

Introduction: Create, Perform, Teach!

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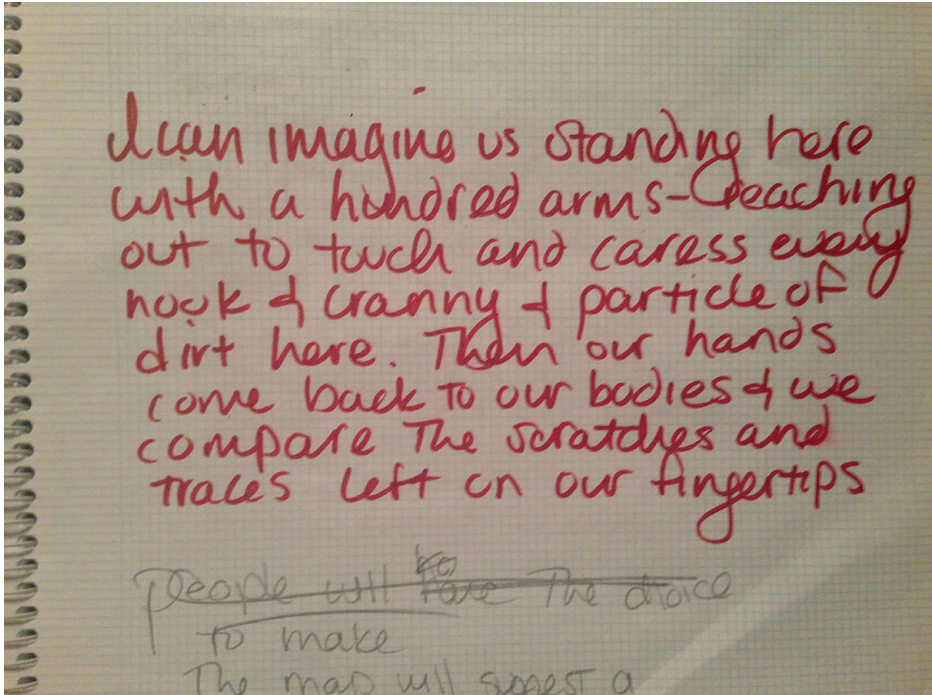


Figure 1. Image from Rifenburg and Allgood "The Woven Body" (2015) (courtesy of Lindsey Allgood).

On December 28, 2015 we launched our Special Issue of *Across the Disciplines* (ATD), "Create, Perform, Write: WAC, WID, and the Performing and Visual Arts." With the click of a hyperlink, readers/viewers were on their way to exploring connections between teaching, learning, writing, designing, choreographing, dancing, singing, directing, acting, drawing, and on and on . . . But our story, while compelling, was left very much unfinished. There were just too many creative avenues we left too lightly treaded. So, we'd like to go on and on . . . For this companion collection, *Writing in and about the Performing and Visual Arts: Creating, Performing, and Teaching*, we've gathered together some of our old friends from the Special Issue, as well as inviting many more fresh faces to the creative party.

Two of the several friends we invited for a redux, Michael Rifenburg and

Lindsey Allgood, included the above word-illustration in their original (2015) Special Issue article “The Woven Body.” The authors begin to scratch at the surface of the word-and-image-experience depth we continue engaging readers with, especially when you consider the “here with a hundred arms —reaching out to touch and caress” they visually and audibly tantalize us with in their original piece.



Figure 2. “Triple-Exposure, Moonstone Beach,” Mckinleyville, CA (photo by Anicca Cox)

This collection amplifies and extends several lines of inquiry we began in our Special Issue, including:

- What does it mean to experience, analyze, synthesize, interpret and deliver information in writing in and about the performing and visual arts?
- How have process, creativity, and other writing and pedagogical theories and practices affected how students—in secondary and postsecondary

settings—write, and how teachers coach students to write, in and about the performing and visual arts?

- What theories of learning and performance influence the teaching and learning of writing in and about the performing and visual arts?
- And how has technology influenced the teaching and learning of writing—in secondary and post-secondary settings—in and about the performing and visual arts, including multimodal composition and online arenas?

While staying true to the aesthetic depth of multimedia performance-meditations like Jody Steel's (2016) *Body Image* and sumptuous image/text experiences like Claudia Rankine's (2014) *Citizen: An American Lyric*, we also amp-up explicit treatment of important pedagogical theories, methods, and experiences we began in the Special Issue. Contributors discuss their views of assessment considerations—like the self-assessment implications of the artist statement and ePortfolio, and the group- and peer-assessment methods practiced in the arts of performance and communication for thousands of years. Contributors also draw more vibrant connections to creating, performing, and teaching in high school settings. In their article for the (2012) Special Issue of *ATD* "Writing Across the Secondary School Curriculum," Kelly Hrenko and Andrea Stairs demonstrate how integrating art, culture, and writing is by no means the sole province of post-secondary settings. So many of the same visual, auditory, oral, and written theories, practices, and performance-attitudes saturate the creative experiences of students and teachers (and students-as-teachers) at all levels.

Our Intentions for this Collection

This collection is intended for teachers and researchers of writing in and across the disciplines, in both secondary and post-secondary settings, and for those outside of writing studies who wish to infuse more writing into their performing and visual arts curriculums and courses. It complements ways of knowing and doing, performed in the Special Issue, for writing studies professionals. It also offers teachers in the performing and visual arts go-to practical designs and strategies for teaching writing in their fields.

Composition and Rhetoric scholars are increasingly doing their part to study and report on connections between creativity, performance, writing, the visual, and teaching (e.g., *Kairos*; *Computers and Composition Digital Press*; *ARTiculating: Teaching Writing in a Visual World*, 1998/2013; Fishman, Lunsford, McGregor, & Otuteye, 2005; Hrenko & Stairs, 2012). Childers, Hobson, and Mullin's collection *ARTiculating* (1998/2013) as well as essays like Kathleen Blake Yancey's "Made

Not Only in Words” (2004) have made us consider questions like “What do our references to writing mean? Do they mean print only?” (p. 298). The move in the recently updated WPA Outcomes for First-Year Composition (2014) to disperse what was the fifth category—writing in digital environments—into the other four categories is a promising sign of our field’s embracing of more than words in communicative performances. It is a sign that, as an inherently interdisciplinary field, we are realizing what Fishman et al. (2005) call for in terms of the larger goal of the “importance of performance and writing” in order “to describe in detail the writing that students are doing and to use that information to question and perhaps to reconceive our understanding of the definition, future, and scope of writing in the twenty-first century” (p. 247). If we further embrace the work of pre-college colleagues like Hrenko and Stairs (2012), and artist-educators like Jacques d’Amboise—dancer, choreographer, and founder of the National Dance Institute (a non-profit organization that coordinates free dance programs for inner-city youth)—we can expand the pedagogical import of the communication/performance connection even further.

Yet peruse any given print writing studies collection—whether WAC, WID, CAC, writing center, or composition—for scholarship on writing in the visual and *especially* the performing arts and you will see/hear/feel a relative dearth. Kathryn Perry’s webtext “The Movement of Composition: Dance and Writing” (2012), suggests both the promise and complexity of learning to communicate with more than words. In her “multimodal attempt to capture and compare both the physical and conceptual movement involved in dance and writing,” readers are offered an intriguing reversal of roles as Perry’s text foregrounds the visual, aural, and kinesthetic—while the textual plays a more modest supporting role. The performing and visual arts have much to offer writing studies in terms of process, creativity, design, delivery, and habits of mind (and body). This collection expands on the concepts and ideas from the Special Issue, especially in terms of writing pedagogy, assessment, and secondary-school connections in the performing and visual arts.

Before moving into the chapters, we, your editors, would like to share why we are so involved in this project. Steven Corbett was warmly welcomed into the domain of research and writing in the performing and visual arts through his partnership with dancer/scholar (and fellow co-editor) Betsy Cooper and her program starting around 2002 (see Corbett, this volume, for details). Since then, curiosity and an appreciation for everything the worlds of acting, dancing, performing, designing, visualizing and vision-questing can offer writers and teachers of writing accompany every creative move he makes and imagines. Jennifer LeMesurier is invested in research that bridges interdisciplinary gaps between performance and writing (see LeMesurier, 2016). The scholarship on bodies, affect, and sensation is a rapidly growing, rich subfield of rhetoric and composition. As more teachers and researchers grapple with how bodies and performance affect their work, she hopes

that these essays will offer starting points for abundant exploration. Many years of working in writing centers has attuned Teagan Decker to the genres of writing valued by various disciplines, including the visual and performing arts. As a teacher of composition, she welcomes the cross-pollination that comes from encountering faculty and students who are writing and researching in the arts because it strengthens her own teaching and ways in which she prepares all students for a multiplicity of possible writing situations. Together, we hope this collection will invigorate, reaffirm, and inspire long-time—as well as fairly fresh—teachers and learners of writing in and about the performing and visual arts.

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