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<http://untappedcities.com/2013/12/12/when-artists-lived-in-soho-a-look-back-at-the-restaurant-food-by-gordon-matta-clark-and-carol-goodden/>

Risk and Gain

I get in at my stop, ride for 1 hour (1.5 hours if it's raining), and get to work. In between home and work, I stand in a crowded subway train and absolutely nothing happens. If something happens, it's annoying: delay, loud music, panhandlers, dancing kids, grumpy train conductors, and a general air of everyone not wanting to be there. \$113 dollars please!

I do this every day, every day, and every day; and every day I lose at least 2 hours in this urban limbo. I stand in the subway looking at things that I have seen a million times before and then, suddenly, I see something out of the order. [A LOST NOTEBOOK](#), a [SMASHED AVOCADO](#), a note with the number to a [MESSAGE PARLOR](#), and for a moment or two I think about these things or situations. I guess, I think about how they got there, who they belong to, or why they are "out of the ordinary." After a while, I drift back into the annoyance of my subway ride and those thoughts are lost.

Now, what if I wrote those thoughts down, took pictures of the things I saw, and put them up somewhere?—somewhere where people can see them. Some sort of exchange network for pictures. After thorough research about what that medium could be, I was swaying between telephone poles and the internet. The internet has cat memes, so I decided for that.

This is how Subway Stories began. It was merely a way to make use of the time on the subway and learn about maintaining a website. As an added benefit, subway rides became a little more bearable. I started actively looking out for things I could put on my blog and became less self-conscious about bending down in a mass of moving commuters to pick something up from the ground that looked like trash, but turned out [TO BE A LOVE-NOTE](#).

As I kept posting my findings, I got more and more hits on my website and had more and more plans where to take it. I could make "special features" which would be collections of similar things that I find. For a while, each entry was accompanied by a [SHORT VIDEO ON YOUTUBE](#). However, that turned out to be too much work, somewhat unnecessary, and not very interesting.

My average number of visits kept climbing and reached new heights each week (keep in mind that I'm talking about the 100 hits/day range). My confidence was getting high along with them.

Then, summer 2014 came. For some reason, my hits started to drop lower and lower. I was clueless about what was happening. At some point the level sank to around 10 hits/day and I was back at square one.

As I was sulking in my low, I reexamined what I was doing. I had to confess to myself that sometimes the blurbs that I wrote along with my findings made even me cringe. They seemed a little forced. What could be done about that?

At that point, I had been entertaining the idea for quite some time to write short stories about the subway. So, what if I just post the findings without blurbs and in a separate section, I post one short story about the subway each month? I would rename the findings to “Subway Stuff” and the stories would receive the name “Subway Stories.”

And here we are now with a slightly changed “Subway Stories.” The visits on the site are still low. So low, that I wonder if it’s not actually just bots visiting it.

Where do I go from here? Well, first of all: what am I trying to do with Subway Stories? So far, I think I am not doing it to a specific end. It’s there, because it can be there. It’s also an experiment for me to see what an online presence is like and how to maintain it. Although this project of mine might not be drawing a lot of interest, it’s nice to look at. That’s still something. Every investment banker’s wife will tell you that.

Some people have suggested I turn it into a coffee table book. Hm, maybe.

I guess with this project I am not really risking anything. It doesn’t cost a lot to get a website hosted and I’m not trying to motivate people to do something. Thus, I am also not very anxious about it becoming a success.

Maybe I have found my answer right there. By not risking anything, I also don’t open up to the possibility of winning something,—some sort of reward. No risk, no gain.

In another area in my life I do risk something. Humor me. It’s not your stereotypical high-endorphin-level gambling risk.—I write fiction (mostly short stories).

I invest a lot of effort into that activity and don’t know if the energy and time I invest and the general strain and deprivation it creates in my life will ever pay off, i.e. offer me some sort of reward.

This was my sensation when I worked on a short story in the spring of 2014. After it reached a certain level of completion, I submitted it to a writing competition at my school insecure whether I would have a chance or whether all the time and energy I invested over more than half a year would prove to be void.

It turned out that I won. 1st Prize and some money. You risk, you gain.