

« CHORA »

Textual documentation
by Beatrix Joyce
2019

Accompanying the space choreography CHORA
Presented at Tanzfabrik Open Spaces
Berlin, November 2019

Concept, space choreography, videos, production: Moritz Majce & Sandra Man

Objects: Moritz Majce

Texts: Sandra Man

Performance: Zoé Alibert, Eli Cohen, Judith Förster, Charlie Fouchier, Assi Pakkanen,
Florenca Martina, Gian Mellone, Sonia Noya, Stephan B. Quinci, Laura Siegmund,
Maya Weinberg, Natalia Wilk

Sound: Tschajka

Voice: Frank Willens, Sandra Man

Translation: Anna Galt

Outfit adaptation: Johanna von Raußendorf

Production: Patricia Oldenhave

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« CHORA: PERFORMANCE WRITING »

In what ways can we engage with, reflect on and document hybrid modes of performance?

Following their invitation, I responded to Moritz Majce's and Sandra Man's space choreography "CHORA" in writing and experimented with my ideas on how to put my experience of the work into words.

I set myself certain tasks that would allow me to observe and reflect on this living environment while being immersed in it. My intention was to write from my body. With this approach, I explored my ambiguous role within the work, switching between observer and activator, audience member and co-performer. I revelled in questions of subjectivity versus objectivity, and asked myself whether my experience could also speak for the experience of others, who, like me, were participating in a haptic space.

During the four-day presentation, I collected a great deal of intuitive writing. From the raw material, I then generated the following texts: Space Journal, 10 Terms, and Space As Body. These texts can be seen as first attempts at seeking alternative approaches for documenting live art works. They offer multiple interpretations, pose new questions and open up literary modes of examination and play.

Space Journal

During a rehearsal, I established 10 locations within the installation and performance space that I called "anchor points". At each anchor point I wrote for a set amount of time (depending on the rhythm of the work that day) and, following the same sequence every day, I made multiple rounds. I first answered the question: "how is my body positioned?" and shortly stated the body posture I had assumed in the new location. This helped me to repeatedly bring the awareness of my own body and presence in the room to my attention, so as not to lose myself too quickly in the mental space of writing. I then began to note down my observations and catalogue actions that were taking place. As soon as my time was up, I moved to the next location along the predefined route.

The text that came out of this exercise can be seen as a series of diary entries, each with their own time-code (indicating when the entry started) and the anchor point in space at which it took place. The text below, stemming from the first round of the second day, offers an insight into the stream-of-conscious-style method I adopted, and can be considered as raw, source material.

« SPACE JOURNAL »

DAY 2, 6.11.2019, 18:00 - 20:00

Anchor point: 1
Time: 18.00

My perspective:

**Back against the wall, knees touching.
Breathing deeply, relaxed.**

There are a lot of people here today. A lot of activity, a lot of sound.

People have already climbed onto the Ekkis.

One performer in black.

People are skating, balancing their wine, taking a ride.

Explosive movement in silence.

A smile of recognition. No performer is inhuman. No one is robbed of their humanity. Their humanity is magnified, replicated, extended beyond them.

They read the text, their eyes wide.

A young boy on an Erkki on his phone.

A lilac jumper, a fresh tint in the space.

When two women meet.

I'm not the only one with a notebook today. Many things, many people, many thoughts to study.

A quiet whisper, dynamics perforating the air.

Anchor point: 2
Time: 18.12

My perspective:

**By the chair, back against the wall,
knees up, deep breath, relaxed.**

I remember this place.

Deep blue water suspended above an open door. A vertical lake, but no leakage.

An arena appears.

People watch what other people watch.

Bright yellow hair. Bright orange hat.

A guy rotates the chair he was just sat on and takes a sip of his drink.

Thirst. Itchy throat.

Voices become slightly older in one corner. A baby makes a noise.

Babies always help to feel a sense of community.

Feet shuffling. Trainers make quite a particular sound, the sound of rubber on the wooden floor. Most Ekkis are occupied now, with one, two or three people. The Ekkis are divided over two halves of the space.

Anchor point: 3
Time: 18.24

My perspective: cross-legged.
Book close to me on the floor.

The dancers come really close, shifting the air around me.
The baby starts to dance and attracts attention - happy to be part of the space no doubt.
A sculptural rotating - flexing joints independently, the body skewed in an odd organisation.
Everything is so determined it makes sense. And yet it seems so non-sensical at the same time.
What is left when you take EVERYTHING away?
A little wink from a passerby. She is driving the Ekki but can't see where she is going. She is amused by it.
A black square with a white outline. Is it a symbol?
I am guessing all sides are equal but my eye can't resist the temptation to see the two vertical sides as longer.
A sudden run. An island populated with five people moving towards me. A performer speaks to them. Almost complete silence.
A moment shared.

Anchor point: 4
Time: 18.36

My perspective: Sitting on my shins. Book in front of me, stretching my back.
The view from below.

New people entering. A choreography of boots. A star aligned at the centre, the unfolding of plates.
Throwing something away, repeatedly.
A gesture carried on to caress another body. A swift swiping. A swipecy swifiting.
Lying down on the floor. Embracing the world. Letting the floor embrace you. Looking up at the lights. Marking territory - a deliberate run - awakening audience members from their slumber.
People sit up, alert. A face outside, looking in. Seeing us without us seeing it.
Another embrace on an Ekki.
Is that what they are made for?
A door opens, from the inside out.
A loud car beeping, the sound of the street slips in.
Cold. Bare feet. Cold.
Giggling erupts in the far corner.

Anchor point: 5
Time: 18.49

My perspective: on the floor, legs crossed & outstretched.

Oh, the sink! There it is again.
I wonder how deep it is.
Could you swim there? Would it be allowed?
Gazes from the outside in.
A man and a woman watch as they eat apples.

A cough, a laugh. An entry point: cold. cold. Caressing the glass.
Smooth but cold. It looks like she has a plan.
A woman watches from beside the screen.
That's a nice place to be watching from - you can hide a little.
The sound of a bell, and a whole horde of people leaves to see the show going on in another space. Will they still remember this place? Windmills standing tall.
Bodies walking at the same speed as the windmills are turning. A quick wave to a friend - his eyeline was fixated on the projection, but I caught his eye.

Anchor point: 6
Time: 19.00

My perspective: sat on the chair, this time the other one, the one on the left.

New performers enter. Dropping to the floor. Sweat glistening in tiny beads on the skin.
Sandwiched between two Ekkis, she sits.
A man stands by the wall, the projection covering his body. He becomes part of the landscape, of the basin. A rhythmic set of steps, running in a circle. A performer jiggles, up and down, on the grass.
Lights dim.
The actions don't go unnoticed - it's almost like they are emphasised by the darkness. Like everyone is more tuned in.
The projection on his skin, dissolving the image into dancing lights.
Runners crossing - not colliding.

Anchor point: 7
Time: 19.12

My perspective: on the floor, kneeling, one shin lying down, one knee up.

Leaping, turning, catching, falling.
A sudden burst of energy, then silence.
A cold draught coming in.
The yellow lights from the hall.
A beat - music is playing. No glamour.
Two people meet with their foreheads.
A moment focussed on each other.
Then they turn their gaze outwards again.
A man with four wheels enters - is it his own Ekki?
Perhaps he already knows what it feels like to drift along, smoothly, easily.
A girl has taken her shoes off.
Does she feel at home here?
Two Ekkis are united: a woman reaches out to catch her friend, sprawled on a white Ekki.

Anchor point: 8
Time: 19.24

My perspective: Centre point. Kneeling, one shin on the floor, one knee up.

A man lay down next to me, just as I was arriving. But he is sitting again now.
The lights are very bright, when you look up you feel momentarily blinded.
A dancer shifts, making the grass flat, moving the board up and down.

How is that for the audience member lying on it?
Like the incoming tide, ebbing and flowing.
A gentle shift, but with a huge impact.
I am surrounded by Ekkis - all populated with people. Are they waiting to be moved?
Do they want the performers to move them?
Going for a stroll. A loud bang - a crash.
A girl smells the grass, perhaps to check if it is real.
If I move this Ekki I am on, would the other girl who is on it mind?

Anchor point: 9
Time: 19.36

My perspective:

Kneeling on a pillow on an Ekki.
There are three of us here, on this Ekki.

A girl massages her foot on an Ekki close by.
A performer closes the door to the outside.
Most of the Ekkis are in the centre now, most are connected.
A surge of activity. Shuffling feet.
A dancer rotates her hand on the floor, then drags it along. She caresses the hand of a girl in red.
Red and blue. Close but far. Moving - on a journey. Meeting a sculpture of two.
An audience member walks on the Ekki, passing by behind me.
A new space has opened up - dancers are filling it.
An Ekki moves of its own accord - well - a dancer started rotating it and then it kept going, until gravity weighed it down.

Anchor point: 10
Time: 19.48

My perspective:

cross-legged on the same kind of Ekki.

A guy is moving it, rotating it.
The smell of cigarette smoke wafts by.
We are collected in the centre, mirroring the current image on the projection.
White Ekkis are pulled around by performers in white on a parking lot.
We slide until a performer stops us with his foot.
One of the guys on my Ekki has a tattoo of a key that says "HOME" on his wrist.
We skid towards the corner.
Looking up at the ceiling I notice it also has a hole in it - in the shape of a square.

10 Terms

Inspired by the writing style of the German artist and philosopher Marcus Steinweg, I gave myself the task to define the work through a series of keywords. As I repeatedly revisited the room, I began to note down words that came to mind in each anchor point. I then elaborated on the word that I had chosen, or that had chosen me. This way I developed a kind of fluid encyclopaedia of the work, with the intention to flesh out my understanding and experience by means of creating alternative definitions of the words that linked to the work. In the editing process, I construed a spider diagram of these words, in which I wished to emphasise the importance of the horizontal plane - the words and their definitions can be shuffled around and read in any order. Each term holds equal value and, with no hierarchy intended, serves as an entry point to a network of possible directions.

« 10 TERMS »

- **Darkness.**

Sometimes, the lights are dimmed. But the space is never submerged in total darkness - strokes of colour, emanating from the projections, continually dance along the walls. Perhaps the shadowy atmosphere serves as a reminder of the moment of ambiguity between two decisions. It refers to the instant BEFORE knowing, the uncertainty of not YET knowing. In the darkness, bodies become less distinguishable and the movements of the elements in the space - the islands, the performers, the other audience members - are harder to predict. It's a lack of light without a lack of trust; the performers have no fear for the unknown. By immersing themselves in unpredictability and accepting instability, they embrace the darkness that began in the deep creases of the womb.

- **Water.**

Flowing, filling, leaking, undulating: connection through fluidity. Instead of selection there is enhanced attention: no one relationship is chosen, rather the performers exist in an exercise of relating to everything at the same time. There is no hierarchy of relationships between people, objects, projections - all elements are taken into account within the movements and actions in the space. The performers' mind state relies on distraction to diffuse attention and explore a panoply of directions at any given moment. This diffusion of attention, also on the part of the audience member (it is up to them what their point of focus is) creates a non-repetitive, constantly changing organisation of the elements, cancelling each other out in an overarching hum. Little microbes swim around, coincidentally finding each other, moving, close and far, swarming, dissolving into emptiness. Rhythms of coming together, of adding, of extending and then falling apart again, scattering, leaving the source. Everything becomes one, without contours or contrast. Like water molecules, the elements are each individually ungraspable - united in perpetual motion.

- **Waiting.**

The space exists in the constant tension between the present and an expected event of the future. The audience is held in suspense, but the work does not keep to its promise: whatever happens, happens. Waiting for the next thing to come along is part of the experience. What do we understand the claim "nothing is happening" to mean? Does it secretly mean "nothing

significant is happening”? Moments of emptiness are only empty when they are not filled with something else, something that was not pre-composed within the work, but which nonetheless becomes part of the work. The act of waiting does not equate to a lack of purpose, rather to the allowance of letting things appear, of giving space, of dealing with emotions, of transitioning into new kinaesthetic zones.

- **Reflection.**

What does time passing actually feel like? To become lost in the elements of the space, to enter the jungle of the environment, to observe, one can use the gaze. The gaze, in this work, is not one of directing, rather one of allowing: allowing light to seep in, allowing relationships to emerge. It doesn't pierce the space, it doesn't force connection, but rather embraces the way the light falls and creates images in the mind. This is how the audience can enter a state of contemplation, of inner-reflection. What the eye seeks, the eye will find; and when the eye is no longer looking, it might just stumble across what it never would have considered possible.

- **Structure.**

Falling in one go, falling in many parts. The destruction of an entity. Bursting into existence in many different locations at once, and therefore existing no longer. The performers are building a space with its own rules, a utopia - a microcosm of freedom, equality, exploration and play. A place where everything has a place - where actions are natural, where practices of communication with the environment are expansive. A place that is the grounds for the art of passing time. They are trained in resisting urges of “normality” and in resisting the desire to tell just ONE story. Refusing to simplify, they resist the need for spectacle or entertainment or any kind of pre-supposed expectations. Resilient to social conventions, they keep the assumed and the preconditioned at bay.

- **Magnitude.**

The word “magnitude” immediately triggers a sense of something big - but big in comparison to what? Magnitude is a scale and size is only comprehensible when we put it into context, when we draw comparisons. This work plays with the very tiniest of changes: it challenges the perception of the minutiae, the details that make up the whole - the size of an action, a movement, a gesture, a gaze, can be tiny but, due to the heightened sense of awareness of the performers, have an immense impact. It is like a magnifying glass is held up to the elements in the space, giving the smallest changes more weight, making them visible and extending them beyond their own contours. A smile of recognition from a performer is caught by another, replicated in space and channeled onwards - humanity itself is magnified, extended beyond a singular body.

- **Mess.**

Traces of movement have been left behind on the islands: foot prints, dirt, mud, blades of grass. A handprint, an imprint of a former touch, a prior action. The performers sink into the mess, they swim around in the noise. Following impulses, however gentle, with pure curiosity: where will this impulse lead? And when there are no clear impulses a jumble of possibilities is left - waiting to be selected or to put themselves forward for selection: like a meat market of potentials, like a plane made out of noise, like the pixels on a tv-screen without signal. Re-arrangement without ever arriving at a final arrangement.

- **Entrance.**

How do you enter a space that is so porous, its insides are its outsides and every surface can be an entrance or an exit, and therefore there are none? We went on a journey around the room. A journey moves a body or an object through multiple points in space over time - it can vary in length, in speed, in sensation. Perhaps a journey doesn't even have to go through space: perhaps a journey can happen on the spot, traveling through other, metaphysical realms. The act of turning, of rotating, can only happen when contrasted with something that is still - but stillness is an illusion, as the planet itself is rotating. This is our point of entry: it's all just a matter of frequency.

- **Island.**

The audience is clustered on the moving islands. Like boats, they can sail through the space, mooring in locations they find interesting, angles they'd like to watch from. Are they claiming this little board, this one square meter, this territory, as theirs? As they relax and move around on their chosen island, discovering the rest of the space from the comfort of their self-created home, they are bound to get attached to it. They are like birds, watching the world from their nest. But who does the island really belong to? Where does our desire to "own space" come from? If all the islands would be squashed together, their sides touching and aligned with the walls of the space, there would be no island left: only common ground.

- **Horizon.**

The horizon is the line where the edge of the Earth meets the sky. It can be smooth or jagged, depending on the distance of the observer. The paradox is that you can never get close to the horizon - when you move towards it, it shifts back, creating a space that can never be bridged, a gap that can never be closed, a promise that can never become reality. An open horizon reminds us of possibilities, of journeys we have not yet taken. The horizon makes the horizontal plane visible and the vastness of lateral space tangible. There is so much potential in going sideways - but somehow, you are always still drawn forward, towards the illusion.

Space As Body

The last exercise I experimented with was the idea of imagining the space as an organism, more specifically, a human body. Which parallels could I draw between the elements in the space and the body's organs? In an attempt to playfully investigate the relationship between the work and corporeality, I analysed the different functions of the elements within "CHORA" and created links with what I imagined to be corresponding organs and functions of the human body.

« SPACE AS BODY »

As they move, slide and shuffle along, the islands are like fingers and toes, touching and feeling the environment around them. The floor and the ceiling, along with the multiple screens and chairs, are the framing structure of the space. They are the bones, stacked to form an architectural skeleton that carries the weight of the work. Films scattered around the space act as windows to another reality - offering images of places beyond this place, an ulterior world. They are like portholes into the mind, the thinking machine, the underlying clockwork of the body. Regulating the input and output of messages and processing information, they serve as the conceptual underpinning of the work - the space's brain and nervous system. The skin, acting as the boundary between the interior and the exterior, consists of the linoleum on the floor, the paint on the walls and the ceiling which can sense every footstep or fleeting breeze from a body passing by. The pathways of the bodies in the space, both audience and performers, are like veins, running deeper and wider as they are repeated, transporting the (anti)bodies from one side of the room to the other. The dramaturgy, generated by the relationships between the active bodies, is a surplus and becomes the space's waste. It is processed in the digestive system, the intestines and kidneys of the work, and released by the performers. The heaters make for the space's muscular system: they keep the space warm and maintain a stable temperature in order to allow the organism's metabolism to function and the air to be hot and mobile enough for the crucial processes, generated by the objects, images and performers, to take place. A great water reservoir, for which the ground in which it lies was dug out and excavated, is depicted on one of the projections. Although this large body of water is not physically present, perhaps it is the space's uterus, a well of fertility, pregnant with potential.