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# They Smell of Earth After Rain Exploring the Sacred Space Within Performance: An Examination of Transcendence, Ritual, and Artistic Expression

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THEY SMELL OF EARTH AFTER RAIN  
EXPLORING THE SACRED SPACE WITHIN PERFORMANCE:  
AN EXAMINATION OF TRANSCENDENCE, RITUAL, AND ARTISTIC  
EXPRESSION

by

Candy Jimenez

BFA, Arizona State University  
1997

Presented in  
partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Dance

Hollins University  
Roanoke, Virginia  
May 2024

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Jeffery N. Bullock

Department: Dance



## DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to all living beings and nature.

To my mom for inspiring me all my life. She is my light, strength, inspiration, and why I believe in myself. Watching her through life's tribulations in raising seven children on her own after experiencing trauma and the loss of my father made me think that if she can navigate through that, I can do anything. I found my love of dance through her. I believe she was the original dancer, and I was given the gift to pursue performance and creation in dance for both of us. Through that, I share the responsibility to teach others about the benefits of movement and dance.

To Brian for believing in me and being my rock, my partner for life. I love sharing our lives. I hope we get to enjoy many more adventures together.

To all my animal companions, whom I have been so lucky to have in my life: Guerro, Bonita, Tre, Hank, Jack, and Nikita, for giving me so much joy. To all the animals that see my light and cross my path.

I hope that humanity may do better.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful.

Jeffery N. Bullock

Yolanda Jimenez

Brian Eakins

Amador Jimenez Sr.

Amador Jimenez Jr.

Casper Jimenez

Joann Jimenez

Louie Jimenez

Martin Jimenez

Misty Jimenez

Alicia-Lynn Nascimento Castro

Nicole L. Olson

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## THESIS ARTIST STATEMENT

Soil

Ether

Fire

Stone

Wood/Trees

Water

Scorpio: The psychic and emotional realm

One of seven - November 3, same as my brother, different year.

In the middle, exact as present.

The past molds one for the future realizations of self, but existing in the immediate moment of extant is my intention and reason for creating.

In the middle is where I have existed.

In a position to learn from the past connected to histories, cultivating energy and spaces, while witnessing youth prepare for the coming time.

I am a time traveler, a time nomad, and I ask others to join me in witnessing the movement of sentiment.

Sustaining with all senses

the human experience:

touch, contact, feel

smell, scent, fragrance

sight, vision, see

hear, aural, listen

taste, flavor, savor

To be present in the witnessing.

I am a movement artist, specifically a dancer, choreographer, dance educator, and dance advocate. My mission is to embody the energy that facilitates healing across various contexts, including performance as a dancer, expression as a choreographer, exchanges of discipline as a teacher, and leadership in advocacy roles in my community.

My work is about the human experience, acknowledging the individual myth, specifically regarding the value of tribulations because that is where character is forged. My artistic practice is about perseverance, coexisting with nature, and valuing all living things. I create works for the concert stage, but I frame this dance as a ritual because I believe in connecting with the audience and challenging their gaze. I strive to create new movement expressions that are physically visceral and emotionally interpreted for individual journeys.

My work imprints a thought, a moment, a breath of hope in my audience. All living things are connected through energy, so for the moment of witnessing, I ask my audience to be open, accept, and embody the power in their way. I would like them to digest my myth from a micro perspective to identify with a specific knowledge. I want them to experience the “silent knowing” through my art, something that animals have that I value.

My festival, Rooted in Movement, is a platform specially created for my work's life. It is also a venue for other choreographers to present work on universal truth. I am proud to give other voices the opportunity to do so alongside mine.

I want to grow in my artistry in embodying energy, comprehending it, translating it, and communicating it through movement. Through my art, I want to find and communicate value in universal truth vs. human-made values.



Illustration 1: Photo of Candy Jimenez, by Angel Castro, 2020.

*POETRY OF CONCEPT*

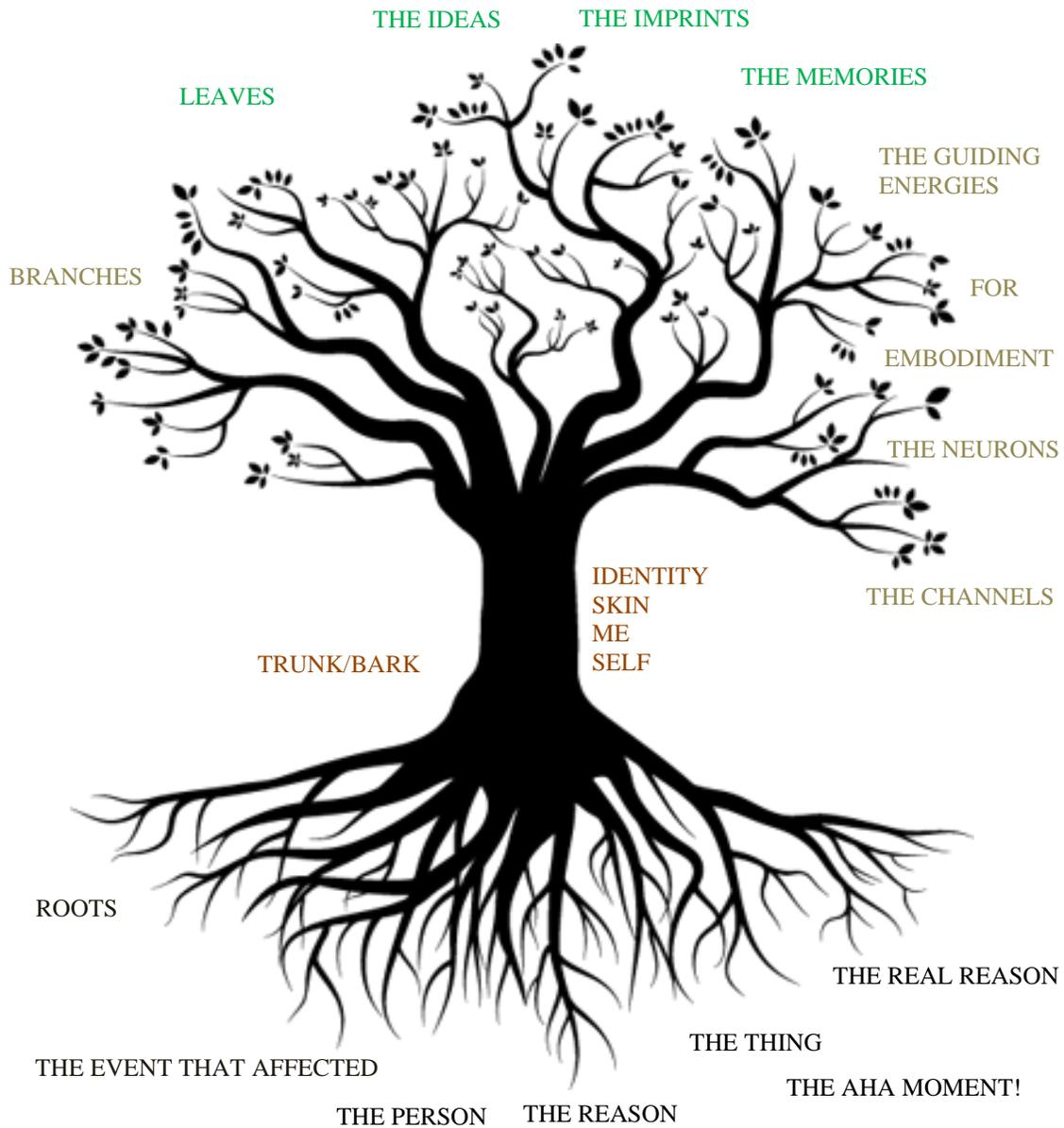


Illustration 2: Tree/Human Collation, created by Candy Jimenez, June 2023.

## THE BEGINNING

In artistic expression, performance serves as a ritual, an opportunity for transcendence, and a gateway to the sacred and the essence of life. This has intrigued me immensely, and through this research and my creative manifestation, I have learned the reason for my interest. Could one make a spiritual connection with other energies through this transcendence? Specifically, with other energies in different dimensions or different times and spaces? Could sacred space that we, as performers, access be the portal for communication? This thesis arose from my grief and loss process. Still, the concept of the written artifact and creative manifestation facilitated an intense opportunity to research the depths of the human experience, mind, and conscious abilities. Through dance performance, individuals can transcend ordinary realities and spiral into moments of spirituality, ritual, and genuine connection. This shared exploration dives into the relationships and interactions between the performers, the audience, and the performance space to uncover a sense of transformation within each participant.

The concept of sacred space and transcendence within performance goes beyond ordinary thresholds and time immemorial. It involves various art forms, such as dance, music, theater, and visual arts. Amid each artistic expression, there is the potential to achieve transcendence, where one reaches out of the human vessel and connects on a spiritual plane. Regardless of creative discipline, the artist creates to escape mortal limitations and embrace connections in different dimensions. At least, this is true for my artistry.

Ritual is a part of the human experience and a big part of the impetus for my work. We generally think of rituals and traditions as something sacred that only our

ancestors or indigenous people would perform; however, through this research, I'm finding that rituals are relative, and creating a contemporary ritual for my work is vital. Through my research, the question was, what is the ritual for, and what will that entail? What would it look like, and how would it feel? How do I include the audience in a ritual with or without consent? Ritualistic elements include symbolic gestures, divine guidance, processions, ceremonies, rites of passage, and symbolic artifacts that help connect the mundane and perhaps what we call the sacred. Including these elements in performance serves as a conduit for a transcendent experience that would help stimulate a sense of connection with something greater than oneself. My goal was to create something authentic, genuinely using these elements while avoiding the act of appropriation. I wanted my ritual to be unique to my experience connecting with the divine.

Through all its forms, artistic expression lives as a container where exploration of the sacred within performance and human consciousness can come into being. Through the modes of creative expression, movement, and performance, dancers can harness a natural, intimate, intrinsic yet extrinsic power of trope, allusion, symbolism, and abstraction to provoke a response and rouse the senses in their audiences. This invites the audience to transport and contemplate the mysteries of existence and interconnectedness.

This thesis hopes to examine and descend into the mysterious nature of the sacred time and space accessed in performance and the transcendence realized from the experience. It explores how artists navigate the liminal space between the seen and unseen, the known and the unknown. It explores the intersections of ritual, spirituality, and performance and how they provide a journey for the performer and the audience/witness.

## THE ORGANIC INFORMATION

Throughout my research, I was afraid, overwhelmed, and full of doubt, yet I discovered that I may find failure in finding answers and fulfillment. It hurts to fail but hurt, and failure can help nurture and strengthen the imagination. Through the fear, I found authors and sources I connected with. I feared not being able to articulate my concept, but as I researched, I found the core of the impetus, and it became easier to write about sacred time and space. I also found that what intrigued me has been written about historically through time. I found vast scholarly material regarding a subject matter I initially thought might have been improper in academia.

What is Sacred Space? Is it relative or subjective? Who gets to define Sacred Space? Sacred Space can mean many different things to different people and belief systems. The question is: “What action, event, or life happening garners Sacred Space?” Where does that get defined? For the nomadic Wodaabe people, Sacred Space can be that of the space where rituals or ceremonies are held for courtship, while for the Mossi people, Sacred Space is for the funerals where drumming is the aural signal for pointing the souls towards the space of the afterlife.<sup>1</sup> In numerous African Societies, the cycle of life merits Sacred Space. Dance is the portal that connects the space of the living and the space of spirits.<sup>2</sup> So perhaps sacred space can be sacred because of the happenings in the space and the histories of the land. Since Sacred Spaces show up differently throughout the world and for different cultures, is it more plausible that the events and happenings being produced or acted upon in that space make it sacred? It begs the question:

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<sup>1</sup> Patricia Beaman, *World Dance Cultures: From Ritual to Spectacle* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 157.

<sup>2</sup> Beaman, *World Dance Cultures*, 158-181.

historically, are spaces sacred because of events that happened at a point in time in those spaces or because of the rituals or ceremonies that take place within them? For example, the site of a church or monastery and a natural wonder such as the Grand Canyon are considered sacred. Is it because of the beauty or natural wonder they behold or the location where rituals happen within them?

On the other hand, Crater Lake in Medford, Oregon, is considered a sacred space because of the battle between the Chiefs of the Above and Below Worlds that destroyed the mountain that once stood there.<sup>3</sup> In contemporary times, the rituals done in any of those spaces do not make the spaces any more sacred; instead, the ghost of the event made the space sacred. The Sacred Space relevant to my thesis is the actions, rituals, and rites of passage performed in a space. It is about the transcendence that is achieved that makes any space sacred. If one were to transcend in one's backyard through a movement ritual or rite of passage, the sacred space would be the time and energy that contained the event.

For example, I founded and produced a festival, Rooted in Movement, that became a vessel to cultivate a transcendent moment for one of our witnesses/audience members, where she felt she received a message from her recently departed husband. She shared with me the emotional yet joyful signal that transported her through two worlds. Thus, Sacred Space, now and historically, is relative. Egungun are spirits of the Yoruba people of Nigeria who have passed on and attained ancestor status through rituals during transition. Patricia Beaman, author of *World Dance Cultures: From Ritual to Spectacle*,

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<sup>3</sup> Ella E. Clark and Robert Bruce Inverarity, "Legends of the Lakes," In *Indian Legends of the Pacific Northwest*, 1st ed., 49–78, University of California Press, 1953.  
<https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.8501127.6>.

wrote of this culture: “Egungun are conduits between heaven and earth, and give advice, grant blessings, or punish wrongdoers. In their elaborate costumes, Egungun demonstrate the power of ancestors to their descendants through dance.”<sup>4</sup> Through masked manifestations, the rituals and actions locate Sacred Space because they help the audience/witness through symbolization and repetition.

Iris Stewart similarly expressed in *Sacred Woman, Sacred Dance: Awakening Spirituality Through Movement and Ritual* the following quote about performance as a Sacred Space:

“The stage, the altar, the studio—whatever space you designate—is the sacred dancing ground, and the dancing time is time out of ordinary. The dancers enter consciously, sensing the difference between the busy outside world and the dedicated dance space. This is the hallowed ground, dedicated to and ruled by forces that are not personal, not individualistic.”<sup>5</sup>

Performing for an audience to be watched is not the objective of performance. Instead, dance is considered a community ritual in which the audience becomes the witness. The role of the witness is to become a part of the performance as an observer watching as an active participant versus a passive viewing. Stewart, the founder of WomanDance, also states:

“Anyone who enters the realm of danced theater enters even now when dance seems so secular, a sacred realm. Behind the effort needed to become a dancer, as I see it, lies a deep urge to be allowed into sacred time and space, to open the earthly body and what it can communicate to an other-worldly energy. The dance itself becomes, for a moment, the vessel into which sacred energies may flow, a vehicle for the manifestation of the gods, those forces which appear in the psyche as archetypal images.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Beaman, *World Dance Cultures*, 179-180.

<sup>5</sup> Iris J. Stewart, *Sacred Woman, Sacred Dance: Awakening Spirituality through Movement and Ritual* (Rochester: Inner Traditions, 2000), 216.

<sup>6</sup> Stewart, *Sacred Woman, Sacred Dance*, 136

I connected with Stewart's research because she explores women's spirituality. Dance can become ecstatic through repetition and ritual. Through ecstatic dance and performance, we lose sense of time and space. Losing oneself in the force of movement opens portals and dimensions, allowing the senses to feel stillness. The stillness allows the body to be open for the divine, almost as if one with all, the divine being sacred, performing in Sacred Space. Stewart also expresses:

“Ecstatic dance is an offering of one's own body to the Divine, negating the need for the dark side—scarifying and self-torture, sacrifice or the spilling of blood. (The original meaning of the word sacrifice was “sacred offering,” not “sacred killing.”) In dance we do not attempt to lose control but rather to change consciousness, to enter into the flow.”<sup>7</sup>

Movement is naturally part of the human experience and part of our being. In sadness and joy, throughout time, we find that the body naturally digests and resolves emotions and events through the movement of the body. “At times, the movement of the sacred is so interior we feel it only in hidden places within.”<sup>8</sup> The body is a sacred element in the practice of sacred space, sacred location, and sacred rituals.

Another area of research investigated for this project was transcendence, ritual, and artistic expression in the performance context. According to Anna Halprin, an American choreographer and dancer who redefined dance by breaking the traditional rules of modern dance, “The purpose of a transcendent event is to create change.”<sup>9</sup> In the context of dance, ritual is crucial as it prioritizes dance as healing or transformation over dance as entertainment. Halprin was well regarded for utilizing dance for healing and

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<sup>7</sup> Stewart, *Sacred Woman, Sacred Dance*, 185

<sup>8</sup> Cynthia Winton-Henry, *Dance—the Sacred Art: The Joy of Movement as Spiritual Practice* (Woodstock: SkyLight Paths, 2009), 18.

<sup>9</sup> Anna Halprin and Rachel Kaplan, *Moving Toward Life: Five Decades of Transformational Dance* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1995), 14.

dance in nature. She delved, honored, and acknowledged literal urban rituals where the community would come together and intersect with ritual to explore how individuals contribute to a greater whole in reciprocation. Her social movement experiments were commitments for social change. Rituals in dance give meaning, and movements have significance. The idea of repetition and ritual aiding the individual in finding kinesthetic awareness and heightened levels of proprioception through creating and performing gestures and genuine rituals helps open portals toward transcendence. Achieving transcendence through artistic expression is the goal of some artists. Halprin noted:

“Dances that change and transform our lives can be called rituals in the way I use this word. A way to create a ritual is to invest the objects of our daily lives with new significance. Ritual and ceremony can happen anywhere at any time.”<sup>10</sup>

In learning from the readings of Halprin, it is relevant in contemporary times to create a modern ritual. Halprin, quoting Roy A. Rappaport, an anthropologist of ritual, followed three of his five attributes. Halprin emphasizes the following: “Ritual is performance. If there is no performance, there is no ritual”, “In ritual performance, transmitters are always among the most important receivers of their own messages,” and “In ritual, the transmitter, receiver, and message become fused in the participant.”<sup>11</sup>

## TRANSCENDENCE IN PERFORMANCE

In making this work, the following questions regarding transcendence in performance were considered: What kind of art creates a journey or experience for one to transform or transcend? Will the audience be willing and open to an event that might be transformative? It requires a shift in thinking and approach. One of the main reasons for

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<sup>10</sup> Janice Ross, “Anna Halprin's Urban Rituals,” *TDR/The Drama Review*, 48: 2 (182), doi: <https://doi-org.hollins.idm.oclc.org/10.1162/105420404323063391>, 2004, 49-67.

<sup>11</sup> Ross, “Anna Halprin's Urban Rituals,” 52.

my interest in transcendent and transformational performances is that, as an artist, a moment of transformation and transcendence equates to the effectiveness of the art created. As the author of *The Transformative Power of Performance*, Erika Fischer-Lichte, stated, “In effect, objects and actions are no longer dependent on the meanings attributed to them. As events that reveal these special characteristics, artistic performance opens up the possibility for all participants to experience a metamorphosis.”<sup>12</sup> Art as a spectacle or ritual could rouse audience participation. Regardless of whether the audience members will act for themselves or the empathy and care of others, the transformation of the role of audience to participant becomes the transcendent event versus the art itself. The performers’ transcendence happens naturally through the provocation of the audience, cultivating a unique relationship between the performers and the audience. Thus, the moments of shift and exchange in roles are the special moments of transcendence. These moments of transcendence are also coined “moments of enchantment” by Fischer-Lichte.<sup>13</sup> I am especially interested in Lichte's writings and work because her statement of performance as a process and event is also an engagement of the full activity of the human being as an embodied mind. This information is essential for my work as I strive to create and present work to inspire and make change. I very much connect to what John L. Austin, a British philosopher of language and a leading proponent of ordinary language philosophy, stated about performance. He is best known for developing the theory of speech acts, coining the term performative, and developing the concept of the performative speech act. He made claims such as: “Connections amidst

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<sup>12</sup> Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance* (London: Routledge, 2008), 23.

<sup>13</sup> Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power*, 6.

transformational with effective. Performance is intentional. If successful it does cultural work in the world. It strives to affect human affairs.”<sup>14</sup> Working towards transcendence can be the mark of the artist making societal effects in the world, contributing to positive change. Fischer-Lichte also stated:

“The pivotal point of these processes is no longer the work of art, detached from and independent of its creator and recipient, which arises as an object from the activities of the creator-subject and is entrusted to the perception and interpretation of the recipient-subject. Instead, we are dealing with an event, set in motion and terminated by the actions of all the subjects involved – artists and spectators.”<sup>15</sup>

Linda Hartley, the author of *Embodiment of Spirit*, also relates performance as transcendence and transformation in the “Unitive State.”<sup>16</sup> Influenced by all her practices of body-mind centering, transpersonal psychotherapy, authentic movement, and somatic psychology, Hartley developed a practice that engages body, mind, soul, and spirit to support the unfolding of the process through the body and the cultivation of embodied presence, clarity, and compassion. The witness and mover have experienced a different and transformed state of time, space, and energy in this state. The shared moments are happening in other dimensions per se. According to Glenna Batson, author of *Intimate to Ultimate: The Meta-Kinesthetic Flow of Embodied Engagement*, who aims to promote a better understanding of the value of embodied movement knowledge, kinesthesia is the time and space where “kinesthetic embodiment and spirituality” bind.<sup>17</sup> The segue for transcendence is a movement created and performed in these states of dimension

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<sup>14</sup> Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power*, 9.

<sup>15</sup> Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power*, 22.

<sup>16</sup> Sarah Whatley et al., *Dance, Somatics and Spiritualities: Contemporary Sacred Narratives* (Bristol; Chicago: Intellect, 2014), 11-32.

<sup>17</sup> Whatley et al., *Dance, Somatics and Spiritualities*, 230.

experienced by both the performer and the witness. This concept of mind and body connection is vital to this thesis as it strengthens the point of finding transcendence in dance. However, it is not simply a movement in creation or performance but also the significance of the movement. Is it being done in ritual or spectacle, and what is its intention? The mindset and approach in the creation and performance and even the viewing of the piece is a more radical notion than a traditional performance for entertainment. I thought to mention this here because although I understand the different schools of thought about dance, such as social dance, dance for entertainment, and traditional dance, I have come to realize that my belief in what dance can be regarding healing and even resistance or propulsion is that of radical thought. Radical in that the idea is non-conformist or different from the thought of dance in the Western world. Even acknowledging the work of Bill T. Jones, Pina Bausch, and Anna Halprin, where their work is about challenging the traditional gaze, I still identify this thought as radical. This is urgent because although it may seem I am undermining my thesis by calling this radical, I think it is essential to appropriately educate, identify, and strive to normalize the healing purpose of dance. I find that teaching in public schools and even creating in public schools is more challenging to sit in my beliefs in what dance has the power to do.

#### RITUAL ELEMENTS IN PERFORMANCE

Ritual elements in performance enrich the depth of human expression. Often, whether it is performance art, dance, theatrical, ceremonial, or cultural, the aspect of ritual resonates. Ritual elements can evoke a sense of tradition, belonging, and collective experience. These elements exist in various forms of performance, ranging from religious ceremonies to contemporary art forms.

Ritual elements exist in gestures, rites of passage, symbols, and symbolic actions that engage a deeper meaning and significance. Elements such as actions, chants, symbolic objects, music/sounds, and spatial arrangements establish a composition or spatial framework where audience members become witnesses and share an experience of transcendence. Jayachandran Palazhy, a choreographer, teacher, and the Artistic Director of Attakkalari Centre for Movement Arts in Bangalore, India, was asked to contribute to the source, *The Sentient Archive*. It is a collection of writings on a body comparable and he stated, “The participation in various rituals and their associated psychological states strongly influence the practitioner as well.”<sup>18</sup>

The power of including ritual elements in performance is its capacity to create a sense of belonging and how it opens portals to find a collective identity.<sup>19</sup> Performing rituals, performers and audience/witnesses may connect in a time, space, and ephemeral moment of belief systems. These encounters cultivate a sense of unanimity and harmony among audience members, emphasizing shared connections and experiences. Palazhy’s statement of the body as a source of consciousness:

“Dance creates empathy in the observers through metaphors and the kinetic agency of presence, something that has spiked the interest of neuroscientists as well. Dance plays with the eternal and the temporary, making it a particularly rich medium of apprehending knowledge. Through dance, we are able to understand the activity of disappearance, to know the immaterial. In the ephemeral gesture we leave the everyday and encounter the atomization of time.”<sup>20</sup>

I have learned that through my upbringing in the Catholic church, for some, rituals initiate communication with the divine; others create a sense of reverence and high regard

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<sup>18</sup> Bill Bissell and Linda Caruso Haviland, *The Sentient Archive* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2018), 201.

<sup>19</sup> Bissell and Caruso Haviland, *The Sentient Archive*, 223-225.

<sup>20</sup> Bissell and Caruso Haviland, *The Sentient Archive*, 204.

for a more extraordinary being. Thus, rituals such as religious ceremonies, prayer, purification rites such as baptisms or last rites before death, and sacred relics or symbols are a central part of worship and spiritual practice. This is true throughout history and many cultures. Gregory Maquoma, a dancer, choreographer, teacher, director, and writer from Soweto, South Africa, worked with Akram Khan and, through his recent work, which includes *Rain Dance* and *Exit/Exist*, wrote:

“When our ancestors performed their rituals, dancing around a fire till dawn, they used rocks and burned sticks to draw on cave walls what they were seeing while in a trance; memory, intuition, and consensus were the driving forces. Our ancestors relied on driving the body to an extent of reaching that point of total submission to the unknown.”<sup>21</sup>

I utilized ritual elements in my performance to engage my audience on a visceral level. I did not want to tell the audience what to feel or what they should do; instead, I used the element of ritual and spatial arrangement to ignite memory and spark a transcendent journey. Repetitive prompts, cues, movements, and symbolic gestures can cause a shift in emotions or themes that resonate with universal human experiences such as nostalgia. Scents and sound can also evoke and transport the audience into other realms of memory, causing one to travel into the past in time. I strived to create my ritual through this knowledge of the human experience.<sup>22</sup> This proved difficult, as I wanted to blur the boundaries between art and ritual, thus inviting the audience to question their assumption of reality and the meaning of existence.

Through research and exploration to engage the audience and find transcendence through performance, it is undoubted that ritual elements exist and remain in our lives.

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<sup>21</sup> Bissell and Caruso Haviland, *The Sentient Archive*, 224.

<sup>22</sup> Michael Bull and Jon P Mitchell, *Ritual, Performance and the Senses* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 39-43.

When I speak of ritual, I speak of actions repeated daily and hourly in life in religious spaces, cultural spaces, and dance performances. As we venture into the future, how will these rituals evolve in performance, or how will performance evolve with ritual?

#### ARTISTIC EXPRESSION AND SACRED SPACE

Artistic expression performed live can be sacred just as a space can be sacred. Live artistic expression is a temporary entity. The idea of performing something that only lives within that moment of performance makes that time and space holding the event sacred. As Peggy Phelan, an American feminist scholar and a seminal book writer who discusses the ontology of performance, stated, “Without a copy, live performance plunges into visibility – in a maniacally charged present – and disappears into memory, into the realm of invisibility and the unconscious where it eludes regulation and control.”<sup>23</sup> This is a pivotal characteristic of live performance, the argument for why it can be a portal for transcendence, and its relation to sacred space. Phelan’s statement is relevant to me as she argues and persuades that the impermanence of performance is crucial to its force. Her work primarily concerns research and exploration of performance as a live event.

Artists use this sacred space or event (performance) to express, challenge, intervene, etc.<sup>24</sup> Although fleeting, a performance can be a powerful event for anyone within its location, leaving lasting impressions. Like a ritual, it can leave convictions and be a gateway to journeys of transcendence. Diana Taylor, a Professor of Performance Studies and Spanish at New York University, explains:

“Performance, as acts of intervention, can interrupt the circuits of the cultural industries that create products for consumption. It is much harder to control bodies than to control television, or radio broadcasts, or Internet platforms. This is

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<sup>23</sup> Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (London: Routledge, 2008), 128.

<sup>24</sup> Diana Taylor, *Performance* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 51.

why regimes of power do everything possible to avoid and prohibit mass congregations and, in some places, the use of masks in public gatherings. Performance does not depend on texts or publishing companies (and it therefore eludes censorship). It does not need directors, actors, designers, or all the technical devices that theatre requires; it does not require special spaces to exist—it only requires the act (and sometimes the presence) of the performer and his or her public. Sometimes the public does not know it is the designated spectator.”<sup>25</sup>

She concludes that performance is a powerful weapon. I append that performance can also be a sacred space.

Artists have used sacred spaces to express deep emotions, thoughts, concepts, messages, and protests. Nature, churches, temples, and holy land offer a unique environment encompassing cultural significance or spiritual meaning. Through the various forms of performance, the spaces utilized bring different layers of impressions for the audience to engage with the artists’ message, the self, and perhaps the divine. For example, if in nature or a church where biblical symbols or sculptors are present, where the wonder of the creations of nature exists, these could evoke a sense of awe and contemplation in the spectator. Furthermore, artists today continue to explore the concept of the sacred. Artists push the boundaries to include broader spirituality, identity, and interconnectedness themes. Site-specific work as the container can impact installations and create immersive experiences. This kind of work challenges the viewer with their relationship to the sacred and the profane. The viewer is forced to reflect on beliefs, values, and experiences, fostering a deeper understanding of the complexities of the human condition and our collective search for meaning.

Contextual ground is also pivotal. Creating and performing work in natural or imagined landscapes becomes relational to the work or event. People and artwork are not

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<sup>25</sup> Taylor, *Performance*, 51-52.

isolated. Each is affected by the environment they are located within.<sup>26</sup> The impact of sacred space on the artistic output and its reception is relative to the concept and location of the performance space. We should also regard “essence.” Essence is a considerable factor in work related to transcendence, artistic expression, ritual, and sacred spaces. The essence of the spirit of the soul is the “magic,” the unknown that cannot be described in words but felt and experienced through the transcendence of the performance. David H. DeGroot, author of the notable book *Philosophies of Essence*, writes:

“The necessary “gap” in our knowledge, naturally, will be filled by phenomenological scrutiny of the essences of “soul” and “spiritual community”. \*Phenomenology thus turns out to be an “occult”, subjectivistic way of fathoming that which science cannot. Coincidentally, the proper outlook of the phenomenologist turns out to be the time-worn Idealist metaphysic. Only spirit is truly being-in-itself, being not dependent on something else. The “sciences of nature” are dependent themselves on the spirit or mind which directs them, and they are but one activity of the spirit.”<sup>27</sup>

The book is notable because it is a philosophy book that inspired critical thinking and encouraged readers to question the fundamentals of existence. DeGroot’s work on the concept of essence from Pre-Socratics to the present strengthened my beliefs in transcendence and ephemerality in live performance in that scholarly writing exists regarding something related to the magic I write about. Like Pina Bausch, the work for me is not created intentionally about a literal concept or storyline but rather about the human condition. In other words, Bausch is especially interested in essences. Her work utilizes repetition to engage the audience with the human condition. Dance performance lends itself to a phenomenological event. For my artistry, in striving to engage with the audience to imprint upon and cultivate a transcendent journey, the impermanence of the

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<sup>26</sup> Jill Hayes, *Soul and Spirit in Dance Movement Psychotherapy: A Transpersonal Approach* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2013), 197.

<sup>27</sup> David H. DeGroot, *Philosophies of Essence*, 117.

live creation and the essence of all the beings involved, for example, the location, are all part of the formula to access that sacred space I speak of.

## THE AUDIENCE'S EXPERIENCE

Why do we play the role of spectator? Why do we put ourselves in vulnerable positions of viewing? Is it a place of vulnerability or our space to protect as spectators can be witnesses? Is the spectator or witness immune from emotions sparked by the visuals? As I continue to create and view art, I want to be challenged by what I view. I want to learn and be introduced to new perspectives or be enlightened. Some may view art as escapism from this reality towards a nightmare or fantasy—so many aspects to consider for the spectator. As an artist, I want to make change through creating and performing. In my opinion, the arts are the one thing that best expresses the human condition. As a nurturer, I want to care for the audience through my artistic and gaze challenges of viewing art with preconceived notions and personal histories. As Taylor states, “Performance is a doing, a done, and a redoing. It makes a visible invisible; it clarifies and obscures; it’s ephemeral and lasting; put-on, yet truer than life itself.”<sup>28</sup> This experience is actual for most performers. For me, at least.

How does that ring true for the audience member? I strive for the audience members not only to be a spectator but also want them to be a witness. I realize I cannot control the gaze. Still, through naturally engaging creations that include repetition, ritual, and acknowledging the essence of humans, I might transform the spectator into a witness. A spectator views the dance in its literal sense. You might as well watch “So You Think You Can Dance” on a television screen. As a choreographer, dancer, and artist, that is not

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<sup>28</sup> Taylor, *Performance*, 41.

a successful experience. I want to speak to the witness. A witness sees the work and, through the concept, might be affected in days to come based on the experience they witnessed. The witness engages more for an experience versus a superficial, entertaining visual. As Taylor states, “Performances often challenge the limits of artists. But they also challenge those of their viewers.”<sup>29</sup> Different performances ask for different things from their audience. Do these performances create the role of spectator, participant, or witness? Based on what the performance is asking for from the audience, it can transform the audience member if the member is willing for their gaze to be influenced. Once in that role as the specific and intended spectator, is that role active or passive? Does the person in that role act, react, observe, or participate? There is power in performance. It can motivate, empower, intrude, confuse, disempower, and make change. To again quote Taylor, “Performances ask that spectators do something, even if that something is doing nothing.”<sup>30</sup>

Nevertheless, even though there is power in performance, concerning the audience experience the discourse tends to be more hypothetical. We have diverse examples of transcendence with the work of Pina Bausch and Bill T. Jones. Is the transcendence for the audience or the performer? It is different and relative for each work. Bill T. Jones, an American choreographer, author, dancer, and director of Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company, choreographed a work entitled *Still/Here*. Jones’s works are known for speaking the truth of the sacredness of illness. In this work, he set movements, images, and gestures of terminally ill people who had participated in

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<sup>29</sup> Taylor, *Performance*, 73.

<sup>30</sup> Taylor, *Performance*, 86.

workshops Jones had previously led. Jones's work *Still/Here*, although controversial and not agreed upon by some, was an exploration of how people cope with serious illness.

Some people thought it was disgraceful to offer healing or affirmation through dance with serious illness. This was especially true as New York dance reviewer Arlene Croce may have influenced the gaze of those with her opinion. What was unsettling was that Croce encroached on her opinion of the work without acknowledging the interaction between artist and spectator within that sacred space. She did not see the work! At the same time, others hailed him for his landmark work in dance. His intimate relationship with AIDS and HIV paved his artistic voice, as he is known for using his voice to express a voice for the journey of illness. For me, I understood his work to help those who shared their stories as a way to become immortal. While others thought the work was created to exploit the vulnerable, I saw it as an opportunity for strength and a way to be forever remembered. Although they may have passed on, their essence, the story lives on. The nature of the human condition imprints on us.

My memory of seeing Pina Bausch's choreography on stage for the first time was profound. Young out of college, I was lucky to be given a free ticket to see *Nelkin* (*Carnations*), choreographed by German choreographer Bausch. To see Gammage Auditorium in Tempe, Arizona, fully dressed in pink carnations, was a sight to see. It was unbelievable to see a set so grand. I had never heard of her until then, and what I saw was breathtaking. A moment I didn't realize until now changed me. It changed me because I have come to expect more of a relationship between dancer and spectator. In her work, *Carnations*, she is motivated by the interactions between the performer and the audience. The transformation, the expectations, and the questions prompted by the work become

the subject of the work. In Bausch's work, the formula of repetition's aesthetic and theoretical implications are a tool to engage the audience through satisfaction, confusion, and challenges. Critic and writer Ciane Fernandes shares/writes of Bausch's work:

"Instead, the present is the repetition of the past, while becoming future. The audience is almost forced to see the scene, to be with it."<sup>31</sup> Through the method of repetition, the audience can access the sacred space that Bausch's work creates. The audience naturally engages as spectators, witnesses, and performers.

One of the most important items to consider is that a performance or dance performance is for an audience. Dancers/performers find fulfillment in their artistry, but for the sake of dance performance as an art form, the audience is an essential factor, and they must not be passive. John Martin, America's first significant dance critic and who had a philosophical perspective on dance, declared:

"...thought to all outward appearances we shall be sitting quietly in our chairs; we shall nevertheless be dancing synthetically with all our musculature.... It is the dancer who functions to lead us into imitating his actions with our faculty for inner mimicry in order that we may experience his feelings. Facts he could tell us, but feelings he cannot convey in any other way than by arousing them in us through sympathetic action."<sup>32</sup>

To be the audience, you must be engaged. The act of engagement is the reason for new expressions. There is a reciprocation in art between the object and the receiver, and as old as the principle of engagement is regarding simply observing, art is not without an integrated and unified experience. I want to make this conceptual connection between performance and dance performance.

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<sup>31</sup> Ciane Fernandes, review of *Pina Bausch and the Wuppertal Dance Theater: Repetition and Transformation*, Dissertation New York University, 1995, 105.

<sup>32</sup> Arnold Berleant, *The Aesthetic Field: A Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* (Springfield: Thomas, 1970), 98.

THE END

Do I have the power to heal? Does my audience need healing? I want to create and perform as if I have the power to heal. I ask my audience to either come into the space with an open mind and with an active intention or to pretend they may need healing and with this, we may find a segue toward transcendence. Transcendence may or may not happen, but I believe a transformation will transpire. With all its gifts and offerings, performance can be the place for some to find answers, questions, inspirations, or assurances. Therefore, I create. This is my purpose. The significance of a transformative experience for the performer and the audience member is relative, but it enriches and uncovers the human condition. To be human on earth in the most present form as a giving and receiving energy might save us from ourselves. Do we need saving? Let us pretend we do. The intersection of ritual, spirituality, and performance is the threshold for transcendence and exploration of new communications. With this, we might find a deeper understanding of artistic expressions that promote active interpretations and a unified experience.

*MEDITATION*

*PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE: NOW*

Meditation has become a part of my life. It is an essential and mindful practice that all humans should embody. It brings us close to nature, the self, and the present moment. I practice daily rituals such as having coffee and walking barefoot in the soil and grass in my backyard. I sit under my tree and hone into touch as the skin of my back and the skin on my feet sense the energy and wisdom of the earth. The earth expresses energy; if one is open enough to receive it, the messages are channeled through. Through

my thesis process, messages flooded through. I realized how very much a part of nature we are, and I found myself connecting and realizing my ancestral knowledge.

I started to think of the tree as a being of wisdom and a reflection of myself. The tree, as I, comes with histories, knowledge, and wisdom rooted within; the bark and trunk mirror the skin of my body just as I come with scars and memory; the bark resembles grooves of trauma and joy, and it grows branches towards the sky in where we strive for more leaving ourselves open for embodiment of memories, imprints, and the ideas that guide us into the future. The tree became significant in the evolution of my artistry and creation. As I lived with the idea of the tree, it brought me back to the time of losing my father. It is that memory and time that helped guide the creative manifestation. Why are transcendence, ritual, and artistic expression so vital to me? I realized the answer. Those were the things that gave me hope after losing my father. Those were the things that made me feel alive and inspired me to want to strive for more. Those were the things that helped me cope with loss. I was also intrigued because they were tools to channel and connect to something greater than myself. So, I dove into meditation and ritual, and as I coped, I found magic in nature and the pious act of creating with dance. Creating art in many ways has allowed me to travel in time and find immortality.

With my connection to meditation, in my thesis performance/creative manifestation, *They Smell of Earth After Rain*, I was inspired to ask my audience to travel with me in hopes of them connecting with the concept. I also questioned and wanted to investigate the idea of meditation and prosocial behavior with dance. Prosocial behavior cultivates a kind and mindful energy, opening opportunities for genuine engagement. Is it innate to have empathy, or does practicing a mindful discipline make one more

compassionate? I realized that to have a transcendent experience, my audience needed to be fully present, so taking my audience through a mindful activity was the impetus for the evening. The evening started with a dancer leading the audience through a walk with a script I provided and a sound bowl. I also posted some instructions next to a table of candles and posted the instructions in a QR code where they could find the program information for the work.



Illustration 3: Table of candles that the audience engaged with. Photo by Eibysta Lobo, July 5, 2023.

## SCRIPT

**Time: 8:30 or 8:40**

**Ring Bowl**

**Good Evening...**

**Here are some instructions to guide you to the next performance area of the piece, "They Smell of Earth After Rain"**

**You can also find these instructions in your program. Scan the QR code and read along as I recite these out loud.**

**I also want to alert you to....**

**Be mindful on your path to be guided by the light and the blue arrows pointing the way. At each fork in the path you will make one of 2 choices regarding direction. Read the signs posted in the middle of the path and follow the guided prompt. Each prompt is a different guide depending on the direction you choose.**

**If you have not reached the final destination by 8:55, I will ring this bowl to signal to you to finalize your journey to move with urgency to the Beale Garden as the performance starts promptly at 9:00.**

Pick up a candle with a jar and make sure the light is on. As you turn the candle on, take a deep breath in and empty your mind of thoughts as you exhale and tune into your breath.

As you tune into your breath be mindful of the heartbeat in your chest.

Now be present to the beat of your heart, the rhythm of your breath, and as you continue to clear your mind be fully present in the now.

Once outside, feel the temperature of the air. Is it windy? Has dusk taken over the sky? Is the moon full? Is the skin sensitive? Can you smell the night?

As you explore your environment with your eyes, I will ask you to no longer communicate with your voice. Be quiet in the self but allow the inner voice to speak in your vessel.

Now, when you are ready and only when you are ready, start your journey. Cross the threshold with your first step and find a rhythm that adds to the symphony of the rhythms of your heart and lungs.

Follow the arrows on your path, use the light to guide your way. When you approach the forks in the road, please read each choice and make your instinctual decision and continue as guided.

As you navigate through your journey allow your silence to receive the message from the roots.

Your destination will be the garden.

Follow the lights.



Illustration 4: PDF image of instructions created by Candy Jimenez, read by Alicia-Lynn Nascimento Castro to the audience to begin the journey to performance, July 2023.

*STARTING THE JOURNEY TO THE PERFORMANCE*



**On this path you will Touch.**

Touch the tree in the path.  
Touch the grass, nature.  
How long can you remember the texture?



**On this path you will Smell.**

Can you smell the clouds?  
Can you smell the soil?  
Can you smell the perfume of someone walking by?  
Do the blossoms of nature leave a scent?



**On this path you will Look.**

Be aware of what it is that you see. Do you see your reflection in the trees? Do you see your reflection in others? Do you see the shadows? Do you see the light? Is there laughter?



**On this path you will LISTEN.**

Name one thing that you hear when you listen with your ears.  
Can you hear yourself? Can you hear the wind? Can you hear the darkness?



Illustrations 5-7: Hollins College Quadrangle, Photo by Cheryl Miller, 2015, The Cultural Landscape Foundation - Map accessed February 2024.

Illustrations 8-11: PDF images of directions for audience to performance space. Created & written by Candy Jimenez, July 2023.

*CONTINUING THE JOURNEY*



As you continue in this direction.

Try closing your eyes to see how far you can go while staying on path.

As you get to the intersection, approach someone on the stairs and ask them to join you on the rest of the journey.



As you continue in this direction.

Take in the energy of the tree giants around you.

Embody the energy and hug someone passing by.



As you continue in this direction.

Enjoy the beauty of the night sky.

Give someone a compliment as you pass by them.



As you continue in this direction.

Count the number of steps you take to sit on the stairs at the center of Coker building.

Once seated, observe and wait for someone to approach you to continue your path.



Illustrations 12-15: Hollins College Quadrangle, Photo by Cheryl Miller, 2015, The Cultural Landscape Foundation - Map accessed February 2024.

Illustrations 16-19: PDF images of directions for audience to performance space. Created & written by Candy Jimenez, July 2023.

*PRESENT IN THE JOURNEY*



As you continue in  
this direction.

Enjoy the air upon  
your skin.

Spark a smile at  
someone nearby.



As you continue in  
this direction.

Find a moment of stillness.

Stop with instinct in your  
tracks.

Acknowledge the now.



As you continue in  
this direction.

Tune into the rhythm  
of your stride.

Dance to the sounds  
of the wind.



Illustration 20: Hollins College Quadrangle, Photo by Cheryl Miller, 2015, The Cultural Landscape Foundation - Map accessed February 2024.

Illustrations 21-23: PDF images of directions for audience to performance space. Created & written by Candy Jimenez. 2023.

*PYSCHO-HARMONIC RESONANCE (CHANNELING)*  
*THE TUB*

The bathtub became a significant part of the work. I was hesitant to utilize it as I knew of other dance works or choreographers using tubs, and I did not want to be associated with the works in concept or manner. It is already difficult to imprint on a gaze, and doing so with preconceived notions of how tubs have been used, I thought, would bring more challenges.



Illustration 24: Working in the tub.  
Photo taken by Candy Jimenez, 2023.

I also did not want to be generalized in that I was trying to be or mimic the work of those artists. I thought I was conscious of other work taking place in tubs. “Swan Lake performed in 27 bathtubs!” performed by dancers worldwide during the pandemic, performed athletic maneuvers.<sup>33</sup> They demonstrated tub dancing flaunty with intricate footwork and clever camera editing. Jennifer Muller’s work, *The Works Tub*, demonstrated a groundwork for introducing the elements of baptismal events, ritual rights, and comedic play, which laid a heavy line for me to navigate.<sup>34</sup> I was also inspired by Phoenix, Arizona, artist Beth Lessard, who choreographed with a brass claw foot tub. I knew using the tub was a risk, but I took Muller’s advice: “If you need to

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<sup>33</sup> BBC, “Swan Lake performed in 27 bathtubs!,” [https://youtu.be/T8PLkd2VAnc?si=eWv7-0HZQQAD9h\\_](https://youtu.be/T8PLkd2VAnc?si=eWv7-0HZQQAD9h_)

<sup>34</sup> “Jennifer Muller/The Works Tub.” [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com). Accessed April 12, 2024, [https://youtu.be/gLXnGCmbK6I?si=6oRLJ\\_NPIe70xjUz](https://youtu.be/gLXnGCmbK6I?si=6oRLJ_NPIe70xjUz).

create it, you need to do it. It's not about being clever. If the choice comes from deep inside, then you must. It is not a superficial choice."<sup>35</sup> I wanted the work to be seen for its



Illustrations 25-27: Tub in performance of Nicole L. Olson (the last scene) taken by Orfeas Skutelis, July 2023, Tub in transit, volunteers: moving tub to performance space. Photos taken by Candy Jimenez, 2023.

honesty versus connections to things already done. I had a purpose for the tub, and it wasn't because I had seen others do it. Although it is crucial for my awareness of other tub work, I did not use those works as inspiration for mine.

I take baths naturally because I need them for muscular therapy. I soon found that it was a time and space for reflection and thought, and unexpectedly, I started to receive messages.



Messages from my past, yet at the same time foreseeing the future. As I connected to moments of cleansing or a baptism, thoughts for the creative manifestation started to connect for me. It seemed appropriate to find a space within the

work for the tub. Just as the work is about sacred space within performance and ritual, I naturally was in ritual: channeling in the tub. I believed that this was where I could be fully present in my world. I need to call this exploration of thought in the



tub something other than channeling. I am exploring *mind-streaming*. This name seems appropriate as, in that present moment, there is a constant state of information and

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<sup>35</sup> "Jennifer Muller/The Works: Alive & Kickin," 2015. *Films On Demand*. Films Media Group. <https://fod-infobase-com.hollins.idm.oclc.org/PortalPlaylists.aspx?wID=105029&xtid=118150>. 1:35-1:37

thought flowing through dimensions. There is a state of presence through that thought, so I am also intrigued by calling this psyche-syncing or psycho-harmonic resonance my favorite. Psycho-harmonic resonance is the psychological or mental aspects of harmony, resonance, or alignment. It suggests a connection between mental states or processes and the harmonious alignment of frequencies or vibrations, whether literal or metaphorical. It also refers to the phenomenon where an object or system vibrates or oscillates at a specific frequency when exposed to external forces or stimuli that match its natural frequency. In a broader sense, resonance can also describe a deep emotional or intellectual connection, alignment, or correspondence between two or more entities. I created this term and defined it by the definitions of each word on its existence; meshed, they made magic. The word “magic” is another word that I want to re-create.

For this thesis, keep in mind that as I continue to evolve as an artist, this may change, but the answers now are mind-streaming<sup>36</sup> or psyche-syncing<sup>37</sup>, which is the channeling that creates the magic or psycho-harmonic resonance.<sup>38</sup> I was and am convinced that as an artist, I allowed momentum to move forward with space and time held for the tub. The tub was the vessel, but the water was the impetus for Candy's multiple identities. Perhaps the Ego, Id, and Super Ego. The character in the tub, half-dressed, is Candy in another dimension, another time, and another space. Accessing another time and space encompasses meditating and being fully present. Psycho-

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<sup>36</sup> Sophie Frei, "Synchronizing the Timaeus," In *Beyond Whitehead: Recent Advances in Process Thought*, ed. Jakub Dziadkowiec and Lukasz Lamza (Lanham: Lexington, 2017) 45.

<sup>37</sup> Dare A. Baldwin, and Jessica E. Kosie, "How Does the Mind Render Streaming Experience as Events?" *Topics in Cognitive Science* 13 (1): 79–105, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1111/tops.12502>.

<sup>38</sup> Steven M. Lehar, *The World in Your Head: A Gestalt View of the Mechanism of Conscious Experience*, 1st ed. Mahwah: Psychology Press, 2003, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410606549>.

harmonic Resonance gave me the information to bring another dimension into the creative manifestation. Being in harmony in the psyche allowed me to connect the past to



the future while remaining present in the sacred womb of the tub. These concepts inspired the creation of the solo that Nicole L. Olson danced. She was in the timeless space while I played the role of the present time. I also played the character that traveled through time.

Illustrations 28 and 29: Rehearsal and performance photos. Taken by Candy Jimenez and Orfeaus Skuletis, July 2023.

## THE OBJECT SIGNIFYING CHANGE IN DIMENSION THE SLIVER OF TIME AND SPACE

I needed to communicate the difference in time and space between both dimensions and the juxtaposition of both. It was challenging as I had decided I would present my performance outside. This made it difficult, as I needed the budget or ability to use different sorts of technology or media to express the different dimensions I was trying to convey. I was intrigued by using nature to communicate different dimensions and parallels, so I leaned in, yet I still wanted some non-sensical elements in the environment. I thought it might be helpful to juxtapose the set and the challenge of doing it on a minimal budget. I wanted to present in a dream-like world. I wanted to create sets that didn't make sense or were from different locations. I had to be careful not to look like I was trying to replicate the set of *Alice and*



*Wonderland* or other sorts of fantasy movie sets. I remained genuine in my theme and thesis. It was about acknowledging the sacred time and space in ritual and performance.

Although ritual and sacredness are very real to me, to communicate them or bring the audience/witness with me, I had to create a spectacle to have the audience believe. I realize I cannot control or create gaze, but I know I can imprint upon it somehow. I started with the guided prompts to cleanse the palate of the mind.

The set and scene upon which my audience would travel were also fundamental, so I chose the historical garden. I loved that the garden came with its history. As the audience navigated

through the guides and path, they held a candle they eventually left at the altar before a big tree and were asked to release it with intention before they made their way to the



Illustrations 30 and 31:  
Mirror installations within the work. Photos by Candy Jimenez, 2023.

performance space. Upon their arrival, they saw mirrors. I connected to mirrors, which have different meanings in different cultures and religions. The mirror, for me, signified the reflection or portal to another dimension or reflections to

different versions of the self. The element of wood represents different periods in life.

The circumference of a tree trunk tells the age of the specimen. For me, this connects us

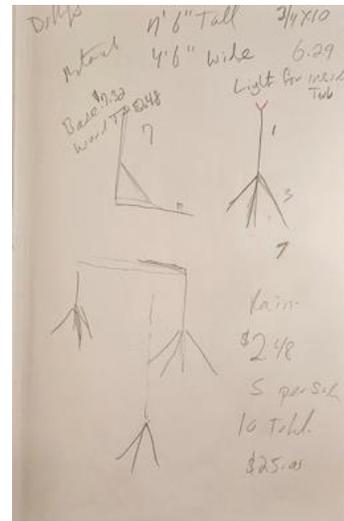
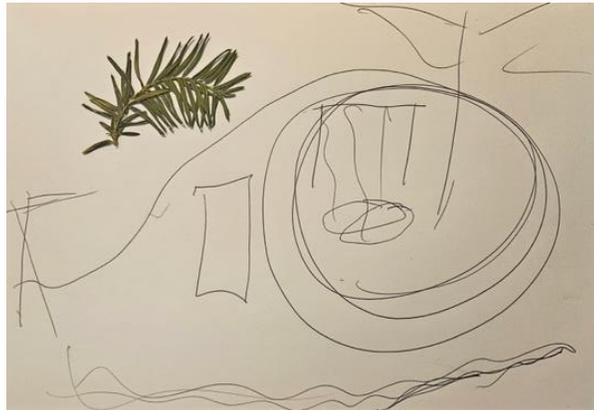
to the past. The branches of wood utilized in the creative manifestation had already fallen off, representing the journeys that had passed. The broken branches of timber that I reaped from nature represented a connection to the earth and the elements used in fire and ritual. The mirrors were placed in ways that are non-traditional to that of an object of a mirror. This led to the placement and juxtaposition of the tub. In addition, I knew that I didn't want the tub to be seen immediately. I was presenting the creative manifestation in a non-linear timeline; therefore, I did not want the tub to be seen. The HBO series *His Dark Materials* inspired me, and what I found most fascinating was how they cut through space to travel to other dimensions. The sliver in the plane of space and time was enchanting, and I was intrigued by the challenge of creating that effect. I built a portal made of nature. It was a piece of visual art that represented the sliver of time and portal into the dimension, the home of the tub, and the character in the bathwater. Using a clear



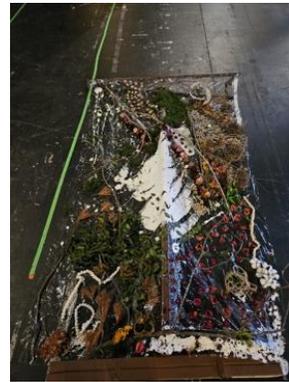
Illustration 32: Mirror installation within the work. Photo by Candy Jimenez, 2023.

piece of plastic, I composed a tableau and artifacts of nature to create a sliver in space for time travel. This was to communicate those dimensions are ever-present, and with imagination, we might access them if only we meditate and practice to be fully present.

*CREATING THE PORTAL*



Illustrations 33-40: Hand drawings, renderings, and process of creating set piece (The portal). Photos by Candy Jimenez, 2023.



Illustrations 41-48: Process of creating set piece. Photos by Candy Jimenez, 2023.



Illustrations 49-51: Performance photographs taken by Orfeaus Skuletis, July 2023.

## THE SNAKE

The material represents a timeline, the thread, and the consistent visual representation of time throughout different times and spaces. It also means a snake. As stated by Gloria E. Anzaldua, “The snake is a symbol of awakening consciousness-the potential of knowing within, awareness and intelligence not grasped by logical thought. Often nature provokes un "Aja," or "Conocimiento," to one that guides your feet along the path, gives you el animo to dedicate yourself to transforming perceptions of reality, and thus the conditions of life.”<sup>39</sup> I first created the representation of the snake or timeline with red tulle because it was what I had on hand. I was going to make it a solid decision, but considering the color, I realized red represents bloodline and the connection between me and the loved ones lost through time. This characterization worked, but I wouldn't say

I liked that it could be misconstrued for passion, killing, etc. White material dragged through nature could represent the snake, thread, and timeline without the interruption of the red color. The white material also means Anzaldua's statement: “You stop in the middle of the field and, under your breath, ask the spirits-animals, plants, y tus muertos-to help you string together a bridge of words. What follows is your attempt to give back to nature, los espíritus, and others a gift wrested from the events in your life, a bridge home to the self.”<sup>40</sup> This material is the connection.



Illustration 52: The material/snake. Photo by Candy Jimenez, 2023.

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<sup>39</sup> Gloria Anzaldua and Ana Louise Keating, *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 540.

<sup>40</sup> Anzaldua and Keating, *This Bridge We Call Home*. 540.

## THE STONES

River Rock

A Gift

Part of ritual

*Symbol of shared experience/weight of life*



I painted the Hebrew symbol, the Tree of Life, on the rocks to communicate that the rock, the gift, carries energy.

I gifted the audience something so that they would engage and connect. It is also an artifact that can be taken home to continue instilling a message even after the performance. Is it a weight or burden to carry, or is it energy and life to inspire?

### 1. Hebrew Sephiroth

1. KETHER = Upper Crown
2. 'HOKMAH = Wisdom
3. BINAH = Intelligence
4. 'HESED = Love
5. PA'HAD = Fear
6. TIPHERETH = Beauty
7. NETZA'H = Triumph
8. HOD = Glory
9. YE'SOD = Foundation
10. MALKHUTH = Kingdom

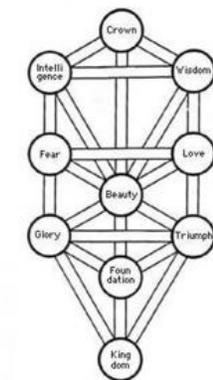


Illustration 53-54: Painted River Rock (the gift). Photo by Candy Jimenez, 2023 and the Hebrew Tree of Life graphic/jpeg, accessed March 2024.

## NATURE

Nature is the location for all things mirroring psycho-harmonic resonance, so it seemed relevant that my piece happened in the historical Beale Garden. As nature unfolds

throughout history, I wanted nature to be part of my creative manifestation in helping tell the story and enveloping the witness for their journey. Nature inspired me to write the poem that I used as text within the piece.

*The stars look different tonight  
They smell of earth after rain*

*fragments memory...*

*What does still water reflect?  
When did we learn that follicles rise to the moon?  
When that the tree reaps as it weeps and seeps?*

*The howl of the wind quivers  
as the skin contains me (within)  
in silence  
in hushed movement  
in this body that disperses  
in the timeless space connecting life and death*

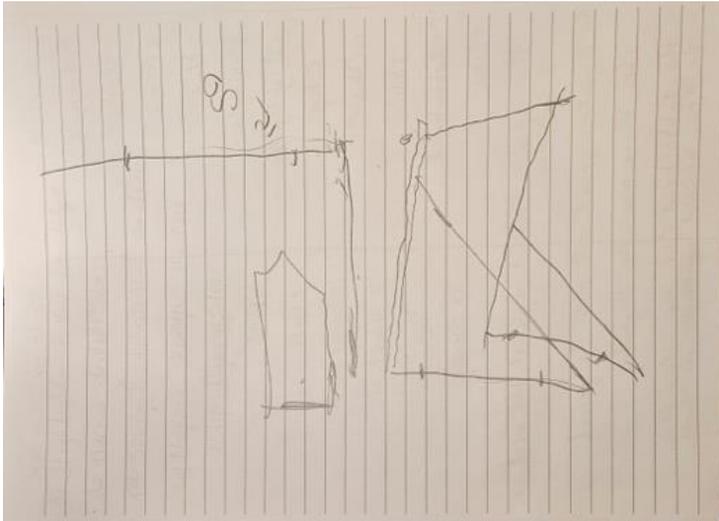
J. Krishnamurti, an Indian philosopher, speaker, writer, and spiritual figure, was a big inspiration in my work. His writings were very influential in my artistic decisions. I realized the creative manifestation upon reading, “The ending without a motive is the whole significance of dying and living. The roots of heaven are in living and dying.”<sup>41</sup> These words helped me realize the magic of now and the mystery of the dimensions of the past and future. The circularity of life and the harmonious magic of nature were relevant.

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<sup>41</sup> Jiddu Krishnamurti, *Krishnamurti to Himself* (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), 38.

## *RAIN*

It rained the day we buried my father. I was a young, pensive girl who thought the earth cried with me that day. That imagination somehow brought me comfort. For me, rain symbolizes a storm passing, even a cleansing ritual, much like the water in



the bath. I was intrigued at the thought of juxtaposing the space with artificial objects embedded in nature and fake rain trickling from a pipe even though clouds were brewing. This expression represented timelines/dimensions clashing together in an

immeasurable space. This represented a glitch in the matrix, a calm after or before a storm, where an accident of nature allowed the gathering of energies from different locations to experience resonance. The random rain was essential for me to include in the piece.



Illustrations 55-56: Design and construction of the rain. Photos by Candy Jimenez, 2023.

And each hour seems to give that tree a different quality.



Illustration 57: Performance photograph with tree. Photo by Orfeaus Skuletis, 2023.

There is a tree by the river,  
and we have been watching  
it day after day for several  
weeks now as the sun is  
about to rise.  
As the sun rises slowly over  
the horizon over the trees,  
this tree becomes all of a  
sudden golden.  
The leaves are bright with  
life and as you watch it as  
the hours pass by, that tree  
whose name does not matter  
what matters is that beautiful  
tree, an extraordinary quality  
seems to spread all over the  
land, over the river.  
And as the sun rises.....

Poem by Jiddu Krishnamurti

### *THE MOVEMENT WITHIN*

The movement was inspired by J. Krishnamurti's text and poems from "When Angels Speak of Love: Poems" by Bell Hooks. Nature, its resonance, and the rhythm of the text also inspired the movement.<sup>42</sup> Rehearsals took place outside in nature, and movement was created while reading the text, with rhythms found in the text and in nature itself during the rehearsals. The description of words within the text also inspired the architecture of the movement.

**I remember standing on the edge...**

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<sup>42</sup> bell hooks, *When Angels Speak of Love: Poems* (New York: Atria Books, 2007), 11, 15, 29, 91.

## REFLECTION

*They Smell of Earth After Rain* has an aura or sense of mystery behind it. It is poetic and not literal so that the work may be captured by the individual and interpreted by their journey. The illustration on page one, the poetry of concept, is guided by the imagery of a tree with roots: the leaves are the ideas, the imprints, the memories, and guiding energies. The branches represent the energies for embodiment, the neurons, and the channels where the energy flows. The trunk/bark represents identity, skin, and the self. Finally, roots are the real reason for the work. The roots are the fire, the spark of ignition. In contemplation, I needed to know what the roots were about and how they were cultivated to determine the leaves, my creative manifestation. Acknowledging histories imprints upon my future. This thesis is only one of many steps toward my evolution in my artistry, even more so at the age of 50.

Connection was the main impetus for this project. I realized that loss drove me to the ideas I flourished in. I am intrigued by finding connections in the time and space of performance. When I perform, I disperse and accumulate all simultaneously, traveling through portals where I may connect with a familiar energy. Connection is more important now, more than ever. In the age of technology, artificial intelligence, smartphones, social media, and addictions or vices, genuine connections are non-existent. Ironic as you would think that through this virtual ‘connectedness’ connections are happening all the time. All that has happened is that the world seems smaller, and communication is more accessible, yet we are further away from the connections we strive for. Connections that include communication, inspiration, and healing are found in nature, meditation, art, music, performance, etc. These connections where people feel

seen, heard, understood, and find space to connect to self and others can be the groundwork for healing. With the many unhealthy vices available to people such as unhealthy social media, alcohol, drugs, anything ad naseaum; it is important to connect to nature as humans are part of that organic environment. While I feel that everyone in the world needs healing, I realize not all people agree or want to be healed; however, I want my work to be available for those who may benefit from it. Within that same point, I am not saying that I am a healer and can perform magic, yet it may fill in the gap and help make a connection for a person looking for it. One must be quiet enough to hear or willing to see what might be there for them. Nature became my collaborator as I realized it as an environment with inherent portals. The cosmos harnesses sacred time, precious and fleeting, and time that will never be. This is important to my thesis as I have learned that the loss of my father and my understanding of his journey to suicide affected my life in the decision to be an artist and creator. I have come to appreciate and grieve the ephemerality of sacred time and space. Yet, it is the impermanence that makes it sacred and so unique. This fact is vital for my work.

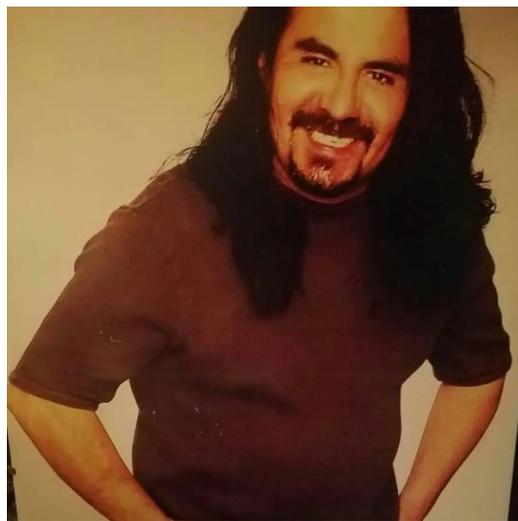
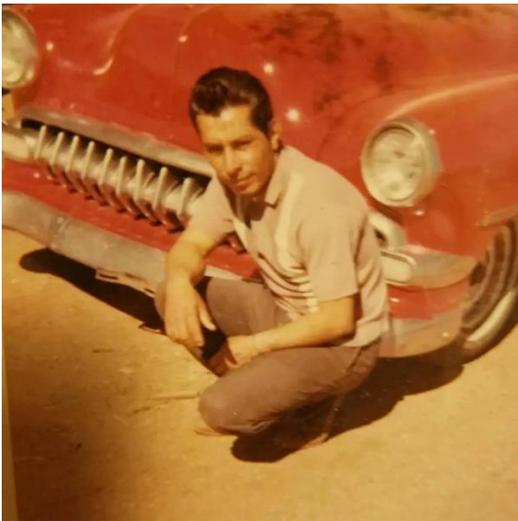
Silent knowing is all that is present without thinking in words. It is in the way that animals and babies can feel their feelings without having to define them in words because they can't define them in words. The exciting fact is that this is a happening, not a doing. The instinct, the erotic; I am intrigued by the erotic, and for me, it connects to silent knowing. Quoting Audre Lorde, "The erotic is a measure between the beginnings of our sense of self and the chaos of our strongest feelings. It is an internal sense of satisfaction to which, once we have experienced it, we know we can aspire. For having experienced the fullness of this depth of feeling and recognizing its power, in honor and

self-respect, we can require no less of ourselves.” To me, this is silent knowing, and I was excited to tune into this experience as I thought I would be propelled into new movements and ideas. I also wanted to investigate hallowed space. I was interested in sacred practices and activities that brought us closer to the self. Nature was a significant collaborator because it provided space and a platform to connect easily to the self. Through my interests and research, I found that I could channel energy, and then ideas and concepts would complete themselves as I held time and space in nightly baths. As I saw this knowledge of connecting in the tub, the idea of hallowed space faded away and became more about sacred space.

As I faced the challenge of locating myself within the framework, I realized ritual and religion were impactful in my life and should show up in the work. Dance, these sacred times and spaces, ritual, and religion were, in some essence, a portal for connection and communication. All these ideas impacted the decisions made during the creative process. Although the piece’s elements seemed to feed my concept, it was not clear enough for audience members to follow. I like the idea of having the audience members figure things out for themselves. I don’t want to have to hand-feed concepts. I like the audience taking what they need from a piece, but at the same time, there are audience members who take things literally as they are, as they could/should. The gaze, in general, is a complex challenge I take on every time I create. I remind myself of why I create. I feel I need to simplify the work. Make my work somehow less dramatic. In some ways, my work, in general, and how I connect have become melodramatic. To honor my work, I believe in the text, the concept, and the message, but I want to recreate it with the new knowledge and experience I have accumulated. I create to connect, and although I

may not have the powers of magic and healing in the life of an artist, I will proceed as I do and ask my audience to witness and experience the event as if they might need healing. If we go into the experience with this pact, we might learn something or expose something extraordinary.

For the ones we have lost.



Illustrations 58-59: Photo of Amador Jimenez, Sr. by Yolanda Jimenez, 1977 & Photo of Amador Jimenez Jr. by unknown, 1998.

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