WAYS OF WALKING
Ethnography and Practice on Foot

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‘Taking a Line for a Walk’: Walking as an Aesthetic Practice

Raymond Lucas

It is not given to every man to take a bath of multitude; enjoying a crowd is an art; and only he can relish a debauch of vitality at the expense of the human species, on whom, in his cradle, a fairy has bestowed the love of masks and masquerading, the hate of home, and the passion for roaming (Baudelaire 1970, 20).

Walking has long been regarded as offering the potential for aesthetic practice. In this chapter I seek to understand the uses made of walking by twentieth century artists and art movements, with particular reference to the city. Sitting the investigation in the city reflects my own interests which are rooted in my architectural training. It also serves as the context for my own creative practice, particularly a project entitled Getting Lost in Tokyo, the subject of a solo exhibition in 2005 and at the core of my research on inscriptive practices. My inquiry begins, however, with the engagement of theorist Walter Benjamin with the nineteenth century Parisian poet, Charles Baudelaire. Around the figure of the flâneur, which has become familiar from their writings, there has grown a vast secondary literature, exploring various aspects of our interaction with the urban environment (Tester 1994). Benjamin’s work is reflected in the interests of art and self-professed anti-art groups such as Dada, Surrealism, and the Situationist International. For these visual artists, poets and performers, the city provided a site for investigation both relevant to their condition and breaking with earlier forms of patronage. Besides considering their work, I explore some of the ways in which walking has furnished a metaphor for creative practice itself. In the aphorism that gives this chapter its title, Paul Klee conceptualized the line as a trace resulting from a continuous gesture (Klee 1961, 105). The ‘walk’ of the brush or pen over a surface generates the line. The action of inscribing a line has the potential to be so deeply ingrained that it can inform our thinking across many disciplines and practices.

Following a discussion of urban aesthetic walking, in particular flânerie, I present an example from my own work. Getting Lost in Tokyo is a project based on my observations of Shinjuku subway station in Tokyo. It engages with walking explicitly, and seeks to generate new architectural spaces out of my experiences of a specific place and time. The work involves a series of transformations and translations from one inscriptive practice to another.
On the fascination of the flâneur

Architectural and urban theory, especially at the height of modernism and the International Style, has often been criticized for considering the city in isolation from those who inhabit its territories. This problem does, indeed, run through modernism’s dealings with urban space, to the extent that its tabula rasa approach and strict single-use zoning denied much of the historic place-making that originally created the city. The early roots of what we now know as modernism, however, had a strong humanist element. Charles Baudelaire, writing at the cusp of the movement’s beginnings, and later Walter Benjamin, writing in its early phase, both identified with the urban character known as the flâneur. Baudelaire spoke movingly of how this character, who would go ‘botanizing on the asphalt’, was vanishing in his time as a result of Baron Haussmann’s boulevards, in opposition to and competition with the arcades, which were the native haunts or hunting grounds of the flâneur.

[In] those days it was not possible to stroll about everywhere in the city. Before Haussmann wide pavements were rare, and the narrow ones afforded little protection from vehicles. Strolling could hardly have assumed the importance it did without the arcades (Benjamin 1997: 36).

By the time Benjamin wrote about the flâneur, however, Paris had just been transformed into a city of boulevards, with the arcades only surviving as a partly hidden route running north to south of the right bank.

A parallel can be drawn here between walking in the city and practices of reading. As Tim Ingold (2007) has shown, medieval and modern readers would approach a text in very different ways. The medieval reader would stalk its pages like a hunter-gatherer on the trail, seeking out meaning in its smallest signs (Ingold 2007, 15). While this way of reading still persists, most modern texts are aimed at readers who expect information to be presented in an orderly, chronological sequence, in the manner of reportage. In the mode of reading that emerged with modernity, meaning is imparted rather than sought and found. The differences between these modes are reflected in many other disciplines. The theory of cinema, for example is split between the ideas that spectators actively discover meaning for themselves and that they are passive recipients sutured into their entertainment. In a nutshell, this is the difference between so-called art-cinema and movies. This dichotomy is present in other art forms as well: the fine arts, architecture, music. Likewise, in modelling the city, the flâneur and his ilk may be opposed to the shopper, tourist and commuter.

Basic to flânerie, among other things, is the idea that the fruits of idleness are more precious than the fruits of labour. The flâneur, as is well known, makes “studies”. On this subject, the nineteenth-century Larousse has the following to say: “His eyes open, his ear ready, searching for something entirely different from what the crowd gathers to see. A word dropped by chance will reveal to him one of those character traits that cannot be invented and that must be drawn directly from life; ... most men of genius were great flâneurs – but industrious, productive flâneurs ...” (Benjamin 1999, [M20a,1] 454).

How, then, does the flâneur see the city? Here we can turn to Benjamin in his extended studies of the character, related to his reading of Charles Baudelaire. Benjamin’s
major unfinished work, *The Arcades Project*, devotes an entire section to the *flâneur* (Convolute M: The Flâneur; Benjamin 1999, 417-55), placing him alongside such phenomena as fashion (Convolute B); iron construction (Convolute F); prostitution, gambling (Convolute O); and photography (Convolute Y). Indeed, the *flâneur* is understood as a phenomenon.

Preformed in the figure of the *flâneur* is that of the detective. The *flâneur* required a social legitimation of his habitus. It suited him very well to see his indolence presented as a plausible front, behind which, in reality, hides the riveted attention of an observer who will not let the unsuspecting malefactor out of his sight (Benjamin 1999 [M13a,2] 442).

The dilettante wanderer is an unlikely hero for a writer associated so strongly with the left, Adorno and the Frankfurt school. His concern, however, is to show that there is joy and comfort to be found of the urban environment. Far from decrying the modern city as inhuman, Benjamin celebrates its anonymity, the way in which one can be lost and at home in a crowded street or on public transport. The *flâneur* is a figure who understands this sheer enjoyability of the modern city – the exhilaration, and display, of promenading to see and be seen. It is all part of the urban character. The *flâneur* inscribes upon the city, writing rather than reading it.

This is an important distinction: his spectatorship is an active one, which imposes his will upon the city streets, creating a narrative as he goes along. In what follows we shall see that different modalities of being in the environment contribute to different understandings of inscribing and of spectatorship. It is important to understand that practices of reception can be as creative as those that inscribe in the first place.

**Flânerie as a thinking tool**

> "Sous les pavés, la plage."
> [Beneath the paving stones, the beach.]
> Situationist slogan, Anonymous, c. 1968.

*Flânerie* has long been regarded as a creative tool. Francesco Careri of Stalker, a contemporary Italian interdisciplinary urban workshop group, establishes a trajectory for the use of this tool from the Dada anti-art movement, through Surrealism, the Situationist and Fluxus movements to the work of Robert Smithson and Richard Long (Careri 2002). Some of the best documented examples are found in the works of the Situationist International with the notion of *dérive* or drift.

As one among various Situationist methods, *dérive* is a technique of transient passage through varied ambiences. The *dérive* entails playful-constructive behaviour and an awareness of psychogeographical effects, which distinguishes it from classical notions of the journey and the stroll.

In a *dérive* one or more persons during a certain period drop their usual motives for movement and action, their relations, their work and leisure activities, and let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there. The element of chance is less determinant than one might think: from a *dérive* point of view cities have a psychogeographical relief, with constant currents, fixed points and vortexes which
strongly discourage entry into or exit from certain zones (Guy Debord, *Theory of the Dérive*, in Andreotti and Costa 1996, 22).

The Situationist drifting strategy is closely tied to their notion of psychogeography (Sadler 1998). This refers to an exploration of the hidden, non-physical connections between spaces, and of the patterns of desire within a space. The group produced a number of psychogeographic maps, most notably *The Naked City* (1957) by Guy Debord and Asger Jorn, in which patches of a map of Paris were collaged with variously sized arrows including images of war and colonialism, postage stamps and a text which read ‘Life continues to be free and easy’. Each map represents a drift taken by Debord and his colleagues through Paris – a series of connections that cannot be adequately represented on a standard plan of the city (Debord 1994; McDonough 2002). This drifting strategy is clearly related to *flânerie* as defined by Benjamin. It is important to stress that the movement involved is far from random. It is rather guided by various attractions and spectacles and how these act upon the drifter. I undertook a similar traversal of urban space in Tokyo, and the accompanying notations and drawings are largely the result of the various attractions and repulsions as I made my way through Shinjuku station.

The theory of the dérive informed much of the work of the Situationist International and beyond. An example is the work of the artist-architect Constant. Constant took the central theme of the drift and incorporated it into his attempts to create a ‘unitary urbanism’ based upon a view of the future in which humanity would be released from the burdens of work and accordingly free to play and occupy space however and whenever desired. This rather naïve notion gave dwelling the same weight as running and skipping, and represents a fundamental if impracticable challenge to traditional notions of architecture. It lay behind his plans and models for New Babylon – a proposition for a Situationist city, whose entire structure could be reconfigured according to the whims of its inhabitants.¹ From an architectonic perspective, indeed, the intent behind the project is of greater interest than the megalithic structures of his imaginary city, which hearken to the greatest excesses of modernism rather than, as Constant intended, railing against them.

The Situationist dérive may be contrasted with the Dadaist excursions to banal places, the Surrealist reconfiguration of the city through games, and Fluxus street-theatre and happenings. The aesthetic and creative implications of *flânerie* and similar wayfaring in urban situations are quite different from those encountered in what Careri (2002) calls ‘wilderness’, as it figures for example in the work of Richard Long. The sense of isolation in the city is of an entirely different quality from that found in the wilderness. Careri holds that the wilderness walk degrades and fades with the passing of time, whereas the urban walk perpetuates its memory in the walkers and the traces they leave behind, be they representations, reconfigured maps, or the memories of participants who may or may not have been passers-by.² The defining

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¹ De Zegher and Wigley (2001) and Wigley (1998) present this project, and its aims and implications, in great detail.

² In fact by ‘wilderness’, Careri is referring more often than not to ‘rural’ and hence managed landscapes.
features of the urban walk lie in the apparatus of memory and in interaction with others who may be neither aware of nor implicated in one’s actions. The flâneur, after all, walks to be observed, as well as to observe others. The key difference is in duration: engagement with others in the city is immediate and primarily with human observers (wildlife in the city, though present, is rarely acknowledged). Outside the urban environment, by contrast, engagements with other walkers can carry on over seasons or even years.

Engagements with the city

The leading Surrealist writer and poet Louis Aragon has given one of that movement’s most coherent expositions of Paris, the focus of so much of their attention. Paris Peasant is a novel, but seeks to be neither a coherent narrative nor a character study. Aragon chooses to examine a small part of the city with which he is well acquainted and particularly interested: this is an arcade, the Passage de l’Opera, which was under threat at the time of Aragon’s writing in 1926.

How oddly this light suffuses the covered arcades which abound in Paris in the vicinity of the main boulevards and which are rather disturbingly named passages, as though no one had the right to linger for more than an instant in those sunless corridors (Aragon 1994, 13-14).

The novel combines observations of this place with excerpts from advertising or price-lists from restaurants and bars (ibid., 78-9), street signs (165) and newspaper clippings (32); all of which conform to the model of the flâneur and wanderer who allows the mundane and banal to grab his attention with the same fascination and ferocity as the unusual and the freakish. The gaze that Aragon turns on the Passage de l’Opera is at times disinterested or directed towards a spectacle, and at other times fully engaged towards others: indeed, while Aragon ostensibly crafts a portrait of the city of Paris, the ultimate effect of his writing is to compose a self-portrait, to give an account of himself and how it is that he, by turns, engages and disengages, physically and socially, with his chosen environment. As an actor in this place – that is to say, as an individual with agency – he understands the ‘original’ environment with a degree of neutrality:

There is nothing more mysterious than these curious slatted shutters, set into the walls above the baths, which allow communication between the adjoining cabins in many of the Parisian establishments (those of the Rue Fontaine, the Rue Cardinet, the Rue Cambraères, for example). No one is suggesting that the architect foresaw the use that would be made of these fittings; could the engineer who drew up the plans for the Pont de Solférino have had an inkling of the debaucheries that his arches would one day shelter? The simple hearts of architects are free of all perversity (Aragon 1994, 57).
Figure 12.1 Parisian passage
One anthropologist who has sought to understand contemporary space as radically opposed to the environment of the flâneur is Marc Augé. Augé’s analysis rests on two complementary concepts – non-place and supermodernity. Conceptualized differently from the pre- and early-modernism of Baudelaire and Benjamin, the supermodern is a spatial phenomenon with temporal implications. Supermodernity relies upon ubiquity and evenness of space where events cannot take place and where social activity is confined to narrow channels and stripped of most of its engagement and interaction. This supermodern is exemplified in the contemporary international airport, especially when it is contrasted with the hustle and bustle of its predecessor, the sea-port. Airports present a smooth, secure and undifferentiated space in which little can happen outside of that narrow channel of permissible social activity. As a result we barely interact with such spaces, being held in a disinterested state for the duration of our stay there. While such spaces might be personalized by regular users or workers, the traveller will often identify the chains of coffee shops and other amenities as ubiquitous manifestations that conform to standard expectations. Where airports such as Amsterdam’s Schiphol add art galleries and casinos, these can be read as part of the same system, conforming to the non-place rather than reacting against it.

Augé’s work draws explicitly on Michel de Certeau’s notions of space and place (Augé 1997, 79-95, see Certeau 1984, 117-18). But whereas de Certeau does not set space and place in explicit opposition – seeking merely to differentiate between them – Augé’s notions of place and non-place are strongly opposed. This can be seen again in terms of narrowing options and the way in which travel by air or on a motorway strips any quality of place from a locality. Where nodes are made in this direction (such as towards boards depicting local wildlife and nearby landmarks used as logos) they reduce locality to pure spectacle. Spectacle was, of course, one of the key concerns of the Situationist International and Guy Debord – and it forms part of a process of urbanization that has its roots in the Parisian arcades and Grands Magasins.

Of particular relevance here is Augé’s work on the Paris Metro (Augé 2002). While it might seem at first that these subterranean transportation networks are examples of non-places, Augé argues that the Paris Metro is part of the genuine experience of a city which tourist activities have reduced to a theme-park itinerary of the Eiffel Tower, Arc d’Triomphe, the Louvre, and a number of other cliché destinations. The mode of transport is, however, more important to Paris as a living, working social space. The Metro shows us the diversity of the city’s occupants, and also reveals its differences from other cities such as London, New York, Moscow and Tokyo – all famous for their subways and each with a unique character of their own.

If we look more closely, we cannot fail to notice that the activities of the subway traveller are numerous and valid. Reading is still prominent among them, mostly (although some lines are more intellectual than others) in the form of comic strips or sentimental novels of the Harlequin genre. Thus adventure, eroticism, or rose water is poured into the solitary hearts of individuals who apply themselves with a pathetic constancy, to sealing themselves off from those around them without missing their stop (Augé 2002, 34).
Before considering other activities that commuters engage in, such as using a walkman or maintaining a stony and stoic silence, Augé cites Georges Perec, who ponders what effect the enforced temporality of subway stops might have upon the reading of the text – how might this fracture control or limit a narrative?

Despite appearing to be a similarly controlled space to the airport non-place, with its atemporality\(^3\) and immunity to the time of day, week, month or season, the subway is in reality a distinctly ‘anthropological place’ (Augé 1997, 42) varying in character from the first train in the morning (Augé 2002, 31) to the rush-hours, to the daytime and then evening trains. Thus the place varies over time, bringing different travellers to their destinations as diverse social groups and individuals go about their daily routines. This resembles Augé’s exemplar for anthropological space, the marketplace, which is only identified as such when it is actually happening; at other times it might not be a marketplace but a city square, car-park or some other windswept expanse.

**Getting lost in Tokyo**

The metro is but one example, of course – and it leads me to consider its relation to my own project in the Tokyo subway. The terms of my exploration were similarly poetic and personal in their intention, even if my purpose and experience there differed greatly (after all, Augé’s portrait of the Metro is drawn from a lifetime’s travelling on it, whereas I was a novice visitor – an outsider in terms of both nationality and purpose). It was an experience of running counter to the system, being out of place, but this also gave the project something rather tangible to hold on to.

The city of Tokyo is organized on principles founded in the unique co-operative competition of Japanese corporations which combine their economic might with a social role, often providing financial services, childcare and even local government and broadcasting within private megastructures. It is this mix of activities in the city and, as I discovered, in the subway stations themselves that makes flânerie possible. The connection between modes of urban wandering and the urban environment in Tokyo is illustrated by the arrangement of subway stops, which are often conjoined with department stores. The city is structured as a number of smaller cities, each with its own centre based around a transportation, economic and social hub. Standing in for town-halls, these hubs have their left-over spaces, which substitute for town squares. The space around Shibuya station is one example. Hachiko\(^4\) square serves as the meeting point for nights out in the ward as well as attracting hopeful rock bands that come to busk or simply to play for the joy of it. Other sides of the station attract street vendors, break-dancers and motorcycle gangs in what would fail any

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3 This is again with reference to the commuter and irregular traveller. Given that place is a category defined by the action of people on a locality, the quality of placelessness is variable.

4 Hachiko was a professor’s dog who waited on his master at the station every day. After his owner’s death, Hachiko continued to return, waiting there every day. Commuters fed Hachiko with rice cakes and sushi until he eventually died. A statue was erected of the loyal Akita in the square in front of Shibuya station, that now bears his name.
architectural examination for the design of an effective urban environment with a social aspect to it. Different parts of Tokyo offer even more extreme examples of what should not work, but somehow does. Ikebukuro station and its Seibu department store have a rich social life which is far less teenager-oriented than Shibuya, but which nevertheless is understood to confer a strong and worthwhile local identity on those who participate in it.

My series of drawings, *Getting Lost in Tokyo* has its origins in two trips I made to the city, in January 2003 and 2004 (Lucas 2004; 2008). These trips were ostensibly tourist journeys to a place that has long fascinated me. It was in part Chris Marker’s cinematic travelogue and search for images of beauty and happiness, *Sans Soleil*, which finally persuaded me to go. I arrived as a traveller who, though moderately informed, had no contacts or real working knowledge of the language or customs of the place. My visits to Tokyo responded to my reading of theories of *flanerie*, Situationist drift and spectacle. And of the many experiences that flowed from them, one stood out as especially interesting — that of travelling the subway and, in particular, negotiating the massive interchange stations such as Shibuya or Shinjuku, the station at the heart of this project, which has some seventy exits to the surface. Navigating these stations raised numerous questions — not least of which was ‘how is it even possible to negotiate this place?’ What are the characteristics of the Tokyo subway as distinct from those, say, of Paris, London and New York?

A traditional map or plan of this space is of no help in understanding or finding the way; so how do the many thousands of commuters and other users actually manage it on a regular basis? How did I manage it? Given my particular circumstances as a foreigner without any real intention or purpose, I ran counter to the flow of people in the place, when sampled in and out of the legendary rush-hour crushes. Reconstructing from memory my experience of using Shinjuku station, I found it was best represented by a flowchart diagram. This allowed me to include all the journeys I made through the space, including finding my way, getting lost, exiting or just passing through to change lines. This flowchart fragmented the account into episodes — each distinct from one another, and not tied to a specified place. The episodic nature of the flowchart allowed a complex and non-fixed totality to be broken down into manageable chunks.

This theme of the manageability of the environment runs through the work as a whole. The primary purpose of the episodic division was to allow each smaller element to be presented in Laban notation. This is a system of notation most commonly used in dance choreography to trace the movements of the dancer. In it, time is read from bottom to top, and the central vertical line represents the vertical axis of the body. The shapes on either side notate the actions of particular parts of the body as (in this case) it moves through and touches the train. The diagrams show that movement is complex, iterative and variable, and we can begin to see how notation itself can be a rather radical gesture. Each notation in the series describes the way every action impacts upon the body during its passage through the subway station.
1. Stay on the train.
2. Is this your stop?
3. Stand up and wait at door.
4. Is someone else at the door?
5. Wait on them opening the door.
6. Do they open the door?
7. Press the door release.
8. Mutter, grumble and complain.
10. Are you changing lines?
11. Locate exit sign.
12. Move in the direction indicated.
13. Locate transfer sign.
14. Is there another sign?
15. Is there a transfer sign?
16. Find an open space.
17. Move in the direction indicated.
18. Move in the direction indicated.
19. Move away from that crowd.
20. Are you at the correct platform?
21. Is there another sign?
22. Wait for the train to arrive.
23. Is there more than one sign?
24. Select an exit sign.
25. Does this exit lead out?
26. Have you tried other options?
27. Has the train arrived?
28. Board the train.
29. Does this exit lead out?
30. Exit station.

Figure 12.2 Flowchart diagram from *Getting Lost in Tokyo*
Figure 12.3 Sample of Laban notation from *Getting Lost in Tokyo*
Upon further analysis, this series of notations threw up several recurring motifs – elements from the journey that were common concerns. Out of the thirty episodes, fifteen motifs recurred in the notation, though appearing in varying degrees, positions and relationships. This repetition led me to consider the next step, the use or even *detournement* (Situationist-style misappropriation) of architectural drawing conventions. Since my aim was to reconstruct an experience within an actual architectural space, I had to avoid any attempt to reconstruct the actual plan of Shinjuku station. Adopting the projective conventions of axonometric drawing, I forced each event into a narrow corridor that represents the passage of time. I made no attempt to modulate the lighting of the space, such as placing it in north- or south-facing contexts, nor did I give any suggestion of artificial or sky-lighting. The form alone was depicted in the drawing. This enhances the feeling of non-place. Plan and section would have made it much easier to ‘design in’ such orientation, but I chose instead to impose a diagram – specifically a labyrinth (as opposed to a maze). The longest route within this space is taken by the labyrinth path, which spirals towards a centre. This deliberately recalls Tarkovsky’s *Stalker*, where the destination is visible at most times, but only the semi-supernatural guide of the Stalker can navigate its hidden traps and pitfalls (Tarkovsky 1986).

![Diagram](image_url)

*Figure 12.4 Building block archetypes from Getting Lost in Tokyo*
Figure 12.5 The Labyrinthine Zone arrangement derived from Tarkovsky’s film *Stalker*, from *Getting Lost in Tokyo*

Figure 12.6 The complete labyrinth, from *Getting Lost in Tokyo*
The labyrinth

A drawing of the entire labyrinth shows us the ultimate alternative to the series. The episodic nature of the series allows us to understand one thing at a time, savouring and understanding each detail and decision, while not being overwhelmed by the totality. Indeed the drawing series could be offered as one way of answering the question ‘how is it possible for a newcomer to learn how to negotiate this vast complex space, which is constantly changing with the ebb and flow of the crowds of rushing but ever polite commuters?’ We can cope with one or two episodes at once, but not all thirty and not all of the possible permutations of decisions.

The city is the realisation of that ancient dream of humanity, the labyrinth. It is this reality to which the flâneur, without knowing it, devotes himself. Without knowing it; yet nothing is more foolish than the conventional thesis which rationalises his behaviour, and which forms the uncontested basis of that voluminous literature that traces the figure and demeanour of the flâneur – the thesis, namely, that the flâneur has made a study of the physiognomic appearance of people in order to discover their nationality and social station, character and destiny, from a perusal of their gait, build and play of features. The interest in concealing the true motives of the flâneur must have been pressing indeed to have occasioned such a shabby thesis (Benjamin 1999 [M6a,4] 429).

The masses in Baudelaire. They stretch before the flâneur as a veil; they are the newest drug for the solitary. – Second, they efface all traces of the individual: they are the newest asylum for the reprobate and the postscript. – Finally, within the labyrinth of the city, the masses are the newest and most inscrutable labyrinth. Through them, previously unknown chthonic traits are imprinted on the image of the city (Benjamin 1999 [M16,3] 447).

The horror of the totality is represented by the Tarkovskyan labyrinth, where the path to the desired centre is always clear, but can be found only by those initiated in the ways of the Zone and who can avoid its invisible dangers.

The more a source is inscribed, the more meaning accumulates. But what is the result of this accumulation? This interpretation of a distinctly urban event provided me with challenges that other exercises have not. Departing from the concentration in traditional architectural drawing upon static fixtures, I could render such things as the distraction of attention by advertising and signage, the movement of crowds against and towards your destination, and the way in which one negotiates a space. My aim was to explore the difference between this use of architectural notation and the drawing conventions traditionally used in design and construction. What is also shown, through the drawing series, is how much more there is to architectural experience than what is normally depicted in its representations – including architectural photography – which are normally devoid of any signs of occupation. By representing other concerns than the play of solid and void, we broaden the scope of what architecture and our experience of the city can be.
Inscribing the city in this way is more than a method to represent experience. There are more direct ways in which this could have been achieved, for example through prose writing or making a documentary video. The point of working in this way, through diagram, notation, drawing and photography, was to understand the experience more fully. Inscription, then, is itself a learning process.

Walking is such a fundamental human practice that it cannot fail to inform our other activities. Art, architecture and other creative practices are no different. The brief outline presented here covers only a small sample of a very large body of artistic walking. The picturesque landscape might indeed be regarded as an earlier version of the same thing, though located in the wilderness rather than the city. The particular conditions of the city require different approaches, however. As the artists reviewed above discovered, urban wandering demands different forms of representation. Taking a line for a walk, as Paul Klee described drawing, conceptualizes the surface as a territory on which one can walk. This is to understand artistic practice in terms of everyday common experience. What I am suggesting here is that different modes of walking involve the territory of both surfaces – of the landscape and of an artistic medium such as canvas or paper – in interesting and novel ways.

A different concept of territory is suggested by the city than by the rural or wilderness environment. It would still of course be possible to depict the
contemporary city in ways ordered by Romantic landscape or Renaissance courtly painting traditions, but this would be knowingly to misappropriate forms from another context. Armed with an attitude towards such things, the artist, architect or anthropologist can make self-conscious choices regarding the representation and inhabitation of the territories of their chosen practice, be that the city itself or a sheet of paper.

References


