

WALKS IN PROGRESS

a book for the everyday wanderer

A walk through our development of *WIP*
Across RCA
Being Digital 14B

Team Slowness & Contemplation:
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contents

Starting out

Initial research

First ideas

Further research and reading

Walks

Forming a final response

Prompts and artistic responses

Book-making process

Bibliography

starting out

In its infancy, the idea for *Walks in Progress*, began with a general but simple question:

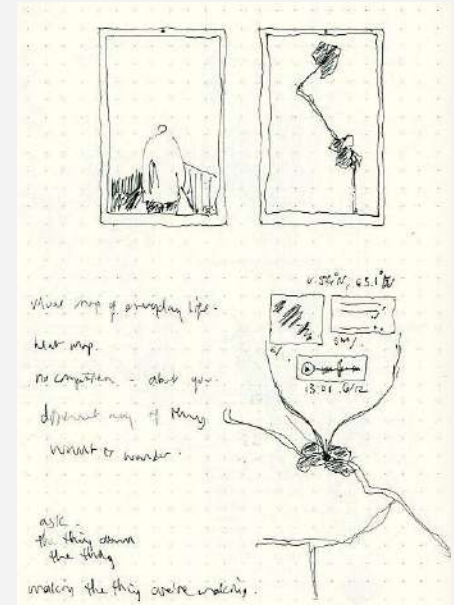
“How do we regain what we lose to the digital world?”

The inquiry was set by five artists - two photographers, an illustrator, an animator and a contemporary artist, assembled under the interest of rediscovering living slowly, and having time for reflection, in a digital age so full of constant stimulation. During our process, our research question evolved to:

“How do we regain moments of slowness and contemplation in a rapidly moving digital world?”

Of what initially began as an idea for a mobile app, ended up resolving as a phone-sized physical book, aimed at prompting users to go for walks and find time away from digital devices.

This documents charts moments of our working process, from research, conception, workshopping, and resolution, with images and text. The project grew into itself by the time we set a key activity for our development: going for walks ourselves. Our walks acted as the anchor to what became a collective yet personal group project, forming the prompts and responses that make up our final result of a hand-bound walking book.



initial research

Our research began with a wide range of inspirations regarding the compression of time and space, starting with a group visit to Sugimoto's photographic exhibition.

We became interested in the idea of walking as a form of uncovering space through movement, and as a way to slow down, and reconnect to our physical senses.



'Hiroshi Sugimoto', exhibition, Hayward Gallery, Nov 29, 2023.

We looked at the wandering dérive maps by Situationist International and the concept of Baudelaire's *flâneur*, as well as David Lemm's interactive stamp maps, to name just a few.



Richard Long, *A Line Made by Walking*, 1967. Guy Debord, *Guide psychogéographique de Paris*, 1957.

David Lemm, *Landmarks*, 2015.

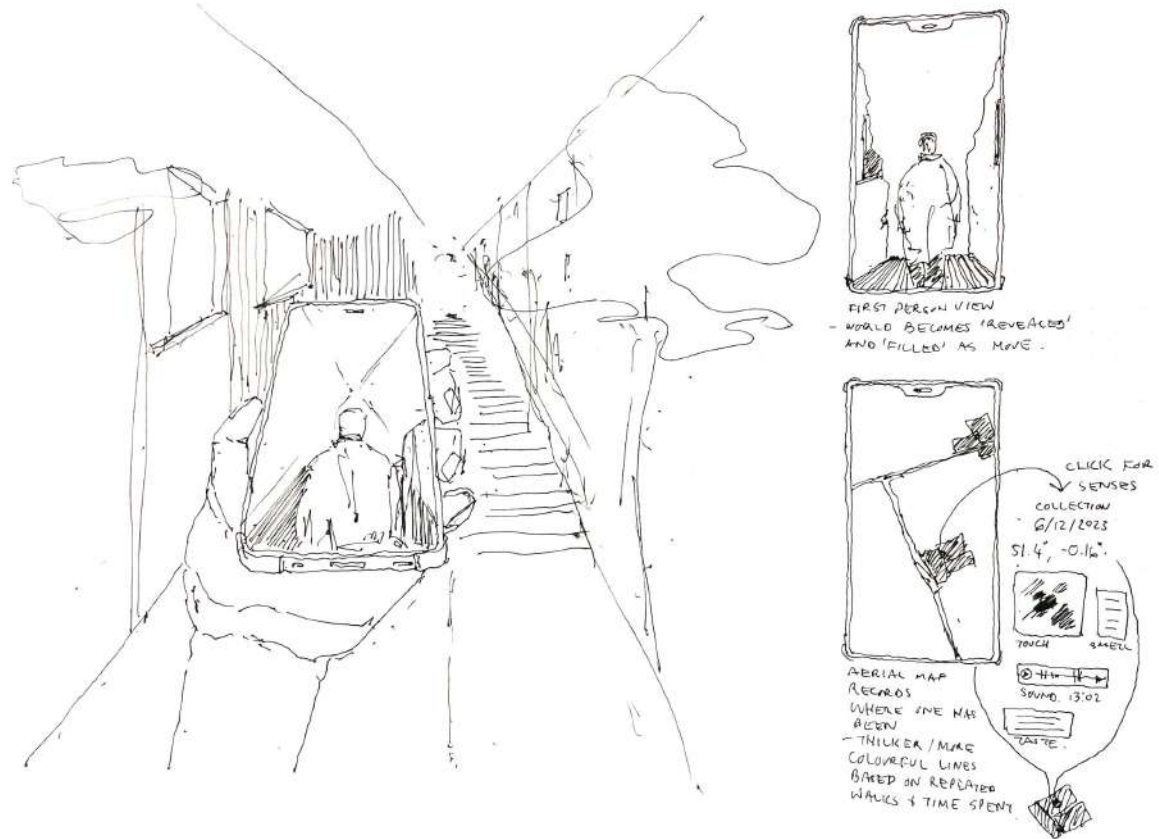
first ideas

With such references in mind, we began contemplating the idea of creating a sensorial map that would be shaped or 'filled in' as the user explores the city's landscape. Migrating from the format of a physical map, we conceived an idea for an app that would offer a reverse proposal to Google Maps.

The substantial difference was that it would not impose a set path, direction or the fastest route, but rather would focus on aimless wandering. The user would not only be able to trace their walks through graphic lines, but also record sensorial encounters with the aid of their device.

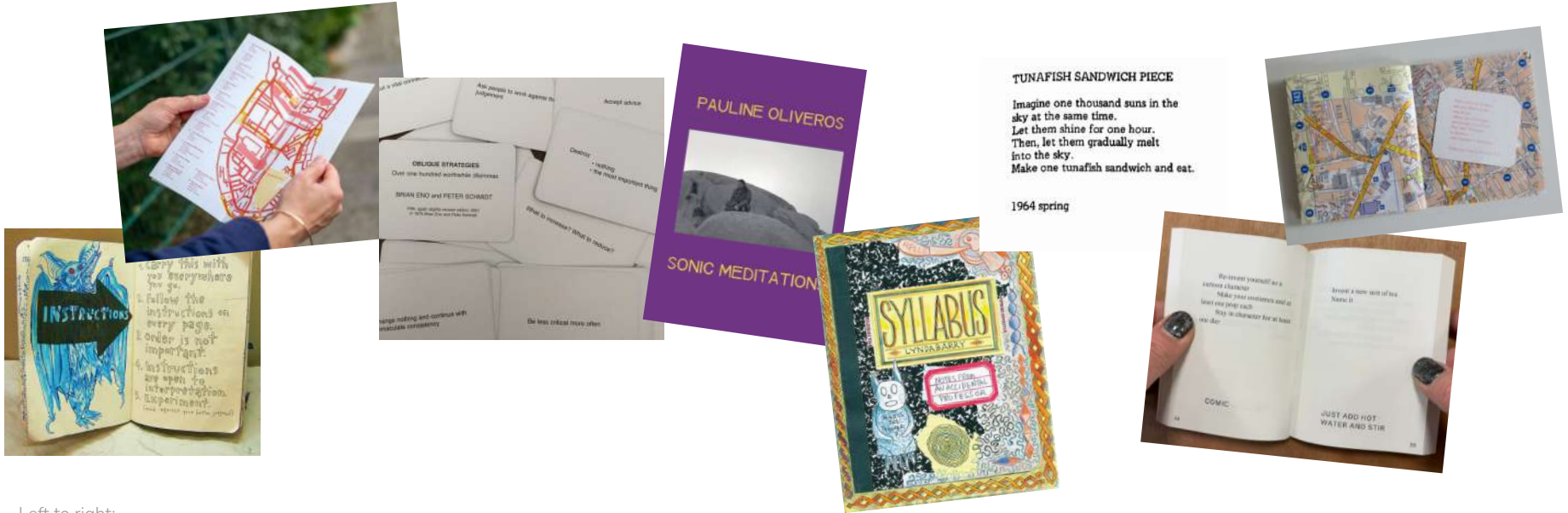
Some examples are sound recordings, surface textures or forming writing inspired by the smells of the surroundings. All these aspects would then be stored in a cumulative map, similar to an archive of sensations; always accessible.

Even as we eventually moved on from this idea, we carried over many themes, such as the notion of wandering, and having an always accessible collection of one's experience.



further research and reading

A pivotal moment in the development was receiving tutor and peer feedback regarding our chosen project outcome. The critical feedback pushed us to interrogate, re-evaluate and ultimately abandon the format of an app, to affirm our position in opposition to the digital. We looked further at ways to encourage people to use their bodies and their curiosity, in the form of prompt or action based artworks and books. We developed our idea into needing to be a tactile, physical document, designed to be held in the hands, while walking.



Left to right:
Keri Smith, *Wreck This Journal*, 2007. Modernist Estates, *Walking Guides*. Brian Eno and Peter Schmidt, *Oblique Strategies*, 1975. Pauline Oliveros, *Sonic Meditations*, 1971.
Lynda Barry, *Syllabus: Notes from an Accidental Professor*, 2014. Yoko Ono, *Grapefruit*, 1964. Mirjam Bayerdörfer and Rosalie Schweiker, *Teaching for People who Prefer Not to Teach*, 2017.
Michaela French and Helga Schmid, *Get Lost*, 2015.

walks

As a way to 'workshop' our ideas on walking and sensorial recording, we decided to conduct a series of walks for ourselves, both as group and individual activities, in different areas of London.

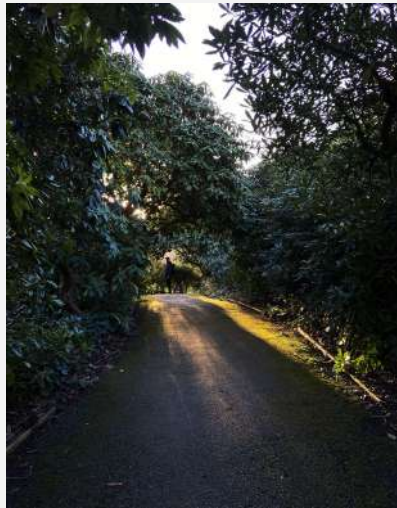
We explored the natural landscape of Hampstead Heath, for instance, as it gradually transitioned from the city to open greenery. We also employed a series of recording methods, to help us observe and pay attention to our surroundings, including sketching, photography, and using a microphone to record the 'tactile sounds' of plants, footsteps, and mud, for example.





Our own embodied experiences and documentation informed the prompts we each wrote individually. This formed a way to retain the group coherency, while also allowing room for our personal reflections to shine through.





forming a final response

Following our experiments and responses, it became clear to us that a book format would allow us to collate our work while also creating a guide-book for users to continue filling themselves. We then concentrated our efforts on the design and realisation of the book as our final object outcome.

Extract from 'Introduction' of the book:

“Designed to fit the space of our pockets, *Walks in Progress* is a phone-sized book comprising a series of potential experiences for the walking wanderer. It acts as a small everyday antithesis to digital abundance, offering an analogue phone replacement to take on the go. Following a trace of the radical style left by Yoko Ono's book *Grapefruit*, it prompts first to leave our phones behind:

Dig a hole.

Bury your phone.

Scatter the ashes of the internet over it.

Cover with dirt.

In an age of digital saturation, the idea of taking our time, slowing down, and living in the moment often appears as a surpassed cliché, a distant utopia. Most of what is regarded as human is inevitably lost to these rapid processes; and mundane spaces forgotten.”

The book is formed to provide inspiration, a lens or “new eyes” without imposing any rules on how to approach the book nor our surroundings. Indeed, what *Walks in Progress* will look like depends on our personal and sensorial responses to the prompts. A book, a journal, a manual, a game, and more, *WIP* then can also be a mirror reflecting our aspirations for a less digital and more connected future.



prompts and artistic responses

We each wrote a multitude of both practical and surreal or abstract prompts, which we whittled down to our 5 'best' each to include in the book, accompanied by an individual introduction. Each of our prompts were followed by an artistic response we created ourselves in reference to them, based on each of our specialisms, from photography, illustration, animation and writing.

Five personal collections, of five prompts and responses, mark the five-chapter division of the book. Each looks at different aspects of experiencing the world and all are united by a curious sense of discovery. We have included some of our work below (full version can be seen in Team Outcome doc).



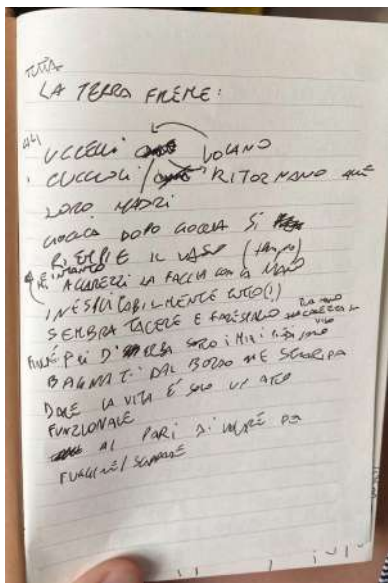
Photograph by Nina McCue



Illustrations by Dor Cohen



prompts and artistic responses



Poem by Aurora Fantechi



Animation by Kanto Maeda

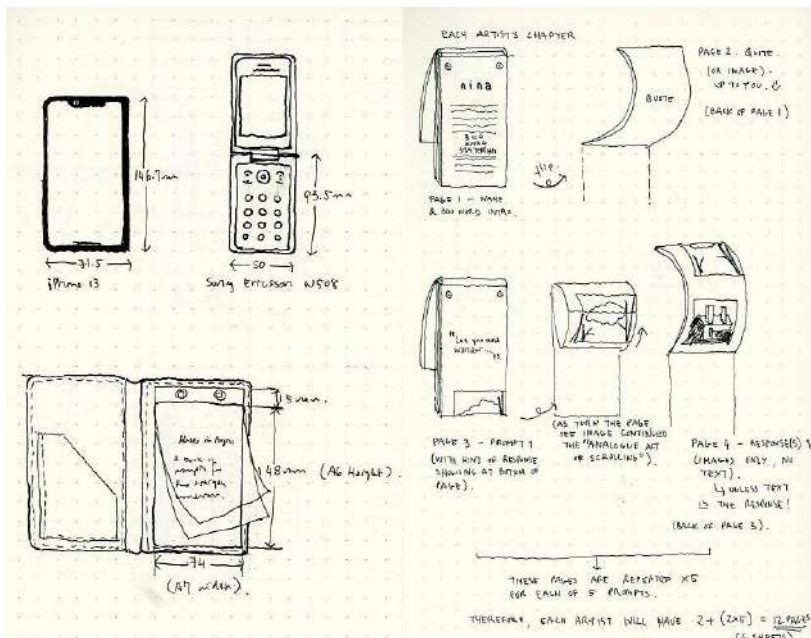


Photograph by Ruitong Liu

book-making process

We designed the book through sketches, InDesign-ing, and lots of prototyping. We used the dimensions of a phone as a critique for replacing the digital on the walk. The layout of the book is designed as an analogue reference to a scrolling motion, using a French Fold binding and overlapping images. In addition, we used adjustable screws to bind the pages, allowing users to add new pages, jumble the order, or take just a few pages to go.

In prototyping, we paid close attention to how the book felt held in the hand, the paper texture, the print quality, and the pleasure of the flipping motion.





We then sourced fabrics, paper, screws, etc. iteratively testing various options, for the realisation of the book. Even the cover was re-adapted for durability.

bibliography

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<https://davidlemm.co.uk/Debris-and-Phenomena>

<https://sensorymaps.com/>



Final result.