So, here was the notion. What about a tale of a man who ‘lost his way’; who became so entangled in some maze of imagination and speculation that the common, material ways of the world became of no significance to him? 1

‘The Art of Wandering’; a phrase coined [probably not exclusively] by Arther Machen in his book entitled ‘The London Adventure, or the Art of Wandering’ [from which the above quote comes from]. The ‘Art’ within Machen’s context, is most likely alluding to the ‘notion of’, the ‘appreciation of the activity’ and the ‘ability’ to wander like a ‘flâneur’, experiencing urban conurbations from a more ‘cerebral’ standpoint. However within the context of this semester’s work, the ‘Art’ can be additionally ‘read’ as the creative visualisations that are the direct consequence of such ‘wanderings’... or ‘dérives’.

This somewhat fortuitous strap line perfectly encapsulates one of the areas of work and research undertaken this semester; the combination of the ‘Art’ [the act of] of wandering and the ‘Art’ [the creative forms] derived from such ‘wanderings’.

The act and subsequent effects of ‘wandering’, becoming ‘lost’ and being open to new imaginings and experiences within our urban environments, is explored further by the Situationists, and principally their ‘spiritual’ leader, Guy Debord, through their theory of Psychogeography.

The study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organised or not, on the emotions and behaviour of individuals. 2

Guy Debord advocated this very deliberate act of wandering as a way of experiencing the often-concealed or forgotten zones of a city that one would not typically even acknowledge... let alone visit; being alive to its ‘psychogeography’. These ‘dérives’, meaning to ‘drift’, encourages metropolitan navigation that disregards the conventional methods of urban flow and one’s inherent sense of direction or geospatial awareness; allowing the ‘route’ be serendipitously haphazard, governed by chance, desire and curiosity. The ultimate goal is to discover, or ‘re-discover’, a location’s ‘genius-loci’, meaning ‘spirit of the place’, which is often lost, forgotten or hidden under the veneer of conventionalism or ignorance. Robert MacFarlane’s article called ‘A Road of

1. Arther Machen, The London Adventure, or the Art of Wandering, 1924
2. Guy Debord, Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography, 1955
One’s Own’, poetically defines the process;

Unfold a street map, place a glass, rim down, anywhere on the map, and draw round its edge. Pick up the map, go out into the city, and walk the circle... record the experience as you go, in whatever format you favour: film, photograph, manuscript, tape. Catch the textual run-off of the streets; the graffiti, the branded litter, the snatches of conversation. Log the data-stream. Be alert to the happenstance of metaphors, watch for visual rhymes, coincidences, analogies, family resemblances, the changing moods of the street. Complete the circle, and the record ends. Walking makes the content; footage for footage.

Although the Situationists are commonly accredited with the ‘notion’ of the art of urban wandering [in the hope of ‘constructing situations’ not governed by traditional behaviour; hence their movement’s name] in the 1950-60s, the nineteenth century poet, essayist and art critic Charles Baudelaire, also had a perception of this psychographic model a hundred years earlier; commandeering the term ‘flâneur’ [meaning ‘to stroll’] and characterising it to me a ‘stroller of the streets’. Baudelaire saw the flâneur as an ‘urban cultural rebel observer’ of sorts that denounced the newly asserted bourgeois affectations of morality and hieratically defined civil, political, social, artistic and economic order of the time. Principally, concerning visual communication, he believed that ‘traditional’ artistic content, intention and its derivative ‘forms’ [resultant from the new authoritarian order], were insufficient for demands of ‘modern’ life, and that artists needed to envelop themselves in the city to access the true zeitgeist. Although originally defined merely as a somewhat detached ‘social observer’, the unquestionably political overtones associated with the concept of being a ‘flâneur’, resulted in it inevitably becoming a type of avant-garde militancy.

A flâneur … a disengaged and cynical voyeur on the one hand, and a man of the people who enters into the life of his subjects with passion on the other.

Although clearly defined in very different contexts, this urge to emancipate oneself from the homogenous cultural stagnations of ordered control is very much evident in Baudelaire’s 1850’s, the Situationists’ 1960s and today’s contemporary society. The technique of electing to disengage with the accepted, conventional order and encounter new environments and experiences through dérives, wandering or becoming a flâneur, is the result of the unending enforcement of the ruling ‘establishment’ [be it political, social or cultural]; overly engineered and landscaped ‘public’ [consumer] spaces; the proliferation of ever-more shopping arcades and, what are perceived as,
‘leisure’ facilities; the perpetual demographic ‘cleansing’ of retail, public and community environments; the propagation of these spaces with the unhealthy lust for ‘celebrity culture’ and unchecked consumerism facilitated through the glut of aggressive branding and visual marketing. All without any acknowledgment of the cultural and psychological ‘collateral damage’ that may [and does] occur.

The latter reasons for avant-garde militancy listed above relates to another Situationist theory that has affected my work and directed my research – ‘the Society of the Spectacle’. Along with their desire to ‘construct situations’ through the arbitrary [and commonly unfulfilling] ‘dérives’ and the more heavily artificial and contrived efforts to force new ‘situations’ [often through hypothetical designs for public architecture and municipal spaces [in an attempt to combat Euclidian design dogma] and many, invariably, unsuccessful interactive ‘events’] the Situationists, and in particular Guy Debord, believed that our contemporary existence could be defined as the;

… collapse of reality into streams of images, products and activities sanctioned by business and bureaucracy. 5

The ‘Spectacle’ is the result of those who control the media; the images we see and the sounds we hear. Political, social and cultural commentary is ‘governed’ and filtered to the masses, after it has been appropriated and subsequently authorised by those with vested interests. Our world exists through a tightly ‘legislated’ visual construct; images are streamed to us; premeditated conclusions have been drawn to the effects they will have on the mainstream masses.

Whoever controls the media, the images, controls the culture. 6

A tool the Situationists devised to combat this spread of ‘uncensored censorship’ was ‘détournement’; the art of ‘turning expressions of the capitalist system against itself’ 7. By misappropriating the images used by the ‘Spectacle’ and in-turn, abusing their original usage, positioning and meaning, new visual messages can be conveyed that are in hostile opposition to the very mode in which they were originally conceived and deployed. However there is a caveat; détournement relies on the viewer’s ability to ‘intertextualise’ the détourned metaphors, signs and signifiers, thus enabling them to recognize and de-code the duplicitous significance. These ‘postmodern’ [of sorts] conceptions and communiqués are ‘supposed’ to help us to;

Discover the power of the commodity, the reign of the spectacle or the pornography of power. 7

5. Simon Sadler, The Situationist City, 1999
6. Rian Hughes, CULT-URE, 2010
How successful the practice of détournement was [and is] in holding a mirror up to the Spectacle in an attempt to force it to see its own contempt for the masses is debatable. The concept and practice of seizing and satirically altering cultural, political and social imagery is, of course, widespread in today's modern mainstream media with countless parodies of TV and film, news items, music, technology, advertising, iconography, fashion, celebrities, politicians, class systems, war and so on. Unfortunately, most of the détournement use of ‘spectacular’ imagery today is not in anyway designed to confront the original issues of media regulation and control, and now, somewhat paradoxically, détournement has been ‘re-détourned’ by the media and marketing industries, in the same way the once anti-capitalist, anti-establishment ‘Street Art’ movement and its associated graphic styling and attitudes to authority, has now been usurped for mainstream consumer branding purposes to market urban footwear, music videos and headphones [see any Adidas or Nike advert]!

The ‘Street Art’ is an exemplar of how the dérive, its relevant psychogeography and the Society of the Spectacle can intertwine their themes. The urban wastelands of the forgotten environments [not only forgotten by those who do not inhabit them but also by commerce, local government, law, justice and ultimately the ‘Spectacle’ itself] where street art is prevalent is the self-styled antagonistic playground for the disenfranchised youth, who are permitted a certain degree of autonomy from the norms of ‘mainstream’ civil obedience [attitudes to property, graffiti, noise, public behaviour, tolerance etc]. They are ‘gifted’ this ‘privilege’ as long as they remain a safe distance from the bourgeoisie addresses and behave themselves in the retail areas and public spaces; of course I am being somewhat derisory here to prove a point. It is these exact same urban zones that would have been perfect for a Situationist dérive; full of reality, vitality, vice, genuine antagonism, alternative mindsets and opinions. It would have been devoid of any targeted ‘spectacular’ interference, and staid mainstream branding and marketing; political, consumer or otherwise; as the presiding classes perception is that all those who ‘choose’ to live there [or are unable to work/pay their way out] are demographically cursed to be forever low earners, unskilled and uneducated [not necessarily true of course!] and therefore unworthy; an unwarranted marketing and distribution cost, unfit to debate with, poll or often even acknowledge. Now of course this once untapped market is at the forefront of modern youth culture, hence the unabashed sorties into these zones by sycophantic branding companies; embezzling the imagery, iconography and the inherent defiant philosophies of the ‘underprivileged’ [exciting, edgy, dangerous, thrilling; would be the marketing spiel]... yet they cynically leave no legacy of support, neither help highlight the screamingly evident social issues.

‘Street’ is very occasionally beautiful eruptions of genius, resistance and hope in the midst of a wasteland. Street is what they call these moments once they have been stolen, repackaged and priced for resale… you can buy it from us slice by slice or you can go home and watch TV. 8
The consumer ‘wing’ of the Spectacle seemingly will enter any potentially lucrative social sphere; regardless of ethics or morals; exploiting without prejudice or reservation.

The Street Art example above hopefully demonstrates the links that can be made between the dérive, the psychogeography of forgotten spaces [but not exclusively ‘forgotten’], the act of détournement and the aesthetical and ethical effects of the Spectacle, and it is these four areas, along with semiotics [discussed later], that have inspired the artwork and discourse produced in the ‘Insitu’ BLAD. The book opens with, maybe somewhat predictably, a manifesto that I hope will accurately describe my enquiry’s theoretical and conceptual framework;

1. The fundamentals of our work are;
   - The reclamation of a location’s or individual’s ‘Genius – Loci’ [a distinctive atmosphere, or the ‘spirit of the place’, although we will apply it to people too] or its unseen, alternate aesthetic, history or memories.
   - To experiment and misappropriate the images of the ‘Spectacle’ [Guy Debord’s theory of the collapse of reality into streams of images, products and activities sanctioned by business, capitalism and bureaucracy].
   - To offer alternative ‘re-representations’ of emotional, consumable, social, psychological, cerebral semiotics and images.

2. We embrace the post-modernistic values of ‘détournement’, [the often derisive aggregation of the ‘Spectacle’s’ visualisations], the beauty and art of the ‘dérive’ [drifting through and documenting environments not yet experienced] and the environmental immersion of the ‘flâneur’ [allowing oneself to become organically part of an environment and its inhabitants’ movements and will].

3. We will emancipate and re-render the memories, images and experiences of the cities and streets [but not exclusively urban conurbations] and those who dwell, work, die and sometimes have time to play in them.

4. We will use modern technology and techniques to redefine the ‘Spectacle’ by using [somewhat paradoxically] many of the same image presentation and manipulation techniques employed and developed for the ‘Spectacle’ itself – an uneasy equilibrium of hypocrisy [ironically serving only to empower the power of the ‘Spectacle’ further].

5. We intend to re-assign meaning [sometimes playfully, sometimes aggressively] to the accepted orders of hierarchy, power and legitimacy. We will ‘re-mediate’ the mainstream and current social, political, sensationalist commentary and the pseudo choices of commodity,
consumerism and community we are faced with daily.

6. We will travel [physically or mentally] to our next destination or task using a different route to normal or otherwise expected: following no established signage, disregarding any sense of direction and ONLY navigating using our innate curiosity, desire or chance; rather than necessity or function.

7. Although our creations will be ‘original’ [in concept and production] nothing ‘in them’ will be ‘new’ to you. It is the approach, order and mode in which we re-present what you will have already seen, experienced, learnt, felt or understood that will be the innovation.

Behind the slightly grandiose language and inflections [and the obligatory use of the art-manifesto-royal ‘we’], I hope the statement aptly summaries the intentions of the artwork produced. Guy Debord’s manifesto, published in 1957, wordily entitled the ‘Report on the Construction of Situations and on the International Situationist Tendency’s Conditions of Organisation and Action’, explores, as you would imagine these themes and many, many more. Unlike the Insitu manifesto, Debord shows a far more aggressive contempt for the ‘bourgeoisie’ stating;

We… need to undertake an effective ideological action in order to combat the emotional influence of advanced capitalist methods of propaganda. On every occasion, by every hyper-political means, we must publicize desirable alternatives to the spectacle of the capitalist way of life, so as to destroy the bourgeois idea of happiness. 9

The work I have undertaken throughout this enquiry does not have such a venomous anti-middle class stance, instead aiming its ‘détourned’ sarcasm squarely at the media and those who control it; its ruthless marketing techniques [and lack of ethics], its pornographic affair with ephemeral celebrity and its unique ability to brand ‘envy’ to the masses; filtering out truth, integrity, creativity, individuality and worth, leaving the masses ‘panning’ with only sensationalist and consumer driven detritus. Debord had an equally healthy disregard of those who ‘govern’ the spectacle and design its mass-user-interface, identifying their Machiavellian ‘cleansing’ techniques, stating;

The ruling ideology sees to it that subversive discoveries are trivialized and sterilized, after which they can be safely spectacularised. 10

This mass-marketing; the imposed amalgamation and the eroding of free-thought and desire, be it commercially, culturally, socially or politically, is the ultimate desire of the Spectacle; homogenised marketing and the standardisation of thought.

The public, in the sense of a great consensus of separate and distinct viewpoints, is finished. Today, the mass audience [the successor to the ‘public’] can be used as a creative, participating force. It is, instead, merely given packages of passive entertainment. 11

As you can see the Spectacle’s propagandist program seems constantly on the agenda for any avant-garde thinkers [and those with just a simple ‘working’ moral compass] of any given generation. As said earlier, the deployment of détournement as a weapon to combat the expediential spread of the Spectacle’s visual power has had very limited affect. Another attempt to revolutionise how visual communication was employed in the consumerist industries came from a British graphic designer called Ken Garland. He wrote the ‘First Things First’ Manifesto in 1964, in which he outlined his [and 21 other high profile designers’] reservations and concerns about how, in particularly, graphic design [but it essentially pertains to all forms of aggressive visual marketing] was being misused; servicing only the needs of the ‘lifestyle’ branding companies; he proposed ‘a reversal of priorities in favour of the more useful and more lasting forms of communication.’ 12

We have reached a saturation point at which the high-pitched scream of consumer selling is no more than sheer noise… we hope that our society will tire of gimmick merchants, status salesmen and hidden persuaders. 13

Sadly, the mass audience ensemble we all find ourselves performing in has not tired of the ‘hidden persuaders’ and the Spectacle’s ability to avoid meaningful detection by the ‘masses’ remains; therefore it continues to provide the hymn sheet from which we all ‘sing’.

This lack of ability [or more likely willingness and desire], to detect the Spectacle’s manipulative semiotics, brings me onto the fifth area of study. Much of the work produced in the book, operates within the theories of semiotics; the signifier, the signified and the sign; and commonly breaches the often more subjective, deeper strata of signification, coined ‘Myth’ by philosopher Roland Barthes, in his 1957 book entitled ‘Mythologies’.

The starting point of these reflections was usually a feeling of impatience at the sight of ‘naturalness’ with which newspapers, art and common sense constantly dress up reality. 14

14. Roland Barthes, Mythologies, 1957
Barthes’ quote above alludes to the effects of the Spectacle and, similarly to him, I wanted to;

…track down, in the decorative display of what-goes-without-saying, the ideological abuse which, in my view, is hidden there. 15

Barthes shared the now prevalent anti-bourgeois sentiment of Debord’s commentary, by the semiological ‘interrogation’ of established cultural references in the hope of de-representing many of the deceptive middleclass values and notions aligned to them. A simple example is the French population’s love of red wine; the bourgeois connotations centre on the wine’s inferred ‘myth’ being exclusively and simply viewed as healthy and relaxing [add to that the drinking of it being perceived ‘harmless’, always a polite social activity, typically and patriotically French]. According to Barthes, this ‘second-order’ sign somewhat bypasses the contradictory truths of its potential side effects; unhealthy and inebriating if drunk to excess; potentially damaging to social and domestic relationships; the subsequent slow but tangible loss of normally concealed ‘inhibitions’ and bodily, intellectual and verbal control. On the surface the bottle of wine, the signifier, simply relates to its content – the signified being an alcohol beverage, the bourgeois then assigned the many positive ‘second-order’ signs as mentioned above, without any reference or acknowledgement of the existence of any alternative ‘second-order’ sign; which I have in-turn coined the ‘third-order’.

The motivations for these overtly positive and somewhat selective ‘second-order’ readings is another duplicitous technique deployed by the Spectacle, as if marketed correctly, these ‘optimistic’ manipulations of semiotic values can be applied to all manner of products, branding, social and political philosophies.

Material which has already been worked on so to make it suitable for communication.16

Anything can be ‘adapted’ into a myth, hence the Spectacle’s love of semiotics in its control systems. ‘Decorate’ a signifier and therefore its signified, calculating its effects and modify it for a ‘certain type of consumption… with a type of social usage which is added to pure matter’ 17.

This use of ‘myth’ can be related back to the ‘Street Art’ discussion earlier. Street Art – the immediate signifier could be the graffiti, the ‘vandalism’, and although in some cases it maybe aesthetically pleasing, it is nonetheless criminal. The signified would be the manifestation of a disenchanted, isolated, often forgotten ‘working’ class youth [ironically the vast majority are not actually working] and all the associated significations of poverty, desperation, boredom, unemployment etc. The Spectacle has applied a second-order reading, designed to attract typically
middleclass consumers, i.e. those that have expendable cash to buy overly priced footwear, street branded clothing, accessories, urban styled technology, urban issue based music and so on. This second-order promotes a new, ‘presentable’ urban ‘lifestyle’ that one can experience from a safe distance [i.e. from their middle-class front rooms], adopting very selective aspects of the culture and unsurprisingly leaving the ‘actual reality’ of the culture far behind.

This massaging of second and third-order signs and their meanings is endemic throughout the advertising world, not to mention the political and social spheres, as it is a vital tool that the Spectacle implements persistently and subversively. I would like to discuss an example of how these second and third-order signs have been ‘massaged’ in one of my pieces; page 06 from the ‘Insitu’ BLAD – ‘It’s Perfect Mummy’ [or appendix - fig 1].

This is a particularly pertinent example of how the orthodox ‘signified’ of an innocent baby doll toy has been, to use my own terminology, ‘third-ordered’. The work was inspired by a recent news item about a young girl called Poppy Burge, who was given a £6000 breast enlargement voucher for her 7th birthday from her mother [who is a self confessed plastic surgery addict]. Poppy said:

I can’t wait to be like Mummy with big boobs, they’re pretty. 18

The signified ‘second-order’ could see the doll as being a relatively innocent image of simply a ‘smaller’ version of the girl, relating to the socialisation of her perceived future role in society, and in essence, her preparation for motherhood, and maybe a humble expression of idol worship in that she ‘wants to be like mummy’ [and ironically in Poppy’s case, in more ways than one].

The third-order signs could be the ‘plasticity’ of the doll; the hard, cold, soul-less, feel-less manner in which it ‘mis-re-presents’ the soft, warm, treasured form of a baby. Plastic’s only inherent quality is it can be precast into any contour, any shade… forever ‘re-moldable’; a transient structure; cheap. Echoes of plastic surgery begin to evolve from these many levels of potential significations.

Plastic is a modern artificial ‘universal medium’. Available in any colour, any shape, any texture, it has no inherent properties of its own, no natural grain. 19

My work’s re-molding of the doll with over sized Botox lips, fake tan, breasts and eyelashes, overly tweezed eyebrows, a perversely low cut baby-grow with ‘sexy’ zipped front, the bondage dog collar and the highlighted hair with roots requiring perpetual attention, hopefully signifies firstly, a more

19. Rian Hughes, CULT-URE, 2010
‘aptly’ fashioned baby doll toy for Poppy… it’s perfect… it’s a ‘Jodie Marsh’ Special Edition after all! [Jodie Marsh is a ‘celebrity’ made famous through various low budget reality TV shows, who is well known for her plastic surgery [and big lips and fake tan], glamour modeling and attending every D list event in an ever-more outrageous outfit with the express reason to be photographed and written about. Be in no doubt, the plastic surgery is very much a part of her fame and appeal. Jodie is idolised by many young girls: an inspirational character?]. So the ‘perfect’ role model for Poppy [after her mother of course].

And secondly it comments on the ‘sexualisation’ of ever-younger children through the Spectacle’s savage and morally corrupt attitude to targeted consumerism to the pre-pubescent age [which repeatedly manifests in, amongst others, much mainstream TV programming, music videos, toys [see any new Barbie or celebrity doll product], clothing, make-up products and any teen [and pre-teen] magazines ‘tips on life’ and ‘how to get boys’!].

The ever-expanding use and desire for self-enhancement to replicate those that have gained ‘celebrity’ through this ‘artificially implanted talent’ [i.e. not gained through actual talent or hard-work], relies solely on the Spectacle playing a pivotal role. It must portray the unattractive [considered my most of us I would imagine] yearning to synthetically ‘update’ oneself; with the only goal being to achieve more dubious notoriety through images and the often-lurid commentary on your ‘image’ and your ‘lifestyle’. The perceived advantages to this way of life seemingly outwit the detection of the evident flaws in character, and their [maybe] deeper rooted psychological issues. Regardless of these ethical concerns the manipulation of signifiers and the signified is an integral weapon in the armory of the Spectacle.

The celebrity make-over of the doll featured in my work, and the constant renewal and upgrading of Jodie Marsh’s image could be considered as a ‘hyper-reality’, a heightened simulation of the real; whereby they cease to reflect ‘actuality’ or true matter. This notion of the altered ‘hyper-real’ is another area of investigation that interests me and is part of the wider philosophical theory of ‘Simulacrum’; meaning ‘likeness, similarity’.

Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being or substance.
It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality; a hyper-real. 20

Greek philosopher Plato described Simulacrum as a relatively simple system that principally distorts an original image, but with the intention of still it appearing ‘real’ to the viewer, in the initial way my Jodie Marsh doll image is viewed. However French theorist Jean Baudrillard claims that Simulacrum is not merely a ‘realistically’ altered, but still altered nonetheless, version of the original, but is an

20. Jean Baudrillard, Simulacra and Simulation, 1994
image that is extended to such a degree that it operates on its own plane of reality, far removed from the notion of the simply altered ‘real’. Again this theory could be applied to my image, as although it is supposed to appear like a ‘real’ plastic doll, it could be perceived as being elevated to the ‘hyper-real’ through its clearly absurd premise; it would never be manufactured; it would be censored and sanctioned for being [and rightly so!] perverted, depraved; the perfect toy for the pedophile; who would purchase such an abhorrent parody for an innocent child to play with and so on. Thus does this render its existence outside reality?

These are not representations, these are simulations. The line between reality and representation fades away.  

Unlike Plato’s essentially two-stage system of Simulacra; the original followed by a distorted version to still appear ‘real’, Baudrillard believed it to operate over four levels;

1. The faithful replica of an original image - maybe a simple family photograph.

2. The enhanced or misrepresentation of the ‘real’ captured in the original image – a modification in the signifiers, maybe subtle or more obvious, but it has a purpose, an intent – fashion photography for example.

3. The image is altered to conceal a ‘reality deficiency’ – life style branding for example – the impossible and implausible mise-en-scene of perfect people, selling/consuming perfect products in perfect lives – images from worlds that do not exist.

4. Simulacrum – an image becomes a series of signs and non-realities that only refers to itself, exiting only in its own infinitely abstracted reality, thus offering no relation to reality at all.

This abstraction of the image from its original reality to the extent of Baudrillard’s description is a concept that remains debatable. Is the intertextuality or context of a hyper-real image, however subtle, ever really removed or distorted to the point it can’t be recognised? Yes, of course, surrealist abstractions and many forms of ‘modern art’ will present visualisations that are either so minimalist or distorted, that what they are, were or refer to is rendered exceptionally faint or utterly hidden [intentionally for the most part], but within the realms of the ‘representational’ imagery, how ever far Simulacra removes it, can it ever be devoid of all inference of a materially real context? Does the fact that it has fallen into the hyper-real and thus is existing outside the realms of its original reality and framework, not offer us its new reality?

The notion of representational abstraction that results in the image created ceasing to operate in any tangible reality appeals to me, and although I have not attempted to or believe any of my current work has removed itself to that degree, it is certainly an area I am intrigued to explore.

Simulacrum, in theory, could be the perfect antidote for the Spectacle’s current monopolising of visual communications; how could it control imagery that is outside its own reality? How can it exploit imagery that refuses to acknowledge the reality of the Spectacle itself? Is it a possible vehicle for a new brand of hyper-détournement?

As you will appreciate the five main themes explored throughout this semester’s work have offered, and continue to offer, countless avenues for investigation and theoretical debate and although I have examined and explored many philosophies and concepts, it is clear that there are limitless strands of debate I have not yet encountered.

To some observers the theories of the psychogeographic effects of a dérive, the mere existence of the ‘Spectacle’ and ‘Simulacrum’ and even [to a lesser degree but still worthy of inclusion] semiotics may appear, at times, somewhat ‘fabricated’, and often [certainly regarding the ‘psycho’ element of geographies] ‘subjective’ in the extreme. And although the Situationists’ concepts discussed have an undeniably ‘playful’ nature about them [toying with the Spectacle through détournement, superimposing emotional arousal and psychoanalytical contexts onto what others would simply see as ‘everyday’ locations, using a map of the Berlin Underground to navigate through Paris in a desperate attempt to ‘construct’ avant-garde experiences and so on], I believe they had a serious point to make. Psychogeography, whether you believe in its merits or not, is simply asking the ‘ordinary’ person to be ‘alert to the qualities of space’ 22, and even though its inception may have come through drug induced dérives through Paris in the 1960s, seeking to surround oneself with vice and potential jeopardy in the hope of discovering some kind of dark, mysterious, liminal hinterland of human life, it nevertheless demonstrated a tangible ‘dissatisfaction with the contemporary city’ 23. This yearning some feel to escape the mundane, sterile public spaces of our cities and to mute the relentless high-pitched white noise of consumerism drives them to stride out of the thoroughfares and into the nether regions of our cities, in search of new connections with their environments and hopefully, adventure.

And finally;
Imagine a polygraph machine combined with a GPS device. Imagine that this machine, once strapped onto you, could actually digitally map your physiological reactions to locations encountered on a dérive. Imagine then it could visualise these physiological [and logically the associated
psychological] reactions into a map that distinguishes exactly when and where [and subsequently why] you were excited, scared, aroused. Well Christian Nold, a psychogeographer at the University College, London has invented such a thing.

However, before we toast psychogeographical success and erect a statue to Debord, imagine then Nold receives many, many emails from advertising companies ‘enquiring’ about his ‘emotional topography’.

Yes, its seems the Spectacle knows everything… and now it wants to ‘rebrand the cities’ 24…

by the détournement of psychogeography itself.

**Debord will be turning in his grave**.
Appendix

Fig 1; 06 – ‘Its Perfect Mummy’

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