

We feel grateful for the expansive relationships we are continuously building - our neighbors help us to develop questions, nurture idea exchange and create space for criticality.

We celebrate these relationships. We are learning.

Our work is made possible through the strengths of many.

Here are few that have helped us translate our work from our neighborhood into the Miller Gallery:

Gil Berry, Vicki Vargo, Tony Buba, Jim Kidd, Nina Burdell, the North Braddock Code Office, Jacob Ciocci x 100, Ginger Brooks Takahashi, NHK, Phyllis Brown, Tesar Freeman, Margaret Eva Cox, DJ Nelson, KT Tierney, Astria Suparak (thank you for having us) and the deconstruction community including Brad Guy, the BMRA and Buffalo Reuse. Search for them!

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This project is financially supported in part by the Pittsburgh Arts Council and the Pittsburgh Biennial at the Miller Gallery

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#### 2011 PITTSBURGH BIENNIAL

Sept. 16 - Dec. 11, 2011 Curated by Astria Suparak, Director, Miller Gallery at CMU

Miller Gallery at Carnegie Mellon University Purnell Center for the Arts, 5000 Forbes Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15213 www.cmu.edu/millergallery / Info line: 412.268.3618 Hours: Tues.-Sun., 12-6pm / Closed Mondays Free and open to the public

be in touch with us: www.transformazium.org info@transformazium.org

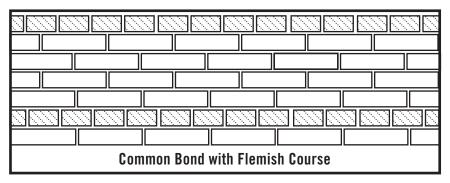
Hello, we are Transformazium - a way of working, a building, and dynamic relationships. In 2008, we acquired an abandoned church and an adjacent empty lot in North Braddock, PA through the Allegheny Vacant Properties Recovery program. This process removed nearly half a million dollars of back taxes and liens from the building's title so that it could be purchased for its assessed value of \$20,000. We moved from New York City to North Braddock because we believed that our building would be a place in which our ideas would have room to grow. We shared (and share) variously overlapping passionate interests in art making and art looking, experimental farming, gardening and food policy, radical education and investigating ways that creativity and critical thinking can make us happier, more generous, generative and powerful people. Before we moved, we imagined ways that we would make our ideas tangible and available to each other and our neighbors. Almost immediately after becoming residents of our new neighborhood, we began to recognize the assumptions and value systems we had brought with us, and the ways that those informed our intentions. Our plans had been made in relationship to the place we were coming from. We needed to generate new ideas and come up with new plans in relationship to our new place.

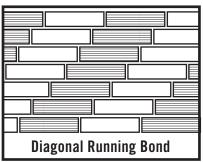
Like many neighborhoods in the rust-belt region, ours has experienced economic and demographic changes that are readily visible as boarded up storefronts and vacant, dilapidated homes. This landscape is a complicated visual and emotional mixture of beautiful, sad, scary, familiar, depressing, exotic, intriguing, claustrophobic and limiting. It changes depending on where you are coming from, where you are going, and how you perceive yourself in relationship to it. Through our relationship with our formerly abandoned building and our growing relationships with our neighbors, we've begun to translate our systems of value from one place to another, and to reconsider what we left behind, what we hoped to find, what our resources are, and how we can share them.

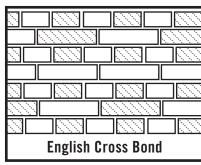
Our building came with some very pressing needs, foremost being a fire-damaged and condemned parish house connected to the main building. Faced with bids of \$15,000 and above to demolish the parish house and have it taken to a landfill, we explored our options and ultimately decided to deconstruct the building. Working together over 9 weeks, we taught ourselves the basics of deconstruction and completed the non-structural work removing doors, windows, mouldings, plaster, lath and non load bearing walls. We then hired a local demo contractor, DJ Demolition, to finish the deconstruction.

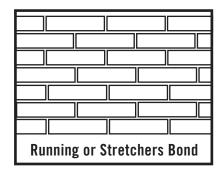
The cost to deconstruct was under \$10,000, and left us with a wealth of material resources that we will use for future building projects in the main building and in our lot.

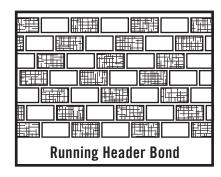
#### CLASSIFICATIONS OF BONDS + PATTERNS

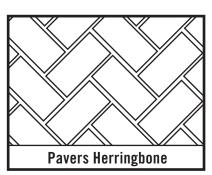


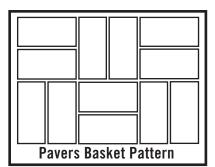












#### Word match.

The following are some words that we find ourselves using and thinking about a lot. Match words on the left with words on the right. Some words may match with more than one word. Some words on the left may match words on the left. Some words on the right may match words on the right. Some words may match because they have a relationship as opposites, instead of being similar. Sometimes you learn more from people you have less in common with than those who are similar. People tend to spend more time around those who are similar. Just saying.

	germinate
value	art
resources	arbitrary
embodied energy	power structures
local	money
access	ideas
engage	neighbor
problematic	listening
public	economy
privilege	waste
community	shared
transform	material
context	options
communication	deconstruction
challenge	assumptions
gentrification	class
repurpose	exchange
demolish	build
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foundation

## WE HAVE A TON OF BRICKS.

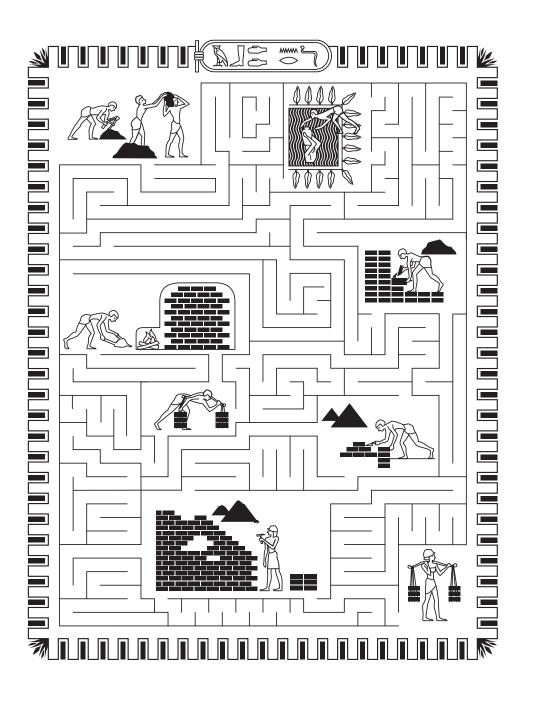
These bricks are from our neighborhood. Our bricks are our wealth.

Our bricks have become a way to describe how we can find value in unlikely places, and how we can use those resources to build, unbuild, and rebuild our neighborhoods together.

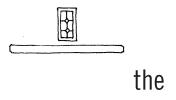
This is your brick, draw what it looks like.								

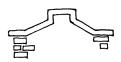
Where did it come from?

Where is it going?



#### Finish





building.





# circle the item with the greatest



# value



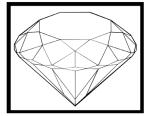




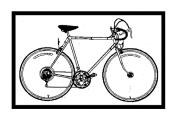












## BRICKS ARE MADE from clay mixed with sand

and water and ground to a smooth, uniform texture. The clay mixture is formed into blocks and fired to achieve strength and durability. Fired bricks have been used for at least 5,000 years. With their invention came the possibility of building permanent structures with widely available and abundant materials. These structures were resource efficient, fire resistant, and suited to many types of building, from the simplest rectangular house to incredible feats of architecture including the Great Wall of China, Hagia Sophia, and the Hanging Gardens of Babylon. Bricks allowed our towns and cities to grow, and our cultures along with them. In our neighborhood, bricks are so common a presence as to be virtually invisible. And yet, these are literally the building blocks from which our homes, schools, libraries, stores and churches are built.

The bricks that we salvaged from the building we deconstructed were likely made from clay quarried nearby. We will put them back into use in our lot across the street as paths, garden beds and the walls of future structures.

Our bricks are an opportunity to build a relationship with the architecture of our neighborhood, in dialogue with our neighbors, that is active, imaginative, and respectful of the history embodied in each brick.

### EMBODIED ENERGY

is a measure of all of the resources which go into the making of an object over the course of its entire life cycle. These resources include the raw materials that compose the object, as well as the chemical, mechanical and human energy and water used to extract these materials, to transport these materials to the site of manufacture, to convert these materials into component parts, to assemble the object, to transport the object to its point of sale and use, and eventually to disassemble or decompose the object. The more energy inputs and the shorter the useful lifespan of the object, the higher the Embodied Energy.

Some objects that have a high Embodied Energy are expensive because of the high resource inputs that go into their making, and so are considered very valuable. On the other hand, some objects with a high Embodied Energy are made with artificially low labor or material costs, or do not include future expenses associated with the objects and their manufacture in the sticker price. These objects are considered to have little value. How do these economic value systems relate to the ways that we choose to value our environment, our resources, our health and our labor? When we consider the Embodied Energy of an object, we have the opportunity to imagine the spirit of the object as composed of all of the resources and fuel that went into it, and all of the hands that touched it. When we extend an object's useful life through reuse, we push that spirit forward into the future where it can have purpose, rather than allowing that spirit to be wasted and lost forever.

How many times does the word ENE	RGY appear in this text?
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•••bonus activity:

Take an object from your life and map its Embodied Energy.

#### Job Description:

#### **Neighborhood Conversation Starter**

You are a Neighborhood Conversation Starter.
You have a valuable skill: active and creative communication.

Your responsibilities as a Neighborhood Conversation Starter are to:

- Gather information about resources and services available in our neighborhood.
- Deliver this information to your neighbors so that resources and services can reach those who need them more effectively.
- Gather information from your neighbors about what resources and services they need.
- Deliver this information to local organizations so that neighborhood needs can be met more effectively.
- Start conversations. Ask your neighbors about their talents, skills, experience and expertise.
- Record their responses in the Neighborhood Human Resource Log.
- Connect neighbors with each other so that we can share skills and resources, and help each other achieve our goals.

#### • • •

With our voices.

Through our relationships with each other.

All of us can teach, learn, share, and collaboratively strengthen our neighborhood.

The position of Neighborhood Conversation Starter lays the foundation for a neighborhood creating a local economic system; encouraging the growth and support of local resources and the people who create them, as well as a strong network of communication among residents.

• • • You will be paid an honorarium of	\$12/hour for your work and time.
I agree to this job	date

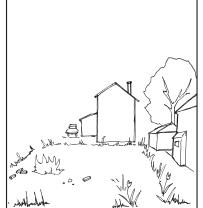
<sup>\*</sup>This is one example of a way to formalize resource and relationship sharing in our neighborhoods. See www.transformazium.org/log for more examples.

# We all have resources to share. How do we create spaces for active communication and resource sharing, so that we can all be resources to one another? Our neighbors are teachers, carpenters, grocers, electricians, roofers, scrappers, swappers, barterers, artists, doctors, musicians, poets, librarians, child care providers, cooks, mothers, fathers, cousins and more.

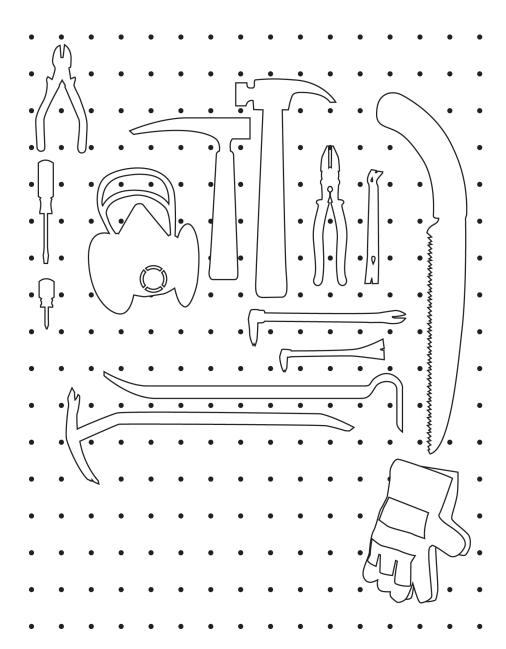
# Three ways a property can exist in our neighborhood. Where do you see resources, possibilities, waste + missed opportunities? Describe.











match the descriptor to deconstruction

or

demolition

majority of materials are compacted then put in a landfill or used as fill

minimizes landfill waste + pollution

creates value-added markets from waste materials

values speed

expands job opportunities + workforce development skills

a wrecking activity directed to the disassembling, dismantling, dismembering or razing of any structure

also known as "unbuilding"

values labor

method currently used to raze 245,000 houses/year in the U.S., producing 20 million tons of debris

creates 20 times more jobs

cost of job goes primarily toward landfill fees + fossil fuels

accumulates LEED points

values energy

reduces the consumption of new resources

redevelopment of the site may require excavation or abatement of toxins

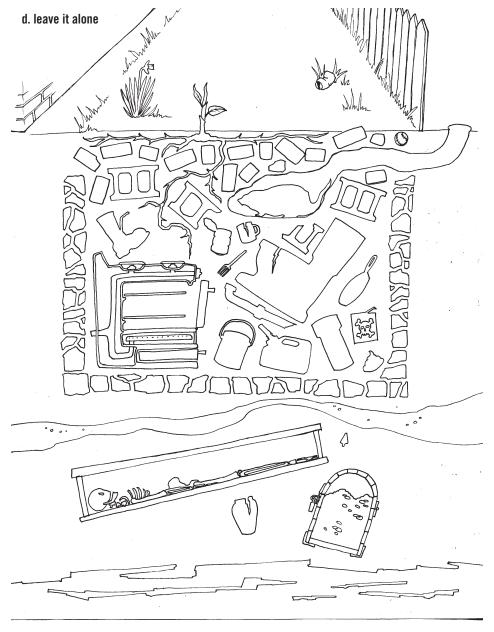
primarily uses excavators, bulldozers, wrecking balls, explosives + cranes

primarily uses hand tools + human thought + labor

building must be systematically dismantled + materials processed for reuse

#### This lot is full of possibilities and lots of other stuff. What would you do with this lot and everything underneath it?

- a. cap it and build up
- b. remediate the soil
- c. excavate



#### DECONSTRUCTION can be defined as:

the practice of disassembling a building in such a way that the materials (joists, flooring, siding, fixtures, and more) can be reused for new construction. Deconstruction is a cost competitive alternative to conventional building demolition.

By reusing building materials, many environmental and social benefits can be realized, including:

- Reducing the consumption of new resources.
- Minimizing landfill waste and pollution.
- Creating value-added markets from waste materials.
- Expanding job opportunities and workforce development skills. from the Building Materials Reuse Association, www.bmra.org

To the left are some of the tools we used to deconstruct the parish house attached to our building. We had very little experience when we began, and learning how to use these tools and our bodies in new ways was an exciting, often humbling challenge. Even more humbling was the process of uncovering the thought and labor that had gone into building and maintaining the home as we took it apart.

These tools enabled us to preserve many tons of material resources, place value on the human energy present in them, and extend this energy and history into the future.

Can you name the tools pictured and describe their use?

