

You may perform a spell against madness

A short guide to the Live Art Development Agency's Study
Room

Lone Twin

Introduction

I have been asked to create a guide to the materials on offer here in the Study Room that has something to do with ideas of site and space. What I've found interesting when thinking about this request is how often a guide's job, be it a book, a manual or a person, is to offer an explanation, a telling in either language or diagram, of a spatial situation. A guide to a city, a guide to a building, a guide to erecting a piece of flat-packed furniture, a person dressed as Sherlock Holmes guiding a group of visitors around Baker Street all hope to offer a reading, an understanding, of the space, the place or the materials in front of them, just as a map offers the same to the land it charts.

What is offered in this short guide (my favourite guides are short) is a selection of works by artists that attempt, however reliably or unreliably, to guide us. I've looked towards works that attempt to offer a charting or a mapping, of what possibly lies ahead; be that a city, a forest, a face, a cultural condition, a time, a language, a room or a sky.

Gregg Whelan, Lone Twin

***Walk The Line*, Antti Laitinen**

DVD, D0300

This piece is in a series of works where Laitinen engages with the natural world. For *Bare Necessities* Laitinen lived naked in a forest for four days and nights taking neither shelter or food with him. In another piece, *Stones*, the artist simply presents three stones, one found after seven minutes of digging, one found after seven hours of digging and one found after seven days of digging.

For the *Walk The Line*, the artist again appears to have worked in wooded environments, he states:

'I printed my portrait on various maps. Then I started to orientate the maps following the lines on my face. On my arm I carried a satellite recorder (GPS) drawing the path that I walked.'

Emanuelle Enchanted (Or A Description Of This World As If It Were A Beautiful Place), Forced Entertainment

Video, V0148

Certain Fragments, Tim Etchells

Book, 1999, P0135

During one of the 'newsroom' sections of Forced Entertainment's *Emmanuelle Enchanted*, a theatre piece which seems to be taking place on the night of some unknowable disaster, the following list is read by a performer, delivered as if its an urgent news bulletin:

1. A statue, a statute of Headless Christ
2. A Gold Coloured Watch
3. Eyes the colour of the sea
4. A hotel room without any clocks
5. A beautiful violent country
6. Grab Reality as a Commodity and Sell It
7. Win a chance, win a good chance, win a ghost of a chance
8. A scorched film
9. A broken bone
10. Acting out the last journey of her sister

In *Certain Fragments*, Forced Entertainment's Tim Etchells offers the following programme notes on the piece:

'It was the struggle to present and comprehend and its opposite – a nervous reluctance to continue – that gave the work its central methodology; the act of arranging and rearranging units of information, be they textual, visual or spatial so that new patterns, implied narratives and meanings can emerge'

Thirteen Ways of talking about Performance Writing,
John Hall

Article, A0110

In this paper Hall begins on a defining of how writing might operate around performance and offers, in the fourth of thirteen approaches, a simple task for a reader to take up on, a suggested reason for writing; to carefully chart the world around us:

check out the names of things

write the names of things quietly

you may perform a spell against madness

what is it that makes people write?

Wanderlust, A history of Walking, Rebecca Solnit,
Book, 2001, P0400

This remarkable study of walking has an ever-changing footnote running along the bottom of its pages, one of them, from American poet Gary Snyder reads:

We learn a place and how to visualize spatial relationships, as children, on foot and with imagination. Place and the space of place must be measured against our bodies and their capabilities

Simon Patterson

Book, 2002, P0087

The Great Bear

Patterson took the iconic map of the London Underground and playfully subverted its famous usability by changing the names of lines and stations. Patterson offered lines with stations made up entirely of the names of planets, footballers, musicians, film actors, engineers, Louis', journalists, Italian artists, philosophers, explorers and sinologues. On Patterson's map it's possible to get on the Footballers Line at Gary Lineker, change at Kirk Douglas onto the Film Actors line and travel north alighting at Bette Davis.

In the book's introduction to Patterson's work Bernard Fibicher uses a passage from Jorge Luis Borges in which Borges creates a classification of animals from 'a fictional Chinese encyclopaedia': 'a) those that belong to the emperor, b) embalmed ones, c) those that are trained, d) suckling pigs, e) mermaids, f) fabulous ones, g) stray dogs, h) those that are included in this classification, i) those that tremble as if they were mad, j) innumerable ones, k) those drawn from very fine camel's hair brush, l) etcetera, m) those that have just broken the flower vase, n) those that resemble flies at a distance'

At some point during Patterson's work on his version of the London Underground map the London Underground entered into talks with Patterson on the possibility of displaying his map next to the original on some of their station platforms. However on seeing Patterson's map they withdrew the offer fearing that *The Great Bear*, with its visual similarity to the actual map, would throw the underground network into chaos.

Éclat, Caroline Bergvall

Book, 1996, P0437

Éclat playfully announces itself as a guidebook but with its textual breakdowns, constructions and interruption it immediately begins to operate beyond the form, or at least radically extends it. Sonic and spatial treatments of writing suggest an interior space of immeasurable dimension:

By and large a bedroom: is a rectangular or oblong square of contained space with sleeping utensils. Object arrangements. Any casual. Reconnaissance. Item by item iron or flatten. Ah but once in doubt stay well-lit.

Performance Research Journal, On Navigations

Journal, Vol 6. No 3. Ed Allsopp & Williams, Winter 2001

In 'Navigating the Currents' David Williams interviews artist Basia Irland:

'DW: A lot of your books, like your other work, construct a tension between information revealed and withheld, between transparency and opacity or containment: partial revelations. And I think it was Thoreau who wrote something about decayed literature making the best soil. This cycle of a return to the earth is a resonant ecological loop, another oroboros. Perhaps it's inevitable that books, maps, charts, registers and traces of journeys and fragile sites, and so on, should come together in the form of 'libraries'. I'm thinking both in terms of the portable repositories you make and in terms of your unfinished novel *The Library of Waters*, which you've described as a kind of praise poem based on the hydrological cycle. I very much enjoyed the fragment I have read, itself-reflective connections with your ongoing water work, as well as its interrogative relationship to the very project of the library: the claim to knowing represented by mapping, charting, collecting, categorizing, cataloguing, archiving. And related to this, its fundamental infinitude: it seems uncompletable...does the writing of *The Library of Waters* represent part of a navigation of your twin roles as artist and academic, working with very different kinds of knowledges and experiences?

'BI: Absolutely. I love books and respect book knowledge. But it I only ever partial, a complement to experiential knowledges which are much harder to articulate but no less meaningful. In the video documentary I made for *The Gathering of Waters*, I say that this is not about sitting in a boardroom or a classroom indoors theorizing about rivers, it's about physically being at the river and experiencing it first-hand.'

Yes, Yoko Ono

Book, 2000, P0528

In 1966 before the advent of video technology Yoko Ono placed a closed-circuit camera on the roof of a gallery pointing towards the sky above. The image of the sky was relayed into the gallery below. Without a videotape recording the image it remains as transitory as the sky above us, and with the image appearing in real time all we're offered is a frame by which to view what is already there but not visible from the position we currently inhabit.