



DATE: February 9, 2016

TO: AASHE STARS

FROM: Elizabeth Schlatter, Deputy Director, University of Richmond Museums

RE: Parking Lot Project

For the University of Richmond's 2014-2015 Tucker-Boatwright Festival of Literature and the Arts, the Art and Art History department in collaboration with University Museums presented a series of programs, exhibitions, educational opportunities, and a major site-specific creative project, all focused on the complementary topics of landscape and land use.

As one of the signature programs of the Tucker-Boatwright Festival, the Parking Lot Project (PLP) transformed a dedicated University of Richmond campus parking lot for a yearlong, student-driven, collaborative research project focusing on parking/transportation, environmental sustainability, and competing land use values. Through courses in fall and spring 2015, 22 individual parking spaces were excavated and re-developed as green spaces in an alternating pattern with functional parking spaces. The PLP's interlocking template of green/art spaces and parking spaces was conceived to dramatize differing values and visually communicate an exchange about parking and land use. The PLP also afforded an expansion for faculty research through its unique aesthetic/environmental/historical content, materials, and forms.

As part of this larger yearlong investigation into landscape and land use, PLP was host to several guest scholars and artists who interacted with the students, gave public lectures and performances, and participated as artists-in-residence. Examples of some of the many activities include the following:

- worked with a contract archeologist to excavate a portion of the site
- met poet Susan Stewart who addresses environmental themes in her work
- met Trip Pollard, lawyer for the Southern Environmental Law Center
- met with UR Dance professor Alicia Díaz on the topic of site specific dance and performance
- consulted with John Hayden, Professor of Biology and specialist in botany
- participated in the international PARK(ing) Day
- attended lectures and met contemporary artists Mark Dion, Matt Coolidge, and Natalie Jeremijenko, including on-site class visits/critiques by Coolidge and Jeremijenko
- attended a lecture by Elizabeth Kolbert, author of *The Sixth Extinction*
- worked side by side with two artists in residence (one from Iceland and one from Seattle) who address similar themes in their work.

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Joel and Lila Harnett Museum of Art

Joel and Lila Harnett Print Study Center

Lora Robins Gallery of Design from Nature

- contributed to Fall NPR interview hosted and aired by Catherine Komp <http://ideastations.org/radio/news/reimagining-parking-lots>

The students enrolled during the year discussed their projects with all of these guests, garnering useful feedback and ideas. Their final projects included everything from a carport that gathered rainwater to service an adjacent organic garden, a sculpture comprised of mirrors in rectangular forms to reflect both the forested and built environment as a meditation on spatial disruption and synthesis, an uncanny, moss-covered wall of asphalt chunks using contemporary materials suggestive of another place and time, a bicycle-powered movie theater, and a greenhouse used to grow mushrooms and greens as well as to be a gathering place for workshops on bicycle maintenance, locally sourced produce, and oral histories. Students in the fall semester actively posted progress of their projects on an Instagram feed set up for #ParkingLotProject. The spring semester students each gave on-site presentations during the University's annual School of Arts and Sciences Symposium.

As an interdisciplinary, research-driven, and problem-based project, PLP exemplified principles and goals of the Richmond Promise [the University's strategic plan], in particular through being an integrated academic enterprise, focusing on distinctive student experiences, and emphasizing intellectual diversity and personal expression. It transformed a University utility space into a field research and teaching site resourcefully making use of transient opportunity through Campus Master Plan. Also, PLP's unique subject matter and context greatly expanded students' knowledge and use of tools, processes, and disciplinary content, enabling them to produce significant, ambitious projects for their portfolios that demonstrate technical and conceptual merit as well as project management skills.

Finally, the collaborative nature of the overall festival and specifically PLP has altered how the University will be conceiving of, planning, and executing Tucker-Boatwright Festivals in the future. The level of engagement, experimentation, and accessibility, made possible by the shared focus on the theme of landscape and land use, enabled rewarding participation from all aspects of the campus' communities and has set a new standard for campus-wide interdisciplinary projects.

Respectfully submitted by,

N. E. Schlatter