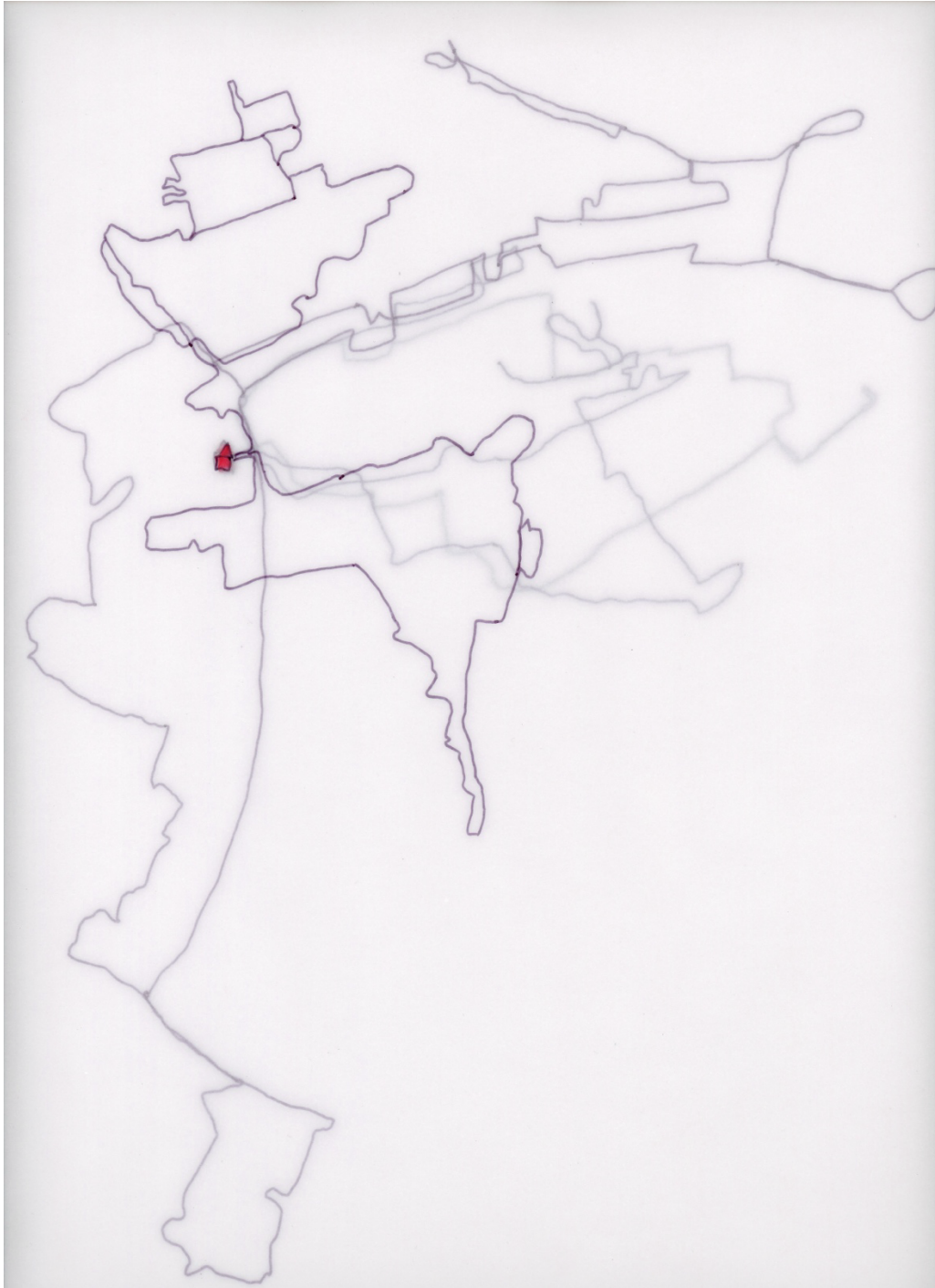


# Reading Poems 26 Walks in Malmö

Roberley Bell



The Stack of Walks

*Reading poems 26 walks in Malmö* takes the form of 26 hand-drawn maps, along with a street map. My hand-drawn maps are the mark of my walk as a linear thread unraveling through the city. Drawn nightly while still fresh in my mind, they also aided in planning the next day's walk.

The maps are drawn on vellum; the translucency of the paper allows each day to be seen through the next. The stack of days, one atop another, form a network that is Malmö. The constant red house, my only landmark noted on the maps. It is my departure point, the doorway of my apartment block on Per Wickenbergsgatan. The small red house can only be seen on the most recent map, the one on top as that point is fixed, the daily path is not.

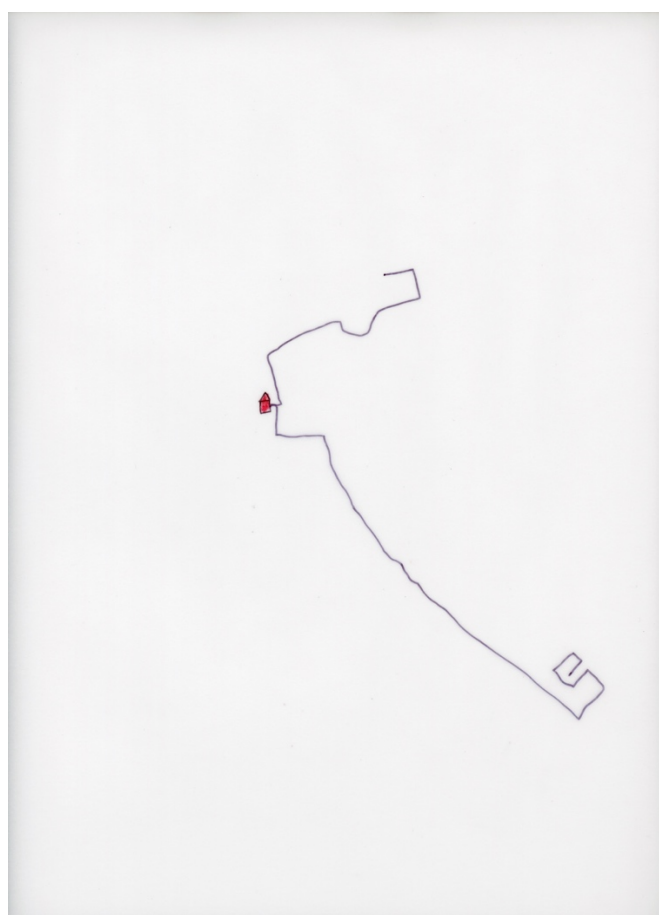
*Reading Poems 26 walks in Malmö* began with the straightforward premise of walking the city each day. To explore the edges, to walk as far as I desire in a day and to become more and more familiar with Malmö as a place over time.



The Daily Walks in Malmö: 4<sup>th</sup> June

My daily routine would begin with a coffee looking out at the magnificent trees of Kungsparken from the window of the apartment on Per Wickenbergsgatan. I would study the map, looking for a location to further explore, a neighbourhood, a specific park, a view to the sea, something I had been told about. Then I would move out, leaving from the front door; the only constant over 26 walks was the point of departure. I would begin without a specific path in mind. Just the idea of where I was headed, not how I would walk there. I do not access the map nor GPS as I walk. I would allow encounters, something unexpected, or the desire to take a seat with a coffee along my way to direct the path.

Acknowledging my surroundings and letting go of what might be the obvious way to a destination, I walk nomadically. I would pause to reflect, to write, to draw here or there and then re-navigate my path and move onwards. The places where I stop or things that I encounter do not form landmarks on my hand-drawn maps, they are reflected in the linear gesture of the map because they have after all dictated my path.



The Daily Walks in Malmö: 6<sup>th</sup> June

My Malmö street map marks every street in Malmö that I walked. Because each day was its own exercise, I had the desire to visualise where I had been. The hand-drawn street map is that web of every

street in Malmö that I walked. Many I walked innumerable times, along with intersections I crossed over time and again. Through this process, the streets never traversed were erased. This map is not about the distance travelled, it is a way to piece together the many parts of the city that I had explored, like a puzzle becoming whole.

I employ the physical act of walking and the documentary process of sensory coding – mapping as a tool for understanding space and place. The city reveals herself gradually as I walk. Through the simple performative act of walking, I engage in discovery and field research as a means to understand something not yet known about a place. I connect to the world through my senses – what I see, what I hear, what the air tastes like. Walking heightens all of our senses while slowing down the pace of sensing the city. These sensory codes make places meaningful.



The Daily Walks in Malmö: 7<sup>th</sup> June

When I walk I focus my attention to walking in the moment. I am conscious of my peripheral vision: is there something there to re-direct my path? I am sensing the smell and taste of the air, the sounds of the city, the paths of other pedestrians. As I move I shift direction, though still in some way I am headed to the point I had selected earlier in the day with my coffee looking out at the chestnut trees in Kungsparken.

Walking immerses us into the built and human environment that surrounds us. Happening in real time, the answers to the questions of how we choose to navigate space and what perceptual properties control those decisions unfold one step after another.

My walks begin as a personal quest, a form of investigation, sometimes with a defined strategy, other times not. The relationship between the idea that I have for the walk, the physical walk itself and how I choose to bring the evidence of the walk to fruition is always in flux. Ideas often change once on the ground. The form that is the evidence of my walk emerges from my process on the ground. I have completed walks in numerous cities, including Istanbul, Salzburg, Sharjah, Paris and Holyoke amongst others. The outcomes were not predetermined at the onset. Each walk dictated its own form. The results have been books, photo documentation, handwritten letters, and drawings. I select the means that best capture the essences of the place, those experiences and perceptions that I gather along the way.



The Daily Walks in Malmö: 18-27<sup>th</sup> June

## Biography

Roberley Bell's practice draws on the world around her, inspired by place and time. Through drawing, photography, performative walking and object making, Bell explores the relationship between nature and the built environment in search of abstraction. Bell is the recipient of numerous fellowships including a Fulbright to Turkey; *Do You Know This Tree?*, published by Visual Studies Press, documents a walk in Istanbul spanning five years. Bell has had numerous residencies including the Cité International in Paris; Stadt Künstlerhaus, Salzburg, Austria; the International Studio Program, NYC; and Sculpture Space, Utica, NY. Most recently she was a research fellow at the Urban Institute, Malmö, Sweden. Bell's work has been exhibited and reviewed internationally. She has completed public projects in Istanbul, Turkey, Kaliningrad, Russia, Chicago, Pittsburgh and Cambridge among others. Bell creates personal walking projects and leads walking workshops internationally. Bell lives in Western Massachusetts, maintaining a studio in the historic canal city of Holyoke, MA.