Students in the Performance and Technology Class create a series of performances that explore the interface between society and our machines. With the theme of the cloud to guide them, they have created increasingly complex art using digital media, microcontrollers, and motion tracking. Their work will be on display at the Duke Choreolab 2016, and in a Youtube video after the class https://youtu.be/MxwGdMeIgPM https://youtu.be/ygOH1Q2WGGa

The interaction of nature and technology has always been a contentious one. With this project we sought to create a combination of the two worlds where the forces of nature—in particular, clouds—are controlled by technological innovation. We have a box of dry ice with a lid that is controlled by motor. As the observer comes closer to the display, the sensor “sees” this approach and begins to raise the lid, releasing the billows and clouds of the dry ice. The closer the person comes, the more the lid opens. As they leave, the lid lowers. This system also incorporates LED lights to mimic stars in the sky as the observer approaches, creating a more realistic effect.

In keeping our tense balance of nature and technology, we have our fishing line pulley running over a tree branch, as though the scene takes place in a different space—in the canopy of a forest, in the midst of a storm, or in a park on a foggy day.

Our project aims to explore the playfulness of chasing clouds in our childhoods. We used an Arduino coupled with an ultrasound rangefinder and continuous servos to create a cloud that runs away from you as you walk closer to it and sneaks up closer behind you as you walk away from it. To create our cloud, we used white helium balloons that were bundled together.