

category FIVE

by

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A Bound Document Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Fine Arts

Approved February 2024 by the
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ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY
May 2024

ABSTRACT

In an attempt to summarize two years worth of work in one hundred and fifty words... This reflection oriented document categorizes my project, "category FIVE", into chapters of development and actualization. Accounting for the collaborative nature of the project, I advise that this specific document is only half of what the entire work saw through the eyes of Isabella Lepp. Beginning with background information, moving into making the work, and ending with production and reflection of the work, this document follows a mostly chronological timeline in telling the process of making, "category FIVE", an immersive dance experience. Enjoy.

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CHAPTER 1

HISTORY OF ME

My fascination with hurricanes began early. This was not an accident. I was born in Stockholm, Sweden and grew up in Florida. You can imagine how this stark geographical weather and climate difference forced me to pay attention to outdoor forces from the start. The extreme weather difference between living up north and moving down south is in my DNA. I was young at the time of the transatlantic move, but I had family that stayed behind. As I grew up I kept in touch with my Swedish family through phone calls and yearly visits where I was reminded about their harsh dark and brutally cold winters. The juxtaposition of hearing about one weather extreme while sitting outside in shorts and a tank top in December sparked an intrigue for me that never faded. I can recall my cousins telling me they sometimes needed to use infrared lamps indoors to keep from getting depressed on these long nights. This exchange of experiences was the first time I truly realized the great impact of weather and how it affects people daily and in their lifestyles.

Living in Florida exposes residents to unique meteorological experiences and lends insight into the tropical atlantic weather system. The hurricane season lasts from June 1st to November 30th which, if you are keeping track, is half the calendar year. This is just one of the several factors that exposes Florida to more cyclonic activity than any other US state. I grew up being a first hand witness to the intensity that came with hurricanes. Though these storms can be detrimental to homes, businesses, and communities, I was fortunate enough to live in a well-built, secure house that was far enough inland to avoid any major flooding or impacts. I saw my fair share of tree's toppling power lines and pool chairs flying through the sky, but these instances only produced superficial damage, luckily. Mostly, when I caught wind of a looming hurricane, I was excited, because I knew it meant having a day (or

more in some cases) off of school. I did not have a full understanding of the potential danger everyone would be in within a matter of hours. Like "snow days" in the north, "hurricane days" were built into our school calendar for the sake of making up missed days due to these massive, long lasting and impactful storms.

Sometime in second grade, I developed a fascination for the weather. I began watching the news every morning to see the three minute weather forecast. In third grade, I was asked to be a weather anchor on my elementary school's newscast. Holding the plastic pointer finger on a stick and pointing it at a map of our state telling the school our weather over a live broadcast solidified my interest in weather and reporting. Luckily for my family, I began pretending to be the news anchor at home as well. Whenever a hurricane was being reported on, I would mute the television, stand in front of it with my plastic pointer finger, and inform my family what was happening, how to prepare, and when we should take cover.

Continuing to grow and learn in Florida, I began realizing the true, widespread impacts a hurricane could have. Additionally, I noticed a set of patterns emerge whilst presented with a cyclical storyline of four parts; Preparation, Impact, Emergence, Return/Recovery. These four pillars of weathering the storm, repeated with each passing hurricane and piqued an interest in me which I finally, in grad school, had the capacity to research and explore further. These four stages (Preparation, Impact, Emergence, Return/Recovery), of the cycle became the backbone to my thesis project and assisted in guiding "category FIVE" to be born.

Dance has been my main focus in life from a very young age and gave me a form to cling to as I built my foundation of education through undergrad and graduate school. In my early days, I enjoyed the spotlight and the adrenaline rush that performing and competing gave me. I have always been a very focused, driven and perfection oriented person who had a hard time giving up and walking away.

Oftentimes throughout my childhood, and still today, people ask “why do you dance?”. This question always bothered me because I really never knew how to articulate in words the answer. Still today, I don’t fully know. I know that I enjoy the environment, and moving my body in such a particular and focused way, and that I generally enjoy the art, but mostly I just feel a deep internal driving force that would never let me quit. I did try (to quit) one time in high school. Clearly, that did not stick, and I just kept going.

As I progressed through my Graduate schooling I was asked “Why do you dance?”, many more times. Equipped with more vocabulary and knowledge about my own internal drive and the world of dance, I was able to decipher more intentionally why I chose, and keep choosing, to dance. I presume the answer will change many times as I progress in this world, but for now I know one thing (at least): I am tired of the two dimensionality and separation of audience and performance of traditional dance demands. I have a deep nagging wish to immerse the audience into performances, and help them answer the many questions they typically have after leaving a performance, before the end. Not being interested in choreographing for viewership, I changed the physical space setup and culture in which traditional performances have occurred for centuries and created a four stage immersive dance experience, “category FIVE”.

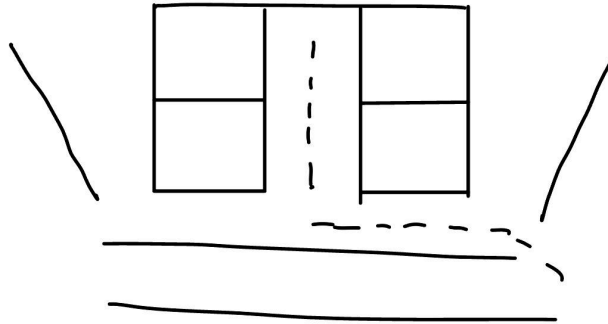
CHAPTER 2

THE PROCESS: IDEATION

How does one come up with an entire project that is supposed to encompass their personality and tone of voice and make an impact on the dance community? There is not one correct way. In a seemingly normal daily meditation of which I was so committed to for over 100 days, an idea dropped into my head from the sky. A literal full and complete picture of what my applied project would be, how it would look, and what elements I would need to coordinate. Seriously, I can't make this up. Immediately, I grabbed a pen to make a digital note so as to not forget this fleeting

Applied project

1. Ice Room
2. Hurricane Room
3. Sun room
4. fog / clouds
5. Forest Fire



Headphones?

codes to scan on rooms for
description / research information

idea. Here is the initial idea sketch & scribble:

A singular large room, divided into four quadrants each representing a different weather landscape where audiences would walk through each room,

museum style. There would be one to two dancers stationed in each landscape moving in a vocabulary style that we developed together. There would be panels on the wall in which you can tap to hear auditory information about the weather of the room you were in. Screens would be placed as needed to assist in showcasing the landscape. There would be color stories to accompany each room. The audience would be completely self guided and welcome to stay for as little or as long as they would like.

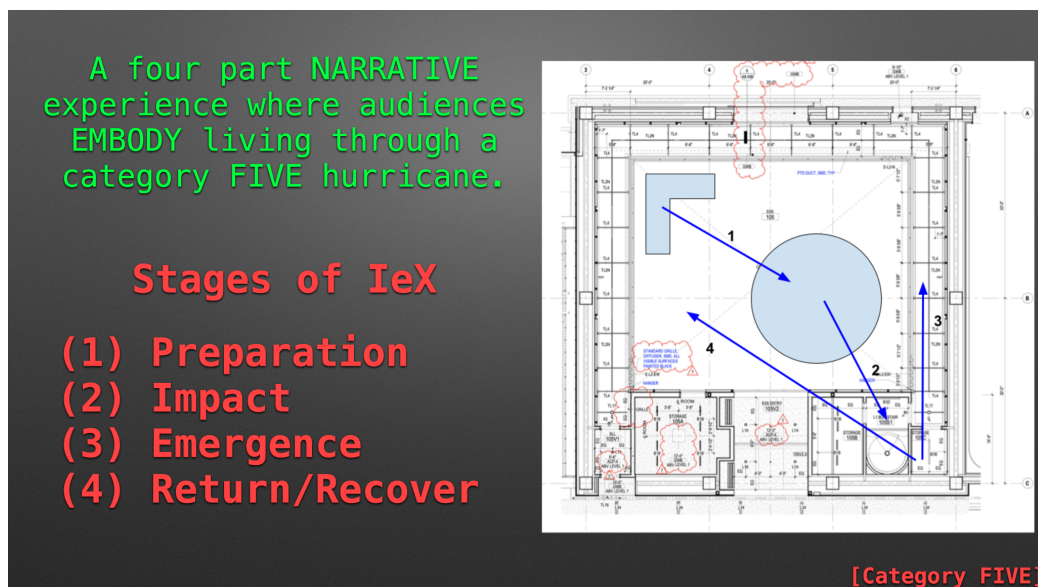
As many ideas do, this particular one morphed and changed and adapted to several renditions of what would later become a final (for now) version. From February of 2022, when this idea and note were born, I learned more and allowed myself to adjust and move sometimes away and sometimes towards the initial idea. A major shift in thinking occurred in the Spring of 2023 when Dean Saifullin (ASU Fellow Graduate Student and Dance & Technology Artist), and I decided to become collaborators of now *our* thesis project.

The curious can know this came about by happenstance. Dean was in Liz Lerman's Atlas of Creative tools class in which I visited to see final showings. At the end of class, I casually asked Dean how his applied project was coming along, because we had a milestone due that semester. I simply asked, not knowing if it was even allowed, if he wanted to join my hurricane project in which he replied "yes", and off we went.

Dean has a background in technology with dance, and carries interests within the art that vary from my own. It was the perfect combination of strengths and weaknesses that made us a unified team. We started the work by having weekly meetings for months discussing the project, what it would be, how we would pull it off, and who we would ask for support. Everything was in our imagination at first. My initial four room museum idea morphed into something closer to what would

eventually be presented, and showcased both of our individual skill sets and what we were able to accomplish together. Later in the process, we both enrolled in Ana Herruzo's "Immersive Experience Design" course which was held at the MiX center in Mesa. There, we knew we had the technological support and ability to create a massive undertaking of media, art, and dance.

Through Immersive Experience Design, Dean and I made several mini-projects, all in the realm of our end goal vision so we could practice and think through all possibilities limitlessly. We truly allowed ourselves the space to think, change, think again, alter, erase, insert, and adapt the project up until the first audience group entered "category FIVE", literally. Here is one of the digital sketches:



At the same time Dean and I were ideating about the big project, I began diving into one of my individual streams of research; How to create an authentic experience that felt familiar and evoked emotion. In order to replicate a realistic experience, I knew I could rely on my own experiences with hurricanes, but also understood that my singular experience would not be representative of every person's experience. Through a series of about fifteen face to face interviews with

family, friends, and mutual friends, I gathered information using the interview questions listed below, which allowed me to pull ideas of how to set the living room scene stage, and gave me direction in how the overall emotional tone should shift throughout the experience.

1. Where and when have you experienced hurricane(s)?
2. Who were you with (if anyone)? Were you responsible for the care of others at this time? (whether under your same roof, or elsewhere)
3. What preparedness steps did you take prior to the storm(s)? Was there a certain emotion or feeling that presented itself?
4. During the storm(s), what did you do? Was there a certain emotion or feeling that presented itself?
5. Directly after the storm(s) passing, what did you do? Was there a certain emotion or feeling that presented itself?
6. What are some impacts the hurricane(s) had on you? (long lasting or short term)
7. What memories do you associate with Hurricane(s)? If you've experienced Hurricanes over a lifetime, how did your relationship to them evolve, change, or stay the same?
8. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience(s)? This can be funny memories, major losses, familial quirks, etc.

Through all of our dreaming and creating, Dean and I realized that we wanted to portray the actual hurricane in a realistic yet artistic way envisioning the audience would stand in the eye of the storm and watch the chaos surrounding them. Using multiple projectors, we wanted to figure out how to create a 360 degree image to engulf the audience. This cylinder became the most important set piece and design element of the project, and of course the most difficult piece to logistically create, transport, and hang. We started with an apartment scaled version.



Through the summer months we continued making and meeting and dreaming and thinking. We had reached a point where we needed to begin physicalizing our ideas if we were to have a finished product by October of 2023. Together, we decided the next best step would be to find and cast dancers to portray the humanistic element that technology could not. With a relatively short turn around and much more work to do, we knew we had to choose dancers who would be responsible and could portray a heavy subject matter. We chose not to hold formal auditions, and instead asked individuals who we had good experiences with in the past. Through this process, we ended up with eleven dancers to begin working with immediately. As I mentioned earlier, it was summer, so many of our dancers were not in person. Thanks to covid, we all knew how to operate rehearsals via zoom, and so we did.

The dreaming phase of creating “category FIVE” was wonderfully fulfilling, fun, and engaging. Imagining such a large project from scratch was a huge undertaking that was met with small doses of skepticism along the way, but mostly an open willingness to try. Allowing myself to let go of the initial idea enough to dream and metamorphize a better version was a lesson I needed to practice. One can’t dream forever, though, and this is where the project was just beginning.

CHAPTER 3

THE PROCESS: ACTUALIZATION

Projects are not made on wishes and hope, especially not multi year collaborative thesis projects. The amount of coordinating, scheduling, emailing, meeting, asking, answering, practicing and arranging that took place to make this project happen, was astronomical. With a school full of resources and connections, many things are possible. Possibilities don't just fall into the lap of those who sit back and watch, however.

In order to make "category FIVE" happen, we had a village of people who assisted along the way. Here are a few of the contributions that were not Dean and my doing:

Costumes, props, stage management, oversight, cylinder making, cylinder transporting, cylinder hanging, projection rigging, living room rug donation, unlocking the MiX doors, turning on the lights, playing the sound, setting up the speakers, providing rehearsal space, providing a pool of dancers to work with, phone calls for opinions, committee approvals & advice, emotional support, selling tickets....

This is not a comprehensive list. My point in adding this brief list is to showcase how much more collaboration was done beyond Dean and I to actualize our project.

Though we were the catalyst for each action to be done, we could not have possibly accomplished as much with just the two of us. Collaborative projects go beyond the artists.

So, how did we make "category FIVE"? Once we were out of the imagination phase, we got into the physicalizing phase. I had to learn a lot about technology and rigging for example, to know who I could ask for assistance that I could trust would get us the right information. The part of the project that I absolutely felt confident in

making, was the dance phase otherwise known as stage 4 Return/Recovery. I matched up 13 schedules and found one single time per week that most of us could meet most of the time. The movement was made collaboratively with the dancers based off of prompts given by Dean and myself. I wanted the dancers to have a deep understanding of the subject matter that would show through in their movement. I focused a lot on the potential audience perception of the movement by ensuring my dancers were not given movements, but rather movement stories to portray. This character analysis like depth let the dancers be attached to the work in a different way than just a physical body performing movements that had been asked of them.

Choreographically, I began from a movement driven inspiration. The movement was disconnected from the work and story line, and was intended to get a vocabulary of phrasing to use as a baseline for further development with the dancers, collaboratively. Initially, I was focused on large shapes and geometry since the audience was to be positioned 20 feet above the dancers in a non-traditional setting. The intricacies of the movement and it's story-telling was out of focus on my behalf, until about halfway through the process when a CRP (Critical Response Process, Liz Lerman) circle brought to light the disconnect between the movement and the intentional storyline.

From that point forward, we adapted movements we already had and created nuance with our dancers' assistance. They took personal stories from prompts we gave that allowed them to get in character on a deeper level. We began looking at the movement as a vessel to further demonstrate the deep intentions and experiences collected from interviews and data. The storytelling became the center focus of the movement, and geometrical shapes became afterthoughts. Having an authenticity in movement quality and a humanistic touch point for audience members to witness allowed the story-line in its entirety to emerge in an impactful

manner.

The technical elements that were seen during the project were in large part spearheaded by Dean. I can let you know that he generated some of the visuals by using graphic design programs such as Resolume Arena. Other portions of the media were sourced from various sites and banks of images. We worked together on the overall vision and storyboard of what would be shown, and he took that and ran.

The living room scene was designed by myself, but sourced from ASU's prop department and ASU staff's homes. We had limited options in this sector of the project due to budget restraints, but did the best we could with the offerings. The posters and photos were created and sourced by me as well, and I collected data for the posters with an idea in mind that the audience should have background information about hurricanes and their impact. "category FIVE" was listed as an "unnamed hurricane" on the final poster in the pre display room to emit a sense of understanding that what the audience was about to experience is likened to a historical hurricane.

The production of the audio warnings was one of my favorite creative pieces of the project. I was tasked with making warnings that would evoke a sense of urgency and intensity in the audience, while being direct enough to guide them through the moving experience. A formative moment and memory from my childhood was hearing the semi automatic sounding man's voice come over the TV warning us to "shelter in place" when weather emergencies were coming our way. Through this project, I would learn that this man's voice is named "Tom", and that it is also extremely difficult to get ahold of as it is still in use by the national weather service. In an effort to create as authentic of alerts as possible, I read through many forums where others were also wanting to use Tom's voice. Thanks to a dedicated reddit user, I was able to find a small, buggy website which would let me input 150

characters at a time for Tom to speak out loud. I would then record Tom's voice, save, change out the text, press play, rinse and repeat about 30 times to get all of the vocals I needed for each warning within "category FIVE". Low budget, high valued outcome.

CHAPTER 4

THE PRODUCT: CATEGORY FIVE

No show can happen without a tech week. Unfortunately, this is where I realized we made one of the biggest mistakes in our process. With “category FIVE” being a new show, in a new space, with a crew that had never used that space or technology before, we had a plethora of issues immediately. Without going into detail, know that we did not see our full show with all elements until two days before opening. Tech is where our lack of experience was displayed and the lack of technical support from our team was evident. Issue after issue, we spent most of our time putting out fires and trying to find work-arounds to every typical and tried pathway. We knew what needed to happen in order to ensure success, but fell very short in our attempts to make things happen. Scheduling a four day tech for a project of this large scale, was a blatant mistake. However, with a lot of outside assistance and a little bit of magic, we were able to open the show as scheduled for our first of eight runs, all of which were sold out.

Pre-Stage

The audience entered a room filled with real life account photos of some of the most tragic hurricanes on record and posters with data analytics of these hurricanes’ impacts. Here, as the host and guide of the audience within the experience I invited and welcomed them to chat with their group through the process. Contact between audience members within the experience was important to me as I wanted them to feel familiar and supported by their counterparts. There is a sense of belonging and supporting your family and friends before an impending disaster strikes, and I wanted to emulate this feeling before the show began.

Stage One, Preparation

The audience entered a living room set where they get their first glance at the large cylinder which later represents the hurricane. For now, the cylinder is a TV playing a popular episode of "The Office" for comedic relief. I chose this show because I knew it would make the audience laugh and let their guards down slightly. Any unfamiliar experience would make the majority of the audience feel uncomfortable, but in order for them to be fully present to accept what was about to happen, we needed them to relax a bit. After watching a short commercial break of the categories of hurricanes, the first alarm goes off which warns the audience to seek shelter immediately. Guided by the alert and myself, the audience enters the cylinder.

Stage Two, Impact

The second stage was by far the most intense and physically disorienting part of the experience. Dean and I really wanted all of the audience senses engaged in the impact in order to trigger an autonomic nervous system response. During this stage, we realized the audience needed more than just to see and hear the hurricane. We wanted them to feel the impact. This is the first decision Dean and I made to enhance the performance after doors had already opened. Like I said earlier, an artist's work is never finished. Shows 2-8, Dean and I were circling the cylinder adding touch to the fabric, and occasionally the back of an audience member who was inside. Standing in the eye of the hurricane, audience members were immersed in their shelter which doubled as a display for the destruction happening in their view. At this time, our dancers also secretly destroyed the living room, leaving bits of their home scattered about the space.

Stage Three, Emergence

After the passing of the hurricane, the audience heard another alert which urged them to evacuate the shelter, and head to higher ground. The choice to have the audience move upstairs was another decision rooted in reality and authenticity. We wanted the audience to feel out of breath from their increased heart rates due to the multiple alarms, warnings, and of course climbing the spiral staircase.

Once the audience made it to safer, higher grounds, they looked down on what was once their home, noticing its destruction. The dancers also secretly entered the cylinder while the audience was transitioning, which revealed to the audience a group of helpless individuals in the remains of what once was. This is the first movement heavy stage. The dancers performed on ground level, while the audience watched from above; an experience that is not common for audiences of dance.

Stage Four, Return/Recovery

In every cycle there is a beginning and end, which most often run together. After a traumatic experience, such as a hurricane exemplified by "category FIVE", you either return to a semblance of normalcy or spend time recovering. One is more direct, but they both lead to the same conclusion. As the audience is notified they may return "home", they are guided down the stairs to find seats set up in the main floor with dancers surrounding them. Having the audience mixed in with the dancers was another attempt to immerse the audience into the story line, and not just watch from afar. So much emotion and raw information can be gathered by being in close proximity with a performer. This allowed the audience to gain more information than they would have sitting in a traditional theatre.

How to end the experience was one of the more difficult decisions Dean and I had to make. At this point in the process, we were in the space with our dancers in tech week, and there were many eager opinions offered to us without our permission. Ultimately, we decided that the lights and music would fade, I would come out and make a short ending speech, and our dancers would bow. Each show I offered the audience members to meet with the dancers outside the space to ask them questions about the project.

CHAPTER 5

ROLES: CHOREOGRAPHER, DIRECTOR, MANAGER

Through the process of creating “category FIVE” I learned to juggle many titles and responsibilities which are not typical of creating a traditional choreographed work. In these traditional experiences, the maker is involved in the process in a more peripheral manner in terms of production. The choreographer would source dancers, schedule and run rehearsals, and then show up at the scheduled venue to tech the piece and show the work. In the case of my thesis project, I had to coordinate schedules, budgets, teams of people, spaces, and the wishes of my collaborator. Through the entire process from inception to presentation I was heavily involved in making each step happen. I could have given up some of my wishes, such as using the MIX space and made my life a whole lot easier, but I’m stubborn and wanted the experience to learn and practice all the skills which were associated with the project.

In rehearsals, we worked through a lot of material, not all of which made the final cut. We edited, discussed, learned, practiced, shifted, laughed, and danced. There were many versions of the dancing portion of the project and there were many discussions of what would make the final cut, but more on that later.

As a director, my main responsibility was securing the MIX Enhanced Immersion Studio for our project. This job included numerous emails back and forth between the MIX department and the ASU dance department. At the time, I was not aware of the challenge choosing a non Tempe campus location would prove to be, even though this was still an ASU affiliated campus.

Once we received confirmation to utilize the space for “category FIVE”, we had meeting after meeting coordinating the needs of our project in correlation with what the space could provide, had provided, and was expecting to be able to provide

by our show date. The Enhanced Immersion Studio (EIS for short) is a brand new space which had yet to host a dance production. Being the first in this capacity was a huge accomplishment in which I secured bragging rights.

Every aspect of the show was designed, produced, and executed with Dean and my supervision and direction. We did not have the luxury of simply showing up and placing a premade work on a stage space. Truly, our wants and aspirations for the project were completely up to us, as we did not have departmental support until about 1 month before the project premiered. The challenge of ensuring our vision would come to life with minimal assistance from outside sources proved worth it when I examine how much I learned through the process.

CHAPTER 6

TWO ARTISTS, ONE WORK

Working with another artist, collaboratively, proves to be rewarding and inspiring when the proper steps are taken to set expectations and boundaries. As I have mentioned previously, working with Dean was something that allowed my creative vision to expand beyond what I alone was capable of. On the other side of the coin, compromises had to be made and it was not possible that each of us got to see our complete vision come to life in full, without the input of the other artist. In my opinion, this only served the project positively, being greater and more fully involved than I could have imagined solo.

Through the early phases of the process, Dean and I would check in with each other regularly and ensure we still were imaging the same thing. The tricky part of imagination is that conversations alone do not ensure consistency. Our ideas were the same, in theory, but once we started actualizing parts and putting them in front of our eyes, we would find discrepancies. These discrepancies were not detrimental to the project or the process, yet made us realize the importance of physicalizing elements sooner than we initially had decided within our timeline. The early stages were fun, inventive, not constrained, and magical.

As we approached our project debut day, the differences in Dean and my work style was visible. Personally, I stick to deadlines (for the most part) and enjoy working a little bit at a time over a longer period. Dean was the opposite. As we began to tech and space our project in the space, Dean was pulling all nighters and working hours on end with no break to get what he had promised to provide together. At this point I had a choice; I could either let this foreign working process of his overwhelm me and get in his way with my feelings and opinions, or, I could trust that he would get done what he said he would. I had seen many of his works

over the years in Grad School, and was always amazed by the final product, knowing more or less about how they came to be. In an attempt to not interfere with our project negatively, I chose to let him work in the way he always had and trust in the final product. Part of collaborating is letting the other person do what they do best, and though it was not always easy for me to see the deadline approaching knowing the massive amounts of work that needed to be done, I made a conscious decision to trust.

In one rehearsal in particular, Dean and I were working with the dancers who so graciously decided to commit to our work. We were a few weeks away from the premiere and tensions were beginning to rise. Dean and I had a large misunderstanding that affected the rehearsal productivity and the dancer's emotions generally. It seemed that we only ran into issues when we stopped communicating, and started assuming. Though we know each other quite well, and had been on the same page for almost a year regarding the project and its outcome, we had to remember that we are still individual artists, with individual styles, and individual ideas. None of the issues we worked through were ever of malicious intent, but more of ignorance. After that rehearsal Dean and I had a phone call to solve the tension and work through what had happened, so we could move on and not continue the project in bad faith. We had to keep in mind the dancers who committed their time and talent to us, for almost nothing in return, also relied on our communication and collaboration being positive and productive. Dean and I talked out the issue and realized that assumptions had no place in our process. From there, we made some of our best collaborative work.

CHAPTER 7

WHAT HAPPENED?

Reflection is a part of the creative process. Without thinking about the work you have produced, it is difficult to deduce what worked, what didn't, what you liked, what you wished was different, and what you want to do again. After the eight shows ran, and just about 100 people saw our project, I was able to reflect on the experience and draw some conclusions.

Because of the Dancers

Because of the dancers, I was able to make a project that had human connection. My initial idea for "category FIVE" before it even had a title, involved dancers but did not include them interacting with the audience. The dancers were able to bring a humanistic element to the project and performance that technology never could have replaced. Because of the dancers, I believe the audience was able to connect more deeply to the subject and story line.

Through rehearsals of "category FIVE", the dancers were tasked with homework assignments intended to develop their own characters within the work further, and provide Dean and myself as choreographers, something to work through beyond our own movement vocabulary. The dancers were dedicated to the project and subject matter which assisted in developing the project more than Dean and I could have alone. Arguably, they were important collaborators in the process as much as anyone else.

After a Deep Dive of Subject

Starting the project, I had a surface level curiosity of hurricanes and their destructive forces. As time went on and I researched and interviewed hurricane

survivors, I realized these storms hold much more than just physical destruction. Each individual who has been victim to a hurricane has emotional scarring as much as their home may have had physical scarring. Not all of the stories were fear based, but all of the stories were authentic and recalled with strong memory. I still find hurricanes fascinating, but also view them more symbolically. Hurricanes can be the example of many cyclical patterns of life where you must first prepare, then be impacted, then emerge from your trauma, and finally return and recover.

To Me

It is always fascinating comparing what I estimate will be impactful to me, and what actually ends up being impactful. I am a judging being, not always in a negative way, but I am constantly making decisions and forming opinions as I move through life. Rarely, do I naturally just "let things be". If someone had asked me what I was going to take away from creating "category FIVE", I probably would have said things like:

- "It will be so cool to have the audience really experience a hurricane in the desert."
- "I want to learn how to emotionally impact people with performance, and not leave them questioning what they just watched."
- "I want to create something different, unique, impressive, and most importantly, not boring."

And though I still agree with those in-experienced thoughts, I also took away things like:

- Collaborating on larger projects serves me more than working alone does.
- I care about audience perception and opinion more than I wish to admit.
- Though I probably could, I'm not sure that I want to be labeled a

“choreographer” as my career. I like it, but it’s not my passion.

That last bullet point is a raw and honest feeling that I’ve long been afraid to admit because of the pressures that were both externally and internally imposed on me from a young age. I have always been a talented and dedicated dancer, and for many of my teachers that meant my next step was a choreographer and performer. Admitting now after an entire Graduate degree in dance that those dreams may not be mine, is terrifying, yet freeing in a way I am excited to explore.

CHAPTER 8

WHAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN

An artist's work is never done. The variation of "category FIVE" which was shown in October of 2023 was merely an iteration closer to what we would call "final" for the moment. With that being said, Dean and I had many sections that we were happy with the outcome, and a few ideas that came to us a bit too late to implement. Without going into too much detail about "should have, could have, would have", here are some of my desires for a potential second iteration of "category FIVE".

- A longer tech week. 4 days was not enough.
- More audience trial runs. Had we been in the space earlier, a lot of our onsite ideas could have been implemented.
- Longer time between shows. I think a big opportunity for dialogue was missed between audience and artists due to their only being a 15 minute turn over.
- More technical knowledge and precision. Especially when it comes to projection mapping.
- Lengthier and more involved process for the audience to get to know each other prior to entering the experience. This bond could have been built stronger.
- A door entrance to the pre-stage that would not have had the audience walking through the experience first.
- More living room seating.
- More incorporation of all the senses through the experience, as we began to do in the cylinder.
- Better video editing with more realistic transitions.
- A completely self guided experience with no need for me to be present.

- Earlier display of full project. Practice in the space so tech week could have been focused on nuance fixes rather than major ones.
- A tech team that was privy to the project earlier than 1 month before premier.

CHAPTER 9

WALKING AWAY WITH

After such an extensive and time consuming project filled with dedication and commitment, it's best to reflect on the outcomes. Besides just making the project happen, how has this work influenced me? Through a three year graduate program, what are the lessons learned that I continue to reflect on and influence my future steps?

After creating and showcasing "category FIVE", I am inspired to continue mixing dance and technology. I am not interested in traditional performance, for the most part, and would like to continue focusing my attention on experiences which include dance and are immersive. The tech world is great at storytelling and realistic retellings of imaginative experiences, but lacks a humanistic element that dance has and holds strong to. These two forces combined, dance and technology, are a lightly explored combination personally, which I would love to contribute more to.

I learned that collaborative work is far more interesting to me than solo endeavors. Though I will continue to do work alone on occasion, as it is important to garner a strong sense of self, I prefer having another trusted artist to work alongside and imagine with. My shortcomings can be supported by another's strengths, and vice-versa.

The field of dance and technology, both combined and separate, offers more than one is capable of understanding. The scope of projects from small to large, academic to artistic and any other avenue of expression is extensive in a way that challenges artists to stand out from the swell of other creative makings. My goal is never to compete with what is already being made, but to further the experiences of those working directly with me. In this particular case, the dance department, faculty, staff, dancers, and production support were challenged to find new ways and

processes when the project took a non-traditional performance route. I am responsible for establishing an alternative route to making an applied project, as well as developing new processes in order to create successfully.

Moving forward, I want to continue challenging myself and exploring creatively in fields that I may not be comfortable in. I enjoy relying on others to bridge the gap in my knowledge realms, and contributing to others by challenging their ideas using a background of dance and performance specialties. The process of creating "category FIVE" collaboratively is one I wish to replicate and try again in the future.

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