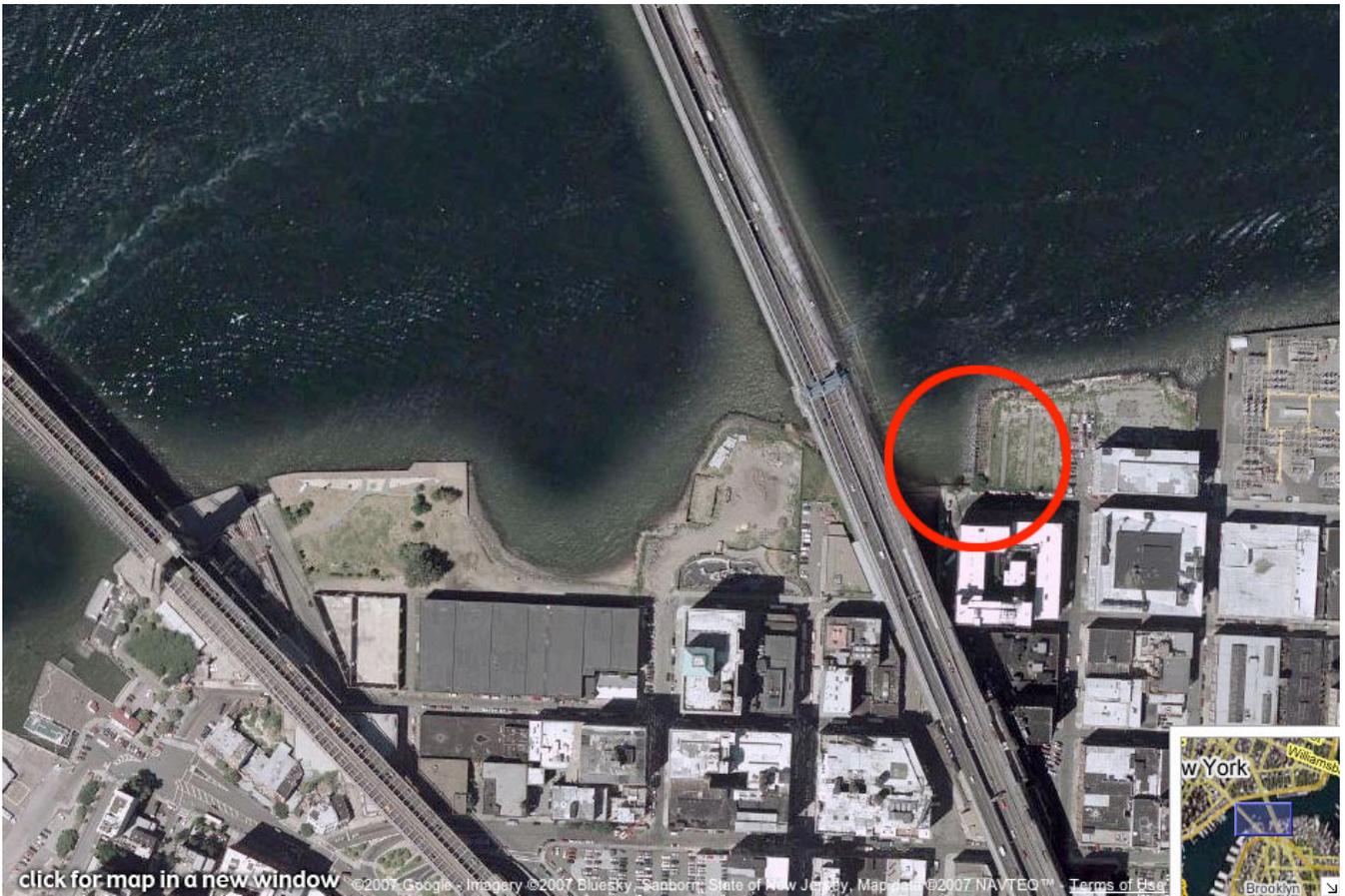


Ark, AN INSTALLATION BY RICHARD WATTS

New York City, DUMBO, Brooklyn Bridge City Park, June 30 – Aug. 25 2007, as part of Brooklyn Waterfront Artists' Coalition (BWAC) 25th anniversary outdoor sculpture show, "Still Flying".



Ark is a 30' vintage mahogany boat, built in Hong Kong, found on Georgian Bay in Ontario, Canada, which has been taken apart and reconfigured as symbolic form. Like an aging body its practical function, removed, reveals underlying meaning. This 'boat' has been gutted, sandblasted, torched, transformed. The hissing of the sandblaster is the sound of time passing. A steel structure made of gas and water pipes, like a building's energy system fallen from the sky, both prevents and delineates its disintegration.



Ark is a controlled wreck, a bandaged world, a transitional object between two countries, a dream ship, a human process evolving towards an unpredictable future. It is a work about shadows and memories, which come from the loss of material form.

Combining human and animal elements, it has potential to walk, float, or fly, but its movement is frozen. Like the original ark it has traveled across the world, most recently along the dry concrete rivers between Toronto and New York City. With its scrap steel torch held high, it is pointing towards the entrance to America with a diminutive torch, facing the emptiness where the Twin Towers stood.



More than a sculpture, **Ark** is a story. Its meaning is in the human interactions around it. It is an epic in miniature as it was transported to and installed in NYC against all odds. Images of the unfloatable “boat” swaying down the highway on the truck, almost stopped at U.S. Customs as it couldn’t be categorized as ‘art’ or ‘commodity’, ‘wreck’ or ‘vehicle’ (while American hunters returning from Canada with a shot bear were passed right through), and moved three times in a small park before being salvaged as an ‘artwork’ by Jeanne-Claude and given a temporary resting place; speak to a frightened post-911 world under siege, as well as Noah’s antediluvian difficulties finding dry land. If a boat, like a raft, is a world on water, as the earth floats in space, how do we determine if it is salvageable, or not? This is the most important question of our time.



And yet as with all epics Ark speaks of hope: a wedding was photographed in front of it before it was offloaded from the transport truck, and couples, walking two by two, seem inexorably drawn to it. Earlier visitors to the New World arrived by boat, shackled by memories. Unlike that time, our frontier is gone, we breathe our children's future, and the world will not be redeemed by divine intervention after a flood.

"Things fall apart; the center cannot hold
mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,

...

And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?"

W.B. Yeats, "The Second Coming", 1920



Ark is a project of Crowe River Studios, an artist collective grounded in a converted barn in the Canadian Shield. It would not have been possible without the assistance of many people, among them: John Winney / Dew Man Marine, Toronto Marine Maintenance, Robert Fox, Doug Makemson, Crazy Boat Man, Andrews Trucking, Charles at Chambers Paper, Erin Clarke, Maddie Hudson, Michel Trocme, Nick Rogers, other friends in Toronto, and an innovative FedEx customs agent.

I would like to thank particularly Allan MacIsaac and Sharon Hunter, who stuck through a difficult landing, moving the installation five times in one week (much of what we do in our country is move things around...). Its current location is thanks to Hal Swann for sourcing a number, Jeanne-Claude and the Brooklyn Parks Commissioner for answering, and Margaret Watts, our financier/producer.

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CROWE RIVER STUDIOS