

What Makes You Different? The Immersive Dance Experience

People are obsessed with the normal, with fitting in, with categorisation. The uniform, the suit, goths, punks, hipsters. Circus, for us, is a place for the acceptance of the different and the celebration of the unusual. In this experience, we use no 'circus skills' - we use only the circus mindset to create a unique, immersive experience for participants. Ask yourself the question - what makes you different?

Dancing is one of the most complex forms of human action and interaction. The hypnotic rhythm of the dancefloor allows the freedom of self-expression but can also allow self-doubt, vulnerability, inadequacy...

Our project explores the concepts of inhibition and trust using 'silent disco' and other technology to create a complete multisensory immersive experience of sight, touch, sound, sensation and movement.

Beginning by focussing on oneself, and one's self as part of a group, through simple somatic exercises for awareness and opening, the early aim is to establish a safe framework for each individual taking part in the experience.

The group follows a basic movement meditation, starting to move the body and connect with themselves and the people around them, and to familiarise themselves with the space they are in. Over the course of the first fifteen minutes, the group creates an accidental choreography by reacting to the instructions given.

After the lead-in, the group is invited to blindfold themselves, and the movement meditation continues 'in darkness'. This point could be used to change the visuals in the surrounding area, so that when 'waking up', the location that they were so connected to has altered. This could also be the point at which the audience would don VR headsets.

At a certain point during the first blindfold section, the recording diverges, and it becomes clear (to anyone watching) that the group has separated into two groups, henceforth known as A and B for simplicity. B is instructed to remove their blindfolds and approach A, taking the next ten minutes playing 'guardian angel' and leading A through a set of simple, clear partnering exercises. B is then instructed to replace their blindfolds, and the recordings reconverge. Everyone removes their blindfold.

Another ten minute section follows with the group in sync once more. At this point, no one in A knows who is in which group, beyond themselves. B is invited to maintain the secret, not giving themselves away.

The roles are reversed or adjusted for a second fifteen minute blindfold section, where A plays guardian angel to B. The specific exercises are altered, so that the experience is still somewhat unexpected.

After the recordings reconverge for a second time and the group is again one, the blindfolds are removed once more. The final section of the experience is a simple bringing together of the whole group

Splitting the groups creates an additional level for the overall project which only emerges in discussion following the end of the experience.

For practical purposes, a short message is given at the beginning of the experience about the level of touch interaction and to establish personal boundaries. Several trained 'guardians' overlook the whole experience to ensure that everyone feels safe.