

EXCERPT FROM:

“ To EI and Back: Taking On Every CTA Stop In One Weekend”
-Andy Seifert, New City, June 17, 2008

“Just yesterday, the Armitage station unveiled their new public art exhibit, and who should happen to be there today than the artist himself, Jonathan Gitelson (as well as his charming mother). For the three months before the station was dismantled, Gitelson interviewed passengers waiting for the train, asking them, point blank, to share the first story that came to mind about the city, perhaps about their relationship to the Armitage station itself. The result: forty-two pictures that accompany a caption from selected answers, each relaying a specific part of an EI passenger’s nostalgic recollections.

“People were really receptive,” he says. “People were surprisingly open and forthcoming. That was one thing that really surprised me. People weren’t scared and apprehensive to talk to a stranger about their personal life.”

It’s a neat, simple exhibit that says something about how people begin to define the city; some start with the EI, another with the Art Institute, one talks about going to a party off of this very station, or a food drive, run by a Catholic church in the area.

“I think the theme is just learning about the people who use this space,” he says. “I don’t think that I had an agenda in what I wanted it to say...I just [like] hearing stories from people. My only hope was that people would open up to me and tell me something personal.”

I ask why he thought a majority of people opened up, dug deep in their memory and produced a sometimes very emotional answer, and his response speaks to the nature of a typical EI passenger: “I guess when you’re waiting, you don’t have anything better to do.”