Selling Ballet: Dancer as Commodity in the Advertising Campaigns of American Ballet Companies

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Tattered, torn, windswept clothing drapes loosely on a striking young man and woman. Frayed fragments of fabric appear as if they could slip seductively off to reveal lean torsos at any moment. She perches on his shoulder, and his arm threads between her lithe sinewy thighs. Pressing his hand against her belly, his exposed muscular chest seems to heave as he nestles his face into the arched small of her back. She presses her hand against his, her head thrown to one side in ecstasy, as her free arm drapes luxuriously over her tousled disheveled hair.

Although this paragraph might read like a description of the cover image of a cheap romance novel, it is actually describing an image used to advertise American Ballet Theatre's 2011 production of the ballet, *Manon*.[1] Gone are the visual codes indicative of ballet; we see no pointe shoes, tights, or tutus. What we *do* see is an abundance of flesh and a tone of eroticism. It provokes the question: What exactly is being marketed here?

Selling Ballet?

Navigating the tumultuous and exponentially evolving 21st century in late capitalism, the ubiquitous nature of advertising is an accepted norm. Although many of us would like to believe arts organizations are a lofty enough endeavor that they need

not fall prey to the need for slick marketing strategies, most arts organizations in the United States operate more like corporate businesses than we would like to believe. For US ballet companies, fiscally dependent on donor support and box office sales, the efficacy of advertising campaigns can be crucial to survival. In response to this reality, in recent years several American ballet companies have grasped for public attention by embarking on advertising campaigns that merchandise neither the art form nor the experience of a live theatrical production, but the dancers—either by sexually objectifying the dancers' bodies or by commoditizing individual dancers' personalities. This notion of treating dancers as objects of desire or as commodities—for buying, selling, and owning—is certainly not new, but I argue this sort of tactic is an outdated, no longer acceptable, mode of cultural transaction in a society striving for equality and social justice. My intention is not to superficially criticize these companies and their advertising campaigns; I aim, rather, to bring to light the issue of how dancers are represented, and to suggest that marketing might be successful in promoting productions without resorting to devices of objectification. By analyzing images from recent marketing campaigns of US ballet companies, this article reveals subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, ways images may objectify dancers. These images raise questions about how we advertise art—specifically an art form that emphasizes the aesthetic of the human body in motion, applauds the ephemeral qualities of individual performers, and champions human expression. If the goal is to highlight the beauty and poetry of which the body is capable, when does an image cross the line between artistic expression and become an objectification?

Recent controversial advertising campaigns of ballet companies have been a topic of discussion on websites, blogs, magazines, and major newspapers. The most opinionated voices criticizing the advertising images have been those most closely associated with the dance world, such as noted dance critics Tobi Tobias and Joan Acocella. In contrast to these opinionated observations, an article in the *Wall Street Journal* reporting on the innovation of NYCB's 2010 advertising campaign focused on the novelty of a ballet company trying a new means of advertising rather than evaluating the effectiveness or critiquing the content of the camaign itself. To my knowledge, no scholarly articles have been published on these specific advertising campaigns, and few scholarly publications deal with marketing ballet in general.[2] Most applicable to this particular research are articles published in the field of marketing. Douglas Holt's "Why Do Brands Cause Trouble?" discusses the evolution of the advertising industry's use of branding and how the process has developed through a postmodern era. His work is particularly helpful in understanding how marketing has developed into a cultural authority. Francois Colbert's "Beyond Branding: Contemporary Marketing Challenges for Arts Organizations" notes the increased need for arts marketing due to a surplus of cultural products and offers insight into the inherent tension created when arts organizations attempt to fulfill their missions while also trying to compete in a saturated marketplace.

Although several companies from across the country have recently objectified dancers in advertising campaigns, (see, for instance, the Pennsylvania Ballet[3] and the San Francisco Ballet[4]), I will be focusing primarily on the advertising campaigns of American Ballet Theatre (ABT) and New York City Ballet (NYCB). As two of the largest

and most recognized ballet companies in the world, ABT and NYCB are prominent, high profile institutions perceived by many in the dance community as setting and maintaining an international standard for the field of ballet. In addition, since each of these companies is housed in New York City at Lincoln Center—NYCB at the David H. Koch Theatre, and ABT at the Metropolitan Opera House—they are in direct proximity and in direct competition with one another. Each company has a vested interest in creating a distinctly differing brand in order to compete for audience members and donor support. This circumstance of proximity and understated rivalry creates an unusual situation for evaluating the marketing strategies of these companies. Furthermore, although these companies have approached marketing from different angles, ABT and NYCB have both used advertising images that objectify dancers.

Branding Ballet

Branding refers to the process of creating an aura about a product, promoting a "certain set of values or a certain emotional association" (Rose 2012, 111). As a tactic for promotion, branding has become an integral part of contemporary marketing strategies. Successful US corporations use branding to stand apart, to create distinctiveness, to imply difference. Comparing and contrasting the advertising images used by ABT and the NYCB, I demonstrate the differences are manifest and easily identifiable. Each company has managed to successfully construct its own distinctive brand; and for both ABT and NYCB, the company history is an important aspect of the branding. Since perhaps this link between history and brand is most obvious to those following ballet and frequenting ballet performances, a brief explanation and comparison of the company histories is in order.

ABT and NYCB are both American ballet companies, yet each has a distinctively different history and ideology. Founded in 1940, ABT is often thought of as a museum of ballet. As of November 2012, the company's website boasts of an expansive repertoire containing "all of the great full-length ballets of the nineteenth century." In addition, ABT has commissioned a large number of works from legendary twentieth century choreographers such as George Balanchine, Antony Tudor, Jerome Robbins, Agnes de Mille, and Twyla Tharp. The vast majority of ABT's productions are theatrical in nature, incorporating elaborate sets and costumes, and creating make-believe characters and fantastical worlds. ABT's philosophy includes an inherent concern for historical reconstruction, the tradition of ballet and its productions, and the creation of grand spectacular theatrical experiences.

In contrast to the opulent nature of ABT's productions, NYCB is known for its stripped-down neoclassical aesthetic. George Balanchine and Lincoln Kirstein officially founded NYCB in 1948. Although Balanchine was Russian-born, he loved all things American and aimed to create an American style of ballet. NYCB's repertoire consists of over 150 works, and although the company is currently attempting to add newer choreography to its repertoire, the majority of these works were choreographed by those who have served in the capacity of Artistic Director for the company: Balanchine, Jerome Robbins, and Peter Martins. Stylistically, the company is what many define as neo-classical, referring to ballet technique manipulated enough to no longer remain truly classical in form, but not so abstracted as to become a complete departure from the realm of ballet. The majority of the choreography within the company's repertoire is

considered neoclassical or contemporary ballet—often abstract/plotless works, stripped of elaborate sets and costumes, focusing primarily on the movement and the music.

Both companies were built on a European model and have tiered ranks for company members—principal, soloist, and *corps de ballet*. Despite its name, *American* Ballet Theatre's roster of dancers reads like a who's who of international ballet stars; although the company has recently begun to employ students from their affiliate school, the Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis School of Ballet, none of these performers has yet reached the status of principal. In contrast, all of the ninety dancers employed by NYCB, although perhaps not all American-born, are graduates of the company's affiliate school, the School of American Ballet. For performances, ABT often publicizes the specific performers, promoting its stars; whereas NYCB generally refrains from announcing casting prior to performances, and lower ranking performers are often given opportunities to perform principal and soloist roles. One of the distinctive differences between the companies is that ABT often publicizes the dancers, whereas NYCB tends to place the emphasis on the choreography rather than on individual performers.

As is apparent, ABT and NYCB have distinctly different personalities. Among balletomanes, ABT is generally considered a traditional European-style ballet company—extravagant full-length ballet productions, a star system, and an international cast. On the other hand, NYCB is considered more American and contemporary—choreography swathed in Balanchine's 'American' neoclassical style, a more proletariat casting system, and affordable ticket prices. ABT and NYCB are inherently different from one another in repertoire, performers, and philosophy, and these differences are embedded in their branding and the images that represent these brands.

The Interpretative Process

As one might imagine, the most important sources for this project are the actual images. All of the images analyzed were found online; endnotes and bibliography indicate specific websites where the images may be found. For each company, I have selected two separate advertising campaigns—one that objectifies the dancers, and one that does not. I have selected these particular advertising campaigns because they are so markedly different from one another and each campaign markets the company with a different approach to promoting the brand. The NYCB advertising images I have selected for this article fall into two categories: those from a 2008 advertising campaign featuring black and white images, and advertisements from 2010 featuring dancers appearing as everyday people. By juxtaposing these two advertising campaigns—we see how the 2008 campaign focuses on the company's choreography, aesthetic, and location while the 2010 campaign focuses on the dancers as individuals. The first set of advertising images I have selected for ABT are from the company's website in 2013. In this set of images the company has returned to a traditional ballet promotion model, simply using color images from actual performances or from photo shoots that re-enact a performance. The second set of images is from the 2011-2012 advertising campaign and signals a significant departure from this traditional model; these images were selected specifically because they are striking statements of fantasy and objectification. By describing, analyzing, and juxtaposing a few images from each of these advertising campaigns, I will evaluate how each company has marketed their respective brands.

My primary resource for analyzing the ABT and NYCB marketing images is *Visual Methodologies* by Gillian Rose. According to Rose, one of the primary goals of

advertising is to create difference among similar products. Although balletomanes might argue that ABT and NYCB offer distinctly differing products, for the purposes of this analysis, I contend that the similarity lies in each company's attempt to attain financial support, either through tickets sales or donor contributions, for productions of theatrical ballet performances. Engaging Rose's analytical tools for interpreting images, I consider several advertising photographs with an eye toward revealing hidden assumptions and intentions. Focusing primarily on Rose's guidelines for compositional interpretation, I analyze various components including content, color, spatial organization, light, and expressive content. In addition, I investigate how bodies, manners, activity, and settings are represented.

Rose discusses *gaze* and *feel* as two essential characteristics of advertising images. I use the term *gaze* in its most common usage. Basically, where do the dancers focus their eyes? Are they looking at the viewer? Are the dancers looking at each other? Is the focus inward, self-reflective? And what does this gaze imply? I am specifically interested in the illusion of eye contact with the viewer, or the lack thereof. According to a 2010 article in the *Oxford Journal*, eye contact is a "salient social signal of interest and readiness for interaction," and the "direct gaze is capable of intensifying the feeling of being the target of the other's interest and intentions" (Pönkanen 2010). I argue that meaning is made within this illusion of a connection between the viewer and the image of the dancer. One of the other differences in the advertisements is the discrepancy in *feel*. Rose states: "the essence of a visual experience is its sensory qualities . . . there is a subjective 'feel' that is ineliminable in our seeing . . . . appreciation of this 'feel' should be as much a part of understanding images as the interpretation of their meaning"

(Rose 2012, 29). Intangible and difficult to articulate in words, *feel* is the mood or emotional sensory response that the advertisement elicits from the viewer. As I scrutinized the selected advertising images, I became increasingly aware that each company's branding approach conveys gaze and feel in distinctly different ways.

ABT: Tradition or Temptation

ABT has a long history of marketing their productions with photographs highlighting key moments and characters from beloved ballets. By featuring the conventional visual codes of ballet—such as dancers executing classical ballet vocabulary on an expansive stage, elaborately detailed sets and costumes, pointe shoes and tights—these images are in line with traditional modes of ballet advertising. The advertisements used for ABT's Spring 2013 season are emblematic of this approach. Although the photographs are possibly a result of a staged photo shoot, the images portray live performances and represent a clear depiction of what an audience member might expect to see. I will henceforth refer to this as ABT's *traditional* approach.

In comparison to the traditional approach used in ABT's 2013 advertising photographs, the images used in their 2011 campaign are strikingly different. Although we see characters in costumes, we rarely see their full bodies as these images place the viewer much closer to the dancers. These bodies are not on stage, and they are not dancing. Each dancer enacts a particular sensuality, and a hint of a story is unmistakable within each image. Interestingly, we rarely see the dancers eyes in these images; the gaze is either introverted or the eyes are closed. The dancers seem lost in their own thoughts, worlds, fantasies, or dreams, allowing and encouraging the viewer as voyeur. According to Rose, "voyeurism is a way of seeing that is active; it distances

and objectifies what is looked at" (Rose 2012, 159). Looking through a voyeuristic lens, power lies with the viewer; this situation creates an atmosphere where the dancers may be viewed as a commodity for consumption. Without the illusion of eye contact, the viewer focuses on the bodies and how these bodies are displayed, becoming voyeuristic. The dancers' bodies are objectified as sexual fantasies. The images from ABT's 2011 campaign do not portray the reality of a ballet performance, but an unrealistic chimerical fantasy. By contrasting how ABT has used different advertising images to promote the same ballet, a pattern of objectification becomes evident in the non-traditional advertising photographs. Some of the most recognized works of the classical ballet canon, including *Le Corsaire, The Sleeping Beauty*, and *Swan Lake* are represented within both of these advertising campaigns. However, each campaign represents these ballets through differing approaches.

ABT's Le Corsaire

The traditional image from *Le Corsaire*[5] features the ballet's lead dancers, a female and a male, in a moment from a *pas de deux*. The backdrop hints at the story, featuring craggy, jutting rocks and the outline of a distant pirate ship. The stage lighting and coloring of the image are watery and nocturnal. The costumes are typical of what is generally seen in this story ballet. She wears a long filmy, light blue dress with bare shoulders, pink tights and pointe shoes; he wears white tights and tunic. The couple seems small in comparison to the vastness of the stage and the backdrop, and the lightness of their costume against the darkness of the background draws attention the balletic lines of the bodies in profile. He lunges as she leans toward him in an arabesque. Her face is turned toward the audience, and as she rests her head on his

chest we see a contented smile and closed eyes. He seems to almost present his chest to her as he lifts his face upward in gratification. Despite their closeness and the obvious implication of a romantic relationship, there is a sense of propriety and respectability represented in their comportment and demeanor.

In contrast, one of the 2011 images used to promote *Le Corsaire*[6] features a single man as an object of desire. Jose Manuel Carreno, one of the company's international stars, is featured against a warm earth-toned background that closely matches the tone of his skin. He is shirtless and we see only the top portion of his blue and gold ornate pants. Carreno is entwined in a large rope that drapes sumptuously over his body, and the viewer is close enough to notice the well-defined musculature of his chest, shoulders, and arms. Although his torso leans slightly, he appears strong and in total control. Glancing down and to one side, he appears both submissive and regal. There is no denying the sensual nature of the image. The absence of a female counterpart hints that he is unattached, available. Shifting the focus from an ensemble of dancers, or a couple, to a lone individual heightens the viewer's awareness of the exposed, sexual body.

ABT's The Sleeping Beauty

Evaluating the images used for ABT's production of *The Sleeping Beauty*, the contrast of tradition and fantasy is again evident. In the traditional image[7], we once more see the ornate stage-sets and costumes. The scene captures the moment when Princess Aurora awakens from her one-hundred-year sleep. Lavish draperies hang behind her, as she perches delicately, legs crossed modestly, on her bed. She appears as if she has just sat up, opened her eyes, and is taking a deep breath, her arms

floating out to her sides. She wears a pink tutu embellished with flowers, pink tights, and point shoes. Prince Charming, standing nearby in a ballet position, wears the standard white tights with a pale green and white tunic. He looks down at her adoringly. The viewer witnesses a moment that could be a snapshot from one of ABT's actual performances.

In contrast, one of the images ABT used to promote its 2011 production of *The Sleeping Beauty*[8] was described by dance critic, Joan Acocella, as follows:

> …their banner shows the principal dancer Veronika Part lying on the floor, apparently asleep, in a pink tutu and point shoes, and with her hair unballetically down. Part is representing Aurora, in *The Sleeping Beauty*…but most people won't know that. All they're going to see is this weird Barbie lying on the floor.

One of the other, very unballetic, details Acocella failed to mention is the lack of pink tights. We actually see the dancer's bare legs, another instance of exposed flesh. Within ABT's production of *The Sleeping Beauty*, the character of Aurora does lie down and fall asleep; however, this image does not represent what this portion of the ballet would in fact look like during a production. The dancer would be lying on a set piece, not the floor; even "asleep" there is a posed quality to Princess Aurora's comportment during a live production. In this image, the dancer seems truly relaxed lying on a solid white background/floor so that her silhouette is emphasized. In an actual production, the ballerina's hair would be in a bun, and her legs would be covered with pink tights. Additionally, in light of recent tragedies involving the rapes of sleeping, drugged or intoxicated, young women, I find the implications of this image especially troubling. Within the actual ballet, we experience a fairy-tale, artificial and proscribed. We already

know that there will be a happy ending. By removing the conventional ballet codes from the image of this sleeping ballerina, she becomes a real person, lying asleep, perilously vulnerable.

ABT's Swan Lake

Perhaps one of the most iconic ballets, *Swan Lake*, evokes thoughts of elegant ballerinas in white tutus. ABT's traditional advertising image for *Swan Lake*[9] portrays just that. The theatrical backdrop shows a silhouette of a curving horizon with a large sun rising beyond the imaginary lake. A group of ballerinas clad in the customary white tutus, representing swans, stands defiant in a unison pose with wings/arms spread wide and chest lifted toward the rising sun. We see lingering traces of fog, hugging the floor as if being chased away by the pending dawn.

ABT's 2011 *Swan Lake* image[10] portrays a completely different scene, a real lake rather than a theatrical set: a soaking wet couple embracing in the twilight, as they stand waist-deep in water that ripples and is speckled by raindrops. The tinting of the image feels warm despite the grayish-white of the drenched costumes. The couple shares a magical kiss—one of his arms encircles her waist as his other arm reaches behind him touching his fingertips to the water. He is leaning in toward her; she is open armed/winged and vulnerable. Her long hair is down and wet. The image is a reference to pure romantic fantasy, and not a very authentic representation of what one would see if attending an actual ABT production.

Maintaining the ABT Brand

Despite the differences in advertising approaches, there are common themes within these advertising campaigns. In each image, a story is represented through

specific characters, signified by costumes and setting; and through the implicit emotional content, the viewer is introduced to the theatrical nature of a narrative. Thus ABT's brand is still recognizable even when the product is somewhat distorted by its unrealistic representation. However, the difference lies in how the 2011 campaign objectifies the dancers by portraying them as objects of sexual fantasy. Each instance raises questions about how the dancers are represented. As unrealistic and fantastical as the art of ballet may seem, it is a real-life profession for many, and the manner in which these dancers are represented matters. How might an audience interpret a ballet advertisement that has been stripped of the aspects viewers associate with ballet—hair in a bun, pink tights, pointe shoes, and the outward projection that is typical of proscenium dance forms? From the viewers/voyeurs point of view, is the ballet production being sold? Or are the dancers on the market?

NYCB: Black & White or Flesh & Blood

NYCB, unlike ABT does not feature a classical repertoire, and therefore does not typically use a traditional style of ballet advertising in the manner of ABT. The majority of the advertising images that NYCB has used in the last decade are emblematic of the sleek, contemporary style of the company. There are pointe shoes, but we rarely see tutus. There are costumes, but they generally look more like practice clothes than formal costumes—another one of the company's hallmarks. For the purposes of this analysis, I have selected images from the advertising campaigns of 2008 and 2010, because they demonstrate a clear contrast in the approaches employed.

NYCB's 2008 Urban Chic

The NYCB's 2008 advertising campaign[11] emphasizes the company's chic, urban personality and successfully connects the company with the city environment while featuring dancing bodies that express NYCB's unique neoclassical aesthetic. Pentagram Design Firm, creators of this advertising campaign, state on their website that the designs for this campaign were intended to create "an identity that links the company's legacy and location to a contemporary and dramatic new aesthetic." The term *identity*, in common usage, implies a continuity or consistency of character; constructing an identity may be one of the most important aspects of marketing and is a primary objective in the exercise of branding. Within this quote the marketing firm also acknowledges their intention of connecting the company to the city and to emphasizing the "new aesthetic." Although the statement on the website is unclear about what "new aesthetic" indicates, the intention of connecting the company to the city is clear. The design firm demonstrated business savvy by linking NYCB to a much more recognized brand: NYC—a global city, the big apple, the city that never sleeps. The urban imagery is fairly subtle, but inherent, throughout this particular marketing campaign. Engaging a stark color palette—black, white, and grays—the images and logo are softened only by the gradation of shades and a hint of transparency. Pentagram's design team incorporated a logo font described as "stacked and layered, like buildings staggered in the skyline, with a degree of transparency that echoes the visual texture of the cityscape" (Pentagram, 2012). The font used for the text is in capital block letters, often using shades of gray creating a fade-to-black effect. The black and white images conjure up

thoughts of printing, newsprint, the *New York Times*, Times Square, the no nonsense personality of the stereotypical New Yorker.

NYCB's use of black and white photographic images in order to represent an art form filled with flesh and blood bodies is a bold and interesting choice—again hinting at the metropolitan, industrialized cityscape. The photographs are sleek with a modern/contemporary edge—much like the choreography, and the city, this company promotes featuring clean lines, very little embellishment, and solid white or black backgrounds. This manner of design seems to mirror the style of choreography the company produces—streamlined, efficient, no-nonsense—emblematic of the city itself. The dancers have been photographed to seem in the midst of moving through a neoclassical movement phrase while wearing form-fitting costumes, generally the simple leotard and tights, emblematic of Balanchine's work and much of the NYCB repertoire—clean lines, no frills. Stark white backgrounds accentuate the outlines and shapes of the dancers. The dancers are sleek; resembling the thoroughbred horses to which Balanchine so famously compared them[12]. In harmony with the black and white theme, we see both black-skinned and white-skinned dancers; the contrast of skin colors within the black and white images adds to the interesting play of color saturation. With bodies posed in dance-like positions as if moving through one of Balanchine's neoclassical movement phrases, an emphasis is placed on line and a tension between dance partners. The dancers look only at the camera or make eye contact with one another. There is no inward gaze. The viewer seems to experience eye contact with the dancer(s), or at times witness an exchange of energy between two dancers. No inward reflection is evident in these images—all energy is projected outward and away.

NYCB's 2010 Casual Aesthetic

In contrast to the sleek, stark, black and white 2008 advertising campaign, the 2010 campaign[13] seems to promote the individual personalities of the dancers, rather than the choreography or actual performances. Interestingly, Henry Leutwyler, a photographer commissioned to create portraits of iconic figures such as Michelle Obama, Julia Roberts, Beyonce Knowles, and Spike Lee, shot the images for this advertising campaign. In an effort to create a more "natural" image of the dancers, Leutwyler stripped away the artifice of the ballet stage to show the "real" people behind the magical creatures that appear in the theatre—not a surprising tactic for a photographer known for revealing the human, everyday nature of his larger than life, iconic subjects. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, this 2010 campaign featured a "relaxed, casually sexy aesthetic that represents a radical image overhaul for the company" (Orden 2010). Displaying images of dancers wearing everyday clothing in pedestrian poses, the ads could be for a designer perfume or a hipster clothing store. The dancers are wearing clothing that could be out of their own closets, with no indication of theatrical costuming. None of the images show the entire body, and only a few show anything lower than the waist. Again, we see the NYCB dancers face the camera and make eye contact, engaging with the viewer or other dancers in the image; however, these advertisements are conspicuously different from previous images. The stereotypical associations with ballet are missing; the bodies are not in dance-like poses, no leotards and tights or tutus and pointe shoes. The women wear their hair down and free. In some images the dancers seem posed for a portrait and in others the dancers seem as if they were caught in candid moments of laughter or contemplation. The

viewer has the feeling of experiencing a personal, private moment with these individuals. Placement for these advertisements targeted subways and downtown Manhattan neighborhoods, home to the young, hip, suburban potential patron. These images of young attractive dancers placed in areas many consider gritty and urban creates an interesting juxtaposition.

When paying attention specifically to the coloring and lighting for these images, the emphasis is on the dancers' skin, the color of flesh is the focus. Against the dark nondescript background, and the generally muted colors of the clothing, the lighting highlights the exposed skin of the dancers—their skin almost seems to glow. The cold nature of the black and white campaign has been warmed up through the emphasis on the color of the flesh. The austere hairstyle, the traditional ballet bun, has been released and the women look like regular New Yorkers. This campaign has humanized the dancers—they are no longer black and white, stark and posed, distant and ethereal. They are real live flesh and blood people, just like the viewer. I question the effectiveness of this approach since, as many audience members will admit, part of the reason patrons attends theatre and ballet performances is escapism—to experience something magical; part of the appeal of ballet dancers is their mystery.

The NYCB Brand

The straightforward gaze of the dancers is one of the most prominent characteristics of all of the NYCB advertising images. The vast majority of the advertisements feature only one or two dancers; and the dancers look into the camera, engaging and acknowledging the viewer. As noted previously, the dancers only seem to look away from the camera when looking directly at their dance partner. The images

seem to promote a sense of connectivity between the viewer and the viewed. The viewer experiences an illusion of eye contact that makes the dancer seem open and honest. Perhaps the company is implying recognition of the audience's importance and is indicating a desire to build a relationship. The dancers seem as if they recognize passers-by as potential audience members, inviting them in by making eye contact with their fellow New Yorkers.

NYCB dramatically altered their advertising campaigns from 2008 to 2010—moving from an emphasis on the location and the aesthetic qualities of the choreography to a heightened focus on the dancers as individuals, a shift from marketing the ballet production itself to merchandizing and commoditizing the individual artists. Although the term objectification is most often associated with a means of accentuating the sexuality of the body, these advertisements create a much more subtle objectification in the sense that the individual persona is placed on the market. Large ballet companies, such as NYCB, have the power to represent the artists working for them in whatever manner the company sees fit in order to sell a product—even if the product is not necessarily the same entity advertised within the images. Again, we see an advertising campaign in which the dancers—rather than the production—seem to be the product.

In closing…

In a capitalist society, ballet companies must advertise, not only in order to compete with one another, but also in order to survive as businesses. Taking into account our current economy and how the arts are funded in the US, it is perhaps unavoidable that ballet productions have become a type of commodity and that

capitalist marketing strategies have been adopted by ballet companies. However, I am troubled by the nature of some of the advertising images and am uneasy with the implications. I find marketing strategies that represent the dancers as merchandise disconcerting. Whether the dancers are portrayed as sexual fantasies, as in the 2012 ABT advertisements; or whether the companies are revealing the dancers as real people that the average person can connect with, such as NYCB's 2010 advertising campaign—I see an unsettling trend. I argue that successfully advertising an art form that uses the human body as the primary tool, without objectifying the dancers' bodies, is possible. Effective and eye-catching marketing is evident in ABT's traditional advertising images and in NYCB's 2008 black and white campaign. Overall, this project has raised more questions than answers. In what manner can or should ballet companies be held accountable for how they market not only the art form of ballet, but also the dancers? And what responsibilities, if any, do ballet companies have to represent and promote an ethos of the ballet community as a whole? Additionally, how can we, as viewers, be more aware and more active in our viewing? Perhaps through heightened awareness and a more discriminating palette, we may begin to gain an amount of control over how we perceive what we see and how we, in turn, represent our art and support our artists.

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Notes

[1] This image promoting ABT's production of *Manon* can be found on AD Ludlow's website: http://www.adlubow.com/arts_abt.php.

[2] "The Swan Brand: Reframing the Legacy of Pavlova" by Jennifer Fisher engages with the concept of branding. "From the Sun King to Twitter: Ballet Branding, Then and Now" by Daniil Simkin looks back at how branding has been used historically and in the present by individual dancers.

[3] An image from Pennsylvania Ballet's advertising campaign may be found on the following website: http://m.phillyweekly.com/35123/show/1ccd402f31ca20371dca83958185267a.

[4] Some images from the San Francisco Ballet's 2001 advertising campaign may be found on the following website: http://www.ballet-dance.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=15&t=15713.

[5] This image may be found on the ABT website, www.abt.org. At the time this article was written, this image was one of several images scrolling on the homepage.

[6] This image may be viewed on the following webpage: http://www.ebay.com/itm/2006-American-Ballet-Theatre-ad-page-JOSE-MANUEL-CARRENO-/370599933936.

[7] This image may be found on the ABT website, www.abt.org. At the time this article was written, this image was one of several images scrolling on the homepage.

[8] This image promoting ABT's production of *The Sleeping Beauty* can be found on AD Ludlow's website: http://www.adlubow.com/arts_abt.php.

[9] This image may be found on the ABT website, www.abt.org. At the time this article was written, this image was one of several images scrolling on the homepage.

[10] This image may be found on the following webpage: http://turnedin.tumblr.com/page/7#5042739916.

[11] Some of the images from this NYCB advertising campaign may be found on the following websites: http://www.30elm.com/accounts/Jhayne/blogs/2667 or http://krrb.com/posts/12100-nyc-ballet-original-poster-jerome-robbins-2008.

[12] Incidents of Balanchine comparing ballet dancers to thoroughbred horses occur repeatedly in ballet tome, for instance in Linda H. Hamilton's *The Dancers Way*. For an interesting take on how Balanchine compared ballet dancers to horse, see Toni Bentley's article, "What's Wrong with Degas?" at http://www.tonibentley.com/pages/journalism_pages/journalism_arts_n_ants.html

[13] Images from this campaign may be viewed at http://dancelines.com.au/sexy-photos-cant-fix-the-woes-of-new-york-city-ballet/ and http://vplnyc.com/blog/archives/1870.