

Abstract

This study explores viewers' ability to appreciate dance with two conditions: (1) understanding; and (2) feeling (but without understanding). We built on a previous research which studied the pairing of dance and music, and borrowed variables therefrom including: (i) understanding art; (ii) feeling art; and (iii) art appreciation. Each participant was assigned to one of three experimental groups before viewing a three-minute unconventional and abstract dance clip that featured one of William Forsythe's most famous works, "In the Middle, Somewhat Elevated". Group one was appointed no excerpt ("Control" condition), group two was appointed an excerpt that explains the dance ("Understanding" condition) and group three was appointed an excerpt that encourages them to "feel" the dance, think nothing about it and believe that it is acceptable not to understand what they are viewing ("Feeling" condition). The viewers' understanding, perception and enjoyment of the dance clip were then measured and analyzed. Our analysis shows that feeling without understanding the dance tend to bring viewers a more positive emotional response after viewing the said dance clip. We also acquired significant results under the "Feeling" condition for the scale that measures intuition. These results suggest that one's enjoyment of dance relies more on feeling, and less on understanding, what he/she is watching.

Keywords: art appreciation, abstract dance, music, cognitive-capacity, cognitive processing, understanding, feeling, BMI scale, ambiguity