

## Performance on The Doll's Head Trail: Co-Creating Experience Through Participatory Installation Art

Nicole Costantini

*Abstract: The Doll's Head Trail is an attraction in Atlanta, GA that features art installations created from repurposed trash. Hikers are invited to participate by adding to or altering the installations, thus transforming them into hiker/artists. The hiker/artist's contribution enables them to co-create experiences for other hiker/artists. In this essay, I explore the performative possibilities of objects, installation art, and The Trail by analyzing two experiences I had with a car installation during the fall of 2020. My experiences recall the lore of Bonnie and Clyde and explore how one's positionality can lead to moments of enchantment and disenchantment.*

Constitution Lakes is a nature preserve in Southeast Atlanta, Georgia. Described as “part wildlife refuge, part hiking trail, part snake pit and part art exhibit” (Lee), this preserve sits on land that once housed Atlanta’s South River Brick Company and now serves as home to one of Atlanta’s best alternative attractions: The Doll’s Head Trail. Established by carpenter Joel Slater in 2011, The Doll’s Head Trail consists of found art installations created with discarded items found inside the park and maintained by Slater, volunteers, and park-goers (Lee). While most of the installations are constructed from old plastic jugs<sup>\*1</sup>, rusted bed springs, cans,

---

**Nicole Costantini**, Ph.D. is a performance scholar and practitioner who teaches communication at a college in Atlanta, Georgia. She received her Ph.D. from Louisiana State University. Her research focuses on the intersections of identity, space and place.

<sup>1</sup> The asterisks throughout this document refer to images of installations included in the “Participatory Art Installations on The Doll’s Head Trail” photo essay located at <http://liminalities.net/19-1/dollshead.html>. I invite you to experience the trail how I have

children's toys\*, and/or random car parts\*, many of the most popular installations documented on social media consist of weathered, sometimes eyeless, limbless, or disembodied baby dolls\* paired with other found items and/or captions written in marker on shards of pottery, brick, or plastic.



September 7, 2020. All photos by the author.

---

laid it out in this text – the image order reflects my introductions of the different installations.

The trail, labeled by Slater as an “accidental tourist attraction” (Prescott and Krausman), is situated deep within the park. Visitors follow a paved path from the parking area to a boardwalk tagged with left pointing arrow and “DHT.”<sup>2</sup> Following the boardwalk into the woods, hikers first encounter a sign decorated with fishing bobs attached to a fallen tree that provides instructions\*, “keep to the bobs,” guiding the visitors to the trailhead. A second metal sign\* sits further along the path, providing additional directions and a message – “Please respect the concept & add only items found in the park to the D.H. Trail. *Thanks!* Enjoy your visit to our fair park.” This is where the installations begin: there are bobs attached to another fallen tree to create a “Scale model of an unknown solar system\*,” and the “Linda Blair witch project\*” sits among an array of other installations within what seems like the trail’s version of a foyer, right outside the start of its main loop.

Scattered throughout the trail are sites like “O, Captain, my Captain\*,” “Journey to the Censor of the Earth\*,” and remnants of what was once the “tallest willow oak” along I-285 that is now adorned\* with objects found in the area. There are several offshoots located along the trail guiding hikers to places\* like the Trail of Tires,<sup>3</sup> a shorter path that is home to installations made of a variety of rubber and plastic tires titled things like “Tireland\*,” “Two Tired\*,” “The Wheel Estate,” and The Relic Trail, which we will revisit later in this essay. The fun of The Doll’s Head Trail comes from the openness of the installations: viewers are free to interpret the trail as they see fit. As Slater states, “If you think it’s going to be creepy when you come out here, it’ll be creepy. If you think it’s going to be whimsical when you come out here, it’ll be whimsical. It kind of reflects whatever your worldview is . . .” (Prescott and Krausman).

---

<sup>2</sup> The boardwalk was closed due to weather damage in 2022. At the time of writing, hikers are directed to take a different trail to reach the start of The Doll’s Head Trail.

<sup>3</sup> As of January 2023, the Trail of Tires marker has been replaced with a new shard of pottery designating it the “Tired Antics Trail.”



September 7, 2020.

A sign\* marks the “official” starting point of the trail’s loop and provides instructions for hiking (the numbers have been added by the author):

1. “Bob” around clockwise to see the trail as designed.
2. Please add to the trail only items found in the park. Modern toys and trash will be removed.
3. Keep it kid-friendly in content and construction. No broken glass or jagged metal.

The invitation to participate in the artmaking transforms the hiker into co-creator, should they choose to accept the role. These instructions allow The Doll's Head Trail to function as what Umberto Eco calls a work in movement, a work of art that "consist[s] of unplanned or physically incomplete structural units" (30). There's no telling how the found objects may be arranged from one day to the next. The trail invites the hiker/artist to perform, and the instructions intend for the performer's actions to operate within a field of relations (Eco 32). As Eco writes, the

'work in movement' is the possibility of numerous different personal interventions, but it is not an amorphous invitation to indiscriminate participation. The invitation offers the performer the opportunity for an oriented insertion into something which always remains the world intended by the author (36).

Therefore, the hiker/artist is invited to participate in ways that extend the original intention of the author, in this case Slater, while still expressing their own creativity.

This participation also speaks to two of the main agendas that have influenced the "art of participation" since the 1960s: activation and authorship (Bishop 12). In *Participation*, Bishop writes that activation stems from the active subject "who will be empowered by the experience of physical or symbolic participation" (12). Though the hiker/artist might not consider themselves an artist in other settings, adding a caption to an installation or rearranging objects empowers them to become one through this experience. In this role as co-creator, the hiker/artist assumes creative control and puts "to work the idea that we are all equally inventing our own translations" (16). The second agenda, authorship, opens the production of art to a collective rather than an individual author, allowing for the "aesthetic benefits of greater risk and unpredictability" (12). There is no way to predict how an installation will change over time and this unpredictability serves as a driving force for hiker/artists to return for another experience. Each visit is a kind of spiral repetition, in which the "'same' repeats itself but with a twist" (Bennett 126). Each twist, each alteration to an installation allows for the thing to transform and "give birth to wondrous and unsettling—enchancing—new forms" (Bennett 40). Therefore, repeat visits to the trail remain exciting because there is always the possibility of encountering something new.





September 7, 2020 (left); November 5, 2021 (right)

The participatory nature of The Doll's Head Trail reveals qualities of the trail itself, especially in comparison to more traditional hiking trails and other environmental art installations. As Jonathan Gray reflects upon in "Trail Mix: A Sojourn on the Muddy Divide between Nature and Culture" (2010), people often take to the woods as an escape from the everyday and to witness nature, though the boundaries between the two are often blurred. For example, in "Reflection," the third act of Trail Mix, Gray explores the paradox between human culture and nature as he reflects on finding "trash" in the woods. This scene includes a poem about a summer walk through a state park during which he sees what he thinks is a reflection of the sun, only to discover "the Mylar corner of a potato chip bag or energy bar wrapper caught in a spider's web" (210). He then corrects himself – "No, not caught. Used, incorporated. Added like some new kind of leaf..." (210). The human who has gone to the woods to be in nature finds that human nature has encroached, as it so often does, upon the wild. Anyone who has hiked knows

that leaving trash behind is a breach of trail etiquette, etiquette that has been put in place as an attempt to leave nature as it is found.

In comparison, many people travel to Constitution Lakes *for* the trash—or more precisely, the trash-turned-art. Hikers pause along the trail to photograph the installations just as others often stop to photograph wildlife. The Doll's Head Trail serves as the escape, creating its own brand of trail magic and the camaraderie felt among hikers on nature-based trails (Terry and Vartabedian) is often shared between hikers/artists/spectators as they encounter each other en route to the next installation. Even here though, there is etiquette in place. Returning to the rules listed on the trailhead sign, the second rule explicitly states "Please add to the trail only items found in the park. Modern toys and trash will be removed." The Doll's Head Trail is not intended to add trash to Constitution Lakes Park; rather it is meant to serve as a conservation method.

Participation then assumes a second meaning by picking up trash and relocating specifically to The Doll's Head trail area, the hiker/artist is co-creating art while cleaning up the nature preserve. In an interview with *On Second Thought*, a talk show on Georgia Public Broadcasting, Slater discusses the communal effort it takes to maintain the park and trail. Sometimes the maintenance work, like picking up trash not used in installations or removing installations that are obviously made outside of Constitution Lakes, is completed by Slater, his friends, and park regulars, but sometimes the work is completed by anonymous volunteers (Prescott and Krausman). The hiker/artist who co-creates also sometimes performs the maintenance, and the willingness to participate in the caretaking is indicative of a communal desire to maintain the spirit of the trail. These acts are also indicative of a third agenda that influences "the art of participation:" community (Bishop 12). The Doll's Head Trail relies upon a community of volunteers and hiker/artists who are invested in its mission and actively work to maintain that mission and the art resulting from it. Correcting breaches of etiquette on the trail (removing outside installations and/or litter) protects the pre-existing art and extends the field of relations established by Slater. The trail can function because of the community brought together by its existence.

It is important to note that this conservation effort also connects the installations to the larger field of environmental art. M. Marks et al., write that as a "participatory art form that [often] engages communities," environmental art intends "to express and/or foster pro-environmental awareness and behaviors (312). Since environmental artwork is situated in nature, its presence "can assist in the re-imagining and appreciation of place" while leading participants to consider

sustainable practices and behaviors (Marks et al., 311). The Doll's Head Trail creates a relationship between the hiker/artist and Constitution Lakes Park through the invitation to participate. The trail magic, the camaraderie, and the desire to witness change over time all invite the hiker/artist to return, and over time the relationship between the trail and the hiker is established. This connection can also motivate hiker/artists to be more invested in the overall state of the park. Citing Layne Lippard, M. Marks et al. note that "works that are related to or created in specific locations can highlight "the special' qualities of place embedded in everyday life" (Marks et al., 312; Lippard 2). I have witnessed the changing of seasons throughout the two and a half years that I have visited Constitution Lakes Park, and even though it was not my original intention to track the seasonality, I find myself looking for changes in the trees, the water levels, and plant growth alongside the alterations to the installations; all observations I note because of the relationship I now have established with this site.

M. Marks et al. also note that environmental art "aims to stimulate awareness of people's relationship with nature as well as art which prompts discussion and/or action around environmental issues" (311-2). Slater's instructions to only add items found in the park encourages the hiker/artist to consider the overall state of the park and to act by relocating and repurposing the trash. Those who choose to participate in this artistic intervention effort become invested in the trail, and thus the park's, future. It is important to note that this conservation effort does face some challenges. I have noticed an increase in signage\* over the time I have hiked around The Doll's Head Trail, all of which reinforce that only trash from inside the park should be added to the trail. Some of the signs are more explicit than others, explaining that new items/installations create more work for the volunteers. All the newer signage indicates a breach, or probably several breaches, in trail etiquette and that this behavior was harming the trail more than it was serving it. I have encountered objects on the trail that lead me to question whether an object or installation was new rather than repurposed – bright, clean plastic flowers that lack signs of dirt, dust, or sun exposure, for example – and this questioning takes me out of the moment, suspending the trail magic that usually captivates me as I observe the installations. A desire to be a part of the Trail, however temporary, causes some to disregard Slater's established field of relation and creates issues for the community that supports the conservation efforts. Though there is no clear-cut solution to this challenge, it is evident that Slater's intentions, and the community invested in supporting the Trail, seek to restore and protect the park itself even if/when that maintenance includes removing extraneous items. The



directions give legibility to the installations as not only part of the nature preserve, but also as aesthetic objects that exist with/through that nature.

The invitation to participate in the creation/co-creation/maintenance, speaks to the notion that “aesthetics is inherently social” (Hamera 46). Judith Hamera writes that

The formal properties and presumptions intrinsic to the production and consumption of works of art are communicative currency circulating between producers and consumers, binding them together in material and highly situated interpretive communities, serving as bases for exchange in the public and private conversations that constitute art's relational, political, and affective lives (46-7).

Since art functions in “social time and in social space” (Hamera 47), the participatory nature of the Doll's Head Trail serves as an opportunity for performance. The hiker/artist, along with other hiker/artists, co-creates an experience for other trail-goers who in turn, interpret the existing scene and are invited to make their own contributions. This collective participation activates the hiker/artists by “allow[ing] them to appropriate works for [them]selves and make use of these [works] in ways that their authors might have never dreamed possible” (Bishop 16). On any given day, a new label or piece of tape, or rearrangement of figures extends the performance and continuously invites other hiker/artists to interpret and create.

The hiker/artist may never actually encounter another hiker/artist but instead, they meet through the objects which with they work. Once discarded as trash, the objects are revitalized and reanimated through the hiker/artist's performance. Hamera, quoting Andrew Sofer, writes that the process of animating objects enables us to “trace spatial trajectories and create temporal narratives as they track through a given performance” (Sofer, 2; Hamera 61). After all, “Sofer posits that the function of the prop... is ‘to bring dead images back to life – but with a twist’” (Sofer 202; Hamera 61). The assemblages created by the hiker/artist breathes new life into objects that otherwise would have been left to rot (or not, as one installation reminds us – “mylar is forever\*”).

Though the relationship between the hiker/artist and the objects is necessary for the installations to exist, as time goes on the distance between the hiker/artist and the installation enables the objects to perform. The installations remain on the trail long after the hiker/artist has gone, and the distance that exists between the hiker/artist and the object allows for the object “to emerge with a physical presence of its own” (Kaplin 22). Once the objects “are liberated from the body”

(Kaplin 23), the installation “speaks,” because it “binds communicative competence, history, affect, action, and thought together within the commodity situation” (Hamera 58). Thus, Hamera claims that the objects act as both story and event that “animate the relations of exchange even as it is, itself, animated in the process” (58). In his study of anthrolithic performance in Chaco Canyon, Jake Simmons concludes that objects perform because they have “sufficient coherence to make a difference, produce effects, alter the course of event” (Simmons 14; Latour 373). The installations themselves shape a hiker/artist or hiker/spectator’s experience on the trail. Though the effects produced by the installations differ from person to person, the installations produce effects that could take the form of embodied sensation, participation in the trail, a story told in the aftermath of experience, a curated series of images shared through a social media post, etc. Thus, the found object installations have dual purposes: they serve as objects within the hiker/artist’s performance of creation while also performing independently on the trail.

The remainder of this essay explores two encounters I had on The Doll’s Head Trail in the fall of 2020. I utilize performative writing as a tool to recount these experiences because as Della Pollock writes, performative writing is “evocative,” because it invites the reader to experience a situation along with the author (80). I explore object performance and the co-creation of experience through participation within these encounters, and in turn, seek to follow in Jonathan Gray’s footsteps by investigating the encounters “as texts and opportunities for reading” (“Reflection” 220). As Gray writes, “The reading in this instance is not just interpretation of some pre-existing, objective phenomenon—it is also, importantly, an act of creation” (220).

### The First Encounter

*Two friends, one dog, and I are walking along the trail when a fishing bob and black Sharpie marker writing on the side of a blue barrel garbage can\* creates a detour in our plans. It reads “Relic Trail” with an arrow, pointing us to an opening in the trees to our left. We cautiously cross two wood planks over a small break in the path and head deeper into the woods.*

*We make a left at the first tree with a fishing bob and another arrow, followed by a quick stop to view “A cultural touch stone\*\*”—a large stone topped with a rusted can and fishing bob embedded into the base of a tree. Moving on, we encounter more bobs and Sharpie arrows on shards of pottery that directs us further down the relic trail but warning us that it is “slippery when wet.\*\*”*

*Uphill, downhill, across slippery bricks and wood plank walkways that lead us over soft, cakey mud. Deeper into the woods we pass brick ruins, once part of a dock that has disappeared over time. We come to a split in the path and take a left, which leads us to more mud and scratchy overgrown weeds. We find a dead end and turn back, retracing our steps back to the split where we see the shard of pottery we missed. Covered in dirt, it is labeled with "relic trail," a fishing bob, and another arrowing pointing to the other path. We tread carefully across one last elongated wooden plank\* to discover the ultimate treasure.*



September 20, 2020

*A rusted, overturned car.\* An open door, riddled with bullet holes\*, is marked, "the end of the road." Weathered tires inside the body of the car and embedded into the soft earth at the tail end. A glass Corona beer bottle\* sits on top, half filled with brown water and debris. A closer inspection reveals an inscription written in marker, partially obscured by dirt, "this replica of the Bonnie and Clyde death car is proudly..."*

*As I read the inscription, it feels as if time stops. Suddenly, I am transported to another wooded area, one with a road and another car riddled with bullet holes. I have not been to this place, do not even know where it is located, but the multiple depictions of it I have seen in movies*

*fill in the gaps of my imagination. The fabled Bonnie and Clyde death scene, site of their ambush and murder. My mind snaps back to the present and I am captivated, enchanted by this replication. My eyes scan the surrounding landscape, filled with trees, mud, and deep puddles of water. I wonder where the car could have come from, how long it has been here, and exactly how it received its wounds. For a moment, I feel as if this discovery on the relic trail serves as an alternative ending to the Bonnie and Clyde story, one where their death car was left behind in the woods to rot and decay, hidden from the prying eyes of the public. An unintentional spectacle forgotten by time, only to be found by three women and a dog wandering in the woods 86 years later.*

This moment of “discovery” feels different from my other encounters with installations on the trail. While I have felt a sense of intrigue, among other things, this moment is the first and only moment where my body physically responded. I am speaking here about the felt sensation of enchantment, “a condition of exhilaration or acute sensory activity” where one is “transfixed in wonder and transported by sense” (Bennett 5). Jane Bennett writes that the feeling of enchantment is brought about by a surprise encounter, and within this “surprised state” is a “pleasurable feeling of being charmed by the novel and as yet unprocessed encounter and a more *unheimlich* (uncanny) feeling of being disrupted or torn out of one’s default sensory-psychic-intellectual disposition” (5). My moment of enchantment leads me to an imagined history of the Bonnie and Clyde death car, one where the death car was abandoned after the infamous ambush that claimed the duo’s lives and left in the woods to decay, rather than instigating the chaotic public spectacle that we have seen documented and continuously restaged over the last 70 years.

However, this transformation and the power of this imaginative experience is something, in this moment, I am exclusively experiencing. My companions, who at best have a mild fascination with the car and its label, do not appear to share my elation. One lets out an extended “coool” and takes a couple of photos of the car, while the other stays back near the plank and inspects her dog’s paw. I am, however, transfixed, trying to capture every detail in my memory, though I know most will fade and I will be drawn back later for another visit. The moment of transformation speaks to my longstanding interest in the Bonnie and Clyde legend and prompts me to wonder about the writer(s) of the caption. What was their inspiration? Do we share a fascination with the lore of Bonnie and Clyde? This line of questioning, which I may never be able to answer, speaks to how participants can co-create experience on The Doll’s Head Trail.



Let's return for a moment to Judith Hamera's work on performativity and the object. Hamera provides a useful framework to contextualize my own encounter with this installation as performance, writing that

The object, like the performed story, is the membrane across which performer/artists and audience encounter and imagine one another. . . . Neither is simply a text waiting to be animated but a display that binds communicative competence, history, affect action and thought together within the commodity situation. *Thus, the object in the situation speaks; it is, simultaneously a story and an event. It animates relations of exchange even as it, itself, is animated in the process.* (58). [Italics added by author]

Though my friends and I were the only people at the car's site when we encountered it, the presence of other hiker/artists was made noticeable through the inscription. Who knows what inspired the labeler to demarcate the frame as a replica of the Bonnie and Clyde death car but their act reflects the collective imaging of co-created art and the myth of Bonnie and Clyde that exists in American cultural memory. It animates the object, allowing it to enter into a particular field of relations created by those who have participated in the transformation of the object from an abandoned car into an art installation. This performative writing alters the gaze of the spectator by conjuring up the legends surrounding the death of Bonnie and Clyde, reframing the vehicle by situating it into the ongoing conversation of the real/fabricated death car(s).<sup>4</sup> It is the cause of my enchantment; without it there would be no felt sense or imagined history on my part. It creates a spectacle, which in this case, "is the invisible that 'appears' only through mediation" (Taylor 145). Marking the frame with this particular label evokes the spectacle of the Bonnie and Clyde drama, not because the car was actually involved in their acts but because someone marked it as so, thereby co-creating the experience I'm having while placing this car into the imaginary of the legend.

---

<sup>4</sup> The death car has been publicly displayed across the United States. Several replicas have been made, leading to multiple death cars on exhibit in different locations. While some exhibitors have acknowledged the manufactured replicas, others have claimed that their version of the car is the "real" one. This has led to debates about authenticity. For several years the actual death car has been said to be on display at Whiskey Pete's Casino in Primm, Nevada; though when the author visited Whiskey Pete's in November 2021, the car was on loan to a museum in California and the empty display was left standing. A 2022 *Motorious* article written by Elizabeth Puckett reports that the death car is currently at Whiskey Pete's.

### A Second Encounter

*One friend and I return to The Doll's Head Trail a few weeks after our first visit. We travel more quickly this time, our footsteps surer as we navigate our way to the boardwalk and back down the trail. It had been raining in the days before this trip and we stop to observe changes to the installations on the main trail. The Rockstar Elmo certainly seemed to have acquired more mold since our last visit and we find some signs pointing in the direction of a second boardwalk, topped with a plastic dinosaur skull.*

*As we approach The Relic Trail, my excitement builds. We follow the path, walking the wooden planks and cautiously trying to avoid slipping on the still-wet bricks. There is more mud this time as we carefully dance around patches of earth that threaten to capture our shoes. The trees around the death car seem greener and I am thrilled to see it again. I walk about the car, taking more pictures as we ponder its make and model. Our sneakers sink into soft mud and the slurp of our feet escaping becomes our main soundscape. I reach open door and bend to read the inscription again: "This replica of the Bonnie & Clyde Death car is proudly... by the ...."*

*"I wish I could read the rest of this" I say out loud, prompting my friend to pull a tissue and water bottle out of her backpack. I hesitate for a moment as she hands me the damp tissue. Am I allowed to clean the dirt off? Then I realize that the car's original blue paint is the clearest here. It seems I am not the first hiker trying to figure out this mystery. And besides, the trail invites participation. A few swipes of tissue reveal\* what I've been missing. "This replica of the Bonnie & Clyde Death car is proudly presented by the NRA."*

*The NRA? I do not know what I was expecting but it certainly was not that. Suddenly, my elation dissipates, and nervousness starts to settle in my stomach. I remember that we are two women alone in the woods several minutes off the main path. My eyes flit around the landscape as if the revealing of this text could suddenly produce someone holding a gun alongside us. Once I am satisfied that we are still alone, I look back at the car and start to see it differently. Rather than basking in the thrill of discovery, I am overwhelmed by the violence of the bullet holes. My coveted moment of enchantment from the first visit no longer exists. The illusion has shattered, and dread take its place. This is my moment of disenchantment.*

In "The Persistence of Vision," Donna Haraway writes that positioning is "the key practice grounding knowledge organized around imagery of vision" (360). My positioning at the Bonnie and Clyde replica shifts from one visit to the next because of my choice to uncover the second part of the caption. The first visit and my initial viewing of the car enables my sense of enchantment and allows me to romanticize the moment. Bennett writes that "Under the haze of nostalgia. . . the enchanted world becomes an object of longing" (63). The imagined history

that I curate during my first visit allows me to envision myself as part of Bonnie and Clyde's lore and transforms me from the hiker/artist/spectator into an adventurer who just uncovered a "missing piece of history." How often have I dreamt of discovering untold secrets of the past? How many times have I envisioned myself as both a researcher and adventurer, à la Rachel Weisz's character Evelyn in Stephen Sommers' remake of *The Mummy*? My positioning in my moment of enchantment allowed me to revel in all the possibilities that do not quite exist as simply or as ethically in reality. Rather, the enchantment added a rose-colored tint to my vision, causing me to overlook any other possibility of intent or interpretation surrounding the installation.

My moment of disenchantment occurs when my positionality shifts. As Bennett writes, disenchantment displaces magic in favor of calculated, rational thinking (58). Rationalization, she writes, is a process that is ongoing and because of this, "the enchanted world is always in the process of being superseded by a calculable world" (58). Indeed, the newly uncovered section of the caption repositions me as a spectator, moving me back into a reality filled with ongoing political disputes about gun control and violence, a reality in which school shootings have become routine news reports and the NRA consistently lobbies against gun control measures.

Additionally, the NRA's presence in the caption prompts me to remember the horrific elements of the spectacle that was Bonnie and Clyde's actual death: the parading of their car through the streets while spectators grabbed for any piece of the duo they could get their hands on and later, the mob of people who gathered at the furniture store-turned-morgue demanding to see Bonnie and Clyde's bodies as the autopsies were being conducted (Rich 30). The mob was so chaotic as they climbed over furniture and tried to scale the partition put in place to block the bodies from view that police had to promise to put Bonnie and Clyde on display when the autopsies were completed (Rich 30). This version, the true spectacle, was forgotten in my moment of enchantment, and even though I was not conducting research at the time, I cannot help but feel that I placed myself precariously upon the edges of Dwight Conquergood's moral map ("Performing"). From this position, I can see how easily one could be swept into the pitfalls that come with glamorizing an object of study rather than acknowledging or accepting its reality; how easy it could be to get swept up in the tides of a breakthrough; or how tempting it could be to lay claim to a new version of history.

The NRA signature once again prompts me to think about its writer(s), who have now co-created a second, disparate experience for me on the trail. Our

participation has not changed; we are still encountering each other through the object despite my shift in perspective. This interaction serves as a reminder that the trail is full of possibilities, and while the installations will mirror my own world views, they also reflect myriad other complementary and contradicting positions.

### **Conclusion**

On a visit to The Doll's Head Trail in February 2022, my friend and I find a surplus of signage\* reiterating that the trail is meant for conservation and that visitors should not be adding new items or trash to the installations. We revisit many of our favorite installations, some of which have undergone major alterations. As we approach the blue barrel marking the start of the relic trail, I am unsure of what to expect. It has been over a year since my last visit to the car and I don't know how I'll feel when I see it. We encounter more signage on The Relic Trail as well, one indicating the sights we should find here. The car is the last site listed.

We cross over the two wooden planks and begin our journey uphill and downhill, over slippery bricks and through mud that still seems softer than the main trail. We note how high the water seems around the path as we make our way toward the elongated wooden plank leading to our destination. "Time to test our skills on the balance beam," I joke, right before something bright red catches my eye. The front of the car\* has been covered in spray paint. The left door is open and tagged with a yellow symbol, and the headlight nearest the Bonnie & Clyde inscription has been painted to look like an eye. The inscription on the door has been altered to read– "end of the trail."

Large pockets of mud keep me from approaching the right side of the car as closely as I would like, but the light blue circle surrounding the inscription still seems to be present, though dirt has begun to cover it again. The car seems less ominous than it did on my last visit, though these new alterations completely redirect my eye and my attention. For a moment I am frustrated by the paint – where would a trail-goer find cans of paint in four different colors to use in the first place? They must have brought it in, once again challenging the field of relations set up by Slater. Then I realize that maybe the painter is co-creating an experience for another trail-goer that will enchant and mystify them, just as I felt during my first visit to the car.



## Works Cited

- Bishop, Claire. "Introduction//Viewers as Producers." *Participation*, edited by Claire Bishop, Whitechapel Gallery and The MIT Press, 2006, pp. 10-17.
- Conquergood, Dwight. "Performing as a Moral Act: Ethical Dimensions of the Ethnography of Performance." *Literature in Performance*, vol. 5, no. 2, 1985, pp. 1-13.
- Eco, Umberto. "The Poetics of the Open Work//1962." *Participation*, edited by Claire Bishop, Whitechapel Gallery and The MIT Press, 2006, pp. 20-40.
- Elkin, James. *The Object Stares Back*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing, 1996.
- Gray, Jonathan. "Reflection." *Text and Performance Quarterly*, vol. 30, no. 2, 2010, pp. 220-221.
- Gray, Jonathan. "Trail Mix: A Sojourn on the Muddy Divide between Nature and Culture." *Text and Performance Quarterly*, vol. 30, no. 2, 2010, pp. 201-219.
- Hamera, Judith. "Performance, Performativity, and Cultural Poesis in Practices of Everyday Life." *The SAGE Handbook of Performance Studies*, edited by D. Soyini Madison and Judith Hamera, Sage Publishing, 2006, pp. 46-64.
- Haraway, Donna. "The Persistence of Vision." *The Visual Culture Reader*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., edited by Nicholas Mirzoeff, Routledge, 2013, pp. 356-362.
- Kaplin, Stephen. "A Puppet Tree: A model for the Field of Puppet Theatre." *Puppets, masks, and performing objects*, edited by John Bell, MIT Press, 2001, pp. 18-25.
- Lee, Conor. "Doll's Head Trail at Constitution Lakes." *History Atlanta*, 09 Jul. 2014, [historyatlanta.com/dolls-head-trail-constitution-lakes/](http://historyatlanta.com/dolls-head-trail-constitution-lakes/).
- Lippard, Lucy. *The Lure of the Local*. New Press, 1997.
- Marks, M., L. Chandler, and C. Baldwin. "Re-imagining the environment: using an environmental art festival to encourage pro-environmental behavior and a sense of place." *Local Environment*, vol. 21, no. 3, 2016, pp. 310-329.
- Pollock, Della. "Performing Writing." *The Ends of Performance*, edited by Peggy Phelan and Jill Lane, NYU Press, 1998, pp. 73-103.
- Prescott, Virginia and Allison Krausman. "From Trash to Treasure on The Doll's Head Trail." *On Second Thought*, Georgia Public Broadcasting, 27 Sep. 2019, [www.gpb.org/news/2019/09/27/trash-treasure-on-the-dolls-head-trail](http://www.gpb.org/news/2019/09/27/trash-treasure-on-the-dolls-head-trail).
- Rich, Carroll Y. "The Autopsy of Bonnie and Clyde." *Western Folklore*, vol. 29, no. 1, Jan. 1970, pp. 27-30.
- Puckett, Elizabeth. "What Happened to Bonnie and Clyde's Death Car?" *Motorius*, 19 Nov. 2022, [www.motorius.com/articles/features-3/where-is-bonnie-and-clydes-death-car/](http://www.motorius.com/articles/features-3/where-is-bonnie-and-clydes-death-car/).
- Simmons, Jake. "Do Objects Perform?: Anthrolithic Performance in Chaco Canyon." *Text and Performance Quarterly*, vol. 41, no. 1-2, 2021. pp. 21-36.

Taylor, Diana. *The Archive and the Repertoire*, Duke University Press, 2003.

Terry, David, and Sarah Vartabedian. "The Trail Itself: Hiking as Self-Evident, Eminent Performance." *Spectra: The Online Magazine of the National Communication Association*, 01 Dec. 2013, [www.natcom.org/communication-currents/trail-itself-hiking-self-evident-eminant-performance](http://www.natcom.org/communication-currents/trail-itself-hiking-self-evident-eminant-performance).



*This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike International 4.0 License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>; or, (b) send a letter to Creative Commons, 171 2nd Street, Suite 500, San Francisco, California, 94105, USA*