SLOW THINKING

SESSION #2: QUALITY & CREATION IN THE DIGITAL SPACE

Wednesday 6ᵗʰ May 2020

This conversation encouraged consideration of how Circus might diverge into the digital space. We explored how we can improve the documentation of live performance in future, so that if we need to 'dig into our archives' again the quality of the experience for the home audience is improved. Beyond this the conversation questioned the very nature of Circus, the 'liveness', the risk and physicality that an audience member watching circus feels and how this could be captured or even enhanced by the use of film-making techniques.

Below is a summary of the conversation. The full recordings and transcripts are available here: http://upswing.org.uk/about_us/slow-thinking-an-invitation/

CONTRIBUTORS

This session included contributions and provocations from: Donna Close, creative director and cultural strategist; Joumana Mourad, IJAD Dance; Raphael Herault & Summer Hubbard, Double Take Cinematic Circus; and Mark Morreau, cinematographer & digital artist.

KEY THEMES & IDEAS

During Session 1, key themes and ideas emerged:

- The digital experience is 'exhausting but not fulfilling'
- Circus Arts' core identity is about more than just technique
- What do you give and what do you get back on a digital platform?

- Are there different 'rules' to creating digital circus work?

- Being 'forced into something incredibly quickly, has brought extraordinary creativity'.

SUMMARY POINTS

- Circus has always reinvented itself and adapted to the available spaces, from the classic big top to the theatre, festivals and the street. Embracing the digital space should not try to replace or replicate these settings. The digital realm is a new space where we need to establish new rules and parameters.

- At the start of lockdown, there was a rush to get work online, but the sector now feels a need to take stock, observe and redefine our language in this space.

- How do we be faithful to circus in the digital space and retain the feeling of real risk rather than illusion?

- How are Circus skills perceived on video compared to in-person? There was the feeling that on video, skills had to be perfect as so much relies on the visual rather than atmosphere and tension.

- Circus has a unique connection to a live audience, but film has the potential to open up other perspectives to let people in.

- Digital versions can approach the film-making equipment as a new type of Circus apparatus. For example, close ups of minute details of a hand balance; telling 'small stories' of movement; distorting time; or using a viewpoint not possible (or only seen by a select few) in an auditorium.

- A need was identified for emerging Circus artists and choreographers to learn technical skills (such as basic editing) so as they could support and lead the process of making for digital.

- The concerns that graduating students are 'missing out' seem unfounded and instead they see this as opportunity to be 'groundbreaking'.

- There is a clear concern about accessibility in this digital space and hard-to-reach communities who were partaking in in-person activity are no longer joining now that actives take place online.

SHARED RESOURCES

The following were recommended shows/ companies working in this field that came from the discussion:

- German drive through show
https://www.theguardian.com/world/gallery/2020/may/05/social-distance-cinema-drive-in-theatres-boom-coronavirus-in-pictures

- Complicite – The Encounter – streamed performance requiring headphones
http://www.complicite.org/productions/theencounter

- Solo climbs el Capitan without ropes – drama and risk caught on film (even if you know the ending its still exciting to watch)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=96FUPTQeqYI

- Online aerial improvisation conference in Greece run by Angeliki Meli

- Mimbres project #acrobatsstuckathome - this project running on Instagram

- Reg Bolton
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mktl-3IvkiE

- JP and Matilda Leyser (am not sure who JP is)
https://motherswhomake.org/maker-profile-matilda-leyser

Recommended programmes for image and video editing:

- Adobe - https://www.adobe.com

- Power director - https://www.cyberlink.com/products/powerdirector-video-editing-software/features_en_GB.html?affid=2581_-1_286_PDR-B&gclid=EAIaIQobChMIupDk6qeE6gIVQuvtCh3U5gm9EAAYASAAEgIDV_D_BwE&r=1