

DRAWING DOCK CREEK

By Winifred Lutz, 2008

Independence National Historical Park,
Philadelphia

Installation traversed two city blocks, using soccer field paint, white wash, grass, blue shock cord, sod staples, steel.

Art installation commissioned by the American Philosophical Society Museum in partnership with Independence National Historical Park. Text and Photos © 2010

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Installation description by Winifred Lutz, October 2008

Drawing Dock Creek was about revealing and remembering the now buried but still active Dock Creek of Philadelphia. The installation mapped at full size the locations of the two tributaries that formed the creek and a section of the creek proper as they once crossed the part of Independence Historic Park between 3rd & 5th Streets and Walnut & Chestnut Streets in Philadelphia. The installation was designed to evolve in stages just as the creek was lost in stages. Both the process of installation and the physical presence of the work were also meant to present an analog for the varied experience of the creek during its surface existence: as interference/something to be crossed, as beauty lost.

Project Phases

March-April

The project began with the outlining of the creek and its tributaries where they had crossed the present grassy areas within the park. This was done with white soccer field paint. The grass painting was followed immediately with the same outlining on the brick, stone, and cobblestone of the park with whitewash. All the outlines were filled in with flow lines after the style of maps from the 1700's when the creek was yet open. The grass and whitewash lines were refreshed on a regular basis.



Drawing Dock Creek (2008)

by Winifred Lutz

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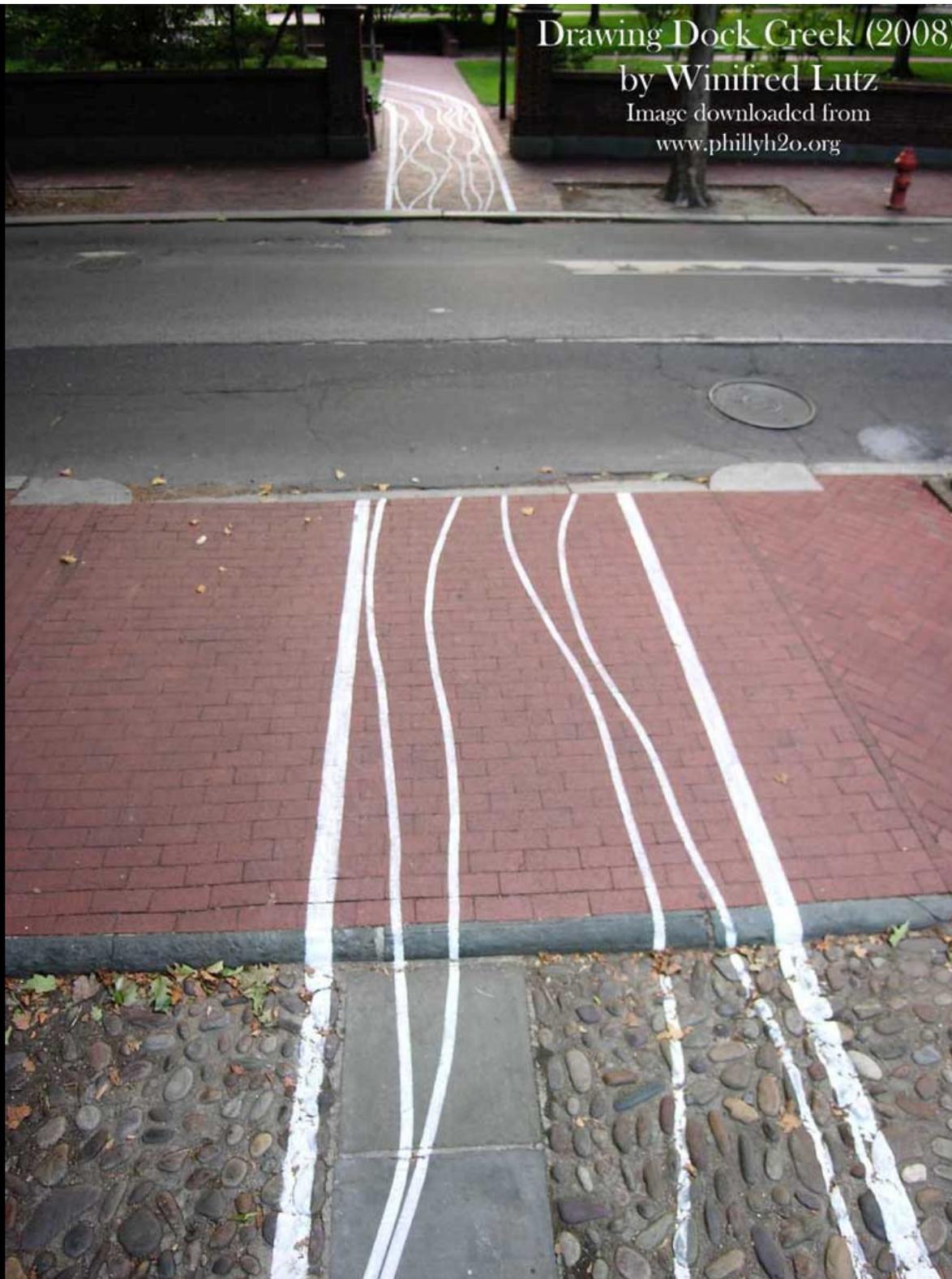
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Project Phases

May-August

Once spring growth began, the flow lines in the grassy areas were discontinued but the outlines were maintained while allowing the grass and weeds within to grow to make a live creek.

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Project Phases

August-September

The last part of this five-month evolution created an analog for the surface of the final section of the creek left unburied in the late 1700's. This part of the installation was about 120 feet long, and was made of 17,000 feet of 1/8-inch diameter electric blue shock cord (aka bungee cord) stretched in level lines across the swale at one-inch intervals.

The blue elastic surface acted as an analog for water: it rippled in the wind; it quivered when the rain hit it; it confused the eye when dappled by sun and shade; birds and squirrels played in it; it appeared opaque from a distance, but dissolved into transparency as it was approached. The interpretation was intentionally delicate and lyrical. Dock Creek was originally very beautiful, and an important source of fresh water fish for the Native Americans who lived in its vicinity and who asked the white settlers who bought the land to defer as long as possible from compromising the creek. It seemed fitting to remember the last part of Dock Creek left open not with an image of the pollution damage, but with an analog for its last lost beauty before the start of Philadelphia.

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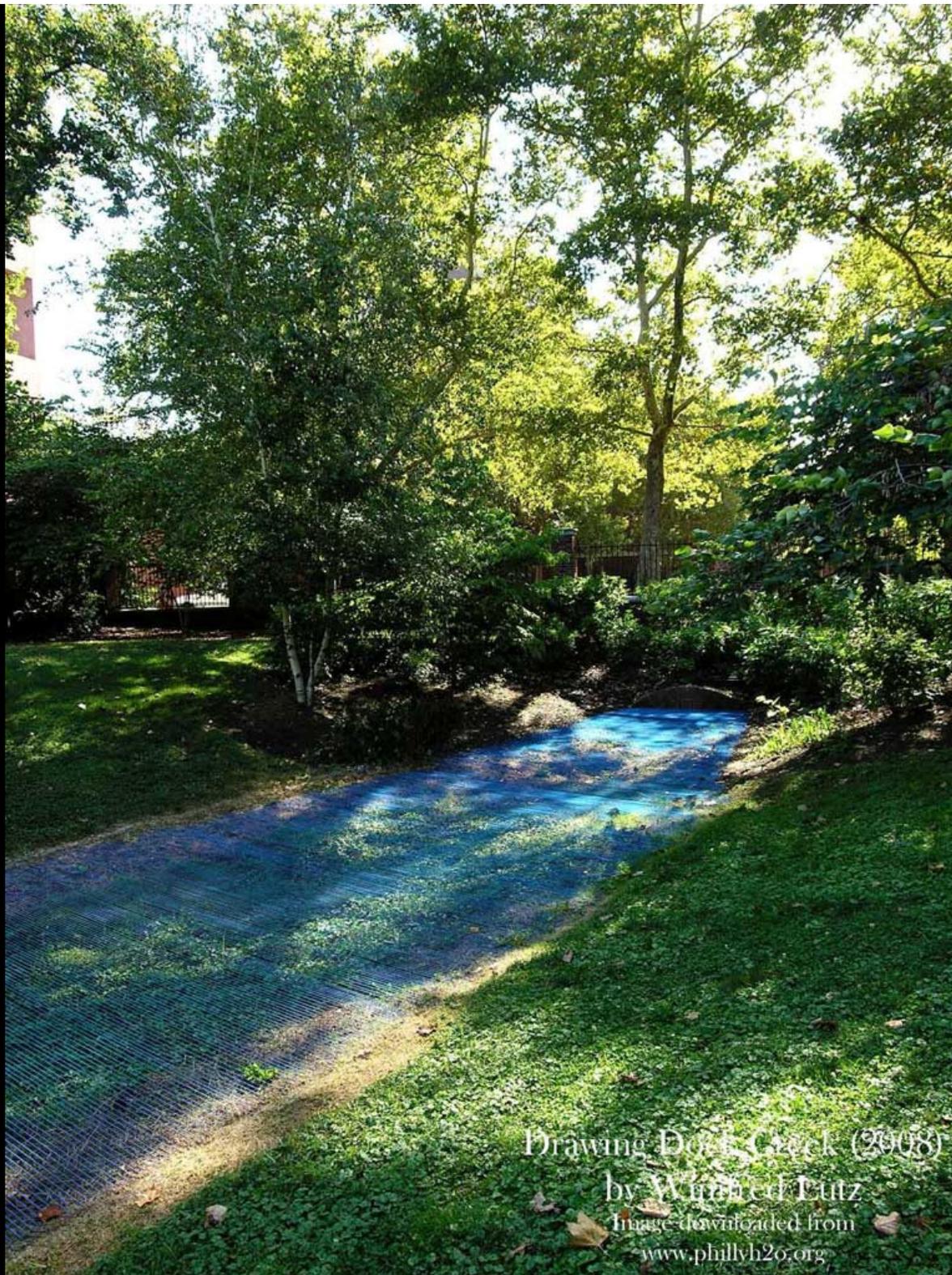


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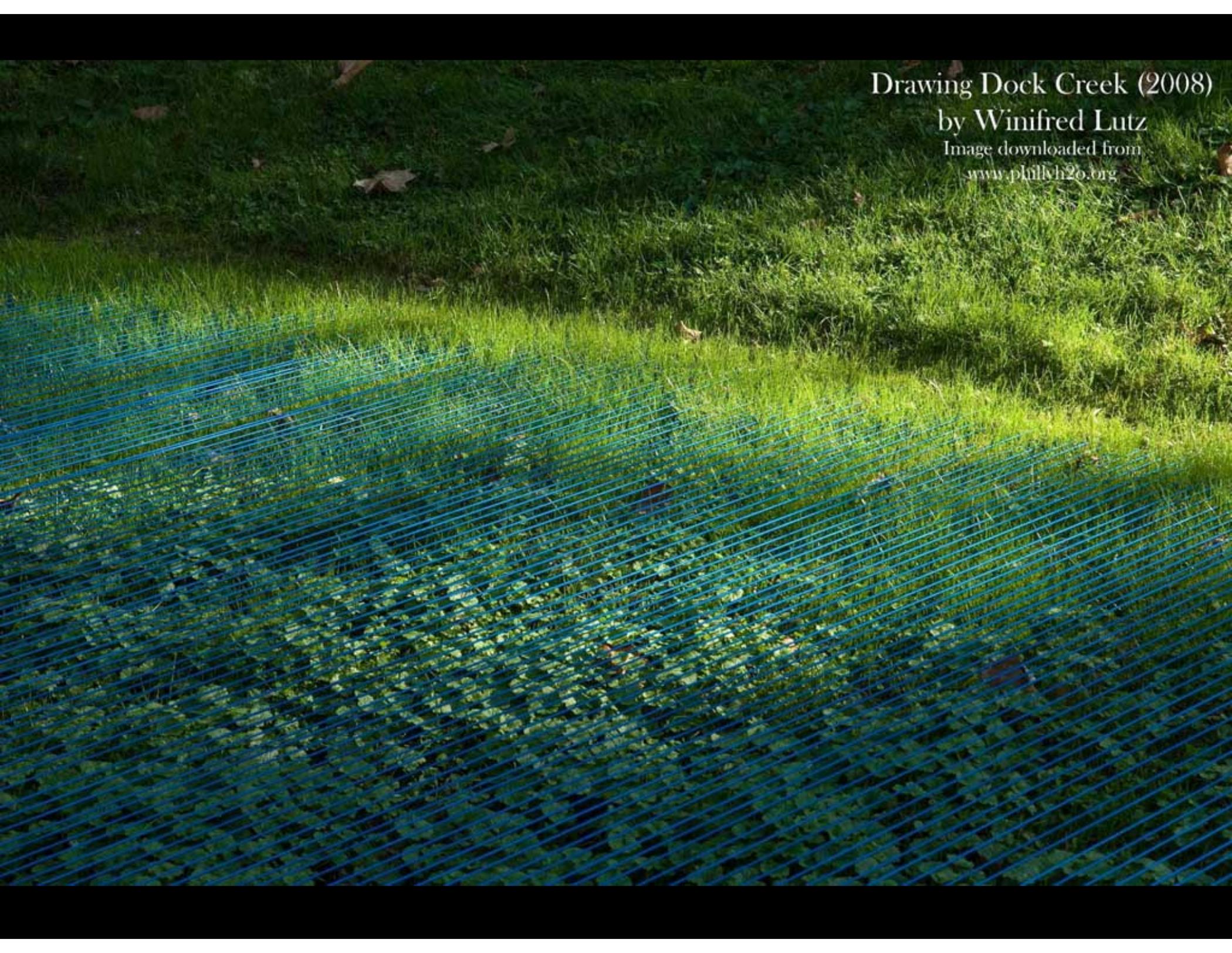


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