

SCHIRN KUNSTHALLE FRANKFURT

THE SCHIRN KUNSTHALLE FRANKFURT IS DEDICATING A MAJOR SURVEY EXHIBITION TO WALKING IN CONTEMPORARY ART PRODUCTION

WALK!

FEBRUARY 18–MAY 22, 2022

PRESS PREVIEW (WALK! + CARLOS BUNGA): THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2022, 11 A.M.

From February 18 to May 22, 2022, the Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt is dedicating a large international group exhibition to the hitherto rarely considered facets of walking in contemporary art. With photographs, video works, performances, collages, drawings, paintings, and sculptures, the exhibition “WALK!” presents an overview of the spectrum of contemporary artistic positions that aesthetically intertwine the act of moving on foot with the challenges of our time.

The act of walking has gained new significance as a social phenomenon in the twenty-first century. At the core of activities such as strolling or hiking are sensory experiences that enable a connection with nature and the environment as well as a new experience of the self. At the same time, they are related to social issues of global ecological, geopolitical, and economic change. As an artistic practice, walking promotes the idea of a space that is structurally connected to movement, encompassing mental and virtual spaces in addition to urban and rural environments. The aimless wandering of the flâneur, a figure who Charles Baudelaire declared to be an artist, is tantamount to a critique of consumerism—an aspect that would be further elaborated in the 1950s psychogeographical experiments of the Situationists, for whom the flâneur’s strolls became a tool for the reappropriation of urban space. Walking Art, which in the 1960s and 70s develops alongside Land Art primarily in outdoor spaces, focuses on the walker’s immediate experience of the environment. The artistic movement challenges the notion of cultural progress as a domination of nature by turning walking into the material of its work. Exploring and expanding upon Walking Art, the contemporary works in the exhibition extend artistic walking into the social realm. They reflect current debates around issues such as globalization, migration, and climate change, and embark on a remapping of public space.

The exhibition “WALK!” at the Schirn brings together around one hundred works by more than forty international artists, whose work essentially focuses on the various aspects of walking: wandering around without a destination, for instance, opens up a new space of experience in the works of Francis Alÿs and Sebastián Díaz Morales. Works by Bani Abidi or Özlem Günyol & Mustafa Kunt show how walking is monitored and observed. Other works, such as those by Kubra Khademi or Pope.L, focus on Not Walking, emphasizing the social dimension of walking. Walking as a means of narratives is a central element of works by Hiwa K, Minouk Lim, and Milica Tomić, among others. For Jan Hostettler and Hamish Fulton, the pioneer of Walking Art, the act of walking in its own right is the basis of artistic reflection. The artworks of Carole McCourt, Fabian Herkenhoener, and others are created by the physical activity of walking, during their strolls, or in the aftermath of walking. Participatory projects further extend the exhibition into public space.

The exhibition “WALK!” is supported by the Friends of the Schirn Kunsthalle e. V. and the City of Frankfurt am Main with additional support from the Polytechnic Foundation of Frankfurt am Main.

Dr. Philipp Demandt, Director of the Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt: “Even though the idea for the exhibition ‘WALK!’ has existed for a while, it now comes just at the right time. ‘Social distancing’ and restrictions on public life in the wake of the pandemic have given new meaning to everyday outdoor movement. There is no better moment to highlight walking in contemporary art and contextualize it in relation to current social issues.”

Dr. Fiona Hesse and Matthias Ulrich, curators of the exhibition, further explain: “By focusing on walking as a social phenomenon, the exhibition ‘WALK!’ overcomes the conceptually limited framework of traditional Walking Art. The works by today’s generation of artists attest to a diverse use of walking that combines everyday, political, and socio-critical elements. It is through their

artistically considered view of walking, personal experiences, and counter-historical narratives that they also explore the body's inherent vulnerability and social norms.”

SELECTED WORKS AND THEMES OF THE EXHIBITION

In his videos *Pasajes I–V* (2012–18), **Sebastián Díaz Morales** (*1975, Comodoro Rivadavia, Argentina) visualizes how spaces become psychogeographically condensed and rambling walks allow for the opening up of alternative perspectives. The artist assembles images of cities and recreates them in the form of imagined geographies. His videos follow his protagonists as they walk through these magical-realist worlds. **Rahima Gambo** (*1986, London, UK), whose documentary works highlight themes of postcolonialism, identity, and politics in Nigeria, undertakes a psychogeographic exploration of the cities of Lagos, Maiduguri, and Abuja in *A Walk* (2018–continuing). The videos and collages are reflections of the artist's inner cartography and incorporate sites that have been attacked by the Islamist terrorist group Boko Haram. **Francis Aljys** (*1959, Antwerp, Belgium) uses performative actions on his walks to weave new narratives into urban structures, which in turn become part of the city's multiple histories. The video *The Collector (Mexico City)* (1991–2006) documents a multi-day performance in which the artist dragged a small magnetic toy dog on wheels through the streets of Mexico City's Centro Histórico, collecting metallic objects along the way.

Walking in public spaces comprises the observation of the surroundings and the act of walking itself. With their work *Male Subject & Female Subject* (2011), **Özlem Günyol & Mustafa Kunt** (*1977 and *1978, Ankara, Turkey) reflect on the interplay of external and internal methods of control by arranging for a private detective to shadow them in New York for a day. As they did not know the exact time of the detective's observation, their everyday life became overshadowed by a sense of suspicion. Self-observation and observation by others likewise merge in the works of **Miae Son** (*1985, Seoul, South Korea). The video work *the still walker #2, Moonwalk* (2015) shows the artist practicing the moonwalk, a dance step made famous by Michael Jackson. She came up with the idea of walking forward while standing still by using escalators. After using YouTube tutorials to learn the dance she created the work *Instructions for Moonwalk (Beginners)* (2016), which combines drawn instructions with a music box mechanism. Besides paved paths and signs, the means by which walking is controlled also includes barriers that prevent crossing from public to nonpublic spaces. Pakistani artist **Bani Abidi** (*1971, Karachi, Pakistan) takes a satirical look at these in her series *Security Barriers A–Z* (2009–2019). The prints, which depict objects based on models found in her hometown Karachi, resemble a specialist catalog of street furniture for the protection and security of buildings and squares.

Prohibitions or refusals can lead to Not Walking, revealing how walking is structured by social norms and highlighting the gender, origin, or physical characteristics of the person walking. Artist **Kubra Khademi** (*1989, Kabul, Afghanistan) has lived in Paris since 2015; she focuses on the living conditions of women in Afghanistan. For her performance *Armor* (2015), captured on film, she walks through a busy area in the center of Kabul wearing custom-made metal armor, drawing attention to the sexual and verbal harassment of women in public spaces. The video installation *Great White Way* (2001–2006) by **Pope.L** (*1955, Newark, New Jersey, USA) emphasizes deviance and normality in walking. The artist, whose performances have interrogated racism and inequality in the United States since the 1970s, crawls through Manhattan's bustling streets in adverse weather conditions while wearing a Superman costume—an action that is either ignored, stared at, or mocked. Notions of care and compassion are explored in **Jesse Darling's** (*1981, Oxford, UK) sculptures *Crawling Cane* and *Collapsed Cane* (2017), whose forms recall walking aids and the vulnerability of the human body. Simultaneously active and fatigued, the objects struggle with distinct resistance against their own suffering, which can be clearly perceived in the space.

Walking, as evinced by **Minouk Lim's** (*1968, Daejeon, South Korea) project *Portable Keeper* (2009–ongoing), can also be a tool to narrate historical events and keep their memory alive. In

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performances that explore the impact of the Korean War, the artist employs two-meter-long sculptures. These *Portable Keepers* move with the performer through urban areas and become bearers of memory, recording the history and numerous changes of the places. **Milica Tomić** (*1960, Belgrade, Serbia) connects various sites of successful anti-fascist resistance during World War II in Belgrade with her action *One Day Instead Of Night, The Machinegun Will Burst If The Light Can Not Come Otherwise* (2009). In the video work, she revisits these sites by walking through them, lending them a voice by narrating their stories. The project *Los Angeles River Crossings* (2005) by **Hans Schabus** (*1970 in Watschig, Austria) commemorates the river of the same name, which was canalized in 1938 after a disastrous flood. The artist walked the approximately eighty kilometers of the river, documented more than one hundred bridges, and created a map of the water's path in which Los Angeles appears as a blank space. **Hiwa K** (*1975, Sulaymaniyya, Kurdistan) recounts his flight as a child from Iraqi Kurdistan to Rome in the video work *Pre-Image (Blind as the Mother Tongue)* (2017) by retracing part of the route on foot. On the bridge of his nose and forehead, he balanced a pole fitted with bicycle, car, and motorcycle mirrors, symbolizing how his identity has become fragmented into many roles. **Tiffany Chung** (*1969 in Đà Nẵng, Vietnam) also addresses migration in her multimedia works. Through the cartographic drawings of *Global Refugee Migration Project*, she reflects on the ever-increasing displacement of people by recording migration routes and the number of arrivals, as well as those who have died or gone missing. Her video work *A Thousand Years Before and After* (2012) shows a uniformed human chain moving through an epic landscape, their synchronized walk taking on the appearance of a ritual.

For some artists, walking holds a transformative potential and serves as the subject of artistic reflection. The founder of Walking Art, **Hamish Fulton** (*1946 in London, UK) sees artistic walking as an ephemeral work of art in its own right. Fulton's artistic walks differ from everyday movement by a set of strict self-imposed rules. For almost fifty years, these walks have formed the basis of his "Walk Works," which comprise a wide variety of media as well as respective texts detailing his walks. On view at the Schirn are a series of works that highlight his socio-critical and environmental commitment. Hamish Fulton challenges and replaces national boundary demarcations with the lines of his walks through Europe in *35 Walks Map. Europe. 1971–2019* (1971–2019); in the drawing *343 Barefoot Paces, Wyoming 2017* (2017), he focuses on the practice of counting steps as a means of slowing down thought. **Jan Hostettler's** (*1988, Solothurn, Switzerland) works are an expression of the inner transformation that the artist experienced in 2016 during his eight-month journey on foot from Basel to Istanbul. On the 3000-kilometer route, he collected objects that he either archived or, back in his studio, transformed through a lengthy process into lightfast iron oxide pigments for painting canvases (*Eisen II* and *Eisen V*, 2021).

In other works in the exhibition, walking is an essential element of the artistic production process. **Fabian Herkenhoener's** (*1984 Troisdorf, Germany) "drag paintings" are created while walking and in an uncontrollable process based around principles of abrasion and superimposition. The artist drags canvases of works such as *ZDF (Düsseldorf Schleifbild #1)* (2014) or *o.T. (Burkina Schleifbild #6; Schnellstraße bei Bobo Dioulasso)* (2018) behind him with the image surface facing down. Occasionally, as seen in his video work *The overly dramatic truth* (2016), he even submerges the canvases in a river. **Carole McCourt** (*1963, Liverpool, UK), in her installation *Cairngorm Mountain Walk 7th June 2018 (After Nan Shepherd)* (2018), brings together disparate materials and media that emerge from collected memorabilia, interviews, walks, and experiments with organic elements in and from the environment. Other works in her practice, such as *i believe in yew joanna* (2019) and *dreaming dobson's dream* (2020), are the result of her working in collaboration with nature by burying drawings, which take on traces of organic materials or decomposition after months of weathering. The material of **Birke Gorm's** (*1986, Hamburg, Germany) artistic practice are objects found and collected while walking, which she places into context with techniques and aesthetics that are often gendered and imbued with specific historical connotations. The work *IOU* (2021) consists of several branches into which she has carved faces.

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These works play with closeness and union, and can be found in different places while walking through the exhibition.

EXHIBITION PROGRAM

WALKING IN EVERY DIRECTION

Performance by Hamish Fulton

On the occasion of the exhibition **WALK!**

Saturday, February 26, 3 p.m.

For the past fifty years, British walking artist Hamish Fulton (*1946, London, UK) has been undertaking walks all over the world. During a joint one-hour “Public Walk,” participants can (newly) experience walking with the artist in the context of art. Through an intensive, collective reflection on the idea of walking itself, sensory impressions that are often lost in the hecticness of everyday life become perceptible: a deliberate sense of connection with one’s body in the here and now and its accompanying feeling of deceleration.

Participation free of charge, announcement of the meeting place on February 25 after registration: fuehrungen@schirn.de

ARTISTS IN THE EXHIBITION

Bani Abidi, Yuji Agematsu, Allora & Calzadilla, Francis Alÿs, Daniel Beerstecher, Ellie Berry, James Bridle, Tiffany Chung, Jesse Darling, Michael Dean, Sebastián Díaz Morales, Anders Dickson, Flaneur, Hamish Fulton, Regina José Galindo, Rahima Gambo, Birke Gorm, Özlem Günyol & Mustafa Kunt, Hamza Halloubi, David Hammons, Yolande Harris, Mona Hatoum, Fabian Herkenhoener, Hiwa K, Michael Höpfner, Jan Hostettler, Kubra Khademi, Bouchra Khalili, Kimsooja, Minouk Lim, Carole McCourt, Helen Mirra, Sohei Nishino, Carmen Papalia, Signe Pierce & Alli Coates, Sascha Pohle, Pope.L, Hans Schabus, Miae Son, Cheyney Thompson, Milica Tomić

Alongside the exhibition “WALK!,” the Schirn presents Carlos Bunga’s site-specific installation *I always tried to imagine my home* (2022) in its publicly accessible rotunda, which enters into dialogue with the themes of “WALK!.”

CATALOG *WALK!* ed. by Matthias Ulrich and Fiona Hesse with Marie Oucherif, with contributions by David Le Breton; Dee Heddon, Morag Rose, Maggie O’Neill, Clare Qualmann, Harry Wilson, Matthew Law; Fiona Hesse; Marie Oucherif; Noora Pyyry with Ilari Leino; and a foreword by the director of Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt, Philipp Demandt. Ger./Engl., 240 pages, 225 ill., 16,5 x 24 cm, Softcover, Verlag für moderne Kunst, ISBN 978-3-903572-59-1, € 29 (SCHIRN), € 35 (in bookstores)

FIRST FRIDAY For the opening of the exhibition “WALK!,” admission is free on the first Friday, February 18, 2022.

LOCATION SCHIRN KUNSTHALLE FRANKFURT, Römerberg, 60311 Frankfurt am Main

DURATION 18 February–22 May, 2022 **INFORMATION** www.schirn.de **E-MAIL**

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ADMISSION € 10, reduced € 8; free admission for children under 8 years of age **SAFETY AND**

SANITARY MEASURES at www.schirn.de/en/visit **CURATORS** Dr. Fiona Hesse, Matthias Ulrich,

Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt **CURATORIAL ASSISTANT** Marie Oucherif **CULTURE PARTNER**

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