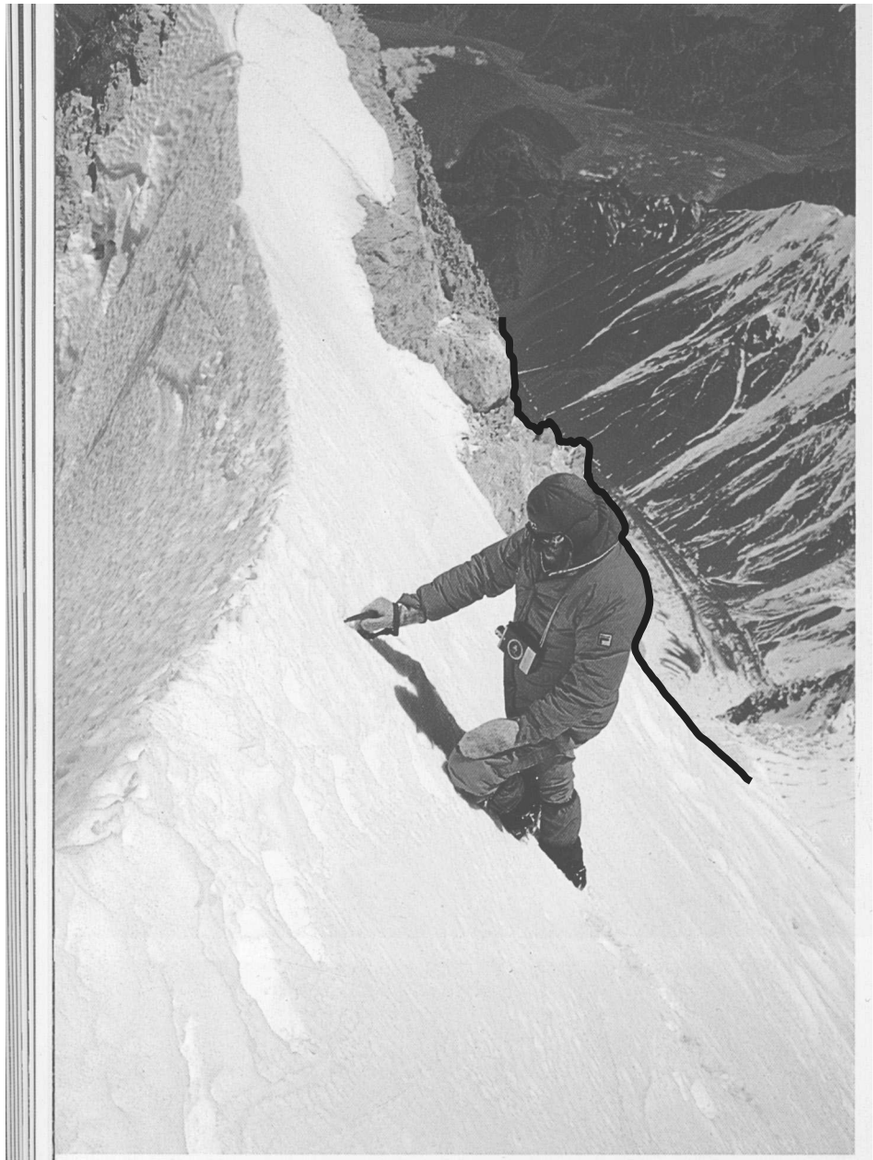
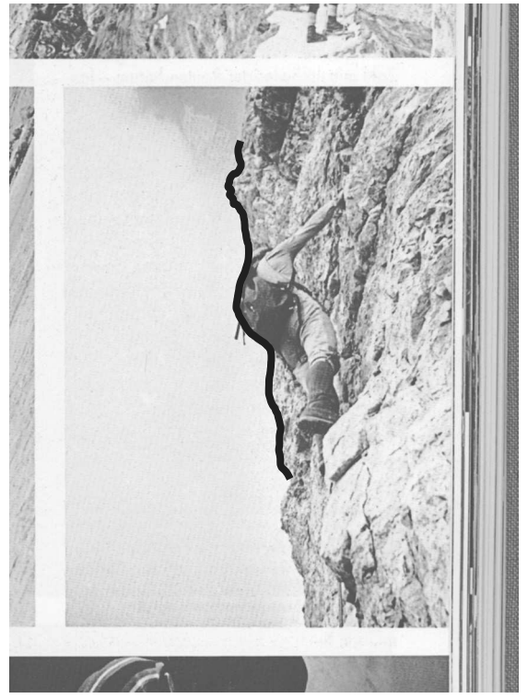
(40) MIDWAY upon the road of our life I found myself within a dark wood, for the right way had been missed.
(Norton, 1891)





Reinhold Messner einen Meter unterhalb des Gipfelgrats am Gasherbrum II (1984, Blick nach Norden, Singkiang), den er schon zwei Jahre vorher in einem Schneesturm erklettert hatte.



Graphic Proprioception

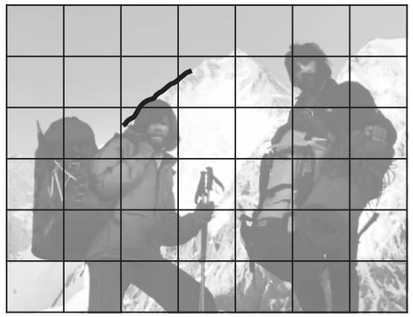
James Langdon

Developed from a text of the same title performed as part of BFTK#4 Event One
(5 June 2019, London College of Communication, London).

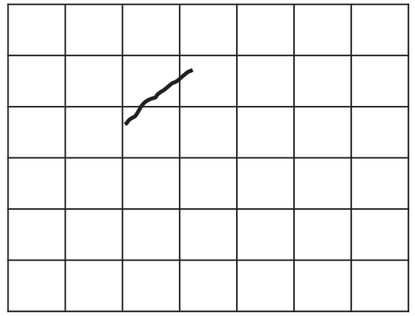
(one)
On the mountain,
Reinhold feeling truly himself



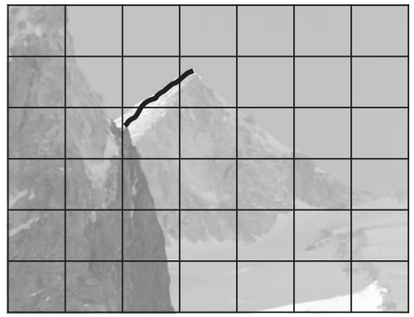
The opening shot of Werner Herzog's 1985 documentary 'The Dark Glow of the Mountains'. Lingering five, ten, fifteen seconds on its protagonists, mountaineers Reinhold Messner and Hans Kammerlander. The three of them: Messner, Kammerlander, Herzog's camera, holding their reciprocal poses. Messner leaning on trekking poles, pack over one shoulder. Kammerlander gripping armfuls of equipment: another pack, ice axe, climbing rope, sleeping mat.



And the camera, holding Messner in absolute compositional alignment with the profile of a mountain, visible far off beyond the two climbers. Gasherbrum I, in the Karakoram range of Pakistan. One of the fourteen peaks on earth over 8,000 metres above sea level, and the first objective of this expedition. The right side of Messner's head, his long hair, where it meets the collar of his blue jacket, and then his shoulder, aligning with Gasherbrum I. Not for some fleeting instant aligning. The entire shot. Five, ten, fifteen seconds.



Camera panning away, to the left, toward the distant Gasherbrum II. Messner and Kammerlander will follow, but not by this uncomplicated vector. They will traverse both peaks in an arduous, inching effort, without returning to base camp to rest and replenish. Camera arriving, refocussing, registering the second mountain in frame. One, there was Gasherbrum I. Two, where it was, Gasherbrum II. Only Messner missing. Camera anticipating him. He will come. Messner, mountain, mountain. Mountain, Messner, mountain. Mountain, mountain, Messner.



Messner Mountain Museum. Across six mountaintop sites in the Italian Dolomites. Messner its founder and figurehead. Its logo a capitalised acronym correlating, inevitably, its six typographic

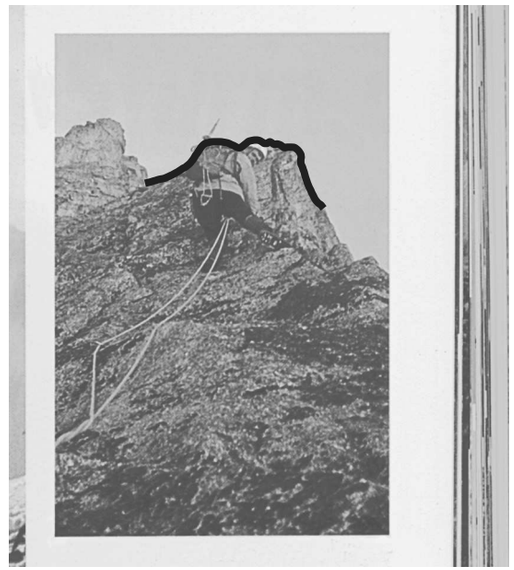
peaks — MMM — and its six sites. Inevitably. Naturally. In the remains of Sigmundskron Castle, outside the city of Bolzano, the MMM centrepiece. Expedition memorabilia. Unique artefacts of global mountain culture. A technical history of mountaineering. Books. Many books. Books about mountains. Books about Messner. Books by Messner, about mountains. Hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of pages in those books. Countless photographs on those pages. And in those photographs, Messner and the mountains, continuing, irresistibly, aligning. Messner's head. Mountain. Messner's shoulder. Mountain. Messner's chest. Mountain. Messner's stout back, Messner's gesturing arm, Messner's trudging leg. Mountain Mountain Mountain. Messner on the rock face. Messner climbing. Messner in the valley. Messner posing. Messner alone. Messner in expedition group photographs. But never the others in the group aligning, always Messner aligning. What explains all of this graphic coincidence?

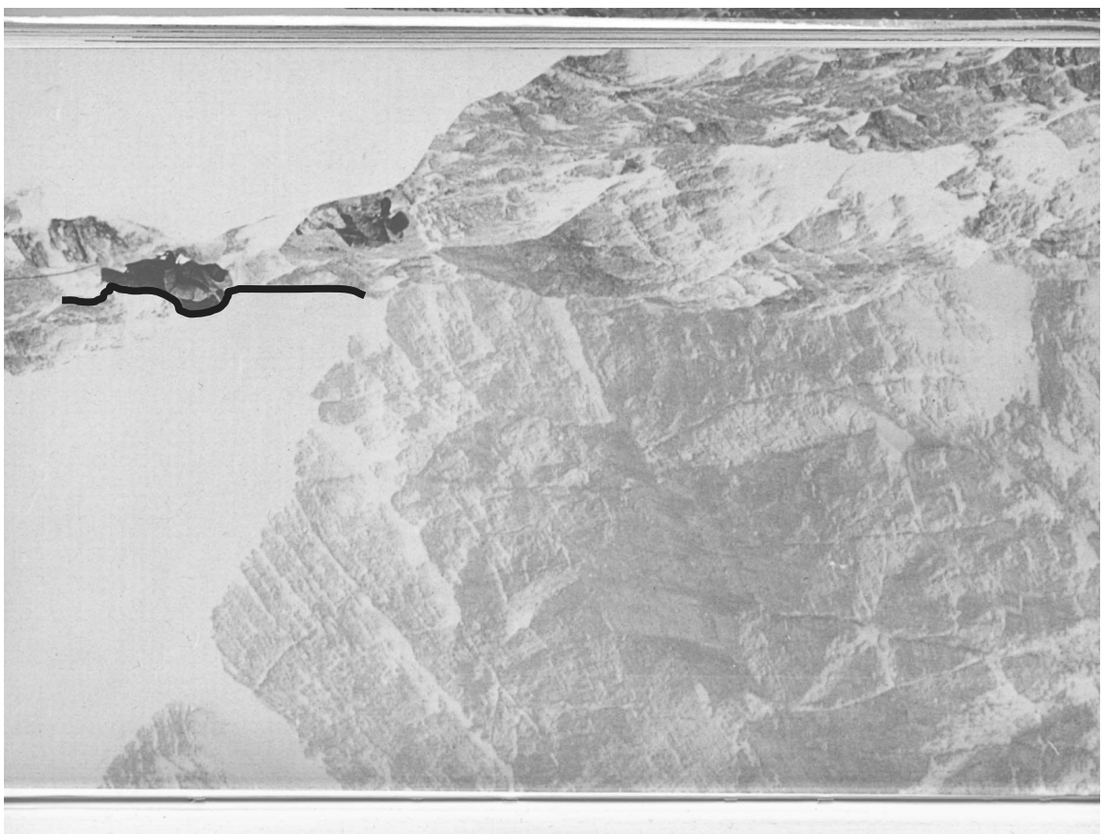
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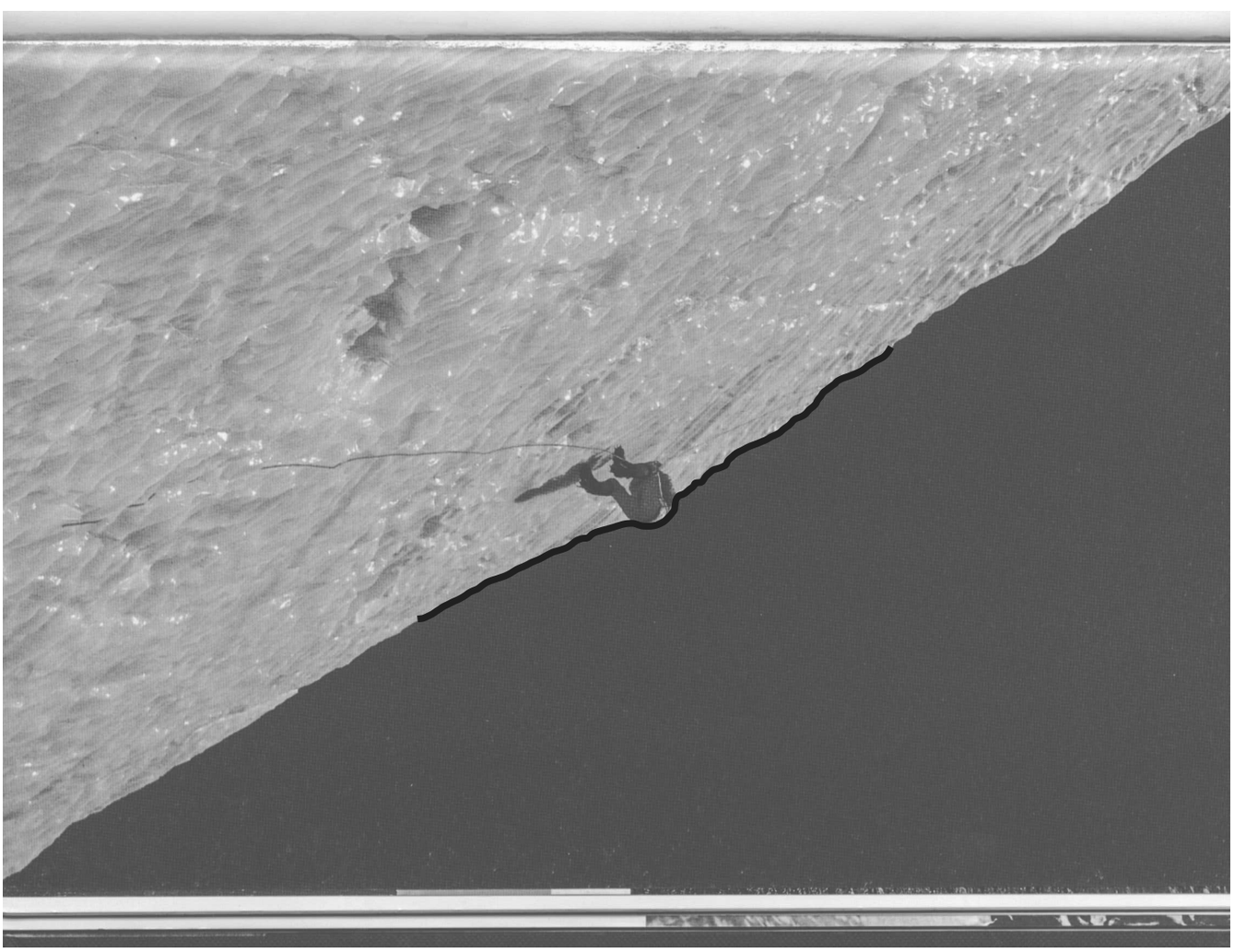
Picture restless Reinhold. Some unimaginable summit just claimed. But Reinhold back down. At his desk, writing. Reflecting. Reporting. Writing a sentence. Out of restlessness. Out of longing. *I do not regard a mountain just as a mass of stone, but as an organism, which one observes and with which one lives.* Inert, Reinhold. Detached. *From below, from a good distance, the face had appeared to us as a graphic whole.* Too distant. Not good. Animate it. Reinhold's editors: dissatisfied, anxious, reacting. Beckon to the reader, Reinhold. Invite them into your territory. *I used to be accused of escaping from reality in these climbing trips. However, I had much more the feeling of escaping into reality.* Whispering here, don't dare distract him. There. There is the opening, Reinhold. Go on, go in.

*

Slowly, very slowly I let myself dissolve. I see my whole being from without. 'Here' is now somewhere else. I am transparent, made of glass, borne up by the world. Still with you, Reinhold. Ecstatic, here. *It is as if my thoughts had acted like a dividing wall and now, without my noticing or smelling or hearing anything, everything has gently percolated through into me.* Now! An alignment, happening. Precarious, fragile. Witness. *I sit here as if I were a constituent part of this mountain. Every little move I make with the utmost respect. I daren't slip, daren't trigger an avalanche nor tumble into a crevasse. I am like the snow on the mountainside, and perfectly in tune with the rocks, the ice, the clouds.* Yes Reinhold. Yes. Finally. Like weather. Like the snow. You contribute the skyline. Covering the rocks, the ice. Uniting with them.

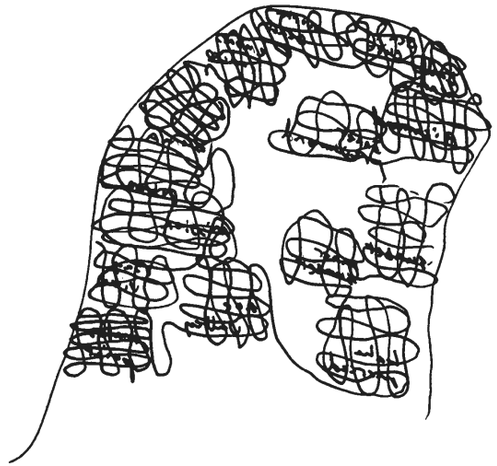




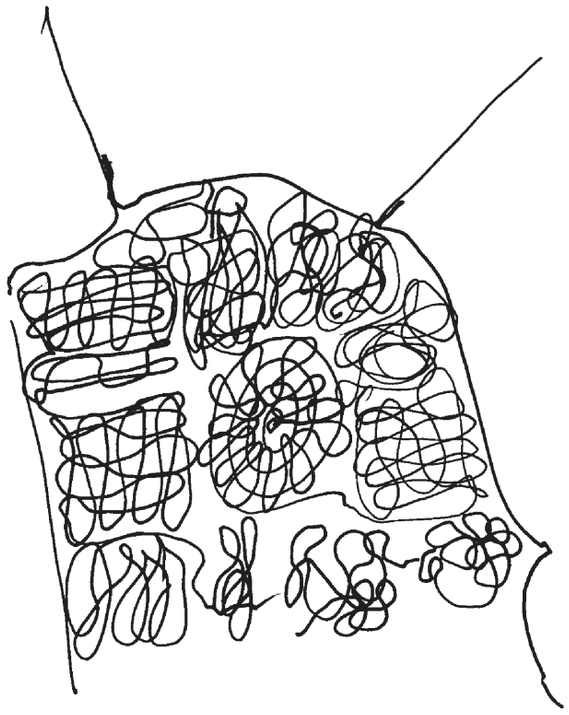


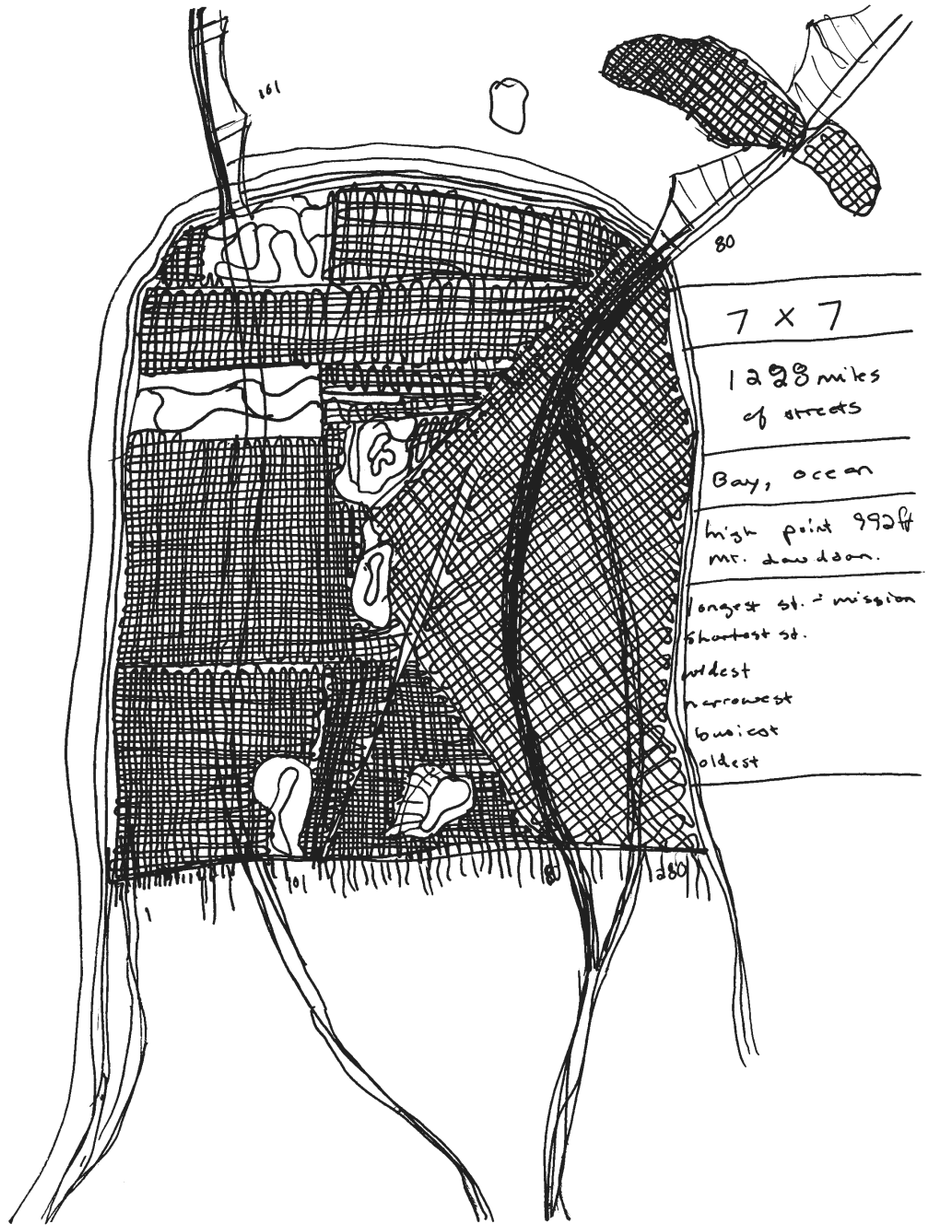


Reinhold Messner (left) and Peter Habeler (right) at Munich Airport on 22nd May 1978



« Stills from ‘The Dark Glow of the Mountains’ (1985) by Werner Herzog, and photographs from Reinhold Messner’s extended bibliography, with drawings by James Langdon.

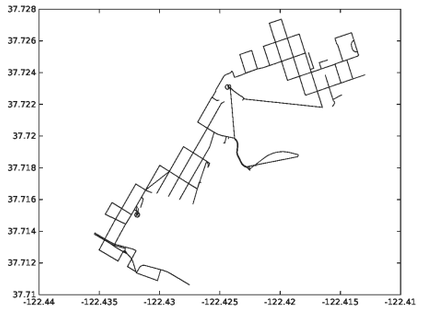



101
80
7 x 7
1298 miles of streets
Bay, ocean
high point 992ft mt. davidson.
longest st. = mission
shortest st.
wildest
narrowest
bumicat
oldest
1
101
80
280

(two)
Amidst the labyrinthine city,
Rickey thinking he would see what was what

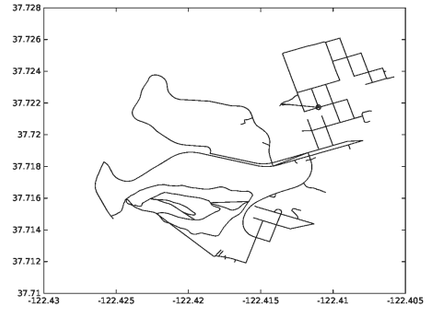
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Here is long-distance runner Rickey Gates, running every single street in San Francisco. Systematically. Plotting the most direct course. Rickey as the current flowing through the circuit. All at once. Or as close to it as physically possible for a human body. A highly trained body. San Francisco offering itself up. Lending itself to such an objective, with its strict edges. The bay, surrounding, defining the city's outline. Like a head in profile. Containing its labyrinthine streets as spiny interconnecting neurons. Having their own inscrutable connective logics. Rickey running, striving to make it singular. To take it in. Covering it, athletically. A body delivering its senses to their subject. Taking a snapshot. Rickey saying *to open your eyes and keep them open for a period of time and then close them*.

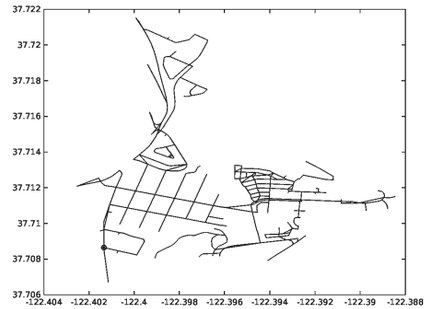


For forty-seven days, Rickey running. And the whole time, at the periphery, the Golden Gate Bridge in orange. The Golden Gate Bridge painted orange. Any superficial sighting of it, on any given day,

confirming that fact. The official Golden Gate Bridge website even giving, with disarming lack of pretence, formulae for recreating the bridge's exact way of being painted orange. Cyan 0%, Magenta 69%, Yellow 100%, blacK 6%. Or "International Orange". Or "Fireweed".



Rickey running. Rickey looking. Rickey hearing. One experience. Scanning, cataloguing. Going to plan. Rickey having calculated it all. With an algorithm. For efficiency. To calculate the quickest way. Or the most economical, that might be a better way. Of saying it. Of seeing it. Absorbing it. With the least overlap. Like a single thought that would activate all of the city's neurons at once. An expansive thought constrained only by the time it takes for current to surge through hundreds of thousands of kilometres of neuronal pathways.



But not so fast. The Golden Gate Bridge never is painted orange. That cannot be said. Cannot be seen. That cannot be done. The Golden Gate Bridge is a site where painting happens. Where painting orange is happening. For that bridge is not a thing that can definitively be painted orange. It cannot be painted orange quick enough. Cannot be painted orange quick enough to ever say it's been painted orange.

*

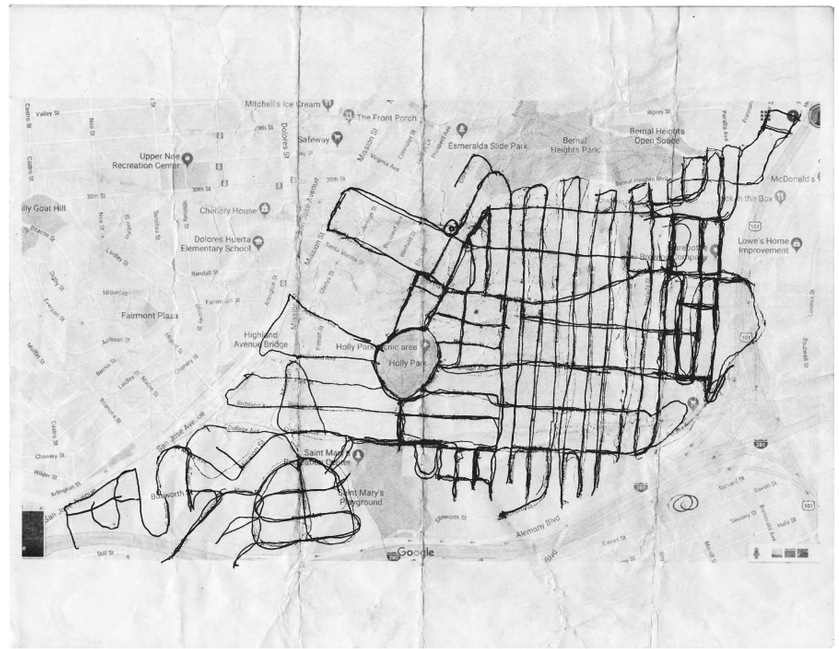
Rickey running but thinking it's not working. Realising it's not working. Rickey deviating from the plan. From the algorithm. The algorithm saying turn here Rickey and Rickey not turning. Rickey feeling here is not the place to turn. Reason objecting. The city's reason not the algorithm's reason. Rickey ignoring the algorithm. Rickey ignoring the vector. Rickey running the city, as it make sense. As it presents itself. Its areas having formed as a result of like-minded people coming together and growing together. Rickey drawing the line. But after the fact. The line recording the running, not programming the running. The line coming during, and after. Not before. Not in the abstract.

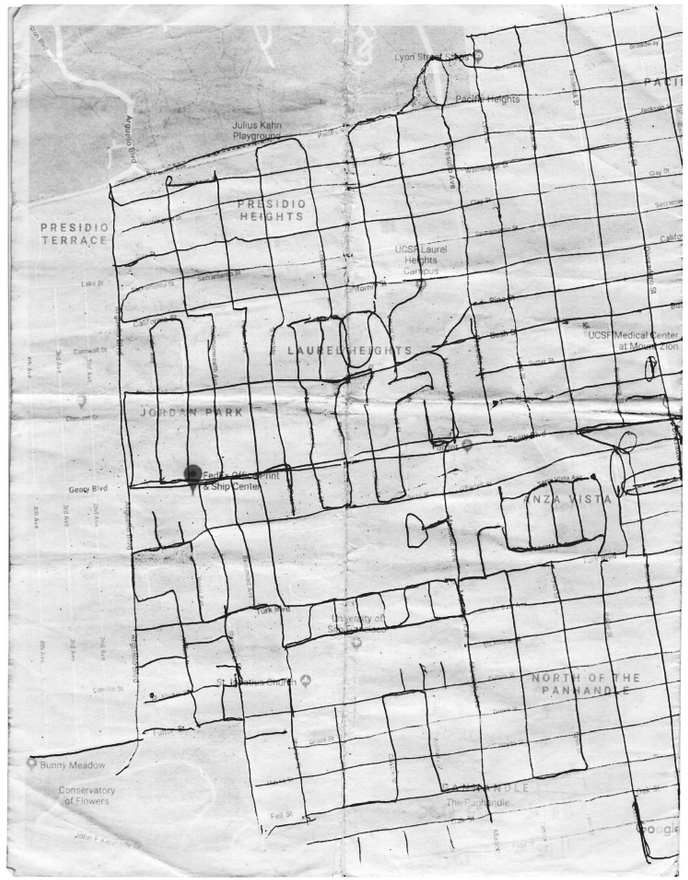
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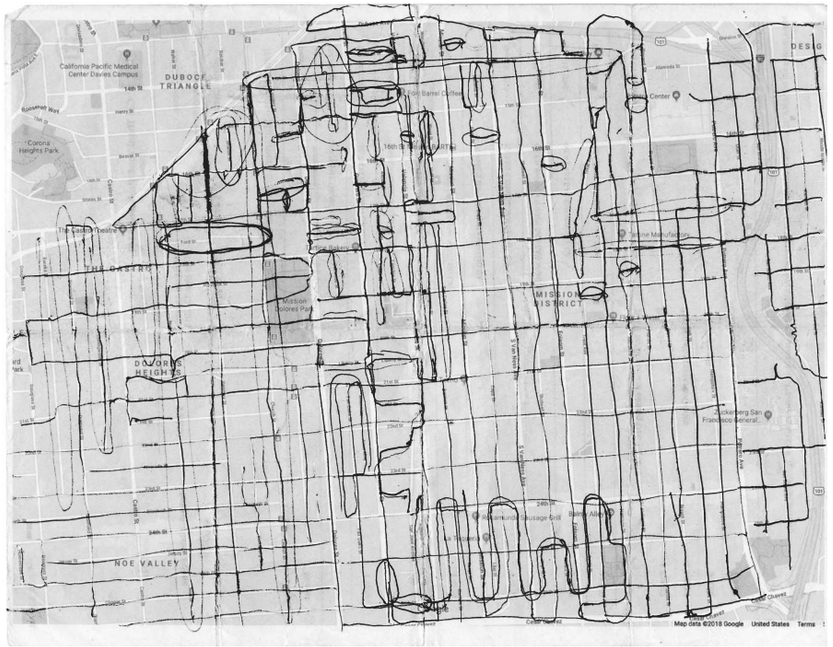
Even if the team of more than fifty "revered and rugged" specialist metal workers, painters, and support labourers could maintain such an illusion it still could not be done. No matter what they thought. But if they did. If they single-mindedly set off painting orange from one end of the bridge. With energy. With intent. To get it done. To see it done. Even then, by the time they reached the opposite end the wicked salt-fogged San Francisco air would have been undoing their work all that time. For an equal amount of time undoing. Back where they started, a superficial sighting would more likely be reporting the bridge corroded than painted orange.

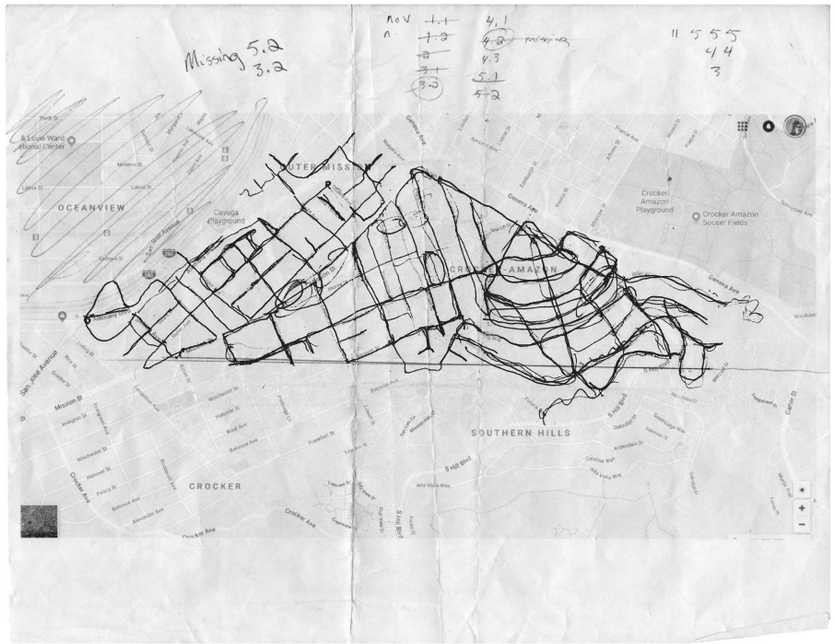
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Then something intervening. Something not foreseen. Not another weathering. Emergency. Changing, reprogramming everything. The matter in the air, the colour in the sky, the concern in the talk. The sky turning orange. The city changing. From the outside. Wildfires burning across California and altering the city's consciousness. Rickey feeling it coming apart. The single experience. The snapshot. For ten days wildfires burning. Ten of forty-seven days. Wildfires burning in parts of the snapshot and not in others. The snapshot of San Francisco becoming blurred. One city and all the people in it witnessing natural disaster. Another one not. Two cities then. As close as Rickey was getting to getting it all at once.




Julius Kahn Playground
Pacific Heights
PRESIDIO HEIGHTS
PRESIDIO TERRACE
UCSF Laurel Heights Campus
LAUREL HEIGHTS
UCSF Medical Center at Mount Zion
JORDAN PARK
Geary Blvd
ANZA VISTA
NORTH OF THE PANHANDLE
Bunny Meadow
Conservatory of Flowers
Google


California Pacific Medical Center Davies Campus
DUBOCE TRIANGLE
Corona Heights Park
MISSION DISTRICT
NOE VALLEY
Map data ©2018 Google
United States
Terms



« Maps and drawings by Rickey Gates, from his 2018 run covering every street in San Francisco.

(41) On traveling one half of our life's way,
I found myself in darkened forests when
I lost the straight and narrow path to stray.
(Arndt, 1994)