



Giuliana Vaccarino Gearty

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# Disorientation

## IsolationNegotiated Manifesto

In an interview in 2003, the author Elena Ferrante asks, "When does the city become the city of being lost"? What is the value of unpredictability, of heart-quickenning disorientation, of "debris in the muddy water of the brain"? Turning again to Ferrante, feeling lost in the built environment allows for possibility and excitement, recalibrating our patterns of experience so that not everything is predetermined, mapped out, explained. Feeling lost broadens our interpretations of the city, allowing for ambiguity and contradiction, messiness and obscurity-conditions that, as Robert Venturi would say, reveal what is most substantive and meaningful in human life. Yet for those who live in a gridded city, is wandering beyond our reach? Can our feet echo the distorted eddies of thought in our minds? When and where is this city of being lost? Michel de Certeau can provide insight: "Walkers... follow the thicks and thins of an urban 'text' they write without being able to read it...Walking affirms, suspects, tries out, transgresses, respects, etc., the trajectories it 'speaks.'" Perhaps our own rebellious feet can help us look anew at our city, trace deviant paths, connect fragments of trajectories, lead us to the unexpected. Through creating more opportunities to allow ourselves to feel lost, and through embracing, even seeking, the sensations that come with it, maybe we can make our lives richer and our cities more vivid.