The Urban Sketchbook

How To Implement Psychogeography Exercises In Your Classroom + Studio Practice
What Is Psychogeography?

❖ Is the study of specific effects of a geographical environment (consciously organized or not) on the emotions and behaviors of individuals

❖ Created by Guy Debord, a French Situationist philosopher

❖ The Situationist International (SI) was an international organization made up of avant-garde artists and intellectuals in Europe from 1957-1972
Guy Debord thought that cities have “constant currents, fixed points, and vortexes that discouraged entry/exit into certain zones.”

He encouraged people to go on “derives” or walks where individuals follow what they are drawn or repelled by instead of taking certain, pre-planned “routes.” This allowed for playful encounters with architecture and the urban environment. They would also set up urban games to help them to see their environment in a new way.
If you were to walk through these images consider how their construction would affect your interrelation with the space. Where are you visually guided? or directed away from?
Example

You go for a walk around your neighborhood with no intended path or goal. You leisurely explore your surrounding by being conscious of but not necessarily following intended walkways or street signs.

You give yourself some sort of limitation like following a color or looking for textures.
In 2016, I created a class that I taught at two universities called The Urban Sketchbook, which was inspired by my own studio practice.

This was based on these ideas from urban games, derives, and the basic outline of psychogeography to generate content for class projects.

These projects also helped students to develop their personal voice and senior thesis exhibitions.

Some of these projects I adapted into collaborative projects that I implement in my current position as an Early Childhood Art Teacher.

Here are some examples of how you to can use these in your classrooms and studios to not only help you and your students gain new perspective about your surroundings but also about your individual, internal narratives.
The Color Walk + Accordian Book

William S. Burroughs would take color walks, in which you choose a color and let it lead you through an environment. Students were asked to go on a color walk and create an accordion book based on their experience.
I took the students to an Asian Market in Milwaukee, WI which was something they hadn’t experienced before. Since it was a new sensory experience for them they created graphic journalism collages to report on their responses. As we entered the store students were given $10 to purchase some items that they would find using the “Find 4” game. The scavenger hunt got them to interact in a new way and provide them with new experiences.
Find Four Game

PART 1: Find Four Items that are:
Red
Green
Have Eyes
Are Kitchen Utensils
Curious
Celebrate
Would never eat
Would like to eat
Have an interesting texture

PART 2: Purchase 2-4 items with your $10
You will either integrate these into your work through drawing, photography, or collage.

PART 3: Ask a clerk or someone at the store about an item you are purchasing.
Try to learn something new!
Students were asked to come up with a list of places that reminded them of something from their childhood. (i.e. antique stores, places of worship, gardens, etc.). They chose a couple of the places to have a derive. After their walks they come up with a list of words to help them form a narrative. Then they used their sketches, photographs, words to create a layered mylar “palimpsest” drawing. This exercise utilized “place” to help them excavate memory and develop a more personal narrative in their work.
Students were taken on a geocaching field trip, where we looked for caches around the city. After our adventures they created a zine about their experience. To conclude, we had a class zine exchange.
ROBERT MACFARLANE: BEGINNER’S PSYCHOGEOGRAPHY

“UNFOLD A STREET MAP OF LONDON, PLACE A GLASS, RIM DOWN, ANYWHERE ON THE MAP, AND
DRAW ROUND ITS EDGE. PICK UP THE MAP, GO OUT INTO THE CITY, AND WALK THE CIRCLE, KEEPING
AS CLOSE AS YOU CAN TO THE CURVE. RECORD THE EXPERIENCE AS YOU GO, IN WHATEVER MEDIUM
YOU FAVOUR: FILM, PHOTOGRAPHY, MANUSCRIPT, TAPE. CATCH THE TEXTUAL RUN-OFF OF THE
STREETS; THE GRAFFITI, THE BRANDED LITTER, THE SNITCHES OF CONVERSATION. CUT FOR SIGN.
LOG THE DATA-STREAM. BE ALERT TO THE HAPPENSTANCE OF METAPHORS, WATCH FOR VISUAL
RHYMES, COINCIDENCES, ANALOGIES, FAMILY RESEMBLANCE, THE CHANGING MOODS OF THE STREET.
COMPLETE THE CIRCLE, AND THE RECORD ENDS. WALKING MAKES FOR CONTENT; FOOTAGE FOR
FOOTAGE.”

(TAKEN FROM: ROBERT MACFARLANE: A ROAD OF ONE’S OWN, TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT, OCT

This is a link to a kit to help get you started!
http://unknowndestinations.org/files/destination_kit_1_0.pdf
Email me at Stephanie.Wiegman@concordia.ca for questions.
More Walks, Derives, and Games

- Train Game
- Glass on a Map
- GPS Drawing
- Sensory Walk
- Nature Walk with your child
What About Younger Students?

- These walks and games work with any age group.
- Color Walk
- Shape Hunt
- Texture Walk
- Nature Walk / Foraged Art
- GPS Walking
- Geocaching for MS
- Scavenger Hunts

Photo from motherspride.com
Collaboration

❖ At Concordia Shanghai, I collaborated with the HS Art Teacher Jane Klammer to implement some of this coursework with the Highschool students and Kindergarteners

❖ We had the HS students go on a color walk with the Kinder. They took photos together and the HS used this as source material.

❖ The Kinder also created painted papers for the HS to use in their collages.

❖ The Kinder then made zines about their color walk with the HS students.

❖ In the end the HS and the Kinder each created a Zine about their walk.

❖ We are having a HS and Kinder Zine exchange next month to celebrate our collaboration.
Color Walk: HS + EC Collaboration

Step 1: Color Walk + Take Photographs
Step 2: Kinder paint backgrounds and learn about color mixing
Step 3: HS takes background and photographs and makes collages
Step 4: Kinder makes their own zines
HS in process work. Final step will be a Zine exchange between Kinder and HS
Through our collaboration, Jane looked at how to utilize these exercises to help her HS students develop a personal voice in their work.

She will now take you through the framework of how she mentors her HS students at Concordia International School in Shanghai to help them develop this skill.
“Hitting The Mark” by Jane Kalmmer

The range of marks used to making drawings, the arrangement of those marks, and the materials to make the marks are endless.
Guides that help artists in making decisions about how to organize an image on a picture plane in order to communicate content.
Figurative or Nonfigurative sculpture, architectural modes, metal work, ceramics, glass work, installation, performance, assemblage and 3-D fabric/ fiber arts
imaginative, inventive, and confidence in the articulation of the art of mark-making.

Artwork is consistent in being of high quality and levels of expertise.

Compositions demonstrate informed decision-making and may show successful engagement with experimentation and/or risk-taking.

Final artworks address fairly complex visual and/or conceptual ideas and demonstrate mastery in composition, concept and execution.

Students master confidence in the communication of the vocabulary of art (principles of design and elements) in the creation of their artwork.
Today we are going to make a ZINE, which are small self-published DIY books. Zines are often traded at zine exchanges, festivals, or sold at Distros (zine shops). They are normally created on A3 or A4 paper, so that they can be editioned on a printer or copy machine.

We will use this medium to discuss our experiences with place from our walks yesterday.

After you finish your zine, you can scan and email it to me. I will send out a group email with attachments to all of the zines. Then we will have created an digital portfolio exchange. Each of you can then print and trade your zine with each other.
Zines are...

- Great ways for your students to discuss their walks, new experiences with place, and record and develop ideas.
- Great way for you in your own studio practice to record your thoughts, new ideas, create mini sketchbooks, or completed works of art.
- They travel well, are cheap, can be made anywhere, and it is easy to become part of the zine culture.
Check out nieves.ch or caferoyalbooks.com to see an online catalog of zines from artists around the world!