

Non-Attachment in the Creative Process

by

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## ABSTRACT

This ethnographic research focuses on the specific creative processes of one dance-maker who worked collaboratively with seven dancers, a sound designer, a costume designer, and a narrative speaker. Together they created an evening-length dance work entitled "The Now Creature." Throughout the creative process, the dance-maker was interested in noticing attachments, finding freedom from these attachments, and being aware of how the work was affected by the choice to detach or remain attached to certain ideas. This interest stemmed from the dance-maker/researcher's interest in Buddhist philosophy and a system of decision-making she had been developing since childhood. The creative process for "The Now Creature" began with experiments in chance procedures as a method of non-attachment. After the first public showing of the piece, the process shifted to include intuition and aesthetic integration. "Embodied nowness," or the awareness of one's physical and mental sensations in the present moment, played an important role in rehearsals and in the overall process of letting go of attachments. All collaborators kept journals and were usually given specific prompts about which to write. The researcher/dance-maker also conducted one-on-one verbal interviews and group discussions with the collaborators. These data informed the development of the work presented on January 31-February 2 at Arizona State University. Findings from this research can be applied to any kind of creative process, or any life situation that includes decision-making.

## DEDICATION

To Royce and Nina Stein for unwavering support.

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## PREAMBLE

Message to myself as I start writing: I can let go of the idea that writing this document needs to be daunting/exhausting/frustrating. I do not have to be scared of it. It is an opportunity for me to process and share what I have done and discovered. I do not have to let the past negative experiences of others determine how I approach my own experience. I do not have to let my own previous writing experiences influence how I experience this one. I can enjoy writing. I can enjoy synthesizing. I can enjoy structuring my time and space to make room for this process. I do not have to be confined to a chair and a table and a computer. I can sprawl out on the floor and write everything by hand. I have a spine and shoulders and a neck that turns my head. My breath can be deep and luxurious. I can let go.

## SITUATING THE PROJECT

This section explores the topic of non-attachment as a catalyst for personal artistic research culminating in an applied project performance entitled “The Now Creature” presented January 31-February 2, 2014 at Arizona State University. The synthesis of ideas based on experiences using chance methods as a child as well as later in my life studying Buddhist theories significantly informed my creative process. Additionally I discuss choices about the extent to which well-known artists employing chance methodology as a creative tool influenced my work. From this discussion, I explain how the research question framing this thesis investigation is fundamentally an attempt to understand a style of dance making that I most highly value to generate movement, structure, and intention.

### **Early Interest in Chance**

When I was in kindergarten or preschool, I decided it was time for me to start styling my own hair. When it came to determining which hairdo to have for the day, I had a really hard time figuring out what option would be the best one. How was I supposed to know if a ponytail would ultimately be better for my experience of the day than a half-pony? Rather than debate with myself about which hair option was ideal, I came up with a solution to decision-making that put my mind at ease. I drew a picture of the hairstyles I knew how to do and kept it in my drawer to reference (see Appendix A). Next I cycled through the list, top to bottom, one hairdo per day. This way none of the options got more attention than the others, and I no longer had to take responsibility when the outcome of the day was not the perfect choice.

Since this early creation of “The System,” as I have named this lifestyle, it has grown to include most aspects of my daily life. There are two main methods of decision-making within The System- cycles and random integer generators. The hairdo example from my childhood demonstrates how I use cycles. When there are a manageable number of finite options that create an even playing field, I assign each possible outcome an integer, then use a random integer generator to tell me which outcome is chosen. Statistically, each option has an equal chance of being chosen. There is a feeling of equality in both methods of decision-making within The System. There is also the ability for me to let go and trust that whichever options are chosen will work out.

Much of what I knew about randomness was clarified in a statistics course in high school. I learned tools for how to make the chance of outcomes fairer, mostly by using random integer generators. The word “random” often gets used in our society to describe anything unexpected, so I try to limit my use of the word to explain only situations in which there are varying possible outcomes that are determined by a chance procedure. During my process I mostly used the word “chance” to describe what my collaborators and I did.

Some may claim that randomness does not exist. When one comes to a decision that is determined by chance, the outcome is the result of many circumstances that have been building for years (millennia, really) all to culminate in one moment. When I use the random integer generator on my calculator, there is an entire lifetime that has led up to the moment when I decide to push the button to generate the number. Some would say that the outcome has been pre-determined, and that all outcomes happen the way they do because the universe has been planning them since the beginning of time. This is called

determinism. Some would say that everything is chance, and not caused by prior events. This is indeterminism. I have a hard time attaching myself to one side or the other.

### **Discovering Buddhist Theory**

During my freshman year at Gustavus Adolphus College, I took a course on Indian philosophy in which I was introduced to Buddhist theory. It greatly opened my way of thinking and made sense in a way that no other philosophy had for me before. I was able to question and clarify what I truly thought and believed about life and the human experience. A year later, after continuing to study Buddhism, I spent a month in India traveling to temples and talking to monks. It became evident in my time there that I was interested in Buddhism as a philosophy and not as a religion. Within Buddhist theory, I most resonated with the fundamental teachings of Siddhartha Gautama (often referred to as “The Buddha”).

One of the most basic understandings in Buddhism is that change is inevitable. Because change is persistently occurring, nothing can be permanent. “In short, *everything*- from the simplest gratifications to the greatest ecstasies- is subject to the universal law of *impermanence*” (Smith & Novak, 2003, p. 35). This impermanence applies to physical things as well as ideas, emotions, and ethereal belongings. Because nothing remains constant (except change), human happiness cannot remain stable if it depends on certain states. Humans may suffer when they believe that our happiness is determined by anything outside of ourselves. Even when happy, one knows that the circumstances will eventually change, which could lead to sadness. According to Buddhist theory, the basis of suffering is craving or desire. “Craving is like sticky glue that makes us become attached to things, and once attached we cannot let go, as in the

case of bad habits that are hard to break” (Prebish & Keown, 2006, p. 48). Desire is directly related to attachment. People say that they attach themselves to things and people, but what they are really attaching to is the idea that they need these things in order to be happy. Can happiness exist regardless of the things, people, and situations in our lives? What if there is choice to detach from the idea that our happiness is determined by anything outside of oneself?

What if we let go of the idea that there is a “self” that can be affected at all? One of the essential teachings of Siddharta Gautama is that everyone is connected to one another and cannot be separated into individual beings. “The doctrine of dependent origination is a fundamental Buddhist teaching on causation. It holds that all phenomena arise in dependence on causes and conditions, and as a consequence lack intrinsic being of their own” (Prebish & Keown, 2006, p. 49). This belief means that individual suffering (or happiness) is not nearly as important as many tend to think it is. In fact, “...the Buddha was pointing out that human nature cannot provide a foundation for permanent happiness because the doctrine of the five aggregates shows that the individual has no real core” (Prebish & Keown, 2006, p. 56). If there is no such thing as an individual self, why is so much time spent on trying to make oneself happy? Why would I desire to find peace within myself if there is no “self” at the core? This attachment to the idea that people are individuals leads to suffering.

Buddhist theory is not as depressing as it may seem. One of Siddharta Gautama’s most important declarations is that suffering can cease, partly by removing desire. “If the cause of life’s dislocation is selfish craving, it ceases when such craving is overcome. If we could be released from the narrow limits of self-interest into the vast expanse of

universal life, we would be relieved of our torment” (Smith & Novak, 2003, p. 37). This explanation also leads us to the idea that humans are all energetically linked and our levels of happiness and suffering are collective. It does not matter if I find happiness when anyone else is suffering, because I am not separate from anyone. Life is a team effort.

My initial studies of Buddhist theory really upturned how I had previously thought about the world and my existence in it. This new way of thinking helped me find greater connection to the people around me, a greater sense of compassion, and a release from selfish tendencies. I also found peace in the idea that nothing is permanent, including negative emotions or mindsets. My practice of non-attachment became more conscious, and I realized that I did not need to be affected by external forces or situations.

### **Connections between Buddhism and “The System”**

When I was a senior in college it finally dawned on me that The System I had been developing since childhood and my Buddhist studies as a freshman were really related. I had made an elaborate system to make choices for me because I did not want to be attached to the outcomes of these decisions.

For example, the socks I am wearing today were chosen by The System. When I retrieved them from my sock drawer, I did not stand looking at all of my pairs of socks trying to figure out which ones would be the best socks for today. The System chose for me, I put them on, and they have been fine. I am not attached to the idea that certain socks can make me happier or sadder or have any effect on my day. It does not matter which socks I wear- or shirt or earrings or how I do my hair or what color pen to buy or what flavor of ice cream to eat... Once I start going down this path I realize how many

“things” do not matter. It frees up a lot of time, saves a lot of energy, and gives me space to focus on being a compassionate person, existing in the now, and making art.

### **Relation to Dance-Making**

Once I realized how prominent a role non-attachment played in The System, and in my overall lifestyle, I became very aware of moments when I consciously chose to attach or not. I developed a practice of self-observation and often focused it on my experiences with decision-making specifically. During my time in graduate school at Arizona State University, my main research interests have been focused on non-attachment as it relates to dance in the realms of moving, teaching, and making dance works. I eventually transformed this specific area of focus for my thesis into an evening-length dance and documented my attachments and moments of non-attachment throughout the process, as well as the attachments of my collaborators.

It is relevant to address the fact that while many artists have used similar methods for dance making, I have chosen not to follow their models. Before starting “The Now Creature,” I had heard of Merce Cunningham and John Cage and knew that they were both associated with “chance dances.” I had not actually seen or studied much of their work, though. While researching them would have influenced my work, I was interested in finding a creative process based on chance without being swayed by knowing what others had done before. My research into Cunningham and Cage came after the final performance of my work.



## MAKING THE PROJECT

The actual application of non-attachment principles and theories involved a qualitative research design that allowed for my subjectivity as well as every collaborator's input to shape the process. I felt that the nature of qualitative data gathering using an ethnographic approach made sense, especially since it allowed me to be focused on presence, which I imply in the title of my work, "The Now Creature." It also was interesting to notice that conducting my fieldwork was both a simultaneous exchange of generating and analyzing information. I further discuss my artistic inquiry and other insights about creating the project in this second section.

### **Gathering Data**

I chose to take an ethnographic approach with this project. Simply put, ethnography, which is rooted in self-understanding, describes and documents knowing (Vissicaro, 2011). This research is very specific to a small group of individuals who made a dance in a particular time frame in a unique location. The information gathered would have been different had any of the factors been changed. Any conclusions I express are not meant to be sweeping generalizations applicable to all artists in all places at all times; they are instead personal revelations that helped illuminate my own practices and will influence my future work.

The idea of a subjective participant as researcher is appealing to me and I find the process of analyzing my surroundings and myself while actively creating work to be very grounding. It keeps me in the now and keeps me present. I mostly documented the process through writing before, during, and after every rehearsal, showing, or meeting with my committee or collaborators. This "journaling" on my part was a practice that I

stuck to throughout the entire process, which helped me organize my thoughts and look back on the experience to notice trends and shifts.

Analysis of the process was simultaneous to making the work. What I was noticing and writing about then influenced the process and the work. There was a consistent cycle of creation and evaluation that continued to feed itself.

My collaborators brought notebooks to each rehearsal in which I usually asked them to write about very specific topics at specified times- for example, “What is something you can let go of from your day so that you can move into rehearsal with a clear mind?” It was helpful to read their thoughts on the experience. Some of my collaborators were not very comfortable with writing, so we also had group discussions on given topics during which I took notes on what was verbally stated.

The collaborators were all aware of what the study was about. I was granted Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval to interview and collect written and verbal information from these collaborators (see Appendix C). I recruited collaborators either by talking to them in person or sending them emails asking if they would like to be involved in the project. One of the dancers approached me to express her interest in the project and I gladly welcomed her presence. Before rehearsals started I sent emails to the collaborators and talked with them individually about the research intent of the project, so they came in knowing that I was interested in their attachments. In this document I have chosen to be vague in regards to the identity of the collaborators to protect their anonymity.

### **Making the Work**

I knew I wanted to make an evening-length dance work and that I wanted to work with other artists, as I view collaboration as a method of working that inherently demands non-attachment. Within collaboration is the idea that multiple people shape a piece of work, which leaves little room for any contributor to hold on to strong ideas of what exactly the work must be. The System determined that I would work with seven dancers because I had previously made dance pieces for one to six dancers and it was time to try something new. I decided the piece would also benefit from a sound designer and a costume designer. Early in the process, I realized the project also needed a narrator character, so a vocal performer was brought into the piece as we neared the final performances.

Before explaining how I worked creatively on “The Now Creature,” I must first discuss previous ways of working. Before this project, I had made six notable dance pieces that were produced in dance concerts. My creative process was different every time, but it usually involved me generating movement or having dancers generate movement that I then manipulated and arranged in space. I had used varying chance methods in each of these processes but was never explicit about it with my collaborators because I did not view it as a valid way of making artistic decisions. “The Now Creature” was my opportunity to let go of the idea that I needed to have all the answers, that I needed to tell dancers what to do and how to do it, and that I needed to apologize for leaving aspects of the dance up to chance.

**Phase One- Chance procedures to generate movement, January 2013-May 2013.** Before any of the creative work began, I knew that my show would be at the end of January, giving me over a year to create the dance. One guarantee for graduate

productions is that they receive performance space, lighting instruments, tech crew, and house staff for the show. The School of Film, Dance and Theatre made \$500 available to support the project, which I put toward costumes and promotional materials. These were the given parameters of the work.

There were a few options for space, ranging from a proscenium stage to classrooms to a versatile room with movable tension-grid hung lighting instruments. I chose the latter option because the space offered many possibilities for performance, lighting, and seating. One of my underlying goals in the work was to give the audience an experience of the room as they had never before encountered it. This space that caught my attention was the Nelson Fine Arts Center Dance Lab, room 122, where I had taken some movement classes and seen a few performances. In particular, I was drawn to the black floors, the tension grid, and the two balconies, which offered many production possibilities. I was interested in transforming the space as previous productions had not.

Throughout the year leading up to the final show, I showed “incarnations” of the work in three other shared dance concerts, all set on a proscenium stage. It was a challenge to translate the work into a different setup and gave me an opportunity to let go of the idea that the work could only be successful in one location. The entire cast was never fully assembled for any of these three performances, so we also had to let go of the idea that the work needed to be performed by everyone involved (see Appendix B for more information about these incarnations).

From the beginning, I knew that the people I worked with could not be left up to chance. I chose very specific individuals to ask to collaborate based on how they exist in the world as social beings. I had never seen some of them work in their craft before, but I

trusted that their personal characteristics would reflect in their work (and I was right).

The one common trait between all of the collaborators is that they all had made eye contact with me in social situations when others had not. This led me to believe that they had an awareness of their surroundings, an interest in knowing those around them, and a presence in the present.

The cast was diverse in many ways, including variations in age, gender, religion, skin color, body shape, movement history, family situation, and status in school. One of the dancers was pregnant. As an art maker and a human, I am interested in the nuances that make up who a person is and I am severely disinterested in homogeneity. When I see performances I place great value in being able to witness someone expressing his/herself without having to conform in order to seem the same as everyone else. This is reflected in the cast I gathered (please see Appendix D for photos), as well as in how I teach and how I treat people daily. Because I never intended for the cast to be anything but a collection of interconnected individuals, I think they felt more free to express their unique ideas and perspectives during rehearsals than if I had wanted them all to be similar.

When I was assembling a cast, some potential collaborators were not interested in working with me and this was a first step in my practice of letting go. I had to be okay with the fact that some people did not want to or could not be a part of the piece and not let it affect me personally. I viewed rejection as an opportunity for other options I had not yet considered. This attitude carried on beyond the initial gathering of collaborators.

After a couple of months of movement generating, I had individual meetings with each of the dancers during which I told them that if the process was not beneficial to them or if they had changed their minds about wanting to be a part of it, they could quit and I would

not be offended. Two dancers did choose this option and I followed through by not taking it personally. Two new dancers joined our group and the piece moved forward.

We met three times a week to rehearse. I let go of the idea that everyone needed to be at every rehearsal and instead embraced the ever-shifting group of people present. We developed the piece so that some people were in some sections and not others, and sometimes the people within each section changed. The piece was constantly evolving and we did not stifle its evolution because of absences from rehearsal.

Following Siddharta Gautama's explanation of "right effort" as a step on the path the cessation from suffering, I chose not to respond angrily when collaborators arrived late to rehearsals or cancelled with little notice. Rather than waste my effort attaching to the idea that I needed to be upset by these usually-negatively-thought-of actions, I instead moved forward and worked happily with whoever was there that day. I knew that in those typically negative situations there were, as Smith and Novak (2003) put it, "...destructive mind states to be expunged so that compassion and detachment can have a chance" (p. 45). I was usually able to detach myself from feelings of anger or disappointment.

*What we did and when we struggled with The System.* The work began with significant influence from The System. Because I had developed such a complex organism of decision-making for my life in general, I was curious to see if a similar system could be made specifically for dance-making. I had used chance methods in my work before, both during the process and in live performance, but had always felt the need to rationalize it or defend it. This time I was willing to embrace it, develop it, and see what could happen.

The first five months of creation only involved the dancers and me (not the sound, costume, or narrator collaborators). We dedicated our time to generating movement material and manipulating it. Our method of working was to make lists of possibilities and let a random integer generator decide which one we would use. The first list we made included various inspirations for movement. For example:

1. telling a story
2. memories
3. gestures
4. Laban Movement Analysis
5. mimicry

We then used a random integer generator, typing in 1-5, to decide which tool we would use. One time it chose “memories,” so we then made a list of memories most people had.

For example:

1. kindergarten
2. losing teeth
3. vacations
4. injuries
5. holidays
6. food

The random integer generator chose one for us. In one case it selected “holidays,” so we then made a list of holidays. The random integer generator chose “Easter.” At this point I decided that chance had done enough, and I came up with the structure in which we made movement based on memories of Easter. Once each dancer had created a phrase

following the guidelines I laid out, we again made a list and consulted our random integer generator to decide how many people would learn which other dancers' parts. This is an example of how we let chance determine many aspects of creation, but then at some point we had to take control and make decisions so that something was actually accomplished.

We tried adhering to our system of chance, but there were moments when “everyone hated it” so we compromised with the System. We did this when a section “felt wrong or looked bad.” I noted many moments when dancers made suggestions intuitively and everyone was okay with leaving The System out of it. During the third rehearsal I was already ready for intuition to play a bigger role. I made a change to The System so that once per rehearsal we could let intuition guide our process, but the System would decide when that moment would be. At the next rehearsal, I decided to respond intuitively in whenever it wanted so that I was not too attached to the idea that The System was the only way of practicing non-attachment. As I wrote in my notes, “I will try to remain unattached to my intuitive input” (2013a).

The System was ever changing. Because we made it, we could change it. We had to make a lot of decisions about The System, “probably more than if I just made the piece without randomness” (2013a). I noted that “the System decides what we do but we make a LOT of decisions about how to do it” (2013b). Many decisions are contained within what seems like just one choice. There can be a ripple effect.

Early in the process, I wondered if laying out specific options stifled creativity. Were we stifling intuition? Was intuition actually the key to non-attachment? One of my committee members suggested using The System until something really hit me, then using that to strengthen my personal aesthetic.



One beneficial aspect of working in this way, with chance determining outcomes, was that I was not expecting anything specific from the dancers or from the movement. We made what we made and it did not matter if I “liked” it or not. I could not be disappointed by the movement that was generated because I had not clarified what I was hoping it would be. As one dancer wrote, “I have no expectations or ideas of how this piece should be overall. I’m just waiting to be prompted to create... I feel that lack of attachment allows for more interesting collaboration” (Dancer A, 2013). Because we had no expectations of what the movement had to be, I found myself to be delighted with most of the movement that evolved. Much of the material generated at the beginning of the process made it all the way into the final version of the piece a year later. Because the dancers had developed the movement (still within the constraints of The System, but finding their creativity within it), they were able to embody it more fully as time went on.

Another positive result of working this way was that the various movement sections that evolved were all quite unique. Because there was not a specific quality of movement that the dancers knew I wanted, many different qualities emerged. This kept the piece from getting stale.

One negative aspect of working with chance was that it was impossible to leave everything up to chance. One we realized all the possible choices that could be determined by a random integer function, we would find more. It was a fractal into infinity that left me feeling like nothing could get accomplished. We spent more time making The System than we did coming up with material to be performed.

*Attachments in this phase.* In my field notes from 02-20-13 I wrote:

What is it that we are attached to?

What exactly are we trying to keep from attaching ourselves to? Our selves?

Are we focusing on my non-attachment? The dancers, the audience?  
How can we create something that is still touching/meaningful? Still find connection, depth. Still dedicated to the work. Dedicated to the changes the work takes, to being open to change.  
Invested in the process. Invested but not attached?  
Time in rehearsal is the work. Final product is a sidenote. Audience gets glimpse into our process because the product is still changing. There is no FINAL product.  
How to keep dancers motivated?  
Start doing exercises during rehearsals to foster non-attachment, come into the present time/space. I need to let go of attachment to how I think things 'should' happen/feel.  
-letting go of the 'should'  
-being present in the now/here  
-remembering that the process is what's important  
-ask what exactly we're attaching to  
It's about practicing non-attachment in creation.  
It's about ephemerality. (2013c)

The dancers were attaching to the desire to perform certain movements or sections. During one rehearsal I asked the dancers to pick their favorite movement section and some of them got nervous because they thought I was going to take it away from them. They were also attaching to the idea that they brought each other happiness. When two of the dancers left the process, some of the others were disappointed. I tried to set an example by treating their departures as opportunities for new positive change.

**Phase Two: Letting go of chance, August 2013-January 2014.** Our process was influenced by our decision-making strategies in chance for an entire semester. We tried to stick to The System even when it seemed restricting, just to see what would happen. During the summer break from school we did not have rehearsal. When we came back for the fall semester, we decided to let go of our way of working with chance. It had become a hindrance rather than a help, and I was feeling like I had become attached to the idea that The System was necessary for me to be nonattached to other ideas. I had been attaching to the idea that the structure had to be a certain way. I realized that my

collaborators and I could practice non-attachment in the creative process without leaving everything up to chance.

*Adding sound and costume designers.* During the summer break I asked a music history graduate student to create sound for the piece and I asked a dance graduate student to design and create the costumes. There was a big shift when the sound and costume designers entered the process. I had to let go of control of the piece substantially, which I found to be freeing. I started each of them off with some broad direction, then trusted that they would make something interesting. They requested feedback throughout the process and I gave little suggestions, but never asked them to start over or told them they were wrong. My suggestions were more like clarifications when the designers needed some guidance. The graphic designer for the promotional materials and I worked in a similar way. I gave him three nuggets of information and let him run with it. In the case of these three collaborators, I was very pleased with what they created and thought that all aspects of the piece came together successfully.

The sound designer was interested in creating an interaction between the dancers and the sound, so he constructed five accelerometers (hereafter referred to as “sensors”) that the dancers wore on their hands in gloves (see Appendix E). These sensors took feedback from the dancers’ movements and sent the data to the sound designer’s computer. These data then went through a program and were translated into sound that was amplified through surround-sound speakers. In some cases the sound was very obviously manipulated by specific movements and in other cases the relationship was subtler. I found that this live music generation gave everyone involved an enhanced sense of nowness, as the sound was unpredictable and happening in the moment.

The costumes were designed so that pieces of them could be removed and hung by clothespins in the space. Each dancer's costume was unique in color and pattern, and the unifying qualities were in the type of fabric and in the fact that sleeves and pant legs could be zippered off. There also emerged a bright color palette (see photos of the costumes in Appendix D).

Because I view collaboration as a way of working that is not one-sided, I embraced the idea that the sound and costume designs could then influence the movement and the structure of the overall piece. It was really satisfying to let go of a hierarchy and permit all elements of the piece be influenced by one another. The sound designer came to rehearsals and had significant input into the creation of the movement. Rather than attach ourselves to the idea that we needed to stick within our roles of "choreographer," "sound designer," and "costume designer," we allowed our roles to be fluid. We had a common goal of creating a piece of moving art and we did not let the process become restricted by holding on to what is typically expected of people in specific roles.

***Embodied nowness, aesthetic, and intuition.*** While we were using chance and especially after we decided to let it go, rehearsals with the dancers and sound designer needed to include a sense of focus. Kristopher K.Q. Pourzal and I developed the term "embodied nowness" in a paper on teaching non-attachment through non-attached teaching that was presented at the annual National Dance Education Organization National Conference. In our paper presentation we discussed the importance finding ways to let go as dance teachers and as dance students, which can emerge through being embodied in the present. I use the term "embodied nowness" to describe my experiences

with mindfulness, focus, presence, and being in the now. When I become mindful, I also become body-ful. Rather than noticing the connection between mind and body, I am reminded that they are not separate. Thus being present- in the present- is an embodied experience. As a long-time dancer and inhabitant of my body, I must share that I find mindfulness to be connected to movement as well as stillness. Sometimes settling into stillness helps me come into the moment, but often I find movement to be more helpful in creating sensations for me to experience and observe.

Embodied nowness is a state from which great creativity can flow. It is an act of letting go. It helps to unveil attachments people may not have known they had. Being in the now lets me see what I am holding on to from the past so that I may choose what to do with it. It lets me notice what expectations I have for the future so that I may also choose what to do with them. It is an act of self-reflection that can be very passive or very active, but beneficial either way. Awareness is a key to non-attachment. As Dhiravamsa (1975) explains, “When we are totally attentive, our consciousness becomes more extensive, giving us a wider, deeper, and purer vision because the ignorance and stupidity of the conditioned mind do not intervene. Only then can the intuitive insight flow” (p. 9). This intuitive insight can be really helpful in the creative process- and in life overall.

Referring directly to attachment, James Baraz (2010) explains that mindfulness “...weakens the negative or unwholesome mind states that cause us suffering, such as attachment... and strengthens the wholesome mind states that lead to happiness, such as kindness, generosity, and wisdom” (p. 43). In this case, he is inferring that happiness is the opposite of suffering. For me, happiness arrived in the form of using “kindness,

generosity, and wisdom” to create an environment in which a dance could emerge from being in the moment. Awareness of mind states- whether positive, negative, or existing without judgment- led me to be more aware in my art making and in my practice of being a collaborator. Baraz (2010) also nicely explains, “When you are mindful you know what is actually happening in your present moment’s experience, without judging how it is or wishing it were different” (p. 44). When I took a moment to notice my emotions and thoughts during rehearsals, I was able to remove labels of “good” or “bad” from them. Removing these labels was useful for mindsets, for the work we created, and for the ways we rehearsed.

Throughout the creation of “The Now Creature,” we practiced methods of focusing at the beginning of rehearsals to get everyone into the present as much as possible. My interest in embodied nowness started to affect our process more substantially once we made the shift away from chance procedures. Starting in September, we starting doing more focusing activities, talking about them, and writing about them. Once we did not have The System to support us, we were left with ourselves. Focusing on the moment illuminated what the work needed and what it was ready to discard. The piece became a creature itself and our work was to live inside it and to listen to what it had to say. I use the word “focus” to mean having the capacity to let go of any distractions from the moment and task at hand and to be able to keep one’s interest from wandering to unrelated phenomena.

Drawing from experiences in previous dance classes, non-dance classes, rehearsals, yoga, and my personal mindfulness practice, I presented various focusing activities during rehearsals for “The Now Creature.” Many of them involved being still

and noticing sensory experiences. For example, we sat in a circle with our eyes closed and spent a minute focusing on what we tasted, then smelled, then saw, then heard, then felt in our bodies. Another activity we did was ripping up newspaper as slowly as possible. The sensory experience of this simple task put many of us in a very calm and focused place. During a September rehearsal, I noticed that sometimes conversation got off topic, so I proposed that every time someone went off topic everyone responded by making the noise “bzzzzzz.” It was a fun, funny, and non-judgmental way to get us back on track.

Being mentally present during rehearsals did not mean that the rest of the outside world completely vanished from everyone’s thoughts. As one dancer wrote in her journal, “I may acknowledge or sense outside things but they do not take away my attention... from the one thing I am trying to accomplish” (Dancer C, 2013). Often we drew from the thoughts we had that were persistent in keeping us from being in the moment. For example, if someone was really giddy because of an event that happened earlier in his or her day, I tried to channel that energy into creative movement that could then be shaped to work with the piece. Being aware of oneself does not imply denying oneself, but it brings awareness to the moments when people choose to respond to our distractions or not.

“With the flow of *intuitive insight*, we shall open the doors to Creation” (Dhiravamsa, 1975, p. 11). It was within the nowness of being focused and present that intuition emerged. I could make decisions and not feel the need to rationalize them or to give credit (or blame) to The System. We did what we did because that was what we needed to do. The dancers had significant input as well, listening to their intuition to

make informed choices. Ultimately I was the authority on whether or not an idea worked for the piece, but I tried to seriously consider every suggestion and many wonderful ones greatly impacted the piece. When I asked the dancers to write about the moment during rehearsal when they felt most present, one dancer wrote,

I feel like I was most focused when we were just playing around (marking through transitions, throwing out ideas, working together, etc.). It was a really creative space that included each of us, and I feel like that was really conducive for me being truly present. (Dancer B, 2013)

Focus does not have to exclude fun.

During one rehearsal, I decided to create an experiment by not having us do a collective grounding activity before we started working. I noted, “it takes forever to focus when we don’t do it collectively” (2013d). After half an hour of scattered energy, I reined everyone in and we came into the present. We did another run of what we had been working on previously. Unprompted, three of the dancers exclaimed that it felt better that time.

My own presence as a leader was reflected in the presence of the collaborators. In order for them to focus, I needed to focus myself. During some rehearsals I wish I had spent more time preparing myself before going into the work.

This was also the phase of the process when aesthetic (my ideas about what was interesting to watch and what was not) came into play more clearly. The piece ultimately ended up being something I enjoyed experiencing as an audience member, as I had shaped “The Now Creature” into a dance that I liked. My thoughts about the piece changed through time. It was good to have an idea and try it out for a while, but also good to be able to let it go and move on to other ideas. The piece and I were always adapting to change (like the dynamic universe). This project helped me to further clarify



what my artistic signature is and further explorations in the creative process will focus on identifying and articulating the quirks that make up my style. “The Now Creature” was a “Denise piece” because of the way it was broken up into “chapters,” its light-heartedness and colors, and subtle details. It was a dance that was different every time it was performed, it allowed each performer to be who they were that day, and it was interspersed with humor. It did not take itself too seriously and it did not tell a specific story. There was a strong relationship between movement, sound, space, lights, and costumes. Though this research was not intended to bring me to a definition of my aesthetic, it definitely showed me some of the qualities that I value in dance work and how I choose to portray them.

Improvisation became more incorporated into the piece during this second phase of the process, which gave the dancers freedom to respond to intuition in the moment. Improvisation calls for presence and nowness. The sound being generated and affected by movement kept the dancers aware of what they were doing. There was live aural feedback for them to respond to in movement.

It is relevant to note that many artists use improvisation in the creative process for similar reasons that I use chance. They both can encourage ways of being that have not yet been realized and cannot be planned. New ideas can emerge and develop.

Along with aesthetic and improvisation, the final piece was influenced by our practices of embodied nowness. The dancers’ focus carried over into performance, which translated to the audience. Some feedback I received from audience members was that they were very engaged throughout the piece. Presence in rehearsals led to presence in performance, which led to presence in the audience. Did this then carry on beyond the

end of the piece? Did the audience then inspire presence within other areas of life? One dancer mentioned that experiences in rehearsal helped her practice non-attachment in the rest of her life.

Throughout the process, in trying to find *nowness*, I questioned the roles of the past and the future. We were present in the now, yet building on material that had been previously created, expecting it to be shown in the future. How did we stay in the now? We also knew that the piece would be shown in a different physical space than the ones in which we had most rehearsals. The solution to this conundrum was to realize that neither the past nor the future were more important than the present moment. The final version of the piece was not more important than the version we were working with that day. We did not have to sacrifice that day's experience for the sake of the future. Yes, the final showing was more "official" and for an audience, but we did not have to attach to the idea that it was more important than the present day's rehearsal with no audience. Though we created the piece to be shown in a final weekend of official performances, the work was not product oriented. The work was about an experience of non-attachment, not making a piece about non-attachment. We let go of the idea that the piece had to be about anything at all. Without delving too far into the realm of phenomenology here, it is worth mentioning that my work can be looked at as a study of the individual human experience within the context of a piece of dance art.

***Attachments in this phase.*** It would seem that adding the elements of intuition and aesthetic to the process would make it harder to find non-attachment. I had created The System because it kept me from attaching to the idea that one outcome was better than another, so letting my opinions and desires enter the process gave me an opportunity

to practice non-attachment in a different way. This new phase in the work helped me look at my attachments from a new angle and it was easier for me to notice them.

I noticed myself leaving the present moment during rehearsals when someone commented on my physical appearance. It brought awareness to the idea that people are seeing an image of me and I started to wonder who had seen it that day, how it looked in the moment, how I could make it better... My physical experience of being in the moment suffered because I tried to leave myself in order to see myself as others did. Because I was distracted by my image, I assumed that dancers also were distracted by their images, so we often rehearsed in rooms that did not have mirrors. This was an example of me attaching to the idea that seeing or thinking about our physical appearances had to be distracting.

Another idea I attached to was that music during rehearsals was distracting. Before our sound designer was part of the process, we put on music from someone's phone or computer to have something to listen to as we worked. I got distracted by this music and forget what the task was at hand. The dancers seemed to enjoy the music, so we continued to play it during rehearsals. This ended up influencing the final version of the piece in various ways, which I thought were successful. Though I had attached myself to the idea that music was distracting, I eventually embraced it as an inspiration for creation.

Sometimes while rehearsing, something came up that was distracting that could not be pushed aside. It needed to be taken care of right then, disrupting rehearsal. Examples include someone needing to use the restroom, getting water, or texting someone else to set up a ride home. As the person leading the rehearsal, I let go of the

idea that these “disruptions” were negative or that they detracted from the process. Why can’t bathroom breaks be productive too?

While working with the dancers, I tried to encourage them to let go of the idea that we had to stick in our roles of “choreographer” and “dancers.” I was open to hearing their ideas about lighting, sound, costumes, and structure. They generated most of the movement, so my title of “choreographer” did not make sense.

I was really interested in letting go of my title of “choreographer.” I thought of myself more as a “dance-maker” or a “gatherer of collaborators” or an “art-shaper.” The piece would not have happened without me, and many people described it as “very Denise,” but the title of “choreographer” just does not fit the role that I played in this process, as I came up with very little of the actual movement material. Often in the dance world we see the choreographer as being the boss, and I did feel like I had a lot of power, but again, I choreographed hardly any of the dance and was more of a facilitator and collaborator. Also, I found myself playing many roles and enjoyed moving between them without letting myself feel restricted by titles.

After a showing for my committee less than two months before the performance I wrote in my journal, on 12-04-13:

I am feeling frustrated today because on Monday everyone was at rehearsal and I kept talking about Wednesday’s rehearsal, assuming everyone would be there. Two people are out of town, which they knew about for months. One texted me 15 minutes before to say he wasn’t feeling well. I know it’s the end of the semester and there are a million things going on, but get with it! There are others depending on you.

I don’t usually let my emotions show or bubble up like this. It helps me appreciate the people who are here and who are put together. Okay, now empathy for those who are sick and who were really busy preparing for a trip.

Still feeling feelings toward the showing.

Disappointed, embarrassed, mad.

I'm attaching to the idea that other people have power over my emotions. I can respond however I choose. Right? So if I choose not to attach to these emotions and just let them pass... Peace.

But why feel them in the first place? Attached to the work, so it being critiqued at less than its full potential felt bad. Attached to the idea that what we made needs to be something- engaging, entertaining, good... That there even needs to be something.

Attached to myself. This work has my name on it. If it's bad, it makes me look bad, unprofessional, not worthy of being in this field or program.

But hey! I can see and analyze attachments, and that's what my research is really about! So this was great! Yes! (2013e)

**Phase Three- Performances, January 2014-February 2014.** Tech rehearsals for “The Now Creature” began January 27, 2014, and included light cueing, walk-throughs with the stage manager and tech crew, and two dress rehearsals. The show opened on Friday, January 31, and closed after a matinee on Sunday, February 2. Throughout this week, I kept notes of my own experiences of attachment and encouraged my collaborators to do the same. I also encouraged the dancers to do a collective focusing activity before each performance, which they seemed to value.

Less than a month before the show opened, the narrator character was brought into rehearsals. This performer was a dance graduate student who was also interested in using the voice. His presence in the last month of rehearsals was a welcome shift helped tie the various sections of the work together to make one cohesive dance.

The title of the piece “The Now Creature” first emerged during a May rehearsal in which two dancers had created movements that reminded us of gargoyles. We had been talking about being in the now, so decided to name the little phrase we had created “The Now Creature” for reference when we came back to it after the summer break. We often named sections based on what the movement evoked. As the performances neared and I still did not have a title for the overall work, the sound designer suggested using “The

Now Creature,” as it seemed fitting to our studies in nowness and it felt as though the work we had created had a life of its own. Because the piece was always changing and had a different personality each time it was performed, it really did feel like a living creature. During the week of tech and the performances, I continually came back to this feeling that the work was alive.

The performance space helped create a sense of breath. There were clothespins hanging from fishing wire to which the dancers attached pieces of their costumes. In the tension grid were six technical crewmembers, all dance or theatre undergraduate students. Their role was to slowly move the fishing line up and down so that the clothespins and fabric pieces were always in motion. This moving sculpture was constantly shifting and being changed by both the tech crew and the dancers. The space beneath the sculpture was where the dancers waited while they were not dancing, and they were continuously moving slowly as well. I called this area of the space “The Tank” (see Appendix F for pictures of “The Tank”).

*Attachments during tech and performances.* One dancer wrote about her experience during tech and the performances:

Prior to the week of the performance I had to let go or become unattached to the idea that I would know all of the aspects of the performance. I was attached to the idea that in rehearsal we would run things from the beginning to the end of the piece. This was not Denise's approach especially because of the chance elements. This approach pushed me to be very present with what I was doing at the moment. During the week of the rehearsal I found myself feeling a lot of excitement and delight during tech and dress rehearsals as I saw everything coming together... During the performance it felt easy and natural to be present with what I was doing even though there was a new element of an audience. I also realized that the concert Denise created kept the audience present during the entire performance. (Dancer C, 2014)

During the week of tech rehearsals and performances, I felt very relaxed. My notes claim that I was “letting go of: the idea that I need to be stressed, the idea that things need to happen at the last minute, the idea that I will not have time for other parts of my life, excitement” (2014a). The technical director and I had been working hard the week before tech started to get the light plot prepared and on the last day of focus I told her that I was not worried. Next week going into tech, she said that because I was not worried, she was not worried either. My trust that everything would come together smoothly carried over to the technical director and the rest of the tech crew. One of them described it as “the most chill tech week ever.” Even though there were many technical aspects and some of them were fairly complicated, I did not let the fear of imperfection or failure keep me from being patient, communicative, and kind. With brief and straightforward direction from me, the tech crew and performers all did their jobs quite well, as I trusted they would. During tech week I felt as though my true role was to be the keeper of calmness- to set an example for others. Since it was “my” show and I was acting very collected and positive, others perhaps adopted a similar attitude.

Without veering too far into the topic of embodied leadership, I must mention that I found my experience as a leader was also an embodied practice of non-attachment. I tried to set an example within myself for how to approach the work that others were welcome to adapt. As Ladkin and Taylor (2010) explain, “...a leader must be attentive to the somatic clues of their body as they experience situations, and then choose how to express them” (p. 70). Awareness of my own experience within the process influenced how I functioned as a leader. Looking back, I wish I had spent more time focusing myself before rehearsals and reflecting on my effectiveness as an embodied leader.

*Post-performance attachments.* Since the show, I have felt attachments. There are the “positive” emotions- pride, accomplishments, success. I did not feel any negative emotions right away, but soon after the show closed I started to notice a fear that I may never create something so satisfying again. I may never have the opportunity to focus my time and energy on making dance again. I may never again find collaborators so willing to work with me. My immediate attachments to the success of the show led to suffering in the form of fear. When people told me “you should be proud!” I seriously considered their demands and decided that maybe it would be better for me not to be proud because ultimately it was causing me pain.



## MOVING BEYOND THE PROJECT

Now that the creative process, performance, and writing stages of this project have wrapped up, I realize that research on the topic of non-attachment in art making may continue to motivate my dance making for quite some time. There will always be more questions to ask and creative work to explore. I recognize that some of the main nuggets of insight gained from this experience that I will take moving forward may also be of benefit to other artists, scholars, and humans in general, which is the focus of my final section of this document.

### **What Do the Findings of this Research Mean in Relation to my Creativity?**

Trust goes a long way. One of my committee members suggested that I “just trust the process.” Everything turned out the way it turned out because I trusted that no matter what happened, it would be fine. I fully trusted my collaborators to take the project seriously and complete their work well. Trust involves a lot of letting go of control, expectation, judgment, and fear. It is related to embodied oneness in that I can exist in the moment, in my body, trusting that the present moment is all that matters, and I can choose to be mindful of my thought processes and physical/emotional experiences.

Non-attachment does not mean denial. One can feel emotions, and that is okay. People do not control their emotions, but they can control how they respond to them. Emotions can have as big or as little of an effect on our actions as one chooses. Non-attachment is all about choice! As John Dewey notes about the creative process, becoming a mindful choice-maker is a fundamental aspect of being human (“Dewey’s Moral Philosophy,” 2014). Relinquishing choice as a method of finding non-attachment can be made more complex than it has to be.

During the entire process, any attachments stemmed from the idea that I am real, that this life matters to me individually, and that there is a “me” to which attachments can hold. My moments of non-attachment came when I distanced myself from my self- when I stepped outside and looked at this creature called “me.” Why does this being waste time thinking about her own issues?

There is a lot of choice involved in the act of revoking choice.

There is the idea of no-self, of interdependence. The work that I make is not *mine* because I do not exist independently of others. Many factors led to a situation in which I (as a seemingly unique and individual being) was presented with the opportunity to make a dance work, so I did. I could have decided, “this is *my* project and *I* will make it” but instead I opened the door for the piece to be made by many. There was not just one person doing the work, and the work does not belong just to me. I embraced the idea that beings are inter-connected and this was evidenced in the work that was made. It was truly collaboration- I just happened to be the spark that initiated it (and the person whose name appeared on the promotional materials). This relates to the Buddhist story of Indra’s Net “...a cosmic web laced with jewels at every intersection. Each jewel reflects the others, together with all the reflections *in* the others” (Smith & Novak, 2003, p. 61). None of the jewels in the net exists independently of the other jewels, as my contributions to “The Now Creature” would not matter without the contributions of everyone else.

This project helped me analyze the elaborate System I had made that controlled most of the decisions in my life. I have gone through stages of being embarrassed by it and of embracing it. Where does it stand now? Though I realize the benefits of letting something outside of myself determine outcomes of seemingly meaningless choices, I

have also come to realize that this is not the key to non-attachment. I can, in fact, become very attached to The System sometimes.

### **New Questions Arising from the Experience**

There is a lot of choice involved in not becoming attached to the outcomes of situations, and I can choose not to become attached whether I decided the outcome or something else did. Had I been using The System as a crutch to keep me from truly taking responsibility for my attachments (or lack thereof)? Had I avoided embracing The System in my art before because it had actually been hindering me? Had I chosen to be an artist because it was an escape from The System? Asking these questions helps me clarify why I do what I do. More importantly, asking these questions inspires me to continue making art. I can make art and not be attached to it. I can live my life and not be attached to it either.

### **Cunningham and Cage**

Since the close of “The Now Creature,” I have further looked into the work and processes of Merce Cunningham and John Cage. My main question was “why did they use chance in their creative practices?” Some of the answers illuminated how similar my way of working was to theirs, and some of the answers were surprising and very different from what I did.

John Cage was primarily known as a music composer. Cage’s work was similar to mine in that he made very elaborate systems of chance. He often used the *I Ching*, which I have yet to explore. Our work is also similar due to our interest in creating structures in which anything could exist. Neither of us was as concerned with the content of the work as the structure of it (Pritchett, 1988, p. 74). Our differences lie in the reason behind the

chance. Cage understood chance in a different way than I do. As Benjamin Piekut (2013) explains, Cage looked at “non-human agency as chance-determined” (p. 155), while I understand that chance is still very controlled and connected to humanity. He used nature as chance, while I never turned to nature as a determining force. Piekut (2013) also notes that “Cage sought to remove his own control, to be affected rather than to affect” and that he was “committed to eliminating personal expression in favor of revealing a more general truth” (p. 134). Christopher Shultis (2000) mentions the role of choice:

Cage used what he called "chance operations" to lessen the human tendency to mediate. Chance operations were, for him, a way of redirecting the control of the compositional mind from the role of master to the category of impetus- through asking questions whose responses are subject to an outside source instead of determining compositional results solely by personal choice. (p. 93)

Michael Nyman’s (1974) explanation of Cage’s practices was the most interesting to my own research. “Cage’s adoption of chance and random procedures... [was] evidence of his deepening attachment to the Zen philosophy of non-involvement” (p. 43). Cage’s interest in Zen was similar to my interest in fundamental Buddhism. He actively sought non-involvement in creation, which is different from non-attachment, but similar in that both of us were not interested in taking ownership of what was created. I find the idea of “attaching” to anything involving Zen to be ludicrous, but if Cage was indeed attaching to a philosophy, he was working against what I tried to do with non-attachment.

John Cage and Merce Cunningham worked together often and both used chance, so I assumed that their reasons behind doing so were similar, but I found this to be untrue. Calvin Tomkins (1965) explains the difference between the two men:

Unlike Cage, whose interest in chance was in part a reflection of an interest in Oriental religions and in recent developments in mathematics and science, Cunningham considered chance simply a tool for practical use- one method among others. “If you use chance, all sorts of things happen that wouldn’t

otherwise,” he said once. “I found my dances becoming richer and more interesting, so I continued using chance methods. That’s the only reason.” (p. 260)

Cunningham did not use chance methods because of heady philosophical reasons; he used them because they made his dances “more interesting.” This is a straightforward yet powerful reason. While chance methods also make my dance works more interesting, in that they present scenarios I may not have thought of on my own, I also use them because I am trying to accomplish non-attachment in creation. A similarity between my process with “The Now Creature” and Cunningham’s process is that “...he will use chance when he thinks it may be useful, but he also depends on his own powers of conscious invention, his personal taste, and at times his memory, and he refuses to be bound by any system, even of his own devising” (Tomkins, 1965, p. 261). Cunningham allowed aesthetic, intuition, and conscious choice to enter his process when he felt limited by the systems he had created, as I had halfway through making “The Now Creature.”

Moving forward as an artist, it would be interesting for me to study more specifically how Cage and Cunningham created their chance systems. I would enjoy seeing how our systems could influence each other to form new ones. I would also be interested in further researching Cage’s ideas about nature in chance, as well as other artists who were influenced by both Cage and Cunningham.

### **Benefits to Future Work and Other Dance-Makers**

This project of making an evening-length dance work and analyzing attachments during the creative process will influence my future experiences in making art. What really matters is awareness and the ability to step back at look at oneself without judgment. “Why am I making these decisions? What am I holding on to that is holding the work back?”

In today's American society people have many opportunities to be over-stimulated and it can be difficult to take time to slow down and come into one's body and into the present. There is also a sense of selfishness that can hold people back from finding compassion for all and recognizing interconnectedness. In a world where it can be so easy to grasp on to ideas that one needs "things" in order to be happy, it is important to be able to step back and detach oneself from the idea that happiness originates externally.

In my future work, I will try to go into the process without expectation. I will be open to collaboration and not claim the work as *mine*. Even if I am the only person who does any work (perhaps in a solo), I can think of it as collaboration with the time, space, and energy around me. I will remain open to change and willing to experiment with what emerges. I can notice my aesthetic and be okay with it entering the process. Chance can have a role in creation, but I need not attach anything to it, let it be an excuse for my attachments, or use it as my only method of non-attachment.

The creative processes that emerged from this project are deeply connected to my pedagogical ideas and practices. Creating "The Now Creature" reminded me that I embrace diversity and truly listen to what people have to say and how they digest information and experiences. I value people as individuals and ask them to interact on a personal level with material that is given to many. My interest in collaboration keeps my art and teaching fresh, as I think it is important to share viewpoints other than my own and to investigate how they overlap and influence each other. In art, I like to explore new possibilities, rather than trying to replicate something that has already been done. In teaching, this is reflected in my efforts to ask new questions about material and to present students with new experiences. The biggest connection between my art-making and my

teaching (and the rest of my life) is that I always try to step away from myself in order to observe what I am thinking or feeling and how that affects my responses to situations. I try to practice non-attachment in all realms of existence.

Realizations that I have had about my own attachments and experiments with various methods to bring them up and let them go may help other dance makers in their processes. As I move forward in pursuing a teaching career, it will be useful for me to keep this research in mind when working with students. As young people start to shape their personal creative practices, I encourage them to take a step back and look at their attachments and how they affect the work that emerges. This extends beyond the realm of dance into other art media. In fact, practices of analyzing attachments can be applied to all realms of life. How can people approach non-arts-related projects? How do attachments affect how interactions between people occur on a daily basis? By bringing awareness to the ideas to which artists and non-artists cling, they can then lay out a variety of responses from which to choose. Actions can be however positive or negative a person makes them. This is powerful when applied to all aspects of life.

## POSTSCRIPT

As I write this document I am very aware of how vigorously I am chewing my gum, how lopsided my pelvis has become in my chair, and how warm the air feels on my skin. I remind myself that my breaths can be deeper. I am aware of how silly it is for me to worry about how good this document will be, if I will get it in on time, if it will be long enough... I am aware that I could become attached to the idea that there is a “me” who will be affected by the success or failure of this document. Instead, I continue to write, working for the sake of working (and creating), knowing that this will not ultimately affect me (as there is no “me” to affect). In conclusion, none of this research on non-attachment in the creative process matters to me. It matters to the collective energy of connected humans known as “us” and can help “us” reduce suffering through non-attachment in creation.



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APPENDIX A

HAIR OPTIONS FROM CHILDHOOD



APPENDIX B

TIMELINE FOR “THE NOW CREATURE”

January 2013- Assemble seven dancers. Begin creating movement material.

February 2013- Two dancers drop out of the project. One dancer joins project.

April 2013- First produced performance of the work in “Graduate Project Presentations” with six dancers, visible stage manager, recorded music acquired through a creative commons website. Costumes found in costume shop.

May 2013-July 2013- No rehearsals. Gone for summer break.

July 2013- Costume designer and sound designer join the team. I start discussing the work with both of them separately.

August 2013- Final dancer joins the team. Rehearsals begin again, starting with a different, more intuitive process.

September 2013- Sound designer starts bringing material to rehearsals.

October 2013- Second produced performance in “Graduate Project Presentations.” Sound designer used Wii-mote sensors to create live sound. Five dancers perform in their own clothing.

November 2013- Last-minute third produced performance in “Emerging Artists II.” Used pre-recorded sound made by sound designer. Five dancers perform in their own clothing.

December 2013- No rehearsals because of winter break.

January 2014- Narrator joins rehearsals. Costumes are constructed. Sound is ready. Space is set up. Lights are hung, focused, and designed. Tech, show, and strike.

APPENDIX C  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD LETTER

## **AN INVESTIGATION OF ATTACHMENT AND NON-ATTACHMENT IN THE CREATIVE PROCESS**

### **RESEARCHERS**

Professor Vissicaro, Associate Clinical Professor in the School of Dance and Denise Stein, MFA graduate student in the School of Dance have invited your participation in a research study.

### **STUDY PURPOSE**

The purpose of the research is to investigate attachment and non-attachment in the creative process.

### **DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH STUDY**

If you decide to participate, then you will join a study involving research of attachment and non-attachment in the creative process. This will include documenting understandings by taking field notes and conducting interviews.

If you say YES, then your participation will last approximately eight months; the study will occur on Arizona State University's Tempe campus. Over this time frame, you will maintain a journal to document ideas, feelings, and behaviors after each rehearsal as well as record spontaneous entries that pertain to understanding of attachment and non-attachment in the creative process. Additionally, you will be asked questions during a series of eight interviews, which will last approximately 30 minutes each. Ten subjects will be participating in this study. Individuals must be 18 years or older to participate.

### **RISKS**

There are no known risks from taking part in this study, but in any research, there is some possibility that you may be subject to risks that have not yet been identified.

### **BENEFITS**

The possible/main benefits of your participation in the research are to gain awareness of personal habits of attachment in the creative process. This research may contribute to the field of dance by offering insight about attachment and non-attachment in the creative process.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential. The results of this research study may be used in reports, presentations, and publications, but the researchers will not identify you. In order to maintain confidentiality of your records, Professor Vissicaro and Denise Stein will remove the names of subjects from data gathered for this study and use codes instead. Only the researchers will have access to this information.

### **WITHDRAWAL PRIVILEGE**

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. It is ok for you to say no. Even if you say yes now, you are free to say no later, and withdraw from the study at any time.

### **VOLUNTARY CONSENT**

Any questions you have concerning the research study or your participation in the study, before or after your consent, will be answered by Professor Vissicaro, P.O. Box 850304, Tempe, Arizona 85287-0304, 480-965-4764 OR Denise Stein, (303) 807-6558.



If you have questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk; you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at 480-965 6788.

APPENDIX D

PHOTOS OF CAST IN COSTUME



Photo credit: Tim Trumble Photography



Photo credit: Tim Trumble Photography

APPENDIX E

PHOTO OF SENSORS IN GLOVES



Photo credit: Tim Trumble Photography

APPENDIX F  
PHOTOS OF “THE TANK”





Photo credit: Tim Trumble Photography



Photo credit: Tim Trumble Photography



APPENDIX G

PROMOTIONAL POSTER AND POSTCARD

JAN.31, 6:30 P.M.  
FEB.1, 7:30 P.M.  
FEB.2, 2:00 P.M.

DANCE LAB  
NELSON FINE  
ARTS CENTER  
ROOM 122

TICKETS:  
\$8 STUDENTS  
\$16 GENERAL PUBLIC  
FREE FOR HERBERGER  
STUDENTS

TICKETS AVAILABLE  
AT THE GALVIN  
BOX OFFICE



# THE NOW CREATURE

DENISE A. STEIN & GARRETT L. JOHNSON

“A CHANCY DANCE PERFORMANCE...”