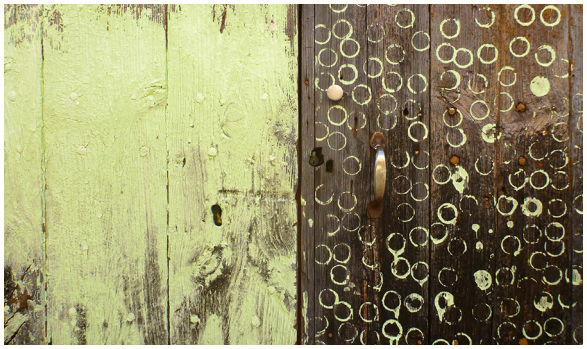
LUCE CHOULES – **GRAND TOUR, CATALUNYA, SPAIN**

PEREGRINATIONS_A REVIEW



Here I am. A conglomerate – a mass of many parts – brought together as a composition of rounded fragments, held in the cement of silica and clay. I am considering my position carefully, from the trail – behind, sand, sea and ahead rock, mist. All together, we follow a digital line crafted remotely.

This month, my compacted premise is set and fluid – a disparate collective held together loosely, to begin a tracing through liminal zones of littoral lows and summit highs. We gather by industrial beach, bags ready for offloading – a month of camping gear travels ahead by road, waits for those arriving by foot. Not all will complete this tour, some will join in days. And others, in other times. Rope designs give way to badlands, where ants move a cricket carcass over pine needle carpet winding up through eroded sand paths and low oak – and GR markers, followed and not followed. A chain barrier becomes a stumbling block, soon passed; and soon after, a question... woodpecker or toad? A tarp is stretched between three trees, a travelling library is assembling. Wrong turns lead to marked roads, tyre prints deep into tarmac and grit as feet move over ruts. Retracing takes in thicket and stables, boulders and dolmen before reaching a fake castle. Tall forest emerges by dry river, and a strawberry diversion gives way to slipways. 1000€ reward for black cat missing two weeks. Meanwhile, a seaside screening of slow cinema unfolds, where labyrinths, lakes and desert hold a dark room in silence. A revisited tree (now clone) plays witness to simultaneous flute and drum, spontaneous singer-dancers gather and perform. That evening, while most slept on beachside school floor, a cacophony of tent life was recorded elsewhere. The next day, a chance encounter led to carpark gridlock, and a failed mission for fresh vegetables preceded the fair with pizza and lecture. Pine forest up, cork forest down to polyphonic farmhouse passed on by generation. Library presentation "describe your donation" moves to writing "are you ready to tell it?" (7 minutes allowed, but more is taken), while the anticipated vocal workshop replaced with impromptu sessions and recital.

Brambles impede but don't dissuade (true to the route on a phone). Topping out chances on a spring in the road fed by pipe half-hidden, before the pass of a trunkless tree – and after, a slate wall stretches along high paths. Finding and relocating squares, triangles and circles in threes, a moment in lack of awareness causes fall. For this, a pine cone is given and late excursion is taken – the view past radio mast, found lamb reunited at last. A missed section from wrong turns and private road, added kilometres to others unneeded in a day bookended by rain. Hotel squatters, permanent and temporary join for an evening – where a piano is played with four hands, and a cloud is seen in a frame. Two fonts, flowing and captured – one fills bottles ready to move, while the other beyond locked gate supplies blue plastic destined for markets in source water. Blackberries in the mouth, cedar resin scent in the nose, a field in the eyes, birds in the ear, rocks to move over by hand. Later, we write to get lost. From pines to oak, a ridge of red earth and rocks rise above pastures – a seabed at height looses river-tumbled matter rearranged underfoot. Later, outside of theatre storage hangs a performance in motion. Shale moonscape gives way to grey concrete road, while a drone whirs in still air. A lofty bridge spans fast highway before reaching slow wide water filled with green weed trailing in flow over flat rock. Treecreepers pick from oak nearby while sleepers rest in sight of old spa. Tenacious shrubs resist wind and sun, while a long trail meanders by loose rocks and dirt winds up and over to a sanctuary in progress. Later, sounds and costumes catch the

PEREGRINATIONS_A REVIEW

[continued]



light in night. Texts are animated with narrators and drum, and an assembling book keeps hands busy while sun burns grey cloud and an animal tarot does rounds. Up up up. Ancient path worn by religious traffic, reveals monastery and radio masts – two beacons negotiating a change in power. Motorbikes breaking silence drop from the top through forest too fast to notice a snail now crushed. A stop by waterfall proved fruitful in fossils, before the stream of déjà vu and slippages. Rain arrived by stealth at night, continuing through morning – experimental travel a theme – while transport becomes stuck in the mud, oblivious to the scouts seeking horses and a dome. Thunder and lightning and rain in sheets, arrive just after dinner by municipal pool.

Mizzle follows night, gives way to easy trails of warm air to the town square where museum plays shelter. Around, many visitors mingle. Then green hair, orange hair and haircut (think he's in a band, famous) walk by... the English language landing on an ear listening to Catalan. Then up through forest of pine trees and moss, to a house in ruin with dark rock lookout for lunch. Into the deep valley and out high – a rill in between – before signs for a refuge point to herb teas to be taken in cups self-named. Dark clouds gather from the east, and eventually a storm arrives in loud bursts and bright flashes, while storytelling and boxes replace a library unravelling. And now to the summit with cello and cloth, with strings of blue material fastened against strong breeze, traipse up over short grass kept in check by livestock. A broken concrete column marks topmost, where yellow and red paint flag the selfie spot (popular), as the aware and unaware sit to hear music. Notes carry on, make writing. Here I am again – clouds above, dust below.