Exhibit XO: institutional pilot proposal

Accessible text version

Kenny Bass | 17 October 2026

The same proposal, capability boundaries and next step as the visual PDF, in a single reading column with descriptions of its images. This format is not an accessibility certification.

Read the linear HTML version

For discussion only. This proposal does not imply institutional interest, endorsement, approval, partnership, budget, or schedule. Nothing here creates a commitment, transaction, or rights grant.

1. Exhibit XO: institutional pilot proposal

Accessible interpretation, built into the exhibition.

An artwork-led first step

Begin with one or two photographs from A Marine's Disposable War (AMDW) and the live browser companion. Test how visitors enter the work, choose their own depth, and distinguish description, testimony, research and uncertainty.

AMDW is the artwork. Exhibit XO is the proposed approach to exhibition interpretation. AI and gallery hardware remain optional; the browser-based Core stands on its own.

Image description

Spent, Iraq, 2003. Photograph by Kenny Bass. Visual description: Thousands of long empty artillery propellant cases cover the ground and recede toward a low horizon beneath a broad pale sky.

2. The artwork comes first.

Disability should not mark the edge of someone's encounter with art.

The pilot asks whether visitors can reach meaningful interpretation while staying with the artwork, without a fixed sequence or an account. It is an integration question shaped with a museum, not a claim that museums lack interpretation or access services.

Encounter, orient, choose depth, return

Find the readable address or entry marker. Confirm the artwork and receive an overview. Open description, closer detail, context, testimony, provenance or uncertainty. Pause, move on or begin again; no timer or forced sequence.

A readable URL is the universal fallback. QR codes are optional printed pointers. NFC, deliberate artwork recognition and a shared station are optional entry methods that require venue testing. Recognition is never passive.

Image description

West of Eden, Iraq, 2003. Photograph by Kenny Bass. Visual description: A low tank stands in grass left of center, with a palm rising to its right. A road and parts of the photographing vehicle are visible in the foreground.

3. What is available now?

The live companion is the starting point. Additional features remain in development and require testing before release.

Live / current

The browser-based AMDW companion covers all fifteen photographs. Visitors can open description, closer looking, context, Kenny's recollection, authorship, connections, technical detail and uncertainty at their own pace.

Tested / not released

A technical candidate has passed controlled checks but remains unreleased and unavailable to visitors. This includes deliberate artwork recognition; technical checks do not establish visitor or museum acceptance.

Prototype

Source-grounded interactive questions, gallery stations and audio nodes are bounded development directions. They require human, device, venue and technical testing.

Future / optional

Reviewed audio and later tests with another collection are separately scoped possibilities. They are not required for Core and carry no availability promise.

4. Whose account am I receiving?

Visible source labels keep evidence, testimony and interpretation distinct.

Artwork record

What the photograph shows, what the approved project record establishes, and the work's authorship and documented history.

Artist testimony

What Kenny recalls or interprets, explicitly labeled as his account.

Museum interpretation

Museum-contributed interpretation, visibly attributed and separately reviewed. It does not silently become part of the artist or project record.

Contextual research

What documented sources contribute.

Combined interpretation and uncertainty

A combined answer is labeled as such. What the evidence cannot settle remains visible; uncertainty can apply within any source class.

People remain responsible for approval, release, correction and withdrawal. Technology can preserve labels and links; it does not decide what is authoritative.

5. Core works without AI.

Reviewed interpretation in an ordinary browser, with depth chosen by the visitor.

What Core requires

Approved interpretive layers and source labels; a readable web address and current browser; keyboard, screen-reader, zoom, reflow and contrast review; and a human process for release, correction and withdrawal.

What Core does not require

AI, a proprietary app, an account, recognition, special hardware, passive sensing, facial recognition, an always-on microphone or visitor tracking.

How approved material reaches a visitor

Approved artwork and sources are organized around each work's identity, sequence and links. Visible source labels identify contributions and uncertainty. The browser presents the reviewed layers. Optional features and museum material are added separately. Failure of an optional feature returns the visitor to Core.

A venue configuration can select local order, labels, entry methods and help without rewriting the project's established facts. Any approved evaluation data remains separate from ordinary use.

6. Add only what the pilot needs.

An optional capability must never become a hidden requirement.

Interactive questions: prototype

If separately approved, visitors could ask questions in everyday language, change depth and explore connections within reviewed exhibition sources. Answers must identify supporting sources, distinguish combined interpretation, preserve uncertainty, decline unsupported claims and return safely to Core. These behaviors require implementation and testing.

Audio: future / optional

Reviewed narration and description could provide another way to enter the work. Core remains complete when audio is unavailable. Voice interaction would require push-to-talk, a visible privacy state and explicit testing; no always-on microphone is proposed.

Artwork recognition: tested / not released

Recognition would be deliberately initiated by a visitor through a camera or file. It is not facial recognition or passive sensing. Manual selection and a readable address remain available.

Optional AI could use institution-controlled equipment or a separately approved service. Neither a finished AI system nor an unlimited service is promised.

7. A quiet presence beside the work.

The station and screenless audio node are one proposed product family. Core does not depend on either.

Gallery Quiet

A compact tabletop direction with an angled screen and tactile controls, paired with a smaller audio node. It is the near-term enclosure study.

Civic Light is the longer-term purpose-built direction; Archive Bronze explores a venue-responsive material variant. These are concepts, not completed products, fabrication drawings or installed systems.

Image description

Gallery Quiet: station and audio-node concept study. Visual description: A pale tabletop station has an angled dark display and tactile controls. A matching smaller screenless node beside it has a dark speaker grille and controls. Industrial-design study; engineering configuration subject to prototype validation.

8. What must the hardware prove?

A physical prototype still needs to be built and tested with visitors, museum staff and accessibility specialists.

Physical validation

Display angle and glare; seated and standing reach; tactile differentiation; push-to-talk and visible privacy indication; headphone hygiene; speaker behavior; stability; service access; cleaning; heat; noise; power; cable management; and emergency fallback.

Proposed local configuration

Pi 5-class endpoint computers would handle controls, stored approved interpretation and playback. Optional speech, retrieval and larger AI workloads would use a separate institution-controlled on-site host over a private network. A local endpoint language model is not part of the pilot baseline.

Fallback is part of the design

The station and audio node would each retain local compute and stored interpretation. A private venue network would connect optional larger services. If AI or the host becomes unavailable, stored interpretation and manual navigation must remain available.

Industrial-design study; engineering configuration subject to prototype validation.

9. Start small. Learn before expanding.

The first test uses one or two AMDW works in a browser, before considering hardware, AI or a larger exhibition.

1. Proof

Test entry, navigation, depth, understanding and correction with one or two works.

2. Institutional pilot

Selected AMDW works with agreed roles, paid co-design, field evaluation and release requirements. The selection and scale are established in a written scope.

3. Complete AMDW installation

The full fifteen-work experience, with every optional feature reviewed separately.

4. New collection test

Selected museum-owned material, with the necessary permissions, only if the AMDW pilot supports a second test.

What to evaluate

Independent entry, navigation and recovery; comprehension and source attribution; depth choice, trust, comfort and emotional load; reliability, staff workload, support, incidents and correction. Evaluation is optional and separately consented. Visitors may use Core without taking part.

10. Practice, not a certification claim.

Automated checks can find technical defects. People must evaluate the lived experience.

Current practices

Semantic headings, landmarks, labels and logical reading order; keyboard operation and visible focus; screen-reader structure and direct links; zoom, reflow, contrast and readable measures; and text equivalents for meaningful images and diagrams. No timed interaction, autoplay, forced audio or disappearing instruction is required.

Required human review

Qualified blind-user testing of the institutional experience remains required. Co-design and testing labor should be paid. Additional disabled participants and appropriate specialists are needed for the actual museum, devices, routes, content and environment.

Limits

One reviewer, browser or automated report cannot establish universal access, certification, museum validation or readiness for every visitor. The pilot is not a finished off-the-shelf museum product.

An accessible text version accompanies this visual proposal. Both include visual descriptions. Their availability does not establish accessibility validation; the linear HTML version is also available for browser reading and reflow.

11. A bounded experience with accountable people.

The minimum Core deployment stores no visitor interaction record.

Visitor privacy

No profile or sign-in is needed. There is no background camera, proximity tracking, biometric inference or hidden listening. Any measurement or stored usage data requires an explicit museum decision and data plan. Approved evaluation remains separate from ordinary visitor use.

The institution supplies

A real visitor or exhibition question; the venue and staff workflow; approved institution interpretation and rights authority; technical context; paid co-design and testing participants; and privacy, security, conservation and evaluation decisions appropriate to scope.

Kenny Bass / Altheon supplies

AMDW artwork authority and the approved reference material; the browser experience for agreed works; a review-and-correction process; implementation support during an agreed test period; and clear boundaries for optional features.

Stored interpretation and optional computing may remain on systems the museum controls. This proposal's web pages collect no dossier engagement data.

12. Agree the scope in writing.

A first conversation identifies a useful question. It creates no partnership, budget or schedule.

Existing companion inclusion

Every AMDW exhibition includes accessibility and the existing digital companion. Institutional acquisitions include configuration of the existing accessible digital companion for the selected photographs and their installation order. Physical signage, on-site work and unusual platform requirements are scoped separately in the written proposal.

Pilot agreement

Confirm the works, visitor needs, environment, content approval roles, rights, security and data boundaries. Agree evaluation methods, consent where applicable, success criteria, incidents, correction and withdrawal.

Budget, schedule and support

Scope labor, equipment, support, insurance, fabrication and contingency before commitment. Hosting, maintenance, new content, revisions and any optional service use require defined terms; this proposal makes no ongoing or unlimited-service promise.

Detailed security records, contracts, engineering files and participant records are handled separately from the public proposal.

13. What is the question worth testing?

Begin with a working conversation, then a written pilot outline for review.

Bring the institution's exhibition, interpretation, visitor-experience, accessibility and technical leads together around one or two works. Compare the proposal with the live companion and decide what the institution needs to learn.

Read and discuss

Explore the live material or start a pilot conversation through these links.

Explore Exhibit XO

Open the live AMDW companion

Read the linear HTML version

Discuss a pilot question

Image and rights boundary

Photographs reproduced here are credited to Kenny Bass. The full AMDW companion remains a separate presentation with its work-specific records and credits. Inclusion in this proposal grants no reproduction rights and does not authorize other publication, high-resolution distribution, sponsor use or a new license. New uses and institution-owned material require the applicable permissions and rights review.

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