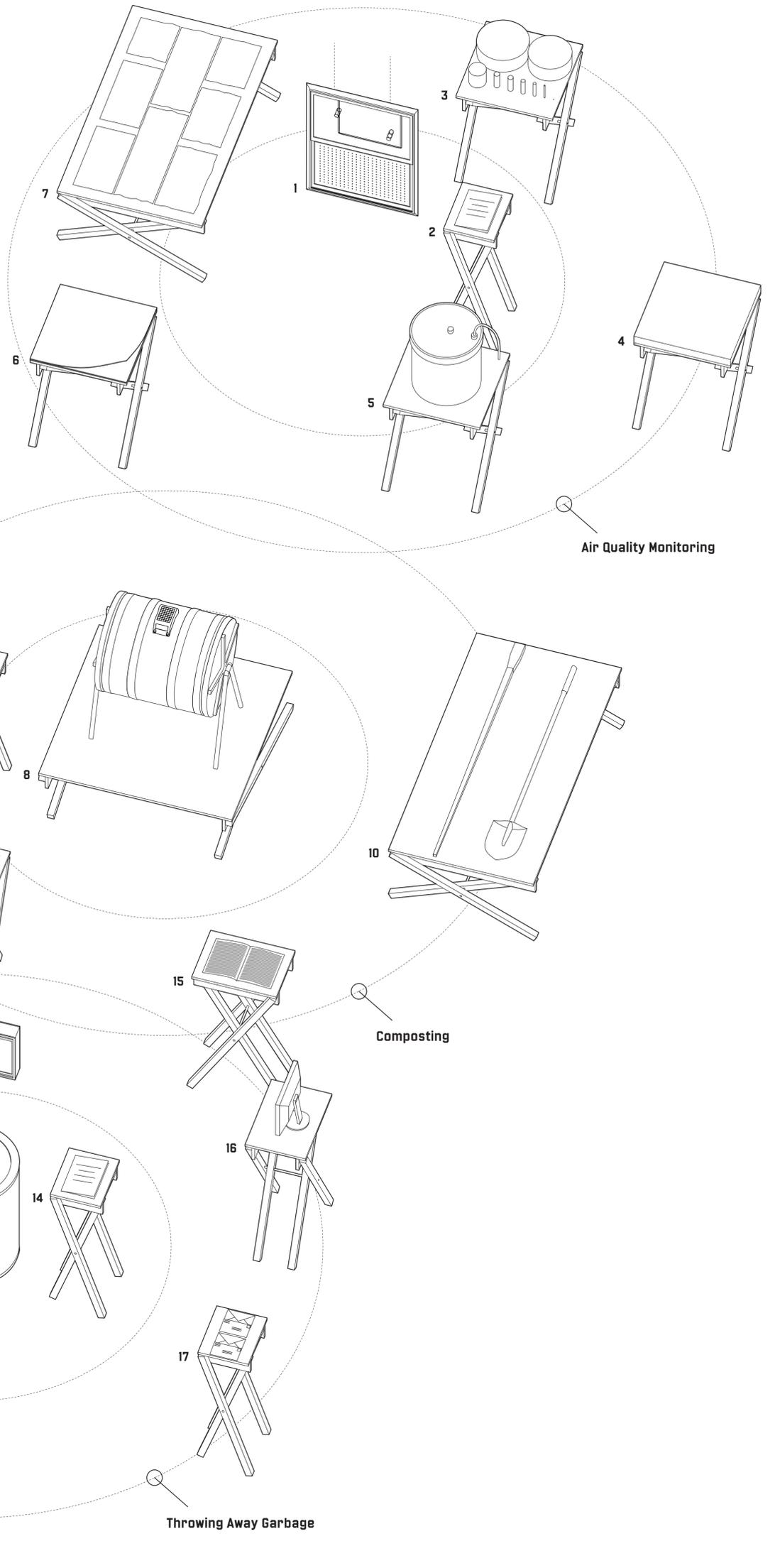


# THE ASSEMBLY OF TRASH

Waste is invisible until it becomes a problem. Large scale systems of sanitation and waste management seek to contain and enclose problems associated with waste, removing it from contact with urban life. Because it is volatile and long-lasting, waste successfully undermines its management, filling the air with odor or, in the case of older landfills, leaching into the water supply. Who or what is responsible for these and other unintended consequences of waste making and disposal? Individual consumers? Trucks? Waste management corporations? Garbage bins? Landfill liner? Global markets for recyclables? Manufacturers of consumables? The

water table? The question of whether waste is a public matter of concern or not emerges out of ruptures and conflicts within this heady mix of inert and volatile materials, human protagonists and large scale systems. Rather than fortify these points of weakness, we propose a number of incisions into already unstable components of the waste stream. Otherwise personal or invisible aspects of waste making and decomposition are brought to collective scrutiny and sensation, allowing new public rituals and spaces of engagement with trash to emerge around air quality monitoring, composting and the act of throwing garbage into a bin.



Each ritual is joined by a constellation of objects that are proximate to it, including technologies, regulations and experimental interventions into the waste stream.

## 1 Window Lung/ Particle Screen

These two interventions position air monitoring techniques typically associated with landfill owners or regulatory agencies within the architecture of the domestic window. The Window Lung learns from the typology of the air monitoring bucket, an advocacy tool that is used by activists to record air quality. The lung inhales exterior air, testing it for volatile organic compounds (VOC's). The Particle Screen absorbs particulate matter typically emitted by landfills. Each constitutes an air quality test that would be sent periodically to a lab for analysis, not unlike advocacy technologies such as the bucket. [Timothy Boll, Whitney Van Houten and Mark Nowaczky]

## 2 Assembly Manual: Window Lung/ Particle Screen

3 Particulate Matter  
Typical particulates released from landfills. Scale=original size x 360 [Timothy Boll and Whitney Van Houten]

4 Perfume  
Landfills stink. If properly contained, smell can be mitigated. One method to buttress the containment provided by ground cover is perfume, which some landfills emit around the perimeter of the premises in order to deodorize the air.

## 5 Air Quality Monitoring Bucket

The Bucket is a tool that is used by independent activist and advocacy groups to monitor the air quality around industrial sites. Typically, these sites are regulated based on calculations submitted by the owner of the plant to a regulatory agency. Ambient air quality testing is not typically relied upon in the current regulatory environment. Buckets are used by "Bucket Brigades," or groups of people who monitor air quality, to prove the release of chemicals into the air. This is done in order to agitate for ambient air

quality monitoring by government agencies. According to Global Community Monitor, the Bucket can test for over 70 gases, including VOC's and sulphur compounds. The bucket works by drawing in air from the surrounding environment into a specially lined bag, which is then sent to a certified lab for testing.

## 6 Landfill Liner

Three surfaces from the liner that typically contains contemporary landfills: geo-textile, geo-net and geo-membrane. Each of these layers acts in the primary and secondary layer of the landfill lining, which, together with pipes and different kinds of clay, comprises a thick surface at least five feet thick. [Donated by Modern Waste]

## 7 Communicating Residues

To explore and visualize the contents or air that infiltrates interior environments, sticky "thresholds" were placed within typical points of entry (windows, doors, etc.) in order to establish a discernible buildup of particulate air pollution, a critical residue. [Mark Nowaczky]

## 8 Compost Bin and Networking Device

The wireless compost monitor attaches to the exterior of a standard residential compost bin. A temperature probe extends from the base of the unit into the bin. Open source electronic hardware transmits the changes in temperature over time to an internet connected base station. The activity of each individual instance of composting can then be communicated to the larger public. [John Geisler]

## 9 Assembly Manual: Networked Urban Composting

10 Temperature Monitoring Stake  
A gardening implement for the internet age, the temperature monitoring stake allows the user to track the activity of multiple compost piles via temperature change. The stake provides instant feedback via LED display, while logging the temperature data via wireless antenna. The temperature data can then be

analyzed by the individual user and shared by the community of urban composters via internet mappings. [John Geisler]

## 11 Property Maintenance Code

In Chapter 216 of the City of Buffalo Code, entitled GARBAGE, RUBBISH and REFUSE, Article X references "Source Separation of Recyclables." The city code manages the potentially negative externalities that may arise from backyard compost sites. The code seeks to prevent the scattering of compost, the soaking of compost and the attraction of pest animals. This is done by specifying the space in which residential composting can take place, specifically a covered, weather and rodent proof container.

## 12 Phytomining Patent

Rufus Chaney's patent for "Method of phytomining of nickel, cobalt and other metals from soil" is an example of the type of scientific research that can take place in conjunction with art installations. Chaney worked closely with the artist Mel Chin on the project "Revival Field," a project that itself yielded concrete scientific data on the phyto-extraction of cadmium from the soil.

## 13 Last Rites Public Trash Receptacle

The installation turns the quotidian act of throwing into a spontaneous performance, a funeral for dead objects. These transactions are then documented, accumulated and re-presented by the system as a collection of last rites. [Cheng Yang Lee]

## 14 Assembly Manual: Last Rites

15 Excerpts from a Scavenger's Diary  
In pursuit of a lifestyle sustained by scavenging and collecting the discards of others, a UB architecture student moved into an abandoned house in the east side of Buffalo, a neighborhood where such material resourcefulness is the norm. Curious about his neighbors that have taken to pushing carts and collecting cans to support themselves, the diary chronicles relationships formed in the neighborhood through these material transactions

and reactions from an outsider having difficulties becoming assimilated into this system.

## 16 Francis Alys: The Collector [1991-2006] & Zapatos Magnéticos [1994]

The ritual of walking the city is posed as an act of recording. Alys drags a magnetic dog through the streets of Mexico City and walks the streets of Havana with heavy magnetic boots, extracting metallic detritus from the street. The act is captured on video, recording the act of recording and creating an afterlife for an embodied act of observing wasted matter and the spaces it inhabits.

## 17 Stanley Milgram: Lost Letter Technique [1965]

The Lost Letter Technique comprised a social experiment where various addressed letters were discarded within the urban context. How and what letters returned implied social biases to groups or organizations in which letters were addressed. The act of discarding was also spatial, raising larger questions about how discarded objects are responded to depending on where they are found and what their content is.

## 18 Vacuum formed waste

Four junk objects, sealed in vacuum formed PETG. [Curt Gambetta]

## 19 Mierle Ukeles: Maintenance Art Manifesto [1969]

Written in 1969, the feminist-environmentalist artist Mierle Ukeles' manifesto challenged the invisible, unglamorous labor of maintenance, declaring maintenance as art: "after the revolution, who's going to pick up the garbage on Monday morning?"

## 20 Litter Lens

Physical representation of the relation of urban boundaries to one another and the litter found within them. Photos are taken of urban litter and blown up in relation to the decomposition time of each object. Location: Lockport, NY, Fall 2011. [Nicole Halstead]

April 14th–May 19th  
CEPA Underground Gallery  
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M-F 9am-5pm, Sat 12-4pm

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**Infrastructures of waste removal and disposal operate in the background of daily experience, relegated to the periphery of consciousness and urban space. Though increasingly understood as a problem of management and technical containment, the consequences of waste production extend beyond the boundaries that are designed to contain them. Waste seeps into our lives and bodies in unexpected ways. Waste is an ineluctably collective dilemma, and yet it is increasingly removed from the domain of collective responsibility. Given the invisibility of waste management, how might society engage with issues that are deliberately disappeared?**