Notes on Choreography

The last dance piece I created, Stunning!, explored what it means to create beauty for the screen.

And how to "stun" audiences into attention when navigating this emerging market of the Attention Economy.

The aesthetics of the piece come from not only my technical training as a dancer but the technical requirements for making dance in the COVID pandemic-era shift towards the digital.

The timeline in which widely accessible technology has progressed from telephones to instant video communication often feels like science fiction.

Telecommunication technology like that of Zoom entered our daily life in such a rapid way that culture is still trying to adapt to it.

And the dances I have been making, stage the stress and vulnerability of navigating a developing future in front of an audience.

The unmuting, the duo identification, the video pinning, screensharing, bluetooth, syncing, syncing, syncing, the digital labour, that we have been forced to learn how to do In order to keep eyes on us in an era of **fried attention.**

During performance I want dancers to be more than performers doing choreography, I want Somaticly-informed technicians, rethinking attention, surveillance, and the politics of dancing under conditions of endless scrolling.

I no longer have a need or desire to be in a world that has proven itself so poorly designed for the comfort, safety, or future of community and of artistic living.

This is honestly where I begin to make a choreography from.

And allowed rehearsals to have an importance. My way of stepping towards a better experience online and offline. I believe we need spaces that build the physical skills we need to create a better world.

What do we create when facing a future where we're unsure what could happen next? This is the logic the dancing operates under.

I become a broken umbrella sticking out of the garbage. My dangerous metal limbs bent in frightening angles, the roundness of the umbrella now a forgotten illusion when you see me uncovered. My metal monster hand that once provided protection, sanctuary, comfort now betrays you with my true form. The mechanics that make that illusion possible, the engineering of the everyday, failed.

While in the dance, dancers must do very serious work, this humor thing, this building a green screen thing. It infects the performance, allowing the throwaway of improvised movement to be visible just enough.

The two positions I return to when creating movement are that of the baby robin that lived in my garage, and screenneck.

The robin cranes its neck at an impossible angle, mouth agape, helpless, hungry, and becomes to me this alternative to a now default position of Screenneck.

Screenneck being that awful, cramped, barely looking up position with neck muscles weak and engagement almost entirely from the chin. Eyes baggy and tired, with hands planted into one's chest. Lifting only from the shoulders and splayed at the keyboard.

Still from "**Charlie Jones On The Computer**" Henry Selick (dir.), Coraline, 2009

It is informed by those illustrations in ergonomic chair ads, the grotesque posture diagrams with red glowing pain emanating from misshapen human spines.

Through full-out dancing with the cast, I found myself choreographing a spider-like, forced high-arch physicality with a teetering, infantile rhythm. One where dancers let their long limbs flail and their boneless feet slap the floor. There is no traditional engagement with technique, but rather a desperate locomotion born out of rehearsal-as-performance. The drama came from a disorienting doubleness, a mix of two monsters: trained bodies misusing the rigor of Graham and Limon to throw themselves into a body that can not perfectly perform both without glitch. That doubleness carries the ache of being more adaptable than the structures meant to lead us. Manifesting in tantrum, refusal, and the impossibility of fitting into the screen.

Solo performance emerges from this stew: becoming a baby Oni barreling through a village square, stealing liquor bottles, eating raw fish, befriending cranes who bow their necks and lift him into the clouds. The creature in this solo is monstrous, but light. Stunning but parody. A parody of Eros blooming into something queerer, more excessive, and refusing. The solo work morphed into what I began to think of as the dance of the internet troll. It is danced with a committed frustrated yet trained body. A body that finds beauty in the control of sudden and explosive shifts. A choreography of refusal and individualism.

There is no technological savior and I doubt there will be.

There is no current technological innovation that will save us.

There is no tech that will save our humanity.

A melancholic tone of the dance begins to take shape for me as I watch the dance. I am confused for the longest time, but it's because of the mix of the music, and the commitment of the dancers, and the insistence to get this shoddy technology to work wonders, and the animalistic-innovative-sissy-strangeness of the alien baby moves, and the fact that these are all in defiance of an easy fix, of a technological save.

The images that the screen projects back to the audience exist because of the dancers' hard work on stage. There is no easy way to make this dance work, to make the components fit, the costumes organic, the makeup lived-in. It had to be made through the everyday commitment the dancers made to be here. We had to choose to do this dance every day, to struggle through the screen, to put our possible technological failures on display.