

Analysis of the outcomes of the 1st intervention –

Comparison of the outcomes of the intervention and the process/ outcomes of another research artist –Personal Reflection

Intervention 1

As I described before, my first intervention was based on my thought of intervening in the unity of the senses in order to test how sensory modes in our bodies experience vitality affects as dynamic shifts or patterned changes within ourselves or others.

The first notice that I have made (after watching the video with the two performers improvising in isolation one from the other), using the 'open' score that I mentioned above, was the following: even if I tried to 'balance' the dominance of the sense of vision with the other senses of touch and hearing, their experience through the exploration of the movement remained on the surface.

Reflecting on what happened, the first reason that the outcomes were not the expected ones was the fact that I didn't 'block' the performers' sense of vision. I only isolated the two performers in order to avoid any imitation or mirroring each other's movement, expecting to discover different qualities through their improvisation and to become more vulnerable with the goal to let a vitality affect to happen.

I think that a perspective for the development of this idea could be a new 'open' score with my proposal to the performers to close their eyes, insisting on the observation and the embodied awareness through the utilization of the other two senses of touch and hearing, while they are improvising.

In the same way, I would also like to intervene in the unity of senses, by blocking the sense of hearing (close their ears) and focusing on the senses of vision and touch through their explorative improvisation. The last idea emerged by the feedback that I got from the performers, as they told me that the wall was blocking their sense of hearing (something that I hadn't predicted before) and in any case they were concentrated more on the senses of vision and touch.

As far as it concerns the sense of touch, I thought that my instruction to the performers to touch literally the walls, the plants or any object which surrounds them and metaphorically the space, opens up new pathways for the future.

Firstly, I think that I could repeat the same process, using the 'open' score of the literal touch of objects and afterwards discussing with them and questioning what the affect is. How does it feel to touch a plant or to touch a wall? Can you move by bringing back this sense? Is it different the way you move in every session of improvisation?

Secondly, due to the fact that I am intending to create a site-specific performance, I realize now that I have to make an external research to the knowledge domain that I am practicing now (the phenomenon of affect attunements and vitality affects) and search for reference sources in the field of site-specific performance, the theatre/dance performance in relation with the archaeological perception and imagination (as I have also expressed my wish to present my performance in ruins or abandoned places).

Thirdly, I decided to involve Forsythe's improvisation skills in our next rehearsal, in order to create a supportive condition for the performers to 'touch' metaphorically the space and 'play' with the dimensions in it. I am wondering what the result will be if I transfer my embodied knowledge to my dancers (from our workshop with Amy in Block B) and give them time for research in the studio before we move outside. I hope that they can have a clearer direction and the outcomes will be more productive for me, concerning the creation of the craft.

Last but not least, influenced and inspired by the artist/researcher Isabel Lewis, I assume that the primary senses of vision, hearing and touch are interrelated with dance movement research. Especially, in the field of vitality affects they are involved in a natural way. For this reason, I am questioning myself how and if I can utilize other senses in my research which are not directly connected with the dance performance field. What if I could evolve the sense of smell? In which ways and what the outcome would be?

For this reason, I made my first experiment with my students in improvisation in the studio. I brought four herbs: oregano, basil, lavender and anise. The score that I gave to them was to close their eyes and without knowing what it is, to smell one herb per time. Then, each one could improvise keeping the awareness on this sense of smell with her/him

During the discussion that we had afterwards, some of them told me that they improvised according to the fact that they liked (or not) the smell, but the majority said that they moved according to memories that the herb they smelled brought forward. This is an important outcome which relates to the outcomes that Isabel Lewis describes in her interview *Isabel Lewis: The scent of Bergain and talking plants* (2017).

Comparison of the outcomes of the intervention with another research artist with similar subject of enquiry / Personal Reflection

To begin with, I could say that I was inspired and influenced by the methodology and process that Isabel Lewis follows in order to evolve the unity of the senses in her performances and to create conditions that all senses are co-present and equally participate in the experience of movement: touch, vision, hearing and smell.

In her interview, “*Embodied Presence: Isabel Lewis Interviewed by Brook Holmes*” (2019), she describes the preparation of her new commission entitled *Existing Otherwise* which was hosted in the Philadelphia Art Alliance, a building which was built in the beginning of 20th century in an Italian Renaissance style. She focuses on erasing the difference between the landscape/backdrop and the performers.

She spends time at every place where she works, in order to bear witness to the loudness of absence: what remains unseen but felt. Her goal is to be able to awaken the space and this thought influences her in the way she creates movement scores and she approaches the performers. She requires a high degree of concentration in the physical mode of engagement with the space, avoiding any representation of the past forms.

Lewis (2019) supports that she utilizes the sound design not only to be heard but felt moving throughout the space. Smell also has an important role in her choreography. For this reason, she invites scientists to analyze and capture the building’s existing smells with the tendency to archive its present state and to generate a gathered presence. She (2019) supports that sensing together makes for a kind of intimacy that transcends being in the same place and in the same space.

Concerning specifically smell, in her other interview *Isabel Lewis: The scent of Bergain and talking plants* (2017), she describes her cooperation with the Scandinavian chemist Sissel Tolaas in order to create 3 different smells and capture them in small vials for her performance *Occasions*.

Her choice to create and utilize the smell of garden, the intellectual smell of a library and the smell of night clubs in *Occasions* (2017) is not related only to the fact that she has made research on the relation between smell and bodily memory but also to her will to balance the dominance of the visual. She (2017) wants to heighten the other senses in order to balance the way that we read an artwork: not only with our eyes but with the whole human sensorium.

Thus, comparing to my current practice and the first intervention that I created, I think that the similarity is that I wanted also to balance the dominance of the visual and that's why I isolated the performers in the two catacombs. Also the fact that I decided to 'host' my practice in an outdoor space (ruins), I guess it has to do with the influence by Lewis' process, as I was intending to activate and enrich all senses, to create a condition for them to be co-present with the natural landscape.

The idea to make this experiment with smell with my students in improvisation is another intervention (unfortunately I didn't record the session) that I want to investigate with my performers for the future. It is an important discovery that I tested the fact that the bodily memory and smell are connected and it was confirmed by the feedback I got from my students.

To conclude, I think that my research on Isabel Lewis' process made me reflect on other possible trajectories that I can include in my methodology and 'break' my habits as a choreographer. Specifically, in the field of affect attunements and the theory of vitality affects, it guided me to create 'open' scores for the performers which are developed through my observation to the momentary changes and arise from the outcomes of process. This is a radical change in my methods as they were focused on 'close' scores until now and I was used to create specific patterns and motifs for my choreographies.

The comparison between the theory of the unity of the senses and my practice proved that it is true that senses are united in order to perceive a unified world. Thus, the process that I have experienced with my performers and the first intervention that I created in order to (dis)unite them, even if the outcomes were not the expected ones, taught me a useful methodology for my future practice.

Through, the first intervention I realized what it didn't work and why and reflecting on it, I made other decisions (the ones mentioned above) which I hope that can develop my practice research in the next steps.

Reference Sources

Lewis, I. (2017, August 24). *Isabel Lewis: The scent of Bergain and talking plants* (Celina Basra, Interviewer) . Retrieved from <http://scentury.com/isabel-lewis-scent-berghain/>

Lewis, I. (2019, September 19). *Embodied Presence: Isabel Lewis Interviewed by Brooke Holmes* (B. Holmes, Interviewer). Retrieved from <https://bombmagazine.org/articles/embodied-presence-isabel-lewis-interviewed/>