



# A System of Public Placing: James Woodfill and Union Office Spring and Summer, 2018

Part 1: Impulse - A Visceral Survey

Part 2: An Installation

Part 3: An Exhibition

*Union Office Public Placing Project Team:*

*Lead Artist: James Woodfill*

*Union Office Collaborating Artist / Exhibition Curator: Annie Woodfill*

*Survey Artists: Megan Videmschek, Kylie McConnell, Baron Mattern*

*Text written by Annie Woodfill*

**A System of Public Placing** was commissioned as part of the implementation of the two-year long **West Bottoms Reborn** project, funded by a **National Endowment for the Arts Our Town Grant**, awarded in 2016. James Woodfill acted as the lead artist for the project in collaboration with **Kansas City Design Center**, and The City of Kansas City, MO's **Office of Culture and Creative Services**. **West Bottoms Reborn** aspired to create a vision study for the development of a system of public spaces in the West Bottoms district of KCMO.

**Union Office** is the collaborative platform originating from the studio of James Woodfill.



## Part 1: Impulse – A Visceral Survey

A response to observations of the Forester Viaduct and the surrounding area was commissioned from artists Megan Videmschek, Baron Mattern and Kylie McConnell. This activity resulted in a number of drawings, photographs, videos and charts, along with extensive conversations about the visceral and perceptual nature of the area.

Clipboards and a small variety of papers and markers were provided to the artists for an activity that mimicked the idea of surveying. These excursions started to investigate material impulse on a basic level in regards to the construction of memory while placing oneself in a new and ambiguous environment – as Baron said, “Learning to think the thought of being between things.”

### *Survey as Drawing:*

*Think about public space. What is it and how are you moving through it?*

*What are the different logics that you encounter?*

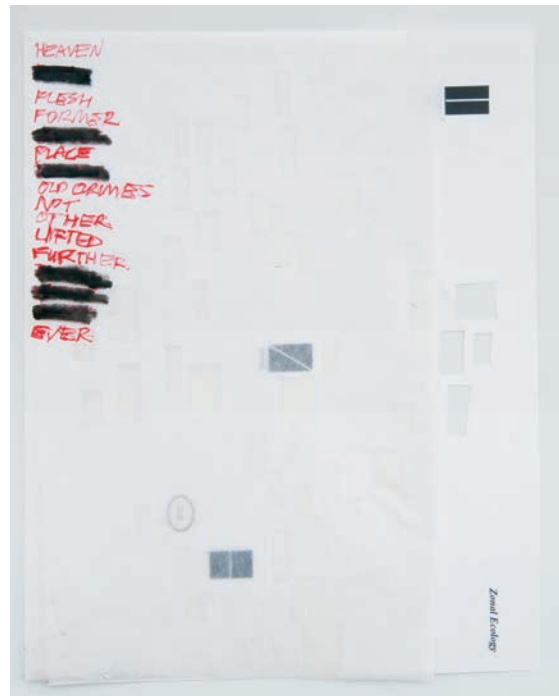
*What ideas of listening form? Pathways?*

*How do the impulses with materials affect how you clarify spatial placement?*

*Think about finding systems existing in the area. Can they be defined as zones?*

These were but a few of the many themes that evolved through discussion that acted as starting points for the work. Using the materials at hand – pencils, markers, tape, paper, language, cell phones – the artists negotiated an economy of materials and gestures that serve as bullet points in an infinite list of ways we can interpret the activation of public space.

Within the survey area these artists have focused on the memories of their trajectories. As the artists drifted through the area archiving their experiences, each with a uniquely developed way of communicating ideas through materials and mark-making, their compositions are in negotiation with the idea of moving through space. What note-taking strategies can be quick, what can fit on the clipboard or in a pocket, what can be noted for later analysis? The shorthands that emerged reveal an appreciation for the ability of economical gesture and the pragmatic to be an interface for the ephemerality of the site.



149.SAD526V

1. SAC2500 ✓	38. SAD 0529 ✓	75. <del>SAD 0529</del> ✓	112. SAD 1110 ✓
2. SAC2501 ✓	39. SAD5350 ✓	76. <del>SAD 0529</del> ✓	113. (?) ✓
3. SAD2250 ✓	40. SAD 0619 ✓	77. SAD0600 ✓	114. SAD 1039 ✓
4. SAD2251 ✓	41. SAD 5351 ✓	78. SAD0554 ✓	115. SAD 1038 ✓
5. SAD 2252 ✓	42. SAD0531 ✓	79. <del>SAD 0554</del> ✓	116. SAD1037 ✓
6. SAD 2253 ✓	43. SAD 5352 ✓	80. (?) ✓	117. SAD1036 ✓
7. SAD 2255 ✓	44. SAD0532 ✓	81. SAD0552 ✓	118. SAD 1087 ✓
8. SAD 2253 ✓	45. SAD0533 ✓	82. SAD0664 ✓	119. SAD1088 ✓
9. SAD0501 ✓	46. SAD5353 ✓	83. SAD0638 ✓	120. SAD1089 ✓
10. SAD0503 ✓	47. SAD 0534 ✓	84. SAD0003 ✓	121. SAD 1041 ✓
11. SAD 0504 ✓	48. SAD0634 ✓	85. <del>SAD 0003</del> ✓	122. SAD 1107 ✓
12. SAD 0572 ✓	49. SAD 5026 ✓	86. SAD0556 ✓	123. SAD 1043 ✓
13. SAD 0580 ✓	50. SAD5027 ✓	87. SAD0557 ✓	124. SAD0021 ✓
14. SAD 0512 ✓	51. SAD5030 ✓	88. SAD0558 ✓	125. SAD0022 ✓
15. SAD0513 ✓	52. SAD 5029 ✓	89. SAD0559 ✓	126. SAD0023 ✓
16. SAD0514 ✓	53. SAD 5031 ✓	90. SAD0624 ✓	127. SAD0024 ✓
17. SAD 0515 ✓	54. SAD 5032 ✓	91. SAD 0560 ✓	128. SAD0025 ✓
18. SAD0516 ✓	55. SAD0534 ✓	92. SAD 0561 ✓	129. SAD0026 ✓
19. SAD0517 ✓	56. SAD 5033 ✓	93. SAD 0562 ✓	130. SAD 5035 ✓
20. SAD0518 ✓	57. SAD5036 ✓	94. SAD 0641 ✓	131. SAD 5037 ✓
21. SAD 0581 ✓	58. SAD 5035 ✓	95. SAD 0642 ✓	132. <del>SAD 5037</del> ✓
22. SAD 0582 ✓	59. SAD5002 ✓	96. SAD0644 ✓	133. SAD0610 ✓
23. SAD0583 ✓	60. SAD5003 ✓	97. SAD0564 ✓	134. <del>SAD0610</del> ✓
24. SAD0575 ✓	61. SAD 5000 ✓	98. SAD0565 ✓	135. SAD0659 ✓
25. SAD0519 ✓	62. SAD 5001 ✓	99. SAD0670 ✓	136. SAC 1575 ✓
26. SAD0526 ✓	63. SAD0044 ✓	100. SAD0671 ✓	137. SAD5250 ✓
27. SAD0521 ✓	64. SAD0046 ✓	101. SAD0672 ✓	138. <del>SAD 5250</del> ✓
28. SAD5340 ✓	65. SAD 0047 ✓	102. SAD0673 ✓	139. SAD5251 ✓
29. SAD5341 ✓	66. SAD 0048 ✓	103. SAD0674 ✓	140. SAD5252 ✓
30. SAD5342 ✓	67. SAD0049 ✓	104. SAD0675 ✓	141. SAD5254 ✓
31. SAD5344 ✓	68. SAD 0050 ✓	105. SAD0592 ✓	142. SAD5253 ✓
32. SAD5343 ✓	69. SAD0051 ✓	106. SAD 1022 ✓	143. SAD5255 ✓
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34. SAD5347 ✓	71. SAD 0053 ✓	108. SAD1012 ✓	145. SAD5257 ✓
35. SAD5348 ✓	72. SAD0544 ✓	109. SAD1084 ✓	146. SAD5258 ✓
36. SAD0528 ✓	73. SAD 0545 ✓	110. SAD1029 ✓	147. SAD5259 ✓
37. SAD5349 ✓	74. SAD0546 ✓	111. SAD1030 ✓	148. SAD5260 ✓



COLOR INTERACTION - IN MOTION

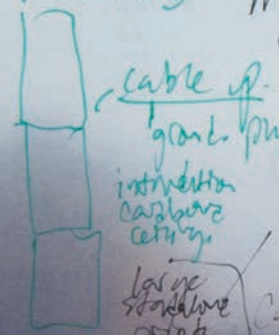
RENDER  
[REDACTED]  
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GHOST  
CROAK  
TWITCH  
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MEAT  
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WAR  
SWATCH  
RAGE  
[REDACTED]  
RUSH  
SICKER  
BLUE  
SLEEP  
GAMBLE  
PATHOS  
SLEW  
LOVE  
BLIT TO LAST  
[REDACTED]  
FLUSH  
LEFT  
EVADE  
[REDACTED]  
RECAP  
TONEK  
[REDACTED]  
ARMOR  
ABUSE  
NAVE  
DUSK  
GONE  
BOLD  
BREATH  
[REDACTED]  
WASTE  
ETHER

DATE  
REUSE  
FOREVER  
CREAT  
WAY TO GOLD

all goes back to clipboard size - or comes from clipboard  
categorize some of the  
photography. - website

• for each clip

maybe  
(quality  
system) apply across;



apply an overall channel

link to it where  
elaborate all on the left

category

do not touch tables

(organize 3 partitions one more time)

by the end interventions in display

category org  
talks as well

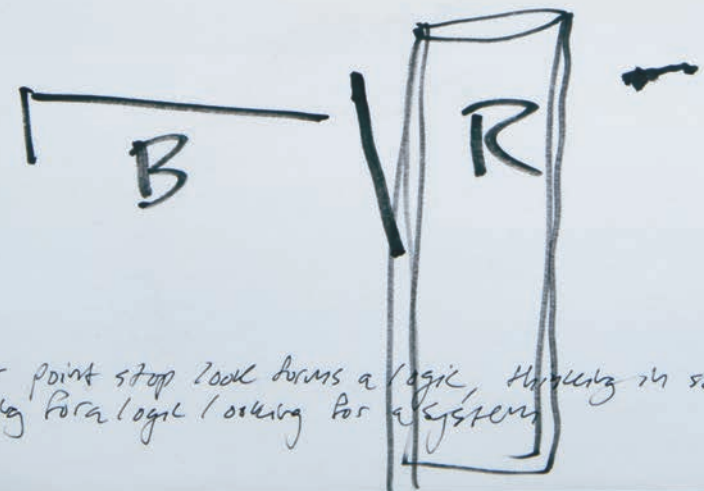
is in together as 5  
quizzes

think about 3 or 4 - will points

9 x 12

different location presentation is to get a sense of the art-ness of it.

b/g prints vs 1/4" or 3/8" strand.



→ or point stop look for a logic, thinking in steps,  
looking for a logic looking for a system





## Part 2: An Installation

A series of wayfinding markers temporarily inhabit the infrastructure throughout the area underneath, on top of, and surrounding Forester Viaduct in the historic core of the West Bottoms District, with their placement informed by a series of walking videos conducted during the early stages of the WBR project as well as the survey undertaken in the area by Union Office collaborators. After also surveying the light poles owned and maintained by Kansas City, MO, jackets were wrapped around select poles and columns.







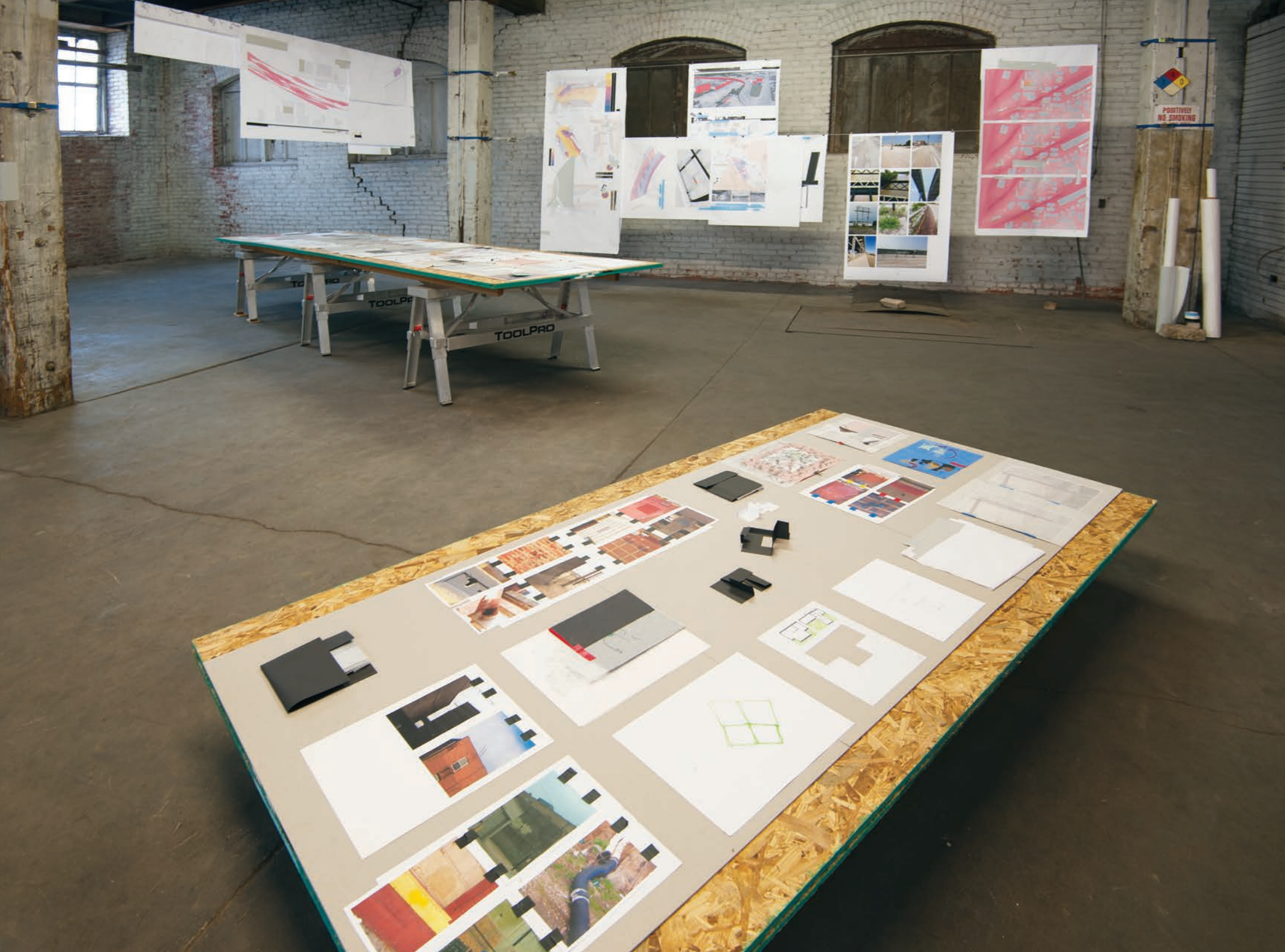
The *Public Placing* markers are responding to the conditions of the site, both harmonic and dissonant, and act as amplifiers to those conditions. These markers act as variable parentheses, marking the nebulous boundaries that form and dissolve as we move through the area. These visual cues for seeing space, form and color point to and exchange information with the plethora of background phenomena in the area.







*A System of Public Placing* is a process of going out and getting lost - wandering. In the form of signals, and resisting a clear functional role, the devices inserted into the environment point to the beauty in the pragmatic, appropriating way-finding impulses in service to "way-losing." Right now, the West Bottoms has a density and a vagueness that inspires/prompts/triggers exploration. There is a lack of articulation within the deteriorated boundaries of a post-industrial landscape that allows us to access our imagination of its past, present and future. Streets have expanded into fields and alleyways have congealed into streets; buildings surprise us with anomalous curvatures and unexpected angles to coexist with the railroad and other patterns of industry; highways and viaducts have been rediscovered as hallways from the underneath, preserving history and providing sanctuary; deteriorating structures and sidewalks reveal their relative transience and start to negotiate with the wildlife; overlooked surfaces have become the parameters of reactionary artistic compositions and substrates for marking impromptu territories. The contingencies of the movement of product and the flow of water, and a visceral relationship with large scale transportation affect a kind of impermanence that draws artists, cultural dialogue, nature watching, and even tourism. Spaces become verbs and to exist in the public space here is to inhabit through invention/invent ways of inhabiting.



### Part 3: An Exhibition

The exhibition titled *A System of Public Placing* was an installation of the survey works from artists Megan Videmschek, Baron Mattern and Kylie McConnell, in dialog with a variety of visual and structural cues culled from the archives of student works at KCDC. This installation was in collaboration with a broad exhibition of KCDC work regarding WBR, along with works by WBR artists Carmen Mareno and Miranda Clark.

Megan's emotionally inspired lists of graffiti tags and expressionistic drawings, Baron's light-pole video interactions and spatial memory games, and Kylie's vellum layered collages were carefully arranged among each other next to redacted KCDC studies of light, planes, wind and sound from the beginning phases of the WBR project. Photographs with initials at the bottom are extensions of an online archive of the "West Bottoms Survey" images housed on a research-community free-sharing website called Are.na.

This exhibition shows all of these impulses as the formative notes for methods, as well as reminders of experience, in their context, as material processes create gestures that are in direct conversation with the surroundings. Activating the space with the conversation of remembering and interpreting the space, these displays are shown, not as archives, but as active agents. Adjacent to the KCDC surveys and data renderings as a means to a hyper-articulated end, these exercises pause within what resembles the initial surveying stages of that process, to drift and indulge in the suspense of the abject unpredictability that floats around in the West Bottoms.

*Related websites and research platforms:*

- <http://woodfill.us/public-placing>
- [https://www.are.na/annie-woodfill/v\\_2017-candid-ebb](https://www.are.na/annie-woodfill/v_2017-candid-ebb)
- <https://www.are.na/annie-woodfill/west-bottoms-survey>
- <https://www.are.na/annie-woodfill/west-bottoms-reborn>

