

Hearing in Color

by

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ABSTRACT

The participatory and interactive nature of the “Hearing in Color” project unites people from different walks of life. My interest lies in creating a space for people to explore their creativity, think critically, and hone their own voice in a safe and collaborative environment. I have discovered that all art forms: movement, voice, visual or digital, stimulate possibilities for expression and enable people to move forward in new directions. To this end, my project fused multiple avenues of engagement, innovative dance technology, and alternative or site-specific locations to create a community-based project aimed at promoting dialogue and enhancing ties between several groups in the Phoenix area. In this paper, I argue that a multi-layered approach to community-arts and the use of advanced technology builds bridges for diverse populations to come together to participate and learn from one another. I also maintain that community exists among all communities involved in a process of community arts, not just the participants and facilitator. When community engagement and awareness are prioritized, a multi-layered approach creates the possibilities of growth, honesty, and understanding for all people involved.

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Introduction

In 2006, when I began the pursuit of my MFA in Dance, I knew I wanted to do something meaningful. My goals focused on community engagement, innovation, and relatable content for the audience. I hoped that the idea of connection within the community would carry on in some respect once my project was finished, and that all communities involved would experience and understand each other more fully than they did at the beginning of the project. For the past three years, I have broadened my experiences as a community-based arts practitioner, exploring many new and innovative techniques. During this time, I was involved in various partnership opportunities with community groups, all of which addressed challenges facing youth. These experiences helped to deepen my understanding of, and develop a foundation of skills for this form of work.

My interests lie in creating a space for communities to be creative, critically think, and dialogue about their present lives and new discoveries. The realization that I want to help facilitate this exploration through the use of art has brought my research to this point. Furthermore, I have discovered that all art forms: movement, voice, visual, or digital, stimulate possibilities for expression and enable people to move forward in new directions.

As I move forward with the explanation of this project, two specific terms, community-based arts and art technology must be defined. To understand the importance of community arts, I employ the definition of community-based arts from the Community Arts Network as, “Community-based arts is a creative

expression that emerges from communities of people working together to improve their individual and collective circumstances” (DeNobriga). Hendriks adds to this definition by expanding on how it manifests as a range of activities bearing familiar resemblances, such as storytelling, performance, dance, text, and visual arts (12). Embedded within community-based arts is the need to embrace self and others while becoming one of agency. Human agency is the capacity for human beings to make choices and to impose those choices on the world.

The field of community-based arts has expanded in recent years, becoming an important aspect of many academic arts programs. New development practices and methodologies in education, theatre, dance, and visual arts have been implemented to bridge academic institutions and surrounding communities. Arts projects have become an important part of larger urban development strategies. In addition to any creative achievements, projects are expected to have positive and measurable impacts on local social capital. In the United States, community-based arts are often produced in areas that face challenging circumstances. The importance of community-based arts in elevating marginalized voices to resounding volumes is proving to be a positive force in community development processes. Community-based art follows the post-structural turn in art and teaching, which addresses the histories, stories, and themes that lie outside the mainstream. Thus, community-based projects aim not only to share little or unknown stories, but also aim to de-center traditional or “normalized” histories.

The second definition of arts and technology, I intertwine into my ideas about community-based arts and why using the two together is an integral part of my process as a community-arts practitioner. In recent years, technology has proved a useful tool in raising critical awareness about identity issues. With the incorporation of advanced technology in community-based arts, new information about the ways participants can benefit from technology has increased. In the technological age, community based arts has been able to increase these possibilities by not only creating new spaces (i.e. virtual communities and accelerated communication such as blogging and Youtube), it also has increased the capacities of archival preservation by documenting experiences for global dissemination.

Currently, many articles and books have been written that look at media and technology as a more advanced tool for documentation purposes within the community. Also, the use of media has been highlighted to emphasize and portray a certain perspective for spectators to experience through the use of camera angles, use of sound and space, and other film editing techniques. Cite all of your references for the above claims. However, little has been documented thus far specifically looking at the arts and technology as a collaborative relationship that benefits community-based arts. More recently interactive theorists have begun to see the connection between the body and technology. As media theorist, F. Sparcino states, “The future of artistic and expressive communication in the varied forms of film, theater, dance, and narrative trends toward a blend of real

and imaginary worlds in which moving images, graphics, and text cooperate with humans and among themselves in the transmission of a message.”

In particular, technology is used in many ways to enhance the creative process of dance and other arts. For example, it can extend the vocabulary of dance creation and performance. It allows choreographers to create while in a different location from the dancers, or without using real dancers until the piece is ready to be set. The lighting design and music can work simultaneously to create an experience based on the dancer’s movement by using certain software such as MAX/MSP and SoftVNS which use motion sensing, video and audio manipulation. Some video techniques are based on camera angles, while others use production techniques to create illusions or enhance concepts about the choreography. “Performance tools are divided into two major groups: those that are an explicit part of the performance and those that are used to help create, design, construct, or control some aspect of the piece” (Bary 3). There is also the use of technology for documentation or development of the concept through storytelling or shifting points in time. For example, a dance piece may be taking place on stage while a video plays describing the movement or the character’s movement in more detail. The media may also be used to describe the nuances of the character or information about their past that leads up to the moment the audience is watching.

Although I emphasize the importance of technology, I was unable to use it in my earlier experiences with community-based projects leading up to the most

recent project. My recent experiences have consisted of working with three separate community youth groups. The first partnership was through the Youth Development Institute in Phoenix, AZ. This particular group included youth between the ages of 13-18 years. The group shared a common experience of sexual and/or physical abuse. Some of the youth had mental disorders and were heavily medicated, while others struggled with occasional disciplinary problems. Overall, the group remained stable during the course of this partnership, and we created a safe space to explore dance and other movement generating activities. At the end of the semester, ASU provided vans to bring the group to campus and present a walk-through of activities and flow of the class experience. This process sparked my curiosity to work more with youth communities specifically.

I also worked on two different projects in the spring of 2009 with students and Professor Stephanie Woodson from the School of Theatre and Film. The first project was through a community-based arts course consisting of nine graduate and doctoral students. The project took place at Black Canyon Correctional Facility and was based on collaboration with a population of female youth. During the seven-week residency, the class created a piece titled, “Ch-ch-ch Changes”. During this process, the group generated stories and movement based on the theme. This particular project furthered my interests in researching ways to sustain community-based practices within a community once the artist has left.

For my last project, I worked with Tumbleweed Center for Youth Development, a homeless youth outreach center. Under the Tumbleweed

umbrella, organizations for single moms, LGBTQ (Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender/Questioning), housing, and learning centers come together. The participants were youth between the ages of 18-21 years. The specific project created was entitled, “The Other Side,” which focused on the stories and experiences of the youth within the group. During the material generating process, the community explored questions such as: how they got there; where they want to go; and where they have been. Through many writing activities, improvisational acting/movement, and other exercises, we gathered unique stories and experiences in order to create the script. During the process, participant youth and instructors worked together to devise an original piece that aimed to generate awareness in the surrounding community regarding the lives of homeless youth. The final show was presented at the Phoenix Fringe Festival as well as the First Friday Art walk in April 2009.

My experiences with Tumbleweed, along with other dance and technology experiences piqued my curiosity about finding ways to use movement and technology with community-based arts on a more in-depth level. Due to my past involvement with the Tumbleweed organization, I proposed and created a new integrated arts project. “Hearing In Color” that combined movement, painting, text, and technology in August 2009. My partnership with Tumbleweed lasted for two years, and eventually, culminated in an evening-length presentation that incorporated media, dance, community members, and audience interaction.

The Tumbleweed interactive canvas project, which also was my thesis project, titled “Hearing In Color”, was created through a similar exploration of the topics addressed in “The Other Side,” but also included the entire community and not just the youth group, meaning youth, staff, volunteers of the Tumbleweed organization, a local dance company, neighboring businesses and community members in downtown Phoenix. The entire community was able to express their stories and dreams for the future, while creating the opportunity to experiment with technology and interactive art as a means to relate to one another. All of these areas, combined with my passion for community-based arts, created an opportunity for the Tumbleweed community and myself to accomplish the creation of an interactive canvas and gain a new perspective about community engagement.

Creative Process

Thesis Project: Interactive Canvas

The interactive canvas idea began in the spring of 2009. I had already been involved with numerous community projects and each one usually had a main focus whether it was dance or theater. These experiences made me want to create something that would give every participant an opportunity to express his/her perspective, including those who were shy or less receptive to performance. From this came the idea of painting and storytelling. I wanted to use my past experiences with technology and motion sensing while using movement and storytelling. The interactive canvas idea allowed my community group to express their stories using voice, paint, movement, and technology, although as the project developed, certain parts changed significantly due to cost, space, and dependability of the technological components.

I began testing and developing the functions and details of the interactive canvas earlier while taking a Performance and Technology class in the spring of 2009. During the summer, the interactive canvas was in its structural stages. Mark Ammerman, the technical director in the School of Dance, and I began sketching out blueprints for the easel and sensor placement on the canvas. We also began building the frames, and stretching the canvas. School of Dance faculty member John Mitchell and I began building the patches for motion sensing using SoftVNS visual software. The experimentation examined how many colors could be used simultaneously, specific differentiations in movement quality, light sensitivity,

and technology details such as wiring, camera functions, text and sound, as well as programming in MAX/MSP software. The interactive canvas used motion and sound as well as paint to create a multi-sensory work of art.

Participants approached the brightly colored easel and blank white canvas (6 ft. tall) which gave them four-color choices. Each bucket of paint had a paintbrush hanging over it. The paintbrush was held in place by a momentary switch. The momentary switch was connected to wires that ran up through the PVC piping and to the back shelf where the laptop, and microprocessor box were located. As the paintbrush was removed from the switch, the Max patch was activated. When the paintbrush touched the canvas and triggered the motion sensors, sound was activated. The peizos, a motion sensor device, were strategically placed along the back of the wooden framework of the stretched canvas. This location allowed for greater compression and a stronger vibration for the software to read. As the participant painted, the computer knew what color was being used based off of what paintbrush had been removed from a momentary switch.

The sound score consisted of people's feelings and voices about that particular color. For example: If the participant chose the paint brush that hung over the red paint, as soon as he applied pressure to the canvas while painting, he would hear a random person's story about their opinion or personal experience with the color red. Although the original idea for the canvas was to have the Tumbleweed community hear their own voices and each other, I decided to

expand the project and interview not only the participants, but other people within the Tumbleweed community, including the local downtown neighborhood that the organization called home, as well as with my dance cast and EPIK Dance Company. I began to realize that the canvas was the medium for community engagement, not just a tool for expression within the project. My ideas and definition of the word community began to look more like a web of groups connected to each other rather than separate “communities.” The idea of asking people to talk about color in a way that was not just visual was a bit baffling for most at first. I would ask them: How does the color yellow taste, smell, sound, feel? Some would look at me confused or wait for further instruction while others immediately went to all of the senses but used something that was still yellow in color to refer to. For example, I would ask someone to describe the color yellow with all five senses. They would begin with the “standard” answers such as the sun or a dandelion. Then I would ask, “What does it smell like?” And they would reply, “Lemon pound cake.” Of course, the object was still yellow. I began to challenge people to go further than the actual color with their descriptions. How does it feel? Where does it exist in the body? My favorite answer was from a young woman one evening after an open-microphone night at Conspire, a local coffee shop in downtown Phoenix. She went through each individual color as it refers to the chakras. I found that these answers could possibly spark a different approach to creativity as the participants painted on the interactive canvas. As the idea behind the stories began to shift, so did the Tumbleweed meetings. We began

to focus much more on different approaches to painting. It was amazing to see the individual strengths of each participant. They felt safe painting and showing their work at the end of each session.

The entire idea all began with a blue print created by Mark Ammerman and the possibilities of using this as a tool to engage communities. We had to think about the size of the canvas. Would it be horizontal and vertical? Would we need light? How would we hook up the paintbrushes? Where would the motion sensors go on the back of the canvas? How many would we need? We chose black, white, blue, green, red, orange, purple, and yellow. We had to think about how many colors we wanted on one canvas. What colors would complement each other?

Hearing in Color Cast

As the idea of the interactive canvas became clearer, the beginning stages and approaches I would take with my cast through this process also unfolded. The cast of “Hearing in Color” included current students, recent graduates of the School of Dance, and members of the Epik Dance Company: Crystal Bedford, Grace Gallegher, Jerome Upayokin, Elisa Redcliffe, Alyssa Brown and Ramon Soto. I selected these people based on their group cohesion, passion for community work, creativity, and comfort with improvisation, which were equally critical for the choreographic process. Asking not only for my cast to dance, but also write, speak, and paint, quickly created a very connected group. They were asked to move into a vulnerable place on more levels than technical ability. Each

person's fear surfaced and her/his growth occurred at different times throughout the process, which was clearly reflected during their performances together and in the connectedness that they experienced after the show. They were asked to be reflective about their positions in life in comparison to the homeless youth. I shared my interviews and the Tumbleweed sessions consistently during the project, which I believe helped with the reflection process.

Two-hour rehearsals were held biweekly from June 2009 until the concert on December 4 and 5, 2009. Initially, for logistical reasons, rehearsals were held at Arizona State University. In November, we rehearsed in the Pie Factory building. Rehearsing in the Pie Factory helped the dancers to understand the flow of the evening and also gave them a clearer understanding of their restrictions. I was able to place my ideas into the intended space and design the space in a way that would give the audience a range of viewing choices.

The Tumbleweed Process

As mentioned in the introduction, following the First Friday Art walk in April, I continued to work with the Tumbleweed Center beginning in August 2009. We met twice a week for a total of three to four hours. I began working on a new project with an entirely new group of teens. The new project was based on the creation of an interactive canvas, color, and how we experience colors differently. I wanted to create something that could be used among a community of participants whether they enjoyed singing, dancing, acting, or painting. My

hope was to create something that anyone would feel comfortable using and adding to, in order to partake in the project.

The sessions for Tumbleweed participants would vary from week to week. I originally structured many of the sessions based on my past experiences with community-arts projects. But the nature of the sessions began to shift as the project developed. It became about the participants rather than a formula I had learned. Some days we did yoga and guided imagery, while other days we focused on different approaches to painting. I focused on what seemed right for that session based on the participants' needs.

Along with the interactive canvas project, the Tumbleweed clients also participated in a hip-hop workshop with a local dance company, EPIK. This workshop took place on September 27th 2009 at Sway Dance Studio in Phoenix, Arizona. The workshop took place from 3-6PM. There was an hour and half class, a showing of the choreography learned, and a question and answer session that followed the class. The Q and A session was not only to talk to EPIK company members but to hear the voices of the Tumbleweed group as well. I believe the workshop was an enjoyable and eye-opening experience for the Tumbleweed youth but especially for the EPIK company members. This experience again changed my definition of community in this project. Another circle of people were involved and the experience directly affected our engagement with, and awareness about the Tumbleweed group.

The Tumbleweed participants also had the opportunity to present and sell their work at the November First Friday Art walk. The show was very successful although only one participant sold his work that evening. The Tumbleweed youth were able to interact and talk about their work with people that evening. It was rewarding to see the excitement and courage among the group as they talked about our past sessions and art work with strangers. I could see they had confidence behind their work and in their bodies. It was one of the first times I had seen this throughout the duration of the project.

The Pie Factory

I presented my Master of Fine Arts thesis performance as a site-specific project that was a shared concert with fellow MFA candidate, Melissa Canto. The event was held at the Pie Factory on Grand Avenue in downtown Phoenix. There were two shows, one on a “First Friday,” which was open for the entire public, and one was presented the following night for a more intimate audience. The tech week was held November 30th- December 4th with the show dates on December 4th and 5th, 2009.

The publicity and marketing process began in the beginning of November. Through online networks such as Facebook, MySpace, and Craig’s List, as well as flyers and posters passed out among the ASU main campus, downtown and First Friday venues, we promoted the event two months prior to the performance. I wanted to take my work off the campus to make dance and theatre accessible to a wider audience. I began to think about ways that public space has been used

throughout time as a gathering place, but also as a place of resistance.

To this end, I looked to the work of Marvin Carlson and Michel De Certeau to help unpack our embedded perception of performance/dance and “non-traditional” space. Marvin Carlson points out the many ways that performance during the late Middle Ages “existed as an important part of urban life without any specific architectural element being devoted to its exclusive use” (Counsell 170). Carlson’s observations disrupt the notion that the proscenium arch has functioned as the traditional space for performance. Instead he points to the use of “public space” as the customary place for performance. Additionally, Michel De Certeau examines space as a site of potential resistance of the status quo or hegemonic discourse in his outline of strategies and tactics in public space (32).

There is a difference between strategies and tactics. Strategies require a subject (an enterprise or city and so on) to be separated from an environment. They also require a 'proper' place [later described as a regularized, rule governed, institutionalized location] from which to generate relations with an exterior (their competitors or clients and so on). Strategies lie behind political and economic rationality. Tactics, on the other hand, have no 'proper' localization, and are not strongly separated from the other. Indeed, they often take place in the territory of the other. They are opportunistic, always on the watch, and involve combining disparate elements to gain a momentary advantage.

Many everyday practices are tactical in this sense. They often involve victories of the weak over the strong, via 'clever tricks, knowing how to get away with things, maneuvers...'(xix). These in turn are based on really ancient, maybe even natural survival techniques. It might be possible to classify tactics according to classifications of rhetorical techniques.

Originally my intention to do site-specific work was not to question the “normative” manner of performance but to make it accessible to the public and engage as many people within the community as possible. I didn’t realize my view of performance had become much more aligned with Carlson’s view of public space. I believe a large part of this is due to my interest in urban movement and where this type of movement is considered the norm. I am also aware that I subconsciously was using tactics as mentioned by Michel De Certeau to connect separate communities together using the site-specific space. Thus, public space can be a site of public community building and/or public resistance.

Successful content-rich site-specific choreography heightens the awareness of a site’s physicality, surrounding community, and connects the audience to the performers and location in an intimate manner. As an artist, my objective for setting work inside Bragg’s Pie Factory in Phoenix, Arizona was to produce a meaningful and conscious work about the type of community that resides around the area of the building. Seeing the Bragg’s Pie Factory for its present day use, I saw the space as an art gallery instead of its past life as an actual Pie Factory. I wanted to show movement in an art gallery setting that

corresponded to the work but became a part of the gallery once the dance was finished. I had several goals for this project. I wanted to allow the audience to enter the art gallery space during the First Friday Art Walk to see the exhibit of art work made by the Tumbleweed Youth, bring awareness about the homeless youth population in Phoenix to the downtown community, and include the audience members as part of the performance.

After confirmation that we would be able to use the Pie Factory for the December show, I began to look at the possibility of my dancers using paint and their own personal stories to create work in each performance. My cast and I began to explore action painting also named “gestural abstraction”. This style of painting uses techniques such as spontaneous dribbling, splashes or smearing onto the canvas, rather than being carefully applied. The resulting work often emphasizes the physical act of painting itself as an essential aspect of the finished work or concern of its artist. As Yves Klein states, “For me, each nuance of a color is in some way an individual, a being who is not only from the same race as the base color, but who definitely possesses a distinct character and personal soul. Nuances can be gentle, evil, violent, majestic, vulgar, calm, etc. In sum, each nuance of each color is definitely a "presence," a living being, an active force which is born and dies after having lived a sort of drama of the life of colors (Klein).

The piece was titled “Hearing in Color Part I”. In each performance the paintings and experience were different. I strategically placed the solos around

the room, starting each solo about twenty seconds apart in an effort to have the audience move through the space as each solo began. Some audience members watched the entire process from the midpoint of the room while others ran back and forth trying not to miss each section. And some watched only one solo in its entirety before moving on to view the remnants of movement from the large black wooden canvas set up throughout the space. Each dancer's solo was personal to his/her own experience with the color they chose. Some dancers talked about the color from their childhoods, others talked about the connection to their last name, while the last soloist created a beautiful poem about gray to end the piece. What I found most successful about the piece was the opportunity it gave for the audience to be a part of, or witness, its process. The energy in the room was very unique and unlike any piece I had created previously. The process was more organic and creative, the performances were more intriguing, and the audience connection to the work was more intimate. Altogether, the site-specific work resonated with my natural artistic inclinations and goals.

As the first set of solos finished, the focus shifted into the center point of the space. Dance designed for proscenium stages may limit a choreographer's creativity and audience's experience. The choreography may feel bound by a rectangular stage where movement is viewed only from one side. However I found that centering the audience after having them scattered throughout the space would place emphasis on the level of importance and focus for the next piece. There were six pools of light. I had hoped to show the motion sensing in a

clearer way but there were limitations due to one of the lights burning out just before the solo began. Each down pool of light represented an individual's experience along my process with the community project – a dancer from EPIK, one of the Tumbleweed Youth, a local poet from the downtown area, and even my own voice from the very first day of the project when no one showed, but I met a young man whom I helped to connect with the Tumbleweed organization.

Initially, I attempted to use docudrama techniques, which included movement investigation and the embodiment of the experiences that I had had with each person along the way. Docudramas tend to focus on the facts of the event, as they are known, and use literary and narrative techniques to flesh out the bare facts of an event in history to tell a story. Docudramas model after documentaries that aim to tell real-life stories, instead of fictional stories.

The final piece was based on real recordings I had obtained from the social workers working at Tumbleweed. In less than two hours, two men broke down the rules, expectations, fears and communities that exist among homeless youth. They shared first-hand experiences with me about the reality of these youth and their daily lives. This particular interview shifted my perspective the most throughout the twelve-month process of working with Tumbleweed. This new knowledge influenced my decision to set the piece on my ensemble. I let the cast listen to all of the interviews with the hope that they could begin to comprehend at least some level of the realities of these young people. While we sat around my laptop, safe in our dance studio, these youth were having life-

changing experiences that were completely removed from our daily lives. I think that because I was so open about the Tumbleweed process with the cast, they successfully embodied the idea as much as they possibly could to perform it those two evenings at the Pie Factory. They also grew very close during the four-month process, specifically because of the sensitive subject matter they were addressing in the dance.

Analysis of the Work

Financially, there were many obstacles throughout the process of creating this project. I had always known the concert would cost quite a bit more due to choosing a site-specific venue. Production costs, stage-managing, along with tech crew and space rental were all taken into consideration. I did not however realize the amount of money that would go into the technology side. Considering the fact that we were trying to create something from scratch left the choices wide open. And with trial and error came a price. Being unsure of how many cameras, motion sensors, and microprocessors would be needed began to make the invention process expensive. It was all a guessing game until we could narrow down a system that would work effectively with the least amount of error. This need for security and reliability with the technology worked to my advantage as I was much more interested in technology that was not wireless, making it less expensive. The only down side was the restriction of the wiring set up, which was limited to the availability of power outlets in the space.

The same challenge occurred with the painting materials. From the cost of canvas to buckets of paint, the budget kept growing. The desire to have a blank canvas at the beginning of each show meant more paint and canvas materials. Although I had a large portion of paint colors donated to my project, many of the colors were not specific to the project. We did however utilize the materials during the Tumbleweed sessions while experimenting with action painting and other various activities.

I also went into this complex project lacking knowledge specifically in technology and painting techniques. I believe that not understanding my limits with technology allowed more room for my project to be innovative. Instead of asking what I couldn't do, I asked if it was possible. John Mitchell was very influential in my process, and especially guided me in terms of software structure. As for painting, I consulted an artist/scholar, Rico Reyes, for advice about the action painting process with my Tumbleweed sessions and dance cast. Reyes also came to Tumbleweed and my cast rehearsal to discuss color and painting techniques. This lack of knowledge created an honest state of vulnerability for me with the dancers as well as the Tumbleweed participants. This vulnerability kept my partnerships equal throughout the process. Although I was facilitating the project, we were all creating and realizing it together.

Collaboration with fellow MFA candidate Melissa Canto also proved challenging for a variety of reasons. One major obstacle was due to sharing the Pie Factory space and availability of rooms. The original plan was to separate the pieces throughout the building, giving the audience an opportunity to experience the small rooms differently from the main front space. As the time grew closer to the concert, the only space available was the main room for both concepts. Although I feel we did well with sharing the space, I do recognize that we had different expectations for the evening. This forced us to compromise both of our visions.

Ethics

Working with a vulnerable population such as Tumbleweed, I frequently questioned how the clients were being represented in my work. How to protect the vulnerability of their stories while sharing them with a larger audience was a reoccurring theme and point of consideration for me throughout the process. I understood that this population's privacy - more than most - needed protection and a sensitive approach. I worked hard to ensure that no confidence was breached. While I feel I upheld this end of my commitment, I am also aware that I was not always able to follow through with other commitments that I made. During the process, each client was told they would sell a painting. Due to the lack of follow through with one person's verbal agreement, one client did not receive payment for her painting as promised. While I made every attempt to secure the money, unfortunately the payment never was made.

Though there were many challenges during this project, I feel the strengths balanced the entire process. Specifically, the innovation of the project was directly connected to the level of motivation for everyone involved. The process became organic as I learned to let go of expectations and become interested in the process and actual presentation. By letting go and working outside of my comfort zone, I was able to create and learn so many things simultaneously. Finally, working with my group fully in a partnership allowed for the potential of the project to be realized.

Conclusion

”Hearing in Color” focused on community engagement with the Tumbleweed Community, a Phoenix dance company EPIK, a team of professors and ASU staff, and the dancers in my cast. I wanted to develop this project into the most community-engaged experience that I could facilitate. Understanding that not all people within a community express themselves in the same way, I was eager to find as many ways as possible for every participant to feel comfortable but also challenged. In an effort to do this, multiple mediums of expression were used. I wanted the audience to feel as if they were there the entire time and an integral part of the process. This project encouraged audience members to have a visceral experience rather than be passive viewers. “Hearing in Color” is a work that strived to engage the viewer as an active participant and to become a part of the community involved with the project’s vision.

The main insight I gathered from writing this document was that these communal artistic processes acted as a catalyst to trigger events or changes within the community. Through the idea and innovation of the project “Hearing In Color,” an organic community process evolved. This process was “counter” to normative expectations about hierarchical relationships? due to its “side by side” nature especially in terms of complexity and the relationship of the facilitator to participants. The emphasis of equality greatly affected the creative process, original goals, and final outcome of the project. As the facilitator, I allowed the project to take shape by way of the experiences of those involved, not only how I

wanted to frame it for others. This experience has directly influenced how I work as a choreographer, teacher and community-based practitioner. I realize any experience or piece of work must embrace those participating in an equal manner to show the authenticity and honesty of the project. I have identified that honesty in my work is very important. Choosing to emphasize the process and its honesty creates vulnerability. This experience of vulnerability presents an opportunity for the audience and everyone involved to relate to one another more fully.

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APPENDIX
TUMBLEWEED RESIDENCY OUTLINE

The Theme is based on Colors and Experiences of Life:

Work with Tumbleweed Youth, employees and volunteers.

Project Concept:

To generate material (text, drawings, movement) that will influence and inform the process of an interactive mural. The majority of the mural will be created during the residency but the last two sections will be completed during the November First Friday as a live interactive art exhibit that will be shown in the Tumbleweed Gallery as the Youth and audience participate and create together.

Proposed timeline:

August 17th - November 6th, Meeting times: 2x a week, 1-1.5 hours per session- Sessions will include movement, improv, writing and other group activities. The last six sessions will be the mural making process.

Participant Residency Goals- introducing participants to storytelling; connecting with emotions; learning to listen to the stories of others; and deepening their understanding of the role of art as a medium of expression. Most importantly participants will learn to work within an ensemble, and be in community with each other based on creativity and respect. Additionally, students will be given the opportunity to sell their paintings and other artwork at the November and December First Fridays Art walk in Downtown Phoenix.

Facilitator Residency Goals- learning to facilitate storytelling, arts, and technology. Learning about the experiences of a population that I am affiliated with, and facing the unique challenges and opportunities that come from working

with Tumbleweed. Learning new ways to process, dialogue, brainstorm through obstacles WITH participants regarding the project. Allow for the process to be organic and open through not only the facilitator's vision but also the community involved.

Regarding the flowing population- the end product is not contingent upon fixed roles therefore this project lends itself to a transient population. Turning an obstacle into an opportunity. A brief review at the beginning of each class will happen for all participants to get on board with where the project is at in its process. The mural is created from multiple perspectives, if participants enter later or leave during the process the information they create will still be shared as an experience within the group collaboration. If a participant misses any of the activities, it will not negatively affect the final experience or process.

Possible Risks for Participants/Organization- Students may experience issues of vulnerability around sharing stories and generating movement. The project is on a timeline that eventually ends, possibly creating a sense of abandonment and disbandment of the group, leaving feelings of alienation and loneliness.

Overtaxing of employees time and effort and/or other program disruptions.

Possible Risks for Artist- Damaging of personal equipment (not easily replaceable). The project could demand additional time than I am anticipating, which may have unforeseen consequences. As a facilitator, maintaining intimate but healthy boundaries with youth.

Color is the representation of how they associate and feel deep emotions and thoughts. The color becomes a metaphor for an inward expression that moves beyond words, expanding the modes of communication beyond verbal or written to include 'alternative' forms of communication.

Examples of what will be explored:

Color and Storytelling:

How does the color "yellow" make you feel?

What is your favorite color? Why? When did you decide and why?

Share a time in your life that you connect with the color "yellow"?

An opportunity.

A challenge?

Color and Body:

Close your eyes and picture the color "yellow" in your body.

Where do you imagine color to be?

Does it travel through your body, or remain in one place?

What emotional feeling does this bring up for you?

Create a gesture (a single movement) to express this feeling in your body originating from that place.

Color and Sound:

What is sound that you feel when you think/feel the color "yellow"?

Does it repeat or change?

Where does this sound exist in your body?

Connecting Color/Story/Body:

How might you tell your story with the gesture you have created?

What is one word from your story that you can connect to your gesture? (use a demonstration from yourself). Using the rhythm of the sound you created start the gesture to that rhythm and use the phrase (akin to the activity “Machine”).

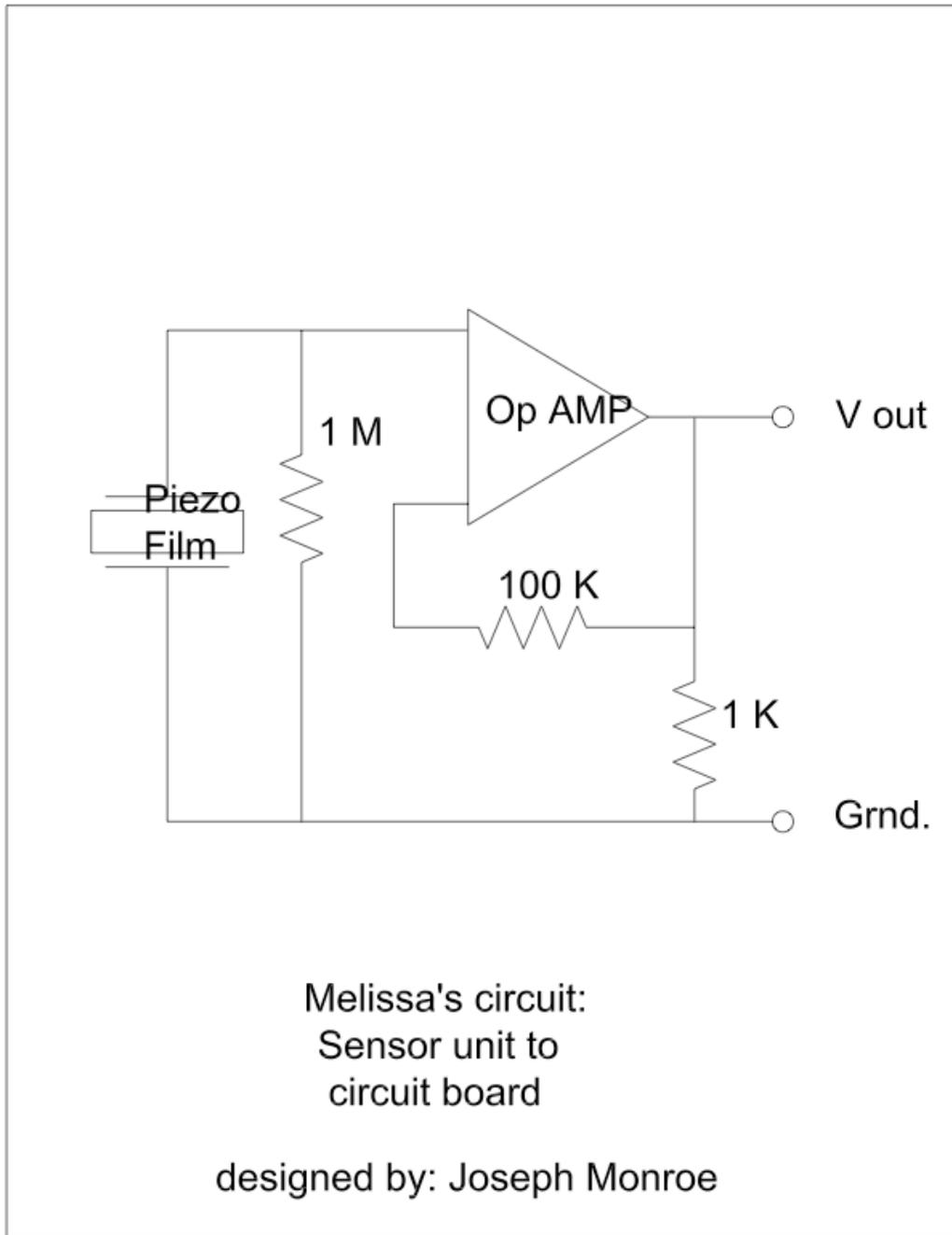
These activities will then be distilled into a comprehensive interactive art piece that utilizes the color as a metaphor for the composite story/sound/movement.

Each student, according to various technological mechanisms, will create a mural that uses the color as a form of expression of these deep experiences. Thus, the ‘mural’ becomes a colorful text for the experience of the “artist” based on a communal understanding of color. In this way, color expands the vocabulary of communication, and creates a medium for dialogue between personal narrative/sound/movement. Each participant will be in dialogue with both their own experience, and the experience of other participants throughout the mural making process.

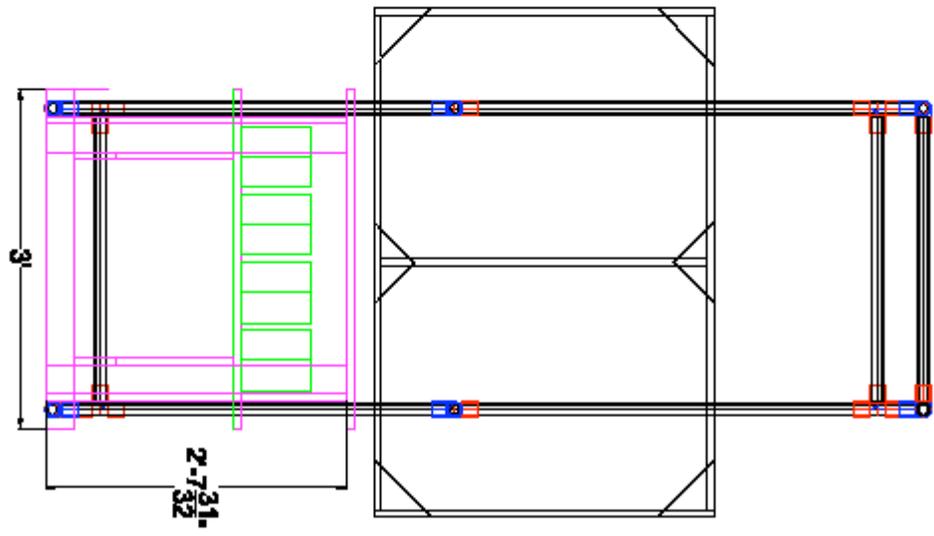
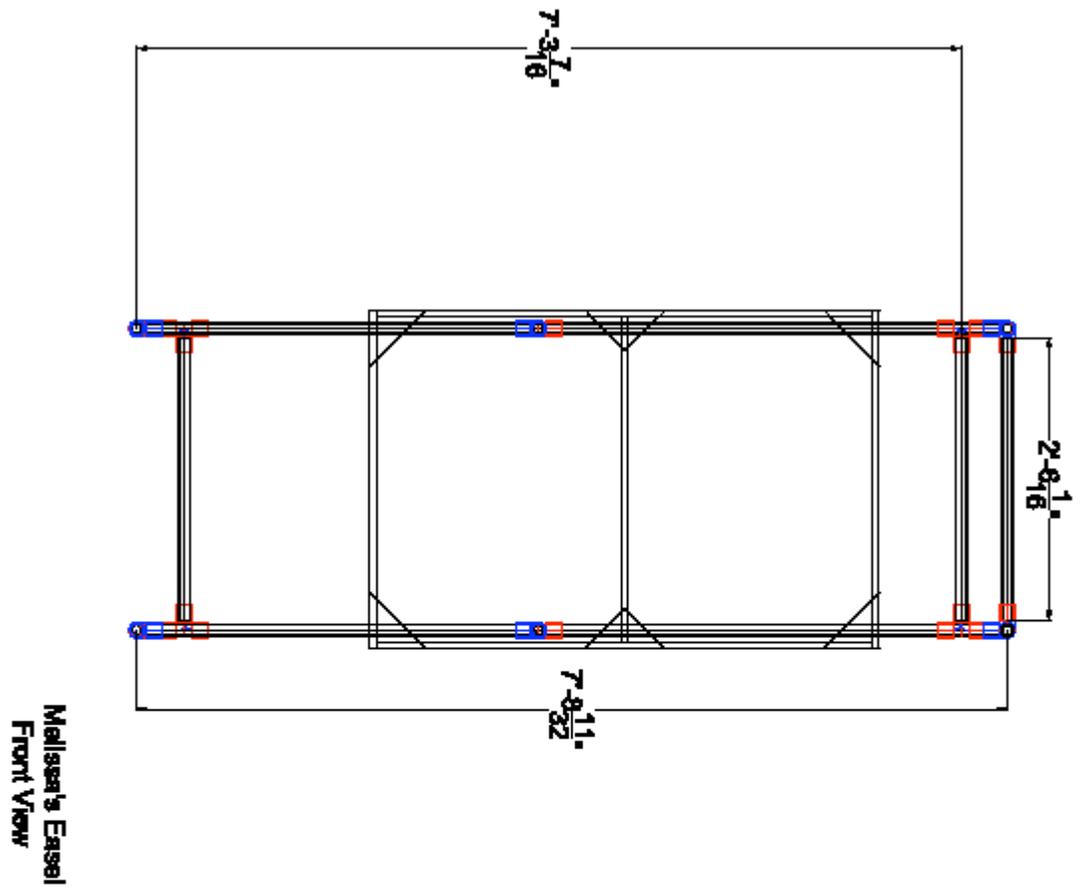
Relationship building:

While I cannot quantitatively state how participants will grow/change/benefit from the experience of storytelling/arts/technology experience, the foundational importance of ensemble and community building will provide a safe space for participants to explore emotional and vulnerable experiences. This type of support, while akin to that of the support staff at Tumbleweed, is different, as it

positions Tumbleweed youth as mutual support systems for each other - thus, creating stronger relationships.



Melissa's Circuit: Sensor Unit to Circuit Board



Melissa's Easel

