

WALK! festival engages community with dynamic art

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If you visit the Weitz this spring, dynamic and engaging installations await in the Perlman Teaching Museum, all centered on the act of walking. There are currently three installations on display: Harriet Bart and Yu-Wen Wu's *Crossings*, a collection of various pieces of art related to walking called *Passages*, and David Lefkowitz and Doug Bratland's fictional visitor's bureau to a parallel Northfield, called the *Ambulatory Nirthfolde Information Dispensary*.

All three are part of the festival that begins this month: "WALK! A Festival of Walking, Art, and Ideas." Sponsored by both Carleton and St. Olaf, the festival was Carleton CAMS professor John Schott's idea. It has evolved to include contributors on Carleton's campus and beyond, and will include a vast array of event. Phil Smith and Angela Ellsworth, two Artists-in-Residence who will each be at Carleton for two weeks, will lead walks and give lectures. Carleton professors will give workshops and lectures, in topics ranging from walking and memoir and

walking in art to the Shikoku pilgrimage route in Japan. Guided walks through Northfield and the Arb, film screenings, and guest lectures will be offered throughout the spring. All of the events are open to the public and will celebrate, encourage, and discuss the multi-faceted act of walking.

Why walking? Schott, speaking at the opening reception of the three exhibits, said the walking festival "has been a long time in development...very close to four million years," when our hominid ancestors first began to walk. At the reception, he discussed the history of walking as a human evolutionary adaptation, as an art form, and as an area of philosophical inquiry: "meta-walking."

The three installations each deal with the idea of meta-walking differently. Upon entering the museum, the walker is greeted by the Ambulatory Nirthfolde Information Dispensary, a visitor's bureau kiosk for a Northfield of a parallel universe. Lefkowitz, an art professor and Carleton web content specialist Doug Bratland have created a new world that seems, to the viewer,

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to be accessible by walking. There are postcards and maps for sites around town, from the Cowling Arboretum Contemplative Transit System and the Inferior Hiking Trail to the Pedestrian Landing Strip and the Sod Wedges of Nirthfolde, are hilarious and realistic glimpses into the world around us and the parallel world that, perhaps, could be real.

Crossings, by Harriet Bart and Yu-Wen Wu, takes this concept in a new direction by addressing walking in the context of the refugee crisis. The viewer's attention is first caught by the vast path of rocks that snakes from one end of the room to the other, leading to a video projected on the wall. Increasingly large numbers pour across the scene and into a chain-link fence that grows taller and taller until the viewer wonders if the numbers will ever escape it.

The fence is also imposed over scenes of nature, turning the idea of walking into something tragic. And when viewers look closely at the rocks at their feet, they will see that some are painted with numbers, representing the 60 million refugees worldwide. Viewers will be invited to transport rocks to St. Olaf's Flaten Art Museum by walking, an act the artists intend to rep-

resent the journeys of refugees.

As Christina Chang, the Interim Director and Curator of the Perlman Teaching Museum, said at the reception, "It's hard for us to hold a number like 60 million in our minds," but *Crossings* allows the viewer to begin to comprehend "the nameless mass who are portrayed as burdens on the countries they are seeking asylum in."

Harriet Bart and Yu-Wen Wu, speaking at the reception, emphasized the enormity of the crisis, saying, "We felt it was important not to lose sight of those who are walking, walking, walking, and are forced to walk to exhaustion."

Passages, the third installation, is a collection of walking art by various artists from Carleton's collections and other external sources. It includes everything from photographs to drawings to animated books, and aims to draw attention to the relationship between the walker and the landscape, the self and the environment.

The Ambulatory Nirthfolde Information Dispensary, *Passages*, and *Crossings* are on display throughout the spring in the Perlman Teaching Museum, and the events of the walking festival will go on periodically throughout the term. Walk around campus, and you'll be sure to encounter them.