

Art gives us
permission to pause ...

... a reason to
not just pass by

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Abstract

This subject is investigated as a result of the 'pause' effect lockdown had on my studio practice that led to me incorporating 'walking' into my artworks. The essay will examine how artists have used the concept of being present in their work. Using examples from Abstract Expressionism, installation work and concluding with walking as art. It will examine how repetition, grids, voids, time, stillness and movement can all represent a connection to the 'here and now'.



Long (1967)
© Richard Long

In an age where we are
encouraged to be mindfull,
how have artists tackled
the concept of being present?

Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future,
And time future contained in time past.
If all time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable.
What might have been is an abstraction
Remaining a perpetual possibility
Only in a world of speculation.
What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present.

Burnt Norton (Four Quartets) T.S. Eliot

Introduction

Machines are designed and built to work well at a regular, repetitive speed. Our world is increasingly machined, digital technology has become intertwined with our everyday lives. Always available in the palm of our hands we are constantly 'on'. Continuous fragmented attention, rarely stopping, never 'fully present'. A space to pause in modern, busy daily lives is becoming rarer and the need to reset and rebalance increasingly important.

On early cassette recorders when 'stop' was pressed during a recording it left a noise as the recording head was physically moved away from the tape. The 'pause' button on a stereo however, would interrupt the play head but leave it engaged. It represents the need to pause but stay present, not to switch off entirely. Creating a space in action to reflect, a period of silence to take careful consideration of your next move. A television test signal 'test card' also represents recalibration and alignment, a device designed to allow for simple adjustments of picture quality. A holding place to retune and refine, typically broadcast at times when the transmitter is active but no program is being broadcast. These were originally physical cards that the camera would be pointed at in order to allow for these adjustments.

Danish philosopher, Søren Kierkegaard wrote *The Concept of Anxiety* (1844), in which he defined anxiety as the 'dizziness of freedom' – a deep-rooted sense of uneasiness in the myriad possibilities available to a person in the modern world. Mindfulness is the practice of purposely bringing one's attention to the present-moment experience without evaluation. Mindfulness derives from sati, a significant element of Hindu and Buddhist traditions, and is based on Zen, Vipassanā, and Tibetan meditation techniques.

Within this essay, how artists have tackled the concept of being present will be investigated. Some artists have discovered art can be both liberating and therapeutic. By immersing yourself in creative processes or by exploring works of art you can focus on the present. From Abstract Expressionist painters of the mid twentieth century, contemporary immersive installation artists and artists that primarily use walking in their practice, it will be demonstrated that a 'pause' can be created with both movement and stillness.

The world was put on pause during the Covid outbreak of 2020. For many this involved new routines, travel was curtailed, separated from friends and family we were urged to work from home where possible. My own work, often created with the intention of a non-digital space of balance and minimal form progressed to using found materials acquired on local lockdown walks. This eventually led to the painting of an abstract pole, a portable work that I could eventually take with me when we were allowed back out into the world. I have since photographed this work in the locations that had temporarily been denied to me. Locations that represent a break from my usual and allow me to stretch my legs and lungs as a form of recalibration. The pole marking my still presence for a limited time in these natural spaces that are accessed by the simple meditative practice of a long walk. A physical break from a routine of persistent technology.



Turner (2022)
© Anna Turner

Chapter One – Holistic Here and Now

The origin of what we today call 'mindfulness' can trace its origins to Zen Buddhism. Many painters associated with Abstract Expressionism were influenced by Zen philosophy, generally speaking, Zen cherishes simplicity and straightforwardness in grasping reality and acting on it 'here and now'.⁽¹⁾

Barnet Newman described his intentions with painting in 1965 as 'one thing I am involved in painting is that the painting should give man a sense of place: that he knows he's there, so he's aware of himself'.⁽²⁾ Abstract Expressionist paintings are typically large, enveloping a viewer. These large fields of colour may promote introspection or contemplation, the viewer is not distracted by narrative or representation. Abstract Expressionism's 'all over effect'⁽³⁾ as Newman described it. The aim being to pull the viewer into a direct physical encounter with a work.

Newman painted his first 'zip' in 1948, *Onement, I*, it was in this work that he hit upon what became his signature motif, and defined all of his paintings thereafter: a vertical band top to bottom, placed within the painting. His zip divided the large expanses of colour in an otherwise spare composition. 'So rather than a picture seeming to represent something at a remove from us, either in time or space, the 'creation scene of *Onement, I*, occurs 'in the present tense', in the here and now'⁽⁴⁾.

Upright and singular, 'Newman's zips are in effect not figures but abstract triggers that evoke our innate need to mentally construct and define our place in space.'⁽⁵⁾ A focussed space within a vast area of paint for the eye to rest on and contemplate. Newman is 'using his paintings to deliver a richly phenomenological experience of space, a vivid awareness of standing alone in a particular place and time'.⁽⁶⁾ An approach relying solely on a personal encounter with a work of art. One that is not filtered through the digital barrier of a screen or lens, allowing a first hand, physical involvement in the works presence. He was also engaged with depictions of the sublime. In 1965 he explained that 'man can be or is sublime in his relation to his sense of being aware'.⁽⁷⁾ By creating a sense of place in which a viewer could locate themselves 'he's there, so he's aware of himself' Newman was linking place and the self's sublimity.

Newman's works created with masking tape that often bleeds inevitably contain imperfections. These imperfections assumed the 'explosive force of self-recognition, for here, palpably, [was] the human being'.⁽⁸⁾ Because of the nature of a large simplistic painting engulfing a viewer and free of the distraction of narrative, the viewer is able to focus more readily on its position in relation to the work and the space it is occupying at that moment. The painting stands alone bearing no relation to anything other than itself, it is not extracted from anything in the outside world.

Agnes Martin's work has been defined as an 'essay in discretion on inward-ness and silence'.⁽⁹⁾ If purity of silence could imply 'freedom from the prison of things' as suggested by art historian Renato Poggioli, 'silent' in abstract art in the 1960s, gained resonance from its cultural juxtaposition with an increasingly active consumer society. It appeared that some artists rather than reflecting the pervasive consumer culture as Pop Art was doing with a return to representation and recognisable form, were instead recognising a need for art that gave respite from that culture.

Where Newman was associated with the 'zip'. Martin is often associated with the grid, a structure she described as 'ego-less'. Six by six foot painted canvases, covered from edge to edge with meticulously pencilled lines and finished with a thin layer of gesso. Her practice drew from a mix of Zen Buddhist and American Transcendentalist influences. Transcendent being beyond the range of normal or physical human experience. Her canvases were not large by Abstract Expressionist standards. 'Its a good size when you feel you are stepping into it. It has to do with being the full

(1) (Nagatomo 2020)

(2) (Temkin 2002: 83)

(3) (Garrard 2012: 24)

(4) (Falconer 2015: 40)

(5) (Auping 2007: 146)

(6) (Falconer 2015: 45)

(7) (Temkin 2002: 83)

(8) (Temkin 2002: 96)

(9) (Spence 2015)

size of the human body.⁽¹⁰⁾ Nearly always utilising a square format for her paintings, Lucy Lippard, quoting Plato in an article for *Art in America* 'Homage to the Square' wrote, 'was a source of ideal proportions – endowing a structure with permanence and stability, making it a constant factor in a transient and corruptible world'. The exact qualities of a square format, neither portrait or landscape, present an inorganic area in which to mark out space. As Martin herself explains 'my formats are square, but the grids never are absolutely square; they are rectangles, a little bit off square, making a sort of contradiction, a dissonance ... it lightens the weight of the square, destroys its power'.⁽¹¹⁾ A grid is also a symbol of interconnectedness – orderly and harmonious. The reason some people are drawn to Agnes Martin is because she had the vision to try to make a map of the proportions of the undistracted mind.⁽¹²⁾

Mark Rothko referred to the space in his paintings as 'auras of silence'.⁽¹³⁾ His mature style used blocks and frames of colour with evaporating edges shimmering in fields of colour. In the latter part of his career he was concerned with painting environments, large canvases he envisioned being hung together. The Seagram murals now housed at Tate Modern and the Rothko Chapel in Houston.

'I realize that historically the function of painting large pictures is painting something very grandiose and pompous. The reason I paint them, however ... is precisely because I want to be very intimate and human. To paint a small picture is to place yourself outside your experience ... However you paint the larger picture, you are in it.'⁽¹⁴⁾

Rothko famously said that his paintings should be viewed from a distance of 18 inches, to dominate the viewer's field of vision and create a feeling of contemplation and transcendence. Rothko's paintings allow us to experience a level of self-reflection – or the transcendence that is so often described in relation to his work. The 'epiphany' moment may come when our expectations, sense of control, and self-consciousness are reconciled. As Dr. Matthew Pelowski, a professor at the University of Vienna who has conducted extensive research on Rothko's emotional effects, explains, 'It seems to be describing a rather transformative experience, something self-changing, insightful, where you are forced back into yourself.'⁽¹⁵⁾

In an interview with Simon Grant for Tate etc. Brice Marden described the Rothko effect:

'I had what you might call a transcendental experience in the early 1960s. I was driving in my car from San Francisco to Monterey in California and going through this area that's known as the artichoke-growing capital of the world. They grow in long rows over gently sloping hills. I remember that there was a very peculiar light, and there was a storm approaching, and I felt I was in a Rothko painting ... that you're in a space, an indefinable space and it's having an effect on you physically.'⁽¹⁶⁾

Rothko paintings encourage introspection, the dialogues around the artist often use the word 'sublime,' which is a notion formerly closely associated with Romantic-era paintings that signify nature's vastness. Rothko's luminous colours, formlessness and lack of hard lines represent endless depth. They blur out the surrounding world, blocking anything recognisable from your peripheral view. 'There's nothing determinant, and there's no object in it, there's absence, there's infinity, there's formlessness.'⁽¹⁷⁾ This was a new understanding of the sublime concept that was previously depicted with awe inspiring natural scenes but our new comprehension of these places with advancements in science and exploration has moved these concepts on to forms of abstraction and themes utilising voids and infinity.

(10) (Princeton 2015: 101)

(11) (Princeton 2015: 137)

(12) (Princeton 2015: 187)

(13) (Auping 2007: 159)

(14) (Rothko Center: 2022)

(15) (Bohicchio 2021)

(16) (Grant 2008)

(17) (Bohicchio 2021)

This idea of voids and infinity can also be traced back to Zen. Zen's void concept states that nothing in the universe has an inherent existence. That is, nothing exists on its own. Everything in the universe is interconnected with everything else. Everything is dependent on everything else.

Yayoi Kusama's career spans paintings, performance, sculpture and installation, she is also an artist who has been very open about her mental health. Her series of 'Infinity net' paintings are like deconstructed grids that Agnes Martin favoured. Kusama described her Infinity Nets as paintings 'without beginning, end, or centre. The entire canvas would be occupied by [a] monochromatic net. This endless repetition caused a kind of dizzy, empty, hypnotic feeling.'⁽¹⁸⁾

Kusama participates in a tradition of the sublime expressed in abstract painting. Kusama's Infinity Nets emerged in the late 50s as Abstract Expressionism was at its peak. By comparison, Kusama's gestures are unpretentious and repetitive, without relinquishing their individuality; yet, collectively, they build and generate energy latent in the material paint and capture (remember, these are nets) light. The Infinity Nets shift from pictorialism, in which a painting suggests a vicarious experience, to a more direct perceptual experience. This process draws the infinite into the imminent.⁽¹⁹⁾

Chapter 2 – Installation and Embodied Experience

Although the Abstract Expressionists made increasingly large works in order to engulf the viewer they remained two-dimensional. 'One of the criticisms of that whole romantic impulse towards transcendentalism and towards disconnecting from the world by escaping into some spiritual realm, is that it demands disembodiment.'⁽²⁰⁾ Artists began to start experimenting with environments. Three-dimensional spaces that the viewer would move through. The act of physically entering and interacting would fundamentally shape the viewer's perception of these environments. This moved the encounter with these artworks from purely a visual perception to an embodied experience. As with her *Infinity Nets*, Kusama has experimented with the concept of infinity with several mirrored installations. The most recent versions of these mirror rooms are currently on display at Tate Modern. 'Infinity Mirrored Room – Filled with the Brilliance of Life' is one of Kusama's largest installations to date and is shown alongside 'Chandelier of Grief', a room which creates the illusion of an endless universe of rotating crystal chandeliers. 'One is more aware than before that he himself [the viewer] is establishing relationships as he apprehends the object from various positions and under varying conditions of light and spatial context ... For it is the viewer who changes the shape constantly by his change in position relative to the work'⁽²¹⁾ The viewer's position is integral to the work, instead of merely participating, the viewer becomes the art. Mesmerizing in its effect the viewer is intensely aware of their presence. These two room installations reflect Kusama's lifelong preoccupation with the infinite and sublime, as well as a personal obsession found in pattern and repetition. Lucy Lippard wrote of the Post Painterly abstract artists of their 'daring to challenge the concepts of boredom, monotony and repetition, their demonstration that intensity does not have to be melodramatic.'⁽²²⁾ To be bored means to be conscious of nothing else but times passing. 'If attention sustained too long empties into boredom or distraction, perhaps boredom or distraction might awaken attention.'⁽²³⁾

Mirosław Balka's *How It Is* was also exhibited in Tate Modern's Turbine Hall. It was a physical representation of the voids that the Abstract Expressionists were creating on canvas. An enormous shipping container open at one end and raised on stilts. At the farthest end of the container was a ramp. The visitor walked up it and into darkness. A light absorbent flock coating covered the interior surfaces. Walking into this immediate darkness was felt almost physically as well as visually.

(18) (Romaine 2009)

(19) (Romaine 2009)

(20) (Blazwick 2001)

(21) (Romaine 2009)

(22) (Garrard 2012: 42)

(23) Reed 2017: 31

'My sculptures are about layers of interpretation. They are about being,'⁽²⁴⁾ says Balka continuing that he wants to 'make a place that gives us opportunities for thinking'. The visitor stands surrounded by a sense of presence. Balka has been quoted as saying he would like 'How It Is' to provide a 'space for contemplation' for those who visit and step inside. 'they seek less to entertain than to give you pause. All are invitations to the imagination, returning us to our own thoughts.'⁽²⁵⁾ When entering this space you are intensely aware of your physical presence, stripped of one of your senses you experience vulnerability and despite knowing that you are in the safety of a gallery space this is an intensely primal fear. This innate fear stems from a point of human history when we were nowhere near the top predators we are today. Humans have only really become apex predators with the advent of technology. Fear of the dark has become instinctual, and we experience it today as a form of mild anxiety, a lingering, foreboding fear that keeps us on edge. This type of anxiety is our body's way of keeping us on our toes in case we need to 'fight or flight' away from danger.⁽²⁶⁾ So maybe not the contemplative space to pause that Balka intended but for those of us residing in increasingly light-filled cities with access to immediate illumination this dark space temporarily reconnects us to our most primal experience of the world. A moment where we are fully present and alert to possible dangers lurking in the dark. We are so often attached to portable tech that holds our gaze and blocks all input from the rest of the world we have forgotten the skill of paying attention.

Like Balka, James Turrell creates atmospheres that can be almost physically felt. But instead of darkness he uses light to work the medium of perception. According to Robert Hughes, 'Turrell has contrived an exquisite poetry out of near emptiness'. Empty rooms conjuring incandescent neon Rothko's.

'Turrell's work has a restrained, elevated air, hushed and deliberate. One thinks of Mark Rothko's paintings, translated into 3 dimensions and actual conditions of light. And, just as Rothko paintings were once accused of 'emptiness' – where being nothing for the casual eye to engage beyond a couple of fuzzy rectangles – so Turrell's installations may be thought, by some, not full enough. But after a while the question of fullness versus emptiness turns on itself; in contemplating these peaceful and august light chambers, one is confronted – perhaps more vividly than by any current painting – with the reflection of one's own mind creating illusions and orientations, and this becomes the 'subject' of the work. The art, it transpires, is not in front of your eyes, it is behind them.'⁽²⁷⁾

While the eye strives to perceive the visible contours the brain is working out where the viewer is within the space. All this leads us to question our sense of substance, presence and absence while looking at his work. They require patience as our eyes adjust. We are accustomed to instantly accessible liquid crystal screens but these areas of light filled spaces require a slower form of looking. Turrell's work is dematerialised and ungraspable. Effected from a material long associated with revelation.⁽²⁸⁾ Turrell's work invites you to linger and not all require an electric current for effect. His skyspaces such as *The Deer Shelter* at Yorkshire Sculpture Park are simple apertures framing the sky above within a simple structure with seating allowing a place for contemplation. 'My work has no object, no image, no focus. With no object, no image and no focus, what are you looking at? You are looking at you looking. What is important to me is to create an experience of wordless thought.'⁽²⁹⁾

(24) (Campbell-Johnston 2009)

(25) (Searle 2009)

(26) (Hirala 2016)

(27) (Hughes 2001: 269)

(28) (Graham-Dixon 2006)

(29) (Turrell 2022)

Chapter 3 – Everywhere is Walking Distance if you Have the Time

By planting your feet in the 'here and now' it is possible for walking to become a meditative act. To 'wander' is the Taoist code word for becoming ecstatic, and roamers, farfarers and wayfarers know the intoxication. The Sufi have a tradition of 'aimless wandering' – the aim of aimlessness is psychological purification, practising 'sacred drift.'⁽³⁰⁾ Walking represents a momentary pause from routine that in modern life is becoming increasingly sedentary. A temporary physical break from the monotony of the everyday. 18th-century philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau wrote in his book *The Confessions* that 'I can only meditate when I am walking'.

Getting out into the countryside represents a freedom and space to recharge from many peoples everyday. Yi-Fu Tuan, the Chinese-born American geographer and one of the key figures in human geography stated in his book *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* 'Place is security, space is freedom, we are attached to one but long for the other'. We refresh by escaping the narrow confines of small town or city life with temporary disconnection in rural locations. As a Psychoanalyst quoted in an article on Earth Art in *Art in America* in 1969, 'Manifestation of a desire to escape the city that is eating us alive, and perhaps a farewell to space and earth while there is still some left'. Urban spaces include a near constant access to internet and digital services, the ever present visual noise of advertising, information and entertainment.

During the pandemic, accessing remoter natural spaces became at once more important and more difficult. An edict to stay local meant that many were trapped within the tarmac enclosure of an urban ring road and were confined to pavement pounding loops of their local neighbourhood. So called 'fresh air' during a viral outbreak felt important, plus the fact that many community spaces were no longer accessible. As our worlds became smaller our eyes were not refreshed by seeing or experiencing anything new. 'Both the sense of community and of security depend on the familiar. Free of them, transcendental experiences become possible.'⁽³¹⁾ Everything became familiar and with many city dwellers accessing the same open spaces in the form of their local park, striding out alone and achieving a meditative, uniform pace for any significant distance became impossible whilst negotiating pushchairs and new dog owners.

The remote locations of many land art sites reveal a marking of destination and the benefit to the mind of walking there. A leaving behind of the worlds chatter. Christopher Morley wrote of Wordsworth 'employing his legs as an instrument of philosophy'. Rebecca Solnit describes the suburbs 'as a kind of tranquilliser' by accessing the outdoors 'we are shaking that trance off us and going out in pursuit of the world.'⁽³²⁾ She goes on to write of a 'beautiful solitude of the open road, in a kind of introspection that only outdoor space generates'.⁽³³⁾

Richard Long's *A Line Made By Walking, England 1967* was an important early work in the history of land art and conceptual art. The artwork consisted of a straight line created in a Wiltshire meadow by the artist walking repeatedly up and down the same path. The contrast of the geometrical line and the surrounding landscape was captured in a black and white photograph. By doing this Long created a precedent that art could be a journey. Through the medium of walking time, space, distance became now subjects for his art. 'My intention was to make a new art which was also a new way of walking: walking as art'.⁽³⁴⁾

The repetitious nature of walking up and down the single straight line is reflected in the pendulum movement of the walking action used to make it. 'The imagination cannot help but pursue a line in the land – onwards in space but also backwards in time to the histories of a route'⁽³⁵⁾ Long's work in the meadow could be described as 'Shul', being in Tibetan an impression, trace that remains of

(30) (Fulton 2010:16)

(31) (Auping 2007: 25)

(32) (Solnit 2005: 107)

(33) (Solnit 2005: 119)

(34) (Tufnell 2007: 39)

(35) (MacFarlane 2013: 15)

something once here, or that passed this way. Tibetan teacher Tsongkhapa in 1397 used the word *shul* to explain the Buddhist belief of Emptiness. Long was profoundly effected by a performance by the experimental composer John Cage and his theories about the interchangeability of art and life, and his interest in Zen Buddhism and Taoism.⁽³⁶⁾ As with Martins grids and Kusama's nets, the act of walking contains a huge power of repetition. 'What all these walks have in common, whether short or long, for purpose or mere leisure, within or without arbitrary boundaries – is the notion of meditation, of being able to think differently through the rhythms of our feet.'⁽³⁷⁾

Marina Abramović and Ulay's *Great Wall Walk* was an ambitious performance piece that took several years of planning and bureaucracy before being able to complete. The intention was to walk towards each other from opposite ends of the 4,000 kilometre Great Wall of China. After years of planning however, they eventually set of 2,400 kilometres apart in 1988. The text and images of the piece speak of the essence of walking, of the basic simplicity of the act amplified by the ancient emptiness of the desert around them.⁽³⁸⁾

While built more than a 1,000 years ago as a defence against invaders from the north and west, the serpentine spine of the Great Wall had been carefully mapped out by geomancers for its 'dragon energy'.⁽³⁹⁾ Their eventual meeting on the wall marked not only the end of the walk but also the end of their relationship, they embraced and went their separate ways. Walking the dragon's spine had, for Ulay and Abramović, been intended as a great motif for transcending the barriers that divide us – it was to be a totem of love and reconnection. Instead, the wall came to represent a division in myriad forms, not just physical but also the political barriers they then perceived between east and west, as well as the emotional barriers that had grown between the pair.⁽⁴⁰⁾

Like Long's pieces, theirs seem a gift to viewers of the assurance that a primeval purity of bodily encounter with the earth is still possible and that the human presence so crowded and dominating elsewhere is still small when measured against the immensity of lonely places.

They were reunited in 2010 at the New York Museum of Modern Art retrospective of Abramović's work entitled *The Artist Is Present*. Abramović sat for eight hours a day – 750 hours in total – in silence, at a table. Members of the public were invited to come, sit and hold her gaze. On the opening night of the show, Ulay made a surprise appearance, stepping from the audience to sit with Abramović. It was the first time in 22 years that they had seen each other. *The Artist Is Present* took place in a noisy atrium in one of the world's busiest cities but almost because of this the piece became more powerful. And rather than seeking disconnection it was connection at a still point opposite the artist within this busy Manhattan gallery space. The philosopher Arthur Danto called Abramović's performance a pilgrimage 'a ritual moment, and understood as such by [people's] ordeal of waiting'.⁽⁴¹⁾ It has also been understood as a variant on Darshan. Darshan, (Sanskrit: 'viewing') in Indian philosophy and religion, particularly in Hinduism is the beholding of a deity, revered person, or sacred object. The experience is considered to be reciprocal and results in the human viewer's receiving a blessing. The viewer is also often a pilgrim, so the concept of journeying to the space for viewing could be considered part of the experience. Although 'Pilgrimage' is often used to describe a journey of religious significance, it can be sometimes viewed as a description of personal growth and exploration, the pathway followed doesn't necessarily have to lead to a 'God'. But what unites most traditional pilgrims is that part of the route at least will be undertaken by foot.

Walking or ambulation, is one of the main gaits of terrestrial locomotion amongst legged animals. Walking is a dynamic posture where both the torso and legs are coordinated.

(36) (Hubbard 2010: 275)

(37) (Fulton 2010: 4)

(38) (Solnit 2002: 274)

(39) (Bramwell 2020)

(40) (Bramwell 2020)

(41) (Reed 2017: 199)

Usually the uniqueness of human beings is portrayed as a matter of consciousness. Yet the human body is also unlike anything else on earth, and in some ways has shaped that consciousness. The animal kingdom has nothing else like this column of flesh and bone always in danger of toppling, this proud unsteady tower ... The alternating long stride that propels us is unique, perhaps because it is such a precarious arrangement. Four-legged animals are as stable as a table when all four feet are on the ground, but humans are already precariously balanced on two before they begin to move. ⁽⁴²⁾

Early evolutionists suggested that walking, thinking and making originated together but after the discovery of the 'Lucy' skeleton in Ethiopia in the 1970s it became evident that walking came first. So the act of walking is accessing our deepest connection to what it is to be human. The alternate repetitive act of bipedalism that took us from the trees to the plains freeing our hands and allowing us to create. Today we have access to much faster means of travel but it is the very slowness of walking that allows 'rediscovery of simple joys and the reconquest of the primitive animal'.⁽⁴³⁾

Even apart from the action of walking, but compatible with it, there is also joy experienced as fullness, the joy of living. After a whole days walking, the simple relaxation of taking the weight off your legs, satisfy your hunger simply, having a quiet drink and contemplating the declining daylight, the gentle fall of night. 'The body free from hunger and thirst, without aches, the body at rest, the simple feeling of being alive is enough to produce the highest sort of joy, of pure intensity and absolute modesty: the joy of living, of feeling oneself *here* ... ⁽⁴⁴⁾

We can achieve serenity by simply following a path. Walking leads to it, quietly, gradually, through the very alternation of rest and movement. A simple act of putting one foot in front of the other. It is linked obviously with the slowness of walking, its absolute repetitive character: 'Serenity...something different, more than detachment, less than wonder: more than resignation, less than affirmation. A steady balance in the soul'.⁽⁴⁵⁾

The echoing chants, the ebb and flow of waves recall the alternating movement of walking legs: not to shatter but to make the world's presence palpable and keep time with it. And just as Claudel said that sound renders silence accessible and useful, it ought to be said that walking renders presence accessible and useful.⁽⁴⁶⁾

Chapter 4 – Time Marches On

A defining theme of modernity has been speed. It has become ever more necessary to create areas in our lives to pause and reflect. Whether that be slowing down to a walking pace or a moment of stillness. In all the artworks I have referenced the viewer is required to disconnect from the digital, often technology creates a barrier between us and nature. We cannot experience real presence through a lens. But getting caught up in notifications, updates, and emails can cause us to easily miss the gift of the present moment.

Many of the pieces covered include aspects of rhythm and repetition reflecting our bodily rhythms within time and that of our natural surroundings. Tides, waves, walking, heartbeat all aligned to an abstract concept, time, another repetition of a ticking clock. Time passes us by and each day is a period of hours we can't get back. Being present and paying attention enables us to find 'second by second joy and gratitude at the gift of being alive'.⁽⁴⁷⁾

(42) (Solnit 2002: 32)

(43) (Gros 2015: 144)

(44) (Gros 2015: 143)

(45) (Gros 2015: 145)

(46) (Gros 2015: 212)

(47) (Reed 2017: 32)

Time can be defined as 'the continued sequence of existence and events that occurs in an apparently irreversible succession from the past, through the present, into the future.'⁽⁴⁸⁾ Time is used to quantify, measure or compare the duration of events or the intervals between them, and even, sequence events. We have had uniform time since clocks were invented but that is different from lived experience or what sociologist Erwin Straus called 'sociocultural time'. If we ignore it he warns 'time loses its reality, and we find ourselves in an exceedingly difficult position in our efforts to orient ourselves in the time process, to find out where we are and where are the other social phenomena on 'the bridge of time'.⁽⁴⁹⁾ Although time is regarded as an abstract concept, there is increasing evidence that time is conceptualised in the mind in terms of space.⁽⁵⁰⁾ That is, instead of thinking about time in a general, abstract way, humans think about time in a spatial way and mentally organise it as such.

The notion of pausing for a time can be felt with both movement and stillness. Reflecting, taking a break, contemplating will all depend on what we are experiencing in the time surrounding that pause. The overriding tempo of your everyday. Our experience of slowness can only be defined by our experience of speed. We can have no experience of slow without a sense of how fast feels. A pause is not an absence of thought or action but an important part of it.

The pressure of an accelerating world has created the need for psychological breathers. Occasions to slow one's tempo have become harder to access. Increased need has met decreased opportunities to address that need. We have become habituated to instant gratification. The American writer Kurt Andersen suggests how the internet discourages patient gazing: 'Waiting a while to get everything you want ... was a definition of maturity. Demanding satisfaction right this instant, on the other hand, is a defining behaviour of 7 year olds.'⁽⁵¹⁾ The concept of delayed gratification has become old fashioned and unnecessary. In the middle ages it would not be unusual to contemplate icons for a long time, but today museum goers rarely spend more than a few seconds viewing a piece of art.

Conclusion

Both cassette recorders and television test cards are symbols of a pre-digital world where pausing and disconnecting from technology was an easier concept. We rarely now see a test card on a screen, and these days it is more likely to be evidence of some sort of fault in programming. Reliance on the digital is more not less prevalent. Our books, music, images are all contained in digital form on our phones and the Covid pandemic has accelerated 'cashless' transactions. We consume and upgrade with increasing frequency and are more likely to orient ourselves with the aid of a satellite than an ordnance survey map.

In walking is freedom: the freedom to pass or pause, the freedom to stop an hour by the gorse: the freedom to find your own speed and your own way. Walking frees the body from its seated sedentary muscle jams and walking is both common and free, although in practice for many today it is both rare and priceless. People speak of longing to go walking when 'time' permits or when work 'allows' it. To do something for free is itself, in these days of turbo capitalism, a kind of gentle revolution⁽⁵²⁾

Art can be a reminder that 'mindfulness' doesn't have to cost anything. A moment to take a breath, creating a space in action to reflect, a period of silence to take careful consideration of your next move. A holding place to retune and refine. Despite a resurgence of the practice of mindfulness, anxiety rates in the population and in particular the young are very high, and this could be blamed on the pervasiveness of social media. Not all 'community' is positive. Our mental health like everything

(48) (Oxford 2011)

(hh) (Fulton 2010: 16)

(49) (Reed 2017: 22)

(50) (Clark 1973: 27-63)

(51) (Reed 2017: 12)

(52) (Andrews 2021: 70)

else is becoming commercialised. And rather than switching off the technology that is adding to those mental stresses it is being used to sell us more product in the form of 'calming' apps.

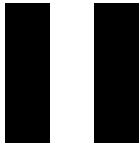
Businesses are increasingly aware of the financial costs that stress, depression and anxiety saddle them with. Rather than removing the source of stress ... some employers encourage their staff to meditate ... we're now reaching the stage where mandatory meditation is being discussed as a route to heightened productivity⁽⁵³⁾

Screen technology is taking us further away from our senses and from our animal roots. We are increasingly becoming disembodied and detached from the earth on which we are standing. By switching off for a time we can trigger our innate biophilia, our love of natural things, and access incredibly restorative experiences. It gives us a chance to reconnect with the present, clear our mind from clutter, engage our senses, and bring a sense of calm to our lives.

Pauses also serve a purpose beyond structure. They can be used for emphasis, dissuasion, reiteration, or as a means to assure one's understanding. They are markers of change in pace or subject, and they grant those on the receiving end the necessary time to process content and appreciate form.

The capacity to pause is a freedom we should grant ourselves to give respite from endless productivity. A time to rethink and recharge. A step away from the digital white noise for a period of clarity. Art can give us that place to pause, a space to focus, process and engage in the here and now. In the Henry Moore Foundation Research Library in Leeds, there is a poster designed by Studio Sutherland with words by Thomas Sharp it states: 'When the world demands toxic productivity, contemplation is a radical act'.

(53) (Foster 2016)



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