

CRISTIN TIERNEY

# ARTFORUM



## Victor Burgin

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In 1967, Victor Burgin typed some instructions on a pair of index cards: “A path along the floor, of proportions 1x21 units, photographed. Photographs printed to actual size of objects and prints attached to floor so that images are perfectly congruent with their objects.” He called it *Photopath*, first realizing the piece on the coarse hardwood of a friend’s home in Nottingham, England. A one-to-one map in the style of Borges, the work served as a kind of Conceptual catwalk, testing new strategies of site specificity, self-reflexivity, and dematerialization. Despite quick entry to the canon—abetted by its 1969 inclusion in the London leg of Harald Szeemann’s epochal “When Attitudes Become Form”—*Photopath* is rarely reincarnated; the last time New Yorkers encountered it was in the 1971 Guggenheim International Exhibition, installed on the museum’s spiraling concrete ramp.

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Now, *Photopath* has finally returned to an intimate, noninstitutional setting, lent startling prescience in a world awash in simulations generated by text-to-image algorithms. Conceived under the supervision of the octogenarian artist, this one-and-a-half-by-thirty-one-and-a-half-foot version diagonally bisects Cristin Tierney's small, bay-windowed room (I imagined a massive version slicing across New York's Federal Plaza, à la Serra's *Tilted Arc*). Visitors are encouraged to walk around or step over the image stream, which is matte finished and, unlike earlier iterations, inkjet printed in color. Burgin has written persuasively about the interdependence of words and pictures; both ultimately betray *Photopath*, which is always destroyed after exhibition. As David Company notes in his recent book on this piece, documentation of *Photopath*—such as Elisabeth Bernstein's lovely install shot for this show, in which the image falls like a shadow across daylight puddled on the pine floor—becomes inextricable from the work itself. Like the planks of Theseus's ship, Burgin's limen remains forever suspended between reality and representation, reconstruction and void.

— *Zack Hatfield*