

The Politics of Representation in Applied Performance



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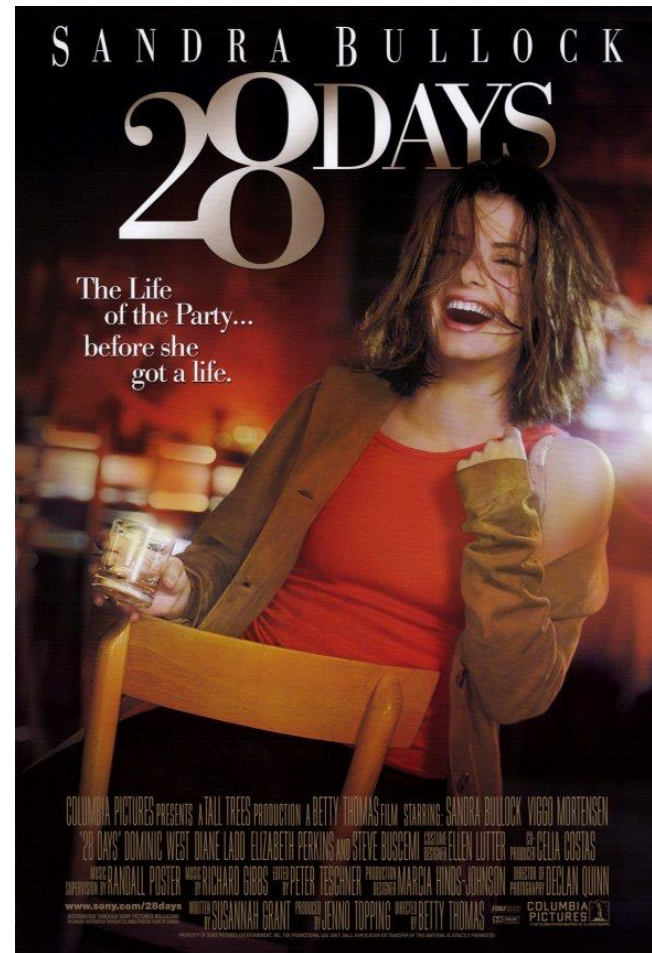
Addiction as a social taboo

As Dehl points out “our shared cultural understandings of addiction are shaped largely by a **metaphor of waste**. Within this metaphor, the addict is identified as ‘[s]omething wasted or destroyed,’ as ‘refuse matter” (2015:15)

- War on Drugs 1971
- Drug policies that criminalise/marginalise
- Biomedical model of addiction

Representations of addiction recovery

- Those representations “depict a stock experience of treatment that is surprisingly univocal, as well as *unrealistic* when compared with the availability and realities of real-life programs” (Hersey 2005, p.467, my emphasis)
- White, middle class people
- Recovery as an ‘overnight’ process



Challenges for artists

- Expose vulnerability
- Recreate stereotypes
- 'authenticity'
- Stage stigma
- Advocacy
- Promote social inclusion

- Attentiveness and responsiveness
- Collaborative, collective and co-creating (joint authorship) whose stories? The tension that underline these tendencies
- Move beyond the dominant narratives
- Ethical and aesthetical sensitivities



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- How can we create performances that accommodate the complexities of addiction recovery and in turn recognise our participants' experience as unique and valuable?



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Art is Relational

- Re-assess how we talk and create art about addiction and recovery.
- Art allow us to apprehend the dimensional, relational and embodied experiences of addiction recovery.
- Art Invites a conversation that is not closed but rather willfully attends to understand the complexity of human experience.



- ‘Critical vulnerabilities’ in performing arts (...) examine how the core characteristics of **openness, uncertainty, and varying degrees of exposure** contribute to an aesthetic paradigm where risk is deployed as an intentional tactic, **a strategy of engagement**, or a critical tool for the shared making of meaning’ (O’Grady 2017: xi)

Aesthetics of Change

- Movement as Narrative
- 'Non nameable' can be presented
- provocative cultural alternative that challenges the social and cultural stereotypes of both addiction recovery and live performance.



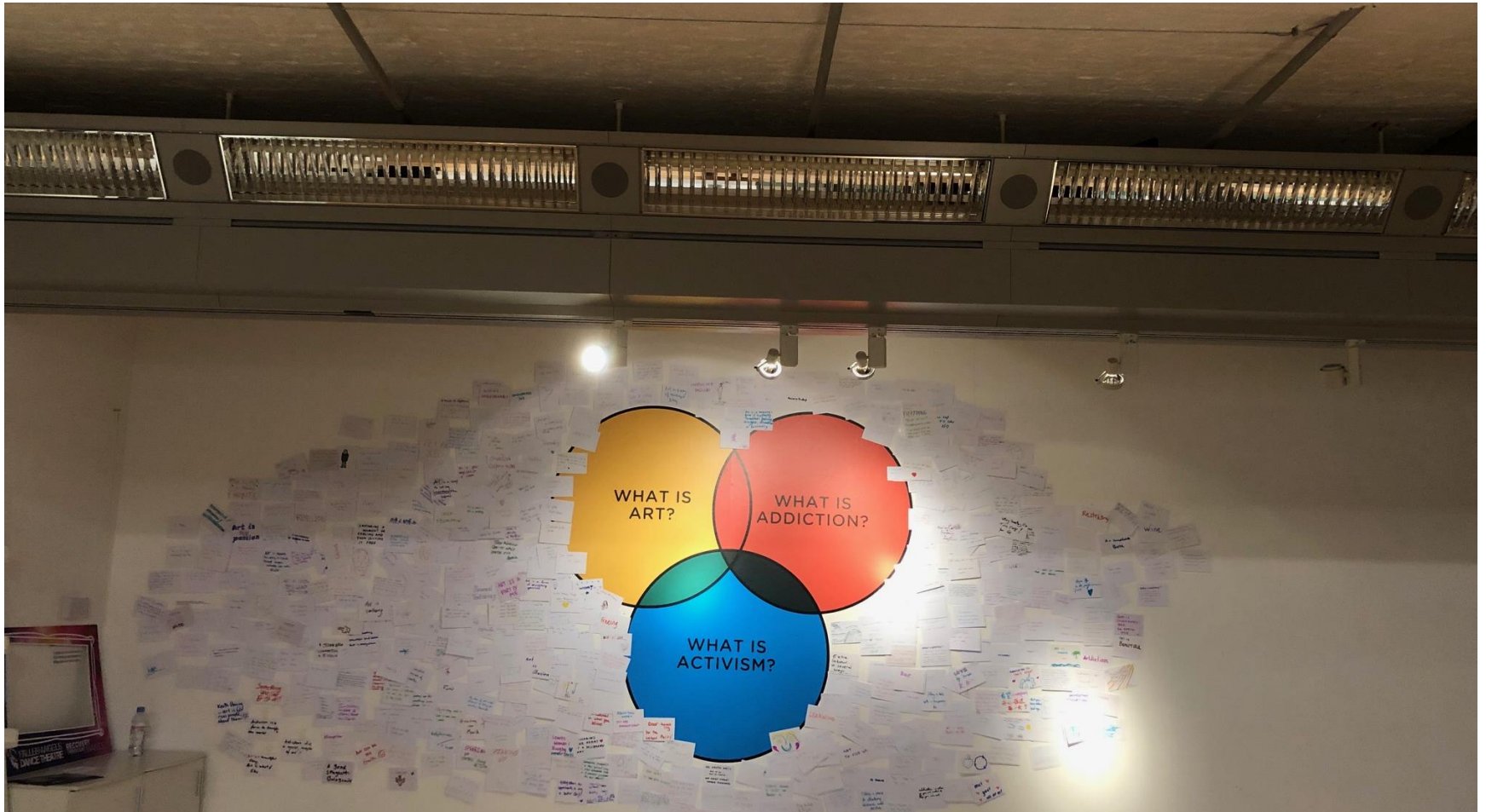
The power of vulnerability

The vulnerability of the performing body is in a precarious position inbetween and betwixt the two cultures, the culture of addiction and the culture of recovery.

This moment of flux or in-betweenness is manifested through their shared sense of vulnerability and a recognition that their bodies matter, are not “wasted”, “destroyed” or a “refused matter” (Dehl 2015:15).



Audience engagement



Thank you!