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Mis-Guided Exploration of Cities: an ambulant investigation of participative politics of place

PERSIGHETTI, SIMON BERNARD

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University of Plymouth

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Mis-Guided Exploration of Cities:

an ambulant investigation of participative politics of place.

By

SIMON, BERNARD, PERSIGHETTI

A thesis submitted to the University of Plymouth

In partial fulfilment for the degree of

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Dartington College of Arts

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Acknowledgement:

Mis-Guided Exploration of Cities:

an ambulant investigation of participative politics of place.

I complete this document with gratitude particularly to my colleagues who are core members of **Wrights & Sites : Stephen Hodge, Phil Smith, Catherine Turner** and the visual artist, **Tony Weaver**. We have walked a long way together and as our work develops our journeys continue to excite, bemuse and amaze. I would also like to thank my supervisors, Dr Ric Allsopp, Dr Deidre Heddon for their patience, advice and interest in the ambulant subject of my work and study. Special thanks goes to Carolyn Purslow and my children, Olivia, Raphael and Natasha who have to put up with my obsessions and gathering of souvenirs from the urban underworld. During my work with Wrights & Sites I have been particularly inspired by the brilliance and generosity of Mike Pearson and wish to acknowledge him here as a kind of genius loci around my practice. Finally I would like to thank everyone at the wonderful place called Dartington College of Arts who know very well about the importance of place and location in arts practice. I hope that through this writing and the projects I undertake that you will understand why I wished to continue this journey of research.

Signed Declaration:

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'S. Persighetti' in a cursive script.

Simon Persighetti

Company Members Signed Declaration:

with regard to the submission by **Simon Persighetti** of his thesis and catalogue entitled:

Mis-Guided Exploration of Cities: an ambulant investigation of participative politics of place.

The members of **Wrights & Sites** are aware of this academic submission and agree to **Simon Persighetti** seeking a PhD through the articulation of aspects of our collective practices. We do this in the knowledge that each of us retains a level of autonomy within our work and in relation to individual approaches and opinions within the practices. To this extent we regard our collective work as the output of 'distinctive voices in a chorus'. The submission of this thesis and related materials is not seen as a consensual interpretation of the works of **Wrights & Sites** and we retain and demand our individual rights to produce our own research, writing and interpretations of such work both now and in the future. Included in this agreement is **Tony Weaver** as Designer/ Art Director for the **Wrights & Sites** publications: *An Exeter Mis-Guide* (2003), *A Courtauld Mis-Guide* (2003) and *A Mis-Guide to Anywhere* (2006)

Signed Declaration:

Stephen Hodge.....*Stephen Hodge*.....Date *9/9/7*
Phil Smith.....*Phil Smith*.....Date *7.9.07*
Catherine Turner.....*Catherine Turner*.....Date *9/9/07*
Tony Weaver.....*Tony Weaver*.....Date *10-09-07*

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy have I been registered for any other University award.

This research was supported with a part-time bursary fee and other financial assistance provided by Dartington College of Arts.

I acknowledge the inspiration and contributions to my research and practice through a number of collaborations but most notably through lengthy professional practice as a member of the site-specific arts company, **Wrights & Sites** including the other core members, **Stephen Hodge, Phil Smith, Catherine Turner** and the visual artist, **Tony Weaver**. Key publications cited in this thesis and a range of projects and presentations cited in the Appendix have been devised or co-authored with this company. This document, its content and inclusions have been approved by my collaborators. In effect the paper should be instrumental in setting on the record what constitutes an incomplete but substantial archive of the development of Wrights & Sites on-going projects over a decade. At the same time I wish to signal that the interpretations, related research and framing of the practice mark my individual route and current understanding of the work and its implications. I have no intention through this submission of compromising the individual research activities or outcomes of these named colleagues.

Programme of study: PhD, (Part-Time) Interdisciplinary Arts

Publications and other forms of creative and performing work:

2006: (co-author with Wrights & Sites) 'A Manifesto for a New Walking Culture: dealing with the city' *Performance Research*, vol.11. no.2 (See Appendix 13)

2006: (co-creator with Wrights & Sites and visual artist, Tony Weaver) *A Mis-Guide To Anywhere*, site/journey-generic provocations in book form. Financially supported by Arts Council England and the Centre for Creative Enterprise & Participation. (See Appendix 15)

2003: (co-creator with Wrights & Sites and visual artist, Tony Weaver) *An Exeter Mis-Guide*, site/journey-specific provocations in book form. Financially supported by the Local Heritage Initiative, Arts Council England and Exeter Arts Council. Exeter. (See Appendix 16)

(AUTHOR'S DECLARATION CONTINUED)

2003-5: (co-creator with Wrights & Sites and visual artist, Tony Weaver) *A Courtauld Mis-Guide*, site/journey-specific provocations in map form. Commissioned for *Urban Networks* (East Wing Collection 06, 2003-5). London: Courtauld Institute of Art and its environs.

2000: (co-author with Wrights & Sites) *Studies in Theatre and Performance: Supplement 4*, 'SITE-SPECIFIC: The Quay Thing documented'.

1998: (co-director with Wrights & Sites and Stephen Clarke) *The Quay Thing: a sense of place*, 28 minute broadcast quality, digital video document.

1998: (co-director with Wrights & Sites and Stephen Clarke) *The Quay Thing: PILOT, Navigation*, 7 minute broadcast quality, digital video document.

2005: (co-creator with Wrights & Sites and Optimistic Productions/Fulcrum TV) *Subverting the City: A Mis-Guide to Milton Keynes*, short documentary for Channel 4's *3 Minute Wonder*.

Presentations and conferences attended:

2005: (co-author/co-presenter with Wrights & Sites) 'A Manifesto for a New Walking Culture: dealing with the city'. Zürich: *Everyday Walking Culture* (the Sixth International Conference on Walking in the 21st Century). (See Appendix 13)

2004: (co-author /co-presenter with Wrights & Sites 'Anywhere:Theories and Practices at Play in the Current Work of Wrights & Sites'. University of Exeter: *Site / Sight <- > Source / Resource Symposium*.

2004: (co-author/co-presenter with Wrights & Sites) 'Mis-Guiding the City Walker'. Copenhagen: *Cities for People* (Fifth International Conference on Walking in the 21st Century). (See Appendix 1)

(AUTHOR'S DECLARATION CONTINUED)

2005: (co-organiser with Wrights & Sites) *Walking Arts & Performance*, day-long pre-conference workshop with contributions from international walking artists. Zürich: *Everyday Walking Culture* (Sixth International Conference on Walking in the 21st Century.)

AN EXTENSIVE RANGE OF FURTHER PRACTICAL PROJECTS, EVENTS AND INVESTIGATIONS ARE INCLUDED IN THE **APPENDIX / CATALOGUE** ACCOMPANYING THIS THESIS. (Pages 115 – 216)

External contacts:

Site-specific arts company, Wrights & Sites. (1997 -)

tEXt Festivals Curator. (2002 – 7)

SPACE X Gallery, Exeter, Board of Management.

Format of submission for PhD:

A Written Thesis to provide an overview and to encapsulate a range of professional, practical and published works. Such works evidenced by an accompanying APPENDIX cataloguing such outcomes, events and presentations.

Word count of main body of thesis: 26,439

Signed..........Date 1/6/2008

Simon Persighetti

Abstract:

That which changes our way of seeing the streets is more important than that which changes our way of seeing paintings ...(Debord 1957, 107)

The politics of place and walking as an arts practice form the core concerns of my research. The research is being conducted with particular reference to the ongoing *Mis-Guide* projects, conceived and produced by the site-specific arts company, Wrights & Sites, of which I am a member. Our apparent rejection of performance-making for an audience has led to walking with spectators as collaborators in the work, and has made the physical journeys and verbal exchanges along the way an integral part of the practice. Through this work, which revolves around place, site-specific arts and urban walking, I am harnessing existing knowledge about cities as spectacle in the footsteps of the Flâneur, the Dadaist, and the Situationist and in recognition of contemporary works by artists who use journey and place as the text, reference points and resources that generate or support their research and practice.

I am exploring a sense that urban spaces and places can offer passages to utopian, creative and optimistic relationships with the everyday. I am engaged in a research writing or re-writing of the city activated by wanderings and explorations that can lead, for example, to an active engagement in issues of ecology and environmental planning. In the spirit of a walk between places and ideas I have attempted to structure the writing as if the writer and the reader are passing though or over different thresholds. We pass through thresholds or doorways or across boundaries in our physical and mental development but we

also employ such concepts practically and imaginatively in the devising of performance work. As theatre-makers we could make claim to be *leaving the everyday* and entering a dedicated space called a studio where by degrees we often engage in vocal, physical and mental practices that might appear very strange and out of place in any other context. The crossing of thresholds and boundaries is also part of the composition of performance with entrances and exits, appearance and disappearance, transformations and shape shifting as key aspects of such work.

... Liminality can perhaps be described as a fructile chaos, a fertile nothingness, a storehouse of possibilities, not by any means a random assemblage but a striving after new forms and structure. (Broadhurst 1999, 12-13)

Some of these thresholds in this thesis might be regarded as doorways or obstacles whilst others might verge closer to the ambient hubs noted by poets and psychogeographers. I see this writing as a means of interrogating and exploring and developing my own practice towards particular social and environmental issues.

To wander through a diverse terrain is to feel the surroundings pass through one's body as the body passes through the surroundings...
(Moore 1986, 57)

Simon Persighetti, JULY 2007

(Amendments & Corrections Completed July 2008)

See www.mis-guide.com



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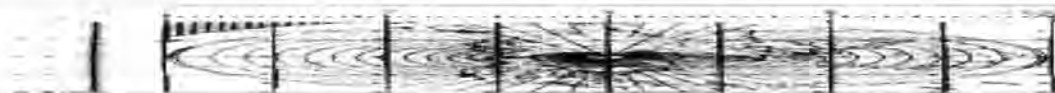


Appendices : Pages, 115 -215

Consisting in the main of Illustrations, notes, scripts and commentary as part of the archive of the work. (Catalogue of Events and Presentations)

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- Appendix 1 Page 119, Mis-Guiding the City Walker (2004)
- Appendix 2 Page 127 Details about *An Exeter Mis-Guide* (2003)
- Appendix 3 Page 136 Details about *A Mis-Guide to Anywhere* (2006)
- Appendix 4 Page 142 *Pilot Navigation* (1998)
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- Appendix 12 Page 190 *Passages* (2001)
- Appendix 13 Page 194 *A Manifesto Towards a New Walking Culture* (2005)
- Appendix 14 Page 203 List of projects, papers & publications 1997 – 2007
- POSTSCRIPT on my doorstep, Page 209
- Appendix 15 Page 213 Insert Publication: *A Mis-Guide to Anywhere*
- Appendix 16 Page 215 Insert Publication: *An Exeter Mis-Guide.*



Mis-Guided Exploration of Cities:

an ambulant investigation of participative politics of place.

Prologue

Vision seems to adapt itself to its object like the images that one has of a town when one contemplates it from the height of a tower; hearing is analogous to a view taken from outside and on the same level as the town; touch, finally, relates to (the understanding) of whoever comes in contact with a town from close up by wandering through its streets.

G. W. Leibniz' (from a letter to Jacob Thomasins, October 1668)
(Vidler 2001, 81)

This walk-word-work is the culmination of a wide range of projects directly and indirectly linked to the key aspects of this thesis. The thesis is simply a framing statement designed to open up discussion about the interconnectedness of work that moves between live performance, writing, curating and wandering about in the world. The practice as research platform is clearly present here and as with so many arts and performance-related projects, I am faced with the difficulty of creating an architecture of words to re-present the many physical architectures of the work. This paper is thus an *ambulant investigation* about what became, through practice, an ambulant investigation through space and place. At the outset I will attempt to exorcise the ghosts that lurk around the study of walking the city in the form of such commentators and theorists as Guy Debord with the *Theory of the Dérive* and Michel De Certeau's labyrinthine *Practice of Everyday Life*. The *Dérive* or *drift* is described by Debord as, ... a technique of transient passage through varied ambiances. (Debord 1981, 50) These figures along with the named and nameless flâneurs of the 19th and early 20th Century

are acknowledged but will not be central to the discussion. I consider this to be particularly important because to a certain extent the complex discourses surrounding, for example *Situationism* and *Psychogeography* can, rather than inspire activity, lead to a sense of inertia. (See Appendix 1, page 119) A useful reference to Situationism in relation to walking the city can be found in Jamie Hilder's *Praxis Makes Perfect: The Spatial Revolution of the Situationist International* (2003, points 1-17) , where, he says that he would prefer to write an alternative version of the paper by hand: with shoplifted pens, the entire text of Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle* on paving stones somewhere in Vancouver. (Hidler 2003, 17)

The *dérive* entails playful-constructive behavior and awareness of psychogeographical effects; which completely distinguishes it from the classical notions of the journey and the stroll" (Knabb 45). The journey or stroll is an aesthetic activity; the *dérive* is a critical activity. The difference between them is between observation and participation.

Cities are designed to encourage specific movements, and the person performing the *dérive* is meant to both submit to and contradict such pressures. A necessary result of this type of action is the enactment of an urban critique, and an awareness of how certain architectural phenomena promote or impede certain activities. The theory of the *dérive* is rooted in the Marxist idea that material conditions create consciousness, and combined with it is the SI's (Situationists International) concept of Unitary Urbanism, an urban design program meant to eliminate architecture which dulls human creativity. Unitary Urbanism, by amalgamating architecture with the other arts as well as technology, would result in a "lived art": a unifying activity that would eliminate alienation. (Hidler 2003, 17)

It is in practice, promotion and activation of this "lived art" that I am wary of a form of documentation that would run counter to the *desire lines* I hope to inspire through this writing. If this thesis, through the implementation of tortuous and elliptical propositions was instrumental in discouraging people from participating

in the notion of walking as an arts practice, then the project, in my view would falter. Having said this, I also acknowledge that much of the ground has been covered by others in untangling or translating these theories of the city. As someone actively engaged in arts practice and community action in my own city I do equate the deserted street with a polis/ public that fails to take the short walk to the polling booth. It may be optimistic to believe that this research as practice and practice as research could impact upon the structural, social and political life of the city but I am willing to make a step over the threshold. Discussing the contribution to the discourses on "The Art of taking a Walk", Rebecca Solnit usefully comments on De Certeau's view that:

Walkers are "practitioners of the city" for the city is made to be walked....
A city is a language, a repository of possibilities and walking is the act of speaking that language, of selecting from those possibilities.
(Solnit 2001, 196, 213)

Solnit goes on to recognise that if this metaphor of the city as a language holds true then the abandonment of the streets has frightening implications. She says: If the city is a language spoken by walkers, then a post-pedestrian city not only has fallen silent but risks becoming a dead language. (Solnit 2001, 213)

The silent or silenced streets of a city have provided familiar locations for spectral nightmare movie scenarios following post nuclear holocaust visions, feral societies and other real or imagined dystopias. *Metropolis*, *A Clockwork Orange*, *Bladerunner* and *Soylent Green* come to mind in a dread celluloid carnival that might include *Dawn of the Dead* (also known as *Zombi*), a 1978 production directed by George Romero and filmed in an after-hours Pennsylvania Shopping

Mall. Perhaps the *news-real* image of the dust covered and ashen faced escapees from the tumbling World Trade Centre in 2001 evoked a sense of a nightmare-come-true. I am not alone in recognising the implications of the brief second of shocked silence that followed the staccato death throes as the buildings imploded. In *American Ground*, William Langewiesche wrote: The powder was made primarily of crushed concrete.

The waves generated winds that pushed it through the streets in dense, choking clouds and lifted it to mix with smoke and darken the morning. Then all the white paperwork floated down on the city as if in mockery of the dead ... After the dust storms settled, people on the streets ... were calm. They walked instead of running, talked without shouting, and tried to regain their sense of place and time. Hiroshima is said to have been similar in that detail. ... People who came to the site in those early days often had the first same sensation, of leaving the city and walking into a dream. (Langewiesche 2004, 8-10)

To mark the idea of moving from one place to another the paper is divided into *THRESHOLDS* rather than chapters in order to provide a sense of the ambulant methods of research that are part of this academic and practical research through practice. If all the paperwork should be scattered over the city the walk as research will continue.

(See APPENDIX 1, Page 119, for further commentary on the relationship of Wrights & Sites work to issues of *Situationism* and *Psychogeography*.)



THRESHOLD 1. Documenting *Proofs or Illusions*



1. Gandy Street, Exeter, Devon, 2006, Persighetti

As I cross the first threshold I wish to provide a sense of my attitude and approach to the documentation of the work and to reflect upon some aspects of the contexts in which the work has been researched and developed. The phenomena of the city provide the theme and the arena for this exploration.

A house constitutes a body of images that give mankind proofs or illusions of stability. We are constantly re-imagining its reality: to distinguish all these images would be to describe the soul of the house; it would mean developing a veritable psychology of the house.
(Bachelard 1994, 17)

As I become more familiar with the much revered book, *The Poetics of Space*, this “Classic Look At How We Experience Intimate Places”, I also become uneasy about Bachelard’s reading of the domestic space called ‘home’. It

occurred to me that Bachelard's own memory, upon which he places great store, of the childhood house "from cellar to attic", might be based upon a sense of stability no longer present, presumed or assumed in this world. In other words, the poetics of space may now seem to be so disrupted and distorted by the velocity of change, that this version of the house as a microcosm to shape our thoughts, memories and dreams, has been confounded. The *supermodern* condition described by Marc Augé as the "acceleration" of history (Augé 1995, 26-28) highlights the possibility that notions of a (settled) settlement or dwelling place as a model of the cosmos are problematic. This is an important issue given that the house or home can be seen as one of the primary components of what constitutes, in multiple, a city. Bachelard talks about the city as a place lacking in *cosmicity* or intimacy and in so doing would no doubt view the intensity of the late 20th to early 21st Century cities as living nightmares capable of burying poetry beneath its bricks and mortar. I would suggest that there is almost an element of superstition attached to his critique of the intense urban milieu:

In Paris there are no houses and the inhabitants of the big city live in superimposed boxes...they have no roots, and what is quite unthinkable for a dreamer of houses, skyscrapers have no cellars. From the street to the roof, the rooms pile up one on top of the other, while the tent of a horizonless sky encloses the entire city. (Bachelard 1994, 26-27)

Such apparent aesthetic conservatism, if taken seriously, could lead all utopians to throw themselves off the tower blocks or cower in survivalist bunkers. The populist legacy of such ideas also emerged in the 1960's with paranoia about the effects upon high-rise humans living in *little boxes*, with predictions of mass alienation and the erosion of individualism. The anti-urban link between city and

the conditions for plague or rioting for example is by no means a new phenomenon although the current predictions about the growth of cities and the ecological footprint they require to absorb their waste and pollution may well lead to unparalleled unrest on local and global levels. To counter a fit of nostalgia, the *Mis-Guide* project to be discussed throughout this paper celebrates diversity and uncertainty in magnificent palaces and in the back alleyways of prisons.

...at the beginning of the twenty-first century (cities) contain almost half of the world's population. The world's urban population is increasing by 55 million each year....By the year 2020, urban population is likely to rise to over 75 per cent of global population. (Blowers and Pain 1999, 249)

If such predictions are true, then it is the city that may well require even more attention by artists and creative activists and planners than in Bachelard's poetic past.

Our cities which, because they import all their water, energy, food and raw materials and export all their waste are unsustainable. This makes them vulnerable in a way which is likely to generate within them social discontent. (Troy 2002, 18-19)

Many of the visible changes in the late 20th century European city were obviously driven by changes in working practices; the move from manufacturing to service industries; rationalisation of work forces under the influence of computer technologies and a highly volatile housing market. In an English city, evidence of change are clearly visible to its citizens, with the city, land-marked as it is, by church spires with little or no congregation, industrial complexes void of work, or office buildings permanently bearing *TO LET* signs. Such abandoned sites have become focus points for artists, either as new colonisers of the empty spaces or

as site-specific practitioners engaged in what could be regarded as a kind of post-industrial wake. At the *Turbulent Cities* (University of East London) seminar in 2001, Patrick Troy said:

The point has been reached in many cities, including London, where middle- to low-income earners such as nurses, police, teachers, transport workers and lower paid clerical workers simply cannot afford to buy or rent even very small flats in or near the centre. Without substantial intervention, few of the people in occupations needed to actually make the city work will be able to live within reasonable distance of their jobs. (Troy 2002, 7)

This kind of scenario is also being played out in cities worldwide, increasingly unstable, given the shifts in information and manufacturing bases, energy and global warming issues and the over all impacts of technological and economic globalisation. Given such a climate, to encourage through arts practices a fresh viewpoint and possibly transgressive or playful navigation of any city inevitably draws attention to such anomalies in city planning. This becomes particularly problematic when the municipality is engaged on the one hand with the promotion of heritage tourism and on the other with the concerns of commercial and industrial development within archaeologically or culturally sensitive sites.

...it is certain that we can no longer think of cities in the time-honoured ways. The advent of software signifies the rise of new forms of technological politics and new practices of political invention that we are only just beginning to comprehend as political ... (Amin & Thrift 2002, 127)

Amidst such changes in the locale and awareness of worldwide events constantly streaming into our lives, place becomes fluid or atomised and our identities may no longer be dependent upon ancestral *attics*, *cellars* or solid ground. The discourses around virtual spaces probably best express this sense

of movement, transition and velocity but the image of the collapsing twin towers of the World Trade Centre (2001) appears as an iconic emblem of an actual and a virtual world imploding so that *The Communist Manifesto* phrase borrowed by the modernist Marshall Berman, gathers a resonance that seems to hijack theory. From Marx and Engels (1848) he quotes: All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and men at last are forced to face ... the real conditions of their lives, and their relations with their fellow men. (Berman 1993, 21)

Here I do not make reference to that 9.11 event simply for dramatic effect but perhaps because since that dread day, our version of site is now seen in constant flux as if we have become conscious of a place in our psyche that is in continual freefall and is blown down the road in a storm of dust, paper memos, memorials and memories. The atomic mushroom cloud that haunted the period of the Cold War has it seems been replaced by a new gap in the skyline and a new form of warfare.

... We barely have time to reach maturity before our past has become history, our individual histories belong to a history writ large... Nowadays the recent past ... becomes history as soon as it has been lived. History is on our heels following us like our shadow, like death. (Augé 1995, 26-28)

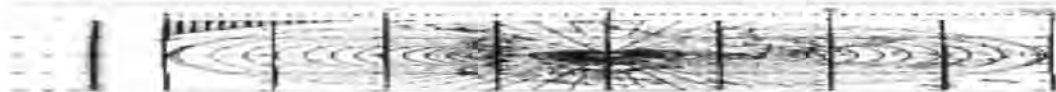
To this extent, the documentation of my own practice evidences a desire to historicise the recent past though it is done in the knowledge that the written word is merely a trace of the activities and event hood of the work. In a "rescue archaeology of the event", Mike Pearson suggests a forensic methodology to describe the "Aftermath" of the work or performance. He asks:

What has happened? What survives after the event? How is it remembered and recalled?... think of the scene of crime as a paradigm for our documentary efforts. (Pearson and Shanks 2001, 57)

It is perhaps ironic that arts practices that slip out of the frame still have to adhere to some kind of perspective or to borrow from Peggy Phelan, to dwell upon the vanishing point in a discourse about the "hole in the painting". (Phelan 1997, 24)

Artists who contest the monumental or the tangible, permanent artefact are aware of the ephemeral in their work. They celebrate the appearance and disappearance of their work almost as a consequence of a new and developing sense of time, space and place. I posit this notion as a means of challenging and observing my own site-specific practice. I want to ascertain the extent to which I have moved from a practice that can be seen as a kind of colonisation of time, space and place to a more transitory, less focussed and ambulant practice. Indeed, journeying on foot has been the means by which I and my collaborators have escaped the theatre space, entered the wider built environment and then kept on walking.

As a homage to transience, Andy Goldsworthy makes neat arrangements of leaves or pebbles or snow and Gustav Metzger pours acid on materials that will quickly decompose and disappear, leaving tiny residual traces. (Ede 2005, 43)



THRESHOLD 2: From Savannah to a Paving Stone

I cross the second threshold to provide a background to my practice and illustrate the motivations and circumstances that led to a move from performance through to a possibly more inclusive and participative mode of operation. In this section of the thesis, I have adapted, reworked and added to some of the early documentation concerning my own work and the development of a site-specific company practice. I wish through this sequence to explore performance investigations of site and the possible approaches to performance that might be pursued in and through site.

The politics of place, and walking as an arts practice, form the core concerns of my research. It has been conducted with particular reference to the ongoing *Mis-Guide* projects, conceived and produced by the company, Wrights & Sites, of which I am a member: a group of walking artists based in Exeter (UK), who make work that engages with site and landscape across a range of media such as installations, walks, maps and alternative guide books. Since 1997, we have grown used to working in specific sites and landscapes with specific communities, but the publication of *An Exeter Mis-Guide* (2003)* followed by *A Mis-Guide to Anywhere* (April 2006)*, provided us with opportunities to interact with a wider public. However from my personal vantage point the work began in another territory. *(See Appendix 2 , Page 127, Appendix 15, Page 213 & Appendix 3, Page 136 & Appendix 16 , Page 215 for further details about these publications.)

I worked as an art and drama teacher for 4 years (1987-91) in the landlocked African State of Zambia and it was there that I first became involved in what has been termed 'site-specific' performance work. On my first visit to that nation in 1984, I met Dickson Mwansa who was teaching drama at Lusaka University. He told me about a theatre company called Chikwakwa, an outreach group formed in 1969 from the university campus experimenting with the uses of theatre in rural development issues. Mwansa writes:

Drama is a familiar and effective form of teaching that has been widely used in Zambian society. In traditional society, it is used for teaching the young coming of age how to live in the world. In modern times, it is strongly integrated in various forms of development work. (Mwansa, 2003, 61)

'Chikwakwa' roughly translates as 'grass cutter' or 'machete', because the first task the performers completed on arrival at a particular location was to scythe a circle into the high savannah grass to create a performance arena. The cut grass was then used to create a thatched shelter to protect the actors from the heat of the sun and to be used as a base for meetings and devising a play which related directly to issues raised by local inhabitants. More recently (Residency: February to May 1994) a performance project called *Litooma* attempted to revive the original grassroots concept by holding workshops on the first Chikwakwa site.

The Litooma director Thomas Riccio described the place as:

...less a theatre and more an outdoor amphitheater in ruin. Located about 15 km from the (Lusaka) city center next to a housing area and cornfields, the stage house was a converted tobacco drying building on what was a former tobacco farm. Established during the late 1960s by a group of activist students that viewed theatre as a vehicle for social change and cultural identity. (Riccio 1993, unpaginated)

When I interviewed Mwansa in 1984, there was considerable tension brewing in the established theatre buildings of Zambia particularly as the theatres also ran as social clubs dominated at the time by mainly European expatriates. Stemming from the colonial (Northern Rhodesia) period the transition towards independence-inspired *Zambianisation* appeared to be taking far too long. The lack of evidence of any actively creative, cultural exchange was shockingly evident. Under these conditions the site of theatre was obviously highly contested and I can remember being naively outraged when I saw the Lowenthal Theatre building in Ndola on the Copperbelt of Zambia decorated with a wrought iron image of William Shakespeare! Dickson Mwansa commented wryly on this as simply being part of the legacy of colonialism and a rusting symbol of a (by-then) declining expatriate enclave mentality.

...The European tradition of drama in the theatre clubs is one based on the use of expensive and complicated stage settings, lighting systems, furniture and costumes. The Travelling Theatre can neither afford nor has room to carry such equipment. We use simple stage settings, in school halls, or outside in village squares, with sunlight or tilly lamp for lighting... (Mwansa 1977, unpaginated)

This image of creating a theatre out of the landscape and then of creating work which related directly to the landscape and its people was to provide influence and inspiration to my work from then on. The intrinsic drive of theatre work intertwined with task, need and the concerns of everyday life were certainly ideas shared by community artists in Britain.

The stories that form the basis for its scripts come straight out of life and are presented unapologetically, sometimes literally on a street corner, by the very people who live them. (van Erven 2001, 5)

It was the Chikwakwa act of grass cutting before any of the artifice, commonly connected to the aesthetics of theatre making, which led me to further consider the impact of site. There are obviously clear echoes of this kind of clearing of space in other examples of ceremonies and ritual theatre, even with the appearance of the *Leader* (clearing the play space) in the opening sequence of English Mumming Plays.

Since there is no theater building to house this dramatic event, its stage must be created anew with every performance ... the action is set apart from the spectators yet made accessible to all of them by the drawing of the circle. ... How this is accomplished may vary from play to play. In some it may be done by the performers all entering at once and walking around in a circle while they sing or while the Presenter gives his first speech ... In other cases it may be the Presenter who walks around, declaiming a prologue that calls for "room" and setting the boundaries of the action as he walks. (Brody 1969, 17)

During the second half of the Twentieth Century, the community theatre movement was instrumental in attempting to mark social, political and economic changes by encouraging specific inhabitants of localities to re-examine their own histories. The notions we might connect with site-specific work which emerged from such community arts practice in the 1970's and 1980's are often related to place by memory or reminiscence as in the documentary plays of the Living Archive in Milton Keynes, and particularly in the work of Ann Jellicoe and the Colway Theatre Trust, established in 1979. The work often consisted of peoples' histories woven into pageant-like plays performed in and by members of specific communities. The work might have been performed in specific geographical

locations which amplified the stories or histories but most of the work could arguably be more strongly resourced or rooted in ideas and narrative than in a tangible sense of place or politics of place. In his study of *The Radical In Performance*, Baz Kershaw perhaps ruefully quotes the doyen of the English community play, Ann Jellicoe as writing that:

If we set out to challenge the basic political feelings of the communities we serve, we will alienate large sections of them and lose their support ... Politics are divisive. We strongly feel that the humanising effect of our work is far more productive than stirring up political confrontation.
(Kershaw 1999, 64)

Kershaw notes that some commentators, mainly from the Left, had 'taken her to task for the apparent *naivete* of the modernist assumption that art can rise above politics.' (Kershaw 1999, 64-65) I think that Joan Littlewood of the famous Theatre Workshop at Stratford East might have applied a more radical turn of phrase in response to that. Perhaps the sensitivities of Colway Theatre Trust clients provided behind the scenes politics that have gone undocumented? It might be a matter of conjecture, but in the case of the community play it may be that the actual play is **not** 'the thing' but the gatherings, conflicts and celebrations that surround it are. In a more radical and gritty scenario and during the same period, John Fox described the early community collaborations of Welfare State as research 'into nascent ritual (using theatre) as part of a way of life rather than a repeated dramatic production where theatre is an end in itself.' (Coult & Kershaw 1999, 29) In a discussion about commissioning of Welfare State projects, Fox stated that:

The worst demand is where we (Welfare State) are expected to patch up all the social ills in their neighbourhood and provide massive turn-on entertainment more likely to benefit an administrator's career than the community itself. (Coult & Kershaw 1999, 17)

Perhaps the *Colway* community work could be termed as 'site-sensitive' bearing similarities to the way Shakespeare texts, particularly *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, have often been transposed upon idyllic garden locations. In such instances the open-air perhaps evokes or anticipates the sky of the original Globe Theatre and the fantasies and romantic illusions popularly connected with landscape. The on-location community play certainly addresses site with more integrity in that the local audience shares the experience and air of the play, but it often remains sensitive rather than specific to the unwritten text of site. To this extent there is an element of anthropological evocation attached to such work because the community play seems to promote a sense of communion formerly generated through rituals now commonly referred to as *pre-theatre forms* or the first 'age' of theatre (Brody 1969, 19)

At Dartington College of Arts, Devon, in the early 1980's, the theatre director Colette King led a module called *Theatre for Domestic Spaces* that promoted the notion of theatre being possible in any context but also suggesting that the ordinary living space was a vehicle for the imagination as much as the generally accepted places for the exposition of visual arts and performance. Such an approach also supports the methodologies of devised theatre where fragments of information, texts or material evidence could be explored and amplified in the generation of performance composition. This also readily adhered to the

Duchampian model of the *readymade* object extended to found space or location. In an interview with Allan Kaprow, the key figure in the development of Happenings, talking about his multi-sited and remotely realised project called *Self-Service* (Summer 1967) , Richard Schechner commented that the work was,

... embedded in everyday activity, inseparable from it, sometimes identical with it.

KAPROW: Yes, and the very materials, the environment, the activity of the people in that environment are the primary images, not secondary ones. The environment is not a setting for a play (if you want to use that theatrical allusion) which is more important than the people; the accented or oblique activity within the environment is the event. There is an absolute flow between event and environment.(Sandford 1995, 221-229) ¹

In theatre practice Tadeusz Kantor is perhaps best known for his manifestos about real spaces and real objects as transmitters of plural and protean signification. His work was very much engaged in the breaking of frames and led to his own experiments with the potential of the Happenings which he began to organize in 1965 following a visit to the USA.

Happenings, as Kantor himself wrote, were a consequence of his previous experiences in the theatre and as a painter: "Thus far I have tried to overcome the stage, now I have abandoned the stage outright, that is, I've abandoned a place that remains in a certain relation with viewers. In searching for a new place, I theoretically had at my disposal all the reality of life." (Kitowska-Lysiak 2002, unpaginated)

¹ *Self-Service*, a piece without spectators, was performed in the summer of 1967 in Boston, New York, and Los Angeles. It spanned four months, June through September. Thirty-one activities were selected from a larger number. Their time and locality distribution were determined by chance methods. Participants selected events from those offered for their city; each had to pick at least one, although doing many or all was preferable. (Sandford 1995, 221- 229)

In community theatre, the archiving and exposition of its texts, actions or living memory was driven by an awareness that as people became or were forced by economics, to be more mobile, then the sense of community, as it was understood, could be recognised or rekindled, celebrated or enhanced. An undercurrent of sentiment, nostalgia and melancholy may have been the unspoken residue of such activities, perhaps providing in a public arena, the tensions between “proofs or illusions of stability” (Bachelard 1994, 17) This along with the niceties of sponsorship could have been instrumental in defusing such potentially political grass roots activity. As with any concept or form that ostensibly emerges from an abrasive or revolutionary movement, there are examples of the ways in which they can be assimilated by the status quo. It has been observed that innovative experiments explored by community arts animators had by the 1980's started to be appropriated by market forces. At their worst, some organisations became generators of bespoke, carnival-style arts projects sponsored by development agencies to administer, in the words of Welfare States' John Fox, 'psychedelic elastoplast'. (Coult & Kershaw 1999, 17) Alarmingly, and more recently, it has become evident that some of the principles of the situationist movement have, it appears, been appropriated for draconian, military purposes. In her contribution to a Wrights & Sites performance lecture, *Simultaneous Drift (4 walks, 4 routes, 4 screens)* Cathy Turner quoted Shimon Naveh, former brigadier general in the Israeli Defence Force who said:

We must differentiate between the charm and even some values within Marxist ideology and what can be taken from it for military use. The theories ... are based upon a methodology that wants to disrupt and

subvert the existing political, social, cultural or military order. The disruptive capacity in theory ... is the aspect of the theory that we like and use ... This theory is not married to its socialist ideals. (Weizman 2006, 15)²

In this context, the military operational theorist, Naveh was discussing Israeli Defence Force strategies for urban warfare in Palestinian cities where he revealed that some of the principles of the Situationist practices of *dérive* had been adopted to, “break down distinctions between private and public, inside and outside, use and function, replacing private space with a ‘borderless’ public surface.” (Weizman 2006: unpaginated) This of course contrasts with an optimistic assertion that:

... the Situationists replaced the randomness of Surrealist roaming with the construction of *rules of the game*. To play means deliberately breaking the rules and *inventing your own*, to free creative activity from socio-cultural restrictions, to design aesthetic and revolutionary actions that undermine or elude social control. (Careri, 2002, 106)

As will be discussed later, (See pp. 63-64) similar values are connected to the *Mis-Guide* project where the adoption of playful or ludic strategies are applied to the cities we explore.

²Wrights & Sites, *Simultaneous Drift (4 walks, 4 routes, 4 screens)* a performance-lecture at Arnolfini, Bristol, UK as part of *Situations: Material City* programme on 11 October 2006. *Material City* was a programme of interdisciplinary conversations, commissioned projects and creative responses which investigated imagination and the urban environment. It was led by *Situations* at the University of the West of England, Bristol in association with Arnolfini and the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology at the University of Bristol. Funded by Arts Council England.

However we have given recognition to the sense that urban exploration could be misinterpreted and have stated that: “the very activities we are promoting as ways of re-seeing the world could be for all we know, the kinds of methodologies being suggested by more covert, formal or informal militaristic groups.” (Wrights & Sites 2006: 60) Whilst the Situationists may have been regarded as rather ineffectual revolutionaries, the impact of their ideas re-interpreted and harnessed in the theatre of war seems mentally and physically abhorrent. In applying such tactics such armed forces have been able to consider domestic spaces as penetrable zones to be demolished or blasted through wherever deemed necessary in the pursuit of duty.

Naveh is referring to a set of military strategies developed for invading Palestinian cities, re-interpreting the map to read alleys, roads and doorways as no go areas, instead adopting a tactic of 'moving through walls...like a worm that eats its way forwards...'
(Kokhavi in Weizman 2006, 9) ³

If site-specific work makes any departure from the usual premise of theatre it is made out of a desire to let PLACE speak as loud if not louder than the human mediator or actor who enters place. In site-specific work the artifice of acting is exposed when the site reminds the audience of their own presence in a particular time and space.

³ Eyal Weizman interviewed Aviv Kokhavi on 24 September 2004 at an Israeli military base near Tel Aviv. Translation from Hebrew by the author; in video documentation by Nadav Harel and Zohar Kaniel (2004)

To this extent the Brechtian tenet of a self-conscious (smoking) spectator engaged in witnessing the everyday seems to be realised. His explanation about the development and dynamic of his Epic Theatre significantly chooses the street corner as its inspiration. Though the concept originally appeared in the shorter form of a poem called, *On Everyday Theatre*, I will quote extensively from its later rendition:

It is comparatively easy to set up a basic model for epic theatre. For practical experiments I usually picked as my example of completely simple, 'natural' epic theatre an incident such as can be seen at any street corner: an eyewitness demonstrating to a collection of people how a traffic accident took place ... The demonstrator need not be an artist ... On the contrary it is important that he should not be too perfect. His demonstration would be spoilt if the bystanders' attention were drawn to his powers of transformation ... He must not 'cast a spell' over anyone. He should not transport people from normality to 'higher realms'. He need not dispose of any special powers of suggestion. It is most important that one of the main features of the ordinary theatre should be excluded from our street scene: the engendering of illusion. The street demonstrator's performance is essentially repetitive. The event has taken place; what you are seeing now is a repeat. If the scene in the theatre follows the street scene in this respect then the theatre will stop pretending not to be theatre, just as the street-corner demonstration admits it is a demonstration (and does not pretend to be the actual event).
(Willet/Brecht 1985, 121)

The clarity of attention and intention in this writing and its call for economy in performance and a fascination with the act of observation certainly resonate with the tensions and demands of the site-specific. This proposition, if applied back into the street of found space, may suggest a different approach to performance and one that probably continues to be explored through task-based performance rather than in narrative theatre. Anthony Howell's systemic work with Theatre of

Mistakes and his acknowledgement of the performance scores developed by Fluxus are a case in point. (Kaye 1996, 130)

In traditional theatre, interactions are predetermined and governed by narrative... The surfacing of actual tensions in real time, rather than their exploration in fictional space and time, is one of the most important and problematic aspects of performance art. The cathartic excesses of theatre are replaced by the subtle realities of human motivation and interaction. (Childs and Walwin 1998, 121)

This aspect of what might be termed *non-performance* (or 'not-acting' to adopt one pole of a Michael Kirby continuum that signals different degrees of representation) would be key to the departure that Wrights & Sites eventually made. In contrast to a community theatre that endeavours to identify or evoke a kind of historical homogeneity, site-specific arts practice can be instrumental, consciously or otherwise, in amplifying the power structures, hypocrisies and contradictions of a site or locality. If this is the case then the human presence of an actor can inadvertently mask or camouflage the very site that is being addressed. A clue to the performer finding a way to work transparently can be further exploited by considering that:

To act means to simulate, to represent, to impersonate. As Happenings demonstrated, not all performing is acting. Although acting was sometimes used, the performers in Happenings generally tended to "be" nobody or nothing other than themselves. (Kirby 1972, 3)

In terms of exploring the gap between the real and the imagined in site performance, this might allow a reconsideration of the performer not as figure against the ground of site but as a collaborator with site.

(*In Happenings*) They walked, ran, said words, sang, washed dishes, swept, operated machines and stage devices, and so forth, but they did not feign or impersonate. (Kirby 1972, 3)

This statement is usefully echoed by a description of Kantor's first *Happening*

Cricotage (1965):

10 December 1965 - the first happening in Poland took place in the café of Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Sztuk Pięknych (Friends of the Fine Arts Society) in Warsaw. It lasted one hour... 'it was in a café that the cricotage took place. I included 14 life processes such as eating, shaving, coal carrying, sitting etc. In the course of the happening these activities were deprived of their practical function and each of them was 'doomed' to rely on its own development.' (Borowski 1982, 85)

Thus site-specific theatre that genuinely addresses a particular location can provide a means of opening up places that are normally hidden or circumscribed by actual or bureaucratic barbed wire and *KEEP OUT* signs. Part of its purchase is in its invitation to look behind the real and metaphorical shutters, fences, boundaries and boarded up windows. To this extent, the site-specific artist may legitimise a quasi-trespass for, or on behalf of her audience or spectators. In this there is a playfulness that recognises a line of resistance or desire in the public to subvert the dominant power structures of the city. Perhaps such an impulse is the political imagination triggered through play.

Play, as experimental activity, is often regarded as a key constituent of, and stimulant to, the imagination. It is also of crucial importance in the city's activities, and in programmes to free up the city's spaces. For example, much of the Situationist political programme can be interpreted as the production of new modes of play and correspondingly playful spaces within which the imagination could roam free. (Amin & Thrift 2002, 115)

The exploration I became engaged in during my work in Zambia also arose from what could be seen as the luxury of wide open spaces in a predictable climate. It

was possible, for example, to terminate a section of an outdoor performance by relying upon speedy and dramatic equatorial sun downs. The positioning of images in this particular light and the use of local resources such as river clay, bamboo, bark and elephant grass underline this experience of site-specificity. It is significant, perhaps more by coincidence, that anthropologist Victor Turner⁴ formulated his work on Liminality and the relationships between ritual and theatre, through his study of the Lozi Peoples of Northwest Rhodesia, now named Zambia.

The term *limen* (Latin, threshold) or *liminal* was used by Victor Turner in his work on anthropology and performance to describe a certain marginalized space which holds a possibility of potential forms, structures, conjectures and desires ... (Broadhurst 1999, 12-13)

Through my practice, development of site work included silent walks, gathering found objects, bird watching, cooking, processional performance and building totemic sculptures. The rainy season did preclude outdoor activity to a greater extent due to the unarguable force of the elements which in 'thunder, lightning or in rain' overshadowed the puny machinations of mere mortals. It is also worth noting that in a society where the gap between dream and reality is not as divided as in the western European culture(s), the power of place is often overwhelming.

⁴ See Turner, Victor, (1982). From ritual to theater: The human seriousness of play. New York, PAJ Publications.

One also has to acknowledge that in Zambia most performance work, rituals and ceremonies continue to take place in open-air spaces despite the presence of urban theatre buildings, churches and temples. I am keen at this point to underline the fact that most of my work there occurred in a teaching situation and was in a predominantly urban and industrially scarred environment that bears little resemblance to the stereotypical rural image commonly used to portray an African nation. During that period there were a number of incidents of civil unrest, a cholera epidemic, a failed coup and illegal political rallies as part of a Movement for Multi-Party Democracy. The mass gatherings of people either involved in food riots or in the celebratory marches against the one-party state, and the welcome visit to Zambia of a newly released Nelson Mandela⁵, added up to a lively, volatile and exciting time in the towns and cities of Zambia. This would present me with a rather contrasting experience on my return to the UK. The work of Welfare State and the influence of Peter Kiddle (Theatre of Public Works) certainly underpinned my awareness of contextual practice during this period. To a certain extent site-specific methodologies can be seen as tools for interrogating context and therefore can be seen as a means of enquiry as opposed to rehearsals towards performance outcomes. The idea of process as opposed to product will be explored further in my articulation of *Mis-Guidance*.

⁵ February 11 1990: Author of "No Easy Walk to Freedom" and Leading anti-apartheid campaigner Nelson Mandela was freed from prison in South Africa after 27 years. His release followed the relaxation of apartheid laws - including lifting the ban on leading black rights party the African National Congress (ANC) - by South African President FW de Klerk.

The second *Threshold* provides an important record of the development of my practice because it represents a lived initiation into more profound understanding of the connections between place, performance and politics. I had witnessed in Zambia a very practical example of a participative mode of operation that had led to a change in the history of a nation.⁶ For better or worse the range of actions on the streets and public spaces were performances, speeches, demonstrations and marches that led to a palpable period of change.

⁶The Movement for Multi-party Democracy (MMD) is a political party in Zambia. Originally formed in response to the general discontent in the nation due to the perceived economic mismanagement and poor governance, by the previous government of UNIP led by Dr Kenneth Kaunda. MMD controlled an absolute majority in parliament between 1991 and 2001, when its past leader, Frederick Chiluba was president of the country. Its election into power in 1991 ended the 27 year rule of the United National Independence Party .



THRESHOLD 3: Underneath the Arches (angelcast to Wrights & Sites)

7

We have sat, an easy generation
In houses held to be indestructible
(Thus we built those tall boxes on the island of Manhattan
And those thin aerials that amuse the Atlantic swell).

8

Of those cities will remain what passed through them, the
wind !
The house makes glad the eater: he clears it out.
We know that we're only tenants, provisional ones
And after us there will come: nothing worth talking about.

9

In the earthquakes to come, I very much hope
I shall keep my cigar alight, embittered or no
I, Bertolt Brecht, carried off to the asphalt cities
From the black forests inside my mother long ago.

Bertolt Brecht ⁷

This third threshold brings the commentator back home or at least back to England to face the *Land of Hope and Glory* return to what was chillingly called *Thatcher's Britain* in 1992. I had left a place where visceral drama seemed part of everyday life and where I had witnessed and participated in the victory rally of the newly instated Movement for Multi-Party Democracy. In this shock of my own culture, I began writing a play called *Train* which projected the idea that sections of the railways, then being privatised, could be used as a means of 'disappearing' the losers and lost of society.

⁷ Extract from Brecht in Willet, J and Manheim, R, eds.(1979) *Bertolt Brecht: Plays, Poetry and Pros*, 1913-56, *OF POOR B.B. The Impact of the Cities*, 1925-1928, London, Eyre Methuen Ltd.)

In such an imagined scenario, a government that claimed to be 'closing down the something-for-nothing society' would hive off a section of the rail network and, using old trains and rolling stock, create an invisible, mobile city of the *new underclass*. Thus this threshold reveals some of the political implications of making work in place and in response to place and the circumstances revealed through the process. It also marks a significant alliance with other artists *underneath the arches*.

In a long, grey waiting room
A sense of being cut off
an impression of beggars in the land of plenty
a sense of sanctioned intolerance
a sense of cultural poverty.
(Wrights & Sites, Persighetti, 2000, 10)

While I was developing this *TRAIN* script at Exeter & Devon Arts Centre (Exeter Phoenix), I overheard some people at the bar talking about holding a theatre festival of new writing. The central figure at this scene, who turned out to be Professor Peter Thomson of Exeter University Drama Department, had secured access to some enclosed railway arches where he intended producing a programme of 'new writing' performances. The local professional company, Theatre Alibi, had agreed to host the festival by supplying design, technical and marketing resources and skills. The festival was named *Platform 4*. The tour of the arches, its spine supporting the Paddington-Penzance rail line, revealed a dark, dank, subterranean chamber. Its only inhabitants were pigeons. It had been used as car mechanics workshops and storage space but was now empty. Out of its Brunel designed stone bones emerged *The Archangel of Industry*, the only site-specific event on the programme devised, designed and executed in situ. It

was to mark the beginning of a whole series of *angelcast* collaborations with an alliance of musicians and performers including Joel Segal, Lily Neal, Carolyn Purslow, and the actor/designer John H. Bartlett.

Shall we search out angel bones for relics
and wallow in the romance of despair?
For the work, the toil, the sweat of a nation
in a place that is no longer there.
I saw you weep in the theme park playground,
A helter-skelter of an age undone,
Where the ghosts in colourless supplements,
turn to ash in the fading sun. (Wrights & Sites, Persighetti, 2000, 10)

The spirit of the first *Platform 4* season spawned many local offshoot activities because it re-ignited a sense that, despite funding problems and a general air of political despondency, it really was possible to create new and innovative work. During the period from 1992-97 **angelcast** continued making major and minor work including the production of two site films (*The Drop*, *The Suit*) directed by Stephen Clarke. The act of making this kind of work can indicate a direct political stance because it is work which inherently challenges the status quo of theatre buildings and galleries; it also can generate questions concerning land, ownership and human geography. Its political impact is heightened because the performance occurs in environments which remain in place after the event. Even the demolition of a building fails to immediately erase the geographical location on maps or in memory. A play inside a theatre is nearly always viewed within a temporary or ephemeral frame. The use of a non-theatre space suggests the empowering of the artist and the development of a wider audience. There was a certain freshness about the platforms because you were able to see new work

without the obvious cultural trappings of auditorium or studio theatre. There was also a sense of experiencing theatre as an event generated by subverting or transforming the established use of a warehouse or abandoned shopping mall. Perhaps in deference to Bachelard one must also be conscious or wary of the seduction of the poetics of place. Sacha Craddock, writing about the work of Heather Ackroyd and Daniel Harvey, comments that:

Site-specific work often carries the 'advantage' of ready-made atmosphere around domestic decay and worn-down industry: there is always ample potential for nostalgia about past lives and existences. (Childs & Walwin 1998, 93)

The *Platform 4* seasons ran for three consecutive years in three non-theatre spaces and each time, the question arose about the meaning of the banner 'New Writing'. Because the form and content of the plays largely adhered to a literary tradition, it seemed to me that most of the work produced was new only in the fact that the ink was still wet. The production directors did acknowledge the sites from a sensitive or scenographic point of view but the notion of creating work out of the sites was not on the agenda. The lack of response to place was amplified during the first season when trains thundered over the actors' heads. The suspension of disbelief was irrefutably challenged.

Out of these questions about place came a group of *Platform 4* associates and spectators who wanted to tackle practically this question of PLACE. We all recognised that we had very different approaches as writers and theatre makers. There were no real expectations about a particular style or consensus aesthetic. At the bottom line, we recognised that to form an alliance might assist us in the

funding game and as a group we would be able to share resources and logistical support to make some ambitious work. This recognition of difference might also generate a picture of the potential variations present in the site continuum from sensitive to specific approaches and outcomes. The incentive of the Lottery/Arts Council initiative made it seem possible to raise the profile of this kind of work and I enthusiastically signed up with this new alliance under the banner of

Wrights & Sites. Writing about this period, Cathy Turner recalls:

Not all of us were happy to describe ourselves as 'playwrights', since the term implied a preoccupation with literary texts. Those of us who felt the word might be applied to us, also felt limited by the assumption that words and words alone must be our medium. All of us felt that 'new writing' was bound up with all the languages of theatre. As a group, we preferred to drop the first syllable and call ourselves simply 'Wrights', a word which suggests craft and physical activity. The dual commitment to theatre-making (as opposed to playwriting) and non-theatre spaces led us to coin the name: Wrights & Sites. (Cathy Turner in Wrights & Sites 2000, 4)

The organisation consisting of Stephen Hodge, Catherine Turner, Phil Smith and myself, Simon Persighetti, began working together as a performance company engaged in a major project called *The Quay Thing* funded by Arts Council England (1998). (See Appendix 4, page 142 & Appendix 5, Page 147)The focus of the project generated 7 productions in various locations along the Exeter Canal and the River Exe. At its outset the desire to include public participation in our work may have been quite tokenistic in that there was some level of community involvement in the devising and realisation of the work, but at times this felt fairly peripheral to the central ambitions of the project and of the company intent.

What does become clear however is that the making of art works from, for and in, particular places does implicate a public in a manner quite different to the exposition of work in a theatre or gallery. This comes close to Lucy Lippard's description of community artists as "animators" rather than as interpreters or creators of expressions or impressions. (Lippard 1997, 267) Perhaps the idea of animation can equally be applied to built space as much as in relation to those who inhabit it. We chose the riverside location because it seemed to us that it presented many possibilities because of its history: its crucial trade role in the development of the city; its contemporary use as a work and leisure space; its mix of ancient and modern architecture; its busy and abandoned buildings and spaces. Most importantly it presented itself as the artery of Exeter: the waterway of simultaneous past and present. When we enter the public space or the field or the abandoned building new constraints quickly reveal themselves. Every centimetre that surrounds us may have been measured, allotted, bought or entered into the records upon written deeds. What this suggests is that artists who escape the gallery or the auditorium find themselves in other kinds of contract with land-lords and legislators. Such tensions remind the site-specific artist of the need to see through the received image of the great outdoors or the *romance of decay* in the rusty factory and to realise that it presents another kind of frame with its own peculiar sub-texts and subsoil. In addressing *site-specific performance and the material past*, Mike Pearson observes that:

We might envisage performance which refuses the panoptic view, which is aware of what it brings to site, which makes no attempt to re-enact the million, million occurrences which have happened there, which is aware of

its nature as a contemporary act, as the latest occupation of a place where previous occupations are still apparent and cognitively active, the friction of what is *of* the place and what is brought *to* the place. (Pearson & Shanks 2001, 111)

The process of making site-specific performance is often archaeological. The signs we find on the upper layers of the site may mask incredible mysteries of ownership which challenge our sense of place and our sense of ourselves upon this planet. Each site has its own cultures, architectural sign systems, forensic evidence, written and oral histories which makes each site unique and requires varied and fresh modes of investigation. The politics of ownership, often an invisible thing, also becomes a significant part of the unwritten script. This made us indeed aware of ourselves operating in a volatile *contemporary act*.

During our development of the proposal we consulted with local inhabitants, local authorities and the regional arts organisation, South West Arts (now ACE South West). There was general support for the project including verbal offers of matching funding from local authorities but we were to find out to our cost that words are not always enough. When the news came that we had won the award our good news was met with animosity from the city council rather than congratulations. We were unfortunate that in the interim period there had been some dramatic changes in personnel as well as some political furniture moving. However the most important factor may have been that our proposed performance sites turned out to be hot spots of sensitivity for the city council as this location had already been earmarked for typical waterside redevelopment. First steps had already been put in place with the eviction of the popular Maritime

Museum from former warehouses and notices to quit distributed to boat owners in the canal basin. In such a climate it might have been considered risky to allow access to a group of unknown artists into buildings safely sealed for future plans particularly if they were not willing to apply the *psychedelic elastoplast*.

(Coult & Kershaw 1999, 17) In this case such environmental first-aid would have included, at the councils' request, a willingness to perform and lead themed *playdays* by the river, dressed up as pirates (!) The other problem festering in the background lay in the fact that the Arts Council/ Lottery funding for our own project apparently stood over and above the amount that the council itself were able or prepared to spend on the entire city Summer Festival. Some angry and possibly embarrassed civic figures accused us of attempting to blackmail them into supporting the project, citing an article in a local newspaper that claimed that the funding we had been offered was dependent upon matched city council funding.

In fact we only needed a token amount of funding from local sources to release a vast amount of main project funding. This conflict led to two nauseating inquisition-like meetings in civic offices and council chambers that yielded us little but frustration and anger. Despite being in a city, the treatment we received might be more appropriate in a backwoods Wild West sheriffs' office. It was clear that we would have to find financial support elsewhere but of course the real worry was that as our relationship with this authority had turned so unexpectedly sour, we feared that access to the quay of the *Quay Thing* would be denied us. In

other words the entire premise and *premises* of the project would be barred from us. Phil Smith wrote:

I don't think we ever quite realised how political our choice of site was. If we had redefined the use of The Quay as a site for public experiment we would have been turning around the civic project. Any chance we had of doing that was disrupted by the Council's animosity. (Wrights & Sites 2000, 48)

Being aware that most of the property in the area belonged to a hostile council forced us to play our contingency card. At an emergency meeting we declared: 'If they don't want us on their land, we'll take to the water'. Work began to secure access to a large boat to provide an escape from our out-of-site predicament. Liz Swift of VOID who later made work commissioned as part of Wrights & Sites main season tells of their company decision to reference an existing text as part of a response to the circumstances of the location and its restrictions:

VOID has frequently used classic theatre texts as elements within performances. The texts have often facilitated an engagement with the subject of theatrical representation - a theme which has been an ongoing interest. Furthermore, theatre texts have been used to respond to and comment upon contemporary themes whilst retaining a critical distance from present politics... (Wrights & Sites 2000, 93)

Thus the VOID performance was named *Treading Water* and included the adoption and fragmenting of an appropriate Ibsen text, *The Enemy of the People*

... about small-town bureaucracy and corruption. It tells the story of Dr. Stockman, the 'Enemy' of the title, who discovers that the waters of his home town, an up and coming spa, are infected. His findings are suppressed by the local council and community who discredit and ostracise him. (Wrights & Sites 2000, 93)

Whilst emerging from unfortunate circumstances, this stumbling block that had led the company into such disarray was actually instrumental in sending Wrights & Sites on their current and decade-long journey. By degrees the stumbling became a series of walking exploits initially made as reluctant nomads or arts exiles on our own turf. The transitory aspect of the work is clearly expressed in Phil Smith's records of what he called *a predatory struggle for space and site*.

We were in our second chance site. We were in a compromise. We were in a plan we had once discarded, haunted by the ghost of an idea we'd already laid. Yet there were no nuances of this death. The cadaverous reanimation of a threatened project was no doubt felt by all four co-initiators. But none of us made it explicit in our work. (Wright & Sites 2000, 54)

This record of a *struggle for space* is helpful in illustrating the political implications and potentials of our work, not just in terms of our arts practice but as a more general and shared sense of the existing measures of control of public and private spaces. In Britain this is particularly pertinent given the claimed upturn in CCTV installations in our towns and city centres.

According to the information commissioner, there are now 4.2m cameras in Britain. New research by J P Freeman, a security consultancy based in Connecticut, shows that Germany, the country in Europe with the next highest number, has just 1.6m. The whole of Western Europe excluding the UK has 6.5m. (Iredale 2007, unpaginated)

Such figures have been contested but it is clear that security providers are becoming a formidable force. New developments in CCTV technology include devices that are programmed to automatically track and record unusual movement or behaviour. A device called *The Bug* has been tested in Luton (UK) and it is claimed that : "The software linked to the cameras looks out for some 50

behaviour traits that could be suspicious." Stuart Thompson, managing director of the company developing this product apparently agreed that : "It may mistake someone window-shopping for someone loitering, but on every occasion that a crime has been committed the system has always caught evidence." (Iredale 2007, unpaginated). Under the gaze of such a high-tech panopticon, the implications for urban explorers and for others interested in the mechanisms and flows of city life are obvious. In their discussion about the impact of what has been termed *hyper-surveillant control* , McLaughlin & Muncie suggest that there will come a time when members of certain urban societies will become so used to the notion of CCTV saturation that the impact of *conformity and control* will generate a kind of post-panopticon culture:

We can imagine, for example, how certain individuals, including anti-social 'others', will actually get a buzz out of being active participants 'appearing' in the digital crime-scape that is city life or producing 'hazy' spaces beyond the power of vision. (Pile, Brook, Mooney 1999, 134)

As a point of interest it is reported that my own city, Exeter (UK) is about to buy in to this new *Bug* facility. (Iredale 2007,unpaginated) In its description of the new Exeter, Princesshay shopping centre, a company called Vigilant Technology, a *worldwide leading provider of intelligent IP surveillance and security solutions*, celebrated its contract to supply equipment for this Land Securities project:

The site under development covers an area of 530,000 square ft providing a mix of new shops, residential apartments, cafes, bars, restaurants and improved public spaces and new public toilets ... Such a massive development has inevitably created a requirement for a sophisticated video management system to support what will be in excess of a two hundred camera CCTV system ... we have provided for some 200 terabytes of hard disc storage capacity. Vigilant NetView, an entirely

digital matrix will allow operators at multiple locations to view live or recorded images from any of the cameras as well as to control PTZ cameras from both the Princesshay and Exeter City Council's control rooms. (Vigilant 2008, unpaginated)

Without wishing to engender a surfeit of paranoia, the CCTV discussion is represented here to give emphasis to the sense of city as a place of performance. From the performance of the everyday that might include the flows of crowds and traffic as well as the less evident flows of images and electronic communications. The dominant politics of production, consumerism and capital that fuels the mechanisms of cities provides the adventure playground where the city can be seen to be more than an architectural construct but as an active culture. Thus this threshold may indeed reveal some of the political implications of making work in place and in response to place and the circumstances revealed through the process.



THRESHOLD 4: Pilot: Navigation 2

The Quay Thing – Performances

The Quay Thing (Pilot-Navigation)

5, 6, 7, 9, 10 & 11 July 1998

Four performances created for a boat journey between Exeter Quay and the Double Locks, aboard The Southern Comfort –

Phil Smith, Simon Persighetti, Stephen Hodge & Cathy Turner

Performers: Jo Loyn, Naomi Ludlam, Patrick Morris, Sue Palmer, Phil Smith

The fourth *Threshold* marks the recognition of journey and movement through site highlighting issues of scale and challenging our definitions of site-specific practice. The journey on a pleasure boat meant that the primary site, the boat which carried audience and performers was a mobile, moving stage which travelled through an urban and then rural landscape and waterway. The physical scale and transitory nature of this performance meant that even if the audience completely ignored the interventions which occurred along the way, they still had an experience, a journey which was re-framed simply by it being billed as something different to the normal pleasure principle of a boat trip. My initial proposal had been to regard the boat itself as the main focus or site for investigation and preparatory notes were made to fuel active investigation with the performers.

It is here for the first time in the company archive that we find the word *Misguide* as Phil Smith, microphone in hand and standing on the port side of the *Southern*

Comfort, introduces the audience to the pilot season consisting of a journey down the River Exe and Exeter Canal on a pleasure boat. The script reads:

Misguide: The Quay is like a script. Its lines rubbed out and over-written. I don't know where the energy has gone. The seahorses are in Plymouth. The Museum is a thing of the past. It's not just the things that are gone, but the things that never came. The hotel in the warehouses. The tower on the Piazza ... (Phil Smith in *Wrights & Sites* 2000, 44)

The adoption of a guide-like figure in Phil Smith's work and again in the form of the disembodied musings of the *Unknown Artist* in Cathy Turner's section of the journey usefully alluded to some of the methods that the company employed in developing this unsteady pilot project.

I invented a fictional 'guide', like Exeter's redcoats, who supplied biographical details about the fictional artist. Her commentary became increasingly bizarre, increasingly suggesting that she was inventing it as she went along. This threw the artist's authoritative appropriation of the place into question, while suggesting the pleasure of spontaneous fictionalisation. (Cathy Turner in *Wrights & Sites* 2000, 31-32)

Later, during the planning stage I decided to 'abandon ship', choosing to focus my investigation at a crucial geographical point in the proposed journey because the notion that I could use the boat as a site became untenable. I came to this decision on board the boat when all four Wrights travelled together. The actual journey revealed the compositional problems inherent in the creation of site-specific work. Imagined projections onto a site must be tested out on site. I became aware of the dramatic quality of the journey; the volume of the engine; the dynamic operation of the boat by the crew as they performed their daily tasks; the change in my perception of the space on board when it was inhabited by passengers. In my view, the journey was so loaded with atmospheres and

images that I felt swamped by its actuality. I also realised that up to that point my site work had often been in places of comparative abandon, silence, stasis: places which I had perhaps colonised with my own perceptions. (See Appendix 4, Page 142) After this crisis of confidence I began to look at a very particular site, the place where passengers would disembark before taking the return journey towards the sunset. My focus had shifted to the Double Locks on the Exeter Canal. However, it was not the chosen site but the journey to it that would prove crucial in the longer term. Because we did not have easy dedicated access to the big pleasure boat apart from nearer to the critical dates (Exeter, 5 - 11 July 1998), I arranged to borrow a small boat on a trailer to act as a kind of microcosmic focus point for the work. The devising process began as the 4 performers gathered to collect this boat and they were assigned vocal tasks which they performed whilst hauling the boat along the paths and roads which ran parallel to the river and canal. I became conscious that the public exploration of ideas and actions could be problematic for the actors, particularly for those who were mainly used to rehearsal in the cocoon of studio or theatre. I hoped that the boat could act as a kind of physical/visual refuge during this process of journeying to the Double Locks. The itinerant hauling of the boat also externalised the sense of dispossession which I certainly felt following the frustrating encounters with city officials. This experience provided a clear example of how the circumstances or politics of place could impinge upon or inform the outcomes of the work. It led me to consider site work as a form of cultural trespass. The actors' only home, the only place where they could rest

their minds came through gazing into the bottom of the boat. In these circumstances the boat also became a foil, a disguise, a justification for their presence on the river bank. Later I realised that this was another clue to the idea of making work through walking. At this stage I was still only thinking about such travels as process for performers to generate work for reception by the on-looking audience. As with the other strands of the journey the idea of some kind of host-like figure seemed to be a necessary part of the journey.

Again in the pilot season Stephen Hodge was perhaps closest to the emerging ambulant and mis-guide aspects of the work by simply employing one performer to mark the route of the journey. Tellingly the first quote to appear in his *Sitelines* documentation of this project comes from the walking artist Richard Long who said: "To walk a line is the easiest thing a human being can do to put his [her] mark on a place." (Long 1994, 27) Unlike Richard Long whose work does not require spectators and depends upon photography, typography and documentation to communicate his work, in *Sitelines* Hodge composed material solicited from the private or discrete research of a group of performers. Hodge's work revealed the finest line being drawn between performance and task whilst providing an openness to the spectator's gaze and personal association or interpretations. He writes:

...I became interested in creating some space within the event for the audience members to look at the site/landscape for themselves. During the first session the performers were sent on a three hour walk along the canal, armed with a series of documentary and imaginative exercises. I was presented with sixty-nine pages of writing/diagrams and four bags full of found objects. I worked with one of the performers, Patrick Morris,

distilling his written material, finally selecting twenty-three short statements. Twenty-three signs were constructed, each one sporting one of these statements. *Sitelines* was performed as part of the return journey to the Quay. Patrick walked slightly ahead of the boat, clearly visible, carrying the signs. He stopped to erect each sign at the position where the words written on it were originally recorded. (Stephen Hodge in Wrights & Sites 2000, 62)⁸

In effect the selection of the material and its representation as a form of located and locating procession was successful in revealing the outcomes of practical research as part of, or episodes from the sites of discovery. This concern with generating performance integral to place was also the fundamental reason for my abandoning the pleasure boat as a stage. This dynamic can be captured in one moment during the devising process. As the *Southern Comfort* approached the bridge at the entrance to the canal, a crew member leapt effortlessly off deck and onto the stone bank. With the flick of his wrist the heavy lock and chain were loosened and he was gliding across to the other side of the water on the pivoting bridge. This was an action that might have taken an actor a long period to learn if not perfect. This was, in his terms, a *work-a-day* sequence carried out relatively unconsciously in a dutiful and efficient manner. For me the specificity and authenticity of the action had as much impact as the sound of the trains thundering overhead in the first season of *Platform 4*. (See, Page 42)

⁸ Patrick's actions were simple and non-matrixed (walking, carrying and erecting signs) and the twenty-three statements were fragile and personal. Framed within the contexts of the performance and the site/landscape these ordinary texts became extra-ordinary. Between the twenty-three markers each spectator was free to reflect on the physical surroundings. (Stephen Hodge in Wrights & Sites 2000, 62)

Again Kantor's, experiments with Cricot 2 come to mind:

10 December 1965 - the first happening in Poland took place in the café of Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Sztuk Pięknych (Friends of the Fine Arts Society) in Warsaw. It lasted one hour... 'it was in a café that the cricotage took place. It included 14 life processes such as eating, shaving, coal carrying, sitting etc. In the course of the happening these activities were deprived of their practical function and each of them was 'doomed' to rely on its own development.' (Borowski 1982, 85)

The experience of site-specific performance work is so varied and expansive that definition or methodology of such practice can be problematic. As already suggested, I prefer to view such work as being on a kind of creative continuum governed by actual and imagined factors. Indeed, the most refreshing aspect of such work is that its definition continually bleeds. It is work that embraces disciplines highlighting and blurring skills. Site-specific arts imply accessibility by accident or design. The processes and the processual nature of this work suggest expansion, movement, receptivity and openness to the unexpected events of site. Perhaps this suggests that in site-specific performance the actors or animators of place must always be prepared to absorb or respond, for example to the creaking of floorboards or stray dogs of a space as much as a character actor might be expected to respond to the presence and actions of other performers, the audience and the acoustics of a dedicated theatre auditorium. Such a continuum was later most usefully mapped out by Stephen Hodge at a presentation at the Performance of Place Conference, University of Birmingham (2001)

Sketch for a continuum of site-specific performance:

inside the theatre building

outside the theatre building e.g. Shakespeare in the park.

site-sympathetic existing text physicalised in a selected site.

site-generic performance generated for a series of like sites
e.g. car parks or swimming pools.

site-specific performance specifically generated from/ for
one selected site

Layers of the site are revealed through reference to:

historical documentation

site usage (past, present and/or possible future)

found material (text, objects, actions, sounds, etc.)

anecdotal evidence, collected from members of the community

personal association

mytho-geography (half-truths and lies)

site morphology (physical and vocal explorations on site)

(Hodge, Stephen 2001) ⁹

Placing this line of thought at this point in the document is to build a bridge beyond the idea of performance and towards the practice that Wrights & Sites were developing.

⁹ (See Appendix 6, Page 151 for full context in which this chart appeared)

Initially this diagram was devised partly to challenge the way in which the term *site-specific theatre* was being used as we began to note the number of works that were simply imposing performance in non-theatre spaces. This model invites us to think about site-based performances that might employ a number of strategies of investigation and styles of performance.

In 1997, the Edinburgh-based performance company Grid Iron produced their 'first full-scale site-specific production, *The Bloody Chamber*... held in Edinburgh's underground vaults beneath the Royal Mile. It was a sell-out show in Edinburgh, and when it transferred to the London Dungeon, it won the *Herald Angel* for Outstanding Contribution and Achievement in Theatre... (Scottish Arts 2007, Unpaginated)

In a later example of site work, Grid Iron produced a show called *Decky does a Bronco* (July 2000) in Barshaw Park, Paisley, and though billed as *site-specific*, the production centred around playground swings but did not utilise the actual swings located in the park. The company brought their own specially customised set and toured to many public parks. In 2007 the show was still available for booking to other unspecific locations. The company website stated:

Decky is a site-specific production for outdoor performance in swing/play parks, public gardens or school/college grounds. We can perform both in the daytime and, as we have exterior lighting, in the evening.

We create 'natural amphitheatres' around our own swing structure, which we shape according to the geography of the sites. These tend to be in-the-round but we do not attempt to turn the sites into theatres, rather we realise each site in the most total way with the maximum possible quality of sight lines from playing area to audience. (Grid Iron 2007, unpaginated)

The fact that such a show transfers from one site to another seems an obvious contradiction. I have been persuaded at times to not be so vehemently purist about the definition of what constitutes site-specific theatre. Fiona Wilkie (2002)

has produced a very useful survey, that factors in a number of anomalies and contradictions that may make the argument relatively inconsequential. The fact that the Grid Iron shows connect with and generate new audiences mainly because they use non-theatre spaces may give credence or credentials to the work with or without precise definition. However, given the stand that every site, place, location has its own potential and unwritten vocabulary, the inaccurate use of the word, 'specific' is in my opinion an anathema. Although the specificity discussion is important, however I consider the range of definitions and the Hodge model of this continuum (p.57) useful as a way of articulating and measuring the different levels of connection to site and the consequent perceptions, event-hood and thresholds that are encountered in the fields of our site-related practice.

The overriding issue of contention arising from the survey turns around the question, 'Can site-specific performance tour?' This is a question that might more explicitly be phrased, 'Does "site-specific" imply "site-exclusive"?' The responses to this are divided almost exactly between those who believe that site-specific performance can tour often with qualifications (Impossible Theatre, for instance, believe that 'it can - with care. "Obviously it loses something, but also can perhaps carry something else away with it') and those for whom the notion of touring such work is a contradiction. (Wilkie 2002, 149)

Equally Fiona Wilkie agrees that a discussion about different levels of specificity is perhaps more important than dwelling upon the potential dogma of a fixed definition. *Contradiction* could be viewed here as a productive irritant or trigger to our perceptions of site thereby generating efficacious performance work. In other words contradictory proposals and communications may provide a number of readings of a site in question and assist in our categorisation of such work. My

particular journey to and through sites is based on particular aesthetic and political convictions making it difficult to accept the *site-specific* banner when it ostensibly becomes a marketing slogan to promote work not genuinely rooted in or arising out of site. Whilst I certainly support the use of Grid Irons': "swing/play parks, public gardens or school/college grounds " for performance in non-theatre spaces, it could be said that the company are not only appropriating generic sites but are also appropriating terminology. It is strange in this context that a demand perhaps needs to be made for more specificity about specificity. Where a contrived spectacle sets out to mask, camouflage or ignore the site in which it is presented, surely the logical step would be to retreat to the old homestead of gallery or auditorium? This is not the only company that clearly frames site in such a theatrical, generic or site-sensitive manner whilst blurring the definition of its practice. Whilst Grid Iron claims that it does not : "attempt to turn the sites into theatres", their technical descriptor for *Decky* perhaps takes us right back to the *site-sympathetic* or even to the start of the continuum with *Shakespeare in the park* when it states that:

The audience are placed in the round, 1.1m beyond the boundary of the performance area. Four passageways are left clear for actors' exits/entrances, one of which is made suitable for an actor to enter on a bicycle. The performance boundary area is clearly marked by the positioning of lighting/sound equipment in 4 corners with all cables encased in/covered by ramping. The audience is seated. We bring up to 300 small stools. (Grid Iron 2007, unpaginated)



THRESHOLD 5 : New Frames and Lenses

...To attempt to define an approach, with a view to the future ... as a site-specific artist I want to present not a picture, but a frame. Rather than simply 'hold a mirror up to nature', I want to invite the audience to step, with the performers, through the looking glass into the reflected world and to explore beyond the edges of that reflection. (Cathy Turner 2000, 40)

The *Thresholds* so far have taken us through episodes of activity and reflection about site-specific performance practice but I hope by now that the evidence of a significant departure is becoming clear. Following our pilot project on board the boat and along the waterways we did succeed, at financial and diplomatic costs, in gaining access to a number of city council-controlled sites. Commissioning two other works directed by guest devisers: Peter Ireland & Liz Swift (VOID: Performance) on Exeter Boatyard, and Eileen Dillon (with consultation from Dorinda Hulton) at Medieval Exe Bridge, Wrights & Sites embarked upon the making of four separate pieces in the former Maritime Museum and in Exeter's former Municipal Power Station. (Appendix 5, Page 147) I am certain that at that stage in our work as a company our own productions also straddled and blurred their ways along an unformulated continuum. Full accounts of *The Quay Thing* projects are available (Wrights & Sites 2000) but in terms of this thesis, the crucial point is to mark the circumstances or instances that led to the company moving towards a different vantage point and mode of operation. Whilst these factors all emerged from our first project as harbingers of a new direction, it took longer for the company to assimilate, translate or realise such goals. In her article, "Framing the Site", Cathy Turner was perhaps the nearest in airing a future model when she wrote:

I believe that what I was looking for was an approach to site-specific theatre that would allow a live negotiation with both site and audience, yet which would include an attempt - perhaps diverse attempts - to create meaning. Those attempts would need to be provisional, incomplete - with gaps, as it were, for spontaneous response, and for the intervention of 'reality'. (Cathy Turner 2000, 26)

A key moment in my own work came with *Short Day/ Long Line*, (Appendix 7, Page 162) a millennial walk to mark the end of the 20th Century and the conclusion of my site work with the group named *angelcast*. (22/12/99). In this event we drew a continuous chalk line from one side of Exeter City (UK) to its far boundary. I believe that it may be useful to set out my journal entry here as it will help to contextualise the later development of *Mis-Guide* practice.

Journal Entry:

22nd December 1999: Simon Persighetti and Joel Segal drew a chalk line 4.3 miles long from one side of Exeter city to the other. This task was performed as a means of recognition of time and space in response to the issues and concepts attached to the passing of the Millennium. Although the Millennium moment was generally considered to be at the midnight or 00 hour of 1st January 2000 we chose to mark time at the point of sunrise on the shortest day known as the Winter Solstice. Our starting point had been at the Countess Wear roundabout and our finishing point was to be the Cowley Bridge Inn roundabout. Neither site warrants a mention in astrological almanacs or studies of sacred geometry although it might be possible to extrapolate the esoteric significance of two circles joined by a line. If our activity did have mystical significance it would only be in

relation to the measurement of time via planetary movement (Earth, Moon, and Sun) versus the digital clock of the Millennium Dome.

The act of drawing the line was simple but the enquiry it elicits is unavoidably complex. While the line links one edge of the city to another it necessarily dissects it. When a bus crossed the line at the town centre it was clearly following another kind of timetable. The line drawn with sidewalk chalk purchased from *Poundland* (Cut Price Store, UK) denotes a childish act or the act of an educator in the same way that a simple game of hopscotch represents children's folklore whilst engaging aspects of geometry, mathematics, competition and ballistics. I hoped that by drawing the line I might place in my movement memory an understanding of the meridian line simultaneously satirising the centralism inherently sanctified by Greenwich Meantime. (S.P. January 2000)

At a simple level this action privileges the pedestrian sites of paving stones and two roundabouts as opposed to historically significant tourist sites whilst embodying a serious as well as playful intent. The duration of the event in harsh winter weather conditions also highlights something of the physical and mental elements of ritual or pilgrimage. The act lacked the normal rationale of a purposeful journey but clearly was also different from a ramble to enjoy sights and fresh air. Experientially it amplified a sense that urban spaces and places can indeed offer passages to utopian, creative and optimistic relationships with

the everyday. Robin Moore, with his background in urban planning, in the 1970's carried out extensive field studies of children's play spaces and children's interactions with the environment. His focus in Britain was upon urban environments that he described as 'big city, new towns and old industrial city environments' (Moore 1986, 10). He was concerned about the design of urban spaces that allowed for children, a free-ranging, anarchic interaction with the environment. Borrowing from Johann Huizinga's *Homo Ludens, study of the play element in culture* (1955), Moore suggested the term *Terra Ludens* as a means of promoting and encouraging access to environments of playful adventure, for interacting with the inherited world.' (Moore 1986, 9)

To wander through a diverse terrain is to feel the surroundings pass through one's body as the body passes through the surroundings- at one with each other. Like the rambler, one experiences a floating state of mind, drugged by a wealth of sounds, of smells, of sights and textures. Indeed, opportunities to 'ramble' should be built into every urban neighbourhood. (Moore 1986, 57)

The *Long Line* exercise (Appendix 7, Page 162) and the journey aspect of the *Pilot Navigation Project* (Appendix 4, Page 142) were impacting upon me in a realisation of the potential of a walking that related to the concept of *wrighting*. By this I refer to the idea of writing as a physical activity of improvisation, discovery and crafting or shaping perhaps more usually equated with devised theatre or choreographic practices. This is a concept first described to me by Peter Hulton at Dartington College of Arts (1984) when he talked about the shaping or wroughting of ideas, images and actions towards performance. Because such devising processes do not depend solely upon the literary traditions of the isolated author composing scripts to be interpreted by the actions of actors, the

wrighting concept lends itself usefully and productively to site-specific arts practices and more particularly to the ambulant. The journey experiences triggered an engagement in a research writing or re-writing of the city activated by wanderings and explorations that can lead, for example, to an active engagement in issues of ecology and environmental planning.

In origin the *flâneur* was a detached and self-contained poetic figure, distanced from the crowd by his superior aesthetic sensibilities. He aimlessly wandered the city streets to gain inspiration, at once part of, and isolated from the urban crowd, whom he studied... (Pearson 2001, 149)

Mike Pearson goes on to suggest that, in the modern shopping centre, we have all become *flâneurs*, grazing, gazing, consuming. (Pearson 2001, 149) However, our pursuits are more often governed by commerce in such controlled environments. In the main, we are not drifting aimlessly, we are not fuelled by some god-like overview and our aesthetic sensibilities are more likely to be engaged in the pursuit of fashion and fast food. The aimless drifters of the contemporary shopping mall are perhaps those with little or no spending power, who rather than merging with the crowd, are swiftly picked out by the CCTV camera and the security guard.

... loitering without purchasing, displays of non-conformity and political protest are strictly controlled or prohibited in contrast to the relatively freer outdoor sidewalk. (Macauley 2002, 196)

It is significant however, that the reflections of the city drifter from Baudelaire to Debord constitute a vast range of residual discourses as if the footsteps of the strollers have been replaced by, and recorded in text. It has, perhaps become a different kind of writing of the city as if the perceptions of the *flâneur*, once

transmitted, begin to engrave themselves upon the physical city and the bodies of its citizens. The notion of porosity in which the body makes the city and the city is a body, invites Walter Benjamin's dream image of, "a book that is a city street cut through the body of the author by his lover." (Burgin 1996, 141)

As an acknowledgement of the steep learning curve generated by the *Quay Thing* projects (Appendix 5, Page 147) Wrights & Sites were now considering new approaches to their work. The company members unanimously agreed to clearly identify through practice the propositions, terms and potential of *wrighting* and *site-ing*. This would necessitate regaining possession of the work by placing ourselves at the centre of the work with a focused sense of research, control of material and recognition of the politics of site. A discomfort or rejection of contrived spectacle and a desire to engage audiences in the awakening processes of site-specific work would require a move away from what we saw as a colonising of site. The invitation to others to participate in our investigations, opening the group up to work with other kinds of artists, artisans, specialists and members of the general public, was a reminder of our original desire to collaborate with a designer who was possibly an engineer or architect rather than a scenographer. To this extent we were beginning to feel more akin to visual artists than to theatre practitioners, becoming uncomfortable at the time with the seeming conceits, tricks, egocentricity, and autoeroticism of theatre. Whilst it was agreed that it is almost impossible to make work in/on site without the projections of our own cultural perceptions, we were keen to make work which at least attempted a rejection of the single authorial voice. Site is always peculiar and

often exists as a chorus of overlaying entities to be revealed by the torchlight and sounding devices of the wrighter.

The portable site of the earth-filled, old school desk in *The Dig* (2000) (Appendix 8, Page 165) where members of the public were invited to excavate for lost artefacts, clearly contrasts with the scale of *Pilot Navigation* (1998) and the sometimes unwieldy occupation of *The Quay Thing* buildings and locations. The four individual voices of the company were a necessary part of the first ventures in order to discover the sound of those voices. The later *Satellite* strategy allowing us to make solo or independent work also allowed low budget, often unfunded, individual explorations to take place freed from quadraphonic discussion. (Appendix 9, Page 168) These newly acknowledged principals would also be instrumental in Wrights & Sites' continuation as a working unit and as a means to genuinely explore site beyond theatre re-presentation and towards something we might tentatively term as the *mytho-geography* of cityscape or landscape. We would be pursuing such an investigation through walking as urban explorers whilst developing methods and tools to sense and make sense of the city.

How we structure a space and define a place is based on our sensory perception. While in the western world there has been a clear dominance of the visual, in our everyday perception most of us 'see' aided by the interplay of all the senses. And of course these senses do not create perceptions in themselves, but require a frame of reference, an object or objects that they define. We do not sense in a vacuum but need to be confronted with a material world to sense: a flower we smell, a path we step on and touch, food we taste, ... Thus it can be said that our environment affords us certain *senses*capes. (Degen 2002, 21)

Such sensing of place helpfully chimes with our formulation of the kinds of frames that could be applied by any urban explorer when approaching new, old or unrecognized thresholds of a city.



THRESHOLD 6 : Guide-lines and Manifestos

Walking locates the body in place. In the repetitious act of turning over our legs – of falling forward, then rising and collecting ourselves into a corporeal rhythm – we are as it were like large knitting (or perhaps sewing machine) needles stitching ourselves into the local fabric of the environs, grounding and rooting ourselves if momentarily. (Macaulay 2002, 196)

At this threshold perhaps the reader feels a breeze on the face as the ambulant aspect begins to impact upon the writing, the commentary and the references.

This project began with a walk away from theatre. It began at my doorstep long before I had heard of the first footsteps of the Dadaists gathered on an untended patch of ground in rainy Paris on an excursion from art in order to introduce a “new interpretation of nature applied ... not to art but to life.” (Careri 2002, 76-77)

The Dadaists passing through Paris, as a remedy for the incompetence of guides and dubious pedants, have decided to undertake a series of visits to selected places, in particular to those places that do not truly have any reason to exist. (Dada Flyer, 14th April 1921) (Careri 2002, 76-77)

The Wrights & Sites remove from spectacle and theatrical performance came through the adoption of the *Drift* as a means of discovering fresh approaches to observation and interaction with the city of our work, rest and play.¹⁰ Rather than inviting audiences to a specific site we were now inviting people to investigate with us by walking with us, finding places along the way, jumping fences and making cuts down alleyways. The whole city became an art gallery and adventure playground inscribed with monuments, footprints, havens and danger zones.

¹⁰ To accompany this THRESHOLD 6 commentary see account: *Notes from a Drift*, March 2002, Appendix 10, Page 175)

Walks for their own sake, furiously enacted but lacking agenda. Strategic walks (around the M25, the walls of the City) as a method of interrogating fellow pilgrims. Walks as portraits. Walks as prophecy. Walks as rage. Walks as seduction. Walks for the purpose of working out the plot ... Walks that release delirious chemicals in the brain as they link random sites (discrete images in an improvised poem). Savagely mute walks that provoke language. (Atkins & Sinclair 1999,15)

It is with the liveness of a conversation on foot that I propose the following commentary: The journey begins. The experience and its elements can be anticipated through the reading of a map or other images and documentation that attempt to interpret the environment. It may be that the geography is already familiar to you although the Highlands of Cameroon (West Africa) may have startling similarities to the Highlands of Scotland. You may have travelled part of this route before and will know or think you know what kind of luggage, equipment or tools you may need. Even if you have never encountered this particular track, there will inevitably be certain givens. For example you may already know what a pavement looks like, or you may have prior experiential knowledge of the sensations of crossing a muddy field or climbing over a gate. This kind of journey, however, starts with a different sense of anticipation; openness to the potentialities of transition; a sense that today will be different.

As you walk through the city you weave spaces together in a subjective way: this can never be captured objectively, say by drawing maps to trace journeys, since it is the experience of walking or 'passing by' that counts. Maps are typical forms of fixation of the flux of everyday life, which try to pin it down by abstracting heavily from it. (De Certeau 1988, 91-110)

The lens adopted in walking as an arts practice will have a particular impact upon your perception. As a result, the ordinary or predictable pavement will reveal textures, tonalities, marks, footprints, fossils and patterns that in the course of the

everyday move from A to B might go unnoticed. Equally, the framing of the experience may render tiny episodes more significant or allegorical. It is this dynamic that may lead the walker to discover or generate *discrete images in an improvised poem*. (Atkins & Sinclair 1999, 15)

The walker may become susceptible to the dynamics of synchronicity, a heightened awareness of the elements that make up the concrete world of the city or the forest being traversed. Whilst you may anticipate the need to carry provisions, it is hard to anticipate what extra-daily materials you may desire or need in the exploitation of this experiential drift of the body and the imagination. Obviously, some means of recording the minutiae of the journey will be useful but you may also wish to take some seemingly inappropriate or irrational objects with you in order to short-circuit or trigger new perceptions of place. (Appendix 11, Page 180, *A Site- Specific Toolkit*) For example a walk from a city centre to its edge lands or rural boundary could involve the task of bringing some aspects of the green routes back into the centre of the city or to leave traces of the green along the route back into the urban. In this case, rather like guerrilla gardeners,¹¹ you might use some of the tools or accoutrements of horticulture to reframe the experience.

¹¹ The concept of *Guerrilla Gardening* was first used in the 1970's by the activist group Green Guerillas based in New York, USA. It refers to a form of non-violent direct action, which consists of making use of public urban spaces, many times squandered (like vacant lots, edges of alleys and walks next to buildings, edges of parking lots, etc.), and turning them into community gardens by there planting flowers or vegetables. Goat Track <http://goat-tracks.blogspot.com/2007/10/guerrilla-gardening.html> Accessed October 2007

The issue of the associative or the personal narrative overlaying another place and time seems to be heightened by the physical act of walking. Taking us forward (into the future) but reflecting our own slow primordial development as bipeds:

Walking is an odd fulcrum in human evolutionary theory. It is the anatomical transformation that propelled us out of the animal kingdom to eventually occupy our own solitary position of dominion over the earth. (Solnit 2001, 43-44)

This is not a passive spectator experience. The commitment of these muscles, bones, this heart and this bloodstream to the act sets off bodily sensations that evoke or awaken the memory. It makes me conscious of mediation between the private and the public. As a site-specific artist it makes me wary of allowing such subjective, autobiographical narratives to invade my practice. And yet, if these triggers are being activated in me, why should they not be triggered in potential spectators of the work I might make in response to site or journey? If employed in a minimal manner it might be that such narratives could be retold as an invitation to others to also voice such personal associations. The problem arises if the authorial voice of the mis-guide becomes so dominant that the site becomes the exclusive domain of that voice.

One of the motives of the mis-guide proposal is that it might undermine the fog often created by well-meaning explanations of place. Here I refer to a plethora of information that whilst referring to a particular location simultaneously draws attention away from it. One of the things that we discussed at a number of points during the early ambulant experiments was an attempt to define the potential role of the mis-guide. I remembered the dilemma of the guides' position in the Exeter

Underground Passages where, as part of my *Year of the Artist* project, *Passages* (2001), (Appendix 12, Page 190) the official guides were asked not to deliver their usual historical commentaries because I wanted the spectator/walkers to encounter the passages without verbal interpretation. On following this instruction, the guides found themselves in a kind of policing of the visitors to this altered subterranean location. This rather authoritarian role was amplified because of my stipulation that they should simply lead. Removal of their usual vocal, informative, friendly and communicative role created a cool tension, correct in its economy but discomforting in its silence.

We were now considering the ways in which a guide could operate with a light touch and almost as a human *signpost* as opposed to an actor or interpreter. Phil Smith also suggested using two kinds of guide on the same journey. A guide who physically leads the walkers and sensitively gauges the pace/time of the journey and a second guide who might adopt a more social stance as informal communicator. The communications might consist of devised texts, actions, questions, markings and provocations at particular points along the route. We also talked about the municipal guide as a person who is in the business of delivering the information of fact and closure ("look at this only ... then switch off until I take you to the next significant place") whereas our mis-guide might have more of a quixotic approach, opening up the possibilities of many interpretations, lies, truths, musings, navigation, soundings and measurings. In other words, conveying a sympathetic or complimentary sense of the terrain, drawing attention

to a continuum of experience marked by a range of concrete and abstract signals and communications. Our guide would thus become a medium capable of shifting viewpoints, revealing, camouflaging or making transparent different phases of the drift or journey. As suggested by the notion of *sensescapes*, (Degen 2002, 21) the physiological effects of a sustained journey make us more aware of sensing beyond sight and beyond place as a defined or measurable set of shapes and elements because the drift of the journey can blur the edges of each named or nameable location.

Later in the journey, even fences seem to dissolve... Sheet ghosts of the hospital laundry glide past a window, the night shift smokers sitting, hunched over on crates, trespass ... tip-toe past sleeping nurses in concrete boxes ... the pungent smell of a pub ... an abandoned beer glass on the windowsill ... hills ... Ludwell Lane ... Electric Fan, face down in the stream ... (Persighetti 2002, *Notes from a Drift*) (Appendix 10, Page ?)

This new vantage point became useful in re-configuring the play or position of the artist as one of guide or mis-guide through real time and space rather than as narrator or interpreter of place. The performer (if required) could indeed become a **signpost** re-framing the geography of the city in rejection of the closure of singular historic interpretation. As such, the terms *wrighting*, *performing*, *mis-guide* and *mytho-geography* would be introduced as active propositions to be applied to an on-going exploration of the city. In part to define these terms, this change of approach led to the drafting of Wrights & Sites' *Manifesto* (2001) devised through discussion and predominantly articulated by colleagues, Phil Smith and Cathy Turner. This long list of aspirations rehearsed a later devising of *A Manifesto Towards a New Walking Culture* (2005) (Appendix 13, Page 194) It is perhaps a useful exposition of the kinds of ideas that the company have

evolved or adopted as markers in the move from theatre and spectacle, towards more discrete activities. The manifesto is a shifting, discursive and by no means, conclusive set of proposals that help indicate the kinds of methodologies and paths of desire being followed in an attempt to involve anybody and everybody in an engagement with place.

WRIGHTS & SITES (incomplete) MANIFESTO (EXTRACT)

1. We write this MANIFESTO with the full recognition that this is an OUT-MODED activity, which implies a greater stability of identity, meaning and intention than is sustainable. We write it as an act of EXPLORATION, of DEFIANCE and of HOMAGE to those avid writers of manifestos among the European Avant-Garde.

This MANIFESTO is a map, an interim report on the negotiation of a multi-terrain – drawn somewhere between the mountains of mythogeography and the cellars of psychogeography, a map with no place names, of journeys that slice place from identity, of the border between city, planet, body and rumours of thoughts deeply felt, provisional findings on which we are disagreed.

2. Wrights & Sites create SITE-SPECIFIC work.

The specificity of site in the work is always infected: by virtual particles moving in and out of physical being, by signposts to other places, by wormholes (like discarded videotape hanging in brambles), by memories unlike "art" in site-specificity the site is primary to the secondary infection.

3. SITE-SPECIFIC is spelled SITE-SPECIFIC (with a hyphen).

Other spellings: Memetic-neo-symbolist-disruptive geography, mythodgeography, détournement, smithogeography and perspicaciouslyghettingthere. And other practices uncontainable in a manifesto.

4. SITE-SPECIFIC does NOT mean merely the placing of art-work in a public space, but the development of work THROUGH and FOR that space.
5. Our work is made with a GENUINE INTEREST in the political and socio-political implications of its sitings.

Disruptive geography: the upsetting, setting in motion, of calcified representations of the site. Reverse archaeology: the mapping of fragments, rubbish, 'ruins' as the future.

6. We want to reveal the context through the work, not necessarily vice versa.

In disruptive geography the eye is an active transmitter, a means of making actual contact solely through its gaze, exchanging glances with others, participating in the mutant, unstable gaze of the invisible realm (context) that pervades the visible world as a constant, watchful presence.

7. We prioritise TRANSPARENCY, in the sense that we allow the viewer to see the site through the work. Rather than 'hold the mirror up to nature', we invite you to step through the looking glass and see the same world differently.

Transparency is a modest style; it means not absence but like a holiday slide projected on a living room wall – it colours the site with its own spectral intervention while simultaneously highlighting the wrinkles, patterns and anomalies of the wall in intensified light and shadow.

8. We will never reduce space to scenic DECORATION!

9. For this reason, we reject spectacle, but hope to engage audiences in the AWAKENING PROCESSES OF SITE-SPECIFIC WORK.

... against those arts that "leave one somehow dumb", those 'sites' in which "you imagine you can see nothing". Reverse archaeology excavates marks of denial and erasure, uncovers fragments of former structures.

10. We follow the practice of MYTHO-GEOGRAPHY, placing the personal, the mythic, the fictional and the speculative on equal terms with factual, municipal history.

The desire lines of the unfinished *Manifesto* surfaced rather like the conversations arising out of our walks around our home town of Exeter in a series of drifts and meetings in pubs and our own *attics and cellars*. But in *Manifesto* declarations One - to - Ten, a flavour of the resistance to performance in the theatre sense becomes clearer. The decision to begin inviting friends,

colleagues and strangers on walks around Exeter marked a significant opening of a new phase in our work. It acknowledged the dis-ease we felt with our first projects while gleaning some hope and insight out of the ashes.

This democratising stance and openness to the phenomenology of the city has clear antecedents in the activities of the Flâneur, the Psychogeographer, and the Situationist. As alluded to earlier, the issue of the Flâneur is contentious in that the Flâneur does not necessarily attempt to engage with others or to create any artwork or event in response to observations made. Without apology, the *Mis-Guide* projects foreground the processual rather than a product such as a performance or delivery of a scripted interpretation of place. In contrast, for example in a more recent event led by Tim Brennan as part of a SPACEX Gallery residency, the artist led walkers to particularly significant sites in the city of Exeter and overlaid the sites with various readings from historical texts.¹²

Whilst the choices of material were often associative and not always directly related to the sites, the density, detail and information of the texts tended to deflect the participants from the actual and sensory experience of the locations.

¹² **16 December 2006 - 24 February 2007**

Since 2002, Brennan has undertaken walks throughout northern Britain that expand upon his previous performance works. (His) new photographs explore the relationship between geography, personal memory and social history. Alongside the exhibition Spacex commissioned Tim Brennan to produce a new performance site specific to Exeter, which the artist calls a manoeuvre. This is a guided walk with original narrative specific to the area offering an imaginative insight into the locale. (Spacex Gallery 2007,unpaginated)

In effect such guide-like commentary, whilst running counter to the autocratic guided tour, also adopted some of its authorial and authoritarian aspects. In retrospect perhaps this acknowledges the limitations of any visiting artist in being able to respond to place and it is certainly the stance that we recognise in our deep knowledge of our own living environment in contrast to the cities where we have been privileged to make provisional forays. (Notably, London, Copenhagen, Zurich, Vienna, Paris, Ndola, Shanghai). (Appendix 3, Page 136 & Appendix 15, Page 213) Brennan recognises this unbalancing effect in his work and uses it as a lever to extend his communication and dialogue with those who accompany him on the journeys.

A key moment during research and a tool of investigation must be attributed to the book *Fortress Europe* by Tim Brennan, with texts by Pavel Buchler. The publication, consisting of photographs taken on the battlefields of the First World War, presents the photograph as a site in its own right: an image that proposes a particular view of a specific site and sight line. Brennan challenges the authenticity of the photographs, enlarged to reveal alterations, fingerprints, and deterioration. The photograph records a moment in time, and through manipulation and an ageing process, the photo presents a history of itself in a continuum from the moment of its creation amidst the mud and blood of the trenches to this contemporary moment as the page is opened.

Forensic evidence registered on the same plane as the ghostly trace of the distant photographic event. How did it come to be part of the story? The prime suspect (and the key witness) is certainly the photographer tampering with history ... But others might also be implicated: archivists, researchers, civil servants, army officers, journalists ... anyone handling

the picture (re-visiting the scene, so to speak) at any time during the last three quarters of the century ... (Brennan & Buchler 1992, 11a)

Given the impact of this proposition concerning the layering of meaning and signification of a glossy, 2-dimensional, monochrome, documentary image, what then is the potential impact of tangible, navigable sites? In addition it is possible to project the notion that certain perceptual strategies may be employed to locate or reveal the patterns of alteration, fingerprints, footprints, deterioration of the environment where we live. The potential of performance in time and place as a means of research and theoretical excavation leads to a consideration of the kinds of tools the artist might invent or utilise in this practice. One of these *Fortress Europe* photographs is accompanied by the text,

The Spade, an instrument of excavation - that is to say an instrument of image-making: to excavate is to make an incision through visible facts, to expose to view. Spade in hand, the excavator is remodelling the known, de-creating the familiar so as to uncover something which has existed materially but was not available in the phenomenal world. (Brennan & Buchler 1991, 430-434) ¹³

If I regarded the spade as a text, I could spend time researching the thing itself. I could study its components, weight, feel and its own history from forge to garden centre. I might pursue the broader history back to the primate with a stone; the anthropological or sociological impact of its invention; the uses of the spade in the construction of Saxon earthworks or in the battlefields of Europe.

¹³ The theme of the fragment "The Spade" comes from the author's untitled statement in *Excavating the Present*, Kettles Yard, Cambridge, 1991.

However, all the time that I spend plundering the archives, filleting the libraries, surfing the net, writing the thesis, the spade, the very focus of my study could lie inert, unchanged, unused. The very tool at the centre of the study may have rusted a little, gathered some dust, but it will have remained essentially the same. Beyond the possible fields of the spade's contexts, genealogy and potential as a trigger for a vast array of academic research - the spade remains the same although my perception of its significance and signification may have radically changed. It could be argued that the spade is just an inert object, forged and manufactured for a specific purpose. However, despite my scholarly attention to it, the spade has not fulfilled its purpose. I pursue this image as a means of articulating the kinds of site-specific tools of investigation being adopted by Wrights & Sites.¹⁴

Perhaps we could visualise the outcomes of this research if I picked up this instrument and began to work with it? In seconds, the tool could become an implement of destruction as it ploughed into a site particularly if that site happened to be your skull. Such an active piece of research would thereby earn the attention of forensic scientists and tabloid photographers. Then indeed, the humble implement takes on a new significance as it is carried ceremoniously into a court of law. User and victim of its use will have experienced an altogether visceral transformation.

¹⁴ A version of this set of prescriptions and objects were exhibited at my *Crossing Time* Exhibition, *A Site-Specific Toolkit* .(Dartington Gallery, 2003) (Appendix 11, Page 180)

The moment of wielding the central object of this investigation would change the trajectory of the research.

Practice as research and research as practice can be a bloody and confusing means of discovery but it certainly ensures that something in the external world does change. The spade as instrument of revelation would make a mark in the world and its traces would escape the confines of the library stack. In the context of this investigation the implement is a footstep as opposed to an item of hardware. Whilst Wrights & Sites did execute a project called *The Dig* (2000) (Appendix 8, Page 165) and I did actually use a spade, no blood was spilt. In the end, it would not be a manic and violent wielding of metal that would be used as an implement to prise open space and place, but a series of walks, rendezvous and framed drifts. Using the devices of questions and suggested actions and provocations a new instrument emerged in the form of an inventive guide book. - A book for the pocket of the urban explorer rather than a thesis or file for the archive.

In the early Wrights & Sites pilot drifts there was a tendency for participant - walkers to be on the alert for the *theatrical* to be insinuated into or segued with the lived experience. There was a sense of waiting either to be given a lead or to actually witness some kind of sited performance. It did not take long, however, to convert this mode of expectation by setting tasks, enquiries, activities, excavations, collections, physical and relational responses to different

environments encountered. In effect this was a means of marking the many micro-arrivals and departures of the journeys on foot. Referencing De Certeau and making his ideas accessible as they do so, the authors of *Theatre*

/Archaeology suggest that:

Such walking could be inscribed as routes on maps, but that would miss the practice of our meandering, stopping and starting, window-shopping, passing-by. There is always a tension then between the possibilities of the constructed order ... and our own improvisation ... Step by step we decide how we will do it, how we will read the text of the city: we gain our understanding through movement. The 'moving about' that the city multiplies and concentrates makes the city itself an immense social experience of lacking a place - an experience that is, to be sure, broken up into countless tiny deportations (displacements and walks) compensated for by the relationships and intersections of these exoduses that intertwine and create an urban fabric, and placed under the sign of what ought to be, ultimately, the place but is only a name, the City. (De Certeau 1988: 103 quoted in Pearson and Shanks 2001, 148)

An obvious or overt example of acknowledging *tiny deportations (displacements and walks)* can be found in the *marking* of encounter by leaving telephone messages on ansaphones from one location to another, reporting on the experience and thereby transmitting or displacing the experience or observation elsewhere. During a drift on the edge of a Devon town, a group of walkers found a dumped and battered retail refrigerator at the bottom of a roadside leafy incline. From that location I mobile phoned the company who were contracted (according to affixed label) to be in charge of *Ginsters Pasty* appliance maintenance. I reported its sorry condition: "This fridge is in a bad way. It's upside down at the bottom of a hill. There are brambles and stinging nettle growing over it and it does not appear to be working. Can you come and fix it?"

There is obviously a performance edge to this phone call as it is witnessed by others though no fiction is being constructed or proposed. Perhaps there is a pseudo-documentary weighting to the exchange between site, witnesses and call centre ? Perhaps also, the remote telephonist begins to buy-in to this unusual call as a mix between genuine enquiry and satirical prank. In this case, the telephonist did join in the spirit of play that was being generated. The ambiguous and the actual collide at such moments providing the play of the everyday in an evidential rather than proposed or imagined world. Such exchanges by example invite fellow walkers to enact their own interventions en route. Whilst there was humour in this event, implicit, serious ecological issues also arose.

Close observation as opposed to a tourist gaze seems to encourage response or intervention to the encounters, experiences and circumstances of the walk. This rendering of significance to each event or discovery on the journey can become a hyper-sensitised experience; a thickening of a sense of place. Another example of the processual consists in the rhythm of the walk itself. A cycle of footsteps generates a repetitive pattern capable of acting as counterpoint to the unexpected. A time – space meshing provides a bass line that can place the walker in an almost meditative state. Rather than a search for novelty or a desire to encounter a 'postcard' vista, like the gestalt of figure against ground, small details can be amplified.

When you walk through the crowds on Exeter High Street ... your brain doesn't "see" all the details of buildings or people you pass ... What you actually 'see' is an 'optic flow' – the important patterns and details, the crucial information such as "can I step over that ?" Or "is that too steep?" (Wrights & Sites 2003, 8)

It is as if the 'optic flow' or experiential continuum lulls the senses into a present that for quite extended periods seems to hold everything in equilibrium. As in the construction of a dramatic thriller, this of course provides the perfect ground or backdrop for the unpredictable event to impact upon the senses.

We seldom look at our surroundings. Streets and buildings, even those considered major monuments, are in everyday life little more than backgrounds for introverted thought, passages through which our bodies pass ... In this sense cities are "invisible" to us, felt rather than seen, moved through rather than visually taken in. (Vidler 2001, 81)

Inevitably this seemingly neutral state may induce a blank canvas, a *tabula rasa* of the senses thereby amplifying the punctuations that momentarily disrupt the pattern - the crack of a branch underfoot, insect sounds, the white arc of a jet plane. The rural Rambler for example may be armed with a set of knowledges about the natural world that may act as a naming script or narrative through the identification of flora and fauna. Whilst this may be considered to be a useful subtext to the *sub soils* being traversed, it can also act as a kind of constraint, a constant interference - a busy static. It gives special significance to some things encountered but through specialism, as in the application of taxonomy which may negate or overlook many other things. The naming or labelling of finds can be instrumental in eroding a more fluid, interrelational set of observations. The rhythmic flow of the walk can thus be constantly disembodied by the *compartmentalised* list-taking of the ornithologist or the train spotter. In fact a *tick-box mentality* may have its roots in some kind of work ethic that can only justify active leisure as the pursuit of knowledge or physical achievement or timed action (as in

cross-country running). This walking project, whilst honouring specialist fields of knowledge such as architecture, also honours multiplicity, serendipity and pointlessness:

Gestalt thinking brings poetry and science close together in the sense that genuine poetical descriptions, that is, descriptions of experiences, are taken to be on the same level of ontological reality as the physical, chemical, geological, ecological, etc. The experienced world is taken to be *the* world, and the experienced world is one of gestalts. (Naess 2005, 122)

The placement of miniature signs, symbols, exhibits or souvenirs as shrines to the memory of a moment experienced on a drift can provide a means of externalising our attention to the world. This could be thought of as a kind of ritualised gift-giving that helps to punctuate the journey like a milestone on a pilgrims way. In a *small world drift* we entered a supermarket and built small *houses* with as many consumer products from around the planet as we could find. These tiny abandoned shrines made of tin cans and cartons might cause amusement to some and annoyance to others. This activity reveals the obvious global links we have as individual consumers but provides other information about shopper behaviours as well as sensations induced by adrenalin and paranoia. The act of non-shopping in shopping centres has become for me a sensory litmus test for the efficacy of urban exploration.

In pursuit of other devices of revelation we might, for example, produce a set of questions that could be asked in any order during a day's journey. Some of these questions might relate directly to a specific location but other, more ambiguous or poetic questions might be devised and applied to any situation, site, environment

or circumstance along an unknown route with an unknown destination. In other words, certain questions might elicit, invoke or evoke responses, images or memories by association or juxtaposition with the place and time of the questioning. Such an itinerary of questions could take on the tone of interrogation. If this is so, then it certainly suits the desire to use the experience of a drift to unearth clues from the footfall upon *terra firma*. It became evident through such *inter*rogations that the walk, when framed by an investigative lens, allowed participants to walk through the *looking glass* and hence moved closer to an experiential definition of Live Art. In this context, Lois Keidan's suggestion that: 'Live art can offer a place, a context and a process in which audiences can become involved or immersed in the creation of artworks ...' underpins the possibility of participation as well as political potential so that: '... the experiences of the neglected, the marginalised, the disenfranchised or the disembodied can be made visible, sometimes for the first time.' (quoted in Hill & Paris 2006, 14)

In relation to our project the *marginalised* can also refer to place as well as the humans and other beings that might dwell in such places. (See Appendix 10, Page 175) for an example of an *Interrogative List* used on a Wrights & Sites drift, (2002). Such a list has never been wholly or systematically employed because one of the virtues of the *Mis-Guide* is that a simple question or intention at the outset, in effect triggers serial or unpredictable questions in the moment - to - moment experience of the journey. Such a list might appear in a guide book that contradicts the traditional format of information, direction or instructional imperative.

A Guide Book

Guidebooks come in many different forms, from free handouts to Michelin and Baedeker guides. One reason why guidebooks are so useful to tourists is that they catalogue, in a structured and relatively standardised form, relevant aspects of the places that tourists visit. They list accommodation (with phone numbers), attractions (with opening times), recommended bars and restaurants, and so on. This standardisation can make strange places feel considerably safer to tourists by reducing their uncertainty. (Brown & Chalmers 2003, unpaginated)

Whilst Guidebooks often suggest 'guides to action' they are often concerned with a linear and logical experience where particular points of interest are clustered in a suggested order. The notion of being able to view a large number of key sites to an efficient timetable is also woven into the body of such publications. With such *standardisation* it is an irony that tourists (at leisure) may actually find themselves inadvertently and efficiently working for the tourist industry. A guide book is generally understood to be a publication dedicated to the easy navigation of a particular place. Rather like a map it is often designed with a particular historical, political or economic agenda. The commercial map gives a sense of authenticity with facts, figures and dimensions that may be wildly inaccurate but suitable to the promotion of the assets of a particular locale. To this extent, the word *Mis-Guide* may be more accurate and more truthful in that it plays against the conceits of the municipal or industrial versions and interpretations of place.

During the development of the first publication, *An Exeter Mis-Guide* (2003) (Appendix 2, page 127 & Appendix 15, Page 213) we became very aware that the concept of the project did have a degree of transferability about it. But we were also aware that we were working from the vantage point of a group who

lived and worked in a specific city. I believe that it might be possible to go to a strange, unfamiliar town and create some cut-and-paste response to that place in a short time. However it would quite justifiably be open to criticism. Its claim to being *A Trenchtown Mis-Guide* for example, based upon a two-week reconnaissance would be, shall we say, “misguided”. Professional contextual arts practice requires, rather like hunting, knowledge of the terrain and its workings in time and space. The contradiction implicit in the *Mis-Guide* concept is that you must know or discover the popularly held versions of a place in order to signpost alternate routes and ways of perceiving the place. To counter the *parachute* method where we would drop in to a specific place, we began to discuss the idea of a generic version *Mis-Guide* that could be used by anyone on a journey to a new place or in familiar territory. We began to envisage a device that would excite other people about their own relationships to place. I personally hoped that it might be used as a trigger for others to make their own versions of a *mis-guide* in their own places. Each version would then have its own specificity, its own ambitions, its own form and content. At its very simplest the *Mis-Guide* can consist of images, ideas or suggestions that act as perceptual stumbling blocks or counter-intuitive propositions.

At a number of points in this documentation I allude to a kind of archaeological or forensic approach to site in recognition of the serious play of this practice. This is highlighted for me in this description of a land survey carried out by a construction company:

All assessments begin with researching the history of the land. It also includes a phase one walkthrough where the trained eye of an environmental specialist looks for anything that would impact development cost. That includes signs of distressed vegetation from chemical spills and the like; remnants of a gas station island, which could signal the presence of underground storage tanks; subtle signs of industrial use such as manhole covers or vent lines for underground tanks; discolored water or water with an odor indicative of contaminants; odd depressions that may be signs of a sinkhole, mine subsidence or an area where a farmer once buried trash; indications that the land harbors an endangered plant or animal; and a tombstone masked as a weathered rock. (Houston, 2006, 3)

In order to introduce the concept of groups or individuals developing their own locative practice I began to develop exercises that could be used in devising new ways of re-visiting familiar territory. Here I include some departures that might illustrate the proposition. These are notes originally devised for a workshop with Red Room Writers Group (2004) embarking upon a project to create a promenade performance in Hoxton, East London. These ideas were introduced and explored as part of this process:

1. The Room: A room is often the starting point, the departure point before a drift through the city. It might be your own room and just beyond that there is your doorstep or a lift or stair well. The city begins here in a room – a small world, a microcosm of a whole city. Explore the room and find all of its components from structure, to furniture, to objects to the smallest marks. Select 3 or 4 places in the

room and as a guide, invent a fictional commentary. Take people on a tour of the room telling them a pack of lies.

2. Zones: Go for a walk in the immediate district collecting texts found in litter, graffiti, signage and overheard conversations. Frame your exploration by looking for particular things. Choose your lens by looking for: Dread Zones, Sexy Zones, Sacred Zones, Small Worlds, Boundaries.

Take notes, make recordings but do not get mistaken for a private detective or market inspector. Devise a guided tour using the texts and locations you have found or identified. Take people on tour.

If you do this exercise with a partner you can take turns as commentator or occupier/activator of the sites you have chosen.

This is an opportunity to slip between fact, fiction and associative information.

In pairs travel/walk to a place in town where you think you might be able to engage in conversation with a stranger or where you might by chance overhear things being spoken. You do not have to find out anything very significant. How things are said might be more interesting than the words. This is not a spying or stalking exercise. Sometimes an enquiry about directions to another place might lead to related questions or information. Drifting in pairs will be useful in terms of comparing observations and gathering of verbatim material.

The fact that you are on this mission is likely to assist in tuning in to the music of people's everyday language and exchanges. Sometimes the information might come through other means than the spoken word - how dogs communicate, how traffic flows, how crowds move, how bodies "speak". Take breaks to make notes or diagrams of your findings.

Write short poems or paragraphs that combine some of your observations. Move to diverse territories - the side street will provide different qualities to the busy café or High Street. Charity shops where you can browse in a leisurely manner are very different to speedy supermarkets. (From *Mis-Guided Workshops* (2004) with Red Room Writers' Group, Hoxton, London.)

Following this workshop, the Red Room artistic director Lisa Goldman wrote and directed *Hoxton Story* which was described as: "An interactive archive, a booklet and a limited series of intimate walkabout performances." (Red Room 2005) The description of the project chimes exactly with the kinds of sensibilities we wished for in the multi-modal application of the developing *Mis-Guide* principals.

Hoxton Story is a unique journey through a "regenerated" London community - a visual and aural living montage of facts, fictions and verbatim testimony. The project has multiple manifestations and is designed to explore the process of, and feelings around, the now mythical "regeneration" of Hoxton. Juxtaposing the perspectives of tenants, squatters, residents, council workers, community activists, artists, architects and developers, it explores their dreams, disappointments and achievements in relation to the land/environment of Hoxton - as home, work and recreation; as public space and as capital waiting to be realised. (The Red Room 2005, unpaginated)

The idea of a generic collection of propositions that could be applied to a specific location not only has resonances with the site-specific continuum discussed in (Threshold 4, Page 57) but can generate a continuum of forms and styles of outcome according to a number of routes and locations in a particular town or city. Whilst the live production on the streets occurred in September 2005, the artworks, publications, sound archive and web presence remain available. As such, whilst I was critical of some of the qualitative aspects of community arts (Threshold 2, pp. 26-31) there is no doubt that relationships between artists and participants arising from such projects can become part of the history of place and the making of place. *The Guardian* review described the work as:

... the bastard child of fashionable verbatim theatre and today's many life-is-shit council estate plays. It has absolutely no manners, and is all the better for it... in weaving stories, it reveals truths... the divisions between art and life blur, in a show that is rooted in the community and probes the very nature of community itself. (Gardner 2005, unpaginated)

The guidelines and manifestos that make and continue to arise from the Mis-Guide project are geared to this idea of harnessing the micro and macro identities and identifiers of place and of the ways in which people move through and inhabit space. Matt Smith, reviewing the Wrights & Sites publication *A Mis-Guide to Anywhere*, wrote:

The artefact they have produced (I'm loathe to call it a book because it longs to be separated from itself, torn apart and left in underpasses and dank stairwells) is firmly based in this alternative tradition of walking and travel. The artefact itself is thin, ring bound; the polished pages adorned with soft-focus photographs, the familiar rendered unfamiliar, radical discontinuities; each of the 115 pages offers a different disruptive method of walking (Follow your shadow. Repeat at different times of the year, and at different distances from the equator) or a statement of fact (I walked for

three hours in London between the Strand and Monument and I did not see one child). It seeks to make and return the cities and blank suburbs we inhabit into the labyrinths and playgrounds they are; and by enabling you to get lost in them to rediscover what you might not have known or simply what you might have forgotten. It's a reclamation of a space that is already ours. (Smith, M. 2007 unpaginated)



CONCLUSION

Our apparent rejection of performance-making for an audience has led to walking with spectators as collaborators in the work, and has made the physical journeys and verbal exchanges along the way an integral part of the practice. Through my practical and academic involvement with issues surrounding site-specific performance work I have become concerned with the tensions between performing in place and the notion of place appearing to perform. In this activity there seems to be the possibility of the subjective and the objective, the “I” and the “He” conflating as perceptions of the movement through the city shift. There is a point where the work and the material of the work seem to mesh.

He adopts a paving stone, perhaps on his street.

On a regular basis he uses this site as a canvas or page or material to write upon, or inscribe upon it, or act upon it, or to leave some object to be taken away by unknown passers-by or by the road sweeper. Sometimes he may simply wash the stone or plant seeds between the surrounding cracks. He supposes there may be times when he might be accused of vandalism.

He would have to decide between actions of permanence and impermanence, durability and disappearance. (Persighetti, 12th September 2001) ¹⁵

When transferred to the idea of exploring real-time places, the dynamic of the perceived and the imagined holds much potential with regards to arts practice and the art of the everyday.

¹⁵ This text formed the commentary for a short film entitled “Morning Coffee” made immediately in response to the destruction of the World Trade Centre, September 11th 2001. Filmed by Simon Persighetti with technical support by Stephen Clarke and voice-over by Misha Myers at Dartington College of Arts.

Within the company there are four distinct voices and methodologies, resulting in a broad range of practices. Collectively, we are sympathetic to Mike Pearson's ideas, when he writes that:

site specific performances are conceived for, and conditioned by, the particulars of found spaces, (former) sites of work, play and worship. They make manifest, celebrate, confound or criticise location, history, function, architecture, micro-climate ... They are an interpenetration of the found and the fabricated. They are inseparable from their sites, the only context within which they are 'readable'. (McLucas and Pearson 1996:211)

The company has been exploring the potential of an approach to place through the lens of what we term *mytho-geography* that places the fictional, fanciful, mistaken and personal on equal terms with factual, municipal history. It suggests performance through the participation of active spectators as researchers of the city, allowing **Authors and Walkers to become equal partners in ascribing significance to place**. The working title of this mode of operation and research has been termed: The *Mis-Guide Project*. Whilst much of my practical work involves collaboration, it has been my intention to be able to identify distinctively individual navigations through this field of research.

By passing through number of *threshold* discussions and elaborations, I hope to have provided an extensive framing statement to catalogue a series of site-specific projects (see Appendix pp.115-216) that led to the adoption of and development from a kind of situationist drift through Exeter and beyond to the cities of the World. On my street in Exeter there are gaps or holes between the rows of Victorian terraced houses, the result of World War 2 bombing. The gaps have been in-filled with garages or car parking spaces but two zones have been

landscaped with grass and shrubs. The first space has a sign that reads: *PRIVATE PROPERTY NO DUMPING*, a regular meeting place for children taking turns to swing from a knotted rope attached to a tree. Without prior notice or explanation the tree has been felled more recently by the local authority. Significantly this site has now lost its purchase as an informal recreational space. The second green zone bears the sign: *NOT A PLAY AREA*, a bald statement poetically ignored by the local children. In his essay, *Creative Writers and Daydreaming*, Freud discusses the relationship between play and writing.

Might we not say that every child at play behaves like a creative writer, in that he creates a world of his own, or rather re-arranges the things of this world in a new way which pleases him?... The opposite of play is not what is serious but what is real. In spite of all the emotion with which he cathects his world of play, the child distinguishes it quite well from reality; and he likes to link his imagined objects and situations to the tangible and the visible things of the real world. This linking is all that differentiates the child's 'play' from his 'phantasising'. (Freud quoted in Burke 1995, 84-85)

This linking of the tangible and the imagined may be key to the practice of devising site-specific performance in that it plays between the forensic evidence of site and associative memories. Such dynamics are intrinsic to cognitive mapping, memory maps and the 'development of "image geography," which would include ambience, meaning and the likes and dislikes of people living in a place.' (Lippard 1997, 82)

In my contribution to a *Manifesto Towards a New Walking Culture*, I considered the walk of the pedestrian as a means to excavate the layers of factual and fictional stories, meanings, associations and experiences of the city:

'... to walk with a sense of not knowing anything about the city ... to walk as a constant experiment to discover the intricacies and individuality of your walk that is as distinctive as your handwriting ... to give a word to each footstep so that a walk becomes a story or poem ... '

'... to step on the cracks and find the gaps and make new tracks extending your territory becoming more aware of the restrictions being imposed by signs and surfaces and the aggressive armoured invasion of the car ...'

'... to amble, ramble and de-ramble the city in search of wildlife, ancient tracks, sacred signs and paths of desire and to fill abandoned roadside cars with earth and turn them into immobile gardens ...'

(extracts from a *Manifesto Towards a New Walking Culture* first presented at Walk21 conference, Zurich, September 2005. (See Appendix 13, Page 194)

In this case the walk can be considered as a tool of revelation where the act of walking draws lines, shapes and trajectories through the built environment as if the walkers are writing and re-writing the city with their bodies. The Danish architect Jan Gehl focuses upon the spaces between buildings being as important for consideration as the buildings themselves in the way that people attribute meaning to the places where they dwell.

The major function of ... communal spaces is to provide the arena for life between buildings, the daily unplanned activities - pedestrian traffic, short stays, play, and simple social activities from which additional communal life can develop (Gehl 2001, 59)

This animated view of the built environment places its inhabitants to the fore and is helpful in changing our perceptions of the city as a free-flowing environment rather than a static set of constructs seen as functional buildings or lines and icons on a map.

... the urban space is a frequented place, an intersection of moving bodies. It is the pedestrians who transform the street into a space. Yet this walking is often orientated. We are drawn back to significant places,

familiar places, memorable places, weaving them together in improvised narratives. We both read and write. Through memory and imagination, we can claim a measure of control. (Pearson 2001, 149)

It is this claimed “measure of control” or at least its potential that can be described as an exercise in writing. With a background in theatre-making, members of Wrights & Sites have all been engaged in writing for performance but it is the terms *wrighting* or *wroughting*, as in the manipulation of materials, which come closer to the manifesto's definition of writing. It is a provisional means of exploring and generating *polyphonic vocabularies* of the city.

Company member, Cathy Turner states:

We decided that the work we wanted to make would be much more directly involved in the world outside the theatre. Our work would be site-specific. We also found it more helpful to use the word ‘wrighting’, rather than ‘writing’ to describe our work ... (C.Turner, 2007, 4)

Within the debate about Practice as Research it becomes clear that research is sustained and approved according to INTENTION and MOTIVATION. This is expressed via a trajectory governed by a question that acts as a kind of prism or lens for the researcher. However the very same mechanisms of research may simultaneously be harnessed by collaborators or members of the public so that the research as process also becomes the arts practice itself. This begs the questions:

How can the artist make work without actually employing a conscious research imperative? Indeed, to what extent is it possible to make work without the recognition of previous ideas, images, works created by others in the past and

present? In my own work what does it mean to add scholarly references, analysis and justifications after the event? For example it was the initial proposition to walk rather than inhabit a given site that led to the company's discovery or acknowledgement of the Situationists and the beginnings of the *Mis-Guide* drifts. Where we part from the flâneur and the situationist is in a desire to include rather than exclude a wider participation in this work and its outcomes. Perhaps it is this kind of practice that leads me away from the book stacks and into the *multisensorial* (see Loi, pp.100-4) library of streets, alleyways and other spaces in between. I make this statement not as a rejection of the solely written dissertation but as a way of expressing the potential dynamic of multi-modal, active and collaborative research. To accept the invitation of the *Mis-Guide* project is to become a member of the search party. When reflecting upon her first steps in the development of the early *Quay Thing* project, Cathy Turner said:

The audience might be invited to experience and imagine beyond the confines of the performance, beyond the history of the site, slipping through the gaps in the performance to discover new narratives and experiences. (Wrights & Sites 2000, 27)

At the time I am not sure if any of us had envisaged how many gaps between the everyday and performance as well as gaps in fences we would cross in order to realise this participative ambition. To this extent I would lay claim to being part of a new wave of experimental tourism that yields new insights, new knowledge and fresh perspectives upon the politics of place. The devices of research therefore

become transferable as, or synonymous with, the practice for the individual artist or tourist of the everyday.

Daria Loi has written a fascinating and exhaustive paper appropriately entitled:

A suitcase as a PhD? Exploring the potential of travelling containers to articulate the multiple facets of a research thesis.

She writes:

Due to the participatory methods and tools proposed in the research, I decided to explore the opportunities offered by a thesis to become a place for participatory practices to emerge and to be an artefact where readers could be asked to physically, emotionally, and conceptually experience ideas rather than just read about them. (Loi 2004, unpaginated)

This helpfully parallels the Wrights & Sites ambition to invoke remote participation via our website or publications. Rather than being regarded as dead letters, the documents can thus act as sets of provocations or interactive tools suggesting that our instructions are invitations for members of the public to pursue or to invent their own routes and navigations. The *Shattered Anatomies* box containing *mixed textual and illustrative media and objects* published by the Arnolfini, Bristol (1997) was just such a package that steered between academic papers and implements for marking, generating or devising for performance. As document, *Shattered Anatomies* was described in review as:

a performance act in itself. It is itself a documentation of performance and a performance of documentation. This dualism allows itself to exist in many different arenas. It is both academic resource and performance event, both research material and artwork. (Hayward 1999, 153)

For example, Julian Maynard Smith presents a Station House Opera contribution to the package by including a collection of miniature terracotta bricks to be played with in a kind of replication of their production of *Bastille Dances* (1989).

A continuous performance (outside the National Theatre, London) lasting from two hours to a week, the piece used 8000 breeze blocks to explore the relationships between politics, power and buildings: how buildings reflect the value of society and why people organise themselves in buildings that they build. (Station House Opera, 2007 unpaginated)

I use this particular example pointedly as reference to a company that clearly uses the moments of performance as moments of research. From the vantage point of her PhD suitcase, a metaphor for travel as well as a container of instruction, interaction and information, Daria Loi goes on to say:

I perceive as inconsistent the notion of discussing methods via a medium that does not allow such methods to be demonstrated and experienced. I believe that in some instances a traditional PhD thesis format – the bound paper report – does not enable the expression of what one intends to share with others through the thesis and does not mirror the concepts one intends to promote. (Loi 2004, unpaginated)

To a certain extent I have addressed this dilemma by devising work in collaboration with a company and in inviting others to participate in the work. The dissemination of the work is absolutely intrinsic to the projects and much of it has occurred on foot. This is clearly illustrated by the Zurich manifesto statement:

To hold meetings, discussions, readings, and vigils on traffic islands or to make decisions on foot and on the streets instead of in airless committee meeting rooms. To write minutes, musings and decisions on paving stones. (Wrights & Sites 2006, 11)

Because the *Mis-Guide* project or any site-specific arts activity could implicitly lead towards participation I am careful not to dismiss the potential of community arts initiatives that could emerge from an individual's re-engagement with their locality. Although a communal potential could be implied or applied through engagement with *Mis-Guide* practice, there does not have to be an overtly utopian ethos attached to this agenda. Because so much arts funding in the UK and elsewhere is currently predicated upon commitment to issues of inclusion and accessibility, I prefer that *Mis-Guide* propositions should remain open for individual or group involvement. For example, certain people do not identify or wish to identify with any recognised or constituted group or community. As such, despite the liberal sentiments of arts funding bodies, the selection of those who should be recognised as partners in the arts can be extremely arbitrary and potentially divisive. Skateboarders, graffiti artists, sex workers, refugees might all have good reason to shun an activity that places them in a broad consensual milieu. Broad definitions of participatory arts are often couched in libertarian tones, clearly assuming an identity for the individual via a group. Despite the democratic tenets of community arts manifestos there can be a tendency to preserve the hierarchical position of the professional artist within the frame.

(April 2006) Using the SCALES 12 walk from the new publication *A Mis-Guide to Anywhere*, a group of 15 participants began outside the ICA, London, by measuring the outlines of their bodies with lengths of string that were then cut to the correct anatomical lengths and extended down The Mall to Admiralty Arch. The instruction to 'walk the dimensions of your body' was thus extended by

sharing and walking the total dimensions of the whole group's body outlines. The issue of scale extended our perceptions of the immediate environment, particularly in such a monumental and officially proscribed zone. St James' Park, for example, is a pleasure ground governed by a vast menu of prohibition. Even the taking of photographs of flowers is regarded with suspicion, as the whole park and its associative elements are officially regarded as the property of the crown. The group later used the string to redraw their body outlines on the gravel arena of Horse Guard's Parade, a simple activity that quickly drew the attention of curious tourists and CCTV cameras. Another of our 2006 projects called *Exeter Everyday* was described by us as:

Completely unique, with over one hundred thousand participants, hundreds of millions of pounds of scenery and landscape, extraordinary logistical resources and deep improvisational skills.

Exeter Everyday was billed as the biggest celebration in the city's history, perhaps to become a model for similar festivals throughout the world. The hyperbole went on to declare that:

Most festivals emphasise the unusual and the extraordinary. Very rarely is there an opportunity to acknowledge the everyday. *Exeter Everyday* is filling that gap with a week of day-long festivals celebrating different aspects of everyday life in Exeter. Anyone in the city can take part. It is not necessary to do anything special. Simply to take notice of the everyday, guided by or ignoring the theme of the day.

Every day the people here make and re-make their city, by the ways in which they use the city, travel across it, mark it, mend it, walk over it, write on it, work on and in and under it. This is a chance for us all to enjoy the unexceptional power we each wield every day. (Wrights & Sites 2006)

The Suitcase PhD researcher Daria Loi argues that:

...in some circumstances ideas should be expressed and accessed in multiple ways, offering the view that researchers should adopt an approach (she calls) *multisensorial writing*, an approach that mirrors how people experience and filter the world. (Loi 2004, unpaginated)

By way of summary, I draw upon a composite of a co-authored paper first delivered by Wrights & Sites at *Cities for People: The Fifth International Conference on Walking in the 21st Century*, Copenhagen (2004) (See Appendix 1, Page 119). It is a useful reminder that this work exploring and articulating **an ambulant investigation of participative politics of place** is necessarily the product of a long-term collaboration with others. The impact and implications of collaboration and participation are political even to the point of putting my name to this document whilst giving recognition to the people I work with, the places I walk through and all who walked this route before me, with me and away from me into the future. In this respect there is no doubt in my mind that a pavement is a political thing.

When formed in 1997, Wrights & Sites' first project involved the creation of site-specific theatre performances around Exeter's Quay. While making those performances we found we were enjoying the sites as much as the theatre - we began to explore places. We began to walk. For the last six years walking, exploring and leading mis-guided tours have been the most important part of our work.

We have been inspired by and in some cases reacted against a series of different, sometimes conflicting traditions of walking.

We have been exploring the potential of an approach to place through the lens of mytho-geography that places the fictional, fanciful, mistaken and personal on equal terms with factual, municipal history. It suggests performance through the participation of active spectators as researchers of place, allowing authors and walkers to become equal partners in ascribing significance to place. At its simplest we are interested in finding ways of experiencing the built environment of the city in a creative or more specifically, a re-creative manner.

We all use the idea of the 'drift' or 'dérive' - a disruption of the habitual ways of walking the city. The 'drift' rejects the normal constraints on walking - a destination, a route, a commercial, consumer, devotional or leisure purpose. Instead the 'dérive' is a usually day long exploration of the town, city or landscape as if it were alien, unfamiliar, a-functional, a museum, a playground. Dérivistes seek the atmospheres of familiar and unfamiliar places, searching for those spaces within the city most resistant to (or removed from) their functions.

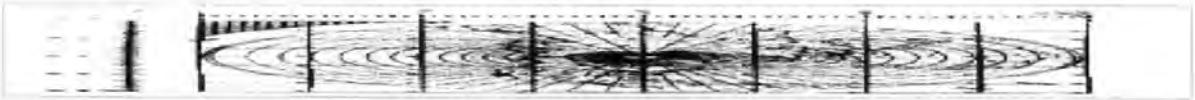
On finding atmospheric or ambient places we may follow the walking artist Hamish Fulton by taking only photographs and leaving only footprints, but sometimes we might create a 'situation' there - for example, in a council work yard we might reposition discarded road signs, in an urban edge land we might remake the parts of a burnt house into a ceremonial doorway. Following the Situationists, many of our walks propose an attention to

unmapped boundaries and unwritten restrictions. The walker might be asked to look at the spaces between things - who is the space for? The environment is seen from new perspectives, deliberately sought. We invite the walker to become an amateur human geographer, looking not only for official strategies and systems, but also and crucially, for the architectural everyday, the use of space by its inhabitants.

But in other ways, too, a *Mis-Guide* invites the walker to constantly re-think their familiar environments.

We do not see the drift as a self-contained movement through space, even when undertaken by a group. There is always the possibility of interaction with the material elements around us and with the other inhabitants we encounter along the way. We are not detached observers but participants. This means that our walks encourage new exchanges and meeting points, as well as new perspectives.





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APPENDIX/CATALOGUE OF PROJECTS 1997-2007

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Exeter Pavement, Cathedral Yard, 2002, Persighetti





Persighetti in a difficult situation, Digby, Exeter, 2001 (Photo. Phil Smith)

Mis-Guiding the City Walker 2004

1

Reference Pages: 14,16, 104

Mis-guiding the City Walker

Company

For People: The Fifth International Conference on Walking in the 21st Century, Copenhagen (2004)

1. The Specific: An Exeter Mis-Guide (Simon Persighetti)

ights & Sites is a group of four performance makers, committed to producing experimental, site-specific work. An artist-led alliance based in Exeter (England), we have a wide range of experience, working in diverse contexts: theatres; galleries; community and educational arenas; urban sites and landscapes. Formalised in 1997, the four core members (Stephen Hodge, Simon Persighetti, Phil Smith & Andy Turner) have been working together, in various permutations. Collectively, we are sympathetic to Mike Pearson's and Cliff McLucas' ideas, when they write that:

Specific performances are conceived for, and conditioned by, the particulars of found spaces, (former) sites of work, play and worship. They make manifest, celebrate, confound or criticise location, history, function, architecture, micro-climate... They are an interpenetration of the found and the fabricated. They are inseparable from their sites, the only context within which they are 'readable'.

(McLucas and Pearson 1996:211)

We have been exploring the potential of an approach to place through the lens of mytho-geography that treats the fictional, fanciful, mistaken and personal on equal terms with factual, municipal history. It suggests performance through the participation of active spectators as researchers of the city, allowing authors and walkers to become equal partners in ascribing significance to place. At its simplest we are interested in finding ways of experiencing the built environment of the city in a creative or more specifically, a re-creative manner. In his essay, **Creative Writers and Daydreaming**, Freud discusses the relationship between play and writing:

ight we not say that every child at play behaves like a creative writer, in that he creates a world of his own, or rather re-arranges the things of this world in a new way which pleases him?...The opposite of play is not what is serious but what is real. In spite of all the emotion with which he cathects his world of play, the child distinguishes it quite well from reality; and he likes to link his imagined objects and situations to the tangible and the visible things of the real world. This linking is all that differentiates the child's 'play' from his 'phantasising'.

(Freud 1959:84-5)

the linking of the tangible and the imagined may be key to the practice of devising site-specific performance in that it plays between the forensic evidence of site and associative elements. Such dynamics are intrinsic to cognitive mapping, memory maps and the 'development of image geography, which would include ambience, meaning and the likes and dislikes of people living in a place' (Lippard 197:82).

The serious play of the artist might become one of guide or mis-guide through real time and space rather than as narrator or interpreter of place. The performer would perhaps become a signpost re-framing the geography of the city in rejection of the closure of historic interpretation. As such, the terms 'wrighting', 'performing', 'mis-guide' and 'mytho-geography' remain as active propositions to be applied to an on-going exploration of the city. It is with caution that we employ the term 'mytho-geography', a working title (modus operandi) coined by Phil Smith, a core member of the company. The meeting of myth and geography is applied to the city where we live and work, not as a definition of practice but as a lever to balance the municipal interpretations of the city. Such interpretations are very much the currency of the burgeoning Heritage Industry that, on the one hand is often dutifully concerned with historical accuracy and authentic reconstruction but equally employs the disingenuous and romantic sloganeering of the travel agent.

The Wrights & Sites remove from spectacle and performance came through the adoption of the 'drift' as a means of discovering fresh approaches to observation and interaction with the city of our work, rest and play. Rather than inviting audiences to a specific site to see performances, we were now inviting people to investigate with us by walking with us, finding places along the way, jumping fences and making cuts through alleyways. The whole city became an animated art gallery and adventure playground inscribed with monuments, footprints, havens and danger zones. This led to us, as authors or performers, handing over our journeys and the directions to anyone who wishes to participate in their own explorations.

Our research project has led to the production of a publication, An Exeter Mis-Guide, conflating theoretical propositions with physical journeys and actions. The experience of mytho-geography as a mode of perceiving and of wrighting may turn the walker/spectator into the animator, puppeteer, archaeologist, explorer and loiterer around hitherto unrecognised aspects of the city.

The pocketsize book An Exeter Mis-Guide designed by our collaborator, the visual artist, Tony Weaver, is a disruption of city tour guides and a disruption of tourism. It offers a model or set of invitations by which visitors explore the urban space, choose their role and take the opportunity to 'drift'. Rather than directing anyone where to go and what to see, the Mis-Guide explores ways of seeking cities within cities; a forged passport to an 'other' city and a hyper-sensitised way of travelling the familiar one.

Why mis-guide? Because we see the present flanked by memory and imagination, historical and geographical accuracy is subject to debate. An overlay of maps seems to challenge our notions of time and space in a landscape or cityscape of sky, water and earth, merging contours, fluctuating and colliding the flow or contra-flow of daily life. Hence, An Exeter Mis-Guide. Hence, the strange journeys we make, walking in a place we think we know but allowing in a sense of don't know. So that we may see the shadows of the houses like sky, the cracks in the pavement like rivers, the Earth in the eyes of the passers

Looking Back: Precedents and Influences (Phil Smith)

When formed in 1997, Wrights & Sites' first project involved the creation of site-specific theatre performances around Exeter's Quay. While making those performances we found we were enjoying the process as much as the theatre - we began to explore places. We began to walk. For the last four years walking, exploring and leading mis-guided tours have been the most important part of our work.

We have been inspired by and in some cases reacted against a series of different, sometimes conflicting traditions of walking. Because we have neither a leader nor an agreed manifesto these traditions exist in tension about each other in our work and each of us would probably describe a different ancestry for our practice.

The most obvious of our adopted ancestors are the Situationists. We all use their idea of the 'drift' or 'dérive' - a disruption of the habitual ways of walking the city. The 'drift' rejects the normal constraints on walking - a destination, a route, a commercial, consumer, devotional or leisure purpose. Instead the 'drift' is a usually day long exploration of the city as if it were alien, unfamiliar, a-functional, a museum, a playground. Dérivistes seek the atmospheres of familiar and unfamiliar places, searching for those spaces within the city most resistant to (or removed from) their functions.

We get to what Situationists would call the psychogeography of the city - the city's atmospheres imperceptible to the habitualised walker - we sometimes use 'catapults' - for example, taking arbitrary buses or blindfolding ourselves in a taxi and asking the driver to choose a destination.

In finding atmospheric or ambient places we may follow the walking artist Hamish Fulton by taking only photographs and leaving only footprints, but sometimes we might create a 'situation' there - for example, in a council workyard we might reposition discarded road signs, in an urban edgeland we might remake parts of a burnt house into a ceremonial doorway.

This is close to the Situationist anti-aesthetic of détournement - the adaptation of dead art into disrupted forms. We all to some extent adapt areas and objects of the alienated and commodified city in order to provoke its re-experiencing: suggesting people walk in high heeled open-toed 'fuck me' shoes until they fall apart or poetically re-using the digital advertising displays on the city's buses to present found roadside images.

We differ from the Situationists' idea of unitary urbanism - the countering of the fragmentation of the city by a single, Situationist architecture turning life into one continual drift. Each of us may embrace the idea of walking as a means for change and resistance, but we are probably all suspicious of utopian planning and centralist means.

against the Situationists' unitary urban utopia we have mytho-geography: a geography of the city that equates equally its legends, its official, municipal and tourist histories, its distortions by commerce, its stakes about it, lies and rumours about it, its dark tales of conspiracy, its physics, its uses in fiction. Rather than seeking to collapse these into a finally resolved unitary 'truth' about the city we have delayed this synthesis, keeping the different elements in motion about each other - this is the creation of a playground for change, what the critic Homi Bhabha calls the 'Third Space'.

We probably define ourselves in opposition to the internalised dreaminess of the nineteenth century neur, wandering disconnected and gathering, but are more in tune with a neo-romantic like Arthur Schenker who found wormholes in London suburbs to an unnerving countryside alive with dread possibilities. Or with an early C20th tramper like Stephen Campbell who went on zig-zag walks: taking a left, then a right, then a left, then a right, or drew straight line routes, and had to negotiate the consequences.

We have also taken serial structures, the dematerialisation of performance, the use of CDs, and an obsessive connecting of the city's esoteric details from writers and conceptual, land and live artists like the Fluxus Group, Janet Cardiff, Iain Sinclair and Robert Smithson. With the Rome-based walking group Walker we seem to share a mix of modernism with a playful, even pagan, archaism - after all, walking is an anachronistic resistance to the dominant form of urban travel. Like them we set the nomadic against the settled.

Finally, I'd like to add to our traditions the work of James J. Gibson - a scientist of the senses of perception who brought to the study of consciousness, in the 1950s and 1960s, the demand that the body's senses be understood in motion. He described the ambient optic array that stretches our view of the world around our head as we move through it. He described the brain's reactions to the world it walks through in terms of contemplation of detail but of a negotiation of the functions of key parts of the landscape. I'd like to propose him as part of a tradition of walking that is neither a means to a simple contemplation of the city, nor a research instrument for progressive reforms - but one that is a process for the disruption of walkers of themselves as well as their habitual walkings.

Looking Forwards: Cities for People (Cathy Turner)

The Situationist drifter disrupts the map. For de Certeau, the practice of walking the city is an alternative to the aerial view of the city planner. For Lefebvre, the planner's 'conceptual space' is challenged not only by the empirical patterns and measurements of spatial practice, but by the complexities of 'lived space', both imaginative and material.

We re-make the city by using it in new ways. In so doing, we inevitably re-make ourselves and allow the city to re-make us. It's a mutual process.

We are aware that these perspectives have had their impact on architecture and urban planning. Architects from Constant Nieuwenhuys and his uneasily utopian 'New Babylon' to Bernard Tschumi and his 'folies' at the Parc de la Villette have stressed that there is no architecture without 'event', proposing spaces that dislocate the more repressive architectural conventions through which events are regulated, creating strategic designs that aim to open up the possible combinations of events and spaces.

These architectures aim to provoke constant redefinition through multiple use. Whether or not such a project seems realisable, these architects seek to create conditions within which a new, less hierarchical society can emerge, rather than attempting to define and create that society through a formal plan. In a related move, many planners propose an increased attention to the 'architectural everyday', the use of space by dwellers, including their contribution, both implicit and explicit, to its re-development (though without the assumption of unity, fixity and utopianism implicit in some previous attempts at 'community architecture').

These developments can be seen in stark contrast to the occasions on which Wrights & Sites have fallen foul of town planners when attempting to stage performances in unoccupied or occupied spaces; when painting chalk 'graffiti' in a shopping precinct; when drawing attention to a statue that is due for re-siting. Part of the problem seems to be that we are perceived as provoking interest and comment regarding sites on which plans have already been made. While more progressive planners and architects aim to open up possibilities, here it is the very proliferation of possibility that is feared and circumscribed.

It is true that we do encourage a critical perspective on the city and its development. A couple of 'walks' in the *Exeter Mis-Guide* specifically invite an individual perspective on town planning. 'Look for ruins on which the future can be built', reads one. Two others suggest making one's own plans, perhaps sending these to the City Council.

Following the Situationists, many of our walks propose an attention to unmapped boundaries and unwritten restrictions. The walker might be asked to look at the spaces between things - who is the space? The city is seen from new perspectives, deliberately sought. Arguably more carefully targeted than the Situationist *dérives*, several of the walks direct attention to particular areas of concern. We invite the walker to become an amateur human geographer, looking not only for official strategies and systems, but also and crucially, for the architectural everyday, the use of space by its inhabitants.

In other ways, too, a *Mis-Guide* invites the walker to constantly re-think the city.

Ultimately, we do not see the *dérive* as a self-contained movement through space, even when undertaken by a group. There is always the possibility of interaction with the material elements around us and with the other inhabitants of the city. We are not detached observers but participants. This means that our walks encourage new exchanges and meeting points, as well as new perspectives.

Secondly, our work is playful and concerns the landscapes of memory, desire and possibility, as much as empirical observation. Psychogeography, mythogeography and spatial metaphor are part of the exploration. Thus the walker's own 'everyday', their own socio-political 'positioning' and their own spatial imagination are brought into the re-visioning of place. This is an engagement with what Lefebvre terms 'lived space' or what Soja prefers to term 'Thirdspace' (not unrelated to Babha's use of the term 'Third Space') - both real and imaginary, metaphorical and material. Through these walks, the walker explores the interlocking identities of self, civil society and city, exploring their own relationship to place, finding the places where there is congruence or perhaps contradiction between these identities. Re-inventing them. Re-naming the city while exploring it.

s creative exchange might give rise to new ideas about what the city could be, what it is, how its lived experience might be given expression. Several of our walks have creative outcomes - an A-Z of photographs; postings on the LED signs on buses; commemorative acts; the creation of new designs; the imaginative e-mailing of places to other places; the enfolding of polaroids of the country in the heart of the city. Yet we also see the walk itself as a creative outcome, a performance of place that reinvents place, of time and spatial practice.

There is scope for work with the displaced and the disaffected in finding or dreaming a space through such exploration. I'm interested in a number of allotment projects that invite people from immigrant communities to manage a piece of land, celebrating the choices and relationships and metaphors that arise from this process. The allotment, a portioning off of space, is no more and no less than a playground within which self and place can be co-creative. Though with less absolute freedom, the city can also be included within a space of play, framed by the walk which suggests the boundaries and perspectives of the game. By involving people in this space, by appealing to what Soja calls the 'critical spatial imagination', people might become more deeply involved with the city, opening up the potential for constructive input into both its development and its expressive possibilities.

The Generic: A Mis-Guide to Anywhere (Stephen Hodge)

is partly a matter of scale.

I've had this idea for a while now, even before the publication of An Exeter Mis-Guide, to produce a generic version. Something we've recently started referring to as A Mis-Guide to Anywhere.

But there are a lot of issues here.

Most of the company's work to date has been consciously site-specific, and at times we've been quite hard-line in defence of the specific over the general, sympathising with Richard Serra's well-quoted statement: 'to move the work is to destroy the work' (Serra 1994:194).

We will probably generate more Mis-Guides for specific places, such as the one that we made for the Bartauld Institute in London last November, but we will never be able to match the investment in place of An Exeter Mis-Guide (three years in the making, and with the five of us having a combined total of over 70 years of living in the city).

Something that really took us by surprise was the wide range of interest in An Exeter Mis-Guide. In addition to feature articles in local magazines, reviews have appeared in a national newspaper and journals for writers, the homeless and ramblers, as well as on-line on the BBC's website, a performance art magazine and a leisure and tourism site. The book has picked up buyers from very diverse places, including a historian from Cultural Tourism DC in Washington and a geographer from the University of Technology in Sydney. Somehow a lot of people are managing to be interested in a book about a city that they will probably never even visit: they seem to be finding ways of transferring the specific to the general, at least to another specific context.

is a generic Mis-Guide actually possible to write?

Mis-Guide To Anywhere will consciously play with its title. Three or four of the more playful activities that in planning to explore will really push the word 'Anywhere' in terms of space and scale: a space walk (inter space), activities for somnambulists (unconscious, dream space), new tactics for Sim-City (virtual space), and perhaps a Mis-Guide to one's own DNA (personal, micro-space).

re generally, we are aware of the limits of our own western-European centrality. And we have decided that the book will largely focus on the urban experience. But it is our intention to interrogate and trespass beyond these borders. We accept mobility. And we accept the need for people to locate themselves. We accept the many narratives of place. We are interested in the dynamic between the specific and the general, in connections and differences, in scale.

the top of my desk, three zeros (three nothings) separate the 1:50 plan of my house and the 1:50000 map of Exeter. Three more zeros take me to the 1:50000000 map of the world.

le played an important part in one of the project's recent research and development trips, a simultaneous drift by the four core members of Wrights & Sites in four European locations: Paris, Bilbao, Manchester and the Channel Islands.

lter Benjamin, in *The Arcades Project*, quotes a guidebook to Paris of the time: 'the passage is a city, a world in miniature' (Benjamin 2003:15).

addition to the world within each individual Paris passage, it became clear to me as I walked northwards, exploring the passages along the length of the Rue Saint Denis, that I was also making a journey eastwards around the world (from the Paris artists of the Passage du Grand Cerf, to the Middle Eastern shops of the Passage du Prado, to the Indian and Pakistani restaurants of the Passage du Brady). The world in one street.

ilist, at the same time, instead of drifting the whole city, Simon walked the same micro-area of Manchester, again and again. And in Bilbao, Cathy explored static drifting. And on the island of Herm, Phil traced the structural pattern from a leaf he found that morning onto a map of the island, and then attempted to walk it.

se activities also make us think about interpenetration. To quote Benjamin: 'We know that, in the course of flânerie, far-off times and places interpenetrate the landscape and the present moment' (Benjamin 2003:419). And McLucas and Pearson, quoted earlier, when they write that site-based work is 'interpenetration of the found and the fabricated' (McLucas and Pearson 1996:211).

Mis-Guide to Anywhere will take these ideas on board. It will also facilitate an interpenetration of the experiences of the walker-writer and the walker-reader, who will become partners in ascribing significance to place. Not an instruction manual, but rather a set of provocations and perspectives, with space for the reader to fill in her own specifics, make her own connections and decide her own scale.

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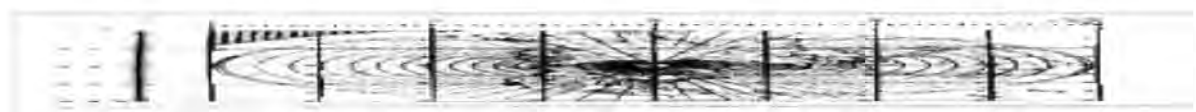
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An Exeter MIS-GUIDE 2003

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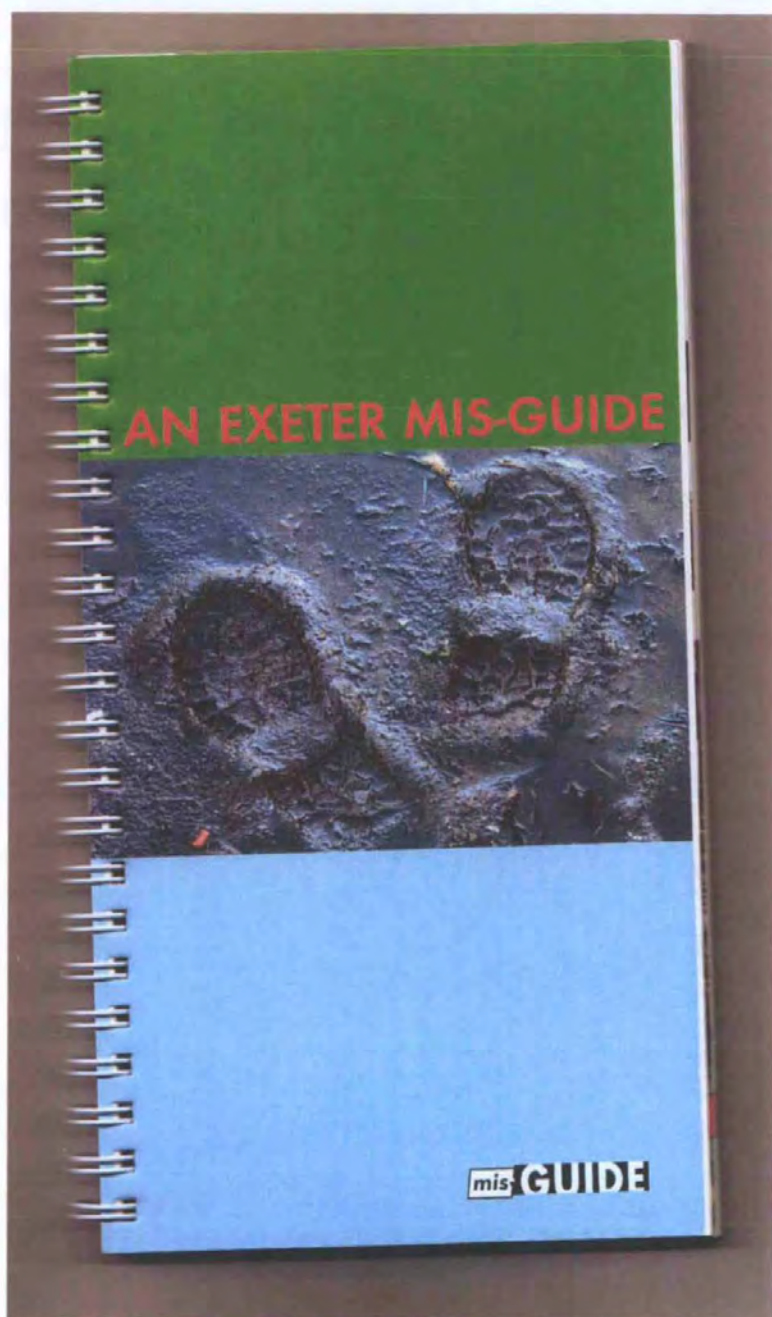
Full Company with Tony Weaver

Exeter (published September 2003)

An Exeter Mis-Guide takes the form of a guide book. It suggests a series of walks and points of observation and contemplation within the city of Exeter. It is no ordinary guide book. It is guided by the practice of mytho-geography, which places the fictional, fanciful, fragile and personal on equal terms with 'factual', municipal history. Author and walker become partners in ascribing significance to place.

Many of the walks were developed in conjunction with Exeter citizens, creating a variety of perspectives on the way we negotiate the city. We aimed to help local people to discover the unknown side of their city and to celebrate each person's unique sense of place.

Funded by the Local Heritage Initiative, Arts Council England and Exeter Arts Council.



The Specific: An Exeter Mis-Guide

Are you misguided?

What's different about this Guide to Exeter? Well, it's not just a book for tourists, for one thing. Instead it is for everybody to play at being a tourist - or an explorer, an archaeologist, a spy, a fugitive ... you choose. Whatever part you play, this is a mis-guide to seeing and exploring the unfamiliar in Exeter (even in the places you know well).



SIMON PERSIGHETTI: SAMPLE TEXTS FOR FINAL PROOF: *An Exeter Mis-Guide* pages

Walk Bites:

Walk Bites appear throughout the *Mis-Guide* as simple suggestions for journeys of discovery. They do not always relate to the main content of the pages where they appear. They could be regarded as little stumbling blocks that may take you in unexpected directions.

Where would you place your X on Exeter?

Loiter without intent

Seek and sense invisible boundaries

Discover city hedgehog habitats

Find red Exeter, amber Exeter, green Exeter

Identify buggy routes for trundling baby to sleep

Notice footprints or animal tracks set in concrete

Sightsee a supermarket but do not buy anything

Stage romantic farewells at zebra crossings

Skip over Trews Weir bouncy bridge

What happened to the Bird Woman?

Use a mirror to view Exeter Cathedral ceiling

Ask directions to the place where you are standing

Leave a feather on the steps of Exeter Phoenix

Visit the Royal Albert Museum animals whilst listening on headphones to music

Listen to Exeter traffic and sirens as a night at the opera

Track the cats on your streets

Follow the Roman Walls whilst eating a bunch of grapes

Phone a friend describing your view from phone box or mobile

Label and exhibit things you unearth in your back garden



Drift Discovery, Exeter, 2006, Photo, Persighetti

Simon Persighetti, W&S Misguide Sample Pages :

Touch Tours

You may walk down a particular street every day but only feel it through your shoes. What kinds of information, sensations, associations arise by touching the familiar walls and fabric of the city?

It might seem odd to stop to touch-tour your journey but it can be done momentarily without drawing attention to your actions. This tour could be taken on any walk (you can invent your own route) but I have chosen the High Street because it is such a public place to encounter this private experience.

Start: Corner of Paris Street/High Street

Railings by the bike stands (Next store)	Touch
Silver birch tree (Virgin Records)	Touch
Flowerbeds (structure and plants)	Touch
Shop windows	Touch
Wooden benches	Touch

Touch

Metal plaque mounted on marble stone (Site of East Gate)
Carved letters on wooden Exeter Box Office
Stone fascia on H&M shop (Former Barclays Bank)
Black scansions
Flag pole (Bedford Square)
Statue of William Reginald Courtenay (touch his shoes)
Return to High Street crossing it and heading back towards Boots the Chemist.
Trees
Carole Vincent sculpture of a family group
(it commemorates the Year of the Pedestrian 1988/9 – How touching!)

City Planner 1

Walk along any street and re-design it to fit your desires. In your imagination you could re-organise, re-colour, re-shape the whole city. Record your new City Planning using maps, sketches, diagrams, photos. On Paris Street, imagine a new bus station or civic centre.

A good starting point could be to buy a postcard of Exeter and alter the view by sticking new images, buildings, objects onto it. An extension of this walk would be to plant some change in the street itself. For example, sticking a stamp on the pavement could mark the siting of a new post box. Where you might wish to change a colour, you leave a painting brush.



Drift Marker, Exeter 2003, Photo, Persighetti

A to Z of your street

You may have taken many photographs of events inside the place where you live but do you have any shots of the street where you live?

Make a photo A to Z of the street starting at your own front door.

For example: W = Wall, X = Crossroad, Y = Yellow Lines.

You don't have to be an ace photographer; you can get great results from point-and-click or single-use cameras. Close-up shots of particular features are often more effective than general views. Obviously it is important to honour peoples' privacy to avoid accusations of spying or Paparazzi escapades.

This project can throw up all kinds of issues about private and public spaces. In the process of taking the photographs, neighbours might be rather bemused to see you taking pictures of moss or cracks in the pavement but this should add to the creative adventure. Showing the results to neighbours is likely to arouse interesting conversations about life in your locality. Once the photos have been developed you can make up your own alphabetical guidebook that might include captions, comments or poetry for each image. Offering to show the finished work will allow for a sense of exchange and even lead to further mis-guide projects.

**Crowd Sound Walk
(St James Park)**

Check out the football fixtures for Exeter City Football Stadium, St James Park. This is a good Saturday afternoon sound walk. Arrive just after kick-off and skirt around the grounds listening to the murmurs and roars of the crowd. You can adjust the volume by walking through the nearby network of streets.

If you get tired, you can sit on a bench at the unattended St James Railway Station where you can call up train information on a press-button, crackling speaker. The crowd sounds mingle with the occasional passing train. During lulls you may hear the water trickling through the overgrown pump house on the embankment. This is the site of the spring that used to supply water to the city from the 13th to early 20th Centuries via the Underground Passages. The water still flows as an undercurrent to the roar of the contemporary city.

If you are nervous of jubilant crowds, leave the neighbourhood before the last whistle.

Reviews

... "Mis-guide" tourism is the latest of all the forms of "experimental tourism". And it has an unlikely home town: Exeter...

The Times, 13 September 2003

Lost and loving it



Exeter Mis-guide authors Cathy Turner, Stephen Hodge, Simon Persighetti and Phil Smith

LET your dog choose the direction of your city walk; take a "touch tour" feeling trees, flower beds, walls and letter boxes along the way; follow railway, river and canal "edgelands" to find somewhere you might sleep if you were homeless . . .

"Mis-guide tourism" is the latest of all the forms of "experimental tourism". And it has an unlikely home town: Exeter.

A group of friends, weary of traditional guides, have got together to create a whole new approach to tourism in the West Country city.

The result, *Exeter Mis-Guide*, published next week, offers a bizarre, off-the-wall, hippy-dippy (and, some might say, downright odd) selection of ways of enjoying Exeter.

"You're not just being a tourist and letting things wash over you: you become more sensitised and notice things more," said Phil Smith, a former actor, aged 47, and one of four co-authors.

He used the term "mis-guide" because he believes that all guides are subjective: "We see the present flanked by memory and imagination; historical and geographical accuracy is subject to debate."

Participants are encouraged to take pictures and notes, and to video sights. The best groups consist of three to four people (any larger and dominant members start taking over). Discoveries will soon be shared on a website.

Other "mis-guides" include choosing a compass setting and travelling in that direction for a set time while "doing your utmost not to deviate from your straight course"; taking photographs of objects beginning with each letter of the alphabet along a certain route; and, if you are upset, walking until you feel better, and then remembering and enjoying that spot for that reason.

The "mis-guide" can be seen as part of a current growing trend. Smith said the group was influenced by Joel Henry's Laboratory of Experimental Tourism as well as by Iain Sinclair's recent book about forgotten zones around the M25, *London Orbital*.

Alain de Botton's book *The Art of Travel*, in which de Botton encourages people to take "word pictures" of places to heighten their sense of understanding of a place, also fits the group's philosophy.

And so does this summer's outbreak of "flash-mobbing" — when people get together via the internet and agree to go to a certain place at a set time to perform pointless acts — and "Join Me". The latter consists of a "Karma Army" of people who set up earlier this year to promote random acts of kindness, such as giving old men their train fares home.

Exeter City Council, somewhat bemused by *Mis-Guide*, which was sponsored by the Arts Council, is considering whether to stock it at tourist information centres.

Tom Chesshyre, The Times, 13 September 2003

... often enlightening... positively dangerous... We loved this intriguing and amusing guide...

Devon Today, October 2003

... With the book tucked in pocket I felt entitled even licensed to poke around where it is normally discouraged even forbidden to enter... I found this an imaginative and very open invitation...

liveartmagazine, November 2003

Reviews Continued:

Walkers tired of the same old scenery could follow in the footsteps of of Exeter artists Wrights & Sites whose first book pioneers a new genre in travel writing, the 'mis-guide'...

Writers' News, December 2003

... a unique guide to Exeter... includes hundreds of interesting and virtually free activities...

The Big Issue South West, December 2003

... this is an inspired publication...

Exeter Flying Post, December 2003

... one of the most unusual walking books around... a refreshing and often humorous read... [makes] us see the city in new and imaginative ways by exploring on foot...

Walk: The Magazine of the Ramblers' Association, Spring 2004

... well written, often verging on the lyrical... The authors certainly challenge the dominant notions of tourism travel, space and place they make the 'usual' unusual (the 'familiar' unfamiliar) by providing a different lens through which it is gazed upon. Such ways of approaching places and spaces not only provides options for the traveller, but also provides material and ideas that can be used within academic research as well as teaching...

leisuretourism.com, 2004

... The Mis-Guide succeeds by putting into writing small strategies, or jumping-off points, that seek to stimulate creativity in a society that seems to prefer spoon-fed entertainments and over-the-top spectacles. The graciousness with which this enterprising group of walking artists have invited us to do more than just admire, but to create art ourselves and rediscover the social function of the city, is truly an accomplishment...

Reconstruction: Studies in Contemporary Culture, Winter 2005

... I have become acquainted with the work of Wrights & Sites, a site-specific collective working out of Exeter. I thoroughly recommend their excellent book **An Exeter Mis-Guide**...

Carl Lavery, Studies in Theatre and Performance 25.3, 2005



Reference Pages: 23, 78

(Co-creator with Wrights & Sites)

We noticed that many people who don't actually live in Exeter seemed to find things in *An Exeter Mis-Guide* which they can transfer to other places. After receiving responses from people in Toronto, Sydney, New York, Washington DC, Bangalore and beyond, we began to wonder whether we might make a 'Mis-Guide' that deliberately set out to provide transferable ideas. We started by calling it a 'generic' guide - unusually for us, since we have always been interested in specific localities, rather than 'types' of place. We would not usually consider a work to be 'site-specific' if it could be transferred from its original location. But in this case, the work is completed by the walker and becomes specific to its location only in the walking (we intend 'walk' to be interpreted as journey, hop, skip, jump, negotiate on wheels etc. as appropriate to circumstances and mood).

We realised that the same set of instructions or stimuli become radically different as they are transferred between places and we became very interested in that difference and how we perceive it. We called this project *A Mis-Guide to Anywhere* and we were pushing the idea of 'anywhere': can we be mis-guided 'anywhere' and on any scale?

After two years of research and walking experiments in Manchester, the Channel Islands, Copenhagen, Zürich, Paris, New York, Shanghai, rural Zambia, etc, *A Mis-Guide to Anywhere* was launched at the ICA, London, in April 2006, accompanied by *4 Mis-Guided Tours*.

(Co-creator with Wrights & Sites) *4 Mis-Guided Tours*, four 'mis-guided' tours.
London: ICA and its environs.

4 Mis-Guided Tours

Full Company

Central London (April 2006)

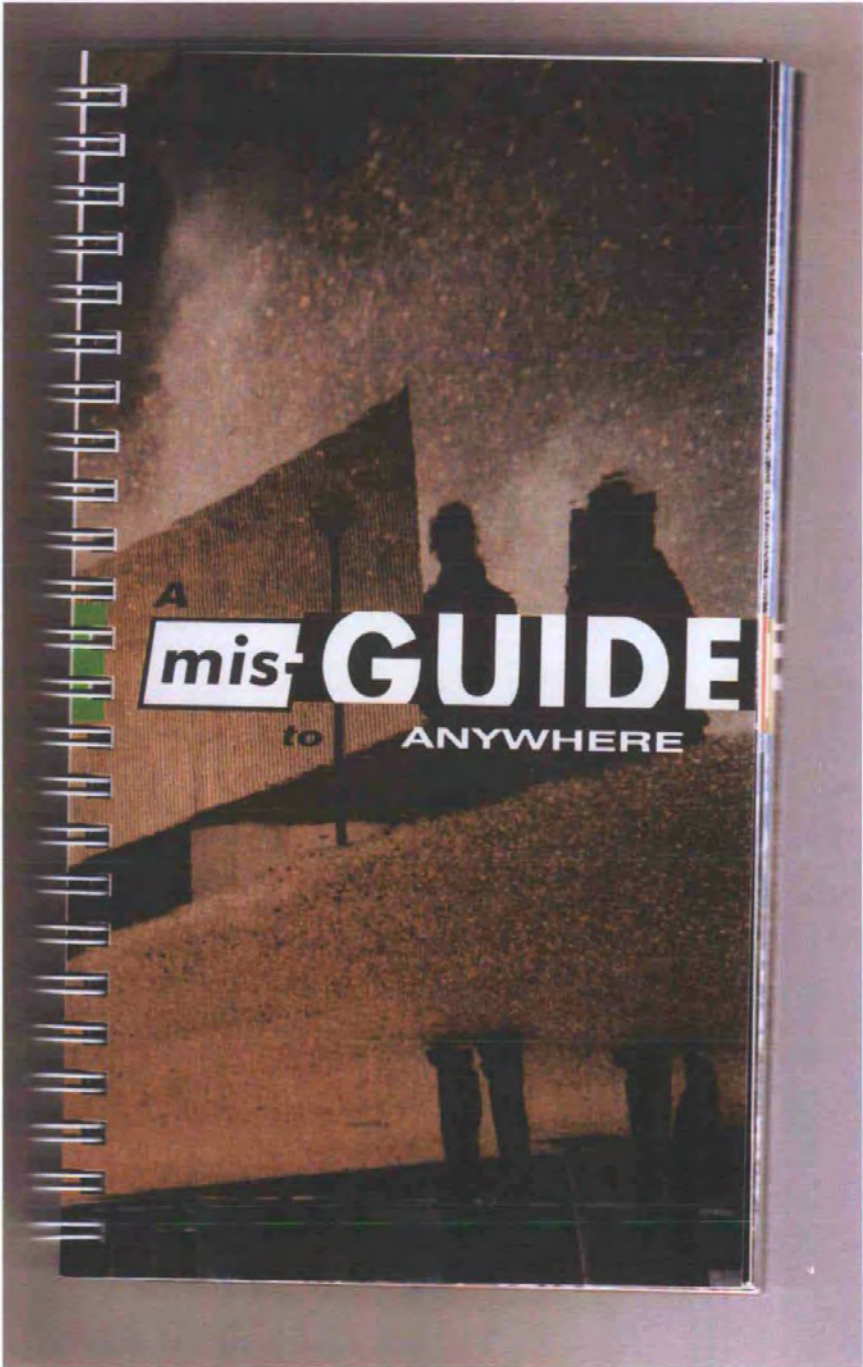
Created to coincide with the launch of *A Mis-Guide to Anywhere*, these *4 Mis-Guided Tours* started and ended at London's Institute of Contemporary Arts.

1. **The problem of shopping** (Cathy Turner) - Rearrange the dreams on sale by reading stories in window displays, sight-seeing shop assistants, shopping for a fictional 'you' or exploring shopping nostalgia.
2. **Out of place** (Stephen Hodge) - A walk of coincidences, derived from overlaying a map of Paris onto London. What's where the Eiffel Tower should be? Where can we stop for a un Ricard?... [Blogged by Rodcorp [here](#)].
3. **Scales** (Simon Persighetti) - In a park or open city space: walk the dimensions of a paving stone; walk the dimensions of your dwelling place; walk the dimensions of your body...
4. **Masses** (Phil Smith) - A drift in search of spaces where the trivia becomes monumental and the monumental becomes cake decoration. A chance to give homage to the trinkets and fondle butchers in bronze.

Presented as part of the ICA Performance Programme.

Once again, we worked with our artist colleague, Tony Weaver, on the design of the book. The project was financially supported by Arts Council England (Lottery Funded) and the Centre for Creative Enterprise & Participation.

2006: (co-creator with Wrights & Sites and visual artist, Tony Weaver) *A Mis-Guide to Anywhere*, site/journey-generic provocations in book form. Financially supported by Arts Council England and the Centre for Creative Enterprise & Participation, Dartington College of Arts, Devon, UK.



A review: Tuesday, March 25. 2008

A Mis-Guide to Anywhere

Book: A Mis-Guide to Anywhere
Publisher: Wrights & Sites
ISBN 13: 978-0954613013

In *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*, Rebecca Solnit calls walking 'the most obvious and the most obscure thing in the world'; and it is: at once quotidian and functional yet – and more so now than ever before - oddly subversive and hidden. Suburban and particularly urban life doesn't encourage walking, or at least it doesn't encourage a certain kind of walking – any beyond the purely functional; we're funnelled, corralled, caged by streets and architecture, driven by lines of force between our cattle trucks and our homes, dissuaded from nomadic revelries and haphazard acts of discovery. We don't map, recreate, these spaces, they map, create us. So that's why the alternative radical history of walking, that which is still coming into being, is one that relies on metaphors of disappearance and misplacement, alchemy and dream states – ancient methods of (re)discovery transposed into the most modern of settings. Learning to get lost so that you might find your, or another, way

The Wrights & Sites collective are a group of artists and pranksters based in Exeter who formed in 1997 and whose core remit is to produce multi-media site-specific explorations of space and place. They (they being Stephen Hodge, Simon Persighetti, Phil Smith and Cathy Turner) began by focusing much of their attention on their home town of Exeter, going as far as to produce a mutated guidebook to the city that suggested 'a series of walks and points of observation and contemplation' – a Mis-Guide, a distorted method of exploring the familiar. But this site-specificity had obvious limitations and the group wondered 'towards the end of 2003...whether they might make a 'Mis-Guide' that deliberately set out to provide transferable ideas... in this case, the work will be completed by the walker and will become specific to its location only in the walking (we intend 'walk' to be interpreted as journey, hop, skip, jump, negotiate on wheels etc. as appropriate to circumstances and mood)'. Essentially what the group intended was a portable Mis-Guide with enough broad thematic content to enable it to be adapted to any city, town or suburb anywhere in the world.

The artefact they have produced (I'm loathe to call it a book because it longs to be separated from itself, torn apart and left in underpasses and dank stairwells) is firmly based in this alternative tradition of walking and travel. This Mis-Guide to Anywhere can be 'used' 'anywhere you can walk slowly down the street without being shot by Western contractors. Anywhere you can reorganise buildings without permission. Anywhere you can stand still without being questioned. Anywhere you find abandoned beds. Anywhere the movie you

always wanted to see is playing. Anywhere you legged it' and as such is a portable manifesto for 'disrupted walking' is a 'utopian project for the recasting of a bitter world'. The artefact itself is thin, ring bound; the polished pages adorned with soft-focus photographs, the familiar rendered unfamiliar, radical discontinuities; each of the 115 pages offers a different disruptive method of walking (Follow your shadow. Repeat at different times of the year, and at different distances from the equator) or a statement of fact (I walked for three hours in London between the Strand and Monument and I did not see one child). It seeks to make and return the cities and blank suburbs we inhabit into the labyrinths and playgrounds they are; and by enabling you to get lost in them to rediscover what you might not have known or simply what you might have forgotten. It's a reclamation of a space that is already ours.



Situationists

In terms of influence it is the Situationists who loom largest. Guy Debord had seen a map in a book called *Paris et l'agglomération parisienne* in which the movements of a 16 year old girl had been mapped. Her life fell between the three points of a triangle – her home, her school and the home of her piano teacher – and there was little deviation outside this strict geometric cage. Debord was horrified and outraged 'at the fact that anyone's life could be so pathetically limited'. Thus the idea of the derive was developed a 'technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances' in which 'one or more persons during a certain period' is to 'drop their relations, their work and all other usual motives for movement and action, and let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there'. In other words practice a freedom of movement otherwise discouraged by everyday living, and in doing so achieve a certain kind of mental state – a state that was at once exploratory and political but also playful and childlike, (indeed Debord compared it to the method of free association in psychoanalysis) – which could open up new areas of possibility.

The Situationist literature and mythology, saturated with metaphors of mixture, of recombination, involves the using of a kind of thaumaturgy of travel to rearrange place, subtle methods of navigation unlocking new possibilities and

new layers of meaning – all modes of separating and splitting the horror of totality, an aspect of capitalist society that Debord abhorred. The Mis-Guide is very much part of this transcendent urge, using, in Jean-Cristophe Bailly's memorable phrase, 'the generative grammar of the legs' to subvert this totality and to create narratives on the hoof.



City as dressing up box

The question that has to be asked of this artefact is: what do we do with it? In some respects it is hard to ascertain what level it is pitched at. Is this a manifesto, a subversive document designed to politicise and aggravate; or is it a pamphlet conceived with play in mind, gentle groups ambling across the cities of the world pointing out hitherto unexplored objects, monuments? Does it matter? I'm not so sure about its political aims, at least not on a macro level – there aren't riots trapped between these glossy pages; but on a micro level there is a sense of a minor personal politics at work, concerned with what Michel de Certeau called 'The Practice of Everyday Life', the instilling of a rigorous sense of discovery that penetrates to the core of the seemingly most banal and obvious aspects of day to day life. There is, in a sense, a liberatory knowledge in simply paying attention to what you do most often, and this slim volume provides myriad ways of doing just that. What intrigues me - and it's what it doesn't tell me - is what to do next.

<http://www.mountain7.co.uk/index.php?/archives/11-A-Mis-Guide-to-Anywhere.html> March 25. 2008



THE QUAY THING (PILOT NAVIGATION) 1998

Reference Pages: 43, 53, 64

Full Company

Exeter Quay & Canal (July 1998)

The Quay Thing, funded by a £97,410 A4E award in 1998, was the company's first project.

Four interweaving pilot performances were created specifically for a boat journey between Exeter's Quayside and the Double Locks pub on the canal.

The project also yielded two digital video documents and a Studies in Theatre and Performance Journal Supplement.

Funded by The National Lottery Through The Arts Council of England, Exeter Arts Council & dB Sound and Lighting.



The Quay Thing (Pilot Navigation)

Extract:

NAVIGATION: Working Notes (June 13th 1998)

Proposed performance units to be woven with other Wrights' material (sinusoidal).

VOICE: The voice of the boat. (Berio style?) Vocal celebration developed from the sounds of the boat engine which provides the bass line/rhythms for vocal composition.

Encompass other found sounds of river, canal, water, birds etc.

Gradually text relating to the boat's story/history emerges.

GIFT/TALISMAN: Passengers are presented with individual mementoes of the journey tied to a string or fishing line. The objects relate to the boat and aspects of the waterways. (e.g. Stones of the river-bed). These strung objects will also be hung from relevant nautical places along the route.

PEBBLE MUSIC: The engine of the boat is cut. As it settles or drifts the passengers are encouraged to listen. Music is played by dropping stones into the water at different rhythms, volumes, intensities.

TALISMAN TEXT: A character on board intones text/poem relating to each object tied on the string. The string is read in a cycle as if saying the rosary or using a prayer wheel.

THE LAUNCH: Some kind of speech frames the journey (Welcome and 'we name this boat').

APPARITION: A character who seems to be disconnected from the journey keeps appearing on route. Perhaps he/she is evicted from the boat at start of journey but then keeps appearing on canal bank. (Bicycle Express). At the Double Locks this character is seen by the rusty anchor playing music (sea songs, smuggler songs) for spare change.

LANDMARK: Drawing attention to at least one significant nautical landmark on route (to be identified).

At present I envisage characters having a fluid, drifting quality as if they are there but not there... memory traces of people who have travelled on the boat or embodiments of the boat's character.

Following the belief that the central character of a site-specific performance is the site itself, then I wish to investigate the personality of the boat itself. The boat speaks to its passengers through the activities of the performers.



Extracts:

IMPORT/EXPORT: Notes

Yes! The major character of this piece is the site/landscape/waterscape between the lock gates. Every time we go there it is different. There are many variables: different levels of water influenced by tide and the mechanics of the lock, trains passing, birds singing, the odd dog or accidental tourist. The water hides and reveals the structures of the lock. Dead fish and rubbish accumulate and swirl between the gates, but on another day the water is a sky mirror.

These variables are this major character's means of speaking to us and we are learning to live, work, play, improvise, sink or swim with it. Beyond the surface information (The locks' outer signs) we know or suspect the nature of its inner or underworld. We are drawn to water. We are made of water and emerged from the birth canal of water. We are the amphibians who learnt to crawl up from the beach. Our reptilian brains are forever homesick. When we look into the water we are peering into recent and primordial story. The water harbours one-celled creatures, mythological phantoms, fragments of dinosaurs, the dust of humans, the traces of history...

...With our cargo we have exchanged materials and languages with other lands. On our sailing craft we have escaped our little island and discovered fantastic creatures and sensuous fruits. Ships and barges have passed through these lock gates laden with wool to return some days later laden with the heady wine barrels of Spain and France. Now these lock gates are only opened for the pleasure boats and for the weekly sewage ship which dumps effluent out at sea. **IMPORT/EXPORT: Detail**

(Revised 30th June)

Owing to the variable states of the lock we may have to go with the flow, using whatever routes are available and adapting to different acoustic and spatial conditions governed by weather and the water levels.

As passengers present their tickets to board pleasure boat at Exeter Quayside they are each given little clear plastic cut-outs of human shape.

Passengers arrive at DOUBLE LOCKS (DL) and as they disembark from the pleasure boat they see the HOME BOAT which is positioned for encounter as a museum piece. The boat contains maps & negative body (cut-out); a cassette player playing Shipping Forecast/'Sailing By' tape, a collection of pebbles. (Fishing Rods are pre-set under boat)...

...The tape is faded off: The ship's bell is rung by MC.

'I will navigate you around the lock'... The Passengers are led along tow path (Same right bank) and spread along waterside up to LIFE BELT STAND from which hangs a wreath of plastic flowers. In the water they see a boat shape constructed with floating oranges. They may also see 7 life-size human cut-out shapes floating on the surface of the water near DL end Lock Gates...

...On the seven big barrage poles that line the bank there are placed 7 cargo/trade objects.

TOURISTS: The shambolic crew, dressed in yellow waterproofs, are seen towing the HOME BOAT on the left bank opposite. They seem a bit 'lagered out' and sing snatches of 'Brits-on-holiday' songs...

...They stop at the left of GIRDER JETTY and out of the HOME BOAT they take pebbles which they skim over the water. They then bring out rudimentary fishing rods (a cane, string and a pebble weight) and cast off...

...SENSITIZED to the water, they move individually to different parts of the lock. As if measuring the dimensions of the space by gesture, use of fishing rods and vocal soundings they call/sing out:

' Fyrste the Lengthe of the whole ground wroughte ys ' /

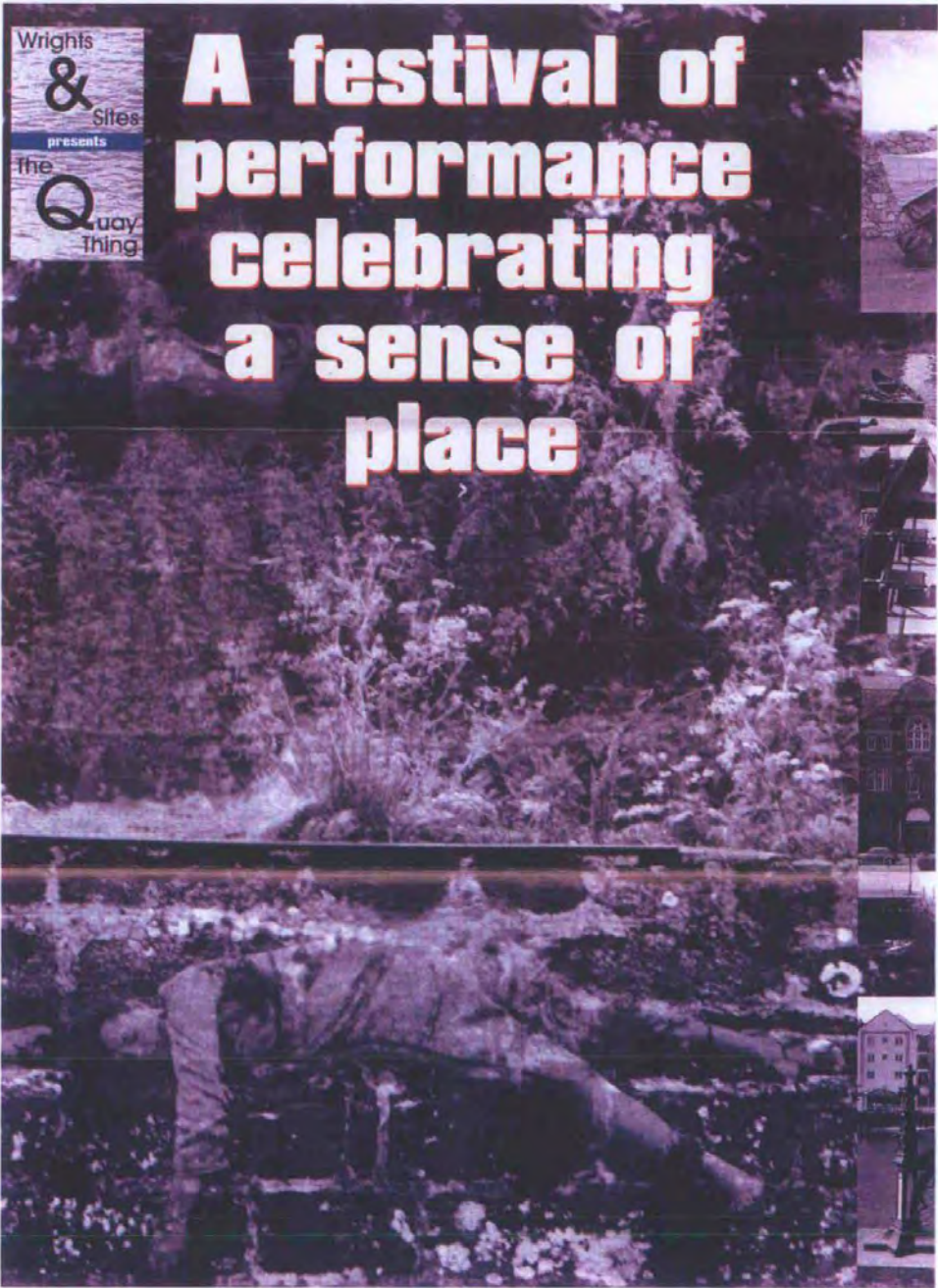
' The lengthe of the Bancke ' /

' The bredtthe at the lower sluice & downwarde ' /

' The depthe there & belowe '

...The crew move round to tow path and sit on the bank in close proximity to audience. They find, listen to, scoop out memories lurking in and around the water... They speak these memories which are echoes of songs and conversations once heard in this place or spoken near the canal or river. At first the delivery is fragmented as if half heard, half formed, as if being learnt. Individuals communicate these memories to the witnessing audience.

This is my city, And this is my city, And this is my city,
Sail it home. All of the Barrels, All of the bales, build up my city much more than
stone...



Wrights & Sites (Sue Palmer) in Quay Thing Publicity, Exeter, 1998



THE QUAY THING (MAIN SEASON) EXETER 1998

Reference Pages: 43, 61, 66

Full Company: Wrights & Sites

Exeter Quay & Canal

The Quay Thing, funded by a £97,410 A4E award in 1998, was the company's first project.

The main season resulted in the production of six new performance works and a number of smaller community pieces, involving over thirty professional practitioners. Performances were created specifically for a number of sites on and around Exeter's Quayside, including a large warehouse (recently the city's Maritime Museum), the working boatyard, the former Municipal Power Station and the Medieval Exe Bridge.

The project also yielded two digital video documents and a Studies in Theatre and Performance Journal Supplement.

Funded by The National Lottery Through The Arts Council of England, Exeter Arts Council & dB Sound and Lighting.



The Quay Thing 1998, Photo, Persighetti

The Quay Thing / Watt/ Absolute Power.

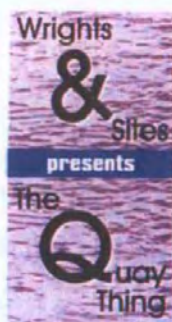
The main chamber which once housed four steam-driven turbines became a laboratory in which sound, text, movement and images were generated. The sonic qualities of the building led to the devising of vocal compositions based upon the resonance and dimensions of the architecture and the influence of Nineteenth Century Protestant (work-ethic) hymns. Scientific equations defining the properties of electricity also provided text. A durational sequence of actions was choreographed from notions of past work activity. Four bicycles moved in formation through the darkness illuminating the space from dynamo-powered light. A 'worker' delivered a eulogy to James Watt, an inventor of the steam engine, whilst people balanced weighty history books upon their heads. A blind actor (Kate Schofield) explored the machine room by touch; an 'Electric Automaton Queen' confined in a glass display case, ranted about power; a homeless man emerged from the inspection pit and fantasized about winning the lottery and spending his winnings on virtual reality equipment.

The performance culminated in a cacophony of electronic sounds, computer generated voice, old radio recordings and songs which accompanied the activity of filling the floor with live and dead domestic appliances. The combined interventions of professional performers and members of the local community led to six performances following a structured composition which was explored and adjusted for each showing. The audience were left with a sense of having been witness to the emergence of the memory traces of the building. For a short while power had returned to an abandoned cathedral of power.

In this composition I was concerned about the role of the audience; about their presence in the building. I wanted them to experience the feeling we had of being trespassers in another's history. Attached to their chairs were objects found in the

building such as rusty nuts and bolts, electrical components, scraps of paper, the detritus of another time. During the performance, one of the worker/performers senses that she is being watched by 'intruders'. In that moment audience and performers are implicated in the act of trespass.

This production was devised on site through directing the performers to investigate the building, amplifying aspects of its structure, past functions and sonic qualities. The involvement of the performers cannot be underestimated in this process. Their physical engagement with the place and knowledge of relevant archive material as well as response to the tactile and invisible elements encountered, demanded stamina, sensitivity and presence solely relevant to the particular site. To this extent the presence of the human being and the individual's connection to the work also makes the production people-specific. The performer's body is framed by a harsh industrial environment, a reality which magnifies and usurps pretence. This revealing of the body and the fragility of the human being challenges accepted definitions of acting. In such a place the act of acting seems to be more about doing, about working, about performing a task. It leads me to consider and to further investigate the possibility that the ego of the actor might submit to the genius loci - the character of site. It was the act of grass cutting before any of the artifice, normally connected to the aesthetics of theatre making, which led to me to further consider the impact of site.



Pilot - Navigation

A performance on a boat between Exeter Quay and the Double Locks - 5, 6, 7, 8, 10 & 11 July - 8pm

by Phil Smith

Simon Persighetti

Cathy Turner

Stephen Hodge

Wrights & Sites is a crew of performance makers who are at work on Exeter's Quayside - exploring, looking, listening, making finds... It's a quest to track down stories in the cracks between the paving stones, the dark spaces of old warehouses, the sound of the water, the taste of the beer.. join us on a voyage through lock-gates and bridges, past gasworks and tea-shops, towards the sea.

The Price - Admission £5 (adult); £3 (youth concessions).

The Place - The Prospect Inn, Exeter Quay, for boarding The Southern Comfort.

Tickets - In advance from Saddles & Paddles, Exeter Quay or from The Wrights & Sites office, The Waterside Shop, Haven Bank (by The Footbridge).



Wrights & Sites Quay Thing Publicity, Exeter, 1998



Out of Place 2001

6

Reference Page: 57

Out of Place: The Politics of Site-Specific Performance in Contested Space (a performance presentation)

Full Company

Performance of Place Conference, University of Birmingham (May 2001)

Our contribution to the **Performance of Place Conference** took the form of a performance presentation, mixing academic analysis with allusive textual material and live action. We aimed to draw on the physical and historical properties of the space we were given.

A performance presentation does not translate easily into a text format. In performance our individual contributions were interwoven. In the interests of clarity, we have decided to present them separately here. We have each chosen how to present our contribution, whether detailing action, adding retrospective comments or paring down to the bare bones of the text. For this reason, the four sections cannot be read as a straightforward documentation of the event, but may give some idea of the themes and ideas it attempted to address.

Phil Smith

Wearing the clothes I would wear for a conference. A prop: a red and white stick, entwined with ivy, wrapped for transport.

Thian Haynes is finishing presenting her paper on **Performing Space in Dance Theatre** - we have been waiting to give our paper, heightened by anticipation like all the other givers of papers, I imagine, but maybe different, maybe our waiting more performed?

The place where I've sat for most of the conference listening to the papers, contributing questions and opinions, writing notes, worrying and wondering about our paper. Place where we came in and were shocked by how unlike its description it was.

begin by holding up a 'Five Minutes Left' card written by the person chairing a previous session.

Every time I've seen this I've felt a kind of chill. The effect it produces on the speaker who gets shown is that they speed up, they speak more words, but as listener I stop hearing any at all. Site-specific work can be like - you try to do too much and you become absorbed and sealed off, quarantined, an infectious 'Other' anaesthetised by your own material - you and the site disappear.

The other thing I've been seeing at the table here has been people's papers. This is my paper. (Unwrap the red and white stick from plastic bags.)

to explain why the stick is as it is - painted like a tool for mapping a site. But of course, it is bent rather than straight. An unreliable map on an unreliable ground. In Cancelled Menagerie it became a hunting gun.

It also reminds me of not being at home, of being away from Nikki and the children. Of Daniel and his infectious Chickenpox.

In my most recent performance, A Carnal Tour, it served as a Guide's stick and that is what it is again.

Please follow me.

I lead people through the window door to where Simon is hanging from ivy on the side of the building.

Simon hands the people over to me and I set off with them across the grass, pausing -

I was on a boat for twenty four hours until a day ago, coming back from Spain, and when I stop like this I feel the movement of the boat - I have brought another site with me.

At the statue at the bottom of the garden I turn and direct everyone's attention to the house, where Cathy and Stephen can be seen through the windows re-arranging the furniture in the room.

In Spain I was reading a book. Mark L. Danielewski's House Of Leaves, in which the architecture of a house suddenly changes, a great staircase opens up in it, corridors snake away from it, massive cave-like halls swell up under it. We were in Spain for a wedding and the day after we watched the video of it. On the news when we got home I watched the video of the wedding reception in Jerusalem, when the floor suddenly gives way. I realise that my daughter, Rachel, is watching with me and turn over to The Simpsons... Wondering if she is remembering herself on the wedding video and feeling what I feel, the fragility of space. Please follow me.

We move to the path, the side of which has collapsed into the gardens below and has been roped off with plastic tape.

When I got back from Spain I threw away a piece of paper into the wastebasket, my hand lying on top of the rubbish there for a moment. Suddenly my hand felt very strange I couldn't locate the feeling, until I looked at my hand and it was covered with, maybe, one hundred ants. Then I saw it as a shot from Buñuel and Dali's Un Chien Andalou. Please follow me.

We go up the steps towards the room where we started. At the top I pause. Simon is now videoing from alongside me. I talk about the man who carried on videoing as people fell through the floor in Jerusalem. How he wasn't a professional. How he caught remarkable and momentary behaviour - a man wanders about seemingly embarrassed, another plunges into the hole, a child imitates a screaming woman, an adult grabs a child and runs from the chasm as if might open up further.

I am trying to be more present in this site than that video-maker. But always aware of all the movies in our heads, the invisible Walkmans playing our soundtracks.

The shape we have just walked is that of a video camera.

We walk into the room and the people walk in too. I sit at a table.

I am pointing up to the sky and trying to explain to the eight year old heckler that everything we are, except for helium and hydrogen, has been formed in the factories we call stars. The water ripples by, over giant pike bigger than the child. 'O yeh?' he says, sceptically. The child keeps pace with the boat. Why is everyone in England an empiricist? Do you follow me?

I am holding a microphone over the graves. People picnic on them. Then I play a pre-recording of Electronic Voice Phenomena as if I'd just picked them up.

The bishop and two acolytes pass through us and enter the North Door as I'm quoting Vico on the importance of graves as cradles of civilisation. The movement of earth has forced a corpse into the cellar of the bar over there. It's on display.

Per square metre this is the most haunted area in England; which is true of many tourist destinations. What's the difference between the tourist trade's exploitation of death and allusions to a recent murder?

The knife puncturing the liver. The second slash tearing into a vertebrae. The murderer is called Aslan. The Dean's, and I quote, 'cleansing' of the Green... how long before this death has been transformed into a meme?

Do you follow me?

Here's goes one!

What is a meme? A meme is a unit of ideological thought. Memes are in a constant process of natural selection. Like genes.

One of the most successful memes is the idea of a self.

Are you following me?

We're seated along one edge of a square arrangement of tables. I've just recognised one of the

Committee Members from our ante-natal classes. No acknowledgement.

We speak our text, rehearsed in the café over the road. To create the performance we want to make, we are making the theatre we don't. I'm self-conscious, but I don't recognise my description of my work.

Pirates are a very successful meme. The acceptable face of rape and dis-possession.

They will give us the money if we dress up as pirates.

On Exeter's Quay there have never been any pirates. (I forget this line.)

We are surrounded by the glassy eyes of stuffed animals.

Another successful meme - the student prank - reducing us and the woman in the wheelchair who is repeating it. We are all shrinking before the stuffed animals.

Then, it works - the school-children brought aimlessly in to the museum.

Some run riotously, chasing the metaphor and the lobster loose in the museum.

The others watch us.

One steals the bird curator's claw.

Starship Troopers and the Brain Bug, the non-humaness of animals, the desirability of keeping the collection, and its failure to freeze a moment of supremacy over other continents and species.

The bison on the bathroom mat.

Do you follow me?

.

The final section will be created in response to the memes of the space itself.)

Over the last two days I've sat in this room... mainly in this room... and been inspired by how similar the reoccupations of other people's work is with ours. With framing, mapping, bodies and ghosts... coming from very different disciplines to my own. I know that what I've heard and seen here will change what I do.

I'm tempted to snap this stick now... Prospero-like - as a celebration of my continuing desire to make both theatre and performance.

But maybe I'll resist the temptation.

hear someone say: 'Go on.'

Yes, I think I will.

break the stick - it comes into three pieces. I place them on the table.

Simon Persighetti

climb up the ivy on the external walls of the building:

Burglar, Ornithologist, Romeo, Detective, Gardener, Site-specific artist...

write 'En Trance' in salt upon the step up to the 'dining room'.

pass found objects through holes in the garden fence.

place a landscape upon the open hand of a spectator in homage to the work of performance-archaeologist, Sally Watkins...

There is always that sense of anticipation of unknown corners.

In my imagination the place is like a lung expanding and contracting, changing shape and colour and smell.

It is a dreaming of place.

Astronomy is a collective enterprise in picture making' and this will continue until we can touch those lights and say for sure whether the stars are hard bodies or clouds of luminescent liquid.

Arriving at an unknown building with only a sketch or a map leads to many projections which can only be ratified or dismissed as you step through the door. Even on site; even on sight, first impressions are often incorrect.

Because I believed the guide book I assumed that I would be entering an oak panelled dining room. In my Gladstone bag I carried the site-buster kit of magnifying glass, tape measure, chalk and plumb line. But my secret weapon was the salt cellar and condimentary histories of the old salt roads back before the rise and fall of Birmingham's Industrial Revolution.

Text generated for the abominable room which did not fit the sketch or the map or my projections:

One might dismiss the 'Don't know/probably/maybe'.

I am no **Homes & Gardens** subscriber

But I might describe the decor as

probably arrived at by Committee.

Not 'Changing Rooms' but Deranging Rooms,

A kind of **A Dolls House** minus the homecraft of Ibsen

Maybe

This is a clear case of secular exorcism of history

An exorcism administered by the High priestess

Laura Ashley

whose final interior flight down stairs

left her outdated; past sell-by
short of staff
short of breath
lead 'probably/maybe'

This room is the
Don't know vote
that has kept us out of Europe;
it's the motel-vision of it'll do culture
comfort
nothing.
lift the floorboards and the Borrowers have moved out
leaving no trace.

Patry Turner

...What is 'Access'?

it is an arts funding priority.

...What is 'Access'?

is it the largest possible number of people entering the largest possible arena?

or

is it one person slipping through a gap in the fence?

Does access mean 'Look, the door is open...'

or

Look, a new set of keys?

Who controls access?

is it those in charge of property, planning and development, commercial outlets, local government and
government funding bodies?

Can we accept a definition of access from those who control it?

...
.

Wrights & Sites is a performance group with a special relationship to place.

In our work together, we have deliberately chosen to remove our performance from the framework of

the Proscenium Arch, the Wooden O or even the so-called 'Empty Space'.

This allows a fluidity of role and meaning and blurs the distinction between the artwork and the real, the artist and the audience.

Does this make it accessible?

.

In 1998 we set out to stage a season of performances on Exeter Quayside during the Exeter Festival.

We did not expect this to be contentious. We did not then recognise the significance of the waterfront in urban development, or the import of the city festival with its pyrotechnical displays.

Malcolm Miles writes, of Melbourne waterfront:

No need for subtlety here - the statement is of spectacle, designed to sell the city's future... In such a great place, how could you fail to have a great time?

Anyone, it might be said, can walk along the fiery promenade... but not all kinds of spatial practice, or occupation, are likely to be tolerated...

The world of the city postcard is not that of experience, was never inhabited, only imagined...¹

Exeter's Quayside is a highly contested site. Only co-operation with municipal interests would render our project acceptable.

We were offered money to dress up as pirates. Nostalgic dreams of Captain Pugwash, Swallows and Amazons, decorating the always-summer spaces for children at play...

We politely refused and staged our work in the margins, where it became less accessible.

Access, as defined by the authorities, seems to mean siting one's work within a set of established meanings.

.

How else might one define the accessible?

Is it staging performances on Exeter Quay?

Or was that a nuisance?

Is it making interventions at an arts event?

Or was that self-reflective?

Is it inviting a group of people into your home?

Or was that self-indulgent?

Is it presenting scrolling messages on bus routes?

Or was that cryptic?

Is it letting people enter the underground passages while hushing the official voice of history?
Or was that uninformative?

Is it a surreal safari through the local museum?
Or was that baffling?

Is it leading a group of academics in mysterious configurations on the Cathedral Green?
Or was that elitist?

Does it open up access to ask questions about access?

Does it open up access to ask questions about access?

Do you follow me?

Or do I follow you?

In 1986, Steve Rogers of **Performance Magazine** accused Lumiere & Son of presenting a site-specific performance that was politically conflicted. Deadwood took place in Kew Gardens. It criticised capitalist consumption and the resulting destruction of the rainforest. But, according to Rogers, it reinforced the role of the spectator as consumer of spectacle.

As we were being guided around Kew gardens, I was not made to feel that I might be in a rain forest but rather that I was in a zoo...' This attitude of passive consumption seemed to him 'the very basis of capitalism and the end result is alienation...' He accused them of using 'capitalist methods to attack capitalist methods'... ²

His singling out of Lumiere's very eloquent performance may have been unfair - as the company pointed out ³, a conventional audience-spectator relationship lies at the heart of much, if not most radical and experimental theatre. Indeed, it may only have seemed so incongruous to Rogers because the siting of the work did, in other ways, offer a challenge to norms of presentation.

But could it be said that the spectator's relative passivity, the polarities of artist- audience, art-life, tend to make theatre politically ineffective, however eloquent?

Can we provoke the audience into performance, into a re-negotiation of space? Maybe, though this would seem likely to bring us into conflict with ideas of the accessible as compatible with the already established, static landscape of the city postcard - a concept revealed in the decorative blandness of much (not all) public art.

Oblique and fluid as its politics might be, such work could be seen as an incitement to direct action.

7.

What is a site?

Is it a space, a place, a symbol or a set of rules?

Is it a memory, a stage, a story or a mystery?

Is it a territory, a stronghold, an identity or a tenancy?

Is it a text?

A past? A future?

An objective fact or a 'shifting bundle of mirrors'?

To quote the situationists:

'Under the pavement, a beach.'

8.

In 2001, we developed the idea of a Mis-Guide, a book containing ideas for a series of walks through Exeter. These walks will be founded on a mythogeographic approach to place, inviting the walker to join with the writer in the making of meanings. How do we walk the city? How do we read the city?

How do you read the city?

9.

...he arrives at the idea that walking is to an urban system what speech is to language: an appropriation, an acting-out of place, and a negotiation of possibilities. The process of the city epitomised for De Certeau by walking breaks up any imposed sense of place and fragments the city into an endless number of contiguous cities, each constantly remade by new acts of negotiation and association.' ⁴

The walker experiences space as process, lived in rather than conceived, moved through rather than viewed from a neighbouring hill.

The walker's perspective subverts static notions of place as imposed by bureaucracy or commerce.

The walker experiences a layering of narratives, personal, socio-political, historic or mythic.

We call this the practice of mytho-geography: an approach to the layered nature of site.

As I said before, we propose to develop these ideas in the form of a Guide Book.

We've been told that the book form is intrinsically inaccessible.

10.

What is 'Access' and does it relate to the 'Popular'?

Who are the people?

Do the people want the popular?

Are the people to be denied access to the maze?

Tim Cresswell writes:

...the arrangement of spaces and places can be thought of as a 'metanarrative' - a text of established meanings... easily recognisable parts of the 'way things are'... and they are entwined in a continuing story about the modern world, about the West, about England, about freedom. Against this metanarrative are arrayed an increasingly diverse set of alternative stories and alternative places...⁵

Are they to be made accessible?

Notes:

1. Malcolm Miles, **The Uses of Decoration: Essays in the Architectural Everyday**, John Wiley & Sons, Chichester, 2000, p.25

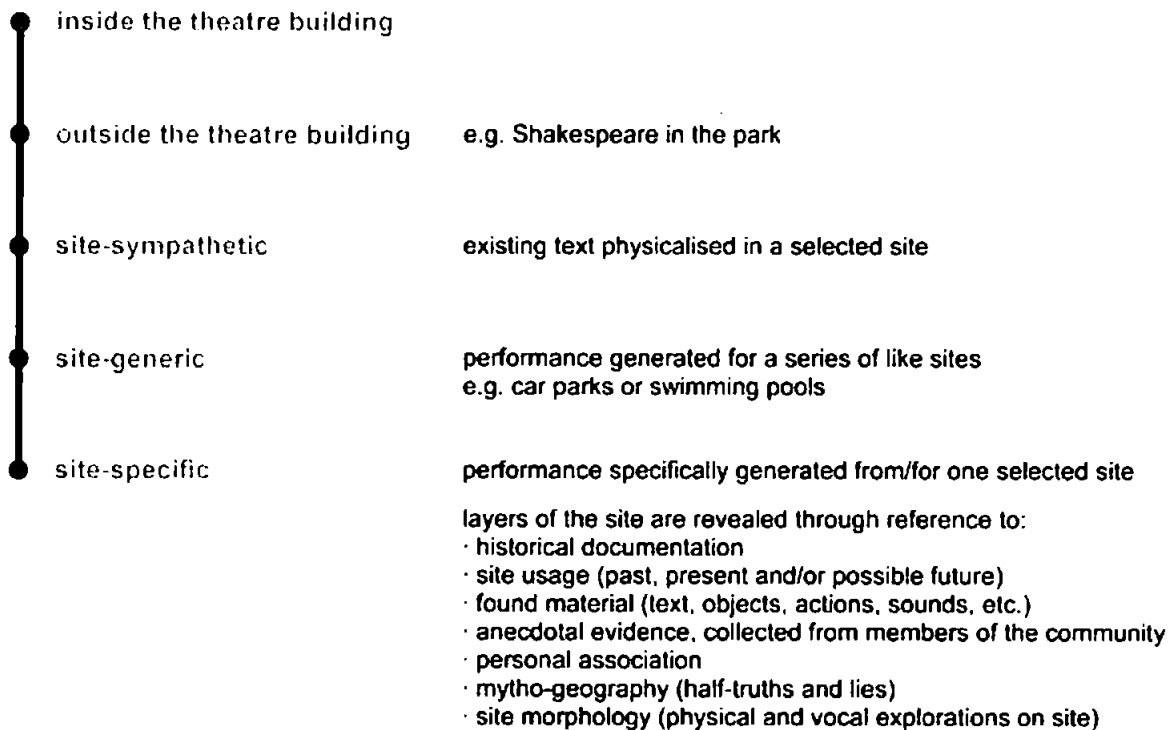
2. Steve Rogers, 'Entranced by Butterflies', **Performance**, No. 43, Sept/Oct 1986

3. David Gale and Hilary Westlake, 'Doff That Bonnet Before It Becomes A Tea Cosy!', **Performance**, No. 44, Nov/Dec 1986

4. Malcolm Miles, op. cit., p.27

5. Tim Cresswell, **In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology and Transgression**, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis and London, 1996, p.162

Sketch for a continuum of site-specific performance



Reference Pages: 62, 64

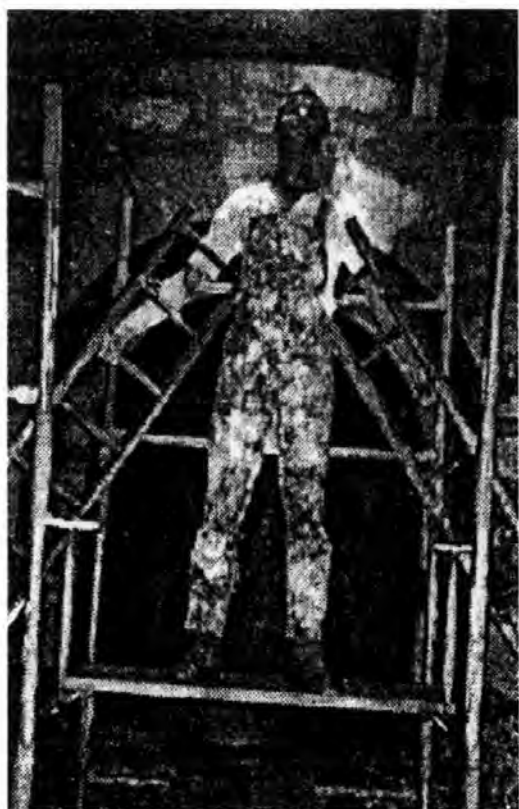


Image from first angelcast production: Archangel of Industry, PLATFORM 4, St Thomas Arches, Exeter, 1993 (Persighetti)

an g e l c e a s t (l a s t)

short day

LONG LINE

WEDNESDAY
356-01 WEEK 51
Shortest Day
O Full Moon

22

DECEMBER 1999

WEDNESDAY 22 DECEMBER 1999
356-01 WEEK 51
Shortest Day
O Full Moon

7.56 AM The sun has not yet risen
The uniform makes him visible yet invisible
He is performing a task but not acting
The line marks Time and Space
The chalk mark will soon dissolve
Appearance and disappearance by walking away
Appearance and disappearance by erosion
I ask, "Which way is the Millennium ?"
I am advised to asked at the Jolly Porter Pub
"....They know most things going on around here."

Simon Persighetti

Angelcast Press Release.12/12/99 **Contact: Joel Segal (01392) 875239**
Simon Persighetti (01392) 255483

A LONG LINE FOR THE SHORTEST DAY

Simon Persighetti and Joel Segal of Angelcast will be drawing a line right through the city of Exeter on Wednesday 22nd December to mark the last Winter Solstice of this Millennium. Rising before dawn, the pair of site-specific artists will begin drawing a chalk line from Countess Wear, through the City Centre and out to Cowley Bridge Roundabout.

Angelcast specialise in putting on performances in unusual places but this event represents the longest stage they have ever played upon. Joel Segal said: "We plan to film the journey recording incidents which happen along the route. This is our way of celebrating the Millennium. I suppose we should be doing it on New Years Eve but we want to draw the line as straight as possible."

The work will start at 8AM as the sun rises on the shortest day and people are invited to join the crew by drawing short sections of the line or writing statements, comments or resolutions on the pavement. Dry weather permitting, the unbroken line should eventually span 4.3 miles across the city. The chalk mark will no doubt be washed away by rains or simply fade with time.

Simon Persighetti, December 1999



THE DIG, Exeter Phoenix , Devon. 2000,

Reference Pages: 67, 81

The Dig

Full Company

Exeter Phoenix (June 2000)

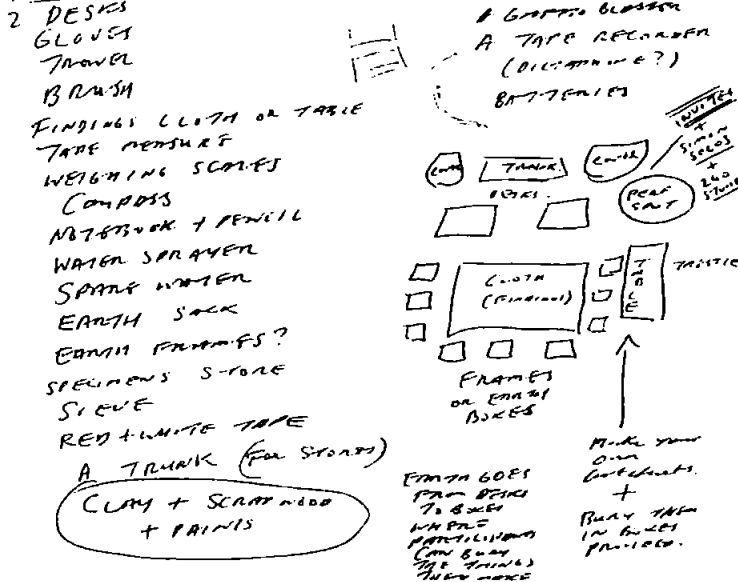
The Dig was commissioned by South West Arts to mark the launch of the **Year Of The Artist**, it took as its inspiration the current and former uses of Exeter Phoenix, and the context of the event. The resulting performance was both site-specific, and suggestive of the artist's process. **The Dig** took the form of seven hours worth of excavations and interventions in and around Exeter Phoenix.

Four attributes of the site were identified as reference points for the work:

- the original purpose of the building (the first location of the University of Exeter)
- the presence of the Archaeological Field Unit (appropriately in the basement)
- the current usage of most of the building in its role as an Arts Centre and café/bar (artistic creation & presentation, and the consumption of food & drink)
- the housing of arts funding & administration bodies on the top floors (South West Arts/Exeter Phoenix offices upstairs)

A BATTERY ALARM CLOCK, A 454MM SINGLE (WITH A KNOT)
 A CAUCIFIX, A ROUND STONE, A BOTTLE OF BEER,
 A LIGHT BULB, A BANDAGE, A CAMERA,
 A MOLTED ACTION MAN, A BELL, A LOAF OF BREAD,
 A GLOVE, A BIRD, PASTA, BICYCLE PART,
 A POPPY SEED PAK, KIDDERNATERBACJ.

WIND HAT AND SUIT COVERED IN MOPS.



Performance Ingredients, Persighetti 2000

A Dig Proposal :

I am standing on the steps dressed in a grey suit and wielding a giant fountain pen.
 I am kneeling in front of a No-Go Area - a taped off zone around the scene of a crime. A pile of ashes surrounds a dead chicken, its feathers are singed, and it has a paint brush in its beak. I pray for truth and red paint.

I am holding up a large mirror. I hold it up until I can hold it no longer. It falls and smashes. I make a map of its chaotic particles.

I stick the larger pieces to a banner. I sweep up the mess.

I walk up and down the stairs talking about my commitment to arts practice.

At top and bottom I make a chalk mark.

I will do this for each year of my life.

I interview people as they walk up the steps.

The interview ends when they get to the top.

This is recorded and played back at the bottom of the steps at regular intervals.

I produce a first aid box.

I open it to reveal a block of red paint, a brush and some water.

I paint wounds on the pavement.



THE DIG, Exeter Phoenix, Year of the Artist Launch. 2000
Photos: Piers Rawson, 2000



Reference Pages: 67, 85

It has been the policy of Wrights & Sites that individual members whilst engaging in collaborative projects may also wish to pursue solo projects or work in other contexts that continue to explore site-specific or mis-guide principals. Include here are two examples of such Persighetti **Satellite Projects**:

Walking Newtown

2003: (Persighetti, Satellite Project) 17/05/03: *Walking Newtown*

Open invitation (35 walkers) mis-guided tour through Newtown, Exeter.

Alleyways, Brickworks, Missing things, War Memorial, a Cut through someone's house, Delivery of a door and revealing of the Private detectives office, Ceremonial re-naming of the Park (Belmont Pleasure Ground).

Walking Newtown, a Mis-guided tour of Newtown, Exeter sites was held on Saturday 17th May. Hosted by Newtown Community Association, 30 local Adults and children came on a walk around their own neighbourhood and were introduced to the concept of An Exeter Mis-guide by members of Wrights & Sites via explanation and the exhibition of our trial pages. The walk was very successful, taking in the former clay pit where the bricks for building the city were produced; a cut through someone's house, the hanging of socks on the ghost clothes lines of demolished houses, the writing of a postcard to the former Post Office, the naming of the fallen in the First World War at the parish monument and a ceremonial *opening* of Belmont Pleasure Grounds. Participants were invited back to the community hut for tea and discussion about their experience. There were enthusiastic requests for a repeat tour in the near future and ideas were shared about other routes that could be explored.

NEWTOWN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION: Walking Newtown. Simon Persighetti of Wrights & Sites invites you on a Mis-guided tour of Newtown sites. **START** at the Community Hut, Belmont Park, Saturday 17th May, 2PM. For Adults and Accompanied Children.

(One hour walk plus afternoon tea)

Supported by Local Heritage Initiative.

Why (Newtown) Mis-Guide ?

I think I know where I live

I should do because I have walked these streets,
this neighbourhood, this Newtown for 10 years.....

A Decade-dance up and down Clifton Street

and in and out of the grids defined by Gladstone, Polsloe,
Blackboy and Western Way.

We live on an island cast away from the city centre by a stream of fast traffic and
the daily song of sirens from the ambulance station, the police station and the first
cries of babies born in the maternity hospital.

The answer is that I do not know where I live

Its familiarity is little compared to those who have lived here all their lives

Who remember the milkman ladling milk, door to door from a churn

Who remember the first sighting of a car pulling in to Greenslades Garage

Who heard the bombs pounding Portland Street

Those who have been here for a long time

See layers of time in the moments of today

So that the things that they see- never stay that way.

Memory is rarely accurate in the track that historians might want it

For we see the present flanked by past and future

An overlay of maps challenging the time line

A landscape of sky and water and earth merging contours,
fluctuating and colliding in the contraflow of daily life.

Hence The Mis-gulde to Newtown

Hence the strange journey we are about to make

Walking in a place we think we know but allowing in a flow of
don't know

So that we can see the cracks in the pavement like rivers,
the windows of the houses like sky,
the earth in the eye of the passers by.



Newtown Mis-Guide. Belmont Pleasure Grounds & Clifton Rd, Exeter, 2003
Photos: Cathy Turner

Men of this Parish, 1914-18

Dictated by Purslow-Persighetti R. (born 1990) to Persighetti S. (born 1954)
St Matthews Church Yard, May 17th 2003.

Ackland N A, Agget HJ, Allery CH, Bennet AJ, Bennet CW,
Bennet RC, Benson HC, Blatchford WH, Bowden AF, Bowden FL,
Bowden CH, Bradford AL, Berry AH, Bridle FW, Browning E,
Clow EA, Clow B, Clow HF, Cockram PJ, Coles WH, Collet G,
Colwall S, Commins WG, Crump SG, Dorothy AE, Ebdon M,
Elston A, Farleigh E, Fitzgerald J, Gillard F, Grant FG, Harris P,
Hayes CC, Hodge LH, Holmes RH, Hooper F, Howell A,
Jackman PG, Jarvis AG, Jerret S, Jones R, Kemp FG, Kitson J,
Knight T, Lias WG, Manley H, Marshall EJ, Matthews J, Milford J,
Pannell WH, Parkhouse C, Patchett IJ, Pinn EJ, Pinniger WJ,
Pook AE, Reed CC, Reynolds FJE, Rooke PH, Rowe EF,
Rowden WJ, Sawdye EK, Scanes TH, Searle C, Sharp GT,
Stanlake WJ, Swift E, Tancock A, Tancock H, Toms CA, Treuge A,
Upright JC, Webber G, Webber W, West AH, Wheaton P, White R,
Wilson JH, Wollen HG, Wood SW

Men of this Parish, 1914-18 Newtown, Exeter

Simon Persighetti, May 2003



Newtown Mis-Guide. 2003 Persighetti (Phil Clark, Rachel Sved, Emma Short)





Newtown, Exeter, Pleasure Ground Poster, (Belmont Park) 1999



Reference Pages: 69, 86

Questions on a Drift



This set of questions may be asked in any order. Some of these questions may relate more directly to specific locations but I think it may be possible to ask them in any situation, site, environment or circumstance along an unknown route with an unknown destination. In other words, certain questions may elicit responses, images or memories by association or juxtaposition with the place and time of the questioning. As I wrote the list on a train and on a walk that moved from an urban to a rural route, I used the rhythm of the journey rather than the features of the journey to trigger the list. After a time I became aware that the list began to take on the tone of interrogation. If this is so, then it certainly suits the desire to use the experience of a drift to unearth clues from the footfall upon terra firma.

Simon Persighetti, July 2002

Is this Exeter ? (or name the district in which you are drifting)

What do you know about this stone ?

Where is North ?

Is this a good place to play House ?

What does to trespass mean ?

Have you ever been accused of loitering ?

How many smells can you detect in one inhalation?

Are we under surveillance ?

Can you find the hidden faces ?

What kind of cloud is that ?
 Can you describe your own footprint ?
 Where did you have your first picnic ?
 What are you looking for ?
 Where would you rather be ?
 Who would you like to share this moment with ?
 Is this a sign ?
 Have you ever slept in a Bus Turning Circle ?
 What name would you like to give this place ?
 Can you detect any signs of evaporation ?
 What is your favourite piece of graffiti ?
 How important is the naming of weeds ?
 Which way does the wind blow ?
 What do you wish you had brought with you here ?
 Is there a stone in your pocket ?
 Have you got any secrets ?
 Can you picture someone sleeping ?
 Is the alphabet visible here ?
 If made to wait here for five hours, what would you do to occupy your time ?
 Would you like to ask a question about this ?
 Are you a Mud Person or a Tarmac Person ?
 Is the map on the palm of your hand accurate ?
 Have you ever stolen fruit ?
 What time is it ?
 Are you a collector ?
 What is your passport photo like ?
 How can we de-ramble the ramble ?
 How would you explain this activity to a young child ?
 Questions on a Drift (continued)

Have you seen the advert where anglers compare the fillings in their sandwiches ?
 Is this the Mark of the Beast ?
 "What is behind that curtain ? " * (*from *O Superman*, Laurie Anderson)

Does it rain on your parade ?
 If this were your country, what would the flag look like ?
 Have you ever bowed to Mecca ?
 Did Wesley pass this way ?
 Have you ever dumped illegally ?
 Are archaeologists benign vandals ?
 What kinds of steps would suit this dance floor ?
 Has anyone seen the birdwoman ?
 Did you ever get lost in the forest ?
 How much iron is in your body and is there enough to make a compass ?
 Where is your Ground Zero ?
 Did you ever zap ants with a magnifying glass ?
 Where is the hole where Alice fell ?

Would this be a good site for a crucifixion ?
 What book is this palace in ?
 Do you remember walking to school ?
 Anyone for a game of Stratigraphy?
 Have you heard the movement of the Tectonic Plates ?
 Is the weather effecting your outlook ?
 Have you asked permission ?
 If this were a poem, what would the first line say ?
 Have you got a question for this brick ?
 What direction are you going in ?
 Can you see the doorway to the underworld ?
 What first aid treatment would you give to this ?
 Who does this belong to ?
 Can you point towards your birthplace ?
 Are we about to be ambushed ?
 Do you believe in fairies ?
 What part did you play in the industrial revolution?
 What is it about electricity pylons that appeal to you ?
 What kinds of creatures do you fear ?
 Is this a geography lesson ?
 Is this Exeter ?

Simon Persighetti, July 2002

... The more daily techniques are unconscious, the more functional they are. For this reason, we move, we sit, we carry things, we kiss, we agree and disagree with gestures that we believe to be natural but which are in fact culturally determined. Different cultures determine different body techniques according to whether people walk with or without shoes, whether they carry things on their heads or with their hands, whether they kiss with the lips or with the nose ... (Barba, Eugenio 1995, 15)

This kind of journey however, starts with a different sense of anticipation; an openness to the potentialities of transition; a sense that today will be different. The lens adopted in walking as an arts practice is likely to have a particular impact upon your perceptions. As a result, the ordinary or predictable pavement will reveal textures, tonalities, marks, footprints, fossils and patterns that, in the course of the everyday move from A to B, might go unnoticed. Equally, this framing of the experience may render tiny episodes vividly significant or allegorical.

It is this dynamic that may lead the walker to discover or generate *discrete images in an improvised poem*. Experiencing heightened awareness of the elements that make up the concrete world of the city or the forest being traversed, the walker may become susceptible to the dynamics of the synchronic.

Whilst we may have become familiar with the photographic records of the arguably, performative walks by Richard Long or Hamish Fulton, we are also aware that they have established a number of strategies to mark, remember and disseminate

certain aspects of their systematic journeys by less illustrative means. Through the use of lists; the recording of finds; the poetic chain-linking of one location with another; the gathering of objects discovered or the reconfiguring of the found, the removed spectator is able to experience other ways of seeing their journeys.

On a recent drift that began with a catapult-like, blindfolded taxi journey to an unknown starting point, I took a plastic Madonna with me. It is the kind of tawdry object sold to pilgrims at Lourdes in which to gather and export holy water. At a woodland place where we rested to eat, we discovered an old pop bottle and, by association, I abandoned the Madonna to be discovered by future walkers. As I make these notes in a moving train, I visualise a line from this railway carriage to that silent, sylvan place by an overgrown bridle way. By such means of marking a point in a journey, it is as if the event or moment has entered a continuum. The abandoned object has either remained undiscovered at the end of the projected line or, having been discovered, has continued on some other journey. The Polish theatre director, Tadeusz Kantor refers to the *Annexed Object*:

The idea of the process of annexing reality proclaimed the necessity of questioning art's sacred dictum of being allowed to present in a work of art only a fictitious reality, a reflection of reality, a representation of reality (simply a "false pretence") a dictum that barred reality from being a part of the work of art ... (Kantor, 1993, 71-72)

In the context of his argument, Kantor is challenging the artifice of theatre space with the introduction of the found or *poor object* as a thing in itself, *left alone without a description*. The consciously abandoned object in the context of site has a similarly disrupting dynamic though it is likely to have a different impact to the object as it might appear on the stage or in the gallery. Its ambivalence is closer to the discovery of an abandoned baby who can be recognised as a fellow human but cannot be named. Whatever the conditions, the continuum exists. A less tangible marker of a time and place, like a word inscribed with chalk, may be erased or eroded very quickly but the assured dynamic of presence-absence/absence-presence fuels the possibly fetish-like impact in the imagination.

During the 7th July 2002 drift from Exeter Cathedral, guest walker, Bob Butler gave envelopes to participants that contained sets of provocative questions as a means of interrogating the experience of certain landmarks along the way. Envelope 5 was handed out at the Moto service station where we gathered for breakfast after approximately 5 hours of walking. Whilst the organisers of the day had pre-planned the route, allowing for uncharted detours and stopping points, the return journey was left open for participants to make their own routes back to the city centre. The final collection of questions read:

MOTO

AND SO HOW WAS IT FOR YOU, STRANGER? DID THE EARTH MOVE?

SO WHAT DO YOU THINK OF ALL THIS?

- A MEANINGFUL EXPLORATION OF OUR MAN MADE & NATURAL ENVIRONMENT?
- A DECENT EXCUSE FOR AN INVIGORATING STROLL AROUND EXETER?
- A PRETENTIOUS PILE OF PSEUDO-ARTISTIC CRAP?

Is this activity a kind of aimless tourism, a Sunday ramble clothed in dilettante speculations? I suppose it is inevitable that such an exercise be challenged.

"Why take the road to nowhere?" "What is the point of this almost invisible and seemingly inconsequential activity?"

A journey is usually taken for a particular reason to a particular destination. In the drift, the form and function appears to have been rendered obsolete. When I went for strolls in Ndola, Zambia, which for socio-economic reasons has a predominantly walking culture, I was often challenged for simply walking as a leisure/pleasure pursuit. Locals carrying wood or water on their heads were astonished if they saw me walking to work; actually volunteering to go by foot when the dominant image of a white expatriate was *one who goes by car*. In this African City, to travel by car was loaded with status not to mention physical security. From both sides of the economic tracks, it was therefore frowned upon to *Zamfoot*. Expatriates would often pull over to offer a lift and, when the offer was declined their responses would be in the order of a bemused grimace. Against such a backdrop, walking is clearly a political issue, making my choice to walk appears a foolhardy, misguided and inverted kind of luxury. At the same time it helps to amplify the very real possibility that someone can live for a lifetime in a particular dwelling in a city without ever seeing *the houses in between*. To this end the walk and the misguide could have considerable impact upon our notions of place and community and our engagement with it.

Barba, Eugenio, (1995) *The Paper Canoe*, Trans. Fowler, Richard, London, Routledge

Kantor, T, (1993) *A Journey Through Other Spaces, Annexed Reality 1963*, Ed. Trans. Kobiak, Michael, London, University of California Press.



Reference Pages: 71, 80

2003: (Persighetti , Satellite Project) *A Site Specific Toolkit*. 6th - 14th March 2003: This exhibition at the Dartington Gallery, Totnes, Devon, **Crossing Time series**. consisted of records, sculpture, devices and installations of Wrights & Sites work including an update of Mis-Guide activities. The exhibition was attended by Staff and Students of Dartington College of Arts, a large number of visitors ranging from local residents, practising artists, school children and tourists.

Since I began this obsessive drift into site-specific performance and artwork, I have gathered a number of objects that I find useful in trying to understand, interpret, measure and investigate spaces and places. Sometimes the space may be contained and defined by walls and in other circumstances, for example, through walking/drifting, the site is expansive and relatively boarder-less. This selection of "tools" in no way represents the definitive kit because each site seems to require different approaches, and specific lenses. If you are a musician you might measure place with a tuning fork; if you are a civil engineer you might begin with a theodolite. We tend to view everything differently according to individual predilections but knowing this can be very helpful. The musician and the civil engineer might gain new insights by sharing or combining instruments to exploit different ways of perceiving. These tools are used as means of devising work in, for and of the site but there may also be the wish to invite audience or spectators to use these devices so that they can also experience the reading and wroughting of the site-specific experience.

Thanks to **Salla Virman** for her assistance in installation of this work and to the core members of **Wrights & Sites** who continue to inspire, contest and define different ways of seeing, discovering and responding to sites, space, place most particularly in, through and under the city of Exeter.

Simon Persighetti, March 2003



(1) *A Site Specific Toolkit*. 2003, Dartington, *Crossing Time*, photo Persighetti

THE FRAME: Frames were made for Cathy Turner for use on board the Southern Comfort pleasure boat in Wrights&Sites, *Pilot Navigation* on the River Exe and Exeter Canal in 1997. On route as the sun went down, the audience/passengers were invited to view the journey through their frames in order to see the *landscape paintings* of the *Unknown Artist*. As they disembarked at the canal basin, the (mis) guide asked the passengers to leave the frames on board but *to take their paintings with them*. Since then, the frames have been used in many situations to get a particular perspective of a landscape or site. There is no doubt that a frame has a tyranny about it. The containment of image within a frame is a means of capturing a particular view with a particular agenda. The tourist postcard is framed to avoid the inclusion of the pylon and the rubbish bin. With this little frame it is possible to focus upon the abject and celebrate paradox and contradiction.
(See **MAGNIFYING GLASS**)

grid a systematic array of perpendicular lines used as a frame of locational reference on an archaeological site. Elements of the grid are usually assigned some value of distance and direction with reference to a local or regional DATUM.

Bahn, Paul, 2001, *The Penguin Archaeological Guide*, London, Penguin Books Ltd.

BALL OF STRING: Sometimes a site becomes overwhelming. It is possible to become overloaded with too much information. With string it is possible to quickly isolate a particular area to improve the concentration. It is a means of selection in a similar way to the use of the **Frame**. Sometimes it is useful to attach yourself to the site with the string and let the ball unravel as you move around the site. You are therefore using the string to trace or mark your route.
A length of string can be used to write or overwrite a site.

Ariadne, the daughter of Minos, fell in love with Theseus and furnished him with a ball of string by means of which he could guide himself through the Labyrinth in which the Minotaur was kept and, after killing him, return.

Guirand, Felix, 1964, *Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology*, London, Paul Hamlyn.



(2) A Site-specific Toolkit: Dartington, *Crossing Time*, Persighetti 2003

PROTECTIVE GLOVES: Engaging in this work provides a sensory experience but there may be occasions when the tactile needs to be approached with caution. You often encounter sites, particularly in the urban context, where there are health and safety issues to be considered. Some interesting found objects may harbour invisible messages in the form of microbes, chemicals or other hazardous wastes. On a less sinister note, you may wish to investigate places that have become overgrown by vicious brambles. I once discovered an abandoned gardener's glove that had been in the same place for so long that it had become the host for a palm-shaped moss garden. In such circumstances the object left by the human becomes an integral part of the landscape. (See **BOOT/RELIC**.) The wearing of particular clothes for particular sites can also be helpful in drawing a distinction between theatrical costume and work clothes. A lot of site work is more akin to work-like action rather than acting; doing rather than pretending.

TROWEL: Unless you are a trained archaeologist on an approved, professional dig, the trowel can be a dangerous tool. Revealing the invisible below the surface can lead to acts of inept vandalism. It is worth noting however, that the professional archaeologist often allows volunteers and novices to attack the top soil; the first layer of stratigraphy, knowing full well that the modern layer often contains rusty bedsprings, coke cans and broken dinner plates. Such poor objects transmit issues of ecology, habitation, recent time-lines, chaotic poetry and the romance of decay. These fragments can trigger many creative responses for the site-specific artist or archivist but are unlikely to inspire the expert in Bronze Age funerary. The trowel is double-edged in form and function because it is used for building new structures and for discovering forgotten structures.

The Boot- A RELIC

In the cartoons and comics, the rookie fisherman casts off and swiftly catches the *Big One*.... an old boot- Definitely something to throw back into the water. As a souvenir from a walk on Dartmoor in 2001, Misha Myers gave this relic to me. This object is extremely evocative because it had been abandoned long enough to start morphing with the landscape. As an organic host for moss, natural forces would have eventually consumed it. Decay was arrested by its curation as a relic or gift. (See **PROTECTIVE GLOVES**.)



(3) *A Site-specific Toolkit: Dartington, Crossing Time*, Persighetti 2003

In site work the found object (the find) indicates habitation, usage or past action by others, animal or human, thus providing evidence or markers of time and motion. The boot suggests travel, journey, an unidentified person, an event that led to abandonment and a process of change, endings and abjection. Collecting and removing such objects from a location might be construed as malpractice certainly with regard to the ethics of industrial archaeology. When is site-specific intervention an act of plunder or “tomb raiding” for arts’ sake? The relic removed, can in some cases be act of rescue or restoration. When the abject object is transformed or re-animated, the artist could certainly be regarded as someone who gives a new value or significance to the discards by salvaging memory and time. However, the rescue could be temporary, with a reeling in, a reading of its texts and textuality and a throwing back into the water so that other curious hunters can catch it again.

The point about London Stone is that while everyone agrees it is significant, nobody knows why.... It has been captured, that much is certain. Set in a tank. Hidden and exhibited.... Break the glass, strike the stone. If it is to be treated as a trophy from a colonial war, encased like a fire extinguisher, it will demand justice. Light from the narrow rectangle of the window exposes the fossil record, worries at the fault lines that must one day split, recalling, on the instant, all the journeys made from this place. (Atkins, M, Sinclair, I, 1999, 168)

WORD CARDS: Such cards impact differently wherever they are placed. They were designed as educational reading aids for the purpose of sentence construction and word recognition. Because of this, they automatically evoke associations with school memories, nature tables, classroom visual aids. On site they can be placed randomly to label or mis-name elements or objects discovered. They can make significant (by sign) things that have never been given value. A domestic stain can be identified as SHOE. In a museum the label ascribed to an artefact is placed as a means of authenticating or explaining the object on display. Such a sign might act simultaneously as an invitation and a prohibition. This information might by its authority also disguise the subtext:

DO NOT TOUCH.

On site most elements are not on display in the same sense but the suggestion that they might easily be seen out of context whilst remaining in context may change our view or perception from the general to the particular. **WORD CARDS** also conjure up questions about the naming of things and the bringing into existence of things by naming them.

MAGNIFYING GLASS: Purchased at a jumble sale, this is a playful object. It belonged to a Centenarian woman in Exeter. Near the end of her life, though her sight was failing, she still enjoyed reading and wore this glass around her neck. Sometimes I move around looking at the world through this lens. In such situations I rarely read texts but it helps me to read the texture of place. Again it is another framing device although it has different associations to the picture **FRAME** as an object. It also can be utilised as a costume because it can be worn for viewing and for being viewed in the act of viewing. In this regard, the site-specific investigator might be perceived as a performing, but defective, detective.

We do not sense in a vacuum but need to be confronted with a material world to sense: a flower we smell, a path we step on and touch, food we taste,...Thus it can be said that our environment affords us certain **sensescapes**. (Degan, Monica 2002, 21)

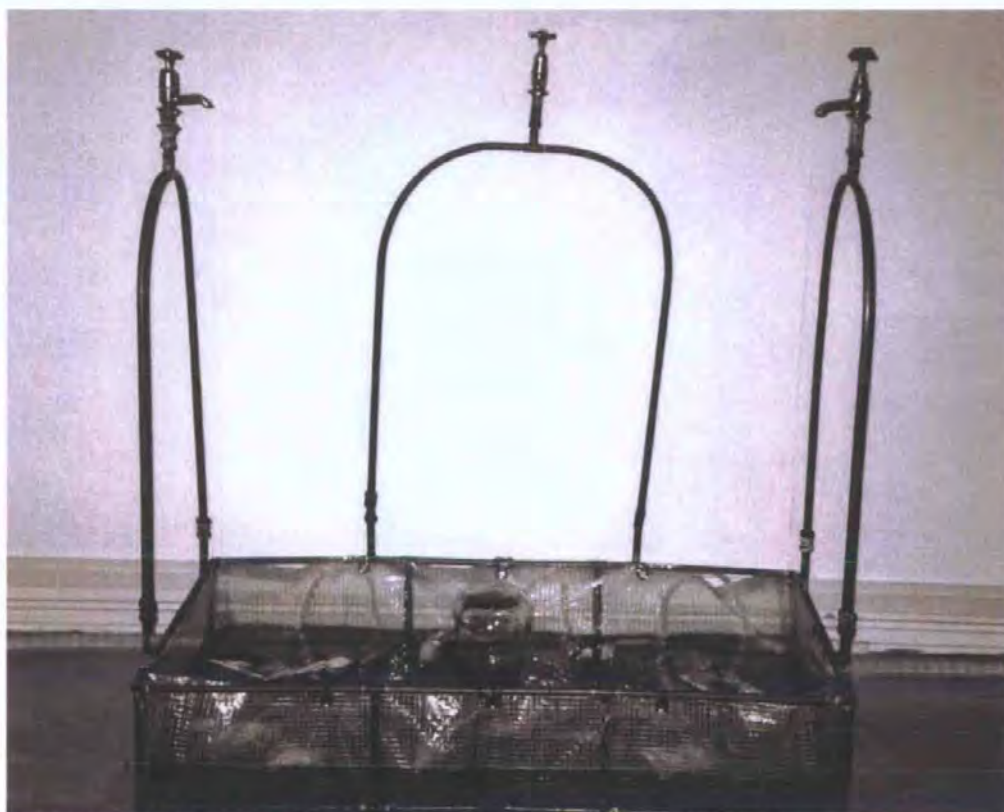


(4) A Site-specific toolkit: Dartington, *Crossing Time*, Persighetti 2003



(5) A Site-specific Toolkit: Dartington, *Crossing Time*, Persighetti 2003

BULLFIGHT: I was looking around charity shops for a Spanish souvenir. When the package holiday industry went into full swing, Spain was one of the first places to be colonised by Watney's Red Barrel beer and Paella and chips. Thousands of Bullfight replicas found their way into the front rooms of this colder climate. To me, the plastic bull, coated with spray-on velvet and festooned with spears became synonymous with the consumer-and-consumed culture of mass-production exotica. Particularly given that the word *Holiday* has its origins in Holy Day, the purchase of an icon celebrating ritual death is very intriguing. Holiday and mortality; Carnival and carnivore are embodied in this memento of a fortnight in Tourmalines. My bull fight painting, purchased for 50p from the Red Cross Shop, provides another layer of exoticism. This is a signed oil painting by someone called, B. Saba whose hand transmits a literal sense of authenticity to the pseudo-remembrance of things past. This souvenir, this object of memory represents displacement. In the site-specific toolkit it can be used to amplify notions of such displacement. For example, if I hang it on a Bus Stop in Exeter it might suggest that the next bus will take us to Madrid rather than Newton Abbot. Placed outside a butchers' shop in Magdalen Street, the significance will be different. To this extent, carrying estranged objects to a variety of unlikely sites may have the effect of magnifying our identification of what the site really is. Misplacement or displacement of such signifiers can therefore bring us closer to reading place.



(6) *A Site-specific Toolkit: Dartington, Crossing Time, Persighetti 2003*



(7) *A Site-specific Toolkit: Dartington, Crossing Time*, Persighetti 2003

COMPASS: North is on the move. I was standing on the concourse outside Paddington station thinking about the number of times I have stood on this particular spot at the end or start of journeys. I realised that I had always stood there in a semi-conscious state until September 11th when I saw the stacks of Evening Standards with the poppy orange image of the Twin Towers blazing on the front page. Since then I look at things more closely. Turning back to the station you see the curved red tiles arching to an apex and a tiny worn-out Union Jack fluttering in the breeze. This solid industrial cathedral teeming with people looks vulnerable as if it is some great dinosaur soon to be extinguished. With my gaze fixed on the rooftop, I do not notice two women walking towards Praed Street. One voice says: "Let me tell you. Wherever he is, He can always tell where North is...."



PASSAGES EXETER 2001

Reference Pages: 73

Company: Simon Persighetti,
Cath Cullinane (Technical Manager & Lighting design)
Sarah Frances (Performer/Vocalist)
Mark Norton (Collaborating Plumber)
Production: YOTA project number 2-276
Location: Exeter Underground Passages
Dates: April 2001

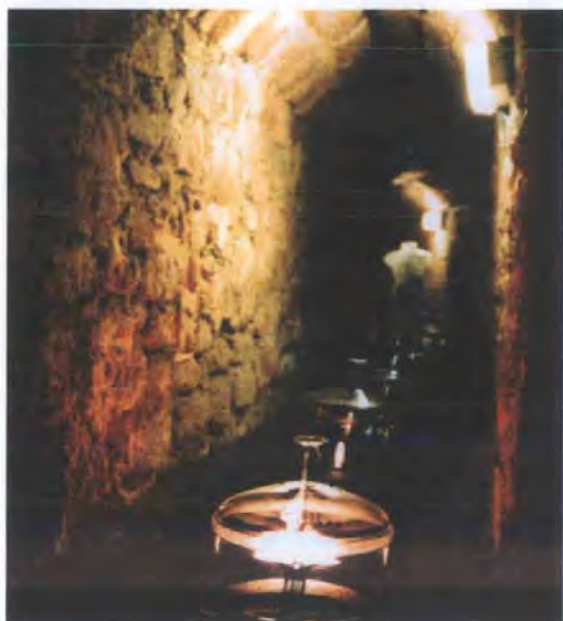
A series of site-specific performance tours beneath the streets of Exeter through the 13th Century passages originally built to bring water into the city. Light, sound, video, visual installations and live vocals. The project includes a public voice workshop and the installation of an ice sculpture in the shopping centre above this subterranean site.

Voice Workshop, 31 March 2001, Passages & Exeter Phoenix.

Ice Event, 5 April, Princesshay, Exeter City Centre.

PASSAGES Preview, Saturday 14 April

PASSAGES TOURS, Sunday 15 April, 10am, 11am, 12noon, 2pm, 3pm, 4pm.



Passages

Passages of MYTHO-GEOGRAPHY

1. A site constructed to carry water to the heart of the city long before hydroelectric power.

1460 AD, a small boy sings down a section of lead pipe- the first microphone.

TAKE A DEEP BREATH

2. Twentieth Century: Stairway to Bargain Basement entering the negative space of seven centuries one step at a time / one step out of time.

AIR ENTERS YOUR LUNGS

3. 11.30 AM: Oh Beautiful municipal piazza, landing strip for pigeons (Has anyone seen the birdwoman lately?) Oh landmark for retired pedestrian architects.

Walkway to LONG TALL SALLY. (she would surely bump her head)

THE OXYGEN IS FILTERED

Interlude: One day the plumber wins the lottery. He is a closet classical archaeologist. At weekends he goes on digs but he tells his mates that he's a member of the Territorial Army. He is an expert in Roman underfloor central Heating. He is also very knowledgeable about terrazzo. On the day he wins the lottery, the first thing he does is to go into the Blue Boy Gift Shop. He surveys the glass menagerie, the reproduction empire clocks, the porcelain dolls, and the Wedgwood mementoes. He places a blank cheque on the counter and then goes crazy with a sledgehammer. After this cathartic experience he signs the cheque and calmly leaves the premises.

4. Dark Ages: The Access Door between Upperworld and Underworld. Cerberus has been relocated to an honorary top dog post at the Civic Centre. Humble apologies to wheelchair users and buggy pushers.
THROUGH YOUR CAPILLARIES
5. Get out...got to get out/ get out to get/ get out to get out
CO2 IS EXPELLED
6. Intrauterine flashbacks are the only modern explanation given for the phantom vicars midnight bicycle rides through the underground passages.
INTO THE ATMOSPHERE
7. Tired from his travail, the stonemason yawns. It can still be seen to this day. The Yawn. The great yawn.
THE OXYGEN CONVERTS SUGAR
8. 1980: mind your head/ beware of the dog/ beware of the head/ mind your dog/dog your mind/ head your dog.
IN YOUR BLOODSTREAM
9. AD 1537: I can barely breath now. A beggar was caught raiding the poor box at the cathedral door. A group of worthy citizens arrested him and dragged him down here. Retribution should take place below ground. The wretched man stank to high heaven. (Wet Wipes were not available) so the good men had to hold their venerable breathes. They wedged his body into the narrow passage and left him there for the rats to nibble. I pour this bucket of Remembrance into the shadows.
POWERING YOUR MUSCLES
- 10.2001 AD: She came round from the anaesthetic and thought at first that she had been left on a trolley in the hospital corridor. She was wrong. She had awoken in the wrong place and in the wrong body in the wrong time.
THE BEAT OF YOUR HEART
- 11.? BC The face of the Messiah can be seen at regular intervals in irregular places.
BLOOD FLOWS FREELY
- 12.Secret Entrance to the Portman Building Society, Country Casuals, Virgin Records...
THE PULMONARY SYSTEM
- 13.1600 hrs: Fish Mouth by E.U.
THE OUTBREATH REACHES THE WALLS
- 14.July 4th: Some boisterous foreign language students have swung upon these supporting Accros but it is not recommended practice. On either side of these walls lies the rest of the planet.

CONDENSES

15. Missing Canary perch.
DROPLETS

16. Sex Education set in stone.
FALL

17. 11am: I once saw a sepia photograph of a workman crouching by the pipe,
which ran along the floor. He is completely blurred. During the long exposure
necessary in early photographic processes, the man left the scene at a crucial
moment, as it was time for tea.
UPON YOU

18. The year 2K: A site-specific artist in a situ-ation.
A MICROCLIMATE

19. 1620AD: Stepping out of the daylight. Working in the Passages can be a dry old
job. His wages include beer. He lowers himself down- a foot resting on this stone.
A rat skitters below. He hears the gurgle of water. He pisses.
OF THE PLANET

VOICE SCORE 1.

Give me the sky
To carry water
One step at a time
He goes on digs
The upperworld and the underworld
Get out/got to get out
The great yawn
Mind your head
They hold their breath
In the wrong body
The face of the Messiah
Secret
Mouth
The rest of the planet
Missing
Sex
Long exposure
Site specific
A foot resting on this stone
Give me the sky.

OF THE PLANET
A MICROCLIMATE
UPON YOU
FALL
DROPLETS
CONDENSES
THE OUTBREATH REACHES THE WALLS
THE PULMONARY SYSTEM
BLOOD FLOWS FREELY
THE BEAT OF YOUR HEART
POWERING YOUR MUSCLES
IN YOUR BLOODSTREAM
THE OXYGEN CONVERTS SUGAR
INTO THE ATMOSPHERE
CO2 IS EXPELLED
THROUGH YOUR CAPILLARIES
THE OXYGEN IS FILTERED
AIR ENTERS YOUR LUNGS
TAKE A DEEP BREATH
MYTHO-GEOGRAPHY

Simon Persighetti, Feb 2001



A Manifesto for a New Walking Culture: 'dealing with the city'

Reference Pages: 74, 97

2006: (co-author with Wrights & Sites) 'A Manifesto for a New Walking Culture: dealing with the city' *Performance Research*, vol.11. no.2

Full Company

with guest interventions by walking artists Richard Layzell, Bess Lovejoy, Fiona Templeton and contemporaries of the Dada movement. First presented at:

Everyday Walking Culture: The Sixth International Conference on Walking in the 21st Century, Zürich (2005)

Details of this Conference appear after the Manifesto text below

Abstract

Drawing on the urban exploratory work of our on-going Mis-Guide project and our use of the walking 'drift' or 'dérive', Wrights & Sites presents a manifesto for the active and creative pedestrian - envisioning a walking that is neither a functional necessity (to shops, to work) nor a passive appreciation of (or complaint about) the urban environment. Instead we present a manifesto for a walking that engages with and changes the city, particularly using the arts.

One of our key strategies is site-specificity: devising walkings that are specific to their routes, to their surroundings. In harmony with this we present our paper in a manner specific to the Casino setting of the conference, dividing it into four suits (as in a deck of playing cards). The order of presentation of the material was determined by the shuffle of a deck of cards by a croupier.

Each 'suit' of the manifesto has been written by a different member of Wrights & Sites.

In broad outline these 'suits' have the following foci:



The walker as artist <-> the city as compositional catalyst. Flirting with Dada (with its roots in Zürich's Cabaret Voltaire and its emphasis on chance operations and the production of manifestos), this 'suit' explores connections between the processes walking and artistic composition. [Clubs]



The walker as writer of the city. First we change the way we 'read' the city: a set of new concepts that will unbalance the consciousness of the everyday walker and challenge the dominant assumptions about walking and the city as a place for walking. Then proposing a set of strategies (or 'fulcra') for ways of re-writing the city, moving from changed perceptions of the familiar city to the means to change its organisation, uses, attitudes to and planning of public space. [Spades]



The walker as playful performer. Walking as a means of playful reinvention, a 'making strange' of the everyday. Remembering our theatrical roots and that Brecht was an exile in Zürich in 1947-1948, this suit considers the walker's performance as a move out from the theatre towards a more open playing space. [Hearts]



Disrupted walking as the new designing of the city. How does a new kind of walking engage with the planning of the city and the powers that initiate and deliver it? Strategies for a new walking, to become more like an active re-designing of public place, generating a 'culture' that changes specific spaces. The creative pedestrian as the new architect of the city. [Diamonds]

In place of the 'court cards' (Jack, Queen, King) of these suits, a number of guests have provided short interventions into our manifesto. These are Richard Layzell [Hearts], Bess Lovejoy [Diamonds], Fiona Templeton [Spades] and contemporaries (or near contemporaries) of the Dada movement [Clubs].

Wrights & Sites would like to acknowledge support from the Centre for Creative Enterprise & Participation, Dartington College of Arts, the University of Exeter and the University of Winchester. Thanks also to Richard Feltham & Tony Weaver.

Manifesto Extract:



3 ♠

To combat the functionalism of walking by having no particular place to go. To pick up on other walkers' varied paces from speedy to slow. To invent small or secret dances at bus stops and on railway platforms. To invite people to go for walks with you as a gift to be unwrapped with your feet. To use walking as an opportunity to greet neighbours and to break long-established silences. To write the city with your relationships.



6 ♠

To go shopping without the intention to buy and to view shopping malls as hyper-real museums to consumerism. To travel the world in a supermarket making atlases from imported food placed in your basket or trolley. To write the city with conscious choices.



A ♠

Step on the cracks and find the gaps and make new tracks. Extend your walking territory becoming more aware of the restrictions being imposed upon you by signs and surfaces and the aggressive armoured invasion of the car. Extend your experience by habitually eroding the controls of speed and commerce. Walk a new walking culture to write the city with your bodies.



7 ♠

To give a word to each footstep so that a walk becomes a story or poem. To re-enact particular walks and styles of walking that you have found in books, plays and films and to write the city with your own associations.



4 ♠

To insist upon the rights of the pedestrian over the car. To dream of the day when you do not have to say 'Mind the road' to children. To continue laying flowers at the sites of pedestrian road accident fatalities. To regard wheelchair users as walkers not separate from pedestrians. Take a chair into the Shopping Mall to see this point of view / this viewpoint. Break the taboo and travel by wheelchair for a day. To write the city with Human Rights.



10 ♠

To re-value public space with an eye more akin to the musings and perceptions of children so that we might gain a deeper insight into the poetics of space, inviting children's participation in the planning of their environments. To hold meetings, discussions, readings, and vigils on traffic islands or to make decisions on foot and on the streets instead of in airless committee meeting rooms. To write minutes, musings and decisions on paving stones.



9 ♠

Amble, ramble and de-ramble the city in search of wildlife, ancient tracks, sacred signs and paths of desire and to fill abandoned roadside cars with earth and turn them into immobile gardens. To celebrate the growth of weeds, plants, flowers in the most hostile urban zones. To follow the journeys of insects as your guides. To write the city with cobwebs, tendrils and minute flora and fauna.



5 ♠

To invite town planners on practical courses exploring trespass and paths of desire. To adopt public places for sitting as if they are an extension of your home and to recognise and respect the people whose furniture is the street. To write the city with your presence.



8 ♠

To reclaim the nights in the city. Walking through the streets at the dead of night is not a criminal offence. Insomniacs should not be made to feel guilty for being up and about. Walk where streets have become ghost corridors for somnambulists.



2 ♠

To walk with a sense of not knowing anything about the city. To walk as a constant experiment to discover the intricacies and individuality of your walk that is as distinctive as your handwriting.

Now the city would move like a map you were drawing; now you would begin to live your life like a book you were writing. Called forth by a street or a building, an ensemble of gestures might imply that a different street had to be found, that a building could be redesigned by the gestures performed within it, that new gestures had to be made, even that an unknown city had to be built or an old one overthrown... (Marcus 1990: 166)

Marcus, Greil (1990), *Lipstick Traces, A Secret History of the Twentieth Century*, London: Secker & Warburg.

The complete **Manifesto for a New Walking Culture: 'dealing with the city'** was published in **Performance Research**, Vol. 11. no.2 **YEAR**

Details of the context and conference where this manifesto was first presented appear below:



Hodge, Persighetti & Smith outside Cabaret Voltaire 2005, Photo. Cathy Turner

Mis-guided in Zürich - mind the MAP

Full Company

Zürich (September 2005)

What is a map for? Is it just to direct you to your destination? How many maps or cities are created with the walker in mind?

Can a map be used to take you to the unexpected city, the secret city that hides inside the familiar (or unfamiliar) place? Can the city reveal the map?

Mis-guided in Zürich - mind the MAP was a mapped, but unpredictable exploration of Zürich. Four Mis-Guides led a journey through a city they'd never visited before: the route was planned, but never walked or researched, in advance.

The walk was accompanied by A Manifesto for a New Walking Culture, presented as part of a plenary session on the following morning.

Commissioned for Everyday Walking Culture (the sixth international conference on walking in the 21st century, organised by Walk21). Made with assistance from Annette Spoerri from the City of Zürich and with reference to the new 'Mobil In Zürich Stadtpläne'.



Annette Spoerri from the City of Zürich and with reference to the new 'Mobil In Zürich Stadtpläne'.2005, Photo: Persighetti

2005: (co-creator with Wrights & Sites) *Mis-guided in Zürich - mind the MAP*, 'mis-guided' tour of a city never visited before. Zürich: *Everyday Walking Culture* (the sixth international conference on walking in the 21st century).



Mis-Guide starting point, Zurich, 2005, Photo: Persighetti



Detail of wall, interior, Cabaret Voltaire, Zurich, 2005, Photo, Persighetti



Mis-Guide on Josephstrasse, Zurich, 2005, Photo: Persighetti

2005 (co-organiser with Wrights & Sites) ***Walking Arts & Performance***, day-long pre-conference workshop with contributions from international walking artists.
 Zürich: *Everyday Walking Culture* (the Sixth International Conference on Walking in the 21st Century).



LIST OF PROJECTS 1997-2007

Introduction

The politics of place and walking as an arts practice form the core concerns of my research. The research was conducted with particular reference to the ongoing *Mis-Guide* projects, conceived and produced by the site-specific arts company, **Wrights & Sites**, of which I am a member. Our apparent rejection of performance-making for an audience has led to walking with spectators as collaborators in the work, and has made the physical journeys and verbal exchanges along the way an integral part of the practice. In collaboration with visual artist, **Tony Weaver**, the company have co-authored, three publications: *An Exeter Mis-Guide* (2003) *A Courtauld Mis-Guide* East Wing Collection 06 (Urban Networks) and *A Mis-Guide to Anywhere*, launched at the ICA, London, April 2006. See www.mis-guide.com

This large body of work includes many collaborative projects with **Wrights & Sites**, members of the public and earlier foundational work with **angelcast** productions. The development of **tEXt Festivals** over 5 years was an attempt at curating visual and written work that in some ways reflected the idea of arts practice arising out of and folding back into social, geographical and political contexts- very much part of the site-specific practice that opened up the ambulant and participatory edge of my practice. A SELECTION OF THESE PROJECTS AND ACCOMPANYING DETAILS AND WRITINGS APPEAR IN THE CATALOGUE.



Raph Purslow-Persighetti on Clifton Street, Newtown, Exeter, 1998. (Simon Persighetti)

PROJECTS: 1993-2007

Research through practice projects:

2007: (co-curator with Wrights & Sites) *Stadtverführungen in Wien* (Mis-Guide in Vienna)

2006: (Persighetti, Satellite Project) 05/07 *tEXt Festival Celebration of TRAVEL Writing* including Pauline Everisto, Ian Marchant, Blind Ditch, Film: *WALK DON'T WALK*, dir.

2005: (Persighetti, Satellite Project) 05/05 *tEXt Festival celebration of Writing FIVE* including Gavin Turk

2005: (co-creator with Wrights & Sites) *Mis-guided in Zürich - mind the MAP*, 'mis-guided' tour of a city never visited before. Zürich: *Everyday Walking Culture* (the sixth international conference on walking in the 21st century).

2004: (Persighetti, Satellite Project) 05/04 *tEXt Festival. IDENTITY & the Word* including Uninvited Guests (Chat Room) Supported by Arts Council England South West.

2004: (co-creator with Wrights & Sites) *Blue Boy Walks*, five 'mis-guided' walks. Commissioned for *Homeland*. Exeter: Spacex Gallery and Relational Projects.

2006: (co-creator with Wrights & Sites) *4 Mis-Guided Tours*, four 'mis-guided' tours. London: ICA and its environs.

2003: (Persighetti, Satellite Project) **A Site Specific Toolkit.** 6th - 14th March 2003: This exhibition at the Dartington Gallery, Totnes, Devon, **Crossing Time** series. Consisted of records, sculpture, devices and installations of Wrights & Sites work including an update of Mis-Guide activities. The exhibition was attended by Staff and Students of Dartington College of Arts, a large number of visitors ranging from local residents, practising artists, school children and tourists.

2003: (Persighetti, Satellite Project) 05/03 **tEXt Festival. EXCAVATION & the Word.** Planning and Launch of, a second festival of writers for Exeter. Writing Workshops, Performances and readings and Visual Exhibitions by Graham Rawle, Sarah Chapman, Amy Shelton, Polly MacPherson, Film "London" Dir. Patrick Keiller (1994) **Stack Excavation:** 03/05/03 Wrights & Sites series of public tours in the stack below Exeter Central Library. Including my Video film and book installation. Supported by Arts Council England South West, Exeter Arts Council, Dartington College of Arts, University of Exeter.

2003: 22/04/03 – 11/05/03: **Mis-Guide.** Wrights & Sites Exhibition of Trial Pages of An Exeter Mis-Guide at Exeter Picture House. Followed by further development of the book for publication Aug/Sept 03.

2003: (Persighetti, Satellite Project) 17/05/03: **Newtown Mis-Guide.** Open invitation (35 walkers) mis-guided tour through Newtown, Exeter. Alleyways, Brickworks, Missing things, War Memorial, a Cut through someone's house, Delivery of a door and revealing of the Private detectives office, Ceremonial re-naming of the Park (Belmont Pleasure Ground).

2003: (co-creator with Wrights & Sites, **Lost Tours.** Wrights & Sites research and development project supported by Arts Council England in development of a series of walks, drifts and interventions in Exeter. To include shed and allotment investigations and appearance of the Lost Tour Guide. Two weeks of 'mis-guided' walks. Arts Council England funded R&D project. Exeter & Welcombe Barton..14/07/03- 25/07/03

2002: (Persighetti, Satellite Project) 05/02 **tEXt Festival. A celebration of PLACE & the Word** including Bill Drummond (**HOW TO BE AN ARTIST**), cris Cheek and Kirsten Lavers (**THINGS NOT WORTH KEEPING**), Linton Kwesi Johnson, Shaz Kerr. Film: **RECUERDOS** introduced by the Director, Arteaga (Mexico) Supported by South West Arts, Exeter Arts Council, Dartington College of Arts, University of Exeter.

2002: (Persighetti, Satellite Project) 28/07/02: **Clifton Street A to Z:** Completion of photographic A to Z of my street and collation as bookwork. (With Raphael Purslow Persighetti, Aged 7)

2002: 16/12/02: *Exeter Small Worlds (Z) Drift*. First Bus of the day (Z). Begin walk at random bus stop. Including building small worlds along the way with found objects and miniature clay bricks. Following plume of smoke to massive warehouse fire. Canal walk and re-configuring dumped domestic and building objects. Building and abandoning houses and maps with goods borrowed from supermarket shelves.

2001: (Persighetti, Satellite Project) *Passages* financially supported by South West Arts. Exeter: *Year of the Artist*.

2000: (co-creator with Wrights & Sites) *The Dig*, seven hours of performances, excavations and interventions. Commissioned by South West Arts to mark the launch of *Year of the Artist*. Exeter: *Year of the Artist*.

1998: (co-creator with Wrights & Sites) *The Quay Thing*, four weeks of site-specific performances. Creator of 2 performances (*Pilot Navigation*, *Watt Absolute Power*) financially supported by the Arts Council of England (£97,410) and Exeter Arts Council. Exeter: Quayside and Canal.

1993-1999: angelcast productions:

***Short Day / Long Line*,** Countess Wear to Cowley Bridge, Exeter, 1999

***The Archangel of Industry*,** St Thomas Railway Arch, Exeter, 1993

***Storehouse*,** Kennaway Warehouse, Exeter, 1995

***Text Styles*,** Real McCoy Arcade, Fore Street, Exeter 1997

***The Raw & the Cooked*,** Harry's Restaurant, Longbrook Street, Exeter 1998



Selected publications:

2006: (co-author with Wrights & Sites) '*A Manifesto for a New Walking Culture: dealing with the city*' ,Performance Research, vol.11. no.2

2006: (co-creator with Wrights & Sites and visual artist, Tony Weaver) *A Mis-Guide to Anywhere*, site/journey-generic provocations in book form. Financially supported by Arts Council England and the Centre for Creative Enterprise & Participation.

2005: (co-creator with Wrights & Sites and Optimistic Productions/Fulcrum TV) *Subverting the City: A Mis-Guide to Milton Keynes*, short documentary for Channel 4's 3 Minute Wonder slot.

2003: (co-creator with Wrights & Sites and visual artist, Tony Weaver) *An Exeter Mis-Guide*, site/journey-specific provocations in book form. Financially supported by the Local Heritage Initiative, Arts Council England and Exeter Arts Council. Exeter.

2003-5: (co-creator with Wrights & Sites and visual artist, Tony Weaver) *A Courtauld Mis-Guide*, site/journey-specific provocations in map form. Commissioned for *Urban Networks* (East Wing Collection 06, 2003-5). London: Courtauld Institute of Art and its environs.

2000: (co-author with Wrights & Sites) *Studies in Theatre and Performance: Supplement 4, 'SITE-SPECIFIC: The Quay Thing documented'*.

1998: (co-director with Wrights & Sites and Stephen Clarke) *The Quay Thing: a sense of place*, 28 minute broadcast quality, digital video document.

1998: (co-director with Wrights & Sites and Stephen Clarke) *The Quay Thing: PILOT, Navigation*, 7 minute broadcast quality, digital video document.



Selected papers at conferences:

2005: (co-author/co-presenter with Wrights & Sites) '***A Manifesto for a New Walking Culture: dealing with the city***'. Zürich: *Everyday Walking Culture* (the Sixth International Conference on Walking in the 21st Century).

2004: (co-author/co-presenter with Wrights & Sites) '***Anywhere: Theories and Practices at Play in the Current Work of Wrights & Sites***'. University of Exeter: *Site / Sight <-> Source / Resource Symposium*.

2004: (co-author/co-presenter with Wrights & Sites) '***Mis-Guiding the City Walker***'. Copenhagen: *Cities for People* (the Fifth International Conference on Walking in the 21st Century).

Conference organisation:

2005 (co-organiser with Wrights & Sites) *Walking Arts & Performance*, day-long pre-conference workshop with contributions from international walking artists. Zürich: *Everyday Walking Culture* (the Sixth International Conference on Walking in the 21st Century).



POSTSCRIPT ON MY DOORSTEP



Persighetti Adrift, Exeter, 2001. Photograph, Stephen Hodge

Finally I give further mention to my own city (Exeter, UK) where, between 2006 - 2007 the inhabitants had, witnessed the demolition of the first (1950's) pedestrian shopping precinct in Britain to be replaced by a shiny 21st Century shopping mall - a cathedral of consumerism with a view of the older model of sacred worship.

The main focal point for the new development is the new European style Princesshay Square, where several of the new restaurants will be located. The large piazza includes views of the Cathedral and an iconic glass two-storey building known as the Pavilion building. The Pavilion's windows feature screen printed designs inspired by the architecture of Exeter Cathedral and created by artist Katayoun Pasban Dowlatsahi. (Princesshay 2007, unpaginated)

I had originally, placed this local story in proximity to observations about the psychological impact of 9/11 (See pp. 14-16 & 20-22) and had quite understandably opened myself to criticism for linking a fairly mundane example

of town planning with the cataclysmic tragedy of the destruction of the World Trade Centre in New York. During the Princesshay work, ancient sites were exposed to daylight and subjected to strictly timetabled rescue archaeology. The team from Exeter Archaeology Unit were on site between Summer 2005 and March 2006 before the bulldozers completed the dig and the concrete was poured into new foundations. The hole in the town centre had become an arena where the public would stand on a viewing platform to watch the destruction, construction and excavations. The new development was then being promoted with banners that read:

**PRINCESSHAY:
A FLAVOUR OF THE
PAST
A glimpse of the future**

Originally I had edited this section out of the thesis but an event occurred that led to its re-instatement here. On 23 May 2008 I was in Exeter Civic Centre where I had been attending a *Risk Assessment Course* in support of my community and public arts practice. At lunchtime I was leaving the high-rise building when I became aware of a security alert. Alarms were not sounding but council personnel were preventing people from entering the complex. As I left the building I saw the blue tape of a police cordon stretching across Paris Street; crowds of people being directed away from the shopping centre; fire engines and ambulances amidst a cacophony of sirens. I heard a security guard outside the Main Post Office saying: "Look out for anyone that looks sweaty or nervous."

Moments later I saw a police-escorted Bomb Disposal truck speeding towards Princesshay.

'Islam convert' in restaurant bomb attack

A SUSPECTED Islamic convert with a history of mental illness is to be questioned by police in connection with an explosion at a restaurant in Exeter.

Nicky Reilly, 22, was arrested and taken to hospital after suffering minor injuries in the small blast in a branch of the family-orientated Giraffe restaurant chain in the centre of the city. Police were carrying out a search of his home in Plymouth.

Although limited in scope, Thursday's attempted attack was a reminder of earlier bombings and attempted bombings in the country.

Mr Reilly was the only person injured in the incident, carried out in the restaurant's toilets. Police later discovered and disarmed two other devices nearby.

"Our investigations so far indicate Reilly, who has a history of mental illness, had adopted the Islamic faith," said Tony Melville, deputy chief constable of Devon and Cornwall police.

"We believe, despite his weak and vulnerable state, he was preyed upon, radicalised and taken advantage of."

The blast happened shortly before 1pm at the Giraffe restaurant in Exeter's Princesshay shopping centre.

Police said Reilly suffered cuts to his eyes and burns to his face, but his injuries were not life threatening.

Security services say they have foiled numerous bomb plots in Britain since the September 11, 2001 attacks on New York and Washington.

Four Islamist suicide bombers killed 52 people and injured hundreds of others when they exploded their home-made bombs on three underground trains and a bus at rush-hour in London on the morning of July 7, 2005. (Castle, Tim, THE DAILY TELEGRAPH, 23 May, 2008 unpaginated)

As the ramifications of this story and all the interconnected tales of conceived, perceived, imagined and ecological terror continue, I become more convinced that Bachelard's own memory, of the childhood house "from cellar to attic", might be based upon a sense of stability no longer present or assumed in this world. In other words, the poetics of space may now seem to be so disrupted and distorted by the velocity of change, that this version of the house as a microcosm *to shape our thoughts, memories and dreams* has been confounded. Therefore, with this repeated reference to Bachelard, we end with: *A FLAVOUR OF THE PAST* and a *glimpse of the future*.

Simon Persighetti, June 2008



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A MIS-GUIDE TO ANYWHERE 2006 PUBLICATION

Reference Pages: 23, 78, 87

INSERT PUBLICATION INSERT PUBLICATION INSERT PUBLICATION



INSERT PUBLICATION INSERT PUBLICATION INSERT PUBLICATION

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AN EXETER MIS-GUIDE 2003 PUBLICATION

Reference Pages: 23, 76

Mis-Guided Exploration of Cities:

an ambulant investigation of participative politics of place.

PERSIGHETTI S.B.

PhD

2007

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an ambulant investigation of
participative politics of place**

Persighetti S.B.
PhD

**Dartington College of Arts /
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