

**Beau Bree Rhee**  
*Fall 2023*  
**Yale School of Art**  
**Night School**

# SHADOW OF THE SEA

**WORKSHOP: CHOREO-GLYPHS**

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*Shadow of the Sea*  
2022

Presented by The Kitchen in partnership  
with Madison Square Park Conservancy.

Performed by:  
Bria Bacon, Cara McManus, Chaery Moon,  
Beau Bree Rhee, Caitlin Scranton.

In dialogue with art installation *Landscape  
and Memory*, 2022 by Cristina Iglesias.

# POEMS

## PART 1: Shadow of the Sea



# INTERVIEW

# VIEW



Bria Bacon, Cara McManus, Chaery Moon, Caitlin Scranton & Rhee in Beau Bree Rhee, *Shadow of the Sea*, 2022. Performance view, September 21, 2022. Presented by The Kitchen in partnership with Madison Square Park Conservancy. Artwork pictured: Cristina Iglesias (Spanish, b. 1956), *Landscape and Memory*, 2022. Bronze, stainless steel, electrical pump, and water. Five works, each approximately 10 x 6 x 3 feet. Installation view, Madison Square Park. Collection the artist, courtesy Marian Goodman Gallery. © Cristina Iglesias 2022. Photos by Rashmi Gill & Mimi Guan.

Paul Valéry *Poésie Perdue*

Published in Paul Valéry, *Poésie Perdue*, ed.

Michel Jarrety (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2000).

## POEMS, STANZA 8

Vois l'ombre de la mer/l'onde/que la lune tourmente  
Et qui traîne des monts sur sa forme dormante  
Les monts coulent toujours  
Dans leur ombre. <sup>1</sup>

*III, 382 (VII. 199) (1904–1905)*

La mer, la plus intacte et ancienne chose du globe.  
Tout ce qu'elle touche est ruine; tout ce qu'elle abandonne est nouveauté. <sup>2</sup>

*VIII, 259 (1921)*

1. See the shadow of the sea/the wave/that the moon torments  
And which heaves its hills on its sleeping form  
The hills falling always  
Within their shadow
2. The sea, the most intact and ancient matter of the globe.  
Everything she touches is a ruin; everything she abandons is anew.

Ode\*

O Nim you are gold hammered a hundred fold  
Receive the love of heaven 'til the mulberry-tree roots turn to coral  
O Nim O love O first step of land at dawn  
O Nim you know well that the will is heavy and that gold is light  
Sow the seeds of your blessing over this beggar's downtrodden field  
O Nim O love O hidden breath of an ancient paulownia tree  
O Nim you love spring and luminescence and peace  
Spread your tears of a bodhisatva's mercy over these weak hearts  
O Nim O love O spring wind on a frozen sea

**Manhae** (Han Yong-un) *The Silence of Nim*  
Published in *The Silence of Nim* (Seoul: Hwedong  
Editions, 1926). This book consists of eighty-  
eight poems and a forward that Manhae called  
“*added words.*”

만해 한용운

찬송

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뽕나무 뿌리가 산호가 되도록 천국의 사랑을 받읍소서  
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님이여 사랑이여 얼음 바다에 봄바람이여

\* English translation by Beau Bree Rhee, with refer-  
ence to the French translation of Han Yong-un, *Le  
Silence de Nim*, translated by Hyeon Ju Kim and  
Pierre Mesini (Marseille: Éditions Autres Temps,  
1996).

**Interview:  
Curatorial Conversation**

*In-dialogue:*

**AB: Alison Burstein, Curator at The Kitchen.**

**ARS: Angelique Rosales Salgado, Curatorial Assistant at The Kitchen.**

**BBR: Beau Bree Rhee, Artist.**

**LR: Legacy Russell, Executive Director & Chief Curator at The Kitchen.**

**Alison Burstein. AB**

Great. So just to start us off, we want to start by talking about the emergence of the piece. So *Shadow of the Sea* emerged from an invitation to create a new work in dialogue with Cristina Iglesias's exhibition *Landscape and Memory* at Madison Square Park, which reflected on layers of buried histories by installing five bronze sculptural pools along the path of a creek that used to run through the site. I was interested in creating a point of contact between you and Cristina based on what I recognized as a number of resonances between her exhibition and the themes you explore across your practice—including the connections between the deep past and present, the palimpsestic qualities of landscape, the potential of mapping as medium. Could begin by speaking about the extent to which you drew from ideas or ways of working that you've pursued in past projects while in the process of conceptualizing this new work?

## .Beau Bree Rhee. BBR

Well, first of all, the word palimpsestic is so spectacular. That's a nice segue. Yes, this is lovely to begin with the situation in which the piece emerged.

The contextualization of *Shadow of the Sea* was within my work of the last couple years during the pandemic, which was mostly centered around the new earthwork *Dream Garden in the Anthropocene* in East Hampton, which is an actual garden and also indigenous allyship with Jeremy Dennis, the Shinnecock and Ma's House BIPOC Art Studio. So thinking upon this the context, just starting with some key research references like ecofeminists Vandana Shiva *Soil not Oil*, Leah Penniman *Farming While Black* and the essay *A Garden that is a Sculpture* by Isamu Noguchi. This situates us in the language.

I also was interested in ecological realities, really educating myself with the living material of soil and agricultural revolution and things that were non-dance or performance related. This was really grounding the research of, of a lot of my work from 2021, 2022, til now.

And then, of course, there was *Performance Paysage*, which Alison you and I worked on closely together. That was a score with poems, and some song and of course this idea of performance as landscape. So already there were ways to enter into this sort of Abyss of Time and the body... probing its endlessly porous relationship to atmosphere through the section of the piece titled Chorus of Breath. And, it was a much darker tone than *Shadow of the Sea*, it was much more like rageful in some ways, dealing with grief in the age of the Anthropocene. The movements, I think, there were some visual crossovers, but also the quality felt different. But there's some throughlines there with the scoring and the poems and again, the connection of body and landscape.

Then there's the dance film that Jeremy Dennis and I worked on and created together *Les Parages East West*, which is based on the indigenous spiritual belief that souls enter the body from the East and leave to the West. I quote this piece in one of the stanzas of *Shadow of the Sea*. And this is really a piece where I think the body is acting as a sort of lattice, this cosmic lattice, where the indigenous religious beliefs and spiritual myths are highlighted or, or mapped, or formalized geometrically through the body. Then the body is also sort of a lattice for the actual landscape. So it exists as a transfer of light and shadow. Perhaps kaleidoscopic in some way, as the sun and atmosphere shifts, too.

So, all that to say, then, that all of this situation of my practice, met this incredible proposition to create a work in dialogue with Cristina Iglesias's installation.

Then, it all just sort of washes through the body, my body. And there was a movement language that emerged for *Shadow of the Sea* and ideas that emerged and phrases that emerged that were new, that were unexpected and different.

There were a couple of things I noted in relation to Cristina's work. One was just like this guttural thing. This is from a note from one of our first meetings with Cristina, this idea that ecology is boundless.

So there's this boundlessness somehow. And because Cristina's piece was referencing historic ecology, there's this hinge (gestures arm like a hinge) from past time to future time, right? So *Shadow of the Sea* is doing that into the future.

*\*note to self – Cartography with Alison NYPL*

I was really inspired by the modesty of her intervention in the park, which took the form of buried bronze sculptures tracing the path of the historic stream. There was a subtlety there, and this kind of anti-ego stance. For example, the grandeur of the bronze material

was so intense, but then she made such a point to hide it away in the grasses that she planted along the edges of the sculptures. It was an approach that felt really fitting to the project itself. Voilà.

### **Legacy Russell. LR**

I wonder maybe Beau, we can talk a little bit about the question of the site, noting that, of course, this was a first time really in your performing at Madison Square Park, with a very different type of format, right, that stretched across two parts of the city coming from opposite directions, and really allowed for a more expanded view of histories and associations, both in relationship to New York City as kind of an additional protagonist as a performer within the work, but also to write really thinking about this idea of, of New York City as a collaborator.

I wonder, perhaps, if you can talk a little bit about that, because, you know, with performers traveling different parts of the city, you know, to a center point, which was Madison Square Park, thinking about this question of public and recognizing certainly that there were strands of the performance that really bloomed and were contingent on an engagement of the public that occurred unexpectedly across the performances. This, of course, becomes its own score. So I'm curious to hear you reflect a little bit about that. And your experience there?

### **BBR**

Yes. Well, New York City is the ultimate collaborator and the ultimate performance piece. Madison Square Park is also smack dab in the middle of this pulsating, extravagant, glamorous neighborhood. I think as a site, it was quite overwhelming at first, because as a performer, you want to be adding something. And what can you add already to the incredible life pulse of NYC and the range of people and the dogs and the birds and everything else that's happening. But then I think one word that gave me some

liberty was this idea of the Commons. Right, we were still masking, we were still masking in rehearsal, we were very much coming out of this specific moment of the pandemic. I mean, it's hard to believe it was just a year ago, actually.

### **LR**

Right, absolutely.

### **BBR**

and here we were, kind of revisiting the Commons. So some of my background research context, was looking at the texts of Olmstead and Vaux, you know (laughs) who've shaped our city, and Roberto Burle Marx. These landscape architects who thought about what is the role of a park in the city. A park is actually a pretty modern thing, because parks only really exist in cities, because if you're outside the city, you have nature.

And then that allowed me to rethink something Olmstead and Vaux's concept for Central Park, where they were thinking of it as a "walking gallery of pictures for the public". Central Park's history is very problematic, and they displaced a lot of communities. But ultimately, the narrative was that it was supposed to be a place of common dignity for all New Yorkers. And this quote kind of got me somewhere.

Then there is this other older idea, which I've kind of latched on to maybe since like, 2005, or something where I've always been fascinated by the etymology of the word choreography. *Choreo - the body, graphy - writing.* So writing the body, writing the body.

So: if the landscape architect is creating a walking gallery of pictures, what might happen if that is flipped somehow through the writing of the body?

### **LR**

Absolutely.



## BBR

And then, I mean, now we're transitioning into this big idea of the dance poem, which is the term that I use to describe my piece. But so what do you give the commons? You give them maybe something like a glyph, you give them something like a poem, you give them something kind of almost classical in nature, like imagining something a bard might read at 6pm as people are going home.

So it took a little bit of time, maybe a few weeks to really kind of figure this out conceptually. How do you create something that won't just be like a bunch of smoke in the air in this site, and something that will be legible to the commons. Legibility was something that I was thinking about a lot. Legible to folks who are just passing by, who might just be, you know, stepping in for a couple of minutes for, you know, we had various, like rungs of audience members, too.

I think, once I had the idea of hieroglyphic choreography, creating images that were bold and legible from many different angles, in a prismatic way on that lawn. Then the ideas started coming very quickly.

The walk more than anything, felt really like the most urgent, urgent, urgent thing of the piece. It was like, the performance will happen only as a contextual flow to this urban-ecological-meditation-acknowledgement, this tender brutal thing. And then, of course, it conjoined Cristina's narrative with historic water, and future water, water to water.

And on the walks of course, the notion of audience is thrilling, and I love that word bloom, because there were the audience members who walked with us and became a part of the first stanza of the piece, and then there was all of New York City, unwittingly and organically a part of this strange macabre walk and all the poetic entanglements that happen day to day in NYC became a part of the walks themselves. You see

this in the footage a lot.

## LR

Absolutely, absolutely. I guess I'm curious, maybe we can expand a little bit and grow towards this question of the dance poem, right? I do wonder Beau, if you might take a moment to meditate on the kind of relationship, perhaps, between this idea of the dance poem, a score, and maybe what mapping can do? These are, of course, really essential points, in giving us a better sense of how to reimagine the cityscape as a core component of this piece, and it's been staged.

## BBR

Oof! That's a beautiful, beautiful question. Well, the first thing I'll say about the poem is that poems really got me through the pandemic. And as life becomes increasingly incomprehensible, I think that poetry has this ability to just kind of somehow parse things together or explode them.

So actually, I will quote from two folks.

A longtime reference, Octavio Paz, he speaks in *The Bow and the Lyre*, about how:

*"The word free at last shows all its entrails, all its meanings and illusions like a ripe fruit or a rocket exploding in the sky. The poet sets matter free."*

So that's one.

And then, of course, yesterday August 2 was James Baldwin's birthday. And, we quote him a lot, but there's good reason for that. (laughs) This is from the 1973 documentary *Another Place* in Turkey, by the filmmaker Sedat Pakay. Jimmy says:

*"I think all poets - and I'm a kind of poet - are caught up in a situation which is a kind of pre-revolutionary situation, and that they have a very difficult role to play. In so far as real poets, they are committed to the welfare of the people, of all people, but they don't always read this welfare as simply as politicians might. My role is to try to bear witness to something that will have to be there when the storm is over, that*

*will get us through the next storm. Storms are always coming.”*

I heard this a few weeks ago, while I was ruminating on our conversation. I thought, well, this is just perfect, because *Shadow of the Sea* is about storms, right? It’s about the shadow of water, shadow of storms, and the shadow of disasters. I think those two quotes contextualize quite well what a poem or a poet is here.

Well then, in the context of this project and this piece, a dance poem, what is that?

Well you know, replace word with movement, or gesture. There’s something about dance that simultaneously accesses our biological reality, and then it can also access this kind of mythic psychological condition.

To touch on your question of mapping and cityscape a bit here:

\*The score for Stanza 1 was based completely on the reading of sea-level rise projections from Climate Central (describe briefly organization here) in 50 and 100 years time. We decided to go ahead with moderate climate change projections (so trying to stay somewhere in the middle) – and the projections of these maps are really hard to digest. It was my first time actually using a scientific projection as a part of a score, and then of course through the choreography there’s a poetic interpretation. But I mean, I love New York City, so much, I’m in a marriage with it in some ways. We are a city surrounded by water, and the next, 20, 30, 50, 100 years we are going to see vast ecological change. But in some ways the maps, though factual, are so hard to actually comprehend as a human being, just the scale of it, and the vastness of time. Also maps are never completely neutral, right, there are many worldviews that create the map itself, just in that science is an act of interpretation of data. And I think that’s sort of where everything kind of hinges is, you know, through something quite simple and powerful like walking these 50 Year 100 year water lines.

The maps then meet my score, which liberates the question: What does the body know? What does the body or bodies comprehend and, what can be understood poetically or emotionally through that body action that could not necessarily be otherwise?

You know, and then we did have literally poetic moments, despite the brutality of the premise of the walk, there were those moments of tenderness and care and coming together and coming apart. You know, so I think the piece is sort of classical that way. It’s classical in that it’s sort of glyph. Also there’s just these moments where it’s like, yeah, we need each other.

**LR**

Appreciate that.

**Angelique Rosales Salgado. ARS**

Thanks, Beau, I think you’ve touched on this notion of a prism a few times now, and considering that a prism as maybe an object that can cast many shadows. Thinking of the title *Shadow of the Sea*, evoking one of the work’s central questions: the sea covers 71% of our planet? And what about its shadow?

Could you talk about what brought you to kind of formulate this question and how it functioned as a driving motivation for the piece, not only, I think, in your research and in your references, but as you tried to, like, really map that out in an embodied way with us across the different sites that the project carried? Yeah, and your exploration, I think of the many dimensions and manifestations of the shadow.

**BBR**

Hmm, this question is so juicy, you might have to cut me off at some point. Well, it started with the Valéry poem. It started with :

*Vois l’ombre de la mer/l’onde/que la lune tourmente  
Et qui traîne des monts sur sa forme dormante  
Les monts coulent toujours  
Dans leur ombre.*

I was simultaneously destroyed and exploded and revelatorized by this image.

It struck such a chord in me. It was electric, like, trying to imagine what the hell the shadow of 71% of the planet could even look like. This is unfathomable. But then also, it just felt like this is the time we're living in.

This is so it. We're living in the shadow, the incomprehensibly enormous shadow of things. Of forest fires, of floods, of the Industrial Revolution, of Extractionism, of Extreme Capitalism, of all these things. Right, and that you and I, we did not have individual agency over when we were born (laughs), we were kind of just like born into these shadows, these reverberations of all these things.

I read that poem early on during the creation of the piece, and Valéry was not thinking about climate change, the Anthropocene age when he was writing it, I'm sure. So it also felt like this sort of double myth where this collection of poetry *Poésie Perdue*, it's detritus poetry, it's work that he threw out or hid. It's work that was never supposed to see the light of day, and this scholar / editor / professor Michel Jarrety published the work in 2000. So it felt like a myth to me. It felt like there was some supernatural force that had picked up that little piece of paper, put it in this edition and then like 100 years later put it in my path and, I'm sitting there reading it I'm like, Oh, my God, like this is it. This is it.

Then, like many things in creative life and art making, once that electricity happened, the shadow just kept coming and coming and coming and coming. The shadow was already in the work with Jeremy. In that way, it's a not really a solo dance. It's really a duet because it's the dancer and the shadow which is cast by this triangulation of the sun and the planet and the being.

Then there's like also some sort of physical reality to the shadow that I think is good in terms of it being a metaphor that is understandable. Like yes, this is a physical condition as well as a metaphor.

And then how all this came through in the in the movement? I think this is important for me to foreground that the movement and the dance language was coming from a very non-western non-modern dance context. So the body needed a lot of space for atmosphere. It needed a lot of time for shadow. It needed like, negative space gravitas for like water to come in and clouds to pass through and things like that, you know? It also needed simplicity, sparseness, directness, again channeling the efficacy of a glyph.

But all of those references were explored in different ways and each stanza very stylistically different. But you know, Stanza 5 Turtles is sort of this moment maybe of very slow, deliberate insurrection of this liminal creature that lives on land and sea. Kind of like budding forth in a group.

Throughout the piece, the status of the body also evolves: from pedestrian (so, human), to dance-as-we-know-it, to horizontal and geometric or lithic in X, to becoming non-human especially in Turtles, to eventually becoming water or poem or element in Sea. Maybe a dissolving of the human.

20:25. Two references that were not referenced directly in the piece, but that have followed me for years and years. It's a much more gritty, New Yorker type of shadow. It's the shadow of F. Scott Fitzgerald and James Baldwin, like the price of things, what things cost, what people pay materially, psychologically, spiritually for whatever it is that they want and desire. Something about the critique of capitalism about that, too, we're all wrapped up in that, and this problem is all wrapped up in that. And we all exist in that.

(laughter) So that was somewhere sort of in the back of my head. And of course, we're living in New York City, the world's beautiful capitalist center, right in the thick of it.

So Valéry started it and about a few weeks after I realized, oh my goodness, I need, I really need Manhae and his poetry.

If Valéry provided the sort of initial explosive image, Manhae provided the kind of spiritual or universal context of *Shadow of the Sea*. Manhae is most well known for his metaphor of the *nim* or the beloved, who is always leaving and always departing. *Nim* could be your beloved, or your self, or your happiness, or the latest extinct species, it is just sort of a metaphor for loss and evanescence, but also Buddhist transcendental love. He was writing in a time of immense colonial violence and social upheaval in Korea in the early 20th century. He was one of the leaders of the anti-colonialist movement, an activist, a community organizer, feminist advocate, a writer of essays and articles, as well as a poet. He was jailed several times, he was not eating the food of his jailers. His friends and family brought him meals in jail. He was a pretty radical radical guy. The universal love of Buddhism that we come across now in the West is often really diluted, but he's coming from a fairly, almost militant point of view in terms of how this transformational tenderness, how the aliveness of life can actually bend things towards less violence and towards something more whole.

\*Also just a factoid, so Manhae is the poet's given Buddhist name, which is a tradition when you become a deep practitioner of Buddhism you're given a name in the Buddhist tradition in Korea. His worldly name is Han Yongun, but Manhae actually means Ten Thousand Seas. So, voilà. How appropriate, talk about boundless ecologies.

I prepared a rough translation of his foreword to *The Silence of Nim*, and this I hadn't read again

for years and years until making the piece, So in the foreword, he defines who is Nim: "*Nim*" is not only the beloved, but all things longed for. If all living beings are the *nim* of the Buddha, then philosophy is the *nim* of Kant. The rose's *nim* is the spring rain, as Italy is the *nim* of Mazzini. Not only do I love *nim*, but *nim* dost love me. If romantic love is freedom, so also is *Nim*. However, have you not received the frugal constraints attached to freedom's good name? Do you also have a *nim*? If so, it is not your *nim*, it is your shadow. I write these poems longing for the young lamb(s) wandering lost on the way home from the fields at sundown.

So here, I was like I found it!!!

So the shadow here is sort of this unification. It's a cosmic bond that one cannot escape of interbeing. So the shadow shadow shadow, it's like in all these references.

## AB

It's so wonderful to hear about the full range of references as you've just described them. And I'm curious to maybe tie back to something that you said previously, as it relates to the question of legibility, as you were thinking about the legibility of this piece in public, and how that connects to the nature of the work as a dance poem, perhaps as well, as you've described, a bit how you're thinking about that term, but one of the things that I'd be interested in hearing is the relationship between the different stanzas as you're just starting to describe they are such different tones, the piece ranges quite widely. And what that means for individuals who might be coming in and out of the piece and only experience one of them, so what kind of legibility or you know, potential to interpret that might come from that. Yes.

## BBR

One thing I was thinking a lot about, going back to the concept of the commons and legibility is hieroglyphs and the body being a bard for the

public, for the many different ranges of public in terms of class and race, and, you know, native New Yorkers and visitors and whatnot. Another thing that I've been thinking about since COVID, is *Realism*. Which is fascinating to me, because the more real something is, I think, the more unreal or more surreal it becomes. Learning about the biology of soil, for example, is just completely fucking flabbergastingly unreal. You know, how can there be one mile of mycelial hyphae in one square inch, it seems impossible, c'est pas possible.

So I was interested in *Shadow of the Sea* in making a dance poem that felt real. I think what connects *Shadow of the Sea* with *Performance Paysage* and other work despite how different the tones are, is that I'm interested in providing space for some kind of emotional quality or, psychological context in which we can sit for a moment and just together recognize that we're living through this. Because what we're living through in the Anthropocene is so strange and catastrophic, one psychological term that always comes to mind is cognitive dissonance. We live in such contradictions. I remember once in our conversations during the making of the piece, you said once Alison that 'the idea of linear progress is futile'. This, too, encapsulates this idea.

I wanted the piece to capture those contradictions. And so therefore, the the range of tones in each stanza I thought it was it was important to have this kind of like prismatic kaleidoscope where you have something very pedestrian in Stanza 1, where you have something more jazzy and mass in Blues, where you have something quite like esoteric and geometric in X, where you might have something more blossoming and eternal in Turtles, where you might have something maybe like frustratingly stagnant or like boring in Repose, and something more embodied and poetic in Sea. And that all of these things kind of exist in harmony together in this very

like nonsensical almost whiplash way.

There's this young amazing French ecological psychologist Leila Benoit, she's at Yale. And I learned from her that the psychologists who are studying how climate change is affecting our psychology, they're finding out that our minds are performing the 'derealization' of trauma patients. Trauma patients of assault and you know, more direct violence, that our brains are doing that in order to cope with the world. It's an auto-mechanism of self preservation, basically, right? If you're assaulted, your mind creates this derealization block that so that this is not real, this is not happening, and therefore you can survive. I thought, wow this is fascinating.

And then maybe in service, what can this piece do? Perhaps it can provide a space or rite for an hour or 30 minutes, where perhaps, through this movement language, through these glyphs, through the sounds through the spatial arrangements, how we take up space together, perhaps we can touch our reality. In a way that's gentle but brutal, but not weak, with courage right. Like, there's a kind of immenseness to the premise of it all. I think those are kind of the broad strokes.

Maybe just to define why it was important to call it a dance poem. You know, I never called anything a dance poem yet. (laughter) I think I perhaps will in the future, like maybe now this will be a whole series. I was really interested in thinking about dance in a new way. Because you know, I've apprenticed with Bill T. Jones, I've had a lot of training, I come from this like, lineage of New York City dance. But I don't actually feel super connected to how a lot of it is presented. And I was just thinking, Well, gosh, like, there's always a lot of like technique, and it's very finessed, and then there's contact improv, and these things from the past that often like seem really affected. We don't have to include all this in the transcription, by the way, I'm just, I'm just spilling the tea. ;)



Cara McManus, Caitlin Scranton & Rhee in Beau Bree Rhee, *Shadow of the Sea*, 2022  
 Performance view, West Side, September 21, 2022. Presented by The Kitchen in partnership with Madison Square Park Conservancy. Photos by Walter Wlodarczyk.

Bria Bacon, Cara McManus, Chaery Moon, Caitlin Scranton & Rhee in Beau Bree Rhee, *Shadow of the Sea*, 2022. Performance view, September 21, 2022. Presented by The Kitchen in partnership with Madison Square Park Conservancy. Artwork pictured: Cristina Iglesias (Spanish, b. 1956), *Landscape and Memory*, 2022. Bronze, stainless steel, electrical pump, and water. Five works, each approximately 10 x 6 x 3 feet. Installation view, Madison Square Park. Collection of the artist, courtesy Marian Goodman Gallery. © Cristina Iglesias 2022. Photos by Walter Wlodarczyk & Rashmi Gill.



So sometimes you're just like, wow, well, these things we're seeing over and over again, and the movement seems to be within like very specific type of existence, whatever it is.

And then I think it was this thing where how can movement respond to the commons? And also my style in general, in the spirit of Cool Jazz, like in the spirit of things where you can do more with less, like, how do you present a really simple structure to the public, where folks can view it, again, like a prism, either in passing, or in its entirety, or a stanza.

And it's not like talking at you in the same way as an opera, or a ballet, or a modern dance, it's not these things that have their tropes, you know, so. Yeah. (laughs) Maybe it exists more like a garden, or something like that.

### **ARS**

So I think you've talked a lot about kind of this shape of the dance poem. But I'm wondering if you could speak to us about kind of how the eight stanzas of the piece really range widely and their tone. And I think, you know, the style and invocation of each of them include different pieces of music or spoken text, accompanied by, you know, the movement that's unfolding inside of the space. But yeah, just if you could speak to what you were interested in exploring through the scope of new vocabularies and associations that you put into motion. We know that song selection, also, as you've talked about, you know, in earlier stages, and how it took shape in the space charts, kind of your personal connections to an intergenerational range of artists that you're in dialogue with, some of whom you've collaborated with, directly, or have a history of engagement with their work.

So in what ways are you drawing from these dialogues, both direct and indirect?

### **BBR**

I mean, this also is a question that posits to the nature of the piece, which was that it needed a

village, both in its production and in its in its conceptual and artistic context, like, all of these friends who are here are a part of it.

The music was very carefully chosen. I remember thinking that the BB King song was really important, just because it referenced the history of New York City Parks, it was part of the 1969 Harlem Cultural Festival that was unearthed recently in the Questlove documentary *Summer of Soul*. I wanted to make links with our history here in NYC. So urban history, but then also personal history, which also relates to realism. Like with Jeremy Toussaint- Baptiste, he is someone I have collaborated with on multiple occasions in the past, and the Julius Eastman exhibition, obviously, at The Kitchen. So I was building on my own institutional history with The Kitchen, and also rewriting more just histories. The Nina Simone section - it's America, we're in America. Arguably the greatest thing that America has maybe given the world is Jazz and the American Songbook, our common treasures. So making all these webs at various scales intertwine, and collapsing different eras.

And, as you all know, I'm super interested in ecologies, and ecology is boundless, and these are definitely ecologies and the enmeshment of all of this, and the way that it informs my practice is really, really beautiful, and often mysterious. And outside of my control. I love inviting that.

The sound designer for the piece Michael Hernandez created the 220 hertz frequency for the sound piece during *Repose*, which was more literally ecological - it's the frequency that scientists have found that trees communicate - but it was kind of wild, because it seems that that frequency really did invite in all of these non human other species and their choreography, which, you know, was beyond my wildest dreams.

So, yes, I mean, the sound was a huge component



in like, establishing that space of performance, as a unique site for that moment. I think people would just walk and hear, you know, Turtles, the Jeremy track it, which is so stunning, and just stop for a moment. So it had that kind of spatial, architectural, presencing, which was, which was super important, right? Because you're like, on Fifth Avenue, and there's a million other things happening. And so how do you like, hold people rapt?

*\*spoken text – something I need to address a tiny bit more,*

Yeah, so I guess you know, parsing together ecologies through associations small and large. Perhaps here I can ask a couple questions. 38:20

Alison I'm curious, in terms of if you have any specific thoughts related to the scale of the work in the city, atmosphere and land. I think the scale question opens up the other questions in terms of the process of producing it, the public nature of it, what dance, you know, it, it was such an ambitious production as a team. And so what did that mean?

And then the second question is for Legacy in that email in September, remember you wrote a few phrases that kind of latched on to my mind, related to the anti monument and lyrical unease? And you mentioned some kind of like tender injury? And, yeah, I was just really curious about those phrases. And I know, it's been a long time. But I wonder if you could maybe speak on those

**AB**

Yeah, I mean, I can maybe start with a few words on this scale question that I think, you know, as you just named, that the, the production of the piece became part and parcel of the work, because of the way that you expanded this site to include really the city at large. So that started with with the coastal walks, which began on the east and west sides and included each of

the two sets of performers moving toward each other. The dancers then convening in the approach to the park. More symbolically, the piece marked out a choreography across different sites of the city, the posts, the streets, the park, which I think required a very different level of production and collaboration that brought in, the rhythms of city transit, the pace of pedestrians, the natural movements once we arrived at the park. So I think in that way, the concept of the piece established an ecosystem that then demanded a certain form of production that was really generative to think through, you know, the nitty gritty of how we would move the dancers and our production team, in one sense, but also invite the audience to take their own path, if they were joining for the coastal walks. There was the invitation to join at Madison Square Park that would require public transit or bike or walking from the concluding point of that stanza to the park. So in the same way, the production set into motion a set of opportunities for the audience.

I think the way that the question of scale radiates onto across so many levels is really indicative of the way that the piece built. As you just said, it took a village, and then it also kind of created a village within the city and people who were moving within, in unison, or, you know, in parallel with one another over the course of the performance.

**BBR**

And it was a really beautiful artist-curator collaboration too because in some ways, I was sharing my version of a score, my version of the mapping, my version of the Climate Central Research, FEMA, yada, yada. And then together, we formed the actual score, and made it so real.

This goes back Legacy to a previous question about mapping and urban space. But one big reference throughout was Vito Acconci's *Following Piece*, which is a really different idea, but I've always been fascinated by what walking

can do because you're just this one little interstitial point but with the intention of performance, suddenly, you go from like a unitary thing to the urban scale. But we're in very different times from Vito Acconci's *Following Piece* and for us, there was so much infrastructure that was required in order for our coastal walks happen with our public, you know?

## AB

Yeah, that also, just that reference, it makes me think about the different ways of looking at the piece invited and think, you know, the reference to *Following Piece*, the question of observation, whether it is known or unknown. That's one kind of framework for looking in the city. The other is kind of looking past without realizing what you're seeing. I think that Cristina's piece in Madison Square Park operates at that threshold of something that you could look over. Because her pieces are sunken into the ground, and then there are grasses that are planted along the side that partially covered it or obscured it from view until you're up close, it was very easy for visitors to not know what they were encountering until they were right up upon it.

I think there was something about the coastal walks in particular, that similarly kind of demanded a different form of looking because it was a very subtle gesture. And I think that the evocation of a future state that is always maybe a lingering presence that is there only if one stops to think about the future of climate change for example.

That similar sort of lingering presence came through in the Coastal Walks in the way that the dancer is kind of almost blended into the surroundings. But if you could kind of maybe came up close enough to see that there was a group following or there was deliberate link between the two or three dancers performing, there were moments to prompt that attunement, you could see that something different was happening in this performance. I think that is interesting.

## BBR

Yeah, and there's been something sci fi watching the footage, especially from the east side, which is a bit more ghostly, and also how the document of the performance will resonate into the future as our, as our lived landscape changes, you know. I love this idea of a 'future lingering presence' Alison.

## LR

I would love for us to talk about this idea of the collective within the scope of the performance, Beau, and for you, perhaps reflect a little bit about, you know, what it was like to work with a range of collaborators throughout, of course, the making and production of the piece. And, you know, what does it mean to move, act, produce, engage, ideate, imagine re-world through a collective practice, in lieu of, or perhaps, you know, adjacent to or in intersection with this idea of a singular individual.

And, of course, I appreciate right, like in the history of dance, and, you know, this notion of the company, right, that there is always this kind of complex and also really wonderful stickiness, that engages this notion of collective body, individual body, how, of course, each are provided space and have opportunities to, to stand in place of one another. So, you know, what does that exchange mean to you? And perhaps, you know, how did you experience that within this process of contribution across your dancers and you really as an artist within that.

## BBR

Yeah, this is a great question.

That I think one of the first words that come to mind is the question of authorship. *Shadow of the Sea*, I was the funnel and the prism through which many many many voices were shining. There was some movement that felt very particular to who I am and how I embody the world. But the scale of the work, the subject of the work, the commons of the work, the ambition of the work it, it required so much, so much,

so much more than the individual.

The context and subject of the work is the commons, sort of, right. So the Anthropocene, this geological age, climate change is something that we're all experiencing. Therefore, it's a universal experience. Therefore, the piece needed that to be represented, in the cast and I mean in the huge team behind it too.

I think also reflecting on it to coming out of the pandemic, and I had a real crisis as an artist, like for six months before I had a residency at Ma's House, I was not making work. It was NFT o'clock in the art world. Everything was being hyper capitalized and objectified, which is our world, and that's fine. But personally, I was like, well, I'm interested in art for (maybe this is enormously cheesy) as a space of discourse as a space of partage, as a space of embodied experiential transformation.

You know, things that cannot be done alone behind the screen. So maybe in some way *Shadow of the Sea* was trying to, boom, explode some of the experiences of the inverse of those last couple years.

Legacy you bring up a really interesting point about the history of dance companies and dance is always generally collectively authored anyway, because the choreographer is always collaborating with the dancers in their bodies, and often quoting movements made by others. So dance is always a collective authorship, it just gets funneled through one person that's doing more of the decision making.

In the case of *Shadow*, the movement language, I did feel is very much my own, maybe more so than some other types of choreographers that might be working, just because it was so glyphic and reduced right. So there was a clarity in the authorship there.

However, in the rehearsal process, I left a lot of space open for choices. In Stanza X, there was

set choreography, but there were also moments where it was like: choose three shapes and rotate at will, and then we'll meet at this grandma pose, which was like, inspired by my maternal grandmother. And then we'll hold an X sculpture, but, you know, choose your own adventure there again as well.

So I was trying for the choreography in the body to have this sort of lattice or trellis effect where, where there was just enough material and space for the performers could inject their own selves and interpretations of the material.

The whole piece is kind of a big assemblage really, because at the end, the two Sea movement phrases are my own movement, but they're written or choreographed to the poems of Manhae and Valéry, right? I think always in my work, there's Jazz and always in Jazz, there is riffing and that is ultimately always collaborative and collective, in that you're developing something new within the context of a mega shared vocabulary and artistic language.

Yeah, and just practice somehow, just spending time together. It was a long dance, and as an ensemble we didn't have that much rehearsal time. But given the circumstances and the poetic nature of the dance, the movements were condensed enough that by living through it with these different bodies and beings, it kind of found its way somehow. 55:25

**LR**

Thanks Beau, that's wonderful to reflect on.

**AB**

Yes. One final piece to think about just to think about, you know, here we are almost now, a year later reflecting back on the evolution of the piece. But even within the span of the performance, we saw many transitions between the three different iterations.

So it premiered in September, and then ran

with two other performances into October. There were transitions that happened in between, so I'm just curious if you could reflect on if and how your impressions of the piece might have changed or evolved in each one of those iterations.

## **BBR**

Well, weather was the other major collaborator, right (laughs) weather and the changing of the light. The first performance was a pretty stressful day, but it had such a joy to it, I believe it was Equinox, right? We had a fantastic weather day. There were all kinds of weather ups and downs leading up to it and you know, a lot of frayed nerves.

But we had some land spirits with us, I forgot to mention this actually, a very important part of my practice with the earth work in the garden and all this stuff since COVID. And also indigenous allyship has been paired with a lot of fucking paranormal activity.

The first performance was, in my experience of it, and well, there were hundreds of experiences of it. So I'll just speak for myself. It felt very joyful. It felt super focused. Also that's when the piece became, because we, you know, we had never really done it before. That's kind of the beauty of the first show is that the piece doesn't really become until then.

So it was also just a relief, and it felt that the audience was held rapt and there was some reverberation coming from there. So that was great. It was nice also to get some feedback from from you all and Legacy and Brooke and our community of folks who were invested in the work. I'll never forget Brooke's *'That was a triumph!'*

The second performance, the light was shifting, it was a more interstitial moment in the season. And the shadow came and found me for that second performance. It was a darker one for me, and it was, it was really hard, like, the movement

felt hard, and the subject felt hard. And it's, it was like, the performance had this totally other different charge to it, which, that's the beauty of performance, it's like, it's never gonna be the same thing. (laughs) I do think in terms of the dancers, the second performance, we were more comfortable in some ways. And then just the last 10 minutes, it was just hard with like, the darkness descending and everything, but what we learned from all that was like just that, you know, the tiny little body like we're so vulnerable, it's so tender. And it takes so much to get out there and perform and move and project and be present.

The final performance was the most whole, you know, we'd done it enough times, all the cues were smooth. It was this crisp, perfect Autumn in New York night, we had the lighting resolved and set up. Yeah, it was somehow a synthesis of the of the first two energies.

But I do agree that each one felt massively different, regardless of the, you know, existing progression of the piece. And just, you know, also like the context of the weather, I remember one dress rehearsal, we were doing Era of Loss. And this beautiful Black man was leaning topless on a tree, just soaking it all in. Nina's voice resonating through the park. So there were also all these hundreds of these micro-performances and mini versions of the performance that were experienced. Which is a really nice memory for me too, the marginal performances that we gave to New York.

## **ARS**

Should we touch on that one? I feel like I mean, I'm happy to ask it in this form, but I think you touched on a few of these threads. I'm just touching on maybe kind of this public space because an encounter with a piece in the wider audience that you've referred to, in different instances. And you know, how folks were invited to participate in a way in this traversing of the city and encountering the dancers as well, who were

inside of a different kind of movement? In what ways were you thinking about the work entering into dialogue with this wide cross section of the city's population? And the histories you were just referring to and of public performance more broadly?

### **BBR**

Well, I'll do full circle and Legacy, I'm gonna borrow your language. The coastal walks were something simultaneously monumental and anti-monumental. It's like an anti-monument to the Anthropocene. That's endlessly fascinating to me, like we could talk about it for a really long time.

I think it does bring about a new chapter to performance in the city because at this scale of land and ecology and the incredibly rapid changes that we're going to see...it's like how do we activate futures with our embodied selves?

Like, we have to transform ourselves through our bodies. That's one thing I'll say.

And to borrow another phrase from you Legacy, I think the cross section of the city and the commons and the way that the work had to be legible, I think it had to be lyrical. That's where poem and lyric and bard and tenderness and all this kind of speaks, and that was super important to me too, right? So it has these conceptual qualities of postmodern performance, like *Seedbed*, yes all this stuff we know. But to be legible on the public scale, there needs to be something else, you know, the Lyric. (laughs) The Lyric, and then the deep Unease, just the underlying discomfort. Lyrical unease. That achey thing that we all know, and that discomfort is interesting.

### **LR**

I will always have comments about your amazing work Beau. But I feel like it will be exciting to review the transcript.

### **AB**

I think this is a really beautiful sort of, let's say provisional endpoint as Legacy noted, you know, maybe we will think of more, you've brought up so much here that makes me you know, gets the thoughts going in different directions. I think it's a good place to wrap for now.

### **BBR**

Beautiful. Perfect.

# DANCE POEMS BODY

## PART 2: Supportive Texts



# ESSAY

## Beau Bree Rhee

*Dance-poems. Dance and poetry as a sense-making, through so much loss grief decay. Rummaging through this, and parsing together life, again.*

*Dance as related to chant, chant as related to poems. Dance not as a virtuosic activity, but one that speaks the body and soul in a simple, subtle, tender way. Sparseness.*

1.

*Performance Paysage:  
Coves of Breath and Death / Chorus of Rage  
NYC 31.8.2019*

When I die  
My bones I hope  
Especially my femurs  
Long lithe calcium carbonate structures that port me through this life  
To turn into fossils  
Hard packed with minerals soil and time  
Like love and losses infinite density  
Perhaps next to a million year old shell I'd be a sprightly sprig

## BODY POEMS DANCE POEMS

2.

*Performance Paysage:  
Canyon of Intimacy  
8.7.2019*

Corps  
Un volonté  
Un mystère  
Origine  
Plaisir  
Douleur  
D'ici  
On peut comprendre la fragilité des choses  
Unissent  
Transformation  
Equilibre  
Vivant et soutenu  
Par quoi ?

Le plus je étudie vie le corps  
Le plus étrange  
Ces mains  
Ces yeux  
La tete  
Un doigt  
Flottante  
Sur l'eau  
Etrange somme :

Cher amour  
Entre nous  
On comprendre  
Chaque geste  
Sans mots  
L'espace entre

### 3.

*Synesthesia poems 2022-2023*

Cerulean Sage  
Sea Foam Green  
Diagonals cross in an X  
Tip of the head to the toes  
My Body  
Dissolving

Red blooms  
Roses small and large  
All around my torso  
Crescendo on the shoulders  
Centered at the heart  
Red roses rouges  
Red blooms

Rubble  
Double rubble  
Double rubble  
Rubble  
Rubble  
Double dubble  
Double rubble  
Rubble

Yellow sand with green specks  
Energy flowing out of my right hip  
Like a hole in a sandbag  
Sandbag hips  
Trauma leaves  
Like sand  
And while  
Pale green dots around my legs

Deep dark navy cloud  
Shimmering gold specks  
Floats heavily over my body  
Peeling off the layers of my being  
Weight, and shaking  
Peeling off the layers of my being  
Time, and mythic time  
Peeling off the layers of my being

## PERFORMANCE PAYSAGE – AN ESSAY



« *Qu'est-ce-que c'est la danse ?  
Qu'est-ce-que c'est le temps ?* »  
Paul Valéry

THE BODY is a cosmic and relational site; it is a porous space where we live in radical dependency to the world. I believe that a contemporary, poetic, and emotive art language is needed to make sense of our existence & the state of our Earth today. I approach the body as our main connection to our ecosystem. In my drawings, I work both figuratively and abstractly with these concepts of body-space.

Performance as Landscape (*première* 3.13.2020 at University of Toronto) stems from a philosophical frustration with the human-centric notion of performance itself. Of course, these desires & questions come from a deeply person-



al grief at being human now in this particular moment in our planet's history, in the Anthropocene.

The piece is fundamentally about rage/grief related to climate change and themes of breath and loss/absentia. I wondered if it was possible through this performance to insert (and perhaps even transform) the human into a bigger flow & time of life, into the non-human, the lithic, the telluric. Art is made by and for humans, but it seems necessary to propose an alternative.

Could performance itself become a landscape, an atmosphere, an ecology? What would a paradigm shift into elemental horizontality look like, while ultimately remaining human of course? What about air & atmosphere?

The research for the piece centered around time & cosmology (modern day physics), agricultural calendars & rites (more ancient), and notions of weather. Some of the choreography was directly informed by a Korean agricultural calendar that identifies 24 seasons in one calendar year, each season lasting 15° of the Earth's revolution. Life actions & survival rituals often accompany each season.

The drawings & score give a sense of the direction: conceptually, spatially, emotionally. Some were drawn before the rehearsals; some were drawn during and after. The March version of the performance was quite ritualistic, in response to the site-specific installation *New Circadia* at the gallery. It comprised nine sections—"Canyon of Intimacy," "Duet," "Quartet," "A Song: Crete Sleeps," "A Poem: Eclipse Poem," "Chorus of Breath," "Chorus of Rage," "Drying Winds - Reverse Vitruvian," "Canyon of Intimacy - Absence Presence"—across three "geographies" in the gallery, named *Coves of Breath*, *The Canyon*, and *The Aeonic River*.

There's an atmospheric quality of storminess in the work; an underbelly and girth of rage that is important. The piece gives space to explore the poetics & politics of our rage (most obviously in "Chorus of Rage," but it's there in other sections as well), a collective rage. Like a grid for a garden trellis, or chord changes in jazz, my process left a lot of room to welcome the personalities and textures of my collaborators. The sound is an important spatial and somatic element, created by Jeremy Toussaint-Baptiste who I've collaborated with since 2017.

There's a deeply uncanny prescience that the performance has to the current pandemic landscape (the "Chorus of Breath," the visors, the silk Head Clouds that performers wear over their faces). It's almost uncomfortable to look at, now. The boundary of art-and-life becomes grotesquely fuzzy, and what we performed seems encapsulated as a portal in time. A sort of shamanistic neo-surrealism. The Head Clouds are a visual cue I'd used in a performance nearly nine years ago (at that time responding to the nuclear disaster in Fukushima) as a way to visualize the body's membrane-like relationship to the environment.

We breathe nearly 23,000 times per day, or 12 cubic meters of air.

*These questions keep coming back:  
What unites? What separates?*



**Design: Chloé Maës**