

situations

material city

Wrights & Sites

Wednesday 11 October 2006

Transcript of *Simultaneous Drift*
(4 walks, 4 routes, 4 screens)

Material City

Material City is a programme of interdisciplinary conversations, commissioned projects and creative responses which investigate imagination and the urban environment. It is led by Situations at the University of the West of England, Bristol in association with Arnolfini and the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology at the University of Bristol. It is funded by Arts Council England South West.

Simultaneous Drift

This is an edited transcript of *Simultaneous Drift*, performed by Wrights & Sites, which took place on 11 October 2006. Wrights & Sites (*A Mis-Guide To Anywhere*) presented a performance-lecture on their site and walking-based practices that overlap with architecture, urban exploration, activism and autobiography. Wrights & Sites are four artist-researcher-lecturers with a special relationship to site and landscape. The company makes work across a range of media: site-specific performance, published Mis-Guides & Mis-Guided Tours, themed drifts, 'mytho-geographic' mapping, multi-media installations, and public presentations & articles.

Projects include:

- *The Quay Thing* (site-specific performances along Exeter's quayside and canal, 1998)
- *An Exeter Mis-Guide & A Courtauld Mis-Guide* (mis-guided books and maps for specific locations in the city of Exeter and the Courtauld Institute of Art, London, 2003)
- *A Manifesto for a New Walking Culture: dealing with the city* (a performance-manifesto written for 'Everyday Walking Culture: The Sixth International Conference on Walking in the 21st Century', Zürich, 2005)
- *A Mis-Guide To Anywhere* (mis-guided book for use in any location chosen by the user, 2006)
- *4 Mis-Guided Tours* (4 led walks around central London for the Institute of Contemporary Arts, 2006)
- *The Present Generation* at Palazzo delle Arti Napoli (PAN, 2006)

Formalised in 1997 and based in Exeter (UK), the four core members are Stephen Hodge, Simon Persighetti, Phil Smith & Cathy Turner. They lecture in the performance arts at the UK Universities of Exeter, Plymouth & Winchester, and Dartington College of Arts.

See **www.mis-guide.com** for more information about Wrights & Sites.

Four desks, chairs and microphones form a line across the stage. The members of Wrights & Sites greet the audience as they enter. The evening is introduced and the DVD video starts (split-screen footage of a simultaneous drift undertaken from 12 noon to 1pm on 26 August 2006).

From audience left to audience right, the images show:

- Cathy Turner drifting inside 31 Howell Road (Exeter), filmed by Nick Dereza;
- Phil Smith drifting from the Central Library stacks to Debenhams (Exeter), filmed by Joel McAllister;
- Simon Persighetti drifting from Temple Meads to Broadmead (Bristol), filmed by Carro Pinchbeck;
- Stephen Hodge drifting around Canary Wharf (London), filmed by Rebecca French.

After two minutes, each member of Wrights & Sites walks to the desk underneath the image of their own drift, lays out various objects, and sits down.

During the course of the presentation, four miniature 'cities' are constructed on top of the desks:

- Cathy builds a house made from the A-Zs of Exeter, Bristol and London. Just before she begins her second section, she places a baby's 'lullaby lightshow' (the same one we see on the video) inside the house and switches it on. It plays Brahms' 'Lullaby' for five minutes.
- Phil stacks the pieces of a first aid kit on the table, then lines of large plastic toy cuttlefish, squids and sharks, octopi and a large toy crab (all unpacked from a rucksack). Wooden building blocks from an old Czech toy-town are used to construct the graveyard, office blocks, monumental arches of an incoherent city, the toy sea animals are placed as if they are invading this city. Towards the end of the presentation, the first aid kit is packed away in the rucksack, as if in preparation for leaving.
- Simon arranges his site-specific toolkit, containing materials for creating miniature landscapes, small worlds, villages and cities (that in the public sphere may be constructed and abandoned among the giants of the cosmos).
- Stephen places a model of 1 Canada Square (the Canary Wharf tower) on a line of turf, cuts out a series of photographed signs, and plants them in the grass.]

1: Stephen

I stood in the kitchen, looking back across the Thames at the cityscape we'd been drifting through half an hour earlier. Dense material, with hard edges. No sign of soft bodies, of any 'life between buildings'. Very different in scale to Exeter, where I had started the day.

I thought of the others: of Cathy and Nick, of Phil and Joel, of Simon and Carro.

The rules had been simple:

- to each choose a starting location for a drift
- to each choose a partner to walk with, who would make his or her own choices about how to document our drift on video, remaining silent behind the camera
- to all start at noon and end at 1pm

2: Phil

In 1938 H. G. Wells published a plan for a World Brain - a network of libraries containing a gently evolving set of common texts, a blueprint for a unified global development of ideas. As libraries now dissolve, divesting themselves of print, they offer, for a short while, opportunities for scavengers to make Dispersed Brains: orb-like in imagination, bubble-like in construction, mobile in affection, deferring forever global ambitions.

In the year 2000, in our first publication, I wrote: 'Moving away from the theatre building is to follow the 'real Christians' from ... nave to ... house church ... Or the militias to their paranoia bunkers.' I hadn't expected it to be true.

3: Stephen

Wrights & Sites' first public project, *The Quay Thing* (1998), employed thirty-seven people and resulted in fifty-four public performances across a range of sites on and alongside Exeter's quay, river and canal. It was on a boat at this time that we first used the term 'Mis-Guide' to describe a tour-guide type character whose information veered wildly between fact and fiction.

After this somewhat overwhelming project, we found our attention shifting away from site, towards cityscape and journey. By moving, rather than staying still, we found an opportunity to side-step many of the problematic, time-consuming issues of management and of access (licensing, health & safety, and most significantly permissions to use sites). We began to walk. To 'drift'. A lot. And we were able to get on with our work, very efficiently and with minimal bureaucracy.

And during this time we came across other walkers, including, of course, the situationists.

4: Phil

So what do we do now?

Stick at gently subversive suggestiveness?

Banshee planning? Threat architecture? Insurgent rambling is an option.

Is it any more aggressive than changing trajectories to change space?

5: Simon

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

In this work there is a call for serious play and a sense that urban spaces and places can present passages to utopian, creative and optimistic relationships with the everyday. This writing or re-writing of the city activated by wanderings and explorations that can lead, for example, to an active engagement in issues of ecology and environmental planning.

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

Mike Pearson suggests that in the modern shopping centre, we have all become *flâneur*, 'grazing, gazing, consuming...' However, our pursuits are more often governed by commerce in such controlled environments. In the main, we are not drifting aimlessly, we are not fuelled by some god-like overview, and our aesthetic sensibilities are more likely to be engaged in the pursuit of fashion and fast food. The aimless drifters of the contemporary shopping mall are perhaps those with little or no spending power, who rather than merging with the crowd, are swiftly picked out by the CCTV camera and the security guard. It is significant however, that the reflections of the city drifter from Baudelaire to Debord constitute a vast range of residual discourses as if the footsteps of the strollers have been replaced by, and recorded in text. It has, perhaps become what Walter Benjamin called the 'Writing of the City' as if the perceptions of the flâneur, once transmitted, begin to engrave themselves upon the physical city and the bodies of its citizens. The notion of porosity in which the body makes the city and the city is a body, invites Benjamin's dream image of 'a book that is a city street cut through the body of the author by his lover.' (Burgin 1996: 141)

(Persighetti 2005)

6: Phil

Now print is over - and the invisible is back with us again - we demand the right to bug communications exchanges, to sink glass domes through their walls so we can watch official tappers as we do sharks in an aquarium. We will honour electricity as a scarce sacrament. A five hundred year sentence comes apart. Ideas will be expressed, not in the march of prose, but in wandering meetings and rain-washed discussions. We should put all our ideas at the mercy of weather, to the test of navigation. Smuggling them into public places.

7: Stephen

Walking-based, rather than site-based, activities are bound up with notions of displacement and dislocation: there is movement from one place to another; there is a point of departure, a period of passing through, and a point of arrival; there is a constantly shifting 'sense of place'; here is connected to elsewhere through the journeying process; there is disruption; one finds oneself 'out of place'.

Walking is an applied (or spatially and socially contextualised) practice. Walking facilitates interaction between the walker, the territory moved through, and the people found there. The indeterminate nature of most everyday environments calls for latitude in the structure and content of walking-based activities, an openness to things encountered, a playful attitude towards displacement. Walking is a porous activity. Material seeps in. Material seeps out.

Drifting with small groups of people helps us to explore new territories, or to research and develop pages for our printed Mis-Guides; to introduce new ways of walking or walking as a research activity to students and workshop groups; and to give an insight into the company's methodology.

8: Simon

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

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

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

(Persighetti 2005)

9: Phil

To put a fragile thing every night in the High Street and to replace it every time it is damaged. No matter how slight the damage, no matter how often the replacement.

Because space is constructed of trajectories rather than places, because it has no mass, it is elusive. It has no multitude, but multiple journeys - its revolution is its own turning. There is no draughtsboard for it. Conveniently, our enemies chase a spectre of one, rather than chase us. Driven by imitation and disruption, what works multiplies. Which means we are always nostalgic - we have instant traditions. We only feel like we're part of something - which is the perfect model for our infiltration of economies of stimulation and gratification. Our longevity is built in.

By the way, the green strips of paper in the books in the library indicate that those volumes are for disposal.

[The members of Wrights & Sites stand and watch each other's films for a minute or two. After a while they return to their seats. Phil, Simon and Stephen continue to watch the films whilst Cathy speaks.]

10: Cathy

'We must differentiate between the charm and even some values within Marxist ideology and what can be taken from it for military use. The theories...are based upon a methodology that wants to disrupt and subvert the existing political, social, cultural or military order. The disruptive capacity in theory...is the aspect of the theory that we like and use...This theory is not married to its socialist ideals.'

Shimon Naveh, former brigadier general in the Israeli defence force (Weizman 2006: 15).

Naveh is referring to a set of military strategies developed for invading Palestinian cities, re-interpreting the map to read alleys, roads and doorways as no go areas, instead adopting a tactic of 'moving through walls...like a worm that eats its way forwards...' (Kokhavi in Weizman 2006: 9). These tactics are knowingly, even smugly informed by the writings of Deleuze and Guattari, Bataille and the situationists.

The situationists would not be surprised by this easy recuperation of aspects of their revolutionary theory. But Naveh's suggestion that 'the theory is not married to its socialist ideals' might raise questions about the value of critique where it can be conveniently separated from the proposal and realisation of alternatives. 'The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it' (Marx 1845: XI).

The situationist perspective on whether and to what extent and in what way alternatives might be helpfully articulated varied across time and between people. David Banash, arguing the political value of theory points out that in practice, the situationists were pretty ineffective revolutionaries (Banash 2002: 5). However, as Simon Sadler puts it: 'The determination to address fundamental issues about the politics of space, rather than simply rearrange the furniture, so to speak, separated situationists from...most avant-gardes' (Sadler 2001: 40).

Our Mis-Guides propose a series of ways of re-framing the world, to provoke new ways of encountering it. Yet I'm sometimes troubled that we and people discussing our work tend to stress the possibilities of 'making strange' as though this guaranteed revelation and as though revelation ensured that the structures revealed were somehow dealt with. And though I can't feel optimistic about revolutionising the totality, not in a Marxist sense and not yet anyway, it seems important to ask to what extent it is possible to conceive of positive alternatives by... well, by rearranging the furniture.

May 2003: Simon Persighetti leads us on a walk through Newtown, Exeter. We all creep through a hole in a hedge and find ourselves in someone's back garden. We are led in through the house where we pick up a door and carry it to a house down the road. Suddenly our city exploration bursts into a private world. I think we are touched by the way in which we are given permission to help to rearrange it. On this community walk, at this moment, we enact the meeting-points and tensions (we wipe our feet carefully) between the personal/private and the communal/public.

It is not so much the grandiose and often vague utopian statements of the situationists that interest me, nor yet the sound and fury of 1968, so much as their 'playful-constructive behaviours'. The situationist acts of *dérive* and *detournement*, their ideas of the 'constructed situation' were artful and playful, though more open-ended than the completed work of art, more knowing than the children's game. In these activities, they not only theorised a changed world, I suggest that they did change it - or at least change the relationship to it - if only partially and temporarily.

'If you have ever looked out in the early morning and seen a city fill up with snow, you will know that the first walker changes everything.' (Wrights & Sites 2006: 61)

The Mis-Guide, like the situationist *derive*, is not, or not only just a throw of a die, a whimsical suggestion for experimental tourism. What it brings to the space matters -

inevitably - as well as what it finds within it. The tensions between the two are also productive.

'Push to the edge of your comfort zone. Notice, if you reach it, the point at which you no longer feel safe.

Then take one more step.' (Wrights & Sites 2006: 24)

I've written before about object relations as a tool for discussing the tensions between what is 'me' and what is 'not-me' in our approaches to place, and the reparatory, constructive and mutually revealing aspects of the drift and related activities. This theory, in its focus on children's play, makes clear the significance of playfulness in our lives, even as adults. In play, we *re-make* the world, find a meeting point between ourselves and what is, or might be, out there.

My unease with the prioritisation of mere disruption and critique is illuminated by Eve Kosofsky-Sedgwick's discussion of a current in literary criticism which she characterises as 'paranoid', placing its faith in exposure as the principal requirement for political change. Without dismissing this position entirely, she posits an alternative 'depressive' or 'reparatory' position, citing Melanie Klein, who was, of course, a key figure in object relations theory:

'This is the position from which it is possible...to use one's own resources to assemble or 'repair' the murderous part-objects into something like a whole - though, I would emphasize, *not necessarily like any pre-existing whole*. Once assembled to one's own specifications, the more satisfying object is available both to be identified with and to offer one nourishment and comfort in turn... Hope, often a fracturing, even a traumatic thing to experience, is among the energies by which the reparatively positioned reader tries to organize the fragments and part-objects she encounters or creates.' (Kosofsky-Sedgwick, 2003: 128 & 146, emphasis in original)

As we 'read' the city, if we somehow attempt to play with, re-organise, repair the 'fragments and part objects' we encounter, we find ourselves, in a small way, re-making and transforming its material.

I find echoes of this thinking in the way Sadie Plant describes the situationist (and Marxist) conception that 'social awareness and human freedom...develop out of...the recognition of oneself in productive activity or labour on the world. (Plant 1992: 21, my emphases)

At least one position taken by the situationists was reparative, playful-constructive, pleasure-seeking and hopeful. We might hope to emulate this.

June 2002: As part of Exeter's 'Text Festival', we invite people to chalk on the pavement. We are surprised by the level of unease expressed by the local council. The area, they say, must be clearly demarcated and at the end of the day, it must be washed.

A woman kneels carefully on the pavement, places her shopping beside her and chucks, 'I think legal graffiti is lovely.'

I remember a passage from *The Little Prince*:

'Were they not satisfied where they were?' asked the little prince.
'No one is ever satisfied where he is,' said the switchman.

And they heard the roaring thunder of a third brilliantly lighted express.
...'They are asleep in there, or if they are not asleep they are yawning. Only the children are flattening their noses against the window-panes.'
'Only the children know what they are looking for,' said the little prince. 'They waste their time over a rag doll and it becomes very important to them; and if anybody takes it away from them, they cry.'
'They are lucky,' the switchman said. (Saint-Exupéry 2002: 71)

In what sense do the children 'know what they are looking for'? What kind of knowledge is this? I think it is something like the commitment that is asked for in a Mis-Guide - a commitment to a game, perhaps. A provisional, playful, but knowing commitment.

Windows as doors, doorsteps as playrooms, the garden as a bedroom an ice rink or a far away land. Children remake their space all the time, dreaming of things as different, bigger, smaller, riskier, subject to different rules and customs. For them, life is already a drift.

My point is that play is *realisation*. It is both critique *and* (provisional) proposal. It is born of the tension between the person and the world.

August 2006: In our Exeter Everyday Festival week, we invite passers by to celebrate feet and shoes, reflections in windows, horizons and crowds. We propose and host a festival without fireworks and civic ceremony, without consumption, without spectacle.

The situationists generally had little time for the domestic. There is no private space in Constant's 'New Babylon'. In his 'Theory of the Dérive', Debord considers a map of a student's habitual movements through Paris - a map of limited and repetitive routes - as evidence of 'the narrowness of the real Paris in which the individual lives' (Debord 1981: 50). Adventurous living, Debord seems to suggest, is uncircumscribed.

'Place your hand against a wall. Feel its fragility and its strength. Take your hand for a walk around the room. Make it a country to be discovered.' (Wrights & Sites 2006: 25)

When I watch the video I am surprised at the ways in which my own ambivalence is so clearly expressed.

Closing image. Wrapped together in a sleeping bag on top of a collapsed tent that I have failed to erect in the too-small room, I kiss my daughter's hand, then turn my head away, as if imagining Stephen on the streets around Canary Wharf, Simon on the streets of Bristol, Phil mining the streets of Exeter before ascending to take in its panorama.

Before this summer, my own life was spent predominantly out there, in the public spaces, figuratively, if not physically. The last four months have entailed a huge shift in perspective and not an easy one. This game, this juxtaposition of inside and outside, the exchange of meanings between them, the flow from one to the other, the dialogue between the 'me' and 'not-me' of both out there and in here... This, for me, is a way of realising something.

11: Stephen

Wrights & Sites' drifts are similar to the situationist *dérive*, although we often employ a few key strategies to help disrupt familiar patterns of movement and observation.

We 'frame' our drifts. For example, we might walk whilst trying to find evidence of the rural within the urban, or whilst looking for tiny worlds within the larger world. A frame can act as a filter or a signpost, and give focus, although sometimes the frame itself may drift during the course of a walk.

We might employ a 'catapult' to disorientate ourselves at the beginning of a drift.

Start at an unusual place - you can use a 'catapult' - for example, if you're feeling flush you could call a cab, hand over a couple of notes, strap on walkmans and blindfolds and ask the driver to drop you off somewhere without recognisable landmarks. (Wrights & Sites 2003: 34)

We might begin at the edge of a territory, perhaps where the city meets the countryside. There is an attraction to these edges, these liminal zones. They are often dysfunctional, disorientating, blurred 'playgrounds' where almost anything can happen or be found. As Jan Gehl wrote:

On the soft-edged street, three times more activities take place in the course of a normal day than on the [hard-edged] street. (Gehl 2001: 188)

Similarly, we find that breaking the usual daily cycle, perhaps by starting before dawn, leads us towards a temporal liminality: an in-between time as the world and its inhabitants slowly awaken.

Rather than the 'transient passage' (often translated as 'rapid passage') of the situationists, we usually proceed at a slower than normal walking pace: tracing and retracing routes; following existing desire paths; discovering deadends; stopping to talk to people, or to reconfigure detritus. Slow as they may be, they are still resistant to the flâneur's stroll, and certainly open to the 'playful-constructive behaviour and awareness of psychogeographical effects' present in the situationist *dérive*.

In addition to psychogeography, defined by Debord as 'the study of the precise laws and physical effects of the geographical environment, consciously organised or not, on the emotions and behaviour of individuals' (Debord in Knabb 1989: 5), Wrights & Sites draws on 'mythogeography'. Rather than looking inwardly towards the self, mythogeography draws on collective data relating to site and cityscape: on myths, rumours and lies; on unrealised architectures; on collectively held desires.

12: Simon

LICENCE - BUILDING MATERIALS

[application form](#).

(www.bristol-city.gov.uk 2006)

13: Stephen

We usually travel with a toolkit, or playbox, of functional materials that can be used to connect with the cityscape and the people within it: notebooks and cameras to document elements of our journey; chalk to leave ephemeral signs for sleeping residents; postcards and stamps to send messages from here to elsewhere; plastic bags to discard material in; torches in order that we can leave the streetlights behind.

Mis-Guide books & maps are generated by Wrights & Sites, working in collaboration with the visual artist Tony Weaver, and are direct extensions of our framed drifts. They allow us to consolidate longer term research; to work with specific groups to generate particular frames; to connect with people in places that we are no longer in or have never been to; to make work that has a long lifespan; and to generate multiple frames with loose structures for walker-readers to interpret as they see fit.

14: Phil

To match the 'michinoeki' petrol stations for motorists, Japanese planners have created 'machinoeki' stations for walkers. They offer a place to rest, eat, buy socks or maps. The 'machinoeki' are fixed, local sites. But the next 'machinoeki' must be mobile - groups of walkers carrying philosophical resources and material supplies - water, anti-maps, sticks with sandpaper handles - disrupting functional walking, passing on rumours, collecting information for a mapping of escape routes, tunnels and caches of ideas, a tramping firm of architects leaving only aspirations, taking only those who would have joined the circus anyway. I feel like all my walks are a preparation for this. No, it's more than that - we need a mobile infantry, a fluid demagogon - to challenge functional walking - the travesty of our medium - we need our own tentative monster...

15: Simon

Al Ghurair Centre was the first purpose-built shopping mall in Dubai. The mall has over 250 shops on two levels and sells reasonably priced goods when compared to other speciality and designer clothes stores in other malls. It is conveniently located at Riqqa Road in Deira. Coming soon! Al Ghurair City: will be a harmonious blend of enclosed and exciting streetscapes, the best of entertainment, food, upscale residences and state of the art office space. It will house the latest international brands and strong local and regional brands. The merchandising mix will attempt to differentiate the project and will offer new retail experiences in the city and the region. In terms of design it will marry the most modern architecture with traditional icons. It will create a new metaphor - 'Modern Arabic' and will become a unique place to visit in addition to being a bustling shopping destination. This new architectural style enhanced with exciting streetscapes, will make Al Ghurair City a tourist must-see in Dubai.

(www.datadubai.com 2006)

16: Stephen

If metadata are defined as 'data about data', then the signs that pervade our environment are examples of the metadata, or 'metamaterial', of the city. Our Mis-

Guides are fucked-up signposts - dysfunctional sketches for navigating city(and sometimes land)scape, only made concrete with the complicit footsteps of the user.

Whereas everyday signs often clutter a cityscape, mis-guided activities are usually discrete and temporary.

Drifting Berlin with Daniel Belasco Rogers, 10 days after this simultaneous drift was recorded, we mapped our movements around the city using a GPS device. Like Debord's map of habitual movements, Dan's been recording all of his journeys in this way since April 2003. He calls it 'the daily practice of map making'. The focal point of these maps is his house in Rheinsberger Strasse. Actually, the house used to be part of the Berlin Wall, the front door providing a route from east to west.

17: Simon

BRISTOL MATERIALS

Time and Motion Studies
Quantity Surveyors
Sandbags holding it all in place
Waiting for the green man
Siren Operas
Blue shirt Security
The itch of CCTV
Fossils in kerbstones
Heroes from Novels appear in monuments
The toxic shock of the short cut
Pebbles rattle in the ribcage
Brunel in a fluorescent stovepipe hat
Footnotes on Pedestrianisation
Absolute becoming
A longboat silent dreaming
DH LAWRENCE and FERLINGHETTI DRIFT
A bridge of whys and wherefores
The weight of an unpaid slate
We could check in to the City Inn
We could follow the towpath ghost horse
WE could just stand still 'til arrest
Sea shells and broken beer bottles
Crisp packets caught in bushes
A forever held in concrete
The wrinkled paradox of a windblown glamour mag
The silent passing of strangers like two layers of paint
Myths and Misses of traffic goddesses
Snapshots of silent corners
The grid reference of fences
What are you thinking now?
The espresso coffee kicks in
A dark surrounding whirlpool
A burst of billboard colour
Long gone newspaper
Walking against heritage municipality
Any moment could be your past
Once again we find the off licence to trespass unchallenged.

18: Phil

Among the materials of the city are seams of semi-secret symbols:

The red and white of restrictive tape.

Pylons shaped after the portals of the Ancient Egyptian after life.

The Shell petrol station scallop - taken from a salesman's family coat of arms, the badge of the pilgrim.

The city is marked with these and other occluded symbols of power, commandeering the imagination, conjuring banality, halting tangents, badgering us into premature conclusions, closures and purchases. How else do such almighty injustices endure? In government holey-space (h-o-l-e-y) a mighty Air Loom weaves tendencies and arguments, false flag operations and threats.

These horrors can be turned to our advantage, by making the city an art of memory - not in a book of meanings, but in the street furniture, in the massing of buildings, in the degeneration of fading signs; to these will be assigned the task of symbolising worthwhile ideas until they can safely materialise. Our work is not simply a study of the city, but a study *in* the city.

19: Simon

THE MALL GOES UNCOVERED

Like insecure teenagers, malls keep changing their style. They are ripping away their roofs and drywalled corridors; adding open-air plazas, sidewalks, and street-side parking; and rechristening themselves "lifestyle centers." This new look may remind you of something: a vibrant urban street. Yet, while these new malls may appear to be public space, they're not public at all—at least if you want to do anything but shop. They represent a bait-and-switch routine on the part of developers, one that exchanges the public realm for the commercial one. They're also enormously successful—by the most recent count, there are about 130 lifestyle centers scattered around the country. In 2006, New York City will get its very first.

On a recent Saturday, in search of the future, I visited a lifestyle center on the edge of Phoenix called the Desert Ridge Marketplace. Parking my rented Chevy in front of a big-box emporium called Barbeques Galore, I walked through the arched portals that decorate the marketplace entrance. Inside, there were restaurants and stores lining a winding and narrow outdoor pedestrian street that opened up onto a series of little plazas. Padded wicker chairs were strewn about in a studied, casual way, and a huge fieldstone fireplace had benches built into it for those cool desert nights. This was a delightful place for a Frappuccino.

(www.slate.com 2006)

[Phil holds a dictaphones up to his microphone, and plays an extract from *The Gonk* by H. Chappell (the music that plays as the zombies walk around the shopping mall in George A. Romero's *Dawn of the Dead*).]

20: Phil

Low level paranoia is necessary for two reasons: one ethical, one operational.

Ethically, we should adopt a heuristics of fear, junk the benefit of the doubt, adopt responsibility for our survival; reject an economy that multiplies, accumulates and hoards survival behaviours, and courts extinction. Let us assume that we will all die soon, unless we take responsibility for averting the death of the very optimistic consciousness that avoids such assumptions, if it can. We must walk with a catastrophe movie running invisibly around us.

Operationally, we will return to one of the original qualities of the drift: military reconnaissance, preparation of the ground. Our strategy is the dispersal of eroticism, the deferral of violence in favour of dread space - in place of bleakness, shock and speechlessness, deafness after the blast, we will commit ourselves to re-shaping a string of bleak places as spaces of 'dread', drenched in the sensation of almost too much possibility, pleasingly panicked by the feeling of freedom before freedom.

21: Stephen

Per Mollerup divides environmental signs into four categories: identification, direction, description and regulation.

Identification.

TALL PIECES OF GRASS, WEED, NETTLES, FLOWERS BRUSH AGAINST
EACH OTHER ... TWO DOGS PANTING ... THIS PLACE MAKES WHAT?
THE SMELL AGAIN JUST HIT ME ... (Wrights & Sites 2000: 62)

2993 days before this, I asked our collaborating artists on the pilot version of *The Quay Thing* to make a record of a drift on our first half-day together. Constrained in a similar fashion to Simon Pope's *east-west walk*, their physical frame was the banks of Exeter's canal between the quay and the Double Locks pub. This corresponded to the journey our audience would make aboard a boat 19 days later.

I worked with one of the performers, Patrick Morris, distilling his written material, finally selecting twenty-three short statements. Twenty-three signs were constructed, each one sporting one of these statements. [In performance,] Patrick walked slightly ahead of the boat, clearly visible, carrying the signs. He stopped to erect each sign at the position where the words written on it were originally recorded. Patrick's actions were simple and non-matrixed (walking, carrying and erecting signs) and the twenty-three statements were fragile and personal. Framed within the contexts of the performance and the site/landscape these ordinary texts became extra-ordinary. (Wrights & Sites 2000: 62)

22: Simon

FROM CITY INN BROCHURE FOUND ON THE PAVEMENT AT TEMPLE WAY,
BRISTOL

Time is precious. Commitments, meetings, appointments. Timetables, delays. Days usually end with everything ticked off, including yourself. We've thought of ways to ensure you make the most of any free time you get. Positive benefits. Create your

own time zone. Move in from 8am. Your space in the city for the whole day. Order room service round the clock. Plug in your laptop for high speed emails. Or just switch off to your favourite CD or film. Sounds or silence. Your time, your place, your space.

23: Stephen

Direction.

We are where? Somewhere? Anywhere? Nowhere? Everywhere?

Often elsewhere, certainly, as in the case of 'the home-to-work-and-back routine: those head-down journeys when the mind is focused elsewhere and elsewhere' (Wrights & Sites 2005: 117).

Drifting through the Exeter night with ten students 283 days before this, consciously on the look out for 'wormholes' from the 'here' to the 'elsewhere':

- a startling art deco house where the taxis dropped us threw us straight back to the 1920s (a historical elsewhere)
- a French flag transported us to Paris (a geographical elsewhere)
- discarded polystyrene fast-food boxes conjured stories of post-club adventures (an autobiographical elsewhere)
- a sandstone wall took us to a desert (a geological elsewhere)
- a road called 'Moonridge' sent us hurtling through space in a rocket (an imaginative elsewhere)
- a real wormhole on the ground altered our perception of dimension (a scale-related elsewhere)

24: Simon

A QUESTION OF SKILLS 1: IN THE WILD

In the Wild

There are no corner shops
Giant Owls sear you with God-like night vision
You will wish for air-conditioning
Elephant dung is threatening
The river is simply a disguise for crocodiles
After the third sleepless night with Hyena lullabies
You will be exhausted enough to
Watch with passive fascination as mosquitoes
Dip into your skin
You will write home
Primordial poetry on postcards
Inspired by deep star skies and dehydration.
Under the Baobab Tree you will sing
'The Road to Nowhere'
A song last heard on headphones aboard a Jumbo jet
At the craft market on the edge of a game reserve
You will decline the haggle for a souvenir
Knowing that the hand carved giraffe on offer
Is also in the Oxfam catalogue.

25: Phil

I became aware a few weeks ago that for two days there was a civil war in the sky, with different birds trying to control different levels - herring gulls tearing out the tail feathers of magpies, crows turning a pigeon inside out on the Bartholomew Street catacombs - I've been aware for three or four years now that the relations of power between species is changing and that in some places, Hitchcock is now the only god.

In his chapter on 'Walking In The City', Michel de Certeau urges an end to panoptic criticism, overturning the critic perched like a god on the World Trade Centre. This is surrendering too much. This is Von Danieken criticism, assuming alien astronauts made the Nazca lines because the natives could never have flown to see the complete designs. It is to deny the importance of the invisible. To deny us the invisible as one of our materials. Of walking in relation to the monster, to the dead, to the shape of utopia, to the spectre of the psychological gesture, to the birds - not to stand at the top of the tallest building, but to walk in relation to that altitude, to infuse the everyday with the pleasure of form, free-at-the-point-of-use. Our right to walk side by side with the giant translucent structures of Final Fantasy insectoid philosophy, a great crustacean work - the end of humanity, its transport and transfiguration from within, not destruction from above.

The shore crab can survive out of the sea for long periods of time by circulating water around the edge of its shell, re-oxygenating it and then taking it back in to draw off the oxygen into its organism. This is the zoological basis for the mobile machinoeki.

26: Stephen

Description.

At one point in our drift through Canary Wharf I noticed something that didn't quite belong: material out of place. One, and only one, of a series of patches of grass beneath the trees was laid with astro-turf.

8 days later, when we were undertaking *Forest Drift* for the Centre for Contemporary Art and the Natural World, the large car park and pavement-like pathways, constructed in Haldon Forest by the Forestry Commission, inspired us to carry a large, real traffic light sign with us as we walked.

There are strange and pregnant tensions between the city and the not-city ... between history and the anecdote ... between the heritage and tourism industries and ourselves.

27: Simon

A QUESTION OF SKILLS 2: IN THE CITY

In the City
They torched the corner shop
CCTV sears you with God-like night vision
You will wish for a breeze on your cheeks
Dog shit is threatening
The road is simply a disguise for muggers
After the third sleepless night with drunkard lullabies

You will be exhausted enough to
Watch with passive fascination as allergies
Erupt from your skin
You will write home
City light poetry on postcards
Inspired by neon signs and alienation
Under the Bus shelter you will sing
'The Road to Nowhere'
A song last heard in the car boot cafe on the edge of the estate
You will decline the haggle for a curio
Knowing that the hand carved giraffe on offer
Is far cheaper in the wild.

28: Stephen

Regulation.

It's not allowed... You need a permit... Anywhere in Canary Wharf... (Canary Wharf security guard on video)

This is my turf... Keep off the grass.

We're often getting into trouble with authority, with people who own or control space. We have a terrible relationship with our city council. In Clifton Street, where Simon lives, they've erected a sign to let us know where we stand: 'NOT A PLAY AREA'.

29: Phil

The crucial operating principle of a drift is deferral - the synthesis of its materials is postponed, and these materials are set in orbit about each other, and subjected to the motion of the drift itself. There is no need for conclusions, just as there are no destinations - only a provisional mapping that is imagined and redundant in the same instant, capable only of practice, never of publication. This is the iconoclasm, the refusal to represent, that can save us from Enron and theocracy - of course it is comic, arrogant and hubristic just to fucking mention the idea, but I've watched too many zombie movies and the cities feel like they do just before everything goes very badly wrong. Why not a material, intellectual discipline of deferring synthesis, a heterotopic culture of differences, capable of humility and invisibility, the 'end' of cities, their transport and transfiguration from within, rather than destruction from above.

In the centre of the city I imagine every quiet suburb as just outside the blast zone.

In the tea shops we listen for the sounds of artillery fire.

The KGB (or whatever they're called now) were caught planting 'Chechen' bombs in a Moscow tower block. They were just practicing.

Everything is war now. Space is defined by the destroyed Buddhas in Afghanistan. All resistance is holey - h-o-l-e-y.

The monster inside your boyfriend says 'open the door, sweetie, open the door.'

Bristol under water when the levees break.

Everything feels like black ops.

Right At Your Door, Close Encounters of the Third Kind, Carrie - these are our guides to interior decor.

Khlestakovian inscrutability: don't do too much, let your enemies come to you... let things happen... stay in the bubble...

Holey space, a space full of holes, is the gold of the new drift. Reversed out seams and nuggets, in which the drift can sneak, melt, refine and alchemicalise itself. In caches, stacks, cellars, bubble houses, tunnels, cloisters, forests, ivory towers, corridors - holey space is the space of trajectory. In bubble form it is immensely strong.

An injury to one is an injury to all. So we will have no martyrdoms, no sacrifices, even to space. Then you know we can win.

30: Cathy

Coda

Does Naveh know what his soldiers are getting into?

His are not new tactics, after all. Nor do they in fact originate with Deleuze and Guattari, Bataille, or the situationists. They are the tactics of resistance; tactics which have worked in the past because they have made use of places that have partially eluded totalising structures - places that were in part controlled by the city dwellers themselves.

Paris: the Communards burrowed through the streets inside the terraced houses.
Ireland: the IRA made getaways through houses via doors left permanently open to them.

Vietnam: underground passages defeated the US army.

Afghanistan: the Tora Bora caves refused to yield Bin Laden.

Berlin: Daniel Belasco Rogers' house became a gateway from East to West.

What happens to an army in the domain of the resistance? Can it remain an army? Can it remain an army, when it turns to strategies of subversion and dispersal? And how easy are these spaces to navigate? And what if the city dwellers deliberately set out to confuse and disorient, borrowing from children's games and stories to construct a space that defies expectation?

What if the soldier, breaking through a wall, finds a room entirely filled with sand, a desert drifting under tables and around lampshades, halls and stairways mazing through mountains built of furniture; a hall of mirrors; a corridor of doorways merging into a trompée l'oeil scrawled out in blackboard chalks; a Schwitters sculpture with trapdoors into Namia; a forest of tiny plastic palm trees surrounding one real one; the bathroom a neverland of ticking crocodiles... a space where the soldier confronts the unnerving realisation of being in an alien camp where the enemy is hiding in the cupboard... of entering a territory that confuses bandit country, the Borrowers and the sofa?

31: Phil

Let's get down to practicalities. Bubble strategy. These are the spaces: 1 - ghosts, 2 - materials, 3 - covert, 4 - semi-public, 5 - inside and outside, 6 - fighting on more than one front.

Our first contribution to the struggle might be a series of spectral planning applications: a new set of ruins (a part of Beirut in Bedminster), a mapping of dériviste escape routes through the homes and gardens of non-dog owning sympathisers, mobile structures for the covert training of survivors by showing zombie movies, the enlargement of already existing fragments of desert in city centres.

32: Stephen

Wrights & Sites are less interested in notions of the 'post-geographic' global village than the possibilities of generating 'new geographies' across a range of scales, from the local to the global.

Mis-Guidance is centred in outward-looking, social transaction. It is informed by disrupted and playful walking, an openness to the mythogeographic, flexible boundaries, and a creative awareness of the connections between here and elsewhere/anywhere.

Our raw material is the drift.

33: Phil

The poor are winning wars by taking journeys... by disbanding, by going home, by leaving. They don't ever have to retreat: they disperse, they disappear into the hills, they become invisible, they fall down the rabbit hole. There is no New Jerusalem, now ... there is only walking.

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