

Stainboys

Charcoal pencil on archival pigment print, rag natural paper

When I see the streets and sidewalks of New York City under open construction, the earth looks pale and sickly. Is there anything living down there? Is it ghost soil? Above, the sidewalks are marked with stains. My curiosity turns to making sense and non-sense from these stains. I speculate about the possibility for life forms that emerge from the deep gaps below, and seep up to reveal themselves on the surface.

There is a Latin phrase, *solvitur ambulando*, which means "it is solved by walking." I have a daily practice of leaving the challenges of my work table for long reflective and observational walks. Particularly during the Covid years, I put my attention on my bioregion: learning about the street trees of New York City. I wondered about how their roots and interconnected mycelial systems communicate and function below the sidewalk.

We urban dwellers are of this earth, and yet often profoundly disconnected from it. Even in the city, life is teeming with intertwined species—plants, animals, fungi, bacteria and microbes. We know it and sense it in our bodies, memories and histories. Yet the ground I walk upon is suffocated with concrete and asphalt. It is *terra incognita*.

In 2010, an 18th century ship was found interred 25 feet below street level at the World Trade Center. What other impossible truths might lie below our feet?

Prior to the late 17th century, cartographers illustrated maps of global journeys with fictional sea creatures, drawn from sailors' stories, and the cartographers' own imaginations. The sea was vast and unknown. On the Hunt-Lenox globe, created around 1510, one area is marked 'Hic Sunt Dracones' ('here be dragons'). In my work, I am seeking the dragons of our shared bioregion.

This series of Stainboy drawings hurdles past the limitations of logic to assert the primacy of the imagined to navigate uncharted territories in this unknowable land.



Lisa Crafts