

Sent from the Road

In November 2017 Maud Salembier asked me whether I would be interested in mentoring the 2018 edition of the Wandering Arts Biennial (WAB), a biennial initiated and organized by the Brussels-based arts laboratory nadine. Septembre Tiberghien and Maud Salembier were the guest curators of the 2014 and 2016 editions. Maud invited me to take over for the 2018 edition and to pursue the ongoing reflections with a new itinerary, nourished, among others, by my artistic research and experience.

I have never used the term *wandering* to define my artistic approach. I see this movement of the body, through space and time, as a *being* on the road.

Through touch, sight, hearing and smell, I accumulate knowledge about what is happening now near to (and far from) the road. On the road, I experiment different work formulas that enable me to recompose my images/imagination in a different layout.

Everything leads you to reconsider the notion of *wandering* and to think about its definition and its various representations.

From an etymological point of view, *wandering* comes from *wandrian* (Old English), which in turn is related to *wend* (go in a specified direction, typically slowly or by an indirect route) and *wind* (the perceptible natural movement of the air, especially in the form of a current of air blowing from a particular direction).¹ This idea of movement, of air, of a wind or breeze which follows a certain direction without necessarily knowing where it is going to come to a stop, offers a metaphor for artistic research which I quite like. I perceive in this movement a certain lightness and, at the same time, a rigorous and powerful gesture. This reflection highlights the importance of the creative process and valorizes its progression. The term *wandering* is then understood as a physical act in space, but also as an imaginary journey which the individual wanders through, leaving traces.

But let's return to this concept and to the various representations it evokes. It has long been at the heart of texts, artistic practices and exhibitions.² When we talk about *wandering*, we talk about ongoing actions such as roaming, walking, rambling, strolling, ambling and drifting, and many more.

In this rich history of actions and reflections, what is the starting point I would like to adopt for the 2018 WAB?

1. Oxford Dictionary, 2018.

2. A lot has been written on walking and wandering: e.g. *Walkscapes*, *The Art of Walking*, *Erre: Variations Labyrinthiques*, *Wanderlust* (Rebecca Solnit), *Selected Statements & Interviews* (Richard Long), *Lignes d'Erres* (Fernand Deligny), *Lines: A Brief History* (Tim Ingold), *Marcher Créer* (Thierry Davila), etc. In this text I am just going to concentrate on some references that are not always made explicit and with which I feel an affinity.

Why am I – and many others too, for that matter – so fascinated by this history that evokes the issue of movement and its representations?

I am interested in the trajectories that develop and put forward powerful images. The first name to come to mind – among other examples – is Kurt Schwitters. He used to pick up and collect bits of junk which he found as he walked the streets of Hanover.³ These pieces of junk would be given a place in the *Merzbau*, which Schwitters built up bit by bit in his house. Beyond the creative act, his gesture postulated the recording of the positioning of an artist evolving in a given society at a given time.

I am equally fascinated by *A Line Made by Walking* (1967), by the English artist Richard Long. The title of the work and its photographic image radiate an energy that makes us relive the action, although so gratuitous, of the artist drawing a line in the grass by means of his body, his physical presence, his walking.

Another reference, perhaps less well known, involves the German film-maker Werner Herzog. In 1984, in reaction to German Chancellor Willy Brandt's refusal to see Germany reunited, Herzog undertook to walk the entire length of the German border – a walk he never completed, due to a state of extreme exhaustion.⁴ He wrote in this regard: 'always carefully following the border, because it was clear now that only poets could provide unity'.

This idea of the border brings to mind *Comment aller chez Krimhilde?* (2003), a performance-lecture by Till Roeskens (b. 1974).⁵ In it, this German artist proposed a never-ending journey that started out from the Strasbourg train station and traversed the countryside but almost never arrived at a destination.

I am aware that the references that I am briefly evoking all touch on an aspect of movement that evokes the notion of limits: domestic and cultural for Schwitters, anthropological and conceptual for Long, political and physical for Herzog, liminal and absurd for Roeskens.

But is it not also a challenge for me to imagine a precise limit and framework for this 2018 edition of the WAB?

So I suggest thinking about the idea of *wandering along (a) limit(s)* and the ensuing question, namely:

How can you form an image(s) of a *wandering along a limit(s)*?⁶

3. 'Collecting and Collage-Making: The Case of Kurt Schwitters' in John Elsner and Roger Cardinal, *The Cultures of Collecting* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 72.

4. *Walking Himself into Intoxication*, Werner Herzog, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/zeitgeist/werner-herzog-s-german-comeback-cinema-legend-heads-berlinale-jury-a-677080-3.html>

5. *Comment aller chez Krimhilde*, 2003, Till Roeskens, <http://documentsdartistes.org/artistes/roeskens/repro6-5.html>

6. Continuation of my research for my PhD in art. Fragment of *Le Journal d'un Usager de l'Espace: over de (on)mogelijkheid om een beeld te*

I see this red thread as a path to follow, to question, to refer to over time and to deviate from if necessary. We can also ask ourselves questions regarding the becoming of an image created during the act of *being* on the road:

What stages of transmutation is it going to go through and what will be its status during a public presentation?

What about the exhibition of these images?

What status can we give them and does it make sense?

These are some notes and questions that I would like to propose before taking to the road and I hope that others will crystallize as we progress.

Through different phases (conferences, exhibitions, screenings, performances scheduled in March, June and November 2018), the biennial wishes not only to create points of contact around these questions, but also to weave a network in the city with cultural partners (schools, institutions, art centres). A biennial that already has a short history, but which remains an ongoing project.

See you very soon, on the road.

Mira Sanders, January 2018

PS: I devote a white page at the bottom of this text to the reader.

See this image as an invitation to travel.

In the continuity of my artistic research and Phd in the arts 'Le Journal d'un Usager de l'Espace: over de (on)mogelijkheid om een beeld te vormen van limieten', Mira Sanders, (LUCA, KU Leuven, 2012-2017). 'On the (im)possibility to form an idea of limits relies on the 'act of drawing' to explore, along the way, visual possibilities in order to appropriate limits in a place (or context) as objective matter into an artistic vocabulary. The exploratory and intuitive research forms images of a limit(s), a travel trajectory or trajectories, a time, a dimension(s) and places them in an artistic perspective. The research prefers to walk next to the landscaped paths to mark the volatile and mobile, fluid and invisible limits and declare them in a new pictorial territory. Images that emerged from intimate experiences along the way came to the fore step by step during the doctorate. They assumed the appearance of a reasoning or scenario or something linguistic – or all three concurrently. An index was used to gather images, actions and intentions along the way. This index serves as a means to be able to envision continuously a pictorial research (photos, drawings, models, installations, films and maps) and to explore it to its limits.'

