

Shining Like the Sun

Shining Like the Sun is a long-term research project inspired by Trappist monk, Thomas Merton, who, on a Louisville street corner, was suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that he was not separate from the beings that surrounded him. He “woke from a dream of separateness and self-isolation,” saying, “There is no way of telling people that they are all walking around shining like the sun.”

Using a variety of methods and media, the project investigates historical, psychological, ecological and social phenomena, and seeks to render the linkages between these ideas and the mingling of site and self.

Drawing on frameworks provided by systems theory, space/place theory, biogeography, ecology, poetry and social science, I walk on and off the city’s grid and documenting, contextualizing, giving voice to: *historyscapes, inscapes* (memories, fears, aspirations), *landscapes, creaturescapes, cityscapes, socialscapes*. The media used are: photography, sound recordings, field notes, and poems and essays.

To date the project has had four components. I anticipate more.

1. ***INTER : VIEW: A Conversation about Nature and the City***
INTER : VIEW was funded by MICA in 2007. The project is an interdisciplinary exploration into the connections between ecological sciences, urban public health and urban ecosystems, and the imaginings, fantasies, stories and expressions of Baltimore city residents regarding nature, their place in nature, their views of the city and its relationship to their health. I videotaped and audio recorded interviews/oral histories with 20 Baltimore residents (representing diverse ages, socio-economic groups and ethnicities). These interviews/oral histories, accompanied by still photography, were compiled into a 24-minute video—in May, 2009. The film can be viewed online here: <http://vimeo.com/6181059>. Pending additional funding, interviews will also be conducted in Kyoto, Japan, the center of Shinto tradition (philosophical integration of daily life with nature systems).
2. ***From a Far-off Country***, a collection of poems and writings in search of the place of self and collective (human and nonhuman) in an urban ecosystem; a reflection on and response to Ted Nordhaus and Edward Shellenberger’s statement that “Humans have become the meaning of the earth.”
3. ***Real and Imagined Paths of Water...*** is a field research project conducted in, along and across an urban waterway (Jones Falls, Baltimore MD). It is an experiment in psychoecology...an attempt to locate, verify, render, communicate my theory that intangible elements such as history, memory, psycho/emotional states are valid ecosystem components and – in order to understand urban places and the souls that live there – they should be studied along with flora, fauna (and their artifacts), and the flow and cycling of inorganic materials.
4. ***Street Corner***: a series of photos of the same Baltimore street corner (Preston Street & Greenmount Avenue), featuring the Chicken Nook, a fast food establishment.
5. ***Emergence***: a musical composition for eight voices (the same number of atoms in both hemoglobin and chlorophyll molecules) using recordings of city/nature sounds as a way of rendering the interrelationships in an urban ecosystem.