

Intimate Landscapes: Creation, Development and 'Performance'

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Interdisciplinary art is becoming more prevalent as time moves forward, but what does it mean? Patina Lee, an author for Art site *Widewalls*, suggests interdisciplinary arts is a crossover between art forms, however

'their unity does not signify singularity, a permanent unbreakable bond of becoming one single novel discipline. It rather works on principles of temporary relations... They are juxtaposed, but never dissolved in one another' (Lee, P., 2016).

Lee also notes that many believe an interdisciplinary artist to comprise their work of 'several disciplines in order to realize their art' (Lee, P., 2016) - supposed interdisciplinary art, but this would describe that of a multidisciplinary artist. The concept of creating a crossover of art forms via temporary relations is something I wanted to consider when creating my work - I wasn't making a film, nor a dance, but a dance film.

This piece of work was a collaboration with other dance artists. There was a mutually agreed theme for the film, which was explored individually through our own sub themes. We were guided through detailed conversation and exploration with each other, as well as professional designer Ruth Stringer and musician/sound artist Chris Young.

During the creative process, many tasks were explored to open up ideas, movements and design - this is defined as composition by Anne Bogart and Tina Landau, authors of *The Viewpoints Book* (2014). Composition is a method based approach to choreography, used for 'generating, defining and developing the theater vocabulary that will be used for any given piece' (Bogart, A. and Landau, T., 2014). Composition has been particularly useful in this process, as it's allowed me to highlight the movements, themes and images I like and wanted to include within my piece. Bogart and Landau also describe composition as 'a method for revealing to

ourselves our hidden thoughts and feelings about the material' (Bogart, A. and Landau, T., 2014) supporting my previous statement.

The first task that heavily influenced my work was offered by dance artist Zosia Jo Dowmunt (2020). This task focused on using text as a stimulus. Jess McCormack, an author, supports the idea of using text to create choreographed movement in her book *Choreography and verbatim theatre: dancing words* (2018). The text chosen for this work was from *When Things Fall Apart* (1997) by Pema Chödrön, due to having a personal connection to the text. At first the text was difficult to work with; the power of it was overwhelming. Eventually I realised that sometimes conflicting, contrasting and juxtaposing the movement vocabulary was a possibility not to be dismissed. Thus breaking the lexicon rules with conflicting vocabularies (Preston-Dunlop, V., 2010). Juxtaposition was an interesting concept I'd like to include within my final piece. Intimacy with fear, or more so intimacy, had become less interesting to me in terms of movement, but excelled in my thoughts as a theme. This was extremely relevant to me due to current times within the UK dealing with COVID-19 - locked down in the middle of a global pandemic. Absurd fear I may never be allowed outside for longer than an hour again, combined with the intimate thoughts and memories of being outside pre-lockdown.

Dowmunt and I began making word associations to intimacy and fear; mourning and growth came to mind. This in turn created two questions that I explored within my work. How can my movement become a result of an internalisation of a feeling and from a design perspective, how can I bring the memory of outside, inside? Upon exploring the internalisation of a feeling, I struggled to truly internalise and make/set movement as a result; here I realised that setting movement for my work wasn't authentic to the internalised exploration. To stay authentic to the movement exploration and approach it with rigour, I decided to use an improvisation score when filming. Miranda Tufnell and Chris Crickmay write in their book, *Body Space Image* (1990), 'Improvisation provides with a means to excavating layers of experience, sensation, character, feeling that we normally rush through or suppress - to travel

deeper and deeper into an ever enlarging and changing moment' (Tufnell, M. and Crickmay, C., 1990) which supports my decision in using improvisation when filming.

The concept of rigour was developed in my movement through the use of looping (a choreographic task) in particular. One area this was extremely relevant was when embodying the act of crying and mourning into my wrist/hand. Taking the simple movement of rubbing an eye and changing the space it's performed and repeating it over and over. It was fascinating to see how much it evolved and how much the meaning of the movement had changed. Telory Arendell (2019) supports this when she wrote, 'repetition to the point of exhaustion are clearly means of pushing form beyond its content' (Arendell, T. 2019). The next area looping enabled movement creation was in moving incrementally with the wall - simple rolling along the wall created an enthusiasm and joy for moving. Moving with a wall and feeling that sense of others being with me through the walls' sturdiness, was definitely something that needed to be included within my work. Moving with the wall and watching the shadows move and react in response really epitomised a longing and mourning for a pre lockdown situation - a longing for interaction with others outside, highlighted by the shadows created by the natural outdoor light.

When speaking with designer Ruth Stringer (2020), we discussed elements that would enhance the design of my work. It was clear that design of the space around me was vital to portraying the correct intention of my work - 'everything you put on stage (or in a film frame), should be a choice... it should be beautiful or functional, or it shouldn't be there' (Stringer, R. 2020). From this it became apparent that to be able to highlight bringing outside inside, I needed to physically bring outside elements inside - flowers, water and natural light should all play a key role in my portrayal of the intention. To not distract from their vibrancy, their shape, their colour and texture, I decided that my film should be shot in the same frame and angle for the majority - a plain white background using nature elements, such as a leaf or flowers in the foreground. Vilayanur Ramachandran (2003), a psychologist and neuroscientist, supports this concept when he gave a lecture on Radio 4:

'in the realistic photo you have all this irrelevant information cluttering the picture and distracting your attention away from where it's needed critically... By leaving all this out in a doodle or sketch the artist is saving your brain a lot of trouble' (Ramachandran, V., 2003).

The key message I received from all of this was about experiencing. Experiencing fear. Experiencing intimacy. Experiencing outside with all of the senses and appreciating each experience/sense in a multitude of ways. Upon researching the senses, I came across the medical condition synaesthesia - 'In its simplest form it is best described as a "union of the senses" whereby two or more of the five main senses that are normally experienced separately are involuntarily and automatically joined together' (Wannerton, J., Unknown). After gaining this knowledge on the condition, it posed the question of how could I show this within my work to give a unified sensory experience - an intimate experience? With this question in mind, I began to think about sound. The ticking of a clock perfectly symbolised the never ending feeling of lockdown, along with the idea of taking time to become intimate with the feelings. Water running, the rustling of flowers and their leaves all symbolic of the outside. They're also visionary elements included within the work itself. It was important to arrange my sound so that the audience could experience these components at different times, with juxtaposing footage, but also to appreciate the sounds with complimentary footage to give that intimate sensory experience. Moreover, I wanted to incorporate bright colours throughout, particularly in the flowers and costume to heighten the visual appearance, again for the senses but also as juxtaposition to the white framing/background. Overall, synaesthesia played a huge role in the development and piecing of my work, informing design, sound and the overall theme of the work.

The overall process felt a success for me - I am pleased with the final work. I have been successful in creating an intimate sensory experience, bringing the memory of outside inside. This is evident in my angles and the use of foreground and background - it unified my work by bringing a sense of the outside to the forefront of

the mind. I'm extremely pleased with the use of colour, sound and props to heighten the senses in a synaesthetic manner - they allowed the viewer to feel texture and colour, hear it, taste it, successfully demonstrating the intimate sensory experience I wanted. However, the concept of fear could have been heightened further as a theme and within my movement. This could have been further developed in the final piece by using more close up shots of different body parts in the internalisation of a feeling task. This would have added extra depth to the movement contents' overall meaning.

If this process was to be repeated again, I would definitely make adjustments. For a long period of time, I was stuck in a rut with where to take my film and what it was truly representing. I think this was partially because I needed to film more footage that I was truly happy with, but also because I needed to research deeper into my theme, both academically and physically. When I had completed these two tasks, everything seamlessly fell into place. Next time this is something I will definitely consider first. In terms of collaboration, I believe each of us have been able to communicate our ideas effectively in order to create unique chapters that when are placed together, highlight a simultaneous theme. This experience has been extremely beneficial and educational to my development as an artist - particularly as an interdisciplinary artist. I've been opened up to new choreographic tasks, such as looping, new skills in sound and video editing and developed a deeper and rigorous approach to improvisation. Thinking about how each art form can stand alone as its own within a crossover of art forms, but also connect deeply has really enhanced my abilities as an interdisciplinary artist.

Word Count: 1650

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