

Audio Artwork Transcript

Chloë Bass: Wayfinding

Chloë Bass: Wayfinding includes a site-specific audio artwork narrated by the artist and local collaborators. This component of the exhibition draws from several sources: quotes from the City of St. Louis's Mow to Own Program (a program where citizens can acquire properties adjacent to their own by caring for the site for two years), Google and Yelp reviews of the Pulitzer, reports on aging and disorientation from the National Institutes of Health, landscape architecture teaching guides, and the artist's personal narrative. It also incorporates many of the phrases written on the sculptures.

Narrators

Chloë Bass

Artist

Damon Davis

Artist

Cheeraz Gormon

Poet, storyteller, and podcaster

Ron Himes

Theater artist

Lacey Kirkwood

Pulitzer staff member

Pulitzer Arts Foundation

Introduction

Lacey Kirkwood: The text in this piece draws from several sources: landscape architecture teaching guides, quotes from St. Louis Mow to Own program's website, Google and Yelp reviews of the Pulitzer Arts Foundation, reports on ageing and disorientation from the National Institutes of Health, and personal narrative. It also incorporates many, although not all, of the phrases that artist Chloë Bass has installed on her own signs around the Pulitzer's campus.

Track 1

Chloë Bass: WAYFINDING

"It would be good to have entertainments and ceremonies that were not meant to distract us but to remind us of everything all at once." — Bernadette Meyer, Utopia

Cheeraz Gormon: Wayfinding is the organization and communication of our dynamic relationship to space and the environment. Successful design to promote wayfinding allows people to: (1) determine their location within a setting, (2) determine their destination, and (3) develop a plan that will take them from their location to their destination. The design of wayfinding systems should include: (1) identifying and marking spaces, (2) grouping spaces, and (3) linking and organizing spaces through both architectural and graphic means.

There are five primary architectural wayfinding elements: (1) paths/circulation, (2) markers, (3) nodes, (4) edges, and (5) zones or districts.

An early symptom of Alzheimer's disease is the inability to find one's way (wayfinding).

Damon Davis: February 12th, 2012

The Pulitzer is a very nice museum. The building itself is noteworthy for its architectural originality. There is truly no other place like it in St. Louis. I visited it on the same day as the Kemper and CAM. Those are nice museums, but this one kind of stands out. It probably didn't hurt that the items on exhibit were priceless.

If you go, be sure and take a walk into the Serra sculpture "Joe" outside. If you're a sketchy character like me, one of the attendants might follow you in, which is kind of weird but understandable.

The museum is always free, so there is no reason not to stop by every once in a while if you're any kind of art lover. Every exhibit might not be your cup of tea, but take a chance and maybe expand your horizons just a bit.

I'm not really that sketchy, by the way.

Tom J., 4 stars

Useful: 2; Cool: 1

Chloë Bass: Topography, noun: a detailed description or representation on a map of the natural and artificial features of an area; a set spatial moment meant to represent a landscape that is otherwise moving; a snapshot. See also: family photographs.

How much of love is attention?

Track 2

Cheeraz Gormon: ONE: PATHS/CIRCULATION

"The circulation system is the key organizing element of a site or building. People use circulation systems to develop a mental map."

ONE: DIAGNOSIS

Chloë Bass: A single instance is an example of nothing. The minimum to define a pattern is three. Yet somehow we are primed to recognize exceptionalism and struggle to see at the level of daily behavior.

Ron Himes: The 'Mow to Own' Program is a 'sweat equity' program where residents may take immediate ownership of a vacant lot that is located next to an occupied residential or commercial property that they own, for a nominal fee. Participants must agree to continually maintain the lot, including regular mows and debris removal, for twenty-four months.

"Mow to Own" programs enlist local residents who wish to acquire vacant, typically city-owned lots to care for lots in exchange for eventual ownership of the lot. These programs are typically most effective in cities with a considerable number of vacant lots and low demand.

Chloë Bass: I did not know (until I looked) that the symptoms of dementia are partially classified as social: "the inability to recognize common things." I wonder about the baseline of "common": what threshold of democracy does a thing need to cross in order to acquire that status? Fifty-one percent? Thirteen percent? The percentage of minutes per hour during a nightly news broadcast?

The problem is: whether treated or untreated, these kinds of symptomatic lapses will eventually lead to death.

The question is whose death: your own death, or others'? In the case of old age, the answer seems clear; outside of this condition, results vary. I hear the only treatment for memory ailments is palliative, designed to minimize discomfort for the patient and those around them. So now I begin to question the boundaries of "around": what constitutes nearness? How far is too far, even if it's right next door? I've been stuck on this phrase for years: "extending the boundaries of who we call our neighbors."

Cheeraz Gormon: The spatial anxiety scale was developed by scientist M.P. Lawton. Lawton (2001) used an Internet-based survey of 240 individuals and found that men tend to employ a spatial survey or overview approach using distance and cardinal directions as if one were reading a map, whereas women tend to navigate using landmarks encountered along the route (turn left at the church). Schmitz (1999) reported way-finding experiments with 32 German adults and suggested that anxiety provides an additional explanation of sex differences with regard to way-finding. Lawton and Kallai (2002) conducted two separate studies of way-finding behaviors among 513 psychology students (from the United States and Hungary). They reported that women's anxiety about finding their way in unknown areas influences the way that they navigate. Lawton and Kallai attributed this anxiety, at least in part, to differences in upbringing where young girls are often more closely monitored and given less freedom to explore than boys at an equivalent age.

Chloë Bass: A few months ago, I heard a podcast about a new form of disorientation in the elderly: ageing city-dwellers who can no longer navigate their neighborhoods because of the rapid rise of new buildings. A kind of gentrification-based confusion induced not by a shift in culture, but by an unpredictable horizon.

I spent a long time describing this podcast to a friend. Later I went back to find it, hoping to use some quotes from the featured gerontology specialist in my work. Despite persistent searching, both on my behalf and on behalf of the friend I originally described it to, I've been unable to locate anything.

If you're certain that something happened, but you can't find the evidence of it anywhere, are you willing to concede it was a dream?

Track 3

Cheeraz Gormon: TWO: MARKERS

"In wayfinding, a marker is an object that marks a locality. Markers such as arches, monuments, building entrances, kiosks, artwork, and natural features give strong identity to various parts of a site or building. They act as mental landmarks in the wayfinding process and break a complex task into manageable parts."

TWO: APHASIA
difficulty communicating

Chloë Bass: Perhaps the problem is that I find so many things perfectly revealing just as they are.

Ron Himes: Benefits & Problems Addressed by Mow To Own Programs

Enhanced property values: Unkempt lots tend to drive down surrounding property values.

Public health: Maintenance eliminates many pest and disease infestation hazards when trash, standing water and vermin are managed.

Reduced log of vacant or city-owned lots: These programs transfer lots that are not on tax rolls to owners.

Damon Davis: January 12th, 2013
(Updated review)

Came here today to see an exhibition on break-ups upon invitation from a friend. Having recently gone through one (I did it through calling), this exhibition provided a little comic relief. At one point, I had to use the bathroom. Quite stark & clean. And only 1 toilet! Seriously, seriously! I have a GI disorder where sometimes I have to use the bathroom at a moment's notice. Sometimes, you don't know what's real in an art place like this. There is a gorgeous outdoor endless pool that looked like there was water bubbling. Only, it was raining. Quite an illusion. You don't realize it's really raining until you look outside the entrance.

Kat V., 3 stars
Useful: 2; Funny: 4; Cool: 3

Cheeraz Gormon: Integration: a) incorporation as equals into society or an organization of individuals of different groups.

Disintegration: the process of coming apart.

Chloë Bass: Every time I've nearly been killed I've survived it, but that doesn't mean I'm out looking for more devastation in order to prove a point.

It's easy to say "I didn't know" as an excuse for why something has been stricken from historic record. A gentle reminder that that which is unpublic often goes unknown/unrecorded, and a trick that's hard to conquer when it's also true that so many movements thrive in secrecy.

This is what I want to tell you about the history of here: once I watched two strangers closely observing plants, their heads bobbing together and apart again like seed pods in a wind. Once I came here on a sunny day and ate spring rolls on a bench while a child called out, "look, I found a kitten!" Once I came here on a day when everything seemed like slate: the sky, the ground, the road, all sound, all life, the cold.

The history of this site extends at least this far, if not a moment further: you're in it. There was a day: 8/8/88, and I was alive on that day. And there was a day 9/9/99, and I was alive on that day, too. By the time I thought to recognize it, the number of the year had cast beyond the number of months within it, and I just sat, wanting

19/19/19 and knowing it would never arrive.

In the annals of history, most of the things that made you cripplingly anxious for a brief period of time will probably go unrecorded.

Track 4

Cheeraz Gormon: THREE: NODES

“A node is a point at which subsidiary parts originate. People make decision points at nodes in paths. As a result, nodes should contain graphic and architectural information to assist with those decisions.”

THREE: APRAXIA

difficulty performing routine activities

Chloë Bass: When Fedex delivers a package, they need a signature, but not necessarily yours. Anyone’s will do. Which seems strange, until considering how many things are just asking for proof of ongoing existence, anyone’s, just marking that we’re still here. A quarter, anyone’s quarter (or a dollar or a water or a sandwich or a piece of fruit, nothing will go to waste) will do, to prolong a continued shuffling life that works only in service of its own sustainment.

There are the habits we form ritualistically, and then there are those that come by accident. In family life, you try something once, you like it, and suddenly it becomes a *thing*. Or the routines that happen through forces of marketing: meatless Monday, taco Tuesday, hump day, thirsty Thursday, first Friday, second Saturday, Sunday the day of rest.

But then there are the more insidious repetitions: I thought I was paying attention but it turned out I was ignoring that outstretched hand until ignoring became my only coping mechanism, the organizing force of my day, and the months, and the years, and the decades, and the century that followed. Until the time of ignoring added up to a crisis too big to fix, and then, still alive, we miraculously began the ritual of mourning ourselves.

The thing about living in the same place for a long time is that the mistakes become your own. The cabinet door breaks, and you learn to live with it that way, flapping off-kilter and requiring the second little nudge to the left to stay shut. The tile breaks, and you learn to live with it that way, your foot avoiding the rough patch with an awkward step that quickly becomes automatic. The heart breaks, and you learn to live with it that way — but in that case, you forget, over time, that you ever felt different at all.

You might want so much more than you know.

Cheeraz Gormon: In 2013, a comprehensive Wayfinding Questionnaire (WQ) was published by a group of Dutch scientists. This new questionnaire was designed to cover a full sense of navigation complaints merged with feelings of spatial anxiety: a combination of actual ability, and affect around ability. In other words, it’s not

always so much what we can do as how we might feel about it.

People who take the WQ are asked to rank each statement on a scale of 1 (not applicable to me at all) to 7 (totally applicable to me). I am most interested in statements six, seven, and eight:

6. I can always orient myself quickly and correctly when I am in an unknown environment.

7. I always want to know exactly where I am (meaning, I am always trying to orient myself in an unknown environment).

8. I am afraid of losing my way somewhere.

The Wayfinding Questionnaire is primarily used to assess stroke patients.

Chloë Bass: How much of care is patience?

Track 5

Cheeraz Gormon: FOUR: EDGES
“Wayfinding edges determine where an area begins or ends.”

FOUR: AMNESIA
difficulty remembering

Wayfinding problems in Alzheimer’s disease (AD) have been linked to changes within the hippocampus and related structures, including senile plaques, neurofibrillary tangles and neuron loss. These changes have been found to be related to wayfinding deficits that commonly occur even in the earliest stages of AD. Persons with AD have been shown to have deficits in many functions essential to wayfinding, such as learning routes, recalling landmarks, and in remembering the sequence of landmarks in a route. People with early stage AD have also demonstrated difficulty in learning and wayfinding in new environments.

Cues, or pieces of sensory information in the environment, are necessary for effective wayfinding as they help to distinguish one place from another and provide a reference point to remember one’s location.

Chloë Bass: It’s more difficult than we imagine for resistance to become routine. A certain level of pushback, depending on who you are and how you say it, is useful for the machine to continue: we can thrive on the increased stimulation that comes from mild conflict. A little bit of pushback is enough to catapult someone into power. Your voice gets louder, but your nuance is silenced. Soon, the idea of resistance takes on another cast: the statement of all that’s pushed you up the hill as a kind of ineffective childishness, a heap of labor flailing towards the unknown. The idea that from up here, you can do better than they can.

I want to believe that bodies can be different without being threatening. For months, I lived in a house with no windows to the street. I danced around by myself and pretended I was dancing with others. I imagined outside life imprecisely. This

is often how it goes when you have a chance to hold yourself apart. Distanced sociality is a dangerous experiment. In the absence of contact, a minute can stretch to contain a thousand ghosts.

Maybe this story is hard for you to imagine because your windows face elsewhere. Maybe this story is hard for you to imagine because you're not me.

Some days you call out to the world and all that echoes back is your own emptiness. I want to think of signs as a quiet fight against the myth of useful amnesia. It's one thing to say *we didn't know*. It's quite another to know, forget, and do it all over again with the silent, deadly understanding that nothing will ever need to change.

How much of life is coping?

Track 6

Cheeraz Gormon: FIVE: ZONES/DISTRICTS
"Wayfinding zones and districts are regions (either outside or within buildings) with a distinguishing character that assists in the general identification of place."

FIVE: AGNOSIA
difficulty perceiving the environment

Ron Himes: Preparation
Step 1: Identify An Eligible Lot

Eligible Lots are:

Lot may not exceed 40 feet frontage
Lot may not be contiguous to three or more LRA, LCRA, or PIEA owned parcels
The lot must be the property of the LRA for a minimum of three years
Lot must be vacant and unimproved real property

Chloë Bass: There are those who are afraid of rage because they have not felt it, cannot imagine something hot as productive, or joyful, or related to anything other than devastation. And there are those who are afraid of rage because they know it, its deep skew, and the vision that comes after. After months of isolation in fear of death-by-germs, to return to the streets to protest death-by-the-state seemed incredibly unnecessary, totally routine, and deeply unreal.

It's no secret that I struggle with the idea of forgiveness as forgetting. To remember, and forgive anyway, turns what could be just a moment into a series of acts: life between fallible minds and bodies as a form of long-term commitment and understanding.

People seem astonished when I remember the slightest thing about them. It's true that to be seen over time brings a certain kind of joy. But after years of being praised for my memory, I wonder if I'm not also being chastised for a lack of

compassion.

I know that what I'm saying to you is a risk.
The bigger risk is that I never said it at all.
Or if you look at it a different way, the biggest risk is that I keep saying it forever.

Damon Davis: October 29th, 2011
(Previous review)

Came here with the bf to see the Buddha exhibit. Parking was a bit of a hassle, but only on the weekdays. The space was stark & all white, which allowed you to focus on the exhibitions. There is an infinity pool with a meditation rock on the first floor, which provided a sense of serenity & atmosphere. The employees were quite helpful & very knowledgeable.

Kat V., 5 Stars

Track 7

Cheeraz Gormon: SIX: GRAPHIC WAYFINDING

Graphic information is the most direct way for people to find their location. Typical graphic wayfinding information includes systems made up of text, pictograms, maps, photographs, models, and diagrams. Visitors are required to observe, read, learn and comprehend these systems as they make their way through a site or building.

SIX: APATHY

The loss of ability to initiate activity or conversation

Chloë Bass: It's easy to make up stories about yourself but harder to bring them to light. In the voice you offer to another, suddenly details are missing: the patchy grass beneath a tree that looked like a lush carpet from afar. All the extra words in defense of explanations that won't take, a smokescreen of language to obscure an important truth: that the story is just a story, and sometimes not even sufficient, fully, to be one. Meanwhile, in the overflow of explanation grows the profound loss: everything we accrued by not giving others the chance to speak.

Ron Himes: Step 2: Applicant Qualifications
An applicant to qualify must:

Applicants must have paid all real estate taxes on all properties that they own in the City of St. Louis, and have no outstanding violations on those properties
Applicants must own property with an occupied residential or commercial structure, immediately adjacent to the desired lot

Chloë Bass: At the entryway to the bridge, a woman enthusiastically waves a brown cardboard sign reading *Your life matters!* as the cars whiz by. Marking the other end of that same span's curve, a man stares blankly, holding a sign of identical size, shape and color: *Help Me.*

How much of belief is encounter?

Track 8

Cheeraz Gormon: SEVEN: ORIENTATION

Orientation devices such as maps, site plans, floor plans, building and floor directories are used to help people to develop a mental map of a large complex. This is typically the first level of graphic information given for decision-making in an unfamiliar setting. These devices should help people to determine where they are, where their destination is, and what the best route is to their destination.

SEVEN: ANOSOGNOSIA

inability to perceive one's condition

Ron Himes: Step 3: Maintenance Requirements

During the 24 month period, the applicant must agree to:

Keep property free and clear of debris and excess vegetation

Comply with City ordinances, including keeping grass cut to no higher than seven inches

Pay current real estate taxes assessed on the lot

Chloë Bass: Don't forget: sweat equity is a kind of formalization of "40 acres and a mule": if we had always taken free labor in good, rewardable faith, America would be a very different nation today. How to explain a world where rules are known not through their expression, but through a telling chain of silences? Omission, or lapse, becomes its own a vocabulary of expectation and disappointment. Of this time I can already offer a future-apology: we answered every question you presented, but stayed mute on what was never asked.

Cheeraz Gormon: Once a place becomes familiar to people, whether it is dangerous or not, [. . .] uncertainty decreases. This means that only after your ancestors revisited a territory again and again were they able to relax.

Chloë Bass: In mathematical terms, an integer is a whole number; never a fraction. This suggests to me that what disintegrates is always already made up of wholes, not of parts. Even isolated, we are intact, never broken.

When we suddenly receive a list of everything we can no longer do in the name of maintaining safety, it becomes abundantly clear all the things we always had done that put other people at risk. But of course these things were not only risks; they held other meanings, too. Later, we will explain: we did not touch one another, and if we could, we clung. For now, I'm ready to wake, look back at the past, and smile in awe at all we did not know.

I've been aiming towards a certain type of perfection but the reality is that more beauty is experienced in the immediate, not through clarity. You'll have to trust me when I say that many of the things I appear to know most deeply, I feel I know by accident.