

ARTISTS

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Introduction

Pedestrians and Cartographers

In Western civilization, the map has traditionally offered a bird's-eye view constructed from the vantage point of an ideal observer above the fray, like Michel de Certeau looking down over Manhattan from the top of the World Trade Center while pedestrians moved through the maze of streets below, unwittingly “writing the text of the city.”¹

When GPS technology came of age in the mid-1990s, artists had been using trajectories down here on earth to trace maps for many years. Today the convergence of global networks, online databases, and new tools for location-based mapping coincides with a renewed interest in walking as an art form. This book charts the cartographic jungle and maps the mappers, be they airborne or earthbound, surveyors, explorers, navigators or interlopers.

Walking is the way most of us make our way through the world most of the time, yet our gait is as personal as a fingerprint, and so are our multiple itineraries.² “Knowledge is grown along the myriad paths we take,” writes Tim Ingold, it is “an improvisatory movement—of ‘going along’ or wayfaring—that is open-ended and knows no final destination.”³

Picture a group of twenty-year-olds sauntering out of a train station during a railway strike. They have nowhere to go, and they are taking their time getting there. A walk can start with the pleasure of just moving—putting one foot in front of the other, ambling, laughing, shooting the breeze. Since the early 1950s, when Guy Debord and his friends wandered through Paris on day-long drifts, and the late 1960s, when Richard Long trampled a patch of grass in a field and snapped a photo of the result (*A Line Made by Walking*), contemporary artists have returned time and again to the walking motif, discovering that, no matter how many times it has been done, it is never done.

Like walking, mapping is an embodied experience carried out from a particular point of view that “makes possible both the finiteness of my perception and its

opening out upon the complete world as a horizon of every perception."⁴ Here it is considered as a way to locate ourselves in the world, allowing us to make sense of our situation and to act on it.

Mapping denotes a process that takes place every time a map of any kind is created—a drawing scribbled on the back of an envelope, a sequence of places or events etched in one's memory, an itinerary generated on the fly by an online route-finding service, or a projection prepared by a team of professional cartographers.

The environment to be mapped encompasses both the immediate, physical, often urban surroundings in which we walk, our own actions and perceptions as pedestrians, and the cultural or ideological filter through which we view this experience. "Surely this is exactly what the cognitive map is called upon to do in the narrower framework of daily life in the physical city," writes Fredric Jameson: "enable a situational representation on the part of the individual subject to that vaster and properly unrepresentable totality which is the ensemble of society's structures as a whole." Jameson advocates "an aesthetic of cognitive mapping," which he defines as "a pedagogical political culture which seeks to endow the individual subject with some new heightened sense of its place in the global system."⁵

Mapping is not only the object of our research; it also serves as its method. The situationists created maps to highlight the "psychogeographical contours" and "articulations" of modern cities, the "constant currents, fixed points and vortexes that strongly discourage entry into or exit from certain zones."⁶ Their maps chart not the physical distances that separate two parts of a city but the influences that shape our experience of walking through it at street level. Because this mapping was at an early stage in its development, for Guy Debord its results were as imprecise as the first navigational charts: "The only difference is that it is no longer a matter of precisely delineating stable continents, but of changing architecture and urbanism."⁷

To show "psychogeographical pivotal points" in Paris, Debord and Asger Jorn cut up a street map, brought together districts that were miles apart in actual physical space, and added arrows representing the flow of atmospheres. Each map they produced was a collage on paper, an exploded yet synthetic view of a dynamic process. This book also attempts to capture a complex, evolving situation at a particular point in time.

Top-Down or Bottom-Up?

Computer programmers have two major approaches to developing large-scale applications. Top-down programming starts by considering the problem at a high level of generality and then progressively specifies it. Programmers proceed by successive refining until the level of abstraction coincides with that of the programming language.

In bottom-up programming, developers begin at the lowest level with the programming language and then increase their level of abstraction.

To reconcile pedestrians with cartographers, I combine both approaches. The book begins on the ground with a close study of an emblematic walking project and works its way up to a higher-angle view of what is involved. By alternating close study of a few characteristic projects and attempts to fit them into a broader picture, I aim to build a clear and highly differentiated map of a complex phenomenon.

This path recapitulates the history of modern cartography, which developed from the "rectilinear marking out of itineraries" that characterized the maps of antiquity by gradually incorporating more and more information.⁸ Strikingly similar to today's computer-generated itinerary maps, medieval pilgrimage maps were aimed at facilitating action. Their instructions to pilgrims showed a path to take from one place to another, indicated stops to make, and noted distances in hours or days. A fifteenth-century Aztec map that describes the exodus of the Totomihuacas shows footprints and sketches of each day's meals, battles, and river crossings: it is as much history book as geographical map.⁹ In Europe from the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries, the map gained autonomy, distinguishing itself from its constitutive narratives. The system of projection incorporated both tradition (Ptolemy's *Geographia* remained a model for subsequent cartography) and observation (such as navigators' portolan charts). The map became a theater.¹⁰ In keeping with academic tradition, my first-person account is counterbalanced by the multiple voices of others—artists, scholars, and fellow mappers.

Choice of Artworks

The field has burgeoned over the past decade, so here I focus mainly on walkings and mappings I was able to experience firsthand. The corpus regroups works from several genres—performance, dance, writing, visual and sound arts, and cinema and video. Although the main focus is on the field of contemporary art, I have included projects not usually labeled art when they offer a fresh point of view and can otherwise contribute to the discussion. To give context and consistency to recent projects, I have related them to landmark works from the past half century.

Structure of the Book

The introductory chapters set the stage. Chapter 1 opens with a "thick description"¹¹ of an emblematic walk in which a group of people meet in a suburb of Orléans to map their surroundings by choosing their own landmarks and naming them. This experiment is grounded in the recent history of psychogeography and the "politics of

applied pedestrianism" from the situationists to Reclaim the Streets. In what ways has walking contributed to the practice of culture-jamming?

Chapter 2 proceeds through a series of jump cuts. It begins by briefly evoking the biomechanics of walking before cutting to the Judson Church in New York in the early 1960s and the "dance of everyday language" where dancers explored ordinary movements of the body. It then fast-forwards, moving uptown to Central Park to take Janet Cardiff's audio tour *Her Long Black Hair* in the hopes of undergoing an experience that may or may not be art.

The next two chapters explore these questions from the artist's viewpoint. They deal with various methods artists have used to structure their walks: chapter 3 considers walks as objects seen from the outside, where the overall shape is important, and chapter 4 examines the use of instructions, protocols, and scores to create more open-ended walks.

Chapter 5 explores the ways in which mapping is involved when we move through space. When we navigate through artists' labyrinths, walking meets mapping through wayfaring and wayfinding.

Chapter 6 follows a few distinct trajectories (or lines made by walking) and reveals characteristic means of annotating space, and chapter 7 deals more generally with how movement, space, and time are envisioned or made visible in hybrid maps and datascares.

Chapter 8 moves up another step to consider contemporary experiments in collaborative cartography using networked databases. Can collaborative mapping be a form of what Bertolt Brecht called *Umfunktionierung* (functional transformation)? After examining the various ways in which the maps can be linked up and what this fully networked model means for pedestrians today, in the last chapter, I attend to mapping "ways through."

1 Psychogeography: The Politics of Applied Pedestrianism

Drifting for an Hour in Orléans-La-Source

What the map cuts up, the story cuts across.

—Michel de Certeau¹

Sunday, October 17, 2004: a "psychogeographic walk" with Wilfried Hou Je Bek was scheduled for 2 p.m. as part of Archilab, the Orléans architecture festival. He and I arrived a few minutes early, but across from the Bolière tram stop, several people were already waiting. Others arrived in small groups, until about twenty were gathered. The air was cool, and the sky overcast.

Wilfried Hou Je Bek handed us each a pencil, a small yellow card (figure 1.1), and a black and white map of the neighborhood. The card showed a four-item list that was designed to look like a software pull-down menu. It was a "walking algorithm." My card was printed with these instructions:

first right
first left
third right
repeat

A Psychogeographical Account of La-Source

Wilfried told us to walk for an hour following our algorithms. Every time we noticed something striking—an object, a street corner, a configuration of elements—we were to give it a name of our own invention that reflected the impression this place or phenomenon made on us.

We were not to look for names. It was up to them to find us. We had no cameras, no GPS, nothing to distract us—just pencil and paper.

A light wind, leaves rustling, chestnuts rolling off a sloped roof, in the distance the staccato rhythm of heels on the pavement. Another psychogeographer? Feet moving, fresh air, regular breathing that accelerated when I ran.

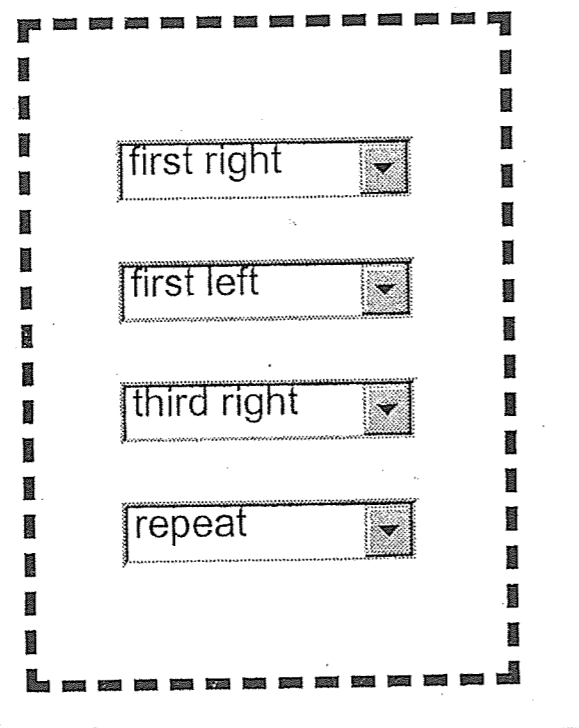


Figure 1.1
Wilfried Hou Je Bek, *Walk*, 2003–2004. The artist distributed yellow tickets with instructions for a walk in Orléans-la-Source. Participants gave names to the places they encountered as they followed the walking algorithm.

Armed with my instructions, I watched for crossroads I could identify and count. What exactly is a “first left”? Does this unmarked lane qualify, or should I wait for something more important? Another participant wrote that she entered “a false street where it has become very difficult to orient myself, I’m having a lot of trouble finding the third right.”

I opted for the cul-de-sac, moving ahead slowly on the lookout for a marker or a nameable place. In one hour, in an area of about 400 meters, I eventually found sixteen of them and duly noted each one on the back of my map.

The first identifiable object was a monumental green “L” lying on its side in front of a school, the Collège La Bolière. A small girl passing in the street followed my gaze. “It’s for playing,” she declared in a tone that did not invite contradiction.

Farther on, I met up with “rusty doors: chestnuts on concrete.” Then I stopped to contemplate the “modular beige boxes” across the street. Most of my names were attempts at description. I began with the quality that struck me first and then added other details, as if by stringing them together I might find in their accumulation the appropriate term. Once it was a cluster of street signs: Watteau, Cézanne, and Poussin huddled together like gossips near the intersection.

After a while, I realized that I was walking in circles, continually noting the same landmarks, hesitating at the same intersections. The program described an endless loop.

Bolière is an outlying area near the university campus. After a few minutes, I found myself in a development of tract homes that brought to mind an American archetype: “little identical suburban boxes which differ only in color and planting.”² Here, the differences were a bit more pronounced. Many of the houses sat behind a hedge or a fence, their sloping A-roofs ready to ward off even the heaviest rain. On my map, I noted “keep out.”

In Anglo-Saxon countries, wealthy city dwellers began emigrating to the outlying country in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but only after World War II, middle-class families left the towns in droves and transformed suburban areas into the settlements we know today. In 1961, Lewis Mumford decried the conformity of the suburb: “the ultimate effect of the suburban escape in our time is, ironically, a low-grade uniform environment from which escape is impossible.”³ In the city centers, poverty and neglect were visible to all. By contrast, the suburb cultivated a false naïveté: it was a place where “one might live and die without marring the image of an innocent world, except when some shadow of evil fell over a column in the newspaper. . . . Here domesticity could flourish, forgetful of the exploitation on which so much of it was based. Here individuality could prosper, oblivious of the pervasive regimentation beyond. This was not merely a child-centered environment: it was based on a childish view of the world, in which reality was sacrificed to the pleasure principle.”⁴

In Europe, many deplored the changes brought by the suburb: “In the older neighborhoods,” wrote Constant in 1959, “the streets have degenerated into freeways, leisure activities are commercialized and denatured by tourism. Social relations become impossible there. The newly constructed neighborhoods have but two motifs, which dominate everything: driving by car and comfort at home.”⁵

What about La-Source? Were its inhabitants as enamored of their pipes and slippers as their American counterparts? Did the small plots surrounding the individual dwellings reflect, as Robert Moses noted dryly, “not merely the rapacity of developers but the caution of owners, who do not want too much grass to cut and snow to shovel?”⁶

I was reminded of the California communities that photographer Bill Owens portrayed thirty years ago in his book *Suburbia*. The streets were planned for car traffic

but did not seem unfriendly to pedestrians, not that I was likely to meet a little Richie fitted out with toy rifle and cowboy boots, cheerfully making his rounds on a Big Wheel.⁷ In fact, I saw few people on foot and could only speculate on what went on behind the hedges.

Peeling the Onion

Founded in 1962, just a year after Mumford published his book, Orléans-La-Source was conceived as a "pilot town for the twenty-first century," part of a government plan to decentralize Paris. Grouping both small industries and the campus of the University of Orléans in a wooded area near the source of the Loiret River, it was intended to be the "French Oxford," a place where "princes would be pedestrians." In the city center designed by architect Louis Arretche, 7,500 apartments were built in twenty years.⁸ Today, much of its population lives in low-cost housing, and newspapers refer to it as a working-class district.

The Bolière neighborhood harbors a school complex classified as a *zone d'éducation prioritaire* (ZEP) (prioritized education zone), a label given to "establishments concentrating the greatest difficulties," which qualify them for additional government funding. The Orléans board of education Web site lists these handicaps: "the proportion of underprivileged social categories, the results of the French tests given to sixth graders, the proportion of families with three children or more."⁹

Proportions? Categories? Results? Across the street, a construction of pale pink cinder blocks gazes back at me. Could these modest apartment buildings be part of the projects to which the town owed its recent notoriety? La Source briefly flickered through the headlines in 2005 during France's so-called suburban riots. The following year, another round of violence was feared when teenagers set fire to cars and dumpsters, throwing stones at vehicles parked near the police station.¹⁰

What did the organizers of Archilab have in mind when they picked this neighborhood? My fellow psychogeographers had their own ideas on the matter, noting details like "a forlorn Christmas wreath left on a street light," a "park with anything but trees, in front of a forest of buildings," "a bench to see nothing," and "a feeble attempt to make social housing cheerful with a bit of turquoise paint." The spot marked Lycée Voltaire on the official map was described by two people. The first wrote: "How can it be a ruin after only thirty years—I mean, treated like a ruin with this horrible pink and prisonlike [word I can't make out]? How can a pink foie-gras door mean "No entry!?" Don't go out either. That is a mystery." The second noted succinctly: "A prefabricated education," "'let me in'—'let me out.' Mussolinification of thought."¹¹

The Avenue de la Bolière is known locally for its Sunday "rodeos." Motorcycle riders rear up on their hind wheels, speed side by side at over 100 MPH. Engines revving, tires screeching, neighbors grumbling. A member of our group noted a fence next to a roundabout: "looks like a car crashed into it."

Not far away is the Bolière 3 mall, with a Champion supermarket. In 2006, Babette, the head cashier, was fired for giving credit to customers, causing a general outcry. She recounts the time sixteen years ago when local companies first began downsizing: "a mother came in with her small daughter; she needed milk and diapers. She reimbursed the loan at the end of the month when she got her relief check," and Babette soon was "giving credit to 5 or 6 people each month, for 50 or 60 euros. Always for staples, jars of baby food, diapers, pasta, never alcohol."¹²

Toponym Territory

Our walk finished an hour later as arbitrarily as it had begun when the participants gave their annotated maps back to Wilfried Hou Je Bek. Nowadays, even flâneurs have to keep to a schedule. Our notations would be translated into a language of his invention, L-Expression, and visualized in a three-dimensional display for which the programming had been outsourced to artist Orkan Telhan in the United States. The results were presented on a plasma screen at the Archilab exhibition, *The Naked City*.

Before going our separate ways, we discussed how difficult it had been to find names. Although naming something can make us more acutely aware of the particular qualities of that thing,¹³ our relationship with an environment is built over time. The visitors among us could not easily put a name on things we perceived confusedly. "On the tip of our tongues," the names slid off, and instead came paraphrases, descriptions, and approximations. However imprecise they may be as labels, these remarks give us a sense of place:

"Fort Knox in the ghetto: money with nowhere to go." (facing the *Centre de Chèques Postaux*, local headquarters of the post office banking service)

"A graffiti signs the blind wall of the shopping center: tpi (international penal court?)"

"I arrive in an immense open space, a vacant lot divided in two: parking lot/basketball court. Around this space, buildings and iron bars. What urban developers call a *délaissé* [abandon] appears at the heart of another kind of abandon we don't usually name."

The stumbling block for people who are familiar with an area is a selective gaze that ignores everything but what is necessary for the task at hand. We see only what we expect to see. It takes a certain detachment to be able to look for one thing and find another fortuitously.

Wilfried Hou Je Bek maintains that "the ability to communicate about places in names you have yourself found the language for, the name of it reflecting the reason why it is named as it is, creates a strong emotional relationship with these objects. The survey of the names a community has given through the ages, will tell you about their collective history, it will relive past hopes and miseries, it will evoke mental maps of which some areas will be nearly abandoned, while elsewhere lots of names are in close proximity," which is why "the suppression of local names, in favor of gutless administrative ones [estranges] people from the world they live in."¹⁴

This seems to be the case everywhere in France, due to its highly centralized administration. Sifting through the archives of land registry in the Meuse valley near the German border, Patrick Beurard-Valdoye found that 90 percent of the toponyms from the Napoleonic era had disappeared. Over the years, successive administrations tended to regroup four or five plots of land into one, for which they retained only one name. He maintains that when we stop using a name, the place itself vanishes. In a poem-palimpsest composed entirely of obsolete toponyms, he conjures up long forgotten spots, such as Gringolet and Rebitorchon, simply by pronouncing their names.¹⁵ This local memory is disappearing in many places. By interviewing elderly people in Palestine, geographer Kamal Abdul Fattah and his students were able to revive names of local wadis, springs, hillocks, and cliffs. The terms in Arabic, Canaanite, and Aramaic reflect the meaning these places had for the inhabitants.¹⁶

Indigenous Australian dreaming tracks are strings of toponyms that designate places in which members of a particular group have lived, represented as stages in the journey of their totemic ancestors. Each named place corresponds to a memory trace that is at once individual and collective, mythical and historic.¹⁷ "No one who has not experienced Arunta landscape can appreciate the vivid reality of the myths," wrote Olive Pink in 1933: "The whole country through which we passed was apparently only mulga scrub, a few gum creeks, a low or high range here or there, or some open plains, yet it was made the scene of much activity by aboriginal history. . . . So vivid are the tales that the investigator has the feeling of an inhabited area with much activity around: people hurrying hither and thither."¹⁸

"To move forward we have to go backwards and start language anew. 'Right here Write now,'" says Wilfried Hou Je Bek. He put his own principle to work by dubbing the Orléans-La-Source experiment "psychogeonomics," a portmanteau name on which we can hang a host of others: *geonomics*, a theory that people own only what they create and therefore land and other natural resources belong to the community; *geodynamics*, "the study of the activity and forces inside the earth"; *onomastics*, "the study of the origin, form, meaning and use of names, especially proper names"¹⁹; and *nomics*, a game in which players propose "changes in the rules, debate the wisdom of changing them in that way, vote on the changes."²⁰ With our feet, we are continually writing the city, but can we read it?

Psychogeography: A Toolbox for Reading

"Psychogeography is the fact that you have an opinion about a space the moment you step into it. This has as much to do with the space as with our hardwired instincts to determine if it is safe," says Wilfried Hou Je Bek.²¹ *Graphy* comes from the Greek *graphein* (to write), a decidedly polysemic word: if geographers "carve," "draw," or "write" the earth (*geos*), what about psychogeographers? The Latin prefix *psychē*

(breath) adds a zest of soul to the mix, linking earth, mind and hand. Psychogeographic writing is an alternative way of reading the city. Wilfried Hou Je Bek calls it "the city-space cut-up." Just as William Burroughs and Brion Gysin cut and reorganized newspaper texts to reveal their implicit content, so too psychogeographers decode urban space by moving through it in unexpected ways.

Although the various practices gathered under the umbrella of psychogeography are ancient, the term itself was first used by members of the Lettrist International in the early 1950s. They described it as "a science of relations and ambiances" they were developing "to give play in the society of others [*le jeu de société*; literally, "the parlor game"] its true meaning: a society founded upon play. Nothing is more serious. Amusement is the royal privilege that must be made available to everyone."²²

Writing in the Belgian surrealist journal *Les Lèvres Nues*, Guy-Ernest Debord attributes the term to an "illiterate Kabyle." Its vagueness appealed to the loosely organized group that adopted it to describe its various activities. Because geography deals with the impact of natural forces (such as climate and soil composition) "on the economic structures of a society, and thus on the corresponding conception that such a society can have of the world," wrote Debord, psychogeography should examine the "specific effects of the geographical environment . . . on the emotions and behavior of individuals."²³ To accomplish this ambitious investigation, he recommended drifting:

The practice of de-familiarization and the choice of encounters, the sense of incompleteness and ephemerality, the love of speed transposed onto the plane of the mind, together with inventiveness and forgetting are among the elements of an ethics of drifting we have already begun to test in the poverty of the cities of our time.²⁴

Contemporary practitioners take their cue from Debord, who proposed one of psychogeography's first genealogies. It began with Giovanni Piranesi's labyrinthine stairways and gathered Claude Lorrain, Jack the Ripper ("probably psycho-geographical in love"), Edgar Allan Poe, and André Breton (deemed "naively psycho-geographical in encounters"), among others.²⁵

Each psychogeographer has his own list: Ralph Rumney's included "Renaissance architect Serlio, French garden designer Le Nôtre, and all builders of grottoes, follies and mazes"; Iain Sinclair turns to William Blake, "the Godfather of Psychogeography"; Rebecca Solnit makes a case for satirist John Gay, the author of *Trivia, or The Art of Walking the Streets of London* (1716); Wilfried Hou Je Bek singles out Horace Walpole, who, over a period of thirty years, transformed his Tudor mansion into a Gothic castle "meticulously designed to provoke a vast array of sensations in its visitors"; Merlin Coverly cites Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* for the way it depicts the seamy underside of the city as reflecting dark corners of the human psyche.²⁶

Among the precursors found on nearly every list is opium-eater and peripatetic Thomas de Quincey: "On Saturday evenings," wrote de Quincey, "I have had the custom, after taking my opium, of wandering quite far, without worrying about the route or the distance" in search of an occult "Northwest Passage" allowing one to cross London unhampered.²⁷

The Figure of the Flâneur

Charles Baudelaire's flâneur is often cited as a model for today's run of psychogeographer. Inspired by Edgar Allan Poe's story "The Man of the Crowd" and epitomized by Baudelaire's painter friend Constantin Guys, the flâneur was something of a dandy who ambled through the Paris arcades while ordinary people scurried to work all around him. Free from the pressures of the workaday world, he sought the random encounters that the city streets were always ready to offer. Guys, "the painter of modern life," was a man of the world whose domain was the crowd, "just as the air is the bird's and water that of the fish." He desired nothing more than to merge with the throng and to dwell in "the ebb and flow, the bustle, the fleeting and the infinite." The crowd was "[a]n enormous reservoir of electricity" that gave him the opportunity "to be away from home and yet to feel at home anywhere; to see the world, to be at the very center of the world, and yet to be unseen by the world" to the extent that the man himself has become a mirror, "a kaleidoscope endowed with consciousness," "an ego thirsting for the nonego and reflecting it at every moment in energies more vivid than life itself, always inconstant and fleeting."²⁸ Baudelaire completes this portrait in "The Crowds," one of the prose poems that comprise *Le Spleen de Paris*: "It is not given to everyone to be able to bathe in the multitude: enjoyment of the crowd is an art" that requires "a taste for dressing up and masque, a hatred for domesticity and a passion for travel. The solitary and thoughtful stroller derives a singular intoxication from this universal communion."²⁹

In the 1930s, Walter Benjamin reappropriated Baudelaire's dandy for his own purposes, contrasting "the pedestrian who wedged himself into the crowd" with "the flâneur who demanded elbow room and was unwilling to forgo the life of the gentleman of leisure." He claimed that "Around 1840 it was briefly fashionable to take turtles for a walk in the arcades. The flâneurs liked to have the turtles set the pace for them" as a way of protesting against "the division of labor which makes people into specialists."³⁰

In the tradition of Restif de la Bretonne, who wandered through Paris on the eve of the French Revolution (*Les nuits de Paris*, 1788–1794), Benjamin's contemporaries Louis Aragon (*Paris Peasant*, 1925), André Breton (*Nadja*, 1928), and Philippe Soupault (*Last Nights of Paris*, 1928) put to paper their citywide ramblings. Like Baudelaire ("Modernity is the transient, the fleeting, the contingent"),³¹ they celebrated the

inadvertent poetry of shop window displays, fleeting glances, elusive women, chance encounters, and mysterious pursuits.

Drifting through *New Babylon*: Montage and Metonymy

Drifting for members of the Lettrist International did not mean only walking. The adventure began during a transportation strike in the summer of 1953 on the platform at the Gare de Lyon, where the group was trying agit-prop. Failing to rally any of the stranded passengers to the strikers' cause, Guy Debord, Jean-Michel Mension, and their friends sauntered out of the station (or were they chased out?) and began flagging down cars.³² Hitchhiking nonstop through Paris, they changed their destinations to fit that of the drivers. Their goal, as Debord noted facetiously, was to add to the confusion.³³

Later, this "technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances" was accomplished on foot and by taxi, "depending on whether the goal [was] to study a terrain or to emotionally disorient oneself."³⁴ In "Dérive by the Mile," Michèle Bernstein argued in favor of replacing private transport in Paris by large numbers of low-cost taxis, which would be more conducive to recreational drifting. As they travel varying distances in a set time and follow an essentially random itinerary, taxis combine freedom of movement with automatic disorientation.³⁵

Conversely, walking was better for close-up views that focus on the environment at hand.³⁶ The situationists prided themselves on detecting the "sudden change of ambiance in a street within the space of a few meters; the evident division of a city into zones of distinct psychic atmospheres."³⁷ It is a subjective science. When Guy Debord describes the urban ambiances that he and fellow lettrist Gil J. Wolman gathered while drifting through the north of Paris, his judgments are peremptory: here he sees a "repulsive *petit-bourgeois* landscape"; there he deems a staircase leading to a network of alleys to be "annoyingly picturesque"; farther on, he consecrates "the impressive rotunda by Claude-Nicolas Ledoux" as the center of an "important psychogeographic hub" because it is "a virtual ruin left in an incredible state of abandonment, whose charm is singularly enhanced by the curve of the elevated subway line that passes by at close distance."³⁸

A drift could last as long as the drifters wanted it to—a whole day or, as Debord suggests, the time between two periods of sleep: "The maximum area of this spatial field does not extend beyond the entirety of a large city and its suburbs. At its minimum it can be limited to a small self-contained ambiance: a single neighborhood or even a single block of houses if it's interesting enough (the extreme case being a static-drift of an entire day within the Saint-Lazare train station)."³⁹

It comprised both restless movement and alcohol-fueled talk. Speaking in Paris at the Palais de Tokyo in September 2003, Jean-Michel Mension described those early drifts as leading frequently from one neighborhood bar to another. It was not usually

a solitary pursuit. Debord's and Wolman's drift began at 10 a.m. and finished at an unspecified time in the evening when the two drifters abruptly decided to put an end to it. On the way, they made a number of "stops—sometimes long, sometimes brief—at various bars patronized by the bargemen" on the right bank of the canal Saint-Denis, before arriving in a Spanish bar known as the Tavern of the Rebels.⁴⁰

Architecture for Drifters

Members of the lettrist group⁴¹ viewed drifting as part of a larger quest, which was outlined by Ivan Chtcheglov in his 1953 *Formulary for Unitary Urbanism*. Inveighing against "banalization," the mental illness of our time, he notes: "Everyone is hypnotized by production and conveniences: sewage system, elevator, bathroom, washing machine"—a state of affairs that arose out of the postwar struggle against poverty but "has overshot its ultimate goal." Instead of liberating people from worldly cares, he claims that the obsession with material comfort has enslaved his contemporaries to the point that "presented with the alternative of love or a garbage disposal unit, young people of all countries have chosen the garbage disposal unit." This is why he thought it necessary "to bring about a complete spiritual transformation by bringing to light forgotten desires and by creating entirely new ones. And by carrying out an intensive propaganda in favor of these desires."⁴²

Chtcheglov goes on to portray the ideal city of the future in which drifting is the main activity of its inhabitants. Landscapes that change from one hour to the next will result in complete disorientation. All the other arts will be superseded by architecture, "the simplest means of *articulating* time and space, of *modulating* reality, of engendering dreams":

Everyone will live in his own personal "cathedral," so to speak. There will be rooms more conducive to dreams than any drug and houses where one cannot help but love. Others will be irresistibly alluring to travelers. . . . The districts of this city could correspond to the whole spectrum of diverse feelings that one encounters by chance in everyday life.⁴³

The Dutch painter Constant later incorporated these ideals into his utopian city New Babylon, whose inhabitants, freed by automation from the obligation to work, could spend their days engaging in creative play.⁴⁴ Chtcheglov himself had second thoughts later, after several years in a psychiatric hospital. In "Letters from Afar," he likened the continual drift to free association in psychoanalysis. Too much of either threatened the unprotected individual with disintegration. He recommended it for a shorter period: "limited to Sundays for some people, up to one week average. A month, that's quite a bit. We drifted for three or four months in 1953–1954—that is the extreme limit. It's a miracle it didn't kill us."⁴⁵

For Henri Lefebvre, the practice of drifting "revealed the growing fragmentation of the city." Industrial expansion in the nineteenth century had already begun to break

the center of Paris into pieces. The Place des Vosges, a vestige of the aristocratic seventeenth-century city, was surrounded by newer bourgeois areas in the Marais, the Bastille, and the Faubourg Saint-Antoine. "We had a vision of a city that was more and more fragmented without its organic unity being completely shattered," said Lefebvre, and "Afterward, of course, the peripheries and the suburbs highlighted the problem. The experiment consisted of rendering different aspects or fragments of the city simultaneous, fragments that can only be seen successively." To accomplish this, Constant had the idea of using walkie-talkies to link up groups of drifters in spatially distant neighborhoods of the city. The drift took the form of narrative unfolding in several places at once by means of walkie-talkies: "you go along in any direction and recount what you see. . . . The goal was to attain a certain simultaneity . . . a synchronic history. That was the meaning of Unitary Urbanism: unify what has a certain unity, but a lost unity, a disappearing unity."⁴⁶

The Demise of Unitary Urbanism

After 1960 and the development of urbanization and city planning (in France the urban planning code dates to 1961), the situationists abandoned the theory of unitary urbanism and the practice of structured drifting. The drift "had a precise meaning only for historic cities, like Amsterdam, that had to be renewed, transformed. But from the moment that the historic city exploded into peripheries, suburbs—like what happened in Paris and in all sorts of places, Los Angeles, San Francisco, wild extensions of the city—the theory of unitary urbanism lost any meaning."⁴⁷ For them, drifting would have been nonsensical in a new town like Orléans-La-Source.

Algorithmic Walking

The situationists reflected on what was for them a practice, unlike Wilfried Hou Je Bek, who began with the theory. His generation saw psychogeography as an "academic bon mot" that called for references to Michel Foucault, Antonio Negri, and Gilles Deleuze. It was not something you actually did. He decided to buck the trend: "I have always been into making walks—that is the real reason for psychogeography."⁴⁸

So he and his friends began where the situationists left off in the newly built cities, following the method described in Guy Debord's "Theory of the Drift" (1956). In 2001, two groups of psychogeographers explored a neighborhood under construction in the new town of Leidsche Rijn ("the armpit of Utrecht," as Hou Je Bek put it) using a map of Rome "as some sort of randomiser." After agreeing to meet forty-five minutes later on the "Ponte Garibaldi," they set out to "rewire their perception of Leidsche Rijn"—This "way of manoeuvring" offered them "a pleasant afternoon" but, as Hou Je Bek concludes, it "was too strongly influenced by the limits of personal tastes, expectations and biases." They needed a more "objective method," since the

psychogeographical effects were more likely to be stronger "if the route was as clear as possible."⁴⁹

A solution came their way via the *Game of Life*, a cellular automata program developed by John Conway in 1970 that used stones on a Go board. In this game with simple rules (analogous to evolutionary patterns of bacteria populations), it was impossible to predict what would happen next: the only way to find out was to execute the program. Inspired by the *Game of Life*, which had been developed without a computer (to test his code, Conway had to update the patterns, one stone at a time), Wilfried Hou Je Bek came up with a set of rules to define a route that could be both endless and unpredictable. He notes that to succeed, these directions need both to "enslave" the participant, creating in him "the desire to find out where this all 'will lead to,'" and to enhance his "cognitive map with new images and experiences of the city."⁵⁰

To measure the psychological effects of these strolls, he imagined a notational system that later developed into the psychogeographic markup language (PML) project.⁵¹ Because the walking algorithm produces different results each time it is executed, it is a generative program. Groups of psychogeographers, each following a different set of instructions, can use it for experiments in collaborative cartography, as we had in Orléans-La-Source.

For him, walking is a process of self-education: "The psychogeography project started because I wanted to say something about cities. I had no idea what I would want to say, but that's what it started as—a systematic process of finding out. Slowly, while doing that, you build up enough understanding to be able to say something."⁵²

Playful Pedestrianism

As unitary urbanism was winding down toward the end of the 1950s, other movements were gathering momentum in Europe and Japan. During the second Gutai⁵³ show in Tokyo (1956), Shiraga Kazuo dipped his feet in paint and walked over an expanse of canvas he had placed on the floor. Atsuko Tanaka walked through exhibition openings wearing her *Electric Dress*. Inspired by neon drugstore signs, the dress was a tangle of electric cords and light bulbs that lit up from time to time, like the electric impulses moving through the body. Akira Kanayama showed 150 meters of shoeprints and invented a four-wheel remote-control device filled with paint that automatically traced a meshwork of lines on the floor (*Remote-Control Paintings*, 1955).

While Guy Debord was oscillating between drifting and political activism, the decentralized Fluxus group was developing a kind of playful anarchy that was reminiscent of the dadaists. They wrote walking scores and organized tours in the city (such as *FreeFlux Tours* and *Fluxus Tour of Soho*).

Excursions, Tours and Mobile Galleries

The tradition of artist-led tours can be traced back to the *Excursions & Visits DADA*. At the instigation of André Breton, the dadaists planned a series of tours of "common places" like the Louvre, the Buttes Chaumont garden and the Gare Saint-Lazare. The *1st Visit* (and the last, too, it seems) was the Parisian church Saint-Julien-le-Pauvre.

The group's leaflets announced that "Thursday, 14 April, at 3 p.m., in the garden of St-Julien-le-Pauvre church, the dadaists passing through Paris, wanting to remedy the incompetence of suspicious tourist guides, have decided to inaugurate a series of visits to chosen places, particularly those that have really no reason to exist" (and were decorated with slogans such as "Cleanliness is the luxury of the poor man. Be dirty!", "You ought to trim your nose as you trim your hair," "Breasts should be washed like gloves," and "Distribution of silk stockings for 5.85").⁵⁴

Intended to offend traditional aesthetic sensibilities and make the public aware of dada's militant antiart stance, the promised excursion failed to attract any takers other than the guides themselves. Photographs show them standing in the church garden under a forest of umbrellas, while André Breton reads from a paper.⁵⁵ As Hugo Ball said, "For us, art is not an end in itself . . . but it is an opportunity for the true perception and criticism of the times we live in."⁵⁶

Like the visit to Saint-Julien-le-Pauvre, artists' tours often cast everyday sights in a new light. In 1962, after observing street vendors in Paris's Marais quarter illegally hawking "genuine cheap Swiss watches" *sous le manteau* (under the table; literally, "under the coat"), Robert Filliou found a subversive way to show art by peddling it "under the hat." The Galerie Légitime (Legitimate Gallery) with its *Couvre-Chef d'œuvre* (Masterpiece Hat) was born. In July 1962, an exhibition invitation was distributed: reminiscent of situationist maps, it showed an itinerary through Paris, with each stop marked with a time—from the Porte Saint-Denis at 4 a.m. to La Coupole at 9:30 p.m. The itinerant gallery, its owner, and the exhibiting artist (Ben Patterson) ambled through Paris, talking with people they met at the places noted on the flyer.⁵⁷ Filliou's itinerant gallery recalls Marcel Duchamp's *Boîtes-en-valise* (suitcases equipped with "samples" of his works) and his remark that the readymades were rendezvous at a certain time and place.

Walking blurs the borders between representing the world and designating oneself as a piece of it, between live art and object-based art. Artists moved from depicting places to pointing them out or demonstrating them, like André Breton quickly walking in and out of local cinema screenings in 1920s Paris.⁵⁸ And since the fabled nontour of Saint-Julien-le-Pauvre, they seem to be intent on taking us with them as well.

Walking Mathematically

Beginning in the early 1970s, Georges Perec examined his own relationship with lived spaces in books like *Especies d'espaces* (*Species of Spaces*) and *Tentative d'épuisement d'un*

lieu parisien (*An Attempt to Exhaustively Describe a Parisian Place*),⁵⁹ in which he listed all the events he observed from a café table at the place Saint-Sulpice in Paris. He begins *Species of Spaces* by noting: "The subject of this book is not exactly the void but rather what there is around or inside it."⁶⁰ Positing that "To live is to go from one space to another, trying insofar as possible to not bump into things,"⁶¹ the book itself moves from the space of the page ("Space begins in this way, with only words, signs traced on the blank page")⁶² to that of the bed, the bedroom, the apartment, the building, the street, the quarter, the city, the countryside, the country, Europe, the world, and space, like a letter addressed by a child. Percec notes that he likes to walk in Paris, sometimes for an afternoon without a goal but "not really by chance" and sometimes by carefully preparing an itinerary. If he had the time, he would like to conceive and resolve problems like that of the bridges of Koenigsberg or "find a path crossing Paris from one end to the other, only taking streets beginning with the letter C."⁶³

Fellow Oulipian, mathematician, scholar, and poet Jacques Roubaud "writes with his feet," using place names and arbitrarily concocted walks to help him mentally compose his poems and haibuns (a short literary form combining prose and haiku). He calls the process "sonnet-walking." The micro-haibun *Sonnet-walking* is composed of thirteen sonnets, each marking a stop on a trip in the United States (New York, Cambridge, Boston, Philadelphia, Cincinnati, Denver, and San Francisco), with intermediate sonnets describing the trip from one place to another. Another, composed in Tokyo, takes the shape of the Yamanote line circling the city. He stopped at each train station to explore the area on foot and compose poems.⁶⁴

From Poaching to Protest: Walking the Cutting Edge

In the 1960s and early 1970s, visual artists explored unusual means of engaging with their everyday surroundings. In Amsterdam, Stanley Brouwn collected footprints of anonymous passers-by by putting sheets of paper on sidewalks. Later he handed paper to pedestrians in several European cities, asking them to draw a map showing how to get from wherever they were to the train station or the cathedral. He stamped these drawings *This Way Brouwn* and gathered them into an artist's book. The results show how different people see and convey spatial relationships. As maps, they depend on the particular context for which they were made.

Between 1970 and 1973, Adrian Piper made a series of unannounced street appearances in New York to which she gave the title *Catalysis* (figure 1.2). *Catalysis* is the change (often the increase) in the rate of a chemical reaction that is induced by a catalyst. The term *catalyst* is often used figuratively to designate someone or something that provokes change. She did not want her actions to be labeled guerrilla theater, streetworks, or happenings. To call them art would reduce their effect. For *Catalysis I*, she soaked her clothes in a mixture of vinegar, eggs, milk, and cod liver oil for a week

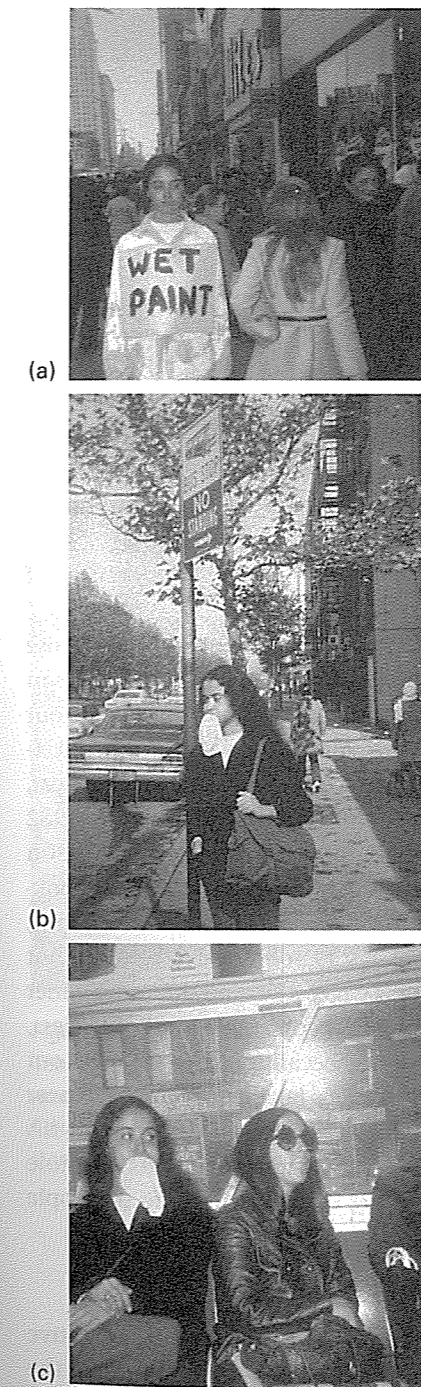


Figure 1.2

Adrian Piper, *Catalysis*, 1970. Performance documentation: black-and-white photographs, 16 in. × 16 in. (40.6 cm. × 40.6 cm.). A series of unannounced street appearances in New York. Photos: Rosemary Mayer. Collection of the Generali Foundation, Vienna. © Generali Foundation and APRA Foundation, Berlin. *a*: *Catalysis III*: The artist walks through Macy's department store to shop for gloves and sunglasses while wearing a sweatshirt covered with wet paint. *b*: The artist rides the bus with a towel hanging out her mouth.

and wore them on the subway during evening rush hour and in a bookstore on Saturday night. For *Catalysis III*, she strolled among racks of gloves and sunglasses at Macy's wearing a sweatshirt on which she spread a layer of sticky white paint and wrote *wet paint*. For *Catalysis IV*, she rode on a bus with a towel hanging out of her mouth.⁶⁵

These actions, which express deliberate dislocation and alienation, have been interpreted as a socially charged critique of homelessness.⁶⁶ More basically, however, they explore the reactions of passers-by to destabilizing situations. Are New Yorkers as callous as they are said to be? In 1964, a young woman from the borough of Queens was stabbed to death in full view of many neighbors, whose lack of assistance led to many social psychological studies of the "bystander effect."⁶⁷

By the time Taiwanese artist Tehching Hsieh carried out his third *One Year Performance*⁶⁸ (figure 1.3) in the streets of New York in 1981, the situation had changed considerably. This was the beginning of the Ronald Reagan presidency when a reaction against so-called big government led to decreased spending on public services.⁶⁹ As tax revenues declined, administrations across the United States cut back funding for social services, closed psychiatric wards in hospitals. There was a rise in the number of homeless people seeking refuge on the sidewalks, subway platforms and parks of New York.

For Hsieh, "art is not a career; it is my life"⁷⁰ and New York was the place he chose to live that life. After spending one year in solitary confinement in a self-made prison cell within his studio (1978–79) and another year punching a time clock every hour on the hour (1980–81), Hsieh issued a statement in which he resolved to "stay OUT-DOORS for one year, never go inside" and "not go in to a building, subway, train, car, airplane, ship, cave, tent" from September 26, 1981 at 2 p.m. to September 26, 1982 at 2 p.m.⁷¹ During that year, he moved around downtown New York on foot, slept on park benches, bought food in outdoor markets, made fires on the piers near the Brooklyn Bridge, and washed himself in fountains and fire hydrants. An illegal immigrant, he was not strictly speaking "homeless"—he had left home voluntarily—and did not have to rely on the street for his living. Locked in his cage, he could attain an inner freedom, yet outside, roaming around at will, he was "trapped . . . in a kind of restless, internal exile."⁷² Always on his guard in public spaces, "because of the violence out there,"⁷³ he noted his journeys on maps and had friends take photographs. These radical experiments,⁷⁴ which have not been equaled since, engaged the artist in his everyday existence as a human being and offered the people he encountered the role of witness. As Hsieh puts it, "you have to make the art stronger than life so people can feel it."⁷⁵

Boots Made for Walking

Others have stripped the genre to its essentials, devising spare but evocative performances. *Roadworks* was carried out in May 1985 by Mona Hatoum in the



Figure 1.3

Tehching Hsieh, *One Year Performance 1981–1982*. The artist spent a year outdoors, moving around New York City with only a sleeping bag and a few other belongings. © Tehching Hsieh. Courtesy the artist and Sean Kelly Gallery, New York and the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Collection, Detroit.



Figure 1.4
Mona Hatoum, *Roadworks*, 1985. Performance, Brixton, London. © the artist. Photo: Patrick Gilbert. Courtesy White Cube. Mona Hatoum performed *Roadworks* in May 1985 in the predominantly African Caribbean district of Brixton in south London.

predominantly African Caribbean district of Brixton in south London (figure 1.4). The site of violent riots in the 1980s, Brixton suffered from severe economic problems, unemployment, inadequate housing, and a high crime rate. Yet for the inhabitants, an increased police presence was not reassuring; indeed it felt like an army of occupation. In Brixton, bobbies had a reputation for brutality and for indiscriminately using their stop-and-search powers to target blacks and minorities. Later in 1985, during a nighttime raid in connection with a robbery, London police officers shot and paralyzed a Brixton woman. Coming after many instances of oppression by police, this accidental shooting triggered off a night of violence in which one person was killed.

In Brixton, Hatoum walked barefoot on a busy city sidewalk, a military-style boot (the kind worn by police officers and skinheads) tied to each ankle by its shoelaces.⁷⁶ The documentary video shows the artist moving laboriously past shopping carts, baby carriages, and market stalls. At first, we see only her feet pulling the boots as other pairs of shod feet pass quickly without pausing. When one oncoming pedestrian moves in and turns one of Hatoum's boots on its side, Hatoum stoops to stand it back

up. The camera gradually moves out to show the action from other points of view. Some passers-by are startled, and others turn to gape or point her out to their companions. A group of men look on, chuckling. One of them says: "Does she know she's being followed?"⁷⁷

This interplay of vulnerability and power has a particular significance in the United Kingdom, where walking is a national pastime. The Ramblers Association was created to promote "Britain's most popular outdoor recreation": "Walking is the most inclusive, sociable and sustainable means of transport, the closest thing to perfect exercise and the best way to access the outdoors."⁷⁸ Official maps in England and Wales record at least 225,000 kilometers of off-road public rights of way. Tourists meander through the foothills in the Lakes district, bird watching or pub crawling.

But walking also brings into play embedded class antagonisms. English tradition has long pitted aristocratic fox hunters against plebian foot travelers. Suspicion of pedestrians can be traced to sixteenth-century Britain, where they were suspected of vagrancy. After the enactment of the game laws in 1671, the pedestrian was seen as a potential poacher. His very existence was a threat to private property. Donna Landry argues that "walking means aligning oneself to some extent with a rebellious reclaiming of common rights, with the dream of liberal freedom, with the ideal of democracy."⁷⁹ In a country where common lands were being increasingly privatized and enclosed, the walker reclaimed the right to use public footpaths.

For those with the means to drive, walking was construed as a political statement that signified adhesion to the democratic principles of the Enlightenment. The young Samuel Coleridge and Joseph Hucks, gentlemen dressed as peasants, set off to walk from Cambridge to Wales: "By going amongst the Welsh populace disguised as a poor pedestrian, [Hucks] sought a different kind of experience. Pedestrianism was an expression of universal brotherhood, of solidarity with the laboring man. And the freedom to travel without carriages, horses, and servants, and to go wherever their feet might carry them, was a heady experience of freeborn liberty."⁸⁰ Mona Hatoum's performance suggests that more than a century after the abolition of slavery, this liberty may be illusory for those who have no choice but to travel on foot.

Taking his inspiration from the French situationists, Ewen Chardonnet sees psychogeography as a tool that can teach history, politics, and the theory of capitalism. In Paris, a city that sees about three thousand demonstrations every year, it means one thing to "start a demonstration moving from the Invalides (that is a symbol of Napoleon's grave) to Saint Michel (symbol of 1968)" and quite another to "go from Bastille Square (symbol of the French Revolution) to Nation Square (symbol of resistance to wars with Germany, Nation is on the east side of Paris, where invaders usually came in during wars). You can choose different places to pass through to stimulate the imaginations of the protesters and even provoke riots."⁸¹

At the time of Restif de la Bretonne, Place de Grève⁸² facing the Paris Town Hall was the site of public executions. In 2009, a group of university professors made it the site of their protest against the French government's neoliberal university reforms. For six weeks, relaying each other night and day, marchers walked in a circle that they called *La ronde infinie des obstinés* (The Infinite Round of the Obstinate).

Reclaiming Public Space

Artists often choose to marry humor and political activism with walking. For the event *9 Evenings* in 1966, Öyvind Fahlström arranged for performers to carry signs through the streets of New York showing portraits of Chinese leader Mao Tse-tung and U.S. television comedian Bob Hope. This "odd couple" of media figures produces a cognitive dissonance that seems striking even today.

In 1966, Michelangelo Pistoletto made several large spheres of pressed newspapers that encapsulated the news from the period. The following year, Pistoletto and his wife rolled a two-meter *grande sfera di giornali* (great ball of newspapers) through the streets of Turin, inviting passers-by to play with it. This *Scultura da passeggio* (Walking Sculpture) was a way of engaging with the world outside museums and galleries (figure 1.5). The newspaper ball was one of Pistoletto's *oggetti in meno* (minus objects), of which he wrote:

I feel that in my recent works I have entered the mirror and actively penetrated that dimension of time which was merely represented in the mirror-paintings. These recent works bear witness to the need to live and act in accordance with this dimension, i.e. in the light of the unrepeatable quality of each instant of time, each place, and thus of each "present" action. . . . My idea of evolution is also antievolutionary (like walking forward on a moving sidewalk that is going backward). Unlike the mirror paintings, my new objects do not represent: they are. Each individual work is a single word in a discussion which could last a lifetime and which is also a language closed in upon itself.⁸³

Fred Forest cultivates the complicity of the general public through clearly delineated actions. He has been operating in the cracks between media since the late 1960s. Today, his playful hijacking of communication codes to show up dysfunctions in public institutions and his use of weapons provided by the mass media to criticize those same media might be called culture jamming. A former newspaper cartoonist, he began to experiment with the media as a way of thinking about "communication itself, its codes, its subversion, its ideological, symbolic and aesthetic foundations."⁸⁴

For a series of projects called *Space Media*, Forest asked newspapers to print a small blank square that readers could fill in as they liked and send to the artist. The first, dubbed *150 cm² of Newspaper*, was printed in the French daily *Le Monde* on January 12, 1972. The eight hundred responses were exhibited at the Grand Palais. Ten days later, he appeared live on television with a request that viewers observe a moment of silence to "reflect on the meaning of their lives."

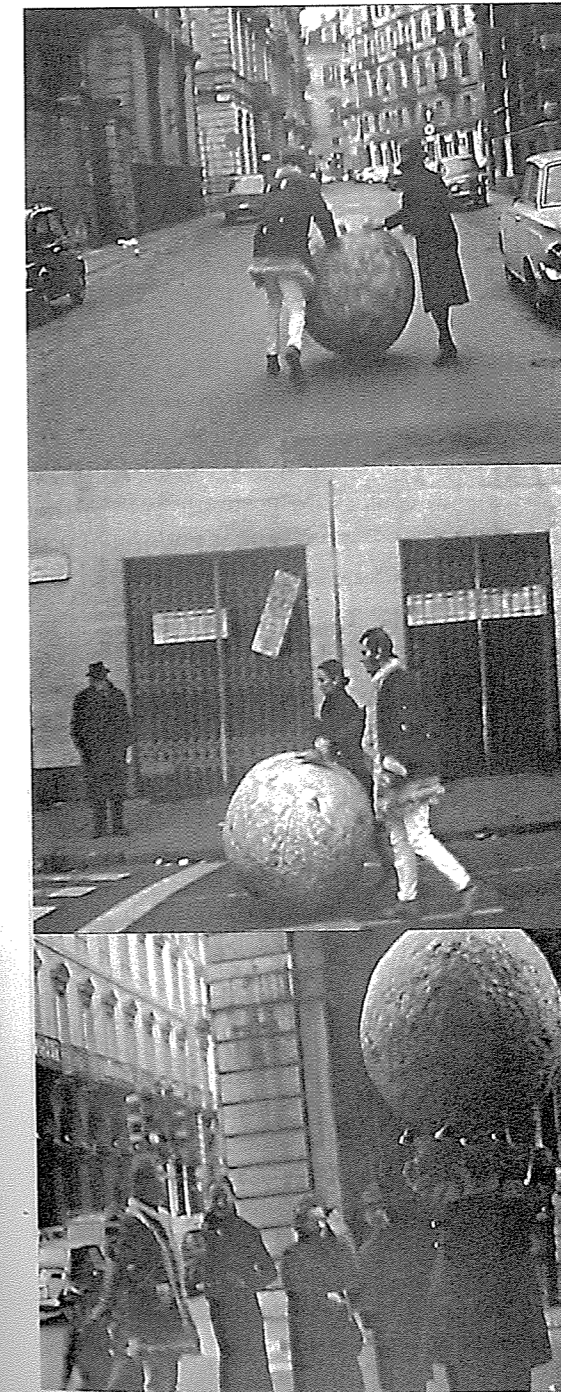


Figure 1.5
Michelangelo Pistoletto, *Walking Sculpture* (*Scultura da passeggio*), 1967. Performance in the streets of Turin. Stills from the film by Ugo Nespolo, *Buon-giorno Michelangelo*. Courtesy Cittadellarte-Fondazione Pistoletto, Biella.

After similar experiments in other European media, Forest was invited to participate in the twelfth São Paulo Biennial as part of the communication section curated by Vilém Flusser. Here was an opportunity to create a series of symbolic spaces for free expression. In defiance of Brazil's military junta in power at the time (albeit not one of Latin America's most repressive), he organized a nationwide call-in operation and published blank spaces in several newspapers. Every day, as they arrived, the public's responses were posted on the walls of Forest's stand at the Biennial. The local media responded enthusiastically.

The climax of the operation was a street demonstration in December 1972, *Hygiene of Art: The City Invaded by Blank Space*, that featured Forest and a group of marchers carrying blank signs (figure 1.6). Protest marches have long been joined by ordinary people to make their voices heard, but Forest's action was an example of sociological art that conflates protest and public relations. The operation was orchestrated with the help of curator Flusser's contacts in the Brazilian media. Instead of calling on dissidents or students who could have been arrested and tortured, Forest hired fifteen men to carry the signs. As professional sandwich-board



Figure 1.6

Fred Forest, *Hygiene of Art: The City Invaded by Blank Space*, 1973. Performance walk in the streets of São Paulo, Brazil, under the military dictatorship. The artist hired fifteen professional sandwich-board men to walk with him carrying blank signs.

men who work at street corners in the heart of São Paulo, they could not be held responsible for the content of their signs. The press published the itinerary of the march through the city center. Passers-by understood that the blank signs alluded to the censorship imposed by the regime. Although it was against the law for more than three people to congregate in the street, after fifteen minutes, recounts Forest, a hundred had joined the procession, and by the end, nearly two thousand were milling around. From their balconies, onlookers showered the marchers with ticker tape. The demonstration held up traffic for two hours, leading to the artist's arrest by the political police.

Although the march took place only two months after Augusto Pinochet's military coup d'état in neighboring Chile, Brazil was not Chile. Forest's arrest was abundantly reported in the local media, while foreign journalists noted laconically that "Brazilian police don't like freedom of expression."⁸⁵ Protected by his status as a foreign artist who had been officially invited by the Biennial, he was released after several hours of questioning.

Temporary Autonomous Zones

A number of culture jammers have cited the influence of Hakim Bey's *Temporary Autonomous Zone* (TAZ). Under the auspices of the Nietzschean Dionysus, "who will turn the world into a holiday," Bey called for the creation of temporary spaces that elude formal structures of control. A TAZ is located in a real time and space but depends on the Web "to bring it into being; crudely speaking one might say that the TAZ 'exists' in information-space as well as in the 'real world.'" The Web does not necessarily require computer technology. Groups can use both high- and low-tech means—word of mouth, phone trees, snail mail—to "construct an information webwork." The key to its utility is "the openness and horizontality of the structure."⁸⁶ In some ways, Forest's *Space Media* events prefigure the TAZ, yet participants in a TAZ are anonymous, and the experience is not documented, whereas his own "sociological art" relies on press coverage in which the artist himself figures prominently.

Reclaim the Streets is a collective that began in London in the early 1990s to advocate community ownership of public spaces by combining political activism with partying. It began with the occupation of Claremont Road in east London to prevent it from being destroyed to make way for a new link road. For six months, activists of all sorts—anarchists, ecologists, and squatters—joined forces to maintain the pressure through sit-ins, site invasions, and rave parties, which all received extensive media coverage.

The battle of Claremont Road was ultimately lost, but it served as a catalyst for a wider protest movement. During the 1990s, the group staged a number of nonviolent, festive street events to mark their opposition to cars and the corporate privatization

of public space.⁸⁷ Protests in the form of “cheeky surprise actions” set up using phone trees and instant messaging spread quickly to other cities worldwide. In some cases, they were combined with antiglobalization actions. The 1999 protests in Seattle were echoed by similar events as far away as India and the Philippines, including Carnival against Capitalism, Seattle Solidarity Action, Reclaim the Future, Toxic Planet, Tube Party, No Blood for Oil, and Guerrilla Gardening.⁸⁸

A similar spirit presided at the birth of the “free networks” movement in the next decade. Julian Priest, one of the founders of the London-based Consume the Net, sees the “digital media landscape” in England as a successor to “techno” culture “with its DIY bedroom music studios and self-organized parties.” Locally, this situation resulted in part from the “unseen network effects” of London’s orbital motorway, the M25, which was completed in 1986: “By connecting the edge of London’s road network for the first time, a space was created for the emerging rave culture.” Wireless free networking, which spread to other places from Berlin to San Francisco, was “an antidote to the commercial pipe dreams of telcos and investors, and with its focus on the ownership of infrastructure and local and co-operative action, it can be seen as a grounding of internet utopianism in something real, useful and manageable.”⁸⁹

The 1990s saw the development of other forms of activist art. “In the aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall, the term ‘*tactical media*’ arose as a renaissance of media activism, blending old school political work, artists’ engagement with new technologies,” write David Garcia and Geert Lovink: “During the early nineties there was a growing awareness of gender issues, racism, postcolonial struggles, and the possible role that art could play in society.”⁹⁰ Members of the collective Critical Art Ensemble define *tactical media* as “situational, ephemeral, and self-terminating. It encourages the use of any media that will engage a particular sociopolitical context in order to create molecular interventions and semiotic shocks that collectively could diminish the rising intensity of authoritarian culture.”⁹¹

Walking Psychogeographically

Hakim Bey’s intuition about the role of the Internet has been borne out by the rapid spread of psychogeography. Similar experiments in different places took place simultaneously and were quickly relayed by the Web as artists, architects, writers, teachers, and festival organizers caught the bug, spawning onsite mapping parties, dinnertime drifts, and haiku hikes.

The online publication of key situationist texts provided inspiration. Ken Knabb translated them into English and published them without copyright in 1981 and later online on his *Bureau of Public Secrets* Web site. Others appeared in Bill Brown’s zine *Not Bored!* (started in 1983), “an autonomous, situationist-inspired, low-budget, irregu-

larly published, photocopied journal. No copyrights, rights reserved, advertising or subscriptions.”⁹²

Psychogeography was popularized in Great Britain by the works of filmmaker Patrick Keiller (*London*, 1994) and writers Iain Sinclair (*Lights Out for the Territory*, 1997), Peter Ackroyd (*London: The Biography*, 2000), Will Self (*Psychogeography*, 2007), and Stewart Home (“The Psychogeography of Zeros and Ones,” 1997), who in 1992 revived the London Psychogeographical Association.⁹³ Since the early 1990s, the Italian architecture group Stalker and artists Francis Alÿs and Gabriel Orozco have all used walking as a speculative tool.⁹⁴

François Maspero would undoubtedly object to being called a psychogeographer.⁹⁵ His first-person account of a one-month trip on a suburban commuter train line, *Roissy Express: A Journey through the Paris Suburbs*, has inspired a number of French writers, who explore cracks in our “seamless” maps. Examples include François Bon, who recounted his weekly train trip from Paris to Nancy in *Paysage Fer*, to Philippe Vasset, who explored one by one all the blank spots on the official IGN map of Paris (*Un livre blanc*).⁹⁶

Remaking the World?

What is psychogeography’s legacy? In its diverse forms, it embodies the desire to renew language, social life, and oneself. For contemporary psychogeographers, the drift is purposeful; it can reveal the city’s underlying structure. Sinclair aims for Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s “alert reverie,” a kind of double presence that is both in the here and now and in the imagination:

Walking is the best way to explore and exploit the city; the changes, shifts, breaks in the cloud helmet, movement of light on water. Drifting purposefully is the recommended mode, trampling asphalted earth in alert reverie, allowing the fiction of an underlying pattern to assert itself. To the no-bullshit materialist this sounds suspiciously like *fin de siècle* decadence, a poetic of entropy—but the born-again flâneur is a stubborn creature, less interested in texture and fabric, eavesdropping on philosophical conversation pieces, than in noticing everything.⁹⁷

In “Theory of the Drift,” Debord proposed the idea of a “possible rendezvous” as a means of “behavioral disorientation.” Here, a person is given an appointment at a particular time and place but has no idea if someone will be there to meet him or who that person is. Not knowing what to expect, he will study his surroundings and start conversations with passers-by: “He may meet no one, or he may even by chance meet the person who has arranged the ‘possible rendezvous.’ In any case, particularly if the time and place have been well chosen, his use of time will take an unexpected turn.”⁹⁸

Courting the unexpected is often combined with the unabashed apology of subjectivity. Stewart Home states: "For me photography is most alluring when both the person behind the lens and what is being photographed self-consciously manifest their subjectivity. Traveling across 'Britain' to discover 'America' is only one of the many ways in which such subjectivity might remake the world in both photographic and material form. . . . The psychogeographer . . . knows that the world cannot be recorded, it can only be remade."⁹⁹ "Remaking the world" is usually done in smoke-filled cafés. If these debates rarely lead to concrete action, what about walking?

2 A Form of Perception or a Form of Art?

The whole universe of science is built upon the world as directly experienced, and if we want to subject science itself to a rigorous scrutiny, and arrive at a precise assessment of its meaning and scope, we must begin by reawakening the basic experience of the world, of which science is the second-order expression.

—Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*¹

William Wordsworth used to walk in order to think or write, with phrases spoken adopting the cadence of feet on the ground. Jean-Jacques Rousseau could meditate only when walking: "When I stop I cease to think; my mind only works with my legs."² Friedrich Nietzsche was said to value only thoughts that come from walking, while Søren Kierkegaard spent his mornings strolling through Copenhagen, stopping briefly to chat with passers-by in the Ostergade or hail fishmongers in the Gammel Strand before returning home to put to paper what he had composed afoot: "Every day I walk myself into a state of well-being and walk away from every illness; I have walked myself into my best thoughts, and I know of no thought so burdensome that one cannot walk away from it."³ As Saint Augustine put it, *solvitur ambulando* (it is solved by walking).

Walking and Falling

Robots have learned how to roll, dance, move up or down stairs and even hit a ball, but they are still clumsy when asked to move forward on two legs. Walking is not as simple as it looks.

In their table of contents for *La marche humaine: Kinésiologie dynamique, biomécanique et pathomécanique* (Human Walking: Dynamic, Biomechanical, and Pathomechanical Kinesiology), François Plas, Éric Viel, and Yves Blanc give us an idea of the complexity of this task.⁴ The process known as the "double pendulum" combines muscular actions (the heel attacks the ground, the sole of the foot is pressed down flat, the heel takes off and is followed by the toes, the lower limbs move forward