

Maya Lin: American Artist Lecture Series

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CHRIS DERCON: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, my name is Chris Dercon, I'm the director of Tate Modern. Good evening and welcome to Tate Modern for the second event of our American Artist Lecture Series. Remember a couple of months ago we had Brice Marden and tonight is the legendary already a legend the famous artist and architect Maya Lin. And after Maya, in the spring, we will have Ellen Gallagher.

This is to say that the American Artist Lecture Series which is a three year partnership between Art in Embassies, Tate Modern and the US Embassy is I think a truly important event, a truly important event because it seeks to introduce American modern and contemporary artists to Great Britain. It seeks to introduce them indeed being here talking about herself, himself about their practices in front of a large audience.

And I'm very very happy to be able to address you because I know that many of you are students and many of you are interested in how did Brice Marden decide this, how did Maya Lin go on about that and what is now Ellen Gallagher up to. It's very important to have these artists, to have them here to talk to you about their own practice and I can only thank Missus Susman, Marjorie Susman for having brought to us together with Virginia Shore in the Art in Embassies team for having brought it to us the idea and having introduced us to the idea of let's have American artists coming over to London and talk to you about what they do and thanks to Marjorie they also stay for quite a bit of time. That means they get to meet a lot of people and a lot of people get to talk to them.

Marjorie, thank you very much for being such a good friend of Tate, a generous friend of Tate, and thank you Virginia and the Art in Embassies team for organizing together with Marco Daniel these important events. And you see that they become very important events.

Maya Lin, artist and architect and of course we heard for the first time really in Europe, Maya, about your work when you did this truly important Vietnam Memorial, which I think you realized in 1982. The Vietnam Veteran Memorial in 1982, but since then you have done many many more things. Not only did you make large-scale site-specific installations but you moved on and you really broke into landscapes and not just breaking into landscapes to make monuments but like you just said you're very interested now in the anti-monumental and I'm very very very curious to hear what you mean by that, "anti-monumental." I mean, how large can you get? It's very interesting because Maya is an advocate, an advocate of a new conscious, a conscious for our environment, a consciousness for biodiversity but also you try to raise our conscious about our own histories and the way we have changed for good our worse our landscapes. You went back to the history of Native Americans and I think you're getting into many more stuff and not in the least into much political stuff which of course we think is very very very important because an artist cannot shut up. Artists have to speak, and that's what you're going to do tonight, Maya, you're going to speak.

And again, very well chosen, because the latest issue of Art Forum, which is a very respected art magazine, the latest issue is all about art and architecture. “Art and architecture”, writes Art Forum in their editorial, “meet more often and more profoundly today than ever before. From public art to the Art Fair 10, from the pavilion to the installation. But if the interchange between these fields offers a host of new possibilities for structure, space and experience, it also makes reflection on their status more urgent.”

A better introduction, Maya, can be what you’re going to say is actually the topic of the day, and we want to learn from you. And now I believe Marjorie Susman is going to speak to you. No she’s not! Maya Lin is going to speak immediately. Maya Lin!

(applause)

MAYA LIN: Thanks, Eric. Thank you, everyone, for coming out, to Ambassador and Mrs. Susman, thank you again for inviting me here. I’m just going to start in.

I sort of see my life a little as a tripod with three legs being art, architecture, and then the memorials. And I’ve always actually felt the memorials were a little bit of a hybrid, they combine aspects of both. They have a functionality but their function is much more on a symbolic or conceptual level.

With that in mind, I’m starting with an image of water. I don’t know why I like water so much but I am rather addicted to it in almost all of my work, and maybe it’s because water and be, exist in three states: solid, liquid, vapor. Whether it’s a natural-occurring water wave like this image, or this again is a naturally-occurring wave, it’s called a Stokes Water Wave, it was very inspirational to a whole body of work of mine, but I’m very interested in what I would call systematized nature. Did man have a hand in it, did he not? But so this one’s a very interesting image because it’s an actual naturally-occurring water wave.

The use of water in my sculptures has come out both in more formal ways—these are almost like taking water and throwing it down on a concrete floor, is part of a series called Dew Point, and some were quite large in the series and others were more intimate maybe seven or eight drops. But again the beauty of a simple drop or how complex that form actually is, is something I’m very drawn to.

But simultaneous to that, I have always been drawn to working in the land. It could be because I grew up in a very rural part of Ohio, surrounded by hills, surrounded by the earth, but my dad was also a potter and I spent hours as child playing with clay—and I still play with clay to this day.

So this is plasticine and it was a start of the first of three pieces called Wave Field. I tend to work in series and in almost all my works, I love to explore scale and how with the change of scale our experience of the piece changes. So taking the cue from that Stokes Water Wave, I started creating a piece in Michigan. And I couldn’t figure out how water begins and ends. I stared at it, at films of it, tried to sculpt it, couldn’t quite figure out how to begin and end a simple water wave. We all know what it looks like, but how do you stop it, how do you freeze it. So at a certain point I gave up and I just laid it out on the ground and I started sculpting it with the crew and again this piece is actually oddly irregular.

It's called Wave Field, it's a hundred feet by a hundred feet, ten thousand square feet. And even though it looks very regular, I actually had to splay the whole grid out in order to make it feel natural. So I became very very interested in what makes something feel natural, what makes it feel artificial.

So this is just another scale for you. The scale of this piece, the smallest of the three, is those waves are about four, five feet high. You can sit in a wave, curl up, read a book, it's in front of an aerospace engineering building. So I came about that water image because I was researching the site, but it's not just about a physical site, it was about aerodynamics, fluid dynamics, when I came across that image.

The second in the series is called Flutter and the inspiration wasn't from an above-ground wave but in a way what water does to the sand formations underneath. And it became a very shallow wave formation called Flutter. And it exists, it's thirty thousand square feet, so I started to play with what happens when you start to increase, so I tripled the scale and it exists and an artwork for the General Services Administration in Florida, in Miami.

And what I never figured out on this one was, it's also shallow for a reason, they were so worried about snipers. I mean these waves are three feet high but they were very very concerned about security for this piece, it's in front of a federal courthouse. So then I was exploring things that you could see over it, could define itself but it also remained visually fairly shallow.

And then the last of the series, a piece I completed a few years ago for Storm King which is an art park north of New York City, about an hour away. And I wanted to triple the scale again so it started as a ninety thousand square feet square feet piece, and again playing with clay, plasticine. For scale, just to give you a scale of this piece, so the waves were going eighteen, twenty feet high and then I had to grow it because it had to fit in with the surroundings.

So it matches with the hills but also as you go into a wave you lose sight of what's around you but then you could cross over and see through. So again change in scale was something very interesting, something of great interest to me. And then that's also the change of seasons. I'm extremely interesting in how these pieces look throughout the course of the year.

That's what and I sort of close that series down as far as waves, it were much more reminiscent of water waves, but I again wanted to still explore folding the earth. So this is an early paper model and I'm currently working on a large-scale earth work, called A Fold in the Field, on the north island of New Zealand. And this is the beginnings of it. And I'm working on it, I'll go back down in another month because I'm extremely extremely concerned about making sure that the waves do not become abrupt but literally feels as if this field is pulled up and folded. So it's much more abstracted use of the form. The waves are, just to give you an idea, about sixty feet high, so we're kind of playing at yet a different scale again, curious.

But it also starts with smaller artwork. So this is a little maquette of a piece called Flow, which was existing at a show for Storm King that I did a year or two ago. So I began to explore this idea of a simple, folded plane. And it also comes in, how do I take what I do outside and this is one of, the first show I ever did and I've done two traveling shows, this one was called Topologies. And this was a topographic

landscape, it's about sixteen by eighteen feet and again playing with this idea, can I make a form that when you look at it kind of can't make up its mind of if it's solid or liquid.

And it led me to want to go slightly larger in scale for the next large-scale exhibit, Systematic Landscapes. And the idea was, what if I could make a hill that you could walk up and touch the ceiling. And this is a blueprint for that piece, each one of these is a two-by-four. And it turned into a piece that was one of the anchor pieces for Systematic Landscapes, that from two approaches it looks like a water wave, a cresting wave, but from the back side it feels much more like a hill. So there's an ambiguity—is this piece from water or is it from land?

And the two other anchor pieces in the show, one dealt with the earth and one dealt with water. And that's just the making of that piece.

So the water piece gave you three very different relationships to the land—one you walked on, one you walked under and one you walked through. And the one you walked under was a wire drawing I made and it was the southernmost island in the Atlantic, before you hit Antarctica. And I also draw from technology so this is literally how a computer sees typography, draws an XY grid, so the idea was to create a drawing in space. And the water line is literally the top two feet and the rest is about three underwater ridges that collide at this point creating this one little island. Again I'm very fascinated with using scientific data and analysis to give you maybe a different way of looking at the world around us.

And the last of that show anchored us in a mountain-scape, this is called Blue Lake Pass. We spent our summers in Colorado and this is a hike that many of us take and I just took the mountain-scape and I pulled it apart and allowed you to walk through it, giving you a very different relationship back almost to the stratigraphic layers of the earth.

This show traveled for about three years and with every installation I chose to focus on a river. It's San Diego, at the Contemporary, there wasn't a river of note so I've done something I've always wanted to do—I followed a crack in the concrete floor. I chiseled it out a little bit more and I silver-leafed it, because again whether it's a river or it's a crack in the floor we're, nature's following some certain similar principles on on on natural phenomena so that fracture looks as much like a river to me as an actual river. So I called it the Depot River because the museum is in a former train depot, it's there to this day. They kept it.

This is the Columbia River system, which you can tell, this is in pins. With every bulging, it's where there's a dam in the Columbia River. And with pins you can't quite your eye can't focus on it, so again it's a three-dimensional drawing. I'm very interested in seeing and pulling out rivers as whole places. We tend to think about what is upstream, if they're causing us a problem, but maybe we're not looking about not thinking about a river as a whole, thinking about what's going on downstream.

This is another river, it's when the show was at the Corcoran in DC and I cast it in recycled silver. It's the Chesapeake Bay, but again this one reminds me as much like a ginger root or the root of a tree.

And this is the Hudson River system, that's the Long Island Sound again in a hundred percent recycled silver. And then I just start with compiling what that river is, in finding a drawing flowing, you know I make drawings, just trace out what the shapes are before turning them in to...

This is the upper Everglades, it's in pins. So no one ever really thinks about upper Everglades and how this whole system was changed drastically by the canals downriver.

Or for instance, this is the Yangtze River in silver, but when I installed it as a pin river in the US Embassy in Beijing, I went there to visit for the first time and I think the consulate general said, "oh, it looks like a dragon." And at this point I can't look at the Yangtze River without seeing the dragon. So again choosing water ways that might remind you of something else might, you might begin to think of them almost as a drawing, as a form.

Where this is the Colorado River and again I love to play with scale. So this is in pins. This is cast in silver.

And then I was asked to be commissioned to do a work, for a casino in Las Vegas, the Aria, and this was a very green casino and I proposed a river because again, where is the water coming from or going to. And it's Lake Mead and it's Lake Powell, it's ninety feet and it's all recycled silver. And again you may or may not notice but it is where the water source is coming from that feeds Las Vegas.

And right now I just started working with the Thames River, the Thames and the history behind it. So I started tracing back, often times I study the history to understand how much has it changed, shape, form. And also how do you end a river. I tend to choose where the shallow parts of the river drop off into the ocean. Then again, I draw it and cast it and make it in wax and then cast it.

Another type of drawing that I worked on, this is a sketch of mine. I'll often, I go to a site and it might take me a little while. This is in Wanås, in southern Sweden for the Wachtmeister Estate and I woke up one morning and I made this little drawing in the gravel driveway, and that piece became 11 Minute Line because that is the time it takes to walk it, approximately. And most of the Wanås sculpture park is across the way which is all the way over here, but I fell in love with this cattle pasture over here so I asked if I could install in there and they said it would be fine as long as the cows don't mind. And the cows apparently love it so—there's a pecking order with cows so they actually like to be higher up looking down.

But it's the first of three drawings which I'll wait for the right site to create the last. So the first one is deliberately almost a little prehistoric in nature. There's a joke, I'm from southeastern Ohio, there's the incredible mounds, effigy mounds, drawings that were created by the Hopewell and Oneida tribes and when Europeans first came across them they thought, they made an assumption that certainly the cultures that made these are way too sophisticated for the tribes that are here, someone from Europe must have come over, made these pieces and then gone back to Europe. So I couldn't resist bringing a little bit of Ohio to Europe.

And the second in the series is in Kentucky and it's a drawing that is a little bit fifties modernist, it goes up and it goes down. It's called the Kentucky Line. This is the site, and it's a private collection in Kentucky and where the line crosses. So these are around twelve hundred, fifteen hundred feet long.

So the last in the series and I'll wait for the right site will be a drawing that cannot make up its mind if it's language or not because again I'm loving the ambiguity of states.

As well as these drawings of wire drawings, I would call them drawings in space. This is the San Francisco Bay and it's permanently installed at the California Academy of Sciences and it takes the topography above and below water level, it's called Where the Land Meets the Sea. And you can sit under it and have your tea and you're literally under the bay.

For a piece I did for the Indiana Museum of Art, you know, Ohio, Indiana kind of flat, I was looking, searching for what I could do and I was told, oh, the second largest underground river system in the country is under the state of Indiana. So I went spelunking and we ended up taking sections through parts of the White River and turning it into a piece that is again permanent and at one point where the upper part and the lower part come together you can see the cross section. Other than that, it's called Above and Below.

Or another way I've played with water is, these are topographic reliefs of the Red Sea. The Caspian and the Black Sea. And again we tend to not see what's below the surface, so these are sculptures that play with your idea of what's below the surface.

And I'm starting on a series that will be cut in stone. This is the Aral Sea, or what's left of it. So with every successive layer it will mark in time the gradual disappearance of both the Aral Sea, Lake Chad which is almost nonexistent at this point.

And the last in that series will be about the disappearance of the ice in the North Pole.

And this is an atlas, I use atlases I get from the store, in Europe, and I take walks through the world and I make landscape cuts into them. And I find that as you get to the back of an atlas, if you follow geographic boundaries, there are also older, political boundaries and so you can kind of take a line through and then follow it down to create a little crater.

Meanwhile I'm as interested in mountains and maybe anti-mountains and I've been making these on a very small scale. This is Everest, technically the second tallest mountain in the world, and this is a wire drawing of Everest. And I'm as interested in the shadow the drawing makes as I am in the three-dimensional form of it.

But it's not the tallest mountain in the world because the tallest mountain in the world if you take a cross-section from top to absolute base is Hawaii. And so this is a cross-section through Hawaii, and there it is. So again can I get you to rethink what the world around us is, knowing that I can mine the world for a kind of scientific factual data and get you to reconsider what a mountain may be.

Not to confuse us any further, I'm going to jump a little. This is a microscopic image of coral and it is manifesting itself in a building I am working on right now in Cambridge, Mass where I'm actually playing with the transparency of stone and creating a building for Novartis. It's a research pharmaceutical building in Cambridge and it involves a lower wrapped stone piece and a glass tower that comes out from it. With an absolute condition that we needed to bring retail back. This is the last bit of Mass Ave in Cambridge that was an empty lot so we're trying to enliven the entire street and connect you so you can continue from the MIT area up to Harvard so this is. And again it's ambiguity. It's like stone, but the wall is transparent.

Or another work of architecture is for the Children's Defense Fund in Tennessee where everything at the Alex Haley estate was a one-story cabin, so how could I as a modernist work in that vein. So I chose a boat shape that twice a year they double capacity but for the rest of the year it remains very intimate, with a cinderblock building here and then the chapel itself and then a terrace that can be tented over and used to double capacity.

And I started playing with time in the architectural work, so at the Haley estate I created one new building but I also restored an 1870's barn and turned it into a library. With both they had cribs so you could have an outdoor entry space, a shared space out of doors, and then you go up and I slipped an inner modern skin inside of it.

For a private residence in Colorado that opens and shuts when the owners are there. Where again the space between allows you very different ways of looking at the land around and in time the rear box will be embedded in the woods and only the front part of the house will be visible.

And the last of the architecture. This is a piece I actually did for the board of Chinese in America. So sometimes I'm very drawn to working with institutions, not-for-profit institutions, so even though it's a small project I really wanted to help them. And what I didn't realize is, as I started working on this little museum, I could create a walk in time. And the exhibit surrounds a courtyard, a shared courtyard, and there's a window in every courtyard because the history of Chinese immigration to America is that we came out in waves, with very succinct different waves and as you enter the heart, the atrium, you see every the sort of the changing face of Chinese immigration from the 1860s to the present day. So I was sort of surprised that I could use time and memory in an architectural work.

And then I'm just going to go on to the monuments, the memorials, the anti-memorials, whatever. And I'm just going to bring up again the Vietnam Memorial which I started with a way long time ago to me is not an object inserted in the earth, it's pure surface. It's as if I took the earth and I cut it and I polished it so it's a geode. And it's also very much about time. And I thought, what if I could put a book so that on the right-hand side you have the beginning of the war and it rags to the right and it's cut by the earth and the names are all chronological so any returning vet would find their time on the wall. This was a very unusual war and people rotated out I think every eighteen months so if you really if you come back and you find someone you know, you might actually be standing next to someone who you knew.

To me, I wanted to I started to play with this idea of time and memory and it's pure surface in that I had a huge disagreement with the architects of record because they wanted to create a massive wall, a wall

that was two or three feet thick, they thought a veneer was cheap. And I kept going, I don't want a wall, I actually want there to be no wall, that the form is the names themselves. And literally they dematerialize and you're left with you looking at your reflection through the names. I used the phrase, through a mirror darkly.

The second of the monuments is a civil rights memorial in Montgomery, Alabama. And the timeline here, because the Civil Rights era, we can mark a time Brown vs Board of Education to Martin Luther King's assassination. I left a gap because again ongoing civil rights struggles are still very much a part of what we're all dealing with. But again it is a timeline and you can walk around it clockwise and it intertwines people's deaths with historic events and sometimes a political or a legislative event led to a riot, led to someone's death, sometimes someone's death led to a change in legislation. So as you walk around this timeline you realize it's a people's movement and people made a difference in changing history. It's a water table, the first time where I explored keeping the water extremely still and when you touch it you effect how the water moves.

The third of the pieces that dealt with history was the women's table at Yale. Again a water table. I was called in, Yale's my alma mater, I went there undergrad and grad, and I didn't know what to do. So I started researching coeducation at Yale and I found out that women were allowed to go to Yale for years in the graduate schools and even before that they were allowed to sit in, and they were called "silent listeners" which I thought was kind of creepy.

So I decided I'd count them all, from the time when there were none, and the very first group of women at Yale were in like 1873 and there was Mister Street and he built Street Hall under a condition and his daughters were both in the art school so Yale's School of Art was the first school to go co-ed. So I'm in love with taking factual information and presenting it, but again history is never subjective so what I choose to put out there as facts becomes actually very pointed.

And I'm working on the two last memorials, one dealing with Native American issues along the Pacific Northwest and the second dealing with something I've been concerned about since I was a child, the environment. So throughout the Pacific Northwest at the time of Lewis and Clark, I'm creating six parts, a six-part series along the Columbia River system. Some are chosen because they are very important to Native Americans, others are chosen because they're important to Lewis and Clark and still others are chosen because they're very important from an ecological point of view.

How do you begin when Lewis and Clark started in Missouri and ended up here? I start where they ended and I reflect back. This is Cape Disappointment and this jetty wasn't here and all this land is created, the natural shoreline used to be here. So what I started using was (unintelligible) a bit as a lens but this is what we were met with. And whenever I work in a state park or a federal park I kinda don't want to be there. I don't want to be seen as an artwork. I almost feel like I should be a little more invisible because I'm there to expose the land itself.

This is what we were met with. You couldn't even see the ocean anymore, you had a restroom, you had a parking lot, these great picnic tables, so this is what it looks like today. We were able to get them to do a transportation study and restore the dunes to their natural condition and we juxtapose two pathways.

One, the western view, it's Lewis and Clark's sighting of their entire journey and then this quite view which follows the natural shoreline. And it is a poem by the Nez Perce whose home once we were in when they dedicated the site exactly two hundred years to the day that Lewis and Clark were there.

So this is a walkway to the ocean and on it I inscribed Lewis and Clark as they were trapped with bad weather at Cape Disappointment. And if you look at how western man, latitude, longitude, mile marker, they charted their journey. But you also notice you're visiting not undeveloped territory, you're visiting all these peoples' homelands. And juxtaposed with that is the whole prayer as it walks along about the Native American asking us, asking nature to teach us and show us the way. Neither is right or wrong, they're just very different ways of relating back to nature. And this is that pathway as it looks today.

On the opposite side, which is where I was extremely interested, was there were two great estuarine systems in the United States, the Chesapeake Bay and the Columbia River system. And this is how you saw it when I got there. Actually you didn't see it, it was a sea of asphalt and a hedge went the whole way. So again I wanted to reveal it. So this is what it looks like today. And it became a complete wetland restoration project, and when you go out to the tip, you're left looking out on the bay and it tells you how important this bay used to be, this estuary.

At the other end of the parking lot I was met with this, which is a fish-cutting sink. And this is what it looks like today and I knew when I saw that I wanted to do a different fish-cutting sink, what I didn't realize is that the main tradition of the Chinook is the cutting of fish the wrong way. And from the blood of the fish springs a bird he flies over the mountain right there so now when you go and you cut up your fish you can read this little story. You're going to wonder, why is this here, it's because you're in the Chinook tribe homeland.

For another piece, the Sandy River Delta, which I chose because the Forest Service is restoring this whole park, and they're blowing the dam and allowing the Sandy River to take its course. To bear witness to that we created a bird blind and in it is inscribed all the species noted by Lewis and Clark, and what their environmental status is today.

And the last of these is the one that I would say is the memorial. It's going to be the Celilo Arc and it will tell a history of one of the most sacred fishing grounds in all of the Pacific Northwest. It will start with the geologic history, go to a mythic history from the tribes, going to when Lewis and Clark almost didn't make it over here and then to the Army Corps of Engineer's decision it's the last dam that went in on the Columbia and it inundated the falls in 1955. And so this is sort of a sketch of a simple bridge that will tell the story, weaving you the last third will be quiet until you get to the end and then it will tell you what the place used to sound like. So it's called the Celilo Arc so that'll probably be finished...

So more water flowed over Celilo Falls than over Niagra Falls and they kind of deliberately inundated it at a certain time because it was a bit messy so there's all these facts which will go on that walkway, talk about the deliberate need to kind of vary this.

With that comes a jump to the last memorial, What is Missing, and I've started to play with different histories, so it's literally you could hear this from miles and miles away and then I'm going to jump to

What is Missing, which is the fifth and last of the memorials but I set up my own not-for-profit foundation and I'll be working on it for the rest of my life.

(nature sounds)

(TEXT ON SCREEN)

WHAT IS MISSING?

The species that have gone extinct

The species that will disappear in our lifetime

The species that we will never know

because we destroyed their habitats before we ever knew them

There have been five mass extinctions in the history of the planet

The last one was caused by an asteroid the size of Manhattan hitting the earth at the speed of 18,000 meters per second

We are witnessing the sixth mass extinction in the planet's history and the only one not to be caused by a catastrophic event

but by the actions of one single species... Mankind

One in eight birds

one in four mammals

one in three amphibians

one in four conifers

so far assessed

are threatened with extinction with human alteration of their habitat the single biggest cause

On average a species becomes extinct every 20 minutes

In the time it takes to view this film one species will have vanished from this planet

WHAT IS MISSING?

The common loon

Thirty years ago residents of northeastern North America noticed a decline in population of this "common" bird

When researchers began studying the birds they noticed high levels of mercury in their blood and feathers

The lakes where they made their nests had been poisoned by pollution from coal-burning power plants
National Geographic

LIN: So we've made about 75 one-to-two minutes films. These are slightly educational and didactic in nature which gives me reservation but I wanted to start with something that was a little bit more from a science point of view, the permanent it's. These films are played continuously like this is an installation of the listening cone out at the California Academy of Sciences, I'm extremely interested in morphing this. This is a monument that jumps form, it can take on many different sites and different places. We've committed to giving a work to the Field Museum in Chicago, IUCN in Switzerland will be doing something with Cornell.

The BBC, National Geographic, and Cornell Ornithology have all been instrumental in donating films, videos, sounds to this project, but it won't just be this form. What if it could flow like water, it's free as long as you share it. This is the listening cone permanently installed out at Cal Academy but as much I'll be producing a sound ring for Cornell Ornithology Labs.

And then this was a piece that travels, it's been to China, to New York, it's again, you pick up an optically clear piece of glass and you can literally hold a species or a place in your hand.

We've also done pieces that are as temporary this was for the MTV billboard in Times Square that Creative Time got for me on Earth Day in April 2010. So we played four videos that almost slowed you down in Times Square. This was of a frog that (unintelligible) it's paws, but I'll just hop.

So this is what has stunned me as to where we are, where we are with species being threatened and also that we have to focus on the habitat degradation that's going on. So it's not just the species we're worried about, it's the habitats they need to survive.

But for me as an artist, how can I get you to look at this differently? So that it's not just missing species, it's the scale of species the abundance of species, it's all these other issues, the visibility of the stars at night for instance, and we've started to mine ecological history for what the place used to be like. It's called Shifting Baselines or Landscape Amnesia, if we don't even remember what used to be, how do we even affect change. And so again, using facts, using history. This is, note the baby manta ray in this fellow's hand, or the collapse of the cod in 1870s, the codfish were taller than a man and with every successive generation we get used to a diminished expectation, we don't even realize what's missing. Or, these are all bison heads.

So, pulling this all together and maybe slightly inspired by Robert Smithson with his non-sites, I pulled on the website what I would call the nexus of the project. And it's a map, it's actually three maps right now but when I'm done with the third map I'll collapse them into one. So it's a map of memory, a map of the past, a map of the present and then a map of the future. So right now you can go to whatismissing.net and on it you can have both historical memories of places, what a place used to be like, as well as this Earth Day, and I only surface on Earth Day, I sort of want something new. We want them out to the present which links them to about forty to sixty environmental groups and we're always more in. Tell us what you're doing, show us your conservation stories.

The key is I want everyone to be seen together and as it now stands you can see these entries both geographically located but if you click time down here under time, you can also see these entries temporally located. And in time when I've created the last map the map of the future, green print, let's envision a sustainable planet, you'll be able to go in the map of the past and go out the map of the future so there will be a little bit of a time wormhole involved.

So right now we've got like a Manhattan wormhole timeline that goes from the very earliest accounts and also we just launched one for London. And with cities, a lot of these cities were based where major estuaries were. You have incredible citations of abundance of wildlife and then an arc of serious decline and then with the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act things just beginning to come back.

So this is just a few from London. So you begin to see, these laws do little good, oops, am I going backwards? Oh, this wasn't (mumbling) So all of a sudden the fish die out, the salmon vanish, but then you begin to get into the 70s, anti-pollution efforts and New York was the same way, you now have seals showing up, whales showing up, an arc of things can come back if you let them, with regulation, and that's the last one in the London one, so I invite anyone to give us memories, both personal and historic in nature.

So this is New York. The lobsters were six feet long, the oysters were twelve inches in diameter, sturgeon were nicknamed "Albany beef" because they were so plentiful. And this is a memories, you can add a personal memory of something you've remembered diminish or disappear. So this came in from someone in Rhode Island. Where this is from India.

And Conservation in Action as I said is up now and we linked to all these groups because I actually want all the groups to be seen as one whole. And this is just World Wildlife Fund's work.

As well as on the site, I'm beginning to tell you what you can do in your everyday lives. So for instance, second-most exported economic product outside petroleum is coffee and this is your choice today, between shade-grown and traditional. And these are the regions you could affect if you make that choice. For... What is the largest irrigated crop grown in America? It's the American lawn. More gasoline is spilled refueling lawn equipment in the US than was spilled by the Exxon Valdez.

We kind of try to get you to think about things and "I had no idea" or this is the amount of pesticides, fertilizer, water that is needed or what if you gave 50% of your lawn back to nature that creates a habitat in your own back yard. Or organic cotton versus regular cotton, it's an intensely pesticide, fertilizer needy plant and these are the areas you could effectively support with organic cotton.

And what's the problem with it, the dead zones are forming all over the world because of the fertilizer because of the pesticides so again getting back to water I know where this is one of my pet peeves, tuna, sushi-grade, Atlantic Bluefin tuna. World Wildlife Foundation basically says it'll be extinct commercially in another year or so if we don't stop eating it.

There are certain things that are easier because we just could give it a break and it would come back. Bigger ones ... this is what the world needs if we eat an American diet heavy on the cattle. This is a moderate meat diet much more a European diet and this is a vegetarian diet so begin to think what our diets are. And this is from Lester Brown his book which tells you this is what it could cost to really put the earth back in so I just had to say, "Oh, what are we spending money on already, so we could help create marine protected areas that could help restore fisheries, or we could buy perfume in Europe and the US." This one's really good. Protecting biological diversity of \$31 billion, or business entertainment in Japan. So again, aren't we spending the money already and times and could we maybe just take a look at what we are doing?

Greenprint will begin to rearrange the lights at night for plausible future scenarios and I'll just leave with two more things and a short film. What if seven billion people, the world's population, lived at the density of Manhattan? How much space do you think we would take up? Anyone have a guess? The

state of Colorado. So is this a question of population or is this a question of land use and resource consumption?

So I'm just going to end with a film we produced, if I can get it to click. So I'm building this in an experimental fashion, I'm putting it out on the web, it's coming out as permanent installations. I don't feel I've pushed it into what I would call what I do as an artist. It's a memorial, don't know quite what it is, I know I'm very interested in understanding animal movement and sounds.

(animal noises)

And so with that in mind, I've started to explore just ... beginning to analyze and understand different animal movements. So that's a horse, or this one is ... try to guess what this sound is.

(animal noises)

So I think I'm beginning to explore what this could become for me as an artwork. Or this one again.

(animal noises)

Which is a crane and its movement. So this is a fact and again I'll probably focus it all back to habitat. 20%, 25% of greenhouse gases released just caused by deforestation, it's equivalent to all the combined emissions from all the cars, trucks and ships and airplanes in the world. So I came up with a little film, courtesy of me and Radical Media, we showed it at the Copenhagen 15 conference. Brian Eno donated the sound for it, it's called Unchopping a Tree. And I'm just gonna end.

TEXT

Central Park New York City, USA

Destroyed in 9 minutes

Humlegården Stockholm, Sweden

Destroyed in 1 minute

Hyde Park London, England

Destroyed in 4 minutes

Ueno Park Tokyo, Japan

Destroyed in 2 minutes

Schlossgarten Eutin, Germany

Destroyed in 1 minute

Champs de Mars Paris, France

Destroyed in 1 minute

Ørsted Park Copenhagen, Denmark

Destroyed in 1 minute

If deforestation were happening in your city, how quickly would you work to stop it?

90 acres of rainforest are destroyed every minute

Deforestation threatens half of the world's species with extinction

Deforestation is responsible for 20% of all global warming emissions

We can't unchop a tree but we can not chop it down in the first place or we can plant a few tree sustainably.

Reduce emissions. Protect species. Together we can save two birds with one tree.

(applause)

LIN: So yeah so basically I invite anyone to go on the website and add a personal memory, they can also tell us a historic fact. Again I think if we can use what used to be and actually if you're young, talk to your parents, go back to your grandparents' age, again scientists call the phenomena "shifting baselines" and we just don't remember what used to be. We get used to something getting less and less and we accept that. So we lower baselines with every successive generation. So once more I'm using facts and inviting anyone to help build this sort of online memorial.

But with that I think we're done, thank you for coming and if you have any questions...

(applause)

MAN: If you have any questions, please, raise your hands. We have two microphones here, they will come to you with the microphone.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Hi, it's not really a very properly formulated question but I think earlier in your talk you mentioned distinctions between nature and artificial creations? How does that relate to your concern for sustainability and conservation?

LIN: I think. I'm not quite understanding the question.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Well I in my own work actually I am dealing with artificial creations and also with nature, do you have a conceptual distinction between the two in your own mind?

LIN: Between artificial and reality, yes I do, I think what I like doing, when I do go out and make a work in the landscape, there's definitely... a lot of the sites are restoration sites, but at the same time I like having the work, say the wave fields, to be something that sets itself apart yet merges with the land. When I work in a park, though, I don't actually necessarily want to put a work of mine in. The work is actually exposing the experience of nature. So sometimes I'll step over, like with the wave fields, especially the last one that's a brownfield remediation site, but part of me chooses when I want to create a work in the land versus when I'm restoring. And sometimes I do both, actually, but I kind of have a very hard time with within national parks or state parks because in a funny way I don't know if that's my place as an artist, my art there again steps way back and I almost become invisible. Now that's part of my art, but it certainly isn't one of the wave fields. I don't know if that answers your question. Anyone else have a question?

AUDIENCE MEMBER 2: Hi, I was just wondering, like when you're doing your work with monuments and stuff, do you still bear in mind your ideas of conservation, do you somehow integrate that into your other works?

LIN: Yeah, the architecture has been very committed to sustainable, recycled, energy-efficient, daylight situations since I started, whether it's FSC wood or reclaimed and recycled, it's been that way from the start, for the artworks as well, like the first of the broken glass pieces, it was all recycled materials. So it's pretty much part of everything I do, but I also volunteered, I was on the board of the Energy Foundation for about a decade, I sat on the NRDC board for about the same, and then I set up What is Missing. So, I just decided to focus more attention on what I would call the most activist of the monuments, but at the same time it's playing with facts. Like, of the 75 films we quote from all the groups, again, everyone's sort of competing for the same small pie within the environment movement and my energy is, well, why can't we all be seen together, so I don't try to actively fundraise on the site at all, no one does, but what if we could look at all the gains and all the conservation success stories and failures and learn from it. But I have in my art and architecture been very committed to recycled, sustainable solutions from I think the get-go.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 3: I just wanted to I just wanted to ask when you started out, did you study architecture initially—

LIN: Yes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 3: And did you always think you'd want to combine sort of art, art history with architecture?

LIN: No, and I think what happened was ... my dad was Dean of Fine Arts, so I was casting bronzes by the time I was in high school. I was also very bored, it was Athens, Ohio, there's wasn't much to do, so I was making everything. But my mom was a very serious academic, so I think I went to college thinking oh, I like art, but maybe I should do something a little bit more academic, then I thought architecture would be a mixture of both my love of, I'm actually a bit of a polyglot, so I love science, I love math, and I love art. I actually went to Yale to become a field zoologist, because my first love has always been the environment. I got to Yale and their animal behavior program was neurologically based, and the Science Advisor didn't think I would really like that and he was right, I didn't, so I chose architecture and it took me getting through grad school to realize that I've always made art. And I'm as deeply committed to the architecture but I can't take on too much architecture because it would turn me into a large, a firm. I mean, I call my place my studio, I have 3-5 assistants, I like to keep it small, I like to keep it very hands-on. So even though I'm very committed to the architecture, I won't take on as much in it so that I could also balance both with the art and then you know the confusing thing is the memorials which I won't give up. That's the tripod. I don't think I'd stand up very well if one leg was gone.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 4: I'm really interested in guess in the degree to which art can actually create change and whether there's actually a real role for art in saving the environment. That's something that a lot of people talk about and I was wondering if you could say a little bit about your personal feelings on that?

LIN: I mean I think I probably wouldn't be doing what I'm doing if I didn't think it could affect... maybe one person is gonna walk out of here and not eat tuna. That would probably make me happy. It would be better if you all walked out of here and didn't eat tuna. Yes, I am I absolutely believe art can shift

perception, art can give you a different way of looking at something. Do I want to be didactic in my art? I sort of try not to and I'm really hoping I wasn't boring you guys silly, because it's actually very hard because the memorials have been so about, let's place the facts out there and walk away. Because I actually believe when you place the facts out there, you're going to get every one of you to react to it. And yes, it's pointed what facts I put out. With Missing, I'm kind of stepping over the deep end as my family would say. But at the same time I feel, since I was a child I just felt, one species doesn't have a right to be doing what we're doing and if there's anything I could do to make a difference, I'm gonna try. Anyway.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 5: Hi I read a lot about you and I know your brother is a poet and you worked a fuel project with him. I'm wondering how poem influenced your design and how this whole thing worked?

LIN: I write about my work before I actually start making the work, I think it's sort of an unusual process, but probably with every project I've ever done, I sit there and I start writing first. It's a first sketch. And I'm not sure where it's going but it's my mother was a poet, my brother's a poet, he was a very tough critic at times, but literally whether it was like he'd start you with the easy stuff in poetry. It would be Mark Strand but by the time I was in high school I was absorbing Walt Stevens or John Ashbery and I think writing and language has been very much a part of the way I think, and it's probably why the first book I ever did was called Boundaries, because I wanted to write something first. I deliberately didn't do an image-based coffee book I wanted to do this in-between thing and I think something that's very much been a part of my thinking process. Any other questions?

AUDIENCE MEMBER 6: I was struck by what you said about being one world, the fact that you consciously wanted to have a work that was only about space, about surface that wasn't a kind of object, and it seems that quite a lot of the works involve processes of removal, of shifting or moving or carving or processes that aren't constructed, and is that something again that keys into the kind of issues about conservation or sustainability or is that a more deep-seated kind of—

LIN: No, I think that that first piece, I mean, it's an act of cutting the urethane and merely polishing the earth. Partly it was like, I don't believe we know what we do and why we do it. I think your brain is making huge choices as you sleep so I might have studied memorials for a whole semester before I went down, saw the site and automatically knew what I wanted to do. It was a very simple impulse. I also knew that the park was an incredibly used park so my reaction was, if you're going to touch it, don't overpower it. So now that's something that comes out in a lot of my architectural works, that piece too. Can you also create a lens in which to give you a different experience back to looking at the landscape around you. So I'm actually extremely interested, even the most physically large moves like the waves or 11 Minute Line, I was very curious with 11 Minute Line, well what would it be line to look at the field you're in but to be six feet higher than the field, how's that going to change your experience of that place. So part of me kind of waffles sometimes as far as how much I want to be there, how obvious is my presence there, and yes I am exploring with the wave fields, with the folds in the fields a very larger voice out there but I can then step way back and try to disappear. It really depends on what the site is, and why I was brought there in the first place.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 7: You mentioned about your tripod. Which is the part you enjoy most?

LIN: I can't give up any of them. I mean I love each one and they're extremely different for me, at least. And I think there are artists that have had their work be much more architectonic in nature or architecture that is much more sculptural, I actually love the differences between the art and the architecture and I think um probably the hardest thing for me is that, you come out of the gate with the Vietnam Memorial. It took a good, over a decade of work of art and architecture for people to even see that work. It was hard because again yes and I knew when I accepted the Civil Rights commission it was just going to further label me, but I am also drawn to these really historic moments in our time and I don't know why but I don't think I ever made a choice, it was never conscious, I just kind of do what I do and you know, I get to play, I don't know...

There we go, thank you.

(applause)