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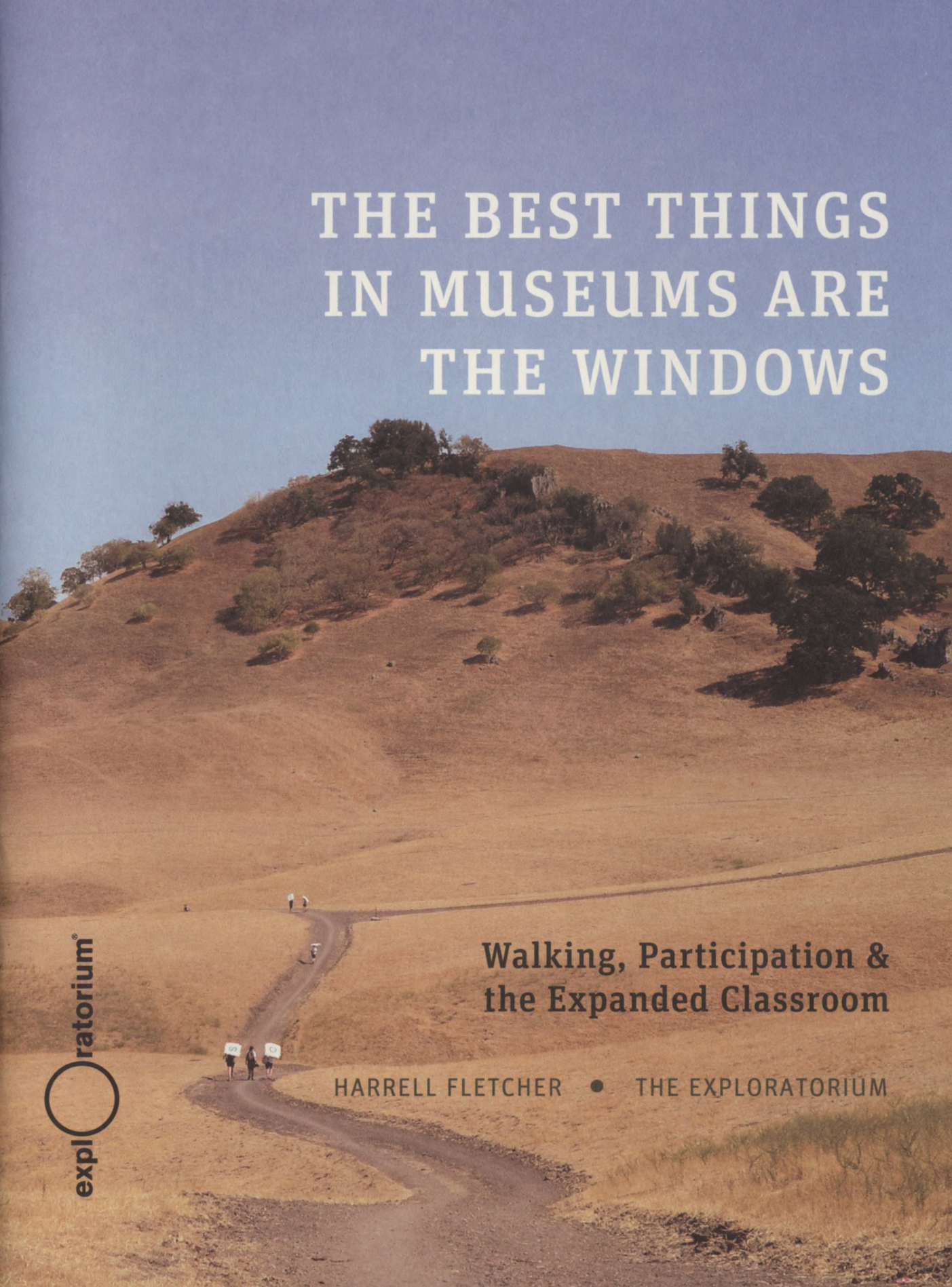
The Best Things in Museums are the Windows

Harrell Fletcher

THE BEST THINGS IN MUSEUMS ARE THE WINDOWS



Walking, Participation & the Expanded Classroom

HARRELL FLETCHER • THE EXPLORATORIUM

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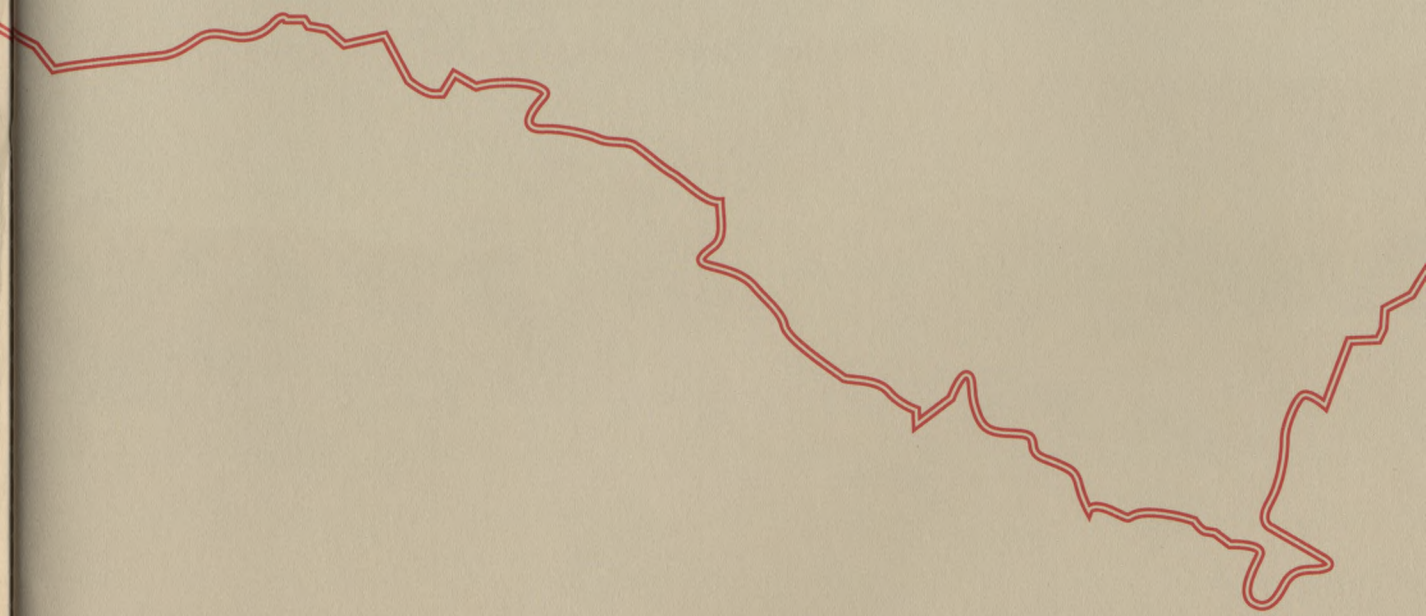

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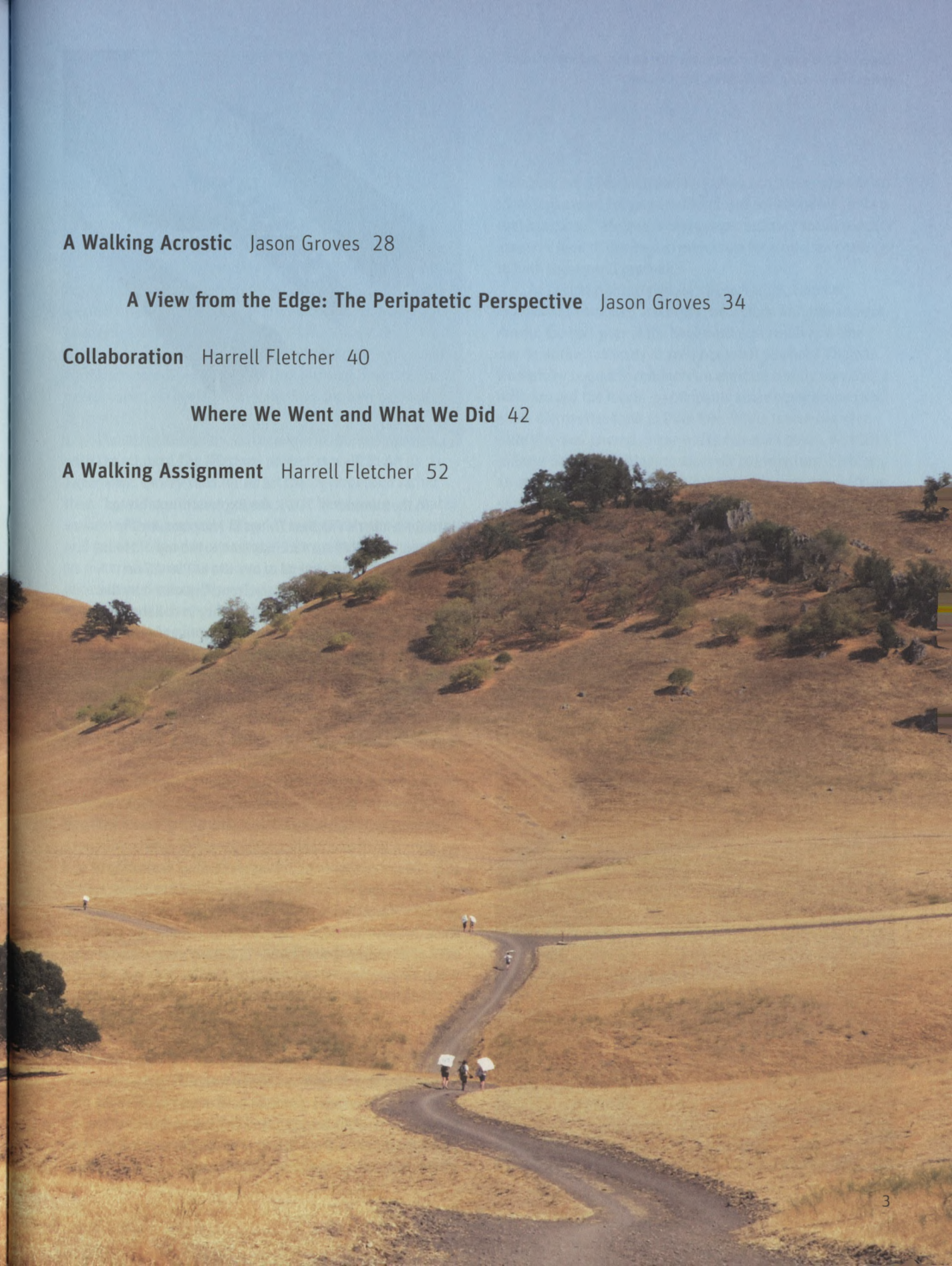


(pages 4–8) As a pedestrian one encounters oddities and marvels such as these found along *The Windows*' four-day trek.

Let's Take a Walk

Marina McDougall

"In my room, the world is beyond
my understanding;
But when I walk I see that it consists of
three or four hills and a cloud."

—Wallace Stevens[1]

Our perception of the world—and our interactions with our surroundings—has been fundamentally shaped by our bipedalism. Walking on two feet with the ground beneath us, one foot in front of the other, we move in relationship to our environment in a uniquely human way.

Walking correlates with internal patterns of thought. What we encounter and experience as we walk along—by glimpsing through a window, glancing to the side of a road, or gazing across a valley—stimulates fresh observations, mental associations, and meandering thoughts. As author and walking enthusiast Rebecca Solnit writes:

"The rhythm of walking generates a kind of rhythm of thinking, and the passage through a landscape echoes or stimulates the passage through a series of thoughts. This creates an odd consonance between internal and external passage, one that suggests that the mind is also a landscape of sorts and that walking is one way to traverse it. A new thought often feels like a feature of the landscape that was there all along..."[2]

In the summer of 2013, the Exploratorium hosted Harrell Fletcher's *The Best Things in Museums Are the Windows*, an ambitious four-day trek to the top of Mount Diablo from the eastern end of our site at Pier 15 on San Francisco's downtown waterfront. Organized by the Exploratorium's Center for Art & Inquiry in collaboration with Fletcher, the project was borne out of research and discussions generated during his two-year stint as an Artist-in-Residence.

The Windows project provided an opportunity to discover a rich interdisciplinary discourse related to walking, the ways in which walking is a form of inquiry, and the power we have moving on our own two feet.

We first engaged Fletcher because we were drawn to the way his ethos as an artist resonates with that of the Exploratorium. We were also intrigued by Fletcher's writings on alternative forms of education (he is inspired by John Holt, an early proponent of homeschooling, for example) and his long history of collaborative projects. At the outset we had no inkling that his final project would take the form of a walk, yet now this seems natural since Fletcher is a champion of all things "pedestrian"—in the very best sense of the word.

Fletcher's work promotes democratic ideals of participation. His projects rethink the relationship that museums have with the public by removing expected hierarchies. As Jordan Stein details further in his essay (see page 10), Fletcher's projects dissolve distinctions between experts and amateurs to draw out the creative potential in all of us. For example, his collaboration with Miranda July called *Learning to Love You More* (2002–09), a series of online assignments (such as "Make a field guide to your yard" or "Write your life story in less than

a day"),[3] created a platform for creativity against the backdrop of everyday domestic and workaday environments.

The Exploratorium itself embraces a deeply populist ethos. Informed by John Dewey, the American philosopher, psychologist, and educational reformer, the Exploratorium's founding vision is based on the belief that education plays a crucial role in democracy by cultivating an informed, engaged, and empowered citizenry. Like Dewey, the Exploratorium espouses hands-on learning and experiential education as well as the notion that learning resonates most deeply when we each individually find our own paths of discovery.

Dewey's writings on art correlate in interesting ways with the ethos of *The Windows* project as well. In *Art as Experience*, Dewey calls for an art that is *embedded* rather than "*apart* from human experience."[4] Bemoaning art that is separated from everyday life and "relegated to the museum and gallery,"[5] he advocates instead for art that is connected to its materiality and the process of its making with its "indigenous status" intact. Dewey's *Art as Experience* conjures the traditional role that art has played in the history of human culture—from the Sumerians to the Haida to the Shakers—one that is woven into the fabric of everyday life and is part of the collective experience.

Taking its name from a quote by the impressionist painter Pierre Bonnard, *The Best Things in Museums Are the Windows* was designed to explore the continuum between a museum and its surrounding community. As an art project, it removed the vitrines and frames of the museum and transposed them to everyday places, revealing the latent possibilities for discovery in everyday settings and charging the world around us with new meaning.

As Shannon Jackson describes in her essay on page 18, Harrell Fletcher founded the Art and Social Practice MFA program at Portland State University. She touches on the rich history of socially engaged art, where a vast number of artists from Joseph Beuys in the 1960s to Futurefarmers today have played a transformative role in the way we perceive social relations in a wide range of contexts, spanning everything from ecology to health care to labor and economics. When one looks back at the 44-year history of the arts at the Exploratorium, one can trace a strong lineage of projects characterized by the qualities of this artistic approach.

In his book *Education for Socially Engaged Art*, Pablo Helguera describes the parallels between socially engaged art and education, noting that "...standard education practices—such as engagement with audiences, inquiry-based methods, collaborative dialogues, and hands-on activities—provide an ideal framework for process-based and collaborative conceptual practices."[6] Helguera encourages aspiring social practice artists to look to the field of education for strong precedence in both theory and practice.

In keeping with Helguera's observation, Fletcher gravitated to our staff scientists, educators, and researchers during the first year of his Exploratorium residency. One day he enthusiastically shared how staff physicist Thomas Humphrey regularly conducts an exercise simply entailing a walk around the block—participants share observations and make discoveries right at their feet. While traversing very little physical ground, these walks can span hours, with an infinite number of things to discover at every turn. Fletcher, an avid walker, has for some time set out on unique walking experiences. In his essay on page 26, he describes how his enthusiasm for walking and for the "straight line" exercises he conducted with a friend beginning in 1988 have evolved into more formalized walking projects.

Inquiry—the Exploratorium's underlying learning philosophy—has an interesting relationship to walking. Inquiry

is triggered by anomalies and new stimuli that pique one's curiosity: the shoe one notices in the middle of the road, the nest we find in the branches of a tree, the history we unearth in the name of a town. When we encounter something surprising or wondrous along our way, we generate questions. Walking literally sets inquiry in motion. Seeded with demonstrations, presentations, and all manner of experiences created by both Exploratorium staff and community partners, *The Windows* exaggerated our sense of the potential for inquiry-based experiences latent along the route. Presenters illuminated histories of radioactivity on Treasure Island, led us on a search for microorganisms living in a creek in Oakland, and told intriguing stories about geodesy on Mount Diablo.

The Exploratorium's Institute for Inquiry (IFI) has carefully studied and shared methods of inquiry-based learning for the last 35 years. IFI educator Paula Hooper, who participated in the journey, inspired us to contemplate learning as both a shared and private experience. We each bring ourselves—our unique backgrounds, social and cultural understandings, and idiosyncratic predilections to each new learning situation. Paula heightened our awareness of the approaches and methods employed by various presenters in our itinerant outdoor classroom. What methods were used to engage us? How did they resonate with each of us?

Walking has long been symbolic of one's life journey, and is also emblematic of learning and the processes of our own becoming. As anthropologist Tim Ingold explores,[7] humans—like other organisms—evolved in dynamic relationship with the environment. He shows how there is a continuum between walking and thinking; human development, growth, cognition, and movement. Ingold describes the human journey as a process of "creative growth," with movement and observation as fundamental aspects of our "unfolding," our "growing into the world."

It's no wonder that so many important writers and philosophers—Kant, Nietzsche, Rousseau, Thoreau, and Snyder, among numerous others—have taken up walking as a critical aspect of their creative process, to set their minds in motion. Literary scholar Jason Groves (who joined *The Windows* as a member of the public) explores the relationship between walking, literature, art and philosophy in his essay on page 34. He also muses on how walking as a subject traipses across many diverse fields of study in *A Walking Acrostic*, on page 28.

What meanings can we derive from *The Windows*? Though the top of Mount Diablo gave us a clear goal, were we walking for something? Were there symbolic or ethical dimensions to Fletcher's walk? Solnit writes, "Waking is a bodily demonstration of political or cultural conviction,"[8] and "walking has long been associated with certain redemptive values."[9] Perhaps *The Windows* (harkening back to Thoreau) embraced the pedestrian as a statement of simplicity? Or perhaps we were walking to express a conviction in the powers of curiosity and being alive to all that surrounds us.

[1]Stevens, Wallace. "Of the Surface of Things." *Harmonium*. New York: Knopf, 1919. Print.

[2]Solnit, Rebecca. *Wanderlust*. New York: Penguin Putnam Inc., 2000. 6. Print.

[3]Fletcher, H. and July, M. *Learning to Love You More*. Retrieved from learningtoloveyoumore.com.

[4]Dewey, John. *Art as Experience*. New York: Perigree Books, 1934. 3. Print.

[5]Ibid. 6.

[6]Helguera, Pablo. *Education for Socially Engaged Art*. New York: Jorge Pinto Books, 2006. Xi; 77–81. Print.

[7]Ingold, Tim. *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2011. ix–14. Print.

[8]Solnit, *Wanderlust*. 217.

[9]Ibid, 131.

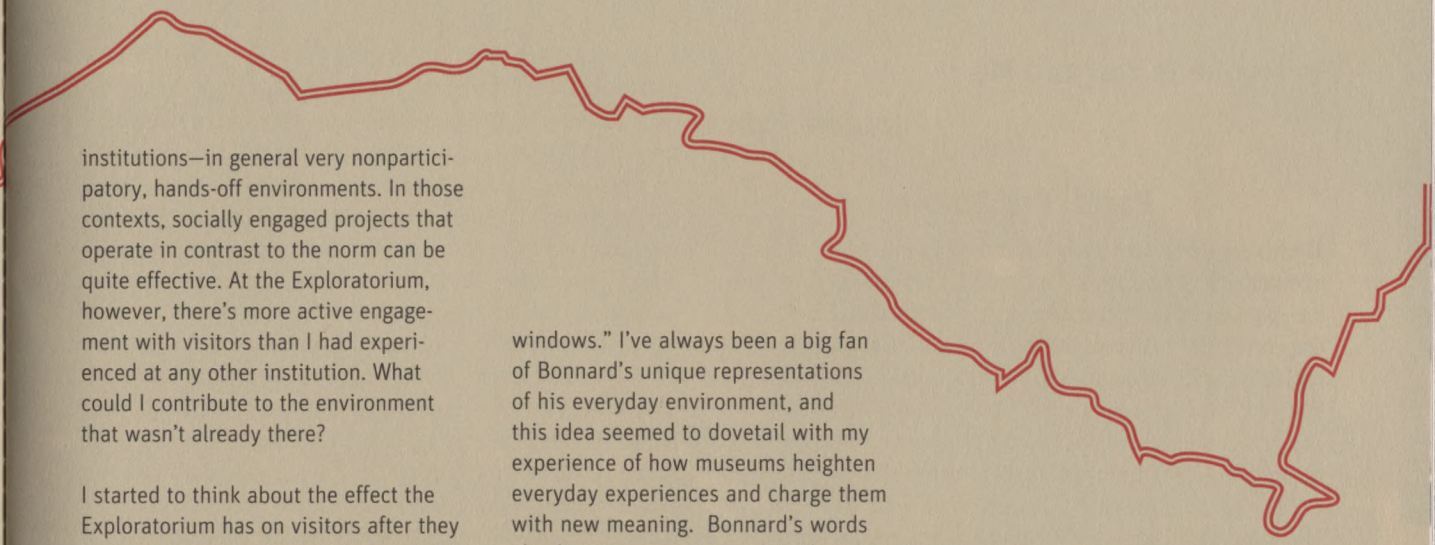
The Best Things in Museums Are the Windows

Harrell Fletcher

Pierre Bonnard, *The Open Window*, 1921, Oil on canvas, 118.11 x 95.885 cm. The Phillips Collection Washington, DC.

Marina McDougall and Jordan Stein of the Exploratorium's Center for Art & Inquiry approached me about producing a project for the museum about a year or so before its move from the Palace of Fine Arts to Pier 15. I had lived in the Bay Area for about ten years prior to moving to Portland, Oregon, and was familiar with the Exploratorium, but I soon realized there was so much more to learn. Over the next year I visited several times, meeting the staff and learning about the institution's history and methods. Among the staff, there was simultaneously sadness about leaving the old building and excitement about moving to the new site. I was impressed with the physical buildings, both of which have amazing architectural significance as well as vast stores of anecdotes and memories, but I found myself more drawn to the Exploratorium's philosophy as described by both founder Frank Oppenheimer and the current staff—the people who put those ideas into practice.

I'm sympathetic to the experiential and interactive ways in which the Exploratorium functions, since my own work employs similar socially engaged methods and applications. Because of that crossover, the Exploratorium presented an unusual problem for me. Most of the work that I create is for art



institutions—in general very nonparticipatory, hands-off environments. In those contexts, socially engaged projects that operate in contrast to the norm can be quite effective. At the Exploratorium, however, there's more active engagement with visitors than I had experienced at any other institution. What could I contribute to the environment that wasn't already there?

I started to think about the effect the Exploratorium has on visitors after they leave and head back out into the world. My impression was that they leave with a heightened sensitivity to the way the world works from both a scientific and an aesthetic perspective. It reminded me of the experience of being in an art museum, coming across a window, and suddenly seeing the view in a whole new way. Art museums by their nature create a sense of value and appreciation for the objects that they display, and in looking out the window, a museum's aura can be transferred to the world outside.

French artist Pierre Bonnard once said, "the best things in museums are the windows." I've always been a big fan of Bonnard's unique representations of his everyday environment, and this idea seemed to dovetail with my experience of how museums heighten everyday experiences and charge them with new meaning. Bonnard's words also became a way to explain the project that I began to develop with the Exploratorium.

I wanted to shift attention away from the Exploratorium's physical site and instead take its experiential approach out into the world. During my site visits I had walked around the piers, which were then still under construction. One of the site's most striking features is the building's eastern view of the water, the Bay Bridge, the East Bay, and beyond. On a clear day the farthest point you can see to the east is Mount Diablo, near Walnut Creek. I proposed to assemble a group of participants who would step out past the museum's windows into the environment outside, sailing across the bay and then walking through Alameda and Contra Costa counties to the top of Mount Diablo. Each of the participants, all somehow connected to the Exploratorium, would share knowledge related to the landscape with the group and the public as we trekked. This idea was initially met with skepticism, but over time the Center for Art & Inquiry generated the incredible support and engagement necessary to pull off such an unorthodox project.

(right) Exploratorium Artist-in-Residence Ruth Asawa constructs *Castle*, a complex origami structure made from milk cartons, 1974.

(facing page) The Exploratorium floor at the Palace of Fine Arts in 1975.

Everyone Is You and Me

Jordan Stein

Part I: Pre-Amble

There's an apocryphal story about the Exploratorium's grand opening. It's spring, 1969. The museum's founding director—pioneering physicist, humanist, and educator Frank Oppenheimer—has spent the last year or so assembling an ambitious group of engineers, inventors, artists, educators, and oddballs to collaborate on a suite of hands-on exhibits that would eventually make up the permanent collection of the world's first "Exploratorium." Frank has convinced the city to hand over the keys to the beautiful beaux arts Palace of Fine Arts in which he can test his ideas and create "a laboratory atmosphere" complete with "apparatus which people can see and handle and which display phenomena which people can turn on and off and vary at will."[1]

The giant building, impossibly drafty and gently curved, is warmed by enormous fireplaces stationed every 300 feet or so. Working away, the gang creates a robust set of exhibits that distill and illuminate the principles and properties of electricity, magnetism, light, sound, color, and motion. Their aim is to make the invisible visible.

The main door pushes open. "Hello?" the door-pusher's voice calls. "Are you open?" And after a short pause, "Well, yes, I guess so." And that was that: our unofficial opening.

Although this story may or may not be completely true, it speaks to the informal, improvisational, and permeable spirit that defines the Exploratorium and still pulls people here, both to work and to play. For over 40 years, the museum kept those doors wide open (though the fireplaces were eventually deemed illegal) and millions of visitors helped keep us there. The arts, biology, and the social sciences soon joined the foundational physics-based experiments and exhibitions about memory, turbulence, frogs, and AIDS. The environment was animated by a commitment to experiential learning and direct engagement—made explicit by its blossoming professional development programs for science teachers.

Eventually, we outgrew our first home, and in January of 2013 the museum moved into a newly renovated pier along the Embarcadero, San Francisco's waterfront promenade. With hundreds of solar panels, a bay water heating and cooling system, a high-tech theater, optimal biology labs, dynamic new exhibit spaces, and 600 refurbished or new exhibits, our new home represented a serious upgrade for staff and public alike.

In the year or so leading up to the move, we were awfully concerned with accumulated *stuff* (trashing it versus saving it) and with accumulated *spirit* (compromising it versus preserving it). We were consumed with a fundamental question: Transported across the city and into the spotlight, would we be a different us? It was during this period of soul-searching and transition that we invited artist Harrell Fletcher to explore developing a project with us as an Artist-in-Residence (AIR).

Active since 1974, the Exploratorium AIR Program has hosted more than 250 artists keen on experimentation and collaboration, including Ruth Asawa, Brian Eno, and Tauba Auerbach. We try our best to free them—and ourselves—of any expectations up front, as there's more likelihood of true collaboration emerging that way. As Peter Richards, the cofounder of the program and now emeritus staff member would say, we invite artists to "come mess around."


TWO EYES

Harrell Fletcher's practice is defined by spirit, not stuff, and we thought his methods and insight would implicitly speak to where the institution was in its life cycle. His work—defined by participation and often categorized under the social practice rubric—resonated with our inclusive ambitions.

Social practice developed from sculptural and performative traditions that reached beyond material objects directly into human and social relations. Free from lighting, pedestals, and wall text, socially engaged artworks are instead the scaffolding on which to hang actions and relationships, often placing ethics and economics in the metaphorical spotlight. Important projects in the field have explored, among many other realms, civic gardens (Amy Franchescini's *Victory Gardens*, 2007–9), workers rights (Mierle Ukeles series of *Maintenance Art* works, 1969–present), environmental awareness (Amy Balkin's *Public Smog*, 2004–present), immigrant advocacy (Tanya Brugera's *Immigrant Movement International*, 2011), and access (Paul Ramirez Jonas' *Key to the City*, 2010). Participation, collaboration, interaction, and provocation are hallmarks of this type of work, which emphasizes situations and encounters over physical form and structure.

If Harrell were a singer, you might say his works were characterized by passing the microphone to the guy at the back of the room. For a 2006 public sculpture garden commission at the Domaine de Kerguéhennec in France, Harrell interviewed park visitors about what *they* might want in a public sculpture. One proposal came from an eight-year-old boy named Corentine, who saw a golden turtle painted green in his young mind's eye. After several conversations, sketch sessions, curatorial meetings, and visits to the foundry, the oversized reptile came to life in the garden and the museum hosted a public reception and unveiling for Corentine.

The finished work, appropriately known as *Corentine's Turtle*, illustrates the way in which social practice projects are very often marked by their context and characters; their particulars would have a hard time being recreated or even comprehensible in any other place or time.

This direct, unmonumental, almost casual approach to sharing, learning, and collaborating felt native to us—perhaps the Exploratorium could be considered one really big experiment in social practice. Over the course of several visits to the museum, Harrell met with a fleet of staff scientists, artists, and educators to get to know us. He was inundated by "The Move"; the behemoth lurking in the margins of nearly every conversation. Indeed, most Palace-based planning and programming had slowed as everyone was looking to our new site across town.

During one of his visits, Harrell mentioned a recent project with Eric Steen that involved a three-day walk from the University of Colorado in Colorado Springs to the top of

(left) Mierle Laderman Ukeles' *The Social Mirror*, 1983, is a mirrored New York City Department of Sanitation truck used in parades and festivals.

(below) Harrell Fletcher, *Corentine's Turtle*, 2006, a collaboration with eight-year-old Corentine Senechal. Domaine de Kerguéhennec, Centre d'art contemporain, Bignan, France.

Pike's Peak that included students, faculty, and community members. Along the way each participant gave an informal presentation about a different aspect the environment they were walking through, including geology, botany, history, map-making, and more. Like many projects in the social field, its premise was deceptively simple: let's take a walk and teach each other things along the way that somehow illuminate the landscape. There was no single leader or guide; instead, the group formed a pool of collective knowledge. Calling the project a work of art served to inspire increased attention along the way and co-mingle disparate fields of knowledge and disciplines.

A short time later Harrell and I found ourselves hovering over an onscreen map of San Francisco, the old and new museum visible in the frame. He muttered something about a straight line and asked if I'd zoom out until we could see across the bay and over the hills. Eventually Mount Diablo appeared in the East Bay, the tallest peak for many miles. "How about if we walked there...from here?"

And so *The Best Things in Museums Are the Windows* became a 30-mile walk, kicked off by a 5-mile sail, organized by the Exploratorium in collaboration with Harrell Fletcher. Much like a musical score to be interpreted, Harrell established the guidelines and criteria for the project, envisioning the core group of walkers and the idea that community collaborators would be essential. With the museum having just arrived at its new site, we were curious about our relationship to our new "surrounding" communities. Where did our museum end and the outside world begin?

PART II: The Amble

Our task, in addition to not-so-simply completing our 30-mile journey in the dead of summer (to accommodate Harrell's academic year as Director of Portland State's Social Practice Program), was to program a series of site-specific events that spoke to various social, geographical, historical, physical, or psychic elements of the places we would pass through. With the help of extraordinary community groups and partners, almost 30 stops were planned and noted on a web-based map, along with descriptions of what would happen at each stop and when.

The trek extended from the eastern end of the Exploratorium, across the bay, through Berkeley, up and over the East Bay hills, down into Contra Costa County, into the suburbs of Lafayette, Moraga, and Orinda, across the foothills of the State Park, and eventually to the summit of Mount Diablo. The public was invited to walk alongside a small group of museum staffers who camped together for four days and three nights en route to the top.

Harrell and the Exploratorium arts program staff identified a diverse cross-section of twelve walkers from the museum, including Explainers (the Exploratorium's take on traditional museum docents), science educators, researchers, exhibit developers, a summer intern, a videographer, and a curator's son. Unexpectedly, the trip even took on a perfect stranger. Just a few days before our departure, a phone message arrived from an intrepid East Bay resident named Julie Hartford at nearly the same moment that we faced a last-minute dropout. She had read about the project in her local paper and was hoping to join for the whole thing, even the camping, which we'd originally decided would only be open to museum staffers. Harrell called her back and invited her to participate.

Community collaborators included a utilities district biologist, a nonprofit group of disabled sailors, a working ranch and education center, a community music school, ocean science researchers, several chefs, an elementary school named after John Muir, a geographer, an astronomer, various academics, the sister of an Explainer, and many artists, including the incredible Michael Swaine, whose umbrellas not only kept the sun off of our faces, but also, when Velcroed together, formed the words "windows" and "explore."

Additionally, there were several Exploratorium staffers who did not walk, but who fashioned presentations for specific spots on the map, including two fantastic cinema programs that bookended the experience—one on the night before we took off, and one at the final campsite before the culminating summit walk.

In reflecting on works of social practice, there's a risk of the project specifics atomizing into a mist of metaphorical pronouncements and self-congratulatory life lessons. Not unlike a sculptor photographing their newest work in its best light, it's not criminal, but neither is it the whole truth. While it's impossible to stitch together a composite image of the experience—a sculpture depicted from every angle—I'll share the event that kicked off the walk, as well as three other moments that explore the idea of "keeping time" from different vantages. (For the full itinerary of the walk, see page 42.)

Given the museum's waterfront location, our first step could literally sink us. So, then, how to embark on this giant walk? Not even two miles down the Embarcadero from the Exploratorium is Pier 40, home to the Bay Area Association of Disabled Sailors, or BAADS, a volunteer-run group that seeks to make sailing accessible to everyone, regardless of physical ability. That first morning, a few BAADS representatives docked at Pier 15 and helped us across the bay, teaching us how to hold the line, read the wind, and safely steer. Once across, veteran sailor Margreta von Pein gave a short talk on the history of BAADS, the potential of alternative forms of education, unorthodox transportation methods, and community empowerment.

Describing the last stop of our first day, however, must begin with an admission: Like a benevolent slug inching its way across the East Bay, we were very, very late to arrive at John Muir Elementary School. And we'd worked hard to be prepared: Fred Stein, a science educator at the museum, waited at the small creek that ran through the property with microscopes for a critter investigation; Rachel Harris, the Muir garden teacher, was standing by with a prepared tour; Valerie Gutwirth, the school's charismatic dance instructor, had a poetry and movement exercise ready. Most worrisome, parents had studied the website and shown up with their kids *on time*. My cell phone battery was dying and my recently secured, $40 solar charger was worthless.

Under these circumstances, Fred started his activity early with the public, repeating it once we arrived; Rachel apologized saying she had to take off; Valerie texted that she had to run home but would be right back. We learned early on that things would have to be flexible, that the rhythm of the project was out of our hands—or feet—to a significant extent, no matter how much we planned and prepared.

Months earlier, on one of many scouting trips through the area with a group of Explainers, I met Ben Renwick at the counter of Campana Music in downtown Lafayette. "Pay

(left) The first-ever Campana Mini Music Festival, held in July 2013.

(opposite page) Crossing the Bay on the *Orion*.

Attention!" a simple sign hollered in black-marker scrawl from the wall behind him. "That was Joe's handwriting," Ben explained. Joe Campana had owned and operated the shop for over 40 years before he passed away in 2011. Ben, a woodwind instructor, had been employed at Campana Music since 1980 and met with students in small lesson rooms upstairs. Among the sheet music, guitars, saxophones, flutes, and elegant old cash register, he spoke of Joe with a special admiration. After several more conversations by phone, we decided to transform the parking lot for one day into a performance space for teachers and students in honor of his late boss.

On day two of our epic journey, Ben, his colleagues, and his students played host to the first-ever Campana Mini Music Festival. The sound of occasionally bungled jazz standards carried through town, locals wandered over and stuck around for some potato salad, an improvised awning kept everyone cool, and remembrances of Joe lined the windows of the shop. We walkers hung out for only a short while (we had to reach our camp before dark), but the program went all day.

The next afternoon, as our core group plus a few strangers amiably competed for shade in the foothills of the State Park, an old friend of Harrell's named Cleveland Leffler spoke to us about time. What we understood as history, he explained, was an infinitesimal blip compared with what scientists understand as "Deep Time." Mount Diablo—now 3,849 feet high—was once beneath the sea. Tectonic forces caused by the overriding of the Pacific and North American plates created an uplift of the once-horizontal seabed. Surrounded by rocks with bits of seashells still intact, his observations were strikingly visceral—our individual beads of sweat miniscule against the dusty seabed. It was against this psychedelic backdrop that we began our ascent to our final campground.

Like all projects, it was easier coming down than going up, and we eventually dispersed just as quickly as we'd come together. A massive collaborative undertaking, the walk now lives in the minds of those who participated, whether they trekked the full 30 miles, hosted a mini music festival for the walkers in a parking lot, posted images online, studied the map and rendezvoused with the group for a few hours, drove the supply van, or volunteered at the campsite kitchen.

PART III: Post-Amble

As author Rebecca Solnit writes, "the subject of walking is, in some sense, about how we invest universal acts with particular meanings. Like eating or breathing, it can be invested with wildly different cultural meanings, from the erotic to the spiritual, from the revolutionary to the artistic."[2]

I think our walk's particular meaning lies in art, education, experience, and invitation, largely with "art' as an excuse to pay attention. I'm reminded of a Zen-like quotation attributed to another collaboration, that of artists Robert Irwin and James Turrell with rocket scientist Dr. Ed Wortz in the late 1960s. While researching perception and consciousness at an engineering laboratory, Turrell scribbled the following in a notebook: "The object of art may be to seek an elimination of the necessity for it."[3] In other words, if art consistently frames our experiences, offering meaning and waking us up to life, then perhaps its ultimate goal should be to disappear entirely from the frame. An elusive goal, but a compelling case for experience itself as art.

The Best Things in Museums Are the Windows wasn't perfect. Our timeline was tough to keep, the heat was intense, not everyone was able to walk the full distance, and we were consistently late to meet our waiting public. It's unpleasant to measure the project's inclusive ethos against its blister-causing reality, but thank goodness for that. Ultimately, it was a genuine—and genuinely shared—experience.

There's a model for this sort of thinking hidden in plain sight on our museum floor. Everyone Is You and Me, a 1970s-era exhibit by long-time staff artist Bob Miller, puts the experience and mission of the Exploratorium in plainly literal terms. A chrome-plated sheet of glass and an arrangement of lightbulbs separate two visitors who sit across from one another. By controlling the lights via a simple dial, the glass alternates between being a mirror and a window. Consequently, users have the chance to hybridize their faces in an undeniably charming and strange way, eliciting laughter, surprise, even astonishment. The experience is about reflection and

transparency, but also relating and relationships. And as the title implies, it's also about empathy. What's winning about the work is not that it's well intended (dubious criteria for any successful artwork), but because it's unmistakably powerful and not completely comfortable.

Everyone Is You and Me is included in the *Exploratorium Cookbook III*—an open source, DIY guide to building one's own exhibits that was originally published in 1987. These blueprints for the precocious tinkerer included plans for everything we had on the floor, each page a tiny window on how to bring these experiences closer to one's own life. The fairly sacred cows of the contemporary art world—singular authorship, careerism, and the politics of copyright holding—are set aside for the sake of sharing, access, and collaboration.

Long after we'd come down from the mountain, Everyone Is You and Me seemed relevant as I reviewed the countless images made along the way, frames from the field. One image in particular struck me, which was taken at a "crossing" into the foothills of Mount Diablo State Park, where it very quickly got very hot, with little shade anywhere.

Although I didn't make this photograph, I recall *seeing* this moment and noting it as particularly rich. In retrospect, it was the point at which I realized that our crossings were infinite, each step a window onto a new world. Over time, it has become indicative to me of the distances between distances—the innumerable crossings that I wasn't aware of before. Because we walked together, and because the situation somehow seemed so *unlikely*, the view not only became artful and framed, but reflected and shared. It became both a window and a mirror.

In the walk's wake, we held a public event at the museum to reflect on and contextualize the experience. Formal presentations mixed with open question-and-answer time. Near the end of the day, John Weber, Director of the UC Santa Cruz Institute of the Arts and Sciences, wondered aloud about the "art" of *The Best Things in Museums Are the Windows*—where was it, what was it, who made it, and for what? Marcus Mack, a precocious 21-year-old Explainer who made the trek (and who also slept in a tent for the first time ever on the trip), spoke up. He said, "For me...it was more the reflection that was art. Actually walking and having experiences and talking to people was all art in the making and less, 'Oh, well, I need to walk like this to make this look really cool because this walking is art right now.'"

In other words, art framed the walk, but didn't define it. The window became the mirror.

[1]Rationale For A Science Museum. Frank Oppenheimer, Department of Physics, University of Colorado. *Curator: The Museum Journal*, Volume 1 Issue 3, 206–209 (September 1968).

[2]Solnit, Rebecca. *Wanderlust*. New York: Penguin Putnam Inc. 2000.

[3]Tuchman, Maurice. *A Report on the Art and Technology Program of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1967–1971*. New York: Viking, 1971. 131.

Everyone Is You and Me, a popular exhibit on the Exploratorium floor.

(clockwise from right) Francis Alÿs in collaboration with Cuauhtémoc Medina and Rafael Ortega, *When Faith Moves Mountains (Cuando la fe mueve montañas)*, Lima, Peru, 2002, video still. Three-channel video installation with sound, two channels transferred from 16mm film projected, 34 min. each; one channel on monitor, 6 min., continuous loop. Dimensions vary with installation.

Harrell Fletcher and Miranda July, *Learning to Love You More*, 2002–2009. Web project and archive. Acquired 2010 by SFMOMA.

Felix Gonzalez-Torres, *"Untitled" (A Corner of Baci)*, 1990. Baci chocolates individually wrapped in silver foil (endless supply). Dimensions vary with installation, ideal weight: 42 lbs. The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.

Seven Windows

Shannon Jackson

Harrell Fletcher's collaboration with the Exploratorium's Center for Art & Inquiry, *The Best Things in Museums Are the Windows*, is a project that brings forward a range of questions. At base, it starts with a deceptively simple one: What if we could go directly from the Exploratorium to the top of Mount Diablo, which is across the San Francisco Bay and visible from the windows of the museum's new space at Pier 15? The implications of executing such an idea, however, are far more complex, logistically and conceptually; that mixture propels the work as a whole. Ultimately, *The Windows* draws from various genealogies in art, science, education, and community practice. In trying to come to terms with its context and its effects, I found myself exploring a few different domains of comparison.

Proposition 1: This is a social practice artwork.

It is not a coincidence that the Exploratorium's Center for Art & Inquiry has recently focused its attention on the work of artists identified with a so-called "social turn" in the arts. Such artistic practices are defined by a range of labels such as relational aesthetics, social practice, post-studio art, community art, participatory art, and public art. Those terms all come with slightly different orientations. Within the visual art field, however, the embrace of the social is partly characterized as an embrace of the relational—that is, an embrace of person-to-person encounter as a material aspect of the art object. Rather than conceiving of art as a thing bound by a frame or balanced atop a pedestal, art becomes most interesting as a structure for enabling interaction amongst those who engage with it; in such social practice artwork, the nature of that interaction is itself the form and central matter under question. Harrell Fletcher's *The Best Things in Museums Are the Windows* thus joins a vast and ever-growing roster of expanded art events conceived as relational explorations. We could place it in a network of internationally renowned—if highly differentiated—contemporary works, ranging from the perpetually eroding and perpetually replenished stacks and candy spills of Felix Gonzalez-Torres to the service art pieces of Christine Hill to the discursive choreographies of Tino Sehgal to the collaboratively coordinated environmental interventions of Francis Alÿs. In these and thousands of related pieces conceived at museums, biennials and strategically chosen off-site locations, artists are still mobilizing material—candy, dirt, lumber, paper, and bodies—as well as the staff and institutional resources of an art context to produce actions, processes, encounters, and alternative social spaces.[1] Indeed, the art requires action and encounter in order to become itself and, to some ways of thinking, requires continued action to remain itself. Perhaps because of its environmental ethos, perhaps because of its allegiances to a number of social movements, the West Coast of the United States has become an important site of innovation in this field—whether in the feminist happenings of Suzanne Lacy, the sustainable

food experiments of Susanne Cockrell and Ted Purves, the prison data pieces of Sharon Daniel, or the interactive wish systems of Miranda July and Harrell Fletcher himself. Each of these artists is affiliated with degree-granting programs in the social practice field, in graduate art practice programs in San Diego, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Santa Cruz, and Portland—an index of how much the traditional MFA is being redefined on the West Coast by artists' interest in framing, engaging, and reimagining social systems.

Like any purported "turn" in a given intellectual, artistic, or political movement, this turn is not properly understood as new. It is an ethos that remembers and occasionally forgets lineages in the Constructivist experiments in the early 20th century and the Happenings of the mid-20th century.[2] While community art histories may not have had the same formal preoccupations with "relationality" as such, the art movements of the Works Progress Administration through other federal and community-sponsored initiatives certainly share the impulse to make art from social interaction. Finally, many quite rightly question whether sociality can ever be imagined as a new element in any art object. Art objects framed as paintings, staged as theater, or upheld by pedestals all initiate encounters of various sorts. Past modernist critics who might have argued otherwise, art has always required process and always activated interpersonal exchange. Perhaps these social turns are not so much adding a new material as foregrounding a relational dimension that was always there.

Proposition 2: This is an Exploratorium exhibit.

The Best Things in Museums Are the Windows included exercises that investigated the speed of sound, lectures about radioactivity, animal dissection demonstrations, and

explorations of human movement. Exploratorium educators, exhibit developers, scientists, curators, and Explainers animated the trail, setting up their wares and exposing the scientific undercurrents of the everyday. Meanwhile, the structure of the project enabled and required exhibition and demonstration from a host of community organizations along the trail—a sailing organization for the disabled, a local farm, a music school, a community garden, and more. The project arguably is a full-scale continuation of the goals and identity of the Exploratorium, questing forward to find new ways to produce "eye-opening, always changing, and playful place(s) to explore and tinker." The Exploratorium is arguably already quite "social" and participatory in its techniques and goals. As an organization that is part of a much longer history of a specific museum practice, one that is usually differentiated from the history of art museum practice, it joins a host of history museums and science museums that began working much earlier to liberate the object from its bounded place on the pedestal. It is not as if this museum genealogy does not have its problems. Whether recalling the fraught colonizing ethos of early anthropology museums or the Cold War science museums erected to celebrate a nation's scientific prowess, early "learning centers" certainly placed constraints on the frames and goals of what could be learned. Arguably, however, the exhibition models of most science museums were already propelled by a principle of encounter, even if that encounter was less than reciprocal. Objects were displayed not only to induce contemplation, but to impart information and to provoke a different kind of awareness about the functioning of the world. As such, art museums are now realizing how much there is to learn from science museums.

As a 21st century science museum–turned-learning center, the Exploratorium has redefined itself with an awareness of the nationalist critiques—and sketchy factualisms—that structured the dramaturgy of science and history museums of the past. (Not much taxidermy to be found here.) Re-imagining itself soon after its founding in 1969 as a new triumvirate—"a museum of science, art, and human perception"—the focus would now seem to be on mobilizing the mutually redefining potential of each of these terms. Bonnard's flash of recognition about windows being the best things in museums here becomes clear. It is not that one longs to escape the museum by looking out the window—or by jumping through it. The window is a lens to look through and to look with; it is a prosthetic that frames encounters and produces new ones. The window might be found in a mirror that changes the shapes of the beings it reflects or in the projector that disperses them across an environment; the window might be a magnifying glass, the transparent wall of a terrarium, or a pool of water whose surface reflects the faces of the children who look down upon it. These and other "windows" offer access to a kind of knowledge and an awareness of how that knowledge is made. Here, human perception is activated but also under question. We are in a space of investigation that asks us to think, not only about what we know, but also about how we know what we think we know. Such an ethos

(left) Andrea Fraser, *Museum Highlights: A Gallery Talk*, 1989. Performance, Philadelphia Museum of Art. Performance documentation.

(below) Josh Greene, curator John Spiak's office installed in a gallery in *Some Parts Might Be Greater Than The Whole*, 2008. Arizona State University Art Museum, Tempe, Arizona.

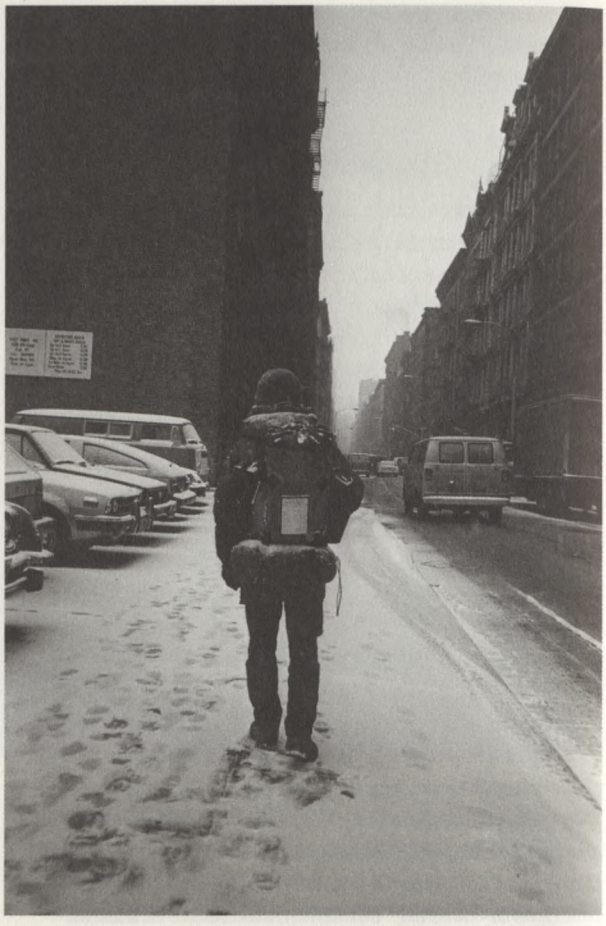
exposes the conceptual rigor that has redefined the fields of art and science in the late 20th century, underscoring the shared impatience of both domains with perceptual habits that accept the "givenness" of the world before us. Ultimately, then, it is not simply that the best things in the museums are the windows, but that the museum's windows might be the best windows that there are.

Proposition 3: This is an alternative classroom.

If the museum's windows are striking for the lenses on the world that they provide, then this project tried to see whether such windows could be imported, resituated, and extended to a world beyond the Exploratorium's physical site. As such, it is perhaps another instance of a wide and rangy movement in progressive pedagogy, one that explores the effectiveness of learning environments beyond the traditional school. Whether recalling the tacit learning of Tolstoy's agrarian villages, the experiential democracies imagined by John Dewey, or Paolo Freire's disquisitions against the stifling practices of "banking" education, alternative education movements develop new practices for hands-on, inquiry-based learning—and seek out exterior places and hands-on environments in which to site it.[3] Contemporary researchers such as Jean Lave tout the importance of LPP—Legitimate Peripheral Participation—documenting the effectiveness of learning in sites that are peripheral to the formal classroom.[4] Throughout *The Windows*, Fletcher recalled a favorite story of Exploratorium founder Frank Oppenheimer, one that told of a woman who reportedly came home after a visit to the Exploratorium and rewired a broken lamp. How might others be emboldened to use the lessons of the museum in spaces outside of it?

The Exploratorium is, of course, already engaged in LPP; it is already a place where teachers, families, and professional organizations reap the educational benefits of participating in the Legitimate Peripheral sphere. *The Best Things in Museums Are the Windows* thus challenged the Exploratorium to peripheralize the periphery, or to alter our sense of where lines between center and periphery are drawn by re-siting its exhibits in the natural and urban landscape of the Bay Area. We as participants would learn about the physics of wind on a sailboat and about radioactivity on a (formerly?) radioactive island. We learned about historic train systems on streets where the rails were buried and about the effects of drought in the middle of a forest. Recalling the ethos of the alternative classroom, the educational efficacy was heightened by placing the encounter on a site were relevant issues and histories were palpable.

(right) Tehching Hsieh, Life image from *One Year Performance 1981–1982*. September 26, 1981–September 26, 1982.



As such, *The Windows* also joined and advanced a pedagogical turn within the contemporary art networks of social practice described earlier. Indeed, many artists have been quick to realize that the social turn is not only not new to art, but also not new to other arenas of inquiry. Mining the field of education for alternative models—A.S. Neill's Summerhill School, John Holt's "unschooling," Jonathan Kozol's "free schools"—art collectives such as the Center for Land Use Interpretation, Chto Delat, the Center for Urban Pedagogy, or WochenKlausur, as well as individual artists such as Sharon Hayes, Pablo Helguera, and many more model their practices on pedagogical ones.[5] There is thus a very interesting chiasmus between artistic domains and educational domains in our present moment: while educators are redefining schooling by making it more like art, artists are redefining aesthetics by making it more like school. In this space of mutual appropriation, a different hybrid arises. Artists and teachers both create think tanks, devise group exercises, install projects, distribute assignments, and welcome failure, eliciting opportunities for reflective interaction on the workings of art and the environment around them. At its best, art's conceptual framing loosens the pre-destined instrumentalization of education, while the educational pursuit places inquiry and sociality at the center of the artistic sphere.

Proposition 4: This is a work of institutional critique.

The phrase "institutional critique" was coined in the 1980s to characterize a range of art practices that took the institution, specifically the art institution, as a central medium and object of reflection. Andrea Fraser famously constructed alternative docent tours and an alternative docent persona—Jane Castleton—to expose the inner workings and inner economies of the museum space (image, page 20). Inspired by the institutionally targeted work of Hans Haacke, extended by the counter-exhibition strategies of Fred Wilson, artists who identified with institutional critique developed practices for mining and rendering visible the operational structures of the exhibition space. Elmgreen and Dragset, Mierle Laderman Ukeles, Tino Sehgal, and many others incorporate security guard staff into their artworks. These artists along with others such as Josh Greene (image, page 21), Mark Dion, Pierre Huyghe, and many more have displayed curatorial offices and curator's bodies inside their exhibition practices, turning the museum space inside out. More recent social practices have extended institutional reflection, though often they involve museum staff less as objects and more as interlocutors in a shared space of reflection. For example, Portland artist and Harrell Fletcher's student Lexa Walsh exemplified such a mode as an education artist-in-residence with her *Meal Ticket* system for gathering staff from across the institution.

The Windows was a variant of this variant. The Exploratorium is a space that, to some degree, already makes transparent the workings of its operations. In its new space, visitors are invited to see into the workshops and laboratories that create its exhibits. Upon visiting the Exploratorium, Fletcher was increasingly interested in the people who kept the museum running and contributed to its learning. These are the people charged with sustaining a learning space, an art space, and a dynamic space for thousands of daily visitors of various regions and generations. What would it mean to draw these makers further out into the open? To place them in a different natural habitat while also giving them the opportunity to engage with each other?

If *The Best Things in Museums Are the Windows* was, in part, an extension of the Exploratorium's status as a venue of

(below) Richard Long, *A Line Made by Walking*, 1967. Photograph and pencil on board, image 375 x 324 mm. Purchased 1976, Tate Gallery, London, Great Britain.

Legitimate Peripheral Participation, it also legitimated such peripheral participation for the museum's staff as well. It was a group experience filled with challenges, frustrations, and bonding and learning moments for a group of employees. It was a retreat activity carried out by those who usually tend to the retreats of others. Non-Exploratorium participants thus found ourselves engaging with a specific group of employees throughout the trip; people like Julie Hartford and I would find ourselves in conversation but just as often we were spectators to conversations amongst staff members that seemed to have been going on for a while. Many team members knew the names of each other's partners and kids, and the illnesses that they were recovering from. They knew what projects each was putting on hold to be there, and how much work was piling up in their offices as we walked. They knew each other's taste in music, their food preferences, and their social foibles. In seeing these institutional representatives interacting with each other, I felt surrounded by people who were likely the smartest kids in school—though not necessarily the most well behaved. They questioned each other at every turn, layering query upon query, twisting devices that I didn't think we were supposed to touch, interrupting each other, teasing each other, turning someone's demo into a debate. As producers of one of our city's notable 'off-site' experiences, these staff members were having their own 'off-site,' relying on a history of trust as they followed a series of structured activities. But they were also testing that trust and, hopefully, strengthening it. *The Windows* allowed Exploratorium staff to do their own exploring as well.

Proposition 5: This is a walking art piece.

If social practice can describe a range of expanded forms in contemporary art, then "walking art" is both a variant and a precedent of such a turn. As Jason Groves chronicles in his essay (page 34), walking has always been a source of inspiration for the artist, the philosopher, and the everyday citizen. While a range of thinkers elaborated upon the imaginative effects and physical benefits of walking—whether for clearing or activating the mind, accessing the natural world, or re-encountering an urban one—numerous artists over the course of the 20th and 21st centuries have incorporated the act of walking as an artistic material. Surrealists created chance excursions—or "deambulations"—that spontaneously explored the city and wider outskirts of Paris, translating the concept of "automatic writing" into a moving, corporeal form. Later, Situationists sought to politicize the act of alternative walking, developing the practice of the "derive," which more self-consciously sought to upset or resist the spatial habits of urban space in order to imagine new psychogeographical relationships. Such practices were extended in the sphere of site-based choreography, whether in Lucinda Childs's *Street Dance*, Trisha Brown's sculptural dance *The Stream*, or Yvonne Rainer's deployment of *Street Action (M-Walk)* to protest the American invasion of Cambodia. Walking has extended the practice of endurance art, expanding the act of walking into days, weeks, and even years in order to test and redefine the experience of embodiment and temporality. Some walking art pieces posited literal and symbolic destinations, such as Ulay and Marina Abramović's decision to end their relationship after walking the Great Wall of China. Others such as Tehching Hsieh's *One Year Performance 1981–82 (Outdoor Piece)* (image, page 22), ended undramatically; in that piece, walking was a mundane vehicle for eluding sheltered space and its conventions of social interaction.

The Windows partakes of some of the genealogies suggested above, mixing chance spatial encounters with deliberately planned spatial alternatives. And the peak of Mount Diablo gave this walk a focused sense of destination.

As a four-day event, it also required a degree of endurance, and some Exploratorium staff members wondered whether they would endure and enjoy the psychic drain and alternative imagining that often accompanies long excursions. The artist whom Fletcher most explicitly cites as inspiration, however, is Richard Long. Living outside Bristol, England, Long famously devised walks and perambulations that conformed to—or suddenly surfaced—geometries that were both precise and new. Integrating the act of walking with the act of "marking" (to quote a recent retrospective), Long entered the terrain of the natural world in order to denaturalize his (and our) relationship to it. *Turf Sculpture* and *Turf Circle* marked the landscape at right angles or in perfect circumferences. His famous *A Line Made by Walking* photographed the trace left by repeatedly walking in a grassy field near his home (image, page 23). The geometrically precise line stands out as an all-too human intervention in a natural landscape, simultaneously invoking reflection on the delicacy, focus, and once-presentness of the figure who made it. *The Windows* plots its own unexpected geometry, even if its "line" was made not only by walking but by sailing as well. Indeed, as anticipated and documented in the Exploratorium's map of the work, the thrill and *chutzpah* of this piece partly resides in its desire to conform to an imagined line, one that runs as due east as possible from Pier 15, through Oakland and Berkeley, to the top of Mount Diablo. The step-by-step endurance of this walk was thus oft experienced in relation to this imagined line, attempting to reconcile the material and the ideal, the lateral view and the bird's eye view, with each progression across water and ground.

Proposition 6: This is a contemporary artwork by Harrell Fletcher.

At the beginning of this essay and throughout, I have referred to *The Best Things in Museums Are the Windows* as a piece "by" Harrell Fletcher. As a work commissioned by the Exploratorium's Center for Art & Inquiry, this highly collaborative work indeed simultaneously exists as a piece, an idea, and a proposition conceived by Harrell Fletcher. Its structure recalls other works associated with this name, such as *A Walk to Pike's Peak* in Colorado. Moreover, many of Fletcher's pieces have created structures that include the desires and knowledge of everyday people, heightening our awareness of the everyday expertise of the amateur (such as in *The People's Biennial*, co-curated with Jens Hoffman) or extending our experience of everyday intimacy (such as *Learning to Love You More*, created with Miranda July). *The Best Things in Museums Are the Windows* will have his signature, and it will join the history of other pieces "by" Fletcher—those proposed and theoretically authored by him.

Proposition 7: This is not a contemporary artwork by Harrell Fletcher.

As a social practice piece, however, this is a work that is not exclusively understood as one conceived by a single artist. While his artistic proposition galvanized Exploratorium curators, staff, and community partners, it was simultaneously conceived as a piece that featured others' expertise and counted upon the trust of the team it assembled. It was made by the staff members who planned demonstrations along the path and by those who coordinated sailors, historians, and trackers in advance. It was made by the group who first stepped on the BAADS sailboat and by those who joined at various points along the way. Moreover, the piece now lives as a proposition whose simplicity and complexity can be an invitation for others in the future, others who decide to imagine their own creative walks and to follow unorthodox geometries across the landscape. In the end, *The Best Things in Museums Are the Windows* is a vehicle for exposing the expertise and creativity, not only of Harrell Fletcher, but of an Exploratorium that is already here, there, and everywhere.

[1]For more context on a range of contemporary social art experiments and exhibitions, see, for instance, Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*; Grant Kester, *Conversation Pieces* and *The One and the Many*; Shannon Jackson, *Social Works*; Nato Thompson, Ed., *Living as Form*; Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells*; Ted Purves, *What We Want is Free*; Tom Finkelpearl, *What We Made*.

[2]For more on these genealogies, see, for instance, Maria Gough, *The Artist as Producer*, Christina Kiaer, *Imagine No Possessions*; Jeff Kelley, *Childsplay: The Art of Allan Kaprow*; Judith Rodenbeck, *Radical Prototypes*.

[3]For more background on these genealogies, see, for instance, Leo Tolstoy, "The School at Yasnaya Polyana," *The Complete Works of Count Tolstoy*; John Dewey, *Art as Experience*; Paolo Freire, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

[4]See Jean Lave, *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge UP, 1991.

[5]In addition to texts already mentioned, related reading on this nexus includes, A.S. Neill, *Summerhill: A Radical Approach to Child-rearing*; John Holt, *How Children Fail*; Jonathan Kozol, *Free Schools*; Pablo Helguera, *Education for Socially-Engaged Art*.

Walking

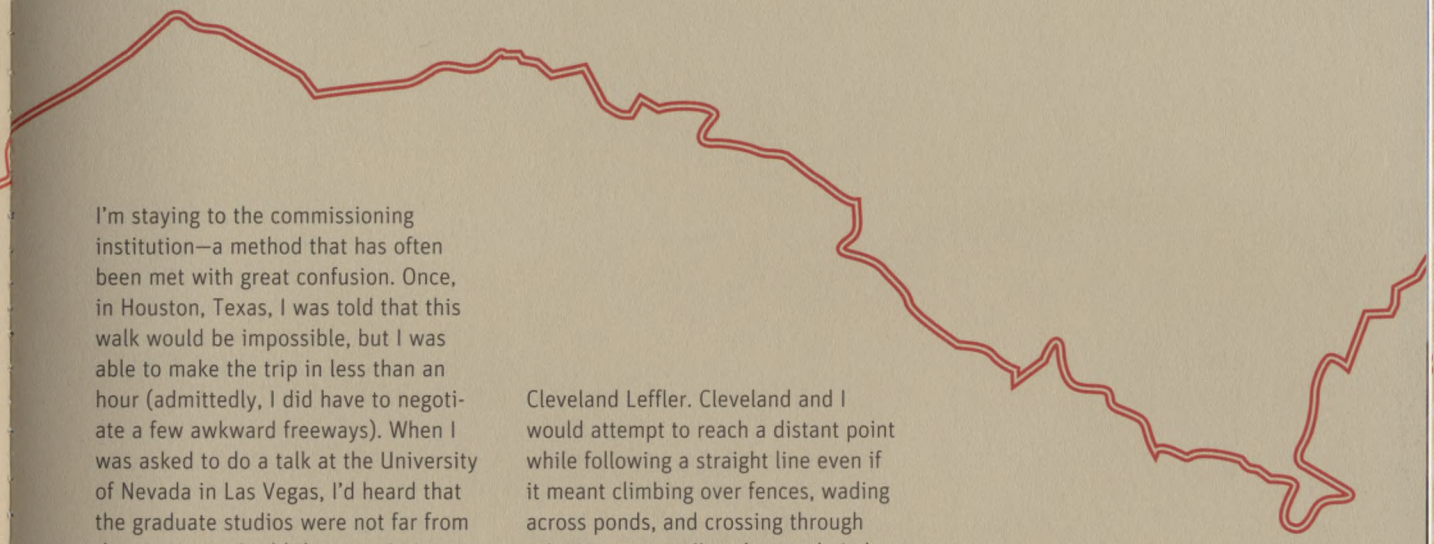
Harrell Fletcher

I've always been a big walker. I love the pace of walking, which allows for multisensory observation and (mostly) danger-free daydreaming. It's amazing how far walking can take you. As a 21st-century Western society, we've largely lost our ability to gauge how far we can walk from one place to another and how long it will take us, which has inhibited us from embracing walking as a form of transportation.

Historically, several artists have conducted solo walking projects including Richard Long, Hamish Fulton, and Werner Herzog. The public's ability to participate in these works has only been possible by means of documentation—photographs, exhibitions, books, et cetera. The Swiss artist San Keller has conducted participatory walking projects, one of which was called the *Long Way Home*, in 2004. Once a month San would meet people at Grand Central Station in New York City and then walk them to wherever they lived, sometimes taking all night long and into the next day, fifteen hours or more. I went on a couple of those walks, and they were significant experiences for me. I've also been intrigued by other kinds of walks that weren't thought of as art, necessarily. *Volks walks*, for example, are German public walks where people gather together to walk, as a kind of moving party.

When developing a new site-specific project, one of my main research methods is to walk from wherever

Harrell Fletcher and Eric Steen, *A Walk to Pike's Peak*, 2012. Project for UCCS Galleries of Contemporary Art, Colorado Springs, CO.



I'm staying to the commissioning institution—a method that has often been met with great confusion. Once, in Houston, Texas, I was told that this walk would be impossible, but I was able to make the trip in less than an hour (admittedly, I did have to negotiate a few awkward freeways). When I was asked to do a talk at the University of Nevada in Las Vegas, I'd heard that the graduate studios were not far from the airport, so I told the organizers I'd like to walk instead of getting a ride. They seemed alarmed, but sent a graduate student on a bike to meet me and we made our way back in a relatively short time; the main issue we encountered was the 100-degree heat. In San Francisco I've always just given myself a bit of extra time and have always managed to reach my destination on foot, regardless of the distance or the hills along the way.

I've also had a long history of devising walk-related art projects. As an undergraduate in 1988 and 1989 I conducted Richard Long–inspired walks in huge circles, and also straight-line walks in collaboration with my friend Cleveland Leffler. Cleveland and I would attempt to reach a distant point while following a straight line even if it meant climbing over fences, wading across ponds, and crossing through private property. I've also used aimless walks as the basis for photographs and videos, and spent a whole semester walking on railroad tracks for a class project. Later on, I developed participatory walking tours at universities and cities that I hadn't visited before as a way to learn about those places, and to encourage locals to connect with the places in which they lived and worked. In 2012 I also developed a three-day group walk in collaboration with a former grad student of mine, Eric Steen, which stretched from the University of Colorado in Colorado Springs to the top of Pike's Peak. This project was a clear predecessor to *The Windows*. It included students, faculty, and community members who each presented information about various aspects of the terrain we traversed and environments we camped in during the trip.

One aspect of the Pike's Peak and Exploratorium projects that differentiated them from other walks was that the presentations were participatory, which transformed each project into an unusual kind of tour. In typical walking tours, one person with specialized knowledge leads while everyone else is there to learn from that person. In *The Best Things in Museums Are the Windows*, we dismantled the position of "leader"; everyone took on the role of teaching everyone else at some point during the walk.

A Walking Acrostic

Jason Groves

Artist Michael Swaine created shade umbrellas especially for *The Windows*. The words formed by the umbrellas inspired this glossary of terms that evoke many other rich walking-based histories and projects.


the philosopher's Walk
rIchard long
loNg march
Drift
prOmenade
Werner herzog
romanticS
biomEchanics
pedestrian X-ing
Pedagogue
circumambuLation
sOnglines
labyRinth
rEverie

Enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant regularly walked from his front door to Small Linden Avenue and then up and down its length eight times. He did so with such regularity that local residents were said to set their watches by his appearance. This avenue later became known as "The Philosopher's Walk," but it is eclipsed by the picturesque Philosopher's Way in Heidelberg, one of the centers of German Romanticism. From Japan to Germany to California, many of these traditional pathways of quiet contemplation have been preserved against encroaching development. Even when they are constructed anew, as in the Philosopher's Way located in John McLaren Park in San Francisco, the relationship between philosophical reflection and walking extends deep into human history. The Philosopher's Way was developed by Peter Richards and Susan Schwartzenberg, two artists who, as it happens, have made important contributions to the arts and to the Exploratorium's work in the realm of the environment.

the philosopher's Walk

If a pilgrimage makes an appeal and a march makes a demand, as Rebecca Solnit writes in *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*, then the long march poses an ultimatum. The ability to mobilize large numbers of people to travel great distances together on foot has been instrumental in the independence and civil rights movements of the 20th century. One of the seminal long marches, Ghandi's 1930 Salt March, effectively protested the colonialist exploitation of the British salt tax by leading marchers 240 miles from Ghandi's ashram at Sabarmati to Dandi, on the Arabian Sea. Picking up a lump of the coast's salty mud and proceeding to (illegally) manufacture salt by boiling it, Ghandi proclaimed to shake "the foundations of British rule." This form of nonviolent civil resistance known as *satyagraha* (from the Sanskirt *satya*, truth, and *agraha*, insistence) was hugely influential to Martin Luther King Jr. and his fight for civil rights. The long march has been and continues to be a key tactic in nonviolently challenging systemic social inequality.

loNg march

rIchard long

Richard Long's is an art of transient traces and ephemeral tracks, as the titles of his artworks indicate: *A Line Made by Walking* (1967), *A Walking Tour in the Berneroberland, March 12–22 1969* (1969), *Circle of Autumn Winds (Reading the Wind Reading the Compass)* (1994). Long developed the practice of the lengthy walk into an art form that provocatively blurs the boundaries between sculpture, performance, and conceptual art. But what kind of walk is the Long walk? He insists it is not Romantic: "What I do is not Wordsworthian." But considering how Long's studio is the great outdoors, we would do well to remember how the Romantic poet William Wordsworth's servant described their house: "This is where master keeps his books; his study is out of doors."

As both a place to walk and a way of walking, the promenade choreographs civic culture. Starting in the later 18th century, an emerging middle class announced its arrival onto the stage of world history by turning against aristocratic carriage-culture. Proms, paseos, passages, and plazas were increasingly populated and appropriated by a mobile middle-class public wanting to see and be seen. The rather pedestrian successor of the promenade, the sidewalk, has not displaced these more distinguished predecessors: public promenades and esplanades flourish across Europe, Latin America, and beyond.

prOmenade

The notion that a view can change the world has its roots in the Romantic period. The poets and artists that set out for the mountainous landscapes in Europe and beyond actively transformed those spaces in their poetry and painting. Their artistic perspectives significantly inspired contemporary cultural appreciation for the environment. It wasn't always this way: the vast mountainous and desert landscapes that we take to be beautiful or sublime had been considered ugly and horrific in Western culture well into the 18th century. The North American love of wild nature—and our love of windows—is inherited from these Romantic predecessors.

romanticS

Drift

During the 1950s and 1960s, a small collective of French students, writers, and other delinquents known as the Situationists set out to re-envision the city of Paris as a fluid space. Through calculated acts of aimless plankton-like drifting (dérive), they developed what Situationist Guy Debord called "a mode of experimental behavior linked to the conditions of urban society: a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances." The effects of the geographical environment on the emotions and behaviors of individuals was playfully dubbed *psychogeography* by the group in 1954. The drift and its resulting psychogeographies reintroduced play, adventure, and passion into the banal built environment and, in doing so, promised to liberate—as one member famously spray-painted above the occupied Odéon Theater in 1968—"the beach beneath the streets."

Werner herzog

When is a walk also a cinematic experience? *Of Walking in Ice* (1974) recounts in journal form the remarkable three-month-long pilgrimage of a young Werner Herzog from his home in Munich to the Paris apartment of his dying mentor, Lotte Eisner, whom he hopes to keep alive through an honorary act of walking. Along the way he develops bad blisters on his feet but he also works out the conclusion to the screenplay for his film *Stroszek*. Herzog himself probably took his inspiration from the experimental filmmaker Oskar Fischinger, who in June of 1927 walked from Munich to Berlin with little more than a camera. The one-second shots recorded along the way would become the legendary stop-motion short, *Walking from Munich to Berlin*, which captures a shifting landscape from a walker's point of view.

The first steps of a child are a monumental event, but our lives are full of first steps. As the great 19th-century novelist Honoré de Balzac asks in the opening to his *Theory of Walking (Théorie de la demarche)*, "Isn't it really extraordinary to see that, since man took his first steps, no one has asked himself why he walks, how he walks, if he has ever walked, what he does while walking...questions which are due to all the philosophical psychological and political systems, with which the world was occupied?" In his famous motion studies made between 1883 and 1886, the photographer Eadweard Muybridge answered some of Balzac's questions. At the same time, in France, the doctor Gilles de la Tourette was pioneering his footprint method of gait analysis. These new techniques of observation were the first steps, as it were, in the emerging science of biomechanics.

biomEchanics

In ancient Greece, a pedagogue was not an educator but rather an impetus to education: a servant who escorted a child to school. While a pedagogue today is often regarded as an authoritarian pedant at the head of the classroom, an alternative model is preserved in the image of one who accompanies students on their journey. Language preserves this link between learning and pathways: in *The Old Ways*, Robert MacFarlane remarks that the verb to learn can be traced back to leornian, "to get knowledge," and from there to the Proto-German liznojan, "to follow or find a track" from the root leis-, meaning "track." Learning is way-finding by which we are guided, as the Museum of Jurassic Technology announces, "along a chain of flowers into the mysteries of life."

Pedagogue

pedestrian X-ing

While wildlife crossings are increasingly incorporated into new road constructions, the evolution of the pedestrian crosswalk itself has spawned a veritable bestiary. In addition to the white-on-black zebra crossing, whose visibility owes no small part to the Beatles' *Abbey Road*, other types include: the tiger crossing (yellow on black), the toucan crossing (for pedestrians and bicycles), the pegasus crossing (for horses), the widespread pelican crossing (or pelicon, a pedestrian light-controlled crossing), the predecessor of the pelican known as the panda crossing (which tragically did not feature a "don't cross" signal), and the increasingly popular pelican variant known as the puffin crossing (pedestrian signal lights are mounted on the near side of the crosswalk for the visually impaired). And then, of course, there's always jaywalking.

circumambuLation

The ceremonial practice of moving around an object in religious devotion might be the most sacred form of walking. It is perhaps most visible today in *Tawāf*, the Islamic ritual of pilgrimage in which Muslims circumambulate the Kaaba, part of Islam's most sacred mosque, in a counterclockwise direction. Similarly but culturally distinct, when the poets Allen Ginsberg, Gary Snyder, and Philip Whalen trekked around the entire circumference of Northern California's Mount Tamalpais on a single day in 1965, they were venerating the mountain in the Hindu and Buddhist traditions of Parikrama and Pradakshina. The embodied practice of "opening the mountain," a Buddhist term for opening a place to spiritual practice, persists on Mount Tamalpais to this day in the ritual walks that Whalen leads around the mountain every year.

Nowhere are song and sense of place more closely intertwined than in the complex system of Aboriginal path-stories known as songlines. In areas across Australia, virtually every prominent land formation is situated on a network of lines that are both song and itinerary. Songlines inscribe cultural memory of place into the landscape through oral tradition. Such chanted guidebooks narrate the desert cosmology of the Dreaming, the Aboriginal realm of high belief and law. The travel writer Bruce Chatwin popularized and partially fictionalized these in his novel *Songlines*.

sOnglines

"During these wanderings, my soul roams and takes flight through the universe on the wings of imagination in ecstasies that exceed all other pleasures."

—Jean-Jacques Rousseau

rEverie

labyRinth

Some scholars have suggested that our fascination with labyrinths and mazes might be a vestige of humankind's nomadic predecessors and their skill in evading danger by forging intricate escape routes. Today, however, the labyrinth is typically encountered as a symbol or an adjective (labyrinthine) describing an internal or mental journey, rather than a physical structure such as the famous mythological one designed and built by Daedalus for King Minos of Crete. The tipping point might have been the medieval labyrinth inscribed on the floor of the cathedral at Chartres, which provided devout Christians with a space for inner pilgrimage when travel abroad was hindered by violence and regional conflict.

(opposite page) Documentation of *Roadworks*, performance by Mona Hatoum, photograph by Patrick Gilbert. Photo from exhibition organized in 1985 by the Brixton Artists Collective.

A View from the Edge: The Peripatetic Perspective

Jason Groves

What does it mean to "walk out"? How is it that the act of walking out has acquired such cultural and political significance?

In the spring of 2013 I was able to explore these questions in more detail in a college seminar I taught on travel and literature. Pedestrian Crossings, as the course was unofficially known, looked at literature, philosophy, and art as articulated from the perspective of pedestrians, vagabonds, and other wayfarers. Encouraged by our readings and discussions, the course grew into a larger book project called *Walking Out*. The attempt to write it over the summer in Berkeley, however, was hampered by several distractions. One of those was caused by the Exploratorium.

One day, while searching the museum's website, I was sidetracked by a webpage announcing Harrell Fletcher's social practice art project *The Best Things in Museums Are the Windows*. The prospect of a four-day, 30-mile, artist-facilitated walk from the Embarcadero to the peak of Mount Diablo was enough to attract my interest. But what most fascinated me was the fact that this museum-sponsored event began with participants walking out of the museum. And so I soon found myself drawn out of my office and into the far reaches of the East Bay by the allure of a multi-day journey: on the morning of Saturday, July 20, at Homestead Park in Walnut Creek, I joined up with a procession that included Exploratorium staff, artists, scientists, and, like myself, random strangers. Though I had never been in contact with any member of the group, and though I only resolved to join the walk that very morning, it only took a matter of minutes for me to go from interloper to interlocutor. A 36-hour conversation ensued, punctuated by long silences, hyperventilation, lectures, head scratching, blister treatments, dehydration, a surprise spa treatment, some sleep, and plenty of wayfinding along a path of several dozen miles that led to the summit of Mount Diablo. What follows is an outsider's attempt to document this foot journey by tracing its entanglement in, and resonances with, the steps of the other artists, writers, philosophers, and pilgrims who find meaning in the act of walking.

It wasn't always the case that a multi-day walk from a city center to a distant mountain peak would have been advisable, let alone alluring. In his 1802 book *The Promenade, or The Art of Walking* (*Der Spaziergang oder Die Kunst spazieren zu gehen*), the cultural theorist Karl Gottlob Schelle proposes that his readers take circular walking tours within the city walls (he was referring specifically to cities without public parks). In this way the promenading pedestrian can wander aimlessly without actually being exposed to the danger of getting lost.

Schelle's *The Art of Walking* recalls the legendary "peripatetic school" of Aristotle. It took on this name not only because his philosophical courses were said to be held in an outdoor corridor between columns—*peripatos* in Greek—but also because of a legend that Aristotle had the habit of pacing back and forth—*peripatētikos*—while lecturing. And so "peripatetic" today has the meaning of "one who walks habitually and extensively." A peripatetic method, loosely understood, framed the question introducing my literature seminar, and it also framed the website of *The Windows*, which posed the question: Where does the museum end and the outside world begin? *Solvitur ambulando*, the Roman rhetorician and peripatetic Cicero would have replied. *Solve it by walking*.

Today's academics have recently rediscovered the connection between walking and thinking. Commenting on a recent growth in academic interest directed toward peripatetic subjects, anthropologist Tim Ingold writes:

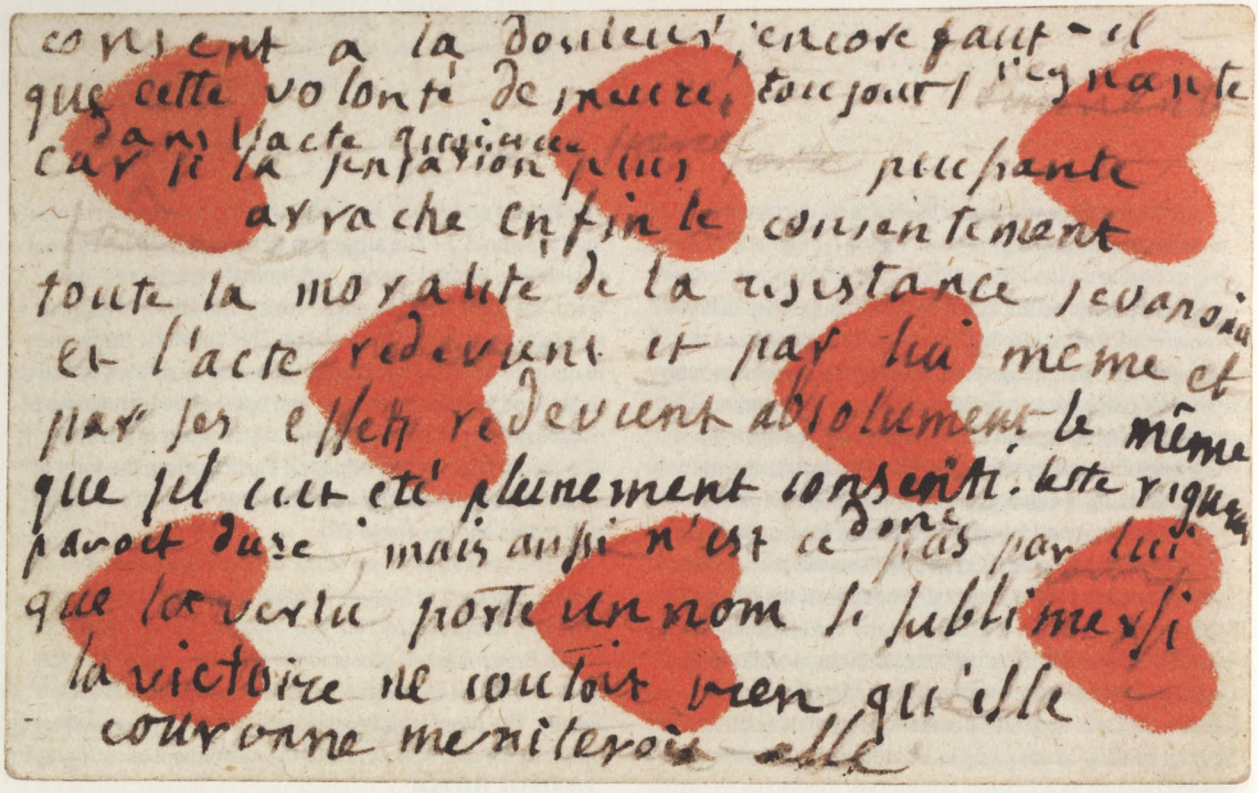
> Locomotion, not cognition, must be the starting point for the study of perceptual activity. Or, more strictly, cognition should not be set off from locomotion, along the lines of a division between head

and heels, since walking is itself a form of circumambulatory knowing.

Ingold's work points to the very real possibility that we not only think *on* but also *with* our feet. The conception of walking as "circumambulatory knowing" finds resonance in the world's religions, yet *circumambulation*—a ceremonial practice of moving around an object in religious devotion—is only one of the many ways that knowing is linked with moving. Walking is equally a form of nonlinear knowing.

Contemporary pedagogies of walking, such as Rebecca Solnit's *Field Guide to Getting Lost*, build on the peripatetic tradition by taking the decisive step outside of the city walls. They privilege the act of *drifting* over any straightforward pedestrian movement. The trajectories of these walks deviate away from a fixed locus, whether it be somewhere within an institution's walls, a city's borders, or a set of traditions. They can be seen as exercises in what literary critic Christian Moser calls *peripatetic liminality* (from the Latin *limen*, meaning "threshold").[1] The attraction to physical and perceptual thresholds, liminal spaces, and liminal experiences—in a word, the view from the edge—resists the all-knowing, satellite-generated view from above. This aesthetic preference maps onto political structures: the walks facilitated by artists today tend to favor horizontal and open-ended structures of consensus rather than hierarchical structures of authority. It also favors Legitimate Peripheral Participation, the form of situated learning addressed in Shannon Jackson's contribution to this volume (page 18).

The utopian element of the peripatetic perspective can also be observed in Stanley Brouwn's series of conceptual artworks, simply titled *This Way Brouwn* (1960–1964) in which Brouwn asked passersby to sketch on paper the way from A to B and then signed, collected, and exhibited the results. The utopianism of those maps can be seen in what is omitted: the grid structure and the absolutism of cartography.



It was partially out of a desire to see the margins of the Bay Area on foot rather than by satellite or map that I walked out of my study on a sweltering July day. Unsure of what I was getting myself into (and, more important, how I would get myself out of it), I finally committed to the walk late in the day. The watershed moment occurred where Harrell Fletcher and I stopped at the intersection of two backcountry trails, neither of which we had heard of before. It was growing late, water was scarce, and we had no clear idea how to reach our campsite. Turning to him, I asked to look at the map. "There isn't one," he said, and with that reply we decided to set out on the single-track trail that eventually wound its way, through several thickets of poison oak, down to our camp. Although its trajectory was represented on the website as a more or less straightforward line, *The Windows* unfolded along a series of similar digressions, switchbacks, unexpected surprises, fault lines, and what the writer Jorge Luis Borges once called "a garden of forking paths." In this regard, the group's sometimes-frustrating inability to adhere to its posted schedule can be seen as something fundamental to the ethos of the event rather than merely accidental.

Throughout literature and art the walk is the primal scene of estrangement. This is no small element of its appeal. Whether embodied in the pilgrim, the wanderer, the vagabond, or the exile, walking is a vehicle to leave behind what is familiar. For the attentive walker, even the

(left) Playing cards discovered with the manuscript of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, 1776–1778.

(below) Dave McKean, *Map of the Human Heart* illustration for Iain Sinclair's *London Orbital*, 2002.

everyday becomes enigmatic, and this includes the physical act of walking. The riddle of the Sphinx poses walking as an enigma in one of the earliest flourishings of Western art and thought: *Four legs, two legs, three legs, one leg / Who goes on them all?*[2] Only the disabled Oedipus was in a position to provide the answer—humans—that proved so elusive to all the sure-footed travelers that came before him. Oedipus, whose name means either "I know" or "swollen foot" in Ancient Greek, offers an insightful view into the human body from the very edge of mobility. In this regard, it was fitting that *The Windows* commenced by sailing across the bay with the Bay Area Association of Disabled Sailors.

Contemporary artists such as Mona Hatoum have rediscovered this strangeness. In her seminal performance *Roadworks* (1985), Hatoum walks barefoot through an Afro-Caribbean district of London while she trails a pair of military-style boots behind her (image, page 35), poignantly performing and commenting on the vulnerability of the immigrant. Finding myself in the scorching backcountry with a group of strangers, none of whom had a map of our route, was another way to rediscover this strangeness. Traveling by foot to the point of exhaustion—you can try this experiment within the span of one day—offered another way to deplete the familiarity of what we take to be our most familiar mode of movement.

If the physical act of walking inevitably encounters physiological impediments, the attempt to document a walk also encounters cognitive impasses. The Romanian philosopher E.M. Cioran presents this idea in a single pithy aphorism:

> Ideas come as you walk, Nietzsche said. Walking dissipates thoughts, Shankara taught. Both theses are equally well founded, hence equally true, as each of us can discover for himself in the space of an hour, sometimes of a minute.[3]

A leisurely stroll has long been recognized as a way to dissipate stress, but Cioran suggests that it dissipates thinking as well. Like Cioran, I prefer to linger with the paradoxes of walking rather than insisting on its appreciable benefits for productivity and wellness. So does the Belgian artist Francis Alÿs. In a work from 1997, *Paradox of Praxis 1 (Sometimes Making Something Leads to Nothing)*, Alÿs pushes a large block of ice through the streets of Mexico City, until, after 9 hours, it completely melts. The melting ice presents walking as a recessive action, taking itself away as it occurs. Peripatetics, I found in the readings and viewings of my seminar, and again on the Exploratorium trek, tend to be oriented toward the process of inquiry rather than the arrival at an answer, solution, or final artwork.

W.G. Sebald's attempt to document his peregrinations along a largely abandoned stretch of England's coastline, as recounted in *Rings of Saturn: An English Pilgrimage* (1995), is exemplary of recent literary inquiry into the liminal. Equally prominent in this school is Iain Sinclair's 2002 travelogue *London Orbital*, which describes a physically and syntactically arduous navigation, by foot, of the 113-mile M25 motorway—"a rage-inducing asteroid belt, debris bumping and farting and belching around a sealed-off city"—encircling London.[4] In both cases these eccentric wayfarers find their art in the experience of being drawn outside of a normal routine into an alien orbit, whether (in)to the ruins of a catastrophe or the newly built suburbs and ex-burbs of a sprawling metropolis.

Inspired both by this curriculum of eccentrics and by the promise of emancipation that their walks held, I too

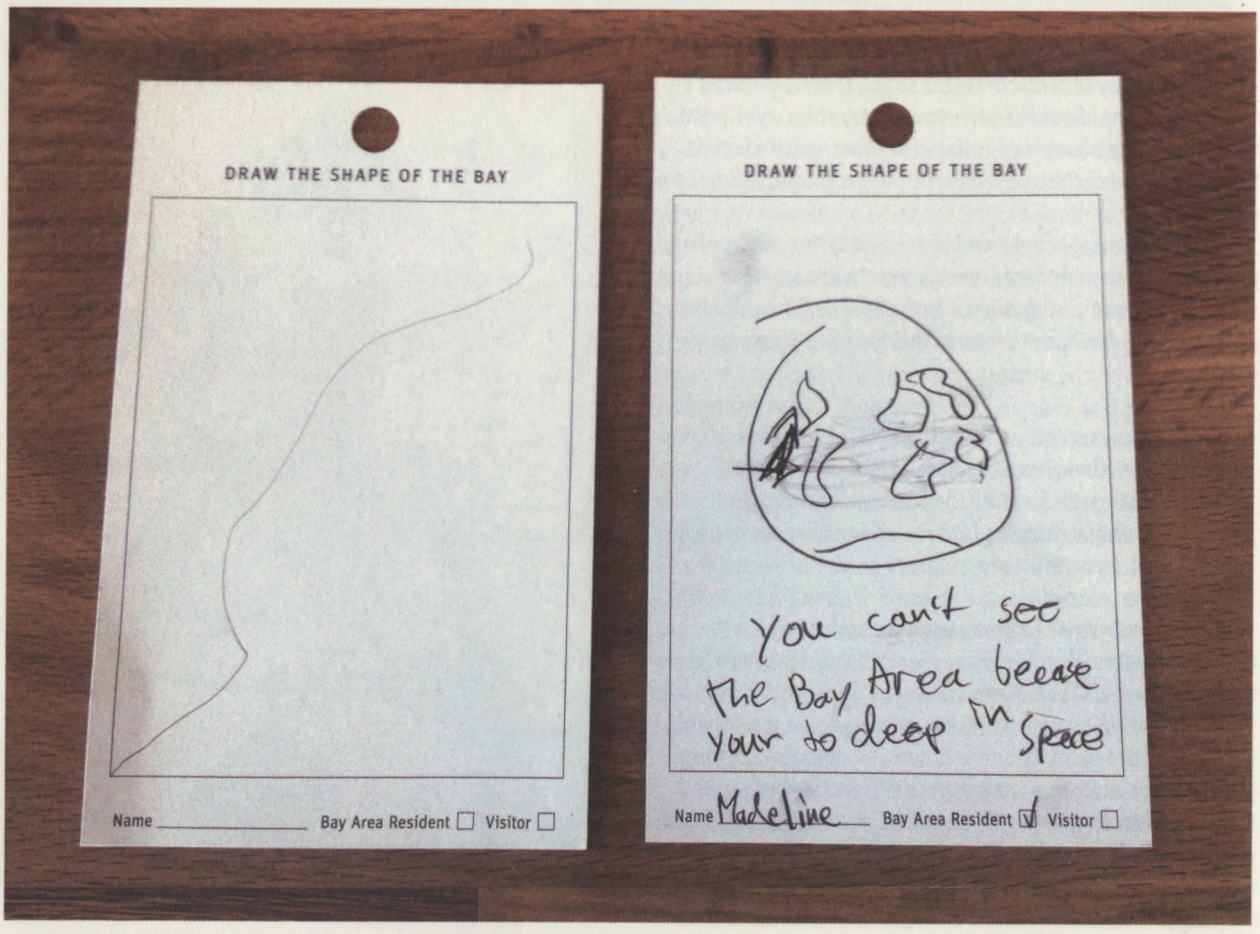
(below) These two drawings were made by Exploratorium visitors as part of the museum's *Drawing the Bay* exhibit.

found myself drawn away from my writing desk by the allure of *The Best Things in Museums Are the Windows*. The scene of my first encounter with the group at Homestead Park in Walnut Creek was as diabolical as our destination: situated between two skunk dens under a canopy of oak trees, roughly twenty people gaped at the contents of a pigeon's chest as Exploratorium object preparator Stephanie Stewart-Bailey arrayed them on an improvised dissection table. Swarms of wasps punctuated a procedure that had an air of the cultic. I kept to the edge of the circle, politely refusing someone's request to relieve me of my backpack and deliver it to the campsite.

If in that moment I realized how unscripted this trip was, throughout the day it slowly dawned on me that much of what I was experiencing seemed eerily familiar to Sebald's book. Setting out from Homestead Park on the unshaded Kovar Trail, under the dog star Sirius, I could not help but recall that the opening lines of *The Rings of Saturn* situate that ill-fated walk under this star:

> In August 1992, when the dog days were drawing to an end, I set off to walk the county of Suffolk, in the hope of dispelling the emptiness that takes hold of me whenever I have completed a long stint of work.[5]

Strange coincidences were afoot. The isolated outpost where we lunched that day, Borges Ranch, happened to share its date of construction with the birthdate of the most prominent literary influence of *The Rings of Saturn*, namely the Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges (1899–1986). Many of Borges' works of speculative fiction, including *The Garden of Forking Paths* and *Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius*, deal with the possibility of alternate universes. Did the path of *The*



Windows momentarily intersect with one of them? How is it that our footsteps can trigger reverberations of forgotten memories, missed connections, and forgotten histories? Was it a similar emptiness to Sebald's that made me into an echo chamber for others' experiences?

One of the more remarkable advocates of walking—and an outspoken critic of the view from the carriage—was the 18th century writer, educator, and political philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau. In *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, Rousseau develops a term for the confusion of memory and perception that happens during any act of walking that is not goal-oriented: *reverie*. In its everyday usage, *reverie* suggests a liminal state between waking and dreaming; the word comes to us from the Old French word *reverie*, meaning "rejoicing, revelry," and also coming from the verb *rever*, "to be deranged." For the ten walks that structure Rousseau's *Reveries*, the word suggests a more radical state of becoming unhinged, where even the distinction between reason and madness has become deranged. The narrator of *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker* no longer walks through a tangible landscape; instead, he moves through an intangible one that is an amalgamation of memory, perception, and desire. The conditions of *The Windows* were largely optimal for a state of reverie; in my footfalls resounded many of the fictional ones I'd encountered over the years.

As chance would have it, the flash of an eight of hearts in the hand of Exploratorium Explainer Marcus Mack triggered my recollection of Rousseau's *Reveries*. Marcus's ongoing intervention on our walk, a collection of card tricks called *Sleight Detours*, had an unforeseen element of surprise: Rousseau himself had begun composing his *Reveries* (image, page 36) on a pack of playing cards he brought on his solitary walks. "Misdirection," the technical term for the type of card manipulation in which an audience's perception is diverted toward something insignificant, could also describe the reverie-like state of distracted attention that takes place while walking in an intensely stimulating area. During the reveries of the walker, every step is capable of initiating a new train of thought, and everyday objects become fraught with extraordinary significance. The imaginative richness of the state of reverie is no doubt one reason why so many writers commence their stories by writing about walking out.

The foot trails that took us to Mount Diablo were not the traces of a solitary walker; instead, they were formed by collective political action involving multiple constituencies and municipalities. The advocacy of activist Elizabeth Stampe and pro-pedestrian organization Walk San Francisco, combined with the physical infrastructure of regional trail networks and the support of the Exploratorium, provided the equally important social infrastructure in the sense that fellow-walker Shannon Jackson explores in her book *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics*.

For a few days we were able to forget the anti-pedestrian bias of the built environment and to envision cities oriented around the marginal figure of the pedestrian. Oases of art, inquiry, and hibiscus tea filled the landscape. In this way the talks, demonstrations, films, and situations arranged along the trek were like so many pop-up *machi-no-eki*, the hundreds of "walking stations" that dot Japanese cities.[6] The *machi-no-eki* on our trek may have been as transient as the vernal pools in Mount Diablo State Park, but I see them as prototypes for a pedestrian network—and open-air classroom—of the future.

Frustratingly, the panoramic viewing area at the top of Mount Diablo was closed when we reached the summit. In place of an overview were the views from its edges, a tangle of images and sensations from the previous days. Some weeks later I visited the Exploratorium's Fisher Bay Observatory Gallery to see the view that inspired Harrell Fletcher. I couldn't see Mount Diablo through the haze, but I did stumble across a collection of drawings of the Bay Area. They foretold the emergence of a new generation of radical cartographers. In response to a prompt to draw the shape of the bay, one anonymous illustrator had drawn a single floating line, as utopian as any map by Stanley Brouwn, while a drawing by a young museum visitor named Madeline celebrated the pedestrian's perspective. A realistic approximation of a satellite image of the bay had been drawn, crossed out, and then followed by a one-sentence manifesto: *You can't see the Bay Area because your to deep in space.*

[1]Ingold, Tim. "Culture on the Ground The World Perceived Through the Feet." *Journal of Material Culture* 9.3 (2004): 315–340.

[2]Hughes, Ted. *Crow: From the Life and Songs of the Crow* (London: Faber & Faber, 1970), 63.

[3]Cioran, Emile M. *The Trouble with Being Born*. (New York: Arcade, 1986), 28.

[4]Sinclair, Iain. *London Orbital*. London: Granta, 2002. 11.

[5]Sebald, Winfried Georg. *The Rings of Saturn*. New York: New Directions, 1998. 1.

[6]As of 2006 there were 800 official *machi-no-ekis* (and counting) in Japan. A variation on Japan's *michi-no-eki* (motorway rest stops), they have four basic functions: free restrooms, visitor information and guidance, social exchange between visitors and local residents, and collaboration among other *machi-no-ekis*. See Teshima, Takayuki, et al. "Creating Sustainable Cities through Machinoeki" *Walk21* (2006).

(left) Harrell Fletcher and Jon Rubin, *Fortunes in the Parking Spaces*, 2002. SFAC Public Art Commission, North Beach Parking Garage, San Francisco, CA.

Collaboration

Harrell Fletcher

I've always had a collaborative impulse. As a child I loved drawing on the same piece of paper with other people, and would often do so with my father. I shared an improvised darkroom with a high school friend where we worked on one another's prints. At Humboldt State University, my friends and I organized public performances, film screenings, and elaborate practical jokes.

In graduate school I started collaborating with another student, Jon Rubin, and we worked together for about five years on a wide variety of socially engaged projects. Miranda July and I collaborated on an early participatory web-based project called *Learning to Love You More* that continues to live on in various ways, long after it ended in its original form. I've collaborated with artist heroes of mine like Larry Sultan, John Malpede, Chris Johanson, Michael Bravo, and Wendy Ewald. I've worked on many projects with students and have recently started a new collaborative group called Public Doors and Windows with two former grad students, Molly Sherman and Nolan Calisch. In all of these situations, there have been great benefits in brainstorming ideas, dividing responsibilities, and spending time together.

I've also worked on a wide variety of projects with nonartists, in part to make work that would be of interest to audiences beyond an art-going public, and also as a way to learn about new aspects of the world. Direct collaboration with nonartists and participatory models allow people to become more deeply invested and engaged with the projects than conventional audience dynamics allow, and I think as a result the work becomes relevant to a broader base of people.

Learning can happen in many ways, but for me one of the most effective and satisfying approaches is through direct contact with people who are knowledgeable in whatever discipline or topic a project is examining. I also like to employ some degree of chance in my work. Rather than coming up with a specific subject and then finding a related expert, I prefer to let location and situation determine the project focus through people I meet and their existing interests and resources. These collaborators share what they know with me, while I offer them access to institutions, audiences, and—occasionally—funding. I have worked in this way, in varying forms and in varying degrees of collaboration, with Albert Keshishian on an exhibition about his rug store in Oakland, CA; with Corentine Senechal on a public sculpture in Brittany, France; and with Michael Patterson Carver in Portland, OR, promoting and exhibiting his drawings of political protests, among many others. In each situation I gained knowledge and experience, enhanced the cultural appreciation of my collaborators, and promoted an expanded and more inclusive definition of what is "valid" in the context of the art world.

In the case of *The Best Things in Museums Are the Windows*, it seemed natural to collaborate with the incredible staff at the Exploratorium, with their amazing knowledge and expertise in facilitating learning experiences for the public. I also consider the project a true collaboration with Jordan Stein, whose usual role as curator evolved into project leader and organizer, while I primarily contributed to the idea development and thus was able to enjoy experiencing the trek as a participant.

Where We Went and What We Did

Day Zero

Experiments in Terrace: Inspiring Footage
Exploratorium, Fisher Bay Observatory Terrace
On the evening before the journey, the Exploratorium's Cinema Arts group presented an outdoor screening of films that traced the geography of the walk, inspired a sense of exploration, and motivated deeper thinking about the cultural and physical relationships to the landscape along the way.

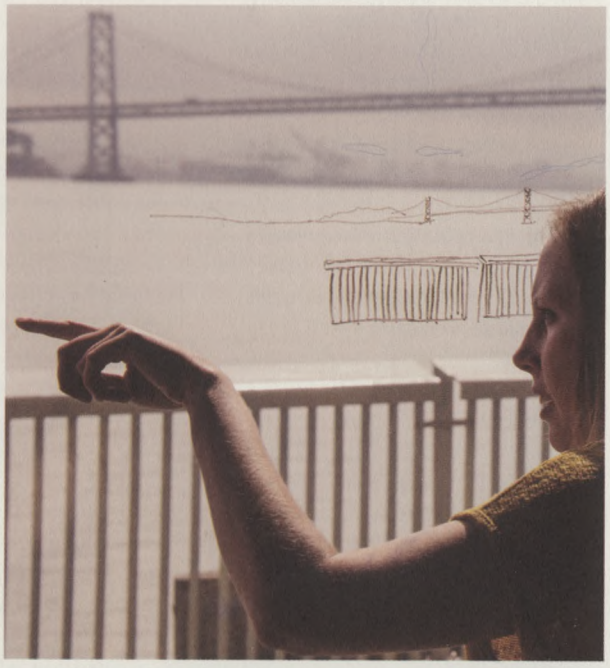
Day One

Window Drawing with Exploratorium Explainers
Exploratorium, East Gallery
We made, recorded, and shared observations about the world unfolding just outside the Exploratorium's windows. People grabbed washable markers and joined the Explainers in creating an interactive timeline of ships passing, clouds rolling by, and other patterns by writing and drawing directly on the giant East Gallery windows.

From Data to Decisions; From Decisions to Data
Exploratorium, Fisher Bay Observatory
The Exploratorium recently launched a NOAA buoy next to the museum in the San Francisco Bay. Why is it there? What information is it gathering? Who decided that data was needed, and who uses the data it generates? The California Ocean Science Trust placed the buoy in context, illuminating the web of institutions, science, politics, and decision making that explains where it came from and what it's helping us to discover.

BAADS (Bay Area Association of Disabled Sailors) Boat Launch
We embarked on the journey guided by BAADS, the Bay Area's only nonprofit dedicated to providing sailing programs to people with disabilities and their families, friends, and caregivers. We crossed the bay to Treasure Island, where the public was welcome to join us for a tour of the museum and a discussion, then we headed east to Emeryville.

Treasure Island Museum Tour and the Science of Radiation
An artificial island in the San Francisco Bay, Treasure Island has a fascinating past. It was the site of the 1939 Golden Gate International Exposition; a naval station during WWII; and later served as a naval nuclear, biological, radiological, and chemical warfare training center. Exploratorium Exhibit Developer Mary Elizabeth Yarbrough and Anne Schnoebelen, Vice President of the Treasure Island Museum Association, led a tour of the seldom-open Treasure Island Museum. Exploratorium Senior Scientist Ron Hipschman discussed radiation and offered a Geiger counter show-and-tell.




Orion
BLADES

BAADS Presentation and Lunch
Emeryville Marina
After the core group of adventurers docked at the Emeryville Marina, we sat down for lunch in the grass. Margreta von Pein made a brief presentation about BAADS and its remarkable activities.

Ghost Train Hunt
Corner of Powell and Vallejo Streets, Emeryville
A complex network of streetcars and interurban trains efficiently moved people throughout the East Bay from 1903 and up until auto industry related interests dismantled it in 1958. On our way to Mount Diablo, we walked along many former rail routes from Emeryville through Claremont Avenue. Oakland natives Antonio Papania-Davis and Meg Escudé constructed hand-held devices that allowed walkers to superimpose historical photographs showing streetcars on our route over the scenes as we find them today. They also collected historical maps and other ephemera that helped walkers recognize the subtle signs of past streetcar lines as we made our way through Oakland.

Creek Critters
John Muir Elementary School, Berkeley
We explored some of the creatures in local creeks and methods for collecting them with Exploratorium Senior Science Educator Fred Stein and Muir Garden Instructor Rachel Harris.

The Dance That Time Built
John Muir Elementary School, Berkeley
We met at John Muir Elementary for a community movement activity led by the school's dance instructor Valerie Gutwirth, a dancer with over two decades of teaching and performance experience. Valerie lead the group in an on-the-spot choreography of place, journey, and interdependence using selections from the poetry anthology *The Tree That Time Built: A Celebration of Nature, Science, and the Imagination,* and the words of John Muir.

Day Two

Whipsnake Utilities
Grizzly Peak Blvd., Berkeley
Jessica Purificato, a fisheries and wildlife biologist from the East Bay Municipal Utilities District, shepherded us down the hill and discussed her work monitoring fish, wildlife, and plant species on East Bay watershed lands, including a project to watch for the presence of the endangered Alameda whipsnake.

Wilder Habitats
Wilder Housing Development, Orinda
Ingrid Morken and Doug Spicher from WRA Environmental Consultants accompanied the group through the Wilder Housing Development and spoke about the extensive creek, riparian, wetlands, and special-status species habitat restoration that has taken place in the valley. Wilder is a community

under construction surrounded by hundreds of acres of preserved space.

Water Break
Soda Aquatic Center, Moraga
On arrival, we cooled down at the Soda Aquatic Center pool. Exploratorium artist Jamie Topper and Senior Scientist Charlie Carlson explored multiple methods of moving through water, including propelling, hovering, and sculling.

Blister Sisters
Soda Aquatic Center Parking Lot, Moraga
Liz Shenaut, an Exploratorium Explainer, and her sister, Emily Shenaut, a professional ballerina, offered an interactive presentation about blisters. What causes them? And what exactly happens under the surface of the skin when a blister forms? We brainstormed ways to reduce friction in our shoes and tested out materials with varying coefficients of friction. Emily offered her first-hand experience and strategies for blister prevention and care.

Campana Mini Music Festival
Campana Music Parking Lot, Lafayette
We stopped in for a series of afternoon and evening student concerts at the Campana Music store, one of Lafayette's oldest and most colorful businesses. The event was a tribute to its late founder, Joe Campana, who ran the store from 1947 until the day before he passed away in 2011. The store provided free hot dogs, chips, and water as students performed into the evening. This event was created with Ben Renwick, a woodwind instructor and Campana employee since 1980.

Pedestrian Ideas
Campana Music Parking Lot, Lafayette
Marina McDougall, Director of the Exploratorium's Center for Art & Inquiry, and her son Milo engaged Elizabeth Stampe, former Executive Director of Walk San Francisco, in a discussion on the challenges of privileging the pedestrian in car-centric environments. Stampe works with the advocacy group Walk San Francisco to create a "more livable, walkable city."

Moon Science
Sienna Ranch, Lafayette
We experienced an evening of night science as the moon approached full. People enjoyed a nature talk or night hike, peeked at the sky through a telescope, explored the science of glowing, and listened to an old folktale about the moon. Exploratorium staff and friends joined with Sienna Ranch staff to present this night of programming.

Day Three

Light Walk
Sienna Ranch, Lafayette
All that we see is light. Ordinarily, we see light from so many sources at once that it's hard to know where it's coming from. On this Light Walk, led by Exploratorium Senior Science Educator Fred Stein, we explored ways to use pinholes to limit the light we see and to consider how light and our eyes work to understand more about what we see and how we see it.

Just Warming Up
Cypress Street and Lincoln Avenue, Walnut Creek
What's the difference between heat exhaustion and heat stroke? How can we prevent and evaluate these conditions? Exploratorium Explainer and former Wilderness First Responder Qian Li gave a practical overview of maintaining and restoring wellness in hot environments.

A Bird Apart
Howe Homestead Park, Walnut Creek
James Pomeroy Howe, who earned his reputation as an Associated Press war correspondent and Renaissance country gentleman, homesteaded on this land for fifty years. In his retirement, Howe grew walnuts and almonds and raised exotic birds and smoked their meats. In his honor and memory, Stephanie Stewart-Bailey, Exploratorium Object Preparer and dissection enthusiast, performed a pigeon dissection in the park.

Fossil Walk
Kovar Trail, East of Howe Homestead Park, Walnut Creek
Mount Diablo—now 3,849 feet high—was once beneath the sea. Tectonic forces caused by the overriding of the Pacific and North American plates created an uplift of the once-horizontal seabed. We looked for numerous large rocks with parts of seashells still intact, and checked out the specks of broken white seashells in the road as we walked along with Cleveland Leffler, Bay Area artist and "science thinker."

Sound Aspects of Open Space
Kovar Trail
Musician Wayne Grim presented a six-channel, site-specific outdoor audio installation incorporating objects found within a five-mile radius of his chosen performance area. These objects were resonated live using a series of transducers. In addition to creating the piece, Wayne discussed how to make an unassuming object vibrate and produce sound.

Group Lunch
Borges Ranch
The former ranch of early Walnut Creek pioneer Frank Borges is the home base for Walnut Creek's Shell Ridge Open Space activities. The ranch complex includes a blacksmith shop,

numerous outbuildings, and farm equipment displays. Built in 1901, the ranch houses historical displays of the early 1900s and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. We took a quick tour and broke for lunch.

Less Is More Oasis
Green Valley Road, Briones Mount Diablo Trail
At the Less Is More Oasis, we enjoyed a respite from the shadeless trails of Mount Diablo State Park. It afforded meditation and experimentation with some of the lesser known and counterintuitive properties of a hiker's best friend: water. Along with Diane Whitmore, Exploratorium Exhibit Developer, we witnessed turbulent and beautiful patterns that formed a quenching tea, munched on fruit cooled by water via the sun, and refreshed ourselves with a cooling spray of scalding water, and we tried lifting steel with water.

Films by the Fire
Live Oak Campground, Mount Diablo
We gathered around the movie screen at base camp on the final night of the expedition to Mount Diablo. A program of

visual storytelling curated by the Exploratorium's Cinema Arts group offered meditations on nature and the spirit of curiosity it evokes.

Day Four

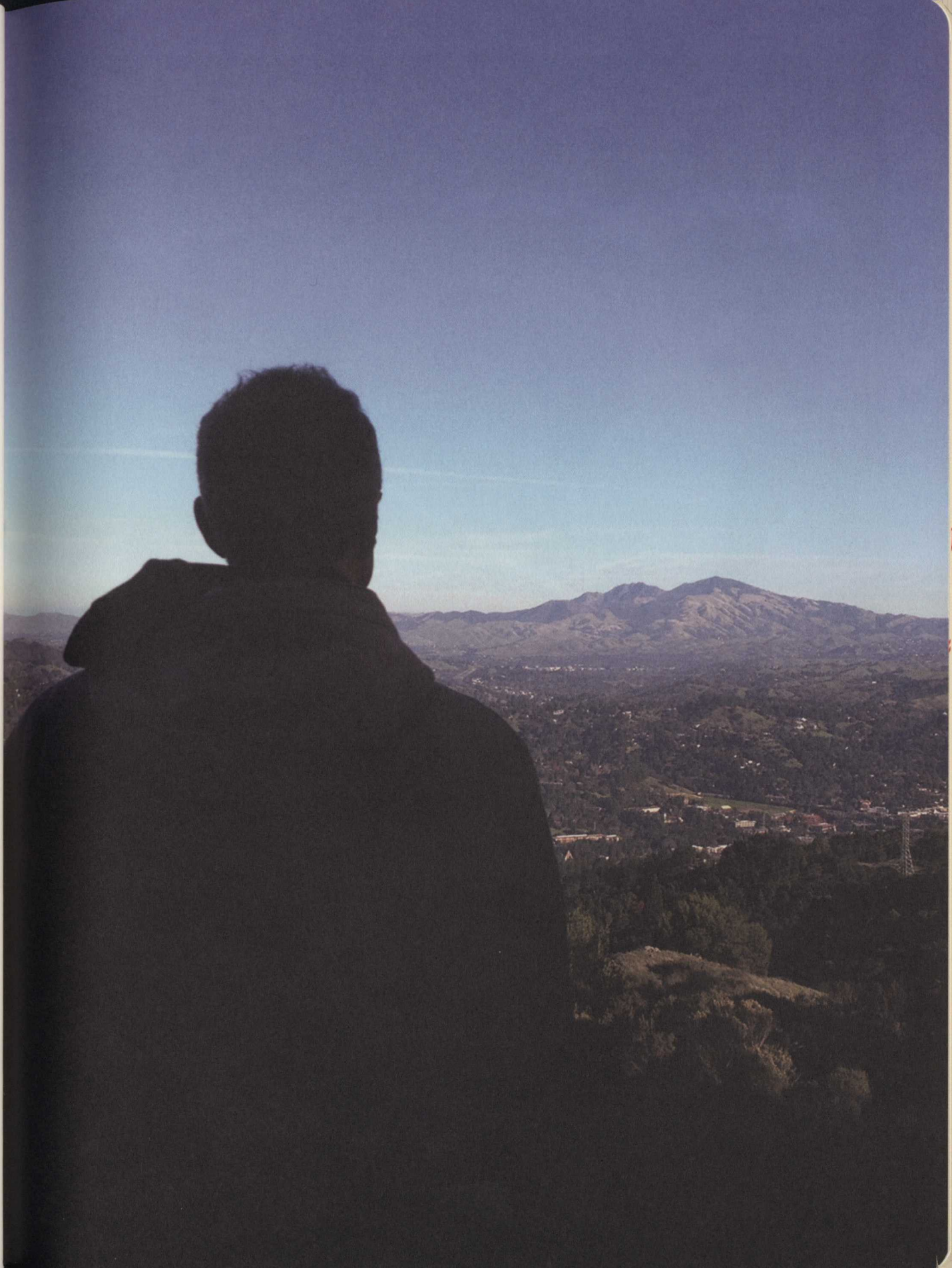
How Who We Are Shapes Our Understanding
Summit, Mount Diablo
When we engage in learning, we bring all of who we are with us, including our social and cultural experiences. From the summit of Mount Diablo, Exploratorium Senior Science Educator Paula Hooper spoke with the walkers, capturing their thoughts and reflections to uncover how their explorations and understanding are imbued with who they are.

Throughout the Walk

Looking East with Adam Green
Hiker Adam Green periodically took photos facing east from wherever he was and posted them to the Exploratorium's Instagram account. This provided remote participants with a window onto *The Windows* and through the landscape.

Reflections on Walking
Rebecca Solnit's wide-ranging book, *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*, trespasses through fields as diverse as philosophy, evolutionary biology, and urban planning. Inspired by Solnit's study, Marina McDougall and her son Milo contributed a metacognitive layer to the trek by focusing on the activity of walking itself through a series of daily reflections, readings, and simple activities on the wonders of bipedalism.

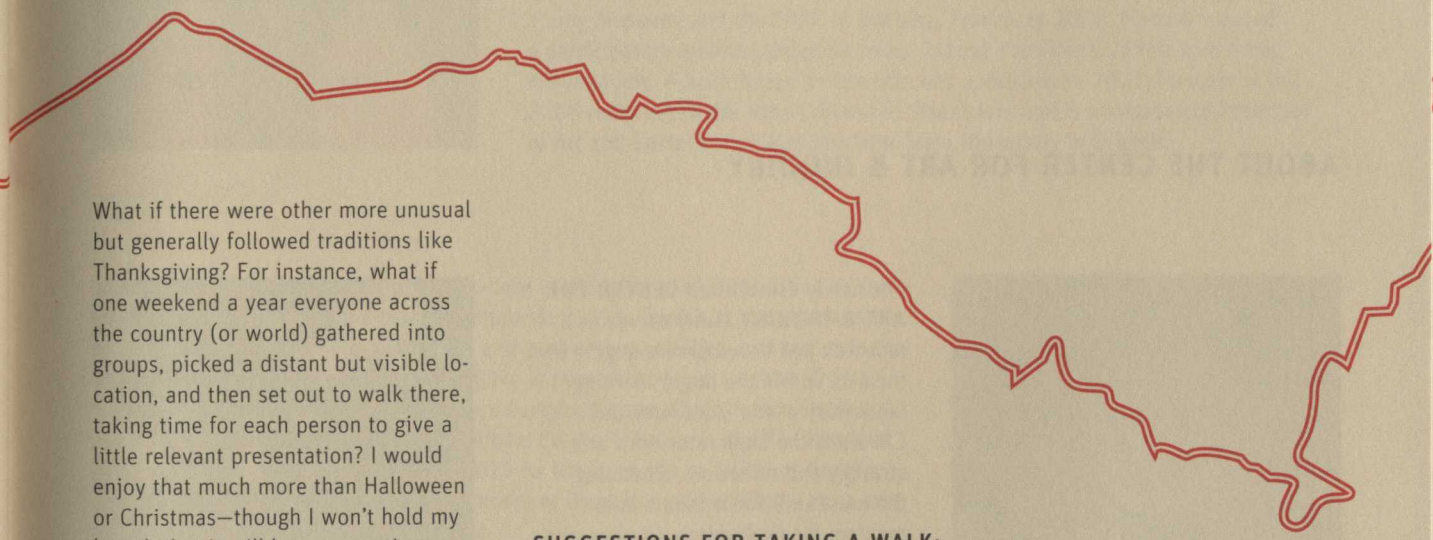
Sleight Detour
Exploratorium Explainers inspire visitors to engage with the museum's exhibits in creative ways, help out with floor operations, and lead daily demonstrations. One of most popular demos is performing magic tricks for captivated audiences of all ages. At various interludes along the path, Explainer Marcus Mack reached for his deck of cards to delight and astonish us, while simultaneously exploring the relationship between our eyes and our brains.



A Walking Assignment

Harrell Fletcher

I know the legendary (and somewhat suspect) origins of our national Thanksgiving dinner. But I'm not sure how that original intercultural get-together of natives and pilgrims evolved into the national holiday we collectively observe today. Thanksgiving has always been my favorite holiday—no stressful presents or costumes, just hanging out and relaxing with family and friends and eating. Everyone across the nation does more or less the same thing, and it puzzles me. How did this shared ritual become so widely accepted, facilitated, and implemented over a relatively short amount of time? It's an amazing feat that our public behavior has so effectively organized itself.

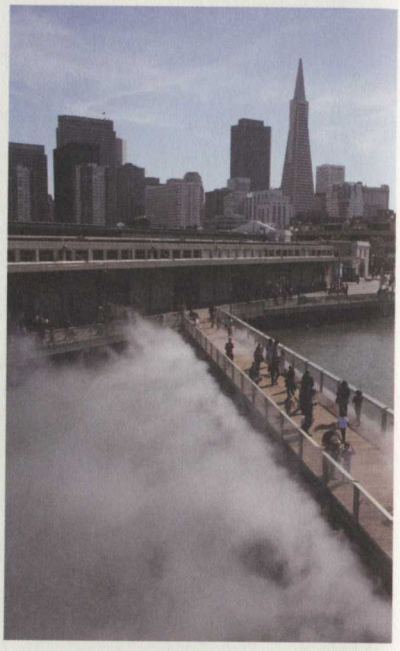


What if there were other more unusual but generally followed traditions like Thanksgiving? For instance, what if one weekend a year everyone across the country (or world) gathered into groups, picked a distant but visible location, and then set out to walk there, taking time for each person to give a little relevant presentation? I would enjoy that much more than Halloween or Christmas—though I won't hold my breath that it will happen anytime soon.

Instead, I will continue to develop participatory walking projects. I would also like to suggest that other people—including you—use *The Windows* model to construct their own walks. Get a little exercise. Talk with people. See the environment that you live in up close. Doing so creates a situation in which people share knowledge with each other, and other people are an amazing but underutilized resource that we have at our disposal if we just engage with them.

SUGGESTIONS FOR TAKING A WALK:

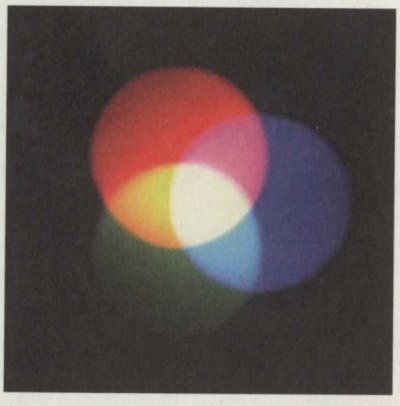
- Organize a group of willing participants; try to keep them as diverse as possible (age, gender, profession, et cetera).
- Select a starting point near where you live, work, or go to school.
- Select a point in the distance. This point might necessitate a route that would take an hour to complete, or one that could take months or even years.
- Have each participant determine a specific location along the route to deliver a presentation of some sort—a talk, a song, a dance, whatever they like—that's related to an element of the environment you're walking through.
- Gather what you'll need for the trip, such as food, water, and camping gear.
- Head outside and see what happens.



ABOUT THE EXPLORATORIUM

THE EXPLORATORIUM is an interactive museum dedicated to science, art, and human perception. A global leader in informal learning, it has developed creative exhibits, teaching tools, programs, and experiences that ignite curiosity since 1969. In 2013, the museum moved from its original home at the Palace of Fine Arts to a LEED Platinum–certified new building at Pier 15, along San Francisco's revitalized Embarcadero. In addition to the 600-plus exhibits that inhabit its six galleries, the Exploratorium transcends its own walls via its teacher professional development programs; its relationships with the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, NASA, and other governmental, educational, and corporate partners; and its collaborations with science centers around the globe.

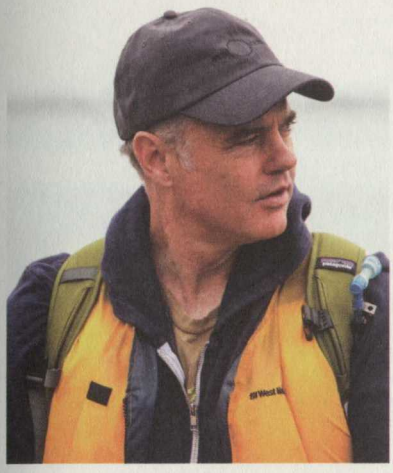
ABOUT THE CENTER FOR ART & INQUIRY



The newly established **CENTER FOR ART & INQUIRY (CAI)** serves as a research and development engine for the arts within the larger learning laboratory of the Exploratorium. CAI leads the Exploratorium's arts strategy and direction, expanding the museum's focus on art as a medium for exploration, inquiry, and discovery. Working with program directors from across the museum as well as a council of national advisors, CAI oversees the Exploratorium's long-running Artist-in-Residence program, hosts research fellows, and initiates special projects to advance work at the intersection of art and interdisciplinary learning.

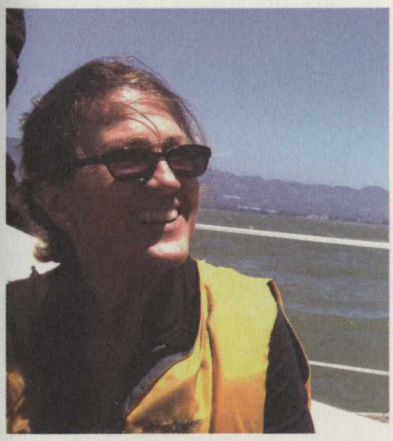
The Center for Art & Inquiry staff includes Marina McDougall, Director; Jordan Stein, Assistant Curator; and Kirstin Bach, Program Manager.

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS



HARRELL FLETCHER received his BFA from the San Francisco Art Institute and his MFA from California College of the Arts. He studied organic farming at the University of California, Santa Cruz, and went on to work on a variety of small Community Supported Agriculture farms, which impacted his work as an artist. Fletcher has produced a variety of socially engaged, collaborative, and interdisciplinary projects since the early 1990s. His work has been shown at SFMOMA, the de Young Museum, Berkeley Art Museum, the Wattis Institute, and Yerba Buena Center for the Arts as well as a multitude of other national and international institutions. He was a participant in the 2004 Whitney Biennial and his work is in the collections of New York's MOMA, the Whitney Museum, the New Museum, SFMOMA, Berkeley Art Museum, the de Young Museum, and the FRAC in Brittany, France. In 2002, Fletcher started a participatory website called *Learning To Love You More (LTLYM)* with artist Miranda July. A book based on the site was published in 2007. Fletcher is the 2005 recipient of the Alpert Award in Visual Arts and is an Associate Professor of Art and Social Practice at Portland State University in Oregon.

JASON GROVES is a Postdoctoral Associate in the Integrated Humanities at Yale University. His research and teaching interests include literature and discourses of nature in the age of Goethe, theater and performance studies, and topics in the environmental humanities. His essays have appeared in venues such as *Critical Climate Change, The Global South, Modern Language Notes, Performance Studies, Society and Space, Synapse: The International Curator's Network*, and *The Yearbook of Comparative Literature*. Since June 2013 he has been the co-editor of *Feedback*, a curated blog of critical and cultural theory at Open Humanities Press. He is still working on a book entitled *Walking Out*.



SHANNON JACKSON is the Richard and Rhoda Goldman Chair in the Arts and Humanities at the University of California, Berkeley, where she is Professor of Rhetoric and of Theater, Dance, and Performance Studies. She is also the Director of the Arts Research Center. Shannon's most recent book is *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics* (2011), and she is currently working on a book about The Builders Association. Her previous books are *Lines of Activity: Performance, Historiography, and Hull-House Domesticity* (2000) and *Professing Performance: Theatre in the Academy from Philology to Performativity* (2004).

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The following people comprised the core team of walkers from Pier 15 to the summit of Mount Diablo.

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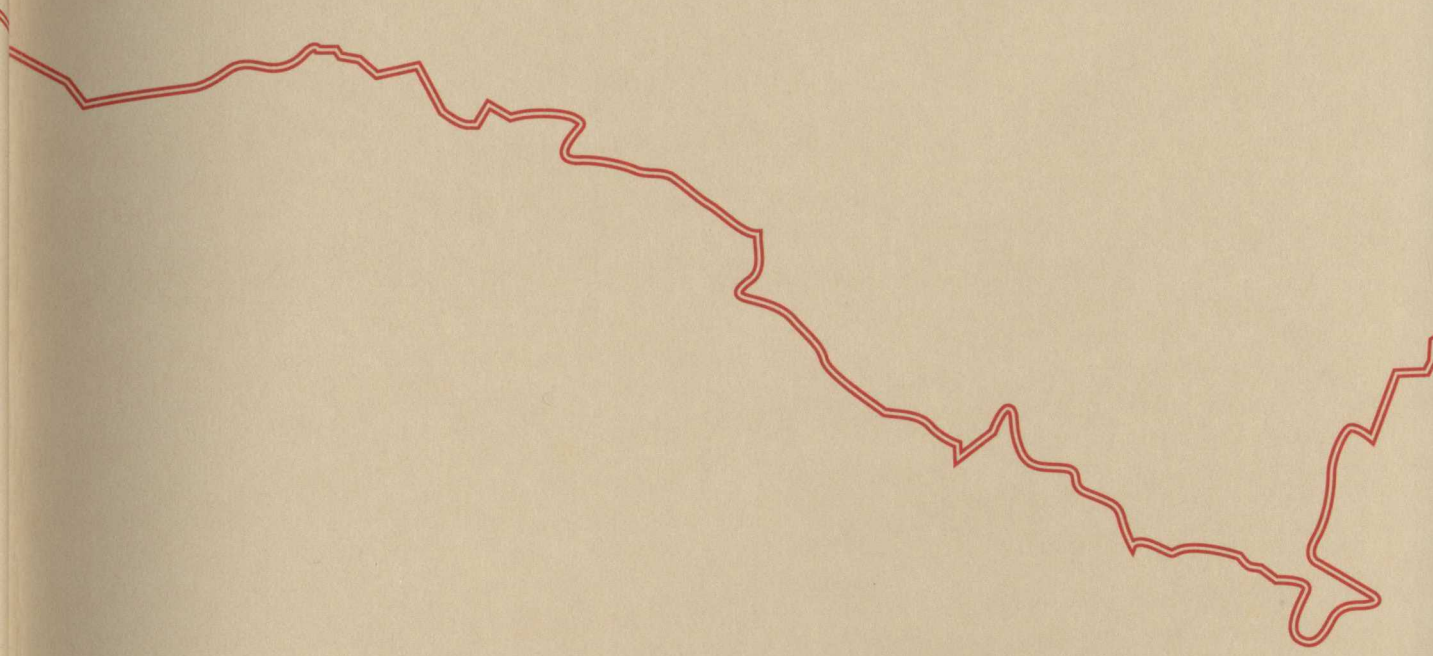

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"Walking in this time and place is, among other things, an endeavor to recover an immediate and embodied experience in real space, a quietly rebellious act in an age of privatization and disembodiment. The walk documented in this book broke out of the Exploratorium in somewhat the way that the Exploratorium broke out of what a museum could be: as a move toward greater openness."

Rebecca Solnit

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