

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

# Dancing from the Inside Out

Using design thinking to explore  
the intersections of street dance,  
social media, and self-identity  
in Aotearoa

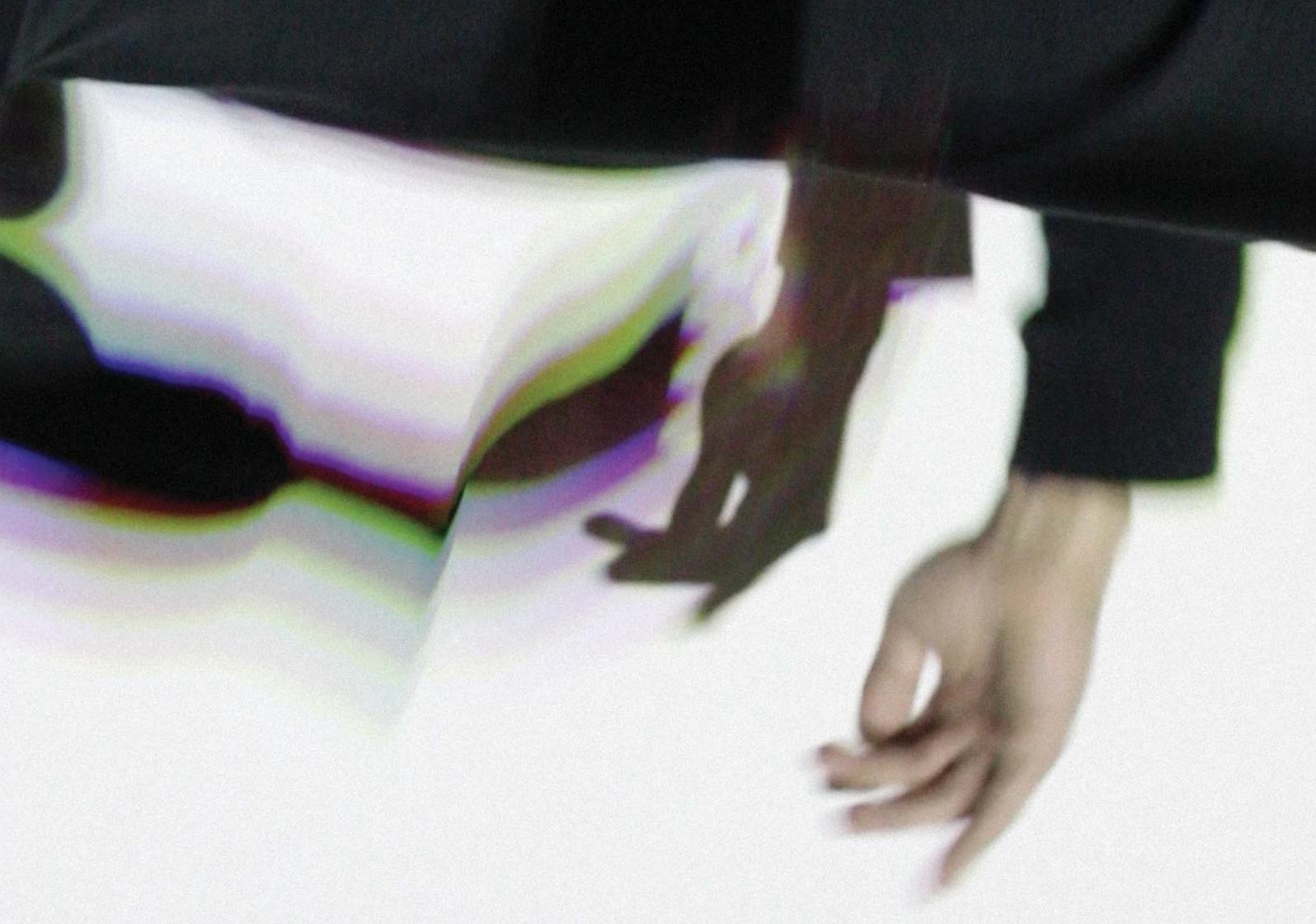
An exegesis presented in partial  
fulfilment of the requirements for  
the degree of Master of Design

Massey University  
College of Creative Arts  
Wellington, New Zealand

Phoebe J Smith  
2014–2016

## Contents

04	Abstract
05	Acknowledgements
06	Introduction
10	Context
16	Design Thinking
21	Process: Discover
25	Process: Define
31	Process: Develop
43	Process: Deliver
60	Conclusion
63	Reference List
65	Bibliography
71	Image List
72	Glossary
75	Appendices



## Abstract

Keywords: design thinking, participatory culture, social media, street dance culture, self-identity, cultural production + consumption, circulations, distribution, dissemination, movement.

Street dance, derived from hip hop dance, is a vehicle for self-expression, connecting with others, understanding purpose, promoting confidence, challenging and improving oneself, and positively impacting participants' lives (Henderson, 2010). Beyond a form of physical activity, it holds much potential to influence self-identity.

Since the advent of YouTube in 2005, social media platforms—particularly YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram—have become central to street dance culture's production and consumption. These networked mediascapes have increased the culture's visibility, accessibility, participation, and provided a platform to share dance expression, join the international street dance community, as well as access or even create professional opportunities. The way street dance cultural flows circulate through social networking sites recursively shape and inform the culture itself.

Dancing from the Inside Out uses design thinking methods to investigate how engagement with street dance culture in networked spaces—where self-identity is performed, actively constructed, and negotiated—might impact an individual's relationship with street dance. Following empathy research, the project uses the Māori health and wellness model Te Whare Tapa Whā as an analytical framework, and identifies an opportunity to strengthen one's taha wairua, or spiritual wellbeing, concerning ideas around self-expression and understanding identity. These concepts are at the heart of street dance culture and promote identity development, though risk being overridden by emerging cultural practices that digitally networked spaces have shaped.

The project's design response takes the form of Hikoi (Māori term meaning to step, stride, march)—the initiation of a movement starting in online social networking environments, in pursuit of the heart and soul of street dance. A practice-based design investigation, Hikoi movement builds a narrative across Facebook and Instagram, and using video portraits, blog posts, and still images, that adhere to a manifesto, aims to inform and inspire Aotearoa street dancers about strengthening taha wairua, in the age of social media.

## Acknowledgements

My first gesture of gratitude extends to my God, my heavenly Father, and friend. He has given me the courage to push through this journey. I am nothing without His love, guidance, and faithfulness.

To my parents, Don and Carol Smith, and to my family and my friends. Thank you for your endless support, for being pillars of strength, and for cheering me on.

Thank you to my supervisors Max Schleser and Eugene Hansen for your guidance, and for having more confidence in me than I've often had in myself.

Thank you also to Euan Robertson for your continued mentorship, Mon Patel for your technical assistance and willingness, and my College of Creative Arts colleagues for your support.

I'd also like to acknowledge my fellow Masters of Design students colleagues Vaughan Flanagan, Franco Lora, and Harita Kapur, for your camaraderie and encouragement throughout this project, and also my World of Wearable Arts family for being so supportive in the last home stretch.

Finally, this project is dedicated to the street dance community—thank you for being the motivation for this Journey. Thank you to the dancers who have joined with me throughout this process, and generously volunteered your time and talent. I am so grateful for your willingness to not only invest in me, but in our street dance culture. We have such rich opportunities ahead of us.