

CREATIVETIME



September 3rd – October 5th, 2025

Chloë Bass: *If you hear something, free something.* A Guide for NYC Subway and Bus Riders of All Ages Presented by Creative Time and MTA Arts & Design

About This Experience

Artist Chloë Bass invites us to rethink how we move through and feel in public space. In places where we often hear alerts or warnings, *If you hear something, free something* proposes something different: care, connection, and emotional presence. This sound-based public artwork takes over the MTA's Public Address (PA) system with poetic, multilingual announcements voiced by professional vocalists and everyday New Yorkers. Each announcement begins with a custom alert sound and ends with a prompt: "If you hear something, free something." These 24 announcements are shared in English, Spanish, Arabic, Bangla, Haitian Kreyól, Mandarin, and ASL and encourage reflection, surprise, and shared emotional life on platforms, buses, and in our communities.

This project is part of Sonic Commons, Creative Time's 2025 theme for public art and program exploring how sonic fragments (snippets of sound like conversation, music, announcements, footsteps, laughter, or silence) shape how we relate to each other. Public art is art made for everyone, and is encountered in shared places like parks, sidewalks, or the subway. Public art brings creativity into our everyday life and helps us think about the place, the issues, and the people who make it up.

Public art like *If you hear something, free something* reminds us that shared spaces can be places of imagination, healing, and connection.

Through sound, movement, and reflection, Bass encourages us that kindness and care are forms of power we all can share. You may experience the work through audio or sign language interpretation. You can take part by listening, sensing, imagining, or responding in whatever way works best for you.

Experience *If you hear something, free something* in the mezzanines of the following subway stations:

Manhattan

- Fulton St (4,5)
- 14 St-Union Sq (4,5,6)
- 42 St-Bryant Pk/5 Av (7)
- Grand Central-42 St (S)
- 163 St-Amsterdam Av (A,C)

Queens

- Court Sq (7,G)
- 74 St-Broadway (7)
- Mets-Willets Point (7)

Brooklyn

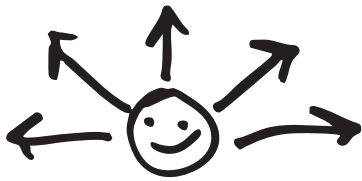
- Clinton-Washington Avs (G)
- Fort Hamilton Pkwy (F,G)
- York St (F)
- Atlantic Av-Barclays Ctr (2,3,4,5)

Bronx

- 167 St (B,D)
- Westchester Sq-E Tremont Av (6)



To learn more about Creative Time's public art programming, visit creativetime.org
To learn more about the artist, visit chloebass.com



Ways to Engage

The prompts in this guide are an invitation to reflect and connect, whether through movement, writing, gesture, silence, or shared conversation.

While on the Platform

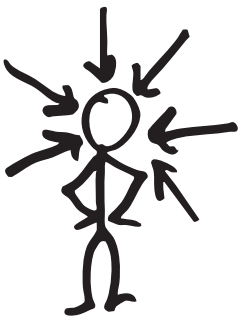
Take a moment to observe.

- What sounds do you experience – nearby or in the distance?
- How do people move or act when public messages play?
- Notice patterns, pauses, energy, facial responses, or gestures.
- What emotions or thoughts come up as you observe?

Tune In and Turn Inward

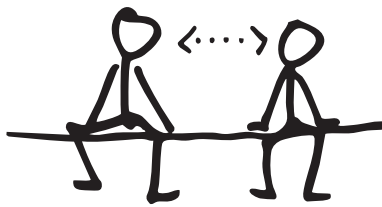
Tune into the words and sounds from *If you hear something, free something* and what's around you.

- What feelings or memories does each message bring up?
- Respond with a gesture or movement: hand over heart, deep breath, tapping; a one-word reflection whispered or signed.
- Trace a symbol on your palm that represents how you feel.
- Notice any vibrations through your feet, seat, or handrails and reflect through breath, tapping, or signing.

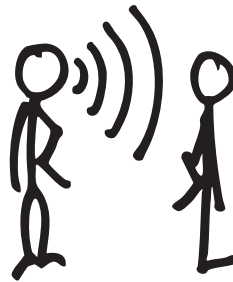


IN-TRANSIT: Travel Messages

- Focus on the community moving around you.
- Imagine you could send a silent message to your fellow riders.



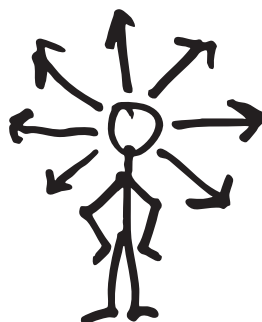
- What would it say? (e.g. “We’re moving together” “Pause” “You’re not alone.”)
- Write it, sketch it, hold it in thought, or express it nonverbally.
- If you’re with someone you trust, sign or share it aloud. Share your message and listen to theirs.



Feel the Echo

In-Between Moments (Platform or Transit Pause), reflect on how small actions ripple.

- Think of a small moment of care you witnessed or received during your commute.
- (e.g. you noticed someone offering their seat to another rider, because they needed it or someone moved over to make more room for you without being asked.)
- What happened? How did it affect you?
- What changed in you? What might you give today in return?
- Sketch or describe what “care in motion” might mean and could look like to you.
- Practice a subtle care gesture – eye contact, smile, offering space.



Beyond the Ride: Carry It Into The Community At Home, School, or Work

- Create a “Sound of Care” diary. Log a meaningful sound and feeling each day. (include texts, images and or collage elements)
- Host a “Public Message” Circle. Share one phrase you wish others could experience in public.

In the Community

- Create a poem, sound collage or window display with a message inspired by *If you hear something, free something*.
- Host a Gesture of Care Walk: small, intentional movements in public spaces.



Reflect

- How do public announcements, sounds, and silences influence how we act?
- What does emotional freedom in public space mean to you?
- What kinds of sounds stay with you long after you experience them?
- What could it mean to “free something” when you hear or sense something meaningful?

Final Thought from the Artist:

“I’m asking us to restore the emotional life of the public.”

– Chloë Bass

Imagine. What could a public space for connection, not just caution, look like?



CREDITS Angela Garcia, Education Consultant in collaboration with Creative Time and artist Chloë Bass.