

For 6 months, I researched the topic of dance reviews. My interest was to develop a practice to restage and perform dance pieces as reenactments based only on information provided in a dance review. This research resulted in an effective practice that I intend to continue as a workshop format for dance writers and choreographers alike. The research occurred as planned and exceeded expectations!

I started with focusing on the perspective of dance writers and empathized with their (often lonely) experience of their (almost impossible) job of critiquing such a subjective artform as contemporary dance. I read hundreds of dance reviews and studied the languages that were used to describe dance. With my research supervisor Petra Mosbacher-Dix, we analyzed the patterns that were used. I interviewed 8 dance writers and spoke openly about the relationship between the art critic and the artist. I realized many false assumptions and misunderstandings amongst artists regarding art criticism and journalism and empathized more with the complex reality of their work.

I then focused on the perspective of the readers of dance reviews to understand how the public/reader interprets text written about movement. I worked at INTER-ACTIONS in Heidelberg which provided me access to their community program BUILDING-ACTIONS. I facilitated 5 weekly sessions with public where I developed exercises on movement translation to words and vice versa.

My main research was to reenact dance reviews of solo performances. Once a week for 3 months I chose a review of a solo piece I didn't know. I worked with a professional dancer that fit the description of the dancer portrayed in the review. We attempted to recreate the work described in the review – translating the text back to movement and performance. We presented our reenactment performances to the public for feedback.

3 approaches:

1. I started approaching the task literally. whatever was in the text I implemented into the performance. Whatever was not mentioned was not in the piece. The result was mostly a broken up, empty of content performance. Public felt disconnected and unengaged, and didn't understand what they were witnessing or why they were there at all.  
Conclusion: it is not enough to take the words in a dance review literally.
2. I then approached the reenactment including my own interpretation of the text. I still applied factual information, but gave space to "fill in the blanks" and leaned on subtext. I no longer attempted to recreate the original piece in the review. I now reenacted the review as an art piece of its own, making it more of a commentary between the writer and me. The public expressed they were more connected and curious to compare what was originally written in the review.  
Conclusion: interpretation of the text was more inviting, interesting and triggered curiosity.
3. Finally, I approached the review as inspirational text. This opened up how I artistically responded. I still respected facts and descriptions in the text, but "what" it was, was now to my imagination. This was more of a conversation between the writer and me than commentary. The public expressed a deeper curiosity to read the review as needed source for understanding and connection to their experience.

Conclusion: the inspirational reenactment created the need to know the source.

Results:

- I created a 25 part questionnaire for writers of dance for the purpose of self-reflection. Now available for public use.
- RE-VIEW Workshop: I developed exercises, tools, games, and formats for dance authors, choreographers and dancers alike. I wish to facilitate a Workshop series of review reenactments with the goal to establish empathy, allow dance writers to refine their practice, and choreographers to focus on communication to audience.

Final observation - the relationship between artists and dance critics is inseparable and valuable to sustain the development of dance. We need to support each other and recognize the importance of our collective experience to move forward in a healthier relationship.