

## **TASK 4: COMMENTARY**

Over the course of this task, I have grown and learned more than I thought was possible. My journey has taught me so much more than just about dance alone; it has taught me how to express my identity creatively through my artistic story. I have also learned how to better express myself through my choices of music and movements, and more importantly, the impact of my artistic response to the people surrounding me. I have come to realize how significant storytelling through art can be.

**Researching:** At this initial stage, I conducted independent research on 2 different choreographers and explored how these individuals, tell a story through art using different styles of dance. While analyzing their dance backgrounds and works, their individual dance styles was somewhat the inspiration behind the dance genre I ultimately chose for my own dance – a fusion of Contemporary and *Polyswagg*. I was greatly inspired by Loni Landon's highly dynamic and challenging movements and at the same time, was equally enthused by Parris Goebel's strong, hard-hitting moves that goes to demonstrate woman fire with aggressive inner strength. Thus, I figured that a fusion of these 2 dance styles would be perfect.

**Planning:** At this stage, I narrowed down the themes I had in mind for my dance, organized and decided on the space measurements I required for my performance, selected an appropriate costume and finally, planned a rehearsal schedule for myself so that I can set aside some time every day to choreograph and rehearse my dance piece.

Research I conducted in the earlier stage on the styles and works of 2 different choreographers was also a major contribution to the final theme I finalized upon for my dance piece – Feminism, that is. With my chosen theme in mind, I began choreographing the movements of my dance. Looking back, I experimented with a variety of composition techniques such as repetition, variation and contrast, to come up with the movements of my dance.

When deciding on the space measurements and selecting a performance area, I was as thorough as possible. I came to a conclusion that the main criteria I'm looking for in my ideal performance space, is its cleanliness, safety and appropriateness to the style of my dance. Thus, the most ideal venue that fulfilled this criterion had to be the school's dance room. The room consisted of large mirrors, a sophisticated audio system and provides the audience with adequate viewing space. To demonstrate my exploration of using space as a solo dancer, I measured and marked out my performance space area using some masking tape; the edges and any other critical areas where my props may be placed are marked too.

Choosing the music for my dance, I realized, has an enormous influence over the overall atmosphere of my dance. At this stage, I planned edits and used fade-ins and outs effects to ensure the music I used had a smooth transition.

Costumes and props were also introduced at this point. These are factors that can influence the overall look of my dance. I decided on my costume design by making sure it keeps up with the style of my dance and should add to, not detract from, both the movement and the theme. Since my dance is a fusion of contemporary styles and '*Polyswagg*', I wanted for my costume to be close-fitting so much so that each and every movement of mine is enhanced and can be seen clearly. In short, the costume I decided on, that consisted of a jeans jacket, matching dark blue colored long sleeved shirt and full-length leggings is comfortable to dance in and suits the theme of the performance.

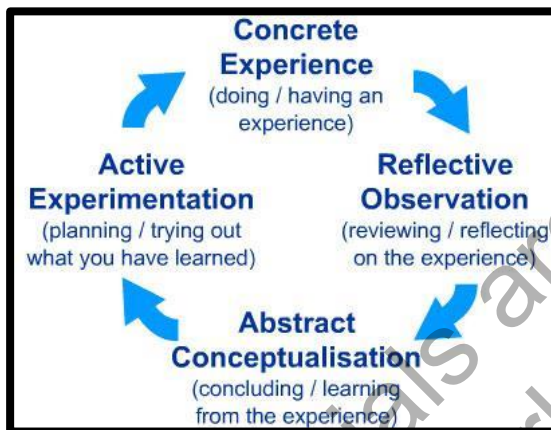
**Creating & Performing:** Adhering to my rehearsal schedule posed as quite a challenge for me as I found it difficult to cope with the overwhelming workload, coupled with preparations for the upcoming final year examinations. However, it was also this, that made me realize that regardless of any circumstances, I should give 100% commitment to this e-portfolio. To ensure I stay organized all throughout this process, I tried to visualize in my mind, the intended outcomes I wish to see in my dance and was also able to schedule time, even though

not as long as I hoped to spend, to rehearse and choreograph the movements that incorporated the use of props in my dance.

Along the way, I had to admit that I was indecisive at times about the types of movements used. This indecisiveness saw me altering parts of my dance even when it may be unnecessary. When I choreograph my dance, I constantly ask myself if the movements are consistent and relevant to the theme or the 'story' that I'm expressing.

Once the choreography is set, I did one final rehearsal in the actual performance space and practiced all my entrances and exits for the dance.

When I finally performed, it was no doubt I felt extremely nervous. Performing alone was much different than performing solo, yet at the same time, I did feel excited to showcase my story for the audience, which I hope they enjoyed watching as much as I did choreographing.



Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle

The following is my structured reflection based on Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle, that is typically represented by a four-stage learning sequence.

## 1. Concrete Evidence

*How did you feel? How did you react?  
What choices did you have?*

It's remarkable that telling a story, one of the things that we do almost naturally every day, can end up being one of the most challenging to do well. This is something I've come to realize over the course of this task.

Modern choreography these days, no longer try to bring an audience through an actual story. This was much of a challenge for me as it meant I had limited resources to refer to; therefore, most of my ideas came directly from my own experiences and how I perceived my identity to be. In a way, this was a good experience for me as it reduced my dependence on other resources (particularly online resources) and instead, encouraged me to work independently to achieve the objectives of this task.

## 2. Reflective Observation

*Identify the positives. Identify the things that could have gone better.  
What were the barriers to success? What needs improvement?*

Life is full of experiences we can learn from; this task has exposed me to several challenges of which, has made me a better person.

My journey throughout this task has been well. I was able to use my acquired knowledge from the research I conducted, to purposefully inform artistic decisions in the process of creating my own dance, demonstrate proper application of skills and techniques while performing my dance, and through my dance, develop an imaginative and coherent artistic intention that intends to ultimately reflect my identity.

As this task progressed, I experienced a range of mixed emotions. In the early stages of my dance, I found it difficult to express and tell my story through my movements despite dance being a strength of mine. I felt a tinge of anxiety within me because I was worried that the story behind my dance was not evident to the audience and I continued feeling this way for quite some time. It continued to perplex me even more when I knew I didn't have much help to rely on as this is something that is unique to my identity and it may be difficult for others to understand my story.

It wasn't until a point where I really composed myself that I arrived at a stage of realization. This was when I decided that if I wanted to tell my stories through my dance, I should first savor the process of creating the dance itself. I imagined how I would verbally communicate the story behind my dance to a person and subsequently from there, convert my words into movements. Using this method, I was able to come up with movements for my dance relevant to my story, much easily now. One of the things I've come to learn of is that the way the music, costumes and props/stimulus are woven into the story largely determines how engaged one's audience will be. In my opinion, I think the incorporation of props in my dance has room for improvement. I feel I should have used the mirror prop more frequently throughout the dance as it was the key symbol of my dance theme, feminism and that it didn't exactly receive the amount of attention it deserved.

Reflecting back, I would say that this task for me, progressed relatively well despite the barriers to success, which I still overcame, at the end.

### **3. Abstract Conceptualization**

*What conclusions can you draw? What have you learnt?  
How does this relate to the real world?*

I have come to understand that time management isn't a skill that can be taught, instead it's one that needs to be learnt. Under time constraints, I learnt to plan my time wisely so that sufficient time can be delegated to rehearsing my dance, completing school work as well as revision. Working with realistic goals was extremely helpful and I believe that this skill that I've picked up, will certainly be one that will come in handy in the real world as it will boost my productivity and improve my time management when I enter the workplace.

### **4. Active Experimentation**

*What might you do differently?  
What/who might help?*

From the challenges I faced in incorporating props and setting aside quality time to rehearse my dance, I reckoned that the next time, I should aim to select props which are easier to incorporate, to avoid similar cases in the future. I should also ensure that I make full use of the time dedicated to dance classes in school to rehearse and choreograph movements for my dance so that I'm able to save more time for other school works and revision when I'm at home. The dance room is an ideal venue as I also get to rehearse in the actual performance space.

Given another chance to repeat this task, I would definitely ask for more help from my dance instructor and constantly request of his opinion of my dance movements so that I'm aware of the areas that needs to be improved and whether or not the story of my dance is evidently displayed. This is sure to help enhance the overall quality of my dance piece.

## **Can artists shape the world through storytelling?**

The art of dance itself is a language if one is able to express it well. Dance, as a theatrical art form, is a powerful means of communication due to its ability to express ideas when words can't. Choreographers are the drive behind the creative process of each dance, experimenting and developing the movements we see. Through storytelling, an identity is constructed. Stories allow artists to communicate who they are and help to construct our own understanding of who we are. Artists are able to change the way people view the world because art is such a powerful way for people to convey a message or tell a story. Sometimes, a dance alone could reveal a stronger message than any written stories could ever do.

## **How does culture influence the interpretation of the story? Does culture determine aesthetic preference and understanding of the story?**

Culture surely has a lot to do with this. There are many ways of telling stories, and people from different cultures go about it in strikingly different ways. For instance, if we look into Western culture, typical stories follow the journey of a hero, starting out on a quest, overcoming obstacles, and bringing back pride to his/her community. Western cultures also tend to adopt a rather direct approach of putting things, while many Asian cultures prefer to tell their stories in indirect ways. The Chinese is a good example as they are used to telling stories in ways that seem quite circuitous to most Westerners. While a Chinese may be used to this style of storytelling, and can easily interpret the essence of the story, a Westerner may take a longer time to do the same.

Just like the interpretation of stories, most cultures also differ in what is considered beautiful. In India, spiritual myths are portrayed across the genre of art, and the resemblances of life and love to these stories are imbued with aesthetic beauty. In Chinese history, aesthetics were seen rather as intellectual pursuit, with notable thinkers like Confucius dedicating himself to the study of art. In short, aesthetic preference can be determined by culture and therefore may vary fundamentally between societies.

## **How do the artists tell stories?**

Dancing itself is a form of non-verbal storytelling. Artists usually present their stories by using a series of images, or in this case, movements that represent pivotal moments in their story, or they select a central moment to stand for the whole story. Artists, particularly dancers, weave information into their dance by arousing the audience's emotion and energy through their choices of music, props, stimulus and their movements.

## **Does culture define aesthetics?**

No it doesn't. Within each cultural context and time period, what is considered beautiful and the criteria for determining beauty may vary and thus in my opinion, there are no universally applicable criteria that could be used to define the value of aesthetics.

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