

Hidden City Philadelphia

Opening the Hidden City Philadelphia map is akin to finding the key to a treasure map. How have I lived in this city for eight years and never visited or known about these historical wonders? Organized by Peregrine Arts, Hidden City was a month-long festival in which renowned visual and performing artists presented work in historic architectural landmarks not typically included on Philadelphia tourist routes. Out of one hundred sites originally under consideration, nine made the cut.

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One of the strongest works of the festival was John Phillips and Carolyn Healy's *Running True* installation at the Disston Precision Saw Works. The artists spent six months working on-site in one of the unused buildings of the working factory. Phillips filmed the machinists working while Healy collected discarded materials from the factory grounds. The resulting sculptural, sound, and video environment addressed the history of the site, as well as paid homage to the talent and skill of the working machinists. Smelling of rot and decay, the darkened environment yielded a plethora of discoveries. On one wall, moving images of old equipment schematics, factory sketches, and a map of the region overlaid a screen of factory blueprints. The movement and coalescing of images suggested the evolution and history of both the site and neighborhood. Throughout the space, Healy constructed elaborate assemblage sculptures from, abandoned, rusted objects. The precise, orderly placement of the objects combined with a bit of whimsy—saw-blade trees and a floating, wire-roller bridge line in silk recalled the film *Metropolis* or a Futurist film set.

Projected onto three white, boarded-up windows was a three-channel video work of current manufacturing at the factory. Shifting from abstracted moving color fields to more representational images such as a hand polishing metal or a figure hammering, the video represented a departure for Phillips, who normally works more abstractly. Reverberating off the decaying walls, the sound created an immersive environment for the viewer. The work's success resided in the holistic nature of the installation. Phillips and Healy's work is fully integrated within the architectural space and addressed the history of the site as well as engaged the viewer both in the factory and surrounding neighborhood.

(...)

— Colette Copeland