

Precious Things

Mezzacello is a machine for life in the middle of a place of built utility. The cityscape is optimized to maximize utility to one species AKA humans. A modern city is a precious thing; delicate, dynamic, dependent, distracting. As you probably already know this urban farm is located in downtown Columbus, OH. It exists because we have built, failed, rebuilt, improved, and modified our original plan. It started as a garden. It has become a system of enclosed interdependent ecosystems behind a gate surrounded by asphalt, concrete, brick, steel and glass. That journey requires discussing wisdom, vulnerability, innocence, ignorance, and values.



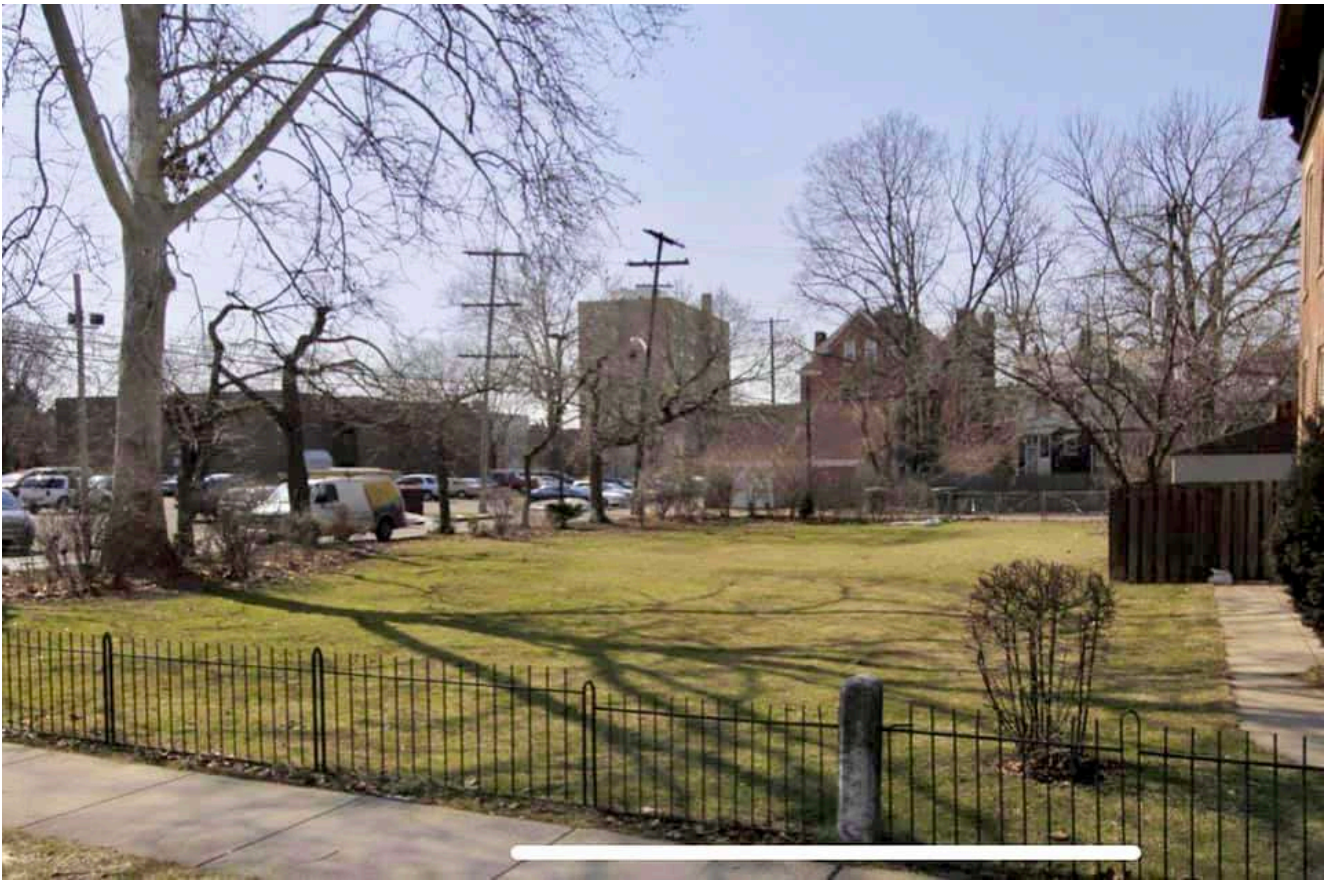
Tori Amos really singing her truth to the song “Precious Things”. [Jim Bruner](#) | Mezzacello

This is a hard blog post to write because from here I could pivot in five directions and still be discussing the same topic. So today I am going to focus on Precious Things. In

this language I am writing in that phrase can mean three distinct things:

1. Some discrete object, action, or person that is valued and treasured,
2. An idea or situation that is more ephemeral and mysterious and has meaning beyond its use.
3. An object that is fragile and not at all utilitarian.

This post is about that last one.



Mezzacello in late summer 2015. [Jim Bruner](#) | Mezzacello

This garden, if it was going to be truly sustainable, could not be a jewelry box of intentions; it had to be a tool box of applied STEM and systems.

When I started the gardens at Mezzacello I only knew the precious things. I said things like, “Oh wouldn’t this be cute?” Or I would think, “Oh that will be fun to try?” I literally didn’t know any better. What I quickly and painfully

realized through time, failure, and surprise is that precious things will not sustain life. They illuminate it and make it meaningful and beautiful to the mind and spirit, but not the body. This garden, if it was going to be truly sustainable, could not be a jewelry box of intentions; it had to be a tool box of applied STEM and systems.

This is a bubble of life in the midst of the city. The city presses in on it as it pushes back in a dynamic tension where ecosystems and laws interact. Here ecosystems are failsafes and there are legal and hygiene regulations that shape the decisions, boundaries and structures just as natural law shapes it. I am grateful that I recognized this in time. The reality is that Mezzacello could never be a whimsical garden. This endeavor had to become a machine for life.

There are precious things here. But they are deliberate and they are special and require personal energy up front. Everything else is infrastructure. The precious things fail when you rely on THEM when in fact they rely on YOU. There are not enough hours in the day for me to keep asking Mother Nature for exceptions to her rules. Laws of nature, not blind or cruel. That is impossible. Only people are those things. Mother Nature is demanding. When you are playing in her house, you play by her rules. I have learned that. I continue to learn that. We all of us need to learn that.

I will be touching on this and related concepts as a series called #Machine4Life and it will be adjacent to #ProjectMartian and my work with #BronzevilleAgricademy. Stay tuned. Love your precious things, but do not use them everyday.