

“When we walk together,

we think talk
see
stop
hear touch lead
follow stop
look
move laugh smell
question answer
think disagree stop
wait
agree(?) walk walk
walk.

”

-piotr wojcik

the

Schuylkill River

a guide



as you begin,
try to

c e n t e r
y o u r s e l f

where have you been?
how have you been?
do you know where you're about to go?

find your body and finally be in it.

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special thanks

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head down chestnut street

exit penn. pass drexel.
this is, after all, "university city."

campuses, with their concentrated and connected student body, are truly microcosms,

and

universities, with their access to brilliant minds and their (seemingly endless) access to resources and funds, can – and do – greatly influence the cities & the physical environments that surround them.



Inhale. Exhale. Repeat.

Take the ramp up to South Street Bridge,
and start heading wherever you want to go.

And while the future may seem daunting,
I hope you've found some comfort in what you just experienced.

I hope that you repeat what you've just experienced,
that you introduce others to the Schuylkill,
therefore re-introducing yourself to it, too.

I hope that, in the face of the unknown,
in the face of eco-grief,
in the face of an unsettling political climate,
you remain an activist for change.





what ways, if any, are you connected to these institutions?

in what ways can you leverage your connections to ensure a better fate for our planet?



Feeling anxious about all this? Me too.

In his article, "If you're suffering from climate grief, you're not alone," meteorologist Eric Holthaus writes,

"

Last week's U.N. climate report gave a terrifyingly clear picture of a world on the brink of locking in catastrophe. It told us what was needed and the horrors of what awaited if we failed to mobilize. As a scientific report, it was dazzling. But it didn't tell us how to process, cope, and adapt our lives to the grief of that overwhelming knowledge.

… We'll need a comprehensive crash course on human psychology to deal with the massive changes we're seeing; a guide to self-care for the most important decade in human history. We need to know how climate change will change us as social beings, how we can deal with grief, how to go about the process of imagining a new society. We will need to know not only how we can survive in this world, but how we will *live*.

"

As best said by Heraclitus, a pre-Socratic philosopher who used the image of a river as a means of conveying the constantly changing nature of mortal beings,

"Into the same rivers we step and do not step, we are and are not."

On this stretch of silver, shining boardwalk, the Schuylkill feels infinite, like you could walk alongside it forever.

But is forever really guaranteed?

In October 2018, The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released a report entitled, *Global Warming of 1.5°C, an IPCC special report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty.*

"One of the key messages that comes out very strongly from this report is that we are already seeing the consequences of 1°C of global warming through more extreme weather, rising sea levels and diminishing Arctic sea ice, among other changes," warned Panmao Zhai, the Co-Chair of IPCC Working Group I.

According to the IPCC summary for policymakers, "The report finds that limiting global warming to 1.5°C would require 'rapid and far-reaching' transitions in land, energy, industry, buildings, transport, and cities. Global net human-caused emissions of carbon dioxide (CO2) would need to fall about 45 percent from 2010 levels by 2030, reaching 'net zero' around 2050."



Isabelle Stengers
Another Science is Possible: A Manifesto for Slow Science

"

It may be said that we who are here are in the position of having to imagine how we will answer those who are not here, but who nevertheless already exist. What will we say to the children born in this century when they ask: 'You knew all you had to know; what did you do?' Any adult today might imagine being asked this question. However, as academics, I would claim that we stand in a special position.

"

Now…
Now…
Now…

continue down chestnut,
continue down chestnut,
getting on the chestnut street bridge.
getting on the chestnut street bridge.
get on the ramp of the schuylkill river trail.
get on the ramp of the schuylkill river trail.
get on the ramp of the schuylkill river trail.

as you walk down the ramp and start along the trail,
heading towards the walnut street bridge,
take in your surroundings.

who is with you?

even if you walk alone,
especially if you walk alone – who is with you?

encounters from my own walks:

poetry-reading men in hammocks,
speed-walking elderly women,
twin babies snug in strollers,
dogs, dogs, dogs, &
the occasional turtle.





take note of who is present, and
who is not. take note of who
you'd like to bring.

a brief timeline of efforts to clean the Schuylkill

1828
Mandated a fine of $5 to $50 for pollution from manufacturing

1867
Creation of Fairmount Park as a direct response to industrial development

1868
New law increases the pollution fine and expands the definition of pollution; opposed by local businesses

1972
The federal Clean Water Act targets problems with industrial and municipal sewage

2000
The Schuylkill River is designated as a National Heritage Area

if you haven't already, look at the river bank. do you notice litter? gum wrappers? cigarette buds? bottle lids? beer cans?

jot down what you find on the lines below.



Find A Spot By The River

Where are you drawn to? Go there. Settle.
Suggested but Not-in-the-Slightest-Required Spot:
Underneath the patch of trees near the Walnut Street Bridge.

In 1991, poet and Philadelphian Stephen Berg was commissioned by the Fairmount Park Art Association to write the following poem about his relationship with the Schuylkill River, which was ultimately featured in a public art piece of the same name along the bank of Kelly Drive.

The poem is included in its entirety on the next two pages. If it is helpful to you, feel free to reflect upon the poem as you take a moment to commune with the river.

As you read, as you reflect, as you observe, ask yourself,

What do you notice?
What do you touch/smell/see/hear?
What is the river trying to tell you?

Sleeping Woman

Stephen Berg

how can you know what it means to be here

in the clear silence without need listening
fed by the lost source of nature where you

are now voices hover breathe on the abyss
are the abyss bare songs faint streaks traces

gusts scribble of leaves cloud scrawl unpredictable
storms calms black trees table of weeds and stars

you could die here watching pick twilight haze
become night daybreak dusk igniting the

dark water step into the flickering
meadow beyond opening to you its

bright deep surface a mind not yours throat
humming before we had our lives places

cry out for images of you of me
if they had tongues what could they say to

explain us what to do the crazy years do
to us who hope to live forever sure

of a life after in the tenderness
of knowing this amazed by cherry branches

each blossoming stripped in a day o gods
we hear speaking to us on pages time

fuses its cold flame to our souls we put
our human hands together pray murmur

your names that are no one's this tiny body
of flesh of bone answerless composing

its last message again again again
but the river consoles urgent hypnotic

geese rift on the rough water mirror
holding nothing spilling across falls long

body mouth fireladen sky in it where
all images are broken on the meeting

of two eternities between by white
chrysanthemums scissors hesitate

only an instant no words to say it
thought these rise from anonymous stone to

help the mystery speak like a letter to
an intimate friend and not hinder the

sacred troubled beauty love is was will be
love has shaken me like wind rushing down

from the hills hitting an oak you
burn me with what eyes look me in the face

friend to friend nothing's sweeter than sleeping
with your love it heals the dying soul with

what eyes what pain love gives you burn me show
me what's behind your eyes of death's tremendous

nearness kneeling to any phrase hear me
talking in my sleep to you to whom I

gave birth how can you know what it means how
can you face the edge of time who does not

think of himself is given the keys offerings
glimpses of torn mist who the kindness

infinite of my hands who now where you
stand touch me give me my name