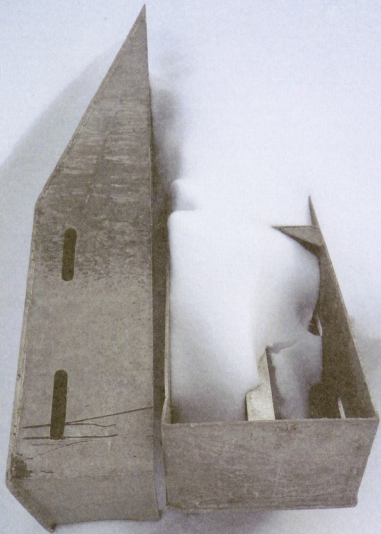


DANNY'S LOT















SCUFFING AROUND SHANGRI-LA

The story of Danny's lot starts in East New York, Brooklyn roughly seventy years ago, though for the purposes of this homage it begins in April of 2009 when David Belt, Alix Feinkind, and I toured Athens, Georgia scoping out underutilized and closed down shopping malls. It was at the height of the almost Great Depression of 2008-10 and the attendant collapse of the retail real estate market. Bringing those malls back to life, transforming them into destinations you'd actually want to hang out at, creating a sense of place. That was the impetus and driving impulse behind David's brainchild and nascent entity known as Macro Sea, with him at the helm and Alix and I along for the ride as employees and collaborators. We visited a vacant suburban mall, 200,000 square feet, with a vast desolate parking lot, and a couple of other gloomy strip malls barely hanging on for dear life. They didn't have a sense of place. Interesting and germane to the mission despite not fitting the bill, while being inadvertently crucial because our informative guide Michael Oliveri made an offhand comment that it gets outrageously hot in Athens in the summer but there's a surprising dearth of swimming pools. Man, that sucks, we said. You need places to swim, especially when it's so damn hot. And then Michael, more as an aside than anything, chuckled and said,

"You know, a guy down here made a swimming pool out of a dumpster a few years ago." Really? A pool in a trash dumpster? A dumpster pool?

It wasn't the proverbial eureka moment but the inventiveness of the concept tickled our fancy. After four days in Georgia checking out more malls we came back to New York and, sitting in David's office reviewing the trip, the dumpster pool notion came up again. A pool in a dumpster, wouldn't that be great? Yeah it would. But how? And where? We discussed how much fun that would be and how it dovetailed with the strip mall rejuvenation strategy featuring dumpster pools as recreational facilities in the parking lots. But we didn't have a strip mall. We had Brooklyn. Summer was around the corner and if we were going to make a dumpster pool then, by default, Brooklyn was the obvious and practical location. I recall this distinctly, David leaning back in his chair behind his desk, smiling, with a gleam in his eye stating, "A dumpster pool. I mean, how cool would that be?" "Really cool," I replied, and I remember earnestly declaiming: "You want to make a dumpster pool? So do I. If you're serious I really want to make this happen." That was the actual start of the road to Danny's lot.

We started looking into obtaining dumpsters and I wrote Michael Oliveri

favor are you asking for now? And I told him in a roundabout and discursive manner about the Elk Gallery and how I wanted to do an exhibition of his "work." Well, he deflected, demurred, protested, said it was crazy, and he might even have blushed. Striking while the iron was hot I laid out a fairly delineated proposal of installing his "art" in the garage and also in front of it as an outdoor sculpture park. I could see it all my mind's eye and described it in detail, and after the kidding and ribbing subsided he completely got it. He understood, and even better, he was game. God, I loved that. My new hot artist, sixty-five years old, who didn't know or care about art but on the other hand had a grasp and feel for it that would put most who go by the name artist to shame.

This was around Thanksgiving, and I chose an opening date of December 11th. There was loads to do, not so much the installing but clearing out of that garage. Man, was there a lot of shit in there. Winter came on vengefully with late November early December raw grey intensity and Danny, Danny Jr. and myself were mucking around in that unheated garage with the door open, filling up dumpsters with trash and what have you, deciding what to keep and what not to. That took a few days at least, tough going. The whole process, in itself a continuation of the lot's overarching process, gave rise to the title for the show, "Things that Stay, Things that Go - Danny Tinneny's Selective Salvage." After getting it excavated of everything except what was going to stay, I swept up multiple times, there was so much

dust in there, and one evening nearly froze my fingers off trying to fix the chains tangled up inside the housing of the damn roll-up gate. Seriously, arriving home I ran warm water over them for at least ten minutes before a semblance of feeling came back.

Big items came first. The stable doors stayed where they were against the fence, a talisman. Two five-cubic yard dumpsters were brought inside to face each other in a nod to Richard Serra. With the forklift Danny solicitously moved them back and forth, inching them into what I deemed the perfect position. A stack of old cobblestones reminiscent of Carl Andre, just so, nearby. A bright red period piece fire callbox went in the corner and the "Watchman," the torso and head of sailor mannequin that has a special place in Danny's heart, was at the back supervising. A purple bollard, painted by the girlfriend of a Carroll Street old-timer, got hoisted over the door. An arm and chair of a small Bobcat backhoe got its place, as did a squat tower of cinder blocks with a shovel bucket on top, along with a car chassis topped by assorted pieces of sharp metal and old tarps and hoses propped up on a small I-beam. Also a big unruly heap of 4 x 8' pieces of plywood, various coiled cables on palettes, a Knaack tool box, two of those wheel ramps for driving a car into a trailer, an old wooden wheelbarrow, and a huge blue metal work table doing double duty as the "bar." For the crowning glory the Javelin owned "by some Chinese guy" that had been peacefully settled in the same spot for years was rolled by the three of us with the help of Jay thirty feet to take center stage

in front of the door. There, flawless, and after the Dannels went home as the anemic sun sank below the Culver Viaduct I scuffed around, lording it over, my borrowed domain.

Inside, the positioning of smaller objects. A mysterious Chinese empress painting, and an equally mysterious suite of matador paintings. When Danny used to buy cars at police auctions he'd also get whatever was in the car and trunk - that explained their presence. He also told me he bought a car once that had a Glock tucked away in a secret compartment behind the back seat. Whereabouts unknown, deposited in the canal, not included. A ziggurat of discarded Parliament packs near a looped fire hose, a wire spooler hung from the rafters, and mallets, shovels, brooms and other tools slanted against the walls. Another Knaack box full of old LPs (Perry Como, Arthur Godfrey, the Andrews Sisters, Tommy Dorsey and his Orchestra, et al) was kept open for viewing, and a patinated stove of a certain age put at a determined angle near a metal tripod of indeterminate origin. Danny seemed pleased. "It's looking pretty good in here, Jock," he said. Then, along with a summery photograph of one of the flora-engulfed unused boats I sent out a "press release," reprinted here:

"With Bond Street on one side, the Gowanus Canal on the other, bordered by Carroll to the south and the cobblestones of President Street to the north, "The Lot" is a repository of gritty and occasionally sublime readymade beauty. Almost everything there has a functional purpose, though much has stayed past its prime

thanks to the preservationist instincts of Danny Tinneny, the lot's owner, "arranger" and undisputed king. All these objects help give the lot its unique character and often transcend their utilitarian origins to enter the realm of the purely sculptural, combining undeniable formal qualities and socio-historical resonance. Posing questions as to what is art and what is not without essaying any dogmatic answers, the lot's contents blur that supposed boundary with Duchampian aplomb. An accumulation of weathered, battered, and engrossing remnants of the Gowanus' industrial past and its more recent multi-use incarnation, the aesthetically rich environment has resulted from both chance and judicious reclamation. Whether it's a peacefully decaying 1958 Oldsmobile 88, various bollards, a backhoe, forklifts, a Grove crane, rusted dumpsters, bales of wire, oil drums, numerous ladders, stacks of wood, sandbags, tires, and shipping containers, they all are part of a not entirely accidental cement sculpture garden. Set off by the big skies above the canal, ringed by an aluminum barbed-wire topped fence, the weedy domain with its semi-feral cats hunting amongst the detritus is evidence of a keen sensitivity to the appeal of what many consider junk.

The lot has had many lives, first as a car salvage business and now as the home to the office of a moving company, a woodshop, parking for movie stylist RVs, and many other activities. Now changes are afoot, and before that transformation occurs there is an opportunity to take stock of these sundry inanimate things and