

Weight Loss course maintains your heart rate within your optimum weight loss zone by adjusting workload," while "custom courses allow you to easily create and store personalized programs of up to 8 miles, with variations as small as 1/10th mile increments." It's the custom courses that most amaze me; users can create an itinerary like a walking tour over varied terrain, only the terrain is a revolving rubber belt on a platform about six feet long. Long ago when railroads began to erode the experience of space, journeys began to be spoken of in terms of time rather than distance (and a modern Angeleno will say that Beverly Hills is twenty minutes from Hollywood rather than so many miles). The treadmill completes this transformation by allowing travel to be measured entirely by time, bodily exertion, and mechanical motion. Space—as landscape, terrain, spectacle, experience—has vanished.

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 somewhat differently—one step at a time, with many pauses in between. Occasionally the pauses become full stops

Chapter 16

THE SHAPE OF A WALK

The disembodiment of everyday life I have been tracing is a majority experience, part of automobilization and suburbanization. But walking has sometimes been, at least since the late eighteenth century, an act of resistance to the mainstream. It stood out when its pace was out of keeping with the time—which is why so much of this history of walking is a First World, after-the-industrial-revolution history, about when walking ceased to be part of the continuum of experience and instead became something consciously chosen. In many ways, walking culture was a reaction against the speed and alienation of the industrial revolution. It may be countercultures and subcultures that will continue to walk in resistance to the postindustrial, postmodern loss of space, time, and embodiment. Most of these cultures draw from ancient practices—of peripatetic philosophers, of poets composing afoot, of pilgrims and practitioners of Buddhist walking meditation—or old ones, such as hiking and flâneury. But one new realm of walking opened up in the 1960s, walking as art.

Artists, of course, have walked. In the nineteenth century the development of photography and spread of plein-air painting made walking an important means for image makers—but once they found their view, they stopped traipsing around, and more importantly, their images stopped the view forever. There are countless wonderful paintings of walkers, from Chinese prints in which tiny hermits stray amid the heights to, for example, Thomas Gainsborough's *Morning Walk* or Gustave Caillebotte's *Paris Street, Rainy Day*, with its umbrella-carrying citizens going wherever they please on the Parisian cobblestones. But the aristocratic

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 that can last anywhere from two minutes to ten hours. More often they're less definite. . . . Trapped by our concepts

young couple in *The Morning Walk* are forever frozen with their best foot forward. Among all the works that come to mind, only the nineteenth-century Japanese printmaker Hiroshige's *Fifty-three Views on the Tokuida Road* seem to suggest walking rather than stopping; they are, like stations of the cross, sequenced to reprise a journey, this time a 312-mile journey from Edo (now Tokyo) to Kyoto, which most then made on foot, as they do in the prints. It is a road movie from when roads were for walkers and movies were woodblock prints.

Language is like a road; it cannot be perceived all at once because it unfolds in time, whether heard or read. This narrative or temporal element has made writing and walking resemble each other in ways art and walking do not—until the 1960s, when everything changed and anything became possible under the wide umbrella of visual art. Every revolution has many parents. One godfather for this one is the abstract expressionist painter Jackson Pollock, at least as one of his offspring portrayed him. Allan Kaprow, himself an important performance and interdisciplinary artist, wrote in 1958 that Pollock shifted the emphasis from the painting as an aesthetic object to a "diaristic gesture." The gesture was primary, the painting secondary, a mere souvenir of that gesture which was now its subject. Kaprow's analysis becomes an exuberant, prophetic manifesto as he weighs the consequences of what the older artist had done: "Pollock's near destruction of this tradition may well be a return to the point where art was more actively involved in ritual, magic, and life than we have known it in our recent past. . . . Pollock, as I see him, left us at the point where we must become preoccupied with and even dazzled by the space and object of our everyday life, either our bodies, clothes, rooms, or, if need be, the vastness of Forty-second Street. Not satisfied with the suggestion through paint of our other senses, we shall utilize the specific substances of sight, sound, movements, people, odors, touch."

For the artists who took up the invitation Kaprow outlined, art ceased to be a craft-based discipline of making objects and become a kind of unbounded investigation into the relationship between ideas, acts, and the material world. At a time when the institutions of galleries and museums and the objects made for them seemed moribund, this new conceptual and dematerialized art sought a new arena and a new immediacy for artmaking. Art objects might be only the evidence of such an investigation or props and prompts for the viewers' own investigations, while artists could model themselves after scientists, shamans, detectives, or philosophers as they expanded the possible repertoire of gestures far beyond

and languages and the utter predictability of our five senses, we often forget to wonder what we're missing as we

that of the painter at his canvas. Artists' bodies themselves became a medium for performances, and as art historian Kristine Stiles writes, "Emphasizing the body as art, these artists amplified the role of process over product and shifted from representational objects to presentational modes of action." In retrospect, it seems as though these artists were remaking the world, act by act, object by object, starting with the simplest substances, shapes, gestures. One such gesture—an ordinary one from which the extraordinary can be derived—is walking.

Lucy Lippard, who has been writing subversive histories of art for more than thirty years, traces the parentage for walking as a fine art to sculpture, not performance. She focuses on Carl Andre's 1966 sculpture *Lever* and his 1968 *Joint*, the former made of bricks lined up to extend from one room to another so that the viewer has to travel, the other a similar line but this time of hay bales in a meadow traversing a far greater distance. "My idea of a piece of sculpture is a road," Andre wrote then. "That is, a road doesn't reveal itself at any particular point or from any particular point. Roads appear and disappear. . . . We don't have a single point of view for a road at all, except a moving one, moving along it." Andre's minimal sculptures, like Chinese scrolls, reveal themselves over time in response to the movement of the looker; they incorporate travel into their form. "By incorporating an oriental notion of multiple viewpoints and both implied movement and direct intervention in the landscape, Andre set the scene for a subgenre of dematerialized sculpture which is simply, and not so simply, *walking*," concludes Lippard.

Other artists had already built roads of sorts: Carolee Schneemann built a labyrinth for friends to walk through out of a fallen tree of heaven and other tornado debris in her Illinois backyard in the summer of 1960, before she moved to New York and became one of the most radical artists in the burgeoning field of performance art. Kaprow himself was building environments for audiences and performers to move through and participate in by the early 1960s. The same year Andre built *Joint*, Patricia Johanson built *Stephen Long*. As Lippard describes it, "A 1,600-foot wooden trail painted in graduated pastels and laid out along an abandoned railroad track in Buskirk, New York, it was intended to take color and light beyond traditional impressionism by adding the elements of distance and time taken to perceive it." In the American West, even longer lines were being drawn, though they were no longer necessarily related to walking: Michael Heizer made his "motorcycle drawings" by using said vehicle to draw in the desert; Walter de

hurry along toward goals we may not even have chosen. I became a tracker by default, not design, when my

Maria commissioned a bulldozer to make similarly grandiose earth art on Nevada's arid surface, with lines that could be seen whole from a airplane or perceived over time and partially from the ground; but perhaps Robert Smithson's 1,500-foot-long *Spiral Jetty*, a rough but walkable path of rock and earth curling into the Great Salt Lake, was human in scale. Though its first inhabitants walked for millennia, the American West is often perceived as inimical to pedestrian scale; the earth art, as it came to be called, made there often seemed to echo the massive development projects of the conquest of the West, the railroads, dams, canals, mines.

England, on the other hand, has never ceased to be pedestrian in scale, and its landscape is not available for much further conquest, so artists there must use a lighter touch. The contemporary artist most dedicated to exploring walking as an artistic medium is the Englishman Richard Long. Much of what he has done since was already present in his early *Line Made by Walking* of 1967. The black-and-white photograph shows a path in grass running straight up the center to the trees at the far end of the meadow. As the title makes clear, Long had drawn the line with his feet. It was both more ambitious and more modest than conventional art: ambitious in scale, in making his mark upon the world itself; modest in that the gesture was such an ordinary one, and the resultant work was literally down to earth, underfoot. Like that of many other artists who emerged at the time, Long's work was ambiguous: was *A Line Made by Walking* a performance of which the line was a residual trace, or a sculpture—the line—of which the photograph was documentation, or was the photograph the work of art, or all of these?

Walking became Long's medium. His exhibited art since has consisted of works on paper documenting his walks, photographs of further marks in the landscape made in the course of those walks, and other sculptures made indoors that reference his outdoor activities. Sometimes the walk is represented by a photograph with text, or a map, or by text alone. On the maps the route of the walk is drawn in to suggest that walking is drawing on a grand scale, that his walking is to the land itself as his pen is to the map, and he often walks straight lines, circles, squares, spirals. Similarly, his sculptures in the landscape are usually made by rearranging (without relocating) rocks and sticks into lines and circles, a reductive geometry that evokes everything—cyclical and linear time, the finite and the infinite, roads and routines—and says nothing. Yet other works lay out those lines, circles, and labyrinths of sticks, stones, or mud on the gallery floor. But

tendency to be distracted by life's smallest signs grew into an unrelenting passion to trace those obscure, often

walking in the landscape is always primary to the work. One magnificent early sculpture uniting these approaches was titled *A Line the Length of a Straight Walk from the Bottom to the Top of Silbury Hill*. With boots dipped in mud he had walked the distance not as a straight line but as a spiral on the gallery floor, so that the muddy path both represented the route he had taken elsewhere and became a new route indoors, evidence of and an invitation to walk. It plays with the concreteness of experience—the walk and its location (Silbury Hill is an ancient earthwork of unknown religious significance in southern England)—and with the abstractions of language and measurement in which that walk is described. The experience cannot be reduced to a place name and a length, but even this scant information is enough to start the imagination going. "A walk expresses space and freedom and the knowledge of it can live in the imagination of anyone, and that is another space too," Long wrote years later.

In some ways Long's works resemble travel writing, but rather than tell us how he felt, what he ate, and other such details, his brief texts and uninhabited images leave most of the journey up to the viewer's imagination, and this is one of the things that distinguishes such contemporary art, that it asks the viewer to do a great deal of work, to interpret the ambiguous, imagine the unseen. It gives us not a walk nor even a representation of a walk, only the idea of a walk and an evocation of its location (the map) or one of its views (the photograph). Formal and quantifiable aspects are emphasized: geometry, measurement, number, duration. There is, for example, Long's piece—a drawing of a squared-off spiral—captioned "A Thousand Miles A Thousand Hours A Clockwise Walk in England Summer 1974." It plays with correlations between time and space without showing or telling us anything further of the walk but the nation and the year, plays with what can be measured and what cannot. Yet it is enough to know that in 1974, as life seemed to get more complicated, crowded, and cynical, someone found the time and space to engage in such an arduous and apparently satisfying encounter with the land in quest of alignments between geography, body, and time. Then there was the map with inset text, "A Six Day Walk Over All Roads, Lanes and Double Tracks Inside a Six-Mile Wide Circle Centred on the Giant of Cerne Abbas," with the routes he had walked radiating like arteries out from the figure Long had placed at the heart of his walk. Another inset portrayed that figure—a 2,000-year-old chalk outline of a 180-foot-tall figure with a club and an erect penis on a Dorset hillside.

puzzling patterns somewhere, anywhere—to their source or end or simply to some midpoint in between. But when I

Long likes places where nothing seems to have broken the connection to the ancient past, so buildings, people, and other traces of the present or recent past rarely appear. His work revises the British tradition of country walks while representing its most enchanting and problematic faces. He has gone to Australia, the Himalayas, and the Bolivian Andes to make his work, and the idea that all these places can be assimilated into a thoroughly English experience smacks of colonialism or at least high-handed tourism. It raises once again the perils of forgetting that the rural walk is a culturally specific practice, and though it may be a civil, gentle thing in itself, imposing its values elsewhere is not. But while the literary art of the rural walk bogged down in convention, sentimentality, and autobiographical chatter, Long's art is austere, almost silent, and entirely new in its emphasis on the walk itself as having shape, and this is less a cultural legacy than a creative reassessment. His work is breathtakingly beautiful at times, and its insistence that the simple gesture of walking can tie the walker to the surface of the earth, can measure the route as the route measures the walker, can draw on a grand scale almost without leaving a trace, can be art, is profound and elegant. Long's friend and contemporary Hamish Fulton has also made walking his art, and his photographs-with-text pieces are almost indistinguishable from the other peripatetic Englishman's. But Fulton emphasizes a more spiritual-emotional side to his walking, more often choosing sacred sites and pilgrimage routes, and he makes no sculptures in the gallery or marks in the land.

There have been other kinds of walking artists. Probably the first artist to have made walking into performance art is a little-known emigré from Dutch Surinam, Stanley Brouwn. In 1960 he asked strangers on the street to draw him directions to locations around town and exhibited the results as a vernacular art of encounters or a collection of drawings; later he held a conceptual exhibition of "all the shoe-shops in Amsterdam" which would've called for viewers to take a walking tour; installed in a gallery signposts pointing out cities around the world and inviting viewers to take the first few steps toward Khartoum or Ottawa; spent a whole day in 1972 counting his steps; and otherwise explored the everyday world of urban walking. The magisterial German performance artist and sculptor Joseph Beuys, who often imbued simple acts with profound meaning, did one performance where he simply swept up after a political parade and another where he walked through one of the bogs he loved. This 1971 *Bog Action* was docu-

began tracking lost people, what had begun as an eccentric habit—following footprints on the ground—quickly

mented in photographs that show him walking, sometimes with only his head and trademark fedora visible above water.

The New York performance artist Vito Acconci did his *Following Piece* over twenty-three days in 1969; like much conceptual art of the time, it played with the intersection between arbitrary rules and random phenomena by choosing a stranger and following him or her until he or she entered a building. Sophie Calle, a French photographer whose works arise from interactions and encounters, later revised Acconci's performance with two of her own, documented in photographs and text. *Suite Venitienne* recounts how she met a man at a party in Paris and surreptitiously followed him to Venice, where she tailed him like a detective until he confronted her; years later she had her mother hire an actual detective to do the same to her in Paris, and incorporated the detective's photographs of her into her own artwork as a kind of commissioned portraiture. These pieces explored the city's potential for suspicion, curiosity, and surveillance arising from the connections and disconnections between strangers on the street. In 1985 and 1986, the Palestinian-British artist Mona Hatoum used the street as a performance space, stenciling footprints containing the word *unemployed* down streets in Sheffield, as if to make visible the sad secrets of passersby in that economically devastated city, and performing two different walking acts in Brixton, a working-class outpost of London.

Of all the performances involving walking, the most dramatic, ambitious, and extreme was Marina Abramović and Ulay's 1988 *Great Wall Walk*. Radical performance artists from the Communist east—she from Yugoslavia, he from East Germany—they began to collaborate in 1976 on a series of what they called "relation works." They were interested in testing both their own and the audiences' physical and psychic boundaries with performances that threatened danger, pain, transgression, boredom; they were also interested in symbolically uniting the genders into an ideal whole; and they were increasingly influenced by shamanistic, alchemical, Tibetan Buddhist, and other esoteric traditions. Their work calls to mind what Gary Snyder described as the Chinese tradition of the "'four dignities'—Standing, Lying, Sitting, and Walking. They are 'dignities' in that they are ways of being fully ourselves, at home in our bodies, in their fundamental modes," or Vipassana Buddhism's similar emphasis on meditating in these four postures. In their first piece, *Relation in Space*, they walked rapidly from opposite

matured into an avocation. . . . I now commonly walk toward a single goal: to meet the person at the other end of

walls of a room toward each other until they collided, again and again. In 1977's *Imponderabilia* they stood nude and motionless in the doorway of a museum so that visitors had to decide who to face as they slipped sideways between them. In 1980's *Rest Energy*, they stood together while she held a bow and he held the arrow notched on the taut bowstring, pointing at her heart; their balanced tension and stillness prolonged this moment and stabilized its danger. That same year, they went to the Australian outback hoping to communicate with aboriginal people, who ignored them. They stayed and spent months of a scorching desert summer practicing sitting without moving, learning "immobility, silence and watchfulness" from the desert. Afterward, they found the locals more communicative. From this experience came their *Nightsea Crossing* performance in Sydney, Toronto, Berlin, and other cities: while remaining silent and fasting twenty-four hours a day, they spent several hours each day on successive days in a museum or public space sitting motionless, facing each other across a table, living sculptures displaying a kind of ferocious commitment.

"When I went to Tibet and the Aborigines I was also introduced to some Sufi rituals. I saw that all these cultures pushed the body to the physical extreme in order to make a mental jump, to eliminate the fear of death, the fear of pain, and of all the bodily limitations we live with," Abramović later said. "Performance was the form enabling me to jump to that other space and dimension." The *Great Wall Walk* was planned at the height of her collaboration with Ulay. They intended to walk toward each other from opposite ends of the 4,000-kilometer wall, meet, and marry. Years afterward, when they had finally cleared the bureaucratic hurdles set up by the Chinese government, their relationship had so changed that the walk became instead the end of their collaboration and relationship. In 1988 they spent three months walking toward each other from 2,400 miles away, embraced at the center, and went their separate ways.

The Great Wall, built to keep marauding nomads out of China, is one of the world's great emblems of the desire to define and secure self or nation by sealing its boundaries. For these two raised behind the Iron Curtain, this transformation of a wall separating north from south into a road linking east to west is full of political ironies and symbolic meanings. After all, walls divide and roads connect. Their performance could be read as a symbolic meeting of East and West, male and female, the architecture of sequestration and of connection. Too, the artists believed the wall had been, in the words of Thomas McEvilley, the critic who has

the tracks.—HANNAH NYALA, POINT LAST SEEN In the beginning of the 1940s, Paris was a six-day walk from

most closely followed their work, "mapped out over the millennia by feng shui experts, so if you followed the wall exactly you would be touching the serpent-power lines that bind together the surface of the earth." The book on the project records, "On March 30, 1988 Marina Abramović and Ulay began their walk over the Great Wall from opposite ends. Marina embarked from the east, by the sea. Ulay started far to the west, in the Gobi desert. On June 27, to the blare of horns, they met up in a mountain pass near Shenmu in Shaanxi Province, in the midst of Buddhist, Confucian and Taoist temples." McEvilley points out that this last performance also expanded upon their first, in which they strode toward each other until they collided.

Both artists have a section in this book in which sparse words and evocative photographs give a sense of their experience, functioning like Richard Long's photograph-and-text pieces to evoke carefully chosen fragments of a complex experience. In between the two texts McEvilley's essay revealed another face of the walk: its entanglement with endless layers of bureaucracy throughout the journey. Like Tolstoy's Princess Marya wishing to be a pilgrim on the road, Abramović and Ulay seem to have set out with an image of themselves walking alone in a clear, uncluttered space and state of mind, but McEvilley describes the minivans that took them to lodgings every night, the handlers, translators, and officials that bustled around them, ensuring they met the government's requirements and attempting to slow them down so they would spend more time and thus money in each province, the quarrel Ulay got into at a dance hall, the way schedules, rules, and geography had fragmented Ulay's walk (while Abramović made sure she started each morning where she stopped the night before, declaring, "I walk every fucking centimeter of the wall."). The wall was crumbling in many sections, calling for climbing as much as walking, and atop it the wind was often overwhelming. The walk had, in McEvilley's version, become another kind of performance, like a record-seeking one, in which the official goal is realized only at the cost of countless unofficial distractions and annoyances. But perhaps the two artists who had worked so long on their powers of concentration were able to shut out the surrounding clutter from their time on the wall. Their texts and images speak of the essence of walking, of the basic simplicity of the act amplified by the ancient emptiness of the desert around them. Like Long's pieces, theirs seem a gift to viewers of the assurance that a primeval purity of bodily encounter with the earth is still possible and that the human presence so crowded and dominating

the border, a three-hours' drive, and one hour by plane. Today the capital is only several minutes away from

elsewhere is still small when measured against the immensity of lonely places. "It took a great number of days before, for the first time, I felt the right pace," Ulay wrote. "When mind and body harmonized in the rhythmical sway of walking."

Afterward, Abramović began to make sculptures that invited viewers to participate in the basic acts her performances had explored. She set geodes, chunks of crystal, and polished stones into wooden chairs or on pedestals and mounts where they could be sat with or stood under—furniture for contemplation and for encounters with the elemental forces she believes the stones hold. The most spectacular of the sculptures were several pairs of amethyst shoes included in a big survey of her work at the Irish Museum of Modern Art in 1995. I had arrived there at the end of a long walk from downtown Dublin to find that the museum was housed in an elegant old military hospital, and the walk and the building's history seemed preparation for the shoes—great rough chunks of translucent mottled purple that had been hollowed out and polished inside, like a fairy-tale version of the wooden shoes European peasants once wore. Viewers were invited to put them on and close their eyes, and with them on I realized my feet were, in a sense, inside the earth itself, and though it was possible to walk, it was difficult to do so. I closed my eyes and saw strange colors, and the shoes seemed like fixed points around which the hospital, Dublin, Ireland, Europe, revolved; shoes not to travel in but to realize you might already be there. Later I read that they were made for walking meditation, to heighten awareness of every step. They were titled *Shoes for Departure*.

Kaprow's 1958 prophesy is fulfilled by all these walking artists: "They will discover out of ordinary things the meaning of ordinariness. They will not try to make them extraordinary but will only state their real meaning. But out of this they will devise the extraordinary." Walking as art calls attention to the simplest aspects of the act: the way rural walking measures the body and the earth against each other, the way urban walking elicits unpredictable social encounters. And to the most complex: the rich potential relations between thinking and the body, the way one person's act can be an invitation to another's imagination; the way every gesture can be imagined as a brief and invisible sculpture; the way walking reshapes the world by mapping it, treading paths into it, encountering it; the way each act reflects and reinvents the culture in which it takes place.

anywhere else . . . —PAUL VIRILIO, *SPEED AND POLITICS* An automobile which cuts out the use value from your

Chapter 17

LAS VEGAS, OR THE LONGEST DISTANCE BETWEEN TWO POINTS

I would have preferred to step out into the Peak District. I had been looking for a last tour of the sites of walking's history, and that locale seemed to have everything. I had envisioned starting in the hedge maze at the magnificent estate of Chatsworth, then wandering through the surrounding formal gardens into the Capability Brown-landscaped later gardens. From there I could go into the wilder reaches of the Peak, toward Kinder Scout, where the great right-of-way battles were fought, and past the famous gritstone climbs where "the working-class revolution in climbing" took place, then head for bordering Manchester with its formative suburbs or Sheffield with its industrial ruins and climbing gym in a former forge. Or I could begin with the industrial cities and work my way into the country and then to the garden and the maze. But all these picturesque schemes came to an end with the sneaking suspicion that proving that it was still possible to walk in Britain didn't count for much at all. Even Britain's industrial wastelands signify the pale northern European past, and it wasn't pedestrianism's past but its prognosis that I wanted to inspect. So one December morning I stepped out of Pat's van onto Fremont Street in downtown Las Vegas, and he set off to spend the day climbing the boulders and cliffs at Red Rocks.

Down most of Vegas's east-west avenues straight as latitude lines you can see the thirteen-mile-long escarpment of Red Rocks and, behind its ruddy sandstone domes and pillars, the ten-thousand-foot-high gray peaks of the Spring Range.

feet . . . I was recently told, "You're a liar!" when I said to somebody I walked down the spine of the Andes. The