

Ephemeral labyrinth provided by the San Francisco Bureau of Urban Secrets & Southern Exposure. Photo by Romel Jacinto



Inside the labyrinth *by Leslie Sinclair*

IT'S BEST TO APPROACH the labyrinth with a question or intention in mind. I visit the Toronto Public Labyrinth when I want to be quiet and think. Today, I fidget at its entrance, trying to think of something profound to focus on. All I want to know is what will happen when my boyfriend moves overseas in a few days and I stay behind. Instead, I settle on a default intention I use in yoga when I'm at a similar loss: I will spend this time offering love to the world.

"No one saves us but ourselves," says Buddha. "No one can and no one may. We ourselves must walk the path." So I start walking, fussing with my clothes and hair until my mind finally accepts the task at hand.

The labyrinth is an ancient symbol, often walked as a sacred journey in the Middle Ages. Unlike a maze, which presents the walker with several choices of direction, dead-ends and false leads, a labyrinth has only one path to the centre and one path out. Without fear of becoming lost, the person navigating the labyrinth enters a moving meditation, similar to yoga. Found in churches and parks, hospitals and

prisons, labyrinths offer benefits like reduced levels of anxiety, chronic pain and insomnia, and lowered blood pressure and breathing rates.

This labyrinth is fashioned of grey and pink brick pavers, and over the years moss has filled in the cracks between the stones. As I trace its twisting path, my thoughts stray from my intention to the left-behind objects that will incarnate my boyfriend when he leaves: the book I borrowed but never gave back, the fancy coffee pot, the cat, the mid-century modern table from his bedside that now sits at mine.

In the centre, I wait for enlightenment but none arrives. The labyrinth is no oracle: it can't predict my future. But it reminds me to stay present or risk wandering off the path. Fortified by my pilgrimage, I negotiate its turns, back to where I began.

Leslie Sinclair lives in Toronto, Ontario. A worldwide labyrinth locator can be found at labyrinthlocator.com