

Locative Media, on and off the beaten track
by Suhjung Hur, Annie On Ni Wan, Andrew Paterson

[Suhjung Hur](#)

Curator, Art Center Nabi
99 Seorin-Dong Jongro-ku
Seoul 110-110
Korea

[Annie On Ni Wan](#)

DXARTS
Box 353414
University of Washington
Seattle, WA 98105-680
U.S.A.

[Andrew Paterson](#)

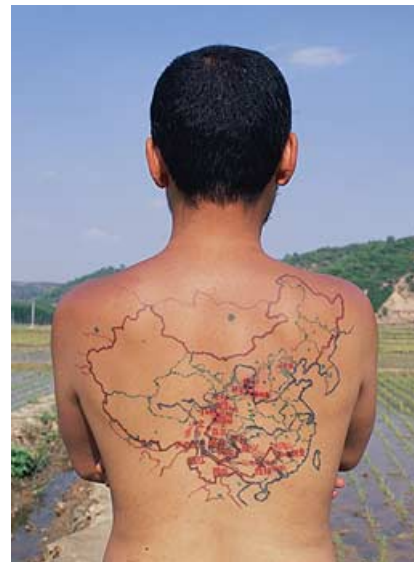
University of Art and Design Helsinki
Hämeentie 135 C
FI-00560 Helsinki
Finland

'Locative media' denotes in artistic and cultural practice that which has become a nominator for site-specific, context-aware, and often participatory platforms exploring the possibilities of pervasive and ubiquitous computing technologies. Context is crucial in that locative media pertains to the point of spatio-temporal 'capture', 'dissemination', or some point in between [1]. Locative media, as a hybrid and still emerging media culture and research field, includes a rich spectrum of activities: collaborative mapping, open technology experimentation, tactical/surveillance critique, urban gameplay and subjective storytelling.

Embodying the concept of a grassroots 'street version of the Internet' [2], locative media interventions have often followed an ocular-dominated technological perspective that moves the point of interaction from the desktop PC in a private environment into the physical realm of public space. Further, continuing the trajectory of Happenings, Fluxus, and the Situationists from the 1950s onwards - whose interests in direct public participation were also pursued by early Internet art - locative media practices have aimed to engage the participation of individual, whether it is the artist, collaborator, targeted audience or anonymous public.

This curatorial project aims to explore and consider the less-visible forms in the map of locative media. Maps are the representations of visible things, gaps and invisible processes. Wolfgang Iser, in considering the act of reading [3], said no tale is told in its entirety and the inevitable omissions are what give the story its vitality. So what is being presented in the documentation gaps and revealed in-between the visible points? Our attempt is to present a diverse spectrum of practices - from the archaeological to the performative - considering the gaps in geographical, material and cultural (in)visibility. Works by younger artists and even non-artists were selected along with better-known actors in the field, situated in a broader geographical axis outside Europe and North America.

The details of environmental information could be micro-locative as in [Guttersnipe](#) which holds archaeological, material, and cultural interpretative processes. Physical marks and thrown-away materials on the pavement were incorporated into a history of a street. Until these texts were made available online, however, it was presented only as a performative lecture: live spoken words over video footage. Also based upon the data-gathering process of meteorology, [sunTracer](#) weaves a unique narrative with the changes of nature. Being macro-locative, it extends site-specific information into a networked view onto earth. While many of locative projects respond to the precision of its positioning system and scientific data, [sunTracer](#) waves to wind, rain, air polluted and conditioned by ambiguity and smells of nature. A tactical approach in [LOCA](#) incorporates both micro and macro-locative aspects, raising awareness of the ironic dualism in surveillance and nomadic technologies: creative or abusive subversion of telecommunication utilizing bluetooth nodes in a temporary ad-hoc network.



The Long March by Qing Ga
Copyright © Qin Ga

Mobility, or inversely, immobility often feature as key factors: In [Long March](#), [the Walking Project](#) and [Guttersnipe](#), individuals walk over varied distances and places; be it historic empire, local neighborhood, or street corners. Each project engages diverse technologies and sometimes unexpected cartographic tools including the 'low-tech' tattooist's needle, video-camera strapped to a baby's push-chair and virtual weblog. The focus thus should be moved from the technical challenge and the ubiquity of locative devices to the qualitative and cultural implications of movement, archival methodologies, and dedicated attention to people, actual sites, and material histories.

Urban ecology and social inter-relationships are explored in [Planteundersøgelser](#) via communal platform of a temporary public garden and an urban 'plant chart'. Similarly, [Tactical Sound Garden](#) extends the horticultural metaphor into a toolkit for locative sound work. In both projects, the labour and craft of sharing knowledge and resources is as significant as their sustenance and growing ambitions. Materializing the immaterial data, [Choreography of Everyday Movement](#) traces longitude and latitude of a dancer's movement and visualizes them into 3-dimensionality with the piles of etched glass. Meanwhile, [Shoot me if you can](#) is a playful but critical commentary on the use of camera-phones and the ubiquity of digital image in urban daily life. "It engages people as performers or players in gameplay, where capturing THE surveillant data of the other is a means to become a winner."

The participatory and collaborative aspects of locative media foreground participants' site-specific experience in local context, while encouraging them to be performers within the activity. Through their practices of walking, listening, conversation, game-playing, or living an everyday life, an individual partakes in different roles: gardener, composer, choreographer, cartographer, walker, tattooist, spectator, data-collector, storyteller, decision-maker, archaeologist, explorer; Or, simply but importantly, just an other within public environment.

Complex and ethical questions also arise. How do these technologies invite participation? A question is raised by *LOCA*: To what degree is that 'raised hand of involvement' determined by the system, a voluntary action? Will the technologies be a 'restrictive collar around the neck' as in [Bowville](#), which control accessibility and communal decision-making process? Then, where and who is the community voice? As illustrated powerfully and literally in *Long March*: Will important decisions be made considering the relationship between body, location and the interactor's experience, to be written indelibly on our collective backs?

Each project presented has discrepancies between what happened, what was documented, and how it is represented as a story of the activity. For an observer who did not take part in, and for the audience who learn about what happened here and/or there, what is the displacement and interaction process of reading the project online? How is the work online actualized outside of the location-specific context? Questions still remain for us.

Acknowledgements

This text benefits from asynchronous email and wiki conversation between the co-curators. Click [here](#) for an insight to how this gallery was curated.

References

1. The inception of and early debates on locative media started through mailinglists, workshops, and festivals with artists, curators, theorists, and researchers, notably gathered online: <http://locative.x-i.net>, <http://locative.net> <http://locative.us>
2. Minna Tarkka, "Labours of location: Acting in the pervasive media space", published in *Species of Spaces*, ed. Giles Lane. Diffusion eBook series 2005. <http://diffusion.org.uk/>
3. Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of reading: A theory of Aesthetic Response*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979.

(Ed Note. Read the LEA Locative Media issue at: <http://mitpress2.mit.edu/e-journals/LEA/archive.html>)

Curator Biographies

Andrew Paterson

Andrew Paterson was born in Falkirk, Scotland in 1974. Lives and works in Helsinki, Finland.

My creative practice involves working in the roles of initiator, participant, author and producer, according to/and within different collaborative and interdisciplinary projects. These roles operate in the field of media/socially-engaged arts, where 'artwork' may be understood as a conversation, devised situation, workshop or event. The activity specializes in mobile and collaborative interfaces or interactions.

This focus has evolved from the layers and processes of printmaking, through a blend of poetic text, inter-relationships between media, virtual/augmented environments and initially coordinating community art workshops. Story-making/telling and listening are an increasingly influential set of modes in representing my own - and engaging others' - experience.

Since January 2003, I have undertaken practice-led research as a Doctorate of Arts candidate at Media Lab UIAH in Helsinki, Finland, consolidating under the title of 'Contextual Media Fieldwork: participatory mobile systems, devised events, and socially-engaged art practice'.

Suhjung Hur

Suhjung Hur is a curator and writer based in Seoul, Korea. As a curator at Art Center Nabi, non-profit media art center in Seoul, Hur has been curating and organizing exhibitions, workshops and live events since 2002. Her curatorial projects include Liquid Space, Art &

Science Station, and Unzipping Codes. She is also organizing experimental sound-visual performance series, 'alt_sound' and a monthly gathering of media art practitioners, The Upgrade! Seoul. In 2005, she organized international workshop 'Urban Play and Locative Media' and Unesco Digital Arts Award on the theme of 'City and Creative Media' held at Art Center Nabi.

She was a co-founder and editor for short-lived art quarterly Stray Dog in Los Angeles, and has written for leading art and architecture magazines in Korea including Wolgan Misool, Art in Culture, Bob, Design Net, as well as for catalogue publications. Suhjung holds a Bachelors Degree in Communication/Journalism from Yonsei University and a Masters Degree in Art History from University of Southern California. Currently she is a PhD candidate for Communication and Arts in Yonsei University.

Annie On Ni Wan

Annie On Ni Wan is a young activist in audiovisual performance, interactive art and an innovator in interactive technologies. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in Creative Media from School of Creative Media, City University of Hong Kong in 2002 and a Master of Science in Art & Technology from Chalmers University of Technology, Gothenburg, Sweden in 2005.

Her recent works, including locative media, audiovisual performance and interactive installation, have been shown at the Mondal Museum (Sweden); Syndicate Potential (Strasbourg, France); Art+Communication Festival 2004 (Riga, Latvia); Piksel 2004; FLOSS in Motion, (Bergen, Norway); Multimedia Art Asia Pacific Conference 2004 (Singapore); and Oppositional Architecture (Berlin, Germany). She received travel and project grants from various organizations in Hong Kong, Sweden, and Norway, including the Nordic Fund and EU Culture Fund.

She is now a Ph.D student at the University of Washington's Center for Digital Arts and Experimental Media (DXARTS), majoring in mechatronics and algorithmic montage, studying with Dr. Shawn Brixey.