

**IMPACT LAB AND THE HALPRIN LIFE ART PROCESS:
A PRACTICE-BASED APPROACH TO CREATIVE, AFFECTIVE, AND POLITICAL
MOBILIZATION**

This is the first time in my life I am going to be a part of something much bigger than myself, and I don't really know what to expect.

— Christina Demunda, Impact Lab, 2011

During Canada's decade-long engagement in the post-9/11 US-led invasion of Afghanistan 158 Canadian military personnel were killed. Each of these deaths has been memorialized in the media, through formal and popular repatriation ceremonies, and via the renaming of sections of the repatriation route to the "Highway of Heroes" and the "Route of Heroes." Unlike Canada's military dead, there are no exact numbers for Afghans who were been killed or who died as a result of war-related causes during this time. While, in part, the lack of an accurate accounting of Afghan dead is a result of the US/NATO no-body count policy,¹ it is also reflective of a "differential distribution of grievability across populations" wherein Western lives are deemed grievable while the lives of non-Western "others" remain outside of the realm of grievability (Butler 2010, 24).

From July 1 (Canada Day) 2010 through July 1 2011, I performed *Impact Afghanistan War* [*Impact*] a alternative memorial project in which I fell 100 times a day in a public space for one year. Each of *Impact*'s 36,600 falls was done in recognition of one of the tens of thousands of unnamed and uncounted Afghan dead. *Impact* was an attempt to reach beyond the numbness produced by abstract numbers, political ideologies, and media spectacularization, and to allow myself, and invite others, to be impacted. Though primarily a solo performance memorial, others occasionally joined me when I fell: Once, as an organized group fall on October 7, 2010, the 9th anniversary of the US-led invasion of Afghanistan; from time to time, as a spontaneous gesture; in the case of friend and colleague, Bradley High, as an almost weekly participant; and, at a distance, in Melbourne, Australia, Vivienne Neale fell approximately once a month (sometimes

¹ The no-body count policy was communicated in the first month of the war by U.S. military spokesperson, Rear Adm. John D. Stufflebeem: "[A]s a military institution, we don't keep body counts, or at least we're not keeping body counts. Maybe in past wars it was done. But we're not doing that." U.S. Department of Defense, News Transcript, Public Affairs, "Enduring Freedom Operational Update" October 30, 2001 [online] <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=2232>.

alone and sometimes with friends). Sometimes, these fellow fallers shared reflections on their experience of falling through in-person and email conversations or on [Impact's blog](#). My glimpses into their meaning-making processes helped to both ground and expand my understanding of *Impact's* impact and sparked in me a curiosity about the effects of participation in *Impact*. Impact Lab, a practice-based activist research project that took place within the context of “Performance Lab” a Theatre Studies graduate course directed by Professor Laura Levin at York University, was the product of this curiosity.

In spring 2011, five York University students — Christina Demuda, EmilyAnne Fullerton, Rebecca Hooton, Melissa Lepp and Samantha Niaraki — participated in Impact Lab. The project combined public performances of *Impact* with in-studio post-performance reflections based in the Halprin Life Art Process (HLAP), a method for creative exploration developed by postmodern dance pioneer Anna Halprin. Impact Lab sought to extend *Impact's* scope in two significant ways: First, by adding a collective dimension, and second by incorporating a process of creative and embodied reflection. Through an examination of Impact Lab, this paper explores the potential of activist performance, in concert with a reflection process rooted in a multi-modal expressive arts approach, as a model for the facilitation of both personal agency *and* political mobilization.

Impact Lab and the Halprin Life Art Process

Rather than just looking at somebody doing something very unusual, I want the audience to be able to identify and realize that this is a person more than [she] is a dancer, a person who identifies with very real things (Anna Halprin, cited in Ross, 2007: 221).

Impact Lab participants met weekly for seven weeks. The first session was spent in-studio with an emphasis on introducing participants to the project, exploring the physical mechanics of falling, and familiarizing them with the HLAP. Subsequent sessions were divided into two activities: public space performances of *Impact*, and in-studio post-fall reflections based in the HLAP's expressive arts tools of movement, drawing, and writing. In the final in-studio session, participants devised short creative “performances” about their experience of falling using

materials produced during previous weeks. Over the course of the seven weeks participants also contributed written and visual reflections to *Impact*'s blog and in its final week Impact Lab culminated with an off-campus performance of *Impact* in Toronto's Queen's Park (Fig. 1).

The HLAP was developed by Anna Halprin and her daughter Daria Halprin, who, in 1978, also co-founded the Tamalpa Institute, a movement-based expressive arts educational institution offering programs that “integrates movement/dance, visual arts, performance techniques and therapeutic practices” (<http://www.tamalpa.org/about/index.html>). My choice of the HLAP as the overarching philosophical and pedagogical umbrella that informed Impact Lab's methods of investigation was an organic one. I've taught workshops using the HLAP for over fifteen years and served on the faculty of the Tamalpa Institute for three years. I am also a long-time student of Anna Halprin's and her influence is evident in *Impact* through its philosophical underpinnings — a belief in dance's transformative power when connected to community issues and concerns — and in the use of falling as a recognizable “scored” task rather than a choreographed movement. While a score tells a dancer “what” to do it does not tell them “how” to do it, or how to feel – any emotion is born of the movement itself and, according to Halprin, *cannot* be “scored,” or choreographed. Halprin's use of scoring, task-based movements and a gestural vocabulary drawn from the lexicon of the day-to-day was highly influential in the development of a North American postmodern dance aesthetic that foregrounded dance as a socially situated process rather than as a product of virtuosity.



Figure 1: Performing Impact Lab at Queen’s Park, Toronto, Ontario (March 31, 2011) Photo Cassie Scott

For Halprin, a particular dance or “score” is always as part of a larger creative and social process. Anna and her husband Lawrence, the renowned public space architect, drew upon their experiences as collaborators to develop the R.S.V.P Cycles as a model for creative collaboration and decision-making. A process-oriented framework that can be used to develop, reflect upon, and revise any collective creative endeavor, the R.S.V.P. Cycles’ interconnected components include **R**esources (the knowledge and abilities of the participants); **S**core (a plan leading to action); **V**alueaction (the reflective and communication processes that deepen participants meaning-making and facilitate the score’s ongoing development and evolution); and **P**erformance (the action itself) (Halprin, L.1969).

A key strength of the R.S.V.P Cycles is its non-linearity. As a model for creative development, decision-making, and collaboration, there is no single entry point, no proscribed

order, and no rigidly choreographed or predetermined destination. Participants and their degree of investment at the varying stages of a creative process may change. Though *Impact* was in the eighth month of a year-long Performance when Impact Lab participants entered the project, by combining public Performances of *Impact* with in-studio reflections (Valuation), participants were able to contribute Resources to *Impact*'s ongoing development. Participants refined the Score in ways that reflected their individual and collective interests and concerns and produced mini (in studio) Performance sketches as well as more in-the-world performances like blog entries. Finally, in some cases, after the conclusion of Impact Lab participants went on to develop and perform creative and/or activist projects that were an extension of, or informed by, their Impact Lab experiences. It is important to note that although Impact Lab was based on a project that (1) was already in its performance phase, (2) emphasized reflection or meaning-making, and (3) was informed by a postmodern dance or performance art aesthetic, the HLAP as a method could also be used to generate original scores and performances in a range of aesthetic forms.

Psychokinetic Imagery Process

For the in-studio post-fall reflection process I was most interested in a method that could serve as a mechanism to access, reflect upon, and communicate the multi-perspectival nature of the phenomenal and associative experiences that were generated through the repeated act of falling within the context of a public activist memorial project. The central HLAP resource used for Impact Lab reflections was the Psychokinetic Imagery Process (PIP), a process through which participants shift between movement, drawing, and dialogue (written and verbal) as a means of simultaneously accessing and expressing affective experiences (Halprin D. 2003). Christina Demunda explains the value these post-fall explorations had for her:

Talking about and exploring my thoughts, emotions, and mental processes through various artistic mediums [was] necessary for understanding the chaos in my brain.

In his example of the U.S. Homeland Security's colour-coded terror-alert system Brian Massumi explains that the effective modulation of affect by the state is achieved through its

bifurcation, the splitting off of emotional and phenomenal experience, from cognitive or critical interpretation (2005). By rendering “affective experience” as subjective (private) it becomes separated from the political (public) process of producing the rationalized narratives that are used to justify and shape local, national, and foreign political policies (Massumi 2007). Thus, in Massumi’s example, fear becomes the “affective fact” through which the narrative for the necessity of a “war on terror” is produced. I propose that in Canada, our much greater emphasis on military memorialization (as evidenced through the Highway of Heroes phenomena, institutionally supported Remembrance Day observances, and a growing network of military memory projects) suggests that grief is the affective fact through which Canadian narratives of humanitarian militarism are manufactured and maintained. Utilizing the PIP in post-fall reflections helped to disrupt this (socially constructed) bifurcation of affective experience from cognitive interpretation and expression by providing a mechanism whereby the “allatonceness” of the phenomenal experience — the “chaos” in Christina’s brain — could to be explored and communicated both affectively *and* cognitively. Here I am seeking to draw upon and extend Marshall McLuhan’s notion of the “allatonceness” of auditory experience that he situates “in opposition to the single, dominant perspective of the visual gaze” (Eaket, 2008: 39).

Post-fall drawings were preceded by short, guided meditations wherein I invited Christina, EmilyAnne, Rebecca, Melissa, and Samantha to recall their experience of falling by revisiting it on three levels of awareness — physical, emotional, and mental. This deliberate use of three levels of awareness resists not only the bifurcation of affective experience from cognitive and critical interpretation, it also resists McLuhan’s model of positioning one phenomenal mode of perception (auditory) in opposition to a more dominant and hegemonic one (visual). Through this lack of oppositionality the HLAP engages a kind of “Aikido” that challenges the hegemonic control of dominant modes of perception by “blending with” rather than directly “opposing” or “attacking” them.²

Physically, Christina, EmilyAnne, Rebecca, Melissa, and Samantha were asked to reflect on the sensations, sights and sounds they experienced. Emotionally, they were invited to recall any

² Aikido, a Japanese martial art developed in the 1920s, bases its techniques of self-defense and spiritual development on the philosophy of harmony. As a physical technique, Aikido practitioners “blend with,” rather than oppose or resist, an attacker’s energy to either gain control over them, or to move them away (<http://www.aikidofaq.com/introduction.html>).

feelings that may have arisen during the day's falls.³ Mentally, they were asked to revisit any thoughts, fantasies, visual images or conceptual associations that emerged as they fell. From here they were invited to draw and given several possible approaches as a way to encourage each of them to trust their own image making process (Fig. 2). Drawings were then used, sometimes as a visual vehicle to help them to narrate their experiences in partner (Fig. 3), and group shares, and at other times, as a visual "score" to further explore through movement.



Figure 2: Image making process post-performance (March 3, 2011) Photo by author

As with the drawing process, I guided them through the process of "moving" their drawings by providing them with a number of different entry points. Sometimes they were directed to choose an image, a colour, or another specific element in the drawing that they wanted to explore. Other times they were encouraged to let the drawing "move" them — to kinesthetically

³ Because I was concerned that *Impact*'s overarching narrative of mourning and honouring the dead could leave participants feeling "bad" or "wrong" if their emotions are not "appropriately aligned" with the performance's "message" during this part of the guided reflection I felt it important to name a range of emotional qualities—sadness, anger, fear, boredom, restlessness, embarrassment, numbness—to signal that it was whatever they felt was welcome.

explore its emotional quality. While the HLAP frequently uses music and sound scores in warm-up exercises, with the PIP, the drawing acts as the sole “score.” This deliberate unmooring of movement from music is designed to support participants to create their own kinesthetic dialogue with the imagery without its being overshadowed by the more socially conditioned relationship between music and movement. Like the attention brought to the three levels — physical, emotional, mental — this approach to moving their drawings resisted the construction of a singular or homogenizing narrative, and the privileging of one way of knowing over others(s). An exploration of a single drawing often involved a series of short “dances.” As each dance was brought to a close they were encouraged to find a posture, and from within that posture to see if a word or statement emerged. The drawings, dances and words, that were generated could then be further explored through writing or could become an additional vehicle through which to communicate their experience to the group.



Figure 3: Sharing images and narratives post-performance (February 17, 2011) Photo by author

It's interesting to note that Halprin "first introduced drawing in the dance studio [in the 1940s] as a way of helping preliterate children script plots for their dances" (Ross 2007:304). Unlike more conventional or didactic approaches to education (or to activism), the PIP process with its use of a range of aesthetic frames (drawing, movement, writing) provides participants with an expanded vocabulary for the translation of phenomenal or pre-verbal experiences, or experiences that exceed language's symbolic capacities. In this process, there lies the potential for an increased capacity to negotiate communication across complex differences of identity and personal and affective experience.

Negotiating Meaning Through Intra- and Inter-personal Multi-vocality

Samantha's and EmilyAnne's first post-fall explorations illustrate some of the ways in which the PIP facilitated individual and group expressions of multi-vocality: In her "Freedom?" (Fig. 4) drawing Samantha layered the story of her aunt's imprisonment and subsequent murder by Iranian state authorities with questions about individual freedom in relationship to collective responsibility — questions Samantha continued to engage and grapple with in subsequent explorations.

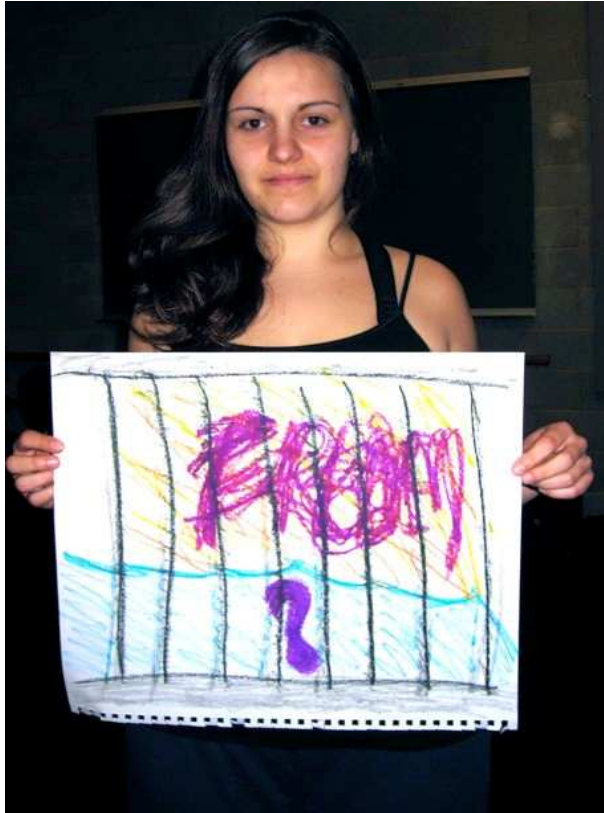


Figure 4: “Freedom?” by Samantha (February 10, 2011) Photo by author

EmilyAnne’s first “Untitled” (Fig. 5) drawing and corresponding journal excerpt, on the other hand, articulated a very different kind of freedom:

Free of thought, free of worry . . . like my movements on the floor, I let my hands do what ever they pleased. . . The pastels felt so good in my hands. . . Quite content. Quiet. Grounded. Not overly opinionated. Today I was just letting myself be. Not thinking, Just BEING. . . Lovely. A place I want to be. Freedom.

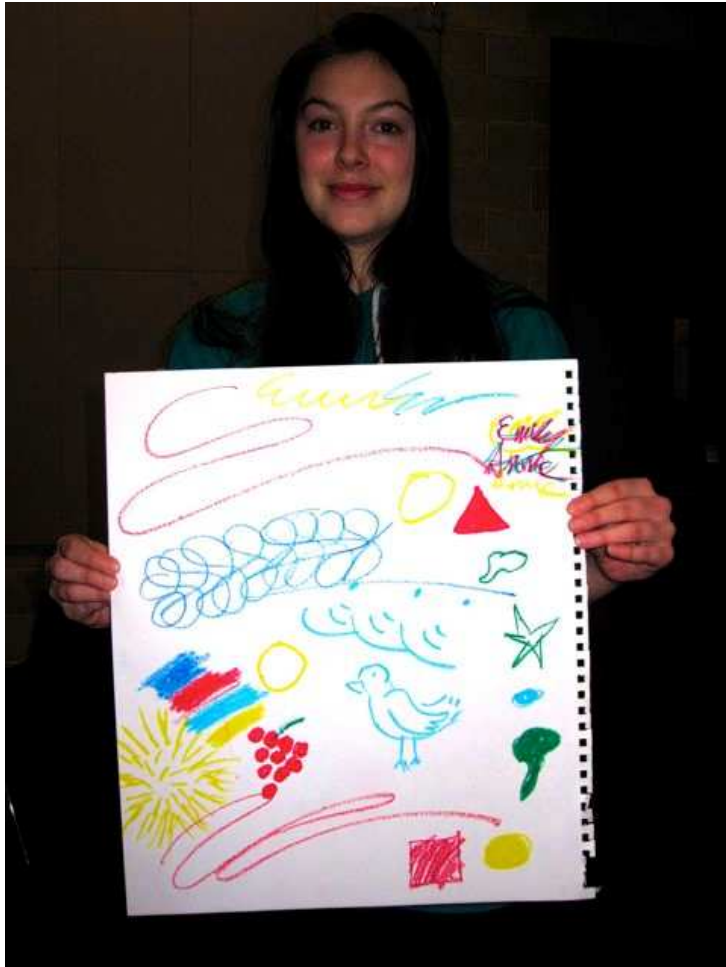


Figure 5: “Untitled” by EmilyAnne (February 10, 2011) Photo by author

Belarie Zatzman suggests that the performance of memory necessitates the navigation of “participants’ sense of identity along a negotiated continuum of self/other, personal/public, process/product, past/present, and local/national” (Zatzman, 2005:96-7). Whereas for Samantha, falling and the post-fall engagement with the PIP provided a mechanism through which to share the memory of her aunt’s political persecution and murder, for EmilyAnne, the process provided her with an opportunity to discover (or remember) an inner sense of liberation, which she named “BEING” and “Freedom.” This juxtaposition of Samantha’s and EmilyAnne’s narratives of “Freedom” illustrates how the process of negotiating meaning across vast continuums may be necessary not only for individuals’ understanding of their identity in relation to memory and history, but also, for the group’s understanding of the diversity identities within the collective body. The fact that Samantha and EmilyAnne were able to communicate their radically different experiences in relationships to the concept of freedom, is also suggestive of some of the ways the

body, phenomenal experience, and art may be resources for the (re)discovery of methods of poly-vocality within a context of both intra (internal) and inter (social and political) discourse. The articulation and visible expression of the diversity of narratives that emerged from the act of falling (and of witnessing one another fall) during our first meeting also served to facilitate a kind of mutual caring that was not dependent on compliance either to a dominant meta-narrative or to a proscribed counter-hegemonic narrative.

Expanding Circumferences of Care, Accountability, and Meaning-making

Twist, starting at the knees.

Spiral, spin, woooosh and I'm down.

Careful to roll.

Don't make the impact of The Impact too forceful.

The rudiments of falling.

I see a world upside down,

People conversing with a flag.

(Right side) Up again.

Spiral, spin, woooosh and I'm down.

Careful to roll.

Impact this time. My head hits the ground. Hard.

Blood pools around me in the grass, the very grass that held me all those falls before. In fact, we are all just bodies in the grass. Green and red. Grass and blood. A mass grave.

But wait, reality sets back in. I push myself up. (Right side) up again.

Red fades away into green and we're all standing again.

Then, spiral, spin, woooosh, and I'm down.

Careful to roll.

The rudiments of falling.

— Melissa Lepp, Impact Lab 2011

Impact, with its flag as a signifier of nation, sought to engage participants and witnesses in a kind of geopolitical “spatial dialectics” (Eaket, 2008: 29), one that questioned empathy’s confinement within national boundaries, one that sought to interpellate us into a citizenship that insists on participatory meaning-making based on the recognition of shared vulnerability. Through its daily insinuation into the everyday present of the public sphere *Impact* also sought to implicate both participant and witness in the military actions of our nation state, and to invite a process Deleuze refers to as the “deterritorialization” and “reterritorialization” of space. Bodies fall to the ground in the intimately corporeal here and now, before a flag brought down from high, disrupting the “normal connections and relations that constitute a given space” (Eaket, 2008:45). The world, as Melissa writes, is upside down, people converse with a flag, and through it, with nation (Fig. 6).

The works of scholars who examine the affective, narrative, and performative mechanisms deployed by nation states towards the interpellation of citizen populations in acts of war formed *Impact*’s theoretical underpinning. In her post-9/11 reflections on global and geopolitical violence Butler argues for the potential of practices of mourning grounded in the recognition of vulnerability as a primary and shared condition of life to produce “an ethics of non-violence and a politics of a more radical redistribution of humanizing effects” (2003: 9). And, like Massumi, Jackie Orr (2006, 2004) traces the history of the U.S. government’s manipulation of insecurity and terror as a means of militarizing the civilian psychology and calling into being the “civilian soldier” (Orr 2004, 452). Through its embodied and publicly-situated conversation with the flag *Impact* sought to call (or invite) into being another kind of citizen, one who questions their interpellation as “citizen soldiers” (whether in the name of a “war on terror” or enlightened militarism), one who questions the nation state’s “differential allocation of grief” (Butler 2010).

In addition to its role as a signifier of nation, *Impact*’s flag also acted as a more didactic messenger. Both the flag and the informational postcards that accompanied it bore this message.



Figure 6: Flag postcard for witnesses of *Impact*⁴

⁴ The flag's printed message indicates the number of Canadian casualties when I began *Impact* on July 1, 2010. By the time of *Impact*'s concluding falls on July 1 2011, the number had risen to 157 and rose again to 158 in October 2011 (<http://www.forces.gc.ca/site/news-nouvelles/fallen-disparus/index-eng.asp>). Throughout the year, I altered (in pen) the number on the postcard and dedicated one fall to each additional Canadian casualty. The final two casualties during my year of falling — Bomardier Karl Manning (May 27, 2011) and Master Corporal Francis Roy (June 25, 2011) — were non-combat related deaths and are the fourth and fifth suspected cases of suicide involving Canadian soldiers serving in Afghanistan (<http://www.ctvnews.ca/army-identifies-latest-soldier-to-die-in-afghanistan-1.662437#ixzz2U7li5LJ2>).



Figure 7: *Impact* audience members/witnesses. Queen’s Park, Toronto, Ontario (March 29, 2011) Photo by Cassie Scott

Despite the availability of this communication it is important to recognize that unlike the audiences who deliberately set aside the time to attend staged dance or theatre productions, *Impact*’s audience was both unintentional and highly dispersed. Many witnessed from a distance, through the windows of surrounding buildings or passing vehicles. Of those witnesses who were within physical proximity most were on their way to or from somewhere. It is not surprising therefore that only a very small percentage actually stopped to read the flag’s inscribed message, or to take a postcard. Even fewer stayed to witness more than a couple of falls. This is not to suggest that *Impact*’s relationship to its audience of citizens busily immersed in the day-to-day trajectory of their lives was accidental. Rather it is a relationship that was integral to *Impact* and reflective of a postmodern dance (and performance art) aesthetic that emphasizes a decentralized and poly-vocal meaning-making structure. But while it was not unexpected that so many passers-by would do just that — pass by — I had not anticipated the degree to which witnesses responses would become such a critical element of the affective experience of *Impact* Lab’s performers.

Witness to a Witness

During my eight months of performing *Impact* prior to Impact Lab I saw my capacity for empathy expand, not only for the disavowed “Other”—the Afghan dead—but also for “Us”; for all those who busily passed by; for those who witnessed with intention, with sorrow, with anger; for the Canadian soldiers who lived, fought, and died in Afghanistan; for those who returned home bearing the physical and psychological scars of war; for their families and friends. The visceral challenge of balancing a daily falling practice with the maintenance of my physical and emotional well-being also made me heartbreakingly aware of what an immense struggle it must be to perform the day-to-day tasks of living in the midst of a war zone. However, because *Impact* had largely been a solo performance, it wasn’t until I began facilitating the Impact Lab that I experienced such an intimate sense of responsibility to and for a group.

My desire to “protect” project participants weighed heavily on me. *Impact* had always been performed in outdoor public spaces and since the project coincided with what I came to think of as “the season-of-thaw” — falling conditions were horrible. In a way, these conditions, like the enactment of falling together, facilitated a sense of group connection because of how it necessarily grounded the notion of caring (for self and the collective) through a series of concrete tasks that we “performed” together; suiting up for the fall, selecting a location, falling, changing out of wet clothes, hanging them to dry. By our fourth meeting, however, weather conditions had become particularly unwieldy. It was raining and the campus grounds were reduced to a series of interconnecting ice-water pools interspersed with rather sad and dirty snow moguls. In response, the group altered *Impact*’s “score” diversifying it in terms of both geography and task: I fell in one of my “regular” outdoor spots; Melissa, Christina, and EmilyAnne fell on the other side of a large window inside York’s Centre for Film and Theatre building (with a new attention to care, since the floor was tile over concrete) (Fig. 7); and Samantha and Rebecca circulated, witnessing the falling, and speaking with and observing passers-by and other witnesses.

After completing my falls I came inside to find Christina, Melissa, and EmilyAnne still in the process of falling. When they finished they embraced one another, at which point Christina broke into tears: During our post-fall reflection I learned that Christina’s tears were in response to feeling both “humiliated” — by several witnesses who had laughed at and “mocked” her, Melissa, and EmilyAnne — and “unprotected” by a group of her friends:

I could see another group of friends in the distance, but they could not see me. With the amount of student activity going on around me, it was very difficult to get to my usual meditative state. It was extremely jarring at times and challenged my focus, which was especially important now that I was falling on cement floor. I made a mildly disturbing discovery; I found that the more onlookers ignored or taunted me, the more desperate I became for my friends to notice me. By fall 39, my eyes were welling up with tears. "Why is no one trying to protect me?"



Figure 8: Impact Lab performance, indoors at York University (March 15, 2011) Photo by Rebecca Hooton

As Christina shared her experience the general tone of the group shifted to a criticism of *Them*, of *Their* arrogance, *Their* ignorance, a criticism of *Impact's* unintentional and seemingly uncaring audience. Then Samantha offered a reflection from her perspective as "a witness to a

witness, watching those who were watching those who were falling.”⁵ Samantha shared the story of a woman who had been quietly sitting and watching Christina, Melissa, and EmilyAnne fall. The woman told Samantha how moved she was and she stayed to witness their entire set of falls. Through the redesign of the score, the group created a new role, that of meaning-making mediator and witness to the witnesses. From this new location Samantha was able to make visible a response that might otherwise have been drowned out by louder and more affectively stinging voices.

From Choreographing Resistance to Mobilizing Movements

If I can't dance, it's not my revolution.

— Emma Goldman (paraphrased)

For dance to move the political beyond arrested development, its knowledge of how bodies are assembled, of how space and time are configured, of how interconnections are valued must be made legible beyond the ends of the choreographic endeavor. (Martin, 2012:64)

In his analysis of the relationship between dance and politics Randy Martin (1998) points out that political movements don't just involve abstract thinking, ideologies, and intellectual conceptualizing, they involve actual bodies in motion. Because of the West's long-standing (post-Enlightenment) privileging of ideas, or the mind, over the body, Martin suggests however, that what bodies have to offer political movements has been undervalued and overlooked. Clearly Emma Goldman refused this devaluation of the body. A leading anarchist thinker and activist of the early 20th century, Goldman valued embodied experience and was an early and vocal advocate, not only for dancing, but also, for birth control and a range of other issues related to gender and sexual liberation (Kaufman 2003, 12). Goldman's insistence on a revolution that includes dance was an insistence on a politics that includes the body.

Using dance as a metaphor, one can analyze political movements in relationship to the level of choreography they deploy. Many oppositional political movements have a tendency to reflect

⁵ Niaraki, Samantha. "Bitter Sweet." Impact Lab 2011.

the very choreographic models of the hegemonic systems for which they seek to offer an alternative. In her analysis of 60s “New Left” movements Wini Breines (1982) coined the term “prefigurative politics” to describe the political philosophy of social movements that strove to “prefigure,” or embody through their day-to-day practices and interactions, the society they were struggling to bring into being. While many 60s and 70s social movements (perhaps most notably, feminism) embraced prefigurative political practices, by the 90s an institutionalized social movement model had gained prominence. Sometimes referred to as the “non-profit industrial complex” this model has had a tendency to reduce participation to signing petitions, forwarding emails, and of course, giving money. The Occupy Movement, with its absence of a central, controlling leadership and a predetermined set of demands, may well be as much a response to the limiting choreography offered by a host of institutional and oppositional social movements, than it is to the greed and corruption of the 1%.

Participant motivation within prefigurative models is facilitated not only through political ideologies or positions, but also via lived engagement. Pre-figurative approaches to activist mobilization can also be seen as a mechanism through which participants develop their decision-making and risk-taking capacities. In *Conscience and Courage: Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust* Eva Fogelman argues that one of the distinguishing characteristics of rescuers of Jews during the Nazi’s genocidal regime, was a highly developed capacity to take risks and to improvise in dangerous circumstances. Fogelman suggests that this explains why there were a disproportionate number of “sneaks, thieves, smugglers, hijackers, blackmailers, and killers” among the rescuers (1994: 3). It also explains why so many “moral” citizens did nothing. As Fogelman argues, it’s not enough to feel a sense of conscience, we need to act on it, and in order to act on our conscience we need to engage in practices that help us develop courage in the face of risk, especially, the courage to act against the status quo. When counter-hegemonic movements demand rigid adherence to party positions or allow for only limited and prescribed action, they do not only deny individual participant’s agency, they also contribute to the arrested development of the political movement itself.

Conclusion: The Halprin Life Art Process as a Model for Creative and Prefigurative Political Mobilization

I can fall down the stairs, or trip on a branch, but falling with purpose, falling for something, falling for someone is an entirely different thing. It has touched me this week in ways that I didn't expect. I have been impacted.

— Melissa Lepp, Impact Lab 2011

The real struggle is the change of tomorrow, and I think I am just slowly, truly, starting to realize this and how much of an impact it is having on me is so surreal. The ironic thing is, it is probably the most real conclusion I've come to in months. Where to start?

— Samantha Niaraki, final reflection, Impact Lab, 2011

Standing. Taking in the world. Almost more vulnerable than lying on the ground. Standing tall. Holding my ground. Allowing myself to be here — to be seen. Standing. Am I proud? I think I am. Just being. I'm here.

— EmilyAnne Fullerton, final reflection, Impact Lab 2011

A central emphasis of prefigurative political approaches is a shift away from vanguardism's mono-vocal truth claims and towards a more poly-vocal negotiation of meaning and decision-making. Similarly, *Impact's* use of a task-based and scored structure, rather than a rigidly choreographed one, created space for Impact Lab participants to adjust the score to match individual and group needs while simultaneously maintaining both aesthetic (ensemble) and intentional (political/symbolic) cohesion. Likewise, post-fall reflections grounded in the Psychokinetic Imagery Process, provided participants with a range of opportunities and methods to become co-generators of meaning at both a personal (private) and a public (social/political) level. Participants were also invited to shape their discoveries into written (and in Rebecca's case — photo and video documentary) contributions to [Impact's blog](#), thus further emphasizing their agency by refusing the confinement of their affective and phenomenal experience to a "subjective" or privatized location.

While my original intention with Impact Lab was to facilitate a reflective process as a means of accessing narratives generated through participation in *Impact*, I now recognize that the project's "revolution" was in its process. By combining an embodied expressive arts

methodology with engagement in a public activist performance project, Impact Lab served as a prefigurative model that provided participants with resources not only to reflect upon their experiences of falling, but also to develop their creative risk-taking capacities within the relative safety of a studio environment, and to then extend their risk-taking to a public environment. This dual process became a practice through which participants were provided with both the resources, and the opportunity, to *stand tall*, to *hold their ground*, and to allow their courage to catch up with their conscience. It was not simply participation in *Impact* that moved, or mobilized, Christina, EmilyAnne, Melissa, Samantha, and Rebecca, it was engagement with a process that allowed them to access and express their embodied experiences, to bring their experiences out of the enclosed and privatized arena of the subjective, and reconnect them to the larger social and public sphere (Fig. 8).



Figure 9: Standing Tall, Impact Lab performance, York University (March 22, 2011)

Photo by Rebecca Hooton

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