

# cmagazine 121

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years

## Walking

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Carmen Papalia — Sheilah Wilson — Vanessa Dion Fletcher  
André Cadere — Richard Long — Elinor Whidden  
Hamish Fulton — Samuel Rowlett — Barbara Louder



until June



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# On Speculative Walking:

## From the Peripatetic to the Peristaltic

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«I can only meditate when I am walking. When I stop I cease to think; my mind only works with my legs.»

\* *Jean-Jacques Rousseau*

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„All enjoyment, all taking in and assimilation, is eating, or rather: eating is nothing other than assimilation.“

\* *Novalis*

How does motion affect consciousness? What are the ways in which motility—slowness or speed—alter one’s experience of space and time? A most personal form of transportation, walking induces mind travel and flows of the imagination. In *Confessions*, Jean-Jacques Rousseau suggests that there is something about walking that stimulates and enlivens thoughts. He adds that, for him, meditation could only happen when walking; when he would stop, thinking would cease, which conjectures that the movement of his mind depended on the movement of his legs. Rousseau has a role in a long and richly variegated history connecting walking with speculative thought in literature and philosophy where the process engenders conscious and unconscious states of becoming, opening towards a fluid sense of embodiment where surroundings are taken in and assimilated. This edifying passage is durational, occurring in real time, which is of course unique to each instance, to each happening, and indeed, to each walk.

Numerous terms capture an experience that is simultaneously corporeal and cerebral, including perambulation, peregrination and wayfaring.<sup>1</sup> A personal favourite is “peripatetic,” which means “one who walks from place to place.” This word originates with Aristotle, who taught philosophy while walking in the Lyceum of ancient Athens. The Peripatetic school was founded around 335 BC, the name taken from the Lyceum’s covered walkways or paths known as *peripatoi*.<sup>2</sup> One might even conjecture that walking and speculating are core elements of metaphysics, and of reasoning in general. As Rebecca Solnit tells us, “...the association between walking and philosophizing became so

widespread that central Europe has places named after it: the celebrated Philosophenweg in Heidelberg, where Hegel is said to have walked; the Philosophen-damm in *Königsberg*, where Kant passed on his daily stroll (now replaced by a railway station); and the Philosopher’s Way Kierkegaard mentions in Copenhagen.”<sup>3</sup> In her book *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*, Solnit lists an impressive array of people who walked as a way of developing their imagined terrains, including Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill, Thomas Hobbes, Friedrich Nietzsche and Ludwig Wittgenstein. In the 18th century, William Wordsworth and his sister, Dorothy, advanced the taste for walking long distances in the countryside. Their walks are central to our perceptions of Romantic poetry and particularly its adulation of nature. Numerous pathways can be traversed through a study of walking and its expanded relationship to thinking. Memorable writings on the subject include Rousseau’s *Reveries of a Solitary Walker* (1782), Henry David Thoreau’s “Walking” (1862),<sup>4</sup> Charles Baudelaire’s *The Painter of Modern Life* (1863), Virginia Woolf’s “Street Haunting: A London Adventure” (1930), Walter Benjamin’s “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire” (1939), and W.G. Sebald’s novel *The Rings of Saturn* (1995).

Walking has also given rise to emergent and radical ways of being in the world: protests, public demonstrations and social formations are engaged in, and indeed are produced, through the democratic use of public space. Walking as political and collective action has played a role in many significant historical events such as the Women’s March on Versailles in 1789 to protest the high price and scarcity of bread, an important precursor to the French Revolution;

Notes

1 Two important aesthetic concepts related to walking include the *flâneur* and the *dérive*. The former, originally connected to 19th-century poet Charles Baudelaire means someone who strolls, lounges or saunters: the latter, connected to Guy Debord,

2 Interestingly, another group of philosophers, the Stoics, also acquired their name from the architectural sur-

4 Thoreau takes up the strong spiritual dimension of walking as epitomized by the pilgrimage. His essay expands upon the etymology of the word “saunter,” which he believes may come from the French *Sainie-Terre* (“Holy Land”) or *sans terre* (“without land”).

Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* (New York: Penguin, 2001), 16.



Gandhi's 240-mile Salt March in 1930, also known as the *Salt Satyagraha*, protesting the British salt monopoly and taxation system and leading to the Indian independence movement; Martin Luther King Jr.'s 54-mile march in 1965 from Selma, Alabama to the state capital of Montgomery to protest unjust voting laws; and Cesar Chavez's 340-mile March for Justice from Delano to Sacramento in 1966 to protest mistreatment of farm workers in California.<sup>5</sup> More recent is the 1,600-kilometre walk of a group of James Bay Cree youth from Whapmagoostui, Quebec to Parliament Hill in 2013. And Nelson Mandela's 1995 autobiography is titled *Long Walk to Freedom*. Such a commonplace activity, walking can both feed the soul *and* alter the course of history.

The penchant for walking while thinking is a human activity further enhanced by the presence of natural and human-made panoramas. Perhaps the quality of imaginative explorations is afforded by geographical place *and* atmospheric condition: charming vistas, shadows cast, light quality and the arduousness of the terrain. It takes time and distance to unfold an idea or disentangle a motif in one's imagination. Often ideas come in an oblique yet generative manner while distracted by a setting and the progress of the syncopating beats beneath one's feet. This evokes what psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi describes as the "flow state," which ensues when one is engaged in focused and meaningful actions.<sup>6</sup> Usually marked by an intensified temporal awareness, there is a sort of free-floating attentiveness afforded by the extended walk where a diffusion of consciousness tends to set the mind to thinking. And a more exact clarity might occur with remapping how a

thought has unfurled by returning to the spaces where it was born: an eternal return as eternal cogitation, perhaps. How long does it take to figure an image, develop an idea, or embody a narrative? And in what ways might this form of speculative walking become a luminous reverie, a collaged flow of innovation and recollection? What is fundamental here is the embodied affect of movement on the imagination, the peristaltic waves of the mind. Plus walking is extremely good for you and aids digestion.

The assimilation of one's surroundings coupled with rhythmic journeying is an intricate process that arouses the potential for metaphor and analogy. For example, a relationship between cities and bodies, and how the former are often described in bodily ways, provides entry into symbolic content. Here, one can point to the metaphors of veins and arteries in relation to lanes and streets. Canals, tracts and ducts have their mirror worlds inside and outside the body. I am especially intrigued by how metaphors of digestion inform and complement our daily peregrinations. Literary critic, essayist and philosopher Walter Benjamin extolled the art of "slow walking" as the instrument of modern urban mapping, as if one is grazing the terrain for pleasure, experience and sustenance.<sup>7</sup> Walking becomes a form of rumination where cogitation moves from the literal to the figurative. As peristaltic waves move food through the body by its own motility, the physical movements of walking similarly allow for the slow digestion of thoughts and experiences. Through involuntary nerve impulses, peristalsis helps to draw nutrients from food through a dynamic and circuitous digestive system. Rhythmic

5 See Robert Manning's essay "Long Walks, Deep Thoughts," in *Chronicle of Higher Education*, December 15, 2012.

6 See Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1991).

7 Quoted in Anthony Vidler, *Warped Space: Art, Architecture and Anxiety in Modern Culture* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2000), 74.

contractions allow for passage through the body and, by extension, the imagination. Metabolism moves in mysterious ways.<sup>8</sup> Like cows, we also ruminate as we roam. The word “ruminant” comes from the Latin *ruminare*, which means “to chew over again.” Perhaps perambulation is a method or mode of aerating nascent ideas by breaking down the constituent elements, enabling space between thoughts. And of course, all this takes time and energy. If food takes on average 12 hours to digest, how long does it take to formulate a thought, digest a landscape and incorporate an idea? Consider that walking burns about four calories per minute and the brain, a notorious energy guzzler, can burn a calorie and a half per minute when actively thinking. Quick assimilation is not the ideal; in its place is the deliberate, slow rumination of total digestion.

There are several models for peripatetic engagement. Walking can be said to represent a twofold mediation; between the corporeal movement in space and time, and its provision for the peristaltic waves of reflection afforded by that movement. It is from this double perspective that we explore how walking can be understood as a form of mobile thinking. Walking has long nourished creative urges, whether writing, art-making or political meditations, and indeed mediations. With its long history, peripateticism characterizes exploratory expeditions that support the unfurling and digestion of an idea. Walking is a form of reflection that generates compelling metaphors. Whether in urban or rural spaces, pathways suggest the folds and multiple passages of a digestive tract where indeterminable and endless contours might be discovered, where front-

iers are made porous and turned into thresholds, where motility arouses internal apprehensions. Walking aerates mind, body and the spaces in between so that a sustainable life force emerges between the rhythm of walking and that of a poetic digestion, forming a site and an event where the outside world meets with the interior realm of human reflection and creativity.

Through walking, one ingests or assimilates the landscape for fuel and nourishment. In this way, walking is tied to a kind of productivity, to making something with one’s body and imagination. What does it mean to be attuned to one’s own creative urges via roaming and rumination? And how might we feed lavishly upon all sorts of ambulatory comestibles while on the lookout for the thing that will satisfy our emergent desires? This relation is contingent upon the personal response and cravings of the one who ambles. Walking thus becomes part of a generative cycle of assimilating and absorbing the world around us, taking (without taking) things in with all of the sustenance this process entails; each of us has our own rhythms, ways of moving and responding to the world around us. Some are sluggish, others swift, with one no better than the other. In a metabolic sense, the process involves speculative walking from the peripatetic to the peristaltic, where momentum is simultaneously corporeal and cerebral. Perhaps spatial passages with their continual circulation of nutrients highlight the ways in which the metaphoric and the metabolic are not so easy to disentangle. \*

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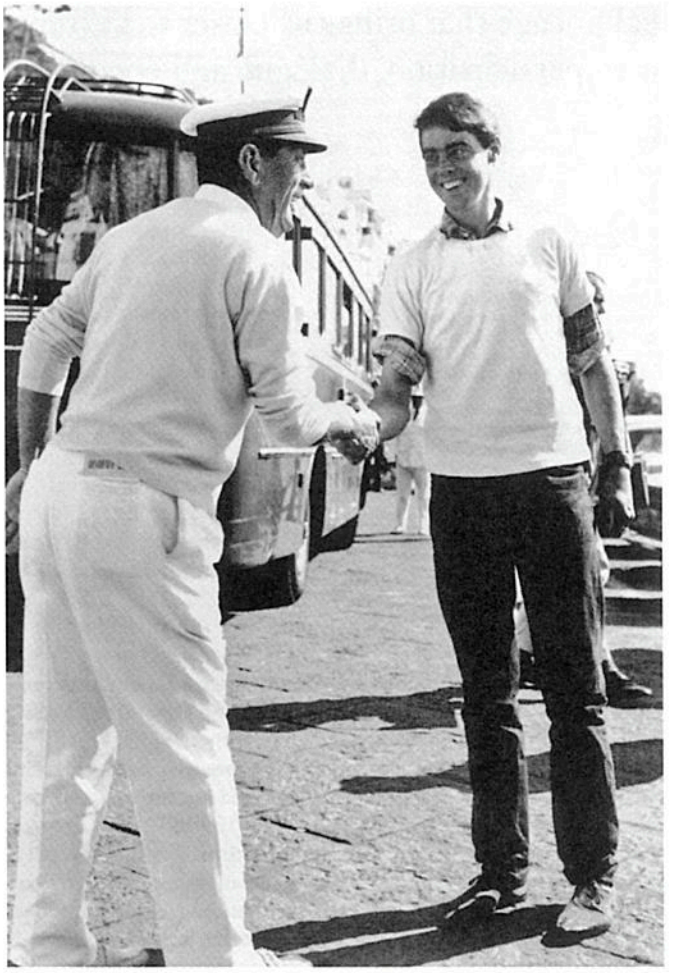
<sup>8</sup> Connected via the spinal cord and other nerves, the brain and the digestive tract are in constant communication and share a networked intelligence. Some scientists have hypothesized that we have two brains. See Michael Gershon’s *The Second Brain: A Groundbreaking New Understanding of Nervous Disorders of the Stomach and Intestine* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1999).



# Walking

# Transformed:

The Dialogics of  
Art & Walking





The recent history of walking as contemporary art owes much to a previous generation's preoccupation with theories of "space" (in expanded sculptural practices) and "place" (for avant-gardist, resistant tendencies). However, there may be other concepts that have greater resonance for current "walking art" practice and which suggest, with echoes of Robert Frost, that there's a path perhaps "less travelled by."<sup>1</sup> Namely, there may exist a different historical lineage that brings us closer to current preoccupations with participation, dialogue and encounter.



André Cadere with Harald Szeemann  
PHOTO: DANIEL PYPE; IMAGE COURTESY OF LYNDA MORRIS

Even while still students at St. Martin's College of Art in London, Richard Long and Hamish Fulton rapidly gained a reputation as being *the* archetypal "walking artists." Their journeys by bicycle around the UK, or hitch-hiking across Europe as sculptural practice—echoing the interests and methods of their North American contemporaries, such as Douglas Huebler<sup>2</sup>—were soon extended by their use of walking.

Whether walking in precisely predetermined circles on rough upland terrain, or walking for a set number of days and nights, or walking without talking, these artists adhered to the artistic preoccupations and conceptual determinants of the day—working within spatial, temporal and behavioural constraints to produce work in a sculptural tradition, albeit on a hugely expanded scale and presented starkly, in an informational or bureaucratic form.

It was through the radical pedagogy of St. Martin's that Fulton, Long and others came to consider walking as a viable artistic strategy, explored through a number of workshops organized by faculty. The best known saw a group of students bound together with a cord—reminiscent of Lygia Clark's group-work<sup>3</sup>—and instructed to negotiate their way back to the art school through the streets of Soho. While this earliest work is recorded photographically, as a group of young art students huddled on the corner of Greek Street, another exercise lives on through myth alone: students were instructed to "walk to the countryside," heading westward out of London. It's rumoured the aim was reaching Oxford; however, a wrong turn landed them north of the Chiltern Hills, their numbers depleted. While these instances appear to establish the fate of "walking art"—in the UK at least, where Fulton adopted the term and imposed it on Long—its origins are perhaps less straightforward. As well as being promoted, it is claimed, as a typically "British" mode of art-making by certain artists (most notably Anne Seymour in *The Nose Art* exhibition

#### Notes

- 1 Extract from Robert Frost's "The Road Not Taken" (1920) in Louis Untermeyer, *The Road Not Taken; an Introduction to Robert Frost* (New York: Holt, 1951).
- 2 See Douglas Huebler's *Variable Piece #1* (1968) for example, or his *Duration Pieces*. See, for instance, Alexander Alberro, *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003).
- 3 See, for example, Suzanne Stein, "Interview: Rudolf Frieling on The Art of Participation" 2008. <http://blog.sfmoma.org/2008/11/interview-rudolf-frieling-on-the-art-of-participation/>
- 4 See William Wood's "Still You Ask For More: Demand, Display and 'The New Art'" in Michael Newman and Jon Bird, eds. *Rewriting Conceptual Art* (London: Reaktion, 1999) for an account of how Long, in particular, was pitted against artists like Art & Language, whose stoic, austere silence was deemed to be more "British" than philosophic, conversational work, which supposedly demonstrated an allegiance with "American" tendencies in Conceptual art. This "Britishness" entwined prehistoric and Romantic references—the ironically titled *The Long Man of Wilmington* and the popular interpretation of the English Romantic tradition as a silent reverie in the face of "wilderness."



at the Hayward Gallery), the work made by Fulton and Long *individually* does not reflect the nascent participatory or collaborative approaches that are inferred in their student work. Or rather, that is the case unless we discount one work by Richard Long that suggests an altogether different historical trajectory for “walking work.” In a photograph of a performance by the artist<sup>5</sup> held by the Galleria Lia Rumma in Naples and taken in Amalfi in 1968, we see Richard Long standing, arm outstretched, a toothy smile on his face, shaking the hands of passers-by. Although Long himself, in conversation, dismissed *HandShaking Piece* (1968) as a mere “student performance,”<sup>6</sup> this work suggests that there are other social modalities—even in the work of those artists associated most strongly with the spatial and sculptural concerns of walking—which could define a lineage of “walking work,” which would include theoretical and practical concerns closer to our current preoccupations: participation, conversation and dialogue, for instance.

The ease with which Long greets those crossing the harbourfront in Amalfi—with the Italian summer sun shining on them and their relaxed, casual clothing—bolsters Claire Bishop’s criticism when she appends “walks” to her list describing the “predictable formula” of participatory art.<sup>7</sup> But this does not mean that we can tar all walking work with the same brush. We can find a wide gamut of work, some of which would dispel these criticisms, and which demonstrates the whole range of artistic strategies, constructing manifold relations to others.

André Cadere’s incessant, insistent skirmishes and gate-crashings of the art worlds of Western European and the USA during the early to late 1970s—who he saw as excluding him as just a “dirty” Eastern European<sup>8</sup>—present something of a contrast. His walks between galleries supporting Conceptual and Minimal art and artists, *Barre de Bois Rond* (1975) conveyed on his shoulder, were anything but a disinterested meander, his itineraries far from a list of arbitrary spatial coordinates. There were no “chance operations”<sup>9</sup> at work: walking was a means to precisely explore the political dimension of the artist’s world. Even Gustav Courbet’s casual greeting<sup>10</sup>—apparently a benign “hail fellow traveler, well met”—is more nuanced than it at first appears. This is a meeting between artist and dealer after all, whose handshake enables the artist to take his place within the market, temporarily assuaging some of the anxieties that come with relying on patronage and sales as indicators of status and self-worth. While these examples of work by Long, Cadere and Courbet apparently prefigure the contemporary artist in participatory mode, they only highlight the messy engagement of artists with their world: negotiating institutional demands; living with status-anxiety; the low-down, base business of making sales, placating patrons and dealers.

The frictionless world of participation imagined by critics exists only as a paper tiger of course, useful only as a rhetorical device. There is never an *a priori* reality—an extant, smooth “social space”—which artists choose to inhabit; the “social” is in the making, produced with every footstep<sup>11</sup> and with every handshake. Walking is in no way free from either the overt disciplining or naturalized cultural mores that influence artists’ and others’ lives; it is in no way a technique that will guarantee access to—and equal exchange within—the public sphere.<sup>12</sup> The messiness of the world and the constant need to build and rebuild it in relation to others, to negotiate it and parlay it into being, is at the heart of “walking work” in this mode.

It is this “anthropological” space that “the maverick philosopher of the everyday”<sup>13</sup> Michel de Certeau recognizes—in *lieu* of phenomenological philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty—as being distinct from the abstract, the totalizing and the “geometrical.”<sup>14</sup> This thickening of space described by de Certeau et al. is redolent with the crush and clamour of pedestrian life, an “opaque and blind mobility characteristic of the bustling city,”<sup>15</sup> and an enforced proximity out of which springs familiarity; a dense togetherness from which comes the formation of the crowd, the multitude.<sup>16</sup> But as Markus Miessen asserts, as a criticism of participation in art and politics, proximity does not necessarily correspond to empathy, despite our best intent.<sup>17</sup> This criticism is also present in the work of anthropologists Tim Ingold and Jo Lee who question the common sense of walking within anthropological fieldwork. At face value, the proximity brought about by being with others on foot appears to produce insights and understandings that would otherwise be denied to us. But in their incisive invocation of fellow anthropologist Clifford Geertz, they recognize that walking in close proximity does not necessarily admit the researcher into others’ lives. “We cannot simply walk into other people’s worlds, and expect thereby to participate with them,” they state,<sup>18</sup> noting that a further “attunement” is required. Through their discussion of the shortcomings of Georg Simmel’s theory of the

- 5 Reproduced in Frances Morris and Richard Flood, *Zero to Infinity: Arte Povera 1962–1972*. 1st ed. (London: Walker Art Centre, 2001).
- 6 From an unpublished interview with the artist, 2005.
- 7 Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso, 2012), p. 21.
- 8 André Cadere in conversation with Lynda Morris, Lynda Morris, ed. *André Cadere: Documenting Cadere, 1972–1978*. (Ostend, Belgium: Modern Art Oxford, 2013), catalogue of an exhibition at the Mu.ZEE gallery, Ostend, March 2–May 2, 2013.
- 9 Marc G. Jensen, “John Cage, Chance Operations, and the Chaos Game: Cage and the ‘I Ching,’” in *The Musical Times* (Vol. 150, No. 1907, July 1, 2009): 97–102.
- 10 Gustav Courbet’s, *La Rencontre Ou Bonjour M. Courbet*, 1854, oil on canvas, 129 cm x 149 cm.
- 11 Thoroughly elucidated in Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 1984).
- 12 Craig J. Calhoun, *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992).
- 13 Christopher Prendergast, “Everyday Life: Theories and Practices from Surrealism to the Present” in *French Studies* (Vol. 60, No. 4, October 1, 2006), 536–537.
- 14 de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 93.
- 15 *Ibid.*
- 16 See Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, trans. Carol Stewart (London: Phoenix, 2000) and Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2004).
- 17 “A lot of recent talk on participation assumes that the closer you get to something or someone, the more empathy you develop. This is a scary assumption.” Markus Miessen, *The Nightmare of Participation* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2011), 45.
- 18 Tim Ingold and Jo Lee, “Fieldwork on Foot: Perceiving, Routing, Socializing” in *Locating the Field: Space, Place and Context in Anthropology*, eds. Simon Coleman and Peter Collins (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2006), p. 67.





Dyad as the basic social unit subtended by the eye, they conclude that “to participate is not to walk *into* but to walk *with*—where ‘with’ implies not a face-to-face confrontation, but heading the same way, sharing the same vistas, and perhaps retreating from the same threats behind.”<sup>19</sup> It is the *physical* attitude of bodies and their *spatial* arrangement that suggests something of their *relational* attitude. Walking alongside becomes a means to negotiate a flow—of conversation, of movement. Moreover, it becomes symbolic of an ideal type of relation, where moving together, shoulder-to-shoulder, conveys the potential for *mutuality, parity or equality*.

For anthropologists, as we have seen, this participatory mode of walking with others is itself something of an ideal, and has been formalized into a method of fieldwork in geographer Jon Anderson’s “Talking Whilst Walking” (2004)<sup>20</sup> for example. Yet for artistic practice, there’s a compulsion from some quarters<sup>21</sup> to explore the less literally sociable or “ameliorative”<sup>22</sup> aspects of being together—to explore the inevitable distancing that come from art historical positioning of artists as “autonomous,”<sup>23</sup> rather than as “insider[s];”<sup>24</sup> or from an art-theoretical perspective, the outright refusal to be “included.”<sup>25</sup> Vito Acconci’s *Following Piece* (1969)—and subsequent artworks influenced by it<sup>26</sup>—also proves the inverse of Ingold and Lee’s theory, where a walking *with* alludes to a malevolent, sinister—or at least indifferent—attitude to others. Marina Abramović and Ulay,<sup>27</sup> while confirming the confrontational and anti-social aspects of walking *into* do so as a test of commitment—both artistic and personal—by walking towards each other not knowing whether the increase in proximity that this affords will bring them together or force them apart. Their eventual falling apart appeases philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy<sup>28</sup> in his insistence that it is the *declination* of individuals, rather than an *inclination* towards others, that shapes our social reality.<sup>29</sup> Perhaps we could imagine a world of different relationships, beyond aloof, impermeable monads, marching in-step,<sup>30</sup> colliding, coinciding or skirting around each other? Could we imagine a “walking work” where artists and/or participants are less intact, inscrutable or unscathed following their encounters with each other?

Such a work would require more of the artist than simply walking with others, suggesting an acknowledgment of vulnerability<sup>31</sup> and an openness to the influence of others that runs contrary to art’s recent history.

It was Tom Finkelpearl who saw Paulo Freire’s radical, emancipatory approach to pedagogy as providing a way out of the Modernist impasse for contemporary art—in particular, as “a counterpoint to the Greenbergian notion of aesthetic isolation.”<sup>32</sup> Freire’s<sup>33</sup> *dialogic* approach levelled the hierarchies otherwise taken for granted: student and teacher journeyed together, learned together; and, by implication, there is no longer an audience or spectator waiting patiently for the “transmission”<sup>34</sup> of the artist’s monologue. Rather, there is an expectant and eager fellow-traveller. They are thus participants in a dialogue that “brings them together while holding them apart”<sup>35</sup> and through which they “come to see the world not as a static reality but as a reality in the process of transformation.”<sup>36</sup> Exploring this potential for participants to be changed *in themselves, as well as in the relations between them* could align the work of walking artists with a spectrum of concerns that have broader currency, bringing them into conversations with other artists to explore the concepts of encounter, negotiation, participation and dialogue, which their own history of practice exemplifies so readily. Historian and philosopher Paul Carter writes of an altogether different pedestrian figure—but one which also exemplifies this shift in correspondence between spatial and relational modes and which prefigures the trajectory of my argument here. Writing of agoraphobes’ anxiety at the threshold of entering open space, Carter suggests that there is more to the condition than the fear of *spatial* openness. Rather, it is a hyper-sensitivity to the potential for innumerable new encounters within this space and the anticipation of *relational openness* that induces this panic. Furthermore, Carter concludes that their condition stems not from a fear of the catastrophic consequences of coming into proximity with others, but in the potential for a “cross over”<sup>37</sup> or *transformational* event to occur. We can wonder at the fate of walking art had Richard Long,, striding into the brilliantly sun-lit quayside southeast of Naples, continued with such bold, public encounters—a stranger on the road; a fellow traveller. It is perhaps the very openness to the possibility of being changed by encounters with others—anticipated by the agoraphobe—that we need to grasp and which might take us farther along the path not taken. \*

\* Artist Simon Pope’s work, such as the film *Memory Marathon* (2010), often involves walking and talking with others. More recent work, such as *A Song, A Dance And A New Stannary Parliament* (2014) continues an ongoing interest in how objects appear within dialogue. These concepts form the basis of Pope’s doctoral study at the Ruskin School of Art, University of Oxford, establishing more-

- 19 Ibid. This also finds resonance in Andrew Roddan, *Vancouver’s Hoboes* (Vancouver: Subway Books: 2005), 20 “that kind of brotherhood we find when the forest fire sweeps the mountainside and animals and human beings flee together from a common foe.”
- 20 Jon Anderson, “Talking Whilst Walking: A Geographical Archaeology of Knowledge,” in *Area* (Vol. 36, No. 3, September 2004), 254–261.
- 21 Bishop 2004; 2011; 2005; and in Dusan 2009.
- 22 Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 12.
- 23 See, for example, Peter Bürger, “On the Problem of the Autonomy of Art in Bourgeois Society” in *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).
- 24 See, for example, Robert K. Merton, “Insiders and Outsiders: A Chapter in the Sociology of Knowledge” in *The American Journal of Sociology* (Vol. 78, No. 1, 1972), 9–47 for discussion of sociology’s grapplings with insider-ness.
- 25 Dave Beech, “Include Me Out,” in *Art Monthly* (No. 315, April 2008), 1–4.
- 26 In a 1992 *Frieze* article on Sophie Calle’s *Suite Vénitienne* (1980–1996), Stuart Morgan writes, “If every artwork has a prototype which it emulates and corrects, Calle’s would be Vito Acconci’s *Following Piece*...”
- 27 Marina Abramović and Ulay, *The Lovers: The Great Wall Walk, 1988*, performance documented on video, 65:32.
- 28 Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 4.
- 29 See also Bakhtin’s conjecture that we are formed and transformed by social interaction—in a sense, from our *inclination* towards others. See Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1984).
- 30 As exemplified in Francis Alys’ *The Guards* (2004–5).
- 31 This *dialogic* relationship is recognized by Homi Bhabha as “a process that sloughs off the calloused, dead skin that covers up our vulnerabilities to ‘difference’.” Homi Bhabha, “Conversational Art,” in Mary Jane Jacob and Michael Brenson, eds., *Conversations at the Castle: Changing Audiences and Contemporary Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), 45–46.
- 32 Tom Finkelpearl, *Dialogues in Public Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 272.
- 33 Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: London: Continuum, 2005).
- 34 Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator* (London, Verso, 2009), 14.
- 35 Dwight Conquergood, “Performing as a Moral Act: Ethical Dimensions of the Ethnography of Performance” in *Literature and Performance* (Vol. 5, No. 2, April 1985), 1–13.
- 36 Donald Macedo in Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 12.
- 37 Paul Carter, *Repressed Spaces: The Poetics of Agoraphobia* (London: Reaktion Books, 2002), 184.



# The Walk

# Exchange:

Pedagogy and  
Pedestrianism

An Interview  
with Moira  
Williams

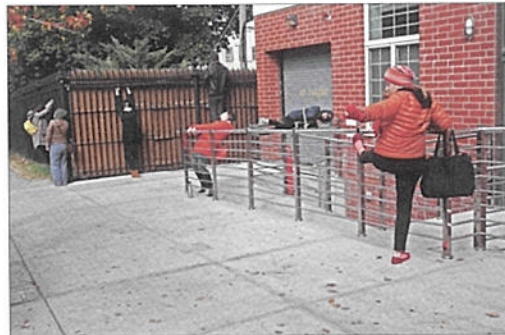




## The Walk Exchange: Pedagogy and Pedestrianism An Interview with Moira Williams

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Moira Williams, a performance-based artist whose work invites public interaction and exchange, is a founding member of New York City-based walking cooperative The Walk Exchange, which produces free “educational and creative walks.” Founded in 2010 by Williams, Dillon de Give, Bess Matassa, Virginia Millington, and Blake Morris, The Walk Exchange holds monthly walks and an annual Walk Study Training Course (WSTC). The cooperative has organized a walk through the Lower East Side related to a New York-specific poem or song, for instance, KISS’s *Back in the New York Groove*. The Walk Exchange member Blake Morris embarked on a 90-day walk in New York City, stopping at 30 different homes and staying for three nights in each one. Additionally, The Walk Exchange conducts workshops and produces site-specific projects.



The Walk Exchange, WSTC #4, 2013, Brooklyn, New York,  
New York City Marathon  
PHOTO: MOIRA WILLIAMS

Like other members, Williams’ practice involves walking as a means of exploring ecology, gardening, urbanism and spatial politics. For example, in *Exchange* (2010) Williams germinated wheat seeds in her armpit and transplanted them to a soil-filled compartment in a modified man’s white dress shirt she calls a “dirt shirt.” She wore the shirt while walking the streets of New York. Eventually, she transplanted the seedlings to public land and then harvested them, using the micro-crop for baking bread, which Williams served to a gallery audience. This July, Williams will be walking to Nashville, Tennessee to participate in *FLEX IT! My Body My Temple*, an exhibition of social sculpture, performance and video at The Parthenon art museum and the surrounding Centennial Park.

Earl Miller interviewed Williams about The Walk Exchange and its ongoing Walk Study Training Courses (WSTCS).



**EM** Earl Miller  
What motivated the founding of The Walk Exchange?

**MW** Moira Williams  
Dillon de Givé and Blake Morris started the wstcs as a free walking education platform. Bess Matassa, Virginia Millington and I met during the second wstc and soon realized we were interested in walking both as an active expression and as a way to explore multiple critical discourses about walking. Following the wstc, we met with Blake and Dillon to discuss how we would like to walk and work together. By the end of our initial meeting, we had come up with a name: The Walk Exchange.

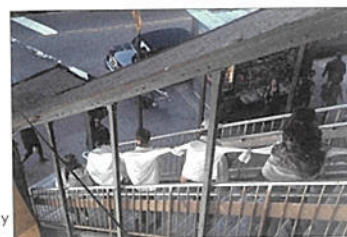
**EM** Can you discuss the Walk Study Training Courses? What do they comprise?

**MW** The wstcs are free seven-week courses held on Sundays during the fall for three to four hours each. The courses are topic-based. In our most recent wstc, we explored walking and autonomy. The texts we discuss run the gamut from formal theoretical essays by Walter Benjamin and Michel de Certeau to literary essays by Henry David Thoreau and Virginia Woolf, sound bites, and realtors' promotions of specific neighborhoods on YouTube. We typically meet in a different site each week that works with, or sometimes entirely opposes, the texts we are reading. The readings at times cause friction in the group, which in turn leads to fruitful conversation — precisely what we are aiming for with the texts as well as with the walks. The courses have a mid-term assignment where we ask the students, and ourselves, to create a short walk based on a reading. The course ends with a much longer meeting where everyone creates a walk based on what we have learned about the topic we have been exploring.

The five of us develop and facilitate each course collaboratively. We meet, creating exercises and/or gestures that can be drawn from the readings, and we discuss the readings throughout the meeting. Each of us walks, asks questions and discusses the readings, the places we are walking, and how and why we are studying walking.

The goal of the wstcs is to build a community of critical walkers, folks who are interested in exploring many things, including but not restricted to: the flâneur; the democracy of walking; commercial walking tours, such as those of the travel industry; and Walk Scores, computer-generated rankings based on a given address's proximity to amenities, which are often used by real estate developers.

**EM** What are some of the politics that make for critical walking?



Moira Williams, *White Shirted Walk*, 2011, performance, Woodside Subway Station, Queens, New York City  
PHOTO: MARK BOURDEAU

**MW** Walking can quickly become commoditized and a bourgeois privilege. Used as a systematic approach, it can be reduced into many capitalistic forms including Walk Scores to create cultural and property value. Walk Scores concern me because they are realtor-based selling points, shifting ideas central to the commons towards bourgeois economics. Walk Scores do not facilitate critical cartography. They instead cause people to believe areas without Walk Scores are unsafe or hold little value.

The Walk Exchange opened critical discussions about the tour and stereotypes surrounding the flâneur and other walking archetypes. In *wstc #3* (2012) we met in Sunset Park (Brooklyn) to consider ways of entering communities other than through the tour format. We are aware of the popularity of New York as a place for tourism. The Walk Exchange is not so interested in duplicating the paid tour. We are committed to free walks. A discussion The Walk Exchange engaged in during *wstc #4* (2013) is how the flâneur is a well-established code that speaks to male narratives of power and to abled bodies that can wander freely. We were walking through Long Island City, among its low, dense shopping/café areas, past its open-spaced industrial sites, under its luxury high-rise buildings, and along its newly landscaped waterways as a way to open a conversation about codification.

Walking can become a critical activity by mapping a lack of accessible routes and transportation for the disabled. Walking can be a tool for collecting data about everyday inclusions and exclusions, and for discussing walking as sustainable transportation. In turn, data about accessible walking can inform critical or subversive cartography to open discussions about narratives of power and to address the exclusion of the disabled.

**EM** Can you discuss some of the most memorable projects The Walk Exchange has undertaken?

**MW** The most memorable walk for me was the *wstc #4* walk where we followed the 2013 New York City Marathon through the South Slope/Sunset Park part of Brooklyn. I recall the density of people, the discarded bright green paper Gatorade cups, and the many closed-off public routes. People had no access to their workplaces and subway entrances. The marathon had moved on when I made the return walk, by which point the streets were clear of marathon debris, as if it had never occurred. Anyone could move freely across the road and enter any subway. Questions about temporary rights of passage and inconsistent freedoms are still on my mind. Another memorable walk was *Grids of Expression*, a four-week exploration of the area around 54 Bogart Street in Bushwick. I set up a mobile station made of a ladder with large adjustable wheels for mobility, an orange milk crate, and a platform constructed from found lumber. Teenagers dismantled it in Maria Hernandez Park and used it as a bike ramp and skate park. It was a piece that was meant to move, be moved, sat on, have conversations on or about, climbed on, dismantled and reassembled. I had used it in a previous walk when I walked the mobile station up and down Halsey Street (Brooklyn), stopping at unprotected bus stops, unfolding it, and creating a seating area for people waiting for the B26 bus. Walking with the mobile station was a design charrette for protective bus stops along Halsey Street.

**EM** What cross-section of people attends your walks? How did they find out about them? Do you think the informal walks and courses are leading to more artists practising walking as an art genre or form?



**MW** The Walk Exchange attracts a variety of people. However, most are academics currently in a grad program involving psychogeography on some level. Our wstcs have had participants who are artists (painters, performance artists, and walking artists), graduate students, academics, graphic designers, and writers. For our informal walks, we have attracted even more diverse groups: naturalists, poets, city planners, active seniors, and other general enthusiasts. Participants find out about our walks through our mailing list and website, through cross-promotion with organizations including iLand, *Senior Planet*, the Walking Artists Network, and Jeff Stark's *Nonsense NYC* list, and through notices at various universities.



Moira Williams, *Can Can Walk*, 2012, Brooklyn, performance, New York  
IMAGE COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

Several practising walking artists have taken the wstcs. Other participants have stated that because of their participation, they are pursuing walking as a methodology for embodied research to further their academic studies or to create a walking art project. Still for me, the wstcs are more about movement, creativity and critical research—not whether someone refers to herself or himself as an artist.

**EM** Why is walking so popular, especially in art and psychogeography circles?

**MW** Many urban planners are taking up psychogeography. In doing so, planners are increasingly looking to artists and art communities to help resolve city development and environmental matters. Artists have, of course, connected their practice to specific sites through writing, object making, installation and performance. Walking is a psychological way to connect one's self or community to site, land, city and neighbourhood. And it is a way to connect to one another.

**EM** With walking and psychogeography groups appearing everywhere, especially in the UK, what makes The Walk Exchange outstanding? Has the New York context made The Walk Exchange in any way different?

**MW** Our wstcs make us stand out. And so does our collective form, our use of multiple kinds of text and our informal walks that maintain a critical walking methodology with a looser format than a wstc's seven-week commitment.

New York also has a psychogeographic charge that people claim only exists here. It is dense in visual culture, textures, sounds and scents that percolate throughout the five boroughs to generate innumerable experiences and conditions. Moreover, being in New York City heightens our awareness of issues such as urban gentrification, the disparity between public green areas and gated green places, the lack of transportation for disabled people, and the locations of safe pathways. The city makes us extremely critical but at the same time offers us opportunities for playfulness and moving between and outside of New York's many institutions in ways that may not be possible elsewhere.

**EM** What groups in New York and elsewhere are comparable to The Walk Exchange?

**MW** We are excited to know that Todd Shalom, the founder of Elastic City, a New York-based organization commissioning artist-run walks among other things, is currently looking to our wstc approach to expand his walking program. Our syllabus, ideas and methods are available for others to use.

Many people in the Walking Artists Network, which is based in the United Kingdom, are also concerned about building a critical walking community that looks at disability, social justice, and counter-mapping (appropriating the government's techniques and representations used in mapping to point out alternative power structures).

**EM** You have studied spatial politics and hold a graduate certificate from the Cultural Studies department at Stony Brook University, which you completed in tandem with an MFA in performance and media studies. In this field, you consider the power structures of space in a way that is comparable to the goals of both the Walking Artists Network and The Walk Exchange. How has spatial politics informed your walking practice?

**MW** Spatial politics, like the visual arts, has given me a reading of the body in multiple ways. Stepping out the door physically connects the body. I can connect to my neighbourhood and its geography by sitting on my Brooklyn stoop; however, I experience limited sightlines, and people have to come to the stoop for me to interact with them. In contrast, walking involves negotiating movement and shared spaces with multiple sightlines that are moving with and against the body simultaneously. I see walking as an everyday activity wherein my body engages reciprocally with the surrounding environment and those populating it. Studying how one's own movement and the group's movement affect the surrounding environment can stimulate thoughts about everyday life-centered matters in urban, suburban and rural landscapes.

Moira Williams, *Grids of Expression*, 2012, performance, Brooklyn, New York City  
PHOTO: ANDY MONK; IMAGE COURTESY OF THE ARTIST



I am particularly interested in the body's response to capitalism and the loss of the commons. Ideas of trespass interest me too. Consequently, my work is inserted into various built and natural environments. It tends to be mobile, either in a walking format or on wheels. I once lived in a wheelbarrow (and sometimes under it) throughout the five boroughs. I was exploring NYC's built environment—its size and wheel restrictions. The work began with me curled up in the wheelbarrow. I did not move until someone pushed the wheelbarrow, which took approximately three to four hours. From that point onward, the wheelbarrow and I were never apart. Each day, I wore the same clothing, which included a pair of boots that came apart at the front, making a thump-flop-thump sound as I walked, creating an external rhythm and also causing me to walk unusually. The area where I slept was very public: the centre of a traffic triangle with three fruit trees. For ventilation I would prop up the wheelbarrow with a stick that came from one of the trees. One morning I woke up to a dog trying her best to remove the stick—pulling at it and digging away.



**EM** I think of Debord when you discuss walking in light of a critique of capitalism and private interests taking over public space, or the commons. How has he influenced you?

**MW** Guy Debord and the Situationists used pedestrianism to wholeheartedly, emotionally and critically experience encrypted events of the city. Their most popular technique, the *dérive* (“drift”), was the first step towards an urban praxis and psychogeographical articulation of the modern city. The *dérive* is a stroll through the urban environment, usually by a group of people attempting to understand and interpret the complex language of urban space. The Situationists saw in cities “repressed desires” and the possibility for shifting these by engaging in “playful reconstructive behaviour.” They used the *dérive* to expose scandalous poverty and other social situations. The exercise was meant as a way to critique commodified consumer society.

**EM** I am curious about the backgrounds, practices and interests of some of The Walk Exchange’s members. Can you elaborate on them?

**MW** Virginia Millington’s interests lie in the archive. She is currently photographing the remaining New York bodegas that have their traditional awnings filled with colourful light bulbs. Bess Matassa has a PhD in American Studies and is an urban cultural geographer. Her doctoral dissertation, “From the Cracks in the Sidewalks of NYC,” examines how the walking patterns of New Yorkers during the fiscal crisis era (1974–1989) reflected urban decline and survival strategies. This project considers the iconic walks of John Travolta in the opening of *Saturday Night Fever* and President Carter in the South Bronx; the movements of residents along the Brooklyn-Queens border during the 1977 blackout; and the wanderings of the Son of Sam serial killer. Blake Morris is a postgraduate student at the University of East London who is researching walking. His current artistic practice focuses on memory palaces as walking documentation. Dillon de Give is a walking artist. His recent work, *Just the 2 of Us*, was a year-long work pairing strangers for walks in public spaces.

**EM** It sounds like The Walk Exchange and all of those involved with it have developed a critical yet hopeful dialogue around walking. I have one final question, then: what are The Walk Exchange’s upcoming projects?

**MW** Along with several informal walks, we are planning a simultaneous walk with several UK walking groups in the late spring. Based on city guides created by Lee Walton, a North Carolina-based social practice artist, two walks will take place: one originating at Union Square, New York, and the other at Union Square, London. The distances of the respective walks may vary.\*

**Earl Miller** is a curator and art writer based in Toronto. His recent work involves artists’ walks and walking tours. He has written for magazines including *Flash Art* and *Art in America*. He has recently curated exhibitions at the Dorsky Gallery Curatorial Programs in New York, the Yukon Art Centre and the Art Gallery of Peterborough.



Still from The Walk Exchange, *Informal Walk, President’s Day, 2013*, performance, New York City  
IMAGE COURTESY OF MOIRA WILLIAMS





# Walking with



Carmen Papalia, *Blind Field Shuttle*, 2013, walking tour.  
IMAGE COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

# Artists

*edited by* Eugenia Kisin

## Introduction: Movement Memory by Eugenia Kisin

Walking with Artists is a partial sampling of contemporary walking practices in Canadian art. Walking involves bearing witness—to space, to other participants, to the embodied imprint of motion—and the very notion of *which* bodies act as conduits for meaning is indelibly marked by structure and subjectivity. Ideals of walking may privilege, for example, the movement of an able body with the cultural and political freedom to travel across borders, or the capacity to access and navigate remote and difficult terrain. To capture these embodied qualities, and their disruptions, we commissioned 13 writers—each one on the recommendation of the artist in question—to write about their experience of one of these walking practices. Their documentation is thus an aesthetic act itself that makes visible the connections that even the most ephemeral walk can enable.

These acts of witnessing also reveal the power of peripatetic practice to make us account for things—for our occupation of land, for the uncanny presence of past lives in the contemporary moment. Walking, in this way, is an exercise of ritual and memory, evoking pilgrimage as a mode of reckoning with the sacred. Secular vigils also conjure these connections as a sense of shared obligation and reciprocity emerges from marches—there is a reason, after all, that so many walking practices draw attention to exchange and the accumulation of sustenance. Notably, this kind of participation is different from the trope of the alienated flâneur: acknowledged complicity allows us to walk together in these projects.

Yet, in spite of the shared nature of the described experiences, these writers grapple with the problem of representation. They are cautious about imposing meaning onto an embodied act, and their documentation often takes the form of a list-like account or a diary, a reckoning of presence tinged with intimacy. Close description takes the place of dialectical criticism, as the question of *how* one knows—through the senses, through movement or through acts of inscription—is called forth by these acts. For the land, too, writes itself onto our bodies and memories.

We invite you to share these walks.

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## Carmen Papalia: *Blind Field Shuttle*

New Brighton Park, Vancouver  
August 2013

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by Zach Bergman

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*Blind Field Shuttle*, a non-visual walking tour led by Vancouver-based artist Carmen Papalia, who is visually impaired, is an experience where up to 50 people walk together with their eyes closed. An exercise in trust and perceptual mobility, the experience involves participants lining up behind Papalia, linking arms and shutting their eyes for the duration of the tour. *Blind Field Shuttle* has been performed at the Craft and Folk Art Museum in L.A., CUE Art Foundation in New York, Gallery Gachet in Vancouver, Mildred's Lane Residency and at the Open Engagement art and social practice conference, among other venues. I participated in *Blind Field Shuttle* at New Brighton Park in Vancouver.

To kick off the session, we walked to the south side of the tunnel that entered the pool parking lot. I closed my eyes and held on to Carmen's arm. We waited for around 10 seconds, as I acclimatized to the loss of vision, and then started to walk. The first thing I noticed was the way spaces seemed to grow and shrink as the intensity of the light through my eyelids varied. And things that were distant felt much closer than they were in reality and vice versa. The most impressive thing, however, was the ground: it felt as if it was undulating and transforming beneath my feet. It was like walking on a waterbed with rock hard lining. Something that surprised me was that I didn't rely much on sound as a guide during the walk, but appreciated it as a meditative soundtrack to my journey: the children screaming, the water in the pool, the wind blowing around us, the constant sounds of industry to the east. Another sensation was that I wasn't actually moving and that everything was moving around me. I was pleasantly shocked by the location that I ended up in.



## Eryn Foster: *Walking and Talking and Not Saying Anything*

Halifax, October 2013

by D'Arcy Wilson

It was 8:30 p.m. on a mild October evening in 2013 when Halifax-based artist Eryn Foster distributed her phone number to more than 30 people at the Khyber Centre for the Arts, encouraging the rest of the group to exchange their own contact information. Our instructions were simple: to join Foster on a walking tour of Halifax's downtown landmarks without saying anything. Instead, we would relay instructions to one another via text message.

Our initial manoeuvring of Barrington Street's Friday-night sidewalk traffic was awkward as we typed, adding new mobile contacts while trying not to bump into anyone. It was a sight for passers-by — a large group of adults seemingly disenchanted with each other's company, immersed in their phones, disconnected from reality. If only they knew we were making new acquaintances unburdened by the pressures of face-to-face conversation, that we were putting trust in total strangers by exchanging our personal phone numbers, that we were aware of our collective movement as we clumsily made our way to the first landmark.

Foster guided us to the city's oldest graveyard where we stumbled into a ghost walk, and to the park outside the Public Library where a group of young men arrived to sing hymns and preach to us about sin. We lingered by the Public Gardens just texting, and I was surprised at how conscious I was of my surroundings amidst my technology trance; although I rarely stopped typing, sounds were more vivid and I could sense the commotion of Spring Garden Road around me.

Climbing up Citadel Hill, I observed the beauty of our slow uphill trek — our phone screens casting a cool glow over the green grass, lighting our way to the top of the city. The bell in the town clock chimed 10:30 p.m., and for me, this was the finale. I departed the group, abandoning the safety of my invisible conversations.



## Hamish Fulton: *A Walk Around the Block in the Rocky Mountains*

Banff, Alberta, November 2007

by Ernie Kroeger

Hamish Fulton, though known primarily for his solitary long-distance walks, began experimenting with group walks as an art student in the late 1960s in London. In November 2007, he participated in the Walking and Art Residency at The Banff Centre and led four group walks. For the first one, 11 participants met at the corner of Banff Avenue and Elk Street. At precisely 5:00 p.m. Hamish gave the signal and we started out, at a turtle's pace, toward the next corner. We were to circumnavigate one city block, clockwise, over a period of one hour, in silence. Each side would take 15 minutes. The total distance was about 700 metres. It was a surprisingly complex calculation, gauging distance and time together with pace and group dynamics. Across the street, cars entered and exited a supermarket parking lot. I felt self-conscious. Someone yelled out: "Nice pace!" Rounding the first corner onto Marten Street, we had established a good rhythm. Communication lay in the subtle interaction of our bodies and measured steps. This block was longer so we picked up the pace. A few pedestrians wove themselves in and out of our group. Around the next corner onto Moose Street, we slowed down and then, turning the final corner onto Banff Avenue, we sped up again, reaching the corner where we had started at exactly 6:00 p.m. From above we would have looked like a strange walking timepiece, the wobbly end of an invisible minute hand moving slowly around an oblong clock face. I was chilled and therefore happy to finish but also a bit disappointed. I had been lulled into a meditative state and it felt as if time had been stretched and slowed down. Now the circuit was complete and, stepping back into the everyday world, the spell was broken.



## Cheryl L'Hirondelle: *nikamon ohci askiy* (songs because of the land)

Vancouver, 2013

by Ayumi Goto

On February 15, 2013, one day after the March for Missing and Murdered Women, which takes place annually in Vancouver, I performed *Commemoration* in the character of Gei Shagyl. For my performance, red balloons were placed around the perimeter of Oppenheimer Park. Carrying a speaker that played the song “Kikinaw” from Cheryl L'Hirondelle's *Vancouver Songlines* LP alongside the Yoshida Brothers' shamisen piece *Sprouting*, I ran around the park, cutting the balloons' strings with scissors and releasing them into the sky. The purpose of this performance was to commemorate the lives of the women who had disappeared and to honour their families, friends and those who would always remember them. The performance was also a creative show of support for the Idle No More movement: attached to every red balloon was a small Chinese New Year envelope that contained a symbolic piece of copper, and a piece of paper, on one side of which was inscribed the Japanese phrase 自立する and on the other, its translation, “Idle No More.”

Inspired by Cheryl L'Hirondelle's *Vancouver Songlines* project, I felt compelled to familiarize myself with the land beneath, around and within me. I strapped three speakers around my waist and each day I ran as much as I could to the music of Cheryl's *Songlines* for 105 days between Canada Day and Thanksgiving weekend. I ran in Vancouver (unceded Coast Salish territories), Saskatoon and rural areas in Saskatchewan (Treaty 6 territory), Cold Lake Alberta (Dene territory), as well as Toronto (Mississauga of the New Credit), Kamloops (Secwepemc) and Kelowna (Okanagan). After completing each day's run, I painted a picture to convey my experience, wrote notes in Japanese to my mother describing my journey and wrote diary entries reflecting upon my growing relationship to the land. In total, I ran 1568.5 km, the exact distance of the Journey of Nishiyuu, six Cree youth and one guide who

travelled from Whapmagoostui, Quebec to Ottawa to request an audience with the Prime Minister and show their support for the Idle No More movement. Covering the same distance as the Nishiyuu, and sonorously shadowing Cheryl's *Songlines*, I attempted to develop a more intimate and respectful relationship with the land.

[www.vancouver-songlines.ca](http://www.vancouver-songlines.ca)

Lisa Myers:  
*Blueprints For a Long Walk*  
Lake Huron, Ontario, 2009

Day seven: August 20, 2009

by Lisa Myers

Excited about getting to the railway bridge that crosses the Mississagi River, we left around 10:30 a.m., and walked along quiet, dusty roads and crossed breezy fields, keeping close to the train tracks that marked the way. Around noon, we found a nice, moss-covered rock to sit on and eat lunch. Perched up from the road and settling into our meal, we saw a municipal works truck roll along the road. As the pick-up truck slowly passed by, the driver leaned out of the truck window and glanced at us. We all returned the look silently until my cousin Shelley suddenly yelled, “hey, hey, that's Tom Dumont!” We all jumped up and ran after the truck. Tom Dumont is Great Uncle Tom and Aunt Gladys' son and he lives close by in Thessalon, Ontario. Tom stopped the truck, which interrupted his tour of the county for two summer students sitting witness inside the vehicle. They just happened to be driving along this back road. Learning we had lost our maps the day before, Tom gave us a map of the area so we could find our way to the bridge with ease. He warned us of the 5–6 p.m. train schedule and suggested we aim to get across the bridge earlier.

In 2009, my cousin Shelley, her son Gabe and I decided to follow the same route our grandfather had walked from residential school in Sault Ste Marie towards home



along the north shore of Lake Huron. In doing so, we traversed a distance that existed not just in space, but also in the layered geography of place. We walked during the same season our grandfather recalled surviving on blueberries. We visited the shore of the Mississagi River where he was offered food and conversation in his language, Anishinaabemowin. Walking for 11 days, and covering 250 kilometres, we created new family stories and blueprints for more long walks.

Three years after our long walk I created *Blueprints* and *Train Tracks* (2012), a series of maps and train track prints, made with blueberry pigment.

## Elinor Whidden: *Mountain Man*

Kamloops, British Columbia, 2012

by Bruce Baugh

Elinor Whidden's *Mountain Man* is a modern voyageur, retracing the waterways and trade routes followed by First Nations people and fur traders in the past. As these routes became the basis of today's highway system, and cars have replaced canoes as the main means of navigating them, the Mountain Man uses equipment scavenged from cars, such as tire treads and rear-view mirrors.

In Kamloops, BC, Whidden led a group of walkers to the confluence of the North and South Thompson rivers, long a site of the Secwepemc (Shuswap) people and once a Hudson's Bay Company trading post. About 20 of us, kitted out with walking sticks attached to car rear-view mirrors, walked through downtown Kamloops, across the railroad tracks and down to the river, moving from the present into the past. Mountain Man was more fully equipped: voyageur cap, gaiters, powder horn, water canteen and a fragment of tire tread.

The walking sticks were key: we were reenacting the walks of the voyageurs with rear-view mirrors, which were quite useless since it was far easier to simply turn around to see what was behind than to look in the mirror. We

felt a bit ridiculous. Passers-by would stop and stare at the strange procession we made.

Yet, there was a curious sense of adventure. Using this synthesis of the old (walking sticks) and the new (rear-view mirrors) produced something entirely new, surprisingly discordant and unsettling in the tension between past and present. For me, there was an acute sense of loss regarding the past, of life being invaded by car culture. The tire-track across the Mountain Man's back signified the sacrifice of walking to driving.

And yet it was fun: although Whidden's satire has a serious point, her *Mountain Man* performance is full of humour. We were all in high spirits.



Elinor Whidden, *The Adventures of Mountain Man* — Fort Kamloops, March 20th, 2012, performance.  
PHOTO: MARGARET WHIDDEN; IMAGE COURTESY OF THE ARTIST





## Vanessa Dion Fletcher: *Writing Landscape*

Lake Ontario, Toronto, Spring 2011

by Angela Salamanca

Vanessa Dion Fletcher's *Writing Landscape* offers a rich sensory experience that reawakened in me bodily sensations and memories of walking along a shore. As a Lenape/Potawatomi woman, the artist explores the embodiment of her connection to the land by creating a space and time for her reflections through the meditative practice of walking. In her broader practice, Dion Fletcher explores the process of the formation of her identity as an Indigenous woman who grew up without access to her cultural practices and language. In *Writing Landscape*, she documents a process of making and gathering markers by using walking as a language to explore her connection to the land. In this piece, there is no written or spoken language, yet there is a clear communication between Dion Fletcher's body and the earth she carefully—and at times precariously and playfully—treads on, and the viewer. Through the images in the video, I am invited to participate in the artist's process of marking her journey on the land. I notice her walking away from the focus of the frame and back again, and in this ebb and flow of motion, I wonder about the imprints I make upon my surrounding environment and what or how it imprints upon me in return. In viewing the video, the sensations the artwork inspires give way to single words: *imprint, connection, fragility, precarious, foothold, soothing, playful*.

Dion Fletcher embodies walking as a meditative practice and an unconscious communication between the land and our bodies. The prints created by the etchings on the copper plates are evidence of the artist's presence on the land, of her markings as she travels on it.



## Zoë Kreye and Catherine Grau: *Unlearning Weekenders Procession*

Vancouver, June 2013

by Mariane Bourcheix-Laporte

On June 15, 2013, an eclectic group of a dozen novice *unlearners* came together to take part in a 12-hour procession through the city of Vancouver. This collective walk was organized by Zoë Kreye and Catherine Grau as the culminating event of a year-long artistic project researching modes of understanding and being in the world fostered through experiments in embodied experience, intuition, collaboration and the deconstruction of dominant experiential paradigms. To realize the *Unlearning Weekenders' Procession*, the collective put out an open call for the public to participate in the event's workshoping process and/or join in along the way. De-ambulating through the city's different neighbourhoods—starting from residential and industrial areas in East Vancouver, mixing with the crowd in the glossy downtown core, taking in the view across the city bridges and coming to a halt at one of Stanley Park's picturesque beaches—the procession came to be punctuated by participant interventions that, following Kreye and Grau's irreverence for prescribed behaviour, aimed to further the group's venture into the uncharted territory of *unlearning*.

At the core of the project was a desire to reclaim public space, and to momentarily inflect it through a chanting, touching, dancing, backwards-walking, stumbling, laughing, costumed, prosthesis-adorned collective body. Passers-by greeted our colourful procession with bemusement or cheer. And for the participants, the procession became a celebration of the simple pleasures of *being*: being in the moment, being part of the environment and being aware of one's own and others' bodies. After 12 hours of letting go of self-monitoring habits and social inhibitions, we realized that, if anything, we should beware of the comfort of habitual actions and repeated thought patterns and of anything that impedes new possibilities for experience. Indeed there is more to life than we know.

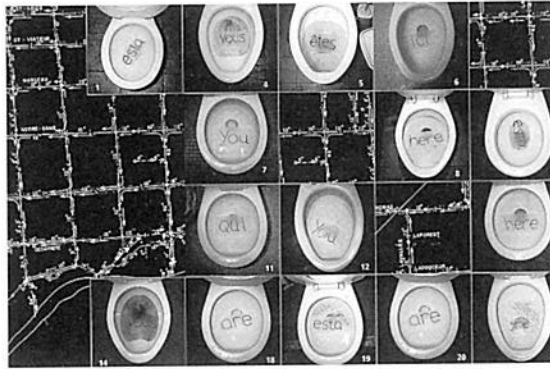


## François Morelli: *Histoires des eaux usées*

Joliette, Quebec, 1999

by Didier Morelli

In *Histoires des eaux usées* (1999), artist François Morelli maps out the city of Joliette (Québec) following a meandering trajectory of 61 public and private restrooms to develop a summertime tourist guide. Once located, the washrooms become makeshift studios. In each lavatory, the artist performs a series of repetitive actions that begin by painting a small watercolour on toilet paper. The image consists of one single word from the cartographic sentence: *you are here*, *esta aquí*, or *vous êtes ici*. The sheet is left floating in the bowl to be photographed, showing the watercolour bleeding into the water against the white porcelain. Subsequently, the artist unceremoniously flushes the floating paper down the toilet, an evacuating action that highlights a hidden rhizomatic infrastructure that supports the daily activities of *Joliettains*. Morelli compiles the addresses of each location with an accompanying image and assigns them a number (1–61). The images are used as a lavatory index for a board game where the roll of a dice determines to which toilet the visitor needs to travel. As participants are invited to take part in the work, a new series of chance walks emerge. In his repetitive and task-oriented gesture, the artist transforms the unplanned *dérive* into an action that follows a regulated above-ground network of sidewalks, streets and buildings. While public service spaces disappear in urban areas, Morelli challenges locals and tourists alike to engage with the discharge of their refuse. Cycling through processes of consuming matter, producing energy and discarding waste, *Histoires des eaux usées* underlines the everyday biological necessities of the social body in motion.



## Gwen MacGregor: *Seamus and Me*

Fernie, British Columbia, 2008

by Lewis Nicholson

Gwen and I spend a couple of weeks most summers at her family's cottage in the interior of BC. For years we hiked around the area, becoming ever more ambitious in our outings, often heading to the highest points of elevation. On the last of our independent excursions, we found ourselves on a peak after a five-hour hike on a blisteringly hot day, our water supplies completely depleted and unable to locate the anticipated quick and easy route down indicated on the map we'd picked up from the local tourist office. After several fraught hours of bushwhacking along a dry, rocky and log-strewn river bed, wading through waist-high stinging nettles, completely exhausted by the uncertain nature of every footfall, fatigued and disoriented due to our state of dehydration, we found a spring and revived sufficient faculties to return, hours later than anticipated, to an anxious MacGregor clan.

Thereafter, for our more challenging excursions, we employed the services of local professional guides, which is how we met Seamus, a spectacularly intelligent and energetic border collie trained from an early age for mountain rescue work. The hike recorded was a modest half-day jaunt at the height of the summer to a magnificent outlook over the Lizard Range, where we spent an hour or so lounging on the peak, eating our lunch and drinking in the scenery. While we rested, Seamus was off the hook and energetically rummaging around the slopes, perhaps foraging for a little lunch himself, a dog just being a dog, wild in nature, but with a GPS device attached. His movements and whereabouts were only fully revealed when the data was later transcribed and animated. Combined and contrasted with the information from a separate GPS Gwen had been carrying, an engaging portrait emerges of two distinct but interdependent species exploring the same terrain in a manner appropriate to their nature.



## Alvis Parsley: *Love Behind the Bargain*

Toronto, 2013

by Camille Turner

Alvis Parsley's performative walking tour *Love Behind the Bargain* is a journey that remaps and transforms Toronto's central Chinatown to reveal an intimate world of love, loss and migration. I was initially drawn to Alvis' work because my own artistic practice has turned towards using walking and sound to tell stories. I took Alvis' walk three times and each time, I entered a headspace that was not my own and experienced the familiar turned inside out. Alvis has a knack for astutely pulling back the veil so the audience can see the world and experience ourselves from a particular, personal, unfamiliar perspective.

The 60-minute walk, which stops at 15 sites, begins at Alexander Park, a social housing complex. The audience follows Alvis through the rear entrance of Chinatown Centre. The young trans artist's small size and soft voice belies the power of their brave vulnerability. Proclaiming their gender queerness and fear of homophobia in Chinatown, Alvis speaks in English and Cantonese in the midst of crowded Dragon City Mall. Heads turn suddenly in surprise.

Through a poetic text performed at each stop, Alvis captures the awkward confusion of a newcomer trying to mimic local cultural practices and explores issues such as the ethical dilemma of exploitative labour practices that enable workers in Chinatown to survive. Alvis' keen sense of observation and critical eye nimbly unmasks white supremacy to reveal how power invisibly structures desire. Statements like "Chinatown — where you feel close to me," explore the polite Canadian fascination with exoticizing the other.

Playing with "double consciousness,"<sup>1</sup> a term coined by W.E.B. DuBois to describe seeing oneself through the dominant lens, Alvis sweetly states, "We admire you, you have such a pretty face," powerfully shifting the uncomfortable gaze to bear on the looker. I recognize myself in Alvis' words and I've returned to this artwork again and again because it brings me face to face with myself.

<sup>1</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, (1903). *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Dover Publications, 1994, orig. 1903).

## Germaine Koh: *League* — *The Arbutus Corridor*

Vancouver, July 2013

by Jay White

*League* is a monthly event hosted by Vancouver-based artist Germaine Koh where volunteers convene at a park in south-west Vancouver to invent, improvise and play games. The July 2013 version of *League* was different in that the event occurred while walking the Arbutus Corridor, an 11-kilometre section of abandoned railway line that traverses southern Vancouver's residential neighbourhoods.

Whereas *League* usually involves group participation and teamwork, this time we were encouraged to individually devise parameters to alter the ways in which we



might relate to the landscape along the route. Koh took a glass of seawater from False Creek at the start of the route, and carried it, without setting it down, to deposit the water at the abandoned railway's southern terminus along the Fraser River. Along the walk I transcribed sounds of the environment onto the old metal rails with a stick of chalk. Another participant found a section of an old book and resolved to finish reading it by the end of the walk.

As we meandered along the abandoned rail line, our individual projects became secondary to our collective fascination with the route as an expanse of untamed landscape that has managed to survive the aggressive development of the city. We stopped to eat blackberries, rest in the shade of large trees, and investigate community gardens and discarded objects that have found their way into this interstitial space.

On the surface these activities might seem inconsequential, but they reveal the significance of Koh's project. Participating in a *League* day means consciously committing time and attention to the dying art of informal play, and reclaiming the joy of doing nothing in particular. Participants make rules and games not only as a way to compete and win but also to participate in a mutually negotiated and dynamic social space wherein perfect strangers can enjoy spending time together.

## Barbara Louder: *Writing/Walking Sticks*

Halifax and Vancouver, 2011

by Amish Morrell

At the Cultura 21 International Summer School in Bulgaria in 2010, Barbara Louder led 30 cultural workers and activists from 22 different countries on a collective walking exercise exploring communication and relationality. Taking turns being blindfolded, with the help of a partner they used homemade walking sticks to feel their way across a meadow and along the edge of a forest. The walking sticks become an extension of their consciousness and corporeality, enabling them to sense and touch their surroundings, test surfaces and make sounds on objects. As they negotiated the space around them, their sighted partner (with whom they didn't always have a shared language) used voice, intonation and touch to guide them. As the day progressed, they began to use the walking sticks to form a chain and then a net. Like the men in Bruegel's 1568 painting *The Parable of the Blind Leading the Blind*, the group ventured across the meadow and wooded area, becoming its own topographic form that slowly changed shape and direction as participants responded to one another's movements, collectively negotiating the landscape around them.

Louder's more recent project, *Writing/Walking Sticks* (2011), brings together walking and writing, where participants collectively explore and inscribe the landscape with the traces of their movement. Each of her 26 yellow aluminum walking sticks have a different letter of the alphabet and a self-inking stamp pad on the tip, so they leave a mark each time they strike the ground. In 2011, as part of "The Walkable City" design charrette in Halifax, participants met with health professionals to discuss the role of walking in addressing public health concerns, spelling WALK in the pavement as they moved through the city. And at Walk21, a conference held in Vancouver in 2011, participants stamped messages on long scrolls

of paper and on the pavement as they walked through spaces and institutions within the city. The group also marks movement itself, the shape and pace of the group immediately identifiable from the bright powder-coated yellow paint of the *Writing/Walking Sticks*. Foregrounding walking as a communicative and relational process, the sticks also enable us to consider how the act of walking also is a way of intervening within, and inscribing, the spaces we share. \*



Barbara Louder, *Writing/Walking Sticks*, 2011, performance.  
IMAGE COURTESY OF THE ARTIST