Art as Adventure

Art as Adventure:

Going Beyond

Edited by

James P. Werner and Rosemary O'Neill

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Introduction

Rosemary O'Neill and James P. Werner

The artist-traveler has historically followed political, economic, and cultural expansion. The role of artist as witness, reporter, geographer, collector, and educator exemplifies the significance of mobility, geographic and cultural mediation in the productions of art/visual culture, and the critical questions raised as a result. In contemporary art, especially as the result of globalization, some artists are seeking out remote experiences as typified by Pierre Huyghe's Antarctic journey adapted for the production, *A Journey that Wasn't* (2005). Since, many artists have worked in-situ, in collaboration with local populations, or translated travel experiences from remote locations. The aim of this publication is to pose questions about this phenomenon and how these experiences are conceptualized and re-constructed through reproductive mediums, installations, or documentary formats in contemporary art case studies. Moreover, the intention is to question whether artists' adventuring to remote sites can, in itself, constitute a form of conceptual art with underlying aspirations for unfamiliar, isolated, and spatial experiences.

The artist as traveler has deep historical precedents *as* contemporary art production today. The expanded field of art of the late 1960s has gone beyond the monumental and spatially aesthetic in-situ works of Robert Smithson, Walter di Maria, Nancy Holt, James Turrell and others shifting to a re-conceptualization of the experience of mobility, remoteness, spatial experiences manifest in research, publications, collaborative exhibitions and technology to bridge far-flung places. To what do we attribute the seeking out of remote locations? And how does one define the notion of adventure and remoteness. In the 2003 exhibition, *Wish you were here: The Art of Adventure,* curator Cathleen Chaffee notes the root of adventure in *advenire* or "to happen" a motivation connected with circulation and the possibility of transpiring events. While the 2005 Roundtable, "Remote Possibilities" artist Pierre Huyghe states that, "the issue of the remote place is not exactly the point." Rather, it is a "displacement" not necessarily in location, but more about the "productions of situations and complex heterogeneous

territories." Or, Jan Bas Ader's travel quests to explore the relationship of the self to the world. These perspectives each reflect a willingness to present an experience of place to others, and allow for the sense of place to be produced in new alternative contexts, or even manifest as a reflection on the self in relation to others and places experienced.

In "Mapping and the expanded Field of Contemporary Art," Wystan Curnow attributes the phenomenon of travel as a contemporary theme to significant political shifts – that is, globalization, but also to the desire of some artists to give a voice to the silence of the road atlas. Artist Ruth Watson has written in a special issue of *The Cartographic Journal* titled, "Art and Cartography" that "mapping is our most common place metaphor today with some 24 exhibitions on the subject between 1977 and 2009 – these include Robert Storr's MoMA 1994 exhibition *Mapping* focused on the iconography today to Nato Thompson's 2008-9 exhibition *Experimental Geography* which teases out the issue of art as geography and geography as art, situating this work as a social and political practice to Okwui Enwezor's locating contemporary art "in an age of permanent transition" acknowledging voluntary and involuntary migrations." As the road atlas evolves into ever changing digital visualizations, there is consideration for geography and cartography beyond the map, relative to the perspectives inherent in journeys facilitated by digital mapping and the visual recordings that are woven into new technological ways of recounting the adventure.

So, what are some of the practices that constitute geographic mobility? How does the notion of "going beyond" allow for things to happen? What are the histories and contexts emergent within this process? How are these complexities re-presented when one hasn't experienced the remote or out of the way? How do these experiences link place and memory? The following chapters address these issues not in a chronological manner, but rather in relation to the artistic practice, the role of research, the experience of mobility, documentation, and notions of remoteness. The methods and outcomes of each artist represented have common goals to re-visualize and transport one notion of place to another. As a global community emerges in the present, each of the practices discussed in this book utilizes some form of media relevant to framing a reduced but poignant set of characteristics about a past journey and place. In this process, these practitioners are redesigning the experience of a journey as a transplanted event, akin to a Dionysian reproduction, merging artist interpretation with a quite physically virtual rendition. This production of situation and sometimes frame of mind, frames these outsiders' memories of unfamiliar things for themselves and the audience, representing unique and revealing constructions of distant realities.

Christoph Fink's *Atlas of Movements*: Between Cartography and Poetry

Rosemary O'Neill

Christoph Fink's *Atlas of Movements* (Figure 1–1) is a theoretically open-ended inventory of what the artist refers to as "travel periods." Within the *Atlas of Movements,* the artist has categorized distinct, numbered "movements," carefully delineated within a personal notational system that is ostensibly systematic but often cryptic. These movements are charted in advance along a route connecting point A to point B in and around identifiable cities such as Mannheim, Cleveland, New York, and Montreal; or across broad geographic areas or trans-national expanses such as Brussels to Geneva, Leuven to Mount Etna and Montreal to New York. The lengths of the movements vary, as does the means of beginning and ending a work. While walking is a principal mode, vehicular and air transport are sometimes integrated within a movement, and recorded with exacting systems including precise time, latitude, longitude, weather conditions; as well as sensational, perceptual, and documentary observations at times using sound recordings and photographs. By designating these itinerant ventures as movements, Fink situates his work in relation to time-based mediums including the choreographic and the musical involving kinesthetic experience with pauses and moments of immobility, which can include the focused study of a locale or even, archival research. In a continuous interplay between self and environment, demarcated locales and interstices intersect with bodily, emotional, and psychological sensations.[1] By taking this approach, Fink's work is inherently performative arcing between calculation

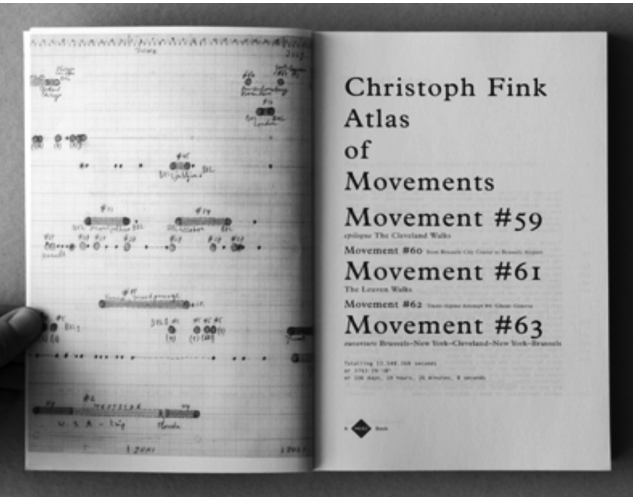

Figure 1–1. Christoph Fink. *Atlas of Movements #59–#63.* Merz,2003. Cleveland Walks and Leuven Walks. (All photographs of works illustrated in this chapter are courtesy of the artist)

[1] *Christoph Fink, Atlas of Movements*, conversation with Eva Wittocx, January 2012, Leuven Museum, online archive, Leuven Museum.
http://www.mleuven.be/en/binaries/zaaltekstchristophfink_eng_tcm41-49679.pdf
Accessed: November 28, 2016.

and cartographic recording, with impressions, expressive sensibilities, and collection of random things that are generated by or appear within the spaces that compose the work.

His choice of the word "movements" for these "travel periods" furthermore associates this work with contemporary travel based works such as that of Robert Smithson or Richard Long, but more directly, the historical link between the artist and cartographer, a link that has direct connections to Flanders, where map making and landscape painting thrived. This can be seen in the works of 16th - 17th century landscape painters such as Joachim Patinir whose painting *Paysage au bord du lac* (Musée Cahors Henri-Matin) captures the panoramic view of Flemish landscape fusing the real and the sensational aspects of place in relation to time and travel.[2] As a native of this region, Fink has stressed that the environment in which one initially gains knowledge of place continues to inform one's perceptions of all other locales, thus suggesting that one's geography of place or one's biotope, imprints a topographical vision on perceptions, which continues to color one's memories and inform one's geographic perceptions in subsequent travels. This objective knowledge of place and poetic sensibilities of geography taken up by Fink exemplifies a model of human consciousness and re-claims the visual and historical association between cartography and fine art. It was this intersection of cognition and sensation that was diminished when cartography progressively shifted towards the disciplines of science and mathematics by the 17th century, and in the process of this shift in mapmaking the aesthetic qualities of topographical renderings were mitigated and the imaginative and sensational evocations previously embedded in cartographic inventions were gradually diminished.

By identifying his work an "atlas" however, Fink clearly situates his work directly within mapping traditions – a corpus of rigorously detailed records – charted in chronographic or absolute time with keen attention to topography and physical boundaries. But within this closely plotted time, extensive recording of a closely observed environment, perceived ambiances, or sensational aspects of his prolonged itineraries emerge between pre-determined "check points," or pauses between the beginning and the end of a single "movement." His choice of the designation of "check-points" resonates given associations with political borders and security monitoring,

[2] Filip Luyckx, "Christoph Fink's Travel Accounts: Aesthetics of Contemporary World View," *The Low Countries Jaargang* 14 (2011) 65. Accessed: January 10, 2016. For image of Patinir see: http://www.musees-midi-pyrenees.fr/ musees/musee-de-cahors-henri-martin/collections/art-du-xvie-siecle/joachim-patinir/paysage-au-bord-du-lac/

while on a personal scale, these constitute moments of physical respite and, or psychological reflection. Check points hedge the flow of movements, information and sensations, but can also indicate the arbitrariness of physical borders in relation to centers and liminal zones, or personal borders that are more fluid and indicative of physical limitations or sensational transitions.

Fink's documents and working notes are recorded in unique taxonomies contingent on the project. These calculations, field notes, images, sounds, etc. are then expanded into objects, drawings, images, recordings, installations and books linking objective data collection with parallel artistic productions in varied mediums such as wire sculpture, carbon paper drawings, cut paper installations, clay discs, and photographs, which provide visual parallels though condensing and re-configuring the mobile and experiential aspects of the individual movements. In this process, Fink expands contemporary notions of mapping generating diverse and often elegant artworks, in tandem with a rigorously documented personal archive of data linking physical spaces with spatial experiences. It is Fink's artworks that mediate the abstraction of site experiences with the visually oriented exhibitions spaces in which his works are featured, or post-sites, where one form of abstraction yields to another. These conceptual translations are visually complex blending the actuality of site via data with the distancing of site via a projection of experience contingent on chosen methods of display.

At the foundation of his installation-based exhibitions is a reassessment of the modern convention of mapping to encompass patterns of heterogeneous experiences, especially the implied socio-cultural present as well as notions of durational time and layers of memory in relation to geographic and spatial configurations. His exhibitions demonstrate ways in which he aims to create a language of these primarily walking practices that recalls Michel de Certeau's notion of "tourner un parcour," composing pathways analogous to "turning a phrase" – thus creating a rhetoric of walking.[3] Fink's point A to point B trajectory does not imply a walk of a single straight line, but rather a complicated nexus of movements with unexpected interventions such as detours and physical barriers, but also active research such as studies of flora or time spent in exhibitions or archives. Fink is activating spaces within defined place-based configurations, following Certeau's distinction between the "static" place, and the active generation of space

[3] Michel de Certeau, *The Practices of Everyday Life* (1984), 100. As quoted in Nato Thompson, "In Two Directions: Geography as Art, Art as Geography," *Experimental Geographies: Landscape Hacking, Cartography and Radical Urbanism*. New York: Nato Thompson and Independent Curators International, 2008, p. 19.

through mobile elements, "direction, velocities, time variables."[4] Fink is furthermore creating new spaces through the experience of "successive contexts" composing works with multi-sensory, intellectual, and psychological components rendered in situ or in visually arresting forms that translate movement and sensation into complex visual elements that are conceptually linked. Interweaving the rationality of his own pre-set systems with the poetic, ephemeral, and experiential, Fink connects the objectified notion of place with the expansive and phenomenological unfolding of space in relation to the social, cultural and the political allowing for a fuller immersion into an emergent zone and the forging of a closer link between the intellect, physical, psychological, and cultural sensations.[5]

In a recent interview with Eva Wittocx published by the Flanders Art Institute, Fink compared his approach to that of a painter – that is, for him, a concentration on "material study."[6] And given his near endless possible geographic coordinates, he is afforded the freedom to work in his words, "anywhere really, in principle the whole of the earth surface is my work terrain." Fink's work is distinguished by unassuming acts of discovery within the remote, defined here as intervals along a calculated line that generate ambiances to extend data toward intuitional and perceptual sensitivities. Fink's work is a transient act, and as a result, he addresses the impossibility to "capture" the "instantaneousness of the moment."[7] This sense of impossibility conveys with it a sense of modesty, for there is an absence of grand narrative, allegorical pretension, or even aesthetic exposition of landscape itself. Fink's work conveys humbleness in approach and poetry in aspiration, a striving to communicate presence and ephemerality in relation to historically and culturally embedded geography.

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[4] Michel de Certeau, *The Practices of Everyday Life*. Translated by Steven Rendell (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1984), 117.

[5] Ibid. De Certeau distinguishes between the "phenomenology" of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's univocal spatiality analogous to place (outside) and the anthropological mode of experience of a relational experience of space. By contrast, de Certeau uses the terms "being-there" in relation to place and the operations, which specify the realization of "space" and history. See pages 117-118.

[6] Eva Wittocx, "Christoph Fink: *Atlas of Movements*" Museum Leuven, Flanders. Archive 2012.
file:///Volumes/RO/christoph%20fink/zaaltekstchristophfink_eng_tcm41-49679.pdf Accessed: October 10, 2016.
Wittocx: Atlas of Movement," Flanders Art Institute, Brussels.
http://bamart.be/en/pages/detail/66 Accessed: January 16, 2016.

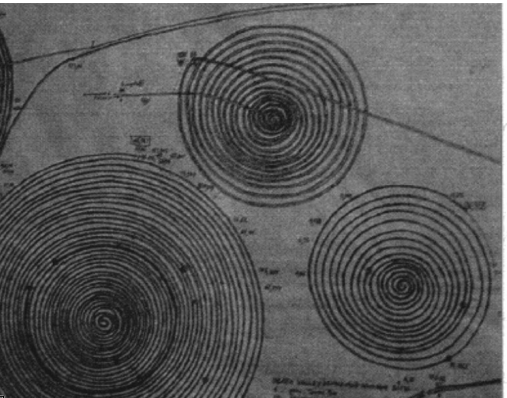
[7] Ibid.

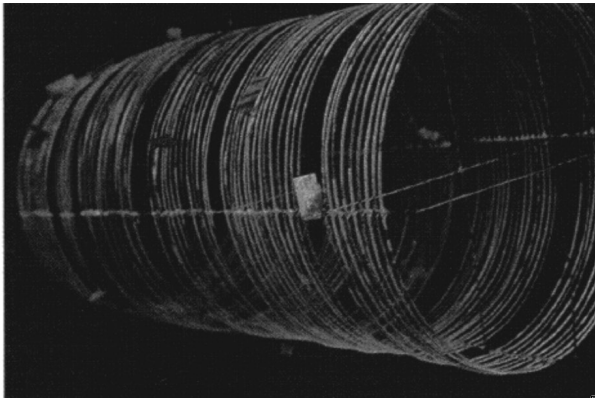
Rebecca Solnit has written in her study, *Wanderlust*, "walking is bodily labor that produces nothing but thoughts, experiences, arrivals…It is corporal and lies between idleness and work." In the work of Fink, ambulation is thought and sense productive – not in unstructured time, but rather, a measured time frame within which empirical knowledge is equally compiled. There is a balance between the rigor of the project and the moments of idleness, not in the pejorative contemporary sense, but rather in relation to a concept of sloth, or times dedicated to imaginative thinking about one's inclinations.

The *Atlas* itself is a process of accumulation that synthesizes "field notes" into broader fields of research – astronomy, history, cultural studies, environmental studies, urban development, and more. Fink subjects topographical maps to critical analysis peeling away – layering over time or re-building spaces through over-mapping and re-configuring experienced spaces. Since mapping is an associative process of spatial arrangement, orientations such as point of location, linear trajectory, horizon, point of view, and movements in space – the body, the earth, the solar system – are taken into account to generate articulated patterns, while his range of materials – paper constructions, installations, carbon drawings, objects, clay and ceramic discs, diaries, and books, result in a compendium of relational types of knowledge.

In the *North American Walks* (2002) the horizon line determined the form of the works, which are composed of flattened discs in which "check points" are located at points with the space of the circumference. (Figure

Figures 1–2a, b, c. Christoph Fink. *Atlas of Movements, Movement #2* (A North American Experience), 5 cities, ironwire sculpture (cylindershape), (175mm x 327mm), 1994.





1-2) This "on the road" experience of five cities – Tucson, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and New York resulted in disc-shaped, horizon-oriented drawings, which the artist arranged vertically originally in a paper construction, then, creating a tubular iron-wire sculpture within which linear trajectories, topographical shifts, space, density, and time are accumulated as a stratum of diverse urban and desert locations organized all in

Figure 1–3a: *Atlas of Movements*, **Movement #52 (The Frankfurt Walks), detail.**

Figure 1–3b: Christoph Fink. ***Atlas ofMovements*****,** ***Movement #52*** **(The Frankfurt Walks) ink and pencil on paper cut-out + printed text on paper, (5400mm x 1365mm + extension 450mm x 2370mm), 2002.**

relation to the experience of the peripheral horizon. As such, the horizon of far-flung places is mobile and even, intangible, but Fink compresses this experience into a sedimentary accumulation of planes in relation to astronomical dynamics as the movement's coherent dynamic. In *Movement No. 52: The Frankfort Walks* (2002), the resultant installation is a visually complex arrangement of paper cutout shapes strung out in an intricate arrangement of time, geography, movement, and spatial experience and viewed from a bird's eye perspective. (Figure 1–3a)

Thus, taking the cartographer's point of view, one follows dominant skeins (time and geographic points) but Fink also shows underlying shifting patterns and unexpected connections – perceptual, intuitive, topographical. His use of cut paper is significant both referring to the conventional language of maps as flat and viewed from a "god's eye" point of view, but his layering of paper shapes and intricate lattice-like patterns reveal unplanned moments – curved pathways, straight clear stretches, and back-switched

tracks. Thus, the calculated metric movement between point A to point B allows for disrupted movement, unfixed trajectories, and even, tenuous progression. These cutout spatial pathways constitute a tour in which units of movement are enunciated as digressions in relation to a planned itinerary. Despite the minimal and abstract formal qualities of the exhibited works, this installation captures the ways in which the single linear movement expands into a field of trails and impromptu developments constituting what is best characterized as "totalizing observations."[8]

Wittocx has noted that Fink is not so concerned with the landscape itself, but the totality of the observer in his surroundings" which allows for a breaking down the hierarchies of places (i.e. prioritization of destinations) in favor of the potentially infinite events in between. Fink's spatial expansion appears to follow Foucault's discussion in "Of Other Places," moving beyond what he refers to as emplacement and resultant "localization" toward a complex arrangement or relational sites, which he defines as heterotopias.[9] By ordering his routes between or around real places – in relation to the intervals in between, Fink is also suggesting how networks and boundaries question or reinforce borders, public and private use areas, environmental dynamics and shifts, geo-cultural memory, local stories and national histories.

In 2012, M Gallery in Leuven, Belgium, invited Fink to design a companion exhibition for the Leuven Museum celebration of the 500th anniversary of the renowned Flemish cartographer Gerard Mercator (1512-1594), whose concept of mapping projection remains a cartographic innovation historically.[10] While he traveled little, Mercator mapped regions such as Palestine and empirically tested his geographic projections by studying travel writings and historical accounts thus projecting his geographic premises and testing his theories using secondary literary sources. In a meta-level empirical study, Fink used Mercator's maps of this region and these supplementary accounts to undertake his own geographical research, a reiteration of the cartographer's process. Mercator projections, while innovative as the concept demonstrated the pitfalls of a projected and grand-scheme

[8] De Certeau (1984), 119. De Certeau cites C. Linde and W. Labov's articulation of the difference between a map and a "tour." See page 221, note 8.

[9] Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias," Architecture / Mouvement/ Continuité, October, 1984; ("Des Espace Autres," March 1967 Translated from the French by Jay Miskowiec), 23.
http://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/foucault1.pdf. Accessed November 28, 2016.

[10] Wittocx (2012). np.

overview map, especially as generated within the context of an expanding Northern Europe within a broader global context. This example demonstrates how the dominance and power of one geographic area is exposed in mapmaking via the scale and fuller articulation of dominant geographic centers in relation to those lesser dominant areas or marginal zones on the periphery of that singular vision.

Fink's aim in this project was not to diminish this historical figure during a celebration of his cartographic innovations, but rather to consider the impacts of mapping when understanding of place is imposed on the spatial complexities and complicated sites from afar. This distancing results in an abstraction of space and mediation based on one's own geography. Rather than place as a static zone, mapping is an iterative process that is dynamic and subject to terrestrial, social, and political dynamics experienced in spatial terms. While they both share an understanding of space based on one's bodily placement, Fink is seeking to embed his physical self resolutely into each moment of time with each geographic interval traversed. So, for Fink, Mercator remains of significance especially because his work coincided with a shifting world-view towards a more humanistic framework locating his concepts within his own understood domain. In Fink's words: "He (Mercator) was an early day modernist who lived at a time when man as increasingly aware of his own place in the world and seeking rational ways of solving human problems."[11] The artist suggests in this statement that the process and materials of mapping spaces are an interventionist endeavor. Fink moreover, sees a parallel with the contemporary moment, especially how geographic and spatial experiences can evidence histories, and in which material and space can influence and re-shape interpretations of diverse world narratives. This time-based axial approach allows for the insertion of factors that shape our understanding of geography and terrain, how we negotiate environments, and a recognition of knowledge that constructed spaces hold within them.

Fink's diverse methods are chosen in relation to his "material study" affirming the significance of experience in relation to its measurable arrangements. Moreover, by locating himself in the interregnum between destinations, Fink considers how these spaces linking social or urban centers are constructed, why these configurations exist historically in relation to more natural zones, where flora and fauna are situated in relation to more human-centered activities, and how these breaks shift one's perceptions and experience of time. Fink's projects are an investment in the value of physi-

[11] Ibid.

cal and spatial encounters, by contrast to the ways in which economics and technology have intervened to establish destination points distinct from the complex interstices that exist throughout. An example of this point is Fink's four-part project in the city of Leuven, Belgium, where he carefully defines each aspect of his trajectory in the works titled *Movement #61: The Leuven Walks* (2003). He records Movement #1 as follows:

> First Walk -- X=crossing of the projected straight line Ghent-Leuven Monday June 30, 2003 15.05.30: clouded over, a dark grey day (after many sunny days) It's been raining all day, drizzling then harder again. I'm going up to the city centre of Ghent today. The real field-work will have to wait for sunlight. I intend to walk to the river Scheldt to where the line crosses the river until the point where the landscape opens up.

These are not nature walks as established in the practices of Richard Long or Hamish Fulton, but rather Fink's walks cover multiple terrains – residential, roadways, open spaces, urban centers, and perimeters area. While in "Movement #2: A First walk through the archives July 7, 2003 Collection Stedelijk Leuven," (Figure 1–4).

Fink researches the collection of historical maps, books, and prints selecting images that demonstrate how the geography informed the design of the city itself, how natural areas were accessed and used for walking and the cultivation of flora, especially evident in the descriptions and drawings

Figure 1–4. Christoph Fink. *Movement #61*: The Leuven Walks, 2003.

Figures 1–5a and 1–5b. ***Movement No. 61*** **- #2: A First Walk through the Archives, July 7, 2003. Collection Stedeljk Leuven.**

of tulip varieties and other indigenous plant life; as well as the role of local rivers and stream flows that shaped topography providing an historical basis for the ways in which the contemporary space has adapted to the history and geography of the region over a five hundred year period. (Figure 1–5a) This movement within the project parallels the present walks of Fink and informs his conception of space, now mediated by history and time producing a durational memory of place imbedded and resonating in the present tense generation of new spaces. Fink shifts between the experiences of geography and history to articulate complex intersections shaped by planning and development, cultural and political shaping, the impacts of commerce and exchange, mobility and access, urban and rural borders, and the role of liminal zones and ambient spaces that still exist. Fink is fashioning geographic space through his intellectual and sensational agency while undertaking an "excavation" of complex narratives that reveal how the notion of "place" is not static, but rather shaped and reshaped as spatial experiences in constant formation. Equally important, he takes into account our contemporary relations with the natural world – its flora and fauna – and how that informs notions of self, history, society, and culture in what Filip Luyckx has described as "an original kind of geography."[12] While Fink has discussed his work in terms of material processes, his conceptual approach is equally ambitious. "My working method alternates between object and subject. I want to say something that goes beyond and abstracts my own

[12] Filip Luyckx, "Christoph Fink's Travel Accounts: Aesthetics of Contemporary World View," *The Low Countries Jaargang* 14, 2001, 66. Translated by Laura Watkinson. Accessed: 1/10/2016.

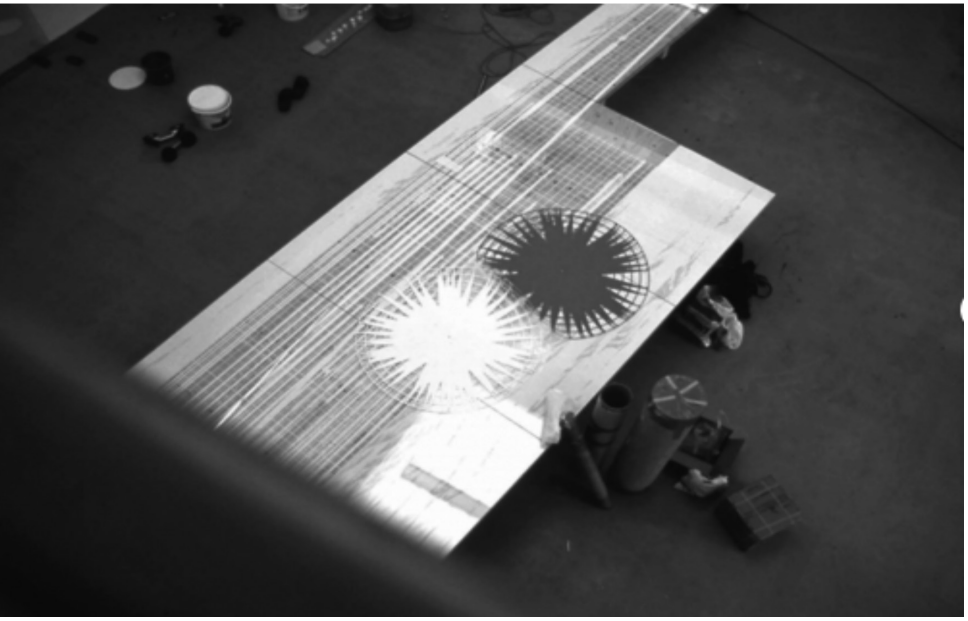


Figure 1–6a: *The Cleveland Walks*, paper and mixed media, 2004.

experience by means of very personal observations. I want to extrapolate something from them that can be meaningful for mankind as a whole."[13] This "cartography of the moment" project, as he described it, was undertaken that same year in a walk commissioned by the museum in Cleveland, Ohio. Following Native American travel routes in a ten-day walk along the Cuyahoga River, documentary photographs show the development of this historically significant pathway along river beds and forest has dramatically changed, especially in the twentieth century when the region developed around manufacturing and industry transforming the natural geography and leaving remnants of economic success and decline evident. With urban decline and the proliferation of suburban developments, sports bars and manicure shops, there are numerous zones where walking itself is "out of the norm." Fink's walks generated public suspicion and the artist walking in this environment was seen by some as a transgression and even, threatening.[14] The banal photographs that resulted from this project attest to the

[13] Christoph Fink, as quoted in Wittocx (2012), np.

[14] Cathleen Chaffee, "Introduction," in Chaffee, Cathleen and David Carrier. *Wish you were here: The Art of Adventure* (Cleveland Institute of Art, 2003), 38.

Figure 1–6b: *The Cleveland Walks* – Field Museum, Chicago, 2003.

dramatic change in the region, a stage set of archeological decline, at best, a terrain v*ague*. Yet, another aspect of the movement was a visit to the Field Museum in Chicago established in 1921, where masks and other examples of a regional material culture are encased (Figure 1 – 6a) as ethnographic artifacts of indigenous populations no longer extant or visible.
The parallel between the depressed environment of the present and the fragments of a previous rich culture on view in cases and dioramas, points to his excavation of site as an archeological endeavor to make whole the picture of place where former cultural vibrancy and depth co-exists with modernization and current urban and suburban deterioration.

With the *Montreal Walks* of 2008, Fink expands the artist's repertoire by formulating the walking – mapping experience in relation to three-dimensional format using clay or fired flattened spherical ceramic discs. (Figure 1–7b) Charting the borders and histories of the region – one that crosses between countries (Canada and the U.S.) and across indigenous and new world cultures, Fink's work is inevitably political and interrogates how space is constructed in relation to geographical and human agency.

Artist and collaborator Joelle Tuerlinckx writes: "Fink gathers and transforms precise data through a unique notation system, and his clay and ceramic discs spring from this process. This study is sustained by research into the different periods of earth's evolution, its ecosystem and geography as

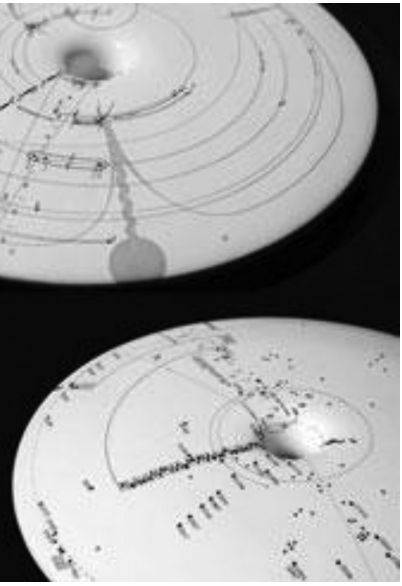


Figure 1–7a. Movement No. 85 Istanbul Walks, Montreal Walks.

shaped by the political. It leads to a representation of the globe, or, more precisely, a representation of the globe's space-time (the central void embodies space-time to come). The clay ball is fashioned according to detailed calculations, and engraved with moments of knowledge."[15] Tuerlinckx concludes: "Fink builds his own vision of the world, one which is radically ethical, political, poetical, and directed only towards more freedom."[16]

While Fink's work was not included in the 2008-2009 exhibition *Experimental Geography*, a term defined in relation to two key ideas: the material realization of concepts and the production of space,[17] it certainly echoes these defining ideas in Henri Lefebvre's 1974 study, *The Production of Space*, referenced in this catalogue, especially in formulating a framework where the physical, mental and social are fundamental to a theory of spatial practice that is social and enacted through performative actions, a system of material representations, and recognizable codes related to these representational spaces. Fink's work and

[15] Joelle Tuerlinckx, "The Montreal Walks 2008," *Catalogue*, issue 1, no. 1. Accessed 1/23/2016.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Trevor Paglen. *Experimental Geography* (NY: Nato Thompson and Independent Curators International, 2008), 28-29.

Figure 1–7b (bottom). Movement No. 68: Istanbul Walks, Montreal Walks.

the tradition of mapping in which he situates his oeuvre, might exemplify what Nato Thompson conceives as the "poetic-didactic" vein of mapping in *Experimental Geography*.[18] Irit Rogoff' regards geography in relation to an expanded field of cognition and system of classification, a mode of location, and a site of collective histories in the process of which space is ordered, that is, "multi-dimensional knowledge in formation."[19] As an "epistemic" category, geography is a "body of knowledge" and an "order of knowledge."[20] Specific to Fink's work, Eva Wittocx has written that Fink's works combine experience and circumstance in a way that forges "external factors such as weather conditions to a form of introspection, thereby restoring man's connection with nature."[21] A bodily sensitivity to place with its nuanced sensations combine with a highly systematic, even obsessive, recording of data is a means of locating oneself at the center of experience from which one's spatial relationships are both fixed and in constant relocation. Fink's work manifests the analytic cognition of knowledge with a sensational awareness of shifting terrains and poetical experience of spatial immersion. Thus, his project underscores the ways in which artistic intervention can re-shape geography by expanding the topographical into a broader macro and micro approach in relation to space itself, as well as durational time and history, while acknowledging how individuals share a role in shaping telluric configurations and sensations.

Fink undertook the ceramic works after observing an exhibition on the history of the earth. His ceramic discs are premised on the continuum of past-present-future agency, wherein his notational system encompasses the personal and sensational in a state of continuous becoming via individual mobile orientation points, recognition of emergent patterns, and condensation of this axis of data and consciousness into complex and enigmatic material expressions. In these works, Fink's work affirms the multiplicity of modes of spatial understanding, the relationships that exist in this complex process of time, culture and history, as well as the role of the artist in calling

[18] Nato Thompson (2008), 14-15. "Experimental Geographies should be considered as a new lens to interpret a growing body of culturally inspired work that deals with human interaction with the land…Consider the dynamic possibilities of the works as they operate like an expansive grid with the poetic – didactic as one axis and the geologic-urban as the other."

[19] Irit Rogoff, *Terra Infirma: Geographies Visual Culture*. London: Routledge, 2000, 20-21.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Eva Wittocx (2012), n.p.

attention to how these complexities can be realized in a material practice that is rigorously studied and aesthetically intricate and diverse. Fink affirms the singularity of his vision within broader fields of knowledge, and in doing so avows a self-determined perspective premised on new ways of formulating spatial intelligence that is rigorously analytic, inherently political, and visually poetic.

Water Links: Uncovering Authentic Community Narratives through Participatory Media Art

James P. Werner

Over the past few years I have worked closely with major metropolitan museums collaborating on the development of participatory art experiences for museum audiences. I have studied and designed interactive installations using video, web and other technology exchanges, and worked on identifying the needs and desires of contemporary audiences in art galleries and museums. The projects that were proposed to museums emphasized contributions from the audience to facilitate a creative process. A variety of proposals were made to museums involving narrative recording diaries, locative GPS tracking and mapping of patrons, live communication between international venues, patron curating, and many others. The common thread that both museum representatives and the students involved in these projects kept returning to was the narratives that audiences are compelled to contribute about critical issues.

These interactive engagements embrace contemporary practices in participatory art that have been accelerating over the past decade due to fundamental changes in the way audiences engage both public and personal spaces digitally. Whether they are giving opinions about artwork to the museum and the artists, creating and uploading their own work in reaction to an artist, curating their own digital exhibitions from collection archives, or discussing things live with others through various technology feeds, both inside and outside the gallery, contemporary audiences of this era simply want to contribute. The result of participating in a creative piece allows people to become collaborators in the artwork. By facilitating these expressive activities, the artist opens an avenue of exploration and pedagogical opportunity for the participator, and for those who receive their messages. It extends the possible tangents for critical reflection on the work, and expands the learning process for the visitor through engagement in a creative event.

These practices resonate with the ideas of Alain Badiou who suggests that 21st century art practices have grown to foster pedagogical experiences. This is the result of a cascade of interactive, participatory artwork that has emerged in recent decades. As the public becomes more engaged in digital collaborations through social and interactive media, artists use and dissect technological mediums as soon as they are available. Investigating how people might understand new technologies in alternative ways, and how they affect cultural development can be classified as practices in new media arts.[1]

Figure 2–1 (previous page). Poster image referencing climate change with a camera installed in the middle; the poster was placed as a video-diary station in Micronesia and Vanuatu installations.

The evolution of participation in the art

[1] Tribe, Mark, and Reena, Jana. *New Media Art* (London: Taschen, 2006).

event in western culture has embraced wide and varied types of media artwork over almost sixty years. Artists more recently have aimed to provide an outlet for creative experiences and new modes of narrative contextualization through which audiences may understand critical information, or themselves, in alternative ways. But approaches with new technologies today, I suggest, consist of the same basic premises as were intended as far back as the early *Happenings* movement that began in 1958, only with newer materials. Methods and tools continue to change, but the axiom of collaborative and participatory art has continued throughout the decades. Art "events" have been represented by a variety of practices ranging from painting by audiences to telematic immersive spaces that make one's own body the center of the piece. The *Happenings* movement that began with Allan Kaprow (1958), and greatly influenced by the theory and works of John Cage, saw activities such as performance, collage and drawing facilitated by the audience[2]. Soon after, the *Fluxus* movement emphasized the viewer's presence and the element of chance that could affect the outcome of a situation. This movement's approach to participatory action in art is perpetuated to date by events like the annual Flux event in Atlanta GA, where artists install performance, video and digital engagements on downtown streets. The period also saw the beginnings of media art through the examination of video and the self as it is reproduced within the video image. Bruce Nauman's video installations included *Live-Taped Video Corridor* (1970) that placed the viewer's image on a TV screen at the end of a long hallway; as one walked towards two televisions at the end of the hall, they could see their own image on one as it moved further away from them.

In the 1990's relational experiences in installation and media works emerged as an underlying tenant of many mainstream artworks. Nicholas Bourriaud's theory of *Relational Aesthetics*[3] became an underlying retrospective theme associated with this activity. The idea suggested that artistic praxis has changed and is now bent on creating critically minded social experiments focused on interpersonal relationships at micro-levels in society. This direction in art is due to the changing social bonds created in a society that experiences human relationships less directly, interacting through experiences developed for the sake of commoditizing the intangible and creating artifacts from mediated (or simulated) human interactivity.

[2] Kluszczynski, Ryszard. W., ed. Cubit, S., ed. Thomas, P. "Viewer as Performer or Rhizomatic Archipelago of Interactive Art," *Relive*. (London: Leonardo, The MIT Press, 2013), 65-80.

[3] Bourriaud, Nicholas. *Relational Aesthetics,* trans. S. Pleasance & F. Woods (Dijon: Les Presse du Réel, 2002).

In 1983 Artist Roy Ascott fashioned the concept of "telematic art" to define networked computer spaces as powerful art mediums to be explored for cultural examination. Soon after the 1990s and early 2000's saw new media artists exposing and reflecting the state of media and a screen-centric culture, and the individual's relationship to it. Works like Julia Scher's series of installations *Security by Julia* (1988-2002) placed audiences in the presence of video cameras and other surveillance technologies in every corner of a building space and projected visitor's images on television screens that could be seen wherever they went in the gallery. Marie Sesster's *Spotlight* (2004) was another installation that tracked unsuspecting visitors in public spaces by projecting a spotlight on them that followed them throughout the space, not allowing them to escape the blaring light shining directly on them everywhere they went. Some artists celebrated and perpetuated new socializations made possible by online collaborations. Miranda July's *Learning to Love You More* (2002 – 2009) was a website that gave audiences instructions for creating things or producing "events," and uploading the evidence of their experience in a site that posted the resulting pieces for everyone to see. This site had people create their own works and share them together online as a collective overview of creative outcomes from July's initial ideas. The embrace of these "events" in contemporary art has only grown in variation in the 21st century. Artist Paul Sermon's many telematic digital works allow visitors in galleries or public spaces to interact from two different places as they see their bodies projected together in a virtual space[4]. These types of work challenge new communication methodologies, scrutinizing socialization in contemporary technological contexts. This type of conversational and bodily interaction in digital space has been new and unique until quite recently.

Being able to manipulate and affect others through digital experience is an element of new media engagement that is becoming ubiquitous across social media usage today. With the availability of virtual reality systems to the general consumer in 2016, such experiences will soon become much more commonplace. A large number of contemporary new media artists working in this manner have focused attention on participatory media engagements that identify a tenant of technologies that can be seen, or allow audiences to understand a topic, in a new way by acting with the work. This is not simply because of the technology used, but because of the way a work or concept is changed or altered as a result of technological filters. Many contemporary art practices start to fall into this mode of technological

[4] Sermon, Paul. http://www.paulsermon.org. 2016. Accessed 11/16/2015.

examination. Media art historian Oliver Grau states, "Interactive media are changing our perception and concept of the image in the direction of a space for multisensory experience with a temporal dimension open to evolutionary change and gaming. Images serve as projection surface for interrelated information; images enable to move us telematically in immersive scenarios; and reversely, images allow us to have an affect at a distance."[5] What he describes reflects an understanding of aesthetics through the daily lens of media. This has given rise to a unique perspective related to seeing and understanding space through mediated virtual frames, first coined by James Bridle[6] as "The New Aesthetic"[7]. Under this definition images and scenarios are broadly defined and categorized by the level with which the filter of cameras, satellite images, video projections or visually-oriented software have captured and skewed elements of reality that are only possible through a technological filter or lens. What's more is this genre has not matured, leaving many contributions and definitions of it coming from the general public, delivered primarily through an online platform. This development correlates with the practices associated with relational aesthetics, where social developments and change come from the micro level of interpersonal activities that eventually affect larger society from the bottom up. Recognizing and conversing with a global audience about new developments in visual language requires extended experience with the technologies that form these communicative structures. Each culture has its own association with these technologies and is introduced to them in different ways, at different speeds, and with different intents.

The Unique Narratives of Cultures

Working from these concepts of participation and new media methodologies, in 2015 I developed a series of investigative video projects aimed at less-visited corners of the globe. The projects focused on local public perspectives about water issues and on climate change. The projects are facilitated by relationships between artist, the topic of examination, and reflective contributions from the local viewers. The installations used small video

[5] Grau, Oliver. "Media Art's Challenge to Our Society," in *Imagery in the 21st Century.* (Boston: MIT Press), 351.

[6] Bridle, James**.** "#sxaesthetic", *Booktwo.org,* March 15, 2012. Accessed 1/5/2014, from http://booktwo.org/notebook/sxaesthetic/.

[7] Sterling, Bruce. "An Essay on the New Aesthetic", in *Wired Magazine*, vol. 4 (2012). Retrieved from http://www.wired.com/2012/04/an-essay-on-the-new-aesthetic/.

cameras mounted inside digitally collaged posters related to the topics. Participants could speak to the cameras about their thoughts on the topic. One main goal was to offer the opportunity for people to speak their mind, off the cuff, and candidly in a public space. By creating a space where participants could enter and contribute narratives of their choosing, it offered the chance for people to contribute on their own time, in their own way, and in ways they felt to be important.

Traditional video interviews are often staged. The dynamic that individuals have with a camera space can be forced and feel confrontational. Participants often need to prepare themselves for the discussion; interviews are done in a question and answer format, and often rehearsed. The experimental video spaces in the installations explore the possibility of capturing more personal, expressive and genuine video diaries from the community. I wished to incorporate the viewer into the creative process and develop new perspectives on critical topics at the same time. The participations can be shown in live feeds online and are easily distributed to global communities through online galleries, as well as in traditional art gallery and museum settings, with the option of live streaming interactions during an installation. The examination of the perspectives on environmental issues of local people, place and locale was crucial to the interactive component, its resulting content and final form the project eventually took as a touch screen engagement in a gallery setting.

One of these installations was installed at the SCANZ 2015 international residency sponsored by the organization *Intercreate.org* and the Western Institute of Technology (WIT) in New Plymouth, New Zealand. The residency theme was *Water and Peace*. We spent two full days at the Maori site Parihaka Pa, a sacred and renowned site of the first Maori peaceful protest against British invasion in 1889.

As artists-in-residence we learned about their customs, language, ate and slept in their communal halls and conversed with elders. We learned

Figure 2–2. *Water Links* **Installation. Section of hanging cards and video recording station installed on the Huatoki walkway. New Plymouth, New Zealand.**