

2005

Experimental Navigation and the Creative Process

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Experimental Navigation and the Creative Process

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Richmond, VA / May 2005



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For this creative project, I am exploring alternate methods of navigating urban environments, and ways in which this activity can inspire creativity. This process is intended to create a new awareness of the urban landscape, break out of the prescribed, and to inspire innovation. The range of possibilities for this way of navigating is vast, and part of the challenge of my experience has been defining boundaries, assigning variables, and using strategies for exploration – making my process inherently morphological. I hope that my work here will encourage others to step out of their comfort zone and experience their environment in a new way.

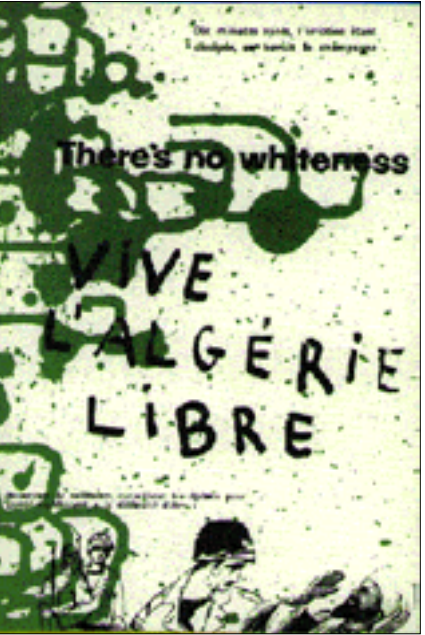
introduction > Getting lost on car trips, wandering around a foreign city where you don’t speak the language, exploring a neighborhood that you just moved into; when first exploring topics for my creative project, I had not considered the link between situations such as these and a creative process. I suppose that we are all aware of it, even on an intuitive level; the hyperawareness of each detail that we experience when lost and searching for something familiar, the slight rush gained from being out of control just for a few minutes, or the primitive feelings of fear, excitement, anger, or joy when coming upon something totally foreign. What I wanted to encourage in my study is a meditative embrace of this awareness — attempting to meet unexpected situations with openness as opposed to frustration. In these moments of clarity, it becomes possible for creative growth.

It seems logical that breaking out of the prescribed will inspire the creative process, and my hope when beginning this project was that the visual solutions I would produce be unique and separate from anything that I have created in the past. However, my intention is not to develop psychological or cognitive theories about creativity or the creative process, but to use this project as a way of investigating my own creative process and documenting my example for others to examine. My goal for the visual process portion of this project is to create work that explores the dynamics of **psychogeography**, and exemplify the way that this process has influenced my work.

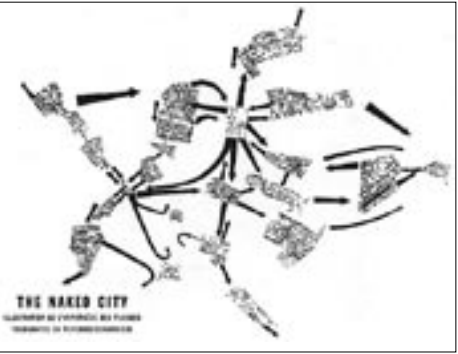
As far back as I can remember – even when I was a small child – I have been chided for my desire to wander and to explore. I have always been able to mentally lose myself in a fantasy, a book or a daydream, and new experiences have always inspired my imagination. In a traditional classroom setting, this mental exploration is not encouraged and I can recall many teachers, some more kindly than others, calling me back to reality. After years of attempting to stifle this behavior, it resurfaced during my later years in college and in my graduate school experience. For me, this behavior and mentality connote **play**. It was frightening to tap into an emotional relic from my childhood. I understand why many adults are afraid to play, for it takes time and focus to invite this attitude back. What became evident to me is that play is necessary as a part of my creative process, and with the intelligence and experience that comes with adulthood, I have learned the need to understand more clearly why it is important, and how it affects all aspects of life.

Having moved to Richmond only two weeks before beginning my graduate education, I did not have much time to settle into my new environment and to begin experiencing the city. After eight months of classes, summer arrived and I realized I had no idea what my lifestyle would consist of without classes. Naturally, I began seeking out places to go for respite and enjoyment in my spare time, and I made a pact with myself to continue familiarizing myself with the city throughout the summer and following school year.

psychogeography + chance processes > What began as an instinctive desire to explore my environment crystallized into theory when I discovered the Situationist International movement and the concept of psychogeography. A somewhat off-putting term, psychogeography is “the study of the effects of geographical settings, consciously managed or not, acting directly on the mood or behavior of the individual.” In other words, this term describes **strategies** or experimental suggestions for altering the way that one navigates through an environment, and how place affects one’s emotions and mental state.



Fin de Copenhagen, 1957 (Guy Débord)



The Naked City, 1959 (Guy Débord)

Though this over arching definition focuses on emotion, for the purposes of this study I have chosen to explore the more procedural and strategic aspects of pyschogeographic navigation. I have focused more on defining varying ways of navigating urban space with unusual or random processes and the manipulation of multiple variables within each navigation. My work documents these “strategic navigations” in varying ways and these documents are the primary outcome of the study.

The Parisian Situationist International movement of the late 1950’s was comprised of artists, poets and adventurers, who, led by Guy Débord, devised playful methods of responding to more serious themes of the time such as postwar conformity and the ways in which urban planning forces us to navigate a city. This group coined the term psychogeography, and developed the *dérive* — a solo or collective activity still celebrated by psychogeographers today, as an exercise designed to make people critically aware of the potential of urban spaces, connecting art and life. The goal was that, by aimlessly drifting, one would become aware of the *emotions* given by a particular place and rediscover the way to experience a city, as well as spur a transformation in the way that cities were planned. Débord encouraged people to make navigational decisions based on emotion rather than the way that streets have been laid out by urban planners. He advocated a “celebration of the discontinuous and subjective experience of urban space.”

Due to the way that cities are set up, conforming to the existing system tends to lead to a prescribed way of navigating. In a typical day, one finds their way to a destination using pathways and directional signage intended for traffic. Richmond is no different, and though I had lived here for months, I realized in that summer after my first year of graduate school that I had barely walked off

“...not all those who wander are lost”
–Tolkien

Psychogeography
The study and analysis of how place impacts and inspires our psyche.

Psyche
The mind functioning as the center of thought, emotion, and behavior and consciously or unconsciously mediating the body’s responses to the social and physical environment.

Play
The injection of amusing, fun and enjoyable activity into daily life or tasks.

the beaten path. When I began to navigate the city more imaginatively, I determined that all decisions coming from within do not jolt me into a new realm of consciousness. Jessica Helfand describes a similar effect imposed by the familiar patterns of design education: “while conceivably empowering to the student, projects, more often than not, are framed by what the student already knows. The distinction here is that while such independent work encourages our students to think for themselves, our narrow-minded curricula restrict their capability to use their minds to truly advance their ideas; and in turn, we limit their ability to advance themselves.” It became apparent to me that true exploration on my part would require leaving my decision-making to chance, and by designing a set of strategies for navigation.

Strategies are carefully designed chance processes (not careless randomization.) They can be based on any number of factors or variables ranging from simple procedures to the monitoring of emotional states. Navigational strategies intended to force a person off the beaten path might include an algorithm [1st Left, 1st Left, 2nd Right, repeat]. Other strategies might be to follow the color red (or any color); changing direction [n,s,e,w] every 5 minutes; or following cards that have instructions written on them (walk in the shadows, cross the street, spin around.) These strategies may not be practical on a walk to work, but they would certainly challenge the

way one thinks about the work place and its place in the city. When are able to question or reconsider something as habitual as the daily commute to the office, we increase the potential for creative growth.

Though the principles behind psychogeography can be applied to any area, when practiced within an urban environment, there are more opportunities to meet strangers or experience special findings simply because cities are so dense. New experiences and discoveries allow us allows us to create a new awareness of our surroundings, to become aware of the effect of place on our psyche, and to form a new relationship with exploration. Challenging our way of thinking inspires innovation and increases possibilities. Relinquishing control over a situation forces us to be open to chance, and this state of mind allows us to look at the mundane in new and exciting ways.

The open-ended nature of psychogeography made predicting the outcome of my thesis difficult and opened up much uncertainty. In the moments on my journeys when I am enveloped in the process of exploration, I feel most convinced that this study is worthwhile. Transporting oneself to a peaceful place in the most stressful of times is a beautiful challenge. John Dewey’s statement that “only when the past ceases to trouble and anticipations of the future are not perturbing is a being wholly united with his environment and



therefore fully alive” speaks to this feeling. When we cease to simply pass through our environment and become conscious of our interaction with it, we begin to fully experience it. The spiritual experience intersects with materials and becomes art.

John Chris Jones’ statement that “things designed, and perceived, are influenced, perhaps more than we think, by the perceptions, the ways of seeing, of ourselves as designers and perceivers,” describes the relationship between expanding process and final outcome. The ways in which we see things, as communicators, dictates communication on a larger scale. When applied to certain artists and the creative arts, these abstract ideas begin to take form and illustrate ways in which psychogeography can impact the creative process. Jones himself exemplified these tactics in a project entitled “St. Ives by Chance.” During a family vacation to St. Ives he grew tired of the beach and wanted to experience the city in a unique way. Borrowing his daughter’s Instamatic, he set out with a map of ten popular tourist locations and determined that upon reaching each location, he would take a snapshot facing North, South, East, West (repeat), regardless of what the image was. This was his way of rebelling against the prescribed tourist experience, though his process is arguably more interesting than the images he produced.



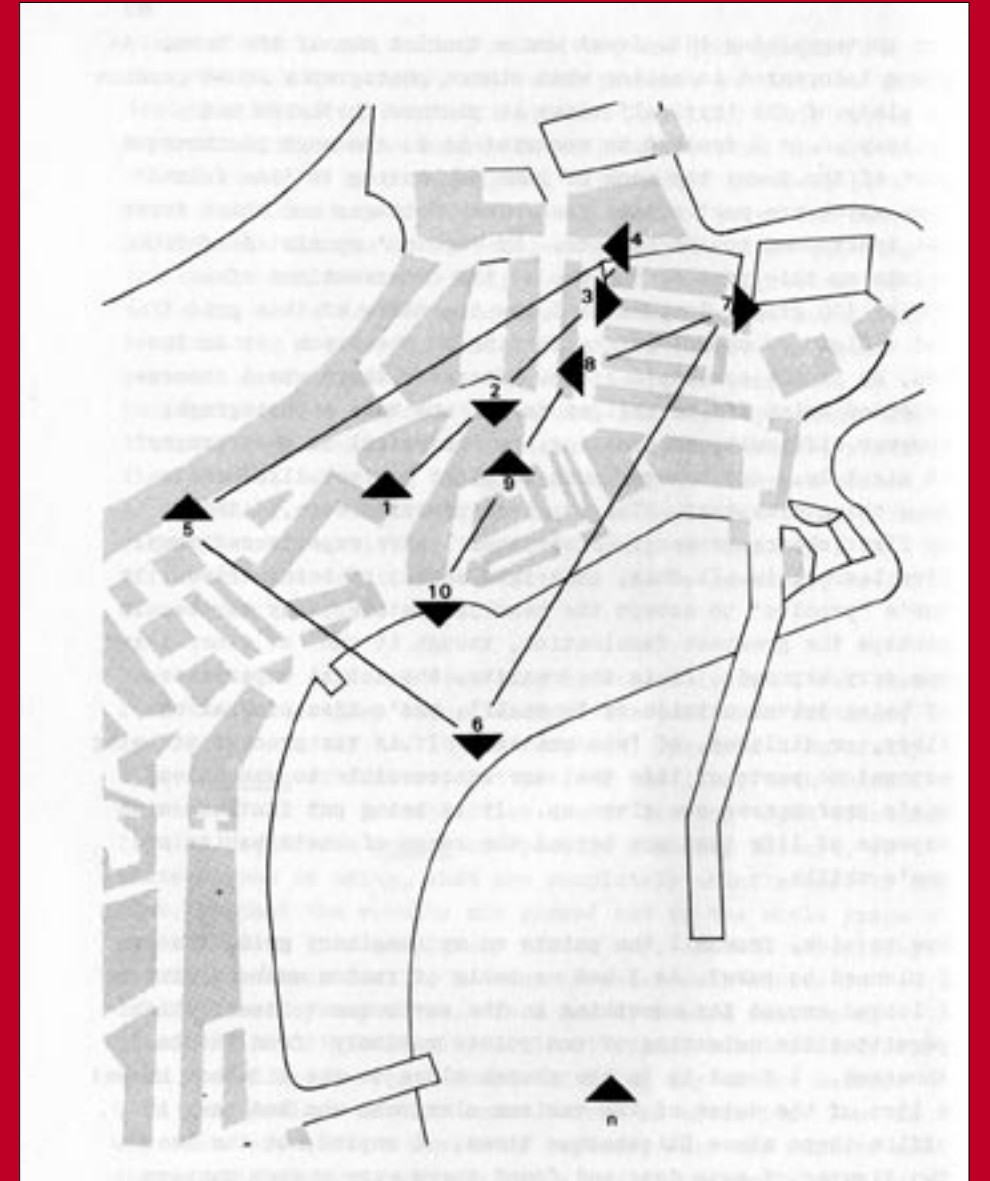
A typical tourist photograph of St. Ives. (John Chris Jones)



Photo 1 from *St. Ives by Chance* (John Chris Jones)



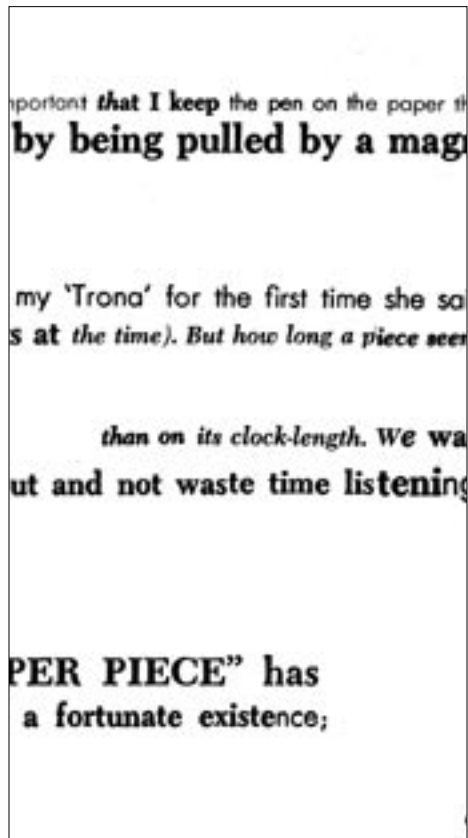
“Image Number One” from *St. Ives by Chance* (John Chris Jones)



St. Ives Tourist Map from *St. Ives by Chance* (John Chris Jones)



From Notations (John Cage)



From Notations (John Cage)



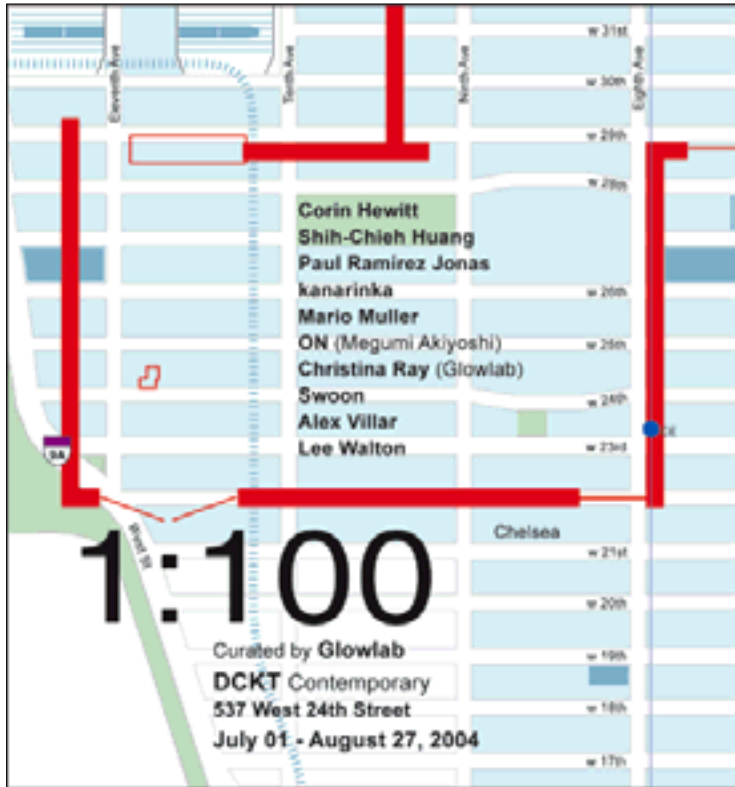
From Notations (John Cage)

John Cage – though his work is not explicitly psychogeographical – embraces *structured* randomness and chance in his work, giving his musicians directions but no map. He writes in his autobiographical statement: “My work became an exploration of non-intention. To carry it out faithfully I have developed a complicated composing means using I-Ching chance operations, making my responsibility that of asking questions instead of making choices.” In the book *Notations*, he employs I-Ching chance principles to determine text selection and arrangement of the pages. I-Ching uses chance, constrained by the basic numeric structure of life, to bridge the infinite and the finite, exposing the greater tension between structure and chaos, detail and the whole that exists within the microcosm of psychogeography and morphology.

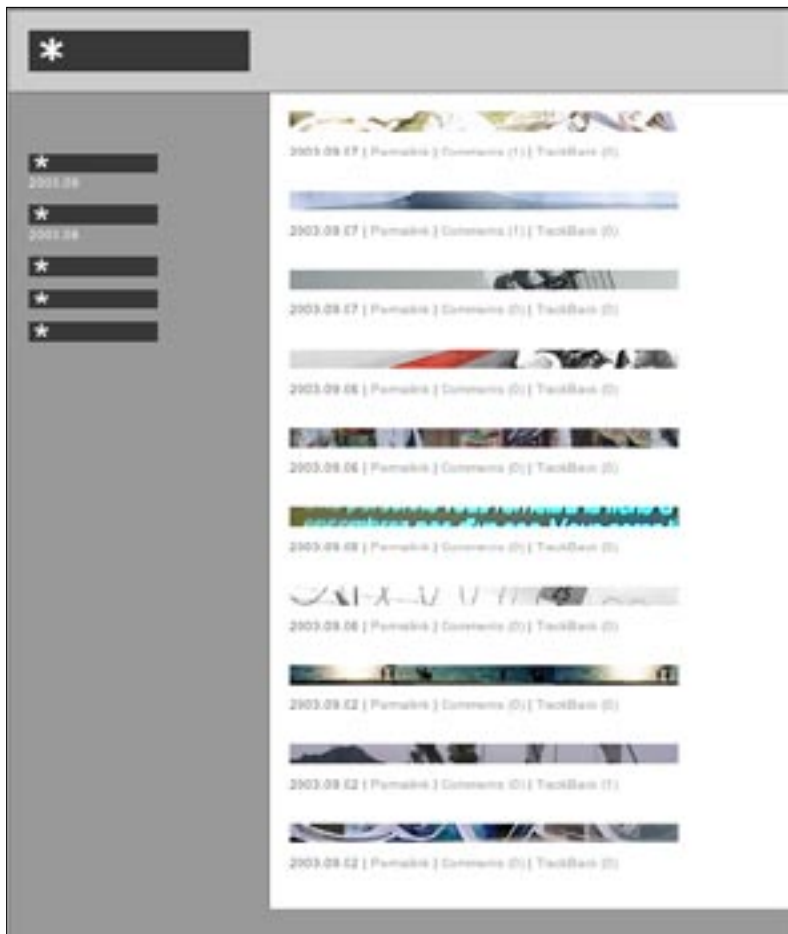
Modern-day psychogeographers are interested in *procedural* exploration and the effect on creative processes that result when one is forced to break out of habitual treks and to develop a new consciousness of the environment. When embarking on a journey with a strategy, it is important to not have expectations as to what the results will be. Having a mind that is open to possibilities is as important as having eyes open to see the street ahead. Whether the result is a chance meeting with a stranger, finding beautiful graffiti in the most unexpected place, or simply allowing your head to be in the clouds for a

few hours, one must take notice of the results and use them to an advantage. This nondiscriminatory embrace of randomness makes a successful journey a highly individualized process. The unusual experiences that result have provided inspiration for writers, artists, musicians, and designers.

Based in New York City, Glowlab is a creative collective that focuses on exploring psychogeography as it relates to contemporary art, and the furthering of psychogeographic theory. Using the web as a medium, Glowlab makes available new and innovative interpretations of this concept in the form of a bi-monthly web-based magazine (just launched March/April 2005). This site provides articles, letters, project descriptions, featured work and links. The Glowlab site also hosts a forum where enthusiasts can post opinions and responses; information on projects and methodologies; request participation and collaboration; and discover links to other relevant work. The posted work of each artist, though having an elaborate process, sounds like fun. Their playful celebration of these tactics seems to have come from years of practice, embarrassment and acceptance. www.glowlab.com



"1:100" gallery exhibition, curated by Glowlab



"Muteblog"

“One Block Radius” is a psychogeographic documentary of one city block in New York City as it appeared before being raised to make way for the new site of New York’s Museum of Contemporary Art. The creators of the site focused on environmental stimuli such as ads/signage; communications; food/beverage; invention/design; daily life, etc. Using photography, video, maps, interviews and found objects, Glowlab founders Christina Ray and Dave Mandi compiled a dense interactive data map about this block. www.oneblockradius.org



www.oneblockradius.org

Social Fiction is a group based in Holland that hosts a website dedicated to psychogeographic experiments and related work. They recently launched *The Journal for Patterns Recognised*, dedicated to “the study of distorted pattern recognition as a branch of speculative knowledge.” www.socialfiction.org



Psychogeographical Markup Language (PML), a diagrammatic representation of psychogeographically experienced space and the representation of dynamically collected data. (From Social Fiction.)



The Wolfram Session: Generative (algorithmic) Psychogeography (Utrecht, Holland), a study wherein participants completed an algorithm; determine place on map & document; complete the same algorithm; repeat. (From Social Fiction.)

One important consideration of psychogeography focuses on how we relate to others who share our environment. In issue no. 1 of Glowlab’s bi-monthly magazine (issue entitled “Strangers”) Sharilyn Neidhardt notes: “living in a dense urban environment evokes a certain polite distance between the people in the city. It’s as if, being forced to live literally on top of one another, we courteously avert our eyes, to give one another the psychic space we can’t physically experience.” I note this aspect only after observing first-hand in my experiments ways in which aspects of exploration have impacted my interactions with strangers.

Neidhardt discusses how her experience as Glowlab’s event coordinator has adjusted her perspective on strangers. Beginning her adventures with psychogeography, she had reservations about its many aspects, as did I. Hobbies, like people, are strange at first and warrant suspicion. However, through practice and adjustments in perspective, she found that things

that are strange are generally friendly. At Conflux, an annual conference on psychogeography hosted by Glowlab, the common area of interest and activities allowed people to find a common ground on which to build relationships, and to enhance perspective on psychogeography as a way of life. This conference, however, was not conducted in the traditional format, but invited individuals and groups to organize psychogeographic experiments during the event. These included: redesigning products and leaving them on shelves of grocery stores; leaving signs posted around the city asking questions relating to place and psyche; or deciding to follow strangers through the crowd. The first several days are usually participatory, with presentations on the final day. Participating in these conferences, Neidhardt closes with the statement: “I know it’s corny, but it really makes me feel that the strangers in my life are just the friends I haven’t made yet.” Due to personal experiences within my studies, I am beginning to believe that she is right.

This year, Conflux will not be held due to the launch of Glowlab’s bi-monthly web-based magazine and new website. Next year, it is scheduled to continue as tradition. Inspired by Conflux, Provflux 2005 will take place May 27-29 in Providence, Rhode Island.

Hosted by P.I.P.S (Providence Initiative for Psychogeographic Studies), Provflux participants will include: Glowlab / Lori Ann Napoleon (www.subk.net/maps.html) / Anna Shapiro / M.U.R.L (Mobile Urban Research Lab) / Jason Kambitsis / Jen Tynes / Neo-Luddite Foundation.

Psychogeography asks that we adopt the mindset of the *flaneur*, one who derives pleasure and energy from the activity of city streets, moving purposelessly among the urban crowd with the eye of an artist, and a spectator of life. A flaneur has no destination or aim, but simply enjoys being a part of the hustle and bustle.

“For the perfect flaneur, it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow. To be away from home, yet to feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world, to be at the center of the world, yet to remain hidden from the world – such are a few of the slightest pleasures of those independent, passionate, impartial natures which the tongue can but clumsily define.”
-Baudelaire

“An intoxication comes over the man who walks long and aimlessly through the streets. With each step, the walk takes on greater momentum; ever weaker grow the temptations of shops, of bistros, of smiling women, ever more irresistible the magnetism of the next streetcorner, of a distant mass of foliage, of a street name.”
-Walter Benjamin

“To go out strolling, these days, while puffing one’s tobacco, while dreaming of evening pleasures, seems a century behind the times. We are not the sort to refuse all knowledge of the customs of another age; but, in our strolling, let us not forget our rights and our obligations as citizens. The times are necessitous; they demand all our attention, all day long. “
-Le Flaneur newspaper, published May 3, 1848, Paris

definition of terms >

Algorithm – A fixed pattern.

Boundaries – Physical limits or borders, constraints within the environment.

Brands – A mark indicating identity or ownership.

Chance – An unknown and unpredictable phenomenon that causes an event to result one way rather than another.

Dérive – An activity involving aimless drifting, with special attention given to emotions in a particular place.

Destination – The purpose or intended goal for which a journey is conducted.

Documentation – The collecting and organizing of data gathered on a journey.

Duration – The amount of time it takes to complete a journey.

Emotion – A mental state that arises spontaneously rather than through conscious effort and is often accompanied by physiological changes; a feeling.

Flaneur – A figure who derives pleasure from the hustle & bustle of city streets, moving among the urban crowd with the eye of an artist, a spectator of life.

Focus or Filter – A selective area of interest.

Hyperawareness – A term assigned to the state of being where one becomes overly conscious of their surroundings and details within the environment.

Morphology – The study of the structure and form of a language system, including inflection, derivation, and the formation of compounds.

Navigation – The way in which one moves through their environment, using familiar elements to plan, record and control the course of the journey.

Play – The injection of amusing, fun and enjoyable activity into daily life or tasks.

Psyche – The mind functioning as the center of thought, emotion, and behavior and consciously or unconsciously mediating the body’s responses to the social and physical environment.

Psychogeography – The study and analysis of how place impacts and inspires our psyche.

Strategies – Systematic methods for generating elaborate, chance-related plans for navigating in unusual ways.

retrospective > Psychogeographic principles are everywhere, though not always distinctive. It has become difficult for me to look at anything without relating it back to my creative project in some way. I also see connections between this process and my past workshop experiments, and more than anything between the evolution of my process and conceptual work since I arrived at VCU. I have selected past projects to show that challenge both the way that I work with form as well as how I searched for data.

Kalahari Bushmen Research Archive (Fall 2003), Rob Carter

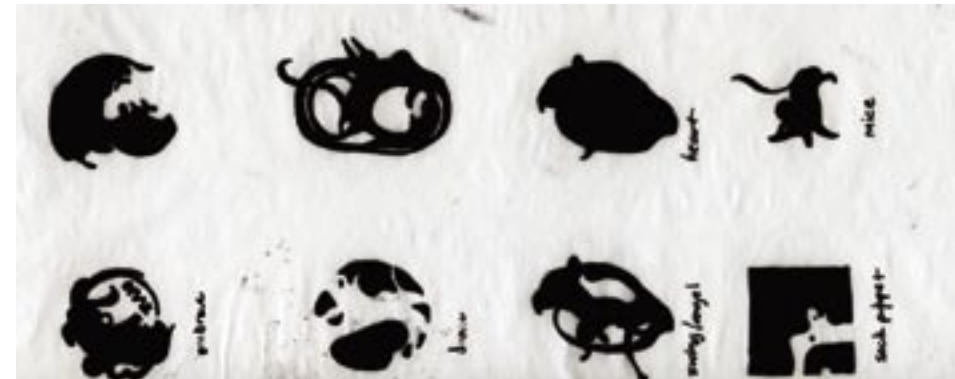
In the graduate workshop, we were challenged to research an endangered culture and find an appropriate way to archive our research. I chose to research the Kalahari Bushmen, an ancient tribe of people who have no written language and pass their stories along orally and through their rock art. I decided to create a purely visual archive, retelling their stories, along with my own, through pictures painted onto a leather scroll. This method was unique for me because, though I was navigating through a sea of information and research, I was constrained to the front of one piece of leather to document my findings. With no plan for final outcome or appearance (as well as having to paint over the top of previous work), this process allowed the execution to be organic and spontaneous, each addition a risky yet natural addition to the whole. The result is a map of my progression throughout the semester, both in terms of my understanding of their culture and my development of this visual language.



Kalahari Bushmen Research Archive, Graduate Workshop Fall 2003

Richmond Recycling Project (Fall 2004), John Malinoski

We were given an assignment to develop an identity mark for a new recycling program in the city of Richmond. The twist to this assignment was the assigned process for which we were required to develop this logo. We were to first begin picking up objects of objects found on the ground, a collection that grew quickly by just paying attention to the details in my everyday paths. John then asked us to divide the objects into two groups, and set up them up in a matrix where an object from one group would be formally merged with each object from the other group. These unusual juxtapositions yielded unique results and challenged us to think differently about identity marks.



Broad Street Project (Fall 2003) Henk Groenendijk

In this project, we were given the assignment to explore one block of Broad Street in Richmond and find the human element within this block. This was my first opportunity to get to know the city into which I had just moved.. I noted the human element as being apparent in the way that buildings and property were maintained. Some buildings were kept pristine and newly renovated while others were left dilapidated and falling to pieces. These details revealed to me how people interact with the block. I launched a campaign designed to pique interest in the dilapidated buildings, and create a sense of unity within the divided neighborhood. As a part of this project, I hung up a large quantity of signs on a central fence, hoping to create a visual impact. After only several hours, all of the signs had been ripped down. Reconsidering, I hung up several signs only in strategic places, and realized that subtlety can be more powerful than a sledgehammer.



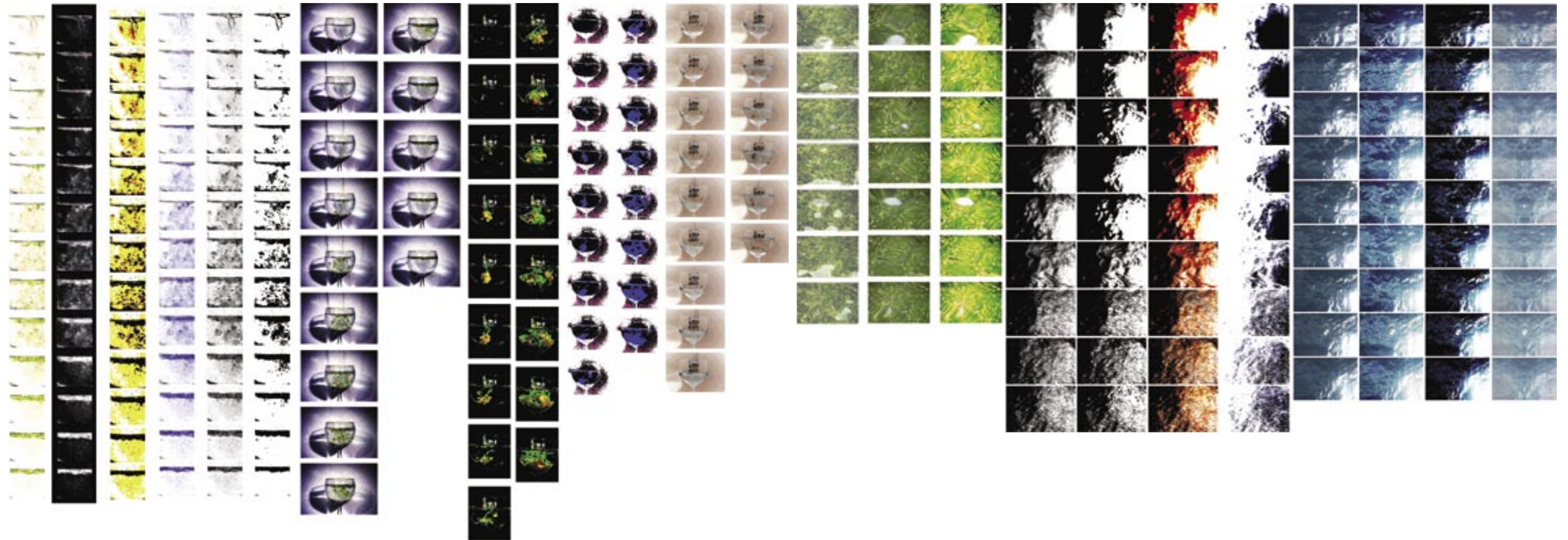


Dominican Republic Photographs (Fall 2004), Susan King Roth

In November of 2004 I was given the opportunity to visit Escuela Callejon de la Loma, an elementary school in the Dominican Republic for one week. This experience was unique because here I was exposed to actual residents' homes and living conditions in the town of Cabarete (as opposed to the swanky resorts usually frequented by tourists.) Exploring this town where I barely spoke the language, I became enchanted with the tiny details and quirks that made the residents' way of living distinctive yet similar to ours.

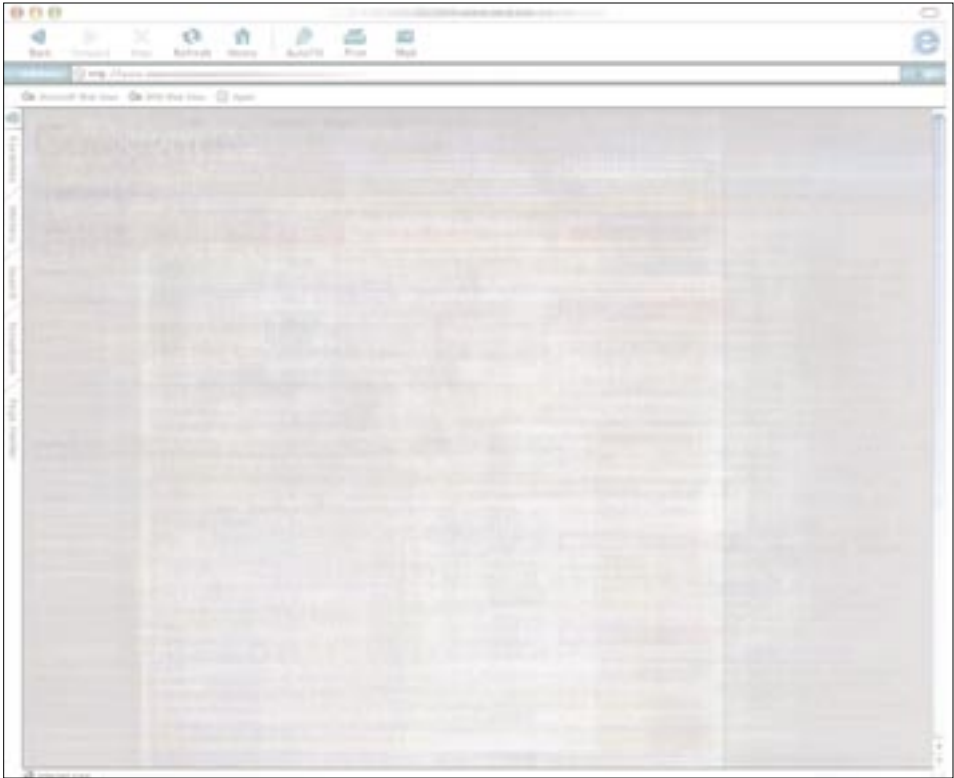
Motion Graphics Studies (Spring 2004), Roy McKelvey + Matt Woolman

Using a morphological methodology, I applied variables to video footage of three elements: fire, air and water. Using both still frame and real-time studies, I explored ways in which motion can be used to enhance visual communication, as well as ways in which morphological structure can inspire exploration and invention. The concept of morphology fascinates me because it reveals ways in which a structured process can lead to exciting and innovative visual results.



Internet Explorations (Spring 2004), Roy McKelvey + Matt Woolman

The internet is a space within which much modern-day navigation occurs. I felt it worthwhile to spend some time making observations about the way that this medium is structured, and the way in which it imposes information on us. For one study, I kept seven days worth of email sent to my junk e-mail folder, and copied the text and images into a grid. The vertical axis indicates the volume of mail received on a particular day, and the horizontal axis shows time, each of seven breaks in the block of text indicates a new day. I am also interested in the way that websites are set up, usually to pack as much information into an 800x600 screen as possible. To examine the quantity, but also the physical structure of this resource, I made 100 screen shots of the first 100 web screens that I visited on a particular day and overlaid each of them at 1% opacity. This showed an interesting continuity between various unrelated websites, as well as an overwhelming number of words and images.



100 Websites, Graduate Workshop Spring 2004



Junk Mail, Graduate Workshop Spring 2004

Visual Conversation (Fall 2003), Rob Carter

A structured schedule of visual statements passing through our program yielded random results as we received and responded to visual statements on a variety of topics through the medium of email.

Visual Conversation (Spring 2004), Sandra Wheeler

Randomly assigned a partner with whom to complete this project, our workshop class was asked to select a vehicle for a visual conversation about childhood. Exchanging this vehicle on a weekly basis, we relinquished control of the final outcome, allowing our partner to destroy, build upon or ignore our own additions to the project.

Dice Project (Fall 2004), Rob Carter

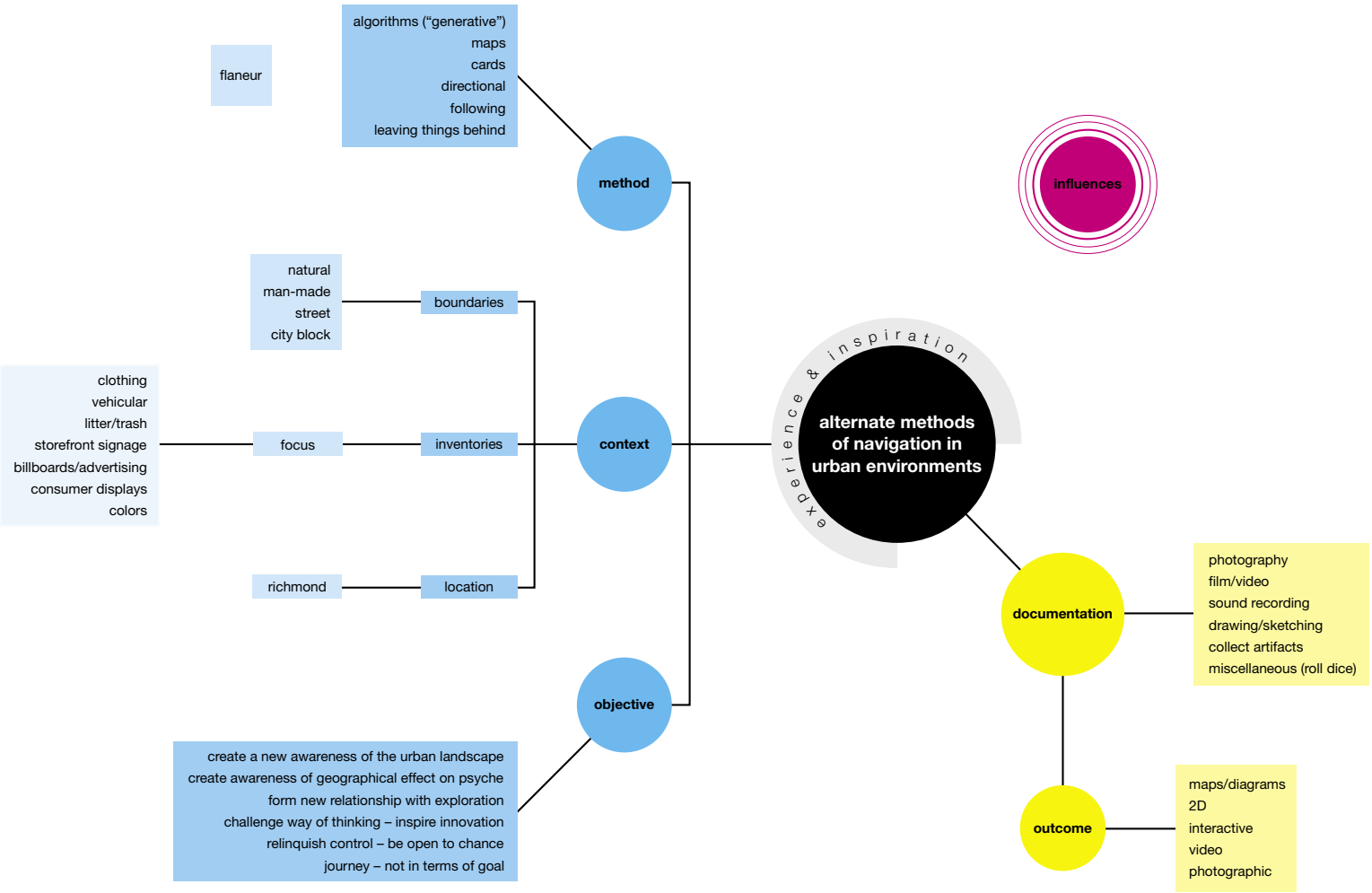
Rob Carter's challenge was met with confused looks and giggles: for each decision you make, assign 6 variables to a dice and roll it. Allow the outcome of the dice roll to determine your decisions. Find a way to archive this process. Such a broad concept was intimidating at first, but the fascinating aspect is that most participant's first dice-related question involved a vehicle for documentation. Other questions randomly decided how many times per day to consult the dice, and whether to use the dice for a particular purpose or "playing field." For example, Rachele Riley chose to a psychological route; Justin Howard consulted the dice when working on projects for other classes; Andrew Ilnicki used (and continues to use) the dice when socializing, leaving the course of an evening out to chance. From the most vague assignment, the human need for order was challenged. Each personal decision allowed for a focus on challenging new possibilities. Each personal definition allowed focus on the challenge, and discovering new possibilities. Relinquishing control of this archive resulted in a lot of hard work being torched in a classmate's fireplace.

experimental navigation + the creative process >>

process + methodology >

When I first decided to focus on psychogeography as a topic for my creative project, I was nervous and uncertain. I would come to realize that my plan for completion of this project was in complete conflict with the spirit of the psychogeographic process – that is to say, I felt pressured to have a plan with predictable outcomes. Revisiting my process, I am happy to see that the path I took was scenic and winding, much in keeping with my personality and the way that I enjoy working and looking for inspiration. Though I enjoy tangents, happy accidents and meandering routes, I did need to define a structure for how to conduct my project and reach specific outcomes. From my reading and analysis, I determined the following elements to be essential ingredients in a psychogeographic investigation: *navigational strategy, boundaries, focus or filter, destination, duration, and documentation.*

I developed a series of diagrams that would help me to set up boundaries and define what activities might be carried out from an infinite set of possibilities. At the beginning of the semester I started making schematic outlines for my project, diagrams that defined the components of the topic with respect to constraints and variables in the process. This schematic evolved over a period of several weeks.



I have...

1. Strategies for Excursions

Natural	Trees	Water	Mountains	Deserts	Distance	Weather	Quicksand
Man-Made	Buildings	Walls	Fences	Private property			
Geographical	1 Sq. foot	1 Block	1 Sq. mile	1 Street			
Physical	Exhaustion	Dehydration	Hunger				

Permanent

Documentation	Drawing	Photography	Film	Color studies	Writing
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Outcome

Outcome	Film	Interactive	Maps	Diagrams	Poetry	Writings	Sculpture
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Some may ask, what is the benefit of this structure? Why not just take a walk through a strange neighborhood, or do something crazy and unusual? My understanding is that, whether or not I consciously acknowledge each of these elements, they do exist within any trek. Even if it is a daily drive to work, there is a plan for arriving (whether from memory or using a map and directional signage); places where the car cannot legally go; a focus on surrounding traffic or other environmental elements; the arrival at the office; and the memory of the trip and the measure of distance on the odometer. These are all fairly common parts of a journey, so much in fact that we take them for granted. Defining these components forces us to acknowledge parts of our own experience that we might otherwise ignore. Explicitly defining the elements of a journey provides a rigid framework for dropping any variable in, making this process inherently morphological. As defined in *Motion Design: Moving Graphics for Television, Music Video, Cinema, and Digital Interfaces*, a morphology is “the study of the structure and form of a language system, including inflection, derivation, and the formation of compounds.” Though structural, a morphology is a flexible tool that allows for experimentation and innovation. Inserting random components into a structure allows for re-definition and improvisation.

Journey 1 – I recognized early on in my work that environmental factors have a strong effect on human psyche, and that the denseness of urban areas provide high levels of man-made stimuli. In a city, the roads, signage, vehicles, architecture, advertisements, clothing and even litter represent ways in which humans interact with urban space. None of these things occur naturally, but have been imposed by people who have a plan for their function – namely designers. When I started my investigations, I could not see the link between psychogeography and design, so I began my journeys by searching for design artifacts with the aim of analyzing how design affected the human psyche. I began to

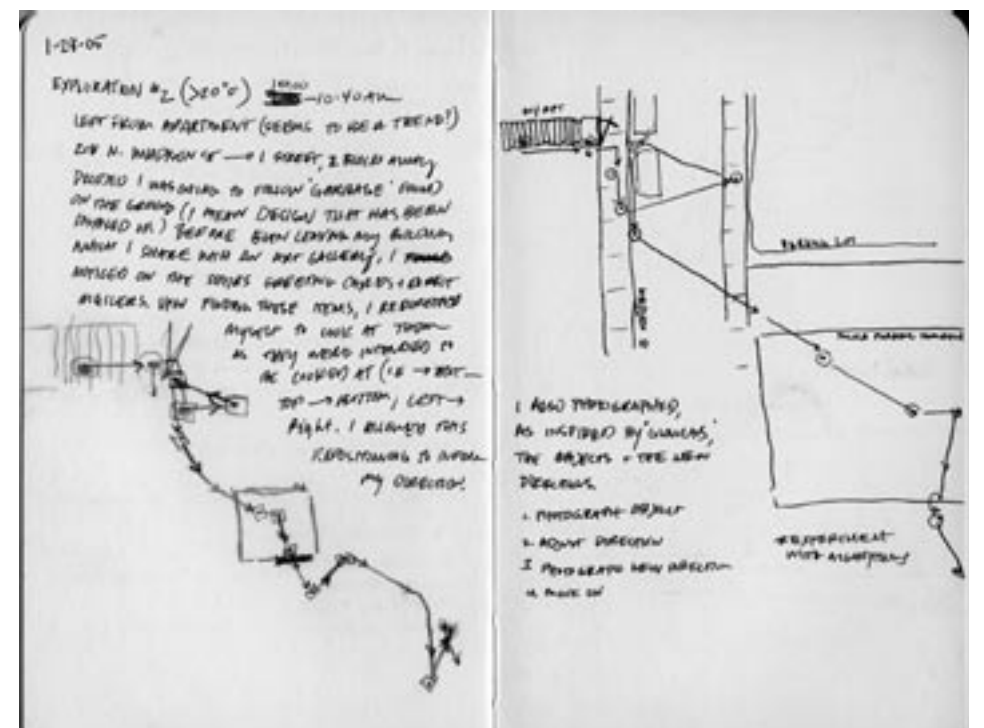
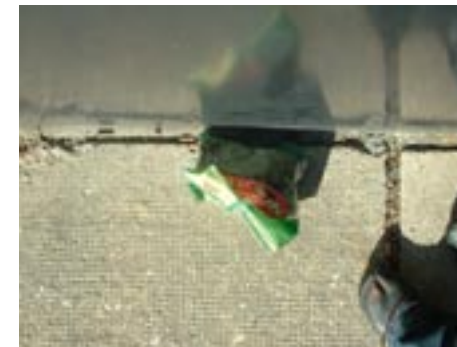
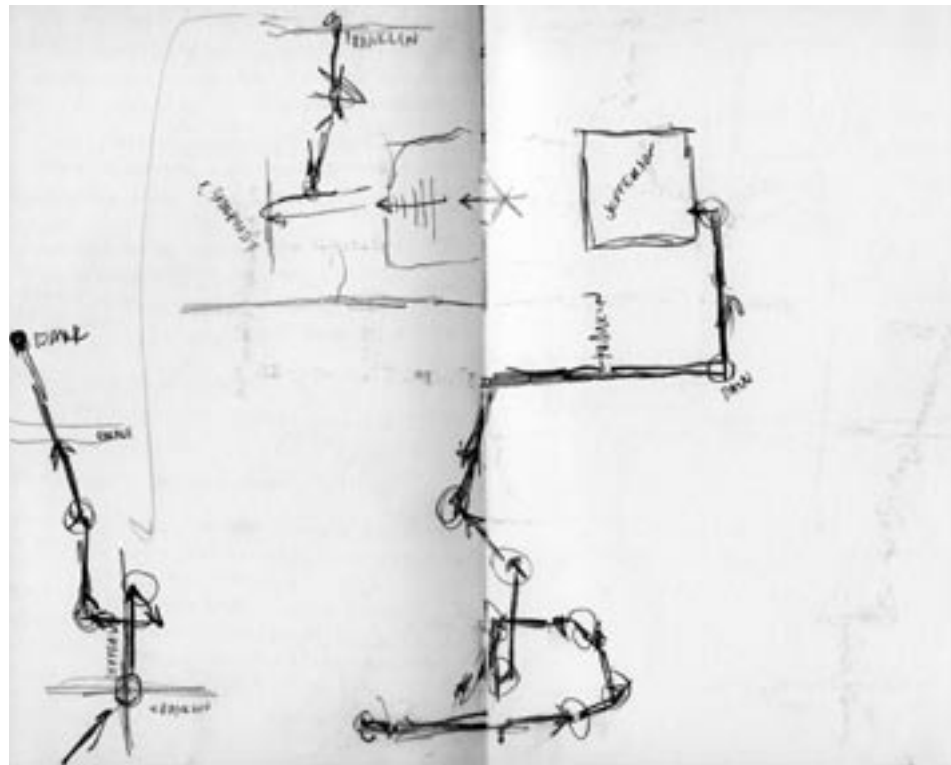
photograph signage, vehicles, litter, and brands, taking an inventory of these things within the constraint of one city block.

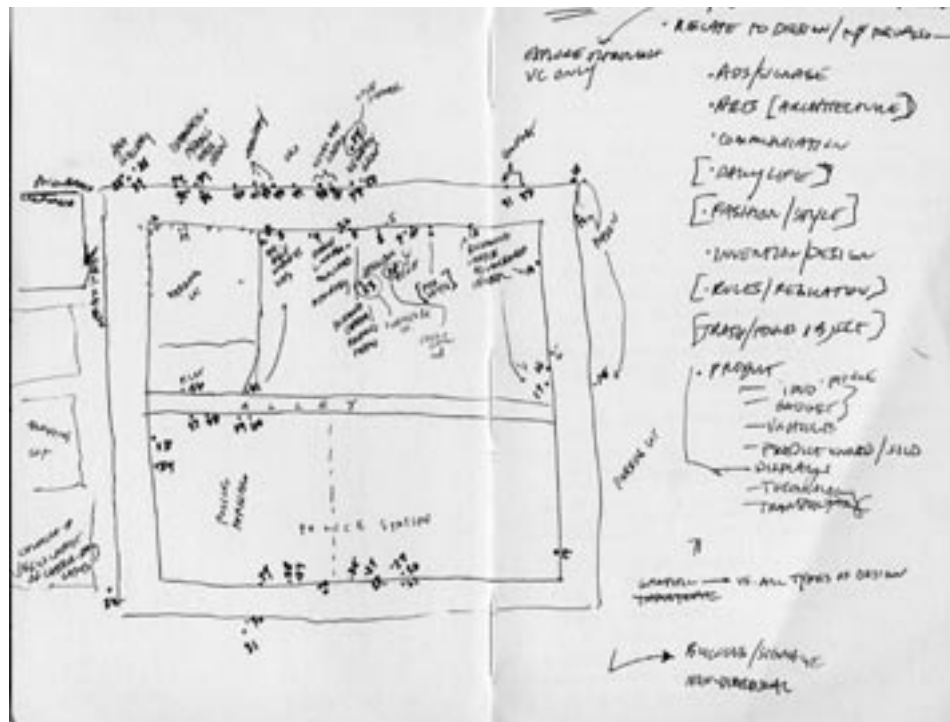
This study introduced the important notion of boundaries. If a psychogeographic process can include everything, then how can it reveal anything specific? While I was focusing on categorizing stimuli, I was simultaneously trying to grasp the concept of a psychogeographic journey and in doing so, embarking on a series of experimental trips throughout Richmond. These journeys were intended to result in a collection of imagery and a deeper understanding of psychogeographic research.

One method of randomized navigation utilized in psychogeography is to follow a single stimulus within the environment. For example, I decided to go for a walk and change the direction of my route every time I saw someone wearing a visible brand on their person. By following these people (until seeing another,) I criss-crossed my path many times, felt silly, and also ventured into several new places including the Jefferson Hotel – less than a block away from my apartment. I documented this journey by making inaccurate sketches of my journey and writing notes in a sketchbook.

Journey 2 – I again departed from my apartment, deciding that I was going to follow “discarded design,” or litter, found on the ground. Before even leaving my building — which I share with an art gallery — I noticed on the stairs some homemade greeting cards and direct mail scattered on the steps. How long had they been there? Upon finding these items, I redirected myself to look at them as they were intended to be looked at (i.e- text reading top to bottom, left to right.) I allowed this repositioning to inform my directional changes. I also photographed the pieces of litter themselves and, from a ground-level vantage point, the new directions that they pointed me in.

1. Photograph object
2. Adjust direction
3. Photograph new direction
4. Move on

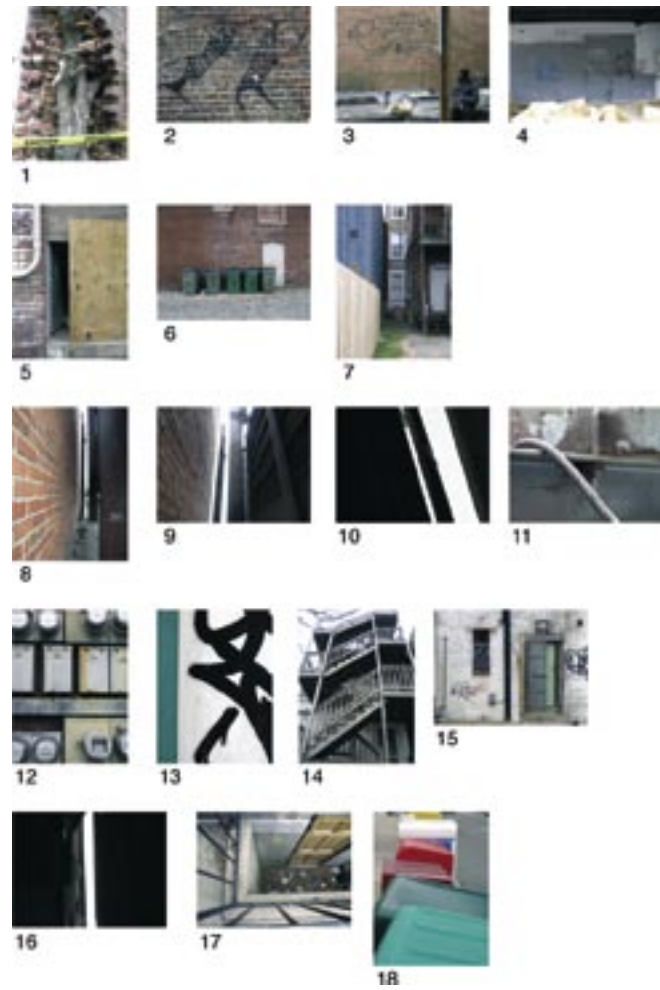




Journey 4 –To expand upon the notion of boundaries, I decided to embark on a journey giving myself the constraint of moving in one direction on a single street. Inspired by Henk Groenendijk's Broad Street assignment, I decided to start at the beginning (or the end?) of this dynamic and central street and walk West until I reached the Richmond City limits — a trip that ended up being about 7 miles. I documented this excursion by videotaping it. To represent my journey, I sped up the tape from 3.5 hours to 3.5 minutes to convey the drastic changes in mood and function that the street contains, from residential to downtown to suburban districts. Interestingly, the final piece reflected how short the trip seems in my memory.



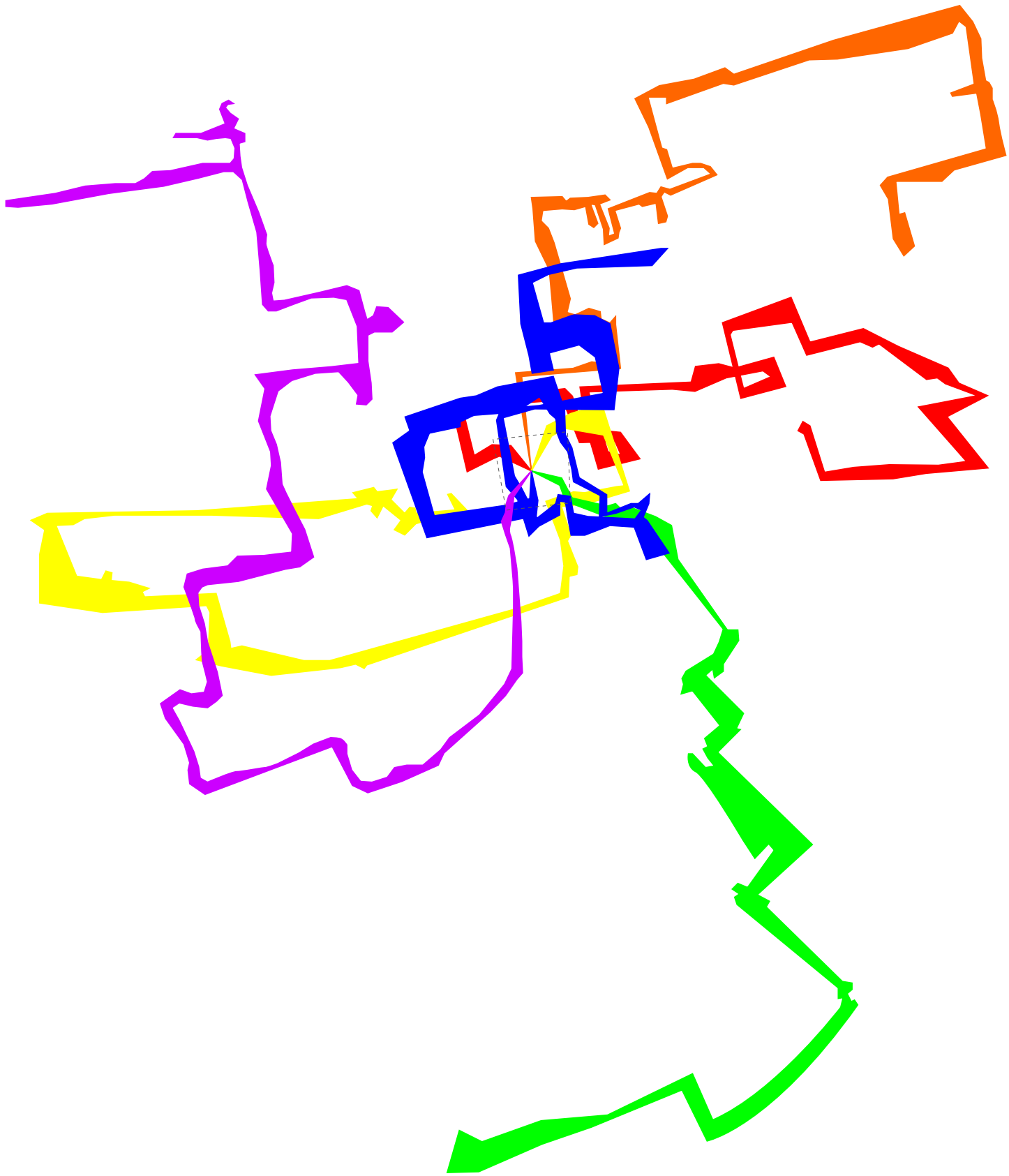
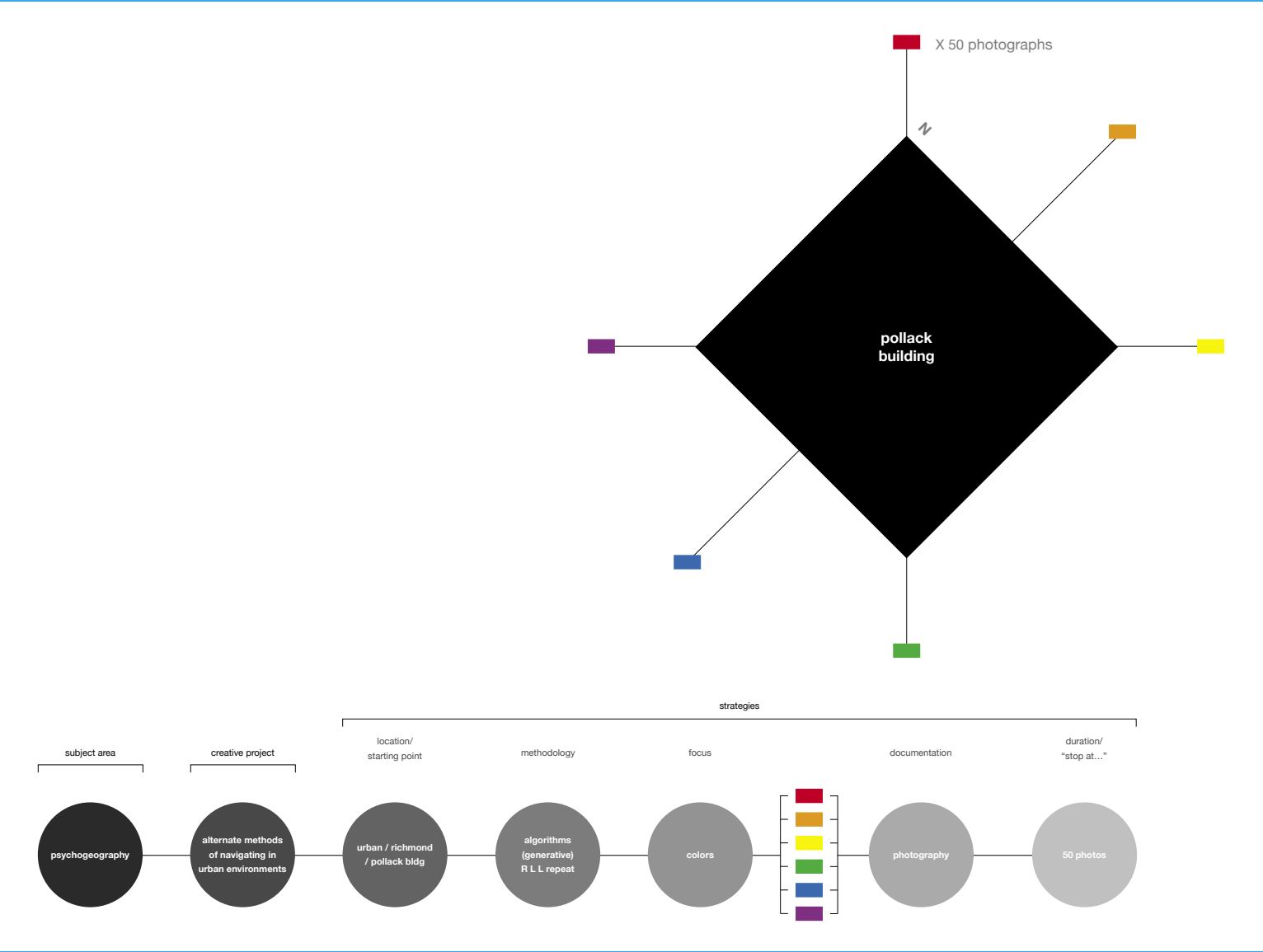
Journey 5 – On my first algorithmic walk, I again departed from the corner of Broad and Madison Street, following a predetermined [1st Right; 1st Right; 2nd Left; Repeat] formula. Strangely, on this walk I met more strangers than on any previous journey. The algorithm, while easy to remember, required quite a bit of focus and was therefore not as relaxing as previous journeys. I documented this process by photographing each interesting object that I passed, and sketched my journey on a map. (Consequently, I afterwards defined more random methods of documenting besides consciously selecting which parts of the surroundings to use as documentation.)

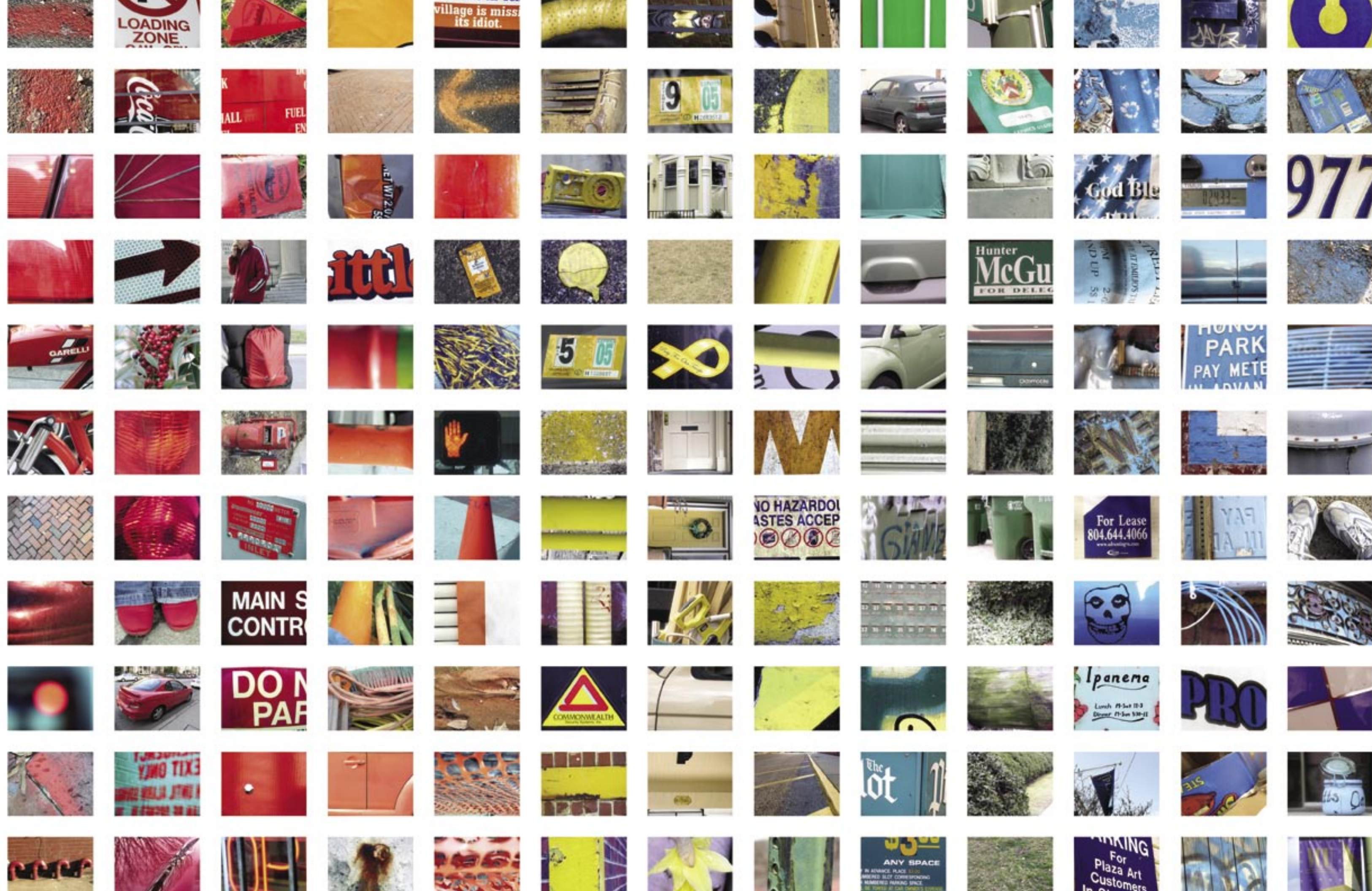


The first big leap in my visual work happened when I designed a set of six journeys, with slightly different variables that would work together as a unit. Starting at six different points outside the Pollack building (as diagrammed in the schematic that follows) my journeys followed the following criteria.

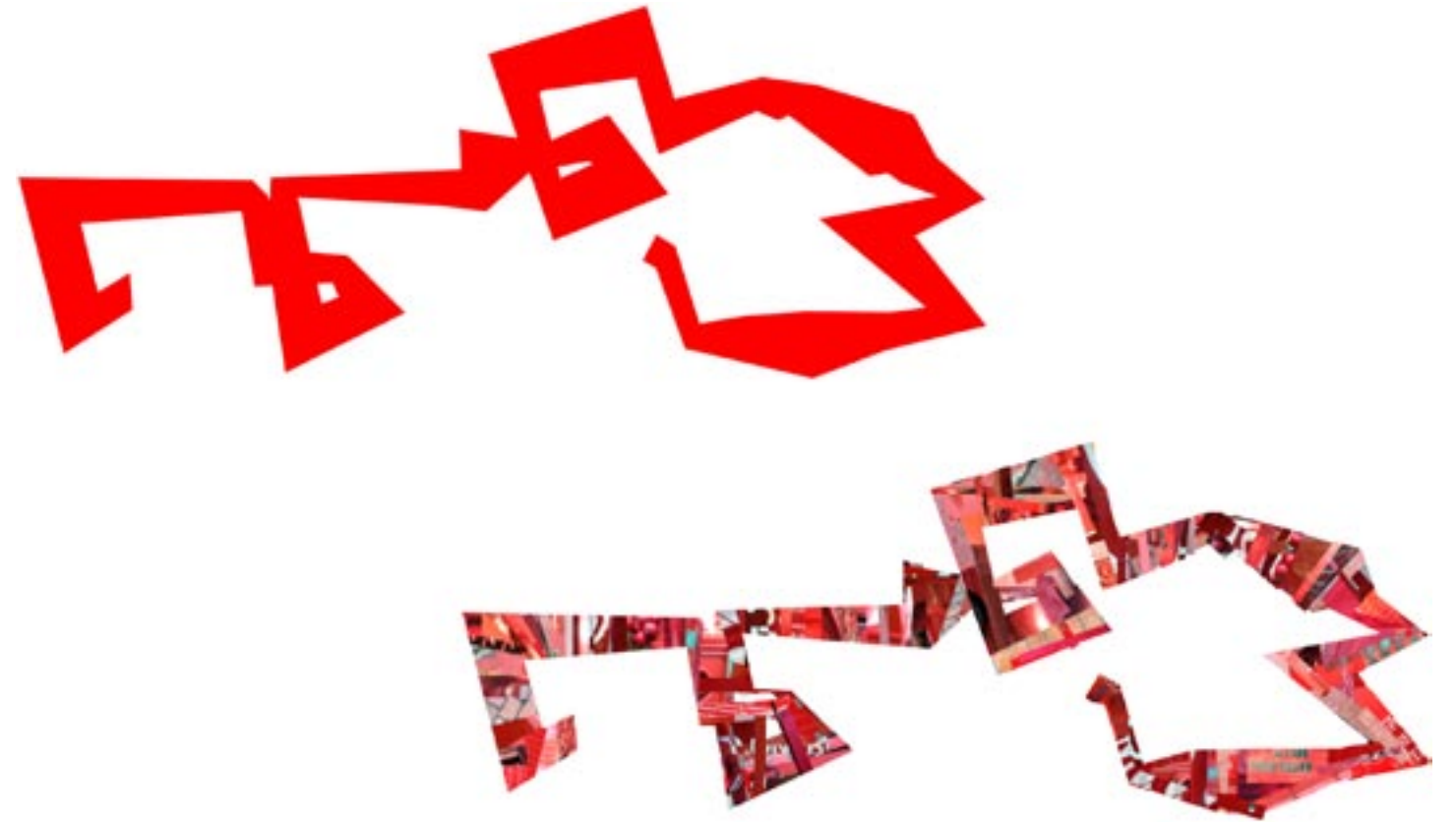
navigational strategy – [1st right, 1st right, 2nd left, repeat] algorithm
 focus/filter– one color per journey [red / orange / yellow / green / blue / purple]
 documentation – photography
 destination – stop each journey after taking 50 photographs of the given color
 duration – varied, depending on the frequency that each color occurred in the environment.

Starting from a different corner of the Pollack building for each journey, the same algorithm sent me on six different paths. The time it took me to reach 50 photographs varied the length of each journey, as can be seen in the diagram. The 300 photographs taken on these 6 journeys, when tiled together, form a sort-of rainbow effect from far away, and up close one can look at the details that make up each individual image. This contrast illustrates an important aspect of my studies: that each individual piece is an important part of the whole. In these pieces, I tried to explain and exploit this tension.

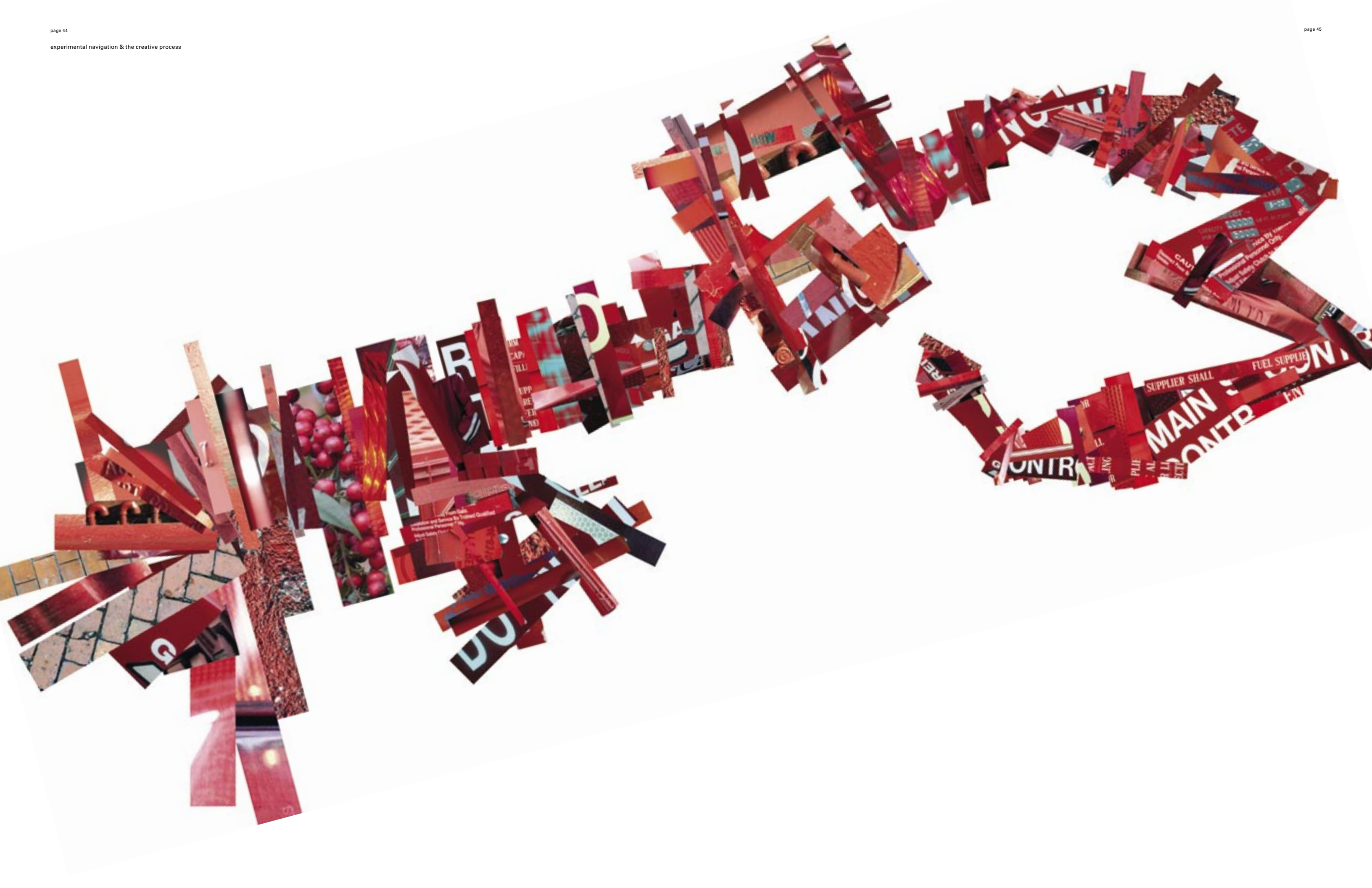




Using the shape of the paths that my journey took, I also began creating collages using the photographs I had collected. These collages tell a story about the journey. For example, a grouping of tail lights may indicate that I was in a parking lot, or a cluster of construction materials indicates a road work site. These paths could take the form of print, be used as navigation for an interactive piece, or be arranged to interact with each other in some way. It was important not to get caught up on one idea, trying to “complete” the project when there are so many possibilities that have not yet been explored.



Butterflies on Wall
Found: 2.14.05 Orange County



As my understanding and excitement about this process grew, I began to think of ways to encourage others to participate. Proactive and participatory approaches to psychogeography could include leaving redesigned products on shelves in grocery stores; redesigning maps to purposefully get the user lost; leaving objects in the environment; or creating a game for an audience to participate in.

I decided to create cards that had instructions on them: *Take off your shoes and walk in the grass; Sit on the curb for five minutes; Introduce yourself to the next person you see; Pick up precious objects you find on the ground, start a collection; turn left right now, don't bump into anything; Stop and pet a dog, be nice to the person with it; Lay down on the ground and look up at the clouds (its OK to do this on the street); Turn so that you are facing East, take a photograph.* Shuffling these cards before going out for a walk would make a journey different each time. I decided not to point out what a participant should get out of it, knowing that people will reach their own conclusions. I hope that the subtlety of this process will generate memories and contemplation.



A final exploration for this semester considers the element of sound. Overheard conversations and passing hellos, squealing breaks, blaring horns and car stereos describe to me what is the sound of Richmond. I did several explorations with footage that I taped from a walk around the block, but in the end this was tainted because I kept trying to engage in conversation with people to make the audio more interesting. I did further explorations with a chance happening: a conversation that was accidentally tape recorded when leaving a party. This sound clip is particularly dynamic because it includes the band, conversational chatter and din from inside the party, as well as the thank-yous and goodbyes when exiting. It also included the conversation about the party once outside, as well as the sounds of the city at night. I used a

morphological process to experiment with ways of mapping this sound clip, and continued to experiment with form. I was amazed by the connections between earlier workshop projects and these studies. I found myself most attracted to the appreciation of each minute detail, and reflecting on the role that chance played in each step of my process.

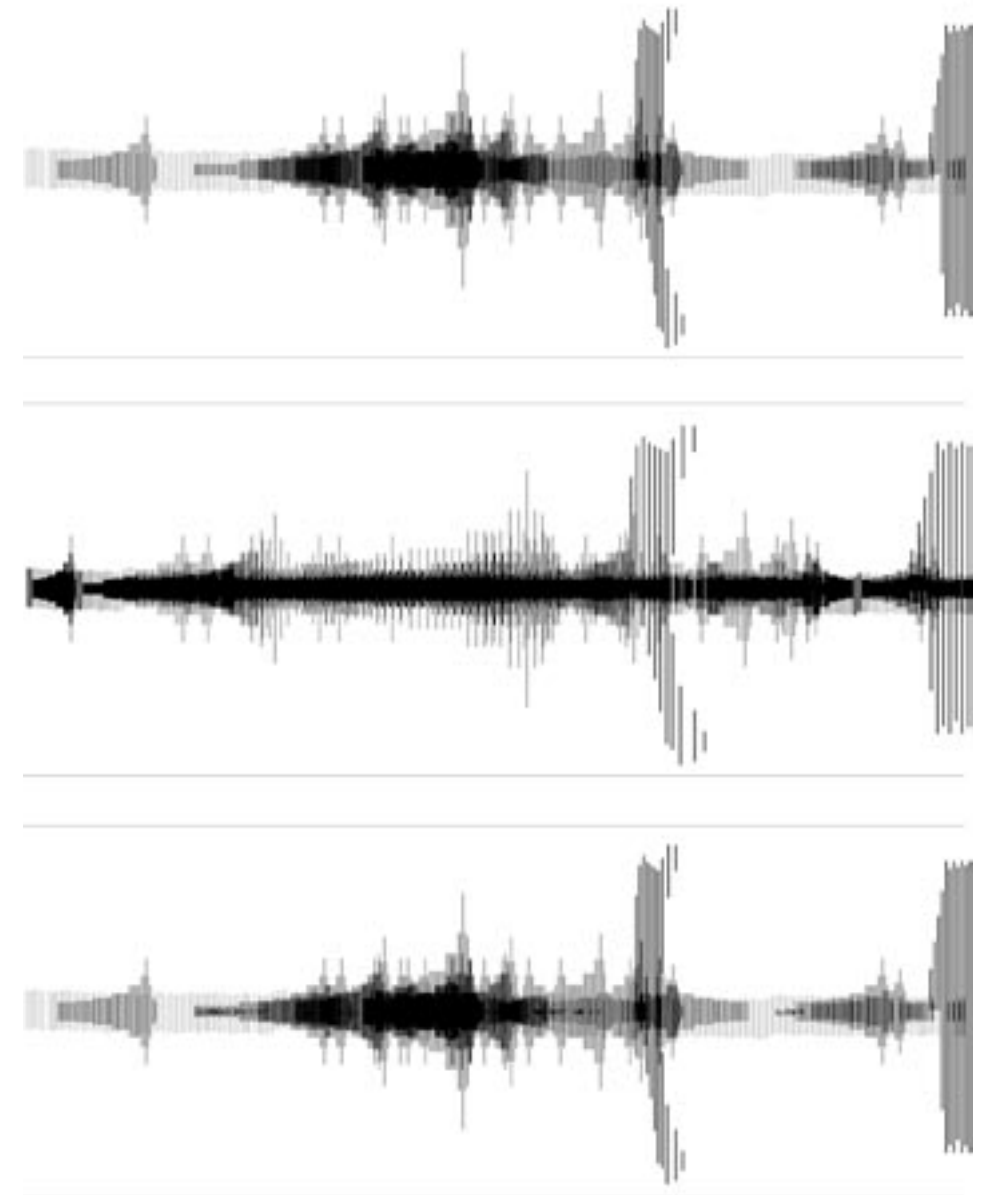


Figure 1. The effect of the number of trials on the number of correct responses. The number of correct responses (Y-axis) is plotted against the number of trials (X-axis). The data shows a positive correlation between the number of trials and the number of correct responses, with a slight increase in the number of correct responses as the number of trials increases.

[illegible]

Source: www.fishbase.org. Fish species data were obtained from the FishBase database. The species names were obtained from the FishBase database. The species names were obtained from the FishBase database.

[illegible]

Exhibition

Creative Project

- Explanation of project
- Schematic
- Schematic for a Sub-Problem
- Color Swatches Grid
- Paths
- Red Path
- Shuffle Card Game
- Sound Explorations
- Broad St Walk Video

Retrospective

- Broad St Project
- Internet Animations
- Motion Graphics Morphological Studies
- Kalahair Bushmen Research Archive
- A History of Graphic Design Timeline



reflections > Looking at my body of research and creative project experiments, I am pleased with the knowledge and experiences that I have gained this semester. Internally, the way that I think and perceive things has changed drastically, and I am currently struggling to reconcile these changes with future plans.

What I set out to do in my study—to systematically link psychogeographic and design processes— seems to be a largely untapped area, though maybe for good reason. As designers, our job is to solve problems and to make decisions within a particular set of constraints. I now see that what I have been doing is “breaking out” of my designer persona and nurturing my artistic side. There are many designers who use their environment for creative and artistic inspiration. By ingraining fun and inventive processes into their lives, they yield work that I find exciting and distinctive. Bruce Mau’s *Incomplete Manifesto for Growth* is a list of suggestions for thinking and working “outside the box.” Paul Elliman and Max Kisman are notable for their typographic creations formed from everyday objects.

I have found this study to be a major challenge. I have not been taught to let projects take their own form, to

release control and to not preconceive solutions. I believe that the outcomes of my project have impact and reveal the benefits of open-ended visual research. Was this an exercise in self-exploration? Absolutely, although I attempted to make my study be about more than just my experiences, tying it back to daily life and the way in which creative people work. The more that I understand and meditate on these processes, the stronger these are becoming.

My study could have been strengthened by simply a larger volume of visual solutions and more experiments, as these experiences facilitate deeper understanding. This exhibition and document are a superficial closure. I am inspired to continue a larger body of personal work. If I become jaded in the working world, I hope that these principles will remind me why I chose this field.

Though at first a shock to my system, I see the value in using strategies to allow a designer to break out of pre-digested approaches to problem-solving. But, these approaches in a design context are not ends unto themselves. They must be applied as a part of a larger framework. I look forward to continuing my research and pursuing understanding of this connection.

thank you > God.

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- reading + influences >
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