School of Music Theatre & Dance
Department of Dance
Thesis Paper Title Page

Points of Perspective

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts
(Dance)
in The University of Michigan
2014

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Table of Contents

Abstract

I began making work in New York in 2008, 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 formed as a way to communicate, create, and exchange content. This increased accessibility allowed for instant gratification. I, like many other small to mid-scale independent choreographer colleagues, would spend an entire year on generating work, collaborating with performers, and securing funding, only to then fall short in audience attendance. I was creating work to connect with and build my audience, so where were they? With the rise of internet accessibility and dance on primetime television, I wondered if the concert dance audience had chosen a different, more convenient route in supporting dance. At their lowest ratings, *So You Think You Can Dan*ce has 4.3 million viewers. Additionally, it was hard to compete with their multiple angle shots, popular music, celebrity judges, and a look at both the process and performance. Likewise, one billion YouTube users frequented the site monthly, with many of their viral videos being dance related. I had to acknowledge that these two models share free access from the comfort of one's home. The audience tally is unable to be surpassed in comparison to proscenium theatre performances. For these reasons, I began to question the benefits of accepting technological advances within our practice; with these advances, how can artists keep dance-making viable in a two dimensional world?

Methodology and Process

Through my five years as choreographer and artistic director of my company, *bnw:dance*, my work has always had a theme: human connection. Finding multiple entry points into this topic through the use of prop lighting, projections, collaborations, and even as far as "Skype duets" with dancers throughout the world, I found myself on the cusp of graduate school with a clear aesthetic and intention behind my work. It was my personal belief that adding technology to performance allowed me to cover more ground in audience relations and commonality. The screen has been around for ages and has moved from theaters to living rooms to mobile devices; it is connecting the world in a different way than ever before. 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. I wanted to share in the sudden expansion of human commonality (and instant gratification) through advanced technology provided by increased accessibility and production of both textual and visual imagery, including video. The past two years studying Screendance at University of Michigan has been technically and creatively challenging, but my work has transformed in a way I never thought possible.

As I experimented in ways to expand my audience reach, I played with the possibility of collaborating with bands, producing music videos, and practicing cross promotion. Though this became a viable option, my main questions still remained unanswered: How can we as artists sustain dance through the utilization of growing technology, which allows us to take advantage

of additional accessibility, while maintaining the visceral and kinesthetic feeling one gets when attending a live performance? Through my research in both Salt Lake City, Utah and Chicago, Illinois during summer, 2013, I came to a convergence of both worlds which would then lead me on my path to creating my thesis project, "Points of Perspective".

During my summer research, I studied with filmmaker and editor Simon Fildes who specializes in "cutting on action," natural soundscapes, and repetition within his practice. Studying with him, combined with a panel response to a controlled experiment showcasing live performance versus screen, I was able to pinpoint certain sensory experiences that made live performance preferable and that could be incorporated in my screen work. I left my summer research with the encouragement to use natural sounds in my Thesis and with the intent of playing with audience perspective in multiple capacities. My Thesis focuses 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.

"The 'most intangible emotional experience' the dancer is able to convey through metakinesis is made all the more potent in the Screendance with the addition of first person narrative, the use of the close-up to add intimacy, the sound of the dancers' breaths, and editing techniques, all of which allow the makers to cite or acknowledge what is particular to the possibilities of the moving image, adding depth to the narrative or text of the work, metaphors of place, memory, and site, encouraging the viewer to feel a kinestronic response." (Rosenberg, 69)

In *Screendance: Inscribing the Ephemeral Image*, Doug Rosenberg addresses the issues I began negotiating in my research. I used his points as a catalyst in my process. He discusses how much has been written about the way the viewer embodies sympathetic responses to live, dancing bodies. Comparatively, very little has been written about how that response and sensation is translated to the screen. He believes the viewer "must forego preconceived ideas about dance in order to fully embody the experience of viewing Screendance." (159)

I began putting my project into motion by doing a preliminary casting while sitting in on the dance department's general audition for both BFA and MFA shows for the year. The process was fairly easy for me. I had the wonderful fortune of working and connecting with many undergraduates in my first year, so I had a great sense of who would be interested and capable of the work required. Performing live on stage and filming a Screendance are wildly different and I knew I needed a patient, courageous, and mature group. In this particular audition, the graduates were selecting dancers along side of the graduating seniors. We agreed to teach a short partnering phrase, modern phrase, and jazz phrase to keep the audition brief while also seeing a vast range. Prior to this audition, I had been approached by interested seniors to be considered for my project and knew I would be selecting three of them. Therefore in the audition, I was only looking for two additional dancers. After the audition finished, I had several dancers approach me, interested in screen work, which ended up changing my initial selections from the audition. While I hadn't initially selected these dancers as options, I felt their respect and dedication to the job was more importantly than proficient technique. The dancers had a keen interest in all

3

aspects, not just dancing in front of a camera. They wanted to know about film techniques, editing, and the eventuality of where a dance film can live. This made my decision clear and finalized my choice of the five dancers I would use.

Through fall semester, I split my creative process between Grad Studio and rehearsals with the cast. Grad Studio became a great refuge for me every Friday morning. I was able to improvise, create material, watch dance films, and conceptualize the content of my own work. I had clear intent of the structure I would be working with through my process, as it was the basis for my thesis, but what about my content? I was just coming off the philosophical high of *Einstein's Dreams*, a fictional novel by Alan Lightman. In the novel, Einstein is in the process of discovering his theory of relativity and imagines multiple worlds: one world where time is circular, and people are fated to repeat themselves, another where time stands still. This novel and the novel *Cloud Atlas* by David Mitchell influenced my decision to turn back to human relationships and the pathways we follow, together and alone.

I became interested in roads, metaphysically and literally. I researched different pathways and their intersections, such as crossroads, cul-de-sacs, forks in the road and dead ends. In this research, I learned that the use of cul-de-sacs appeared in American urban planning in the 19th and early 20th century. Their purpose is and was to reduce the amount of car traffic on residential streets within the subdivision, which in turn would reduce noise and air pollution. This decrease in traffic, in turn, was thought to lower the crime and increase desirability, because in most cases the people who would enter the cul-de-sac either live there or are guests of those who do. This information was helpful in thinking about not only the roads themselves, but the people who

enter these paths and for what reason.

I was curious about dead end roads, where the gravel meets nature. In most cases, it marks a small trace of where something or someone once was: a leveled house where grass and weeds have now grown, or a one paved road that has now been abandoned. There is something interesting to me about being in a place that someone once cherished as their own and have since left behind. What event in their lives made them abandon that space? What choices did they make to steer onto a new path? This brought up the metaphorical "fork in the road." Based on the literal definition, "the point at which a road branches into two," it also gives reference to a deciding moment in life or history when an important choice needs to be made.

While my choreography would be about these relationships in space and time, the environment where they would perform because equally important at this point in my process. I decided to spend some time driving through neighboring towns, in search of these different roads. The climate became important through this exploration as well. The weather was getting colder and with the chance of snow on the horizon, it was important to find a location to film in the fall semester. I found myself in Canton, Michigan at the Lower Rouge Trails. The trails included pathways on paved roads, gravel, and flattened grass. There I was able to find dead ends, multiple forks, and secluded areas "off the beaten path." It was the perfect location for my intentions. I documented the space with my camera and brought the pictures into the rehearsal space to show and discuss with my dancers.

Rehearsals were productive even if the dancers weren't always moving. At the start of our process, I came into the space with a longer group phrase that took two rehearsals to learn. There

was no music, and it was meant to be completely in unison, so apart from learning the movement, the dancers had to work at breathing together and understanding the timing of the phrase as one unit. This movement became known as our "mapping phrase." It represented the unity of the groups in a searching state in the film. It would also be one of the only times they were all together in space, thus representing their common ground, but eventually their own individual pathways of choice.

From this place, my dancers and I would have conversations at the end of rehearsals about the positives and negatives of creating dances for the screen and where Screendance can live beyond the internet. My dancers also often asked questions about motive behind the location, and purpose in the movement. These questions were challenging and smart, which helped my process. Though this was my work, my cast was fully invested through the entire process, even collaborating on choreography. This became "our" work, not solely mine.

I split the group of five dancers into a duet and a trio and started with the structure of the duet. Using the delicate intimacies of touch, knowing that I would be able to exploit them further on video, I created a structured motif for the dancers to play with in space. I came up with six different points of contact, including "head to shoulder," "fingertips to fingertips," and "knee to hip." The dancers improvised a triptych with the points of contact, varying the dynamic and speed in each. Though the process, we eventually shifted the order from the original "A,B,C" structure to "A, C, B," which ended up being the final version for filming.

The trio was developed differently. I originally was playing with a group improvisation using only negative space and traveling along a specific pathway. The negative space was meant

6

to be apparent, but wasn't coming through with the group. I decided to test the idea with a rotating trio. I started with the first dancer, collaborating on creating a solo. I then added in the second dancer to create a duet by playing with every possible negative space opportunity throughout the solo. After successfully having a solo and duet built by this method, I took the duet apart and had the second dancer create their negative space movement into a solo. I then added the third dancer into that solo, creating another duet by playing with the second dancer's negative space. This process was repeated until each dancer had a solo and duet built out of negative space. From this, we developed four solos and three negative space duets, which would be added to the movement bank. At this time, I decided I would continue to create as much movement as possible and then create the transitional narrative between the sequences later.

Another choreographic device I used was something I like to call "copycat." Any dancer can be the lead improviser, and this time it was me. I did a free improvisation for two minutes and asked my dancers to stand behind me and pick up five to six movements. I then asked them to put the movement into any order, creating a short phrase. I was left with five aesthetically similar, but ultimately different solos. When grouped together, the disunity complimented each other. I videotaped the group and allowed them to watch. We were able to then agree up with movement would make for a compatible duet or trio.

For costumes, I knew I would be staying more pedestrian. Since we were filming on location and the intent of the dancers was to represent a more relatable persona through appearance and gesture movement, I wanted to find outfits that would be worn casually. I dressed the dancers for the season. Though it ultimately was coat weather during filming, I didn't

7

want them in outerwear on camera. I ended up going to a local thrift store and purchased layers. Each dancer wore two or three layers, including sweaters and button downs on top. They each provided their own pants and shoes. I also provided the dancers with either a scarf, a hat, or gloves. Though they didn't match, the dancers all had a common theme to their wardrobe with the type of clothing they were wearing. I also allowed them to wear some items that kept them looking more human, such as rings and earrings.

I reached out to Samuel L. Richards when I began thinking about how sound and music would influence my videos and my work. I had worked with him in the previous year on his dissertation, collaborating on music and dance, so I knew his capability and his aesthetic. Since his relocation to Salt Lake City, Utah, we spoke in depth through emails and phone calls about my intent as well as ideas between natural and artificial sound companionship. I spoke about my summer research and the connectivity between audience member and natural sound in the room. We decided to focus on the natural soundscape of the environment first and foremost, and he would compose an abstract, but subtle score to compliment and strengthen the work. I also decided that I would use the same score for multiple videos, so I asked him to complete a ten minute version that I would have the rights to, for editing purposes. I sent him rehearsal videos, costumes, location pictures, and other Screendance videos as inspiration. In the fall, he sent me the first three minutes and asked for feedback. I shared the music with the cast in rehearsals, but it was so early in our process and the music was quite ambient, so they couldn't get a feel for its final outcome. I asked him to keep creating and working and by our first film day, he had six minutes to share. I told him I would give greater feedback after filming and we would resume

after the holiday.

November was our first day of filming on location in Canton, Michigan. Having visited the location beforehand, I had predetermined four paths that I would use throughout the day. The temperature was cold and the dancers needed to keep their bodies warm, so I had to devise a plan to work as efficiently as possible. I brought four cameras into the field, one being an action camera. I decided the best option would be to simultaneously film the solos, duets, and trios, while allowing the dancers in waiting to use the action camera. As always, no plan is complete without minor bumps. For starters, one of my dancers was incredibly ill that day, but decided to tough it out, since this was so long scheduled. We all were mindful with her health through the day, giving her plenty of rest, fluids, and blankets to stay warm in between takes. Additionally, once we began in our first location, I realized how indecisive the natural light was being. In a matter of seconds, the clouds would part and the sun would wash out my footage. I would adjust my settings for the sun to disappear again only moments later. This notion eventually was going to my job in the editor more difficult. We shot the group choreography first, followed by dancer Samantha Parisi-Estavez's solo. Filming these two connected an abstract narrative in my head. I was able to see where I imagined the story going in that moment and proceeded to film then in that fashion. I next filmed Maddy Rager and Ambika Raina's duet, knowing that both Sam's solo and their duet could be portrayed as happening simultaneously in time after the group phrase. The temperature was uncharacteristically warm for November and this allowed us to take advantage and film for six hours. The sun setting was the only indicator that we had to wrap on that first day. We ended the film day with an exploration and improvisation on a bank

9

overlooking a large creek. At the end of day one, all of the action camera filming had been completed, all of the wide and mid shots of the solos, duets, and group phrases had been completed and the only thing that remained were the close ups.

Finding the time and scheduling a second day for filming became much harder. The semester was coming to a close and since I was working with mostly seniors, many of their schedules conflicted during that time period. We finally decided on a two hour period on a Sunday afternoon. Unfortunately, the day before we were set to film, a significant amount of snow had fallen, covering the ground and trees. We pressed on and decided to meet to film anyway and I spend the first part of the afternoon figuring out the best camera positions to capture the least amount of white coverage as possible. Since we were focusing on close up shots, it wasn't as stressful as it could have been if I was working with wide shots. The other issue is that the temperature was thirty degrees colder than the first film day, so my dancers were having trouble staying warm, especially in their costumes. I moved as quickly as I could, having each dancer perform three different tasks. A simple gaze, running in and out of the frame, and lastly, performing their solo, standing. I demonstrated where the distance from the camera to their body would be in focus, and out of focus, and asked them to play with that knowledge. I didn't know at the time, but the facial expressions and images from that second shoot ended up being some of the most powerful and striking footage in the culmination of my entire project. Finishing filming, I had over 22 hours of footage to import into the editor and begin the second half of the project.

In December, I was able to use the culmination of our Choreography, Performance,

Production, and Design (CPPD) class to test out a few experiments, prior to jumping into full editing mode. Through the semester of CPPD, I was able to correlate all of our projects to my Thesis, which was helpful in sorting out costuming, design of the space, lighting, and promotion.

Traditionally, the CPPD concert in December is host for live performance work, but since all my work was screen based, I needed to come up with a unique way of presenting my progress thus far. I ran with the lecture-demonstration model and formed an outlined mix of speaking, live demonstrations of my choreographic devices, and finally their transference onto the screen.

I began by explaining my intentions of the lecture-demonstration; the focus of my work being about the body and about the dance and that I would not only be showcasing dances made for the screen, but the choreographic devices used in the process. I showed and spoke about three short movement vignettes, the process of their creation, and their early transference onto video. Since I had just wrapped up our second film day, I had little to no editing done and was showing raw footage situated side by side. I spoke to the audience about my idea for split monitors, and an idea to split the actual video, so combined would make one full screen. The feedback about this idea that proceeded was helpful. I was looking at one environment and location as my screen and wanting to negotiate the expansion across monitors by splicing the frame. However, after the lecture demonstration, faculty members reminded me that all of the locations used in the making are part of the dance and video, so pulling the eye to different locations across the screens may be something to play with. This advice became helpful while editing the different versions of videos shortly after.

I took a month off after filming. I wanted fresh eyes and a ready perspective as I dove

11

head first into the editing room. I had ten consistent hours of footage to go through, which is quite overwhelming at first when the task is to narrow it down to ten minutes. Once I began, I created a weekly regimen of when and for how long I would work on it. Monday and Wednesdays became my routine. For the first month, I was only watching the footage from each of the four cameras and sifting the most important clips out and into a separate folder. From this narrowed down footage, I still retained over three hours of video. My next step was to sift the footage further, into three categories: behind the scenes footage, action camera footage, and footage of my central Screendance.

My focus then went to beginning the four monitor version of *The Bones of Your Beliefs*. To do this, I first set out to create a linear path between the movement, the bodies, and the environment. I played with the order of clips, where I wanted one clip to end and the next begin, and how to shift from location to location without disruption. I began to realize that I had filmed in sections, but without much transition. I ended up with fifteen minutes of footage, which needed to be trimmed still to ten minutes, but with no transitions. Each section jumped to the next and I was frustrated. I decided to leave it and brainstorm a solution away from the screen. As I reflected on my current state, I decided I had two choices: delve back into my footage to find the clips that will live as the scene changers, or end the scenes as they would in a stage production with a "blackout," or in cinematic fashion, by "fading to black" in the editor.

I inevitably decided on the first of the two choices. I had incredible face shots from our second film day, which became not only the transition for my longer scenes, but a substantial impact for the emotion and loose narrative that these dancers had together in space and time. I

12

was able to get the four monitor version down to ten minutes with the transitions included, but wasn't quite ready to split the clips between the four screens yet, so I left that to work on my second version of The Bones of Your Beliefs, the one monitor video.

As I spent a month watching the ten minute version, it felt too long for the one monitor version, and after an encouraging meeting with my Thesis Chair, we decided it we best for this version to stay between five and eight minutes. We decided together that I would tighten it up as much as possible and keep this version for festival submissions in the future, to further represent my work.

"In order to recorporealize the body, however, it must first be de-corporealized, and ideas about corporeality must also be interrogated." (Rosenberg, 55)

After reading that sentence from Rosenberg's third chapter, I went back to the editing room to reevaluate my process further. I asked myself if my work had relayed any urgency of a re-imagined body or bodies in motion. Though this constant reevaluation, I discovered I was leaning heavily on close ups. I was finding my niche and ultimately fine-tuning my personal aesthetic. Through this development, I was able to complete my one-monitor version and solidify the order of my four-monitor version of the film.

My next task was to decide which clips would live on each of the four monitors. I began by layering from one-track line to four on the screen of the Final Cut Pro editing program. I pulled segments and clips out of the original linear order and placed them above in either the second, third, or fourth row. I kept "scenes" together on one monitor and played with screening each of my dancers' faces on all four tracks. After I completed the four tracks, I moved them

each to a different "project" in the editor, thus creating four different files to export. Instead of continuing the editing process within the four "projects" right away, I decided to export them as they were initially to test my product. This became my first iteration of the four screens. Side by side on the desktop, I had four small videos lined up to play. Watching them, I was able to take notes where the gaps are, how fast the scenes were moving, where my particular eye was being drawn, and how to efficiently loop them upon completion. I repeated this process three times before I felt I had the four videos in their right place. I wasn't able to watch the four videos on the actual computer monitors until the Sunday before the gallery opened. This ended up playing a critical role in the success of this section of my work. Finally, I was ready to add the final iteration of the composed music. The final composed length was slightly over ten minutes, but the four-monitor version spanned just over nine minutes, so I had to trim and fade the track. This was an easy detail to alter since the tone and overall strength of the sound was more complimentary and not obtrusive.

Installation and Continued Examination

The week-long installation was held at the Duderstadt Gallery in the James Duderstadt Center on the university's North Campus. I shared my installation with my MFA cohort, Maxx Passion. We divided the space evenly down the center of the gallery, showcasing our personal work on each of our respected sides. I entered the emptied gallery space Sunday, April 20, 2014 to start installing the screens and videos. The size and emptiness overwhelmed me initially. I had to use some imagination to visualize the final look of my side. I began rearranging pedestals and angling televisions and computer monitors to my liking. To pair with my clean and sleek aesthetic, I had silver vinyl titles created for the entire space: larger titles for the glass exterior wall and smaller ones to represent each of my separate pieces. The most important aspect in my positioning tactic was to draw focus to my videos from passersby in the outer corridor, allowing just enough curiosity to draw them into the space.

The front of the gallery on my side hosted one of the two larger flat-screen monitors that displayed my "collapsed version" of my video. Though it was not intended as the central focus of my work, it was angled slightly towards the glass exterior of the gallery and thus ended up becoming the reason many entered the space on my side. What I had intended to be the central focus, my "expanded version" of the video, had alternatively become lost in the mix. The goal and effectiveness was being lost in translation. I became frustrated and searched for the small tweaks that would help bring this part of my thesis back to life.

Specifically what was happening with my "expanded version" was that people were confused if it was supposed to be interactive. They would approach the computer monitors, reach

for the mouse, and subsequently, throw off the timing of my screens by either pausing them or fast forwarding through the black. I observed and allowed this to happen for two days before making changes. I was stunned how quickly the single screen "collapsed version" had become the preferred version of my side of the gallery over the "expanded version". This translated to me as the way our eyes see movement on screen versus movement on a stage: the idea that an audience member draws a box around the stage, just as the screen boxes in the video. It was showing that the concept of four boxes was becoming confusing and distracting. The four screens had become fragments of the single screen version. Upon the suggestion of my Thesis Chair and after witnessing an array of reactions, I decided to take the time and re-edit the four culminating screens. I shortened and tightened the black pauses between scenes and screens to allow for more multiple screen action throughout the work. I reloaded the shorter version on Thursday of that week, which was exactly halfway through the gallery week. This change, along with some reorganization of the space, which came from the suggestion and help of a Thesis Committee member, completely revitalized the space. We removed the computer keyboards and hid the computer mice away from audience reach. We also moved a gallery bench to the base of the "expanded version," to invite viewers to the option to linger longer. Immediately the change in gallery spectator behavior was noticed. No one reached for the computer monitors, many sat and watched, actively moving their focus from one screen to the next, creating their own narrative in the process. I was thankful these changes were made and reflected on the fact that in a live performance model, I would have never had this option. The malleable structure of video in a gallery setting, allows for growth and understanding each day that we were open.

16

Further into the gallery, past the "collapsed" and "expanded" videos, hosted my "first person version" of my work. Also showcased on a large flat screen television monitor, the video was angled towards the center of the gallery space. The video was just long enough to keep the attention of the gallery attendees, without becoming too redundant. Bookended around the monitor, hung thirty behind the scenes photos on either end. These were taken by one of my performers, Samantha Parisi, on the second day of our shoot. The photos captured perspectives of me as choreographer and filmmaker behind the scenes, as well as the dancers in action and whilst in waiting, trying to stay warm. These photos led seamlessly into the back-wall video projections showcasing the making of my videos.

As an addition to the gallery, I gave an opportunity to a class of students I was teaching, to showcase their own work within the gallery space. The class was called *Dance Composition for Social Media* and allowed students to create short dance phrases, practice filming and editing, and post online using Instagram. These fifteen second videos tackled three different themes: wide shot vs close up, duets with the camera, and narratives. The fourth project was open ended. In total, the class finished with 25 video posts. In the gallery, I displayed these videos on a laptop, keeping them interactive. Gallery attendees could access all 25 videos and play them at leisure. Additionally, I included a note explaining the class and its importance to the growth of our digital dance culture.

The biggest hurdle of the space was inevitably the back wall projections. The combination of the large open space, glass walls letting natural light in, and white walls washed out the projections. Unfortunately, there was really no fix. In the evenings and especially for the

17

reception, after the sun set, the projections were vivid and eye-catching, but during the day, in comparison to the high definition monitors sharing the space, it became slightly lackluster throughout the week. If I were to do it over, I would consider an alternative to using a projector in that particular space, or think twice about a space that cannot screen from a projector as vividly as I needed.

Through the week, Max and I offered a five-question survey for gallery attendants. This was incredibly important for the continuation of my research. In the survey, we asked about the gallery space as a whole: did it feel welcoming? We asked if they felt connected or distanced in regards to the videos, what drew them into the space, and how often they attend dance events. In total, we received fifty-seven responses. The majority of responses indicated that both the gallery felt welcoming and that the gallery attendants would be likely to watch the videos again via the internet. These responses faired positive in respect to my research dealing with audience reach and appropriation. It affirmed my optimism for the future and potential home for dance on screen. The other positive feedback from the questionnaire was the response to how often the gallery visitors frequented dance-related events. Between the four options spanning from "first time ever" to "frequently," the majority was evenly split between "rarely" and "occasionally." This suggested to me that the openness and low pressure of the gallery instilled a newer dance audience that would perhaps never enter a theatre to see live dance.

The rest of the feedback from the questionnaire included reasons for entering, such as: general curiosity, interest in the spacing of the screens and objects, the "eye catching" movement, and the acclimation of all the technology and screens. One person noted that it

looked like a live Tumblr, which was a great visual.

By the end of the week, the gallery had over three hundred visitors passing through it. The closing reception was a great way to end the thesis week on a high note. It was a wonderful opportunity for friends, family, dancers, and faculty to enter the space and take the time to engage with all aspects of the gallery. The faculty responses were mixed, as I expected they would be. While some felt the space had been constructed well, others felt it to be sparse. Some were more concerned with the gallery space, while others were more interested in the content of the films. One constant response from all of the faculty, however, was that I was finding my niche in my art and it was becoming recognizable as my own. A large amount of experimentation and examination lived within this project, and with the trial and error came success and failure. This project, then, became just another step forward in my research and understanding of Screendance's place in our dance community as well as knowledge towards growth and continuation of Screendance. Rosenberg states: "Screendance is thus a process of both inscription and effacement." (68)

Reflections in Retrospect

In the midst of writing this, I learned that the only remaining large dance film festival in the UK had officially closed it's doors. *DANCE:FILM*'s director, Steph Wright, said in an email statement announcing it:

"Unfortunately Screendance festivals all over the world have gone this way in recent years, the great *ReelDance* in Australia and *Moves* in the UK for example."

While I do see the unfortunate trend and decrease in major dance film festivals, I am hard pressed to take these examples and make a general statement about the flux of Screendance in our culture. Rosenberg states in his book that "while Screendance is more difficult to identify or delineate movements or genres (much less to locate identifiable authorship separate from choreographic identity), this lack of self definition is cause for concern in a field that already teeters on marginality." (168)

If anything, this only adds to my curiously about distribution. In what venue is Screendance most likely to prevail? There are a plethora of opportunities to show and screen work, but one doesn't stand out over the other. Perhaps the festival model is dead for our genre, beyond the few notorious remainders (*cinedans* and *Dance on Camera*). Are galleries, small scale pop-up screenings, and curated online events the way to move forward? Despite this apparent reduction in dance specific film festivals, I was fortunate this year to be accepted into the *Greensboro Dance Film Festival* for my thesis Screendance, *The Bones of Your Beliefs*.

However, I have had previous films as part of "Women in the Arts" showcases in Chicago and experimental galleries in Ann Arbor, Michigan, so perhaps festivals are becoming one outlet among the rest, instead of the forefront of showcasing work.

In my future research, I plan to explore these venues and where the parameters and limitations lie within each, for the overall success of the film. By creating work that can live in each of those worlds, I not only continue my research in the inclusion of technology in our practice, but I add knowledge to my practice with each project. Technology can often mean convenience over quality, but I don't believe that has to be the case when transferring performance onto film. I hope through additional research, I can strengthen the credibility of video dance as a sustainable addition to live performance and engage new audiences to appreciate and support with newfound accessibility.

Reflecting on my two-year experience in this particular MFA program, I would say I definitely grew into "practice as research," which may have been the point of getting my graduate degree after all. I initially struggled with the formality of research and the theoretical jargon that was attached. Over the course of my journey, I had to focus hard on applying theory to my own work, understanding that I was already creating research based dance and that it all starts with a question. In time, I learned to be smart about how I used theory in my practice. It wasn't going to be solely about turning the pages of books, but instead, conversing with other artists across the country and across the world working in my practice and watching the trends of Screendance, from the prospective of filmmaker, choreographer, and audience member. By bringing back conversations and responses about where the practice of Screendance is currently

and where it can be, I found support and encouragement for my attempt to give dance a life

somewhere other than on a stage or in a theatre. This effort is not new, but it has yet to become

the norm or to establish a dynamic, mutually supportive relationship to live performance. The

continuance of formal compositional approaches, but with new modes of perception, pushes the

art one step further. As technology continues to advance, it can only aid dance further with the

amount of audience involvement that can be attained between both the physical and digital

world. My hope is that one day this will in fact become the norm, which will then allow us to

push the boundaries of dance even further elsewhere. This has always been the essential mission

of modern or contemporary dance. Rosenberg said it best: "It perhaps moves dance to a new

venue, but is still, in the end, seen as a product of dance." (142)

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