

## RECONSTRUCTED GROUNDS

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### **ABSTRACT**

*In this paper, I discuss the generative role of design narration and video production in the provocation and rehabilitation of an existing environment. "Bemis Gardens" is an exhibition and design laboratory that sought to consider the urban condition of the contemporary art center and its relationship with downtown Omaha through the transformation of the Bemis Center's exterior dock into a public art site and urban garden. In recent years, artists, architects, ecologists and social designers have formed new hybrids between food production and social space, urban ecologies and public art, forgotten space and material ingenuity, and public spectacle. "Bemis Gardens" was structured as an open laboratory and interactive exhibition. Throughout its three-month run the exhibition hosted a series of workshops consisting of professionals from diverse fields in effort to consider urban land use futures and speculate on specific actionable possibilities for the Bemis Center's site. The proposed installation of the Water Hutch designed and constructed by Peter P. Goché is one such actionable proposition. Reminiscent of the many waterways that meander through the Midwest, the work consists of a sinuous line made up of three oxbows. This set of parts served as provocateur for the subsequent design strategies developed as a result of this open laboratory and interactive exhibition whereby I developed a generative literary narrative based on the history of Omaha's "jobber's canyon" and the social phenomenon depicted in a previously produced video. This narrative served to inform the mock installation of the Water Hutch.*