

StoryCorps Interview at Long Island Children's Museum
Al Jarnow and Lisa Greene

Lisa: For me, the children's museum became real, not when we gave it its name, but when you created what I think, to this day, is the most incredibly amazing and wonderful logo. Because, to me, the children's museum logo represents all my hopes and dreams for the museum. It's smart, it's beautiful. Every individual character has meaning, and works separately, but together—I think that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Can you talk about that logo?

Al: It went through a bunch of iterations. But I really chose four—because those were our initials, LICM—to me what are iconic images of Long Island, of childhood learning, of childhood experience. The L is made out of children's building blocks. A simple enough figure but it's a vertical block and a horizontal block . . . uh, the standard [unintelligible], maple, wooden building blocks except it got kind of orangy in this iteration. The I, obviously, is a lighthouse, but it had a lot of options of being different lighthouses—and became the Fire Island Lighthouse. The C is a moon, which, to me, is a symbol of mystery, of imagination, of wondering what's going on in the night sky, of dreams and nightmares, and all kinds of things. So, the C ended up in there as a quarter moon. And the M is a Caslon M, which seemed to me signified a significant part of learning, which is reading, and identifying interesting-looking type fonts, and design is as much a part of reading as the words are. It's the kind of letter that you see carved into the stone facades of Roman buildings and the Metropolitan Museum of Art and it, it said museum to me.

Lisa: Why don't you describe what you did with the logo that's outside?

Al: The L stands there as an L made out of blocks. The I, the top of the lighthouse does light up—I wanted a rotating beam on top of it but that didn't come to pass. The C, the moon, I wanted a piece of, uh, plexiglas in there which became opaque during the day and transparent at night, but that material isn't made so that it can stand up outdoors so it is set in a black box. The M, uh, is a striated letter M, which, when you look at it from one angle is that Caslon M, but because of the way it's placed on triangular blocks, when you look at it from another angle, it's a child's handwriting M. Equally as much fun for me was our first newsletter.

Lisa: You let me have my way with the brown paper bag color.

Al: Which was a brilliant idea. I mean, we really wanted to do some interesting, provocative things, and, uh, rather than print it on pristine white paper, we printed it on brown paper bags.

Lisa: I think what we wanted to do was to say to people, "Give us your money and it will be well spent [man laughing]. We are really, really creative and we don't need to have a lot of money, we can make do with a little bit of money, and we can do great things, so please believe in us." I think we really wanted to get that across.