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/Offscreen/

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Summer 2018

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Understanding the Construction
of Masculinity Through Movement
in Media of the 1980s

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In the words of Winston Churchill, “Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But is is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.”

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PROLOGUE



When I came out to my brother, Joe, in 1993, we were sitting at a bar in Ft. Lauderdale enjoying some post-beach drinks, and I finally had gotten the nerve up to tell him I was gay. At the time I was living in Los Angeles and had come out to myself two years earlier. I told my brother I was gay and he looked at me, laughed and said, "I thought you might be gay, since you always hid your Pet Shop Boys albums behind your sole Led Zeppelin LP."

We then had a long discussion about his support and how our parents might react. He then said, “But I was never sure you were gay, because you don’t walk and move like the gay guys I have seen on South Beach.”

I then realized I had conditioned myself to walk and move in a very specific, normative manner, and I knew I had done this conditioning during my adolescent years in the 1980s.



Figure 1. Exterior of */Offscreen/* bedroom installation, Robert Fitzgerald, 2018.



INTRODUCTION

I was a closeted gay man through high school and college and didn't come out until I was in my late twenties, during the height of the AIDS crisis. I navigated this time by observing my peers and mainstream media in order to distinguish what were considered heterosexual and homosexual movements.

This thesis began as a response to the complexities and pitfalls of trying to define masculine identity as framed through the examination

of the links between masculine subjectivity, embodiment and physical movement. This all occurred during a time when the study of gender and gender roles was becoming a serious academic area of research.

By reviewing mainstream films and media of my youth and adolescence I question the effect of the male characters' physical movements in these films and their influence on how I as an adult, physically move through life.

Growing up a middle-class white male in suburban Connecticut in the 1980s, the men and boys I knew seemed very comfortable in who they were. They seemed "middle-of-the-road" - not exuding macho masculine heterosexuality, nor suggesting stereotypically flamboyant or feminized homosexuality. As I was in my formative years, films played a central role in my learning about the outside world. As a teen, my friends and I attended movies weekly. These films introduced me to worlds outside of my own: Wall-Street tycoons, war heroes, bodybuilders, openly out gay men. Knowing that I had to hide my sexuality in a time of repression and fear, I subconsciously appropriated the movements of these characters. So to advance my current research, I decided to review the films of my youth. I chose to only re-watch films I had previously seen.

My thesis project, */Offscreen/*, is a performance and installation which was first presented in March 2018 at the University of Michigan Stamps Gallery.

/Offscreen/ consisted of a loose replica of my adolescent bedroom from the decade of the 1980s in suburban Connecticut. Inside the bedroom installation are various projected videos which highlight the way that physical movement is related to the construction of masculinity.

The bedroom installation also contains a video performance of me replicating movements I have extracted from the films I researched.

Separate from the bedroom installation is a closet structure. This closet

has been removed directly from the bedroom installation. This structure sits in another area of the art gallery, a glass cube which faces into the lobby of the McKinley Town Center Corporate Office Building. The closet structure is an integral part of the live performance, which occurred four times during the run of the thesis show.

I will begin the thesis by outlining my research questions, and then going into a discussion of the context for my work. In the contextual section I will first introduce the subject of masculinity as theorists have defined it over the past thirty years. After introducing the lens of gender and sexuality and how it relates to film, domestic space and physical body movement, I will present contemporary artists who are working in related fields of research. In the methodologies section I will explain and describe my pattern of research, the process of how I got to what I made.

In my discussion of */Offscreen/*, I will describe both the physical artwork produced based on this research (Figure 1), and will describe/explain the ideas behind it all. Finally, I will end with a discussion of the challenges of the research and my conclusions, relating back to my original research questions on masculinity and movement.

Research Questions

- 1 What were the effects of masculine movements portrayed from media in the 1980s on my development?
- 2 How did I process these movements in my private space?
- 3 How can I reenact these movements in order to deconstruct them and gain a clearer perspective on how body language and movement created ideas of masculinity in the 1980s?
- 4 How can I explore the public space of the bedroom and the closet, and by exhibiting the movement in that space, reveal the contradictions between the male public and private self?



**CONTEXTUAL
REVIEW**



“And what is our ideal man? On what grand and luminous mythological figure does contemporary humanity attempt to model itself? The question is embarrassing. Nobody knows.”¹

—Aldous Huxley

To begin, I would like to clarify the way that I am using certain terms throughout the thesis.

Sex

Biologically, sex is defined as “either of the two main categories, male and female, into which humans and most other living things are divided on the basis of their reproductive functions.”²

Gender

Gender, on the other hand, is much more complex. For the purposes of my research, I am defining gender as “the socially constructed characteristics that are typical of the two sexes, male or female.”³

Sexual Orientation

Finally, sexual orientation can be defined as “an enduring pattern of romantic or sexual attraction, a person’s sexual identity in relation to the gender to which they are attracted; the fact of being heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, or asexual.”⁴

I consider film, space and movement through the lenses of gender and sexuality. I will discuss artists who are working with film as a medium, artists who use domestic space, video and movement, and gay artists who use gay identity as the basis for their works.

I will begin with the subject matter of film and the representation of a cross section of male characters in films from the 1980s. I talk about the importance and representations of the bedroom and closet. Following this will be a discussion on the general ideas of human physical movement, its meaning as metaphor and how some theorists believe it is gendered. I will finish the contextual section by talking about gay-identified artists who use their own sexuality as the subject matter of their artwork.

Masculinity

Masculinity is a set of attributes, behaviors and roles associated with boys and men. As a social construct, it is distinct from the definition of the male biological sex. Standards of masculinity vary across different cultures and historical periods. My research focused on the western academic study of masculinity, a subject which received increased attention during the late 1980s and early 1990s. (Figure 2).

I began my research on masculinity by mainly focusing on three theorists - two male, Michael Kimmel and Antony Easthope, and one transgendered female, R.W. Connell. All three considered leading scholars in the field of masculinity. All three were responding to the gender theory earlier established by female theorists, and were concerned there was a lack of empirical knowledge about masculinity. Kimmel and Connell both first published their findings in the mid 1990s and both updated their research regularly as the study of masculinity continued to grow and change.



Figure 2. Youth and Masculinity, stock photo, date unknown.

Connell, Normative and Hegemonic/Subordinate

In her text *Masculinities*, R.W. Connell breaks down masculinity into four main strategies for definition: Essentialist, Positivist, Semiotic and Normative. “Essentialist definitions usually isolate a feature that defines the core of the masculine, and hang an account of men’s lives on that. Good examples are risk taking and aggression. The positivist views membership of the male sex as signified by the male anatomy. Semiotic approaches define masculinity through a system of symbolic difference in which masculine and feminine places are contrasted. Masculinity in effect is defined as non-femininity.”⁵

Connell defines the normative strategy of masculinity as a set of traditional values of Western patriarchy: physical strength, stoicism, dominance, self-reliance, control, heterosexual virility, violence, and power over something or someone.⁶ The normative strategy is also often called “hegemonic masculinity” for the ways that it forces normative masculinity on everyone, even those who actively try to resist it. This definition is often found in media studies, and is what I believe to be the driving force for masculine male characterization in films of the 1980s.

Connell also distinguishes the social organization of masculinity in terms of the Hegemonic and the Subordinate.

Hegemony is the influence or authority over others. Hegemonic refers to the social, cultural, ideological, or economic influence by a dominant group. Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the current problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees the dominant position of men and the subordination of women.

However, within that overall framework there are specific gender relations of dominance and subordination between groups of men. Connell believes in American society, the general media is constantly pushing the dominance of the heterosexual man and the subordination

of the homosexual man?⁷ Connell notes that oppression positions homosexual masculinity at the bottom of gender hierarchy among men and that patriarchal culture has a simple interpretation of gay men: they lack masculinity. This oppression among men is one of the reasons I believe I kept silent in regards to my own sexuality for so long.

Easthope and the Masculine Myth

In films, television, advertising, popular music - narratives and images that bombard us from all sides - men are invited to recognize themselves in the masculine myth. The myth of masculinity presents itself as fixed, self-consistent and pure. In fact, it is not fixed and has no central core. In his text *What a Man's Gotta Do*, Antony Easthope argues, "Gender is marked in three areas or levels of human experience:

- 1 That of that body and the biological
- 2 That of social roles
- 3 That by which gender is defined internally in the unconscious"⁸

The myth of masculinity aims to bring together all three levels in a perfect unity: the completely masculine individual. Easthope further explains, "[because the levels are distinct and never simply overlap, if we use the terms 'male' for the body, 'man' for the social identity, and 'masculine' for the internal, subjective tendency, then we can see they will not fit together evenly to make up 'one' individual."⁹ I am a cis-gendered male. I have never desired to change my physical bodyform. The participation in organized sports and activities such as Boy Scouts and College Fraternity made up my social identity. Finally my personal struggle of sexuality weaved its way into the confusion of how I identified as a gendered male.

Kimmel, Time of Crisis

Michael Kimmel is an American sociologist, and founder and editor of the academic journal - *Men and Masculinities*. Kimmel presents two tracks which help establish my research questions. He argues that masculinity is not fixed and that, in the past, it has only seriously been considered when men are faced with times of crisis.

In his text, *Manhood in America*, Kimmel states, “The search for a transcendent, timeless definition of manhood itself is a sociological phenomenon—we tend to search for the timeless and eternal during moments of crisis, those points of transition when the old definitions no longer work and new definitions are yet to be firmly established.”

This is what I call the crisis of the personal. My crisis was the struggle of my sexuality as an adolescent, and a point of transition as I began the long journey to self-acceptance.¹⁰

I grew up a middle-class white male in suburban Connecticut in the 1980s. The men and boys I knew growing up seemed very comfortable in who they were in their manners regarding masculinity. Knowing that I self-identified as gay, I felt I had to hide my sexuality in a time of both repression and fear. One of my tactics for hiding was in the way I physically presented myself. I unconsciously researched timeless and traditional heterosexual and homosexual masculine movements in order to create my own definition of masculinity. Kimmel continues, “Moments of crisis include times when societal masculinity is seen as threatened and people work hard to try and salvage, revitalize, and resurrect it. These crises in the meaning of manhood usually run parallel with crisis points in economic, political and social times.”¹¹

Just as I was coming of age personally, the transition from the late 1970s into the early 1980s was a major shift in political, economic and cultural national identity. The idea of the 1970s sensitive man in the political time of President Jimmy Carter gave way to the 1980 Presidential election of Republican Ronald Reagan (Figure 3), and

began a time of American self reflection. A former Hollywood actor, Reagan worked in over 50 films, and was best known for his work as Notre Dame football star George Gipp in the 1940 film *Knute Rockne, All American*. Historian Rupert Wilkinson wrote that “Americans were not sure what role they wanted their country to play in world affairs, but they knew they wanted their President to get tough.”¹² Many believe Ronald Reagan “restored national self-confidence by transferring his own self confidence to his countrymen. One of the reasons he was so successful in doing this was his role as a former actor and his indelible link to the Hollywood film industry.”¹³ The Hollywood film industry soon followed suit. In popular culture, out was the sensitive man of Alan Alda and in was the macho hero of Sylvester Stallone. My research begins with the study of masculinity through the lens of film, specifically mainstream American films of the 1980s.



Figure 3. Ronald Reagan, 40th President of the United States, stock photo, date unknown.

Jeffords, Time of National Crisis/80s/Aids

Because I grew up in the 1980s, looking into the production of gender in that time period was important to my understanding of my identity. In the 1980s we were at the height of the Cold War, and men were expected to be “manly men.” Characters in mainstream film began to re-embody conservative traditional roles, which had been dropped in favor of the sensitive male, popular in characters in films during the 1970s.

Susan Jeffords, in her book *Hard Bodies: Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era*, says that the ideal 1980s masculine man was, among other things, unemotional, “never revealing true emotions or feelings,”¹⁴ while being strong, sports-minded and athletic. Jeffords’ argues that the Reagan era was an era of bodies. From the profitable craze in aerobics and exercise and the molding of a former Mr. Universe, Arnold Schwarzenegger, into a box office draw, to the conservative agenda to outlaw abortion and the identification of “values” through sexuality and thematized aggression against persons with AIDS, articulations of bodies constituted the imaginary of the Reagan agenda. Reagan’s policies were geared towards the idea of the hardened body, promoting its power and prescribing how it should be perceived, touched, fed, regulated and counted.

In the dialectic of reasoning that constituted the Reagan movement, Jeffords argues that bodies were deployed in two fundamental categories: the errant body containing sexually transmitted disease (HIV/AIDS) and mortality (homosexuality) equating the “soft body”; and the normative body that enveloped strength, labor, determination, loyalty and courage, or the “hard body.”¹⁵ In this system, the soft body invariably belonged to a female or homosexual whereas the hard body was, like Reagan’s own, male and heterosexual. As such, these hard bodies came to stand not only for a type of national character heroic, aggressive and determined, but also for the nation itself.” The “hard body” was to come to stand as the emblem of Reagan philosophies, politics and economics.

As a youth growing up in a conservative East Coast home, my world was quite small. The idea of the “hard body” was the stereotypical hegemonic masculine model which surrounded me.

The construction of the heterosexual masculine ideal has a specific arc within the political and social climate of the 1980s. This arc went from super macho to macho family friendly. In the 1980s the action genre was at its zenith. Characters such as John Rambo and the Terminator were building on the image of the macho warrior. In addition to the warrior character, in other films heterosexual men were portrayed as ruthless businessmen winning at all costs and in others they were strong family men. Jeffords discusses how many of the characters of the early eighties were based on the idea that we were winning the cold war and had to prove that we were a strong country. Also, because of our failure in Vietnam, less emphasis was placed on our struggle in Vietnam and more emphasis was placed on how we were winning the cold war. By the end of the eighties, male characters were still strong but they softened in terms of their role as a family man and Jeffords believes this is when the Christian Right began having more influence on the government and Hollywood.

Jeffords uses this premise to mount her broader argument that during the 1980s, and especially during the Reagan administration, the cinema was engaged in a Reaganian project of remasculinization in the wake of Vietnam, Watergate, and the women’s movement, which had shattered the nation’s faith in masculine authority figures. Jeffords situates this masculinizing project within the blockbuster action films of that era, and especially within its muscle-bound superstars: men such as Arnold Schwarzenegger and Sylvester Stallone. These bodies, she argues, came to stand “not only for a type of national character – heroic, aggressive, and determined – but for the nation itself.”¹⁶

While most of the male characters in 1980s film were heterosexual, there were representations of homosexual male characters. Though the gay rights movement had been gaining momentum since the

early 1970s, the socially regressive tone of the Reagan administration, along with the advent of the AIDS crisis, meant that homosexual characters in films were visible but most times were stereotyped in a variety of ways. These characters tended to be problematic in terms of stereotypical representation and range from over-the-top campiness to characters associated with femininity and weakness. During this time, the social and political climate was exceptionally homophobic.

Characterizations of Males in Films of the 1980s

The ideals of cinematic reality and fantasy were the materials from which I constructed a taxonomy of masculine movement which worked into the larger visual piece, */Offscreen/*.

Representations of masculinity in film serve a dual purpose: they reveal forms of masculinity present in culture while simultaneously playing a part in the construction of masculinity that they portray.¹⁷

Film

Laying the Groundwork on Using Film

My approach for using film as source material seemed obvious to me, for in those pre-cable, pre- internet and pre-Netflix years, I attended the movies almost weekly as a ritual with my friends.

For my research, I chose only to review films which I had previously seen, many on the big screen and some on videocassette. Almost all the films were mainstream American movies of the time. I choose films produced from 1980 to 1990, and the list grew to over 100 films, listed in the appendix.

I also made the choice to use found footage, or clips, from these films. As I was exploring the ideas surrounding physical movement, I chose to highlight clips of male characters performing “masculine” movements. I was concentrating on the physical motion and not the dialogue, characters or plot.

As I re-reviewed these films, I decided to isolate scenes which I believed best exemplified or highlighted physical movement. As I began to collect these clips, I developed the beginnings of my visual thesis research for */Offscreen/*. While pulling footage for my eventual movement performances, I also began to notice commonalities among the clips, irrespective of the original film. (This discovery would come up later in the projection works in the bedroom installation.)

Visual Artists and Found Footage

As film critic Scott MacDonald points out, the practice of using earlier films from a variety of sources, or found footage, as the raw material for new works of film art “has a history that dates back almost to the origins of cinema and is currently considered a dominant critical procedure in independent film and video making.”¹⁸ While compiling the



Figure 4. *Every Shot, Every Episode*, Jennifer and Kevin McCoy, 2001

clips of physical movements from these films, I began researching artists who use film as medium. Artists such as Jennifer and Kevin McCoy, Christian Marclay and Douglas Gordon all manipulate film.

Using found footage from films, I employed the techniques of the art team of Jennifer and Kevin McCoy, who in their 2001 work, *Every Shot, Every Episode*, structurally broke down over 10,000 film shots from episodes of the 1970s popular television series - *Starsky and Hutch*. They then created an encyclopedic database of information which allowed a viewer to choose among 300 categories and watch individualized playlists on custom playback kits (Figure 4).

The McCoys' source material was subjected to the nonlinear, non-narrative logic of the database and was grouped typologically by structural techniques (every zoom-in, every special effect), by stock characters (every cop, every waitress, every bookie), or by actions (every car chase, every door slam). Douglas Eklund, curator of the photography collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, considers this "a witty and thorough critique of media imagery, imagery which is lodged in the subconscious of an entire generation and which becomes a portable reference guide for those raised and reared by television."¹⁹

Similar to the McCoys, the idea of creating a taxonomy of a series of similar, in my case male movements, came to me when I discovered a scene in *First Blood* (Figure 5), that was reminiscent of a scene in *Long-time Companion*, where lead characters were sitting on the ground, breaking down over the loss of a loved one. From there I decided to begin linking together scenes which eventually ended up in the bed projection, *Come Together*, and in the dresser drawer projection, *Hero In A Drawer*.



Figure 5. Image from the film *First Blood*, stock photo, 1982.

Taxonomy Physical Movement List

To lay the groundwork for my visual thesis, I began by creating a masculine movement taxonomy, specific to male film characters in films in the 1980s. To study and understand movements I created a list of categories and broke movements down into areas such as action, body part, dress, location and description/direction. I then linked and coded these descriptive terms to better understand the connections they might have with one another.

The action list ranged from arrest, to jump, to high-five, to zip. The dress descriptive list ranged from ascot, to belt to watch. Each movie would have its own shortcode. Each clip I viewed would then be linked and coded. For example in one scene from the film Top Gun, the main character throws his late friend's dog tags into the ocean. This would be catalogued as #TG (Top Gun), #Throw, #Arm, #Uniform, #Ship, #Overhead, and #Dogtag. I was able to then link movements in a variety of ways not beholden to character or plot.

Actions

Arrest	Growl	Peek	Smoke
Bathe	Hide	Place	Sneeze
Bend	Hop	Plant	Step
Break	Hug	Pull	Stretch
Build	Jump	Pump	Suck
Burp	Jump	Punch	Sweat
Call	Kiss	Push	Swim
Chase	Kneel	Rise	Talk
Chew	Line	Rotate	Tip-Toe
Cough	Lead	Rub	Toss
Cross	Lift	Run	Touch
Cry	Listen	See	Turn
Curl	Look	Shake	Twirl
Drive	Mount	Shrug	Twist
Extend	Nod	Sit	Wave
Fall	Observe	Skip	
Grab	Pat	Slip	

Body Part

Abdomen	Chin	Lips	Side
Ankle	Ear	Lobe	Spine
Arch	Elbow	Mouth	Stomach
Arm	Eye	Nail	Teeth
Back	Finger	Neck	Thigh
Balls	FootFore	Nipple	Toe
Brow	Hair	Nose	Tongue
Brow	Hand	Penis	Torso
Butt	Head	Ribs	Waist
Calf	Hip	Shin	Wrist
Cheek Chest	Lash	Shoulder	

Dress

Belt	Pant	Sock	T-shirt
Cufflink	Pocket	Suit	Underwear
Jacket	Shirt	Tie	Watch
Naked	Shoe	Towel	

Location

Bar	Corner	Locker	Sidewalk
Beach	Court	Outside	Street
Bed	Field	Path	Wall
Building	House	Road	Window
Car	Inside	Room	
Chair	Jail	Seat	

Description/Directions

Across	Full	Man	Side
Angry	Gay	Military	Slow
Backwards	Half	Nervous	Squash
Competition	Happy	Newspaper	Tight
Computer	Leather	Pain	Up
Down	Left	Phone	Upper
Fast	Loose	Right	Woman
Female	Lower	Rolodex	Zag
Forward	Male	Self	Zig



Figure 6. Image from the film Wall Street, stock photo, 1988.

Five Male Characters

While compiling my list of films, I found certain male characters that kept reappearing. I was interested in the body language of the male characters and how I might interpret these movements. As my goal was to find a range of physical movements exemplified by male characters, to streamline my research I broke down the characters into five categories: the male as family man/ buddy, businessman (Figure 6), sportsman, hero/warrior and self-identified homosexual male character. I chose these characters as they tended to come up the most in films I had seen.



Figure 7. Image from the film *Mr. Mom*, stock photo, 1983.

Family Man / Buddy

In the male character of a family man or buddy (close friendship) role, I found there to be many examples of intimate physical motions. The arm around a shoulder, a hug, and holding hands are all good examples of movements these characters display. Though not as exciting to re-create as some of the bolder moves, this type of character can say a lot with small finessed moves. Films such as *Kindergarten Cop*, *Twins*, *Mr. Mom* (Figure 7), *The World According to Garp* and *Buddies* are good examples.



Figure 9. Image from the film *Paris is Burning*, stock photo, 1989.

Hero/Warrior

Certainly some of the most complex characters to understand and place in this category, their movements ran across a wide spectrum. I chose to include a range of characters, from the traditional hero leads in *Superman* and John McClane of *Die Hard*, to characters who were groundbreaking in their struggles in fighting for a cause. Good examples of this are *Paris is Burning* (Figure 9), and *Kiss of the Spider Woman*.



Figure 8. Image from the film *Trading Places*, stock photo, 1982.

Business Man

The Businessman of the 1980s was strong, virile, and lived by the “greed is good” (*Wall Street*) mantra where winning is everything. With more accentuated arm raises, finger pointings and high fives, I found the film *Wall Street* to have more male-on-male body contact than *Rambo II*, or *Predator*. Other films I reviewed under this genre included *Trading Places* (Figure 8), *Risky Business* and *Scarface*.



Figure 10. Image from the film *Kickboxer*, stock photo, 1989.

Sportsman

A very easy choice to refer to for physical movement, these male characters normally possessed great strength and I found their everyday movements were often accentuated with a bit of confidence swagger. Films I reviewed in this category included: *Rocky IV*, *Major League* and *Kickboxer* (Figure 10).



Figure 11. Image from the film *The Fan*, stock photo, 1981.

Homosexual Male Characters

The characterization of homosexuals in American mainstream films of the 1980s, tended to be either over the top flamboyant, dying, or psychotic killers - certainly not the most positive societal portrayals. Films such as *Beverly Hills Cop*, *Cruising*, *The Fan* (Figure 11), *The 4th Man* and *American Gigolo* all included gay characters which fit these stereotypes. I decided to review these highly stereotyped examples as well as smaller films that portrayed gay characters in a more positive light, such as *Parting Glances* and *Making Love*.



Figure 12. *Side by Side*, video performance documentation, Robert Fitzgerald, 2018.

Butler and Side by Side

Now that I had broken down these movements structurally and had given myself parameters with which to categorize them, I wondered how might I test the effect they had had on me, and discover where these movements live today.

My next step was to replicate certain movements side by side, in order to test both my body's resilience - I am performing these movements as an adult 30 years after many of the films have been release - and to begin to see if any movements seemed familiar or were movements that I habitually perform (Figure 12).

In this part of my research, I also began considering the theory of gender construction developed by theorist Judith Butler. In her highly influential text from 1990, *Gender Trouble*, Butler states that gender is "a stylized repetition of acts . . . which are internally discontinuous . . . [so that] the appearance of substance is precisely that, a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to

perform in the mode of belief.” To say that gender is performative is to argue that gender is “real only to the extent that it is performed.”²⁰

Butler’s theory led me to wonder whether the actions I had extracted from the found footage, once removed from the context of the film, would still communicate the gender identity of the filmic characters. If I replicated the movements in abstraction, would they still carry their gendered meaning? Going back to my research questions, would these movements seem familiar or foreign as I performed them?

Finally, I returned to the idea of replication or reenactment in terms of visual art making. As art critic and historian, Sven Lutticken writes in his essay, *An Arena in Which to Reenact*, “[Performance] reenactment is distinctive in that it invites transformation through memory, theory and history to generate unique and resonating results. Reenactment may lead to artistic acts, that, while not instantly unleashing a ‘tremendous emancipatory potential,’ create a space - a stage - for possible and as yet unthinkable performances.”²¹ Lutticken wrote this in conjunction with curating the art show, *Life Once More: Forms of Reenactment in Contemporary Art*.

Creating the taxonomy, then performing the replication, while interesting, was only the first step toward answering my larger research questions. This made me question how I could accurately investigate a time period that had already passed. I decided to the best of my ability to recreate my adolescent bedroom to act as an installation and location for projections of these movements. I could then dissect, project, and recreate the movements on my own sound stage in order to see how they fit into the five male characters I had established, and to discover potential connections between these movements and my own personal development.

Notes for Contextual Review

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- 15 Ibid., 14.
- 16 Jeffords, *Hard bodies: Hollywood masculinity in the Reagan era*, 24.
- 17 Todd Reeser, *Masculinities in Theory*, (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 25.
- 18 Scott MacDonald, *A Critical Cinema 3: Interviews with Independent Filmmakers*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 364.
- 19 Eklund, Douglas. “Every Shot, Every Episode.” The Metropolitan Museum of Art, i.e. The Met Museum. Accessed February 12, 2018. <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/284985>.
- 20 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, (London: Routledge, 1990), 136.
- 21 Sven Lütticken, *Life, once more: forms of reenactment in contemporary art*, (Rotterdam: Witte de With, 2005), 60.



Link to Performance

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Os-aXE6ftpk>













**DISCUSSION OF
CREATIVE WORK**



The art piece */Offscreen/* was exhibited at The University of Michigan Stamps Gallery from March 9 – March 31 2018. In */Offscreen/* the two components of the visual work included both installation with video projection and a live performance. The installation is comprised of a bedroom replica fully finished and furnished, measuring roughly 240 square feet, (Figure 13) and a closet structure (Figure 14), detached from the bedroom and located in another part of the gallery. The live performance, entitled *Change* (Figure 15), is derived from the installation and includes five acts.



Figure 13. Bedroom Installation, /Offscreen/, Robert Fitzgerald, 2018.



Figure 14. Closet Installation, /Offscreen/, Robert Fitzgerald, 2018



Figure 15. *Change Performance, /Offscreen/, Robert Fitzgerald, 2018.*



Figure 16. *Door into Bedroom Installation, /Offscreen/, Robert Fitzgerald, 2018.*

Installation and Video Projections

The architectural and sculptural components of */Offscreen/* consisted of both a replica of a teenage bedroom and a separate structure of a closet which sat in a separate area in the gallery. The bedroom was based on recollections of my own adolescent bedroom. The entire bedroom structure is 28x15x11 feet in size, including the inaccessible back area where the window monitor is placed. The inside of the structure is 16x15x11 feet and is finished and furnished, while the outside walls are untreated wood, giving the effect of a stage set. The title */Offscreen/* and a short description of the work is situated just to the left of the entrance door. Within the room, there are situated seven single channel video projections. These videos are set on loops, and continuously playing. These video projections include both taxonomies and a running recorded version of my movement performance in response to my research. These projections will be discussed alongside their respective pieces in the bedroom. The closet structure is a 4x5x11 foot, four-sided stand-alone sculptural piece. It referred to its former place in the bedroom, but stood alone in a glass-cubed area at one of the gallery entrances. Whereas the bedroom allowed visitors to walk through and explore, the closet itself served primarily as prop and setting for the performance.

The wood door into the bedroom was propped open with an full-length mirror attached (Figure 16).

The door and the mirror were positioned so that when one enters, they catch a glimpse of the one of the projection pieces in the bedroom, specifically, the mirrored piece, which I will describe in further detail below. The entire floor is wall-to-wall carpeted in light grey carpet. The interior walls were painted a royal blue, which was called "Boathouse Blue." The walls ran a standard eight feet tall. At the base and the eight-foot mark were a white wooden baseboard and ceiling trim respectively. Extending beyond the eight-foot mark

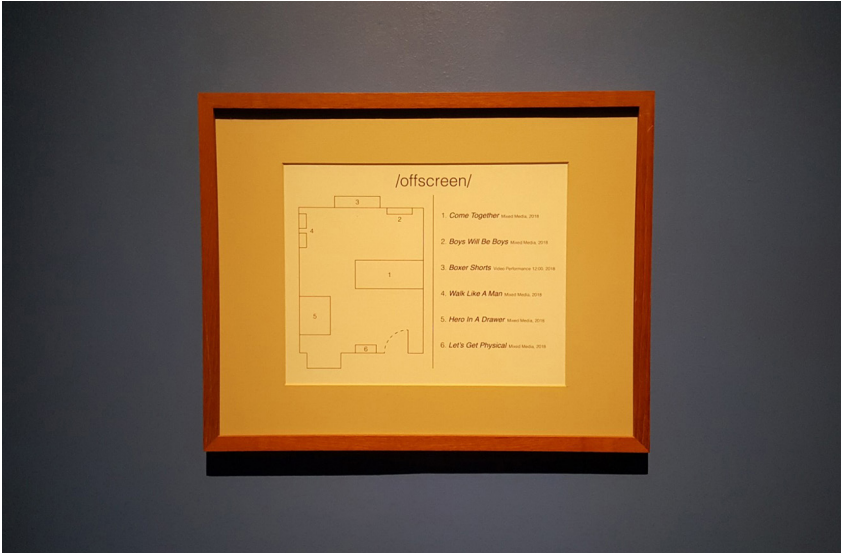


Figure 17. Floor plan for /Offscreen/, Bedroom Installation, Robert Fitzgerald, 2018.

around the entire enclosed room, were three more feet of wall painted black. This was to give the illusion of the room suspended in space and was also used to hide the water and electrical lines above in the gallery. Returning to the items in the bedroom, I will describe them starting counter clockwise beginning at the door. Figure 17 shows the floor plan at the entrance to the installation.

Domestic Space

*"Yet we can think of queer space as something different...What would such a space look like? It would be ourselves dissolving into the communal construction of an always changing world. It would be a free space in which we can construct ourselves together."*²²

—Aaron Betsky

Creation of a Space for Visual Work

I realized that by housing my newly edited works in my adolescent bedroom, I might gain a clearer understanding of the role the original movies played in my life. I will describe the bedroom and its contents, including individual descriptions of the works, along with artists that influenced me and the theory and theorists which surround the works. In his 2012 article, "Investigating the Presence," William Odom writes, "Most teens feel the sense of place of attachment to their bedrooms. Here they live with their things, make sense of their lives, and work to understand the complex changes and challenges of growing up. The bedroom provides moments for solitude and reflection, a social space to engage parents and peers, and a canvas to experiment with an evolving sense of self."²³ Thinking about this safe space for evolving, by recreating my teenage bedroom, could I prepare a canvas for movement experimentation through use of found footage, memorabilia, placement and re-enactment? I wanted to investigate the private and public spaces of the bedroom and their relationship to physical movement from both my memory of films and activation within my own body. Luckily my room in Connecticut had not changed so much, and I was able to find a significant amount of personal memorabilia to assist in recreating the bedroom and closet.

The Bedroom, Structures and Video Projections

In the bedroom installation of my work */Offscreen/*, I was continually thinking of what are considered public and private spaces in the area of a bedroom? Do these spaces lend themselves to ideas surrounding repressed sexuality? Jason Reid, in his text *Get Out Of My Room, A History of Teenage Bedrooms in America*, argues in regards to sexuality and experimentation, “The teen bedroom was seen by some as a sacrosanct space in which various forms of teen sexuality could find expression ... as a sexual lab of sorts, a relatively safe place where forbidden and culturally sanctioned sex acts could find expression.”²⁴

Come Together

I thought about this idea as I specifically created the bed piece in the bedroom, *Come Together*, in which I had assembled clips from films where male characters were about to embrace, some romantically and some in camaraderie. Similar to the bed of my youth, the twin XL sized bed was covered in dark blue flannel sheets and a green and black plaid flannel comforter (Figure 18).

I juxtaposed some bright red pillows against the dark sheet and comforter to help draw viewers to the video projection embedded near the top of the bed. This viewing plane of approximately 12”x8” featured edited clips of various male characters about to embrace (Figure 19).

I chose characters from such films as *Rocky III*, *Maurice*, and *Deathtrap*. The projected video sits close to the pillow, which for me was a place of hiding, yet still in sight. My bed itself was a place of unfulfilled desires. The work was inspired by Felix Gonzalez-Torres’s black-and-white *Untitled*, a 1991 photograph of the artist’s empty, unmade bed with traces of two absent bodies. In the early 1990s, with controversies surrounding homosexuality and the AIDS crisis



Figure 18. Come Together (right) and Seoul '88 (left), part of /Offscreen/ Bedroom Installation, Robert Fitzgerald, 2018.



Figure 19. Come Together in foreground, /Offscreen/, Bedroom Installation, Robert Fitzgerald 2018.



Figure 20. *Untitled (Billboard of an Empty Bed)*, Felix Gonzalez Torres, 1991.

simultaneously wreaking havoc across the gay community, this 1992 public installation across 24 billboards in New York City represented a site of conflict, symbolizing both love and death (Figure 20).

Seoul '88

In a later addition to the room, I was thinking again about the ideas of hidden sexuality and the room as having “zones.” Next to the bed sits a 15”x15”x24” two-drawer wooden nightstand. A viewing plane has been created in the top drawer, inside the nightstand sits a black and white television running a clip from the 1988 Summer Olympics. The clip, two minutes in length, is a looped video Olympic Diver Greg Louganis, who, at the 1988 Olympics, famously injured himself while attempting a back dive (Figure 21).

The back of his head hit the diving board, necessitating stitches and causing blood to get into the pool. After receiving treatment, 25 minutes later, he came back and won the gold medal, cementing his



Figure 21. Greg Louganis, Seoul Olympics, NBC Sports, 1988.



Figure 22. *Boys Will be Boys, /Offscreen/*, Robert Fitzgerald, 2018.



Figure 23. *24 Hour Psycho*, Douglas Gordon, 1993.

legacy as an Olympic legend. Later, it was revealed that he had not disclosed his HIV positive status, causing tremendous controversy regarding the ethics surrounding disclosure. In her text, *Youth Culture and Private Space*, Sian Lincoln writes about the extent of control the modern teenager has over what level of the public can filter into their bedroom.²⁵ By burying the video *Seoul 88* in a nightstand, I required the viewer to expend some effort to distinguish what was playing on the television set. Hiding the repetitive image of the then closeted Olympian had me think about hiding my sexuality within my own home. As writer Richard Rodriguez states in his book *Days of Obligation*, “to grow up homosexual is to live with secrets and within secrets. In no other place are those secrets more closely guarded than within the family home.”²⁶ The projection itself is located where it would be difficult to see unless the viewers were to crouch down.

Boys Will Be Boys

Hanging on the back wall of the bedroom installation is a 12x18 foot wood framed fraternity composite photograph. This piece is titled *Boys Will Be Boys*. This photograph is my original Sigma Chi composite from Cornell University in 1989. I combined my composite photograph with a slow-speed version of a playful pool scene from the film *Making Love* (Figure 22).

In this work, I give a nod to the ideas surrounding memory, male bonding, and sexuality. Influenced by artist Douglas Gordon’s use of film speed and memory in his video piece, *24 Hour Psycho*, I hope to conjure a suspended memory of male bonding. Gordon, using film in alternative forms, infuses a combination of humor and trepidation to recalibrate reactions to the familiar (Figure 23).

By using the image of the fraternity and its members I am recalling the levels of intimacy between men. In *Boys Will Be Boys*, the num-

ber of cut out faces was in direct response to the results of a recent survey of fraternity members who admitted to same sex encounters during their time in college.

Walk This Way

If there was any work in the room that directly related to Butler and gender construction through repetitive movement, *Walk This Way* was that work.

On the third wall sit two large, full-length, wardrobe mirrors. The mirrors, leaning against the wall, are spaced apart to allow a projection to run between them. This video clip runs in slow motion, and shows the main character in *American Gigolo*, Julian Kaye, played by actor Richard Gere, slowly, seductively walking towards the viewer while loosening his tie, and has been scaled to be life-sized. His movements were akin to those of a fashion model walking a catwalk. This stereotypically feminine movement paired with a male character simultaneously creates sexual ambiguity and turns his character into an object of sexual desire. The mirrors allowed viewers to replicate or create their own walk in relation to the running clip. The idea of Richard Gere walking slowly towards me, sandwiched between two mirrors struck me when rewatching this - dare I say - classic film. Breaking my own rules of research I chose this clip based on dialog as well as physical movement. In this scene, Gere's character Julian Kaye, has just informed a potential client that he does not "do fags." The man then explains that he wants to hire Julian not for himself, but for his wife. Then Gere breaks into this seductive walk, towards the paying client like a female supermodel, loosening his tie in the most seductive manner (Figure 24).

The use of the mirror in a room, specifically a bedroom, is where you appear to yourself. In *Queer Spaces*, architectural theorist, Aaron Betsky writes, "The actions that come out of this space of the



Figure 24. *Walk This Way, /Offscreen/*, Robert Fitzgerald, 2018

mirror, the methods by which queer space is actually constructed, encompass a choreography of gestures.”²⁷ The gestures of the Richard Gere character as businessman and seductor in *Walk This Way*, becomes highly confusing, yet due to scale and speed I was hoping to create a work which would direct the spectator into making a physical movement of his or her own.

Hero In A Drawer

A four drawer wood dresser also sits against the third wall. Atop the dresser stand a lamp and a Sony cube clock radio. The second drawer from the top was pulled partially open, revealing some disheveled clothing, including a Cornell Rowing t-shirt, my junior high track and field tank top, and some plaid long sleeve shirts. Against the right side wall of the drawer was a small video projection. This projection, entitled *Hero in a Drawer*, contains a montage of clips of male characters that

were considered heroes in their respective films. The films selected include *Wall Street*, *Superman III*, *Top Gun*, *Kiss of the Spiderwoman*, *Paris is Burning*, *Die Hard*, *Road House*, and *First Blood*. In the clips, each of the male characters is making sweeping physical motions that became typical of the hero archetype. Placing the clip in the drawer for me, represents the need to store these strong heroic moves in a safe place, a place which is kept sacred and hidden when needed. *Hero in A Drawer* builds on the intensity of movement from found footage, starting slow and building to a frenzied action hero climax (Figures 25, 26, 27).

This work was partly inspired by Christian Marclay's *Telephones 1993*, a 7½ minute compilation of Hollywood film clips, which demonstrates the transformative power of Marclay's editing. Using the narrative arc of a telephone call he masterfully stitches together excerpts from well known movies to create a new narrative (Figure 28).

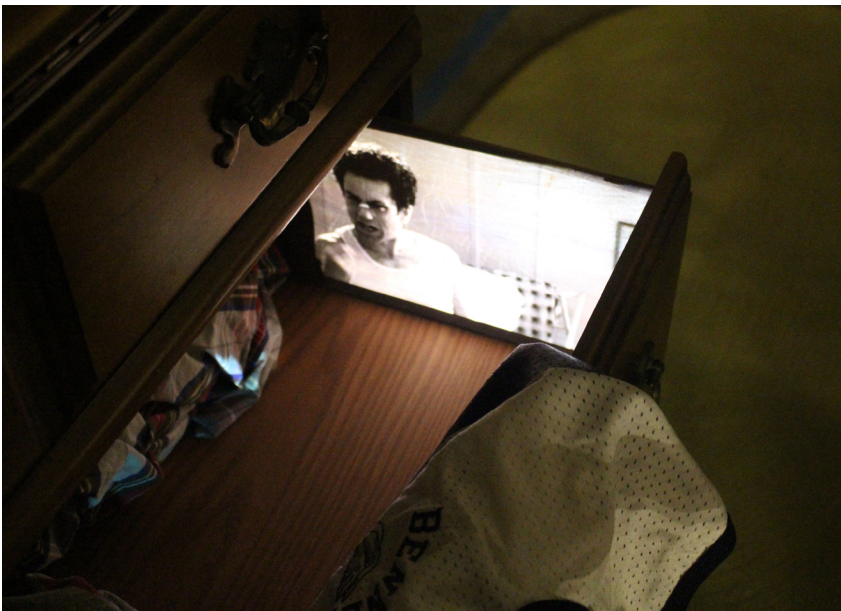


Figure 25. *Hero In A Drawer* (detail), */Offscreen/*, Robert Fitzgerald, 2018



Figure 26. *Hero In A Drawer (detail), /Offscreen/, Robert Fitzgerald, 2018*



Figure 27. Hero In A Drawer, /Offscreen/, Robert Fitzgerald, 2018.



Figure 28. Still images from *Telephones*, Christian Marclay, 1993.

Another artwork which parallels my interest in unusual projections is Tony Oursler's *Obscura*. A pioneer of New-Media Art since the mid-1970s, Tony Oursler is best known for his video projections and installation works that explore technology's effects on the human mind. Electronic Arts Intermix describes Oursler's work this way:

"Oursler orchestrates microcosmic scenes, tableaux, and interventions that convey the obsession, escapism, isolation, and sexual fetish that cause or grow out of technological dependence. Oursler seeks to disorient and disarm viewers by inviting them into disorienting psychological mini-dramas, at once engaging in their humor and disturbing for their uncanny juxtapositions and keen, biting commentaries."²⁸ (Figure 29)



Figure 29. *Obscura*, Tony Oursler, 1996.



Figure 30. *Let's Get Physical, /Offscreen/, Robert Fitzgerald, 2018.*

Let's Get Physical: Trophy Shelf of American Hegemonic vs Subversive Masculinity

On the fourth wall, just to the left of the door, is a shelf which holds four generic baseball trophies, each with the American flag as its column. In the center of the shelf there is a video projection on the wall of an oversized trophy, made to look as if it were sitting on the shelf. For the trophies base, instead of marble, is an edited film clip. Just directly below the trophy shelf on the floor sits a Michigan football. Entitled *Let's Get Physical*, the clip is of two combined scenes from the highly camp musical film *Can't Stop the Music*, starring the Village People. The first clip is of a group of men diving into a pool in a synchronized fashion, one after another. The second clip shows another group of men beginning an indoor running race. The baseball trophies, which are all similar with no nameplates, are generic representations of celebrating Americana and baseball. Along with the Michigan football, they also convey the classic image of victory and competition, specifically in sports, which were aimed at young male American men during this time (Figure 30).

In the work *Let's Get Physical*, I deliberately placed the video clip within an oversized trophy projection and wedged it between four identical, generic baseball trophies. The highly patriotic trophies honoring achievement of "America's favorite pastime" for me is very symbolic of the normative mantle of hegemonic masculinity that Connell speaks about, and that was forced upon me in my youth. In my version of "the mantle," I have incorporated clips of swimmers and runners, the very two sports I participated in high school, and giving them center stage, as well as subverting them by using sports clips from the thinly-veiled homoerotic comedy *Can't Stop the Music*, specifically from the scenes while they are performing their music club hit, *Y.M.C.A.* (Figure 31).



Figure 31. *Let's Get Physical*, /Offscreen/, Robert Fitzgerald, 2018.

Other Bedroom Objects

Also in the room at various locations sit other miscellaneous objects which give visual clues about the context and setting of the bedroom. These objects include: a 1988 edition of the International Male catalog which was discreetly placed under the bed, and pair of hockey skates and a hockey stick placed in the corner between the first and second walls, my high school varsity swimming sweatshirt placed on the ground in front of the mirror, a set of iron dumbbells also placed in front of the mirror, a framed collection of my swimming medals placed on wall two next to the window, a 1986 edition of *Gentlemen's Quarterly* (GQ) magazine which included an article about my fraternity placed on a chair next to the dresser, an economics notebook from my undergraduate studies with a Reagan-Bush sticker on the cover also on the chair next to the dresser, (Figure 32), a brown wicker clothes hamper next to the dresser filled with a collection of clothing from the time



Figure 32. Detail of Bedroom Installation (chair), /Offscreen/, Robert Fitzgerald, 2018.

period, a stack of music albums leaning against the third wall, and finally a poster from the Manchester Connecticut Thanksgiving Day road race. The International Male catalog was placed under the bed as it fit well with the unfulfilled sexual desires that were indicated in the *Come Together* video piece on the bed. The hockey equipment, swim sweatshirt and medals, dumbbells, and the road race poster were all nods to my athletic background. The notebook, specifically the Reagan-Bush sticker on the cover, was indicative of my conservative upbringing and political leanings at the time. The GQ magazine article, entitled *Nice Coat, Good Grip, Bid Him*, analyzes the correlation between students' handshakes and whether or not they were invited into the fraternity. The fact that this article about physical movement was published in GQ magazine, which was widely seen as a benchmark of masculinity at the time, contrasts with the stereotypically feminine physical movements in the piece *Walk Like a Man*. The music albums were a nod to the story told in the prologue. Finally, the hamper of clothes was added to further highlight the missing closet in the fourth wall.

The Window

On the second wall, directly facing viewers as they enter the installation, there is a window inset in the back of the bedroom. It's a standard size of a house window with white curtains, wood rod dowel and white blinds which are cracked open (Figure 33).

The window sits in the center of the wall, and to the left are the swimming medals and to the right is the fraternity composite work *Boys will be Boys*. Running behind the window, *Boxer Shorts* is a ten minute looped video of me recreating the movements which were portrayed by other characters in the other projections in the room. The space it is shown in is completely black and the video was filmed in a black box theatre. I am wearing a white crew neck t-shirt and



Figure 33. *Window and Boxer Shorts* video, /Offscreen/, Robert Fitzgerald, 2018.

baby blue boxer shorts. Wearing my underwear alludes to the film *Risky Business*, specifically the scene where actor Tom Cruise dances through the house in his underwear.

The video is a collection of the taxonomy of movements collected from the films I researched. The reproduced, five to thirty second clips with a range of movements, are edited in random order. For example, the breakdown scene of Sylvester Stallone in *First Blood*

runs between the high fives of the *Top Gun* volleyball scene and the arm raises of the jubilant drag queens in *Paris is Burning*. Unlike *Come Together* in the bed and *Hero in a Drawer*, where themes were connected, in *Boxer Shorts I* replicate the physical movements of the male film characters completely out of context (Figure 34).

The black backdrop, or void of the space, for me connects the past of the bedroom with the present of the closet in the glass cube. The black void is, for me, is transition of my mental, physical and emotional journey of the past to the present, connected by through the the study and replication of these movements. Thought I attempted to replicate the movements exactly, this was not entirely possible. (A good example of this was actor Bruce Willis's character, John McClane, breaking through the window of a skyscraper in *Die Hard*.)

With the loss of the imagery of location and any additional props, I wanted to highlight these characters in action – some subtle movements, some over the top. Replicating the taxonomy to create the video work was yet another step on my way to creating the live performance portion of */Offscreen/*. An important aspect of *Boxer Shorts* is the necessity for the viewer to peer through the blinds to get a clear view. This again raising the question of public and private in a domestic space.

In addition to Jeffords theories on 1980s films, the work of Laura Mulvey on “the male gaze” is relevant to this work. The “male gaze” was coined by the feminist film critic Mulvey in her 1975 essay, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” in order to describe a projected fantasy of sexual desire and passivity onto the female body. In layman's terms, it's how women —the subject of the gaze— are seen by heterosexual men as sexual objects.

Mulvey argued that films may be viewed in “three different looks,” which she claims are all male. The first refers to the camera as it records the actual events of the film (acknowledging the cameraman

and director as male). The second was the look or view of the male spectator that of necessity followed the camera's masculine gaze; and the third was the dominating look of male characters within the film narrative.²⁹



Figure 34. Still from *Boxer Shorts Video, /Offscreen/*, Robert Fitzgerald, 2018.



Figure 35. Still from *Boxer Shorts Video, /Offscreen/*, Robert Fitzgerald, 2018.

Mulvey also believes that in order to enjoy a film as a woman, or any gender other than male, we must learn to identify with the heterosexual male protagonist.³⁰ As the majority of characters I reenact identify as heterosexual, I decided not to spiral down the very complex and disputed gay gaze theory versions of Mulvey's male gaze. I simply left the interpretations to the viewer. Adding a bit of humor, I did add a bonus of a clip from *American Gigolo* of the Richard Gere character peeking out his blinds in the film, effectively gazing on my reenactment of his walk (Figure 35).

My goal in *Boxer Shorts* was to remove the movements from the original context of their films and characters, and to create a physical database from which to choreograph the live performance. My attempt, though at times clunky, was to embody the physical movement and obvious physical mannerisms of these characters.

While re-creating the bedroom I was thinking about space, scale, sexuality and self-identity. Paralleling my attempt to capture my hidden sexuality, Betsky, in *Queer Space*, asserts, “by [its] very nature queer space is something that is not built, only implied, and is usually inevitable. Queer space does not confidently establish a clear ordered space for itself. It is altogether more ambivalent, open, self-critical, or ironic, and ephemeral.”³¹ I do believe I established, questioned and experimented with my own identity in this room. As Jason Reid writes, “The autonomous teen bedroom (works by) spatializing the liberation process, creating walls, both literally and figuratively, that teens could use to separate themselves from their mothers and to a lesser extent their fathers.”³²

I chose to take the closet out of the bedroom and into a public space while considering the ideas of feminist scholar Barbara Hudson. “[The bedroom] encourages young people to create a ‘bold expression of self’, which celebrated an independent spirit. It gives teenagers the “power to define and revise one’s image through décor.” It forged a separate identity from their friends, siblings and parents. The bedroom became a “privileged space that was considered part of the home in a structural sense, yet divorced from it in an emotional one.”³³ In the film *Losin’ It*, one of the male teenage leads is depicted as celebrating his supposed sexual prowess and confidence. He looks into the mirror, flexes his muscles and puts a sock in his underwear to emphasize the size of his manhood. Barbara Hudson, in her article “Femininity and Adolescence,” discusses male sexuality and its oppositional image, which is relevant to this bedroom scene, where in the male is “objective, independent, competitive, adventurous, self-confident and ambitious. The contradictions in the cultural myth of male sexuality arise out of the bedroom (as in *Porky’s* and *Losin’ It*), when the male is taken out of the privacy of the bedroom and his masculinity is challenged in a public setting.”³⁴

The Closet

Separated from the entire bedroom installation, in another part of the Stamps gallery sat the closet structure, which was positioned in the corner of the 18x18 foot glass cube lobby. The façade of the closet had the same trim and paint coat as the bedroom, though the edges were frayed with torn drywall, literally ripped out of the fourth wall in the bedroom installation (Figure 36).



Figure 36. *The Closet, /Offscreen/, Robert Fitzgerald, 2018.*

The other outside three walls had an exposed exterior of unfinished wood and 2x4 foot supports, while the interior of the closet was finished, carpeted and held a wooden rod and working light. This was the space where my outfits for the performance were stored. The door of the closet was wood, similar in make to the bedroom door, and on the inside of the closet door was a standard full-length mirror. The outfits contained in the closet included my high school swimming letterman jacket, a pair of swimming goggles, a red Speedo, a black business suit, a white dress shirt, a red and blue striped tie, a pair of green cargo shorts, a white tank top, and the same white crew neck t-shirt and boxer shorts which were used in the video, *Boxer Shorts*. On the floor of the closet sat a brown leather briefcase, the exact briefcase my father gave to me when I had an internship in New York City with the Department of City Planning during my senior year of my undergraduate studies. All of the clothing items were placed on wooden hangers. The closet door itself was only opened during the performance. At all other times the light was off and the door was shut. There was no signage in place to discourage curious viewers from opening the door.

I chose to separate the closet from the bedroom in part due to the closet's isolating symbolic nature. In his article on the history and use of the closet in the American home, Henry Urbach, in *Closets Clothes and Disclosure* wrote,

A relationship of faithful codependence emerges between closet and room. The room relies exclusively on its closet and the closet communicates uniquely with its room. The closet also has less legitimacy than a room. It is a decidedly non-social space; it enforces isolation ... Though things may inevitably find their way outside of the closet, while they're in it, they're barred from full participation in what's going on outside.³⁵

The closet structure, removed from the fourth wall of the bedroom installation and placed into the glass box at the entrance of the gallery, created a new spatial metaphor: the bedroom now acts as the space

holding hidden desires, and the closet is openly on full public display. Urbach goes further in saying, “The closet refers to the way that identity, particularly gay identity, is concealed and disclosed because gay identity is not quite hidden by the closet but not quite displayed either. Rather it is represented through coded gestures that sustain the appearance of uncertainty.”³⁶ There were multiple factors in my decision to move the closet, the first being the metaphorical ideas surrounding “coming out of the closet.” By not locking the door of the closet structure, I subscribed to the theory that my sexuality was not quite hidden nor yet on full display. During the live performances with the closet door fully open and the light on, I engaged in the performance of a constructed masculinity through connected gestures. Further, by physically moving the closet from the bedroom to the glass cube, I am following the trajectory that Tony Adams argues in his book - *Narrating the Closet*. In this book, he states the three epiphanies of gay identity include “‘learning the closet,’ when a person becomes familiar with the metaphorical space, ‘living the closet,’ when a person privately identifies as gay but publically discounts this identity and finally ‘leaving the closet,’ the moment when a person discloses gay identity to others.”³⁷ My bedroom installation represents my “learning the closet”; the closet with the closed door represents “living the closet”; and my performance with the closet door open represents “leaving the closet.”

While considering the performance surrounding the closet, I researched the artworks of art duo Gilbert and George. In her article “Performing the Closet: Grids and Suits in the Early Art of Gilbert and George,” Katherine Bourguignon carefully looks at the early art of Gilbert and George (1970-1977) and at “their contrived public appearance to understand their complex relationship to the closet during these years. Not only do I find points of comparison between Gilbert and George’s choice of subject matter and a gay identity, the closet stands as a metaphor for the silence of secrets, the upkeep of the status quo, and the distinction between private and public, inside and outside.”³⁸

In a 1976 series, *Dead Boards*, the art duo Gilbert and George photographed each other blank-faced in empty rooms - close up shots of wooden floor planks art paired with gridded windows and far away images of the artists (Figure 37). Gilbert and George never appeared together in the same rectangular segment of these gridded photographs. They rarely face each other or the camera.



Figure 37. *Dead Boards*, Gilbert and George, 1976.

Bourguignon believes, "The repeated imagery and lonely mood of the work hints at the artists' struggle with the closet, a concept that divided gays in Britain during the 70's. While activist gays wanted to announce their sexual preferences publicly, Gilbert and George, whose homosexual relationship had not yet been made public, may have struggled with the desire to 'come out' through their art. Their examination of empty rooms and their use of a strict grid pattern demonstrate an awareness of the prison like qualities of the closet wanting to free the closet from its potential prison-like quality, I chose to incorporate it as an integral part of the performance. John Clum, in his text *Acting Gay: Male Homosexuality in Modern Drama*, noted that, "The closet is less a place than a performance - or series of performances, maintained by the heterosexist wish for, and sometimes enforcement of, homosexual silence and invisibility. The closet shields gay men and women from persecution, discrimination, and isolation by forcing them to pretend, play-act, and remain silent. In consequence, the closet divides and isolates gays, urging them to deny their desire."³⁹

Movement

*"Indeed, our very conception of the world, our reality is shaped by the pattern of our bodily movement, the contours of our spatial and temporal orientation and the forms of our interactions with objects. Through acting, interacting and observing, we come to know ourselves and others. Body and mind work together upon our corporal experiences, drawing general inferences from specific acts. The result is a personal lexicon of movement meaning."*⁴⁰

Mark Johnson (Figure 38)



Figure 38. Still from *Change performance, /Offscreen/*, Robert Fitzgerald, 2018.

Body movement plays a central role in the process of becoming human.

Just as there is a challenge to understanding the history and ever-changing theories of masculinity, the ideas of analyzing body movements, especially through the lens of masculinity presents its own set of challenges. Returning to R.W. Connell, who makes explicit the necessity to acknowledge the materiality of the body, “The masculine body cannot be defined as a passive object, which all men receive or experience in the same way. Bodies are as diverse as are the ways in

which men are able to use them and these factors must have bearing on the ways in which men define their cultural practices.”⁴¹

For movement analysis research I decided to look at this subject through the combined research of Carol-Lynne Moore, a dancer, choreographer and academic, and Kaoru Yamamoto, an educational psychologist, who together wrote - *Beyond Words, Movement Observation and Analysis*.

Movement is often considered to be the universal language as all people move in some capacity. Moore and Yamamoto believe that movement can act as a metaphor on three levels.

The first level hinges on the idea that “movement is a universal language,” meaning that everyone can understand physical action in the same manner. This approach to the understanding of movement has sometimes been called the “physiognomic approach”;⁴² in other words, the relationship between movement and meaning is one of identity - they are one in the same. I would argue that the universal language of masculine movement was the hegemonic version in the films that I studied, understood by those that created the films and those that watched.

The second level is “movement as a foreign language” where physical movement signifies nothing, until one masters it through learning, its physicality and the meaning of its code.⁴³ Putting aside the over the top stereotypical flamboyant gestures attached to male characters in certain films, there were subtle movements which I recalled from memory and present day which were a “foreign language” or coded movements. I would place these movements into the subversive ideas of masculinity.

Finally, *Beyond Words* describes the third metaphor as “movement as private code,” which has a unique and individualistic senses in which each person uses body movement idiosyncratically, thus conveying meanings that are unique to him or her.⁴⁴ These private codes are embedded in the live performance of */Offscreen/*. The videotaped

performance which is projected in the bedroom installation, is the replication of movement combination of universal and foreign language, derived from the films I researched. The movements that I perform during the live performance of */Offscreen/*, begin to work their way into the field of private code. Movements which I had performed over the years and had given personal meaning to them, regardless of where they may have originated. I choreographed the work to combine all three sources of movements.

Judith Butler's work requires that gender be viewed as the performance of masculine and or feminine traits through constant bodily repetition. To Butler, without homosexuality, heterosexuality would be without something to define itself against. Without the existence of homosexuality, it would be impossible to delineate what types of gender performances were considered heterosexual.

Growing up in the 1980s, I believed I would be vulnerable to harassment and potential violence if I had disclosed my sexuality or performed gender in a feminized way. Butler believes institutional powers like psychiatric normalization and informal kinds of practices like bullying try to keep us in our gendered place. Butler questions how these gender norms get established and policed and believes the best way is to disrupt them and overcome the police function.

My claim is that one of these policing institutions is film. By breaking down the physical movements of film, creating a taxonomy, then re-embodiment the movements into my own private code and publicly displaying them, I can study the language of "masculine movement" from a specific time, and in doing so can disrupt it.

Performance

The live performance piece which accompanied the bedroom installation was entitled Change. The performance of Change was set in the public lobby area of the McKinley Towne Center Corporate building, located at 201 S. Division Street in Ann Arbor, Michigan. The area of the public lobby is quite unique as it contains an 18x18 foot clear glass cube, owned by the UM Stamps gallery, acting as an entrance as well as a public face into the corporate lobby.

Four times during the run of the *Embody MFA* thesis show, I performed this 10-minute movement piece derived from the culmination of knowledge in the bedroom installation.

The glass cube created an additional barrier between myself and my audience. Having the original private architectural closet placed into the very public glass cube created both a looking glass in the fashion of being in a specimen jar and a very public closet in which myself and the original closet were performing in, now an open closet and not a veiled space.

I have broken down the five acts of the performance to cover both description and meaning of each act, including other artists who inspired and some of the methods I used to create the work. Though the movements have become an abstracted form derived from all of the film research, after certain descriptions I will indicate if the movement is specifically referencing a particular film.

Act I

I enter the lobby of the building from one of the two elevators, on the ground floor. Dressed in a black suit, white dress shirt and striped tie, I appear like other businessmen in the building, entering and exiting; however, I am shoeless. As I exit the elevator towards the main entrance of the building and the glass cube, I check my left wrist for the time, though I am not wearing a watch. I walk briskly and with intent towards the front exit using my right hand to hold an imaginary briefcase. On the marble wall next to me, I pass a monitor playing a cable television newsfeed. I then take a right and enter into the glass cube; the glass door closes behind me and I stop in the middle of the 18x18 foot space. I place down the imaginary briefcase on the tiled floor, and facing the gallery entrance, I unbutton my suit jacket and begin stretching as if I am going to begin a swimming race (reference: *Making Love*). I acknowledge the imaginary competition to both my left and right and then drop down into a swimmer's starting position.

I then forcefully launch myself forward towards the open doorway and turn to the left just as I reach it, swinging my body quickly to the right and lifting up my right arm and lowering my left as though I am moving with a hockey stick (*Slap Shot*). I rapidly move across the entire tiled floor as if it were an ice rink, performing a figure eight, then check my body against the closed- door closet structure, with a strong slam. After pausing and dropping my body down then back up, from the door, I begin slowly walking backwards in an accentuated manner lifting my arms over my head emulating a swimmer's backstroke. While backstroking and walking backwards I remove the jacket from my body and allow it to fall to the floor. I then change direction, continuing the backstroke, reaching the original glass double door entrance. I turn to face the double doors, reach into my pocket and pull out a pair of swim goggles, which I place around my neck.

I quickly turn around and begin to slowly and seductively walk in a straight line towards the open gallery door (*American Gigolo*). While

walking, I use my right hand to move the goggles left and right as though I am loosening a tie. I stop in the doorway, stare straight ahead and snap the goggles up to my forehead, before quickly taking my hands and running them behind my ears as if I am tucking my hair behind, and then lowering both hands at arm's length to observe my nails. (*Kiss of the Spider Woman*). I then snap both arms up and pull my head back as though I'm being choked in a neck hold (*First Blood*). With goggles on my head and a strained expression on my face, I bound backwards, struggling with the imaginary bar holding my neck back (Figure 39). Grunting loudly, I then push forward, releasing the hold that is being held on me, and then immediately leap up into the air, in an upside down V-shape, and land on the ground in a push up position. I then lift my body up on my knees, lean back, pull off the goggles and throw them off to the side. I then loosen the tie and place it around my head like a bandana (*Rambo II*). Then, I look to my left and right and go back onto the floor on all fours (*Platoon*), crawling with my elbows, indicating to imaginary soldiers to my left and right that we are under attack. Rolling my body across the floor, I then pop back up on my knees facing another direction, and act as if I'm looking through peephole (*Porky's*), into a space



Figure 39. Still from Act I, *Change performance, /Offscreen/*, Robert Fitzgerald, 2018.

I should not be looking into. I then gawk through the peephole, indicating to outside members to come join me in my visionary exploration.

I then fall back, and roll on my back, ending on my stomach, in push up position (*Perfect*), walking my hands back until I return to a standing position. Reaching high in the air, I bring my arms down, and pull the bandana off my head and place it into my pocket like a pocket square. I then begin caressing an imaginary golf club and lower it down in front of me (*Caddyshack*). I prepare to take a golf shot, slowly shaking my butt back and forth and then swinging, missing the imaginary ball, then throwing my club out of frustration. I then look down and kick imaginary ball as though I'm cheating and look to my left and right to see if anyone is watching me. Acknowledging to myself that I've gotten away with cheating, I then place my thumbs in my front pockets and tap my waist, with confidence.

I then casually stroll back to the closet. At the closet, I open the door, reach in and turn the light on, hang the tie on the hanger, pick up the suit jacket and goggles and place them on a hanger, and then begin to remove the dress shirt and dress pants. I change the articles of clothing with care as though I'm returning them to my closet to wear again, shake them out for wrinkles and occasionally check myself in the mirror. Once these articles of clothing are removed, it's revealed that I am wearing a white tank top and green cargo shorts underneath.

Act I sets the stage in terms of time and pacing on the entire piece. Arriving dressed in a business suit; I give reference to the businessman characters in films as well as my own brief experience during college when I spent a semester in New York City as an intern with the Department of City Planning. Arriving and moving in bare feet allows me to move in a quick pace across a slick tiled floor, giving me liberty to create more accentuated movements, as well as subverting the attire to emphasize performance. The swimming and hockey motions in Act I reference back to the sports I participated in my youth and specific items back in the bedroom installation.

The range of motions in Act I range from violent hits and drops dissolving into very slow and subtle hand gestures. The creation of choreography of Act I and all subsequent Acts take into consideration of the space and range of my body in relation to the closet structure and the limits and sightlines of myself being in the glass cube. For each of the acts, there was a decided costume which gives nod to my own personal history and clothing as well as the characters in films I was researching. The first Act also addresses the limits of motion my current body has as opposed to my late teenage body when originally viewing these films.

Act II

I glance into the mirror, run my fingers through my hair, pick up the real briefcase, turn off the light and shut the closet door. I then turn around with my back to the closet door and face the outside world with briefcase in hand. I pause for a moment, look directly upwards, and then begin walking briskly diagonally across the floor. I pause in the center of the cube again, look upwards, check my imaginary watch, move my briefcase to my other arm, lift my heels off the floor, and again walk briskly forward to the corner of the glass cube (*Wall Street*). At the corner, I place the briefcase down, and immediately launch into moving around the cube in a circular fashion. I pause at the open gallery door, shake the hand of an unsuspecting guest/viewer, look them in the eye and simply say “good job” (*Bonfire of the Vanities*). I then very rapidly turn my body towards the center of the cube as though I’m playing volleyball (*Top Gun*) continually saying “good job” (Figure 40).

I make a full round of the entire cube, pointing to imaginary persons inside and real people outside the cube, while saying good job (*Police Academy*). Raising my arm to my ear as though using a telephone, I announce good job into the imaginary receiver (*Wall Street*). I then do one more lap in the glass cube, raising my hands higher though I’m high



Figure 40. Still from Act II, *Change* performance, */Offscreen/*, Robert Fitzgerald, 2018.

fiving at the end of a sporting event and return to the corner where I had placed the briefcase. I then walk directly toward the closet door and very slowly, with my right arm at my side, begin a short repetitive tapping motion while saying good job in a very low voice with much less enthusiasm as though I was on the losing team (*Bad News Bears*).

I then finish this walk by tapping the door handle, which I then open again, turn on the light, look myself directly in the mirror and state one last time “good job.” I then begin the process again of removing clothing.

Act II is the only part of the performance where I use spoken word. The continual use of the line “Good Job” within this work becomes a loaded meaning. For Act II, I use the term to emphasize the hierarchical male positions within the business world as well as the range of emotions when used in sportsmanship. Beginning with the “Good Job” of the teammate who has just performed a sports move successfully, to the repeated almost painful use when acknowledging the opposite team after the win or loss of a game.

The term “good job” was found in numerous films and using the term as a starting point I was able to tackle the job of movement from a perspective where I was not simply linking or merging movements together to give the idea of a seamless move. Creating these types of moves with spoken word, for me, started to shift from using simply universal code of movement to a more private code, where I had used the term.

While removing the suit carefully in the mirror at the end of Act I, I give special attention to the placement back into the closet and the folding and shaking of the pants as I would if I were placing back into my own closet at home. Continually acknowledging myself in the full length mirror at the beginning and ending of each piece acts as both a pause in performance and a personal acknowledgement of the self in my private code of movement.

Act III

I take off the tank top and cargo shorts to reveal a naked chest and red speedos. I then turn off the light again, close the closet door, and then immediately turn around and lean against the door, lifting my left arm, acting as though I am on a crowded subway. I bounce my body back



Figure 41. Still from Act III, *Change* performance, /Offscreen/, Robert Fitzgerald, 2018.

and forth, as if I'm in an uncomfortable commuting situation (*Trading Spaces*). I then leap to my left, arms overhead as though I'm holding a spear, and make an incredible leap to the center of the room as if I'm spearing a pig (*First Blood*) (Figure 41), I drop my entire body to the floor, face down, and immediately pull myself back up on my knees, and hold something in my hand as if it were a dog tag, lifting it up as I tear it off my neck and throw it into the vast abyss (*Full Metal Jacket*). I then raise my right arm and begin to move my body in a clockwise position, continually raising my right arm and using my left arm to hold the microphone (*Bachelor Party*). This toasting action has me moving in circles in the center of the room and brings me to my feet. At this point I am on my feet, and have switched to a volleyball receive position and quicken my pace across the entire floor of the glass cube (*Top Gun*).

Eventually my arms are over my head, and I am spinning my body furiously towards the closet (*Paris is Burning*). At the closet door I pause, open the door again, turn the light on, and place the blue boxer shorts over the red speedos and put on the white crew neck t-shirt. I am now wearing the same outfit that I was wearing in *Boxer Shorts*, back in the bedroom installation. Transitioning from rolling on the ground as if in the army to arms in the air in jubilation as performed by drag queens I draw from the work of dancer and choreographer Joe Goode. In his dance piece, *29 Effeminate Gestures*, Goode gives an unapologetic, brazen critique of social constructions of masculinity and the behaviors prescribed for American men. "He expounds upon this line of social commentary by framing and exalting the physicality and identity of effeminate men who do not conform to societal rules and constructs of the binary system of gender performance."⁴⁵ In the work, Goode begins on stage wearing coveralls and holding a chainsaw. He proceeds to cut up a chair with the chainsaw, then moves around the stage in a very feminized accentuated manner, touching his body and speaking to the audience with sayings like, "If you are excited by ... too much ... if you enjoy the aesthetic of ... too much ..."



Figure 42. Still from *29 Effeminate Gestures* performance, Joe Goode, 1987.

Goode explains of the work, “It’s that a single body can hold the rage (of a man) and the beauty (of a woman), the thick heavy masculinity and the light liquid femininity, that all of that can be contained in one place”⁴⁶ (Figure 42).

Act IV

I check the mirror and look into the closet, this time leaving the closet door open and the light on. With my back to the audience I begin walking backwards - this is where I start seriously and quickly abstracting moves - continually doing what I’ve called the punch-handshake-high five (*Raging Bull, Making Love, Fast Times at Ridgemont High*) move across the diagonal of the glass cube. I then quickly spin and return to the entrance of the gallery doorway, place my body at strict attention as if I were in the military, and pause (*Streamers*). I then pull my body back and start twirling, moving my hands around my head as though I’m wrapping a towel when one gets out of the shower (*Kiss of the*



Figure 43. Still from Act IV, *Change performance, /Offscreen/*, Robert Fitzgerald, 2018.

Spider Woman). This stand at attention/towel wrap twirl occurs while facing outwards towards all four glass walls. Each time I become less regimented with the stand at attention, and my body takes bigger, more exaggerated twirls (Figure 43). I end this movement back at the gallery door and again pause. I then bring my body to the ground, slap it very hard (*The Great Santini*), and quickly walk back to the center of the glass cube, giving what appears to be continuous butt slaps. At this point, for approximately two minutes, I begin abstracting all of the previous moves, as well as integrating other new moves into a very fast-paced climax. Each of the four performances is slightly different in this last two-minute abstraction.

Act IV is the point where I let go of the direct movement recognitions of the found footage and release them into a personal private code.

Inspired by choreographer Trisha Brown's *Accumulation* (1971), I begin my punch-handshake-high five with a slow clear repeated action, slowly building in speed, until it morphs into a longer singular gesture built out of three distinct parts. The Walker Art Center explains of Brown's work, "In *Accumulation*, Brown worked out of the fiction of the body's mapping by a kinesthetic score, whose mechanical logic—bend, stretch, and rotate—merely exists to be excavated."⁴⁷ I thought of this as I methodically worked out hand motions, which began a new section of *Change*, then built the act from that point out. Movement, in *Accumulation*, unfolds increment by increment—from thumb to wrist, wrist to elbow, elbow to shoulder, shoulder to neck, hip to knee—accruing according to a simple accumulating sequence. I was working out three of the most common male hand gestures I am accustomed to both from life and film: punch, handshake, high-five.

The Walker continues, "*Accumulation* (1971) (Figure 44), exposes the cognitive challenge of performing, showing the dancer and the body in the course of thinking, not merely gesturing in space, and offers the satisfaction of watching a composition materialize according to an indissoluble unity of intent and action: the body's vocabulary as a

movement language.”⁴⁸ The slow build of this movement is derived from a series of moves from the other acts. I feel this is where my personal choreography begins to shine. I began by spending time reviewing and replicating the movements from the found film footage, a good example is the variety of “high-fives” from the film- *Top Gun*. I study, then repeat them over and over until I can link them together into a choreographed movement work. This type of choreography is what is viewed in the video clip, *Boxer Shorts*, viewed through the window installation in the bedroom. Acts I, III and III pushed the replication in understanding linking ideas through movement and merging the universal and foreign language code. In Act IV and V private code begins to take over the movement embracing my own personal history with the re-reviewed history of movement.

ACT V

I then walk back to the closet - which is open - collect all of the clothing, turn off the light and close the door. I then cross the glass cube to pick up the briefcase, and then walk back out the original glass doors, back towards the bank of elevators, thus concluding the piece (Figure 45).

Again, the act of revisiting these film movements, combined with my own memory, physical ability and personal clothing is my way of experiencing and exposing the universal, foreign and private code of my personal movement, today and of my past.



Figure 44. Still from *Accumulation* performance by Trisha Brown, 1971.



Figure 45. Still from *Act V, Change* performance, */Offscreen/*, Robert Fitzgerald, 2018.

Notes for Discussion of Creative Work

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- 24 Jason Reid, *Get out of my room!: a history of teen bedrooms in America*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017), 437.
- 25 Sian Lincoln, *Youth culture and private space*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 97.
- 26 Richard Rodriguez, *Days of Obligation: An Argument with my Mexican Father*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1993), 30.
- 27 Aaron Betsky, *Queer space: Architecture and same-sex desire*, (New York: William Morrow, 1997), 21.
- 28 Denis Gielen, *Tony Oursler - Vox Vernacular an Anthology*, (Brussels: Mercatorfonds, 2013), 15.
- 29 Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," in *The Film Theory Reader: Debates & Arguments*, ed. Marc Furstenau (New York: Routledge, 2010), 36.
- 30 *Ibid.*, 37.
- 31 Betsky, *Queer Space*, 26.
- 32 Reid, 429.
- 33 *Ibid.*, 430.
- 34 Barbara Hudson, "Femininity and adolescence," in *Gender and Generation*, ed. Angela McRobbie (London: Macmillan, 1984), 57.
- 35 Henry Urbach, "Closets, Clothes, Disclosure" in *Assemblage*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996) 62.
- 36 *Ibid.*, 64.
- 37 Tony Adams, *Narrating the Closet: An Autoethnography of Same-Sex Attraction*, (New York: Routledge, 2011), 15.
- 38 Katherine Bourguignon, "Performing the Closet: Grids and Suits in the Early Art of Gilbert and George", *Genders Magazine* online 2000.
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- 42 Carol-Lynne Moore and Kaoru Yamamoto, *Beyond words: movement observation and analysis*, (London: Routledge, 2012), 69.
- 43 *Ibid.*, 71.
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46 "The Silent E: 29 Effeminate Gestures, 24 Years Later." Dancers' Group. March 07, 2013. Accessed May 15, 2018. <http://dancersgroup.org/2011/04/the-silent-e-29-effeminate-gestures-24-years-later/>.

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48 Ibid.



Link to Performance

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Os-aXE6ftpk>

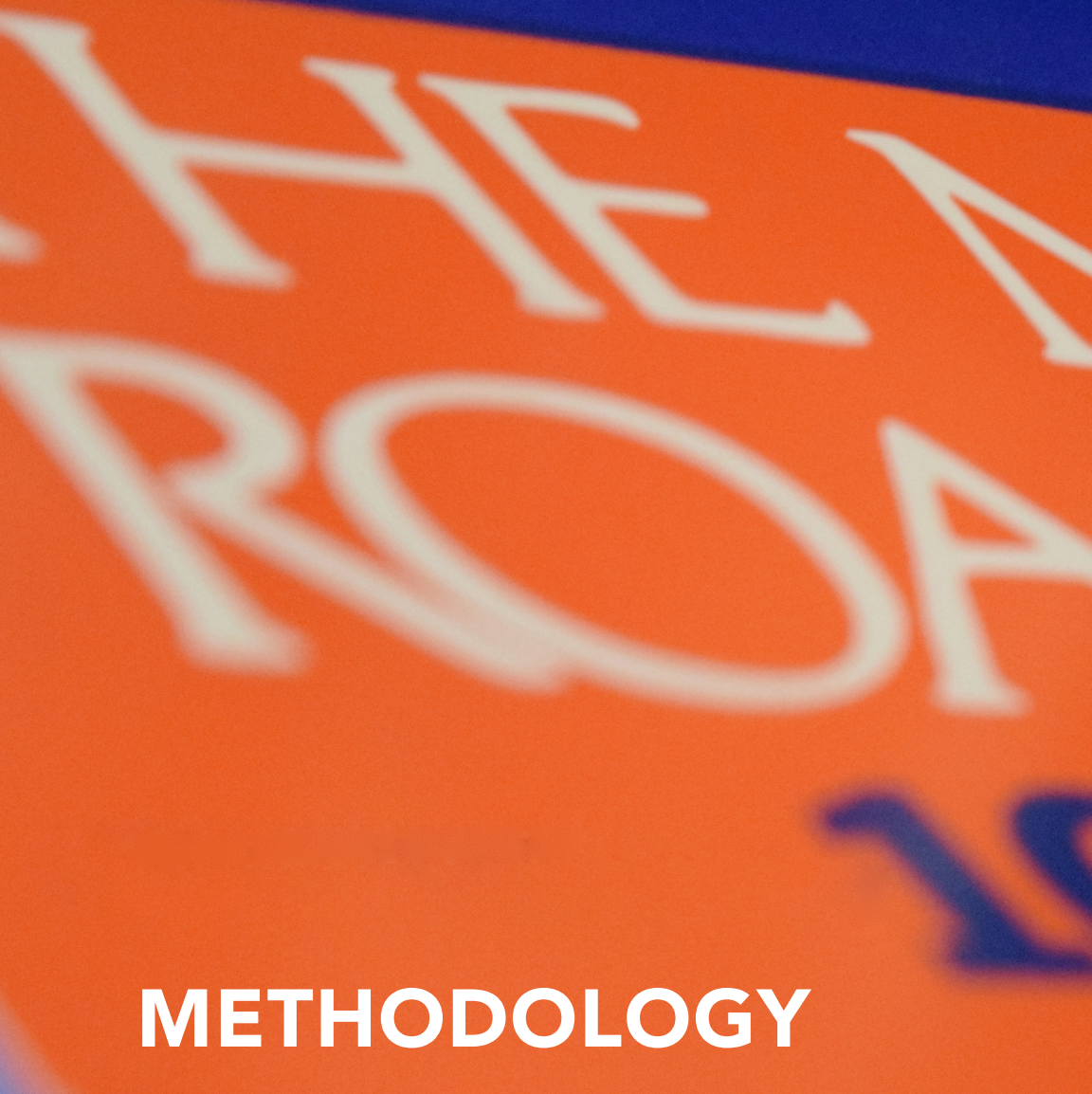












METHODOLOGY



Now that I have contextualized the areas of research, I would like to explain the process by which the work was created. I must note that the process by which the work in */Offscreen/* came about was not straightforward. Working from personal memory can be a challenging thing, as events and occurrences do not always come to mind in logical order.

Prior to entering the University of Michigan I was primarily a sculptor with a background in urban planning. I was developing artworks and

installations which were in reference to the body and how one might navigate spaces, such as how a city planner might create a sidewalk four feet wide versus six feet wide and how a pedestrian might navigate either space.

At the University of Michigan I began making short films based on my experiences in the corporate world and how I physically moved, then decided to go back in my memory and challenge the notions the influence film and media may have had in my physical daily movement. I was thinking about the changing meaning of what it means to “move like a man.”

My methods included, gathering theoretical data and synthesizing, breaking down the work through gender, film and movement theory. Looking at gender theory which was written and supported in the time frame I was looking at the films. Finding how these theories have changed over time. Determining which theories best fit in with the wide ranged scope of the thesis project.

Gathering film data and synthesizing. Setting limitations on which films to review and which movements to catalog. Creating a classification and catalog of movements and finding the physical connections then linking them with my memory.

Rehearsing, filming and re-enacting these movements. Using the film footage to then place my movements side-by-side with the original, then making the determination to project the final outcome without the side-by-side comparison.

Experimentation with video editing and projection allows me to revisit the movements in these films and tightly edit what I believe are the most potent physical movements. Movements which would work well in dance as well as movements which could link well physically when performed together and in a series. Editing this found footage was a way to reenter this world through my memory. While watching the films again I remembered certain scenes which

had stayed with me in my subconscious and was most likely the reason I had included them for research.

I could say I have been training my body for the research in this thesis my entire life. Since the first day I crawled on the floor, my body has been in constant motion. Training my body for movement replication and then for choreographed dance was a challenge as I realized early on that for a number of movements I was hoping to replicate I might have some difficulty with a body of middle aged man. Through training and research I was able to train and push my body for the ability to complete these choreographed works. Working in improvisation also trained the connection of mind and body. Quick thinking became useful when I shifted speed and choreographed literally 'on my feet'. Though I performed and presented as a solo dancer, working with other dancers assisted in my knowledge in the use of space and range.

Working with a variety of personal materials and thinking about the visual aspect of the thesis show, I built a mock-up bedroom to work out the details and receive critical feedback on the direction of */Offscreen/*. Finally working from memory and looking through archives of personal objects for bedroom installation allowing me to revisit objects which also sparked memories of experiences.

A close-up photograph of a person's face, partially obscured by horizontal window blinds. The blinds are dark, and the light coming through creates a pattern of horizontal bands of light and shadow across the person's features. The person's eyes and nose are visible through the slats. At the bottom of the image, the word "CONCLUSION" is written in a bold, white, sans-serif font, centered horizontally and overlaid on a solid black horizontal bar.

CONCLUSION



/Offscreen/ and its performance allowed me, as an artist, to dig deep into my past. Investigating the films of my youth through the lens of gender, sexuality, and movement allowed me to link theory and artistic practice, finally allowing me to create a new performance work that built from this research.

Michael Kimmel had written about two types of crisis, which I interpreted as one personal and one societal. My personal crisis ran parallel with the change in cultural climate from the late 1970s to the early 1980s.

By revisiting my original research questions, I have concluded that the movements of male characters in the films that I reviewed fall into the Judith Butler theorization of male masculinity as constructed through performance. I would say that in the 1980s I was also influenced by these films; thereby, my gender was constructed in part by witnessing of repetitive movement of these male characters. I did begin to question the stereotypical code presented in these films.

If I think of myself as masculine and I am performing these movements both in everyday life and in the glass cube of the gallery, those movements, to me are masculine. One of my goals with this research was to challenge how we get stereotyped into behavior. There is no single masculine movement, nor a series of them. Looking into my personal past, thorough media and movement, I established moves which I believe represent me today as a human who identifies as a man. The movements that I replicated, then later subverted and choreographed are my definition of masculine movements. The performance asks of the audience, are these moves any less masculine? Does it even matter if someone else believes the movements are any less masculine? One of my end goals was to push the joy of movement. Find the areas of research which can lead into larger works. In this case it was masculine movements from films, however in the future I am hoping to explore other recorded movements which to investigate. With the taxonomy I have created, given time I could put together much longer and varied movement performances.

Beyond the material of film, I am also interested in further investigating spaces we navigate, which leads back to my degree in urban planning, and how I might use my methodologies here in investigating such areas as light and sound in conjunction with human movement.

The recreation of the bedroom space was a bit of *deja-vu* and the replication of the exact movements in the *Boxer Shorts* video gave me the ability to look at these movements fresh, allowing me to build off of them and adopt and adapt them my own choreography in the glass

cube. The power of the spaces is just as important as the taxonomy of movements from film.

While revisiting the films, there were certain scenes which were influential and embedded in my memory as I recalled them immediately when watching them. Subconsciously as a teenager I may have incorporated these movements into my daily life. If popular film reflects the ideas and fashion of the time, arguably it also reflects the physical movements of people as well. Myself and my peers most certainly consciously and subconsciously re-enacted these movements, such as *Top Gun* high-fives and *Rambo* jumps. In fact, I recall distinctly re-enacting the *Top Gun* high-five as it was common that school year, to say “I feel the need, the need for speed” (*Top Gun*), one of the many catchphrases from the film as the two main characters were giving each other high-fives.

My research did uncover a distinct repetition of what might be considered violent and sudden, many at angular motions and high speed. There was a common thread that many movements were exaggerated for character punch in the original film. I tended to take these moves and after replicating them exactly in *Boxer Shorts*, introduced them with the same intensity at the beginning of *Change*, but eventually would tone it down as most everyday movements. Of course the “over the top” movements which my friends and I recreated, would only find themselves back into film culture later, feeding the cycle.

My final research question was how can I explore the public and private space of the bedroom and the closet, and by exhibiting the movements in those spaces, reveal the contradictions between the male public and private self? In terms of space, the reconstruction of the bedroom and the closet worked exceptionally well as both an installation for projection (the bedroom) and structure for performance (the closet). As mentioned earlier placing the closet into the glass cube, which sat in an office building lobby worked well on exploring the public and private display of the closet.

In my youth the closet was a private, closed off space in the semi-public area of the bedroom. My real closet in Connecticut would have been both a physical and psychological private space within my world. By simply ripping the physical structure out of the bedroom, to me, felt like ripping a hidden past and placing it into a glass cube for all to see.

In the glass cube the closet and the performance was open for all to see, bringing it into a very public space. While performing, the audience, standing behind the glass wall are invited to read the choreographed moves I have created, a spectator sitting a movie theater looking at a screen. A greater insight with the glass cube was the daily rehearsal and the daily reactions from business people, many middle aged men like myself, pausing and trying to figure out what I was doing. I looked a bit like them in certain costumes, but was physically behaving quite different in a space which has a limited range of prescribed acceptable moves.

The research behind */Offscreen/*, as challenging as it was, allowed me to delve into my personal past in a way which was totally unexpected. Revisiting films, movement and spaces of my past while linking them to my present brought about challenges and unexpected rewards. I want to believe the strength of */Offscreen/* showcases the influences of our past and how we process them and act or don't act upon them in the present. The ability to breakdown movement to create my own language to work from will carry my own research and artwork forward. Giving me a groundwork to produce more work surrounding the ideas of what it means to move like a man.

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Filmography

YEARS 1980-1989

A Chorus Line

A View to a Kill

Airplane

All the Right Moves

American Anthem

American Gigolo

An Early Frost

Another Country

Apartment Zero

Bachelor Party

Batman

Before Stonewall

Beverly Hills Cop

Big Trouble in Little China

Blue Velvet

Blues Brothers

Boys in the Band

Breakfast Club

Buddies

Caddyshack

Can't Stop the Music

Colors

Commando

Consenting Adults

Cruising

Deathtrap

Die Hard

Dirty Dancing

Dressed to Kill

Dune

Eddie Murphy Raw

Escape from New York

Escape to Victory

Fame

Fast Times at Ridgemont High

First Blood

Flash Gordon

Footloose

Full Metal Jacket

Hotel New Hampshire

In & Out (90s)

Just One of the Guys

Kickboxer

Kindergarten Cop

Kiss of the Spider Woman

Labyrinth of Passion

Last Exit to Brooklyn

Law of Desire

Lethal Weapon

Liquid Sky

Longtime Companion

Major League

Making Love

Mala Noche

Mannequin

Maurice

Meatballs
Mr. Mom
My Beautiful Laundrette
Once Upon a Time in America
Paris is Burning
Parting Glances
Partners
Perfect
Platoon
Police Academy
Porky's
Predator
Prick Up Your Ears
Querelle
Raging Bull
Rambo: First Blood Part II
Red Dawn
Revenge of the Nerds
Risky Business
Road House
Rocky IV
Runaway Train
Scarface
Streamers
Stripes
Taps
Taxi Zum Klo
Terminator
The Dresser
The Fourth Man
The Great Santini
The Karate Kid
The Living Daylights
The Lost Boys
The Outsiders
The Right Stuff
The Road Warrior
The Running Man
The Untouchables
The World According to Garp
They Live
This is Spinal Tap
Tin Men
To Live and Die in LA
Tootsie
Top Gun
Torch Song Trilogy
Trading Places
Urban Cowboy
Wall Street
Weekend at Bernie's
Withnail and I
Xanadu
Young Guns
Youngblood