

David Brooks Sculpture Proposal



Title:

Gap Ecology (5 Still Lives with Cherry Pickers and Palms)

Conceptual Context:

The current recession has halted dozens of construction projects around New York City at an alarming rate. The *Building Trades Employers' Association* is reporting nearly \$5 billion in delayed or stalled projects across the city in recent months.

Not surprisingly, many find this current phenomenon as a startling crisis portending only more uncertainties to come. From another perspective however, this could be seen as the natural order of things in an emergent global economy. With a little poetic license, a look at a phenomenon common in rainforest ecology, *Gap Ecology*, shows a process not too dissimilar and paints the picture of a possible future to come. In the Amazonian forest, the onslaught of unrelenting storms in the rainy season brings a severity of rain and wind, often resulting in the natural felling of old growth emergent trees. The fall of an emergent tree from the blanketing canopy makes its visible mark on the forest, forming a "light gap". When one of these towering hardwood giants topples, it usually takes a handful of neighboring trees with it, thus ripping a hole in the forest canopy and exposing the understory to uninhibited shafts of light. This newly formed gap in the forest will be quickly colonized by opportunistic species in the undergrowth. Certain types of palms, bamboos and various shrubby plants are well adapted to capitalize on such improvisational events. Taking advantage of their brief exposure to light, these pioneering species begin fruiting and flowering at accelerated speeds, attracting numerous bands of animal life to their momentary bursts of growth – a veritable bacchanalia. Typically this event has a relatively limited duration, as these species are not designed for long-term existence in the rainforest, but are designed to take advantage of another's downfall, a rupture in the status quo. Saplings can lay dormant in the understory for decades, awaiting such an event, if it happens at all. These portending forces of opportunistic life are ever present but concealed in the hierarchy of the forest's body, waiting to be enacted.

Material and Situational Description:

My project proposes to take advantage of the numerous light gaps formed by dormant construction sites that now litter the New York City landscape, and to enact a veritable bacchanalia of a different sort. My proposed public work: "Gap Ecology (5 Still Lives with Cherry Pickers and Palms)" will consist of five cherry-pickers, or aerial boom lifts, which are one of the more common pieces of heavy machinery that live on job sites throughout the duration of large construction projects (see below).

Each of the five cherry-pickers will have the passenger basket filled to the brim with more than 25 *Majestic* and *Areca* Palms – filled to the point that they are bursting through the seams. (See the below example)



Site:

The five cherry-pickers will congregate at five different dormant construction sites, for one “work week” at each site. This band of cherry-pickers will follow a route from South to North through Manhattan over a 4 to 5 week time period. (see below map showing 5 potential sites of dormant construction projects, which form “light gaps”).

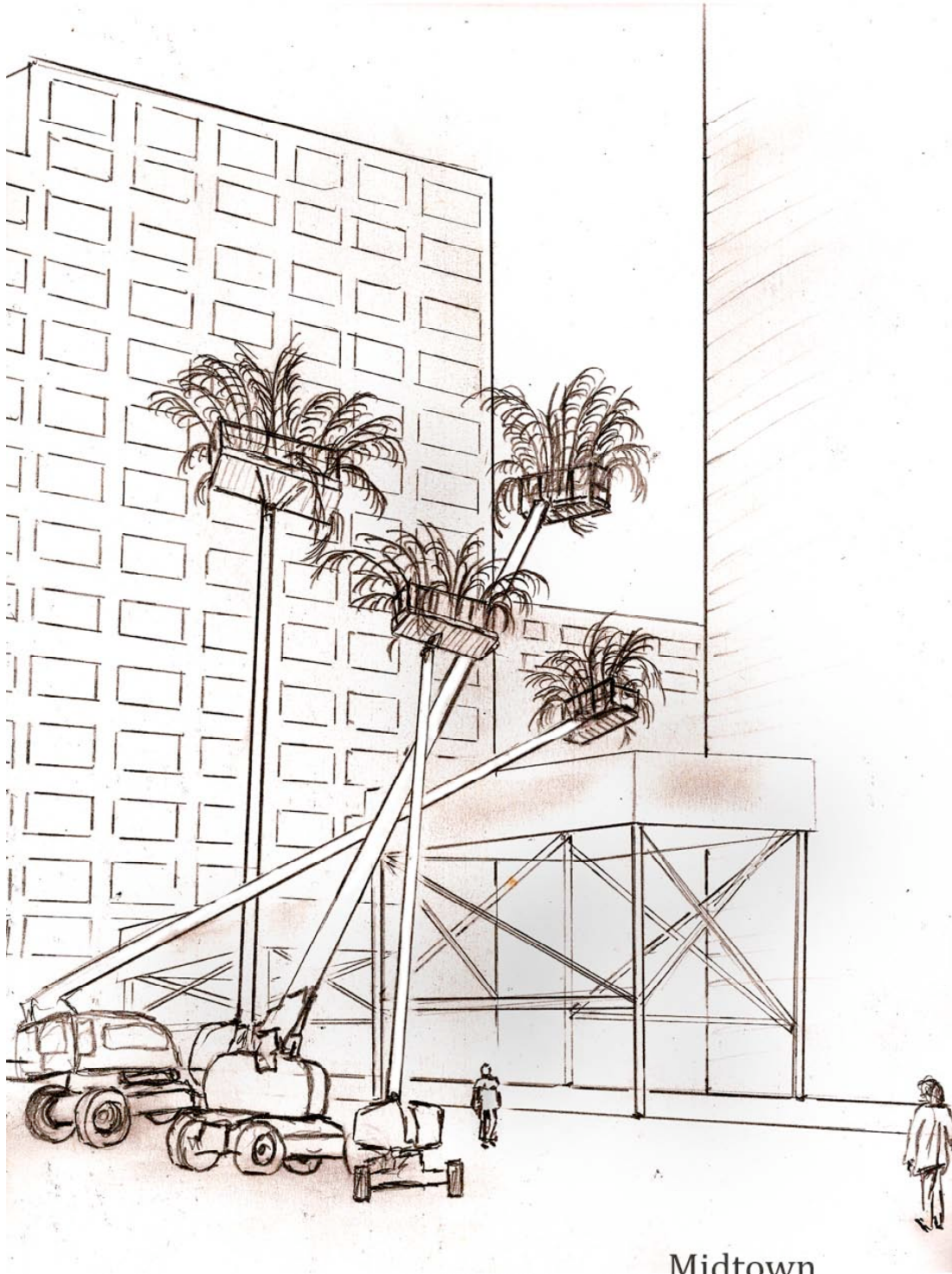


The five cherry-pickers will migrate through the city (moved at night, or on the weekends, after a “work week” has concluded) to five chosen construction sites currently dormant. The “Still Lives with Cherry Pickers and Palms” will highlight the activity and inactivity of infrastructural projects that shape our physical world and act as barometers within ever developing global economic system, continuously left unchecked. The movement to each site will allow for a new composition and arrangement of the cherry-pickers, behaving like opportunistic palm species reaching toward these newly formed light gaps.





Hell's Kitchen



Midtown