The art of walking in Australian contemporary practice

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Research.

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Abstract

This thesis explores walking as a dynamic and vital physical practice in the production of contemporary Australian visual art. In the tradition of Charles Baudelaire's evocation of the *flâneur* as adapted by Walter Benjamin and late twentieth-century artists, the research explores two aspects of the intersection of art and walking in an urban context; it critically evaluates artistic output created as a consequence of the performative act of walking; and it examines visual art that involves walking as its major component. The question that unites these two fields of inquiry and addresses a gap in the current knowledge is one that asks how the immediate physical experience of walking has reinvigorated the artistic creative process.

An interdisciplinary critical analysis of specific art practices focuses on three Australian contemporary artists. Although they work in various media and via a broad choice of subjects, Noel McKenna, Daniel Crooks and Lauren Brincat have each produced work that is a consequence of walking. Each employs a different mode of walking practice or performance. The thesis contends that the links between art and walking practices play an increasingly important role in Australian contemporary art, and reveals the broader implications of this connection.

Statement of Candidate

I certify that the work in this thesis *The art of walking in Australian contemporary practice* has not previously been submitted for a degree nor as part of the requirements for any degree at another university or institution other than Macquarie University. I certify that this thesis is original research and has been written by me. Any help and assistance that I have received in my research work and thesis preparation have been appropriately acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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Introduction

This story begins on ground level – with footsteps...
– Michel De Certeau, *Walking in the City*.

"Walking is a fundamental universal activity, the basis of locomotion through the world for human beings" (Moorhouse in Long 2002 :33). This quotation, which derives from an essay in Richard Long's *Walking the Line* (2002), is typical of many that speak about walking as the most elemental of human characteristics. Walking is not merely an accomplishment of the feet, but is one relished by the whole body in motion (Ingold and Verngust 2008: 2) and is as much a product of the feet as of body and the mind. Walking is, therefore, "a way of thinking and feeling" (Ingold and Verges 2008 :2). While the relationship between walking and the arts is one that has existed through time, as contemporary art has become further entwined with life the exploration by artists of this vital connection has recently accelerated.

In 2013 the Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art in Sunderland, United Kingdom (UK) held an exhibition entitled *Walk On – 40 Years of Art Walking from Richard Long to Janet Cardiff* [1]. The exhibition, offering an "as-yet-unwritten history of art and walking practice", presented the work of more than 40 artists from the UK and elsewhere who made their work by undertaking some kind of journey on foot (*Walk on* 2013 – NGCA). Spanning more than four decades, *Walk on* was the first exhibition of its type held in the UK. The exhibition highlighted the relationship between contemporary art, artists' practice and walking produced during recent decades. Notwithstanding this particular focus on the relationship between art and walking, walking remains an underrated activity in the world of contemporary art.

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[1] The exhibition *Walk On: From Richard Long to Janet Cardiff – 40 years of walking* took place at Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art, Sunderland, United Kingdom from 1 June to 31 August 2013. An associated conference 'On Walking' was held at the University of Sunderland on June 28 and 29, 2013.

Aim

This thesis articulates the argument that despite its reputation as an overlooked practice in Australia, the 'art' of walking has reinvigorated Australian contemporary art and artists. The thesis demonstrates how that as the practice of contemporary art becomes more intimately involved with everyday life, the exploration of the everyday through the medium of walking results in surprising connections between the two fields. It identifies them as less distinct and more dependent practices than once imagined. In doing so, this thesis contends that despite the parallel involvement of Australian artists with global artistic practices in exploring this vital relationship, the link between the two practices of art and walking is one that is yet to be fully acknowledged or explored in academic writing on contemporary Australian art.

In discussing the connections between art and walking made by Australian visual artists, this thesis focuses on art made in the urban setting and demonstrates how walking acts as a conduit for artists to explore the contemporary city.

The research aims to demonstrate that walking in the urban setting is a dynamic and vital physical practice in the production and expression of contemporary Australian visual art. Following an overview of the relationship between art and walking, the thesis identifies three specific art practices where walking has been employed by artists as a device to make contemporary art in the urban context; evaluates the work created by those artists; and by examining how the practice of walking is reflected in their work, reveals how walking inspires new ways of thinking about the world. As Waxman (2011) observes: "Unlike more specialized artistic tactics, this [walking] is one always available to the able-bodied person. Sometimes it takes an artist, however, to rethink the familiar and demonstrate its as-yet-unimagined capacities" (11).

Through its examination of artworks that have been facilitated by walking, the thesis reveals the merit and potential of walking as a means by which life and culture in the urban context can be more readily understood.

Approach

This thesis brings together two cultural activities (that of art and walking) to address a lacuna in Australian art theory. In doing so, it adopts an interdisciplinary approach to the thesis topic. Although it is contended that the act of walking as an aesthetic practice has existed for thousands of years and, indeed, that artists have been making art about walking for at least the last century (Careri 2002 :20), the two practices are not often linked in Australian academic writing or in studies of Australian contemporary art. Despite the lack of attention to the topic, numerous examples are available to demonstrate that Australian artists have made links between the two practices in their work. [2]

While walking is an automatic function performed by the human body – and therefore a potential subject for study in anatomy, biology and other disciplines in the natural and health sciences – the thesis focuses on walking as a product of, or inspiration for, the making of contemporary visual art. Walking's cultural history, moving "from the Pilgrims to the wandering Japanese poets, the English Romantics and contemporary long-distance walkers", (Long in Moorhouse 2002: 33) means that while the thesis is primarily grounded in the discipline of art history, it takes a broad approach to the topic and calls on (or perhaps more appropriately, traverses) other disciplines including cultural studies, geography, feminist theory and urban planning.

For some time it has been accepted academic practice that not all scholarly research must be situated or contained within a single discipline. The term 'interdisciplinary' is used to indicate that this thesis is situated within two or more academic disciplines. Having regard to the topic, it is contended that the scholarly study of works of art has,

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[2] It is noted that a two-day symposium *Talking the Walk/Walking the Talk* was hosted by the School of Art at the Australian National University in May 2014. This symposium considered the relationship between contemporary art practices and walking and touched on walking in the urban context, although the main focus was on walking and the natural environment.

in any event, become an increasingly interdisciplinary practice (Kraft 1989: 57). Back in 1982, Preziozi noted:

> We are in fact in the midst of changes which have already precipitated the end of art history – and the "art" of art history – as we have known it... We have begun not only to deconstruct received art historical theories and practices...but also to sketch the outlines of a discipline of art study that moves beyond the various art histories in which we have all been trained... (Preziozi in Kraft 1989: 57).

Allowing the thesis to have a discursive connection to a broad range of disciplines produces a more flexible critical framework to consider the extensive role and importance of walking for Australian art and culture. Pink, Hubbard and O'Neill et al. (2010) have noted the "contemporary convergence of theoretical, methodological, art-based, practical and activist engagements... with the oft taken-for-granted practice of everyday life – walking" (6). The possibilities that lie in exploring and considering walking as a fundamental human activity from different perspectives, and with different intents, are a more useful way of thinking about the topic (Pink et al 2010: 6).

The urban context

The siting of this thesis within an 'urban context' necessitates contemplating the parameters of the study. A simple definition of 'urban' is stated as a place, "of, relating to, or comprising a city" while a 'city' is, "a large or important town; a town so nominated" (Macquarie Dictionary 2013). Extending the thesis' broad approach to the topic, this thesis also uses an expansive concept of the 'city' and explores the city as one which is not necessarily confined within specific geographical or social boundaries an area of production, or as a capitalist terrain filled with people and architecture.

Of the scholars that support this idea, Guy Debord's (1958) Situationist *Theory of the Dérive*, notes that urban *dérives* (or 'drifts') "involve playful-constructive behaviour and awareness of psychogeographical effects, and are thus quite different from the classic notions of journey or stroll". For Debord, the term 'psychogeography' meant "a study of the specific effects of a geographical environment, consciously organized or

not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals" (Careri 2002 :97). Consequently, in this thesis, the city is explored as an urban geographical environment that has the potential to generate these effects.

It is also necessary to distinguish the practice of urban walking from walking in nature – as explored in the writing of William Wordsworth, Henry David Thoreau and others and, in particular, from the ideas expounded in Thoreau's well-known essay 'Walking' (Thoreau 1993: 49–74). For Thoreau, walking in nature – "the fields and woods" was the only environment contemplated as a suitable environment for strolling when he asked, "what would become of us if we walked only in a garden or a mall?" – not to mention Thoreau's general disdain for Australia and its inhabitants at the time (Thoreau 1993: 57). By contrast, Walter Benjamin saw the city as the "essential locus of modern capitalism" (Bewley 1997 :101) and suggested that walking the city was the key to understanding it (101).

Any consideration of walking practices by Australian artists is required to acknowledge the extended tradition and culture of Indigenous Australians' dreamings and song paths. While Bruce Chatwin's *The Songlines* (1987) provides a base from which to discuss the relationship between walking and place in Australia, this thesis, which is concerned with the nexus between contemporary art and walking in the urban context, does not aim to involve the Aboriginal tradition, except to keep open for further research the possibility that Morrison's (2012) subsequent argument for "walking's role in the construction of an Australian identity", proposes a parallel stream of ideas to complement any understanding of Australian contemporary art practice (8).

History of walking in the city

In order to situate the thesis within an historical (and art historical) context, the thesis explores the history of ideas surrounding city pedestrianism. The origins of the modern exploration of the city on foot begin with the lyrical poems of France's Charles Baudelaire and his 19th century concept of the man in the street. Baudelaire's poems

subsequently became an important subject for further 20th century discourse in the writings of German philosopher and cultural critic, Walter Benjamin (1999) who shaped the evocative figure of the *flâneur* in response (Kuppers 1999 :310). Despite later issue taken with the character of the *flâneur*, including the maleness of Benjamin's character, (Dreyer and McDowell 2012) Benjamin's emblematic model remains an important foundation for much contemporary thinking on the subject.

According to Careri (2002), three subsequent periods in art history occurred from the 1920s to the late 1960s that served to link seminal artistic 'experiences' in the urban context to walking. They span the years from Dada to the surrealists, the Lettrist International to the Situationist International, and minimal art to land art (Careri :21). Careri (2002) notes that these episodes provide "a history of the roamed city that goes from the *banal city* of Dada to the *entropic city* of Robert Smithson, passing through the unconscious and *oneiric city* of the Surrealists and the *playful and nomadic* city of the Situationists (21)".

Originating in 1920s Paris, the Dada group of artists who formed around artist André Breton (b.1896) discovered that walking was an apt vehicle for their 'anti-art' excursions to the city's banal locations. The group's walking excursions marked the passage from "the construction of an aesthetic action to be effected in the reality of everyday life" (Careri 2002: 70). Some years later – influenced by the writings of Freud's psychoanalysis – a group comprising Breton, Louis Aragon Max Morise and Roger Vitrac, known as a "quartet deambulation", became intent on discovering the unconscious life of the city's (Paris) empty territory – a space that was a metaphoric representation of the unconscious mind. Subsequent surrealist deambulations continued to employ walking as a method of making contact with this otherwise concealed part of the modern city as a place where the sensations of the everyday could be experienced (Careri 2002: 79–88).

By contrast with the Surrealists – whom they saw as having failed to fulfil the possibilities of deambulation – the 1950s decade saw the Lettrist/Situationists led by Marxist Guy Debord reengaged with the 'anti-art' strategies of becoming lost in the

city. The group adopted the *dérive* (or drift) as "an aesthetic political means by which to undermine the postwar capitalist system" (Careri 2002: 88). With the overarching goal of resisting the boredom and monotony of the modern city spectacle, the Situationists embarked on urban drifts which employed dual techniques of studying city terrain – known as 'psychogeography' – while encouraging disorientation of the individual mind to construct revealing 'situations' in everyday realities.

After 1960, a period of revolution in the trajectory of contemporary art and walking arrived when the relationship between the pedestrian act and place assumed closer ties with nature through the work of Britain's Richard Long (b.1945). Long's walking performances in nature (discussed in detail below) – which claimed the experience of walking the landscape as a form of art – were later extended to the city by practitioners including the city pilgrimages and performances of fellow British artist Hamish Fulton, Belgium's Francis Alÿs (b.1959), Yugoslavian-born artist Marina Abramović (b.1946), French artist and writer Sophie Calle (b.1953) and many others.

Having regard to the constraints imposed by the length of this thesis, it is not proposed to examine any of these foundational art movements in further depth, although the respective contributions of both the movements and their contributing artists are drawn upon in the thesis when appropriate.

Walking in Australian art

In *Wanderlust: A History of Walking,* Rebecca Solnit (2014) asserts that notwithstanding the development of photography and *plein-air* painting, artists had continued to depict walking as a stationary activity until the late 1960s (267–68). Notwithstanding the Aboriginal tradition, this seems an apt description of what had occurred in Australian art at the time. From the late 18th century, walking was reflected as a stationary activity in painting and photography in works such as Girolami Nerli's (1860–1926) *Beach Scene, Sandringham* c.1889 (pl.1), David Moore's (1927–2003) *Pedestrians Martin Place I* 1949 (pl.2) and John Brack's (1920–1999) *Collins St, 5pm* 1955(pl.3) among numerous other examples. In parallel, however, artists such as

Eugene von Guerard (1811–1901) and Lloyd Rees (1895–1988) – while not literally depicting the act of walking – used their own pedestrian practices as a device for making art (Hook; Hawley 2014).

There is no doubt that the art movements of the early 20th century were played out in Australian art. The lineage of contemporary art and walking in Australia was also contributed to by a 1977 visit by Long. Sponsored by Kaldor Public Art Projects, the artist visited Australia to create *A straight 100 mile walk in Australia* and *A line in Australia* 1977 (pl.4)*. A blend of conceptual work and performance made in the desert outside Broken Hill, New South Wales, *A straight 100 mile walk in Australia* was said to represent "a move toward the world outside the gallery, and a move toward performance art using the body as both subject and object" (Kaldor Public Projects explorer). Created ten years prior to the publication of *The Songlines* (Chatwin 1987), Long's *A straight 100 mile walk* arguably ignored the Aboriginal tradition in favour of a "private aesthetic experience[s] absent [of] cultural engagement" (Favero 2014).

In the latter decades of the 20th century, Australian artists like Rosalie Gasgoine (1917–1999) also began to link their art practices with the act of walking. Gasgoine's *Piece to Walk Around* 1981 (pl.5) is one such example. A growing interest in performance art and the dematerialisation of the art object – fuelled partly by the funding of contemporary art museums in Australia's major cities and a plethora of new artist-run spaces – also led to an upward trend in performance art (Grishin 2013 :475). Artists became embodied with their art, and walking and art became part of the practice of everyday life in the sense that one "walks into a set of situations (art) just as one walks down the street (life)" (Marsh 1993 :33). Here the performative nature of art as walking arguably represents the meeting of art with the quotidian (Whybrow 2010 :15). These changes also demonstrated a shift in the study of art history as a single discipline and recognised that different means were required to consider the linking of once-distinct subjects.

Method and scope

This brief historical backdrop provides a context for the thesis' following discourse. In order to focus the discussion, the thesis provides examples of the way in which urban walking and art are being linked in contemporary Australian art. As will be demonstrated in the following chapters, this thesis contends that Australian contemporary artists currently employ the act of walking in urban spaces in a multitude of ways.

While numerous Australian artists[3] employ walking as an inspiration or medium for, or object of, their art this thesis focuses on three living Australian artists – Noel McKenna (b. 1956), Daniel Crooks (b.1973) and Lauren Brincat (b.1980). The work of these three artists provides a lens via which the relationship between art and walking might be critically examined. Each of these artists produce examples of walking being used in distinct ways, yet what unites them is a common interest in the city as a social space. An evaluation and critical analysis of work by three such artists is undertaken in the following chapters of this thesis. Critical analysis is used here in its broad sense – meaning that the artworks are analysed "not simply within the aesthetic but in a much broader and deeper network of social and political concerns" (Orwicz).

As examples of artists who have used the act of walking to make art, a critical analysis of selected work by these three artists highlights various aspects of the relationship between art and walking in the urban context. Each artist has been meaningfully selected to illuminate a distinct approach to walking in contemporary art, and to expose less patent ways where art is dependent upon the act of walking. As each focus artist works in a different media – painting and drawing, video art and performance art – so the thesis automatically introduces diverse ways and less familiar means whereby

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[3] Despite the lack of academic scholarship on the subject and the lack of attention given to Australian artists who incorporate walking in their practice, for the purpose of researching this thesis and potential further research on the subject, a list of more than 30 Australian artists who employ walking in their art was compiled by the author. The list continues to expand.

walking might be considered a component of an artist's practice. As is shown, what emerges – despite the difference in art production – are common threads between respective practices and art works. Although each of the three artists may not have set out to make walking the focus of their work, directing attention to this aspect contributes a new angle to their respective output. At the same time the work of each artist highlights the merit and potential of walking through the medium of art.

A range of readings are drawn on to address the tenet of each artist's selected works and the respective means by which each engages walking as a mode of practice in their work. Commentators of various disciplines are also drawn on to demonstrate the purpose of examining walking as an action, a creative tool, a motivator, an aesthetic practice and more. Theoretical models employed for discussion of the works vary according both to the method of working (that is, according to the means by which walking is employed by the artist) and the resulting art produced by each practitioner. Discussed further below, they extend from Guy Debord and the Situationists' *Theory of the Dérive* (or 'drift') (Debord 1958), Gleber's study of the role of the *flâneur* in German film (Gleber 1999), Michel De Certeau's spatial practice theory developed via his chapter on 'Walking in the City' (De Certeau 1984) to Henry Lefebvre's theory of 'rhythmanalysis' together with his essay on the rhythms found in Mediterranean cities (Lefebvre 2004, Lefebvre 1996). Wolff (1985), Elkin (2016) and others are employed for the purpose of considering walking as a feminist art practice.

At this stage of the research, it has not been considered appropriate to strictly adhere to one particular theoretical or ideological model. While most scholars referenced below employ a Marxist reading around the topic of art and walking in the everyday, the art practices of McKenna, Crooks and Brincat, as well as the art works produced, is very diverse. The artists demonstrate fresh ways of examining the topic, new forms of media and the production of contemporary works that do not sit easily within a rigid framework. The thesis therefore seeks to explore the work of the focus Australian artists against a range of readings in preparation for further and more expansive research in the field.

Collectively the focus artists' work provides examples of the ways that walking can be represented in two and three-dimensional means, result in objects, or exist as records of an occurrence. Using a critical methodology, the observations in the following chapters consider the aesthetic elements of each work and conclude with a discussion on the selected works' context within art history and the overall practice of each artist. Each discussion takes account of the role of walking in that specific artist's practice while also contributing to the thesis argument more broadly.

Literature Review

Much of the new scholarship on art and walking rightly takes an interdisciplinary approach. While many scholars have discussed the history of walking, several texts devote space to walking's involvement with art. Of these, Solnit's (2014) *Wanderlust: A history of walking* is a work of non-fiction that weaves a personal narrative through both the history and current practice of walking. Solnit's text, however, leans toward the practice of walking in nature. While art is a thread of the general narrative, the relationship between art and walking is given a distinct chapter (266–76) and provides insights on walking in urban spaces. Both Amato (2004) and the recently published Gros (2015) are similarly subtitled – the first as a cultural history of walking, the latter as a philosophers' overview. Both include specific introductory discourse on the topic of city walking though, unlike Solnit, they contain no particular focus on art or artists' practice.

Together with Solnit (2014) and Amato (2004) the majority of walking texts and academic discourse introduce the modern concept of art and walking in urban spaces (as opposed to natural environments) with a discussion of German philosopher Walter Benjamin's treatment of Charles Baudelaire's "detached" *flâneur* (Amato 2004 :174). This establishes Benjamin's 19th century text *The Arcades Project* (1999) as a vital resource for an exploration of walking in the urban environment.

Subsequently, and almost without exception, commentators across all disciplines move along a chronological narrative that marries the pedestrian act with art via a

consideration of named movements in art and social history that, in chronological order from the early 1920s, include the practices of the Dada and the surrealists, the Lettrist International and the Situationist International, minimal art and land art. Combined with the primary sources including the archive of the Lettrist International and the Situationist International,[4] Careri's (2002) *Walkscapes: Walking as an aesthetic practice*, provides a considered overview of each 'episode' and is a leading resource in the field.

More specifically, the thesis topic of art and walking practice is limited to a study of contemporary Australian visual art. While, in general, contemporary art refers to "current or recent art production", and therefore "all art is contemporary to those who make it" (Atkins 2013 :107), as a more precise term of art history, the meaning of 'contemporary' is a matter of some debate. A blanket definition that covers most bases refers to the period after World War II.

Suffice to say that the period the thesis refers to in respect of the production of contemporary art in Australia is that produced by the focus artists, all of which has been created during the current millennium. According to Careri (2002), Long's *A Line Made by Walking* (pl. 6) created in 1967 – a drawn line created by repeatedly stepping on the grass in a field – was the point at which, "the action left a trace on the land, the sculpted object was completely absent, and walking became an autonomous artform" (23). As mentioned Long's walking art piece titled *A straight hundred mile walk in Australia, A line in Australia,* 1977 (Kaldor Public Projects explorer) provided a catalyst for Australian artists to explore the relationship between art and walking in their work. Both the primary records in the Kaldor Public Art Projects archive and the Art Gallery of New South Wales archive, together with Long's text (Long 2002) contain useful background information to that moment and to the artist's related work.

Despite the thesis being limited to the extent of its focus on contemporary art made

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[4] The complete archive of materials from the Lettrist International and the Situationist International are available to view online at:
<http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/index.html>.

by Australian artists, it is significant to note that this is not reserved to art produced inside Australia, nor by the media employed. Of the work discussed in the following chapters, several works have been created in and/or inspired by international locations. As stated, respective work from the three Australian artists selected as focus examples (McKenna, Crooks and Brincat) includes painting, video works and documented performance. In addition to the primary source materials – that is, the artists' respective works – relevant sources of research material include exhibition catalogues, critical reviews, journal articles and newspaper reports and similar material.

In the context of the history of art and walking in urban areas previously discussed, Debord's essay, *Theory of the Dérive* (Debord 1958) is an essential starting point for the work of these three artists and in particular to McKenna, much of whose work is arguably the product of a contemporary Australian *dérive* where the artist lets himself "be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters [one] find[s] there" (Debord 1958). Notwithstanding Solnit's dismissal of Debord's "pugnacious" and "authoritarian" treatises that she finds "somewhat comic" (Solnit 2014: 212), Debord's writings provide a solid framework for further discourse.

Subsequent to Debord, contemporary writers have focused on various aspects of art practice and walking in urban areas. French scholar Michel De Certeau's (1984) *The Practice of Everyday Life* contains a chapter entitled 'Walking in the City' often referred to in the discourse surrounding art and walking. Looking at pedestrians in Manhattan from the highest floor of the (then) World Trade Centre, De Certeau's 'walkers' are described as 'practitioners'. They practice an "elementary form of the experience of the city" (which he describes as a type of language or a "spatial acting out of the place" (De Certeau 1984: 93; 99). De Certeau's analysis of walkers from this height suggests their weaving through the city on foot results in a visual type of poetry. It is an idea that is relevant to Crooks' work.

Henry Lefebvre's text *Rhythmanalysis* (2004) is also a useful ally for exploring Crooks' work with pedestrian subjects – as an artist who "listens to a house, a street, a town as

one listens to a symphony, an opera" (87). In addition to these commentators, several recent readers including *Walking and Mapping* (O'Rourke 2013) *Performance and the Contemporary City* (Whybrow 2010), *Ways of Walking* (Ingold and Vergunst 2008) and *Artificial Hells* (Bishop 2012) are drawn on in the analysis of the artists' work.

International dissertations and, in particular, those that focus on the work of international contemporary artists like Francis Alÿs and Janet Cardiff – including that of Vogl (2007) and Waxman (2010) – provide helpful discourse around art, artists and the practice of walking in the urban environment. Notably lacking in academic scholarship is writing on Australian art and its relationship with walking. As mentioned, Chatwin (1987) and its subsequent treatment by Morrison (2012) are of limited relevance for this thesis. Chatwin's focus on Aboriginal tradition and the natural environment (as opposed to the urban) lends context to the thesis as "Chatwin positions walking at the intersection of place, life and (Murphy's) scholarly reflection upon that life (Morrison 2012)". While this thesis does not touch on the tradition of Aboriginal art, this thesis contends that walking reveals a corresponding intersection of art, place and life in the urban context.

Structure

The Introduction to this thesis is followed by four chapters. Given the various media employed by the focus artists and the diverse ways in which each employs walking as a device, a separate chapter of this thesis is devoted to each focus artist. Further, as a consequence of the fact that each artist's practice does not rely entirely on walking as a mode of practice, specific works from each artist have been selected for study. Each of the first three chapters comprises a short introduction to the artist, a description and background to the works selected for analysis, and an evaluation of those works using a range of threads drawn from the work discussed.

Chapter 1 considers the role of walking in the art of Noel McKenna, "an artist of urban landscapes and suburban objects" (Dow 2013) who works across various media but is primarily known for his paintings. For this first chapter, two bodies of work are

considered. Drawn from exhibitions respectively titled, *From Watsons Bay to Waterloo* (2006) and *A Walk from One Tree Hill to Half Moon Bay* (2014), each comprises a set of paintings and etchings of suburban landscapes, minutiae and oddities observed during McKenna's wanderings around the Sydney (Australia) and Auckland (New Zealand) suburbs (Dow 2013). While McKenna might be considered a 'drifter' in a Situationist sense, in opposition to the performance-based works of that movement, McKenna's focus work consists of objects (paintings) produced as a consequence of his suburban drifting.

Two of Daniel Crooks' video works are the main interest of Chapter 2. Crooks is an artist whose practice is centred on video and new media. He is well-known for his body of 'time slice' videos where, "...thin slices are extracted from a moving image stream and then recombined using temporal and spatial displacement" (Engelen 2010). While Crooks employs his 'time slice' method to create works on a range of subjects – including moving trains, cars and elevator – Chapter 2 focuses on works that highlight pedestrian rhythms in urban spaces. They include the digital videos *On Perspective and Motion Part 2* 2006 and *A garden of parallel paths* 2012, shot respectively in Sydney and Melbourne. Crooks' works explores the temporal and spatial aspects of human movement. The thesis notes Crooks' role as an 'invisible' *flâneur* and aligns elements of De Certeau's spatial practice and Lefebvre's theory of 'rhythmanalysis' with Crooks' output.

The focus works of the third artist, Lauren Brincat, comprise performances by the artist. Two performances recorded on digital video are the subject of consideration in Chapter 3. The walk for *This Time Tomorrow, Tempelhof* 2011 was performed at an abandoned airport in the city of Berlin, Germany. Conversely, that for *Walk in Traffic* 2012 was executed on the busy streets of Mexico City, Mexico. Brincat's performances provide opportunity for broad discussion. While there are parallels with the concept of Debord's *dérive*, as a female artist Brincat's works also provide opportunity to discuss the concept of the female *flâneuse*, the extension of Long's art and walking practice, the incorporation of the audience as participant in the work, and the positioning of Brincat's work alongside other important contemporary artists.

Chapter 4 concludes the discussion by summarising how the findings regarding the work of the three focus artists sheds new light on the relationship between art and walking in Australian contemporary art made in the urban context. Having posed questions as to how and why the practice of walking is incorporated in the work of three contemporary Australian artists, the conclusion considers the relevance of those findings. The conclusion also restates its contribution of this study to the field and, finally, considers potential areas for future scholarly research on further unexplored areas in the relationships between walking and Australian contemporary art.

Chapter 1: Noel McKenna's urban landscapes and suburban objects

Introduction

In October 2012, Australian artist Noel McKenna (b. 1956) exhibited his painting *Public Toilets Sydney CBD* 2012[5] (pl.7). Painted on canvas and flanked by blocks and columns of small childlike handwriting, this large map of central Sydney was inspired by the artist's tour of the city's public toilets (McKenna 2012). After visiting numerous public toilet blocks at a noted date and time, the text reflects each toilet's score from a possible 10 – with the rank reflecting a written list of qualities such as the lighting, wall, floor, toilet paper and whether hot water was provided in the hand basin. Asked about the motivation for his work in a video made at the time of the exhibition, the artist noted, "I get inspired by many different things...most of which stem from my own actual life I suppose, every day, things that happen..." (McKenna 2012).

McKenna, an artist of "urban landscapes and suburban objects" (Dow 2013) was born in Brisbane and like another well-known 'walking artist' Francis Alÿs (O'Rourke 2013 :43), originally trained as an architect. Instead, McKenna's university studies were completed in visual art in Sydney, where the artist has now lived for some time (McCulloch, McCulloch & McCulloch Childs 2006 :648). McKenna's first solo exhibition was held in Brisbane and more than seventy solo exhibitions later, his most recent presentation *Seltzer,* was held in Sydney during May 2016[6]. The works in *Seltzer* are the outcome of McKenna's ambulations in and around New York City boroughs.

Although McKenna's work traverses various media – including painting, drawing and ceramics – he is primarily known as a painter. Consistent with the mapping project *Public Toilets Sydney CBD*, a portion of McKenna's oeuvre is produced as a consequence of the artist's wanderings in and around the suburbs of his adopted home of Sydney. Researching and painting a map of Sydney's city public toilets may

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[5] As part of the exhibition *The piano of my brother* 2012 held at Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney.
[6] *Seltzer* 2016 was held at Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney in May.

initially appear strange or silly, but like much of McKenna's art this gesture is more complex than it appears. This chapter considers the means by which the everyday practice of walking is reflected in McKenna's output. It substantiates a reading of particular McKenna works to reveal the contribution of the art and walking partnership to his practice and the broader implications of this connection.

The focus works of Noel McKenna

As noted in the Introduction it is not practical to attempt a comprehensive study of every work in an artist's output that has a potential relationship with urban walking. In McKenna's case, walking has been the impetus for individual works and several entire exhibitions – including those located in Sydney, New Zealand and New York. Two exhibitions have been selected for discussion in this chapter. They are *From Watsons Bay to Waterloo* ('Sydney exhibition') held in 2006 in Sydney, and a *Walk from One Tree Hill to Half Moon Bay* ('Auckland exhibition') in Newtown – a suburb of Auckland, New Zealand (*From Watsons Bay to Waterloo* 2006) (*A Walk from One Tree Hill to Half Moon Bay*) (Savage 2014; Chappell 2014 :80).[7] In addition to the works in these shows, several other selected works from McKenna's oeuvre are drawn on to substantiate particular aspects of the thesis' argument.

From Watsons Bay to Waterloo

From Watsons Bay to Waterloo comprised a set of eighteen paintings and etchings – made using a selection of oil, acrylic, ink and enamel on plywood and canvas – and one glazed ceramic. McKenna, who does not own a car, observed this selection of suburban landscapes, objects and oddities, represented by the works in the exhibition, while strolling through Sydney's eastern suburbs on a route from Watson's Bay (a suburb close to where the artist lives) to Waterloo, the location of his Sydney gallery

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[7] The majority of works in the exhibitions at *From Watsons Bay to Waterloo* 2006 held at Darren Knight Gallery in Sydney and *A Walk from One Tree Hill to Half Moon Bay* held at two Rooms Contemporary Art Space, Auckland can be viewed on the internet at: <http://www.darrenknightgallery.com/artists/mckenna/from-watsons-bay-to-waterloo/> and <http://tworooms.co.nz/exhibition/a-walk-from-one-tree-hill-to-half-moon-bay/> respectively.

(Darren Knight Gallery 2006). As the artist notes, "On such a long walk from Watsons Bay to Waterloo you see so many things you could do a painting of" (McKenna 2006).

A Walk from One Tree Hill to Half Moon Bay

The second focus exhibition of this chapter is the outcome of a seven week-long artist residency in Auckland (Savage 2014; Chappell 2014 :80). The title of the Auckland exhibition refers to a tour between the suburbs of One Tree Hill (named after a volcanic peak in the centre of Auckland –the site of an ancient Maori fortress) and that of Half Moon Bay located several hours away by foot.

Fourteen paintings on canvas and cardboard combined with various media, and two 14-page 'walking diaries' comprised the exhibition. Tellingly, the work was inspired by New Zealand artist Colin McCahon's *Walk (Series C)* 1973 (pl.8) – a momentous 11-piece unstretched canvas numbered according to the fourteen Stations of the Cross (McAloon 2009). McKenna viewed McCahon's *Walk* – a spiritual meditation on walking described by the New Zealand artist as "bits of places I love" and referenced Maori tradition (Museum of New Zealand) – immediately prior to commencing his Auckland residency (McAloon 2009). Aside from any aesthetic reference to McCahon's *Walk* in McKenna's paintings, it seems likely that McKenna commenced his own walk in One Tree Hill because of its corresponding spiritual significance for the Maori (Lewthwaite 1983).

Together McKenna's fourteen works comprise a narrative of the artist's perambulations around Auckland's eastern suburbs (Chappell 2014: 80). Writer and friend of McKenna's, Gregory O'Brien, notes of the Australian artist's aesthetic practice: "McKenna's ritual of daily walking, alert to the elements of surprise and happenstance along the way, indulges his appetite for the occasional, the unrehearsed, the unexplained and is fundamental to McKenna's art" (O'Brien in Savage 2014).

Capturing the quotidian

Careri (2002) notes that a problem of the art of walking is the difficulty in communicating the experience in aesthetic form (148). In the history of art and walking in the urban context, the Dadaists employed literary descriptions of their walks and the Situationists produced maps of their Paris ambulations. However, representation of the places traversed by McKenna has generally come about through painting and drawing. This practice is also evident in the work of British artist, Hamish Fulton (b.1946) – whose work encompasses phrases and signs that evoke the sensation of the places he has visited and things observed in the landscape. Careri (2002) notes that "the representation of the path is resolved by means of images and graphic texts that bear witness to the experience of walking with the awareness of never being able to achieve it through representation" (150).

In the Sydney exhibition, this concept of bearing witness is evident in McKenna's semi-naïve images of a denuded forest of diseased trees in Rose Bay (*Diseased Trees, Lynne Park, Rose Bay*, 2006) (pl.9), the morning line up for the Rose Bay ferry (*6.45am, 29 June 2006, Rose Bay Wharf,* 2006) (pl.10), the painted mural wall of a local corner store (*Andy's Corner Store Surry Hills*, 2006) (pl.11), and people waiting on the platform at Redfern station (*Redfern Station*, 2006) (pl.12). In this group of paintings, there are a few occasions where people are observed to be moving on foot – such as the person walking toward the line of people waiting to board the ferry in *Rose Bay Wharf,* and the man walking along the station in *Redfern Station*. McKenna's intention, however, is not to make paintings *of* people walking. Rather, his subjects are those things noticed by the artist as *he* walks. Although rare in these paintings, and depicted like outlines of vacant figures, McKenna's simply rendered human subjects evoke the viewer's empathy and imagination.

Notwithstanding a lapse of eight years between the Sydney exhibition and the Auckland exhibition, and a direct referencing of McCahon's *Walk* in the suburban setting (Savage 2014), McKenna's Auckland subjects continue the quotidian theme and capture the artist's 'snapshot' observations of the everyday noticed by him while

wandering on foot. Like those in the Sydney exhibition, human subjects in these paintings are generally scarce, isolated and observed from the point of view of the passer by (Savage 2014). The two cartoonish figures discerned among the fourteen pictures in the show are unidentified, although both are involved in activities that provide sufficient hints for the viewer to guess at what they may be doing – that is, the lone archer in *Archer, One Tree Hill, Auckland*, 2014 (pl.13) and the horse trainer in *Ellerslie Racecourse, Auckland*, 2014 (pl. 14) (*A Walk from One Tree Hill to Half Moon Bay* 2016). When walking, McKenna enjoys observing, putting "people into categories and inventing stories about them..." (McKenna 2012). The suggestive poses of these figures allow the viewer to do the same. Other works such as *White Dog, Cornwell Park*, 2014 (pl.15) and the grey dog in the yard of *House, Mt Wellington* 2014 (pl.16) employ lone animals – another of McKenna's common motifs when animals are not the main subject of a painting.

The suburban *flâneur*

McKenna's walking rituals are then best described as that of the 'suburban flâneur'. This new *flâneur* type contrasts with Walter Benjamin's character of modern 20th century Paris (Benjamin 1999 :417). Specifically located in the arcades of the newly modern city, the *flâneur* was an interpreter of modern culture (Seal 2013 :5), an observer, a witness and "the stroller of the commodity obsessed marketplace" (Seal 2013 :5). Relocated to Sydney or Auckland and surrounds, McKenna's suburban *flâneur* is an interpreter of the often unobserved minutia of everyday life in the suburbs of these 21st century cities. McKenna's mode of making art through walking keeps him alert to the rich fabric of readymade subject material found on street corners, seen through gaps in fences, or glimpsed while passing by. Like Benjamin's *flâneur*, McKenna's paintings note his implicit rejection of commodities and the marketplace.

Deliberately shirking the glamour of Benjamin's figure, McKenna adopts certain *flâneur*-like traits and his work depicts snippets of everyday life that occur in the gaps and inconsistencies found in the contemporary Australian or New Zealand city (Sound

environments). Unlike Benjamin's idler, whose strolls are unplanned (O'Neill), McKenna's walks appear to be neither aimless or wanton, and in that regard are more analogous with the *dérive* expounded by Guy Debord and the Situationist International group. McKenna's strolls broadly resemble Debord's idea of the *dérive (*or 'drift'*)* in that the artist apparently lets himself "be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters [he] finds there" (Debord 1958)*.* On the other, the limits of the *dérive* are overly prescriptive in certain respects – such as duration and the preferred number of walkers – to take full account of McKenna's drifting method.

Using walking as a device to make work, as examined through the works in the two exhibitions, McKenna's paintings also clearly establish a sense of place. In studies of human geography, the meaning of place is subjective but not static. While Solnit's preference of place as the individual atlas of each inhabitant or visitor, Lippard's version is one of place in the personal – "a layered location replete with human histories and memories" (Potts 2015 :90). Although there may be multiple routes between the two suburbs in each city and, at least in the case of the Sydney exhibition, repetitive walking by the artist along the same paths, McKenna's choice of subjects provides the viewer with the artist's personal 'atlas' of suburban life in both cities.

Walking imbues McKenna's work with a true spirit of place and an authenticity that, in accordance with Debord's psychogeographic explanation (discussed in the Introduction), captures both tangible and intangible elements of atmosphere, mood and character, otherwise unattainable without real-life presence in the space. By 'authenticity', this thesis refers to two meanings of the word 'authentic'. The first is a reference to the fact that the subjects of choice are of genuine origin; the second carries with it a sense of reliability and trustworthiness (Macquarie Dictionary 2013). Consequently, while the viewer might be unfamiliar with the city, or unaware of the path that McKenna has chosen, his ambulatory adventures provide the narrative that binds the works together. Walking captures the true sense of the spaces represented by McKenna as the artist weaves his way between and around the suburbs of the respective exhibitions.

As an Australian artist, McKenna's exploits as suburban *flâneur* as represented in his paintings are a contrast to the images that often define Australia – pastoral and bush landscapes or beach and desert environments. Finding the suburbs increasingly relevant to the world he occupies, and therefore to his creative practice, McKenna's work depicts the "everyday vernacular" via, for example, "small domestic dwellings in urban situations" (Chappell 2009:82). Like the Situationists, who sought out strange and unconventional places in Paris for their 'drifts', McKenna appears disinterested in depicting the kinds of places more often associated with the subject cities. In this way, his art journeys through inner-city neighbourhoods can be aligned with the British artist Richard Wentworth, who has been known to photograph "singularities and irregularities" that include "pavement bubblegum sculptures, often useless but grandly titled shops, [and] hapless dentists..." (Wentworth in Whybrow 2010 :105). Parallel subjects in the focus exhibitions might include McKenna's *Andy's Corner Store, Surry Hills* (pl. 11), the landscaped bird house in *Bird Home, Ellerslie* 2014 (pl. 17) and several more.

As a consequence of his use of walking in this manner, McKenna's work can usefully be analysed by employing the representation of modernity described by Friedrich Nietzsche, and later employed by Gleber (1999) who attributed the *flâneur* with the qualities of an 'historian' of a particular spatial area (the suburban city), a reflective 'critic' of the city, a close 'analyst' of its architecture, a 'collector' of scenes and images and an 'interpreter' who translates these scenes into – in McKenna's case – his art (129–130).

Walking as collector

Taking a lead from Gleber's descriptors of *flâneur* traits, it is pertinent that McKenna's strolls through the city and suburbs are initially as collector. Commentators have noted the artist's ready employment of a camera to capture numerous snapshots on his wanderings (Darren Knight Gallery 2006 – Press Release). These pedestrian snapshots become the basis – in the sense of research – for his painting and drawing.

While the photographs are a direct record of a thing or an event, the resulting art works are a consequent melding of reportage and McKenna's suburban experiences. They are later combined with the painter's hand to create a drawing or painting.

Parallels can be made with McKenna's urban scouring and that of British sculptor Richard Wentworth (b. 1947), who views the urban environment as a landscape consisting of readymade works which merit the same treatment as other more traditional forms of landscape. Just as Wentworth's work has been attributed with the observation that after viewing, "one suddenly has a heightened awareness of the position of objects in one's environment, and a refreshed curiosity in how they came to be there and how we might interpret them", McKenna's paintings and drawings – which likewise draw on the readymade qualities of the buildings and objects observed while walking – have a similar effect on the viewer (Eastham 2011).

As discussed earlier, the artist's frequent pedestrian outings exhibit a crucial element of authenticity to McKenna's aesthetic practice. McKenna feels at home in the city (McKenna 2014) and is drawn to paint those aspects of city life that often feature the neglected, unwanted and even undesirable aspects of everyday life ignored by others. According to O'Brien, McKenna's art "is concerned with narrative and event, with the experience or observation frozen in time" (O'Brien 1997: 58). As a pedestrian with a camera, the narrative that McKenna experiences or observes and then translates to the canvas, is not necessarily the same as that received by the viewer. Rather, McKenna's works possess meaning that is "insinuated not inscribed" (O'Brien 1997 :59).

Walking to compile a history

In the Sydney and Auckland exhibitions, McKenna 'maps' particular regions through the method of walking. Prior to these exhibitions he realised unconventional 'maps' of particular things or objects of interest – like those in *Public Toilets Sydney CBD* (pl.6) and *BP Fuel Outlets in Australia* 2005 (pl.18). In the Sydney exhibition he also exhibited *Lighthouses of Australia* 2006 (pl.19). With these projects, McKenna joins other

Australian artists who have played the role of urban cartographer using unconventional means.[8] In McKenna's case these maps become imbued with the idea of preserving aspects of Australian culture that are in the process of disappearing. The diaries exhibited in the Auckland exhibition (*1st 14 days in Auckland* 2014 and *2nd 14 days in Auckland* 2014) also map the artist's day by day suburban experiences.

In the role as Gleber's 'historian', both the Sydney exhibition and the Auckland exhibition comprise mostly humble scenes of suburbia. The catalogue for the Sydney exhibition (McKenna 2006) contains a short statement from the artist about each painting. For example, under *Diseased Trees, Lynne Park* (pl.9) the artist has noted: "A few years ago this line of trees were very sick and looked like they couldn't be saved but they were. This painting is a memory of what they were like." Similarly, McKenna makes the following notation under *6.45am, 29 June 2006, Rose Bay Wharf* (pl. 10): "It is a great sight every time you see the sea plane landing and taking off. Russell Drysdale did a great gouache *Rose Bay Airport at night* in the 40s and for years I have wanted to do a work about the sea plane at Rose Bay" (McKenna 2006). It is apparent from these statements that in some cases McKenna has, via his walking, been observing the same scenes for years –preserving them in his 'memory map' while perhaps imagining that the passing of time may eventually lead to the disappearance of buildings, and objects representative of a certain lifestyle.

As 'historian' of urban scenes in these two cities it is poignant to note the separate colour palette employed for both exhibitions. Although the two cities sit on similar latitudes, McKenna's Auckland depicts a much greener landscape – perhaps the direct result of Auckland's lush environment, less dense neighbourhoods and McKenna's subjective view of the differences between the two countries. On the other hand, the landscape works in the Sydney exhibition are painted in sepia-like or monochromatic tones – an unusual palette for a city often described as the 'emerald city' and a place

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[8] Jane Shadbolt's *Mapping Enmore* 2013 and Kate Sweetapples' maps of Sydney's avian, fish and celestial surnames (*Mapping Sydney: Avian Surnames*) that produced imaginary maps of stories relating to past events on the inner west streets are two such examples (see Berry 2013).

generally considered to have ample sunshine and a sparkling harbour. Despite this difference, McKenna's choice of subjects for both shows, aided by the use of long shadows, dead trees, an old style caravan and anonymous solo figures and animals in the Auckland exhibition bring a feeling of nostalgia to the work.

Walking to analyse urban architecture

McKenna's early training as an architect influences his choice of architectural subjects and style of painting the built form. The act of walking enables McKenna to build a layered memory map where small, observable details of particular buildings are brought to light. In the Sydney and Auckland exhibitions, McKenna's subjects range from imagined interiors like that in *Apartment Interior, Surry Hills* 2006, (pl.20) to the detail of a house perched on the edge of escarpment in *House on Cliff, Dover Heights*, 2006 (pl.21) and a range of buildings in the Auckland suburbs. The former works are accompanied by the artist's published statement that notes he is "still interested in architecture" (McKenna 2006).

The majority of McKenna's houses are of naïve appearance, made with simple lines and painted without depth and skewed perspective – as if they may have been drawn or painted by a child. On Wentworth's practice, Kerr (in Whybrow 2010) notes that his "poetic engagement of observable reality that distinguishes this as a creative process and not merely as a task of recording, while it is the freedom from constraints of academic convention that allows fresh insights into our discussion of urban experience" (106). Similarly, unworried by academic convention, McKenna's deliberate 'de-skilled' technique also mean his work is readily relatable to the audience. McDonald (2016) has recently observed the artist's ability to foster the illusion that paintings like McKenna's are easy to make, while "concealing the fact that the real skill of the work is found in many small features" that include their "wit and spontaneity", play between images and text and their overall ability to generate empathy with the audience.

The buildings depicted in the Auckland exhibition range from humble houses to the

strange and quirky. This strangeness is apparent in curved stone toilet block in *Toilet Block, Cornwall Park, Auckland* 2014 (pl.22) to the small timber construction in *Auckland Archery Club Inc*, 2014 (pl.23) to the red brick house with white and lime green caravan parked out front in the treeless *Front Yard, Pakaranga, Auckland*, 2014 (pl.24). Each attests to McKenna's interest in the intrinsic beauty and humanity of a humble life. Both these and the buildings represented in the Sydney exhibition can be described as ordinary. They are also reminiscent, for example, of suburban scenes painted by Henri Rousseau (1844–1910). Like Rousseau's works such as *Banlieue 1896* (pl.25) and *The Chair Factory at Alfortville* 1897 (pl.26), McKenna's images draw the viewer's gaze to the lyrical essence of ordinary things achieved partly through flouting the laws of perspective with very familiar scenes (Avanzi 2016).

McKenna's exploration of architectural exteriors and interiors adopts a Situationist critique of urbanism. Making further parallel to Wentworth, who finds the contradictions in the city through his walking practice (Wentworth video), Kerr notes the artist's close study of the physical fabric of buildings teases out "a subjective and fleeting narrative, an intense and vivid testimony to the continuous relationship between people and the architecture they inhabit" (Kerr in Whybrow 2010 :106). Similarly, McKenna's art celebrates the small and undervalued aspects of rich community and belonging that are a function of the suburbs, while on the other, offers a critique of their aesthetic blandness, vulgarity and car dependency.

Walking as a critical reflection of the city

Following this critical line of reasoning, McKenna's art represents a quietly subversive reflection on various aspects of city life. Produced as a consequence of walking, his work provides the viewer with an alternative experience of the city and an exposé of otherwise glossed over and underappreciated aspects. As Ryan (2004) notes, McKenna "transcends the banal to reveal the profundity of the commonplace" (85). While the artist *flâneur* is privy to the same realities available to other city inhabitants, it is the artist's perspective that reveals a different side to the city. This alternative side of the city is one communicated through McKenna's art.

In the Sydney exhibition catalogue, Ryan's comments above could refer to the large grid-like acrylic and oil painting *2030–2017* 2006 (pl. 27)*,* a curiously futuristic title considering the date of the exhibition. Using only sepia-tinged black, greys and white, the painting represents some of the things that "grabbed the artist's eye" on the relatively long walk between the two suburbs (McKenna 2006). As if to provide proof of his suburban parade while simultaneously allowing those familiar with Sydney to identify the images, two of the occupying grid rectangles contain painted lists of hand-written street names to delineate the artist's walking route. Many of these small images have larger versions in the show – some have been discussed earlier in this chapter. Notable Sydney landmarks can be discerned along McKenna's pathway (including Ken Unsworth's controversial Kings Cross sculpture *Stones Against the Sky* and several eastern suburbs' churches). It is clear from the majority of images that McKenna's attention is attuned to the commonplace and away from those aspects of the city that represent its economic force.

Through his attention to the detail of quotidian artefacts and landscapes, the effect of McKenna's work is to slow the viewer down – perhaps from the frenetic pace of modern life to something akin to strolling. McKenna achieves this through choice of subject and the reduced nature of his painting. Jacks notes that the "modern suburban and urban dweller oft has an antipathy toward, and inexperience with ...natural landscapes" (Jacks 2004 :7). McKenna's work offers a chance to truly experience the 'natural' landscape of the viewers' daily surrounds.

As a further critique of the contemporary city, and another nod to authenticity, McKenna's walking practices are reflected in his everyday life. As previously noted, the artist does not drive a motor vehicle. *Rose Bay Shopping Trolley*, 2006 (pl.28), is a small painting on glazed ceramic of a four-wheel drive Land Rover. A small white cross of the type used as roadside memorials is placed at each side of the car. Titling the picture after the common Australian slang for a four-wheel drive and employing the crosses as a motif to represent mortality allows this work to be read as an objection to the use of these vehicles on suburban roads. It demonstrates that McKenna is "an

unwilling participant in the structuring of space, time, money and consumption"
(O'Neill).

The artist's anti-car stance (specifically often fixed on four-wheel drive vehicles) has
been a bugbear and common theme for McKenna in his more recent work. His
opposition to the vehicle's city use is also evident in later works. For example, *Bicycle
Rider, Sydney*, 2008 (pl.29) depicts a bicycle rider dwarfed by a four-wheel drive
vehicle and can be read as a comment on the tendency of city planners to address the
needs of city motorists over humbler forms of transport. Additionally, the artist has
painted the words '4WD in the city' at the top of his list of 'things that bug me' in the
work *Things that bug me about today's world/Things I like about today's world*, 2012
(pl.30) (*Noel McKenna: The piano of my brother*). McKenna's views are aligned to
Debord who argued that psychogeographies were best experienced on foot and
decried the primacy of the automobile in modern cities (Solnit 2014 :212). De Certeau
also argues in his influential essay 'Walking in the City', that the city is made to be
walked (De Certeau 1984).

In a similar way, McKenna employs his 'drifts' around the suburbs to celebrate the
poetic aspects of quirky urban architecture. However, while paintings from the Sydney
exhibition such as *House in Rose Bay for sale* 2006 (pl.31) and *House on cliff Dover
Heights* (pl. 21) have the potential to be read as being critical of suburban houses –
either as spaces of democratic achievement and privacy on the one hand, or as banal
and environmentally indulgent on the other (Anderson 2006) – McKenna typically
leaves this interpretation open to the viewer and is neither anti-city nor pro-suburb
(Anderson 2006). Mc Kenna's technique and choice of subject communicate and
inform the viewer while simultaneously avoiding any form of preaching.

Gros (2015) notes, that the urban *flâneur* experiences walking in a way that is
removed from nature. It is, for example, different from that expressed by Thoreau
who equated 'wildness' and 'hope' with nature and found nothing of life in towns and
cities (Thoreau 1993:62). While for Thoreau the "most tasteful front-yard fence was
never an agreeable object of study...", McKenna's work demonstrates that, in his case,

the opposite is true. McKenna's renderings of the minutia of suburban life are intimate and personal. His work aligns with Jacks' (2004) argument that "only by walking the land, fully engaged and immersed as we read carefully and deeply, can we truly know a place" (7). In contrast to Thoreau who found his sole interest in the study of nature, McKenna's poetic rendering of everyday life reveals that the small and undervalued glimpses of suburbia offer an alternative view of city. Moreover, this chapter has demonstrated that it the practice of walking is key to the acquiring and sharing of these insights through his art.

Chapter 2: Daniel Crooks captures city movement

Introduction

While Noel McKenna finds a comfortable domain collecting fragments of suburban life and transforming it to poetry, Daniel Crooks' discovers a "reservoir of electricity" in the hustle and bustle of city crowds and urban spaces (O'Rourke 2013: 8). Baudelaire observed that while not everyone enjoyed the idea of being a person who walks through the city, "the solitary and thoughtful stroller derives a singular intoxication from this universal communion" (O'Rourke 2013 :8). Like McKenna, Crooks' plays the role of contemporary *flâneur* in his observations of individuals and crowds in city spaces. While for McKenna the body is an instrument of perception (Careri 2002 :148) in Crooks' case the focus works of this chapter are contingent on the representation of bodily movement. Both artists produce work that elevates the practice of walking in the urban context.

Born in Hastings, New Zealand, Crooks moved to Australia to begin his formal art studies after a period working as an animator (Colless 2007). The artist has subsequently been based in Melbourne and his current practice is largely focused on video art. Crooks' video works have appeared in numerous group exhibitions in Australia, New Zealand and internationally. This chapter considers the means by which the everyday practice of walking in urban spaces is reflected in Crooks' output. It considers examples of Crooks' video art to reveal his contribution to contemporary art, and discusses the broader implications of the artist's unique approach to art made as a consequence of walking.

The focus works of Daniel Crooks

While McKenna's art is designed to slow the viewer by inspiring engagement with the unexpected quotidian, Crooks' tampering with time leads viewers to become absorbed by the visual shift between real time and the normal flow of events. During the 1990s, Crooks' experiments with the medium of video allowed him to create his first 'time

slice' video recording described by the artist as a "series of videos and digital prints" (Crooks – Artist Statement).

To complete a 'time slice' video, "thin slices are extracted from a moving image stream and then recombined using temporal and spatial displacement" (Engelen 2010). Captured simultaneously from multiple viewpoints, the 'time slice' videos are like a form of "digital collage" (Harding and Cramer 2009 :243) that build together to create an image in a similar way to that of a desktop scanner (Simmons 2009 :23). Like McKenna's paintings of suburban life discussed in Chapter 1, Crooks' 'time slice' videos deliver an alternative means of observing the familiarities of the real world. By altering the viewer's perception, Crooks' art provides a new means for exploring the commonplace. This exploration often requires his engagement with the everyday practice of walking.

Many of Crooks' captivating 'time slice' videos depict the movement of people walking in urban spaces, both in Australia and elsewhere.[9] Two examples considered in more depth for this chapter are *On perspective and motion (Part 2)* 2006 (pl.32) and *A garden of parallel paths* 2012 (pl.33)[10].

On perspective and motion

On perspective and motion is a 23-minute video captured in Sydney's best-known pedestrian plaza, Martin Place – one of very few traffic-free zones in the city centre. Described as Sydney's civic heart, Martin Place is, "arguably Australia's most iconic public space" ('A city's heart builds on a sense of place' 2007). A wide, closed-off street – more synonymous with Paris's formal Haussmann-designed boulevards than with

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[9] For example, Daniel Crooks' *Static No.12 (seek stillness in movement),* (2009–10) was shot in Shanghai, China and *Static No.19 (shibuya rorschach)*, 2012 was recorded at the Shibuya intersection in Toyko.
[10] For links to the focus video works online, refer to the relevant artist plates in the Appendix.

Benjamin's arcades – the pedestrian plaza was incidentally the location of the so-named 'Sydney siege' in December 2014.[11]

Appearing across seven screens, 180-degree pans are captured by seven cameras on a semicircular frame. The video records the movement of pedestrians in a zone outside Sydney's ex General Post Office (now the Westin Hotel). Capturing his footage on a busy city weekday, Crooks' technique of slowing and disrupting the footage results in pedestrians walking through this urban space in hypnotic fashion. Meanwhile the city is seen "folding, reversing, expanding and contracting on itself with perfect fluidity; a city in which "pedestrians slip, slide and undulate in a sensuous dance of the everyday" (Priest 2007: 33). The relatively long length of *On perspective and motion* means that in the first minutes, the eye is drawn by the surreal appearance of the pedestrians as they snake across the screen. Not long into the recording, the eerie drone-like soundscape overlaid with odd bytes of birds chirping, strange recorded voices, general traffic, sirens and weird noises becomes more noticeable (Simmons 2009). Alongside the walkers, the video focuses on the grotesque forms of the old sandstone archways and horizontal brick lines of the surrounding buildings. Together, the video's visual and auditory effect creates a sense of uneasiness and impending doom.

A garden of parallel paths

In a contrasting space, yet still inside the city, A g*arden of parallel paths* runs for nine and a half minutes[12] and is set outside the formal areas of central Melbourne. It explores the movement of city dwellers around, through and across the graffiti-strewn inner city laneways for which Melbourne is well-known ('A garden of parallel paths' 2012). Using a different technique to that for *On perspective and motion*, *A garden of parallel paths* is a composite of multiple single channel videos. The recording pans

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[11] A total of three people were killed in the 16 hour 'Sydney siege' that took place inside the Lindt café in Sydney's Martin Place in December 2014 (Refer 'Sydney siege' 2014).

[12] The timing of the video on the linked Vimeo webpage is incorrectly recorded at 7:23 minutes.

numerous laneways which appear as vertical strips from a central-viewer perspective. City pedestrians – alone and in groups – are captured walking through sunny laneways in slow motion. Like magic, one laneway (or path) gives way to another, walkers appear from nowhere, disappear into walls, morph from around corners and randomly interact. As the camera pans across each opening, the effect for the viewer is akin to looking down a series of hallways or open tunnels. In this regard, the video recalls the key visual of Bruce Nauman's *Corridor Installation* 1970 (pl.34) where Nauman's installation of six long corridors offered up a "choice of realms to explore" (London 1995 :423).

Brighter, and with less dramatic tension than that heard in *On perspective and motion*, the soundtrack for *A garden of parallel paths* emanates a static pulsing and a light cacophony of everyday urban sounds that includes birds, chimes, voices, cars and the echoing of footsteps. While the video maintains certain similarities to the effect of Nauman's *Corridor Installation* – in that the walker who explores the laneway (or corridor) is confined by the architecture on either side and is under surveillance – Crooks' departs from Nauman's idea by dealing with the pedestrians (and the viewer) less as 'victim' than as participant (London 1995 :424) although the idea of someone watching from behind the camera is remains .

A garden of parallel paths has adapted its title from Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges' short story *A Garden of Forking Paths* (*A garden of parallel paths*, 2012).[13] Borges' story refers to time as an infinite, non-linear concept and infers the coexistence of parallel or alternate universes where there is no single narrative (Butler 2010). Likewise, in Crooks' video, "a labyrinth of endless parallel times and spaces", the narratives are multifarious, and played out by the pedestrians ('A garden of parallel paths, 2012'). Benjamin wrote that "the city is the realization of the ancient dream of the labyrinth. Without knowing it, the *flâneur* is devoted to this reality" (Careri 2002:72). Analogous with Benjamin's concept, while adopting dual roles of urban *flâneur* and artist, Crooks' *A garden of parallel paths* attempts to realise this

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[13] Borges, incidentally, was fond of taking long walks (Williamson :142).

labyrinthian depiction of the city. The walkers are an essential element of this portrayal.

The invisible *flâneur*

In contrast to McKenna's mostly suburban 'drifting', Crooks' art engages with inner city spaces and employs human walking behaviour as an aesthetic device for his art. Both *On perspective and motion* and *A garden of parallel paths* are a melding of careful planning – in the choice of location, time of day, camera mounting, post production editing and so on – and the product of chance. Employing a camera mounted on a wheelchair or other moveable device, the artist is a step removed from Baudelaire's *flâneur* as 'someone who walks' but at the same time, adopts the role of detached or absent observer as a means of observing and deciphering social and political activity in urban spaces (Fenner 2015 :26).

The role played by the video maker (Crooks) as *flâneur* is an extension of that performed by the 20th century photographer. As explained by Sontag: "The photographer is an armed version of the solitary walker reconnoitring, stalking, cruising the urban inferno, the voyeuristic stroller who discovers the city as a landscape of voluptuous extremes (Sontag 1973 :55)". In the *Painter of Modern Life*, Baudelaire (1863) noted the ability of the modern artist to mix with the crowds and enjoy being incognito while looking for that indefinable something called 'modernity' to express a certain idea. Using the multiple sets of 'eyes' enabled by technology, Crooks too goes incognito in his articulation of the contemporary city. While McKenna's wanderings take him into the streets, Crooks', aided by technology, simultaneously ushers the viewer into the proxy role of *flâneur*. The streets scenes offered in Crooks' videos are not so much created through architecture, but made possible through the recognisable body action of walking as translated to the familiar TV screen (Kuppers 1999). Through Crooks' videos, "the camera's eye becomes our own" ('White Night travels through time aboard Daniel Crooks' Phantom Ride' 2016).

Technique: Slices of time

It is worth considering why Crooks' videos are found to be so mesmerising for the viewer. The two works discussed in this chapter record everyday life in the city and the banal activity of pedestrianism. Popular time lapse videos readily found on the internet, say of an evening sunset or moving cloud formations, are speeded up to demonstrate a lapse of time. However, Crooks' treatment of time presents it in a reconstituted version. Consequently, *On perspective and motion* seduces the viewer with a series of moving images of distorted walking bodies morphing with still-life architecture. The viewer witnesses the pedestrians moving across the screen as a slow-moving and carnival-like spectacle. *A garden of parallel paths* operates to lure the viewer with its labyrinth of pathways where people suddenly vanish and pop up in a seamless temporal dimension.

In both cases it is the modification of the single time element during the video-making process that alters the action of the walking body and compels the viewer. The 'time slice' is not as complicated as it sounds. For *On perspective and motion* Chambers (2006) suggests the procedure is similar to taking a still photograph of a moving image, cutting it in strips, swapping each strip with another in front or behind it, and animating the result (Chambers in Bullock 2006 :17). In terms of recording the motion of city inhabitants, Crooks' time slice techniques have been discussed with respect to their connection with the history of cinema and the metropolis. Simmons (2009) recalls films such as Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1926), Walter Ruttman's *Berlin Symphony of a Great City* (1927) and Dziga Vertov's *The Man with the Movie Camera* (1929) all of which maintain "a correspondence between the motion of the city and the moving image" (London 1995 :23).

Made prior to these, an interesting precursor can be seen in the silent Australian short film of unknown authorship, *City Traffic in Variable Moods* c.1920[14] which also

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[14] *City Traffic in Variable Moods* c.1920 can be viewed online at:
http://aso.gov.au/titles/newsreels/city-traffic-variable-moods/clip1/

features pedestrians walking along footpaths and across busy city streets. It uses camera techniques that include super-fast time (almost time-lapse) alternated with slow motion (De Souza). By updating these techniques, using processes unique to the art form of video (London 1995) and working with the familiar bodily action of walking, Crooks is able to experiment with time as an "elusive idea that has engaged philosophers for millennia" (time). This method of heightening awareness of the body's movement in space provides compelling viewing while simultaneously revealing more about human habitation in urban spaces.

Walking depicted as motion

In *On perspective and motion* and *A garden of parallel paths*, the video medium allows the walker to be caught in action, as opposed to occupying a fixed location in the landscape required by the artist-painter. In this regard, Crooks' video works have been discussed as part of a trajectory influenced by the nineteenth century motion studies in the pioneering photography of Eadweard Muybridge (1830–1904) (Harding and Cramer 2009 :243) and his colleague Étienne Jules Marey (1830–1904).

In works such as Muybridge's *Two Women Walking, Meeting and Partly Turning: Plate 45 from Animal Locomotion (1887)* 1884-86 (pl.35) and Marey's *Descent of Inclined Plane* c.1882 (pl.36), the photographers' work centred around compiling visual descriptions of people moving – and specifically, walking (Braun 1992: xvii) – in order to reveal the complexities of human body movement otherwise invisible to the human eye (Simmons 2009). Marey's dream was to cut and slice time to make it representable (Simmons 2009). Crooks has acknowledged the influence of both photographers, and in particular, Marey in *On Perspective and Motion*:

> Marey was trying to break down motion—to stop the world and to see the little moments that are in it—and how those come back together to create motion. Whereas I was coming from an absolutely diametrically opposed situation of trying to break [filmed] motion down to recreate it and make [new] motion. And at the opposite ends of the circle we meet up (Priest: 2016).

Linked to the scientific studies of Muybridge and Marey – Crooks' work has later been lauded for its relationship to the post-cubist art of works such as Marcel Duchamp's (1887–1968) *Nude Descending a Staircase No.2*, 1912 (pl.37) (Harding and Cramer 2009:243). In *Nude*, Duchamp "reduced the descending nude to a series of some twenty different static positions whose fractured volumes and linear panels fill almost the entire canvas" (Philadelphia Museum of Art). This modern course taken to depict the movement of city walkers is also evidenced in the work of Australian artists, notably that of Frank Hinder (1906–1992). Hinder's work included studies of Wynyard subway and city crowds (Free 1980 :20-21). Examples include *Subway (double image)* 1947 and *Subway Wynyard* 1948 (pl. 38, pl.39).[15]

It is difficult to imagine either *On perspective and motion* or *A garden of parallel paths* coming to fruition had these previous art histories not occurred (Harding and Cramer 2009). Just as Muybridge's chronograms were praised for portraying the magical in the banal (Waxman 2010 :16), and the modernists – Hinder for his cubist rendering of reality and exploration of form (Harding and Cramer 2009), and Brack's *Collins St 5pm* for its formal repetition and muted palette (National Gallery of Victoria) – Crooks' videos adapt and extend these ideas. Drawing on these legacies and focusing on human movement, Crooks' videos allow us to "see something of what it *feels* to be alive" (Simmons in Harding & Cramer 2009 :252).

Walking as rhythm

The 'beat' of the city would generally be heard audibly through the sound of two alternating footsteps (Chen 2013). Applying leading edge technology to the movement of city pedestrians, Crooks videos depict the 'rhythms' of the city in visual form. Lefebvre (1996) speaks of a character he terms the 'rhythmanalyst' – one who knows how to listen to a place noting that, if "one observes a crowd during peak times and

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[15] The later *Subway Escalator* 1953 was Hinder's modern version of Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase*) and illustrated the crowd moving with the assistance of modern technology – that is, an escalator (see pl. 40).

especially if one listens to its rumour, one discerns flows in the apparent disorder and an order which is signalled by its rhythms: chance or predetermined encounters, hurried carryings or nonchalant meanderings..." (230). In other words, Lefebvre suggests that rhythm is inseparable to our understanding of time, and rhythms are best understood through observation of repetition (Lefebvre 2004 :viii). Rather than detecting mechanical rhythms, he recognised the organic aspect of rhythmed movements (Lefebvre 2004 :6) and "the coexistence of social and biological rhythms" (Lefebvre 2004: xii). Through the mode of everyday city walkers, Crooks' videos portray the experience of city rhythms as an interrelationship of the body through space and time (Chen 2013 :531).

In *On perspective and motion*, the repetitive nature of everyday phenomena and the idea of an ordered 'capitalist machinery' is reflected in Crooks' video. Like 'urban pilgrims' Crooks' subjects participate in a daily performance – one which becomes "imprinted in the sonic rhythm" of their "synchronised movements" (Ingold and Vergunst 2008: 97). It witnesses the workers acting like worker bees and drones while their ambulatory practices literally take place between the gaps of the city's power structures (Sound environments). While the reasons for each person's movement through the space is individual, their daily pilgrimage through the spaces of the city can be observed from the walkers' 'collective groundwork' in city spaces (Barr in Fenner 2015 :26).

By contrast, the disorder of the walkers in *A garden of parallel paths* evidences a more relaxed rhythm and a gentler pace as Crooks' equates the labyrinth of laneways with Benjamin's Parisian arcades. Sharing the physical space as walkers, the individual's cross paths, move to avoid collisions, make eye contact with other walkers, and observe their surroundings. Chen (2013) notes that the study of walking rhythms does not preclude inanimate objects and calls for the study of alliances. As is evident in this recording, the rhythms of the laneways record the sharing of space as an alliance between the walkers with parking meters, garbage bins, and other objects in the landscape.

In *On perspective and motion* and *A garden of parallel paths*, walking is used as a device to observe urban rhythms. By slowing and distorting time, Crooks' technique of capturing multiple bodies in the organic phases of movement – mainly walking – allows the rhythm of city life to be revealed. Listening to the rhythms of the city directs attention to the effect of the urban spaces on daily life. While the concept of urban encompasses a city or town – a geographical place defined primarily by the number and volume of its inhabitants, Benjamin noted that it is the "motile interaction of these bodies with their spaces [that] creates the urban, not the bricks and concrete themselves" (Küppers in Whybrow 2010 :56).

Walking as a depiction of the human condition

Each walking ritual across the urban spaces identified in the videos is deeply entwined with Crooks' time and space narrative. Human pedestrians play an imperative role in the work linking the elements of space and time. As Jackson urges, "Walking can be seen as a narrative process that weaves together time and space because at the same time that stories connect the past and future they also 'articulate peoples' notions of who they are and where they belong'" (Jackson 1998, 177 in Ingold and Vergunst 2008: 97).

In *On perspective and motion*, Crooks' manipulates our perception of space and time distorting the human body with fascinating results and in corresponding fashion to the depictions of human bodies by artists like Francis Bacon (1909–1992) and Alberto Giacometti (1901–1966). Analysing the aesthetic qualities of *On perspective and motion*, Colless (2007) notes the walkers' "bizarre shapes" as they "hover mid-step in city streets in eternal moments", and that of the "grotesquely distended office workers" that are reminiscent of Bacon's compelling tortured and twisted figures (19). Elongated limbs and feet are evident, for example in Bacon's *Triptych – August 1972*, 1972 (pl. 41) and *From Mubridge 1965* (pl.42)[16], while Bacon's paintings of moving

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[16] For the full title of this work see the plate.

figures enjoy a tension brought about by "walking the line between figuration and distortion" (Bond 2012).

The elongated bodies of Giacometti's discomforting and isolated sculpted figures in the 1960s solitary *Walking Man* series and the group of walkers in *Piazza* 1947–9 (pl.43) are also brought to mind in *On perspective and motion*. Like Bacon's paintings previously referred to, Giacometti's sculptures were created in the tumultuous period after World War II and his thin, naked and emaciated solitary figures were synonymous with the ruinous condition and misery of the world at that time. Although stationary, the sculptures depicted scenes of "Coming and going with no reason in the crowd" (Ponge in Foster, Krauss, Bois et al :461). Stripped of their humanity, Giacometti's figures represented the condition of human loneliness and breakdown of civilization evident at the time (Heartney 2008 :195). In *On perspective and motion*, it is generally business people dressed in suits and city workwear who are depicted walking in the video. Rarely speaking or interacting with one another, and never looking directly at the camera – while appearing quite sensational – the inhabitants of this urban space are depicted in a comparative way to those of Giacometti as isolated dehumanised figures.

Walking as visual effect

In each of the time-shifting processes demonstrated in *On perspective and motion* and *A garden of parallel paths*, Crooks suspends our belief about time while simultaneously letting time acquire a spatial representation (London 1995). Crooks may not have had the same intentions as that of the Surrealists, yet his videos of walkers, including the two discussed in this chapter, portray characteristics of the surrealist aesthetic (Grishin 2013 :509) such as that found in the early techniques in Hungarian artist André Kertész (1894–1985) *Distortions* series of photographs exhibited in 1933 (pl.44).

Using time-manipulative techniques on the everyday practice of the walkers, the resulting surreal effects can be seen to re-enchant the quotidian plazas, streets and

laneways of the city (Waxman 2010 :15). Via the walkers, Crooks is able to communicate Benjamin's initial idea that the gaps or spaces between the buildings are more significant than the buildings – and what the buildings represent (Thomas 2004: 134). Although the effects of enchantment and delight are evident in the casual appearance and vitality of walkers who stroll through Melbourne laneways, this is less so in Martin Place where the surreal effect, when combined with an intimidating soundtrack, is more akin to the uncanny – particularly given the recent history of the space.[17]

Synonyms for uncanny reveal the broad reach of the term which ranges from eerie and frightening to that which is astonishing or magical. In Crooks' case, the uncanny depictions of people seen in *On perspective and motion* are not 'frightening' according to Sigmund Freud's (1919) depiction in his essay *Das Unheimliche (The Uncanny),* but nevertheless can be recognised in certain of Freud's passages. For example, the distorted images of the walkers can be viewed as "something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it..." (Freud S, 1919) and – as Freud also attested – Crooks' techniques are a fictional means of overlaying uncanny or edgy effects on real-life situations (Kuhns). Add to this the dramatic, haunting soundscape of the work and through the medium of these urban pedestrians, Crooks' work provides a compelling view of the urban cityscape.

Walking as poetry and language

Crooks' depictions of walkers in the city can also be aligned with the language of spatial practice developed by Michel De Certeau. In his essay 'Walking in the City' De Certeau observes the practitioners of the everyday – city walkers – from the top floor of New York's World Trade Centre (De Certeau 1984). De Certeau's description of pedestrians spied from above, observes the city as a labyrinth notes that "their bodies

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[17] Arguably, ten years after Crooks' video was made the Sydney siege brings a further and recent historical dimension to *On perspective and motion* 2006 (Whybrow, 2010 :24) drawing limited parallels with the 'new tragic narrative' that followed the destruction of New York's Twin Towers (Whybrow 2010 :24).

follow the thicks and thins of an urban 'text' they write without being able to read it"
(De Certeau 1984 :93). Viewing the walkers' action as a language of individually
composed paths and unrecognised poems, De Certeau implies that the action of the
walkers in taking shortcuts, writing their own paths, and moving in ways not envisaged
by city planners and organisers amounts to a means of resistance by ordinary people
to the power of city authorities.

In *On perspective and motion* and *A garden of parallel paths*, Crooks delivers to the
audience the means by which individual pedestrian movements can be collectively
shown to shape the city. Crooks employs his subject pedestrians, walkers, strollers and
passers-by as translators of the city's language. As the individual walkers are the
authors of their own text, they humanise the pathways through the city. Through his
art, Crooks captures moments of pedestrians passing by and redelivers it to the viewer
(De Certeau 1984 :161). While McKenna's walks enable the discovery of suburban
poetry, Crooks' version is revealed in the ambulatory movement of city crowds.

Walking as everyday life

Despite the evidence put forward earlier in this chapter, Crooks' 'time slice' videos are
almost always discussed solely in reference to their relationship to, and treatment of,
time and motion while the pedestrian 'actors' are seen as accidental players on the
artist's stage. While they occur by chance and vary in appearance as a consequence of
body shape, the clothes they wear and the random effect of the artist's interventions,
these walking 'actors', like the city itself, are essential characters in the videos
narrative. Each anonymous individual plays a role as their body appears onscreen. In
both focus videos, the subject pedestrians are bodies traversing real space in real
time, conduct akin to the 'practice of everyday life' (De Certeau 1984).

Everyday life is envisaged by the distorted, twisted bodies found in *On time and
motion* and in the fleeting moments of the walkers captured in *A garden of parallel
paths*. In the former video, Crooks' technique merges the art historical and filmic
characters produced by Bacon and Giacometti and others with new technologies. This

mesmerises the viewer by playing with the line between reality and representation in depicting the human body (Bond 2012 :21). In *A garden of parallel paths* it is the 'sliding door' effect[18] of Crooks' labyrinth of laneways that leads the viewer to contemplate everyday moments. By combining instants of time, the video resists any one specific narrative as these instants become metaphors for the personal decisions, chance meetings and strange happenings that occur in life. In both videos Crooks' captures the pedestrians in "the act of passing by" (De Certeau 1984 :161) enabling the audience to identify with the pedestrians in a manner that encourages each viewer's contemplation of their own life experience while individual memories are imprinted into the fabric of the city (Barr in UNSW, 26).

As already noted the contribution of the anonymous pedestrian extras to Crooks' work has been largely ignored. As we have seen in this chapter, the ambulatory movements of the walkers in *On perspective and motion* and *A garden of parallel paths* are responsible for defining space and time. While their actual appearance might be accidental their walking movement produces an aesthetic descriptor for time. Employing the walkers as mediators, Crooks diarises numerous time instants, while the record of each instant merges with another, fades and eventually disappears from the screen (London 1995 :426). As James notes, these works prompt a question about the present that, "has melted in our grasp, fled 'ere we could touch it, gone in the instant of becoming" (James in London 1995 :426).

Through the contemporary language of the video, Crooks' art exhibits techniques that are internal to his art and, at the same time, captures the energy and atmosphere of contemporary city life. Specifically, in *On perspective and motion* and *A garden of parallel paths*, this is carried out through his observation and recording of people walking in animated urban spaces. Taking the role of invisible *flâneur*, Crooks integrates his unique 'time slice' method of working with the ambulations of urban walkers to create videos that explore everyday city life from unexpected angles.

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[18] This term is used to refer to the split narrative in the plot of the British film *Sliding Doors* (1998).

Already well-known for his explorations of time and space, this chapter clarifies the role of the practice of walking in Crooks' videos that are the focus of this chapter. Occupying the role of *flâneur* in both focus works, walking provides the vehicle for Crooks' to communicate the rhythms and human language of the urban environment while simultaneously exposing its potentially dehumanising effects.

Chapter 3: Lauren Brincat's walking performances

Introduction

The third chapter of this thesis is concerned with Lauren Brincat's 'walking pieces',
which comprise ambulatory performances by the artist as documented on video.
Perhaps even more so than in the work of Noel McKenna and Daniel Crooks, Brincat's
walking performances represent the blurring of everyday life and art. While Noel
McKenna's depictions of urban landscapes and objects are a consequence of his
flâneur-like suburban observations and Daniel Crooks' work comprises 'time slice'
videos of other people walking, Brincat's art discussed in this chapter comprises her
embodied walking performances. This chapter identifies focus works where walking
has been employed by Brincat as a device to make contemporary art in the urban
context. It then evaluates those selected works and reveals how the artist's practice
inspires new ways of thinking of the relationship between walking and art.

Born in Sydney, Brincat also completed her visual arts education in the city, holding
her first solo exhibition in 2007. While she formally trained in painting and still
considers herself a painter – despite not using either brush or paint in her recent work
– the focus of Brincat's current practice is centred on video, performance and
installation. When interviewed in 2012, Brincat stated that the theoretical grounding
and sensibility for composition she developed in her training as a painter underpins
her current practice (Yang :2012). Brincat's feeling for composition is evident in the
works discussed in this chapter. In recent years, Brincat has lived internationally and
much of her recent work has been inspired and or created in overseas countries.

To date, Brincat has completed five separate walking performances.[19] Part of an
ongoing series, they represent just one aspect of the artist's overall practice.
Understanding the way that walking can become art involves looking at the work from

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[19] Lauren Brincat's walking performances include *It's a Long Way to the Top* 2009 [?],
Steady as She Goes 2011 (France), *This Time Tomorrow, Tempelhof* 2011 (Berlin), *Walk
in Traffic* 2012 (Mexico) and *Walk the Line* 2016 (Australia?).

a contrary perspective – even if there are no physical remains of an artist's walk, if the walk hadn't happened, the art work would not exist (Moorhouse in Long 2002 :33). This idea assists in understanding how Brincat's walks – where the only tangible evidence of their happening is the video or written documentation of the performance – are works of art. O'Rourke (2013) notes that walking "...blurs the distance between representing the world and designating oneself as a piece of it, between live art and object based art." Brincat has also said that "the quality of the intention and the execution of the gesture" are the most important elements of her work (Yang 2012).

The focus works of Lauren Brincat

Although some of Brincat's walking works are recorded in areas outside of cities (including the latest *Walk the Line* 2016 which featured in the 20th Biennale of Sydney), this thesis highlights two performances where the artist has walked in urban spaces. *This Time Tomorrow, Tempelhof* 2011 (pl. 45) was performed in Berlin, Germany, while *Walk in Traffic* 2012 (pl. 46) was created and shot in Mexico City, Mexico. Both video works that document these respective performances are formally described as 'Documentations of an action' and shot on single-channel digital video.

This Time Tomorrow Tempelhof and *Walk in Traffic* are both discussed via the tangible record of a particular walking performance – principally that recorded on video and in written reviews of the actual performance (where the latter is available). The video documentation forms an integral part of the work. This thesis acknowledges that there is a distinction between a performance and its documentation, that they are mutually independent (Auslander 2006 :2), and that as a consequence there is potential for the record of the performances to be fragmentary or incomplete (O'Dell in Auslander 2006 :1). However, this thesis treats the documentation and other available material as an access point by which the artist's performance walks can be discussed. For the purpose of describing the works, this chapter examines the performances in terms of their documentation on video, and assumes the artist intended the respective video recordings as an accurate record of the work. A further assumption that the viewer

stands in the location of the camera operator aids in the initial description of each performance discussed in this chapter.

This Time Tomorrow, Tempelhof

Brincat's video *This Time Tomorrow, Tempelhof* records the artist's performance walking on the airport runway at the site of Berlin's original Tempelhof Airport. Several years prior to Brincat's performance, the Tempelhof airport ceased operations, and was converted to a large recreational park and open space.[20]

Situated only five kilometres from the centre of Berlin, Tempelhof airport has a distinct urban setting and a complex history. Originally known as Tempelhofer Feld, the site was under the military control of the German Reich from the late nineteenth century. In addition to being associated with early 20th century experiments in aeronautics, the airport – which was designated in 1923 – became synonymous with the Nazis during World War II when Adolf Hitler was responsible for its significant expansion. Tempelhof is known for its innovative architecture, including a large curved building that houses the aircraft hangar. At the time of the Berlin Airlift of the late 1940s the airport became known as a symbol of friendship when planes arrived and departed every few seconds to bring supplies. Subsequently, during the Cold War, the airport represented a "gateway to freedom" for the people of Berlin (Heeb 2007). In more recent times, the airport has represented, a "way of everyday life" for the residents nearby (Heeb 2007 :71–72).

The video for the performance of *This Time Tomorrow Tempelhof* depicts a solitary walk by the artist. A few moments from the start, the artist appears suddenly in centre-frame attired in black. Shot from behind in the manner of a classical composition, Brincat walks in the direction of a distant horizon, using the runway's white painted guiding-strip as a path. The soundtrack is more or less silent as Brincat,

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[20] After ceasing operations in 2008, the city of Berlin reclaimed the 386-hectare site for open public space. When Brincat's performance took place, the airport was therefore no longer in operational use (Kulish 2008).

seemingly aware of her performance, walks with a calm, steady gait. Becoming smaller, and then eventually only a black spot in the distance, after around three minutes she disappears from view at the vanishing point of the frame. The video continues to run, verified only by the moving procession of traffic outside the airport perimeter. At around one minute from the video's conclusion, tiny figures emerge in the distance. Located at the edges of the runway and walking toward the viewer, their presence is never resolved.

Walk in Traffic

Made the following year and inspired by a suggestion from the Mexican curator Cuauhtémoc Medina, (Hernandez 2012) Brincat's *Walk in Traffic* was performed in the heart of Mexico City where the artist was resident at the time (Champtaloup 2013). The video documentation of Brincat's performance commences in a street lined with with ubiquitous, medium-sized buildings and a full road of slow moving traffic. Brincat's walk commences at the Monterrey Avenue junction – a traffic intersection notorious for high traffic flows and congestion in a city that embraces 21 million people (Champtaloup 2013) [21]. As the traffic moves forward, the camera is trained on the centre of the multiple-lane highway. Accompanied by a soundtrack of blaring horns and general traffic noise, two separate roads entering from different angles and comprising several lanes merge at the bottom of the screen.

After approximately one minute, the soundtrack melds to Bree van Reyk's ambient electronic soundtrack (Champtaloup 2013) and the traffic speed is simultaneously slowed onscreen. Without warning, a large bunch of colourful, helium-filled balloons of various shapes and sizes appear in centre frame. As in the documentation for *This Time Tomorrow, Tempelhof* the artist's walk is shot from behind. Dressed in black and carrying the balloons so her head is obscured from view, the artist appears and begins walking through the thick lanes of traffic. Tentatively at first, she travels away from the viewer along the centre of the road. Choosing a relatively straight path between

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[21] This 21 million figure is the population of the wider metropolitan area of Mexico City.

numerous lanes of traffic, Brincat entrusts her safety to the Mexican drivers and gradually disappears from view while the balloons remain in frame, shrinking in size as they approach the vanishing point.

Walking as artistic performance: a brief recount

Brincat's walking performances find their original precursor in the walking practice of British artist, Richard Long, the first contemporary artist to explore the notion of walking as an art form and a pure aesthetic practice. Long's *A Line made by walking* 1967 (pl.6) – a line on the ground created by walking back and forth along a straight line in a grassy field – produced a sculptural object as a result of the artist's walking. That is, the line that remained in the grass after Long's walk was the object produced by his footsteps. Images of *A Line made by walking* show the straight line of trampled grass heading toward a line of trees. Unlike Brincat, Long does not appear in person in the documentation of his performances.

In the succeeding decades, Long's numerous 'walks of art' confounded expectations about what art should be, and what it should look like (Moorhouse in Long 2002 :32). Moorhouse notes that "...Long took sculpture into the domain of the immaterial: the walk comprises the movement of a body through time and space and, as such, has no permanent physical attributes." Long's work enabled this relationship to be defined between elements of landscape and the power of an idea, despite a lack of any physical presence of a performance (Moorhouse in Long :32). His walking practice demonstrated that the execution of ideas can be articulated through walking.

Many artists have since extended Long's tradition – including by shifting the landscape for articulating ideas from the natural to the urban environment. French artist Sophie Calle's (b.1953) urban walking performances, for example, have often explored ideas surrounding surveillance and personal privacy.[22] Unlike Long, whose practice has blurred the boundaries between walking as performance and land art, but whose

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[22] Two such examples are Calle's *Los Angeles* 1984 and *Suite Venitienne* 1980.

walks often comprise or are accompanied by a permanent sculptural element, Brincat's art is performed without any physical trace of the artist's presence on the land. The two urban walking performances discussed in this chapter express different aspects of Brincat's contemporary artistic practice. These include the practice of walking to express a conceptual idea, as a mediator of time and memory, as social protest and as a feminist performance.

Walking to realise a romantic idea

Brincat's walk in Berlin for *This Time Tomorrow, Tempelhof* was completely ephemeral although the record of its happening poses numerous questions for the audience: why is the artist at the airport; how is she able to walk on the runway; where is the walk heading; what will happen next – and so on. At the same time, her use of the 'ruckenfigur technique' in the documentation of her performance – where the artist is shown with her back facing the viewer – heightens the sense of mystery. The fact that the artist is walking away at a steady pace, with her back to the viewer, conveys the idea that Brincat is unworried, or has assumed some degree of control over what will happen. This performance pose can be compared, for example, with Cindy Sherman's photograph *Untitled Film Still #48* 1979 (pl.47), where the artist's uneasy stance at the side of the road lends an ominous air to the work.

When exhibited, *This Time Tomorrow, Tempelhof* has been displayed on a rectangular screen mounted on a triangular frame. This has the effect of accentuating the symmetry of the piece, and highlighting the movement of the artist toward the horizon (Priest :2014). Brincat has noted that she finds walking meditative ('Lauren Brincat at NAS Gallery') and the repetition of her footsteps adopts a meditative aura – recalling the manner of Thoreau's walking practice (Thoreau 1993). The artist's steady walking continues for more than five minutes, yet after only a few minutes she all but disappears from view. This performance recalls Brincat's similar walk in *Steady as She Goes* 2011, a work that took place during the same year as *This Time Tomorrow, Tempelhof* and is documented on video and in still photographs (pl.48). Regarding *Steady as She Goes*, the artist says she woke up one morning when staying in the

French countryside to find the barn where she was working totally covered in cloud. Brincat notes of the walk that she: "...set up the camera and tripod and walked across the field into the cloud until I disappeared. It was complete once I was unable to see anything but white" (Yang :2012).

In contrast to the misty French scenery in *Steady as She Goes*, which has been compared with the well-known German romantic painting Caspar David Friedrich's *Wanderer Above The Sea of Fog* 1817 (pl.49) (Bullock in Day 2013), an urban airport setting would not generally be considered 'romantic'. However, in her performance for *This Time Tomorrow Tempelhof*, both the choreography of the performance and its documentation can be viewed as such in the sense of its suggestion of mystery and contemplation of the unknown. *Wanderer Above The Sea of Fog* depicts a stationary walker contemplating the landscape. Wearing similar attire to Friedrich's 'Wanderer' – long dark coat, dark-coloured trousers and boots – Brincat's performance evokes this romantic motif in its imagery. Among other commentators, Gregg (2011) contends that romanticism need no longer comment on purely environmental concerns – that is, that beyond mountains, glaciers and pastoral scenery – and, that a contemporary version of romanticism potentially embraces dark histories, disquiet and decline through images of the domestic and everyday environments, as well as via urban scenery of interiors, buildings, roads and so on. Brincat's walk is akin to this thinking. Similarly, Tempelhof airport is a fitting geospatial landscape for the artist's body to absorb the airport's multiple histories in a performance piece centred around her walk down the runway.

The airport setting of Brincat's walk toward the horizon and the performance title *This Time Tomorrow, Tempelhof* recall a song of similar name from 1960s band, The Kinks[23]. Commencing with the sound of a jet plane taking off, the lyrics of the song refer to "transience and an ephemeral world" (Hasted 2013 :160). Like Brincat's performance, the song's lyrics look to an unknown future asking, "This time tomorrow,

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[23] The song *This Time Tomorrow* was released by the Kinks in in 1970 (Hasted 2013).

where will we be, on a spaceship somewhere sailing across an empty sea..." ('The Kinks Lyrics').

Brincat's work has also been linked with that of Bas Jan Ader (1942– 1975) (aka Bastiaan Johan Christiaan Ader) (Bullock in Day 2013: 17). Ader, a Dutch conceptual artist, disappeared in 1975 after attempting to sail a small boat across the Atlantic (Bas Jan Ader – Biography) (pl.50). The trip was part of a three-part performance that began with a walk in Los Angeles – from the Hollywood Hills to the ocean – and was originally planned to have ended with a repeat performance of the Hollywood walk (Verwoert 2006: 1)[24]. In Verwoert's description of the Los Angeles walk, Ader "is shown traversing the urban sprawl at a determined but unhurried pace...or shot from behind against a panorama of city lights." Adding to the connection with Brincat's walk, Ader also referenced the song *Searchin'* by 1950s band The Coasters by writing the lyrics to one of their songs on the photos that recorded his walk (refer pl. 51). This had the effect of "linking the romantic iconography of the solitary wanderer to a commodified version of the quest for the sublime in the form of an old pop song about the search for love" (Voerwert 2006: 1).

Homages to Ader's work have also previously included American artist, David Horvitz' (b.1982) walk in *Disappearing (fog,palos verdes)* (2007) (pl.52). Both Ader's and Horvitz' works are evoked by the imagery of Brincat's walk in *This Time Tomorrow, Tempelhof*. While German romantic painters like Friedrich placed their subject in a position to communicate with God through nature, Brincat's walking performance enwraps the viewer in a contemporary experience by employing her physical and psychological profile, enhanced by the three dimensionality of the video documentation (Bullock in Day 2013: 17). Just as the idea of the walk as a contemporary search for the sublime was explored in Ader and Horvitz' works (Voerwert 2006: 2), Brincat's solitary walk toward the horizon in the iconic setting of Tempelhof airport – the scene of so many departures to places and futures unknown –

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[24] The Los Angeles walk referred to is titled *In Search of the Miraculous (One Night in Los Angeles)* 1973 which is documented by a series of eighteen black and white photographs (Voerwert 2006 :2).

conjures the idea of prospective odyssey. The walk acts as a catalyst to consider both the 'anonymous' artist's personal destiny and, by analogy, our universal future.

Like Ader, Brincat strips her personal identity and any excess detail from the performance for the purpose of conjuring the artist's emotional bearings (Gregg 2011 :138). As Kaprow (1993) argues, the rationale for this approach is to "preserve the immanent cognitive state of the artist while performing" in order to convey their personal experience as an integral component in the work (Kaprow & Kelly 1993). Therefore, in simple terms the artist's job is, "to play the role in order to realise an idea" (Voerwert 2006: 2). While an artist can suggest the viewer approach his or her idea through the ideas expressed in an object – a painting, sculpture or other material object – in *This Time Tomorrow, Tempelhof* Brincat employs the ubiquitous and very accessible act of walking to express a romantic notion.

Walking as memory

Without knowledge of the locality, the performance of *This Time Tomorrow Tempelhof* (as viewed on video) could equally depict an airport runway in any global city. However, having thrown the viewer a clue by titling the work after the name of the airport, it is clearly the artist's intention that the viewer be made aware of the walk's location. As we have seen, tying her bodily actions to place means Brincat's walking piece refers to the history of the Tempelhof Airport and its location in the centre of Berlin. Attached to the airport's history are the memories of generations of people from across the globe who departed in planes from the runway. Inhabiting the geopolitical space of Tempelhof, Brincat's walk recalls the varied histories of this emblematic place.

As the Situationist's broadly intended, the concept behind a *dérive* was to engage with places with a sensitivity to their atmosphere and imaginative potential. In a similar manner, Sophie Calle's walking performance in the work, *Los Angeles* 1984 (pl.53) entered the city through the experience of those who lived within it (Allen). In Berlin for *The Detachment* 1996 (pl.54), Calle's photographs revealed "the hidden past in

urban spaces, [and] draws on the memories of passers-by to describe the symbols of East Germany that have been removed" (Allen). As she travels down the runway, Brincat's is a metaphoric walk that recalls individual and collective memories of generations of voyagers, for whatever reason they were present in the space.

In a corresponding manner, Brincat's walk in *Walk in Traffic* is reminiscent of colourful street vendors both in Mexico (and other developing nations). Still images from the performance find a precursor in the art of Mexican walking artist, Francis Alÿs – specifically the balloon seller (or *ambulante* in Mexican Spanish) depicted in Alÿs' ongoing series of slideshows, *Ambulantes I and II Mexico City* (1992–present) (pl. 55). From one perspective the artist walking with balloons represents a playful kind of pedestrianism and her walk might appear as a flippant gesture. However, just as this thesis has argued that McKenna's deliberately down-skilled and childlike art is at once deeply ironic and purposeful, Brincat's balloon walk is a multi-layered performance with a number of interpretations.

Throughout the last century of art history, toy balloons have been employed by artists from Paul Klee to Banksy and, perhaps most famously, Jeff Koons for a wide variety of means – as whimsical motifs, symbols of innocence or to mock art itself[25]. By contrast, Alÿs' *Ambulantes* series, is politically and socially motivated. The series of documented walks speaks of the artist's fascination with informal labour and the improvised ingenuity of the city's street tradesmen. It documents the disappearance of Mexico's colourful street vendors as a result of administrative policy (Tobar and Uribe 2007). As one of a number of meanings, Brincat's *Walk in Traffic* can be viewed as a tribute to Alÿs and its corresponding critique of city administration which has led to the disappearance of a once-vibrant community to make way for cars and other forms of motorised transport.

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[25] Examples of these ideas expressed in the work of those artists can be seen in Paul Klee's *Red Balloon* 1922, Banksy's mural *Balloon Girl* 2002, Jeff Koons' *Balloon Dog* series 1994–2000 respectively.

Walking as social practice

Expanding on this idea, unlike *This Time Tomorrow Tempelhof* – a walk that makes no demand for participation from spectators and benefits from its solitary nature – *Walk in Traffic* is a social performance that repositions the audience, requiring the cooperation of the Mexican drivers (both as spectators and participants) (Heartney 2008 :398; Bishop 2012:2). Just as McKenna's paintings of demonstrate his opposition to the way the modern city has elevated the importance of cars (and in particular the four-wheel drive) over pedestrians, Brincat's disruptive stroll through the traffic creates "a sensation of 'meaninglessness' that shows the absurdity of the situation" (Alÿs in O'Rourke 2013: 124).

Carrying balloons in the traffic has, in the first place, a practical effect, in that the balloons act as a type of theatrical decoy to protect the artist from harm as she ventures into an otherwise dangerous situation. While any apparent danger in the first performance turns out to be a furphy because the airport is closed, this time it is real – as in Ader's ultimate performance for *In Search of the Miraculous*. The balloons, however, signal that the artist's presence is non-threatening so that despite the disruption to the traffic, she is allowed to walk and move freely among the cars.

In art historical terms, a number of pointers in the performance including its ephemeral nature, its apparent light-heartedness and the use of balloons as readymades suggest a nod to the fluxus art happenings of the 1960s and 70s. Brincat's performance, however, is more closely aligned to the cultural history of street protest and the street performances of artists. In Adrian Piper's *Catalysis III* 1970 (pl. 56) the American artist walked the streets of Manhattan wearing a 'WET PAINT' sign and in Anastasia Klose's *Film for my nanna* 2006 (pl.57) the artist, dressed as a bride, walked Melbourne's streets in search of a husband with a sign reading 'NANNA, I AM STILL ALONE' draped around her neck. Brincat's intervention is, at least at surface level, less politically provocative or socially awkward than these works. As Alÿs has said, however, when accused of the trivial possibilities of his work, "sometimes doing something poetic can become political and sometimes doing something political can

become poetic" (Alÿs 2004). Likewise, Brincat's work invests her poetic performance with social and political meaning.

Bishop (2012) argues that social practice works of art – such as Brincat's performance in *Walk in Traffic* – are "part of an ongoing history of attempts to rethink art collectively"(3). As Brincat stalks her way through the traffic occasionally skirting a vehicle to avoid collision, the idea of meaninglessness is shifted to the audience – that is to the individual drivers of cars (and the wider viewing audience) to whom the performance is directed. If the idea of walking in traffic with balloons in traffic is so trivial, then what does that act say about the everyday activity of sitting (most likely) alone in a car for hours, stuck in a traffic jam? Despite the everyday chaos of the Mexico City traffic, Brincat's *Walk in Traffic* acts as a forceful disruption to the normal order of the day for drivers and at the same time, focuses their attention "on the ephemeral nature of urban life and their own status as simply another fleeting imprint on its surface" (Heartney 2008 :399). Crediting Debord, Bishop suggests that audience participation can effectively become a secret weapon in the success of performances like *Walk in Traffic* – in the sense that such collaborative performances have the potential to rehumanise societies "rendered numb and fragmented by the repressive instrumentality of capitalist production" (Bishop 2012: 11).

Walking as gendered performance

Walk in Traffic also records Brincat walking in places generally off-limits to, and potentially dangerous for, pedestrians. Reminiscent of Alÿs' general walking practice – including *The Collector* (1990-92) (pl. 58) where the artist pulled a toy dog through the streets of Mexico City – a claiming of territory by the artist-walker might be the purpose behind a walk (O'Rourke 2013: 124). Unaided by Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal* – the starting point for Benjamin's 'Arcades Project' (Seal 2013) – Benjamin's venerable *flâneur* was a position consistently reserved for men, while women who walked in public city spaces were considered to be prostitutes or homeless and destitute and present in public spaces for the sole purpose of being gazed upon by men. Brincat's walks in public places such as the airport and the street highlight the

departure between the artist and this notion. Her attention-grabbing *Walk in Traffic* presents a challenge to the accustomed position of women and the established order. While the scholars Janet Wolff and Rosalind Pollock agree that the *flâneuse* is an impossible figure (Wolff in Whybrow :58), Elkin (2016) claims the city as a place increasingly owned by the female *flâneuse* – a term that results from her own imaginary definition (8)[26]. She notes that in the past, there was "always a *flâneuse* passing Baudelaire in the street." Rather than the image of a woman who observes from a lounge chair, or is content merely to *be* observed, her notion of the *flâneuse* is a woman who is empowered by the built environment (Elkin 2016 :20). This empowerment is increased by the 'transgressive act' of women walking in the centre of cities and, "...walking where they're not meant to" as Brincat's walk in *Walking in Traffic* demonstrates (Elkin 2016: 20).

The type of 'transgressive act' being considered may have been more akin to works such as Mona Hatoum's *Roadworks* 1985 (pl 59) where the artist struggled to walk barefoot, dragging her boots by the shoelaces, along a busy footpath in the politically-charged atmosphere of the mid-1980s London suburb of Brixton. While Hatoum's *Roadworks* 1985 has some similarities to Brincat's *Walk in Traffic* in that it involves a female artist 'trespassing', by walking in a public urban space where a woman is not normally expected to be, nor welcomed by passers-by and/or drivers, Hatoum's is a patent political gesture that examines the potent mix of vulnerability and power of a lone woman walking in such space (O'Rourke 2013: 16-20).

Although Brincat's *Walk in Traffic* operates in a markedly different fashion to Hatoum's *Roadworks'*, the more discreet method of placing her body in danger and at the mercy of the traffic while simultaneously creating a feminist disruptive spectacle operates to great effect. Like the works of Alÿs, Piper and Klose referred to above, her territorial claim is aimed at the viewer with a clever mix of poetry and politics, while being similarly non-threatening in its approach.

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[26] Elkin's imaginary definition of the *flâneuse,* at attempt at redressing the exclusion of women from walking in cities (Elkin 2016) is defined as a noun, from the French. A feminine form of *flâneur*, an idler, a dawdling observer, usually found in cities (7).

In addition to its claim for territory in a broad sense, more than two decades ago, Wilson (1992) noted the male problem of having women on the streets in the Victorian era had evolved to the point where it had now become inverted. That is, that the resolve to make decisions about where and when women should be seen in public urban spaces has been replaced with feminist concern about women's safety in city environs (1). Still very much alive, this issue is one shared by women across the globe. Despite the palpable fear in Brincat's gait as she begins her walk, the eventual success of her walk in traffic is saturated with universal meaning.

Through Brincat's walking performances highlighted in this chapter, this thesis argues reveals how the artist's practice inspires new ways of thinking of the relationship between walking and art. Through her walking performances in *This Time Tomorrow Tempelhof* and *Walk in Traffic* this chapter has made evident that walking enables the realisation of ideas, can recall and preserve collective memory, and act as a critique of social policy. Brincat's walk also claims female territory and amounts to a subversive feminist act. Employing universal themes in her work, Brincat's walking performances also demonstrate the global significance of walking in Australian contemporary art.

Chapter 4: discussion and conclusion

This thesis has explored walking in an urban context as a dynamic and vital physical practice in the production of contemporary Australian visual art. It has argued that walking in cities, an otherwise underrated activity, has reinvigorated Australian contemporary art practice. Although the association between walking and thinking and the benefits that walking brings to creativity have been accepted for some time, it is only more recently that a specific relationship between art and walking is being recognised. As this thesis has demonstrated, walking can be used as a device to make and produce art; it can be the subject of art and it can be embodied as act through a walking performance.

In order to argue the significance of walking for Australian contemporary art, the thesis commenced its discussion with an introduction to the history of walking as a cultural practice. It then explored the origins of the modern urban walker through the prose of Charles Baudelaire and its evocation in Walter Benjamin's figure of the *flâneur*. Moving on from Benjamin's time, the thesis provided a brief outline of the trajectory of walking practices that moved from Dada to the surrealists in the 1920s, the Lettrist International to the Situationist International, and minimal art to land art. It then considered the practice of Richard Long and the significance of his work for Australian contemporary walking artists.

In its Introduction this thesis noted the lack of attention both inside and outside Australia to the practice of walking in Australian contemporary art. Each chapter of the thesis therefore focused specific attention on an Australian artist who employs the practice of walking in an urban context to make art. Subsequently the thesis evaluated examples of work by each of those three artists – Noel McKenna, Daniel Crooks and Lauren Brincat – and demonstrated the myriad of ways that walking has been incorporated into their respective art practices. The thesis subsequently analysed selected works from each artist and explored the effects that the art produced by each has in the broader cultural context.

In McKenna's 'drifts' around the suburbs of Sydney and Auckland, the thesis establishes McKenna as an acute observer of contemporary life. In his paintings of suburban objects and people, the thesis argues the artist's ability to uncover and capture relationships between space, communities and nature that provide valuable cultural about everyday life in these cities that otherwise goes unnoticed.

Like Baudelaire, McKenna finds in the city and its passing details "an endless source of fascination" (Ingold and Vergunst 2008 :15) keeping eyes and ears open while performing the role of suburban detective (Ingold and Vergunst 2008 :15). Having found Gleber's work on the modes of observation of the *flâneur* useful for analysing McKenna's work in Chapter 1, this thesis has demonstrated that as observer, collector of suburban scenes, objects and minutia for the purpose of his creative practice, McKenna's art provides a poetic criticism of the contemporary city. Crucially, McKenna's observations of the city are gained through walking. They are not the same as, nor unable to be gained by, accessing city landscapes when travelling inside a motor vehicle or by painting inside a studio. Through his art, McKenna demonstrates that walking is not simply a means to get from one place to the next. By observing the city at walking pace McKenna's art reveals the poetry of everyday city life.

It is at the less hurried pace of walking that Crooks' 'time slice' videos find several common threads with McKenna's art. In the two video works of people walking in the city and explored in Chapter 2, the thesis contends that Crooks' is a contemporary urban *flâneur*. Depicting motion of the city through the modification of his video recordings, Crooks' pedestrian subjects are presented as the city's "everyday practitioners" (De Certeau 1984). By employing urban walkers as a device to make art, Crooks is able to portray the motion of the city to record traces of time and memory and record the rhythms of the contemporary city and to explore the intricacies of the human condition. As a result of Crooks' 'time slice' videos, critical thinking about life in urban landscapes is revealed.

While Crooks focuses on the walking performances of strangers, Brincat's revelations are embodied in her own walking performances. Via the two documented

performances considered for this thesis, Brincat's embodied performances of walking in Berlin and Mexico are discussed in terms of the manner in which they enable realisation of a romantic idea, for their ability to conjure concepts of memory through landscape, and their enabling of social protest in the urban context. The performances also lay a feminist claim for space in places previously reserved for men through non-threatening and poetic means.

As noted in the Introduction, the thesis' consideration of works from these three artist's oeuvres has enabled the examination of ways in which the practice of walking is reflected in contemporary Australian art. Using the approach of evaluating specific works facilitated through walking, the thesis has revealed some of the myriad of ways where walking has been employed as a device or tool by Australian artists. While this approach has paid attention to a side of each artist's practice that was previously underrated, it has also filled a gap in existing scholarship. Interestingly, the thesis illustrates that walking and art have been brought together by artists in circumstances that are beyond the conscious realisation of those who make and view art. It argues therefore, that the practice of walking is a significant cultural activity that demands fresh attention.

Having embarked on a study of contemporary Australian art where artists employ walking as a mode of their practice, it has become apparent that this thesis has only just touched the surface of an unexplored field. While necessary constraints were placed on this thesis, further scope exists within the field of art and walking that this thesis has been unable to address. For example, preliminary research conducted for thesis discovered that if the thesis parameters of the city and urban location were lifted, more than thirty Australian artists for whom walking is an important element in their contemporary practice have been identified. With further investigation, there are likely to be many more artists, and further means by which walking is employed as mode of practice in making contemporary art.

Despite it being centred on Australian artists, thesis demonstrates that that the work explored by the thesis is not peculiar to this country and is developing universal

themes of global importance. At this point the scholarship on art and walking by Australian artists is relatively limited, and has generally been confined to walking in nature. That said, despite enormous international attention being given to the topic, there are no specific Australian texts that explore the nature of the relationship between the two practices in this country. Although the evidence exists, including that set out in the previous chapters, that Australian artists are making original and globally significant work employing walking as a device, it is rare to find a mention of any Australian artist in the current international reading on the topic. Perhaps ironically, authors such as Careri (2002), Solnit (2014) and much of the established literature in the field make reference to the tradition of Australian Aboriginal dreamings and songlines as the first examples where the connection between art and walking was made thousands of years ago.

As a consequence of the lack of scholarly investigation of the relationship between Australian contemporary art and walking, the field for further research in the field is wide open. To address a multitude of gaps, there are a number of valuable topics that could be covered to examine both the historic lineage and current connections between walking and art in the contemporary era. Although further preliminary research would be required to establish the parameters of the field, new areas of study might include a written history of contemporary Australian art and walking. While set in the contemporary era, such a study could expand its parameters to explore works made outside urban areas, and be carried out via an exhibition of works accompanied by exegesis. Alternatively, a thesis which addresses overarching aspect of the relationship of art and walking as explored by Australian artist practices would make a useful introduction to the subject in addition to and enabling further study and recognition of the significance of walking for making art. Further more specific alternatives could restrict to studies of walking to particular artistic media, to walking and certain artist practices or in accordance with the theory within certain disciplines – for example feminist practices, environmental practices and so on – for the purpose of placing a strong spotlight on the special relationship of art and walking practice.

This thesis has revealed the merit and potential of walking as a device for artists to explore new approaches to understanding everyday life and culture in the urban context. Through the quotidian practice of walking artists have displayed a multitude of ways that walking is incorporated in and essential to their art. The thesis concludes that walking in the urban context has reinvigorated contemporary Australian art practice, and that the practice of urban walking in contemporary art practice has an important place within the broader cultural setting.

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