

## darkness manifesto

*What we call the day prevents me from seeing [...]*

*I do not want to see what is shown. I want to see what is hidden amongst the visible.*

Cixous

*In order to know the night, it is necessary to transform our body, to create new organs of perception: we can see the night only by becoming night, becoming of the same substance of the time and space that now surrounds us, emphasizing that we cannot enter the night without changing form.*

Coccia

*Night becomes a verb. I night.*

Cixous

**I turn to darkness** to trouble the hegemony of vision and the power we've given the idea of the objective, all-seeing, all-knowing gaze in the modernity project. I'm not so interested in what darkness *is*, but quite curious about what darkness *does*, its performative and social effects, its material and bodily affects. Darkness has a history and a uniquely modern form. Ocularcentrism, the hegemony of the eye, dominates the Western engagement with the world since the Renaissance. Light and visibility has shaped the arts and the production of reality since the Enlightenment and beginning of colonialism. There is something seismic with the dark, the very foundation of the ways in which we perceive reality can be shaken: the structures it organized and the structures that organizes it, the knowledges that validates it and the knowledges it validates, the orders that normalizes it and the orders it normalizes. Darkness unfolds a space to challenge epistemological paradigms, to create a situation in which imagination is not only possible but maybe even necessary. The very sensuousness of darkness, its moments of disorientation, spur different perceptions, relations and orientations—perhaps radically so—to space, time and others.

**I turn to the theatre** as a place that gathers, and a situation to rehearse specific perceptions, attentions and ways of being together. The theatre is, historically, an apparatus for seeing and making visible. To score an audience's attention and perception. Its darkness a means to make the spectator forget about the space, the own body, especially those around them, even the darkness itself. Approaching performance in the dark suggests a momentary disruption of performance as mediated primarily through its visibility, and dance as radical presence. I want to turn the theatre onto itself, disorient it, and notice what gets stirred up. In the dark, I turn towards a notion of performance that opens space for experience, one that doesn't seek to direct or control it, but considers choreography a means of crafting a setting that invites and holds for experience(s) it can't and won't control.

**I turn to objects** as something to move from, with and through. A touch to be influenced by. A weight to carry. An impression to attune to. A form to yield with. Making a conglomerate of bodies. They teach me different logics, show me new ways of moving, and with time, receive me in forms that I didn't know I missed. I consider the objects as scores, meaning that in the studio it's the objects that initiate movement and lead the process. I dance with objects to investigate interpersonal and inter-body relationships. Embodiment is not a solitary endeavor but a complex entanglement at stake in-between situated bodies. A body and an object, plastically giving and receiving form in negotiation with each other—the dance overturns my understanding of our bodily borders and interdependencies in the process.

**I turn to scores** that doesn't seek to expand awareness or direct attention. I consider the crafting of an object as a choreographic craft. It means formulating a score through materialities beyond the structures of language. During the making of an object, I don't have a clear idea of what it will become; it rather shows me along the way. This practice departs from the possibility of an object to orientate a body in a phenomenological sense, in order to understand the creation of objects as a choreographic practice and a way orientate bodies otherwise. How things appear depends on their setting, in a rather theatrical sense, and this setting involves perspective. Things need the right background to arrive. Scores are, like the theatre, a device for directing attention in various ways. I turn to scores that invite the possibility that the specificity I'm looking for won't emerge. A score simultaneously writes its own outside. A good score brings awareness to where its outside is produced, to what falls outside of its systems.

**I turn to dance** as a practice of perception which troubles my ways of receiving and synthesizing sensorial information. I turn to its ability to put things at stake, to stir up the settled dust of knowing, trusting that, with work, it will move my stance. I turn to dance as a social practice, engaged and engaging. An alibi for spending time together, and more time than simply the time necessary.

**I turn to the body** as a convergence of material and discursive agencies, where the body is both flesh and subjectivity, inseparably. I turn to the body as an object of knowledge, a bundle of intelligences with agency, desires and movement, the site for the lived experience of any and all structures and as a point of departure for shaking them up. Along the lines of the Enlightenment project, ambivalent concepts such as disorientation are considered in negative terms, as dangerous deviations from the social norm. Active disappearance interferes with the visible to disturb systems of power, whereas passive disappearance makes visible the systematic exclusion of bodies that are deprived of a positive or present status. Yet both instances involve an experience of liminality, blurred territories where the excluded announces the power of the powerless, in opposition to the hegemony of the visible.

**I turn to choreography** as a practice that engages hands on with material relations, and a way of thinking-with each medium and agent on stage. How do we acknowledge what is already here, moving, speaking, and how do we join, or alter, that conversation? How can a choreography take place more in the body and imagination of the audience, than on the stage in front of them? What might a post-sopic theatre be?

**I turn.** I keep turning, disorientated. Instead of a theatre about appearance, I find myself orbiting around a question of disappearance, and how undercover choreographies, that emerge through the dark, can become apparent. I turn to darkness to explore vision and spectatorship at the edge of visibility. For ways of making the optical apparatuses visible, twice: in the case of the theatre and of the eye. And this means stirring up perspectives and their formative relations. Darkness is not as much a lack of vision as the appearance of another vision, another invitation into spectatorship.

As disappearances appear, making a theatre of disappearance.