



*Field Notes: Parts of a Whole*  
Broadway Billboard

Audioguide: A conversation with

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Aneesa Razak, Artist & Education Manager, Socrates Sculpture Park  
Carla Heyward, Participant

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00;00;00;01

DP: I'm Douglas Paulson. I'm an artist and the Director of Education at Socrates Sculpture Park.

AR: I am Aneesa Razak. I am also an artist and education manager, and I help Doug at the Park.

CH: And I'm Carla Hayworth, a mixed media artist and participant in all things Field Guide.

DP: So we're here to talk about the Field Guide billboard project. And before we do that, just so that everyone listening knows what Field Guide is, it's a series of ephemeral workshops that are designed to be intergenerational and connect art making, mindfulness and environmental appreciation. We have them many Saturdays out of the year and they're free and open to the public. Aneesa, do you want to describe to us what that billboard looks like and how you made it?

AR: I first saw the billboard I made up at Socrates when I was driving with my friend, and he points over to the billboard and is like "Look! that's yours!" And I, as we drive closer, I see the little shapes become larger and larger. And then suddenly I'm like, Oh my God, I got size right! It looks awesome! And all these little drawings of plants and phrases, almost like annotations, and they're all drawings from our workshops that we basically give out these clipboards with paper and we hand out markers and we ask our participants and visitors to draw something or write down notations of maybe how they felt, maybe something that they were thinking about; to draw on something that they've learned.

AR: And we keep those drawings, sometimes people put their names on them, sometimes they don't. And those drawings have existed with us for about two - three years now. And they're kind of sentimental because you look back on them and sometimes you could remember exactly what workshop it was or which person did it, or if it was a kid or an adult, or a moment that someone may have said something and it's just set in time in these drawings.

00;02;26;03 - 00;02;56;05

AR: And so what I did is I took them and I found a way to kind of curate a selection of drawings that almost look like classifications of things, like labeled plants in an almanac or something. And I put them together and I chose the three colors red, blue and, and brown. Something of an earth tone, I guess. I think that's where that where I began to feel like it was representing the idea or the feeling of being at a Field Guide workshop.

CH: It's a wonderful thing and I think absolutely reflects what goes on and in the Field Guides because I think that as a participant, that's what I was attracted to, when I first found out about this whole concept of a Field Guide. And I think the eclectic nature of what the billboard shows - different people, different ages, different skill sets, and it's all very welcoming.

CH: And, you know, as a participant, it's it's very nice because you kind of arrive on Planet Socrates on a Saturday - not really knowing what to expect. You have some kind of idea in the beginning as to what the workshop will be about, but you don't know what your work will be upon completion, and it doesn't even matter if you don't complete anything. The key is participating.

00;03;53;11 - 00;04;22;10

CH: And what I always enjoyed was that not only did I have fun creating something, but I had fun really watching what everyone else did as well. So your billboard shows very eclectic work, and it shows that everybody really has an artistic skill set, whether you recognize it or not, and that's appreciated too. So when I look at it, I guess I'm inspired because it makes me think, Oh boy, you know, now maybe it expands my own artwork and things that I would be interested in doing even beyond the Field Guide. But the Field Guide is the inspiration.

00;04;34;07 - 00;04;43;19

DP: Aneesa, when you're sifting through all those drawings that people had made over the years, did you have any discoveries or did you find anything that surprised you?

AR: When I was looking through the drawings, I was trying to find a way to put them together in that someone might learn something, or find something really peculiar, like a random phrase that says, like "I aerate the earth!" And it's like a tiny worm looking back at you like, "Oh, what? What does that mean!" But I also was learning a lot about the way that people take notations or that people try to remember something that they've learned.

AR: Almost every year we do a workshop that is on plant classifications and we teach it with Christina Delfico. And she always finds a way to teach young people, but also like older individuals, how to identify things in our community garden. And then the moment that someone figures that out, they have that piece of paper already in their hand and they draw it out, and then suddenly they remember, and then they go into the garden and then try to find that pattern, or that thing, and they pick it out and then it's like, "look, look! Look what I found. Look, look at the thing that I, I just learned how to do."

CH: That nice realization that you've learned something new and different and exciting. It's true. I can cite so many experiences I know I've learned about mushrooms and created a really neat looking collage on mushrooms during one of the experiences at Socrates Park that was a field guide.

00:06;12;28 - 00:06;17;02

DP: You've been to so many, and I was actually going to ask you if you remember the first one you went to.

CH: The first one, and it's funny, a very nice sister friend of mine had encouraged me to check out what was going on in the area, "Go! Go check out what's going on over there." And I was like, Oh, you know, we arrived at Socrates. We were kind of, you know, enjoying the water and the energy of the Park. But I took a walk over and what was going on, I think it was incense - people were making their own incense.

CH: So, I had no idea. And it really wasn't anything I was necessarily interested in, I'll be honest. But I had caught the end of that workshop and I think by the time I walked away, which is really not that long, I had three little, little incense. They looked like little mushrooms as well - And I had a whole discussion.

00:07;09;18 - 00:07;38;02

CH: So I'm telling my friend about, oh, you know, I just made incense and you know, you just see what's going on over there. It's very interesting. And, you know, that's a reflection of pretty much every Field Guide workshop that I attended. I made sure that I came out with either, as you mentioned, an interesting piece of information that I wasn't familiar with or most certainly - as an artist, a piece of art that I could be proud of or, you know, inspire me to do more. Always take away something meaningful.

00:07;41;26 - 00:07;56;03

AR: I think my favorite part about like - we meet so many people that come to these workshops and a lot of the times they've never been to the Park before. I think it's so amazing that they're discovering or learning about the Park through these workshops.

CH: And I have been to the Park before, but I think sometimes it's just synchronistic with your experience. You arrive and suddenly there's something new.

AR: Yeah.

CH: Something that you maybe you've seen everything - you think you've seen everything before, but now something new is being presented to you.

00:08;13;21 - 00:08;36;20

AR: I mean, we get people from all over the city and I think it's amazing that someone chooses a Saturday, they decide, I want to learn about this thing or I'm super interested in this workshop, and they make their trek and they get to Socrates Sculpture Park. But it's also I think my favorite is when someone who's local, someone from Astoria, from the neighborhood, who's never really, who's stepped into the Park and interpreted it as a New York City Park, a regular place to go to, but then they see this odd sculptures and they're like, "What's this? What's going on?"

CH: Right, right.

AR: And then they see like a workshop happening and they come and they ask about it. And then we invite them to the next one, and then they come, and then they discover a whole new thing. Maybe planting, maybe herb exploration. I learned the most from people who are local and have never really had a space to educate themselves, and especially people that are older that come into our workshops and they're like, "Wow! I never knew this and you know, I'm going to keep coming here." It makes me super happy.

00;09;22;01 - 00;09;47;10

CH: It's a multi dimensional thing, I think, you know, show up and just be open to whatever's going on, take a deep breath and relax and enjoy it. And it's a wonderful, wonderful experience. So, I mean, speaking for myself gained a lot of knowledge, some new friends. It's a beautiful thing.

00;09;47;10 - 00;09;52;09

DP: Do you think you could look at a photo of that drawing and describe it a little bit?

AR: Well, there are a lot of plant drawings, specifically drawings of lemon balm, mint. There's a drawing of a radish plant, all very different and showing the different veins or like things that people found that they identified that they weren't sure before. There's also some annotations that may say some of the things people have learned from the workshops. So something that, there's a list, that there's something anti-inflammatory or sage might be anti-fungal and if you keep in water for 15 minutes, it's good tea for menstrual cramps.

CH: I like that everybody has their minimalist approach to drawing and identifying all those different items, and I think that's the appeal of the billboard. To me, it's not like people look at it and say, "Oh boy, you know, that's intimidating art." You know, it's very welcoming. I think either people look and they say, "Oh! you know, I did that. That was - I remember that workshop." Or people say "Oh, look at that - I could draw that. I think I can do that." Right? That's a little worm. And I think that's another part of the appeal of the billboard, that it's a welcoming thing as it is, it's a welcoming thing to everybody. Don't feel intimidated. Just show up. You know?

00;11;24;13 - 00;11;53;19

DP: Yeah, I agree. And I think, like, the art world can be so unfriendly to all ages?

CH: Right, Right.

DP: And then but of course, Socrates is a public park, so it really undermines that phenomenon. All of a sudden you have like world class artists and there's kids climbing on their work and then there's like frisbees get stuck on art, and dogs on it, and then it's like - it's contemporary art.

AR: Yeah

DP: People are doing amazing things.

CH: Right, right.

DP: So I feel like in this drawing, the billboard you've made - this constellation of artists works. It's so evident and as you're saying it, it opens the door. It's the perfect greeting because it opens the door for a - Oh, this is an intergenerational space.

CH: It captures what's going on.

DP: And a community space - it's like this community drawing that Aneesa pulls together. But it's made over the course of years, thousands of people maybe.

CH: Yes, that's interesting.

00;12;27;27 - 00;12;55;26

AR: Although, I was given this opportunity to create an artwork, I didn't want the artwork to just exist as something I made. And I wanted to pull from the community. I wanted it to be something that felt like, like you said, relatable or almost like - "I can do that!" Or maybe a kid that's walking by might see a drawing they did, but they suddenly recall it. It all comes back to them and they, it's like, "Look, that's my drawing! right?"

CH: Right, that's it. That's it.

AR: Yeah. And I think an important part of these workshops is drawing together, like learning together? And then I think.

CH: Fun!

AR: Yeah, it's a collaboration that I..

CH: Fun, fun, fun. Everywhere fun.

AR: I wanted the collaboration to still, exist or like, live on.

00;13;22;02 - 00;13;52;17

CH: It's funny that everybody talks about organic food and there's all this discussion, but I like organic art. I'm a lover of organic art. I like when you have a couple of twigs and maybe a pencil and a piece of paper and you know - objects and you have an idea thrown at you, and now it's create. Nothing sophisticated, I don't need my fancy paints and all these things, just something very basic grassroots stuff on the table and do something with that. And that to me is so much fun. I have some things that I have brought home and it's funny. I was showing my sister and telling my sister about these experiences because they've been many, and showing her some of these things and some of them are hilarious and some of them are really kind of profound, I think.

00;14;26;01 - 00;14;54;18

CH: And, and all of it is with that kind of organic feeling, like the days when you were in kindergarten and you had a couple of crayons and maybe a couple of them were broken, but you still did your work and you still had the enthusiasm. It's still there. So as an older person now, looking at this, this kind of fun that's in your heart that encourages you to create or that you're encouraging yourself to create. And, you know, it's nothing fancy. That's the experience of going to the Field Guide. You just got to relax and have fun. It's a beautiful experience.

AR: So, thank you Carla. You said so many great things.

CH: You rock. You rock on. You rockstar - that billboard rock

AR: Carla..

CH: - the billboard rocks!

AR: Thank you though

CH: And I know it took time.

AR: It took time, but it was a beautiful time taken.

CH: Well, all the time, and all the thought that you put into it. All the sighing and moving things around. Probably I can imagine what it took to create that, but you did a great job.

AR: Thank you.

CH: You did a really terrific job. I said c'est magnifique that last time I told you. But you did. You did a wonderful job doing it, it's beautiful.

00;15;45;16 - 00;16;17;15

AR: I think it was overwhelming to look at all the photos and maybe shed some tears looking at them. See some funny photos of everybody I've worked with over the summer, people I've met, like little kids, like holding worms or something and looking at the literal photos make me think a lot about these are photos of people like experiencing and then I wanted to [see] like the remnants of that experience. So I chose their drawings.

00;16;20;22 - 00;16;44;19

CH: And I recognize the educators too, because it's not, you know, and I appreciate I guess this also is reflective of maybe age, because you do pay attention to umm, you have a nice experience How did that how did that come about? And and was there a lot of running around to create this thing that now you're umm, sitting in this thing, that you're experiencing. So kudos to all the educators. Doug - you're a rock star. And it's so funny that if I sit and try to pull names, I don't want to forget anyone. So I'm just going to say the educators as a collective, thank you for your efforts because as I said, I think maybe I'm a professional participant at this point. That a, a...

AR: You're professional.

CH: Well, I..I..I...

DP: You're the original mud slinger.

CH: That's right, I'm an original mud slinger! My friend is calling me Muddy now.

AR: That's true.

CH: As a participant that really, I don't know how can I say, I'm expressing my gratitude and my appreciation for every little effort, and maybe every little frustration, and maybe every smile, and anything that contributed to putting together each and every workshop. Because I keep going back - I make sure that I come there with an open mind and my creative wheels turning, and I always benefit from what's offered.

00;18;00;27 - 00;18;24;11

CH: So - and I know it takes a lot of effort, but they're all successful. In my mind they're all successful because I've always come out of each experience with more creative energy. Creative energy for my own work and then just like you were saying Aneesa, exploring some new things and maybe trying some new things, and I really appreciate that. So educators - Thank you. Thank you all!

AR: Yay!

CH: Muchisimas gracias! Merci beaucoup!

AR: That's where we can end.