

Brittany Whitmoyer
Grant Proposal
December 1, 2013

For the performative thesis portion of my MFA curriculum, I will be choreographing, filming, editing, and exhibiting a series of dance films or *Screendances* that play with audience perspective in a shared gallery space. The work will feature five dancers and an original score from Dr. Samuel L. Richards. The films will spread separately across four, thirty-two inch monitors, two, forty-six inch monitors, and a full wall projection. The choreography will be realized through a collaborative process, with choreographic prompts in the studio and out on location during filming and will be a combination of set phrases, structured tasks, and improvisatory movement.

My theoretical framework for this project comes from my personal history with dance audiences during a time of enormous potential for audience growth through non-traditional performance. I began making work in New York in 2008, right in the midst of our nation's financial crisis. As we entered a recession, people began cutting back on non-necessities. From 2004 to 2013, less than ten years' time, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn emerged as ways to communicate, create, and exchange content. This increased accessibility and production of both textual and visual imagery, including video, and allowed for instant gratification. I, like many of my small to mid-size choreographer colleagues, would spend an entire year on generating work, collaborating with performers, and securing funding to then fall short in audience attendance. My entire goal as an artist was to connect with and expand my audience. Understanding generational changes and adapting to technological growth in media communications and the arts was an important transition and thus began my research on

engaging new dance audiences through Screendance. Having started my education on multi-media and dance in my undergraduate studies, I continued to incorporate video into my live performances with my company, *bnw:dance*, in Chicago. I have however, further developed my film and editing skills as well as my knowledge of Screendance immensely as a MFA candidate at the University of Michigan.

This summer as part of my research, I learned that editing dance film can mirror contemporary approaches to choreographic composition and structure. I then questioned whether audience reception of video and live dance presentation followed this mirroring or resulted in radically different experiences. I staged a comparative study between live performance and dance on film, inviting a select group of thirty dancers and non-dancers to view the same work in different formats. The panel gave feedback, discussing the audience's focus for each performance, how non-traditional spaces and multiple locations can help or hinder the transformation of the performance, and how social media can be used in marketing dance. The results of my polling indicated that most non-performers are quicker to view a video or film before attending a live performance, but the merge of dance and film requires sensitivity towards the areas that are most crucial for the engagement of dance.

As a result of these conversations and my research, I am focusing specifically on the perspectives one has while watching either live or video performance, the relative degree of agency granted to the viewer and choreographer/editor, and how the senses of the eyes and ears are affected in similar or different ways. In a proscenium theatre setting, the viewer has control over what he/she chooses to look at in a live performance, but we take away that control when creating Screendance. We dictate what the viewer sees through filming and also within the edit.

For example, while a viewer can experience full bodies on stage and watch a duet in its entirety, an editor can choose to isolate the intimacy of the dancers' hands in the duet and then cut to their legs, eliminating the choice of where the viewer should look. While I believe that this ability is important for video dance, I am aiming to replicate the spatial flow of live performance on the screen by separating the film across multiple monitors. By negating the condensed option of the entire performance on one screen and expanding it, I will be playing with viewer's choice to look where they desire over the entire landscape. Multiple movement sequences may happen at once, giving the power back to the viewer to activate their senses and let their own unique perspective materialize as they scan the movement horizon distributed between multiple frames.

The sound score will be an important component as I am work towards staying true to the natural soundscape of the space. This includes the natural sounds of the moving body as well as the environment it surrounds, which will help maintain the sense of the ears. I will be pairing these sounds with an original composition from Dr. Samuel L. Richards, with whom I've been working closely with to match the tonality of the choreography and landscape, while concentrating on attaining a sympathetic response from the viewer.

As a second component, I am leaving this formal approach to composition and visuality for a more phenomenological perspective in an additional film, showing the first person perspective of the dancers performing the piece, using "action cameras" attached to each dancer's body. This perspective will show motion from the inside, perpetuating a kinesthetic viewership for the audience. On the back wall of the gallery, shared with colleague Maxx Passion, I will show a third component: the process behind the product in a series of both film and photographs.

The full installation, entitled *it all lives here (for now)* will take place at the Duderstadt Gallery on North Campus, at the University of Michigan. (The installation will run April 21, 2014 through April 26, 2014 and will be open to the public from 12pm to 6pm daily.)

I will share the installation space with MFA colleague Maxx Passion, juxtaposing Passion's process-driven work that shows product and my product-driven work that shows process. Within the gallery space, we hope to receive feedback throughout the week by encouraging on-line response on a website created for the installation and through social media. We will ask questions such as: Does the space feel welcoming? What drew he/she into the space? What does it mean for dance to have a lifespan longer than for an evening? Where does social media come into play with digital dance? How involved does the audience want to be in the sustainability of a performance? Do the films feel distant to the viewer? Do they feel connected to the performers and environment? My research, then, continues, during and after the show itself. Through the process of this work, I aim to forge new relationships between dance, film, and the audience, and to be better informed as a maker of both live performance and Screendance. As the installation title suggests, *it all lives here (for now)*, the hope is that even after installation closes at the Duderstadt Gallery, the work will keep finding new places to be seen and heard.

Cast List:

Lynsey Colden
Samantha Parisi
Maddy Rager
Ambika Raina
Thomas Roltsch

Estimated Costs:

See Attached Budget

Income	Estimated	Actual	Variance
Department of Dance	\$1,190		
Total Income	\$1,190	\$0	\$0

Expenses	Estimated	Actual	Variance
Duderstadt Gallery Rental	(In Kind)\$0		
(2) 60 inch Monitors	(In Kind)\$0		
(4) 32 inch Monitors	(In Kind)\$0		
(1) Projector	(In Kind)\$0		
Promotion: Posters and Programs	(In Kind)\$0		
Technical Manager (Shared with Maxx)	\$150		
AV Cords	\$50		
Composer Fee	\$300		
Opening Reception Food and Drink (Shared with Maxx):	\$150		
Costumes: (5) Sweaters and (5) shirts	\$50		
Photographer (Shared with Maxx)	\$150		
(2) Headphones for Monitors	\$60		
Vinyl Decals for Gallery (Shared with Maxx)	\$60		
Gallery Cleanup Fee (Shared with Maxx)	\$50		
(4) Roll of Gaff Tape	\$60		
Gas to and from film location (Canton, MI) (X2 Vehicles)	\$60		
Misc. Expenses	\$50		
Total Expenses	\$1,190	\$0	\$0