

NOT A CORNFIELD



YES, L.A. RIVER WATER CAN AND WILL BE USED TO GROW THE CORN.
IN ONE HARVEST A BROWN FIELD WILL BECOME A GREEN FIELD *Adrian Bay*

NOT A CORNFIELD, the photography and video installation capturing the transformation of a 32-acre brownfield in the historic center of Los Angeles into a cornfield for one agricultural cycle between May 2005 and May 2006, is on exhibit at George Eastman House May 9–July 12, 2009. The exhibition is a product of the Metabolic Studio.

NOT A CORNFIELD and related programs are supported in part by

The
ANNENBERG FOUNDATION



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George Eastman House is supported with public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts, a State agency; the Institute of Museum and Library Services; the National Endowment for the Arts; the County of Monroe; and with private contributions from individuals, corporations, and foundations.

Front cover: Lauren Bon: *Not A Cornfield* concept sketch, November 2004.



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Not A Cornfield: Clean soil, the Brown Phase, May 2005.

Photo © 2005 Not A Cornfield LLC.





A Cornfield and *Not A Cornfield* Janet Owen Driggs

Between March 2005 and May 2006, artist Lauren Bon cleaned 'the Cornfield,' an abandoned and polluted rail yard in the historic heart of Los Angeles, brought 1,500 truckloads of clean soil to the 32-acre site, and planted one million corn seeds. As the seeds sprouted so, in addition to tending the crop, did Bon and her team also tend to over 120 happenings in the field, including community events, ceremonies, and salons, and welcomed more than 33,000 visitors.

Not A Cornfield was certainly a cornfield, but it was a cornfield in much the same way that Scheherazade's tales were bedtime stories. In other words, as each of the Arabian tales is both the apparent 'thing' (a story) and a facet of a larger life saving strategy, so *Not A Cornfield* was both a cornfield and "much, much more." [i]

The artwork was, for instance, a visually stunning environmental action that transformed a brownfield into a green field in one agricultural cycle, a relational initiative that generated a social and cultural hub, and an experiment in project-based philanthropy—in addition to being an artist, Bon also serves as a trustee of the Annenberg Foundation—that irrigated the future site of a new State Park. It was also, among other things, an aesthetically acute invitation to reconsider the nature/culture/agriculture nexus, a durational experience of long time, a reinterpretation of the notion of 'monument' for the twenty-first century, and a primary example of the life-focused, life-maintaining work that Bon has named 'metabolic sculpture.'

Before *Not A Cornfield*: Aerial view looking southwest across the Cornfield, Los Angeles, February 2005.

Photo by Steven Rowell, 2005. © 2005 Not A Cornfield LLC/The Annenberg Foundation.

A product of earth, seeds, water, and the metabolic process of generation and decay, *Not A Cornfield* was undoubtedly and importantly a material object. It was also however, equally, the cyclical changes that generated the dynamic object, and the conceptual, relational, and optative spaces that the object opened up. To put it another way, *Not A Cornfield* was simultaneously a single field of corn and many cornfields, each with its accompanying narrative.

With Scheherazadian flair, *Not A Cornfield's* narratives have yet to reach an end. Instead, in true metabolic fashion, as the project drew to a close, so Bon transferred its life-focused energy into two new 'organisms' which continue to operate under her direction.

Farmlab, the first to emerge, was catalyzed when developers bulldozed a local community garden—the South Central Farm—to make way for warehousing. Having saved over one hundred of the Farm's trees, as well as seeds, plants, and soil, Bon

initiated *Farmlab* to hold the rescued flora and explore ways of supporting life in the often-hostile urban environment. Metabolic Studio, the second, came into being when the *South Central Farm Tree Project* found the trees a permanent safe home, and Bon set up a studio explicitly to practice at the intersection of philanthropy and art.

While *Farmlab* and the Metabolic Studio are both *Not A Cornfield* legacies that work to counter systemic disrespect for the very building blocks of life, there are differences between offspring and parent that begin to speak to the simultaneous breadth and subtlety of Bon's metabolic practice.

Not A Cornfield, for example, was a metabolic sculpture: a tangible organic object with temporal and spatial parameters, which participated fully in the metabolic cycles of regeneration and decay. In contrast, while still an artwork, *Farmlab* is an ethical structure, a non-object-based sculpture, which supports multidisciplinary research and actions that bring the value

of earth, seed, water, and process to the fore of public consciousness. Counterpoised with both *Not A Cornfield* and *Farmlab*, the Metabolic Studio is not an artwork at all but a studio. Both framework and container, it is a locus for Bon and her team to explore new paradigms of creativity and sustainability while transforming available resources into energy, actions, and objects that stoke the metabolic process and nurture life.

Derived from the Greek word for change, metabolism is the biochemical process that continuously transforms nutrients into energy and matter, and thereby maintains life. *Not A Cornfield*, the first metabolic sculpture to be publicly named as such, was simultaneously an object-based, a conceptual, and a generative artwork that brought about real transformation while generating the possibility of future transformations. Via both its legacy projects, and through the influence of the metabolic approach to art and life that it has proposed, *Not A Cornfield* continues to support a cyclical approach to Planet Earth's living

systems and ecological services that is perhaps our best hope for the future.

As one seed of corn can grow a plant yielding 600 kernels, each of which may grow a 600-kernel ear in its turn, so *Not A Cornfield* propagated ways to imagine, think about, and act upon the conviction that, when we respect the collective metabolic assets that are the very building blocks of life, "another city is possible." [ii] And so the story continues.

[i] George Herms, in conversation at *Not A Cornfield*, February 2006

[ii] Manuel Castells, speaking at *Not A Cornfield*, November 11, 2005

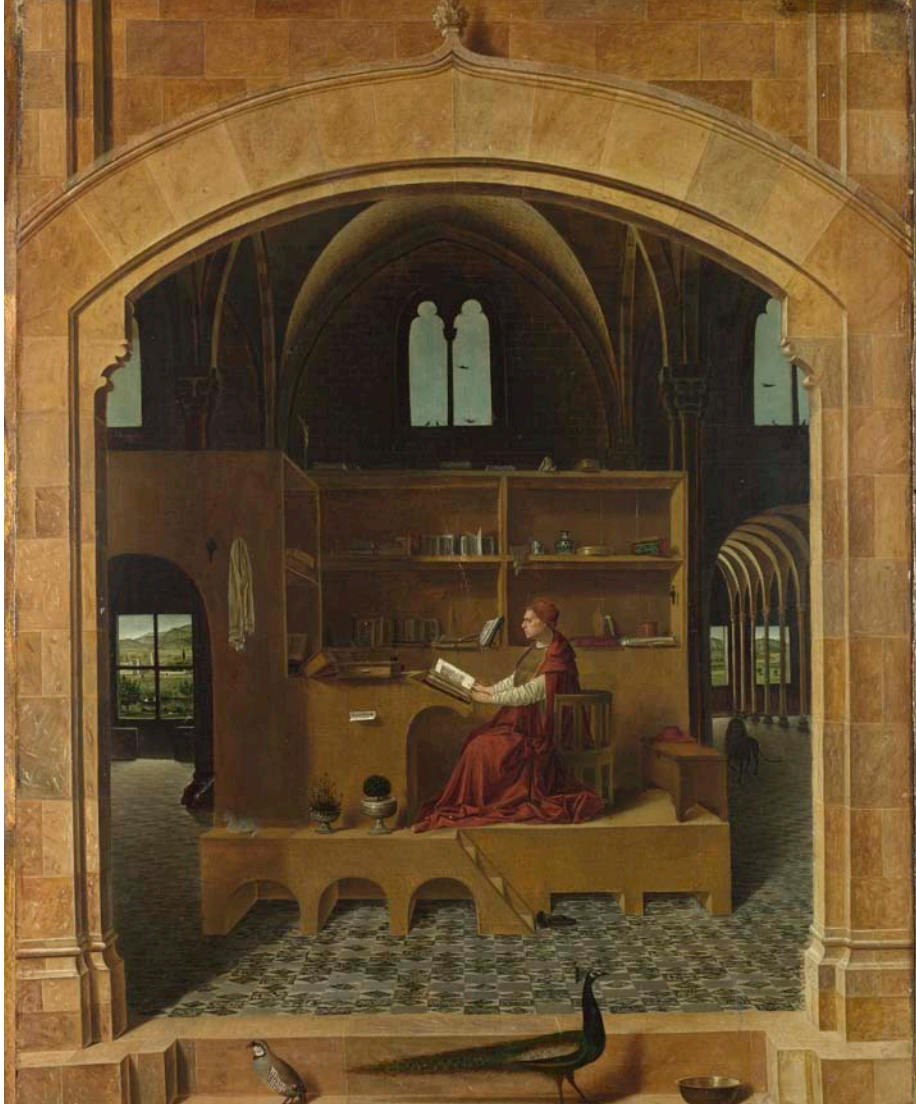


Not A Cornfield: preparing the new soil, July 2005.

Photo by Steven Rowell, 2005. © 2005 Not A Cornfield LLC/The Annenberg Foundation.

Antonello da Messina:
St. Jerome in his Study (c. 1475).

Oil on wood, 46 x 36,5 cm,
National Gallery, London.



Artist as Translator

Lauren Bon

St. Jerome is best known for translating the first bible from the original Greek and Hebrew into Latin. He has been the subject of many paintings, especially during the Renaissance. My favorite of these, from 1475, is by Antonello da Messina. It currently hangs in London's National Gallery where I saw it ten years ago. I have engaged with this painting in various works of sculpture during the past decade. I'm captivated by its wonderful study full of books and objects, each with symbolic relevance.

Of special interest, the pictorial space beyond Jerome's study is an agricultural field. Antonello explicitly connects Jerome's scholarship and the scholarly act per se, with the agriculture that supports it. His calm study is supported by the cultivated garden.

From April 2005 to May 2006, citizens of Los Angeles watched as a site colloquially known as "the Cornfield" was transformed from an abandoned train yard in to a cornfield. The transformation of the Cornfield reconnected the city center with the presence and then the absence of its namesake. A cornfield in the background of Downtown resonates with Antonello's St. Jerome.

In mounting the first exhibition of *Not A Cornfield* I have chosen to invite you, the viewer, to place yourself in the role of translator. My interpretation of St Jerome's study includes selections from *Not A Cornfield's* archive of surveillance imagery. I spent many late nights mesmerized by the dark emptiness of *Not A Cornfield* and the frame of twinkling traffic lights that surrounded it. The antiquated audio and video monitors on these shelves display some of those sights and sounds.





The process of putting together an exhibition about a metabolic sculpture, especially one that, as the word 'metabolic' suggests, is still in the process of working, is to challenge the viewer not to expect a fixed and finite body of work. Instead, the point of this exhibition is to evoke St. Jerome and suggest that the work is itself a translation of the values of earth, seed, water, and process within a cultural framework.

Lauren Bon, February 2009



Not A Cornfield: looking from the hand-planted Eye to the machine-planted rows, August 2005.

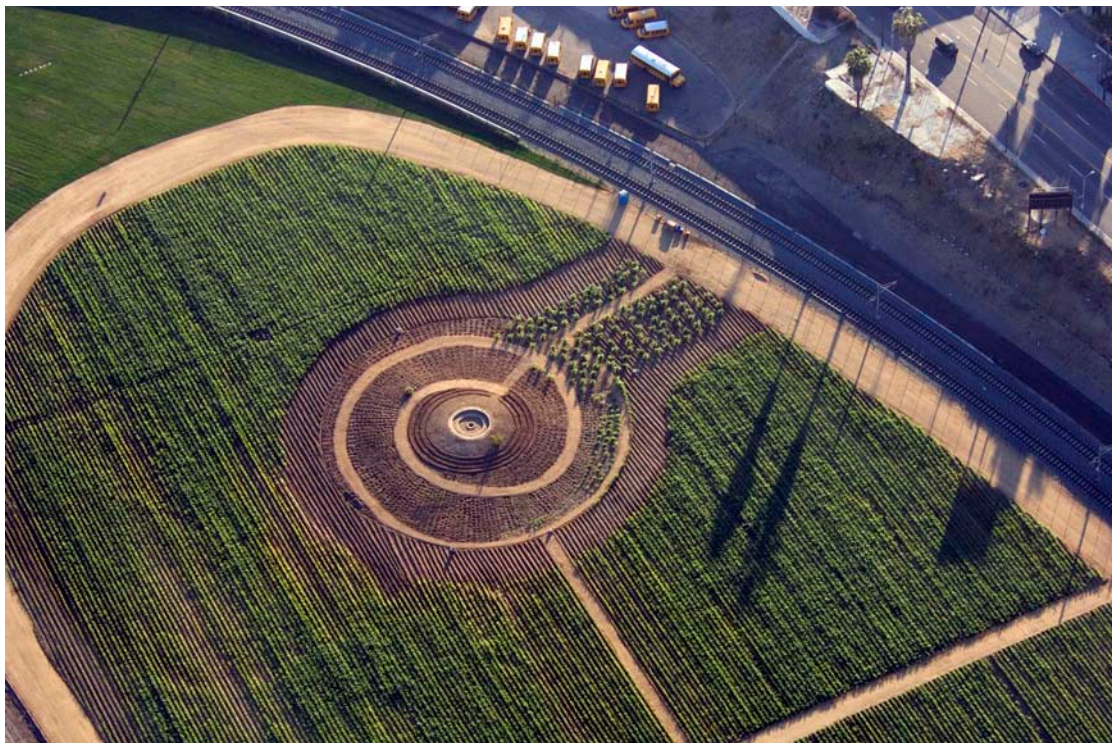
Photo by Jaime Lopez Wolters, 2005. © 2005 Not A Cornfield LLC.

Not A Cornfield: Rumi on site, April 2005.

Photo © 2005 Not A Cornfield LLC.

Not A Cornfield: the Eye,
August 2005.

Photo by Steven Rowell,
2005. © 2005
Not A Cornfield LLC.





Not A Cornfield:
September 2005.

Photo by Steven Rowell,
2005. © 2005
Not A Cornfield LLC.

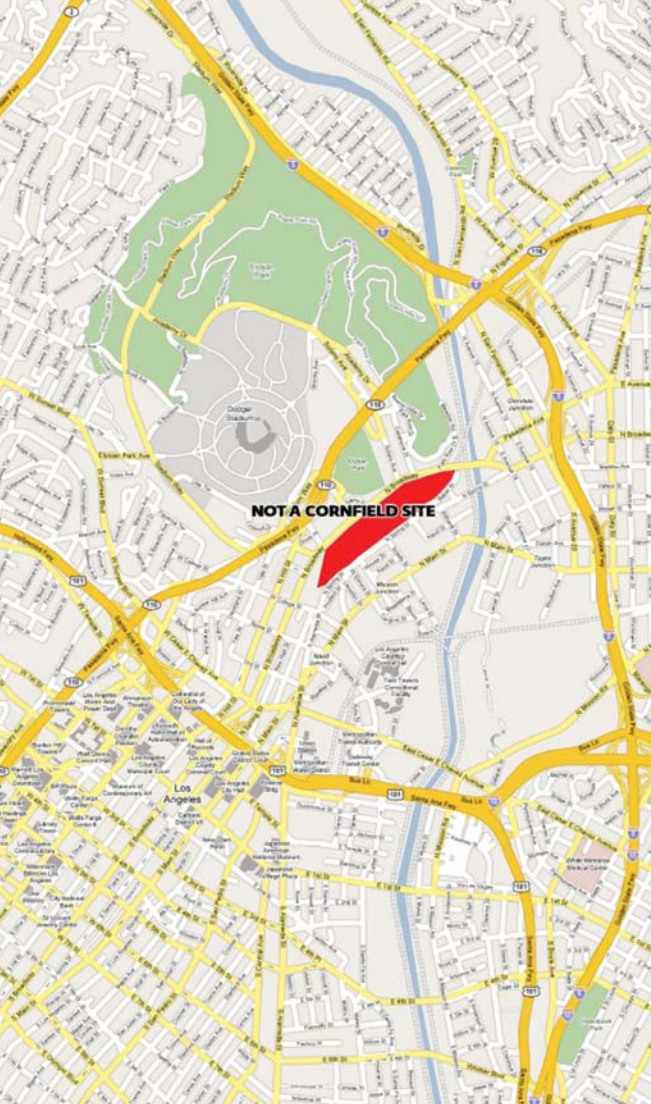
Not A Cornfield:
September 2005.

Photo by Steven Rowell, 2005.
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The Cornfield and *Not A Cornfield*, a Timeline

> From prehistory to post-industrialization

> Not A Cornfield
Brown Phase

Green Phase

Gold Phase

Blue Phase

Clear Phase

Farmlab

Not A Cornfield:

October 2005.

Photo by Steven Rowell, 2005.

© 2005 Not A Cornfield LLC.



Before *Not A Cornfield*,
the Cornfield, February 2005.

Photo © 2005
Not A Cornfield LLC.

4.5–1.7 Billion Years Ago: The Earth forms

33–1 Million Years Ago: The future
Cornfield is under a subtropical ocean

1.8 Million–10,000 Years Ago: Prehistoric
creatures roam the Cornfield’s grassy plain

1200: The largest Tongva village, Yang-Na,
is near the Cornfield

1769: Spanish explorers camp at a “delightful
place among the trees by a river.” Possibly the
Cornfield

1781: Spain’s first Californian pueblo is built at
the “delightful place.” The River is dammed and
an irrigation ditch—Zanja Madre—is dug through
the Cornfield

1848: Running alongside the Cornfield’s small
plots of plowed land and pasture, the Zanja
channels water to the growing city

1872: LA City gives Southern Pacific Rail Road
(SPRR) a ‘subsidy package’ that includes the
Cornfield

1874: SPRR builds its transcontinental railway
terminus on the Cornfield

1877: The Cornfield is the gateway for LA’s exports,
immigrants, and visitors

1902: The Cornfield becomes freight only

1905: LA’s size is calibrated to the amount of avail-
able water. Pursuing expansion, land, and water
rights in the fertile Owens Valley are acquired
dupliciously. William Mulholland starts building
an aqueduct to divert its water to LA

1913: The aqueduct opens. As the water flows
Mulholland says to a 40,000-strong crowd:
“There it is, take it.” LA’s Museum of History,
Science, and Art opens the next day. The Owens
Valley desiccates. The Zanja falls into disuse

1938: Floods kill 113. The River is concreted

1942: *This Gun for Hire* is filmed at the Cornfield

1952: LA City buys Chavez Ravine, a working class
area beside the Cornfield, to build housing.
Residents are evicted. Perceptions of public
housing as ‘communist’ halt plans

1959: Bunker Hill Renewal Project strips houses
from a hill south west of the Cornfield and flattens
its peak for private development

1956: The Brooklyn Dodgers are promised a new stadium if they relocate to LA

1959: Chavez Ravine's last residents are evicted and their home is bulldozed

1962: The new Dodger Stadium opens at Chavez Ravine

1969: The Cornfield hosts SPRR's signmakers

1974: Informed by Mulholland's dealings with Owens Valley, and named for the Cornfield-adjacent area, Roman Polanski's *Chinatown* opens

1984: *Repo Man*, a movie by Alex Cox, opens

1989: SPRR tries to sell the Cornfield, which is now a polluted brown field

1999: Majestic Realty Inc. buys the Cornfield to build one million square feet of warehousing. It secures a \$12 million HUD grant for site clean up, but doesn't do a full Environmental Impact Report

2000: Citizen groups challenge Majestic and the grant is withdrawn

2001: California (CA) approves \$36 million to buy the Cornfield, which will be transformed into the "LA State Historic Park" (LASHP)

2002: 5,000 tons of polluted soil is removed from the locked Cornfield

2004: While planning and fundraising for LASHP, financially strapped California State Parks (SP) start to build an Interim Public Use park (IPU) that allows partial public access to the Cornfield. Lauren Bon is approached for funding

2004 Nov: Inspired by a vision of the Cornfield full of corn and blue light, Bon formulates *Not A Cornfield (NAC)*: a year-long metabolic sculpture that would open the whole Cornfield to public use; irrigate, electrify, and green the site; and put it on the map of public destinations. SP's Director approves Bon's concept and an Annenberg Foundation (AF) funding plan

2005

Feb 7: Valley Crest Landscape Development (VC) starts the IPU for SP

Mar 14: Activists call for Cornfield public art to be made by many local artists

Mar 18: Assembly Member Jackie Goldberg calls emergency public meeting about NAC

Mar 21: Although complaints follow about limited community participation, the meeting votes for NAC



The Cornfield, February 2005.

Photo by James Goodnight, 2005.
© 2005 Not A Cornfield LLC.



The Cornfield, February 2005.

Photo © 2005
Not A Cornfield LLC.

Apr 20: SP issues a one-year Cornfield use permit to Bon

May 23: VC starts work for NAC. 450 tons of rock and 1,600 cubic yards of trash are removed from the Cornfield. 1,500 truckloads of clean soil are brought in from construction sites

Jun 14: NAC's webcam streams online 24/7

Jun 15: 200 people protest for soccer fields. NAC agrees to turf an area and writes a Community Involvement Plan

Jun 16: A hawk catches a mouse. That spot becomes the "Eye," center of NAC's hand-planted spiral garden

Jun 21: Summer Solstice ceremony

Jun 24: All-night seed vigil. At sunrise, corn seeds gifted by a Hopi family are hand-planted at the Eye

Jun 27: Community Workers Program begins

Jul 1: A one-mile path is built around the field

Jul 14: Salon: w. James Rojas, Lauren Bon

Jul 19: The main field is machine-planted in straight rows with 875,000 seeds

Jul 23: Drum Circle on site

Jul 26: The first corn sprouts appear

Activity increases on site. Docent-led interpretive tours, an oral history booth, and a story series augment community plantings and Sunday drum circles. On Friday evenings open mic/open screen events alternate with salon-style presentations

Jul 27: Films from Tijuana w. *Los Illegals*

Jul 28: Four Cornfield acres are turfed

Jul 31: Drum circle, planting

Aug 7: Tours, drumming, tending, oral history, story series

Aug 14: Tours, drumming, tending, oral history, story: Alicia V. Brown

Aug 17: The last of 30 corn varieties is hand-planted at the Eye

Aug 19: *Corn in European Painting*: Felicity Powell, Ansel Krut

Aug 20: *Morning*: Boaz K. Barkan, Roxanne Steinberg, Jamie Burris, Oguri

Aug 21: Tours, drumming, tending, oral history, story: *On graffiti and the L.A. River*: Ralph Lopez-Urbina, Susan Phillips

Aug 22: Some plants are hip high

Aug 24: A path is cut to the Eye

Aug 26: *From Chinatown to China*: short films w. music by Chinese Classical Music Ensemble

Aug 28: Tours, drumming, tending, story: *From Downtown to Highland Park*: R. S. Armstrong, Bob Steinberg

Sep 2: *The Future of Objects*: Lauren Bon, Greg Gale, Jenny Montgomery

Sep 3: Some plants reach 6-feet

Sep 4: Tours, drumming, tending, history, story: *Where is L.A. History?* Bill Shishima. An MTA driver whose train hit a coyote buries the animal's body in the Eye

Sep 9: *Corn and The Art of Growing*: open mic w. Radio Sonideros

Sep 11: Tours, drumming, tending, oral history, story: *Corn Stories*: Katherine James. NAC opens 'live' via webcam at Ace Gallery, Beverly Hills

Sep 13: Some plants reach 9-feet

Sep 16: *Agri(c)ulture*: Lauren Bon, Johanna Blakley, Jenna Didier, Janet Owen

Sep 18: Tours, drumming, tending, history, story: Martha Ronk, Hung Q Tu

Sep 23: *My City, My Self*: Short films, Echo Park Film Center

Sep 25: Tours, drumming, tending, history, story: *River Oral History & Mythology*: Phillip "Sonny" Mendoza

Sep 26: A yurt goes up for winter gatherings

Sep 30: Lauren Bon discusses NAC

Oct 2: Tours, drumming, tending, oral history, story: Council Member Ed Reyes

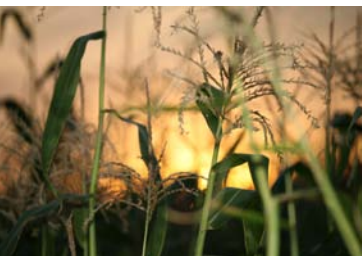
Oct 3: Field audio is recorded 24/7

Oct 5: A GRI panel about NAC at the Getty: Lauren Bon, Matt Coolidge, Ralph Rugoff



Not A Cornfield: The first corn shoots, July 2005.

Photo © 2005
Not A Cornfield LLC.



Not A Cornfield: The height of the Green Phase.

Photo courtesy Bob Blakeman, 2005.

Oct 7: *Maíz con Salsa*: Son De La Tierra, Afro-Cuban ritual, and *Hybrid: One Man's Passion for Corn*

Oct 9: Tours, drumming, tending, history

Oct 14: *Beyond Sustainability*: Larry Santoyo

Oct 16: Tours, drumming, harvest, story: *The Struggle for the Cornfield*: Lewis MacAdams

Oct 20: Irrigation is turned off. Circular 'galleries' are cut in the corn

Oct 21: *Bring on the Harvest!*

Oct 23: Tours, drum circle, harvest

Oct 24: *La Ofrenda* altar—"our way of giving thanks"—is erected

Oct 26: Day of the Dead workshop

Oct 27: Day of the Dead workshop

Oct 28: *Story of Corn*: Betty Fussell

Oct 29: Day of the Dead workshop

Oct 30: Drum circle and harvest

Oct 31: *Halloween Night for Kids*

Nov 1: *La Ofrenda* vigil honoring dead children stimulates healing of a Gabrieleno/Tongva rift, which started under Spanish rule but is more recently aggravated by unequal State and Federal recognition

Nov 2-5: Visitors add to *La Ofrenda* daily

Nov 4: *We Reap What We Sow*: short films w. music by *Telematique*

Nov 6: *La Ofrenda* culmination

Nov 11: Salon: *If You Want a Better Urban Life, You Invent it, Then Fight for it*: Manuel Castells, Lauren Bon

Nov 13: Tours, drumming, and harvest. In the galleries: tamale making, death Council, print workshop, screening: *The Real Dirt on Farmer John*

Nov 17: Volunteer Harvest

Nov 18: *Gimme Shelter* (Homelessness in LA): w. music by The Taiko Center

Nov 20: Tours, drumming, tamales, print workshop, Council, NAC vignettes, *Mary Berry's Patch*, artist/hypnotist Marcos Lutyens

Nov 27: Tours, drumming, galleries, petting zoo, and pony rides

Dec 2: *Up Against the Sprawl*: Dr. Jennifer Wolch

Dec 3: Bon's dream is actualized when a Kyudo archer fires an arrow and *Blue Phase Lighting Project (BPLP)* by Jenna Didier, Marcos Lutyens, and Scott Froschauer is lit. *BPLP* is a matrix of blue lights scattered through the field reflecting the stars above. Landmarks, including City Hall, are also 'painted' with blue lights

Dec 4: Tours, drumming, galleries, Red Nation Runners, World AIDS Day Poetry Circle

Dec 11: Tours, drumming, galleries

Dec 18: Tours, drumming, galleries

Dec 26: Landmark lights are switched off

2006

Jan 4: *BPLP* is dismantled

Bon returns the Cornfield keys to SP on March 31, but SP requires the site returned to its exact pre-NAC state. As a result NAC is contractually obliged to fund. SP-directed actions that reverse many environmental gains. Though contrary to the artwork's aims, these actions become part of NAC, which does not consequently finish until May 23

As NAC enters its end stages a nearby community garden, the South Central Farm (SCF), is facing closure. Bon and AF work with the Farmers, the landowner, and the City to find a solution. In the end though the Farm is bulldozed to make way for warehousing

Galvanized by the systemic devaluation of soil, water, and seeds, Bon moves her team to a Cornfield-adjacent warehouse on North Spring Street and develops a new artwork. An ethical structure dedicated to supporting life in the urban environment its experimental mien and agricultural focus lead to the name "*Farmlab*"

Jan 6: What Comes Next Part I: *Healing Gardens + The Shaman's Apprentice*

Jan 13: What Comes Next Part II: poetry, music, herb teas

Jan 18: The corn stover is harvested



Not A Cornfield: The Gold Phase, October 2005.

Photo by Sarah McCabe
© 2005 Not A Cornfield LLC.



Not A Cornfield: Corn harvested from the Eye, December 2005.

Photo by Sarah McCabe, 2005. © 2005 Not A Cornfield LLC.

Jan 19: The stover is baled

Jan 20: *Corn and Maya Culture:* Ajpop Tecum

Jan 23: The final cornstalk is cut

Jan 27: *Wall of Corn:* Harvest celebration

Feb 3: *Pin Up Workshop* for NAC photos

Feb 6: Conversion of the warehouse begins

Feb 24: *El Rey de los Coleaderos*, Héctor Hernández Gutiérrez, Elena Pardo Sánchez

Feb 26: Agricultural boxes—“agbins”—are donated to NAC. They become a key component of *Farmlab’s* materials palette

Feb 27: *Anabolic Monument:* 31 bales are made into a circular sculpture on the north side of the Cornfield

Feb 28: *L.A. Downtown News* names NAC a “Downtowner of Distinction”

Feb 28: NAC’s corn seeds, ears, unused bales, and irrigation strip is stored at the warehouse

Mar 1: Warehouse clean up extends to the Spring Street Bridge arches, aka “Under Spring.” The homeless people who camp under the bridge are offered help to relocate. One of them is assisted to enter rehab and return to his family in Mexico

Mar 2: NAC’s Community Seed Program begins to distribute seeds

Mar 3: Screening: *Chávez Ravine*

Mar 4: Agbins are planted as gardens Under Spring

Mar 7: SP announces an AF-funded international design competition for LASHP. Bon is eligible to enter and starts gathering a bid team

Mar 10: *Anabolic Monument* and 10 surrounding acres are hydro-seeded. Farmer Gerardo Vaquero Rosas becomes *Farmlab’s* Artist in Residence (AIR). He starts to tend soil and plants inside the Monument

Mar 10: Screening: *The Future of Food*

Mar 14: The NAC webcam is turned off

Mar 17: Salon: *Sustainable Urban Parks:* scholar Galen Cranz

Mar 21: Bon and the team generate *Farmline*, a proposal to hold SCF soil and plants in agbins along an unused rail line, making a communal farm space that would be mobile if development threatened. It stimulates both an ongoing inquiry into urban agricultural models that do not depend on owning land, and the name 'Farmlab'

Mar 22: The hydro-seeds sprout

Mar 24: *Possible Futures for Downtown L.A.* w. James Rojas, Michael Dear, Lane Barden, Alan Loomis, David Fletcher

Mar 31: Bon returns the Cornfield keys to SP and moves operations to the warehouse

Mar 31: *The End: A Party*: w. The Lisa Marr Experiment, Bones, Nutty Nut Nerds, Corny Jokes, Telematique, Seed Therapy, campfire, and webcam screenings

Apr 6: NAC receives a Downtown Breakfast Club award

Apr 10: SP orders the old parking lot site on the south side of the Cornfield re-graded and Roundup sprayed to kill self-seeding corn shoots. The herbicide is indiscriminate, however, and kills all that it sprays. The work is done by VC and paid for by NAC

Apr 11: Trust for Public Land tries to buy SCF land from owner Ralph Horowitz. Celebrities sit in two Black Walnut trees

Apr 14: SP changes its competition rules to exclude the Annenberg family and Foundation employees. Days before the entries are due, Bon is thereby disqualified

Apr 20: Further exploring deployable farm units Bon's team transform agbins with varieties of wheels, trailer hitches, and irrigation

May 5: *Community Editing* of NAC footage

May 6: SP has the Cornfield divided with a plastic fence. On the south side SP's manicured IPU is eventually completed. SP plans that the north side, where the *Anabolic Monument* now blooms, will remain closed until it can fund the new LASHP

May 23: SP determines that the Cornfield is in an acceptable state. NAC ends and *Farmlab* is initiated

Jun 7: AF donates money to buy SCF but the offer is rejected

Jun 13: Sheriffs clear people from SCF and the site is locked



Not A Cornfield: Harvested cobs drying on the Cornfield fence, January 2006.

Photo © 2006
Not A Cornfield LLC.



Not A Cornfield: The Brown Phase, May 2005.

Photo by Sarah McCabe
© 2005 Not A Cornfield LLC.

Jun 21: Committed to keeping SCF's flora alive, *Farmlab* conducts the first of many watering operations at SCF

July 5: Bulldozers mow down the flora. One machine is disabled by a squash

July 6: NAC are invited to build and plant a spiral corn garden at the Rosebud Reservation, South Dakota. Bon and team members contribute labor, expertise, and seeds for the first ceremonially planted corn crop on Lakota land since such spiritual practices were outlawed in 1890

Aug + Sept: *Monument to the Trees of South Central Farm:* With SCF denuded and padlocked, *Farmlab* sets up a seed bank and plants shrubs and seeds rescued from SCF at Under Spring and the *Anabolic Monument*. The Farmers unanimously agree that, to stay alive, their un-bulldozed fruit trees must be moved and kept together. *Farmlab* brokers complex negotiations with all parties to secure the tree's safety and the Farmer's continued relationships with their trees

Oct 20-22: *Farmlab's* ongoing explorations of soil remediation using mushrooms are initiated when team members hear mycologist Paul Stamets talk at the AF-supported Bioneers Conference

Nov 10: *Art at the Port of LA:* w. Stephen Glassman

Nov 16: *Farmlab* continues watering the SCF trees and negotiating for their safe removal to a new home

Dec 12: AF announces that it will box and remove the SCF trees and that in consultation with the Farmers, *Farmlab* will develop a "monument to the trees as unsung heroes of the fallen Farm"

Dec 15: *Edible Estates:* artist Fritz Haeg leads the first *Farmlab* Public Salon. From now on, excepting holiday times, there is a salon every Friday at noon

2007

Jan 9: *Monument to the Trees of South Central Farm:* 110 of the SCF fruit trees are now temporarily lodged at Huntington Botanical Gardens. SCF's iconic Black Walnuts stay in the earth while *Farmlab* seeks a permanent site. Numerous meetings over the next six months, including with LA City and SP, reveal that liability fears prevent these bodies planting fruit trees in public

Jan 12: *Strategies for Rethinking Community and Alternative Space:* Mark Allen, Machine Project

Jan 19: *Agitation:* w. Jeanette Vosburg, Joe Geever, Paul Herzog, Surfrider

Jan 20: *Junker Garden #1:* The process of transforming a truck into a mobile garden begins. Four vehicles are similarly converted over the next six months for the ongoing inquiry into land use without land ownership

Jan 26: *The Garden of Forking Paths:* w. Jenna Didier, Oliver Hess, M&A

Feb 1: *Farmlab* completes *The Cornfield: New Ideas for a Sustainable Urban Park*; a realistic proposal for urban land use that is both economically and environmentally sustainable. Providing a blue-print alternative to more traditional high-budget, resource intensive, park plans, it is made publicly available via free download

Feb 2: *Earth Restoration:* Helen Samuels

Feb 5: *Monument to the Trees of South Central Farm:* Bon and team members meet with representatives of LA's Pan Pacific Park to discuss the SCF trees

Feb 9: *Go Metro:* w. Diego Cardoso

Feb 16: *Cornhenge in Winter:* w. AIR Gerardo Vaquero Rosas (en Espanol)

Feb 20: *The 2010 Imperative:* co-sponsored with M&A and AIA

Feb 21: *Mycoremediation:* Planning begins for a sterile mushroom-growing room

Feb 23: *Microcredit 101:* w. aid worker Sophy Wolters

Feb 23: *Garden of Brokenness:* *Farmlab's* proposal for rehabilitating LA's derelict Confluence Park, expressed via site explorations and a large carousel, opens *Farmlab's* exhibition center with a carnival-themed gala

Feb 23-Apr 10: *Earth And Seeds:* Gerardo Vaquero Rosas exhibits Under Spring

Feb 23-Sep 30: *Chain Link Fence Art Pieces:* Sal Bautista and Ramon Macias exhibit sculptures at Under Spring

Mar 2: *LA homeless youth,* a Discussion: w. Ehecatl Rojas

Mar 9: *Psyched on Bikes:* w. Monica Howe, LA Bicycle Coalition

Mar 16: *Who's Got the Power?* w. Casey Coates Danson

Mar 23: *When the Pacific Speaks, LA Better Listen Up:* w. William Patzert, JPL

Mar 30: *Garden of Brokenness:* AIR George Herms



Farmlab: Not A Cornfield's harvested seeds and irrigation stripping stored at the Spring Street warehouse, March 2006.

Photo © 2006
Not A Cornfield LLC.



Not A Cornfield: Harvested cobs stored at the Spring Street warehouse, March 2006.

Photo courtesy © 2006 Bob Blakeman.

Apr 6: *Sick-Amour:* artist Joel Tauber

Apr 6, 16, + 19: *Agbins on Skid Row:* The *Farmlab* team makes initial site visits for a project that will deliver agbin gardens to LA's central homeless population and train Skid Row residents in their care

Apr 20: *Spirit Run:* w. Olivia Chumacero

Apr 20: *Agbins on Skid Row:* Groups interested in participating in the project meet at *Farmlab*

Apr 20–Jun 4: *Cascade:* Edward Porter's fountain installation at Under Spring

Apr 13: *Practical Solutions for a Climate-Changing World:* w. Kat Steele, Urban Permaculture Guild

Apr 13: *How Mushrooms Can Help Save the World:* w. Paul Stamets

Apr 14 + 15: *Mycroremediation Workshop,* w. Paul Stamets

Apr 27: *Valley Crest* w. Burton S. Sperber

May 4: *Carousel History:* w. Brian Morgan

May 5: *Agbin Ramblas:* This proposal for a sidewalk-scaled citywide project that would turn streets into garden walkways is prototyped at Under Spring

May 8: *Agbins on Skid Row:* Garden recipients make herb and plant requests

May 11: *Salon: Urban Farming:* w. Taja Sevelle, Joyce Lapinsky

May 11, 14, 15: *Agbins on Skid Row:* Team members continue meetings with collaborating shelters and individuals

May 18: *Garden of Brokenness:* Exhibition walk-through w. Lauren Bon, George Herms, *Farmlab* team

May 19: Hosted Event: Second Ever Los Angeles Old-Time Social, Under Spring

May 23: *Agbins on Skid Row:* Planning continues as the agbin delivery date nears

May 25: *Fallen Fruit:* w. artists Dave Burns, Matias Viegener, Austin Young

Jun 1: *Down By The LA River:* w. Joe Linton, City Project

Jun 2: *Agbins on Skid Row:* All day planting of the agbins Under Spring

Jun 2–Jul 6: *How To Make A Junker Garden:* Exhibition and demonstration Under Spring

Jun 8: *Hydromancy, Gloom + Doom:* w. Steve Badgett, Simparch, and Steve Rowell

Jun 15: *Tangible Hacks of the Physical World:* w. artist Shannon Spanhake

Jun 16: *Agbins on Skid Row:* A celebratory parade that includes a double-decker bus, cycling outriders, musicians, and L.A.'s roller-skating Derby Dolls, delivers 23 planted agbins to seven Skid Row locations

Jun 16: *American Symposium:* At Pasadena's Armoury Center, *Farmlab* meets publicly to discuss *Agbins on Skid Row*

Jun 19: *Agbins on Skid Row:* LA Master Gardener Volunteers start mentoring the new gardeners

Jun 19: *Monument to the Trees of the South Central Farm:* SCF's walnut trees are loaded onto trucks. Their imminent departure is accompanied by ceremonies and a vigil

Jun 20: *Monument to the Trees of the South Central Farm:* The walnut trees are transported overnight to the Huntington. Although their stay was initially temporary, with no other publicly accessible place prepared to accept fruit trees, Bon, AF, and the Huntington have collaborated to make a permanent site at the Gardens.

The Farmers and their families become lifetime members of the Huntington Gardens

With the *Trees of the South Central Farm* permanently settled, *Farmlab* achieves its initial objective and Bon determines to develop a studio for further practice at the intersection of art and philanthropy.

Sharing a location, a core team, and a leader, the Metabolic Studio emerges from the artwork *Farmlab*, while *Farmlab* continues as an arena within the Studio.

Jumping forward to today (February 17, 2009) Lauren Bon's commitment to the Cornfield has endured. Under her leadership *Farmlab* continues to tend not only the *Anabolic Monument* but, with SP's agreement, the entire north side of the State Park.

Here, in contrast to the more traditional manicuring that maintains the south side IUP, Bon, her team, and dedicated volunteers explore economically and environmentally sustainable approaches to land management, land use, and the preservation of bio-diverse life in the challenging urban environment.



Before *Not A Cornfield*, the Cornfield, February 2005.

Photo by Sarah McCabe
© 2005 Not A Cornfield LLC.



The *Not A Cornfield* Team

Steve Adler	Chad Benton	Jose De La Riva	Helidoro Guzman
Issac Aguilar	Lauren Bon	James Dellinger	Tim Hale
Ramon Esqueda Aguilara	Sheri Bonwell	Pablo A. Diaz	Sara Harris
Cameron Allan	Duane Border	Jenna Didier	Maria Herrera
Thomas Allen	Cris Borgnine	Sean Dockray	Ted Jackson
Antonio Alvarez	Dick Bruttig	Janet Owen Driggs	Hilary Kaplan
Carmelo Alvarez	Buckie Buxton	Lynne Dwyer	Kevin Lanke
Walter Alvarado	Miana Carneiro	Mark Eiduson	Mauricio Lara
Leonard Aube	Pedro Carranza	Curtis Failor	Richard Levine
Valery Augustin	Sergio Casillas	Laura Figueroa	Raul Leyva
Miriam Ayala	Asercio Castellon	Ken Fountain	Ernesto Limon
Chris Baca	Ruben Chavez	Scott Froschauer	Ernie Limon
Tom Barcellos	Scarlet Cheng	Luis A. Gomez	Jaime E. Lopez
Holly Barnhill	Olivia Chumacero	Wilfredo Gomez	Adolfo Guzmán López
Jacqui Barcos	Edgado Colindres	Luis Perez Gonzales	Amber Lundsford
Francisco Batres	Richard Cruz	Pablo Gonzalez	Marcos Lutyens
Melissa Bautista	Todd Csernecky	David Gonzolaz	Joseph Lyons
Sal Bautista	Xuyen Dang	James Goodnight	Ramon Macias
Julia "Petal" Bejaune	Paolo Davanzo	Paul Grimman	Ramon Macias Jr.

Salvaging seeds from the bulldozed South Central Farm, July 2006.

Photo by Jaime Lopez
Walters © 2006 Farmlab LLC.

Not A Cornfield team members and Valley Crest workers, May 2005.

Photo by Steven Rowell
© 2006 Farmlab LLC.

Not A Cornfield's harvested seeds at "The End, A Party," March 2006.

Digital video by Lisa Marr and Paolo Davanza © 2006
Not A Cornfield LLC.



Jaime Mares	Cayetana Ortega	Linda Sangsowoy	Luis Uribe
Lisa Marr	Arecio A. Oyeula	Craig Sap	Alejandro Valenzuela
Abel Solis Martinez	Jennifer Quan	Marcia Schmitz	Aflredo Vargas
Olando Marquez	John Pecorelli	Jorge Senda	John Villa
Nicolas Lopez Martinez	Ernesto Perez	Nicolas Serrano	Conrado Villanueva
Roland Martinez	Jose Perez	Tim Shinkle	Pablo Villanueva
Sarah McCabe	Rodrigo Pulido	Shannon Shelley	Deshawn Vutheikun
Michael McCall	Yeseria Rameriz	Soar Sounconitha	Mark Walden
Josefina Maria	Rene Hernandez Rivera	Christopher Smith	Michael T. Williams
Medina Henry Mejia	Jose C. Rodriguez	Jessica Smith	Linda Wiser
Jorge Medrano	Lilian Rodriguez	Melani Smith	Eric Wolford
Fidel Melgoza	Ehecatl Rojas	Roxanne Steinberg	Jaime Lopez Wolters
Aaron Mills	Scott Romsos	Michael Stewart	Sean Woods
Jenny Montgomery	Juan Rosas	Wai Ha Tang	Hien Vo
Adel Moussa	Jeremy Rosenberg	Bryan Taylor	Helen Vu
Jesse Muniz	Jorge Reyes	Alma Torres	Ramon Zamora
Peter Natividad	Autumn Rooney	Demitrio Torres	Joseph Zepeda
Keren Ness	Gerardo Vaquero Rosas	Derreck Touvell	
Thai Nguyen	Steve Rowell	Alejaodr P. Trujilo	
Willie Nishizawa	Guillermo Ruiz	Felix Umana	
Adolfo V. Nodal	Elizabeth Saavedra	Ivan Uranga	





The newly installed *Anabolic Monument*, February 2006.

Photo by Steven Rowell
© 2006 Not A Cornfield LLC.

The Anabolic Monument,
February 2006.

Photo by Steven Rowell
© 2006 Not A Cornfield LLC.





The Anabolic Monument,
February 2008.

Photo by Katarzyna Balug
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Not A Cornfield: at the Eye,
the Green Phase.

Photo by Sarah McCabe
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Not A Cornfield: Planting at
the Eye, The Brown Phase.

Photo by Steven Rowell
© Not A Cornfield LLC.





Not A Cornfield: the Eye at night, the Blue Phase.

Photo © 2005
Not A Cornfield LLC.

Not A Cornfield: the Eye at night, the Gold Phase.

Photo © 2005
Not A Cornfield LLC.

Not A Cornfield: La Ofrenda.

Photo by Sarah McCabe
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Not A Cornfield team
members, May 2005.

Photo © 2005
Not A Cornfield LLC.





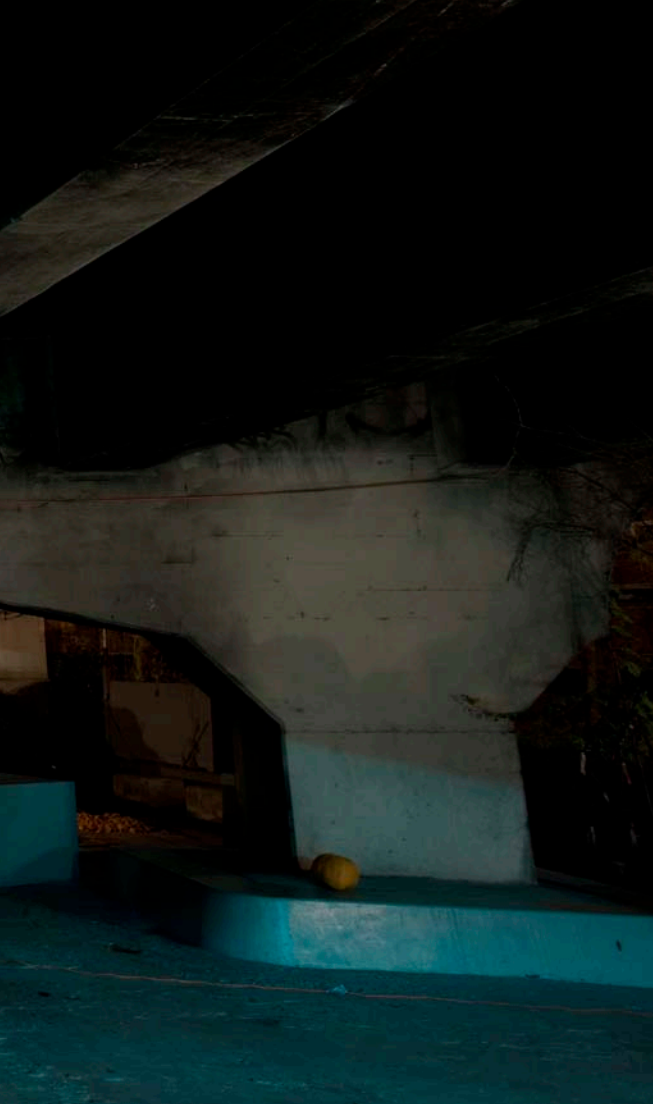
Not A Cornfield: La Ofrenda.

Photo by Sarah McCabe
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Not A Cornfield: Sunday afternoon storytelling at the Eye, October 2005.

Photo © 2005
Not A Cornfield LLC.





Marigold flowers grown at the *Anabolic Monument* dry alongside *Not A Cornfield's* irrigation striping prior to seed harvesting. At Under Spring, February 2009.

Photo by Joshua White, 2009. © 2009 Metabolic Studio LLC.

Farmlab: Planting day for Agbins on Skid Row, June 2007.

Photo © 2007 Farmlab LLC.

Farmlab: Hoisting one of the *Agbins on Skid Row* to its new rooftop home, June 2007.

Photo by Steve Rowell
© 2007 Farmlab LLC.



Opposite page: *Farmlab* transport the last iconic walnut tree from the devastated South Central Farm through nighttime streets to the Huntington Gardens, June 2007.

Photo © 2007 Farmlab LLC.



A doorway between *Farmlab*
and *Under Spring* with
neon artwork by
Lauren Bon, 2007.

Photo © 2007 Farmlab LLC.



----- Forwarded message -----

From: The Metabolic Studio <info@farmlab.org>

Date: Fri, Feb 13, 2009 at 4:19 PM

Subject: Re: The Metabolic Studio

To: <list@farmlab.org>

Dear Friends:

We'd like to re-introduce you to the word "metabolic." We've used it before in the context of "metabolic sculpture" to describe Lauren Bon's artworks *Not A Cornfield* and *Anabolic Monument*. Recently though we've expanded its application to conceptualize and name a practice.

Lauren's studio is now called the Metabolic Studio, and this is where we—Lauren and the Metabolic Studio team—practice at the intersection of art and philanthropy.

Derived from the Greek word for change, metabolism is the process that maintains life. In continuous cycles of creation and destruction, metabolism transforms nutrients into energy and matter. Working to sustain these cycles, the Metabolic Studio aims to transform resources into energy, actions, and objects that nurture life.

In true metabolic fashion the Metabolic Studio emerged from *Not A Cornfield*, while innovative approaches to creativity and sustainability are now growing from the Studio's post capitol-driven inquiries. There are three distinct arenas within the Metabolic Studio: *FarmLab*, Chora, and the AMI. *FarmLab* is dedicated to the preservation of living things in often-hostile urban environments. Chora supports the intangibles that precede creativity. The AMI is the Association of Marginal Institutions.

The Metabolic Studio is located at 1745 North Spring Street in downtown Los Angeles. This is where we stoke the metabolic process with actions:

Under Spring: Once a social brownfield and now an urban paradise—this underside of the North Spring Street bridge is the space of spontaneous encounters, planned events, and orchestrated madness. Adjacent to the L.A. River and train tracks, Under Spring is tended by the Metabolic Studio.

Public Salon Series: A weekly program of lectures, workshops, film screenings, readings, and performance. The Salon Series connects artists, environmentalists, writers, filmmakers, politicians, planners, activists and others and serves a home-cooked buffet lunch. Always free. Fridays at noon in the Spring Street warehouse <http://farmlab.org>

Ignite: This multi-use performance space inside the Spring Street warehouse features a state-of-the-art sprung dance floor. It has functioned as a garage warehouse for dance and experimental music collaborations and classes, as well as a cabaret setting for storytelling and revues <http://ignite-s3.blogspot.com>

Anabolic Monument: A ten-meter circle of decaying corn bales made from the remainder of the *Not A Cornfield* corn fodder. Located at the north side of the Los Angeles State Historic Park, this compost monument holds mystery and hosts numerous butterflies, hummingbirds, and bees in their odyssey toward nectar. It is tended by the Metabolic Studio in association with California State Parks.

Yours truly

Lauren Bon + The Metabolic Studio team

Not A Cornfield:
Harvested cobs, 2005.

Photo © 2005
Not A Cornfield LLC.

Not A Cornfield:
An early drum circle,
June 2005.

Photo © 2005
Not A Cornfield LLC.



Opposite page: *Anabolic Monument:* Aerial view of the Cornfield,
February 2009.

Photo by Joshua White, 2009 © 2009 Metabolic Studio LLC.





First published in the United States in 2009 by George Eastman House, 900 East Avenue, Rochester, NY 14607.
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[fsc logo here]

Printed by Monroe Litho, 39 Delevan St, Rochester, NY 14605
Catalog design by Jen Curtis

Back cover: The Cornfield/Los Angeles Historic State Park, with the *Anabolic Monument*, surrounded by the infrastructure of L.A., February 2009.

Photo by Joshua White, 2009. © 2009 Metabolic Studio LLC.

