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## Leaving the Silo: Artists on Seeing Other Disciplines

Posted by [admin](#) on February 8, 2012 · [Leave a Comment](#)

BEING AN ARTIST IS AN ALL ENCOMPASSING job, with time and money often in short supply. Yet, many leave the studio every now and then to see work outside of their own disciplines. Whether it's inspiration or a break from their own world, it's a healthy sign for any arts ecology. A handful of Houston's outstanding artists tell us what they see and how it informs their own practices.

**Jennifer Decker on dance**  
Artistic Director of Mildred's Umbrella Theatre Company  
[www.mildredsumbrella.com](http://www.mildredsumbrella.com)

You really have to experience dance with your senses rather than your intellect, which really challenges me, as I'm a person who loves language and vocal expression. Having said that, my favorite dance performance I've ever seen so far was watching Lydia Hance dancing to an actress reading a story. I do prefer words, if I can get them. Although the theater I create is very experimental, when I watch dance, I prefer traditional work, because the most impressive thing about it is watching a person do something that I could never in a million years do myself.

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Lillian Warren, "Traffic 15," Acrylic on Mylar, 30 x 30 inches.

COURTESY OF LILLIAN WARREN

### Novelist Julie Herman on theater

[www.mysterygarden.com](http://www.mysterygarden.com)

Live theater offers me a chance to enjoy a fully realized version of what I am trying to create in my 2D, black-and-white fictional world. My every sense goes on alert when the house lights go down, as I wait to see what creative choices the design team has made — and how the company will bring it to life. All these tiny stitches in muslin and satin, blue/red/yellow light filtering in from stage left, a distant barking dog, or the perfect strains of music, a backdrop of stars, an old bench by a sagging post, a sad-faced man leaning toward a pretty girl — get blended seamlessly into one fat inspiration just for me. I'm taking mental notes all along, even when my brain shuts down and relishes the play. I owe Houston theater for being my respite, an inspiring place to rejuvenate my poor imagination after pounding the keyboard.

### Connor Walsh on other art forms

Principal, Houston Ballet

[www.houstonballet.org](http://www.houstonballet.org)

One of the few things that I always push myself to do is to see more art. Whether it be performance or visual art, it somehow always motivates me to work harder and to reach beyond what I think I am capable of. I just recently began to choreograph, and through that process I'm learning how the arts are interconnected. I need to be emotionally stimulated in order to keep doing what I love doing. As long as I feel something while at a show or in a museum then I can hopefully hold onto that feeling and one day translate that into my own work as a dancer.

**Painter Donna Perkins on dance**[www.donnaeperkins.com](http://www.donnaeperkins.com)

I've been privileged to be a fly on the wall as choreographers develop new work. The layers of building a new dance are like layers of paint. While I'm ignorant of dance technique and history, I love drawing bodies in motion. I find dance to be about line, gesture and movement. In 2008 dancer/choreographer jhon r. stronks and I began collaborations, which resulted in "Entanglements" at Archway Gallery in 2009. My February 2012 show at Wagner Sousa Modern Art in Galveston will have several Paper Dance sculptures and photographs derived from previous Paper Dance sculptures. These sculptures were first created in collaboration with jhon stronks' dance events. The Paper Dance sculptures, which hang from the ceiling, will be completed on site. The photographs are close-up images of the light playing across the surface of the paper from which the sculpture is constructed. This photo series is printed on aluminum.

**Karen Stokes on visual arts****Artistic Director of Karen Stokes Dance****Head of the Dance Division at UH School of Theatre & dance**[www.karenstokesdance.org](http://www.karenstokesdance.org)

I like to know what is out there — how others are viewing and responding to the world and what materials they are using to create their work. In order for art to work its magic you have to show up. I like thinking about art, be it visual or performance. Some work does not inspire thinking in me of any kind, and this is interesting too. Then I get to wonder why others seem to like the work, and how come I see it differently. Sometimes, I go with someone who will with "think back" to me afterward. It's great fun to engage in a lively discussion of form, intent, and success/failure of a given work. Going to art, music and theater events informs me about the world in a different way, widening my own thinking and enriching my life. I go in search of transformation, inspiration, wonder. But mostly, I go because I'm curious.



TOP: "Dialogues with Dance: Brit Wallis and Catalina Molnari #1," 2011, Lynn Lane Photography. BOTTOM: Hana Sakai & Domenico Luciano of Dominic Walsh Dance Theater.

**Photographer Lynn Lane on dance**[www.lynnlane.com](http://www.lynnlane.com)

My life has always had involved dance. It moves and transforms me. When I am behind the camera, even when I'm not shooting dance, I look at the human form differently. I think of its potential for motion and when it is static, how dynamic that pause can be. Dance influences everything about me, and this year I'll step from behind the camera to choreograph new work with two other choreographers. Dance is life...on stage and off.

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**Christina Carroll on theater**  
**Percussionist for Houston Ballet Orchestra**  
[www.houstonballet.org](http://www.houstonballet.org)

Theater helps me explore all of life the way music does. Theater and music can be intellectually stimulating, emotionally moving or just plain fun — sometimes all three in one night. Some moments at the theater it's fun to laugh and be entertained, other times it's important to me to explore new ideas and feel things deeply. I love being a part of a big team that comes together to put on a special experience for the audience. One of my favorite things is to play backstage with an opera 'banda' where I have to dodge crew members and chorus and pick up my drumsticks from a table that might also be holding a sword, some wine goblets and some plastic prop food. The theater and the concert hall are special, sacred places to me. The days when I come in the front door holding a ticket refresh and enrich me for the days I head into the stage door to go to work.

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**Mercedes Smith on dance, opera**  
**Flutist for HGO and Houston Ballet Orchestras**  
[www.mercedesflute.com/home.html](http://www.mercedesflute.com/home.html)

I always joke that the hardest part of my job is that I rarely get to see what is happening on stage while I am playing. Only being able to catch an occasional glimpse from my seat in the orchestra pit makes me want to attend as many ballets and operas as I can outside of my work. Houston's Dance Salad Festival provides me with endless artistic inspiration each year, and I've also been known to watch six performances in a row of works that Houston Ballet performs without orchestra — I'm a real ballet junkie. I also find fine art and opera to be very stimulating — no trip to New York City has been complete for me unless I've made it to both MOMA and the Metropolitan Opera.



PHOTO: SHIKAMA TAKASHI

**Dominic Walsh on visual arts**

**Artistic Director Dominic Walsh Dance Theater**  
[www.dwdt.org](http://www.dwdt.org)

Over the course of my career, the impact and influence of visual arts in my work as a choreographer has played a formative role in both the concepts I explore and the specific use of sculptural imagery from which the choreographic vocabulary travels to and from. When I was creating “The Trilogy: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart,” a series of connected ballets on the psychological character of Mozart and the narrative of his music and personal life, I encountered Libbie Masterson’s photographic series entitled “Norwegian Landscapes.” I instantly felt the melancholic and romantic qualities of icy solitude her landscapes evoked. I also felt her work was relevant to the interior space of a genius like Mozart. **I continue to work collaboratively with Nicola Parente. His work has a kinetic energy and a non-linear narrative that I find incredibly inspiring, and off of which I am able to create movement vocabularies that simulate the energy of the brush strokes vivid in Nicola’s work.**

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### Painter Lillian Warren on dance

[www.lhwarren.com](http://www.lhwarren.com)

Dance scares me to death. The very idea of getting out there in front of all those people, performing, putting yourself on the line in such a personal and physical way gives me hives. That fear gave birth to a tremendous respect for those who have that kind of courage and skill. Dance is visceral. When physicality and emotional accessibility is combined with conceptual rigor and innovation it blows my mind. I can enjoy dance with a certain delicious freedom. I don’t feel “responsible.” When I look at work from any discipline within the visual arts, I want to understand its context, its evolution, how the underlying concepts or techniques might or might not influence my work. With the performing arts, I can just let it wash over me.

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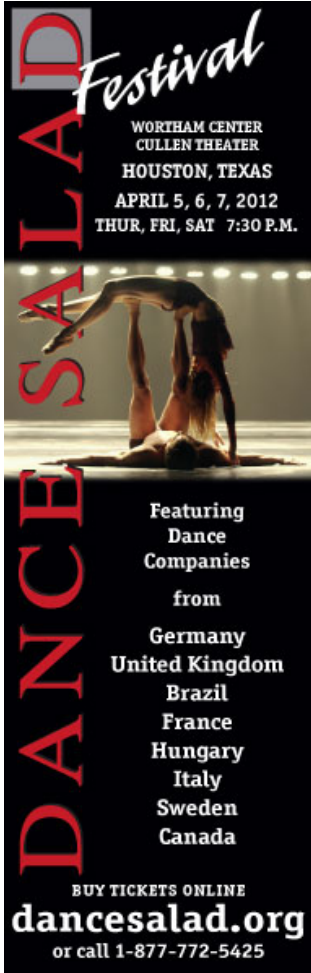
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