

Abstract

This creative practice-based research report explores a phenomenological approach to the body as a sensorially, audibly, visibly and viscerally present entity. The research argues for an experience of embodiment that highlights the primacy of the body within the context of the HIV and AIDS pandemic in South Africa. It addresses theoretical and methodological concerns of theatre making as a creative practice for interrogating the body's lived experience of HIV and AIDS. The study argues that theatre has tended to describe the surface experience of the trauma of HIV and AIDS and that it has failed to speak to the lived body experience of HIV and AIDS. In so doing, this report excavates the innovation of a theatre making process that helps illuminate complex human experience through performance.

This research report is written in a way that allows the reader access to the process that was developed by the researcher/theatre maker/writer. Through a facilitated process of theatre making, this study focuses on the four co-researchers/performers lived experiences of HIV and AIDS and how through the use of stimuli (visual art and elements of nature) and the use of the combination of somatic play, movement and sound, they evoked and exhumed their bodies living memory. The accounts that were made in the exploration are presented in this report and in the performance and recording (DVD) of *Stains Inner*.

This research posits the body as a knowing entity in the era of HIV and AIDS in South Africa and highlights the process of *on-flow* in theatre making as a fluid dynamic process through which the body can viscerally access the latent lived experiences associated with the pandemic. It is a powerful process that enhances the body aesthetic in theatre. The study concludes that this form of theatre making has the capacity to create a transformative experience for the performer and audience. The study also puts forth recommendations that would possibly shift the landscape of HIV and AIDS discourse.

Key words:

Practice-based research; HIV and AIDS; somatic play, movement and sound; lived memory; visceral; body expressivity; on-flow; performance as site.