

# ITINERANT ACTIONS



## FIELD REPORT

# ITINERANT ACTIONS\_1



*Itinerant Actions* developed a collective fieldwork research programme in early-2019 for Hangar Barcelona that explored remote outposts, peripatetic practice and the fluidity of site-responsive working. The project invited current resident artists Paula Bruna and David Ortiz Juan, previous resident artist Patricia Dauder, Head of Research Projects Marta Gracia, and cultural agents Rosa Cerarols Ramirez (Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona) and Lala Thorpe (Cultural Producer & Education Curator, London) to engage in a critical dialogue about embodied knowledge, ecological economies, roaming landscapes and material territory. During June and July 2019, I will be reflecting on this project through a series of articles that will explore fieldworking processes in collapsing systems, material mobility and environmental resistance.

# ITINERANT ACTIONS\_2



Rising from brick-brown earth  
Where fields already planted in uniform rows  
Shows thin beginnings of bright green crop  
Beside an agriculture school  
A glittering mountain grows  
Among the pine forest ranges of Catalunya  
The accumulated debris of potassium salts  
Moved ever-higher – and wider – by heavy machinery  
Transport for avaricious business-as-usual  
Activities of speculation  
Risk life forms for profit  
This augmented inselberg  
Ever-spreading  
Altered geology  
Fast becomes symbol of so-called progress  
To amplify  
Waste and neglect

The natural watershed  
Now interrupted by sodium chloride  
Subject to gravity  
Soaks through colossal mining spoil  
Industrial-scale tailings  
Holding saline residue  
Percolates through to groundwater  
Makes unhealthy headwater streams  
Where unseen organisms perish  
Feeds a larger river system  
Unprocessed detritus and potash toxins  
Bound for the Barcelona beaches  
Where salt meets salt

# ITINERANT ACTIONS\_3



Accessed by closed road  
Now – runs beside new tunnels  
Route for walkers – and sightseers  
The river below  
Fast flowing winter water  
Working through weak layers  
Carves natural direction  
The gorge deepens  
Shaped by erosion and uplift  
Where rafters course in noisy passage  
Led by bright kayak  
Navigating boulders and eddies  
Throw echoes on rock  
Steep sides of brown and grey bulk  
Rising from aqueous green  
Flanked by low trees  
And snow-flattened grasses  
Waiting for spring

This place  
Of compression and force  
Buckled and fractured  
Cracked and dissolved  
With smoothed hoods over hollowed rock  
Inspiration of architects  
Builds ideas in a city  
Far away

# ITINERANT ACTIONS\_4



Constructions

To reclaim – buildings now not present

On land leaving behind history

Monument to another past

Passed – without leaving entirely – now placed to view

A process of removal

An erasing – of unstable constructs

And making other ways to see

New platforms – for land – that will become

In time

Here – rock is rock

Not a fragment

Rock from rock from all rock – broken off – has volume

The sand – only smaller rock

All – rub and roll

With and against – the tide

Slight as it is

The accumulated mass – an aggregate

Moving between bays

Falls deeper – and further

As white sails pass – keeping distance

From the disassemble

Of mountain

This place

Moved by wind – and water – shaped

By movement

Metamorphic – already – reshaping

Geology with all its fragments – a single event

Neither past nor future

Simply – always – now

It is not the wind or water that sculpts

The rock is already waiting to be shaped



# ITINERANT ACTIONS\_5



The path  
Below towers of rock  
Leaves cypress trees  
Up through boulder field  
Tight in places  
Contour  
Tapering ledges  
And wide platforms  
All steep-sided  
Exposed

The wind  
Marinada  
Salty  
And the tang of plump seaweed  
Lingers  
In dry mountain air  
Far from the coast  
Cools  
The rock face  
Yellow – pink – orange – and grey  
A place of doubled erosion  
With rounded pebbles  
Fallen  
In other times  
Passed

# ITINERANT ACTIONS\_6



The road barely visible  
A distant line  
Traces  
Across forested base  
Of colossal rock bulk  
Grey pillars rise  
In blue haze  
At distance  
Against air – scented  
Herb disturbed under foot  
To the forest of crosses

Charred bark  
Blackened rock  
Evidence  
Flames licked the ground  
Leapt shrub to tree  
The pine  
Afire  
Wild  
Caught all unable to leave

# ITINERANT ACTIONS\_7



A track of dust and rock  
Climbs above villages and farms  
Past worked land and close-knit pine  
And broken walls of bright dry stone  
To fence  
And chain  
Hides and holds a hole of industry gone

A quarry site  
Grows over with grasses and scrub  
Hard-stemmed plants determined to stay  
In the hollow  
Where moisture gathers  
In shadows  
And metre-high walls of cleaved bedrock  
Exposed – reveals  
The character of small-scale extraction  
Where roots now find air  
Follow water

And buildings – clustered and re-formed  
Tell stories of fire and liquid rock  
Arches re-purposed  
Frame history evolving  
Natural material  
Made visible  
Scattered – across  
Invites  
A rethinking  
Of permanence  
And processing of time



# ITINERANT ACTIONS\_8



Shutters closed  
Against winter air  
A horseshoe of whitewashed walls  
Rise gently back  
From rugged coast  
Hang stepped – hold soft contours  
Burst with palms and plants  
Of gardens visited in summer

Pine  
Borders  
For rock and road  
Inclined from shallow bay  
As seawater – clear – pushes past  
Landings  
And boats on chains – lull  
While a swimmer passes  
Fast  
Training  
With flippers and buoy

# ITINERANT ACTIONS\_9



Frames of trees  
Pulse with sap  
Rising for spring  
Bud  
While leaves and grasses  
Of autumn  
Crushed under snow  
Lay – revealed  
In glimpse of low sun  
As icy water rushes  
In shadows

Deep  
In steep winter mountain  
Villages  
Of stone against rock  
Seen only as pattern  
Concealed  
By grey and brown  
Reveals  
Places for making  
Poetics and aesthetics  
Responding – recounting – reshaping  
And pathways  
For walkers  
Pass blossom

For now  
High-mountain holds cold  
Fields waiting  
For cattle  
And culture

# ITINERANT ACTIONS\_PARATEXT



Encura Paratext with Patricia Dauder, Paula Bruna, David Ortiz Juan, Luce Choules and Lala Thorpe

Streaming: [stream.hangar.org:8000/paratext](https://stream.hangar.org:8000/paratext)

This name, Paratext, hides a monthly programme of presentations by the artists residents in Hangar of long and short duration, as well as the international residences, always on Wednesday, from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Various artists will be presenting in different formats, specific projects or parts of their works. The sessions are always open to the public in order to facilitate interaction with the artists themselves. In addition, each Paratext has an editor who then publishes his/her impressions of the presentation on this blog. On this occasion the editor will be Marta Gracia.

The next Paratext session will take place on Wednesday march 27, at 7 p.m. in the Sala Ricson of Hangar.

In this edition, Luce Choules will present her research project Itinerant Actions: data and dialogues developed during the Encura Residence #3.

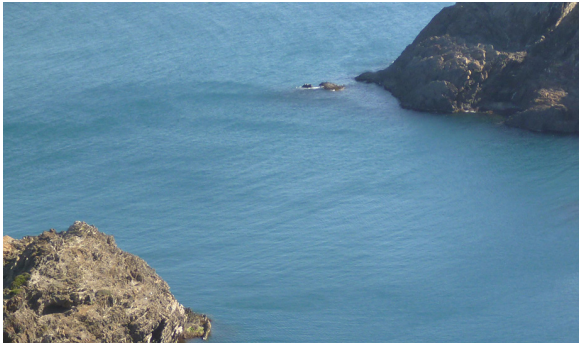
This Paratext session will feature a round table, which will be chaired by Lala Thorpe, cultural producer (London, UK). The panel will be formed of Luce Choules, Marta Gracia (Hangar) and the following artists who have collaborated on the project: Patricia Dauder, previous Hangar resident (1999-2001), Paula Bruna, Hangar resident (2018-2020), and David Ortiz Juan, Hangar resident (2018-2020).

## **Itinerant Actions: data and dialogues**

*"The mind cannot carry away all that it has to give, nor... always believe possible what it has carried away."*  
(Nan Shepherd, The Living Mountain).

Following the presentations, a round-table discussion will be opened up to examine artistic practice in the landscape, reflecting on the ways artists are redefining the geographic narratives of place, site and encounter through memory, traces and sensory recordings. Responding to ideas of embodied knowledge, ecological economies, roaming landscapes and territory, the discussion will consider the role of fieldwork in contemporary arts practice. In addition to sharing working process and practice, the panel of artists will contribute insights into their research and methodologies. Itinerant Actions is a fieldwork programme developed by TSOEG.org.

# ITINERANT ACTIONS\_A REVIEW



Here I am. A boulder transported in from afar, an active mass of volume and weight – fixed to perform the erratic. I am considering my position carefully, from the edges – around, shrub structures, trees in grids, and among, grass tufts, delicate weeds. All together, we thrive in textile ruin.

This morning my boulder premise is set, and fluid – the placement of weathering – to discuss a subject becomes a question of language and interpretation. Rocks, a plant, 3D printing, a ceramic fragment and thin air are introduced as the sun reaches its midpoint. Erosion, disintegration, collapsing structures – all actions in the natural and built environment. Surroundings imagined, weathering actions become performed through writing and the haptic exchange of words becomes important – expression and details, all surface. When weather is effectuated, the dynamics of reciprocity reveal imperfections and in that moment the object becomes whole with all its characteristics. To be flawed is natural. These scripted images of cracks and fissures, materials and matter collected together for closer reviewing, at other times – unspecified, for now. What then is crumbled, smashed or dissolved? The mass, transported and transformed, contains light and heavy elements – and weakness reveals strength.

It's late. Waiting becomes an act that must be performed in cold light until the true dark of the black box is triggered. We are here in this space. We are all together. Presentations become apertures to the underlying structures of working in outdoor studios and the field expands to accommodate the practice of performing – survey and live event become one, held temporarily in the context of process. The field site becomes a fieldwork, where buried objects of enquiry are subject to the processing of change – methods for recording waste ground substructure. The fieldwork is an approach of archaeological reverse – a pre-performed history brought to the here-and-now, holding the surface intrusions of time. Other works demonstrate the breadth of investigation for process-driven explorations – location, relocation, dislocation and translocation. When does the work in one field end and the work in another field, begin? And, what are its documents? The living laboratory, a plant cycle from seed to leaf, the touch of which is at once pleasure and damage; and death, an unfolding of place for life in an artwork observing time and decay – environs for micro-inhabitants and the submicroscopic, the non-human bodies of nano-matter but much significance. Family stories unearth the hidden narrative of time and telling – the resurfacing of fragmented memory in scripts and voice becomes an image of performance. Buried remains. And the vast future – a post-human space imagined through film – as clear as it ever was, observing the single event of geology giving light to the last flicker of a dying star. In the civil collapse of growth without regard of resources, environmental resistance is the reserve of nature. Humanity is not safe. Itinerant action will be necessary. Here I am again – canopy above, roots below.

# ITINERANT ACTIONS\_DIALOGUE

**Edited excerpts from a conversation between Luce Choules, artist in residence for the curatorial research programme Encura #3, and Marta Gracia, coordinator of the artistic research area in Hangar. Conversation held on the 22nd of March 2019 at Hangar.**

**Marta:** The first question is about your residency in Hangar. We know that the initial idea an artist or a curator has for their research project changes through the development of their residency here, but we rarely get to grasp these changes during the development of the process itself and from the artist or curator perspective. Can you tell us a little bit about this in relation to the residency you are currently doing in Hangar?

**Luce:** I realised early on that a documentary film would be an unsatisfactory device to use with the two artists I chose to work with. Meeting with the artists and discovering more about their work I felt strongly that I didn't want to impose an interpretative layer onto their sensitive practices through a documentary film.

During extended studio conversations with Paula I found myself placed in a subtle space inside her process. Trying to understand her methods, her processes, her thinking – but looking at other layers too that maybe she wasn't thinking about and feeding these back into our discussion. So it became much more collaborative in a way, trying to conceptualise her ephemeral practice with her very tangible material works.

When I met David I found that he also works with processes involving intangible, immaterial things – these ephemeral aspects of his process became the focus of our discussions. In many ways the idea of a documentary film framed our conversations when we spoke about the problems of pre-empting outcomes, ideas in progress and finished works. By not making a documentary film I kept our conversations fluid, simple, open and unfixed.

The process of ongoing studio meetings with the artists produced multiple thoughts, records and ideas without ever resolving into a single documentary form.

**Marta:** I think I understand why making a documentary doesn't make sense anymore at this stage but can you go a little more into it? Why in this particular project a documentary wouldn't be a good way to relate with Paula's and David's work? For me, as you said, the key point is the conflict between the documentary as a device and the ephemeral characteristic of their work. But usually the way to deal with the ephemeral is documenting it. I am curious to know more about your perspective on this.

**Luce:** Well, early on I had a very interesting conversation with Paula, during which she said that a friend of hers had said: "document everything right from the beginning of the process, so that you have something to present at the end". So she's been documenting parts of the processes herself but actually she is more interested in the poetics – you know, what's happening within the work – and if the work she's making grows and dies, then it becomes something else before it is finished. Then I thought: that's exactly it! – there's a tendency for an over-documentation of intangible ephemeral things, in order to show and quantify that 'something' has happened. In Paula's work, there is no need to quantify a piece that works very beautifully and poetically. Actually the documentary work, in a way, could destroy the poetics in the work. Sometimes, documentation feels very scientific so we could think: let's test the theory, let's take notes and see what happens in the end – whether we can prove the theory or not. But the notes become the backstory of how to get to the end before you even reach the end. I think that a lot of documentary work is problematic as it forces the outcome through the process, and the outcome becomes the record of the process – rather than a person able to describe some of the processes, or some of the other things that happened around the work, as the events unfold.



ITINERANT ACTIONS\_DIALOGUE (CONTINUED)

Paula actually 'made' an environment. I asked her if she felt she had any responsibility for this new environment, you know, as the plants died bugs had moved in for example – she created something that is alive even if it seems like it's dead. So we talked about the ethics of this artwork disposal. She is thinking now of a way to preserve it, whereas I would think of how it would feel to let it go. What are the mechanisms or methods involved in letting something go? How do you describe that from different perspectives? – Through ethics or aesthetics? And then we talked about her other works – she needs to talk about them through all the processes, rather than showing documents of the process once it's finished.

**Marta:** I have doubts myself about the word documentary, and if it just means one thing – which I don't think so. Did you consider working with documentary not as a way of documenting someone else's process but as a way to work with other people, I mean, did you think of working together with Paula and David through documentary?

**Luce:** I think I did. Because in a way, there is something that I am documenting about their processes – but it is not played back by a film, or even by a set of photographs. I think the best thing is when it gets played back in a 'live' space – such as, in the context of Paratext. For that, I have asked them to concentrate on a project each and talk about the process: maybe some of the failures or things not shown in the work that contribute to an understanding about what's happening in the work. These are things I suggested them to consider for the Paratext event.

I am also processing what I am documenting. I am not writing it down. So it becomes a sort of aural and visual memory, a trace of someone else's process. I guess I am still using this idea of documentary, but not actually showing anything. I am really interested in how it is going to be played live in the space. The artists will do a presentation each and then they will be addressing Lala Thorpe and Patricia Dauder's questions about fieldwork in their work. It is going to be interesting. But you are right: documentary is a very problematic word.

**Marta:** But in Paratext we will also be watching a film that you made during your residency here, right?

**Luce:** Yes, not a documentary film. My film is the result of one of the field trips I made during my residency with Rosa Cerarols – a cultural geographer at UPF here in Barcelona. I wanted to present it at Paratext as part of the *Itinerant Actions: data and dialogues* symposium I organised, which will look at artist's fieldwork. Instead of making a documentary film about the artists for the Paratext, the symposium makes an opportunity to ask Paula and David to look at what they do in the processes of their practice and play this out in the Paratext as a live event. They are going to explore elements of their practice not usually seen in their final pieces and use performance to share their process-based work in a new way.

The film I made is called *After-image* – it refers to something left in your retina after an event has happened. It is an impression, a projection of something else. Something that is left in your memory and then it's gone. It's really ephemeral. And I thought: this is how we live our lives! I love the philosophy of the 'uncarved block' – there are frameworks of course, but I try to be as unshaped as possible. It is the unmaking of yourself that gets you back to the shapeless kind of form you need to be in, in order to understand as much as possible about process. It's thinking and making at the same time. I try to be as unformed as possible, but within that there are things I want to pick out and make tangible or material. A film is a lovely form because it's very ephemeral. And it's only there for the time that it exists in its projection.