



Western Michigan University
ScholarWorks at WMU

Honors Theses

Lee Honors College

4-27-2019

Poster, Expanded

Lynnae Strait

Western Michigan University, lynnae.strait97@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/honors_theses



Part of the Graphic Design Commons

Recommended Citation

Strait, Lynnae, "Poster, Expanded" (2019). *Honors Theses*. 3171.
https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/honors_theses/3171

This Honors Thesis-Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by the Lee Honors College at ScholarWorks at WMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu.



Poster, Expanded

Graphic Design BFA Thesis
Lynnae Strait

Spring 2019

Thesis Statement

The poster is a fundamental part of graphic design that has existed since the 1800s. Throughout the years, its purposes and aesthetics have changed, but its format has adapted very little. My thesis project seeks to define the traditional format of the poster, and then challenge the definition to expand the audience's understanding of what a poster is and isn't.

The definition: A poster is printed, two-dimensional, and static.

The final form of this project came from challenging the three aspects of a poster defined above. Using typographic shadows, dimensional objects, and interaction between the two, this project discusses both the format of the poster as well as the exploration of a space.



Stills of the final moving poster.

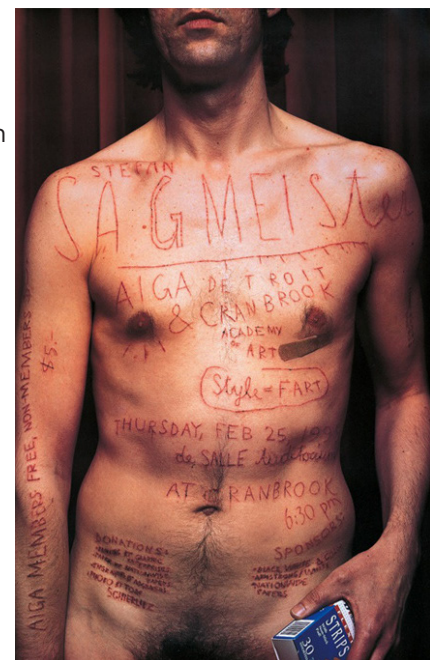
Initial Interest

The initial idea for my thesis came from an observation about Stefan Sagmeister's 1999 Detroit AIGA Poster. It occurred to me that all the information contained on the poster could be found etched into Sagmeister's own body—the final product was simply a photograph. In other words, his own body was the poster. This observation led me to think, "What else can be a poster?"

Of course, this statement alone couldn't fuel an entire thesis—I needed questions to answer, and some parameters—else there would be little basis for valuing success. I realized in order to make a different kind of poster, I had to understand what a "typical" poster is, and from there, seek to challenge that definition. I now had a clear path to move forward.

Audience

My intended audience for this thesis is designers, in hopes that they, along with myself, will be challenged in their own perceptions of what a poster is and isn't. Although my thesis project should be understandable to a non-designer audience, the explorations and research.



1999 AIGA Detroit, Stefan Sagmeister



From left to right: Beethoven Poster, Josef Muller-Brockmann. Vladimir and Georgii Stenberg. Armin Hoffman. Paula Scher. La Goulue Moulin Rouge, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. Bob Dylan, 1966, Milton Glaser. Official United States War Films, Stoner. Kunsthalle Basel Kunstkredit 76-77, Wolfgang Weingart.

Defining a Poster

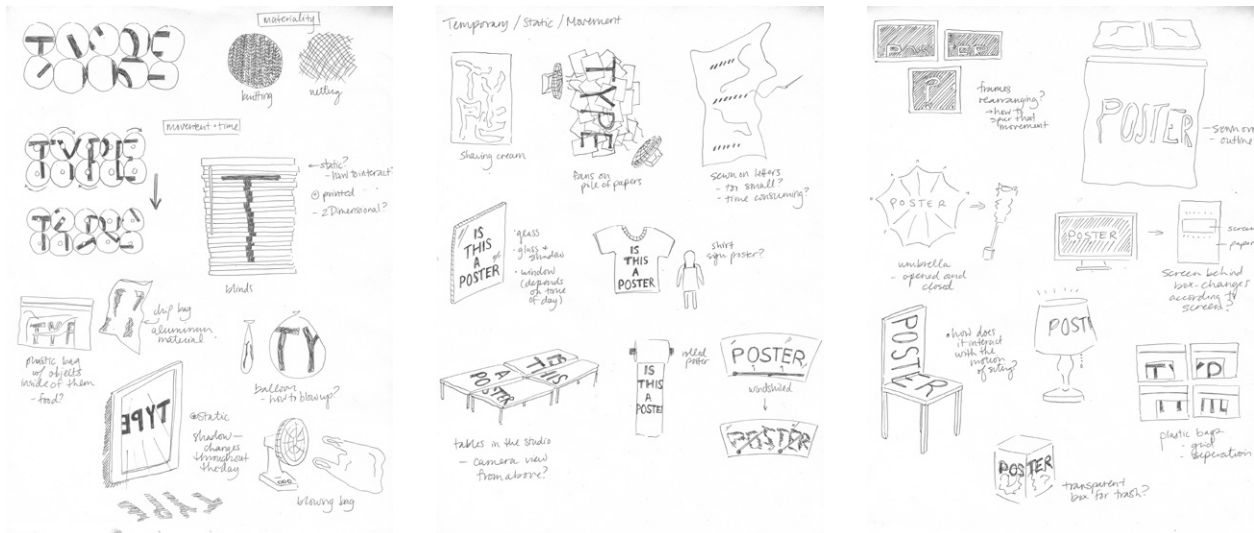
To define a poster, I started with the obvious by looking at the dictionary definitions. Merriam-Webster calls it a “bill or placard for posting often in a public place, especially one that is decorative or pictorial,” and most other dictionary sources stated something similar. While I can’t exactly disagree with the Dictionary, I felt that these definitions were not coming from the point of view of a designer.

So instead, I decided to look at prominent poster designs and see what definition I could derive from them. I noticed although the content, aesthetics, and purposes to poster design have changed over the years, the general form has remained quite constant, which brought me to the definition:

A poster is printed, two-dimensional, and static.

This definition became the key argument I sought to challenge for my thesis.

Sketching



Above: Sketched ideas—many of these eventually were made physically.

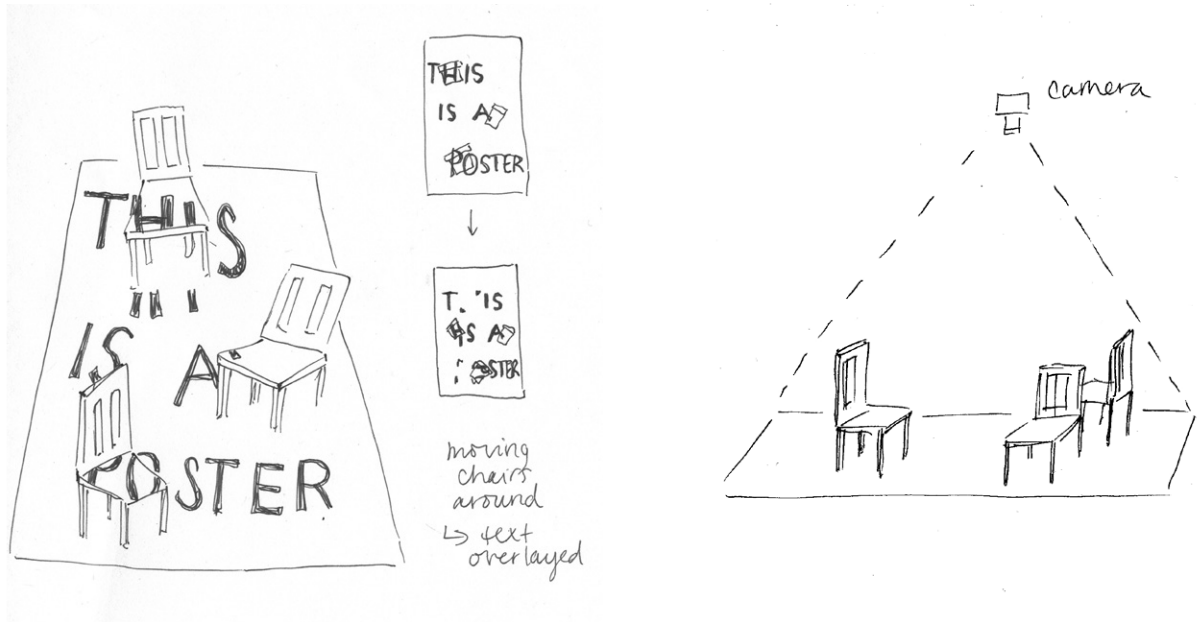
From here, I began sketching both on paper and physically to see what form this project could take. My ideas specifically sought to challenge these three aspects of a poster I had defined. Instead of printed, could a poster be made of shaving cream? Be sewn on? Be a shadow? Instead of being two-dimensional, could a poster be a chair? A lamp? An umbrella? And lastly, if a poster wasn’t static, how would it move? Could it be rotated? Rolled up like toilet paper? Blown away by a fan?



Below: Physical explorations including projected shadow, toilet paper, plastic bags, and an umbrella.

Moving Toward an End Product

My initial intention was to create three posters, each targeting one part of my definition of a poster. Although I had several strong ideas to do this, I ultimately decided to create one poster that addressed all three definitions.



The idea for this one poster came from a sketch showing a camera set up above a designated space, with type being overlaid on objects to be seen from above. It would be intended to have people move through the space, changing where the objects—in this case chairs —would be, thus changing the composition of the poster. This idea combats the definition of a poster I had, with it being non-printed, three-dimensional, and involving movement.

Content

Up to this point, I had been using placeholder text in my sketches like “Can This Be a Poster?” and “Type.” I looked through quotes of artists and designers for something that pertained to my concept of space and movement, and eventually came to this one by Bauhaus artist, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy:

**“The experience of space is not a privilege of the gifted few, but a biological function”
—Laszlo Moholy-Nagy**

I thought this fit well with what I was trying to achieve with exploration of space and was also being written by a more experimental designer was a plus.

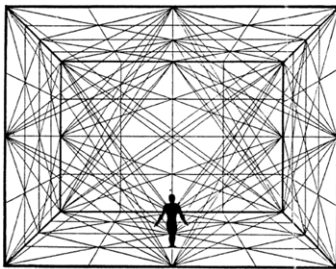
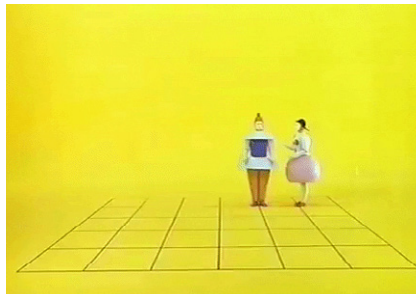


Figure 3. *The laws of cubical space*, drawing by Schlemmer, 1924.



Above: The work of The Rodina specializes in what they call “performative design.” Left: “Mass Makeup: Freckles” examining the high beauty standards in South Korea. Right: “Shadows in Paradise” discussing fear induced by mass media.

Below: The work of Bauhaus designer, Oskar Schlemmer. From left to right: A sketch titled “The laws of cubical space” demonstrating the dimensional, geometric aspects of a stage. Clips of the 1922 piece, “Das triadisches ballett.”

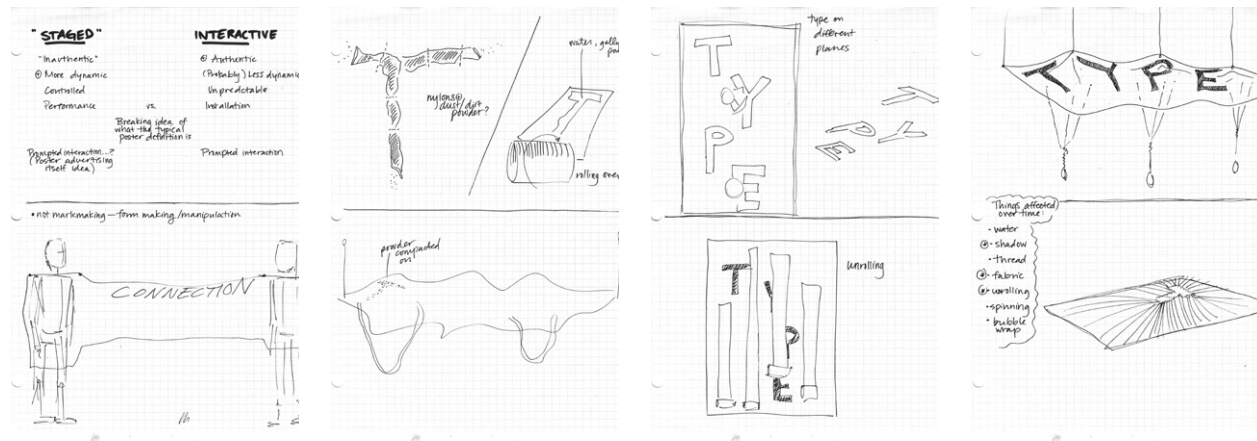
Research

As I moved into this foreign territory of combining performance art and design, I began to search for other designers and artists also using movement in their work. I started my research by looking at animated posters, a newer form of the poster that’s becoming more popular across the web. The movement of these posters were generally quite simple and subtle, but added an extra element or layer to the design.

The work of The Rodina—a Netherlands-based studio—piqued my interest as a place that specializes in what they call “performative design.” Pictured here is the work of designer Tereza Ruller who dons these graphical capes to become a human poster, and then performs various acts discussing issues like xenophobia and beauty standards.

I also studied the work of Oskar Schlemmer, an artist from the Bauhaus theatre workshop. Schlemmer's work focused on the stage studied the experience of the body in space, exemplified best in his 1922 work titled *Das triadisches Ballett*, or "The Triadic Ballet." In this piece, dancers in large mechanical costumes move across spatially-aware stages to create his vision of choreographed geometry. I took a lot of inspiration from this work, however, Schlemmer's work focused more heavily on costume design and how the body moved through space rather than the creation of the spaces themselves like I was.

More Development



Initial sketches for the installation space focused on flexible materiality and the deconstruction of a space over time.

I went through yet another round of sketching, brainstorming ideas for movement, materials, and how these could work together with typography. I began looking at existing installation and performance art for inspiration, and found an abundance of interesting examples. I also looked at unique applications of physical lettering to see how the typography could live in the space I was creating.

It was at this point I came to the problem that I could find virtually no examples of pieces that reconciled both the movement of performance art and then applied it to type specifically for this "performative typography" piece I was envisioning. So I returned to my original sketches and looked through the viable options I previously made.

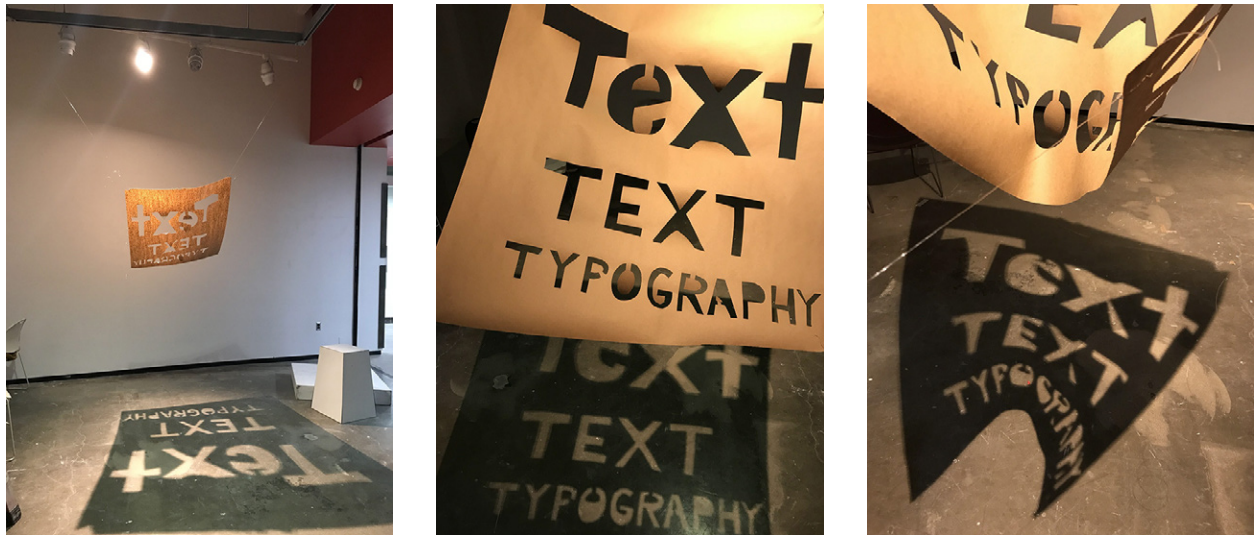
This led me back to an experiment I did using shadows, and I thought that this could be the solve to making performative type. I felt using shadows matched my concept of experiencing space as shadow is something that can be projected into an area without physically taking up space, but at the same time conforms to the dimensionality of that space.



Physical Experiments

I set out conducting tests with shadows, and found myself pleasantly surprised with how well the type could be projected on the ground. Additionally, I liked how the letterforms felt more organic being cut out of the paper and how the counterforms moved in and out of place.

One of the most interesting tests I ran involved putting a pedestal under the projected type, and then simply moving the type template around. This was a good way—I felt—to show how the shadow conforms to its projected shape, and in a sense, explores the spaces around it itself. As a result, I created three-dimensional structures with the intention of shadowed type moving across them and distorting it at different angles. The typographic cutouts were made as either cutouts from large pieces of paper, or made as individually-cut letters pasted onto a transparent sheet.



Left: The type projected onto the ground with a singular light focused on the type template. Middle: Counterforms moved out of place depending on angle of the type template, seen in the “e” and “x” for example. Right: The template could be twisted and moved at various angles to change the type on the ground.

Final Installation

The last step was to bring it all together and install using this combination of the dimensional forms and type. The space I used was approximately 8 x 15 feet long. I chose to cover the projected area in paper, firstly to hide the inconsistencies on the floor, but also to activate the space with color. Additionally, the color helped the shadows stand out more, and I thought yellow related to the concept as it’s often used to represent light.

The hanging pieces were installed with a simple pulley system by attaching fishing line to the paper, then stringing it above, which then allowed me to pull the type up and down manually and shift the shadows at various angles.



The final space covered approximately 8 x 15 feet.



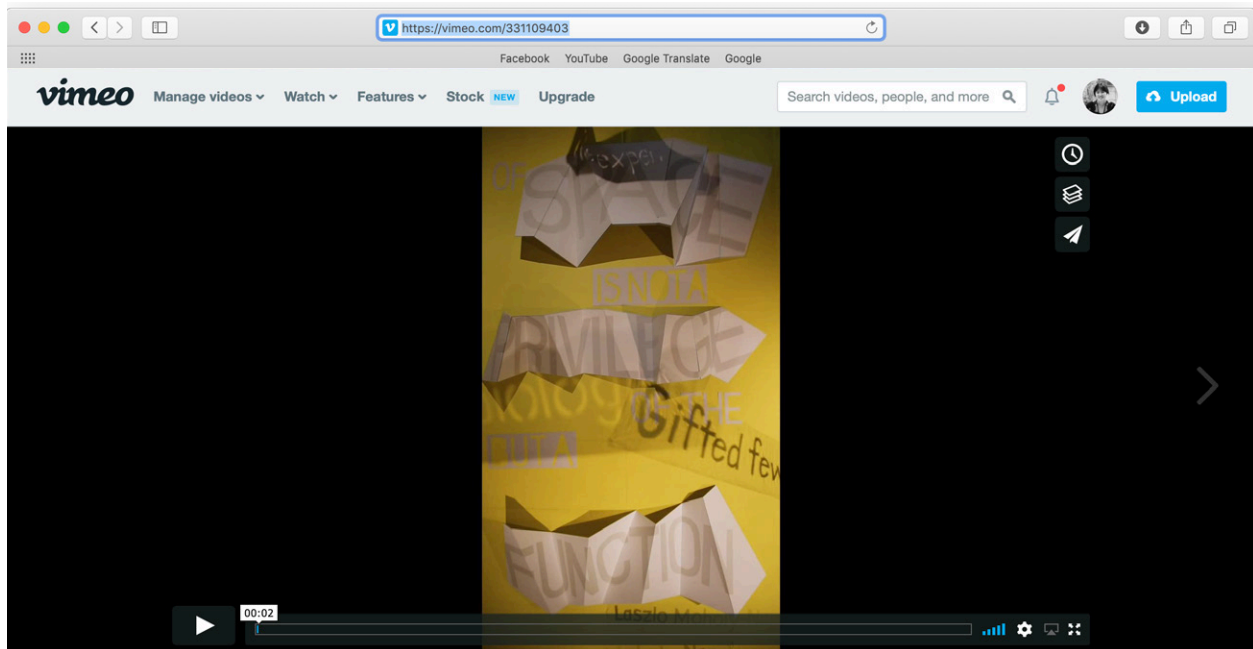
Shadow movement was achieved with multiple pulleys attached to the type templates. Later explorations involved using both arms and legs to manipulate the templates.

Movement

I placed a camera above the entire space and recorded the movements of shadows. I started by just using my hands to move the type, acting almost as a puppeteer handling up to four different pulleys at one time. I also tried attaching the pulleys to my legs to see how full-body movements could be used to manipulate the type.

End Results

The end product lives as a moving poster in video format, about 6 minutes in length. I created this by taking all the footage I had, and selected the most interesting interactions of shadow and form and then over-layed footage on top of each other.



View animation at <https://vimeo.com/331109403>

Reflections and Further Explorations

Going into this thesis project, I had little idea where it would end. What I thought it might look like and what it ended up looking like were two different things. This was a very process-orientated project that involved a greater amount of conceptualizing than most design projects I'm used to. Another large part of this process also centered on understanding different facets of art and design, such as installation and performance art and how they could contribute to creating something in the field of graphic design.

This project acted as a start to me thinking more critically and conceptually about my role as a graphic designer and what that can mean for the work I create. There are several aspects of this thesis I would like to continue in the future.

1. Developing the performative aspect further by exploring the interaction of full-body movements with typographic movement.
2. Further exploration of the overlapping different words and the meaning that can be derived and evoked by combining words with shadow and form.
3. Exploring other ideas not involving shadows but focusing on the original idea of a poster as a recorded space.

Sources

Written

2D Design (n.d.). In Cranbrook Academy of Art.

A Brief History of the Poster (n.d.). In International Poster Gallery. Retrieved from <https://www.internationalposter.com/a-brief-history-of-the-poster/>

Benyon, L. (2016, September). A New Poster Movement. In AIGA Eye on Design. Retrieved from <https://eyeondesign.aiga.org/a-new-poster-movement/>

Bishop, C. (2005, January). But is it installation art?. In Tate. Retrieved from <https://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/articles/it-in-stallation-art>

By Hand: Handmade Elements in Graphic Design. (2009). Tokyo: PIE BOOKS.

Lupton, E., & Lipps, A. (2018). The Senses: Design Beyond Vision. New York City, NY: Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, and Princeton Architectural Press.

Mooth, B. (2013, December). Stefan Sagmeister on Art, Design and Happiness. In Print Magazine.

Morely, M. (2016, June). Graphic Design as Performance Art. In AIGA Eye on Design. Retrieved from <https://eyeondesign.aiga.org/graphic-design-as-performance-art/>

Muraben, B. (2017, March). But Is It Art? 6 Things We Learned at Frieze's Graphic Design for Art Symposium. In AIGA Eye on Design.

Stefan Sagmeister (2014, June). In Poster Poster. Retrieved December 13, 2018, from <http://www.posterposter.org/master-featured/stefan-sagmeister/>

Strizver, I. (2016, January). The Typographic Expressions of Stefan Sagmeister. In TypeTalk. Retrieved from <https://creativepro.com/typetalk-the-typographic-expressions-of-stefan-sagmeister/>

Trochut, A. (2016, May). The difference between art and design. In Creative Bloq.

Visual

Goossens, M. (Artist). Hair Typography. [Hair].

Gupta, A. (Artist). (2017). Together We Rise. [Poster].

The Rodina. (2017). Mass Makeup: Freckles [Performance].

Sagmeister, S. (Artist). AIGA Colorado Banana. [Banana].

Sagmeister, S. (Artist). (2008). Banana Wall. [Installation].

Sagmeister, S. (Artist). (1999). AIGA Detroit. [Poster].

Sagmeister, S. (Artist). Levi's, The Strongest Thread. [Print].

Schlemmer, O. (Choreographer). (1922). Triadisches Ballett [Performance].

Walsh, J. (Artist). (2018). NY Times Magazine - Resist. [Print].