

CPSG 100, 200

**On-Campus Field Trip: World-Premier of *SUPERCELL* by slowdanger, Kogod Theater, The Clarice
September 21, 2023**

REMEMBER: You create a web page answering these questions, upload it and link it to your ePortfolio, and post the URL of this assignment on ELMS. Make sure you COMPLETELY answer the questions.

As with all Excursion Reports, make sure to list the event, when it happened, and where it took place.

MEET TBA. We will be joining students from three other Scholars programs (Arts, ETE, GPH). There is no entry fee. Make sure you have the ability to take notes.

Background: "Making its world premiere at The Clarice, *SUPERCELL* is an evening-length dance work with a multidisciplinary angle responding to climate change, media sensationalism, desensitization and environmental collapse. The title refers to the large storms of deep, persistent updrafts often resulting in many tornadoes. While supercells are terrifying and ominous harbingers of great damage, they are simultaneously breathtaking environmental events when witnessed from afar. The effect is similar to sensationalist media, instantly amplifying catastrophic events for an insatiable public's consumption. Throughout their creation process, slowdanger consulted with scientists, educators, climate activists, anthropologists, sociologists, sustainable design experts and dramaturgical advisor.

"A Pittsburgh-based, multidisciplinary performance ensemble, slowdanger was founded in 2013 by co-artistic directors Taylor Knight and Anna Thompson. The queer non-binary-led organization uses a systematic approach to movement, integrative technology, found material, electronic instrumentation, vocalization, physiological centering and ontological examination to produce their hypnotic performance work. "Anna Thompson and Taylor Knight are always up to something cool," raves the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.

"There will be a post-show Q&A with the artists following the Thursday, September 21 performance."

You will be required to stay for (and if possible participate in) the Q&A session.

Answer the following questions:

1. Performance art multimedia performances like this one are a radically different approach to conveying the issues and concerns of global climate change compared to more traditional science or news media venues. What do you think about this performance? In what way was its messaging helpful compared to traditional approaches? In what ways might it be less helpful?

In my honest opinion, it's not as helpful to the untrained listener. I've had limited experience with artist performances like this and I could pick up a few messages but it was ones I formed from knowledge I already had. It almost felt like a language barrier, there were definitely parts that I just didn't understand how it was related to climate change. There was one scene of two of the performers fighting and screaming "Post this", I could understand that oh we as a society pay more mind to unimportant issues over climate change but I only understood that as of writing it down. This sort of media requires a lot of reflection which a wide audience isn't willing to do. What it was helpful in was adding a human touch to disasters, there were storm stories about great catastrophic events that could occur if nothing is done about climate change.

Also having mentioned issues of consumerism through a snippet about refined/unrefined coconut oil and reusable condoms.

2. How did you feel about this piece? Did it affect you in any way? Did it seem to affect others in the audience? What were your observations?

I felt confused coming out of the Clarence but later on as I reflected I enjoyed it. It was a fresh, but grim take on take on climate change, different from statistics and charts. I don't believe it affected in any way in my thoughts on climate change but it did on my attitude. As a STEM major, I wasn't particularly inclined to an artsy performance but I really did enjoy it. Yeah, the information is not gonna be spoon-fed to me or I can't figure it out through further research but I only understood it after some self-reflection. I spoke to others from CPSG and they shared how besides some obvious observations the show was confusing walking back to Cambridge.

3. Was there anything in this performance which you felt was factually incorrect or that might otherwise impair or otherwise hinder the understanding of or response to global climate change? If so, what was it?

I didn't pick up on any factually incorrect information, most was subject or basic facts that most people know in regards to climate change. Something that could impair the understanding of the audience when the performers were portraying the message is getting confused. To me, as well as the friend I went with, found the outro of performers mimicking water to be drawn out and pointless. What does it add to the conversation? Water? Also, I didn't fully get the reusable condom skit. I understand because it was in the context of coconut oil so it should be something about communism just like the coconut oil. The performer brought it as the character being allergic to regular condoms, therefore having to use reusable ones. There was also the fighting and then dancing part I spoke about, "post this". It was definitely interesting but confusing.

4. How broad an audience do you think this work would appeal to, and why?

I don't think this work would appeal to a broad audience, for one it's an art piece about a scientific issue. The information isn't gonna be directly shown but it has to be understood or implicitly derived so younger audiences won't get it the performance has loud sounds, disturbing lights, and internet topics so I wouldn't recommend it to an older audience. Apart from age restrictions, the performance has topics that might be politically controversial. Not only are there people who don't believe in climate change but there are segments on consumerism. Who would this appeal to? Probably college students, according to a study conducted at Yale University, 52% of students greatly care about climate change and its effects. Not only that, I believe college students as a whole have critical thinking skills because that is needed to get into most majors. Apart from students, any enjoyer of arts. The performance was "very artsy", even if they don't fully understand the message, the visuals will be appreciated. In my opinion, the visuals were fascinating and beautiful so I would recommend it on that principle.

5. During the Q&A, did you hear anything from the creators or the audience that made you rethink the performance? If so, what was it?

During the Q&A, all spoke a bit about how a lot of what they do is improv. basically saying none of the shows are exactly the same. Which I thought was cool. In the beginning, some group in the front of the audience was giggling a bit because the introduction act was that performer on the stairs mumbling and hunched over, making it awkward in a normal context. The performer later got closer to them and started saying loudly "Are you laughing at me". It woke up anyone in the audience who wasn't already paying attention. Also, Anna Thompson said how the group got very close over time so the intimate scenes of fighting or duo dancing were natural at that point. When I was watching I got an internal cringe feeling because I wouldn't want anyone that close to me, but they are comfortable with each other so they did anything to enhance the performance.