1. As part of a co-ordinated group effort, the task was to create a piece of devised performance exploring an agreed theme. *Feed* explored the impact of social media, internet technologies and digital self expression on individual and group conduct and attempted to look at what is gained and what is lost by the increasing digitalisation of the self. Different physical and vocal performance styles were twinned with mobile technologies onstage such as handheld projectors, smartphones and laptops in order to explore physical relationships to digital expression. The source material for much of the performance was taken from current digital trends in self-expression including YouTube video blogs, anonymous commentary on the Internet and Facebook comments. This created an air of vacuousness that was explored through vocal repetition and the juxtaposition of physical movements, exaggeration and original source video. Many of these videos were manipulations of the stimulus YouTube clips, used as real world reference points alongside abstract physical performance.

The physicality of the piece was influenced by the heightened 'everyday' movement explored in companies like DV8 and, in the first section at least, by Pina Bausch's work on group dance with restrictions. There was something redolent of *Café Müller* in the group shoaling but instead of using chairs and blindness as a physical restriction (Bausch, 1978), a polythene sheet divided the group and all participants had to improvise based on the chosen movement of a self appointed lead dancer.

I was interested in this manipulation of the familiar, and through video design wished to look at how projection can manipulate an understood space and change it, or allow you to view it differently. I wanted to see how two-dimensional surfaces could be made three dimensional, and whether by carefully picking out parts of a set with video, it was possible to radically alter what an audience had got used to. In this regard, I was initially influenced by large-scale

3D projection mapping projects like Nokia UK and Deadmau5's manipulation of the Millbank

Building in London (Nokia UK, 2011) (see figure 5), and by Fokus Productions architectural

projection on a church for the QuebecAdabra festival 2011 (Fokus Productions, 2011). These

picked out architectural features for manipulation, with the buildings appearing to be

smashed or bent, and their detailing picked out to glow and distort. These, along with

musicians Pomplamoose's music video of a mash up of 'Royals, 2Pac, Beck' (Pomplamoose

Music, 2013), which utilised a masked set to project multiple video elements from a single

projector, were hugely influential on our method for the final video.

Unobtrusive lighting that picked out the performers in a simple way formed my aim for

lighting design. For this, I was influenced in part by the apparently simple flat aesthetic of

current computer interface design. Windows 8's 'Metro' interface for example (Microsoft,

2012) utilises square tiles and highlights individual portions of an environment to give

prominence to elements it thinks the user should use (see figures 1 and 2). Likewise in *Feed*,

along with set design, flat surfaces were presented squared off, and moved in straight lines

and right angles. The fragmented 'playlist' nature of the second section of the piece lent

itself to a lighting design made up of individual specials, pointed flat and face-on to the set

and performers, and shuttered square to fit the set. This was to allow elements to be

individually highlighted, and the idea came to its extreme conclusion with the 'Catwalk'.
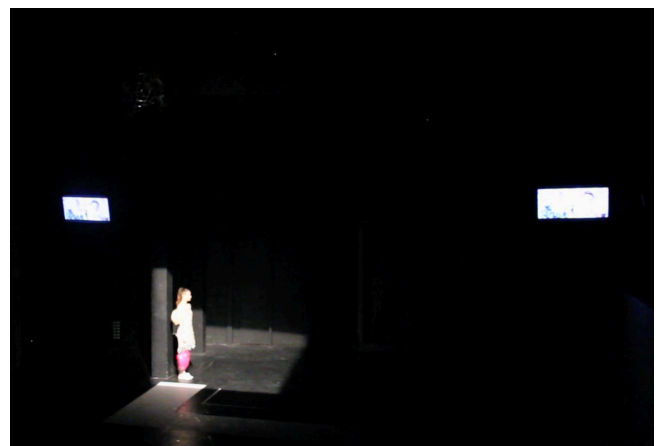

Figure 1 – Windows 8 (Microsoft, 2012)

Figure 2 – Flat Square Lighting

2. Robert Wilson said of Bausch: 'what is very impressive about Pina's work is that it is complete. She's someone who has developed a theatrical language, and gesture, and light, and stage setting, and movement in poetry and music, in all the arts. It's a personal vocabulary that is *complete*' (Wilson, Cited by Sörenson, 2010). In this regard, while not necessarily being able to replicate the total synergy of design and performance elements that Tanztheater's performances are exemplary of, I felt it was necessary to put design as equally at the heart of *Feed* as the performers.

Along with set design, we looked at how a three-dimensional space can be altered digitally. I found many examples of street art that had been designed to give flat space depth (see figure 3), but the most impressive image was an initial influence on the set designers by George Rousse. He manipulated space by taking an angle and identifying an area when viewed from that angle that can be altered, and he does so by painting within the given area (see figure 4). We wondered whether we could achieve the same spatial manipulation but through projection. This proved untenable though we experimented with ideas for manipulation of the floor through an overhead projector on to a white stage. It was apparent that a clean spatial manipulation could not be completed using traditional projection methods, as performers' shadows would corrupt the illusion. It became obvious that spatial manipulation had to built around not only the set but also around the performers. This led us down another non-used idea for the end sequence, the lifting of projected material and moving it by use of white placards (see figure 6). Again it became complicated to create this, as it relied on performers choreographing in these manipulations, although an adapted version of this idea appeared in Lotte and Owen's mannequin transition scene with handheld projection on multiple surfaces.

Figure 3 – *The Crevasse* street art by Edgar Muller (Image from the Guardian, 2011)

Figure 4 - Georges Rousse Rueselsheim 2003 (Creativityfuse.com)

Figure 5 – Deadmau5 Smashing Millbank Tower in London (Nokia UK, 2011)

Figure 6 – Moving a projected image with handheld screens.

It was when looking into methods of projection mapping that, alongside these two

experiments, I became interested in creating a video in which the performers were a part.

They would not be used as canvasses to be projected on nor as tools by which to play with

the projected image but part of the story of a complex mapped video. Pomplamoose's music

video (Royals 2Pac Beck Mashup, 2013) showed filmed versions of them playing instruments, while they sing in 'reality', mapped to different surfaces and was key to developing our mapping technique. The discovery of a low key but effective method by which to map a three-dimensional space digitally (Tim Johnson, 2011), and a variety of examples of how the technology has been used on both two-dimensional surfaces and real world objects (found at the useful resource site projection-mapping.org) allowed us to do a test map. To map a three-dimensional area we placed objects in a space, projected an Adobe Photoshop workspace over the area and drew manually around all the contours of the objects. By then making those shapes transparent, and colouring the rest of the image black, ensuring there was no background layer, the map could be imported as a mask layer into Final Cut Pro. Video could then be played on a track underneath the mask, which when projected would appear on individual objects in the space.

Feed's highly layered set construction that was decided on for the end gave us an apparently flat surface made up of many separate elements to map. Into this we decided to create a 'Catwalk'. This was to be a parade of the digital self. It was an attempt to create a digital environment in which the real person is left inert. The performer at the heart of the video becomes no longer the centre of attention, but is overshadowed by their garish layered personas seen in the vogue, digitally recreated and projected over them. The intention was to show how beneath the complex, layered and sometimes brash digital lives individuals lead, they are rendered inert, blank and all the same. Laura responded to this by costuming the thirteen performers in the same white underwear, unassuming and plain. The costumes had the advantage of colour matching the performers to the white surfaces of the set behind them. The homage the catwalk then played to our research on three dimensional spatial manipulation could be played over them using black and white optical illusions (see figure 7). These, combined with individually highlighted sections of the set, allowed the

space to bulge and transform in a much simpler and quicker way than creating 3D animation.
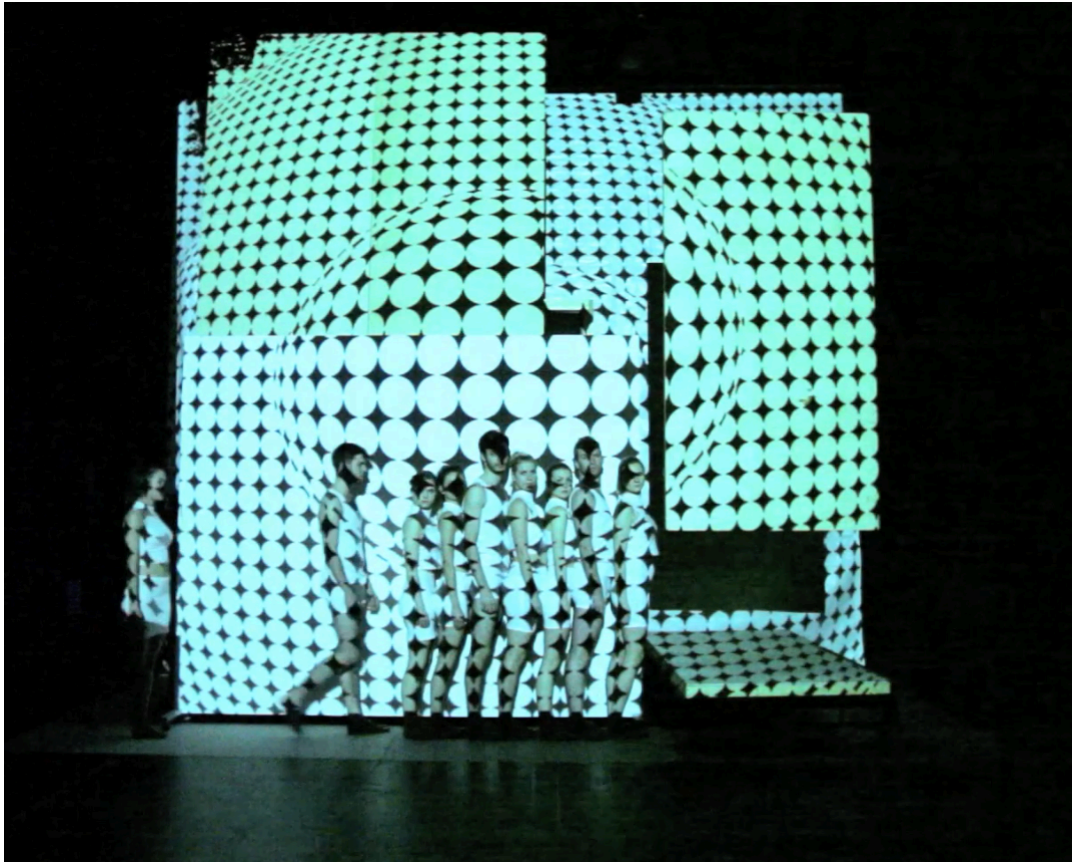

Figure 7 – Projection Mapped Optical Illusions for *Feed*

3. The video and lighting design worked with the whole piece because it was derived from an overall archive collated by everyone through the process. By asking performers to deliberately take self-shot photographs over a weekend, by getting them to add links and stimulus material to a shared online storage space and by utilising a shared Facebook group for distributing information and material, all performers became used to a focused dialogue between their characters, technology usage and social media. The archive was built up as a result. While the material gathered in the archive only made a conspicuous appearance during the final video in select places (some of the 'selfies' were incorporated alongside internet memes after all performers had walked through the digital catwalk), it was useful as contextual material for us. As the performers used it, it gave us good indications about what

they were engaging with and developing and what we therefore needed to provide in response. For example, upon clarification of the track for the vogueing scene, we could plan the video that needed to be shot and edited for it.

It became clear that to maintain a technology infused environment throughout the piece, video and other media would have to be present throughout. A rehearsal run-through without continuous usage of the television screens made video design look like an afterthought, whereas it needed to look like a core part of the work. We therefore linked the three phases in the performers' sequence with our three phases of media: passive media (ever-present but non-interactive - three television screens) through active media (as exhibited by live use of interactive technologies including phones, tablets, laptops and handheld projectors) into overwhelming media (the catwalk). When media is passive, the performers effectively work together as a single society, engaging with and reacting to the same stimuli, as they did in the large group shoal, with the eye of technology watching but inert. During the section on active media, the more fragmented structure of the duets lent itself to an exploration of individualised technology usage. Each duet could comment on a different use before everyone came together in the vogue.

Aesthetically the final section was designed to blur the lines between complexity and simplicity, by doing something intricate with a single transmission method. This is a recurrent theme in consumer technology and social media, where a complex mass of information is designed to be communicated simply to a user. This was also reflected in the performers' work as often-vacuous commentary was twinned with complex movement. The 'Chair Game' section was a good example of this.

4. It became evident on entering the intensive period that material would be being changed until the final day, so the best way to provide complimentary video work was to focus on provision of video systems that gave a lot of information over with minimal editing. It was fortuitous that much of the performance explored material through repetition. A decent way of complimenting this, while also providing a real world reference point for the audience, was to take some of the source material, be it YouTube clips or tourism adverts for Croatia (2012), cut out relevant pieces and find quick ways to bring out a salient comment on the footage. These were works of grotesque; zoomed in, slowed down and heavily cut versions of inane YouTube videos appearing alongside perverse renderings of those same films live on stage. For example, in 'My Best Chummy' we looped the original video of the line Imogen says, and the comparison between Imogen's lonely situation and the video made for something quite bleak. These loops, rather than an easy way to generate a lot of video at short notice, became a neat way of showing up what much of the show was doing in performance in video. It also helped maintain a constant audio-visual presence. Repetition was however a potentially dull device when employed throughout. Had I had more time for development I may have tried to change some of the video to allow for more original expression, as there was a risk at points that we were just oddly replaying a YouTube video for no apparent purpose.

Secondly, in a fluid dynamic working environment like devising where material is not static, waiting to be performed in a set way, but potentially going to change with each day of exploration, rapid response from a lighting designer is absolutely key. Rapid response to changes in the show meant that lighting had to be fluid, with an appreciation that whole sections could be reblocked after a rig. This meant that general coverage in open white that could be narrowed or widened easily formed the core of the lighting. Additionally, in order to respond quickly to changes in the set, as it moved from section to section, particular

design cues were adopted from set design. Much of the set was based on right angles, perpendicular lines and squares. Therefore pools of light for specific pieces were sharply cut into squares around performers, most notably for Imogen in 'My Best Chummy' and James' solos (see figure 2). Likewise to highlight the squared off edges of the set itself, flexibility in the rig was required to light up the insides of boxes. Individual lights used to illuminate whole duets allowed for quick changes if they came up. It was notable how simple you have to make something in order to be flexible, and lighting was definitely a part of the design process that was responsive rather than predesigned. Cues taken from set design cues were helpful in this regard as it allowed for a degree of certainty when decisions had to be made quickly and maintained an aesthetic consistency in the space.

5. Time restrictions on a design process meant that clear understanding of what was expected from each member of the team was important. I found it was challenging balancing what I thought was expected of me in three design areas and being happy in the quality of the design work I could achieve. It became apparent that without dividing responsibilities for lighting and sound between Katharine and myself, the volume of work required on each designed section would not necessarily be attainable. By taking primary responsibility for lighting design, and Katharine for sound design, and by each of us providing a technician or support role, decisions could be made quickly and two design areas could be worked on at once.

Notably, once we could refocus on two rather than three areas, the volume of work I thought I had to complete turned out not to be the amount of work that needed to be completed. It was only when I understood that the work and the process are two sides of the same thing, could I focus on what was possible and appropriate for this performance. I learned that a designer has to both prompt performers with stimuli and wait for performers

to generate content. I realised that the performance born of this is not a finite potentially perfect product, but an organic pulling together of a variety of material from a variety of sources designed to elicit thought and emotional response. It is a naked form of performance that allows for a dialogue throughout and where all of the material is up for contention. This means that whatever the performance ends up being, that is what the performance is. This did not stop my from experiencing acute terror when our projector bulb blew, or meant I reduced the number of hours put in to editing the catwalk video but in future it will enable me to have some perspective on how designing interacts with devising processes. Any mistakes or technical mishaps, as we had in the matinee, are a bolt of electricity added to the performance. The terror of technical failure is ever-present with live work, and its actual appearance just adds more to the dialogue.

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