



Eve Mosher
Drawing the HighWaterLine to the
WTC site, August 2007
Photo Credit: Hose Cedeno



Eve Mosher
Williamsburg Bridge to Queens border,
October 2007
Photo Credit: Hose Cedeno



Eve Mosher
The line continues through the
West Village, August 2007
Photo Credit: Hose Cedeno

Eve Mosher tackles big projects which help to visualize environmental issues and potential solutions to communities large and small. A good example was her HighWaterLine project, which brought her out into the streets, front yards and back alley's of long waterfront sections of Manhattan and Brooklyn, drawing a six-inch chalk line to mark the zones that would be increasingly inundated from climate change induced storms. Armed with an engaging personality, simple tools, and on packets, Eve worked for six months on her monumental "drawing," and met with hundreds of workers, homeowners and curious pedestrians.

The vision of one artist can make a difference, but it takes a network of partnerships to help bring a project this large to fruition. This interview explores some of the ways Eve reached out into the community, created partnerships, and secured funding from a variety of sources. This is an interview with Eve Mosher on February 4, 2008.

JACKIE: Eve, you just completed a very successful project, the HighWaterLine which involved some challenging fundraising in a short period of time. I'd like to talk a little bit about how you found funding partners.

EVE: Because the project crossed over some boundaries outside of the art world, one of the things I did was really investigate organizations and arts organizations out there working on environmental issues. Mostly, what I did was reach out to everybody. It was really important for me to tell everybody about the project. There were some organizations that were thrilled about the project and really wanted to work with me and others that didn't.

JACKIE: How did you reach out? Did you have a project description?

EVE: Yes, and I had two grants in the bag (from the New York State Arts Council and the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs through the Brooklyn Arts Council), so it was a done deal. The project was going to have to happen.

I emailed everybody that I talked to first. I would introduce myself, introduce the project, and then ask for a very specific follow up. I was reaching out to community boards and arts organizations, environmental organizations, and city agencies. Usually, in the first initial email I would look at their schedule and say, "I would like to present at your upcoming meeting at such date." Sometimes they would respond to that, sometimes they wouldn't, and sometimes it took a follow up call.

With the arts organizations that I spoke to, I always said, "I would like to set up a meeting with you to talk to you." So the initial thing was an email, but then beyond that it was phone calls and then going out and meeting people -- lots of meetings.

JACKIE: How many meetings do you estimate you had?

EVE: I know I had nine community board meetings, then I met with two arts organizations, three times with each, before one of them signed on, and then there were additional meetings where I met with people at other organizations and city agencies.

JACKIE: Were they environmental organizations?

EVE: Yeah. They were environmental organizations. I met with one of them five or six times because they were involved really early on in the process. And I met with the other one once. In total, there were probably fifty or sixty meetings when you count the parks department, the city agencies, and everybody else I talked to.

JACKIE: What was the value of these meetings?

EVE: Getting the word out about the project. The environmental organizations were actually able to provide promotion and volunteers to help produce the project. They also provided lots of help on the support material—what I wrote about the project and the materials I handed out while doing the project. The arts organization that I worked with provided absolutely everything they could. They helped produce the documentary [film], provided volunteers, and provided photographers to document the project.

JACKIE: Was it a documentary film maker that documented your piece?

EVE: Yes.

JACKIE: And now it's showing all over the world.

EVE: Yes. We have a seven minute documentary film on the project. We are looking to do a longer one, but right now we are just keeping up with demands and getting out what we have.

JACKIE: That's better than a catalogue.

EVE: Yeah it's worked out a lot better than a catalogu There are so many arts organizations now that are showing films of the project and are really interested in that. I use it in all my talks because it's nice and short. It can be an introduction to a talk, so it gets a lot of play.

JACKIE: Do you think having that film will help break the ice for you on your next project because it shows visually what you have accomplished?

EVE: I don't know about that. I think just having done the project and getting the press I recieved shows that I can do a large scale project and succeed at that. I mean, certainly the documentary is helpful, but arts organizations and granting organizations are not going to see the documentary. The agencies also probably won't see the documentary.

JACKIE: You got a lot of publicity for this project. What was some of the publicity you received?

EVE: A big write up in The New York Times, a short mention in Le Monde, the international paper, coverage on Discovery_News, an article in Good Magazine, and a lot of blog coverage.

JACKIE: Did the organizations that you partnered with help get that publicity for you?

EVE: Some of it. They were the ones that were really diligent about contacting The New York Times, which fed into so many of the other things—especially the international press that I got. And I think that my relationship with some of the environmental organizations might have helped with the coverage because they had existing relationships. The very early coverage I got entirely by myself, which might or might not have played into later coverage.

JACKIE: Did you write your own press material as well?

EVE: I wrote with the assistance of the arts organizations. So I wrote the first draft and went back and forth [with them] on it. At one point because we had gotten a lot of national and international press but not much local press, and we thought it was such a local project, we actually did hire a publicist to write a press release and push it out for us for the weekend where we were at the World Trade Center.

JACKIE: Did the partners also provide in-kind funding?

EVE: Most of the donations I got were service based. One of my big ones actually came from a design group that I came across at Pratt Institute (an art school in Brooklyn) called

Design Corps. It's headed by two professors and a group of students that work for non profits. I reached out to them and they reduced their design fee to half the usual cost. I also reached out to some photographers that I knew and offered to give them an opportunity to take photographs, with the guarantee that it would get picked up, reprinted, and published in press outlets. And this was the first documentary for the young film maker I found. So, the exchange for him is that although he did it for free, he is now getting world recognition.

JACKIE: I liked the fact that you also reached out for individual contributions. I remember getting the email about a donation of X amount would buy a bag of chalk, etc.

EVE: I did it through my fiscal sponsorship for the New York Foundation for the Arts (NYFA), and was able to receive almost \$1,000 - a pretty good amount of my funding. It was really just based off my own mailing list and asking people to forward all the information to others. I didn't really get anything in the way of click throughs on the website. But it was really based on people who were already interested in my work that were on my own mailing list and I was really surprised by some of the people who donated. So, it was definitely useful to be able to do that.

We were talking to some people about corporate sponsorship, but it didn't happen with the project because the process was so fast paced. I'm planning on giving more time on the next project to people who are interested in spending corporate money on this kind of project.

JACKIE: What do you think your biggest lessons were from HighWaterLine in terms of the fundraising?

EVE: I think in terms of the project -- and these are two Battenfieldisms -- the biggest things I credit for making the project happen were, never taking no for an answer and to tell everybody about the project. Frequently, I would get community boards that would say, "We're not interested in talking to you. We don't want to hear about it." It was terrible. It was no, no, no the whole time and I never took no for an answer. And as far as telling everyone about the project (and I mean everyone), I've made fantastic connections doing that. I am really not afraid to talk about my work anymore. You never know who or how someone could help out. I told a caterer about a project the other day and, who knows, maybe something will come from that? But I told some of my husband's workmates about HighWaterLine and thought, "Oh. They're not even going to care about this project." But one of them was the roommate of the son of the Commissioner of the Department of Transportation (DOT) whom I was trying to get a meeting with. I needed to meet with him to make sure that I wasn't going to break any laws by doing this project and he got me that meeting.

JACKIE: Well, just shows you never know.

EVE: It was huge. That's why I will always talk about my work.

JACKIE: So, your next project, Eve, is called—

EVE: Seeding in the City.

JACKIE: You are really going to look out for some corporate sponsorship on this project. You have a non profit sponsor?

EVE: I do. I have NYFA as a fiscal sponsor on this project. Actually, what I am trying to do is come up with a lot of different creative ways to fund my favorites right now is not necessarily a corporate sponsorship. It's gifting of these individual Green Roof Modules (the project is building a citywide network of small green roofplots). So it's like a microfund or sponsorship situation. Somebody can go online and pay fifty dollars so they are a kind of sponsor for a green roof module, and then the specific module is sponsored by them. They can say, "I want it put in this neighborhood's network or another neighborhood's network." It doesn't mean that they get it, but they pay for the module, and then when the module is set in place, the accompanying signage will say, "gifted by so and so."

JACKIE: What is a Green Roof Module?

EVE: The Green Roof Module is a small green roof plot – it's about 2'x4'. I'm doing some test plots this year to see the actual size, but it's a very small lightweight thing that I can literally carry up the stairs and install; up on the roof without any special engineering, renovation, or structural setup. The idea is to then have people create a network in their community that cares about these environmental issues and then all the people that are a part of that network will receive a Green Roof Module.

JACKIE: What's a green roof? Is it grass growing on your roof?

EVE: There's different ways that a green roof can be created. They use these structures, whether it's a tray or a nylon bag that are filled with ultra-light weight soil. Normally, what is planted in them are small succulents called sedum, because they can live off the rain water, grow lower to the ground, and provide a lot of coverage in the trays and on the nylon sacks. But the idea is just to put greenery on roofs because it reduces what's called the urban heat island effect. Urban areas, on average, have temperatures that are seven degrees hotter than their surrounding areas. The greenery also helps cleanse the air and rain water. It holds some of the rain water, so we won't have as big of a problem with storm water run off issues, and it takes some of the heavy metals out of the rain water.

JACKIE: Can you walk on top of the sedum?

EVE: No, but these are small modules. The idea is that people get an idea of what a green roof is, there is an opportunity to share information, resources and ideas about the issues that we face, specifically, in an urban environment, and what a green roof can do to remediate those issues. And I will also make resources available on the website so that if people decide they all want to get together and pay to get a green roof, they can do it and get

discounted prices. One of the corporate sponsorships that I am looking for is working with some of the resource providers to do discounted prices or in kind donations for the actual project and provide discounted prices for anyone who wants to buy it as a direct referral from this project. I'm also talking to some different businesses that are interested in green roofs, promoting themselves as a Green company to bring them into the project as a sponsor.

JACKIE: And architecture. Architectural firms left and right are declaring themselves as Green.

EVE: Yeah. There are traditional businesses and there are a lot of new Green businesses that want to promote themselves. I'm really interested in getting developers interested in this project because it's really a bonus for them to put Green roofs on their building. So if they want to help pay for a small plot to get people into the idea of funding a green roof on a building, or if a co-op group wants to get together and do something with me, it's kind of wide open. But I'm definitely trying to figure out some creative methods for funding, like hosting small parties on some of the roofs where people can pay to attend the party or the planting, there could be a lot of events happening around this project. Every time a green roof module gets planted, there could be a potential event around that.

JACKIE: Excellent. Eve, it is such a pleasure for me to see what one artist can do to make a huge difference. Bravo to you.

EVE: Thank you also, Jackie, it is always a pleasure to speak with you and I really owe so much of what I have been able to accomplish to your inspiration and wisdom.

Eve Mosher grew up on the borders of urban sprawl, watching the daily disintegration of "wild" in favor of "cultivation" in the form of suburban developments and strip malls. She holds an undergraduate degree in architecture and a Master in Fine Arts. She has lived in Texas, New York, Vermont, Oregon and California, all of which greatly influenced her interest in the environment by providing distinct and inspirational experiences. Upon her return to New York in 2005, she experienced culture shock from the lack of aggressive legislation and services vigorously addressing environmental issues. This new awareness influenced her transition to public, issue-based work.

Her 2007 work, HighWaterLine was profiled in international media, including the New York Times, The Discovery Channel, and Le Monde. Her public and community based artworks have received grants from New York State Council on the Arts and New York Department of Cultural Affairs both through the Brooklyn Arts Council. She has also had two projects selected as New York Foundation for the Arts fiscal sponsorship.

Her current and upcoming project include a global project encouraging the re-imagining of your own neighborhood, Insert Here and a green roof network called Redefining the City.