

Making City Water Tunnel # 3 by Marty Pottenger

This article appeared in High Performance magazine and in the book, Citizen Artist

Marty Pottenger is an artist, carpenter and contractor with more than 20 years of experience in performance art and the construction business. Her New York City multimedia project “City Water Tunnel #3” tells the story of the planning, building and financing of the largest non-defense public works project in the Western Hemisphere. Created in collaboration with the people and organizations who are building this five-billion-dollar tunnel project, Pottenger’s artwork includes an Obie-winning solo theatrical production, gallery exhibitions, performances and video installations at the tunnel worksites, weekend fairs, story-swapping circles and water-tunnel-related activities for young people. Pottenger is currently working on a book for New Press about the building of the tunnel and the building of the arts project.

“City Water Tunnel #3” arose from the stories of the people building it. As storyteller, interlocutor, reporter and guide, Pottenger wove together interviews with tunnel workers and her own distilled narrative, adding images, video, graphs, tunnel objects and ambient-sound recordings mixed with an original score by Steve Elson. High Performance asked Marty Pottenger to reveal the process of “City Water Tunnel #3” in all its grandeur, complexity and intimacy. —Ed.

Galileo’s Tears

The water man from Phoenix said: “You have to recognize we’re a closed system—the earth is a closed system—three-fourths of it covered with water. Only a small percentage of that is drinkable...the rest brackish. The challenge is universal. Consequently, it being a closed system, we’re drinking the same water that Napoleon drank. We’re drinking the same water that Archimedes drank. We’re drinking the same water that Galileo drank. So you just have to recognize that, put it into that context, and realize you can only do so much with it.” It rained tonight as Galileo’s tears boiled hot in my Maxwell House. Usually I hate Instant, but this tasted different, richer, more...rebellious. Insistent Instant. It had never crossed my mind that I

*could be sipping the sweat and salt from the
Inquisition's nastiness over 300 years ago.*

(continued from front cover)

Leaning back, I smell France and Marie Antoinette's cake. I take another sip, blowing first to cool, steam rising, curling back in on itself, whooshing the warm brown liquid around in my mouth, savoring images of Joan, the Maid of Orleans, dawn, head bowed, her newly metaled knee down on the ground, resting in the dew that covers the battlefield, her forehead wet with holy water. Of Melissa Etheridge in the pouring rain on stage in Texas, rain on her face, sweat on her upper lip. Of my grandmother Marjorie, now dead for 21 years. Her tiny Chicago countertop kitchen, the drops of water collecting on the wall next to the stove water boiling our three-minute eggs as the black and white TV fills with pictures of women in Vietnam stretched out in rice paddies...not sleeping.

Most of the coffee's in me now, down and inside the parts and passages that make up me. Where does the black of coffee go? I think of the East River, the Atlantic Ocean, my eighth-grade cloud charts, of Phyllis Schlafly and Gloria S., of mothers whose water breaks too far from help...holding the cup, its curve a circle, of all my nieces Jacquelyn, Madeleine, Lydia, Jessica and Beckia. The last of the liquid cool now, I drink, letting the possibilities of past, present and future swim, float, dive and pool together, as if time were just a part of it and water...was the heart.

The performance had just ended when a young woman from the first row walked up to me, said, "I'm John Cunningham's daughter," and put her arms round me for a cry. A week later her mother Pat came with her best friend from childhood, bringing with them a photo album filled with pictures of the same daughter's birth, a photo of John laughing, looking very much alive, leaning against a rail, arms flung round his daughter and his wife, with an ocean stretching out behind them. John was killed four months back on the job, bringing to 22 the number of people killed working on the third water tunnel since 1970. The performance was dedicated to him.

After the performance the three of us, Pat, who had divorced John and remarried years ago, her friend Toby, and a friend of mine sat together for almost two hours listening to "John" stories, sharing the photos one by one. John who left school in Ireland when he was 12 to work the farm after his father died, oldest of eight; John who worked for 18 years as a miner in NYC, going to night school at Fordham to get a Master's in Economics and Political History; John who got his parish priest in Ireland to write Fordham that the school John attended had burned down with all its records, so they'd just have to accept his word that John graduated from high school; John who 20 years ago ran against Local 147's union-backed slate on safety issues, lost and went to work for the Bureau of Land and Mines as a Safety Inspector for 20 years; John who just retired (20-year pension) from BLM and decided to finish out the two years left to 20 in Local 147 to get the tunnel worker's pension plus full benefits for silicosis (black-lung disease); John who died four months into that last two years at 19B, falling off the top of the Mole

where he was changing a light bulb overhead; John who "loved mining," a "good man," "safety conscious," "loved to laugh," "kept to himself" and "who never told much about his job" to his family.

Pat thanked me, for showing her more about John and his work than she had known, telling me that last Saturday her second husband was at his synagogue with the Rabbi, who had just seen a performance of "City Water Tunnel #3." It was Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, which includes a ritual called Tashlikh where one's sins are thrown into a body of water. In her sermon, she spoke about what the show had meant to her, about work, meaningful work, about people figuring out how to stick together. As she encouraged people to go see the performance, Pat's husband jumped up and said, "Hey, that show is about my wife's ex-husband's job." Which is how Pat heard about the performance.

The Tunnel and Its Tales

New York City's third water tunnel, 64 miles long, 800 feet down, 24 feet in diameter, is bringing water to nine million people. The tunnel is being built by more than 1,000 people, most of them pink- and white-collar workers living in the most diverse population in the world. I have been gathering their stories. Their diversity is reflected in hundreds of interviews with tunnel workers (Local 147), Operating Engineers (Locals 14 and 15), city and state politicians, general contracting companies, upstate and watershed farmers, financial analysts, bond traders and buyers, insurers, and employees of the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), material supply companies and more.

Working both in the world of construction and the work of art, I've learned something about these stories of humor, challenge, struggle, mistakes and triumph: Amidst the differences and segregation in any group of workers, lifelong friendships are forged as people build relationships while they are building something big.

The size of the tunnel and the scope of its labor allow us to consider the connections and the fragility of our relationships to each other and to the planet. It powerfully reveals the ability of people in our society to work together, to continue to cross lines of race, gender and class to accomplish tremendous goals. Joining the power and vision of art with the power and vision of the people who are making the tunnel a reality offers all of us the opportunity to consider the connections they have among themselves, and to glimpse the tremendous impact that their individual and collective labor has on the world around them.

Sugar Story

Roosevelt Island Valve Chamber, 170' down, pouring the East Wall of the Main Chamber, huge mother fuc—oh—excuse me—concrete form. Bottom kicks out cause of the weight,. Whole form—which is there to get the concrete to hold a shape until it dries—pulls away, concrete slumps down, 20 elephants worth, big elephants. Contractor has a shit fit, sends two guys to the only supermarket on Roosevelt Island, buying out all the sugar the store had—I still remember them racing back to the job with shopping carts filled with boxes, bags of sugar, all the men dumping it into the mix, shoveling with one hand, tearing open cartons with the other, throwing sugar everywhere. Sugar keeps

concrete from setting. Keeps the load “live” longer, so the concrete can get scooped up and thrown out before it hardens which would mean days and weeks of teeth-rattling, cost-overrunning, job-delaying jackhammering. Granulated, powdered, white, brown, confectioner’s...sweetest job I ever worked on.

Planning: The Steep Side of the Learning Curve

CWT#3, like any big job, started with planning. Months of time were needed to explore possibilities and build relationships in a way I’d never had the chance to before. The initial planning work — 30 hours of taping interviews, transcribing, videotaping, attending the four day American Water Works Association’s National Conference, touring the Department of Environmental Protection offices, union halls, construction sites, valve chambers, water filtration plants, reservoirs, contacting museum designers and staff-- was greater than entire performances I'd done start to finish. My partners included foundations, arts organizations, performance presenters, government agencies, unions, artists and tunnel workers. They participated in the creation of CWT#3 through art surveys, artist residencies, workshops, joint public activities and meetings.

To give some idea of what it means to get as far as I did during this planning process, here are some of the rocky shoals CTW#3 had to steer through:

- a) Obtaining and maintaining from a minimum of three parties (involving at least 15 individuals) ongoing permission for access to the various sites and offices.
- b) Juggling suspicions and concerns as to where CWT#3’s *primary* loyalty lay—the DEP commissioner, employees or management; the general contractor; the union members, the union’s officers or one union over another union?
- c) Was I a tabloid or TV reporter trying to get a quick ‘n easy dirty story? or
- d) A woman activist trying to get into one of the trade unions or simply trying to bust someone for something? or
- e) A secret OSHA safety inspector ready to pounce and file a huge lawsuit? or
- f) A spy from the other general contractor working on the tunnel trying to snap photos of the one-of-a-kind \$450,000 jumbo drill, which could cause the general contractor who designed and paid for it to lose out on the next \$220-million-dollar contract? or
- g) A klutz who was going to trip over a pump hose and fall down a 700’ shaft, making headlines in tomorrow’s New York Post?

These are all very real, possible and serious concerns for each party involved. I found navigating all this challenging, but also fun. Underneath a few tons of the accumulated debris that is now part of any big project in the late 20th Century are really great people who are eager to talk about themselves and their jobs and to share what they know, and excited to work with an artist making a project about something they care a lot about. The time spent in audience development became a chance to build trust among us.

Part of that process included editing a cassette of a few collected stories and giving those out to individuals I wanted to work with, each time transforming slightly suspicious, always busy and overworked individuals into eager excited advocates for the art project and for getting the word out to others. I was able to collect photos that workers had taken themselves and integrate them into CWT#3, and return high-quality reproductions back to the individuals in new forms—slides, color Xeroxes, prints, photo CD’s—to everyone’s excitement.

Extending the traditional intents of audience demographic surveys (a part of Arts Partners Lila Wallace grants), questions put attention on the role of art in each respondent's life, asking them to recall an arts event that really moved them, as well as one that they didn't like, and why. These and a few more questions—like “Did you take any art classes in school or on your own?”—were meant to call to mind one's past and present relationship to art as *something they themselves did at one time* rather than *something that other people do somewhere far from here*. My goal there was to offer the individual a chance to early-on locate him- or herself as an art-maker (current or former).

Most personally and artistically satisfying was to work with this tunnel construction community over the six months of the planning process. Time after time, people offered me the name of someone who's “a great storyteller - oh - he'll tell you stories.” One resident engineer, after he listened to my demo tape, told me about making his own ambient-sound recordings. (“You've got some great sounds there. My sounds aren't as good. You sure did a nice job.”) Engineers gave me rides from one site to another, timekeepers handed out my surveys to their own staff, receptionists got permission from their supervisors to talk with me, technicians took me on tours of the quality-assurance laboratory, department heads hooked me up with now-retired workers who mentored them when they were starting out, elected town supervisors had me over to dinner with their families, retired upstate sandhogs suggested I come back for a weekend and have a “roundtable on the watershed issues” with them. Even those in the bureaucracy around the project did so much more than they do for any newspaper, college student, tourist. The idea of helping an artist was one that interested everyone, even if it took a little time. My challenge was to keep my learning curve short enough to not get in folks' way as they tried to juggle their own lives and jobs building Tunnel No. 3.

At the end of those six months of planning, CWT#3 now involved the activity of collective labor in its creation as a performance about collective labor.

White Oats - from Mike Chief Engineer Tunnel No. 3

Once we were down in a tunnel, must've been up at Highbridge and we couldn't get this leak to stop. Water was coming in pretty good, underground stream, we get them all the time. We tried everything, stuffing it with oakum, caulk, concrete. After a bit, whatever we put in would come right out with a rush of clean water right behind it. Finally we got some oatmeal, good old fashioned oatmeal and stuck that in there. Oatmeal swelled up and gave us just enough time to fill it in with a chemical grout. Water stopped and we finished, packed up and left. About a year later we had to come back to check on something. As we walked to where the leak had been, there was something growing all along the floor of the tunnel, two, three feet high. The chemical grout we had used was nitrogen based, so the nitrogen had fertilized the oatmeal and since there wasn't any sun, this was 700 feet down, the oats came out albino. White Oats.

To Make Art About Someone Else Is an Opportunity To Make Art with Someone Else

My research and experience told me that human beings who work on a project as big as the third water tunnel, that is bringing a resource as critical and poetic as water,

that involves activity as human and dangerous as construction work, would make art about it. It's human nature. Work itself can have an integrity, separate from the surrounding institutions and companies. From the beginning, I wanted to make sure that openings were created that allowed the art being made by the tunnel's working people to have voice and visibility.

Only scratching the surface with CWT#3, I was able with lots of help to locate the photographs of three people who work on the third water tunnel. A concrete inspector's intimate black-and-white portraits of the sandhogs and DEP people, a resident engineer's formal, stunning color photographs of the construction and equipment, and an insurance company safety inspector's lyrical color photos of the construction work and the people doing it. All these were part of an exhibit in the galleries of the two theaters that showed the performance. And many more photos, cartoons, de/re-constructed "official" DEP memos, scratched memo-poems and jokes, graffiti, most of it now buried under thousands of tons of concrete, work totems/mementos (rocks, test borings, boots worn every day for a five-year Valve Chamber job), and the stories told and retold. They exist as poignant and powerful examples of the role art simply plays in each of our lives. The second gallery installation had boots, hard-hats, work gloves, all very muddy and some still wet, delivered by Paddy: "What do ya want this junk for, Marty?" and Ed: "Wait till Chipper finds out we gave you his hat."

The performance project also included people's art through my retelling of their stories—the particular events that they had made into "stories"; the humor and perspective in their art in the telling of them; the poetry in their descriptions. Not included, but out there are several short stories, books, partial books (autobiographies, detective adventure tales, fiction, humor)—some published—that different sandhogs, concrete inspectors, resident engineers, operating engineers are writing about their work; homemade and semi-professional videotape documentation (some scored to popular music) of the work, and much, much more. For a weekend fair we set up a video monitor and played some of these tapes continuously.

Long, wonderful audience discussions after each performance at Dance Theater Workshop included any of the tunnel-working people in the audience, often bringing in their wives, husbands, fiancées and children. People got to meet them for themselves, ask questions, hear each other talk about what they love about the work, what they hate. The people working on the tunnel were shocked time and time again at how interested what they called "regular people" were in the water-tunnel work. Most nights the discussion ended with a solid burst of impromptu applause for those tunnel workers present. The audience also got to participate and watch the relationships that the sandhogs and I had built with each other. Me, a lesbian carpenter performance artist, and them, members of the only construction union that has successfully kept women out of the union entirely. Lots of teasing went back and forth, allowing each of us to express our affection, exasperation and pride in what CWT#3 and the third tunnel had become.

Stuie—Sandhog retired after 34 years

It's been a custom among us sandhogs for at least the last 100 years—farther back than that I can't remember—to see that every man was doing his fair share down in the hole. The best way we come up with is to paint his boot white—if he's sleeping, taking a little

nap, sometimes things get a little slow down there if they're fixing something or waiting for something—and we paint his boots white while he's asleep. Then we get to say, "Guess you was sleeping there, weren't you?"

Where Can the Audience Be In Charge?

The video installation, with a 40-minute video directed and edited by Mary Ellen Strom, allows some of the stories to be recorded by the storytellers themselves, even as it documents the participants involved in a public-works project of this magnitude. People who have worked on the third water tunnel for ten, 20, 30 years got to "meet" each other on the videotape, which traveled as a video installation to the various construction sites and DEP headquarters in Queens. This video and installation offered a chance for the people working on the tunnel and their coworkers in the DEP offices to have a completely self-determined relationship to the art being offered, and used video, a more familiar medium than live performance. The installation was designed as a five-foot-high pipe that could be viewed from either end. The videotape would play if you placed your hand on top of a tin hand-shape mounted on a Plexiglas circle. The videotape would stop if you took your hand away. The idea was that someone could watch a few minutes or 40 minutes, on their way to the bathroom or during lunch hour. Stories they hear from the video spark conversations with coworkers, spark stories of their own, spark further exploration into CWT#3. The video installation traveled to the worksites in the weeks leading up to the performances, offering people a first-hand opportunity to become familiar with the project and consider coming to the live theater performance.

On-site lunch-hour performances were scheduled to come in between the video-installation site visits and the theatrical performance. Challenges forced scheduling them after the first run, which allowed word of mouth. The performances on the construction sites were scheduled in the hoghouses (aboveground trailers with showers, lockers, washer and dryers). The DEP lunchtime performances were in a conference room at Lefrak City, the workplace of more than 3,000 DEP employees from hundreds of departments. Construction performances were full houses. Lefrak City performances—an audience who we knew already went to some theater—were poorly attended. Even coworkers going out between the first and second performance of a day and telling their coworkers that it was the best thing they had ever seen had little impact. Interesting.

My working understanding is that the reasons for this are three-fold. First off, the hopelessness, sense of exploitation and alienation individuals who work for large corporations/city agencies feel about their jobs and their employers (DEP had canceled some annual employee events in the last few years due to lack of interest). Secondly, the lunchtime performances were advertised primarily through interoffice e-mail, a medium some people feel fascinated by and other people feel overwhelmed by. Also, e-mail, while *one* excellent way to advertise, squarely places the "identity" of the performances as DEP domain. That is very appropriate, as DEP was one of our art partners, but I think PR that spoke directly to the employees (banners by the elevators, flyers at nearby shops and restaurants, notices in union newsletters) would have made a significant difference.

The last place to look for thinking about the low attendance, four performances averaging about 65% capacity, is the tremendous emotional risk that going to live performance brings up for most people (including those of us who do it). On this last

reason: I have noticed that being at a "bad" performance feels horrible in a way nothing else does. It can feel like you are personally being tortured. When a live performance is good, it has the potential to truly transform one forever. To create a memory that will be treasured, drawn on like water from a well forever. That is humbling. But when it is "bad" (define for yourself), it is close to unbearable in ways movies, TV, music just don't seem to engender. I have learned a lot about the role of an audience and audience member from doing CWT#3. My respect and appreciation has deepened. It is a gift to us, the art-makers, that they come and bring their most vulnerable, intelligent, open selves.

Natasha—DEP

Marty Marty, don't take my picture, oh no, no, no, don't take it now, I don't look so good. No, no, why you want a picture of me. I not pretty. I'm too old. Get the pretty girls. Go take pictures of the pretty young girls. They pretty, young, not me.

My job. In Russia I am aircraft engineer. Here. (gesturing). all us women, from Russia, from Ukraine, from Poland. We meet here. We like each other. We become friends. We all engineers in our own countries. Mechanical, Physical, Civil, (gesturing to self) Aircraft..I think perhaps the hardest. Here we are all Associate Engineering Technicians. We help our engineers. We coordinate and keep track of information. We love our engineers. Good boys! Good boys our engineers! For my job I keep track of everything that happens. For this project—City Water Tunnel #3. All written information comes to me. Anything written, it comes to me. Contracts, Change Orders, Subcontractors memos, letters, post-its. If it's written and has to do with third water tunnel—it comes to me and I keep track. Not on computer, but in Log. I write down everything, give number and file it. We have to know everything, record everything. We need to know what problem we have and how we solve problem? Did we solve problem? Not just for us, but for the future. For five years, ten years, 20—five hundred years from now. We need to know. It's very important. Do not forget. I come from country with Chernobyl. I think of them sometimes—five hundred years.

You look so good Marty. So pretty. You look good, like artist, all dressed in black. For your job, you look lovely! I too try to dress professionally, for professional job. You like? Marty. You are so pretty. You look so good! Marty ...you...should...wear ...lipstick! You no like lipstick?

4. Called to Account—Policies, Ethics, Morals

Natasha, a Russian engineer, with the Department of Environmental Protection had become a friend over the three years I was researching and working on CWT#3. Natasha. I went to talk with her about my plan to have her and her words in the show as one of my characters. "Why you want to do me Marty? Why me? Do somebody else. My accent ..it's too big. Don't make fun of me! All those people...why you want to make fun of me? You my friend." I knew, even without names, her coworkers would affectionately recognize her from the character, and returning to the workplace "do" the character,

thick lovely Russian accent and all. I knew that without a context (the entire performance and its base of love and respect) she would find it humiliating. My request/offer to perform the character for her, repeatedly met no response.

Accountability in Community Performance Work. Making the long trip out to where she worked several times before the performance so we could talk in person. So the discussions would happen on her turf. That any pull on my part to gloss over the effects of what I did on her life and relationships at work would have to "answer to her" in person. To not be so sure of my intentions that I silence her real voice, picking and choosing only the "parts" of her that I want to make use of. Editing the stories from interviews with a stern careful eye toward the impacts on the people.

I went to Natasha's boss Mike Greenberg, the chief engineer for the third tunnel, for ideas and help. He was a key supporter of the art project CWT#3. He suggested I meet with Natasha's husband, also an engineer at the DEP and offered to come with me. The two of us set off and spent the better part of an hour trying to convince him that he would love the show, that Natasha must see it, that the Chief Engineer would buy them tickets and go with them himself. We got nowhere.

Spending the time, as long as it takes, on each project to address issues of accountability. Setting up a formal "policy" (for myself) of respect for the people I'm working with. There were days when I failed as much as I succeeded. Making art can feel so passionate it felt like it tore my heart out on occasion to have to put various of my photos on the shelf because a piece of rope, or a piece of equipment in the corner of the photo revealed a potential safety violation. I survived childhood, a very tough home and my own fears that I might be a lesbian, by self-denial, public denial, deftly but barely escaping different institutions attempts to censor/isolate/silence me. Many of us when young and in a position of powerlessness did what people do in that situation—beg, borrow and steal. To make art with communities, new rules have to be made, rules that require and rely on trust, integrity and honesty.

I returned to Natasha a few days later, opening night three days away. I had come to a painful decision. To say what I hadn't been willing to say until now. To offer to pull Natasha from CWT#3 if she asked me to. And to make the offer as relaxedly as possible. Natasha. Her character, for me as writer and performer, was the heart of the performance. "Natasha—who's not afraid to care." Not having her in the show...only one other person/character meant as much to me and the artistic construction of CWT#3.

What is too high a cost? Colleagues talked to me about decisions they've had to make. To fire this person. To not use this person's costumes, when they had worked their butt off to make them. Changing music, adding music, cutting music. We talked about "always making decisions in favor of the art." That the art had to come first. I asked them if they had ever decided differently. They had. And now in retrospect, did they think that they had made a mistake? What does it mean to "always make decisions in favor of the art"? Are people first? Is art first?

Natasha didn't answer me. I asked if I could show her the four-minute story . No answer. Was she giving me permission in her silence? Was she too polite, too kind, too timid to say "No"? Had she not made a final decision?

I stood there. Filled with wanting to believe that her silence was assent. We just looked at each other for a bit and then she started busying herself with the papers around her desk. I looked down and saw back under her desk, the pile of high heeled shoes that I had so wanted a photo of...she had begged me not to take it...sure that it would be documenting some unprofessional behavior on her part. I have no photo of the shoes, just a lovely short story about them that isn't in the performance. What gives me the right to cross these boundaries? What code, what policies do I set for myself? To whom am I accountable? Who repairs the rips and tears?

Natasha finally saw CWT#3, during the lunchtime performances at her workplace on the last day. I couldn't make myself look at her, sitting there slightly to the left in the first row of a conference room. The blinds drawn and covered with black cloth, the portable theater lights on a dimmer, Steve's solo cello music like a friend to me. She was within my physical reach for most of the performance. Later, my dear, wonderful tech crew said they had been each of them silently wishing me, directing me, sending me in her direction...each of us knowing what Natasha meant to me and to CWT#3. At the end, Natasha and me both crying, "Marty...you captured me. You got me. You got all of us, it's so beautiful...you framed us perfectly. Grace. Leah. It is so full of love. I love you...you...and I must hate you...look...what you do to me...you make me so emotional, I can't go work now...you ruined me! I love you, Marty. I love you."

Staying in touch when it's "over." Making sure there is enough time/going slow enough/planning time in throughout the project to allow yourself and those involved to assess, express, experience and address.

I owe Natasha a call.

Old guy down in tunnel 23b

Girls. Girls. Hi girls. You need masks. We got silicosis down here. Like asbestosis. From breathing the dust when we blast the rock. You don't want to breathe that. Oh no. My dad. That'd kill you. You need masks. I'll go get 'em. "we got any masks?!" "we got any masks for these girls?!" "any masks!" I'll go get 'em, you girls stay right here. A couple of masks for your protection. From the dust. Could give you silicosis. Well, not in such a short time, but most of us, the old timers, you're down here for most of your life. Me? My mask? Oh, I'm so old, but you're still young. I'm dead already."

Concrete Benefits—Thinking About How The Art Can "Move A Community Forward"

I knew from the beginning that one of my goals in CWT#3 was to improve the safety consciousness and practice of the people working on the third water tunnel. During the research, I asked questions about safety, listening to people's issues/stories, as one way of offering resources. I made sure to have the first story in the body of the performance be about safety, and address it throughout the show.

Working in construction for 20 years, I have struggled with not wearing important safety equipment because of haste and the influence of male working-class culture—not believing you are important/valuable/worth enough to protect. One of my strategies was to make evident through the performance and every aspect of CWT#3 the preciousness of all the people working, through making visible their love (usually unspoken) for each other, and through the quality of the materials/card/production/video/text/set of CWT#3.

Another opportunity existed, which was to use the announcement cards that accompany a performance/art event, as a way of getting a powerful image(s) out to a community. Realizing that one image can be treasured forever or thrown out in the two seconds it takes to look at it and walk to the wastebasket, I wanted to make that two seconds count and offer something that at least had the possibility of being used as "desk art at work" or "refrigerator art" at home. Throughout CWT#3, I kept in mind the widest notion of audience, including the working people's families, neighbors and friends. In the end, those wider categories of people did indeed come to the performances and gallery exhibit. I wanted to open up the possibility of deepening ties between individuals work lives, family lives and social lives, remembering the deep ignorance and silence in the communities I grew up in between what our fathers did and our daily lives.

There are two ends to a tunnel. A one hundred year history of bullying and besting exists between NYC towards the people who live where the water comes from - Catskills and Delaware Reservoir System. NYC has had its way on almost every occasion. A current battle over water treatment vs. land use has been raging for the last twenty years. Traveling upstate to meet, interview, tape and video town supervisors, librarians, trout fishing guides and grocers, I made sure to make a place in the performance for Upstaters to speak, even a bit of their minds to the NY'ers seeing the show. CWT#3 has since been produced at two upstate arts centers to audiences filled with retired miners and their families, local politicians, NY'ers with second homes and members of the tightly knit community of mountain people.

Twenty-two people have been killed building the third water tunnel since 1970. Founding a Memorial Fund was an opportunity to use art to directly affect a community. It will finance the installation of a drinking fountain/sculpture in honor of the people who have died. We raised \$20,000.00 at the Benefit Performance and will be fundraising the rest with an awards/In Memoriam dinner in late 1997. Initial research accidentally led me to realize that it was unlikely that the various groups (long complex histories of competition, cooperation, co-optation) working on the tunnel would be able to come together to fund such a memorial. I, as an artist, could act as the neutral-interested outsider and help this community realize a goal of their own: a public monument that makes their invisible underground labor and sacrifice visible to the rest of us.

Pete—Safety man for General Contractor

*What are you doing here again? Cheez...you're like a bad penny! We can't get rid of you. Listen. I gotta explain something you clearly don't understand! We're trying to work here! Lemme give you an example for instance I'm sitting here holding (gesture) a \$90 insurance claim ,**unpaid**, which I submitted for some guy who stubbed his toe six months ago...on a \$220-million-dollar job! Jeezch! And you come waltzing in here with your dancing or your drama...whatever it is you're doing—Cheezch! What did I ever do to you??*

Are you girls Irish? You look like you could be Irish?

**"Goddamn, I've cut it six times and it's still too short!"
(Carpenter's Joke)**

Working on this community-art project was, on many days, a matter of getting up, spending all day doing things that I could tell I was either bad or terrible at, going to bed, getting up the next day, spending all day doing things that I could tell I was either bad or terrible at, going to bed. Over the course of CWT#3 I got to make bad errors in judgment. I tried things that totally backfired. I lost if not misplaced a few people's friendship. I had more arguments than I've had with anyone in my life outside of my parents and intimate partners. I also made more friends, learned more important things, sharpened my judgment on a thousand things, and reached farther for the full realization of my biggest artistic vision than ever before in my life. I will never be the same. If you're spending most of your time doing things that you already know how to do, why are you doing them? There were many days when I could barely stand to look at how many mistakes I'd made, how inept I'd handled something, how bossy I had been with someone, how unprepared I was for what had needed to happen, how much that impacted on other people, how intimidated I was, how inarticulate. And then...new day...more art to be made. Being a carpenter for so many years helped me keep perspective. I already knew from years of mistakes, a good carpenter is someone who knows how to make their mistakes work for them.

John —Hoghouse man, Local 147 at Shaft 26B

That's John, John O'Flaherty. A lot of people will tell you Flaherty, but no, that's not it. It's O—Flaherty. That's O.' F.L.A.H.E.R.T.Y. O'Flaherty. I've been a miner for over 40 some years. Started up in Boston, working on their harbor tunnel. My brother was killed standing almost right next to me just about. Ye're asking me for a high point or a low point..I guess that'd be one or the other...depending on how your speaking of it. That's when I came down to New York City, hooked up with Local 147. Been in this racket ever since. It's a good union. 147. It's been good to me. Tunnelworkers. We do all the work that's under 50'. All the construction work. Sandhogs, yeah, that's the nickname for us. Oh—if it was ever derogatory, we've lost track of that a long time ago. The Brooklyn Bridge—she's our job. The caissons I mean. All the tunnels—Holland, Brooklyn Battery.

The subways, most of the sewers. That's all our work. Anything below 50' that's where we come in.

No it's not an easy job. If the "sili-" "sili-"—oh what do you call the breathing thing? If that don't get you—all the miners have it—your ears are shot from the noise. It's very noisy down there. Your joints are aching from the damp, it's very damp down there. If you make it to 60, that's all you can expect. No, no, she's not going to let you go easy.

**"You go down with ten human beings, you come up with ten human beings."
(Dennis O'Neil, Shift Boss...only he said "men")**

It is not exactly unheard of for there to be significant struggles for power and control in any situation, when a large amount of money is involved. CWT#3, in this respect, was no different. Once a substantial grant was awarded, relationships changed and I entered a period of education as an artist/producer working within a traditional arts-presenter culture. As battles for control became evident, I spent the next three months attempting to reach resolution with my key presenter via discussion and/or written proposals. Night after night I was up till 5 a.m., drafting new proposals, new letters of clarification. Only to go to my job the next day living off the combination of fear and fury at what was happening. I finally decided that it was better to return the more than \$175,000 to funders and start fund-raising from scratch rather than sacrifice my participation in decision-making about the budget, PR, planning, fund-raising as well as the artistic vision and realization of the project.

It was a devastatingly difficult decision to reach, but in the end, just making clear the decision, and asking some colleagues to help, an agreement was reached that allowed me clear artistic control over the project, and responsible management of the specific funds critical to realizing the artistic vision. We went ahead with the project as originally planned, with two people agreeing to act as arbitrators/consultants when needed. Critical time on the project was lost forever, but if these issues of control, money, credit are not made clear in every project, a price will be paid either at the beginning, middle or end. Every artist needs to determine what is key to the any particular project, what is worth fighting for and then not succumb to notions of "anything is better than nothing" or fears that "you will never work again". It is very scary to be an artist. The structures of this particular version of the art world are well-stacked against us. We need each other.

These are the three big issues of contention in my experience in the field. I was used to the construction industry of small companies, where tangible problems and tangible results soak up much of the airtime that is spent on competition and battles for control and credit in art-related industries. In college I had in fact left the theater department for good in an effort to not be a part of such destructive patterns. About ten years ago, I started performing and writing again, after a ten year hiatus. Now, after doing CWT#3 and then meeting this summer at Jacob's Pillow with a group of choreographers who work with communities, I now want to make art so bad, am so excited by other people that make art, am so moved by the art they are making that my desire to participate is greater than my upset at many of the nasty patterns still active in the artmaking community. Ironically, I assume this desire speaks to probably everyone who

is in this community. I seriously doubt anyone wakes up in the morning and says, "Gee, I'd love to see some heads roll today." I assume that people wake up in the morning and hope that somehow today people will get along, that fair solutions will be reached, that money will come through.

Hope doesn't cut it. We have work to do. We don't have to live with these self-perpetuated obstructions. We are operating in a field soaked in the patterns of classism...isolation and individualism not community, distrust not trust, an ideology of scarcity not abundance, greed not generosity, competition not cooperation. There is the magnetic pull of the culture in that direction that we consciously need to take into account and resist. We have enough tough challenges coming at us from the outside, which is where most of the patterns originated. But like our most intimate personal relationships, it takes hard, scary work to change, and, fortunately or unfortunately, we can't make it go away by hoping or by not talking about it. Pointing fingers isn't useful, we all struggle here, but honest assessment rather than ignoring or denial is a critical first step. Making art with communities requires new understandings of what we're doing, new relationships with presenters and producers and audiences, new rules for how we work together and new visions for both the art and the activities that result in the art. These are exciting challenges. Challenges that mirror what community organizers, unions, community groups, social change organizations, schools and families are figuring out as well. Now is a splendid time to take this on. We are in excellent company.

Somewhere in the middle of the project as I ran into my own and other's mishegoss (Yiddish for "craziness"), I realized I needed to make some long-range goals to help me keep perspective in the short-range confusions. The one that worked best all round was that I would be "on speaking terms with everyone connected to the project...within three years."

Scott —Geologist DEP 23 B and 19B

My job is to reach an understanding of the rock we're going through. To build a picture of what has happened over the last several million years and apply that knowledge to the work of construction. Once we know where we'd like to have the tunnel go, we drill core borings, test borings. To get these we drive a truck along the route, and set a drill up which goes down six, seven, eight hundred feet and brings with it this piece of the puzzle. (hold up small piece of rock/core boring) This is vital information for the contractors to know when they are making their bids. If you think about it, this (holding up the test boring fragment) is the only concrete, pardon the expression, information the General Contractor has to go on. They have to estimate how long it's going to take them to tunnel out, how they are going to do that, and how much it is all going to cost, without even seeing anything besides this. After the work begins, we geologists inspect all the rock as soon as it's revealed, looking for faults, cracks, loose shifting settling, which could lead to a cave-in—trying to understand as much as we can what has happened over the last millions of years. The patterns in the rock are beautiful, like rivers, for the matter, now solid, was once liquid. The rock we're going through now is from a time when the West coast of Africa, the Orkney Islands, and New York City were all a part of the same land mass. It's very humbling. It's good to be humbled in your job every once in a while.

The Art-World Culture: The Circle Grows Smaller

Presenters/Artists/Funders—grave disparities exist in the relationships within this triangle. Some are becoming increasingly out of balance as the "censorship wars" have successfully removed direct funding of the artists (besides raising millions and millions of dollars for reactionary causes; who says there's no money in art?). That in itself is a huge shift away from correct policy, leaving the artist and the art, increasingly funded and selected only through presenters, more and more vulnerable. Artists ourselves will have to take on these issues and find solutions, but the effects reverberate to the core of the triangle.

It appears that an increasingly number of funders are currently in the midst of radically reconceptualizing their roles and relationship to the field. Funders are transforming presenters into "baby funders," offering them large block grants to serve as regranters (as a way of distancing themselves from the art being made?). Now presenters are structuring the grants process, creating peer-review panels, choosing the artists to be on them—thus adding the role of granter to the already powerful role of presenter. Presenters are not publicly accountable in the way that government panels and organizations are. Critical questions and issues are raised and must be addressed. What strategies are being developed by each partner in the triangle to create structures that reflect the nature of the new relationships? Where are the discussions happening that address these challenges? What systems of accountability are being created that at least match those formerly in place?

Making art with communities often requires significant financial, administrative and spiritual resources. The art for me was as much in the daily organizational activities, the contacts with people, the phone calls, the public relations, permissions, as it was in the final performances, the exhibits, the video installations. Imagine if every presenter/funder sat down and for one hour imagined that they were an artist figuring out how to realize a community arts project, thinking it through every step of the way. The way a carpenter does before renovating someone's kitchen. Where would you go for money? What presenters do you want to work with? Where can you find information about the different presenters to make some choices about who would best fit your project? How many choices are there? What presenters are experienced in working closely with an artist, rather than the "artist as labor/talent" model? What role in decision-making do you need to have? Is that different than if you are doing a performance run in a theater space? Is the "art part" only what ends up in the final performance? What are the risks in "making demands"? How secure is your future? Can you afford a "bad reputation"? Who pays for your administrative time? Who pays for your lawyer as you responsibly negotiate with presenters, funders, community organizations, partners?

Another significant development to changes in the culture of arts funding is the elimination of smaller organizations from consideration of monies, simply on the basis of their size/budget. If "Think Globally, Act Locally" is a key direction for a future we can *all* live with, what are the effects of removing funding from many of the arts groups most intimately connected to local communities of difference and diversity?

Developing art-making relationships with particular communities holds within it dynamic possibilities that can potentially transform the public's relationship to art. Art/Performance can play an ongoing critical role in realizing a society where solutions

the size of the problems come into being. Relationships can be built, understandings can come into being that have never existed between communities, peoples, nations. Art is that significant.

In Memorium Story

As I speak the lines, I spill water out onto floor to the front and then to both sides.

For the 22 men who died building this third water tunnel.

For the men and women who love them, who miss them, who work jobs everyday to make ends meet. To making ends meet which they seldom do, for women working for half the wage, its not the men's fault, but something must be done. God bless a good wage. God bless all who will never make it.

For those of us who can't find jobs. For those of us who are laid off. For those of us who are fired. For those of us who are unemployed. For those of us who are bought out bought off. For those of us who are given early retirement. For those of us who have jobs that suck. For us with jobs we hate. For us who won't give up. For us who did.

I slowly start spinning in place as spilled water flies out onto the floor in a circle. The spinning gets faster and faster as the story goes on. I keep pouring water onto floor, keep spinning—the desired effect is to have drops of water flying off in all directions as I spin and tell the story memorial.

To Mike. To Larry. To penknives sharp enough to cut a leg off, to hearts strong enough to do the job. To love that lets us care and remember we do. For Brian and the fucking scrubbers, for Tommy and his blue blue eyes. To me holding friends in my arms as they die...to saying good-bye when there's time, to saying it now when there wasn't. To Anthony Oddo—God bless you Anthony—I spill, drink, splash and cast water for you and for those who shared you. To Natasha who's not afraid to care. To Grace and moving up. To Leah who watches and waits. To Carlos and his coffee cans filled with pens and pencils. To Pete and his self-rescuing mask demonstrations. To Mike and his white oats with sugar on them.

It's not scary to go to work and know you or your friend may die. It's scary to not have work to go to. To not know how you will feed your family. It's scary to give up trying. To work a job that only gives a paycheck. No joy. Not love. Not challenge. Not the satisfaction of a job well done. A hard day over.

*I'm dancing 'cause dancing is the story of winning.
And that's where we're going.*

Sidebars (boxes)---

My goals:

To encourage a deeper sense of accomplishment and pride among many of the individuals who have been working on the tunnel for the last 25 years. To do this by focusing on how each of their individual contributions add up to the finished project and by making it possible for office and tunnel workers to visit for the first time the finished breathtakingly beautiful valve chamber at Roosevelt Island.

To create an opportunity for some individuals to reflect on their work and their lives through my listening during their interviews with me.

To make clear to audience members the process/mechanics by which a public works project of this magnitude gets accomplished at the end of the twentieth century.

To make good jokes about all the silly stuff that we live with all the time and don't get to laugh about enough.

To reveal the caring and intelligence that operates every day in many of our interactions with each other through the stories that I am recording and editing and their retelling during the installations and performances.

To create a unique space in which people from the Catskill region will be able to be heard directly by NYC residents and DEP employees.

To celebrate and commemorate the 22 workers who have died building the third tunnel.

To get at least 100 Local 147 members to a performance.

To get at least 300 DEP employees to a performance.

To get at least \$2250 for Local 147's Welfare Fund via a benefit performance.

To increase the audiences' awareness of water issues and conservation.

To do lunchtime performances that make the rest of that workday safer and more fun.

To include art already being made by tunnel workers in CWT#3, photographs by DEP people as well as music by Irish and Caribbean bands made up of Local 147 members.

To remind everyone involved in CWT#3 how deeply wonderful and valuable art is to their lives.

To challenge any notions that art is not for working people, that art is irrelevant to our everyday lives, that art is hard to understand, that performance is unpleasant to sit through.

To show the people I work with on the project more about the lives of artists and the process of making art.

To bring knowledge of the existence of the third water tunnel to a larger public.

I want to offer audience members the kind of transformative experience that has happened for me in performances, when something is happening that suddenly makes all possibilities evident.

(Credits box)

City Water Tunnel #3

Artistic Director, Writer, Performer, Producer: Marty Pottenger

Lighting Design: Tony Giovannetti
Composer—Performance: Steve Elson
Composers—Soundtrack Video Installation: Steve Elson, Pierce Turner
Video Installation Editor and Video Director: Mary Ellen Strom
Performance Video Editor: Alisa Lebow
Executive Producer: Dancing in the Streets.
Co-Producers: Dance Theater Workshop and Marty Pottenger.

A full theatrical production presented by Dance Theater Workshop and Public Imaginations at Dance Theater Workshop in New York City, May 1996, “City Water Tunnel #3” included a gallery exhibit of more than 60 photographs taken by individuals who work on the third water tunnel. “City Water Tunnel #3” also involved several on-site video installations at the different workplaces for one month prior to the performances and a series of lunchtime performances at tunnel construction sites and NYC’s Department of Environmental Protection. After winning an Obie for CWT#3, a second run produced by Dancing in the Streets in association with DTW at HERE during the Fall of 1996 included both the gallery exhibit of photographs, as well as two weekend fairs celebrating the people who are building the tunnel, with story-swapping circles and water/tunnel-related activities for young people.

The overall project of CWT#3 was produced by Dancing in the Streets. CWT#3's arts partners were Local 147 of the Tunnelworker's Union I.L.U.N.A. and the Department of Environmental Protection, a city agency that oversees capital improvements, water, waste treatment and air quality.

Generous and critical financial support for “City Water Tunnel #3” was received from Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Arts Partners Program administered by the Association of Performing Arts Presenters, the Rockefeller Foundation’s MAP Fund and the Greenberg Foundation. CWT#3/Marty Pottenger also received key funding from New York State Council on the Arts Theater Commission, DTW's Public Imaginations Artist Residency Program and New York Foundation for the Art's New Works.

Deepest thanks to the members of Local 147, the employees of NYC's DEP, Elizabeth Rumsey, Tony Giovannetti, Art Becofsky, Mike Greenberg, Richie Fitzsimmons Jr., Loris Bradley, Tia Tibbits Levinson, Rhoda Cerritelli, Laurie Uprichard, Carla Peterson, Elliot Brown, Ann Rosenthal, David White and Elise Bernhardt ...without whose labors, City Water Tunnel #3 would not have been. --M.P.