Movement as the Driving Force: Empowering Live Dance Performance Through the Integration of Film

Kelsey Victoria Mary Paschich

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Movement as the Driving Force:
Empowering Live Dance Performance
Through the Integration of Film

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B.F.A, Dance, Point Park University 2004

Dissertation
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Fine Arts
Dance

The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico
May 2016
This Dissertation is dedicated to my family that shows me the true meaning of unconditional love on a daily basis. To my husband Wristen and my daughter Banning, without your love, light, and laughter, none of this would be possible.

Dad and Mom, your endless support means the world to me.

Thank you!
Acknowledgements

To Donna Jewell, the Chair of my Committee, thank you for continuously investing in me and providing me with unique artistic opportunities that have empowered me and allowed me to thrive. I am forever indebted to my Dissertation Committee and the Faculty members at the University of New Mexico who have guided me through my graduate years. Thank you for challenging me, encouraging me, and most importantly inspiring me by your unwavering dedication and passion for the art of dance. To my dancers, thank you for your artistry, honesty, and beauty. You made the dream a reality. The pursuit of this degree has provided me with perspective and a deeper understanding of how exceptional it is to be a part of the dance world and do what I love every day. Now more than ever, I recognize that I am a part of something bigger than myself and for that I am eternally grateful.
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Abstract
Dance and film are two distinct mediums of expression. Movement drives both of these art forms and is the commonality that serves as the thread that connects them. These mediums serve as modes of discovery, thinking, and representation. Time and space are shared components between dance and film. Over the past century, there have been many different relationships on and off the stage between the two and as a result of this, new genres like screendance, dance for film, and multimedia performance have emerged. Live dance performance has been strengthened by the possibilities and uses of multimedia elements in real time.

After creating the MFA Thesis Concert C’est la Vie | Exquisite Corpse that correlates with this dissertation, I was left yearning for more knowledge of the medium and discipline of film. Film expanded the possibilities of time, space, and movement for the choreographic process and the live dance performance. Therefore, I argue that by having a deeper understanding of film, live dance performance can be empowered.

Through the experience of creating an evening of live dance integrated with film, I will explain how these two mediums inform each other in process and product. Even though dance and film are independent, deeply rooted historical art forms, having a deeper understanding of the capacity of film presents the opportunity to enhance the performance on stage. This collaboration creates possibilities that lead to further trans-disciplinary discourse and an unlimited creative process.
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Chapter 1 | Introduction

A Fascination with Movement | Arriving at Multimedia

Movement is the foundation of dance and film and is the force that drives and advances these art forms forward. A fascination with movement is what compelled my curiosity to understand how these mediums can support and interact with each other in live performance. Because dance is at the core of what I do, I see motion in everything. Writing, editing, filming, and choreographing are all dance in different forms; they are movement. Movement is something that can be defined in many ways. The following definition supports my research, “Movement is the design element that operates in the fourth dimension - time. Movement is the process of relocation of objects in space over time.” (“Movement”)

In retrospect, the influence of particular artists and projects I completed leading up to the performance of C’est la Vie | Exquisite Corpse, revealed the conclusion that having a deeper understanding of film creates new potentials and directions for expanding live dance performance. How these artists and projects encouraged the mixing of mediums and histories helped establish new ideas in performance.

Working with the camera to document personal choreographic work with still images and video expands the possibilities. With a passion for being behind the lens, freedom to independently document my work in still images and archiving film footage helped develop still camera and editing skills. In the fall of 2014, I registered for an independent study course with the Interdisciplinary Film and Digital Media Department (IFDM) at the University of New Mexico (UNM) and was introduced to the vast world of
cinema, film editing, and the moving image. The relationship between dance and film has recently grown increasingly critical to independent choreographic and performative work.

Like dance, integrating film into the choreographic practice added new dimensions between mediums. The main inquiry became, how can film enhance, support, and recreate my choreography for the stage? Further investigations from practice within these two mediums offer further analysis: How does film influence live dance performance? Can dance and film infuse each other in process and product? How can they be integrated and exist together in live performance? When do these two mediums work well together and when do the mediums exist better independently? The two disciplines share many similarities, but in the end, film is fixed and preserves while live dance is ephemeral. Marcia B. Siegel, a well-respected dance critic and lecturer, speaks about the ephemerality of live performance in her book *At the Vanishing Point: A Critic Looks at Dance*:

Dancing exists as a perpetual vanishing point. At the moment of its creation it is gone. All of the dancer’s years of training in the studio, all the choreographer’s planning, the rehearsals, the coordination of designers, composers, and technicians, the raising of money and the gathering together of an audience, all these are only a preparation for an event that disappears in the very act of materializing. No other art is so hard to catch, so impossible to hold. (Siegel I)

Siegel speaks to the strength, virtuosity, and beauty of live performance that the medium of film is not be able to produce or copy. The unpredictability of live concert dance is what makes the experience exciting and unique. The fleeting nature of live performance gives the dancers and the audience a once in a lifetime experience.
The energy exchange and interchange in a live dance performance becomes a memory of a shared experience that cannot be captured or reproduced on film. Walter Sorell, the late writer of dance, speaks to the invisible communication and energy exchange between the performer and viewer, “Kinesthetic or emotional perception is the inexpressible dialogue occurring between dancers and between dancers and the audience; the experienced sensation over and above what can be reiterated in words.” (qtd in Brannigan 12)

On the other hand, film is a fixed medium that allows the viewer to experience a captured moment of the past in the present and can represent an unreal digital body. Because film has the ability to manipulate time and space more so than dance, this expands the possibilities for what happens in a live performance. Dance offers film a larger scope of movement with real bodies. Film offers dance the ability to capture a moment in time that otherwise, in live performance, would disappear. While maintaining the integrity of the live performance, I utilized filmic elements that infused the overall work of Exquisite Corpse.

The composition of images and film footage is strikingly similar to composing a dance for stage but allows for further manipulation and exaggeration if not expansion of time. Learning to edit film has assisted my ability to edit and compose dance for the stage. Working with the camera led to learning new software, how to edit, and provided the opportunity to learn about the composition of digital images. Claire Bagley, MFA in Dance from the University of Utah, comments on the similarity between editing for the stage and for the screen, “Editors, like choreographers, take pieces and fragments of action and connects them together in a cohesive and artistic way to make phrases”
Editing for the stage offered inroads in understanding and refining skills after working with editing for the screen. It became easier to let certain sections go that I thought would serve the whole work but did not. Rearranging sections became like re-organizing frames to find the correct order and make the show flow the way I intended. During my creation process for *Exquisite Corpse* arranging sections of movement like I would arrange “fragments of action” on a screen was a helpful and efficient tactic for deciding on the overall flow of the show.

These new techniques of filming and editing sparked new curiosities for me, which in turn developed into a new passion for using technology to design, invigorate, and manipulate elements like time and space, in my own choreographic work. Initial fear of jumping completely outside of the realm of dance by picking up the camera and learning about new and related mediums were countered. The transitioning of my personal skills as a dancer and choreographer into filmmaking was a very related leap. Creating a composition on the stage was similar to that of time, movement, and frame organization on screen. This was a new way of mixing two mediums. Many artists of the surrealist movement mixed mediums to create their work. Some of this work inspired me to investigate part of the surrealist artistic processes in search for new elements to add to my own creations.
**Surrealism | Searching for a New Creative Process**

Surrealism was a modern artistic movement from the early twentieth century filled with various art mediums and multidisciplinary roles established by the avant-garde. Artists from this movement have intrigued me because of their unique artistic processes. I was compelled to investigate the creative processes of artists during this period to see if it could serve my own choreographic process. The results led me to new ways of seeing and working. A defining reference for Surrealism is:

A 20th-century avant-garde movement in art and literature that sought to release the creative potential of the unconscious mind, for example by the irrational juxtaposition of images. Launched in 1924 by a manifesto of André Breton and having a strong political content, the movement grew out of symbolism and Dada and was strongly influenced by Sigmund Freud. In the visual arts its most notable exponents were André Masson, Jean Arp, Joan Miró, René Magritte, Salvador Dali, Max Ernst, Man Ray, and Luis Buñuel. ("Surrealism: Definition of Surrealism in Oxford Dictionary (American English) (US)"")

Specific artists were inspirational to compel and create a measured response from their work. André Breton, Meret Oppenheim, and Max Ernst are the surrealist artists whose work influenced my creative process as a catalyst to choreograph and perform in new ways. Many of the avant-garde practiced and utilized different mediums such as writing, painting, sculpture, and photography, to invent their forms of work.

The word Surrealism was coined by Guillaume Appolinaire in the preface to Satie’s ballet, *Parade*, in 1917, and when Breton adopted it for his movement, he had to prevail over the slightly different context in which it was being used by
Ivan Goll and Paul Dermeé. *The First Surrealist Manifesto* is an exhilarating (if loquacious) call to action, stating Surrealism’s basic premises: return to childhood; idealization of madness, non-conformism, the “abnormal” rejected by a repressed society; Freudian free association and “stream of consciousness,” anti-clericalism, free love, eroticism, and occultism” (Lippard 9).

Appollinaire was a poet who was friends with the famous artist Pablo Picasso. Picasso designed the costumes and stage set for *Parade*, choreographed by Léonide Massine. I do not intend to make work that is absurd or that inherits any of the descriptive words listed by Lippard above. However, it is the idea of automatism that intrigued me and I want to understand the mind and body connection in dance on a deeper level.

The density of the avant-garde movement in research and in practice remains a rich compendium of resources. Different components of experimenting and searching for my own practice directed me to new ways to create and produce differently for the stage. However, creating a surrealist piece of art was not my aim nor was it the product of *Exquisite Corpse*. Surrealism provided inspiration, new ways to work, and a springboard to make dance in different ways. This exploration also provided new ways to tap into the subconscious in practice but will require deeper research in the future to further understand its potential.

The first creative tool I experimented with in the studio was entitled Exquisite Corpse. This was a game that was played by the surrealists of the early twentieth century. The game is played with several people, each of whom draws a picture or writes a word on a piece of paper and then folds that piece so the next person cannot see what was written. The next person then does the same thing until the paper has been passed around
and the sheet of paper is full. It is then unfolded and all of the small images or words create a larger image (“MoMA | Cadavre Exquis (Exquisite Corpse) with Yves Tanguy, Joan Miró, Max Morise, and Man Ray. Nude. 1926–27”). I turned this game into a creative exercise with seven female dancers which became a movement game of accumulation. I would create a movement and the dancer next to me had to add a movement on to that. This continued until we had a large phrase. Throughout the process these phrases distilled into seven different solos that then became a larger group piece, appropriately named *Exquisite Corpse*.

The other tool I utilized was automatic writing as a different medium of expression. Automatic writing is writing done through subconscious thought; basically trying to write without thinking first. The results are nonsensical and are often broken thoughts or not words at all. As an experiment to further understand automatic writing, I had writing sessions with myself. An example of an automatic writing that I produced is as follows (punctuation was inserted after the fact for easier reading):

Square plaza dirty communist cotton candy. Walking into the ocean to find pearls of black down down deep under the floor of the red sky that burns with the rays of suckling fresh cracked pepper on the floor with the salty fish that tastes of remnants that don’t overlap. Lying down to smell the dirt but I cannot see the smell of the fog that overcomes overwhelms me with the fear of butterflies. Eyelashes and corn on the cob. Smells like a fat cow that got tipped over in the night. Warm hot scorching ice cream that melts in the freezer and freezes on the sidewalk. With tenacity jealousy rage and teeth shiny pearly white at the depths of the ocean where everything is so weighted it is as flat as a….Just keep the flow
and feel the hot. I am so cold I want to roll around in the snow where the polar bears talk and penguins slide into red square. Cobble stones as soft as marshmallows. In the back of my thoughts and worst fears of happiness and time that has the weight of gravity. Like the bottom of the sea where there is no air no light and no marshmallows. (Paschich)

With this automatic writing sample and a few others, I was able to create a short solo Chatter (still a work in progress), with the text as the sound score acting as a stream of consciousness. This was an extension of utilizing writing as another medium and discipline to further my creative practice that infused my choreographic process for the making of Exquisite Corpse. This writing exercise was extremely useful in articulating my creative practice in a different way. Writing can also be considered a mode of movement and a means for tapping into the unconscious. Writing has revealed for me what is hidden in the mind which has manifested my thoughts and dreams into words. Movement can serve as communication and dance has the capability of articulating the unseen in the language of movement.

Surrealism was a starting point that provided me with an overwhelming amount of visual stimulus to make new work. While not aiming to create a surrealist piece of art itself, I still planned to produce my own lasting images on the stage. One of the most pertinent artists of the twentieth century and a great influence to me, the late Pina Bausch, succeeded in transporting audiences to a different world. Bausch re-invented “Tanztheatre” in the 1970’s (“Sadler’s Wells Theatre - The Singular Art of Pina Bausch”). Much of Bausch’s work looked like a life size painting. James Woodall, who wrote The Singular Art of Pina Bausch, comments on some of Bausch’s influences,
“Bausch has always drawn heavily on Surrealism - the imagery, for example, of Belgian René Magritte, Frenchman Balthus and her fellow German Max Ernst. Surrealism contains, within its prolix gestures and mad thinking, marvelous metaphors which deliberately mean nothing” (“Sadler’s Wells Theatre - The Singular Art of Pina Bausch”). These gestures that “deliberately mean nothing” can bring distinctive qualities to movement when creating dance as I used in my opening work *The Hat Makes the Man*. The artists of the surrealist movement left behind bold ideas, thought provoking images, and a bit of absurdity that engage artists like myself to keep returning to the art to be inspired by the movement’s idiosyncrasies. A study of dance for film that I created provided an opportunity to examine Surrealism further. As an attempt to bring Surrealism into dance, I ended up with much more insight of how to mix mediums. This project gave me the chance to integrate dance and film for the first time.
Eye to Eye | A Study of Dance for Film

In the Spring of 2015, I created a study of dance for film entitled *Eye to Eye*. The goal of this project was to research how different mediums inform each other. This project informed the filmic elements integrated with live dance that I later created for the stage. László Moholy-Nagy was an artist from the early twentieth century who worked with a variety of mediums and greatly impacted my views on movement. One of his works that inspired this project in particular was called “The Light Space Modulator” (“From the Harvard Art Museums’ Collections Light Prop for an Electric Stage (Light-Space Modulator)”), a metal sculpture that showcased light play and the manipulation of movement. It was first showcased in Berlin in 1930 after almost a decade of development. He also made a short film that featured this sculpture translated as “Light Play Black White Grey” (“‘Lightplay: Black-White-Gray’ by László Moholy-Nagy on Vimeo”). Seeing this short film with a rotating metal sculpture as the subject with movement, reflected light, and shadow in a darkened room, opened my perception of the potential movement had that could be represented on stage aside from dance.

Inquiries for this project were: How can the subconscious be seen or interrupted through movement? Can surrealism be expressed through movement? How do moving, writing, and filmmaking inform each other? What other movement can accompany dance on stage or in film? Because of this project, I was able to move forward with a broader perspective of motion. Movement can exist in so many ways outside of dance on stage and in the frame. It is pertinent to reflect on the outcome of this project because the findings propelled me forward to create the evening length work of *Exquisite Corpse*. Even though I was left with more questions than answers, the results of this project impacted
the way I began to work. The following is an excerpt from the final thoughts I compiled upon completion of this study of dance for film. The research done and the discoveries made throughout this project bridged these mediums and revealed a variety of ways dance and film can be in conversation with one another.

*Can two realities exist simultaneously on a new or unexpected plane?* These questions produced some findings. I discovered that there are many types of movement outside of the dancing that I did in each session. Writing is movement, my surroundings like the flowers produced movement, other people walking past me produced movement. Through the practice of moving and writing in different spaces, I discovered new inquiries. *How do I integrate this new practice in my creation of dance for stage? How can technology and the use of film enhance movement for the stage? What other types of movement can enhance the dynamics of the final product? Can I make unconscious and conscious choices simultaneously?*

*Surrealism served as my theoretical framework for this project. I assumed that surrealist practice would only exist in my movement and writing. Yet, Surrealism presented itself in the editing process and the composition of the final film as well. The “irrational juxtaposition of images” became a prominent theme. I enjoyed making the film and editing. In each session, the camera was always set in one location, filming from only one perspective. The camera intentionally had no mobility. This left me thinking about how the camera can participate in different ways or contribute necessary motion on screen. The stillness of the camera for*
this project created simplicity in the editing process but also bored me a bit as the viewer. I had to find new ways of editing to create more movement aside from just the dancing. Continuing on with this project, I would be inclined to work with other dancers and be behind the camera as well to experiment with movement of the camera and the bodies in space.

Moving and writing in different spaces was informative. These sessions have defined a new practice for me as a dancer, choreographer and teacher. I feel strongly about the connection of moving and writing. I believe that moving and writing inform each other. I intend to continue forward with this practice. Some of my sessions I did not feel like writing after moving. I just wanted to keep moving. But some of the sessions I experienced a flow of writing that I do not have without moving first. Dancing opens my mind and my body and I feel more receptive, patient and willing to write after moving. I intend to move forward with this practice for myself and to serve my choreography, the writing serving as both practice and as documentation.

I compiled footage that served as my findings. I also edited and composed the final film that was a larger part of my practice than the dancing and writing. During this part of the process I noticed that what I felt when dancing was not always the same as what I saw in the footage. In my complementary writings, there is documentation of what I was feeling during the sessions. I was always aware of my space but still got lost in movement. When watching the footage my attention was not always on me as the mover. The most effective footage for me was the Neutor Tunnel footage of Salzburg. I liked this location because it felt as
if it could be any tunnel anywhere in the world. It was a public space and the footage was interesting to me because there were pedestrians walking, riding bikes, pushing strollers and walking their dogs through the shot. All of these proved to add movement to the frame.

This unexpected element created more movement, dynamics and a fantastic sound score to play with. The sounds of echoes in the tunnel, footsteps and a foreign language (German) conversation on a phone, created another layer of awareness and place. I originally intended to use some of my writings as a sound score. I wanted to record writings in whispers and different volumes to create a sound score. I ended up using the sounds from the tunnel and a track of music that completely enhanced the composition of the footage. The project’s final outcome changed directions during the editing and composition.

Moving forward I intend to continue with the dancing and writing practice for myself as a tool to choreograph. I also intend to continue using the camera for still and film to inform my practice. I aim to discover a way that the digital work I am doing can be integrated into the work I am creating for the stage. (Paschich, Critical Issues in the Performing Arts Final Project Reflections)

I did get answers to some of the questions posed at the beginning of this project. Through the creation process for Exquisite Corpse I documented rehearsal thoughts in writing for archival purposes. I also was able to create my own short film for the stage. This contributed to integrating film with live dance. The flowers, the people in the tunnel, and objects like strollers, were other types of movement I found to use on screen with dance. The final inquiry about making conscious and unconscious choices simultaneously
leaves me without an answer and certainly deserves further investigation. However, I gained new perspective on different modes of movement throughout this project. I gained insight on the similarities of composing a dance for stage and a film for screen which gave me direction and further inspiration to investigate within the perimeters of live dance performance.

Chapter 2 | Exquisite Corpse

The Process and Product | Two Mediums Take the Stage

*Exquisite Corpse* was a full evening-length contemporary dance performance that I directed and choreographed. It was performed in Rodey Theatre at the University of New Mexico on the weekend of September 4-6, 2015. The production was a multimedia performance that included live contemporary dance, film, and projection. This show was my first experience directing an entire production, choreographing a full evening of dance, and creating any sort of film element to be showcased on a large scale during a live show. What drew me to working with both mediums was my fascination with movement. The creative process, actual production, and post-show experience provided me with an overwhelming amount of information on how the two mediums can influence one another.

The idea of integrating filmic elements with live dance was to utilize different sites for movement, create an unreal world on stage for the viewer to experience, and to present more modes of movement on the stage outside of the dancing bodies. The projections served as light, shadow, texture, and movement. I used the physical body of the dancer as a site for the projection. These projections also spilled onto the stage as the dancers moved through them, often leaving the projection itself as the spectacle of
motion. The rear projection screen, the black brick upstage wall, the stage, and the physical dancing bodies were all sites for projection and filmic elements. *Exquisite Corpse* falls under the category of multimedia work. Jennifer Mahood, with an MFA in Drama from Calgary, Alberta, makes a crucial distinction between *intermedia* and *multimedia*:

(Intermedia) This is a term to describe a work where the mediums are inextricably intertwined and dependent on one another to reveal the overall work…Multimedia describes a work that uses multiple mediums; however, each medium can exist independent of one another. Intermedia art on the other hand is work that cannot be reduced to its parts. (Mahood 7)

This performance was created as an investigation of the cross-discipline of mediums (contemporary dance and media) and used Surrealism as the theoretical/conceptual framework for the creative process. The following is a description of the work printed in the program:

*Exquisite Corpse* is an evening-length work of contemporary dance, video projection and design, directed and choreographed by Master of Fine Arts Candidate Kelsey Paschich. *Exquisite Corpse* utilizes surrealism as the theoretical/conceptual framework and questions identity, presence and absence. Just as a surrealist would experiment with different mediums, *Exquisite Corpse* is an intersection of contemporary dance and media that aims to expose subconscious thought through dance and imagery. Movement as a language makes transparent the space between dream and reality with spontaneity, juxtaposition and the element of surprise. This work challenges the preconceived
understanding of real versus surreal. (Paschich C’est la Vie | Exquisite Corpse printed program, 2015)

I filmed, edited, and composed all of the video elements which included a pre-show loop, a five-minute film that looped five times to total twenty-five minutes that played as the audience came into the theatre, a silent four-minute black and white film on the back wall of the theatre mid-show, and a short film towards the end of the performance that was also cast on the back wall of the theatre.

Running many technical elements simultaneously during a live show was a new challenge. Fortunately, I had an experienced collaborator to work with, guest artist/lighting designer David Deveau. He designed the projections and helped create some of the filmic elements in the space. He flew in from Houston, TX for the week of the performance. During our collaboration, Deveau provided technical support, design ideas, and was incredibly knowledgeable with the realities of running a high tech show. He was also able to give crucial feedback about lighting looks, mood, and the logistics of working with two projectors in real time.

We agree that all of the components that involved live dance and film, worked and served the piece overall. Our original goal and discussions about the design elements of the work were to create a new world on stage with dance and technology. In “Jackets” we used rotating abstract grids to create a fragmented, broken up stage for the dance to move inside of and around. In “Layers,” we took short clips of film that I shot of the dancers, footage of water, light, and other objects and pieced them together as a short film. We then projected that film on the back wall of the space with the real dancing
bodies still in the space against the wall. That moment was more about the dancers in the
digital world than the live world on stage.

The purpose of the film elements and projections within live contemporary dance
for Exquisite Corpse, was intended to give texture, light, shadow, and enrich the overall
design on stage. The challenge was figuring out how the two mediums could be in
conversation with each other on the stage in front of an audience and not distract from
one another. I had to ask myself, where would the audience be looking, where did I want
them to look? How could I focus the lens for the viewer? The proscenium stage was my
frame and with bodies in space, I was able to manipulate time and space throughout the
performance with the use of media. The projections created by Deveau were the only
lighting source for the dancers in sections of “The Hat Makes the Man,” “Why You So
Mad,” and for the entirety of “Jackets.” Therefore, their bodies were sites for the
projection and took on a look of an abstract moving image. This created a different
environment in the space and rarely could the viewer catch the whole figure of the body
unless the dancer(s) were directly in front of the the projector.

From that point forward dance and film were woven together for the creation of
Exquisite Corpse and the balance became tricky when deciding when to use one medium
to permeate the other or when to keep them independent of one another. Choreographing
dance with the projections or filmic elements in mind, and vice versa, assisted the product
in being somewhat balanced in the end. The filmic elements and projections infused the
dancing with new dimensions of space and layers of motion. The dance elements
anchored the filmic elements in the stage space as well as provided real time movement
as a layer of spectacle in live performance.
“Meret Oppenheim | Pre-Show Dance and Film Loop”

Fig. 1
Meret Oppenheim (1913-1985) *Stone-woman / Steinfrau, 1938*
Oil on cardboard, 59 x 49 cm
Private collection
©ProLitteris, Zürich

Meret Oppenheim was one of the few surrealist women. She created the image shown (see fig. 1). Oppenheim was an artist who worked with different mediums like photography, sculpture, and poetry, to name a few, and held her ground as a female artist in a very male driven artistic movement. This image was the inspiration for the pre-show loop. It motivated me to take the risk of being on stage dancing a structured improvisation for a long duration of time with a film loop. In my mind’s eye, the stone legs and feet dip into the subconscious in an attempt to free what cannot be seen which is
what I tried to manifest each time I performed this solo. Each evening I performed was a different experience. The last performance I was able to drop into movement without thinking too much, earlier and easier. The idea was to be in my own world as the audience entered the theater. I began dancing twenty minutes before the house opened so I could have a world and mood completely set for the audience as they entered. This also provided a unique opportunity to be deep into my own movement flow before there was a viewer.

The pre-show dance and film loop manifested all of the ideas and creative tools used throughout the choreographic process that will be discussed in further detail later in this chapter. The idea of the pre-show loop was to have something happening as the audience came into the theatre, to allow them to enter another world, time and place without the ice breaking tension of the beginning of the show happening when the curtain opens. I wanted to break the boundaries of the formality of the traditional theater experience.

The video footage and ambient music created an unreal world for the viewer to experience. The pre-show film loop was a five-minute piece of footage taken in the Neutor Tunnel in Salzburg, Austria that I edited and pieced together, montaged, with other images and footage to create a montage on the full rear projection screen. The still camera allowed for the basic space of a tunnel on screen, to be filled with other imagery. I reference the definition of montage as, “The process or technique of selecting, editing, and piecing together separate sections of film to form a continuous whole” (“Montage: Definition of Montage in Oxford Dictionary (American English) (US)”).
The other footage montaged into space of the larger frame was: myself dancing along another filmed wall in the Neutor Tunnel rotated 90 degrees so it appeared I was walking/dancing up and down the screen, a short film of a butterfly and smoke, footage of a sparkler shot up close that created flashes of light on a portion of the screen and the up close image of a ghost light coming in and out of focus. The film itself was looped four times for a total of twenty minutes before it dropped out to projector black close to the beginning of the rest of the concert. This look appeared completely white on the projection screen and was very bright in contrast.

![Image](image-url)

**Fig. 2**
*C'est la Vie | Exquisite Corpse MFA Thesis Concert 2015*
“Meret Oppenheim | Pre-Show Dance and Film Loop”
Kelsey Paschich
Photo Credit: Travis Lewis, 2015

The projector sat on the floor downstage center of the proscenium. Therefore, as I was dancing, it cast my shadow upon the rear projection screen. I danced a structured improvisation with the film and played with my shadow. The duration of this sequence was important to me. I would begin improvising on stage with the film loop before the house opened. My task was to play with the space divided on the screen as if it
represented many different rooms, each one unique. I would try to fit myself in each space and stay there until something happened like the footage of me walking along a wall. I would then try to get out of the way and go to another space. So, by the time the audience entered the theater, the film loop and I had already dropped into the movement conversation that would be part of that particular performance. The mood foreshadowed what was to come later in the show with projections, shadow play, and film on stage with live contemporary dance.

The informal atmosphere that this pre-show loop created for the viewer was an experiment to see how or if the audience would engage in the event on stage. Because I allowed myself to come in and out of play with the screen, there were moments when I came downstage close to the projector and took a scan of the audience in the house. I observed that some of the viewers seemed captivated by what was happening on stage. Others were relaxed and chatting with those around them, reading the program, and watching what was happening on stage at their leisure.
Dancing with my shadow came about by a happy accident in a performance one month prior to the premiere of *Exquisite Corpse*. During SHIFT Contemporary Dance Collective’s, SHIFT | Launch at the North Fourth Center for the Arts, I had the opportunity to present three sections of *Exquisite Corpse*: “7,6,5,” “Jackets,” and “Why You So Mad.” These sections were still works in progress at that point in time and the media was yet to be fully integrated.

Because of its size, the projector provided by the theater could only be placed on the floor and could not be hung in space as I originally wanted. I had to rethink how I could cover the dancers with projections with the projector placed on the floor downstage center. The throw of light was limited, leaving black space downstage left and right. However, with this new positioning, any dancer that stood or moved in front of the
projector, had their shadow cast on the back screen. The shadows were larger on the back scrim the closer the dancer was to the projector and smaller as the dancer neared the scrim. The multiplicity of the dancers created by the shadows was an unforeseen affect that enhanced certain sections of the concert. “Jackets” in particular benefited from the multiplicity of bodies in space created by the shadows, with so much more movement and dimension immediately added to the stage. This developed into shadow play in multiple sections in the evening length work.

I know now that I will continue researching shadow play and investigate possibilities of using the idea of multiplicity in performance. This loop also left me with a curiosity for duration and what that means in dance. I observed that the longer I stayed in the structured improvisation more movement choices became accessible. It was as though I was peeling away layers of the self to expose my inner thoughts through the duration of a movement task.
After the stage was set, seven women dressed in black suit jackets and black boots took the stage as I exited. The opening section of the show began with a piece that I choreographed in spring of 2014 titled “The Hat Makes the Man.” This piece was originally set on four male dancers. The ideas, images, and inspirations for this work were the true beginning of what would carry over to the stage for Exquisite Corpse thesis concert in September 2015. I have questioned how the images and ideas of the surrealist movement could be integrated into the creation process of dance and the live performance; this piece was my opportunity to explore these inquiries further.

Intrigued by the idea of dream and reality, I created a work in response to Max Ernst’s photomontage “The Hat Makes the Man.” (see fig. 5) This is a photomontage or
collage created by Max Ernst in 1920, which inspired the initial idea for the choreography. I used the color image that shows cut out hats stacked on top of one another and seem to be phallic towers. This image has rigid angles, asymmetry, and the uneven towers show movement on the page. A detailed description of this image is as follows:

To make *The Hat Makes the Man*, Max Ernst cut, pasted, and stacked images of men’s hats clipped from a sales catalog. The suggestively phallic towers and tongue-in-cheek title inscribed on the work, “C’est le chapeau qui fait l’homme” (“The Hat Makes the Man”) were likely inspired by Sigmund Freud’s book *The Joke and It’s Relation to the Unconscious* (1905), in which the famed psychoanalyst identified the hat—a requisite accessory for men—as a symbol for repressed desire. The visual pun adds a new, bawdy spin to the cliché. (“Max Ernst. The Hat Makes the Man. (1920) | MoMA”)

![Fig. 5
*The Hat Makes the Man* by Max Ernst, 1920
Museum of Modern Art (“Max Ernst. The Hat Makes the Man. (1920) | MoMA”)
I took these ideas and applied them to choreography. The opening of “The Hat Makes the Man” entails the seven female dancers walking straight downstage towards black, army like boots that line the downstage tape past the proscenium. They stood downstage in a line from stage left to stage right in their own lit specials. The dancers are set facing up stage and their feet look as though they are bound to the floor. To me this was a similar idea to the wobbly towers in the still image. I was not trying to recreate the image on stage, just simply use the shapes and motion in the image to influence my choreographic choices. This began with gestural movement of the hands and arms.

Sections of Andre Breton’s Surrealist Manifesto of 1924 were used as the soundscape. Because males dominated the Surrealist movement, I distorted my voice in garage band to sound like a deep male voice and read the manifesto that was then layered over the sound of a ticking clock. For over three minutes, the mood was tense on stage with the gestural, sharp movement of the dancers. This tension was released when the voice stopped and the ticking clock faded away. One by one the dancers left the line downstage. The portion of text used from Breton’s 1924 Surrealist Manifesto is as follows:

In the *Surrealist Manifesto* of 1924, André Breton wrote, I believe in the future resolution of these two states — outwardly so contradictory — which are dream and reality, into a sort of absolute reality, a surreality, so to speak, I am aiming for its conquest, certain that I myself shall not attain it, but too indifferent to my death not to calculate the joys of such possession. He continued, for the time being, my intention has been to see that justice was done to that hatred of the marvelous which rages in certain men, that ridicule under which they would like to crush it. Let us
resolve, therefore: the Marvelous is always beautiful, everything marvelous is beautiful. Nothing but the Marvelous is beautiful. (Cardullo, Bert and Knopf. Robert 365)

Using this excerpt from the first Surrealist manifesto was an attempt to integrate text as soundscape and create tension. The soundscape serves as a good representation of the esoteric yet familiar nature of dreams. In my experience, I am always in the present time in a dream. Like a series of vignettes, there is not a linear story or any logical way to go from one scene to the next. Breton’s description of surrealism is as follows: “Psychic automatism in its pure state, by which one proposes to express-verbally, by the means of the written word, or in any other manner-the actual functioning of thought. Dictated by thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern” (Lippard 20).

When I reset the piece on the seven women, it was fascinating to see them embody the same qualities of movement. The second version with seven women was much more powerful than the original version with four men. There were multiple bodies in space and the women embodied more fire, fluidity and strength in their movement. They developed the movement beyond what was originally given to them. These qualities were not natural for all of the women at first. The women personified the choreography originally created for four men. At that point, I realized it was a completely different work when reset on seven women and it was not simply a replication of a piece that had already been performed.

At the beginning of the third section, all of the dancers were sitting on the floor except for one dancer standing upstage right of center and facing down stage. The eye
could only catch the outline of the dancers and the projection of a texture that looks like white snow or tv fuzz when the station does not come in on an old tv set, was projected on the whole stage. Mahood describes the extra layer of texture and complexity that is added to her own work by using an intermedial approach:

An additional layer of corporeal movement is layered with the digitally dancing body, another texture is incorporated in the work through a web of movement connections. This adds another layer of intermedial complexity to an already complex work, another layer of meaning to explore. (Mahood 48)

Even though I define this show as multimedia, the projections and filmic elements added more complexity and texture. At the beginning of the last section, all of the dancers are sitting on the floor wavering like seaweed and have a snowy projection on them and projected on the scrim. The snowy projection filled the dark stage and added texture to the moving bodies that blurred out the unique characteristics of each dancer and drew the focus to the movement of the body. In a dream, identity is often changed, lost or not seen.

The projection in this sequence represented that loss of identity by blurring out the detailed structure of each body on stage. The snowy projection changed the mood and enhanced the movement that was already happening on stage. Deveau advised me that dance and media work best together when the viewer cannot watch one medium without the other (Deveau). I agree, however, in this situation, I believe the projection could be watched without the dance and the dance without the projection. When put together, the live dance with the projection was a complete work.
The difference between setting work on women and on men impacted me as a choreographer. I know now that gender plays a larger role in dance interpretation and execution than I originally thought or knew. The same piece set on two different genders changes the feeling, the movement, and the quality amongst many other elements in a way I do not yet fully understand and would like to further research.

“Why You So Mad”

Fig. 6
*C’est la Vie | Exquisite Corpse, “Why You So Mad”*
Sarah Hogland
Photo Credit: Travis Lewis 2015
In the creation process for this solo, I asked Sarah Hogland to use the music as motivation to move. In an attempt to create a completely different choreographic pallet and a piece of pure physicality, we began working with music by Notorious B.I.G. The impetus of movement was derived from a much lower and more grounded place. The movement that emerged was weighted. Working together at the start to generate movement, we both utilized the automatic moving exercises, revealing many physical possibilities. We then made a list of ten words and created a movement associated with each word. At this point, the movement task was given to Hogland to decipher. She then had to find transitions between the ten movements to make a phrase. This phrase was then divided up, retrograded, and translated into floor movement.

This solo was one of the only moments in the show where the stage had one dancer alone, aside from the pre-show film and dance loop. The flow of the show needed a moment with simplicity and minimal spatial design. The different movement and phrasing were in juxtaposition to the other sections of the work. Physicality was meant to drive this section so that there could be a kinetic connection with the viewer. John Martin, a dance critic, describes a kinetic experience between a viewer and a performer, “The inherent contagion of bodily movement, which makes the onlooker feel sympathetically in his own musculature the exertions he sees in somebody else’s musculature.”(qtd in Brannigan 12)

A black and white projection with moving rectangles covered the dancer, the rear projection screen, and the rest of the stage. This affect brought movement and texture on the live body and stage that was being created by light. As if the audience was being drawn into the dream of the solo dancer, she slowly walked backwards from downstage
center to upstage center, which created an intentional energy pull with the distance that slowly emerged between her and the audience. As she passed mid-stage, the rear projection screen slowly flew out. The same black and white projection was now cast on the upstage, black brick wall.

The sound score was ambient. Max Richter’s music created an atmosphere as if the dancer was submerged under water during this dream-like sequence. The transition in and out of this solo was bookended with this ambient music so the Spanish rap music came as a surprise. As soon as she arrived and leaned against the upstage wall, the projection and sound bumped to loud and bright, making an abrupt change. In bright white stage light, Hogland suddenly disconnected from the wall and ran from upstage right to downstage left. I intended the Spanish rap music to be a surprise. This change represented the mind abruptly switching from one place in a dream to another. Through creating this solo, I know that I can create a complete section with a small amount of choreography.
In this section, the dancers were lit by the projection of a moving grid that cast texture on the moving bodies. This effect diffused the dancing bodies and created a new environment on the stage. Deveau designed the rotating grid projection that moved throughout the space. The dark space on stage was defined as much as the lit space and the projector on the floor provided shadows on the back wall. The shadows multiplied the bodies on the stage and the viewer was encouraged to watch the shadows as well as the live dancing bodies. The rotating grid projection defined and fragmented the space in which the dancers traversed. For a live audience, the eye could just catch some of the movement out of the light. The dancers ran to all points in space on the stage to create high energy. However, the shadows more often than not presented a clear perspective of the choreographic movement being performed by the dancers because the lighting was so fragmented and dark.
Another way the projection served and shaped this section was by creating a surreal world on stage. Because of the fragmented light, the naked eye could only catch so much of the movement the dancers were doing but could experience the energy and motion not seen by being present in the audience and not experiencing this section on video after the fact. Until the end of the short piece, the seven dancers could not be caught altogether. They arrived together in a group directly placed in front of the projector so the grid texture was saturated on their bodies.

On camera, this section did not document well because it was so dark. This is an example of the importance for the viewer to be present at the live performance for the unique experience that simply cannot be documented or replicated. The choreography and space was specifically designed with the projection in mind as the only lighting element to create a new environment on the stage. The projection and the dancing were dependent upon one another.

During a Dance History III course this semester I was introduced to several dance artists from the twentieth century that are broadening my perspective on live dance and the use of filmic elements. One artist worth noting is Alwin Nikolais. The projected light effects in “Jackets” were similar to a piece called “Pond” (“Pond- A Documentary on Vimeo”) created by Nikolais. In “Pond” the live dancing bodies have light cast on them and the dancers seem inseparable from their environment created by the light design. The light cast on the dancers in “Jackets” created new motion and a new focus that encompassed the full stage rather than directing the eye to the individual dancer. “Pond” was one of the many works Nikolais created as one of the first artists to work with multimedia in concert dance.
Born in 1910 in Connecticut, Nikolais began as a puppeteer and an organist for silent films. He was greatly influenced by Mary Wigman and later Hanya Holm. After World War II, Nikolais began choreographing more holistically meaning he expanded his vision away from the individual dancer to considering the effect of the whole stage space. This is where technology came in to play and changed the way he worked. To Nikolais, the dancer was an artistic tool and not a means of individual self-expression. In “Nik: A Documentary,” Nikolais talks briefly about this, “Dancers often get into the pitfall of emotion rather than motion. To me motion is primary—it is the condition of motion which culminates into emotion. In other words, it is our success or failure in action in time and space which culminates in emotion.” (Nikolais 116) In “Jackets,” the dancers were used in a similar way. Now that I am aware of the work he has contributed to the field of dance, I anticipate doing further research on Nikolais’ creations, processes, and theories as I move forward investigating the relationships of technology and live dance.
“Layers | A Silent Film Interlude”

In *Dance on Screen*, Sherril Dodds describes the multi-layered relationship between movement and film. This description best introduces “Layers | A Silent Film Interlude.”

The actual material body, constituted through flesh, blood, bones, and muscles is the raw material for dance. It is given a sense of ‘shape’ and ‘texture’ through a number of formal considerations. These range from fundamental characteristics of dance, which is dynamic movement in space and time, to considerations such as location, music, costume, make-up, set-design, and lighting. The video dance body is then subject to another set of variables depending on filmic or televisual codes. Again these involve formal considerations about decisions over camera position, camera movement, lens type, shot length, the use of colour, special effects, and editing choices. This gives the video dance body an additional texture, a layer of technological signification. (Dodds 148–149)

“Layers” was created to provide the viewer with a sensorial intermission (not necessarily a disruption) from live dance and to shift the eye to something more fixed and controlled, a shift in reality and dimension. Camera angle, editing choices, and the arrangement of frames were new considerations that had to be made for this short film to exist simultaneously with the live bodies on the stage. This filmic element in the live concert setting offered a different sense of time; an occurrence that had been filmed in the past but was being shared in the present. Essentially, this section provided a pause from the show for the audience with the two dimensions of the flat screen.
This four-minute silent film footage was in black and white and projected on the theater’s black brick wall, upstage. Maya Deren greatly influenced me in creating this interlude. Deren was one of the most important experimental filmmakers of the twentieth century and interestingly enough in this description of her work she is described as “rejecting surrealist traditions.” Dr. Erin Brannigan, the Senior Lecturer in Dance in the School of English, Media and Performing Arts at the University of New South Wales, beautifully describes Deren’s work and strategies as a filmmaker:

Working against the conventions of mainstream media, and rejecting documentary, abstract, and surrealist traditions, Deren developed her own aesthetic and dancefilm form. Using performers with no acting training and often casting herself as the protagonist, her films are underscored by a preoccupation with figures moving through a variety of natural and domestic locations, a distortion of time and space continuity, destabilized/fragmented subjects, mobile and ambiguous sources of agency and desire, stylized figural action, and dream-like narratives. (Brannigan 102–103)

Deren’s *A Study in Choreography for Camera* that featured Talley Beatty as the lone dancer served as an inspiration to me (Deren). Beatty was a well known modern dancer and choreographer during the mid-twentieth century. He choreographed and performed the movement in Deren’s short film that she refers to as a collaboration. Beatty was a refined technical modern dancer with exquisite form that made this short film study truly engaging. In black and white, the viewer sees Beatty dancing outdoors and can watch the way his body moves. Beatty’s clean, architectural lines and overall body strength are a spectacle in itself. This short film study represented a purity of focus
that magnified the motion of the human body. Deren captured the beauty of human form perfectly, I knew this idea was something worth investigating.

“Layers” was a short film that attempted to break down and zoom in on the moving image. I refer back to the inquiry, what else moves besides the physical body? My answers in film form were: water dripping down a windshield, the sparks of a firecracker, the light on from the bulb of a theatre ghost light close up. These were in addition to the close ups of the dancer’s backs, hands, and faces. These were my layers for the film.

In an attempt to keep the shot simple and clean, the footage was all in black and white, I used silence in place of sound. I filmed footage of the dancers on the stage months before the show with a ghost light as the only source of light. The close up shots were taken of the dancers’ backs, faces, and hands. These images were layered on to one another at different times through the four minutes and montaged together to create meaning for each of the small images existing as a whole. I am fascinated with the movement of bodies or as Deren said, “images of the bodies in motion and an exploration of the implications of movement for the individual body” (Pramaggiore 36).

The movement created on the dancers was specifically made for the camera. The intention was to see the dancers live onstage up against a magnified part of a body on a larger scale on the screen. This created a different perspective of movement. “There is a potential filmic dance form, in which the choreography and movements would be designed, precisely, for the mobility and other attributes of the camera.” (Deren 318)

The challenges with “Layers” were in the creation and editing of a film. Getting the film to translate clearly from a small laptop screen to a large black brick wall with
correct opacity, sharpness, and contrast was a problem. The solution to this problem was taking the raw video footage that I shot of the dancers in the theater and at other sites such as the carwash and putting it into Cue Lab, a program that enables projections and filmic elements to be manipulated in live performance. Because it proved difficult to create the film on a small laptop screen and translate it to the large scale wall in the theatre space, Deveau and I recreated this four-minute film in the theater on the upstage wall. We took the raw footage, arranged and specifically placed it in space on the wall. This allowed for the correct opacity, sharpness, and contrast to be applied to the large-scale site for the film.

As a choreographer and a film editor, it is easy to keep creating movement until there is simply too much and the challenge is practicing restraint in choosing only the footage that contributes to the whole picture. The editing and shifting of focus was important as I pieced together the live dance and filmic elements. The silence, the cleanliness of the black and white shot, and the purity of movement was an effective combination. This film gave me a new way to achieve minimalism and incorporate movement that was created specifically for film in live dance. The fixed medium of film, for this particular instance, was actually as fleeting as the live dance that preceded it.
“7, 6, 5” was the only section of the show that had no integration of filmic elements or projection. In direct juxtaposition to “Layers,” this section was designed with classical music and abstract movement made for the stage. It was lit with raw, stark lighting and it was specifically designed in space to utilize the stage with three dancers. However, Rodey Theater has a balcony on the upstage wall (see fig. 8) that was used as another site or small stage for a structured improvisation to offset the very structured and formed choreography happening below on the main stage. Hogland was the dancer improvising on the balcony and another dancer Nicole Corpion rolled a large vintage spotlight on stage that followed Hogland up the spiral staircase to the balcony and lit her movement. In the midst of a heavily image based show, I felt it was important to let the viewer
experience raw dancing with no interruptions. An overall goal for the show was to have a balance between the filmic elements and the live dancing on stage. By this point in the show, many filmic elements had been shown. It is hard to tell where the audience’s eye is drawn when both dance and film are sharing the stage. This was an opportunity for me to suggest to the audience to watch only the dance.

This piece was created with choreographic movements set in musical phrases of five, six, and seven. I originally set this work for a portion of my Comprehensive Exam required of second year graduate students in spring of 2015. It was created in three rehearsals within the span of a week and was not accompanied by music. Layering the abstract classical piece of music came later and was a perfect match for the odd angular movements choreographed in this section. This was the only piece choreographed this way and therefore unique and distinct in mood and aesthetic.

Referring back to Deren, even though there was no filmic element here, this section’s contribution to the overall show was in the simplicity and purity of focus on the dancing of the live bodies on stage. With some of Deren’s other films: *Meshes of the Afternoon, At Land, and Ritual in Transfigured Time* (Deren), it is noted that Deren clearly had an interest in dance and that it expanded her knowledge of movement and made her work unique, “Deren’s persistent interest in dance and ritual…manifests itself in these films as an obsession with images of bodies in motion and an exploration of the implications of movement for the individual body…Deren’s interest in dance preceded her work in cinema” (Pramaggiore 26). From creating “Layers,” I am left with a desire to further distinguish the potential dance has for the screen. Additional research on Deren
and her use of movement in film is necessary to understand the implications of dance for film.

“Exquisite Corpse”

By this point in the show, the dancers began to take away layers of clothing like their jackets. The changing of clothes symbolized the layers of the individual self. The idea throughout the performance was to have a transformation not only in time and space, but with the individual real bodies on the stage. With the fly system, I was able to fly in eight white romantic tutu skirts. They slowly lowered down into the space and one by one the dancers took them off the metal welded hangers (see fig. 9). The dancers now had
white tutus instead of black jackets. As the show transformed and took the viewer somewhere else, the dancers also were physically changing to enhance the transition of space and time.

The original short work named “Exquisite Corpse” was developed with the surrealist creative tools the game of Exquisite Corpse and automatic writing. With the automatic writing in the creative process for the piece, the dancers and I translated that idea into what we called “automatic movement.” We would begin rehearsal moving for the sake of moving, anywhere from ten to twenty minutes in duration and then follow that session immediately with five minutes of automatic writing. The inquiry of these surrealist creative tools, automatic writing, and the game Exquisite Corpse was to find out how these processes could be transcended through dance. My goal again through this process was to find new ways to work and create in the studio. Hogland, shared her feedback integrating the automatic writing within the choreographic process:

I found the automatic moving exercises to be extremely useful. It allowed me the time and space to work through the types of movement that I find myself resorting to regularly- my 'fall back' movements so to speak. By giving myself permission to move this way, it made it easier to transition into movement that was foreign to my body in some. In this space of exploration, it was exhilarating to experience new pathways of energy flow, as well new intentions within the movement. By intention, I do not necessarily mean some sort of narrative impulse guiding my movement, but rather an abstract cognitive or physical impulse/desire that manifests itself kinesthetically in a way that is novel to my moving body. This exercise provided a platform for authentic risk taking. When we were eventually
asked to formulate our own choreography, I felt much more open to exploration/risk/newness than I usually do when asked to choreograph on the spot. This process allowed me to challenge myself as a mover and creator.

I value moving and writing because it supports the duality of doing/thinking; of having an experience and then reflecting upon it. By respecting both of these components, the process becomes more holistic for me as a dancer. The experience itself can provide immediate growth as I explore new movement, dynamics and forms of risk. The reflection process then enhances my experience through a more subtle and sustained form of growth. I may not become immediately affected by what I have written, but this cognitive process will continue to incubate and perhaps reveal something new to me during the next rehearsal, week, etc. I believe that these two types of growth, immediate and gradual, are paramount to the artistic process. (Hogland)

With these creative tools, the dancers were left with dance components that were open for change during live performance. They had spatial and sound landmarks to navigate with as a road map of sorts. As a series of solos set as a group work, the viewer had to take in a large amount of choreography. However, the two film components integrated into the work deepened the dimension on stage and re-directed the focus.

Referring back to the subconscious, the snowy projection reappeared in this section and was projected on the upstage wall in a small box like a television. It appeared and disappeared again as Kaitlin Innis ran towards the wall. This brief projection
referenced a familiar image seen earlier in the show. At the end of this piece a projection of a window and time lapse of clouds floating by was projected on the wall upstage right. At this point, all of the dancers were sitting facing up stage and watching the time lapse of the clouds. This was a pure moment of dreaming and an opportunity to see into subconscious thought. These projections represented the other forms of movement that added layers, texture, and dimension to the dancing that was happening on stage.

Because of the way this work was built, the product on stage continued to evolve. The solos were mobile pieces of choreography that could be rearranged and put almost anywhere in space and can live on stage with or without the filmic elements. Moving forward, I intend to create more pieces that have the flexibility to allow filmic elements or exist without them. In this instance, the filmic elements strengthened the work in the space where it was being performed and that is why they were integrated. However, this particular section of the show reminded me of my passion for live dance performance. As a dancer, choreographer, and audience member I desire movement in its rawest form in which the live body personifies the individuality of the dancer through action. Live performance lends a sense of empowerment to the viewer and performer.
“The Other Side”

Fig. 10
C’est la Vie | Exquisite Corpse, “The Other Side”
Sarah Hogland, Dalila Baied, Kaitlin Innis, Nicole Corpion, Emily Innis, Kimberly White
Photo Credit: Travis Lewis, 2015

“The Other Side” was focused on peeling away the multiple layers of imagery and choreography that had been built upon throughout the show. By now, the viewer had experienced an array of images on the stage and on the screen. They had encountered a variety of moods and soundscapes. This work was meant to be a point of resolution at the end of the show.

This section closed the show with a group of six dancers in a downstage center special repeating gestural movement. The repetition got to a point where the loop was mesmerizing. This mood mirrored the mood set in the beginning of the show with “The Hat Makes the Man” that had a trancelike atmosphere. The downstage center placement
of six dancers left the seventh dancer lying downstage left. This close proximity to the audience created an intimate setting for the viewer. By this point in the show, the space had been utilized in many different ways with many sites for projection and filmic elements, and it only felt right to leave the viewer with the real body, not the unreal digital body, as their final image because this was after all a live dance performance.

After five minutes of repeated gestural movement, Hogland broke into the middle of the small circle where Kimberly White was repeating her gestural movement. Hogland began to react and improvise with the negative space around White. The tight group of four dancers left walking around the two in the center disbanded into a large “U” around the perimeter of the upstage, leaving Hogland and White improvising downstage. White finally broke away to exit the stage and Samantha Katz, the seventh dancer, finally stood up and walked to Hogland.

As a final moment of transformation, Katz took her tutu off and then sternly shook it so it would stand up by itself. She then left it standing in a stiff, up right position on the floor and exited the stage. After a minute passed, the other four dancers around the perimeter of the stage abruptly ran to Hogland and did exactly as Katz did before she exited. They left their tutus stiff and standing up right directly in front Hogland and then left the stage. The viewer was left with Hogland and the bunch of tutus standing before her. As the ambient music faded away, Hogland slowly moved upstage into the darkness leaving the tutus in the isolated pool of light. This was the only moment in the show with true stillness. With so much movement in multiple forms throughout the show, the pile of tutus standing together in stillness created a dramatic effect that was intended to leave the audience with a lasting image of unity.
Chapter 3 | Conclusion

What sticks | Moving Forward with Dance and Film

For further research and archival purposes, I had just the dance elements of the show filmed separately after the formal concert in a different space. I used bright stage light, one look, all the way through the concert. There was no film, projection, or technical elements, like lowering the tutus in on the fly. The mood, texture, and lighting of the mixed media created a different world on stage for the dance elements when performed altogether in the formal concert. The movement onstage was specifically dance.

Stripping away the multimedia elements was an exercise in returning to the root of the show; dance. For the most part, the dance elements stood alone, but I have learned from this process that the filmic elements and projections gave a unique dimension of time, space, and motion as well as texture during the live performance. This recording clarified for me what the filmic elements contributed to the dancing, space, and show. When created together, film and dance support and enhance the live performance experience. By learning a new medium and integrating film into my dance process and performance of Exquisite Corpse, this proves that a deeper understanding of moving from the perspective of two different disciplines enhances and supports live dance performance.

The archival footage became a new work of its own. By editing the footage, choosing which camera angle, and composing the moving images, the documentary footage now becomes an artistic representation of the live performance. These new
compositional choices focus the viewer’s attention where the editor wants them to look. The power of dance and film lies in the editing.

Within a live performance, the viewer has more freedom to choose what they will see and where they will direct their focus. The choreographer/director has less control of choosing the focus for the audience in live performance and can only suggest where their attention should be directed. Archiving the performance is where the camera serves the work to document the event, so it can live on and possibly be restaged in the future. However, the feeling, dimensions, and energy cannot be replicated or experienced again. This is the beauty of live performance.

As I began the editing process to compose the film footage of the concert, I learned that projection and video elements in the live show do not document as clearly as I thought they would. These elements seemed as though they were very difficult to capture on film. This left me with the unanswered question, to what purpose documentation? The concert itself was the culmination of the artistic process, now what is left? For the audience member that was not present at the live performance, what do they experience when they watch the video of the performance? My current answer is the viewer has a different experience. They do not feel the exchange of live energy that exists in the moment of live performance.

A viewer that attended the live concert will have had the ultimate experience with this work. They will have encountered the live and digital imagery in real time. They will have also experienced bodies in space with an energy that only exists in live performance. This refers to the ephemerality of live dance performance. A viewer that watches this concert documented on film will not have the experience the live audience
had because ultimately any video of a live performance is a representation of the performance, not the performance itself. The beauty of this is that the film of the concert becomes its own piece of work in a new editing and composition process. The fleeting nature of dance is the strongest offering of live performance. In the editing process of the film of the performance, I had to let go of the preciousness of what the work was live. I had to embrace that the film archived the work yet it would now become a new digital composition.

The integration of film and projection in the live performance enhanced the show as a whole. However, I know that I have only scratched the surface of possibilities of what these two mediums can do together. Now that the show is over, what remains? Still images, video for documentation, and the memory of the experience, represent what was. The film documentation of the show captures the live dancing and the design of space. The experience of utilizing dance and film remains ingrained in my memory and moving forward I am compelled to do more research and practice.

What I know now is that with fixed film elements, the excitement and unpredictability of being present for a live dance performance cannot be replaced. To have the full experience of this multimedia evening of dance, the viewer must be present in the audience. Even though Peggy Phelan, a Professor at Stanford University who has an advanced background in writing for the arts, believes that performance’s strength is its separation from technology and mass reproduction, she goes on to explain in the book *Digital Performance*, that the performance itself is only that performance in that moment.

Performance’s only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of
representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance. To the degree that performance attempts to enter the economy of reproduction, it betrays and lessens the promise of its own ontology. (qtd in Dixon 123)

I have still images (shown in figures) and film footage to document the event of *Exquisite Corpse*. The still images capture a moment in time while the film footage records the actual motion of the body and the flow of the show. Some of the media elements were bright enough to catch on film. These are the elements that stick, the elements that go forward with time as documentation of the show. Even if it is just a representation, the film still captured the live event. This is how film serves dance, with documentation, creating representations of the performance that then live on and can become their own works of art.
Conclusion

The creative process, the show itself, and the remnants leftover have made an imprint on my practice and shaped my ideas of what it means to create. Mixing mediums has endless potential. I know now that I do not ever want to be limited to the use of one medium. However, my passion for movement in its purest form, dance, is now magnified. After working with dance and film, I have a deeper understanding of my personal aesthetic and tendencies for creating movement for the stage and for the screen. I now have different mechanisms to focus the lens for the viewer whether it be in live performance or on film.

Even though I will continue mixing these mediums as I create more work, I am an advocate for live performance and the unique experience it creates for the audience. Dance is at the root of who I am. Moving forward, the research of the history and practice of both mediums will be an ongoing project and will contribute to my work in the fields of dance and film. I will further explore the potential of the delicate balance and weaving of these two art forms together. Geoff Moore, a director of theatre and film, describes what live theatre has to offer. This description also pertains to live dance performance:

Theatre offers something different. Another kind of attention. You have to go out. You are required to be part of a social transaction. Your humanity is called upon. You have to be “there” with others. The higher demand often leads to higher frustration. It is a price well worth paying…The space theater offers is a human space, a societal space, a political space. Theatre’s job is to keep that space relevant, and to keep it always open to question…Theatre is still sweaty and vulnerable, it is unedited and anything can happen. (qtd in Dixon 131)
Moore’s explanation of the human experience live theatre offers is what I value so much about live dance performance. Seeing live dance is an opportunity to be present, to experience liveliness, and to be affected. I intend to move forward as an advocate for live dance, choreographing and performing. I will utilize technology onstage when it strengthens the work being shown. Dance for film is another love I will continue to invest in and explore. But to me, first and foremost, my passion lies with the raw art of dance and movement.

I am left with more than an obsession with dance but with curiosity for the further potential it has in partnership with film. Integrating film with live dance is exciting and can change the world on stage as the audience sees it. Yet, moving forward, I desire to find the opposite; finding a new place for dance in film. I am left with the question: What can dance be on film that it cannot be on the proscenium stage? More research and practice with using the camera may provide me with some answers. The camera has the capability to capture the moving image. Film editing provides the possibility of manipulation and exaggeration of time and space. By developing a new practice with these tools, similar to the daily ritual of choreographing, I hope to find new ways to make, shape, and represent dance.

Since photography was the initial springboard into working with the camera, I intend to continue research within this medium. Photographing dance and moving bodies has been enlightening. There were moments of Exquisite Corpse that were caught in still images by photographer Travis Lewis that somehow transcended the physicality, emotion, and intent of the dancing body better than that same moment reproduced on film. I do not have an answer as to why that is, but it is motivation to further investigate
the power of the camera. From this, new inquiries arise. Can I integrate film and photography as another mixture of mediums? How, will, or can this change my perspective of dance and the lens through which it is seen? Research will provide different perspectives and lead me to new methods of production.

It is hard to compare the two art forms as each presents different working situations. Specifically, I am referring to the moving parts of scheduling dancers for rehearsals to performances and working within the confines of that budget and time frame. Regardless, if the work is for stage or for screen, there will always be limitations of budget, time, and resources. Although my first passion is dance for the stage, I question now whether it is more efficient to make dance for film or to create a live performance. Integrating mediums has provided me with a new way to be self-sufficient as an artist. If I can choreograph and collaborate with the dancers in a timely manner, efficiently use my time to shoot footage, and direct post-production, it is possible that dance for film is an ideal way to work. I do not intend to choose one medium or the other, but as an independent artist dealing with the logistics of making a living through her work, the question of efficiency and sustainability comes to mind.

Overall, the creation of Exquisite Corpse, learning about new mediums, and presenting the findings in the form of a performance serves as the beginning of something new. I have uncovered a new way to develop, investigate, and take risks within the movement driven art form of dance. I have met dance’s sister art form of film which provides different offerings but requires the same rigor and attentiveness to detail. I move forward as a master of neither knowing that both will inevitably require research, practice, and persistence. I will pursue my work with great regard for the artists that laid
the groundwork of multimedia before me. Regardless of the medium or the mode, movement drives me forward.
Appendix A | Exquisite Corpse Program

Exquisite Corpse

Artistic Director & Choreographer | Master of Fine Arts Degree Candidate
Kelsey Paschich

Exquisite Corpse is an evening-length work of contemporary dance, video projection and design, directed and choreographed by Master of Fine Arts Candidate Kelsey Paschich. Exquisite Corpse utilizes Surrealism as the theoretical/conceptual framework and questions identity, presence and absence. Just as a surrealist would experiment with different mediums, Exquisite Corpse is an intersection of contemporary dance and media that aims to expose subconscious thought through dance and imagery. Movement as a language makes transparent the space between dream and reality with spontaneity, juxtaposition and the element of surprise. This work challenges the preconceived understanding of real versus surreal.

“Myth is the facts of the mind made manifest in a fiction of matter.” –Maya Deren

Dancers
Dalila Michele Baied
Nicole Corpion
Sarah R. Hogland
Emily Innis
Kaitlin Innis
Samantha Katz
Kelsey Paschich
Kimberly White

Music Composition
George Alexandru Baldovin
Max Richter
Nina C. Young
Rachel’s
Sgnl_Fltr

Music Editing | Film Footage & Editing
Kelsey Paschich

Guest Projection Designer & Artistic Collaborator
David Deveau | Visiting Assistant
Professor Sam Houston State University
Resident Lighting Designer, Technical Director, Manager for NobleMotion Dance

Lighting Designer
Kevin Benjamin

Graphic Designer | Publicity Imagery
Lauren Golightly

Stage Manager
Ana Mercedes Arechiga

Thesis Committee
Committee Chair | Donna Jewell
Jennifer Predock-Linnell
Amanda Hamp
Mary Anne Santos Newhall
Miguel Gandert
Vladimir Conde Reche
**Show Order**

*Meret Oppenheim* | Pre-Show Film and Solo

*The Hat Makes the Man*

*Why You So Mad*

*Jackets*

*Layers* | A Silent Film Interlude

7, 6, 5

*Exquisite Corpse*

*The Other Side*

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**Special Thanks**

To my beautiful dancers, thank you for everything. Your artistry has brought this show to life. To my mentors, thank you for your invaluable guidance. Wristen and Banning, you are my light. Thank you for your daily love and giggles, without this, I would not be whole. Mom, thank you for your faith in me, the encouragement to keep going and the constant support. Dad, thank you for showing me what it means to be an artist and for sharing your endless knowledge, curiosity, and passion for art that has infused my love of dance. Ariel, my partner in crime, thank you. I am glad we are in this together.
C'EST LA VIE

Ariel Burge and Kelsey Paschich
September 4th - 6th, 2015
Works Cited


Deren, Maya. *Maya Deren Experimental Films*. N.p., 1943. DVD.


Works Considered


*Bdance for Camera 2*. N.p. DVD.


