

Glimpses of

Walking Art Practice

Reflections on Socially Engaged Paths

Ernesto Pujol

This eBook contains highlights and extracts from *Walking Art Practice*. Contents and other page references are to the full text not to this extract. For more information, or to buy the book, please visit:
www.triarchypress.net/walkingart

Published by Triarchy Press
Axminster, England
First Edition, 2018

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A catalogue record is available from the British Library.

ISBNs:

Paperback: 978-1-911193-36-4

ePub: 978-1-911193-37-1

Cover design and images: Ernesto Pujol

Printed in the European Union by TJ International, Padstow, Cornwall

This book is dedicated to three unforgettable walking teachers:

Alma Pujol, my mother, in memory of our urban walks

Saralyn Reece Hardy, walker of the Kansas prairie

Rebecca Solnit, for her inspiring *Wanderlust*

not my thoughts
but my steps
connect me
with others

Acknowledgements

Walking threads thoughts triggered and pursued, then dropped and picked up to their resolution, or left by the roadside, until who knows when. This is a book about *the when*.

This is a hybrid book with art book elements and the personal content of a field journal that shares reflections by a socially engaged, cultural practitioner. It may serve as a manifesto for artists who walk and a resource for performers—a performative walking manual.

Although this book has a structure consisting of three thematic parts, I have written it in such a way that readers can open the book anywhere and read my 68 reflections in any order.

In terms of order, all walking is repetitive. Therefore, there is a certain amount of conscious overlapping and repetition because I have allowed it to be reflective of the repetitiveness of walking, of how repetitive steps work the mind of the walker.

I wish to acknowledge my friends Lori Brack and Kate Zeller for their helpful suggestions about my first manuscript. I also wish to thank all who have supported my walking art projects over the years as funders, hosts, curators, advisors, colleagues, partners, producers, performers, volunteers, docents, documentarians, journalists, and friends. My performative walks have been collective productions and experiences that would not have happened without their trust, loyalty, and generosity.

I also wish to voice the gratitude of many walkers in thanking Triarchy Press for their commitment to books on walking. I personally wish to thank my editor, Andrew Carey, for being “a word man” and reclaiming the original title of “Roadside Spiritualities,” which had been *strategically* changed to “Roadside Philosophies.” Andrew gently reminded me of my own beliefs: that religious rituals should not be confused with the intuitive gestures of the human spirit, which sustain our walking through creative beliefs about the road.

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Introduction: *First Steps*

“The universe only winks at the ones
no one will believe.”

Michael Cunningham, *The Snow Queen*

We walk. No one taught us how. We taught ourselves, while adults watched in awe, holding our hands, trying to protect us from bump, fall, and hurt. However, for most of us, that early childhood experience is beyond recall.

Unless we walk for healthy exercise or meaningful pilgrimage, technology has eliminated our need for long-distance walking. Few in the West walk to work. Most step to and from their car, bus, or train, stepping across the street, to the corner, around the block. At most, we stroll through farmers’ markets, shops, and malls. The housebound, interned, and imprisoned move from room to room.

Is this truly walking? Walking erect was one of the gestures and experiences that made us human. Walking is connected to breathing; to the intake of oxygen for the brain; to the lubrication of joints; to the flow of our metabolism and digestion; and to the burning of calories. Walking keeps the body healthy, if not alive. It is a medical fact that the minute we stop moving, the body starts breaking down. Survival requires movement. Even the bedbound require massage, or muscle weakens and skin rots.

However, Western, post-industrial humanity walks less and less, associating the need for laborious walking with class, with lack of resources, with poverty. It is hard for an audience to regard its own daily, unremarkable walking ability, minimally skill-based, as a visible sign of intellect or talent, a credible form of art making. Yet, performative walking practice is now a form of contemporary public art precisely for these reasons—because, when a vital aspect of our humanity is at the point of being lost, artists take note. And artists are walking, everywhere.

Artists are seeking to challenge our increasing urban indoor passivity, taking us outside our stasis to see, listen, think, and

feel—to experience—reconnecting with each other and Nature before it is lost. Artists seek to reject viewing the world only through digital images, energy-efficient windows of climate-controlled rooms, fast hybrid vehicles, mobile phones or computer screens, giving us the gift of full perception through immersion. They seek to see, hear, smell, taste, touch, feel, think, and remember the forgotten, to experience something through our minds and bodies. To shiver in the woods, sweat in a jungle, and thirst through a desert. To see the visible and sense the invisible seeing us, fully experiencing through all our organs of perception—again.

A culture is how a specific people, in a specific place, in a specific moment, choose to portray themselves to each other and to the world. Artists are choosing to walk in order to regain control of our being from government officials, political parties, religions, corporations, and media. Artists are walking for you and me; artists are walking for us.

A Working Definition

I strive to understand what it is that I do. What is a socially engaged practice? And what is the role of performativity within my public practice? For me, the answer shifts year to year, like a migrant. Below is the definition that I am currently working with. The one constant in my ongoing reflection is that my practice remains a riverbed of rock that holds an ever-changing wild river of thought:

A socially engaged, public performance practice is
...the site-specific embodiment of urgent social issues
...through considered human gesture, such as conscious walking,
...ethically made and generously shared with a community
...as a form of diagnostic, collective, poetic portrait,
...freely offered for aesthetic appreciation and meaningful reflection,
...ultimately seeking a socially transformative, cultural experience.

Before reading on, I invite you to visit the glossary. It lists a selection of the terms I use, as I define them, which may be helpful in answering questions along the way.

Part One

Walking Practice

One Walks One

My humanity is very prosaic. It often challenges me with its child-like wants before a walk, and with its recovery needs after walking. However, when I finally walk, something transformative happens. The walker is the true me. I do not mean that “the best of me” walks. It is much more than that. It is about the coming together of all-of-me, finally achieving a healed unity during the walk.

I walk neither as a needy body, nor as a utopian thinker. I walk as one with myself. My self is finally unified by the walk. Brain and body become mind. And in becoming mind, I am mindful; I walk mindfully. And in so doing, I walk as One with Nature.

This is a Oneness that is greater than I. It is not about the fusion of two different but parallel realities, but about one ultimate reality that requires inextricable moving elements. Walking vanquishes the inner and outer duality of the human animal, and of humanity and Nature. Walking unifies the interiority of the walker, and walks it back to Nature, completing and reintegrating the walker, and thus, completing Nature.

Nature needs us. We both lost when we were separated. We, too, were an important element in its internal balance.

Flowing Stillness

In 2003, curator Saralyn Reece Hardy and I created a project at the Salina Art Center called *Becoming the Land*. I invited the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of Kansas homesteaders and farmers to revisit their ancestral landscape with me. There was no verticality but that of our bodies: flatness in every direction. It was like walking on water across a vast green ocean. My body dissolved during that prairie walk. My mind experienced no envelope. I was everywhere, and everywhere was in me.

There is invisible movement to our visible walking, another territory beyond the one ahead. We actually flow in every direction, far beyond the envelope of the permeable body. There is little edge to us.

We are dispersion. We can be smelled far away by nonhuman animals. We emanate breathed air; we emit scents; we drop discarded skin cells and hair; we produce the gassy and solid waste products of nutrition. Our evolving thoughts and feelings hover silently around us and beyond, as a kind of tentacular energy field.

When we walk, we are invisible motion in visible motion. We simply have to become aware of this invisible biological motion. We have to exteriorize that awareness. That is perfect walking practice, from the first to the last step, and beyond. If we understand and embrace this, much of the anxiety of walking practice will dissipate because we are moving perfectly long before we walk perfectly.

However, even as we are invisible flow in visible motion, we are also invisible stillness in visible motion. We can flow visibly but remain inwardly still.

Stillness is not physical inertia. Stillness can happen in the midst of brief and durational motion. That is why our performative movement can communicate stillness. Our visible and invisible flow can communicate inner peace.

Curating Walking

Walking belongs to everyone. I do not own walking. No one artist owns walking. Just because one artist has walked “successfully” does not mean that walking has been “done” and should not be funded and performed, again and again. Walking is not about the modernist myth of originality.

Walking eliminates the myth of achieving something original in the arts because everyone walks. That is why walking as art is so hard, because it dwells outside the notion of artistic talent and crafty skill. But that is the healthy system of checks and balances within the practice that keeps it humble.

Pragmatically, in terms of the success of a walking project, it is much wiser to walk an unknown path with a known gatekeeper or stakeholder who can introduce an artist to all the human and non-human inhabitants of that path, conveying the message that we can be trusted, that artists are not trespassing or invading with an intention to exploit and steal.

I cannot stress enough the importance of a walking facilitator, of someone who invites the walker to walk. This facilitator entrusts us with the mysterious responsibility of walking their landscape, translating it for us before the walk or during a first walking experience. Of course, perhaps they may strategically push us into a solitary walk of their landscape because solitude is key to understanding it. Or they may push us in with little introduction because they want to see what we experience, our capacity for seeing and whether we experience what they experience, if there is synchronicity of meaningful, sited experience. It may be a necessary test that we need to pass. However, it is fine not to pass it. Only if we experience sited meaning are we the right artist walkers to engage for their project.

I have been through many a walking test. The most challenging have been the ones I passed, but that then ushered me out because I saw more than the hosts wanted me to see and were ready to reveal. Or because I saw something that they did not consider important and kept trying to dismiss, but I considered crucial. We

Path Into Paths

As far back as the Greek philosophers, we have meditated on the fact that everything is constantly changing, that a walker cannot step into the same path twice. Heraclitus would have said that neither the walker nor the path are the same, both are different every time.

A walker knows that knowing a path is not merely walking it from beginning to end. A true walker knows that knowing a path requires walking that path in both directions, because things look totally different when seen from opposite directions, practically forming two distinct experiences through opposing views.

One path is really two paths, depending on our direction. In every round-trip, the end is the beginning and the beginning is the end. Thus, every path has two beginnings and two ends. And we must walk a path night and day, so that we see what dwells in the light and in the shadows. But the light, too, has a range, as the shadow has a range. We must seek to experience what dwells in the soft and in the harsh light, on the edge of the shadows and in the deep shadows. All seasons. We must try to see what dwells in the cold, in the hot, and in the in-between. We must walk that path every month for many years, so that we experience birth and growth, peak and reproduction, illness and decay, so that we see the cycles of life and death of the path. That is true path knowledge; that is true walking practice.

Do not just walk along a path. Talk with a path; dialogue with a path. Speak with your mouth, talk with your hands, and talk with your feet. Listen carefully with all of your body for its responses. See what it presents you with, what you find and what finds you. Seek to be found by what is visible and invisible to the human eye. And if you are healthy enough to walk it barefoot, feeling the soil with your soles, touching the rocks and tree bark with your hands, a truly tactile walk, learn through the nonverbal, learn through your skin, so that you experience the skin of the path.

Of all the places I have walked performatively, the nation of Hawaii is the place where I have experienced the skin of the path most vividly. During the summer of 2011, as I prepared a walking performance entitled *Speaking in Silence*, I often felt that I was walking across the rugged back of a giant turtle out to sea. The island of Oahu seemed to move beneath my feet, shaking my steps. I was constantly feeling as if I was falling. It was a dizzying sensation I could not shake off. I often had to reach for my balance, holding on to walls and large stones. It made me feel particularly vulnerable, as if the mother turtle could deep dive any time and leave me alone in a shark-infested sea, to be devoured or drown. Everything seemed to vibrate as part of an unseen ancient metabolism.

A walker knows that the point of pilgrimage is walking, that walking means shedding. Pilgrimage is about what happens along the path in terms of releasing unnecessary, visible and invisible baggage, from fat to hurt. Walking is psychic editing. The path is editing you, clawing at you. The path of pilgrimage can be an aggressive animal—of your own bloody making. A path is arduous because we have made it arduous by not being prepared for it. A path rejects unreal agendas, if not the agendas of the unreal. Because a path is pure thisness.

Walking & Love

Walking faces us with many landscapes: there is the landscape outside of us, and the landscape inside of us. We enter a landscape, seen and unseen, but we also bring our landscape into it. We, too, are a landscape: the secret landscape of love, gained and lost, only known to us in remembered and repressed memory.

A true walking practice sooner or later confronts us with love. Everyone we have ever loved reappears; everyone who ever loved us re-emerges. They come out of deep memory to meet us; they step forward out of the shadows and into the light to watch us by the side of the road. Or they stand in the way. It depends on our secret history of love.

If we are perceptive walkers, we will see them, we will encounter them watching, the lovers we have left and been left by. If we come to this intimate moment, we have arrived at a deeper level in our walking; we are crossing a threshold. The possibility of being healed and healing has come to us.

When we begin to confront our history of love, all paths turn into a lovers' lane. We thought that we were entering a path to help heal a community or restore a landscape. But the walk is addressing us first as a prerequisite for healing others. We are the first landscape of love that must be restored.

This moment is not about meeting the memory of a lost lover, perhaps triggered by a smell that involuntarily led to a Proustian memory of heartbreak. The moment I refer to is about an accumulation of people loved and lost who suddenly line the road, who occupy and even block your path, irreversibly.

This is a pulsating threshold, a turning point in a walking practice. This is a path of love completely lined with once-loved individuals, where we remember everyone we have ever loved and been loved by, as a secret community of the wounded heart.

It may be a love walk lined with all the mistakes we have ever made in love simultaneously exposed. If we decide to cross this threshold, there is no question that the memories of our many failures in love may bruise our psychic body like overgrown,

Glass & Hockney Walk

For American composer Philip Glass, performance is the formal, public framing of what arises and flows from the activity of deep listening. Throughout his 2015 memoir, *Words Without Music*, Glass writes about the creative process of composers, but much of what he describes applies to the creative physicality of artists who walk.



British painter David Hockney returned to Yorkshire as he turned 70 to paint his native countryside. In *A Bigger Picture*, a wonderful one-hour documentary by Bruno Wollheim, we witness three years during the process. Returning to his homeland, Hockney speaks of how we see through memory, how the act of seeing is filtered by memory.

I agree that we often see through memory, because seeing can trigger memories that are then played simultaneously in our current seeing. Nevertheless, I also believe that we are truly capable of seeing without memory, which is to say, without perpetual self-reference, without the constant footnote and endnote of our autobiography.

Can we consciously surrender the ego and perceptually be in the present without our past? Can we achieve autobiographical freedom for a moment? Can we see like a fox sees? Better yet, can we see like a tree sees, as German state forester Peter Wohlleben describes in *The Hidden Life of Trees: What They Feel, How They Communicate*, “seeing” without having eyes?

I have seen without eyes in unforgettable, ego-less sight moments. We cultivate them by walking, by seeing through the ankle and the knee, by seeing through the wrist and the elbow.

I try to walk like the fox, to see like the fox. This is no mimicking. It begins with getting into the brain and the body of the fox, and then, once inside, allowing for things other than thought to guide me, allowing for an unspoken unknown to drive

me to incomprehensible action against thought and plan. I begin to walk like the fox to be fully here, without human memories, to see nothing but what's here. The fox avoids hounds and looks for food; the fox hides the food it finds. The fox is not writing its autobiography. And yet, it is completely connected to the moment without having to think about the meaning of the moment.

To walk the moment, seeing, smelling, and listening. Only that. One foot in front of the other. Only that. To inhabit the space between Hockney and the fox.

Walking & Performance

Walking as art practice is performative, even if this is unintended, because the moment a body wants or needs to walk and enters the space and flow of the public, joining the sited public, it becomes a public body, a body whose performing in society is watched by society, all the more as it seeks social agency.

I am not very concerned with justifying walking as art, even as I write and rewrite these pages about it, no more than I was concerned with justifying installation as art during the 1990s as they blurred the boundary between art and our cluttered, domestic and shopping landscapes. Art is but an aesthetic tool to generate meaningful and transformative experience. I am not interested in defending the credibility of any particular tool; I am interested in generating conscious experience, however I can. The goal, regardless of the cultural tool, is to experience increased consciousness.

Artists who walk as art perform; they become performers during the act. And when selected members of the public are trained to walk with them, and when members of an untrained public spontaneously begin to be moved and join them, then everyone is performing, everyone is watching and being watched; all become performers during the walk. And this is what I call *social choreography*, to choreograph movement in society, by society, which may lead to the movement of society. Social movements start with the public movement of one.

Walking as Recovering

An artist walker walks across a prairie or along a local waterfront. What is the use of that? Perhaps human intimacy with that environment is being lost, and there is a need to revisit, to recover. Perhaps the landscape was once closely known, when there was agriculture and fishing, all manner of harvesting; before our post-industrial workforce sitting inside all day at computers; when seasonal labor required being outdoors. Losing hamlet, village, and town populations to cities has increasingly disconnected us from fields and waterfronts, except when they are transformed into preserves and parks where we camp or jog.

However, perhaps fields and waterfronts are still well known but threatened, increasingly endangered in some way, and outsiders need to know what is happening; outsiders could be recruited to help, to bring in much-needed resources.

An artist walker may manifest a knowledge and way of life that is being lost, a landscape in danger of being lost. Humans have a way of becoming blind to the familiar nearby. Places and paths tend to become invisible to us over time, losing their history and meaning.

We are surrounded by meaningless monuments lacking in significance to generations several times removed from past rulers, heroes, saints and gods. The heroic is fragile, as national identities are taken for granted, change, or come under siege. Much cultural patrimony is destroyed this way.

An artist can help to reawaken the awareness of the psychic value of a site by revisiting and renewing its meaning, or by exposing how contemporary forces are trying to erase an important piece of history. During a project, the site can again become a destination, even if contested, a place to walk to and through, through the excuse of art.

Walking & Sex

Sex drives so much of human behavior that it is difficult to divorce it from walking. I do not mean that a walker might be looking for sex. I mean that the human-animal's sexual drive, particularly during youth, is the conscious and subconscious undercurrent of much of what the body does.

The desire to get up, step out, move forward, arrive, enter, and exit may contain an unconscious, undetectable sexual undercurrent even though the actions are not accompanied by conscious sexual desire. This undercurrent is not about finding a temporary or permanent sex partner, but about being driven by an ancient energy that is procreative; a basic energy connected to the way non-human animals are choreographed by survival instinct.

Not enough is said about the link between conscious and unconscious sexual drive and daily movement that seems to bear no sexual content. In a youth-oriented media culture where the old are vanished from sight or depicted as monstrous to behold, and in a male-dominated culture where virility is worshipped and fed Viagra when limp, not enough is said outside of the context of illness about how the diminishment of sexual drive with age correlates with loss of desire for seemingly sexually-unrelated daily movement. This experience is only known by the old and rarely spoken about in a society that silences the old.

Aging makes us increasingly static. Indeed, aging is often about fighting stasis. And yet, this is neither pathetic nor tragic. Stasis need not be a state of loss and ruin. Stasis has great value as a pensive moment that can harvest much insight, for it is a state of inactivity at the right stage, at a biologically earned stage of much deserved rest and potential for reflection.

There is a stage for life as movement and a stage for life as reflective pause; a valuable pause filled with memories of movement. Moreover, this is when the reality of sex as life's conscious and unconscious undercurrent suddenly reveals itself most clearly, when we are finally able to stop and remember the visible and invisible reasons for all our past walking.

Walking Needs

A walker walks because the body needs to walk, to step forward, because the body needs to stand, to take a stand—to respond. We walk as response, sometimes as the only possible, legal response, to the loss of humanity.

The body walks, even if the brain does not know its destination. The body is often ahead of the brain, but only if we cultivate this, if we free the body from the brain-cage of ideas, of only being able to walk forward as a result of ideas or in pursuit of ideas.

The body may intuit and even know its destination, long before the brain. The brain, so used to driving the body, may be understandably confused or alarmed, like a passenger strapped into the back seat of a moving car who sees no head above the wheel. But an intelligence is at the wheel: the wheel itself. And if the brain surrenders its constant need for information, for control, this experience might be the beginning of a better relationship with the body, and the environment.

It is challenging for the brain to tolerate motion without notion, to accept motion without known purpose. Nevertheless, it is during those moments of not-knowing, of walking for no reason, of walking without reason, that our walking is at its most pure, at its most connected.

This purity is not the purity of “art for art’s sake.” It is the essence of human connectivity, very close to the state of the animal—reclaimed. It is not about finding human meaning but about being found by meaning, naturally. Things will come our way. The path is real, because it is not the result of our brain’s projections. The body is the teacher; the environment is the teacher. They are speaking with each other in a very old language, even if the brain does not understand that language.

Our steps are an unknown language being physically articulated, as if single steps were letters, spelling words, forming phrases, long sentences, incomplete until we reach a corner, turn left or right, pause, remain still, look, listen, see, and are found by understanding.

Walking Stillness

Silence is not the absence of sound.
Silence is the absence of distractions.

Following this thought, I believe that stillness is not the absence of movement, but the absence of disturbances. We can walk with a deep inner stillness that is not shaken by movement. We can walk with a deep inner stillness that informs movement.

Movement informed by deep, core stillness is not necessarily abstract and unproductive. Movement informed by stillness has the quality of considered gesture, regardless of pace. The gesture may be very slow, and thus, prolonged. Perhaps it is being explored, so that the gesturer is watching his own gesture unfold. Nevertheless, a considered gesture may also be manifested quickly because it has the wind behind its back, it is walking downhill, pulled by gravity—or it is like a bird, in flight.

We can embody stillness in motion.
We can manifest the movement of stillness.

Walking the Animal

Despite the occasional home video about dog feats posted on the Internet, with canines walking on their hind legs for longer than usual stretches, non-human animals do not walk the way we engage in walking. Non-human animals move from one point to another, seeking food and shelter, migrating and mating, but as far as we know, they do not walk for the sake of walking.

Walking for non-survival reasons is integral to the construction of the human animal. Walking allowed the human animal to begin to experience vertically, to begin to perceive above and beyond the ground. In fact, humans domesticated dogs to listen to and sniff the ground for them. Dog companions on a walk substituted ground-level perception while the human increasingly thought and thought, increasingly disconnecting from the environment. Moreover, while our alienation from Nature is tragic and needs to be undone, this separation is the basis for the civilized notion of human transcendence, of existence above and beyond Nature.

Sustainable, consistent, collective, vertical movement marks the birth of the human-animal's civilized notion of transcendence. But thankfully, in trying to undo this alienation and begin to construct a new, Nature-based notion of transcendence, the human mind is not restricted to the brain. The deep body thinks. The depths of our organ-wide, distributed mind are not brain vaults filled with forgotten or repressed elements only unleashed during dreamtime or trauma. The elements that make up the mind are everywhere in the body and interact with each other, particularly when we are not thinking, sometimes most productively during thought-free walking.

It is important for a walker's wholeness to recover the early human experience of listening to and sniffing the ground, of experiencing survival needs, and of walking without thoughts. This combination is what can make a walk whole, in terms of walking the full human animal beyond the limits of the fantasy of civilization.

Part Two

Roadside Spiritualities

Sustaining Sight

As a child, I walked head down looking for fragments of coral, shells, pebbles and seeds. As an adult, I sometimes walk like that child, curious about the treasures of terrain. It is wonderful to reclaim and re-experience that first perspective, that hungry sense of wonder. But as an adult, I know that it was not wonderful to have been scanning and harvesting from nature for my personal cabinet of curiosities, because I was depriving mollusks of homes and birds of food. The practice of deep walking is not about collecting.

After art school, as a young monk, I remember an early training period in which I was simultaneously engaged in editing the senses and opening the senses through voluntary poverty, manual labor, vegetarianism and fasting, monastic studies, periods and degrees of silence, chanting, meditation and contemplation.

At the peak of that clustered period I took a walk beyond the walls, in much need of psychic expansion. I started to walk up a thick grassy hill and, while climbing, began to look down at the vast, sloping green carpet ahead of my uphill steps. But a sudden deep sight stopped me. In that instant, I could see every individual blade of grass among thousands, among millions, each one unique yet similar, same but different.

I no longer saw Nature in a grand sweep. I finally saw its minuscule, intricate parts. I still remember that moment of expanded awareness. The instant I saw that singular blade of grass, I saw them all, fully alive, layered but as individually distinct as you and I. It was the kind of walking experience that takes over the body; it halts your body and throws back your head to face the sky in a kind of walker's ecstasy.

I do not remember how long I stood still, standing on top of that hill, physically held within deep sight. Eventually, my walk continued downhill, and I made my way back to the abbey. Outwardly, I seemed the same, but, inwardly, I was suddenly focused, more than ever before, so profoundly focused that this began to change me, to make me look for more such moments of full perception, seeking to sustain deep sight for all of life.

Walking Myth

In *The Lure of the Local*, art critic Lucy Lippard writes of how public art practices have the potential to raise awareness about unknown and little known stories and memories, furthering the evolution of consciousness. For Lippard, artists can make stories and memories more public, revealing the human ideologies and experiences that have shaped a place. Such practitioners can model evolved creative responses that can support human rights, and help restore and preserve webs of natural cycles manipulated by human ambition, by functional and dysfunctional human interventions in need of review.

This process is not about artists as readers who choose to manifest their reading. This process is about artists as humble, entrusted students of place, as grounded scholars who walk the landscape as a library, giving up their personal reading preferences, allowing themselves to be led to unknown readings, ultimately pointing creatively to the many contradictory texts a place often contains. Artist walkers are entrusted with a diversity of rooted texts in local code. An artist's job is not so much that of an editor, but of generously voicing a public that is often without voice, crafting a careful reading by everyone for everyone out loud.

Like Lippard, I advocate the performative invocation of the mythical as an effective tool for the public manifestation of people and place through pre-scientific ideologies, helping contemporary audiences to experience the desire for transcendence that past generations sought. This revisiting of old myths and new myth-making is not about the cult of the artist, about mythifying the artist or the artwork, but about helping audiences inhabit the space of myth as a valuable vantage point. Inhabiting myth can offer a transformative point of view that can unleash unknown psychic potential among participants.

Manifesting and inhabiting the mythical in a public, durational group performance always challenges our abilities much more than experiencing the mundane. Mythical experience requires us

Bodhisattva Walks

The Judeo-Christian tradition has prophetic walkers like Moses, John the Baptist, and his cousin, Jesus of Nazareth, but little is said of their walking. Historical and mythical attention concentrates on the agency of their stand, in terms of commanding, baptizing, and preaching to the masses at chosen sites: Mount Sinai, the River Jordan, and the Hills of Galilee. However, they walked to get there, they made followers walk there.

Christianity had a tradition of wanderers known as *gyrovague* monks who spent their lives walking, often in pilgrimage, and were received as guests by *cenobite* monks, who lived in a cloister with a vow of stability, of rootedness to place. But the first chapter of the 6th-century *Rule of Saint Benedict*, which eventually reformed all monasteries and convents in Western Christendom, gave the gyrovagues bad name as walkers unable to settle down, always on the move following their independent will. In a medieval world where individual and collective will was surrendered to heavenly and earthly autocratic rulers, the notion of bodies whose movement could not be contained and surveilled was threatening to religious and secular authorities.

For me, perhaps the most attractive of the walker myths is the Buddhist notion of the Bodhisattva, of the enlightened body whose heightened awareness is manifested through the public gesture of walking individuals and groups toward increasing consciousness. Nevertheless, rather than enjoying life among the newly conscious, the Bodhisattva leaves them and walks on to facilitate the journey to consciousness for others, in other places, forever starting it anew. In this construction of a walker, the state of enlightenment is a state of pilgrimage, of constantly walking with new people.

Cloister Walks

It is easier to attain material detachment and some degree of consciousness when one commits to a cloistered life with a flexible rule of silence that edits superfluous talk, a vow of celibacy supported by a celibate community's friendships, voluntary aestheticized poverty, and a life behind protective garden walls, than trying to achieve these states in the world. Having experienced both lifestyles, conscious life in the world is harder than life in a monastery, for all its sensual privations.

It is interesting that monasteries provide for walks as tools for the attainment of consciousness. There is the humorous notion that monks are not supposed to run unless there is a Viking invasion, of which there have been many, some deciding not to speed-up but to be martyred for stillness. Monks are encouraged to walk slowly throughout the monastic enclosure, designated for meditative walking. But even work areas are considered to be meditative space, in terms of the Benedictine notion of *ora et labora*, of pray and work, of praying as monks engage in manual labor, which only employs the body and frees the brain for prayer.

Cloister walks follow the square and rectangular paths of monastery courtyards, their walls often lined with the 14 images of the Way of the Cross, a devotional practice which requires the walker to pause, meditate, and pray before each station. The images show another walk, the painful, uphill walk of Jesus carrying a cross, and all the people he met along the way. This is a sheltered walk that meditates about a daring walk synonymous with taking on and carrying the so-called sins of others. It follows a notion of walking as cleansing, which requires the sight to see the burdens people carry invisibly during their walk. It constructs a collective healing walk through the sacrifice of the leading walker's body. Indeed, the leading walker's suffering body evokes an empathy that is, de facto, the cleansing agent for collective healing. Empathy for the one taking on the burdens of others opens the sight of the public, turning them into witnesses, which

is a deeper state of viewership, inviting them to reconsider their past, present, and future movement.

Cloister walks are not about distances incrementally achieved. A body walking a square, rounding its corners, walking the four sides of a square is a body going nowhere. But what if we measured this psychically rather than materially? What if we measured the miles in terms of psychic distance to an invisible destination? Because materially, there is nowhere to go but within.

In spite of appearances, the cloister walk is not a horizontal walk. On the surface, the architecture is visible: a walled garden. However, the true architecture lies below the surface: the vertical architecture of a bottomless well, or a topless mountain. The “farness” of a cloister walk consists of psychic verticality. The walker has no destination in the known world. The walker approaches the mythical. The walker combines the underworld and heavenly elements of Orpheus and Dante with the mission to walk the caves of his subconscious and the mountain paths of awareness toward full consciousness.

This second psychic architecture only opens up through the repetitive walking of the same space: day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year; decade after decade. You might say that the repetitive walk of the same path, in fact, is what creates the ultimate architecture of self-knowledge through the surrender of visible achievement, creating a walk that confronts all illusions of achievement, and vanishes them from the path.

A cloister walk is also about reading. The monk often reads inspired writing, biblical commentary, theology, hagiography, and mystical treatises during the cloistered walk. Deep reading while walking a cloister alters pace, slowing steps, sometimes marking moments of insight with the cessation of step, before resuming reading, walking on. In robes. To walk wearing long, flowing fabric vanishes the legs but emphasizes each step the way a ship’s entire body sways right and left in heavy seas. Fabric swings to and fro, like a pendulum. In this rhythm, a right is a clear right, and a left is an indisputable left. To suddenly stop in

the middle of this creates a material disruption only fixed by the downward pull of gravity.

The cloister walk is a highly choreographed private walk in the shade surrounded by protective walls, with a pool of bright light in the middle, where there is a birdbath, a sundial, a cross, a statue, or a plant specimen blooming or fruiting seasonally as a reminder of creation's cycles. I invite performative walkers to consider a silent retreat in a monastery to experience this form; considered step, sustained slowness, and punctuating stillness as an ancient training which is not provided in contemporary art schooling.

Destinations

Walking a road becomes so important for some that it overshadows both their arrival at a destination and the destination itself as an extraordinary site, no matter its history, scale, and sacredness. The transformative experience of the walk makes the destination post-climactic. The true climax happened during the journey, while walking the road: one or more breakdowns followed by release and surrender, one or more insights leading to transformation, long before arrival. Yet, had there been no destination to journey toward, there would have been no process for transformation. Even when a destination becomes post-climactic, it was necessary because it triggered walking; it made us walk.

Walking can be about desiring and achieving a form of psychic death, in Western monastic terms, the death of the man or woman of the world, so that they can become empty vessels and the universe can finally begin to trickle or rush in, filling and overflowing them with the right contents for others to drink from. Sometimes, after such a journey, we remain forever journeying; journeying becomes our interior life and our public practice.

Nevertheless, when group journeys are sterilized from the messiness of the human condition, as folks travel within air-conditioned, padded bubbles, riding on powerful wheels, walking very little in-between places, destinations become important because they are the main source, and sometimes the only source, for potentially transformative experience upon arrival. Other than being herded like sheep between entry and exit, there is little or no walking experience after having been transported and deposited there. The transformative thus relies on the fact of briefly being there. Others accomplished the pilgrimage for us, which poses the question: “was there was a pilgrimage at all?”.

Sadhu Walkers

The sadhus of India, the wandering naked ascetics, were believed to spend their entire lives crisscrossing the country. However, in Sondra Hausner's insightful ethnographic study, *Wandering with Sadhus*, she writes that many sadhus stop wandering at some point in mid-to-late life, settling down to practice in place. Life becomes about sited practice, teaching through anecdotes, communicating wisdom extracted from their memories of walking.

At that point, it is my belief that a psychic wandering begins; that the road now lies within the former walker: past destinations are now inside the older walker, who remains walking, even if currently seated and surrounded by disciples, wisely transmitting the walking. The older walker walks the memories of a lifetime, remembers his forward walking in time, and walks on, to nonmaterial destinations, as the possibility of nirvana, or yet another incarnation approaches to keep expanding consciousness.

The earned stillness of an older walker does not erase his muscle memories, the effects of a lifetime of walking. One is a walker forever, moving or not, because one has achieved detachment from everything, even from walking, because walking was never the end in itself.

Walking practice engages in detachment for the sake of achieving an expanding sight, the sight of our Oneness. We walk to physically and psychologically step away from attachments to people, possessions, and places, seeking to achieve freedom from self, desire, and baggage. Walking is about detachment from the parts to see the whole, even as the whole is expressed in the parts.

We are embodied. Everything, even what is disembodied, is expressed through the body. Even the immaterial is expressed through the material. The immaterial uses the illusion of the material to talk about what matters. Steps talk. Mindful walking through the material world is one of the building blocks for consciousness of the immaterial.

Walker Stages

In *The Graveyard Book*, Neil Gaiman tells the story of Nobody Owens, a lost, cold, and hungry, orphaned child who stumbles into a historic cemetery where the ancient dead take pity on him, so he is adopted and raised by the ghosts of the graveyard. Only, Nobody Owens does not know they are dead. He hears them talking and sees them walking; perceiving them is his normalcy of sight. In fact, he sees the dead and hides from the living, because the living are the truly scary.



A successful walking practice is not the result of a mathematical equation. But there are subtle stages to undergo when it becomes a lifelong practice that amounts to a way of living, becoming the walker's identity.

When we start walking, there is a first stage when we soon realize that we live in a world of signs, that the road is full of signs. We find signs, and we are found by signs. Indeed, we may be or wish to become a sign to those watching us walk everywhere and nowhere.

In the novice walking stage, we often seek to comprehend the meaning of all signs and symbols, forcing wisdom. But all forced wisdom is faulty, because it is premature. We may try to connect two or more signs or symbols, seeking greater meaning. There is a lot of effort to a novice stage, like being a magician's apprentice. And while there is gain from sincere effort, in the end, it is just a matter of time. Walking practice needs time.

Nowhere is often the territory of the forgotten, suppressed, repressed, denied, or hidden; the dominion of the scary, terrifying, embarrassing, guilt-ridden, or shameful. All that is missing is to complete the story of a people and a place stored in the vault we call nowhere.

Walking Empathy

Walking, as an immersive process, can evoke empathy. This empathy results from experiencing and thus understanding the conditions endured by others, whether human or non-human.

Walking is punctuated with immersive experiences that can help walkers understand the violation of an environment that communicates its distress when the walker repeatedly witnesses the exploitation of its resources and contamination of water, land and air, the illness and death of plants and trees, fish, birds and quadrupeds. Walking confronts us with human architecture and inhabitants, whose way of life may be threatened, under siege, and with people who share their stories, actively seeking our empathy.

There is a morality implicit in walking, which starts with deciding not to stay inside, to step out into the world, to see and listen firsthand, placing ourselves within the reality of others. In so doing, we walk beyond the self in order to connect deeply with other selves, and truly get to know and feel what they are undergoing. Selflessness is the first moral principle connected to walking, at the very foundation of walking.

The selfless desire to see, to smell, taste, touch, and listen is followed by empathy. The firsthand experience of cause and effect, of struggling and suffering, helps us to better differentiate between good and bad conduct in a place, between right and wrong actions in the world, through whatever set of principles we carry as an active system of values we call morality. But because this morality is based on selflessness and is informed by experiences that trigger empathy, it is potentially not self-righteous but compassionate, forgiving, and generous, because it has experienced complexity.

Of course, there is no question that some can walk many paths unaffected, only seeing what they wish to see through the harsh filter of rigid agendas, their so-called morality untouched by diverse experience, remaining blind to the experience of others. However, I prefer the permeable, evolving morality brought about by empathy for the most unexpected peoples and places.

Walking Vessel

Vulnerability is the wisest material with which to coat a strong vessel. A walker should be a conscious vessel. The conscious vessel is transformed through its holding nature. The conscious vessel receives from holding. Its cracks are mended. The sediment of a lifetime of content, holding story after story, begins to fill the cracks of its fragility, and slowly covers the entire vessel with an unbreakable patina of wisdom.

Walking engages in gathering through the psychic enormity of step. Whether only taking one, or a thousand and one steps, the courage of taking a step is transformative of the walker and of the landscape. Taking a step unleashes a visible and invisible landscape of healing content.

*A step gathers as if the foot were a hand.
Whether barefoot or shod, the foot absorbs and stores the land.
It knows the land long before the brain knows through thought.
The foot stores an ancient form of wise no-thought.*

Part Three

Teaching Walking

No-Thought Walking

I am not interested in creating rigid rules for walking practice. My field experiences have generated some written reflections, hoping to inform young artist walkers, to help the contemporary, interdisciplinary art medium of walking acquire one or more recognizable, performative, formal elements, if not full form. I am interested in exploring all that walking activity can generate as a practice, regardless of field, even as I emphasize cultural production. I believe that walking can be a transformative experiential component to creating ephemeral public art.

There are many kinds of walks and goals to walking. A conscious walk starts with clarity of intent, even if the intent is to get lost, so as to give up control. More and more individuals need to give up control in order to reclaim their balance.

There is a difference between the educated surrender to an unknown but nurturing path, and being self-destructive. Contemporary life can be a tightly controlled and surveilled, ambitiously fast, overwhelmingly multisensory, chaotic experience. For some, just walking down an unfamiliar but safe path without a professional goal may be the beginning of reclaiming balance.

No matter how carefully planned, a walk ultimately curates itself, which is to say that a walk always surprises us with unintended results and no results; or with nothing new, the latter being just as important as newness because the maturity of a practice is based on repetition.

Disciplined repetition can consist of the same exact gesture reperformed during a lifetime. Moreover, while there are variations, because of resources or lack of resources, the seasons, age, sickness and health, solitude or company, sometimes the best of them are the subtlest.

A conscious walker may understandably seek to have no-thought while walking. If that is the intent, the walker must be clear that to withhold thought while walking can later be betrayed

Walking School

Teaching is like walking because it is based on repetition. Teaching is based on the repetition of information and knowledge, until learned—until lived. Lessons, tested and enriched by experience, can generate insight and, over time, wisdom.

The act of repetition is not only for the benefit of the student, but also for the benefit of the teacher. Most things are not taught well the first time we teach them. Most things are not learned the first time we hear them.

Teaching takes patient, repeated articulation, in various ways. The teacher learns that the same material must be presented in different ways over time, until the listener's curiosity is engaged by one of the modes of presentation. One mode of presentation alone seldom achieves success with a diverse audience.

The strategy of repeating variations of some material over time creates a union between the teacher and the material, not so much through memorizing but through identification. The teacher and the material become one; the material becomes the teacher's identity.

In this increasing state of oneness with the material, sometimes all walls disappear. Suddenly, teaching has transcended all classes and classrooms, and the teacher is always teaching, not in a pedantic way, but as the living presence of that material in the world. The material has become a way of seeing and being.

Walking teaches us how to walk. The act teaches itself if we are mindful, if we study our steps and learn from them. We also learn how to walk by teaching others how to walk, by studying and learning from their steps. In this process, a walker becomes the walk. In the process, a mindful group of walkers is formed. As a result, a walk becomes a school for walking for all.

Detaching from Art

I believe that we need to detach from art, yet hold on to what art was about throughout most of the history of humanity: the desire to reach a state of existence that is more than mere survival, surpassing material survival by providing insight into the possibilities of the human condition, connecting us with each other and with the planet. In that sense, what we used to call art allowed for the creative expression of the mystery of the self-awareness of matter, which sought to transcend the gathering of food and water, the making of clothing and shelter, our reproduction, and our submission to religious and secular powers.

The artist walker has to become an unapologetic body. Rather than arguing on and on that walking can be art, defending walking as art, I prefer to free myself from the shackles of that tired old dynamic, of having to argue whether something is art or not. I simply state that the question, too, is dated; indeed, it is as dated as the term.

Most of the time, unwillingness or inability to consider walking as art are the result of a conservative notion of art held by outdated critics, or by a mainstream public that was lost by the art world when abstraction arrived. This is a public that holds on to a notion of art as figurative painting or sculpture; it must be educated. Walking as art also requires this same public to stop passively consuming art and start actively experiencing art (participation). But we can only participate in what we have been educated to understand as potentially valuable experience.

Walking as art requires the public to let art into their bodies because of the proximity of walking as a common experience. So, there is a loss of distance from art that is at first disconcerting, but that eventually generates an immersion in the art, because the body and life of the public is the art, transforming art into culture, or recognizing pedestrian culture (common life) as art, as John Dewey once did.

We must detach from art, because art was only meant to be a cultural bridge, it was never the destination. The goal of art was to

Liberating Artists

I believe that walking as art practice, in terms of socially engaged art, radically changes the nature of art-making, not so much vanishing the author as liberating authors by relocating them in three important ways.

First, there is the question of inside versus outside, of moving from making art inside a studio, to making it outside: a transplant that can potentially transform art into culture by engaging audiences.

Artists make art but people make culture when they publicly claim artworks as their own.

Second, it signals the increasing freedom of artists that began with conceptual art. Socially engaged art is a peak in the history of conceptualism, so to speak, by freeing artists from the anxiety of having to materially make art in all places at all times. Artists become the moving containers of art-making knowledge, to be activated or not, if and when art can contribute to issues affecting society.

The liberation and relocation of artists is democratizing, because it places artists back into the commons through their common and uncommon skills. Much like a village apothecary, baker, blacksmith, butcher, cobbler, or midwife, the visiting or resident artist is in possession of a certain set of life-enhancing skills. If art-making were re-understood as labor, as a trade rather than a career, it would democratize the practice.

Artists have valuable, creative skills to offer in the form of aesthetic, meaningful experiences. Artists are no longer mythically conceived as dramatic entities driven to make secretly, but as accessible, creative tradesmen. Artists can be called in, like carpenters, to repair the old or build the new, in front of everyone: a public process that generates accountability from demythologized artists as accessible makers.

Third, as the acquaintance between artists and audiences deepens through available, everyday, participatory, aesthetic,

Path Integrity

I always encourage people to try to experience walking alone, in pairs, and as groups—in silence. Therefore, when creating a new group of silent walkers, I must make a judgment call on the abilities and receptiveness of potential participants. I train walkers as best as I can. I write and freely distribute a unique training manual for every new site and group. And I take chances with borderline walkers. I embrace the embarrassing practice of taking a chance.

Nevertheless, a group walk can be spoiled by a distracted walker or by a walker with a secret agenda, whose unfocused or disruptive behavior gradually begins to sabotage the movement, concentration, and experience of the rest. A walking group experience should not become about the containment of a dysfunctional walker.

I am entrusted with holding a space, in terms of creating a safe walking experience for all. It is not only a question of personal safety, which is paramount, but of form and depth. A walker making unexpected interventions that violate our contract of trust can create an unpredictable environment that ceases to be safe for most, that begins to destroy the choreography and the depth of the experience, turning it into a veneer of experience. Even if the rest of the walkers continue to do what they were trained to do, the walk can devolve to a superficial level because no one trusts that fellow walker, so everyone is on guard, protecting their vulnerability.

Sadly, if a situation approaches that point, even though the disruptive walker was trained—which included reading my project proposal (a text I share with all participants), and watching others walking for a while—yet none of that penetrated that person's armor, nothing disarmed that individual, then, I normally remove that walker from my walk. I do not enable that narcissistic or troubled ego. I send the ego home. Because I am entrusted not just with protecting the integrity of the other

Silent Group Walks

To lead a silent walk is of social service because it creates the conditions for mindful perception, which is the foundation for a more grounded construction of human reality.

It is countercultural to engage in a methodology of silence. This methodology consists of defining the various kinds of silence, freely training walkers in the sustained practice of silence, and facilitating silent public spaces for audiences. The creative process leading to the embodiment of silence engenders suspicion, and its final manifestation unleashes distrust, and even anger. My performers and I have been angrily shouted at by drivers and pedestrians during our durational, silent walking performances. And we have responded with peaceful silence, letting the hate pass through us. Our silence has not been condescending; our silence has been empathic, because we understand the effects of what we are unleashing. Silence in public spaces often provides a stage for all that is raw and repressed.

It is precisely because of this individual and collective cathartic potential that I value the experience of group walking in silence, even if there is disbelief at the outset. Participants in a silent walk may mistakenly think that the instruction to be silent is a form of group control, even a state of punishment. But if the walkers can suspend their prejudices and their judgments, and trust the silence, surrendering to the experience of silence, giving up the current, social media custom of constantly commenting about everything, and the habit of talking when nervous, they will eventually appreciate silence as a gift, a tool, and a strategy during the walk.

Walking in silence brings the gift of psychic rest, of resting from the job of voicing the ego. Silence is the key that opens the door to meditation, which leads to mindfulness. Silence is a strategy that both protects the walker, like armor, and creates an open space for the stories of others to enter and be listened to in silence.

Walking Aesthetics

For me, aesthetics are not a contaminated envelope or straightjacket. They exist somewhere in-between welcoming points of safe entry into a work and acts of generosity.

Therefore, what do you look like when you walk? Are you wearing a uniform or a costume? Is it a costume that you created as the skin of this gesture? Is it a uniform constructed as an expression of your identity in the world, which you wear every day of your life? Alternatively, is it a secret uniform to reveal your true identity, perhaps seldom revealed in the world, which you are selectively willing to reveal during a performance? (Of course, it could be a uniform to cover your identity, as you may feel too exposed.) Is it the uniform that you wear when you walk? Perhaps you wear the same uniform for every walk, regardless of site, so that it visually helps to curate (to identify, to connect) all your walking into one practice.

Sometimes I ask young performative walkers what they are going to wear during a walk they are planning. Some inevitably answer that they are “going to wear nothing special.” And my reply is that “nothing special” is a uniform: it is the uniform of the unnoticed, the result of a decision to walk mostly unnoticed. In addition, and more importantly, “nothing special” is not rootless. In fact, it may be the uniform of whiteness, because there is no textile without social and cultural significance. Unnoticeability is the uniform of Americanized and Europeanized social environments, because it assumes a racially non-discriminatory, informal class structure, and gender-relaxed society. The experience of complete unnoticeability, of total freedom on a sidewalk or path, is mostly a white experience.

Of course, I understand taking on the mantle of invisibility as a strategy for research, and even for access, which may require a walker to look harmless. In addition to unnoticeability as a kind of performative camouflage, a walker may try to wear the skin of humility. True humility is admirable: it is disarming, opening many paths, and it is the first step to listening. However, to decide

Walking the Imagination

Terms are contaminated and thus burdened by the gendered history of manipulative power. Nevertheless, because I work with communities to whom I need to describe a project using accessible, clear language, I try to rescue words from this ruined landscape of historic speech, reclaiming original meanings or redefining them.

I want to believe that we can rescue imagination, that is, our understanding of the purpose and agency of imagination in society. I am aware that we live in an age where we mistakenly think that we have the right to fully access and consume everything, even the stories of others. However, I believe that this can be curated by ethics.

Therefore, I define a *moral imagination* as the ability to imagine yourself in someone else's shoes. An *ethical imagination* is the ability to imagine yourself wearing those shoes—inhabiting them—walking through the world as another person. It is not enough to stand like a lightning rod; it is necessary to inhabit and walk in place of.

Inhabiting and walking in someone else's shoes begins to generate a *radical imagination*, that is, an imagination at its most productive, socially heroic and prophetic.

Walking Language

I am not a supporter of art theory as the only nutrient for art training. I received a Western European education in the humanities by way of Spain, complemented by the pre-Columbian and colonial literature of the Caribbean, Central and South America, updated by Cold War violations on the neo-colonial stages of Cuba and Puerto Rico, followed by the African-American struggle for civil rights, white feminist theory, and queer movement documentation. I continue to be humbly schooled, most recently in the perversion of globalism by forces such as unrestrained capitalism, invasive technology masquerading as social media, and the populist neo-fascism of a post-industrial, angry underclass that feels betrayed. Of course, not everything is negative schooling, and there are global ecological restoration initiatives (even if fought by big oil and gas), and inspiring local efforts at artisanal organic farming, and the rebirth of farmer networks. They may not feed a world that should not be overpopulated in the first place, and that also wastes a lot of food, but they are slowly making food production real again. This trajectory continues to homeschool me as a multidisciplinary thinker and maker; it informed my thinking through contradictory theories which made me suspect the authority of any single theory.

I also seek the knowledge deeply stored within the human body, the possibility of distant memory fragments passed through our DNA, and more recent muscle memories often related to the experience of pain. I seek to understand perception through our known senses, plus intuition and instinct. Not harboring the prejudices of secular modernity, I also desire to be informed by the human spirit as a self-less, empathic receiver. The perceptual result of all this is vital to walking practice.

If given a choice, I prefer to walk rather than to theorize about walking. Nevertheless, after I walk and rest from walking, I eventually begin to think about the experience of walking, and

Walking Leadership

There are positive and negative forms of leadership. Leading a group of walkers while constantly talking like a tour guide, leaving no room for silence, can block the subtle sounds of the natural world. This may also result in only regarding the most obvious features of a landscape, noticing only what a chatty group leader points to as notable. This not only filters everyone's perceptions according to a busy leader's menu, but also creates a walking audience that inwardly organizes itself hierarchically. A leader needs to avoid the creation of a negative hierarchy bookended by needy followers who compete for a leader's undivided attention, to walkers lagging behind, fighting the experience because they have issues with authority, and the in-between, who try to stay out of this dysfunctional walking dynamic.

Walking requires a methodology of generosity. It is important that walkers watch each other, and watch out for each other, as part of a path's emotionally mature ecology. This is not about supervision. A walk's leader is in charge of supervision. No other walker needs to supervise his or her fellow walkers. In fact, unless the leader appoints one or more assistants, based on scholarship, experience, or skills, the leader must discourage self-appointed supervisors, either through discretion or through a clear public statement that empowers everyone equally.

A walk's leader must embrace authority. Otherwise, a walking group can become fragmented and the walking experience can deteriorate quickly. There should be clear guidelines. Even when a group experience seeks to embrace diversity of individual experience, in terms of different decisions and expressions during moments of intimacy with the self, these, too, must be at the service of the collective. All individual performer decisions and gestures will take place within the context of the group and will reflect upon the group.

There is no question that a walk's leader wants to perceive, too. A walk's group leader wants to experience the path as much as the

Walking Slowness

Walking slowly can counteract our addiction to speed, our individual and collective cult of speed, which dulls all senses. We now fear slowness as lack of wit, evidencing less intelligence. The slow are suspect. The village idiot is slow; the town's fool drags his feet. But who wrote that story? Who created that cruel cartoon? Certainly not a walker.

Monastic cultures are wisely slow. The monastic body trains in the craft of slowness.

Americans fear slowness as a loss of momentum. Business is all about the rhythms of timing and grabbing. However, what if there is another layer to timing? What if there is a supra-human timing? What if we walked slowly and, by the very virtue of our slowness, could see and hear much more? What if our slowness allowed us to encounter slow and subtle entities missed by speed?

What if everything and everyone is being choreographed by this greater collective psychic timing in universal flow, which may not have a choreographer other than the elements in the process and the process itself, once unleashed (the big bang?). I do not know; I do not need to know.

Many people are afraid that if they slow down, they will never recover their prior speed. Many fear that they might remain slow forever, and thus, stuck in a permanent perceptual disadvantage across the industrial and post-industrial worlds. There is so much fear of the slow unknown.

We cannot let our walking art practice be curated by speed. We cannot let our walking practice be dictated by fear of slowness. Walking unknown paths requires trust in the nourishing of the yet-unknown, and in the very concept of the unknown itself.

To know what we do not know is important to knowing, to the quality of our knowledge, giving it perspective and depth, giving it subtlety and wisdom. This process is not a race; this is a very slow evolution, an evolved knowledge of our universal ignorance, very slowly achieved, wisely discerned.

Glossary

A selection of key terms, as I define and use them throughout this book.

Awareness – Awareness is often confused with consciousness. I define awareness as the basic state of being informed about someone or something.

Charrette – A small group meeting seeking a balanced dialogue about selected common issues, giving voice to all participants and focusing on creative solutions.

Civilization – Historically, a powerful people and their leading culture, traditionally constructed and sustained through material and psychological domination. Ideally, a people's evolved state, best evidenced through their awareness of all sentient beings' rights.

Conscious – The conscious is our system for becoming and staying human in the animal world through the formulation of ideas communicated through language and images.

Contemplation – The deep(er) consideration of thoughts, for a long period, with an element of surrender.

Docents – A term commonly used in museums for mature volunteers trained to speak with visitors about exhibitions and performances.

Hyper-Awareness – A heightened state of awareness; a precondition to consciousness.

Meditation – The rumination on ideas, resulting in considered thoughts.

Mind – The totality of the self. Mind combines thoughts and ideas with feelings and emotions (the so-called heart), plus memories stored in organs (the visceral), fiber and muscle. The mind is not sited only in the brain. The mind is as much in the finger and toe as in the brain.

Nature & nature – I capitalize Nature when I envision the contextual environment as a living entity and influential force, as opposed to the lower-case nature of something or someone, and human nature.

No-Thought – Christianity walks the mind from reflection, through meditation, to contemplation. Buddhism seems to go one step further: it takes the mind to no-thought, quieting the mind, willingly surrendering all thinking to a peaceful oblivion that does not negate or destroy the self, but simply suspends it, giving it a taste of the silence and flow of the cosmos.

Novice – In Western monasticism, a young person seeking to become a monk or nun; someone in the early stages of monastic training. In many monasteries, it is preceded by being a Postulant, one who asks to become a Novice, usually for one year. The novitiate usually lasts for one or two years.

Practice – Most people think of a doctor's or a lawyer's practice. However, the art world did not borrow this term from these professions but from Buddhism and its notion of meditation practice. Artists are trying to move away from the influence of competitive corporate culture that has increasingly defined art as an abrasive urban career. Artists are trying to replace this with the humbler notion of art as a practice, as a mindful way of life, consisting of consciously creative gestures, visible and invisible, large and small. Art practice is a private and public, selfless and generous, creative life process resulting in a conscious cultural product.

Reflection – The act of considering events, issues, and ideas—seriously.

Socially Engaged – As I state in the beginning of this text, a socially engaged, public performance practice is the site-specific embodiment of urgent social issues through considered human gesture, such as conscious walking, ethically made and generously shared with people as a form of diagnostic, collective, poetic portrait, freely offered for aesthetic appreciation and meaningful reflection, ultimately seeking a socially transformative, cultural experience.

Unconscious & Subconscious – Many define the unconscious and the subconscious identically, considering the unconscious and the subconscious as practically interchangeable terms. However, psychoanalytic practice prefers to use the unconscious as the term for the deeper mind. Novelist Cormack McCarthy writes in his article “The Kelulé Problem” that the unconscious was our biological system for operating as an animal, which lingers as a primeval system integral to our mind. For him, the unconscious remains mostly inaccessible to the conscious and communicates with it primarily through dream sequences and images (visions), which we have to interpret. Nevertheless, throughout this book, I use the term unconscious as an *adjective*, as the opposite of conscious, meaning: insensitive or unaware. Thus, I beg to differ with common usage. The subconscious does not work for me as an adjective. Contrary to psychoanalytic usage, I prefer to use the term “subconscious” as a noun, as the name of the deeply rooted, primeval system McCarthy writes about.

About the Author

Ernesto Pujol is a site-specific, public, performance artist and social choreographer, as well as a writer and educator. In the 1970s, he pursued undergraduate work in the humanities, art, and philosophy. During the 1980s, he sought Western monastic training in a Cistercian-Trappist cloister, followed by social work among the homeless, graduate work in education, psychology, and communications. He also served in public health addressing HIV/AIDS in the US and Latin America, as a consultant to nonprofit organizations such as the Brooklyn AIDS Task Force and GMHC in New York, the Academy for Educational Development in Washington, DC, and the Panos Institute in London. During the 1990s, Pujol began to practice socially engaged art through a series of installation projects in Cuba and Puerto Rico. In 2000, he began to collaborate with citizen curators on regional, long-term projects in the Midwest and the South. In 2011, The Contemporary (art museum) in Honolulu hosted a partial retrospective of his work and commissioned a citywide, durational performance, *Speaking in Silence*. Pujol continues to serve as a graduate studio and thesis advisor to several programs, lead field-training, master workshops, and develop group performances as public portraits of embattled people and places.

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