

# **The Live Camera in Performance:**

## ***The Bland Project, This Kind of Ruckus and Measure for Measure***

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The University of New South Wales  
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree  
of Master of Fine Arts

School of Media Arts, College of Fine Arts  
The University of New South Wales  
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## **Statement of Authentication**

**The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.**

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## **Abstract**

This exegesis details the development and execution of three pieces of work that incorporate the use of live camera in performance / theatre.

Each work has quite a different thematic, in-turn they range from performance installation to traditional theatre; the one aspect in common is the use of live camera throughout each piece.

Within each work and as a whole the exegesis will assesses the way time, present and past (live camera –pre-recorded camera) are staged through the use of video technology. It will explore how the representation of the present and past (live camera –pre-recorded camera) through screen-based media can work in a theatre environment involving performers.

This exegesis will contribute to an existing body of research into the use of live camera and pre-recorded feed in performance and theatre.

## **Contents of Attached DVDs**

### **DVD 1: The Bland Project**

**Bland 1/3 duration 25.00**

**Bland 2/3 duration 24.40**

**Bland 3/3 duration 12.24**

**Stills, 15 photographs by Mayu Kanamori**

**Schematic, diagram, 7 images**

### **DVD 2: This Kind of Ruckus**

**This Kind of Ruckus duration 53.39**

**Stills, 6 photographs by Heidrun Lohr**

**Schematic, Isadora patch, 3 images**

### **DVD 3: Measure for Measure**

**Measure for Measure, first half, duration 01:01:58**

**Measure for Measure, second half, duration 01:01:08**

**Stills: Video stills: Sean Bacon, Photographer: Heidrun Lohr**

**Design, and concept drawing: 6 images**

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Methodology

*The Bland Project*, *This Kind of Ruckus* and *Measure for Measure* have been chosen for a number of specific reasons. They all employed the use of live video cameras. The conceptual reasoning behind the use of live cameras and video was unique to each work. They each had different approaches to how a work is made. The descriptive framework within each work was different; *The Bland Project* was performance installation, *This Kind of Ruckus* contemporary performance and *Measure for Measure* mainstream theatre. These distinctions are important because they create a broad spectrum in which live camera has been used. *The Bland Project* was not a narrative driven piece; it was a movement based aural and visual spectacle, with the central theme being about the notion of ‘blandness’. The audience were put into a position where they could interpret the work in their own fashion. *This Kind of Ruckus* was a series of responses linked together under the umbrella of a central theme, that theme was the exploration of sexual violence within sport and Australian culture. *Measure for Measure* was a contemporary interpretation of a Shakespeare play. A further distinction between these three works can be seen when you place them on Michael Kirby’s continuum exploring the modes of behaviour undertaken in performance, which he discusses in his article *On Acting And Non Acting*<sup>1</sup>. Kirby’s continuum represents “a scale that measures the amount or degree of representation, simulation, impersonation and so forth in performance behaviour. Although the polar states are ‘acting’ and ‘not-acting’, we can follow a continuous

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Kirby, On Acting and Not-Acting, The Drama Review: TDR, Vol. 16, No. 1 (The MIT Press Stable, Mar, 1972) pp3-15

increase in the degree of representation from ‘non-matrixed performing’ through ‘non-matrixed representation’, ‘received acting’ and ‘simple acting’ to ‘complex acting.’”

Kirby states that the continuum goes from absolute non-acting task-based activities, to full scale acting performance, which involves all the standard devices used in theatre such as script, plot line, character development etc. At the beginning of this continuum there is ‘non acting’, performers play themselves, not representing a character or a situation.

Kirby calls this performer ‘non-matrixed’. When this performer works within a design / landscape or is wearing a costume that represents someone or something, Kirby calls this ‘non matrixed representation’. In ‘non-matrixed representation’ the performers still play themselves and the signifier of ‘representation’ is external to the performer such as a costume or prop. When these external elements are strong and reinforce each other Kirby calls this ‘received acting’. With ‘received acting’ the performers remain themselves, however the external elements are so strong that the performer is seen in the context of those elements and in doing so takes on a character. When the performers actions reinforce this character we move a long the continuum to ‘simple acting’ and in turn ‘complex acting’.

The three works discussed explore different points on this continuum, while at the same time sliding along the continuum. It is the function of the video element with in the performance that often facilitates this sliding; the video element enables the performer to engage theatrically on a number of different levels dependent on how the performer is engaging with the live video element.

## 1.2 Overview

The body of this exegesis details the development of the three works, describing the progress of the conceptual aesthetic and technical structures that have informed each of these works from concept to realization. It provides detailed technical information on the works including technical limitations and problems and solutions to the issues that arose.

## 1.3 Background and personal motivation

I became interested in video and the use of live camera feeds through a visual arts photography background. The video medium allowed for an immediate response, I pointed the camera at an object and I had a representation of that object immediately, receiving instant feedback while shooting. Being able to watch a live feed in the monitor while recording led to a major perceptual shift from the long delay in viewing film and photographic mediums. However today, with the onset of the digital medium, this delay is now nonexistent.

In Yvonne Spielmann, *Video: the reflexive medium*, she refers to the video process as “transformation imagery”<sup>2</sup>. The fact that with film and photography, it is the single image that matters, where as in video it is the transition between images that is central to its core. It is the process of a constant movement of signals circulating between recording and reproduction equipment, a closed circuit. These signals can be modified, by processors and keyers, they can be overlayed and reduced and they can be transmitted auditively and visually and importantly, all of this can be done in real time.

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<sup>2</sup> Yvonne Spielmann, *Video: The Reflexive Medium* (The MIT Press Cambridge, Massachusetts London, England 2008) p4

What interests me about the notion of an instantaneous response is how the viewer perceives that representation of real time, bearing in mind that representation is not precisely what is occurring but a live occurrence represented, shifted or reframed.

Spielmann argues that technically, the raw material of video consists of noise, which is the electronic signals of both audio and video signals; it does not present image and sound like film. It is the manipulation of the noise through video technology, like scan processes, which produce the image.<sup>3</sup> The combination of these various technical processes results in an audiovisual medium, where the progress to the outcome of the video image becomes almost performative, a culmination of its components.

The notion that the video medium works as a culmination of events, an expression of form consisting of audio and video signals that are manipulated, sculpted and processed, excited me. Because the live feed, the instantaneous image, is not a real representation of what the camera sees, rather it is a constructed simulacrum. I am interested in what happens when you place this technology within a performance environment. Because the performance environment is also a constructed place where the end result is a culmination of many different components combined to create a desired effect.

I began working with live camera feeds in installation work where the viewer could interact with in the space created. The works would directly engage spectators through performance, sensor systems and live camera feeds that were activated by voluntary or involuntary viewer involvement. The viewer becomes a performer, the privacy of the viewing experience is invaded and, willingly or not, the viewer becomes the viewed, not

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<sup>3</sup> Yvonne Spielmann, Video: The Reflexive Medium (The MIT Press Cambridge, Massachusetts London, England 2008) p8, p98

only by themselves but also by others. The viewer completes the work. These works had a strong performative element to them. In turn, my work progressed into using live camera in collaborative performance in a theatre environment where I was able to work with performers / devisors on an idea from concept to production where the video component is treated with the same concerns as a performer.

## Chapter 2

### Conceptual framework

#### 2.1 Video as performer

Theatre traditionally uses set design to create a world for the performers to exist within. In my work, the video element of the live performance not only serves as a component of the set design, but as a live functioning element on stage, an element that the performers can interact with. Josef Svoboda's ground breaking *Laterna Magika* (1958), was entirely dominated by the interactive element of the film component. The live actors worked in total synchronicity with the film element. Interestingly this led to constraints with the performance, where the performers had no scope for development, as Svoboda put it:

“It means that the *Laterna Magika* is to a certain extent deprived of that which is beautiful about theatre: that each performance can have a completely different rhythm, that the quality of the performance can be better or worse, that a production can expand its limits.”<sup>4</sup>

In *Laterna Magika* the use of film in live performance was a new language, which presented a great scope for exploration. In my work, the use of pre-recorded video combined with the use of live camera, somewhat alleviates the constraints described above. In this way, my approach to video in live theatre allows the video component to be both interactive and reactive, allowing the performers to develop and experiment within the live performance.

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<sup>4</sup> Jarka Burian, The Scenography of Josef Svoboda (Wesleyan University Press, Middletown, Connecticut, USA 1971) p86

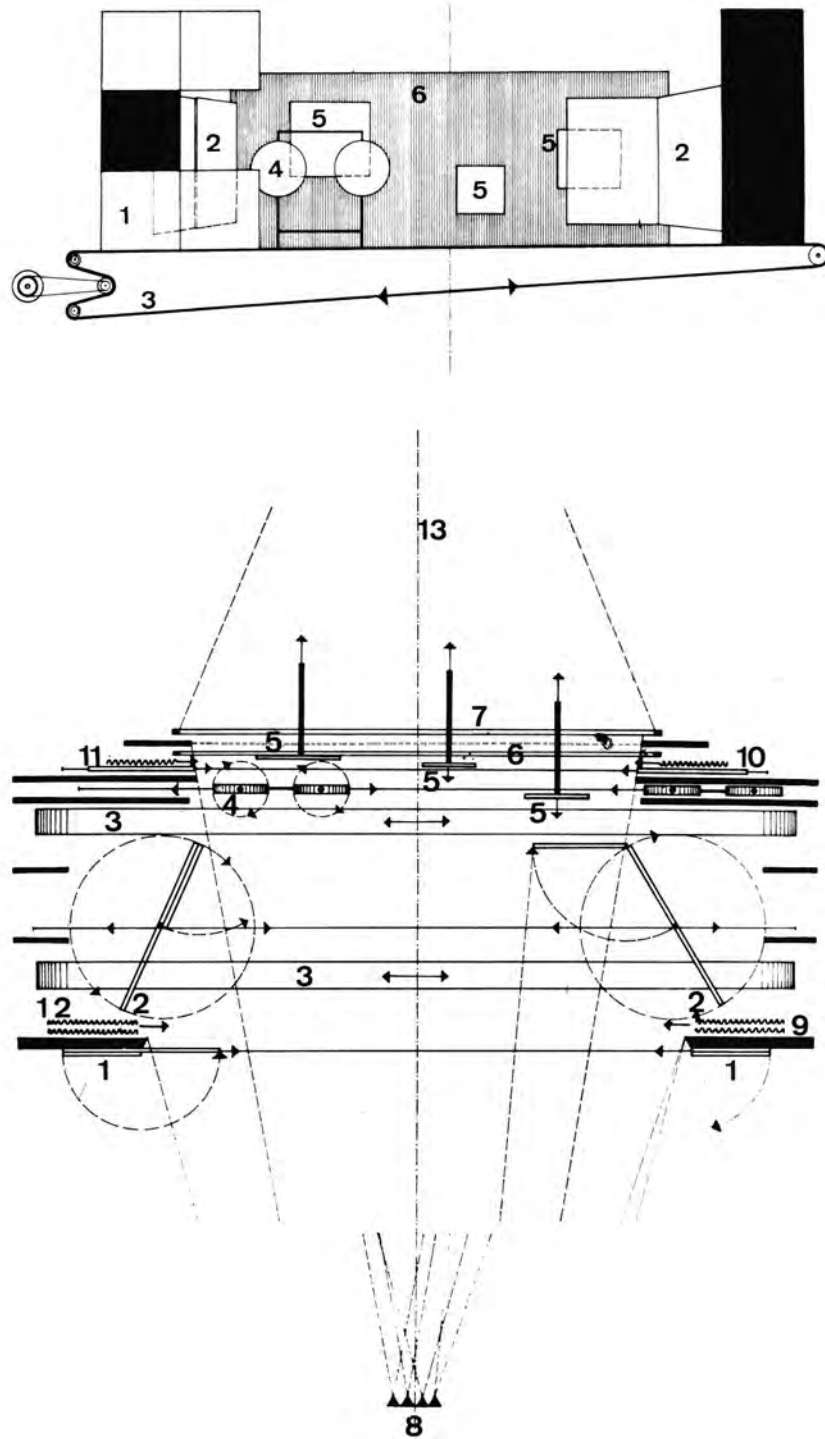


Figure 1 . Josef Svoboda diagram of *Laterna Magika* (1958 Brussels World Fair) showing the complexity of the screen and projection set up. The Scenography of Josef Svoboda, Jarka Burian, Wesleyan University Press, Middletown, Connecticut, First Edition 1971, Figure 80, p84

To elaborate on this idea, within my own work an interactive scenario is when the performer works within the constraints of the video, physically responding to the timing and/or the framing created in the video component. *The Bland Project* contained a number of scenes where the performers had to synchronise with the video component. The blanket scene, for example, where the performers did a short choreography with blankets, which included creating a screen out of the blankets. This screen was then projected onto with a live camera feed of the performers taken from the other side of the blankets, creating a quirky sense of perspective (See Fig 8).

The video works in a reactive fashion when live camera is used to film the live action on stage, allowing the performer the freedom to create their own rhythm with the live camera. An example of this is the live camera images of dancing in *This Kind of Ruckus* (See Fig 15). In this scenario the onstage cameras were operated by stage-hands, who had to follow the action of the performers, therefore giving the performer the freedom to play within the scene.

## 2.2 Context

My interest in these concerns of course is no way unique. In the late sixties Josef Svoboda, the scenographer, used closed circuit, live television projection and pre-recorded video in his opera works *Luigi Nonnos Intoleranza* February 1965 and Carl Orff's *Prometheus* 1968.<sup>5</sup> Both these works were a variation of principles used in Svoboda previous works, most importantly *Laterna Magika*. It is important to focus on this work due to similar concerns raised in my own practice. This work consisted of three

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<sup>5</sup> Jarka Burian, *The Scenography of Josef Svoboda* (Wesleyan University Press, Middletown, Connecticut, USA 1971) pp103-106

film and two slide projectors that were synchronously controlled as well as a deflecting device that allowed a projection beam to be placed in any spot (including a moving screen) on the stage. The stage space had eight moving screens with directional reflecting surfaces. These screens could move up, down, side ways, rotate, disappear and reappear in precise rhythm with live actors (See Fig 1).

Every element (due to the constraints of the film medium, a set liner process) was highly synchronised. This work at the time was a new hybrid medium with its combination of film projection and performance. It explored concerns that interest me with my own work with the use of live camera in performance. The director of *Laterna Magika*, (Svoboda's long time collaborator) Alfred Radok pointed out: "Above all, *Laterna Magika* has the capacity of seeing reality from several aspects. Of 'extracting' a situation or individual from the routine context of time and place and apprehending it in some other fashion, perhaps by confronting it with a chronologically distinct event."<sup>6</sup>

La Fura dels Baus are also known for their use of multi media forms like video and live camera feeds, in works such as MTM which is concerned with similar ideas of seeing reality from several aspects, of being able to manipulate concepts of time for performers and audience.

"*MTM* is an allegory about the manipulation of information carried out by major political, economic and social forces through the mass media. ... In order to achieve this goal, the show creates a web of fake images, fictions that the audience confuses with reality. ... The images that were pre-recorded, projected and recorded live through the

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<sup>6</sup> Jarka Burian, The Scenography of Josef Svoboda (Wesleyan University Press, Middletown, Connecticut, USA 1971) p86

course of the performance are interwoven and immerse the spectator in a huge lie. ...

The images and their treatment compose *MTM*'s skeleton, to the point where the acting constantly interacts with the video, the projections and the mirror play created by the set".<sup>7</sup>

*This Kind of Ruckus*, with its use of real time and pre-recorded footage, explored the same concerns of reality being seen from various perspectives, including the possibility of present, past and future. Both Josef Svoboda and La Fura dels Baus are concerned with how video works with in a performance arena.

With the video as medium, I am also very interested in the works of Jeffrey Shaw, particularly *Corpocinema*,<sup>8</sup> which explored notions of taking the image off the two dimensional screen through the use of projection. At the time this was ground breaking because it explored the medium, the idea of the act of projection as opposed to the subject of the projection itself. It is this deconstruction of the medium, which enables you to begin to understand it more fully. Gene Youngblood's *Expanded Cinema* explores these ideas in depth.<sup>9</sup>

Ulrike Rosenbach, Peter Campus and Tim Burns<sup>10</sup> explored similar issues in the video medium. Jeffrey Shaw's work for example, allows you to think about cinema as a medium in itself, regardless of content. The work of Peter Campus allows you to think about the medium of video in a similar way. Campus's use of the video medium, like my

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<sup>7</sup> La Fura Dels Baus website [http://www.lafura.com/web/eng/obras\\_ficha.php?o=61](http://www.lafura.com/web/eng/obras_ficha.php?o=61)  
synopsis of MTM

<sup>8</sup> *Corpocinema*, 1967, Sigma Projects, Museumplein, Amsterdam, Netherlands

<sup>9</sup> Gene Youngblood introduction by R.Buckminster Fuller, Expanded Cinema (A Dutton Paperback, P.Dutton & Co,Inc, New York 1970)

<sup>10</sup> Scanlines, Video Art in Australia Since the 1960s, <http://scanlines.net/person/tim-burns>

use, is an exploration of the notion of the medium, specifically the idea of the instantaneous feedback, which is what the invention of video has enabled.

So Campus allows you to think of the nature of the video medium, where as Ulrike Rosenbach allows you to think of the nature of the video medium in relation to the live performing body. For example, in her work *Don't Think I am an Amazon* Rosenbach superimposes a live image of her own face onto an image of the *Madonna im Rosenhag* by Stefan Lochner, 1451. This image is projected on to a target board, which Rosenbach then proceeds to shoot at with a bow and arrow in live action. It's a beautiful example of the use of live camera in a live performance.

The works of Bruce Nauman *Good Boy Bad Boy* (1985) among others, Nam June Paik *TV Cello* 1964, are of interest for their use of live camera in their work. These artists all explored how the medium worked, which is fundamentally different to using the medium to explore something else. So even though Rosenbach's *Don't Think I am an Amazon* is about feminist concerns it is also about how the live camera operates within the real environment and what that does to the projected image of her.

## Chapter 3

### *The Bland Project*

#### 3.1 *The Bland Project*

Track 20 Carriageworks Sydney  
August 2008

Credits:

Director	Alan Schacher
Performers	Ari Ehrlich Ryuichi Fujimura Phillip Mills Teik-Kim Pok
Choreography	Alan Schacher with the performers
Video Design / Imagery	Sean Bacon
Filmmaker / Imagery	Michelle Mahrer
Composer / Musician	Boris Baberkoff
Lighting Design	Sydney Bouhaniche
Video Artist / Installation	Sean Bacon
Set Design	Sean Bacon Alan Schacher
Costume	Alan Schacher
Moving Screen System	Russell Emerson
Production Manager	Liam Kennedy
Rigger	Garnet Brownbill
Video Documentation	Sam James Michelle Mahrer
Photographer	Mayu Kanamori

This Project has been supported by the Australian Council for the Arts, Arts NSW, Marrickville Council, Department of Performance Studies at the University of Sydney, Performance Space.

*THE BLAND PROJECT* was initially developed in 2006 through a Critical Path residency at The Drill Hall.

Special thanks to Richard Manner, Michelle Outram, Rosalind Richards and Fiona Winning at Performance Space, Russell Emerson, Miranda Heckenberg, Kirstin Boker, Dr Paul Dwyer, Ariana Grabovaz and the staff and students of the Department of Performance Studies, University of Sydney, Mark Mitchell, Creative Practice Research Unit (School of English, Media and Performing Arts, UNSW) for screen construction method and equipment loans. Joey Ruigrok van der Werven for additional technical advice. Anna Bazzi-Backhouse, Marrickville Council for residency support.

### 3.2 Introduction

*The Bland Project* was a performance installation initiated by Alan Schacher in collaboration with myself, and four performers Ari Ehrlich, Ryuichi Fujimura, Phillip Mills and Teik-Kim Pok. The first stage of development at the Drill Hall Sydney consisted of four moveable screens attached to four separate wire strands. The performers were able to move the screen left to right, horizontally across the space. There were also screens and screen material that hung against the back wall and around the space. The moving screens, back wall and assorted screens created a fragmented projection surface for four projectors.

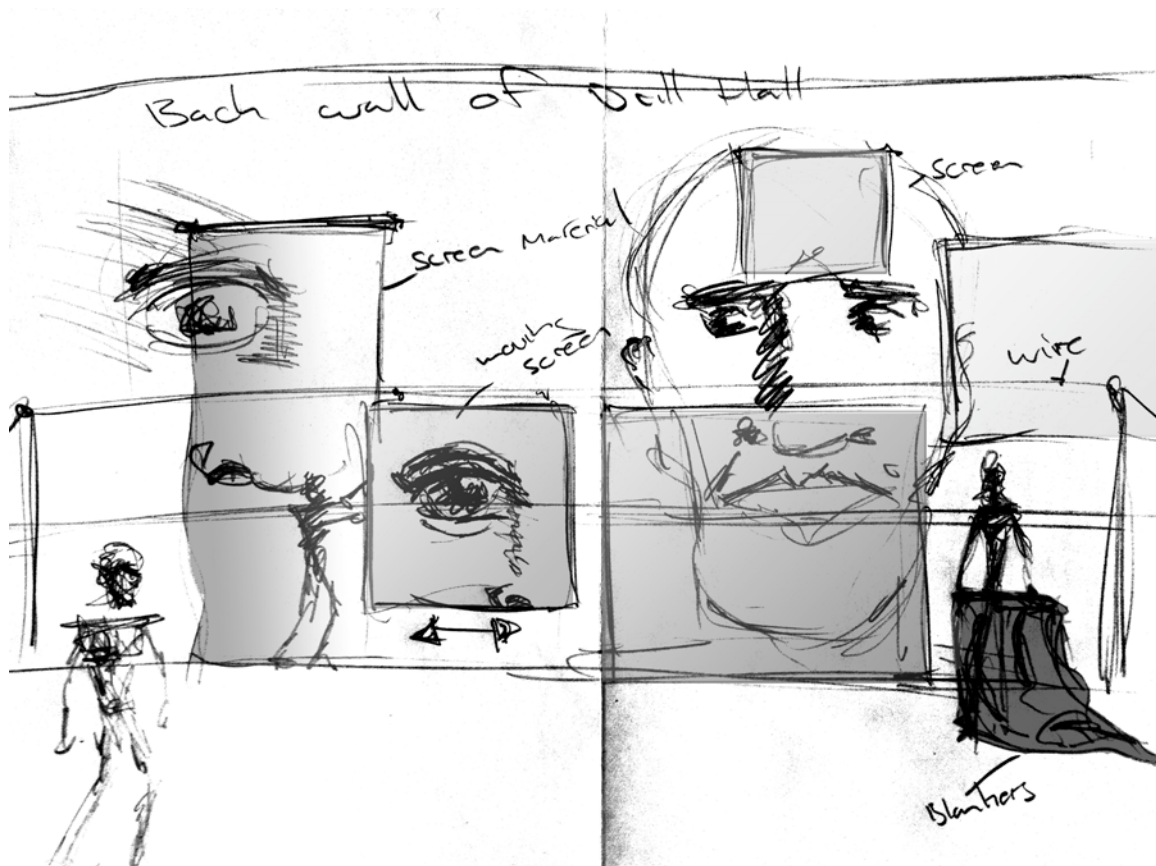


Figure 2. Concept drawing for *The Bland Project* first development, showing moving hanging and blanket screens with projection overlays. Image: Sean Bacon

The images projected were pre-recorded footage of the performers, close-ups of faces, body parts and body movement. This was live mixed with live camera feed from cameras situated around the space.

*The Bland Project* second development, which culminated in a performance season, had a different mechanical moving screen structure. The screens could move at different speeds on a horizontal plane, and stop and start at certain points within the structure. At various locations around the performance area additional screens were lowered, pushed manually on trolleys across the space or created by small screens and blankets used by the performers. As with the first development the screens created a fragmented projection surface for projected images, which were pre-recorded footage of the rehearsal process, footage of the performers, close-ups of faces, body parts etc, footage of body movement or rehearsed segments of choreography mixed with live footage from two cameras focused on the performance area.

The performance started with four identically dressed performers, (blue shirt, grey slacks and black shoes) they stand in a straight line ushering the audience silently into the performance space. They exchange places with each other in the line: from one side to the other, and then recommencing. The audience enter the room and take their seats to be confronted with the projected image of the four performers, still repeating the action the audience encountered at the entrance way. This is not a live broadcast image but a pre-recorded looped video projection. The projections here establish how the video component will work, in its interaction with the performers, and importantly its parameters within the performance. The parameters of the video projection contains only footage of the performers; it is a combination of pre-recorded and live, the video works as

a reflection and a mirror to the performers real physical form. The lights dim and the screen retracts to reveal a moving screen system on four tracks, one screen per track. They quietly move across the space in a horizontal path, back and forth. During the course of the performance pre-recorded images of the performers as well as live camera feeds of the performers, are projected onto these screens and onto the back wall of the theatre space, and the performers move and interact with them. The performers use mirrors, ordinary grey blankets and hand held screens as sculptural elements.

### 3.3 Design and implementation – schematics

The video interactive environment in *The Bland Project* consisted of nine projectors and a variety of screen surfaces, The screen surfaces were divided into three parts, the main screen surface was the back wall of the performance area where the image was from two large projectors, the second screen surface was the moving screen structure.

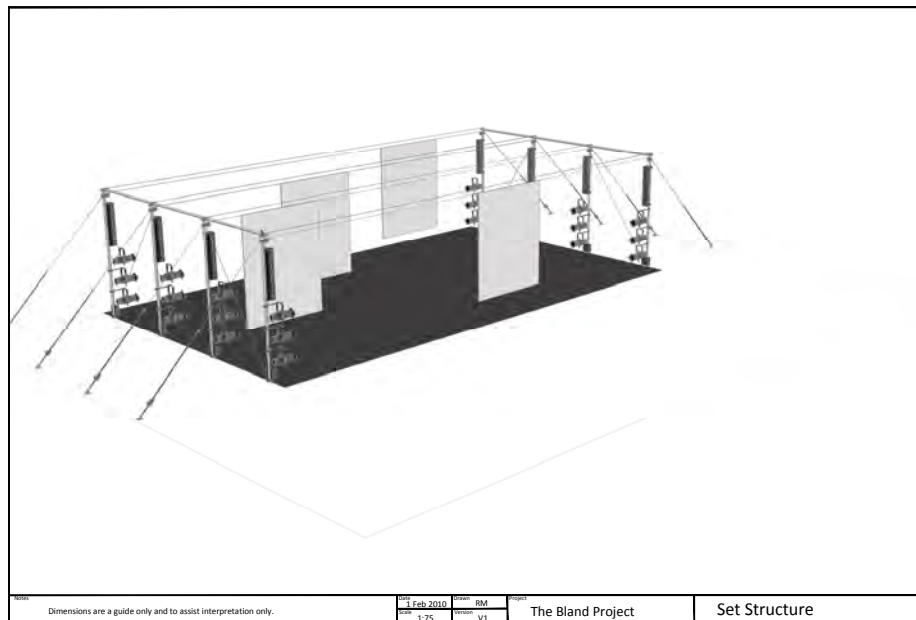


Figure 3: Moving screen system design diagram of screen mechanism and set structure. Diagram: Russell Emerson

This also used the two main projectors and two small projectors either end of the performance area. The third projection surface was a number of screens, which appeared and disappeared during the performance including the blanket screen (See Fig 8), the trolley screen, the pull down screen and hand held screens (See Fig 7). The remaining five projectors provided the image content for these screens, meaning that the majority of projectors were used for a single image (See Fig 5). For example projector six was used once to project onto the blanket screen.

The video system played from four different sources. The main source was a Mac G5 computer; the software used was Isadora, interactive graphic design software created by Troika Ranch, a New York based dance company. This software allows for real-time processing of live camera inputs. The remaining sources were 4 DVD players.

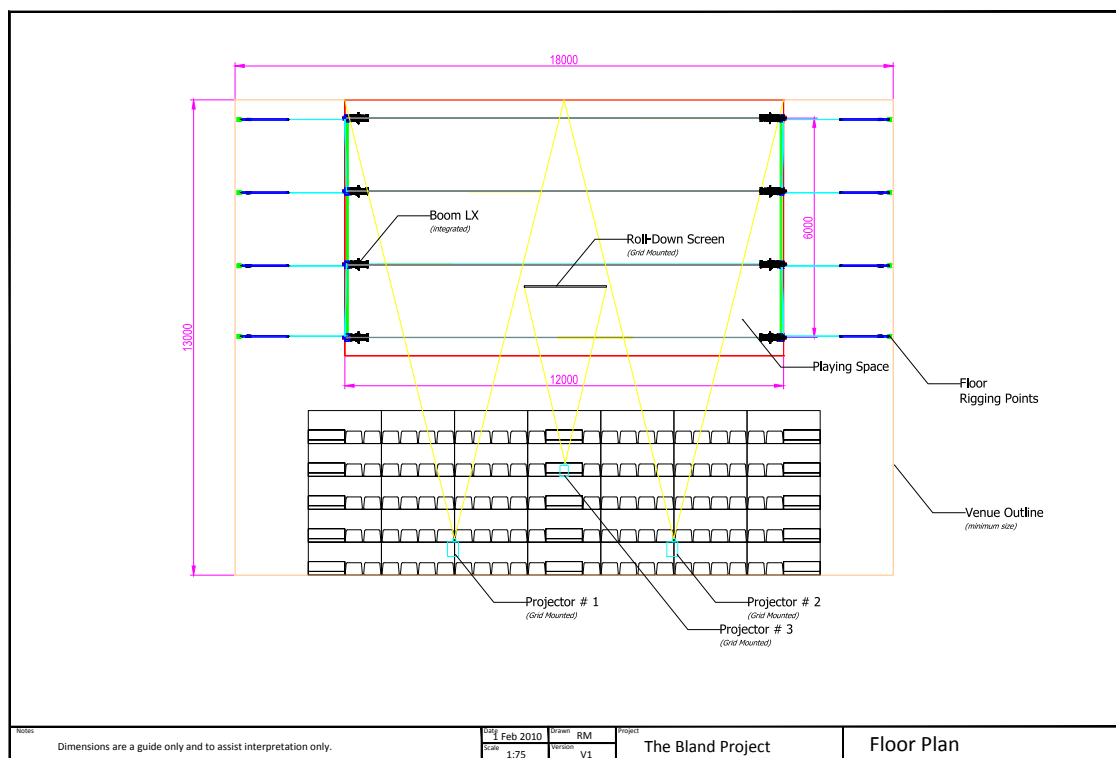


Figure 4: Floor plans showing screen mechanism and set structure. Diagram: Russell Emerson

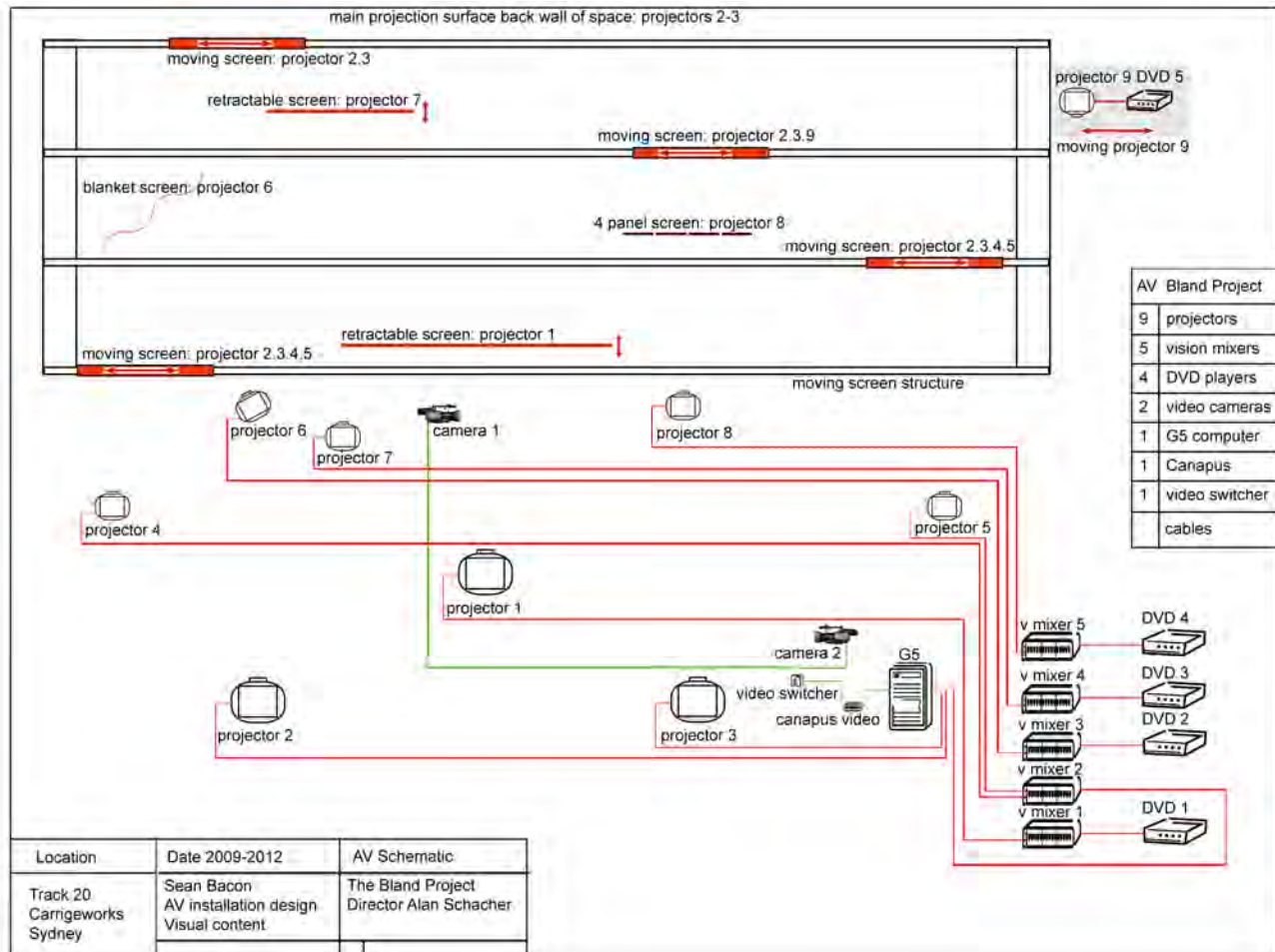
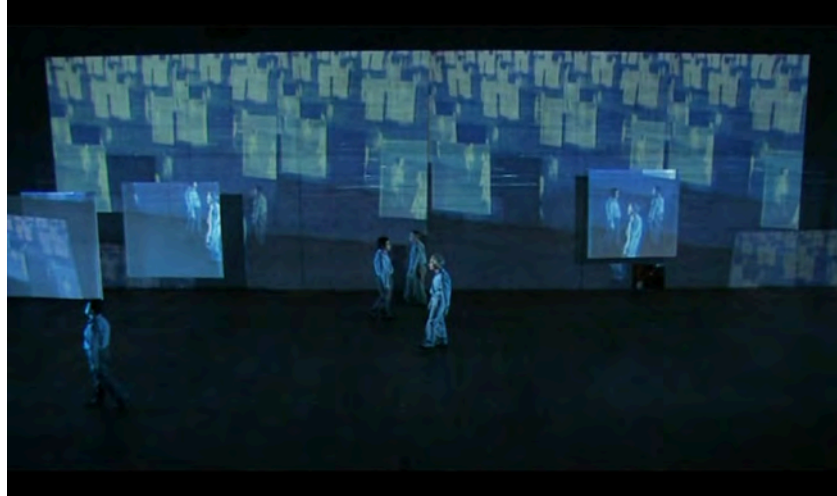


Figure 5: Schematic (Not to scale) showing screen placement (moving and stationary), projector placement and visual control system including the 5 vision mixers, 4 DVD players and the Mac G5 computer, red indicates out ward flow of information to the projectors, green indicates inward flow of information to the Mac G5 computer. Diagram: Sean Bacon



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Figure 6: Moving screens with live camera feed. Photo: Mayu Kanamori

Figure 7: Performers and panel screen. Photo: Mayu Kanamori

Figure 8: Blanket screen with projected image of performers. Photo: Mayu Kanamori

### 3.4 Aims, conceptual overview and development

In relation to Kirby's acting/not-acting continuum, the performances in *The Bland Project* were predominately task-based, with performers undertaking certain actions which constituted the physical choreography of the piece. *The Bland Project* had no overarching narrative or plot line, rather it was a performance universe left open for interpretation by the audience. In this way the performers fall into the Kirby category of 'non-matrixed representation'.<sup>11</sup> They had a costume, and while they were not playing themselves, they were not playing particular characters or characterisations.

Alan Schacher's conceptual framework for *The Bland Project* was an exploration of blandness, persona, identity, exposure, disclosure and masking, and in turn perception and presentation.

"The theme comes down to persona and to the confrontation of one's own social identity amongst others. The persona is examined as fleeting, an ungraspable and interchangeable event. The subject is performance of self, and how this involves a confrontation with self. There is an explicit question about how one feels in being uncomfortable with performing. The experiment lies also in forming a small community who must somehow expose the very mechanics they use to conceal their persona, and to turn this into a performance or aesthetic device. The project investigated ways that this self-reflection and exposure lapses into concealment, and how this can be shown performatively. This

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<sup>11</sup> Michael Kirby, On Acting and Not-Acting (The Drama Review: TDR, Vol. 16, No. 1, The MIT Press Stable Mar., 1972) pp. 3-15

work will enable an observer to similarly reflect on identity. The work seeks to push the participants to react in ways that overstep this concept of blandness.”<sup>12</sup>

The director was very interested in the way that a person on stage can have the ability to disappear through their persona, through their persona becoming bland. My input was to create a video interactive environment, through the use of live cameras and multiple projectors, with the aim to actually totally remove the persona from the stage. To have the ability to take the physical body of the performer and, to a certain degree, make it disappear through multiple projections, which create a dilution of the image.

Referencing Expanded Cinema, Robert Zagone<sup>13</sup> worked with similar concerns with his *Videospace* work at the KQED Experimental project in the late 1960’s, with his explorations of the video medium using multiple-camera feedback techniques to gain a disintegration of form. The video component of *The Bland Project* also used the idea of feedback to replicate the image of the performer into infinity, disempowering it, consuming the physical form into the medium (See Fig 6).

The screens moved through the performance space in a choreographed manner. These screens had the ability to dissect and segment the projected image. The projections consisted of the action that appeared on stage. There was no external video footage introduced into the environment, from outside of the performance world apart from two pieces from the rehearsal process that were mixed with the live action on stage, in a

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<sup>12</sup> Alan Schacher, Program notes *The Bland Project* 2009

<sup>13</sup> Gene Youngblood introduction by R.Buckminster *Expanded Cinema* (Fuller,; A Dutton Paperback, P.Dutton & Co,Inc, New York 1970) p.286

sequence called the mirror dance. It was done in a very subtle matter and the reason being to compress time, and to create an environment where time is not linear.

The video acted as the fifth performer, taking the performers physical form and replicating them in infinite loops, the projections became equal to the physical human form. It was important the video landscape had the ability to dissect, manipulate and swallow time, providing another level to the concept of the real persona disappearing on stage.

### **3.5 Outcome**

Due to the implementation of the video component from the beginning of the research and concept process the video was wholly integrated with in the performance, and was fundamental to realizing the conceptual framework of the piece. Through its integration the video component functioned on an equal footing with the live performers manifesting in a strong physical presence, where each element of the performance was in dialogue with each other. In this way the video became the fifth performer on stage.

One aspect of *The Bland Project* was its heavily technical component, for example nine projectors, which contributed to difficulties in enabling a touring season beyond its Carriageworks premiere. In saying this, the technical components of *The Bland Project* were completely necessary to examine the concepts of the piece.

## Chapter 4

### *This Kind of Ruckus*

#### 4.1 *This Kind of Ruckus*

The Arts Centre, FULL TILT, Melbourne 18-28 August 2011  
NORPA, Lismore City Hall, Lismore 12 March 2010  
Norwood Concert Hall, Norwood, Adelaide 20-26 February 2010,  
Performance Space, Carriageworks, Sydney World Premiere, 3-12 September 2009

#### Credits:

Collaborating Artists / Devised by:	Danielle Antaki Sean Bacon Arky Michael Jane Phegan Deborah Pollard Christopher Ryan Yana Taylor Kym Vercoe David Williams Stephen Klinder
Performers (premiere season):	Danielle Antaki, Arky Michael, Jane Phegan, Kym Vercoe, David Williams
Performers (Adelaide, Lismore):	Danielle Antaki, Alan Flower, Jane Phegan, Kym Vercoe, David Williams
Performers (Melbourne season):	Valerie Berry, Arky Michael, Katia Molino, Kym Vercoe, David Williams
Video Artist:	Sean Bacon
Dramaturgy:	Deborah Pollard, Yana Taylor, and Christopher Ryan
Additional dramaturgy:	Paul Dwyer
Sound Artist:	Gail Priest
Lighting Designer:	Neil Simpson
Stage Manager:	Katy Green (premiere season), Frank Mainoo (Adelaide + Lismore), Holly Woollard (Melbourne)
Production Manager:	Tom Brickhill (premiere season), Holly Woollard (Adelaide, Lismore, Melbourne)

version 1.0's *THIS KIND OF RUCKUS* was developed with support from Performance Space. version 1.0 inc. and this project have been assisted by the Australian Government through The Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body, by the NSW Government through Arts NSW, and the Department of Performance Studies at the University of Sydney. Premiered at Performance Space, September 2009

## 4.2 Introduction

*This Kind of Ruckus* originated from a four-week creative development entitled *Hurt and Damage*. *Hurt and Damage* explored the language and framework used in counselling and mediation sessions in cases of domestic abuse. This included research into therapy and rehabilitation of people who have experienced domestic violence, both as victims and perpetrators. However, when the work was being made for its premiere season, the focus shifted to look at a number of current cases of sexual violence and accusations of sexual violence involving high-profile sportsmen. At this stage, the work became strongly focussed around situations where things have got ‘out of hand’, where people perceived a lack of control (either in themselves or others), and where the consequences may be severe. It also looked closely at the fall-out from such scenarios, where the perception of what happened may differ greatly, and, is often completely in opposition to the other. This is where the function of the video became integral to the realisation of the work, by providing a very clear and simple method to visually explore these opposing viewpoints. The sports focus informed the dramaturgy and aesthetic of the set and video design. The design was set out like a sports playing field with yellow marker tape depicting the perimeters of the space, at the same time suggesting tape surrounding a crime scene. The front half of the stage floor was covered in bubble wrap, which connected with a wall of bubble wrap, creating a transparent wall. Above the bubble wrap wall were two large projection screens invoking score board screens. On either side of the space stand two large tables with a number of glasses and cans of alcohol, accompanied by garbage receptacles.

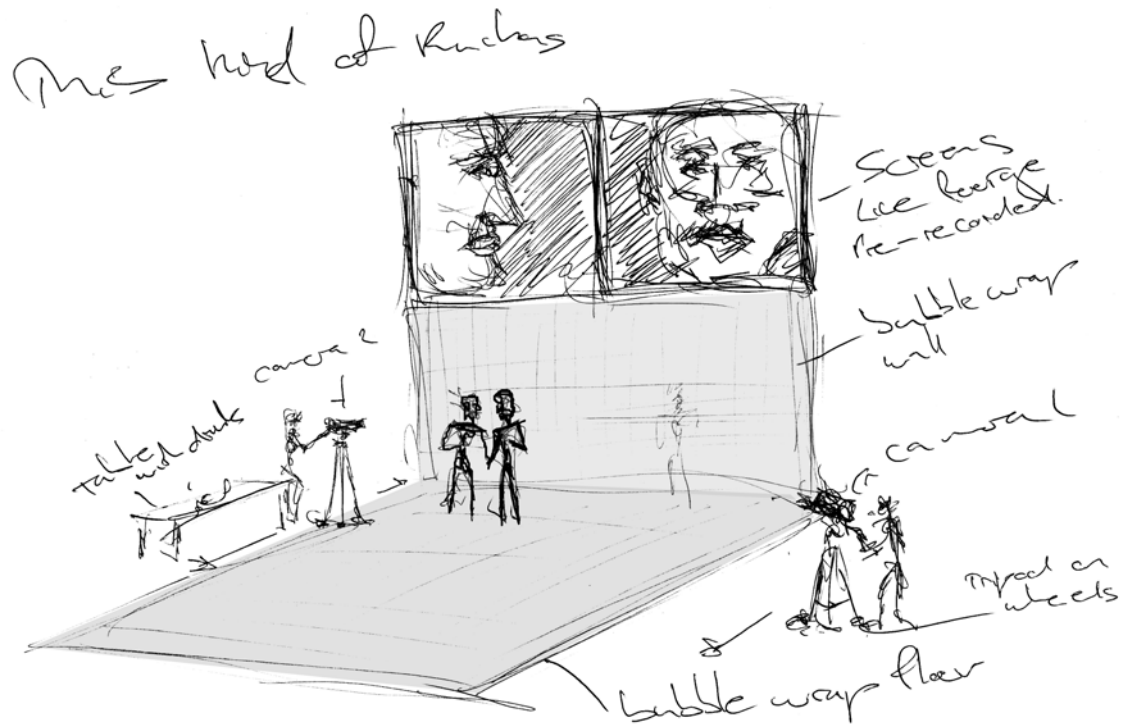


Figure 9. Concept drawing for lay out of *This Kind of Ruckus* showing cameras on tripods, bubble wrap wall and screens. Drawing, Sean Bacon

#### 4.2 Design and implementation, schematics

*This Kind of Ruckus*, like a sports game, is divided into two halves. Upon walking into the theatre the audience is confronted with a red curtain covering the whole down stage. There is a small space between the curtain and the audience where five performers are holding poms-poms (like the cheerleader entertainment in half-time at football matches). When the audience is seated there is a small routine and the performers sit down. One performer begins a monologue, told casually and in first-person, about her experience driving home one evening. The story becomes sinister and changes direction; one male performer is left on the stage packing up the five chairs and as he exits the red curtain opens to one side. The stage has a large square of bubble wrap on the ground the bubble

wrap continues up stage where it turns into a transparent vertical wall the top of the wall is met by two large 4/3 projection screens. There are three manually operated cameras on tripod dollies, stage left and right and upstage left and one fixed camera upstage (See Fig 10).

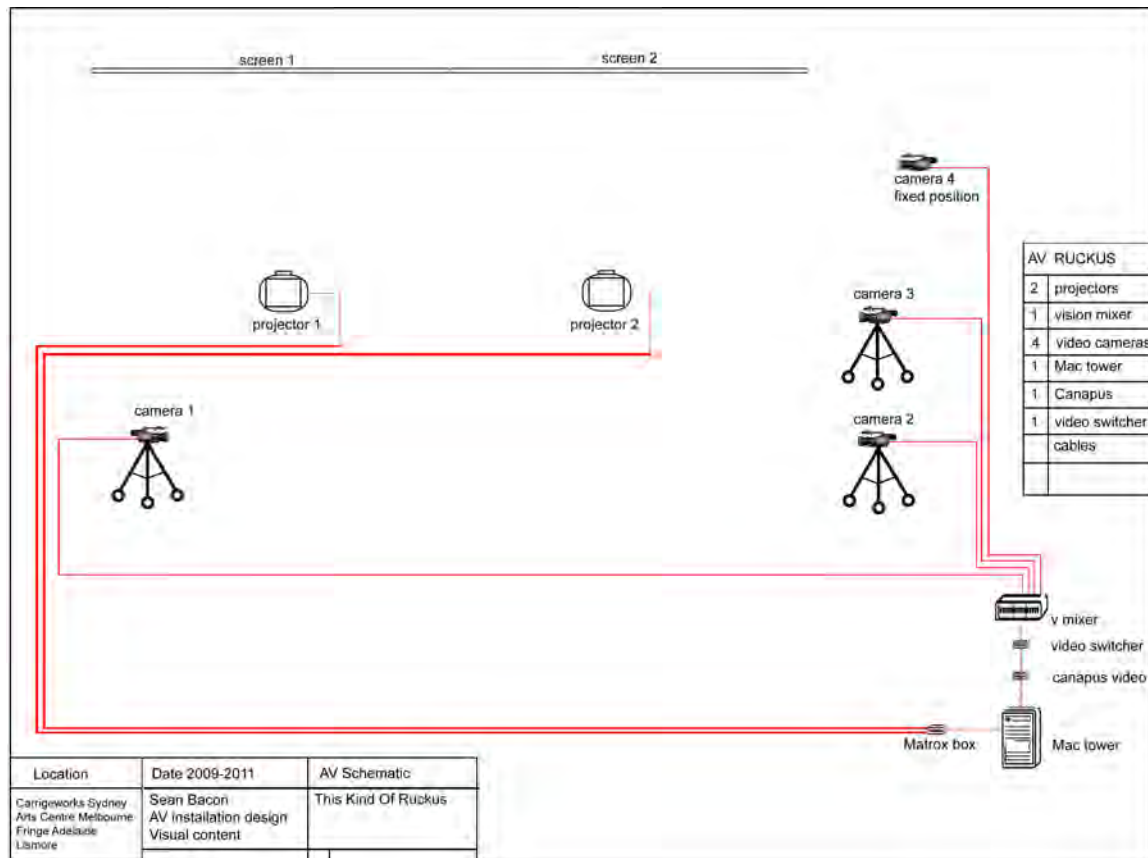
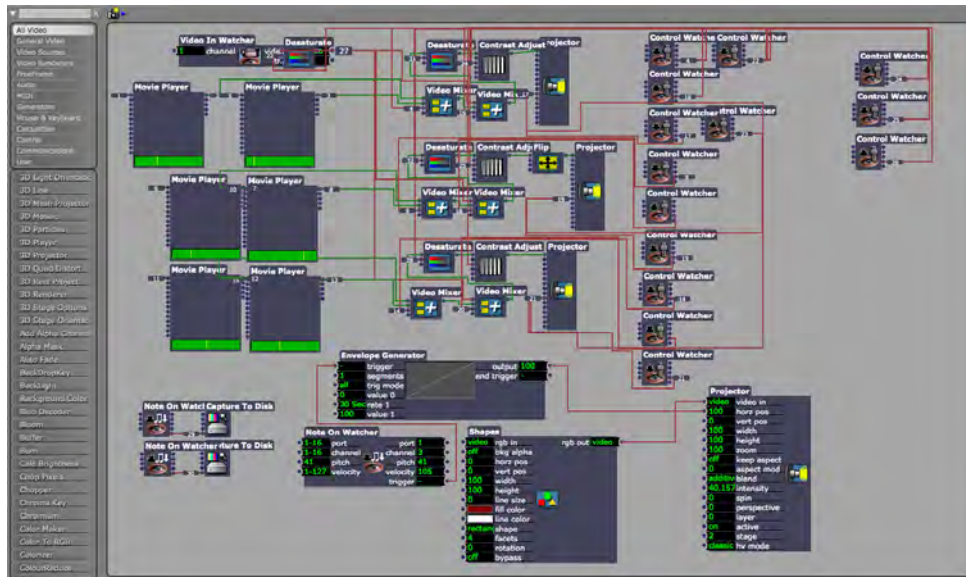


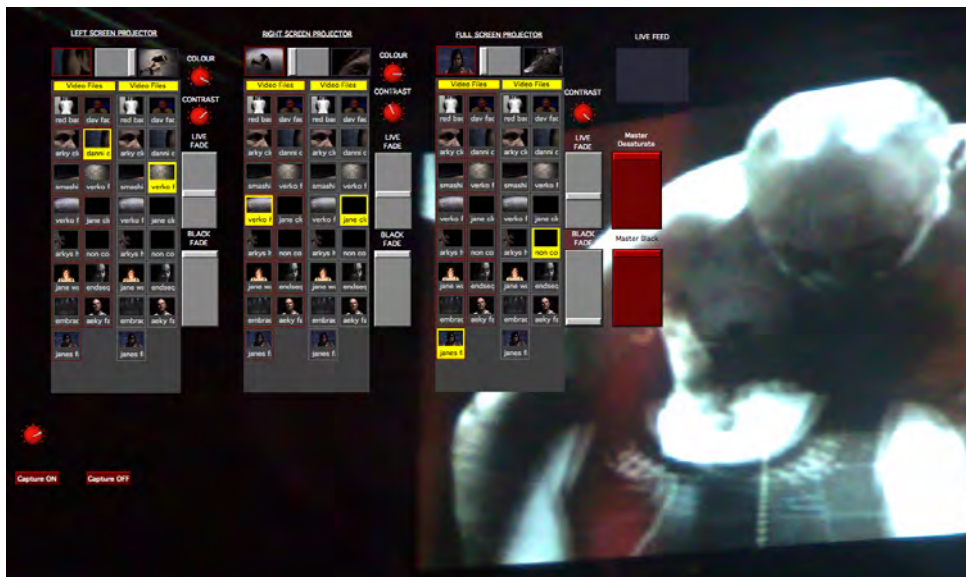
Figure 10: Schematic (Not to scale) showing screen placement, projector placement and camera positions (fixed and moving). Diagram: Sean Bacon

The four cameras feed into a Mac computer G5, the software used (like *The Bland Project*) is Isadora, which allows for real time editing of live video footage. The output from the computer goes into a matrix box, which allow for a single image to be separated across two projectors. Isadora was programmed to separate the image up into three

different parts, one single image that encompassed the whole projection surface and two separate images which occupied the left and right hand side of the screens (See Fig 11-12).



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Figure 11: Isadora patch, showing computer layout of how the projection works, with multiple pre-recorded and live video footage. Image: Sean Bacon

Figure 12: Isadora control panel and video mixer, showing layout of the three projection system, left panel for left screen, middle panel for right screen and right panel for full screen. Image: Sean Bacon

This allowed the projection screen to overlay pre-recorded images with live images a number of times.

A female performer in underwear lies unconscious on the floor downstage; a male performer sits downstage also, watching her body with an intense gaze. Stage right camera is focused on the males face which is projected on the left screen, the right hand screen shows pre-recorded footage of a mans back (See Fig 13). This moment is held for a long time. Then the male performer lifts his head and looks directly down the camera lens. At the same time, the image on the left screen crosses to a pre-record of the same image, allowing the performer to leave the action and the image to remain. This is an important segment as it sets the parameters for the video content during the show - what the audience see on the two screens is a combination of real time images captured live from the performance, and pre-recorded images of the same action. There are no external images shown, the video is contained within the world of the stage. The two time frames allow for reflection on the live action and the suggestion of differing interpretations of the same event.

The cameras on tripod dollies were moved around the stage for particular shots during the performance, when the cameras operators were not directed towards a particular point they just followed the action on stage like the coverage of a football game.



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Figure 13: Live camera left with pre-recorded footage right. Video still: Sean Bacon  
 Figure 14: Live camera left with pre-recorded footage right and centre. Video still: Sean Bacon  
 Figure 15: Live camera left with pre-recorded footage right. Video still: Sean Bacon

### 4.3 Aims, conceptual overview and development

In *This Kind of Ruckus*, the performers only ever use their real names, and many of the stories that are told by the performers, such as the opening monologue, are in fact real situations that happened to the performer. Using Michal Kirby's acting/not-acting continuum<sup>14</sup>, *This Kind of Ruckus* sits within a number of places on Kirby's scale. For instance, with its use of camera operators, *This Kind of Ruckus* sits comfortably within Kirby's description of 'non acting'. Kirby explains that far-eastern theatre, in its use of stage attendants, employs this idea of 'non-acting'. These attendants perform tasks that have no performative quality but are part of the performance and importantly part of the visual presentation. The camera operators in *This Kind of Ruckus* fit into this same role. Interestingly the image the camera operators create does have a performative quality in the sense that it replicates the live action on stage.

The success of the duplicity with *This Kind of Ruckus* lies in the slippage of performance along the Kirby spectrum. The actors initially present as themselves but in costume, falling into 'non-matrixed representation' on the spectrum. As the show progresses however, the performers engage in various scenarios, or retell situations, which are fictional but, importantly, they do so 'as themselves'. In this way they enter the 'complex acting' realm of Kirby's spectrum. It is never clear for the audience when scenarios are factual or fictional, and indeed, many of the factual stories are chosen for their 'unbelievable' element. And so the duplicity is achieved, and the thematic surrounded

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<sup>14</sup> Michael Kirby, On Acting and Not-Acting (The Drama Review: TDR, Vol. 16, No. 1, The MIT Press Stable Mar., 1972) pp3-15

different versions of events is established. Who can we believe on stage? Do we only believe the performances/performers who are convincing?

The video component operated in a similar way in the sense that what the audience saw was a combination of live and pre-recorded events so the audience were consistently questioning the validity of what the projected image was. This was fundamental to the over-arching theme of the work, which was exploring the 'grey area' around consent and perception of 'what happened' in situations of potential threat and violence, often of a sexual nature. This is highlighted in a mediation scene, where we watch a therapy session play out between two people. This scene functions to constantly shift audience sympathies – who is at fault in the scenario? Can we take sides? This 'complex acting' scene works when both performers are equally convincing in their belief of their victimhood, thereby providing the audience with an uncomfortable and, often familiar, slippery scenario.

The video functioned to highlight this sense of shifting sympathies. Throughout the entire scene a pre-recorded shot is played in slow motion, showing each performer entering from the far end of either screen and running toward each other, and ending in the centre in an embrace. The slow motion nature of the scene creates confusion about the intent – the embrace can be read as loving or violent. Overlaying this image are close-ups of live/pre-recorded images of hands and scanned bodies and faces, underpinning the sense of tension and unease.

#### **4.4 Outcome**

The media around these cases often fuelled speculation around who was 'right or wrong,' with different commentators apportioning blame accordingly. This created a substantial

‘grey area’ in the populace, seeking to understand what had indeed happened. Many involved in this key incidents are sporting celebrities and therefore, many people felt they have an investment in these people, as fans of them in particular, or of their sporting code. The performance slippage along the Kirby spectrum, coupled with the intimacy and shifting perspectives provided by the video, allowed the audience to enter the story, to be part of the action, in that they consistently questioned the events and looked for an understanding of what was playing out before them, much in the way they do when considering the various perspectives provided by the media.

## **Chapter 5**

### ***Measure For Measure***

#### ***5.1 Measure For Measure***

Belvoir St Theatre, 18 -25 Belvoir St Surry Hills Sydney 5 June 25 July 2010

Credits:

Cast:

Maeve Dermody  
Damon Gameau  
Ashley Lyons  
Robin McLeavy  
Robert Menzies  
Arky Michael  
Colin Moody  
Steve Rodgers  
Chris Ryan  
Toby Schmitz  
Helen Thomson  
Frank Whitten

By

William Shakespeare

Adapted & Directed:  
Set Designer:  
Costume Designer:  
Lighting Designer:  
Composer & Sound Designer:  
Video Designer & Operator:  
Assistant Director:  
Sound Operator:  
Assistant Lighting Designer:  
Floor Technician:  
Stage Manager:  
Assistant Stage Manager:

Benedict Andrews  
Ralph Myers  
Dale Ferguson  
Nick Schlieper  
Stefan Gregory  
Sean Bacon  
Duncan Graham  
Jeremy Silver  
Tom Willis  
Jonathan Yeoman  
Nell Ranney  
Mel Dyer

## 5.2 Introduction

*Measure for Measure* was a contemporary adaptation, by Benedict Andrews, of a classic Shakespeare work. The Duke of Vienna, Vincentio, announces he intends to leave the city on a diplomatic mission. He leaves the government in the hands of a strict judge Angelo. The Duke has not in fact left the city, but remains there disguised as a friar (Lodowick) in order to spy on the city's affairs, and especially on the actions of Angelo. Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* is about power, vice, corruption and justice. One aspect, amongst others, that contemporises the work is the use of live video. The video reflects a media-enhanced world that resonates with the voyeurism that is entrenched in contemporary culture; the video is the all seeing eye of power where nothing remains hidden.

The set for *Measure for Measure* is a revolving hotel room. Two large projection screens hang on either side of the stage (See Fig 17, 20). The two projection screens show live video coverage of the show from beginning till end, both screens show the same image. The actors video all the action on stage with additional video from hidden cameras set in the furniture, mirrors and roof, as well as a pan tilt zoom centred above the stage (See Fig 17). The hotel room has glass walls and a glass-walled bathroom in one corner. Opposite a large bed a flat screen TV silently displays the world weather and excerpts from Congress in Washington, USA. Sometimes the live action on stage is obscured by the revolving stage and the audience can only watch it on the screens. At other times the audience simultaneously watch the actors performing on stage and the reframed image in close-up on screen.

### 5.3 Design and implementation, schematics

The hotel room revolved in a clockwise direction for the main part of the performance, the speed and movement of the revolving room varied depending on the scene, for instance in the last act the revolve was stationary. A large cast of seventeen actors moved on and off the stage during the performance. The revolve was used for a number of reasons, logistically to enable actors to appear and disappear throughout the acts, to give a shifting visual perspective to the audience watching, and to heighten a sense of tension. Conceptually the revolve works in a number of ways to depict themes that run through the play, for example the idea of consequence is reflected as one action enables another and so forth.

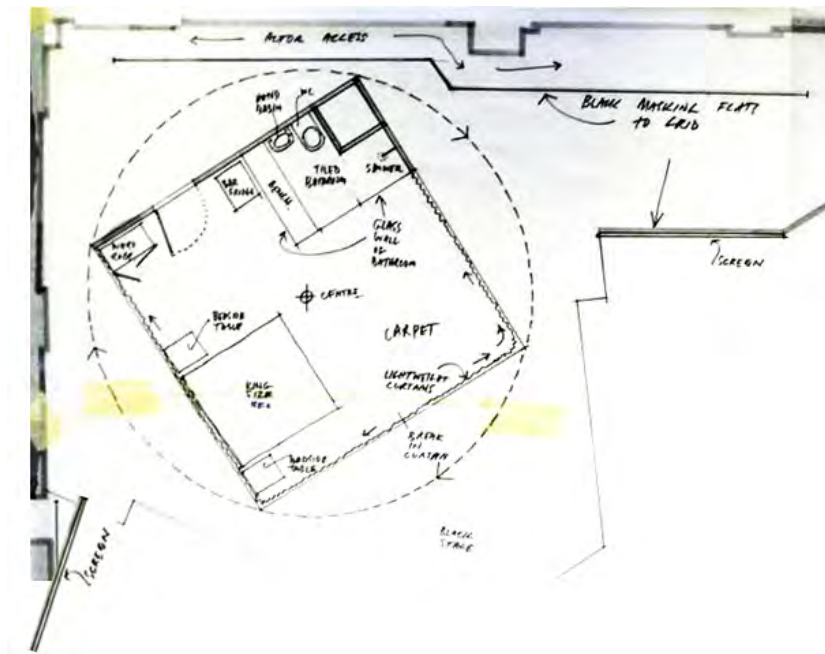
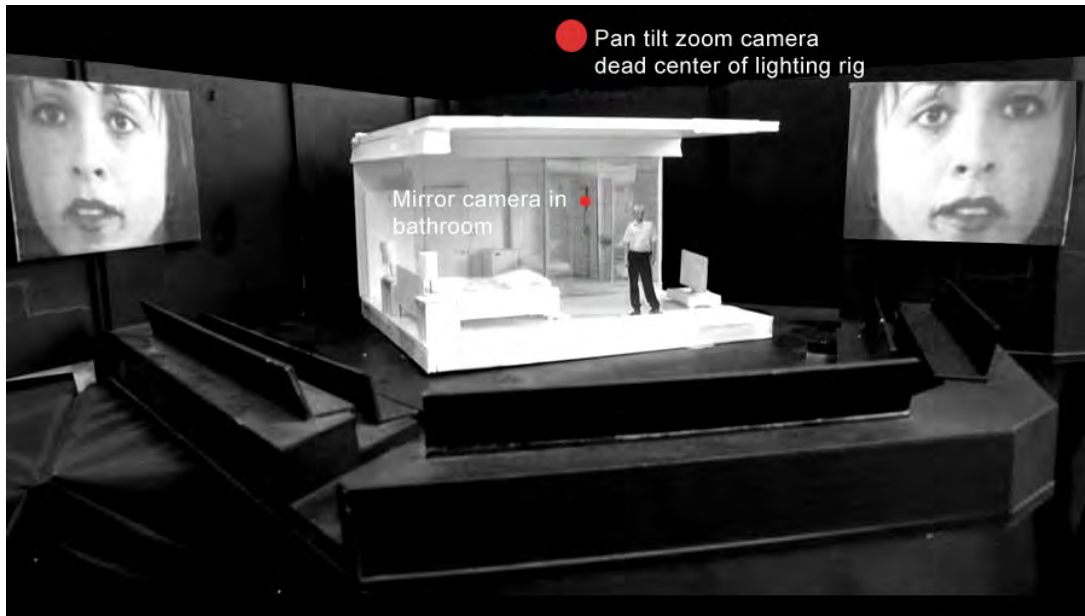
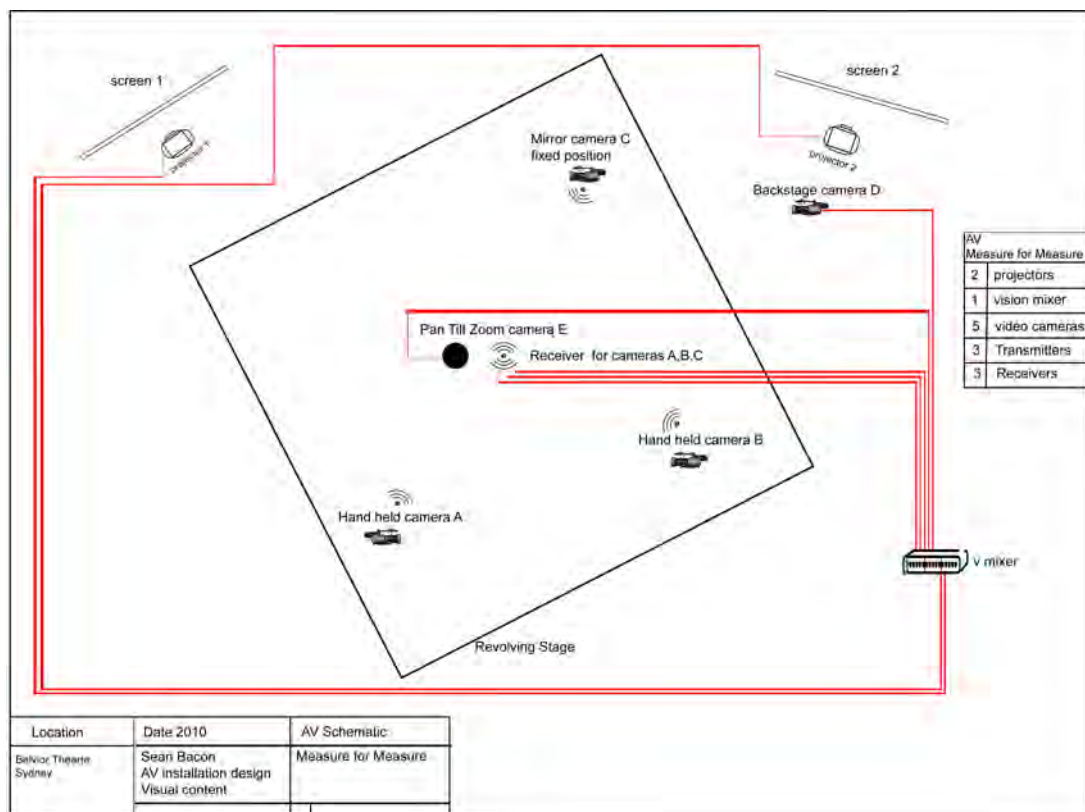


Figure 16: Diagram of set, revolve and screen placement in Belvoir Theatre. Diagram: Belvoir set department



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Figure 17: Model of set, revolve, screen and camera placement in Belvoir Theatre. Model: Ralph Meyers

Figure 18: Schematic showing camera and screen placement. Schematic: Sean Bacon

Several video cameras are situated throughout the set, on and off the revolve.

On the revolve, there is a camera hidden behind the bathroom mirror (mirror cam C), and the two main cameras on set are hand held cameras (camera A, camera B) (See Fig 18).

These are operated by the performers, due to the mechanisms of the revolve these three cameras operate wirelessly. With cameras A and B the wireless transmitter was located on the camera, with the mirror cam in the bathroom, the transmitter was located on the bathroom ceiling, the receivers for all three cameras were located in the central lighting hub which was situated directly above the centre of the stage. A pan tilt zoom (PTZ) camera sat directly above the stage below the lighting hub, to allow maximum coverage of the stage. A fifth camera was located back stage to allow for some travelling shots of the actors back stage (See Fig 18).

The play was divided into three acts, in act one the main cameras used were hand held cameras A and B, the majority of the second act was the PTZ camera, act three was again cameras A and B. All the camera feeds run back to a mixing desk with a duplicate feed running out to the two projectors. Two large projection screens were set either side of the stage, they displayed a duplicate image of the live camera feed coming from the stage.

There was no pre-recorded content in *Measure For Measure*. The screens showed a live input from the stage for the whole duration of the show.



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Figure 19: Set with projection image from hand held cameras. Video still: Sean Bacon  
 Figure 20: Set with projection image from bathroom mirror camera. Video still: Sean Bacon  
 Figure 21: Set with projection image from pan tilt zoom camera. Video still: Sean Bacon

#### **5.4 Aims, conceptual overview and development**

From the moment *Measure For Measure* begins the two screens show a live image of the action on stage, this live image does not waver until the final act where Isabella (sister to Claudio) runs from the stage pursued by a performer with a hand held camera. As Isabella exits the theatre the signal from the camera breaks up and disintegrates and eventually ceases all together, concluding the show. What the live camera does in *Measure For Measure* is create a heightened sense of immediacy, a visual representation of the present, a simulacra, an edited perspective of what the audience sees in front of them. In this way the video carries the same weight as the performer, it coexists with the performer.

Benedict Andrews' interpretation of *Measure for Measure* sees us in a world where politics, and politicians are essentially corrupt. The society is hurtling toward anarchy, with sexuality and sexual deviance playing a strong role. This is set against an omnipresent government who holds terrifying power over its subjects, and surveillance forms an integral part of creating this atmosphere. In this way the use of live video becomes fundamental in establishing the universe of these characters, as it functions in real time, as the surveillance and constant vigilance of the people in power.

During the performance the performers played one or multiple characters, and they also operated equipment for the video component such as cameras and televisions. In each role, whether character or task-based, the performer continued to wear the costume associated with the character. In this way, the performers fall into the category of 'non-

matrixed representation'.<sup>15</sup> Undertaking a task such as operating a camera was executed in a very utilitarian fashion, but as the performer remained in costume and as the audience were never introduced to the performer as themselves, the style never slid right back into 'non-matrixed'.

Kirby's performance spectrum relies on the 'personas' that are introduced to the audience. In order to perceive that a performer is indeed playing themselves, the audience needs to view this person as themselves. Given that an audience rarely knows the performers on stage, this very beginning stage of the continuum is difficult to achieve. An audience will readily assume they are being presented a 'character' in 'costume', as opposed to a true representation of the 'real' person on stage. By swinging between recognised forms of acting 'in character' to task-based actions, the video element achieved a sliding and fluctuation along the continuum. *Measure for Measure* also sits comfortably on the far end of Kirby's continuum in 'complex acting'. However, with the video component consisting of live camera operation by particular actors *Measure for Measure* was able to encompass a board range along the Kirby spectrum.

#### 4.5 Outcome

The use of live camera in *Measure For Measure* allowed for the audience to view the play from multiple perspectives, physically and conceptually. For example, at a number of stages throughout the performance, a character would leave the stage and be followed live on camera. The use of this device exploded the boundaries of the stage, not only showing the backstage areas – dressing room etc, but also allowing us to see the

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<sup>15</sup> Michael Kirby, On Acting and Not-Acting (The Drama Review: TDR, Vol. 16, No. 1, The MIT Press Stable Mar., 1972) pp3-15

characters in these spaces, where, most importantly, they remained ‘in character’. So even though the audience was exposed to the ‘architecture’ around the performance, they only witnessed the character, not the performer ‘reverting’ back to themselves. In this way, the universe of the performance expanded beyond the active space of the stage, allowing the audience to suspend their disbelief beyond the auditorium and into the ‘real’ world, thereby creating a situation where the society of the play reflects the society we experience on a daily basis. The video in *Measure For Measure* allowed an exploration of these concepts, by providing different perspectives of the live action on stage. Importantly, the live video allowed for an exploration and expansion of the themes in *Measure For Measure*.

## Chapter 6

### 6.1 Conclusion

“Theatre provides a space in which different art forms can affect each other quite profoundly. Maybe we could even say: when two or more different art forms come together a process of theatricalization occurs. This is not only because theatre is able to incorporate all other art forms, but also because theatre is the «art of the performer» and so constitutes the basic pattern of all the arts” (Kattenbelt, 2006).<sup>16</sup>

The three works in focus for this thesis are similar in that they only use video footage from the action on stage, albeit in a combination of live capture and pre-recorded footage. In this way the video in all of these works functions as a simulacra, establishing and enhancing the environment and atmosphere of the performance. The video can then function as an important tool in how the audience perceive the work, by creating a heightened reality of the live action, by allowing intimacy, split focus, and differing perceptions that would not be available through the live action only.

Since these projects, I have undertaken a number of projects where there is a combination of live capture, pre-record and the introduction of footage shot outside the world of the theatre performance, such as *Beautiful One Day* and *seven kilometres north-east*. In both these performances, the use of outside footage serves to give a strong sense of location within the piece. The audience know that the work is ‘set’ in another place, (Palm Island,

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<sup>16</sup> Intermediality in Theatre and Performance, Author: Chiel Kattenbelt, pp20-22, Published by: Utrecht University 2006

Bosnia and Herzegovina) and the video functions to give the audience a very strong sense of place; it transports them to those locations. The use of such footage, also combined with live capture, gives a sense of authenticity to the work and takes the audience on a more holistic journey and provides a greater overall understanding of the fundamental concepts of each piece.

The use of live video in these works allows for the audience to question the validity of what is happening on stage. It allows for a new perspective, allows you to analyse the simulacrum. In *Measure for Measure* you see the live camera feed of the close up of the face and you can see the face live on stage. It's because of the extreme proximity of the camera footage that the emotion and reality becomes heightened. The video is also used to contextualise the work, and highlights certain elements and emotions in each piece, therefore each camera shot is detailed and planned to capture this moment. In *The Bland Project* this was used to capture the whole body, to witness the bodies emerging and disappearing into the space. In *This Kind of Ruckus*, the video was used to create differing perspectives, bringing the live action into question. In *Measure for Measure*, the main focus is on the face of the performers, a close up that the audience would not otherwise see. In these ways, the theatre experience is heightened.

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