

Chance

by Robert Ladislav Derr

Artist Statement:

In *Chance*, a “psychogeographical”¹ walk performance project that [Robert Ladislav Derr](#) began in late 2005, he relies on his viewers to determine his cartography through cities worldwide. Derr creates works of art that require his viewers to be more than quiet observers. After having the viewers roll the die thirty times, he proceeds on his walk through each city wearing four video cameras according to the die commands – the commands send him forward down a street, right, left, back, or require him to spin or stand in place.



Chance: Harrisburg performance, 2008, photo A L Foglesong

Creating a spectacle out of his walk performances, Derr wears a mirrored suit so that his presence on the street has a dichotomous relationship between being real and illusionary given this oscillating dualistic character of mirrors. Following the directional commands to the next intersection and completing spin or stand in place for one minute, his walks generally average forty-five minutes – the amount of time that it takes to complete all thirty commands.

Having walked with the video cameras, Derr then returns to each

¹ Psychogeography, term coined by Guy Debord to describe the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals

intersection encountered and photographs the front, back, and side views, creating a photographic cartography as well. The street scenes combine in his videos and photographs to create a narrative of moments in time.



***Chance: Rosario* photograph, 2006, courtesy of the artist**

Wearing the video cameras gives the footage a tactical quality as the cameras record the arrhythmia of his physicality when he steps off of a curb, moves around geographical structures, traversing through the streets. His fellow pedestrians' experiences are also captured while they play their role in the structure of daily life that is defined by the geography of the environment. To connect his second-generation viewers to his walk performance, Derr projects the videos in a square, placing the viewers at the center of the projections, just as Derr was at the center of the four video cameras.



Chance: Vancouver video installation, 2007, courtesy of the artist

He uses the city as a fluid canvas, moving through the streets with his cameras in silence, capturing an unedited glimpse of the architecture and ephemeral characters that construct the ambiance of place and time. Nato Thompson describes the commoditization of walks in *The Interventionists*², “the Situationists asserted that culture itself was fast becoming the ultimate commodity...even walking...their hysteria finds validity in the increasing privatization of culture...in the shrinkage, policing, and control of public space”. Derr’s walk performances are formal investigations that use the chance of die rolls to allow him to discover each city from a pure, non-commercial perspective.

With Derr’s cameras pointing indiscriminately outward onto society, his walk performances illuminate the critical act of seeing, recording, and being in the canvas of the city. The videos and photographs from each walk performance are documents of the social, temporal, and spatial.

Having completed *Chance* in sixteen cities worldwide, Derr's forthcoming performance will be in April 2009 for *Playing the City*, an exhibition at the [Schirn Kunsthalle](#) in Frankfurt, Germany curated by Matthias Ulrich. *Chance* will also be featured in Volume 13: *Public* issue of [ASPECT: The Chronicle of New Media Art](#) with commentary by Bill Arning, director of the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston.

RELATED URLS:

Website

<http://home1.arts.ohio-state.edu/~derr34/>

Chance

<http://home1.arts.ohio-state.edu/~derr34/chance.html>

² *The Interventionists* page 16

Art Papers

<http://home1.arts.ohio-state.edu/~derr34/ChanceArtPapers.jpg>

Boston Globe

http://www.boston.com/ae/theater_arts/articles/2008/04/04/on_a_roll/

Summit Daily

<http://www.summitdaily.com/article/20070121/AROUND06/101210047/-1/AROUND04>

CONTACT: derr [dot] 34 [at] osu [dot] edu

BIOGRAPHY:

Robert Ladislav Derr uses video, photography, performance, and installation as he puts himself literally in the center of a barrage of questions about life and making art. He has exhibited and performed worldwide at such venues as the LIVE Performance Art Biennale (Vancouver, BC, Canada), Wexner Center for the Arts (Columbus, OH), Athens Video Art Festival (Athens, Greece), Photographic Resource Center (Boston, MA), American Academy in Rome (Rome, Italy), Independent Museum of Contemporary Art (Limassol, Cyprus), Irish Film Institute (Dublin, Ireland), Art Interactive (Cambridge, MA), DiVA Festival (New York, NY), and Jack the Pelican Presents (Brooklyn, NY). Derr has an MFA from the Rhode Island School of Design, and he is an assistant professor of art at The Ohio State University.

