

NOTE FROM THE ARTIST

When I first started this project, my initial premise was to explore perceptions of femininity with a group of men who dance the most masculine form of dance you can do: B-boying. Born from NYC street gangs in the late 70's, it was a way to provoke fights, get respect in the street, and get girls. It is now world-wide and has expanded to include many other styles and forms of dance, similarly to the wide container of Contemporary dance. There was a time when a B-boy would get called homosexual or weak for dancing "soft". According to the cast, this has changed. Dancing soft is not the B-boy way, but smooth is acceptable; how is that different than soft? Throughout the process we had several in-depth discussions about ideas of gender, the wide scope that exists from person to person within it, and the range that one person can hold. Examining feminine and masculine qualities became a way to explore opposites and the ways in which society has set up systems which define us. But why do we see feminine as weak and masculine as strong? Why do we see aggression as masculine and nurturing as feminine? We discussed how men are expected to be only one thing—strong—and women are expected to be strong as well as soft and nurturing. This limits our perceptions of men even more, while expecting too much of women. We explored what these qualities look like through movement. We talked about how when we dance, we search for balance, freedom, and peace from the boxes that society puts us in.

Throughout this process, what kept emerging in the room was more of a need to show the range of who these men are—they are fathers, partners, communicators, brothers, lovers and fighters. We needed to show their complexity as dancers, that they are not just machines or clowns who do tricks for entertainment purposes that we so often see in the media, but rather movement artists who are just as rigorous and thoughtful as any other kind of dancer out there. It became more clear to me through this process, that perhaps there was something more important than uncovering something new about seeing femininity through this lens, because the heart and essence of Hip Hop culture is under-represented. What we mostly see is the exploitation of that culture for a buck. By starting out soft and setting aside the innate posturing of Hip Hop with a nurturing and feminine approach, we were able to celebrate the masculinity of these men and see it for what it can be, instead of what society tells us.

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