

Can we do so in a manner that is rigorous yet also accessible, associative and playful — not unlike running itself?

Can we incorporate non-Western and feminist perspectives to enrich dominant discourses?

As we consider such (new) possibilities of running, what are the (new) ways of thinking and talking about (re-presenting) running?

Is it possible to consider running beyond a sport or exercise, and to re-configure it as an artistic discourse?

Could we activate running as a creative technology that may enable us to re-imagine the way we engage with the world?

Walking-Running the talk

Points of departure (mind the gaps)

Within the well-trodden cultural tradition of **walking**, male walkers like Wordsworth, Rousseau, Basho, and Richard Long cast big shadows. Given the global running boom of the past 45 years or so, philosophers, geographers and neuroscientists have begun to sit up and pay attention to running (for example Lieberman 2004; Austin 2007; Mattson 2012; Latham 2015). Yet, existing discourses ignore non-Western conceptions of knowledge and the body (even though 'non-Western people' run, too!). Critical feminist perspectives are limited, and the figure of the runner as a solitary, male, Romantic persists (see for instance Sheehan 1975; Lorimer 2010; Rowlands 2013). Think Caspar David Friedrich's protagonist in *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog*, throw his walking stick into the sea, swap his suit for running shorts, add heroic grunting and you have the contemporary running MAMIL (middle-aged man in lycra). It seems that some of these runners are not just re-tracing the walking forerunners, but re-enacting the self-seriousness and logocentric modes of knowledge production.

Systematic studies of running as an art process and/or subject matter are also rare. A few odd forays aside — you may have caught, *in passing*, sprinters dashing up and down the hallowed halls of the Tate in Martin Creed's *No 850* in 2008 — artists, curators and art researchers seem to be side-stepping running. Then there is the small problem of what could be called a 'hierarchy of suffering', and people (within and outside of the art world) prefer to stick to its old stories:

Madness, melancholia, and self-destruction? Tick (think Van Gogh, Pollock, Basquiat, Franko B, Burden). Sweat, blood, tears and other fluids from or to feed into the fraught creative process? Tick. Sweat, sweat bands, snort, panting and feeling good from running? No way.

Moving on

It's time to move on, to up our speed, and up our game. This is a call to ditch the tweed jackets and prejudices, and to walk on the wild side, by **running**.

Take the **city** for instance. Follow in the psychogeographical footsteps of the Situationists, but step into the 21st century, by the CCTV cameras shadowing your moves. The city is your playground. Embody the poetry and childlike cheekiness of Daoist wanderer Lao Zi.

Running is **digital** too. Picture yourself as a smart mobile device: agile, light, intelligent and *smarting* — stinging. Mobilise the *digits* of your toes. Activate the unique running 'apps' on our body and mind that we have inherited from the *Homo erectus* who had run to hunt for food two million years ago. Be on your toes. Maintain a critical stance against the consensual hallucination of our digital era.

Running may even have a **political** dimension. Transform your body into a site and *sight* of protest. Run with Colin, the Angry Young Man of the *Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* (1959), and deploy running as a *demonstration of resistance*. Run *against* the authorities. Don't let the bastards run you down. Don't let things come to a standstill. Don't take things lying down. Exercise your autonomy. Live life on the run as Lao Zi the political exile did. Run, and *run* — govern — your state, and state of being.

'To invigorate the mind, move literary feet', cries novelist Joyce Carol Oates, for, there is no activity 'more nourishing to the imagination' than running. Run the LSD — the long slow distance — and allow your natural morphine (endorphin) or cannabis (endocannabinoid) to kick in. You may even run into **poetic insights**. That was how Alan Turing conceptualised the computer, and how Lola of *Run Lola Run* (1998) out-played the bad guys (and lethargic narrative conventions).

Indeed, running may be at **the heart of thinking**. The Latin etymology of discourse — '*discursus*' — refers to *running* from place to place. My discourse has itself been formulated in a 'running' manner. As you can see, I have scampered about in a nonlinear fashion to montage together an array of theories and practices including Daoism, paleoanthropology and art. In other words, running may not just be a fertile subject matter, but a handy *thinking* app; by un-packing both its physical and poetic processes, figurative and literal meanings, running may be a rewarding exercise for the body, mind and heart.



Public- and world-facing, activities are situated within and beyond the artistic and academic worlds. Interdisciplinary and practice-related, the interventions and innovations are disruptive and theoretically-grounded as they are light-footed, light-hearted and light-headed; critical and pragmatic as they are quixotic and bonkers.

Examples include the '**Running-Discourse**', in which participants conduct discourses about running *while* running (performed for instance at Document a 2012), and hybrid events such as the **RUN! RUN! RUN! International Festival of Running 1.0** (held at the Slade Research Centre 2014), in which people gathered to celebrate and critique running via presentations, paintings, performances, running tours, films and workshops. Then, there are '**performance-lectures**', which are scripted talks accompanied by highly collaged moving images (such as one presented at the Association of American Geographers' Annual Meeting, 2015). Sound and image dance and battle with each another, enacting the exuberance of running, yet also raising questions about academic and artistic conventions of knowledge production.

More than an (academic, physical) exercise

This **an invitation, a provocation** for artists and curators to harness something that has a critical mass (running), and re-invent it into a resource. After all, artists have always been *opportunistic*: Picasso's incorporation of newspaper cuttings opened the way for collage, while Nam June Paik's irreverent video experiments presented a critical discourse against the increasingly ubiquitous goggle-box in the 1970's. In addition, by honouring sweat and feeling-good, I want to present a counter-argument to a popular (and out-moded) narrative about the art world as one characterised only by hedonism or melancholia.

Art educators also may capitalise running as a teaching apparatus that is student-centred, and research- and practice-based, too, by going for runs with students in the streets for example. Students learn as fellow researchers conducting field work — via running — with the teacher, about, for instance, relational aesthetics, site-specificity, psychogeography, body politics, kinaesthetic learning, stories and histories of the city, 'live' art, and the importance of experience and observation. In other words, the entire city is transformed into a vibrant classroom or studio. As a format running may also help to demystify research, proving that research can be unthreatening and inclusive.

The worlds of art and art education aside, this is a call for **people from all walks of life** to draw on running as a catalyst to gain an insight into how we may relate to the city, state, and technology, as well as to employ running as a starting point to work through critical issues like privacy and wellbeing. In addition, I would like to present a case of how running may function as a responsive and cursory mechanism to *cut across* disciplinary and institutional boundaries and to help join up thinking in a nonlinear manner, including the assimilation of non-canonical discourses.

At the same time, this is **not about running at all**, but a call to invent your own 'running', to see the world with a sense of playfulness, to ask questions — without necessarily running into any grand answers.

Come RUN!
RUN! RUN!
with me.
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Come run — literally, metaphorically — with me. Join my **RUN! RUN! RUN! International Body For Research**, a think tank that is not run-of-the-tread-mill. The Co-Director is geographer **Dr Alan Latham**, and members hail from psychology, Fine Art, and community engagement. Branches spread from London to Leeds, Cardiff and Singapore. We talk and think about running, and ask questions about running. We run, too. Let us RUN! RUN! RUN! Let us create a new movement.