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DS1

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Designing within the Realm of Dance

Dance choreography can be thought of as designing movement for the body, but how does that compare to designing visual motion? Through research and personal experimentation, I intend to explore possible ways to mimic or depict dance using graphics. I will be considering questions such as: what design elements can display movement while referencing the human body and portrayals of dance are the most successful at representing the movements of the human body? I specifically want to discover how graphic shapes and lines can take on an abstract form to represent the angles of the body alignment captured through movement and dance.

Technology has been a rising asset in the fine arts higher education community. Many bachelor's dance programs lack the means to teach these technologies. Digital Dance Literacy, or DDL, is a program that has been proposed and is currently being researched as a curriculum to be used in higher education for several programs offering a Bachelors of Fine Arts in dance. DDL combines technology and dance to create, document, and design dance work (Risner and Anderson 113). One expected benefit of this curriculum is how it will aid in collaborative design between faculty and student using integrated software and inputting creative material (Risner and Anderson 117). The software will be taught in a Digital Dance Literacy class and is meant to display students' visualization of the dances they create. The DDL students will promote their own work and dance events through the creation of postcards, programs, event posters, and other

designed media (Risner and Anderson 118). By “utilizing digital graphics editing, page layout design, digital audio editing, and digital video manipulation framed within a dance context,” the curriculum is combining graphic design and dance (Risner and Anderson 117). Through the DDL teaching software, dance is becoming a digital art and therefore a faction of graphic design.

The physical space a dance is performed in can be specifically designed for its performance. This concept of designing a physical space can be emphasized by taking inspiration from a choreographer that went above and beyond with her use of design in space. The choreographer Sasha Waltz embodies the concept of artistically designing a physical space used for dance. The sets she uses include bare rooms, lighted floors, and curtains with holes cut through to display dancers on the other side. Rüdiger Schaper, a theater critic at *Der Tagesspiegel*, described her performances by saying she “just went into a monstrous space and conquered it with her dances” (Fitzgerald). Her pieces were often filled with intense visual backdrops. “What a viewer sees is visually stunning, viscerally charged and at times difficult to absorb” (Fitzgerald). Waltz fluctuated her choreography between basic movement and “sheer spectacle” (Fitzgerald). When analyzing the choreography and set design of Sasha Waltz, one can see that dance contains “designs of costume, color, and light” (Fitzgerald).

Dance can and is represented by multiple different art forms, but the most common are painting, photography, and film. “The art of ballet [dance] has... singularly attracted great designers and painters as collaborators” (Terry and Rennert 4). Painting provides a means of depiction that has less limitation of size, color, theme, and time constraints. Painting or illustrating dancers for a promotional poster must have exaggerated form to serve its purpose (Terry and Rennert 4). Dance posters serve as an advertisement for an event or teaching service that is being sold to the public (Terry and Rennert 3). This can be captured through either an

elaborate or simplistic design. Photography, on the other hand, is meant to “capture the mobile dancer to the immobile” (Terry and Rennert 4). The photographer must embody “their motion in time and space” (Terry and Rennert 4). Videographers collaborate with graphic designers and art directors to create music videos that include dance (Risner and Anderson 114). When capturing dance on film, one must consider how to add in the live elements that may be lost by not viewing the performance in person (Risner and Anderson 115). Motion capture is another element of film that is used to solve the contrasting nature of live and recorded dancers. “This animation technique measures a dancer’s position and orientation in three dimensional space in real time” (Risner and Anderson 115). Much like photography, filming dance must capture a dancer’s movement in space and time.

The argument is not about which form or style is the best, but about which iterations of these forms or styles are executed in a way that best represents dance. “Does Dan Reisinger’s free brush strokes for Batsheva evoke the feelings for the dance better than Herbert Migdoll’s photo/graphic treatment of the Joffrey Ballet or Riz a Porta’s strictly photographic rendering of the Dances Espagnoles?” (Terry and Rennert 4). Does the loss of a live audience effect the representation of dance negatively? These questions cannot simply be answered due to the complexity of each poster. Both were successful in their depiction of the dancers’ movement. Artists and designers have a unique relationship with their subjects, in this case dancers. Baskt, Picasso, Rauschenberg and Migdoll were close members with the dance groups they designed for. These artists were tasked with designing “all of the elements of a dance company requiring any graphic application at all” (Terry and Rennert 4). These relationships create the argument that one must have an intimate knowledge of dance to be able to portray it in another medium, specifically graphic design.

Abstract forms can represent the movement of the body and its alignment during choreographic gestures. A dancer's body and graphic shapes and lines can be correlated by the materiality of how they move throughout space, or as it occupies space on a page (Burt 95). In this simplistic comparison, any shape or form can represent a dancer in the way that it illustrates movement and space. Both dance and design are full of "skillful artistic transitions" (Burt 96), whether it be from one movement of the body to the next, or the transition of the viewer's eye from each design element to the next. Choreographic movements can be considered abstract when they are improvisational or do not suggest concrete positions (Burt 101). In those instances, these suggested positions can be better represented by abstract line illustrations, shapes, and designs.

Dance can be represented in many different forms, but is only successful when the movement of dancers is fully captured through their design. There are a multitude of artistic situations in which the crossover between graphic design and dance are beneficial, especially considering both are visual art forms. Technology can be used to design visual motion as well as create graphic elements needed to put together a dance performance. Abstract shapes and lines can take on form to depict a dancers' body movement and alignment. Movements of the human body can be viewed through the lens of graphic design.

Works Cited

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- Fitzgerald, Nora. "Designing Dance As Art Installation." *New York Times*, 10 Sept. 2003, www.nytimes.com/2003/09/10/arts/designing-dance-as-art-installation.html.
- Risner, Doug and Jon Anderson. "Digital Dance Literacy: an Integrated Dance Technology Curriculum Pilot Project." *Research in Dance Education*, vol. 9, no. 2, 5 June 2008, pp. 113–128, doi:10.1080/14647890802087787.
- Terry, Walter and Jack Rennert. *100 Years of Dance Posters*. Dempsey, 1975.

Literature Review

“Kaash’: Dance, Sculpture and the Visual”

This article found in *Visual Culture in Britain*, the writer describes and compares the visual elements between dance and sculpture. He specifically talks about the representation of dance through sculpture and how it interacts with abstract versus concrete movement.

“Designing Dance As Art Installation”

This *New York Times* article dives into the choreography and set design of Sasha Waltz. Her use of an elaborate amount of set variety in her shows creates a highly designed performance that both contrasts and harmonizes with her choreographic fluctuation.

“Digital Dance Literacy: an Integrated Dance Technology Curriculum Pilot Project.”

This article describes a proposed new curriculum for Bachelor’s degrees in dance. The up and coming curriculum adds the use of technology in dance. A new software creates a means to collaborate and critique between student and professor. Students will also be asked to create designed media to promote their work such as: posters, handouts, and programs.

100 Years of Dance Posters

This book depicts a multitude of dance posters throughout the years. It describes different uses of media and techniques. Artist and designers’ intentions of their work is described in accordance to each poster pictured in the book.

Design History Review

1. Dan Reisinger – Batsheva Dance Company Poster. 1964; Japan Ballet in Israel. 1964.

Reisinger is described as a “modern designer”, but has worked in exhibition design, oils, signage systems, and graphic design, specifically silk screens (Terry and Rennert 14). In 1964, “his two-color stock poster for Bathsheva” was printed (Terry and Rennert 14). His depiction of the Japan Ballet in Israel was used for the program cover (Terry and Rennert 15).

2. Herbert Migdoll – Joffrey Ballet – Astarte. 1969.

Migdoll “captured the flavor of Astarte with all that can be good about the term ‘psychadelic’ and without all the usual pejorative aspects of the form” (Terry and Rennert 16). He treats his photos by superimposing a dot pattern over an image, in this case, of dancers (Terry and Rennert 14).

3. Riz a Porta – Danses Espagnoles – Susana Et Jose. 1957.

Riz a Porta is a Zurich typographer, photographer, and designer (Terry and Rennert 14). She captures the Spanish dancers using simplistic photography in the most effective way (Terry and Rennert 14).

4. Leon Bakst – Narcisse 1911

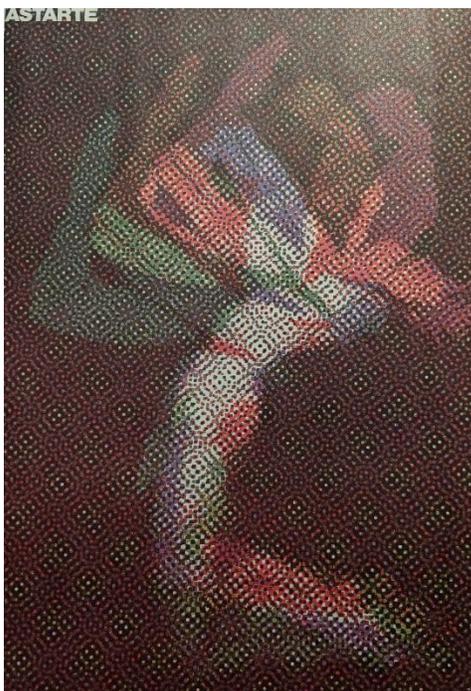
“*Narcisse* is a ‘mythological ballet’ with poem and décor by Leon Bakst” (Terry and Rennert 8). The poster is a 6-color lithograph.

Visual Research

1. Dan Reisinger – Batsheva Dance Company Poster. 1964; Japan Ballet in Israel. 1964.



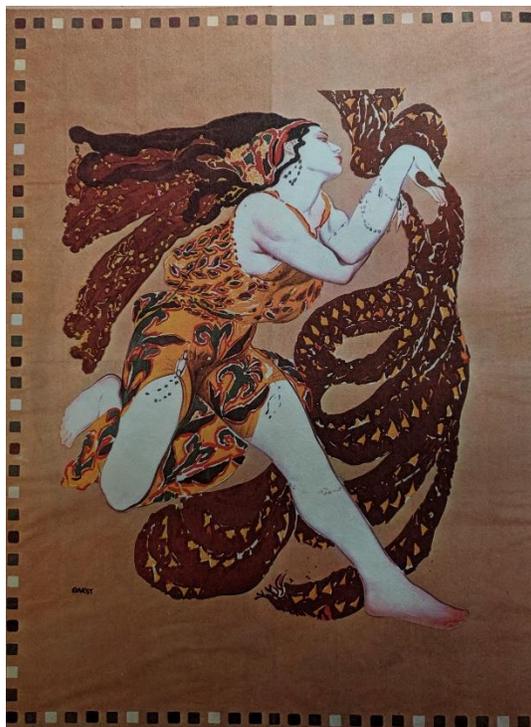
2. Herbert Migdoll – Joffrey Ballet – Astarte. 1969



3. Riz a Porta – Danses Espagnoles – Susana Et Jose. 1957.



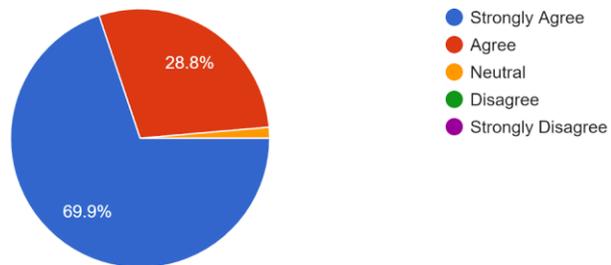
4. Leon Bakst – Narcisse 1911



Data Analysis

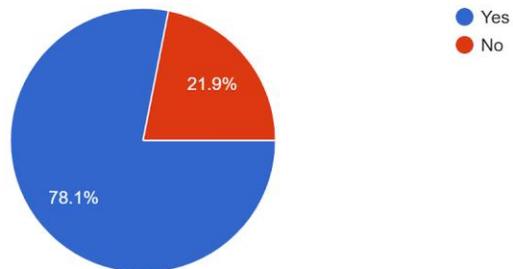
How much do you agree with this statement: Dance is a form of visual art?

73 responses



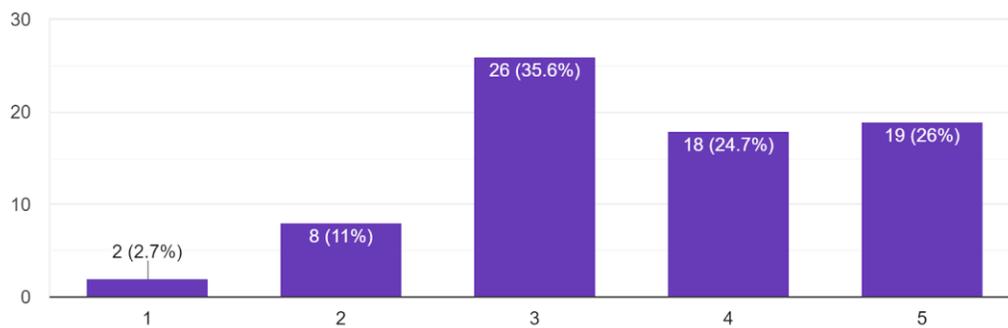
Have you ever taken a dance class of any style?

73 responses



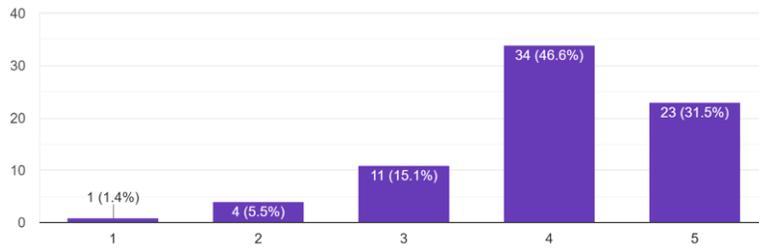
What is your level of interest in dance?

73 responses



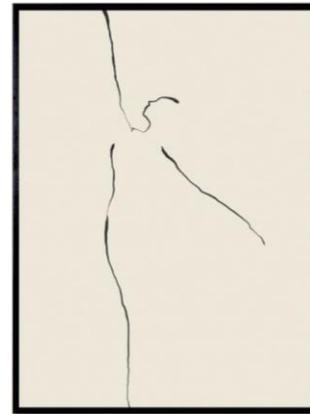
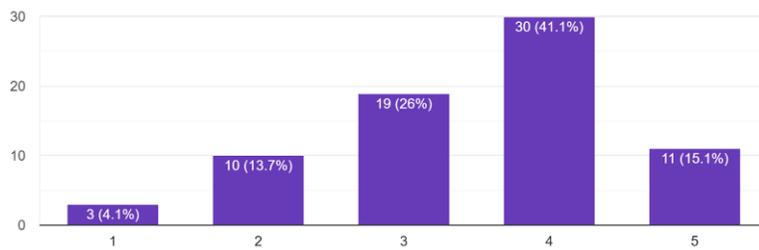
How well does this depict dance/body movement to you?

73 responses



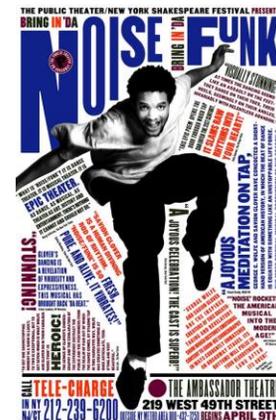
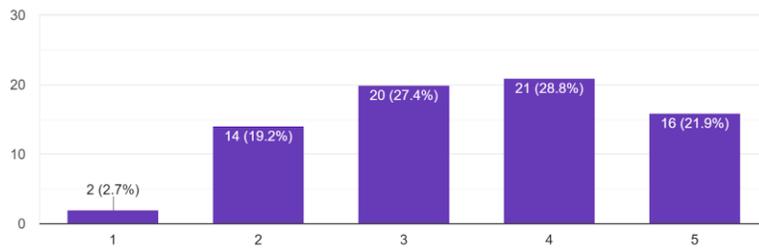
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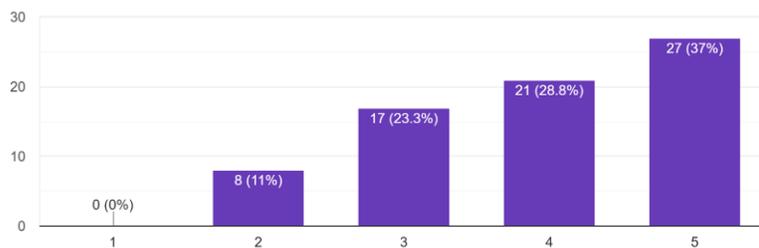
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73 responses



Timeline

	10/7	10/14	10/21	10/28	11/4	11/11	11/18	11/25	12/2	12/9	12/11
Concept	work on vision board	design ideation									
Event Poster		name event	poster layout design	iterations	review possible layouts	add photos/continue design			revise		FINAL
Artist Bio Poster		write bio	poster layout design	iterations	review possible layouts	add photos/continue design			revise		FINAL
Takeaway				iterations	review possible layouts	add photos/continue design			revise		FINAL
Costume		start sketches		shop/make		designed sketches		add into posters?			FINAL
Movement /Choreo	improvise. movement		finalize movement	review content							
Photographs	find camera/photographer			capture movement	edit/review						

Committee

Susan Orada – UNL Director of Dance Studies

Lauren Simpson – UNL Guest Choreographer who uses art objects in her work