

Case study

Alexandra Mizzen

Details

What:

Alexandra Mizzen is a dancer and circus artist who undertook a four-week research project to establish a methodology for circus creation using classical dance practices.

Alex collaborated with fellow performers, Chelsea McGuffin, Suzanne Simpson and Louise Deleur, to develop circus creation practices drawing on the modalities of ballet, music and visual arts.

The research project has developed Alex's ability to manage a creative process and enabled her to explore a new direction for her arts practice.

Alex and collaboration partner, Suzanne Simpson, are planning a project with a well-established Australian female singer in a new work that will draw on the outcomes of this research and the stories of strong Australian women.

When:

April 2015

Where:

Alderley, Brisbane



Alex Mizzen. Photo: Hamish McCormick (Carnival Cinema)

Arts Queensland contribution:

\$6,500 – Individuals Fund

Contact for further information:

Website: <http://www.alexmizzen.com>

Links:

<https://vimeo.com/128369954>

Outcomes

- Circus creation practices were developed drawing on different modalities including ballet, music and visual arts.
- Definitions of circus and dance were developed from responses to an online survey.
- Direction, management and collaborative skills with fellow creatives were refined – Alex developed a new working relationship with Louise Deleur (Lucid Dance Company) and strengthened connections with both Sue Simpson and Chelsea McGuffin for future collaborations.
- New skills were acquired in tight wire, partner acrobatics and music (piano, accordion and musical saw).
- Footage from the research will be used to help secure future residencies and funding.



Alex Mizzen. Photo: Hamish McCormick (Carnival Cinema)

Learnings and reflections

Alex made surprising discoveries during the research project:

The intersection where ballet meets circus was evident in the vaudeville acts of old...they were pieces of great charm that you were drawn to as an audience member. It was important to acknowledge the common roots of both circus and vaudeville: as a place of entertainment. At its essence this is circus; pushing reality and entertaining at the same time. I wondered whether the dramaturgy of a show could lead these same acts of 'entertainment' to being viewed very differently and thus pertain more to the inclusive art that I wanted to create – art that engages, inspires and provokes.

This discovery also led me to a second point of surprise: the limiting view I placed on the project. Initially I foresaw this research as only exploring how ballet can influence circus creation. I was wrong. The influence between ballet and circus is not exclusively one way – it was possible to take a quality inherently at the core of circus (pushing the realm of possibility) and infusing it into traditional ballet, thus creating an entirely new experience of circus.

This particular research was about defining creative methods for circus using ballet dance practices. It became clear to me that intention and clarity were paramount and will be key motivators in my future arts practice. Further research will be focused on these creation practices/processes and concepts within an overarching theme. What became apparent during this project, working alongside three brilliant and strong women, is that the future work I create needs to sit squarely in the strength, fragility, intelligence, power and creativity of women – an exciting discovery made towards furthering my mission.