

This Way: Emilie Gossiaux (Audio Transcript)

Hi. My name is Emilie Gossiaux, and you're listening to an audio recording I created for This Way, a series of artist-designed walks organized by the MIT List Visual Art Center.

Before we start this experience, find a comfortable place to rest. This can be on a bench, on a rock, on a stoop, or in the grass. Feel free to pause the audio while you search. Once you're seated or reclining, take a deep breath. Close your eyes and absorb your surroundings.

Feel the surface of what you're sitting on using your hands and your fingers. Feel the weight of your hands and of your body in your seated position. Try to feel your pulse through your fingertips. Can you sense the Earth reverberating through your body? Maybe someone is playing music nearby. Can you feel the sounds playing through your body too?

Now take a few moments to acknowledge the air around you. Breathe it in through your nose and your mouth. Feel it on your skin. Does the air have a texture too? What kind of weight does it have? Try to sense its movement. Keep breathing in the air through your nose and think about the colors that light up in your mind's eye when you smell the air. Do you have an emotional response to your sense of smell?

We're going to start walking soon, but first, pay attention to the sun. It's going to be your guide. Think about where you're sitting on this Earth right now. And think about how the sun travels across the sky, how it moves from the East to the West. Feel the sun on your skin. Which side of your body is the sun touching right now? Which part of your body feel the most warm?

Focus on that sensation of warmth and of light. You can tell which direction you're facing by sensing where the sun is in the sky in relation to your body. Now open your eyes, stand up, and stretch.

Stand still and distribute your weight equally with both feet on the ground, with your back straight, your shoulders even height, and your face facing forward. Relax your arms, your hands, and your fingers at your sides. Remember that the goal of this experience is not to walk with a sense of urgency for a destination in mind, but with a sense of curiosity and a desire for discovering.

Now, using the sun as a compass, decide what direction you want to walk in-- north, east, south, or west. Decide if you want to walk towards the sun or away from it. While you're walking, don't forget the feeling of the sun on your body. Keep it there and let the feeling be your guide. Imagine you are a plant moving with the sun's directions.

Keep your eyes open while you're walking, and be an active observer. If you're with a friend, ask them to narrate what they see to you. Exchange short descriptions and ask each other questions about what they see. There's something about verbalizing what you see that allows you to appreciate the things around you. It's a way of showing empathy to the world that you're in.

Now do the opposite and move through the world in complete silence. Listen closely to your environment and divorce yourself from language. Communicate only through gestures, touching, and eye movements. Keep listening to your environment. Follow a sound, and let the sound be your guide.

Before you go home and end this experience, take something with you that you find on your walk, something that signifies this journey for you like a souvenir or a token.