

MIDAIR

The Intersection of Climbing and Dance

This Independent Research Project is submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for Module D60040b: Independent Research Project
BA (Hons) Contemporary Dance
alongside a film, installation, zine, and sketchbook.

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Abstract

This written document forms part of a practice-as-research enquiry submitted alongside a film, installation, zine, and sketchbook. Together, these elements document the development, processes, and outcomes of *Midair: The Intersection of Climbing and Dance*. The practical component explores interdisciplinary exchange between climbing and dance through a series of workshops, while the sketchbook evidences the creative process.

This research investigates how cross-disciplinary movement practices generate embodied knowledge, with particular attention to women's embodied experiences within historically male-dominated environments. Through participatory workshops, observation, and reflection, the project examines how engaging with unfamiliar movement languages influences confidence, risk-taking, and spatial awareness.

The findings suggest that the intersection of climbing and dance fosters new forms of embodied understanding while creating supportive environments in which women can renegotiate visibility, confidence, and spatial presence. The written component situates the project within relevant contexts and critically analyses insights emerging from the practice.

Introduction

Midair: The Intersection of Climbing and Dance is an interdisciplinary practice-as-research project investigating the convergence of climbing and dance as embodied movement systems, with particular emphasis on women's lived experiences within historically male-dominated physical cultures. The inquiry is grounded in both my academic practice and my situated participation within contemporary dance and climbing communities, where movement is shaped not only by technical proficiency but also by socio-cultural inscription, spatial politics, and gendered expectation.

Engaging with *Face Dancing* (Gresham 2017), which articulates the entanglement of affective, emotional, and kinaesthetic dimensions of movement, the project considers how climbing and dance may be understood as mutually informing practices of embodied cognition. It examines how women negotiate presence, risk, and visibility within these environments, foregrounding how spatial confidence and embodied agency are produced through both physical engagement and social conditioning.

Situated within a practice-as-research methodology (Nelson 2014), the project operates on the premise that knowledge is generated through iterative, embodied, and performative processes rather than solely through textual articulation. It is structured around the guiding research question: how might interdisciplinary exchange between climbing and dance generate new forms of embodied knowledge while enabling women to renegotiate their presence within gendered movement ecologies? The practical component consists of collaborative workshops bringing together dancers and climbers in shared embodied inquiry.

This written component contextualises the practice within relevant theoretical and artistic frameworks and offers a critical analysis of emergent insights produced through the research process.

Contextualisation

This research is situated within a practice-as-research epistemology (Nelson 2014), in which embodied and performative practice is positioned as a legitimate mode of knowledge production. Within this paradigm, practice is understood not as illustrative of theory but as generative of knowledge that may exceed or resist linguistic codification. *Midair* mobilises this framework through workshop-based inquiry, wherein movement operates as a site of epistemic production and relational exchange.

Central to the project is the concept of embodied knowledge, understood as knowledge that is enacted, sensed, and refined through physical engagement rather than discursive explanation. Both climbing and dance are predicated upon such forms of knowing, requiring the cultivation of kinaesthetic intelligence, spatial attunement, and dynamic bodily negotiation. In climbing, this may manifest through perceptual mapping, weight transfer, and route improvisation; in dance, through choreographic sequencing, somatic awareness, and temporal modulation. Their intersection enables the transference of embodied logics, thereby destabilising habitual corporeal patterns and expand perceptual possibility.

Although frequently categorised as a sport, climbing may also be understood as an expressive and compositional movement practice. Croston (pers. comm., March 18, 2026) notes that climbing literature often uses the phrase “dancing up the rock”, foregrounding rhythm, flow, and spatial decision-making as integral to ascent. This aligns with choreographic paradigms in which movement is constituted through relational dynamics between body, environment, and intention. Similarly, Paxton’s notion of the “small dance” (Paxton 2018) articulates micro-adjustments of balance and postural negotiation as continuous somatic activity. Within *Midair*, these frameworks position climbing and dance as contiguous rather than discrete practices, both operating through embodied responsiveness to gravity, space, and constraint.

Despite increasing participation, climbing remains structurally shaped by gendered asymmetries. Existing research highlights the persistent underrepresentation of women across both recreational and professional climbing contexts (Croston 2025, pers. comm., March 18, 2026), including limited visibility in guiding professions (Santoire, pers. comm., April 22, 2026). Parallel inequalities persist within dance, particularly in relation to choreographic authorship, institutional leadership, and canon formation (Foster 1998). These conditions inform the project's commitment to constructing a women-centred environment that foregrounds spatial agency, confidence, and embodied visibility.

These gendered conditions shape not only participation rates but also the ways in which space is inhabited and negotiated. Participants in this study reported experiencing implicit expectations regarding performance, visibility, and competence, particularly within environments historically dominated by male presence. Such expectations may influence bodily comportment, risk tolerance, and spatial decision-making. Within this context, the creation of women-centred environments becomes not merely supportive but structurally transformative, enabling alternative forms of engagement that challenge normative spatial hierarchies (see Appendix E for participant feedback).

Risk operates as a constitutive principle across both disciplines, structuring engagement with uncertainty, limitation, and physical vulnerability. Rather than functioning solely as exposure to physical danger, risk is understood here as an affective and psychological condition shaped by perception, social context, and self-regulation (Gresham 2017). In climbing, risk is materially inscribed through height, fall potential, and physical exertion; in dance, it emerges through improvisational exposure, performative vulnerability, and interpretive uncertainty. *Midair* reframes risk as a relational and environmentally produced condition, examining how supportive social structures can reconfigure it as a site of empowerment rather than constraint.

Finally, *Midair* aligns with a lineage of choreographic explorations of gravity and verticality. Trisha Brown's *Man Walking Down the Side of a Building* (1970) redefined the body's relationship with architecture, turning gravity into a compositional force.

Later works such as Mourad Merzouki's *Vertikal* (2018) and Rachid Ouramdane's *Corps extrême* (2022) extend this inquiry, merging dance, climbing, and aerial movement to explore suspension and threshold. While these projects, mostly authored by men, often frame verticality through spectacle or conquest, *Midair* repositions it through a feminist and community-based lens. Here, strength is collective, risk is shared, and elevation becomes a metaphor for relational agency. Through this lens, *Midair* both situates itself within and critiques contemporary discourses on gravity, vulnerability, and embodied empowerment.

Methodology

The project employs a practice-as-research methodology (Nelson 2014), in which knowledge emerges through iterative embodied experimentation. Participants were provided with an information sheet outlining the purpose of the research (see Appendix A). Research was conducted through a series of small-scale, facilitated workshops bringing together dancers and climbers in shared somatic and physical practice. Each session integrated movement-based warm-ups, climbing activity, and structured group reflection, enabling sustained cross-disciplinary exchange (see Appendix F for session itineraries).

Methodologically, the workshops function as action research, generating iterative feedback loops between practice, observation, and reflection. Data collection methods included participant observation, informal interviews, written feedback forms (Appendix D), and visual documentation (Appendix G). My positionality as both facilitator and participant is integral to the research design, producing an embedded epistemological and reflexive stance in which knowledge is co-constructed through participation rather than externally observed.

The decision to employ small-scale workshops was informed by the need to create an environment conducive to trust, experimentation, and sustained interpersonal exchange. Limiting participant numbers enabled closer facilitation and more responsive adaptation of tasks according to individual confidence levels and physical experience. Participants were drawn from both dance and climbing backgrounds, ensuring the presence of distinct embodied vocabularies within the shared environment. This diversity was central to the research design, as the juxtaposition of different movement traditions enabled the emergence of new kinaesthetic understandings through collaborative exploration.

Reflective analysis

The workshops evidenced the capacity of cross-disciplinary exchange to generate expanded forms of embodied knowledge. Participants frequently reported encountering “positions and shapes [they] would never do in dance,” indicating that climbing introduced alternative kinaesthetic logics that disrupted habitual movement patterns. Conversely, climbers identified the value of “fluid warm-ups instead of static,” suggesting that somatic principles derived from dance enhanced mobility, coordination, and preparatory awareness. These exchanges demonstrate that knowledge was not transmitted didactically, but emerged through experiential entanglement between bodies, environments, and tasks (see Appendix E for sample responses).

A significant outcome of the research was the reconfiguration of participants’ relationship to risk and confidence (see Appendix E figure titled “*Did you feel more confident after the session?*”). Participants reported increased willingness to attempt challenging movement tasks within the workshop environment, often articulating that they “felt more confident to try harder things.” This contrasts with experiences reported in conventional climbing contexts, where fear of judgement, surveillance, and comparison with more experienced (often male) climbers constrained risk-taking. Confidence thus emerges not as an intrinsic trait, but as an environmentally conditioned and socially mediated phenomenon. Within the women-centred workshop structure, risk was recalibrated as exploratory rather than punitive, enabling more expansive engagement with physical uncertainty.

The findings further demonstrate that spatial experience is deeply gendered. Participants consistently described mainstream climbing environments as sites of heightened visibility pressure, articulating feelings of being “overlooked,” “watched,” or inhibited by implicit behavioural norms. In contrast, the workshop environment was described as “safe,” “supported,” and “empowering,” enabling increased experimentation and corporeal presence. These findings position space as an

actively produced socio-affective construct rather than a neutral container for movement.

Additionally, the workshops generated a pronounced sense of collective support and relational learning. Participants described the environment as characterised by “shared encouragement” and reduced comparative pressure, fostering conditions of belonging. This shift from individualised performance towards collective engagement underscores the role of sociality in shaping embodied experience and learning processes.

Critical reflection

While the workshops successfully established a supportive and exploratory framework, participant feedback suggests that the integration between climbing and dance could be further articulated. The warm-up component was consistently identified as the most effective structural element, particularly its capacity to introduce fluid, dance-derived somatic preparation into a climbing context (Appendix F). Participants also valued the collaborative ethos of the sessions and the opportunity for interdisciplinary exchange.

However, feedback indicated a need for more explicit structural integration between movement-based and climbing-based tasks. Participants expressed a desire for clearer transitional logic between disciplines, as well as increased time allocated to reflective discussion in order to consolidate experiential learning. Suggestions were also made regarding the refinement of the warm-up to more directly address climbing-specific physical demands, such as functional strength and hip mobility.

These insights foreground the iterative epistemology of practice-as-research methodology, in which evaluative reflection operates not as closure but as a generative mechanism for methodological refinement. They indicate that greater structural clarity and expanded reflective space may deepen the articulation of embodied knowledge across disciplinary boundaries.

Future iterations of the project may also benefit from incorporating longer-duration sessions or repeated encounters between participants. Sustained engagement would allow for deeper integration of movement vocabularies and provide opportunities to track longitudinal changes in confidence, spatial negotiation, and relational dynamics. Additionally, the inclusion of outdoor climbing environments could further expand the project's ecological scope, introducing variable terrain, environmental unpredictability, and heightened sensory awareness as additional factors shaping embodied knowledge (Appendix E).

Conclusion

This research has demonstrated that the intersection of climbing and dance operates as a generative site of embodied knowledge production, in which movement functions as both method and epistemology. Rather than positioning climbing and dance as separate disciplinary systems brought into dialogue, *Midair* evidences how their convergence produces a hybrid kinaesthetic field in which bodily intelligence is reconfigured through spatial, affective, and social entanglement.

Across the workshops, embodied learning emerged as a process of translation and disruption. Participants did not simply transfer skills between disciplines; rather, they experienced a recalibration of habitual movement logics through exposure to unfamiliar physical grammars. This shift was most evident in altered perceptions of balance, sequencing, and risk, suggesting that kinaesthetic knowledge is not fixed within disciplinary boundaries but continuously negotiated through environment and relational context.

A key finding of this project is that confidence and risk are not intrinsic psychological traits, but environmentally produced and socially mediated conditions. Within mainstream climbing environments, participants described heightened self-surveillance and awareness of judgement, particularly in relation to gendered visibility. In contrast, the women-centred workshop structure reconfigured risk as exploratory rather than evaluative, enabling expanded physical engagement and a greater willingness to inhabit uncertainty. This reframes confidence not as individual capacity, but as an emergent property of supportive spatial and social arrangements. The research also highlights how space itself functions as an active participant in shaping embodied experience. Climbing and dance environments are not neutral containers for movement, but culturally coded structures that regulate behaviour, attention, and bodily presence. By deliberately constructing an alternative spatial ecology, *Midair* reveals how movement practices can be re-situated to redistribute agency, visibility, and participation.

Importantly, the project also exposes the limitations and tensions within its own interdisciplinary framework. While the integration of climbing and dance generated rich embodied insights, it also revealed the need for more explicit structural and conceptual bridges between practices. This includes further attention to how movement principles are translated, rather than merely juxtaposed, across disciplinary contexts. These limitations are not read as failures, but as productive indicators of where interdisciplinary methodology requires further refinement.

Looking forward, *Midair* suggests the potential for expanded practice-as-research models that extend beyond studio or gym-based environments into more ecologically and temporally sustained contexts, such as outdoor climbing sites or longitudinal workshop series. Such developments would allow for deeper investigation into how embodied knowledge evolves over time and under changing environmental conditions.

Ultimately, this project positions creative practice as a rigorous epistemic mode through which relationships between body, space, and power can be critically examined and reconfigured. By bringing climbing and dance into sustained dialogue, *Midair* contributes not only to interdisciplinary movement research, but also to broader critical conversations around gender, spatial agency, and the conditions under which embodied knowledge is produced and legitimised.

Reference List

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Appendices

Appendix A – Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form

Participants received a Participant Information Sheet and consent materials via an online form. Available at:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSehs5DkVdgCNLpVfy-M0TAD-hJJrfUNvfx2G-KRoI0vd7CqnQ/viewform>

Project Title:

Midair: The Intersection of Climbing and Dance

Researcher:

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BA3 Contemporary Dance Student, Trinity Laban

Contact Details:

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Purpose of the Study

You are invited to take part in a research project exploring how women experience, navigate, and express movement in climbing and dance. This project seeks to understand how these disciplines inform each other, to help further their sport.

What Participation Involves

If you take part, you will:

- Attend socials with lead movement/stretching exercises and climbing (will not involve any monetary expenses to participants).
- Participate in group discussions or semi-structured interviews about your experiences, background, and gender dynamics in these spaces.
- Allow photography or videography to document workshops and climbing sessions for research and exhibition purposes.

The project will take place in a climbing gym, sessions will be scheduled at mutually convenient times twice a month from February to March.

Duration

- Workshops: approximately 2 hours per session.
- Interviews/Discussions: approximately 10 minutes.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal

Participation is voluntary. You may withdraw at any time without giving a reason, and your data will be removed if requested.

Risks and Benefits

- Physical activities involve normal climbing and movement exercises. Safety equipment and supervision will be provided.
- Benefits include opportunities to develop skills, confidence, and body awareness, and contribute to research exploring women's experiences in climbing and dance.

Confidentiality

- Your personal data and interview responses will remain confidential until consent to publish/use in exhibitions.
- Visual materials (photos/videos) will be stored securely until consent for publish/use in exhibitions.
- You can choose what images are included in public outputs (exhibition, photo book, etc.).

What happens next?

If you decide you would like to take part, you should answer the consent form. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to speak to the researcher by emailing: maddy.abrahams@gmail.com

If you are concerned about any aspect of the project, or how the evaluation is being conducted, then you should contact the Chair of Trinity Laban's Research Ethics Committee, Prof Jonathan Clark, j.clark@trinitylaban.ac.uk

Appendix B – Interview Questions

Section 1: Background

- Can you tell me a little about your experience with [climbing/dance]?
- How long have you been practicing your discipline?
- What drew you to it initially?

Section 2: Embodiment and Movement

- How would you describe your body awareness in your discipline?
- What physical or mental challenges do you face in movement?
- In workshops, how does engaging with the other discipline feel? What differences or similarities do you notice?

Section 3: Gender and Space

- How would you describe your experience as a woman in [climbing/dance]?
- Have you experienced situations where you felt excluded or underrepresented?
- How do you negotiate confidence and space in these environments?

Section 4: Reflection and Learning

- Has participating in cross-disciplinary workshops changed how you view your own discipline?
- What aspects of the other discipline do you find inspiring or challenging?
- How has this experience affected your confidence, movement, or sense of belonging?

Appendix C – Consent Form

Project Title: Midair: The Intersection of Climbing and Dance

☐ I confirm that I have read and understand the information explaining details of the Midair: The Intersection of Climbing and Dance study and that I have had the opportunity to ask questions.

☐ I consent that participation is at my own risk

☐ I understand that taking part is voluntary and I am free to withdraw or to refrain from answering any question at any time without any negative consequences.

☐ I consent to participate in workshops, discussions, and/or interviews for this project.

☐ I understand that the individual interviews and group discussions will be video-recorded for the purposes of transcription and exhibition. I consent to this.

☐ I understand that my personal information and responses will remain confidential until I consent to the contents of the interview and pictures.

☐ I consent to being photographed during sessions for research and exhibition purposes

☐ I understand that the results will be published or exhibited. I consent to this.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix D – Feedback Form

The participant feedback form used in this research can be accessed here:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScdk_sM6tkL53v6i8bb34ugWP9TKfbTQuxx7aqzodOFmTc7dw/viewform

About you

- Which discipline do you primarily identify with? (dance / climbing / both)
- How long have you been practicing your main discipline?
- What & where (country) originally drew you to this discipline?
- Had you ever tried the *other* discipline before this workshop? If yes, in what context?

Session experience

- Overall, how was the session? (Excellent/Good/Okay/Not great)
- How did you find the warm-up? (Loved it/Good/Okay/Didn't work for me)
- How was the balance between movement & climbing?
- Did you feel physically safe?
- Did you feel physically supported?
- Is there anything I can improve?

Learning & impact

- Did you learn something new about your body or movement today?
- Did this session change how you see your own discipline?
- Did you feel more confident after the session? (Yes / Somewhat / No)

Gender & space

- How would you describe your experience as a woman in your discipline?
- Have you experienced moments where you felt excluded, overlooked, or underrepresented in climbing or dance spaces?
- Did the all-women environment affect how you moved, took risks, or expressed yourself?
- How do you usually negotiate confidence and space in your discipline?
Did anything shift for you during this session?

What worked/ what's missing

- What was the best part of the session for you?
- Was anything missing or not quite, right?
- One thing you'd change or improve next time:

Looking ahead

- Would you come again?
- What would make you more likely to come back?
(e.g. longer session, more climbing, more dance, outdoor session, different time/day)
- Any final thoughts or comments?

Appendix E – Sample Participant Response

Participant A (Dancer)

“I found myself doing positions and shapes I would never usually do in dance. It felt unfamiliar but also exciting.”

“The warm-up helped me feel more connected to my body before climbing, especially in terms of balance.”

“I felt more confident trying things because everyone was supportive and not judging.”

Participant B (Climber)

“I really liked the fluid warm-up instead of the usual static stretching. It made me more aware of how I move.”

“I noticed better coordination when climbing, especially thinking about sequencing movement.”

“It felt like a much safer space than usual climbing sessions.”

Participant C (Climber)

“In normal climbing spaces I sometimes feel nervous being watched, especially by more experienced male climbers.”

“In this session I felt more comfortable to try harder things and take risks.”

“The group was really supportive - we were laughing and climbing the whole time.”

Participant D (Both)

“It felt different from other environments because there was less comparison and more encouragement.”

“I would have liked a bit more connection between the dance and climbing parts.”

Figure E1: *“Have you ever tried the other discipline before this workshop?” bar chart*

Had you ever tried the other discipline before this workshop ?

8 responses

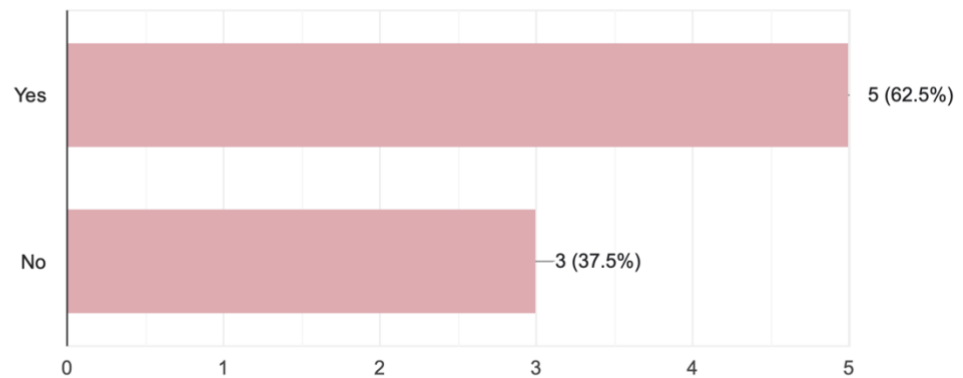
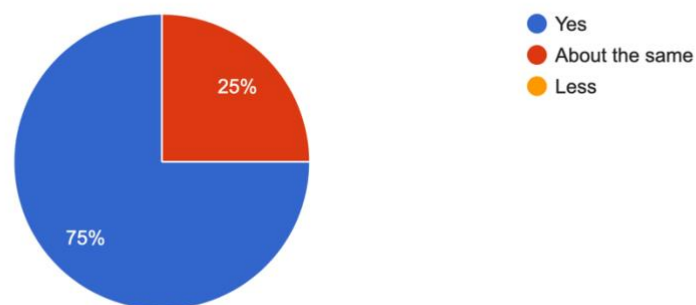


Figure E2: *“Did you feel more confident after the session?” pie chart*

Did you feel more confident after the session ?

8 responses



What would make you more likely to come back?

“More dancing, outdoor sessions, longer sessions”

“An outdoor session would be amazing”

“Oh! Outdoor sesh would be so fun.”

“More dancing, definitely an outdoor session would be cool”

“It worked as it was. Maybe regularity in days and times.”

“I’d love to come back regardless but an outdoor session would be amazing”

Appendix F – Session Itineraries

The following session structures outline the practical delivery of *Midair*. The project included both climbing-based social sessions and dance-based movement sessions. While similar in format, both were designed to support exploration, peer exchange, and community, rather than formal instruction.

F1 - Climbing Session Itinerary

The climbing sessions prioritised informal interaction and shared experience, creating a supportive environment for participants to explore movement and confidence within a climbing context.

Session Structure (2 hours)

Arrival and Check-In (19:00) - participants arrive at reception and check in

- Pre-registration completed in advance
- Rental shoes collected if required
- Belongings stored in lockers

Informal Preparation (10–15 minutes) - participants gather

- Initial social interaction
- Orientation within the environment

Movement-Based Warm-Up (20–30 minutes) - warm-up led by the organiser

- Focus on mobility, balance, and body awareness
- Comparable to a dancer's or climber's personal warm-up

Climbing Social (1h) - participants climb within a shared social setting

- Climbing (with support for new climbers)
- Peer encouragement and support
- Collaborative Climbing / Group Projects - participants are encouraged to attempt routes together

Cool Down and Group Discussion (10–15 minutes)

Session concludes with reflection.

- Open group discussion
- Optional short interviews

Documentation (Throughout)

- Photography and video (with consent)

F2 - Dance Session Itinerary

The dance sessions focused on somatic awareness, movement exploration, and embodied practice, integrating principles relevant to climbing.

Session Structure (2 hours)

Arrival and Set-Up (19:00) - participants arrive and check in

- Musician and photographer set up in advance
- Participants gather in studio space

Somatic Warm-Up and Partner Work (30 minutes) - the session begins with a guided somatic warm-up

- Partner massage and mobilisation
- Eyes-closed movement exploration
- Tactile exercises (brushing and activation)

Traverses and Movement Exploration (20–30 minutes) - participants explore travelling movement patterns

- Individual traverses developed later into phrases
- Partner traverses with shared weight
- Eyes-closed guided movement

Movement Principles (Integrated Throughout)

Key principles explored:

- Weight shifting
- Torsion and rotation

- Core engagement
- Balance and coordination

Break (5–10 minutes)

Movement Sequences (30–40 minutes) - three structured sequences

Sequence 1:

- Weight shifting and grounding

Sequence 2:

- Rhythmic and dynamic movement
- Strength-based elements (e.g. handstands)

Sequence 3:

- Torsion, spirals, and rotational movement

Group Discussion and Reflection (30 minutes)

- Open group conversation
- Reflection on movement and experience
- Inclusion of musician and photographer perspectives

Documentation (Throughout)

- Photography and video (with consent)

Appendix G – Visual documentation

Visual documentation captured movement, interaction, and group dynamics.

This included:

- Photographs during movement and climbing
- Images of interaction and support
- Video recordings for reflection

The documentation focused on:

- Movement patterns
- Body positioning
- Expressions of confidence and hesitation
- Social interaction

All materials were collected with participant consent and used for research and creative outputs.

Figure G1: *Climbing*



Figure G2: *Dance*



Figure G3: *Climbing*



Figure G4: *Dance*



Appendix H – Posters

H1 – Workshop Recruitment Poster

Poster Description

The poster was designed for participant recruitment and communication. It was distributed digitally within climbing and dance communities to invite participation in *Midair: The Intersection of Climbing and Dance* workshops.

The design combines bold colour contrasts and layered imagery to evoke movement and texture. Using scans of dance and climbing shoes, reflects the project's focus on embodied experience and the merging of disciplines. The visual language suggests both fluidity (associated with dance) and structure or terrain (associated with climbing), reinforcing the interdisciplinary nature of the project.

The typography is playful and informal, contributing to an accessible and welcoming tone. The phrase “for women+ dancers and climbers” is clearly emphasised, aligning with the project's intention to create a supportive and inclusive space.

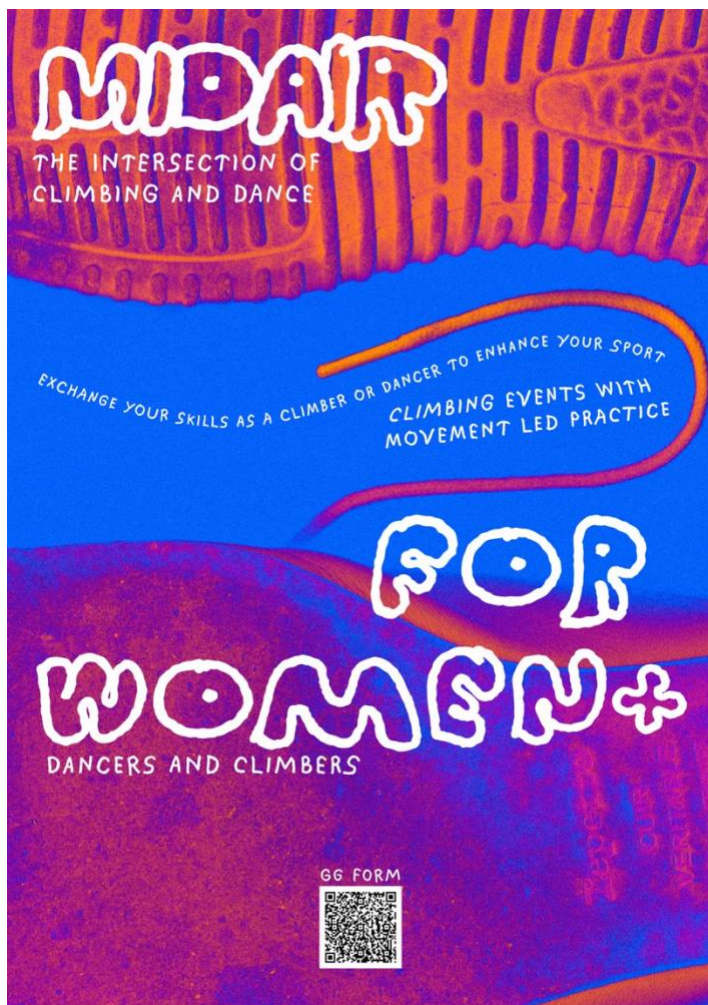
Key information presented in the poster includes:

- Project title (*Midair: The Intersection of Climbing and Dance*)
- Invitation to exchange skills between climbers and dancers
- Emphasis on movement-led practice
- Target audience (women+ participants)
- QR code linking to sign-up form

The inclusion of a QR code provides a direct and accessible method for participants to engage and sign up to the project.

Overall, the poster functions not only as a promotional tool but also as an extension of the project's creative identity, visually communicating themes of movement, collaboration, and inclusivity.

Figure H1: *Midair workshop recruitment poster*



H2 – Exhibition Poster

Poster Description

The exhibition poster was developed as a visual extension of the project's final outcome, promoting the public sharing of *Midair: The Intersection of Climbing and Dance*.

The design features a lino print of ballet shoes attached to a carabiner, combining symbols from both dance and climbing. This imagery reflects the core concept of the project, the intersection of two disciplines, and visually communicates the merging of movement practices.

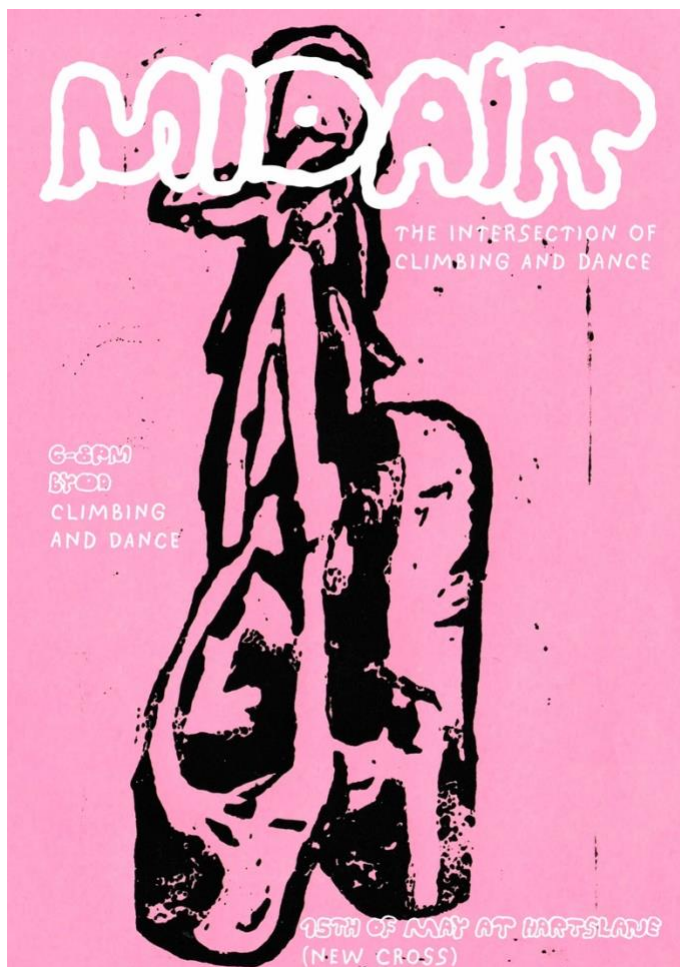
The use of lino prints as a medium introduces a tactile and handmade quality, aligning with the project's emphasis on embodiment and physical process. The bold

contrast and simplified imagery highlight the relationship between delicacy and strength, often associated with femininity and athleticism.

The poster functions as both:

- A promotional tool for the exhibition
- A creative artefact within the research itself

Figure H2: *Midair exhibition poster (lino print)*



Appendix I – Interviews

I1 – Interview with Joanna Croston (Author of *Mountaineering Women*)

Date: March 18, 2026

Format: Zoom interview

Role: Author and climber

Context

Joanna Croston is the author of *Mountaineering Women* and an experienced climber. Her work focuses on the visibility and historical recognition of women in mountaineering. This interview explored themes of gender, representation, and the relationship between climbing and artistic movement.

Key Quotes

- “Men would lead and you would follow - that has only really changed in the last decade.”
- “Many of these incredible female climbers never documented their achievements.”
- “There is a strong culture of modesty among women climbers.”
- “Climbing has often been described as ‘dancing up the rock’, although that phrase is overused.”
- “Movement in climbing shares the same spatial awareness and core strength as dance.”
- “Routes are like drawing or painting - you create lines through movement.”
- “I wrote this book because younger climbers didn’t know any female climbers from the past.”

Transcript Notes (summarised)

Croston described her early climbing experience as male-dominated, often climbing with her ex-husband and male peers. She noted that leadership roles were typically taken by men, with women expected to follow. However, she observed a shift in the past decade, with more women leading and forming their own climbing groups.

Following her divorce, Croston began climbing more independently and with other women, which she described as a turning point in her practice and confidence. She highlighted a recurring issue of gender bias and lack of visibility, explaining that many highly skilled female climbers did not document or promote their achievements. She referenced climbers such as Catherine Destivelle, noting her modesty despite performing at the highest level.

Croston also discussed the relationship between climbing and dance, emphasising shared qualities such as spatial awareness, balance, and core strength. She linked climbing movement to artistic practices, describing routes as “lines” similar to drawing or choreography.

She reflected on the aesthetic and performative qualities of climbing, including atmosphere, environment, and movement expression, drawing parallels with dance performance elements such as audience, lighting, and music.

The motivation for her book emerged from an encounter with a younger climber who lacked awareness of historical female figures in the sport, highlighting a gap in representation and knowledge transmission.

I2 – Interview with Isabelle Santoire (Female Mountain Guide)

Date: April 22, 2026

Format: Zoom interview

Role: Mountain guide

Context

Isabelle Santoire is a professional mountain guide. The interview explored her experiences as a woman in the climbing industry, as well as her perspective on movement, risk, and gender dynamics.

Key Quotes

- “Climbing combines balance, focus, and being fully in the moment.”

- “When I get pumped, I tell myself to breathe - relax and the solution will come.”
- “Women tend to climb more fluidly, trying to save energy.”
- “We are still a minority as professional mountain guides - around 35 women compared to 2000 men in France.”
- “Often we are not asked to lead because of assumptions.”
- “Climbing is a unique space - you must stay aware, even when in flow.”
- “There is something really special about how women connect and support each other.”

Transcript Notes (summarised)

Santoire began her movement background in figure skating, which she described as sharing similarities with climbing in terms of balance, control, and focus. She emphasised the importance of being present and “in the moment,” comparing climbing to other activities but noting its unique demands for awareness and safety.

She described climbing as a combination of multiple physical disciplines, incorporating elements of balance, coordination, and endurance. She also highlighted the importance of breath control, particularly when managing physical fatigue.

Santoire observed differences in movement approaches, suggesting that women often climb more fluidly and efficiently, while men may rely more on strength. She framed this as a difference in strategy rather than ability.

She addressed ongoing gender imbalance within the profession, noting that women remain significantly underrepresented in mountain guiding. She also discussed bias in leadership roles, where women are less frequently assumed to be leaders.

Reflecting on past experiences, she explained that women-only climbing groups were once negatively perceived, but are now becoming more accepted and valued. She emphasised the importance of community and connection among women, describing it as supportive and distinct from male group dynamics.

Santoire also highlighted the importance of outdoor movement for wellbeing, linking physical activity to emotional release and positive mental states.

Appendix J – Use of Generative AI Statement

Generative AI was used in an assistive role during the drafting stage of this dissertation in accordance with Trinity Laban's Category 2 AI guidance.

Tool used:

Open AI ChatGPT

How it was used:

AI was used to help:

- Check grammar and academic phrasing
- Creating key points from my notes to enable me to expand my ideas

Example prompts included:

- “Can you check grammar and UK English spelling”