Getting Lost and Looking For A Landscape

by

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Bachelor of Fine Art
The School of the Art Institute of Chicago 2001

Submitted to the Department of Architecture
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Masters of Science in Visual Studies
at the
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

June 2009

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Abstract:

The possibility of becoming lost is always present, as far away as another country or as close as your own body. When truly lost, there is at first, an examining of the unfamiliar, then a quick check-in with what we know. In a way, becoming lost is a way of finding what we know. It seems that when we are off-course, we become hyper-aware of our surroundings, scanning to find out what appears to be going on. We ask, why is this happening in this way, and how is it different from what I know? Leaving the realms of what we know by going to unfamiliar spaces allows us to become more present in our immediate situation. In my work I am searching for ways of inviting this condition.

Looking for a Landscape, my final work at MIT, takes as its site an ordinary object from an urban space. The work is about exposing what we do not see in our everyday lives to provide an opening for participation and dialogue through the creation of unfamiliar visions of our environment. Through seeing the city in a different way we can suddenly become lost and find opportunities for discovery.

The original housing of Looking for a Landscape is a standard city utility box with a concrete base, painted and graffitied like all of the other utility boxes in the city. The doors are modified so that they do not open like a normal utility box, but are hinged at the bottom and pull down, cantilevering like a drawbridge, to create two large platforms on either side on which to sit. Each of these platforms is upholstered with a gold-trimmed, maroon colored pillow that covers the entire surface. Binoculars, the same kind used for sightseeing at scenic locations, are mounted at eye-level on top of a post at the center of each pillow. These binoculars point out into the city, becoming a viewing station of the everyday. The entire structure is on retractable wheels embedded inside the concrete base. When the wheels are up, the utility box looks like a stationary, permanent part of the city. When the wheels are brought down, by a cranking mechanism inside the base, they make contact with the ground.
allowing Looking for a Landscape to be moved to the next location of the city.

In this thesis, I will discuss Looking For a Landscape as a vehicle for both getting lost and finding direction. I will map out different aspects of “getting lost” through experiences in my life including: intentionally getting lost as a means to finding a new way; understanding the concept of place and social spaces and the grounding relationships we have with them; playing with what is familiar through our senses and the environment around us; and introducing objects and opportunities for opening up social layers within the spaces in which we live.

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Looking For A Landscape
Getting Lost and Looking For A Landscape

To make people free is the aim of art,
therefore art for me is the science of freedom.1

Joseph Beuys

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1 Beuys, Joseph, 1983. From Victoria and Albert Museum interview
Over the past few years, my work has been influenced by my experience mentoring a young man who is on the autistic spectrum. He is someone who does not use language much in his daily activities. We communicate through painting and drawing and an elusive language that has evolved between us. The work we do together is hard to put into words since we are mostly using very subtle cues from each other in our art collaboration. Sometimes the process will start with a large but sparse composition that I lay down; he starts to work into it and a conversation emerges in the idiom of the painting. Sometimes a specific gesture or image he makes dominates the visual conversation and I try to find my points of entry into what he is working on so that we can open it up into a dialogue. The central dynamic of our process involves getting lost, then gradually finding our way through inventing in each session a shared language that we use for the occasion.

I find our most successful and satisfying pieces are the large-scale paintings we make in his studio. Clovis is a tall man with long

Clovis
arms, which makes his brush stroke huge and emphatically gestural. For me, working on these big canvases is satisfying, in part because he has room to use his whole body. These large canvases are always an intense experience, and after spending an hour in constant conversation through painting, I am usually exhausted.

On the days we connect it is as obvious as the days when we don’t. One of the crowning moments of our work together was when, after working on a drawing together for a while, we locked onto a way of communicating, and, after moving deeply inside this conversation, one of us made a mark that caused us both to laugh out loud. This was a rare moment; nothing like it ever happened again, but it was as if we were reading each other so well that we were in total harmony.

When we first started collaborating, Clovis would often come over to my apartment. After working, he would sometimes just sit by himself and rock back and forth while making a deep droning sound that was something like the OM sound found in Eastern traditions. Sometimes he would make these same motions and sounds when we drew or painted. One day while drawing together, as he was making a deep OM sound and rocking back and forth, I started making the same motions and sounds, rocking back and forth with him. He took my hand that was holding a marker and started drawing on the paper with it. It was not uncommon for him to do this, and sometimes I would take his hand to show him something. This time I slipped into a state where I felt that I was the student and he was the teacher of his experience. I was a beginner, genuinely open to seeing. In that moment I realized he was a master of his art: he had been doing it for years and was very confident in his mark making.

Clovis is someone who sees the world differently than I do. Indirectly and sometimes directly, the experience of working with him has allowed me insight into how our world is organized. Our surroundings – the world we claim and assume is there – guide how we live. As an artist I try to see through the narratives we use to read
our world, and try to find ways to explore it again with altered eyes.

Working with Clovis helped me push through the walls of my world into the unknown.
The possibility of becoming lost is always present, as far away as another country or as close as your own body. When truly lost, there is at first, an examining of the unfamiliar, then a quick check-in with what we know. In a way, becoming lost is a way of finding what we know. It seems that when we are off-course, we become hyper-aware of our surroundings, scanning to find out what appears to be going on. We ask, why is this happening in this way, and how is it different from what I know? Leaving the realms of what we know by going to unfamiliar spaces allows us to become more present in our immediate situation. In my work I am searching for ways of inviting this condition.

*Looking for a Landscape*, my final work at MIT, takes as its site an ordinary object from an urban space. The work is about exposing what we do not see in our everyday lives to provide an opening for participation and dialogue through the creation of unfamiliar visions of our environment. Through seeing the city in a different way we can suddenly become lost and find opportunities for discovery.
The original housing of *Looking for a Landscape* is a standard city utility box with a concrete base, painted and graffitied like all of the other utility boxes in the city. The doors are modified so that they do not open like a normal utility box, but are hinged at the bottom and pull down, cantilevering like a drawbridge, to create two large platforms on either side on which to sit. Each of these platforms is upholstered with a gold-trimmed, maroon colored pillow that covers the entire surface. Binoculars, the same kind used for sightseeing at scenic locations, are mounted at eye-level on top of a post at the center of each pillow. These binoculars point out into the city, becoming a viewing station of the everyday. The entire structure is on retractable wheels embedded inside the concrete base. When the wheels are up, the utility box looks like a stationary, permanent part of the city. When the wheels are brought down, by a cranking mechanism inside the base, they make contact with the ground allowing *Looking for a Landscape* to be moved to the next location of the city.

In this thesis, I will discuss *Looking For a Landscape* as a vehicle for both getting lost and finding direction. I will map out different aspects of “getting lost” through experiences in my life including: intentionally getting lost as a means to finding a new way; understanding the concept of place and social spaces and the grounding relationships we have with them; playing with what is familiar through our senses and the environment around us; and introducing objects and opportunities for opening up social layers within the spaces in which we live.
The Process of Getting Lost as a Means to Finding a Way

Through the process of going astray, I was experiencing how we are not indifferent to geography, places, architectures, and landscapes. We are molded by light, walls, mountains, and cities and learn how to mold ourselves in new landscapes and streets... The answer has been that this was my way to gain knowledge, my methodology for becoming sensitive to the world outside... Getting lost here is research, developing a dialogue with places that tries to avoid prejudice. The situation, this special time and space, the context becomes the absorbing condition of the artist’s work...

Places are not only spaces, but people, and together they produce stories.2

Franco La Cecla

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For me, getting involved with the unknown is a journey, one that relies heavily on the relationship I have with fear and my understanding of possibility. As La Cecla says, it is about going into the unfamiliar and absorbing what you can from the experience, and about becoming aware of subtleties. It is not just about a place to visit, but about encounter, and about how interaction creates specific situations.

In *Looking For A Landscape*, “time” is what is afforded to the viewer; an invitation to take a moment and actually sit down to look at the city. First, through the recognition that the landscape is more than what it seems, triggered by the unexpected sight of a utility box opening out, then through sitting down and looking through the binoculars. There is a small act of bravery involved in *Looking For a Landscape*. It involves taking time to stop and become part of a situation that does not have any obvious lead-ins, other than your own curiosity. When the doors of *Looking For A Landscape* are closed, the object is invisible. Not that you can’t see it, but you look right past it. When it opens though, the possibility of a whole new world comes into view.

On a trip with Wendy Jacob’s Autism Studio a group of us from MIT went to Gallaudet University, whose main population is deaf. We went to see how the students interact with their university and each other, and we learned of a project they were working on called “Deaf Space.” This project acknowledges the Deaf way of communicating through sign language, and works to reflect itself through architecture.

Since sign language works through seeing hand gestures, sight becomes the defining factor in communication. In their research creating “Deaf Space,” the students and professor were looking into how a conversation using sign language structures bodies in space. When two people are signing to each other, they can look face to face, but if another joins them, they arrange themselves in a triangle, so that no one is standing in front of or directly to the side of someone else. A circle grows out of this if more people join
in, until, as in any conversation, there is a communication breakdown if too many people are present. Architecturally, the idea was to have wide, semi-circular spaces to help facilitate spaces for conversations.

The reflections from windows and doors can become extensions of sight as well, and architecture can become an extension of the body, by allowing you to see if there is someone behind you trying to get your attention. Even walking down the sidewalk has a formula. When two or more people are walking and signing, the ones reading the signs must look directly at the hands and face of the signer, so the one signing must look ahead and be their eyes, giving subtle signs to help them avoid bumping into objects in their path.

At Gallaudet, the environment was familiar, a normal looking college campus, people taking taxis and driving cars, people walking around, but there was one small difference in the system--the students could not hear me and I could not understand their sign language. What I knew of communication was at first halted, and then had to be redefined. Simply entering a situation where much of what I know does not apply sets me adrift and changes the space around me. At the same time, I am sensitive to what I was not sensitive to before.

When we arrived at the University, I rode in a cab with one of the students and we started writing to each other on a notebook, which we passed back and forth. Quickly, I realized that using fewer words said much more and made the conversation more enjoyable. When we pulled up to the dorm, he told me that tonight was not a good night for a party, since so many people were away for the holidays. I was thinking of a party where no one could hear. I thought about groups of people all in one room, but without any noise. What would that be like? How would it feel?

Having trouble communicating made me an outsider. At first, it was novel, and everyone was nice about it, but then I started to see the walls come down as to what I could actually communicate. I became aware of how important the flow of a conversation and the timing of words are for humor and for emphasizing points. This is
where I had to really start as a beginner and pull from myself other ways of expression. It was a new task, being connected to others without depending on spoken language. Maybe it was more about presence. Presence, like in close relationships, where little cues keep the conversation going even when you are not talking, cues like holding someone’s hand. It was as if all the non-verbal types of conversation were shifted to the foreground. This new dynamic was about daring to be comfortable with people I don’t know in ways in which I was uncertain.

But as much as this experience was about uncovering my own techniques of communication, it was also about understanding another’s perspective and how they live in the world. This was an exchange where we were all willing to cross over into the alien and let ourselves be exposed to someone else’s way of getting along in the world while at the same time revealing parts of our own. Here, these students were trying to push through the unknown of their situation, to create something that spoke for them, which is very similar to my approach to art making. This is not just about two different worlds observing each other, but about two dynamic worlds trying to have a meaningful exchange.
Concept of Place

Charles Goodsell, in a 1988 structural study of civic spaces, primarily city council chambers, distinguishes between space, place, and social space. For Goodsell, space is simply cubic volume, the amount of room it is possible for people and objects to occupy. Place, in contrast, is the identifiable domain of meaning, the material presence of objects, floors, walls, persons, and such from which we construct meaning. Social space, finally, can be understood primarily as the meanings drawn from our interaction with place.

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When I see a house, I am immediately drawn to it. The house is the skin of the orange; you peel it when you look in the windows, and you get to eat it when you go inside. The house is evidence of passion. In accordance with nature, anything that has lost its life-energy begins to lean or fall down after a while. When you see straight walls and a working roof this is proof that someone has a certain kind of passion to make this happen. It says, "Here is a house! I am claiming this spot in the world, I am going to make a shrine to a thought." It could be a garage turned into a woodshop with tools in it, a small family-run restaurant, or a place to bring a baby into the world; it is pure fiction and dreams that have come to life. How simple it is to make a place.

When I rode my bike cross-country from Boston to the Oregon coast, I slept in a tent every night on random pieces of land. The feeling of being lost in the world was never far away, and sometimes it was all consuming. Late at night, when I had my head half on the pillow just looking at the zipper of the tent, I would think, ‘I am here.’ I might go out for a piss, or a walk into the woods or into a yard – then I would always come back home to the tent, back to ‘here.’ A ‘here’ that was not there a few hours ago, but that was now a real place I could leave from and go back to. When I leave ‘here’ it turns into a ‘there.’ ‘There’ is where the bikes are, where my socks are drying on the handlebars, where my shoes are outside my tent and where the pots and dishes are drying. There is a spot, a place that was created and is now real. Just this thin tent can make a world, a place to be.
The world, as we see, is malleable, and the way we feel towards it changes all the time. Just as places and social spaces can be comforting, they can also be mystifying. *Looking for a Landscape* inserts this kind of possibility into a space by allowing people to sit in the city, to see it from an (as of yet) unimagined position. This idea is central to all of my work. I want to formally acknowledge the influence our environment has on us, how place and spaces affect our lives, and how we interact. Everything in our lives has been created, and can also be manipulated.

While living in Chicago, a few friends and I would create “living room scenes” throughout the city. We would drive around in my van and listen to whatever tapes we had – the Beats reading poetry, early hardcore and classical music, lectures of Joseph Campbell, or the music of Daniel Johnston – while keeping up a conversation about street art, philosophy, culture, and the delights of life. As we drove down the alleys of Chicago, we collected domestic objects: rugs, TVs, couches, fake plants, vacuum cleaners, coffee tables, etc. One person would drive while the rest of us crammed ourselves into the spaces left by the furniture. When the van was completely filled, we would go to a park or a public street corner and unload a “living room scene.” This magical pile of trash that had no clear voice in the van or in the alleys was now unfolding itself into a room-size composition. An intimate domestic setting appearing suddenly on an urban street corner or in a large field of grass: the dislocation and juxtaposition were intoxicating. There was a magic that had a lot to do with how we had begun with what was thrown away. Some of us would sleep in the Art Institute to wake the next day and find tourists and other people surrounding the displaced “living room” taking photos.
Insertion Module (see appendix) laid out much of the framework for Looking for a Landscape with its concepts of building social spaces inside the places we already know. Insertion Module in many ways simply carries forward the inspiration behind the “living room scenes.” Insertion Module is a structure specifically designed and built for the negative spaces of a building. The negative space in this case is under a staircase attached to a landing at the side entrance of an industrial building in Cambridge, MA. Insertion Module was constructed to fit perfectly into this space. The side of the module that is visible when it is nested under the stairs, because it has the texture and color of the façade of the building, works to perfectly camouflage the module in its environment. The module can be extracted from its invisibility by being taken out of its place under the stairs and rolled out on its wheels into the street where it can then be unfolded into a functioning teahouse. The walls of the Insertion Module are double-hinged and fold down to become the benches of the tea house, and in the middle is a small fire pit, a teakettle, and teacups. The benches of the teahouse are raw poplar, while the rest of its interior is covered in carpet and wallpaper.

While the tea house of Insertion Module introduces a silence to a space, which counteracts and emphasizes how desolate the industrial side street really is, Looking for a Landscape is about creating a space in the city to be able to look “out” at the landscape and examine it directly. The presence of an object extends further than its physical parameter. The teahouse activates its surroundings in the way it reconfigures the industrial wasteland, by creating a site that extends to all the “walls” it is surrounded by. In Looking for a Landscape, instead of incorporating the walls as part of the space, my aim is to push through the walls that surround us.
Looking For A Landscape tempts the viewer to take the time to explore the environment we take for granted. It is not only about seeing the world outside, it is also about taking the time to do so. The pillows and binoculars in Looking For A Landscape offer a soft place to sit to be removed from the hustle and bustle daily life, while providing an atmosphere to see the world from a private space. If Looking For A Landscape is about creating a rip in the flow of traffic, using spectacle as its tactic, the difference here is that the actors, who are people curious and daring enough to sit down and look through the binoculars, are looking back out at the audience. Because of this whimsical nature, it creates an aura around it for people to gather within and talk.

In this way, my work is a way of illuminating the thread between getting lost and new perception. I try to play upon our processes of dealing with being strangely misplaced. Maybe it is about trying to remove what Alan Watts describes as screens:

It is in such ways that civilization, as we have worked it out, is a system of screens which conceal the connections between events. Just as roast lamb is a presentation at the table without visible connection with kitchen, cooking, or shepherding, so, also, children simply arrive amongst us without visible connection with sexual intercourse or parturition. Bacon, as found packaged in the supermarket, gives no intimation of pig, and steaks appear as if they were entities like apples, having no relation to the slicing of dead cattle. To remove such screens is held to be just as offensive and vulgar as to relieve one’s bowels in the gutter of a public street.4

Here perhaps the screen has to do with the repetitiveness in how we make connections in the everyday, the ways we have of inhabiting our selves and our environments that camouflage from ourselves where we are and what we are leaving out. Gordon Matta-Clark similarly dissects these screens, utilizing the house as the medium.

have always been attracted to Gordon Matta-Clark’s work, and I find his thoughts and actions somehow present in my own work. On a very surface level, his ideas are similar in bringing the notion of the “house” and the “everyday” onto the dissection table, both as the symbol and the actual physical structures.

In his *Building Cuts*, Matta-Clark intervenes in the physical structure of the house by opening gaping holes cut through its floors and walls. One reading of Matta-Clark’s work is that it is about deconstructing the structure of our familiar landscape. Looking at his work in this sense, I see *Looking For A Landscape* working on similar terrain.

This type of work asks how do our surroundings and situations guide our behavior? And what can we learn from each other through our limitations or by interacting in unexpected ways? How do we cut apart what has become so invisible to us?
In a dérive one or more persons during a certain period drop their relations, their work and leisure activities, and all their other usual motives for movement and action, and let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there. Chance is a less important factor in this activity than one might think: from a dérive point of view cities have psychogeographical contours, with constant currents, fixed points and vortexes that strongly discourage entry into or exit from certain zones.

Guy Debord

5 Theory Of The Derive. Guy Debord Internationale Situationniste #2 1958
As the Situationists explored the urban environment and proposed ways that we could turn our urban experience into one of pure creative action, they became interested in investigating the unexplored ambiences of their surroundings within the city and the possibility of everyone becoming artists in their own lives. In their journal *Internationale Situationniste* #1 they formulated some aspects of their process in definitions:

Psychogeography - The study of the specific effects of the geographical environment (whether consciously organized or not) on the emotions and behavior of individuals.

Psychogeographical - Relating to psychogeography. That which manifests the geographical environment’s direct emotional effects.

Psychogeographer - One who explores and reports on psychogeographical phenomena.

Dérive - A mode of experimental behavior linked to the conditions of urban society: a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiences. The term also designates a specific uninterrupted period of dériving.

Unitary urbanism - The theory of the combined use of arts and techniques as means contributing to the construction of a unified milieu in dynamic relation with experiments in behavior.6

The dérive is about bringing a new dimension to the city by setting up guidelines or situations that allow us to start perceiving what is already there, but that we have been trained not to see. *Looking for A Landscape* is something like a traveling opportunity for dérive. It is a dérive on wheels. It invites the viewer to take a moment out of their day to resituate themselves to see what might be lurking in the spaces around or behind the lenses of these huge binoculars. Also, because the way in which the piece is constructed, the box looks like it floats, and the way it moves through the city taps into the uncanny.

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It unhinges a site and an object in the city that represents the permanent and the stationary, and makes it mobile and open.

The dérive is about allowing ourselves to unhinge from prescribed routines or daily activities and to move toward what inspires us. A member of the Situationists, Ivan Chtcheglov, writes about their praxis:

The dérive (with its flow of acts, its gestures, its strolls, its encounters) was to the totality exactly what psychoanalysis (in the best sense) is to language. Let yourself go with the flow of words, says the psychoanalyst. He listens, until the moment when he rejects or modifies (one could say detourns) a word, an expression or a definition.7

The work of the Situationists exposes the fact one city block might initially look the same as the last, but there are certain elements that give different surroundings, each particular block or area, a totally different feel, which in turn makes us associate with them differently. This type of insight reveals that the construction of the city includes aspects, objects and places we know are there but that we have been trained not to see. These elements are visible, but at the same time hidden; these “non-sites” – an ordinary utility box, the space under a stairwell and the ordinary ways we arrange space – have potencies that can be exploited towards opening up possibility, expanding our view of the city and opening up new sites of interaction.

Looking For A Landscape, like Insertion Module, focuses on these spaces we overlook and is designed to question the elements and conditions of perception with a view to opening up unexplored spaces for interaction and participation.

This spring, I went with a group of students to Istanbul, Turkey as part of a public art class. We were a group of people, all with different backgrounds, connected through the situation of going...
to experience something new together. During our trip, situations would arise where we would all look at the same unique or unusual scene, but in each of our heads we made different connections to what we saw before us and how it interested us. The structure of the class held us together, but we all grew out of it in different directions, agreeing to keep the structure alive, and communicating. During these moments, comments were usually the most illuminating, about who we were as people, and what could also be seen. As people informally try to verbalize their reactions, you hear stories and information ranging from growing up in certain places with certain parents, to history, theory, or random connections to their life or other artists.

Beyond the fact that traveling to a foreign country is the perfect dérive, our situation of traveling together made our conversation dérivé-like. The everyday is so marvelously different when you are traveling, like watching a man slowly push a wooden cart loaded with shiny lamps down the street as people rush around him. Prompted by scenes like this and other situations in which we put ourselves, the conversations start to become loose, and every attempt to tie them together reveals more conversation. It is not like a lecture about the scene, where photos are projected and the background information is second-hand. Here, we are all unfolding at the same time what has become a web of references and stories that all mingle and play off each other for a while. Each of our own experiences are seamlessly woven into what is being said, and are connected to different histories, theories and experiences of others.
Social sculpture

Only on condition of a radical widening of definition will it be possible for art and activities related to art to provide evidence that art is now the only evolutionary-revolutionary power. Only art is capable of dismantling the repressive effects of a senile social system to build a SOCIAL ORGANISM AS A WORK OF ART. This most modern art discipline – Social Sculpture/ Social Architecture – will only reach fruition when every living person becomes a creator, a sculptor, or architect of the social organism. Only then would the insistence on participation of the action art of FLUXUS and Happening be fulfilled...8

Joseph Beuys

My good friend Heather (who I collaborate with sometimes) and I were commissioned by the town of Hyannis in Cape Cod to build a public artwork that represented some aspect of the location. At our first meeting in town hall, all the people who were to be involved were there: a woman who dealt with the money, another who dealt with planning issues, a couple of people from public facilities; all said and done, there were about nine people in this conference room and it had the air of being a stuffy business meeting. Heather had put together a bunch of slides of public work from around the world. During the slide show, you could tell people were getting excited about what could happen in their town.

When we turned the lights back on, the attention was back on us. We gave a few remarks and then opened the conversation back up to everyone in the meeting. Instead of coming with delineated professional roles, we turned the tables around and called everyone an artist. We asked if anyone had any interesting leads on where a public artwork might go, and what it might look like. We set the tone that every idea was a good idea because it could spark another idea – so let them flow. By really trying to follow every lead, we created a climate where any idea could be entertained.

In this environment, none of these people felt like they had anything to lose, and they were free to throw out any idea. In some instances someone would catch him/herself going way out, and look around the room, with an expression of doubt, and we would be right there, egging them on for the rest of the idea. We encouraged them to “just let it flow.” The tough guy from the water department with the big moustache was now on some riff, describing a fountain that would freeze in winter in the shape of a sail on a sailboat. The intervention here was the invitation to participate. It was as if everyone had turned into a kid right before our eyes. We were sitting in the town hall, and everyone there was a professional in their field, but at this moment we were a group of adults all allowing ourselves to get lost in our imaginations and explore the possibilities of the town, as well as of our minds. It was magnificent to see how
the process was not just about pure imagination, but each idea was causing someone else to explode with another idea about some other possibility for the town. It was as if we had dumped a bunch of energy on these people and they now had the power to talk to each other in very informal and creative ways.

I see the experience of becoming lost as a way to freedom.

One of the main things that I have been wondering about is how one can actually live a "liberated" life, or if this is even possible. My idea right now is that perhaps the only real way to liberate oneself is to slip in between the cracks of larger authoritative systems. It interests me how often we do this by making smaller, more enclosed systems that are even more restrictive than those in the outside world. You can become so cocooned in these little self-invented structures that you almost believe the larger systems don't actually exist anymore.9

Andrea Zittel

Although much of my work is about creating unfamiliar situations, working with people in the spirit of cooperation and openness and communion is what I see as the place to be. To be attached to a larger energy, the sense of community, of people working or experiencing things together is what seems like a home, a centering feeling. Though, it is at these moments of being found, that the sense of being lost is sure to find you. It is to be found only to be lost again, yet it is a different layer of lost. Although being found always ends, this is something I constantly search for.

While our mythology suggests that society is like a tree with the ripening fruits of professional individualism growing thick upon it, a more accurate image would show a maze of corridors, blocked by endless locked doors, each one leading in or out of a small cell.10

John Ralston Saul

9 Zittel, Andrea Diary 01: Andrea Zittel published by Gabrius Spa, Milan, Italy, 2002
10 Saul, John Ralston. Voltaire's Bastards The Dictatorship of Reason in the West. The Free Press, 1992
I think that Looking for a Landscape momentarily breaks down these cells Saul writes about. In his book, Relational Aesthetics, Nicolas Bourriaud frames work in this vein as “art taking as its theoretical horizon the realm of human interactions and its social context, rather than the assertion of an independent and private symbolic space.” In his terms, the work of relational art “is no longer to form imaginary and utopian realities, but to actually be ways of living and models of action within the existing real, whatever scale chosen by the artist.”\textsuperscript{11}

This kind of approach to art seems very close to what I constantly strive for in my work: twisting the perceptions of how we usually ‘act’ towards each other to create situations where we break free and start to ‘react’ and ‘interact’ outside of the deadening and disenchanting constraints of the familiar-- losing ourselves to find a new way of living.

Creating social spaces like Insertion Module and Looking For A Landscape might be what Beuys had in mind when he said,

"My objects are to be seen as stimulants for the transformation of the idea of sculpture…or of art in general. They should provoke thoughts about what sculpture can be and how the concept of sculpting can be extended to the invisible materials used by everyone."\textsuperscript{12}


Freedom means mostly the freedom of the other, it's not at all a question of one's own freedom, it's a question of the freedom of my brothers and my sisters or of my sisters or my brothers. So when I come out of my laboratory, or my workshop, or whatever I want to call the place where I am trying to produce something, or to get something done, or to effect a collaboration with other people as a whole community of workers, I can't simply declare that you have to believe in what I have done, or that what I have done is quality product simply because it happens to be my product; I can't even declare that it has any particular qualities at all. All I can do is to take advantage of the possibility or to accept the duty of showing people what I have done, and then I have to ask them whether or not it is useful. And if we were to begin to make use of or to practice this kind of technique, we'd very soon find ourselves capable of being truly productive.13

Joseph Beuys

Looking for a Landscape is designed as an interactive piece. It is an effort to create a space where people have the opportunity to react and interact with each other and the city, instead of being confined to extended moments of merely “acting”.

In an interview, Beuys is asked,

Q. "It seems to me that your work is the extending of a kind of 'Socratic space' in which the works are no more than a pretext for dialogue with the individual.

A. This is the most important side of my work. The rest - objects, drawings, actions - all take second place. Basically I'm not that much connected to art. Art interests me only in so far as it gives me the possibility of dialogue with individuals.”14

13 Beuys, Joseph. DIFESA DELLA NATURA, compiled by Lucrezia De Domizio, II Quadrante Edizioni, Torino, Italy. 1988, p. 75.

When I first started painting with Clovis, there was a phase when he could not paint if any paint was on his fingers. I would clean his hands, load the brush, and he would make a couple of brushstrokes and then when he dipped the brush back into the paint, he would get paint on his fingers and the cycle repeated. These paintings were an exercise in patience. There was something about this interaction that was pleasing him; not just for pleasure’s sake, though it was as if he could not see past this. As our painting process went on, he grew out of this and we set up a process in which he cleaned his own hands.

A couple of years later, I was with him at his house with two other people. We all decided to paint some canvases together on a big table. We were all painting on different canvases, and it was understood that anyone could start to paint with anyone on the same canvas. During the painting, a moment arrived when Clovis decided to get his hands into a bottle of paint that had become partially...
solidified. As he was pulling out this chunky paint, he decided to not use his brush. We were all watching him. You could see from the look on his face that he was entering into something new for himself. He was open to the moment of this paint, and at the same time feeling out if we were supportive of it. Everyone at the table was fine with this experience and we let Clovis know as much. As he moved further down this new road, we could feel that he was losing any type of reflection, growing more in tune with how the paint felt in his hands and the way he was using it. All the energy was on him. You could just feel it. He was someone who was waking up to a whole new experience and we were able to see this happen. The air in the room changes at a moment like this. It is as if the outside does not exist; here is the focus. This kind of moment has a certain wildness to it, as if on the way to crossing over this small boundary of painting with his hands, he is also tapping on all the doors of his own reality. This was a time for new types of movements in the world.

Losing himself deeper and deeper in this moment, Clovis, excited about the painting, stood up with his hands full of paint, looked around searching for the next inspiration, then ran up stairs and jumped in bed.
Appendix
Costumes

In this piece there are two performers, each housed in a structured costume. One of the costumes is ‘standing up’ and the other is ‘squatting down’. In the first costume the performer’s hands are encased so that their arms are held up rigidly in the air and cannot be lowered past their shoulders. Their arms cannot be spread apart or brought together, and their hands do not have much side-to-side motion. In a way the hands, each holding a marker, are like a fish’s tail above the body. The other costume is a cube, where the performer squats down and must walk in a crouched position. Only one arm pokes straight out of the cube and holds a marker in its hand. The performers still have use of their legs although they are completely covered in the soft padded material which also covers the rest of their body so their face and head cannot be seen and they so that they cannot see.

I brought the audience in the space and I became the third performer with my hands tied behind my back. I lead the two costumed performers in a 20 foot by 20-foot white room to the walls so that their motions made marks on the walls. The performers go back and forth around the room, one with hands in the air making marks high on the wall, the other making one continuous line about 2 feet from the ground.
OM House is a 6 by 6 foot white cube divided into an upper and lower story. An arch-shaped entrance is cut out on each of its four walls with a stool inside of the cube placed directly behind each entrance. The viewer, by ducking their head into the arch and popping it up through a hole cut out between the two stories directly above the stool, can insert themselves comfortably into the structure while sitting on the stool. Once the viewer is inserted into the structure, they find themselves buried in a lawn with a thick layer of green grass, their head and shoulders growing out of it like trees with their arms and the rest of their body left ‘below’ them on the lower story. As they look around their new landscape they, they see the heads of the other viewers also buried up to their shoulders in the lawn. The interior walls and ceiling of the upper story are a wavy, mirrored Mylar that distorts and reflects the interior landscape of the upper story where the viewers ‘find’ themselves. There is an unfired clay pot in the middle of the lawn at head level. Before entering, each of the viewers is asked to make a deep “OM” sound that matches the “OM” sound the other viewers are making. When all the viewer’s tones match, water drips from the ceiling like rain. The falling water, triggered by the humming “OM” sound, slowly melts away the unfired clay pot.
In Tuesday, we have a small clapboard house-like structure painted white with black shingles. The form is a cross between a New England house, a cabin, and a church, with its two pitched roofs, one roof peak high than the other. There are no doors or windows in this ‘house;’ each of its four sides has a cut-out crevasse or indentation, a cubby for a human body to slide into sideways and sit like a solid silhouette directly in the wall of the ‘house’. Each cutout or cubby is fur-lined. The house has another element that is growing underneath it and protruding through the walls to form chimney-like arms made of bark-like wood. These two elements, the organic and the built, are woven together, but the difference of their material natures is visible and obvious. In each of the four fur-lined cubbies a performer sits nude and blindfolded. There are two male performers and two female performers. All four sit dormant in their cubbies until a golden ball pops out of one of the chimney-like protrusions. After the ball pops, out the performer slowly leaves their fur-lined cubby to search for the ball on their hands and knees, groping to find it in trackless space. Once they find the ball, they have to come up with a way of finding how to get back to their place in the ‘house’. Once back in the ‘house,’ they reinsert the ball and sit dormant again until the ball pops out again a minute of so later. The space is dimly lit and the sound of crickets and traffic can be heard in the background.

At the performance I introduced Tuesday with the following text:

My work is an illustration of the enormous complexity of trying to understand and critique any institution or organization. An institution is a living organism. People, who are in constant change, make up the cells of this organism.

Beyond dogma and idealistic visions, all organizations are a reflection of the experiences and desires we share and deal with on some level by being human. In the sculptural component of Tuesday two different elements coexist as one structure: the organic and the built. Is the organic element growing through the built structure, or is the organized and built just disguising or decorating the organic?
A dimly lit scene with a boat suspended from the ceiling by large cables. Inside the boat are two performers, a radio playing music, a bottle of wine and two wine glasses. In this stationary romantic boat ride, the man and woman relax and drink wine while listening to the radio. Their movements are few as they gaze and ‘drift’ through the world around them, oblivious to what is below. As their boat floats suspended in the air, three streams of water drip off the boat, one off each oar and another from the woman’s hand, which is hanging off the side of the boat. Their world hangs five feet from the ground; the three streams of water drip directly into the mouths of three nude men lying on the ground below on their backs. These men drink the water dripping into their mouths but otherwise do not move – their only movement is in drinking and peeing. It is a “tableaux vivant” or "living picture."
The Insertion Module is a structure specifically designed and built for the negative spaces of a building. The negative space in this work is the space under a staircase that is attached to a landing at the side entrance of an industrial building in Cambridge, MA. The Insertion Module was constructed to fit perfectly into this space. The side of the module that is visible when it is nested under the stairs, because it has the texture and color of the façade of the building, works to perfectly camouflage the module in the building’s façade. The module can be extracted from its invisibility by being taken out of its space under the stairs and rolled out on its wheels into the street where it can then be unfolded into a teahouse. The walls of the Insertion Module are double-hinged and fold down to become the benches of a functioning teahouse. In the middle of the teahouse is a small fire pit, a teakettle, and teacups. The benches of the teahouse are raw poplar, while the rest of its interior is covered in carpet and wallpaper.
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