Imago Score: Collaborative Research in Creative Process

The Imago Score is an educational research project designed by IU Artist/Teachers: Rowland Ricketts, Assistant Professor in Textiles, Henry Radford Hope School of Fine Arts, Primary Investigator, Selene Carter, Visiting Lecturer in Contemporary Dance, Department of Kinesiology, Amy Burrell, Graduate Student in Textiles

Imago: An insect in its final adult, winged state (larva, nymph, pupa): an idealized mental image of any person, including the self.

Abstract
Musicians use scores to orchestrate and arrange their compositions for performance. Choreographers and performers create and follow scores as well. In a score, general guidelines are followed, yet dynamic choices may be made by the individuals following the score for any given project or performance. The Imago Score is a collaborative performance project designed for a group. It asks the participants to invest in and research each phase of the creative process. In this way the work is about the metamorphosis and development implied in its title (from a pupa to an adult). Often performing artists like dancers, or musicians are merely cogs in a bigger machine that is driven by the vision of one director. Our goal is to shift the generation and guidance of this vision to the individual participants/artists that comprise the group through empowering them in the creative process. The Imago Score asks participant/artists to embody and explore ideas of transformation. We use the word artist over performer because performer places too much emphasis on the final performance as though it is the end goal. In the Imago Score overall goal is transformation throughout the entire experience, and not just in the final performance.

Research Question
With the Imago Score we are researching how engaging in the creative process collaboratively empowers students to engage in learning that is transformational to their way of thinking and operating in learning situations, instead of being solely goal or grade oriented. Ultimately their research into the creative process by their undertaking of following the score collectively is our research. How does their mutual engagement in the creative process transform their ability to acquire knowledge, think critically and solve problems? The Imago Score facilitates the participant/artist’s awareness of the creative process, their understanding of how it works, and their investment in it through a specific set of practices and guidelines. At stages throughout the score the participants/artists are asked to perform certain tasks, activities, and exercises that shape the development of the work. As the group works through the score these experiences empower their artistic development and inform their choices. The decisions they are asked to make define the work for performance.

Contexts and Implications for Interaction & Scholarship
We situate the Imago Score in the context of teaching and learning in terms of how it shifts the paradigm from product focus to an integrative learning process devoted to engagement and transformation at each phase of development. The Imago Score is not limited to any one discipline and is designed to be undertaken by any group willing to engage with it fully to completion. Though dance and visual art are implicit, the participant/artists may be comprised of anyone willing to engage in the process. Prior movement, performance or art experience is not necessary. A group that includes a mix of students or individuals from varying backgrounds, yet with a common interest to undergo a process that brings them collectively to new ground is ideal. Potential groups could be students committed to sustainability and perma-culture practices, scientists, dancers, visual artists, actors, students in Arts Administration or Business, students in Education, SPEA, Communication and Culture, Journalism, etc. The Imago Score is designed to model and engage the creative process, and may include anyone willing to be an active member. Teachers themselves are also ideal members for this process.

Components of Student Engagement
Within the Imago Score there are specific ideas at play that engage personal and collaborative experimentation, self-reflection, problem solving and decision making. What follows is an outline of the key factors of student engagement embedded in the score that enlist the participant/artist creative process research:
1. **Interaction of two disciplines**: The *Imago Score* is a collaboration between visual art and dance. The visual art component involves design, and craft. The dance component is in the genre of post-modern dance and improvisation.

2. **Location**: The research process asks primary questions about *place*. The group is asked to identify and visit a site that is loaded with meaning and intentionally selected to reflect the community, the region, and the history and/or tension of the place where the work is being made and performed.

3. **Performance site**: The group is asked where they will perform the final product and why? It could be a proscenium theatre, a gallery space, a public atrium, etc. The site will determine audience, choreography, design and visual installation capabilities.

4. **Object**: The group is asked to gather multiples of a found object from the locations that are chosen within certain parameters. This object creates the visual field of the piece, and is manipulated by the participant/artists.

5. **Felting process of object**: The technique of felting involves encasing the object in wool through a process of mapping, molding, matting and shrinking the wool around the object. The felt encases the object and creates a protective case or shell. This essential step is both a microcosmic metaphor and real measure in altering the object and its use and meaning to the process of the larger piece. How does the felting create protection, incubation, gestation, camouflage? The felting of the object involves metamorphoses and emergence in the experience of the artist/participant, and in the object itself.

6. **Movement research**: Throughout the process movement exploration will be guided that is often reflective of the various stages of the group; the location the performance site, the gathering, the object, and the felting are all primarily experienced through the body. The participant/artists are asked to reflect on these processes and create simple movement sequences that embody and express their experience. These movement phrases are then formed into a larger pattern intrinsic to the relationship between group members and their manipulation and design of the felted object in the performance site.

7. **Writing**: The primary mode for self-reflection and generation of material among the group will be timed writing based on the processes the group is led through collectively. The writing is shared, gleaned from and used in shaping the course of the process and the final performance. The writing also directly documents the process in a way that does not hierarchically evaluate or prefer specific examples from various members, yet allows for each participant to equally record, voice and document their impressions in a democratic way. The result is a unified yet personally varied source of ideas and images to draw from collectively in the creative process.

8. **Roles**: At each group meeting participant/artists will be asked to take on different roles within the group to facilitate the process; the documenter records and observes the work sessions, the facilitator leads the writing, movement or decision making within the work sessions. The switching of roles allows for each member to share in the potent responsibility of editing and developing the work.

9. **Performance**: There is a transformative occurrence during performance that the group must engage in. The score is designed to value and reflect the process, yet without the performance the work will not be complete. Performance is where finally the metamorphoses is complete and the cycle undertaken at the group’s first meeting is allowed to alight and become utterly what it is.

**Advancement of Literature on Teaching and Learning**

We propose to investigate how the *Imago Score* advances the literature on teaching and learning by situating our research in context with studies on engaging creativity, and experiential and active learning utilizing both qualitative and quantitative research methods:

**Research Methods**

We are using mixed methods of information acquisition involving a demographic survey, a pre and post survey and focus groups about each of the nine Components of Student Engagement listed above that are embedded in the score. We plan to analyze quantitative data relevant to the demographics of the artist/participants. We want to know about their prior understanding, assumptions about and willingness to engage in the creative process. We want to know how their attitudes have changed about engaging in the creative process. We want to know if their participation in the Imago Score has transformed their understanding of and ability to engage in any learning situation as a creative process. We want to know if their values about collaboration, problem solving, self-reflection, critical thinking and decision making have changed as a result of their involvement in the Imago Score. We believe that the mixed method of pre and post surveys and focus groups will yield both the qualitative and quantitative data we want to analyze. The focus groups will be led by a third party investigator, ideally a team member from the IU SOTL Program. The focus groups will be taped and transcribed and the qualitative research will focus on iterative coding to organize findings and will employ heuristic analyses of the data. Additionally we plan to video tape the final performance so that the product may be disseminated to a wider audience. We also plan to survey audience members who attend the performance about their responses to the piece. We want to know if they can discern a process based piece vs. a product or goal oriented project. Our query of the audience involves questions of metamorphosis as well. How do process based projects enlist engagement from the audience that encourage personal, self-reflective responses? Audience responses to alternative, contemporary art performances or installations usually illicit, ‘What was it supposed to mean?’ from spectators. Does the personal engagement of the artists/participants mutually engage the audience in more open-ended, creative ways that lead to meaningful and empowered self engagement?

**Preliminary Results, anticipated results, and overall expectations**

The pilot model for this project was our collaboration in creating a dance performed by students in the IU Contemporary Dance Program. Our process occurred over the 2009-2010 academic year. As we worked together out interactions yielded transformations in our own understanding of our creative work, our teaching and how desire to garner student investment in to creative process. Here is a statement from a student who participated in the creation of the first Imago project performed in January 2010 on the IUB campus,

> Working on Imago was a broadening experience for me. Being a dancer I am used to working with choreographers that come in, tell me where to stand, and give me a specific movement on a specific count. Rarely do the dancers have a chance to be so much a part of an artistic process like this. It started with us exploring movements, Selene guided and directed us so we could learn and explore. Sometimes, this can be confusing and unclear, but as time progressed, this process starts to reveal more than a dance. I felt extremely accomplished as I was able to perform a piece I was so involved in. Working with Amy and Rowland was an amazing experience. To hear from many different perspectives, I believe this allowed for each audience member to perceive something different about the piece. Felting the rocks was also an incredible experience. It is hard to understand how meaningful it is until you participate. The work that went behind felting the rocks is what made it so worthwhile and the process is truly amazing how the pieces of lamb’s wool are able to shrink and form to every crevice of every rock. This process would be a great experience for dancers and non dancers alike to work together to create something meaningful to them to share with others.

We anticipate and expect that facilitation of the Imago Score will yield dynamic, transformative experiences for students and educators into the understanding and practice of the creative process as a research method to follow in any discipline explored in undergraduate and graduate education. We predict that data collected and research analyzed will demonstrate the efficacy of investing in experiential, process based arts collaborations in higher education

**The Impact of the Imago Score on undergraduate or graduate teaching and learning**

Our goal is to use the research to support learning communities to engage in doing the Imago Score. We envision a project website where educators can resource the Imago Score to follow in their educational settings in order to foreground and support integrative and collaborative, experiential learning. This website would include research
findings and the score itself. Over time a collection of several projects would be catalogued to demonstrate the different metamorphoses of the project in various settings, and their impact on process based learning. The Imago Score would serve as an international model for creative process engagement in undergraduate or graduate teaching and learning communities.

The Contribution to the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Program at IUB
We plan to present our research in the SOTL Events Series and to offer experiences in the creative process from the score itself in order to offer a direct experience in creative process and collaboration to the SOTL members. Our research, though discipline based, is situated in the mega-discipline of the Humanities and offers practical experience in methods that are applicable across a wide range of pedagogical disciplines. The performance will be marketed and situated in the context of teaching and learning so that awareness and understanding of process based learning will be fore grounded in press and media efforts.

Milestones, Timelines & Dissemination

- March 2010-Sept 2010: Imago Score artists continue meeting, drafting and refining the score and factors of student engagement,
- Fall Semester 2010: Imago Score is piloted in Art for Non Majors course, potential number of students, 45; data is collected via surveys and focus groups,
- Spring Semester 2011: Imago Score is repeated in Foundations of Modern Dance course, potential number of students, 30, data is collected via surveys and focus groups.
- April/May 2011 data is analyzed and presented to IUB SOTL community
- May-October 2011 Collaborative Article is written and submitted for publication in following journals:
  - Journal for the Society of Teaching and Learning
  - Creativity Research Journal
  - Journal of Dance Education
  - Journal of Creative Behavior

And for presentation at Educational Conferences:
  - The National Dance Education Conference, 2011

Budget

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Supporting Documents

- Photographs of Imago performed January 16, 2010, IU Dance Theatre
- Photographs of IU Contemporary Dance Program students felting stones in the Textile Studio, IU SOFA, February 2010