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Galleries: Art finds a home in some hidden landmarks

By Edith Newhall
For The Inquirer

If you've been curious how to get yourself into a few of Philadelphia's landmarks that have always seemed daunting to approach, if not virtually inaccessible, help has arrived.

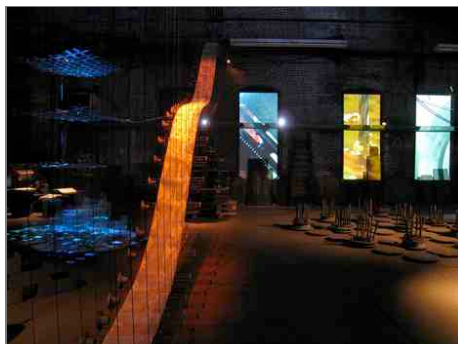
Hidden City Philadelphia, a new arts festival that debuted last weekend, has made almost all things possible this month. On its to-do list for exhibitions (dance and music performances are taking place at various sites as well) are Founder's Hall at Girard College, Mother Bethel AME Church, Disston Saw Works, Shiloh Baptist Church, and the German Society of Pennsylvania.

But hurry to the Web site, www.hiddencityphila.org - these exhibitions are open to the public only on weekends through June 28.

Been to Tacony, or to a historic but still-active saw works lately? I hadn't, so I decided to visit the historic Northeast Philadelphia neighborhood and its oldest and best-known Industrial Age survivor, Disston Saw Works, to see "Running True," a sound, film, and sculpture installation by Philadelphia artists John Phillips and Carolyn Healy.

Phillips and Healy, husband and wife and frequent collaborators, have transformed the crepuscular interior of one of Disston's factory buildings into a virtuoso multimedia environment replete with film projections of present-day Disston employees at work; the sounds of saw manufacturing; eerie lighting (much of the space is enveloped in darkness, all the better to see the films), and arrangements of objects, ancient ledger books, and blueprints gleaned from the saw works' large property on the Delaware River.

Phillips and Healy's cleverly calibrated synchronization of sound, image, and object offers a remarkable interpretation of the site's history and is the perfect realization of what Hidden City Philadelphia set out to achieve.



"Running True," a sound, film, and sculpture installation by John Phillips and Carolyn Healy at the Disston Saw Works.

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