

STONE IS
FOR EVER

“The world is full of more or less interesting objects,
I do not wish to add any more”

– Douglas Huebler

Around the late 1990's I recall swimming in the De Sainte-Croix lake in France. My memory tells me the shore was surrounded by soft grey flat shaped stones that fitted perfectly in the palm of my hand, they looked as if they were made for ricocheting on the still water. It was an art to find the perfect stone for this activity. The artist Hans Haacke decided to do the same. Afterwards he took a photograph of the action and called it *From here to there*. The photograph represented his experience, underlining it with its title.



Hans Haacke – *From here to there*, 2014

This essay is an investigation of artists that create an experience which is documented. The artists that observe the world and emphasize what already exists in nature, the city and everything in-between. Documentation can take on various roles, from mediating an experience through a photograph or a text towards the creation of an unmediated experience in which the artist invites the audience to participate through the use of guides, maps or invitations – to eventually take control of the experience by controlling the media output as much as possible, that can possibly both unintentionally lead to new work by other artists.

In 1967, when he was still an art student at Saint Martin's School of Art, the English artist Richard Long hitchhiked from his home in Bristol to end up at a grass field in Wiltshire. He took a walk in the grass field and his movement resulted in the work he entitled *A Line Made by Walking*, which would later be considered to be one of his most known works.

Through the action of walking back and forth the same path in the grass field he created an intentional line of movement and inhabitation that displayed a mark of the absent artist once present. In order to record his past presence, he documented this ephemeral trace in nature by translating it through a black and white photograph. As the portable camera being his witness, enabling Long to display his experience to be understood and seen by everyone once he exhibited it as a representative image on to the wall. Next to the use of the landscape for his work, Richard Long also shows that a work of art can be a journey, a detour of a daily activity within the existing world.

In comparison to this translation of Long's experience becoming an image through the use of documentation there is the Dutch artist Cor Dera, that turned this process of first having an experience and documenting it after-

wards the other way around, a sort of Richard Long in reverse. In his work, Dera researches how he can depict nature in a way which is different from the traditional aesthetic approach. He tends to affect our view of nature in a critical way. The title of a work he made in 1993 explains his ideals, *Art is dead, long live nature*.



Richard Long – *A Line Made by Walking*, 1967

His work field is often located at the periphery, a place where the city ends and nature begins. In 1999 Cor Dera created a work that consists of signs along the roadside, his so called *bermbordjes* – overlooking nature. Translated to English the sign says the following: “Based on a photograph of a setting sun, Dera wanted to ‘break open’ the demarcated areas of the porches and the suns to function as a third door”. Whether it is true or not if this explanation is based on a real photograph he found on beforehand, you can say that Dera translated the original photograph back to an experience for whoever passes by this roadside sign. By reading the sign the audience isn’t mediated by an image, but a mere description that leads you into the experience of the natural scene. The important difference with Long is that Dera doesn’t produce documentation from a momentary experience, but uses an (existing) image to activate an experience.



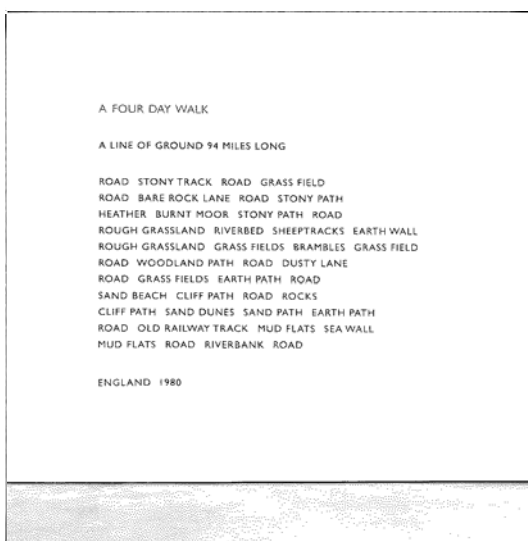
Cor Dera – *Bermbordjes*, 1999

In Later work, Long started to record his journeys through written descriptions like his *Four day walk*, which I think comes closer to activating an experience for the audience. The written descriptions of the walk are the traces from his memory, unlike the photographed trace he left in the field.

Like the photograph from *A Line Made By Walking*, the text is placed far away from its original location onto the walls that make the gallery space. The *Four day walk* consists of a list of observations translated into keywords of what he encountered along his journey. Road, stoney track, grass field, road, bare rock lane, road etc.

In this work I feel that Long translates his own experience into a collective experience not by documenting his trace as a photograph that freezes a moment in time but by inviting the viewer to read his words as a story that creates a timeline and a rhythm that indicates movement in the mind of the audience. A story that the audience can make in their own imagination which is different for everyone in relation to their own experiences of walking and being in the world.

In the end the communication is still a substitute: "it replaces the experience of that which it intends." ¹, but it leaves a lot to the imagination.



Richard Long – *A four day walk*, 1980

So there was Richard Long, working in nature, Cor Dera working in the space between nature and the city – the periphery, and then there is the Belgian born artist Francis Alÿs. His work field is mainly located inside the city, which is a slight shift of workspace that emerged from the group of late 60's and early 70's artists that left their studio to work in the landscape as their workspace.

For Alÿs Movement became a tool for his creativity, but Alÿs is not only crossing certain spaces, he inserts himself inside the flow of the city and its inhabitants, inside the daily circulation of the city.

In 2001, Alÿs created a work he entitled *Looking up*. The work started when he was standing in the middle of the Santo Domingo square in Mexico city and started gazing into the void until multiple pedestrians joined him, trying to discover what he was looking at. With this performance he seduced the passers by to join him and become part of his performance.

Like Alÿs, the audience gains an experience. He succeeds in letting the viewer participate in his work, although the participants of the performance may have

no idea that the man standing on the square is creating an artistic project. Those who experience the work through an aesthetic frame do so only when it's completed. It is only then – when the performance is captured and shown as a video afterwards, when it is exhibited in a space or printed in a book, that the performance can be defined as a work of art.



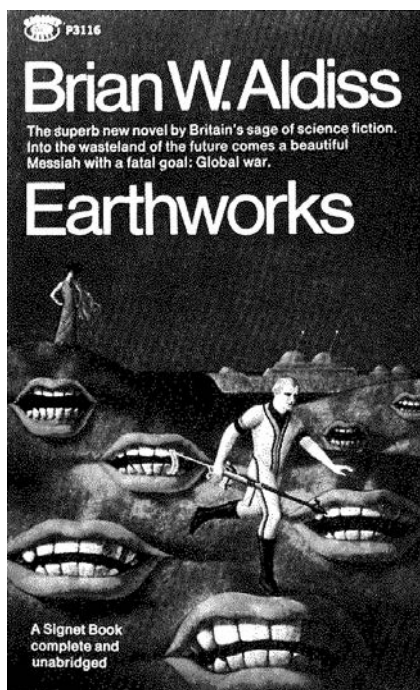
Francis Alys – *Looking Up*, 2001

In the same year when Richard Long decided to hitchhike to Wiltshire to perform his walking activity, the American artist Robert Smithson took a bus to Passaic, New Jersey. Before he left, he bought a copy of the *New York Times* and a paperback science fiction novel called *Earthworks*. After Smithson read the newspaper and the first chapter of the book he pulled the buzzer cord and the bus stopped at the bridge that connected the county he was born with the one at the other side of the river. He started a walk across the industrial area what came to be his work entitled *A tour of the monuments of Passaic* published in *Artforum* in December 1967. In the essay Smithson noted that the book is about a soil shortage, and the title *Earthworks* relates to the production of artificial soil in the story. If you look at Smithson's later work like the famous *Spiral Jetty* and the *Broken circle, Spiral hill*, you can see that these earthworks are produced with soil which is found on site, not producing but only displacing the work material. It is likely that this book inspired him to use the material around him for his later work. The importance of publishing it in this magazine is also connected to his idea of the work. Since most people can't make the trip to Passaic, he used the media as a tool to distribute his ideas. In the essay Smithson takes you on a journey through the site, sharing his observations in writing and taking snapshots with his Instamatic 400. The essay continues into more of a short story like the *Earthworks* book he describes. He appoints himself as an "official" guide to Passaic in an advertisement he designed to accompany the publication of his Passaic essay. The proposed text for the ad reads as follows²:

**SEE THE MONUMENTS OF
PASSAIC NEW JERSEY**

What can you find in Passaic that you can not find in Paris, London or Rome? Find out for yourself. Discover (if you dare) the breathtaking Passaic River and the eternal monuments on its enchanted banks. Ride in Rent-a-Car comfort to the land that time forgot. Only minutes from N.Y.C. Robert Smithson will guide you through this fabled series of sites . . . and don't forget your camera. Special maps come with each tour. For more information visit Dwan Gallery, 29 West 57th Street.

Initially, the text was supposed to be printed on top of a black and white photograph of Passaic's central parking area. In the essay he proposed this urban landscape as new 'monuments'.



Brian W. Aldiss – *Earthworks*, 1965

The language used in the essay smartly adapted this strategy of tour guides by dismissing the ordered prescriptions of the tour guide as we know, adding a humoristic irony, becoming more of a parody. Some of the monuments included were drainage pipes and 'the sandbox monument'. He later uses the sandbox as an example to explain his interest in entropy, where the force of nature changes works at every moment in time,³ being ephemeral like Richard Long's *Line*, which tends towards decline.

The documentation of his exploration in text and snapshots together acts as the guide. In this way of creating and applying documentation, Smithson also invites the viewer to participate in his experience instead of showing the work as a collection of individual objects inside a traditional exhibition space. He guides the visitor outside of the exhibition space, or guides the visitor into a new exhibition space, the outside. In this shift of space, the natural surrounding of the viewer unfolds itself.



Robert Smithson – *The Great Pipes Monument*, 1967

Although the original written advertisement for a guided tour was never published, the estate of Robert Smithson, the James Cohan Gallery, organized a bus tour excursion to Passaic in 2014 that re-traced Smithson's trip on that day. Ironically, after this excursion, the participants were brought back to the Montclair art museum where they got a walk-through by the curator inside the museum to take a look at the photo series Robert Smithson made on site at the time. The participants must have had taken their own photographs from the site and both the photographs inside the museum, late reproductions of what Smithson at the time encountered, or what he felt when he was there as he describes in the text, making photographs of photographs.

Not only did Smithson's tour guide trigger participation back when it was published in Artforum, the site later became a monument itself, an art pilgrim's destination.

A more contemporary example that works with guiding the viewer into an experience is the Spanish artist Lara Almarcegui. Her work usually revolves around space and objects that are in a state of transience. She gave buildings that were about to be demolished a new paint job like the *Renovating the Gros Market a few days before its demolition* in San Sebastian, and the photographed *Ruins in the Netherlands* before they are completely gone. In other work that relates to this state of transience as well, she photographed fallow grounds and wastelands and applies the documentation to turn them into guides to the site. The tour guides are often accompanied by an official opening of the wasteland simultaneously to the gallery exhibition opening where the guides are available for free.

The guides should be read as an invitation to explore these wastelands by yourself, but like the wastelands, the tour guide also becomes ephemeral in its function when the wasteland disappears because of construction. The guide guides the viewer at the time of the event, and functions as a memory object afterwards.

In 2000, she opened an empty lot to the public in the city of Brussels. With this work she wants to give an opportunity for the viewer to experience these fallow grounds before something new is being built. She makes these guides to activate an experience, and by doing so she activates the space at the same time. She claims that "in a city where everything is decided and designed, there is no dynamics and it doesn't 'live' anymore. Undefined places that seem empty but are full with possibilities that make the city interesting. The definition of a city is not a sum of functions it contains, you should be able to wander and dream. A city needs to provide space for discovery and making new plans."⁴ She hopes that these sites are discovered by many.

It is of no surprise that Almarcegui decided to work and live in the Netherlands, a country in which every square meter has been decided upon and where every surface has a specific destination plan. A country with paved roads everywhere that leaves no space for weeds, and when weeds occur, it will be exterminated – nature determined by man. Only on these fallow grounds, where a plan to build something has been delayed or postponed, small spaces arise where nature gains ground.



Lara Almarcegue – *Opening an empty lot to the public*, Brussels, 2000

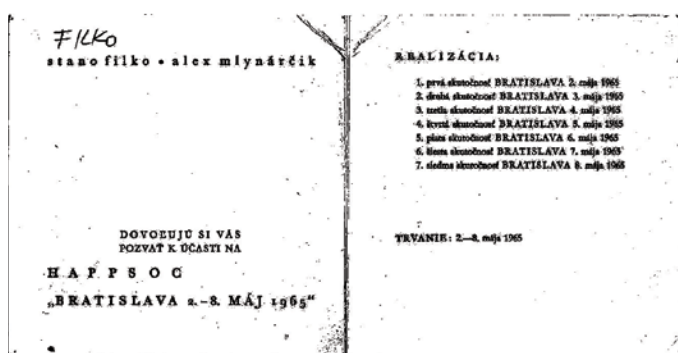
Another guide that in this case is based on an existing guide is *Cor Dera's Guide to nature*. Like his previous road sign work, in which he also guides the viewer into nature, he published the artist book for his exhibition in Ludwigsburg. Dera started with a left over stock of existing nature books. The nature book became his artist book by applying a few simple interventions starting with the removal of the original guidebook covers and binding three guides together as one book. After that he added an introductory text and biography at the back. By transforming this book into an artwork, he changed the readers perception of nature, and as the title suggests: *Cor Dera's Guide to Nature*, Dera takes the reader to nature, he is the nature guide. Not only is Dera guiding us into nature, he also guides nature – out of the book. Like the previous examples, the guide functions as an invitation at the same time.



Cor Dera – *Guide to Nature*, 2000.
Left: original book Right: Artist book

As the guide functions as an invitation, an invitation also functions as a guide. An invitation invites the reader into an event. Stano Filko and Alex Mlynárcik from former Czechoslovakia created a work in 1965 entitled *HAPPSOC I*, that took the form of an invitation card. The people that received this invite were asked to participate into turning the whole city of Bratislava into a exhibition/work of art from the second of may until the eight of may in 1965. On the front of the invite it said: 'Dovolujeme si vás pozvat kúcasti na' meaning, 'we invite you to participate in'. The dates on the card are the times when the two national holidays are celebrated, Labour day and Liberation day. Next to that, the invitation also included a list of 'objects' to be found in the city and their exact statistical number that was used to 'produce' the artwork. Some of the things in the list included are: One castle, 142,090 lampposts, 128,729 television antennas, 6 cemeteries, 137,936 females, 128,727 males, 49,991 dogs, 64,725 apartments, 35,060 washing machines, 17,535 refrigerators, 1 Dunjj (the Donau river), 1.000.801 tulips, 9 (amateur) theaters etc. By adding this list of objects to the invitation, they don't merely declare the city as an exhibition, they also include and elevate the objects within the city that are naturally an essential part of it.

The invitation becomes a guide to the city. Like Almarcegui guides to wastelands and Smithson's tour to Passaic, they fictionalised the real in order to be conceived.



O B J E K T Y:

1. Zany	137.936
2. Muži	128.727
3. Psi	48.991
4. Domy /s provizóriami/	18.009
5. Balkóny	165.236
6. Poľnohospodárske usadlosti	22
7. Prevádzkové budovy	523
8. Byty	64.725
9. Vedecké v bytoch	40.070
10. Vedecké mimo bytov	944
11. Sporáky elektrické	3.503
12. " plynové	37.804
13. Práčky	35.060
14. Chladničky	17.534
15. Gald Bratislava	1
16. Hrad	1
17. Dunaj /v Bratislave/	1
18. Pevňosť lampy	142.090
19. Televízne antény	128.726
20. Cintoríny	6
21. Tulipány	1,000.801
22. Divadlá /aj echoznice/	9
23. Kina, komíny, elektrické, vechy, autá, trolejbusy, písacie stroje, rádia, obchody, knižnice, nemocnice, atď.	

FILKO

Stano Filko and Alex Mlynárčik – HAPPSOC 1, 1965
Invitation and list of objects

Before the *HAPPSOC 1* work in 1965, around 1957, the French Situationists group emerged, lead by Guy Debord. One of the Situationists essential activities was the *dérive*. A form of play that was also practiced by his predecessor organization, the Lettrist International, the wandering through an urban space, which they originally termed *dérive*. The closest equivalent to the *dérive* would have been the Surrealist and Dadaist excursion organized in 1921. Like Debord defines in his 'Theory of the *Dérive*' from 1956, it is "a mode of experimental behavior linked to the conditions of urban society: a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances. During a *dérive* one or more persons during a certain period drop their relations, their work and leisure activities, and all their other usual motives for movement and action, and let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there."⁵ With the goal of creating new situations, it tends to take pedestrians off their known paths and pushes them into a new awareness of the landscape. The first Dadaist excursion started on a rainy day in 1921 guided by a group of notable Surrealism figures including Louis Aragon, Andre Breton and Philippe Soupault. By creating a Dadaist designed pamphlet they announced this unplanned journey. The pamphlet functions as an invitation and both a guide to Paris but at the same time tends to break free from existing guides that hold the predetermined paths and routes. Their announcements not only lead to participation and alternative exploration of the city, but also to a new perception and use of the city. Next to the assump-

tion that the participants might document their drifts, the only proof of the event is the pamphlet.

Debord says that “Everything that has directly lived has receded into representation,”⁶ referring to the central importance of the image in contemporary society. Debord says that “images, have supplanted genuine human interaction”.⁷ These drifts in the end ideally only produce an experience and a mental image at most.

LA PROPRETE EST LE LITME DU PAUVRE SOYEZ SALES

DISTRIBUTION DE BAS DE SOIE A 5,85

LEÇONS DE COUPE

UN CULTE NOUVEAU

Excursions & VISITES DADA

DADA

1^{ère} VISITE:

Saint Julien le Pauvre

JEUDI 14 AVRIL A 3 h.

RENDEZ-VOUS DANS LE JARDIN DE L'ÉGLISE

Rue Saint Julien le Pauvre — (Métro Saint-Michel et Cité)

DONS PÉDESTRES LE 14 AVRIL

ON VOIT COMME VOUS ÊTES COMME VOUS ÊTES

LAVEZ VOS SEINS COMME VOS GANTS

MERCİ POUR LE FUSIL et encore une fois BONJOUR

EM HAUT LE HAUT LE HAUT

EM BAS LE BAS

Les dadaïstes de passage à Paris voulant remédier à l'incompétence de guides et de dicterons suspects, ont décidé d'entreprendre une série de visites à des endroits choisis, en particulier à ceux qui n'ont vraiment pas de raison d'exister. — C'est à tort qu'on insiste sur le pittoresque (Lycée Janson de Sailly), l'intérêt historique (Mont Blanc) et la valeur sentimentale (la Morgue). — La partie n'est pas perdue mais il faut agir vite. — Prendre part à cette première visite c'est se rendre compte du progrès humain, des destructions possibles et de la nécessité de poursuivre notre action que vous tiendrez à encourager par tous les moyens.

Sous la conduite de: Gabrielle Buffet, Louis ARAGON, AMP, André BRETON, Paul ELIARD, Th. FRANKEL, J. HUSSAR, Benjamin PÉRET, Francis PICABIA, Georges RIEMONT-DESSAIGNES, Jacques RIGAUD, Philippe SOUPALET, Tristan TZARA.

(1) Pour le détail des gâteaux, voir l'annonce par le même Graphis

André Breton and Tristan Tzara, Excursions & Visites Dada / Première Visite, 1921, Paris

This importance of image nowadays seems more important than ever. The representation of experiences is growing with gigabytes every day through social media outputs such as Instagram and Facebook which were basically created for recording and sharing experiences with others. “Take the pic or it didn’t happen” is a hashtag that grew out of this habit that became a caption underneath the recording of almost every experience ‘lived’.



Tristan Tzara reading to the crowd at a ‘Dada excursion’ at Saint-Julien-le-Pauvre church, 1921, Paris

Ten years after Robert Smithson’s walking *Tour de Passaic* and Richard Long’s *Line made by walking*, Walter de Maria completed his work, *The Lightning Field*, at a remote location in the desert of New Mexico, which he initially named ‘Mile-Long Lightning field’. The work is a setup of 400 polished stainless steel posts placed in a calculated rectangular grid over an area 1 kilometer long and 1 mile wide. The site itself is protected by copyright. It is forbidden to take photographs of the sculpture or the site.

Instead De Maria commissioned a photographer called John Cliett who lived on-site for a year to make photographs. From over a 1000 images that were taken, De Maria chose nine that became the only images that are allowed to be published. This strict copyright arose from his idea that he wanted the viewers to experience the artwork directly instead of being mediated by images on forehand. In this way De Maria restricted the rights to reproduction of his artwork, not only restricting the number of images available of the work but also the context in which they are produced. The few photographs that were published also emphasize the role in the artist's idea of shaping the image and promoting the idea of the work.

Next to the copyright restriction there are also terms attached for visiting this land artwork. On the website of the Dia Art Foundation there is a page that holds all information and restrictions for the artwork. For the visitors there is a cabin where you have to stay overnight. "The cabin has no communication systems like radio, television or phones and there are also no art history books or magazines and no publications related to the features of the location like climate, geography or history."⁸ Under the tab accommodations you can find the following information: "A cabin adjacent to *The Lightning Field* provides shelter and simple meals during your stay. It has three bedrooms (one with a double bed and two with twin beds), two bathrooms, a kitchen, and a common room. Linens are provided. We do not reserve specific bedrooms."

"Please note that you may be sharing the cabin with other visitors. We therefore ask that you let us know if you are planning to bring young children and refrain from bringing electronic devices or anything that may disturb other visitors. No more than six visitors per night can be accommodated. Camping is not permitted. Pets are not allowed. A simple supper is prepared and left for you in the refrigerator and a selection of breakfast items are provided for you to prepare the next morning. If you have any special dietary requirements please plan to bring supplemental food or beverages of your own." Next to that it states that "the Dia Art Foundation will transport you towards *The Lightning Field* from Quemado, New Mexico, which is about a 2.5–3 hour drive from Albuquerque". "You may not take your own vehicle. You will be returned to Quemado at approximately noon the following day". Under Climate and Conditions the website explains the terms for clothing which is also very specific: "Bring at least one pair of sturdy walking shoes or boots, sunglasses, a sun hat, warm clothing, insect repellent, and a raincoat or windbreaker. Although lightning storms typically occur in this area from mid-July through August, and may also occur at other times during the visiting season, the probability of lightning during your visit cannot be predicted". The fees are pretty high due to maintenance and all the people involved with the work. May and June: \$150 per person, July and August: \$250 per person, September and October: \$150 per person, Student/child (all months): \$100 per person.

"The work of art should make an unforgettable impact, comparable to that of a major natural event, such and an earthquake or hurricane"

– Walter de Maria



Cabin on site of *The Lightning Field*

In 1980, Walter de Maria also wrote a text for Artforum⁹, with the same intention as the images to manage the discourse around the work. The text was titled: “Some Facts, Notes, Data, Information, Statistics and Statements: *The Lightning Field* is a permanent work.” The text started with a quote in italics. The land is not the setting for the work but part of the work, As the title stated the text is very explanatory, filled with interesting facts concerning preparation activities and material use: “The work is located in West Central New Mexico. The states of California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona and Texas were searched by truck over a five-year period before the location in New Mexico was selected. Desirable qualities of the location included flatness, high lightning activity and isolation”. It means that already 5 years before the construction of the work he was searching for a perfect place with great care. In July 1974 a small *Lightning Field* was constructed. This served as a prototype for the 1977 *Lightning Field*. It had 35 stainless steel poles with pointed tips, each 18 feet tall and 200 feet apart, arranged in a five row by seven row grid. It was located in Northern Arizona. The land was loaned by Mr. and Mrs. Burton Tremaine. The work is now in the collection of Virginia Dwan. It remained in place from 1974 through 1976 and is presently dismantled, prior to an installation in a new location. Some other interesting notes worth mentioning relate to how to look and not to look at the work: Viewing *The Lightning Field* from the air is of no value”. “A simple walk around the perimeter of the poles takes approximately two hours. The primary experience takes place within *The Lightning Field*. Sometimes in winter, *The Lightning Field* is seen in light snow. Several distinct thunderstorms can be observed at one time from *The Lightning Field*”. “A permanent caretaker and administrator reside near the location for continuous maintenance, protection and assistance”. In between these bold facts you can find some interesting statements: “The invisible is real” and ending the text with “Isolation is the essence of Land Art”.

De Maria created a whole experience through not only the work itself, but also its surrounding – which he considers part of the work, together with all the specific restrictions he created with it, which until today is still active and strictly taken care of by the Dia Art Foundation.



Walter de Maria – *The Lightning Field*
One of nine photographs by John Cliett, Artforum 1980

This whole idea of strict documentation on forehand and the restriction of photography by visitors during the visit in prevention of the mediated image is the complete opposite of Robert Smithson's strategy, if you look at his *Spiral Jetty*. The Dia Art Foundation is committed to recording changes to *Spiral Jetty* over time through photographic documentation. Since 2012, a geospatial aerial photographer has documented *Spiral Jetty* twice a year, in May and October.

Smithson used documentation to distribute his works, while De Maria controlled the documentation for distribution through specific media outlets. Smithson purely believed that most of his audience would only know the remote sculptures through reproduction. Smithson used the media as a tool for distribution, he called these photographs and texts non-sites that serve as an addition to the work and not just mere reproduction. De Maria on the other hand thought that it should all be about the physical experience of being on-site without the mediation of an image.



Fall 2016, Spring 2016. Robert Smithson – *Spiral Jetty*, 1970

One year after *The Lightning Field* was completed, De Maria asked himself how he could sustain his work to have an ongoing broad audience in the future. This addition to the work contradicts with his initial idea and is meant for people to read that will never be able to visit the site. De Maria had the idea of a book commissioned from someone who, after spending a considerable amount of time on the site, might write detailed account based on his or her long experience. He invited the art critic Kenneth Baker to perform this task with the idea that the result would be published by the Dia Art Foundation. The first draft of Baker's text was denied by De Maria because he found it to be too descriptive. Around the 1990's he undertook a second attempt. De Maria suggested Baker would visit his artwork during other seasons in which he previously went, but again there were circumstances that prevented him to continue. Soon after September 11, 2001 he again returned to the challenge and years later in 2008 finally completed the text which resulted in a 138 page book. The book can be seen as the definitive interpretation of the work that isn't written in art historical terms. It not only functions as an addition to the artwork, but also became a new work that emerged from the artwork that itself has little documentation. Ironically enough, by their absence of documentation they generated new works as additions to the artwork, investigating the original like the book written about *The Lightning Field*. It seems contradictory to think of an image as a mediator of an experience and still publish images of the work, even though he 'controlled' the image and its output himself. The few images also functioned as an introduction to gain publicity for the work. Who would know the work existed if there was no image or publicity for it. Who would have seen it? Probably far less people then he would have wanted.

One year before *The Lightning Field* was completed Ed Ruscha produced a work that almost no one had seen. It is said that he made a fake rock, and he placed it among other rocks in the Mojave desert, naming it *Rocky II*.



THIS IS THE ORIGINAL
 ROCKY I, WHICH BECAME
 THE ARMATURE FOR ROCKY II
 WHICH BECAME THE
 FRAMEWORK FOR THE
 FINAL ROCKY II.
 ROCKY III WAS THE RESIN
 SHELL ONLY TO SUPPORT
 THE MAKING OF ROCKY III.
 IT WAS NEVER COVERED WITH
 DECOMPOSED GRANITE.

Ed Ruscha - *Rocky I*, photo taken inside the studio.
 Backside handwritten by his brother Paul Ruscha

30 years later, when the artist Pierre Bismuth discovered this artwork through a BBC documentary from 1980 that he watched in 2006, he couldn't find anything or anyone knowing anything about it. Bismuth attended a press conference of Ed Ruscha in London and publicly asked him, where is *Rocky II*? Ruscha answered, 'So it's out there in the Mojave desert somewhere, I am not going to say where'. Around February 2015, Bismuth started an indie-gogo crowdfunding campaign to finance and promote his scavenger hunt in the form of a documentary named *Where Is Rocky II*. He commissioned a private detective to find the rock and asked himself 3 questions, where is this rock, why is it hidden, and what is there to hide? In his trailer Bismuth not only wants to find this mysterious rock, he also wants to invite the viewer to participate in this adventure, and encourages people to hide things themselves.

Ed Ruscha created a rock indistinguishable from the real rocks in the desert, it being one of the most solid and everlasting objects that exist in the world, and yet he made it disappear, leaving no trace. In the absence of any recording of the work Ed Ruscha managed to create a powerful work, he created a myth.

Since the introduction of the lightweight portable camera's like the Kodak Instamatic 400 in the 60's, the camera allowed artists to become more mobile and capture their experience like movement through or inhabitation inside the landscape. The experience and its proof became the work. A walk became a new form of art, it turned into a guided tour – an invitation for the audience to participate in the artwork, to deviate from the known paths we walk in our daily life, which eventually lead to the absence of documentation in favor of the true experience. Not only do artists apply documentation in various forms to create their work and with it create a new perception of space, they also use the absence of documentation that leads to dematerialization of the artwork itself or new work created by the audience.

I might take a field trip to the only 'Earthwork' Robert Smithson created in Europe, the *Spiral Hill* and *Broken Circle* in Emmen, but someone once told me its not so spectacular as I think it is. In the end its not so much about seeing the work because I know what it looks like from the photograph in books and on the internet, its more about the idea of visiting the artwork, experiencing it, the art pilgrimage towards it. The work is the proof of Robert Smithson once being there and his creation. When I will be there I can probably not resist to take one or two photographs myself, but like Walter de Maria I will control the output of the image I took by keeping it for myself and not sharing it on social media outlets. People just have to believe I visited the work in person, that it happened.



Richard Long
Being in the Moment
1999

SORRY, NO IMAGE AVAILABLE

Richard Long – *Being in the Moment*
Screenshot SORRY, NO IMAGE IS
AVAILABLE OF THIS OBJECT
[http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/
long-being-in-the-moment-al00209](http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/long-being-in-the-moment-al00209)

Notes

1. p.37 Vilém Flusser. *Writings, The Codified World* University of Minnesota Press, 2002.
2. p.104 Ann Reynolds, Robert Smithson
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3. See essay Robert Smithson. *A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey*. Artforum, 1967
4. Lara Almarcegui. *Een braakliggend terrein in de Rotterdamse haven*. Nutteloze handelingen, Theo Tegelaers
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5. Guy Debord. *Definitions Internationale Situationniste #1*.
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6. Thesis 1. Guy Debord. *Society of the Spectacle*.
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7. Thesis 4. Guy Debord. *Society of the Spectacle*.
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8. p7. Kenneth Baker. *The Lightning Field*
9. Excerpts from Walter de Maria essay *The Lightning Field*
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