

Undergraduate Research Symposium May 18, 2018 Mary Gates Hall

Online Proceedings

PERFORMING ARTS SESSION - BODY TALK: RESEARCHING IN AND THROUGH EMBODIED KNOWLEDGE IN THE PERFORMING ARTS

Session Moderator: Juliet McMains, Dance

MGH 389

12:30 PM to 2:00 PM

* Note: Titles in order of presentation.

Learning Who We Are through Journaling in the Context of Contact Improvisation

Ana Maria Ii Georgieva, Senior, International Studies:

Europe, Dance

Mentor: Juliet McMains, Dance

Contact improvisation (CI) is a duet dance form based on the “dialogue of weight, balance, reflex, and impulse between two moving bodies that are in physical contact.” The inter-dependent disposition of the partnership in this non-choreographed dance duet constitutes CI as significantly reliant on the physical communication with another person. My own experience of vigorously practicing contact improvisation last year led me to begin journaling about my experiences with different partners and scores. I gradually developed a curiosity about whether (and, if so, why) observation and analysis of one’s own patterns of improvisational dance decision-making affect the dancer’s awareness of behavior patterns in other aspects of one’s life. I grew eager to answer the following questions. How does the process of observing one’s own patterns of behavior affect the improviser? How do the brain-body transmitters operate, archive and evaluate or filter our life history? And how does our history (including our cultural make-up, personality type, family history and gender) influence the ways we improvise? To answer these research questions, I assigned prompts to an enrolled group of four volunteers (three males and one female) who agreed to dedicate 2-3 months of their time to reflect regularly on their CI experiences and meet with me for a follow-up interview to discuss their findings. My primary goal of those designated “pathways” was to stimulate my subjects to draw conclusions about how their improvisations impact their identity and why correlations between their movement tendencies and personal lives might be developing.

Application of User-Centered Design Method in Improving Novice Modern Dance Audience’s Experience

Valerie Ziyi Huang, Senior, Dance, Human Ctr Des & Engr:

Human-Computer Int

Mary Gates Scholar

Mentor: Juliet McMains, Dance

This research investigated how User-Centered Design methodology, a multi-stage problem-solving design process, can be applied to improve the novice audience’s experience in watching a modern dance concert. Modern dance, in which each generation of choreographers rejects the aesthetic values of the generation that preceded them, can be difficult to access for novice audience members. User-Centered Design was utilized to develop solutions by involving the human perspective in all steps of this problem-solving process. My hypothesis was that designing the experience holistically surrounding the concert could be an alternative to years of dance training to provide a framework for novice audience members to become more engaged in watching modern dance. The research started with field observation, which incorporated contextual inquiries with multiple focus groups. Interviews were conducted with both experienced and inexperienced audience members, and surveys were sent out to a broader sample of audience members. I will present preliminary design solutions that address one of my key findings: the need for more personal communication among audience members.

Listen to the Body: Bodily Navigation on the Embodiment of Confidence

Hannah Lauren J Moujing, Senior, Psychology, Dance

Mary Gates Scholar

Mentor: Juliet McMains, Dance

Through my own experience of attending therapy sessions that evolve mostly through verbal communication, I often find myself caught up in words, not able to fully verbalize how I feel. Being a dancer, I experience how movement plays a role in extending my emotions and expression in ways that cannot

be described by words. I imagine how using the embodied knowledge I have learned as a dancer could bridge the expression of feeling and thinking towards my intended career as a psychotherapist. What would it look like for me to acknowledge movement to be a huge part of communication in therapy, to provide my patients with a larger vocabulary to really express what they feel? By conducting oral interviews in conjunction with movement prompt explorations, I have attempted to distinguish and contrast what my participants “think” from what my participants “feel.” The interviews, which were conducted with individuals from the Seattle community ranging in age from 18 to 70, centered on the concept of confidence. I asked each participant to define “confidence,” to move in a way that was “not confident” and “with confidence,” and to reflect on how they felt about the concept of confidence after moving. I will share preliminary findings from this study, contrasting the kind of knowledge people access when they respond verbally (more closely aligned with thinking) with the knowledge discovered through movement (more closely aligned with feelings).

Curation: A Performance

Gabrielle (Gabi) Boettner, Senior, Interdisciplinary Visual Arts, Drama: Performance

Mary Gates Scholar

Mentor: Scott Magelssen, School of Drama

Can arts administration be an artistic act? Can curation itself be considered a performative art? These are two questions swirling in my head as I prepare to embark on a post-undergraduate journey of freelance art making and arts administration. My theory is that these two things do not need to be conceived of as mutually exclusive, specifically, that there is an art to simply making art happen. Through an experiential research process, I, as a performing artist, shall perform the role of art curator, undertaking contemporary concerns, processes and logistics in the field as such, and will produce an exposé of art by other artists as well as a research paper detailing my experience and a performed ‘curatorial talk’ about the featured work. Via this process, I hope to better understand the balance of generating and producing opportunities that mutually enhance both my individual art practice, and the practices of others. While, ultimately encouraging more working artists to invest in the wider conversation of what kind of work should be shown in this moment.