

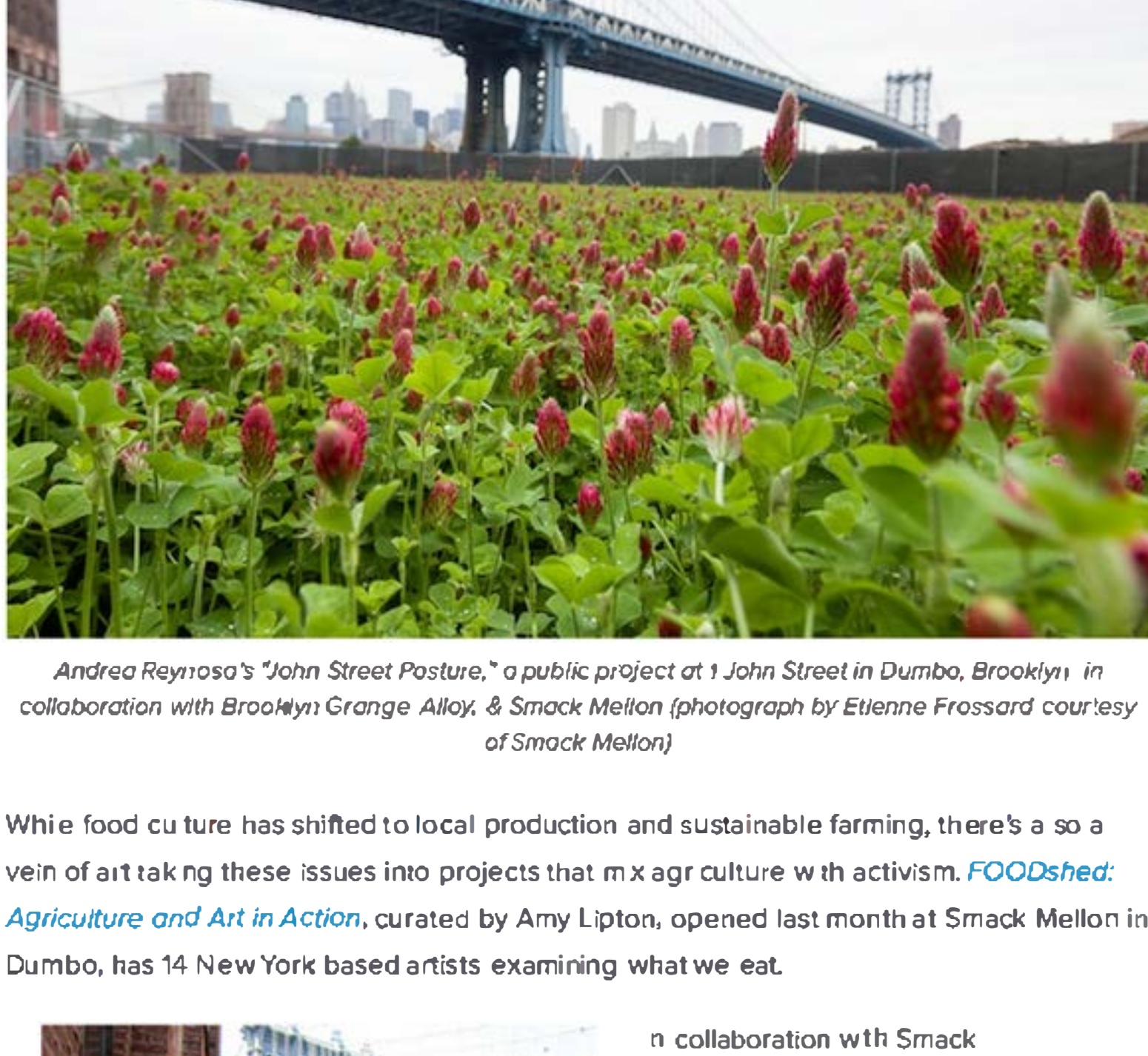
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Sens live to Art & its Discontents

GALLERIES

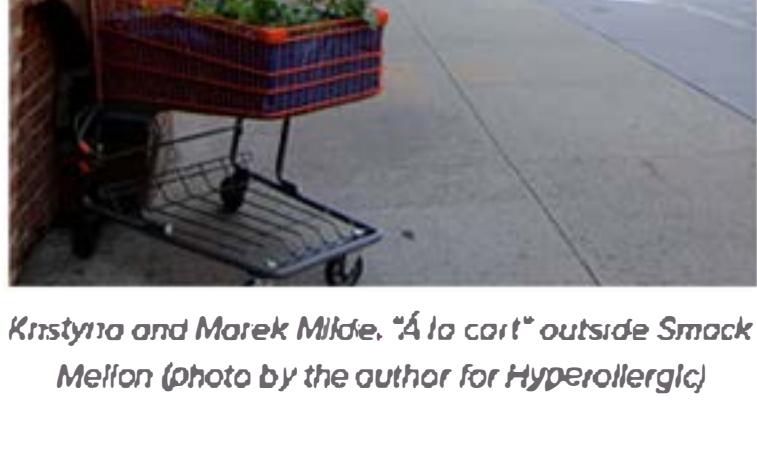
Artists Probe Urban Agriculture

by Allison Meier on July 1, 2014



Andrea Reynosa's "John Street Pasture," a public project at 1 John Street in Dumbo, Brooklyn, in collaboration with Brooklyn Grange, Alloy, & Smack Mellon (photograph by Etienne Frossard courtesy of Smack Mellon)

While food culture has shifted to local production and sustainable farming, there's also a vein of art taking these issues into projects that mix agriculture with activism. [FOODshed: Agriculture and Art in Action](#), curated by Amy Lipton, opened last month at Smack Mellon in Dumbo, has 14 New York-based artists examining what we eat.



Kristyna and Marek Milde, "À la cart" outside Smack Mellon (photo by the author for Hyperallergic)

In collaboration with Smack Mellon's [FOODshed](#), Alloy real estate development, and Brooklyn Grange, artist Andrea Reynosa planted a 6,000-square-foot field with clover that is sprouting red flowers alongside the Manhattan Bridge. The space was formerly a parking lot. The flourish of vibrancy is temporary, but Reynosa is planning that through the cover, a site that might otherwise be an empty construction lot will have life that will in turn ameliorate the soil before a [condominium moves in](#).

Similarly, much of the work in [FOODshed](#) is about improving the balance between urban and nature, while accepting that places like Brooklyn aren't going to return to

farmland anytime soon. Another of the neighborhood projects is from Brooklyn-based artist team Kristyna and Marek Milde. Called [À la cart](#), the artists corralled some shopping carts into vegetable gardens at Old Fulton Street, and in Smack Mellon are coordinating food workshops focused on what can be grown collectively on the city streets.



Jenna Spevack's "Garden Victrola" (photo by the author for Hyperallergic)



Leila Nadir & Cory Peppermint's "OS Fermentation Collaborative Hacks, with Fruits, Vegetables and Microbes" (photo by the author for Hyperallergic)



Tatfoo Tan's "NEAKA (New Earth Apocalypse Knowledge Advancement)" project (photo by the author for Hyperallergic)

Some of the projects are more whimsical, such as Jenna Spevack's "domestic microfarms" that transform furniture and a record player into apartment-scale growing spaces. More conceptual is Rochester-based Leila Nadir and Cory Peppermint's "OS Fermentation: Collaborative Hacks, with Fruits, Vegetables, and Microbes." The EcoArtTech duo's project has custom computer sensors monitoring the fermentation of organic material in real time to show color levels, pH, and oxygen, generating a digital relay of the biological processes we often forget. Staten Island-based Tatfoo Tan, meanwhile, takes it to the extreme with his "NEAKA (New Earth Apocalypse Knowledge Advancement)," preparing for a devastating disaster by examining processes of dehydrating food waste into new material. (An [accompanying giant metal catamaran](#) arrived after my visit, emphasizing the scale of peril.)

This Wednesday, Smack Mellon is hosting a panel discussion on creativity in urban and rural farming with some of the artists and members of the sustainable food community. As part of [the current art and ecology trend](#), there's definitely a chance here for community engagement with agriculture in New York City with the diversity of projects and public programs. However, the strongest piece is still outside the gallery, that stretch of cover by the bridge offering some fleeting beauty in a reclaimed space before the high rise, perhaps the best tact ecology has in a city that will not stop developing any time soon. Yet as a collaboration between real estate park and artist, it definitely offers hope in how greenery can be a component of the urban landscape.



Habitat For Artists Collective (Simon Droper, Michael Asbill, Carmen Acuna, Don McGinley, Brendon Cruz, Jessica Poser, Lisa Breznak and Sean Corcoran) project for pop-up studios out of sustainable materials (photo by the author for Hyperallergic)



Kristyna and Marek Milde, "À la cart" photographs of the carts out on the streets (photo by the author for Hyperallergic)



Kristyna and Marek Milde, "À la cart" workshop table (photo by the author for Hyperallergic)



Joy Gamet, "Press & Vinegar (art and fermentation)" installation, based on her grandparents' beekeeping along with her own home fermenting (photo by the author for Hyperallergic)



Natalie Jeremijenko's "AgBogs" growing in the gallery (photo by the author for Hyperallergic)

[FOODshed](#) continues at Smack Mellon (92 Plymouth Street, Dumbo, Brooklyn) through July