

A woman with dark hair and bangs is wearing large black headphones. She is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is a dark tunnel with many light rays emanating from a bright point in the distance, creating a sense of depth and movement. The overall mood is mysterious and futuristic.

counterpilot

**ASSORTED ANTICS 2022-23**



# MEET THE TECHNO-TROUBLEMAKERS

Counterpilot is an award-winning collective of interdisciplinary artists based in Brisbane, Australia. We create interactive performance works - activating audiences with new technology, rich design, and transmedia storytelling. Counterpilot seeks to transform the familiar, juxtaposing rich fictional worlds against a backdrop of the everyday. By subverting real social circumstances, we co-opt our participants as authentic performers. We harness what we believe to be the most exciting thing about theatre - the live audience. Our works enable participants to observe themselves responding in real ways to hyper-real situations. We seek to provoke change through acts of trouble, mischief, and low-key chaos. We play in the space between people, and we poke at the tensions that bind us.

Counterpilot is directed by Nathan Sibthorpe. Our core team includes Christine Felmingham, Mike Willmet, and a constellation of makers, technicians and tinkerers. Together, Counterpilot produces interactive performance works that boldly experiment with new applications of technology. With interactive tools like geo-locative audio, SMS distribution networks, RFID voting systems, multi-layered video, and biometric sensors, Counterpilot seeks to put the audience at the center of every performance experience - whether it be for physical journeys, experiential narrative, or heightened gameplay.

In 2022-23, Counterpilot is operating as the company-in-residence at Metro Arts.

[See more of Counterpilot](#)

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*"Genius... the technology is state of the art"*  
- Broadway World

*"It is all ingenious, intricate and just about flawlessly realised"* - Stage Whispers

*"Spectacularly clever on so many levels, in a way probably never seen before"*  
- Blue Curtains Brisbane





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3096 3980 5537  
2735 8161 2044  
1484 7868 5252  
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WATCH OR BE INTERROGATED WITH REAL BIOMETRIC SENSORS, AS WE SEEK OUT TRUTH IN A WORLD OF FAKE NEWS AND ALTERNATIVE FACTS.

The polygraph machine used to be regarded as a legal instrument, but today we think we can cheat. Let's see if your heart rate can lie as effectively as our leaders can.

### SEASONS

- Adelaide Fringe Festival (AUS) – 2019
- Brisbane Festival Theatre Republic (AUS) – 2019
- Horizon Festival (AUS) – 2019
- Melbourne Fringe Festival (AUS) – 2019
- Sydney Festival (AUS) – 2020
- Darwin Festival (AUS) – 2021
- The Outside (AUS) – 2022
- Cairns Festival (AUS) – 2022
- Festival of Dangerous Ideas (AUS) – 2022

### AWARDS

- 2019 Hong Kong Tour Ready Award (Adelaide Fringe)
- 2019 Melbourne Tour Ready Award (Adelaide Fringe)
- 2019 Bank SA Best Film, Digital or Interactive (Adelaide Fringe)
- 2019 Adelaide Fringe Innovation Grant

### PRODUCTION PHOTOS

### TRAILER

- Shape** Intimate headphone encounter with tabletop devices and a performer
- Space** 6.5m x 5m Flat floor room
- Capacity** 12
- Duration** 30 Minutes
- Tricky Tech** Working biometric sensors and polygraph algorithms
- Feels** Sinister game show with playful danger, becomes a surreal philosophical experiment
- Themes** Truth in a post-truth world, Deception and Shame
- Looks** Pulsing lights in the darkness, retrofuturist consoles and confidential dossiers.

Full technical specifications available on request.

*"It's a beguiling game to play in an age of alternative facts and fake news, and another demonstration of Counterpilot's ingenuity. No one else is making work quite like this."*  
- The Age

*Truthmachine is produced by Metro Arts and co-presented by RCC Fringe. Counterpilot is supported by the Adelaide Fringe Artist Fund via the Adelaide Fringe Innovation Grant. Counterpilot is supported through the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland.*

# TRUTH MACHINE

WOULD YOU TAKE A LIE DETECTOR TEST WITH A STRANGER?



## DEMOCRACY IS GETTING HARD TO SWALLOW...

Crunch Time is a performative dinner party designed to model the processes of democracy. Seated around a projector mapped dining table, participant diners use interactive tools to vote for every ingredient used in an elaborate meal. Viewed via live-feed video from a nearby kitchen, a guest chef prepares real food in response to demand. But we're not using master chefs here – instead, each performance nominates individuals from public positions of leadership. Politicians, artistic directors and CEOs take their turn to cook up requests from the dining room with dangerously unpredictable results.

*“The digital tech and projections behind Crunch Time are superb. You feel like you’ve been sucked into a game show...”* - The Age

### SEASONS

Next Wave Festival - Co-presented by Darebin Arts Speakeasy (AUS) – 2018

Norman Price Theatre Brisbane - Co-presented by Metro Arts & TAFE Queensland (AUS) – 2018

### AWARDS

2018 Matilda Award Winner - Lord Mayor's Award for Best New Australia Work

2018 Matilda Award Nomination - Best Video Design

### PRODUCTION PHOTOS

### TRAILER

**Shape** 5-course meal facilitated by interactive media

**Space** 4m x 8m Flat floor room (Dining) + Adjoining Kitchen (within 100m of Dining Room)

**Capacity** 12

**Duration** 2.5 hours including interval and 5 course meal

**Tricky Tech** Projector-mapped dining table with built-in voting system

**Feels** Strangers coming together to connect before fighting - high stakes gameplay with operatic consequences

**Themes** The discomfort of democracy, Quiet Australians and how to better disagree

**Looks** Dining room meets mediatised battleground, animated spectacles with heightened moments of ritual and theatricality

Full technical specifications available on request.

*Crunch Time was co-commissioned by Next Wave and Metro Arts. Crunch Time was originally developed for the 2018 Next Wave Festival, presented in association with Darebin Arts Speakeasy. Through Metro Arts, this project has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body. Crunch Time is supported by Creative Sparks. The Creative Sparks Fund is a partnership between the Queensland Government and Brisbane City Council to support local arts and culture in Brisbane. Metro Arts' Work-In-Residence Program was made possible by the support of Lynn Rainbow-Reid AM and John B. Reid AO. Crunch Time is supported by Critical Stages.*

# CRUNCH TIME

A PERFORMATIVE DINNER PARTY  
DESIGNED TO MODEL THE  
PROCESSES OF DEMOCRACY





## FROM HUNGRY SHARKS TO DEADLY LASER BEAMS, DANGER IS IMMINENT AND THE ONLY PERSON WHO CAN STOP IT IS YOU.

A dubious social experiment in collaboration with optikal bloc, bad things are happening, and our heroes are at risk! A game for the masses, this work explores activism in the attention economy, and the challenge of large-scale teamwork. Avoidable Perils was created at the height of Australia's COVID-19 pandemic and is designed for a socially-distanced future.

### SEASONS

Darwin Festival (AUS) – 2020

Brisbane Festival (AUS) – 2020

Bundaberg (AUS) – 2020

### PRODUCTION PHOTOS

### TRAILER

*Presented in collaboration with optikal bloc. Originally commissioned by Darwin Festival, Brisbane Festival and Metro Arts*

# AVOIDABLE PERILS

A COMPETITIVE GAME  
OF DEATH-DEFYING  
COOPERATION!

**Shape** Durational video installation with interactive tangents including SMS messaging, a live reactive website, and the possibility for an unlockable scavenger hunt in collaboration with the local community.

**Space** Can be presented in three tiers depending on location and scale of tour. These scenarios are guides and cost will be dependent on further conversations.

**Tier One:** Flatscreen TV or LED Wall

**Tier Two:** Large Scale Projection without architectural mapping

**Tier Three:** Bespoke Architectural Mapping

**Minimum Installation Activation** 3 Nights

**Nightly Activation** 2-4 hours per night

**Tricky Tech** Dynamic interactive media including animation, website, sms message system, and responsive sound design.

**Feels:** High stakes vigilante collaboration - banding together to beat the clock and save the day.

**Themes** The challenge of large scale cooperation in the face of global danger (from climate change to vaccinations), activism in the attention economy, and collaborative community safety.

**Looks** Saturday morning cartoons summoning us for help!

*Full technical specifications available on request.*





## STRANGERS IN THE DARK, ISOLATED BY HEADPHONES, FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS TO FIND ONE ANOTHER...

Set in an infinite ocean, our participants float in the unknowable spaces between each other. Following instructions in an immersive sound design, they are guided to find each other across tabletop miniatures. Together they co-create detailed worlds by manipulating objects and filling in the blanks in each others' narratives. Tiny architecture reveals itself. Lights turn on, water emerges, and mechanical discoveries are made. Here, we share a series of fantastical true stories - of infatuated dolphins, lonely whales, and remote lighthouses.

ADRIFT explores feelings of isolation and our fraught relationship with nature in the face of a potential mass extinction event. Our real feelings of loneliness are evoked in the context of disconnected communities and the threat of irreparable change. We feel alone in a world that crumbles beneath us. Our relationship with nature is just as fraught as our relationships with each other.

*"There is an ocean of silence between us... and I am drowning in it." -Ranata Suzuki*

### SEASONS

Metro Arts (Premiere Season, AUS) 9-19 November 2022

*This project is supported by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body. This project is supported by the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland, part of the Department of Environment and Science. This project is proudly supported by Brisbane City Council. The Creative Sparks Fund is a partnership between the Queensland Government and Brisbane City Council to support local arts and culture in Brisbane. This project has been supported through Bundanon's Artist in Residence program.*

**Shape** Ticketed interactive headphone experience with hands-on design

**Space** Suitable for modular blackbox spaces. Design includes bespoke tables, practical lighting & haze effects.

**Capacity** 24

**Duration** 80min

**Tricky Tech** Immersive binaural audio design, mechanical miniature models, pixel-mapped lighting design.

**Feels** Wistful but whimsical, using the sublime power of story to conjure intimacy between strangers. The social magic of theatre, fuelled by morbid curiosity and peculiar wonder.

**Themes** Loneliness and isolation, climate change and mass extinction, grief and loss. The redemptive qualities of play and imagination, empathy and care for strangers.

**Looks** Surreal nautical purgatory. Reflective surfaces with fog. A ceiling of pixelated lights that mimic water. Tactile wooden miniatures.

Contact [trouble@counterpilot.com.au](mailto:trouble@counterpilot.com.au) for more details on presenting ADRIFT.

# ADRIFT

AN ANCHOR IN THE SEA  
OF LOST SOULS - OUR  
ELEGY FOR THE OCEAN  
BECOMES A PLAYGROUND  
FOR STRANGERS





## A GAME OF ONLINE AUTHENTICITY PLAYED WITH GUEST PERFORMERS, CO-CREATED WITH ACCLAIMED AUSTRALIAN PLAYWRIGHT MAXINE MELLOR

BREAKING is a new livestream performance work channeling our relationship to global tragedy amidst 24-hour news cycles and our doom scrolling fixations. Unrehearsed guest performers are enrolled as remote news anchors, following instructions from an automated teleprompter system to deliver a series of grim news bulletins that grow in absurdity and turmoil. The bulletins are scripted with the game of performance in mind. Laced with dark comedy, they toy with the impossibility of authenticity, but also glimpse notes of inexpressible pain. The irredeemable darkness of our times is touched on, but only to be mishandled in the most human of manners.

BREAKING is an interactive digital theatre work created in collaboration with acclaimed Australian playwright Maxine Mellor. Designed for online delivery, BREAKING is able to be performed and operated remotely via a webinar platform, and presented anywhere in the world.

*“We are now conscious that the supply of news is almost infinite; that every day yields another exabyte of images and words, and that newspapers and news bulletins are in truth thimblefulls of information arbitrarily pulled out of a boundless ocean of data by hard-pressed editors... We may feel as if we were being force-fed entrees we never ordered.”*  
– Alain de Botton

BAD NEWS MAKES FOR  
DARK COMEDY IN THIS  
INTERACTIVE LIVESTREAM  
WORK

- Shape** Digital livestream performance work
- Space** Can be watched on the audience's personal devices wherever they are.
- Capacity** Unlimited online audience
- Duration** Approx 30-40min
- Tricky Tech** Virtual television studio mixing remote performers with teleprompters and design.
- Feels** Performative challenge meets dark satire.
- Themes** Our relationship to news media, doom and despair amidst global tragedy.
- Looks** Webcam TV show slowly becoming unhinged.

Contact [trouble@counterpilot.com.au](mailto:trouble@counterpilot.com.au) for more details on presenting BREAKING.

### SEASONS

Metro Arts (Premiere Season, AUS) December 2022

*BREAKING was commissioned by Metro Arts, and made possible with the support of Arts Queensland through their Independent Creation Fund. BREAKING was developed with the generous support of Critical Stages Touring.*



## A POP-UP AUTOMATED FLASH MOB TO SATIRISE THE UNRELENTING OPTIMISM OF QUIET AUSTRALIANS.

Counterpilot has a plan for each one of us. And all you have to do is say yes. Are you ready to say yes today? You wouldn't want to be a No Person. Yes People are our kind of people...

Following pseudo-inspirational instructions in a set of wireless headphones, participants will work together to stage an ensemble intervention, activating a public festival hub with acts of hope and disconcerting joy. Before long, our army of good citizens have taken over the site, celebrating the day and spreading their message of "She'll be right!"

What if middle-class Australian values were in fact part of an extremist cult? With targets set on our classic Aussie indifference, this work skewers the selective blindness that allows for our patriotism to persevere in the midst of broad injustice. Fuelled by toxic positivity, multi-level marketing schemes, suspicious pentecostal power structures, and the casual confidence of the silent majority, this is stinging satire masquerading as a real good time. NOT A CULT\* uses herd mentality and facilitated acts of play to conduct a whimsical impromptu flash mob, spreading false hope for the perseverant okayness of our surrounding world.

*It's time to have a go. Let's all have a go together. Here we go...*

*"I don't want your hope; I want your panic."  
-Greta Thunberg*

*This project is supported by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body. This project is supported by the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland, part of the Department of Environment and Science.*

**Shape** Automated flash mob (participatory ensemble performance) for ticketed participants

**Space** Outdoor Festival Hubs + Open public areas

**Capacity** 24

**Duration** Approx 30min

**Tricky Tech** Modular headphone broadcasts, practical lighting design.

**Feels** Cheeky, playful, party time with an undercurrent of brutal political satire.

**Themes** The patriotism and optimism of Quiet Australians, toxic positivity culture, herd mentality and social influence.

**Looks** Trashy backyard barbecue meets religious ceremony. Tiki torches and patriotic robes.

*Contact [trouble@counterpilot.com.au](mailto:trouble@counterpilot.com.au) for more details on presenting NOT A CULT\*.*

### SEASONS

Premiering in June 2023 (AUS).

### WORK-IN-PROGRESS SHORT VIDEO

### WATCH OUR PITCH AT APAX 2022

# Not a Cult\*

A PUBLIC ACTIVATION FOR  
THE GREATEST OF GOODS



# INSTALLATIONS



## LIBRARY OF DEAD EXPECTATIONS

WHAT IS THE THING YOU WANTED BUT STILL CAN'T HAVE?

What is the plan you made that wasn't meant to be? What is the part of yourself that you'd like to forget?

This multi-sensory headphone experience offers a place where your disappointments or out-of-date expectations can be archived, filed, and preserved as relics of what no longer remains. Explore the library or add to its collection. Let's preserve the past in its own special place so that we can truly embrace the future.

**Previous Presentations:** Library of Dead Expectations was first presented at The Outside (AUS), as part of PwC's signature experience in 2022.



## IMB INSTITUTE OF LIGHT

A MYSTERIOUS GAME OF SECRETS AND SPECTACLE HIDDEN IN THE RAINFOREST...

Every cell operates in a way that influences the world around it. There's only so much we understand. But we're learning more every day. A mysterious game of secrets and spectacle hidden in the rainforest? In 2020, Counterpilot collaborated with real scientists from The Institute for Molecular Bioscience at UQ. In true Counterpilot style, we stole their greatest discoveries and hid them in the rainforest for audiences to uncover. Navigate our mysterious forest-bound research facility in order to reveal true scientific wonders. Solve the game to trigger a beguiling display of light and sound crafted from real microscopic imagery.

**Previous Presentations:** IMB Institute of Light was first presented at Brisbane Festival (AUS) 2020.



## ESCAPE FROM MONOTONY

ALL WORK AND NO PLAY MAKES JACK A JUNIOR ASSISTANT MANAGER...

A 90's corporate purgatory is transformed into a reverse escape room channeling techno-nostalgia and anti-work sentiment. Discover the secret triggers to transform this space, activating magical realism through disruptive technical design - lively sound, animated lights and mechanical secrets. Escape from Monotony encourages curious intergenerational play, as participants work together to crack open the mundane and subvert the ordinary everyday.

**Previous Presentations:** Escape from Monotony was commissioned by Museum of Brisbane (AUS) in 2022.



# IN DEVELOPMENT



## PIGEON FOOL

I AM NOT A ROBOT - BUT CAN YOU PROVE IT?

*Pigeon Fool* explores what it means to be human in an age of artificial intelligence by subjecting participants to a theatrical Turing Test. Staged in an asynchronous 1990s internet cafe, participants collectively navigate a series of ambiguous chat rooms. Through facilitated conversations and tasks, they are challenged to discern which of the characters they are engaging with is a real human and which is a “virtual being.” With focus shifting from the ghost in the machine to the humans in the room, *Pigeon Fool* challenges our perceptions and behaviours in an age where robots aren’t just becoming more human – humans are becoming more robotic.

**Development Phase:** Creative development first undertaken in early 2022.



## BOOTLEG CINEMA

GUEST ARTISTS REMIX CLASSIC CINEMA FOR THIS IRREVERENT UP-LATE PROGRAM.

Designed for regular co-presentation with venues or festivals, *Bootleg Cinema* sees a rotating lineup of guest artists collaborating with *Counterpilot* on-the-fly. Together we will create live remixes of classic cinema, exploiting public domain loopholes and auto-correcting outdated social ideals. Fancy some 1960s schlock horror with a feminist bent? Or perhaps a cult sci fi classic reinterpreted through a queer lens? With our live-hacking kit of cameras, microphones, teleprompters and mixing stations, the silver screen is ours to rewire.

**Development Phase:** Early conceptual development.



## THE RECKONING

IN THE HEAT OF DIVISION ARE WE CLOSER TO REDEMPTION OR REVOLUTION?

Reading the comments would give the impression that our collective rage was at boiling point. *The Reckoning* is part game show, part courtroom, with violent undertones evoking historical precedents of cannibalistic mobs and oiled-up guillotines. Here, we play a dangerous game of hypothetical vigilante justice in the court of public opinion. Will it all end in execution? What do we reckon?

**Development Phase:** Early conceptual development.



# CONTACT


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