



Fig.0 Ways of Seeing - Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma, 2024.3, Caiyun Chen, Artist's work

Drifting through the Artificial Fortress Besieged

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School of Fine Art - MLitt Fine Art Practice

Essay and Critical Reflection of Mapping the City

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1 Research Direction and Introduction

My research focuses on the exploration of one's own identity and traces of socio-historical change. I believe that, to a certain extent, the urban environment shapes people's behavioural patterns. Behavioural patterns also permeate the inertia of people's thinking. The transmission of culture is related to rational urban planning. Apart from the objective physical maps in the real world, I am more concerned with the traces of memory at the level of consciousness. My body is my own map, the container of my soul. Language, text, sound and the five senses are my methods of mapping the world.

My body is my home, my ark, my soul's sanctuary.

We are constantly dissecting, discarding, reassembling, and establishing ourselves.

Maps are more than just logical diagrams to help you navigate from point A to point B. They are windows of information to explore the world. They are windows of information for exploring the world, visualising data, and seeing trends to engage more effectively. Maps inspire curiosity, provide insight, motivate people to take action and help us build solutions. The interpenetration of various disciplines has led to rapid advances in cartography, giving new dimensions to the functions of maps. Even in the future, maps still have an irreplaceable role to play.

In my Mapping the City class, I learned about the following different Mapping techniques:

- Mental Mapping
- Illustration recording
- City walk
- Drift theory
- Map of self

2 Urban History of Scars Literature

2.1 Experiment-Map of city walk

On the first day of the City walk, we first passed through the private gardens of Douglas St in Glasgow. Next, we passed two churches. On St Vincent St, the architectural features were mostly Victorian decorations. We could clearly see the building materials and construction methods of different periods. Walking further back, we entered an atrium formed by being surrounded by



Fig.1 Map of city walk, 2024.2, Artist's Photograph

buildings. Due to Glasgow's history, some of the buildings have been rebuilt. The undulating heights of the building joints clearly show the period in which they were built. There are more and more modern buildings in this area than before. And major landmarks such as churches are concentrated in Glasgow's city center. We passed another hospital and bank, both now converted into restaurants and bars. We entered an Italian center decorated with sculptures of modern figures. Other typically representative statues were centered on the buildings in front of and around the City Hall.

2.2 Reflection

This City walk was a planned tour of the city led by the tutor. The name of Glasgow comes from the Brythonic word 'glas cu', meaning 'green space'. The development of heavy industry in this northern region made the people rich. I had never before looked so closely at the old and the new in the city's architecture. And the other people in the city.¹

This reminds me of the 'New Scars' school of contemporary Chinese photography.

Compared to the collective memory of pain projected by the spirit of 'scar literature' in

¹ Moore, J. (2016). Glasgow : Mapping the City. Edinburgh: Birlinn General.

the 1980s, the 'New Scars' images are isolated and individualized, born out of the new migration movement driven by urbanization, such as migration, wandering, and dream-seeking. It was born under the complex background of migration, drifting, dreaming, and other new human migratory movements driven by urbanization, and is highly persuaded by capital, experiencing the pleasure and loss of consuming and being consumed, and becoming unable to retreat, blocked from the path of upward mobility, and inclined to talk to themselves mentally. And lose the motivation to ask questions and enter into the habitual disease in question.²



Fig.2 Chen Qiulin, Frozen Landscape, 2009

As in the 20th century, Glasgow's economy began to decline as a result of the Great Depression of the 1930s and the two World Wars. the 1970s and early 1980s were even darker periods in Glasgow's history. The decline of heavy industry led to high unemployment and low living standards. Alcoholism, drug

addiction, long-term unemployment,

poverty, chronic illnesses, self-loathing, despair, and the shrinking of the industry hit the city's inhabitants and the social psyche hard, affecting generations. Even in the 1990s, the social phenomenon of the 'Glasgow Effect' emerged. Artist Chen Qiulin's works are mainly based on the themes of demolition, ruins, earthquakes, migration, separation, and dreams. As shown in the picture, the swampy predicament between the gender situation and the ruins of modern civilization, and the indifference of the surrounding environment highlight the stoicism and tragedy of the protagonist.

² Gao, M. (2011). Total Modernity and the Avant-Garde in Twentieth-Century Chinese Art. MIT Press.

3 Progressive Memory Collage Route

3.1 Experiment-Map of self

Map of self is a way of introducing myself. I recorded a road map of my weekday travels during my current phase of living in Glasgow. I mainly travel between five points: Barnes House, Stow House, Reid House, Flat House, and Tesco. These five points form a kind of closed-loop route that recurs throughout my life. The geometry of the picture connects each building and represents the walking path I

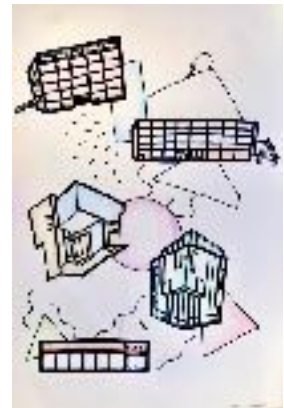


Fig.3 Map of self, 2024.2, Artist's Photograph

remembered. I suddenly realized how singular the route of my life was. I rarely tried extra different routes to get to school or home, my first choice was always the route with the shortest traveling distance or the route with less undulating terrain. I rarely try to explore the edges of the area, perhaps because the viaduct to the north divides the city like a river. The area circled by the highway became my main route of activity.

3.2 Experiment and Reflection-Map of Deconstruction

I wasn't satisfied enough with the route boards I produced the first time around. I reflected on why I didn't try a new way of recording the route of my visit. Why did I have to copy the route exactly as it was in the professional map format? Could I recreate the route



Fig.4 Map of deconstruction, 2024.2, Artist's Photograph

according to my own mental map, my own memory? So I tried to use the collage method, printing off each building and then cutting it up. Deconstructing and reorganizing. Using intuition and memory, collage them out of order.

4 The concept of drift

In the 1960s, the Situationist International advocated in Paris for a popular commitment to an action called *dérive*/drift: 'a method or technique of rapid travel through a wide variety of surroundings' in which participants drifted from solo to groups of two to three people. Drift, endeavors to complete this period of wandering with an unusual, episodic, fleeting, and purely sensory rule of thumb. It focuses on people and their situations and experiences in specific locations.³



Fig.5 Guy Debord, Guide psychogeographic de Paris, 1957

Guy Debord developed the psychogeographic map. He took the concept of the wanderer and developed it into drift, a kind of perceptual map that records the action of drifting, whereby the drifter draws a route based on his or her own subjective perception of the city. drift does not have the usual motivations for movement (work or leisure activities), but

rather the attraction of the terrain and its 'psychogeographical' effects. It challenges how and why people move through their surroundings and encourages exploration and wandering.⁴

The sociologist Georg Simmel, in *Bridges and Gates* (1909), suggests that humans have a will and desire to connect, and that people move in order to connect, hence the creation

³ Gray, C. (1998). *Leaving the 20.th. Century : the incomplete work of the Situationist International*. London: Rebel Press.

⁴ Trier, J. (2019). *Guy Debord, the Situationist International, and the revolutionary spirit*. Leiden Brill Sense.

of bridges, roads, etc., which demonstrates the link between mobility and materiality.⁵

Psychogeographic mapping is based on the impulses and experiences that humans have when traveling, more critically and responsibly, trying to disassociate themselves from their own preconceptions brought about by gender, class, and educational norms. The map depicts personal decisions made in the real world that affect how we understand space based on needs, senses, weather, and so on.

The *dérive*, while similar to the *flâneur*, is more influenced by urban studies (especially Henri Lefebvre). In *The Critique of everyday life*⁶, Lefebvre dialectically defines everyday life as ‘the intersection of illusion and truth, of power and helplessness; the intersection of the sectors that a man controls and the sectors that he does not’, and as a place of perpetual transformative conflict between different, specific rhythms places: the polyrhythmic bundle of the body's natural rhythms, physiological (natural) rhythms, and social rhythms (Lefebvre and Régulier, 1985: 73). In short, everyday life is the space in which all life takes place and in which all fragmented activity takes place. It is the residue.



Fig.6 1850's map of Muirend, which was included in the ancient "lands of Bogton"

⁵ MacRae, D.G. and Wolff, K.H. (1951). Georg Simmel: The Sociology of Georg Simmel. *The Economic Journal*, 61(241), p.163. doi:<https://doi.org/10.2307/2226628>.

⁶ Lefebvre, H. (2014). *Critique of Everyday Life*. Verso Books.

4.1 The city of folds, traveling through ambiguous spaces

4.1.1 Experiment-Drift map of Muirend 1

We mainly roam randomly in the town of Muirend according to the ups and downs of the terrain. The town is divided into three main areas by a fork road. Residential areas, roads with shops along the street (dynamic areas), and quiet areas (parks, cemeteries, etc.).



Fig.7 Experiment-Drift map of Muirend 1, 2024.2, Group work

The three forks are our main marker points. After starting from here, we detoured back here along the boundary of the residential area. The boundary of residential areas is particularly obvious. It is blocked by the wall of the railway, and people can't cross it. Mostly are townhouses, and they are mainly sandstone structures.

Then, we walked from the fork to the bank bar and triggered the waterfall route. In order to reach the park where the waterfall is located. We accidentally crossed the edge of the town by crossing the cemetery. From the cemetery, we guessed that this area should have some history.

Therefore, we subjectively feel that this town is a semi-closed community. The roads in the small town are not like square roads like the city centre. The roads in the town mainly

4.1.2 Reflection

This reminds me of the philosopher Gilles Deleuze's concept of the 'fold'. The city of the fold refers to a city that is neither closed nor completely open, that has layers that are constantly folded, where the public and the private coexist. The 'fold' can be understood as a metaphor for a dynamic, complex, and constantly intertwined reality. The pleated city has more than just a bright side and retains the complexity of life. It also represents Deleuze's way of looking at the world: thinking beyond unilinear or simple dichotomies.

[illegible]

to the long-term input of space applicability development and public interest. In the structure of the "circular urban form", the convenience and integrity of space are integrated with the structure of the internal mechanism of the city. The setting of circular roads and radioactive roads. Intercity, urban center-district railway systems, agriculture-rural green and park-green belts, and public buildings are organically embedded in the urban-rural layout.⁷

10

If we use the term 'pleats' to describe and differentiate the structural condition of urban space, we can also use the term 'striped city' to describe and differentiate the structural condition of urban space. The 'striped city' refers to a closed system with only avenues and no streets or daily life, while the 'smooth city' refers to a highly efficient system that operates with the precision of a machine. The 'pleated city' differs from these two in that it is neither closed nor unobstructed, but rather has many 'pleated' zones, full of layers, possibilities, and hidden corners that may harbour more life-oriented aspects.

4.2 The utopian ideal of decentralisation

4.2.1 Experiment-Drift map of Muirend 2

We have made a coordinate system to express the time and resistance. X is time running, Y is resistance. Our second drift rule was wind and rain, and we imagined ourselves as balloons, moving uncontrollably with the wind direction and the amount of rain.



Fig.9 Experiment-Drift map of Muirend 2, The process, 2024.3, Group work

This time around, our drift was really driven by points of interest. Whenever we came across something intriguing that we wanted to check out or dive deeper into, it felt like the resistance ahead just dropped away, letting us truly go with the flow—that's what these points of interest are all about. For me, since it ties into my major's research, I was especially keen on exploring how residential buildings in urban design manage their space. The buildings we passed had this classic setup where the front faces the public space and the back is more private or communal. It's fascinating how the architecture itself sorts spaces into private and public areas.

So when we started our city walk, we decided to cut out a lot of things that would influence our decision making. Mind you, too many choices can really make it difficult to choose. We started with a simple principle: follow your heart and go with the flow.

By "resistance" I mean things like bad weather that made us choose a better route, or avoiding crowds to find peace, or even getting permission from others to try a less crowded path We used the trip to revisit the city, from people's homes to public spaces, and along the way, everything started to become more free and open.



Fig.10 Experiment-Drift map of Muirend 2, Complete image, 2024.3, Group work

4.2.2 Reflection

Situationists advocate that individual perception and desire should be above the authority and structure of an urban city. They criticise that the Society of the Spectacle under capitalism has constrained people's spatial awareness, and they hope that the practice of 'drift' and mental maps will provide a 'decentralised model' that attempts to dismantle the power structure. But I don't think it has been realised in the physical real world.

On this walk through the town, we tried our best to minimise the interference of our own objective constraints, and explored the community mainly by our own subjective will. We

often wandered in the ambiguous road connecting public and private to try to see if it was passable. It is neither closed nor unobstructed. The public coexists with the private.

Looking back at our routes, I think we are still governed by subconsciously known social rules. For example, are some social institutions open to the public? It's hard to cut through the subconscious distractions. Closed or open doors are our resistance and the point where we are disciplined by the society.

Factors that influence our Drift route:

- *Natural factors of resistance: there is the degree of inclement weather, the smoothness of the roads, and safety.*
- *Human factors of resistance: private territories, closed gates, fences*
- *Areas of least resistance: smooth public roads.*

Henri Lefebvre's Critique of the Practice of Everyday Life describes modern life as characterized by homogenization, fragmentation, and urbanization.⁸ Architectural space is constructed a product of the cultural activities of human civilization, where humans are both creators and consumers. In a consumer society, it is difficult to escape from the purposeful, planned routes. We can only relatively mapping the city. Because the concept of city is the city that has been built. Just as city is a maze, we routinely navigate the walls of the maze and find it difficult to pick our way out of the maze or through the walls. This made me reflect on the relationship between the physical body and architecture as a container and a cage. The relationship between the architect and the user is as if the architect is the hunter and the user is the prey. The user's escape into the cage designed by the architect is like controlling the prey, which resists.

⁸ Lefebvre, H. (2017). Everyday Life In The Modern World..

Although everyday life is affected by formalized symbols, and the rationality of consumption always tends to quantify and homogenize everyday life, reducing content with different essences to the homogenized, the tendency to formalize does not reduce everyday life entirely to form; content as long as is hidden under the referent and the signifier and is thus revealed as an energetic reference without a referent, which gives other meanings to life and can be found in speech and in time. In the modern world, everyday life is no longer a rich 'subject' with potential subjectivity; it has become an 'object' in social organization.⁹

The uploading of personal experience and consciousness, what is the meaning of real space when the human experience of the world no longer needs to be accomplished by moving through space? How will the redefinition of space lead us to re-imagine the city? With the Internet, personalised 'drifting' activities can be extended indefinitely in virtual space, clicking through hyperlink after hyperlink - the 'psychogeographical map' of each user in virtual space is unique. From 1956 to 1974, Constant Nieuwenhuys chose to conceptualize a new utopian city form designed for drifting - New Babylon.¹⁰

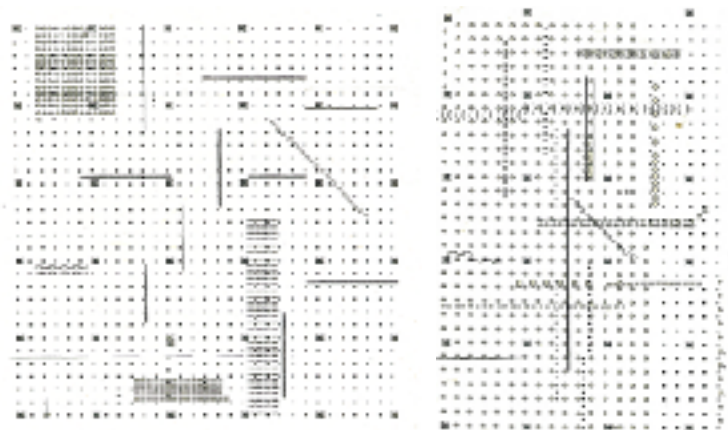


Fig.11 Archizoom, "No-stop city", 1970

⁹ Baudrillard, J. (2015). *La société de consommation : ses mythes, ses structures*. Paris: Denoël.

¹⁰ Pablo García Ríos and Luis, F. (2023). New Babylon. Análisis y reconstrucción virtual de la visión utópica de Constant Nieuwenhuys. *EGA: revista de expresión gráfica arquitectónica*, 28(47), pp.256–271. doi:<https://doi.org/10.4995/ega.2023.16173>.

Instead of destroying existing cities, New Babylon is built over them, a superstructure in the figurative sense. In this new world, the underground are the automated machines responsible for production, above ground, is the traffic, and the elevated parts are the places where people move around. Constant wanted the architect of the new Babylon to be not him but its inhabitants. The climatic conditions, light, sound, smells, and colors in the building would be readily adjusted to the wishes of the occupants. Automated machines would free up the labor force so that people could devote themselves entirely to creative activity and play. Walking through it is therefore a constant process of drifting through different atmospheres, and people who are free from the bonds of labour relations can live nomadically in this building. But the unattainability of this aerial city lies not in the technology but in the idea. Today Neo-Babylon is more often discussed as avant-garde art, although it is meant to be anti-art.

5 Ways of Seeing

5.1 Description and Reflection of illustration



Fig.12 Nighthawks, 1942, Edward Hopper

These 20 landscape illustrations document my travels in Finland. I chose to compose the images from a flat viewpoint, about 10-20m away from the

reference. I did a comparison experiment; 10 of the

images are views through a glass window, the others were composed using direct observation. I think of the glass window as being like a screen, with light and shadow mapping out the image. The presence of the glass window in the image gives the viewer a greater sense of distance. Referring to Edward Hopper's *Nighthawks*¹¹, the glass

¹¹ Slater, T. (2002). Fear of the city 1882–1967: Edward Hopper and the discourse of anti-urbanism. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 3(2), pp.135–154. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/14649360220133916>.



Fig.13 Ways of Seeing - Illustrations about travel in Finland, 2024.3, Caiyun Chen, Artist's

window blurs the boundary between the image and reality, and the viewer feels as if they are inside the painting when viewing it. The window adds to the readability of the image, while the direct composition seems to lack interest. For the colour scheme, I did not follow the actual colours of the landscapes, but referenced the City-pop style of music and derivative visual art, using highly saturated and contrasting tones to colour my work. For the texture of each image, I chose to use Lo-Fi style film and printmaking textures to

give my images a bit of a retro-style presence. I think one problem with this series is that I haven't very much unified a style or perspective; each illustration looks good on its own, but together they don't seem as series-y.

6 Speed of Thinking

6.1 Experiment-Sequence

Explanatory diagrams are intended to explain the images shown using notes, labels, and legends in order to:

- Explain concepts or methods
- Describe objects or places
- Show how things work, move, or change
- Help understand the subject matter shown



Fig.14 Sequence 1&2, 2024.2, Artist's Photograph

Images 1 and 2 contain illustrations of the following three things: the order in which tea is made, the order in which shoelaces are tied, and the order in which you learn to ride a bike.

The sequence of making tea:

1. *Put enough water in the teapot.*
2. *Preheat the teacup.*

3. *Put the tea leaves in the teapot, strainer, or directly in the teacup.*
4. *Bring water to a boil and add hot water.*
5. *Add the tea leaves.*
6. *Steep and wait about 10 seconds.*
7. *Remove tea leaves when pouring from the teapot (if you have a strainer) or pour into a container with a strainer first.*
8. *Pour water again.*
9. *Add milk, sugar, lemon juice, or honey to the tea.*

The sequence of tying shoelaces:

1. *Choose the correct shoelaces.*
2. *Put the shoelace through the bottom two holes.*
3. *Put the left side through. The 'left side', or the laces on the left row of the shoe, should come out through the second hole from the bottom on the left side.*
4. *Thread the 'left' laces through. Thread the laces through the upper of the shoe and into the lace holes directly across from the right side.*
5. *Thread the 'right' shoelace out, skipping a row of holes. The 'right' lace, the lace on the right side of the shoe, should be threaded through the third lace hole from the bottom on the right side.*
6. *Thread the 'right' laces. Wrap the lace around the upper of the shoe and thread it through the third hole down on the left side, i.e. through the lace hole directly opposite the hole you just passed through.*
7. *Alternate laces in this manner. The 'left' lace should be threaded through the second, fourth, and sixth holes from the bottom in this manner. The 'right' laces should be threaded through the third, fourth and seventh holes from the bottom.*
8. *Pass through the top hole and tie the shoelace. Thread the 'left' shoelace through the top right hole and the 'right' shoelace through the top left hole.*

Learn the sequence of riding a bicycle:

1. *Learn how to ride safely.*
2. *Wear safety equipment.*
3. *Familiarise yourself with the bike. Once you are on the bike, gradually feel the weight of the bike, adjust and familiarise yourself with the pedals, brakes and horn.*

4. *Learn to manoeuvre the bike. Basic skills: starting, accelerating, decelerating, braking, parking, and restarting.*
5. *Learn to brake: Your right hand controls the front brake. Your left hand controls the rear brake.*
6. *Maintain a safe distance from other vehicles.*
7. *Ride at the speed limit and with the flow of traffic.*
8. *Keep your hands on the handlebars and your body balanced.*
9. *You can get on the bike from the left side, keeping your weight on your left leg. Do not get on the opposite side of the side support. If your bike has a centre brace, get on from the side that is most comfortable.*
10. *Raise your right leg across the motorbike, don't trip over it and don't get on from behind.*
11. *Don't forget to retract the bike support with your foot or you could be in danger.*

6.1.1 Reflection

Sequential illustration diagram describes something or something in relative detail in an applied literary style to facilitate people's knowledge and understanding of something or something. A flow illustration diagram should be a comprehensive description of something, not only presenting its advantages, but also clearly stating what to look out for and the problems that may arise.

I found that in my flowchart, some of the steps were inaccurately expressed because of my confused memory. Even if it was something that needed to be done every day, I was surprised that I needed to recall it for a while before writing it out. I reflected to myself, is this due to over-familiarity with the order of the steps of something and forming a muscle memory? And then forgetting the details of the exact sequence of steps.

I began to wonder about the ambiguity and uncertainty of memory, the connection between visual memory and muscle memory. Does the brain actually distribute capacity to a few clear memory items, or more fuzzy memory fragments? Because of this,

sometimes the information conveyed verbally cannot be expressed in its entirety, so a sequence diagram is used.

Moreover, the sequence of steps for the same thing was drawn completely differently by each student. For example, Huiling's pictures of making tea, tying shoelaces and learning how to ride a bike are each 4, 3 and 4 pictures different from mine. Does this represent the difference in behavioural patterns of each of us in life. Behaviour determines the height of vision and the way things are done. By inference, different people also have different cognitive differences. To what extent are commonalities and differences in human behaviour and psychological functioning culturally specific?¹²

Although instruction diagrams may be seen by some as outdated in today's increasingly digital and self-learning world, their importance in everyday product use cannot actually be ignored. Imagine what users would do if they had a problem or couldn't understand a product feature without the use of an instruction map. They would call customer service for help, ask a friend, or maybe even choose to return the product. With an instruction manual, on the other hand, users will be able to find the answers on their own, saving them a lot of trouble. This is like a bridge that connects the user and the product, allowing the user to better understand and trust the product.

6.2 Experiment-Sequence of self

In the third picture 3, I recorded the sequence of my route home:

Firstly, after I leave the school studio and go left, I will climb a staircase. Next, I will go straight ahead along the slope. Then, I will pass a parkland and go downhill. After going

¹² Song, Y. and Ype, H.P. (2017). Cultural differences in behavior: A few big elephants or an army of ants? *Advances in Psychological Science*, 25(4), p.523. doi:<https://doi.org/10.3724/sp.j.1042.2017.00523>.

downhill, go right and keep going straight until you pass Antipasti and then turn left.

Finally, turn right at the first junction and enter my flat block.



Fig.15 Sequence 3, 2024.2, Artist's Photograph

6.2.1 Reflection

After I drew the sequence of events, I suddenly realised that the sequence of my route home was too long compared to the previous flow sequence diagram. My perspective was more like a camera position in mid-air to take a side or overhead shot of myself. It's a new way of drawing a sequence diagram, it's more like an animated view of a film. And I was missing signposts to show the way forward. In class feedback, the students understood my route more by the names of specific shops or specific landmarks in my drawing. This led to the conclusion that humans identify routes mainly through: landmarks, monuments, sculptures, public spaces, non-repetitive environments, impressive shops, shopping malls, and so on.

This got me interested in researching landmarks. It seems that people often search for landmarks as a matter of course, without thinking about the reasons for its creation. Kevin

Lynch, an urban studies scholar, developed the theory of urban imagery, which for the first time explored the spatial components of cities from a human perspective.¹³ Lynch proposed five major elements of the urban environment: roads, boundaries, zones, nodes and landmarks. Among them, landmark is a point of reference on the map. Unlike a city node (mode), a landmark is generally inaccessible and serves as an identifiable location in urban space.

Landmarks have the following five roles:

- Spatial identification role.
- Spatial reference role.
- Spatial guide role.
- Spatial domination.
- Cultural significance.

A super landmark carries more than a single performance of urban value. Sociologist Mumford mentioned in *Urban Culture* that 'landscape is a cultural resource'. The cultural landmarks of a city, as a unique landscape, have an important significance for urban culture.¹⁴

7 Conclusion

I think mapping as a way of observing our surroundings, it is an entry point to life that allows us to reflect on the rationality of the society we have built and what we tend to overlook. The ultimate ideal of Drift is to de-centre and de-classify power, so that everyone can regain equal control over their own lives. In Hesse's novel *Demian*: The

¹³ Lynch, K. (1960). *The image of the city*. Cambridge, Mass: Mit Press.

¹⁴ Mumford, L. (1938). *The Culture of Cities*. New York : Harcourt, Brace.

Wandering Boyhood of Emile Hinckley, he writes that there is only one true duty for everyone: to find oneself - to find one's own destiny, not the destiny of others - and then to hold on to it in one's heart. --and then to keep it in his heart all his life, with all his heart and with all his soul, without ever stopping. All other paths are incomplete, are man's way of escape, a cowardly return to popular ideals, a going with the flow, a fear of the heart.¹⁵



Fig.16 Map marking, 2024.4, Artist's Photograph

Open Door

The first time I got drunk was on Elijah's wine. I was eight or so. It was Passover, the feast that celebrates the flight from Egypt and invites the prophet into the house. I was sitting at the grown-ups' table, because when my parents and this other couple joined forces there were five boys altogether, and the adults had decided that I was better off being ignored by their generation than mine. The tablecloth was red and orange, cluttered with glasses, plates, serving dishes, silver, and candles. I confused the summed goblet set out for the prophet with my own adjusting shot glass of sweet ruby wine and drank it up. When my mother eventually noticed, I laughed and grinned a little but when she looked upset, I imitated sobriety instead of spiciness.

She was a lapsed Catholic, and the other woman a former Protestant but their husbands were Jews, and the women thought it good to keep up the customs for the kids. So the Passover glass of wine was set out for Elijah. In some versions, he will come back to earth at the end of time and answer all the unanswerable questions. In others, he wanders the earth in rage, answering difficult questions for scholars. I don't know if the rest of the tradition was followed and a door left open for him to enter by, but I can picture the orange front door or one of the sliding glass doors into the backyards of this ranch-style house in a small valley open to the east might as well spring. Ordinarily, we locked doors, though nothing unexpected came down our street in this northernmost subdivision in the county but wildlife, deer tap-tapping on the asphalt in the early hours, raccoons and skunk-hiding in the shrubbery. This opening the doors to night prophecy, and the end of time would have been a thrilling violation of ordinary practice. Not can I recall what the wine opened up for me—perhaps a happier detachment from the conversation going on above me, a sense of ampingness in the suddenly tangible gravity of a small body on this middle-sized planet.

Leave the door open for the unknown, the door into the dark. That's where the most important things come from, where you yourself came from, and where you will go. Three years ago I was giving a workshop in the Rockies. A student came in bearing a quote from what she said was the pre-feminist philosopher Merleau-Ponty. It read, 'How will you go about finding that thing the nature of which is

totally unknown to you?' I copied it down, and it has stayed with me since. The student made big transparent photographs of swimmers underwater and hung them from the ceiling with the light shining through them, so that to walk among them was to have the shadows of swimmers travel across your body in a space that itself came to seem aquatic and mysterious. The question she carried struck me as the basic tactical question in life. The things we want are transformative, and we don't know or only think we know what is on the other side of that transformation. Love, wisdom, grace, inspiration—how do you go about finding these things that are in some ways about extending the boundaries of the self into unknown territory, about becoming someone else?

Certainly for artists of all stripes, the unknown, the idea or the form or the tale that has not yet arrived is what must be found. It is the job of artists to open doors and invite in prophecies, the unknown, the unfamiliar; it's where their work comes from, although its arrival signals the beginning of the long disciplined process of making it their own. Einstein, too, as J. Robert Oppenheimer once remarked, "live always at the 'edge of mystery'—the boundary of the unknown." But they transform the unknown into the known, haul it in like fishermen's catches and put you out into that dark sea.

Edgar Allan Poe declared, "All experience, in matters of philosophical discovery, teaches us that, in such discovery, it is in the unforeseen moon which we must calculate most largely." Poe is consciously juxtaposing the word "calculate," which implies a cold counting up of the facts in circumstances with "the unforeseen," that which cannot be measured or counted, only anticipated. How do you calculate upon the unforeseen? It seems to be an art of recognizing the role of the unforeseen, of keeping your balance amid surprises, of collaborating with chance, of recognizing that there are some essential mysteries in the world and thereby a limit to calculation, to plan, to control. To calculate on the unforeseen is perhaps exactly the paradoxical operation that life most requires of us.

On a celebrated midwinter's night in 1887 the poet John Keats walked home talking with some friends and several things dove-tailed in his mind, and at once it struck me what quality went to form a Man of Achievement, especially in Literature. . . . I mean Negative Capability, that is, when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason." One way or another this notion occurs over and over again, like the spots labeled "terra incognita" on old maps.

Fig.17 Open Door, Chapter 1- A Field Guide to Getting Lost, Rebecca Solnit

¹⁵ Hesse, H. (2013). *Demian*. Henry Holt and Company.

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