

Professional Archaeologists of New York City, Inc.

PANYC

NEWSLETTER

Number 104, January 2002

Contents

Minutes of General Meeting, November 14 th , 2001	1
Announcements	3
Monitoring Guidelines Report	7
Correspondence	11
From the newspapers	14
Events Calendar	24
PANYC Membership Application	25

Material for the PANYC Newsletter may be sent to:

Chris Matthews
Department of Sociology and Anthropology
115 Hofstra University
Hempstead, NY 11238

Phone: (516) 463-4093
Fax: (516) 463-2201
Email: socczm@hofstra.edu

PANYC website
www.learn.columbia.edu/panyc



9

ANNOUNCEMENT

**2002 BERT SALWEN AWARD
FOR THE BEST STUDENT PAPER ON NEW YORK CITY ARCHAEOLOGY**

A prize of \$100.00 will be awarded by Professional Archaeologists of New York City (PANYC) to the author of the best paper on New York City archaeology written by a student in fulfillment of an academic requirement. Although preference may be given to papers written using materials from contract archaeology projects in the city, the competition is not limited to such research. Both graduate and undergraduate students are urged to apply. Papers should not be longer than 50 pages and must be submitted in triplicate. The deadline for submission is March 20, 2002. Please send three copies of the manuscript to Anne-Marie Cantwell, PANYC Awards Committee, Apt. 5C, 14 Stuyvesant Oval, New York, New York 10009. The Bert Salwen Award will be presented at the annual PANYC Public Program at the Museum of the City of New York in April 2001.

PLEASE POST

ANNOUNCEMENT TO THE MEMBERSHIP

**NOMINATIONS REQUESTED FOR
SPECIAL PANYC AWARD
FOR OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS MADE BY A NON ARCHAEOLOGIST TO
NEW YORK CITY ARCHAEOLOGY**

PANYC (Professional Archaeologists of New York City) is pleased to request nominations for a special award honoring non archaeologists or institutions who have made outstanding contributions to the furtherance of New York City archaeology. Please send three copied of letters of nomination documenting the nominee's qualifications to Anne-Marie Cantwell, PANYC Awards Committee Chair, Apt. 5C, 14 Stuyvesant Oval, New York, New York, 10009. Nominations must be received by March 20, 2002. The award will be presented at the PANYC Public Program at the Museum of the City of New York.

FINAL SEASON OF EXCAVATIONS AT ROSE HILL

Linda,

This summer will be the final season of excavations at Rose Hill. I think 16 years is sufficient, don't you? We're running out of places to explore safely and without redundant discoveries, the site is very expensive to protect over the winter, and we now have a new lab and therefore no excuses about beginning analysis. So I will be doing final mapping, digging, stratigraphic recording, etc. from mid May to end of July, upon which backfilling will commence. I sent the following notice to the AIA New York Society newsletter. Perhaps PANYC members should see it too.

From mid May until late July, 2002, the 16th and final season of excavations will be conducted at the Rose Hill manor, a historic archaeological site located on the Bronx campus of Fordham University. The Dutch colonial farmhouse that stood on the spot may date to the time of the original deed in 1694. It underwent several expansions and modifications after the Revolution, first becoming a gentleman's country estate, and after 1841, serving as infirmary for the Roman Catholic St. John's College, the school that became Fordham University in 1907. The manor was demolished by the college in 1896, and a campaign of excavations to explore the buried remains began in 1985 under the sponsorship of the university and the Bronx County Historical Society. It continues to be directed by university faculty in anthropology and history (Allan Gilbert and Roger Wines). Architectural foundations span the entire period of use, colonial to late 19th century, but artifacts reflect mostly the 19th century life of a Catholic boys' school.

The summer 2002 season will involve excavations to clear up remaining uncertainties, mapping newly recovered parts of the site, sampling of building materials, and record photography. Students interested in participating are welcome and should contact:

Dr. Allan S. Gilbert
Associate Professor of Anthropology
Dept of Sociology & Anthropology
Fordham University
Bronx, NY 10458

tel: (718) 817-3854
fax: (718) 817-3846

We would like to thank members who have commented on previous drafts of the Monitoring Guidelines. We hope all members are satisfied with this, our final version of the document. Unless anyone strongly objects we will proceed to the next step in getting these guidelines adopted as part of the NYAC Standards. Thank you.

**GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF
ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING
AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO
OTHER FIELD TECHNIQUES
9/25/01**

POLICY AND PURPOSE

Monitoring has recently become a more prevalent CRM practice. Although many archaeologists are uncomfortable with its use as a method of investigation, monitoring appears in many Scopes of Work and Memoranda of Agreement. Particularly in urban settings, traffic and other logistical considerations have led to a reliance upon monitoring, often as a substitute for archaeological testing, evaluation or data recovery. Because power equipment is so costly, monitoring is sometimes presented to agencies and developers as a means to reduce costs of urban archaeological projects, although to their surprise the actual costs can be substantially larger. Too often there is much pressure upon the archaeological community to use monitoring in the compliance process as an alternative to other archaeological field methods. Additionally, there has been little professional guidance on the subject and its appropriateness as an investigative technique remains an open question.

The existing Standards for Cultural Resource Investigations and the Curation of Archaeological Collections in New York State (NYAC 1994; adopted by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation) address monitoring in Sections 3.7 and 4.5. Monitoring, according to the Standards, may be acceptable under certain circumstances during Phases II and III as a "supplemental" technique. The Standards caution, however, that "due to the complexities often characterizing projects and sites located in urban settings, [the] guidelines apply primarily to projects situated in non-urban environments" (NYAC 1994:1). This suggests that there may be additional considerations during urban projects, in determining whether and under what circumstances monitoring is an appropriate field strategy.

The following guidelines have been written by a joint NYAC/PANyc subcommittee in order to clarify some of these issues in an attempt to make the existing Standards more explicit on the subject of monitoring. Input on these guidelines has been made by members of both NYAC and PANyc.

DEFINITION

Archaeological Monitoring

For purposes of this document, we define monitoring as the observation of construction excavation activities by an archaeologist in order to identify, recover, protect and/or document archaeological information or materials. During monitoring, excavation is not under the control of the archaeologist although the archaeologist may be given authority to temporarily halt construction work to do his or her job, as defined in the scope of work. Excavation area, location and depth are determined and directed by contractor(s), or the organization employing them.

The practice of monitoring should not be confused with the use of heavy equipment by archaeologists. In this circumstance, the placement, size and depth of the excavations suit the aims of the archaeological research design and the operation of all mechanical equipment is under direct control of the archaeologist.

WHEN MONITORING IS APPROPRIATE

Experience at urban sites suggests that in some cases monitoring may be an acceptable approach. As stated in the Standards, there are some circumstances during the evaluation and data recovery phases (Phase II and III) where monitoring may be used effectively to supplement other archaeological methods. There may also be situations where monitoring may be used during Phase 1B archaeological testing. In general, however, monitoring should only be considered when other testing techniques, including mechanically-assisted archaeological excavation, are not feasible. Also, monitoring may be considered an acceptable alternative to other forms of archaeological testing when documentary research shows significant archaeological deposits are likely to be present, but are outside of the project impact areas or beneath the depth of project impacts. In such cases, the appropriateness of monitoring must be thoroughly established before proceeding with contractor excavations. If a decision is reached to proceed with monitoring, then a written monitoring plan or protocol must be implemented. The contents of such a document are described below. With the exception of extraordinary circumstances (e.g., excavations to permit emergency repairs) an acceptable plan should give the archaeologist the authority to halt excavations under defined conditions.

Specific scenarios based on actual examples are presented *here* to establish guidance in how and when monitoring is appropriate.

Scenario 1) Accessibility is often an issue when planning archaeological testing in urban areas. Monitoring may be appropriate in projects where impact areas have the potential for containing archaeological resources but cannot be investigated in advance of construction due to the presence of buildings, roads, or other structures. Two examples where this occurred are Pearl Street, Albany and Pearl Street, New York City. These were heavily trafficked urban areas where it was not feasible to excavate the streets twice, for both archaeology and construction. As a result, archaeologists were not given access to the sites prior to construction. In both cases detailed monitoring plans were developed whereby the archaeologists worked closely with the excavating contractors to document archaeological resources.

Scenario 2) Monitoring may be appropriate when known archaeological resources are in close proximity to the footprint of planned construction excavations or when known archaeological resources are located at a depth below which construction excavations are planned. In such circumstances monitoring is undertaken to ensure that construction stays within specified limits and/or, should the site be more extensive than previously defined and archaeological remains encountered, to ensure that they are documented or avoided.

One example occurred in a historic district in Jersey City, New Jersey where construction was planned above the depth of an historic sewer. Monitoring was done to ensure the contractor did not exceed the depth of planned construction and that the historic sewer was not disturbed. Another example was in Philadelphia where park landscaping had the potential to disturb an historic burial place. The archaeologists worked with the contractor to document any exposed remains which were then protected *in situ* and trench depths modified.

MONITORING PLAN

When monitoring is planned, a clear understanding between the archaeologist and construction excavation team (from the management level down to the equipment operator) is required prior to commencement of fieldwork. A protocol for construction work stoppages must be developed to enable archaeologists time for recordation and, in the event archaeological resources requiring hand excavation are encountered, a protocol for archaeological data recovery must also be developed.

For projects in which monitoring is being proposed, a written protocol or monitoring plan should be prepared and agreed to by the consulting archaeologist, the review agency archaeologist, the undertaking agency representative, the developer (where applicable), and the construction contractor. The monitoring plan should include a number of essential elements:

- 1) Actual procedures should be specified in case the above parameters are changed during the course of the construction work. These procedures must provide adequate time for the archaeologists to consider the sensitivity of the additional locations to be affected by the new construction plans and to enable all parties to consider and agree to any modification of the monitoring plan which may be necessary.
- 2) The authority of the archaeologists to halt excavations to allow for agreed upon investigations should be clearly stated. This authority should also be conveyed to all levels of the contractor's on-site excavation team, including the equipment operator(s).
- 3) The amount of time during which construction excavations are to be made available for archaeological work should be clearly stated in the plan. This should be specific (e.g., the plan used for Pearl Street in Albany specified the archaeologists could inspect the construction trench for 1 hour per every 20 linear feet of trench). A formula appropriate to the nature and size of the site should be developed.
- 4) The nature of the archaeological work within the contractor's excavations (e.g., photography, drawing of profiles, screening of removed soil for artifacts, taking of soil samples, hand excavation, etc.) should be clearly stated as well as the objectives of the archaeological work. The types of resources which may be encountered based on preliminary research or the results of prior excavations in the area should also be stated.
- 5) The actions to be taken by archaeologists, should remains requiring further study be encountered during construction, must be explicitly stated. The protocol for consultation and decision making required in order to slow down or halt construction activities (e.g., consultations with construction, engineering and agency personnel), including identification of specific persons to be contacted, should also be stated. The amount of time that archaeologists will have to record and/or excavate such remains should also be agreed upon. This can be stated as an amount of time for each cultural resource encountered and/or a total amount of time for the entire project.
- 6) The assumptions under which time estimates are made should be clearly stated, both relating to physical site conditions and to archaeological situations. For example, if the monitoring plan assumes warm weather conditions, the need to change the plan or schedule under winter conditions should be stated. The need for a change in scheduling due to unanticipated archaeological finds should also be spelled out.
- 7) Assistance to be provided to the archaeological team by construction personnel (e.g., pumping of water from excavations, shoring of trenches, construction of shelters under winter conditions), including those actions mandated by OSHA regulations, should similarly be specified.

- 8) As with any archaeological plan, treatment of artifacts, technical analysis of samples, curation, preparation of reports, etc. should be addressed in the monitoring plan, as specified in the Standards.

Wendy Harris
Arnold Frickman
Linda Stone

Correspondence

PROFESSIONAL ARCHAEOLOGISTS OF NEW YORK CITY

3 January 2002

Ms. Sherida Paulsen, Chair
New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission
1 Centre Street
New York, NY

Dear Ms. Paulsen,

I write on behalf of PANYC for a number of reasons. For one thing, to say that I look forward to meeting you on 25 January. It is the first time that the Landmarks Commission has offered this open-ness to archaeologists and other members of the interested community. I think it is really an excellent idea and hope it will be the beginning of a new period of cooperation between all of us.

There is another issue that has bothered a number of our members which I will mention, in case you are not aware of it. It pertains to the artifacts from City Hall Park, a project that has had a difficult trajectory. While the entire archaeological community is glad that the artifacts will now be analyzed, and we understand that it was difficult to find funding to accomplish this crucial part of the project, we think that it sets an unfortunate precedent to have the artifacts processed "in house," so to speak, under the direction of someone on the Landmarks staff, for two reasons. In the first place, there is a great deal of information lost when the group doing the excavation is not also involved in the artifact processing and interpretation. There is inevitably detailed knowledge that derives from having been there when material is recovered that somehow doesn't make it to any forms or other records, which can be crucial in interpreting context and association. The second issue is one of perceived conflict of interest that relates to the material being analyzed under the direction of Prof. Bankoff, although we recognize that he was trying to facilitate matters in a difficult situation. There are historic preservation agencies in which all work is done in house, which would avoid the first of these problems, but that has not traditionally been the way that the situation in New York City has worked. We hope that the solution used for the City Hall Park project will not be repeated in future, and that projects will be adequately funded to cover all phases of work, from excavation to report preparation.

To close on a positive note, let me reiterate my appreciation of the meeting planned for the 25th.

Sincerely,

Nan A. Rothschild
President

PROFESSIONAL ARCHAEOLOGISTS OF NEW YORK CITY

2 January 2002

Ms Warrie Price
The Conservancy for Historic Battery Park
One New York Plaza
Concourse Level
New York, NY 10004

Dear Ms. Price,

I am writing on behalf of the organization above (PANYC) with respect to ground-disturbing activities that are planned in the Historic Battery Park area. From a conversation with Pat Kirshner, Director of Operations, I understand that most of these activities are relatively shallow, involving utility lines and sidewalk placement. However, since this is a historic site, there should be an archaeological assessment of the potential impact of the project on archaeological and historical resources, as is the case for all such sites. Even though the impact area seems small, there are some New York City sites where significant information has been derived from areas under sidewalks and other unlikely contexts.

We would be happy to discuss this situation further, if we can be helpful and you would like more information. Of course you can also get advice from the archaeological staff at the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission.

Sincerely,

Nan A. Rothschild
President

From the newspapers

November 18, 2001, Sunday

THE CITY WEEKLY DESK

NEIGHBORHOOD REPORT: CHINATOWN; 'Five Points' Artifacts Outlast Time but Not Terrorism

By ANDREW FRIEDMAN (NYT) 609 words

Last spring, the tenements, grog shops and gambling houses of the 19th-century slum known as Five Points returned to life on a movie lot in Rome for Martin Scorsese's forthcoming film, "Gangs of New York." A few months later, a flaming chunk of the World Trade Center buried in the ground forever a collection of 850,000 artifacts uncovered from the real Five Points, just west of Chatham Square.

The relics sat on shelves in the basement of 6 World Trade Center, awaiting transfer to a permanent home at the South Street Seaport Museum. On Sept. 11, the falling debris tore a crater through the eight-story building and the room that housed the collection just disappeared.

Federal workers and archaeologists uncovered the artifacts in 1991 while building a new federal courthouse at 500 Pearl Street. In the 1840's the courthouse site held rows of tenements. While contemporaries knew Five Points for its brawls, rampant disease, rowdiness and abject poverty, the artifacts highlighted another, less lurid aspect of its working-class life.

They included a placid array of thimbles and combs, marbles and medicine bottles. They were held under the auspices of the General Services Administration, which constructs and manages federal buildings.

Only last year, Mr. Scorsese's production designers visited the collection, guided by Rebecca Yamin, the archaeologist from John Milner Associates who led a team that spent four years logging the artifacts. More evidence that Five Points is now in the cultural spotlight came in the form of another recent visitor to the collection, Tyler Anbinder, author of the new "Five Points: The 19th-Century New York City Neighborhood That Invented Tap Dance, Stole Elections, and Became the World's Most Notorious Slum."

Ms. Yamin, who recently completed a report on the collection, complete with photographs and a CD-ROM, at least had her time with the relics. For those who had not yet examined them, emotions ran higher. The Professional Archaeologists of New York City lobbied to send in a team to salvage the relics, but were rebuffed.

Finally, on Oct. 12, two General Services Administration trucks pulled up to 6 World Trade Center. As daylight poured into the hole in the building, workers carted up computers from a lab attached to the storeroom. They also found 80 to 100 boxes of artifacts from the 18th-century African Burial Ground, discovered north of City Hall in 1991 (the bones were already safe at Howard University). But the Five Points artifacts were nowhere to be found.

There was one small piece of luck. For a recent exhibition, the Archdiocese of New York had borrowed 18 pieces from the collection, including one of Ms. Yamin's favorites, a Staffordshire china teacup with a portrait of Father Mathew, leader of a temperance movement. They returned the goods

to their future home at the Seaport Museum, not to the World Trade Center.

Each item was wrapped in acid-free tissue and put into a box. They sit in a back room on State Street, the last remains of Five Points and proof of a gentler side of that tumultuous place: a perfume bottle, a toy teacup, five marbles, a vegetable dish, a soda water bottle, a large ink bottle, a child's cup, four clay pipes, a coffee cup, a saucer and the teacup emblazoned with Father Mathew's face. **ANDREW FRIEDMAN**

Copyright 2002 The New York Times Company

The Unforeseen Disruption of Moving Ahead

By EDWARD ROTHSTEIN

is lonely at the top, but it also seems secure. The view is intoxicating. Every potential challenge is visible. The perch seems to guarantee invulnerability.

But then, from an unexpected direction, comes an almost insignificant challenge, one that at first can seem a minor annoyance, hardly worth concentrated attention. And then unexpectedly the leader is toppled.

This pattern of military confrontation is a model that has been increasingly used to describe progress in the worlds of business and technology; its emphasis on unpredictability, on the dangers of assault from below and on the possibly permanent disruption that results have undermined many preconceptions about the course of innovation and change.

The Internet-business bubble, for example, was supported by claims that smaller companies without the prospects of profits had the power to disrupt "bricks and mortar" empires. The Internet itself was also hailed by its acolytes in the early 1990's, when it still had minor cult status, as a disruptive force with revolutionary implications that had the ability not just to trans-

form society but also to alter the nature of human consciousness.

Economists and historians, though, have been taking low-level disruption seriously for decades. The economist Joseph Schumpeter coined the term creative destruction to explain how advances in technology, often small ones, can overturn the powers of established companies. More recently, Clayton M. Christensen, a professor of business administration at the Harvard Business School, argued in his 1997 book, "The Innovator's Dilemma," that disruptive innovation is unavoidable and almost always unforeseen. He notes that such disruption becomes all the more effective when a dominant company is best managed, when it takes care of its work force, focuses clearly on the marketplace and works to produce the highest profits. That is when it is least likely to give credence to a seemingly insignificant challenge. Before long, it is too late and the old conditions may never return.

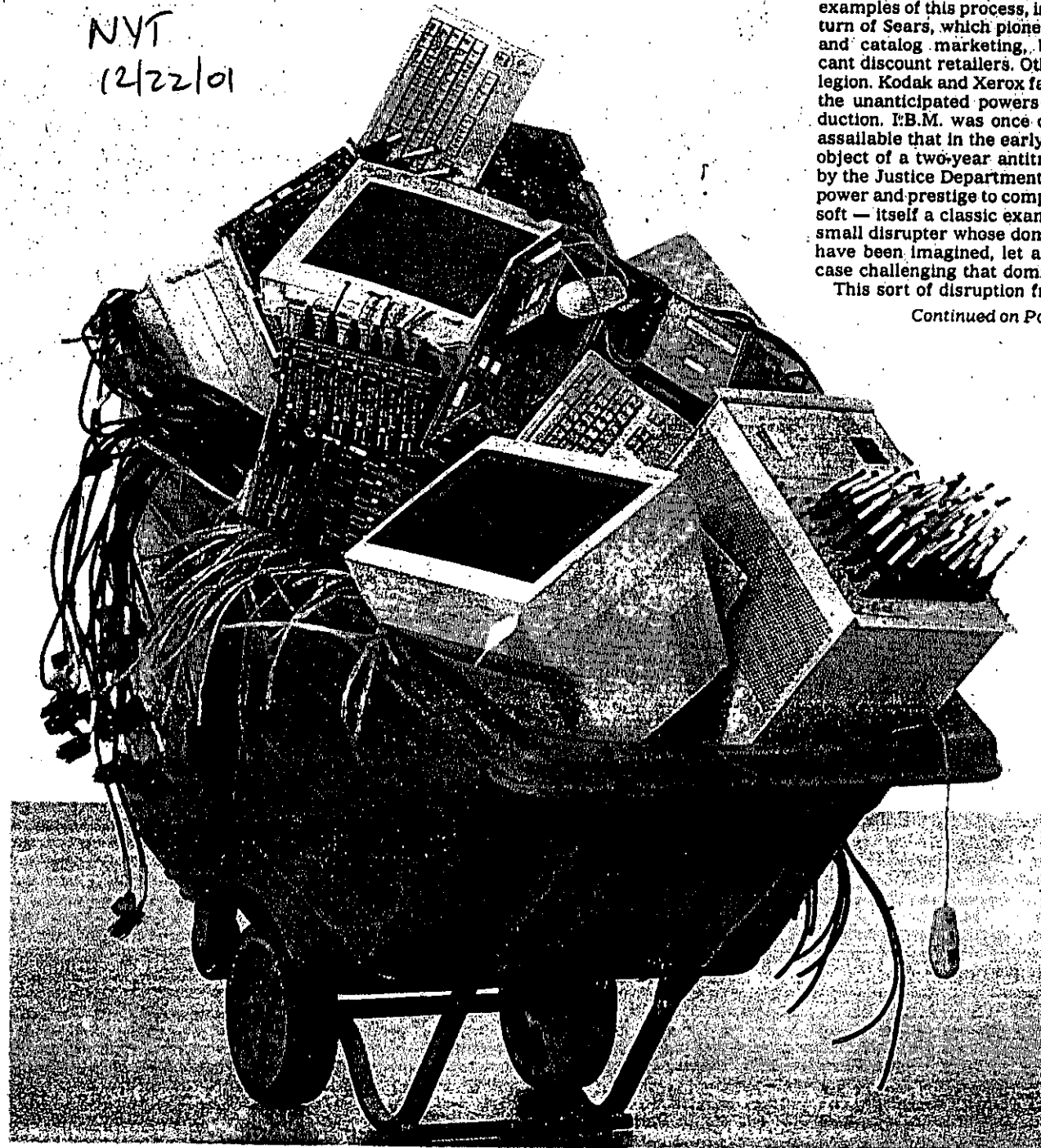
Mr. Christensen gives several detailed

NYT
12/22/01

examples of this process, including the overturn of Sears, which pioneered chain stores and catalog marketing, by once-insignificant discount retailers. Other examples are legion. Kodak and Xerox faltered because of the unanticipated powers of digital reproduction. I.B.M. was once considered so unassailable that in the early 1980's it was the object of a two-year antitrust investigation by the Justice Department; it has since lost power and prestige to companies like Microsoft — itself a classic example of a onetime small disrupter whose dominance could not have been imagined, let alone an antitrust case challenging that dominance.

This sort of disruption from below might

Continued on Page 21

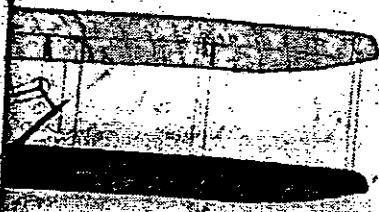


The Disruptions of Moving Ahead

Continued From First Arts Page

seem to be limited to capitalist economies, but it also seems common to many cultural transformations. Small innovations can end up having large consequences. The stirrup has been credited with transforming the nature of war. And as the historian David S. Landes pointed out in "The Wealth and Poverty of Nations," the invention of eyeglasses may have transformed the West: glasses extended the work life of artisans, scientists and inventors and allowed more attention to finely detailed machine work.

Almost by definition, the impact of disruption comes as a surprise. An innovation may have one purpose,



but its ripple effects are unpredictable, which is one reason an established power can miss the implications. A few years ago the historian Edward Tenner argued in "Why Things Bite Back: Technology and the Revenge of Unintended Consequences" that for every technological action, there is an equal, opposite and unpredicted reaction: technology's revenge. That revenge can show up even in paradoxical ways: the invention of a safer football helmet actually led to increased injuries because the new helmets increased the game's aggressive possibilities.

The history of technology is riddled with distorted predictions and unexpected consequences. The telegraph, it was believed, would create stronger communal bonds; instead it

permitted greater dispersion. The airplane, it was guessed, would make the world smaller, leading to a new era of peace; instead it became an instrument of war. Thomas A. Edison envisioned the phonograph's being used primarily for transcribing business transactions. Many contemporary imaginings of the future seem just as unlikely. Michael Derouzos, who directed the Laboratory for Computer Science at M.I.T., seriously suggested that later in this century people would dress themselves by asking their "bedroom monitor" to put together a suitable outfit.

Innovation and change, then, occur in a world so complex that the unexpected must always be expected.

Twenty-five years ago no one predicted the influence of the fax, the VCR and the desktop computer. Most communications and software companies recognize that eventually the telephone, television and the Internet will be closely bound; contemporary notions of the computer will seem grossly limited.

Such may be the stumbling course of all progress and accomplishment. The current recession, the plunge in venture-capital spending and the traumas facing many companies are bound to slow innovation, leading to consolidation and retrenchment. But this shift is also bound to be temporary, for innovation occurs in waves. And the pace of technological change has been particularly breathless during the last century, and even more particularly, it seems, in the United States. For technological disruption does not just affect culture but is also affected by it. It flourishes in certain environments and flounders in others.

Disruption is at least in part an intellectual phenomenon in which new ideas arise unconstrained by dominant preconceptions. It may be, for example, that the spirit of disruption, as outlined in Mr. Christensen's model, was latent in the very origins of the United States, helping to account for its persistent recurrence here.

The United States was itself an invention based on a set of disruptive

ideas; its Revolution succeeded partly because of the strength of those ideas in the face of a seemingly immutable power that never expected the attack by inferior forces. Those ideas also helped create a society — as Alexis de Tocqueville recognized — that cultivated novelty; the lack of social hierarchies even allowed individuals to remake themselves as Gatsby does in Fitzgerald's novel.

In a recent book, "American Literature in a Culture of Creative Destruction" by Philip Fisher, a professor of literature at Harvard, this spirit is seen as one of the guiding themes of American literature: the "apparent completeness and perfection of the world just as it is now" is continually overturned. American culture, with its pursuit of novelty and change, provides fertile ground for technological disruption.

But these patterns of disruption are more complicated than they seem. Their consequences are often unseen by their creators as well as by those being displaced. In technology they can lead to periods of confusion in which helpful standards are dismantled. In culture, valuable knowledge may end up being discarded. Political disruption can become bloody, leading to power that ruthlessly quashes any hint of future upheaval.

There have even been serious challenges to disruption itself, seeking to eliminate it if possible. In business, this is one reason monopoly power is viewed with such suspicion; it attempts to eliminate all forms of disruption. In cultural life, in the face of the Industrial Revolution, romantics and Luddites rejected the pace of social change in favor of the "natural," treating nature as if it were free of disruption. And in the face of Western modernity, with multiplying social and cultural disruptions, full-scale attacks have unfolded.

Destructive innovation, then, is full of ambiguities, dangers and unpredictable consequences. But even during these times of economic caution, its complexity and its potency demand new strategies. Mr. Christensen shows, for disruption can never be avoided or fully eliminated.

www.nytimes.com

The New York Times

January 13, 2002

FORDHAM

House That Lives On in Literature Has New Visitors: Archeologists

By ADRIAN BRUNE

James Fenimore Cooper used Rose Hill Manor as the setting for his 1821 novel, "The Spy." The carillon of the nearby University Church may have inspired Edgar Allan Poe's 1849 poem "The Bells." In 1841, the Rev. John Hughes, New York's first Roman Catholic archbishop, used the manor to establish a college. Initially named St. John's College, it evolved into Fordham University.

St. John's repaid the house for its 200-year contribution to history by razing it and building a classroom building over part of the site. Now, two Fordham professors and a dozen archaeology students are trying to reconstruct the history of Rose Hill Manor from artifacts they have dug up over a 15-year excavation of its foundation.

The team has found ceramic dishes, buttons and wallpaper, along with unexpected items like lice combs, inkwells, slates and religious medals, dating from 1870 to 1900. But Allan Gilbert, an anthropology professor at Fordham who is working with a history department colleague, Roger Wines, doubts that any 18th-century artifacts are hidden in the dirt. He theorizes that St. John's waterproofed the house and removed all artifacts associated with it earlier than that.

Nonetheless, through excavation and historical research, the two professors have compiled a detailed history of Rose Hill Manor. It begins in 1694 when a Dutchman, Reyer Michielsen, bought the land from an Englishman, Roger Barton, and built a farmhouse on it. The professors believe that the farmhouse is the structure whose remains they have excavated.

Mr. Michielsen's son-in-law, Benjamin Corsa, inherited the land in 1733. The Corsa family sold it in the early 1800's to a wealthy New Yorker, Robert Watts, who named the house Rose Hill Manor, after his ancestral home in Scotland.

In 1823, the land and building were donated to the Diocese of New York, which transformed it into St. John's College to train priests and teach the Irish immigrants surging into the Bronx. A group of Jesuits from Kentucky bought the school in 1846 and renamed it Fordham in 1907. The manor had been torn down

Advertisement

TECHNO SCOUT
Your search ends here
TECHNOLOGY UPDATES

Advertisement

a decade earlier.

The digging on the site is to end this summer. Now Mr. Gilbert has his eye on another site, New York's last remaining Revolutionary War fort, on private property in Riverdale. "It's not just about finding the old cannonball for your museum," he said. "Archaeology is about discovering the placement of that cannonball and how its placement was affected over the years."

[Home](#) | [Back to New York Region](#) | [Search](#) | [Help](#)

[Back to Top](#)

[Copyright 2002 The New York Times Company](#) | [Privacy Information](#)



This page is print-ready, and this article will remain available for 7 days. [Instructions for Saving](#) | [About this Service](#) | [My Qpass](#)

January 6, 2002, Sunday

ARTS AND LEISURE DESK

Art/Architecture; The Drama of Digging In New England's Trash

By ANN WILSON LLOYD (NYT) 1363 words

BROCKTON, Mass. — THE artist Mark Dion is a globe-trotter and museum buff. His work consists of scientific-looking installations and museum-based natural history projects often intended as private homages to muses ranging from Virgil and Aristotle to P. T. Barnum and Stephen Jay Gould. The sly subtleties embedded in them, though, are not about the exotic "other." In almost all of his elaborate, entertaining displays, we meet mostly ourselves.

Mr. Dion, 40, has recently become known for a series of archaeological-type digs. These have taken place in a drained Venetian canal, along opposite banks of the Thames in London and in turn-of-the-century ash pits that surround the Queens Museum in Flushing Meadows Corona Park. A forthcoming project will feature whatever Mr. Dion unearths from the former sculpture garden at the Museum of Modern Art, to be shown when that institution reopens after renovations.

Whether trash or treasure (and it's mostly trash), every last chicken bone and bottle cap from these digs is scrubbed, sorted and artfully displayed in specially made casks, vitrines, cabinets or pedestals — in short, treated like a precious artifact. Largely because of this attention to detail, Mr. Dion's displays never fail to be mesmerizing, lovely to look at, even funny, but also a little sad: so much history, waste and clutter, and every bit passed through countless human hands.

For the last 15 years, he has shown his projects extensively in Europe and Latin America. Now he has come home to dig. Mr. Dion, who lives in Pennsylvania, grew up near New Bedford, Mass. He recently turned his shovels on three sites here in southeastern New England, where as a boy he not only found his first discarded treasures, but also was fascinated by the eclectic collections in New Bedford's Whaling Museum, one of the current project's four sponsoring institutions.

"New England Digs" was initiated by the Fuller Museum of Art in Brockton, Mass., where it was first shown last fall. It will be on view from Jan. 26 through March 10 at the David Winton Bell Gallery at Brown University in Providence, R.I., and from April 6 through May 11 at the new University Art Gallery in New Bedford (run by the University of Massachusetts in nearby Dartmouth).

The exhibition consists of three large, handsome Shaker-style cabinets, each designated for one of the three cities (Brockton, New Bedford and Providence) and artfully filled with finds from corresponding sites, plus other artifacts too large to encase: a crumpled boiler, a chunk of tile floor and a massive, rusty safe. Inside the cabinets are typical small-rubbish items like bricks, bottles and blackened bits of metal, but also colorful shards of dinnerware through the ages, balls, toys, marbles and, from the Brockton site, a particularly nice grouping of plastic swizzle sticks. Bins sometimes hold the overflow of glass and pottery.

Mr. Dion studiously avoids making serious scientific or archaeological points in these projects. "He refuses to explain and contextualize," said Lasse Antonsen, director of the University Art Gallery. "By implying that objectivity is a historically framed activity, he challenges established methods that led to disciplines like anthropology, archaeology and zoology."

Mr. Antonsen, along with teams of other intrepid volunteers, assisted the artist on one of the digs, where, as usual, authentic procedural techniques were used only selectively. Mr. Dion takes pains, in fact, to choose well-disturbed areas that would arouse no genuine archaeological interest. Conversely, he must also steer clear of the industrial pollution that lurks below much urban landscape.

In Brockton, trial digs uncovered just such a dubious legacy from the city's former shoe manufacturing industry. The site finally chosen, Department of Public Works land at the edge of a city cemetery, had been piled with twice-relocated dirt fairly glimmering with a mother lode of artifacts. (In Providence, Mr. Dion and his team dug in a former dump on the edge of the Seekonk River; in New Bedford, on the spot where a 19th-century building in the city's historic downtown waterfront burned down a few years ago.) In the exhibition catalog, Mr. Dion is quoted by Denise Markonish, curator of the Fuller Museum, explaining that the sites were "insignificant and disturbed," which are terms archaeologists use to characterize a valueless area where the context and stratification are ruined. "Still," the artist added, "one can find wonders."

The alchemy that turns junk into wonders has something to do with the act of discovery and the mystery of unbroken time. "A fragment of blue-and-white willow export porcelain thrown away in 1894 lies inert for 107 years until someone from the dig team finds it," Mr. Dion continued, "creating a momentary bridge to the person who lost or threw the object away." Finding that same fragment at a yard sale just wouldn't be the same.

For viewers, the alchemical moment occurs in front of Mr. Dion's gloriously visual presentations, but factoring into that moment is photo documentation of diggers doing all that tedious work. The installations result from weeks spent mucking in cold, smelly mud; then endless soaking, scrubbing and sorting. Mr. Dion considers this behind-the-scenes process a kind of fugitive performance, without the usual performer-audience relationship.

Recontextualizing that willowware shard, he says, renders it comparable to a letter in a word and part of a sentence of a larger text, one viewers have to decipher for themselves. "There is a long history of using trash in modern art as assemblages and readymades," Mr. Dion said, "but here objects are allowed to exist as what they are or were, without metaphor, noninterpretive, not even archaeological."

To most viewers, though, the text the objects conjure is inevitably a nostalgic tale. To Mr. Antonsen, the installations are, in part, about reframing desire. Ultimately, though, darker thoughts creep in

regarding the pervasive depths of our cast-off material culture and how soon the planet will become a vast kitchen midden.

Still, that block of fused nails in the Brockton cabinet is a wondrous thing. Rusted together in the shape of their former box, the aggregate nails have become an accidental piece of Minimalist, process sculpture. And cosseted carefully behind the glass doors of the Providence cabinet, an assortment of rough bricks takes on engaging visual properties that are lushly tactile, formal and abstract. By now, Mr. Dion has become, perhaps, the art world's leading practitioner of ceramic-shard arrangements. Displayed here in shallow drawers that viewers may open, these multihued or monochrome reliefs are perfect studies in assemblage and collage.

Seemingly at the top of his game, Mr. Dion is winding up these archaeological projects. "I was becoming the natural-history guy, then I started the digs; now I don't want to be the archaeological-dig guy," he said in a recent talk at the Fuller Museum.

His newest project may finally disclose the hidden performer: he is devising an opera based on early anatomy lessons, drawing further on the artist-as-impresario aspect of his work. A few years ago in the Netherlands, he advertised a public anatomy lesson in the manner of quasi-medical expositions that were immensely popular in the 16th century. Tickets and posters were printed, a professor of anatomy from a local veterinary school was hired, and Mr. Dion then tried to obtain an exotic, recently deceased zoo animal as the subject. A goat was all he came up with.

"I've always been disappointed in how contemporary artists have given over some of the big questions to other disciplines," he said, regarding his interest in science and philosophy. Equally fascinating to him is gullibility and spectacle. P. T. Barnum, he said, was not only the Disney of his day but also a template for contemporary artists. "It's easier to understand artists like Jeff Koons or Andy Warhol through Barnum," he said. "He understood that being tricked was O.K. as long as you were also amused."

Copyright 2002 The New York Times Company

PANYC EVENTS COMMITTEE REPORT - January 23 - March 31, 2002

EVENT	SPEAKER	DATE	TIME	LOCATION	CONTACT	FEE
Over the Line: The Art and Life of Jacob Lawrence	exhibit	thru 2/3		Whitney Museum of American Art	212-570-3676	admission
A "Royal Tomb" at Umm el-Marra: New Perspective on Early Urban Civilization in Syria	Glenn Schwartz	Thurs 2/7	6 PM	NYU Main Bldg, Room 300		free
Artemis of Ephesus: A Greek Goddess in Anatolia	Sarah Morris	Mon 3/18	6 PM	Institute of Fine Arts, 1 E 78 St.		free
Across Borders: Beadwork in Iroquois Life	exhibit	thru 5/19		Museum of the American Indian	212-514-3712	free
Capture: Native Americans and the Photographic Image	exhibit	thru 7/21		National Museum of the American Indian	212-514-3712	free
Splendid Isolation: Art of Easter Island	exhibit	thru 8/4		Metropolitan Museum of Art	212-923-3700	admission

If any members have events which they would like listed, please contact Linda Stone by phone or fax at (212)888-3130 or by mail 249 E 48 St. #2B, New York, NY 10017.

If you are interested in joining PANYC or if you would like to subscribe to the PANYC Newsletter, please complete the form below and return it to:

Greg Lattanzi
PANYC Secretary
274 W. 95th St. #2
New York, NY 10025

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____ E-MAIL: _____

Please indicate preferred mailing address and check below as appropriate:

I wish to apply for PANYC Membership and would like to receive the application form _____

I wish to subscribe to the PANYC Newsletter _____

Amount of additional donation to PANYC _____

