The Sense of Movement

by

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◄◄ Swoon
The Swimming Cities of Serenissima (2009)

The sense of movement (according to Thom Gunn in a motorcycle poem, the first in his early book of the same name):

— which is to say

the way	**(the path by which)**
movement	**(“On the Move” being the title of the poem in question)**
makes	**(actively constructs)**
sense	**(both as feeling and as meaning)**

— is that (as that poem concludes)

One is always nearer by not keeping still.

Though artists as well have long known this, for, as Cézanne once noted:

“You have to hurry if you are going to see; everything is fast disappearing.”

Short-story writers, too, for that matter. Eudora Welty:

“Making reality real is art’s responsibility.”

Which is to say, artists have to be willing to go out there, deep into reality, in order to bring the thing back whole. And artists have indeed been doing so, picking up and setting off, traveling, since time immemorial.

I'm reminded of a visit I myself recently made to a set of ancient caves in Arnhem Land, in northern Australia, their flanks scrawled over with all manner of orange carved drawings, rock paintings dating back tens of thousands of years, and how our guide informed us that recent research suggests that they'd been inscribed by artist shamans who traveled from one community to another, spending weeks and months laying in their elaborate images on one outcrop after the next in preparation for nighttime rituals before large audiences, where the performers would brandish torches in order to animate, as it were, the images and the shadows as backdrop illustration for their enthralling ur-narratives—*primordial cinema!* (Which in turn reminds me of a comment by the late great American curator Walter Hopps, instigator, for example, of the world's first Marcel Duchamp retrospective—in 1963! in Pasadena!—who once dryly noted that "I think of myself as being in a line of work that goes back about twenty-five thousand years. My job has been finding the cave and holding the torch.")

One can draw a clean line between those Arnhem Land rock scrawls and the sand (and subsequently acrylic) paintings of their engenderers' contemporary Aboriginal descendants, "dreamings" as they are sometimes called, which in fact serve to illustrate the wanderings of their creators, mapping out the surrounding terrain in all its mytho-biomorphic density. One afternoon not long after my northern Australian visit, I came upon an epic example on the wall of the National Gallery of Victoria, in Melbourne. According to its wall legend, the painting was the product of a 2007 collaboration between seven Aboriginal women artists: members of the Kaiadilt people, most of them quite old, the greater part of whom had had virtually no interaction with painting itself, let alone with world artistic trends, up to the time of their collaboration.* The vast canvas was said to portray their ancestral homeland, Bentinck Island, the largest of the South Wellesley chain at the bottom of the Gulf of Carpentaria, in Northwest Queensland. The title of the epic work, *Dulka Warngiid,* is, as with many Aboriginal phrases, a bit hard to translate: *dulka,* I'm told, can mean "place," "earth," "ground," "country," or "land"; and *warngiid* can mean "one," but also "the same," "common," "in common," and "only." So it could be translated as "Land of All." The main point here, though, is that since that narrow island was for most of the now-elder artists' youths the only place they knew, a more accurate rendition of the title might be "The Whole World."

But the thing of it was that the painting looked almost exactly the same—same dimensions, same color palette—as David Hockney's 1980 work *Mulholland Drive,* now hanging at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, a painting that, it suddenly occurred to me, was enacting much the same vaulting drama: the traverse mapping and intimate celebration of, in Hockney's case, his own newfound homeland. (The "drive" in the title, at any rate, is clearly a verb: your eyes go for a ride all about the canvas, just as they go walkabouting all around *Dulka Warngiid.)*

Not quite sure what to make of the rhyme there, though it is hardly the only such instance. Other recent Aboriginal paintings look just like Rothkos, and certain southern Pacific stick charts—gorgeous matrices of bent sticks that actually doubled as thoroughly utilitarian navigation guides, recording key landmarks in the night sky (thus both evoking and facilitating far-flung open sea voyages)—sometimes seem as if they've burrowed straight into the artistic subconscious of contemporary artists like Martin Puryear.

But I digress. What I was trying to say is that this proclivity for artistic odysseys wends a long way back. The very word "odyssey" derives, of course, from that archetypical wayfarer from the dawn of classical (Western) civilization, Odysseus. Though perhaps that subsequent (actual) Greek traveler, the Mediterranean-trawling chronicler and proto-historian Herodotus, might more properly be seen as the progenitor of a certain tenor of traveling among those surveyed in the current volume (whose editors have made the decision to limit their canvas of varied and iconic artists' journeys to the past few hundred years—otherwise, granted, there might well have been no end).

Tens of thousands of years ago, as in this Gwion Gwion rock-art site in the Kimberley region of western Australia, artist shamans may have wandered from cave to cave, covering over the interior walls with vivid imagery in preparation for nighttime torch-brandishing narrative performances: proto-cinema!

In contemporary times, the distant descendants of such primordial shamans continue to document their own far-flung wanderings in gloriously vivid wall renderings, as in this epic 2007 acrylic canvas, *Dulka Warngiid* (The Whole World), a collaboration by seven Kaiadilt women evoking the distinct features of their Bentinck Island homeland, off northern Queensland.

David Hockney's uncannily similar *Mulholland Drive* of 1980, at almost exactly the same scale, pays parallel homage to his own adopted homeland, limning the route from his flatland studio to his ridge-top home overlooking the Los Angeles suburbs—not so much a walkabout, perhaps, as a drive-around.

For if, in fact, there are many senses of movement—the call to travel taking myriad forms—surely one of the most compelling is that of *exploration,* or *expedition,* the sheer draw of the unknown beyond (and therefore, perhaps not surprisingly, the most densely populated of the chapters that are to follow). Because as long as there have been explorers (surveyors, conquerors, claim-stakers), there have been artists along for the ride, and subsequent waves of artists documenting the newly forged terrain, its vistas, flora, and fauna (both animal and human), for the folks back home. (Doubtless there have also been generations of artists among the local indigenous peoples, documenting and trying to make sense of the mysterious arrival of these oafish invaders, but that too is another story.)

Just to consider the relentless spread of expeditions of near or distant European origin across North America, one can trace a clear lineage from the likes of Thomas Cole and Albert Bierstadt and John James Audubon and George Caleb Bingham and George Catlin and, with the advent of photography, Edward S. Curtis, Carleton Watkins, and Eadweard Muybridge, on up through Ansel Adams and his confederates, and then to Robert Frank (whose iconic American road trip can be sampled on p. 31 of this compendium). Similar genealogies of representation could no doubt be traced across all the other continents (the sublime Maria Sibylla Merian, traipsing through late seventeenth-century Suriname, her sketchbook at the ready (see p. 33); Eduard Spelterini floating over the Pyramids with his camera (see p. 55); and presently, in more recent decades, clear on out into outer space. In that sense, astronaut Chris Hadfield (soaring over the very same Pyramids!) is merely the latest model of an enduring prototype (see p. 55).

For other artists—and this might be as good a place as any to point out that the categories that segment this book's sampling of the rich and varied historical legacy of artists' journeys are hardly exhaustive, nor need they be seen as exclusive—exploratory journeys

The pioneering New York–born photographer Carleton Watkins (1829–1916) epitomized the exploratory passion of hundreds of similarly driven artists, as he ventured across an entire continent in the mid-nineteenth century to capture, in this instance, the awesome splendor of the view across the Yosemite Valley one morning in 1865.

into the vast unknown segued into research trips aimed at more specifically defined objects of study: one thinks of Dürer or Velázquez on their voyages to Italy (sussing out the competition), or Delacroix to North Africa (drawing deep draughts of Orientalist inspiration), or more recently, Hockney going to China, which is to say, a land (at that time) still not entirely given over to the thrall of one-point perspective (the "moving focus" of whose centuries-old scrolls—scrolls that, incidentally, themselves often depicted the far-flung travels of monks and emperors and the artists who dogged them—was to exert a profound influence on his own subsequent development, as in the aforementioned *Mulholland Drive).*

Other artists traveled because it was part of their jobs: Jan van Eyck and Peter Paul Rubens (see p. 41) were both highly trusted diplomats; a portraitist like Hans Holbein was regularly having to journey to the homes of those whose portraits he was being commissioned to capture; Jan Cornelisz Vermeyen accompanied the Habsburg emperor Charles V on his North African raids against Hayreddin Barbarossa and the sultan Suleiman, a sort of Robert Capa *avant la caméra,* in order subsequently to immortalize the event in his great "Conquest of Tunis" tapestries (ca. 1550; see p. 105); and other artists still (one thinks of the Gentileschis, both father and daughter) simply had to go where they were summoned (to the court of the English king Charles I in their case).

There is a whole category of artists where the summons, the call, while no less emphatic, is more interior (sometimes to the point of idiosyncrasy), more devotional, indeed at times verging on the sacramental—artists whose travels this book's editors have chosen to characterize as *pilgrimages.*

Of course, some pilgrimages are precisely religious in nature—one thinks of the millions of people, naturally including artists, who each year feel the call of the Hajj (though being Muslim, the artists in question often tend toward more abstract representations of the journey, most recently, for example, in the work of such contemporary masters as Idris Kahn or Ahmed Mater, for whom the draw of the Kaaba is quite literally magnetic). Nor, of course, are Muslims the only ones drawn to such sacramental destinations: the great sixteenth-century anatomist Vesalius died in a shipwreck following his visit to the Holy Land. More recently, and improbably, no less a luminary than Edward Lear, the divine limerist of "The Owl and the Pussycat" fame, compiled gorgeous suites of watercolors (see p. 125) documenting his wide-ranging travels to Palestine and Sinai (but also to Egypt, Lebanon, India, and Ceylon). In nineteenth-century Japan, Katsushika Hokusai traveled hundreds of miles all about the circumference of the object of his own (and his entire culture's) fascination as he generated his famous *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji* (see p. 139). Toward the end of that same century, Paul Gauguin sought his own personal paradise in Tahiti (see p. 121), while during the last third of the twentieth, Alighiero Boetti found himself regularly drawn to the Shangri-La-flecked heavenscapes of Afghanistan (see p. 136), and more recently still (if decidedly more ironically), New York–based Patty Chang pursued her Shangri-La in Shangri-La itself (or anyway a town recently named such by Chinese authorities, trying to gin up the place's tourist potential; see p. 131).

Other pilgrimages are more personally charged, sometimes almost shamanistic acts of homage. Across the dead of the particularly brutal winter of 1974, Werner Herzog walked the six hundred miles from his home in Munich to what he feared might be the deathbed of his mentor, the film critic Lotte Eisner, having convinced himself that the gesture could forestall his friend's passing. Meanwhile, just around the same time, the American photographer Stephen Shore set out on a road trip of his own (see p. 141), retracing, in an almost devout act of homage, the steps of his idol, Robert Frank, a generation later.

There have been artists—notably among the Italian Futurists of the first half of the twentieth century—for whom the sense of movement was in the movement itself, which is to say the sheer savor of speed, as in this work from 1913 by Umberto Boccioni (1882–1916), *Dynamism of a Cyclist.*

For some artists, the sense of movement—its intrinsic meaning and feeling—is about the movement itself: the dynamism of just being on the road, the savor of acceleration and speed. It certainly was so for Thom Gunn, the poet with whom we began. But it was as well, say, for such Italian Futurists as Umberto Boccioni and F. T. Marinetti, or more recently, for the great Irish Nobel laureate Seamus Heaney, who urged his later readers to:

> Some time make the time to drive out west
> Into County Clare, along the Flaggy Shore,
> In September or October, when the wind
> And the light are working off each other
> So that the ocean on one side is wild
> With foam and glitter, and inland among stones
> The surface of a slate-grey lake is lit
> By the earthed lightning of a flock of swans,
> Their feathers roughed and ruffling, white on white,
> Their fully grown headstrong-looking heads
> Tucked or cresting or busy underwater.

There'd be no point in stopping, he suggested:

> Useless to think you'll park and capture it
> More thoroughly. You are neither here nor there,
> A hurry through which known and strange things pass
> As big soft buffetings come at the car sideways
> And catch the heart off guard and blow it open.

But other artists (Heaney himself, for starters, on some of his other days) have found their muse in *deceleration,* in slowing things down. The nineteenth-century American novelist Nathaniel Hawthorne once noted in his journals how:

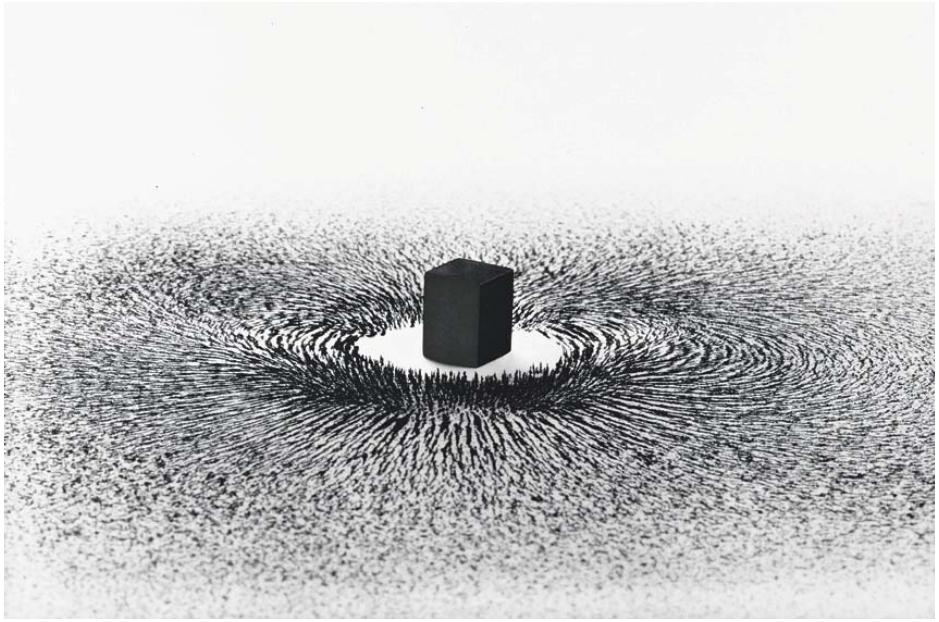
> The best way to get a vivid impression and feeling of a landscape, is to sit down before it and read, or become otherwise absorbed in thought, for then, when your eyes happen to be attracted to the landscape, you seem to catch Nature at unawares, and see her before she has time to change her aspect. The effect lasts but a single instant, but it is real for that moment. It is as if you could overhear and understand what the trees are whispering to one another ...

Indeed, the naturalist Todd Newberry notes in his book *The Ardent Birder* how "canny birders stand still," for "when we enter a habitat, we have to let it recover from the shock of our arrival." Furthermore:

> Standing still has another advantage besides its calming effect. Where birds lurk amid confusing patterns of branches and leaves, standing still gives our eyes a chance to take in arrangements of light and shadow, of line and mass. This takes time. Pretty soon we become aware of moving clues that we would miss if we too were moving. Now they move against a stationary background, and some of those clues are birds.

"Get your feet in the water," Newberry urges in another of his guises (as the leader of tide-pool walks in his weekday job as a marine biologist), "and get your eyes where your feet are." After all, he explains, most life is sensibly hiding under and behind the outcroppings. The point—and this is something that artists as varied as Ann Hamilton and Hamish Fulton and the sublime lollygagging, river-rafting Swoon all recognize—is that sometimes, Cézanne notwithstanding, the only way to hurry up and see a world fast disappearing is by slowing way the hell down.

Some artists have taken that tendency to the extreme of a virtually complete standstill, following the advice of Søren Kierkegaard, who, in one of the essays in *Either/Or* (1843), commented on the way many of his perennially bored contemporaries flitted from scene to scene ("One tires of living in the country and moves to the city; one tires of one's native land and travels abroad; one is *europamüde,* and goes to America, and so on; finally one indulges the sentimental hope of endless journeyings from star to star") when all along their problem was that they were possessed of, as it were, "tired" or "boring" eyes. For his part, Kierkegaard—though one should probably note that here the Danish master is ventriloquizing through the filter of one of his countless heteronyms, the aesthete A—recommended as an alternative "the rotation method," which is to say, staying in one place and "rotating the crop." In this recommendation, he was in turn following the example set by Xavier de Maistre, who in 1794 published the celebrated *Journey Around My Room*—itself perhaps a response to Blaise Pascal's assertion that all the troubles of humanity came down to the difficulty men had in simply being happy to sit alone in their rooms.



For some artists, the motivation for travel is more interior, sacramental, at times religious—artists called to themes of pilgrimage of one sort or another. As with the young Saudi artist Ahmed Mater, whose 2012 work *Magnetism III* deployed iron filings round a central cubic monolith, as stand-ins for the throngs of Hajj pilgrims ranged around the Kaaba in Mecca.

But let's take leave of the philosophers and get back to the artists. Early in his career—in fact, before that career had even started, in the mid-fifties—Robert Irwin was traipsing purposelessly about Europe when he gradually found himself "pulling plugs," as he put it: forsaking books, language, social relations. Arriving on the island of Ibiza, off the coast of Spain, a place where he had no contacts whatsoever, he found himself coming down "to the last plug, and it gets to be like a Zen thing of having no ego: it becomes scary, it's like maybe you're losing yourself. And boredom becomes extremely painful.... But when you have them all pulled out, a little period goes by, and then it's absolutely serene." He thought about less and less, and presently found himself simply thinking about thinking—perceiving the way he perceived and marveling at that—thereby discovering the lodestar that would steer his art for the ensuing six decades, and to this day.

Radical self-limitation has frequently served as an incubator of new work for artists—think of Constable painting and painting the same few square miles, in contrast with Turner, who traveled everywhere in search of his manifold lights. In a funny variation on this business of artists who stay radically put, for a period early in his career, Ingres set himself down in Rome and passed the time by perpetrating a sequence of ever more astonishing pencil portraits of a succession of British aristocrats passing through, one after the next, on their own grand Continental tours (though it bears noting that for prosperous European artists among them, these grand tours—to Italy, France, Greece, and further afield—were a deep well of work that also falls squarely into the purview of the present book). By contrast, the nineteenth-century Japanese woodblock master Utagawa Hiroshige managed to create some of the most hauntingly evocative images of Naniwa (modern Osaka) and Omi provinces without ever having gone there.

Another example of a *stationary* artist who traveled without ever having left is Donald Evans, a young American holed up in an apartment in Holland from which he engendered an entire world of imaginary countries, all by way of editions of the stamps their postal services might have generated (see p. 166). Others still, likewise staying put yet embarking on journeys of the mind, had recourse to elaborate pharmacological regimes to fuel their far-flung trips. The great early twentieth-century Polish writer and artist Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, for example, used to record the specific chemical compounds he was riding while painting his portraits right there, alongside his signature (see p. 161).

The sense of movement may also be pursued via a different sort of radical limitation, this time in terms of task rather than place, by way of elaborate and arbitrary self-imposed *ordeals.* The undisputed queen of this aesthetic domain is Marina Abramović, starting out (following a full year spent in the most remote stretches of Australia's backcountry, walking about, dreaming, often entirely naked, in the company of a group of Aborigines) with her marathon early performances alongside her onetime colleague and companion, Ulay, although they were not always alongside each other exactly. In a legendary tribulation (see p. 79) the two contrived to slowly converge, walking, from opposite ends of the entire Great Wall of China. Though they were hardly alone when it comes to such supererogatory challenges. The Dutchman Guido van der Werve, grieving over the fact that Chopin's heart was buried in Warsaw while the rest of his body lay 1,703 kilometers away, in Paris, set about traversing the entire distance in triathlon style (running, swimming, biking), though in fact it was more like seven and a half Ironman Triathlons laid end to end. Somewhat more antically, the English artist Simon Faithfull, in 2008 (see p. 82), decided to negotiate the Greenwich meridian, obstacles be damned, starting with his emergence from out of the sea on the southern coast of Britain, across fences and hedgerows, through properties and houses (in one window, out the other), across streams and ponds and crisscrossing superhighways, until he descended into the North Sea, on the far other side of the Island.

Not all such self-imposed dictums prove quite as arduous. In 1970, about fifteen years following his season of self-exile on Ibiza, the aforementioned Irwin, having systematically distilled the act of painting down to virtual point zero, closed down his studio and announced that he would henceforth be "available in response," going anywhere he was invited to talk to anyone about the marvels of perception. In this phase, he would only perpetrate artistic interventions in direct response to the specific conditions of any offered site.

If some artists thus impose limitations upon themselves, other less fortunate ones have limitations imposed upon them. This recurrent fact of history opens out onto entirely separate categories of

▲ Many artists indulge in travels in which the journey itself is the point, and the point can become the extremity of the ordeal. In 2012, the Dutchman Guido van der Werve undertook the equivalent of seven and a half consecutive Ironman Triathlons—running, biking, and swimming more than 1,700 miles between Warsaw and Paris—under some sort of thrall to Chopin.

creative journeys arising from the experience of *displacement.* Among these, for starters, is the ordeal of exile, a condition as old as Thucydides and Dante, though it has seemed especially pervasive across the past century (and alas, judging from recent headlines, right up to the current day).

My own grandfather, the prolific modernist composer Ernst Toch, was said to have invented rap music, as it were, in 1930, in Berlin, with his promulgation of the medium of the spoken chorus, beginning with his brief *Geographical Fugue* ("Trinidad, and the Big Mississippi and the town Honolulu, and the Lake Titicaca" and so forth). Three years later his own life transmogrified into a sort of extended geographical fugue (the latter word, it bears noting, stemming from the same Latin root as the word "refugee") as he caromed from Florence to Paris to New York to Hollywood, shredding much of his once-vibrant career in the process.

Strange how, over the past several decades, the phenomena of cosmopolitanism and nationalist ethnic cleansings have existed in a sort of systolic relation: with nationalist upsurges provoking minority flight, and with the resultant refugees tending to gather in cosmopolitan centers whose very multifariousness thereupon provokes its own nationalist umbrage, sometimes (Berlin in the thirties, Kampala in the seventies, Belgrade in the nineties, Baghdad in the aughts, and all of Syria today) culminating in other nasty purifying ethnic paroxysms. Strange, too, how often the umbrage takes on a specifically aesthetic tinge: after all, before he was anything else, Hitler himself was an artist, a painter who knew how to paint a building that looked like a building, not like all that other degenerate avant-garde crap circulating about. I've seriously sometimes wondered whether Hitler hated Jews because he associated them with avant-garde trends, or hated the avant-garde because he associated them with Jews—at any rate, the Nazis went after the artists and intellectuals as such well before they began going after Gypsies and Jews and homosexuals as groups, which is one reason so many of the former were able to escape the worst of their depredations. The situation of extremity and exile often became a principal subject in the escaped artist's new work (as in the case of Max Beckmann; see p. 97); in other instances, the circumstances of his or her life in the new cultural surround exercised profound influences on the exiled artist's own ongoing production (the example of Mondrian springs buoyantly to mind; see p. 99); and in still other cases, the artist's arrival in the new land exerted powerful cross-pollinating influences in the other direction. One thinks of Josef and Anni Albers carrying the torch of Bauhaus modernism to Black Mountain College in North Carolina, or Kate Steinitz bringing knowledge of Kurt Schwitters and his protean collages to Los Angeles, and the impact that seedling was to have, for example, on the artists at the fledgling Ferus Gallery. (For that matter, no less a graduate of Los Angeles High School than John Cage was to champion my grandfather's *Geographical Fugue.)*

Ironically, the United States, refuge for so many of those fleeing European artists, was itself the site, across many of those same years, of a mass exodus hardly less portentous: the northward flight of millions of African-Americans from out of the harrowing bondage of the Jim Crow South (including the aforementioned North Carolina). And for years thereafter, the children of those migrants, perhaps most notably including Jacob Lawrence, would still be bearing witness. Exile, indeed, need not have been an unmitigated disaster. Sometimes it proved to be an occasion for self-discovery. James Baldwin fled New York for Paris in 1948—he used to say he had to; otherwise he would have likely ended up killing someone in his rage over American racism. But it was only in Paris, as he came to feel the profound difference between himself and the Négritude of artists of the African diaspora, that he started to recognize his profound inner Americaness. Beyond that, the condition of exile sometimes allowed artists—and writers and composers and architects and filmmakers—to plumb profound aspects of the entire human condition. "Of course I am a wanderer," my grandfather Toch quoted Goethe's Young Werther, as a motto for his Pulitzer Prize–winning autobiographical Third Symphony, completed in 1955, after he started composing once again, "a pilgrim on this earth, *but can you say that you are anything more?"*

▲ Around the same time when a generation of émigré artists fled Nazi-occupied Europe, millions of black Americans found themselves in northbound flight from the strangulating racist strictures of the Jim Crow South, an epochal passage celebrated in Jacob Lawrence's tempera suite *The Migration Series,* completed in 1941.

Meanwhile, a disconcerting number of artists have been forcibly prevented from traveling at all, finding themselves instead prisoners of one totalitarian regime or another—a different sort of stationary occasion for creativity. Such incarcerations range from the psycho-institutional—one thinks of the prodigious productivity of the inmates at the Gugging Psychiatric Clinic, outside Vienna, or the remarkable outpourings of the likes of the Victorian painter Richard Dadd long into his own confinement (see p. 151)—to the more conventionally political. At the time of this writing, the newspapers are full of news about the situation of the Cuban-American performance artist Tania Bruguera, who'd voluntarily returned to her homeland to test the limits of current thaw, only to have her passport confiscated and end up briefly in jail. Released, she spent the duration of the 2015 Havana Biennial, from which she'd been excluded, on the outside, staging an extended reading from Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism,* at the conclusion of which she was arrested all over again. A similarly returned Ai Weiwei's ongoing wily pas de deux with his overlords in China has been well documented and widely celebrated (see p. 158).

Tomas Tranströmer, from his poem "Sentry Duty":

> Task: To be where I am.
> Even in this solemn and absurd role
> I am still the place where
> Creation does a little work on itself

When Breyten Breytenbach, the self-exiled Afrikaner poet and painter, could no longer abide the conditions of his own Parisian remove, in the early seventies, and decided to travel back incognito to join the anti-apartheid struggle in his native South Africa, he was betrayed, almost from the start, and soon found himself under arrest and presently sentenced to what would stretch into seven and a half years of incarceration. I once asked him why, under those circumstances, the authorities who not only allowed but required him to continue writing poetry (in triplicate! he being after all the country's foremost poet) nonetheless forbade him to paint or draw. To which he replied, "They were not stupid; I think they realized that for me an empty canvas would be an open field of freedom." He nonetheless managed to contrive a way of creating a remarkable suite of prison drawings (provoking a whole new tribulation

once his conceit was discovered), and indeed, as he relates in his memoir *The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist,* with time he managed to foster an entire world out of his solitary cell (see p. 155).

A few years after Breytenbach's release, the Voyager 1 space probe, hurtling out of the solar system, six billion kilometers from earth, rotated one last time to capture an image of its home planet, a pinprick gleam in a shaft of sunlight, Carl Sagan's famous "Pale Blue Dot"—an *actual* world reduced to a single pixel.

Arthur C. Clarke liked to herald the photographic legacy of such space probes as the dawn of a whole new age, not just of science, but of art. As far as he was concerned, these were the first creations of a whole new form of life, which he dubbed *Machina sapiens.* "It is a little difficult to see how a lifeless planet could progress directly from metal ores and mineral deposits to electronic computers by its own unaided efforts," he speculated in the preface to Michael Benson's compendium of such images, *Beyond.* "But though intelligence and creativity can arise only from life, they may then learn to do without the fragile organic substrate that they now require"—a prospect that veritably thrilled him. (Others, including myself in an afterword to the same volume, were not quite so taken with the notion.)

But either way, the sense of movement, from the Aboriginals on out to the space probes, carried clean through—movement understood finally and essentially as a shift in *focus* and a change in *perspective*, focus and perspective in turn lying at the very root of the artistic enterprise. The two of them, and, of course, *precision.*

"Like the burlesk comedian," as E. E. Cummings parsed matters in the preface to his poetry collection *Is 5,* "I am abnormally fond of that precision which creates movement." He concluding a few paragraphs later, "Ineluctable preoccupation with The Verb gives a poet one priceless advantage: whereas nonmakers must content themselves with the merely undeniable fact that two times two is four, he rejoices in a purely irresistible truth (to be found, in abbreviated costume, upon the title page of the present volume)."

Toward the end of his life, Buckminster Fuller was asked whether, having done so much to make space travel possible, he was disappointed that he himself would never make it into outer space. "But, sir," he replied, ever so precisely, "we are in outer space."

In conclusion, the same point phrased slightly differently: Northrop Frye used to recount (in Alberto Manguel's retelling) how he once had "a doctor friend who, traveling on the Arctic tundra with an Inuit guide, was caught in a blizzard. In the icy cold, in the impenetrable night, feeling abandoned by the civilized world, the doctor cried out: 'We are lost!' Whereupon his Inuit guide looked at him thoughtfully and replied: 'We are not lost. *We are here.*'"

∗(p. 14) The seven Bentinck Island elder women who created Dulka Warngiid were Sally Gabori, May Moodoonuthi, Dawn Naranatjil, Netta Loogatha, Amy Loogatha, Ethel Thomas, and Paula Paul. For more on the painting, see Nicholas Evans's essay "A Place of our Own" in *The Heart of Everything: The Art and Artists of Mornington and Bentinck Islands* (Mornington, AU, 2008)

◭ Some artists come to a veritable standstill from which stasis they nevertheless somehow manage to venture very far indeed. Take, for instance, the Japanese ukiyo-e master Utagawa Hiroshige, the evocativeness of whose *Illustrated Places of Naniwa* (modern-day Osaka), from 1834, is especially impressive, given that he himself never traveled further west than Kyoto.

► Toward the end of his life, Arthur C. Clarke heralded the coming replacement of *Homo sapiens* by *Machina sapiens,* and cited the magnificent photographic legacy of the interplanetary space probes as the first intimations of the art of this new species. Late in his life, Carl Sagan highlighted a particular image snapped by the Voyager 1 spacecraft as it hurtled out of the solar system, turning back to prize the "Pale Blue Dot" of Earth in a single pixel nested in a shaft of sunlight.