

FILLING IN THE BLANKS: EXPLORING UNFINISHED-NESS THROUGH  
CHOREOGRAPHIC CRAFT – A PRACTICE BASED RESEARCH PROJECT

by

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

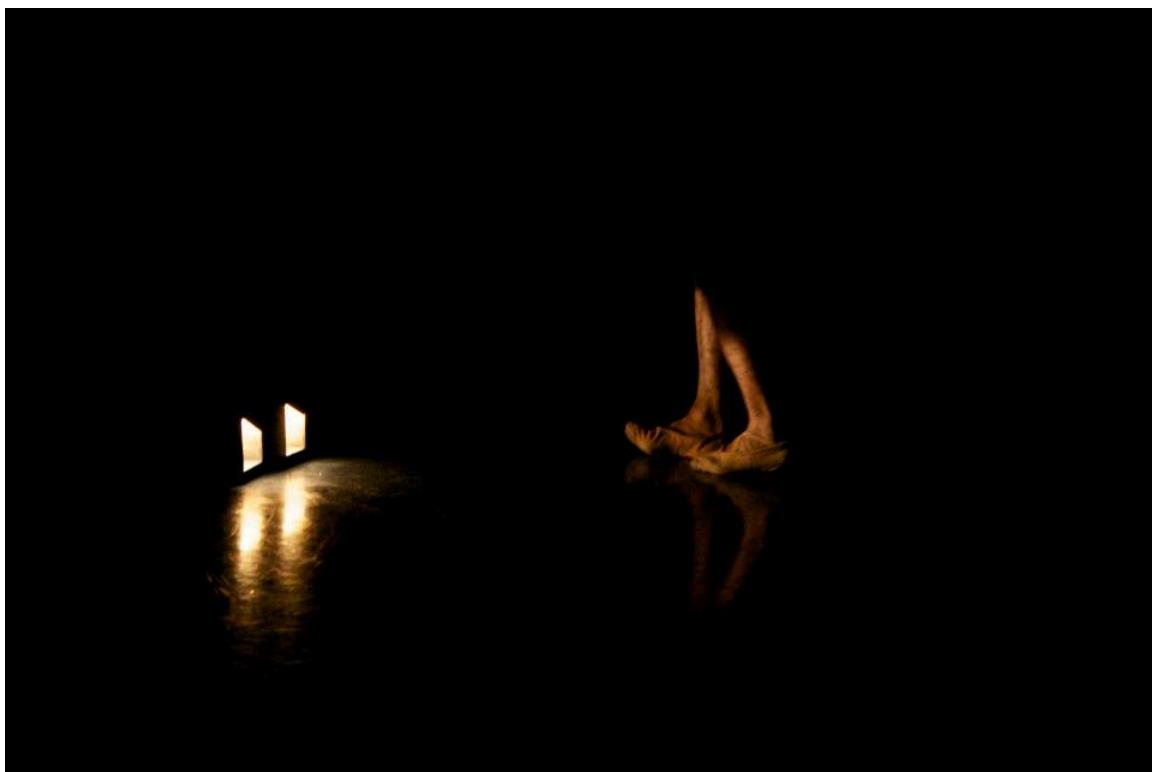
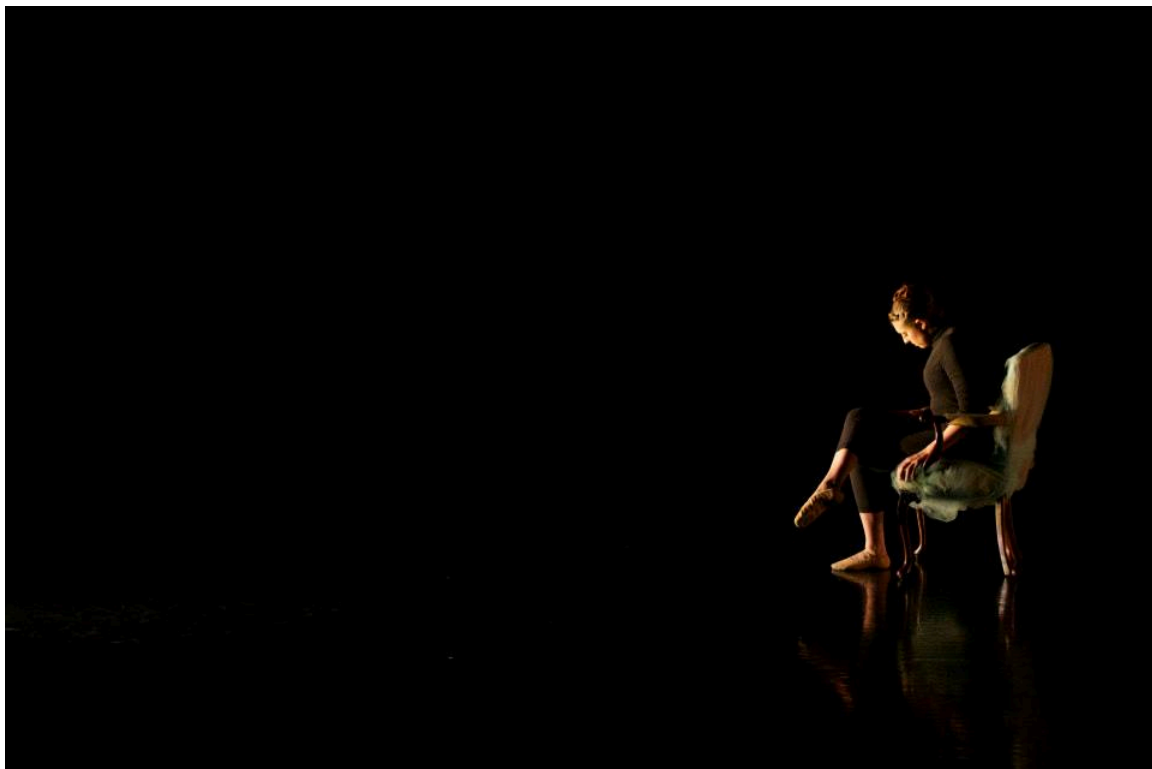
I would like to thank my advisor Elizabeth Gillaspay and my committee members Roma Flowers and Sally Packard for their guidance throughout this process. I am also extremely grateful for the dancers who worked with me as I developed my choreographic piece: Adrienne Esposito, Tristian Griffin, Danielle Hecker, and Katerina De Lawyer. This project would not have been possible without the help of these inspiring individuals. Finally, I would like to thank the TCU John V. Roach Honors College for granting me the TCU Honors Scholar Award in April 2013 to help fund this project.

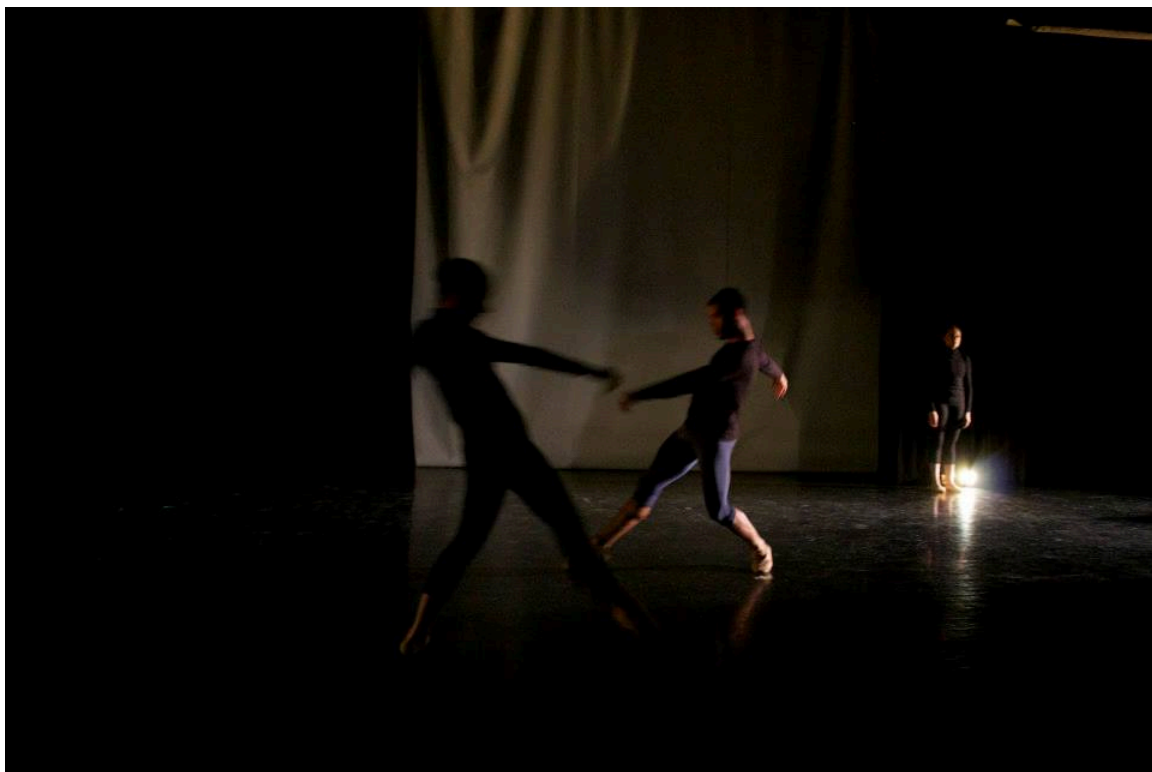
My research for *Filling In The Blanks* began with questions about perception and the impact of perception on the ways in which a dance might be viewed. What one might see in a dance, or expect to see, is as individual as the viewer. This unique experience and my own curiosity about the roles of perception and expectation, both in viewing and dance-making, represent the entry points for this practice-based research project. Through text-based and experiential research, I was able to gather information that helped me shape and fortify the idea that perception is a unique and individual experience. The work of two persons provided choreographic inspiration: Immanuel Kant and Paul Cezanne. Kant's ideas of the *beautiful* and the *sublime* and his theory that our brains are constantly creating order out of chaos and harmony out of dissonance, sparked my choreographic imagination. In his theory, Kant describes *beauty* as when our brain's expectations about what is going to happen next come true. What if we disrupt our brain's expectations of order and harmony? What happens when what our brain *thinks* is going to happen does not actually happen? In short, our brains are challenged and required to become active participants in the viewing process, this is what Kant refers to as the *sublime*. Inspired by Kant, my first choreographic prompt became, "what is the balance between beauty and sublimity in movement as it relates to my movement-making process?" Cezanne inspired my choreographic investigation with his *non finito* paintings. In addition to the traditionally blended and blurred painting techniques of impressionist painters, Cezanne left sections of the canvas blank, or unfinished. Neuroscience writer Jonah Lehrer described Cezanne's paintings as, "[giving] the brain just enough to decipher [...or else...] the mind would not be forced to enter the work of art." From Cezanne's work, my second

choreographic prompt became, “how can I implement ideas of “unfinished-ness” into a choreographed piece?”

My research became a process of questioning: What is hidden? What is revealed? What is finished? And what is unfinished? By engaging with these questions, I accumulated information about my own choreographic habits. I also came to understand the importance of point of view in the process of watching a dance or creating a dance. Through this practice-based research project, I created a work that challenged me to disrupt my own choreographic process and experiment with the ideas of perception and expectations as I crafted movement, structure, theatrical design, and performance.

APPENDIX A





Photography by Kaitlin Herndon



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## ABSTRACT

This honors project centers around the idea of perception and how dance is viewed. After a research process that included text based research and experiential research in the studio, I created choreographic prompts from which I choreographed a dance titled, *Filling in the Blanks*. By disrupting my own choreographic patterns and habits and challenging the way that I see things as a composer, I questioned my own perceptions and expectations through the choreographic process.