

Pilgrimage as a Medium: Teaching Art on the Camino de Santiago

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Abstract: Walking as a social art practice is a pedagogical tool for teaching pilgrimage, allowing students to map their experiences onto a millennia-old tradition while forming a dialogue with the expansive surrounding landscape. Liminal in form and transformative in experience, aesthetic pedestrianism and the performance of pilgrimage share many commonalities, both functioning as performative actions and as ritual reenactments of our shared human condition. This paper will present as a case study the work of artists and professors Roxana Pérez-Méndez and Mario Marzán, who utilize pilgrimage through the context of an embodied walking art practice. By viewing the Camino de Santiago as a site for creative inquiry, students on their journey become intimately tied to the creation process—part social practice, part radical healing, and part counter-mapping. The trace elements of the experience serve as a field guide on relating meaningfully to the environmental, political, or social changes of our moment.

Keywords: Walking as art, pilgrimage as pedagogy, Camino de Santiago, embodied cartography, counter-mapping, social practice.

La peregrinación como medio: la enseñanza del arte en el Camino de Santiago

Resumen: Caminar como práctica de arte social es una herramienta pedagógica para enseñar la peregrinación, permitiendo a los estudiantes mapear sus experiencias en una tradición milenaria mientras establecen un diálogo con el amplio paisaje circundante. Liminal en forma y transformadora en experiencia, el senderismo estético y la realización de peregrinaciones comparten muchos puntos en común, ambos funcionan como acciones performativas y como recreaciones rituales de nuestra condición humana compartida. Este artículo presentará como estudio de caso el trabajo de los artistas y profesores Roxana Pérez-Méndez y Mario Marzán, quienes utilizan la peregrinación a través del contexto de una práctica artística caminando. Al ver el Camino de Santiago como un

lugar para la investigación creativa, los estudiantes en su viaje se vinculan íntimamente con el proceso de creación: en parte práctica social, en parte curación radical y en parte contramapeo. Los elementos traza de la experiencia sirven como guía de campo para relacionarse significativamente con los cambios ambientales, políticos o sociales de nuestro momento.

Palabras clave: Caminar como arte, peregrinación como pedagogía, Camino de Santiago, cartografía encarnada, contramapeo, práctica social.

A peregrinación como medio: o ensino da arte no Camiño de Santiago

Resumo: Camiñar como práctica de arte social é unha ferramenta pedagóxica para ensinar a peregrinación, permitíndolles aos estudantes mapear as súas experiencias nunha tradición milenaria mentres establecen un diálogo coa ampla paisaxe circundante. Liminal en forma e transformadora en experiencia, o sendeirismo estético e a realización de peregrinacións comparten moitos puntos en común, ambos os dous funcionan como accións performativas e como recreacións rituais da nosa condición humana compartida. Este artigo presentará como estudo de caso o traballo dos artistas e profesores Roxana Pérez-Méndez e Mario Marzán, que utilizan a peregrinación a través do contexto dunha práctica artística camiñando. Ao ver o Camiño de Santiago como un lugar para a investigación creativa, os estudantes na súa viaxe vincúlanse intimamente co proceso de creación: en parte práctica social, en parte curación radical e en parte contramapeo. Os elementos traza da experiencia serven como guía de campo para relacionarse significativamente cos cambios ambientais, políticos ou sociais do noso momento.

Palabras clave: Camiñar como arte, peregrinación como pedagogía, Camiño de Santiago, cartografía encarnada, contramapeo, práctica social.

Introduction

“The last step of education is travel”, John Locke¹

It is a bright spring afternoon in early March, and thirteen out of a general student population of 20,000 have slowly trickled into the classroom. They shift awkwardly in their seats, peering across at each other and making small talk to ease their nerves. Some introduce themselves and share their majors or disciplines and their upbringing. Others try to contain their anxiety within the small perimeter of their chair with their mobile devices. These students were selected to join the next cohort for our faculty-led study abroad program, Art on the Camino de Santiago, representing our

¹ Locke, John., *Some Thoughts concerning Education*, Yolton, John W. and Jean S. Yolton, eds. *The Clarendon Edition of the Works of John Locke*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1989. Oxford Scholarly Editions Online, 30 May. 2013. Web. 19 Feb. 2023, p. 262.

academic population's breadth of diversity. Despite their visible nerves and feelings of uncertainty, each one of these students shares a common interest in pilgrimage and becoming a pilgrim.

Our setting is a nondescript classroom on the second floor of the Fine Arts facilities at one of the four founding American universities in the cultural South. As a large, research-based state institution, the student population is heavily drawn from the rural and urban communities that comprise the state. In contemporary higher education, study abroad and international travel can be considered a rite of passage, promoted in glossy brochures and websites as once-in-a-lifetime experiences. Promotional materials often feature dubious corporate visuals reminiscent of the influencer wellness industry, which promise picturesque mountaintop views, group hugs, and immersive experiences—marketing with imagery that occasionally falls back on colonial narratives that emphasize control and materialism.² While many students might overlook the academic benefits of studying abroad when making their decision, the rising demand for experiential learning also brings to light separate but escalating ethical questions related to the industry's practices.³ So much has this industry grown that in the days before the global pandemic, the number of students engaging in study abroad experiences had a steady 4% year-over-year growth rate, resulting in over 340,000 U.S. students enrolled in international institutions in 2019 and a total of 914,095 globally.⁴ However, for the thirteen participants enrolled in the *Art on the Camino de Santiago* program, the decision to immerse oneself in contemporary pilgrimage as a means of educational exploration emerges as a distinctive, profound, and daring way to spend a summer break.

What distinguishes *Art on the Camino de Santiago* from conventional study-abroad programs that claim to answer the fervor for research engagement, self-exploration, and cultural enrichment is its pedagogical approach. In undertaking this journey, students navigate a mosaic of contemporary theories, historical narratives, and the intricacies of their own social identities within the communal context of contemporary pilgrimage. In *How to Make Art at The End of the World* (2019), contemporary art theorist Natalie Loveless defines this process as “research-creation”⁵ a delicate mix of art pedagogy, theoretical reflection, and a dialogic style of investigation, offering a distinct pathway to cultivate deep ties to both academic disciplines and the sacred sites they will journey through.

2 Ogden, Anthony, “The View from the Veranda: Understanding Today's Colonial Student”, *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, vol. 15, no. 1 (2007), pp. 35-56 (p. 37), doi:10.36366/frontiers.v15i1.215

3 Trower, Holly and Wolfgang, Lehmann, “Strategic Escapes: Negotiating Motivations of Personal Growth and Instrumental Benefits in the Decision to Study Abroad”, *British Educational Research Journal*, vol. 43, no. 2 (2017), pp. 275-289 (p. 281), doi:10.1002/berj.3258. The observation outlining students' tendency to overlook the educational benefits of studying abroad.

4 “IIE Open Doors / U.S. Study Abroad”, *IIE Open Doors / U.S. Study Abroad*, IIE Open Doors, 7 Jan. 2022, <https://opendoorsdata.org/annual-release/u-s-study-abroad/>.

5 Loveless, Natalie, *How to Make Art at the End of the World: A Manifesto for Research-Creation*, Duke University Press, 2019, p. 2, doi:10.2307/j.ctv1220kts.

As professors, our roles are multifaceted: we not only coordinate the logistics of long-distance walking but also guide our students' more profound inner journeys; additionally, we facilitate intersectional theoretical dialogues and nurture diverse and underrepresented voices. As these perspectives interplay on the path, they unite by a shared passion for creative practices, ecological awareness, and social issues. However, as artists, this journey assumes a pledged role above mere facilitation; it is a potent pedagogical instrument that serves as our creative practice. Through the embodied experience of walking as social practice, a distinct learning path unfurls—enriching the participants' course experience with a reservoir of affective and ethical wisdom.

This article lays out a case study using narratives from our field notes on the Camino de Santiago, revealing the profound concept of pilgrimage as a medium of art. This form encompasses thinking, creation, and performance within the realms of artistic research and presents a unique divergence from conventional research methods. Transcending the pilgrimage's traditional role of personal transformation, this practice harnesses artistic sensibilities and techniques to underscore how art shapes the interpretations and actualities of a lived experience.⁶ Amidst the transformative landscapes of pilgrimage, the embodied experience of the walk gives rise to an empathetic lens. This newfound perspective that not only illuminates the path forward but also heralds the emergence of a new pilgrim (Fig. 1).

I will be a Pilgrim

The casual conversation ends as they shift their focus to the planned presentation, which includes information on the itinerary, necessary equipment, and safety. To be a pilgrim is to embark on a time-honored tradition, and a difficult condition to enlist from a college-aged person, who may prefer to spend their time daydreaming about eating churros con chocolate, chased by a glass of wine, chatting loudly about their love of cats and Disney musicals. Participants are invited to stand, holding a sheet of paper and a shell. Together, we read aloud the invitation, crafted with echoes of the traditional pilgrim's blessing—a ritual often found in many religions that seeks to grant the traveler protection, guidance, and spiritual depth. This pledge is not mere speech or a performative utterance that enacts,⁷ but a part of intentional pedagogy, language construction, and discourse to not let us fall into the interstices⁸ of presence (and absence) found in the pilgrim. Vocalizing this pledge, we enact the promise between the group to be more than spectators and, within our context, students (Fig. 2).

6 *Ibidem*, p. 102. Loveless describes “research-creation” as a way to mobilize artistic sensibilities to reshape practices within university knowledge-making spaces.

7 Austin, J. L., *How To Do Things With Words: The William James Lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1955* (Oxford, 1975; online ed, Oxford Academic, 3 Oct. 2011), p. 6, <https://doi-org.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198245537.001.0001>.

8 Spillers, Hortense J., “Interstices: A Small Drama of Words”, in *Black, White, and in Color: Essays on American Literature and Culture*, Chicago, Chicago University, pp. 152-175 (p. 156), 2003 Print. Accessed by <https://trueleappress.com>. Here ‘interstices’ is used with black, feminist scholar Hortense Spillers discourse against erasure in mind. It is “the missing word...that which allows us to speak about and that which enables us to speak at all”



Fig. 1: *Art on the Camino de Santiago* documentation, Pilgrim drawing 1, 2022 (All photos are courtesy of Campo Research Studio. © Campo Research Studio All rights reserved).



Fig. 2: *Art on the Camino de Santiago* documentation, Drawing session 1, 2022.

Campo Research Studio As Counter-Mapping

“Yo estoy aquí para contar la historia”, Pablo Neruda⁹

Arriving at this moment was a journey for us, Roxana Pérez-Méndez and Mario Márzan. Our individual artistic practices took a hard turn in 2017 after Hurricane Maria ravaged our home, the island of Puerto Rico. The immediate ramifications of this climate disaster exposed our existence in the world as identities under colonialism. Moving forward requires us to reimagine new research methods and take decisive steps toward a sustainable mode of production. The hurricane destroyed not only our beloved animals and landscape that fueled our individual practices, the homes, businesses, and infrastructure that supported the local economy but also resonated in the body of the diaspora, leaving no aspect of our lives untouched. Present amongst the detritus of the resultant disaster was the heavy residue of Capitalism’s production– exploitation, corruption, and corporate and governmental malfeasance. It was nothing short of catastrophic, revealing that many social and environmental problems we face as Puerto Ricans under this “disaster capitalism”¹⁰ are caused by repeatedly failing to have the social imagination and ethical will to change.

We now exclusively work in collaboration as *Campo Research Studios*. Just as the name implies (‘Campo’ alludes to humble landscapes and agriculture found in our native Puerto Rico, and ‘Research Studio’ describes the investigative, arts-based research process deployed), the point of departure of our work is rooted in the landscape. Our bodies in this process are best characterized by Maya-Xinka feminist activist and author Lorena Cabnal as the “primer cuerpo territorio” (first body-territory),¹¹ the primary vehicle of expression in an inquiry that centers us as researchers, within rather than apart, from the research. From our cuerpo-territorio, we navigate all others in discourse,¹² aiming to create different social and perhaps more ethical, ecological, and sustainable ways of living and engaging with the world. This positioning is a form of revisionist cartographic practice coined by scholar Nancy Peluso as counter-mapping¹³ that refutes relationships of power by offering alternative narratives and understandings of space. As the work moves further into the landscape

9 Neruda, Pablo, *Canto general*, Alicante, Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes, 2000. <https://www.cervantes-virtual.com/nd/ark:/59851/bmcj38p8>

10 Klein, Naomi, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, 1st ed. Metropolitan Books/Henry Holt 2007, p. 6. Author included quotes.

11 Cabnal, Lorena, “Acercamiento a la construcción de la propuesta de pensamiento epistémico de las mujeres indígenas feministas comunitarias de Abya Yala”, in *Feminismos Diversos: El Feminismo Comunitario*, ACSUR Las Segovias, 2010, pp. 11-25 (p. 22). <http://porunavidavivible.wordpress.com>

12 *Ibidem*, p. 23.

13 Peluso, Nancy, “WHOSE WOODS ARE THESE? COUNTER-MAPPING FOREST TERRITORIES IN KALIMANTAN, INDONESIA”, *Antipode*, 27, 383-406 (1995), (p. 387-388). <https://doi-org.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/10.1111/j.1467-8330.1995.tb00286.x>

locating us in the midst of life, we are confronted with the disintegrating boundaries between the quotidian and art.

This form of counter-mapping is also, as Claire Bishop has described in her book *Artificial Hells* (2012), a “social practice”¹⁴ where we deploy walking as a mode of artistic research and as a form of social and environmental activism. In this type of work, sole authorship is relinquished in favor of collaboration. Often, the participants become the audience themselves, shifting the focus from the creation of aesthetic objects to an emphasis on the aesthetic experience, which may not always produce a visual result. For Campo Research Studio’s practice, walking represents the sole means of transportation for many in the global population, not only to secure basic needs but also to find safety from violence, political conflict, and climate change, all while acknowledging a legacy of displacement. To walk this way is to choose to reject Modernity and Capitalism’s global obsessions—a form of resistance to the contemporary values of speed, distraction, human commodification, and the alienation that bring us to the brink of a disaster.

The flesh of the work is progressive and collaborative in the problem-posing choreography of our process. This choreography works with the landscape as a collaborator, stepping in and out of the edges of wilderness and the everyday. In participation, the experience of nature syncs with the natural world around and within us—we wake with the birds, sleep with the moon, and become attuned with the Earth.¹⁵ As we walk, we explore together the natural and cultural barriers and political borders that serve to separate us from the land and nature, denying a form of ethical, ecological citizenship.¹⁶ Working against this abnegation, Campo Research Studio’s curated encounters¹⁷ engage in dialogue through gestures, rituals, readings, discussions, performances, and drawing sketches. These methods restore what Indigenous scholar Enrique Salmón describes as our “kincentric”¹⁸ relationship with the natural system that surrounds us; revealing that while we are one of the many organisms allowed to live on this Earth, we share it in glaring disproportion. From this position, we do not look at the landscape as an object, to

14 Bishop, Claire, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*, Verso, New York, 2012, p. 1. Print.

15 Schumann Resonance is the electromagnetic frequency, first discovered by Dr. Winfried Otto Schumann in 1950, that protects and surrounds the Earth. It is the same frequency, 7.38Hz, that exists inside of human brains that promotes relaxation/well-being. The link that generates this frequency in our brain exists in our DNA, connecting us to matter and natural resonant patterns of the Earth. Pastor Guzman, I. Tuning in to the World’s Natural Rhythm, *Brain World* 8/4/2014. [https://brainworldmagazine.com/tuning-in-to-the-earths\[1\]natural-rhythm/](https://brainworldmagazine.com/tuning-in-to-the-earths[1]natural-rhythm/)

16 Dobson, Andrew, “Ecological Citizenship: A Defence”, *Environmental Politics*, vol. 15, no. 3 (2006), pp. 447-451 (p. 448), doi:10.1080/09644010600627766

17 Ahmed, Sara, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality*, available from: VitalSource Bookshelf, Taylor & Francis, 2013. “Encounter” here is defined as “a meeting which involves surprise and conflict”, p. 6.

18 Salmón, Enrique, “Kincentric Ecology: Indigenous Perceptions of the Human–Nature Relationship”, *Ecological Applications: A Publication of the Ecological Society of America*, vol. 10, no. 5 (2000), pp. 1327-1332 (p. 1329), doi:10.1890/1051-0761(2000)010[1327:keipot]2.0.co;2

capture it as a token of our experience, but as another living partner with whom to communicate and learn.

A walk's episodic and slow pace is a pedagogical tool, generating time to build empathy through understanding and distance to follow the threads of discovery in intimate and contextual ways. Through this method, we find ways to build resilience against climate pessimism and futility, not just for those we teach but also for ourselves. Traversing to and through the fluid surface of the surrounding landscapes generates reverberating critical perspectives and positioning, enabling one to de-center,¹⁹ and move off the grid in resistance. The photograph, video, drawing, interview, spaces, or notations—the after-effects of the engaged walking experience, are fragments of understanding and become both a resource and a field guide to the work, helping us identify the problem and reinforce a climate of hope before it is too late. Campo Research Studio's philosophy recognizes that our collective future requires that we move more responsibly to re-orient during this period of instability, perhaps believing that it resides in the powerful medium of pilgrimage (Figs. 3, 4, 5).

Entering the Terrain

Following the preliminary instructions on the stage of the day, you will receive a personal map of our itinerary along with an additional two maps for your consideration. Put these into your sketchbook for safekeeping and revisit them at km marker 14.5.

As participants embark on their first day of walking, excitement and anticipation can be felt in the fluidity and constant movement of the group. Making their way from the narrow streets of the small Basque hamlet of St. Jean Pied de Port to the upward geometry of rural paths, they come together as pilgrims once again, united by a shared sense of journeying into the unknown. In the imaginary space of contemporary pilgrimage, the concept of a map, with its implicit dependence upon the survey of stable terrain, established reference points, and population graphics, is a vestige of an earlier time and is rendered awkward in the hands of the digital natives. Instead, the visual markers of the bright yellow arrows signal to an internal navigation system built by and with others— a walking cartography built on mutual trust.

Amidst the tranquil roaming of the grazing sheep and horses, the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage path is dotted with hallmarks of contested terrain. Participants gather at km 14.5, reaching the stone marker that signifies the border between

¹⁹ Holliday, Adrian and Amadasi, Sara, *Making Sense of the Intercultural: Finding DeCentred Threads*, Routledge, 2022, p. 8, doi:10.4324/9781351059190. Holliday and Amadasi further state that “in the face of the immense power of the Centre narratives, and the discourses of culture that support them, in maintaining blocking grand narratives”, it is assuming the position of the de-center that allows interventions to function, p 17.



Fig. 3: *Art on the Camino de Santiago* documentation, Drawing session 2, 2022.



Fig. 4: *Art on the Camino de Santiago* documentation, Ritual Performance 1, 2022.



Fig. 5: *Art on the Camino de Santiago* documentation, Drawing session 3, 2022.

France and Spain and signaling the time-worn tradition of pilgrims making their way through Iberia. In contrast to the previous anticipatory excitement, the inhuman animacy²⁰ of this marker weighs heavily upon the land like an anchor, stopping both the participants and other pilgrims as they pass. Within the gray, lichen-speckled surface, we can discern a more-than-human element interconnected with us—the mineral, atomic, celestial, and realms of deep time. The marker also serves as a visual representation of systematic erasure. The invisibility of borders and borderlands and the vast numbers of people who embark on the journey as part of their own beginnings are a function of world-taking, the lasting legacies of European colonialism, and the continued power and racial dynamics that shape these experiences.

As the participants reach the old monastery at Roncesvalles, they are greeted with the hospitality of volunteers at the albergue. By this point, they are in flux with the body cognition of their walk. Later, at our nightly communal dinner, we discuss our experiences walking the first kilometers of the 500-mile route, taking in the map and the marker as forms of knowledge. The discussion uncovers within the group what José Esteban Muñoz describes in *The Sense of Brown* (2020) as a shared “minoritarian” sense,²¹ the disquiet from being positioned as Other. Here, strangeness is painfully familiar and reproduced repeatedly in their personal experience of pilgrimage. The figure of the stranger—a stranger as “already recognised as not belonging”²² and a stranger as pilgrim, looms large for the group. We unpack this feeling, allowing each individual’s story to fill our map in opposition. In our cuerpo-territorio, the issue of otherness is not “an impasse but, instead, an opening”²³ (Figs. 6, 7).

Pilgrimage as a Medium

“*Solvitur ambulando*” (trans. It is solved by walking), Diogenes of Sinope²⁴

Pilgrimage removes the participant from their origin and identity into one full of potential—becoming a pilgrim. As pilgrimage moves into the space and flow of the public, these pilgrims are co-creators in performance, observed by the public as a social body and in motion towards transformation. While the forms and motivations for participating a pilgrimage are many, the act itself unifies the physical and the

20 Chen, Mel Y., *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect*, Duke University, 2020, pp. 9-10.

21 Muñoz, José Esteban, *The Sense of Brown*, edited by Joshua Chambers-Letson and Tavia Nyong'o, Duke University Press, 2020, p. 9.

22 Ahmed, Sara, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality...*, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

23 Muñoz, José Esteban. *The Sense of Brown*, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

24 Mathai, Stephen C. “Solvitur Ambulando...or Maybe Not?”, *Chest*, 143, no. 2 (2013), pp. 285-287 (p. 285), doi:10.1378/chest.12-1819



Fig. 6: *Art on the Camino de Santiago* documentation, Class discussion, 2022.



Fig. 7: *Art on the Camino de Santiago* documentation, Pilgrim drawing 2, 2022.

spiritual into a singular experience. The fusion leaves imprints that are expressed not only on the whole of the itinerary but on the pilgrim as well, permanently recorded in the neuroplasticity of the brain²⁵ as memory. As such, for the duration of the itinerary, pilgrims are in process, being rendered in a creative act like a malleable material awaiting natural order to build upon their inner form.

This potential to transform the self draws us as contemporary artists to pilgrimage as a medium— as both the type of art and the materiality from which an artwork is made. Just like any other medium, it is a condition that has evolved over time and continues to do so as artists continue to define what art is. To accommodate the complexity found in distinguishing and analyzing emerging work, new frameworks of analysis were required as Rosalind Krauss described in her seminal 1979 essay “Sculpture in the Expanded Field”²⁶. By this point, the twentieth century witnessed artworks and movements de-centering the art object in pursuit of the immaterial, from the Modernist reduction of the traditional work of art to Surrealist, Situationist, Conceptualist, and Fluxist instructions for artworks. Minimalist works hovered in a space between art, objecthood, and a beholder.²⁷ Performances and happenings, where people become a real and necessary part of the work, privileged experiences in artistic and unconventional venues over encounters with art objects. While audio installations, immersions, and walks constructed and enlivened spaces, digital forms of art transitioned to the web. Further down the timeline of dematerialization,²⁸ artworks no longer had to be physical but rather could be a way of living and a way of engaging the public in social action.²⁹

This progression towards immaterial did not diminish its primary function for artists as a pathway to the imagination and deeper collective meaning. Much like a pilgrimage that can impart qualities to the pilgrim, art can shape a viewer’s experience in ways that resonate.³⁰ In the hands of contemporary artists, pilgrimage is woven into the methodology of their work, engaging with the boundary between the material and immaterial realms³¹ and expressing itself in as many distinctive ways as there are forms of pilgrimage.

25 Turner, Robert, “Finding Likeness: Neural Plasticity and Ritual Experience”, *Anthropology Today*, vol. 35, no. 3 (2019), pp. 3–6 (p. 4), doi:10.1111/1467-8322.12503.

26 Krauss, Rosalind, “Sculpture in the Expanded Field”, *October*, vol. 8 (1979), pp. 30–44, doi:10.2307/778224.

27 Fried, Michael, *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 155, <http://www.monoskop.org>.

28 Lippard, Lucy R., *Six Years: the Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972: A Cross-Reference Book of Information on Some Esthetic Boundaries*, New York, Praeger, 1973, p. vii. Print.

29 Thompson, Nato, *Living As Form: Socially Engaged Art from 1991–2011*, 1st ed., Creative Time, MIT Press, 2012, p. 22. Print.

30 Greenia, George D., “What Is Pilgrimage?”, *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage*, vol. 6, no. 2 (2018), pp. 5–15 (p. 3), <https://arrow.dit.ie/ijrtp/vol6/iss2/3>.

31 Barush, Kathryn R., *Imaging Pilgrimage: Art as Embodied Experience*, New York, Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2021, p. 23, Bloomsbury Collections, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781501335044>.

One such example lies in the work of performance artist partners and collaborators Marina Abramović and Ulay (Frank Uwe Laysiepen), who, as common practice, transformed their lives into art. In what was to be an expression of their union, their pilgrimage to the Great Wall of China became pivotal for one of their most renowned work, *The Great Wall Walk, China* (1988). Drawn to the mythological aspects of the site as a reflection of the Milky Way that drew energy into the Earth,³² the artist pair walked the length of the wall—each coming from opposing ends. Intimately linked to a pivotal phase within their working and romantic partnership, this work resonated as a profound juncture in their personal saga, “washing over and consuming”³³ their personal lives. In conceptualization, Abramović describes the work as being intended “as great motif for transcending the barriers that divide us – it was to be a totem of love and reconnection.”³⁴ In lieu of culminating in a ritual of their union upon arrival, the pilgrimage marked their separation, each agreeing to never speak to the other again. The legacy of this work became a cultural phenomenon, symbolic as the ultimate grand gesture to failed relations.

The walking associated with a pilgrimage act is a central gesture to generate meaningful and transformative experiences as well as an aesthetic tool in the production of art. Belgian artist Francis Alÿs undertook a metaphorical pilgrimage in *Albert's Way* (2014)³⁵ from the confines of his studio. As part of the performance, he walked the equivalent distance of the Camino Inglés over 7 days by circumnavigating the edges of his workspace, traversing vast conceptual distances with that of the rumored prison walks of Albert Speer, who served 20 years for his role in Nazi war crimes and atrocities. As a performative imaginary pilgrimage,³⁶ Alÿs' walk materialized not only the pacing bound in the experience of the walk but also the transmutability of space, body, and time—between the viewer, the artist, the pilgrim, the studio, the prisoner, the prison, the world access through the mind and time. Watching the documentation of the act passes the experience onto the viewer in a final act of transcendence.

As the body is disciplined through the durational exercise of the walk, the means of accessing history, memory, and knowing from within is made possible. In a distinctively perilous manner, the artist Tehching Hsieh chose the bustling

32 Abramović, Marina, *Spotlight | Marina Abramović: The Lovers*. Uploaded by Sean Kelly Gallery, Youtube, 12 Oct. 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RCb7D9tyGUY>

33 Johnston, Chloe. “‘The Lovers’: On the Great Wall and Beyond”, *Performance Research*, vol. 17, no. 5 (2012), pp. 19-23 (p. 19), doi:10.1080/13528165.2012.728435.

34 Bramwell, David, *The bittersweet story of Marina Abramović's epic walk on the Great Wall of China*. *Guardian News & Media Limited*, Apr 29, 2020, <http://libproxy.lib.unc.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/blogs-podcasts-websites/bittersweet-story-marina-abramovics-epic-walk-on/docview/2396067668/se-2>

35 Alÿs, Francis *et al.*, “Albert's Way”, in *Artist Website: Francis Alÿs/Publications*, 2014, <https://francisalys.com/alberts-way>

36 Ferguson, Russell; Fisher, Jean and Medina, Cuauhtémoc, *Francis Alÿs* (London & New York: Phaidon, 2008, p. 31.

streets of New York City as his pilgrimage route. Living in the streets for a year, he merged with the social body of the unhoused and subjected himself to a myriad of life's stark realities, embodying the metaphorical concept of life on the streets "in the situation where the social conditions that prevail in the circumstance operate very powerfully upon you."³⁷ For Hsieh, there is no distinction between art time and lifetime: "I just say I am doing life. Because all art comes from Life. Doing art, doing life is also doing time."³⁸

The utility of pilgrimage as a medium for artists is in the lasting residual effects that linger in both the participant and the social body. From this position, connections between the walking body and the self, between the self and the social body, between the physical landscapes traversed, and the other living beings that inhabit those landscapes are revisited in open-ended engagement and allow the work to grow within the viewer, inviting change. Gisella Insuaste, for example, creates material and spatial explorations to connect with her ancestral, Indigenous Ecuadorian roots, deploying elements from her own pilgrimage experiences as vestiges that resonate within the work³⁹. Working on a former prisoner transport bus turned roving art space, Insuaste transformed the vehicle into a symbolic sacred capsule for an immersive installation of artist-generated marks and assembled objects that include those she collected on pilgrimage. These remnants of her experience act as tangible memories, layering upon the weathered form of the bus, which itself stands as a body map. Together, these objects form a lens by which the public can hold both the trauma of immigration to the US and that of the prison complex as one.⁴⁰

WalkingLab,⁴¹ a collaborative effort led by Stephany Springgay and Sara E. Truman, takes the itinerary of pilgrimage to generate critically engaged dialogue and further inquiry.⁴² In *Stone Walks Lancaster: Militarisms, Migration, and Speculative Geology* (2018), sited in the town of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, *WalkingLab* uses "Lancaster" as the starting point for the work. This research-based practice then generates a series of pop-up lectures and performative gestures to serve as a vehicle for topics on queer, feminist, Indigenous, and critical race frameworks. The audience, as viewers and participants, form a collective walking body, moving from location to location

37 Hsieh, Tehching, "I Just Go In Life", in *Perform, Repeat, Record: Live Art in History*, edited by Adrian Heathfield and Amelia Jones, Intellect Books Ltd, 2012, pp. 457-467 (p. 460), *ProQuest Ebook Central*, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/lib/unc/detail.action?docID=1719541>

38 Hsieh, Tehching, *All Art Comes From Life*, Tate Modern Museum, 9 June 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FsF-4UjJTaQ>

39 To view the work of Gisella Insuaste, please see www.giselainsuaste.com

40 For a first-person description of the installation, please see Kathryn Barush's chapter 4 "Oakland-Ecuador: Hacienda marcas otra vez- Making Marks, again", in *Imaging Pilgrimage: Art as Embodied Experience*, New York, Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2021. Bloomsbury Collections. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781501335044>

41 To view the work of *WalkingLab*, please see walkinglab.org

42 Truman, S. E., & Springgay, S. "Queer Walking Tours and the affective contours of place", *Cultural Geographies*, 26, 4 (2019), pp. 527-534 (p. 529), <https://doi-org.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/10.1177/1474474019842888>

in a mutual relationship. The joint adventure leaves planted future potentials within the community, growing a public that is primed to deploy their new knowledge long after the event is done. Dialogic in practice, these works serve the immediate and longitudinal need to foster community, compassion, and empathy, achieving a value that is based on the resonating wealth of experience.

Lastly, it is worth recognizing that Medieval pilgrims who traversed the same paths were likely to include visual artists, some of whom were commissioned for practical and religious artworks⁴³ (for whom performing pilgrimage was also creating art). Although many artists of the medieval era remained anonymous, their spiritual dedication to their craft was profound, often rivaling the sophistication of theologians in “spiritualising material objects” as observed by French art historian Émile Mâle.⁴⁴ While concrete evidence may be limited, it is plausible to assume from the identities of sculptors involved in architectural commissions along the pilgrimage route and from the sketchbooks of travelers that medieval pilgrims came from various social classes and ages. It is also conceivable that artists contributed to the visual culture of pilgrimage while perhaps seeking spiritual experiences themselves.

While contemporary perspectives may view artists primarily as unique individuals driven to express a personal vision, medieval artists often held a more complex role. For many, art served as a symbolic medium, but they were equally craftsmen who took delight in the forms of nature for their own sake.⁴⁵ This dual focus on symbolism and craftsmanship suggests that, unlike today’s emphasis on the artist as an individual visionary, medieval artists were engaged in a different, but no less meaningful, dialogue between their work and the world around them (Figs. 8, 9).

Rooting

The sun casts a warm glow over the Galician landscapes, hinting at another day of discovery and connection for our pilgrims. A group united in their curiosity for agriculture and socio-ecological issues marches with a shared purpose — intertwining a curiosity for the past and an interest in land stewardship and food production. In their hands, a field guide, armed with knowledge about the flora along today’s stage. As the morning hours unfurl, each student begins a dive into the world of botany by sitting along the path. This stage now transforms into an open studio,

43 Gerson, Paula, “A Companion to Medieval Art: Romanesque and Gothic in Northern Europe”, in *Art and Pilgrimage: Mapping the Way*, edited by Conrad Rudolph, 2nd ed., Wiley-Blackwell, 2019. pp.881-905 (p.887), <https://doi-org.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/10.1002/9781119077756.ch36>

44 Mâle, Émile, *Religious Art in France, XIII Century: A Study in Mediaeval Iconography and Its Sources of Inspiration*, edited by Dora Nussey, E P Dutton, 1913, pp. 20-21. <https://archive.org/details/ReligiousArtInFranceXIIICentury>

45 *Ibidem*, p. 48.

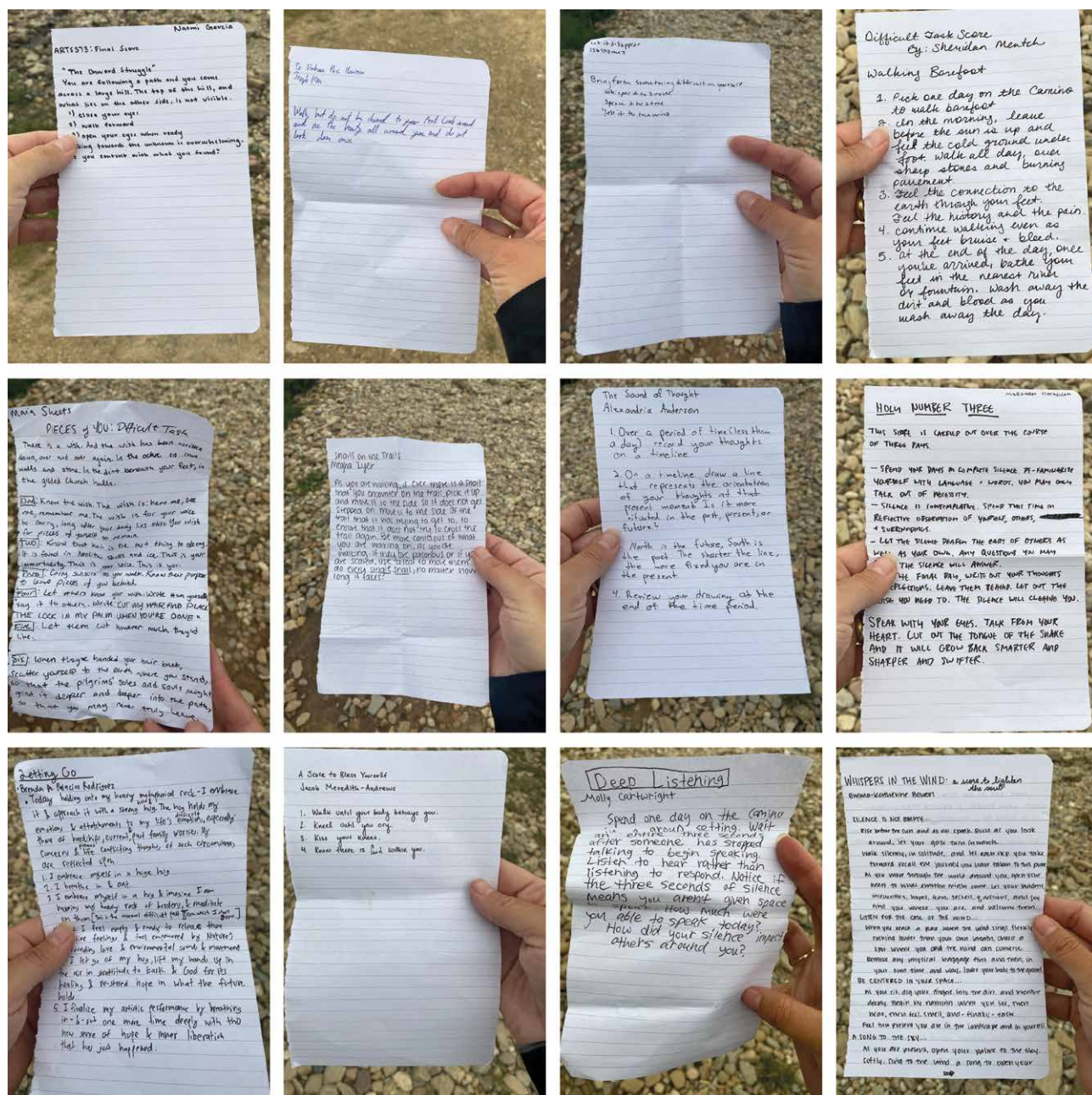


Fig. 8: Art on the Camino de Santiago documentation, A Difficult Task scores, 2022.

where plants and roots become moments of interest. They focus in on the details as their eager hands sketch the sinuous curves and intricate patterns of the edible plants they've just identified. Curious pilgrims occasionally glance over, their footsteps and the song of a goldfinch serenading the moment as the graphite runs across the paper.



Fig. 9: Art on the Camino de Santiago documentation, Caminante No Hay Camino Performance, 2019.

Through all points of the journey, we are looking for evidence of the knowledge garnered through distillation and application. Today it was found with the simplicity of a burner plate at the albergue that evening. The dish crafted on it was as replete with today's harvest. Gather to share familial traditions, recipes and folk healing practices, this stage was more than sustenance or the loaf of mustard green bread. It was a thoughtful narrative, interweaving ancestral heritage, ecology, and spirituality with the tactile language of "root working,"⁴⁶ herbalism, and medicinal practices. Here two of humanity's oldest activities are linked within our place-based curriculum (Fig. 10).

46 Chireau, Yvonne P., *Black Magic: Religion and the African American Conjuring Tradition*, University of California, 2003, p. 21, ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/lib/unc/detail.action?docID=223936>

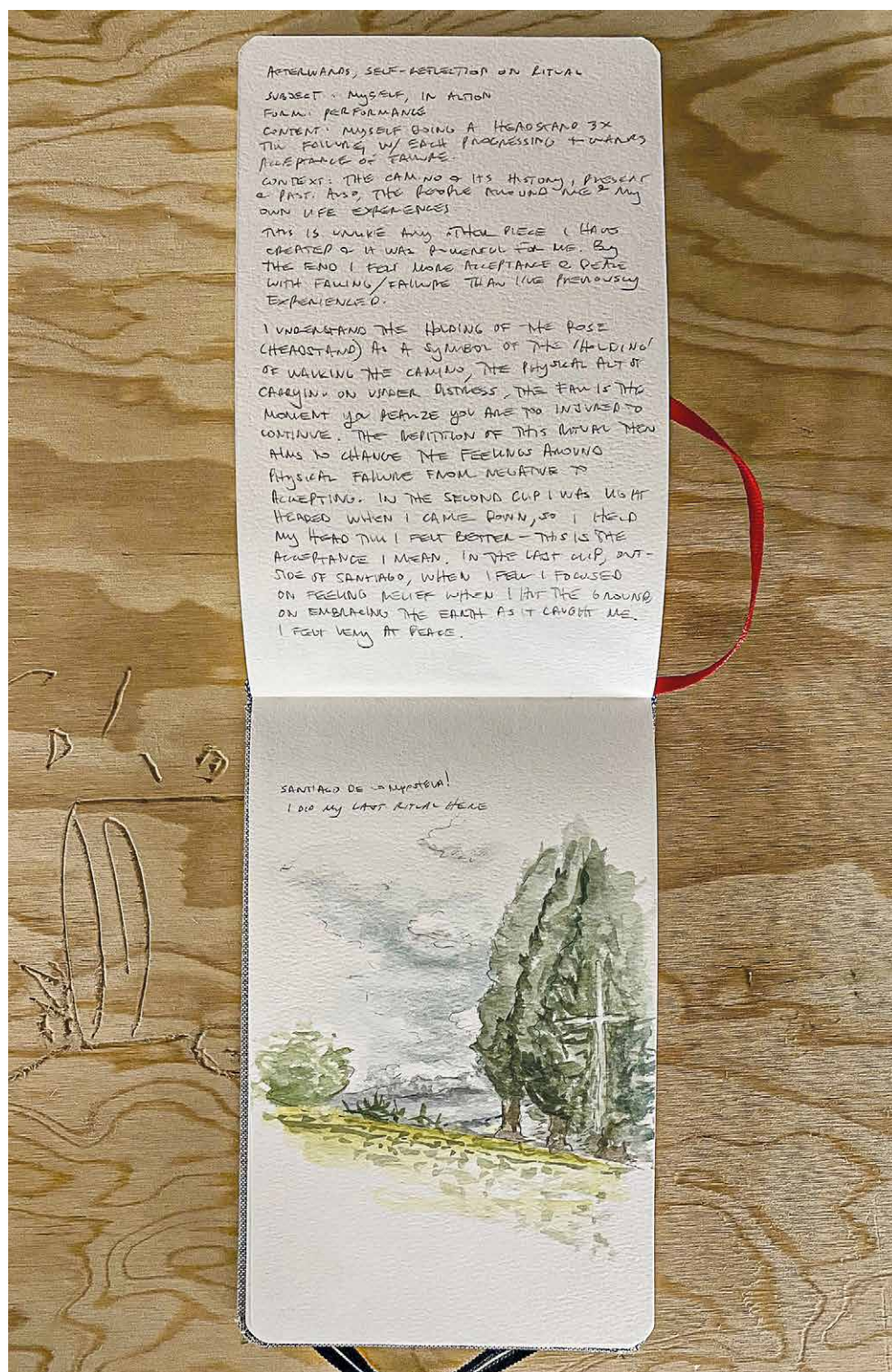


Fig. 10: Art on the Camino de Santiago documentation, Journal reflection, 2023.

Place/Site of Pilgrimage

By privileging the pilgrim's path as a site, pilgrimage turns rituals, communities, and landscapes into spaces for creative inquiry, making the choice of the specific pilgrimage site integral to its material function. For our purposes, the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage path is a ground, as a canvas is to a painting. It is a spatial moment that when it incorporates a living way, is more than the material components of arrows, paths, and sites. The long and layered history of the path offers opportunities that touch on deep time and deep archeology of place, while its geological history connects neolithic time to the present. Vestiges of early humans/humanity, the calming sentient presence of the distant Picos de Europa on the horizon, and the contemporary backdrop of a cosmopolitan Spain all coexist. The additional layers of contemporary Spanish culture and the comingling international network of the Camino de Santiago give pilgrims and our participants who traverse its path the proximity to witness and approach today's most timely concerns from an oblique angle.⁴⁷

Merged with the itinerant, immersive, and communal structure of pilgrimage, the Camino de Santiago grants us a simple processional to frame our collective engagement. Performing pilgrimage *in plein aire* dissolves the space between artist and audience as a place, becoming undifferentiated from the rest of the pilgrimage site, but not disentangled from it. This immersion bridges the gap between us as artists, artist participants, the audience, the local community, and its landscape. From within, the Camino de Santiago serves as a forum for decolonial creative inquiry, inviting multiple world views of animacy that necessitate being accountable in the presence of others and requiring what Indigenous scholar Juanita Sundberg describes in "Decolonizing Posthumanist Geographies" (2014) as a "serious engagement with Indigenous epistemologies, ontologies, and methodologies."⁴⁸

Participants walking and in the motion of pilgrimage are not in a world of secluded sentimentality towards this landscape. We are witnessing the dry conditions of the land, walking with the fumigating tractors that seek a better yield, and smelling the hints of forest fires in the air. The path intermittently enters and exits societal focus, shifting between the center and the periphery to occupy a 'third space.'⁴⁹ In this space, dialogue, interactions with fellow pilgrims, the surrounding landscape, and the encompassing cultural identities all intersect, each metaphorically representing the contemporary issues that our work aims to address.

47 Ahmed, Sara, "Orientations: Toward A Queer Phenomenology", *GLQ: Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 12, 4 (2006), pp. 543-574 (p. 565), Project Muse <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/202832>

48 Sundberg, Juanita, "Decolonizing Posthumanist Geographies", *Cultural Geographies*, 21, 1 (2014), pp. 33-47 (p. 40), doi:10.1177/1474474013486067

49 Bhabha, Homi K., *The Location of Culture*. *VitalSource Bookshelf*, (2nd edition), Taylor & Francis, 2012, pp. 53-56 (p. 56). For Bhabha, the third space is the liminal space *in between* those in power and the subaltern.

Throughout the pilgrimage, we frame, re-frame, adjust, and advise our participants on their experiences, placing our actions—interventions, exercises and further iterations, in a dialogic perspective, and allowing the slow measure of time to guide their affective and aesthetic responses. On a path in the midst of life, we overcome difficulties, hardships, and suffering that confront all pilgrims. The good feelings that come from the experience—from the sustained exercise, the witnessing and performing acts of empathy, to the presence found in mindfulness, are vehicles for the curative effects of enlightenment, perseverance, and transformation. This place of healing becomes a coordinate from which to navigate the world. In an experience where there are many external markers, the engagement makes what may be happening within the participants visible (Figs. 11, 12, 13).

Solitude

This project is completed in two stages. The first formalizes a difficult task for you, to walk a stage in complete solitude and silence, and the other asks you to create a score for a performance of a difficult task. Upon arrival to the Cruz de Ferro, participate in the pilgrim ritual, leaving the stone you brought with you, and then read your score to the wind.

In his epic poem, *La fin de Satan*, (1886), the novelist Victor Hugo declared that the “entirety of hell is contained in one word: solitude.”⁵⁰ Having passed the midway marker of the pilgrimage and entered into the final third of the itinerary, it is not unusual to find pilgrims walking in silence for extended periods. For our participants, their youth and character vitality make the path of the Camino fertile terrain for chatter. The habit of using noise to overpower the disquiet within distracts from the simple richness of hearing the wind rustle through the leaves.

As a common practice in performance and meditation, exercising solitude builds the capacity to endure it as a function of daily life. Gently increasing the duration of silence allows one to encounter the terrain of suffering that resides inside with care. As one walks along the path for several hours and performs the physical motions of the journey, it becomes clear that the entire body is engaged as a tool for perception. The senses are amplified— from feeling the ground beneath one’s toes to tasting the air with each breath to hearing the bright chatter of birds amongst the leaves. The challenge of this exercise turns our senses outward beyond our inner chatter. As the pilgrims approach the final steps to the *Cruz de Ferro*, they delicately remove the pebbles they have carried in their pockets. During these moments, we witness the well of emotions pouring out onto the land around us. Collectively, a pebble of grief that has accompanied us on this journey is released. We leave having shared our score at

50 Hugo, Victor, *La fin de Satan*: Dieu, Ollendorf, 1911, p. 89.



Fig. 11: *Art on the Camino de Santiago* documentation, Pilgrim drawing 4, 2022.



Fig. 12: *Art on the Camino de Santiago* documentation, Drawing session 4, 2022.

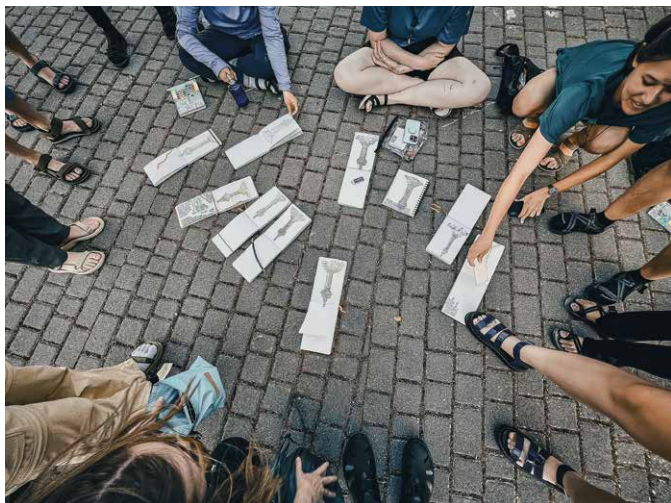


Fig. 13: *Art on the Camino de Santiago* documentation, Drawing session 5, 2023.

the cross with the wind, scattering the words gently around us. The silence that once challenged us, gives strength (Figs. 14, 15, 16).

Social Naturopathy

“Loneliness is the ill being of our time. We feel very lonely, even if we are surrounded by many people. We are lonely together. There is a vacuum inside of us, where you don’t feel comfortable. We try to fill that vacuum by connecting with other people”

Thích Nhất Hạnh⁵¹

The movement of pilgrimage encourages one to develop deeper, textured, and more nuanced individual and social awareness, restoring pathways to our common interior. Pilgrimage asserts its transformative function in this capacity to form this social body-one that sustains boundary-enforcing notions of authenticity by delineating its place as unique and incomparable. For theorist Stuart Hall (1994, emphasis in original), these “[c]ultural identities are the points of identification, the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made within the discourses of history and culture. Not an essence but a *positioning*.”⁵² Moreover, this social space of representation in which belongingness is expressed and the Other is defined simultaneously, is the effect and practice of social, political, and historical power relations.⁵³ As pilgrims move across the landscape of the Camino de Santiago, it too is dotted with the wealth from colonial exploits on display, where one can “properly understand the traumatic character of ‘the colonial experience.’”⁵⁴ This type of insight is essential as collective memory forms our collective identity; and in transformative social justice, one “cannot remain passive”⁵⁵ as Paulo Freire cautioned in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Surely, forgetting any of this threatens our very essence.

As a form of social naturopathy, pilgrimage offers the opportunity to engage directly with the *territorio-pueblo* (territory-public) to release its social flows, encouraging the social body to heal itself. The Naturopathic principle of “vis medicatrix

51 Nhất Hạnh, Thích, “On the art of loneliness”, 13 Dec, 2012. Plum Village <https://plumvillage.app/thich-nhat-hanh-on-the-art-of-embracing-loneliness/>

52 Hall, Stuart, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora”, in *Selected Writings on Race and Difference*, edited by Paul Gilroy and Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Duke University Press, 2021, pp. 257-271 (p. 261), <https://doi-org.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/10.1215/9781478021223-016>

53 *Idem*.

54 *Idem*.

55 Freire, Paulo, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, New York, Continuum, 2000, p. 37.



Fig. 14: *Art on the Camino de Santiago* documentation, Pilgrim drawing 3, 2022.



Fig. 15: *Art on the Camino de Santiago* documentation, Ritual Performance 2, 2022.



Fig. 16: *Art on the Camino de Santiago* documentation, Ritual Performance 3, 2023.

naturae” (AANP par. 3)⁵⁶ emphasizes the healing power of nature, reminding us of the essential role one plays. Recognizing that true understanding comes more from genuine connection than mere knowledge, “tolle causam” (par. 4) teaches us that identifying and addressing the root cause is paramount, as no ailment arises without reason. In our recruitment, we prioritize Black, Latinx, Indigenous, Asian, Gender, Neuro, and Able Diverse students. Such deliberate actions are vital in bridging the “Nature Gap.”⁵⁷ and addressing disparities in nature access prevalent in the U.S. Embracing the adage “primum no nocere” (par. 5), we prioritize safety, striving for a culture of collective health and accountability through minimizing ethical pitfalls, positive role modeling, and transparent communication. This safeguards the environment for our practice to reach its goals and ensures the knowledge-sharing in the “Docere” relationship (par. 6)—the physician as a teacher occurs.

Understanding our interconnectedness with various organisms and non-human entities is essential, as it informs two critical program courses. The first, ‘Art, Rites, and Rituals of Pilgrimage’, introduces students to the culture, history, and contemporary context of pilgrimage through the lens of performance art and other embodied aesthetic experiences. Several performative projects form the core of the coursework with the Camino de Santiago becoming the site and the studio. The second, ‘Landscapes of the Camino de Santiago’, immerses students in the aesthetic exploration of the landscapes along the pilgrimage route. Students engage in drawing workshops using pocket-sized sketchbooks, provided at the onset, to document and interrogate their journey. This approach enables them to map their unique journeys onto this centuries-old tradition, producing a blend of visual, performative, and written notations that intimately reflect an experience of the landscape bound by the Camino. The sketchbook acts as a bridge to the “territorio histórico, la tierra” (historical territory, the Earth),⁵⁸ helping students align with the intentionality of the creative process and become more observant in their studies. This emphasis on healing through slow, intentional, caring practices, stands as our defense against the pressures of capitalism and underscores the importance of preventative care in our lives (Fig. 17).

56 “Principles of Naturopathic Medicine”, in *American Association of Naturopathic Physicians*, Letter of delegates. Last amended 2011, <https://naturopathic.org/page/PrinciplesNaturopathicMedicine>

57 Rowland-Shea, Jenny et al., *The Nature Gap: Confronting Racial and Economic Disparities in the Destruction and Protection of Nature in America*, 21 July 2020, <https://www.americanprogress.org/>

58 Cabnal, Lorena. “Acercamiento a la construcción de la propuesta de pensamiento epistémico de las mujeres indígenas feministas comunitarias de Abya Yala”, in *Feminismos Diversos: El Feminismo Comunitario*, ACSUR Las Segovias, 2010, pp. 11-25 (p. 23). <http://porunavidavivible.wordpress.com>



Fig. 17: *Art on the Camino de Santiago* documentation, Pilgrim drawing 5, 2022.

Studying the Landscape

Landscapes often captivate us through their visual allure, leading to emotional bonds based more on surface aesthetics than the deeper cultural narratives they might hold. By working on observational sketchbook drawings along the Camino, students find new ways to engage with the landscape’s history and other invisible fragments, revealing stories that have vanished over time and developing a deeper connection with that space. These aesthetic exercises in perception enhance their sense of belonging to the site, helping them adopt a sense of responsibility towards the land, even if they are only temporary visitors.

Before diving into the material techniques of drawing, we first present exercises aimed at attuning ourselves to a variety of environments, taking note of indicators that reveal changes over time. As facilitators, we are motivated by the insight to

explore new methods of mindfulness that demand full engagement in the present moment. To this end, we reimagine landscape drawing as a material practice and an exploration that acknowledges signs of human impact on the land and the corresponding ecological consequences.

Contemporary artist Rodney McMillian's perspective on landscapes suggests that they are not just scenic vistas but "spaces of work, spaces of ownership, spaces of oppression."⁵⁹ A careful observation of the Camino landscapes can suggest that these terrains have the potential to offer stories and paradoxes that diverge from entrenched historical notions. This awareness shapes how we experience spaces and leads us to ask: if traditional narratives fall short in addressing today's challenges, what new perspectives can we offer? An act as simple as removing our shoes before a drawing session and allowing our feet to touch the ground triggers new dialogue. Sensing every pebble and blade of grass not only anchors us but also diminishes barriers between us and the land, positioning the students within the terrain instead of walking above it.⁶⁰ This act prompts a re-evaluation of conventional narratives of the landscape and fosters deeper, more emotive connections in our artistic reactions.

While the traditional practice of *plein air* can be wrapped up with the problematic history of colonialism, it also offers students the opportunity to develop their skills in sighting, measuring, and comparing the landscape's visible features—a process that is both formal and cerebral. As students engage in more intricate dialogue with the land, they begin to understand that a drawing is not simply a matter of representation but instead of perception. The objective of these exercises is to confront and break down the notions of tradition, and the consequent daily sketchbook entries become helpful data in that assessment. The students imagine how the landscape might have been perceived through the eyes of past travelers and how their own encounter with the terrain might have differed from mere observation, leaving in question the ways that studying the landscape could influence the modern pilgrim's expectations and experience. Scrutinizing the visual clues of land utilization and alteration leads them to contemplate the development of the route and the identities of the people who have inhabited it or walked through it.

This embodied dialogue helps students recognize the delicate interplay of ecosystems and the lasting impact of our actions, urging a shift toward a more sustainable consciousness. The access gained through conscious acts of immersion fosters

59 *Art Is... Decolonizing Landscape Painting*, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KlYbStrFOuc>

60 Mulligan, Martin, "Feet to the Ground in Storied Landscapes: Disrupting the Colonial Legacy with a Poetic Politics", in *Decolonizing Nature: Strategies for Conservation in a Post-Colonial Era*, Earthscan, 2002, pp. 268–289 (p. 270), <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/lib/unc/reader.action?docID=430027&pg=1>



Fig. 18: Art on the Camino de Santiago documentation, Day of Silence Drawings, 2023.

what the artist Catherine Elwes calls the “eco-critical ethos”⁶¹ in contemporary artistic processes. The practice of drawing along this ancient path cements a unique bond with these landscapes under analysis, exercising a political and ecological responsibility from these serendipitous and introspective moments that ultimately shape their pilgrimage (Figs. 18, 19).

61 Elwes, Catherine, *Landscape and the Moving Image*, Kindle ed. Intellect, 2022, p. 4.



Fig. 19: Art on the Camino de Santiago documentation, Day of Silence Drawings 2, 2023.

Conclusions

Throughout the program, students not only create artworks but also become living embodiments of their experiences on the pilgrimage. Rather than viewing them as mere traces, we see each student as a unique cartography of their journey, echoing the essence of the pilgrimage just as charcoal may convey emotion on paper. Walking, as we have explored, can be an artistic practice, with the pilgrimage serving as both canvas and medium. The transformative power of this perspective is evident in the deep personal evolutions of the participants. Every step reinforces their deepening

bond with nature, from their commitment when saying, “I will be a Pilgrim,” through their journey to Santiago de Compostela, ensuring the resonance of these experiences well beyond their return home.

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