Richard Long: *A Line Made by Walking*, 1967

This formative piece was made on one of Long’s journeys to St Martin’s from his home in Bristol. Between hitchhiking lifts, he stopped in a field in Wiltshire where he walked backwards and forwards until the flattened turf caught the sunlight and became visible as a line. He photographed this work, and recorded his physical interventions within the landscape. Although this artwork underplays the artist’s corporeal presence, it anticipates a widespread interest in performative art practice. This piece demonstrates how Long had already found a visual language for his lifelong concerns with impermanence, motion and relativity.

**Richard Long**

Art as a formal and holistic description of the real space and experience of landscape and its most elemental materials.  

Nature has always been recorded by artists, from pre-historic cave paintings to 20th century landscape photography. I too wanted to make nature the subject of my work, but in new ways. I started working outside using natural materials like grass and water, and this evolved into the idea of making a sculpture by walking.
Walking itself has a cultural history, from Pilgrims to the wandering Japanese poets, the English Romantics and contemporary long-distance walkers.

My first work made by walking, in 1967, was a straight line in a grass field, which was also my own path, going “nowhere.” In the subsequent early map works, recording very simple but precise walks on Exmoor and Dartmoor, my intention was to make a new art which was also a new way of walking: walking as art. Each walk followed my own unique, formal route, for an original reason, which was different from other categories of walking, like travelling. Each walk, though not by definition conceptual, realised a particular idea. Thus walking—as art—provided an ideal means for me to explore relationships between time, distance, geography and measurement. These walks are recorded or described in my work in three ways: in maps, photographs or text works, using whichever form is the most appropriate for each different idea. All these forms feed the imagination, they are the distillation of experience.

Walking also enabled me to extend the boundaries of sculpture, which now had the potential to be de-constructed in the space and time of walking long distances. Sculpture could now be about place as well as material and form.

I consider my landscape sculptures inhabit the rich territory between two ideological positions, namely that of making ‘monuments’ or conversely, of ‘leaving only footprints’.

Over the years these sculptures have explored some of the variables of transience, permanence, visibility or recognition. A sculpture may be moved, dispersed, carried. Stones can be used as markers of time or distance, or exist as parts of a huge, yet anonymous, sculpture. On a mountain walk a sculpture could be made above the clouds, perhaps in a remote region, bringing an imaginative freedom about how, or where, art can be made in the world.