

Donielle Bailey Horst

Collaborative Project: *Echo of Thoughts in Transit*

I. Introduction of Collaborative Partners

For this collaborative project, I have two individuals with whom I am joining forces. The first is a former dance student of mine, who shares my interest in both movement and the written word. Jillian Kravatz reached out to me from a small book press, Archipelago Books, located in Brooklyn, NY. They translate books from all over the world. In her own words, “[She has] always felt a deep kinship between movement and crafting the flow of sentences on a page.”

Ms. Kravatz was kind enough to share some of these “gems” with me as she terms them. They are square, small, and soft to the touch—truly tiny works of art. My focus landed on *For Isabel: A Mandala* by Antonio Tabucchi. Tabucchi’s work is a posthumous one, and I have found myself collaborating with him through his prose. He certainly adds layers to my current work with disembodied environments as his words come alive into pictures and circles. Each chapter begins with “*First Circle*,” “*Second Circle*,” etc. Responding to his prose has created layers to my own creative process as I turn words into thoughts and finally into actions.

II. Points of Interest & Foundation for Development

First and foremost, the translator, Elizabeth Harris, deserves much credit in that I am reading a work by an Italian author who has since passed on. I find that art transcends life and death, and the circles to which Tabucchi continuously refers become truth. As I have been on a journey to unite my artistic selves—the dancer and the writer—I am discovering many answers throughout this collaboration and find myself circling back to that which I did originally know of myself. The past, now, and future seem to be creating a natural progression back to my core.

Sam Sacks of *The Wall Street Journal* highlights Tabucchi as “a soul in transit, yearning to complete the story that will release him from his suffering.” Finding similitude, I read his story and chose words that resonated with me. Below are a few quotes from Tabucchi ...

- “a straw hat” (170)
- “You get caught in a little rain and wind up twiddling your thumbs” (46).
- “I’m working with colored dust ... meanwhile, the circle is tightening toward the center, and I’m trying to reach that” (77-78).
- “Where are you? he said, it’s like you don’t exist” (82).

As I read Tabucchi’s words, I considered the impetuses that push us forward. Claire and Antho, who work specifically with shadow dance, came to mind. I have included this concept of shadows and how the mover responds to these outside forces within the resulting dance solo.



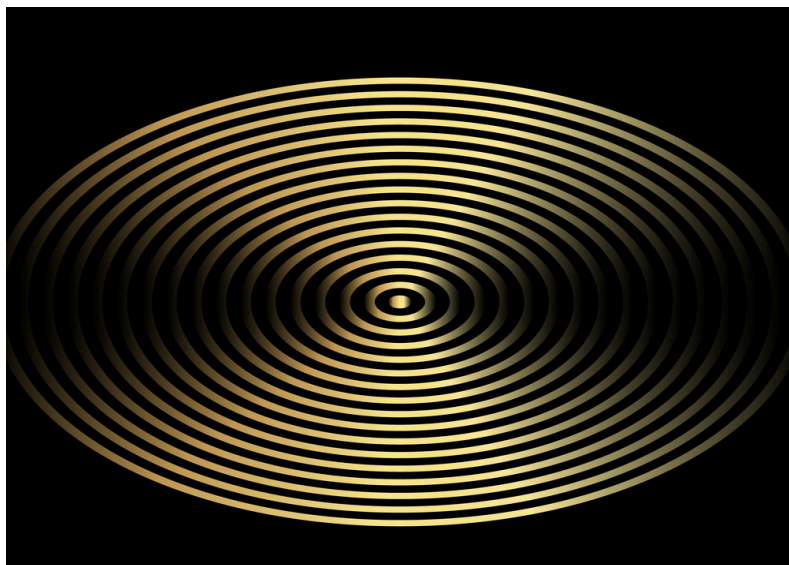
(Claire et Antho)

The Music: While creating the work, I listened to the inspirational words of Crystal Pite, who Lana Heylock mentioned to me; I had to include her in the final audio. Viviane Audet, a French composer, shows a man with a straw hat on the cover of one album; the overlapping of the golden hat was not lost on me. Lastly, the title, *Solitario*, spoke to me and offered a haunting

piano (perhaps not quite existing) to which I responded with movement improvisation and phrases.

III. Methodology

As the creator, I translate Tabucchi's words into my thoughts and into the mover's actions. Thus, a golden hat appears, the rain falls, thumbs meander in circles, hands clap, and circles repeat everywhere. All the while there is a mystery, a nonexistence, if you will; there is a force pushing the dancer to the center and toward the answer at the core. My realization becomes that words are the driving force and the engagement of the five senses creates movement. We feel the twiddling thumbs, hear the claps, taste the gold—however that manifests for you, smell the rain, and see the disappearance and reemergence of the cyclical.



(Vector Stock)

The point of entry can be nothing other than the dot at the center of the concentric circles. As Tabucchi says, “Maybe you can keep tightening a circle around that person you’re searching for” (82). I believe we are all searching for ourselves, and while in our youth we wish to find our person, our career, what we are good at, and even our why, I believe as we get older many believe we should be done, we should be happy. As I age, I find that I am searching, wanting to

find my core, what made me who I am, and what continues to drive me so I can grow—achieve more, become more, impact more. There are many rings of beauty, trauma, hope, anger, etc., that make up who we are. Fabio Gambaro writes of Tabucchi’s work, praising the “pauses and delays, [the] realistic details and openings into the fantastic” (Tabucchi back cover). Like the concentric circles above, the solo pathways are cyclical, incorporating stillness, waiting, & highlighting the voids encountered while truth-finding.

As I consider not only the movement but the overall impact of the environment and what is seen and heard, I delve further into Tabucchi’s “way of being” and how his work is continually searching, hoping to find the central purpose and overall meaning of life, whether spiritual, emotional, psychological, or a combination. I see the surrounding circles as all that impacts an individual and what creates him as whole. The circles themselves present a collaboration.

While I worked on the solo with the mover, she found more freedom and confidence within her facility, within the very core of herself. We used a simple button down shirt to reflect the wayfarer in the novel. The twiddling thumbs and those circles evolved into putting a period on it—the pointed finger. This finger pointed to the mover, to myself, to Tabucchi, and to the center for which we are all searching. The spectator even gets a view of the creator of shadows and the importance of that ambient-production role within the scope of the solo work.

Finally, I speak to the title. Lana Heylock had made a comment that my “research embodies the space, time, and energy between thoughts, words, and actions.” This spurred me to utilize and engage all portions of my artistic self—the writer, the mover, and the viewer, helping me embrace myself as the triadic. I felt power and validation within my methodology.

I turn to Pythagoras, recognizing my thoughts in transit from words to actions:

There is no word or action but has its echo in Eternity. Thought is an idea in transit, which when once released, never can be lured back, nor the spoken word recalled. Nor ever can the overt act be erased. All that thou thinkest, sayest, or doest bears perpetual record of itself, enduring for Eternity. (Lib Quotes)

This solo work is simply an echo of abundant thoughts and therefore an *Echo of Thoughts in Transit*. I thank Jilllian Kravatz for the impetus to take on this methodology, and I thank Antonio Tabucchi and his brilliant work for allowing me the time, space, and energy to recognize the power of the written word, my resulting thoughts, and the movement evidenced from embracing both.

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