

R O B E R T L A D I S L A S D E R R

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M A P P I N G O F S P A C E W I T H D I G I T A L M E D I A

The paper presentation will focus on my psychogeographical walk performances during which I use the city as a fluid canvas documenting the landscape and ephemeral characters that construct the ambiance of place and time. Gallery viewers, my own predetermined parameters, or descriptions in a book or poem map the performances. As I perform, I wear two to four video cameras harnessed to my body, which captures the circumference around my being. The cameras record my journey, while also creating both my absence and presence. At the center of these mediated devices, I am void to the second-generation viewer but present through the arrhythmia in the video documentation. Depending on the type of performance, I occasionally wear camouflage to accentuate the dichotomy of my absence and presence for the performances. Reflecting my surroundings, the camouflage creates my void, as I disappear into the landscape or blend into the crowd.

With the performances complete, I create installations with the videos, and sometimes display them with photographs or objects that structure a referent to the concept. Juxtaposing the still and moving image constructs a dialogue between the real and symbolic. The photograph is at times used to distinguish the subject in a performance, such as the image of Andrew Jackson in *This Union Must and Shall be Preserved* or create a timeline of interesting moments such as the video still sequences in *Void*. In *Chance*, I displayed the videos with two walls of mirrors that create the cartography of the performance.

Void was the first of these psychogeographical walk performances. It is an eight-channel video and photographic installation that embodies my peripatetic performance through the streets of Dublin, Ireland for *Wandering Rocks, Revolving Doors*, an exhibition in conjunction with the *ReJoyce Dublin 2004 Festival*. For four days, I walked from Mountjoy Square to the intersection of Lower Mount Street and Lansdowne Road between 2:40 pm and 4:00 pm, retracing the sites in the 19 subsections of chapter 10, "Wandering Rocks" in *Ulysses*. Walking from site to site in Dublin, I wore two video cameras strapped to my chest and back. While my only presence for the second-generation rendering of the videos is the arrhythmia from my footsteps, I wanted to accentuate this dichotomy of absence and presence for the first-generation viewing, so I wore a suit adorned with mirrors. Reflecting my surroundings, the mirrors created my void, as I disappeared in the reflections from the city. However, the reflections also created my presence. Mirrors have an oscillating presence of two-sides that can be real/illusionary, physical/metaphysical, inside/outside, and visible/invisible. As I walked in this unfamiliar city, I metaphorically represented Mr. Bloom, who wandered through Dublin without a homeland, caught between a political and religious dichotomy. The two rows of video still sequences replicate particular instances from the videos, capturing a decisive moment of time from both my front and back. The sequences circumnavigate the four walls of the gallery room in a linear progression with the front camera views on top of the rear camera views. Recording the same route for four consecutive days illustrates the similitude of daily life. The walk becomes a study into psychogeography, where the geographic features of a city negotiate the individual's habits and patterns. An article that contains video footage and images from the performance can be viewed at: <http://trace.ntu.ac.uk/Review/index.cfm?article=132>

Massaging the Modernist Myth is a two-channel video and photographic installation that explores Jean Dubuffet's public sculpture, *Monument to the Phantom* in Houston, TX. With two video cameras sandwiched together in front of my eyes, I move in and out and around Dubuffet's sculpture by touch. Throughout my interaction with the sculpture, you hear my body rub its surface as I feel my way and squeeze through the archways. The sounds of my movement in the videos situate my presence, while the movement connects to the corporeal. There are five rows of six 16" x 20" photographs that capture both the inside and outside perspective of each of the archways that I moved through while shooting the

videos. My engagement with this sculpture is a critique of the formalist myth of the autonomous genius artist.

Totem is a two-channel video and photographic installation in which I trace a totem pole schematic through the streets of Victoria, Canada. The two-channel videos are presented one on top of the other. While the photographs show the east and west views from each of the seven crossing streets. Hung side-by-side in seven rows, the photographs mimic a totem pole structure. This installation addresses notions of colonialism and modern expansion in a psychogeographical study. Combining the ancient symbol of the totem pole with the cartography of the city, I capture the past and present symbols that represent the essence of place.

This Union Must and Shall be Preserved is a two-channel video and photographic installation of my tracing of Jackson Square in New Orleans's French Quarter. Walking through the frenzy of tourism as I keep the statue of Andrew Jackson within sight, I think about his poignant statement, "this union must and shall be preserved" and wonder: Are Americans preserving or consuming the union? The physical structure of the square combined with the pedestrians and tourists, who are my observers and alternatively being observed make for an interesting document. Expressively, the photograph of Andrew Jackson hangs between the two videos as a static reminder that it is the symbol of focus.

Lunch Break was a psychogeographical study of the business district in downtown Chicago for *Version 05*. From 12:00 to 1:00 pm wearing four video cameras and a navy blue pinstriped suit, I assimilated with the business district lunch crowd. Starting and ending in the same elevator, I embarked on my lunch break journey that recorded the subtly ever-changing minutes of contemporary life and landscape. Walking from the Chicago Board of Trade to the Sears Tower, Chicago Mercantile Exchange, and Midwest Stock Exchange, I recorded the iconic capitalist structures while the employees of this system enjoyed their scheduled time away – universally referred to as the lunch break. Merely walking in silence through the crowd, letting my cameras record, I captured an unedited glimpse of an unfolding drama. So far, this is the only performance in which I have encountered viewer intervention. Not more than ten minutes into the performance, a young woman covers my rear camera lens with her gum. This person was upset about being videotaped without her permission. As she discussed the dilemma with her friend, she decided to take the matter into her own hands at the dismay of her friend. This woman failed to realize that she was in a public space, so no permission is needed to capture her image. Not to mention, she was probably caught on many closed circuit video surveillance cameras that very day. Adhering to my self-imposed parameters, I continued the walk performance thinking that the video installation would be ruined. Then towards the end of the performance, a gentleman alerted me to the gum and removed it. I could not have planned the ending any better – it was perfect.

To Helen was a psychogeographical walk performance through Providence, RI on Saturday, May 28 at midnight for *Provflux 2005*. Loosely based on Edgar Allan Poe's poem *To Helen*, for one hour beginning at the Athenaeum where Poe was known to write, I traced the footsteps that Poe might have taken while creating this poem written to his beloved Helen Whitman, resident of Providence. Dressed in white, reminiscent of Poe's remembrance of Helen "clad in white upon a violet bank," I moved through the dark night on historic Benefit Street toward the First Baptist Meeting House, then down Meeting Street to Waterplace Park. Continuing on the Riverwalk, I headed back to Benefit Street. Upon the John Brown and Nightingale Brown houses, I looked for the roses that Poe says "grew in an enchanted garden." From there, I continued on Benefit Street until the Point Street Bridge, where I met in Poe's words "the mossy banks and the meandering paths." Reminiscent of the enchanted garden, three color digital prints are hung among the four video projections. An article about the performance can be viewed at: http://www.projo.com/theater/content/projo_20050526_derr.1df1c70.html

From Museum to Main was a psychogeographical walk performance through the MassMoca area to Main Street in North Adams, MA for the Contemporary Artists Center's *Detourism* exhibition curated by Nato

Thompson. For this walk, I wore four video cameras and the mirrored suit. Like part of the pedestrian herd in a constant state of flux, I walked the block from MassMoca to Main Street repeating my path for one hour. The photographs in the installation capture one block of my walk, encompassing fourteen street views. My repetitive walk exposes tourism and the fallacy that art museums bring wealth to economically depressed communities, as I continuously walked the same route over and over passing those structures made trite. An article about the performance can be viewed at:

<http://www.thetranscript.com/Stories/0,1413,103~9049~2975339,00.html>

Chance was a psychogeographical walk performance where the gallery viewers determined the direction of my walk based upon the roll of a dice for OPENSOURCE Art's *Mind in Matter: Constructions of the Built Environment* exhibition. Waiting outside the gallery, I received my first command via a two-way radio indicating that I move forward, backwards, right, left, spin, or stand in place. I followed the directional commands until I reached an intersection then awaited my next command, continuing the walk for thirty minutes. When spin or stand in place were the command, I completed each for one minute. Just as in past performances, I wore the mirrored suit and four video cameras. Accentuating the dichotomy of the mirrored suit, back in the gallery each of the six commands was represented by thirty columns of six mirrors – thirty columns for the thirty minutes of the walk. The gallery viewer rolled the dice and my assistant radioed to me the direction that I must move. Then according to the time frame of the walk, the assistant removed the number of mirrors that corresponded to the command from the column that corresponded to the number of minutes into the performance, and hung the mirrors on an opposing wall. One wall created the cartography of the walk in the positive and the other in the negative. When the gallery viewer stood between the two walls of mirrors that have an oscillating presence of real/illusory, physical/metaphysical, inside/outside, and visible/invisible, the dichotomy of the cartography of the performance was highlighted. An article that contains video footage from the performance can be viewed at: <http://trace.ntu.ac.uk/Process/index.cfm?article=137>

My psychogeographical walk performances become a study into psychogeography, where the geographic features of a city negotiate the individual's habits and patterns. In his "Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography," Guy Debord wrote that one should observe, "the sudden change of ambiance in a street within the space of a few meters; the evident division of a city into zones of distinct psychic atmospheres; the path of least resistance which is automatically followed in aimless strolls (and which has no relation to the physical contour of the ground); the appealing or repelling character of certain places." The videos from the performances become more than documents as they narrate the stories of the day. My observers, fellow pedestrians going about their routines, who are alternatively being observed, display their reactions to circumstance, geography, and me.