

WALK—ON

From Richard Long to Janet Cardiff

40 Years of Art Walking

Walk On is the first exhibition to examine the astonishingly varied ways that artists, from the 1960s onwards, have undertaken a seemingly universal act – that of taking a walk – as a means to create new types of art.

The exhibition offers an as-yet-unwritten history of recent art practice, bringing together artists who over the last four decades have worked like explorers, either acting as urban expeditionists or making marks within the rural wilderness. From land art to conceptual art, and from street photography to the essay-film, the exhibition proposes that some of the most significant art works of our time have been created through the act of walking.

All of the artists in the exhibition make work by undertaking a journey on foot, whether by using the city street as their studio, or the landscape as their natural habitat. By doing so, they identify and stake out a new artistic territory. The exhibition includes several internationally celebrated artists alongside emerging figures who have created new works specifically for the project.

Artists such as Richard Long have created work as he walks across countries and continents, leaving behind traces of his movements on the land itself. Other walking artists only exhibit documents from their journeys, in the form of photographs, texts or artefacts. For them, the walk undertaken is itself the artwork – a performance fashioned over time – and anything else produced by the artist is seen as only evidence or documentation.

Some artists such as Marina Abramović have walked over historic sites - undertaking an epic journey across the length of the Great Wall of China, in a symbolic act of meeting and then separating with her then collaborator Ulay.

This exhibition is being brought to Plymouth thanks to a partnership between Peninsula Arts, Plymouth University; Plymouth Arts Centre; Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery and The Gallery at Plymouth College of Art.

A number of new and additional works are featured in the Plymouth presentation of the exhibition.

Walk On has been developed in partnership with Art Circuit Touring Exhibitions and WALK (Walking, Art, Landskip and Knowledge) at the University of Sunderland, and in association with VARC (Visual Arts in Rural Communities). The exhibition is curated by Cynthia Morrison-Bell and artist Mike Collier of WALK in partnership with Alistair Robinson, Curator, NGCA (Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art), and supported by Arts Council England.

Hosted by



Plymouth
Arts
Centre



Art
Film
Food



Plymouth
College
of Art



ART
CIRCUIT

Arts Council
ENGLAND



University of
Sunderland



Artangel

TATE

EXHIBITION THEMES PRESENTED AT THE GALLERY AT PLYMOUTH COLLEGE OF ART:

The works that feature in The Gallery at Plymouth College of Art pull on ideas of great endeavours; failed tasks to understand and 'grapple' with great landscapes and urban environments; attempts to move freely and safely through landscape; manoeuvres through places assisted or impeded with the aid of devices and with a great sense of play, courage and defiance.

Dan Holdsworth's captivating image *Blackout* suggests ideas of (failed) explorations into the great unknown, mans attempt to grapple with nature and our impact on that land. Tracy Hanna's work *Hill Walker* shows a lone figure repeatedly attempting to scale a mountain. There is a tragedy and humour to the endeavour; we will him on, whilst his efforts are never quite rewarded. Rachel Reupke presents a video where a couple of heroic runaways struggle through a landscape. Their journey seems like an impossible cat and mouse game, where their attempt to travel and escape seems doomed to fail. Tim Brennan's guided tour with a difference is playful and bewildering in equal measure. In the work of Tim Knowles we see him attempt to walk in a straight line for 8 hours through a forest filled with vegetation. The work is playful, physically demanding, determined and absurd. Catherine Yass's video installation *High Wire* shows the French hire-wire artist, Didier Pasquette, walk a hire-wire between two tower blocks in Glasgow. This great feat of skill and courage is magical and astonishing to watch. Wrights & Sites are adventurers of cities, undertaking expeditions of the everyday as a way to re-imagine a place, with a seriously playful approach to exploring and reclaiming urban environments. Janet Cardiff's work plays with ideas of reality and fiction, between what we see and what we are told. Through her audio walks, we are invited to experience and imagine places in new ways. Brian Thompson's sculptures examine the ways in which we understand, name and 'figure' the land. The great challenge of depicting natural and man made environments, fuelling the endeavour of this artist and many others in the exhibition.

Tim Brennan's performative walks present alternative histories and uncover new stories about places. *Vedute manoeuvre* was produced for the 2011 Venice Biennale. *Vedute* means 'view paintings', which Venetian artists pioneered in the 18th century and which were sought after by collectors then and since. The cards presented in *Walk On* act as prompts for narratives to be told whilst moving through the great landscape of Venice.

Brennan selected 14 reproductions of Italian artist Canaletto's paintings to form the basis of a walking route around St Mark's Square, the most famous landmark in Venice. The

work was a performance in which participants received a collection of 14 postcards, each of which presents a different view of the square. On the back of each there is a quotation, which brings together familiar facts and improbable bodies of information into a new formation. Brennan led the group to the place shown in each painting, with the walk between them animated by discussion and conversation around more prosaic matters. Brennan draws 'the everyday' into his work, even when it is set in a spectacular tourist centre.

We are showing eleven out of the series of fourteen cards.

Janet Cardiff & George Bures Miller

For over twenty years, Cardiff and her collaborator George Bures Miller have created guided audio works which are listened to whilst walking a prescribed route. Ordinarily these works are entirely site-specific (responding to a particular location, environment and situation).

The Walk Book presented in all of the gallery venues in Plymouth, is the only way in which its possible to experience Cardiff's work without actually being in the cities they are made about/for.

Her work depends on the discrepancies between what we think we know, what we see, and what we are told. Characteristically, her narrators combine fictions with accurate descriptions of the actual landscape, so that the status of both fact and fiction are thrown into doubt, asking us to question where reality ends and our imagination begins.

The Walk Book is available to borrow from Plymouth Arts Centre for the duration of Walk On.

Tracy Hanna works with video projection and three-dimensional media to explore perception and our physical relationship to sculpture.

Hill Walker is perhaps uncharacteristic of her work in that it offers both an overt comedy and bathos. We encounter a lone, heroic figure, seen at a miniature scale. Footage of a walker, climber, or mountaineer, struggling up a snow-covered hillside is projected onto a mound of plaster, which has been formed into a cone shape and looks like the basic form of a mountain. The plaster shape is not unrealistic enough to be cartoon-like, nor is it realistic enough to be any mountain in particular - It merely evokes the idea of a 'mountain' with the minimum means required. The hill walker's progress from bottom to top takes only a minute, after which, the action is repeated again and again, rendering the endless task ludicrous and futile.

Dan Holdsworth's extraordinary image presented in the exhibition, is a negative depiction of the landscape of southern Iceland, a place where volcanic ash and glaciers co-exist and where the earth's tectonic plates create upsurges of enormous heat into a climate of extreme cold.

Holdsworth's large-format photographic images were taken on walks into the glacier where no vehicle can penetrate such forbidding landscapes. Even so, our pathway into the space is terrifyingly short. By the middle distance, we would seemingly become enveloped into a total, sublime darkness, from which it seems there could be no point of return. Initially, we might imagine that the image is simply monochromatic and that only the tone rather than the colour spectrum have been inverted. Holdsworth underscores how alien this landscape is by abstracting it, rendering it even more incomprehensible, impenetrable and immense. We can imagine the landscape permeated with basalt-black dust, yet when inverted and turned white by being rendered in negative, the glacier is seemingly illuminated from within, the place seeming like a ghost landscape.

This landscape is, tragically, a transient one, despite its majestic scale. Due to the effects of global warming, it is melting away under our feet. In the space of a generation, there will be no landscape to walk on.

Originally commissioned by CIRCA Projects, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

Tim Knowles creates photographs, films and abstract drawings by undertaking walks.

Knowles' working methods are playful and inventive, making use of chance in innumerable ways, ensuring that the outcome of each walk is unknown in advance. He uses systems, processes and apparatus that generate outcomes, which the artist is not in control of.

For *Kielder Forest Walk* Tim Knowles attempted to walk in a straight line, on a

compass bearing through Kielder Forest, England's largest coniferous forest. Equipped with 2 compasses, road marking paint, Clad in tough clothing, gloves, a chainsaw helmet with visor and a tailor-made chest harness on which were mounted 2 cameras.

His journey was captured in an 8 hour, continuous HD video and a sequence of time-lapse images recorded every 12 seconds, these random stills taken by a moving camera with variable light levels capture the motion through the forest in an often blurred abstracted form.

Navigating solely by compass, Knowles moves forward through the forest, travelling through varying sections of the plantation's crop cycle, different ages and types, from freshly felled areas, areas planted just the previous year to others ranging back to trees planted in 1926.

The project is presented as an installation with the continuous HD video housed alongside large prints from the time-lapse sequence and artefacts from the walk; maps, compasses, camera rig, helmet....

This solitary attempt to keep to a straight line is an endeavour both physical and psychological. Being a crop the trees are planted in a regular grid format so that at times the forest appears identical in every direction for up to 45minutes.

At times we see Knowles fighting through densely packed spruce trees, or clambering through areas of wind damage, a tangled mass of fallen trees, huge trunks lying horizontal on top of one another meters off the ground – where he must walk along trunks suspended in the air or crawl through a mossy underworld.

In places these fallen giants have begun to regrow, branches shooting from the upward side of their trunks creating a dense new false forest of small trees hovering meters above the ground.

Rachel Reupke's *Infrastructure* sees a lone heroine, or pair of heroic runaways, struggle on foot through what initially appears as a militarised landscape. The figures seem to

desperately flee from the scene towards an airport, past a railway next to a serpentine motorway that nestles inside a forested Alpine landscape and a ferry port.

The work is structured as a journey in four parts across road, river, rail and flight. The miniature human figures are in contrast to both, the magnificent landscape (a walker's paradise) and to the incredible technological achievements of keeping humanity in perpetual motion.

The protagonists here seem fragile, they are all but lost amongst an endless flow of traffic, allowing us to speculate that (given their evident desperation) these figures are wilful escapees from the modern world and its obsession with vehicles. Reupke leaves it to us to decide which has greater romance, the lure of sleek vehicles skimming over seas and skies, or locomotion conducted through the power of our own muscles.

Brian Thompson's work is concerned with how places become known, named and understood. He is interested in the different ways in which we measure and describe the land and how his experience of walking through a landscape can be re-imagined through sculpture.

His works ask us to imagine the formation of landscapes over a long timescale and explores the two and three-dimensional forms associated with walking through a site, in order to map it and to unearth its history.

Thompson's walks, which are recorded through GPS tracking, tracings made from maps and aerial photographs, become the 'line' of the walks and the starting point of the sculptures and prints he creates using a mixture of traditional craft skills and new technologies.

These 'lines' are cut usually by hand and often in wood, with each layer becoming the template for the succeeding layer. Through small increments of size the sculptures evolve, tapering downward from

top to base and incorporating errors and corrections. In this way, the sculptures record (in a geological fashion) the history of their making.

The works presented in the exhibition, combine forms alluding to archaeological and geological understandings of a place and to the imagined objectivity provided by Ordnance Survey mapping.

Thompson notes, of his three dimensional works, that “the sculptures serve as diaries, records, memories, souvenirs or trophies – celebrations of experiences of particular places”.

Wrights & Sites are a group of artists and researchers interested in walking through cities and in what they call “serious play”. The group was founded in 1997 by Stephen Hodge, Simon Persighetti, Phil Smith and Cathy Turner.

They create ‘mis-guides’ to places that offer new or unexpected insights in ways that orthodox travel guides cannot. In 2006, having made guides for particular locations, they decided to create a universal version, that could be taken anywhere and applied to any city.

A Mis-guide to Anywhere playfully encourages users to explore their everyday experiences differently, to discover new ways of looking at a place and to take unfamiliar routes, or to travel in unusual ways.

Catherine Yass’s *High Wire* follows the French high-wire artist Didier Pasquette, who was invited by Yass to walk a wire strung between two towers on the Red Road Estate in Glasgow. Stepping out between what were once the highest social housing blocks in all of Europe, Pasquette offers us the ultimate vertiginous perspective. Yass writes:

“the dream of reaching the sky is also a modernist dream of cities in the air, inspired by a utopian belief in progress”.

High Wire is shown with thanks to and with generous support from, the artist and Artangel, who commissioned the work with Glasgow International Festival of Contemporary Visual Art in 2007.

The information in this guide is also available in large print from each of the venues.

walkonplymouth.org

[#walkon](#) [#plymouth](#)

ARTISTS IN OTHER VENUES:

Peninsula Arts, Plymouth University

Marina Abramović
Tim Brennan
Janet Cardiff
Rachael Clewlow
Sarah Cullen
Melanie Manchot
Bruce Nauman
Simon Pope
Jem Southam
Brendan Stuart Burns

Plymouth Arts Centre

Francis Alÿs
plan b
Janet Cardiff
Bradley Davies
Pat Naldi and Wendy Kirkup
Melanie Manchot
walkwalkwalk
Jeremy Wood

Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery

Francis Alÿs
Atul Bhalla
Sophie Calle
Janet Cardiff
Mike Collier
Chris Drury
Alec Finlay
Hamish Fulton
James Hugonin
Richard Long
Julian Opie
Ingrid Pollard
Tim Robinson
Bryndis Snaebjörnsdóttir &
Mark Wilson
Richard Wentworth
Carey Young

VISITING INFORMATION:

Free admission to all venues.

A

Peninsula Arts, Plymouth University

Roland Levinsky Building, Drake Circus,
Plymouth PL4 8AA
01752 585050
peninsula-arts.co.uk

10am to 5pm Monday to Friday
11am to 4pm Saturday

B

Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery

Drake Circus,
Plymouth PL4 8AJ
01752 304774
plymouthmuseum.gov.uk

10am to 5.30pm Tuesday to Friday
10am to 5pm Saturday



C

The Gallery at Plymouth College of Art

Tavistock Place,
Plymouth PL4 8AT
01752 203434
plymouthart.ac.uk/gallery

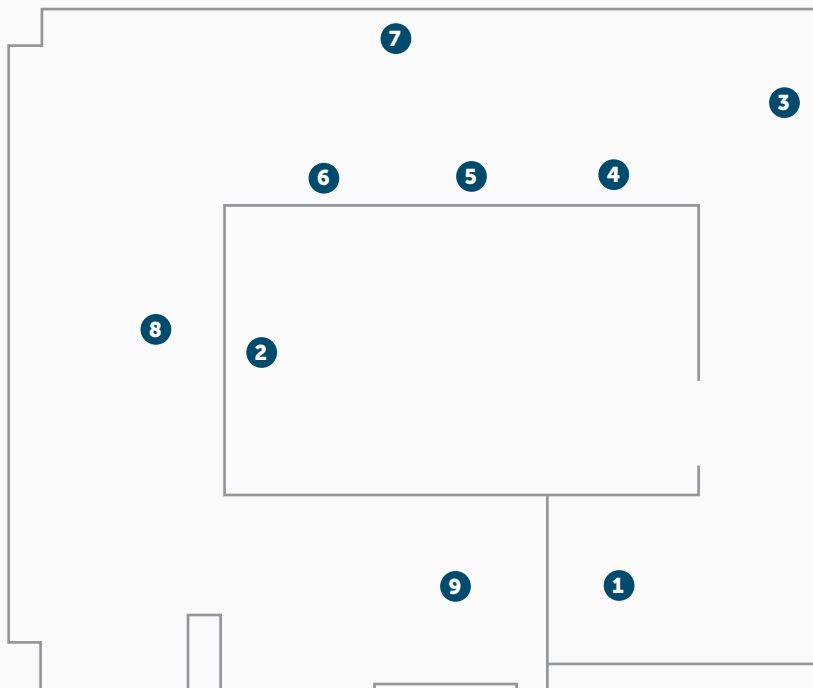
9am to 5pm Monday to Friday
10am to 2pm Saturday

D

Plymouth Arts Centre

38 Looe Street,
Plymouth PL4 0EB
01752 206114
plymouthartscentre.org

10am to 8.30pm Tuesday to Saturday
4pm to 8.30pm Sunday



1. Tracy Hanna

Hill Walker (2009) Video projection on 25kg plaster. Duration: 58 seconds.

2. Catherine Yass

High Wire (2008) 16mm film and MiniDV transferred to HD MPEG digital files. 7 mins, 23 second loop

3. Dan Holdsworth

Blackout 10 (2010) Lightbox. Courtesy Brancolini Grimaldi, London.

4. Rachel Reupke

Infrastructure (2002) Video. Duration: 14 minutes. Courtesy LUX, London.

5. Wrights & Sites

A Mis-Guide To Anywhere (2006)

6. Janet Cardiff & George Bures Miller

The Walk Book (Works from 1991-2005) Edited by Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary, Vienna, in collaboration with Public Art Fund, New York.

7. Tim Brennan

'Vedute' manoeuvre (2011) Limited edition walking itinerary.

8. Brian Thompson

Louisville Walks / On the Narrow Road / Manhattan Walks / Along Loughrigg Terrace / Lake Windermere to the viewing station / Grasmere Round (2012)

9. Tim Knowles

Kielder Forest Walk - An attempt to walk in a straight line through Kielder Forest for 8 hours. (2013) 8hr video & inkjet prints.