

Workshop 1 Report

Workshop 1, March 19, 2021.

1.0 Workshop setup:

The workshop took place in a dance studio room. Participants were a mixture of dance undergraduates, postgraduates, and engineering undergraduates. There were three stations which participants rotated through. The VR technologies explored were Beat Saber (Demo), Google Tiltbrush, 360 video and Oh Shape.

Google Tiltbrush was chosen as we hypothesised that the trails created through movement could be compelling in a dance context. It was also very open ended, providing multiple tools that users could choose to create with.

Beat Saber was used as it is a free, popular game that requires the player to be highly aware of the virtual environment (e.g. shapes moving towards you) to score.

Oh Shape requires body awareness as the player must move their body to fit into oncoming barriers. It also includes a very basic avatar representation in the form of a shadow projection.

Tiltbrush was run on both the HTC vive and the oculus quest, Oh Shape was run using the HTC vive and all other technologies were run on the Oculus Quest. Participants had access to pieces of fabric to incorporate into the activities.

2.0 Event Structure:

Participants rotated between stations facilitated by the project team who encouraged ongoing conversation and recorded the discussions.

After participants had tried the various stations, the group reconvened to do a somatic awareness exercise led by Becca.

Participants were then split into groups and challenged to use a technology of their choice to create a short (30 second - 1 minute) long performance/art piece. These groups included a mixture of dancer and non-dancer participants.

Finally, the group reconvened for an open discussion about the workshop.

3.0 Results

3.1 First rotation through technologies

Participants showed a clear interest and preference for using Google Tiltbrush in a dance context than the other technologies. Participants noted that feeling grounded by the stationary trails left behind in tilt brush helped them to orient. One participant noted the strong sense of being in two worlds, as he was very aware of our disembodied voices as we conversed with him while using Tiltbrush. He described this sensation as reassuring rather than irritating, but did not feel entirely immersed in the virtual environment because of this external stimulus.

A dancer using tilt brush also noted that they wanted the ability to trace with both hands, as they felt their focus was just on the one hand rather than the body in general. One dancer found himself filling in a volume of virtual space, overlapping again and again with the brush until the area was very densely filled with the traces. He expressed he found it fun and interesting to cover the whole area.

Dancers using Beat Saber reported a lot of awareness of the upper body and arms, but not much elsewhere. One dancer commented that he felt like he was taking up more space in the virtual world than the physical world. This could perhaps be an effect of being hyper-aware of bumping into objects/people in the real world.

3.2 Short Performances

One group used Tiltbrush to create a scene/landscape of prompts/words that a dancer would move through and be informed by as they moved in the virtual and physical space.

The second group situated one engineer in Tiltbrush with a headset who would create a drawing in VR. A dancer would then follow the movement of the drawer and interpret this into a dance performance, holding a piece of fabric that moved to mimic the virtual trail.