

The Sea, Lies Open

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Walks

For Philosophy on Stage #4, *The Sea, Lies Open* took the form of a performative installation and a series of three programmed walks – at dusk, midday and dawn - manifesting a consideration of the relationships between walking and thinking, landscape and health, horizons and aphorisms in Nietzsche's life, work and influence. Festival participants were invited to accompany Laura and Tess in order to attend to peripheries, relations, depth and non-human scale whilst walking together through Vienna city centre. Nietzsche is well known for the value he placed on walking for inducing creative thought; but we also walked with Allan Kaprow, Nan Shepherd, Roger Deakin and Robert McFarlane to attend to place beyond the habitual.

In particular, *The Sea, Lies Open* - which also included an installation in Studio 3 of Tanzquartier - considered the significance of the sea for Nietzsche and its continued effect on how we understand our cultural, physiological and philosophical horizons.

Can we walk at the periphery of the human and the nonhuman? Can we think at the threshold of the unknown? How does landscape think? And how can we think alongside landscape in our practices of walking, writing, attending?

The first walk took place at dusk on Friday.

Once the walkers had assembled, Laura and Tess read them a letter:

L: MY DEAR STRANGER,

T: MY DEAR STRANGER,

L: We are about to take an excursion. What you will walk, we have walked, and others will walk again, tomorrow.

T: We are about to take an excursion. What you will walk, we have walked, and others will walk again. We walk at dusk, noon, dawn.

L: noon, dusk.

T: I read his letters in order to write my own whilst she meandered through books, poems, wikipedia perhaps, keeping him all the while in her pocket.

L: She read his letters in order to write her own whilst I meandered through books, poems, wikipedia sometimes, keeping him all the while in my pocket. And as we have written to you, you will write to those who follow our route...

T: who write to those who follow their route

L: who write to those who follow... They called him "our luminous and transporting guide". We repeat, differently, the old phrases we can think with now.

T: All deep knowledge flows cold and will seem inaccessible to us here, buried underground on its way to a distant sea. If you cannot follow the river to the sea then streams and bathtubs can be made to produce the requisite depths... We will hear the bells again as we write, a dozen chimes repeating as the seagulls above remind us of the proximity of the water... The bells define the parish according to who can hear them; traditionally the parish is defined by

the auditory range of the church bell. We are a congregation.

L: Or, we are a circle. In the dark country, midday was drawn out by the bells, which chimed twelve around an expanded 360 degree horizon line, each steeple prolonging the noon, bleeding into one another to extend a point in time. But now my eyes say: enough!

T: We are about to take an excursion. I ask that when we walk together we do not speak, or not, at least, until we stop to reply to this letter.

L: In case we lose our way in the idle babble of the marketplace, dissolve into Black Friday, I ask that when we walk together we do not speak, or not, at least, until we stop to reply to this letter.

T: When we do stop, throw down your walking on the paper quickly, and with complete certainty.

In gratitude, your T & L.

Once the letter had been read, each walker was given a torch and invited to use it as they wished during the walk. It was proposed that we walk in silence.

Tess then led the walk: out of the Museumsquartier, down into the subway station, back up to the street, joining with the Ringstrasse, exploring a public garden before sitting down on benches facing a small pond.

Once seated, each walker was invited to write a letter to those who would walk the same route the following day. Letters could be written in German or English.

Lieber Wanderer,
Dear future walker,

I was able to enjoy my solitude and to enjoy being around other people, my fellow quiet walkers... Take this opportunity to reflect and to take a step back from reflecting.

I will hope for you that you don't have to suffer the pain of a cold November evening, with nothing on your hands, head or ears.

The second walk took place at midday on Saturday.

Once the walkers had assembled, each one was given an envelope containing a letter written by one of the walkers from the dusk walk the previous day, which they were invited to read.

Once the letters were read, each walker was given a small square compact mirror - comprising two mirrors of different degrees of magnification hinged together - and invited to use it as they wished during the walk. It was proposed that we walk in silence.

Tess then led the walk: out of the Museumsquartier, down into the subway station, back up to the street, joining the Ringstrasse, exploring a public garden before sitting down on benches facing a small pond.

Once seated, each walker was invited to write a letter to those who would walk the same route the following day.

Dear unknown friend,

I arrived at this letter in tiny fragments. Parts of the upside downs of ornate roofs framed next to green, twigs, a triangle of pavement and a small section of my cheek. The glance at the city was crystal bright – a torchlight of the bright day and it has led me back to the lake of a stranger's yesterday evening. They wrote to me too, and now I to you...

The third walk took place at dawn on Sunday.

Once the walkers had assembled, each one was given an envelope containing a letter written by one of the walkers from the midday walk the previous day, which they were invited to read.

Once the letters were read, each walker was given a pair of wax earplugs, which they were invited to wear.

Tess then led the walk: out of the Museumsquartier, down into the subway station, back up to the street, joining the Ringstrasse, exploring a public garden before sitting down on benches facing a small pond.

Once seated, each walker was invited to write a letter to those who did not walk, with the knowledge that these letters would be handed out to festival participants during the remainder of the day.

To those who did not walk,

We meandered at a slow pace feeling different surfaces and watching the city arise. The sun appeared through the gaps – almost self-consciously or according to a well-rehearsed script.

Did you miss something because you have not been with us?

What have you done instead?

Probably something inside... what about the outside? It may be less comfortable, maybe even painful, but as soon as you do something – crossing line, that you usually maintain as some kind of border – a process may start to evolve, that we may understand a long time later.

The Sea, Lies Open is an on-going collaborative process through which Laura and Tess are continuing to consider the relationships between walking and thinking, landscape and health, horizons and aphorisms.