

## **ARA 2022 Conference: Proposal for Performance / Demonstration**

Broader Topic: The relation of body and screen as site of artistic research

Title: **Fake N.E.W.S – Faking it and making it in the Digital Upside-Down**

Presented by Mocke J van Veuren with Nelisiwe Xaba and staff and students of the WSOA Film & TV, Theatre and Performance, and Music Departments.

**Keywords:** Digital theatre, live video performance, media critique, absurdism

This multimodal, performative presentation explores the creative and pedagogic processes that evolved during Nelisiwe Xaba's ARA-funded residency at the WSOA Film & Television Department.

The central activity of the residency was the collective workshopping of content under the Fake N.E.W.S project framework. The technical and aesthetic foundation of the work is, as with previous iterations, a stage with a downward-facing camera which captures the floor, which is then projected behind the stage area. This setup allows simultaneous viewing of performers' bodies enacting scenarios whilst mostly lying down flat on the floor, while the projection makes another kind of "sense" of the physical performance.

This often strange and absurd "world" that is created through the video projection often makes more sense than the convoluted movement of bodies on the floor – and is a rich metaphor for mediated representations of reality. Not only does this technological sleight of hand mirror the manipulations of truth in various forms of media, but it also draws a schema of internal psychological structures – the "sense" that is made of the chaotic and sometimes indecipherable action onstage is akin to the functioning of the ego in constituting a coherent world and sense of self, even if that too suffers from absurdity.

In the course of the residency, all participants were implicated in the conceptual and performative development of the work, which followed an organic growth without preconceived outcomes. The work was also fed into a third year Film & TV Screen Studies class, where the relationship between body and screen was theorised further and critically analysed in terms of the embedded and sometimes invisible politics of power that emerge between body, technology, and digital doppelganger.

This performance/demonstration will aim to lay bare the creative and investigative methods of the workshop, including the pedagogic processes that emerged between participants, through discussion with the directors of the project and collaborators. Filmic and photographic documentation of the work will be presented, as well as a live demonstration of techniques involving video and performance.

### **Main Presenters:**

**Mocke J van Veuren** is an artist, experimental filmmaker, researcher and educator based in Johannesburg. His interests include the intersection of performance and film, collaborative creative processes, and radical pedagogies. He is currently a Lecturer at the WSOA Department of Film and Television.

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**Nelisiwe Xaba** is a world renowned choreographer, performer and multimedia artist based in Johannesburg. She has over the past two decades developed a body of acclaimed solo and collaborative dance/theatre works that explore politics of the body, race, coloniality, gender and the gaze. Her collaborative work often incorporates elements of film and other art forms such as fashion design and animation.

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