

*Movement Patterns: Human Life as a Series of Lines*

Tracking an individual's regular movements can be both uncomfortably intimate and frigidly anonymous. In this project I create a series of map-portraits based on several individual's habitual weekly travels. These maps are intended as the sole description of each subject's life, paring away any additional events or behaviors. The map-portraits, as objects, connect seemingly disparate concepts ranging from individual emotions to aesthetic concerns and broad social issues.

The presentation of these map-portraits intentionally suggests a cold, removed observer studying an anonymous subject. This appearance of scientific objectivity works in direct opposition to the fact that I personally know all the individuals represented. Furthermore, the initial maps were made by those individuals themselves rather than an outside observer. There is an underlying intimacy, evoked only subtly, when the viewer notices the flesh-like quality of the hand-waxed paper or the use of only first names of participants. The combination of intimacy and anonymity may create an uncomfortable closeness, like one associated with stalkers.

One of the issues that inspired this project is the contemporary paradox of feeling both invisible and overly visible: the ever-increasing anonymity of an individual meets the ever-increasing exposure of his or her life in environments affected by high-technology tracking, surveillance, and profiling. The more information that an organization has about an individual, the more likely that he or she will be reinvented and renamed as a number in a database. Government agencies and businesses have developed ways to categorize and classify an individual based on data collected from a variety of sources.

From an aesthetic perspective one may consider the movement lines on the maps as representing large-scale process drawings made unconsciously by the body of each person as he or she moves through a local environment. These drawings, arguably made by people everywhere as they move through space, remain unrealized unless monitored and documented. I use a book of transparencies to compare movement patterns to one another and also to create a new pattern consisting of all the participants' movements.

The issue of tracking movements has taken on new implications in the era of "The War on Terrorism." The recent increase in surveillance and the new powers given to the government to monitor citizens' lives create questions about the limits of freedom and privacy. In news debates and private life, people commonly worry that their lives may be "invaded." During the creation of this work, in fact, several participants expressed discomfort, saying that the collection of data about their movements felt intrusive (despite the fact that it was they themselves that were collecting the data). Even I as the organizer of the project felt uncomfortable at times. The context of debate about the uses of information may also create questions in viewers' minds as they look at the artwork: Why are these individuals being tracked? What have they done and what are they going to do? Are they a threat to our safety?

-Brian Collier