

# URBAN WILD SYMPOSIUM FALL 2005

CORNELL UNIVERSITY'S LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE DEPARTMENT WILL HOST A SYMPOSIUM SEPTEMBER 30 + OCTOBER 1 AND 2, 2005 TO ENGAGE THE EMERGING AND DEVELOPING CONCEPT OF URBAN WILD. THIS BLOG IS INTENDED AS A FORUM TO EXPLORE AND EVOKE URBAN WILD IN ITS MANY MANIFESTATIONS. ANYONE MAY CONTRIBUTE TO THE DISCUSSION BY POSTING A COMMENT.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 11

## What is Urban Wild?

'Wild' is increasingly absent from the familiar, ordinary places where we work and live. Spontaneous, self-regulating ecologies have been tamed, expunged, and marginalized from the everyday experience and consciousness of urban and suburban life. 'Wild' has survived mainly when severed from the urban setting or abstracted and romanticized in television, parks, and zoos. Urban Wild acts to transgress the social, cultural, and physical boundaries between spaces of urban dwelling and urban wilding. It seeks to re-imagine the urban-wild relationship by activating, connecting, and generating the 'wild' in, around, and through the urban context.

Urban Wild is articulated most often as a spatial construct, a patch of nature set within a larger urban context with a wide range of manifestations. It may consist of a formally recognized remnant of pre-urbanized ecosystem, or a hazily demarcated or vacant space hosting spontaneous regeneration, or a toxic, inhospitable wasteland where evidence of natural systems is suppressed and difficult to see. Frequently associated with temporary, flexible, and varied forms of human habitation and use, these spaces are dispersed in the urban matrix, and yet may also provide genuine ecological function. Relatively uncultivated, unplanned, and unmanaged, Urban Wild activates complexity and diversity in the urban ecosystem, and connects city dwellers to dynamic, changing, and complex places where impermanence, chance, and restlessness reign.

Urban Wild may also be articulated as a mode of analysis informing

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URBAN WILD GROUP

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They always nest in Woody Allen's building.

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future city organization and growth. Wild activates a dialogue with Urban that speaks not just to nature in the city, but also to the nature of the city. This dialogue signifies process and motility, rather than result. Rejecting any static, ideal form imposed from the top down, Urban Wild embraces flexible, adaptive, community-based systems percolating from the ground up. It seeks to identify, support, and accommodate these systems over a wide range of scales, from the backyard to the region, and facilitate flows between them. Increased flows between systems and over multiple scales will inevitably challenge many pre-existing categories and boundaries, creating new combinations, relationships, and groupings. These new combinations will likely threaten political, social, and economic status quos, and demand new 'outside the box' strategies. And while Urban Wild epitomizes and exemplifies process, it is not completely impartial to outcome. Its mixture of human and natural systems implies a stronger link between them, anticipating more ecologically responsive and less anthropocentric forms of settlement.

A third articulation of Urban Wild linked with and buttressing the others is as a narrative of human experience and habitation. While most conventional narratives march inexorably towards a final denouement where rough spots get ironed out and plot twists are untwisted, Urban Wild can be seen instead as a narrative of complexity that unravels instead of unraveling, instigates rather than resolves, and encourages a multiplicity of ambiguous and open-ended outcomes. It is an agent of potentiality, diversity and surprise, an antidote to standardization and homogenized orthodoxy, a dynamic and creative force that challenges our preconceived notions, bestranges the familiar, and transforms us into explorers discovering the world anew. If narratives of all kinds require some form of language or imagery in order to inform, then Urban Wild, primed to communicate new and unanticipated relationships and insights, may need to develop an idiom all its own, replete with metaphors sufficiently elastic to accommodate change, yet specific enough to facilitate discourse and be widely understood. At some future point in time, Urban Wild may even be deemed an outdated phrase and become known by another name.

These articulations of Urban Wild are neither final nor absolute. They may be seen as temporary equilibriums subject to continual change fostered by the dialectic from which they have evolved. Constructed on shifting ground and potentially raising more questions than it answers,

Urban Wild is a moving target not easily defined. Perhaps this resistance to definition paradoxically most aptly defines it, yet many of the issues it addresses are of vital importance and demand further attention.

POSTED BY URBAN WILD GROUP AT 5:06 PM 4 COMMENTS

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## Symposium Organization

Because Urban Wild is by nature ambiguous and varied in its manifestations, we intend the symposium to be a multi-tracked, interdisciplinary exchange of ideas involving multiple platforms. These platforms will include a presentation of scholarly papers, a series of round table discussions, and gallery exhibitions. Participants will be asked to consider Urban Wild in one or more of the following projected dialogues:

### Encountering

How should we experience Urban Wild, as a chance, isolated episode or a recurring, coordinated event, at or across which scales? Does it demand that we re-examine our concept of what is 'wild,' especially in an urban context? Will it require new modes of perception, stripping away the veil of familiarity and replacing the pictorial landscape aesthetic with a fresh understanding of landscape that rethinks the meaning of sublime?

### Inhabiting

If Urban Wild correctly assumes that human and natural ecologies will increasingly connect and overlap within the urban context, then how will those relationships evolve and what potential forms will they take? What could be the implications for cultural and social dynamics? Is restoration ecology a relevant strategy and, if so, what possible roles can it play?

### Framing

Urban Wild stresses the value of adaptive, self-organizing processes, and yet outcomes matter. To what extent can Urban Wild tolerate human shaping and direction, but still truthfully retain spontaneous, organic progression? Are there viable, measurable thresholds, and where should lines be drawn, if any? Are invasive plants too untamed? How much 'wild'

can we really handle?

## Imagining

Urban Wild is a source generating compelling new relationships, shredding and striating, polarizing and resolving, spawning complexity and diversity. Its unregulated processes are relentless generators of creativity, a deep pool of as yet unknown species, forms, ideas, and solutions that continually push the bounds of convention and understanding. This track asks participants to push the bounds of what Urban Wild means, what it does, and where it is, to head to the margin of what is known and bring back insight from the edge.

## Activating

Urban Wild can not be masterplanned. It bubbles up instead through the substrata and emerges at the surface only when conditions allow. Activating Urban Wild involves staging conditions favorable for the emergence of free-willed and self-organizing process. Inoculating wildness in cities may involve activating civic involvement, provoking a diversity of ideas through inter-disciplinary teams, and planting feedback mechanisms.

## Modeling

How might we capture and represent the intrinsic flows and forces that shape and re-shape Urban Wild? Understanding and framing Urban Wild require a conceptual framework that allows us to measure and map complex, non-linear dynamics without inhibiting or restraining them. Flexible and permeable groupings encourage an intricate, four-dimensional web of relationships and associations that illumine and explicate process while providing sufficient structure for analysis and prediction.

POSTED BY URBAN WILD GROUP AT 4:57 PM 0 COMMENTS

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THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 9

## isee

iSee is a web-based application charting the locations of closed-circuit

television (CCTV) surveillance cameras in urban environments. With iSee, users can find routes that avoid these cameras -- paths of least surveillance -- allowing them to walk around their cities without fear of being "caught on tape" by unregulated security monitors.

POSTED BY URBAN WILD GROUP AT 1:21 PM 0 COMMENTS

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THURSDAY, AUGUST 12



They always nest in Woody Allen's building.

POSTED BY URBAN WILD GROUP AT 6:41 PM 0 COMMENTS

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## Red Hawk in Central Park

Old Home Page Images

Pale Male and Family can be seen almost every day at various parts of the Park. The four are doing quite well. The chicks are fully grown and hunting on their own.

POSTED BY URBAN WILD GROUP AT 6:39 PM 0 COMMENTS

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MONDAY, AUGUST 9

## City Sites

I found this new publication in Baltimore that is trying to foster visionary urban planning:

Called **THE URBANITE**.

In their very first issue in January they mentioned a city in Brazil that Fred told me about that is doing great things with mass transportation: **CURITIBA**.

POSTED BY URBAN WILD GROUP AT 3:44 PM 0 COMMENTS

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SATURDAY, JULY 31

## **horizon pictorial - Barry McGee's 'Urban Wild'**

horizon pictorial - Barry McGee's 'Urban Wild': "McGee has distinguished himself as an artist in his own right - one who has found his calling in scavenging, documenting, and bearing witness to the urban wild."

POSTED BY URBAN WILD GROUP AT 6:37 PM 0 COMMENTS

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