

THE HUNTS POINT *Express*

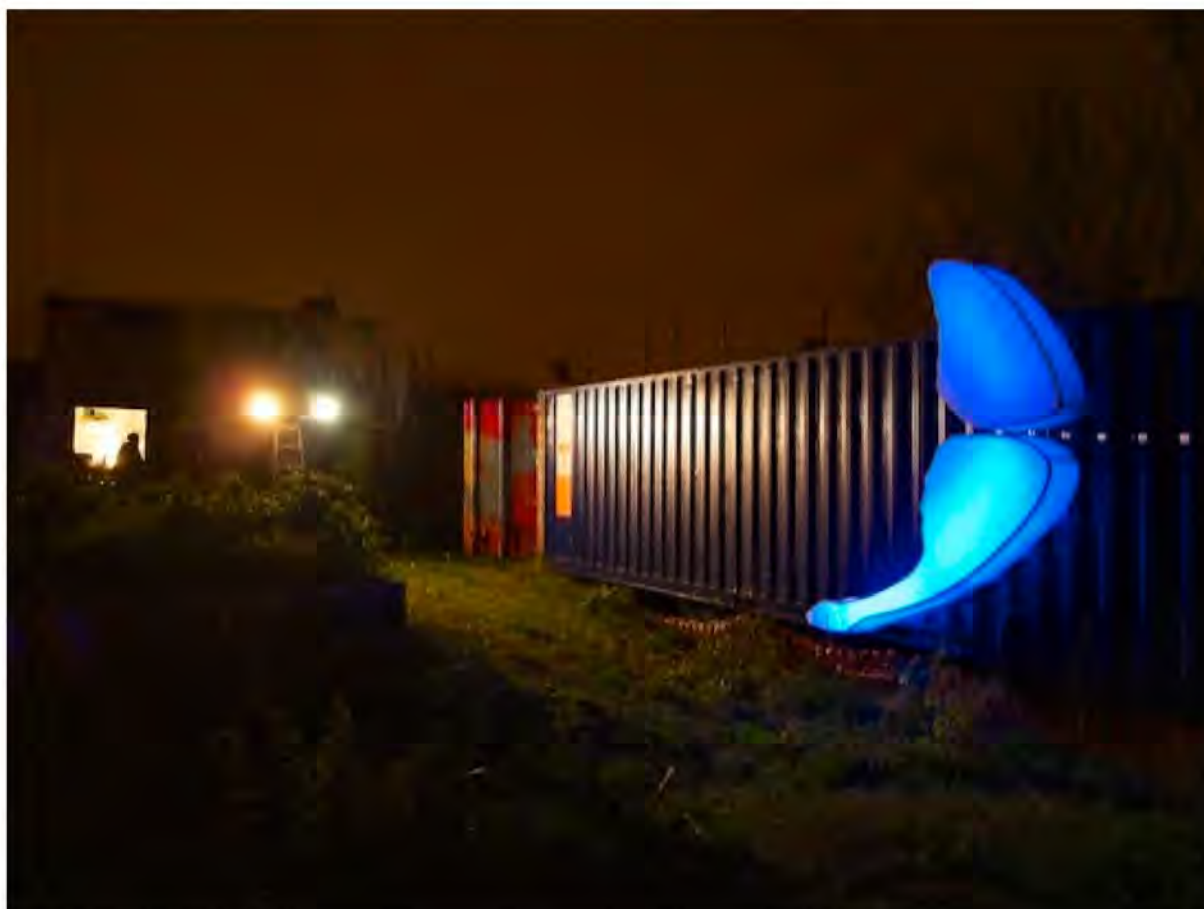
Serving Hunts Point and Longwood

“A waterfront love motel for bugs.”
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<http://brie.hunter.cuny.edu/hpe/2012/11/05/a-waterfront-love-motel-for-bugs/>

A waterfront love motel for bugs

By [Rachel Bryson-Brockmann](#) on November 5, 2012 at 5:24 pm



Rachel Bryson-Brockmann

The Love Motel for Insects at The Point CDC’s Riverside Campus appeals to bugs all night long.

They check in, then stay as long as they like

A section of Hunts Point now glows at night – and not from neon signs.

The latest addition on The Point CDC’s eco-friendly Riverside Campus along the Bronx River is a glow-in-the-dark sculpture that attracts insects and encourages plant growth. Supporters say it is a symbolic step in a fledgling environmental movement to bring more green to Hunts Point.

Artists and staff from The Point hope the sculpture will attract residents to the otherwise desolate, industrial riverfront area that is wedged between Sims' Recycling Factory and Hunts Point Riverside Park. They and others admired the bright, moth-shaped sculpture at a late October "Day of the Dead" party at The Point's Brick House gallery, a squat brick building that was once a fur tanning factory, noticing one moth that had stayed put on the sculpture for a long time.

"It hasn't moved for hours," said Carey Clark, art director at The Point CDC. "I think it's sleeping."

After the sculpture was installed, Clark said, bugs she had never seen before started to appear.

Called "The Love Motel for Insects," the outdoor installation consists of two large canvas sculptures shaped like moths' wings, which emit ultraviolet light to attract moths, beetles, and other nocturnal, non-biting bugs.

"It's not just feel-good art; it's actually doing something," said Clark, who helped bring the sculpture to the Riverside Campus.

The installation is fastened to a large, blue storage container. It radiates light all day, but the glow is noticeable only at night, when bugs can see it from miles away, said the artist who created it, Brandon Ballengee.

"It's artificial moonlight," said Ballengee, who donated the piece, and added that it is known as the Love Motel because "these nocturnal insects are all looking to find a mate."

Ballengee, who has installed similar sculptures around the world since 2001, hopes the sculpture will increase public awareness of the benefits of bugs.

"Bugs are essential to our survival," said the Midtown Manhattan-based artist and biologist. "We don't know much about them, there's so many different species."

The sculptor hopes the work will demonstrate how bugs and plants can help fight Hunts Point's air pollution problem. Tens of thousands of trucks barrel through the peninsula each week, contributing to some of the country's highest asthma rates.

Sharon De La Cruz, director of teen activist group A.C.T.I.O.N. at The Point CDC, said the sculpture brings a fresh perspective to local environmental concerns.

"This comes from a different angle – it's visually pleasing and stimulating," she said. "You've got to find a way to make people care, when they've learned not to care."

Last summer, De La Cruz worked with a group of kids from The Point CDC in the community garden on the campus, producing eggplants, watermelons, Swiss chard and other produce, which they then gave away to residents.

While this space makes up only one small corner of Hunts Point, De La Cruz said the area communicates a broader message.

"The city needs to know that humans live here," she said. "It's not just trucks."