

## Runscape

*The City is growing Inside of us...  
A political act of defiance of the Urban Authority  
With its surveillance and restrictions on movement.*

*Excerpt from Film*

In 1996, when Jean Baudrillard first published "The Conspiracy of Art" he scandalized the international art community by declaring that contemporary art had no more reason to exist. The question of aesthetic banality and retreat from issues of public life and "the real" are questions that have plagued the art world for centuries, from the very first copied Renoir apple to Tino Sehgal or Sophie Calle experiences that anthropologically mix aesthetics, art and life. Baudrillard has since become interested in the simulations of reality set forth by film and vice versa.

In film, the work of simulation becomes drama, a comparative drama that seeks to simulate reality. *Runscape* is used to knit together the geography of Hong Kong, a cartography that trades on the idea of mapping by running through the streets (a young man is seen pounding / racing through the streets purposefully, in stark contrast to the plethora of crowds that are slowly inching forward along the traffic jammed pavement of Causeway Bay.) The runner dodges past pedestrians, runs diagonally through meticulously urban planned plazas, up flights of stairs and through the shopping malls of Hong Kong in order to appropriate the city on his own terms. The direction of his sprint, the contour of his cityscape is directed by his own desires, a remapping of cartography that allows him to remake the city in his own image. In *Runscape*, the idea is that a single individual can remap the cartography of the city, to redefine the city on each individual's terms, to make each city mapping unique to each individual rather than a grouping of concepts, random census tracts, defunct neighborhoods and property blocks. The runner is at times cooperating with the city, in running along the stairs and sidewalks that are mandated, at other times, he jumps over unsuspecting walls and leaps over fences, pitting the city as an adversary, a challenge to his movement, testing the limitations of the concrete jungle as it slowly comes alive with the unorthodox use of its cityscape.

Political and cultural boundaries collapse as the figure jumps over districts in Causeway Bay, Central, and Aberdeen. The runner stitches a new type of geographical exploration that reimagines the terrain on a new mapped media. References and location systems zip by a sprinting figure in a rapidly moving short film where motion, major landmarks and assorted cultural topography become simply a simulation, simulacra of importance. *Runscape* is about the seduction of film as moving photography, images of Hong Kong flash by us in blinding images knit together only by the running figure as he races across the entire city.

The runner becomes also a performer, as he leaps and jumps, sprinting through the city, catching the eye of the strolling pedestrians as he breaks out of conventional modes of

behavior, putting his body in action, moving faster than the city, as if internally pushed forward, as if fleeing or listening to a voice that was slowly speaking outside of everyone else's sound register. The culture of the walking figure derived from the French Flaneur, the American Beat Poets, all contextualized and used in exploring and connecting the city streets. *Runscape* explores the liminal notions between film as public art with the city as landscape and cartography. The film knits the city together in a geography intersecting private and public space. The runner acts as artistic intervention creating an impact on the space itself. This is a creation of an unexplained inexplicable artwork on the street as it blurs the line between performance, a happening, fear, trauma, physical exercise, and rebellion.

American cartographer, Arthur H Robinson stated that a map not properly designed "will be a cartographic failure." Robinson also stated, when considering all aspects of cartography that "map design is perhaps the most complex. A map must be fit to its audience. Map Office's *Runscape* is a new kind of map that explores the history of running, forms of mapping, data, space and time, multiple dimensions, language and the body. *Runscape* uncovers the influence and possibilities of mapping in our world today. Maps have become easier to create, change, develop collaboratively and share. Depicting geographical areas, mindscapes and digital realms alike, these multidimensional maps express endlessly interconnected ideas and issues.

Going back to the beginning of his "postmodern" phase, Baudrillard begins his important essay "The Precession of the Simulacra" by recounting the feat of imperial map-makers in a story by Jorge Luis Borges who make a map so large and detailed that it covers the whole empire, existing in a one-to-one relationship with the territory underlying it. It is a perfect replica of the empire. After a while the map begins to fray and tatter, the citizens of the empire mourning its loss (having long taken the map - the simulacrum of the empire - for the real empire). Under the map the real territory has turned into a desert, a "desert of the real." In its place, a *simulacrum* of reality - the frayed mega-map - is all that's left.

*Runscape* is a bravura performance by Map Office in which they use the figure of a boy to stitch the city together in a mapping that creates a territorial relationship between the runner who runs, and the territory or terras that is beneath his feet. The city map does not exist without his performance. The runner, nor does his physical running exist outside of the map. When the runner stops, the city (like Borge's map) will leave us in tattered ruins, and dissemble into nothing so much as a simulacrum of it's former self.

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