



a blade of grass
nurtures socially engaged art

A Blade of Grass FINALISTS FOR ABOG FELLOWSHIP – Letters of Interest

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New York City's inhabitants are sustained through continual inputs of food, water, energy, and material goods, as well as outputs of different forms of "waste". Because the input and output systems are largely invisible, the material flow of resources is difficult to comprehend. This hidden flow of goods to and from cities around the globe has become the root of an ecological and social crisis we have entered across the world. Arguably the oldest form of gardening, food forests are human-made ecosystems generated through companion planting methods. These methods involve cultivating diverse arrangements of plants that strengthen, support, and nourish each other while naturally fighting pests and attracting pollinators. Edible forests re-integrate us with natural resources we need, and need to care for. They can allow us to live more interdependently, and over time, inexpensively provide fresh food in places it is lacking. Because of their natural regeneration, they are one of the most resilient agro-ecosystems as well as a sustainable means of food production. The "Floating Food Forest" is an edible forest built on modular steel docks repurposed from the United States Coast Guard and anchored in New York City's harbor. Foraging food from plants grown on New York City's land has been off-limits for almost a century for fear that a glut of foragers may destroy a fragile ecosystem. A food forest built on the water can follow a different set of rules, while transporting visitors to a more utopian New York City in a compelling and imaginative way. A contained platform with a working ecosystem can be viewed on a small enough scale so all of the working parts can be seen, understood, and finally reimaged. The Floating Food Forest is an experiment in a small-scale edible commons. In its formative stages, the Floating Food Forest has formed partnerships with organizations including the National Parks Service, the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, and the United States Coast Guard, with preliminary permission for dockage on the Bronx River. While working with city, state, and federal agencies is essential, the project plan needs to be developed through co-ownership with local stakeholders. It depends on working in partnerships that are currently in preliminary stages with organizations including: the Bronx River Alliance, Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice, and local community boards. A yearlong fellowship with A Blade of Grass will secure foundational support for the overall organizational strategy and build-out, preparing it to launch the following year. Longer-term, the Floating Food Forest will become a resource for local artisans and small businesses utilizing food and medicinal plants from the project. Making basic resources available to meet our human needs and analyzing material supply chains has been the focus of my artwork for the past decade. Through collaboratively building small and large-scale ecosystems and habitats in public spaces, my work connects us with alternative, interdependent models of living and collectively sustaining in unique ways.