



McBride Viaduct Subject of Film-Short Gaining National Attention in the *Washington Post*

Erie, PA - STITCH, the 2016 silent film-short about Erie's McBride Viaduct gained national attention in the March 3 edition of the *Washington Post*. The film-short by Erie's Lisa Austin, a City of Erie mayoral candidate and tenured Edinboro University Art Professor, debuted in Maryland in January as a part of [Nikki Brugnoli Whipkey's](#) invitational drawing exhibit, *Drawn Out, Drawn Over: Mapping the Territory of Experience*. The film will debut locally as part of the Erie Art Museum's Gallery Night on Friday, March 10 at 7 p.m. In this STITCH exhibit, sketches, a film-short and a model of the Viaduct demonstrate this bridge's crucial role in the past, present and future of Erie.

Erie's current administration plans to tear down the Viaduct, and send current users to a narrow path along the loud and busy highway. The estimated costs for demolition of the Viaduct began at \$1.2 million and now exceed \$4 million, and will employ out of town workers. However, if the Viaduct is re-skinned, at a cost of \$3 million, many temporary, and an estimated 33 private sector jobs can be created. Austin, architect **Adam Trott** and others have been challenging the city's decision to demolish in part because demolition of the Viaduct would violate two of the principles laid out by planner **Charles Buki** in his new *Erie Refocus* study: invest in existing assets; prioritize the needs of pedestrians.

"The RefocusErie plan urges investment in Erie's existing assets and prioritization of pedestrians and bicyclists over cars and trucks," said Austin. "STITCH was inspired by **Dr. Mindy Thompson Fullilove's** 2015 visit to Erie, PA. Her number one rule for urban planning clearly states to "never cut an artery. STITCH showcases the relatively few underpasses, overpasses and at-grade crossings that "stich" together the City of Erie - over the divide of one of the nation's busiest railroad tracks."

Austin's civic leadership led to the creation of activist group **ErieCPR – Connection Plus Respect** which has been advocating publicly for the thoughtful repurpose of the McBride Viaduct citing similar projects in other cities.

Almost 90 years ago, these tracks claimed the lives of five school children at East Ave. In response, the community rallied and built the McBride Viaduct for cars – and kids. But, after a highway was constructed near the Viaduct in 2005, the Viaduct was closed to vehicular traffic. Soon after the 2010 closure, the Viaduct's wide, gracious elevation was claimed by bicyclists, wheelchair users, skateboarders, folks pushing strollers, workers heading to their jobs, and many children walking to school at Wayne and East. These East-siders – many living in poverty - make a combined 200 trips a day across this 5-football-field-long bridge and safe route to school.

Austin's STICH subtitle borrows from **Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s** quote that we are all woven "together in a single garment of destiny." STITCH stars Austin's CIVITAS colleague, **Stephen Sonnenberg** and features a "drawing machine" by **Dave Stull**, an animation by **MoreFrames**, with filming and editing by **Tom Weber**.

For More Information

https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/museums/in-the-galleries-remapping-the-boundaries-of-drawing/2017/03/03/d100b69e-fd2f-11e6-8ebe-6e0dbe4f2bca_story.html?utm_term=.4e652cda152a

<http://www.washingtoncitypaper.com/arts/museums-galleries/blog/20853344/drawn-out-drawn-over-mapping-the-territory-of-experience-reviewed>

https://www.facebook.com/Erie-CPR-Connect-Respect-1153373241373800/?hc_ref=SEARCH&fref=nf

<https://www.nycgovparks.org/park-features/highbridge-park/planyc>

About Lisa Austin

Born into a middle-class, military family, Lisa Austin understands hard work and commitment. The eldest of six girls in a close-knit family, Lisa, at age 12, began babysitting for her sisters and other families in her neighborhood, and, at 15, bagged groceries at a base commissary. She washed dishes, waited tables, managed a parking lot and worked at a garage changing tires, batteries and alternators. With all her energy, Lisa still found time to excel in her classwork, earning awards and exhibitions during her college career and earned an Associates Degree at Prince George's Community College. At her graduation in 1984, Lisa was selected by the Virginia Commonwealth University sculpture faculty to receive the Jose Puig Award that is annually given to a student with exemplary work, a "strong personality... curiosity... wit and audacity." Austin earned her B.F.A. from VCU and went on to earn her M.F.A. from Yale University.

After graduating from Yale, Lisa met her husband Steve, a military veteran, and in 1996, they moved to Erie when Edinboro University hired her to teach Sculpture and 3D Design in their wonderful Art Department.

Through Lisa's collaborative leadership over the year, several initiatives have been established to create jobs and encourage a more thoughtful and inclusive way of planning. They include:

- **Preservation Erie** (2007): an organization promoting sustainable planning and protection of built assets;
- **Innovation Erie** (2008): an economic development competition awarding winners money and help in starting their own businesses or in bringing new products to market;
- **All Aboard Erie** (2009): a transit advocacy group to improve bus and rail transit;
- **Made in Erie Product Marketplace** (2013): a no-cost venue for local makers to sell their products;
- **Made in Erie Product Design Lab** (2015): a low-cost product-design training program;
- **Rethink the McBride Viaduct** (2014): a group formed to save a key pedestrian artery and safe route over the railroad tracks for children walking to Wayne Middle and East High School and for adults and teens walking to work, to family, to shopping, recreation, or worship; and
- **ErieCPR** (2016): an advocating residency participation in urban-design decisions that promote reinvestment in existing assets and to giving priority to pedestrians

and bicyclists over drivers – both ideas promoted in the Erie Refocused (“Buki”) and Emerge 2040 plans.