

Today's Jam is based on a structure created by Nancy Stark Smith called the "Underscore".

The Underscore is an activity in which everyone can participate at their own level of knowledge – even those who have never heard of it before!

The most important thing about the Underscore is the state of mind of the participants:

- Everyone involved is committed to seeing what all that is going on in the space as part of one dance.
- Each of us contributes to how this dance evolves by tuning in to what is going on within us and around us.
- You can observe and remain connected to the dance, just as a character in a play can be on still on stage and watch others.
- You can even go to the bathroom without removing yourself from the dance – just as a character can go to a part of the stage where no one else is and do something that the others do not observe.
- Talking can diffuse the ability to stay focused on the dancing – please talk only when it is necessary.

Together we cultivate a state of heightened perception which we maintain until the formal ending of the Underscore. (if you need to leave the jam early, you can maintain your "Underscore" mind-set until the scheduled end time if you like).

If you do not have experience in Contact Improvisation and you have arrived after 12:15, please observe today. Other jams will be much easier to join late, and people will be more available to give you guidance. The best way to begin your jam experience is to attend the class which is offered at the beginning of each jam session (11:45 to 1pm).

The following, as well as the excerpts found on the Underscore sheets, are from the Underscore chapter in "Caught Falling: The Confluence of Contact Improvisation, Nancy Stark Smith, and Other Moving Ideas" by David Koteen and Nancy Stark Smith. It's a great book, with wonderful insights into practicing and performing CI and improvisation in general. (You can buy it through Contact Editions, <http://www.contactquarterly.com/contact-editions/index.php>).

Nancy Stark Smith's introduction to the Underscore:

"The Underscore is a framework for practicing and researching dance improvisation that I've been developing since the early 1990's. It is a score that guides dancers through a series of changing states, from solo deepening/releasing and sensitizing to gravity and support; through group circulation and interaction, Contact Improvisation (CI) engagements, opening out to full group improvisation with compositional awareness, and back to rest and reflection.

The Underscore can be seen as a vehicle for incorporating Contact Improvisation into a broader arena of improvisational practice; for developing greater ease dancing in spherical space - alone and with others; and for integrating kinesthetic and compositional concerns while improvising. The Underscore is also being used in the CI community worldwide as a way to focus and concentrate Contact jams."