

peter d'Agostino

between earth & sky: MX



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Laboratorio Arte Alameda - Mexico City

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Peter d'Agostino

(New York, U.S.A., 1945)

Peter d'Agostino is an artist who has been working in video and new media for over three decades. His pioneering projects have been exhibited internationally in the form of installations, performances, tele-communications events, and broadcast productions. A retrospective survey of his work, *Peter d'Agostino: Interactivity and Intervention, 1978-99* was exhibited at Lehman College Art Gallery, New York. Major group exhibitions include: The Whitney Museum of American Art (*Biennial, and The American Century -Film and Video in America 1950-2000*), the Sao Paulo Bienal, Brazil, and the Kwangju Biennial, Korea. His works are in the collections of The Museum of Modern Art; Kunsthau, Zurich; Foundation La Caixa, Barcelona, Spain; Pacific Film Archive, University Art Museum, Berkeley; The Getty Center, Los Angeles, and is distributed by Electronic Arts Intermix, New York.

His interactive multimedia projects include: *DOUBLE YOU (and X,Y,Z.)*, *TransmissionS*, *TRACES*, *STRING CYCLES*, *@Vesu.Vius*, *VR/RV: a Recreational Vehicle in Virtual Reality*, *YOO (YearZEROZERO)* and *peterdagostino.net*. The installations have been exhibited at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Long Beach Museum of Art, as part of the *Video Viewpoints* series at The Museum of Modern Art; ISEA / ZeroOne Festival; the Festival des Arts Electroniques, Rennes, France, *the Interactions* exhibition at the Rijksmuseum Twenthe in Holland, and the European Media Arts Festival, Osnabruck, Germany. The *TransmissionS: In the WELL* installation (1990) and *VR/RV* (1995) both received honorary awards for interactive art at Prix Ars Electronica, Linz, Austria.



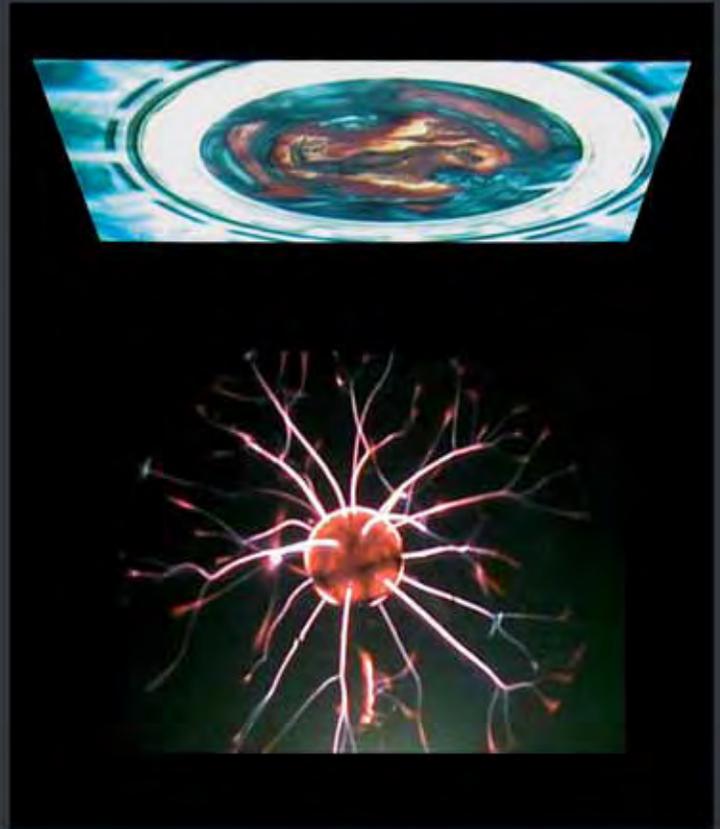
Between Earth & Sky: MX, VII, 2005-2007, Video installation.

Peter d'Agostino's Walks: Between Earth & Sky

In the early 1970s, Peter d'Agostino realized a series of "Walks,"* activities that he documented with a hand-held video camera in uncut real time. Identifying both the visual and physical elements involved in his project, d'Agostino called these actions "documentation / performances," to indicate that the process of production entailed a performative action documented in video. In 2002, d'Agostino taped the "Cordoban Ceilings," again a "documentation / performance." Both the "Walk" series and the "Cordoban Ceilings" report on d'Agostino's visual engagement in the world - from earth to sky. As brackets for his entire body of work, the "Walks" suggest surprising intersections and social concerns that their unassuming visual form obscures.

For thirty years, d'Agostino's work has posited comings and goings in walks that took place in both secular and sacral spaces. Walking is an interstitial act, a temporal continuum that, paradoxically, separates beginning and end, while simultaneously connecting histories of place to the social conditions under which that space is constructed in the image of human activities. Of the multiple discursive frames in which d'Agostino's performative documentations engage viewers, none is more important than that a figure walks a ground. His attention to presence brings video back to the discourses of painting and sculpture from which, in part, it emerged, by presenting the artist as the figure on a ground, a field for other metaphorical excursions in and through the world. Such space is also the locus of perspectival viewing in so far as one sees from the point of view of the maker. D'Agostino's video walks present what he sees in the process of looking. Deploying his body both as the vehicle for the articulation of images and as an extension of their construction, he simultaneously reminds viewers that seeing is an artifice of the producer as he appears in his own productions. As such, similar to Dziga Vertov, Alfred Hitchcock, and Martin Scorsese, who appeared in their work, d'Agostino never permits viewers to lose sight of the fact that what he makes is an artifact, the residue of real acts with which he is continuous.

But here the relationship to conventional art and its histories ends in d'Agostino's "Walks." For the metaphorical site of re-presentation, which is the condition of painting and sculpture, as well as Renaissance viewing, is overcome by metonymy in d'Agostino's orchestration and use of his shadow in the video record of his walks. Through the shadow, he extends his live experiences in real-time to viewers who are made to feel that they, too, walk, and that it is their shadow, which attests to this movement in the image. Thus do viewers become coextensive with the artist and



Between Earth & Sky: MX, III and IV, 2005-2007, Video installation.

the image, walking through and in cityscapes, landscapes, and sacral spaces as the artist's double, his shadow. What is seen, therefore, is a metonymic extension of the visual, perceptual, and corporeal existence of the maker through the prosthetic apparatus of the hand-held camera.

The significance of this metonymical communication is how it bridges the distance between subjects and objects. Indeed, metonymy preceded metaphor in the development of language, as a form of anthropomorphic connectivity with which primitive peoples beheld and interpreted the world, before humans understood themselves as different from their objects and the animals they beheld. Metaphor replaced that connectivity with re-presentation. By re-introducing metonymy in his "Walks," d'Agostino manages to reconnect to both viewer (through the shadow) and world (through metonymy), in critical, however subtle and unassuming, ways that bring viewers back to fundamental conditions of perception.

- Kristine Stiles

* *Roof Walk*, September 1973; *Fence Walk*, December 1973; and *Beach Walk*, March 1974, completed his first *Walk Series*.



Between Earth & Sky: MX, I-X 2005 -2007

videoinstallation, projection, plasma & web [peterdagostino.net/MX]

Between Earth & Sky: MX is a suite of ten new works centering on Mexico City and its surroundings, extending to the east and west coasts and the U.S. border. This series of installations continues a cycle of work initially inspired by *The Other Mexico: Critique of the Pyramid*, Octavio Paz's historical, cultural and philosophical writings, which accompanied me on my first visit to Mexico in 1975.

Roof Walk 1973 documentation / performance loop 26' 48"

In this early, performance-based work, d'Agostino experiments with perceptions of landscape, time and point of view. The Walk Series documents three different "walks" (on a roof, a fence and a beach) that the artist took in the San Francisco area, while recording with a hand-held camera. These excursions -- recorded in real-time and unedited -- map the parameters of the artist's environment, as d'Agostino uses video to redefine the landscape in his own image.

pond / pass / peak 1974

kiva / temple / pyramid 1975 documentation / performances loop

D'Agostino continued his series of walk projects while backpacking in California's Sierra Nevada Mountains during the summer of 1974. The resulting videotapes, *pond / pass / peak* (1974), and *kiva / temple / pyramid* (1975), were produced with support from the National Endowment for the Arts' inaugural video fellowship program in 1974. Parallel to the natural environments of a pond, a mountain pass and peak, *kiva / temple / pyramid* takes place in key historic cultural spaces of North America, Chaco Canyon's Great Kiva, Sun Temple, Mesa Verde, and The Pyramid of the Magician at Uxmal. This work was inspired his studies in visual anthropology, and the artist's interest in Native American cultures. These early walks incorporate the process of exploring natural, cultural and virtual environments, and were eventually expanded into a body of work that has continued over the past three decades and become the basis of his world-wide-walks projects.

Cordoban Ceilings 2003 videoinstallation loop

Features d'Agostino's walks through three major architectural landmarks- the Great Mosque, Alcazar, and Synagogue of Cordoba, Spain. This work focuses on the historical convergence of three cultures: Islamic, Christian and Jewish. Sound: Maurice Wight.

@Vesu.Vius 1999 videoinstallation, projection, plasma & web

A three-part installation (video projection, plasma screen, and on the web) examining d'Agostino's own Italian American ethnicity. It explores many of the paradoxes of natural, cultural and virtual identities and their metaphors. Iconic images of Mt Vesuvius and Pompeii are juxtaposed with places in New York where d'Agostino was raised.



VR/RV: a Recreational Vehicle in Virtual Reality 1994

Video version of the original virtual reality environment

A drive along the electronic superhighway! Using state-of-the-art computer graphics systems, d'Agostino creates a virtual environment that joins together simulations of Philadelphia, the Rockies, Kuwait City and Hiroshima. From inside a computer generated car, these four geographically remote environments are as close to each other in VR (virtual reality) as the next highway exit. D'Agostino's impression of this space is not uncritical; the constant scanning effect on the car radio and a barrage of CNN seen outside points out that our existing information overload has already lead to a techno-Babel, while the inclusion of Hiroshima and Kuwait reminds us of earlier, technologically inspired holocausts.



TRACES 1995 video & web

A touching commemorative piece, Traces addresses the collective memory of some of the most traumatic scenes of twentieth century history, as well as d'Agostino's own recollections of his childhood. Opening with images from the Festival of Remembrance in Hiroshima, the tape cuts to an interview with Robert Oppenheimer, who recalls his thoughts at the moment of the first Atomic bomb test. Moving between scenes of past and present, in New York, Nagasaki and Pearl Harbor, the tape resounds with haunting images.



TransmissionS 1985-90 28 min, color, sound

Through a fluid visual and aural collage, TransmissionS explores the history of 20th-century communications, and probes the cultural and personal implications of technology's power to effect change. Through a fusion of allegory, documentary, science and autobiography, d'Agostino creates a trenchant, often poignant analysis of communications technology as both witness and catalyst to history. A quick succession of fragmented images - the Camera Obscura, Marconi's Wireless, Edison's early films, early television, mammoth radio telescopes - generates a virtual index of the evolution of communications technology. In the segment titled The Well, a human drama illustrates television's omniscience and its limits. A small boy is trapped in a well in Italy, and the nation, transfixed at its television sets, follows the futile rescue attempt. In a personal look at how technology encapsulates human experience, from birth to death, Generations draws on d'Agostino's own home movie footage. The tape ends in an explosive visual fragmentation that is a virtual catalogue of 20th-century technology.



TeleTapes 1981 27:50 min, color, sound

In TeleTapes, d'Agostino continues his critique and analysis of television's influence on everyday life and culture by exploring the content and time structure of broadcast TV. Composed of three parts: TeleTricks - TV Environments; TeleGames - And Now, The News; and TelePuzzles - TV Movies, this collage uses tricks, games, puzzles and a veritable dictionary of TV effects as analogies and metaphors for the visual and aural language of the television viewing experience. Alternating news and commercial footage with his own staged events, d'Agostino examines the viewer's perception of reality versus TV reality, the pervasive cultural influence of TV advertising, and the way that television manipulates and mythifies events. Produced by the Television Laboratory at WNET/Thirteen, New York. Music: Jon Gibson.

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1. **Between Earth & Sky: MX, I**
2005-2007 videoinstallation

2. **Between Earth & Sky: MX, II**
2005-2007 videoinstallation

3. **Between Earth & Sky: MX, III**
2005-2007 videoinstallation
(wall projection)

4. **Between Earth & Sky: MX, IV**
2005-2007 videoinstallation
(ceiling projection)

5. **Cordoban Ceilings**
2003 videoinstallation

6. **Roof Walk**
1973 videoinstallation

7. **Between Earth & Sky: MX, V**
2005-2007 videoinstallation

8. **Between Earth & Sky: MX, VI**
2005-2007 videoinstallation

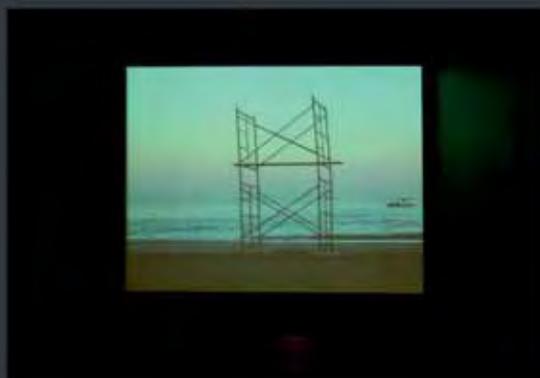
9. **@Vesu.Vius**
1999 videoinstallation
(projection, plasma & web)



Illuminated Cupola.



Overview of the Nave Principal.



Between Earth & Sky: MX, V, 2005-07, videoinstallation.

10. **kiva / temple / pyramid**
1975 videoinstallation

11. **pond / pass / peak**
1974 videoinstallation

12. **Between Earth & Sky: VII**
2005-2007 videoinstallation

13. **Coro space**

Between Earth & Sky: MX,IX
2005-2007 web version

Between Earth & Sky: MX,X
2005-2007 web version

VR / RV
1994 Video version of the
virtual reality project

TRACES
1995 video & web

TransmissionS
1985-90 video 28'

TeleTapes
1981 video 27'50"

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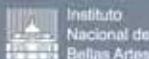
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