



TOP: The crew from Rocking the Boat, a local nonprofit, visiting Waterwash ABC in 2013. Youth from Rocking the Boat helped plant the banks of the Bronx River in 2011. BELOW: Waterwash ABC series as a stormwater wetland park; runoff from a parking lot is filtered before returning to the river.

**WATERWASH ABC**  
 BRONX, NEW YORK CITY  
 Artist: Lillian Ball

Lillian Ball's project Waterwash ABC in the Bronx sets itself apart from a lot of public art. For one thing, it's eminently functional, capturing polluted runoff from a large parking lot and diverting it to a wetland-grassland complex before returning it to the Bronx River. For another, it's an artist-driven project, conceived and executed by Ball and her collaborators, rather than having the artist tacked on at the end of a grant-making process.

"The paradigm is very different," says Ball.

The public can engage with the piece by strolling a handsome, decorative walkway to a viewing area perched above the catchment and the river. Ball enlisted the neighborhood's help in creating the project, working with youth from local nonprofit Rocking the Boat as well as an excavator, a hydrologist, and scientists.

Ball coined the term *waterwash* for a previous water-filtering project. The ABC comes from the name of the business located at the site, ABC Carpet, which contributed to the project mostly by allowing its parking lot to be cleaned up.

Now that the construction is complete, Ball is keeping the community involved through a series of programs at the site, including concerts and dance performances. She revels in the ongoing feedback from the youth volunteers who helped with tasks including planting. "They post on Facebook," says Ball, "saying things like, 'Look how our babies are doing!'"