

Walking

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Our works in stone, in paint, in print, are spared, some of them, for a few decades or a millennium or two, but everything must finally fall in war, or wear away into the ultimate and universal ash - the triumphs, the frauds, the treasures and the fakes. A fact of life: we're going to die. "Be of good heart", cry the dead artists out of the living past. "Our songs will all be silenced, but what of it? Go on singing". Maybe a man's name doesn't matter all that much.

Orson Welles, in F for Fake

If you are ready to leave father and mother, and brother and sister, and wife and child and friends, and never see them again, - if you have paid your debts, and made your will, and settled all your affairs, and are a free man, then you are ready for a walk.

Henry David Thoreau, in Walking

This photo essay - which has the title *Walking*, recalling the work of Henry David Thoreau - is part of a larger project, which I called "L for Liberty" - thinking of Orson Welles.

In 1973, Orson Welles released the movie *F for Fake* - which was called in French *Vérités et Mensonges, Truths and Lies*". The film revolves around the life of a notorious professional art forger, the Hungarian painter Elmyr de Hory. Starting with Hory, Welles questions where the truth resides, what authenticity is after all as a value of the work of art.

What is the truth? What is authenticity in art?

The film provokes a sense of deep questioning in relation to what we believe as "real", as truth, particularly with regard to the art world.

Two years after the release of *F for Fake* I would work as co-director and co-editor with French photographer, director and movie producer Jean Manzon, former assistant to Orson Welles.

My father was an amateur filmmaker and the figure of Orson Welles was a strong presence in our household. Jean Manzon and Orson Welles were the same age. My father was three years younger. Manzon was a good friend of my dear master and unforgettable friend, the poet and writer Jorge Medauar, who was of the same generation as my father. They all loved Portugal. Manzon - who had become my father's friend - would die in the magical city of Reguengos de Monsaraz, in Alentejo, Portugal, in 1990.

The Jean Manzon I knew was an independent spirit, he did not admit to any kind of indoctrination - although he would be accused of exactly that, unfairly in my view.

In this project, I deal with liberty, in a certain sense just as Orson Welles dealt with truth.

L for Liberty is a multidimensional project, with visual works, films, concerts, texts, poems, photographs and so on.

My book *Liberty* - part of the larger project - is, in a sense, the philosophical underpinning of all these pieces.

I confess that I often wonder if there will still exist, in today's world, anyone truly interested on this project, on the idea underlying it, the principle of liberty, the idea that founded what we call Western civilization.

It is an idea that seems to be directly related to the act of walking, as I tell in my book *Liberty*.

The idea of liberty produced the longest moments of peace in History, extended life expectancy as never before, revealed to us much about the Universe, about subatomic particles, announced us the complex gravitational fields, space-time, Faraday's lines of force, the electromagnetic principles, the emergence, autopoiesis, String Theory, quantum physics, digital media, and also brilliant people like Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Leonardo da Vinci, Caravaggio, Charles Sanders Peirce, John Wheeler, René Berger, Joseph Beuys, John Cage. ...the list is endless, where every element seems to be a

moment in a logical process that we know as "walking".

Is there anyone who still pays attention to walking? Who is enchanted by the metamorphosis of themselves and of the path?

How many, in our narcissistic days, will still be enchanted with walking, with their own free transformation?

Walking has always been an irresistible impulse throughout my entire life. Since I have been aware of who I am, walking has always been something fundamental to me.

I started walking very early. At the age of four I got lost three times on beaches. I went out walking, curious to discover what the next step would reveal to me. Those were three dramatic moments. Then, when I became aware that I had gotten lost, I even feared that I would never find my parents again. I believed I could be lost forever!

After those traumatic moments, I never got lost again. But I never stopped escaping to walk.

As a child, I loved secretly leave home, hidden from my parents, like an explorer facing fascinating new worlds.

I admired the gigantic city of São Paulo which for me was a fabulous universe of discoveries.

Much later, as an adult, I discovered in my grandfather's diaries that my father did exactly the same when he was a child, he ran away and walked for miles.

Many times I went out in secret, without anyone noticing it, just to discover something more of the urban labyrinth in which we lived. I escaped like an explorer, to discover the streets of our neighborhood. I was four or five years old. I established goals. I reached a certain pre-established point from which I would return home. The next day my mission was to go beyond that point, and set a new goal.

I loved understanding people's lives in their homes, which I watched from a distance, like a detective. I went out and came back without the people at my home could realize it.

One of the things that fascinated me the most was observing people's lives, as if I were an alien. I would later realize this same

sense of voyeurism in Alfred Hitchcock's movies, particularly in his unforgettable *Rear Window*, of 1954.

From an early age, walking was for me something intimate - and an exercise of observation. Sometimes I walked with my best friend at that time - my beloved dog, named Typhoon. He was small, smiling and very smart - he clearly seemed me to be much smarter than some (or many) humans I knew then or even would come to meet. He also loved to walk. But, I often went alone. Walking was a solitary exercise. It was always an adventure, exploration, discovery.

When I was about eight years old, I decided to walk to and from school - which was about 1.2 miles from home - discovering new paths, exploring new spaces, every day.

Whenever possible, I did not take the shortest route, but the one that would bring the most surprises, the most discoveries.

I lived a countless number of stories on those streets. There were miserable people dying of hunger, drunkards, drug addicts, men flirting with women, women meeting together telling the adventures of the neighborhood, women taking care of houses, men leaving home or arriving from the world of work in the companies, millionaires, young, old people... as usually happened in those days. There was no violence. Houses were not surrounded by high walls yet. It was one of the best and richest neighborhoods in the city. But, as it happens in everything, there are always mice and men - a figure that would mark me much later through John Steinbeck's severe inner gaze.

That world I saw, with all its contradictions, was perfectly the same as the best places in the best cities in the United States or Europe. Many years later, I would realize that people imagined that their places were always the best. This was because, surely, those people were not in the habit of walking, they were not free.

I used to walk through the streets of Pacaembú, the neighborhood in São Paulo where we lived, discovering spaces, sounds, birds, drawings of houses, trees, colors, shadows, observing human behavior.

The word *Pacaembú*, of Tupi origin, means "paca creek". The paca is a large rodent typical in South and Central America. Anyone

visiting the neighborhood would find the name strange. Despite the many trees, the streets were, even at that time, all paved, everything was very clean, organized, and all the streets had well-made and well-maintained sidewalks particularly when considering the amount of rainfall in the region - precisely like Europe or the best places in the US.

Most of the houses were inhabited by European families - French, German, Portuguese, Italian, Hungarian...

There was no sign of violence.

It was a peaceful urban world.

In a certain sense, those walkings made me feel free as an alien being.

In Lisbon, still a boy, I used to walk freely through the Campo de Ourique neighborhood where we lived. From time to time I walked to the Baixa (downtown), passing through the Rato, revolving streets and more streets, as if I were a discoverer.

In 1996 I composed a concert where all the musical elements belonged to the most frequent walks taken by the great poet and thinker Fernando Pessoa. Such concert, with a world premiere in Brussels that year, was dedicated to my dear friend and great artist Irene Buarque.

When I went to Luso, my home village, my land, near Coimbra, I used to walk all the time, discovering and rediscovering every millimeter of that enchanting place. Sometimes we walked, my brother Josué and I, together with our cousins to the Cruz Alta, High Cross, the highest point in Bussaco, the magical forest - which are the mountains next to Luso.

Still in the 1960s, Paris was my favorite city to walk. When we were there, my brother Josué and I walked freely for hours. The neighborhood I most enjoyed exploring was the Marais. And one of the places I loved most to walk was the Louvre.

Everything was discovery. Everything was enlightenment.

Walking has always been, for me, a deeply solitary act. It has always been an operation of discovery, of reflection, of observation,

of self-consciousness.

Even when I walked with my brother Josué, sometimes we got separated and agreed on a place and time to meet again.

Starting when I was about fifteen years old, I began to photograph my walks. It was a timid beginning.

My father gave me what would be my first camera when I was fourteen or fifteen years old. It was a very simple, inexpensive camera. He said that I should be able to make great photos with a simpler camera, because only then I would have learned what photography really is.

He was right.

This approach to photography was also the foundation of "seeing", which is far beyond "looking".

The lesson that differentiates the "seeing" from the "looking" had an ancient history.

About ten years earlier, when I was about four years old, my father taught me to draw. In fact, he had been teaching me to draw from a much earlier age - when I started to be able to hold a pencil - but at the age of four he was more serious about it, teaching me the right ways to hold a pencil, how to use different erasers, how to handle paper, or how to handle a compass for example, for these were observation and body movements that had been the result of thousands of years of experience. We should learn from those who knew more, and thus we should educate our bodies.

Not only that, drawing was not what was marked on the paper surface, but something that was far beyond the drawn lines and spots: it was about our vision. It was about what made us able to see, because what we are able to "see" is a work of construction, dependent on an education, on a technology of thought.

"The hand educates the eyes", he told me.

This is how the act of "seeing" is born.

Without learning there is no "vision", just as there is no music without education of the "hearing", or it is very poor.

Drawing was therefore nothing more than an education of

vision. By learning to draw... we learned to "see".

Many years later I would delight in the teachings of Ernst Gombrich among others, who guided us in the same direction.

Gombrich said: "There is no reality without interpretation; and just as there is no innocent eye, there is no innocent ear".

Only when we learn to "see" can we photograph, we can "write with light". And this is revealed by the very etymology of the word "photography", which means "writing with light". To do this, one must learn to "write" with light.

Anyone can use a fully automatic, digital photographic camera, equipped with Artificial Intelligence, but despite all its resources and a seemingly excellent result, it will not be a "writing of light" if there is no "scripture", a "vision" of things, a culture.

Photography is writing.

The scripture cannot be synthesized by a machine, however good it may be. Scripture is the expression of the human as language.

One can make simulations with the use of Artificial Intelligence resources, just like what happens with the so-called "artificial music", music "made" by computers and so on. First of all, it is music made from algorithms designed by humans. This means that it is just a different compositional process, no less human than any other. On the other hand, the determination of formulas may make the result surprisingly "similar" to something we already know, but it will never be a critique of culture, a denouement of the dynamic human relations, which are always in transformation and, therefore, it will not truly be a "scripture".

The word "scripture" launches its remote etymological roots in the Indo-European *skribh, which indicated the idea of "cutting", "separating", "sifting", "distinguishing". It is always necessary to distinguish in order to understand well. In this way, writing does not mean simply stringing words together, but implies a meaning, an understanding, and so it is a "separation", a kind of "detachment" of something from a whole.

This epistemological dimension of "writing" is what differentiates

art from illustration or decoration.

From the age of fifteen I started to photograph. By then I already had several years of learning, with many miles of lines drawn on pounds of paper.

In my childhood I continuously filled notebooks and notebooks with drawings. If there was one thing my father did not allow to be missing at home when we were children, it was pencil and paper.

My daughter went through an identical path, although in a different way.

In all these cases, everything was an aesthetic education.

Someone looks at something and it is necessary to draw that thing in way to “see” it, developing in this way our capacity to distinguishing lines, colors, shadows and shapes, developing a competence of synthesis.

I gave my first photo essay, from 1972, the title *Airplanes*. It was an essay done on airplanes and in airports, basically in Switzerland, Portugal and France. I was fifteen years old. It was already an essay related to the act of walking.

From then on, among many other essays and projects, I started photographing scenes of my walks. I started photographing paths. Not all of them. But regularly.

Around this time I started a gigantic essay about human intervention on the planet - shadows and lights - and started photographing architecture.

Only when I was about sixteen or seventeen did I discover the work of Henri David Thoreau - which immediately enchanted me. And only later did I discover his beautiful text *Walking*, which marked me for life. John Cage loved Thoreau's writings. This was a connecting factor between our souls.

I would meet John Cage only years later, in 1985, during the 18th São Paulo International Biennial in which I participated with a large musical concert of mine where people in the audience were invited to walk continuously among the musicians, among the sounds. Although John and I started working together as early as 1986, with Merce Cunningham, Bob Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns,

Takehisa Kosugi, David Tudor, Christian Wolff, William Anastasi, or Dove Bradshaw among others, I would only learn that he also loved to walk some time later.

In the early 1980s, more than forty years ago, Luciana and I got married. Our first moment together, when we first met, was a walking inside Brazilian mountains and forests. She loves walking and always does it. She is a solitary walker, so am I - but I always carry my camera with me. We never stopped walking.

During the thirty-two years that I also lived in Manhattan, I was used to walk every day through its streets. I loved doing that. They were very long walkings, of several miles. But, inadvertently I wore too heavy shoes, which caused serious problems in my feet. Even so, I never stopped walking.

When we are in Cascais, Portugal, every morning Luciana and I walk along the beach by the sea. They are delightful and enlightening moments.

Our walking together, Luciana and I, is not restricted to the material plane. We have been walking for more than forty years through love, discovery, and permanent amazement before Nature, the Universe, the human mind, the stars, poetry, art, philosophy, the sciences... before God.

Wherever it may happen, each walking is a story, a universe of discovery and enlightenment.

In Bolognano, Italy, in the wonderful mountains of the Maiella National Park in the Abruzzo, a magical medieval village which is also my land since the early 1990's, I've lived countless walkings not only through the year 1000 village but also along the mountain paths where Joseph Beuys loved walking. Along these paths walked many other brilliant spirits, like the genius Italian artist Renzo Tieri, a brother of mine and a great friend of Beuys - among others.

In Switzerland, for many years now, I simply love walkings. For René Berger, Jean Piaget and so many others walking was an essential part of life, of love for Nature and the human dimension. Switzerland has definitively become my country, it has penetrated deeply into my soul, and I have no words to say how much I have learned and have been learning on my walkings there.

I love Switzerland.

He who walks, usually doesn't talk about it. Today, at the age of sixty-five, I realize this. I'd never talked about walking before.

I speak about it now because it is a reflection on liberty.

I think I have always remained an alien throughout my life. I have always wanted to learn from humans, their look, their thinking - I have never considered using my look to defend a religion or an ideology, for example. I should always be free.

Everything for me has always been - and continues to be - learning. Learning, studying, constitutes for me much of what we commonly call "the meaning of life".

And this means liberty.

The impression I have had on this long journey until now, from the first moment fifty years ago in my teenager, was that there was an essential difference between East and West. A difference in posture.

From about the age of fifteen I began studying both Western philosophy and Eastern sacred texts more intensively. Quickly, Daisetz Suzuki - who had been John Cage's master - became a central reference for me, without at that point I had realized the relationship between them. But there was also the magnificent and majestic *Mahabharata*, the enlightened reflections of Jiddu Krishnamurti, various classical Tibetan texts, stories by Nagarjuna, Milarepa or Lao-Tse among others.

I had the impression that, in general, Eastern thought was more static. In it, one should generally be immobile, standing still. On the other hand, all Western philosophy seemed to be characterized by free walking, by discovery, by the exploration of metamorphosis in its most varied domains.

Lao Tse, who lived between the 6th and 5th centuries BC - who I deeply love - said: "Be still. Stillness reveals the secrets of eternity".

On the other hand, Meister Eckart - the fabulous master who lived between 1260 and about 1328, said: "To get at the core of God at his greatest, one must first get to the core of himself at his minimum part, for no one can know God who has not first known himself. This core is a simple stillness, which is unmoved itself but by

whose immobility all things are moved and all receive life".

Both great thinkers have always been strong references to me over the years, at least since I was a young teenager.

For Lao Tse, immobility reveals eternity; for Eckart, although truth does not move, by it all things move and receive life.

For the former, everything is immobility; for the latter, movement is life which reveals stillness.

While in the East one should be an obedient, passive observer, contemplating Nature and discovering his inner Self; in the West one should be an active, disobedient observer, designing environments, subverting, walking, transforming, elaborating, discovering Nature in which he himself participates with his movement.

When Aristotle defined *peripeteia* as the essential nature of reality, having everything composed of opposites, he does so in relation to *peripatétikós* - which means "to walk" - and to *peripatoi*: paths, walks, sidewalks that signified the name of his philosophical school: *peripatetics*.

Walking is closely related to our idea of liberty.

And liberty is nothing more than knowledge and respect for others, for what surrounds us - this is the etymological nature of our word "culture".

Etymologically, the word *respect* means "to look with attention". Walking requires constant observation and learning, in all senses.

He who walks never does it to destroy, but always to discover.

On the other hand, he who destroys, does so with a certain objective. This objective can be taken only when one is immobile.

In a walk, the objective is thought, observation, which are in the very process of walking.

If walking implied, in any way, destruction, the path itself would be doomed.

A war is the most absolute negation of walking.

In walking we are dealing about the revelation of signs, sounds,

lights, shapes, shadows, movements, behaviors, thoughts.

Therefore, walking is active contemplation: about how to put into motion Oriental immobility.

When we walk, everything is mutation, everything is metamorphosis. This metamorphosis produces a process of differences - and only difference produces consciousness, as an ancient Vedic text taught.

There can only be respect in metamorphosis, otherwise it would cease to be and turn into disintegration. All metamorphosis implies the knowledge about the other, being a human or a biological process.

Because of that, walking means actively operating our self-consciousness.

And only consciousness can lead to peace and liberty.

When we experience a walk, we perceive the transformation of places, of our looks, of the ways of seeing, the metamorphosis of the different universes of fragrances, sounds, colors, the wind, the temperature, the world that forms us.

But it also reveals the mutation of ourselves, showing us who we really are.

Furthermore, it puts before us the consciousness that on those paths thousands and thousands of other people also walked, living moments as sacred and intimate as ours. Some of them have disappeared in the shadows of time, others are still alive, and other ones are alive in our minds.

People like John Cage, René Berger, Salvador Dali, Merce Cunningham, Fernando Pessoa, Honoré de Balzac, Arthur Rimbaud, Antonin Artaud, Joseph Beuys, Werner Heisenberg, Paul Dirac, or Henry David Thoreau walked on the same ground we step on, experienced the same landscapes and paths we do. These among many others are our walking brothers.

Walking is a photo essay, with 365 days photographed over fifty years, taken in about one hundred cities and places on the planet, in twenty countries, in Europe, the Americas, the Middle East, Africa,

and the Far East.

This brings Jean Cocteau to mind when, in *Le Grand Écart*, of 1921, he said: "In the circus, a careless mother may allow her child to take part in the experiments of a Chinese magician. He puts him inside a box. He opens the box; it is empty. He closes it again. He opens it; the child reappears and goes back to his place. Now it is no longer the same child. No one doubts that."

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