

The Exotic Terrains – *grounding critical walking practice in the post-Anthropocene*

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Abstract

This paper discusses creative practice research which seeks to access specific forms of “earth-bound” knowledge in the post-Anthropocene. By illuminating critical walking methodologies as a means to access the direct encounters with an entanglements field of material, discourse and agency, I look for strategies towards creative responses to problematizing this epoch, not simple problem solving. With a focus on movement and landscape, in particular walking, the paper will discuss strategies coming from creative walking practice, which embed walking within the spatial-temporal realm of the ‘environmental crossings’ of climatic change and earth system collapse. This is offered in an alternative to typical design approaches to these dilemmas, which see the environment as a problem to be solved, and seek moral responses of guilt, fear and resulting paralysis. I gesture towards walking to locate the *thought place* or *places* where we might encounter the socio-ecological concerns in non-binary response terms. Here, I will attach a focus on affect to shift the perception of ourselves as bounded entities in the world to bodies as assemblages and processes. Walking can access the sensitive zones of earthly contemplation brought to light through creative practice, as praxis offers up modalities for accessing new onto-epistemologies which must be encountered in the medium of landscape itself. Sensitive zones are places of acute sensorium and thought space, in

which complex entangled ontologies and epitomes might be known. They exist somewhere between affect and transcendence through both corporeal and incorporeal transformations.

KEYWORDS: walking, post-Anthropocene, onto-epistemology

Introduction

*You Are a Force of geology.
And you should have acted
And you did not
so you freeze up. This is why performance is essential.*

Bruno Latour

‘On Sensitivity Arts, Science and Politics in the New Climatic Regime’
(Latour, 2016 #21;)

In my creative practice research, I am drawing from a number of theoretical arguments and artistic practices. Primarily walking practices and walking methodologies coming from land art practitioners working in the late 1960s to 1970s to more contemporary walking practices, which will be discussed in the following sections. And I am also gathering in from the Environmental Humanities, an overarching group which includes, to name a few, cultural geography, eco-criticism and eco-philosophy. The main intention of this discourse is to expose the ontological entanglements of our emerging environmental condition by bridging knowledge forms between science and humanities and mapping fields of ontological entanglements as a means to collapse the false binary of nature/culture and to locate the agential relationship of things to things. The agency that I hope the walks can locate, is that which un ‘freeze’ us, to refer to Bruno Latour in the above quote. Performative action by its very *moving-toward* things and away from things, sets us through our senses into a material and mental field of encounter with the world.

My formal training is in the discipline of Landscape Architecture, which I also teach in. I am undertaking a PhD by practice. I foreground this as it informs the way that I approach a critical walking methodology. My disciplinary knowledge also underlies my concern in climate change and earth system collapse and in bridging the space between the arts and sciences. Landscape architecture was traditionally a pictorial practice, borne out of

painting and poetry and other similar European romantic philosophical traditions from the 17th century onwards. With the advent of the ecological movement, following the available of aerial photography, the discipline emerges as one of cartographic empiricism for environmental goals. Now, it sits somewhere between a constructivist and positivist project, where like many design discipline aesthetics and pragmatism must coexist. I will not continue with this line of thought any further in the body of the paper, however you will notice that many of the themes I will illuminate from theory and practice draw variously on these. With the understanding that this is a creative practice research conference, I will not be further discussing these disciplinary terms, but will revisit this point in the conclusion.

Exotic Terrains

Before a discussion of the theoretical and philosophical underpinning of practice, I would like to frame this paper through a geologic phenomenon. Many creative practitioners working in the space of the Anthropocene, of course, refer to the geologic as a means to mine deep temporal material narratives. The immensely vast time scales of the geologic earth, offer up numerous entry points into ontological shifts towards the material self. Discussed through the practice examples, later in the paper, will be different ways that this tool might manifest within the walking methodology.

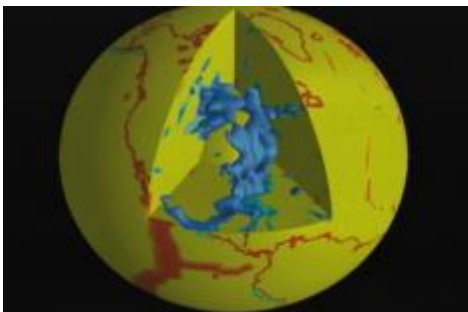


fig 1. The Farallon plate, hidden and stuck within the center of the earth (Snodgrass, #70)

An exotic terrain is a term used by geologists to explain the phenomena in the landscape

of large segments of strata, which seem to be alien to the country rock in which they sit. They are materially and formally foreign. Appearing as a complex and diverse 'geological potpourri', it was once hypothesised that they must be the result of cosmic or divine intervention. Continental Drift Theory, emerging in the late 1970s, illuminated the ability of crustal fragments to "roam" thousands of miles from their origin and fetch up, 'crumpled, against an exotic shore'. The exotic terrain was understood as gigantic pieces of strata which had come loose from the mantle and wandered to some new resting places. They are similar to glacial erratic rocks, ones that have wandered from their original location of production (E et al., 1941). "Erratics" take their name from the Latin word *errare* (to wander). There are performative landscapes, carrying out a processional occultation across the earth, with no sense of a true origin or a geographic location. These landscapes are met at thresholds with other geologic bodies and suture themselves temporally to more stable formations. Here they can do two things: one is to remain attached as visible 'other' to the surrounding country rock. Or they can suture themselves to other orogenic belts, and move even further across the globe, or even inflect themselves inwards towards the core, where they will liquefy and reach the extreme heat within the inner mantle of the earth. Geologists are still unclear as to why certain terrains stop moving and some continue on to other movement belts. An example of this is the Farallon Plate (fig. 1), which began sub-ducting when Pangea broke apart at the end of the Jurassic, becoming dislodged and stuck in the center of the earth. I find this story useful for two reasons: first, it points to thinking of landscape as an in-formation process, the slow temporal coming together and pulling apart of all matter and subjects. Secondly, as the exotic terrains are wanderers, they gain a subjectivity through a sense free will or agency or agential potential as Karen Barad (1986 #81) would describe it, more of a relationship to agency and not as something that one 'owns' or 'has', in the unknown nature of their 'choice' to stay put or keep moving.

Practice opens up the landscape, which then opens up practice

Emerging from a diverse range of creative practices can be perceived a contemporary drive to reconsider nonlinear relationships of time, the corporeal and materiality. This could be seen as axiomatic of a new inquisitiveness into the deep temporality and material flows put forward in the Anthropocene hypothesis. It is evidenced in the overwhelming concentration of creative practices which are focused on the exigency of

climate uncertainty and impending earth system collapse. With a greater understanding of our implicit participation in such impending planetary disasters, creative practice modalities which can approach both the poetics and the politics of ecological enmeshing have gained in numbers. In these practices and theories, ‘ecologies’ are composed of material, phenomena and discourse, intercepted by practices and actions. I will discuss later how an affective and new-materialist thinking becomes useful in shifting ontologies from bounded individual entities towards considering bodies as entangled assemblages and fields of forces relations. Through this paper I wish to join theory from the environmental humanities with walking methodologies and performance, attending the call from Bruno Latour regarding the essential nature of performance in locating our agency to act *with* and *within* the very *climate of fear* towards the climate crisis. I would also like to extend these two themes into Yousef and Gabrys (Gabrys & Yusoff, 2012) ‘environmental crossings,’ the making of work within the very forces of the material earth with which you which to draw attention to, and in the case of this argument this becomes even more acute when in the landscape itself. By throwing ourselves into the world, and asking “can you feel this change? can you sense your own force?”, walking draws us closer and throws us further into the world. Here material and phenomena gain agency in uncovering multiple human and more-than-human narratives of place.

Towards the Many Moods of the Climate Crisis

To begin to unpack critical walking methodology, as a means to access specific shared environmental knowledge of epoch(s) and the landscapes on which they play out, the paper aims to articulate the ways in which creative practice researchers work directly in landscape, as a critical space for the contemplation of socio-environmental challenges. This of course encompasses a multitude of practices and practitioners, and a survey of these is not intended here. Instead I wish to position my practice as I am essentially a landscape practitioner, who makes in landscape with the very medium of landscape as my primary material of making. This ‘contemplation’ in landscape offers a counter to ‘reaction’, invites responses on the binary of optimism or pessimism, the former intended to achieve a perceived possible mitigation and the later to offer up a nihilistic denial all of evidence of this changing planet and our agency in its change. The climate historian Dipesh Chakrabarty calls for work which can reconcile the many ‘moods’ (Chakrabarty,

2017) of climate responses, asserting that in order to come to terms with our implications as geologic agents we need to develop an ‘epochal consciousness’, suggesting that to consider ourselves as geologic and as emplaced within the deep time and planetary space of the earth, there should be more than an aesthetic desire, but also a political imperative. This latter, also makes possible a scientific literature which both naturalizes ‘humanity’ and locates and exhumes multiple human and more-than-human narratives of places, which are held within the ground, awaiting unearthing.

Environmental Crossings

Jennifer Gabrys and Kathryn Yusoff (Gabrys & Yusoff, 2012) use the term ‘environmental crossing’ refer to making through and with the very material and physical parameters towards which a creative practitioner working in the eco-aesthetic space is seeking to draw encounter. They give the example of ice, which carries the narrative for 0° (degrees). For them it holds the “narrative of the threshold, the melting a pervasive and nearly predictable icon of climate. a sign of complete earth system shut down”. They give the example of a work *Greenhouse Britain*, a project by Helen Mayer Harrison and Newton Harrison, 2007. Their encounter is not fully embodied, still remaining abstracted through an interface of publication or exhibition. Still they draw attention to working with the thresholds and physical parameters of material to tell stories which cross ontologies. I extend this idea of *environmental crossings* to an actual encounter within environments, and an actual crossing of the thresholds through embodied action. The very field of relations that landscape provides is a constructed sense of nature rife with forces that cannot be encountered solely through the sensing body but through discourse and language. When creative practice operates in landscape, it can build an empathy with non-human agents and entities, as creative works happen in duration in the spatiotemporal. As a way of making knowledge, creative practice is best poised to access specific earth-bound knowledge through both embodied and empirical means. The idea of a *vector* is useful here, not only as the sense of a line that we can walk and a line that can be drawn, but also in the sense that one might *make something a vector* and locate its agential potential.



**fig 2 . Earth as thin skin; critical zone
(Latour., 2016 #71)**

Meetings and Mutations

Taking ‘crossings’ to Brian Massumi’s notion of ‘meetings and mutation’ (Massumi, Buckley, & Zagala, 2003), where disciplinary episteme meets between the worlds of science and art (and others). They clash and collide and entangle, or as to say they were already entangled, and here perhaps their entanglement becomes better illuminated. This is what Karen Barad might suggest as ‘diffractively reading’ (Barad, 2003) between forms of knowledge which do not share an epistemology. Like the environmental crossings, ‘meetings and mutation’ happen not as singular bounded bodies or discourses, but in a field. Bruno Latour extends this notion even further; in his *New Climatic Regime* (Latour, 2016), he discusses the three aesthetics of science, politics and the arts, as individually being deficient to grapple with the various natures of climate uncertainty, which he puts down specifically to deficiencies in sensitivity. In the context of this thinking, creative practice can operate *into new* fields and in-between fields, not as field-work for any empirical investigation, but to see what happens in the sensitive zones where geologic events collide with modes of human occupation.

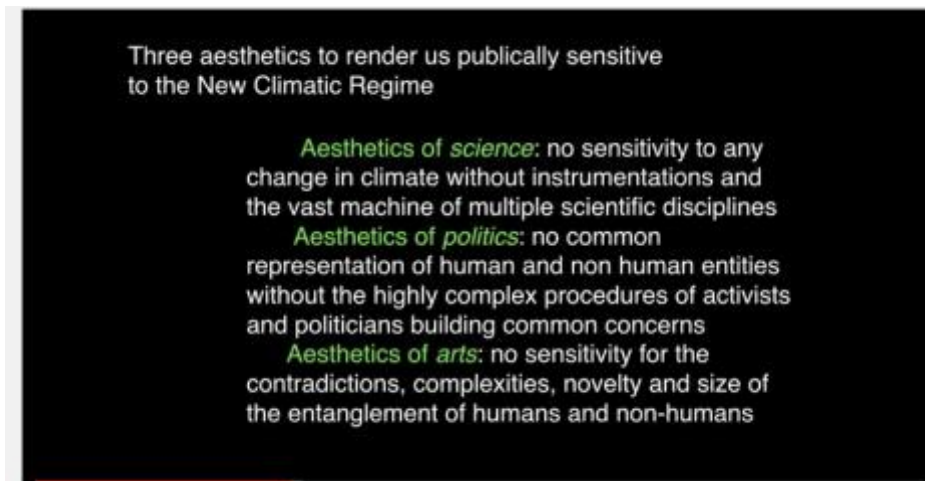


fig 3. Latour, B. (2016). *On Sensitivity: Arts, Science and Politics in the New Climatic Regime*. (Latour., 2016 #71)

Walking as critical framing of landscape

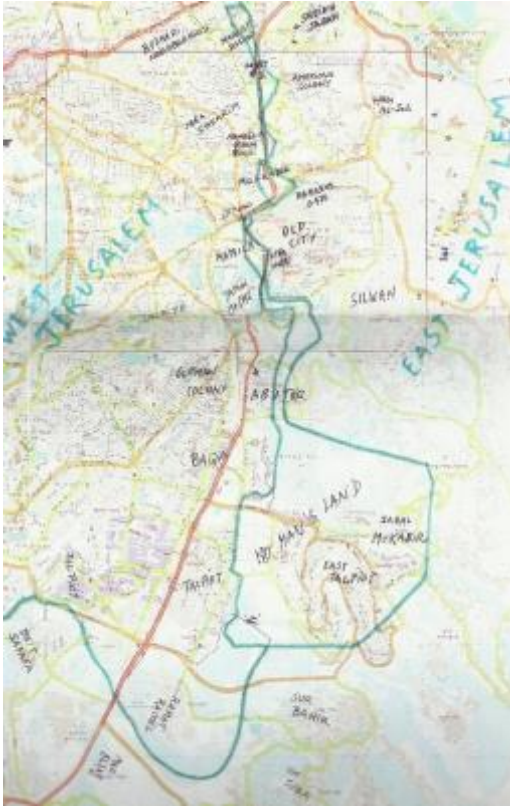
Walking as a critical creative practice comes to us primarily from land art practitioners working in the United Kingdom in the late 1960s to 1970s, belonging to a tradition of walking as art, more specifically as a spatial sculptural practice. This came with the departure, effected through abstract expressionism, from art-as-object to an ‘unbounded investigation into the relationships between ideas, act and the material world’, emanating from a call from the performance artist Alan Kaprow. A clear and familiar example here would be British artist Richard Long’s, “A Line Made by Walking”, 1967, also the work of Hamish Fulton. In 1973, having walked 1,022 miles in 47 days from Duncansby Head to Land’s End, he resolved to ‘only make art resulting from the experience of individual walks.’ He stated ‘If I do not walk I cannot make a work of art’ (Fulton, Messner, d, Hapkemeier, & Vettese, 2005). Here walking made several translations in meaning and framing, from everyday activity to performance to sculpture and back again. Whatever its place in the lineage of art making, it is the relationship between landscape and the walker which remains most co-productive.

Although much of this thinking which influenced the Land Art walking practices emerges from psycho-geographic theory, I am not specifically or directly employ thinking, such as that of the Flâneur in my work. Stephanie Springgay and Sarah Truman suggest why these theories might not be so helpful for a socio-ecological inquiry, stating that most

theories of embodiment and movement put forward the individual and undivided self which is counter to the affectual body in a field of non-hierarchy force relations (Stephanie Springgay, 2017). It is land art walking practices which best situate the present concerns, in their use of cartographic artifacts and their tendency towards spatial, material and temporally orientated thinking, and which derive from working with conceptual frameworks emerging from critical Anthropocene studies that are focused on the temporal flows of the material earth, as the carriage of earth-bound knowledge. The practice to be discussed below suggests walking as a spatial, materially and temporally contingent activity, which surveys and constructs meaning in landscape.

Rebecca Solnit, in *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* (Solnit, 2002), states that like eating or breathing, walking as a universal act can be imbued with different cultural meanings, and therefore constituting political statements. Catherine Harris, on embarking upon one of her performative transects, offers an anecdote regarding Roman soldiers; trained to count their steps as they walked, so that this would survey the newly conquered land, as they marched. This gesture was a two-fold action of imperialistic advance and a projected Euclidian survey. The soldier, in projecting himself forward, makes the very map that will in time 'legitimise' his actions and occupation of that land.

Francis Alÿs walking works often directly seeks to subvert the hidden, temporality-extruded spatiality of landscape. He does this through working with archival material, often cartographic in nature, to look for invoiced vectors, revealing their agential relationships, if only for the duration of the work; the walking then remains a record of this temporal folding. His 2009 work "The Green Line" begins with Alÿs standing on a freeway easement, an escarpment above a busy freeway in an Israeli Jewish settlement. He opens a can of green paint and begins to walk and drip the paint as he moves. The paint's impact with the sandy, gravelly ground is awkward and uneasy, and the line waivers from side to side as Alÿs maneuvers the rough terrain.



**fig 4 . Francis Alÿs, *The Green Line 2004, Jerusalem - Cartographic Study for Green Line*
In collaboration with Philippe Bellaïche, Rachel Leah Jones, and Julien Devaux.
(Francis Alÿs, 2004 #72)**

The Green Line is tracing a vector, a frontline during fighting in the area between December 1947 to June 1948. The next frame of the video is a 120,000 scale historic map from the time of the battle. The green of the paint here is revealed as the green line which marked this front line, the ‘grease of which the pencil measures 3-4 millimeter wide’, Alÿs asks the question, who has ownership of the width of the line.



The Green Line

In 1995, Alys realised an action in São Paulo called *The Leak* in which he walked from a gallery, around the city, and back into the gallery trailing a dribbled line from an open can of blue paint. This action was reprised in 2004 when he chose to make a work in Jerusalem. Using green paint, Alys walked along the armistice border, known as 'the green line', pencilled on a map by Moshe Dayan at the end of the war between Israel and Jordan in 1948. This remained the border until the Six Day War in 1967 after which Israel occupied Palestinian-inhabited territories east of the line. Though palpably absurd, and greeted by onlookers with some bewilderment, Alys's action of dribbling green paint behind him raised the memory of the green line at a time when the separation fence, seen in his paintings here, was under construction to the east of the green line. He later encouraged various commentators from Israel, Palestine, and other countries to reflect on his action, and their voices, sometimes sceptical, sometimes approving, can be heard while the video of his action is screened. Most importantly Alys wanted to ask what the role of poetic acts could be in highly charged political situations, while acknowledging that the relation of poetics to politics is always contingent.

The Green Line (Sometimes doing something poetic can become political and sometimes doing something political can become poetic). 2004

**fig 5. Francis Alys, *The Green Line 2004, Jerusalem*
In collaboration with Philippe Bellaïche, Rachel Leah Jones, and Julien Devaux.
(Alys, 2004 #73)**

In Catherine Harris, *Transect Collaborative* (Cebolla Canyon, NM, 2009), she cuts a section line through a scrubby canyon landscape with a group of fourteen participants. By walking an 'almost' perfectly straight line, the work seeks to subvert the Cartesian logic of cartographic representations of the site. As provocation, the group before they walk contemplate a 1765 ordinance drawing, which surveyed a Native Indian reservation on the site, a set of three lines which truncated the pre-European nature of the site, as it had been known and co-formed over hundreds of years.



**fig 6. Harris, Catherine, *Transect Collaborative*, 2009 (Cebolla Canyon, NM)
(Harris, 2009 t, on Vimeo. #74)**



fig 7. Hester, Bianca. Walking a lava flow (production still), 2015
(<https://vimeo.com/135210558>)
(Hester, 2015 #75)

Bianca Hester's "Walking a lava flow (production still)", 2015, traces a line walked through the city of Auckland, New Zealand. The walk was proposed as a drawing and an observation of the different temporalities, and the embodied measurements of distance, which exist within the city and through time. The walk, which traced the course of a lava flow from an eruption some 28,500 years, becomes enfolded through the walkers' movements. Hester often makes use of cartographic instruments upon her walks, as a means to elicit new encounters with the landscape as the group walks. In considering *multiplicities* of movement, measurement and material, Hester's practices offer up a critical appraisal of walking practice and its capacity to subvert Cartesianism in the Post-Anthropocene, where shifts in ontology and episteme might move us beyond post-Enlightenment thinking, which proposes 'Man' as the self-appointed measure of all things (Banerji & Paranjape, 2016) For Albert Einstein, the measurements of the clock – seconds, minutes, hours – was time itself. However, for his contemporary Henri Bergson, the clock was but one of a multiplicity of measurements of time. There, empathy towards the earth can be encountered through the body moving through the landscape, considering the moving body as a counter, similar to the Roman soldier counting his steps as he marches forward into newly conquered lands. The practice asks the question of how can this action of measuring time be subverted and made anew, through considering the slow temporality of the earth, cushioning the predominant western hurried sense of immediacy and a future focused conception of time, which is empirical and only quantifiable. By considering knowledge *interferences*, which further enable the collapse of the false nature/culture binary, the practice here is to reflect upon Rosi Braidotti's hint towards *measurements* as becoming re-appropriated in the Post-Anthropocene (Braidotti & Braidotti, 2013), delivering novel agencies for the Post-Human.

In considering how walking practices might produce turns towards a greater engagement with the earth, we note that Spinoza points to two entities that we as humans possess within us. The first is the sensing body, which is always ‘immersed and immanent’ (Klingan, Sepahvand, Rosol, & Scherer) The second is an entity that emerges as a system in which mind, body and agency operate as a continuum, implying that it is a sensate- and onto-epistemology to borrow Barad’s term. These walking practices seek a more nuanced and harder-to-locate stratum (Deleuze & Guattari, 1993), ‘gathered into the geologic as a form of collective material subjectivity’. They go on to extend this function as having a feedback into our collective subjectivity and bodily responses to the world. In this case, the sensorium of walking, the haptic sensation of the ground beneath the foot or the body thrust into the weather world, is equally as important as the thinking mind which processes these sensoria. Rebecca Solnit offers here a useful note: ‘Walking (ideally) is a state in which mind, body and the works are aligned, as [if] they were three characters finally in conversation with each other, three notes finally make a chord’ (Solnit, 2002). Language, and image can provide ways to illuminate thought and discourse in the walk, taking it away from a pure embodied encounter with the world, to movements through enmeshed and entangled fields.

The paper will now discuss three walks carried out in locations in Australia, on Maria Island, Tasmania and in North Melbourne and South Melbourne. The walks are public walks usually comprising a group of about 6-10 participants. Some engage members of the publics and some are made as collaboration with other artists and designers. The walks often happen very early in the morning. Each walk uses writing and mappings, as ‘hinges’ into and out of the walks. Opening up points of conversation and pause and producing moments for more acute co-formation between landscape and practice, environment and knowledge.

Walk : 01

Island Walk

Island Walk (2016). Hobart: UTAS - University of Tasmania. PSi Performance+Design Working Group (PSi_P+DWG)

Made in collaboration with Dr Justy Phillips, Dr Fernando Quesada, Dr Jacquie Naismith, Dr Maria Kunda

This walk was situated upon a confluence of Triassic, Jurassic and Permian sedimentary and intrusive rock, which formed over 44 million years ago. As we walked, these rocks had also walked, travelling at the slowest rate imaginable, but they moved nonetheless. The average walker will walk at 5.0 kilometers per hour, eroding the ground beneath them at a minuscule and variable rate, similar to that of the massive dolerite intrusions, which extrude themselves upwards from the center of the earth. Participants followed a ficto-critical travelogue, which navigated and narrated a network of geologic boundaries, faults, sills, inclines and synclines, wandering, as the rocks themselves do, at different speeds and tempos. The writing was choreographed to reveal a folding of the tempos of the walking and co-formation through rhythms with the deep-paces of the subterranean bodies beneath.

The walk set out at a comfortable hour, 9.00 am. Prepared in advance, was a map of the geology of the island. The map is entitled Geological Atlas of Tasmania 1:50 000 series. Sheet 8512N (77), Maria Island Dept. of Mines; geology by M.J. Clarke, P.W. Baillie. Several key notes had been made on the map, extracting a number of key moments that might be intersected, in particular the Permian limestone. The island has a rich and complex history, as most islands tend to, and was a rich hunting ground of the indigenous inhabitants. We were to walk the known track on the island. By walking with the maps as a method for making, the work sought to subvert the 'Cartesianism' of the map, a type of spatial knowledge that fails to make meaning in the nature/culture collapse of the Anthropocene, where we transverse 'mud' rather than a uniform stratum (Rosel, 2015). Here, collectivised walking traced out vectors in pre-formed spatial landscape knowledge (maps, GIS, words) and retrace these through the shared- discourse of the group as we dislodged the fixedness of the map.



fig 9 *The Permian fossil cliffs (King, 2016 #77)*



fig 10 *walking towards the fossil cliffs (King, 2016 #77)*

The agency of the geologic was potent during this walk, in its power to elicit conversation between disciplines – from concrete works – Māori chiefs – tuberculosis spores – hundreds of thousands of *Eurydesma* sp, the fossil of an ancient clam, abundance in the ancient oceans of the Permian –. We pick them up and study them. One of us knew the name of the ancient clam that dwelled within. Another person suggests they are no longer fossil and have almost transformed into limestone. Another offers up the image of a sea bed at the time of a mass extinction.



Fig 11 Eurydesma fossil, Maria Island (King, 2016 #77)

The material agency of objects in the field elicits knowledge sharing and socialising of the strata (Yusoff, 2016) as material and field come into alignment through language, movement and the walk, revealing in a more acute manner the agency of collective knowledge *co-forming* landscape. We discussed the Eurydesma sp, and underlying geologic fault which has brought these fossils up from a lower hidden stratum. Jacky points out that the tombstone of two Māori chiefs, a husband and wife, banished to the site for their political agency in the Māori resistance wars of the late 18th-century, is made of limestone from the fossils. Margaret then takes us to the concrete works, where the limestone in which my fossils would rest was churned up to make cement for building Hobart. Rebecca Solnit makes the comparison between walking and language, stating that “Language is like a road; it cannot be perceived all at once because it unfolds in time, whether heard or read” (Solnit, 2002). Material flows are encountered through conversation and shared knowledge – both material and immaterial.

Anthropologist Tim Ingold refers to walking as a ‘becoming knowledgeable’ (Ingold, 2010), a knowledge that is produced along movements through the temporal landscape. These movements are initiated through everyday activities without any locatable sense of fixed Cartesian space. The walking practice is not intended to form a spatial body ‘or critical mass’, a type of architecture to be installed into landscape. Rather it is the socio-material potential of moving together through landscape, conversing with one another to produce a dialectical space, where the entangled status of knowledge systems might play out. I refer here to walking, thinking and talking as being productive of what I think of as knowledge interferences. Such, interferences become essential as we move into a post-Anthropocene era, where current Cartesianism and post-Enlightenment thinking are exposed as the scaffold of colonialism, violence and enslavement, of both earthly and

non-western bodies.

The walk drew attention to a sequence of erasures; first to the erasure of the Tyreddeme clan from their ancestral lands, then the Māori chiefs from their island of exile, the Irish convicts, the wombats and so on. Through time and conversation, temporal qualities augmented the encounter with that place, as the strata of the site become unearthed through conversation and collaboration. In the folding of embodied and sensorial encounters with landscape through walking, scientific knowledge of the materiality of site becomes just another formation of such knowledge, just as two people might come together and, through conversation, share with each other their diverse knowledges of the landscape. By producing vectors as we walk and by ‘linguaging’, we make the types of ‘, where the scientific and the mythic can converse with each other. Michel Serres refers to this phenomenon in his *Atlas*.

“We are changing paradigm. In a different way more difficult, subtle and complete, the life and Earth sciences, henceforth put in the center of cognition, take over. They practice a more sharing, open, connected way of knowing, in which he who knows participates in the things he knows, is even reborn from them, tries to speak their language, listens to their voices... The life and Earth sciences are once again sewing together the tear that was separating the subject and its objects. Dare I say they become human from it? Yes.” (Serres & Martorell, 1995)(Serres & Martorell, 1995)

Michel Serres, *Atlas*

(Serres & Martorell, 1995)



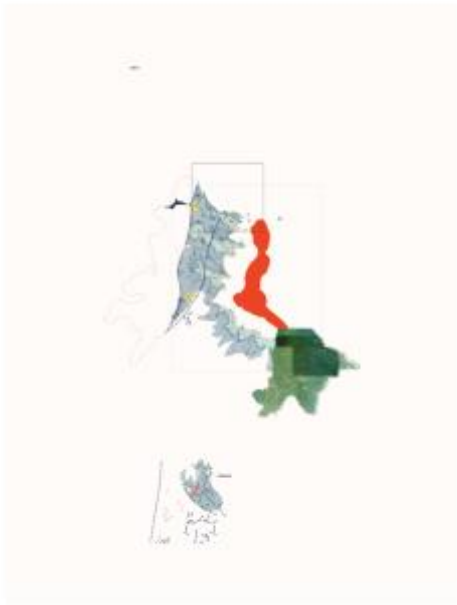
fig 12. Maria Island Geologic Survey (M.J. Clarke, 1981 #78)



fig 13 . Walking toward the fossil cliffs, 2016, Maria Island (King, 2016 #77)



fig 14. *inspecting the map before we commence walking (King, 2016 #77)*



**fig 15. Study for “Make Yourself a Vector”, 2016, Maria Island, Tasmania, King, Louisa
(King, 2016 #79)**

Walk 2: Lagoon Walk

6.45am Thursday 23 July 2016

The intention of this walk was to open up the potential of walking as a way of revealing a site's 'climate'. Climates that had also been erased but which revealed themselves at the micro and macro scales, were explored through the walks. Together with my collaborator Saskia Schut, we proposed one short walk which would approach notions of land and duration. Springgay and Truman, in their summary for theories of embodiment which are relevant to walking methodologies, explain embodiment as lived experience, as a type of bodily response to the physical material and formal qualities of space (Stephanie Springgay, 2017). They draw attention to the relationship of landscape and walking and both the sensual and the tactile. This walk used the sense of equilibrioception and thermoception to draw attention to shifts that occurred in the ground plain as a way to register topographic difference.

Wed 6th July DAY 1: Weather and Events

Outflow

We begin by walking the path of an unnamed creek. We find this unnamed creek on an early topography drawing of Melbourne. It once ran down towards the Port Phillip Bay from a tract of land which is now Princes Park, a relatively high point with a drier micro-climate that would have once been grassy woodland. The walk is intended to follow the datum line of the watershed of the creek. As the leaders of the walk, Saskia and I know our destination; however, we keep this secret from our participants. As we begin to walk, we announce that we are walking the bed an erased creek. The group passes and looks around, and we begin to notice that we are walking in the bottom of a subtle valley. The built environment, so often masks any sense of hydrology systems, accept of course at times of flood. We move as a mass of around 12 people, wandering through the streets of North Melbourne, following the path of the creek. As we pass over storm water drains, we stop and listen to water running underneath us: the creek is covered with street paving and green spaces, but it cannot be fully erased. We pause here and contemplate the life-force of this creek. It still has vitality and presence. We set off again, we feel our bodies

moving downwards, our equilibrioception attuning to the topographic decline as its slopes gently towards the elevation of the bay. We continue to follow contours and sounds until we find ourselves on a football field. We all agreed this felt very much like the lowest point of the creek.



fig 16. *listening for the Unnamed creek* (King, 2016 #77)



fig 17. *original site of Lagoon* (King, 2016 #77)



fig 18. *objects gleaned on Lagoon Walk* (King, 2016 #77)

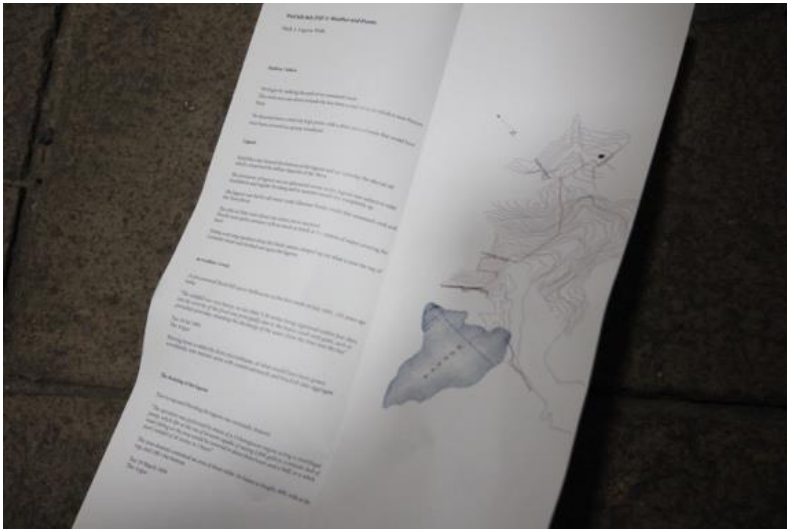


fig 19. Publication for *Lagoon Morning Walk, 2016*. King, Louisa

The Lagoon

We discuss with the group that in this place there once lay a crystal blue lagoon. The lagoon, ephemeral in nature as are most Australia water ways, would flood quite often with as much as 2.1 meters of water covering the land. The Watha Wurrung speakers from the Kulin nation camped up on what is now the top of Lonsdale street and looked out upon the lagoon, which was a great source of food and the place for meetings and corroborees, due to the abundance of food and resources afforded by the lagoon. During summer the lagoon would often dry out. A phenomenal flood fell upon Melbourne in the

first week of July 1891, 125 years today. “The rainfall was very heavy, no less than 5·20 inches being registered within four days, but the severity of the flood was principally due to the heavy south west gales, such as prevailed yesterday, retarding the discharge of the water from the river into the bay”. It was at this point, due to this flood, that the authorities decided to drain the lagoon (Tue 14 Jul 1891, *The Argus*).

The draining of the lagoon

We began to encircle the northern perimeter of the site. Before we began the final leg of the walk we discussed the event of the draining of the swamp. The operation had been performed by means of a 13-horsepower engine acting a centrifugal pump, which lifted at a rate capable of raising 2,000 gallons a minute, so that an inch of water falling on the area would be removed in about three hours and a half, or a whole year’s rainfall of 2 inches in 3 hours. We announce these measurements as we encircled what had been the shrinking shoreline of the lagoon.

By proposing an enfolding of large, complex, urban landscape systems within the small, intimate site of the body, through the senses and through the onto-epistemological shifts that occur through the entanglement of discourse, materials and bodies, “the ontological inseparability of intra-acting agencies”, also movements, of air and of ground and multiple histories, were brought into alignment with movements of our own moving bodies. Walking here provided the means through which to locate flows between bodies, the lagoon, the yabbies which provided edible substance, and the pumps draining the lagoon. With environmental destruction comes cultural destruction, and the activities and location of this walk were intended to set the path of the creek running in to the lagoon as a field, through which we would weave together science, art, and human and non-human narratives of that place. Saskia and I used a number of image and language based suggestions, but we also invited local and non-local knowledge from members of the group, some students, academics and members of the public. We do not preface specific disciplinary or non-academic knowledge in the walks; instead we invite in all suggested points on meaning which might contribute to this archaeology. Elizabeth Grosz has referred back to Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution in which he points towards a relationship between a body and its environment, as in co-formation. She states, “*For*

Darwin, neither life nor the environment in which the living find themselves is a static and unchanging entity; each is subjected both to inner transformation and to a dynamic interchange that perpetually modifies them both." (Grosz, 2008 #32). Practice here can become the agent for an attunement towards these relationships.

Walk 03

Pliocene River Walk

This walk will be discussed to foreground the way language, writing and announcing is used in the walking methodology. We took a group of 6 participants on a walk to transverse the geologic survey of Melbourne. There are five boundaries that we would cross. The walk was 2.3 km. Like the Lagoon walk, we had an intended end point in mind. The intention of the walk was to slowly and gradually take our walkers into deep time. By focussing on the ground and the epoch or era in which it was laid down, we considered the changing environment around us that would have laid down these different materials, marked in colours and hatches on the map in hand. Below is a running sheet and discussion points for the walk. There are four main pauses, where we stop and contemplate as we cross from one epochal boundary to another or, as Chakrabarty might suggest, ways towards developing our "epochal consciousness".

Pause (1) Upper Silurian

silt stone / mud stone

dated as 410 Ma)

The formation descended beneath our feet with a thickness of 3100 meters, where it meets an un-known material, most likely igneous Oldivine which the lower part of the earth's crust is primarily composed of. This 3km is a part of the 'Thin Skin' Bruno Latour refers to when discussing the interface of geology and atmosphere that comprises the site humans occupy on earth. It is a 'Critical Zone' in being an interface between states of liquid, solid and gases that define the planetary condition, but also the agency of our

occupation on the surface that it produces.

During the Silurian, when the material we walk on was laid down, plants had yet to exist. Without plants to stabilise the soil, the Earth was bare and scoured by erosion. A green fringe on the water's edge where we stand, began a slow transformation; a small number of plants developed a revolutionary adaptation – vascularity, or the ability to transport water and nutrients through a network of specialised tissue. The slow events of these transformations are hidden in the 3km + layers of rock below us. As the city develops at its hyper capitalist rate (Melbourne is the fastest growing city in the southern hemisphere), and we excavate more and more of the bed rock of the city to embed car parks for high rise apartments, we pierce these events and their geologic traces.

Australia was part of the supercontinent Gondwana, near the equator with a warm climate. Near the end of the Silurian Period, intense heating of the crust beneath Melbourne 'sweated' gold from deeply buried volcanic rocks into super-hot salty water. This water moved upwards until, near the surface, the gold crystallised out with quartz. This process continued at intervals for another 100 million years, making Victoria one of the world's richest gold provinces.

Pause (2) Brighton Formation

We are standing on what was once materially an ocean bed which has been uplifted at an angle of 13 degrees. This happened in the Late Miocene to Pliocene (dated as 8 to 5 Mya). Below our feet are of more or less horizontally bedded pebble and granule conglomerates (gravels), sands, and clayey sands, extended for 2000 meters. Sandstone pebbles have been derived from Silurian bedrock, the source area probably lying to the north. The Silurian diffuses into this formation. Through deep time these boundaries become ephemerally defined.

Pause (3) Eocene lava flow: basalt

30-55 Mya

Overlying the ancient ocean shoreline, we now pass into the Eocene lava flow, in the form of a thick sequence of basaltic lava. Erupting about 30-55 Mya. The flows erupted from Hamilton and flowed 200km east to rest upon the ground where we stand.

(Pause 4) iron stone, Pliocene river bed

We paused at the transition from marine to non-marine Pliocene sediments, and are crossing the old ocean shoreline to an ancient estuary edge. We walk for another 1.2 km around towards a ridge that embanks a railway cutting. The cutting was made in the 19th Century, as Melbourne expanded due to the economic gains from the world's biggest gold rush. We stand on the top of the ridge, one of the only 'natural', non-anthropologically formed, vantage points in Melbourne. We stand at the elevation of 25 meters above the Moonee Ponds Creek, which is located only 800 meters to the south. We draw our attention to the ground underneath our feet. It is a dark rich red, sandy, compacted loam. We invite our participants to pick up the large white and pink quartz rocks embedded in the red sandy loam, inspecting them closely. We note that they are weathered, round, smooth to touch, as if something gently abrasive has been running itself over the surface of the rock an infinite number of times. Thousands of these rocks lie underneath our feet. These are river stones and we are standing in a Pliocene river bed. We discuss with the group, that where we stand now was once one of the lowest elevations in the city, it has become inverted through time, to be now one of the highest. Collectively we imagine this site during this older time, when the water flowed along this ground and the first hominids were appearing in Africa. The temperatures were cooling around the globe from an extended period of greenhouse effect. Many mammals were becoming extinct. After the deposition of these sediments, the whole Melbourne region was uplifted on the site where we stand, the Pliocene shoreline deposits now lie 25-100 meters above sea level. Once this earth movement had begun, the rivers started to cut into the uplifted rocks and a drainage system developed. A Paleo-channel is a remnant of an

inactive river or stream channel that has been either filled or buried by younger sediment.

Barbara Bender states that “Landscapes refuse to be disciplined” (Bender, 2002) , adding that they undermine the oppositional system we create between the spatial and the temporal as well as the scientific and the cultural. Through writing and ‘linguaging’ during the walk, a type of ‘earthly way of knowing’ or ‘Earthbound Knowledge’ is mined, which serves as a means to reorganize epistemic fields and modes of knowledge transfer, which form and move the Anthropocene, the materialisation of information. One pays reference here to the performative turn, where the power that language has enjoyed in knowledge systems is taken away, if only intermediately. By returning language back into the walk and allowing it to be reformed and spatialised, Merril Swain discusses *linguaging* as playful gestures towards generating and forming language (Swain, 2013). In spatialising words while they are being spoken, a co-formation of landscape with the world is produced which offers up novel potentials for language and landscape to fold into each other.

Conclusion

By reframing landscape as an ‘Exotic Terrain’ (E et al., 1941), and developing practices that can extrude the experience of the land into deep time and planetary space through a shared material and temporal narrative framework, the boundary between subjects and objects, body and earth, can begin to abrade. The project seeks alternatives to predominantly technocratic responses to current earth-system collapse, where knowledge is situated outside of the participant and lies with the authoritative or the expert. Instead, I use spoken words and walking to situate this language back into the landscape, through a type of translation, which locates and situates the walker within the spatio-temporal paradox of deep time. The walking enacts and reforms language, situating it back into the landscape, performing further dialectic maneuvers between sites and epistemes.

I would finally like to end by addressing the relationship between discipline-specific ways of knowing and thinking and the agility that creative practice research offers to making these more plastic and porous to the affectual fields. A question of convention becomes interesting here – as a landscape architect, we are bound to the conventions of our discipline. Within the design discipline, especially landscape architecture and architecture, we talk of climate resilience and ecological adaptation. Creative practice, on the other hand, can work through praxis, more closely at the point of the philosophical inquiry that is needed. Thus creative disciplines can consider working towards a resilience of ourselves as the subject of climate and not only as instrumentalised mitigators. In this sense, creative practice research in refusing disciplinary-specific knowledge is essential in addressing question of climate ontology.

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