

Meredith Bove
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Forgetting the Dance

Exposing process is an intimate act. Process reflects our consciousness, renders it visible, in a way. Process is also difficult to track and to keep record of, in part because it never remains the same, one day to the next. Its shifty nature can make it unpopular - it's easier to present something to the world that is deemed "finished," because finished products are singular. Yet presenting finished dance also feels tricky for me. I have never felt that I've intuitively known when or why a dance is complete. Over the past two years, I've worked on, changed, re-contextualized and stewed in a project that has never felt finished. Each time I prepared to perform the work, I would spend some weeks living with the ideas involved, shifting things around, adding and subtracting. Even though change felt necessary, these changes also produced a lot of fear. I would document rehearsals obsessively, for practical purposes of having a visual for what I was doing. This is what I told myself. But really, the true reason that I would document so thoroughly was because I was terrified of losing the original work, or the current version, with each subsequent change that I made. Making new choices with source material felt like erasing the old, and I didn't want the old to disappear. I now have several iterations of a work that I call by the same name. I don't know which one is the original, and I don't know which one is the true work. Even though I market the product, and call it finished, process is really where this work lives. It feels important for me to continue to find spaces that value process, and equate it with product. In a form that deals so specifically with bodies, creating room within work for change is necessary for me. I need constant reminders that bodies are not fixed. They are fickle, ephemeral, and ever-shifting. By valuing process, I also give value to change, and can enjoy exploring work that reflects all of our mutable natures.

The Remix Festival was a wonderful, rich event where process was everywhere. I brought the aforementioned solo to this festival, and allowed it to be wrecked, remixed, and reimagined by two other choreographers in Philadelphia, working as a collaborative team over a seven hour rehearsal period. This experience has made me feel as though I am now finally able to let the original work go, loosen my grasp on it and let it disappear. Something happened when I performed the remixed work - I realized that it was indeed a kind of erasure of the original - just what I've been so terrified of in the past. Yet at the same time it was erasing, the remix also became a tool for remembering. It heightened my awareness and senses to the one fact that is true of all dance - that it disappears. In its disappearance, we are left with something wonderfully unnamable and illegible, something that we don't often get in our day to day hustle. What the Remix Festival really did for me, was illustrate the ephemeral that is true to all performance, and brought to the forefront issues around what it means to witness dance. Namely, that dance has two lives - one that is visible, and one that exists as history almost immediately after it comes into existence. The festival brought my attention to how we

remember dance, and to the fact that the way we remember dance is as much as part of its beingness as the work itself.

The disappearance of my original work was incredibly necessary. The remix serves as a memorial for the original work in my mind. I cherish everything that is illegible, immaterial and impermanent, but sometimes I need reminders to do so. In a world that is obsessed with production and consumption, the Remix Festival gave time and space to process. It gave space to transience, and memory. My remixed work felt like a ghost of the original, in which there was something familiar about its structure, language and form, but also something altogether different and strange. This was true in watching the other works performed at the festival - the originals and remixes were often like imperfect images of each other, like reflections cast in moving water. Watching the remixes after I had seen the originals, I found that the act of remembering the originals was marred with mistakes, mis-remembrances, and uncertainty. There were fleeting moments of recognition, and then disappearance once more. The moments of reference, where I was able to see a link from one version to the other, were satisfying. It was wonderful to be able to see change, to see process made visible. But what I will really carry with me from this experience, is a notion of collective illegibility. Rarely in the other areas of my life will I find the opportunity to create space with others from my community where we can fearlessly commit to the illegible and the intangible. Thank you Annie Wilson, Susan Rethorst, and all the others who made the Remix Festival possible, for creating a space for performance that remains fiercely resistant to the visible, tangible, material, consumable. Too often these are the qualities that receive exposure from normative structures in place in our world. Hurray for the remix, and hurray for what is otherworldly, strange, invisible, fleeting, imperfect and incomplete.