

D O R S K Y
G A L L E R Y
Curatorial Programs



ARTISTS' WALKS: THE PERSISTENCE OF PERIPATETICISM

MARINA ABRAMOVIĆ, JANET CARDIFF & GEORGES BURES MILLER,
HAMISH FULTON, NEIL GOLDBERG, GENERAL IDEA, LUCY GUNNING,
RICHARD LONG, GWEN MACGREGOR, GWEN MACGREGOR & SANDRA RECHICO,
DANICA PHELPS, SAMUEL ROWLETT, AND JESSICA THOMPSON

Curated by Earl Miller

September 8 – November 17, 2013

Opening reception: Sunday, September 8, 2:00–5:00 p.m.

“A work of art can be a journey.”

– Richard Long¹

In his seminal series *This Way Brouwn* (1960–1964), Stanley Brouwn, a Dutch artist associated with Fluxus and Conceptualism, asked passersby to sketch directions that showed him how to travel from one given point to another. He quickly claimed authorship of these drawings by stamping them with “This Way Brouwn.” In doing so, Brouwn was the first artist who claimed walks as art. This series as well as Brouwn’s later development of a measuring unit based on his step—the “brouwnstep”—prompted one art writer, Aaron Shuster, to claim “Brouwn’s stride merits a place alongside the stripes of Buren, Warhol’s soup cans and Flavin’s fluorescent light fixtures as one of the paradigmatic artistic gestures of the postwar era.”²

Indeed, a half-century later, artists’ walks have become a paradigm. They have ridden on the high tide of social practice art from the 1990s onward that encouraged art production and sometimes presentation outside studios and galleries. They have gained a wider audience because of their hybridization with other genres and fields, notably performance art, video art, and urban geography. They have been granted increased potential for experimentation by GPS and Google map technologies’ provision of new documentary possibilities.

Artists’ Walks: The Persistence of Peripateticism draws attention to these contemporary cultural imperatives that motivate artists to explore the dimensions of wayfinding and walking, and places them within the art-historical continuum of such walks beginning with Brouwn’s.

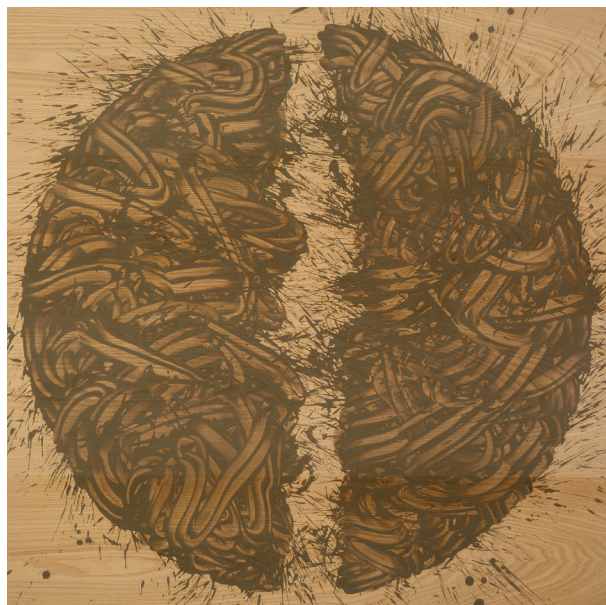
While Brouwn may have stamped his signature on the first art walks, **Richard Long’s** *A Line Made by Walking* (1967) endures as the touchstone walk. The piece simply comprises a single line of tromped down grass created by Long’s walking back and forth while

studying at London’s Central Saint Martins College of Arts and Design. Like many art students during the radical first generation of conceptual art, he and his fellow students Gilbert and George, who first gained notoriety as “living sculptures,” and **Hamish Fulton**, who first organized an art walk in 1967, wanted to evict art from the atelier and gallery. Long recalls: “I had a feeling that the big world that existed outside the studio—the world of fields and moors, rainstorms, clouds and rivers—was a much more fertile territory than being inside, welding metal or making plaster of Paris sculptures.”³

On many walks Long constructs *in situ* sculptures from found materials and photo-documents them. Take for instance, *A Dead Sheep Circle*, *A Five Day Walk in Mid-Wales* (2002), a circle of rocks arranged in a field. In other works—*Untitled* (2003) is one of them—Long did not document but rather incorporated found natural material into gallery exhibited work. Tidal mud from the River Avon is the fundamental material in his painting, *Untitled*, which like the impromptu sculpture in *A Dead Sheep Circle*, bears Long’s characteristically circular composition. Since the mid-1980s, Long has additionally produced standalone text documentations of his walk experiences. One, *Highland Time* (2002), characteristically reads as poetic documentation: “A winter walk of seventeen dreams/crossing Creag Dhubh Cairn at a midday from a blizzard to a full moon rising.”⁴

While Long’s and Fulton’s work frequently differs, often the result of Fulton’s eschewing of the sculptural, the two artists remain connected as early colleagues, for addressing the landscape as subject, for influencing several generations of walking artists, and for their respective text works’ similarity. Behind Fulton’s straightforward, text-based documentations of his journeys is his belief that “A walk has a life of its own and does not need to be materialized into a work of art.”⁵ Consider *Melting Glacier* (2005), an inkjet print of a pass in the Alps with matter-of-fact overlain text reading, “Continuing over Surenenpass to Lake Toma at 2345 metres.”⁶

Recalling the ephemeral nature of Fulton’s and



Richard Long *Untitled*, 2003



Hamish Fulton *Melting Glacier*, 2005



Marina Abramović *The Lovers (shoes)*, 1988, published in 1996

Long's walks is Eleanor Antin's *100 Boots* series (1971-1973). Antin arranged 50 pairs of identical black rubber boots in public locations across the United States, beginning in California and culminating in New York City at the Museum of Modern Art. Placed in marching lines she set up in front of a church, around a pond, and other ordinary public settings, they indexically referenced travel, walking, and military formations. Antin printed fifty-one photo-postcards of the boots and mailed them to critics, writers, institutions, and other artists. *Boot Split with 100 Boots* (1972), attributed to the Canadian conceptual art trio **General Idea**, are collages of Antin's postcards that they returned to her.

While Antin connects walking to mail art in *100 Boots*, **Marina Abramović**, in her last collaboration with her ex-partner, Ulay, merged walking and performance art. This performance was a ritualistic, endurance-testing walk work titled *The Lovers—The Great Wall Walk* (1988), documented by pieces including Abramović's color photographs *The Lovers (Shadow on the Wall)* (1988, published 1996) and *The Lovers (Shoes)* (1988, published 1966). Beginning on respective sides of the Great Wall of China on March 30, 1988, and ending 90 days later, Ulay and Abramović walked towards each other in an arduous trek of 3,700 miles combined that involved crossing a section of the Gobi Desert. Ironically, this meeting, originally intended to culminate in their marriage, instead signified their break-up, as their relationship had gradually soured during the walk's eight-year postponement by Chinese government bureaucracy.

Walking is equally integral to performance in **Lucy Gunning**'s gravity-defying video titled *Climbing Around My Room* (1993). Kim SÅborg, a dancer hired by the artist, circles the artist's bedroom without touching the floor. Barefoot

and wearing a crimson gown, she successively climbs a mantelpiece, a high shelf, and a large Victorian wardrobe. Subdued danger underscores the work—an imbue of adventure into the everyday. The video recalls Bruce Nauman's eponymous *Walking in an Exaggerated Manner Around the Perimeter of a Square* (1967-68), an early video art piece set in his studio. This allusion illustrates how Gunning—like other artists associated with the Young British Artists movement of the early 1990s—appropriated and contemporized conceptual practices of the late sixties and early seventies.

Like Gunning's video, **Janet Cardiff**'s walk works marked contemporaneous changes in the visual arts. Cardiff, one of the most important, prolific practitioners of art walks, began creating audio walks in the 1990s amidst the apogee of social practice art. Social practice art's emphasis upon viewer participation and everyday life as subject as well as setting parallels Cardiff's concerns in *Forest Walk* (1991)—the first of an ongoing series of audio walks she has made independently or in partnership with **Georges Bures Miller**—a piece in which participants don headphones that play fictional dialogue and other audio for a walk through the Rocky Mountains near Banff, Alberta. The next decade Cardiff



General Idea *Boot Split with 100 Boots on the Way to Church and 100 Boots facing the Sea, front view, 1972*



Lucy Gunning *Climbing Around My Room, 1993*

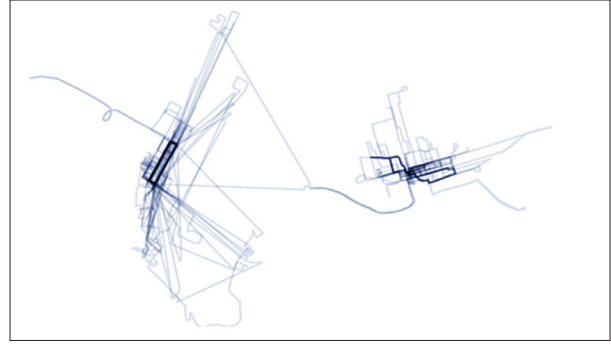


Janet Cardiff and Georges Bures Miller
Hill Climbing, 2002

and Miller produced *Hill Climbing* (2002), a 45-second video loop tracking an unseen but heard couple and their dog who attempt to climb a snowy hill but keep stumbling, never making it up.

Danica Phelps also diarizes quotidian experience. She engages in art walks such as *Walking 9-5* (from 2001 on), comprising to date a total of 680 miles of walking in four cities, one of which was *Brooklyn* (2001), where she walked in as straight a line as possible between 9 AM and 5 PM for 30 days out of a three-month period. Her documentation includes collage-maps of each walk across the borough consisting of drawings, watercolors, brief notes, and color photos highlighting memorable encounters or observations.

As Phelps has done, **Neil Goldberg** sets his urban "street art" practice in New York. In fact, for over two decades Goldberg has focused his art practice on how the mundane experiences of that city's pedestrians can fascinate and delight. *12x155* (1998), a video whose title references the dimensions of Manhattan's original grid, relates its geographical span to the populace it frames. Goldberg traveled to the intersections of numbered streets and avenues across Manhattan, asking a range of people to tell him where they were standing. As a human-centered means of approaching mapping, *12x155* recalls *psychogeography*, a term coined in 1955 by theorist and filmmaker Guy Debord for an urban mapping based on human emotions and subjective experience. Even more directly psychogeographical are Christian Nold's deeply personal maps—one the *San Francisco Emotion Map* (2007)—that mark paths for walks in various cities with

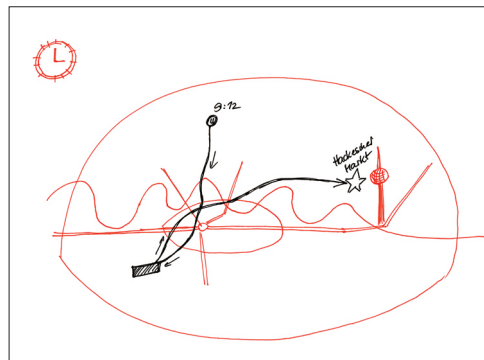


Gwen MacGregor *3 Months New York/Toronto*, 2004

emotional highlights that the artist experienced, for example, a beautiful mural that he viewed.

Samuel Rowlett walks through New York City as a portrait painter in *Itinerant Painter* (2013). He carries a wearable studio—a modified backpack frame with unfolding easel, stools, and hinged canvas panels—painting portraits as a contemporary street painter but simultaneously referencing folk art history, specifically the itinerant portrait painters who, pre-daguerreotype, were ubiquitous practitioners on the American East Coast. Like the street painter dependent upon the middle-class tourist market in New York City, they were naïve artists who predominantly painted for middle-class patrons.

Like Rowlett, Toronto artists **Gwen MacGregor** and **Sandra Rechico** produce walk works resting on public participation. *Map it Out (New York)* (2013) invites visitors to draw pictures where they traveled the day of a gallery visit. MacGregor and Rechico then mount the drawings on the gallery wall, which fills as the number of participants grows. This project of paths and directions recalls both Phelps's *Walking 9-5* series and *This Way Brouwn*, indicating that while art walks have evolved as a linear history, some trans-



Gwen MacGregor and Sandra Rechico *Map it Out (Berlin)*, 2013



Danica Phelps *Walking 9-5 Brooklyn*, 2001

generational consistency stands.

Jessica Thompson's *Swinging Suitcase* (2010) invites direct interaction with the gallery audience. A mobile audio work in a suitcase whose contained electronics play short recordings of sparrow songs, it merges nature with the urban landscape. Picking up a suitcase triggers the birdsongs, and depending on the vigor of the walker's gestures and the distance walked, the sounds accelerate and multiply (the work contains sixty source clips of house sparrows). *Swinging Suitcase* exemplifies how art walks have merged with social practice, electronic and sound art.

Similar to Thompson, **Gwen MacGregor** juxtaposes technology with the primordial act of walking in her video, *3 Months New York/Toronto* (2004), the first of an ongoing series. MacGregor, like many other artists, responded to the creative possibilities of GPS products when they flooded the consumer market a decade ago. MacGregor illustrates technology's role in art walks by transforming GPS data tracing her walks through the two cities of the title. The animated GPS digital information sharply contrasts the solitary meditative act they document.

Rowlett's *Landscape Painting in the Expanded Field* (2012-ongoing) directly alludes to the peripatetic, *plein air* landscape painter, typified by Caspar David Friedrich's iconic Romantic-era painting, *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* (1818), showing a view of a lone man, with walking cane in hand, peering over a craggy outcrop out to a turbulent sea. Rowlett, however, instead of painting the landscape, takes a blank, primed canvas, carries it



Jessica Thompson *Swinging Suitcase*, 2010



Samuel Rowlett *Landscape Painting in the Expanded Field*, 2012-ongoing

on his back and walks through fields and forests, even wading through water. His video and photo documentation of this painting performance shows the actual landscape as background with the blank canvas highlighting the contrast between real landscape and the absent painted one.

Rowlett's *Landscape in the Expanded Field* highlights the central message of *Artists' Walks: The Persistence of Peripateticism*: the pastoral, peripatetic practice of art walks remains unthreatened and has actually been buoyed by the information age. It has grown from the discrete practice of isolated artists to a cross-pollinated genre reflecting the nomadism of today's globalized art world resulting from its numerous disparate international artist-in-residencies, biennials and fairs. The philosophers Deleuze and Guattari study nomads' societal structure in their book *Nomadologies*, analogizing it to that of post-modern culture. They define "nomadism" as "variability in all directions...broken and changing,"⁷ a culture reminiscent of Post-Modernism's fragmentation, decentralization, and crossed disciplines. Certainly, today's multidisciplinary nomadic artist is more a Post-Modern archetype than a sad ghost of Friedrich's wanderer. Accordingly, Michael

Auping notes how Fulton's work, just like the art in this exhibition, "does not infer a retreat to nature from our present condition, but rather a concerted attempt to come to a meaningful understanding of one's life on this planet."⁸ ■

— Earl Miller,
July, 2013

NOTES

1. Richard Long, Interview by Charlotte Higgins, *The Guardian*, 15 June 2012, April 20, 201 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2012/jun/15/richard-long-swinging-60s-interview>>.
2. Aaron Shuster, "Stanley Brouwn," *Frieze*, May 2005, 26 Apr. 2013 <http://www.frieze.com/issue/review/stanley_brouwn/>.
3. Richard Long, Interview by Ben Luke, "Richard Long – Landscape Artist," *London Evening Standard*, 26 May 2011, April 11, 2013 <<http://www.standard.co.uk/goingout/exhibitions/richard-long--landscape-artist-6405450.html>>.
4. Richard Long, *Highland Time*, 2002, text work, James Cohan Gallery, New York.
5. Carrie Marie Schneider, "The Ten List: Walk as Art," *Glass Tire: Texas Visual Art*, 23 Nov. 2012, 30 Apr. 2013 <<http://glasstire.com/2012/11/23/the-ten-list-walk-as-art/>>.
6. Hamish Fulton, *Melting Glacier* 2005, archival ink jet print, Rhona Hoffman Gallery, Chicago, 28 April 2013 <<http://www.rhoffmangallery.com/>>.
7. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Nomadology: The War Machine*, (Semiotext(e): New York, 1986) 57.
8. Michael Auping, "Tracking Fulton," *Hamish Fulton, Selected Walks 1969-1989*, exhibition catalogue, (Albright-Knox Art Gallery: Buffalo, 1990) 12.

BIOGRAPHY

Earl Miller is an independent curator and art writer based in Toronto. He has curated exhibitions across Canada in public galleries and institutions such as the Doris McCarthy Gallery, the Yukon Art Centre, the Tree Museum, and the Art Gallery of York University. He has written catalogue essays for galleries and institutions ranging from the National Museum of Romania, to the Art Gallery of Hamilton, to Le Cr  dac: Centre d'Art Contemporain d'Ivry. His essays have also appeared in books: *The Communism of Forms* and *Gordon Monahan: Seeing Sound*. In addition, he has contributed to numerous visual arts periodicals including *Art in America*, *Canadian Art* and *Flash Art*. He is a member of the International Association of Art Critics (IACA).

CHECKLIST

MARINA ABRAMOVIĆ

THE LOVERS (SHADOW ON THE WALL), 1988 published in 1996
Color photograph with unique drawing
29 x 27 in

THE LOVERS (SHOES), 1988 published in 1996
Color photograph with unique drawing
29 x 27 in

Private Collection, New York

JANET CARDIFF AND GEORGES BURES MILLER

HILL CLIMBING, 2002

Color video
45 sec. loop
Courtesy of the artists

HAMISH FULTON

MELTING GLACIER, 2005
Archival ink jet print
17.75 x 22.25 in, edition 8/50
Courtesy of the Rhona Hoffman Gallery, Chicago

NEIL GOLDBERG

12X155, 1998
Black & white video
2:30 min
Courtesy of the artist

GENERAL IDEA

BOOT SPLITS, 1972

1. *BOOT SPLIT WITH 100 BOOTS ON THE PORCH AND UNIDENTIFIED SCENE, ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL*, 1972
6.5 x 4.5 in
2. *BOOT SPLIT WITH 100 BOOTS AT THE POND AND SEED PACKET*, 1972
7.25 x 4.5 in

3. *BOOT SPLIT WITH 100 BOOTS CROSS COUNTRY AND 100 BOOTS TURN THE CORNER*, 1972
7.1 x 4.5 in

4. *BOOT SPLIT WITH 100 BOOTS FACING THE SEA AND 100 BOOTS ON THE WAY TO CHURCH*, 1972
7.25 x 4.5 in

5. *BOOT SPLIT WITH 100 BOOTS IN THE MARKET AND TWO UNIDENTIFIED SCENES*, 1972
10.25 x 4.5 in

6. *BOOT SPLIT WITH 100 BOOTS ON THE WAY DOWN AND UNIDENTIFIED MAN'S HEAD*, 1972
6.5 x 4.5 in

7. *BOOT SPLIT WITH 100 BOOTS ON THE WAY TO CHURCH AND 100 BOOTS FACING THE SEA*, 1972
7.25 x 4.5 in

8. *BOOT SPLIT WITH 100 BOOTS ON THE ROAD AND UNIDENTIFIED SCENE*, 1972
5.5 x 4.5 in

9. *BOOT SPLIT WITH 100 BOOTS TRESPASS AND 100 BOOTS ON THE PORCH*, 1972
7.25 x 4.25 in

10. *BOOT SPLIT WITH UNIDENTIFIED MAN'S LEGS AND COLLAGE DEPICTING DANCING CHILDREN*, 1972
8 x 4.5 in

Courtesy of the Balch Art Research Library, Los Angeles County Museum of Art

LUCY GUNNING

CLIMBING AROUND MY ROOM, 1993

Single channel video on monitor (color, sound)

7:30 min (looped)

Dimensions variable

Acquired through the generosity of the Donors to the Contemporary Art Fund

Collection of the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University

Courtesy of the artist and Greene Naftali Gallery, New York

RICHARD LONG

UNTITLED, 2003

River Avon mud with acrylic medium and paint on wood
48 x 48 in

HIGHLAND TIME, 2002

Text work

42 x 62 in

A DEAD SHEEP CIRCLE, A FIVE-DAY WALK IN MID-WALES, 2002
Black & white photograph
33 x 42.5 in

© The Artist/Courtesy James Cohan Gallery, New York and Shanghai

GWEN MACGREGOR

3 MONTHS NEW YORK/ TORONTO, 2004

Color video

2 min

Courtesy of MKG127, Toronto

GWEN MACGREGOR AND SANDRA RECHICO

MAP IT OUT (NEW YORK), 2013

Participatory performance

Dimensions variable

DANICA PHELPS

1. *WALKING 9-5 BROOKLYN*, 2001
Mixed media on paper
22 x 30 in

2. *WALKING 9-5 BROOKLYN*, 2001
Mixed media on paper
22 x 30 in

3. *WALKING 9-5 BROOKLYN*, 2001
Mixed media on paper
22 x 30 in

4. *WALKING 9-5 BROOKLYN*, 2001
Mixed media on paper
22 x 30 in

5. *WALKING 9-5 BROOKLYN*, 2001, 2001-2003
Pencil on paper
55 x 55 in

Courtesy of the artist

SAMUEL ROWLETT

ITINERANT PAINTER, 2013
Mobile studio backpack and painting performance

LANDSCAPE PAINTING IN THE EXPANDED FIELD, 2012-ongoing
Color video loop
Time variable

Courtesy of the artist

JESSICA THOMPSON

SWINGING SUITCASE, 2010
Arduino board, sound module, accelerometer, speaker
21 x 17.5 x 8 in
Courtesy of the artist and p/m Gallery, Toronto

A SELECTION OF ARTISTS' BOOKS AND MULTIPLES

Courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art: the Museum Library and Private Collections

Cover: Neil Goldberg 12x155, 1998

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank each of the participating artists who made this exhibition possible. I am particularly grateful to the galleries and institutions who have so kindly loaned works of art and books: the Balch Art Research Library, Los Angeles County Museum of Art; the James Cohan Gallery; the Rhona Hoffman Gallery; The Museum of Modern Art, Museum Library; and The Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art at Cornell University. Furthermore, I gratefully acknowledge the generous support from the Ontario Arts Council, an agency of the Government of Ontario, the Canada Council for the Arts, and Wyndham Garden Long Island City Manhattan View hotel, whose cooperation significantly helped facilitate this exhibition. And a special thank you for the ongoing support I have received from Karen, David and Noah Dorsky as well as from Stacy Koon and Deborah Rising.

The Canada Council of the Arts invested \$157 million last year to bring the arts to Canadians throughout the country. L'an dernier, le Conseil a investi 147 millions de dollars pour mettre de l'art dans la vie des Canadiennes et des Canadiens de tout le pays.



Like us on Facebook
Follow us on Twitter



This exhibition, publication, and related programming are supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.



D O R S K Y G A L L E R Y | c u r a t o r i a l P r o g r a m s

11-03 45th Ave., Long Island City, NY 11101 | T: 718 937 6317 | F: 718 937 7469 | E: info@dorsky.org | www.dorsky.org

A not-for-profit 501(c)(3) tax deductible organization.