

Les Marées Sèches

Compagnie Sfumato
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LES MARÉES SÈCHES - PORTFOLIO

Summary

Les Marées Sèches (The Dry Tides) is a **long durational and choreographic performance** for algae and a human in a **horizontal and non-hierarchical relationship**. It attempts to answer a paradoxical question: What would be a **non-anthropocentric choreographic work**, that is to say, not centered on humans? This attempt to give as much attention to a non-human species as to humans implies **modulating and reconfiguring the performer's presence**. The performance's temporality is defined according to the **tidal cycle, 6 hours and 12 minutes**. It is also an **act of resistance against the acceleration** of our lives and a **way to trouble our productivity-driven mindset**, which reduces our capacity of listening to other living beings.

The whole story

1. What's wrong with anthropocentrism?

Deeply concerned by the ecological crisis, what strikes me most in my research and readings is **our inability to think beyond our anthropocentric paradigm** in our daily life; that is, humans, emancipated from and dominating nature, believe themselves **to be at the center of every ecosystem**. Going back and forth between ecology and the artistic medium I have chosen, dance, my research question emerges:

What would a non-anthropocentric choreographic work?

I see here a **friction, a paradox**, as traditionally, a work described as "choreographic" showcases a certain **virtuosity of human bodies in movement, in a rather anthropocentric way**.

My response to this question is an attempt to **establish a non-hierarchical and horizontal relationship between two species**: algae and humans. Therefore, it implies modulating the centrality and presence of the performer, to attempt to experience a more **eco-centric paradigm**. This question is the source and driving force of the project, and everything else flows from it.

2. The algae, a living waste?

It was primarily the **green algae scandal** on the shores of Brittany (France) that drew me to algae. They blossom and **proliferate abundantly** due to the **excess nitrates used in intensive farming**, flowing into the rivers and entering the sea. As they dry and decompose, they release a toxic gas (hydrogen sulfide), dangerous to humans and animals. This scandal exposes the **harmful effects of agricultural policies**, our capitalist economic model, the **overexploitation** of the planet, and our **lack of sensitivity** to living things. Moreover, algae are currently attracting industrials, who exploit them as a **new material to replace plastic**; on the other hand, they are considered as **waste**, from which beaches must be cleaned. I choose to work with algae out of sincere **curiosity for this mysterious marine plant species**, which has existed since the dawn of time. Here, I **propose to take a different look at them, and to give them the space to exist**, simply as they are.

3. A question of duration?

I initially conceived this creation as an installation; however, I forgot the notion of time! The initial concept of an installation thus becomes a **durational performance, lasting 6 hours and 12 minutes**, the average time of a **transition from low tide to high tide**.

Choosing the temporality of the tides means **adopting the life rhythm of coastal algae and shoreline ecosystems**, and **shifting our perspective away from our conventional temporalities**. Furthermore, the temporality of the tides is a **universal rhythm**, because the rotational movements of the Moon and the Earth, which govern the tides, also influence **the flow of sap in plants and trees**. Creating a durational performance is **not an end goal in itself**, demonstrating human's incredible endurance and tenacity. For me, it's about using it as a **format, a tool to question our relationship to time and deconstruct our chrono-normativity**. This duration, which implies a clear slowing down, is also an **act of resistance against the acceleration of our lives** and the **productivism that reduces our connection to the living world**. Finally, this duration allows the performer to **access altered states of consciousness**, which are a starting point for my choreographic research.



Photo: Camille Figeras



Photo: Camille Figeras



Photo: Alain Goyon

4. What about the dance?

The choreographic material was **inspired by a hypnosis practice** (transmitted by Catherine Contour), allowing an oscillating movement to emerge, by slowly transferring the body weight from one side to the other. Here, I detach and decontextualize this movement from the hypnotic tool, to study it as a **perpetual movement of oscillation**, of ebb and flow, **de-centering and re-centering** oneself, infinitely adaptable, which can **multiply, fragment, dissociate, bifurcate, branch off...**

This **radical slowness** is therefore the **external visual consequence** of this detailed exploration of movement down to the millimeter. This induces a **"dive,"** a temporal disconnection, but also a state of presence that **reopens the perceptual and sensory fields** and presents the human being in a **decentralized position**.

The choreographic score is based on four rules:

- To **'not make an event'**, meaning avoid any action or effort that would disrupt the horizontality, the balance of presences within the algae/human coexistence.
- To **'not make a project'**, meaning refrain from "achieving," not seeking to accomplish a goal (for example, rolling in a certain direction).
- **Defer and branch off**, meaning always be on the move but constantly reconsider one's intentional choices in space and time, so as not to create a project.
- **De-hierarchize/dissociate** the body parts: each oscillation has the same importance.



5. Which spaces?

The performance is primarily intended for a **"white box" setting** (museum, art center, exhibition space), but could also take place on a theater stage. The audience is invited join the performance at any point—beginning, middle, or end. It is **their responsibility to choose how long they would to stay** and spend with us.

The **strong smell of seaweed and the hypnotic soundscape makes it an immersive experience**, where the audience is included and immersed in the performance space, opening them to different scales of sensitivity and perception, and inviting them to **experience this slowing down**. They are invited to sit on chairs or cushions, they can also lie down and have a nap.

It is **not a "show" or a "spectacle"**. The audience's gaze is **more contemplative** and fluid than guided by dramatic perspectives or actions. In the long term, I would like this performance to also exist in a site-specific format, on the coastline, with the existing ecosystem and the true temporality of the tides and the seaweed already present.

6. An "ecological" performance... impossible ? Failures and paradoxes

While the project was thought with an **eco-conception approach**, it was important for me to **avoid an "artistic greenwashing"**. The goal here is not simply to create a work that addresses ecology as a topic, but where **ecology is a commitment, considered in every aspects of the project** - its subjects, form, and production.

Despite our attention to the overall coherence of the project, some points remain **contradictory**. Even attempting to answer the question, "What would be a non-anthropocentric choreographic work?" is perhaps already a **failure in itself**. A choreographic work is a creation made by humans for other humans, and in our case, in spaces built by humans. While the artistic proposition itself manages to be non-anthropocentric, the context in which this choreographic work is created remains highly anthropocentric.

Moreover, a **certain ecological "purity" is impossible to achieve**: to do this project, we travelled (by trains), turned on the lights, used electricity for our computers, etc. Talking about "zero environmental impact" would be hypocritical; to achieve it, we would have to not do any artistic projects (or even not exist at all).

Agenda

January 2024: Research residency "Performance and Ecological practices" funded by **Culture Moves Europe** and carried by **Instant Dissidence**, at **Cloughjordan Ecovillage**, Ireland. This residency wasn't specifically dedicated to Les Marées Sèches, but it was an important time for reflecting and preparing the creative process.

March 2024: First seaweed harvest in Brittany (Finistère area)

29th April - 2nd May 2024: Site-specific residency on the beach in Brittany, and second seaweed harvest

13th - 17th May 2024: Residency at the **CN D** in Lyon, as part of "Artiste en expérimentation"

10th October 2024: Talk for the Master 2 students in Performing Arts at Université Lumière, in Lyon

11th - 23rd November 2024: Residency at **Les SUBS**, Lyon

6th - 10th January 2025: Residency at **Honolulu**, Nantes

27th - 31st January 2025: Residency at **Point Ephémère**, Paris

31st January 2025: Workshop for a middle school class in Paris, in partnership with Point Ephémère

22nd March 2025: **Première** at **Galerie Far West**, in Penmarch in Brittany, for the spring equinox and one year after the first seaweed harvest in the same region.

29th March 2025: Talk at **Radio Paradis** (local radio in Paris 10e)

10th December 2025: Talk at la **Fabrique de la Danse**, as part of the course "Eco-concevoir un projet artistique", Paris

6th March 2026: Talk for the research laboratory **Passages XX-XXI**, of Université Lumière, Lyon

9th - 12th March 2026: Workshops for amateurs in the context of the SEED project - Social & Ecological Engagement through Dance - with L'Eveilleur, at Théâtre Golovine, Avignon

Teaser

<https://youtu.be/fhbAK8Dzmk8>

Press

Le Télégramme : Les « Marées Sèches » : Clara Grosjean en mouvement à la galerie Far West de Penmarc'h. [Lien vers l'article](#)
Ouest France : Penmarch. Une performance de six heures parmi les algues. [Lien vers l'article](#)

The humans behind this projects

Concept & choreography: Clara Grosjean
Performance and assistant: Emma Pocq
Sound: Louen Poppé
Costumes: Héloïse Larue
Logistics support: Shane van Neerden, Audrey Grosjean
Outside eyes: Julie Sermon, Emma Merabet, Nawelle Aînèche

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Partners:

ADAMI - Bourse Première Fois Danse
Speditam - Aide à l'enregistrement d'une bande originale d'un spectacle chorégraphique
Centre National de la Danse, as part of the "Artiste en expérimentation" program in Lyon

Supports and residencies

Les SUBS, Lyon
Point Ephémère x cheville, Paris
Honolulu, Nantes
Le Far West, Penmarch

