

SOURCE // GROUND

The point at which a river starts

The words in bold appear in a glossary at the end of this transcript.

JWB:

Part of my experience as a wheelchair user is that I feel ground through the wheels—

and through the relationship of hand and wheel and muscle.

CC:

Sight is the very first aspect of knowing where I'm going to step, with all four feet.

It's more important to see where I place the crutches, than placing my feet.

JWB:

It's also **haptic**. Keeping my physical attention on the ground also feels like a way of being in relationship. Because rolling over earthy ground is very precious to me. It's not something that I can take for granted. And because it's rare, I think it feels—

The ground deserves my attention. It deserves my regard.

CC:

It's all about **traction**. Like that's what I'm tuned into, of the crutch against the ground, and if it's starting to slip.

There's a process of placing and of *testing*. There's just a very particular understanding of physics that comes—of just looking at the ground and looking at terrain and knowing *exactly* where will provide the most support, before you pour the weight into it.

JWB:

I'm looking for certain kinds of tracks and trails.

They have to be a little bit wider.

They have to be mostly flat.

It can't have rained too recently because if the ground is soggy, it's no good.

Finding ground that's pleasurable [and] inviting is, I think, a big part of that dance.

CC:

I do *feel* through them.

I can feel when I've got a stone in my **ferrule**. By the way it catches the ground. Like it just, something changes by a couple of millimeters. And that's *all* it is.

But I can feel it.

JWB:

Part of the joy of going out and going off the pavement is an invitation to be in close proximity and in intimate connection with the dirt, with the rocks, with the, like, material stuff of the land.

CC:

I'll often walk up the *side* of a tarmac path, on the grass, because it's softer on my bones.

Along the margin, quite literally!

JWB:

I feel that there's a kind of kinship that means I *want* to pay attention to terrain and the land, the ground over which I'm rolling. Because that's part of the relationship that's happening in the moment.

CC:

That need to sometimes redefine a path *around* the path that has been navigated,
or the **desire line** that's been laid.

JWB:

The beauty of taking a roll through the woods. I mean, it takes effort. It

takes work. It takes strength. Sometimes it takes more strength than I have.

But there's something about finding a surface that is playful and can partner me and my particular way of moving—that's when the magic happens.

CC:

We lay our own desire lines.

Glossary

haptic: sensory knowledge gained through touch or physical contact

traction: having a firm grip on a surface

ferrule: the rubber base at the bottom of a crutch, which provides stability and strength

desire lines: an unplanned path that has been made by repeated travel across a route where people want to go, but which is not part of the “official” trail

