

## **Research Statement**

*Ballads of Perceptive Fallacies highlights the consequences of perceptions through a narrative of black women revealing their true self.*

## **Project Statement**

*Ballads of Perceptive Fallacies* depicts a narrative surrounding the idea of letting go of perceptions or expectations that have been placed upon you. This work is grounded in the idea of vilifying stereotypes surrounding black women and it is because of this that the inclusion of black women and black artists in the process was indispensable. As the work continued to evolve, the symbolism of the work shifted, or expanded rather, into a narrative surrounding black queerness. The three sections of this narrative depict the experience of recognizing/finding one's queerness, coming out, and living in one's queerness despite others' opinions. The first section "Becoming An Image" is centered around the idea of aligning with the stereotypes or perceptions that have been placed because of one's black queer womanhood. The second section, "The Conversation, The Climax" depicts a moment of friction or passionate release through this conversation that needed to occur. It is during this conversation that one's true self is revealed and stands vulnerable waiting for a response. The third and final section, "A Re-Introduction" asks the audience, who stands as the person responsible for placing these perceptions, if they still love the person in front of them after showing the rawest, most true self?

The process of creating this work was very collaborative and is at its center really driven by the cast. This work and this process required flexible and versatile dancers that were really dependable and luckily the cast fit the work perfectly. From the beginning it was the work was meant to be multidisciplinary and include many different styles which was reflected in the work itself but also the cast involved. Originally, the plan was to start from the beginning and work through the thesis in the order of the narrative, starting from the "Becoming An Image" and ending with "A Re-Introduction," but after re-centering and acknowledging what the work was about, naturally the piece started with the Climax and expanded from there. The process of starting with the section all together that grounds the entire work was important and was effective in creating unison between the cast. From using the amalgamation of phrase work, solos created by the cast, as well as my own composition and movement, the piece was created.

This process has ignited a passion for choreography as well as a desire to explore more within this work. From this work, I have learned how important language and sources are within making work. Before, I had underestimated the difficulty of explaining how I want movement to be portrayed and the influence of discussions in a process. Because of this work, I have a heightened appreciation for choreographers and previous work I have been apart of as well as a better understanding of how I would like my processes to be held in the future.

## **Anchoring Resources**

**Put Your Hands Where My Eyes Can See:** *Put Your Hands Where My Eyes Can See* by Busta Rhymes was released in August of 1997 and stands as the opening of my thesis, *Ballads of Perceptive Fallacies*. Not only does the time period this song was released reflect many ideas surrounding my thesis, but also the lyrics itself discuss important ideas that in combination with my movement will ignite necessary conversations surrounding black women.

Along with the release of *Put Your Hands Where My Eyes Can See*, the year of 1997 also birthed the Million Woman March. This march, taking place on October 25th, was a day-long event, organized by Phile Chionesu and Asia Coney. The march consisted of prayer, music, and speeches all grounded in the idea of inspiring black women as well as highlighting the ways in which black women are negatively presented in pop culture and the media. Although the Million Woman March took place after *Put Your Hands Where My Eyes Can See*'s release, both are anchored and inspired by paralleling ideas. The lyrics, for me, reflect how black people are perceived negatively in society while also being admired and appropriated for aesthetic purposes. This especially clear in lyrics such as, "*If you really wanna party with me, In God We Trust, Yo it's a must that you heard of us yo we murderous.*" I am also thinking of the title when using *Put Your Hands Where My Eyes Can See*. I am thinking of how our citations and perceptions can blind us from view people as they actually are. The hands kind of represent previous judgements that are created to keep us safe. This self preservation of our most vulnerable selves also contributes to us maybe not letting people in and really seeing people.

**Ex-Factor:** *Ex-Factor* by Lauryn Hill, released in 1998 is the most grounding and important song in my thesis and stands as the climax of the work. In *Ex-Factor*, Lauryn Hill is having this confrontational, intense conversation with someone she is in a relationship with. She is passionately asking for support and for this person to listen to her during this difficult time. This conversation in this song is paralleled with the conversation the dancers are having with the person that placed these labels upon them. This climax has been bubbling and brewing throughout the beginning of this piece and is then given to the audience. In this song, Lauryn Hill jumps between desperately trying to ask for the care and support she wasn't receiving while expressing her anger for that person not giving her that respect and support before. All of these ideas Lauryn Hill is conveying are representations of my thesis. The pairing of Lauryn Hill's words with my thesis is something that grounds the work so heavily and is actually where I started in this process.

**Wild is the Wind:** *Wild is the Wind* sung by Nina Simone in 1959, was originally written by Dimitri Tiomkin and Ned Washington for the film *Wild is the Wind*. Nina Simone's performance of *Wild is the Wind* as well as the film the song was created is important to the themes of *Ballads of Perceptive Fallacies*. *Wild is the Wind* is one of the first examples of black women being shown as the mammy stereotype in the media. This stereotype is grounded in the idea that black women's existence is based solely on helping white people. Nina Simone's reclaiming of this song and making it more popular is a theme throughout this work. Reclaiming is something the dancers embody in this work and through the use of Nina Simone's version of *Wild is the Wind*, hopefully this idea is more clear. Throughout *Wild is the Wind*, Nina Simone is basically singing about her first love and how genuine, deep, and wild that love truly is. The inclusion of this song in *Ballads of Perceptive Fallacies* is grounded in the idea of putting yourself first in a relationship. Despite Nina Simone's song being about romantic love, it is being used to represent all love in this thesis. Having a confrontational conversation about identity with a parent, partner, or friend is something that is really courageous and a difficult conversation to have. *Wild is the Wind* instrumental slowly coming in after this intense confrontation in this work, is representing the voices in the back of their head saying, "I love

this person and maybe I should just become what they want me to be.” At the end, they eventually fight those voices in silence but the residue of this powerful song still lies.

**Footnotes (Books and Papers Scattered About the Floor):** Katherine McKittrick offers this idea of citations having equal or even more value than the body or the thought itself. In her work *Footnotes (Books and Papers Scattered About the Floor)* on a lot of the pages, the footnotes, or citations, take up more space than the text. This idea of footnotes taking up so much space is revolutionary and is more necessary. I have been thinking about the way in which people state their thoughts. Without them explaining their own citations that led them to their beliefs or without the listener's acknowledgment of the speaker's citations, things are so easily misconstrued. How can we include explanations or citations along with our thoughts? How can we create space for people to share their own citations? Do we always need to share our citations? This makes me reconsider the relationship between other people's citations and my own. It creates so many questions about changing or perhaps replacing previous citations and the negotiation between trusting our own citations as well as allowing space for new ones. How can we recognize and respect others' citations while confidently standing on our own? How does this relate to this idea of perception?

**Someone in Someone Else's Gaze:** I made this project, a while ago, in a completely different class. It kind of discusses the way in which we perceive women as well as the way we perceive black women. It really focused on this word gaze and the way one person's gaze (specifically the white male gaze) can completely change the way an entire identity is viewed.

**Kitchen Table Series:** Carrie Mae Weems' *Kitchen Table Series*, is a series of photographs that depicts the lives of black women in their homes. The work highlights the duality between finding one's identity as a black women and being in a “traditional” house [Carrie Mae Weems on Kitchen Table Series: 'Not Simply a Voice for African American Women, but More Generally for Women' - Culture Type](#)