

**Can walking be Art ? Skype Conversation
Lorraine Burke – Claudia Zeiske
30 November 2010**

[13:44:04] Lorraine Burke: I am interested in hearing how your recently curated project with Hamish Fulton went. What is the art in this walk? Is it the walk or what is inside the gallery space or both?

[13:45:43] Claudia Zeiske: The art is the walk for Hamish Fulton. that is very important to understand. When he is walking, he is not changing anything to the landscape. The art is the thoughts that occur, the ideas he brings back, the images in his head.

We produced a book afterwards, but sometimes he also makes exhibitions.

[13:48:40] Lorraine Burke: So his work is quite different from say Richard Long where he makes interventions along the way. I like the idea of the experience of the walk been the work. Not interfering with the landscape. Did you walk with Hamish and if so how was this experience for you?

[13:51:03] Claudia Zeiske: Hamish undertook a 21 days walk in the Cairngorms with one rucksack only, no B+B, no shop on the way. Just himself. He started on Huntly square and myself together with some other 30 people joined him on the first day. We took a minibus back after 20 miles at the end of the day.

I walk a lot myself, i also have a number of other walking projects on the go. Hence the experience was not a new one. but it was a privilege of course to walk with him. important was the symposium we staged the day before, it was about the question 'Can walking be art/'; here he showed some of the walks he had done before. That set the context.

The day before he organised a choreographed walk. One had to walk for two hours around the block. About 30 of us were exactly 2m behind each other walking for the 2 hours. This was slightly unnerving at the beginning, but then it became quite meditative and we hardly wanted to finish when the two hours were up.

[13:58:47] Lorraine Burke: So did Hamish use text pieces for the gallery space or images for the exhibition after? maybe this is why the art is the walk, their is no real way of communicating experience, what do you think?

[14:04:12] Claudia Zeiske: Hamish has been using text and photography for his publication. This is also what he would use for the gallery work. but if you asked him, I think he would say that the walk itself is the art. The rest is either documentation, or his ways of transmitting the experience to other people. his texts are haikus, often interfering with the photos; they are often typeset in profound graphic ways; but he has also written an essay for the book.

**[14:06:38] Lorraine Burke: I don't have that book but I have a book that was written called Walking journey, need to get a copy.
I am interested in hearing about your own art practice and how walking informs your own work.
Can you tell me more about your own artwork and your own walking experiences? Is the walk the art for you or the material produced from a walk?**

[14:11:24] Claudia Zeiske: Walking is very important for me. it has always been. Walking is my saviour, it helps me keep sane and saves me the money for

counselling. i try to go at least every weekend. If i have a problem, I just walk and the longer I walk, the better I feel and then the ideas kick in, or the solutions for whatever the problem is, which simply dissolves.

I am a munro bagger. To be honest if you asked me some 10 years ago, I would have said only daft people do something like that. but for me it is a way of getting myself out. With the poor weather in this country, one would have an excuse every weekend. it is also a way of seeing the country. i have come this way to the most far flung places across my country. But it is also a good way of spending a day with your friends and your family.

I also do my own projects. one is called walking lunches. They are takes on working lunches and a way of combining our busy lifestyle with fitness and lunch time. here you do all three in one:@ have lunch, have a meeting and go for a walk. its very time saving. the format is that I write the agenda and bring the sandwiches. My walking partner brings a camera and agrees/amends the agenda. he/she is taking 3 pictures on the walk: a portrait, a landscape and a still life (the three pillars of art). the walk takes strictly the time the meeting wotul take, i.e. one or two hours, depending on the length of the agenda. after the walking lunch i write the minutes, send it to my partner who amends it and puts in the images, I archive the minutes.

[14:22:15] Lorraine Burke: That’s fantastic, Tim Brennan says walking for him is like a tool or a device, what a great tool, like a paint brush or camera, walking lunches. Yes this is the thing, for me walking hits my core, there needs be no explanation, the simple process of the walk, it simplifies things. No dissertation can explain truly, my words are clumsy in trying to explain it. It just is, and I think that is the beauty. It activates something in the brain. For me a long distance walk can do some much, what keeps me going is knowing I will be hopefully on a long walk in January somewhere.

For me I think it brings me into reality, it brings me right down to earth on the important things in life. I think Rebecca Solnit puts it lovely in her book A History of walking: “Walking ideally is a state in which the mind, the body, and the world are aligned, as though they were three characters finally in conversation together, three notes suddenly making a chord.” Solnit (2001, pp.05).

[14:27:45] Claudia Zeiske: yes, that is what it is. I think through my feet. But if you go with others it is also a form of healthy communication. Another project I have done is Talky Walkies, they brought artists and art lovers from this area together, one Sunday per month we walked from one artist studio to the next here in Aberdeenshrie. A good way of catching up with each other, wheile seeing somethign new. Now I have set up with an artist in Edinburgh Talk Walks, which is s a sort of artist hill walking club. Being based up north i always felt meeting people in the South is a one way thing. We tend to travel south to meet them, normally not for more then an hour. But for the talk walks we meet in the middle and talk all day.

But remember walking is also a way of protesting for example. It has across the world been used to make political actions. Hamish Fulton is very interested in this notion. He is actually interested in all forms of walking: fast, slow, organised, random, sporty ones and political ones. To discover that was new to me. I had always been more interested in the long distance ones. I have done also quite a few long distance walks. I have crossed the alps from north to south, and I am doing a lifelong walk from Gibraltar to the Peloponnesus, every year a bit.

[14:36:04] Lorraine Burke: That sounds great, I like this idea of exchange, if walking inspires thinking / imagination then it is a wonderful “tool’ for creativity and for solutions. What yourselves in Huntly and Tim Brennan are doing is new to me, my walks are usually solitary or I am accompanied by Tom

but usually they are solitary. Having gone to Huntly has opened my mind to how walking can be used in a very useful way, interacting with others. A life long walk, it would be so interesting to see how this walk develops over the years, how the walk grows with you over time. Really beautiful and exciting that... you could only imagine how future walks could possibly be, bit by bit, the walk before during and after. How will you record this walk?

[14:41:53] Claudia Zeiske: Well, most of my walks are just with my husband Nick, or just with myself. But I have discovered that walking with others puts another dimension then purely company to it all. All walking is good. I don't really record them, apart from the walking lunches, which are archived through the minutes and the 3 photos. For the munros I write up a short description, we also take a picture on the top of everyone for our album and also an image of the view. this all often looks the same to the person who looks through the album, but it is not. all of them are different. but remember I am not an artist, So I don't have the pressure to define what it is or to record it for some other output then my own good health.

[14:52:00] Lorraine Burke: The beauty of the walk, it is for everyone, rich, poor no matter what your background, this is another reason I love it as a medium. I like the fact that you don't need to be an artist to get the experience, its universal...which is maybe another reason why it is so powerful. I didn't realise that you were not an artist, it does not matter to me if someone is or not... it connects people. I liked the fact that on Tim Brennan's walk there were all sorts of people having this connection. An artist, musician, teacher, fisherman... there is no boundaries. Maybe this is what Hamish sees in the potential of the walk, and yourself in using it for these walking lunches... the power of it.

[14:57:20] Claudia Zeiske: Well, yes, I guess. That is it!

[15:01:35] Lorraine Burke: Claudia you have inspired me, thank you sharing your walking experiences with me, it has given me a real insight and opened my eyes on the many elements of the walk. I appreciate you taking the time to talk with me,

Lorraine Burke is a walking artist based in North Uist.

Claudia Zeiske is the Director of Deveron Arts and a keen hillwalker and munro bagger.