

Hamish Fulton  
MATRIX/BERKELEY 51

University Art Museum  
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Standing Coyote, 1981-82



**STANDING  
COYOTE**

A SERIES OF WORKS IN THE NORTH-EASTERN CALIFORNIA  
WILDERNESS ON THE NIGHT OF THE OCTOBER FULL MOON 1981

Hamish Fulton is an English artist whose work is about the experience of walking in nature. His walks range from the English countryside to such distant countries as Nepal, bringing to mind similar excursions by 19th-century landscape artists. Unlike his Victorian predecessors, however, Fulton carries with him a camera rather than a sketchbook or easel. When he has traveled long enough to rid himself of the rhythm of urban life, when he has achieved a certain state of mind and comes upon a resting place or sees something out of the ordinary, he takes a photograph which symbolizes the essence of his feelings. He also writes down occurrences which the camera cannot record, such as "gusting wind," which are often included in the finished work. Fulton's photographs, made with a 35mm hand held camera, are unpeopled and deliberately undramatic. They aim at a somewhat anonymous and generalized image which allows room for the mind and eye of the viewer to wander freely. The photograph with a simple text is the document of the piece, and it is by the document that the public knows of Fulton's art. The art itself—the walk—is a personal and solitary act.

In the late sixties many artists began to do works which were not designed to be seen in a gallery or museum. Some artists extended sculpture into real space and time in the form of performance; others, among them the Americans Robert Smithson and Michael Heizer, went out into remote areas and created giant forms in the earth. Hamish Fulton and Richard Long, who had been fellow

students at St. Martin's in London, began to take long walking trips which they documented with photographs. What distinguishes Fulton from the American land artists and from Long is his attitude toward nature. He has never tampered with it in his work—not even, as Long might, to the extent of moving stones or branches to mark his passage. He is more inspired by the walkers and climbers of the Midlands and the North of England and by such naturalists as John Muir than by other artists and photographers, although he admires the work of Richard Long as well as the straightforward landscape photographs of the 19th-century American, Timothy O'Sullivan.

The photograph became important to performance, earth, and conceptual artists, because it was often the only evidence of the art work which was either temporal (performance) or which few people would ever see first hand (earthworks). Like most artists who use the camera as a tool of documentation, Fulton is not interested in the technical aspects of the medium and does not consider himself a photographer. Whereas the conventional landscape photographer goes in search of an image and follows certain criteria for making a good photograph, Fulton considers the photography secondary to the walk. For Fulton, the search is for the freedom from the routine of daily life, for the exhilaration which comes from embarking on a lonely and at times difficult journey, the outcome of which is unknown, and for the altered consciousness which results from solitude

and concentration. He also seeks to keep in touch with and bring to our awareness the natural timelessness and harmony that exist in the world alongside the stressful and disturbing events of which we are continuously informed.

Fulton has made several walking trips in Northern California. In the spring of 1980 he walked in Del Norte and Humboldt Counties and produced Yurok, depicting footprints along a stretch of beach on a foggy day. Fulton takes advantage of the grain that results from extreme enlargement of the photograph—the grainy sky emerges with the granular sand of the beach. San Andreas, which focuses on a small patch of ground, documents a walk in Point Reyes also taken that spring. After a walk in the fall of 1981 in the Mt. Lassen area, Fulton made three works—Yana, Standing Coyote, and Porcupine. All but Porcupine combine an enlarged black and white photograph mounted on board with a simple descriptive caption. Standing Coyote portrays the snow covered ground and distant evergreens, suggesting the silence following a snowfall in the woods. One rock, centered in the foreground, is a monument to the experience.

Fulton has again begun to experiment with painting and drawing. Porcupine, an etching made at Crown Point Press in Oakland, does not include a photograph. Instead, Fulton produced a three-part hand-drawn color etching containing several colors and considerably more text than other works. Both the color areas and words are placed on the pages according

to their corresponding positions in nature. The uppermost page, brushed with a soft grey reminiscent of a cloudy sky, contains the phrase, "sun melted snow falling from the trees." The transparent green-blue background of the middle section approximates the color made by the sun shining through the snow, while the dominant white of the bottom panel refers to the snow itself on which Fulton saw "tracks of a black bear." Fulton collected pine needles on his walk and laid them on the wax ground surface of the copper plates. The plates were then run through the press so that when the needles were removed their shapes were exposed on the copper and subsequently etched. Scattered over the entire print, they appear to be falling from sky to ground. Perhaps the most unexpected element is the bold, red band which borders the print on four sides. The color refers to the blood of a wounded porcupine which Fulton followed for a while and for which the piece is named. The printed words, with the economy and simplicity of Haiku poetry, provide some of the information found in the photograph portion of his other works. Though the etching is visually different from the photo/text pieces, it shares with them the evocation of a much larger experience.

Fulton was born in London in 1946. He attended Hammer-smith College of Art, St. Martin's School of Art, and the Royal College of Art in London. He has traveled extensively since 1968 and currently lives in Canterbury, Kent, Great Britain. His works are in the collections of many major museums,

including The Tate Gallery, London, the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, and The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Constance Lewallen

Works in MATRIX:

Yurok/A Four Day Coastal Walk/Del Norte and Humboldt Counties California/Spring 1980, 1980, gelatin silver print mounted on board and Letraset, 51 x 34". Lent by Nicholas Medhurst.

San Andreas/An 18 Mile Road Walk on May 2 1980/Point Reyes California, 1980-82, gelatin silver print mounted on board and Letraset, 27 x 30". Lent by Thackrey & Robertson, San Francisco.

Standing Coyote/A Seven Day Walk in North Eastern California/Ending on the Night of the October Full Moon 1981, 1981-82, gelatin silver print mounted on board and Letraset, 38½ x 42 3/8". Lent by Thackrey & Robertson, San Francisco.

Yana/A Seven Day Walk in North Eastern California/Ending on the Night of the October Full Moon 1981, 1982, gelatin silver print mounted on board and Letraset, 42 x 38". Lent by Thackrey & Robertson, San Francisco.

Porcupine, 1981-82, color etching with photo-etching, aquatint, spit-bite, and soft ground, 96½ x 24½", edition of 25. Published and lent by Crown Point Press, Oakland, CA.

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Selected one-person exhibitions:

Galerie Konrad Fischer, Düsseldorf, Germany '69, '71, '72, '74, '78; Galleria Sperone, Torino, Italy '70, '72, '74; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Holland '73; Sperone Westwater Fischer, NYC '76, '80; Claire Copley Gallery, L.A. '76; Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, Holland '77 (cat. pub.); Projects: Museum of Modern Art, NYC '78 (brochure pub.); Thackrey & Robertson, SF '80; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris '81.

Selected group exhibitions:

Städtisches Museum, Leverkusen, Germany, Konzeption/Conzeption, '69 (cat. pub.); Museum of Modern Art, NYC, Information, '70 (cat. pub.); Hayward Gallery, London, Hayward Annual, '77, '79 (cats. pub.); Art Institute of Chicago, Europe in the Seventies, '77-'79 (traveling exhibition; cat. pub.); Sydney Biennale, Australia, European Dialogue, '79 (cat. pub.); The Oakland Museum, CA, Slices of Time: California Landscapes 1860-1880, 1960-1980, '82.

Selected bibliography (see catalogues under exhibitions):

Fuchs, R.H. "Photography as Sculpture," Studio International 186 (Oct. '73).

Causey, Andrew. "Space and Time in British Land Art," Studio International 193 (Mar. '77).

van der Marck, Jan. "Inside Europe Outside Europe," Artforum (Jan. '78).

Davies, Allan. "Richard Long and Hamish Fulton," Art Monthly 25 (Apr. '79).