



COMMONspace

a project of REBAR in collaboration with Snap Out of It
www.rebargroup.org
www.sooi.org

Empire Park

The tour is an exercise in guided drift. There is a beginning, and an end, but in between is the continuous fabric of experience. The nature of that experience is surprisingly pliable, given the right attention.

Today we explore San Francisco's privately-owned public open spaces as sites to gently exercise our way of interacting with others and with our own experience of urban life.

With a heightened awareness of the everyday comes the power to shape its contours.


Whose city is this, anyway?
Why, it's yours...



Paraformance [05]

Tour

January 17, 2006



An example of a situation-creating technique is the *dérive*. The *dérive* is the first step toward an urban praxis. It is a stroll through the city by several people who are out to understand the “psychogeographical articulation of the modern city”. The strollers attempt an interpretive reading of the city, an architectural understanding. They look at the city as a special instance of repressed desires. At the same time, they engage in “playful reconstructive behavior”. Together they turn the city around. They see in the city unifying and empowering possibilities in place of the present fragmentation and pacification. This “turning around” or *détournement* is a key strategic concept of the Situationists. *Détournement* is a dialectical tool. It is an “insurrectional style” by which a past form is used to show its own inherent untruth-- an untruth masked by ideology. It can be applied to billboards, to written texts, to films, to cartoons, etc., as well as to city spaces. Marx used it when he “turned Hegel on his head.” He used the dialectic in the study of history to expose the ideological nature of Hegel’s idealism. The Situationists use *détournement* to demonstrate the scandalous poverty of everyday life despite the plenty of commodities. They attempted to demonstrate the contrast between what life presently is and what it could be. They wanted to rupture the spell of the ideology of our commodified consumer society so that our repressed desires of a more authentic nature could come forward. The situation is based on liberated desires rather than alienated ones. What these desires are cannot be stated a priori. They will emerge in the revolutionary process of situation-creation, of *détournement*. Presumably, communality, unification, and public urban space will emerge as more desirable than commodification, fragmentation, and privatization.

from Driftin' with the Situationist International, Author Unknown #5

COMMONspace is a part of SoEx Off-Site, a yearlong series of public art projects investigating diverse strategies for exploring and mapping public space. www.soex.org