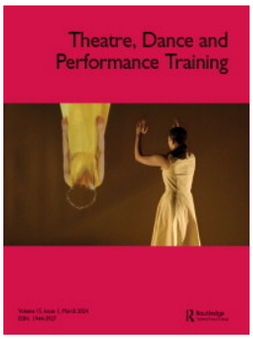

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# Concrete experience: Parkour as a culture of agential learning

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# Concrete experience: Parkour as a culture of agential learning

Campbell Edinborough

The field of performer training remains closely entwined with the authorial vision of twentieth Century practitioners. Performers in the context of theatre and dance are still trained to embody specific ways of being and doing, defined in relation the aesthetic and philosophical concerns of artists making work in the last century. However, as industry practices and scholarship move further away from paradigms of single authorship, or ensembles tied to the vision of auteurs, conventional, studio-based training practices have come under scrutiny. This has led educators and institutions to explore alternative models of training, prioritising student agency and choice. This article analyses the decentralised training practices of Parkour. It examines how Parkour practitioners use video sharing to spread innovations in practice and technique, establishing a training culture that promotes agential learning and experimentation. By looking at online documentation of training and video sharing from the Parkour team Storror, the article argues that Parkour training establishes models of experimentation and innovation that are decentralised and rooted in the agency and curiosity of the practitioner. The article concludes by considering how culture and practices from Parkour might inform the broader field of performer training – articulating strategies for encouraging student agency in learning.

**Keywords:** Parkour, learning, agency, video-sharing, Storror

## Introduction

Since its inception in 1990s France, the practice and growth of Parkour - first known as L'Art du déplacement, and also referred to as Freerunning - has been closely tied to its representation on screen. Early practitioners of the form made use of video to share and publicise their work (Angel 2016, 83). Later their practices were co-opted and celebrated by feature filmmakers (Yamakasi: Les Samouris des

Temps Moderne 2001; District 13 2004; Casino Royale 2006), advertisers (BBC 2003) and documentarians (Jump London 2003; Jump Britain 2005). More recently, increased availability of high-quality cameras and video sharing through the internet has led to an explosion of parkour video content. As vlogging has become a more viable way of generating income, parkour practitioners have begun to document their own practices as filmmakers. This has resulted in an ever growing, if inchoate, video archive of the form's development – establishing a body of excellent documentation of training, accessible online through sites like Youtube, TikTok and Instagram. While scholarship is beginning to explore the impact of media on the development and organisation of the sport (Toscano 2024), so far, little has been done to analyse and evaluate this 'archive' as an important repository for those interested in the study of movement training, education and learning.

This article will draw on available online documentation to analyse training and media-sharing practices from Parkour in relation to theories of agential learning. It will analyse how Parkour training provides learners with frameworks that afford them agency, choice and individuality in the process of learning - establishing a movement practice with a diverse and dispersed 'ownership'. I will carry out this analysis through viewing the growing corpus of excellent parkour documentation through the lens of constructivist theories of learning - which conceptualise the learner as a producer (rather than a recipient) of meaning and understanding. Through making this connection I will argue that Parkour practice can be understood as an important and evolving contribution to the field of movement training.

The article will also argue that the models of problem-based learning seen in video documentation of Parkour training provide valuable provocations for the wider field of performer training – especially in the context of higher education. As industry practices and scholarship move further away from paradigms of single authorship, or ensembles tied to the vision of auteurs, conventional, studio-based training practices have come under scrutiny (Camilleri 2015). This has led educators and education providers to seek out and develop models of training that prioritise student-centred learning and agency. The article will conclude by examining how approaches from Parkour might be understood to have broader relevance to the field of performing arts education, as educators and institutions seek to prepare learners to flourish in an evolving and diversifying cultural sector.

## Parkour as a culture of agential learning

It is difficult to capture the practice of Parkour in one all-encompassing definition. The nature of the form's emergence and subsequent transmission has led practitioners to follow different pathways, with their practices inflected by diverse ideologies and philosophies. More recently, there

have been concrete attempts to codify the practice as a sport under the banner of the International Gymnastics Federation (FIG). However, this move has many critics, including those from Parkour Earth - a rival international federation - who have described FIG's actions as 'the encroachment, misappropriation and the attempt to usurp Parkour as a 'discipline' of gymnastics' (Bull 2023). Beyond this, there are broader questions, as Bull's article in *The Guardian* notes, as to whether Parkour should be understood as a 'sport, practice or performance' – or, indeed, all three.

Such questions and debates are often framed in relation to ongoing attempts to untangle the different branches of Parkour's development back to an authentic source. Most historical accounts locate Parkour's origins in the Parisian suburbs of Lisses and Evry during the 1990s – with scholarship (Aggerholm and Larsen 2017; Angel 2016; Chow 2010) echoing the claims of organisations like FIG (2003). These histories tend to situate Parkour in relation to Georges Hébert's legacy within French military training and physical education, noting the influence of traditional obstacle course training (*parcours de combattant*) and the 'Methode Naturelle' on Raymond Belle - a fireman and father of L'Art de déplacement leader David Belle. However, it is worth considering whether it might be equally productive and accurate to consider Parkour not as a lineage, but as a diaspora.

Rather than thinking about Parkour as a single, authenticable practice, we might consider it as a diverse body of ideas, techniques and cultural practices that have been constellated to capture and describe a range of activities which have cohered around the mythmaking, teaching and autobiographies of the form's early founders. Doing so allows us to make sense of Parkour's capacity to manifest simultaneously as a sport, a practice and a performance, but it also allows us to recognise the distinctive, crowd-sourced nature of the form's transmission and development. While it is undoubtedly true that the identity and early grammar of Parkour emerged from the explorations of David Belle, Sébastien Foucan and the Yamakasi in Lisses and Evry, once videos of the practice entered the mainstream through TV and cinema, it became possible for geographically dispersed communities to adopt and contribute to the development of the practice, drawing on the specificity of their own environments, backgrounds, bodies and interests.

Such a reading of Parkour has implications for understanding its cultural history. However, in the context of this article, I am more interested in the pedagogical implications of understanding Parkour in this way. Specifically, I am interested in Parkour as a space that protects and promotes the agency of the learner through prioritising personalised problem setting over formal teaching. Zeiser, Scholz and Cirks define student agency as 'the ability to manage one's learning [through taking] an active role in seeking and internalising new knowledge' (2018, 1). Implicit in this definition is the idea that agential learning unfolds in contexts where students are afforded opportunities to take ownership over their engagement with learning – making choices about the activities they engage in and reflecting on the value of their experiences. Learners with

agency are learners who recognise the centrality of their status as makers (or seekers) of meaning and understanding.

Understanding Parkour as a form that has emerged and evolved through dispersed individuals and communities responding to inspirational videos, establishes it as a space in which the importance of the learner's personal interests outweighs that of an identified teacher or a fixed definition of the form. In Parkour, learners commonly seek out models for the practice they want to develop, reversing conventional dynamics between teacher and student. While the founders of Parkour were (and continue to be) vital figures in expanding the visibility and training methods of the form, Parkour's technical development and popularity (as I will demonstrate through analysing video documentation later in this article) is equally indebted to the men and women who, in the absence of direct teaching or coaching, were inspired by early videos to go outside and form communities by balancing on rails, vaulting walls and tracing lines of movement between the two.

The contributions of communities far removed from Lisses and Every show that participating in Parkour at a very high level does not necessitate the formal guidance of a sanctioned teacher or expert. Although Parkour has codified and recognisable techniques that one can learn through coaching in gyms (such as: plyos (plyometric jumps), pres (precision jumps), cat leaps and vaults), it is through social exchange – not teaching - that the form and its terminology has evolved, diversified, and been made concrete. In most instances, the Parkour gyms that are now widespread across the globe emerged from the informal communities that coalesced around the practice. The classes and curricula found in gyms were preceded by the communities who explored and defined the form in the absence of formal teaching.

My colleague Alice O'Grady has written in the pages of this journal:

> Parkour is a social activity. Training usually takes place in the presence of others in a mutually supportive environment. Strong bonds are formed through affiliation to the group and peer-to-peer training relationships develop. (O'Grady 2012, 151)

O'Grady's article demonstrates the sociality of the training method in great detail, drawing on insightful interviews with practitioners. However, her analysis does not articulate how this sociality draws so heavily on inspiration from media. Throughout its history, parkour practitioners (sometimes called 'traceurs') have accessed documentation of the form on TV or online, met with peers and mentors, set physical challenges in their local environment and then tried to solve them. In my own practice, I have had numerous conversations with people in parkour who trace their initiation into the practice back to watching documentaries like Jump London (2003) or Jump Britain (2005) or, more recently, viral videos made by teams like Storror, Phat or Farang.

These personal conversations are echoed by interviews with other practitioners. In an interview with Rafe Kelley (2023), Toby Segar,

parkour practitioner and member of the British parkour team Storror, noted that his journey into the practice was inspired by watching Jump Britain (2005) at a young age. In the interview, he describes watching the film and then making connections with other young people who wanted to explore the practice in their own towns and cities. Perhaps of greater relevance to my argument, in the same interview Kelley talks about his own entry into the practice and reflects on the ways in which watching videos from France allowed him and his peers to name and bring a coherent identity to practices that they were already exploring as people interested in gymnastics and martial arts. Kelley's description is echoed by Segar's Storror team-mate Callum Powell in an interview with The Motus Project (2020). In the interview, Powell reflects on watching *Jump Britain* and notes that the practice of parkour he saw on TV felt connected the self-directed physical play he was already exploring with friends in the woods near his home.

Such experiences do not undermine the importance of figures like Foucan or Belle, or the work they developed with their peers in Lisses and Evry. They do, however, show how the founders' work was not always consumed in the context of conventional master/follower or teacher/student relationships. The reflections provided by Kelley, Powell and Segar demonstrate how Parkour videos documenting the work of early practitioners functioned as learning and research resources for practitioners, who would draw on them in the development of their own practice, and in the formation of their learning communities. The videos provided viewers with examples of rigorous practice, but, perhaps more importantly, they also shaped a culture and an identity for individuals and communities who were already establishing connections through play, gymnastics and martial arts. The management of learning and internalisation new knowledge - to return to Zeiser, Scholz and Cirks' definition of agential learning (2018, 1) - took place amongst peers, with the instruction or example of the master or teacher provided from a distance through videos shared online.

## 'Flames every Monday': analysing storror's online archives

In this Section I will extend my analysis of the centrality of video sharing to contemporary Parkour training. I will also explore how practices of documentation and filmmaking in Parkour evidence and advocate Parkour training as an agential learning practice. To do this I want to look at the work of the UK Parkour team Storror. The Storror video blog (https://www.youtube.com/@STORROR) was founded in 2010. Videos are released every Monday on YouTube, with further videos made available on Fridays for paid subscribers. Storror's YouTube channel has (at the time of writing) 9.86 million subscribers – making it one of the most popular English language parkour channels on the platform. Their popularity is related to their excellence as parkour practitioners, as well as to the sometimes-controversial nature of Parkour as a disruptive mode of engagement with public and private space. However, it can also be

attributed to their innovative, early use of point-of-view and drone videography in documenting Parkour practice at height[1].

Storror's most popular video *Rooftop Escape POV* (Storror 2017) has had over 114 million views on YouTube and shows members of the team traversing rooftops from the perspective of one of the runners[2]. To achieve this effect, Benj Cave holds a small GoPro camera between his teeth, allowing the spectator to effectively see through the eyes of the practitioner. Storror's viral success stems from the combination of their innovative use of this GoPro technology and their ability to practise at stress-inducing, death-defying height. Their gonzo filmmaking makes use of (relatively) cheap video technology, which allows them to echo the spectacular, action aesthetics used by professional filmmakers to present the earlier practice of David Belle (District 13 2004), Sébastien Foucan (Casino Royale 2006) and the Yamakasi (Yamakasi: Les Samouris des Temps Moderne 2001). However, although Storror's most viewed videos are rooted in the spectacular aesthetics that brought Parkour into the mainstream, it is important to note that the majority of Storror's weekly output prioritises the documentation of process over the presentation of spectacle. Each weekly video includes extraordinary technical feats, but most of the material included in Storror's output is concerned with showing the process of their training. It is this focus on process that I want to spend time analysing, as it exemplifies the active and agential training at the heart of most Parkour video making.

## Case-study one: *floor is LAVA parkour challenge* (Storror 2020a)

Storror's videos are useful resources in the way that they illustrate the varied training processes found in Parkour practice. One of these is the process of finding places or 'spots' to train. As a practice rooted in the physical exploration of the urban environment, Parkour necessitates practitioners searching out varied spots to train and explore. Storror's videos demonstrate the lengths that the team goes to find exciting and challenging locations to train. Indeed, in their video *RIP Thamesmead – Behind the Lines* the Storror co-founder Benj Cave describes his process of trawling through bird's-eye-view images of urban space on Google Maps in search of unusual buildings and structures (Storror 2020b).

The value of doing this research and searching out such unique locations is well-represented in Storror's 2020 video 'Floor is LAVA Parkour Challenge' (Storror 2020a), which shows the team training on Michael Dan Archer's 2008 environmental sculpture *Seafarers* in the South West of England[3]. The sculpture consists of 108 granite pillars between 1 m and 3 m tall arranged in a wave-like formation overlooking the Bristol Channel. Drawing inspiration from the affordances of the spot and the Netflix TV show *The Floor is Lava* (itself inspired by a childhood game), the team set themselves the challenge of striding (jumping from one foot to another) from the first to the last column without touching the floor. This 'line' of movement presents an exacting challenge, bringing together the need for endurance, strength and technical precision.

1 It is worth noting here that all the members of Storror are men. I have chosen to explore their videos due to their status as the most well-known parkour team in the world. It is beyond the scope of this article to explore the question of parkour training (and its resulting agential learning) as gendered. However, Storror's approach to training and documentation is closely echoed in the work of female associates such as Hazal Nehir. For a more detailed discussion of parkour and gender see Wheaton (2016).

2 I recommend readers watch the videos referenced alongside reading the article.

3 This video resulted in some controversy, with some, including the artist, describing the act as disrespectful given that the sculpture was developed as a memorial for those lost at sea (Pickstock 2020).

The video aptly illustrates multiple aspects of parkour's training practice. It documents how, once the team had recognised the affordances of the spot, the different team members set about developing strategies for completing the challenge. Throughout the video it's possible to see the different strategies used for approaching the task, with multiple sequences showing failure as different team members fall from the columns. These sequences are intercut with the team analysing and discussing problems and issues.

Discussions include:

- brothers Max and Benj Cave describing the challenge of maintaining enough explosive power to complete the line;
- Toby Segar noting the perceptual and physical challenge of maintaining a balanced positioning of his chest over the pillars as he strides from one to the next;
- Benj Cave noting a loss of power when striding to a pillar on an inclined part of the ground.

This final piece of analysis is used by Cave to facilitate a change his technique. He alters the line, choosing an alternate route and shifting from his striding pattern of jumping into a two-footed plyometric jump at the final incline of the run. This allows him enough power to complete the line to cheers from his teammates. On completing the line Cave sits down and describes the complexity of the challenge:

> That's such a mental and physical battle. Out of breath and kind of dizzy and lost within these squares where your supposed to be. That change of course was definitely a good thing. It helped a lot. (Cave in Storror 2020a)

The narrative arc of the video moves from outlining the challenge of a physical location, to documenting the trial-and-error process of training a line through the spot (through analysis, discussion and physical repetition), to the completion of the challenge from some, but not all, of the team-members. Perhaps most interesting (and not uncommon in Parkour videos) is the fact that the video shows the process of failure in as much detail as it shows success. The edit includes a number of bails, as well as the incomplete final runs of Toby Segar and Max Cave, both of whom call time on their attempts with a smile and a sense of satisfaction at having tried even if they hadn't succeeded.

The reason that I am at pains to describe the material in the video, which I hope readers will also watch, is because I think it illustrates the agential and social nature of parkour training in both a rigorous and detailed way. The video shows a process in which practitioners seek out and define a challenge, work collaboratively to anlayse and articulate its difficulties, and engage in a process of trial and error to complete this task. In this way, Storror's process directly mirrors theoretical models from the field of experiential learning research. In attempting the challenge, Storror can be seen independently working through the various stages of David Kolb's reflective cycle of experiential learning (Kolb and Fry 1975). They move from abstract conceptualisation (seeking an appropriate challenge), to active experimentation (developing practical strategies to meet the challenge), to concrete experience (applying strategies

in practice), to reflective observation (evaluating strategies in relation to their successes and failures) - cycling through these phases and clearly demonstrating a process of arriving at new skills through connecting self-reflection to concrete experience.

It's important to point out that I am not using Kolb's theory to validate or bolster Storror's method or approach. I use it instead to draw attention to the rigour of Storror's training and process of documentation, and to the value of their videos for those interested in studying movement training. Indeed, as much as anything, the concrete examples of experiential learning found in Storror's training videos provide useful evidence for validating and exemplifying Kolb's claims about learning. The correlation between the stages of Kolb's theoretical framework and the team's reflections on their own experience also show the agential nature of their learning. The verbal reflections provided by Storror in the video show the team engaged in the kind metacognition that educational theorists (Brame 2016; Zeiser, Scholz, and Cirks 2018) associate with agential and active learning. They demonstrate that they are thinking about their own learning and skill development. They take ownership of the process of skill acquisition through searching out individual and collective approaches to the challenge. They draw out general and specific features of their approach to mastering a challenge. Perhaps most importantly, they reflect on the meaning of the challenge in the wider context of their practice.

## Case-study two: *manpower – most ICONIC roof gap in parkour's history* (Storror 2019)

The reflective process described in Kolb's theory of experiential learning is visible in the vast majority of Storror's videos. This is particularly clear in the videos that show the team members wrestling with failure and psychological challenge. One excellent example can be seen in the 2019 video *Manpower – Most ICONIC roof gap in Parkour's History* (Storror 2019). This video is particularly relevant to the argument I am developing in this article, because it shows the team making a pilgrimage to Lisses to explore the sites in which Belle, Foucan and the Yamakasi first developed their practice. It also demonstrates the important role of video sharing in inspiring Parkour practice, with the vlog focusing on Storror's attempt to complete the roof gap jump known as 'Manpower' - probably best known as one of David Belle's most impressive parkour stunts in the action film District 13 (2004)[4].

In the introduction to the video Drew Taylor notes:

> The jump is one of the most iconic jumps in Parkour history. It's called Manpower. Named after a shop or a bank that was beneath there. We've had this idea for a long, long time. And today is the day. It's going to be interesting to see this jump for the first time because we've seen it in so many videos. We've seen so many people do it. (in Storror 2019)

Returning to the centrality of video sharing to Parkour practice, Taylor's words demonstrate the use a video media as a resource and research tool for guiding the process of personal and community

4 Although the jump is best known from District 13 – Belle first filmed it for his 1998 video SpeedAirMan (Jimmy the Giant 2020).

challenge setting. The video recognises the founders of Parkour (particularly David Belle) as both examples and influences for training, but it does not centre them within the pedagogy. The founders are not actively involved - instead, their practice provides an example of problem-setting that inspires the exploration of dispersed learning community who manage their own learning.

The documentation of Storror's experience at Manpower is interesting in the way it represents the felt experience of exploring challenges set and documented by other practitioners. At one point in the video, each member of the team stands on the ledge and looks down at the (insane) drop they are about to try. In those moments it is possible to see the team reckon with the seriousness of the challenge. When Callum Powell stands on the ledge, he looks down and says 'Oh man. This is going to be heavy. That's no fucking joke.' (in Storror 2019)

After Powell completes the jump, he reflects on David Belle being the first person to do it:

> [I] cannot imagine what this scene must have looked like for David Belle to do this for the first time … To be the first to do this at the young stage that Parkour was at, maybe over twenty years ago or something. It hadn't even left France yet. The techniques were so … not underdeveloped, but … basic. They were just strong men. They would take drops like this for breakfast. It must have taken a different fucking mentality to be the first person to do this. (in Storror 2019)

This reflection is interesting in how it shows Powell's personal experience of breaking the jump facilitating a process of imagining the felt experiences of Belle and the Yamakasi. It shows the unique reflexive relationship between 'teacher' and 'learner' that Parkour's use of video resources allows. Through choosing to explore a challenge set by another practitioner, the learner (Powell) not only explores and engages their own agency, they also enter into a reflective engagement with the agency and bodily experience of other practitioners. In this way, Storror's pilgrimage video shows a novel kind of training lineage at play in Parkour. The learner establishes a relationship to a master or teacher through choosing to enter into imaginative dialogue with their practice – drawing on video documentation and the exploration of a spot or challenge, rather than direct person-to-person transmission. Such an approach transforms the nature of master/student transmission in training – destabilising its conventional power relationships. Instead of seeking affirmation or guidance from an expert, Powell reflects abstractly on his own concrete experience of the jump in order to empathise with (and reflect on) the practitioners who have come before him. Although he was inspired by the work of previous practitioners, he was the one responsible for managing his learning - taking 'an active role in seeking and internalising new knowledge' (Zeiser, Scholz, and Cirks 2018, 1).

Later in the video, we see another side of this process as Sasha Powell and Josh Burnett-Blake struggle to overcome their (entirely sensible) concerns about the jump's potential consequences. The video documents

Powell struggling with the question of whether he can make the distance of the jump, before he finally takes the leap. When I first watched this video. I felt myself holding my breath as Powell rocked backwards on his feet ready to jump. This kind of affective response to watching the videos is not uncommon for me, and is perhaps connected to the ways in which Storror's videographic approach shifts between immersive POV and more conventional forms of documentary.

After Powell's successful jump the video shows Burnett-Blake struggling with the idea of jumping. This is intercut with Benj Cave analysing this struggle:

> Josh right now is going through a bit of a battle. He never takes too much impact when he trains – just for body reasons. He doesn't do it all that often. He's capable of doing this. But it's not something he would normally do. (in Storror 2019)

After another minute of Burnett-Blake contemplating the jump, Sasha Powell notes:

> Josh has said that this is his last attempt, going on the edge and seeing if he feels it. If he doesn't do it on this attempt it's fine. He doesn't need to do it. Only he can make the call of course. (in Storror 2019)

Eventually, as the police arrive to bring Storror down from the roof, Burnett-Blake steps off the roof, saying 'No. I'm not doing it.' The video then cuts to other team members reflecting on this being a sensible decision, noting that it's not worth pushing through discomfort when a challenge has such serious potential consequences.

The video's representation of Burnett-Blake's struggle with the challenge is sensitively portrayed, with the team representing the humility, understanding and compassion needed for peer-support with this kind of major challenge. The shift to analysing the psychological difficulty of breaking the jump is also dramaturgically interesting in the context of the video's subject matter, as Josh Burnett-Blake's struggle allows the viewer to think back to Callum Powell's reflection on David Belle's mindset as the first person to break the jump at Manpower. The narrative sophistication of the documentation of the Manpower jump evidences Storror's sensitivity as filmmakers[5], but perhaps more importantly, in the context of this article, it illustrates their metacognitive abilities as practitioners. The videos not only show the team reflecting on their concrete experience as they speak to the camera - they are also edited and structured so to demonstrate the abstract insights gained by the practitioners through their learning.

5 Although Storror do not provide credits for their work, with much of the footage being gathered collectively through phones and GoPros, many of their videos reference the important role of Sascha Powell and Toby Segar in filming and editing the videos.

## Case-study three: the Storror awards

With the previous two case-studies I have tried to make a case not only for Parkour as a form of reflective and agential learning but also for the sophistication of Parkour's growing video archive. To extend this account I want to use the final case-study to further analyse the symbiotic relationship between the Parkour community and its online video archives. In

the previous case-study I introduced the ways in which practitioners engage agentially with the video documentation of influential figures and peers. In this case study, I want to examine the strategies that Storror have developed to recognise and celebrate their peers. While I have spent much of this article looking at contemporary Parkour's mediated relationship to its founding figures, it is also worthwhile to note the influence that Storror themselves have on the wider field of practice.

Storror's viral success and enormous subscriber-base have led to their approach to documenting parkour becoming something of a template for parkour teams – particularly in the UK. This is evidenced by the approach to documentation used by other teams like Phat and Farang; by individual practitioners such as Hazal Nehir and Katie McDonnell; and collaborative documentary projects that bring together different practitioners (including members of Storror), such as the viral *Capstone Project*[6]. Many of the strategies used by Storror to develop and maintain the popularity of their vlog have been reproduced by other teams. Such strategies include the ways in which they edit together sequences of training and commentary, as well as some of the format styles they use (such as videos based around water challenges or friendly competitions between team members). However, here I am less interested in analysing the narratology of parkour vlogs, than I am in exploring the ways in which learning communities share innovation through video production. With this in mind, I turn to analysing the annual Storror Awards.

6 The Capstone Project was started in 2022. It brings together different parkour practitioners to create videos in the promotion of clothing and merchandise. The relationship between crowdfunding, patronage, merch and video production in parkour is a topic for another article!

The Storror Awards can be understood as a slightly tongue-in-cheek Parkour Oscars. With categories including best male and female practitioner, best team (Squad Goals) and several other categories for individual achievement in various Parkour disciplines. Each Christmas Storror invite Parkour practitioners to submit videos (through a process of Instagram tagging) in the various categories. Storror then produce a video in which they present the videos and deliberate the winners, with money and merch offered as prizes. Perhaps most relevant to my current discussion are the categories of the Lightbulb Moment and the Mad Scientist Award. The Light Bulb Moment represents 'a move that we've never seen before in the community.' (Powell in Storror 2022) The Mad Scientist Award is for 'the person whose been the most creative. Added the most new movements to the sport. The one doing stuff that nobody else in doing.' (Cave in Storror 2022) Both of these awards are used to share videos of innovative practice, with practitioners chaining together techniques in innovative ways or exploring skills in novel ways or unusual contexts. As an example of this, we might look at Jannis Schauer's techniques of putting baby oil or water on balustrades and rails so that he can slide down them on his shoes in the way a skateboader might rail-slide (Schauer 2020). Another example is Joe Scandrett's practice of inverted descents (Storror 2021) – where he jumps backwards from a wall towards the top of a lamppost before sliding headfirst down to the ground (!!).

The videos shared within the Storror Awards are useful examples of the way in which processes of video documentation are enmeshed within processes of training. They illustrate how practitioners working in

dispersed communities connect through social media in order to inspire each other, creating networks that facilitate innovation and guide the development of the form. They also show the ways in which Parkour training does not rely on clearly identified teachers or a fixed curriculum. The Mad Scientist Award and the Lightbulb Moment Award can be understood as exemplary in the way that they illustrate individuals working agentially, innovating without supervision or sanction from a central authority.

While the founders of Parkour continue to train and provide inspiration for others, they are not required to provide a centre for a practice that thrives and revels in its diasporic nature. For many years the Manpower jump was seen as the pinnacle of achievement in parkour. However, as younger practitioners search out their own concrete experiences and learning, the form continues to evolve. In recent years, practitioners travelling to Paris from across the world have gone way beyond jumping the gap at Manpower. They have performed dive-rolls, gainers, and double flips at Parkour's most iconic location. The avant-garde of Parkour is no longer defined by its founders – it is crowd-sourced *via* a globally dispersed network of practitioners reflecting on, and responding to, each other's practice through video sharing.

## What can performer training learn from the documentation of Parkour?

When thinking about what the wider field of performing training can learn from Parkour, perhaps the simplest thing to note is the power of video documentation for sharing innovation in practice. Storror exemplify how video-sharing allows dispersed communities with aligned identities to draw on examples of other people's practice and use it to develop their own. Through engaging with documentation of other practitioners setting, working through, and reflecting on specific challenges, learners can develop the scope of their own training. However, I hope my analysis of Storror also makes it clear that agential learning doesn't simply occur through watching YouTube. Watching videos must be connected to concrete experience and a desire to explore a practice. Parkour practice shows that in order to benefit from engaging with documentation of other people's practice, learners must connect their experience of watching innovative work or training to their personal interests and lived experience. They must place themselves at the centre of their learning, forging an empathetic and reflective relationship between their own practice and the examples set by practitioners found online.

The second finding that I think is worth considering here is the relationship between challenge setting and agency in learning and training. Through connecting Storror's process to the theories of David Kolb, I demonstrated how Parkour training unfolds as a process of experiential and reflective learning – where practitioners manage their learning through taking 'an active role in seeking and internalising new knowledge' (Zeiser, Scholz, and Cirks 2018, 1). Constructivist theories of active learning frame the learner as a maker of meaning (Lumpkin, Achen, and

Dodd 2015), where knowledge is produced rather than received. Storror's videos, and those produced by a range of contemporary parkour practitioners, show challenge setting as a process of inquiry and development – where the practitioner/learner sets challenges that they find personally meaningful. The videos demonstrate that when people set their own challenges within a practice, they can reflect on their experience, and the experience of others, when searching for solutions. This is particularly the case when individuals are supported by peers.

Parkour provides a non-institutionalised model of active learning - where innovation and experimentation are driven by personal research and challenge setting. Brame has argued that active, agential learning occurs in contexts that allow students to construct their own knowledge through exploring activities and then reflecting on the skills gained using higher order thinking (2016). Such a model raises questions about whether students engaged in performer training might benefit from greater opportunity to set their own goals for development. In an institutional context, this might mean the creation of an approach where curriculum content and perhaps some learning outcomes could be left undefined by teachers. It would demand provision of training that focused more on the development of metacognitive skills (learning about learning) than the acquisition of predetermined technical performance skills. It would also demand the creation of a context in which peer support flourishes and learners feel supported to place themselves at the centre of their learning. In other words, it might mean de-institutionalising institutions.

The third finding that I want to consider relates to the importance of connecting individual learning to the learning of people within wider networks. One thing that Parkour evidences extremely effectively is the way that peer support and a globally networked community of agential practitioners drives innovation and success. Contemporary learning in Parkour relies on a wealth of video resources that illustrate successful training processes. Mad Scientists like Joe Scandrett and Jannis Schauer would be unlikely to exist without the broader network of practitioners documenting their successes and failures, sharing their tricks and techniques, and supporting each other through celebrating and critiquing each other's work. This raises important questions for the field of performer training about how institutions and curricula might be connected and networked to allow for excellence (and failure) to be effectively shared, critiqued and developed.

The lack of governing bodies, looseness of affiliation and relative ease of access to participation establish a porousness to Parkour that facilitates knowledge sharing across is diasporic communities. By contrast, the majority of performer training happens in institutions that are required to provide an exclusive or unique offer to students (or clients) and differentiate themselves from competitors. Exclusivity is often connected to an authenticable connection to lineage or access to expertise validated through a governing body. While it is far beyond the scope of this article to question whether higher education institutions would benefit from being structured in different ways, the flexibility and porousness of

Parkour's global networks serves as an example for the benefits of working in more open, loose and responsive ways. Much of Parkour's innovation comes through connecting rigorous, personal practice to the chaotic influence and inspiration of global, viral sharing. It's worth asking what that might look like in the context of formal performing arts training. It's also worth imagining how such a loosening of curricula might reshape and reinvigorate the performing arts.

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