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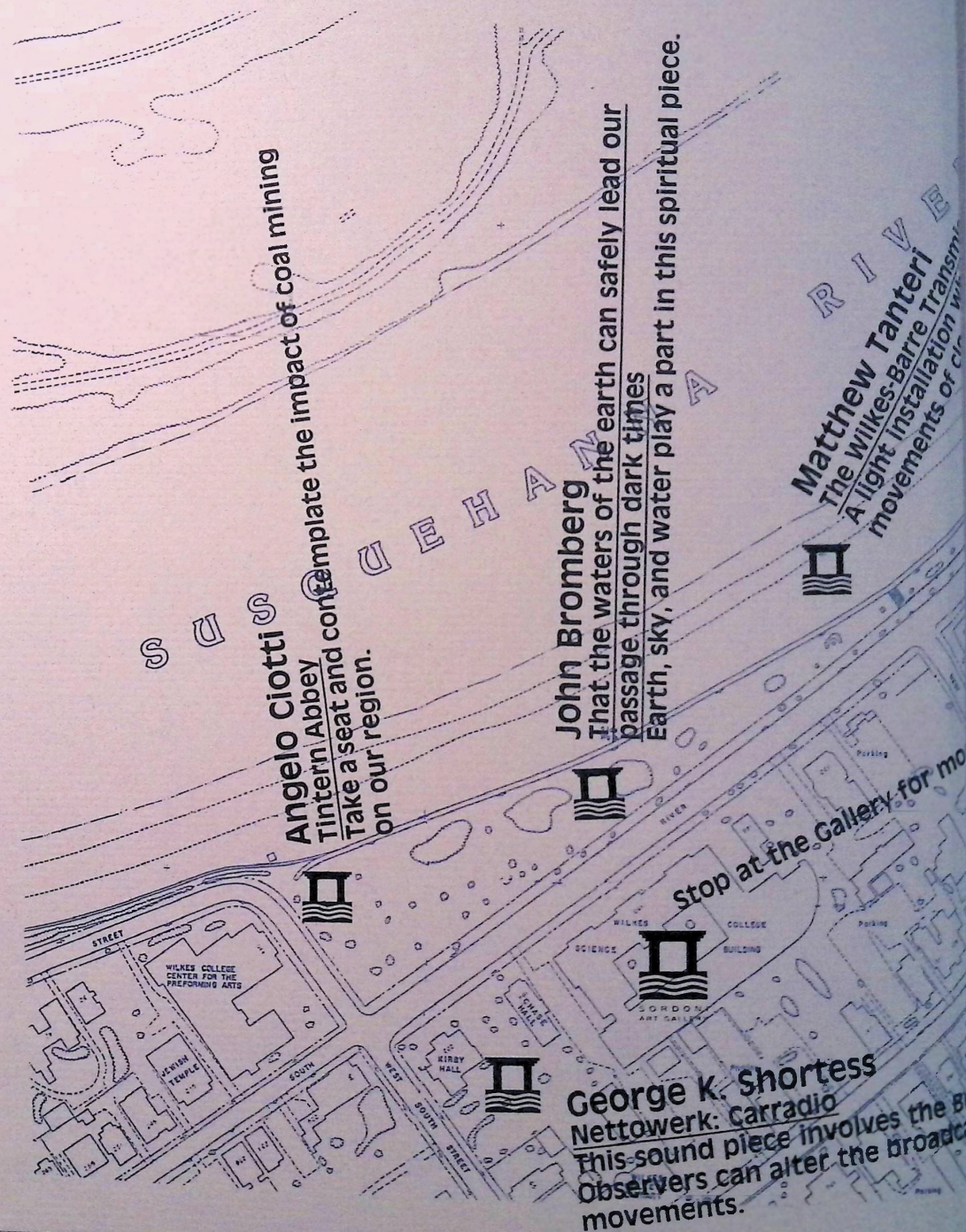
# **WILKES-BARRE: SENSES ON SITE**

An exhibition organized by  
the Sordoni Art Gallery  
of Wilkes University  
Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania

**MAY 13 THROUGH JUNE 17, 1990**

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WILKES-BARRE, PA

## MAP OF SITES:



## Curator's Statement

Last Spring Brian Benedetti, Director, approached me with the opportunity to organize with this year's 30th anniversary Fiesta. I have been interested in the idea of using the River for site-specific sculptures. That location, with its foreground and distant background and the presents intriguing possibilities. After some auspices of the Sordani Art Gallery, Wilkes Pennsylvania Council on the Arts for a grant temporary pieces designed specifically for the nearby location.

A meeting with Marsha Moss, an institutional and bureaucratic complexities of the with initial direction. Sculpture Source, a project supplemented my knowledge of potential projects located nearly one hundred artists doing work.

The artists eventually invited were chosen primarily of which was my personal response. My knowledge an exhibit of this nature had never diversity was also a consideration. John Bromberg; Angelo Ciotti would address the area; Hom would respond to the past recreation; Poleskie would create a unique sky piece over to the Commons; George Shortess would incorporate the Burns Bell Tower on the commuter society; and, finally, Matthew Tanteri designed for its location on the bank of the river.

The success of the exhibition was based on with his/her own vocabulary and with an effort developed an installation or performance that and provided us with the opportunity to experience.

## Curator's Statement

Last Spring Brian Benedetti, Director of the Fine Arts Fiesta in Wilkes-Barre, approached me with the opportunity to organize an exhibit of sculpture in conjunction with this year's 30th anniversary Fiesta. Since moving to Wilkes-Barre in 1982, I had been interested in the idea of using the River Common as a venue to develop a series of site-specific sculptures. That location, with the dike dividing the landscape into foreground and distant background and the awareness of the River in between, presents intriguing possibilities. After some discussion it was decided that, under the auspices of the Sordoni Art Gallery, Wilkes University, we would apply to the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts for a grant to invite six artists to create and install temporary pieces designed specifically for the River Common or for an alternate nearby location.

A meeting with Marsha Moss, an independent curator well experienced in the logistical and bureaucratic complexities of organizing such exhibitions, provided me with initial direction. Sculpture Source, a slide resource in Washington, D.C., supplemented my knowledge of potential participants through their registry, which located nearly one hundred artists doing work appropriate to our situation.

The artists eventually invited were chosen for a variety of reasons, the primary of which was my personal response to their previous projects. Since to our knowledge an exhibit of this nature had never been done in the Wilkes-Barre area, diversity was also a consideration. John Bromberg would focus on the energy of the River; Angelo Ciotti would address the area's historic involvement with coal; Mei-ling Hom would respond to the past recreational function of the River Common; Steve Poleskie would create a unique sky piece over Public Square (downtown and adjacent to the Commons); George Shortess would develop a sound interactive environment incorporating the Burns Bell Tower on the Wilkes campus and comment on today's commuter society; and, finally, Matthew Tanteri would orchestrate a light installation designed for its location on the bank of the Susquehanna.

The success of the exhibition was based on the fact that each artist, working with his/her own vocabulary and with an energy and integrity that was communal, developed an installation or performance that addressed the specific aspects of the site and provided us with the opportunity to experience our environment in different lights.

Kevin O'Toole, Guest Curator

91-180005

**John Bromberg**  
**That the waters of the earth can safely lead**  
**our passage through dark times**

**Location: Wilkes-Barre River Common and Susquehanna River**

The excitement mounts as the date approaches. I have been most moved since the outset by the prospects of the river and how the bank interacts to create this marvelous vista. Driven by this my proposal is as follows:

Directly across from the Gallery amidst the trees, in a park-like atmosphere, I will construct what I see as a transmitter, twelve feet in circumference. A pyramid will sit atop bales of hay extending to the perimeter of the cylinder formed by the bales. The base of the pyramid will be aluminum with bold black line drawings while the top will be plexiglas, to expose objects within. Protruding from the base are hundreds of blue sticks stuck into the hay.

The second part of the piece is best viewed from up on the bank directly behind the transmitter. Towards the water's edge on the service road appear three trees with their root systems exposed and with blue sticks stuck amidst the roots. As you look out into the river, three large blue poles planted in the River bank stand as guardians poised in tension and movement with the river; on the opposite bank another group of poles also stands.

"That the waters of the earth can safely lead our passage through the dark times" is the name of the piece.

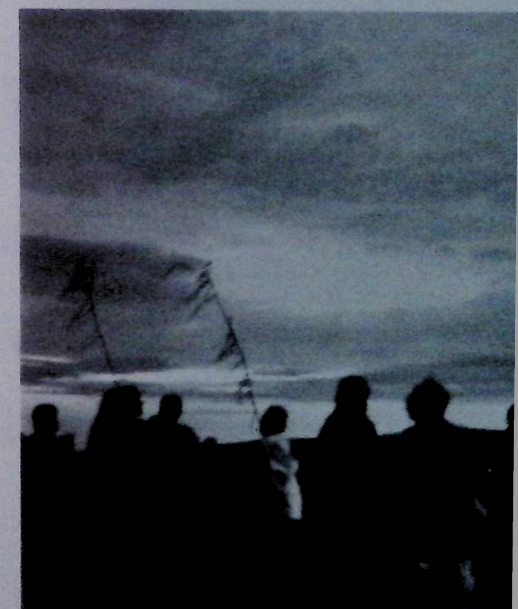
John Bromberg  
February 1990

*In conjunction with this piece, a ceremony was held on May 19 as a collaboration between the artist and Joseph J. Burinsky of Hazleton, Pennsylvania. This ceremony involved Native American ritual and conveyed respect for Nature especially as revealed in the many facets of the Susquehanna River.*

JHO'T

Wilkes-Barre . . . wondrous, invigorating, varied, rich — a healing ceremony at its best!

John Bromberg  
June 1990



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## quehanna River

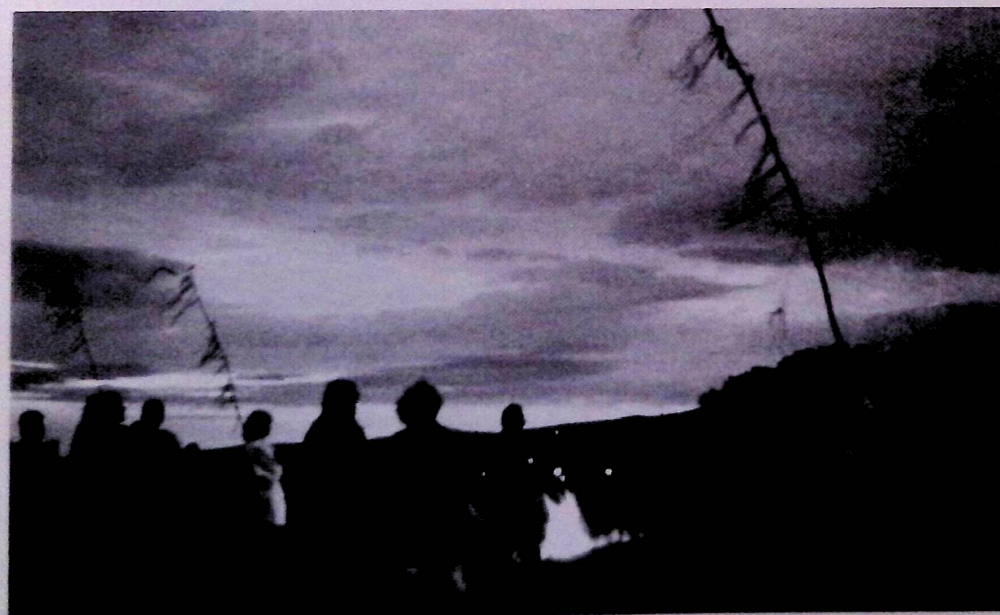
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## Stephen Poleskie Circling the Square

Location: 7000 feet above W

In the 1960s Poleskie was a land-  
he found he couldn't condense his visual  
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drawing on photographs taken from the  
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etc. — to co-ordinate with his movement  
art all over the world.

Poleskie's sky piece for Wilkes-B  
centered on Public Square during the F  
represents the completion of a cycle: P  
Poleskie exhibited his work when he w  
For this performance he piloted an air  
had six movements with titles relating to  
and especially to the Flood of 1972, wh  
the Wyoming Valley.



## Stephen Poleskie Circling the Square

**Location: 7000 feet above Wilkes-Barre Public Square**

In the 1960s Poleskie was a landscape painter, but once he started flying he found he couldn't condense his visual perspective into a two-dimensional plane — no matter how large he made it, it remained flat and less than real. He began drawing on photographs taken from the air and would then fly his biplane or Piper Apache in the specific pattern while emitting smoke from the back of the plane. A reporter who rode with him compared it to being in the ball of a ball point pen. Recently he has been including events on the ground — music, dance, etc. — to co-ordinate with his movements in the air. Poleskie has performed his art all over the world.

Poleskie's sky piece for Wilkes-Barre (he is a native of nearby Pringle) centered on Public Square during the Fine Arts Fiesta. *Circling the Square* represents the completion of a cycle: Public Square was one of the first places Poleskie exhibited his work when he was still a student at Wilkes College in 1958. For this performance he piloted an airplane made in 1958. *Circling the Square* had six movements with titles relating to the history of Northeastern Pennsylvania and especially to the Flood of 1972, which caused significant damage throughout the Wyoming Valley.

JHO'T

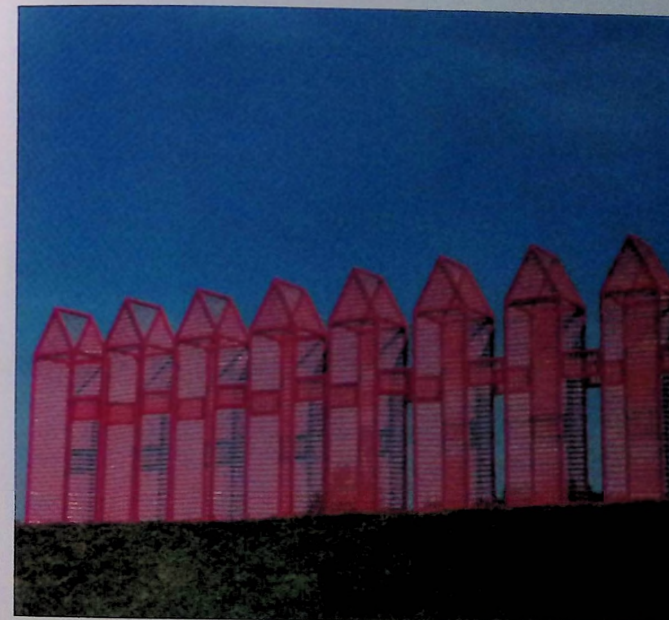
Mei-ling Hom  
Untitled (Cabanas)

Location: Wilkes-Barre River Common

The sculpture situated on the levee by the Susquehanna is a line of rhythmical, blocky, picket shaped forms. These oversized picket forms (8' high x 3' wide x 3' deep each) are in part my response to the trim tidiness of Wilkes-Barre and a visual play with the levee waterfront site suggesting a row of cabana-like beach structures. On the levee the structure is a walk-through space forming an alternately covered and open arcade of dappled light filtered through walls of plastic construction fencing. The structure is built of orange construction netting and 2" x 2" lumber painted fluorescent orange.

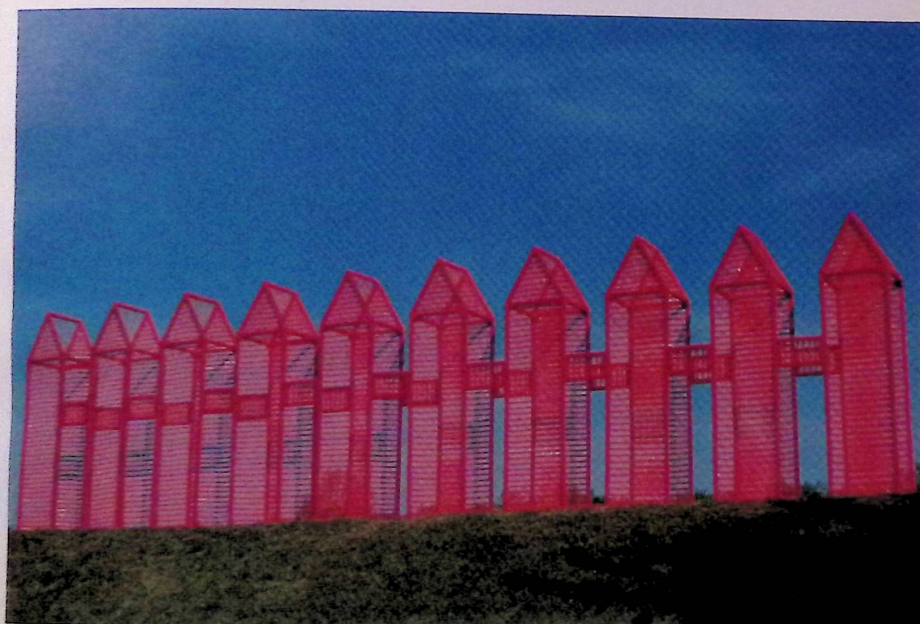
My perceptual game will hopefully be heightened as the setting sun illuminates and intensifies the orange netting and the fluorescent painted elements of the sculpture. The use of industrial materials against the backdrop of the Susquehanna River is intended to contrast the perceptual beauty of each.

Mei-ling Hom  
February 28, 1990



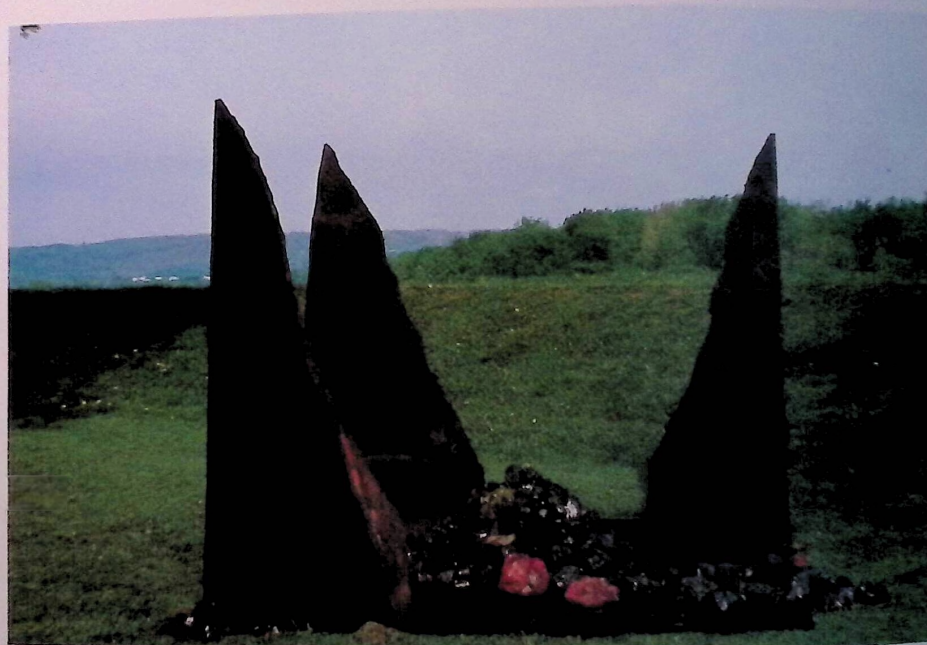
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Circling the Square - Aerial Theatre Project for Erie, Pennsylvania to be executed over  
 the Public Square and the Market Street Bridge the Susquehanna River on the nineteenth  
 of May, nineteen hundred and twenty by attaching Piper Apache trailing smoke POLESKE

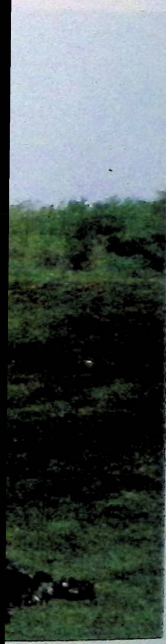


## Angelo Ciotti Tintern Abbey

Location: Wilkes-Barre River C

In an article for the *Journal Inter* quoted as describing his pieces as "functional" "bring life back to a dead earth." He is shapes of Stone Age man and the orient negative forms, or forces, interacting. T sculptural style that is *living*, not inert."

*Tintern Abbey* was designed to s from the Dorothy Dickson Darte Center dramatic vista. It is a contemplative pie based on our coal legacy. The title, *Tintern* village located at the end of a Roman r first coal mines. This interpretation of "a place to rest and ponder upon natur content are relevant to our experience i



## Angelo Ciotti

### Tintern Abbey

Location: Wilkes-Barre River Common

In an article for the journal *International Sculpture* Angelo Ciotti is quoted as describing his pieces as "functional earthworks," whose purpose is to "bring life back to a dead earth." He is inspired in his work by the prehistoric shapes of Stone Age man and the oriental emphasis on simple positive and negative forms, or forces, interacting. The artist states, "I want to see a sculptural style that is *living*, not inert."

*Tintern Abbey* was designed to sit near the dike of the Susquehanna across from the Dorothy Dickson Darte Center where the River bends and creates a dramatic vista. It is a contemplative piece — the viewer is able to sit within it — based on our coal legacy. The title, *Tintern Abbey*, is taken from the Welsh village located at the end of a Roman road, where the Emperor Hadrian built the first coal mines. This interpretation of a Gothic abbey is, in the artist's words, "a place to rest and ponder upon nature's rejuvenation of life." Both theme and content are relevant to our experience in Wilkes-Barre.

JHO'T

## George K. Shortess

### Nettwerk: Carradio

Location: Burns Bell Tower, Wilkes University

Art is experience. Art is perception. Art is the process of our nervous systems. The essence of art is in particular kinds of human perception, I make physical art objects and sounds that can be appreciated either as playful art works or as reflections on the nature of perception and art. The installation is designed to create art within the individual viewer that can raise questions about art and about social concerns as we experience the world around us. The objects and messages around the base of the tower provide visual commentary on a mobile, consumer-oriented society as a loose collection of ideas.

The sounds generated within the installation stimulate some interactive aspects of the human nervous system, the system which is essential to our experience as human perceivers. They are computer-generated sounds and computer-modified radio sounds. The particular temporal pattern is influenced by the ways in which viewers move and interact with the sensors that provide the input to the small computers controlling the sounds.

We move as we absorb the images of the space and the tower, generating the sound patterns which are suggestive of our neural aesthetic responses as cycles of interacting nervous systems contemplating the environment modified by human intrusions. In this way the installation becomes a metaphor for the perception of the altered environment.

Structure is very important for me, particularly the isomorphism in the structure of the nervous system and the structure of my art works. For the expression of this kind of correspondence, the computer is an ideal tool, both for implementing particular ideas and for conceptualizing the relationships between neural networks, perceptions and art experiences. The computer and, by extension, the tower itself, becomes a metaphor for an interacting primitive nervous system that generates sound responses. The process is analogous to the way our own nervous system responds. Behind this installation is my hope that some viewers and listeners will appreciate esthetically the idea that neural activity is our art experience.

George K. Shortess  
February 1990



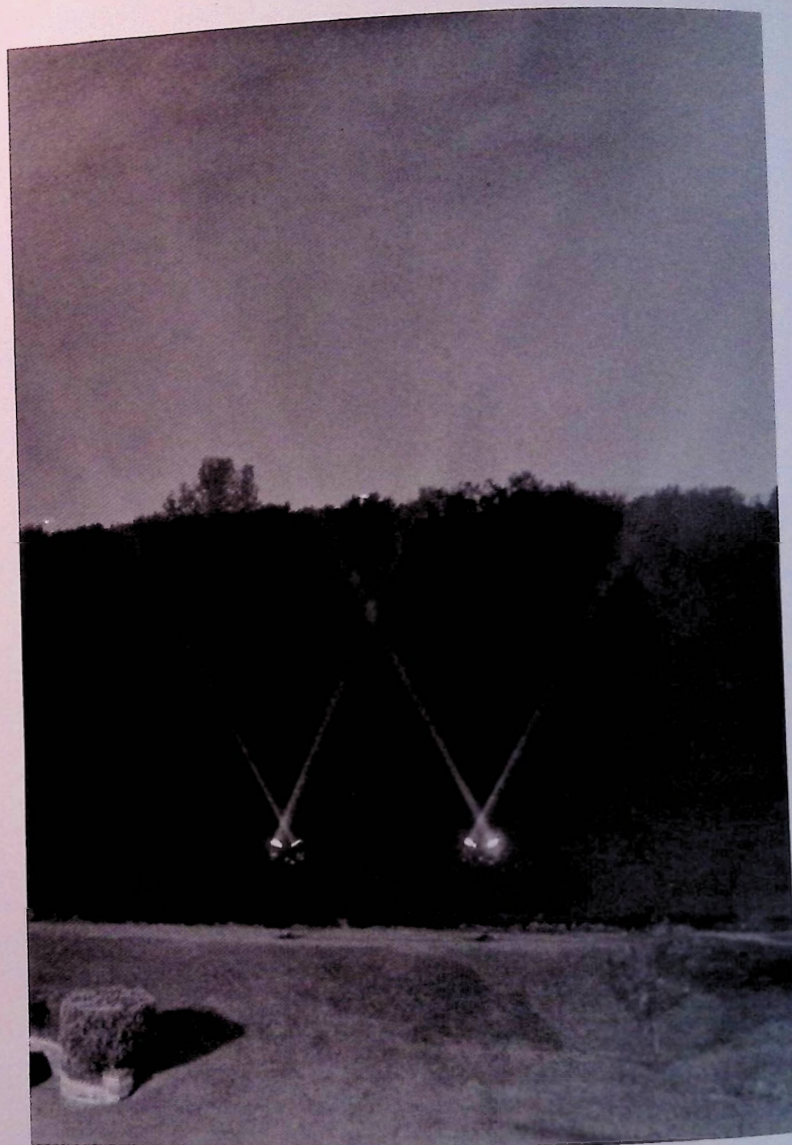
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## Matthew Tanter

### The Wilkes-Barre Tran

**Location:** Wilkes-Barre River

This light sculpture consisted of land's edge along the curve of the Susquehanna River. To counter atmospheric conditions a grouping of 40' above the ground to form a "Big

The installation was best viewed during the evening hours. It was designed to respond to conditions of moisture and air mass that would condense and dematerialize while mingling with the light. Watching it over a period of time allowed the viewer to see changes in atmosphere — variations of light and air creeping over the dike. Positioned on the dike, the light made visible their subtle interaction.


### *A Short History of the Work of Transmissometer?*

Catching the last bus heading — sorting through a collection of sites repeatedly in my memory. Walking discovered the thin line separating each of a vista, the boundaries of which careful consideration.

After working through several plan to create a light structure that extend it upward into the night sky. this visual effect I was left with two The runner up: the headlights of a and fuzzy at the edge. The winner: stamped on the back of it.

In my dictionary I read: "transmissometer measures the visibility or the capability of the lamp's manufacturer, I learned from the local airport to determine the height of the cloud by shining these lights up, and visually, the height can be figured by the time it takes me in on their lesser known use — In my outdoor tests the lamps produced a conceptual basis to develop the transmissometer that would allow the integral to the riverfront environment."

The W, of course, is for Will



## Matthew Tanteri

### The Wilkes-Barre Transmissometer or Big W

Location: Wilkes-Barre River Common

This light sculpture consisted of 12 sky pointing searchlights placed at land's edge along the curve of the Susquehanna River. Responding to local atmospheric conditions a grouping of four cloud-bound light columns crossed 40' above the ground to form a "Big W" in their center.

The installation was best viewed along the dike area from late sunset into the evening hours. It was designed to make visible the active environmental conditions of moisture and air mass found along the riverbank. It materialized and dematerialized while mingling with the natural beauty of the landscape. Watching it over a period of time allowed heightened observation of subtle changes in atmosphere — variations caused by clouds passing overhead, a mist creeping over the dike. Positioned on the border where air, earth and water meet, light made visible their subtle interaction.

#### *A Short History of the Work or W is for Wilkes-Barre but What's a Transmissometer?*

Catching the last bus heading back from Wilkes-Barre to New York City — sorting through a collection of sites seen that day — one image returned repeatedly in my memory. Walking towards the Susquehanna River dike, I discovered the thin line separating earth and sky opened — to reveal the drama of a vista, the boundaries of which gave the Susquehanna's winding progress a careful consideration.

After working through several project ideas I returned to this site with a plan to create a light structure that would define an edge along the riverside and extend it upward into the night sky. In the final round of lights tested to achieve this visual effect I was left with two lamps — both found at your local airport. The runner up: the headlights of a Boeing jet. It was bright, but a little too wide and fuzzy at the edge. The winner: a lamp with the word "transmissometer" stamped on the back of it.

In my dictionary I read: "transmissometer" — an instrument that measures the visibility or the capability of the air to transmit light". Speaking to the lamp's manufacturer, I learned it was part of a ceilometer as used at your local airport to determine the height of the cloud ceiling above the earth. It seems by shining these lights up, and visually determining where the spot of light meets the cloud, the height can be figured by triangulation. Another manufacturer let me in on their lesser known use — in lighting the torch of the Statue of Liberty. In my outdoor tests the lamps produced the narrow beam I desired. They also lent a conceptual basis to develop the idea of a large scale, W-shaped transmissometer that would allow the viewer a visual measure of an activity integral to the riverfront environment.

The W, of course, is for Wilkes-Barre.

Matthew Tanteri  
June 1990

## Acknowledgements

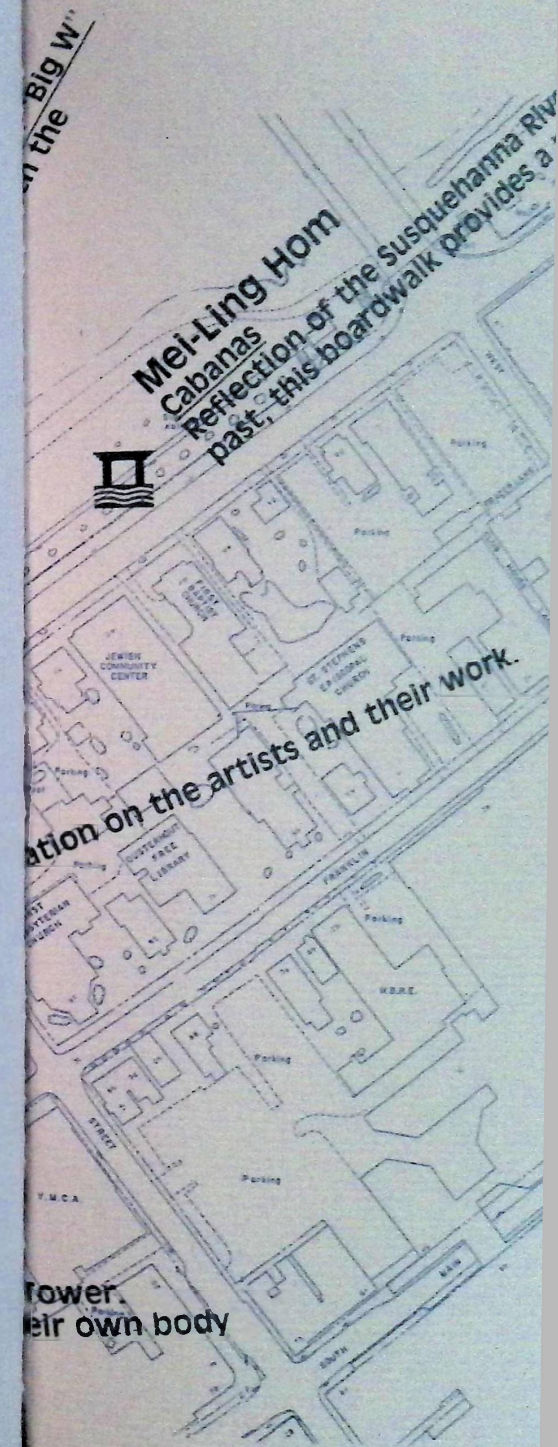
Any exhibition requires the talents of many people, but with site-specific sculpture the numbers become legion. We were gratified by the many positive responses we received to our requests for help, even though many of our needs were unusual and our product was a challenging form of outdoor art. In this year of public scandal about the arts we were pleasantly surprised to find our regional audiences willing and able to lend a hand and embrace our goals.

We are grateful to all who made this exhibition possible, especially the artists who participated and so touched our lives in a unique and lasting way. Kevin O'Toole accepted his job as guest curator with a professionalism and diligence which resulted in a harmoniously divergent group of artists and pieces. Marsha Moss, an independent curator, and Andrew Zorn, Director of Sculpture Source in Washington, D.C., were helpful in lending advice and information during the formative stages. Annie Bohlin lent her usual uncanny sensibility to the design of this catalog and the map which served as guide to our visitors. David Stevens of the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts was enthusiastic and encouraging. Richard Maslow of the Maslow Collection of Contemporary Art readily lent support for an educational artists' symposium in conjunction with the exhibition. Brian Benedetti offered the safe umbrella of the Fine Arts Fiesta to help with security, insurance, and publicity. The Wilkes-Barre City offices under the direction of Mayor Lee Namey were accommodating and supportive — special thanks go to Dianna Gull. Ken Anderson, Manager of Forestry Operations at Pennsylvania Gas and Water, went the extra mile for us.

At Wilkes University, Professor of Art Herbert Simon permitted the use of his sculpture studio for our guest artists. Ray Woods and Harry Miller, along with the ABM crew of Wilkes University under the direction of Gabe Sidonio and John Ruda, offered willing and much needed support to the installation and dismantling of the sculptures. The crew teams of both Wilkes University and King's College stood ready to help with the river ceremony.

Special attention should be given to those who gave in-kind support and are listed on a separate page in this catalog. To these, and to the many supporters who cannot be named, we extend our thanks.

Judith H. O'Toole, Director



the big W"

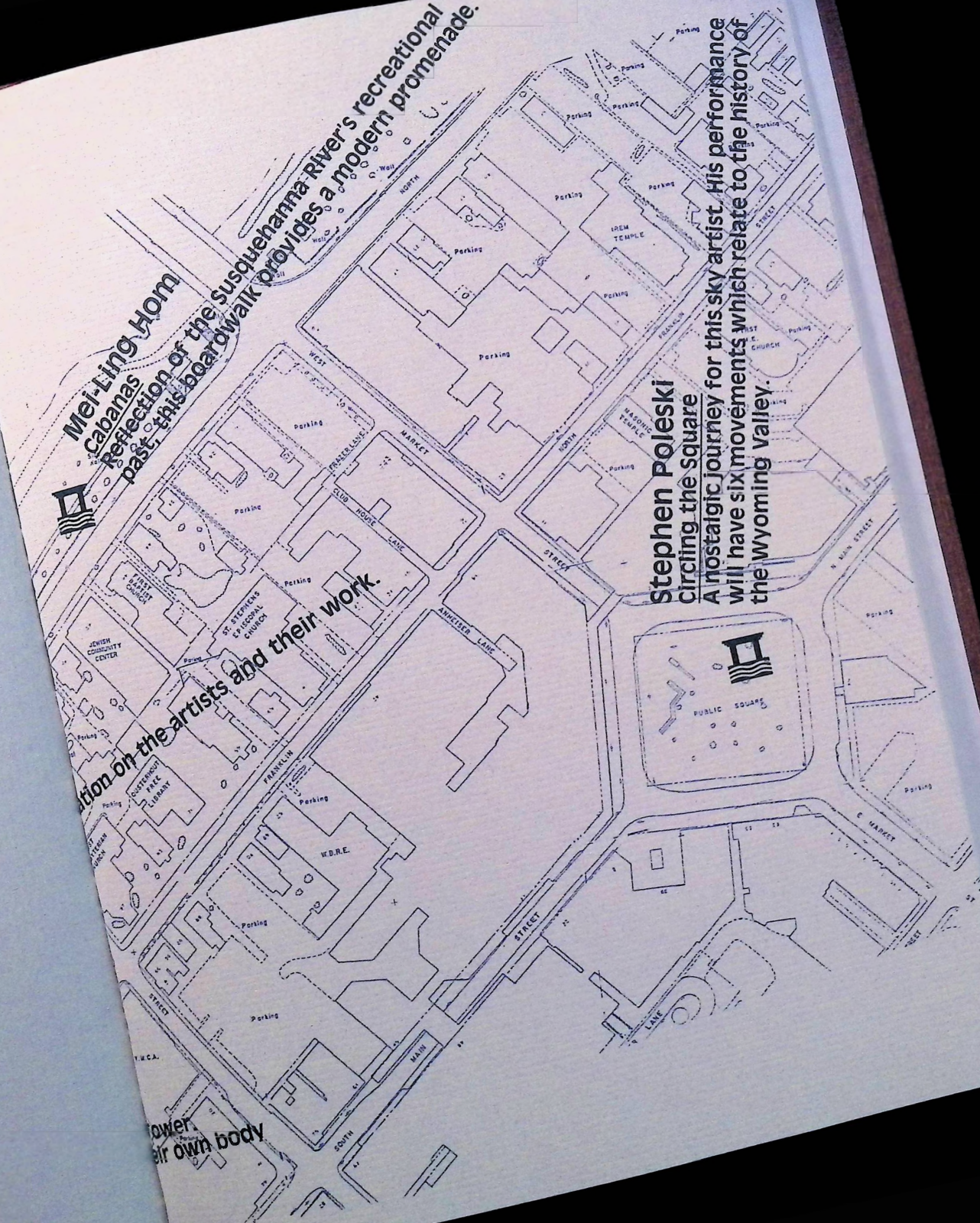
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Mei-Ling Hom  
Cabanas  
Reflection of the Susquehanna River's recreational  
past, this boardwalk provides a modern promenade.

on the artists and their work.

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Stephen Poleski  
Circling the Square  
A nostalgic journey for this sky artist. His performance  
will have six movements which relate to the history of  
the Wyoming Valley.



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The Maslow Collection of Contemporary Art.

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