

An Artistic Exploration at the Intersection of Time, Place, and Memory:

Foraging for Toronto's Lost Rivers

by Shannyn Porter

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ABSTRACT

Over the past two years, I have delved into the Lost River Walks project, and related images and documents in the Toronto Archives. Through this investigation, my thesis explores the intersections of history, environmental awareness, and artistic representation, aiming to revitalise a sense of connection with Toronto's lost waterways and their impact on the city's evolution. Using tools like Google Lens and a variety of anecdotal, archival, and survey-based sources, I have identified 19 sites along 6 lost or altered waterways. Every artwork is an exploration, and every exploration is a passage through memory and time. By using ink sourced directly from the land itself, I have layered paintings onto photographs to create a multidimensional exploration of memory, history, and place that works to re-contextualize our understanding of past and present.

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In memory of my grandma.

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INTRODUCTION

In an era marked by urbanisation's distancing effects on our relationship with the natural world, my research engages with the Lost River Walks project, started by Helen Mills in 1995, to bridge the gap between past and present, creating a visually tactile experience that prompts viewers to rethink their perceptions of both historical and contemporary urban landscapes. This thesis explores the intersections of history, environmental awareness, and artistic representation, aiming to revitalise a sense of connection with Toronto's lost waterways and their impact on the city's evolution.

The choice of this topic stems from the belief that cities are living palimpsests, each individual's personal story layering and interweaving in its creation. Choosing to focus on waterways has many motives. In addition to the ecological, this research seeks to implicitly confront a mindset of urban North America through the contrast and friction with its analog; the city is made of paths, not places. My experience living in Europe has highlighted how intensely this mindset has taken hold in North America at large. Our dialogue is shaped by the lines on the maps we use to discuss the places we are in. Saying I live on Vaughan Road makes more sense as an explanation to most people than that I live in Humewood, and this is taken as self-evident and sensible as opposed to a distinction of living in a destination or along a route. Through my research of the city, I have learned that Toronto contains contradictions regarding this.

While what has been stated is true, Toronto is as well a plethora of little villages and community identities stitched together like a patchwork quilt. Also, the rectilinear roads that shape the city are not all predetermined. Vaughan Road has been a pathway following the ravine carved by the Castle Frank Brook for generations before the founding of Toronto (Lost Rivers, n.d., Early Roads section, para. 2). In focusing on the obfuscated paths the waters of the city have taken and

continue on, I hope to highlight the ways we follow and flout the environment; conflating and contrasting the place and destination.

Through this study, I have explored what ways the artistic manipulation of archival photographs challenges conventional perceptions of time and space. The project seeks to uncover latent narratives of place through the comparison and contrast of photographs in the creation of new images. Alan Trachtenberg's investigation of the materiality of Walker Evans' photographs underscores the importance of considering the physicality of images. They are the representation of photosensitive chemicals exposed to the world for a limited time. That time has been limited, compressed, and translated even in the most authentic of images. I have worked to study how the layering and expanding of images can affect our understanding and expanded to experiment with how the presentation and materiality of the image affect this.

Alan Trachtenberg's essay questions how the mode of consuming a photograph contextualizes our understanding of the photograph. He focuses most on how this can impact the reader's understanding of *Message from the Interior*, Walker Evans' twelve image book of inside landscapes published in 1966. Despite this, Trachtenberg's focus on outlining what a photo is, and is not, and the questions he raises figure into my understanding of my own artwork and process, using and replicating photos.

This essay, written in 1979, exclusively discusses photography as a physical object whose very 'thingness' is integral. This is an important distinction from a modern understanding or conflation with the image as an idea bound by, if anything, abstract pixel measurements that rarely relate to the relative size. Trachtenberg writes, "Neither photographs nor the experience of them are innocent acts." (Trachtenberg, 1979, p. 5) I take this to be the most definitive statement made

throughout which is that objects are, in fact, objects and should be viewed and understood as such.

Tratchenberg implements what can be best understood as a Structural methodology as in line with similar literary criticism. He is deeply concerned with what the authorial intent was regarding the structure of the work. Each element of the photographs and the book as a whole are regarded as significant details to uncover the proper meaning or reading. Despite individual lines to the contrary the text does not consider how meaning is created as a dialogue between viewer and text nor how that might shift from viewer to viewer when it comes to the Message(s) from the Interior in question. While literary structuralism is more metaphorical in its name, I would suggest that in many ways Tratchenberg is literally thinking of the physical structure of the work as a tool to help in unpacking his own understanding of the work.

The text is formed into four parts with distinct, if not explicit, intentions. The first is a preface set to charge questions about both the text named in the title and how photographs are understood and critiqued. The second holds the closest relevance to my work as it focuses on asking questions with regards to how photographs are understood, either as ideas or objects, and how that impacts the understanding. He writes, “A reading that is no more than a looking will be as blind as a vision that pretends to conceptual innocence.” (Tratchenberg, 1979, p. 6) Here Tratchenberg also begins to make analogies to poetry and other forms of art as a way of continuing to question how apparently documentary photographs can be ‘Art’. The third section dissects Walker Evan’s background leading up to and after the publication of Message from the Interior. The last section is an image by image reading of the work and its form.

The questions posed in this work help me to form an understanding of how my artwork can create meaning with the viewer in a way unique to its form. In the early stages of developing my ideas several years ago I made a project which was a painting of Canoe Lake's rail station, taken through a blizzard back to where it once stood, where a photo was taken. This was presented as a painting, a story, and a photo. It felt like while all three had meaning, their shared existence competed with each other. This was resolved in my current approach of an image on top of and within an image consolidating the parts together.

Trachtenberg's questions on the structural nature of an image help reinforce my process. Regardless of whether an image is digital or film, it is still experienced through a physical representation. Trachtenberg says, "Insofar as they centre on questions of representation, theories of meaning have failed to take into account, and to account for, the most simple perceived feature of their object: the sheer being of photographs, their materiality or thingness. Of what do we speak of when we speak of a photograph? An emulsified image adhering to but detachable from (as in a slide projection) a piece of paper of determinate size and shape? Is it the tangible or the optical property that comprises the photograph? Moreover, what connections exist between the thingness of the object and its work as an image?" (Trachtenberg, 1979, p. 8) My answer is if my work were to move into a fully digital and more unified form, it would also lose its structural depth and a level of its 'thingness'. This would in turn lose experientiality and thereby lose a level of audience connection to the work.

I think Trachtenberg aims art towards the goal of an ambiguous 'transcendence' which is either unhelpfully broad or a fallacy. On this he writes, "If art is understood as transcendence, can it be achieved in a medium confined to copying the world? Alternatively, if photography is just as plastic as painting or

drawing (and thus eligible for transcendence), then where does its authentic uniqueness lie? Why make photographs, except as a shortcut to something else?” (Trachtenberg, 1979, p. 7) To me, a photograph, as a flat impression of a small duration of time, never is quite a copy in the true sense. So it is not hard to see how it can create and evoke meaning different from its progenitor. Ultimately, this work helps me to appreciate how a focus on form can be meaningful and how that meaning can impact the understanding of what is represented. Tactile structural qualities are important to how my work creates meaning with the viewer.

The significance of this research lies in its capacity to address contemporary concerns regarding environmental degradation, the individual within the cityscape, and disconnection from history. By re-contextualizing archival photographs within their present surroundings, my work creates a visual dialogue that enables the viewer to create connections between the two. This is what teaching has taught me. To learn something, we need space to be a part of it. With this thesis, I aim not to ask the viewer to consume and be confronted by the demonstration of fault. Instead, I hope to research and mark a path, then ask: What do you see?

CONTEXT

Personal Backstory and Connection:

This work began as an exploration of my grandmother’s life, a journey that was influenced by her battle with Alzheimer’s disease. Grandma Gladys showed signs of Alzheimer’s when I was about ten years old. The genesis of this project comes from my discovery of my grandmother's photographs after she passed away and what that archive made me think of. Seeing her photographs put me on a course to try to evoke the memories she never got to share. This led into my undergraduate thesis work drawing images within images to create new spaces made of past and present. The

scrapbooks she left behind contained photographs from her childhood in Toronto, a city that I had yet to connect with and recently moved to. These images acted as both a bridge to her past and a window into the evolving history of Toronto. As I visited these places, my interest in the city's history intensified. This exploration led me to uncover locations that have undergone remarkable change over time. The juxtaposition of historical images against their present-day counterparts became the cornerstone of my creative process.

Themes of heritage, the fleetingness of a moment, and the passage of time resonate deeply within my work. The contemplation of whether to present my final artwork as a photograph or a painting led to the realisation that the merging of the two was essential. This convergence allowed me to explore the past through the prism of painting and merge it with the present. This blending became the essence of my work, illustrating my journey through the present while connecting with my grandmother's memories of the past.

Inspiration also came from the works of artists like Suzy Lake, who engaged with personal archives and ancestral places in her body of work *Performing an Archive* (Lake, 2014/2016). This work features a collection of photographs that explore the themes of identity and self-representation. Lake uses the photographs to recreate scenes of places where her ancestors lived. The series is a visual representation of her engagement with her own history and how she performs her identity within an archival context, showcasing her innovative approach to self-expression and the exploration of memory.

Lake's work engages in debates concerning the interplay of personal and collective memory, the blurred boundaries between documentation and performance, subjectivity in archival processes, the role of community engagement in historical narratives, counter-narratives within specific locations, and the

temporal layers present in urban spaces. Through her work, Lake prompts discussions on how artists can contribute to broader understandings of history while challenging prevailing narratives, revealing hidden stories, and exploring the intersections of personal history and urban development.

This body of work revolves around Lake's exploration of personal ancestry and the historical development of her hometown, Detroit. Through her engagement with her family's history and the properties they inhabited, she critically examines the cycle of urban renewal, demographic shifts, and social changes that have shaped the city's landscape over time. By performing as an archival investigator, Lake delves into the stories and memories of these properties, creating a connection between personal narratives and broader historical contexts. The work emphasises the significance of personal history and heritage in understanding the complexities of urban development and the interconnectedness of past and present.

The methodology employed centres on research, documentation, and engagement with her family's historical homes in Detroit. She embarked on a journey to locate and record these properties, spanning the period from 1880 to 1925. Lake's approach involved physically visiting and photographing each property, allowing her to visually capture the physical spaces that held significant historical and personal resonance. This process also involved interacting with the current inhabitants of these neighbourhoods, fostering conversations that uncovered stories and memories related to her ancestors and their dwellings. Through photography and dialogue, Lake constructs a multidimensional narrative that intertwines her family's history with the urban development and demographic shifts of her hometown.

Lake's deeply personal exploration of her family's history, set against the backdrop of urban development, aligns with memory studies, revealing how individual and collective memories intersect and shape interpretations of historical

narratives. This perspective enables an examination of not only personal transformations but also broader societal shifts, all within the tapestry of the urban context.

Lake's work aligns with my thesis by showcasing how the artwork creates a narrative of place between personal narratives and the urban landscape. The work's ability to evoke stories from the past and engage with the present context resonates with my exploration of intertwining personal heritage and the city's history. Lake's methodology of physically documenting historical homes and engaging in conversations with current residents demonstrates the significance of grounding artistic expression in lived experiences. By illuminating the intersections of ancestry, urban renewal, and societal changes, Lake's work provides a compelling model for how my artwork can generate meaning unique to its form, fostering a dialogue that bridges a past and present through visual storytelling.

In addition, the Art Gallery of Ontario's exhibition "Toronto: Tributes + Tributaries, 1971-1989" highlighted the significance of intimately knowing and appreciating a city's history (Toronto: Tributes + Tributaries, 1971-1989, 2016-2017). It became clear that to create meaningful artwork about Toronto, I needed a profound connection to its history that connected research with experience. Painting my grandmother's archival photographs from the 1940s and 50s allowed me to see a place for myself in the city while inviting others to share in this personal journey.

The exhibition, curated by Wanda Nanibush, showcased artworks produced in Toronto between 1971 and 1989. The exhibition illuminates the city's evolving socio-political landscape and artistic practices during that period. Featuring over 100 artworks by 65 artists and collectives, the show emphasised their experimentation with diverse artistic forms, including painting, sculpture, photography, video, installation, and performance. These artists challenged conventional boundaries in

response to the social and political context of their time, exploring themes such as performance, the body, self-portraiture, storytelling, and representation (Nanibush, 2016–2017).

The exhibition's title was inspired by the numerous buried water passages within the city (Nanibush, 2016–2017). It metaphorically symbolised the hidden and underrepresented stories and cultural elements in Toronto, signifying lesser-known narratives and influences that had been overshadowed over time. This concept served as a metaphor for the diverse and marginalised artistic and cultural aspects of Toronto's history, with the aim of highlighting their significance and bringing them to the forefront.

The artworks displayed in the exhibition were selected based on their relevance to the socio-political context of Toronto and what had been focused on by the gallery in the past. Speaking with the National Post Nanibush said, “Over time, institutions start to turn towards themselves, and their continuation, and they forget to be a flow from the community, through themselves, back to the community – that was the purpose.” (Waterfront Toronto, 2022) This was emblemized by what Carlos Osorios of the Toronto Star puts as, “Tributes + Tributaries open(ing) with a bang: a towering photo-portrait of Bear, son of First Nations artist Jeff Thomas, from 1984 against the crumbling brick of a downtown-Toronto streetscape. It sends a signal: historically, the city is where colonial reality begins, but it's also where theirs, as free indigenous people, ends.” (Whyte, 2016)

Much of the work in Tributes + Tributaries uses photography to both confront and connect. Ron Benner's *Anthro-Apologies* (And the trees grew inwards – for Manuel Scorza), 1979-1980 connects moulding Peruvian produce with a large image of a field worker's hands (Wheeler, 2016). *Art Is Political* (1975) by Carol Conde and Karl Beveridge confronts art consumption and ideation as an extension of their It's

Still Privileged Art (1975) series. General Idea's *Artist's Conception: Miss General Idea* (1971) confronts pageantry, fame, and the institution's support through a scripted beauty pageant in the AGO's Walker Court as it connects to Rebecca Belmore's *Rising to the Occasion* (1987-1991). The latter being a stylized crinoline gown with a beaver-dam bustle fashioned of dense twigs which the Anishinaabekwe artist paraded in the streets of Thunder Bay in 1987 as the royal visit of Prince Andrew and Sarah Ferguson visited a reconstructed fur-trading fort.

Formative Triptych by June Clark was a form of connection for the artist which serves as a confrontation at times. In speaking with the AGO June said, "When I abruptly moved to Toronto in 1968, I used a camera and walked the streets to search for "familiar" images in which to re-live and savour a richness I missed and that I thought I'd lost. It was both the discovery of the unfamiliar and memory of the known that captured my imagination. Of course, I could not re-create Harlem, but I found a bond of humanity that one can usually find anywhere one goes if the eyes are open." (Clark, 2016) June's description resonates with the impetus for my project and the ways in which documentation is intertwined with exploration and connection to place and people.

In the context and understanding given through this photography a different context is stepped around. In "Notions of Land" Wanda Nanibush posits, "Photography, which developed hand in hand with colonialism, has largely been responsible for the continued stereotype of the noble savage." (Nanibush, 2019) and that "Photography itself was considered part of the proof of white superiority because of its basis in technological innovation." (Nanibush, 2019) In many works this colonial underpinning is subverted through the content and direction of the lens as Nanibush mentions in the work of Robert Kautuk or in Benner's *Anthro-Apologies* and Clark's *Formative Triptych*. Alternatively, this underpinning is utilised like in

the work of Shelley Niro's series *The Shirt* (2003), Conde and Beveridge's *Art Is Political* (1975), and General Idea's *Artist's Conception: Miss General Idea* (1971).

In my work it is vital to acknowledge how colonialism functions as another landscape being documented. Neither image, past or present, represent a land free from coloniality. University of Toronto's main building, University College, is a ghostly spectre behind 'McCaul's' pond; An explosion and debris litter a straightened Waasayishkodenayosh (Waterfront Toronto, 2022). (Don) river. Garrison creek exists in name alone, we see only the dirt excavated to submerge its northern end and bridges spanning the corpse of its dry ravine. The present replaces men laying bricks with an avenue of potholes, wide spaces of lake industry with beach front condominiums.

Even the ink I make from these sites mixes species that have existed for thousands of years with invasive berries. In conversation with Nanibush Walter D. Mignolo says, "the major and vital move is to delink from the Colonial Matrix of Power (CMP), a machine that generates injustices, disavowals, silences at all levels." (Mignolo, 2018) but with such a saturated context how does one remove all connections? I hope on this my work can add to the continued dispelling of coloniality as an aspect of 'the past.' Through the process of associating these photographs I hope to compose a narrative similar to one that can be read in Tributes + Tributaries that these elements have existed for years and continue to hold place.

Later in their conversation D. Mignolo says, "The second step of delinking is relinking. Relinking with what? According to Afro-Colombian thinker, activist and artist, Adolfo Alban Achinte, to relink means to re-exist: not just in the sense of resistance but fundamental re-existence, for which there is no blueprint. It would be imperial to think that the necessary creativity once you delink from conceptual and

emotional frameworks has been already mapped. It is up to the delinkers, so to speak, to work on their own relinking through their own memories, trajectories, and forms of domination. However, I would say today that it is of the essence to relink with earth” (Mignolo, 2018). I believe that the theme of vanished natural elements in my work will provoke audience members to think of their denaturalized spaces and what they might have been. What conclusions they draw and how they draw them as Mignolo writes is up to them.

Theoretical Frameworks:

Lost River Walks and Urban Reconnection:

Lost River Walks is a joint project of the Toronto Green Community and the Toronto Field Naturalists that involve other groups like Hike Ontario. They plan walks that visit various sites of lost waterways and discuss what used to be there. Their goal is to encourage people to feel more connected to the land and water around them by educating them in an immersive way. Using the information they collected, I was able to find a number of photos in the Toronto Public Archives that have general locations or key identifying features.

Lost River Walks seeks to reestablish connections between urban dwellers and the hidden histories of waterways that once shaped Toronto’s landscape. This endeavour reflects a growing interest in reimagining urban environments as spaces not solely shaped by human intervention but intertwined with natural systems. The project aims to restore a sense of place and history by guiding participants through the city’s forgotten waterways through created maps and guided tours. They have collected a significant body of information on the waterways, and it has been the guiding through-line of my thesis work (Lost River Walks, 1995).

The Lost Rivers website is a series of urban pathways which follow water systems that no longer exist. It also holds a schedule for guided tours and also a set of general instructions for people who would like to guide tours themselves and a description of each major section of waterway or 'reach' which refers to a section of tributary or river defined by either modern streets and other landmarks or historic boundaries. Lastly, it is a store for related information about the paths and points of interest on them which are linked within the descriptions of the major waterways and reaches.

Much of the shape of modern-day Toronto is dictated by the Waasayishkodenayosh (Don) River and the water systems that supplied it. The shape of the city reflects histories which the people who walk it are largely disconnected from. To remedy this, Lost Rivers practises what they call "Watershed thinking' or recognizing the relationship between humans and their natural environment – even in the city – is ... appreciating the importance of healthy natural systems to healthy human communities." (Lost Rivers, n.d., Introduction) through the experiential learning process. They are not seeking a separation of the urban and the natural, but rather an integration and restoration. In creating and redefining paths throughout the city, they create new landscapes of experiences which directly act to unite an understanding of the urban and natural environment, both past and present.

The methodology used by the Lost Rivers best fits within what has been described as "Experiential Urbanism" by Gwendolyn Wolfgang in their paper "Minding the Gap: Using Experiential Urbanism to Connect with Environmental Processes." Wolfgang describes experiential urbanism as a solution to the disconnect between contemporary western urban societies and the natural environment. The paper connects the philosophies of "New Urbanism," "Landscape Urbanism," and "Environmental Urbanism" as the continuation or development of architectural

practices for bridging the divide. Wolfgang argues that “Experience can be the next step in this evolution.” (Wolfgang, 2007, p. 25) While Wolfgang focuses on how an environment or landscape can be structurally formed to create rich experiences with nature, the central tenet that individuals from a city, and the city as a whole, benefit from these experiences is precisely the working theory of Lost Rivers.

By compressing the past and present, I encourage viewers to re-contextualize what they think of as ‘natural.’ I hope that through my work the visual connection will bring about a visceral connection. What Lost Rivers describes as “little perturbations of the grid” (Lost Rivers, n.d., Introduction) have always been present in my work. While they describe the shape of the city the sentiment evokes for me the ways in which the layered images have minute variations. Each artwork acts as an exploration of the space that brings these perturbations to light. Gwendolyn Wolfgang argues that “Experience is a way of minding and mending the gap between cultural practices and natural processes in urban settings.” While Wolfgang’s focus is on landscape architecture, their argument holds true to the values of Lost Rivers and my work. The Lost Rivers project seems to be to be a kind of ‘hauntologic’ hydrology. Asking us to question our state of being and evoking a feeling of loss for water systems that have shaped the city. I hope my work evokes the same sensation and contemplation.

The Lost Rivers project reads as good teaching pedagogy to me. Through my experience teaching and their example, I have realised the significance in engaging the audience in action. These works will be displayed throughout the city as opposed to a central institution and the audience will be given the tools to find and experience these places themselves.

Watershed Thinking and Experiential Urbanism:

“Watershed thinking” embodies a holistic approach to understanding the intricate connection between human activities and the natural environment, even within urban landscapes. It entails recognizing the symbiotic relationship between healthy natural systems and thriving human communities. Lost River Walks serves as an embodiment of watershed thinking by uncovering hidden aspects of Toronto’s urban landscape (Lost Rivers, n.d., Philosophy section, para. 1). This approach encourages people to grasp the significance of healthy water systems and their profound impact on their daily lives. Gwendolyn Wolfgang’s exploration of “Experiential Urbanism” further complements this approach. Wolfgang asserts that fostering experiences in urban settings can bridge the gap between cultural practices and natural processes, echoing the objectives of Lost River Walks to catalyse a deeper understanding of the city’s ecological history (The Toronto Green Community & The Toronto Field Naturalists, 1995; Wolfgang, n.d.).

Photographic Materiality and Interpretation:

Alan Trachtenberg’s essay on Walker Evans’ *Message From the Interior* offers insights into how images are understood and consumed, highlighting the importance of considering photographs as tangible artefacts (Krauss & Trachtenberg, 1979). His discussion on the relationship between form and meaning resonates with my artistic practice, as I engage with historical photographs to redefine their significance in the present context. Trachtenberg’s emphasis on the structural aspects of photographs contributes to my understanding of how materiality can inform the creation of meaning within an image.

Implications and the Urban Environment:

By integrating the concepts of Watershed Thinking and Experiential Urbanism, my research addresses the pressing issue of urban disconnection from the natural environment. Urbanisation often results in a loss of historical and ecological awareness, leading to a disjointed urban experience. In this context, my project has the potential to foster environmental consciousness, community engagement, and a sense of belonging.

Overall, my research is situated at the nexus of history, art, and urban ecology, utilising the Lost River Walks project and insights from Watershed Thinking and Experiential Urbanism to re-contextualize the urban landscape. By examining the materiality of photographs and their potential to convey meaning across time, I seek to engage viewers in a dialogue that transcends the boundaries of past and present, creating a space for critical reflection and a renewed sense of place within the evolving cityscape.

Counter Mapping and Deep Mapping:

In *Manual of Counter Mapping* Gwilym Eades describes the subject as creating, “new productions of space taking different representational formats including textual, oral, performed, mental, artistic, and in short just about any conceivable adjective can be applied to the noun ‘map’.” (Eades, 2014, p. 3) Eades’ manual functions as an educational tool to assist students in learning about areas of geography through counter mapping so they focus on a type of counter mapping which challenges an ‘official’ representation; Eades, “This can be any state, military, or corporate defined representation of space in map (or map-like) form.” (Eades, 2014, p. 9) As a form of scaffolded education this direct method of counter

representation is a small but still potentially powerful and rewarding form of critical cartography.

This Is Not An Atlas: A Global Collection Of Counter-Cartographies expands the range of what 'counters' through a large collection of cartographically inspired projects. Crucially, *This Is Not An Atlas* makes the connection that, "Cartography, in this sense, refers to a practice strongly institutionalized by the state and by capital. The resulting critique uncovers how maps were complicit in the history of colonialism and nationalism and how they contributed to their stabilization and legitimization." (Orangotango, 2018, Introduction, p. 13) As a tool for documenting or planning land use and territorial expansion by the state, cartography is inexorable from colonialism. Altered and alternative map-making subverts this to various extents.

"Mapping Postcolonial: An Archive of Post/Colonial Traces, Layers and Spectres in Munich" searches directly for traces, narratives, and spectres of colonialism in Munich. These they host on their website as a mapped archive of colonialism's continued effect. Mapping Postcolonial views colonialism as a self-propagating system which "is being superseded and subverted by decolonizing processes and practices. Decolonizing means uncovering the remnants and traces of colonialism in minds and societies." (Bahl, E., Goeke, S., Pfeiffer, Z., Spillmann, P., Vögeli, M. & Zöls, P., 2018, p. 237) In this way their project is decolonization through the action of discovery and presentation.

"The Knitted Flood Wall," initiated by Martina O'Brien in collaboration with The Ballsbridge Dodder Residents Association, was a participatory art project created in response to the flooding of the River Dodder in Dublin, Ireland, in 2011. The project involved knitting a 45 feet long x 8 feet wide replica floodwall, visually mapping the river's velocity flow, to raise awareness about flood risks and advocate

for the installation of a flood defence wall. It aimed to foster community dialogue and empowerment, drawing on the history of floods in the area and the Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAMS) study of the river. The subversion here is how the map is not something done simply to or about the community and space. Instead, this was a collaborative process done with the community. The project garnered support from local authorities and politicians, contributing to the eventual installation of a new flood defence wall in 2015 (Kollektiv Oranotango+, 2018, p. 103).

The Shubenacadie River Beading Project, organised by Carrie Allison and conducted from 2018 to 2019, is a community-driven activist initiative aimed at raising awareness about the environmental threats posed by the Alton Gas project to the Shubenacadie River ecosystem in Nova Scotia. According to Allison's website "Alton Gas proposes to install two salt caverns, which could amount to as many as fifteen, that will store natural gas ... These caverns will create huge quantities of salt brine that will be disposed of by dumping it into the Shubenacadie River causing irreversible environmental damage to the river's ecosystem." (Allison, 2018-2019)

The project involved beading sections of the river in solidarity with water protectors and the Stop Alton Gas group, who have been protesting the proposed installation of salt caverns by Alton Gas. The beading project served as a symbolic honouring of the river space and aimed to foster treaty relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. This project used the language of colonial cartography, through lined mapping and the division of the river into several segments, in decolonial practice and material. The ultimate result being the sewing of communal bonds and the responsibility to that community to sell the pieces to raise funds for Stop Alton Gas' legal funds.

The concept of Deep Maps, introduced by Brett Bloom, involves creating multi-layered understandings of a place that encompass various perspectives, memories, geological features, and more. Inspired by William Least Heat-Moon's book "PrairieEarth: A Deep Map," (Kollektiv Orangotango+, 2018, p. 301) Deep Mapping aims to provide dense contexts for understanding a place's history and its current inhabitants. Bloom uses Deep Mapping as a cultural tool to shift societal behaviour away from destructive patterns, organising immersive experiences that facilitate direct engagement with a place. These experiences involve activities like Deep Listening exercises, discussions on climate breakdown, and workshops on topics like soil health and animal communication. Bloom describes that, "After many days of being constantly immersed in these kinds of experiences, a relatively strong group cohesion emerged for most people as did an alternate sense of place and time." (Kollektiv Orangotango+, 2018, p. 302) The goals for Bloom's Deep Maps are to tune individuals into the complexities of their surroundings and challenge petro-subjective positions shaped by the pervasive influence of oil but the pedagogical tool is this cohesion and experiential learning.

Selina Springett writes "Deep Mapping the River: a Palimpsest" on the function of Deep Mapping and the creation of "an intimate world between meaning of place, the embodied experience of it, and its own subjectivity." (Springett, 2019, p. 99) In particular Springett focuses on the Cooks River as a tributary that: flows through highly diverse populations, in a site of initial contact from colonial settlers and suffering from pollution and over-channelling. Deep Mapping Cooks River has involved audio recordings of various sites along the river, spoken word poetry and the creation of installations engaging with elements related to the river. Springette is building a "map" out of various non-official elements in order to, "disrupt the

hierarchical tendencies of traditional cartography in a performative act of undoing.”
(Springett, 2019, p. 99)

Through re-mapping the rivers that once existed in Toronto I am taking a step into counter mapping. Similar to the manual written by Eades, my map of the sites relies heavily on the ‘official’ being altered as opposed to providing completely alternative cartology. The rivers in my map are an amalgamation of many colonial maps, using the overlapping commonalities between dozens of maps to find a truth represented with varying levels of importance/accuracy depending on the mapmaker. As ever fluctuating elements defining a river to a particular static course is a fundamental flaw rooted in the kind of colonial thinking that leads to reinforced river walls and dredged channels. That being said the rivers course carves a ravine which largely helps to contain the river and the paths represented in my map are more closely reflecting the route of these incisions in the land.

My work will be installed close to the original sites across the city for the purpose of engaging with the experiential elements common to Deep Mapping. By placing the work throughout the city, it hopefully not only has a wider incidental audience but also encourages the viewers to engage with the still existing terrain. The gallery provides a central space for coordinating this experiential process. Housing colouring sheets as opposed to the artwork acts as a hook but also an overview. Deep Mapping as explained by Bloom informs my understanding that the experience of using the remaining ink and becoming co-creators of the work turns the audience into components of the full/true map.

SITES OF THE ARTWORKS

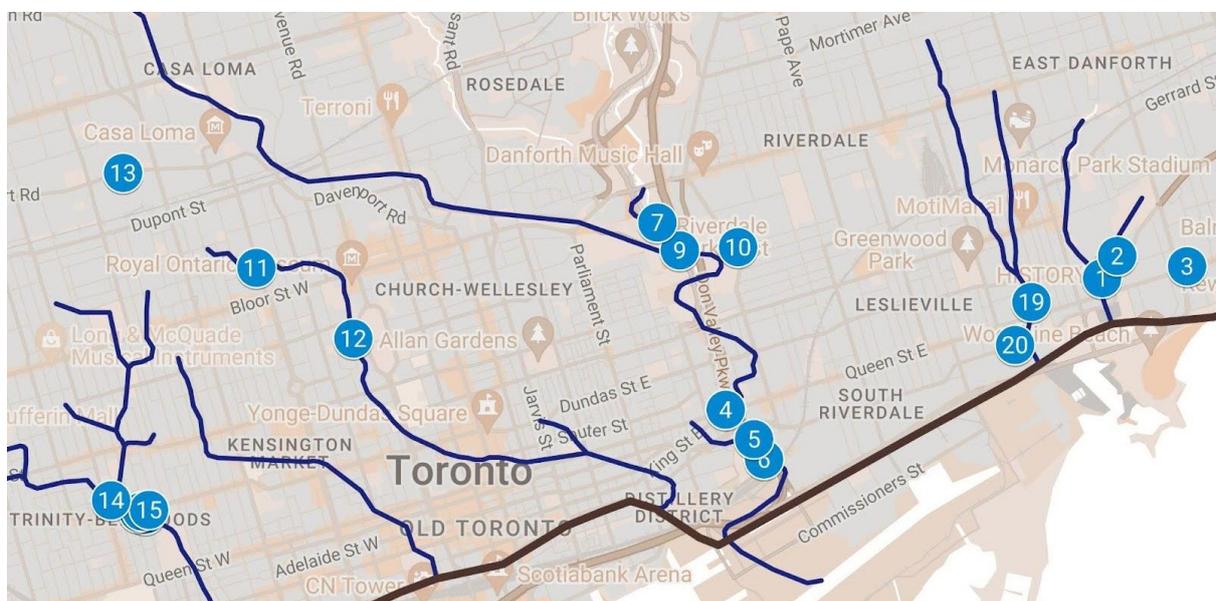
The following is a series of the 19 sites that I have explored, documented, and made artworks of. Each site is geographically clustered for the purposes of organisation.

The descriptions that go with each site are the product of research and inference.

Each description is a narrative that accompanies the art to be read and listened to in the gallery space and on site.

Figure 1. Map of Sites

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 (1920). Small's Pond looking north to Ashland Avenue | 10 (189-). Bain Avenue |
| 2 (1919). Small's pond bridge | 11 (1907). Wychwood Ravine |
| 3 (1906). Looking west from Kew Beach firehall | 12 (1868). Taddle Ravine, McCaul's Pond, e |
| 4 (1899). East abutment, Queen Street bridge over Don River | 13 (1916). Wychwood Park - general creek scene |
| 5 (1900). After the breaking up of the Don River, looking south to Grand Trunk Railway bridge showing remains of wooden bridge from Eastern Avenue | 14 (189-). Northwest Branch, Garrison Creek sewer |
| 6 (1904). Blasting ice on Don River | 15 (1912). Crawford Street Bridge |
| 7 (1912). Swimming in the Don River | 16 (1914). Construction of Crawford Street bridge |
| 8 (1920). Fishing in a creek, Bronte | 17 (1917). Crawford Street bridge |
| 9 (1899). After the breaking up of the Don River: entrance to Rosedale Creek sewer | 18 (1914). Bellwoods Park |
| | 19 (1910). People in a Rowboat, Ashbridge's Bay |
| | 20 (1909). Sunset on Ashbridge's Bay |



Small's Pond Cluster:

Figure 2. Map of Small's Pond Cluster



Figure 3. (a) Salmon, J. (1920). *Small's Pond looking north to Ashland Avenue*

[Photograph]. City of Toronto Archives. <https://gencat.eloquent-systems.com/city-of-toronto-archives-m-permalink.html?key=79372>



City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1231, f1231_it0345

Figure 3. (b) (1920). Small's Pond Looking North To Ashland Avenue, 2024, Foraged Ink Made of Bittersweet Nightshade Berries, Field Larkspur Flowers, Northern Pin Oak Leaves, Silver Maple Leaves, Spreading Cotoneaster Berries and Leaves, Tulip Tree Leaves, Yellowwood Leaves and Seed Pods on Photographic Print, 70 x 50 cm



We are looking north at Small's Pond. This area was the slow-moving confluence of two branches of Small's Creek. Houses creep up to the edge of a sunken y-shaped basin filled to perhaps 10 feet below its brim. It is late April and there are no leaves on the trees reaching their branches into the frame from the right. The sky is clear to the point that a faint marbled wave is visible from some disturbance in the printing process. We find this place with leaf strewn level ground. If we could see around the trees still to the right, we would see a children's park with a metal sculpture of a reed acting as a water element in the summer. The area was affected by the pollution of Ashbridge's Bay and disturbance of the water table elsewhere. Smalls

creek flowed into the bay and became polluted with waste from the homes to the north and industry to the sound.

Figure 4. (a) Salmon, J. (1919). *Small's pond bridge* [Photograph]. City of Toronto Archives. <https://gencat.eloquent-systems.com/city-of-toronto-archives-m-permalink.html?key=81024>



City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1231, f1231_t1909

Figure 4. (b) (1919). Small's Pond Bridge, 2024, Foraged Ink Made of Black Maple Leaves, White Ash Leaves on Photographic Print, 70 x 50 cm



We are looking north at a bridge over the east branch of Small's Creek entering Small's Pond. It is late April, and the southern end of the bridge appears damaged potentially from the winter. The boards wave, warp, and several are missing. Across the creek houses nestle around a road, backyards and fences drooping to meet the creek. We find this place a quiet road leading to low rise apartment buildings and small homes. There are signs cautioning construction and indicating an entrance for trucks onto the lot of a building. If you look carefully, you will see this lot drops down to meet the original grade of the creek, but no other traces remain.

Figure 5. (a) Rust, A. F. (1906). *Looking west from Kew Beach firehall* [Photograph].

City of Toronto Archives. <https://gencat.eloquent-systems.com/city-of-toronto-archives-m-permalink.html?key=51000>



City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 200, Series 376, File 5, Item 37

Figure 5. (b) (1906). Looking West From Kew Beach Firehall, 2024, Foraged Ink
Made of Bittersweet Nightshade Berries, Black Maple Leaves, White Ash Leaves on
Photographic Print, 70 x 50 cm



We are looking out from the newly constructed Kew Beach Fire Hall in 1906. There are a few houses dotting Queen Street's dirt path. It is difficult to tell if in the distance there is smoke, smog, or simply damage to the photo. What can just barely be made out is the reflection of the sky off Small's Pond amidst the trees. Here we can see the angle of the creek that would eventually dictate the direction of Kingston Road. Today we are staring into the grey wall of a condominium. The tower we are standing in is used only to hang the hoses and the wooden ladders appear to be original. Just visible above the condominium building is the top of the CN Tower standing on what used to be a part of the lake.

Channelled Don Cluster:

Figure 6. Map of Channelled Don Cluster

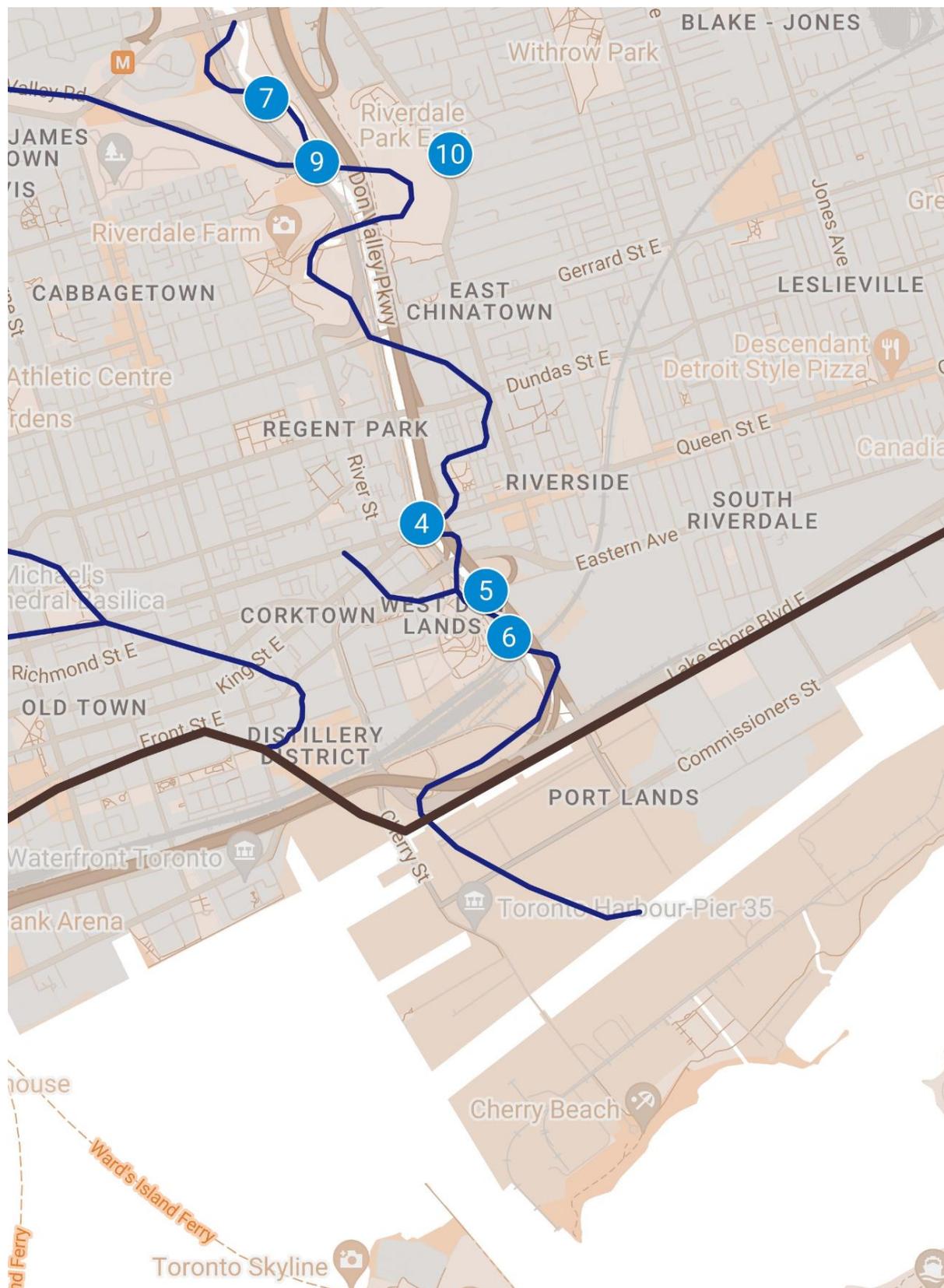


Figure 7. (a) City Engineer's Dept. (1899). *East abutment, Queen Street bridge over Don River* [Photograph]. City of Toronto Archives. <https://gencat.eloquent-systems.com/city-of-toronto-archives-m-permalink.html?key=51122>



City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 200, Series 376, File 2, Item 37

Figure 7. (b) (1899). East Abutment, Queen Street Bridge Over Don River, 2024,
Foraged Ink Made of Common Buckthorn Berries and Leaves, Motherwort Husks,
Leaves, and Stems on Photographic Print, 70 x 50 cm



We are looking at the fruits of dredging Waasayishkodenayosh the Don River for shipping. Forcing the river into a straight and deep line allowed the building of larger structures like this abutment, brick wall and the sewer emptying into the Don. The silhouette of a man on the other side of the river gives us a sense of scale for the large stones cut to create this footing for a newer steel bridge. Today we find that the Queen Street Viaduct runs far above our heads. The river is no longer used for moving goods and the banks are not kept clear. In its abandonment, fast growing woody bushes have taken over the edge obscuring our view.

Figure 8. (a) City Engineer's Dept. (1900). *After the breaking up of the Don River, looking south to Grand Trunk Railway bridge showing remains of wooden bridge from Eastern Avenue [Photograph].* City of Toronto Archives.

<https://gencat.eloquent-systems.com/city-of-toronto-archives-m-permalink.html?key=50673>



City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 200, Series 376, File 2, Item 56

Figure 8. (b) (1900). After The Breaking Up Of The Don River, Looking South To Grand Trunk Railway, 2024, Foraged Ink Made of Common Buckthorn Berries, Mugwort Leaves and Stems, Various Grasses, Wild Sumac Leaves on Photographic Print, 70 x 50 cm



We are looking at heaping piles of wood and ice floating along the Waasayishkodenayosh (Don) River. Blurred figures work through the debris presumably searching for salvageable parts. It is 1900 and the wooden bridge damaged here by the ice will not be replaced with a steel span for another 30 years. Across the river we can see factories mid construction to take advantage of the Grand Trunk Railway Bridge bringing freight across the river. In the distance the word CURRENCY has been painted onto a sloped roof. Today we see a calm river with tall electrical towers punctuating the sky. The passenger train crosses over a bridge that looks like it could be the replacement for the steel bridge from before, but it is a

separate construction altogether. We are at the east end of the south Eastern Avenue Bridge. There were two bridges built beside each other, one for a gas line and this one for pedestrians and car traffic. With the construction of the Don Valley Parkway this bridge was deemed not necessary and closed off. There are holes through the edge of the sidewalk and hunks of rust from girders littering the ground. Someone brought concrete mix at one point and built skate ramps. Several others brought spray paint and left their own less permanent marks. The city maintains the bridge as a more cost-effective method than demolition.

Figure 9. (a) Rust, A. F. (1904). *Blasting ice on Don River* [Photograph]. City of Toronto Archives. <https://gencat.eloquent-systems.com/city-of-toronto-archives-m-permalink.html?key=50843>



City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 200, Series 376, File 4, Item 1

Figure 9. (b) (1904). Blasting Ice On Don River, 2024, Foraged Ink Made of Common Buckthorn Berries, Common Reed on Photographic Print, 70 x 50 cm



We are looking at a plume of dust and ice rocketing up from the surface of the Waasayishkodenayosh (Don) River. It is 1904, 4 years since the wooden bridge at Eastern Avenue was damaged from the ice during winter. Behind the explosives is the Grand Trunk Railway Bridge with a plume of steam rising indicating a train heading west towards the city centre. Today the water is still, the sky cloudless, the train's plume invisible to the eye. This close to the water we can see pieces of plastic trash floating slowly down. We are standing on rocks from an abandoned abutment strewn along the side of the river. The graffiti on the bridge in front of us reads XRAY FORTE.

Don Ravines Cluster:

Figure 10. Map of Don Ravines Cluster

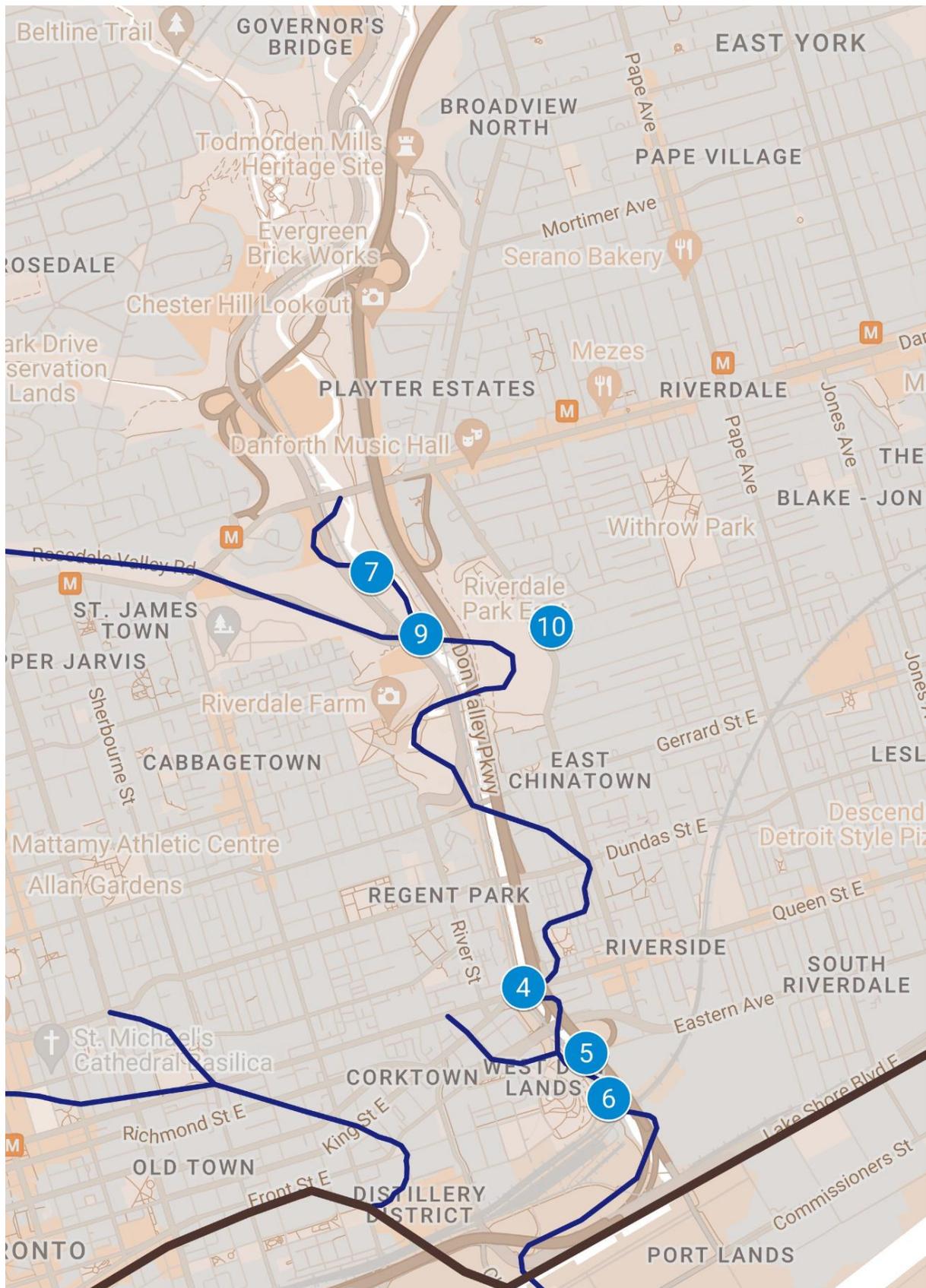
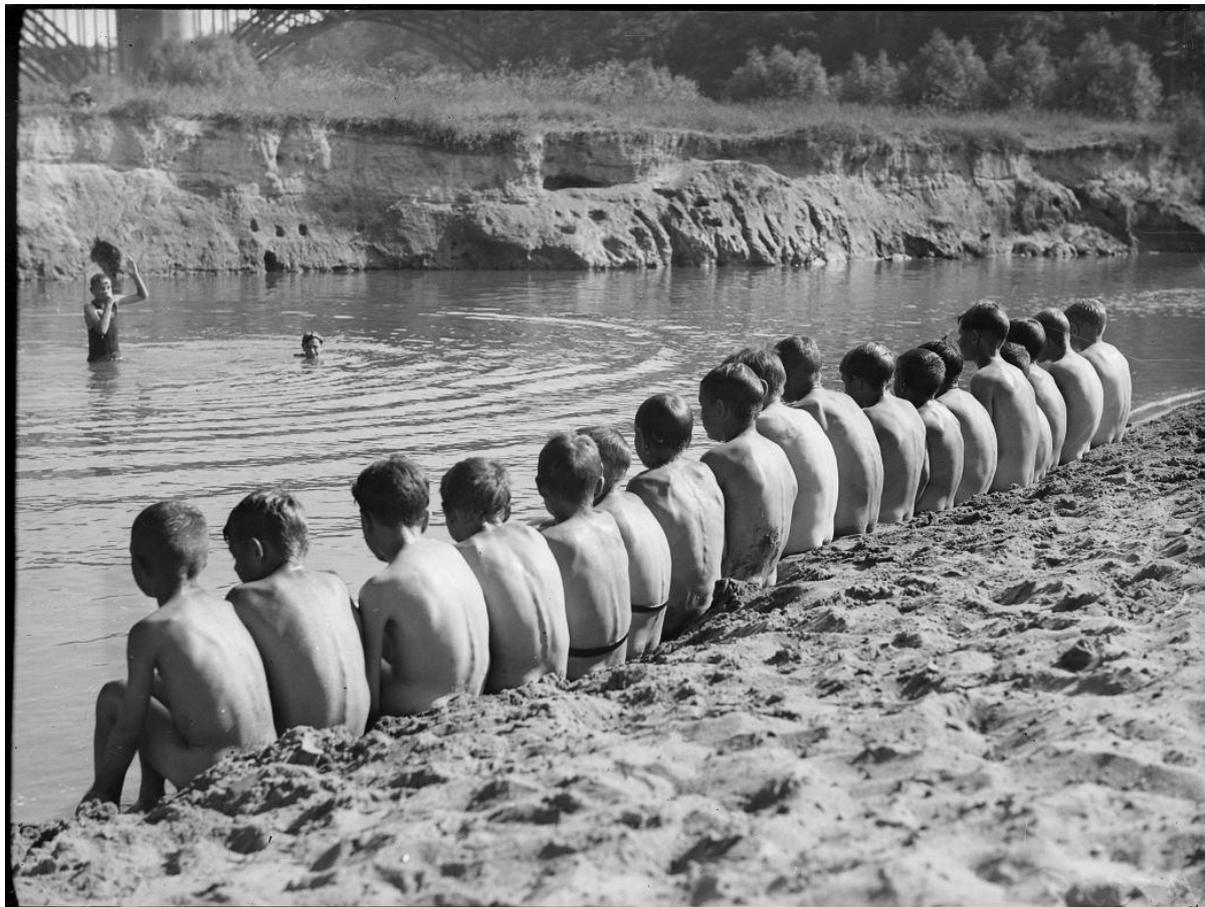


Figure 11. (a) James, W. (1912). *Swimming in the Don River* [Photograph]. City of Toronto Archives. <https://gencat.eloquent-systems.com/city-of-toronto-archives-m-permalink.html?key=551823>



City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1244, Item 7339

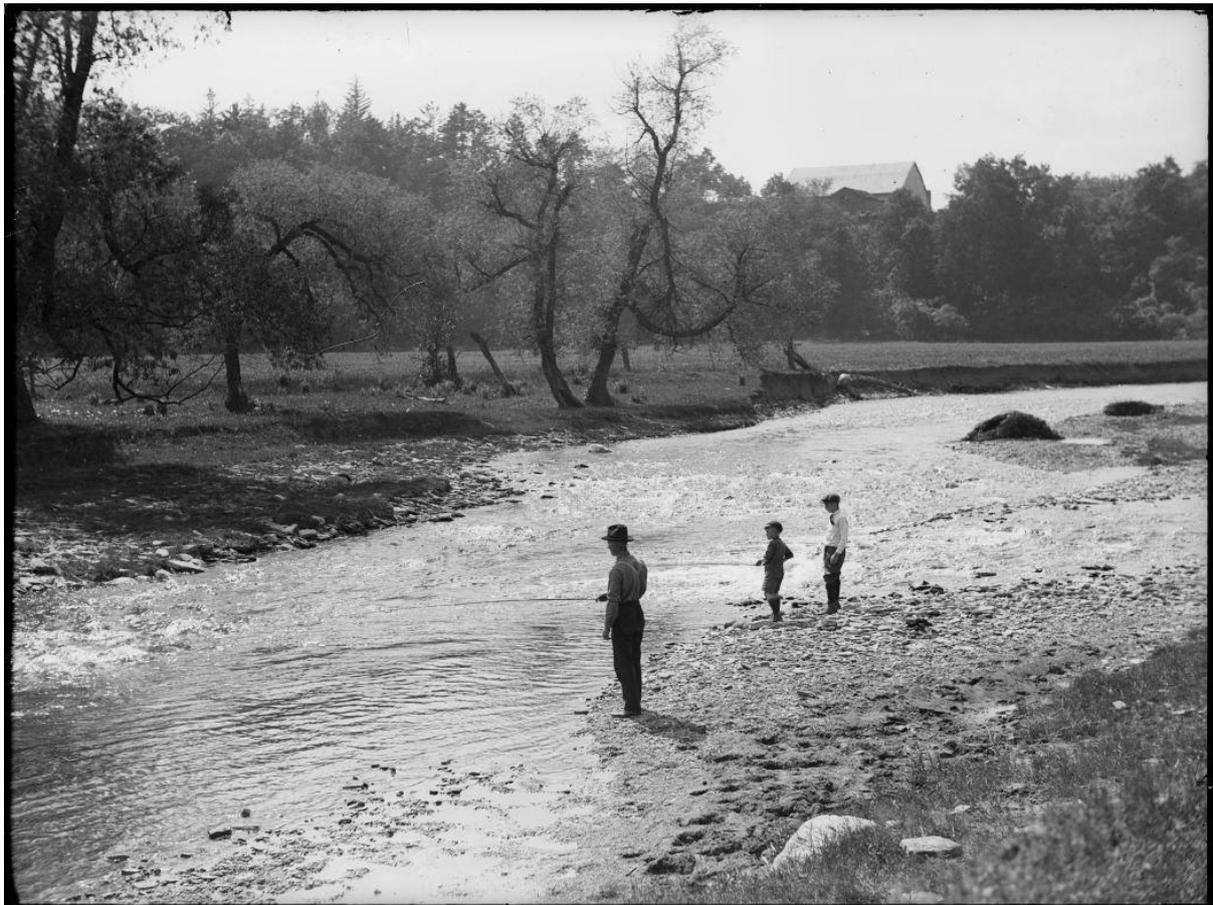
Figure 11. (b) (1912). *Swimming In The Don River, 2024*, Foraged Ink Made of Common Thistle on Photographic Print, 70 x 50 cm



We are looking northeast at children aligned at the bank of the Waasayishkodenayosh (Don) River. Two figures in the river appear as though they are demonstrating something. The north edge of the river is a soft cliff-face with holes scooped out potentially by kids making hand holds. The river is an easy standing height and the south side is a sandy beach. In the distance the feet of the Bloor Viaduct are visible. Today this is a difficult place to reach, Bayview Avenue and two sets of active rail tracks cut off access to the river from the west; the Don Valley Parkway and a rail track cut access from the east. The Lower Don trail is inaccessible due to construction. The sand has mostly washed from the shore, shrubs and fast-growing trees crowd the horizon so that the Viaduct is just barely visible behind. The 2013 *Lower Don Trail Master Plan* says,

“Not every city has a vast landscape of forests, fields, and marshes within walking distance of its downtown core. The Lower Don Valley is one of Toronto’s largest, most centrally located—but perhaps also most underappreciated—urban open spaces.” (City of Toronto, 2023, p. 3)

Figure 12. James, W. (1920). *Fishing in a creek, Bronte* [Photograph]. City of Toronto Archives. <https://gencat.eloquent-systems.com/city-of-toronto-archives-m-permalink.html?key=8831>



City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1244, Item 9165

We are looking at a man and two boys fishing on the bank of a river. The river is a part of a wide flat ravine and appears to be somewhat meandering and shallow. Across the river is a field that leads to a ridgeline of trees. Atop the treeline is a large building, potentially a barn. This photo is a part of the William James Family Fonds

collection with the Toronto Archives. In those archives it is labelled as 'Bronte' referring to the Bronte Creek located between Oakville and Burlington. Also, in those archives it is dated as 1920 but the archives note that there are some discrepancies. The majority of photos in this collection come from William James Sr (1866-1948) but include photos taken by William James, Jr., and Norman James (1907-1992). The nearly 5,000 negatives and prints were acquired by the archives in 1976. William James Sr was known for taking photos in and around the Bloor Viaduct among many other central Toronto sites (City of Toronto Archives, n.d.-c). This combined with the City of Toronto citing this photo as "Fishing in the Don, circa 1908" in a 2012 publication of *Fishes of Toronto* has led us here (Atwood & Gibson, 2012, p. 5).

Today we are in Riverdale Park East on the track. We sit in a wide flat ravine shaped by the meandering of the Waasayishkodenayosh (Don) River facing south. Maps place the river winding this far over which lends credence to the placement. Atop the hill to the south is Bridgepoint Active Healthcare in what was once the Don Jail built in 1864. The river was straightened in the 1880s and it would not be until 1906 that the James family made Toronto its home. This is almost certainly not the location this photo was taken and it appears to be set outside the city bounds. Bronte creek is an interesting and extensive site so while it will not be included in this body of work it does provide an opportunity to extend the research further at a future date.

Figure 13. (a) Rust, A.F. (1899). *After the breaking up of the Don River: entrance to Rosedale Creek sewer* [Photograph]. City of Toronto Archives.

<https://gencat.eloquent-systems.com/city-of-toronto-archives-m-permalink.html?key=50634>



City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 200, Series 376, File 2, Item 19

Figure 13. (b) (1899). After The Breaking Up Of The Don River: Entrance To Rosedale Creek Sewer, 2024, Foraged Ink Made of Bittersweet Nightshade Berries, Zigzag Goldenrod Flowers and Leaves on Photographic Print, 70 x 50 cm



We are looking at the west bank of the Waasayishkodenayosh (Don) River after the ice covering it has been shattered. Explosives were used to open up the recently dredged shipping lane. A man poses on a huge piece of ice sitting on a portion of the riverbank reinforced against taking a more natural shape. Below is the entrance to the sewer that replaced Rosedale valley's creek. Above we can see an unobstructed view of the Toronto Necropolis spilling down the hill. Today we are standing on a large stone, part of the abutment for a small railway bridge over the river. This part of track is unused by trains but shows wear from many feet and the paint and messages from many minds.

Figure 14. (a) City Engineer's Dept. (189-). *Bain Avenue* [Photograph]. City of Toronto Archives. <https://gencat.eloquent-systems.com/city-of-toronto-archives-m-permalink.html?key=50969>



City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 200, Series 376, File 5, Item 7

Figure 14. (b) (189-). Bain Avenue, 2024, Foraged Ink Made of Common Juniper Berries and Leaves, Siberian Elm Leaves, Silver Maple Leaves, Spreading Cotoneaster Berries and Leaves, White Elm Leaves, White Poplar Leaves on Photographic Print, 70 x 50 cm



We are looking west at workers on Bain Avenue finishing the surface of the road. Fumes from the bitumen being spread cloud out the details in the background and leave us focusing on the workers, some of whom pose staring at the camera. We know where we are by the grade of hill on the right side of the frame and the direction of the workers' shadows. Today we can see that just past where they work is the top of the east ridge of the Don Valley. Improvements in road construction have not kept up with the kinds of use our pathways undergo and the road is in a state of repair with a new speed bump where they worked more than 120 years earlier.

Taddle Creek Cluster:

Figure 15. Map of Taddle Creek Cluster

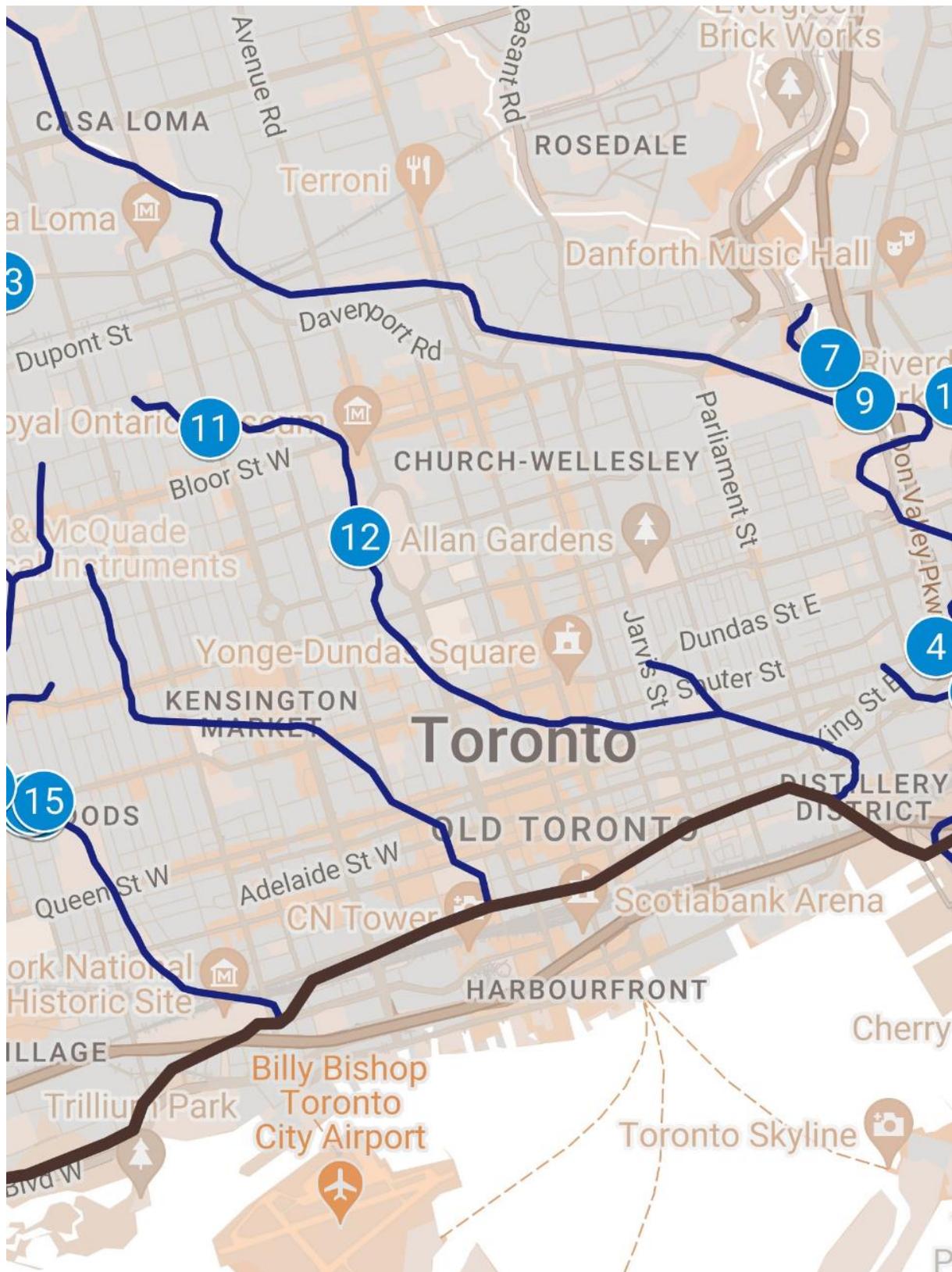


Figure 16. (a) James, W. (1907). *Wychwood Ravine* [Photograph]. City of Toronto Archives. <https://gencat.eloquent-systems.com/city-of-toronto-archives-m-permalink.html?key=87873>



City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1244, Item 12468

Figure 16. (b) (1907). Wychwood Ravine, 2024, Foraged Ink Made of White Oak Leaves, Yew Berries and Leaves on Photographic Print, 70 x 50 cm



We are looking east at a man and a boy with a dog gazing at a drying creek bed in Wychwood Ravine. The area shares characteristics with modern day Smalls Creek Ravine which is a deciduous swamp and would count it among the 85% of wetland that has been lost in the Toronto area. The man stands with his hands on his hips staring at the water. It is not clear if he is passing judgement on a pierced lack of utility in this intermittent creek, considering how best to step across to the path on the other bank, or just looking at something in the reflection. Today we are barred by a ROAD CLOSED sign as we stand on Lowther Avenue. If we continue east, we will come across Taddle Creek playground with Ilan Sandler's *Vessel*, a fountain made in the shape of a pitcher from 4 kilometres of steel rod, the artist's approximate length

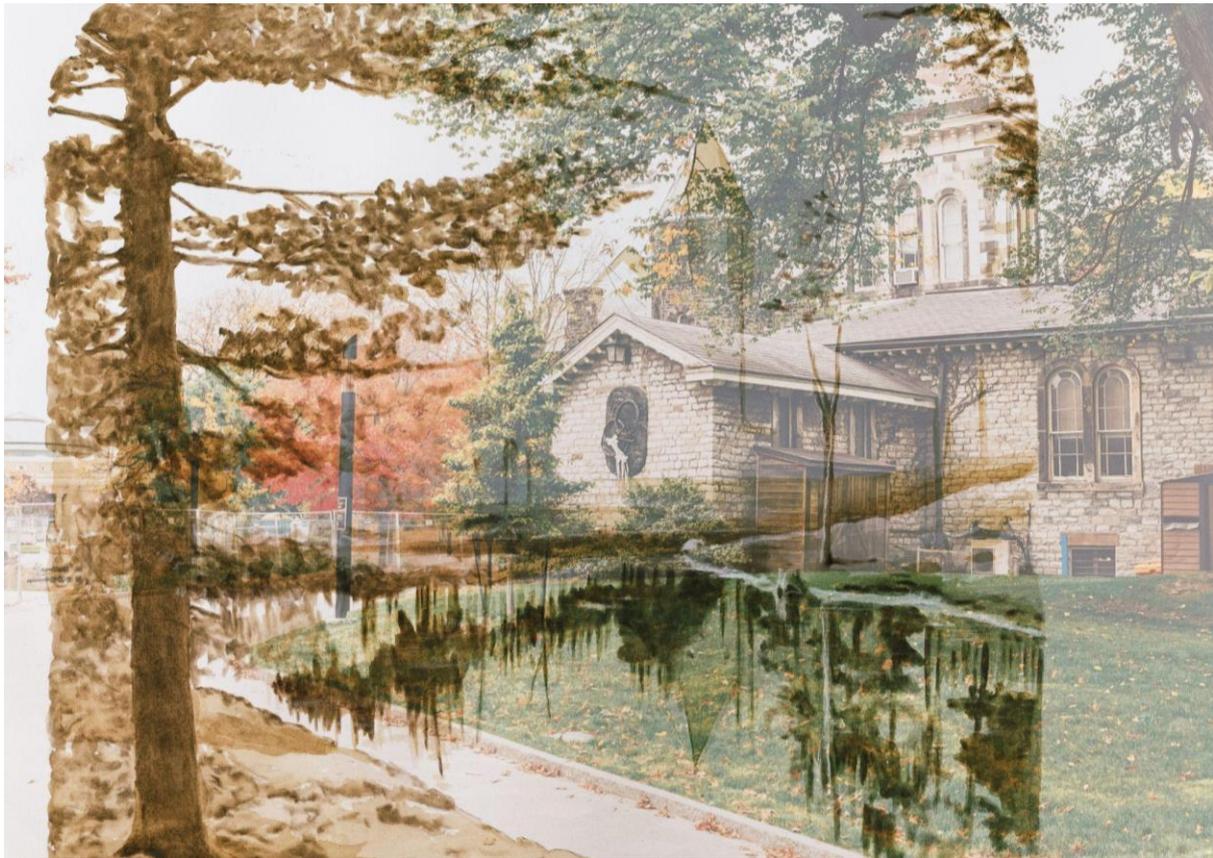
of Taddle Creek. That spot marks the most likely place the creek would have bent southward towards the lake.

Figure 17. (a) Notman, W. (1868). *Taddle Ravine, McCaul's Pond, e* [Photograph].

City of Toronto Archives. <https://digitalarchive.tpl.ca/objects/337484/taddle-ravine-mccauls-pond-e>



Figure 17. (b) (1868). Taddle Ravine, McCaul's Pond, E, 2024, Foraged Ink Made of Dogwood Berries and Leaves, Sugar Maple Leaves on Photographic Print, 70 x 50 cm



We are looking west out on what was once called McCaul's Pond. A quiet oasis within the University of Toronto campus. The Main building of the University appears ghost-like in the distance just past the trees that ring the pond. McCaul's Pond was created by damming up the flow of Taddle Creek and as more residential areas grew north of the University the pond began to be a collecting ground for waste. Due to the smell and health concerns, the pond was drained, and the creek was turned into a sewer line in 1884. Today we stare at the Student Union building with a curious domed tower. This building was the Toronto Magnetic and Meteorological Observatory until it was no longer practical. In 1907 the building was taken apart and reconstructed on top of McCaul's Pond. If we were to head north and

follow the Philosopher's Walk, we would be walking the old creek bed in the still present Taddle Ravine.

Garrison Creek Cluster:

Figure 18. Map of Garrison Creek Cluster

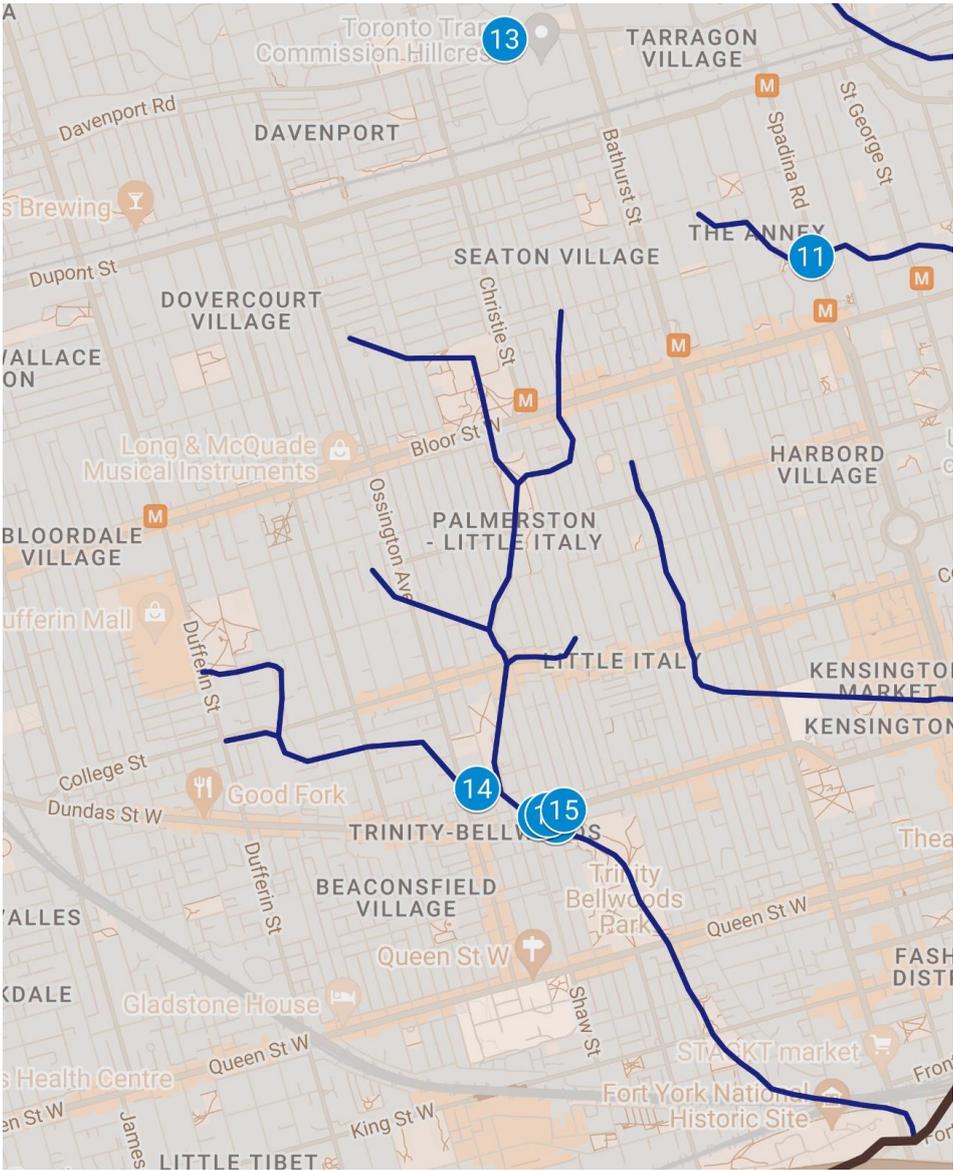


Figure 19. (a) Boyd Sr, J. (1916). *Wychwood Park - general creek scene*

[Photograph]. City of Toronto Archives. <https://gencat.eloquent-systems.com/city-of-toronto-archives-m-permalink.html?key=229665>



City of Toronto Archives, Series 393 f1548_s0393_it13270

Figure 19. (b) (1916). Wychwood Park - General Creek Scene, 2024, Foraged Ink Made of American Beech Leaves, Amur Maple Leaves, Red Currant Berries and Leaves on Photographic Print, 70 x 50 cm



We are looking north at a section of Taddle Creek reaching into Wychwood Park. This residential enclave, located near the intersection of Bathurst Street and St. Clair Avenue, was established in the late 19th century by landscape architect and painter Marmaduke Matthews. He envisioned a neighbourhood that would foster creativity and provide a peaceful sanctuary for artists seeking inspiration. This community centred on a natural spring which fed Taddle Creek and potentially Garrison Creek. Today we are on a median in the middle of Dupont Road staring at a fence. This marks the southern boundary of one Wychwood property, one of the most expensive real estate areas in the city. By creating an exclusive site of only 60 lots, preserved through the heritage site designation, Wychwood park fed into capitalist

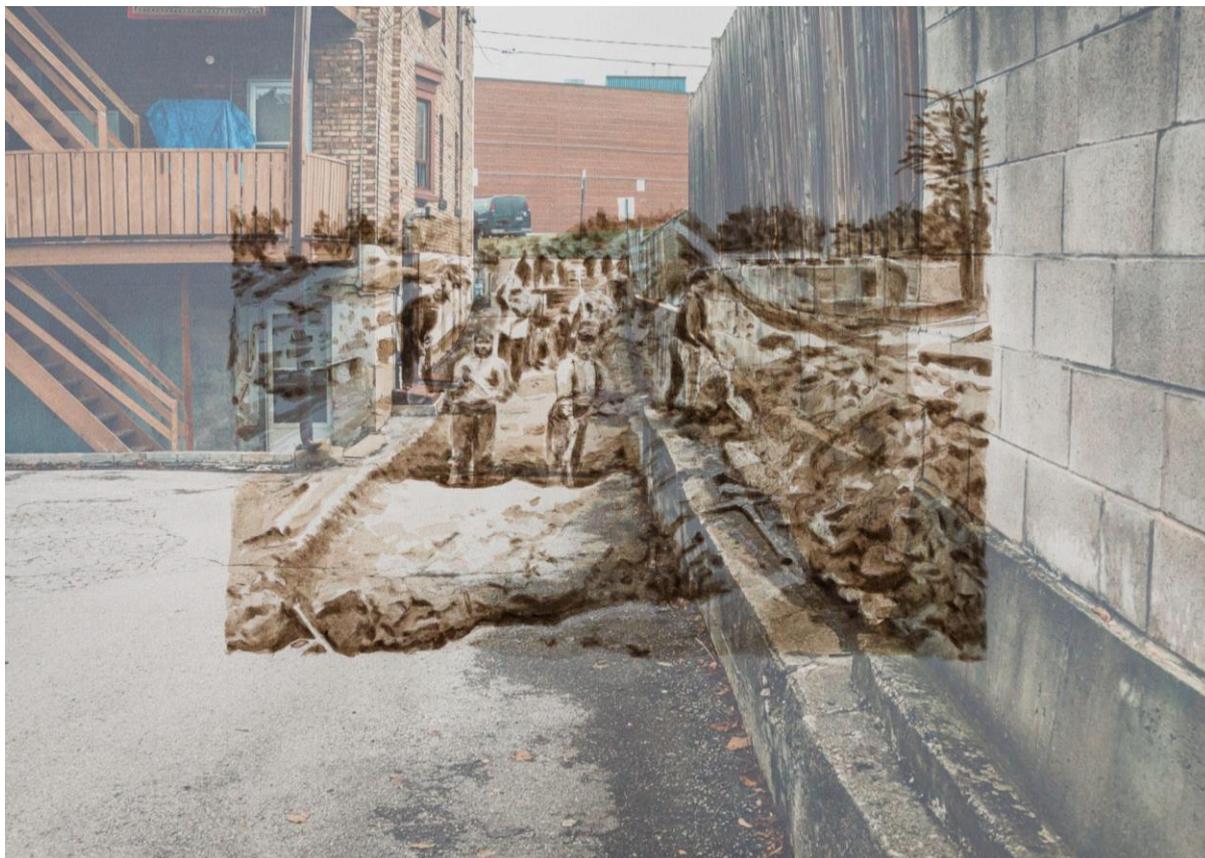
mechanisms of supply and demand. The neighbourhood is gated at this end and the spring has been dammed which allows for a natural skating rink in the winter and two swans a place in the summer. At the time of writing 17 Wychwood Park is for sale with an asking price of \$7,950,000.00.

Figure 20. (a) City Engineer's Dept. (189-). *Northwest Branch, Garrison Creek sewer* [Photograph]. City of Toronto Archives. <https://gencat.eloquent-systems.com/city-of-toronto-archives-m-permalink.html?key=49241>



City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 200, Series 376, File 2, Item 106

Figure 20. (b) (189-). Northwest Branch, Garrison Creek Sewer, 2024, Foraged Ink
Made of Norway Spruce Needles, Northern White-Cedar Leaves, Red Maple Flowers,
White Oak Leaves on Photographic Print, 70 x 50 cm



We are looking north at a team of workers excavating for a sewer. Much of Toronto's underground construction follows the same basic principles of cut and cover put into place here. These men work in a mobile factory line, those at the front using picks to break hard soil and rock while the ones further back shovel the debris. Even further back bricks and boards are being laid while the men the furthest back stand in long coats and tall hats watching. We know where we are based on the proximity to a road and grade change. In addition, this extension of the sewerification to Garrison Creek is mapped and archived to within a few hundred metres. Today we stand in a car park behind a low-rise apartment building. Ahead of

us lies a school and its grounds that fill the space between the trees. Below us, from the maintenance hole cover, is the sound of running water.

Figure 21. (a) Salmon, J. (1912). *Crawford Street Bridge* [Photograph]. City of Toronto Archives. <https://gencat.eloquent-systems.com/city-of-toronto-archives-m-permalink.html?key=79597>



City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1231, f1231_it0559

Figure 21. (b) (1912). Crawford Street Bridge, 2024, Foraged Ink Made of Norway Spruce Needles, Northern White-Cedar Leaves, Red Maple Flowers, White Oak Leaves on Photographic Print, 70 x 50 cm



We are looking southwest at the original Crawford Street Bridge. This wooden bridge ‘fords’ the ravine carved by Garrison creek, so named because its mouth formed the location for Fort York to be built. Wear-marks on the grass show signs of where students from Trinity College might have gone for leisure though by this time the college was already in the process of transferring to a new downtown location. Today we watch a car drive across what is clearly not a bridge flanked by city and personal bikes on either side. We are standing on the south side of Dundas Street between three 12 feet tall pipes designed to discreetly release odours from the Mid-Toronto Interceptor Sewer (Blackett, 2010).

Figure 22. (a) James, W. (1914). *Construction of Crawford Street bridge*

[Photograph]. City of Toronto Archives. <https://gencat.eloquent-systems.com/city-of-toronto-archives-m-permalink.html?key=87600>



City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1244, Item 7095

Figure 22. (b) (1914). Construction Of Crawford Street Bridge, 2024, Foraged Ink
Made of Norway Spruce Needles, Northern White-Cedar Leaves, Red Maple Flowers,
White Oak Leaves on Photographic Print, 70 x 50 cm



We are looking at the Crawford Street Bridge undergoing a transition from timber construction to steel and concrete. Steel reinforcement beams have been laid in arches with wooden forms supporting underneath to act as moulds for the eventual concrete pour. From this perspective we can see along the ravine and watch fog flow down over the edge to pool in the basin. Today we look straight into a sign which reads "RIDE TO WORK RIDE TO TRANSIT" a part of the city bike charging and locking station. The ground is notably level as opposed to a deep wide ravine. The dirt here was excavated in the construction of the Bloor subway line in the 1960s. At the other end of this part of the park hidden just behind the tree there is a plaque

which reads “Crawford Street passes through Trinity Bellwoods Park over a graceful triple-span concrete bridge which still exists but is now buried beneath the street.”

Figure 23. (a) Salmon, J. (1917). *Crawford Street bridge* [Photograph]. City of Toronto Archives. <https://gencat.eloquent-systems.com/city-of-toronto-archives-m-permalink.html?key=80685>



City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1231, f1231_jt1576

Figure 23. (b) (1917). Crawford Street Bridge, 2024, Foraged Ink Made of Norway Spruce Needles, Northern White-Cedar Leaves, Red Maple Flowers, White Oak Leaves on Photographic Print, 70 x 50 cm



We look over a manicured flower bed out onto the finished Crawford Street Bridge. If it evokes a miniature Bloor Viaduct that is no mistake, both were projects of Roland Caldwell Harris the longtime public works commissioner for the city. This bridge began construction just 2 years after Harris was hired. The creek that made this ravine would continue to flow for another 3 years before being entirely diverted into the underground sewer system. Today thick trees evenly fill out the space occasionally used as a farmers' market. If the tree coverage were any sparser, we would look directly towards the CN Tower.

Figure 24. (a) Parks Dept. (1914). *Bellwoods Park* [Photograph]. City of Toronto Archives. <https://gencat.eloquent-systems.com/city-of-toronto-archives-m-permalink.html?key=89720>



City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 200, Series 372, Subseries 52, Item 313

Figure 24. (b) (1914). Bellwoods Park, 2024, Foraged Ink Made of Norway Spruce Needles, Northern White-Cedar Leaves, Red Maple Flowers, White Oak Leaves on Photographic Print, 70 x 50 cm



We are looking west out over the edge of the Crawford Street bridge as people toboggan down the ravines' snowy slopes. The inscription reads “*FEB 14 1914 Bellwoods Park*” which makes it Valentine’s Day. The park got the name “Bellwoods” potentially from its relationship to Alderman William Bell elected to St. Stephen’s Ward in 1888 (City of Toronto Archives, n.d.-b). At the time the Toronto colony was divided into wards named for Christian saints. St. Stephen’s ward (the ‘protomartyr’ of Christianity) was bounded by Queen Street, Bathurst, Dufferin, and Bloor (City of Toronto Archives, n.d.-a). Between 1880 and 1889 the road along the east side of the park changed names from Strachan to Bellwoods (Toronto Public Library, Library

and Archives Canada, and City of Toronto Archives, n.d.). Today we will not see kids sliding down the hill though far to the north a similar sight can be held in Christie Pits Park which happens to be a ravine caused by the same Garrison Creek. We will still see couples holding hands.

Ashbridge's Bay Cluster:

Figure 25. Map of Ashbridge's Bay Cluster

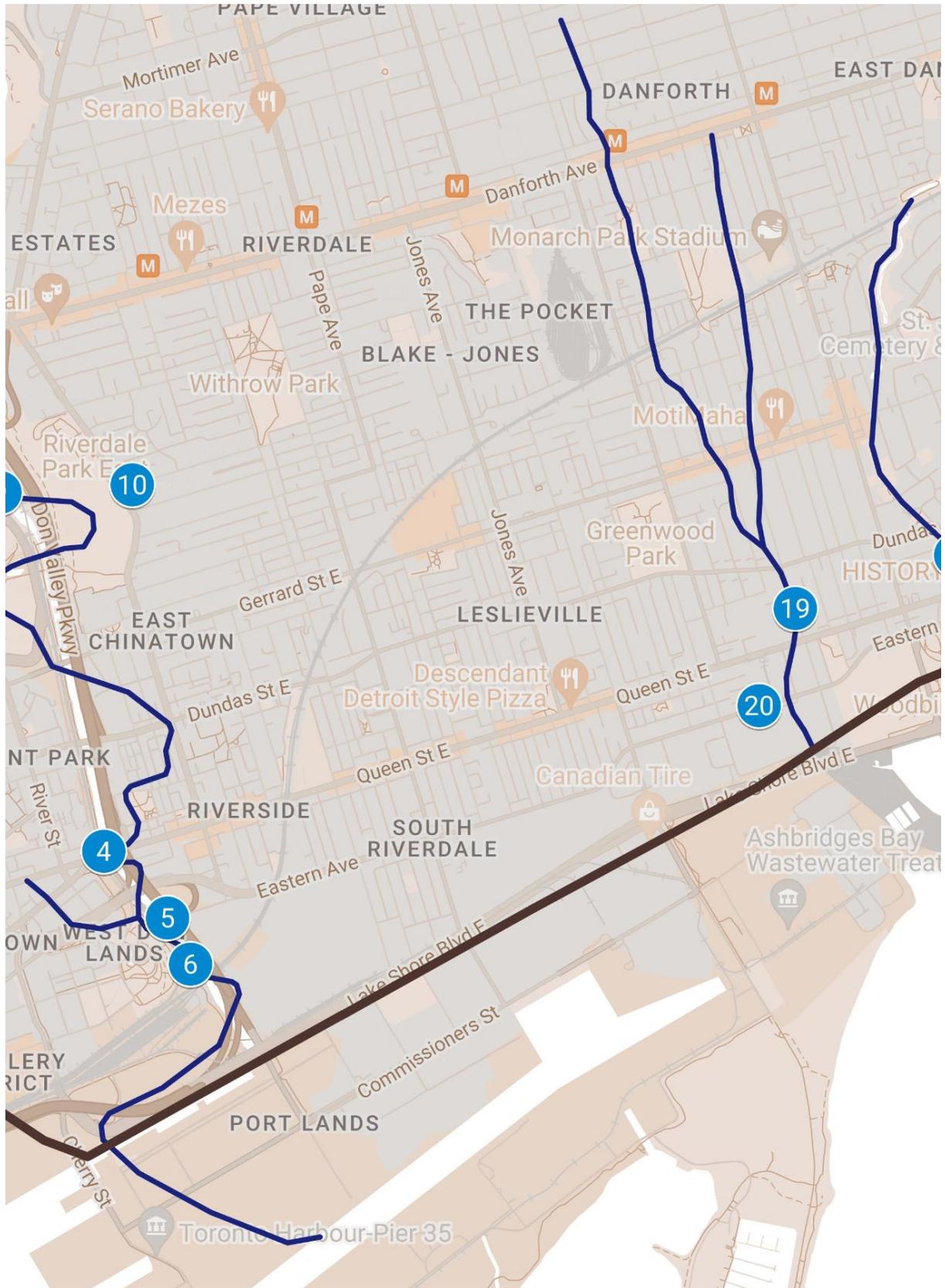


Figure 26. (a) James, W. (1910). *People in a Rowboat, Ashbridge's Bay*

[Photograph]. City of Toronto Archives. <https://gencat.eloquent-systems.com/city-of-toronto-archives-m-permalink.html?key=49076>



City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1244, Item 181A

Figure 26. (b) People in a Rowboat, Ashbridge's Bay, 1910, 2023, Charcoal and Gouache on Photographic Print, 36 x 24 in.



This image is of the area once called Ashbridge's Bay, Creek, and Marsh. This wetland system was one of the largest in Eastern Canada, over five square kilometres. It was poisoned, then filled for industry, and the creek photographed in 1910 was gone by 1913.

Figure 27. (a) James, W. (1909). *Sunset on Ashbridge's Bay* [Photograph]. City of Toronto Archives. <https://gencat.eloquent-systems.com/city-of-toronto-archives-m-permalink.html?key=53782>



City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1244, Item 248

Figure 27. (b) Sunset on Ashbridge's Bay, 1909, 2023, Charcoal and Gouache on Photographic Print, 36 x 24 in.



This is one of many waterways in Toronto that have been altered, removed, or sunken beneath our feet. Even still, the filled riverbed forms roads students take to school today and Eastern Avenue by TTC's Russell Yard hosts flood warning signs where trout once spawned and waterfowl nested.

APPROACH/METHODOLOGY

Research:

Images have been sourced from diverse avenues, including online encounters and the Toronto Archives. The archives, organised into various 'fonds,' particularly those from the city engineer's office, have provided a wealth of historical images that inspire and inform the creative process.

Google Lens has proved invaluable in uncovering the multi-layered narratives surrounding each image. Exploration of lost waterways and specific site research enriches the context and often leads to the discovery of further images. Google Maps, along with Street View and shared Photospheres, assist in pinpointing exact locations.

Exploration of Materiality:

A 35mm lens captures wider contextual views without much noticeable distortion. This allows for the archival photo to be the subject within the new without the need to crop. Multiple on-site photographs are compared in Photoshop with the original images to choose the image best suited as a ground. Images are colour graded and toned to work with the substrate they are printed on.

My work in the past has used gouache and charcoal to depict a monochromatic impression of the archival photo. These materials leave a permanent and lightfast image, the charcoal semi-transparently growing shadows and the gouache opaquely covering areas and creating simplicity. My current work instead is created using an ink made from vinegar and water steeped in a slurry of crushed berries, leaves, and sticks collected at each site. It is neither permanent nor lightfast. In fact, the ink is remarkably transparent and needs to be built up with successive layers. The resulting image is less a combining of pictures and more a haunting,

looking almost like a trick of the light if it were not persisting on the page. An unintentional benefit to this process is how the translucency interacts with the printed image. Despite the ink being added on top of the picture it can appear in places to be showing through the image.

In examining Diana Taylor's excerpt from chapter one of "Acts of Transfer, The Archive and the Repertoire," my understanding of my own artwork emerged as an exploration of the transfer of memory across temporal and material boundaries. Much like Taylor's emphasis on the embodied nature of memory transfer, my work engages in a tangible and sensory act of transference. The use of ink derived from organic materials collected at each of the sites introduces a literal transfer of the environment into the artwork. This act of gathering, preparing, and applying the ink becomes a ritualistic transfer of memory, connecting a past to the present through the materiality of the medium.

Moreover, the transparent and layered quality of the ink, requiring successive applications, mirrors the iterative nature of memory transfer. It speaks to the incremental build-up of recollections and the fragility of attempting to capture 'the' past. The ephemeral nature of the ink aligns with Taylor's notion that memory is not a static entity but a process, subject to change and decay, as she writes that "by encapsulating both the setup and the action/ behaviours, are formulaic structures that predispose certain outcomes and yet allow for reversal, parody, and change. The frame is basically fixed and, as such, repeatable and transferable." (Taylor, p. 31) In essence, my artwork physically enacts the transfer of memory, embracing the materiality of the process, and acknowledging the inherent complexities in preserving and conveying the essence of personal and collective histories. By reflecting on the ephemeral nature of artefacts and how they can evoke a sense of

nostalgia or loss, the ink questions the permanence we associate with archival materials.

The ink, created from the land, becomes not just a visual representation but a tactile and sensory experience of memory. This conceptual framework becomes particularly pertinent in understanding the dynamic and performative nature of the artwork. The translucent nature of the ink, allowing glimpses of the present through layers of the past, becomes a metaphor for the fading boundaries between lived experiences, a visual representation of the gradual dissolution of a coherent narrative. The act of painting becomes an act of unveiling, peeling back the layers of forgetfulness, and inviting a visual dialogue between then and now. It is an exploration of how memories, even when seemingly lost, continue to shape our present.

Michel Foucault's, "The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language," which delves into the strata of discourses and practices akin to an excavation of historical layers, aligns with how my artistic process similarly involves the exploration of diverse materials and techniques to portray a singular location, resulting in a multi-layered work. The materiality of my work, notably the ink derived from berries and twigs, serves as a symbolic and literal excavation of the site. Foucault's emphasis on the evolution of discursive formations over time finds resonance in how my process has changed. The shift from photography of painting in situ, to gouache and charcoal on the photo, to the homemade ink process reflects what Foucault writes about the exploration of the dynamic nature of discourses.

The journey of visiting these sites, making ink for the first time, and layering past and present is a ritual which understands the reciprocal relationship between memory and place, and transforms ordinary locations into sites of profound significance. Through this process, the artwork aims to be more than a visual

representation; it aspires to be a conduit for shared experiences, inviting viewers to ponder the tapestry woven by memory. In the fluid interplay of past and present, the ink painting stands as both witness and storyteller, bridging generational gaps and connecting us to the ever-evolving narrative of our collective memories.

Figure 28. Foraging



Figure 29. The Inks



Community Engagement:

Incorporating the use of the inks I have created from the land into the visitor experience adds an interactive and participatory dimension to my thesis exhibition. In the gallery space, visitors will engage with the artwork on an interactive level through the use of the inks. Set up as colouring stations, designated areas within the gallery will feature 22x30 inch colouring sheets of each artwork, accompanied by the bottles of ink and brushes for visitors to utilise. This hands-on approach invites visitors to become active participants in this intervention, effectively transforming them into co-creators of the artwork. Through the act of applying ink derived from the land onto the colouring sheets, visitors will experience a sense of connection with the geological and generational timescales embedded within the artwork.

By collapsing the boundaries between different times, the exhibition offers a unique opportunity for visitors to traverse time and space, fostering a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of each site's historical narrative. The use of inks sourced from the land serves to reintroduce the natural environment into the timescale, reinforcing the inherent relationship between the land, memory, and human experience.

In addition to the interactive colouring stations, the exhibition provides educational takeaway maps for visitors to navigate and locate all the artworks across the city. These maps serve as both a guide to the exhibition and a means for visitors to explore the sites depicted in the artwork firsthand. By including information about each site's historical significance and relevance to the artistic process, the maps further enrich the visitor's understanding of the exhibition's themes and promote a deeper engagement with the city's history and landscape.

Moreover, the exhibition extends beyond the confines of the gallery space through a decentralised approach to art hosting. The original artworks will be displayed at various locations near the sites they depict, including local cafes, shops, and other community spaces. This strategic placement integrates the artwork into the fabric of everyday life within the city, encouraging broader public engagement and accessibility. By facilitating meaningful dialogue and interaction both within the gallery space and out in the community, the exhibition creates a dynamic and inclusive visitor experience that extends beyond traditional exhibition settings.

Figure 30. Colouring Sheet of (1914). Construction Of Crawford Street Bridge, 2024



Figure 31. Visitor Interaction at Ignite Gallery



Figure 32. Exhibition at Ignite Gallery

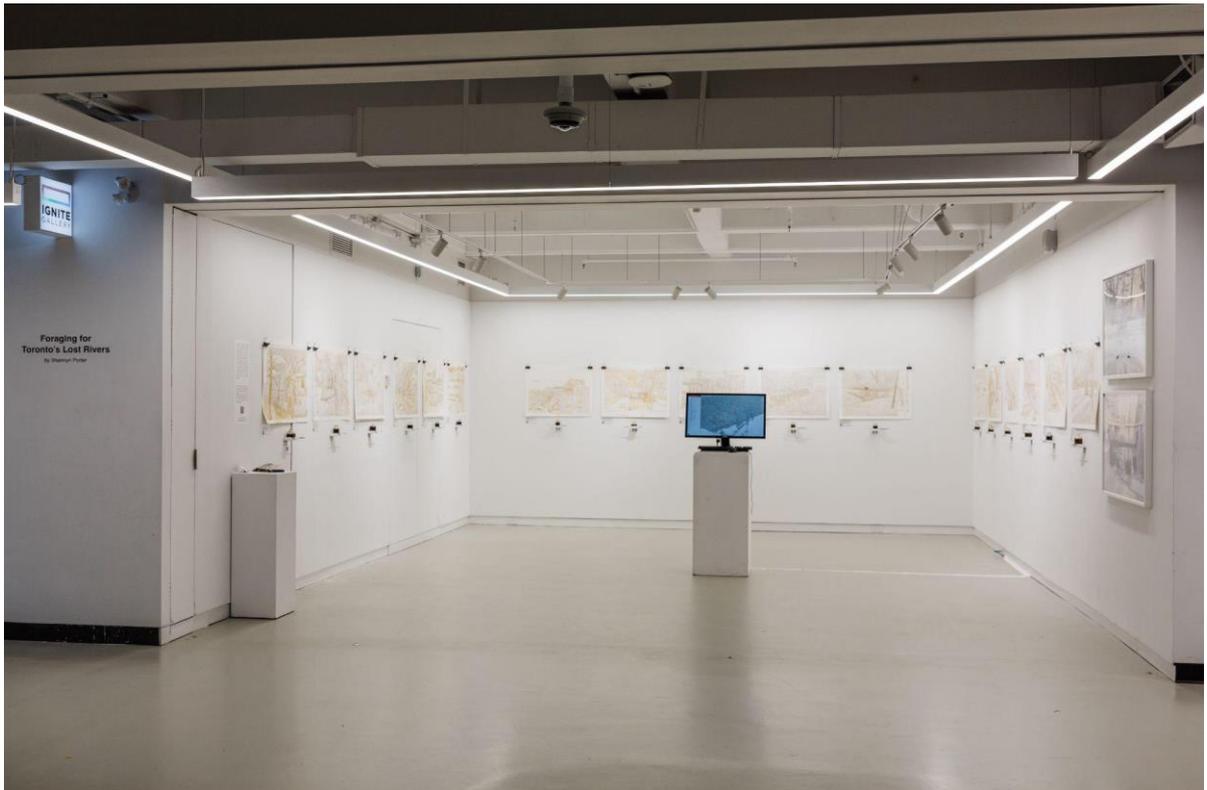


Figure 33. Close-Up of Colouring Sheet and Ink



Figure 34. Dripping Ink



Figure 35. [Foraging for Toronto's Lost Rivers Takeaway Map](#)

Over the past two years, I have delved into the Lost River Walks project, and related images and documents in the Toronto Archives. Through this investigation, my thesis explores the intersections of history, environmental awareness, and artistic representation, aiming to revitalise a sense of connection with Toronto's lost waterways and their impact on the city's evolution. By using ink sourced directly from the land, I have layered drawings onto photographs to create a multidimensional exploration of memory, history, and place that works to re-contextualize our understanding of past and present.

ART MAP

Foraging for Toronto's Lost Rivers
April 16 - 22, 2024, 10am - 5pm



Scan for interactive map



1	(189-). Northwest Branch, Garrison Creek sewer Youthful Vengeance - Cafe & Gallery 1110 Dundas St W	7	(1912). Swimming in the Don River Si Espresso & Pasticceria Bar 748 Broadview Avenue, Ground Floor
1	(1914). Bellwoods Park Youthful Vengeance - Cafe & Gallery 1110 Dundas St W	8	(189-). Bain Avenue Rooster Coffee House 479 Broadview Ave
2	(1912). Crawford Street Bridge Bakery Cafe Cuervo y Marquis 132 Ossington Ave	8	(1899). After the breaking up of the Don River: entrance to Rosedale Creek sewer Rooster Coffee House 479 Broadview Ave
2	(1914). Construction of Crawford Street bridge Bakery Cafe Cuervo y Marquis 132 Ossington Ave	9	(1900). After the breaking up of the Don River, looking south to Grand Trunk Railway Blackbird Baking Co. 635 Queen St E Unit 101
2	(1917). Crawford Street bridge Bakery Cafe Cuervo y Marquis 132 Ossington Ave	9	(1904). Blasting ice on Don River Blackbird Baking Co. 635 Queen St E Unit 101
3	(1916). Wychwood Park - general creek scene Tollkeepers' Cottage Museum 750 Davenport Rd	10	(1899). East abutment, Queen Street bridge over Don River Leslie's Sandwich Room 969 Queen St E
4	(1907). Wychwood Ravine Curbside Cycle 412 Bloor St W	11	(1920). Small's Pond looking north to Ashland Avenue Bodega Henriette 1801 Gerrard St E
5	(1868). Taddle Ravine, McCaul's Pond, e Crimson Teas 415 Spadina Ave	12	(1906). Looking west from Kew Beach firehall Nana's Creperie 1917 Queen St E
6	Interactive Gallery Exhibition OCAD University Ignite Gallery 100 McCaul St	12	(1919). Small's pond bridge Nana's Creperie 1917 Queen St E

www.shannynporter.com

Figure 36. Photograph of Takeaway Map



Figure 37. Artwork at Toll Keeper's Cottage Museum



Figure 38. Artwork at Crimson Teas



RESULTS/CONTRIBUTIONS

On a personal level, I hope the artworks foster a unique engagement, encouraging contemplation and imagination as viewers navigate the interplay between past and present within specific areas. I hope this intimate connection invites viewers to become co-creators of the narrative, bridging the temporal gap between the captured moments and their own perceptions.

On a broader scale, the series might serve as a dynamic bridge between the city's history and its contemporary urban landscape. By shedding light on overlooked historic sites that are traversed daily, the project could prompt a re-evaluation of our relationship with these spaces and the broader urban ecosystem. It draws attention

to the sometimes discordant relationship between urban development and the natural world, encouraging a reconsideration of sustainable coexistence.

The project's artistic scope extends to critical questioning of the veracity of images and their role in shaping our understanding of time and reality. I hope to emphasise that photographs are not mere instants frozen in time, but rather exposures that encapsulate a duration. This nuanced exploration is mirrored in the double exposure nature of the images, capturing both layered moments and the passage of time. This approach prompts viewers to contemplate the complexity of the visual medium, its temporal limitations, the limitations of perspective, and the dynamic interplay between representation and reality.

The process of returning to each of the photograph's locations is not a nostalgic backward glance; it is an active engagement with the evolution of place and memory. The ink, crafted from the land itself, embodies this symbiotic relationship. It is not merely a medium; it is a carrier of stories, a testament to the endurance of memory in the very place where those memories were formed. Through this exploration, I aim to unravel the threads connecting memory and place, revealing how the essence of a location can linger, transform, and communicate with those attuned to its history.

In conclusion, the project catalyses personal reflection, prompts a reconnection with the city's history, and probes the intricate relationship between urbanisation and nature. It also challenges traditional perceptions of images and time, urging viewers to engage with the concept of exposure as both a moment and a continuum. By orchestrating these layers of engagement, the project contributes to a richer understanding of place, time, and our role within this intricate tapestry.

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