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## ART & ENVIRONMENT INITIATIVE

**1997 A&EI established.** First capstone course for the Art-Environment interdisciplinary minor is offered, leading to A&EI's first project at Crawford County Industrial Park (Greenroom).

**2000 Greenroom.** A 'green' community break-room designed for the Crawford County Industrial Park. Meadville, PA. Includes a 33' x 17' mural, historical photo-essay, and sculptural tables and chairs made from recycled materials found on site. This was a student driven project, coordinated by A&EI founder and director, Amara Geffen.

**2001 Signs & Flowers.** A sculptural installation of twelve large (8' – 10') flowers made from recycled road signs. Project involved landscaping a 315' x 80' embankment into a series of undulating mounds (made from recycled shoulder dirt), which together with the flowers evokes a post-industrial garden. Collaboration with A&EI and PennDOT in Meadville. Preliminary concepts were developed by 18 Allegheny College students. Six Allegheny students worked with director Amara Geffen and PennDOT employees to finalize floral designs and fabricate the sculptures.

**2001 -10 Read Between the Signs (RBTS).** A sculptural relief made from recycled road signs that was designed to "screen" PennDOT's storage lot in Meadville, PA. Phase II and III were completed with an artist's grant from the Mid-Atlantic Arts Grants. Project continued each summer from 2001 – 2010. Imagery for this project was gathered through community workshops (PennDOT Summer of Safety events and visits to local schools). Residents were asked to share drawings of what they value/love most about Crawford County. Images from those drawings were integrated into a comprehensive design for this roadside sculpture. Artist Amara Geffen directed this community project, which was built over nine summers with Allegheny College art interns who were taught the basic fabrication techniques for translating and constructing the community designs. PennDOT provided space for the fabrication process and assisted with installation.

**2005 Market Alley.** Design concept for beautification and greening of an alley in Meadville's historic downtown. Project design was developed and finalized by lead artist Amara Geffen in a collaboration with the City of Meadville, and with assistance from Steven Utz, a Rose Architectural Fellow. The project involved daylighting Mill Run, a historically important local stream that flowed through a culvert under the alleyway.

Phase I was completed by the City in December 2011.

**2007 Market House Rain Garden.** An ecoart project, located at the Market Square Municipal Parking Garage, that demonstrates reuse, addresses flooding from stormwater overflow, and creates civic space. Preliminary concepts for this project were developed through a collaboration with Keep PA Beautiful, who funded a landscape architecture intern from UMass, and lead artist Amara Geffen, who finalized the designs in consultation with the City of Meadville. The garden was built with the help of 25 community volunteers and many donations of plants (local nurseries) and repurposed, gently used bricks. Initially envisioned as a potentially temporary project, residents successfully petitioned the City to commit to making this a permanent site.

**Flow: Mill Run.** A signart relief mural on a municipal parking garage in downtown Meadville, where Mill Run, an historical stream, flows beneath the garage on its meander through the City of Meadville. This project was part of a larger effort to highlight and daylight Mill Run throughout the City and stimulate sustainability and economic development in Meadville. (NOTE: this project was salvaged when the parking garage was removed; it will be reused along the North Street Corridor).

**2008 Meadville at the Crossroads.** Mural by Allegheny College alum Berry Breene '07. Preliminary concepts were developed through Breene's senior project, directed by Amara Geffen. The final mural was painted with assistance from Peter Marushka (local artist and community partner) and through 'painting bee' community workshops in the early stages. The mural was funded through a gift to A&EI from the family of local artist Gwendolyn Barboni. A&EI provided fiscal and artistic support, coordinated community engagement events during the early stages of the painting process, and facilitated installation of the mural, located on Park Avenue at the intersection of Chestnut Street in Meadville. The mural depicts Meadville's Market House at the crossroad of the community's rural and urban centers.

**2009 In Praise of Land & Water: Revisioning Stormwater on Federal Highways.** An ecoart project that merges Earth Art with best management practices in the environmental mitigation of stormwater runoff as part of the I-79 Meadville Interchange Project with PennDOT and the Federal Highway Administration. A collaboration with artists Amara Geffen, Angelo Ciotti, Environmental Engineer Steve Halmi, and Landscape Architect Chris Brown (Derck & Edson) who were subcontracted by PennDOT to design the project. The project has won several awards.

**North Street Improvement Project.** A collaboration with the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, the City of Meadville, and artist Amara Geffen to foster enhancements for the North Street Improvement project, which included expansion of turning radii at four major intersections. The proposed plan featured development of a 'green necklace' to enhance stormwater management, establish bio-infiltration and/or bio-retention sites for improved water quality along the street, at sites adjacent to Mill Run (an impaired urban stream). The project will also integrate community art along the North Street corridor. Project has not yet been implemented, but has also not been set aside by the City.

**2010 Mill Run Stream Highlighting.** A collaboration with the City of Meadville to highlight this historically important yet impaired urban stream that meanders through the length of the city, mostly through channelized culverts that are buried beneath city streets. The project involved a series of temporary street paintings, designed by Allegheny student interns, and implemented at four sites throughout the community. The

goal was to make people aware of the stream. A&EI director Amara Geffen supervised the development and implementation of this project.

**2011 Shadybrook Park Revitalization.** A collaboration with the City of Meadville that led to revitalization of a community park through murals, trail development, and stormwater enhancements to address flooding, increase usability of the park and improve water quality in Mill Run. Preliminary concepts were explored in Allegheny College's Art-En capstone course. Final design is by Amara Geffen and Landscape Architect Chris Brown.

**2011 - 13 Blue Box Renaissance.** A community collaboration that involved transforming newspaper distribution racks into functional works of art. Twenty-two racks were painted between 2011 and 2013 by local students and residents of Meadville.

**2012 Poetry Park, Erie, PA.** A commission awarded to artist Amara Geffen for the Trinity Square Foundation. There were two phases to this project: 1) a pathway painting developed with Allegheny College art interns, and 2) design, fabrication, and installation of eight large sculptural forms (floral) installed in the Poetry Park, including a series of three sculptures that serves as a Proscenium Arch framing the poetry/performance stage. All sculptures were designed by Geffen.

**2013 - 17 Fostering Livability through Art, Nature and Culture, Conneaut Lake, PA.** National Endowment for the Arts Our Town Grant approved 2014 and culminated in 2017. Outcomes: design planning for public art trail from Ice House Park to Fireman's Beach; development of a web-app tour series for historically important sites in Conneaut Lake; fabrication and installation of one permanent public art sculpture (*Ganesh: Remover of Obstacles*, a life-size wooly mammoth fabricated from COR-TEN Steel) at Fireman's Beach. Four community arts engagement events were held to gather local stories and provide input in planning and design for the proposed trail. Local students assisted with story gathering and the arts-engagement events. The sculpture, *Ganesh*, was designed by artist Amara Geffen and fabricated by Craig Newell welding in Cambridge Springs, PA. It was installed at Fireman's Beach December 9, 2016.

**2015 The Bus Stops Here: Asbury Manor Bus Shelter Project, Fifth Ward, Meadville, PA.** Design development, fundraising, and project oversight for a bus shelter for residents at Asbury Manor. Allegheny College/A&EI interns developed a Kickstarter Campaign to fund the project. The project was a collaboration between Geffen, Crawford Area Transportation Association, the Economic Progress Alliance (fabricated the structure), Meadville Plate Glass, and Ashley Porter, a local civil engineer who certified the shelter design. Shelter design was completed by Geffen and Porter. Plans originally included decorative metal forms to be added to the structure.

**2016 - 17 The Spirit of Birches, Birds and Words, Meadville, PA.** Public mural at Meadville Medical Center's Medical Arts Building at 765 Liberty Street. Designed and painted by Geffen with assistance from two interns and several local artists. Goal was to create a pleasant, contemplative, healing space for patients as they move from the parking lot to the entrance of the hospital/offices.

**2018 - present ARC Community Greenspace, Meadville, PA.** Development of a community greenspace in downtown to leverage arts and culture programming bringing ARC clients (those with Intellectual and Cognitive disabilities) and Meadville residents

together and breaking down the barriers of isolation experienced by ARC clients. The site is envisioned as an “outdoor room” that will feature a series of murals on blighted buildings that abut the site. Additionally, the site will feature an ADA walkway that will incorporate highlighting and daylighting of Mill Run, which flows beneath the planned walkway in an underground culvert. Rain gardens to mitigate stormwater are also planned, as well as a performance stage and a series of interactive sculptures. The project will be funded through multi-year grants from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts Creative Communities Initiative and the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. To date, one mural (*Bloom Where You’re Planted*) has been completed on one of the adjacent buildings and included community engagement in naming this constructed relief mural.

Between 2004 and 2010, A&EI served as the primary driver for the *Meadville: Not Your Run of the Mill Community* efforts.