Dancing from the Inside Out

Using design thinking to explore
the intersections of street dance,
social media, and self-identity
in Aotearoa

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Abstract

Street dance, derived from hip hop dance, is a vehicle for self-expression, connecting with others, understanding purpose, promoting confidence, challenging and improving oneself, and positively impacting participants' lives (Henderson, 2010). Beyond a form of physical activity, it holds much potential to influence self-identity.

Since the advent of YouTube in 2005, social media platforms—particularly YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram—have become central to street dance culture's production and consumption. These networked mediascapes have increased the culture's visibility, accessibility, participation, and provided a platform to share dance expression, join the international street dance community, as well as access or even create professional opportunities. The way street dance cultural flows circulate through social networking sites recursively shape and inform the culture itself.

Dancing from the Inside Out uses design thinking methods to investigate how engagement with street dance culture in networked spaces—where self-identity is performed, actively constructed, and negotiated—might impact an individual's relationship with street dance. Following empathy research, the project uses the Māori health and wellness model Te Whare Tapa Whā as an analytical framework, and identifies an opportunity to strengthen one's taha wairua, or spiritual wellbeing, concerning ideas around self-expression and understanding identity. These concepts are at the heart of street dance culture and promote identity development, though risk being overridden by emerging cultural practices that digitally networked spaces have shaped.

The project's design response takes the form of Hīkoi (Māori term meaning to step, stride, march)—the initiation of a movement starting in online social networking environments, in pursuit of the heart and soul of street dance. A practice-based design investigation, Hīkoi movement builds a narrative across Facebook and Instagram, and using video portraits, blog posts, and still images, that adhere to a manifesto, aims to inform and inspire Aotearoa street dancers about strengthening taha wairua, in the age of social media.

Acknowledgements

Introduction

Infinite Dance Crew in 2010

The intent of this Masters of Design is to explore design thinking processes as a means of strengthening Aotearoa street dancers' self-identity in the age of social media. This differs from the project's initial direction. Social media has created a multiplicity of opportunities for street dance culture, including the enablement of previously unavailable networking prospects. The project originally sought to leverage these possibilities and connect Aotearoa street dancers to greater professional opportunities. However, in critically analysing the various intersections of street dance and social media, and how these might affect an individual, it became apparent that a greater need might exist in responding to behavioural shifts within street dance culture since the introduction of new communication technologies. Subsequently, the project evolved to investigate possible consequences concerning an individual's self-identity.

The power of dance and its ability to inform self-identity is one I know firsthand. As a Pasifika female adopted into a Pakeha family, finding a sense of purpose and understanding has always been a personal struggle for me. I looked different to most of the children I grew up around, and though raised in a loving family, underlying issues stemming from my adoption motivated a need to find a sense of place. Dance was this space for me. In particular, the non-conformist style of street dance and its culture, resonated with my lived experience and encouraged discovery of purpose through dance expression. It grew my confidence, helped me feel a sense of belonging, and understand more about who I am.

I was actively part of the Aotearoa street dance scene for seven years. During this time I co-founded and coached Wellington based street dance crew Infinite, with whom I competed and performed all over the country and on the international stage. Today I am no longer actively involved in the culture, however I have sustained relationships with members of the street dance community, and continue to observe the culture via online platforms, and show support at various competitions, shows, and fundraisers. Through my various roles and relationships in the community, I have come to have a strong understanding of street dance culture. I have witnessed the exciting growth and development through the new opportunities available through social media, and also the changes in the way the culture operates, and how this might differ from rich opportunities dance has given me to develop my individual identity. I believe design can contribute to the development of street dance as the culture continuously evolves.

The various intersections of street dance and visual communication design have always been of interest to me. In earlier years this materialised as the likes of poster and t-shirt designs for street dance competitions and concerts, and later branding design for dancers and dance organisations. I have lived and worked in Los Angeles as a designer for a collective of YouTube choreographers Movement Lifestyle, which provided insights into the cultural practices of YouTube dancers, and a broader understanding of street dance culture in the US. My time in California also presented me with the chance to intern with nonprofit organisation Invisible Children in the wake of the Kony 2012 video being released—the biggest viral campaign in the history of the internet. This provided a fresh revelation of the potential of design to be used as a vehicle for social and cultural change.

Shifting from aesthetic value to the creative process, my interest in dance and design has evolved to be motivated by the potential design processes might have in contributing to street dance culture. I believe in the power of design to influence cultural change. This projects aims to explore this through the lens of street dance, and my position as a young Pasifika female, with experiences in visual communication design and the local and international street dance community, arm me with a unique array of perspectives in undertaking this project.
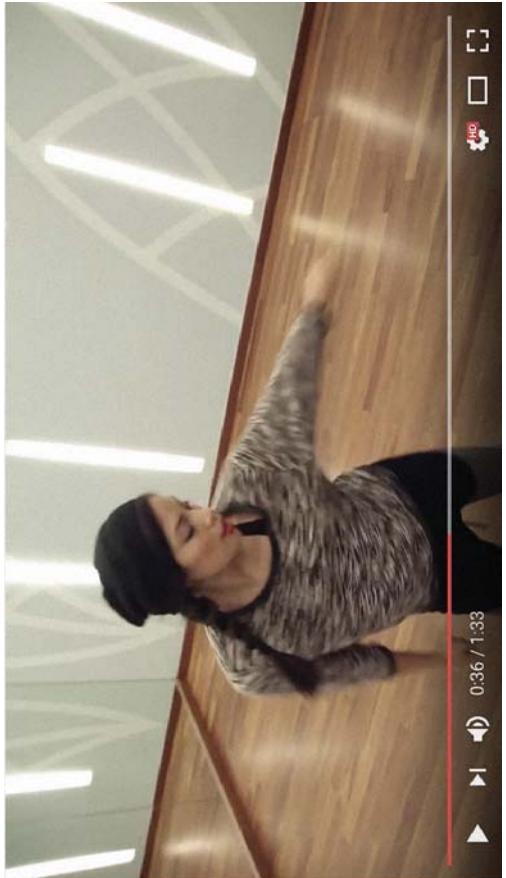
The body of the exegesis opens with an exploration of various occurrences at the intersection of street dance, social media, and self-identity. There is currently very limited literature with this focus; this research aims to contribute to an emerging body of knowledge in this field. As such, a contextual foundation for the project is formed by weaving together texts from hip hop and street dance literature, popular culture and new media, and self-identity, inviting further investigation and focus through design thinking processes.

Design thinking is presented as a form of inquiry to grow understanding of street dance culture in order to produce empathy-informed solutions. It is employed through the use of the Double Diamond model (Design Council, 2006), constituted by four convergent and divergent phases: Discover, Define, Develop, Deliver. As part of this process, qualitative research methods of immersion, observation, and engagement, are used to expand breadth and depth of understanding concerning a participant's behaviours, attitudes, and mindsets, as a member of the street dance community.

Te Whare Tapa Whā, the Māori health and well-being model, is identified as a suitable analytical framework for its holistic view of the self, and highlights strengthening street dancers taha wairua, (spiritual wellbeing) of as an opportunity for design response. Subsequently, the conception of Hīkoi, a movement aiming to strengthen dancers' taha wairua, is developed and iterated through design-led research. The project presents a manifesto, video portraits, blog posts, and a series of images created for social media, creating a narrative encouraging self-expression and the development of self-identity through dance movement. These are distributed through social networking sites, in the hope of recursively informing Aotearoa street dance culture.

The experience of releasing my own video on YouTube informed the change of direction for the project.

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Dancing from the Inside Out in its totality reflects the impact of social media changing how we communicate, participate, interact, and engage with cultures and people, and how we understand ourselves. In its broadest sense, social media is defined as any digital environment enabling interaction between its participants (Leppanen et al., 2014). The likelihood of these spaces hinge on the online activity of its users, where participants—previously relegated to the role of the passive consumer or audience—are actively engaged in production, and the dissemination and circulation of cultural flows. Interaction is also marked by the connectivity within the dialogic digital spaces, where participants are able to engage with one another. Such practices negate previous hegemonic communication structures, enabling new means of connecting within subcultures, and providing agency to grassroots movements. Hence, social networking sites increasingly and recursively inform how cultures operate. This project explores these notions firstly through the relationship of social media and street dance culture, and furthermore through social media and visual communication design.

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dance culture.

Aotearoa Street Dance Culture

The Aotearoa street dance scene today is a dynamic space of cultural production, consumption, and community for its participants. Stemming from its hip hop roots as a voice for otherness, the culture is one that embraces diversity, and particularly resonates with Māori and Pacific Island youth. Street dance in Aotearoa has experienced a large increase in participation in the last decade, which can be attributed to a rise in street dance competitions, continued international success by our dancers and crews, and most significantly, the new connectedness made available by social media.

As a geographically isolated country, socially networked mediascapes have enabled greater accessibility and visibility for street dance cultural flows, providing networking opportunities for dancers previously unavailable. Our most notable example of this is Parris Goebel, a young female choreographer from Auckland identifiable by her 'Polyswagg' style, who is highly sought after in the entertainment industry, and whose career started by posting dance videos on YouTube. Her company The Royal Family are perhaps the most recognised entity of Aotearoa street dance, however the national community operates out of a much wider body of studios and crews throughout the country, who continue to invest in the development of street dance and its participants.

Street Dance Origins

Street dance is derived from hip hop dance, which originated in Brooklyn, New York, in the 1970's. It was one of four elements of hip hop subculture, which was birthed as a voice of resistance and expression for otherness, predominantly black American and Latino youth. Hip hop was a way for minorities to deal with hardship and provided an alternative to gang violence. Underpinned by a system of knowledge and philosophy negotiated by its participants, it came to be an identity and a worldview (Morgan & Bennett, 2011). The culture is a way for youth to understand themselves, and positively impacts participants lives through embracing diversity, fostering community, being participant and youth driven, promoting confidence, and challenging and improving participants lives (Henderson, 2003). These values are reflected in street dance's non-conformist style, allowing freedom of expression by the dancer, who can continuously create new moves, but also have a new way to socialise within a group (Petracovschi, Costas,& Voicu, 2011).

Since hip hop's origins in the United States, street dance has spread around the world. Parallel to its hip hop counterparts, the culture represents a rich 'glocal' dialogue that mediates its American roots with local appropriations of a globally accepted model (Morgan & Bennett, 2011). Additionally, as a form of popular culture, it is woven between complex intersections of its subculture origins and dominant cultural appropriations within the global capitalist marketplace (Osumare, H. 2002). These transcultural convergences are reflective of the potpourri of ways in which street dance culture operates today. Though founded on non-conformist and underground values, its popularity within dominant culture has contributed to street dance often operating in a more formalised structure. Street dance today, contrary to its name, is often taught in dance studios, alongside styles such as ballet, jazz, tap, and contemporary dance. Participants may learn in open classes or workshops, or train with a dance crew—the membership of which can be achieved via an audition process.

Street Dance and Social Media

The internet has transformed the circulation of hip hop cultural flows, democratising distribution channels and empowering young people to share their ideas, expressions and experiences (Morgan & Bennett, 2011). Since the advent of YouTube in 2005, social media platforms (in particular YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) have become central to street dance culture's production and consumption. The ability for any street dancer with access to a digital camera and the internet—to upload videos of themselves dancing, and be viewed by anyone, anywhere in the world—has changed the way participants engage with street dance culture.

Social Media and Self-Identity

In The Language of Social Media: Identity and Community on the Internet, Seargeant and Tagg (2014) present sociolinguistic research from scholars and researchers examining the presentation of the self, and the negotiation of being a networked individual, in online spaces. Seargeant and Tagg offer discussions and varying views of how identity is defined, though in summary, sway towards identity being a fluid concept, pluralistic in nature, and one that is actively constructed and dialogically performed in online social media spaces.

As self-identity is actively constructed on social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, activity on social media becomes a form of impression management and projecting various facets of the self into digitally networked environments (DiMicco & Millen, 2007). Dancers can align themselves with various groups, affiliations and communities, as an act of self-presentation, and to symbolise cultural citizenship of street dance communities. 'Liking', 'favouriting', and 'sharing' videos is also a marker of personal taste (Burgess & Green, 2009). Through this activity, one is able to reveal not just who they are, but project who they may want to be, or how they think they should be seen by others (Seargeant & Tagg, 2014). As such, self-identity becomes informed by other individuals within dance networks. Posting dance videos may be more than an act of sharing self-expression, but a way to project the actual, ideal, and ought self, into the digital world.

Street Dance and Participatory Culture

The way in which street dancers are able to be active producers and consumers of video content represents what Henry Jenkins describes as 'participatory culture'. This notion stems from Jenkins' research in the early 1990's of fan and gaming culture, which identifies fans (readers) as active consumers of content, and active contributors to popular culture's livelihood, through engaging with online communities that connect, create, collaborate, and shape the flow of media (Jenkins, 2006). Shifting from a top down one-to-many communication hierarchy, Jenkins' work has been notable in identifying media users as having increasing influence within popular culture due to the networking capabilities of internet technologies.

Fig 1. Class footage
style dance video

Fig 2. 'Concept video'
style dance video

The production of dance videos capture movement in a variety of ways. This includes 'class footage' shot from the end of classes using selected groups of dancers, live dance performance or competition footage, and 'concept videos', used to describe videos using a form of storytelling in the video production to add meaning to the dance sequence. Concept videos often take on a cinematic quality and require a level of planning to achieve a higher level of production.

Videos are distributed and disseminated through the street dance community on social media networks. This can be achieved through video sharing platforms such as YouTube or Vimeo, however recent developments on Facebook have provided its own video sharing capabilities, removing the need to be redirected to other video sites. Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, can also be used to direct consumers of media to video content using teaser posts, announcements, or short clips from the dance video.

There's the heart of dance and then the social media version of dance where we strive to be seen on screen more so than getting down to an amazing song, where comments can make or break you (and neither is a good thing), where props are sought out more than performance (Suk, 2014).

Though stemming from fan and gaming culture, application of Jenkins' participatory culture theory is widespread. Jenkins (2006) defines participatory culture as "a culture with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civil engagement, strong support for creating and sharing one's creations, and some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known to the most experienced is passed along to the novices". This is exemplified by today's international street dance community, through which engagement with networked digital mediascapes, enables dancers' participation through sharing dance videos, receiving feedback, commenting, sharing knowledge and information, and connecting with and 'following' other dancers, from the global street dance community.

In Popular Culture and New Media: The Politics of Circulation, sociologist David Beer (2013) explores the complex interweaving of popular culture, new media, and the social and cultural contexts they exist within. Building on participatory culture theory, Beer highlights John Urry's notion of 'feedback loops', whereby data circulations—in this case dance videos—recursively feed back into the culture and influence the way it operates, and how it is viewed and engaged with by participants. It is these feedback loops that this project seeks to explore. The circulations of dance videos within street dance's mediatised networks has led to an increase in the culture's accessibility, visibility, participation, and professional networking opportunities. This project aims to investigate how such outcomes have recursively transformed engagement with street dance culture, with a focus on the networked individual.

The Networked Participant

If we view self-presentation on social media as an act of negotiating identity, we can see how one's understanding of the self might be shaped by interaction within participatory cultures. As street dance culture is closely linked to identity development, the increased cultural flows circulating through online street dance communities—giving rise to the culture's accessibility, visibility, participation, and professional networking opportunities—can largely impact how a dancer might understand themselves. For example, the number of 'likes', 'shares', 'retweets', and 'follows', in response to dance videos produced by an individual, can influence the dancer's sense of self. Strong online community support and popularity may encourage the pursuit of becoming a 'DIY celebrity' (Burgess & Green, 2009), where an individual is able to achieve fame and success from social media audiences. Conversely, low support from online affiliations and communities may leave a dancer feeling discouraged and disconnected.

While street dance is characterised by its social nature, interactions amplified by mediatised networking sites have the potential to draw value away from self-expression and identity development, from which the dance and culture was originally derived. Dancing from the Inside Out premises that the way dance videos—as representations and constructions of identity— recursively circulate through social networking sites and participatory cultures, has the potential to override the rich opportunities available to develop identity through the physical act of street dance. The project uses design thinking processes to explore this further and develop a design response.

Design Thinking

The term 'design thinking' has evolved from discussions in the 1960's identifying a desire for design to exist as a knowledge-based discipline, in order to better inform design practice. In his book The Sciences of the Artificial, Herbert A. Simon established a 'science of design' where he defined design as a "transformation of existing conditions into preferred ones" (Simon, 1969). This was pivotal in shifting the definition of design from a craft based skill into one that was a problem-solving, process-oriented activity, which underpins design thinking models today.

I appreciate design as a verb—an action word and an act of service, beyond a skill set in aesthetics. Though escaping a single unified definition, design thinking is generally used to describe a process that places people at the centre, and involves 'users' throughout design thinking modes to addresses 'wicked' problems through an iterative and action-focused approach. Its ability to interrogate complex situations in times of rapid technological change—affecting all tiers of how we live our lives—has increased design thinking's popularity over a broad range of sectors in the past decade, subsequently raising contestation in academic discourse for its broad-sweeping nature and slick tool kit appeal (Mootee, 2013). Despite this, it is the human centred approach at the core of design thinking that reasons its application for this project, valuing the people the design works to serve, and providing a framework for the investigation of the 'wicked' relationships at the intersections of street dance culture, social media, and self-identity.

Paralleled by the rise of participatory design, service design, experience design, social design, design thinking represents an increased emphasis on the importance of the connection between the design process and people or users, where the users' wants and needs are integral to the development of a solution. Empathy research to gain a greater understanding of the user, allows discovery of new insights to develop the design response. Additionally, involving users to test prototypes throughout the process also give further agency to design development to produce effective outcomes. This has been a key aspect of the project, where street dance participants' involvement have been valuable in moving the project forward.

The values and mindsets while engaging with the design thinking process are also characteristic of its approach and key to its success. According to Nigel Cross, the process is one that transforms abstract requirements into constructive responses, through thinking that is both practical and imaginative (Cross, 2011). His view alludes to the mindsets of the design thinking process as being intrinsic to the process itself. Embracing ambiguity, experimentation, being action orientated, holistic, iterative, collaborative, and fluid, are all important cultural values in using any design thinking approach, and have been adopted throughout this project's process. These values embody a reflexive practice, and have allowed for serendipitous occurrences through interactions with dancers, to guide and inform the design outcomes.

The Double Diamond model

This project embodies the design thinking process through the Double Diamond framework (Design Council, 2006). The model uses four distinct stages to represent two divergent and convergent modes of thinking: Discover, Define, Develop, and Deliver. These form the basis for the design-led research approach.

It is the human centred approach at the core of design thinking that reasons its application for this project, valuing the people the design works to serve.

Design Council Double Diamond model (2006)

Discover
Insight into
the problem

Define
the area to
focus upon

Develop
potential
solutions

Deliver
solutions
that work

Problem

Problem Definition

Design Brief

Solution
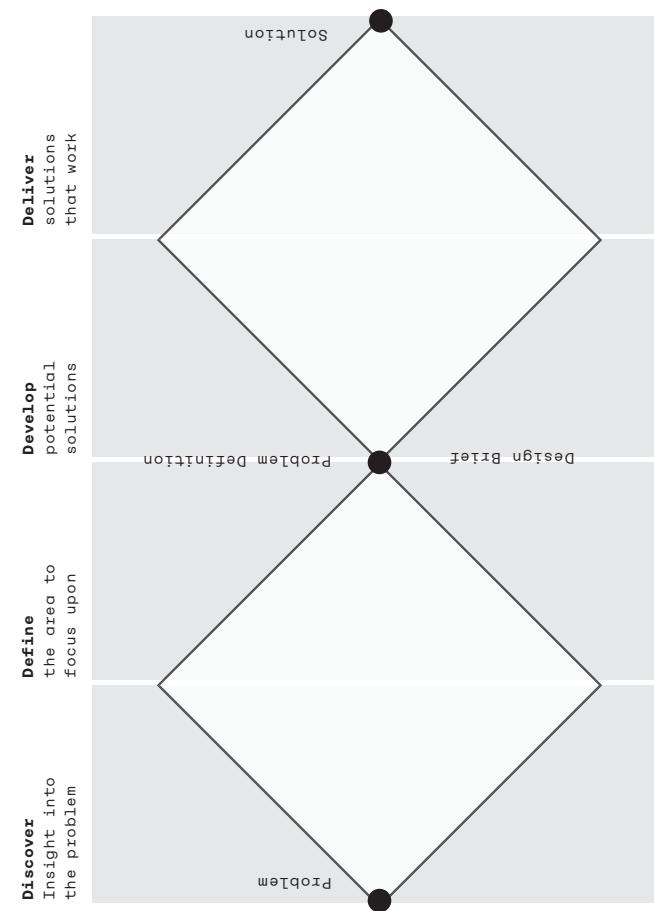
Discover

The beginning of the process is marked by a motivation to gain understanding. Divergent thought processes are employed to develop empathy and uncover new insights and information about the people concerned and their relationship to the situation being addressed. This project uses observation, immersion, and engagement, as a means to investigate and understand motivations, behaviours, and attitudes, at the intersection of street dancers, street dance culture, and social media.

Define

The process then shifts into convergent mode and is a phase of analysis and synthesis to bring focus and define the scope of the project. Sorting, sense-making, and identifying patterns highlight opportunities for the design response, and ideation processes and prototypes are used to test initial concepts.
This project uses the Māori wellbeing model *Te Whare Tapa Whā* as an analytical framework for findings from the Discover phase. Insights and ideas are then distilled into an actionable brief, marking the conception of Hīkoi—the initiation of a movement to encourage self-expression and understanding identity through dance.

Develop

With a sense of direction for the designed response, the Develop phase is an iterative and action-focused time of prototyping and testing to define how the solution will exist. This part of the project is used to extrapolate and develop the Hīkoi movement strategy and components, through a process of mind mapping and visualisations. Here, the manifesto, video profiles, and stills, are chosen as the Hīkoi components. Collaboration and engagement with the street dance community throughout this phase inform how the design response takes shape.

Deliver

The final stage of the process is where the designed response is finalised and released. This is marked by the completion of the initial components of Hīkoi, which are released on social media sites over time. Participant engagement is evaluated in order to inform how the solution might continue to evolve.
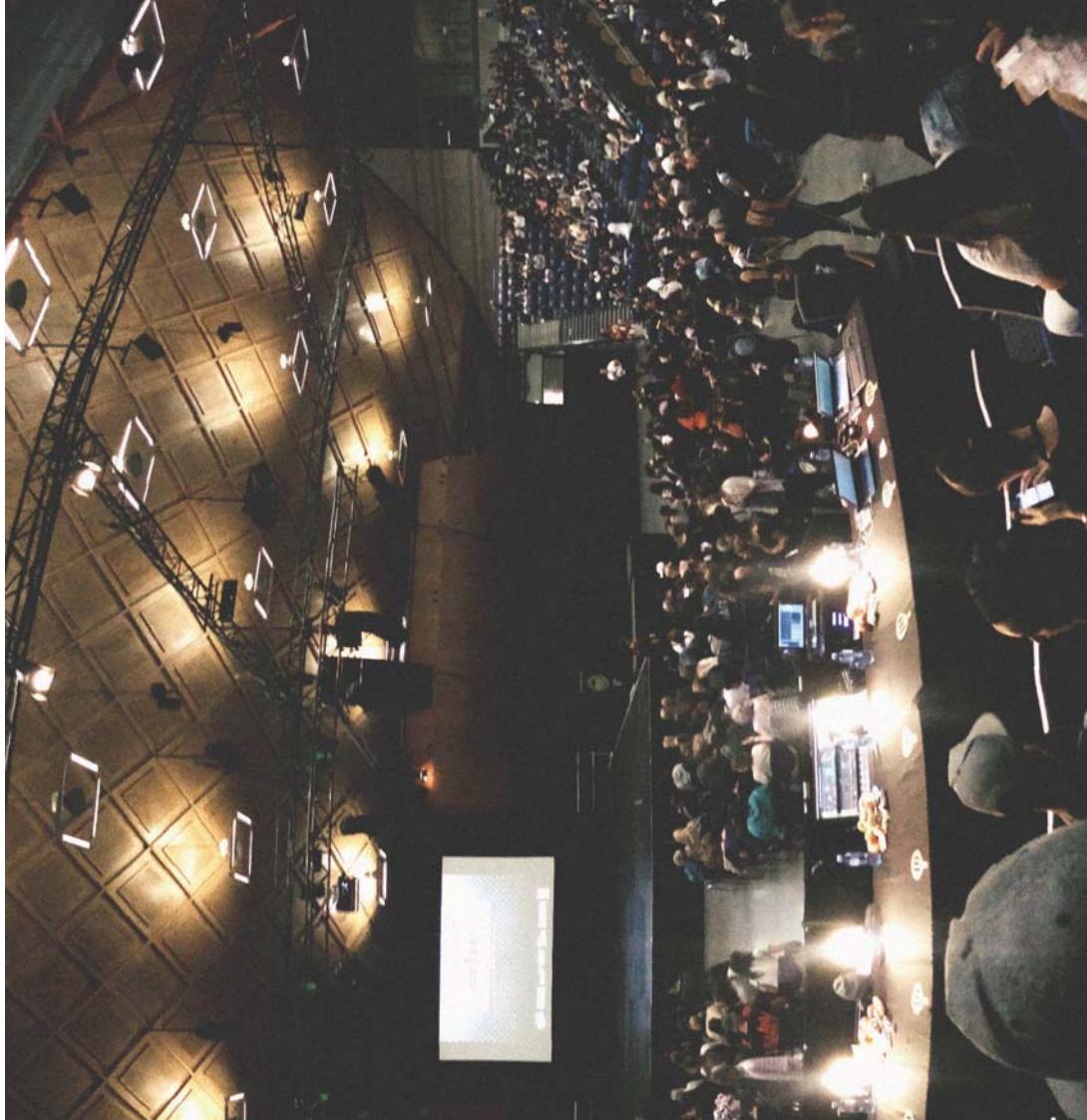
The beginning of the design thinking process was initiated by the Discover phase, to gather as much information as possible about occurrences at the intersection of social media, self-identity, and street dance. Aiming to increase knowledge in both breadth and depth, this first divergent phase of the project was about understanding. I had a level of knowledge shaped from my own experiences further informed by existing literature, however taking on a beginner's mindset and shedding any preconceptions became paramount to uncovering new insights and gaining an increased empathy for street dance culture and its participants.

Immersion, observation, and engagement were the qualitative research methods employed (D.School, 2010). The collection of data throughout this phase used a reflexive approach—the fluidity allowing findings to inspire curiosities and inform how further data might be collected. I aimed to broaden my understanding of the street dance environment at a macro level, though also discover insights specific to individual participants. The following design thinking methods hoped to unpack experiences, behaviours, perceptions, and attitudes, that shaped how participants understood themselves as individuals, and as members of the wider street dance community.

Immersion

Past experiences in the street dance community made immersing myself in environments of dancers a natural mode of inquiry. I attended community street dance classes as a participant, observing other students who excitingly engaged with mobile devices during and at the end of class to document and share the happenings of the evening with social networks. I attended street dance shows and competitions as an audience member, taking note of the camaraderie between the dancers, the sense of achievement and confidence gained through their movement, and the increase in online activity following dance events.

Observation

In addition to observations in physical street dance environments, I surveyed cultural activity on social networking sites, observing the various types of video, image, and text based content dancers shared of themselves, or of others, with their networks. Beyond presenting the self via content relating to street dance, sharing also marked support for friends within the community or dancers that participants looked up to. Production value, aesthetic, and rhetoric of the posts was also noted—the visual style mirroring access to quality production tools, though acknowledging its street culture positioning.

Sitting in the audience at the SDNZ New Zealand Hip Hop Dance Championships

Participating in street dance class with visiting Auckland choreographer Paul Wilson.

Engagement

A rich depth of understanding was also achieved through engaging with participants through semi-structured interviews. These were of much value, allowing in-depth conversations—the semi-structured nature of the interview enabling flexibility within the conversation to build rapport, and accommodating the participant in guiding or directing the conversation if a pertinent direction arose.

Four interviews were carried out. At this stage, I was still trying to grasp an overview of the wider street dance community and how it had been impacted by social networking sites. As such, interviews were conducted with dancers in a position of leadership within the community (i.e. teachers, choreographers), for their holistic view. Interviewees included local participants, as well as YouTube choreographers from the United States, for their observations and perspectives from international community experiences. The interviewees were Libby Calder and Anna Robinson, Jared Hemopo, Nathan Kara, and Mariel and Keone Madrid (Appendix C).

Findings

The immersion, observation, and engagement methods uncovered rich insights affirming the complex interwoven nature of street dance culture, social media, and self-identity. Themes from the data collection reinforced the centrality of street dance being a social activity, with much of its impetus and character driven by its youthful participants and youth culture, sustaining constant evolution and development. Cultural practices also asserted the centrality of social networking spaces to the distribution and circulation of street dance cultural flows.

Social media was largely perceived as a positive tool for its agency of community participation, cultural distribution, and professional opportunities. However, it was highlighted that these opportunities had also become problematic in that dancers could get "lost in chasing the fame", (K. Madrid, personal communication, November 11, 2015). Additionally, issues associated with 'likes', comments, and 'sharing' on social media sites were identified as affecting an individual's validation as a dancer, and subsequently could become a barrier to a positive street dance experience.

Concerning the physical execution of dance movement, an increase in accessibility to street dance videos via social media was largely attributed for an overall rise in technical skill. However, the saturation of dance videos was also identified as a potential barrier to dancers using movement as a form of self-expression and developing one's own individual style.

Though social networking sites are central to street dance cultural production and consumption, with a plentitude of dance video circulations, observations suggest there is limited online spaces for street dance discourse. Text based posts on Facebook from teachers and choreographers within the community occasionally expressed frustrations at the state of street dance culture, highlighting a lack of cultural knowledge and understanding that might contribute to the development of self-identity.

Patterns were also identified in participant behaviour in online street dance environments. Dance videos were consumed on both laptop and mobile devices, and Facebook and Instagram were identified as primary platforms for Aotearoa dancers to share videos of themselves, videos of friends within their networks, or videos of dancers that they looked up to. The engagement with online street dance culture had various levels of engagement, from quick scrolling through social media feeds, to leisurely hours watching dance videos online for both entertainment and inspiration.

Process: Define
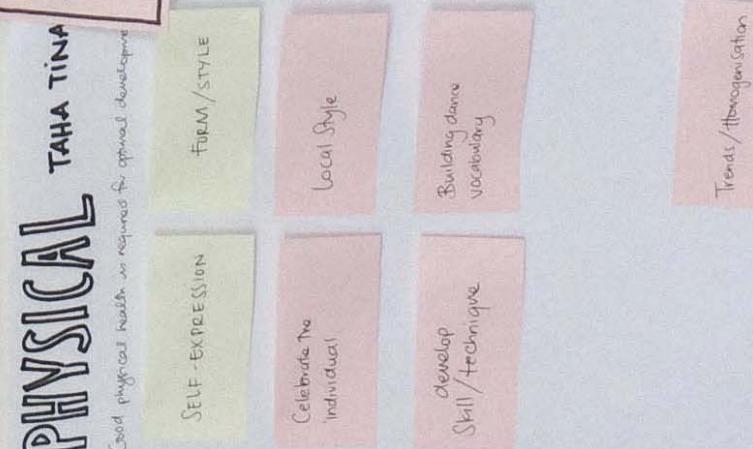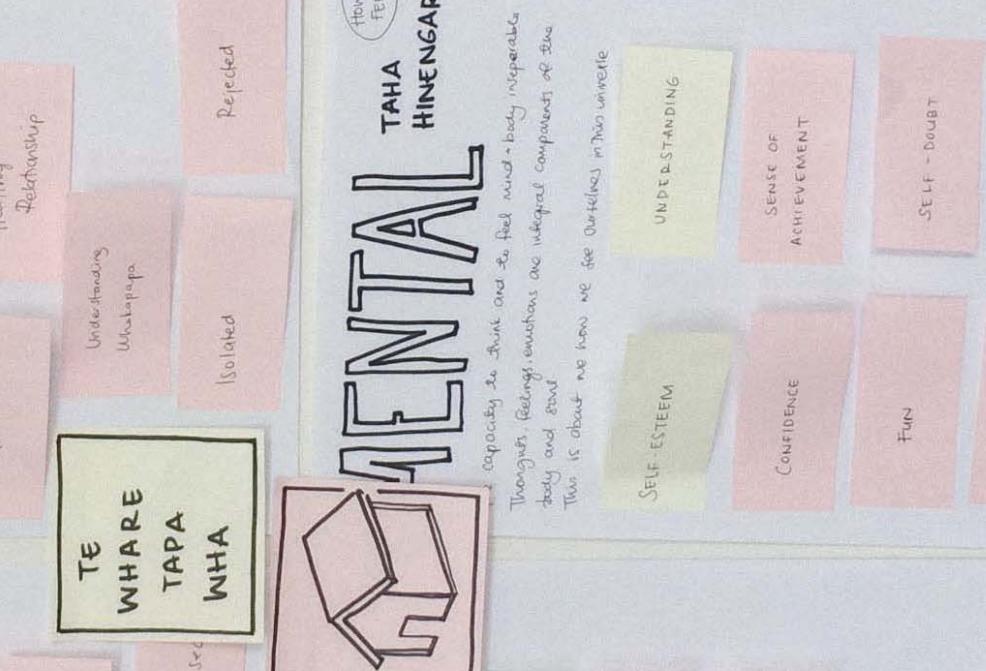
Using the qualitative research of the Discover phase, the project shifted into the Define phase, involving convergent thinking through a process of synthesis, analysis, sense-making, and distillation. The aim of this phase was to distill findings to an actionable design brief to move forward with and respond to.

The SLIP (sort, label, integrate, prioritise) technique (Maeda, 2006) was used to group data and identify overarching themes in relationship to an individual's engagement with street dance culture. Early iterations of this process attempted to draw from the pluralistic sociological self-identity definitions as a form of categorisation. However, this proved to be difficult. The notion that aspects of identity are at the disposal of the individual lacked clarity and structure needed for analysis. Additionally, a level of understanding the self—in a mental, emotional, or spiritual capacity—were heavily evident in the findings, but not in the identity definitions I had been exploring. A more holistic approach was discovered by looking within our own country, and drawing from an indigenous model: *Te Whare Tapa Whā*.

The Te Whare Tapa Whā model

The *Te Whare Tapa Whā* model was developed by Mason Drurie in 1982 as a framework for Māori health and well-being (see Fig 3). It provided a unified theory of health from a Māori perspective, beyond Western biomedical approaches that failed to recognise immeasurable aspects of well-being. Today the model has become widely used in New Zealand, achieving 'paradigm' status, providing a Māori perspective in a variety of contexts (Glover, 2005). It is based on the four walls of the Māori meeting house, the wharenui, each wall representing a cornerstone of Māori health. These are taha wairua (spiritual well-being), taha tinana (physical well-being), taha whanau (social well-being), and taha hinengaro (mental/emotional well-being). The wharenui metaphor illustrates the interdependency of each of the cornerstones of Māori health, for overall stability.

The *Te Whare Tapa Whā* model was adopted in this project for its holistic perspective, reflective of the all encompassing potential for street dance to simultaneously develop all dimensions of the self (Graham, 2002). Utilising Drurie's model as an analytical framework allowed for identification of the respective presence or strength of the four *Te Whare Tapa Whā* dimensions in

Fig. 3. Mason Drurie's Te Whare Tapa Whā
Māori health and well-being model
(1982)

taha hinengaro
mental/emotional
well-being

taha whanau
social well-being

taha wairua
spiritual well-being

taha tinana
physical well-being

the discourse of participants. Analysis of the data suggested that while the physical, social, and mental and emotional aspects of dance are commonly taught and understood within street dance culture, the spiritual dimension of street dance is not as explicit.

Taha Wairua: Spiritual Well-being

Taha Wairua, or spiritual well-being, relates to a person's life force, and the connection of self and spirit to others and the environment. It concerns the values and beliefs that shape how people live, and self-awareness of meaning, purpose, and personal identity. ("Well-being, hauora," n.d.). In relationship to dance, Thorp (2011) posits:

Spirituality, in its most basic form, is the deep, conscious connection to the self through awareness...and the lived experience of movement. From this starting point, all the other connections to other people, the supernatural and the environment stems. Dance is a way to attune to, focus on, and experience this connection. (p. 59).

This conscious intent brings purpose and meaning to movement beyond physical execution, and can 'elevate' the overall movement as the dancer is more 'in tune' (Thorp, 2011). For the sake of this exegesis, street dancers'z taha wairua concerns ideas of consciously understanding or developing identity through movement. It also relates to an awareness of the relationship of the self to other dancers, space, and the greater street dance community, developing a sense of place and purpose.

The focus for the design enquiry became to strengthen street dancers' taha wairua, to support self-identity development through engagement with street dance culture. It was hoped that through a strong spiritual connection with street dance, a dancer might increase in finding a sense of place and purpose, less influenced by amplified social interactions within digital dance networks. These insights were used to create character profiles within the street dance target audience: a point of view statement was also developed as a distillation of the context, audience, and insights. The project then shifted into the ideation phase.

Early Ideas

As I moved into ideation, the ever broadening definition of visual communication design was embraced with open arms. A 'blue sky thinking' approach and rapid ideation processes encouraged a broad range of ideas that hoped to strengthen street dancers' taha wairua. Themes of inspiration, education, and self-reflection, emerged as possible vehicles for the transformation. The challenge remained however, in how the spiritual dimension of movement could explicitly be expressed. I felt contemporary dance did this well, and turned to its practice for inspiration.

Early prototypes
inspired by
contemporary dance
to develop street
dance choreographic
practice

Early prototype
testing
collaborative
choreographic
practice

A recent documentary Dancing in the Now (Samaya, 2015) describes contemporary dance as "a visual language for an internal world", that navigates a "labyrinth beyond time and space". Borrowing from its improvisation techniques that empowered a personal relationship with movement, my first prototypes aimed to facilitate choreographic activity for street dancers. I hoped to encourage street dancers to think about movement differently, to break free from familiar choreographic practice, and to deepen the understanding of movement as a form of self-expression.

I ran a series of workshops with individual dancers using a series of choreographic exercises I had developed. The response from the workshops' participants were positive; the dancers found it mind-opening, discovering purpose within movement beyond shapes and style. Though I enjoyed this direction, the nature of the workshops felt contrived—the structure and individual format of the exercises disparate from the organic and social essence of street dance origins. I explored a variety of possible avenues to develop the project, however decided to focus on developing messaging to inspire dancers with ideas central to taha wairua.

Just as cultural flows that circulated through social networks had recursively transformed street dance culture, I was curious as to how I might also use the very infrastructure that had created impetus for the project, to distribute ideas central to strengthening dancers' taha wairua. I developed the idea of initiating a movement on social media, promoting the power of dance as a vehicle for self-expression and a means of understanding self-identity.
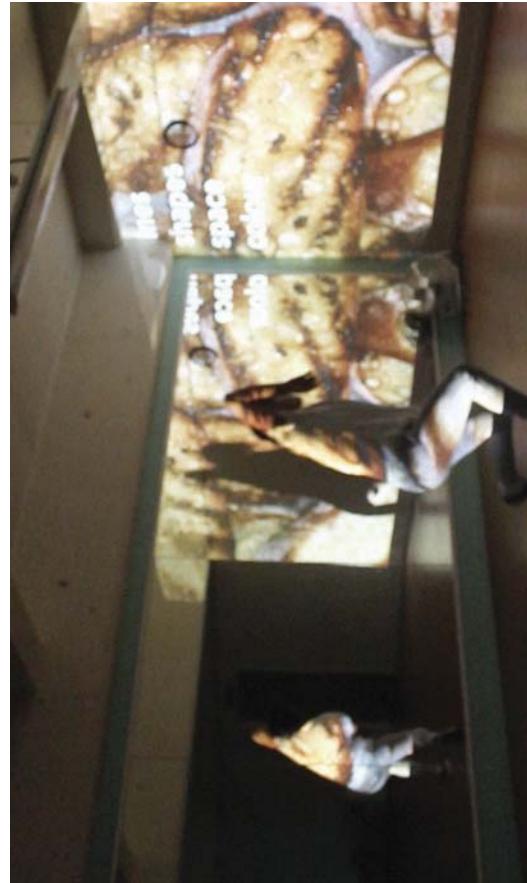
Process: Develop

Preparing to start a movement

Movement in this context, not to be confused with the physical act of moving, is defined as "a group of people working together to advance their shared political, social, or artistic ideas" (Oxford Dictionary, n.d.). Elements of a movement include a narrative describing its ethos, a connection between leaders and members, and an zzzopportunity for members to contribute (Godin, 2008). Responding to insights of the Discover and Define Phases, I developed a vision of a united body of dancers understanding the power of street dance to strengthen an individual's sense of identity, and bring a new consciousness of purpose to their dance practice. Using social media as means of message dissemination and connecting people of shared values, I hoped the movement might inform, inspire, and empower participants of the rich spiritual opportunities dance presents as a form of self-expression, creating meaning, and understanding a sense of place.

The name Hīkoi

Hīkoi was chosen early on as a name for the movement, and is a Māori term meaning to step, stride, or march. It is commonly used in association with travelling protests, regarding the indigenous rights of Māori, addressing issues such as the Treaty of Waitangi, and Māori land rights, language, culture, and racism. I have chosen to use Hīkoi primarily for its literal translation, and its relationship to the physical act of moving and the steps within dance. Secondly, its political connotations resonate with the cultural positioning of the movement, taking a stand to reclaim some of the values of street dance from which it originated. Finally, using a Māori term was important to me. I wanted to acknowledge the indigenous Te Whare Tapa Whā framework from which the movement developed, and also ground Hīkoi as being from Aotearoa, in an internationally connected community.

My role as a designer became to initiate the Hīkoi movement, to build and transmit the narrative of its ethos, and begin to facilitate a way for street dancers to follow and become a part of the conversation. The first objective of the Develop Phase was to advance the vision of the movement into tangible outcomes that might appeal to participants and exist in a manner conducive to the social media platforms they would exist in.

Fig. 4. Hikoi Strategy

high level
engagement

blog posts

Manifesto

video portraits

still images

low level
engagement

Strategy

A strategy was developed to respond to street dancers' behaviours on social media. Mind mapping and visualisation techniques were used to generate concepts in response to "How might we?" provocations centred on participant behaviour and the varying levels of time and engagement on social media platforms. For example, "how might we engage a dancer that briefly checks Instagram on a break at rehearsal, or Facebook while waiting a couple of minutes for the bus?" Conversely, "a dancer might spend hours in the evening at home on their social networking sites, watching and sharing dance videos of their peers or favourite choreographers from around the world—how might we use this time to inform, educate, and inspire them?"

In order to address these varying levels of engagement, a number of ideas were tested and chosen to initiate Hikoi. The first concept to take through to prototyping was the idea of short video portraits telling the stories of dancers from around Aotearoa, aiming to communicate the strength of their taha wairua. These would hope to encourage dancers to reflect on their own spiritual well-being in dance. The second concept to respond to low level engagement and reduced time was a series of still images, using image and text to build the Hikoi ethos. Additionally, to address opportunities for high level engagement with greater time and concentration, was the concept of blog posts, enabling leaders of the street dance community to discuss issues within the street dance community. The final constituent part would be a manifesto, encapsulating the essence of the movement, and outlining Hikoi's values and direction. Ideas for a manifesto video and brand video to contribute to the Hikoi narrative were also developed through to production stages, but were later disregarded due to time constraints of the project. The following section discusses the development of the strategy's components (see Fig. 4). Responding to primary platforms used by Aotearoa street dancers, the social media sites I have chosen to use for Hikoi are Facebook and Instagram. For a coherent online voice a Twitter presence would also be established, however this is secondary, as Twitter is not perceived to be as heavily used in Aotearoa as street dance communities in other countries.

Bringing Hikoi to life

Bringing each of the constituent parts of Hikoi to life was achieved through an iterative process of prototyping, testing, and evaluating. Against my natural tendency, I worked to engage with the production process in a fluid and agile manner, embracing change, ambiguity, and the 'fail fast' mentality. As a Masters research project, a collaborative approach was limited, however I was able to draw from others' video skills in creating the video portraits, and also involve friends, colleagues, and members of the street dance community, for testing and feedback on prototypes. Though the following is discussed in neatly titled sections, the process was very non-linear, and each of the components were developed concurrently—the learnings from each iteration informing the progress of its counterparts.

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Developing Hikoi
look and feel

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Writing the Hikoi Manifesto

Developing the initiation of a movement required understanding its exact values, beliefs, and direction. I had a general idea of Hikoi's ethos, and as such took to writing a manifesto to explicitly draw out, articulate, and distill concepts around a dancer's taha wairua. It challenged me to capture the essence of the movement, and create a narrative that would resonate with street dancers. Multiple iterations evolved its messaging, rhetoric, and tone of voice—how outspoken or passive it might be, its use of language, and how much the movement might point finger at the state of street dance culture, versus an ideal future.

As iterations were developed, I was inspired by social activist rhetoric, a tone that resonates and appeals to anti-establishment attitudes held by informed youth upset with the status quo. Though not as politically loaded as examples such as KONY2012 campaign, #BlackLivesMatter, and Occupy Movement, I liked the idea of a voice with a determined presence, and worked to embody this through the iterations of the Hikoi manifesto and its components. I was also influenced by sports advertising rhetoric, which often inspire through ideas of challenging one to become better, relating to street dance mentality of self-improvement. Drawing on these, I decided to take a strength based approach with much of the movement's messaging, and aimed to inspire street dancers through the opportunities of what dance could be. The manifesto in this way hoped to be a timeless story, and an outline of values of Hikoi regardless of the state of street dance culture.

Developing the Video Portraits

An emerging theme from the strategy development was the desire to create meaning and a sense of connection, as these are core to participants engaging with social media to fulfil social needs. Storytelling achieves this well. Building on the innate need as social beings to feel connected to others, it cuts through the myriad of messages in our fast-paced and technologically integrated lives. As described by author and director Paul Auster (as cited in Fog, 2003):

Telling stories is the only way we can create meaning in our lives and make sense of the world. We need them in order to understand ourselves and communicate who we are. And by sharing stories of our experiences, we can better understand the conflicts of our daily lives and find explanations for how we fit into this world. (p. 18)

A successful example of this on social media is Brandon Stanton's Humans of New York. What started as a photography project aiming to capture 10,000 of New York City's inhabitants (Stanton, n.d.), has become an international success, boasting over 17 million followers on Facebook, who follow snapshots of the everyday lives of strangers in the vibrant city. A typical post includes a photograph of the subject, along with a few lines from an interview with Stanton that provides a personal insight into their lives. Despite the portraits being criticised as "vectors of how young, white New Yorkers see them" (D'Addrio, 2014), the photos exude an honesty and vulnerability that draws the viewer in, and the stories often reveal intimate details of the subject's life that one might only know after years of friendship. The presentation as a story creates meaning, and has successfully moved millions of people to share a pondering of our humanity with their social networks.

Insights from the earlier Discover phase revealed street dancers often looked up to other dancers and choreographers from the community as their inspirations, idols, and role models. Drawing from Humans of New York, and additionally from the video format dancers are familiar with, I developed the idea of telling the taha wairua stories of dancers from within the community. Aligning with the grassroots ethos of Hikoi, the portraits hoped to explicitly express the values of the movement, by using youth to inspire other youth. This aimed to encourage dancers to reflect on their own taha wairua in dance, and increase awareness of the opportunities available through the spiritual dimension.

In developing the framework for the videos I stumbled upon a series called One Minute Wonders: one minute videos showcasing various creatives within their studio. Despite following a fairly rigid and simple structure throughout the series—entering their studio, the interview shot, decor close ups—I was drawn to how markedly different their stories were. The varying personal symbols and signifiers within their videos, along with their interview answers, provided a rich snapshot of the creative's identity. This informed the development of a simple narrative for the Hikoi portraits.

As a novice in video production, developing the videos beyond storyboards required much preparation and rapid up-skilling. Visualisation exercises and storyboarding, in addition to initial camera tests in the dance studio to test shots and angles, were evolved to establish how the narrative would unfold.

Early prototypes both in front of and behind the camera, allowed me to test interview questions, try various video and audio production tools and techniques, and consolidate a shot list that would successfully capture the dancer of the portrait in a way that might support their taha wairua narrative. As representations of identity, I wanted the videos to feel honest and authentic, presenting a realness that shifted beyond the visually dynamic shapes of street dance movements.

Once I had a solid prototype, I contacted a number of dancers who I perceived as embodying the values of Hīkoi, to shoot the final profiles. Filming in Wellington, Auckland, and Christchurch, each dancer was given the same briefing, asked the same interview questions, and followed a similar structure for the shoot. This consisted of filming in the dancer's home environment, dance studio environment, with a traveling scene in between. I worked with different videographers in each city, using a shot list and references for consistency, though also capturing any extra shots we thought might add extra texture to the dancer's narrative. My role by this stage of production was to be director and producer, though building rapport and working collaboratively with both the dancer and videographer was important for everyone to feel comfortable and capture the personal stories we hoped to tell.

The editing process was also iterative, and required working through further prototypes to establish a suitable length, test various backing tracks, negotiate a balance of narrative and dance movement, and test various image treatments and editing techniques.

Developing the still images

Instagram is characterised by its highly visual media feed, which is often used by dancers to share dance videos, posters that promote workshops and events, and photos taken from various dance related activities. In the same way, the Hīkoi still images also hoped to serve multiple roles within the movement's narrative—supporting other components, but also contributing to building the Hīkoi ethos. Many of the iterations of the still images worked to define Hīkoi's visual aesthetic, which would exist alongside the visual language of street dance culture, on social media platforms that supported an everyday vernacular.

Images from prototypes to develop narrative framework, and process shots from final portrait shoots

The still image prototypes worked to navigate how Hikoi could be visually expressed in a way that would evoke its hip hop roots, while also utilising and expressing its access to quality production tools prevalent in contemporary street dance culture.

Early prototype to develop Still image aesthetic

The visual expressions of street dance culture are as diverse as its participants. At the core of the street dance aesthetic is its hip-hop and street culture influence, characterised by its often raw rough-edges, and grungy street appeal. However, visual expressions increasingly reflect the more formalised studio culture, evoking a professionalism more conducive to the established contemporaries it might be taught alongside. Additionally, technological developments and lower production costs have made quality tools previously only accessible by media professionals, available to enthusiasts and serious amateurs, who are able to collaborate with other 'cultural elite' to produce media flows of high production value (Burgess & Green, 2009). This is increasingly evident in street dance visual language and videography, and the environment Hikoi would be entering into mirrors current techno-cultural circumstances. The still image prototypes worked to navigate how Hikoi could be visually expressed in a way that would evoke its hip hop roots, while also utilising and expressing its access to quality production tools prevalent in contemporary street dance culture.

The visual vernacular of social media content is reflective of the ability for any user with digital technologies to document and upload everyday practices. Tools such as mobile devices, meme generators, and snapchat filters, provide any participant with a means to create their own visual expressions. These often encapsulate a certain naivety and ephemerality—synonymous with low culture and the everyday users who populate social networking sites. From a design perspective, this can create some tension regarding quality of creative production, sometimes framed as the "crisis of democratised culture", which laments an acceptance of mediocrity (Dworsky & Kohler, 2011). Explorations and iterations of Hikoi's visual style sought to reflect its grassroots ethos and horizontal positioning alongside its users, though also contribute its understanding of design knowledge and principles. Overall, I hoped to bring the values to life in a way that respected and understood both its street dance audience, and the context it would be distributed in.

Developing the blog posts

The Discover phase of the process revealed a lack of space in online environments for discourse central to street dance culture. As I gathered perspectives of respected street dance community members during this phase, I wondered how this rich knowledge could be shared with the community. This formed the foundation for the blog posts, which hoped to use times of high level engagement by participants, as an opportunity to inform and inspire participants in order to strengthen their taha wairua. 'Affinity spaces' are described by James Gee as ideal learning environments for users within participatory culture (as cited by Jenkins, 2009). This is because the participant is actively engaged with the topic, and motivated to gain new knowledge and build skill. As such, I contacted a few leaders within the street dance community who agreed to write a blog entry, and I met with each to discuss and collaborate on topic choices that resonated with them. Each writer was given a small brief outlining the general objective and tone of Hikoi, however beyond this it was important to me that the post would be a platform for the writer's voice.

Final Works

Dancing from the Inside Out was premised on the notion that dance videos, as representations of identity, circulate through mediatised street dance networks and recursively impact how an individual might engage with street dance culture, affecting self-identity and specifically one's taha wairua. Hikoi has been developed as a response to address this. It exists as an initiator of a movement, with a set of values that promotes street dance as a vehicle for understanding and developing self-identity.

The components used to initiate the Hikoi journey are the #HikoiSteps. Similar to a dance sequence, where the dynamic and varied individual actions of the dancer comprise a routine, so the #HikoiSteps take on their own form to build the Hikoi narrative. These are the manifesto, the Inside Out video portraits, the still images, and the Real Talk blog posts.

Critiquing the "likes and follows" behaviour within online street dance culture, Hikoi positions itself as "the underdog"—a voice that is unsuspecting, quietly outspoken, and persevering. At times Hikoi is provocative—sure of itself and unwavering in its ethos—but it is also uplifting and inspiring, and personal in its approach. Its non-conformist appeal remains true to the voice for otherness from which it was originally birthed, providing a place of belonging for street dance youth who might discover the power of movement as a way to develop a sense of identity. Each of the tangible components of Hikoi work to embody these characteristics.

Visually, the aesthetic of Hikoi navigates a grassroots ethos with an understanding of design principles. It also negotiates the visual language of street dance culture and the everyday vernacular of street dance participants' user-generated content. Images take on a grainy quality, with a muted or desaturated colour palette. This carried through to the use of the grid and the choice of typefaces, that employ an 'undesigned' appeal. A glitch technique is also sparingly injected within video, symbolising Hikoi's disruptive voice, though also as an ironic comment on the consequences of technology within stre et dance culture. Blurred figures capture the dynamism of movement, while also giving a nod to the everyday vernacular of its horizontal positioning. Sneakers, a signifier of street dance culture and a marker of personal taste, showcase the

HIKOI
MOVEMENT

HIKOI
MOVEMENT

When we move,
we're more than moving;
Steps skim the surface,
counts are the conduit.
We're athletes of our
art form, this language
we breathe.
But underneath the hits,
the lines, the grooves,
We're learning about
who we are—finding our
place in the world.
We dig deep, for that
true self-expression;
Vulnerability en route
to authenticity is only
for the brave.

diversity of Hikoi members, and symbolise the literal and political translations of the Hikoi name. Imagery and videography is often up close, mirroring the personal approach of Hikoi, and encouraging the viewer to focus less on the dance moves and more on the act of moving. Representation of the face is avoided, unless profiling a dancer for an Inside Out video portrait, or a guest blog writer allowing the viewer to place themselves in the frame.

Manifesto

The manifesto is a statement of values and beliefs that define the Hikoi movement. All things 'Hikoi' adhere to the manifesto. Culturally activist in undertone but poetic and uplifting in expression, it outlines a narrative that presents connecting with the spiritual dimension of street dance as a challenge that is only for those who are willing enough. The narrative of the manifesto begins with ideas that street dancers are familiar with—moving, steps, counts, being athletes. It then uses the language of the familiar to guide the reader into ideas that might be more unfamiliar within a dance context—identity, self-expression, vulnerability, authenticity. As such, the taha hinengaro z(mental/ emotional well-being) and the taha tinana (physical well-being), are used as conduits to the taha wairua. The manifesto takes a strength based approach and is purposefully lacking specific street dance or social media context. The idea here is the manifesto exists as a timeless document, allowing dancers to bring their own meaning to the text, evolving over time as their relationship with Hikoi and with street dance also develops. The manifesto is written from a first-person plural perspective, encouraging personal engagement, and reiterating the united voice of the movement's members. The design of the manifesto features my old dance studio that I trained in for many years. The experiences in this space shaped much of who I am and my understanding of dance today. To the uninformed reader however, the empty studio represents a familiar space within contemporary street dance culture, and allows the reader to place themselves in the frame. The light creates a spotlight inviting the reader to embody the text in the space. In a shadowed and somewhat mysterious space, the light is symbolic of hope, synonymous with the strength-based appeal of the manifesto copy.

Inside Out Video Portraits

The Inside Out video portraits use storytelling to explicitly express the power of movement to create meaning and purpose, contributing to the development of one's self-identity. Speaking about dance through the lens of their taha wairua, the portraits present dancers from around Aotearoa as a means to encourage viewers to reflect on their own understanding and relationship with dance. In this way, the video portraits use voices of youth to activate and empower other youth, acknowledging the origins of street dance culture and the grassroots ethos of social networking sites.

The video portraits start to reveal the identity of the dancer off stage and outside the studio, by following a narrative structure that employs an interview style, cut with a journey of the dancer leaving home and traveling to a dance studio where they train on their own. In addition to the audio of the interview, symbols and signifiers throughout the videos portray aspects of the dancers' identity and environment that might inform the dancers' movement. i.e. culture, family relationships. The framework of the narrative exists in a way that future profiles could easily be produced through collaborating with further dancers and videographers, continually building the textures of the Hikoi narrative.

Five dancers diverse in gender, ethnicity, age, home city, and dance experiences are presented in the final Inside Out video portraits. Selected to represent the varied backgrounds of the Aotearoa street dance community, they are Tash Crichton, Ken Vaega, Kat Walker, Stevie Haira, and Joseph Ling. Each of the videos highlight themes connected to the individual's taha wairua. Connection, self-expression, identity, having fun, spreading positivity, and personal growth are presented as important aspects of street dance engagement for the individuals.

The videos' art direction aims to embody Hikoi's afore-mentioned characteristics. Shots are often close up and personal to emphasise the personal tone of the videos, and the colour palette shifts from being desaturated to muted colour, adding to the dynamism when movement is introduced. The videos were shot using DSLR cameras—the level of production conducive to the production value of many dance videos circulating within street dance culture. The music uses a beat created by an Aotearoa SoundCloud producer. Inspired by old school hip hop, the tempo and melody further emphasise the low key and personal tone of the profiles.

The Inside Out
video portraits use
storytelling to
explicitly express
the power of movement
to create meaning and
purpose, contributing
to the development of
one's self-identity.

The distribution platform of the video portraits is crucial for the videos' circulation. The videos are designed to be released on Facebook, and are accompanied by a short introduction caption to outline dance affiliations, city of residence, age, and ethnicity, to provide context to the stories shared. Tagging the dancer and their dance affiliations within the posts also allows for the dancer and their immediate networks to be notified, initiating the distribution amongst street dance communities.

To introduce a video being released, the portraits are preceded by a teaser still with a quote from the video and a blurred shot of the dancer in the background. Additionally, to enable member participation and allow dancers to become part of the conversation and share their story, once the idea of the portraits is established, members are invited to create their own videos sharing their own taha wairua (see Fig 5). These can be selectively reposted on the Hikoi Instagram.

Inside Out video portrait:
Tash Crichton, 18
Christchurch

Fig. 5. Inside Out
video portrait journey

Christchurch

It's a way of
expressing how
I feel through
what I love and
through movement.

Tash Crichton

Quote Teaser
Before

Video Portrait
During

Community Portrait
After
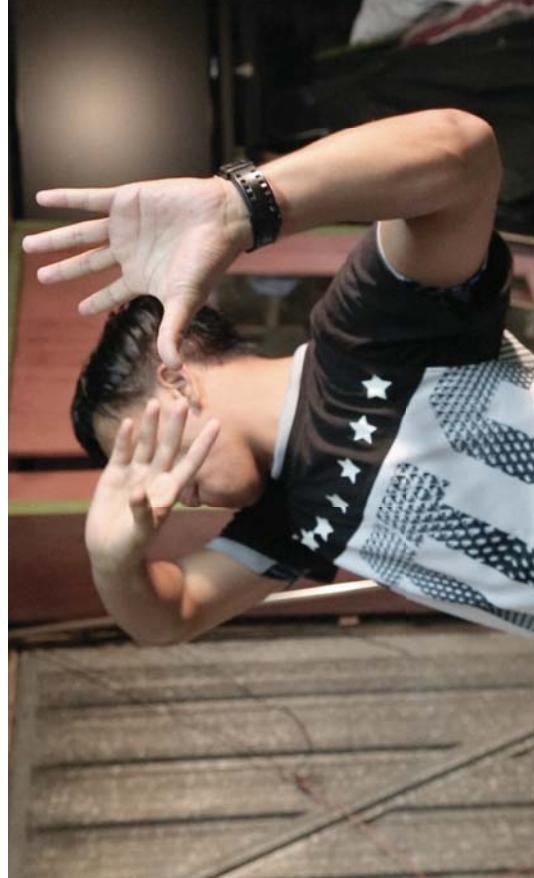
Inside Out video portrait:
Kat Vaega, 23
Auckland

Inside Out video portrait:
Kat Walker, 30
Auckland

Inside Out video portrait:
Joseph Ling, 27
Auckland

Inside Out video portrait:
Stevei Haira, 26
Wellington

Still Images

Serving the brief engagements by participants on social media platforms, the Still images are designed to be recognised and understood quickly. Primarily designed for Instagram, they contribute to the Hikoi ethos in multiple manners, either as individual posts reinforcing the movement's values, or as support for other content. This includes teasers or provocations for the video portraits and blog posts. The Still images adhere to the Hikoi aesthetic, using close up and blurred images of movement, a muted and desaturated colour palette, and signifiers and symbols of street dance culture.

Fig. 6 Real Talk
blog post journey

Provocation
Before

"Classroom Etiquette
and Technology"
by Mariel Madrid.

"The presence
of a camera
in class can
put unwanted
pressure on
students."
Mariel Madrid

#hikoirealtalk

Blog Post + Quote
During

Should cameras be
banned from dance
classes?

#hikoirealtalk

Question
After

"Recording class
can help growth,
but should never
be the purpose
for showing up."
@rexamosito

#hikoirealtalk

Community Response
After

Going Live

It was deemed important that the release of Hikoi into social networking sites wasn't the big announcement of a finished product, but rather the first step of a journey. True to its underdog character, the beginning of the movement would embrace humble beginnings, with a quiet confidence that something had started, and that there was more to come.

The first online presence of Hikoi was marked by posting the manifesto on the newly created social media pages. Beyond sharing the project and its content on my personal social media networks—relying on connections in the street dance community for initial engagement—growth was to be organic, and the distribution of content would be dependent on engagement by the active street dance audience. I was aware of how protective people can be regarding how one is perceived on social media, and the role this plays in identity construction. For this reason I didn't ask anyone to personally like or promote the Hikoi pages. It was important to me that the growth of the movement would rest on dancers having some sort of affinity with its values or direction.

Additionally, to adhere to Hikoi's ethos and its position as a grassroots voice amongst increased self-promotional posts, parameters were established as to how Hikoi would engage within the social media environment. No posts were 'boosted' to become a sponsored post with greater visibility, and I avoided excessive hash tagging on Instagram to attract attention. Dancers featuring in content were tagged to notify their immediate networks; beyond this the distribution of content relied on community engagement.

Due to the multiple ways in which users can engage with their social media platforms, the way in which one might come across Hikoi content is equally varied and to a large extent, at the hands of the dancer. For example, content might be viewed first on Instagram, before Facebook, or perhaps not even seen at all. These nuanced readings are welcomed. Individual narratives encourage participants to build their own understanding of Hikoi, making the movement and its ethos personal to each dancer.

Real Talk Blog Posts

The Real Talk blog posts provide a platform for leaders within the street dance community to discuss and highlight issues within the culture and community that relate to dancers' taha wairua. The social media context acts as an affinity space, aiming to educate and inform in an environment where participants are actively engaged. The tone of the blog posts adhere to the Hikoi character, and aim to be honest, provocative, and inspiring. The first blog post submitted as part of this project is written by YouTube choreographer Mariel Madrid, with her post "Classroom Etiquette and Technology", which discusses the role of cameras and social media in street dance learning environments, and how this might affect dancers' development (Appendix D).

The blog posts are released on Facebook following a still image teaser post. The blog post is then followed with a provocation post to the community, inviting comments, responses, and discussion from the community, which can also be reposted on the Instagram, representing members' voices, and inviting further engagement and discussion (see Fig 6).

Inside Out video
portrait in context

HIKOI movement
August 7 · 🌐

#HikoiSteps :: Welcome to the first of the Inside Out video portraits, showcasing the power of movement through the eyes of dancers from around NZ. Our first portrait introduces Tash Crichton.

Tash is a 19 year old Samoan dancer from Swarm Crew in Christchurch. At this year's Street Dance NZ Nationals, she was awarded Most Outstanding Female Dancer, and her crew also placed first in the adult division. Tash is currently in Las Vegas to represent New Zealand at the Hip Hop Int...
See More

-1:12

6.7K Views

👍❤️ Lauteshna Fruean-Laga, Josh Martin and 280 others

42 shares

👍 Like   💬 Comment   ↗ Share

View 15 more comments

Cynthia Crichton So proud of you Hun xx
Unlike · Reply · Message · 👍 1 · August 9 at 7:27am

Jade Tait Tash Crichton get it! 👏👏
Unlike · Reply · Message · 👍 1 · August 16 at 5:51pm

Write a comment...

Chronological ▾

The frequency of content being released was negotiated by the level of attention and engagement required by each component—the low engagement content distributed more frequently, while high engagement content less frequently. An ideal timeframe would see video portraits released fortnightly, blog posts monthly, and still images weekly, or as fit to support the video profiles and blog posts.

A brief overview of Hikoi's online presence to date highlights the Inside Out video portraits as being most successful in terms of shareability on Facebook, gathering support for Hikoi from local communities and affiliations associated with the dancer featured, and leading to further distribution of the video portraits throughout dance networks. The still images have received greater engagement on Instagram than Facebook, reflective of being more conducive to the highly visual nature of the Instagram platform. At this time of writing, the Real Talk blog posts are yet to be posted.

Hikoi exists not as a solution, but a koha, or gift, that hopes to contribute to the development of street dance culture as it is increasingly shaped by practices and behaviours on social media.

The opportunity exists for the video portraits to feature participants from more towns around the country in order to build a richer narrative of Aotearoa street dancers, and the blog posts hold potential for contributions from more leaders within the community, providing a platform for discourse central to the development of taha wairua and self-identity in street dance. As dancers become more familiar with Hikoi, the project hopes to encourage greater participation by members via the creation of user-generated video portraits, or contribution to discussions provoked by the still images and Real Talk blog posts.

Over time, through the distribution, circulation, and facilitation of content that promotes the value of taha wairua in developing street dancers' self-identity, Hikoi hopes to recursively inform street dance culture. In this sense Hikoi exists not as a solution, but a koha, or gift, that hopes to contribute to the development of street dance culture as it is increasingly shaped by practices and behaviours on social media.

Further opportunities also exist in developing the transformative nature of Hikoi by taking the values into offline environments. Drawing from the Hikoi ethos, the potential exists to use its online presence to facilitate face-to-face relationships, and run workshops and events in the community, collaborating with other dancers to further build on taha wairua concepts.

Conclusion

Dancing from the Inside Out aimed to explore how design thinking processes could be used to strengthen Aotearoa street dancers' self-identity in the age of social media. I believe the project was successful in investigating this, both in contributing to a growing body of literature of street dance culture in Aotearoa, and investigating the application of design thinking methods within a street dance culture context.

Weaving together existing literature with findings from empathy research, the project identified the circulation of dance videos—additionally existing as representations of self-identity—as impacting a street dancer's taha wairua, or spiritual wellbeing, relating to consciously understanding or developing identity through movement. An opportunity was highlighted to use design to strengthen a dancer's wairua, through informing and inspiring street dancers about the potential of dance to create meaning and purpose.

The human centric nature of design thinking methods proved valuable not only in the defining the scope and focus of the project, but in developing the design response Hikoi, involving street dance participants throughout the design-led research in prototyping and testing. This informed the final components for the initiation of the Hikoi movement: the manifesto, Inside Out video portraits, the Real Talk blog posts, and still images.

There are a number of potential applications for the project that are beyond the scope of this thesis. Hikoi was developed with longevity in mind, as a framework that hopes to respond to street dance culture as it continues to evolve, and also facilitate ongoing conversations within the street dance community. Adhering to the manifesto, the framework encourages further generation of content.

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Unless otherwise identified, all images and objects are the work of Phoebe J Smith

Fig. 1.
Urban Dance Camp. (2015, January 30). Rude - Magic! / Koharu Sugawara Choreography ft Yuki Shibuya / URBAN DANCE CAMP. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A8wpJ0TJm_s

Fig. 2.
Salaivao, A. (2016, September 26). Usher 'No Limit' /Choreographed by Allister Ngawati-Salaivao/ Kehlani 'The Way' ft Trey Songz. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2WCFEzelX7U&feature=youtu.be

Glossary

Class footage
Videos recording dance sequence at the end of a dance class or workshop, often performed by a selected group of dancers.

Concept videos
Dance videos integrating 'concept' or narrative to provide context or add value, meaning, or context to dance sequence. These often have a cinematic quality.

Follow
Refers to the act of subscribing to online identities.

Glocalisation
Simultaneously engaging the intersections of global and local dynamics.

Hīkoi (Māori)
To step, stride, march.

Koha (Māori)
Gift, present, offering, donation, contribution - especially one maintaining social relationships and has connotations of reciprocity.

Polyswagg
Used to describe street dance style developed by Parris Goebel, incorporating Polynesian influence into hip hop dance.

Tagging
Refers to identifying people in a social media post. This can be to include someone who was at an event/happening, alerting someone mentioned in the post, giving credit where credit is due, or increasing social media marketing by encouraging others to share it.

Te Whare Tapa Whā (Māori)
Health and well-being model developed by Mason Drurie in 1982, characterised by its holistic approach to health beyond physical well-being.

Taha Tinana (Māori)
Physical health and the capacity for physical growth and development

Taha Wairua (Māori)
Spiritual well-being, referring to one's life force, determining, who and what we are, where we have come from and where we are going.

Taha Hinengaro (Māori)
Mental and emotional health, referring to the capacity to think and feel.

Taha Whanau (Māori)
Family health and the capacity to belong, to care and to share where individuals are part of wider social systems.

Wicked Problems
A problem that is difficult or impossible to solve because of incomplete, contradictory, and changing requirements that are often difficult to recognise.

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA

15 August 2014

Phoebe Smith
14 Arizona Grove
Brooklyn
WELLINGTON 6021

Dear Phoebe

Re: Social Media and Dance

Thank you for your Low Risk Notification which was received on 13 August 2014.

Your project has been recorded on the Low Risk Database which is reported in the Annual Report of the Massey University Human Ethics Committees.

You are reminded that staff researchers and supervisors are fully responsible for ensuring that the information in the low risk notification has met the requirements and guidelines for submission of a low risk notification.

The low risk notification for this project is valid for a maximum of three years.

Please notify me if situations subsequently occur which cause you to reconsider your initial ethical analysis that it is safe to proceed without approval by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees.

Please note that travel undertaken by students must be approved by the supervisor and the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor and be in accordance with the Policy and Procedures for Course-Related Student Travel Overseas. In addition, the supervisor must advise the University's Insurance Officer.

A reminder to include the following statement on all public documents:

"This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor John O'Neill, Director (Research Ethics), telephone 06 350 5249, e-mail humanethics@massey.ac.nz".

Please note that if a sponsoring organisation, funding authority or a journal in which you wish to publish requires evidence of committee approval (with an approval number), you will have to provide a full application to one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. You should also note that such an approval can only be provided prior to the commencement of the research.

Yours sincerely

J. O'Neill

John G O'Neill (Professor)
**Chair, Human Ethics Chairs' Committee and
Director (Research Ethics)**

cc   Dr Max Schleser
        School of Design
        Wellington

        Mr Rodney Adank and Prof Andre Ktori, Co-Heads
        School of Design
        Wellington

        Mr Eugene Hansen
        School of Art
        Wellington

        Assoc Prof Heather Galbraith, HoS
        School of Art
        Wellington

**Massey University Human Ethics Committee
Accredited by the Health Research Council**

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
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UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

College of Creative Arts
PO Box 756, Wellington
6140, New Zealand

Dancing from the Inside Out
PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM - INDIVIDUAL

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree/do not agree to the interview being sound recorded.

I wish/do not wish to have my recordings returned to me.

I wish/do not wish to have data placed in an official archive.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature: _____   Date: 9/4/2016

Full Name - printed   Tash Crichton

Format for Participant Consent Form (2014)

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PO Box 756, Wellington
6140, New Zealand

Social Media and Hip Hop Dance
FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree not to disclose anything discussed in the Focus Group.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature: _____   Date: 26/01/15

Full Name - printed   Olivia (Libby) Calder

Format for Participant Consent Form (2014)

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Dancing from the Inside Out

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I wish/do not wish to have my recordings returned to me.

I wish/do not wish to have data placed in an official archive.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature: _____ Date: 26/10/15

Full Name - printed _Nathan Kara._____

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College of Creative Arts
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Dancing from the Inside Out

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM - INDIVIDUAL

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree/do not agree to participate in the video portrait shoot.

I wish/do not wish to have my recordings returned to me.

I wish/do not wish to have data placed in an official archive.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature: _____ Date: 11/02/16

Full Name - printed   Esther Lau Young

Format for Participant Consent Form (2014)

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UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

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6140, New Zealand

Dancing from the Inside Out

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I wish/do not wish to have my recordings returned to me.

I wish/do not wish to have data placed in an official archive.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature: _____ Date: 26/1/16

Full Name - printed   IVA LANKUM

Format for Participant Consent Form (2014)

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
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College of Creative Arts
PO Box 756, Wellington
6140, New Zealand

Dancing from the Inside Out

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM - INDIVIDUAL

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

YES

I agree/do not agree to the interview being sound recorded.

YES, AGREE

I wish/do not wish to have my recordings returned to me.

DO NOT WISH

I wish/do not wish to have data placed in an official archive.

YES, IT'S FINE

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

YES

Signature:

Full Name - printed   mariel madrid

Date: 11/11/15

Format for Participant Consent Form (2014)

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
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UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

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Dancing from the Inside Out

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM - INDIVIDUAL

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

yes

I agree/do not agree to the interview being sound recorded.

agree

I wish/do not wish to have my recordings returned to me.

agree

I wish/do not wish to have data placed in an official archive.

agree

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

agree

Signature:

Full Name - printed   Keone matcad

Date: 11/11/15

Format for Participant Consent Form (2014)

Dancing from the Inside Out

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM - INDIVIDUAL

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I wish/do not wish to have data placed in an official archive.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature: _____ Date: 17/4/16

Full Name - printed   Connor Massurs

Dancing from the Inside Out

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM - INDIVIDUAL

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

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I wish/do not wish to have my recordings returned to me.

I wish/do not wish to have data placed in an official archive.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature: _____ Date: 8/12/15

Full Name - printed   Taylor Malthus

Form 1 (right)

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TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA
UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

College of Creative Arts
PO Box 756, Wellington
6140, New Zealand

Dancing from the Inside Out
PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM - INDIVIDUAL

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree/do not agree to participate in the video portrait shoot.

I wish/do not wish to have my recordings returned to me.

I wish/do not wish to have data placed in an official archive.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature: _____   Date: 4/4/16

Full Name - printed   GENG JOSEPH LING

Form 2 (left)

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA
UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

College of Creative Arts
PO Box 756, Wellington
6140, New Zealand

Dancing from the Inside Out
PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM - INDIVIDUAL

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree/do not agree to the interview being sound recorded.

I wish/do not wish to have my recordings returned to me.

I wish/do not wish to have data placed in an official archive.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature: _____   Date: 8/12/15

Full Name - printed   Samara Te Aniwa Reweti

Dancing from the Inside Out

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM - INDIVIDUAL

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree/do not agree to participate in the video portrait shoot.

I wish/do not wish to have my recordings returned to me.

I wish/do not wish to have data placed in an official archive.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature: _____ Date: 6/4/16

Full Name - printed   Ken Vaega.

Social Media and Hip Hop Dance

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree not to disclose anything discussed in the Focus Group.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature: _____ Date: 25/1/2015

Full Name - printed   Anna Robinson

Dancing from the Inside Out

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM - INDIVIDUAL

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree/do not agree to the interview being sound recorded.

I wish/do not wish to have my recordings returned to me.

I wish/do not wish to have data placed in an official archive.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature: _____ Date: 8·12·15

Full Name - printed   GRAYSON ZIOGAS

Dancing from the Inside Out

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM - INDIVIDUAL

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree/do not agree to participate in the video portrait shoot.

I wish/do not wish to have my recordings returned to me.

I wish/do not wish to have data placed in an official archive.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature: _____ Date: 5/04/16

Full Name - printed   Katherine Walker

Interview with Libby Calder and Anna Robinson
26 January 2015

As the interview contained conversation to build rapport and allow the respondent to guide direction of the topics, transcripts contain conversations deemed to be relevant to the project.

When/where do you watch dance videos?

Anna: For me it starts on my mobile. Lots start from Instagram, and how they post like the snippets of their videos and they're like, "link in my bio".

Libby: Mine would be through Facebook, or through searching something on YouTube, always on a desktop.

Anna: I watch dance either first thing in the morning when I'm just scrolling while waking up, really late at night, or if I'm doing it for a purpose like choreographing. There are a few choreographers that I really like, so I check their pages in case they've done new videos.

Libby: I find it hard to find sometimes. You have to go through so many new videos.

How do you come across dance videos?

Libby: When they release a competition like BodyRock or something, (and it) comes online, it's like, "cool I'll watch them all at the same time."

Anna: Sometimes I've subscribed to some channels, and that's good cos it'll pop up at the top of YouTube.

Have you ever learned a dance off YouTube and what was that experience like?

Libby: I can't, I'm bad if I learn that way, I've filmed dances for people to learn off YouTube quite a lot. It's good if I explain the moves slowly then do it to music then explain the moves slowly and then do it to music.

Anna: I don't think I've ever learned a dance, but I know Samara and Caitlin, they definitely watch dances that they've liked and just learnt it.

Libby: Some people are really good at learning off YouTube but it confuses me. For me dancing's a social thing. Often web is not good enough in New Zealand. It's too slow, like the streaming. But overseas it's pretty good.

What motivates you as a dancer?

Anna: Well a huge part of it is definitely the people, so a social aspect. Coming to dance and knowing that you've got ten really good friends in the same room. You might not be talking to them, but you're all there.

Libby: You can be silly together, you can proud of yourselves together, you can get annoyed at each other, you have new experiences together

Anna: But then I guess going to a workshop with people that you don't know - then what motivates you is trying to get the dance and look really good doing it. Whereas when you're in Infinite we know that if someone's just taking a bit more time to get used to a move then that's fine. If you're in a workshop there's that extra pressure to impress this person who's teaching you.

Libby: I was talking to Nick about dancing recently saying I can transport myself back to a year and half ago in Serbia and I can physically make myself feel sick thinking about going on for World Champs, and the feeling straight after when I'd stuffed up. It's like, something about competitions for me, and a lot of people I think, it almost takes away the joy of dancing. Whereas if I compare it to the Opera House stage, it's like dancing on that, to people who love us and feeling like I could hide a mistake and just love every moment on stage. I can picture those lights and feel so happy thinking about being on stage.

That thrill of performing is definitely my motivation, whereas the thrill of competing is not for me. I liked becoming a better dancer because of that, but I much prefer being on stage. You know that feeling of like, "I've achieved something and it was so fun the whole time". Doing a dance and making you feel bad is the worst thing.

Anna: That's the same, like when we were just starting competitions in like Dynamix and stuff, at that age, maybe you've got a more competitive streak and you just wanna make sure that you guys are the best and stuff. But then after doing more and more competitions, in particular being a coach of a crew that's doing a competition—when they get judged it's just the worst thing ever. Every time the boys got judged I kinda just wanted to cry and hide away. But I've definitely loved performances more than competition dances.

Libby: And there are no rules so you can be creative. I think that creative side of performing and creating something is definitely my motivation. Also I really really like being fit. Getting to do a workout and get sweaty and it's super fun instead of going to the gym is huge for me. Then also this is very cheesy but when we've done a big performance and little kids are like, "you guys are so amazing", I think that's quite cool. Or when kids are like "can you teach me how to do the caterpillar?" and you're like "of course".

Anna: We know that with the stuff we're doing we're role models, to inspire lots of people.

What do you see as some of the personality traits of dancers?

Libby: Infinite has always had a range of personalities, but when we have a common goal we tend to align a bit. Whereas if Infinite's floating along with no goal, then you definitely see people focusing on different things, which I think is actually an advantage for us, because we come up with new ideas, and if we were just little clones I think it would be really awful, or if we only wanted to do one competition every year I think that would just be disastrous for the team. But in general just personality traits, I think from looking at other dance companies I see so many personalities.

Anna: In terms of hip hop dance, people imagine it as really gangster and swag, and like full of hard out attitude, but I don't think that's what overrides Infinite. We're a bit more free and not locked into stereotypes of a hip hop crew.

Libby: I get so many comments about being a little blonde girl. I think Wellington is very open-minded to different types of hip-hop. I don't think SDNZ (nationals) is, although they say they are, I don't think they are. But I think Wellington embraces—like Pat and Daphz embrace The Company, they embrace us, and I actually think the ballet and jazz companies that are doing hip hop are really supported as well. Like if they tried a comp everyone does actually really want them to grow. So I think that Wellington is arty and cultural and we get away with having more individual styles. I think if we were based in Auckland, we would definitely be more of an outcast, or we'd be pressured to change, or we'd change without even meaning to.

Anna: I think it's a rapport with the place around you. At Pump there's like a really energetic, enthusiastic, exciting, way. There's competition within the studio, but it's not as competitive—

Interview with Jared Hemopo
23 October 2015

As the interview contained conversation to build rapport and allow the respondent to guide direction of the topics, transcripts contain conversations deemed to be relevant to the project.

What's your dance story and how did you get into dance?

I started in 2006 at school, I saw a hip hop competition called Bring It On, a secondary schools competition. I just remember being in the audience and the vibe was real positive, in my mind I was like 'oh yea, (I'd be) keen to try that." And then yeah... But I've always loved dance, from a young age, dancing around the house to Michael Jackson videos and stuff.

What happened between Bring It On and today?

I joined a dance crew Heavily Chaos, they were a church based crew. I joined them with a group of my mates, jammed with them for a bit, and it wasn't until I joined that crew that I actually started to find something more behind it—the dances often had Christian-based messages, I kind of got attached to the story, and the messages we could share through movement and stuff. It was like this whole other world. We'd do church gigs, flea markets, community gigs. The vibe was just real positive.

Then some of the boys wanted a new challenge, Heavily Chaos kind of died out and the interest wasn't there. We needed something new, something fresh, so we started a new crew Limit Break.

We still did all the similar things like community events, and all that church stuff, but we also wanted to do competitions. So then we made a few sets and did SDNZ Regionals 2008. That was a whole new level, being in the competition vibe, it was a mean challenge, it was exactly what we needed. We didn't expect to get as far as did which was awesome - we ended up placing 3rd in finals, which advanced us to Nationals. Then we got 2nd

at Nationals, so that secured our spot to go do the HHI (Hip Hop International) comp. That was off the chain. We didn't have all the normal facilities dance wise, like a studio or stuff. We made a lot of the sets at Donovan's house in his garage and we practised on his driveway. We used what we had to put everything together. That stuff never bothered us, we just had to get it done. We went over to the comp, it was a whole new level, it was pretty amazing. A lot of us didn't think that that was going to be possible. Growing up the way we did, we looked at it as a huge goal that couldn't be achieved. Then when we actually achieved it and got over there, it didn't sink in. The comp was fun—the vibe ay. When everyone gets together on the first day: the flag, the national anthem, all eyes were on the kiwis. It was all new and fresh.

Studied at Excel (School of Performing Arts) at 2008 doing the dance course while we were prepping for worlds. It was pretty hard dancing all day and then practising at night. It was quite full on and struggle in itself. But it was worth it, it was a pretty fun year. I graduated from there and took a gap year 2009 and had a rest for a little bit. I got sick of that—the dumbest decision I've made.

In 2010, I watched my little brother performing a contemporary dance piece after doing Urban Youth (Black Grace). That was my first introduction to contemporary. The energy and discipline was something I'd never seen before. Real professional, they were only young kids in there as well. I was like, 'far out, I gotta do something like that one day.' The following year the auditions were coming up and I was scared as hell but I auditioned.

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no one's fighting to stay. We're really open and accepting.

Libby: I guess most dancers have an arty or creative side to them in hip hop, cos you have to create everything from scratch, unless you're doing syllabus.

Have you ever posted a dance video on social media. If so, what were some of the positive and negative aspects of that experience?

Libby: It was very good to show people competition routines when they couldn't be in that country.

Anna: I've never posted anything like a dance video of me, I've never gotten around to making one. I don't know how I'd feel if I made a solo video.

Libby: The Internet is so mean.

Anna: I guess I'd be like, "what are people going to think?" I guess I'm not as confident as I could be in terms of that, there's so much judging.

Libby: It's only judging by dancers though. Whereas if you think of your family and friends, they're so supportive. It's not a safe environment whatsoever, unless you make it private or disable comments

How do you think social media has affected confidence?

Libby: I think it would have brought a lot of people down. I think A LOT. A few people get liked by millions and feel really awesome about themselves and I think a lot of people get horrible comments—it's a horrible culture that comes with YouTube. There's other positives, but you always remember the horrible comments. It's pretty easy

to show the world, which is awesome if you know how to share it the right way.

Anna: I think it's either really high or really low, not generally a middle ground. Cos if you've done something that's average people won't watch it, they don't even care.

Libby: Everyone has to have their say. But some people are cocky enough to ignore that. Instagram is a bit more of a safe environment cos it's your friends who choose follow you, so they're nicer. YouTube is nasty. It's just a wider platform, people might stumble across you. Instagram can be more private. YouTube seems more negative and critical rather than focus on the positives. I don't know how to use Twitter.

When I left the audition, my whole body, my brain, had never experienced anything like that. The movement and stuff was just so different to hip hop. It had its similarities, so it wasn't too foreign to my body. In a way I knew what to expect but I didn't expect it to be the way it was. I really enjoyed it. I ended up getting into Urban Youth (Black Grace), and that was probably the best programme I've ever done. It's not for everyone, like some people couldn't handle the discipline. Some people really need a kick up the arse and that's what you get when you're there. So I really got a lot out of it.

I finished up that programme and Neil (Iremeia) approached me afterwards and offered me a scholarship to stay on, so I committed to that, and that was my first time being a professional dancer. It was so ruthless ay, talk about being thrown in the deep end. My first proper contemporary class was with the company (Black Grace), I didn't even know how to roll on the ground. The struggle was real.

I did a season with them in 2010. After that I was offered an apprenticeship, but I felt like I really wanted to make it myself. For me I hadn't studied or anything, I had got my foot in the door, but I felt like I was missing out on this whole other chunk, and I couldn't get my mind around skipping past it. Some Unitec students came in the week I was deciding and that's when I learned I could actually get a degree in dancing. So that started the next phase of the journey, and that was cool, that was fun.

I've been freelancing since I was at university. We did a lot of stuff while I was studying. Black Grace gave me a head-start into that world so I knew how it all worked. My mentality going in as a first year student—everyone thought I was really serious.

What are three highlights of your dance journey, and why were they so important to you?
One would be worlds. Representing my country, being 18 and doing something positive - there's a lot of stuff I could've been doing, but I surrounded myself with people that were going places and doing stuff. The second one would've been performing in Italy. The dance opera was dedicated to the 28th Maori battalion that died in the war, so to go over and not just represent the country, but people that had passed, that was a significant moment that I hold onto. Third one would be graduating. The reason: just everything that I'd been through to get to that point, all my ups and my downs.

What does dance mean to you? Why do you dance?
Peace.

What is it about dancing that you love?
It takes you somewhere else. When I dance or when I perform, nothing can get to me. Sometimes I perform for myself, but I also enjoy performing for other people. I get nervous and excited but I've never been scared. In my mind, in that space that I've set for myself, it sounds cocky as, but they (the audience) are privileged to be there. Nothing can get me.

What sort of things do you love to express through your movement?
Truth. Being real. Showing something. Not just being something that's physical, an interesting shape—I just feel like it's meaningless otherwise.

You've had rich experiences in hip hop and contemporary. What are some of the similarities or differences you find between the two genres? What do you enjoy about each one?

Contemporary can be almost exactly the same as hip hop. I don't know how to answer that question. Movement wise, hip hop can be fast and sharp, but then contemporary can be fast and sharp.

Based on your experiences in the New Zealand dance scene, how would you describe the New Zealand street dance today?
It'll be observation cos I haven't been in it for a while. Movement wise it's quite positive, it's producing a lot of amazing dancers and movers. For example the Royal Family dancing for Chris Brown, Janet Jackson, Justin Bieber. They're breaking down a lot of walls. I haven't been to a comp for a while. What it has done is inspired people to give it a go, cos they've seen people that have progressed and gone over to Worlds and taken out gold and stuff, so I think that's really positive. It's encouraged other kids to jump on board and give it a go as well.

What sets us apart from the rest of the world?
We're kiwis. Cultures and stuff. We're a diverse country and there are a lot of different backgrounds that support different movement and movers. Observant, like we just see things and just give it a go. They don't think too much about it. They're just like "Sweet, is that us? Shall we try this? Oh yea, cool." It's real casual.

What are some of the ways you think social media has influenced New Zealand street dance?
Providing all the information, seeing what's happening on the other side of the world. It's really accessible. I can't think of any negatives.

Other thoughts?
I think it's at a stand-still at the moment. It's just the same thing that it's been since it started.

I haven't seen any real biggish progress, to make it any different. It's the same - you put in a crew, qualify, worlds. Like why isn't there anything else? Why is there nothing more? Maybe they need a go to some contemporary classes or something and open up their minds. Straight up, I've never actually thought about this. Just like, different things on stage, why are they always facing the front in the same 'V' formation. It's amazing, but I remember watching the comp this year, waiting for something new.

So what do you think we need?
It should be a hip hop contemporary competition. They need to experiment more and try something new. I've always wanted to do that, do a contemporary hip hop comp here. Contemporary is so relevant. People don't know the contemporary that we know. They think it's just grey tights, they know lyrical but they don't know it can be this hard out thing.

Hadleigh (Pouesi) made a show called Station. It was with Fresh Movement. They did a development work - it was a combination of hip hop and contemporary dance. That was the first time I've seen that. It can be quite a tricky thing to do, to get it across clearly and for people to kind of understand it. There were some really nice moments. Then you flip and you have the hip hop side, so raw and rugged. I'd be keen to see more of that stuff.

Interview with Nathan Kara
26 October 2015

As the interview contained conversation to build rapport and allow the respondent to guide direction of the topics, transcripts contain conversations deemed to be relevant to the project.

What's your dance story and how did you get into dancing?
I guess my dance story is two parts. I started dancing when I was five years old at the dance studio, learning jazz, and that was because I used to dance around the TV in front of Michael Jackson videos... My parents needed something to put me into and get my energy out in a positive way. I started doing jazz dance and that introduced me to a group of boys in an organisation that Jacqui Cesan had created called BoysDance... After a year or so I tried tap dance, contemporary dance, but hip hop was the one that stuck with me, and I started doing that about four years after I started jazz.

My experience with the street dance scene began when I was in high school... I joined the high school hip hop team, during (the days of) Bring It On.

Through that I made a lot more friends within the dance scene. My friends and I created a team called Steeze at high school, and that's how I got into the whole Regionals, Nationals, competitions, and I got into that when I was 16. Before that point dance for me was just a hobby, but I realised when I was 16 that I wanted to pursue it and make a name for myself, and my friends wanted to do the same.

Identity Dance Company (ID) had always been watching me, they'd always kind of been my older brothers who had helped me develop as a dancer... They asked me to come to Worlds. I joined ID first as a reserve for the Worlds team because they wanted me to learn about the Worlds experience alongside them and develop those skills for myself. Then we did NZ's Got Talent together, which initiated me into the crew fully. And then from there The Bradas came about when some of the younger brothers who were

still in XS were going up to the adults division and ID wanted to move away from competitions. They wanted to become more of a professional business, but there were a couple of us in the team who wanted to compete so we joined together with some of the boys from XS and started The Bradas. So that's been my journey into the hip hop scene.

What are three of your most memorable moments and why?
Born to Dance (film). It was a breaking point mentally to see that I can do what I love. It brought our community together. I'd never talked to most of the people before in my life, I'd always looked up to them and knew their faces, but to work alongside them and have them treat me as one of their equals was really cool. It was a new art form for me, it was cool to try the acting thing.

Worlds. Actually more for the whole process of Worlds rather than the winning. On the day of winning I wasn't as stoked as the rest of the boys. I'm a perfectionist and I was out of time with a couple of little things, and I walked off stage like "dammit"... It was nine months for us from Regionals to Worlds and you put so much pressure (on yourself). It wasn't the perfect performance I hoped I would get. I was disappointed. When we won all the other boys were really stoked and I was really happy for them. I learned a lot more about the process and what it takes to win. The whole goal setting thing, mentality of knowing you're a winner so you're going to win.

Do you find yourself applying that mentality to the rest of your life?
For sure. My dad laughed at me writing out daily schedules for the boys or writing our yearly plan,

and goal setting. He was like, "If you put this much time into your schooling..." I just didn't have the same interest. Since I was 16 I've had this dream of becoming a professional dancer, so I learned to have a mentality about never giving up on things and always putting your all into it no matter how you feel about it... I push myself a lot further in terms of dance and discipline.

What inspires you?
I really enjoy out of the box thinking. I think that's because one of my idols is a dancer called Daniel Cloud Campos. I've been watching his stuff on YouTube, and the way he creates his art is so creative, for lack of a better word. He puts time and energy into acting as well as dance, making it entertaining for the crowd... That's inspired me to push my art form.

We have a show here in Tempo called Out of the Box. It's become quite contemporary over the past few years, but when it began it was basically straight hip hop but with a creative concept behind it. Ali did a piece - the song, the concept, was so creative. I like art. I do actually get bored easily watching dance videos.

I'm also inspired by flips. I love tricking and b-boying, so high energy kind of stuff. Within the contemporary world I love big leaps, high, up in the air.

Other idols - for me within the dance scene, I really look up to Andy Cesan because of the leader that he is; Allstair because of who he is and what he continues to do in the hip hop scene after so many years—a role model I guess.

When I'm creating art, I love to put a meaning or message behind it that when I'm teaching a class, I can share with the class. There's a huge difference between a teacher, choreographer, and a dancer—they're three separate art forms. I've learned that only in the past year or so. I've started developing my own methods of teaching. I want the class to learn something more than a few dance moves, I want them to take away something that can help them develop as dancers or their other life. So when I create art I like to have a meaning behind it that it's very personal to me that helps me connect with it, and helps others connect with it when I share it.

I'm not confident with my choreography I don't like it half the time, but when I have a meaning behind it that helps me.

You've studied dance. What are some of the things that appeal to you, that's unique about street dance?
The culture is what separates it. After watching contemporary dance for the past year or so of studying at Unitec, contemporary dance movement inspires me, but the hip hop scene— the culture of it, the fact that you can walk down the street and see a b-boy, graffiti, and know that it's hip hop. Street dance is constantly developing as a culture. There are so many elements to it that push the dance. The whole culture of it makes it stand out for me.

What's your favourite part of hip hop culture?
The youthfulness. It's a youth based culture and it always will be. It's always evolving. I love that it's always evolving. The true hip hop heads will stick to the roots, and you should definitely know your

roots about street dance and where it came from, the street culture, how it began. But also where it's going is, it's constantly developing every single day. No two days are the same. A new song with a new beat, a new move—it keeps it alive. Taking influences from other places as well.

Jacqui Cesan says that street dance is a contemporary art form because contemporary just means new. It's always going to be a new culture. It takes influence from everything it sees, everywhere it goes. Street dance in NZ - street dance started in the US but when it came to NZ it took on that cultural vibe here.

What are some of the ways, good or bad, that social media has affected your dance experiences?
I came into awareness of the hip hop scene during the time that YouTube was big, and putting videos on YouTube was a huge thing. I can't say too much from beforehand, but I've heard stories from people about before YouTube was around and how they had to go and learn off music videos and learn off their friends or make up their own moves. Now we learn off social media - seeing other dancers, seeing their concepts, you learn from that.

One thing that's not good about social media is the fact that you can learn so much, that your own originality disappears. I've seen so many dancers I know that have their favourite performer online and they watch them so often that they become them, and they claim to have their own thoughts but from whatever you see, you're always gonna take something from it.

Another thing about social media that I think is great for dance is the fact that you can advertise yourself so well and you can create a career out of online use and advertising yourself online. It opens yourself to so many opportunities. I think it's another platform to share your message. Sharing with a wider audience, or friends and family overseas. I think it's a great tool. That people will copy, people can talk so freely about how they don't like your art. I've never had it in a negative way.

I try not to see myself as a hip hop dancer I try and see myself as an artist. I love spoken word, I love rap, I love creating music... My movement is very much influenced by everything that I see, that I hear, that I'm a part of. There's a few people that I know, even people within my own crew that I try to explain this to them, they agree, but at the same time they're so stuck on watching their YouTube idols. Maybe they haven't experienced it yet. I learned it from experiencing the LA teachers, a few of them inspired me to get like this. I guess there are a few hip hop dancers that are still about that coolness, and for me it's just an art form.

It was actually being in Australia at the start of the year, taking a class at HDI with Ian Eastwood. He's known on YouTube for these weird moves, and he broke down his movement within the class to a point that we understood every single movement was meant for this. He explained the concept of the piece at the start, and he said "look I'm not gonna teach you guys 8 counts of 8 like they do in LA, I'm gonna teach you 2 counts of 8 and make you get this 2 counts of 8." It opened my eyes a little to "Oh, I don't have to teach like everyone else in NZ

teaches, how the classes I've always been teaching. It's ok to be weird and to be seen as different by people. Most of the time people love if you are different, cos it's refreshing for you. And then when I got to LA the ones I felt more engaged with were the ones who provided— a vibe that they set, they said "be free to be free". I learn so much about being open-minded and about trying to teach a class to be open-minded.

How would you describe the NZ street dance scene today?
Thriving, and segregated. When I stepped into the scene it was very much about crews, when there was Stomp (collaborated crews). Whereas now it's come to a point where there's so many crews under one studio that they've called themselves a company and it's a thriving community within that company —you have 7 year olds learning the bossest moves and becoming the most intelligent dancers too but they have a closed mind about stepping outside of their company. You still have people who come to different classes, they're learning, but they themselves are not part of a specific company they just enjoy learning dance. So you have those people, but within the SDNZ type thing, it's very segregated and people are either too busy or not willing to step outside their step area code to actually experience other people and learn new styles of dance.

It's thriving in the sense that there's so many more dancers than when we first began and that's thanks to social media, and then it's thriving because we have kids so much than we were so much better than we were at that age, and even older people coming out... but it is very segregated in the fact that

people, I feel, are uncomfortable to step outside of their comfort zone.

What makes us unique?
I've heard people say the cultural vibe. Pacific Island cultural vibe. I think we add that to it, in the past we've always had people do the good old Hip Hop, Waacking.... and then they go into the Sasa. I think that's definitely been integrated into our culture- you have our polyswagg... I feel from watching that us kiwis have a knack for innovating... We're quite creative I think... I think we are quite open to new ideas. We push each other and ourselves to create something that's new and different that the world hasn't been seen before.

With social media you see so much of the same same from LA because the moves that work over there are big straight lines that work en mass for you know when you're back up dancing or with a company on stage, but I find here that we like being weird, and that's kinda cool. I like the fact that we like being weird. It keeps it fresh. We're an eclectic group of people, like it's a very much a multicultural country that we bring all those cultures into it. Cool cultural vibe as well as very innovative.

What does a young dancer need to flourish in the street dance scene?
An open mind. A lot step into it having seen the Palace do their thing, or having seen ID do their thing. But they have to realise that's what they did a year ago, what they're doing today is completely different or has changed since then. So, and open-mindedness about what you're going to learn, and know that it is constantly developing.

I think also if you're stepping into the competition scene, you're never gonna succeed on your first try, or most of the time you aren't going to, you're always gonna get a hundred no's before you get a yes. You have to go through those hard phases so, especially for the young ones. They might be being taught by Parris or some of the ID boys that they're going to be successful as well but nah you gotta realise that you have to go through the hard stuff yourself before you become successful.

A lot of the kids now don't have the same motivation as when the companies weren't around. You speak to any of the older dancers now, we all created our own crews with our friends and it was always about having fun, and maybe you wanted to compete in competitions. 1. Because you wanted to make a name for yourself 2. To make some money... But now the kids step into a pre-formed group, or a crew that is going to be developed underneath a company and they have someone choreograph for them. They have someone set up which competition they go to. They don't have their friends step in but other dancers who have a similar want, to be in a crew. I dunno, I can't say not as much motivation but a different motivation behind it cos creating your crew as opposed to stepping into a crew is a completely different process. I think that's one thing is an understanding of the street dance scene, where it has come from before, and where it will be going to and where it is now is another thing that you have to understand.

Have you thought how to address that?

I don't think we've ever discussed how we got there and what it was like even just two years ago. Maybe just a good sit down session and talk with them, but

then I feel like that may not be as successful, cos the kids could turn off easily, if it's not talking about what they're interested in, only a few of them who are interested in knowing that. Maybe even setting up within the company or crew they're in, they themselves for a month of their time have to develop choreography within that time with like three people from that crew - helps them learn what it does take as a choreographer to learn and collaborate with other people but also how we got to where we are. You could talk about how you came to be where you are and they see through following people they're inspired by, the journey that they took...

A couple of the younger boys in our crew—they've never had to lead themselves, they've never had to try and find performance opportunities, they've always just had it handed to them on a plate and so these guys are 16 and world champions right now. They can say no to gigs I understand that, but I wonder what the motivation is for them to continue dancing. Is it because the fact that around school they're now known as this person and that the girls will like them and they have a reputation to uphold? I dunno, it's one of those things I get annoyed at just because I know where me and a couple of the boys came from and it's completely different. It's a privilege they've had that we didn't so yea, different backgrounds bring different opinions.

Dance for me is a form of expression. I've found that over the past few years, when I started dancing it was because I loved listening to music and I loved moving to music, and for many years it was just because I love moving. I did martial arts, I did sports—I just love moving. But there's something about music and moving that's so cool. Over the past

little bit it's been about expressing my views because I don't think I'm great at talking and public speaking is not my favourite thing in the world. I find it's such a good way to convey my thoughts to someone, whether it's through a performance or teaching or a video or even to myself. When you step into studio I struggle so much to create choreography so much but when I freestyle or when I put on a song that kind of speaks to me then my movement kind of conveys it cos I relate with it so it's really a form of expression that allows me to understand and express who I am.

Interview with Mariel and Keone Madrid

11 November 2015

As the interview contained conversation to build rapport and allow the respondent to guide direction of the topics, transcripts contain conversations deemed to be relevant to the project.

Building Block - Where did the idea come from?

Keone: The idea for Building Block came from a couple of factors. One being that both Mari and I have been teaching for a long time and have been fortunate enough to see dance communities all over the world. While there's a great amount of classes and training experiences out there, we did feel like there was a niche to fill with a certain kind of training that dancers were looking for. Often students will come up to us after class and ask "how can I train with you?" or, "what notes do you have for me?" and as a teacher, it's kind of disheartening to not be able to answer those questions, because in a class of a hundred people it's really hard to narrow it down to what is that they need to work on, or how can they grow. So that calling of a specific kind of training derived from the idea of personal training. Personally I come from a sports background, Mari comes from a gymnastics, and so we've both experienced the personal training regimen within a certain discipline with one on one training and have found that extensive amount of growth comes from that area. And plenty of disciplines have that, even within dance, there's not that many but ballroom has that a lot. Privates are such a big part of ballroom and jazz and smaller classes with intimate atmospheres where people can really hone in on the discipline that we do. So again, with all those in mind and us finding a really small space that kind of inspires the idea, it all kind of came together, and that's how it came about.

What's the process from when someone's signed up to Building Block to when they walk in the door of the Building Block experience?

Mari: Usually we'll talk to them and have a consultation. We'll already have a little bit of information from them about the very basic things –

where they come from, what their dance background is and what their goals are. So we have a little bit to go off, but really we can see it, we start off with basic grooving and stretching. Usually based off the grooving and what they said, we can see where they're at.

Keone: This is mine and Mari's way of conducting our sessions; the other teachers can conduct their sessions the way they prefer.

Mari: Sometimes we'll have a huge list of things that they wanna do, but we'll get to what we feel like is a priority for them as a dancer, and we don't want to skip over anything before we feel like they've really grasped it. And it depends on the dancer and what they wanna accomplish while they're there, and how much time we have with them. Five sessions of 90mins sounds like a long time but it actually is not that much.

Building Block has only been running for a year. Do you have any ideas of where you want to take it in the future at all?

Keone: Yeah, I think we'd love to bring the programme to other areas and studios. Initially we had the idea of opening other studios but I think what we've found is that it's not necessarily the space, it's more so about the programme of private sessions, double classes which is a 2.5 hour class with a small amount of students between 10-20 (depending on how big the space is), and then we're adding in a new part of the programme, the name is still in progress, but right now we're calling it Mentor Month, where anywhere between 10-20 students come in and train with a specific teacher for a month, once a week. And basically they're like on a team for a month and they have about two

3-5 hour sessions once a week with the instructor and in addition to that the instructor is working towards something—whether that's a performance or just putting together a video—it's something for everyone to kind of work towards as opposed to just training a bunch of people up at one time. So, those three elements we hope to bring to other studios and expand our reach in that way is what we look forward to doing.

What do you see as the most valuable for street dancers—building confidence or self-esteem, being part of a community, developing skill/technique, or having a sense of purpose?

Mari and Keone: Too hard, all of them.

Mari: I dunno, it really depends on the person. Every person is so different. Someone could be naturally really confident, they really don't need any help with that, but they could really need to experience being part of a community or being part of a team—it would teach them humility and confidence. They all kind of feed each other, I feel like that's something that we've learned about dance, like what we do: we choreograph, we teach, we perform, and all of those feed each other. Too much of one kind of throws everything out of balance. If I were to pick, I dunno…

Keone: Yea I think it's dependent on the person. They are all very important.

Based on your observations and experiences, in general, are there any of those that you think are lacking?

Mari: I think having a purpose is really important. We always tell our students - why are you doing things? Just for us personally, I think motive, and

finding out why you're doing something gives you direction and lets you have great motivation moving forward, especially when things get difficult, it's really helpful to have that. And then, ya know, you work really hard and it helps to have a place that you're going you know, or a sense of where you're going, instead of just working on technique and skill just because. And then also, I think community's super important because dancers—it's really easy to be really self-focused, and you have to have the realisation that you are a tiny part of something that is so huge and it's been going on for years, and that you get to be one little pin-point in the history of this like big beautiful thing and how important that is. Like it gives you a sense of responsibility and of wanting to honour both the past and future. So I think those stand out. And I then I feel like technique and skill is important but those are things that you learn along the way.

Keone: Yea I agree with Mari that purpose for us has been very important in giving us, instead of walking in circles, kind of straight direction. It's kind of, if you decide dance is something that you wanna pursue, I would say that that's a very important thing. But I guess if dance is like a hobby or something on the side that you do it's not the most important. But yeah, it's kind of a level of where you are in your dance career because you know when you start dancing it's just supposed to be fun and it's like this innocent relationship that you have with it. And then once things start getting serious and then that's when it's "ok what am I doing this for?". I think the community aspect of it - it is really important to have a strong circle of people around you to keep you grounded or lift you up, and to keep you working hard and on your toes at the same time. I would say those two things have really helped a lot in our

careers, and then the other stuff continues—the technique and skill, that's an ongoing process, it's never perfect. And the other one, confidence, same with that—confidence is an ongoing thing. Some people, even though they're built with confidence, everyone's human, and everyone runs into their moments where they lack that confidence.

Why do you dance and what does dancing mean to you? Personally and as a couple?

Keone: We have the same thing. We dance for a few reasons. I guess they're ordered in this order, one being for God. The reason why we're doing this is because of that, we would've stopped years ago but for us, God gave us a message that "you're gonna glorify me in what you do, and I will provide for you." And it's been insane since then. The second part of it is to provide for our family. We strive to have kids one day, so that's something we're building up to and it gives us a sense of "why are we doing this?", a purpose. And the third part of it is we love dancing. There's no denying that. If we didn't love it, it'd be really difficult to continue to do, but we love it and we care about it so much. And we believe that there are untapped potentials in the artistic side of dance that has not been exposed to a larger audience yet. I mean it has, but it comes and goes—it's that aspect of, when someone asks you what you're doing for your career, and you say I'm a dancer, it's not really taken so seriously. Sometimes that question is followed by "Oh, so what are you gonna do when you're done?" or "Oh, what else do you do for a job?"...

Can you draw out a little bit more what you mean about the artistic side of dancing?

Keone: Yea so I think maybe, when you think of film. Film has like the perfect balance. You have super popular films that are extremely entertaining that we all love, that everyone can talk about. And then there are films that are beautifully done and stir the mind and provoke positive thinking and conversation amongst people that leave you feeling a sense of motivation and I dunno, just a feeling that you have when you leave the theatre. We both feel that in dance sometimes there isn't—it isn't as equal as it is in film I would say. If I were to try and relate it in that way.

Mari: The way it's seen by the masses, especially street dance. It's like, oh well, Step Up or ABDC.

Keone: Those are the first questions that come to mind, which is not anyone's fault, it's the way that things have gone. And so, I think we'd love to bring that artistic side to urban dance.

Other than a choreographed sequence, what you do you hope for your students to take away from your classes?

Mari: So much, so much. There's a lot mentally that people can leave with from class, and whether that's a lesson they've learned, something that applies to their own life, whether it's that they want to release something that they've been holding on to emotionally or psychologically. I feel like there's a lot of that that we try to approach and give meaning and motivation behind all of our movement. So it's not just coming in and working on your technique. It is that, but it's also, you have to dig deeper into yourself than simply just physically. So yeah we want our students to walk away feeling too, that they feel motivated and that they feel empowered. And that it helps realise where they are with dance, their relationship with dance, and that they feel empowered to keep dancing, keep training, keep developing their own work. Ya know if they want to be teachers one day we want to encourage that so dance can live on, and just pass along the things that the teachers who've affected us, who've given to us. The teachers that I've taken so much from, I don't remember any of the moves they taught me. I definitely don't really remember any of the sequences or any of the classes but I remember the lessons that they taught me, whether I only took their class once or ya know, for a bunch of years.

Keone: We always say at the end of class that we hope the students walk away with more than just moves but, you know, ideas and concepts that they can apply to their dancing and to their lives so that's kind of just what we strive to give the students.

What advice would you give your students to get the most out of taking your class?

Mari: We say come in with an objective. Don't just walk into class, have a plan of attack. If you know you struggle with a certain thing then.. Like if you don't like to go in groups and you struggle with that, like go in with that intention.. If you struggle with performance or you're really shy it's like, "well I'm gonna be more bold and I'm going to push myself to perform. Cos you can come and you're gonna get something out of class no matter what as long as you make an effort. But if you know those areas, and know what your weaknesses are and really go further, your growth is a bit faster.

Keone: Come in as a student and not a superstar, thinking that you're gonna come in and perform somewhere. It's only teacher and students in the class there's no one else, it's not an audition. When you come in as s student, then you're able to come in and try things and the classroom is a place to fail and to succeed. Because failing is kind of successful in a classroom cos then you're able to understand things a little bit more so, I think that part is so important when you come into a class, just with that mindset, then you'll get the most out of it.

How has the class environment changed?

Mari: It's changed a tonne. Technology. The advances in technology have come into the classroom in both good and bad ways. I mean great that you can share stuff but the presence of a camera in a room can do stuff to students mentally, and put unwanted or unneeded pressure on them. The classroom is supposed to be safe and sacred, so when you automatically start opening it up to sharing things with the rest of the world without everyone's permission they're gonna feel pressured to be really good. Ya know, it's kind of hard for people to be vulnerable I think when that's there. Like Keone said, the classroom should be a place where you can make mistakes and where you can fail, and where people don't judge you for that. Suddenly you put this on the internet and it's a scary thing. I think that pressure is there now and you know, it's a reality like a lot of dancers want to have class footage for marketing purposes and it's just kind of how things are, but learning to deal with trying to balance out things. And then, I think also another thing with that is dance has been exposed more which is great. It's a wonderful thing that people are able to share stuff, but I think because of that—the quantity has gone up of people that are interested in dance, but the quality goes down.

Keone: One problem is that we thought that everyone in the class really wanted to pursue it or was really was passionate about it, in an advanced class. Nowadays in an advanced class, you get

students who have never taken a class before coming in A LOT of the time. That's a brand new element that we're all trying to understand that what we're doing is pretty in, it's a trend, it's a hobby that people are picking up on that they wanna try and they don't know where to go. You know when you pick a skateboard as a kid, the first thing you wanna do is a kick-flip, but you have to learn how to ollie first before. Or when you see breakdancing, the first thing kids wanna learn is a headspin, or do a flare or a windmill, but you have to learn how to do a six-step or even top rock first before they go to the ground. It's like that, that we're all trying to understand. I've personally learned to be more patient with that aspect. When it first started happening I'd be "what the heck, you shouldn't be here" but now I just, I get it. There's a mixture of fans, and dancers and people figuring out if they like it or not.

Mari: And that's a huge challenge in the classroom, it's a big challenge for a teacher. And so, if you're gonna be teaching workshops, you need to be aware of that, and kind of built in your skills and your confidence as a teacher so that you're able to handle challenges like that. Cos it's really hard to cater to people who have mixed levels in one room, and not completely ignore one. But, the great thing is that people are really into dance and they're looking at getting something out of it and I think that's something so wonderful and so beautiful that people are excited about it. I think too that's another reason why we wanted to start Building Block, so people can just come and be at the level they're at and we can help them get to where they want to go. Like if you have a room full of beginner students, it's good, we all grow together, and if we have class of intermediate students same thing, it's like all in one

it's really tough to challenge everyone the right way. I think also, intermediate, the level intermediate is kind of getting lost, at least with big events. There are a lot of people who are actually intermediate dancers who need the intermediate level but they're going to advanced classes and trying to hang on, and there's something that's been missed along the way. We're trying to figure out how to address it and help people get to where they wanna go.

Mari: Human connection. Real life connection. It's great if you've got these followers and you can market yourself. Especially when you're trying to teach, but when it comes down to it, you've gotta get in that classroom and you gotta teach, and you have to give them something. You can use it get the opportunity but if you're ready for the opportunity when it comes, it's not a good thing for dance in general. And things can get oversaturated or get weird. I think, I mean it's a great tool, but when you're ready. And I believe that you spend that time, and work hard, you really create your identity—not only in your style, but in your work, in yourself as a teacher (speaking specifically about people who are trying to go out and teach)... It takes time to develop that in yourself, and we see a lot of people who aren't ready, but then I don't know what the motive is. Maybe it's that they see their friends posting...

Street dance community and the relationship between that and social media, or between social media and community in general?

Keone: Social media presence has become such a thing - Facebook, Instagram, Twitter—within our career, and it's good and bad. It's hard to have a personal, cos social media was supposed to be like a personal thing right, and a way to connect with friends or people around the world. For us, it's just been a part of the business and part of our career, we have to have this presence, or connect with our supporters and our followers and keep that consistent. And I think what's that done is that's translated to the younger generation and they're saying "ok that's how it's supposed to be done" so before they've even pursued it as a profession, they're already doing those things—sharing videos of themselves dancing before they're even ready to do that, or I dunno, what you say in your bio, those kind of things that have changed. And people just tagging other people trying to get followers in different ways and hashtags and all of that crazy stuff. It's hard because I get it, I know people are just trying to make a living and make a career out of things, but it's almost, you can get lost in it. As opposed to trying to chase sustainability some people get lost in chasing fame, when sustainability is just the goal for everyone.

Mari: Yeah I feel like what we do has a different culture to street dance and hip hop and the different styles. They're two different worlds. And then I feel like industry is another world too. They're all sort of separate little pockets, and I think that they intertwine every now and then, especially now I feel like sometimes at events I get to be around teachers that are from what we call our community, like our team, competition. It's really great—more of that would be beneficial to everybody...

Would you say it's in a healthy place?

Mari: I wouldn't say lately but we're getting there. I think the world in general, the invention of the internet, and the invention of social media—those are two huge shifts in culture and I think that we're still trying to begin to, adapt to big, super important shift in how we communicate, see things and get information. So it's not gonna happen smoothly or overnight. Ultimately if people love dance and they love it for the right reasons and they're always asking themselves why then I think it's going to continue to grow and thrive and go in the right direction.

What are the right reasons?

Mari: I mean it depends for each person, but for us I think that if you have an unselfish reason for dancing.

Based on all of these observations, where would you say the street dance community is at today?

Keone: Street dance is still very young, especially what we do is extremely young, but street dance is old.

Mari: It's still being defined.

Keone: I feel like it's that young, maybe late teens, early twenties kid who's still trying to figure out what they want to do, but has a lot of potential and a lot of great ideas and has all the talent in the world, but not set in his direction. It's hard because street dance as a whole, there's so much going on, the hip hop world, and battles, and shows, and then what we're doing and our style, which I have no idea what it is.

Keone: Dance is supposed to be, if you go to the core of what dancing is—it's supposed to be a celebration, a worship and a social gathering of people. It's not meant to be kept individually, it's not meant to be kept to yourself, it's supposed to be a shared thing. If you continue to share and keep things in a selfless environment, I guess that's the way I would see it being right. It's weird where dance is just by itself what it is.

Example of Real Talk blog post
"Classroom Etiquette x Technology"
By Mariel Madrid

So it's a thing now. Phones have entered every dimension, every space, including the classroom, granted not the regular classroom, but the ways in which the ability to record something has shot their pea shoot tendrils in between our eight counts and turned into a forest that can be really messy to navigate. Sometimes it's great, yes, but often times I feel that the presence of a camera in a classroom, phone or not, can be incredibly invasive and detrimental to growth.

There are so many reasons that recording has become a regular presence. People love to keep track of things. I understand this. I used to record myself dancing pieces I choreographed and also pieces I just was trying to practice with the purpose of understanding my movement better. Recording myself was a growth tool. I was able to step outside of myself and watch from a viewer's perspective. See what works, what doesn't, what can be better, more clear. Often people do things like a "dance log" where they record themselves in classes to keep track of their dancing. But here's where I draw the line. In class. Bringing that situation into the classroom. I never understood this. Class is learning time. Working, digesting, fighting to "get" something. It is completely absurd to me that in the midst of the learning process of a dance class, one that is exhilarating, challenging, emotional, and intense, that one has the time to go to their bag, get out their phone, and ask someone who is also trying to concentrate, to record you. I find it not only disrespectful of the teacher and other students, but so much effort.

What would be the problem with recording yourself after a class? When you're alone? Even after you've let things settle into your body and brain more? Proper execution doesn't come after 60-90 mins of learning. I can't count the amount of times I had to practice things outside of classes to "get it." And yes I would record myself, but in the privacy of my own home, training on my own, for only my eyes, and solely for the purpose of wanting to get better. My 15 year old self would have wanted to die if anyone watched those videos, I would have been so embarrassed. Not to say that's right, but I was very much still in the beginning stages of my dance and I didn't necessarily want to share it with the world until I got better. It's like trying to talk with a mouth full of water, you want to communicate, but people can't understand you. I wanted to develop my voice before even daring to try and say something.

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or when a person keeps dance to themselves.

Mari: A shared thing. If you're in a selfish place, and you're making something for selfish reasons, it's a different kind of thing, the vibe it puts out. And I've been there, I have to check myself all the time. That's a human thing, not only dance but anything that humans are doing or thinking.

Any other comments about dance, social media, and identity?

Mari: I think that finding your identity has to happen outside of social media, and social media should just be an extension of who you are.

Keone: It (social media) doesn't define you.

Mari: You're you and then you decide to share with everybody else is what you decide to share. I think that's gonna be a challenge for anyone who is a leader or a teacher to give to the next generations and that's really really important, to encourage them and empower them to realise their potential and to help them and guide them to find their own identity and not be dependent on social media as verification that they're any good. Cos there are plenty of people who are incredible and don't, once you start playing the comparison game, you start feeling like you're less than somebody else and that's not true. It's not a source of truth I guess. It's just a thing. That's an important thing to know and to be teaching and to be aware of. Who knows, social media now, but what else could be next you never know. I dunno I guess like, as an artist you're used to making yourself vulnerable, but there's a certain kind of strength that needs to be able to come along with that, cos you're so open to people and now I feel like there's so many opportunities for people

to be so open, that sometimes it just kind of opens everything up, and you can get really hurt. Building people up, not totally ingrained with it, but away from it.

Keone: Social media and even dance doesn't define you. You can be a good person and still make great things too, and you can be a great person and not be on social media and that's fine. Your identity will come along, and young people don't be in a rush to figure out what that is, and your experiences will help define that for you. So you have to go through life, it's forever changing because you go through different things and it's like this melting pot of different things and I dunno, I just don't want people to think that those things define you.

A lot of people talk about being present these days. Being mindful. I think this has a lot to do with this. We have to let go of a thought that if we don't record something it's worth is somehow less. Or of having the need to show everything about ourselves. There is a time and a place. I find it to be more effective when people work quietly and then emerge after having grown. It shows not only hard work and dedication, but character. And isn't that what it's all about anyway? And further I think a very valuable question to ask yourself before posting online is "am I doing this to either get validation or attention or some sense of acceptance?" Even if you get these immediate things, they are so fleeting. Tessandra Chavez, a choreographer and teacher I respect so much recently said, "Confidence is earned." This is so true, and it happens through years of hard work in person. In participating in person. Earning respect from your community and for yourself in person. This cannot ever be replaced digitally, no matter how many videos you post. I often wonder what the affects on character development will be in the long run.

Here's the next thing; sacred space. To me, the classroom is sacred. The classroom is the place you go over and over again to make mistakes, to make little triumphs, to be challenged. It is a home. A simultaneous balance of hardship and acceptance. I know some teachers use the presence of a camera to push their students, and yes, I get that angle depending on the environment, community, and/or industry you are training your dancers for. However, there needs to be a line drawn. Students don't need to be coddled, but they also need to be able to freely explore and express without a camera sneaking in the corner capturing every move and subconsciously putting pressure on people to fear mistakes. Further, for those mistakes to be potentially immortalized by being posted online. This of course depends on the teacher and the aim of the class, but I find it to be distracting when a camera comes barging into the environment a teacher has built with their students and demands acknowledgement.

Here's the flip side of the camera in class. Marketing is master. These days there are many people throwing events, starting organizations, competitions, shows, opening studios, and having company classes. These are all building blocks of making a community and creating places for people to gather for a shared love. There is certainly a perhaps romanticized way of thinking that these things are more special when they are built "underground," and through word of mouth. This is not a common thing these days. To stay in the running, to have a

chance to reach people, social media has taken over. Now it is required reading for events to hire a camera crew, and for organizations to have a social media position with a person constantly at the helm posting updates. Sure, it's not required, but often the events and studios that are attracting many people and therefore keeping their businesses afloat have a strong online presence and this is where the collision happens. Businesses need promotion, but classrooms need to keep their magic. Where do we draw the line on both ends?

This is a discussion and cause of traction all over the world. It's one of those things that happen in private conversations and strong opinions on either side. Sometimes heartfelt disagreements and division can happen over these opposing presences in dance. One end says keep the old ways, while the other says the world is changing and we need to keep up with it's every 100mph hairpin turn. I'm not sure if either one of these extremes is right. Perhaps what needs to happen is the discussion between organizations and teachers needs to be had more often. I think both sides of the coin can learn from the other. As a teacher I want to protect my students and make sure that their learning space is free for them to explore, succeed, and fail while still feeling safe. I also know that media presence is maybe something that all will need to learn how to deal with.

Maybe teachers need to take control of their classrooms more often and to speak more directly on reasons for the camera's presence and it's motives. To be candid about this issue. To know the rules of their classroom. Maybe the camera has to respect the teacher and students needs as well as the event. Maybe there needs to be more communication before classes between media teams and teachers about when they should be documenting; being sensitive to when and how the camera's presence is appropriate. There are many avenues to finding resolutions to these issues, but I find that often people don't take the initiate to communicate their true concerns. It's a sticky place, but a conversation that needs to be had. Not only for the sake of teaching, but for the sake of learning, sharing, and being able to let dance grow to it's fullest potential. I do believe harmony is possible, but we as people, no matter what role you play: student, teacher, event organizer, or any kind of leader, must be thinking deeply about these issues and their subconscious effects. It's our unspoken responsibility. New eras, new problems, yet new chances to make great new growth that benefits all.