



Scott Rogers

Meanders Into Nonesuch Place

Nuggets Will Loiter

Text by Sarah Rose

I have just decided to take a walk. Stopping to rest at a wooden bench along the walking trail, my fingers run along the lines of minds all moving at about half a mile an hour. Scribbled or scratched surfaces of other walkers inadvertently making their mark creating grooves to guide with manoeuvres of identity, proverb, protest, lyric, or bathroom antic. These scrawls sit just beneath the surface and are sealed with the grease from palms and polished by bums moving back and forth to readjust their view. The bench operates as a kind of Ridge Mechanic, servicing and fixing my thoughts into a smooth calm rhythm. The bench must be greased so that components of thoughts can slide over, beside and through other thoughts. Benches are placed at the optimal points along the trail for resting one's body and opening up one's mind. After walking along the trail for some time, I stop and take seat. I pull out my pocketknife to start carving into the log. I'm tired. This walking is hard work. I begin to slice through the wood, incidentally joining up other people's lines. I'm thinking, can a recreational activity that encourages idle behaviour and an inactively active mind be productive?

Compare this Ridge Mechanic with the one I save for the end of the day of administrative slog. It's a round wooden table, with thick decorative carvings all the way up its central leg. Its varnish is made from layers of sticky beer. There are no carvings in its surface, but many words thrust and bounce around the space. Gossip is shuffled, hardship complained of, and stories re-laid by those in the bar. There is a longer wider rectangular one nearby, but I prefer to sit alone and orient myself in any direction I like, preferably away from the others. Like the carving, drinking is also an unwilling and improvisational motor, occupying time and releasing my own digression and association of thoughts.

We get from the model terrain of the table to the actual terrain of the landscape through walking. A passage through the landscape echoes and stimulates the passage through a series of thoughts. When we walk to new places, we are offered new possibilities and new thoughts. When the road forks, a new storyline emerges.



Walking can be an experience where one is in the world but also apart. In *Meanders Into Nonesuch Place* Scott Rogers walks with Jan Welzl, a former resident of Dawson City. Welzl's walks took him across Siberia and through the Arctic Circle where he came into contact with the Inuit and gold miners. He lived for more than thirty years in a cave, working as a trader of goods throughout the north. In his later life he was ship-wrecked off the coast of the United States and extradited to his home in Moravia (what is now the Czech Republic). He then left Europe again only to end up in Dawson. Once there he dedicated himself to the creation of a perpetual motion machine for the rest of his life. Amongst Welzl's perilous exploration and idiosyncratic invention he was actually a locksmith by trade, capable of loosening and securing perimeters. What Rogers seems to company is the limitless resource of Welzl's excursion and ideas. In *Meanders Into Nonesuch Place*, Welzl is an absent figure that represents an alternative path out

of the laws and preoccupations of a labour driven and capitalist centered world. In his exhibition, Rogers builds roads or ridges to trace that absence. Lead by Rogers and Welzl we are seduced by possibilities and idealisms. Suddenly the past and future meets, gravity is suspended, money has no symbolic relevance, bureaucracy is dispersed, discourse is non-linear, and every thought could be a reality.

Rogers' work also conveys a spirit of melancholy sometimes bordering on despair. In *Meanders Into Nonesuch Place* this feeling is harboured through song. Sea shanties and miner's songs as well as the all too familiar favourite, Neil Young, hold fast in Rogers' head. We are again reminded of Rogers' solitary affair. In keeping with Rogers' engagement, those who had never been down a shaft or onto a sea largely disseminated many traditional work songs. It is as if he is trying to close the distance between what is in his head and what he can actually experience. He longs for a time that is "After the Gold Rush". But with the changing value of gold, so changes the interest in gold exploration. The rush continues again and again, only with ever scarcer returns. Rogers' sad songs come from the voice of an explorer, yearning for exploration –to venture into the unknown. However he is held back by his own bodily existence. He sits at a table and with his only exploration: a mind that wanders elsewhere.

However, Rogers believes in perpetual motion in a virtual world. He leads the exhibition visitor right into another possible world, keeping us walking. We keep walking so much that like many Arctic explorers we may eventually encounter a mirage. A future appears closer and a present more distant than we have thought.

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Meanders Into Nonesuch Place

June 21 - July 27, 2012

ARTIST STATEMENT

My practice explores tensions between idealism and its enactment. I am particularly interested in ways that closed systems might be resisted through speculative positions. How might we understand the world to be different than it appears? How might we bring to be what can never be? Can we escape the possible? Recently, I have investigated these questions through research into the history of perpetual motion machines and the narratives surrounding these devices. The life of Jan Welzl, an Arctic explorer and inventor, has been integral to this work. Welzl was an eccentric Czech locksmith who travelled the globe in the early 20th century. He spent thirty years living in a cave in Siberia before writing a best-selling account of his adventures, and moving to Dawson City, Yukon. Once there, he attempted to build an elaborate perpetual motion machine in his cabin up until his death in 1948.



From this story, I have developed clusters of projects using a wide diversity of materials, techniques, and references. These works produce unexpected meeting points; they are sites of cohesion between otherwise disparate phenomena. Failed inventions, CG animations, sea chanties, whittling, Heath Robinson cartoons, automatons, and Fischli & Weiss are all assembled together as parts of this motley cast. In each case we transfer from concrete reality to the intellectual space of possibility, and from thoughts of what is to thoughts of what could be.

SCOTT ROGERS is a Canadian visual artist based in Glasgow, Scotland. He recently completed his MFA at the Glasgow School of Art, and has also attended the Städelschule in Frankfurt as part of Simon Starling's class. Exhibitions including Scott's work have taken place at St Paul St Gallery (Auckland, New Zealand), National Glass Centre (Sunderland, UK, as part of the AV Festival), Liverpool John Moores University (as part of the AND Festival), PM Galerie (Berlin), The Southern Alberta Art Gallery (Lethbridge), The Art Gallery of Alberta (Edmonton) and the Soap Factory (Minneapolis).

In fall 2012 Scott will be part of a three-person exhibition at the University of Moncton. He has also been invited to co-present a lecture with the Arbour Lake School for the conference Institutions by Artists (organized by Fillip Journal in Vancouver for October 2012).



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