



2015 CREATIVE STUDY TOUR

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University of Kentucky
Department of Landscape Architecture
The Curb Center for Art, Enterprise, and
Public Policy at Vanderbilt University

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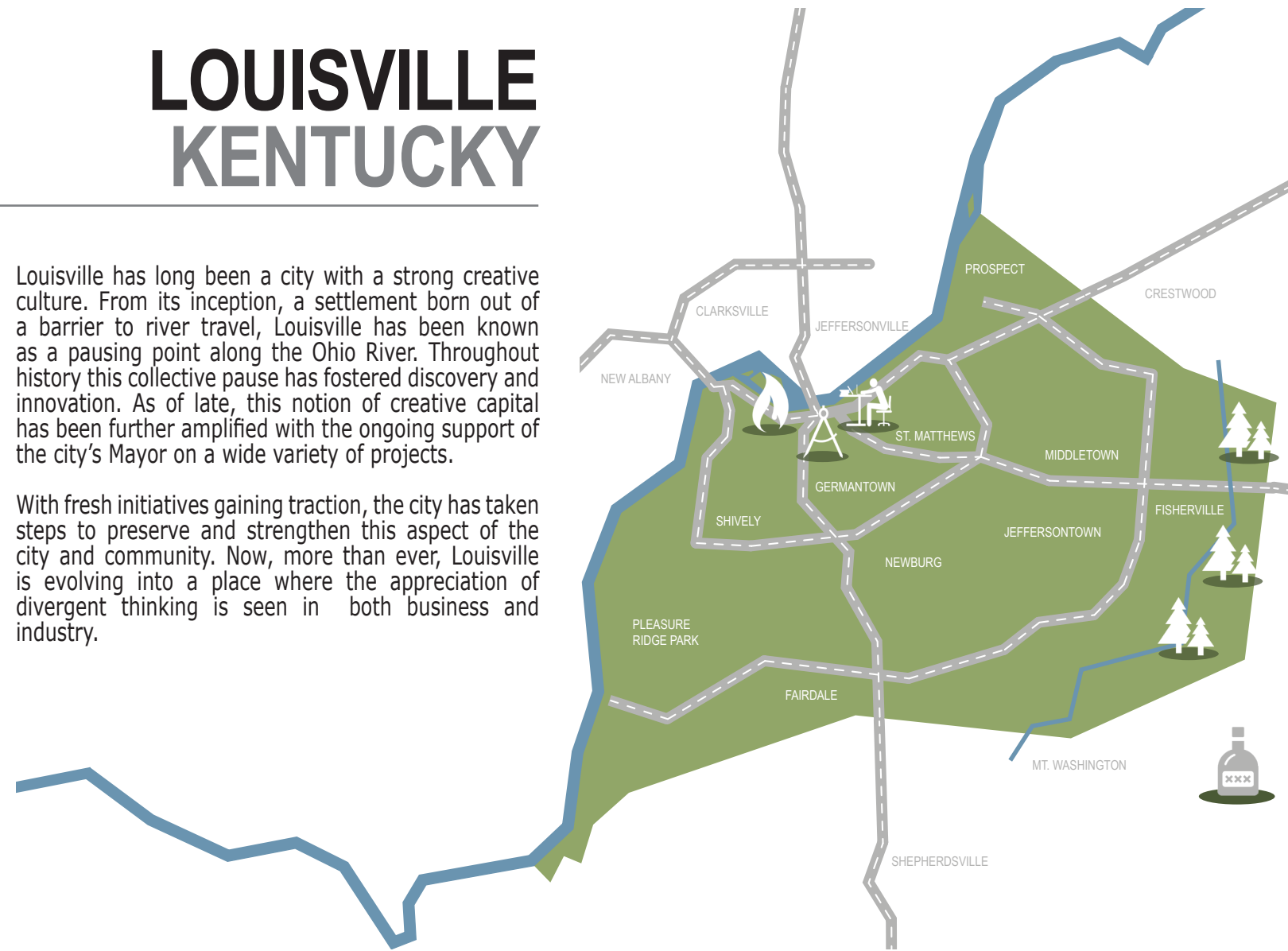
The Kentucky Chapter of the American
Society of Landscape Architects

This book is dedicated to everyone in
search of creative knowledge and those
who help them along the way.

LOUISVILLE KENTUCKY

Louisville has long been a city with a strong creative culture. From its inception, a settlement born out of a barrier to river travel, Louisville has been known as a pausing point along the Ohio River. Throughout history this collective pause has fostered discovery and innovation. As of late, this notion of creative capital has been further amplified with the ongoing support of the city's Mayor on a wide variety of projects.

With fresh initiatives gaining traction, the city has taken steps to preserve and strengthen this aspect of the city and community. Now, more than ever, Louisville is evolving into a place where the appreciation of divergent thinking is seen in both business and industry.



ROBERTO DE LEON



Co-founder and principal of De Leon & Primmer Architecture Workshop. Roberto holds a Master In Architecture from Harvard University and a Bachelor of Arts In Architecture from the University of California at Berkeley.

BROOK WHITE



Glass artist and owner of Flame Run. His work has also been recognized at the national level, including the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., the Huntington (W.Va.) Museum of Art, and the Asheville (N.C.) Art Museum.

DAN JONES



Chairman and chief executive officer of 21st Century Parks, Inc. A native of Louisville, Kentucky, Dan holds degrees from Yale University (B.A., M.F.) and Indiana University, Bloomington (Ph.D.).

DAVE DURAND



President of Forest Giant, a design and development firm focused on mobile solutions for startups and Fortune 500 companies. He is also co-founder of City Collaborative, a non-profit bringing ideas to life in the city of Louisville.

STOP ONE ROBERTO DE LEON

CO-FOUNDER + PRINCIPAL
DE LEON & PRIMMER ARCHITECTURE WORKSHOP

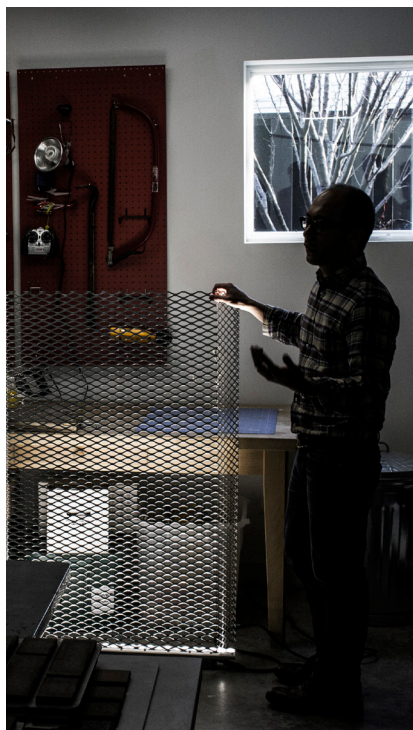
(n) fitzcarraldo

"an image that somehow becomes lodged deep in your brain—maybe washed there by a dream, or smuggled inside a book, or planted during a casual conversation—which then grows into a wild and impractical vision that keeps scrambling back and forth in your head like a dog stuck in a car that's about to arrive home, just itching for a chance to leap headlong into reality."

Entering a designer's space can be like stepping into their mind, contextualizing their process and appreciating the intricacies that contribute along the continuum from ideation to realization. Spending time at DPAW with Roberto was in many ways a window into the person behind the process. It became evident very quickly that Roberto is shaped by a sense of deep understanding relative to specificity of place, time and culture. With this understanding comes a clarity that helps guide creative exploration.



THE STORY



“We love happy **accidents**. Ultimately these come from a non-stop cycle of tinkering and deciding, tinkering and deciding.”

Now over a decade after first setting out to make a difference, Roberto and Ross have done just that by utilizing their original approach that builds consensus through careful examination and a commitment to discovery.

Still this story is ever changing and remains incomplete. Moving forward DPAW maintains a commitment to seeing possibilities, finding extraordinary in what most accept as ordinary. The nature of the firm is to carefully select partners and clients who will support this approach and continue to grow this dialogue between designer and site.

One things remains abundantly clear as we consider the next chapters of this story. DPAW will continue to find their voice through an ever expanding network of knowledge. Knowledge based on experiences rich with context and content. While each new site and project will present unique challenges the team finds strength and inspiration in curiosity.

STUDIO SPACE:
WHERE PEN MEETS PAPER

Looking back through the chapters of the DPAW story and examining the firm as it took shape helps clarify a series of decisions that led Roberto and his co-founder and principal Ross Primmer to Louisville in 2003. Louisville at the time was on the brink of an economic upswing, transitioning from an industrial based economy to a service based economy. By deciding to launch their firm in Louisville they became a part of a movement to establish and nurture a creative class.

Upon closer reflection one can appreciate the vision for the firm and how it has played out over the last 12 years. This vision emerged from a desire to have a strong connection to place while impacting the community at large. Drawing from regional influences, DPAW continues to exemplify an ongoing creative rebirth in Louisville with an appreciation for new ideas that are grounded in deep understanding and experimentation. With several institutional and recreational projects the firm has built a reputation for impacting the community in a positive way.



“We start each project by asking ourself:
What’s our thesis? What are we trying to explore?”

Thesis

THE PLACE



“Surround yourself with **problem solvers.**
Others who may be better than you to help yourself grow.”

There is often an indescribable sense of place that we associate with truly meaningful spaces. As humans, we typically experience these places with a subconscious euphoria that we can't quite put a finger on – something about the space just feels *right*.

As we approached the newly designed visitor's center at Wild Turkey Distillery, we could feel the cascade of impulses rushing through our senses. We were approaching a place that cast the aura of being something special – it was clearly the work of an enlightened designer.

After experiencing the collection of spaces at the distillery, we met with the team that composes De Leon and Primmer in their Louisville office. While walking around the workplace it soon became evident the distinctive qualities we saw at Wild Turkey were a direct result of the design process inherent in this space. The office was both a repository of knowledge and also a playground for experimentation and the testing of ideas.

“The real world is a combination of different skill sets.
You need to understand them in order to implement them.”



LAWRENCEBURG, KY
38°02'36"N 84°51'09"W

Pictured is a view from the tasting room at Wild Turkey Distillery.

As a class we were able to sample some of the distiller's product while also learning about the architect's design intent. The building orientation, material selection, how the varying levels of the building interact with each other - all of these aspects worked together to form a beautiful succession of spaces at the distillery.

STOP TWO

BROOK WHITE

FOUNDER + OWNER
FLAME RUN HOT GLASS STUDIO & GALLERY

(n)zielschmerz

"the exhilarating dread of finally pursuing a lifelong dream, which requires you to put your true abilities out there to be tested on the open savannah, no longer protected inside the terrarium of dreams that you created and kept sealed as long as you could, only to break in case of emergency."

Almost a religious awakening of sorts, Brook White walked us through what it was like when he decided to make his life's work that of a glass-blower. In detail he was able to describe both the hardships and grandeur of starting not just a new career path, but a new business from scratch. A bumpy road most certainly, but one that appears to have paid dividends along the way.

After meeting with Brook it was clear that he represented a great example of following your heart and passion. That sometimes you may need to sacrifice in order to follow your dreams - but if deep down, if you truly want to do it, you'll find a way. You'll enter the open savannah.



THE STORY



While attending Centre College, Brook White was a soccer-playing, future lawyer-to-be kind of student. That is, until he encountered his first glass-blowing class. Brook describes himself as being immediately “spellbound” by the physical aspect of working the glass - from that moment on, he was hooked. Like many people stuck between two aspirations, there comes a moment in time when you must choose one over the other. In Brook’s case, there were simply not enough hours in the day to be both a law student and an aspiring glass-blower. It was at these crossroads where Brook took the deep dive into making the art of glass-blowing not just a career choice, but a life-altering pursuit, a transition from pursuit of a career to a calling.

Fast-forward to 2004 - the opening of Flame Run Glass Studio. After years of apprenticeships and seeking money from outside investors, Brook finally embarked on opening his own studio. Through talking with Brook, it became apparent that his relentless drive during these initial years is what kept the bills paid. Nothing short of a zig-zag line to success, it is this particular type of perseverance that has kept him afloat when times are bad, and have allowed him to flourish when times are good. It can be said that this mentality has even helped him push through some of his more technically challenging projects. Described as sometimes “taking on challenges and having no idea how to pull them off,” Brook has remained confident that he would always figure it out.

Today, Brook seeks out this same type of determination in resident artists that call Flame Run home. As a team, everyone in the hot shop seems to work in unison with open lines of communication while on the floor. A work of art in itself, Brook White has managed to put together a group of artists who now understand the idea of synchronicity in the workplace.



“The passion is as contagious as the heat in the room. For an art career to succeed, **perseverance** is equally as important as creativity.”

IN THE HEAT OF THE MOMENT:
GLASS BLOWING 101

Pictured is Brook spinning a piece of glass inside the “glory hole.”

This is the moment of truth for many glass-blowers. Once the glass enters the extreme heat of the glory hole, it literally becomes a make-it-or-break-it piece of work. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn’t.

“If you do the right thing for the right reason, it will all work out.”



THE PLACE



“A whole lot of this is flying by the seat of your pants. You just gotta try to stay a couple of steps ahead.”

What seemed particularly striking about Flame Run was this continuous circle of tension between funding and work – between the gallery and the furnace. In order for the business to operate, a very particular equilibrium must be achieved. Where enough commissions are collected to power the furnace – and where the furnace is on long enough for the artists to produce work to sell – round and round the circle goes. A constant cycle that some of us would fret over. But for Brook White, and the crew at Flame Run, it provides the opportunity to fuel their creative habit. It seems to instill a sense of order and grit that has trickled down into the functionality of their workplace.

Flame Run was a unique stop on the tour. An interesting craft with an even more interesting story really made the sense of place come alive. Here, we learned the value of doing what you love while also balancing the economies of running a business. Lessons learned and notes taken, it was time to internalize the experience and move to our next destination.

LOUISVILLE, KY
38°15'23"N 85°45'53"W

It's not very often that you stumble upon a workplace that seems to truly embrace the concept of controlled chaos. Upon arrival at Flame Run, one slowly got the sense this place could be analogous to an orchestra pit. A place where there were scores of moving parts – some even seeming hectic at times, but when joined together, managed to produce a masterful symphony.

Using hot glass as his medium, Brook was able to work his craft with elegance and focus as we observed near by. It felt as though we had front row seats in the middle of this pseudo-industrial concert hall. Then, as a balance to the activity and energy in the studio, Brook revealed the second half of Flame Run: the gallery. A collection of works from both in-house and nationally renowned artists, the gallery provides visitors with a rather stark, yet oddly fulfilling sense of process. Separated by nothing more than a glass wall, it is here where the transition from furnace to invoice becomes realized.

“I'm not the greatest artist, and I'm not the greatest businessman - but I'm just dangerous enough at both to make it work.”



STOP THREE DAN JONES

CHAIRMAN + CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
21ST CENTURY PARKS INC.

(n)avenoir

"the longing desire that memory could flow backward. We take it for granted that life moves forward. But you move as a rower moves, facing backwards; you can see where you've been, but not where you're going. It's hard not to wonder what life would be like facing the other way..."

There are not many of us in this world who establish a legacy much larger than ourselves. Even fewer, are those who create something that will have a lasting impact on millions of people. Upon meeting Dan Jones of 21st Century Parks, it was clear that he belonged in this select category.

Since 2004, Dan has spear-headed the effort to design, build, and maintain a 4,000+ acre park system in southeastern Louisville. Discussions with Dan revealed someone who is both driven by ambition and shaped by history - qualities mirrored in his park development.



THE STORY

The opportunity to dream big along Floyds Fork has captured the imaginations of many, including Dan and David Jones. It began in the 1990s with a question, a 100-year question posed by then Metro Parks director Brigid Sullivan and Bill Juckett of the Olmsted Parks Conservancy. What can be done in the present-day community that might match the impact of the Olmsted Park system, which was created in the 1890s?

Dan Jones spent time reflecting on this question before finding inspiration from the precedent Olmsted had established a century prior. This model sent him searching to find property ahead of development. Floyds Fork emerged as a focal point for such an effort. The area matched the lofty aspirations of repeating the Olmsted model and stood out as holding potential to become this generations transcendent public space.

Moving forward, discussions about the project began to emerge around imagination and limitless possibilities. This led to Wallace Roberts & Todd, a national collaborative design practice, creating a master plan for the area using an inclusive design process. The team worked with environmentalists, conservationists, ecologists, and developers to ensure something of lasting value for the community. As the project develops into a reality we are left admiring the commitment to excellence and far reaching positive impacts beyond the park boundaries.

Currently the first portions of the park are open and people have begun to engage and take ownership of this precious resource. It is clear the project and its leaders have reached what could be considered the new standard for excellence.



“If you look at creative people, they get dragged to where they are by who they are.”



“Recognize the wisdom of the past, acknowledge it, and don't screw it up.”



SITE VISIT:
TURKEY RUN PARK

Pictured is the construction site of the future Brown-Forman Silo Center.

Walking through the site brought to life some of the design aspects that Dan discussed previously. Seeing this portion of the park in its unfinished state helped communicate the high standard and level of design integrity these built works must meet.

“Always be sure to consider your audience and the experience. How is someone going to interact with the space? These are the major drivers for park use and management.”



“One of the scariest things is a blank sheet of paper. But if I can come up with a back story, or a theme, the blank sheet becomes far less intimidating - it becomes exciting.”

It's almost overwhelming when you experience The Parklands for the first time. You often don't even realize the enormity of the project because the individual spaces have been designed at such a high level of specificity and detail. But this comes as no surprise after listening to the story of the park's development.

While Dan was most certainly the leader in the implementation of The Parklands, there have definitely been others who have helped along the way. While on the tour we also met with Jim Walters, the lead architect, as well as Scott Martin, the parks director. Talking with all three shed light on the fact that the success of this park is not due to one person, but rather the cohesive efforts of many. Each person has been selectively chosen to provide The Parklands with their specific area of expertise. In effect, the sum of these efforts has resulted in a place that will forever impact Louisville and its surrounding populations for many years to come.

THE PLACE

You're walking along a trail and you notice a crunch beneath your foot. Looking down, you discover the remains of autumn's first leaf. As you lift up your foot, part of the leaf gets caught in a sudden gust of southwesterly wind. The leaf, being pushed wayward through the crisp morning air, leads you astray from your predetermined path - into an area less known. As you continue to follow the leaf, the environment around you begins to evolve. You've broken out of your autonomous shell, and your senses begin to feel an awakened rejuvenation by the vastness of what surrounds you. You stop to look around. Your initial feelings of vastness begin to diminish as your cone of vision narrows to your immediate surroundings. The rocks, the moss, the chirping of the swallow. Slowly, everything begins to feel much more intimate.

You take one step forward and note a splash beneath your left foot. Looking down, you study a flowing stream of water...You have arrived at Floyds Fork. You are in the heart of The Parklands.



LOUISVILLE, KY
38°13'34"W 85°28'36"W

STOP FOUR

DAVE DURAND

CO-FOUNDER + PRESIDENT
FOREST GIANT

(n) ornidine

"the feeling that everything original has already been done, that the experiment of human culture long ago filled its petri dish and now just feeds on itself."

Innovation can best be described as equal parts inspiration and determination. A truly creative individual must possess the ability to both generate ideas and negotiate their path to implementation. The act of solving creative problems is hard work and while the ability to produce novel ideas has tremendous value, the distinguishing factor of a creative master rests in their ability to turn ideas into reality. Meet Dave Durand, dreamer, developer, and doer. Dave's human centered approach to design is based on understanding the people you are trying to reach and then designing from their perspective. By utilizing this approach he not only arrives at unexpected answers but comes up with ideas that users will embrace. After meeting Dave Durand it was clear that he is someone committed to both pushing the boundaries of possible while balancing the responsibility of execution.



THE STORY



Founded in 2013, City Collaborative is a non-profit that “brings ideas to life that have a positive impact on our city.” Its founders come from diverse backgrounds, brought together by a shared love for Louisville and the mission of implementing quick, yet impactful projects focused on community, culture, and technology in the Louisville scene.

With co-founders and board members ranging from the CEO of a mobile app development company to the director of the University of Louisville’s Urban Design Studio, City Collaborative focuses on finding and developing small-scale changes to Louisville’s urban environment. They are committed to using their diverse skill sets to affect as much small-scale positive change in the city as they can, effectively and quickly. By exploring and highlighting these opportunities rapidly within the community, City Collaborative strives to create mass awareness to inspire a collective energy moving communities forward.

Designed to be small and nimble, the team strives to tell the story of the community, helping people see their environment in new ways. By helping people envision their environment differently through short-term action, the hope is this will eventually lead to long-term change in the status quo.

Projects like Resurfaced, a pop-up food and beer garden, and the Louisville Love iPhone app, designed for adding handcrafted type and iconography to photos taken in and around Louisville, are examples of the diverse yet civic minded success stories. Staying true to their goal of engaging the community in taking ownership of imagination, ideas and ultimately action, the team continues to transform Louisville’s urban landscape in a positive way.

“It’s OK to pivot - more often than not, that’s the zig-zag line to success.”

THE PLACE

LOUISVILLE, KY
38°15’02”N 85°45’20”W

Acting as a hub for both creative professionals and students alike, the studio space for City Collaborative is a true reflection of its mission – creating meaningful change in the city in which you live.

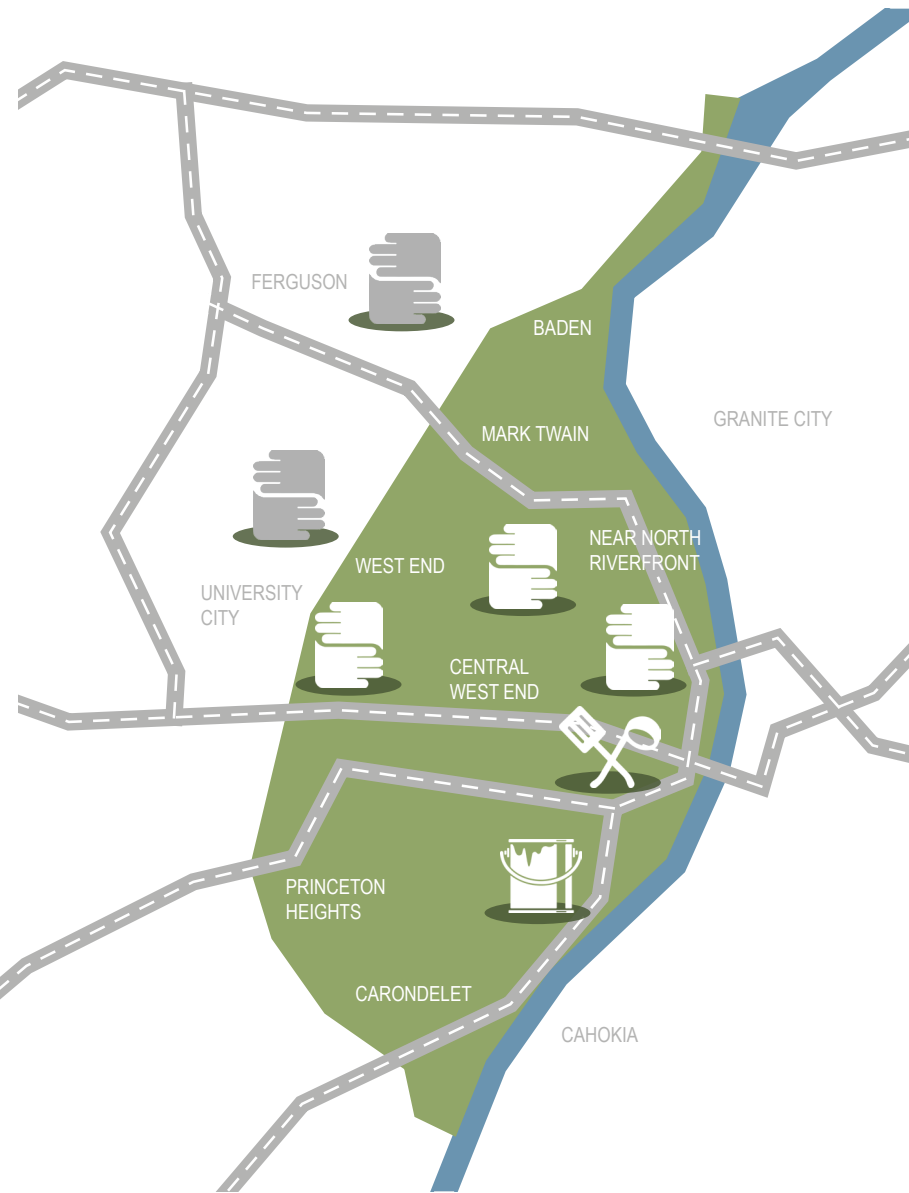
Located in the middle of Louisville’s urban district, the “design lab” conveys the sense of being truly immersed into the city’s network of communities.



ST. LOUIS MISSOURI

Creativity is about making connections, and no city exemplifies this more than St. Louis, a place where creative approaches are helping connect the city to its community and history.

The city and its leaders have made efforts to reconnect with the past, using history to inform creative advancement moving forward. This movement begins with connecting on a personal level and developing empathy and understanding through various perspectives. The creative attributes that make the city conducive to positive change are becoming more present and powerful. Based on this development it appears as though St. Louis is in the beginning phases of a creative renaissance as signs of optimism are beginning to emerge.



**STAN
CHISHOLM**



Visual artist and member of the Screwed Arts Collective. He also is a DJ and performs under the pseudonym "18 and Counting."

**BRIAN
COLTRAIN**



A classically trained chef in culinary arts at L'École Culinaire. He worked in many St. Louis restaurants before serving as chef and ultimately executive chef at Element, featuring an "open kitchen" concept and creative collaboration.

**BOB
HANSMAN**



Artist-in-residence who leads undergraduate community studies courses at the Sam Fox School of Design at Washington University. As an accomplished artist, solo exhibitions of his work have been displayed in and around the St. Louis area.

STOP FIVE STAN CHISHOLM

VISUAL ARTIST + MEMBER
SCREWED ARTS COLLECTIVE

(n) ambedo

"a kind of melancholic trance in which you become completely absorbed in vivid sensory details – raindrops skittering down a window, tall trees leaning in the wind, clouds of cream swirling in your coffee – all of which leads to a dawning awareness of life's increasing fragility."

Stan Chisholm is in search of new perspective, the type of perspective found by shifting the way we see and understand the world around us. This journey began at an early age as he has always been jumping around trying new things. At this intersection of art, music and writings where textures and components come together; Stan has found his muse. A place where he can create, experiment, grow, reflect and communicate with people in a meaningful way. Resting and certainly living in this place represents a commitment to finding and living his passion. It is this passion that resonates in his work and allows others to connect with it so deeply. As this search for new perspective shifts to sharing, the power of his work is revealed.



STAN CHISHOLM

“Every project explores an idea through a non-linear matrix of work. We learn from a diverse set of experiences.”

By all accounts Stan back then was a lot like Stan now, very ambitious and incredibly personable. He developed a drive that you don't see very often in people his age and that continues to shape him today.

It was at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago that Stan met friend and fellow collaborator Lisa See Kim and launched a project called MoneyBags. The artists hosted a public workshop at Chicago's Hyde Park Art Center and helped people create fake currency. They stuffed the counterfeits into cartoonish sacks and piled them into a Chicago Transit Authority train car.

After earning his bachelor's degree, Chisholm spent time in Japan then bounced between Portland, Oregon, and Chicago before resettling in St. Louis. This reunion has been instrumental to his growth as the city and its people continue to be his laboratory for experimentation. An example of this is the Screwed Arts Collective, a wide-ranging group of artists who represent a cross section of the city, providing insight and inspiration.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE:
PAINT BUCKETS AND TURN TABLES

THE STORY



As Stan explains it he has always been making art. His first grade teacher, recognizing his advanced drawing skill, asked him to judge the other students' work in a drawing contest. But visual arts were only the beginning as Stan continued to experiment with various forms of artistic expression. In his eyes this provided the most satisfying experience, swirling his talents together and fostering inspiration across mediums. His approach to creating is not driven by financial success but by personal contentment and maturation. Even among other artists and creatives his story is inspiring.

Public art, Chisholm says, has been an integral part of his life since he was a teenager. He recalls spending time in a clique oriented middle school which led to his early exposure to graffiti and street art. As a senior at Eureka High School, Chisholm enrolled in a program managed by the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis called Art in the Neighborhood, which helps aspiring young artists build portfolios in preparation for college applications.

“For me it does not feel like competition with other artists. I am motivated by the process.”



THE PLACE

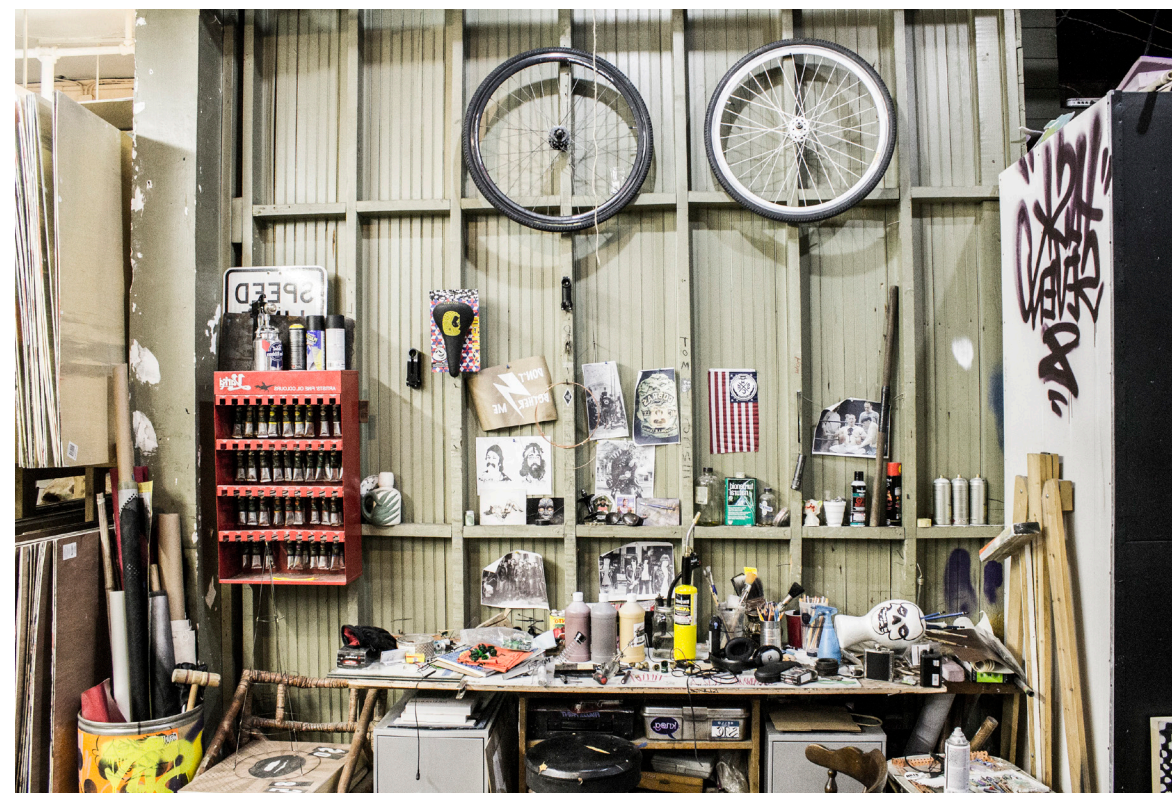
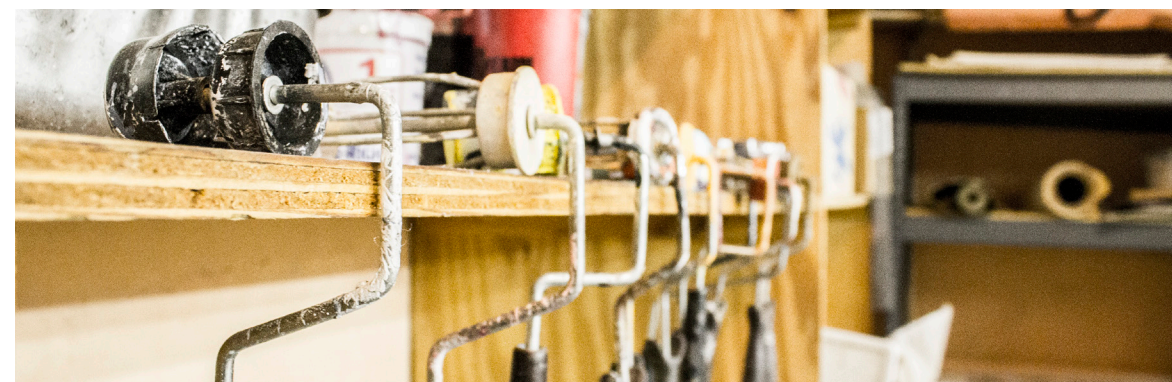
When you think of a library, what comes to mind? A place to read? A place to think and focus? Maybe even a place to incubate ideas? When we stopped at the Screwed Arts Collective, that's exactly what we walked into: a library - with a twist.

The studio space was a vast rectangular room filled with an eclectic mix of creative expression on every inch of wall space. But this was no gallery. Here the walls were filled with half-finished works and newborn ideas. A place representative of a strong relationship with process rather than product. This was not a gallery, this was a studio, a creative library.

The collection of artists in the studio, while very diverse, seemed to embrace the idea that inspiration would come through interaction and conversation. It was interesting to see hundreds of projects in progress, some sitting idle for long periods of time. However, that seemed to be the power of the space, a place for experimentation, creating a series of intersections across projects, media and artists.

The space reflected an approach shifting the value to the process of discovery. The collective, devoid of the permanence associated with a final project spoke more about a reflective conversation with self, the undulating periods of expression and rumination. You could sense the creative process and its remnants were everywhere as a constant reminder of the iterative nature of creative pursuits.

"I view creativity as a process of seeing and experiencing the world. Developing this ability requires openness and curiosity."



"Find inspiration in everything you do, ultimately it is all connected."

ST. LOUIS, MO
38°35'36"N 90°13'37"W

Pictured are a series of images showing the work spaces in the Screwed Arts Collective.

Though these may look in disarray to an outsider, the spaces are arranged solely for the purpose of enhancing the creative process. It doesn't matter if you're surrounded by clutter as long as your mind is making connections.

STOP SIX

BRIAN COLTRAIN

EXECUTIVE CHEF
ELEMENT RESTAURANT & LOUNGE

(n) silence

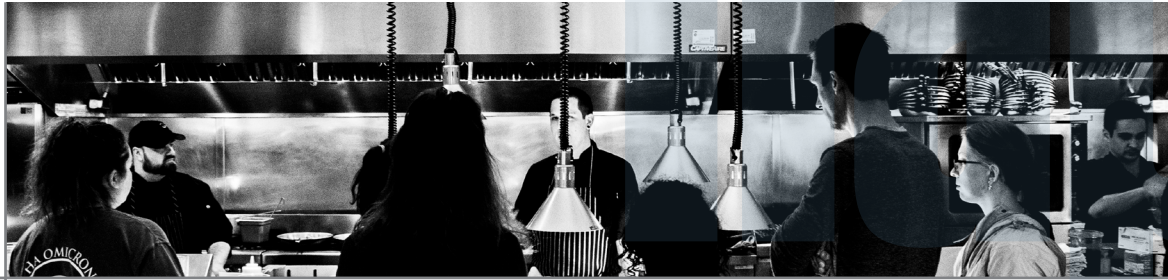
"the kind of unnoticed excellence that carries on around you every day - the hidden talents of friends and coworkers, the fleeting solos of subway buskers, the slapdash eloquence of anonymous users, the unseen portfolios of aspiring artists - which would be renowned as masterpieces if only they'd been appraised by the cartel of popular taste, who assume that brilliance is a rare and precious quality, accidentally overlooking buried jewels that may not be flawless but are still somehow perfect."

Brian Coltrain wants to share his love of food with each of his patrons. He seeks to educate others and spark curiosity about what they are eating. This begins with preparing and serving great food and extends into a relationship that has become the essence of his restaurant. The experience is no longer simply eating, paying your bill and leaving. Brian and his team at Element make it their job to connect with customers through the dining experience. They have created a model of edible education that continues to bring people back wanting more.



“Health and happiness before anything and everything.”

THE STORY



Brian has been cooking since he was a kid, but he never thought of it as a profession until he was older. His parents actually gave him the idea and he explored the possibility by enrolling in culinary school. This turned out to be a good decision, as Brian knew that he had found his calling.

Eventually Brian would find his way to Element, first as chef and ultimately executive chef. He was attracted by the opportunity to build a collaborative kitchen where every cook is a chef and has a chance to contribute to the creation of each dish. Unlike most kitchens where a group of cooks toil to execute a head chef's vision, the team at Element all share the title of chef and work together equally to develop and prepare the creative menu. Brian and all the chefs believe the collaborative model improves not only the creative nature of the workplace but ultimately the food.

Creative play is encouraged at Element and the results have been met with extremely positive feedback from diners and critics. The team's on-the-fly collaboration has developed an environment where the chefs like to feed off of one another, understanding that if they have an idea someone else will add to it making it a better product. No one is higher-ranking than anyone else, and although every idea is not pursued it is certainly considered and discussed as part of an ongoing creative dialogue.

This all relates back to the idea of educating the customer. At Element the creative process does not end after a dish has been prepared and served. As a part of the experience Brian and others seek out feedback and suggestions from the customers and public at large. Having a real connection to the city, the public and its users help maintain a broad and diverse perspective and ensures an authentic relationship.



“I’ve had millions of big ideas shot down. But ultimately, it’s the small, minute changes that affect the final outcome.”

FOOD PREPARATION: AN INSIDE SCOOP

Pictured are some images from the food prep line at Element.

Using the culinary arts as a way of communicating with restaurant guests has helped create a unique atmosphere in this space. The precise cuts of the knife, the smell of a baking oven - all of that is experienced first-hand from everywhere in the restaurant.

Vocalizing, in turn, promotes listening - to the ideas of others, to feedback, to anything. This combination of skills is critical for almost any line of work.”



“The key to successful collaboration and creative growth is to **vocalize** your thoughts. It might suck, but then again, it might not. Maybe your idea could inspire someone else on the team.

The structure of Element’s kitchen is a new approach and with that comes both challenges and freedom. As a unique model they can’t look to others as an example of how to evolve. Blazing a new trail forces them to always be reevaluating and developing creatively. It prevents them from ever viewing their service as a finished product and invites a process of re-imagining even the most successful dishes.

Sharing a meal at Element reinforced everything special the culinary team works so hard to establish as the essence of a dining experience. The food was masterfully prepared, and that is certainly noteworthy, but more importantly the experience was enlightening. Our conversation centered around the food, and the fusion of creative presentation and flavors. We were left asking questions, curious as we made connections from the food we first saw being prepared, then cooked and finally artfully served. From the first interaction with the wait staff through the serving of the food we were engaged and educated through each of our senses.

THE PLACE

Element opened less than two years ago in a historic, three-story, brick warehouse in Lafayette Square. Part of the 1906 City Hospital complex, Element is located inside what was once the hospital’s power plant. The restaurant’s open kitchen and dining room is accessible via elevator in the building’s lobby, with a third-floor bar area and lounge located just above. The building maintains that industrial factory feel, and Element takes advantage of it, incorporating a sleek interior design in the space’s casual setting.

Element feels spontaneous and accessible. From most seats in the house, the chefs are front and center executing their talents, an interactive display for diners to experience along with the food. The night of our visit we witnessed the team’s last-minute preparations which reflected what patrons see every night at Element: a team of chefs working together as a tight-knit group, often coming together for impromptu collaboration before breaking apart to hastily test or execute ideas.



ST. LOUIS, MO
38°36'53"N 90°12'28"W

STOP SEVEN

BOB HANSMAN

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY IN ST. LOUIS

(n) xeno

"the smallest measurable unit of human connection, typically exchanged between passing strangers – a flirtatious glance, a sympathetic nod, a shared laugh about some odd coincidence – moments that are fleeting and random but still contain powerful emotional nutrients that can alleviate the symptoms of feeling alone."

Bob Hansman is different, and that is inspiring. We all need reminders at times of how narrow our perspective can become living a life largely focusing on self. In astonishing contrast, Bob lives his life focused on the idea that we are all part of a community, a community that does not end at the edge of our own skin.

Big problems are messy, multi-faceted, contentious, and often scary. Bob represents the truth that making a difference and acting on these problems requires stepping forward and connecting with people, place and problem in a deep and meaningful way. Our visit was an important reminder of the power of empathy and the importance of caring, connecting, and committing to others.



THE STORY



It is the early 1970s and Bob has been diagnosed with malignant melanoma; beginning what he describes as a harrowing decade in and out of remission and, for a brief time, homeless. Additionally, Bob nearly lost a close friend during this time. In search of a coping mechanism, Bob turned to drawing. As his work evolved it was eventually seen by Jim Harris, who served as the associate dean at the Washington University School of Architecture and wrote art reviews for the St. Louis Post Dispatch. Impressed with Bob's work, Harris asked him if he would like to teach drawing to WashU architecture students.

A few years after he was hired by Washington University, Bob began City Faces, an art program started in the Clinton-Peabody public housing development. The program has grown over the past 20 years, now including a Washington University student organization whose members assist with homework and mentoring for the program at the Al Chapelle Community Center. After receiving recognition as a Missouri Arts Award winning art exhibit, it is now a year-round program.

“The turning point happens when we get motivated to act by these issues, instead of having just the privilege to be sad.”



“The biggest challenge we’re facing is getting people to see that there is a problem, then taking action to start to solve the problem.”

Jovan Hansman now runs City Faces, a program he first attended in 1994 under his previous name, Jovan Simpson. As a quiet 13 year old, Jovan was in need of a father figure in his life. And although Jovan's relationship with Bob started as teacher-student, it soon evolved into something much more. Jovan would eventually move in with Bob and thereafter became father/son - and now, business partners and best friends.

Over the last 20 years, Bob has established a strong relationship with the community and has worked to foster a better understanding of his students by connecting them with the greater St. Louis community. He is known for giving bus tours to classes and groups of students, even other than his own, stopping in each of the neighborhoods to present students with the social and architectural history of the area. He carries a binder filled with notes, maps, and pictures that he uses to provide specific stories to the students. Then, as we watch in fascination, people emerge from homes and businesses at each neighborhood, and residents come out to enthusiastically greet Bob with a hug. It is the perfect illustration of taking action.

FLOOD WALL:
PUBLIC ART IN THE COMMUNITY

THE PLACE

Hansman has quietly ushered hundreds of students through the neighborhoods of north St. Louis. Along the way, he chronicles the dismal racial, social and urban histories that have shaped conditions on the ground, but also introduces the ministers, shop owners and longtime residents who persevere in calling the north side home.

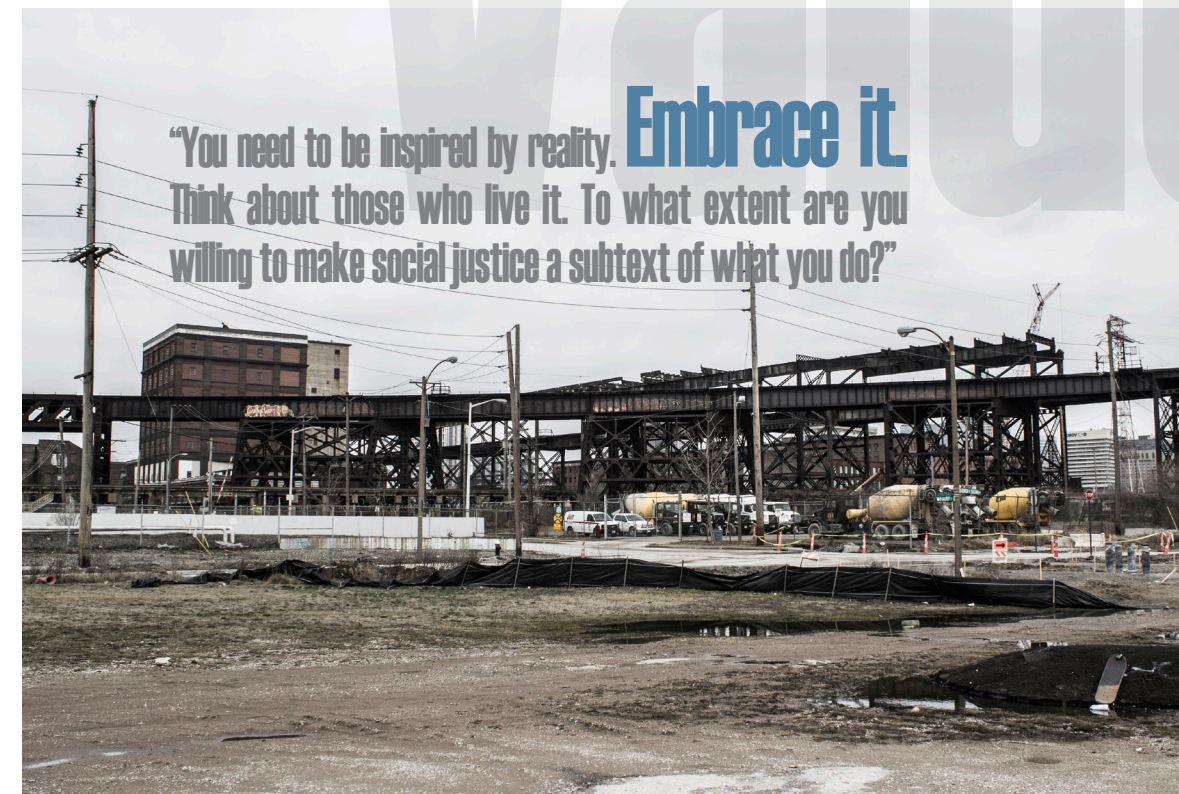
These tours which he describes as “information, information, information” – take students on a transect across some of the most impoverished areas in the United States. Down Jefferson Avenue past what was once Mill Creek Valley, into the abandoned Pruitt-Igoe site, past the old Homer G. Phillips Hospital, and eventually to Ivory Perry Park. The park, mere blocks from Washington University’s Danforth Campus, was the site of a devastating and fatal attack on 10-year-old Rodney McAllister by a pack of wild dogs in 2001. During our visit our tour continued into Ferguson, MO, a nearby suburb of St. Louis where only months before Michael Brown, a black teenager, was shot and killed on by Darren Wilson, a white police officer, sparking civil unrest and protests.

His role in this experience is to bring together people who might not meet any other way. To illuminate misconceptions, on all sides, and open up a dialogue to understanding. These tours are about understanding what we see. It’s about connecting here and there, then and now. Figuring out that when you look at a particular instance, you also need to have the larger picture. The tours are also about understanding how structural conditions shape what might seem like individual decision.

“College is much more about developing a value system rather than a skill set.”



“Risk casting a net wide enough that you catch yourself in it.”



ST. LOUIS, MO
38°36'51"N 90°11'16"W

Pictured is the view from inside the flood wall.

Much like many of the parts of St. Louis that Bob showed us, it was clear this was, at one point in time, a thriving community. However, a whirlwind of social miscues seems to have left many parts of the city with nothing more than a vacant, post-industrial shell.