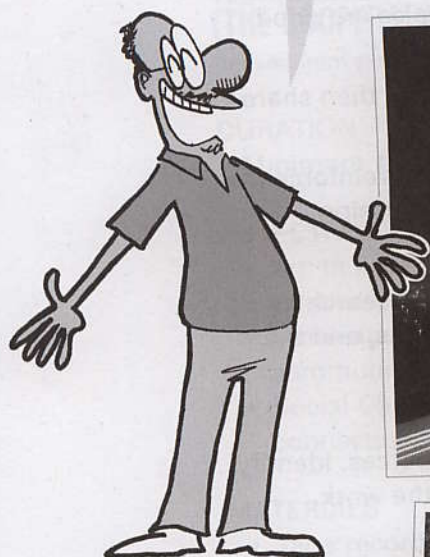


Next stop is

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, population 1.6 million people.



Like many older cities, economic resources here are severely depleted. Most people living in the so-called "inner core" of the city lack the most basic infrastructure – decent schools, adequate housing, safe streets.



Let's zoom in closer to a 10 square block area in North Central Philly, part of the neighborhood called **Germantown.**

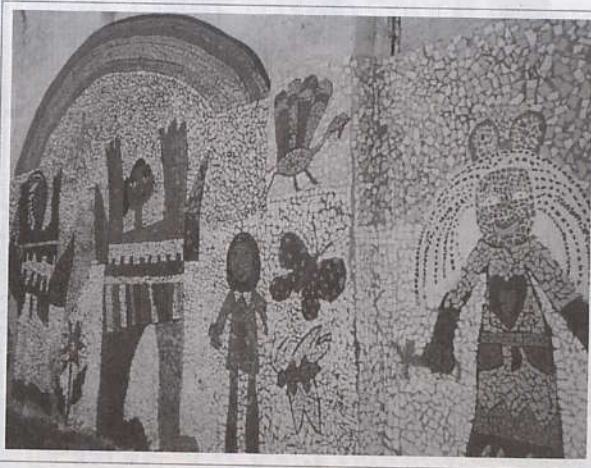
This is an especially hard-hit neighborhood in a city full of hard-hit neighborhoods...



During the 2000 census, 20% of the homes here (one out of every five) were vacant and half of all residents fell below the poverty line, with 41% of households earning less than \$10,000. Ten percent of the adults were unemployed, more than two times the national average.

This is not a new story at all.

Normally, people in neighborhoods like this have three choices: (a) accept the circumstances; (b) fight against improvements biased towards bringing in wealthier people; or (c) leave as soon as possible. None of these options is really viable.



Some people here had a different idea – they decided to “dig in” and rebuild, one vacant property at a time. All it took was an unusual partnership between an artist from across the ocean and a man from up the street, to make things begin to happen.

Meet master mosaic artists **Lily Yeh** and **James Maxton**, just two of the 10,000 individuals who live, work and play within the boundaries of “**That Luminous Place.**”





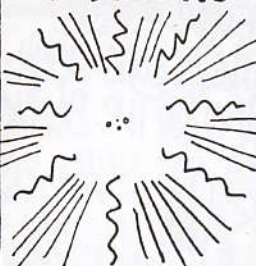
LILY YEH IS THE FOUNDER
& VISIONARY FORCE
BEHIND THE VILLAGE OF
ARTS & HUMANITIES...



"WHEN I ARRIVED IN AMERICA
AS AN IMMIGRANT FROM
CHINA, I FELT A DEEP SENSE
OF ALIENATION..



I EXPERIENCED MODEST SUCCESS
AS A VISUAL ARTIST IN THE GAL-
LERY SCENE, BUT FELT SOMETHING
WAS MISSING...



SOMETHING THAT CHI-
NESE TRADITION CALLED
THE LUMINOUS PLACE...
A PLACE WHERE I
COULD LOCATE THE
SACRED IN THE MUNDANE."

IN 1988, YEH WAS AWARDED A GRANT TO TRANSFORM AN
ABANDONED, TRASH-FILLED LOT INTO AN OUTDOOR GARDEN...



LITTLE DID SHE KNOW
THAT THIS WAS THE
START OF A JOURNEY
THAT WOULD TRANSFORM
MANY LIVES.. INCLUD-
ING HER VERY OWN.

"WHEN I FIRST STARTED WORK ON THAT ABANDONED LOT, I WAS MIGHTY SCARED..."



HERE I WAS..THIS CHINESE WOMAN FROM THE OUTSIDE..NOBODY KNEW WHAT I WAS ABOUT...



I WANTED TO RUN AWAY, BUT THERE WAS A VOICE INSIDE MY HEAD THAT LED ME ON....

AN ABANDONED LOT IS LIKE A CANVAS... FULL OF POSSIBILITY...

I KNEW THAT I HAD TO ASK PEOPLE TO HELP ME..



I NEEDED TO ENGAGE THE NEIGHBORHOOD.. THE CHILDREN... ALSO THE STREET PEOPLE & DRUG USERS WHO HUNG AROUND THE BLOCK."



LILY'S FIRST RECRUITS WERE CHILDREN & AN UNEMPLOYED DRUG ADDICT NAMED JAO WILLIAMS.. HE BEGAN HELPING YEH CLEAR OUT DEBRIS.. HE SOON BECAME HER NEIGHBORHOOD LIASON...

IT WAS WILLIAMS, WHOM YEH DESCRIBED AS A FRIENDLY FIERY SPIRIT, WHO INTRODUCED HER TO ONE PARTICULAR INDIVIDUAL WHO WOULD PLAY A HUGE PART IN THE CREATION & EVOLUTION OF THE VILLAGE...

Yo!! BIG MAN!! BIG MAN!!



HIS NAME: JAMES "BIG MAN" MAXTON.

JAMES "BIG MAN" MAXTON
IS A MASTER MOSAICIST
& OPERATIONS DIRECTOR
AT THE VILLAGE OF ARTS
& HUMANITIES...

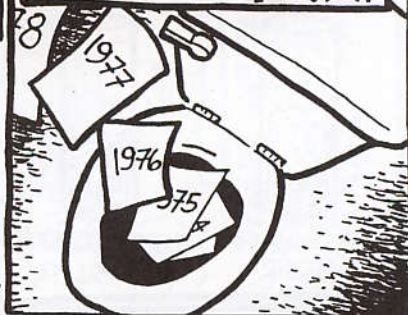
At eighteen
I arrived in
Northern
Philadelphia,
unsure of
myself...

"I DIDN'T HAVE ANY WILL OR
DETERMINATION.. I COULDN'T
IMAGINE A FUTURE FOR MYSELF..."

I WAS A HARDCORE
DRUG USER FOR
TWENTY-TWO YEARS...



I GOT CAUGHT
UP IN THE
STREETS.. WINE,
DRUGS, WOMEN..

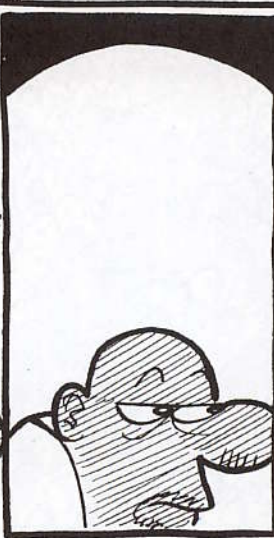
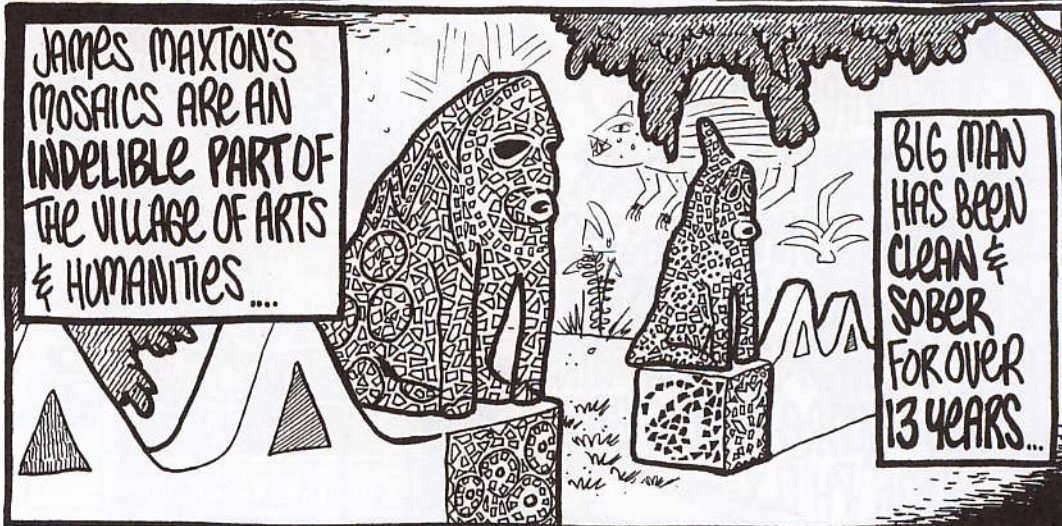


THEN ONE DAY, A FRIEND NAMED
JOJO WILLIAMS ASKED ME TO
HELP HIM TEAR DOWN A FENCE...

Who are
you doing
this for?

THIS IS WHEN
I FIRST HEARD
ABOUT LILY YEH..

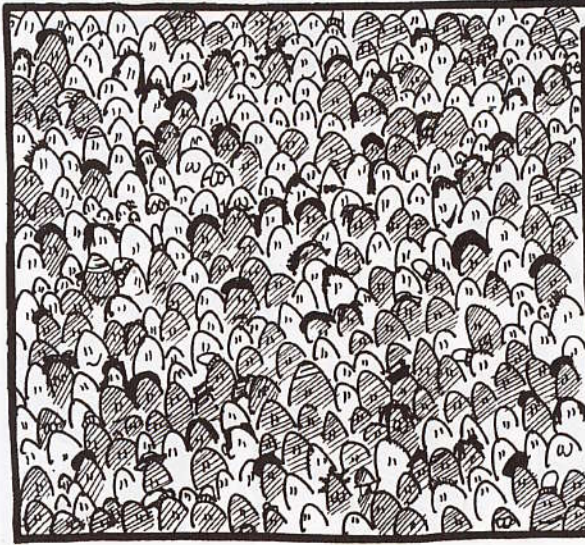
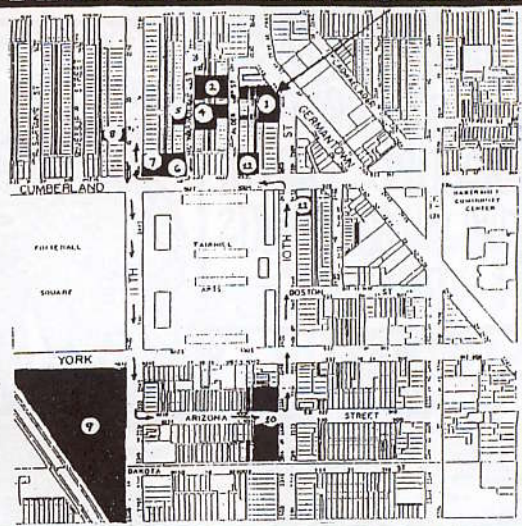






AFTER THE SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF THAT FIRST PROJECT, DUBBED ILE IFE* PARK, YEH RETURNED SUMMER AFTER SUMMER, WORKING WITH NEIGHBORHOOD RESIDENTS ON PARK BUILDING PROJECTS.. *ILE IFE MEANS "HOUSE OF LOVE" IN THE NIGERIAN LANGUAGE OF 180

TODAY, THE VILLAGE OF ARTS & HUMANITIES COMPRISES DOZENS OF PARKS, GARDENS BUILDINGS, MURALS, CLASSES & EVENTS THAT AFFECT SEVERAL NEIGHBORHOODS WITHIN A 260 SQUARE BLOCK AREA OF NORTH PHILLY...



PARTICIPATION IN VILLAGE PROGRAMS & ACTIVITIES HAS GROWN TO OVER 3000 CHILDREN, TEENS & ADULTS ANNUALLY...

"OUR CHILDREN ARE RAW MATERIAL.. WE MUST COMMUNICATE THAT ANYTHING & EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE.."-JAMES "BIG MAN" MAXTON

TIFFANY & JAMILE ARE TWO YOUTH PARTICIPANTS AT THE VILLAGE OF ARTS & HUMANITIES..

I Heard about the Village thru word of mouth & in the newspaper..

I started coming around when I was six years old..

Just bein' nosy... & asking questions..



The Village was my first job!! It gave me a sense of responsibility!!

I've traveled around THE U.S. as part of the Village's Youth Theatre Group!!

I went from being really shy to speaking & performing in front of all types of people!!

Hmmm... lessee...
..I've been on Nickelodean.
I
..I've met The Vice President.
I
& we just got back from Iceland!!



There are so many things happening here...

Most teens think programs like this are dull & corny...

The Village is a really influential place... A place where you needn't be afraid of expressing yourself... whether it's through words, dance, or just working with your hands... because all of it counts!!

The Village is about building UP... instead of tearing down...

The development of my mind is running rampant!!

BUT you have to see it & try.



EVERY SEPTEMBER, THE VILLAGE OF ARTS & HUMANITIES PUTS ON THE KIJENGA PAMOJA* FESTIVAL...

KIJENGA PAMOJA!!



(*KIJENGA PAMOJA IS "TOGETHER WE BUILD" IN SWAHILI)

THE EVENT ENABLES THE VILLAGE COMMUNITY TO CELEBRATE TOGETHER & SHARE ITS CREATIVITY & ACCOMPLISHMENTS WITH THE GREATER PUBLIC...

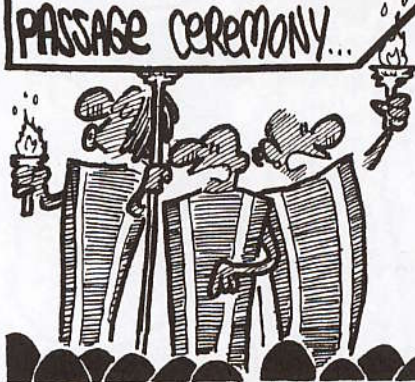
IN ADDITION TO A PARADE, THE FESTIVAL FEATURES DANCE & THEATRE PERFORMANCES BY VILLAGE PARTICIPANTS...



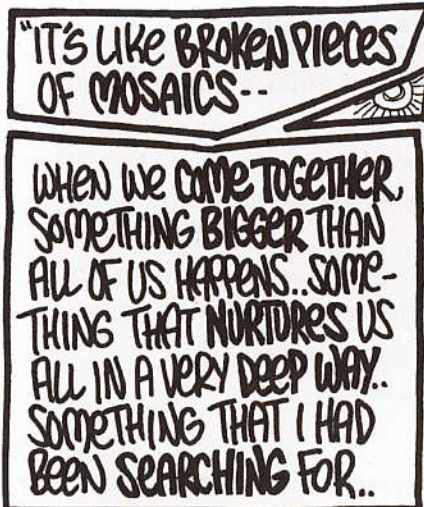
ARTS & CRAFTS
CREATED ON-
SITE ARE SOLD...

...& FOOD HARVESTED
FROM THE VARIOUS
VILLAGE GARDENS
IS SERVED....

THE CELEBRATION CULMINATES IN THE TORCH-LIT RITES OF PASSAGE CEREMONY...



IN FRONT OF FAMILIES, NEIGHBORS, INSTRUCTORS & STAFF, TEENAGERS MAKE A PUBLIC COMMITMENT TO THE PROGRAM & THE COMMUNITY. IN RETURN, WITNESSES MAKE A COMMITMENT TO SUPPORT THE TEENS ALONG THEIR PATH TO ADULTHOOD...





Lily Yeh



James Maxton

THAT LUMINOUS PLACE Pages 74–88

- ARTIST** Lily Yeh and James Maxton
- ORGANIZATION** Village of Arts & Humanities
- HOME** Philadelphia
- MISSION** To build community through innovative arts, educational, social, construction, and economic development programs.
- ADVICE** Our ability to unlock the creativity and dreams of community residents, to reframe deficits as resources, and to channel energy into results-oriented projects, are the keys to our approach. Our success is due in large part to the enthusiasm, support and participation of committed community members.
- URL** www.villagearts.org

IMAGES FROM THE VILLAGE OF THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES



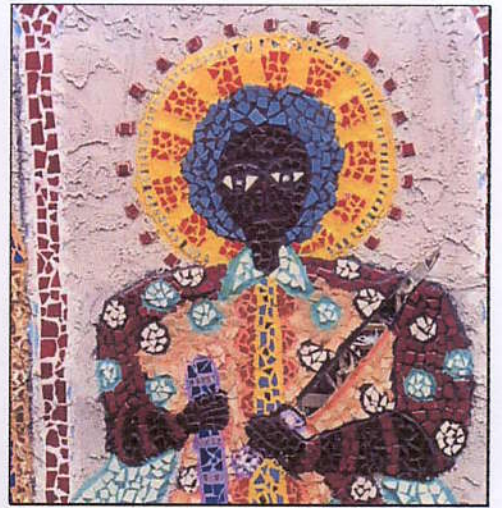
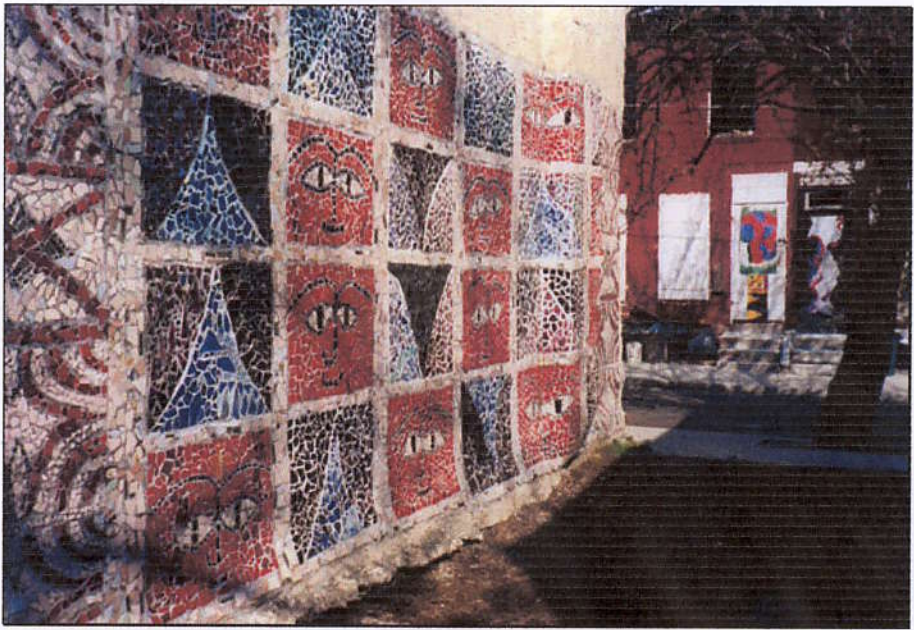
Vacant lot - before



after









The Village of Arts and Humanities, Inc.

2544 Germantown Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19133 (215) 225-7830 fax (215) 225-4339

Dear Village Friend,

The Village of Arts and Humanities is so important to me!

My name is Sam Jackson, and I am currently a 10th grade student at Simon-Gratz High School. I have been coming to the Village since I was ten. The Village has helped me stay on the strong path and is a positive place that keeps me off the corner. It's truly my second home. When I graduate from high school, I plan to attend college and study business management and filmmaking.

My favorite Village activity is acting. I love to act because it allows me to step into someone else's shoes and to experience the world from a different perspective. At the Village, I have acted in the *Waiting Room* (Jamal); *Shades of Gray* (the Narrator); and this June appeared as Kareem in *Choices*. The Village has also given me the opportunity to study ceramics, painting and dance. In fall 2004, one of my nickel prints was exhibited as part of the Philadelphia Print Collaborative's, *Philadelphia: The Rub!* Exhibition at the National Constitution Center.

This year, I was also part of the youth leadership team for the Village's first annual Hip Hop Drop Off Festival on September 10, 2005. I was responsible for the creation of neighborhood auditions for rappers, dancers, and poets and performed twice -once with my dance group, *Bring in the Noise*, and with the Village Griots, the Village's spoken word ensemble.

I am writing today to ask that you make a donation to the Village. The Village fills a void for young people in my community who often have nothing to do after school, plus it provides great training in the arts. Your gift helps to support the Village Arts Challenge, the teen afterschool program for 13-19 year olds that provides in-depth training in visual arts, performance and environmental arts. This year we are working on some exciting projects including comic books, music videos, and a spoken word CD.

I hope you can give to the Village this year, so teens like me can continue to have an outlet for our creativity and to also have a safe place to hang.

Thank you!

Sincerely,
Sam Jackson
Village Arts Challenge Participant

