Larissa Fassler’s artistic practice is about observing daily encounters in the city. She records them to ask what they reveal about our social relations. Her large-scale plan drawings and unmonumental sculptures map her experiences of underground pedestrian walkways and major transit hubs, such as Berlin’s Hallesches Tor (2005), Alexanderplatz (2006), Warschauer Straße (2008), and Kotti (2009–14), and Paris’s Les Halles (2011). A Canadian working in Berlin since 1999, Fassler has also tracked the public reimaginings of ruined states, documenting the junctures of the former Palast der Republik and the recently reconstructed Berliner Stadtschloss in Palace|Palace (2012) and Schlossplatz I–VI (2013–14), and the neglected corner of Kurfürstenstrasse and Potsdamer Strasse in EPICENTRE (2015). She started research for her most recent series of drawings, Gare du Nord (2015), during a 12-week residency in Paris at the Centre international des nécrologes in 2014. This residency followed other extended visits to historically complicated and politically contradictory sites across Europe, all of which resulted in works titled after their locations: Regent Street/Regent’s Park (Dickens thought it looked like a racetrack) (2009) in London, Place de l’Europe (2011) in Brussels, and K1 (2014) in Berlin. LARISSA FASSLER’s feminist psychogeography MY BODY IS THE CITY

BY DIANA SHERLOCK
In these urban matrices autonomous people are united only by their transient roles in the flow of capital. As Hélène Furján writes about more extensively in a catalogue essay titled “Autonomous Worlds: The Works of Larissa Fassler,” they are what French anthropologist Marc Augé calls “non-places.” Yet Fassler uses a form of psychogeography—an analysis of how geographic environments shape behaviour in public space, used as a disruptive tactic by Guy Debord, the French Letterists and Situationist International (circa 1957–72)—to reveal the complexities of each site and its subjects. Unlike the Situationists before her, Fassler updates the practice of psychogeography to include intersectional analyses of gender, race and class in late capitalist society. Fassler cannot deny her own privilege, but she can and does replace the male gaze of the flâneur and the blank stare of the frenetic commuter with the lingering presence of her body, with which she surveys each site. She maps different aspects of each site every day by walking its edges and counting her steps. Similarly, she demarcates each site’s most and least traversed routes, its interior spaces and its exterior perimeters. At times, she uses the somewhat absurd and irrational dérive (drifting) and détournement (rerouting) techniques to penetrate the seeming rationality of modern man and his city. As she walks, her body (petite, female) displaces the Vitruvian man, the modern measure of all things, to reinterpret—according to her unique corporeal experience—inhabited, material sites in the modern city and, by extension, to measure civil society.

She draws her experience of these sites using a range of modified representational techniques from architecture. Her large, colored-pen-and-pencil cartographic drawings use omnipresent plan views. They are spatial abstractions. In one of her earlier works, Warschauer Straße, architecturally rendered cutaways and cross-sections of the site frame the plan view of this U-Bahn/S-Bahn station. She uses conflicting perspectives and scales to unsettle the artist’s and viewer’s positions, and to flip subject-object relations. An artist-ethnographer of the everyday, Fassler most often observes the site from the point of view of her subject. This is quite literally the case in Schlossplatz Research V (2013) as she criss-crosses the plan view of Berlin’s Palace Square with sharp red-ink lines that map the trajectory of views from tourists’ cameras. In order to understand the drawing as more than an abstract representation, a viewer must imagine herself in the place of the tourists. Such discordant views are consistent in Fassler’s oeuvre. She uses them to fragment the omnipresent spectacle of the site, its media and its commerce, and to reveal its multiple subjectivities.

For many sites, Fassler also produces three-dimensional objects that exist somewhere between models and sculptures. In Hallesches Tor and Alexanderplatz, for example, the negative space of the pedestrian underground tunnels is rendered in positive form: absence is rendered present. These sculptures are models for the viewer’s imaginary projection, which is encouraged in some cases by audio tracks of buskers and footsteps. In Les Halles and Les Halles (tricolore) (both 2011), Fassler uses bricolage...
Fassler's documentation of each site is an act of agency in which she engages the politics of each space through her actions. She records the limits of freedom. This is not without risk. In some cities, you can get arrested for sitting in one place for a long time, walking unusual or usual routes repeatedly, writing notes, recording audio or taking pictures. As such, these otherwise everyday activities become acts of resistance within heavily surveilled and privatized public spaces. Fassler pays keen attention to how these sites are controlled—and by whom. What she chooses to document depends on the particularities of the artist's body at a specific moment. Her data-collecting process is obsessive and subjective, and even she excludes and isolates the Other.

Her drawings are microcosms that reflect her experience of inequity and control in broader society. Her most recent work increasingly focuses on culturally diverse Parisian transit hubs. Like the Gare du Nord, they are home to many North and West African, Middle Eastern and Indian passengers, and have suffered increased surveillance and sieges since the Paris attacks. Perhaps in an attempt to capture the scale of inequity and oppression, Fassler's latest series, Taksim Square, June 9 – May 31, presents the shifting realities of sculpture.

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