Ballard: A Portrait of Placemaking
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This piece, included in the *drift* special issue of *continent*, was created as one step in a thread of inquiry. While each of the contributions to *drift* stand on their own, the project was an attempt to follow a line of theoretical inquiry as it passed through time and the postal service(s) from October 2012 until May 2013.

This issue hosts two threads: *between space & place* and *between intention & attention*. The editors recommend that to experience the drifting thought that attention is paid to the contributions as they entered into conversation one after another. This particular piece is from the BETWEEN SPACE & PLACE thread:

April Vannini, Those Between the Common * Laura Dean & Jesse McClelland, *Ballard: A Portrait of Placemaking* * Amara Hark Weber, Crossroad* * Isaac Linder & Berit Soli-Holt, The Call of the Wild: Terro(i)r Modulations* * Ashley D. Hairston, Momma taught us to keep a clean house* * Sean Smith, The Garage (Take One)*
How do people perceive changing landscapes and lifestyles in our neighborhood? We were drawn to this question, perhaps like our interviewees, because we are interested in a certain mystique in Ballard, because we enact something important about it when we go to its coffee shops and restaurants, and because we are transients from other places. Furthermore, we are not always sure of our place in the city, or how our points of reference here may be changing. Much can be said about Seattle’s role in white settlement and in its original industries: shipping, canning, and logging. Much can be said about the arrival of Scandinavian laborers in Ballard, or how the town of Ballard came to be incorporated into Seattle. But as in maps, while these accounts may ground key details, they do not encompass our imaginations of place.

Over the last few decades, new meanings in Ballard have been drawn from the built environment. An old railroad track, since converted into a bike path, allows close-up views of storage lots, dry docks and shipyards still lining the ferryway at Ballard’s south edge. Hardware stores and auto repair shops remain clustered along an early bridge and what used to be the city’s first major highway. Nearby, along Market Street...
and Ballard Avenue, a parallel world of leisure has sprung up celebrating craft processes of work. This is a world of artisan beer, gluten-free pizza, organic coffee, vintage clothing, designer furniture, and one of the city’s finest year-round farmer’s markets. In the past, a noodle shop, a tapas bar, and a Mexican food cart might all have been out of place, but today, they all hang in the balance. As a widening array of consumer spaces channels urban trajectories into the future, contemporary landscapes and lifestyles are retrofitted to traces of the past.

The functional and aesthetic components of cities are affected by scales far outside the neighborhood. But as Ballard’s rapidly changing housing market attests, people resituate themselves and the places around them by winnowing out distances and connections between self and other. Condo owners, young couples, single adults, students, senior citizens, and the homeless scramble, revise and recompile landscapes in dynamic and uneven ways. Often, these shifts are an open secret in which past and future are sutured together – debated, digested, and dreamed over.