

**J. ASHLEY MOTT**

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## **RESEARCH STATEMENT**

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My artistic research is influenced by my fundamentally egalitarian point-of-view and is deeply rooted in exploration of humanist themes. Therefore, my work focuses on issues of social justice and the fold between individual and universal – or existential and phenomenological – theory and human experience. I am interested in the interplay between our unique, entirely individualized lived body experiences, and our shared tribulations and triumphs, those which transcend geographical, cultural, and social boundaries. My research integrates academic inquiry and study with physical, improvisational, and choreographic investigation, deepening understanding of events and emotions which simultaneously equalize us as humans and also honor all of our incredible individuality and diversity.

My MFA research document and choreography, “. . . *to be continued*” (2018) explored the somatic embodiment of trauma and memory. Through as many hours of academic research and reading as time working in the studio and collaborating with the cast and filmmaker, I was able to delve into a very complex and powerful area of study, which affects every human life. While I have a deep personal connection to this topic, I am also fascinated by the shared ways in which we all experience, live through, and integrate or eradicate - somatically - the traumas we experience in our lives. In previous choreographic and academic research, I explored other humanist themes, such as developing resilience in the face of adversity, finding the courage to defend one’s minority values against a dominant majority voice, and seeking respectful coexistence despite the complex challenges of a multicultural community.

My choreographic investigation is often informed by current events and situations I observe in my environment, whether my classroom, the state, the nation, or the world. For example, “*bifocal*” (2016), showed two points of view on how the past crafts the present, through contrasting choreography and split-focus staging. Another piece, “*impact*” (2013), which premiered in Dance Theatre Coalition’s MircoDance concert, was a piece that explored a bicultural relationship as a micro-representation of the more macro societal trials that arise when diverse populations share dense spaces. In another example, when I was commissioned to choreograph the dance section of Westminster Opera Studio’s production of Philip Glass’ work, “*The Photographer*,” (2015), I was equally interested in representing Edward Muybridge’s professional invention of stop-motion photography as well as the motivations of his controversial personal life. Another work I created, “*Only Light Can Do That*” (2015), was a response to the police shooting and riots in Ferguson, MO the year before. I fundamentally believe dance is a tool and medium that can and should be used to express issues of social justice and human experience.

My research and choreography develop from extensive reading and academic inquiry, thorough exploration and collaboration with other artists, and investigation into personal passions and interests related to universal human experiences and emotions.