

PROJECT SERIES:
PAULA HAYES

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Ac Project Room Garden Timeline by Paula Hayes

1995

October 2

Paul Bloodgood and Alissa Freidman of Ac Project Room ask me to design a garden for the gallery as a project.

October 25

Proposal to Ac Project Room for garden design at 15 Renwick St.

1996

January 26

Meeting with Paul and Alissa concerning the direction of the design. Decision to simplify and plant with low maintenance woodland planting for low budget maintenance program. Discussion of the welded structure to hold the two tons of soil in strong boxes.

March 28

Meeting with Ac group: Paul Bloodgood, Alissa Freidman, Anne Chu, Sandra Vellejos. Discussion of the process of installing the garden. I feel panicky because nothing seems to be really happening. I try to explain to the group what a huge undertaking this is, how much incredible strenuous work the whole thing is. They act like I'm difficult.

April 3

The Ac group finally starts to realize what a big project this is and starts to get riled up about it. Art Cart will help build the boxes out of pressure treated wood.

April 9

Anne Chu comes over to my miniature home-office-studio-parental arena space at MacDougal St. to discuss the financial aspect of the garden, to tell me that I have to pay for the planting, which was news to me. In other words the gallery is not the client, it is MY garden as a project. It pisses me

off financially, especially at this date, but opens up new possibilities in terms of how the project develops into the future.

April 15

A structural engineer is consulted. Drawings are faxed to his office. He immediately approves them.

April 16

Chick is called in to weld the super structure. Graham and all of Art Cart [an art moving company from which Ac Project Room developed-BK] get involved. Super human community effort by the Ac gang and the friends of Ac.

April 17

Alissa and myself go out to Bissett nursery in Dix Hills, L.I. to get the plants. We return with the shrubs, trees, plants, soil, soil amendments, tools, mulch, etc. and deliver to the gallery. The gallery is filled with the plants of the garden.

April 18

Installation of plants with entire crew.

April 19

Installation continues, in to early hours of 4/20.

April 20

Opening of the exhibition, "Paula Hayes and Aki Fujioshi." We all worry that the garden will fall off the building bringing all the gallery goers with it...Fortunately this doesn't happen.

Maintenance Mode Begins

April

Cool nights, warming days high in the 70's, low in the 40's. Hand water one time after initial drenching.

May

Cool nights, warm days to 70's, low in the 50's. Hand water three times in month. Removal of one Rhododendron album. Rhododendrons which survive bloom beautifully, addition of Marguerite Daisies, see the painted wall of the next door neighbor building with rusting walls as strong hand in the coloring of the garden direction. Still checking-out the site. Rearrangement of English Ivy. Can't decide about the form, the romantic nature of the organic spectacle.

June

Warmer. In to the 80's. Hand water five times in month. Addition of summer annuals. Some Orange Day Lilies blooming, yellow Pansies. The garden goes in to warmer zone in every way. The blue metallic floor bothers me.

July

Hot summer weather. Hand water nine times in month. Rain heavy mid month. Take out north side Rhodo max. Move Pieris andromeda to sunnier part of garden. Addition of Pyracantha. Addition of fern.

August

Hot summer. Water eight times. Some rain. Establish the form by plants growing into each other. The Ilex grows rapidly.

September

Hot days. Water seven times. Addition of English Ivy, move Hostas. Want more orange.

October

Cooler, rainier. Low in 50's. Plant grasses on north side, on sunnier side of garden Water two times in month. I go up to Vermont for a project with Eric Miles and bring back pumpkins for a carving party on the 18th. Ac artists attend. We make many lanterns in the gloomy darkness in the garden.

November

No more hand watering. Spray with anti-desiccant, add pine boughs to soil line for added protection.

December

Frozen, but only lightly, very mild.

1997

January

Frozen and snow, but mildly so.

February

Warmer days, rain, very mild for winter.

March

Remove boughs, add manure which has been bagged under the flooring for the season, it smells hideous and doesn't quit.

April

Very mild, manure doesn't breakdown? Dogwood open and budding. I add tulips and primrose, red and yellow.

May

Warmer days, in to the 70's, rain, water five times, add Lantana, orange with yellow centers, do major cleaning, pruning, tie up Pyracantha.

June

Warm, drier, water five times in month. Manure still strong smelling, which is disturbing. Add bloodmeal. Everything growing very well. Neighbor complained about manure by yelling out the window "What is this? A barnyard?" and then slammed the window.

July

Warm, some rain, water six times, manure starting to breakdown, cleaned the drains, manure clogged the drain below, poured disinfectant down to the drain and added cedar mulch to the soil levels.

August

Warm, rain ok, water six times. Decide to redo the floor by putting in a cedar floor. 5" wide boards, stained, and paint the railing a rusted brown. I pay my children to help paint the railing. Mice holes show up in the soil. I flush them out with the hose, fill them. We think about getting a cat.

September

Fair weather, some rain, low in the 60's. Paul builds the cedar floor. I move the Wild Friends office over to 15 Renwick. The office window looks out on to the garden. I am so happy with it! The blue floor and railing really bothered me. Now the garden is warm and wooden and growing nicely, I have the site in me and feel that it is maturing. Web caterpillars show up in an extreme infestation on the Ailanthus nearby. They hatch and several come to the garden! I consult with Cornell University and New York Botanical garden and am assured (sort of) that they will not eat anything other than the Ailanthus. Jen Fong photographs the garden.

October

Cool nights, water two times. The caterpillars continue, we pick them off and get rid of them by hand. We get a cat and name it "Mouser." The Pyracantha which is in the sunnier part of the garden flourishes and makes hundreds of berries, as does the Dogwood. I add two tall staked English Ivy which are extra from a Wild Friends client.

November

Cooler, torrential rains, the Dogwood is yellow and red leafed. Red Pyracantha berries fall to the nice wooden floor. Starting to think about the winter here, and prepare for the second sleep. The Jen Fong photo of the garden is used as an ArtForum ad. for my exhibition 11/22.

*Loyalty seeing*¹

BK: For some time we have talked about issues of commitment in our art practices. What are you thinking about this now?

PH: Well, it's obvious where commitment is in gardening as a traditional craft. When you think of how different botany is from horticulture as a science, you realize that botany is all about observing the plants in their habitat, whereas horticulture is about moving the plants to one's own habitat. The commitment to making sure the plants live through this is where gardening originates in some sense.

BK: How does this relate, or not relate, then to the historical precedents of earth art, with people such as Smithson, Oppenheim, or Heizer?

PH: In *Promised Relations*,² I had talked about my position to the land, within the landscape, as opposed to the aerial view of Smithson, Oppenheim, or Heizer. In that context, I suppose that the distinction between myself and their practice *is* really important to me; these guys weren't gardening.

BK: What about your interest in working with landscape amongst people? I mean, you have relationships with your clients, you work within their homes, yards, and terraces; you are constantly considering the needs of a given context, whether horticultural or personal. I feel that this is an important area of your work.

PH: It is significant when you let other people inside what is historically supposed to be such an individual heroic act. But it's hard to get in the right relationship with it oneself, even when one is completely committed to it as an art practice. What about you? When you are a stranger on the

¹ From a conversation between Paula Hayes and Ben Kinmont, 8 November 1997.

² *Promised Relations; or, thoughts on a few artists' contracts*, at Ac Projectroom, January - February 1997. An exhibition project organized by Ben Kinmont with Yves Klein, Ed Kienholz, on verbal contracts, Marcel Broodthaers, Seth Siegelaub and Bob Projansky, Komar & Melamid, and Paula Hayes/Wild Friends. Catalogue published by the Antinomian Press. 1996. See pp. 22-25.

street and at the same time an artist wanting to interact with the public to go way way beyond

the gallery, I know that you are trying to allow trust to exist in the process. You are not the painter with nude subject. You are putting yourself in such a different relationship to “the topic.” You are not on top, so to speak.

BK: Well, it’s true that I am constantly thinking about who’s on top, if there is a top, and whose value system is defining it as such. The strange thing is how little one has to move to go outside of the art context, to look into things mundane or maintenance oriented and find a relatively untrodden, or private ground. I certainly find myself most vulnerable when going into stranger’s homes, washing-up for them, or something, and wondering where the care is. Especially when I focus on whether it is possible to be in this relationship with others and not be a parasite, to not fall into the traditional relationship of being the one with the vision and using others to fulfill that vision. Somehow commitment takes one outside of that vision, and necessitates a learning from participants while still remaining focused.

PH: It goes both ways. For instance when I complete the installation phase of a garden project, when it has been planted completely, I am very concerned that the owner of the garden knows fully that I intend to bring the garden to another level of realization, and to be part of that process. This can be difficult for the person who has commissioned me to do the project, perhaps because of their *own* feelings of commitment to the garden as an artwork. The process is much much longer than the initial commission statement; this the three way relationship between me, garden, and client which is going to happen over a long period of time and really have no eventual outcome. This is very difficult within the way the art economy functions now.

BK: What about this problem of marketing such a concern, this idea of commitment. I attempt to support *and* map my projects through the sale of their archives, and to continue adding to these in perpetuity; sort of like its own ecosystem with a high level of maintenance. But, in your work, I find it interesting that you are running a gardening business and that you participate in two different economies, one of the construction/gardening world, and that of the art world/collectors.

PH: It is significant that I can live and work and do a lot of the same things outside of the art context. What is necessary for me to do as an artist, though, is to explore the subject of commitment to a mutating form, the garden, and the idealism which is required to commit to such an activity. I am doing this within an art history which is unfortunately about the posterity of an individual vision; however, I find this private vision to be disingenuous towards the way things *really* move and change.

Short Title Project List

Since 1983, Paula Hayes has been a professional gardener. After working with and for others in and around New York State on more than 40 gardens, Hayes began her business *Wild Friends*, for which she became the proprietor on July 16th, 1991. Since then she has joined together her art and business practice, both “out of necessity and revelation.” Below is a list of the projects she has begun; it is important to note that these projects were commissioned with the client’s understanding and collaboration in the garden as an art process.

Living Garden Projects

[Untitled project in progress], Scarsdale, NY, Marty and Rebecca Eisenburg.

429 Greenwich St. Garden, NYC, 1997, Commissioned by Rolf and Erika Hoffmann, Walled-in Courtyard Garden, Native Woodland Planting.

Apple Maze, Bauhaus University, Weimar, Germany, 1996, Traditional Maze, Boxwood Hedge Work.

Ac Project Room Garden, NYC, 1996, Balcony Garden, Native Woodland Planting.

88 Bleecker St. Lobby, NYC, 1996, Native Woodland Planting Exterior, Tropic Planting Interior [with Bench Fabricated by Nagashima Studio and architectural input by Stephen Freid].



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