



## Meeting the Body-Space: an 11-step score

**Sandra Paola López Ramírez**

*Visiting Assistant Professor, College of Liberal Arts, Interdisciplinary Arts and Community Engaged Practices,  
The University of Texas at El Paso*

---

This score is an invitation for the improviser to attune themselves to the space they are in and enter into a relationship with what surrounds them. It can be used as a performance score or as an exercise to synchronize body, mind, and spirit before one. It was developed through many explorations during the year-long quarantine of COVID-19 as I sought to develop an active relationship to my living space.

The practice draws from many sources of my training and experience including but not limited to Authentic Movement, vipassana meditation, post-modern dance and the Judson Dance Theatre experiments of the 60s, and Action Theatre. More directly, it was heavily inspired by Natalia Espinel's Gramática del Aislamiento (Grammatic of Isolation) and her duo work with movement researcher Catalina Hernández Cabal (For more information visit <http://nataliaespinel.com/gramatica/> and <https://www.catalinahc.com/research-projects>).

In addition to using it as a personal practice, this score has been shared in small virtual group settings where it generated rich conversations about our embodied relationship to our living spaces, the land we live in and the socio-political implications of these interactions. The score has been revised after each encounter and I relate to it as an ever-evolving exploration that will continue to adapt as we slowly move back into physically sharing spaces.

---

Set aside 30-120 minutes of uninterrupted time to perform this score.

1. Read this set of instructions slowly and out loud, letting each word resonate in your mind and awareness. Set them aside before you continue. You may wish to record yourself reading them aloud, so that you can listen to each instruction at the appropriate time.
2. Place yourself in a comfortable position. You can choose to stand, sit or laydown in a way that feels balanced in your body, where you are neither leaning forward or backwards, or more heavily on the right or left side of your body. Search for what feels like a centre, acknowledging that this often-fleeting sensation will be different any

---

given time you look for it. Settle here and release any unnecessary tension in your body: any gripping, contracting, pulling, clenching... find yourself in stillness in a way that exerts the minimum amount of effort possible.

3. Close your eyes and allow yourself to transition into this moment. Let your body and mind arrive at the space. Focus on your breath, bringing your mind to the part of your body where it's most noticeable. This might be the rising and falling of your abdomen, or the rush of air flowing in and out of your nostrils, or the expanding and contracting of your chest. As you follow your breathing cycle, allow yourself to feel gratitude for the gift of breath...

On each exhale, continue to release any remaining tension. Let go of what you were doing before and gently bring your mind into this moment and the sensation of your body breathing.

4. When your mind, body, and spirit have quieted, and when you feel ready to move on, open your eyes slowly and register the information that comes through them. Without moving your body (or head) trace what is visible. Caress the boundaries of your space and the contour of objects with your eyes starting from the edges of your vision and working towards the centre (what is directly in front of you).
5. Gently, invite movement into your body. You can do this by taking deeper breaths and incorporating other body parts in the act of breathing, for example, lifting your arms in the inhale and dropping them down on the exhale. You can also roll your head and shoulders, stretch down towards the ground, or twist your spine. Move in a way that *feels* good to you right *now*. Leave judgments aside. *Listen* to your body and respond generously. Keep your eyes open and active as you do this, coming back again and again to the space you traced in the previous step.

Continuing to listen and respond to your body's desires, travel towards an object or place that drew your attention during the eye tracing (or that is calling you now that you have begun moving). Do this in whatever way you feel drawn to. You can walk, roll, crawl, swing, spin, stretch, skip, dance, tip toe. There is no right or wrong way to do this.

6. Use other senses to explore this object or place (smell, touch, taste, sound). Use as many parts of your body as you can, challenging yourself to gather as much information as you can about yourself and the object from this interaction.

How does it feel when you encounter your object with your back, belly, head? Even touching a surface with the back of your hand rather than the palm will give you a different sensation. What smells can you perceive in the materials? Is it quickly

---

identifiable (e.g., a pot that smells like garlic) or difficult to place? Can you taste it? Hear it? How are all these sensations giving you feedback about your body? Is something stiff, tense, tight, loose? Are you discovering (or remembering) that you really like the feel of silk, the sound of bells?

7. Take a pause and remain in contact with the object or place. Use this moment to consider its journey into your hands or body. How long did it travel? What materials compose it? What were their journeys? How many relatives (human, animal, plant) took part in the creation and transportation of the object and its materials? Who gave their life or way of life in order for this object or place to exist? For you to be in a relationship with it? Realize the vast network of interconnection we are part of and all the lives and actions we depend on. Extend your gratitude to every being that you can imagine in this process.

Resume moving and exploring the object with your senses. Continue to ponder these questions as you deepen the relationship between your body and the object/place. Try to hold all of this in your awareness as the exploration continues. If it feels too overwhelming, you can move your awareness between your imaginary exploration of interrelationship and your physical experience.

Are you bored yet?

Move past this point of “boredom” and continue to do this for at least 10 more minutes.

8. When you feel ready, shift your attention to another object or another place in your space and continue to move through it while exploring in this multi-sensorial way. Allow yourself to pause and notice stillness in different positions. Allow yourself to stay and explore anything that your body resonates (or not) with. Keep the exploration continuous. There are no transitions.
9. As you move and explore the space, let the shapes, sights, smells, textures permeate your body. How does your physicality change? — Does your posture shift? Tension subsides? Temperature rise? — Notice what parts of your body get activated with each encounter. Where in your body do you feel this object or place?

What channels of communication open? Can you allow a conversation to develop? A relationship between you and this object/place to emerge?

10. Continue in this manner for *enough* time. This will depend on the size of the space, your physical ability, your mental and emotional state, the temperature of the room, the time of day...
11. Take about 5-10 minutes to document your experience. You can use writing, drawing,

---

picture, video, or any other medium that suits you and your experience.



Sandra Paola improvising (2016). Photo credit: Laura Bustillos Jáquez



Sandra Paola meeting the body-space in her backyard in El Paso, Texas, USA (2021).  
Photo credit: Sandra Paola López Ramirez.



---

**Article Banner Image:** Sandra Paola performing as part of *The Road Home* at the Santa Fe Art Institute in Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA (2018). Photo credit: Bruce McKaig.

\*\*\*