





Painting the sign for the *Épicerie*

Nicolas Floc'h

Épicerie and the Portable Store

Temporary Services

2890 N. Milwaukee, Chicago, IL

August 27 - September 27, 1999

Opening service: August 27, 7-10pm

For further info. call Temporary Services at (773) 486-3941

Email: nobudget@megsinet.net

www.megsinet.net/~nobudget/temp_serv.html

This exhibition is supported by *Étant Donnée*, The Cultural Services of the French Embassy - Chicago, Ivy Crest Garden and Lawndale Community Outreach Services, and monk parakeet.

NOTES ON URBAN GARDENING

By Nance Klehm

The site for Nicholas Floc'h 's garden project, is located in the Lawndale community on Chicago's West Side - The Ivy Crest Garden. The site is ten city lots secured by a chain link fence and barbed wire. To the east lies several homes alternating with vacant lots, freight trains run along the garden's west side, a factory stands to the north and to the south lies a car garage, a crack house and the Baptist church where the garden's community group is based.

The Lawndale neighborhood has one of the highest unemployment rates and environmental contamination in the city. Prostitution and drug use occurs openly. The main goals behind the creation of the Ivy Crest Organic Garden was to increase the positive community use of an available 'disused/abused' space and provide an entrepreneurial and recreational opportunity for youth in the neighborhood.

Reclaiming land to grow food in the city doesn't come easily. Perennial weeds hid oil filters, hypodermic needles and a completely flattened city of Chicago garbage can as well as other trash. The soil under several feet of wood chips (futilely spread in an effort to stop weeds) showed itself as typical in most city lots: compacted clay mixed with building debris from a prior demolition. With a committed core of volunteers, the site is home to raised beds of organic vegetables, a flock of ducks (insect control, fertilizer and egg production) and Nicholas Floc'h 's project.

IVY CREST GARDEN

By Ricky Boggs

This was my first time doing this type of work. I remember the way that the lot looked before anyone even thought of turning it into anything, especially a garden. And just the memory of the tall weeds and possibility of insects and vermin that might be inhabited there made it seem worse. But when I saw how much was already done it helped ease the worry.

When it came to meet the other kids it was another story. I am 19 years old and very soft spoken. My co-workers ages ranged from 12-17. Not to get me wrong, I didn't really expect much from them, let's just say that I wasn't ecstatic about working with them right away.

We spent the first week weeding and preparing more flowerbeds and vegetable beds to used for planting. We had other people come out and teach us how to properly care for the plants and the ducks .At first we had problems cooperating; I think it was because we were all getting to know each other.

The next few weeks we learned a little more about what it takes to grow food. We had many visitors that came out to lend a hand. There was a group of 45 teens from Texas that came. We got lots done when they were here. I think it was a great experience for all of us. It gave us a chance to meet new people, learn to work together and get things done. There was another group from Iowa. They were a bit smaller than the group from Texas, but just as helpful. I am grateful to have met people in this day and age that would come out and work with us under no obligation.

One of the more memorable experiences was selling our produce to the chef of the Ritz-Carlton hotel. A group of us went to the farmers' market with some carrots, radishes, green and baby onions. Chef Sarah Stegner was instantly impressed with what we had and wasted no time buying everything. We also went to the Farmers' Market to sell green tomatoes and sweet peppers. At the market we had the opportunity to talk to a lot of different people about our garden project.

I think that the Ivy Crest Garden was a great experience for everyone that took part and I'm happy that I gave it a chance and was part of it. Even though there was some complaining, I know that we all learned a lot and now carry that knowledge with us.

ÉCRITURE PRODUCTIVE, ÉPICERIE AND THE PORTABLE STORE AND THE PORTABLE TEMPORARY SERVICES

By Brett Bloom

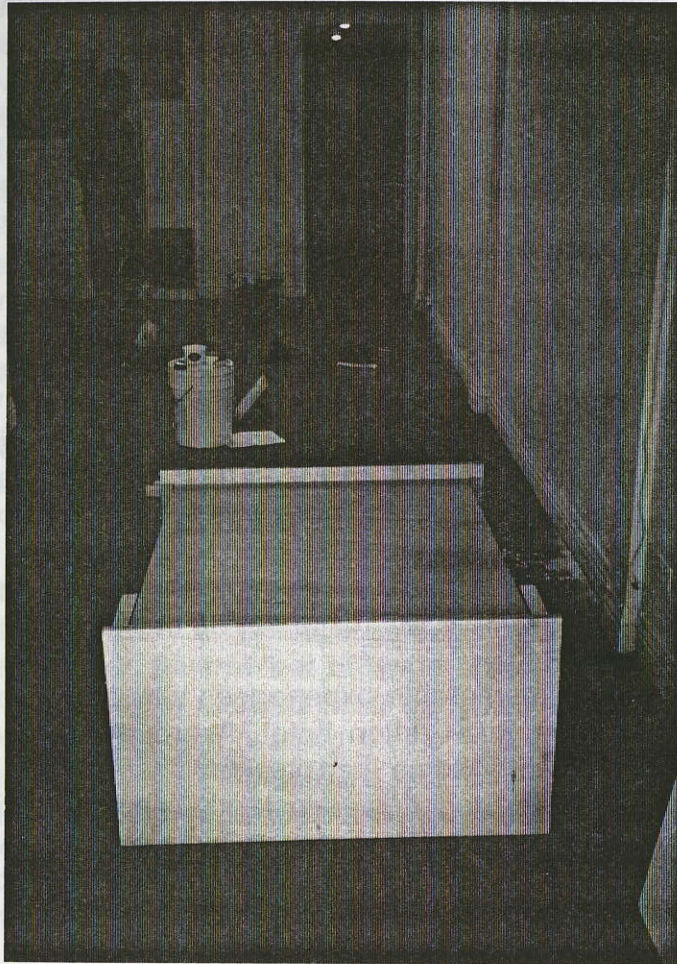
One planned, ambitious project turned into three even more ambitious and labor intensive ones. This is not out of the ordinary for Nicolas Floc'h. It is typical of the way that he works. He is constantly processing new ideas, frequently within the course of social conversations. Working through one idea quickly leads him to several more.

Floc'h had initially planned to do only one project for Temporary Services while he was in Chicago. This project involved growing a garden and then converting Temporary Services into an épicerie to sell the produce.

Floc'h was invited by Lawndale Community Outreach Services, on the West Side of Chicago, to use part of their "Ivy Crest Garden". The planting of the vegetables helped to revive a previously abandoned lot. Floc'h grew the vegetables using a process that he calls "Écriture Productive."

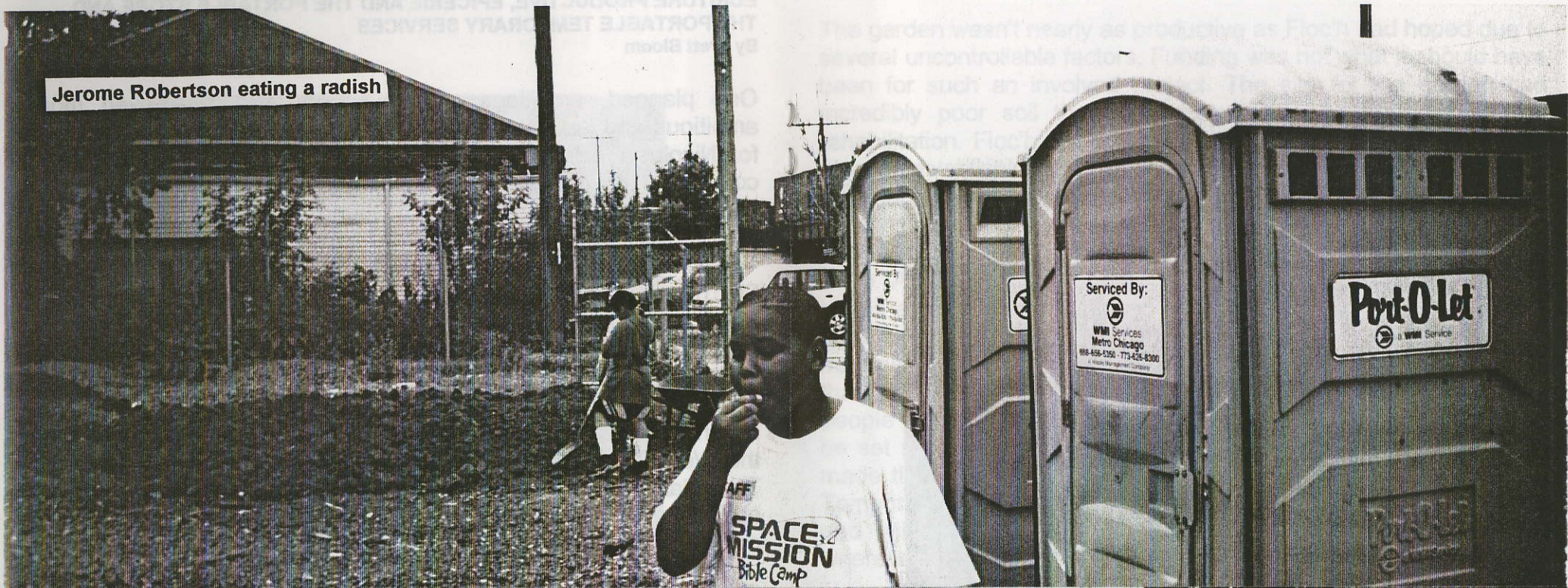
Écriture Productive, or, productive writing, sets up tautological relationships between words and the things that the words are describing. Floc'h has illustrated this process in many projects. A bed was constructed from letters that spelled the word "bed". The mounts of a climbing wall spelled out the word "chute", which means "to fall" in French. A fishing boat was driven on a specific route and tracked with an electronic global positioning device. The movements of the boat, as seen on a radar screen, spelled out "poisson", the French word for fish. This process continued with the vegetable garden in Lawndale.

Tomato plants were planted to spell the word "TOMATO" (see cover photograph) along with several other vegetables (radishes spelling out "RADISH" and so on). Once the tomatoes are harvested they are sold as "Produit-Art" (Art Product). This process allows for the raising of vegetables to be seen in a new way. This process can be seen as fluid and open to many innovative strategies. People consistently respond strongly to the planted words and begin to see tomatoes in a different way. This is the strength of the process.



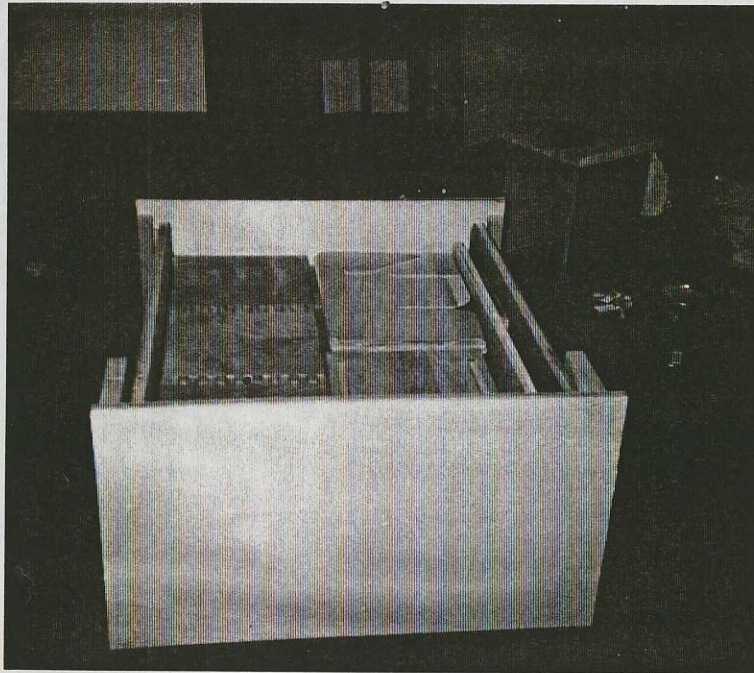
The Portable Store at Temporary Services

Jerome Robertson eating a radish



Radishes



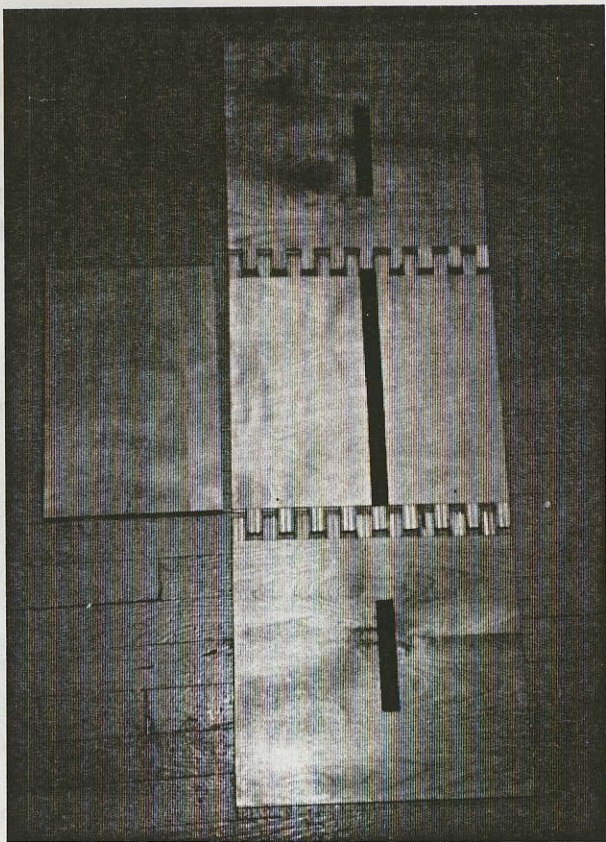


The Portable Store at monk parakeet

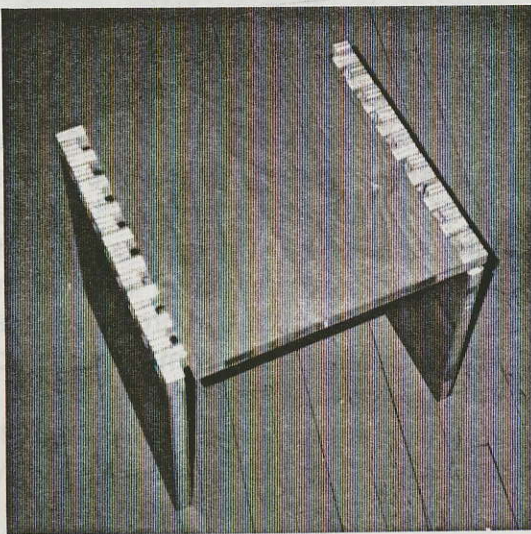
The garden wasn't nearly as productive as Floc'h had hoped due to several uncontrollable factors. Funding was not what it should have been for such an involved project. The site for the garden had incredibly poor soil that still requires an enormous amount of rehabilitation. Floc'h decided that he would continue with the initial idea of establishing the Épicerie, but he would also include the manufacturing of a portable store.

The Portable Store consists of many items that one would find in a store. All of these items from shelving units to a counter top and tables are easily taken apart and fit into a crate. The sides of the crate function as tables themselves. Each piece of furniture is made from plywood. The plywood has been fashioned into torsion boxes that allow for strong construction but remain very lightweight. Two people can carry the Portable Store. It is easy to transport and can be set up within a short period of time. At the same time that he made the Portable Store, Floc'h also made a portable version of Temporary Services. It will be presented in Chicago at a later date and will then travel initiating exhibitions, services and events wherever it goes.

One thing that I think is really important about Floc'h 's exhibition at Temporary Services is the layering of information that occurs. It happens in a concrete manner that leaves all of the constituent parts integrated, but also standing on their own as independent functions. I see this as a concrete manifestation of the importance of information in our world. The ontological structure of matter is becoming information - a constant digital flow. This is not a free for all. We can bracket information and talk about it in very specific terms. Making an analogy with the internet devalues the work in this show, but is a persistent and necessary reference point. This show is like a web site with multiple links to very specific meanings. The Épicerie is at Temporary Services. It sells produce from a garden (that shared space with a community redevelopment project) where vegetables were grown in the form of words. It also sells items that were taken from the grocery store and de-branded. The Epicerie will also sell items from several community gardens and urban farming projects that have close ties to Floc'h 's residency at monk parakeet. The Épicerie is a finite exhibition and real store for a month. It is presented as a service at Temporary Services. The Portable Store is a separate piece that is hosting the



A small chair unfolded and folded



Ivy Crest Garden

Without the help of the following people and organizations:

Étant Donnée, The Cultural Services of the French Embassy - Chicago, Dianne Eberhardt, The Ivy Crest Garden and Chester Robertson, Director of Lawndale Community Outreach Services, Dan Pateman, Andy Gregg, The Baller, Mark Parkes, Jake Spicer of Big Fish Furniture, Beth Novy, Salem Coll-Turn, Dominique Foch, Lora Loda, Kevin Kamp, Nancy Klein, Allison Meares of Heller Project International, Marc Fischer, Virginia Montgomery, Janet Chen, all the volunteers who pulled weeds and sweated in the hot Chicago sun.

Épicerie, but then will move on afterwards and be used in other contexts. The Portable Store is a twin project of the Portable Temporary Services.

The meanings are exhausting. There is too much information. So you take what you need and move on. That is how it works.



Food items being prepared for the Épicerie

Nicolas Floc'h 's residency and exhibition would not have been possible without the help of the following people and organizations:

Étant Donnée, The Cultural Services of the French Embassy - Chicago, Dianne Eberhardt, The Ivy Crest Garden and Chester Robertson, Director of Lawndale Community Outreach Services, Dan Peterman, Andy Gregg, The Baffler, monk parakeet, Jake Spicer of Big Fish Furniture, Beth Novy, Salem Collo-Julin, Dominique Floc'h, Lora Lode, Kevin Kaempf, Nance Klehm, Allison Meares of Heifer Project International, Marc Fischer, Virginia Montgomery, Janet Chen, all the volunteers who pulled weeds and sweated in the hot Chicago sun.

