

Renée Green

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**Carpenter Center
for the Visual Arts**

**Renée Green
Pacing
Code: Survey**

Institution (Building)

Institution (Building) is an invitation to artists to consider the institutional behaviors and practices of CCVA at Harvard University. In repeated visits over the course of two years, artists engage through an expanded form of exhibition with various facets related to the archive, architecture, and history of the Carpenter Center. Their work manifests in anything from

exhibitions, events, and installations to interventions, tours, and publications, taking shape and changing during the residency. Institution (Building) seeks to critically and thoughtfully recover the history of this institution and situate it within broader contexts of contemporary art, culture, and the extraordinary legacy of the Le Corbusier building.



Associative Properties: Renée Green's *Code: Survey* at CCVA

Gloria Sutton

The World Is Right Here Right Now: Simultaneity (2008)¹

Ideal, Utopia, Open Work, Open Network, Open Source (2008)²

Renée Green

As part of *Pacing*, Renée Green's ongoing residency at the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, the artist installed a node within the bookshop featuring a desktop computer and a selection of square-format images mounted on the wall in a compact grid. Showing aerial views of highways, parking lots, bridges, overpasses, and other infrastructure, as well as archival and contemporary images of passengers, travelers, and migrants engaged in daily life, the images were drawn from her multivalent project *Code: Survey* (2006). At CCVA, this node functions as a spatial meeting point as well as an open invitation to access the online dimension of *Code: Survey*, a project stemming from a public art commission invitation made by the California Department of Transportation. Green's response, *Code: Survey*, exists on two registers: digitally, as an open web platform that went live and became globally accessible in 2006 on the State of California's servers³, and architecturally, as a permanent physical installation

located in the then newly built Caltrans District 7 headquarters in downtown Los Angeles. Taken together, these two coexistent forms convey Green's overarching experiment with how to make a public artwork that remains reflexive, responsive, and accessible beyond its physical site.

To this end, the presentation of *Code: Survey* at CCVA is not a 1:1 scale reproduction or remake. Instead, it represents a strategy of translation consistent with the ways that Green's digital works—essay films, sound works, websites, CD-ROMs, and single- and multi-channel videos—produce durational experiences that reiterate the analog tropes that preoccupy her practice: indices and protocols and the social, political, economic, and technical processes endemic to each form. The medium that holds all of *Code: Survey*'s disparate references in a suspended state is the archival protocol. However, each image, code, keyword, text excerpt, or interview that constitute the work adheres to the conditions that determine the storing, accessing, displaying, and dissemination of cultural information. In this particular case, Green relies on web vernacular: links and pages to navigate across various typologies (fictional, symbolic, or material), which provide a unifying structure.

As an online interface, *Code: Survey* operates as a unique search engine that recombines and links images from a variety of sources with keywords, topics, and issues related to California's complex history and population as played out through modes of transportation—physical and social. Images related to immigration, forced migration, economic expansion, land ownership, surveillance, traffic management, environmental degradation, violent suppression, cultural oppression, and other issues endemic to the movement of bodies across time and space since 1850 when California attained statehood, are thoughtfully combined with images depicting how its diverse populations adapted and even thrived in such conditions. These include intimate portraits of graduations, weddings, birthday celebrations, and other formal and informal markers of a change in one's status and identity. Given the vast nature of the subject, the selection is inevitably subjective, though not arbitrary, as images pulled from the Department of Transportation's own collection of images, diagrams, and maps are combined with images selected by Green from public repositories, such as the Library of Congress or Los Angeles Public Library, as well as images of her own creation.

In the wake of the 2016 U.S. presidential election, *Code: Survey* takes on renewed urgency in the way that the website and its search functions underscore the

conditional and codependent nature of the terms *native*, *resident*, *host*, and *alien*, while also calling attention to the paradoxical connections between California's geopolitical position as a border state and the land of freeways. And specifically, more than any other American metropolis, the city of Los Angeles's own civic and popular identity has become synonymous with networks of transportation and narratives of transformation and regeneration.

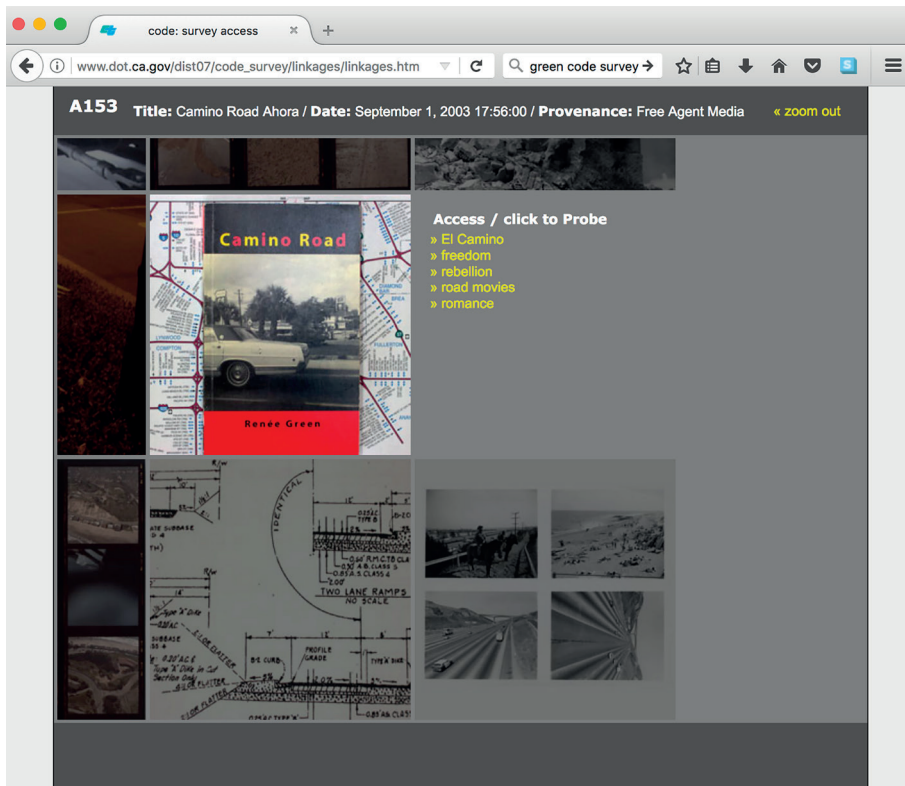
The fact that Green chose to format *Code: Survey* as a website situated in a vast public network accessible regardless of location is indicative of her larger interest in circuits and systems of exchange, which frequently lead viewers and visitors outside the designated exhibition venue's own physical parameters. Above all, *Code: Survey* posits one of Green's recurring questions: "How might one attempt to know a place? How might one encounter a place to be known?"²⁴

One possibility or response to such questions can be seen in the way that *Code: Survey* operates through a process of connections in a manner that recalls the associative property function of mathematics. The website presents a series of images that are stored on a relational database. As one moves the cursor over the grid, larger versions are made visible that can be read as an expression of the information it holds. Often, two or more related images will occur in a row; their meaning, however, is not contingent on their order. As in the associative property function, their value remains the same regardless of location in the sequence. In *Code: Survey*'s digital interface, these image associations are made through literal weblinks, enabled when the user peruses a series of images along with a string of codes (an alphanumeric ordering system), and keywords (a subjective index). Green's own associative property function occurs, then, on three equal registers: images, codes, and keywords. These three formal motifs have recurred in Green's projects over the past two decades.

Under the category of "images," diminutively scaled photographs are arranged in a compact grid not unlike the system of smaller pixels that collectively form the bigger images that appear on the screen. For example, clicking on Code A002, which corresponds to a black-and-white image of three women pilots, pulls up the following provenance caption: "Chinese American woman aviator [Katherine Cheung (center) with two other women at airplane during the Ruth Chatterton Air Derby]/1936. Shades of L.A. Collection/Los Angeles Public Library." The associated keywords on the right of the image include *Chinese Americans-history*, *Chinese Americans-influence*, *flight*, *immigration*, and *women in the military*. Clicking on *immigration* leads, for example, to an excerpt from journalist Carey McWilliams's



Code: Survey. Caltrans District VII Headquarters, Los Angeles, 2006.



Code: Survey A153. Website, 2006.

collection of writings, *Fool's Paradise*, a 2001 source detailing how the initial prohibitions against Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino immigration were later formalized in legislation barring immigration from Asia.

In another expression, clicking on a particularly bright orange hue brings up a picture of an overturned shopping cart, which in turn links to a list of associated terms: *failure, structural; L.A. Rebellion; obvious; plastic shopping cart; riots; riots, 1990s*. Highlighting another term from this list, *an old, abandoned shopping cart*, delivers the uneven voice of a woman recounting the social significance of those carts in certain Los Angeles neighborhoods. It is not a scientific or expert account but, rather, a personal one. The individual voices embedded in *Code: Survey*—recorded interviews with Caltrans employees as well as native Californians—interrupt the seamlessness of the digital images, and point to the excess of information that inevitably overflows from archives, databases, and other typologies of completeness that are often imbued with unchecked authority.

This expression of image, code, and keyword extends into the physical installation of *Code: Survey*, a 28-foot-wide steel grid comprised of 168 square glass panels, each featuring a unique image printed in film with its corresponding code number etched on the glass surface. Affixed to the wall between the floor and ceiling, the permanent installation presents a spatialized and physical experience for viewers in the Caltrans headquarters in downtown Los Angeles, as well as visitors to the building's cafeteria. Designed by architect Thom Mayne and Morphosis, the 13-story building spans a full city block across from Los Angeles City Hall. Like Green's public artwork, the building itself was a commission, the first under the State of California's Design Excellence Program intended to help revitalize urban areas. The building's striking monolithic profile is mitigated by its nimble exterior, which is sheathed in a mechanical "skin" that can be opened or closed according to temperature and light levels during the day conveying the building's emphasis on dynamism and transformation.

Structurally, *Code: Survey's* digital/physical relationship calls attention to the temporal shifts in the protocols and behaviors that pattern our relationship to images and language. It is important to note that *Code: Survey* was produced in 2006, a nascent period when "community" became an analogy for online spectatorship and the terms "social" and "media" had not yet been regularly conjoined in common parlance. This is also before the ubiquity of photo-sharing applications like Instagram, which have now conditioned contemporary viewers to see their own memories and experiences formatted in a sequence of small square images with tags and keywords not unlike the ones Green conceived for the Caltrans physical installation four years before the launch of the photo-sharing app.

These associations convey Green's deep understanding of art's complex relationship to the culture industry. Or, as Green has described how her works function: "We operate in the interstices of late capitalism and are under no delusion that there ever exists free gifts."⁵ Specifically, Green is referring to Free Agent Media, the moniker she has used since 1994 to author her films, videos, books, and other projects, including *Code: Survey*. Contextualizing her choice to form Free Agent Media as an artistic strategy well versed within postwar art history, Green wrote in 1995: "Artists have often mimicked official institutions and functions, sometimes as ironic and yet metaphorical gestures and sometimes as functioning operations which allow artistic play and business sense. Just remember the Bureau de Recherches Surréalistes, Broodthaer's



code: survey http://www.dot.ca.gov/dist07/code_survey/intro.htm

daylighting	kartografiler	immigration borders katliamlar	tarih, amasaliz shifts, perceptual	escape arazi talepleri railroad opposition	altin bilimi arazi talepleri mysteries
kadınlar göç flight	simular köprü sustainability	19. yüzyıl izler	havacılık tarih	beach müller Pacific yol filmleri	mountain life yapı sanatı ve bilimi
plaj Pasifik Napoli gayrimenkul	escape manzara transit	araba kullanmak depremler obselete Tomorrow's City	diamond lane özgürlük hareket sensörleri	köprü socrular	1960lar sivil haklar mapping hareket ayaklanmalar
otoban sistemi gizemler road movies sürdürülebilirlik	otomobil otoban dinlencesi	1870ler'de ayaklanmalar 1940lar'da ayaklanmalar earthquakes traffic management	köprü depremler hada yapısal tutucu katmanlar	eimas yolu geribidirim döngüsü	San Pedro limanı Güney Pasifik

code: survey http://www.dot.ca.gov/dist07/code_survey/intro.htm

A001	A007	A013	A019	A025	A031
A002	A008	A014	A020	A026	A032
A003	A009	A015	A021	A027	A033
A004	A010	A016	A022	A028	A034

code: survey http://www.dot.ca.gov/dist07/code_survey/intro.htm

Code: Survey. Postcards, 2006.

Museum, Warhol's Factory... How is this different, how is it the same?"⁶ Shifting this enterprise to the web underscores another condition of being a Free Agent that Green first identified in 1995 before any semblance of image search existed online and well before the rise of a "sharing" economy: "Because of the changing economies and technologies we too have undergone an *Umfunktionierung* or functional transformation. So rather than a factory, we are a floating company. We exist in the minds of our representatives and via electronic currents. Our collections exist in tiny electronic circuits. We're not weaned of this acquisitive urge, but at times we try to curb it. We too play on people's wishes and repressed fantasies."⁷

Code: Survey, then, can be read as an interface, an apparatus designed to connect two different or distinct systems so they can be operated jointly, thus generating a point of exchange. The ethos of Free Agent Media and the ethics of *Code: Survey* make paramount that interfaces are about connecting individuals. And in Green's case, these interfaces also operate as purveyors of knowledge that, once encountered, allow perceptual shifts. This is precisely what Green's lounges, pavilions, reading rooms, and screening spaces do. Standing in an exhibition in Cambridge, Massachusetts, or in Istanbul, Turkey, as when the work was installed as part of the Istanbul Biennial in 2007, a visitor encounters other characters and individuals from the present and the past who share affinities and associations with a ubiquitous migratory condition, and its related transformation and transportation. In this way, *Code: Survey* seems attuned to a specific type of sociability and reflection that remains counter to the hyperbolic terms of globalism, or social media. The associations produced within and through *Code: Survey* pivot around the experiences and interactions of individuals, not nations or (most prevalent to social media parlance) "communities." In the end, *Code: Survey* translates Green's interest in interfacing with an unknown public—a public of self-selecting Free Agents encountering a database of selected images, codes, and keywords within a framework that remains truly responsive, reflexive, and accessible.

¹ Renée Green, "Archives, Documents? Forms of Creation, Activation, and Use," in *Other Planes of There: Selected Writings* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 182.

² Green, "Imagine this Wherever and Whoever You Are," in *Other Planes of There*, 411.

³ *Code: Survey* may be viewed at http://www.dot.ca.gov/dist07/code_survey/intro.htm. Search engine: Green Code Survey

⁴ Taken from Green's text found on postcards accompanying the installation at CCVA; as on the website, there are three postcard typologies: Images, Codes, and Keywords.

⁵ Green, "Free Agent Media / FAM," in *Other Planes of There*, 94.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 95.

⁷ *Ibid.*



Code: Survey. Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, 2017.

Screening + Talk

Screening of Green's film *ED/HF, 2017*, followed by a conversation between **the artist and Mason Leaver-Yap**, writer and Associate Curator at KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin.

Tue, Nov 14, 2017, 6 pm

Harvard Art Museums:
32 Quincy St., Menschel Hall

Pacing Code: Survey is the second installment of a series of brochures to be published during Renée Green's Institution (Building) residency. **Code: Survey** is on view in CCVA's bookshop from February 23 to September 24, 2017.

Media Bichos / Wavelinks, Pacing's third exhibition installment is on view at CCVA's Level 1 from June 8 to September 24, 2017.

Renée Green. Pacing: Code: Survey. Cambridge, MA: Carpenter Center for Visual Arts, 2017.

A selection of Renée Green's publications will also be available in the bookshop on Level 3.

CCVA

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Gallery Hours Thu–Sun, 12–6 pm
Free and open to the public

Mission

Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts is dedicated to the synthesis of art, design, and education through the exhibition of existing works and production of new commissions. It strives to bring people, ideas, and objects together in generative ways that provide unparalleled experiences with contemporary art, ultimately enriching the creative and intellectual lives of our audiences.

Dan Byers, *John R. and Barbara Robinson Family Director*
Daisy Nam, *Assistant Director*
Anna Kovacs, *Exhibitions Manager*
Daisy Wong, *Exhibition Production Assistant*
Siena Scarff, *Design*
John Ewing, *Copy Editor*
Linco, *Printing*

Program

The Carpenter Center program fosters meaningful engagement among artists, art, and our audiences. Exhibitions, lectures, residencies, publications, performances, screenings, and informal gatherings are choreographed to create a place where visual literacy, knowledge production, contemporary art, and critical inquiry seamlessly meet.

Thank you to Renée Green, FAM Archivist Javier Anguera, CCVA Scholar-in-Residence Gloria Sutton, and Dina Deitsch.

Images: Joshua White, Renée Green, Free Agent Media, and Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts.



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Come Together

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CAFETERIA

No Smoking Within This Facility

WARNING

Smoking is prohibited in designated areas.

Tobacco smoke causes lung cancer, and birth defects.

CAFE

BEACH

THE