

## **Courtney Egan & Anita Yesho**

A Partial History of Square 365, lots 12 and 13

To be curious about the other human beings who have stepped foot on the same patch of ground that you have is a universal human experience. Who came before me...who stood in this spot, on the earth, looking at this view? They are my ancestors, they are my enemies, they are the invaders, they are the settlers, they are my family and friends - they are people with lives of a richness that I can barely comprehend, even the ones only a generation or two back - and my effort becomes an act of imagination.

To aid this imaginative act, my collaborator, a historian, and I, an artist, bore down through the local history strata in one specific spot, a collective art gallery in New Orleans, Louisiana, USA. The spotlight began to shift focus. The lens of recorded history emphasizes not so much the people and their individual lives, but their boundaries - the rules, the laws, the borders, the parcels, and more and more minutiae of administration that reflect the tiered and vast structures of power, themselves enormous acts of imagination, codified and solidified. And then, the lack of information stood before us, with its own reasons for being.

This experiment in locale carefully delineated several boundaries, between history and imagination, and between written words and memory-based oral lore. The strands connecting individuals to history shine brighter and brighter as I follow them through the warp and weft of the world, increasing my capacity for empathy.

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