

## Walking and Mapping : Artists as Cartographers

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Both senses of the term mapping are caught up in a detailed hagiography of artists who, in one way or another, engage with movement through space, mainly as walkers. Records of the experience, both by participants and the inventors of the artworks are mapped across a time spectrum both contemporary and historical.

The walking aspects are various in approach – symbolic, referential, structural, relational, minimal or simply wilful. The lists are expanded to encompass the psycho-geographical, the perceptual, datascares of hybridity, networks with and without maps, and labyrinths. Modes of interaction across the spaces might be didactic, diaristic, conceptual, involve role play or engage the ludic. The making of a map as such, is mercurial.

As an act of curation the author confesses she focusses 'mainly on walkings and mappings I was able to experience firsthand.'

The territory is therefore predictably Europe and North America, (she is based in Paris), clearly delineating this volume as a partial listing, more of a journal of encounters with mapping projects, or narratives about them. It lacks the authority of other listings in the Leonardo series such as Stephen Wilson's

encyclopaedic 'Information Arts'. Progress by the reader is in a whirl of encounters, almost collisions, with the many exponents described, rushing past on their way to a destination, happily of their choosing. The movement through space/time is well documented, the ramifications of each project remaining in often transitory or ephemeral states. The sense of an ever changing inventory is palpable and an awareness that these accounts may be the only record of many of the works described.

As the author observes, 'The field has burgeoned over the past decade...' This is fully evident. More recent projects have been related '...to landmark (sic) works from the past half century.' Precursors to this recent past are nonetheless also inside the circle – Baudelaire, the French surrealists and situationist followers are present, the latter encouraging an approach termed psycho-geography, intended to eventually '...reveal the city's underlying structure.' In this regard a 'landmark' figure in Britain, Steve Willetts, goes unlisted, and reference to writers influential on this field of art practice such as W.G Sebald are not part of the mix.

Curious references are made with claims for instance that boredom in the 1960s became an aesthetic, with films like *Wavelength* used as an example (p32). By comparison to much of what is described as mapping makes the film for this reviewer an edge-of-the-seat thriller. There is in fact no clash of aesthetics here, as the art in common is centred on the existential and reflexive experience of space and time and the reflections that flow from them – *Wavelength* certainly encourages such engagement, though not through physical perambulation. The wealth of detail in this source book many will value – the

research effort is impressive and the findings clearly if not pleasurably expressed. The bibliography in this well presented and illustrated volume is extensive.

Tom Conley wrote recently of the impact map-makers had on the social development of early-modern France through the shifts in understanding caused by the ideological re-definitions of byways, and concepts of country and property. (Reviewed in LDR April 2012) Conley arrives at a sentence that carefully locates the reader, the text and its writer. "One can move into space by surveying and arrogating it, and one can make it virtual, seemingly self-made, when a cartographic process is adjusted to the imagination of one's origins, growth, works, memory, and living itineraries." This perfectly expresses the Australian indigenous contribution to knowledge, (glibly referred to as 'songlines' and 'bush erudition' by so many), being a complete expression of place, identity and community as part of an ancient lineage.

The contemporary shifts in describing space and its dominions explored in this volume have impacts far removed from such a culture. Conley describes cartography and its impact on the confines of 16<sup>th</sup> Century culture and politics. The performances described here possess significance in a provisional context, it being too risky it seems to assess the role ubiquitous and ready-to-hand technologies have in lubricating changes in social and political relations.

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