



**Queensland University of Technology**  
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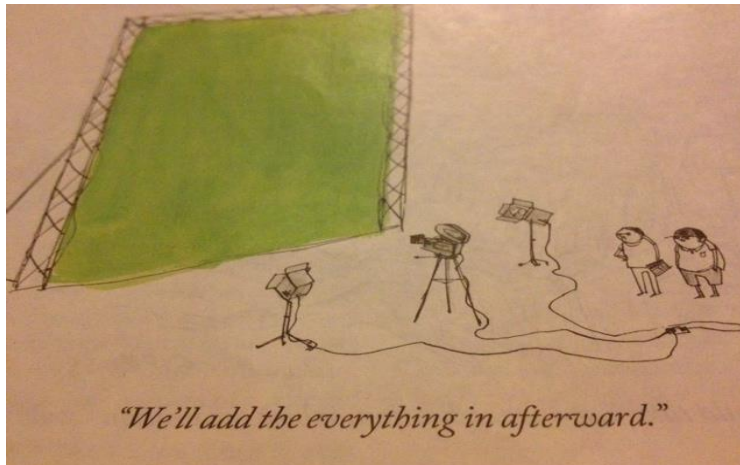
Text Overlaid onto slide: Green –  
Matt Delbridge and Lee McGowan,  
Queensland University of Technology ( 7 secs)



Crossfade to Matt- Title Slide to background

This paper examines two recent productions that deploy the filmic technique of chroma key compositing as a scenographic device on the stage - Peggy Shaw's *RUFF*, which premiered at the PS122 COIL festival in New York in January 2012 and a collaboration between Queensland Theatre Company and the Queensland University of Technology *Total Dik!*, which had its first cycle of development at the Bille Brown Studio in Brisbane Australia in April 2013. Each work uses what we have called a replication of a 'studio' Green Screen environment as a scenic device that contributes to the existing use of filmic discourse in the theatre. Sometimes the Green screen environment is used for live compositing and at other stages it is used as a blank canvas that 'waits' for 'content to appear'.

Crossfade to Edward Steed Image (fullscreen) and Lee V/O



This is Edward Steed's – "we'll add everything in afterward", it appeared in the New Yorker on the 31<sup>st</sup> October this year and pretty well sums up how we've been thinking about the green canvas as just that – a canvas. A place where 'everything can be added in'. So what does this mean for the theatre  
Crossfade to Lee- Steed Slide to background

Now when this adding happens in film we never actually see the green screen environment, but as soon as a Green Screen is placed on a stage it instantly reads as a metaphor that challenges the language of theatre. It acts as a 'sign' for the audience that alludes to the nature of the reconstructed, recomposited, manipulated and controlled. In the two works under discussion today this green site serves as a place for:

- memories to be reconstructed,
- for messages to be manipulated
- and for modes of production to be revealed.

For us this very clearly contributes to the conference themes of

- performance on the palimpsestuous stage, because there is nothing more palimpsestuous than a green screen environment,
- that we are able to make a contribution to the age old conversation that the theater continues to have with technology on the notions of drama, fiction, and dramatic text,
- and that these works can be emergence of new forms that exist beyond Hans Thies Lehmann's postdramatic theatre.

In order to undertake this conversation we'll talk about each work separately

and show some samples from each that demonstrate a connection to these themes before drawing some conclusions at the end that will hopefully engage everyone in an active discussion.

Lets start with Peggy Shaw's RUFF

Crossfade to Fullscreen title slide Peggy Shaw's RUFF (3 secs)

(markerset dance soundtrack)

Crossfade to FullScreen Markerset Dance Video (4 mins)

Crossfade to Matt- RUFF image background



What you've just seen is a section from the work RUFF called 'markerset dance'. It's a video that was made from material generated from a Motion Capture session completed with Peggy Shaw in July 2012. The audio track was made by composer Vivian Stoll who used the series of tones generated from an ECG that Peggy had after her stroke in 2011. It's a lovely 4 minutes where it looks like the avatar is dancing with a moon or star.

For Shaw's *RUFF*, the green screen is a site where the films of memory are projected and the chroma key never used as a device for actual compositing. The composite of memory is the theatrical device that enables the work to occur. The scenic environment is built around a replication of the 'studio', a site where memory misplaced after a stroke is reconstructed. When Ellen Stewart, the founder of La Mama in New York, famously banned the color green from the stage in 1961 (as it was bad luck), she could never have known that one of her closest friends and colleagues Peggy Shaw would create this work, set entirely on a green chroma key stage. Shaw's stroke

occurred at around the same time of Stewart's passing in early 2011, and Peggy recalls a moment during the episode where she felt Stewart pulling her away.



Crossfade to background image of the band

RUFF uses the screen to recall a host of crooners, lounge singers, movie stars, rock and roll bands, and eccentric family members living inside Shaw and makes a tribute to those who have kept her company over the last 68 years. To celebrate these memories RUFF fills a blank green screen with projected memories, a prerecorded swing band and motion captured movement of Shaw dancing with the Moon that we've just seen. In RUFF the green screen actually acts as the projection screen, the band that accompanies Peggy throughout the show were prefilmed in a green screen environment not so the footage could be composited at a later date, but so they would fit into the staged environment. In fact the band were prerecorded for pragmatic reasons, there was no way that the show could tour with a six piece band so we recorded them and made sure they were always there with Peggy. Here is a snippet of the band performing the "Hokey Pokey", it's a perfect way for you to see how the background for the show worked.

Crossfade to fullscreen video of Hokey Pokey 3 mins

By way of acknowledgement the original set and media environment for RUFF was conceived during a Split Britches residency hosted at the Queensland University of Technology from June-August 2012. It's written collaboratively by Lois Weaver and Peggy Shaw, performed by Peggy, composed by Vivian Stoll, choreographed by Stormy Brandenburger, designed by myself and lit by Lori E Seid.

Cross fade to Lee – Original Intro slide in background

...There are clearly a number implications the introduction of the green screen has in the theatre environment. While it can easily be incorporated to augment a performance, introduce dynamic dramatic irony between the performer and their surrounds, and affect and change the stage set, the performance and even the performer it can be used as a performative element...In the next performance we discuss the green is used to disrupt and challenge the audience perceptions of its multiple uses and influences on the production process...

Total Dik Video

Crossfade to Lee , Total Dik Image in background



Total Dik! was a collaborative project between the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) and Queensland Theatre Company (QTC). It was created by an ensemble of interdisciplinary theatre-makers, at various stages of their respective careers, and an experienced writer, completely new to theatre, which allowed the work a degree of uninhibited perspective – a useful element to bring to an experimental stage work that explores the masked drivers inherent in dictatorships.

As an experimental work, it was designed to explore and investigate the use of new media incorporation, 'digital liveness' and intermediality in live theatre and experiential performance. These influences are informed by works such as, *By the Way, Meet Vera Stark*, (2012) written by Lynn Nottage and *Hotel Modern's* works *Kamp* (2005) and *God's Beard* (2012).

In addition to this the work builds on the innovative production processes developed in Chris Kohn's *The House of Dreaming* (2012), Matt's work with Peggy Shaw in *RUFF* (2013), and with Peggy and Lois Weaver as *Split Britches* in *Lost Lounge* (2011/12).

In capturing and shaping a blend of theatre, TV studio broadcast, animation, and experimental play writing, it enables disparate creative processes to be brought into alignment in a single narrative that explores the masked drivers inherent in dictatorships.



The work consciously introduces and tests a diverse range of materials and challenges the passive role of the audience in live performance.

It does so by incorporating 'to-hand' technology including tablets, smart phones, pre-recorded film, and incorporates live compositing, streaming to wireless devices, and scale modelling on the stage.

These contrast, add to and affect the chroma key environments as they are placed in conjunction with live theatre performance and other modes of presentation and spectatorship.

In its interrogation broader notions of dictatorship, particularly the moment of transition from followed figurehead to fascism, the scenic elements of *Total Dik!*, a play set on an off-shore platform, sees a control room become at once a seat of power and the recording studio for broadcast of messages of retribution and sacrifice.

This placing of the audience in multiple sites of spectatorship - in the studio control room, on the stage floor and even at times banished backstage as the performers take control of relinquished production technologies - echoes Lehmann's post-dramatic and signals something more.

### **Cross to Matt for Conclusion (start playing music underneath from S and J)**

Crucially for this paper, it is where we see the green screen used as a scenic device that it is at its most powerful. In *Total Dik!*, the compositing is undertaken in real time in front of a live audience where Actors manipulate scale models, refocus cameras and generate scenes. In *RUFF* no compositing is undertaken at all, but the screen is still used as a site for memories to be reconstructed and replayed. This replication of 'studio infrastructure' reveals the process of production to the audience and collapses the formal relationship that separates audience from the constructs of the 'stage' and to some effect the stage from film.



While these works bring storytelling techniques more commonly associated with digital platforms into the theatre-making space. The juxtaposition of film studio techniques with live performance, and their incorporation of traditional and new media technologies see the works simultaneously test practices of production and performance on the stage. This enhances our understanding of theater generally and reinforces the ongoing relationship between film and theatre.

**End with Sand J ending one minute + Paper Credits... one minute**