

HOW TO GET TO THE RIVER

How to Get to the River — a watershed art adventure walk — was created by artists Whit MacLaughlin of New Paradise Laboratories, Laia and creative producer Pete Angevine with many other contributors.

As they were developing the project, the team had a “watershed moment” when Academy scientist Lin Perez described how watersheds exist at many different scales, with smaller watersheds nesting within larger ones. Perez shared that the Academy is situated within the Lower Schuylkill River watershed, a micro-shed of the larger Delaware River watershed. The team ran outside and started to explore how one could experience a watershed on the street right outside our doors. From this revelation, *How to Get to the River* was born.

The one-mile adventure walk will lead you through the Academy's immediate neighborhood, with 40 multi-sensory experiences based in watershed science along the way. This lyrical experience is designed to inspire you to engage in deep noticing — even to have the same kind of revelatory experience that the artists had about watersheds. Before you get started, here are a few details about watersheds and this watershed in particular to help frame your experience of *How to Get to the River*.

WHAT IS A WATERSHED?

In short, a watershed is a region defined by the flow of water. It is a land area in which all water, including rainfall and snowmelt, flows to the same eventual point. In a watershed, water can move from mountain peaks to streams and creeks through river valleys, bays and marshes and out to sea. Watersheds shape the life within them.

THE DELAWARE RIVER WATERSHED AND THE LOWER SCHUYLKILL RIVER WATERSHED

Philadelphia is located within the Delaware River basin, which flows from the Catskill Mountains of New York through Pennsylvania and New Jersey and into the Atlantic at the Delaware Bay. Within the Delaware River watershed there are many smaller watersheds, including the Lower Schuylkill River watershed, where the Academy is situated.

THE URBANIZATION OF PHILADELPHIA'S WATERWAYS AND MINNOW RUN

How to Get to the River reflects on how historically the region's streams and creeks had a much greater physical presence in our daily lives. The project inspires us to consider how humans have been shaping the flow of water in Philadelphia for hundreds of years. Over the course of several centuries, most of the city's surface streams have been channeled underground and integrated into the city's 3,000-mile sewer system. In fact, only over two-fifths of the linear miles of streams that once existed in Philadelphia are still visible today.

The artist team learned from local water historian Adam Levine that one buried stream was Minnow Run, which flowed from Logan Circle to the Schuylkill River. We can still experience signs of it today.

HURRICANE IDA

As recently as September 2021, remnants of Hurricane Ida descended upon Philadelphia, causing the Schuylkill River to crest at 16.35 feet and overflow into the city, covering parts of Cherry Street and nearby areas in feet of water. An overflow event of this magnitude had not occurred since 1869. This traumatic event reminded us of the immense power that the river holds over our well-being, even today.

How to Get to the River will evoke this history for you as you follow its pathway.

EXPERIENCING HOW TO GET TO THE RIVER

The experiences and markings you will come across on the walk are meant to be subtle; you will get the most out of the walk if you focus attentively on your surroundings.

As you make your way from the Academy to the river, you will begin to notice features that you may have missed before. We hope this artistic exercise in deep noticing will stay with you in some way and perhaps invite you to think about watersheds wherever you go.

Here are some questions to consider on your journey:

- As you head out on the walk, you will first encounter a sculpture called *Attunement*. It was designed to be symbolic of watershed. What do its various parts evoke for you? What do its subtle sounds recall? Does it make you think about how individual drops accumulate into larger flows of water? What does the experience "attune" you to?
- On the walk you will be given a ring of cards. Note that the "glyphs" on the cards are designed to correlate with the same "glyphs" on the walk. Here the cards will prompt you to engage in simple exercises.
- The card shaped like a raindrop or a map pin uses special technology called RFID to unlock several sound experiences along the way. You will experience a musical vignette featuring British saxophonist Shabaka Hutchings. Do you notice how Hutchings uses a special breathing technique

that allows the sounds of his clarinet to flow continuously? How do the sounds you hear resonate with the ideas explored on the walk?

- Many of our waterways are buried underground and channeled through urban infrastructures. How do city workers keep track of what is buried beneath city streets?
- The artists highlight signs of Minnow Run along the walk. Can you find them?
- When water falls through the atmosphere as rain or snow, it runs across rooftops through gutters and splashes into storm drains. Special scopes along the way will help you to become more aware of this movement. When you look through these scopes, what do you notice?
- We can have emotional responses to water and the precious life that it sustains, especially when we learn that waterways are buried beneath our streets and sidewalks. How does the awareness of this make you feel?
- At a certain juncture in the walk, you will come across markings and signs related to Hurricane Ida. The flood affected the area that you will traverse on the walk. Have you experienced flooding in Philadelphia or in other places? How did it affect your life or the lives of those around you?
- Along the Schuylkill, in the installation *Inside the Watershed* created by artists Annea Lockwood and Liz Phillips, you'll hear live sound from a hydrophone, an underwater microphone placed in the river, and discover a fascinating water world normally hidden from us. Immerse yourself in the river's sounds as you feel low-frequency waves through two benches in the arbor. What does the river sound like? What does it feel like to experience the river's sounds resonating within your body?

How to Get to the River takes its inspiration from the multidisciplinary water ecology work of the Academy's Patrick Center for Environmental Research. The experience is part of *Watershed Moment*, the signature artwork of the Academy's Water Year celebration that provides fresh perspectives on the water systems that bind us together. Centered around the importance of watershed thinking in our lives, *Watershed Moment* is designed to inspire a greater connection with our local waterways and the vital need to protect them.



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