

3

Sandra Bridie, b. 1952

Ten Walking Meditations

*Walk #1: Elegy for B. S. Hope,
Elwood Beach, December 2005
(a fiction)*

2007

The Fiction

Sandra Bridie (b. 1952) is a walking artist in the mould of others such as Richard Long and Hamish Fulton. She ‘performs’ walks, creating her artworks for exhibition from photographic and video documentation of these activities, as well as small objects and paintings made from the matter she brings back from her journeys. While Bridie subscribes to the aesthetic of the ‘arte povera’ form of her walking artist counterparts, she differs in her approach to scale and bravado. The male artists mentioned above create their artwork, in the main, from performing extensive and intrepid solo excursions across exotic landscapes with a pioneering spirit. They document uninhabited panoramas with an eye for the sublime, creating art rituals, earthworks and gallery installations from the material of their environments, such as urine and water trails, footprint works, large scale minimal stone, stick, or mud murals. Bridie, on the other hand, performs short promenades in recognisable locations in her immediate urban locale.

In December 2000 Sandra Bridie’s lover and mentor, the art historian and curator Brenda S. Hope (1945–2000), died after a long illness. Bridie and Hope lived together in numerous rented premises across Melbourne over a twelve-year period. Hope was very much the mentor figure to Bridie, initially as her Art History lecturer at university in the late 1960s and early ’70s. Then, as Hope was drawn into curating, she included Bridie in several exhibitions, creating a momentum for Bridie’s art career that has continued to this day.

Since Hope’s death, Bridie has continued obsessively producing work, walking at a furious pace. Her oeuvre has branched out into video installations and collaborative pieces. She has also produced numerous sited installations resulting from walking performances for various international art biennales south of the equator.

In 2005, five years after the death of her lover, Bridie experienced an inexplicable inertia that would not abate. After various medical tests and visits to numerous alternative therapists, Bridie self-diagnosed her ailment and prescribed her own cure. Bridie realised that in all the distraction of busy-ness following the loss of Hope, she had not even commenced the task of mourning. Being an artist, she devised a project where she could incorporate, even document, this important emotional work.

In *Ten Walking Meditations* (2007), Bridie re-enacts a series of ten local walks that she and B. S. Hope routinely made as part of their daily lives together. The walking and documenting of these paths will hopefully allow Bridie to do the job of mourning, each walk being an opportunity for the remembrance of small moments together, much like the task of going through the items in a loved one's belongings after they die.

In this series, then, Bridie documents the walks with photographs and text. In an accompanying interview-text with Hedda Savill, Bridie describes the 'moments': the conversations between Hope and herself and the memories attached to the sites photographed, but she also questions the role of art in dealing with her state of loss. Bridie asks whether the stopping to click and frame an image that resounds in the memory actually assists or hinders her in dealing with the acceptance of her loss.

Sandra Bridie, April 2007

Artist's Statement

Retracing the final walk with B. S. Hope from Mitford Street to Elwood Pier on 15 December 2000

In early December 2000, my mentor, Brenda S. Hope, art historian, curator and partner to me for twelve years died after a long illness. This work, *Walk #1: Elegy for B. S. Hope, Elwood Beach, December 2005*, is thus an elegy in motion to Brenda. What you see here is photographic documentation of the first in a series of ten walks I performed between late 2005 to mid 2006 in memory of B.

Here, in *Walk #1*, I retrace the steps of our final short journey together, commencing at our last home, a small flat in Elwood, and ending at the site where I scattered Brenda's ashes into the choppy waters of Port Phillip Bay.

The walk, which is only 2 or 3km in length, takes in the Elwood Canal, the low-walled promenade alongside the sea, and finishes at the concrete jetty as the beach path approaches the grand seaside palazzos of Brighton.

This is a walk that Brenda and I took frequently throughout our time in Elwood, from 1993–2000. It seemed entirely fitting that Brenda should request that her ashes be scattered in such a familiar place, and yet it took me five years after the date of that final journey for me to be bear up enough to walk along this path once again.

The *Ten Walking Meditations* retrace a series of familiar walks Brenda and I took over our years together, mostly in urban environments along council foot and/or bike paths. As a walking artist, it seems fitting that I pay tribute to Brenda in such a perambulatory fashion, to re-walk each path as an act of memory and to allow myself to recollect those casual moments of intimacy that are the staple of a life (or a time) together.

Thus, I have utilised my way of being as an artist to assist me to do some necessary emotional work. I could not envisage doing this work without the structure of a project with some palpable artistic outcome. At this point I am uncertain, though, if the act of framing an emotional task in the form of producing an artwork documenting these ten walks has been of benefit or a hindrance.

Sandra Bridie, January 2006

Interview with Sandra Bridie by Hedda Savill
June 2006

Hedda Savill: Sandra, what is a walking artist?

Sandra Bridie: So, we're starting at the beginning, are we? A walking artist is an artist who uses the performance of walking as a central motif in their work. For these artists, though, the seemingly ephemeral act of walking is usually concretised as an artwork for public view through documentation or collections of various kinds. Many artists – and you could definitely see walking-as-art as a genre – use photographic documentation of various kinds: black and white photography, colour digital photography, film, video and now web-based documentation of their actions, as the way to represent their practice to an audience. Often the walking is a solitary act, and so as artists we need evidence to exhibit to an audience; often we also create sculptural objects as byproducts of the excursions to exhibit. You could say the radicality of walking as solitary performance, which by definition lacks an audience and is fleeting as an object to view and to sell, is conventionalised through the production of documentation and other byproducts as the 'stand-in' art object.

How did this work come about? Could you please talk me through the images and your Elwood walk?

Crudely, the Elwood Walk came about through an avoidance of the pain of dealing with loss. Since the death of Brenda in 2000 I had been quite busy and productive as an artist, surprisingly so actually. And I thought I was doing quite well to be powering through ideas, traipsing through new terrain and creating ambitious new works of a scale that was also new to me. Whereas previously I had kept to the urban environment in my work, as a kind of oppositional stance to other 'heroic'-scaled walking performances (mainly by

men), I now found I was attracted to a wilderness experience, and to walking as a new challenge. My previous walking could be termed 'polite promenades'. In a way, there was a thought that I could now explore this challenging terrain as a new kind of freedom, one I felt I could not explore while Brenda was alive – certainly not while she was ill for the last four years of her life. So there was an odd sort of exuberance and expansiveness in both media and the type of walks I was undertaking in my walking works – I was acting like the 'merry widow', in a way. In those works made between 2001 and early 2005 my approach had many commonalities with the heroic brand of walking I had previously been so critical of. I was invited to participate in several large survey exhibitions and a couple of international art biennials, as well as one major retrospective that happened to coincide with my fiftieth birthday, so I was definitely a mid-career artist.

I will apologise at this point for this rather long preamble to the Elwood Walk. For me to get to that topic I need to explain the stages I was going through.

In May last year I experienced what seemed to me to be a sudden breakdown. Due to the number of projects I had on the go I thought I had one of those diseases such as chronic fatigue syndrome, but anyway, for several weeks I could hardly get out of bed. I was stuck in the same flat that Brenda and I had lived in for seven years. I began to realise that all my travels and new wanderings were, in fact, a way of getting out of the house, a way of not being around the residue of Brenda's life with me. Being sick and being stuck in the house, I now had to deal with the fact of her death, with the fact of her absence in our home – and with the crude reality of an unbearable new loneliness opposed to the fact of my newfound freedom where I could choose to do what I wanted without her screening my ideas for their value. Brenda was highly supportive of my art practice, but she was also highly critical of anything that struck her as a false note in my ideas, and she would bluntly point these out to me. What would I now do without Brenda there to 'quality control' my projects?

After a pause that lasted until October during which I could only potter at most around the house, and slowly fossick through Brenda's archives and collections for a trace of her, I devised a modest walking project in tribute to Brenda. The project also indulged a strong impulse to reminisce, or relive favoured moments between the two of us. The project I devised was based on our regular walks together as a couple – you see how perfectly these integrated into my art practice! This was revisiting the mode of some of my favourite works, but it was also an opportunity to revisit familiar, quite banal sites, really, and remember great conversations we had had there.

Could you now talk about the actual walk?

The Elwood Walk was a re-enactment of the final walk I took with Brenda's ashes on 15 December 2000 to scatter them into her loved Port Phillip Bay. I had not taken this walk again since that day, even though it is only a few kilometres and is the most obvious bayside walk to take from our flat. By 15 December last year I was strong enough to slowly walk from our – I mean my – flat to the concrete jetty, via the Elwood Canal and along the beach path. Historically, this was a walk Brenda and I would do at least once a week – often on a Monday morning, since usually we both had Mondays off work each week. We would also often take the same walk in the evenings in the summer. The seat that you see in the second last photograph was 'our' seat. We would always take a pause there before returning home. The best conversations, it seems to me now, we would have on that seat, particularly at dusk in summer and autumn; on that seat during 'the philosophical hour' our thoughts would fuse somehow, and we would have our epiphanies. After seeing the film *The Green Ray* by Eric Rohmer, I remember that we would sit on that seat as the sun sank below the horizon and watch for a glimmer of the flash of green that would only occur under certain conditions. Brenda reckoned she saw this elusive 'green ray' more than once, but I always seemed to miss it.

The photos documenting this regular trail merely mark a habit, a proper evening promenade, each image of which has indelibly

imprinted itself on me. As I re-traced that last walk I experienced for the first time the hugeness of my loss, the hugeness of that first walk with her ashes that I could not comprehend at the time. I did not break down, but I did feel an immense gravity which was finally appropriate.

With this solitary funeral procession, how thoroughly do you feel the photographs convey what you were dealing with – and do you think it is necessary for a work to convey to a viewer what you, the artist, are personally grappling with?

I suppose my choice of medium – black and white grainy photographs – was a specific choice, due to the connection of their surface and colour with monumental funerary surfaces; due to the way black and white work on the senses as depicting a lost time, and now such photography is becoming a lost or antiquated mode of representation. You know that in the main I have worked with digital colour photography for documentation of my walking performances, but that medium I knew was not appropriate at all to this work. Also, I chose a fibre paper over my usual choice of photographic paper because fibre paper has its own presence and grain, and is not so acquiescent to the will of the photographer – it takes much longer to achieve the image you want.

So I suppose what I am saying here is that the images show a common local walk that is somehow given an import and gravity due to the medium. That then informs visitors to the gallery of a particular short, though heavy journey I took on 15 December 2005. The titles also give further information to the viewer about my personal experience, and including this interview in the publication will allow no uncertainty in the viewer about my intentions for the work! In particular, the rather banal concrete jetty, really nothing exceptional, has a look of funerary sculpture or architecture, bird poo and all.

So, in a way, you are creating an art project to assist you in the grieving process, something you seemed unable to do until you created a project structure of ten re-enactments of walks you did with Brenda. There is also the added artistic

outcome of a range of representations or documentation of these walks. Is this a harsh simplification? Now that the series of Ten Walking Meditations is complete, can you answer this: what can art do, or rather what do you use art to do that you cannot do without its frame?

You know that question is harsh. You are implying that without an artistic structure – but also without an outcome, including an audience and an opportunity for career development through another exhibition – I am unable to register and confront emotional experience. Well, yes and no. As I have said before, it may be an impediment of the artist (or to me as an artist) to not be able to see or use our senses without such experience becoming a product framed as ‘art’. My work has always been concerned with a lived-in scale, rather than the usual heroic or out-scaled works of the pioneering walking artists. It has always been about the local suburban experience, the recognisable promenade with familiar landmarks along the way. My work has been to incorporate these day-to-day experiences, to live as an artist no larger than anyone else. I suppose my method of experiencing and seeing is now native to me after over thirty years of practice. Therefore, not having applied the same process of assimilation of experience to my need to grieve for Brenda was probably why I became ill. Art is my way of ‘working through’; I thoroughly accept the notion of art as symbolic play; as a process of isolation and then assimilation. Do with that what you will.

Do you find the term ‘walking artist’ problematic in describing the entirety of your production, or do you adhere to this conception of yourself as an artist?

‘Walking artist’ has worked for me for at least twenty years. In a sense I see it functioning in the way that the description of ‘drawing’ works for a notation, broadly, of ideas. For me the nomination ‘walking artist’ holds onto the mode of traversal across space, acting out ideas, and projects as journeys. Even before I became a walking artist I was aware of the experience of having an exhibition as being like travelling overseas: you set up a show in a gallery and you are travelling somewhere foreign, you bring your work home and you have returned from a journey and things are somehow different. As a

walking artist, I have gone on those long journeys overseas and those short trips to the shops, I also have exhibitions, which you could say are analogous to the slide night after a trip away, though hopefully not nearly so boring!

Can you talk about scale as a walking artist a bit more? You are known for the use of an intimate scale, in comparison to male walking artists, as a generalisation There are, however, other more contemporary artists who work 'out-of-scale', or on a heroic scale. Your work seems to insist on a domestic scale and largely features domestic environments – not so much the home, but a domesticated landscape, such as the suburban promenade, council recreational paths. Do you consciously place your work, in part, as a feminist critique of the sublime and heroic scale, the conquering of virgin terrain of some of your male counterparts?

I suppose I consciously both adopted the model of those older British walking artists, and then worked against that same model. I don't feel the need to conquer space in any way; I am more interested in the idea of inhabiting it. So the urban spaces that my work occupies are closely related to the domestic space I inhabit; there is nothing foreign or strange about them, rather the spaces that I map are familiar, local. But as so often in modern life, we can overlook what is so close to us, and so my work is a process of de-familiarising the familiar, or trying to look at my known environment with new eyes. This is quite difficult, much harder than noting details in a foreign environment. Some of my earlier works were purely text walks where I would take a notebook with me and record in detail what I passed in new language. Much like the experience of life drawing – where the act of drawing what you think you know can yield the least interesting results, and you can see anew, as it were, merely by changing the hand you are drawing with to your non-dominant hand.

I have attempted various techniques to assist in this seeing anew. These include obscuring my vision so I had to 'feel' my environment: walking along with Anatole Gersky – who, as you know, is a writer who is vision impaired – and recording my detailed descriptions of what I was seeing as we walked to his incessant and complex enquiries. This exercise functioned for both Anatole and me, with him integrating

parts of these recordings into his novel *The Blind Accomplice*. I have also accompanied various ‘experts’ on my walks (those involved in local history associations, or who use the paths I walk on in specific ways), to inform me of other ways of ‘seeing’ my routes.

In terms of my work being a feminist critique of the perceived male terrain of the walking artist, I don’t wish to generalise about either male or female aptitudes or attitudes. My scale incorporates walks that are relatively short, performed generally in daylight and not involving any contortions from the usual act of walking, such as carrying heavy objects, walking on my hands, or marking each two feet with a fluorescent tag or a rock. I am aware of staying ‘in scale’ as I call it, I am probably more conscious of being anti-heroic in my approach than working against a perceived male approach to walking art. As you may have observed, the ‘genre’ of walking artist seems to attract those who wish to extend and challenge their physical engagement with the world, both male and female. There is something of the circus act about much of what walking artists produce. My approach, then, is to be utterly within my means, within my own scale of living, which is modest and poor, in that I choose not to spend half of my year chasing sponsorship and funding to achieve my work, and an extension of daily living. In a way, this is a luxurious way of practising; it is like having a holiday and being very conscious of how wonderful leisure is. My work, I suppose, is to be consciously aware of these small acts of living, like a short walk in pleasant surrounds, to imbue my role as an artist with recreational qualities and pleasure. This pleasure is hard-won rather than easy, and involves constant vigilance so that it remains meaningful both to my viewers and me.

The presentation of this new work seems to be returning to a past aesthetic, common to other artists such as British ‘walking artists’ Richard Long and Hamish Fulton in the 1960s and ’70s, as well as your own earlier black and white photographic documentation in the ’70s. Why is this?

I have already explained why my current work looks as it does, but yes, you are correct about the ‘documentary’ style used by many

process artists, including walking artists. It is a language that attempts to pin down the ephemeral through a reiteration of events via text, photography and film media.

How does this work sit within the rest of your output?

In some ways this work is a return to an earlier medium and look, but the purpose of the work is not isolationist. I began working with black and white photography as a documentary tool in the mid-'70s, aware of my precursors' use of this medium. My choice of medium – walking and simple photographic documentation – was in line with an aesthetic of 'limited means', which seemed to sit right with my project. My choices were based on that which seemed logical or 'seemly' for the task of recording my unremarkable walking acts. The black and white photograph was very easily reproduced into the small pamphlets and publications I made to accompany my exhibitions, and sat nicely next to my textual ruminations on the walks. Later I moved on to Super 8 film, first black and white and then colour; then, as colour reproduction became cheaper and digital technologies were more readily available, I moved into digital photography and video. This work, then, is entirely nostalgic, it is nostalgic for that time when I first knew Brenda, when I was at university, and when she first became interested in my work. The walks are a retracing of the promenades we did together along the foreshore at Elwood in the late 1990s. But by my choice of media here I am also retracing the beginning of Brenda and my relationship, both our artistic relationship and our emotional relationship, which commenced a little later.

Do you see walking as a political gesture? I know there have been recent international 'walking conferences' where walking is seen as a politically engaged gesture in places such as Zurich and recently in Melbourne (2005).

I began walking as a method of creating an artwork without tools, merely the body moving through space unhinged from the gallery, particularly when my form of documentation took the form of film or a publication. So, for me, walking could carry the body through

space, but it was also a means of creating art out of what I would be doing in the course of a day in any case – it was non-intrusive, and intended to incorporate art practice into daily life in a seamless way, almost a lazy way; I did not wish to make any accommodation for art. Hence my unheroic attitude as a walking artist: I did not set out to explore new tracts of land, to pit myself against the elements or deal with the isolation or physical challenge of wandering through wilderness, performing bizarrely abstracted rituals such as carrying boulders or picking up stones to place at ten foot intervals along my track. My intention was to retain the normal rhythms of my existence in my work and see what that looked like.

In answer to your question, walking as a mode of commuting has definitely become more political as a gesture toward ‘environmentally low impact living’, alongside bicycling as a means of transport. I don’t drive a car, I never have and I often felt like an invalid for this, especially in the ‘opportunistic 1980s’, but now I feel legitimised as many now recognise walking as a valid choice rather than one that comes from some sort of impediment. For this stance, I was invited to give one of the lectures at the recent Melbourne Symposium on Walking, alongside fellow Australian walking artist Alexander Hope.

What is your motif? Richard Long seemed keen on the circle, perhaps Hamish Fulton had a preference for the line and Alexander Hope, whom you just mentioned, consistently walked and made works in the configuration of infinity.

My motif is probably pre-existing – it is the urban path as an image. I tend to document the signage and accoutrements to the paths, which, as they are suburban tracks, proliferate. I have made both visual and word poems from the photos of signage I have accumulated. It is no coincidence that many walking artists are interested in concrete poetry, and I am not dissimilar in this sense. In the *Ten Walking Meditations* series, I have taken to photographing the many seats that Brenda and I would take a pause from our walks on. These images are important to me as they conjure up a babble of the wonderful conversations we would have on our walks. In this publication, image number 11 is the first of these photos of seats.

What would you say are the conventions that you use as a walking artist? I mean what media do you prefer to document the ephemeral walking performances with?

It has evolved over time, or rather changes as the mood takes me. I began using black and white photography to document my walks in the 1970s alongside Super 8 film and text. The text was observations I made on my walks – very localised observations, nothing interpretive. My descriptions were an emptying out of presumptions about what we see and what it means – merely extensive descriptions of physical details, using a ‘cartographic’ frame of mind rather than a poetic one. This work was very rigorous, producing a web of minutely ‘objectively’ observed detail. Then I was interested in an opposite effect, that of ambience – a muffling of sound and a clouding of image – and these works became highly atmospheric and very popular. These works were achieved through simple enough means: merely by unfocusing the camera and going on my usual walks, recording sound through a microphone encased in layers of fabric. The film works were very meditative, and people would stay in the darkened galleries where they played for hours at a time. These current works bring together the two streams, in a way: they are quite focused in their filming, and yet they were achieved through a purposefully meditative process. I consciously daydreamed while I was performing the *Ten Walking Meditations*, not abstractly but rather with intent, if you see what I mean. I was in a daydream state, or I mentally relived one of the walks in that Brenda and I took, imagining she was walking alongside me: reliving our talks, our pauses, the food we brought along for our little picnics, counting the number of times we had taken certain (less regular) walks, and so on.

Who are your influences? I noticed that in the Meditations you bring in different influences into the work: a more casual connection with literature and other arts, in particular film. This has not been present in your work before, has it? Prior to this the references have been contained within a context of ‘process’ and ‘practice’, utilising the materials at hand and not bringing any foreign references into the work. This is in keeping with the ‘genre’ of walking as art in general, which seems to be stoically phenomenological or hermetic as a genre.

Well quite obviously my first influences were the major figures in Walking Art: those I have mentioned already such as Hamish Fulton and Richard Long. I studied the 'genre', and initially followed its orthodoxies. During the 1980s, I became more interested in filmic influences, the way time seems to be lost in a Tarkovsky film for instance – though they are often about journeys – or the lingering of time in films by Visconti, or the palpable feeling of time in Rohmer and his deceptively 'documentary-looking' style. The 'feelings' of time and journeys I perceived in the works of these directors would influence the tone of many of my works, especially my video works. Since, as a medium, cinematic film is so closely allied to art and artists' video it was the greatest influence on me. I would 'key' my work according to a mood from a film, and this was like a word key that would determine an entire work. So my influences have gone from the highly specific to the ineffable.

This walk brings in a human emotional element. As a project, the Ten Walking Meditations is, in a way, a tribute to but also a small portrait of a relationship through active remembering – do you want to talk about that?

I suppose my work has always omitted the human element, in regards to the human figure not featuring in the images that comprise the documentation. Of course, the human figure does not feature in this work either, but here it seems more about the absence of the other figure rather than denying a human dimension. This is alluded to through the empty chair, the empty walking paths, but mostly through the portentously empty pier, and of course the titles and text for the walk, which almost obsessively refer to the missing subject, Brenda. The look of the photos is nostalgic, and refers to funerary images as well as historical images that you might find in a local history museum. This is the way they turned out according to the aesthetic choices I made, not necessarily how I intended them to look. They look very sad and old, which is not what I wanted. The act I was performing was an act of memory, one to activate thought rather than place it in formaldehyde. But to return to your question, the images are a portrait of a relationship by omission, the retracing of Brenda and my regular walks was incredibly moving for me to

perform, but also, in its strange way, ... a delightful re-enactment. At times as I walked along I found myself laughing at the silly things we would come up with in conversation, especially those hysterical moments that come from sheer exhaustion when we would turn from serious art professionals into giggling fools for no seeming reason other than we had walked to the point of fatigue. Many serious but also slight conversations were revisited on these re-walkings, and I felt once again in Brenda's company. Hey, you know we were a great couple, as so many of my friends have commented; and this work also reminded me of that, as well as my grief. So, yes, this work of walking and active remembering was a way to enjoy those wonderful memories rather than drown in them.

You want to utilise this interview as the text to accompany the Elwood photographs in a publication – how important is this text to the work?

Well, you know, I am not sure. The work is so personal and that aspect is new. I wanted the work to articulate certain things about my relationship with Brenda and to act as a tribute, and I feel that perhaps the images on their own might be misread, due to those qualities of nostalgia we have already spoken about. I wanted this work to demonstrate an engagement rather than my normal disengagement with the human form, but also the interview allows me to ruminate on my process. I don't know if this is purely self-serving and of no interest to the reader. You can tell me when we are finished.

Could you take us through the series of Walking Meditations – what other events took place?

Shall I just list the events? Because to describe each would extend this text excessively.

Walk #1: this work.

Walk #2: walk along the St Kilda Beach track to Middle Park. Similar format with black and white photos, but extended notes as the titles of work.

Walk #3: black and white video of real time walk to Dights Falls along the Merri Creek track.

Walk #4: selecting Melways maps and tracing all the metropolitan walks we did together.

Walk #5: retracing the last walk Brenda and I did together while she was alive, as far as the Elwood canal in August 1999. I recorded this walk through video with an accompanying narration about as much as I could remember about that walk.

Walk #6: a country walk, this time at Vaughan Springs, near Daylesford, where we often took a weekend break. This walk was documented in video with the sound of the bush.

Walk #7: around the Botanic Gardens in Melbourne, colour photography. Re-enacting a picnic that took place in February 1996, and the food as noted in my diary. The video camera films me describing the various dishes while I sample them.

Walk #8: re-enactment of a night walk along the Yarra River from Princes Bridge to South Yarra in December 1992 – a written text visualising that walk.

Walk #9: in the bush, at Lerderderg Gorge, where Brenda and I camped on a fiercely hot weekend in March 1990. I performed a re-enactment of losing our way in the bush as we did that time, though this time I consciously lost my way, as the walking tracks are much more clearly signposted today. This was not documented in any way.

Walk #10: sitting on the seat in photograph 9 in this series and recording a reminiscence about a series of conversations between Brenda and me on that seat. This is an audiotape work.

‘Walking meditation’ – where does this term come from for you? Do you personally practice any meditation; are you interested in this practice, and are you religious in any way?

Since I have been walking as an artist I felt it was my duty in a way to research other walking practices, such as pilgrimages, other forms of walking meditation. I have walked several pilgrim trails without counting these as art, more as research as well as recreation. My walks are always those others have trod – marked paths – and there is no real reason why I have not included these pilgrim trails in my artwork. I have sampled Buddhist walking meditation sessions and have found the skills of slowing down my thought and being highly conscious of my feet very useful for my own walks where I tend to become too ‘heady’ and let my thoughts run away from my body.

As a process of conscious remembering through an artwork, how did the documenting of this work assist or obstruct your emotional aim?

Many times during these ten walks I wondered if I was betraying Brenda through creating an artwork out of mourning. This was generally when the work became ‘art’, and I became distracted by my process or the art object I was creating rather than maintaining focus on the task as I set it out. As soon as my ambition for the artwork was held in check and I consciously returned to my premise for the work and concentrated on my memories and their associations the work became meaningful and useful to me. In my wall statement for *Walk #1*, I ask myself whether the “art” of framing an emotional task in the form of documenting these ten walks has been of benefit or a hindrance?. It has been a little of both, but at the completion of this series of walks I feel I have come away with a deepened understanding of what the grieving process is about, and an appreciation of what Brenda both gave me and stifled in me. We had an incredibly rich relationship, but one that was premised on a teacher/student relationship. That was the reason behind my sudden energy at the death of Brenda, my newfound independence and exhilaration at being able to do what I felt like doing in my art without the knowledgeable dampening of my ideas that Brenda’s scrutiny achieved. I always felt that she was the arbiter of quality in my work, which meant there were many works of ‘dubious’ moral and artistic value, as she expressed it, that I did not perform.

By going off and celebrating my independence when Brenda died and then returning to her memory when it was timely for me, I was able to remember what was so great about our time together, while keeping intact the image of a new life I could now make for myself on my own. It was that liberation from Brenda's debt that I could register through these walking performances.

Would you mind talking about the experience of carrying Brenda's ashes along in the original 2000 walk? How did that feel, both physically and emotionally? Were you alone on that walk?

Well, on the day of that walk, I was with a large group of friends and relatives of Brenda's so it was more of a procession than a walk. I was entirely numb, and felt as though someone else was performing the task of scattering the ashes. The experience went by me as if in slow motion but at a distance, more filmic and visual than emotional. It was really only in the re-enactment of that walk, the remembering of the details such as the handmade box of blonde wood that carried Brenda's ashes, comments made by friends, the overcast day threatening to rain, the sense of the lightness of the passing of a life as we scattered the ashes which floated and were stirred by the sea breeze so they performed a dance as they drifted into the bay water By revisiting that day, I could take stock of what had occurred, the enormity of it and feel it finally. I returned home to Mitford Street and for the first time since Brenda's death I cried; more than just cried, it was a full body experience. So you could say that for that experience alone my elegy has been worth it. It's as if only by experiencing a moment at one remove could I fully respond to what had happened, five years on!

You have spoken about the difference in the ethos between your own and other walking artists. But do you acknowledge any kinship with such work or the artists?

It's easy to be critical, isn't it? My walking artist compatriots were definitely influential, and there are several features of their practices I have taken on board. The mere notion of creating an art practice out of walking has allowed me to practice with my body, without props necessarily, and to create an oeuvre that considers the daily

act of living as worthy of consideration. So I have taken to heart the premise of the practice of walking art, and am in no way cynical about it. The work that I now consider most akin to my own approach is by Richard Long, and it's a work he produced to be published as a children's book titled *Walk Across England*. Due to the nature of this walk across southern England – along country roads and paths – and the necessary explication of this act for the benefit of children, there is something innately pastoral about its pacing, and about the depiction of the artist as a gentleman on a leisurely walk across a green and mainly sunny countryside. There is no sense of wilderness to be tamed here, it's a recreational walk and not a confrontation with nature. And for that reason I see this work of Long's and my oeuvre as belatedly bearing similarities with one another.

Now that you have finished your Ten Walking Meditations, what are your current or next projects?

For the first time in decades I have nothing planned, and strangely I am not concerned about this. I am thinking I would like to do some travel. Brenda left me some money and I think the most valuable use I could put that money to is to do something I have not done before, and that is to travel with no aim or project in mind. My challenge is to go away without a camera of any kind, just a travel guide and a diary with the names of some friends to catch up with. I aim to be away for six months at least, without an itinerary, and see where I end up. I have been practising as a walking artist now for more than thirty years and it's time for me to take a break, and take a walk away from art.



11am 15th of December 2005. Starting out from the last home, (upstairs) Mitford Street, Elwood

Black and white photograph on fibre paper, 40.7 x 30.5cm

11.15am 15th of December 2005. The Elwood Canal from Ruskin Street bridge looking up to Broadway

Black and white photograph on fibre paper, 40.7 x 30.5cm



11.25am 15th of December 2005. The Elwood Canal between Addison and Barkly Streets. Reading a line from a story on tiles set in the concrete
Black and white photograph on fibre paper, 40.7 x 30.5cm

11.30am 15th of December 2005. Walking slowly along the Elwood Canal toward the Barkly Street bridge
Black and white photograph on fibre paper, 40.7 x 30.5cm



11.45am 15th of December 2005. The Elwood Canal as it enters Port Phillip Bay, the sea is choppy and the wind is strong

Black and white photograph on fibre paper, 40.7 x 30.5cm

11.50am 15th of December 2005. Looking across to the playground opposite the bike path and the canal entrance

Black and white photograph on fibre paper, 40.7 x 30.5cm



12 noon 15th of December 2005. First view of the Bay

Black-and-white photograph on fibre paper, 40.7 x 30.5cm

12.10pm 15th of December 2005. The bike path and the walking path along the walled walk to Elwood Beach

Black and white photograph on fibre paper, 40.7 x 30.5cm



12.20pm 15th of December 2005. The wind creates resistance, view from the bike path, Elwood walk

Black and white photograph on fibre paper, 40.7 x 30.5cm

12.20pm 15th of December 2005. The Elwood Beach walk, view across the bay

Black and white photograph on fibre paper, 40.7 x 30.5cm



12.50–1.30pm 15th of December 2005. The seat that Brenda and I would habitually sit on at the halfway mark of our walk. Many long and philosophical conversations took place here, especially at dusk

Black and white photograph on fibre paper, 40.7 x 30.5cm

2pm 15th December 2005. Again farewell B. S. Hope. Elwood pier. The site where I scattered Brenda's ashes at her request on December 15th, 2000

Black and white photograph on fibre paper, 40.7 x 30.5cm