

Cassandra Moe

*Remembering Us*, loosely inspired by a wishing tree tradition in China<sup>1</sup>, is a temporary installation meant to provide the resources and environment for introspection and connection. Intended to be built at Boston, Massachusetts' Christopher Columbus Waterfront Park<sup>2</sup>, the installation would be at the center of a major tourist attraction in the Boston area, as well as juxtaposed with the nearby, fast-paced financial district. A volunteer would encourage passersby to sit and write their favorite memory on a piece of plantable paper cut in the shape of a tag<sup>3</sup>. Participants could then tie their tag to the nearby tree branches or arches in the park with environmentally-friendly twine.

Drawing architectural inspiration from Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's Farnsworth House<sup>4</sup>, the structure for *Remembering Us* is designed to be light and minimalistic, with the intent of creating

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<sup>1</sup> "Lam Tsuen Wishing Trees," *Hong Kong Tourism Board*, Accessed February 10, 2020, <http://www.discoverhongkong.com/us/see-do/culture-heritage/historical-sites/chinese/lam-tsuen-wishing-tree.jsp>. During festivals, people would throw joss paper, which represents money, into tree branches. It was believed that the higher the branch the paper landed on, the more likely one's wish was to come true.

<sup>2</sup> Scott Roberto, "A Peek at the Past: Christopher Columbus Park," *Boston Guide*, December, 5, <https://bostonguide.com/article-78290-a-peek-at-the-past:-christopher-columbus-park.html>. The park's original name was simply Waterfront Park, but was later rechristened to its current name. Considering the more recent controversy regarding the idolization of Christopher Columbus, I would argue this to now be a regressive decision, and an interesting place for an installation that promotes reflection.

<sup>3</sup> Gerald C. Williamson, "Sharp-lobed Hepatica, Liverleaf, Liverwort - *Anemone acutiloba*," *Wildflowers of the United States*, Accessed February 10, 2020, <https://uswildflowers.com/detail.php?SName=Anemone%20acutiloba>. To ensure that any possible growth from the paper is noninvasive to the space, the paper would contain seeds for the sharp-lobed hepatica, a wildflower native to Massachusetts.

<sup>4</sup> "Farnsworth House," *Farnsworth House*, National Trust for Historic Preservation, February 11, 2020, <https://farnsworthhouse.org/>.

a welcoming but reflective atmosphere; its simplicity would also allow the focus of the installation to be the tags which participants write on. The pillows and legless tables are inspired by Japanese tea houses, which contain low furniture to symbolize that all their visitors are considered equal upon entry of the house, regardless of concepts like title, class, or status<sup>5</sup>. This choice of inspiration is meant to drive home the intent of the installation: to provide a safe space where we can view one another without the labels placed on us.

Ideally, anyone who visits the park, from local Bostonians to overseas tourists, would feel comfortable writing down their favorite, and presumably happiest, memory. My hope is that, regardless of age, nationality, class, or spoken language, we all can empathize and connect with each others' pockets of happiness; though our differences appear to separate us, I think our emotions can be universally understood.

This installation is conceived in a time where our differences and identities are a cause of hostility and fear. People are belittled for their gender, constrained by their socioeconomic status, and alienated because of their race. In a time of pandemic scares, political wars, and international hostility, I would like to provide a small place where we can display our humanity and be reminded of the goodness in ourselves and others.

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<sup>5</sup> Hiroko Matsuyama, "Japanese Tea House: Architecture of Ultimate Spiritual World," *PatternZ*, July 25, 2017, <https://www.patternz.jp/japanese-tea-house-architecture/>.