

LOST RIVERS

An Icarus Films Release
A Film by Caroline Bâcle

“Important as well as inspiring!” –*Science Magazine*

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LOGLINE

The past, present, and future of lost urban rivers around the world.

SYNOPSIS

Once upon a time, in almost every city, many rivers flowed. Why did they disappear? How? And could we see them again? This documentary tries to find answers by meeting visionary urban thinkers, activists and artists from around the world.



ABOUT THE FILM

Once upon a time, in almost every industrial city, countless rivers flowed. We built houses along their banks. Our roads hugged their curves. And their currents fed our mills and factories.

But as cities grew, we polluted rivers so much that they became conduits for deadly waterborne diseases like cholera, which killed hundreds of thousands throughout the 19th century. Our solution two centuries ago was to bury rivers underground and merge them with sewer networks. Today, under the city, they still flow, out of sight and out of mind... until now.

This feature documentary takes us on an adventure down below and across the globe, retracing the history of these lost urban rivers by plunging into archival maps and going underground with clandestine urban explorers. We search for the disappeared Rivière St-Pierre in Montreal, the Garrison Creek in Toronto, the River Tyburn in London and the Bova-Celato River in Brescia, Italy. There, urban explorers actually work in collaboration with their Italian municipality, surveying fluctuations in water levels and educating citizens about the history of their city's buried Roman rivers. Along the way, we meet visionary urban thinkers, activists and artists from around the world.

Playing with the mystery of urban landscapes in constant transformation, Lost Rivers asks important questions as to the future of our disappeared urban waterways. Cities must act urgently to better manage the effects of climate change and extreme weather events. We also want to create urban green spaces and bio-diversity; not only to better manage our water, but celebrate it. Could answers be... right beneath our feet? In Seoul, Korea, a river once buried under an 8-lane highway has been resurfaced and made the centre-piece of an 8 km green space. A similarly ambitious "daylighting" project was recently completed in Yonkers, New York. Ardent support by Mayor Boris Johnson, the London Rivers Action Plan aims to restore 15 km of 'lost' and neglected rivers by 2015 in order to protect the British capital from the devastating impacts of flooding due to climate change. Is this the wave of the future? Can we imagine an innovative future city that paradoxically moves forward by digging up the past? Universal questions about how we shape our built environment haunt and inspire. Could we bring our lost rivers back to life?

CITIES AND CHARACTERS

Lost Rivers explores the past, present and future of our disappeared urban waterways through their fates in six cities around the world, and through the eyes of visionary artists, activists and urban thinkers.

MONTREAL, CANADA

Canada's second largest city. Once upon a time, dozens of rivers flowed, namely the *Rivière Saint-Pierre*. Today, this river (like many others) is mysteriously out of sight and out of mind, with only a small portion of it still flowing above ground. But some are looking to retrace its history and bring it back in the public's consciousness. People like quirky urban explorers Andrew Emond, whose magnificent photographs invite us reflect on how these waterways have changed over the centuries, and Danielle Plamondon, an active member of a vast international network of underground "drainers" who delve below the surface to uncover hidden gems of urban history.

LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM

One of the biggest cities in Europe with *big* climate change issues. Fearless urban explorers Jon Doe and Zero uncover the city's Victorian philosophy with regards to water management through their exploration of the crumbling, outdated *River Tyburn* sewer. Meanwhile, the Environment Agency's Dave Webb is one of the visionaries behind a very special "leap of faith" plan to restore 15 km of the London's rivers by 2015 in an effort to better manage an alarming increase of flooding incidents. He introduces us to the once-buried *River Quaggy*, now flowing in a South London park, transformed into a natural oasis and flood plain.

TORONTO, CANADA

Biggest city in Canada. Its landscape has lost many rivers, among them the *Garrison Creek*, infamous symbol of the City's very foundation. The Garrison now flows in a combined sewer, for both rain and waste water. For years, controversy has been stirring as to the mismanagement of combined sewer overflows dumped into Lake Ontario. While urban explorer Michael Cook tries to raise awareness of the Garrison Creek via his site vanishingpoint.ca, architects Kim Storey and James Brown and environmentalists Lino Grima and Krystyn Tully advocate for a more sustainable way of dealing with rain water that could, once again, alter the future of the Garrison Creek. But the City of Toronto wholeheartedly disagrees with this new way of thinking. Seems the fate of the Garrison Creek may remain underground...

YONKERS, USA

A city of shut down factories. A city in a desperate socio-economic state. But Ann-Marie Mitroff, Director of River Projects at Groundwork Hudson Valley, has teamed up with Jim Pinto, Director at City of Yonkers Office of Downtown & Waterfront, to try to turn things around... in a whole new way. Following years of lobbying, their project of "daylighting" the *Saw Mill River* - buried under downtown Yonkers for the past 90 years – has just been greenlit. Their

hope: Create a “natural” park with a river in the city centre that will attract visitors... and investors. Can Nature and the City of Yonkers work together to improve both their plights?

BRESCIA, ITALY

City perched in the mountains of Northern Italy, where an incredible network of medieval rivers, among them the *Bova-Celato River*, are buried and practically unknown by its citizens. But endearing oddball Andrea Busi wants to change that. He’s been exploring underground for a decade. After years of issuing him official warnings, the City of Brescia is finally listening to his call. Today, Andrea has formed Brescia Underground, an association working *with* City officials, offering tours and monitoring water levels of Brescia’s lost rivers. And together, they’ve just embarked on a quest to find an ancient washing lake that has disappeared from the city.

SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA

Population 10 million. In the 1950s, its *Cheonggyecheon River* was a magnet for slums, filth and disease. The city buried it in the 60s to make way for a 12-lane downtown motorway with hopes to remedy traffic problems. But traffic, like a gas, expanded. Smog grew. City temperature increased. So, in the early 2000s, thanks to “out of the box” thinkers like environmental engineer Professor Noh Soo Hong and traffic engineer Professor Keeyean Hwang, the motorway was destroyed and the river re-created as the centre piece to an incredible 8-km-long greenspace. And, surprisingly, traffic dissipated. The river is a symbol of rebirth. Of new life. Now, almost 10 years on, how has it really transformed the citizens of Seoul?

IN THE PRESS

4 Stars! Critic’s pick! –NOW Magazine

“Eye-opening” –*Toronto Sun*

“Fascinating” –*Toronto Star*

“Mysterious, highly dramatic, and entirely compelling” –*The Atlantic Cities*

“A fascinating examination of a hidden world previously unknown by most. It provides us with a spectacular look at an underground world with astutely observed editing and vibrant visuals” –*Exclaim!*

“Is *Lost Rivers* Opening Weekend Worthy? Definitely! How often do you get to see a subterranean lost world that actually exists in real life?! Sure, there’s an important and valid environmental point to be made but mostly, the underground rivers are just super cool.” –*Toronto film Scene*

"Alexandre Domingues' photography is crisp and clean, like pure water. Howard Goldbergs' editing too flows effortlessly." –*Rabble*

Sewer enthusiasts find beauty and redemption in Lost Rivers
by Martin Dunphy, *Georgia Straight* (Vancouver)

Water Docs filmfest quenches viewers' thirst for docs about water
by Chris Knight, *National Post* (Toronto)

"There are rivers under pretty much every industrial city in the world!"
by Festival international du film d'environnement (Paris)

Review – Lost Rivers
by Kristal Cooper, *Toronto Film Scene* (Toronto)

Lost Rivers: Tracking down the urban world's many buried streams
by Liam Lacey, *The Globe and Mail* (Canada)

Cinema this Week: Lost Rivers
by Angelo Murreda, *Torontoist* (Toronto)

Lost Rivers Review
by Eric Rumble, *Alternatives Journal* (Canada)

7 must-see movies from the D.C. Environmental Film Festival
by Melissa Breyer, *Mother Nature Network* (USA)

Lost Rivers
by Geoff Manugh, *BLDGBLOG* (USA)

Enticing Film Trailer of the Day: 'Lost Rivers'
by Henry Grabar, *Atlantic Cities* (USA)

Recommendations from CPH:DOX 2012 [in Danish]
by Niklas Engstrøm, *AOK Guide* (Copenhagen)

Planet in Focus Film Festival looks at the world's 'Lost Rivers'
by Humberto DaSilva, *Rabble* (Toronto)

Sewer discretion is advised: Explorers find hidden wonders in urban waterways
by Christian MilNeil, *Grist* (USA)

Review: Lost Rivers
by Daniel Pratt, *Exclaim!* (Toronto)

Lost Rivers: Let the Rivers Flow
by Norman Wilner, *NOW Magazine* (Toronto)

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR



Caroline Bâcle has directed over twenty television episodes. She holds a BA (with distinction) in Communication Studies from Concordia University and recently earned her Master's Degree in Screenwriting and Producing at the University of Westminster Film School in London. Bâcle is currently developing her second feature script with the support of SODEC and Telefilm Canada. *Lost Rivers* is her first feature documentary.

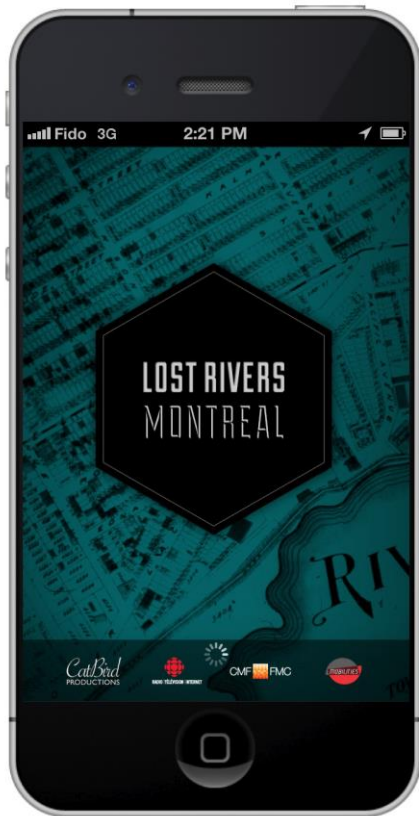
DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

A colleague asked me why I had such an interest in lost urban rivers given that I am not an urban planner, an architect, or a historian. Quite simply, I'm a city citizen continually captivated by whatever urban environments I find myself in, and by the myriad human stories that exist in such places. These stories transcend boundaries, borders, and time. They are found walking along straight North American boulevards and winding European roads and roundabouts. I often find myself wondering about these landscapes. How were they in their natural state? How did their urban metamorphosis occur?

Bygone thoroughfares, liquid avenues, and pathways, urban rivers are a subject of fascination for many. Their concealment and abandonment excite the mind much more than the here and now. And there is nothing more fundamental and precious than water. It's the mirror of our humanity; it guides us toward reflection and reason; whole philosophies have been based on the knowledge that life flows like a river.

Mine isn't a political film. It's a film about human stories, about the evolution of our way of perceiving our built environment, about our disconnection with the natural world that has occurred along the way. My hope is that this film will ignite discussions, and inspire us to look at our cities in a different light. We may well all be active participants in our cities' evolutions to come.

LOST RIVERS IPHONE APP



In the App Store as of October 2012!

Connected to the documentary film of the same name, *LOST RIVERS* is a playful but enlightening mobile application for urban dwellers to discover the lost rivers of Montreal. Tapping into locative media technologies and augmented reality, the application offers a new means of engaging with the urban environment through interaction with virtual landscapes of the hidden past and of the imagined future. Like a digital dowsing rod, the iPhone app allows users to locate the many ancient watercourses that still flow beneath the streets of the city. The app uses the device's GPS system to reveal a "lost river" below a user's feet in real time, and to trace out the paths of rivers, pre-diversion, over the contemporary city grid. The application

interface links specific geographic "hot spots" loaded with fascinating historical lore, urban legends, 3-dimensional soundscapes, photos, and extracts from the documentary film.

The mobile app and the film are connected by the website lostriversdoc.com which calls upon lost river aficionados to contribute stories and media about the past, present, and future of lost urban rivers, wherever in the world they may be.

FILM CREDITS

Title	<i>Lost Rivers</i>
Total Running Time	72 minutes
Year	2012
Country	Canada
Production Company	Catbird Films, Inc.
Language	Original English, French, Italian, Korean (with French or English subtitles)
Director/writer	Caroline Bâcle
Producer	Katarina Soukup
Camera	Alexandre Domingue
Editor	Howard Goldberg
Animation	Eva Cvijanovic
Original Music	John Wilson
Sound	David Gertsman, Roger Guérin, Emory Murchison, Philippe Scultéty, Lynne Trépanier, Sylvain Vary
Shooting Format	HD, 16:9 aspect ratio
Sound	5.1 Surround
Locations	Montreal and Toronto, Canada Yonkers, United States of America London, United Kingdom Brescia, Italy Seoul, South Korea

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