

For Your Consideration (An Introduction to Walking With)

Walking With

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Walking is the constraint. When you walk, you keep one foot on the ground, always. Two feet off the ground and you're jumping. With one foot on the ground, you can move in three directions: forward, backward, sideways. If you move sideways in the 'wrong' direction, you move across. That's walking: one foot at a time. (Manning, 2012, p. 29)

On November 9, 2016, we took a walk. The authors did not take a walk. Rather the "we" referred to in this instance is a large public forest-park and all that it is contained within it (vegetal, grass, tree trunks, trees, animals, insects, and so on), the sun, the air, a camera, and at least two humans. Simply put, the walk was a "walking in/with the world: the only kind of walking" (p. 29).

The video was to be viewed alongside Nordstrom's (2016) workshop about habits and concepts in qualitative research at the Summer Institute of the Antipodes 2016 (Sydney, Australia). Plascencia read the paper for the workshop and brought a camera to the walk. Prior to the walk, the humans discussed what we wanted the video to do. We wanted to articulate the idea that "habit operates as a choreographic tool. It directs our movement, organizes our time, makes experiences predictable, framing it in ways that are usually associated with comfort and well-being" (Manning, 2016, p. 89). We wanted to take the habit and concept of walking and disrupt it to visually manifest the idea that "habit was never quite as stable as it seemed" (Manning, 2016, p. 89). Habits—just like the habitual movements of walking—are never stable and are always created with-in the world.

We began with a semi-choreographed walk. While the walk itself had a beginning and ending, Nordstrom moved as she pleased. However, we were both unsatisfied with the product when

we viewed it. A grassy area called to us and we walked with it. Plascencia put a string around his lens and followed Nordstrom. We walked with the grass, the sounds of it underneath our feet, the light from the sun. We took a brief video and reviewed it. Walking with and having no choreography to the walk suited us and what we wanted the video to do. We then walked with the world. We did only one take of the video, the link to which follows at the end of this introduction. We sat on logs and watched the video together. In between exclamations of “yes...” and comments about how light, movement, and sound walked with in the video, we realized that we could not recreate the walk again. The walking-with video, we realized, was singular. Another walking-with would create a different walking-with. The video was an event, an actualization of the experience of walking-with the world full of indeterminate minor gestures (Manning, 2016).

As we walked with, we realized we created movement. Manning (2012) wrote, “Walking relationally means: when you walk into the hole, you walk-with. Walking-with is more than taking a step, it is creating a movement” (p. 30). This movement is co-compositional, creates affects, and not-yet potentials. Manning explained:

The [land] becomes *configuring* as the body *recomposes*. There is no “body itself” here because the body is always more than “itself,” always reaching toward that which it is not yet. The not-yet takes form through the intensities of preacceleration that compel recompositions at the level of both strata, the body and the [land]. What this means is that both body and space are experienced as alive with potential movement. The body-[land] series takes an on infinite variety of potential velocities. These velocities take form at certain intervals, remaining virtual at others. The body-[land] stratum is therefore neither object nor form, but infinite potential for recombination. (p. 15)

The video has neither subject nor object. The video disorients a walking-with the world that materializes a co-composition of both human and nonhuman in the world. These co-compositional movements ebb and flow with potential.

The video is an event, a “becoming-event [that] creates a memory that feeds into future movement... [a walking] the not-yet” (Manning, 2012, p. 25). In this contribution, we seek not to focus on Nordstrom’s (2016, 2017) workshop paper or article. Rather, we focus on walking-with the world (Manning, 2012) and what an articulation of this walking-with might do for viewers of the video. In this way, the video seeks to provoke different thoughts, thoughts in action (Manning & Massumi, 2014), thoughts that vibrate with potential. As such, we are very much interested in what the video-becoming-event *does* for viewers.

While Manning and Massumi (2014) use the following to describe an example of the ebb and flow of movement in a subway-office-crowded sidewalk, we use it here to invite viewers into the movements of the video. They wrote:

In the ebb and flow, temporary openings come and go. Your perception is focused on the coming and going of the openings, which correspond to no *thing* in particular. Each opening is a field effect. It is an artifact of the moving configuration of the bodies around you, factoring in their relative speeds, and their rates of acceleration and deceleration as their paths weave around each other and around obstacles. The opening is not simply a hole, a lack of something occupying it. It is a positive expression of how everything in the field, moving and still, integrally relates at that instant. It is the

appearance of the field's relationality, from a particular angle. The particular angle is that of your body getting ahead. The opening is how the field appears as an affordance for your getting-ahead. Your movement has to be present to the opening as it happens. Wait, and the opening closes. Its perception and your moving into it must be one. There is no time to reflect, no time to focus, assess and choose. (p. 9)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=urQnghn_0R0&t=33s

References

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Author-Artist Biographies

Susan Naomi Nordstrom is an assistant professor of educational research specializing in qualitative research methodology at The University of Memphis. She received her PhD from The University of Georgia. Her research agenda includes post-structural and post-humanist theories about subject-object relations, ontology, arts-based research, and qualitative research methodology.

O. Gustavo Plascencia is a visual artist and educator whose creative work explores the constructive nature of identity, the conflict that individuals face building their identities, and the duality—sometimes conflict – between domesticity and utilitarianism, personal and communal, and self and society. Plascencia attended the Escuela de Artes Plasticas “Ruben Herrera” in Saltillo, Mexico before immigrating to the USA and he holds a MFA in Photography and New Media from the University of Colorado-Boulder and a BFA in Photography from the University of Texas at Arlington. Plascencia’s work has been shown nationally and internationally including: Instituto Fotografico de Medellin, The International Center of Bethlehem, The Polytechnic University of Valencia, Academia de Bellas Artes San Carlos, Galleria Le Logge and the Raphael Mihailov Exhibition Hall. He is currently the Director of MFA Programs and an Associate Professor of Art at Memphis College of Art.