

Places That Shape You

by

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ABSTRACT

Places That Shape You documents the development and experience of composing and presenting *Places That Shape You*, an evening-length dance performance examining the relationship between culture and urban spaces, inspired by the physical parameters that cities provide for our lives. In the performance, a blend of postmodern contemporary movement vocabulary, text, projection, a mattress, 12 phonebooks and an overhead projector were used to tell a story through the contrast of objects both obsolete and current. Musical collaborator, Austen Mack, created an original score that worked in partnership with the movement, advancing the unfolding of concepts about public and private spaces, community, memory, expectation and abstraction. In collaboration with six dancers, the choreographer conducted movement and archival research investigating personal stories, urban theory, somatic experience, place-making, and memories left in the spaces people inhabit, culminating in an evening length performance.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this document to my mother, Connie Jean Willcox, and my father, Michael Wayne Willcox.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My applied project would not have been possible without the love and support of my family, friends, cast, collaborators, graduate cohort and my graduate supervisory committee. Thank you.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

My life experience has shaped and informed my understanding of movement in daily life. Ever since I can remember I have been excited by the systems that exist in cities. As a child I would count cars and people walking on the street, ask my mother to let me give her directions from a map (this is before the smartphone) and take my friends and family on tours of places I had discovered by being a tourist in my own town. I was raised by my mother in Austin, Texas and this is where I fell in love with cities. Throughout the course of my youth we moved around the city many times and I experienced a myriad of living situations including a studio apartment, a garage apartment, several condominiums, and two years in a house. When I was in third grade I lived in a houseboat for a year. Each time we moved to a new space there was a shuffling of boundaries, expectations and cultural understanding. The constant changes of our living situations encouraged me to identify with an understanding of home in city spaces outside of my living quarters. Shifting my way of thinking eased any stress around moving because the city remained fairly constant. My affinity for cities continued into adulthood as I visited and lived in new cities that became my home. I would take the time to get lost, thinking about the pathways of the sidewalks and parks, visualizing them from a bird's eye view. I often had discussions with friends, family and strangers about their experience in the city, enthusiastically sharing my thoughts on urban functionality and the quality of life that can be created through city planning. I fulfilled my curiosity by observing my community, reading, listening to podcasts about cities, and attending public tours of cities I lived in.

My understanding of cultural boundaries and expectations was blurred when I learned about breaking the fourth wall in performance; which I first experienced through modern art. I remember the moment the fourth wall broke. I was at the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth and I saw Carl Andre's "Slit," two rows of square steel and copper tiles attached to the floor. I mischievously wanted to walk on it. I didn't see a sign saying not to walk on the tiles or marked boundaries like I was familiar with on other sculptures, so I went ahead and walked across it. Nothing happened... I looked around wondering if I was going to be escorted out of the museum, but surprisingly a gallery attendant didn't ask me to step away from the sculpture nor did an alarm sound. I had just broken the fourth wall and it felt amazing. As a dancer, my first instinct was to dance on it, which I did. My second instinct was to learn about the ways this form of interaction can exist in dance performance. To a bystander, me stepping on the sculpture might have appeared anti-climactic, but in that moment, the way I viewed performance and artistic boundaries was forever changed.

Learning of modern and contemporary artists such as Richard Serra, Donald Judd, and Yayoi Kusama changed the way I viewed performance, interactive art, and dance as a whole. Artists such as these provoked my conceptual understanding of performance, boundaries, and rule breaking, which made me question the way society controls bodies and defines dance. Consequently, my definition of dance broadened, and I started seeing the sidewalk etiquette and simple gesture used in conversations as dance and choreography. Pedestrian movement pathways and gestures are movement elements; culturally constructed and loaded with information in regard to the time period with which they are associated.

CHAPTER 2

CONTEXT

Cities are always evolving and continually changing. These changes create an interlocking system that unfolds as the constant push and pull of decision making contributes to the urban metamorphosis. Creating *Places That Shape You* developed from my desire to investigate how people are impacted by the evolution of the city, the ways movement pathways and proximity develop into cultural code, how spatial understanding is reflected in our culture, and how people create ideas and definitions of home. Upon the inception of my applied project I embarked on my research with these questions in mind:

1. How does urban landscape consciously and unconsciously affect people and culture?
2. How can movements in urban spaces influence my use of postmodern choreographic tools?
3. How can I deepen my understanding of urban environments through movement research?

These research questions demonstrate my interest and curiosity in the connection between my interest in cities and its relationship to postmodern contemporary movement vocabulary and dance making. My desire to interrogate the subject matter in a live performance stems from my passion for movement as a form of expression and its ability to motivate the audience to contemplate the systems we live within.

Finding Jane

A friend who was aware of my love for cities recommended I look into Jane Jacobs, an urbanist whose leadership and ideas influenced economics and urban planning. Finding Jane Jacobs created a sustained spark that has kept me interested in her, as well as city dwellers ever since. My project research was greatly inspired by her book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, which was published in 1961. I was drawn to her love and commitment to the betterment of the future of cities and hoped that I could find a way to do the same through the power of dance and performance.

The Death and Life of Great American Cities outwardly advocates for her proposed community-centered approach to urban theory. Jacobs' approach prioritizes city dwellers by proposing solutions for safe, proficient, and enlivened urban planning. She values the power of observation through lived experience and is predominantly concerned with "how cities work in real life, because this is the only way to learn what principles of planning and what practices in rebuilding can promote social and economic vitality in cities..." (4). Jacobs is primarily concerned with the tangible experiences that happen in urban spaces and uses this information to conjure methods and suggestions which aim to improve the functionality and daily life in cities.

Jacobs steps away from formal theory and brings forward her keen and eloquent observations on city life to generate her own philosophies on city planning. I connected to this approach because of my interest in creative storytelling, using "real life" experiences to tell a larger story in connection with urban landscapes. Throughout my movement research I drew from short personal stories as a metaphor for many of Jacobs's principles. For instance, dancers told personal stories, often accompanied by movement,

highlighting the varied occurrences that are experienced in daily life, such as looking for parking, crossing the street or spending time at home with family. This compilation of stories created a body of narratives which provided insight about the variation of individual experiences; a metaphor for Jacob's belief is that there is no singular formula or answer for city planning. Each situation is unique and should be addressed independently for its respective juncture. She insists that, "It is misleading to consider any two city parks actual or duplicates of one another, or to believe that generalizations can thoroughly explain all the peculiarities of any single park" (90). In this case Jacobs addresses the individuality of each park, and the focus on distinctiveness in her philosophy is prevalent and constant throughout her solutions, observations, and critiques. As a dance artist I am drawn to the role of citizens in these junctures, including the people who both inhabit and utilize the urban landscape.

My impetus for researching the personal experience of movement in urban spaces was to uncover the connection between movement in our daily lives and the deeper stories that exist within the overlooked movement patterns that live within us. People are constantly moving around cities, creating a daily dance through pathways based on the landscape and the people around them. This experience of moving through cities contains a valuable somatic understanding of the spaces we inhabit. Jacobs states; "Cities are thoroughly physical places. In seeking understanding of their behavior, we get useful information by observing what occurs tangibly and physically, instead of sailing off on metaphysical fancies" (95). In agreement with Jacob's statement, I sought a physical movement understanding of urban spaces as a form of direct observation. A large majority of my research occurred through tangible and physically embodied investigation

recreating movement patterns such as walking to work. In one instance, these walking patterns evolved into a partnering exercise in which a dancer is carried parallel to the floor, walking along the wall.

Through Jacob's accessible writing style, I was reminded of the value of being relatable and effective. Her directness and aggressive tone helped me work toward finding a more relatable story progression that remained connected to the content in a non-linear fashion. My creative habits are naturally inclined towards abstraction, however her clarity of ideas and expression pushed me to explore becoming more explicit in the performance of my research.

Recognizing Spatial Relationships

I was drawn to cultural anthropologist Edward T. Hall after learning of his method for dividing and defining spatial relationships. This interested me because of its direct connection to both choreographic methods and cities. The ability to define spatial territory provides information that aids in determining what is occurring in each physical relationship. Hall pioneered the development of the four proxemic territories: intimate space, personal space, social space, and space territory. In Hall's book *The Hidden Dimension* he remarked "Perception of space is dynamic because it relates to action- rather than what is seen by passive viewing" (115). Movement relationships are defined by the viewer, acknowledging that movement between people and structure activates the space. His four territories are a tool to help investigate the relationship between space and culture, which varies from culture to culture.

I view the territories and draw my conclusions through a Western lens. In this, the intimate territory consists of close proximity, ranging from actual touch to a foot and a half away from the body. Here, one can feel thermal body heat, sight is often blurred, and the skin provides tactile communication. The personal territory expands from a foot and a half to four feet away from the body and is at times referred to as the “personal bubble.” In this space touch is possible and the distance is common for conversation. Social space is between four to ten feet away from the body. It includes shared places such as churches, workplace or schools. Here the voice tone is normal, and touch is not expected. The public territory is 10-30 feet away from the body and found in spaces such as parks, highways and shopping malls. Beyond 30 feet is still considered the public territory but is divided into an unofficial distance referred to as “not close” (126). Both the social and public territories adhere to socially constructed cultural codes that influence the activity in those places. While the intimate and personal territories are also culturally constructed, the relationships are bound to vary depending on the specific individuals or places that are sharing the space or touch.

In my creative process, I explored Hall’s proxemic territories through the lens of urban landscapes such as streets and districts, through personal experiences using bodily storytelling and spoken narration, and through literal exploration investigating movement manipulations of definitions and terms. The relationships cultivated between the dancers and between the concert sections were inspired by these spatial territories, ultimately impacting the progression of the performance. The structure of the performance used a non-linear collage, progressing as the focus zoomed in and out of the proxemic territories in an unpredictable fashion.

Demystifying Constructed Systems as a Form of Equity

Having always been an inquisitive person I am drawn to others who challenge and question. Curiosity led me to French philosopher and social theorist Michel Foucault, who was interested in power relationships found in society. Once I started studying ballet at age 13, I noticed that I felt like I could jump higher in the dance studio with higher ceilings. This is where my first thoughts on the ways spaces shape bodily movement began. Now I see this in football stadiums, traffic systems and in the dance classroom. Foucault's philosophy supports the idea that everything is constructed, including the body, which he concludes is constructed by society over the span of one's lifetime. He believes that control over the body starts at a young age and is socially constructed; as seen in a school classroom as children sit in rows at their desks facing their teacher or later in life, with soldiers lined up ready to take orders. Additionally, architectural structures are comprised of walls dividing space and imposing a predetermined order to navigate within or alongside. These social systems construct the body to play into power systems, often assisting those in power and reinforcing current systems.

Foucault addresses English philosopher Jeremy Bentham's ideas around the panopticon and expands on them, breaking down the power systems in the panopticon by relating it to society as a whole. In *The Foucault Reader* anthropologist Paul Rabinow explains Foucault's elaboration on the panopticon stating, "The panopticon offers a particularly vivid instance of how political technologies of the body function... It is also a particular organization of space and human beings, a visual order that clarifies the mechanisms of power which are being deployed" (18). The panopticon is an architectural prison design consisting of a large tower, surrounded by a circle of prison cells. In this

scenario, the social roles are as follows. From the tower, the guards have a vantage point where they can view the prisoners, seeing into the cells. The architecture is designed so that the prisoners can see the tower but cannot see the guard. If the prisoners cannot see the guard but the prisoners believe they are being watched by the guard, by participating in this power play they have already given their consent to participate in the constructed system. This poses the question: Does there need to be a guard in the tower in order for the system to work if prisoners are always reacting as if they are being watched?

My desire to highlight Foucault's ideas about participation as consent within my project led me to use metaphor to personify his ideas in relationship to the city. I used elements of Western transportation systems, such as traffic signal countdowns, driving laws, and transportation options, as a metaphor for cultural control and order over bodies in time and spaces. Furthermore, I investigated walls as a constructed form of order and division. Foucault states, "Power is articulated directly onto time; it assures its control and guarantees its use" (160). Time gives our lives order; culturally developed schedules impose control and simultaneously establish a common ground on society as a whole. Foucault influenced my use of vantage point as a point of departure from which the audience moved through the space. Additionally, my reading of Foucault contributed to the physical understanding of time control that I developed using crosswalk countdowns, and led to the development of storytelling in regards to transportation and traffic laws.

CHAPTER 3

MATERIALIZATION

The presentation of *Places That Shape You* took place in a large dance studio that is commonly used for performances. The space's malleability created a level of intimacy through close proximity between the dancers and the audience. I approached the development of the choreography as a site-specific work in a space equipped with an open area, an overhanging balcony, and a large white wall. I used the wall as a projection surface and as a backdrop to create shadows of the dancers' movements. I also used it for partnering sections in the choreography, during which dancers would lean against the wall while performing a movement phrase. The space is primed for the use of multiple vantage points, which I utilized by moving the audience in the space during the performance, controlling their body placement and inviting them to try a new perspective both physically and mentally. Directions that told the audience where to go and what to do were written on the overhead projector and read aloud by a dancer.

I created figure 1 as a representation of the evolution of proximal relationships between the sections. I based it off of Hall's "Chart Showing Interplay of The Distant and Immediate Receptors in Proxemic Perception" (126). Like Hall's chart, the x-axis of the graph represents the distance away from the body measured in feet and lists the spatial territories accordingly. The y-axis is a chronological list of the sections of the work, each of which has a horizontal bar that represents the primary territories that exist in that section. This is a visual display of spatial relationships throughout the work and I will reference it through the following section to provide context.

Section 1: Entry Point

The performance starts with the audience standing on the balcony looking down to view the dance below. A mattress lays flat on the ground while a recorded text was played. One by one the dancers perform a casual and intimate 'end of the day' bed flop, laying down on the mattress as if they had just gotten home from a long day. I use the text as an entry point for the audience. At the start of the work I explicitly describe the personal experiences with urban landscapes that are central to the performance. I foreshadow what is to come while concurrently creating intimate images of relatable personal moments, like laying on one's bed alone. The recorded text remarks:

There is nothing quite like coming home to your own bed

What makes this place home?

What has shaped your day?

Was there traffic?

Did you run into a friendly neighbor?

You were stopping and going with those around you?

You have memories of loved ones in this space

People you love have passed in this space

These spaces free you

And these spaces contain you

These places shape your day

And become a part of you

They become a part of your city

They become a part of your home

They become a part of you

After the text, the mood changes dramatically. The movement becomes playful and dancers weave through one another making passes across the mattress; diving, rolling, and jumping with a comical camaraderie resembling a slumber party set to indie synth-pop. As seen in figure 1, the dancers explore Edward T Hall's "intimate territory" and "personal territory," setting up a sense of community and intimacy within the cast. Once the song ends, one of the dancers walks to the overhead projector and turns it on. The dancer reads the transparency, which is written in subpar handwriting, stating "Please come find a seat," and gestures to the chairs below. This is the first time that I give the audience direction from the overhead projector, setting up a system for how the audience will be receiving information and how they are expected to react to it. Moving the audience around the space to different vantage points becomes a recurring theme that allows the viewers to physically experience Foucault's theory of body control through a learned experience.

Section 2: Summer in The City and Moving Target

The audience members migrate down the stairs to their chairs, the dance continues as everyone settles into their seats. Nineteen-sixties Pop music becomes a recurring theme within the work, which is reinforced by the dancers' retro inspired costumes and obsolete prop materials such as phonebooks and the overhead projector. Set to the tune of The Lovin' Spoonful's song "Summer in the City" from 1966, the dancers engage in a playful disagreement about where the mattress should be placed in the space.

As the disagreement progresses, it results in full body wrestling, illustrating the larger conflict between those with different opinions. The wrestling unveils a tension and conflict that becomes a sustained undertone in the performance. The music then abruptly stops, interrupting the dancers' scuffle, and the projector is turned back on. The dancer reads the text, "Take a look around, your point of view may be different than your neighbor's," then turns off the projector as the music continues. This interruption of text repeats several times in an unpredictable pattern, keeping the audience uncertain of what is coming next.

The unreliable timing of shifts between sections and layers creates a rhythm of change that keeps the dance evolving, a theme that becomes consistent throughout the work. As the last text of this section is projected, all of the dancers stand in front of the projector with the text falling on their bodies and faces as they look at the audience, and the written quote from Jane Jacobs is read aloud, exclaiming: "Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody" (238). The statement is at the core of the work and is presented clearly to help the audience take a moment to absorb this integral message.

Next, the dancers hold the mattress against the wall while one dancer stands in front of the mattress and runs side to side. As she darts back and forth, the dancers holding the mattress shuffle behind her as they try to track her movement from side to side. This imagery is a metaphor for the city as a moving target, portraying the rapid changes that arise within city planning. One of the dancers steps out of the mattress shuffle and quotes Jane Jacobs, saying, "Cities are a laboratory of trial and error, failure and success," she then continues talking, sharing a relatable story about trying to park her

scooter. Then, a solo dancer runs forward and is abruptly tackled to the ground with a heavy auditory thud; the first of many sounds that occur from within the dance.

Throughout the work, auditory sounds often serve as transitions into a new idea or a shift in sections. The dancers also recite a numeric countdown throughout the work which is based on the countdown in crosswalks. The use of countdowns is connected to Foucault's discourse surrounding the power that exists in society, in which we consent unconsciously to perceive and experience time in the way it has been socially constructed.



Places That Shape You Performance Photo 1

Section 3: The Wall Section

Spaces we inhabit have a history shaped by the dates that bridges, parks, and public spaces are erected. These factors impact daily life and play a role in crafting cultural landscape and movement. Even something ordinary or unassuming like walking on a sidewalk or drinking from a water fountain has an impact on the way we experience the space. Erected facades, such as walls, are loaded with cultural meaning and legacy. I have always been interested in walls as a form of inclusion and exclusion and explore these concepts in the “Wall Section” of my dance. I investigate walls from a sociopolitical and literal perspective through contemporary movement and sound. For part of the soundscape of my piece, I recorded a person reading aloud the definition of a “wall” from the Merriam-Webster dictionary, as a literal expression of the wall, and used interview clips from former White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer explaining plans to build a bollard wall along the border. These text samples were paired with pulsing electronic beats driving the rhythmic movement.

The Wall section uses a broad focus from Edward T. Hall’s social and public territory (Figure 1) by zooming out to consider a space in a broad and less intimate manner. The dancers engage in virtuosic partnering that moves quickly with heavy weight sharing that pushes against one another, much like a body pushing against a wall. Abruptly the music drops off and changes into the sound of drone echoes. In this moment a duet begins with a rapid change in body territories and movement quality. The duet is lit by a spotlight to emphasize a more gentle and tender relationship between the dancers as they explore the closeness of Hall’s “body territory.” In life we often progress in and out of varied territories, always passing through each to get to the next. While this

progression is mostly linear, we rarely skip a territory, much less two consecutive territories, so here I wanted to play with doing just that by jumping from “public territory” to “body territory.”

Section 4: Phone Books and Exclusion

Suddenly the use of vantage point reappears. As a dancer stands on the balcony looking at a large yellow phone book, he tells a story of someone coming into his work asking to have their phone number removed from the phonebook. He explains how he did not know how to resolve the situation while flipping the pages of the phonebook and looking at the audience. As he speaks, another dancer placed directly below the balcony is slowly balancing and falling over with auditory thuds. Next, a recorded interview of a conversation between the falling dancer and I to plays. As it begins, the dancer on the balcony drops phone books over the ledge, landing them perilously close to the falling dancer on the ground. The dancer continues balancing to the point of falling over but is never hit by the phone books.

In the interview, I ask the dancer who stood under the balcony: when was the last time you saw a phonebook? I also ask if her family is in the phonebook and posed the question, “Who is not listed in the phonebook?” This illuminates the reality that not everyone is included in city documentation, city life, or choice making. The dancer dropping the phonebooks near the dancers on the floor is an example of Hall’s “Personal Space” intruding on “Personal Space” in an aggressive manner that compromises personal space and boundaries of inclusion (Figure 1). The close calls and loud thuds as the phonebooks hit the ground are jarring to audience members who, I observe, jolt in surprise to the noise. The interview question “Who’s not listed in the phonebook?” is

quickly repeated as the dancer rapidly flips around and falls to the ground as fast as she can, creating a tension in the repetition that is broken with a great relief when she lays on the ground breathing hard.

She catches her breath, sits up, tells the audience her address as it was found in the phonebook, and then in a reminiscing tone, tells a story describing her home; painting a straightforward and clear picture of what her childhood home looked and felt like. When crafting the text, I kept the storytelling specific and factual, but open enough so it could be relatable. She says, “There was a really big tree right next to the house with lots of shade. Everyone would sit outside and spend time together...and the house was the most lovely shade of yellow.” When developing the text, I found that in this case keeping it slightly vague could reach more audience members. Using words like ‘everyone’ or leaving out the specific city left room for the audience to fit their own memories into the piece and connect to the performance.

Section 5: Red Light, Green Light

When the dancer said the word “yellow,” a yellow light appears on two dancers who are moving slowly in small circular motions and gradually traveling towards the audience. She continues calling out traffic light colors, “yellow,” “green,” and “red” in an unpredictable order that controls if the dancers stop, go, or float. This dynamic is suspended while another dancer proudly walks on stage and tells a personal story to the audience. The story briefly describes a time the dancer tried to convince her defensive driving teacher that the red light that she ran was actually a “stale yellow light, not quite red, but a stale yellow.” This humorous and personal interaction with city control allows

the audience to connect with the dancer's story and provides an example of how interpretations of city rules vary. The dancer may not think that she ran the light and did not intend on cutting it that close. However, it is up to those in roles of authority to make those choices for us, determining if we are following the rules well enough.

Following the stop light story, two of the dancers perform a duet while moving in a cyclical pattern on the floor, shifting and adjusting from position to position as they slowly travel across the space. While continuing this movement pattern they have a conversation about the time restrictions that urban living imposes on its inhabitants:

Dancer 1: Do you have a crosswalk near your house?

Dancer 2: Yeah, there is one right by the gas station.

Dancer 1: Do you know how long the walk signal is?

Dancer 2: Probably about 12 seconds.

Dancer 1: Do you think that's long enough?

Dancer 2: It usually works out fine. But I wonder is it long enough for everybody?

Like, if I had two small children with me, I don't think it would be long enough

Dancer 1: Yeah, 12 seconds is really short!

Dancer 2: Have you ever been walking through the city with your grandma?

Dancer 1: I have, and I don't know if we could make it in 12 seconds.

Dancer 2: I guess that's just the schedule of the city.

Section 6: Final Countdown and Organized Complexities

Dancer 2 from the crosswalk conversation stands up and walks to the overhead projector, turns it on, and reads aloud the slide displayed on the wall directing the audience to, “Please stand up.” The other dancers casually gesture, raising their hands from low to high, enticing the audience to stand. The second slide states, “Find another seat in the room,” and the audience members move to new seats as the dancers rearrange the props. A video of a crosswalk is projected on the wall as the song “The Final Countdown” plays for comic relief.

By directing the audience to move, I create a shared experience between audience members as well as reinforcing the learned cultural pattern that I had established previously in the performance. In homage to Foucault’s theory of body control, the audience arrives at their third and final vantage point for the show. As the audience gets settled again, one of the dancers sets up the overhead projector so that it illuminates one of the other dancers. The dancer directing the projector tells a story as the other dancer standing in the light is handed phonebooks. The phonebook stack rises as the dancer talks until the phonebooks are stacked so high that they are covering her face. The spoken text is as follows:

It's easy to keep track of one or two balls on a billiard table, kind of like managing a park and the number of benches or trash cans within it, but when there are more balls, like six balls on the table, let's say like subsidized housing and public transportation, it becomes more complex. When you keep adding balls, even a million balls to the table with factors like zoning laws, tax adjustments, street

safety, money or civic centers, just to name a few, it becomes hard to manage and communicate. When everyone wants something different, things get pushed to the side and it's a lot to hold onto this organized complexity.

Right after the word “complexity” the dancer holding the large stack of phone books dropped them to the ground, creating a loud and dramatic thud as the books fall into a careless pile at her feet. The stacking of the books was symbolic of the many layers and factors that must be considered when making choices for the city. Jane Jacobs describes “organized complexities” (432) through the metaphor of billiards, which is why I chose to include it within the text while showing the physical metaphor of carrying a heavy weight that builds until one is, in this case, literally in over her head. This is the first time the billiard metaphor appears in the performance and it is revisited later in the work in a more abstracted manner.



Places That Shape You Performance Photo 2

Section 7: One-Sided Conversations

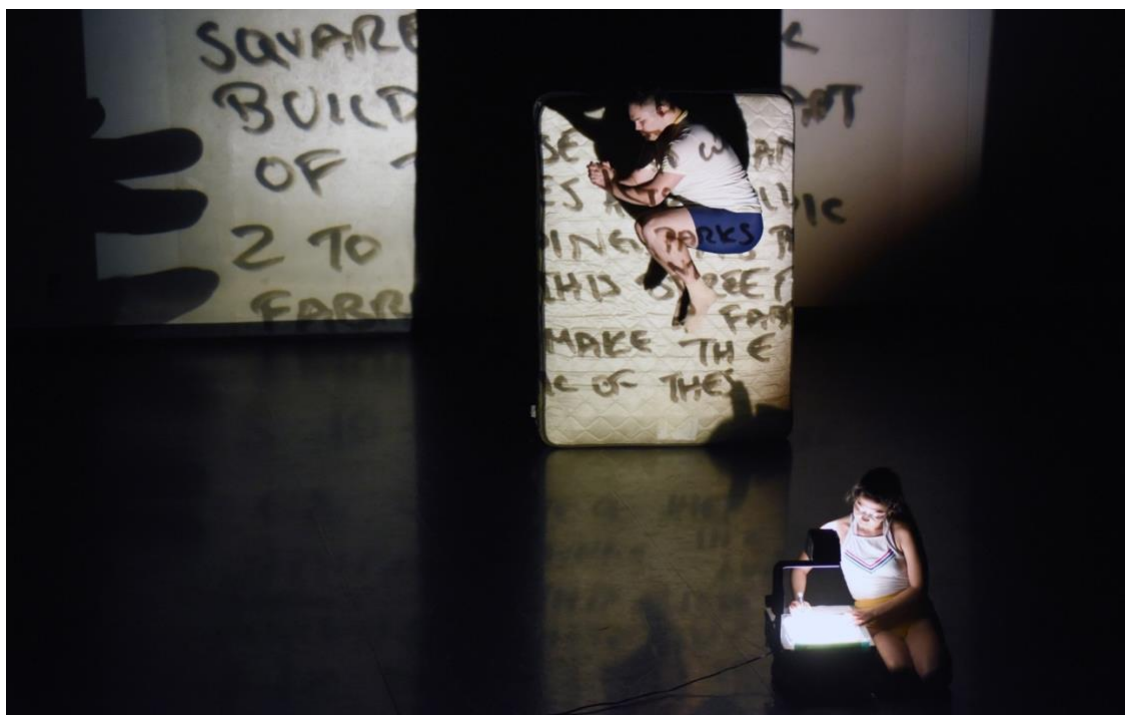
The dancer who just dropped the highly stacked phonebooks walks over to another dancer who is performing a gestural movement phrase and has a one-sided conversation with the mover, while the mover ignores the conversation and continues her gestures. The one-sided conversation is representative of the control and power the city has over our time. The dancer tells the audience a personal story about the calculations that make up their daily commute explaining:

So much of my life is determined by the schedule of the city

If I take the bus it takes an hour to get from here to there

If I take the train it takes half an hour

But I drive, which is my favorite, it only takes me 20 minutes



Places That Shape You Performance Photo 3

Section 8: Abstraction of Jane's Principles

The one-sided conversation occurs in Edward T. Hall's "personal territory" (Figure 1) and evolved into the "social territory," with a dancer sitting once again at the projector reading text from Jane Jacobs' book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. The dancer writes an excerpt on the overhead projector from Jacobs' book describing what city planning should aim for:

First, to foster lively and interesting streets.

Second, to make the fabric of the streets as continuous a network as possible...

Third, to use parks, squares and city buildings as part of this street fabric...

Fourth, to emphasize the functional identity of areas large enough to work as districts. (129)

As the dancer writes and reads the text aloud, the mattress is propped up so the text could be projects onto the mattress and spills over onto the wall behind it. As each number is called, the dancers come out from behind the mattress one at a time. In front of the mattress they each perform a solo movement phrase to the rhythm of the writing and speaking, creating a shadow on the mattress with words projected onto their body. There is a hectic yet composed layering between the movements, shadow, texture of the mattress, and a sound score of a train terminal that slowly creeps in. By the end of the fourth proposal, the dancer is yelling Jacobs' principles at the top of her lungs in an attempt to speak over the sound. The text refers to guidelines to follow when developing a city that is focused on quality of life for the people who live in it. This serves as a

metaphor for tension and intricacy that would have to occur before Jacobs' principles could become a reality. This section concludes with a loud jump, as four of the dancers jump off of the mattress in unison.

Section 9: Tender

Directly after the sound of the dancers jumping off the mattress, the next section begins with a second thud created by two dancers running to hit the wall. After two thuds, the duet becomes the focus as the dancers perform a unison phrase of heavy, weighted movement that travels in a syncopated pattern and repeats multiple times over, utilizing the sound of the body against the wall as the sound score. This ends with the dancers standing in stillness for a sustained moment, followed by the introduction of a 1960s pop song by Bob Dylan.

As the song starts, the proximal distance between them shifts and the dancers move from the "primary territory" to the "body territory" through weight sharing and partnering. The other dancers join in to make three intimate partnering duets set in a row about five feet apart from each other. In the creation of the dance we referred to this section as the "tender section" because of its gentle, supportive nature. The intimacy of the duets coincides with the vintage familiarity of the song and was touching to some members of the audience. After the show, I had multiple audience members approach me and tell me that the combination of the music, focus between each duet, the soft movement and rocking motion made them shed a tear.

Section 10: Summer of Goodbyes

Tender duets eased into a section that I call "summer of goodbyes," in reference to memories and the way they shape the spaces we inhabit. These solos were developed

from movement research on the memories left in the places we inhabit and the way they can permanently alter the way that space is perceived. During this section the music references itself, which I did by bringing back the sounds that occurred in prior sections of the work. This alludes to the reflection of memory by revisiting a memory in a space that the audience just created together. The section ends with one dancer connected to another dancer on the mattress. One of them remarks; “Cities are comprised of community and unity and sometimes tension.” This is the first moment that the tension in the work is verbally addressed.



Places That Shape You Performance Photo 4

Section 11: Toss and Climb

The same dancer who first verbalized the tension moment tosses herself onto the mattress then stands up and again exclaims “AND SOMETIMES TENSION.” This is the

catalyst for the unrestrained monologue that references Jane Jacobs' organized complexities metaphor using billiards. The dancer is frustrated and yelling as she runs across the space and bounces herself off of the mattress. The other dancers run as a group carrying the mattress and placing it on the ground to catch her when she falls. As they zig-zag around the space supporting her falls with the mattress, she unleashes a description of balls on a billiard table, belting, "ONE BALL IS EASY TO MANAGE BUT AS THE NUMBER INCREASES IT BECOMES TOO MUCH..." She continues exclaiming as the tossing and unpredictable zig-zag pattern builds until she stands on the mattress and finishes, breathlessly, with "it's just too much to manage." Following this cry for help, there is a pause of stillness as she tries to catch her breath, then the dancers come together and hug her, providing community support and care. They encourage her to climb over them, creating a clump of bodies that travels on a diagonal across the stage. She uses the group for support as she crawls over and through them, moving across the space without touching the ground.

Section 12: Community Strength and Constructed Boundaries

The dancers break away from the diagonal and begin a virtuosic, climactic unison phrase that emphasizes body tossing and plays with momentum. This is the first time the whole group dances in unison, displaying a powerful form of empathetic community strength that arose from the shared experience of the performance up to this point. As the unison builds, the dancers start to break away from the group movement, running to create a line formation one by one, jumping against, and smacking the wall in a repetitive manner. The dancers peel away from the unison phrase and join the consistent rhythm of

the auditory wall smack. By the time all of the dancers were performing the wall smack together the sound is loud and vibrates in the chests of audience members. The repetition expresses the tension in the physical boundaries between people and the spaces that shape them. As the dancers hit the wall the overhead projector turns on, casting a 20-foot shadow of the dancers on the wall. The projector turns off while the wall smacks continued four more times in darkness and end in unison, leaving the audience sitting in silence in the dark feeling the vibrations left in the space.



Places That Shape You Performance Photo 5

CHAPTER 4

CREATIVE METHODS

Liz Lerman states, “It is only by artists making methods their own that our ways of working will move on in the world” (174). I agree and see the benefits in Lerman’s statement; in this light I offer my creative tools and expansions on previously developed tools to any artist who wishes to experiment with them and carry them further.

Through this evening-length work the audience experienced a journey that was both relatable and unexpected. The development of the work occurred over the course of a year, and the cast varied for the first half of the process until I settled on a group of six dancers. I approached the work with different themes and concepts assigned to each section. The creative process for each section was shaped around the content and the use of metaphor to explain the ideas in a relatable way. Sometimes using a broad, open scope of daily life and interactions with urban spaces, other times zooming into the closest interactions between people, including touch, and physically referenced proxemic territories. Researching the relationship between cities and people served as context for the development of my creative practice tools, which were tailored and refined as the movement research evolved. I developed creative practice tools contextualizing the relationship between cities and people. Some of the tools I used compartmentally, in specific sections, and others were laid over the work as a whole for conceptual cohesion.

Relatable Storytelling

My natural choreographic tendency leans towards abstraction, which made the idea of explicit information new and exciting to take on. In my explorations, I used

“relatable storytelling” as a form of narration, personalization, and connectivity. I reached this form of storytelling by starting with Liz Lerman’s creative tool: walk and talk. With this tool, dancers only have as much time as it takes to walk across the room to tell their story, then they shorten the walking distance, in turn shortening the time they have to speak about the topic. This process helps the storyteller condense or narrow the story down to what is most important to them, often leading the dancers to find the essence of their subject matter.

I started with a list of topics that I wanted to explore with dancers integrated into the work. I led the dancers through “walk and talk” to create two to three stories per topic. This list included childhood home, current living space, traffic laws, modes of transportation, a time when their perception of a space changed, and a specific occasion when the dancer had a different opinion than someone else.

After using this tool, I expanded on it by speaking with each dancer one-on-one, delving into their stories on each topic. After hearing their stories, I told them which ones stood out to me as a listener and director and discussed ideas I had in regard to the placement of their story in the timeline of the work. In that discussion the dancers shared with me the stories that they wanted to use in the performance and gave me consent to incorporate them. Some dancers ended up with one or two stories, some told my stories, and one dancer preferred not to tell a story at all. These factors became choreographic parameters as I developed the work as a whole. After the stories had been selected, we workshopped the text out loud, performing it to fellow cast members. Over time I started to edit the texts, in some moments I decided to use detailed personal information such as a dancer’s home address. These precise details reminded the audience that although the

dancers are performing a role, they are also people who have an address. In other moments, taking out specific details such as people's names, city names, or additional information that might exclude someone from relating to the story made space for the audience to place themselves into the story and connect with it.

For example, in “Section 2: Summer in The City/Moving Target” a dancer tells a story about how it is hard for them to find parking for their scooter stating, “Cities are a laboratory of trial and error, failure and success. Kind of like when I am trying to find a parking spot for my scooter. It’s a moving target.” Behind the dancer telling the story is a mattress being shuffled side to side like a moving target. By using a spoken story and physical demonstration of a moving target simultaneously, movement paired with the text gives the audience multiple points of entry, through visual or verbal storytelling. Keeping in mind that the audience members will only see this performance one time, I used relatable storytelling to clarify and connect the dancers memories into the performance through combination of specific and broad stories. After refining these stories, I found the following questions and key points helpful in keeping the storytelling relatable:

1. What story do you want to tell?
2. What aspect of the story is relatable?
3. How can making the story more personal or broad support your intention?
4. What elements could you use to enforce or add to the meaning to your story?
5. Give it a try, share your story with someone and get feedback.

Prop Development

Recognizing the connection between bodily knowledge and objects encouraged me to use somatic techniques to explore the use of props in my project. One such prop was a mattress. Although many people associate a mattress with sleep, I worked to discover a plethora of ways a mattress can be used. Through researching the physicality of the mattress, I found ways for it to represent not only a place of rest but also a wall, a moving target, a barrier, a space holder, and a safety net when falling. Extensive choreographic research with dancers and a mattress became paramount in unpacking the somatic understanding of the prop, as well as gaining a bodily understanding of the mattress in ways beyond the traditional use.

I initially wanted to use multiple mattresses, I was advised to start with one and see where it took me. As I began investigating, I quickly realized that one mattress is rather cumbersome, and it involved a lot of effort for the dancers to move it around the space. The effort on the dancers as well as the logistics and limitations of storage led me to conclude that one mattress would suffice for the project. I could easily develop my research and fully realize my concept with one. My new intention to focus my research and fully realize my concept with only one mattress constructed a challenge that I gladly welcomed as I worked to make the mattress meaningful in its singularity.

The mattress became a part of the rehearsal process three months into the project. At the beginning of each rehearsal we would warm up as a group, each stepping out of the group warm up one at a time to have a few minutes alone to move with the prop. Allotted time to workshop the mattress increased the dancers' understanding of their bodies in relationship to the prop. It also aided with the overall integration of the prop

into the work because the dancers gained an embodied understanding of how they relate to this specific mattress.

The overhead projector joined the cast soon after the mattress was integrated. I added this prop because of my interest in shadows, analog technologies, and obsolete materials. The developmental process for the projector was much different than the exploration of the mattress because there is no weight sharing. Rather, we experimented with text, shadow, color, and lighting articulation. I started using the projector by dedicating a three-hour rehearsal to experimenting with the prop. One at a time, the dancers took turns playing with the projector using colored lighting gels, writing, and making hand shadows. One dancer would move in front of the light, reacting to the person manipulating the projection. I did not use any motifs during this research session, but we all explored the prop's range and possibilities together, which helped lead to ideas later in the choreographic process. The projector provided an avenue for the explicit use of text by projecting directions, quotes and information on the wall, which helped guide the audience throughout the show.

When selecting props, I initially wanted an overcrowded number of props, relating to the cluttered look of cities. My original desire for an abundance of props was met through the use of the phone books. I decided on this prop because it is a physical embodiment of the number of documented people in a city. When holding a phone book, the number of people can be felt through the weight physical weight of the object. I obtained 12 phone books specifically for dropping off the balcony in "Section 4: Phone Books and Exclusion." As the dancer practiced throwing the phonebooks off the balcony, they became acquainted with dropping and tossing the books around the dancer below. In

rehearsal we refined the tossing of the phone books so that the books landed flat on the ground, creating a loud sound which was essential for the first drop.

The sections following “Phone Books and Exclusion,” were originally created without the phone books. My efforts to problem solve moving the pile of books off stage without a black out resulted in reintegrating this prop in the subsequent sections in a meaningful way. I did this first by stacking the books in a dancer’s arms in “Section 6: Final Countdown/Organized Complexities.” They also became a part of the work through sound samples. The composer for the work, Austen Mack, recorded sounds of the pages turning, as well as the phone books landing on the ground, then used these samples as layers within the sound score.

Body Maps and Memory as a Creative Tool

After first learning of American choreographer William Forsythe’s *Improvisation Technologies*, I was drawn to the creative tool “Room Reading.” This tool fed my interest in movement generation by exploring the body’s relationship with memory and architecture. Forsythe describes the process of using the tool by telling the participant, “You are going to imagine a room, its architecture and its contents, and you are going to analyze the architecture and the contents for its geometric content.” (Forsythe) I often broaden this tool by altering it so that it can be used to generate movement relating to my chosen context. In the case of this project I elaborated on this tool as a form of reading a map of directions with the body, which I call “body maps.” When developing body maps, I employed visual mapping as a creative tool to research the knowledge of familiar pathways, such as the route from work to home, to generate movement material. I used

these pathways to investigate the variances of lived experiences and routes that live within our bodies.

Forsythe's "Room Reading" is also a creative tool that helped me work with the dancers to embody past experiences and the experiences that are left in a space after we leave. I consider this to be a factor in the evolution of cities, a layering process that becomes a component to a district's deterioration or renovation, history and future. The memories that exist in a place play a role in its character and energy. In these circumstances, our perception of a place shifts as we see it through layers of experience.

In "Section 10: Summer of Goodbyes," my dancers and I generated movement solos and duets by physically mapping locations associated with particular memories by using room reading. First, we created movement that portrayed our perception of the space before the shift occurred. Then, we recalled the perception of the space after the shift took place and created a second movement component by physically mapping of the same location, taking into account how our perception of the same space had changed. The solos and duets generated from this research created an intimate feeling of memory because of the care that was taken when they were performed and the meaning behind their creation. For example, in the final production of the project, one of the performers danced her movement pathway on top of the mattress while also speaking the directions to her home as if providing them to someone who had never been there before how to get there. This intriguing pairing reinforced the story while remaining physically unpredictable.

In my creative process I expanded on Forsythe's "Room Reading" tool to include time. I did this by thinking of a specific moment in time when I received bad news. I took

a moment to remember where I was when I received the bad news and recalled the way my perception of the space became completely altered because of the shift in my mindset. Reflecting on that moment, I called attention to the specific ways it altered my perception of the space. I used this information to create a series of movements that recalled the memory. In this creative practice experience:

1. I reflected on this personal experience, recalling a time that the space shifted around me.
2. I used emotional and sensory movement and gesture to create a few movements that either outlined a piece of architecture in the envisioned space, described the circumstance, or embodied the feeling during the shift.

I fused these movements together and collaborated with the dancers, who performed the solos from this memory, one at a time. The feeling in this section was palpable to the audience and had a curious tone of reverie, reflection and memory. In this case, the tool of memory exploration was successful. This is a tool that could be used to display a past experience or feeling, creating a relatable way to reveal the sometimes invisible or overlooked occurrences that happen in a place. The solo section explored the organic patterning that exists in daily occurrences through the mode of movement research, with a focus on the somatic connection to these patterns that lay within us.

Tension

Throughout my research I found that there were many points of tension in urban planning and city development. Often this tension arose from contrasting opinions about decision making. The prevalence of this tension interested me, and I wanted to bring it into the work. I created an overall tension throughout the work by crafting a steady progression in the storyline that continually reestablished constrictions between the dancers. For example: an abrupt use of text would interrupt a movement phrase in an unanticipated moment. In another instance, the use competing focal points such as spoken text, movement and recorded sound, demanded attention simultaneously to challenge expectation and build tension.

In addition, I flirted with walking the line of humor, unpredictably interrupting an idea, and the use of neutral facial expressions in many parts of the performance. For example, in “Section 7: One Sided Conversations,” one of the dancers is speaking to the other dancer using vocal and facial expressions to animate her story. During this moment, the other dancer is moving through the space ignoring her with a neutral face as the one-sided conversation takes place. This act of blatantly ignoring the dancer who is speaking creates tension, leading to the sequence finishing with the speaking dancer exiting after she has completed the thought she was voicing, never fully acknowledged. While creating *Places That Shape You*, I found many opportunities where a section could quickly become funny. In almost every case I chose against humor because it was not at the heart of the idea I wanted to bring forward. Even so, at times when things were serious, they can bordered on being funny and I enjoyed walking that line. It helped keep

the viewers engaged, wondering if they should laugh or if it was funny at all, which also helped add to the tension felt throughout the piece.

Sensory Experiences and Aesthetics

In the final performance of *Places That Shape You* an array of sensory experiences came together to create the aesthetics of the work. A combination of sound, lighting, and an homage to the past established a stimulating beauty unique to the project. Austen Mack crafted a complex music score that suited each section and created a layered overarching flow that was reflective of the movement journey. The music score was layered with internal auditory sounds from dancers hitting the walls, speaking, jumping, falling, or dropping books. Interchanging the source of sound and text reinforced the connectivity between the layered elements of the work.

My use of lighting included design by Quinn Mihalovic and additional lighting moments from the performance of the work itself through manual manipulation of the overhead projector. Obsolete props such as the phone books and overhead projector manifested my desire for an homage to the past. I used 1960s pop music by Bob Dylan and The Lovin' Spoonful, as well as 1960s-1970s costumes of stripes and brightly colored dance briefs. Although the briefs and three of the tops were actually vintage, the use of briefs for dance costumes are commonly seen in contemporary dance works today. This contrast of old and new clothing styles, and the juxtaposition of private; briefs, next to public; pedestrian shirts, created a costume that was both familiar and revealing. Together these sensory elements united the movement and storyline so that all elements of the work existed together as one.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS

This project started very broad, which created a rich pool of places from which to draw inspiration. As the project progressed, I refocused, discarding ideas, movement, or sections that were not serving the project as a whole. Originally, there was a six-minute park section consisting of a movement phrase which was performed to a film shot at a local park. Six months into the project, this section was discarded and boiled down into one sentence regarding the number of benches and trash cans found in each park. The final month before the performance, I found myself altering text and clarifying transitions in an effort to streamline the recurring themes. This challenge ended up being a success, many of the main ideas resurfaced and developed as the performance progressed, leading the audience through a collage of movement and ideas. Refining concepts was pivotal in the development of the performance and allowed an opportunity to synthesize the project as a whole.

Home

Upon the inception of this project, concepts of home were not a central element. As rehearsals progressed and the character of each dancer developed, my interest shifted. Home became most prevalent when I started working with movement that examined the contrast between public and private spaces. Through cast discussion and movement exploration I found that private spaces were loaded with personal stories and self-reflection that brought out the humanity in the dancers and their movement. At this point in the process I realized that my experience embracing the city as my home fueled my interest in the research and it began to appear within the process. I followed this finding

and moved forward with home in mind as I developed storytelling, movement phrasing and character development for each dancer.

Jane Jacobs also recognizes that both specific dwellings and urban spaces play a role in shaping the meaning of home. Jacobs stated, “Home is not just a building: it’s a territory, the whole connection between you and other people and places” (12). In Jacobs explanation of home, she singles out connection between people as well as objects as a key component in “home,” an idea which resonated with me. In addition to connectivity, I associate care with definition of home spaces and enjoy caring for my spaces, by cleaning them, honoring them and planning ways they will exist in the future.

I learned that my intentions behind making this project were in part to remind the audience that the city is their home and it needs to be celebrated through connection and care. After the show I spoke with an audience member who told me that they could relate to coming home from a long day and laying on their bed, as well as the wall section as a restriction or boundary such as the proposed border wall. This conversation gave me insight about the entry point in the first section of the work and proved it to be successful for that viewer. They started to relate to the idea of home as the performance began, and found connectivity to the large spatial ideas, such as the walls which exist throughout urban landscapes.

Sociopolitical Undertones

My interest in body control through the shape of urban spaces supported the creation of a sociopolitical undercurrent throughout the work. These undertones were reoccurring and woven into the performance. In some sections, like the phonebook section, they appeared more prevalent, asking “who’s not listed in the phonebook?”

Having experienced the creative process of generating this work and viewing it as a whole I found that sociopolitical issues are present within movement in urban spaces and it is impossible to completely detach one from another. It wasn't until later in the process that I was able to see this from a wider lens. Watching the performance as a whole allowed me to see both social and political elements within the work. As a viewer, I noticed that socio-political issues around power and inclusion/exclusion existed in certain parts of the work, as well as a component of inclusion verses exclusion. In the "Summer in the City" Section, I projected on the wall "What does the city provide for you?" This question provokes the viewer to assess the ways the city helps support them and subsequently reminds them of the way that they are not supported by the city. Moving forward with creating work I desire to have a more prevalent use of sociopolitical content and intention behind crafting movement and performance.

Play

Through my use of varied approaches, I have come to acknowledge how much I value improvisation and play during the rehearsal and creation process. The use of play within rehearsals led us to find a plethora of material which created options for me as a choreographer. Utilizing these methods increased cast bonding and expanded the common ground between the dancers, as well as between the dancers and the props. Consequently, the way the dancers and other collaborators came together to create and express themselves through movement was an irreplaceable experience that strengthened the performance and informed my creative practice.

Repetition

In *Places That Shape You*, I use multiple forms of repetition with many of the movement phrases, concepts and props appearing numerous times within the performance. In contrast, other motifs were present for only a few sections. For example, the phonebooks did not appear until halfway through the show and only stayed for three sections. A prop or motif would pop into the performance for a short moment, then leave never fully resolved, which I did to play with expectation and leave room for mystery and uncertainty.

Room for Growth

“Section 12: Community Strength and Constructed Boundaries”, was a powerful end to the performance, full of virtuosic movement and precision. However, if I were to restage this show I would revisit this section. The strength in culminating unison could have been sustained for longer, allowing the energy to accumulate before the ending. The final section remained a challenge to develop and it never felt complete. After the show I received feedback stating that an audience member wanted the last section to continue for longer.

As an artist this is an interesting position because I always want to leave the audience wanting more, but I also want my dances to be fully developed. This feedback confirmed my feeling that this section could have been extended to fully utilize the dancers’ placement in the space and harbor a more climactic energetic build. Moving forward, I will be sensitive of this within my choreography while keeping in mind that every creative venture will call for a new set of choices and it is important to listen to my artistic intuition.

When finding ways to use the mattress as a metaphor, not all of the ideas generated were used. If I were to develop the work further, there is one motif that was discarded that I would include in the performance. I named it the “Atlas Motif,” which consists of a dancer walking slowly hunched over with their chest parallel to the ground and the mattress on their back, so that you can only see the mattress being carried by a pair of legs underneath it. The “Atlas Motif” is a physical metaphor for the weight of oppressive urban boundaries that wear on people and cultures as a whole. When I was creating my dance, I didn't find a place for the “Atlas Motif” to exist that would have supported the overall concept of the work. Now, having examined the process and performance, I would have placed it at the beginning of the work. A dancer would have walked into the space with the mattress on their back, placing it on the floor before the text played and dancers lay on the mattress one by one.

CHAPTER 6

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Overall, *Places That Shaped You* exceeded my expectations. It was a well-developed evening-length performance that carried through lines, challenged the audience to think critically about their perspective, fully integrated the use of props, and created a sense of community and bonding amongst the dancers. Now having created this project I feel more confident in trusting my artistic choices. In this process, the theories, ideas, and data that interested me were rather complex and large. I choose to boil them down into metaphor, simplified examples, and abstraction. Researching philosophies and theory with a focus on urban living, perception and city planning provided answers to my research questions through movement and archival research. In the first phase of my applied project I posed these questions:

1. How does urban landscape affect people and culture and are we aware of it?
2. How can urban spaces influence my use of choreographic tools?
3. How can I deepen my understanding of urban environments through movement research?

My interest in Foucault's theories about body control led me to the research question: How does urban landscape affect people and culture and are we aware of it?

In addressing the first research question: How does urban landscape affect people and culture and are we aware of it? I turned to Foucault's theories about body control. Through somatic and movement research I found that the effects of urban landscape are present in everyone, although the effects vary from person to person and culture to culture. This unclear answer enticed me to take a deeper look at this by using the

performance experience to move the audience through the space, giving them multiple vantage points throughout the show. Moving the audience gave me a chance to alter the traditional western audience experience and allow the viewer to be aware of the changes in their surroundings.

When developing this project, I discovered “body maps,” a creative tool that resolves my second research question: How can urban spaces influence my use of choreographic tools? This tool is an example of using urban spaces and time to guide the crafting of a creative method as well as the manipulation of the movement research. This tool was useful in the creation of the work and provided individual findings that fit each dancer’s experience.

Having always valued community, I formed the research question: How can I deepen my understanding of urban environments through movement research? I found that the use of text connecting to urban environments, layered next to movement metaphors, revealed underlying meanings within the text. In addition, findings related to this question were also present in prop development as the dancers and I reacquainted ourselves with common objects, such as the mattress. We learned that common interactions such as flipping a mattress are culturally taught and physically practiced and came more easily than less common uses of the mattress, such as sliding it across the floor. In this research I found that a search for somatic understanding led me to a deeper perspective of urban spaces through the body and our community.

Through these questions, I found that movement research is a physical approach to unearthing learned experiences of the body. My research is united with a cast who collaborated in its findings, which were as unique as the group of dancers, musician and

lighting designer involved in the project. Finding answers to my research questions through the process of making and reflecting on this work was both stimulating and complex. I found that I could not fully answer these questions, although I did find that the answers are always changing, resulting with no one answer fitting for long. I learned that the choice to look to the community for answers and insight is always valuable. I experienced the value of looking forward and found that planning for the future has been one of the best assets for communities and is a successful and long-standing way to address urban space.

Researching urban spaces has been rewarding and has encouraged me to develop artistic projects that engage communities in the spaces we inhabit and use the information to help officials make choices about city development. As my artistic journey progresses, I am dedicated to ruthlessly exploring ideas to breakthrough habitual artistic tendencies. I have evolved as an artist having conducted research that will contribute to forwarding the integration of urban studies with movement research.

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APPENDIX A

PLACES THAT SHAPE YOU PERFORMANCE POSTER AND IMAGES

PLACES THAT SHAPE YOU

A Dance MFA Thesis Performance by Halley Willcox



Nelson Fine Arts Center, Dance Lab 122
Friday, Nov. 9 at 7:30pm
Saturday, Nov. 10 at 7:30pm
Sunday, Nov. 11 at 2:00pm



\$8 for Students
\$12 for Staff, Faculty and Seniors
\$16 for General Admission











