

TERRAINS VAGUES

July 2012 Press Release

Hundreds of post-bubble and post-industrial American cities struggle with their legacies of urban vacancy, population loss, and stagnant economies. For them, market-centric architecture does not work, and perhaps does not matter. Struggling to attract the resources to become relevant again, they are creating new scales of intervention and new kinds of clients. These bypassed areas are a frontier for Architecture, a wilderness where vision is not only necessary but possible. This is the milieu for the new wave of architectural culture, the new territory of practice. *Terrainsvagues* was established to rethink the situation of post industrial places. Its themes are to expand venues for architectural thinking, to explore the undetermined potential of large scale urban vacancy, and to create the non- conventional solutions needed for their complex situations.

Terrainsvagues first initiative began with a simple observation: The East Side of Buffalo's land vacancy feeds negative perceptions that discourage the city's redevelopment. While there were ideas for empty parcels, there were no visions for the overall landscape, no concepts that escorted the landscape to new forms and purposes that would invite new interest. Because vacant land is so cheap and plentiful, urban farming has emerged as an alternate use for the landscape. But the land is contaminated and needs expensive remediation. Some farmers have installed above ground structures, but their basic agricultural purpose hardly engages with the remaining residential neighborhoods. Although the Farmers want to be agents of change and improvement, they understand that agriculture alone will not transform their fields into a new place, destination, or attraction.

As one solution, ARTFARMS invites regionally recognized artists to design sculptures embedded into farmer's fields. Made from lightweight metals, their ghost-like appearance highlights the neighborhood's exodus of homes, people and activity. Used by farmers as growth structures to overcome the poor soil, these large scale planted sculptures attract visitors and attention. This layering creates a cultural destination that supports the farmer's repurposing efforts.

By transforming the area's vacant properties into a new landscape of growing sculptures, ARTFARMS invites a wider audience to witness the formation of a new perception for the area. This means more visitors to the farm produce stores, more positive impressions of the area's future, more potential of attracting other small business development. The result is a synergy where the ongoing local works are enhanced by their coordination with a larger cultural perspective. Scheduled for installation in 2013, the ARTFARMS concept is *Terrainsvagues* pilot project to escort the vacant landscape to a future relevance.

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