

A Feminist's Photographic View of Ballet Dancers¹

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Kinesiology, Sport, and Recreation

Faculty Research Day - March 21, 2024

This project was interested in how female-identified dancers might desire to move their bodies in ways that both subverted and/or diverged from classical ballet form. In the summer of 2023, six dancers with classical ballet training had the opportunity to explore alternative modes of movement and representation. Each dancer has over a decade of classical ballet training, although not every dancer currently focuses on ballet as their primary form of dance. Participants were all young adults. The purpose of this study was to explore how dance photography can create space for alternative expression.

Each participant was invited to participate in an interview and an optional follow-up photoshoot with me. The semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain an understanding of dancers' backgrounds and opinions about ballet. Subsequently, dancers completed a photoshoot with two phases: demonstrating classical balletic poses, and then alternative poses in whatever style they preferred. Each participant contributes a different resistance to ballet hegemony.

Ballet is a very visual medium, and how it is typically photographed reflects the often narrow and conservative values of it as an institution. This project allowed dancers to reflect on their beliefs about ballet and to explore alternative modes of expressing movement through the photographic process.

Please look up towards the second floor mezzanine for the photographic exhibit.

Please scan the QR code to read artist statements:

Footnote 1:

This project was supported by the Human Performance Fund grant from the President's Office at the University of Alberta.

This study was approved by the University of Alberta Human Research Ethics Board, Study #PR000131295.

Thank you to Elizabeth from the Pendennis Weddings & Events for lending their space for the photoshoot. Thank you to Hilary Meng for the graphic design.











