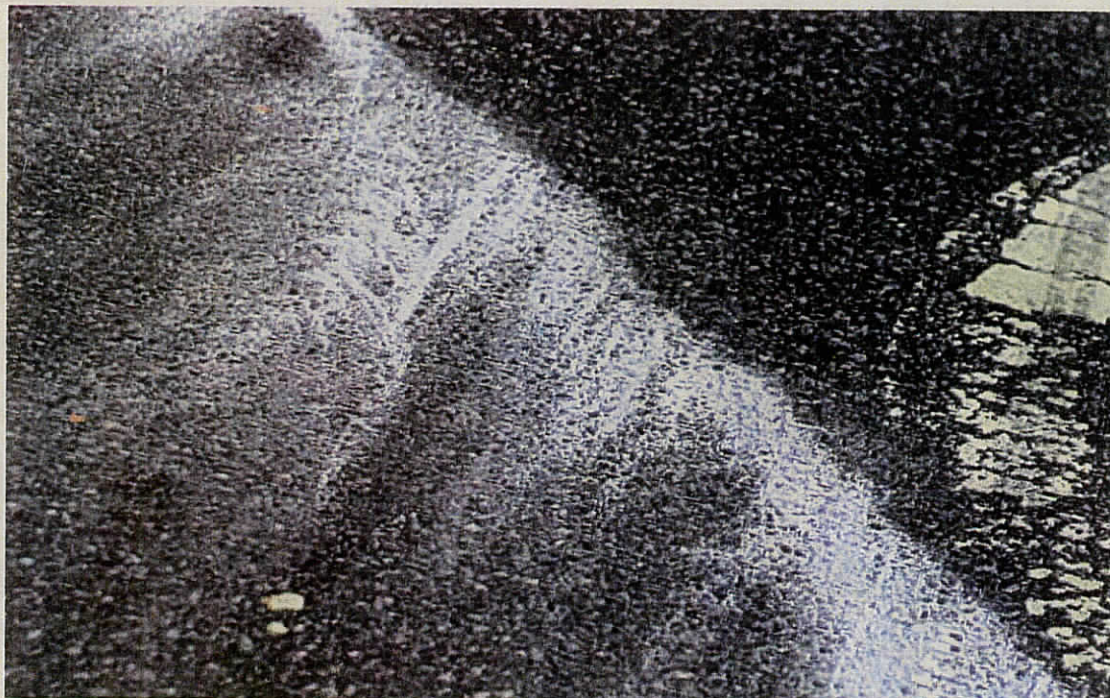


The New York Times





Kitra Cahana/The New York Times

The artist Eve S. Mosher draws chalk lines on the streets of Brooklyn to mark potential flood zones.

The Handwriting on the Road: An Artist Draws the Flood Line

By RANDY KENNEDY

In landscape drawing, lines are usually representations of the contours of the observed world: a horizon, a mountain ridge, a tendril. But a line that the artist Eve S. Mosher began drawing last month is striving for a different kind of effect. To begin with, it is not of the landscape, exactly. It is on it.

Specifically, it is right on the decidedly unpicturesque pavement and sidewalks of Spring Creek, Brooklyn, and after a few weeks of work, it now winds and twists its way into Canarsie, where Ms. Mosher drove on Thursday morning in her environmentally friendly rent-by-the-hour car, with five 50-pound buckets of blue-tinted chalk in the back.

This chalk is her pencil, her charcoal and her ink. She dumps it load by load into an aluminum hopper with four big wheels, the kind used to lay down base lines for baseball diamonds. And then, with her water bottle filled and her black Chuck Taylor high-tops firmly laced, she sets off to draw, dodging cars and timing stoplights as she leaves behind a meandering four-inch-wide stripe leading back to where she began. People tend to come out of their houses and stare.

"What is she doing?" asked Valerie Alexander, a school aide and saleswoman at Macy's, emerging from a drugstore in Canarsie to see the line snaking in front of her and across the street, as its maker disappeared around a corner. "Is she with the city?"

This kind of curiosity is Ms. Mosher's goal, the reason for drawing the line, which does not exist in what Robert Rauschenberg describes as the gap between art and life but fully, and often frighteningly, on the life side of that gap.

The chalk demarcates a point 10 feet above sea level, a boundary now used by federal and state agencies and insurance companies to show where waters could rise after a major storm. Relying partly on research conducted by NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies at Columbia University, Ms. Mosher is trying to draw attention to projections that the chance of flooding up to or beyond her line could increase significantly as a result of global warming.

In a worst-case scenario, according to the research, the line could mark the zone for flooding

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that would occur every eight years, on average, by the year 2050, meaning that dozens of neighborhoods would soon come to resemble Venice, or maybe ancient Alexandria.

Over the next several months, Ms. Mosher, 38, will extend her line through the coastal neighborhoods of southernmost Brooklyn and then move on to Manhattan to draw a line that begins at East 14th Street and loops around the bottom of the island, back up to West 14th Street.

Next she will return to Brooklyn

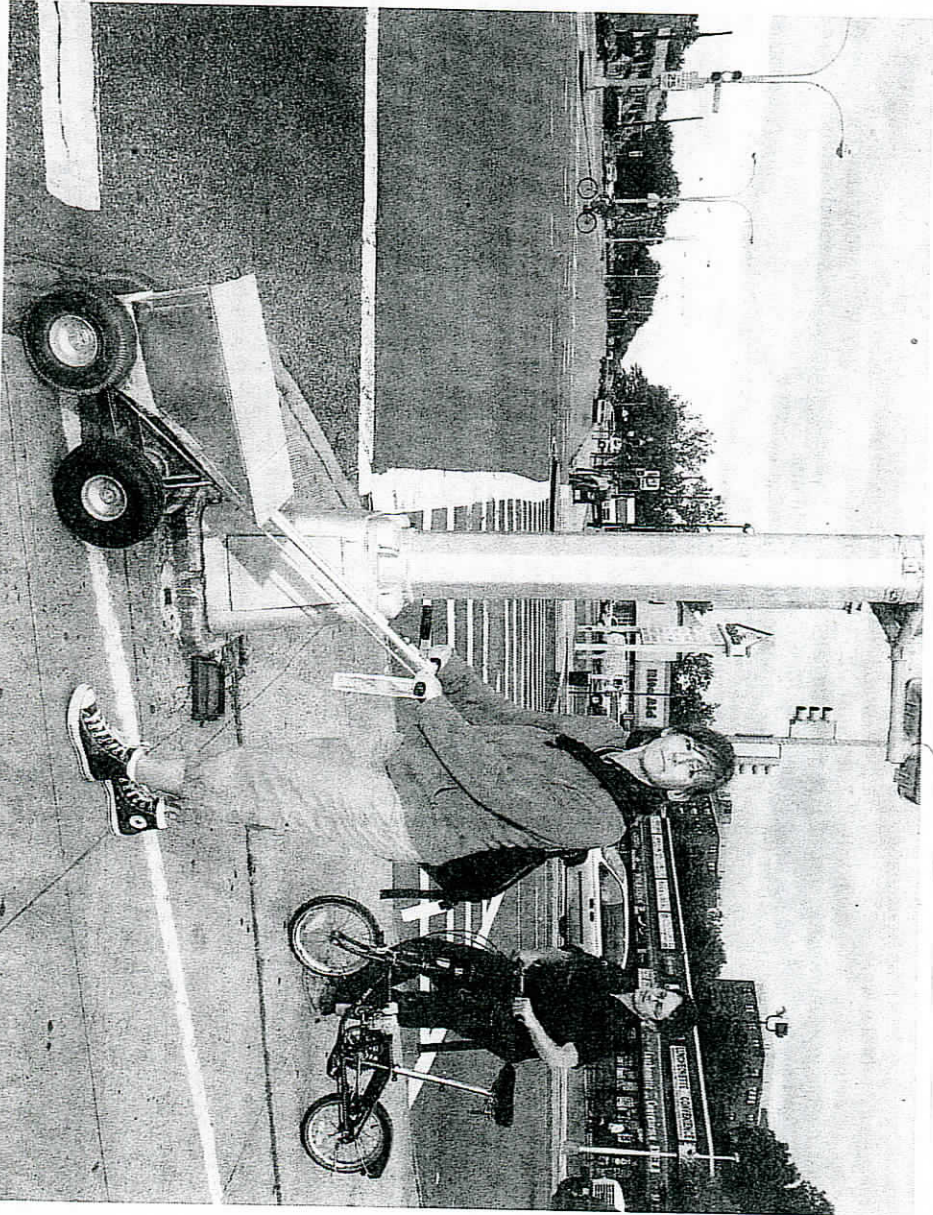
Using art to mark a point where the waters can rise.

and work her way from the Verrazano Bridge to the Battery Tunnel to Newtown Creek in Greenpoint, whose sludgy industrial topography could serve as a wanted poster for the kind of environmental damage that her project, called "High Water Line," is warning against.

Ms. Mosher's brand of landscape drawing is not easy. The chalk gets clumpy. "It's not really coming out super smooth today," she said, hauling up on the handles somewhere along Schenck Street to get it flowing again. The project has also involved countless long meetings to introduce the idea to community boards and city and parks officials.

"There's really no permit for this kind of thing," she explained.

Her drawing, by necessity, cannot be continuous or even particularly lovely in an artistic sense. It can't,



Eve S. Mosher uses an aluminum hopper loaded with chalk to draw lines on sidewalks and pavements.

Kiira Cahana/The New York Times

for example, extend through people's living rooms or yards or the back seats of their cars, so Ms. Mosher has to do a lot of stopping and skipping around. (In parks and other grassland, the line is replaced by temporary, solar-powered light beacons.) And the drawing takes a lot of time because she insists on explaining her mission, even to people who do not seem particularly interested

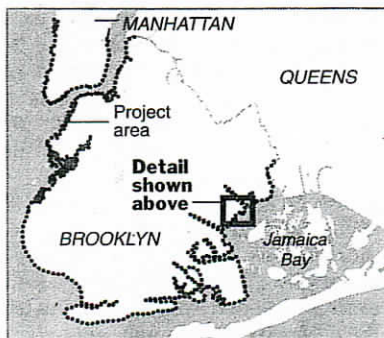
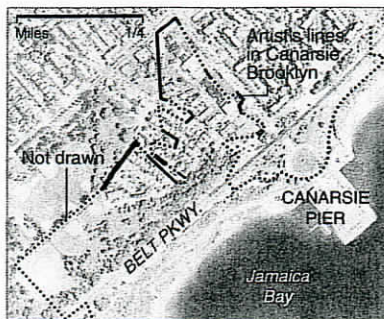
in hearing about it.

"I'm gonna come tell you what I'm doing," she yelled in her still-strong south Texas accent (she was raised near Houston) to a man standing silently watching her on the front steps of his house.

Ms. Mosher, who lives in the Clinton Hill section of Brooklyn, said that so far people had had no compunction about approaching her, either to

wonder why she is dumping a strange blue powdery substance on their sidewalks or to enter into a serious discussion about climate change, Al Gore, Conceptual Art and urban devastation.

"There are times where if someone is giving me a dirty look from their porch," she said, "I won't draw on their sidewalk. But usually I just forge ahead."



The New York Times;
Image by NASA via Google Earth

If people seemed a little reluctant to approach her this week it might have been because she was being followed by a reporter, a photographer, a video documentary maker, a fellow activist, an intern and a man named Edward Morris, one of the founders of a Brooklyn-based environmental organization called the Canary Project, which is helping Ms. Mosher carry out and publicize her work.

The intern, Megan Baker, was handing out what Ms. Mosher called "action packets" to neighborhood residents, encouraging them to compost, bike, buy local produce and write lots of letters to politicians as ways to diminish the risk that water will one day engulf their homes.

A postal delivery driver pulled over to admire the line. He listened for a while to the message attached

ONLINE: TRACING CLIMATE CHANGE

Additional images of Eve Mosher drawing a chalk line along 70 miles of coastal neighborhoods at risk in New York:

nytimes.com/arts

to the art, though his eyes seemed to glaze over a bit on the subject of flood frequencies. "I'll have to get a different route maybe," he said, smiling. "Or maybe a boat."

Mr. Morris, whose organization was founded to use "art as uniquely compelling evidence" of rapid climate change, said that Ms. Mosher came to him with the idea for the line, a project that echoes another one started by Bruce Caron, an activist on the West Coast.

"One of the things I really like about this is that it's getting to a lot of communities that don't really interact all that much with art," Mr. Morris said, adding that he had put many miles on his legs recently, following Ms. Mosher through those communities with a camera.

"The way the line starts to disintegrate and fade after she's done it is pretty poetic, visually," he said.

The other day the line was getting erased a little faster than normal. A street-cleaning truck seemed to be stalking Ms. Mosher, and cars — those speeding metaphors for greenhouse gases — kept driving through and smearing it. She did not seem to mind.

But when Mr. Morris offered to go get the rental car to give a reporter a short ride back to the subway, she looked disappointed, as if the message of her art might not be getting through, even to its adherents.

"Eve chastises me about my carbon footprint," he said. "Do you mind walking?"