

This is Not an Interview: A Stroll with Tyler Coburn

by *bartholomew ryan* 03/25/09

Artist Tyler Coburn has just completed an eighty day-long project titled *Medium No. 1 (Manhattan)*. A commission for "In Practice," the just-ended exhibition at the Sculpture Center for eight emerging artists, the work was a meditation on the city, on technology, and on the networks of social contexts that make up Coburn's New York-based community. The artist traversed one full Manhattan street a day, starting at 1st Street on January 1st, and ending on 82nd Street on March 22nd. For most walks, he was accompanied by a friend or acquaintance with whom he would converse. Coburn recorded each walk, then faxed a daily, one-page transcript to the Sculpture Center. There it would join a long scroll of previous transcripts emerging from a thermal-roll fax machine propped on its side at the top of a plywood ramp. The Situationists believed that by drifting without direction through the city, engaging in what they termed a 'dérive', the artist could create a 'psychogeography' -- a new plan of the city and the self that would shirk off the rigid structures of planned society. Of course they had in mind the drift potential offered by French civic planner Haussmann's Paris, not New York's rigid grid-system. Coburn's tracing of that grid is what he terms an 'anti-dérive', a planned walk. But, as he well knows, there remains room for unplanned drift within the conversations that occur upon the walk. I joined Coburn late on a cold and dark Thursday night at the very western reach of 71st Street. Here are the excerpted transcripts of our conversation up to our arrival at Central Park.



[Tyler alone with his recorder. Sound of the wind blowing and approaching footsteps.]

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