

REFLECTIONS / NOTES

WHILE WALKING

A self-guided audio walk
produced by Pohanna Pyne Feinberg

Four Montreal-based artists share their thoughts on walking as a creative process and as a form of artistic expression.



Victoria Stanton
Kahtleen Vaughan
karen elaine spencer
Dominique Ferraton

IN THE SPIRIT OF CURRICULAR PROVOCATION

This article, in the spirit of curricular provocation, is an opportunity to share some of my research through a hybrid article format that couples a written introduction with this self-directed audio walk. The two components are intended to compliment one another and are intentionally presented in sequential order. By including an audio walk, I am advocating for kineasthetic engagement as an essential component for discourse on this topic. Likewise, I am advocating for a notion of curriculum that is lived and emerging, somatic and contextual, personal yet political and enhanced by curiosity and listening.

May your walking, listening, interacting and reflecting be compassionate and beneficial.

Track 4. DOMINIQUE FERRATON

Website: <http://www.dominiqueferraton.ca>

Dominique Ferraton is a multidisciplinary artist from Montreal. Through sound art, photography and drawing, she explores our relationship with our environment : the ways in which we occupy and transform the places we inhabit and how we are affected by them. Her focus is often on natural environments and landscapes and on the few wild spaces created or found in urban areas. She has created soundscape compositions for CKUT, CBC Radio and NAISA. In the context of artist residencies at the Banff Centre (AB), in Great Smoky Mountains National Park (TN), and at the Bruno Arts Bank (SK), she has used walking, listening and contemplation as ways of entering into a dialogue with specific places. She is a member of the Wild City Mapping collective, a group of artists creating an online, interactive map of Montreal's wild green spaces as seen through the eyes of the citizens who use them.

Activity to experiment with while listening:

What are you getting to know about the place as you walk?

Questions / Points of departure after listening to the audio:

When did walking start for you? Has the way you walk changed over time?

How are places marked and shaped by the way people walk through them? How would you visually represent this human impact?

Do you think that walking alone would generate different artistic results than walking in a group does?

Track 3. KAREN ELAINE SPENCER

Website: www.likewritingwithwater.wordpress.com

karen elaine spencer is an artist who maintains a studio practice, performs, curates and writes. in a practice oscillating between work in the street, exhibitions in galleries, and disseminations via the web, spencer's work questions hierarchies and investigates how we, as transient beings, occupy the world we live in. rambling, dreaming, loitering, sitting – these repetitions that lead us nowhere – are sustained over time until “something” accumulates. spencer employs materials that speak of our day-to-day existence: newspapers, cardboard, oranges, bread, chalk. through a détournement of materials or intentions spencer intervenes into places; shifting, ever so slightly, perceptions of the possible. in 2011, she curated the program gossier le furtif at galerie skol, montreal, quebec. in 2012 she was an artist in residence at the international studio and curatorial program (iscp) in brooklyn, new york and she was awarded the 2012 powerhouse prize. her work has been exhibited in canada, europe and the u.s.a.

Activity to experiment with while listening:

Instead of walking the whole time while listening, find a place to sit for a few minutes. How does it feel to take up space rather than to move through it?

Questions / Points of departure after listening to the audio:

When we walk, we move through spaces that intersect the private and the public. How do these categorizations impact our experience of walking?

Do you feel a sense of freedom through walking? Does that contribute to your creativity?

If women's bodies are managed or controlled in public space, how might this impact the work made by walking artists who are women?

WHERE TO WALK

When choosing a location or a specific route to walk, think about where you might feel safe and comfortable enough to reflect while walking. Remember that you will be listening to audio with headphones and, at times, ambient noise may become inaudible, so you will want to ensure that you do not choose to walk a place where dangers such as heavy traffic will impede your safety. Your choice should also be respectful of the residents and environment that you encounter. For example, private property or public areas where pedestrian traffic is limited to encourage regrowth of plants are not recommended. Also, it would be ideal if your chosen route allows for alternating pace so that you can experiment with walking slowly and quickly. Keep in mind that there will also be moments when you will be encouraged to sit.

WALKING, LISTENING, REFLECTING

You can start the walk with the audio off and then, once you find a good location to listen to the first track, you can then start playing the audio. After the first track, it is recommended to pause the audio in order to read the questions that accompany each track. After reading the questions, you can continue to walk and find a new location for the second track. You can also choose to remain in the same location to listen to the second track, however it was noted during the first iteration of this audio walk in 2014 that walking some distance between each listening session enhanced the participants' ability to consider each artist's contribution. These alternating intervals of walking and listening will also enable you to reconvene with the environment without the influence of the headphones.

Track 1. VICTORIA STANTON

Website: <http://bankofvictoria.com>

Victoria Stanton is an interdisciplinary artist working with live action, human interaction, video, film, photo, drawing, and writing. Continually exploring within such diverse media, while the outward results of her practice manifest in a multiplicity of forms, performance is the invariable core of her research. Her time-based work includes performance for stage, performance for the camera, actions in public spaces, and one-on-one encounters in intimate contexts. Investing a performative presence and consciousness within multiple spaces / times, she continuously underscores the complex aspects of “transaction” and the possibility for transformation. Considered a pioneer of transactional practices in Quebec, Stanton has presented exhibitions, performances, interventions, and films/videos in Canada, the U.S., Europe, the U.K., Australia, Japan and Mexico. Her creative and critical writings have been published in Canadian and American anthologies and art/literary/lifestyle magazines, with one of her articles garnering a finalist position for the Prix de la SOPEP in March 2013. She is the co-author with Vincent Tinguely of *Impure: Reinventing the Word* (conundrum press, 2001) and is currently working on a new book with the TouVA Collective (comprised of Anne Bérubé, Sylvie Tourangeau and Stanton) developing salient notions on how performance is practiced and on the question of ‘the performative.’

Activity to experiment with while listening:

Before listening, take a deep breath. Feel the air fill your lungs and then watching the sensation as the air releases. As you walk, remain attentive to the sensation of your breath.

Questions / Points of departure after listening to the audio:

How do time, space and the body intersect for you?
How have you become connected to the landscape while walking?
What traces have you left?
Do you agree that artmaking is a way of problem solving? If so, how can walking contribute to that process?

Track 2. KATHLEEN VAUGHAN

Websites: www.evokingplace.wordpress.com
www.akaredhanded.com

As an artist, scholar and writer, and educator, Vaughan’s work considers the intersection of body, history and place. She often works with walking as a methodology for simultaneously engaging these three thematics, and she frequently use the form of the map as a trope for representing knowledge, situated personal experience in all its limits and possibilities and desire. ... She has taught art to adults at Concordia University, OCADU and York University, and in community workshops, master’s classes, and recreational contexts. She has worked as a visiting artist in Toronto schools, engaging more than 1000 children in the pleasures of thinking and making. She is now Associate Professor of Art Education at Concordia University (Montreal, Canada), where she teaches graduate and undergraduate classes in studio practice, community art education, and photography. Vaughan also works in community practice in her home neighbourhood of Pointe-St-Charles, a de-industrialized working class Montreal community that historically has faced significant socio-economic challenges and is now experiencing the pressures of gentrification.

Activity to experiment with while listening:

While you walk, how is your body working? How do your muscles feel? Walk very slowly to feel how your feet connect to the ground.

Questions / Points of departure after listening to the audio:

How did your body feel as you walked?
Did you encounter any surprises in the environment while you were walking? Unexpected sights or sounds?
Have you noticed the ways in which the lateral movement of walking activates thought or attunement to how a place changes of time?
How might one’s art practice be enhanced by cultivating an openness to the unknown that may arrive as you walk?