

ARTIFICIAL LIGHT PROJECT

by

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by

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Abstract: As a choreographer, one of my biggest inspirations comes from observing and experiencing human interactions. For my Senior Choreography project, I wanted to explore a couple types of human interactions that relate. The first is just the general idea that each interaction we have influences us in some way, shape, or form. Second, I wanted to explore how we see each other. I wanted to focus on the idea that everyone perceives each other differently. Finally, I chose to dive into who we are when we are alone. I used these three ideas in my senior thesis project and created movement to express each of them.

It is difficult to pinpoint what art means to me but all in all I think art is made to elicit a reaction. I tend to make pieces about human tendencies, abnormalities, and the irony of human behavior as a whole. I want people to reflect on themselves while they watch my work. I want them to fully experience whatever reaction arises for them while observing dance and hopefully learn something new about themselves or the world around them.

While I do not outright reject traditional technique in my work, I tend to stray from it. I believe this allows the audience to relate to the work more and take it into the context of their own lives. That being said, I do enjoy incorporating more traditional lines in my work in ways that are unexpected. What fuels my choreography primarily is human interaction and how people relate to one another. Whether seeking approval, attempting to express themselves, or trying to relate to one another, humans are always concerned with the thoughts and opinions of other humans. We as humans are such a strange, interesting species and the interactions I observe and experience daily are what I try to express through my choreography.

As an artist, I would describe myself as direct, intentional, human, unsatisfiable, and questioning. I am direct in what I want and intentional in the sense that I love to play with the smallest of movements to create a certain feeling. These nuances are a large part of my work, as my work is less dancer and more human. I am unsatisfiable because I never want to settle because there is so much to be done and so little time. I constantly question my work and how to edit it.

At the core of my both my choreography and dancing are my values and beliefs. I believe that all humans are equal and should be treated as such despite gender, sexuality, social status, age, or race. I believe that dance is a privilege and those who are lucky enough to experience it should treat it as such. I believe that if humans reflected on themselves more and tried to understand one another, the world would be a better place.

In 2016 when I first came to East Carolina University and was made aware of the importance of our Senior Choreography Project, I immediately began thinking about what I wanted mine to be. For dance majors, Senior Choreography is a culmination of everything learned from freshman year to senior year. It is a chance to reflect and create something meaningful to each individual. Prior to coming to ECU in 2016 I had not choreographed a piece of my own and was not sure what the next four years would hold. Little did I know, choreography would become an outlet for me and is now not only one of my favorite things to do but also my career.

The piece I chose to create for Senior Choreography was based on human interaction which is a pillar of my choreography and something I often took to for inspiration. Over the past four years, I have watched myself transform into a completely different person. I feel like this has been because of a lot of self-reflection but also because of the people I have met and been impacted by. Through this project, I wanted to explore how interpersonal interactions shape individuals as well as the idea that everyone sees one another in a different light.

One of my favorite concepts is the idea that everyone perceives each other differently. For example, let's say we both know a person named Sam. While we both know this person, the version of Sam that I know is different from the version of Sam that you know. The way I see it, this is because of different interactions we have had with Sam as well as past experiences that shape the way we view people. This played into my Senior Choreography Project concept and how I thought of the relationships between my dancers.

Another idea that I considered when creating this piece was the concept of how interactions, no matter how small, shape us as humans. Whenever someone comes into our lives, they make an impact on us whether it's big or small. In the past four years, I have had countless interactions with people both good and bad that have completely shaped how I view

both myself and the world. Many of the most meaningful coming from the dance program's students and faculty but especially my professors. Dave taught me how to think outside the box, John taught me how to be caring and patient, Teal taught me how to be a strong woman, and Tommi taught me selflessness. These people made me realize how much there is to learn from everyone around me and truly helped shape me into the person I am today.

The final concept that I was working with in this piece was the thought of "who are you when no one is around?" Who are we when there is no one there to label us? What is it that makes us who we are when we are alone? No one else can ever determine this for us because they will never see or be able to understand who we are when we are alone. Personally, I almost always feel like I am being watched so understanding who I am without outside judgement is a personal struggle I often experience. For this reason, I had my dancers stay on stage at random points and watch each other dance.

My Senior Choreography piece started in the dark so that the audience could only hear my dancers and not see them. When the lights came up, the dancers were walking around the stage in all different directions. One dancer would stop and then another would come up and change their orientation before continuing on. This symbolized a "fast-forwarded" version of life to me. Going through life, having an interaction, it affecting you, and then that person leaving in some way. The dancers began to fall toward the end of this section to show that it can be hard to leave someone behind.

In the next section one part that really was meaningful to me was an image that I created of one dancer picking another up by their chin. This to me symbolized someone helping another person without them knowing. For this entire section the dancers moved on and off stage and flowed between different partnerships and groupings. I just wanted to show the natural rhythm

of life and how we move through different types of relationships. The section ended with a group section to show a sense of unity in humanity.

I played with the idea of only knowing our version of someone in a section that I called “light and shadows.” In this section, I had some dancers perform downstage in complete darkness while others performed in a stream of light upstage. These dancers were only able to be seen through the cracks of the downstage dancers. This to me was an expression of the idea of only knowing part of who someone is through an obstructed view.

The final section of my Senior Choreography project was a solo by my friend Victoria. It began with people watching her do it but eventually she was the only one on stage; a first for this piece. In this solo, she went through moments of gyration, moments of stillness, and moments of flow. She was expressing what it’s like to figure out who you are when you’re alone without everyone's judgement.

My four years at East Carolina University led me to create my Senior Choreography thesis piece, *Artificial Light Project*. I chose this title because I believe we each see one another in a different light almost like we are wearing colored glasses, hence the name “artificial light.” With the help of my professors, I was able to create a piece that I feel summarizes what I have learned during my time here. My dancers were amazing and really brought this piece to life and I can never thank them enough.

Senior Choreography Video Link: <https://youtu.be/teXOFrGiTOs>