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Acts of Holding:
Dance, Time and Loss

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Acts of Holding

Acts of Holding: Dance, Time and Loss

Abstract

Acts of Holding is a PhD by publication, which explores the relationship between dance, time and affect, focusing on the temporality of loss. It is a portfolio submission consisting of a body of choreographic practice, working within the field of western contemporary dance, that explores the capacity for dance to generate the temporal affect of loss for the viewer. The practice, made between 2010 and 2017, includes five screendance and one site-specific work and is submitted alongside five articles that articulate and respond to the practice-based findings. Collectively the publications generate insight into the role that loss plays in the temporal affect of dance, and what dance reveals about the temporality of loss.

By ‘temporality of loss’ the research refers to the experience or anticipation of the death of another in terms of its effect on the phenomenological sense of lived-time in the one who remains. Drawing on the author’s embodied personal experience of bereavement, the research operates in reflective loops that shift between insider and outsider positions, in ways that resonate with an ethnographic model of the participant observer. These iterative cycles of making and reflection incorporate and impact psychoanalytic, philosophical and somatic discourse, concerning dance, time and loss. From this multi-modal research, responsivity, holding and precarity emerge as three key temporal qualities intrinsic to both dance and grief. These findings add to discursive and choreographic research, into the relationship between the body, affect and time, within screendance and dance studies from writers such as Phelan (1997, 2004), Lepecki (2012), Rosenberg (2012), and Bench (2016).

Keywords: dance; screendance; transience; precarity; loss; responsivity