

APPLICATION TO DANSE ELARGIE 2024 FROM JUSTINE DOSWELL

Summary - A short performance work made in collaboration with a group of 5 to 7 young boxers from the Docklands Boxing Club in the North East Inner City of Dublin. One that proposes:

An existential boxing workout... An act of communal preparation for fight... An activation of singular and collective processes... An acute composition of relationships...

Introduction and brief context of why - In early December I started working on a community project for St Patrick's Festival (SPF) in partnership with Dublin City Council's North East Inner City (NEIC) that culminates in performance during the SPF Dublin parade on March 17th, celebrating the different communities of the NEIC with a goal to combat the negative associations linked to this area of the city, escalated after the November 2023 Dublin riots. Mid December I met with Philip Keogh, head coach and owner of the Docklands Boxing club to potentially enrol the club's members in the parade. I walked into the club as a stranger, foreign to their histories, boxing practices and locality (although I have lived in the South Central Inner City since 2003). What transpired during my afternoon at the club was an enthusiasm, an openness to do something new and different; an autonomy, commitment and dedication of practice. This resonated with me enormously and has since been percolating. Personally as well as professionally. My initial presence was undoubtedly met in scepticism, however the moment I saw the Cuban flag hanging on the right-side of the ring, I shared my story of growing up in Havana and the club members immediately retaliated with their recent training stories in Cuba, including learning Salsa in their scheduled social time, showing me videos of their Salsa class. Weight transfer our commonality.. It wasn't Ireland that broke the ice, even though few sports are as historically synonymous with Ireland as boxing. It was Cuba that forged a sincere connection. This is what has fundamentally inspired me to make an independent application to you, proposing my own project, one of collaboration with the Docklands Boxing Club, as a possible contender for Danse Elargie 2024. The random aspects of engaging and the connection(s) that ensue... I have always been fascinated with chance and the new possibilities it offers, which often are deeply connected with past patterning. I wish that I had documented more on my phone of my afternoon with the club to share with you.

Leading up to this application, I then immersed myself in research and reading about the history of boxing, the socio-economic/political, cultural, racial intersectionality of the sport, its benefits alongside its documented potentiality in right-wing extremist radicalisation, to better educate myself. Although unequivocally relevant, the crux of my idea comes back to the "present" moment I experienced that December afternoon in the Docklands Boxing Club and the imagined opportunity to develop a short work with the members, featuring their embodied practice, their commitment and reasons for their dedication, driven by their narrative, their experiences both as individuals and as a group.

Your call mentions displacement and flight as themes established since the inception of Danse Elargie 6 years ago. I'm curious to ask the young people of the Docklands Boxing Club to respond to those themes in the context of their current lives in Dublin, their understanding of the history of Ireland and emigration and their broader view of the world and what is happening outside of Ireland.

Working title "The Sweet Science" (Boxing's nickname/ title subject to change)

I propose focusing on the training movement materials these young boxers use, the training sequences, boxing drills (both footwork and upper body), the skipping sequences — non stylised. I wish to ask them to also recreate strategic sequences they recount from previous amateur competitive matches and what those mean to them. The work will reveal their movement language, unadulterated. Boxing, dance and choreography have cross/inter-disciplinary engagement, ones that have inspired and informed many professional boxers and choreographers. French-Algerian hip-hop choreographer Mourad Merzouki's BOXE BOXE would be a choreographic example, amongst many other works I have recently discovered inspired by the sport. However my research has not come across a work that is performed solely by boxers (amateur or professional). I share this idea with you at a very early stage. I have been fortunate to have been granted 2024 artist in residence at the University College of Dublin's Creative Futures Academy, one that starts at the end of February. If successful in this application I would use my residency to research and develop this proposed short new work (between 5 and 8 minutes) with the Docklands Boxing Club. www.instagram.com/dublin_docklands_boxing_club