Emily Gunter and Hannah Haines Present

Translation & Transformation: Mythology in Choreography

Saturday, April 13 at 7pm
Sunday, April 14 at 2pm

The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery

Part of Dance Capstone Season 2019
Welcome!

We are excited to share *Translation & Transformation: Mythology in Choreography* with you. This interdisciplinary collaboration grew out of our shared curiosity of how stories from the past can resonate with audiences today. Drawing upon our studies in Anthropology, Classics, and Dance, we have reimagined the myth of Pygmalion from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. Modern adaptations of classical mythology and its themes have a long-standing tradition in dance, and we have been privileged to immerse ourselves in this tradition through research and creation in our final semester at Skidmore.

The myth of Pygmalion tells the story about a man’s obsession with his sculpture of the perfect woman. We began our choreographic translation of Pygmalion by asking what ideas and ideals Ovid’s representation of the myth imparts. What does it mean to craft the perfect woman? How are these ideals constructed within the story, and how can we understand and reinvigorate this myth through our current understanding of these expectations?

Using the material act of crafting a sculpture as our anchoring image, we have choreographed three distinctive sections: construction, the role of the creator, and deconstruction. By exploring the dynamic exchange between belief and the physical objects we venerate, we hope to have curated an event which invites you to explore what it means to translate and reinvent narratives. The sculptures you see on display from the Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum’s collections also consider the reconfiguration of stories. We encourage you to explore the pieces on display, and to use this booklet as your guide as you walk through the gallery.

Thank you for joining us, and we hope you enjoy the show!

Sincerely,
Emily & Hannah
Acknowledgments

This project come to fruition through the guidance and support of many people.

We would like to acknowledge Student Opportunity Funds as well as the Dance Department for providing us with financial support.

We would like to thank the Tang Museum, especially Tom Yoshikami, Jessica Lubniewski, and Sunny Ra, for welcoming us to collaborate with them.

To Lori Dawson, Ellen Grandy, and Carl Landa for providing technical and administrative assistance.

To the entire dance faculty, but especially our capstone advisors, Debra Fernandez, Erika Pujic, and Dan Curley for your guidance and support.

To our fellow dance capstone peers, thank you for the feedback, smiles, and words of encouragement; your support has meant so much.

And last, though certainly not least, to our dancers: thank you for your dedication and creative energy throughout this process. We could not have done this without you!
Ovid's Myth of Pygmalion

Translated by Emily Gunter

Pygmalion had seen these women leading corrupt lives,
And was displeased by their nature-bred faults, so
He chose a wife-less life.
For a long time he lacked a companion for his bed;
During this time, he sculpted a snow-white ivory statue.
With miraculous skill and pleasure, he gave it a form unlike any natural woman;
He fell in love with his own work.
His statue appeared so life-like, you would believe the girl was alive,
And, if discretion did not stop you, you would want to move her:
In this way was art concealed by art.
Pygmalion amazes himself and conceives in his heart a burning passion for his life-like statue.
He often applies his hands to his creation, testing whether it is a real
Or ivory body, not yet admitting it is only a statue.
He believes his fingers make an impression when they touch her limbs
And he fears his fingers might bruise her.
At one moment he caresses her, at another he brings her gifts that girls find delightful:
Shells and round pebbles,
Little birds and flowers of a thousand hues,
Lilies and painted marbles and flowing tears from the tree of the daughters of Helios;
He even adorns her limbs with finery,
Giving gems to her fingers, a long necklace to her neck,
Light pearls to hang from her ears; and a pendant from her chest.
Having dressed her up, he is convinced she is not less beautiful nude.
He rests her on coverlets dyed by Sidonian shells
And calls her his companion in bed, laying her neck on gentle feather pillows,
As if she could feel them.
The most celebrated day had come to all of Cyprus: the festival of Venus!
Their horns adorned with gold, the heifers were struck
On their snow-white necks for sacrifice.
Incense was smoking, and when the offer was made at the altar,
Pygmalion stood and timidly said, “Gods, if you are able to give everything,
Let me have for a wife, I hope,” not daring to say, “my ivory girl,”
Said instead, “one like my ivory statue.”
Since golden Venus was present at her own festival,
She sensed what he intended and, as a sign of divine benevolence,
A flame flared up three times high into the sky.
When he returns home, he seeks the statue of his girl.
He lays her on his bed and gives her kisses. She seems to grow warm;
He moves his lips again, and touches her chest with his hands:
The ivory softens at his touch, putting aside its stiffness
And yielding to his fingers, like honey from Mt. Hymettus under the sun,
And wax softening, bending into many shapes from the attention of someone’s thumbs, so
By being used becomes useful.
While he is amazed and rejoices, he also is doubtful and fears he is deceived,
He thinks back again and retraces his prayers with his hands.
It was a body! Her pulsing veins jump under his thumb.
The young man expressed the greatest praise,
Giving thanks to Venus, and finally
Pressing her living lips to his own. The virgin feels his kisses
And her cheeks grow red while her timid eyes meet his,
So she sees her lover with the sky.
The goddess was present at their marriage,
And when the moon had completed its cycle nine times,
The former statue gave birth to Paphos, from whom the island is named.
**The Three Graces**
*Aglaia, Euphrosyne, and Thalia* (2001)
Toshiko Takaezu
Glazed stoneware
Gift of the artist in honor of Regis Brodie,
Tang Teaching Museum collection

The Three Graces, also referred to as the *Charites*, were the daughters of Zeus. Their names, Aglaia, Euphrosyne, and Thalia, represent elegance, beauty, and joyfulness, respectively. They appear in classical mythology as patronesses of amusement and festivities. Takaezu’s abstract figures capture the naturalistic femininity of the Graces with their subtle curvature and earth tones.

**G-Pot Medallion #1** (2005)
Nicole Cherubini
Ceramic, fake gold and silver jewelry, chain,
luster, enamel, natural rabbit fur
Gift of Peter Norton,
Tang Teaching Museum collection

Cherubini’s reimagined pot invites the viewer to rethink the function of the pot—often a utilitarian object—to find the performativity in this everyday object. Her use of mixed media creates a distinctive play in the texture of the object, and brings this reimagining a step further by rendering the pot useless in its traditional function as a vessel. Interestingly, in classical literature, vessels often serve as a metaphor for the womb.

**The Fin Within** (1998)
Tim Hawkins
Cast aluminum
Gift of Eileen Harris Norton,
Tang Teaching Museum collection

A self-portrait of the artist through the use of negative space, *The Fin Within* challenges the boundary between the artist’s body, and their environment. By harkening to a fin in his self-portrait, Hawkins references the locomotive nature of the fin to create an image of contradictions in the statue’s stillness.
**Aphrodite Figure (n.d.)**
Jugére
Possibly bronze, ivory or ormolu with marble base
Donor Unknown,
Tang Teaching Museum collection

Aphrodite, born from the sea, was the goddess of beauty. In ancient Greek and Roman literature, Aphrodite’s name was often accompanied by the epithet “golden,” as is true in Ovid’s myth of Pygmalion. Note the coating which makes the goddess appear golden, in addition to the mirror (originally crafted to be) in her hand. As the viewer views the goddess, she simultaneously views herself.

**Venus with Butterfly (19th century)**
Bertel Thorvaldsen
Bisque porcelain
Collection of Lucy Skidmore Scribner at the Tang Teaching Museum

Though this sculpture was crafted in the 19th century, it was made to emulate the classical aesthetic; Thorvaldsen, of Danish descent, spent the majority of his artistic life in Rome. Venus, Aphrodite’s Roman counterpart, is seen here with a butterfly and sheer drapery hanging down her legs. Butterflies are seen as symbols of femininity and fragility, and the loose clothing around her hips accentuates this idea.

**Hebe (19th century)**
Bertel Thorvaldsen
Bisque porcelain
Collection of Lucy Skidmore Scribner at the Tang Teaching Museum

Hebe, daughter of Zeus and Juno, was the goddess of youth and cupbearer to the gods. Her job was to serve the gods ambrosia and nectar in order to maintain their youthful glow. Later when she married Herakles (Hercules), she was relieved from her duties.
Metamorphosis (1992)
Stephanie Sale Goodfellow
Silicon bronze on wood base
Gift of the artist, Class of 1968,
Tang Teaching Museum collection

The word *metamorphosis* comes from the ancient Greek μετά (meta) meaning “with” or “after” and μορφή (morphē) meaning “shape” or “form.” In the performances of ancient Greek tragedy, actors would wear masks. These masks would transform their persona and allow them to take on a new character. The sculpture’s placement in this region of the room is significant, as many transitional and transformative moments in the dance occur in this space where the mask of this sculpture gazes at the dancers and connects these metamorphological scenes.
Images of Venus

Venus (or Aphrodite) is the Roman (and Greek) goddess of love, beauty, and sex. Her image appears across history in statues and paintings depicting her sensuality and relationship with mortals. Among these visual representations of the goddess, her recurrent depiction in the *pudicitia*, or modesty, pose is noteworthy as it both covers up and attracts attention to her chest and groin.

As part of our choreographic process, we worked with sixteen images of Venus and assigned one to each dancer. This process served as another layer of our reinterpretation and transformation of Pygmalion’s fascination with his own statue’s beauty. These images include statues from as early as fourth-century BCE and paintings from as late as the Renaissance and Baroque periods. Below is a sample.

![Venus Pudica (modest), 4th c. BCE](image1)
Praxiteles
Capitoline Museum; Rome, Italy

![The Birth of Venus, 1879](image2)
William-Adolphe Bouguereau
Musée d’Orsay; Paris, France

![Birth of Venus, 1484-1486](image3)
Sandro Botticelli
Uffizi Gallery; Florence, Italy

All images accessed from Wikimedia Commons (commons.wikimedia.org)
Program

Construction

Choreography: Emily Gunter
Music: Clusters 1, excerpt by Meredith Monk, Missed by Julia Kent, A Spire by Julia Kent, and The Water Rises by Laurie Anderson

Dancers: Leonie Aksyonov, Jenna Bredvick, Emily Gilbert, Julia Lawless, Hannah Leffelholz, Elodie Linck, Allai Regan, and Lizzie Usack

By Being Used Becomes Useful

Choreography & Dancers: Emily Gunter and Hannah Haines
Music: Clusters 3 by Meredith Monk, Heima, excerpt by Hildur Guðnadóttir feat. Skuli Sverrisson, Shift by Meredith Monk, and D’Arc: Woman on Fire: Stag by Amanda Moody and Joan Jeanrenaud

Deconstruction

Choreography: Hannah Haines
Music: Canticles of Ecstasy, excerpt by Hildegard von Bingen, edited by Hannah Haines, and Sonata for Viola and Piano 2. Vivace by Rebecca Clarke

Dancers: Madelyn Barti, Maddie Bonin, Kathryn Brodie, Hannah Geller, Carissa Jaehnert, Kailey McLaughlin, Christina Raichle, and Valeria Santangelo

Show Personnel

Stage Manager: Hannah Weighart
Sound Board Operator: Gadria Conlan
Light Board Operator: Noelle Morrow
Camera Operator: Alyssa Tiren
Costume Assistant: Noelle Morrow
Meet the Choreographers

**Emily Gunter** is a senior at Skidmore College pursuing a double major in Dance and Classics. As a dancer, Emily has had the opportunity to perform pieces by guest artists Paul Taylor staged by Taylor II and Stephen Petronio staged by Gino Grenek, as well as Skidmore faculty Denise Warner Limoli, Mary Harney, Debra J. Fernandez, and Erika Pujic. As a student of Classics, she loves to read ancient Greek and Roman literatures in their original languages and examine their meaning for modern audiences. She is intrigued by the intersections of the classical world and dance, namely how Greek and Roman mythology inspires dance choreography. Her roles as a researcher, peer mentor, and rehearsal director have shaped her desire to be challenged and contribute to education and outreach initiatives in the non-profit world, relative to both the fields of Dance and Classics. In her free time, Emily enjoys taking her dog Rosie for walks in the park.

**Hannah Haines** is a senior at Skidmore College, where she is pursuing a double major in Dance and Anthropology. While at Skidmore she has had the opportunity to perform works by Skidmore faculty Denise Warner Limoli, Erika Pujic, Mary Harney, Jason Ohlberg, and works by guest artists Earl Mosley, Ohad Naharin staged by Omri Drumlevich, Paul Taylor staged by Taylor II, and Isadora Duncan staged by Jeanne Bresciani. In addition to her dance studies, while at Skidmore Hannah has nurtured her interests in cultural anthropology and archaeology, developing focuses on both body-centric theory, and archaeology of the Americas. She is currently working on integrating dance and anthropology through a research project investigating using dance film as an ethnographic method. Outside of her academic pursuits, Hannah enjoys cooking, and reading any book by Willa Cather!
Skidmore College Dance Department

Professor, Chair of Dance: Debra J. Fernandez
Associate Professor: Mary DiSanto-Rose
Assistant Professor & Associate Chair of Dance: Sarah DiPasquale
Assistant Professor: Jason Ohlberg
Senior-Artist-in-Residence: Mary Harney
Artist-in-Residence: Eric Otto
Full-time Lecturer: Erika Pujic
Lecturers: Tina Baird, David Otto, Laura Otto, Christy Williams
Music Director: Carl Landa
Accompanists: Carol Ann Elze, Patricia A. Hadfield, Elizabeth Woodbury Kasius
Technical Director, Lighting Designer and Manager: Lori Dawson
Stage Manager, Technical Assistant: Jessica Thomas
Student Assistant Technical Directors: Max Clifford, Annika Morrell
Student Crew: Melanie Aftandilian, Olivia Arthen, Gadria Conlan, Hannah Haines, Jiayue Hong, Eliza Martin, Noelle Morrow, Celeste Munoz Perez, Ethan Reese, Amy Rowland
Student Costume Crew: Sara Brigida, Blynda Chen, Jasmin Fowler-Puja, Noelle Morrow, Zoe Rafalowski-Houseman
Dance Department Administrative Assistant: Ellen Grandy
Student Graphic Designers, Publicity: Monica Andrews, Andrea Bloomer
Student Box Office Crew: Zoë Green

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Fall 2018

Taylor 2 Dance Company Lecture & Demonstration
Friday, October 5 at 7:00 p.m.

Choreography II & Dance Production Showing
Saturday, November 10 at 3:00 p.m.
By Invitation

Winter Dance Concert
Friday, December 7 at 8:00 p.m.
Saturday, December 8 at 2:00 p.m. & 8:00 p.m.
Adults $9/$12, Students & Seniors $5/$9

Dance, Music, & Film Class Showing | Monday, December 10 at 7:00 p.m.

Choreography II Class Solo Showing | Tuesday, December 11 at 8:00 p.m.

Spring 2019

Guest Artist Showing | Monday, February 25 at 7:00pm | No Charge

Site Specific Senior Capstone
Friday, March 29 & Saturday, March 30 at 8:00pm
Wilson Chapel
No Charge

Senior Capstone Dance Concert
Saturday, April 6 at 2:00 p.m. & 8:00 p.m.
Seniors/Students $5/$9, Adults $9/$12

Site Specific Senior Capstone
Saturday, April 13 at 7:00pm & Sunday, April 14 at 2:00pm
Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery – Payne Room
No Charge

Spring Dance Concert
Friday, April 19 at 8:00 p.m.
Saturday, April 20 at 2:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m.
Seniors/Students $5/$9, Adults $9/$12

Bridges to Skidmore Showing | Monday, April 22 at 11:00am | No Charge

Choreography I Class Showing | Tuesday, April 30 at 8:00 p.m. | No Charge

Events held in the Skidmore Dance Theater unless otherwise noted.
For more information: (518) 580-5392 or Skidmore.edu/dance