

## EXHIBITION

### **“FAST TRASH: Roosevelt Island’s Pneumatic Tubes and the Future of Cities”**

April 22–May 23, 2010

Opening Reception: Thursday, April 22, 6–9pm

Gallery RIVAA, 527 Main Street on Roosevelt Island

Web: [www.rivaa.com](http://www.rivaa.com)

#### **For more information or jpegs contact:**

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### **Roosevelt Island’s idiosyncratic underground garbage disposal suggests alternate futures for New York City’s infrastructure**

**New York, April 22, 2010**—What if we radically changed the way we move garbage through the city?

This is the question that independent curator Juliette Spertus and the design firm Project Projects will answer in “FAST TRASH: Roosevelt Island’s Pneumatic Tubes and the Future of Cities,” an exhibition about Roosevelt Island’s highly effective yet little-known underground garbage collection system.

On Roosevelt Island—located in the East River between Manhattan and Queens—there are no garbage bags on the sidewalks and no garbage trucks. Instead, garbage is collected from its 14,000 inhabitants via a retro-futuristic system of underground tubes. A computer empties the trash chutes several times a day, whisking away the waste of the Island’s residential towers, and zooming it through underground pipes to a transfer station at one end of the island. There it is compacted, sealed into containers, and loaded on a truck to join the rest of New York City’s waste.

Part infrastructure portrait, part urban history, the exhibition argues that service infrastructure plays a crucial role in cities and is even capable of inspiring the collective imagination. Roosevelt Island was designed in the late 1960s as a brand-new community where technology and urban design would allow New Yorkers of all incomes to enjoy the best of Manhattan without the nuisance of cars—or trash. Often perceived as Manhattan’s quirky doppelganger, the exhibition reveals Roosevelt Island to also be a groundbreaking case study for the future, offering valuable insights into a community built around progressive policies and technologies.

The exhibition explores the history of Roosevelt Island’s pneumatic garbage system by tracing key events in the Island’s development alongside milestones in New York City garbage collection and alternative transport technologies. Brochures, advertisements, and other ephemera from Roosevelt Island’s archives illustrate the themes and the urban preoccupations of the 1970s. Photographs of the engineers and technicians at work at Roosevelt Island’s facility and video interviews create a portrait of one of the world’s early pneumatic garbage systems, as it operates today.

The Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP) and students from Roosevelt Island’s Child’s School (TCS) collaboratively produced visual interpretations of the complex system to help Roosevelt Island residents better understand how their garbage is collected.

Cities around the world, from Stockholm to Seoul, are taking note of this technology because it takes trucks off the roads, easing congestion and lowering emissions. By exploring Roosevelt Island’s approach to infrastructure from a variety of angles we gain insight into how cities choose infrastructure, and what this means for a sustainable urban future.

Presented and curated by Juliette Spertus with Project Projects, the exhibition was produced with the support of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIO), Roosevelt Island Visual Arts Association (RIVAA), Roosevelt Island Historical Society (RIHS), Envac, the Swedish manufacturer of Roosevelt Island’s system, and CUP.

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Web: [www.rivaa.com](http://www.rivaa.com)

Phone: 212-308-6630

Gallery hours: Wednesday, Friday, 6–9pm; Saturday, Sunday, 11–5pm. Admission is FREE.

Please visit [www.fasttrash.org](http://www.fasttrash.org) for additional gallery hours and calendar of events.

### **FAST TRASH SYMPOSIUM AT NYU:**

Thursday, May 6, 6–9pm, Reception to follow.

NYU Wagner School of Public Service

295 Lafayette Street, New York, NY 10012

RSVP: <http://wagner.nyu.edu/events/newyorkcity-05-06-2010>

For Further information please contact:

Juliette Spertus, curator

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Introduced by **Richard Anderson**, President of the NYC Building Congress and Moderated by **Rosina Abramson**, VP of Planning and Intergovernmental Affairs, Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC).

The panel will explore the decision making process around recent installations of urban-scale pneumatic garbage collection systems around the world, and open a dialogue around the role of garbage collection in dense urban environments.

Panelists:

**Rosina Abramson**, Vice President of Planning and Intergovernmental Affairs, RIOC

**Richard Anderson**, President NY Building Congress

**Steven Brautigam**, Assistant Commissioner for Environmental Affairs, DSNY

**Ken Greenberg**, Architect and Urban Designer, Toronto

**Martin Maillet**, Senior Project Manager for the City of Montreal

**Suzanne Mattei**, Director NY State Dept. of Environmental Conservation, NYC Office

**Mike Youkee**, Housing Expert and Development Consultant, London

**Carlos Vazquez**, Technical Director Sanitation Department, Barcelona

**Lovisa Wassbäck**, Head of Waste Planning, Traffic Administration, Stockholm

The symposium is cosponsored by NYU’s Urban Planning Department, RIOC and Envac, the Swedish manufacturer of RI’s system, in conjunction with the exhibition.