

# The Drawing of our Lives and other Practices

## An introduction to the living archiving processes of Belasco New

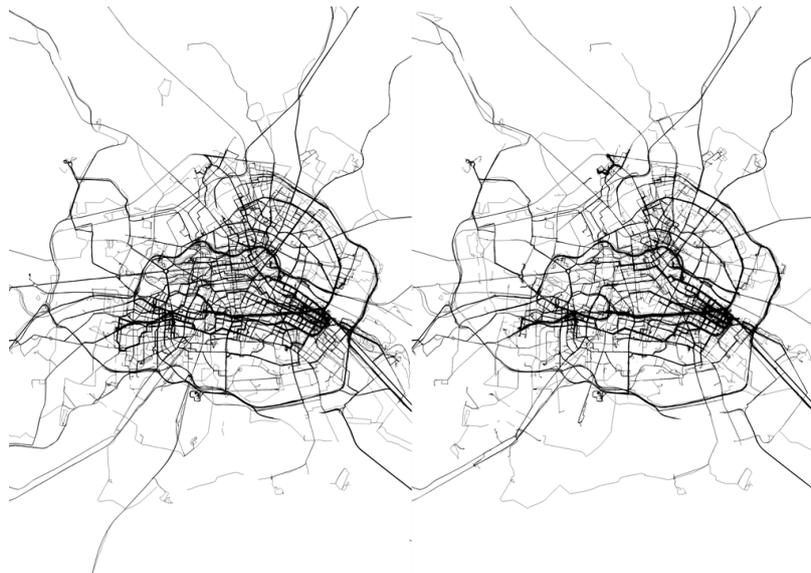


Figure 1: Daniel Belasco Rogers & Sophia New, *All Our Journeys in Berlin 2007 – 2013*

Since 2003 and 2007 respectively, Daniel Belasco Rogers and Sophia New have recorded every journey they make with a GPS. They are the only people to have such a complete record of their daily movements over such a long period.

Belasco Rogers's initial impulse was to watch himself learn about Berlin, the city he and New moved to in 2001. In 2007 New stated that she would record her every journey for a year to observe how having a small daughter was effecting her movements. However she has continued the daily practice to this day and the couple have stated that they do not intend to stop any time soon.

What started as a drawing practice: a way of becoming, to paraphrase de Certeau, the 'readers' of the 'urban text' they write by moving through space[1],



Figure 2: Daniel Belasco Rogers, *All My Journeys in Berlin 2003 – 2013*

has evolved outcomes over the years that followed, taking the practice into many different areas.



Figure 3: The Re-drawing of *Everywhere We've Been in Berlin Since 2007*,  
photo: Manuel Reinhartz

As artists with many years performance experience, they see these maps as performed drawings – the structure of a city's spaces is revealed by years of reiterated motion. More recently they have re-drawn these traces as part exhibition, part performance in which they are present in a gallery space tracing

directly onto a wall or onto paper, a certain excerpt of their geographic and biographical data from their ever enlarging database.[2]

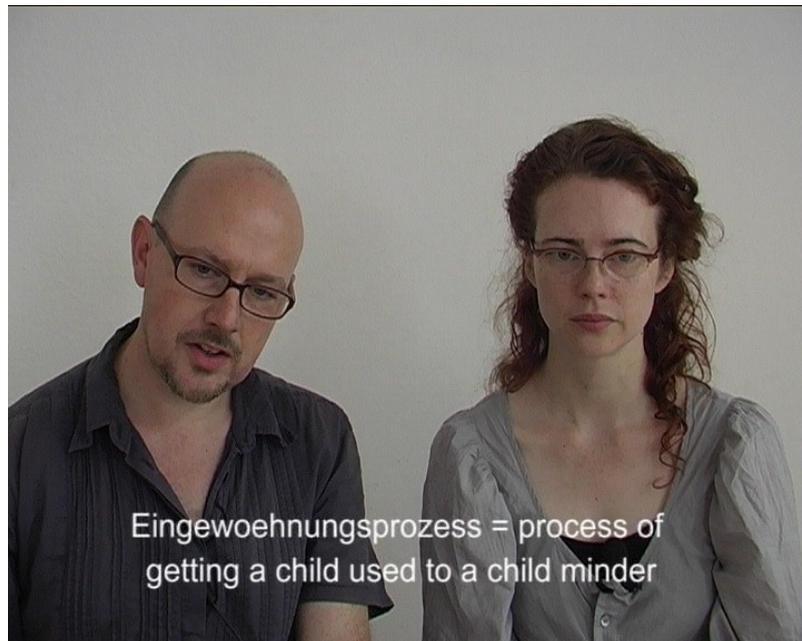


Figure 4: *Narrating Our Lines*, video still

A further, more explicitly performative outcome is *Narrating Our Lines*, for which the couple commissioned an open source animation programme[3] which plays back a chosen excerpt from their database of journeys[4]. This split screen animation shows their movements as a series of lines writing themselves across a black screen while Belasco Rogers and New try and narrate what was happening in their lives at the time, breathing life and everyday occurrence into the abstracted record.



Figure 5: *A Message To You*, Kuopio, Finland, photo: Greg Whelan

Another of their archiving practices is to keep every text message they send each other. They have a complete archive stretching back to 2007, which has been the material for performances and artworks. In the performance *A Message To You* [5], they shout out all of their text messages for the year leading up to the performance in a public space (e.g. a football stadium in Finland, the former Tempelhof Airport in Berlin). As well as exhibiting printouts of all their messages on gallery walls [6], they again commissioned Peter Vasil to develop software that printed out all the text messages on a dot matrix printer, mapping five years of text messages onto the three weeks the exhibition ran for.

Lately, Belasco Rogers and New have turned their attention to the analysis of this data they have been gathering, using it as mnemonic prompt as in *Narrating Our Lines*, experimenting with sonorisation of the satellites as well as visualisations such as the *Birch Forest Visualisation* (working title), which rather than showing the locations on a map-like drawing, shows the amount of time they record every day as columns of black or white squares. Other experiments include having their GPS traces engraved with a laser onto the reverse of acrylic sheets.



Figure 6: *All Our Traces in Berlin 2011* (2012),  
Laser engraving in acrylic 42 x 60 cm (Detail)

After 11 years for Belasco Rogers and 7 years for New, during which the ubiquity of GPS and the political climate of sur- or sous-veillance have utterly changed the artists are still engaged in this daily practice of gathering, viewing, analysing and processing this material, stimulating the creation of artworks ranging from performance and video to drawing.

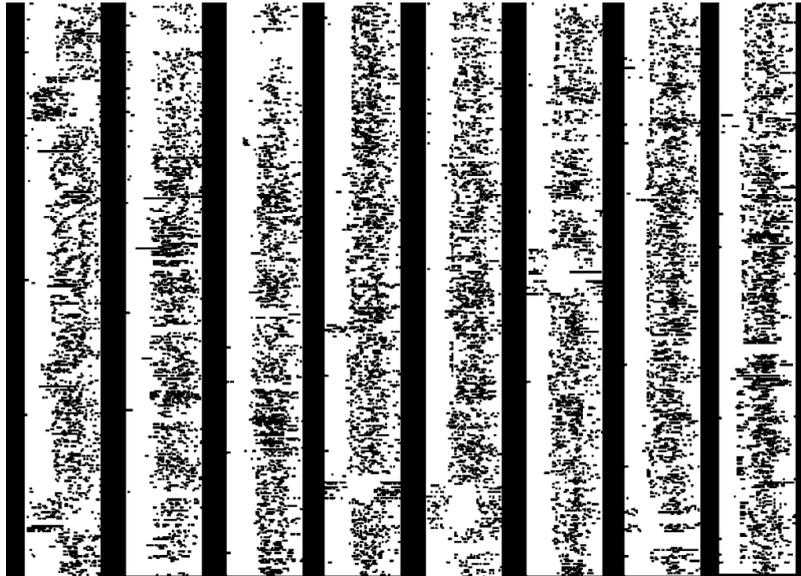


Figure 7: Birch Forest GPS Data Visualisation Analysis of time recorded with a GPS for eight years - each column is a year



[Narrating Our Lines](http://vimeo.com/16705958) from [plan b](#) on [Vimeo](#). <http://vimeo.com/16705958>

**plan b** are the Berlin based English artists Sophia New and Daniel Belasco Rogers. Since 2003 (Daniel) and 2007 (Sophia), they have recorded every journey they make every day using a GPS. The results have been shown in festivals and galleries worldwide. In their performance work they explore the dynamics of spontaneously generated conversation, song, and the material of their own intertwined lives. They work in the fields of performance, installation, new media, visual art as well as teaching and giving workshops. <http://belasconew.com>

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- 1 The ordinary practitioners of the city live “down below”, below the thresholds at which visibility begins. They walk – an elementary form of this experience of the city; they are walkers, *Wandersmänner*, whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban text they write without being able to read it. Michel de Certeau, (1984). *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Steven Rendall. Trans.), p. 93
  - 2 *The Re-drawing of Everywhere We've Been in Berlin Since 2007* <http://belasconew.com/works/the-re-drawing-of-everywhere/>
  - 3 Drawinglife programme made by Peter Vasil. Download available through github <https://github.com/ptrv/drawinglife>
  - 4 <http://belasconew.com/works/narrating-our-lines/>
  - 5 <http://planbperformance.net/index.php?id=message>
  - 6 *Every Text Message We Sent Each Other in 2011* (2012), <http://belasconew.com/works/every-text-2011/>