

Conversation between **Interviewer (I)** and **Collaborator A (A)**

I: Okay, so— thank you.

A: Ah, no worries.

I: [laughter] I'm very grateful for your participation in this. And obviously our collaborative relationship element is sort of separate to the research and in addition to the research, really. But with regards to looking at this process from a particularly research-based perspective, what I'm really interested in is how this has been for you in terms of taking a piece that was made for live performance, and was for a small audience, and sort of— I suppose, transposing it in a way, and/or (?) transforming it into a different medium, or adapting it for a new medium, and not only a new medium in terms of filmmaking, but also in some ways a new medium for you, sure, because it was the 360 thing. I don't know if you have any thoughts about that.

A: I've got loads of thoughts.

I: Mmhmm.

A: Not entirely coherent, though, so we're just gonna mumble through these I think.

I: Yep.

01:18

A: I think— let's take it— if I were to be filming this in a more traditional manner, the concerns that I'd have as a filmmaker are: what does this add? What's the point, I guess? So often, filming theatrical, stage-based work becomes more of a process of documentation. The thing that it brings to it is it's portable, [laughter], you can send a film to somebody, you can't send a performance to them. But also there are times when you can do things that maybe you can't do while watching a live performance, so, you can reshoot stuff. You can move the camera a lot closer to the performers than you can do in a theatrical context. You can transport the viewer and guide them. And that's the thing, it becomes all about super-direction I guess. So the piece itself is directed and has its plan, but then you are moving a camera through a space, and that has its own kind of direction. That's the traditional way of doing it. Of course, when we bring a 3D camera into the space, there is no direction as such, in that it sees everything. So, I guess in terms of kind of, almost like a.... collaborative response to the work that already exists, we had the conversation, I guess, of 'where is the camera placed?' 'what is the camera?' 'Who is the—' Because, the vision in normal 2D cinema and film is the director's vision. It's what they want you to see. What we're doing with 360 stuff is who we want them to be. Not necessarily what we want them to see. What is their role in positioning and in relation to the performance? And of course, there are notions of direction around that through lighting, and through movement and sound and those things, but essentially they're already there. It's just a case of how to best place the person in that situation. And in this case, because of the pre-existing situation where you would have the audience member sit, that's not even really necessarily a choice, it's more of

an obvious kind of– they need to be there. Which then makes this more about technically, or using technical film-making to make that as good as possible. Or to make it as interpretive of that role as possible. I think.

03:42

I: Yeah. That's really interesting. So in some ways it becomes more– the actual act of filming becomes more sort of– about situation, and then like, sort of situation the body of the viewer? And, kind of spatially?

A: Absolutely. If you think of traditional filmmaking, often it's about what the camera's pointing at, not where the camera's situated. There are times obviously when knowing where the camera's physically situated is really worthwhile, whether it's on a dolly or whether it's far away, or– but mostly it's what the camera's pointing at. Whereas with the 360 stuff, it's very much where the camera is physically situated, because it's pointed at everything.

04:24

I: Yeah. That's really really interesting. And– [pause] were there challenges that were presented by either the piece, or the kind of– remit, or the situation, that you experienced, and were they unexpected, or expected?

A: That's a good one. Um– [pause] I think– yes.

I: Yes?

A: Yeah. There are the technical challenges, so obviously we had the camera– the idea of these kind of all-in-one units to film 360 stuff, they're very much sealed units. The manual controls were a problem, there are technical issues in using that, and also, they're not developed specifically for that environment. They're not developed for an environment which is artificially lit to such extremes of dark and light. So I think that that was quite fun. And certainly instructive into how they work. And there is that– also that part which I found– which I expected, but I still found quite difficult, in terms of thinking as I say, the difference between what it's pointing at and where it's placed. So normally when I'm filming things `I sit behind the camera, or I stand behind the camera, and I can see what it's seeing, and that makes it an extension of what I'm doing. Whereas this, I had to set it going and then disappear– I literally had to physically hide from the camera because I didn't want to be in shot. That's quite a strange thing to not see what you're shooting as you're shooting it, to be doing that blind, a whole visual medium, that(?) you can't see while you're doing it. And that reminded me more of the wet darkroom photography that I do. Because obviously, I deal with the negatives and the prints, and a lot of that's done in the dark. A lot of it's done, particularly the developing, without seeing the image. And you do that through experience and through data sheets. You kind of know what sort of times you should be doing things. And `I think that I've found that this process was a lot closer to that than it was to how I'd expect to shoot something. So it felt familiar, but also alien in respect to the actual technique of what we're doing. I'm looking forward to the editing

process, because that again— it becomes a different... [pause] a different way of looking at that footage. If we had vast amounts of time and we kept doing scenes over and over and over again, with a camera, you can cut between scenes normally. This, every time we cut, we're moving the person. Or we're stuttering(?) their reality. And I think that that's very different. The human eye's very comfortable with flashing black and coming back again. Blinking, essentially. But with 360, you're not blinking, you're making the entire world disappear. So I don't know that that would work well as a technique, which means that we had this much longer period of not being able to cut. Which was lovely, because it has defined sections that kind of work, where we can interject with that and move the camera. Which we planned. So... yeah, that then meant that editing became formal as well. So that's not necessarily as much of a choice that you do in the editing room any more, it becomes a choice of how you film the piece in the first place.

07:53

I: Right. Because I would imagine with your— with a more conventional 2D filming process, that— or— you know— non-360 filming process that you probably— obviously, you have certain ideas of what shots and what content, you know, what footage you wanna get. But there's a certain amount of a second creative process that can almost start from the start in the editing room.

A: Absolutely. I mean—

I: In the editing suite.

A: One of them's Walter Murch. He's the guy that edited Apocalypse Now. So he was given masses of footage. Like, hours and hours and hours of footage, and then assembled the film from that footage. So you have the director telling the story, but telling all the story, and then the editor whittling that down into a story that can then be told to an audience. I don't necessarily think that's the case with using a 3D camera. I don't think you can take that footage and chop it up so much. I don't think the human mind is as forgiving in that way. But it was Walter Murch that described the idea of editing as blinking. If you look at an object, and then turn your head to look at another object, you naturally blink in the middle of that turn.

I: Yeah, I remember you saying that.

A: And so, because we're not physically turning the camera, the person in the camera's gonna be turning, they will be doing the blinking for us. We can try and anticipate that, maybe try and put a cut in. If we played the sound over to one side for instance, we kind of anticipate that they're gonna turn their head. We could cut, but that's guesswork. It's not absolute. And that means that it's probably a bit sloppy to use that. So, yeah. So I guess it's about thinking about how to structure filming that doesn't need editing. And that's, again, that's kind of the opposite way round of thinking compared to what I'm used to. But it wasn't unanticipated, it was just— what's the reality of that situation, how does that feel? And I think— Yeah, I will find out a bit more about that once I sit down with the footage, and then realise, 'oh, we should have done a bit differently' or something like that, that— again, editing solves you a lot of problems because a shoot— a shot doesn't look good, you just use a different shot. We've only kind of got one shot,

so it might be the beginning bit looks great but the end doesn't. How do you deal with that? And how best— because it's always at the service of the audience member. The viewer. You don't edit for anything else other than for them to be able to experience it, so you need to make sure they're very comfortable in that.

10:29

- I:** So, second sort of question/topic, is how has adapting this piece— I mean from what you knew of it from what I have told you and from our discussion in April, and information that you had before coming into the theatre in the past few days, how has adapting this into a film document affected your understanding of the original piece and its intentions, or its themes? Or has it?
- A:** Okay. I think because you were very clear early on— the early discussions I had with you were very straightforward and direct I guess. Plus the first thing that I saw was a lighting plan. And I think when you deal with tech and somebody presents you with a lighting plan, it's a lovely way of looking at the work. And I think that actually that lighting plan obviously still holds up really strongly in the space and this— the geometric notions of triangles were quite present before we even got in there. So I was thinking about that, but because I was thinking about it I was also looking for it. So like, that situation where we— I noticed the lights above us were arranged in a triangle as well, that meant that I just was like, okay. We need to make sure that's in shot. We need to make sure that it's kept, because it's a lovely little echo of what's going on below it. So I guess as boring as it sounds, I think I went into this with a very good understanding of what this would be and how it would look. And also, it was such a brief conversation that we had to have in terms of 'where's the camera gonna be placed?', because it just made sense in that kind of way, because you would have a human body in that situation, you know, we're not talking about, again, what it's looking at or what the focus is, it's talking about where's the body in the space? And there are limitations of that. You know... chairs and stuff are kind of a good one. So yeah.

12:46

- I:** Was there anything about na— obviously you saw the lighting plan in advance, but from especially yesterday and the day before, was there anything that became more apparent, I mean, besi— so, for example, the triangle. Was there anything that became more apparent about the piece for you once you saw the lighting in action, or?
- A:** Actually yeah. I didn't realise, for instance, the side lighting creates these beautiful triangles as well, but the actual— that motif of triangles is echoed throughout in a lot of different ways. But also, I think, the photographs from the lighting plan were on a wooden floor. So I wasn't anticipating it feeling so much like a void. Which, in technical terms, really works out quite nicely, because it means I can isolate very small areas and treat them very differently when we come to processing the footage. So if you're overlit and the chair's underlit, I can kind of loop that area off and it's not going to look obvious. So that was... yeah, that was kind of useful.
- I:** A nice surprise, maybe?

A: And not anticipated. So, I kind of went in there thinking, right, how do we get a happy medium throughout? But as soon as we started filming, I was like, actually, we don't need to worry about that too much, we just need to make sure it looks as good as possible in at least one of those situations. Yeah. I think... So, basically, yeah. It was exactly as I expected, but going into it with those expectations, I think, enabled us to be a lot more articulate in the space, which meant that it was more about executing a plan knowing what that should be. Which is good, I think that's great practice. I prefer to work with really tight storyboards, I prefer to do all the work beforehand, and then when it comes to filming you should know what you're doing. I know with some directors like to go in there and kind of wing it and Steadicams and stuff like that. That is literally the opposite of how I work. So, there is something nice about knowing 'this is where the camera's gonna be. As long as we make sure everything else is fine, you know... That should work.

I: Yeah. Absolutely. I would agree.

14:53

I: This is kind of a long and.... lanky question! My working themes in form and content include the generation of envy, so, creating envy amongst the spectators, which you know. Interactive performance that is not actually interactive beyond the audio-visual realm, and there— that's obviously a whole debate about what constitutes participation, what constitutes interactivity. And as we've already touched on, the triangle as a kind of, you know, graphic and sort of like, affective or emotional principle. And I'm curious as to whether— I mean, you've kind of touched on it a bit, but, do any of those ideas resonate with you in your contribution to the process, or not? And you can also just ask me [inaudible] be like, I don't know what you're talking about. [laughter].

A: I think— I mean— those are three really interesting, I guess, concerns within creating any work. For me, the interactivity thing's probably the most interesting, and I'm a big fan of triangles, and I like the [inaudible] elements I guess, particularly when they're very geometric. I'm very comfortable in my own work— geometry's kind of the thing we measure. That's, I mean, that's entirely my job. I measure. That's pretty much it. But interactivity's quite interesting. So, I think I have quite a solid political stance on that I believe that being quiet and watching something is being interactive. I think the translation of gallery spaces into messy spaces feels to me like an occupation of the space that I am comfortable in. I find audience participation, particularly when it's unrequested, a form of assault. I hate seeing shows where all of a sudden the performer's lolloping into the audience right at me. I'm like, great, so, am I being paid for this? Is this my turn to perform? I'm here to watch you do your thing. But that said, the other end of that spectrum, my background in gaming is about interactivity, it's about ownership and agency. I think the best games are the ones where you come away and you've got a story. Not that the character you've played's got a story, but you've got it. You've inherited that. And I think that one of the things that I really enjoyed about this piece is the fact that there are levels of interactivity that stem from voyeurism. That what you're doing is you're allowing someone the agency to be somewhere when they're not, and that's kind of almost like a piece of armour. It's a safety net of inviting them into that space. So there are people for example, like myself, that might not want to sit on a stage with a performer, but you could quite happily give me that and put me on a couch and away I go. I can experience that and know that it's— one, that it's not real,

and two, that I can stop it. That's the other thing. People, particularly me, I have this thing about getting up in the middle of a performance and leaving. The amount of rubbish performances I've sat through because I don't have the... I don't know! Is it confidence, or whatever, to just stand up and walk out. But I think there's a politeness there, whereas I think that with watching something like a film, people are more likely to do that because unless the director's sat in the room, nobody cares. So I think that kind of concern of ways in which performance is interactive, that's kind of interesting, and for me that then goes into the notions of liveness. And that I find very interesting. So, I was complaining just the other week about the company that is now selling headset 360 based theatrical performances.

I: Limina, right?

A: Yeah. But they're just providing them as if you're sat in a theatre. So you're sat in a virtual chair watching a recorded performance. I don't see what that brings to live performance. I think if you're transporting the viewer around, I think that kind of works. I think if you are trying to do something that involves in the performance, that's worthwhile. But faking them being sat in a chair in a live space isn't the same as them being in a live space.

I: I know what you mean.

A: Yeah. So it's something that I'm very considerate of anyway, which is the 'why are we doing this?'. I feel like I would tell particularly you, but also anybody else I worked with if they were asking me to do something that I think contravened the reasons of why I think that that's a good idea. I would quite happily say 'I think you're doing it wrong'. So, you know, the idea of recording your performance and then experiencing it from a virtual chair in a theatre space is a nonsense. But being on stage is something that most audience members will not have done. And I think there's something really interesting about playing with that. And so it's the interactivity of experience rather than necessarily a physical interactivity. So yeah, I think that....

19:55

I: Yeah. And do you think that— so— [pause] So are you saying, and I don't wanna put words in your mouth, are you saying that you think there's something worthwhile about kind of, um... [pause] I don't know what it is. Like, outsourcing that experi— that embodied experience in some way, of interactivity, so that someone can experience it from a level of remove through the headset?

A: I'd— absol— I mean, on kind of a clinical level, I know people kind of— on the spectrum of autism that would find that a much more satisfying way of experiencing theatre. I expect that people with various physical requirements that might find that particularly gratifying. But more than that, the fact that it provides an experience you couldn't have no matter what, unless you would be physically invited on the stage, and that becomes about overcoming all manner of other stuff. And not just within the viewer. Physical limitations of spaces, for instance. You know, you might not have a theatre space to show work in, but you can create one out of this kind of situation. So it becomes one, about not just ability, but resources. There's situations where you could film— we talked about this. The idea if we found a cabaret setting and film it in there, you

could show that to— maybe not this show! But you could show that to young children. You can take them to spaces where they're not normally allowed. And that then becomes I guess about ownership as well, and I think that's quite important. About people feeling comfortable being in certain spaces. I know that the theatre has a certain amount of resistance. You know... My parents, for instance, are okay more or less with pantomime and that kind of theatre. But when it starts becoming more contemporary, there's a barrier there that they find. And that's just about not knowing how to react. Of(?) being told it's a game, or being told it's an experience that you can control I think, enables people to cross that barrier. It creates a form of permeability of experience, I guess.

22:09

- I:** That's interesting. And, you know... If you were to imagine this, so let's say you've edited the film and it's done, and you were to imagine this now, kind of, touring as its own experience, how do you imagine people wanting to engage with it, or how do you imagine it being set up? Like, would you imagine it being set up in a gallery space, or would it have an invigilator of some kind? You know?
- A:** Interesting. I think there's a really good opportunity to blur that virtual-real boundary. So, to have— although there's only ever gonna be one person sat down watching it at once, to have that second chair there, I think is kind of really important, to see that in one world and then see it in the next. [inaudible] with the music. I think if you play music while setting up live, that that then bleeds into— and creates a gradation(?) of immersion.
- I:** No, that's really interesting. And I think that idea— I don't think I would, but I think that idea of a kind of um... [pause] haptic, or sort of not— I don't think involving actual physical touch, because I think that might then ali— again, that is intrusive in a— you know, that might be counterproductive in terms of that people don't like being touched, or people don't like their spa— the whole reason someone would— it would appeal to someone is that they know that they're in control of their personal space.

23:51

- A:** But I think for instance, the jackets. Those jackets have a really specific texture. So if you have that on the back of the chair... I know that I would do, at some point, touch that jacket to see if it matched up with the visual texture that I'm seeing I guess. But I'm... From what I've witnessed with particularly the headsets and the 360 so far though is that there is also the notion of novelty. Most people coming to this situation will not have used them, or they won't necessarily be regular users of them. They might have tried one on, but they won't have done much— so I think you've got to ease them into... There's those tales aren't there of the first time cinema showing with that train coming towards the screen, that people that ran out, though I don't know if that's true or not. I don't think humans are that daft. I think we inherently understand projected image because, shadows. I think we know what shadow is, and all cinema is an inverted shadow to some extent. And I think the same's true with watching TV versus watching something on a headset. It's just closer and more intimate. But it's like... what d'ya call 'em? The people who do the big cinema shows where they dress everything. They did Blade Runner recently. I don't

remember their name. It's that. It's creating an external immersion factor for an internal one. It's a way of just easing people into one world and making it believable. So, for instance, they put the headset on. As they're doing that, it might be nice to dim the lights slightly in the space. Now that's going to make no difference to them within the headset, but, it signals that they're transitioning from one space into another. And I think in a very subtle way that can be quite an effective signal whether it's light leaking in from outside and then not, or even just a form of ritual or pageantry about what's happening. Something very... I dunno... Yeah, very choreographed about putting the headset on. And I think that's the first act of this performance. Well, the second. The first would be visual, seeing an empty chair. The first one that they would be required to do would be to put a headset on. And I think that's—

I: But, embracing the choreography of that?

A: And that's the same as putting on a costume. And then that becomes the same as putting on a role. And those things... We already know those things. People already know those things. So when they start to do that, I think they would feel the similar [inaudible]

26:14

I: So, help— like— applying that kind of liminal logic, where it's like, okay, now you're entering a new world, you're exiting that world, just embracing that, embracing the ritual of that as you said.

A: And by doing that, you're creating essentially a portal. And by doing that you're creating the possibility of new rules. Whenever anybody steps into a new space, there are new rules, And I think that's one of the things I guess in terms of filmmaking that we're trying to establish. When they come into this space, there are new rules, and one of them is, they will move without moving. Not a lot, but they will do a bit. The other one being that they will be talked directly to. Sometimes not. That's the whole point! It's that, you know, you were(?) creating an environment where they can expect and anticipate new rules. That's also important. That kind of— we show you, and then we let you, kind of thing.

27:12

I: Yeah. Yeah, totally. Okay, I think I just have actually one last question. Which is, do you think it's possible to make— from your experience of watching this, and sometimes, I suppose, acting as Bernie or being part of it, mostly watching it— do you think it's possible to set up a relationship of envy between two audience members, or between a series of audience members?

A: Good question. I mean, the envy, of the three things you mentioned is probably the one I'm least versed in, I guess, in terms of performance, because as I say, I like to just sit at the back and just watch from a distance. If somebody gets picked to go on stage, that's usually relief for me. It's not envy. You know?

I: No, but I suppose— are you— but you— sometimes you must, also part of that experience of being a watcher is also watching other people watching other people, if that makes any sense?

A: Of course. Absolutely. Yeah, definitely. There are a couple of shows I've seen recently where that's played out quite largely. One second, I need to do some research because I can't remember his name.

I: Yeah, that's okay! There's no rush. The thing's just going, so...

A: This might be a little bit of a rabbit hole, I suppose, but it's worth talking about in this context in terms of envy, and I guess audience participation as well because—

28:45

I: Well, it's kind of that dynamic that we were talking about with the FK Alexander piece, you're watching someone have a private experience.

A: Interesting you should bring her up. Uh.... [pause] come on... Unfortunately... Ah, there we go! I'm looking on the Take Me Somewhere website, but they've taken it down because the festival's over, and... Who was it... It was... [pause] There he is! Ivo Dimchev.

I: Oh, I've seen his work before but I haven't seen that piece.

A: So— yeah. The P-Project was the piece. And essentially, it's the performer at the back of a room, lying on a piano, and then stopping every now and again, and saying, okay, can I have somebody out of the audience to come and type on a laptop. And I will sing the lyrics that you're typing. We'll get some lyrics between— In fact, have two people typing on laptops. And to do this, he would pay them. And this is where it gets interesting, so he's paying these people money to write lyrics as it sings. And then it escalates a little, and it gets a bit dark. Then he's saying, okay, I'd quite like somebody to get up and dance while I'm playing. I will pay you more than the writers. And immediately hands go up, and people start making their way on stage, and this one girl got up on stage, and he went, 'you're not a dancer, though, are you? You're not a performing artist, are you?', and she went 'yes I am', and he just went, 'fuck off then. I want somebody who isn't a dancer'. And at that moment, because the room was entirely packed with performers, because it was that sort of festival where everybody at it is somehow involved in the arts. The look of absolute disdain on everyone's faces. And genuine kind of... I don't know what, I don't know what the emotion is they had of not being allowed to participate in somebody else's work, or not being able to enter that space because he'd made a rule that— 'not you'. The exclusion of it really... particularly for that sort of person who's quite bold enough to want to do that. And then it got more and more intense. So he steps it up, and then starts, you know— 'I want two people, two strangers', he says, 'I want you to kiss. While I play a song(?)'. And two people get up, and they get paid to kiss on stage. He then wants two people to strip naked and basically simulate sex with each other. In fact, he disappears round a corner and comes back with a mattress. It's quite heavily signalled. But again, they must be strangers. And at first, nobody does it, and then one guy puts his hand up and goes 'I wanna do it'. And then he sits on this

mattress, this kid, on his own, naked at this point, and nobody else is offering to join him. It's quite awkward. And this— yeah, it's quite a strange situation. And then somebody does— they offer to do it, and I wonder if they offer to do it just out of sheer politeness. You know what I mean? 'Cause there's... [laughter]

31:50

I: Well, I'm sure he understands the mechanics of guilt as well you know?

A: Oh, exactly(?), and in fact he did, he said to the kid— and I say kid, he was in his early twenties— he said to him, 'don't worry, we'll just leave it a while, it always happens'. He said that. So he clearly knew what was going on in the space. Yeah, so you can see how that kind of escalated, but this notion of envy was still playing in there, that a lot of the performers were excluded from this, and so when he dropped that he basically at one point he was just going 'it can be anybody now' because he was asking for more and more extreme things. They'd— immediately these performers rushed up on the stage, and tried to make it about them. In a subtle way, but they clearly wanted to be part of that thing, and FK was one of them. She got up and he asked two people to get up, one of you to write a positive review, and one of you to write a negative review. And then he made them read them out. But it was done with a certain amount of wit and style, so it was okay. And then we had Katie Baird(?), who got up, and urinated on stage. She was allowed to do anything she wanted. He offered her the rest of the money that was left, he started off with a thousand pounds, I think he had about thirty left, and he said 'I'll give you thirty pounds to do whatever you want'. And that's what she chose to do. Now, I can't help but read that as somebody trying to upstage... Somebody trying to claim, literally, territorially pissing on a stage, you know, there was a really direct message being sent by somebody doing that. And if that's not done out of envy, because everybody had very much enjoyed the show, if that's not done out of envy I don't know what is. So I think that was perhaps one of the most clinically artistic expressions of envy I've ever seen. Which is to do that in front of an audience.

33:45

I: And to— [pause] and that sort of dynamic and mechanic sort of— it begins by excluding. So it's like here's a thing, you don't have access to it, only these people have access to it, which heightens it.

A: And I think that he's a perceptive enough performer. I mean, he was clearly in control of that entire room from the start. And I found that incredibly, um... Comforting, actually! One, because I knew that he wouldn't do that thing of transgressing that boundary. He wouldn't make me do anything. He didn't want to make somebody do something. It was all about making them to want to do something. And he did that through exclusion and envy. That's what he did. He did it through that, and going 'I like you, here's some money'. And he was incredibly complementary to the people who got up. He was incredibly tender in terms of his relationship. It was very much about giving them attention himself. Yeah. It was very well done. But that— yeah, that idea of withdrawal, exclusion, and also expectation, I guess. Because that final bit wasn't necessarily envy about his attention. It was about the audience's attention as well. And the expectations— I mean, we've talked about Ann Liv Young.

I: Yeah. Oh yeah, we did yeah!

A: I was sat down, three seats down from Pete McMaster, who had been to see Ann performance, and she pointed at him and said this performance will stop now. It will continue when you stand up and take your trousers off. And then they waited. Now, it's interesting because apparently, he did stand up and he did do that. And Pete's a performer, he knows how that goes(?). But I couldn't help putting myself in that situation, of going, well, I'm a durational performer, I would just sit there. I would not do that. I would not be coerced in that way. And then again I suspect they wouldn't use that as a tactic on me, because I think performers read the situation. So translating that to what you've done, because you're not able to read the audience because you're not even there. This is a pre-reading, you are in a situation where you're doing that.

I: You're saying I'm not there because they have self-selected to arrive? Or?

A: Well, no, because the version of you on the headset is a version of you recorded yesterday, not the version of you in the space there. So they can't— they can't reasonably expect to be the sole focus of your attention because they know that you've— you're not there. I mean, we know the mechanics of film, we know that that's not live, but by putting somebody in that situation, and this is what's different, I think, from cinema, is that if you— and we have, we filmed it as a 2D, normal, traditional cinema thing— watching that, there's a dissociation of space, and watching that dissociation of space is also a dissociation of time. You're on that screen, I'm here, you're back then, I'm now. By putting those things a lot closer, which is what 360 cameras do, they are then in that space with you, and at that time with you, you have transported them into that arena. So in terms of creating this idea of envy, I think that's still entirely feasible, possible that they might not— or one might not— make those normal judgement calls of dissociation, that the you in that space talking to me as an audience member would feel real. So when you're not looking at me and you're not talking to me— would that also feel real? So, I suspect that in terms of this piece and in terms of the cinematography of it I guess, being linked to those two chairs that are separate apart, so you know which one you're performing to, I think there's certainly scope for that to actually come across in a way that can't come across in traditional recorded performance. But would obviously if you were to do it live.

37:33

I: That's interesting. Yeah. Because— yeah. Because you're situating their body in that way.

A: Indeed. And it is that— the rules of that particular, as I say, as(?) they go through that portal, things are a little different, and so that notion of, yesterday, recording and not being physical in the space, don't apply any more. It's sort of just like when you watch people with headsets do the rollercoasters and fall off their chair. It's like a more subtle version of that, a more emotional version of that. And I think it's feasible to expect that.

38:03

I: And I think what I'm interested in is not, perhaps, people— and I think even in the live version what I'm interested in is not people completely being subsumed into a feeling of envy, but more— it's more that doubled consciousness of being like— almost noticing your own perception of things acting on you, so it's like, I realise I'm being manipulated, and I still— and I still am feeling the thing. I'm watching myself being operated on.

A: And the safeness of the ability to try it on, as well. I mean, envy's always seen as quite an ugly characteristic. It's not seen as a desirable emotional state, is it? I mean, there are very few books where that's— the hero is supposed to feel that. But to give people the opportunity to try that on in a space and then take it off like you would a costume is quite nice. It's quite a generous act. It's basically saying, 'feel this strange and ugly feeling with no judgement at all, and the reason there's no judgement is because we want you to'. And that's actually quite, perversely quite a giving experience. Yeah, to allow somebody the—

I: To try it on.

A: Yeah.

39:11

I: Do you think that envy is at work in that FK Alexander piece? I didn't see it live, so I don't—

A: Yeah. I... I think it's certainly a reading of it. I think... I don't know whether it was intentional when the piece started, because I saw it as the degree show which she did, and then subsequently at [inaudible] Edinburgh, and it's remained fundamentally similar. From my understanding of it, or reading of it, watching other people has kind of developed. The reason I say that is because what I've talked to her about it, she's notoriously closed about how it should be interpreted. She doesn't really talk about it very much. So these are more my perceptions of it than her explanation of it. But I think it's certainly present, that idea of her giving you sole attention and then you then being able to watch her do it for somebody else, and then somebody else, and with each one it diminishes somewhat, and you know, this being related to Judy Garland and stuff like that, and performers in general, that kind of archetype of, when they're performing, they're performing for you and everybody else. But I also think it's more to do with— I think the focus is different in her piece. And I think it's deliberately more focused on 'look at what this does to the performer'.

I: Or about(?) the labour of— the emotional—

A: Exactly. How can they force themselves to feel like they're being special for each performance, when actually they know that it's transient? So I think it's seen as a durational and emotional, physical, task. As opposed to being seen as something that the audience endures or goes through. But it clearly is something that the audience endures.

I: Or could. You know, they could choose to— yeah.

A: I mean, I'm not sure if she's every performed it as a one on one performance—

I: Well, that's the thing, it would seem to be such a different... yeah.

A: That becomes more, I guess— I'm gonna use this really loosely, it's not the right word, but a form of prostitution. That kind of singular entertainment of performance deliberately meant in that way.

I: To make you f— to mask almost the repetition?

A: Exactly. But I don't know. I don't know if that's happening or not. I should probably ask, but...

41:41

I: I think that's it! I mean, that's really, really useful. Really useful.

A: Fascinating stuff, isn't it? I mean, we didn't even touch on any of the Lynch stuff either. That's [inaudible] but the idea of, um— I could just do it!

I: Yeah, quickly, yeah!

A: That notion of the strange and the eerie. The idea that because the film is 360 that something could be going on behind you while you're looking forward is something that never really occurs in cinematic filmmaking. You expect them to show you what's behind. It's why mirrors and jump scares are such a big deal in horror. Because that's the only time that you can film something and show something behind something at the same time is when you use a mirror.

I: Or use music to almost like... elicit this sense that there is something there when there's not. Or like...yeah.

A: Absolutely. Whereas, in this case, we can literally put something behind somebody. And that notion that that could be the case, and the fact that we might actually do that, means that as a viewer you're inherently unsettled then at that point. But you know you're supposed to be looking in one way, but you're always aware that there might be something behind you. And I think that as a physical and emotional response to being in the space is quite interesting. I think— I don't know how it's gonna turn out, but I'm fairly certain it's gonna be interesting to look at.

42:59

I: Yeah. And I suppose that's an element of voyeurism that is not usually made palpable in the cinema, or— yeah.

A: And also, one of— that you could be being voyeured at the same time! That's the thing. You know, we've had a look at how that works out in terms of the camera placement, but the idea that— yeah, there could always be something behind you, watching you, being aware of you, I think that's kind of fascinating, and I think going through this process has only made it more interesting. From a making perspective, from a thinking about how we situate an audience member in a performance that we can control like that...

43:43

I: Are there any Lynchian dynamics, or images, that emerged from the past few days that you did not first see, or like atmosphere, or anything that emerged from the past few days that you did not foresee from our planning?

A: I think scale is one of them. So we talked about the idea that the space is quite truncated to how it was originally done. But oddly, because of the lenses being fisheye lenses, things that are far away tend to look a lot further away than they are, even when corrected for the aspect. So there's you in the blue light— it feels to me quite far away. And then coming forward out of that. And that— because of the blacks, because of the quality of the camera and its inability to expose correctly for the light bits and the dark bits because the blacks become a void, it is very... transient. It's a weird space. And that's what becomes Lynchian. It's a weird space. It is more 'Black Lodge' Lynch than 'sat in the diner' Lynch. I guess that would be the definition of it. It's the bit where somebody could suddenly start walking backwards, and it would feel reasonable. And I think again, this comes with this idea of going through the portal, of putting the headset on or being that way, that the rules which happen in that space are completely established within that space, and I think that's quite exciting in terms of being a maker in those kind of ways. Which would be interesting should you ever make a piece specifically, and solely, only, for being inside a headset, because then you are able to know purely the rules that happen without any relationship to what happens outside. And that might be an absolute hot mess of a piece. It might look beautiful but not make any sense. Or it might just be too much to be relatable to an audience member. But it's certainly a whole new box of tricks that might be fun to play with.

I: Definitely

A: And yeah, there's a lot of scope there for mixing the surreal, the real, and the unreal. You could animate in that space...

45:48

I: Talk to me— because I mean, you've mentioned those distinctions before actually. And, for you, what is the distinction between the surreal and the unreal?

A: So, surreal would be... Uh... there being two of you suddenly in the space. Or... All of a sudden you are flipped upside down and you're walking across the ceiling. That's surreal. That's... It's got a foot in reality, which would be the physical form, but it's... It's not quite right. It subverts at least some of the normal rules that you would expect a human to observe in that space. We

could then just drop somebody into an ocean [clicks fingers] like that. And they could suddenly be underwater. That becomes unreal insomuch as they won't feel the water, so it's not— it's a dissociation of senses, I think. But also... Yeah, I guess it's that their expectations are that that isn't real at that point. That they know, but then they have to suspend their disbelief to enjoy that. Or that they have to suspend their disbelief to understand that that's part of that world. So the other one being animation. That we can have you moving around as a human in the space, but we can actually draw in that space. That can have elements of the surreal about it, but that's unreal. That's another layer of reality superimposed on top of you.

47:10

I: Yeah. And almost something about the seams of the artificiality being exposed or something, is more of the unreal probably, as opposed to the surreal.

A: I think. I think those are the ways [inaudible]. Again, both of them need defining, I think. within the context of immersive film. I don't think they have that kind of definition yet. But there's certainly... Yeah, okay, so we start this film. Do you want the title of the film to appear? That can appear in the space. It can just literally be the words floating in front of you. That's... seems like you would accept that as a viewer. That seems completely plausible in that space, whereas if you were watching a natural film and all of a sudden the titles started floating in front of your actual face, you'd be a little freaked out. So I think that's where that distinction is. Some of those bits...

48:00

I: Which is probably the future, right? In terms of AR and stuff.

A: Yeah, I think so. Well, I mean with 3D glasses, the titles now come out. I think there is that. But I think it's that thing of, if you're walking around in your everyday life and these things happen to you, you would consider yourself hallucinating. Whereas, particularly, if the unreal stuff happened to you, you would consider yourself dreaming. I think that's maybe the difference. That one's more hallucination, the other one's more dreaming. But I think with dreaming you're dissociated from reality totally, whereas hallucination is an impingement of reality. Yeah. I'm gonna steal that definition for myself at some point.

I: Go! Go for it!

48:40

Okay, one last question.

A: Okay.

I: I'll give you a second to write that down.

A: That's okay.

I: Which is, what is the... what for you is the kind of... political. aesthetic, experiential. whatever, sort of value in experiencing voyeurism? Or, what does voyeurism do, I guess, if anything?

A: That's interesting. That's... because the term's really inherently tied up with a kind of rubric of kind of sexual voyeurism. I mean, when you say voyeur, that's usually what you're thinking about.

I: Well, the connotation is usually sexual, isn't it?

A: Whereas I don't think that's necessarily true in all contexts.

I: No, I don't think so either.

A: And I think the first things we learn are through looking at and then either replicating or learning from seeing stuff. It's a lot easier to learn stuff if somebody demonstrates it first. And so I think that when you're looking in terms of voyeurism in theatre, that what you're looking at is somebody demonstrating something so that you can learn from it. And I think that's true of all theatre. Even non-deliberately voyeuristic theatre. In fact, all arts, morality plays, those kinds of things, they're all forms of voyeurism in that they're seeing something and learning something. But that learning doesn't necessarily have to be moral, or even narratively, and that's the thing. So, you know you could learn, for instance, something that's completely useless outside of the space, but while you're in it, that's what you're doing, you're learning through watching. I think there are ethical considerations in terms of voyeurism as performed on the audience. So I think if you have an audience that's then being watched by another audience that there is an ethical issue to that, whether that's explained away or not, and we talked about Roseanna Kane(?)'s piece about her sister. I think that was handled particularly well, actually, by giving the viewer the opportunity to be both. But then again that's also a form of implication, and I'm not entirely sure where I sit with that. The idea of allowing somebody to do something and then afterwards saying 'and this is what you're actually doing' is, um.... Yeah. I don't know where I sit with that.

51:08

I: Well, it could be read as a kind of apology, couldn't it? In terms of like—

A: Absolutely.

I: —you were being watched, but it's okay because now I'm letting you watch.

A: Yeah. But, again, you only have to replace the word watch with something like... uh... I don't know, 'we only hit you so you could go and hit somebody else'. You know? And that suddenly unravels as a kind of...

I: 'You were hit, but I'll let you hit this person, and so that makes up for it' kind of thing.

A: Exactly. And I'm not exactly sure that that's coherent.

I: No, that logic is a slippery slope.

A: But, is also fascinating because of that. So, you know, I think it's certainly got a place [inaudible].

51:44

I think I should— It's not a Lynch example, it's more of a Kubrick example sort of springs to mind, which is in *The Shining* when Danny opens the— no it's not Danny! It's Jack Nicholson's character— opens the room and there's the guy dressed as the bear.

I: Oh yeah! Yeah.

A: I still don't know what the fuck that scene's about. But there is something going on there, that all I have an experience of is that brief moment of seeing it. That is pure voyeurism. Because they look shocked at being seen as well. And there's that moment when the door opens and it's like... They're being seen, and they're aware they're being seen, and... Yeah, there is something incredibly empowering about that. Why put that in there other than that being the transgression of a visual boundary? In this case, the door. The door being open allows voyeurism and it's both ways. It's seeing and being seen to be seeing. Berger there, isn't it?

I: Yeah! Well that's the thing, yeah.

A: —kind of goes that way. So I think it's interesting that in this piece particularly that notion of voyeurism, of— and it is played out. It's almost like two chairs sitting people watching a stripper, for instance, could be seen as that kind of thing. It has that aspect of it. It has deliberately identified attention being given out to one at a time. But then obviously being able to turn round and see somebody doing that as well, so it's not just about the view being there for your attention, it's about them there to see your attention with somebody else, and that is interesting I think. Because it allows them to see the thing that they're being, and also be the thing that they're being in turn. So, similar to the Roseanna piece I guess. But, um...

53:25

I: And maybe actually that's more interesting than... Or more interesting, or more complicated than just envy, actually, that maybe just the experience of experiencing something and then watching someone else experiencing this— the same, or very similar thing, there's something in that. I don't know. It's like... Yeah. I suppose it's all like roleplay, isn't it? Kind of thing? Yeah.

A: But there are so many different kinds of envy, as well. So there's the envy where somebody gives you a cake, and you're about to eat it, and they go 'ooh! Sorry. You need to share that with your sister.' You know? Okay, I mean I still get cake, I just don't get as much of the cake. Then there's the envy of your sister gets a cake and you don't. That's a very different world. That's almost a righteous envy, whereas the other one's more of an envy of loss. Yeah. I guess—whereas, I think this piece in particular is more of an envy of sharing the cake than of not having it. And I think the interesting thing about the envy of sharing the cake— which should be my biography— is that you get to taste the cake, which then gives you a relationship with the other person because you are both having that experience, so although you might despise them for having the other half of your cake, you immediately have something in common with them. And I think in terms of— this is all art, isn't it? Is communicating commonality or ideas, that that's really quite a strong one. Because, as I say, you're allowing them to experience an unpleasant feeling in a safe space, but also enabling them to share that with somebody else, so they're not on their own. And I think that's quite comforting.

55:06

I: Yes. Definitely. And something about the structure, I think, it can be quite comforting. Do you know? It's like, once you sort of... I think the choreographed or structured nature of it somehow... I mean, it's that old classic of like, the more structured something is, sometimes the more free you can feel within structure, you know?

A: Absolutely. Well then you don't have to worry about it as well. You know where it's going, which means you can focus on what's actually happening.

I: Yeah, which is like the Ivo Dimchev thing like you were saying, where it's like, just because you knew that that was actually really controlled in some ways, it allowed you to relax into it.

A: Yeah. And I think that works well in this case. There was the other case that happened, which is when you see a performance and they have all the props on stage, so you know where it's going in terms of the props, and you end up playing prop bingo. You're just waiting for each of the props to be used. You know?

I: It's too predictable.

A: Or when somebody has an ordered list, and they go 'one', and you know that they've got a hundred, and the first one takes five minutes and you're like... I don't have time for this.

I: Oh no! [laughter]

A: There is that form of structure that can be quite cloying I guess, whereas this is— it doesn't feel like a stringently apparent structure because you don't have a defined endpoint. When I'm sat there as the viewer, I don't know how many times you're gonna come to me, or to them, or go at the mic. Or if at any point that all changes. There's no... There's a sharing, but there's no trajectory of sharing. It's not saying this is finite, or that this is going to end differently.

- I:** And I think if I repeated any one of the positions again, I think then there would be a sense of 'oh, I get it now'.
- A:** Absolutely. And there's almost like a resetting of the space every time you go back to the microphone. That because, particularly in the film because it goes dark everywhere else, it almost cleanses that [inaudible]. And that's the thing. But when it comes back it could be different anyway. So I think that that's quite a useful technique, being able to zoom it back on you, concentrate on that space and then open it back out.
- I:** Yeah. Cool. That's brilliant!
- A:** That's all I've got.
- I:** That's brilliant.
- A:** Later on there'll be probably more in the edit.
- I:** That's absolutely brilliant.
- A:** The editing stuff might [inaudible]
- I:** Yeah. Ssss—