

REFRACTION: An Investigation on The Role of Dance in Providing a Social Commentary towards Body Dysmorphic Disorder Through a Dance Film

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Abstract

Dancing is one of the common things that we always see as a form of entertainment. We often view it as a form of art used for entertainment only. However, dance is not limited to arts and entertainment alone. Dance has the capacity to heal, offer joy, unify, and transform people and communities. Dance is a powerful tool that conveys messages through its non-verbal kinesthetics and intrinsic gestures that allows shifting imagery to promote social movements and changes. The proponent will discuss the role of dance in providing a social commentary, focusing on advocating, and raising awareness about Body Dysmorphic Disorder as its focus for the commentary. The researcher aims to promote that dance and other art forms are powerful tools in commencing and advocating for a change. Furthermore, this research will tackle body dysmorphia and will provide various instances and existing works that will help to fully understand how dance can be a form of social commentary while still being in the field of arts and as a form of entertainment.

Keywords: dance, Body Dysmorphic Disorder, Social commentary, culture, change, kinesthetics

Introduction

For thousands of years, people have utilized dance as a kind of art to convey feelings, concepts, and narratives through movement and rhythm. Dance is sometimes categorized and generalized as only being for entertainment and is not taken seriously as an art form or as a medium for communication and social criticism despite its variety and power to unite people. But the reality is far different from what is perceived. Dance has the capacity to heal, offer joy, unify, and transform people and communities (National Endowment for the Arts).

Additionally, dance has been and still is a potent tool for addressing significant social concerns and offering commentary on current affairs. For instance, modern dance has the capability to challenge the status quo, and prevailing cultural narratives, and inspire people to consider their role in the world critically (Dance Research Journal). With its roots in African American culture, hip-hop dancing has frequently been employed as a form of social commentary and resistance against oppression, highlighting the difficulties and victories of marginalized people (Hip Hop Dance Conservatory). Additionally, dancing can be utilized through events and charitable performances to promote awareness and bring about change on a local and international scale.

Dance offers much more than amusement. It has the ability to draw attention to significant social concerns and spur change since it is a potent medium for communication, expression, and social commentary.

In addition to its use as a form of social commentary, dance has also been linked to body dysmorphic disorder (BDD). A persistent and obsessive fixation with perceived flaws or defects in one's appearance that are not visible to others is a defining feature of BDD, a mental health disease (NIMH, 2021). This may significantly affect a person's sense of self-worth, level of happiness, and general health.

Contemporary dance has evolved in recent years into a forum for exploring the experiences of persons with BDD and spreading awareness of the disorder. For instance, "The Disordered Body," a dance performance, was developed to investigate the feelings and experiences of people with BDD (Dance Insight, 2021). The performance was described as "raw and honest" and aimed to shed light on the struggles faced by those with BDD. Similar to this, the contemporary dance performance "Flawed Perfection" was produced to raise awareness of the problem of BDD and body image. The composition was presented to a sold-out crowd and was called "hauntingly beautiful" (The Movement, 2021). This performance's purpose was to question social beauty standards and spread awareness about the harm they may do, especially to people with BDD.

These modern dance performances highlight the ability of dance to provide social commentary on BDD. They raise awareness of the condition's effects and shed light on the negative effects that society's standards of beauty can have on mental health. These

performances can also give persons with BDD comfort and validation by demonstrating that their experiences are valued and recognized.

Dancing can be a crucial tool for delivering social commentary on BDD. Dance performances can challenge detrimental societal beauty standards and promote awareness of BDD by examining the experiences of those who have it.

The general intent of this project is to provide a justification on how dance can be used as a social commentary specifically tackling the topic of Body Dysmorphic Disorder, or BDD, and using dance as a way to advocate and provide awareness to the general public. The project will also show how the topic can lead to an artistic output combined with the element of dance which will be the main target output for the research. This project questions how dancing, as a form of art and expression, can be used as a catalyst in creating a commentary for a social movement and how dance can promote change. Furthermore, this project's findings will reveal how dancing can make significant impacts on various social issues and how one can utilize the kinesthetics of dance to create social movements, especially with how it can be applied in the current generation.

Dance is not only a form of entertainment but it can also be considered an art form that provides a social commentary towards Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDD), to advocate and raise awareness about BDD to spark a movement for social change.

My main goal for this project is to provide awareness to the general public about Body dysmorphic disorder through a short dance film and their insights and viewpoints are to be collected once they saw the output to justify the intent of the project which is about dance being a form of a social commentary. This study will answer the following questions:

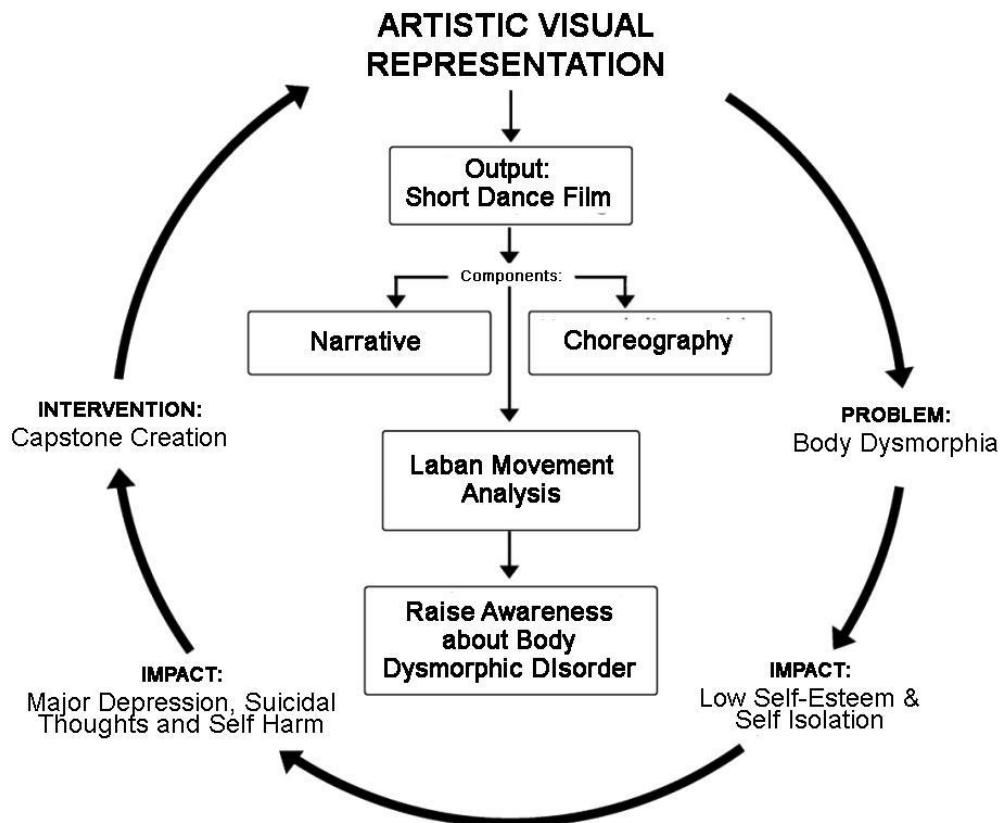
What is Body Dysmorphic Disorder?; How can dance provide a social commentary on Body Dysmorphic Disorder?; How does the kinesthetics of dance provide a commentary without verbal cues and spoken language?; How can a dance film be an effective way to raise awareness about Body Dysmorphia and social issues in general?

To answer the stated questions for this study, I plan on creating a short dance visual film that focuses on a commentary regarding Body Dysmorphic Disorder. Through this, the intention of the project is to portray and raise awareness about Body Dysmorphia through a dance film to

provoke thoughts and emotions in the viewers. The narrative will revolve around one character that is experiencing Body Dysmorphic Disorder and it will be represented through dance, incorporating body kinesthetics that conveys the message of the issue. The climax will be revealing the message of the choreography as well as the call-to-action of the project, which is to create awareness and most especially a social movement. The choreography will mainly be composed of gestures that focus on certain areas of concern based on Body dysmorphia. It should be composed with both constricted and exaggerated movements to further accentuate details and representations of BDD. The dance style that will be used is Open Style with Hip Hop roots. This provides a challenge and a new take for the film because the Contemporary style of dance is a more common style used by dancers to portray this type of message.

Figure 1

Framework of the Visual Representation of Body Dysmorphic Disorder and its Impact to Individuals



The creative framework that I used visualizes the process of how I will come up with the output of providing a visual representation of Body dysmorphia and how I can use dance as a form of social commentary. In this section, I will be dissecting the visual summary of the details of how I will be crafting my multimedia project. The creative framework and the following words that are included in it will be discussed based on the context of this study.

For the method and process of my study, as well as my output, I started with researching social issues that the current society is facing and I picked the one which I relate to the most and wanted to raise awareness to, which is Body Dysmorphic Disorder or BDD. According to Cleveland Clinic, Body dysmorphic disorder (BDD) is a mental health condition that causes you to view your physical appearance unfairly. The thoughts and feelings related to your appearance can consume you and affect your thoughts and actions. (Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDD): Symptoms & Treatment, 2023). Having BDD impacts an individual's self-esteem and may lead them to self-isolation as a result. It also has a high risk of self-harming or suicidal thoughts and major depressive behaviors if not treated. As a proponent, I wanted to provide an intervention, which is to create a capstone project that raises awareness about Body Dysmorphic Disorder and how one experiencing it can seek professional help as well as how we, the public, can help those who experience it. By providing an intervention, I plan to create a visual representation through a short dance film by providing a narrative and a choreography that best represents Body Dysmorphic Disorder with the help of Laban Movement Analysis. I will be using the Theory of Laban Movement Analysis to help create non-verbal cues and the kinesthetics of dance in a way that movements represent the topic and reflect the emotions and experiences of those who have BDD.

Laban Movement Analysis (LMA) is a system of movement analysis and notation developed by Rudolf Laban in the early 20th century. It provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing and describing all forms of human movement, including dance, and is widely used in the fields of dance, drama, and physical therapy.

LMA considers movement in terms of four interrelated components: body, effort, space, and shape. The body component refers to the physical qualities of movement, such as weight, flow, and direction. Effort refers to the psychological and emotional aspects of movement, such

as tension, release, and flow. Space refers to the movement's relationship to the environment and other people, and shape refers to the visual form of the movement (Hanna, 2000).

For the proponent's project that provides social commentary about Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDD) through a dance film, LMA can be used to analyze the movement choices and physical qualities of the dancers, and how they convey the themes and messages of the film. For example, the body component of LMA can be used to analyze how the dancers use their bodies to express the pain and insecurity associated with BDD, while the effort component can be used to analyze how the dancers convey the emotional turmoil and anxiety that are common symptoms of the disorder (Phillips, 2005).

Laban Movement Analysis will be a valuable tool for analyzing movement for the dance film that provides social commentary about BDD. By using the four components of LMA, it is possible to gain a deeper understanding of how the dancers use movement to convey the themes and messages of the film.

For my **research design**, I utilized resources such as Google and Youtube in gathering data. This method is meant to provide explanations by providing answers to the questions of what, why, and how. The qualitative method was used to understand and know how Body dysmorphia or fixation on one's insecurities in general can affect a person's day-to-day life. The data gathering should result in providing personal experiences of those who suffer from the disorder as well as gathering their feelings, thoughts, and emotions so that they are well-reflected into the narrative of the short dance film.

The research materials used in this study are a collection of articles, interviews, studies, and reflections about Body Dysmorphic Disorder and its effects on individuals who suffer from it. The research aims to investigate dance as a form of providing a social commentary, specifically tackling Body Dysmorphic Disorder as its main topic. The main goal of the study is to provide a visual representation of how individuals who suffer from Body Dysmorphic Disorder and their coping mechanisms towards their day-to-day lives to provide a better understanding and provide perspective of the person suffering from it.

The intended **target audience** for the short film and research project will primarily consist of teenagers and young adults. This demographic, ranging from 15 to 25 years old, comprises

individuals who confront insecurities and seek means to address their perceived flaws, thereby striving to cope with their challenges. Additionally, this audience includes those who experience low self-esteem and self-isolation because of these insecurities. The objective of the film is to serve as a dance social commentary that raises awareness about Body Dysmorphic Disorder, resonating with and addressing the concerns of this specific age group.

The results from the data that were gathered will be examined and reviewed thoroughly. The collected data will be used to conceptualize and create the narrative for the short dance film. The research will be taking all gathered data into consideration in writing the narrative for the film in order to best reflect the experiences and stories of those who experience body dysmorphia and their coping mechanism towards their day-to-day lives. After the research and the project, I will be conducting a survey in gathering feedback and opinions as to how effective the project was in raising awareness and providing a social commentary.

In my **design process**, I decided on creating a short dance film with a specific duration of (x) minutes and (x) seconds. Drawing inspiration from my personal experiences, I also sought insights from individuals who shared similar sentiments during the development of this project. The choreography was thoroughly crafted to serve as a commentary on the chosen topic, Body Dysmorphic Disorder. Through this creative endeavor, my research aimed to demonstrate that dance can effectively provide a social commentary on various societal issues.

To capture the footage, a digital single-lens reflex camera (DSLR) was utilized. This allowed for high-quality video recording, ensuring that each sequence was captured with precision. During post-production, the recorded videos underwent editing and color grading to enhance their visual impact and align with the desired artistic vision of the film.

Pre-production Stage

During the pre-production stage, my primary focus revolved around planning and creating assets for the short dance film. I took the responsibility of developing a Gantt chart to ensure that deadlines were met, and deliverables were completed on time. This stage involved the formulation of essential elements such as the script, shot list, sequence treatment, lighting direction, art direction, and production schedule, which contributed to the overall structure and vision of the film.

In shaping the main narrative and storytelling, I opted for a non-verbal script, relying solely on dance choreography to convey the intended messages. The choreography was crafted through movements and kinesthetics, aiming to express the emotions and feelings experienced by individuals with Body Dysmorphic Disorder. To achieve this, I collected interviews with individuals who struggled with dissatisfaction and insecurities regarding their physical appearances, using their insights as inspiration for the choreography.

Through thorough planning and research, I laid the foundation for an impactful and emotionally resonant dance film that would shed light on the experiences of those affected by Body Dysmorphic Disorder.

Production Stage

During the production stage, our team of four people embarked on video recording the footage and executing the main choreography of the short dance film. To capture the scenes effectively, we utilized a two-camera setup using Sony cameras, along with gimbals to achieve smooth and stable shots.

In addition, we meticulously arranged and set up lights to ensure proper lighting for each scene. The strategic placement of lights helped create the desired atmosphere and visually enhance the overall quality of the film. By combining the use of multiple cameras, gimbals, and carefully arranged lighting, we aimed to deliver visually captivating and dynamic shots for the dance film.

Post-Production Stage

During the post-production stage, I gathered all the captured footage and audio files to edit and collate them, following the written script and sequence treatment for the story. I used Adobe Premiere Pro as my main video editing software. In this stage, I edited and color-graded the film, and I included sound effects to better improve the overall impact of the film.

Additionally, I also worked on creating marketing collaterals and developing the film's website. I designed promotional materials such as posters, banners, and other social media collaterals to generate interest and awareness about the film. Furthermore, I developed and

designed the film's website, ensuring it showcased relevant information, trailers, and a visually appealing layout to engage the audience.

Review of Related Literature

In this section, I would be presenting previous and related literature concerning the topic of the role of dance as a social commentary. The following literature provide an in-depth discussion as to how dance provides purpose in one's culture, identity, and significant events where social issues were tackled through dance.

Dance as a Social Commentary in the Philippines

Dance has been used as a means of social commentary in the Philippines for centuries. According to De Jesus (2010), dance has been a symbol of identity and culture in the Philippines since pre-colonial times. Traditional dances like Tinikling, which involves two people tapping bamboo sticks together while maneuvering around and over them, were used to express social and political commentary and to showcase cultural heritage.

In modern times, contemporary dance in the Philippines continues to serve as a form of social commentary, addressing issues such as poverty, gender equality, and political oppression (Reed, 2010). Contemporary dance performances challenge dominant cultural norms and values and aim to bring attention to these social issues.

Another study, "Traditional Dance as a Medium of Social Commentary in the Philippines," by Maria Luisa D. Camagay, explores the role of traditional dance in expressing social and political commentary in the Philippines. The author notes that dance has been a significant part of Philippine culture for centuries, serving as a means of conveying social and political messages, as well as a way of showcasing cultural heritage.

According to Camagay (2000), indigenous dances such as the Tinikling serve as a symbol of resistance and resilience in the face of colonialism. These dances reflected the challenges and sufferings of the Filipino people throughout this period through their movements and rhythms.

Other traditional dance styles highlighted by the author include the Singkil, which narrates the story of a princess rescued from danger, and the Rigodon, a Spanish-influenced dance popular among the Philippine elite during the colonial period. These dances comment on Philippine society by reflecting the cultural norms and values of the time.

Camagay's research emphasizes the importance of traditional dance in Philippine culture as a medium for social and political commentary. Dance plays an important role in creating cultural identity and conserving cultural legacy in the Philippines, by the author's research.

Overall, dancing in the Philippines has played an important role in establishing cultural identity and encouraging social commentary. Dance has always been used to reflect the cultural history and social experiences of the Filipino people, from Tinikling to modern performances.

Dance and Cultural Identity Expression

Throughout history, dance has been a fundamental form of cultural expression. It offers a one-of-a-kind platform for people to express their values, beliefs, and rituals artistically and physically. Dance has been utilized to communicate cultural heritage, values, and beliefs from ancient civilizations to present times.

African American communities in the United States are one example of how dancing may be utilized to communicate cultural identity. According to an NEA study, "African American dance has been a key aspect of African American cultural expression, acting as a medium for communication, community building, and resistance" (NEA, 2018).

Dance styles like Jazz, hip-hop, and breakdancing have been utilized to express cultural identity and opposition against societal injustice. These dances not only allowed African Americans to exhibit their distinct cultural history, but also served as a form of resistance to the discrimination they encountered in American culture.

Traditional Native American dancing is another example of dance being utilized to communicate cultural identity. "Native American dance is a way to celebrate spiritual beliefs, social traditions, and cultural heritage; it is a physical expression of Native American spirituality, and is often used to mark important life events such as weddings, births, and funerals," according to a study by the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian (Smithsonian, 2021). These dances not only reflect Native American traditional values and beliefs, but also serve as a means of conserving their cultural history for future generations.

Dance is an important part of cultural expression since it gives people a unique platform to express their cultural identity. Dance has been utilized to commemorate cultural history convey

values and ideas and protest societal injustice from African American groups in the United States to traditional Native American societies.

Dance is a significant component of cultural expression in the Philippines, and it gives a unique platform for Filipinos to exhibit their cultural identity. The Tinikling dance, which is considered the national dance of the Philippines, is one example of this. According to the Cultural Center of the Philippines, "the Tinikling dance resembles the movement of tickling birds as they stroll between bamboo stems, representing the strong and peaceful interaction between humans and nature, which is an important component of Filipino culture" (Cultural Center of the Philippines, 2022).

Traditional Muslim dances, such as the Singkil dance, are another example of how dance is utilized to convey cultural identity in the Philippines. According to CCP, "the Singkil dance is a traditional Maranao folk dance that tells the story of Princess Gandingan, who was rescued by a prince using two bamboo poles; it represents the rich cultural heritage of the Muslim communities in the Philippines and is performed during important festivals and celebrations" (Cultural Center of the Philippines, 2022).

Dance is an important part of cultural expression in the Philippines, providing a unique venue for Filipinos to exhibit their cultural identity. From the Tinikling dance to traditional Muslim dances, dance is used to celebrate cultural heritage, express values and beliefs and preserve cultural heritage for future generations.

Dance as a Catalyst for Social Change

Dance has long been acknowledged as an effective method for bringing about social change and cultural empowerment. Dance has served as a form of expression, a way of maintaining a cultural legacy, and a platform for campaigning for social justice throughout history. Dances such as the blues, jazz, and hip-hop have provided not just a source of amusement and relaxation in African American communities, but also as a form of resistance against oppression and an expression of cultural identity. "The Role of Dance in African-American Culture" (National Museum of African American History and Culture, 2019) emphasizes the significance of dance in African American communities and how it has evolved to reflect the cultural and political atmosphere.

Similarly, dancehall, which developed in Jamaica in the late 1970s, has been a significant tool for encouraging social and political activity and confronting concerns such as poverty, violence, and police brutality in Jamaica. Smith's (2018) article "The Role of Dancehall in Jamaica's Social and Political Landscape" shows how dancehall has created a venue for young people, particularly those from marginalized communities, to express their discontent and demand change.

Breakdancing and popping, two hip-hop dance genres, have also played an important role in encouraging social change in urban neighborhoods around the world. The article "Breaking Down Barriers: How Hip-Hop Dance is Promoting Social Change" (Wright, 2019) explores how hip-hop dance has helped to bridge cultural barriers, given a platform for young people to express themselves artistically, and promote social justice and equality. Hip-hop dance has also been employed in protest and resistance, particularly in response to police brutality and other forms of systematic oppression.

In conclusion, dance has been and continues to be a strong vehicle for promoting social change and cultural empowerment, whether it is African American social dance, dancehall, or hip-hop dance. Dance serves as a reminder of the continuing power of dance as a means of molding societies and advocating positive change by providing a platform for individuals and communities to express their cultural identity and advocate for positive change. Often, dancing is an outlet where artists take on the specific role of becoming the voice for people who don't have one or who have had their voice taken away. Shimkus (n.d.).

Dance and Mental Health Disorders

Dance has been used as a powerful tool for promoting social change and addressing various issues that impact society. It has been used to raise awareness about important issues, to bring people together, and to inspire positive change. In particular, dance has been shown to be an effective means of tackling social issues such as mental health disorders.

One example of dance being used to address mental health is through dance therapy. Dance therapy is a form of psychotherapy that uses movement and dance to promote mental and physical well-being (American Dance Therapy Association, 2021). Research has shown that

dance therapy can be an effective treatment for a range of mental health conditions, including depression, anxiety, and PTSD (Karkou et al., 2016).

Another example of dance being used as a catalyst for social change is through socially engaged dance. This form of dance seeks to address social issues and bring about positive change through performance and community engagement (Bailey, 2014). For instance, socially engaged dance has been used to raise awareness about issues such as gender inequality, environmental degradation, and poverty (Bailey, 2014).

Dance has also been used as a way of empowering individuals who are struggling with mental health issues. Through dance, individuals can express their emotions and experiences in a safe and supportive environment, helping them to process their emotions and feel empowered (Karkou et al., 2016).

Furthermore, dance can provide individuals with a sense of community and connection, helping to reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness that can accompany mental health disorders (Karkou et al., 2016).

Dance has been shown to be a powerful tool for promoting social change and addressing various issues, including mental health disorders. Whether through dance therapy or socially engaged dance, dance has the ability to bring people together, promote healing and well-being, and inspire positive change.

Open Style in Dance

An improvisational, free-flowing dancing form known as "open style" enables people to express themselves creatively and freely without being bound by strict guidelines or exact movements. Open-style dance has the power to address a range of social issues since it fosters individualism, creativity, and self-expression.

Individuals' lack of uniqueness and self-expression, particularly among young people, is one of the most significant problems that open-style dancing can address. In today's culture, people are frequently required to adhere to strict regulations and expectations, which results in a lack of creative outlets and opportunities for self-expression. Open-style dancing, on the other

hand, enables individuals to let go of these constraints and express themselves freely and artistically. Dance education "has the ability to nurture creativity and imagination, build self-esteem, and promote overall health and wellness in children," according to the National Dance Education Organization (NDEO) (NDEO, 2017).

In addition, problems about ethnic diversity and acceptance can be addressed through the use of an open style in dance. It is crucial to promote cultural acceptance and understanding given the rising number of people from many backgrounds and cultures. Open Style in dance offers a venue for people from many cultures to interact and freely and creatively express themselves, fostering cross-cultural understanding. According to the International Journal of Education and the Arts, a study found that "dance can play a vital role in fostering intercultural understanding and respect since it enables people to communicate via shared experiences and creativity" (International Journal of Education and the Arts, 2016).

Additionally, Open Style dance can assist with mental health issues. Dancing gives people a way to express their emotions and de-stress, which has been found to benefit mental health. Dance "may help enhance mood, reduce anxiety, and increase general well-being," claims a study from the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) (NIMH, 2019).

Furthermore, Open Style dancing offers an expressive and creative outlet with the potential to address several social issues, including a lack of creativity and self-expression, cultural diversity and acceptance, and mental health.

Body Dysmorphic Disorder

Body dysmorphic disorder (BDD) is a serious mental health condition characterized by a persistent and distressing preoccupation with perceived flaws or defects in one's appearance, despite others often not noticing or considering them to be minor (NIMH, 2020). BDD can have significant impacts on a person's daily life, including causing significant distress, reducing the quality of life, and leading to social isolation and unemployment (NIMH, 2020). Unfortunately, BDD is a relatively under-recognized and under-diagnosed mental health concern in the Philippines, where physical appearance is highly valued (Valdez, 2017).

The exact cause of BDD is not known, but it is believed to be a result of a combination of biological, psychological, and environmental factors. Risk factors for BDD include having a family history of the condition, a history of anxiety or depression, and being subjected to criticism or teasing about appearance during childhood or adolescence (NIMH, 2020). BDD is also associated with the overactivity of certain brain regions involved in processing and interpreting information about the body and with imbalances in brain chemicals called neurotransmitters (NIMH, 2020).

To overcome BDD, it is important to seek professional help from a mental health provider who specializes in treating the condition. Evidence-based treatments for BDD include cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), medication, and a combination of the two (NIMH, 2020). CBT can help individuals with BDD to challenge negative thoughts and beliefs about their appearance and learn new, more positive and realistic ways of thinking about their bodies (NIMH, 2020). Medications, such as selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), can help to alleviate symptoms of anxiety and depression that often accompany BDD, and can also help to reduce obsessive thoughts and behaviors (NIMH, 2020).

In addition to seeking professional help, individuals with BDD can also adopt healthy coping strategies to manage their symptoms. These may include practicing mindfulness, focusing on self-care and self-compassion, and engaging in physical activities such as exercise or yoga that can help to improve body image and boost self-esteem (NIMH, 2020). Surrounding oneself with supportive friends and family and seeking support from a support group or peer network, can also be beneficial (NIMH, 2020).

In the Philippines, raising awareness about BDD and destigmatizing seeking help for mental health concerns is crucial. Educating students and adults about the symptoms and effects of BDD can help to reduce the shame and embarrassment that people with the condition may experience and encourage them to seek help if needed. Providing information about local mental health resources, such as community counseling centers, hotlines, and support groups, can also be beneficial for individuals with BDD and their families. Furthermore, discussing BDD in the context of media and cultural norms can be a useful way to raise awareness and promote healthy body image. By promoting critical media literacy and encouraging people to challenge unrealistic beauty standards, it may be possible to reduce the prevalence and impact of BDD and other body image-related mental health concerns in the Philippines.

In conclusion, body dysmorphic disorder is a complex condition that can have significant impacts on a person's daily life. However, with appropriate treatment and self-help strategies, it is possible to overcome BDD and improve one's mental health and well-being. Raising awareness, destigmatizing seeking help, promoting healthy body image, and providing access to appropriate mental health resources can all play a role in addressing BDD in the Philippines.

Social Media and Body Dysmorphic Disorder

Insecurities are a widespread problem that can come from a variety of reasons, including societal and cultural beauty standards that are largely impacted by social media. Social media platforms have been related to greater levels of anxiety, depression, bullying, and poor body image among young people, according to a study conducted by the Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH) and the Young Health Movement (YHM) (RSPH, 2017).

According to Dr. David Veale, a BDD consultant psychiatrist, the rise of social media and its impact on people's fears and self-esteem is a concerning issue, continuing a cycle of comparison and feelings of inadequacy, which can contribute to the development of BDD (Veale, 2017). A study by the University of California, Irvine, also found that people who spend more time on social media are more likely to experience symptoms of BDD and body dissatisfaction (University of California, Irvine, 2018).

The impact of societal and cultural standards, as well as social media, on people's fears and body image, is very strong in the Philippines. According to a Kantar Media and Beauty Philippines survey, Filipino women are under pressure to comply with specific beauty standards, which they often get through social media and the media in general (Beauty Philippines, 2018). According to the University of the Philippines-Manila, the prevalence of BDD in the Philippines is higher than in other nations, with an estimated 1.7% of the population suffering from the disorder (University of the Philippines-Manila, 2019). Celebrities and social media influencers play a big role in propagating beauty standards and promoting a specific image and lifestyle, which contributes to the development of BDD, and other body image issues.

In summary, the influence of societal and cultural standards, as well as social media, on people's fears and body image is a major issue both globally and in the Philippines. Raising

awareness about the hazards of unattainable beauty standards and their influence on mental health, particularly the development of BDD, is critical.

Teasing and Bullying in Filipino Households

Children's concerns about their appearance and looks have long been associated with Filipino homes, in part because of the culture's emphasis on physical attractiveness. This frequently results in comments from Filipino parents or family members about a child's weight, skin tone, or other physical characteristics, which can cause feelings of insecurity and humiliation in the child. A typical cultural practice that can aggravate feelings of inadequacy and self-consciousness is making fun of someone based on their weight and acne.

A research by the Ateneo de Manila University found that Filipinos, in particular, place a "strong emphasis on physical appearance" (Caringal, 2019). According to the study, body shaming and negative self-image are particularly common among children and young adults as a result of this emphasis on looks. Furthering feelings of insecurity and inadequacy is the fact that "teasing and ridicule over physical appearance is prevalent in Filipino society" (Caringal, 2019).

Another study indicated that "Filipino adolescents who encounter weight teasing have worse self-esteem and body satisfaction, and are at greater risk for depression and anxiety," according to a report in the *Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Nursing* (Santos, 2016). The study underlines the necessity for parents and families to exercise caution when making comments on children's appearance and bodies, as well as the detrimental impacts of mocking and bullying motivated by physical appearance.

In realization, because of the cultural emphasis on physical appearance and the widespread practice of teasing and ridiculing based on weight and acne, Filipino households may contribute to children's concerns about their looks. By avoiding critical remarks and encouraging self-acceptance and self-love instead, parents and families can play a significant role in fostering positive body image and self-esteem in children.

Review of Related Works

This section of my study will be citing a series of dance films related to either the general topic of this research which is the role of dance as a social commentary, or the film style,

technique, and approach to be used in the dance visual output. The listed works will be analyzed through the techniques, colors, styles, and aesthetics which will help in providing a visualizer for the project.



"Don't Blink" is a captivating dance short film directed by Shim Mellord Abrio, delving into the concept of societal monsters born out of bullying. These metaphorical "monsters" manifest as masked dancers, disrupting the main dancers in each segment. Each monster embodies the insecurities felt by the protagonists during their dance performances, mirroring their movements and disturbing their mental equilibrium. The film also conveys the theme of escape from these monsters. Initially, the main character is depicted standing at the edge of an empty sea, contemplating self-destruction. However, as the film progresses, it becomes apparent that these monsters exist solely within his mind. In a powerful conclusion, the protagonist resurfaces from his internal struggle, submerging and silencing his monsters. The film effectively utilizes intricate dancing and expressive choreography, framing the struggle faced by individuals. It sheds light on the potential of dance as a means to address and combat bullying, a pervasive social issue affecting children and teenagers worldwide.



"Affinity," directed by Allen Grutas, a talented content creator specializing in dance films and concept videos, explores the theme of embracing freedom without separation. The short dance film revolves around a blindfolded boy walking along the riverbanks, nearly slipping until another boy intervenes and stops him. In the initial half of the film, the choreography showcases constrained and limited movements, symbolizing the process of establishing a connection between the two boys. As the choreography progresses, it transitions into more liberated and fluid movements. Eventually, both boys remove their blindfolds, and the film concludes with a thought-provoking quote, "Find freedom through the bond."

The film employs warm earth tones as a contrast to the dancers' attire, adding a focal element to the visual composition. The natural scenery, featuring riverbanks and grasslands, further enhances the overall ambiance and setting of the film.

A compelling analysis of the film can be approached through the lens of queer theory. "Affinity" explores the bond formed between two boys, while acknowledging the societal constraints represented by the blindfolds. As they establish their connection and remove the blindfolds, they come to realize their shared identity. However, the presence of stigma is depicted as the protagonist clings tightly to his blindfold, trembling with uncertainty. This exploration falls within the realm of dance as a social commentary, as it sheds light on the stigma and discrimination faced by the LGBTQIA+ community in contemporary society.

Through its nuanced storytelling and choreography, "Affinity" provides a powerful commentary on the struggles, bonds, and discrimination faced by individuals in the LGBTQIA+ community, making it an addition to the genre of dance as a form of social commentary.



"I Won't Complain," directed and choreographed by Larkin Poynton and performed by Chibi Unity, is an impactful dance video that serves as a commentary on the destruction, pollution, and degradation of our planet, Earth. The intrinsic choreography seamlessly aligns with the accompanying music, resulting in a visually moving and dramatic piece. From thoughtful direction to meticulous choreography and costume design, all visual elements harmoniously converge to captivate the audience's attention.

The dance video "I Won't Complain" exemplifies how dance can effectively serve as a form of social commentary. It addresses the pressing environmental issues caused by human activity, presenting a stark portrayal of the planet's decline. The execution of color and cinematography is commendable, contributing to the overall impact of the piece. The dance video creates a powerful message that resonates strongly, leaving a lasting impression on viewers with its stunning and intense presentation.

Through its thoughtful choreography and visual storytelling, "I Won't Complain" not only entertains but also imparts a crucial message about the urgent need for environmental preservation. It exemplifies the potential of dance as a medium to engage and raise awareness about pressing social and environmental issues that affect our world.



"Tulong Para Sa Magsasaka," an exhibition piece by TPM showcased during the Vibe PH 2019 Competition in Manila, Philippines, is a dance performance that sheds light on the struggles faced by farmers and the urgent need for their support. The dance piece portrays the voicelessness of farmers who often find themselves unable to express their concerns due to prevailing circumstances and government policies. Through the medium of dance, the performers convey a profound and impactful message, relying on kinesthetics and movements to effectively communicate their narrative.

The performance of "Tulong Para Sa Magsasaka" exemplifies dance as a powerful form of social commentary. By specifically targeting and highlighting the issues faced by farmers in the Philippines, the dance piece becomes a platform for raising awareness and advocating for change. The emotional depth and meaningful messaging inherent in the choreography make a strong statement about the realities and challenges encountered by farmers.

Through their captivating performance, the dancers of "Tulong Para Sa Magsasaka" not only entertain but also strive to ignite conversations and prompt action on the pressing issues surrounding the agricultural sector in the Philippines. The power of dance as a means of social commentary shines through, offering a platform to amplify the voices of those who often go unheard.



"Kayumanggi" is a captivating dance visual that delivers a powerful message centered around body positivity and the celebration of brown skin. The message, "Kayumanggi ang aking kulay, Dugo ko'y Pilipinong Tunay, At Taas noo makikisabay," emphasize that being Kayumanggi (brown-skinned) does not equate to being unattractive. This dance visual aims to evoke deep thoughts and emotions, challenging societal beauty standards and highlighting the inherent beauty and perfection of every human being, regardless of skin color.

Nica Santos, the visionary behind "Kayumanggi," is an esteemed member of the Philippine Dance Community who consistently employs dance as a powerful medium to express her beliefs and advocate for various social issues, including discrimination, sexism, violence, and more.

Through her artistry, she utilizes dance as a means to voice out her convictions and spark meaningful conversations within society.

The impact of "Kayumanggi" extends beyond its captivating visuals and choreography. It serves as a catalyst for introspection, urging viewers to question prevailing beauty norms and embrace the diversity of human appearances. By challenging stereotypes and promoting body positivity, the dance visual contributes to a more inclusive and accepting society.

Nica Santos, through her dedication to using dance as a vehicle for social commentary, showcases the transformative power of this art form. "Kayumanggi" stands as a testament to the ability of dance to inspire change, ignite conversations, and promote understanding and acceptance of all individuals, regardless of their physical attributes.

Results and Discussion

In gathering data, I utilized online video resources such as interviews, professional talks, and dance-related forums. These resources explored the ways in which dance can provide social commentary on various societal issues, the impact of body dysmorphic disorder on individuals, and its underlying causes. By analyzing these online videos, I aimed to address the research questions I had formulated.

The findings from the online video resources shed light on the true significance of dance in providing social commentary and its effectiveness in addressing societal issues. Additionally, they provided insights into how individuals diagnosed with body dysmorphic disorder navigate their daily lives. In these videos, I encountered dancers and individuals personally affected by the disorder, who shared their firsthand experiences and how it has transformed their lives.

I conducted this data-gathering process entirely online, utilizing Google and YouTube as the primary platforms. Below are the preliminary assessment results derived from these online interviews, documentaries, and talks:

Imperfect Me - the impact of body dysmorphic disorder

Imperfect Me - the impact of body dysmorphic disorder is a special report conducted by Sky News which was aired last May 25th, 2018. Eighteen-year-old Emily shares her battle with BDD, where makeup becomes her shield against the perceived flaws she despises. This disorder has taken a toll on her education, causing her to miss out on secondary school. Emily's story highlights the severe impact BDD can have on an individual's life, leading to thoughts of self-harm and suicidal tendencies. With the help of therapy and medication, Emily's condition shows signs of improvement.

In another part of London, Megan battles her demons brought on by BDD. Despite being an academically gifted student, her condition has limited her achievements and self-confidence. Leaving the house remains a daunting task, as she constantly worries about the judgmental gazes of others. Megan's story emphasizes the profound impact of BDD on an individual's emotional well-being.

Both Emily and Megan acknowledge the negative influence of social media on their perception of self-image. While platforms like Instagram and Facebook claim to prioritize user well-being, harmful content promoting distorted body ideals and dangerous practices still permeate these platforms. Discussions surrounding extreme diets and self-harm further exacerbate the struggles faced by individuals with BDD.

Body dysmorphic disorder remains a significant challenge, often leading to high suicide rates among those affected. The fear of being labeled as vain or misunderstood may prevent individuals from seeking help. However, as awareness grows and research progresses, it is our hope that more young people will receive early diagnoses, leading to effective intervention and improved outcomes. By understanding the struggles faced by those with BDD, society can foster empathy, support, and acceptance for individuals battling this debilitating disorder.

Living With Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDD) | Strangers In My Head

Le Yong's daily life revolves around her appearance. When he looks in the mirror, he sees a face that appears broad and short, but it constantly changes, leaving him uncertain about his true appearance. Approximately two-thirds of his day is consumed by thoughts about his face, causing him to feel upset, disappointed, and hopeless. Le Yong's struggle with body dysmorphic disorder has led him to believe that he is too ugly for the world, even contemplating ending his life as a result.

At the age of seventeen, Le Yong suffers from body dysmorphic disorder, a condition that causes him to perceive something abnormal or wrong with his face. To seek reassurance about his appearance, he checks the mirror up to fifty times a day, not to find comfort but to confirm his flaws. He compares his experiences to those who feel their hands are dirty, constantly washing them to ensure cleanliness, but never feeling satisfied. He sees himself as a mentally sick patient, someone with a distorted body image. He seeks validation from his mother, constantly asking if his face is okay due to the ever-changing perception of his appearance.

Le Yong's journey to overcome body dysmorphic disorder involves seeking professional help. By attending therapy sessions, he aims to reduce his compulsive mirror-checking, which has become an ingrained habit. The therapist explains that the more Le Yong checks his reflection, the higher the chance of receiving negative feedback, perpetuating his distress. As part of his treatment, his parents removed mirrors from their home, encouraging him to check less frequently.

The journey of Le Yong highlights the complexities and challenges of living with body dysmorphic disorder. His story underscores the need for greater awareness, understanding, and support for individuals grappling with BDD. By fostering empathy and acceptance, society can create an environment where those with BDD can find solace, pursue their dreams, and ultimately discover happiness and fulfillment in their lives.

Dance for Social Change | Alexis Lee Xin Tian | TEDxNUS

In today's society, performance art has emerged as a powerful medium to bring attention to and provoke thought on pressing social issues. Through dance, storytelling, and creative expression, performers can convey emotions and narratives that words alone often fail to capture. This video explores the transformative potential of performance art in addressing societal challenges and shedding light on topics that are often overlooked or stigmatized.

The speaker, Alexis Lee Xin Tian, shares a personal journey that began with ballet classes at a young age. While initially skeptical of the graceful art form, they discovered a newfound appreciation for dance during their secondary school and junior college years. Joining modern

dance and hip-hop clubs exposed them to different styles and the realization that both classical and street dance have A unique beauty.

The video highlights a student-led organization called "and said" that aims to surface social issues through performances. The organization staged a play titled "Every Singaporean Daughter" that shed light on the impact of everyday remarks and their long-lasting effects on women's identity. To promote the play, the organization created a dance cover that addressed relationship issues. The choreography and lyrics depicted physical and emotional abuse, sparking conversations that shifted the focus to real-life experiences of emotional and physical abuse among young people.

The speaker reflects on their personal experience supporting a friend who survived sexual assault. They witnessed the profound effects of performance art in giving survivors a voice and creating awareness of the lasting impact of sexual abuse. Performance art, such as dance, holds a unique power to provoke thought, elicit emotions, and leave a lasting impression on the audience. engaging individuals on an active and emotional level, it facilitates attitude changes that have a greater impact than mere awareness.

The power of performance art in addressing social issues is undeniable. Through dance and other forms of creative expression, performers can shed light on topics that are often overlooked or stigmatized. By evoking emotions and engaging audiences, performance art enables individuals to connect with social issues on a deeper level, transcending mere statistics and facts. It is through these powerful narratives that attitudes are shaped, conversations are sparked, and progress is made in building a more inclusive and empathetic society.

The preliminary findings from the online-video resources have shed light on the challenges posed by body dysmorphic disorder. These insights underscore the need for further research and exploration to deepen our understanding and develop effective strategies for support and intervention. By continuing to investigate these issues, we can make meaningful progress in addressing the mental health concerns faced by individuals with BDD and create a more empathetic and inclusive society. Furthermore, performance art, with its power to evoke emotions and engage audiences, can play a vital role in shedding light on social issues like BDD, facilitating conversations, and shaping attitudes. Through collective efforts, we can build a more inclusive

and empathetic society that supports individuals battling BDD and promotes their overall well-being.

Design Process

As a dancer, I have always held the firm belief that dance possesses a unique power to convey messages. Throughout my design process, I embarked on the creation of a dance film aimed at portraying the struggles faced by individuals struggling with Body Dysmorphic Disorder. By harnessing the expressive qualities of dance, I aimed to provoke a range of emotions and touch the hearts of viewers. However, it was not a simple undertaking, as I went through numerous considerations to ensure the short film's impact was both direct and thought-provoking.

One of the challenges we faced was the careful choreographic exploration of how to effectively communicate the concept solely through body movements, without relying on the crutch of vocal or spoken language. This choice allowed us to rely solely on the power of physical expression, enabling the movement to speak volumes and resonate deeply with the audience. It demanded meticulous attention to every gesture, every subtle movements, and every carefully choreographed sequence.

The pursuit of our goals necessitated several reshoots to attain the desired output. Each reshoot brought invaluable lessons, pushing us to refine our execution and further amplify the emotional impact of the dance film. The process was undoubtedly time-consuming and entailed substantial financial investment. However, I firmly believe that the dedication and resources invested will prove worthwhile as we approach the ultimate goal of my thesis: assessing the dance film's success in raising awareness about Body Dysmorphic Disorder.

The importance of raising awareness about this disorder cannot be overstated. Through the medium of dance, we have strived to shed light on the inner struggles and insecurities faced by individuals battling Body Dysmorphic Disorder. Our aim is to foster empathy and understanding among viewers, encouraging them to perceive beauty beyond societal constructs and embrace a more inclusive perspective.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis demonstrates that dance is not limited to the field of arts and entertainment alone. It possesses immense potential as a powerful tool for social commentary and advocacy. Dance emerges as an effective and impactful medium for social commentary on a wide range of societal issues. Its power lies in its ability to transcend language and communicate on an emotional level. Through its expressive and transformative qualities, dance challenges societal norms, encourages critical thinking, and fosters empathy and understanding.

Through non-verbal communication, dance has the ability to engage audiences on an emotional level, fostering empathy and understanding. By harnessing the language of movement and embracing its transformative nature, dance can effectively raise awareness about critical issues such as Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDD). By showcasing alternative narratives, challenging prevailing attitudes, and promoting alternative narratives, dance can initiate important conversations, dismantle harmful stereotypes, and contribute to positive social change.

As we continue to navigate an ever-changing world, it is imperative that we recognize and harness the potential of dance as a catalyst for positive social change, not only in the Philippines but across the globe. By nurturing and supporting the artistic voices of dancers and choreographers, we can create a more inclusive, compassionate, and harmonious society. By embracing the language of movement, challenging societal norms, and promoting empathy and understanding, dance can contribute to the dismantling of harmful stereotypes and the promotion of alternative narratives. As we move forward, it is crucial to continue exploring the intersection of dance, art, and social issues, recognizing the significant role that dance can play in promoting a more inclusive and compassionate society.

My journey as a dancer and an artist has been characterized by unwavering conviction in the power of dance as a medium for meaningful expression. The intricate process of crafting this dance film, from careful choreography to multiple reshoots, has reinforced the significance of art as a catalyst for change. With the realization of my thesis goal in the process, I eagerly await the opportunity to witness firsthand the impact of this film as it endeavors to raise awareness, inspire people, and spark a transformation in societal perceptions of Body Dysmorphic Disorder.

Recommendations

Research Topic

In my thesis, I recommend further investigation into the topic of the role of dance as a form of social commentary, specifically focusing on its potential impact on Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDD) and other social issues. To enhance the research's societal relevance, I recommend the following avenues for exploration:

First, expanding the scope of the study would allow for a more comprehensive understanding of how dance can address various mental health conditions and body image concerns. By incorporating a broader perspective, we can gain insights into the effectiveness of dance as a means of social commentary across a range of social issues.

Second, qualitative research methods such as interviews, focus groups, and participant observations should be employed to delve deeper into the experiences of individuals with BDD and related social issues. By understanding their perspectives and challenges, we can examine how dance can influence their perception and overall well-being, thus enriching the findings of the study.

Third, collaboration with dance professionals, choreographers, and dancers who specialize in using dance as a means of social commentary would greatly contribute to the research. By incorporating their expertise and experiences, we can develop effective dance interventions and strategies tailored to address the specific social issues under investigation.

Additionally, evaluating the long-term effects of dance interventions is essential. Follow-up studies can determine if the positive outcomes observed in the short term are sustained over time. This evaluation would provide valuable insights into the sustainability and effectiveness of dance in promoting social awareness and bringing about long-lasting social change.

Lastly, sharing the research findings through academic publications, conferences, workshops, and public engagement activities is crucial. Disseminating this knowledge can raise awareness about the potential of dance as social commentary and inspire other researchers, practitioners, and artists to further explore this field.

By implementing these recommendations, my research on the role of dance as a form of social commentary, particularly in relation to Body Dysmorphic Disorder, can be expanded. It will

contribute to addressing a wider range of social issues while promoting inclusivity, understanding, and positive societal change.

Creative Process

Throughout my experience in the creative process of making a short dance film, I encountered various challenges that prompted me to develop recommendations addressing issues related to scheduling, task planning, following a schedule, overcoming art blocks, managing time effectively, and balancing academics and personal life. Reflecting on my journey, I recommend the following strategies to enhance the overall process:

First and foremost, I recommend developing a comprehensive project schedule. Creating a detailed timeline that breaks down tasks into manageable sub-tasks and assigns realistic deadlines proved invaluable. I found that utilizing project management tools and apps can help to stay organized and effectively track progress. In addition, prioritizing self-care and maintaining a healthy academic-life balance is crucial. I discovered the importance of setting aside dedicated time for self-care activities, relaxation, and nurturing personal relationships. By striking this balance, I approached my creative work with renewed energy and a fresh mindset.

To overcome art blocks and stimulate my creativity, I immersed myself in activities that inspired me. Attending dance performances, exploring different art forms, and engaging in collaborative brainstorming sessions with fellow artists all proved to be invaluable sources of inspiration. I also found that incorporating techniques like dancing, meditation, and taking regular breaks allowed me to recharge my creativity and gain new perspectives.

Establishing a strong support system of peers, mentors, and fellow artists was crucial throughout my creative process. Their guidance, feedback, and encouragement were invaluable in overcoming challenges and fostering personal growth. Collaborating and sharing ideas within this network not only provide fresh insights but also created a sense of camaraderie and support.

Regularly reflecting on my progress and evaluating my strategies played a pivotal role in my creative journey. By critically assessing my strengths and areas for improvement, I was able to adapt my schedule, techniques, and approaches as needed. This flexibility and growth mindset were essential in navigating the creative process successfully.

Implementing these recommendations significantly enhanced my creative process in making a short dance film. Addressing scheduling challenges, managing time effectively, overcoming art blocks, and balancing academic commitments with personal life, can further help in having a more organized, productive, and fulfilling journey toward realizing an artistic vision. I encourage other artists to consider these recommendations as they go through their creative process, be it in dance or any other form of artistic expression.

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