

Interview with Alexandra Cassirer

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Speakers: Silvia De Teresa and Alexandra Cassirer.

Silvia: How would you describe your artistic process during the residency? Was it different from your usual approach? Which aspects came first, which later? What was challenging?

Alexandra: My artistic process is quite intuitive and fluid—it doesn't follow a strict methodology or structured routine. Unlike some of the other residents, who had well-defined daily studio practices, my approach is more about allowing ideas to emerge organically as I live, think, and absorb. I arrived at the residency with a concept already in mind—themes of deafness, language, and isolation—but the process itself unfolded through extensive reading and visual research.

Reading plays a crucial role in my work. It's a form of immersion that shapes my understanding and imagination. I spend months consuming literature on my themes, and this ongoing research forms the foundation of my creative exploration. Music, too, is integral—it is always present from the beginning, shaping the emotional tone of the piece. In this residency, however, the integration of sound came much later, which was a significant challenge.

One of the most difficult aspects was the uncertainty of the performance space. Typically, my creative process starts with the space itself—it dictates movement, sound, and interaction. I usually search for locations first, allowing their physical and atmospheric qualities to inspire the work. In this case, the location remained undefined until the last moment, which meant working in a way that felt almost blindfolded. This was deeply unsettling, as space is everything to me—it's the catalyst that brings a concept to life.

Silvia: Has your stay at the residency shaped the way you create art? Has your artistic process changed since you encountered the concept of choreomania?

Alexandra: The residency provided an invaluable opportunity for introspection and growth. It offered me a sense of clarity and confidence in my artistic practice. Prior to

this experience, I often found myself caught in cycles of post-performance doubt or even emotional exhaustion.

Choreomania as a thematic lens shifted my perspective significantly. My initial interest was in deafness, but choreomania prompted me to explore it through the angles of urgency, madness, and illness—concepts I wouldn't have necessarily associated with it otherwise. The curatorial framework of the residency guided me toward this interpretation, pushing my research into new, unexpected territories. The book by Kéline Gotman, which I read during my stay, also played a key role in shaping this perspective.

Though it's still early to fully grasp the long-term impact, one of the most significant takeaways is a stronger awareness of my own themes, methods, and direction.

Silvia: What role did choreomania play in your process? Was it a starting point, or did you integrate it later?

Alexandra: Choreomania was present from the very beginning. Without choreomania as a framework, I wouldn't have approached deafness in the way I did. This shift in perspective altered the way I developed the piece, leading to an exploration that became deeply entangled with notions of illness and near-madness—concepts I hadn't initially associated with deafness. Rather than seeing it as an illness, I was curious to approach it through this lens, amplifying the state of otherness and isolation.

Silvia: How do you think your artistic process would have differed between a collective residency and working alone? What were the advantages and disadvantages?

Alexandra: One of the biggest challenges of the collective residency was the lack of private studio. I usually work in solitude, which allows me to fully immerse myself in the process. At the residency, we shared a studio, which meant I was constantly observing others but didn't have the freedom to fully engage with my own methods—particularly in terms of sound exploration and improvisation.

However, this challenge also became a profound learning experience. Watching others work, especially artists with structured practices, was incredibly enriching. I was

fascinated by Aun's ability to seamlessly merge daily life with artistic creation, integrating also the discomforts of into her work rather than treating them as separate. I deeply admired Nick's disciplined approach to movement—his ability to enter the studio each day, put on headphones, and immerse himself in the search for movement, recording it as part of his process. While my process is more introspective, observing these different methodologies was both inspiring and thought-provoking.

Even the minor domestic challenges of living together contributed to the artistic process. Performance is deeply connected to life—how we react to situations, how we navigate shared spaces—and these experiences inevitably find their way into the work. In the end, despite the difficulties, the collective environment offered valuable insights that I wouldn't have gained working alone.

Silvia: Has the residency changed your thoughts as an artist?

Alexandra: Absolutely. Beyond shaping the specific piece I worked on, it solidified my artistic identity. Before this experience, I often questioned my practice—what I was doing, why I was doing it, and whether it was valid. This residency provided a sense of affirmation. It wasn't about external validation, but rather an internal shift.

For the first time, I left a performance feeling fulfilled rather than depleted. I now have a clearer vision of my themes, my direction, and the kind of work I want to create. While my practice will undoubtedly continue to evolve, this residency gave me a stronger foundation and a newfound confidence in my artistic path.