

40 YEARS
KALDOR PUBLIC
ART PROJECTS

1977
RICHARD
LONG



1977 RICHARD LONG

PROJECT

A straight hundred mile walk in Australia

A line in Australia

December 1977

Broken Hill

Bushwood circle

8 December 1977 – 7 January 1978

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Stone line

15 December 1977 – 5 February 1978

Art Gallery of NSW, Sydney

I like simple, practical, emotional, quiet, vigorous art. I like the simplicity of walking.

Richard Long, *Five six pick up sticks*, Anthony D'Offay Gallery, London 1980

I like the fact that every stone is different, one from another, in the same way all fingerprints, or snowflakes (or places) are unique, so no two circles can be alike. In the landscape works, the stones are of the place and remain there. With an indoor sculpture there is a different working rationale. The work is usually first made to fit its first venue in terms of scale, but it is not site-specific; the work is autonomous in that it can be re-made in another space and place. When this happens, there is a specific written procedure to follow. The selection of the stones is usually random; also individual stones will be in different places within the work each time. Nevertheless, it is the 'same' work whenever it is re-made.

Richard Long, *Heaven and Earth*, Tate Britain, 2009
www.tate.org.uk/britain/exhibitions/richardlong/rooms/room4.shtm

RICHARD LONG

Detail of a photograph taken by Long during
A straight hundred mile walk in Australia
1977, which became part of a triptych with
the same title

Photo: Richard Long
Courtesy Kaldor Public Art Projects



1977 RICHARD LONG

INTRODUCTION

Richard Long's work comes from his love of nature and through his long solitary walks in rural and remote areas of Britain, North and South America, Asia and Australia – walking as art, as sculpture. Long responds to these environments by manipulating or altering the landscape in some subtle way: by making simple marks to leave a trace on the ground or by creating sculptures from the natural features he has found on site such as his stone line and circle sculptures or his crosses of beheaded daisies. Often he makes image and text works documenting and mapping his walks, and sometimes he brings these natural materials into the gallery. For his 1977 Kaldor project, he did both: undertaking a walk in outback NSW and creating a stone sculpture in a location there, and also creating works in galleries in Sydney and Melbourne.

ARTIST

Richard Long

born 1945 in Bristol, England
lives and works in Bristol

One of the best-known British land artists, Richard Long is one of a generation of artists who, from the 1960s, helped redefine sculpture and expand its possibilities. Like Gilbert & George, Long came out of St Martins School of Art. While Gilbert & George became 'living sculptures', Long began to use walking and his encounters with the landscape as a form of art. Long has said he wanted to use the landscape in new ways. Using natural materials like grass and water, he started making work outside, and, according to Long, this led to the idea of making a sculpture by walking. His *A line made by walking* was made in 1967 when he was only 22 and was his first walk in the landscape as art. A straight line in a grass field, going 'nowhere', was a kind of abstract art made in real space and time. Then Long would make maps, recording very simple but formal walks. On his website he has stated, 'Each walk, though not by definition conceptual, realised a particular idea. Thus walking – as art – provided a simple way for me to explore relationships between time, distance, geography and measurement.' He has identified his prototype landscape as plateau-like, treeless, but with plenty of water, such as Dartmoor in Devon, the tundra of Alaska, the pampas in Argentina and the steppes of Mongolia.

From the beginning, Long made indoor works parallel with the outdoor ones, from driftwood or quarry stones or mud using his hands or feet on the floor or walls. For him they have different effects: real stones in a gallery have their own presence as they directly affect the senses of the viewers in public time and place; while it is the imagination that is fed through the 'second-hand' medium of photos, texts and maps.

Long has exhibited widely since his first solo show at the Konrad Fischer Gallery in Düsseldorf in 1968. He was awarded the Turner Prize in 1989, and in 1990 became a *Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres*. He has recently been the subject

of two major retrospectives, including one at London's Tate Britain in 2009, which featured works from Long's *A straight hundred mile walk in Australia*.

PROJECT

By the time he came to Australia at the invitation of John Kaldor in 1977, Richard Long had started making works – including a series of 100 mile walks – in different locations around the world. Creating *A straight hundred mile walk in Australia*, he had no particular destination in mind when he set out. He caught the train from Sydney to Perth and simply got off when he saw country that he thought was suitable. Walking for Long has enabled him to extend the boundaries of sculpture. The length of the journey and the time it takes him, solitariness and isolation, become elemental variables in this form of art. Stones are used as markers of distance or time; and become part of a huge yet anonymous work.

Most of the artist's longer walks are measured by days and nights, by solar time. The walk he took in Australia, outside Broken Hill in NSW, was made daily, with him returning to the same campsite each night; the hundred miles refers to the cumulative total. This resulted in a series of photographs of the same name. On the walk he also created *A line in Australia* – a line of red stones in a now unknown location, recorded as a colour photograph. The stones he saw as grains of sand in a vast space of the landscape.

Long's work, like nature, can be ephemeral or permanent. For his Kaldor project, Long also made site-specific works for the Art Gallery of NSW in Sydney and the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne.

Stone line (now in the Art Gallery of NSW collection) was made from blue metal stone sourced by the artist from a Parramatta quarry and hand placed by him along the Gallery's entrance court.

Bushwood circle was made from gum and tea tree branches Long found outside Melbourne which he placed to form a giant circle in the National Gallery of Victoria's Murdoch Court.

Long also made a work for John Kaldor at this time from pieces of driftwood collected around the foreshores of the Lane Cove River, near the Kaldor house. *Sydney Harbour driftwood* is part of the John Kaldor Family Gift to the Art Gallery of NSW in 2011.

WORLD EVENTS: 1977

- _ Elvis Presley found dead
- _ Release of *Star Wars*, directed by George Lucas, launching the epic film franchise
- _ Disco music becomes the rage
- _ Train derailment in the Sydney suburb of Granville kills 83 people
- _ Walter de Maria installs *The New York earth room* in New York and *The lightning field* in New Mexico
- _ Exhibition of earth art opens at the Hirshhorn Museum, Washington DC

Long's art was biodegradable before anyone used the word. It remembers the first human marks, so simple they seem part of nature – megalithic mounds, stone circles. His pictures make no comment, except to impart historical fact.

Jonathan Jones, 'A hymn of love to the earth', *Guardian*, 3 June 2009, p 19

- _ The work of Australian landscape painter Fred Williams exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art, New York
- _ 6th Kaldor project: Sol LeWitt's *Wall drawings* installed at the Art Gallery of NSW and Melbourne's National Gallery of Victoria
- _ 7th Kaldor project: Richard Long creates *A straight hundred mile walk in Australia* and *A line in Australia* near Broken Hill as well as *Bushwood circle* at Melbourne's National Gallery of Victoria and *Stone line* at the Art Gallery of NSW

THEME

Land art and site-specific art

In the 1960s, a number of artists in the United States and Europe, driven by a desire to escape the commercial and spatial confines of galleries and museums, developed monumental landscape projects. Also known as earthworks, or earth art, land art was in some way inspired by the geometrical forms of minimal art and some time-based conceptual art, but the artists were also responding to the origins of art in prehistoric stone circles and burial mounds. The 1970s saw the emergence of a back-to-the-land anti-urbanism and more spiritual attitude to the planet, and land art became part of a growing concern for both indigenous and ecological issues.

Ecology is a vision of the interdependence of events in a regenerative system. The word ecology derives from the sense of habitat (from the Greek *oikos*, meaning household), but has developed to reinterpret economics, politics and social theory, and is linked inevitably to environmentalism. (Joseph Beuys' 'social sculpture', especially his 1972 project to plant 7000 oak trees, shares many similarities with land art processes.)

Green awareness has been exerting a subliminal pressure on the collective imagination for decades. By the mid 20th century, nature itself was not safe from cultural intervention. The strong psychological craving to find in nature, with its turning seasons, a consolation for our mortality is as old as pagan primitive groves and tree worship. Venerations of nature are present in our city parks and our mountain hikes, especially as we are overrun with artificiality. Our conception of nature is, likewise, a 'man-made' construction, or intensely mediated (plastic flowers, 'natural' wood Formica patterns, simulated earthquakes at Warner Brothers studios), to say nothing of the ongoing degradation of planet Earth (the greenhouse effect, climate change, supercharged strains of grains and vegetables). Land art, environmental art and eco-art demonstrated the profound social need to affirm membership in the ecological truths of life and environment.

It has been argued that Gerry Schum, a German film director who made some of the first artists videos, coined the name 'land art' after he directed, produced and filmed the 1969 film of the same name. The film showed work from eight American and European artists: Marinus Boezem, Jan Dibbets, Barry Flannigan, Michael Heizer, Richard Long, Walter de Maria, Dennis Oppenheim and Robert Smithson. Schum came up with the

concept after searching for a new venue for art, in order to displace the studio-gallery-collector triangle, which he logically billed as a *Fernsehgalerie* (television gallery). Responding to the invitation to make a work for Schum's film, Long wrote: 'I was happy to have the chance of conceiving a work in a new medium for me (film), which gave a new expression to my straight moorland walks of that time.' He added, 'If explanations are necessary, then the work is no good' (Gerry Schum & Ursula Schum-Wevers, *Land art*, Hartwig Popp, Hanover 1970).

In his 1968 essay 'The sedimentation of the mind: earth projects', Smithson provided a critical framework for the movement as a response to the disconnection of modernism from social issues as represented by the formalist critic Clement Greenberg. He is also responsible for perhaps the most famous piece of land art, *Spiral jetty* 1970, which involved hauling nearly 6000 tonnes of rock and earth into a spiral-shape jetty protruding into Great Salt Lake in Utah.

De Maria was in Schum's film and he too created a renowned work of land art, *The lightning field* 1977. Situated in the remote desert of New Mexico, it comprises 400 polished stainless steel poles installed in a grid array measuring one mile by one kilometre.

Another land art work from the 1970s is still in progress. Since 1972, James Turrell has been working on possibly the largest piece of land art to date, creating nine underground chambers and a network of tunnels inside the extinct Roden Crater volcano in Arizona to form a kind of naked-eye celestial observatory.

Richard Long's *A line made by walking* from 1967 – where the artist trod along a line repeatedly in an English field – is emblematic of two tributaries that join in art history: a move toward the world outside the gallery, and a move toward performance art using the body as both subject and object. Both represent a way beyond a disenchanting world, and a way of reinforcing the bond between the individual and the more encompassing forces of nature. While the subsequent documentation (in the case of Long, photos or maps plus words logging the location and duration of his walks) gave the works another life back in the galleries.

Site-specific art is like land art in many respects: the artist locates the site, and researches its history and its meaning in order to respond with an artwork. Site-related works are embedded in a social as well as natural context (like those interventions in bus shelters, with the artist contriving subversive ads to replace the usual ones). They are wide-ranging in style: sometimes they even act as field reports on the place; they may be temporary or permanent; hard to find, or easy to access. Plopping a sculpture anywhere has given way to the input of the site and sensitivity to the environment, or even to the site using the artist as a kind of medium through which to express itself.

COLLECTION CONNECTIONS

Relevant works in the Art Gallery of NSW collection
www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection

- **Richard Long** (England, b1945)

Slate cairn 1977

slate slabs; 610 x 25 cm (d x h)
Gift of John Kaldor 1995 191.1995

- **Joseph Beuys** (Germany, b1921, d1986)

- **Ute Klophaus** (Germany, b1940)

'Explaining pictures to a dead hare' performance by Joseph Beuys 1965 (printed 1997)

gelatin silver photograph; 31 x 20.5 cm image/sheet (irreg)
Mervyn Horton Bequest Fund 1997 434.1997.10

- **Ken Unsworth** (Australia, b1931)

Propped stone piece 1976

19 river stones, wood and mirrors; dimensions variable
Gift of the artist 2000 203.2000.a-nn

Suspended stone circle II 1974–77, 1988

103 river stones, wire; 400 cm diameter overall
Purchased 1988 356.1988.a-yyyy

- **Ian Hamilton Finlay** (Scotland, b1925, d2006)

Stonypath 1984 from the series *Stonypath*

type C photograph; 30.5 x 40.5 cm
Mervyn Horton Bequest Fund 1984 190.1995.3

- **Dennis Oppenheim** (USA, b1938)

Directed seeding – cancelled crop 1969

gelatin silver and type C photographs, collage; 154.2 x 386.2 x 2 cm
Gift of the Dennis Oppenheim Foundation 1996 236.1996.a-e

- **Tony Cragg** (England, b1949)

Spyrogyra 1992

glass and steel; 220 x 210 cm
Mervyn Horton Bequest Fund 1997 292.1997

- **Susan Norrie** (Australia, b1953)

Undertow 2002

six-channel video installation with sound, projection boxes
Purchased with funds provided by Clayton Utz 2003 266.2003

- **Hossein Valamanesh** (Iran; Australia, b1949)

Longing belonging 1997

direct colour positive photograph, carpet, velvet; dimensions variable
Contemporary Collection Benefactors 2002 207.2002.a-b

SELECTED REFERENCES

- _ Patrick Elliott, *Richard Long: walking and marking*, National Galleries of Scotland, UK 2008
- _ Sophie Forbat (ed), *40 years: Kaldor Public Art Projects*, Kaldor Public Art Projects, Sydney 2009
- _ Rosalind Krauss, *Passages in modern sculpture*, MIT Press, Cambridge Mass 1990
- _ William Malpas, *The art of Richard Long: complete works*, Crescent Moon Publishing, UK 2007
- _ Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the white cube, the ideology of the gallery space*, University of California Press, California 1999
- _ Julie Reiss, *From margin to center: the spaces of installation art*, MIT Press, Cambridge Mass, 1999

Land art

- _ Max Andrews (ed), *Land art: a cultural ecology handbook*, Royal Society for the Arts, UK 2006
- _ Michael Lailach, *Land art: the earth as canvas*, Taschen Basic Art Series, Cologne 2007
- _ Ben Tufnell, *Land art*, Tate Publishing, UK 2006
- _ Brian Wallis, *Land and environmental art: themes and movements*, Phaidon Press, London 2005

Websites

- _ Kaldor Public Art Projects
www.kaldorartprojects.org.au
- _ Kaldor Public Art Projects Explorer, Art Gallery of NSW
www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/kaldor_projects
- _ Richard Long
www.richardlong.org
- _ Richard Long, *Heaven and Earth*, Tate Britain
www.tate.org.uk/britain/exhibitions/richardlong

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

Consider the artist's statement: 'I like simple, practical, emotional, quiet, vigorous art. I like the simplicity of walking'. Without researching his other artworks, based on this statement, how do you envisage Long's practice and portfolio of artworks?

How does walking influence Long's work? Consider his movement through a space and the various objects he encounters. Discuss what feelings may be engendered through walking.

Long says that 'walking has enabled him to extend the boundaries of sculpture'. Do you consider Long to be a walking sculpture himself? If so, is Long's sculpture kinetic? Discuss the notion of movement in Long's body of work.

Discuss Long's art practice, considering the conceptual and material qualities of his work, exhibition installation factors and his statement 'walking – as art – provided a simple way for me to explore relationships between time, distance, geography and measurement'. How does Long work with space, place and scale? How does the exhibition space influence his process?

Research other land-based artists of the 1970s. Where does Long fit into this area of art-making practice? Compare and contrast Long's Kaldor project with Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* 1970. Compare these artists with another artist working with similar materials today.

How does the use of found objects onsite where they are discovered compare with removing them to create art in a gallery space? What environmental issues need to be considered? Discuss if the audience is integral to the artwork's resolution.

Discuss how Long's outdoor works parallel his indoor works. What essential concepts and practices does Long carry through from outdoors to indoors? Imagine reversing the process. What elements are gained or lost by making these transitions between exteriors and interiors?

Debate whether there is a contradiction in showing Long's works of nature in man-made environments. What dialogue between, or interrogation of, the materials is set up by their installation inside? Investigate how making works in different locations impacts on Long's creations. Consider the materials, their authenticity, their archival qualities and issues surrounding their installation.

How are artworks affected by recreating them in a new environment, such as a gallery space? Do you consider documentation that references the original environment an important part of the process? Discuss whether the viewer needs to have experienced the work in its original context to assist their engagement with, and reading of, the work in the new space.

Investigate and outline the difference between land art, environmental art, installation and outdoor sculpture. Locate examples of each and discuss the artists' intentions. Compare and contrast the practice of land art and site-specific art. Assess the temporary nature of both artforms. What ethical and environmental issues are to be considered when practising these forms of art?

Long uses symbols in his work. Are they representational or abstract? How would you create a visual map of the cumulative total of Long's straight walk? Consider the text and symbols necessary to represent his journey.

In 1967, Long wanted to 'use landscape as an artist in new ways'. Research the many ways landscape had been represented until that point in art history. Compare the examples you find with Long's work. Do you think he succeeded in his aim?

Long's work has been described as a 'prototype landscape', depicting key characteristics of places, for example, the tundra of Alaska. Think about your own environment. What dominant characteristics do you associate with it? Propose how you would develop these features into an artwork. Outline the materials, scale and the viewpoint you would incorporate.

Investigate how the period of time in which an artist creates their art affects how it is received by its audience. Suggest some contemporary artists whose work would resonate with Long's work. Discuss the ways in which artists influence each other.

Discuss how the international movement of the 1960s and 1970s known as land art is perceived today. Is it still practised, perhaps under a different genre? If so, outline some examples. Compare Long's practice with that of Susan Norrie, Hossein Valamanesh, Tony Cragg or Ken Unsworth.

Identify events that were occurring in the world that may explain Long's response to the environment through his art practice. One critical response to Long's artworks was that they made 'no comment'. Do you agree? Do you think Long's work communicates history to the audience?

Do you think photographs of Long's Kaldor project do justice to the ideas behind his work? Is it essential for an audience to be physically present with an artwork to truly appreciate it? Debate the idea that much of art needs to be experienced rather than observed. In what ways have artists played with this notion about the relationship between audiences and art?

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George Alexander, Tristan Sharp
and Michelle Perry,
Public Programs Department,
Art Gallery of NSW
Design Analiese Cairis, Zoe Cooper
Editor Kirsten Tilgals

Cover: Richard Long's *Stone Line*
1977 was created in the entrance
gallery of the Art Gallery of New South
Wales from blue metal stone sourced
by the artist from a Parramatta quarry.
Photo: Kerry Dundas

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unless otherwise indicated

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Art Gallery of NSW
Art Gallery Road, The Domain
Sydney 2000 Australia
pp@nsw.gov.au

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