

# *Remote Sensing*

*Susan Jahoda*

*Remote Sensing* is an on-going project that entails walking in New York City as an aesthetic and critical practice. I begin by spending one day reviewing the contents of a book that remains central to my studio practice. I then map out a walk to a destination suggested by the book's texts and/or images. Each walk taken is documented with the title of the book, date, time of day, route and destination, recorded thoughts, performances, encounters, and images that I make. The information is then compiled and formatted as a series of pages that, ultimately, will become both a physical and online book.

Elizabeth Grosz, space, time, and perversion

June 30 09 9:45 am

Fulton Street to Times Square

Route: Broadway to Lafayette to Broadway



Demonstration outside Family Court, Lafayette St

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What I am suggesting is a model of the relations between bodies and cities that sees them, not as monolithic total entities, but as assemblages or collections of parts, capable of crossing the thresholds between substances to form linkages, machines, provisional and often temporary sub- or micro-groupings.

...Moreover, the city is also by now the site for the body's cultural saturation, its takeover and transformation by images, representational systems, the mass-media, and the arts - the place where the body is representationally reexplored, transformed, contested, rescribed. In turn, the body (as cultural product) transforms and reinscribes the urban landscape according to its changing (demographic) needs, extending the limits of the city ever towards the countryside that borders it. As

a hinge between the population and the individual the body its distribution, habits, alignments, pleasures, norms, and ideals are the ostensive object of governmental regulation, and the city is both a mode for the regulation and administration of subjects but also an urban space in turn reinscribed by the particularities of its occupation and use.

...there is no natural or ideal environment for the body, no "perfect" city, judged in terms of the body's health and well-being. If bodies are not culturally pre-given, built environments cannot alienate the very bodies they produce. However, what may prove uncondusive is the rapid transformation of an environment, such that a body inscribed by one

cultural milieu finds itself in another involuntarily. This is not to say that there are not uncondusive city environments but rather there is nothing intrinsic about the city which makes it alienating or unnatural. The question is not simply how to distinguish condusive from uncondusive environments, but to examine how different cities, different socio-cultural environments actively produce the bodies of their inhabitants. There are a number of general effects induced by cityscapes, which can be concretely specified in particular cases. In particular we can say that the city helps to orient sensory and perceptual information, insofar as it helps produce specific conceptions of spatiality, orient and organize familial, sexual, and social relations insofar as the city, as much as the state, divides cultural life into public and private domains, geographically dividing and defining the particular social positions individuals and groups occupy.

When I arrived at 42nd Street I asked a stranger to take my photograph while reading page 108-109 of space, time, and perversion.



Times Square

Recorded thoughts along the way:

Walking through the city streets, zigzagging and pausing for traffic. Breathe. Body languages and architecture sensitize me to accessibility, limits, the uninterpretable. Who goes where, there, and why. Capital. Its hallucinatory fabrications traverse the globe with ease, pressing against the flesh, outside inside, inside outside. In this place, at this moment, I am an image gazing at an image. Breathe. Overcome my sense of isolation. Remember. The phantasmagoric has no memory, no lived experience, no collective history.

Charles Simic, *The World Doesn't End*

July 16 09 5:00 pm

Fulton Street to World Trade Center

Route: Rooftop, 139 Fulton St to St Paul's Chapel to Vesey Street to the periphery of World Trade Center site.



*My Feet on The World Doesn't End*



*Drawing on Rooftop, 139 Fulton St*



*Animal Remains, WTC Fence 07/16/09*



*Untitled Photograph, St Paul's Chapel*

page 15 from *The World Doesn't End*  
The city had fallen. We came to a window of a house drawn by a madman. The setting sun shone on a few abandoned machines of futility. "I remember," someone said, "how in ancient times one could turn a wolf into a human and then lecture it to one's heart's content"

*Recorded thoughts along the way:*  
A woman approaches me as i am photographing the animal remains and asks if i have placed them there? "No," I say and then wonder how my answer changes her experience of being there.

*Why are so many security personnel guarding these ruins? It's as if the city is planning for its own attack. It's as if the illusion of a bordered world is still in tact.*

*The height of the viewing holes are for children, perched on their father's shoulders. Standing by one of these tears one can apprehend how media apparatuses narrate and organize the ontology of violent events.*

Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal*

July 23 09 11:30am

Fulton Street to Museum of Natural History

Route: Fulton St to Greenwich St to Christopher St to 7th Ave to Central Park West to The Museum of Natural History

On 7th Avenue and 46th street I stop to photograph a man dressed in a Spiderman costume. I observe him interacting with people, who mostly want to have their photograph taken with him. Spiderman, aka Sergio, later comes over to chat and we exchange email addresses; he'd like copies of the photographs I'm taking.

I learn later, through our correspondence, that Sergio earned \$43 in donations for his labor that day, all of which he donated to the homeless.



Sergio Felipe, Street Performance of Spiderman in his black costume.

I sit down at a table in the pedestrian section of the street and write in my notebook:

Agamben traces Western histories, post Aristotle, of the Anthropological Machine, discourses establishing the boundaries between human animals and mammals, even though no clear biological differences can be found between them. As the inability to find distinct borders becomes increasingly intolerable for humans, internal conflicts between our human and animal selves, and external conflicts between humans and animals are set into motion. The logics of sovereignty/ontological hierarchies lend legitimacy to acts of extraordinary cruelty towards animals. Agamben challenges us to a different imagining of ourselves, a negotiation of biopolitics, an alternative kind of discussion about what it means to "be" human.

I read this passage from "Mysterium disjunctionis," page 16

...if the caesura between the human and the animal passes first of all within man, then it is the very question of man - and of "humanism" - that must be posed in a new way. In our culture, man has always been thought of as the articulation and conjunction of a body and a soul, of a living thing and a logos, of a natural (or animal) element and a supernatural or social and divine element. We must learn instead to think of man as what results from the incongruity of these two elements, and investigate not the metaphysical mystery of conjunction, but rather the practical and political mystery of separation. What is man, if he is always the place - and, at the same time, the result - of ceaseless divisions and caesurae? It is more urgent to work on these divisions, to ask in what way - within man - has man been separated from non-man, and the animal from the human, than it is to take positions on the great issues, on so-called human rights and values. And perhaps even the most luminous sphere of our relations with the divine depends, in some way, on that dark one which separates us from the animal.



Sergio Felipe, Street Performance of Spiderman in his black costume.

background image, Diorama, Birds of the World Hall, Museum of Natural History

*continued ...Giorgio Abamben, The Open: Man and Animal*

*I read a section of text from Chapter 20, Outside of Being, to the monument of Alexander Von Humboldt, located at 77th Street and Central Park West, directly across from the Museum of Natural History.*

*page 91-92*

*Insofar as the animal knows neither beings nor nonbeings, neither open nor closed, it is outside of being; it is outside in an exteriority more external than any open, and inside in an intimacy more internal than any closedness. To let the animal be would then mean: to let it be "outside of being." The zone of non knowledge-or of a knowledge- that is of issue here is beyond both knowing and not knowing, beyond both disconcealing, and concealing, beyond both being and the nothing. But what is thus left to be outside of being is not thereby negated or taken away; it is not, for this reason, inexistent. It is an existing, real thing that has gone beyond the difference between beings and beings.*



*Associated with Humboldt is an undocumented narrative about how in his travels along the Orinoco River he encountered a Carib tribe, whose pet parrots spoke in a different dialect from their own. Humboldt learned from the Caribs that the parrots were taken from the Maypure tribe as spoils of war, the Maypures having been exterminated during this conflict. The parrots, therefore, were the only living beings speaking in a language that would otherwise have been extinct. What is verifiable in Humboldt's journals are forty Maypure words, transcribed phonetically. Humboldt's pet parrot, a female he named Jacob, resides as a specimen in the ornithological collection of the Natural History Museum in Berlin.*



*Background image, Diorama, Birds of the World Hall, Museum of Natural History*

Emma Goldman, *Living My Life*, Volume 2

August 10 2:00pm

Fulton Street to Ferry to Ellis and Liberty Island

Route: Nassau St to Exchange Place to Broad St to Beaver St to State St to Castle Clinton to Ferry dock.

Thinking about returns; the various climates of hysteria in the USA, their differences and similarities. There is something uncanny in Goldman's accounts of the red scare here, two years after the 1917 Russian revolution. She describes the Palmer raids on radicals, named after Attorney General Mitchell Palmer; how the headquarters of Communist and Socialist organizations were raided, union offices closed and, in December of 1919, how she and 248 other resident aliens, were forced to board a ship heading for the Soviet Union.



People gazing out at the Hudson River

*Living My Life*, page 717

"I felt dizzy, visioning a transport of politicals doomed to Siberia, the tape of former Russian days. Russia of the past rose before me and I saw the revolutionary martyrs being driven into exile. But no, it was New York, it was America, the land of liberty! Through the port-hole I could see the great city receding into the distance, its sky-line of buildings traceable by their rearing heads. It was my beloved city, the metropolis of the New World. It was America, indeed America repeating the terrible scenes of tsarist Russia! I glanced up—the Statue of Liberty!"



I meet my friend Susan in the park and she shows me a page in her diary containing a drawing of a recent dream. We talk about how once a nation is named a "rouge state" the naming acts to legitimize the suspension, by other powers, of their own laws, calling for a state of emergency that, since 9/11, we have known as "the war on terror."



Men performing The Statue of Liberty for money in exchange for a photograph.

Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, Dictee  
August 18 09 10:30am  
Fulton Street to The Bodies exhibition, South Street Seaport  
Route: Fulton St



Dictee, Yu Guan Soon, 1903-1920, political activist,  
page 25, pavement South Street Seaport

Before I begin this walk I memorize the lines from Dictee  
page 155: "You remain dismembered with the belief that  
magnolia blooms white even on seemingly dead branches and  
you wait. You remain apart from the congregation."

I repeat this quote until I reach the entrance to the  
exhibition. I do not enter and pay the \$26 entrance fee to  
Premier Exhibitions because of claims that the bodies on  
display are those of tortured and executed Chinese prisoners.



Exhibition announcement on plastic,  
South Street Seaport



Dictee, pavement South Street Seaport



Discarded exhibition announcement  
South Street Seaport



Dictee, pavement South Street Seaport





Maurice Blanchot, *Two Versions of the Imaginary*

August 21, 09 4:15 pm

Fulton St to rooftop at 455 west 34th St

Route: Fulton St to West Street to 34th St

The day is cloudy with periodic rain, and the sky looks particularly yellow. The destination I've chosen for my walk is a friend's rooftop.

Yesterday marked one of the deadliest days this year in Iraq. 95 people were killed and 560 others were wounded by six explosions across Baghdad. USA labor statistics for this month reported 14.9 million people unemployed and findings from a new study on the decomposition of plastics suggests that bisphenol A, thought to disrupt hormone function in both animals and humans, is releasing toxins into ocean water at an alarming rate..

The Two versions page 8

To experience an event as image is not to free oneself of that event, to disassociate oneself from it, as is asserted by the aestheticists of the image and the serene ideal of classical art, but neither to merge oneself with it through a free decision: it is to let oneself be taken by it, to go from the region of the real, where we hold oneself at a distance from things the better to use them, to that other region where distance holds us, this distance which is now unliving, unavailable depth, an inappreciable remoteness become in some sense the sovereign and last power of things.



cockroach drinking rainwater, rooftop, 455 west 34th St

*continued Maurice Blanchot, Two Versions of the Imaginary*

