

From: *Camp Fire. Hamish Fulton. My artform is the short journey, made by walking in the landscape*, edited by J. Debbaut, exhibition catalog, (Rivoli-Torino, Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, 18 aprile - 8 giugno 1986) Lecturis BV, Eindhoven 1985.

They are bright, they are intense, they are quiet,  
they are real, they are precise, they are peaceful,  
they are full of respect for what they see.  
You can hear the wind whispering, the sound of  
falling water, and the echo of footsteps.  
The images of Hamish Fulton are completely at rest  
like a swan drifting on the black lake.

R.H.F.

## ***THIRTY NINE WALKS***

FIVE KNOTS FOR FIVE DAYS OF WALKING  
THE STRING WAS BRAIDED AND KNOTTED AT BOTH ENDS ONE KNOT TIED AFTER  
EACH DAY  
ISLE OF LEWIS AND HARRIS SCOTLAND SUMMER 1973

GLEN TAMANISDALE  
A FIVE DAY 100 MILE WALK OUTER HEBRIDES SCOTLAND EARLY 1976

BEN NEVIS ON THE CENTRE CLOUD HORIZON  
THE FOURTH MORNING MIDSUMMER DAY SCOTLAND 1975 A WALK FROM THE  
SUMMIT OF BEN NEVIS TO THE SUMMIT OF BEN MACDUI BY WAY OF LOCH ERICHT

A FOUR DAY WALK ACROSS THE BORDERCOUNTRY OF ENGLAND AND SCOTLAND  
WEST COAST TO EAST COAST FROM THE SOLWAY FIRTH TO HOLY ISLAND EARLY  
SPRING 1977

THE CHEVIOT HILLS  
CROSSFELL TO THE CHEVIOTS A 120 MILE MOORLAND WALK IN NORTHERN  
ENGLAND WINTER 1974

FROM THE DEER TO THE SEA  
A FOUR DAY WALK SCOTLAND 1975

RANNOCK  
JANUARY 1978 A 166 MILE WALKING JOURNEY ACROSS SCOTLAND  
FROM MONTROSE ON THE EAST COAST TO LOCH NAM UAMH ON THE WEST COAST

HERMA NESS

A TWO DAY 90 MILE WALK STARTING ON MIDSUMMER DAY  
FROM THE NORTH TO THE SOUTH OF THE SHETLAND ISLANDS  
HERMA NESS TO SCATNESS TRAVELLING BETWEEN THE ISLANDS BY FERRY  
UNST 16 MILES YELL 19 MILES ZETLAND 55 MILES SCOTLAND 1978

THE BLUE STACK MOUNTAINS OF DONEGAL

CAMPING FOR FIVE NIGHTS ON THE SAME GROUND AT THE TIME OF THE  
DECEMBER FULL MOON 1982

DIRT ROAD BIRD SONG

A 115 MILE WALK ICELAND SPRING 1978

A 100 MILE WALK LASTING FOUR DAYS FROM THE SOUTH COAST TO THE WEST  
COAST OF ICELAND LATE SPRING 1975

SOFT GROUND

NO DARKNESS

TRACKS OF THE ARCTIC FOX LATE SPRING DRIFTWOOD FROM SIBERIA  
A COASTAL WALK IN NORTH WEST ICELAND HOLMAVIK TO HOLMAVIK JUNE 5-12  
1979

EVEREST LHOTSE

A 20 DAY WALKING JOURNEY FROM DOLALGHAT FOLLOWING THE TRAIL TO THE  
EVEREST ICEFALL  
POST MONSOON SEASON NEPAL 1975

WATERS EDGE

TURTLE BEAVER FOX ARMADILLO

A SEVEN DAY WALK BY THE SUWANNEE RIVER FLORIDA EARLY 1982

FIFTH CAMP

A SEVEN DAY WALK IN THE PYRENEES SPRING 1981 TRAVELLING IN A CIRCLE FROM  
BEDOUS BY WAY OF IBON DE ACHERITO COL DE LA CONTENDE AU DE COUECQ COL  
D'AYOUS LAC DE PEYREGET COL D'ISEYE

BEAVER STICKS

FOUR DAYS WANDERING BY A RIVER FOUR NIGHTS CAMPING BESIDE THE WATER  
ALBERTA SPRING 1980

SEVEN DAYS

WHISTLING ELK A SEVEN DAY WALK IN THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS OF ALBERTA  
CANADA AUTUMN 1978

KUTENAI

TWO WALKS IN THE ALBERTA ROCKIES 74 AND 70 MILES CANADA SUMMER 1976

THE BERING SEA

A FOURTEEN DAY WALKING JOURNEY ROUND BALDWIN PENNINSULA  
TRAVELLING BY WAY OF KOTZEBUE CAPE BLOSSOM THE ARCTIC CIRCLE NIMIUK  
POINT PIPE SPIT KOTZEBUE  
ALASKA AUTUMN 1977

RINGDOM GOMPA

NORTHERN INDIA JULY 1978

A 14 1/2 DAY WALKING JOURNEY OF APPROXIMATELY 200 MILES TRAVELLING BY  
WAY OF RINGDOM GOMPA THE PENZI PASS THE ZANSKAR VALLEY ATING GOMPA  
HUTTRA THE MUNI GLACIER MACHAIL AND THE CHANDER BHAGA RIVER

TASMANIA

A SLOW JOURNEY HAND OUTLINES FOUR ROCKS

AN ELEVEN DAY WALK FROM THE MIDDLE TO THE NORTH COAST OF THE ISLAND  
BY WAY OF THE HIGHEST HILL TRAVELLING ON TRAILS AND ROADS MARCH APRIL  
1979

THE CLOUDS AT DUSK

A ONE NIGHT BIVOUAC ON THE SUMMIT RIM OF PICO DE ORIZABA MEXICO 1979

TARAHUMARA

A WALK DOWN INTO THE CANYON ON THE RIO URIQUE FIVE DAYS MEXICO 1979

MOON ROCK

A FOUR DAY COASTAL WALK ENDING ON THE NIGHT OF THE MAY FULL MOON  
NORTHERN CALIFORNIA 1982

EARTH WALL

AN ELEVEN DAY WANDERING WALK FROM THE RIO MAURI TO THE RIO ACHUTA  
AND BACK TO THE RIO MAURI WESTERN BOLIVIA EARLY 1981

STANDING COYOTE

A SEVEN DAY WALK IN NORTHEASTERN CALIFORNIA ENDING ON THE NIGHT OF  
THE OCTOBER FULL MOON 1981

YUROK

A FOUR DAY COASTAL WALK

DEL NORTE AND HUMBOLDT COUNTIES CALIFORNIA SPRING 1980

DARK GREY FOX WITH A WHITE TIPPED TAIL

A FOUR DAY WALK IN THE COASTAL HILLS NEAR PORT AUX BASQUES  
NEWFOUNDLAND AUGUST 1981

RUMBLING ROCKS ON THE STREAMBED

A FOUR DAYWALK IN LOCHABER SCOTLAND SEPTEMBER 1982

MOON ECLIPSE

CRESCENT MOON AT DUSK FULL MOON AT DAWN

AN ELEVEN DAY WANDERING WALK IN CENTRAL AUSTRALIA JULY 1982

GLANCING EYE

A TWENTY DAY WALKING JOURNEY FROM DUMRE TO LEDER IN MANANG AND  
BACK TO POKHARA BY WAY OF KHUDI

NEPAL EARLY 1983

RAIN WALL

A FOUR DAY ROAD WALK IN EASTERN HOKKAIDO JAPAN SPRING 1983

BAMBOO MOON SHADOWS

A FOUR DAY HILL WALK TRAVELLING BY WAY OF ASAHI DAKI IN THE REGION OF  
DAI SETU ZAN CENTRAL HOKKAIDO JAPAN

SPRING 1983

CLOUDY WATER IN THE AFTERNOON CLEAR WATER IN THE MORNING

A FOUR DAY WALK IN CENTRAL HOKKAIDO JAPAN 1983 STARTING ON THE DAY OF  
THE MAY FULL MOON AND TRAVELLING BY WAY OF OTO FUKU YAMA

SUN RED IN CLOSED EYES

A WALK TO THE TOP OF MULHACEN SIERRA NEVADA SPAIN EASTER 1984

BIRD OF PREY VANISHES INTO A BRIGHT BLUE CLOUDLESS SKY

A SEVEN DAY WALK IN THE MOUNTAINS SWITZERLAND EARLY SUMMER 1984

MEMORIZED HORIZON AND WORSHIPFUL ALIGNMENT SUMMER MIDDAY TOWARDS  
THE WEST

A TWELVE DAY WALK FROM LAMAYURA TO DRAS BY WAY OF THE SHILAKONG  
RIVER LINGSHE DIBLING RINGDOM GOMPA SANKU AND UMBA NORTHERN INDIA  
JULY 1984

GAME TRAILS IN THE ROCKIES

A COMPLETE TWELVE DAY WILDERNESS WALK 100 MILES BETWEEN TWO ROADS  
ALBERTA OCTOBER 1974

NAKOTA

A SEVENTEEN DAY WALK IN THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS OF ALBERTA AUTUMN 1984

### ***By Way of an Introduction***

*“For the creative man the problem is, first, to identify and define what darkens man's intellect:*

*secondly, to set the mind free”.*

Understanding is not come by passively, nor is it imparted simply in the showing and the telling of what one claims to know. To know the taste of a pear you must change it by eating, said Mao: to know our natural setting we must renew our relationship with it. Hamish Fulton accomplishes this through walking. In the natural context, walking is the type of fitting locomotion for human being, and in the course of walking the world and person are present to each other in a specifically privileged way.

(It is misleading to think overmuch of the lord of the land, owner and overseer, on his beat and the strolling of leisured classes: rather reflect that walking is a generic way in which human beings - player, poet and prophet no exception - go about their living on this earth.)

Fulton does not seek to understand the natural world through a passive contemplation in which the gaze outstares its object and for which representation devolves upon the articulation of the merely visible. He refuses a Western tradition of Landscape Art that legitimates the manipulation of Nature in the interests of humanity's narcissism and strives to motivate the forms of the Earth according to our passions. We are part of Nature: stripped of the precarious powers of advanced civilisation, the Earth lets us be, more or less. Who and what we are, individually and collectively, is inscribed in the history of our relationship with the natural world. Fulton's work arises in the commemoration of occasions of good feeling, moments in which his relationship with the natural world is well realised, is reverently actual. Walking or camping become activities with a cognitive and moral import.

The activity, the knowing art, is sufficient to its purpose: this is delicate matter. No great virtuosity or skill is displayed: the walks are not strenuous, nor do they require long training and precise preparation; the work is made with light materials, with words and photographs of an everyday kind. Had Marcel Duchamp been capable of founding a tradition, then Fulton would be heir to it: the works in this book are as self-effacing as the snapshots in the family photo album or those objects cast with intense indifference to form a configuration for divinatory reading. This art is subversively infectious, its means within everyone's reach.

Neither ready-made nor already-found, wilderness and familiar relatives jostle each other in the category of the negligently-forgotten. We are in danger of overlooking the Earth, and these photographs indict our memories and our consciences - touched as they are by the authenticity of past presence that Roland Barthes discerned in all photographs. They have that air of being witness to a scene of possible crime, past or future, that Walter Benjamin detected in the unpeopled streets Atget photographed. Their careful silence recalls the mute indictment that pervades Edward Curtis's haunting visual records of the North American Indians. We document those subjects whose continued existence is in jeopardy: the subject, if we know it well, dictates its own unconditional terms of remembrance, and we struggle to produce a properly disinterested memory.

In Fulton's work there is the prescience of regret. In these remote and quietly near places I fancy I hear the fall of acid rain on a soil soon to be leached by the distant machinations of agribusiness. Even so, the city streets clotted at the centre of modern cultures seem impoverished by comparison, embodying a vision bounded by city limits. Art cannot resolve this dilemma: it can only give assurance that we do still recognise a good life, and confirm its present absence.

These photographs are photographs of places. They are not aesthetic constructions, formal manipulations designed to tweak our sensibilities, but redeem Herbert Marcuse's affirmation of an art (and the world) shot through with *une promesse du bonheur*: “The truth of art lies in this: that the world really is as it appears in the work of art”, Marcuse writes in *The Aesthetic Dimension*. The places revealed in this book were there in the world, and Fulton was there also.

## ***On Illampu Shadow Line of Pelican Feathers and Reeds from Lake Titicaca***

See its precise concatenation of cast shadows, each feather each piece of reed a gnomon. Are reeds and pelicans characteristics of the same environment, perhaps of this place where they are gathered together? Or are they naturally separated, and only here brought into alignment to form the sign of the journey on which they were in their own ways collected, just as any homecomer at journey's end might display the various souvenirs of travel? The questions reveal my ignorance of the ordinary schemes which reeds, pelicans and places inhabit, and similarly ignorance of how Illampu relates to Lake Titicaca. To dispel that lack of knowledge I turn to the books on my shelves and there find recorded that Illampu is a mountain peak some 100 miles to the East of Lake Titicaca. In this way I come to learn that the photograph records the end of a walk in which items characteristic of Lake Titicaca were brought to the mountain. By the same tokens, the walk is encompassed by the apprehension simultaneously of a beginning and an end, an apprehension that also marks the involvement of a carrying. The objects carried find their usefulness in nothing other than to mark the carrying of them: such purposeful purposelessness enables the artist to reveal a landscape, its absence everywhere present in this image.

There is foresight and knowledge in the activity of the sign, and there is foresight and knowledge in the making of the sign. As each gnomon is placed so it is placed in anticipation of the moment at which the sun will swing the tip of each shadow to stem of feather to base of reed. The sun draws these threads together to present a thin dark line on Illampu, moulding to and witnessing the minute contours of the small patch of ground on which it falls. The shadow line recalls the sloping edge of a mountain proud against the sky, and the objects for me signify a succession of tree-forms, leaf to needle. A line, a track, and there by the sign of a waytaken: we see not only juxtaposition of the endpoints of a journey, but also an image that concentrates remembrance of the changes of scale of landscape features in the course of a travelling - the far mountain aimed far and the ground of a destination achieved brought into focus in this one picture.

Four reeds and four feathers carried to Illampu and there placed in the ground so as to align their shadows. At the moment that the thrown shadow is complete, the objects that act as gnomons, carefully brought all that way, seem somehow secondary and curiously by standing. Or rather as though in some inversion of a primitive necklace in which the bric-à-brac of the environment get threaded together for ornamental display and protection, they appear to peg the shadow line to the ground. Sometimes it seems to me that the shadow is more substantial than the material objects that seek to restrain it: this too is an illusion.

A journey has been made to this end: the shadows of pelican feather and reed shall fall upon mountainside. As at the end of a pilgrimage a candle is lit and signifies that the pilgrimage is made, is complete (for no further sign is certainly looked for), so at Illampu the reeds and feathers are placed as (if you wish) gratuitously as at any ritual. However, the journey so completed was serious, not solemn. Grave solemnity and the arrogance of heroic smallness would call for the contrary construction of a megalithic monument of arrival. Reeds and feathers comprise a sufficient clock and calendar, and the indicated sun is the same as drives Stonehenge. Here is hour and season, for at any other time than this shown the shadows will overlay or fall short. The shadow lines are a precise response to the rhythms of earth and sun, of reed and pelican.

Later I hear that Lake Titicaca is known locally to be The Birthplace of the Sun.

*“The first of the six adjustments is: to adjust forms to the harmonising movement of the universal lifebreath. This cannot be learned by mere exercises of imitation. This ultimate knowledge is given to us by Heaven. But there is something which can be acquired by reading and reading, by wandering and wandering: we will free ourselves from dustiness and foulness - hills and valleys will establish themselves quite naturally within our inner self. If those boundary lines are fixed within ourselves, then we need only express them with the hand that they may become visible. So doing we will transmit the Divine in those mountains and streams”.*

Tung Ch'i-Ch'ang (1555-1636AD): *Hua Yen*

In the vaporous morning air the Pico de Orizaba lances its shadow across space (SUNRISE SHADOW). Sun and atmosphere combine momentarily to conjure a dark pyramid of the imagination more splendidly substantial than the far peaks which pale into relative insignificance. This mountainous gnomon, itself congealed time, indicates on the landscape's dial earlier dawns than today's: Aztec, Inca, Maya. (Egyptian, Babylonian.) Beneath a peak virtually opposite the sun dynasties of souls are invoked. (The photographer stood on the Pico de Orizaba, yet however closely I examine its receding outline I cannot find the shadow of a man.)

*“Mount K'un-lun is so big, and the pupil of the eye is so small, that at a very short distance its form cannot be made out. At a distance of several li, however, it may be encompassed within an inch of pupil; and obviously as one goes farther away and one sees it become smaller and smaller. Now as I spread out my plain silk (to catch) the far-away brightness, the form of Mount K'un-lun may be encompassed by a square inch; a vertical stroke of three inches corresponds to a height of three thousand feet, and a horizontal passage of ink over a few feet stands for an extent of a hundred li... By such means, the beauty of Mount Sung and Mount Hua, the very mystery of the Dark Spirit of the Universe, all may be caught within a single picture... Therefore I live at leisure and control my breathing; wipe clean my goblet or draw sound from my lute, unroll my pictures and contemplate them in silence, or from my seat search out the utmost limits of space. I do not oppose the celestial influences, and in my loneliness I respond to the unpeopled wilderness. Peaks and precipices rising sheer and high, cloudy forests lying dense and vast - to the sages and virtuous men (who then dwelt in obscurity) in past ages, (these have brought) a myriad pleasures to relax their souls and minds. What more should I desire? When a joy is of the soul, and only of the soul, what would be ranked higher than the source of that joy?”*

Tsung Ping (375-433AD): *Preface to Landscape Painting*

The walks represented in this book involved a work of forgetting. To understand, indeed to realise

the landscape, involves bringing oneself into relationship with the land. All incidental and extraneous desires and concerns must be sloughed off, so that the natural world can be entered unencumbered. Fixation of the eyeball provides the space for hallucination, not vision: analogously, the artist rooted to one perspective falls subject to the stereotypes of tradition at the expense of adequately responding to the subject matter itself, the landscape. Fulton esteems those whose benign knowledge of Nature enables them to survive without threatening the integrity and autonomy of any natural thing. The disenchantment of Nature embodied and expressed in the advanced societies of East and West leave us naked in the very wildernesses that are home to our ancestors. That we are so desperately vulnerable when deprived of our cloak of industrial science is a poignant symbol of our alienation from the ultimate ground of our existence, the Earth itself. Since the Second World War, the devastating reach of military and industrial forces has sharpened our sense that indeed we live on one Earth. In Mark Tobey's words: "Our ground today is not so much the national or the regional ground as it is the understanding of the single earth". Fulton's work informs us of the Earth beyond the myopic tunnel-vision of systemic greed. He celebrates the transcendental ordinariness of our world: he shares with his vision of the world as beautiful beyond our wildest imaginings, and ordinarily so, everywhere. The work represented in this book provokes a work of recalling.

### ***Eleven Paces from the First Rock to the Second Rock***

A man's measure.

Hamish Fulton does humanity the honour of including people - or the name of a people - in his landscape works only when they inextricably include themselves in the landscape. They are properly dignified. They have the right to name the place.

There are many ways in which word and place, text and picture may relate: to see text as principally disposed *caption* and *title* to a picture is to succumb merely to cultural fashion. Sometimes the text names the place and the year. Sometimes the text nominates the walk by recounting the named places (the textualised landmarks) encountered during the walk: a notched stick, knotted string or other primitive mnemonic would do as well for we who are ignorant of the placing of the steps. Once, the place is signified by 'nothing but' the encircling permutations of a text that articulates the structured space of possible experience. And in another place (where there are mountains), we are invited to go through the meaninglessness of the names to find the meaningfulness of the place itself.

Names are not the things themselves, yet neither is the one indifferent to the other - the name is not an empty utterance. The text is text of the place and the walk, not simply text of what is visible in the photograph of the place. Such conjunction of text and picture is so commonplace we readily overlook it: within the Western ambit, it is found in travel guides, in the illustrations to natural history primes, and in the family photo album.

Anatomise place, stratify tranquillity. The sounds of quiet solitude and sudden company. Expecting the branch to crack in the cold of night, the dingo's call, running water. Scored memory.



sky

trails                      tracks                      treks                      traces

earth                      stone                      wall

near • far                                      part • whole

one thing              like and unlike      another

high • low                                      big • small

still and moving

BEAVER STICKS      (no hand in this)      SNAKES

corresponding and happy accident

the earth under foot                      (By the waters)

it is

#### DIRT ROAD

#### BIRD SONG

demonstrating each phase of the wings beat, as though derived from a sequence by Muybridge. But at a second glance: are these not tracks in the snow, marks of claw or paw? Hsü Shân believed that written signs were first devised by Ts'ang Chieh after close study of Nature, particularly the footprints of birds and animals. The varieties of the elements of Chinese calligraphy are today called names such as: flying geese, phoenix wing, dragon claw, melon seed. And the Emperor T'ai Tsung wrote of Wang Hsi-Chih: "The dots and lines he executed so ably ... remind me of the clouds and mists which appear isolated yet linked". The trace of a suspension of a sign.

Camp Fire. An intimate relation of humanity and the natural world on the journey. Pause; reflect: branch, fire and ashes. Read the glowing scripts the drifting smoke hear the camp fire speak.

I offer this by way of an introduction.

An unnamed Zen novice asks Master Fuketsu: "We are in constant contact with existence and its workings whether we talk or keep silent. How can we go through without interfering with it?" Fuketsu replied: "I always recall places south of the river in the month of March when the small birds sing amid the fragrance of a hundred flowers".

David Reason *Canterbury; January-April 1984*

## ***References***

The quotation that heads the text is taken from Oskar Kokoschka: "A Petition from a Foreign Artist to the Righteous People of Great Britain for a Secure and Present Peace, humbly tendered and signed by Oskar Kokoschka, London, December 1945".

Reference is also made to:

Ch'en Chih~Mai: *Chinese Calligraphers and their Art*, Melbourne, 1966.

*Chinese Art* (Contag: "Early Chinese Landscape Painting"), Garland Publishing Inc., New York, 1976 (for translations from the Chinese).

E. Hoffman: *Kokoschka. Life and Work*, London, 1947.

Y. Hoffman: *The Sound of One Hand*, London, 1977.

Mao Zedong [Mao Tse-Tung]: *Four Essays on Philosophy* ("On Contradiction" Beijing [Peking]), 1966.

H. Marcuse: *The Aesthetic Dimension*, London, 1978.

D.C. Miller: *14 Americans*, New York, 1946 (for quotation from Mark Tobey).

## ***Notes from the Land of the Electric Light***

### **Michael Auping, Summer 1984**

It is perhaps appropriate, and indeed convenient, to interpret Hamish Fulton's work as an extension of a long tradition of English topographical painting, country walks and admiration for landscape. For a modern, suburban American, however, such an interpretation has little meaning.

Having said this, it is more difficult to define how one might - even personally - interpret the work from an American vantage point. Broadly speaking, the relationship between Fulton's art and America (in the limited sense of the 50 United States) can be seen as ranging from the distinct to the distinctly equivocal.

First of all, it is a fact that America has played a seminal role in the formation of Fulton's art. Both Fulton's subject matter and his method of working were initially inspired by a trip to America in 1969 in which he travelled through the plains states of Wyoming, South Dakota and Montana. Throughout the trip, Fulton took numerous short walks with a camera and notebook (although no specific art works resulted). What did result, was a deep impression of the American landscape.

Indeed, he was “so deeply impressed by the landscape”, Fulton has commented, “that I began to consider making landscape art”.<sup>1</sup>

It is curious, then, that Fulton's landscapes should seem so mysteriously unAmerican, that is to say, mysteriously unModern. This is not so simply explained by the fact that he places his images in heavy oak frames reminiscent of early museum displays of antiquity, though it does add an effect of a distant time. It has more to do with the type of relationship Fulton establishes with nature.

Walking through the modern American landscape, Fulton appears as a romantic outsider, making art that is sympathetic to a nineteenth century sensibility in a science fiction age. The focus of Fulton's art is nature and man's most basic relation to it; walking in it. His images make no reference to technological or urban culture. By contrast, the United States represents one of the most dynamic clashes between nature and culture (Yosemite National Park vs. New York City, the John Muir Trail vs. the Los Angeles freeway system, et al). The ecological movement notwithstanding, Americans have become used to, if not comfortable with, these dynamics. They have certainly provided inspiration and challenge for the American artist, particularly those working outdoors over the last decade or so, during which time the American landscape became part of the pioneering avant garde movement known as Earth Art. Landscape ceased to be simply metaphoric image and became a material to physically manipulate via pneumatic drills and bulldozers; the artist and the industrialist working simultaneously 'developing' the American landscape. Michael Heizer, who has created a number of large, outdoor works in the southwestern United States, has said: “The work I'm doing has to be done, and *somebody* has to do it ... We live in an age of the 747 aircraft, the moon rocket ... so you must make a certain type of art”.<sup>2</sup> Robert Smithson, generally considered the patriarch of the genre, also dealt with the larger concept of nature from an essentially modern-entropic-rational-western approach. He could see bulldozers as twentieth century dinosaurs, small pawns in a huge, spiralling universe of disintegration and change.

Fulton's impression of the land is ghost-like by comparison. While Heizer and Smithson choose to rearrange the landscape, Fulton prefers that the landscape impose itself on him. Avoiding alteration of place, Fulton's photographs document his attraction for 'unspoiled' landscape and the fact that 'he was there'. Fulton agrees with the idea that the only things you should take out of the landscape are photographs - the only things you should leave are footprints.

Fulton is suspect of the notion of manifest Destiny, and the idea of man balancing nature through his own control. In Fulton's art, pastoral landscape appears as a microcosm in a state of grace. Be it Transcendentalist, Far Eastern, Aboriginal, or American Indian in philosophy - all of which Fulton has acknowledged as inspirational - the work projects a sense of the mystery, intimacy and nobility of nature, elevating those feelings close to a level of spirituality. Fulton has said: “Being in nature far me is direct religion”.<sup>3</sup>

What initially attracted Fulton to America was not the promise of a grand landscape, but his interest in the American Indian. In a recent letter, he stated specifically that his admiration for two books which he read on the subject in 1962, *Black Elk Speaks*, by J.G. Neihardt and *Wooden Leg*, By T.B. Marquis; both descriptions of the daily life of the American Indian - led to his 1969 trip to the United States. Fulton's interest in the American Indian remains a guiding force in his art. One of his ambitions is to do an extended series on the American Indian and 'their landscape'.<sup>4</sup>

Fulton is not, however, a twentieth century version of the Victorian voyager who transported easels and sketch-books to the far corners of the world in search of the exotic native unpoisoned by civilization. Fulton is familiar with the plight of the American Indian and is clearly moved by it, although his art is certainly not in any direct sense at least, a political comment about it. Rather, the American Indian exists as a kind of latent image in all of Fulton's works as metaphor for a more spiritual and symbiotic relationship with nature.

One hesitates to refer to Fulton's work in this manner for fear that it will be interpreted as overtly nostalgic. On the contrary, Fulton is a realist expressing a message. Indeed, he could not do the type of art he does without an appreciation and understanding of certain logistics of twentieth century life. Over the past decade or so, Fulton has done works in Nepal, India, Bolivia, Canada, Peru, Ireland, England, Scotland, Mexico, Iceland, Australia, France, Italy and America. By anyone's standards, that represents a lot of air travel, and Fulton would undoubtedly appreciate the irony that there is a vague change he has spent as much time waiting in airport baggage claim areas for his backpack as he has in remote areas of nature.

What Fulton envies in American Indian culture, or that of the Australian Aborigine, is the lack of technology mediating between these people and their natural environment. Fulton recently sent me the following quote by Narritjin Maymura, an Australian Aboriginal, in response to a question about the inspirational sources for his art:

We belong to the ground  
It is our power and we must stay  
Close to it or maybe  
We will get lost <sup>5</sup>

For Fulton, this philosophy is expressed most poignantly in the simple act of walking. He sees the walk as the central aspect of his art. "No walk, no work" has been one of Fulton's maxims. In Fulton's art, walking is presented as one of the most basic dialogues one can have with nature, a dialogue not coincidentally central to the nomadic peoples who have helped inspire his art. Fulton does not approach nature as 'landscape', in the traditional sense of a still image, but as a physical experience. The texts that accompany his photographs relay both the time, distance, and in a number of cases, the condition of a walk. Time is compared to distance, which is measured in relationship to terrain and weather. Fulton's interpretation of nature, the reasons he chooses to photograph particular images, is a direct result of his physical involvement with it. As he moves, each footstep is a form of measurement that mediates between his body and the landscape. When Fulton takes his photographs, he is not separated from the 'scenery', as it were: he is walking through it, incorporated into it. Thus the different types of terrain become a crucial element of chance in the work, determining the length of the walk, the direction and the number of photographs taken. Fulton has commented, "My work is about nature and it seems proper to allow nature to determine events en route".<sup>6</sup>

Fulton does not always present us with the grand view. His works reveal nature as an expanding process or situation that is just as faithfully represented by a modest but meaningful detail as it is the dramatic panorama. This is to say, of course, that nature is essentially a state of mind. If many of Fulton's photographs have an almost déjà vu quality - no matter how foreign the subject - it is perhaps because they operate on one level like mirrors. By forcing a long leap of imagination from art object to 'place', Fulton helps connect us with our past experiences of landscape and ultimately with our feelings about nature in general. Fulton's work reflects back on a very primal instinct, perhaps what Hugh Honour has referred to as 'The Morality of Landscape'.<sup>7</sup>

In one sense, this morality may be generated by thoughts of a pre-agricultural stage of civilization which Jean-Jacques Rousseau believed to be "the state least subject to revolutions, the best state for man".<sup>8</sup>

In this fourth decade of the nuclear era, Rousseau's sentiments take on an even greater poignancy. In twentieth century America, nature and Indian culture have in some respects been relegated to the status of fragile artifacts, in need of protection by (from?) the Federal government. In a sense, the

history of Fulton's native predecessors, perhaps yet to be written, is a metaphor of the collision between nature (the American Indian) and technology (the United States Army, Government). In his walks, Fulton is still coping with this collision. Conspicuously (and poetically) absent from his American works is reference to the reality of four-wheel drive trucks, snowmobiles, high-powered rifles and aircraft. Fulton's message is a moral and optimistic one, pointing ultimately to the future. He is, however, mindfully aware of Lame Deer's prophecy:

“Listen, I saw this in my mind  
not long ago: In my vision the  
electric light will stop sometime.  
It is used too much for TV and  
going to the moon. The day is  
coming when nature will stop the  
electricity”.

from *Lame Deer: Seeker of Visions*

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- <sup>1</sup> 'An Interview With Hamish Fulton', in *Common Ground: Five Artists in the Florida Landscape* (Sarasota: Ringling Museum of Art 1982), page 86.
  - <sup>2</sup> John Gruen, 'Michael Heizer: 'You Might Say I'm In The Construction Business'', *Artnews*, Vol. 76, No. 10 (December 1977), page 98.
  - <sup>3</sup> 'An Interview With Hamish Fulton', in *Common Ground: Five Artists in the Florida Landscape* (Sarasota: Ringling Museum of Art 1982), page 86.
  - <sup>4</sup> Undated letter to the Author, Received May, 1984.
  - <sup>5</sup> Ibid.
  - <sup>6</sup> Peter Turner, (words by Peter Turner after) 'An Interview With Hamish Fulton', *Landscape Theory* (New York: Lustrum Press 1980), page 81.
  - <sup>7</sup> Hugh Honour, *Romanticism* (New York: Harper & Row 1979), page 57.
  - <sup>8</sup> Ibid., page 60.