

Prospectus

Between Cedar & Vine
by
Susannah Hays

Every morning I set out from my apartment for the café on Walnut always turning and returning between the blocks of Cedar & Vine. For 20 years now the paths of my walk and of my mind have played a topographical game of chance.

A short text lies before me. The anonymous narrative branches off to one that lives inside me. The detritus of my neighborhood becomes a trajectory-mapping a larger sequence of memories. The present invents itself from the past. Walking intertwining streets becomes a space of anthropological-poetic-story telling, branching contiguously like the tracteries of a leaf found on the pavement.

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The Neighborhood: Cadence of the Numerous Susannah Hays**

Introduction

Between Cedar & Vine is an auto-topography, which grew out of the artist's morning walk to get a cup of coffee. A collage of text and images collected over twenty-years, her daily "stroll" became an unconscious game of play and chance, which then, in turn, illuminated half-remembered images and familiar, but unnoticed tangible patterns—an entirely new way of seeing.

1985 was the unrealized starting point, when she moved to Spruce Street, between Cedar and Vine, in Berkeley, California. Walking to and from a nearby café, sometimes going the long way round and sometimes going the short way, found fragments of unknown origins elicited multiple meanings, play of memory and chance synchronicities.

In 1991, still trying to make sense of the larger world and her place in it, she departed from the habitual walk for a six-week journey along the Nile River. From the forest of trees in Berkeley to the columns of Karnak she searched the underground passages of Egypt's ancient civilization. The questions of man through the ages were still there, among the ruins, to be seen in relation to the discontinuous postmodern world.

In 1998, the collection of documents suddenly crystallized from their random idiosyncratic disorder into a coherent narration of the artist's search for true beginnings. The gift of living between Cedar & Vine became clear: Cedar Street represented the strict linearity of Western thought, while Vine Street yielded to the non-linear values of Eastern traditions. Living *between* these two, a possible undivided harmony of the cosmos became coherent.

Poet Lynn Hejinian wrote about the work:

Between Cedar & Vine documents minute details of a social and physical web of fissures. Its documentary components—the documents—are literal, its images and the narrative connection between them are allegorical. They show, rather than tell, a tale—a tale of the material and emotional disruptions out of which a neighborhood (and, it is important to understand, also an artist) inexorably creates and then discloses itself. The work is extraordinarily beautiful, but the beauty never attempts to disguise the misunderstanding, the misshaping, and the mortality that is guaranteed to all that is material.

The conceptual sophistication of Susannah's thinking about the character of the documentation is remarkable. She is philosopher of "the document"—of the track, the trace the mapline, faultline, and timeline. And she is a practitioner of the document too; creating them out of the traces that ink lays down as words and the tracks that light lays down as photographic images. She is interested in lines but not linearity. She is interested in the forces that shape spaces into places, "site," shaping and requiring our commitments. Such sites are not geographical but lived regions, locations of felt events. They have emotional resonance in addition to spatio-temporal coordinates: they have what Gertrude Stein called "a sense of movement of time included in a given space". The philosopher Susanne Langer, (in Mind: An Essay on Human Feeling), has remarked: "the fact that we feel the effects of changes in the world about us, and apparently of changes in ourselves, too, and that all such changes are physically describable, but our feeling them is not, presents a genuine philosophical challenge." Susannah Hays in her work is taking up that challenge.

Lynn Hejinian May 2002

Methodology

Between Cedar & Vine is unique in its methodology in that it is an auto-topographic record. The narration is a compilation of found text and discovered topographic traces—coordinates specific to the artist's imagination. Since taking a walk often reveals histories that lay dormant inside us, walking becomes a way of reading not only the city, but also our selves as this early "primitive" material displaces and commingles in the mind and body.

The emphasis in an auto-topography concerns how we constitute a sense of ourselves in relation to the larger world. The act of 'listening in' while 'looking out' became a narrative exchange between autobiography and auto-topography. Circuitously, the perspective of a relational-self, a self-seen in context with the artist's neighborhood environment became visible.

Cedar & Vine, as a book, functions self-reflexively. The reader reads fragmentation implicitly and discovers possible narrative meanings from non-symbolized visual/textual images. Not unlike walking a labyrinth, the accordion structure unfolds gem like curiosities. One moves, therefore, with an ear toward "listening-in", while looking out and seeing foils of one's imagination at play. Playing off voluntary and involuntary moments of memory and associations, one's nature occasions to appear within the realms of these every day human correspondences.

Categories of Reference

TOPOGRAPHICS / AUTO-TOPOGRAPHY

Mapping personal places / Human Geography / Cartography

The City as image / Anthropology / Ethnography / Landscape Architecture /

Art / Photography / Labyrinths / Artists Books

Between Cedar & Vine is an original, authentic work where collective listening (in fragmentation), is employed through the narration of many voices. Self-reflexive observation, where we learn about the material "what" rather than the whole figure, allows observation and question to be engaged while reasoning. Meaning emerges through the non-linear structure of the text and inspired affinities of metaphor,

memory, associative experience and relationships. Like taking a walk around the block, inductive thinking refreshes the mind. The varied texts operate in such a way that they alone cannot produce meaning. In other words the image/text fragments suggest a “picture” which do not signify, but instead yield one or several possible meanings.

Readers who are familiar with the concepts of synchronicity or meaningful coincidence (Jung, dreams, the Tarot, the I Ching, Einstein and Teilhard de Chardin for example) will appreciate the noncausal events, which come together through the author’s word/image study. Though numerous books concerning autobiography are written, *Between Cedar & Vine* is a unique form of this genre in that it shows rather than tells. Looking back, the archive collected between the streets of Cedar and Vine show how a sense of becoming came through experience writing itself.

Related Books

Antoine De Saint-Exupéry [The Little Prince](#)

Barthelme, Donald: [City Life](#), [Unspeakable Practices](#), [Unnatural Acts](#), etc.
“Fragments are the only form I trust”. from *See The Moon?* p 153.

Barthes, Roland: [Camera Lucida](#)

Bashō, Matsuo: [Narrow Road to the Interior](#); [The Narrow Road to the Deep North](#)

Later in life, Bashō turned to Zen Buddhism, and the travel sketches reflect his attempts to cast off earthly attachments and reach out for spiritual fulfillment. The sketches are written in the *haibun* style—a linking of verse and prose. Bashō strives to discover a vision of eternity in the transient world around him and this is his personal evocation of the mysteries of the universe.

Bashō’s fundamental teaching remained his conviction that in composing a poem, “there are two ways: one is entirely natural, in which the poem is born from within itself; the other way is through the mastery of technique”. His notion of the poem being “born within itself” should under no circumstances be confused with its being self-originating. A fundamental tenet of Buddhism runs exactly to the contrary: nothing is self-originating. Bashō’s poems were in fact a natural product of his close observation of the natural *relationships* of people and things, our presence in nature. He prized sincerity and instructed, “Follow nature, return to nature, be nature”. He had learned to meet each day with new eyes. Yesterday’s self is already worn out!” *Sam Hamill*

Calvino, Italo [Invisible Cities](#)

Italo Calvino, in his book *Invisible Cities*, described the fictitious city of Ersilia, in which city residents would continue to stretch pieces of string to represent and define their different social relationships, until the resulting network of strings would become impassable.

Carroll, Lewis Alice’s [Adventures in Wonderland](#)

Cha, Theresa Hak Kyung [Dictée](#)

Susan Wolf describes Dictée, (in her article: “Recalling Telling ReTelling” *Afterimage* magazine), as uncategorizable, merging different forms of writing, visual forms and kinds of information. On one level it is about time, memory and language. On another it is about Korean history, and it can also be read as an autobiography and biography of several women: Cha’s mother, Joan of Arc, St Theresa, the Korean revolutionary, Yu Guan Soon, and Hyung Soon Huo, daughters of first generation Korean exiles born in Manchuria. These stories are intricately woven as the text shifts from prose to prose poetry, from images to words, from history to fiction, and from past to present.

Cowan, James [A Mapmakers Dream](#)

In Sixteenth-century Venice, in an island monastery, a cloistered monk experiences the adventure of a lifetime—all within the confines of his cell. Part historical fiction, part philosophical mastery, *A Mapmaker's Dream* tells the story of Fra Mauro and his struggle to realize his life's work: to make a perfect map—one that represents the full breadth of Creation.

De Certeau, M. [The Practice of Everyday Life](#)

See especially his chapter: *Walking in the City and Spatial Stories*

It is true that the operation of walking can be traced on city maps in such a way as to transcribe their paths (here well trodden, there very faint) and their trajectories (going this way and not that). But these thick or thin curves only refer, like words, to the absence of what has passed by. Survey's of routes miss what was: the act itself of passing by. The operation of walking, wandering, or "window shopping", that is, the activity of passers-by, is transformed into points that draw a totalizing and reversible line on the map. They allow us to grasp only a relic set in the "no when" of a surface of projection. Itself visible, it has the effect of making invisible the operation that made it possible. The fixations constitute procedures for forgetting. The trace left behind is substituted for the practice. It exhibits the (voracious) property that the geographical system has of being able to transform action into legibility, but in doing so it causes a way of being in the world to be forgotten. (p. 97)

Debord, Guy [Situationist International Anthology](#).

See his theory and practice of the terms: *détournement, chance operation and dérive*.

Deleuze & Guattari: *A Thousand Plateaus*

Elkins, James [The Domain of Images](#)

Elkins subscribes that in the domain of visual images only a minority are from the fine art world. He calls on art historians to consider images beyond the cannons of art history. He proposes a radically new way of thinking about visual analysis, one that relies on an object's own internal sense of organization. Elkins blends philosophical insight with historical detail to produce startling new meanings for such basic terms as pictures, writing, and notation.

Lippard, Lucy [Lure of the Local; On the Beaten Track](#)

Proust, Marcel [À la Recherche du Temps Perdu](#)

Spoerri, Daniel [An Anecdoted Topography of Chance](#)

Twain, Mark [Huckleberry Finn](#)