The Pinwheels

Located on Fresh Kills Park’s East Island, Staten Island. The Pinwheels project is a kaleidoscopic land art experience that celebrates the convergence of art and science for the re-imagining and revitalizing of a postindustrial site for the public’s use and enjoyment.

The striking congregation of colored, vertical wind turbines achieves material goals. The Pinwheels, a hybrid vertical helix or Savonius wind turbine, at once wash the ground and park-goers in swirling pools of color and light, and generate up to 750,000 kwh annually.

The approach to The Pinwheels is along an existing park path. The majority of the kaleidoscopic turbines are located along a one-mile loop that is easily accessible to everyone, especially children and the elderly. Within the loop a concentration of turbines surround a west facing hillside dubbed the “Color Fields”. As the sun moves across the sky the shadows on the ground are constantly changing color, as the pinwheels act like theatrical gels projecting a color on the field below.

An intentionally curious landscape by design stems from both a local and global viewpoint. The surrounding neighborhoods and communities need to re-develop a relationship with this landscape, that was once off limits. By providing an environment between common definition ( natural / technical, industrial / sculptural ), it is left up to the park goers to decide where the best picnic spot is, or where to set up the impromptu concert. Ultimately developing a community connection to a space that had been off limits.

Globally what does it means to inhabit a site that was most recently a landfill. As our urban areas grow we frequently rub up against the former industrial / manufacturing fringe. The Pinwheels project asserts the critical social, and ecological importance of recognizing and reforming our industrial wastelands. As our cities grow, we must reclaim these spaces, and we must do so hopefully.