

**Taking the Time:  
D.I.Y. Filmed Portraits for the GLAM Sector**

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**An exegesis submitted to  
Auckland University of Technology  
in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Philosophy (MPhil)**

**2018**

**Faculty of Design & Creative Technologies**

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...and that made me really appreciate music just as this thing where someone just *takes the time* and records those songs, or writes those songs, or comes up with those chords – or whatever it is – and then they commit it into a form that other people can enjoy...

Karl Steven<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Quote from the interview with Karl Steven presented as part of this thesis. This excerpt occurs at 01:16:31:00 into the filmed portrait.

## **Abstract**

This practice-based Master of Philosophy project involves the design, production and dissemination of four filmed portraits of four individual New Zealand musicians. The increasing use of websites within the GLAM (Gallery, Library, Archive and Museum) sector to tell stories about their collections and build relationships with their communities has created new opportunities for story-tellers to produce digital stories about our culture. This study engages with those opportunities to design, produce and disseminate four biographical portraits of four artists, told in their own words.

The project revolves around three key themes: D.I.Y. (do-it-yourself) approaches to the creation of creative works; the telling of first-person biographical stories of artists; and the utilisation of digital technology within the GLAM sector. The portraits produced consist of long-form filmed interviews with each artist, filmed on an iPhone and edited using domestically licenced editing software. Strategies and conventions from the literary, fine art and music worlds, as well the screen world, informed the design and production of the portraits. The completed portraits are now available to the public via the New Zealand music website AudioCulture.

The D.I.Y. method applied to the production of these portraits offers a technical and conceptual approach to the production of first-person filmed portraits that could be applied to people other than artists, disseminated by organisations beyond the GLAM sector, and be applied by other story-tellers. The portraits are designed to offer a window into the lives of these artists for future generations as well as those of today, so that the work and lives of these artists is remembered.

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### **Attestation of Authorship**

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgments), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Ross Cunningham

March 2018

## Acknowledgements

This work dedicated with warmth and gratitude to my partner Tara Pradhan. Your ongoing support and love made it possible.

Special thanks to my Primary Supervisor Peter Hoar. Your generosity, diverse interests, and cheerful and rigorous demeanour made you a delight to work with. I learned a great deal from you, and am grateful for that.

Many thanks to my Secondary Supervisor Clinton Watkins. Your wide range of interests and perspective proved a fruitful compliment to Peter's. I greatly valued your input and enjoyed and valued our simpatico.

I owe a huge debt of gratitude to Simon Grigg. From the day that I first approached you with an idea about producing filmed portraits for AudioCulture, you have been a consistent and enthusiastic supporter. Without that support this project would not have happened. Your commitment to New Zealand music and D.I.Y. punk approach to getting things done are an inspiration.

To Chris Bourke and the rest of AudioCulture team I owe a similar debt of gratitude. The work that you do creating and sharing stories about New Zealand music is vital, and you do it so well. I feel very privileged to have this work be a part of the AudioCulture archive.

Lastly, and most importantly, I would like to thank each of the four artists who feature in this work: Peter Jefferies, Karl Steven, Moana Maniapoto and Delaney Davidson. I can only begin to express my gratitude. Your openness to being involved in this project, and the generosity that you each showed in sharing your personal stories is greatly appreciated. I am very mindful of the privilege I was afforded in recording your stories, and of the responsibility that I hold in making those stories public. I humbly hope that these portraits serve you well.

Nga mihi nui

Ross

## **Intellectual Property Rights**

The four filmed portraits that have been produced as the practice-based component of this Master of Philosophy project are the intellectual property of the researcher. Each of the artists featured in these portraits has signed a consent and release form confirming that the intellectual property is held by the researcher. The researcher would like to acknowledge AudioCulture, the website which hosts these portraits, for their support in producing them. The researcher has agreed to acknowledge that support in any future dissemination of the portraits.

## **Ethics Approval**

Ethics approval (16/261) from the AUT University Ethics Committee was gained on 13 July 2016, before the commencement of the study. Written and informed consent was obtained from each participant before the commencement of data collection.

## Introduction

The biggest revelation I have had came in 1980 when I got a four-track and realised that you could do what you liked, when you liked, how you liked, as noisily and grungy as you liked, and you could put any noise on that you wanted to, and that was great after working in a 24 track studio. That was the biggest musical revelation I've ever had. It was an epiphany.

Chris Knox <sup>2</sup>

Thanks to a small inheritance, New Zealand musician Chris Knox was able to purchase the TEAC four-track reel-to-reel tape recorder he refers to in the above interview quote. That inheritance enabled him, and a swiftly growing community of like-minded musicians, to work independently of the multi-national record companies who dominated the recorded music industry in New Zealand at that time.<sup>3</sup> The four-track tape recorder was small, portable and relatively easy to use, and was put to use in the bedrooms, lounges and whatever other environments that Knox and the musicians he worked with chose to record in. At that time the music recorded on Knox's four-track was commonly referred to as 'lo-fi', as in 'low-fidelity', as it used technology that was less complex than that used in the 24 or 48 track professional studios of the time.<sup>4</sup> However, the relative technical simplicity of the four-track recording process led to a corresponding increase in what Knox characterises as the 'fidelity' of the recordings produced:

Production for me is something that conveys what you are trying to say musically to start with, and conveys it as honestly and truthfully as possible, and as far as I'm concerned I try and do that, and therefore I think my stuff is high-fidelity, 'fidelity' meaning 'faithfulness'. I think

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<sup>2</sup> Interview with Chris Knox for TV3 New Zealand music programme Frenzy, 20 April 1995, directed by the researcher. The interview can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xqG1qHHztC8&t=164s> Segment quoted occurs at 1'18" into the interview.

<sup>3</sup> For an overview of the growth in independent record labels in New Zealand in the late 1970s and early 1980s see, "The Rise of the Independents" in: Dix, J. (1988). *Stranded in Paradise, New Zealand Rock 'n' Roll 1955-1988*. Auckland. Paradise Publications. (pp. 276-281).

<sup>4</sup> For discussion of this approach see: Shepherd, R. (2017). *In Love With These Times, My Life With Flying Nun Records*. Auckland. Harper Collins. (pp. 71-77).; and "Anything Could Happen" in: Eggleton, D. (2003). *Ready to Fly*. Nelson. Craig Potton Publishing. (pp. 100-115).

the stuff that comes out of 48 track digital studios that's been incredibly gussied up and processed and crammed and jammed and just given all the bells and whistles, is low-fidelity, because it's incredibly *un*faithful to the original sound.

Chris Knox <sup>5</sup>

His response struck a chord, one which has continued to resonate in the 20 or so years since that interview. The premise that taking a D.I.Y. (do-it-yourself) approach to the production of creative works was and still is an enticing and empowering one for me, and is one which has manifested itself in the practice-based components produced as part of this Master of Philosophy project.

When I conducted this interview in 1995 I was working as a documentary maker specialising in producing stories about New Zealand music, and part of me was envious that Knox could take this D.I.Y. approach to his craft. I wondered what an equivalent of this might be for music documentary making. I wanted to create filmed portraits which were empathic to the artists portrayed while also meeting the needs and interests of the commissioning organisations<sup>6</sup>. This was a fine line to walk, as the needs and aspirations of the commissioning bodies and those of the artists being portrayed were not always in alignment. And so Knox's championing of a simple D.I.Y. approach, where the means of production was controlled by the artist, resonated with me. At the time I could conceive of ways in which the means of production might be controlled by the artist. But in those pre-internet days I could not imagine how the work could be easily and widely disseminated in an equally independent manner. I aspired to an epiphany like Knox's.

This practice-based Master of Philosophy project is a response to the opportunities now available to audio-visual story-tellers to design, capture (film), manipulate (edit) and disseminate audio-visual stories in a D.I.Y. manner. The practice-based components of this research consist of the design, production and dissemination of

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<sup>5</sup> Interview with Chris Knox for TV3 New Zealand music programme Frenzy, 20 April 1995, directed by the researcher. Segment quoted occurs at 5'30" into the interview.

<sup>6</sup> The commissioning organisations at that time were mostly either broadcasters funding television programmes or documentaries, or record companies funding promotional work for individual artists.

four filmed portraits of individual New Zealand musicians.<sup>7</sup> These long-form filmed portraits were recorded using a mobile phone (an iPhone 6), edited using domestically licenced editing and graphics software (Adobe suite), and disseminated via New Zealand music website AudioCulture.<sup>8</sup> These filmed portraits vary considerably in duration with the shortest being 55 minutes and the longest 110 minutes in duration. With the digital technology available today I was able to design, research, direct, interview, film, record sound, edit, create graphics and deliver completed filmed portraits myself, in a D.I.Y. and independent manner that I could only dream of twenty years ago when I first heard Knox describe his approach to production.

These four filmed portraits, along with the portrait sketch *Delaney Davidson Reads the Cards*, are the primary site of the research in this Master of Philosophy thesis. My aim in producing them is to record the life-stories of the artists, portrayed in their own words. There are no supporting illustrations, images or texts beyond some intertitles, and there is no attempt to illustrate, interpret or analyse the stories being told. The portraits are intended to offer a simple record of the artists recalling their experiences in an unadorned manner.<sup>9</sup> These four filmed portraits are now available to the public via AudioCulture.

There is a small but rich history of broadcast and cinema documentary dedicated to telling the stories of New Zealand's music and musicians audio-visually.<sup>10</sup> While that work has certainly informed this research project, the primary sources on which this research draws to produce the filmed portraits presented as the practical component of this research rely to a greater extent on literary and fine-art conventions, together with those currently emerging from digital practice.

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<sup>7</sup> URL links to the four final portraits, along with the supporting portrait sketch *Delaney Davidson Reads the Cards*, can be found in Appendix A.

<sup>8</sup> AudioCulture is a publicly funded website dedicated to telling stories about New Zealand music. Launched in 2012, it refers to itself as 'the noisy library of New Zealand music'. The website can be found here: <https://www.audioculture.co.nz>

<sup>9</sup> There are many text-based biographical accounts of New Zealand musicians that have been published, both online (AudioCulture is the repository of many of these), as well as in book form. The filmed portraits produced as part of this research add to the public archive of biographical stories of musicians by telling them audio-visually, in the first-person.

<sup>10</sup> From cinema projects such as John O'Shea's hybrid music drama/documentary *Don't Let Get You* in 1966, and Te Arepa Kahi's *Poi E* in 2016, through to the long running broadcast programme *Radio With Pictures* 1976-91, and the 2003 documentary series *Give It A Whirl* – to name just a few.



Consequently a discussion of those characteristics is prioritised in this exegesis. The terms ‘D.I.Y.’ and ‘independent’ are used in this exegesis partly to distinguish the work produced in this research from existing works produced for broadcast or cinema, and partly as a description of the method applied to the design and production of the filmed portraits: they have been produced independently of the conventions and requirements of broadcast and cinema.<sup>11</sup> The design and production of these filmed portraits required minimal resources: they drew on my time, my experience as an audio-visual storyteller, and my relationships within the music community in New Zealand, together with an active engagement in a diverse range of biographical storytelling conventions, including those currently emerging from the digital realm within the GLAM sector. The technical tools used to produce this work were of commonly available domestic technology.

The purpose of this exegesis is to situate these four filmed portraits within the emerging field of digital story-telling for the GLAM sector (Gallery, Library, Archive and Museum); independent D.I.Y. practice; and the telling of first-person biographical stories of artists. This exegesis describes the process that was undertaken to design, produce and disseminate these filmed portraits, and the theoretical context which informed that design, production and dissemination. These three reference points of D.I.Y., GLAM and biography, recur through each stage of this exegesis.

The exegesis begins with a review of the work of the writers David Sylvester and Hans Ulrich Obrist who are biographers of artists. As a writer whose work is characterised by a sustained engagement with the capture and dissemination of biographical portraits of artists, mostly produced in a D.I.Y. manner, Obrist is a key figure in this study. Sylvester’s published interviews with artist Francis Bacon are cited by Obrist as a key catalyst for his work as a collector of life-stories.

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<sup>11</sup> For instance, these filmed portraits did not have to be a specific duration, edited to accommodate commercial breaks; they did not require a crew (separate camera, lighting, sound, and editing people, for instance), and consequently did not require the funding needed to employ those people; they did not use pre-existing copyrighted material (music or images/videos), and so did not require clearances or the associated costs of clearing those rights; and by engaging with web-based delivery via AudioCulture, they avoid the complex multi-layered stakeholder input that characterises projects funded for broadcast or cinema delivery. These filmed portraits have been produced and delivered independently of those requirements and characteristics. While it is not my intention to valourise the D.I.Y. approach that has been applied to create these filmed portraits, I do consciously celebrate certain of the characteristics that this approach has enabled, such as the intimacy that can be achieved by minimising the number of people in the room while filming, and the flexibility and agility that working as a ‘one-man-band’ enables.

I then outline the changing nature of GLAM sector institutions in the context of the increasing use of digital technology to build engagement with audiences. These changes are discussed in relation to the work of academics Rachel Franks and Helena Robinson.

The filmed portraits of Andy Warhol are discussed in relation to the technology of his time and his practice. The use of instructions, rules and strategies as tools of creative practice are discussed in relation to work of the composer John Cage, composer and artist Brian Eno.

The chapter on the design of the portraits details how and why design decisions were made at each stage of the project. I discuss the process of selecting the artists and my relationship with AudioCulture. The technical aspects of the D.I.Y. approach are detailed. The design of the interview methods are discussed, together with the approach to the aesthetic and narrative aspects of the portrait design. Lastly there is a description of how the stories were constructed in post-production and then disseminated.

The discussion chapter offers an analysis of the filmed portraits, the findings and implications of the work. Emphasis is placed on what the D.I.Y. approach enabled from practical, narrative and budgetary perspectives. How the portraits function in the context of AudioCulture is then discussed. The construction of the portraits is discussed from the perspective of my relationship with the artists, and lastly I discuss additional formats in which the portraits could be disseminated.

The conclusion outlines what has been learned over the course of this study. I describe the characteristics of the completed portraits, how they function within AudioCulture, and the potential for the approach taken to be applied in other areas. The importance of establishing and maintaining personal relationships with the subjects is underlined. And lastly I describe the portraits in relation to Obrist's concept of 'a protest against forgetting', and describe the contribution that this study offers.

## Chapter One: Background

### Interviews and conversations

Between 1962-1979 English art critic and writer David Sylvester conducted a series of interviews with artist Francis Bacon. The first of these interviews was recorded for BBC radio, the second was filmed for broadcast on BBC television, and the remainder were audio interviews conducted and recorded by Sylvester himself. Transcriptions of the recordings were edited together to produce the publication *Interviews with Francis Bacon*, first published in 1975, with an expanded version with additional interviews published in 1980.<sup>12</sup>

In the preface to the 1980 edition Sylvester describes the syntactical and structural characteristics of the transcribed interviews as recording, ‘every false start, every crossing of purposes, every malformation of syntax and thought, every digression, every unthinking answer or question, every unwitting distortion of the facts’.<sup>13</sup> His implication is that these are not shortcomings but rather offer insight into the way Bacon articulates his thoughts, engages in conversation and responds to questions; they are key features of this portrait of Bacon in his own words.

The juxtapositions, surprises, and unexpected turns of Bacon’s first-person dialogue, together with the minimally edited approach, offer readers a sense of what it might have been like to have been in those rooms with Bacon and to have experienced those conversations first hand. There is little editing or commentary.

It was Sylvester’s conversations with Bacon, together with the published conversations between French writer Pierre Cabanne and artist Marcel Duchamp, and between the photographer Brassai and artist Pablo Picasso, that convinced Swiss curator and writer Hans Ulrich Obrist to begin what he refers to as *The*

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<sup>12</sup> Sylvester, D. (1980). *Interviews with Francis Bacon 1962-1979*. London. Thames and Hudson.

<sup>13</sup> Sylvester, D. (1980). *Interviews with Francis Bacon 1962-1979*. London. Thames and Hudson. (p. 6).

*Interview Project* in 1985.<sup>14</sup> This project consists of over 2000 interviews to date, the vast majority of which were initiated, conducted, and recorded by Obrist by himself.<sup>15</sup> His sensitivity to the circumstances in which his interviews occurred led him to favour informal environments, such as a café, taxi or airplane. Obrist's work is important influence on this project.

In contrast with Sylvester, Obrist's approach to interviewing is less a dialogue in which the interviewer and interviewee play equal parts, and more a dialogue in which the interviewer's role is to elicit stories from the interviewee.<sup>16</sup> Obrist uses very few words when interviewing. A quick scan through any of his published interviews will show a similar visual pattern: one line by Obrist, occasionally two, rarely three, followed by a one, two or three paragraph answer. Obrist listens more than he talks. He displays an empathy that engages his subjects, resulting in interviews which unfold with insight and surprise.

When read individually these interviews appear to be consistently focused on the interviewee, not on Obrist. However, when viewed as a body of work, as *The Interview Project*, the reader begins to get a sense of Obrist as story-teller, archivist and curator; as someone with a sustained commitment to the collecting and sharing of first-person biographical stories of creative practitioners. His chosen means of disseminating the interviews is via printed text. He has published them in book

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<sup>14</sup> For a discussion of this project see the chapter 'Infinite Conversations' in: Obrist, H.U. (2014). *Ways of Curating*. London. Allen Lane. (pp. 55-59). While many of these interviews have been published as individual monographs, there are two substantial volumes of collected interviews available: Obrist, H.U. (2003).; *Interviews Volume 1*. Milan. Charta.; and: Obrist, H.U. (2010). *Interviews Volume 2*. Milan. Charta.

<sup>15</sup> There are exceptions to this. For instance in early 1990s the Vienna based art initiative *museum in progress*, started by curators Kathrin Messner and Josef Ortner, commissioned Obrist to conduct a series of filmed interviews with artists as part of their initiative to present hybrid forms of art informed by contemporary economics and media. These interviews were filmed in a Vienna television studio and disseminated by *museum in progress*. See: Obrist, H.U. (2014). *Ways of Curating*. London. Allen Lane. (p. 56).

<sup>16</sup> Sylvester draws an explicit distinction between conversation and interview in the introduction to his book with Bacon. In describing the process of making the one-on-one recordings with Bacon he says '*This relaxed climate may have engendered a certain cosiness and a tendency to indulge in conversation (a dialogue in which the speakers have equal status) rather than conduct an interview (a dialogue in which one speaker has things to say and the other is there to elicit them).*' Sylvester, D. (1980). *Interviews with Francis Bacon 1962-1979*. London. Thames and Hudson. (p. 7).

form, as collections of interviews and monographs, and in periodicals and catalogues. He describes these interviews as ‘a protest against forgetting’.<sup>17</sup> The printed artefacts of his protest are now held by public galleries, libraries, museums and archives.

Both Sylvester and Obrist collect and disseminate biographical stories of artists, told in the artists own words. Their published long-form interviews offer insights into the lives and work of the artists via biographical and contextual anecdote, as much as by analytical reflection. Obrist’s extension of the individual interview into the larger, collected and future-focused archive of interviews he has called *The Interview Project* underlines his commitment to ensuring that the work of these artists is not forgotten. The approaches taken by Sylvester and Obrist to interviewing and then minimally editing those interviews, along with Obrist’s larger vision of the individual interview as forming part of a larger project of interviews, have informed this project.

### **Collecting and disseminating digital artefacts**

The nature of archive has been the subject of ongoing and increasing debate and dispute since at least the 1960s.<sup>18</sup> While a discussion of the broader nature of archive is outside the scope of this study, acknowledgement of the impact that the exponential growth in digital technology has had on the nature of GLAM institutions is an important aspect of the study. This section offers an overview of two features of this impact: curatorial framing applied by GLAM institutions; and the ways in which digital technology is increasing opportunities for building emotional connections with their communities.

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<sup>17</sup> The phrase was adopted by Obrist from English historian Eric Hobsbawm. See: Obrist, H.U. (2015). *Lives of the Artists, Lives of the Architects*. London. Allen Lane. (p. vii).

<sup>18</sup> These discussions can be tracked back further than the 1960’s, however this decade has been cited due to impact of Michel Foucault’s foundation work on the topic, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, first published in 1969. Jacques Derrida’s *Archive Fever* is also a key text in this debate, as is Charles Merewether’s collection, *The Archive*, in the Documents of Contemporary Art series offers. See chapters, “Rarity, exteriority, accumulation” and “The historical *a priori* and the archive”, in: Foucault, M. (1972). *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*. New York. Vintage Books. (pp. 118-135).; also: Derrida, J. (1995). *Archive Fever, A Freudian Impression*. Chicago. University of Chicago Press.; and: Merewether, C. (ed.). (2006). *The Archive*. Cambridge. Whitechapel Gallery.

The changing ways in which artefacts held by galleries, libraries, archives and museums can be accessed and made available to communities is the focus of Australian academic Helena Robinson's work.<sup>19</sup> She describes conventional approaches to the collection and organisation of artefacts in archives, as outlined in the Australian Society of Archivists manual of archival practices *Keeping Archives*, as: the organisation of artefacts by provenance and date of acquisition; the avoidance of supporting interpretive narrative; and an emphasis on seeming neutrality.<sup>20</sup> The intent of this approach is to avoid adding layers of interpretation to artefacts that might mislead researchers. In contrast with this, Robinson argues that it is the interpretive curatorial interface that distinguishes museums and galleries from archives. She maintains that when the curatorial interface becomes a digital interface and visitors are able to access individual items independently of the curatorial frame, that the interpretive value of the museum is then in danger of becoming obscured. The application of 'generous' digital interfaces and curatorial frames is increasingly common within the GLAM sector, and is apparent in the AudioCulture interface.<sup>21</sup>

Building active and reciprocal relationships amongst GLAM institutions and the communities that they serve is the focus of Australian academic and librarian Rachel Franks.<sup>22</sup> She proposes that communities could have richer experiences when engaging with digitised collections if those collections were presented in narrative form, suggesting that institutions should prioritise what they make available digitally based on what would tell the best story.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Robinson, H. (2012). Digital Heritage – Remembering things differently: Museums, libraries and archives as memory institutions and the implications for convergence. In *Museum Management and Curatorship*, Vol. 27, No. 4. London.

<sup>20</sup> Robinson, H. (2012). Digital Heritage – Remembering things differently: Museums, libraries and archives as memory institutions and the implications for convergence. In *Museum Management and Curatorship*, Vol. 27, No. 4. London. (pp. 418-419).

<sup>21</sup> See Mitchell Whitelaw's paper for a discussion of the 'generous interface': Whitelaw, M. (2013). *Towards Generous Interfaces For Archival Collections*.: <http://mtchl.net/towards-generous-interfaces-for-archival-collections/>

<sup>22</sup> Franks, R. (2013). Establishing an emotional connection: the librarian as (digital) storyteller. In *The Australian Library Journal*, Vol. 62, No. 4. Canberra.

<sup>23</sup> Franks cites the influence of Mark Tinkler and Michael Freedman's *Online Exhibitions: A Philosophy of Design and Technological Implementation* on her work, particularly the notion that, "despite their differences, onsite and online exhibitions both advance the idea that cultural institutions are more than the artefacts they hold: they are institutions that aim to establish and foster communities.". Cited by Franks in: Franks, R. (2013). Establishing an emotional connection: the librarian as (digital) storyteller. In *The Australian Library Journal*, Vol. 62, No. 4. Canberra. (p. 289).

Franks argues for digital story-telling as being central to developing relationships with communities, offering a three-step methodology to achieve this: curate, choreograph and connect. Curation and choreography involve the selection and organisation of artefacts into narrative form, 'striving to tease out relationships between and across the objects brought together'.<sup>24</sup> The 'connect' component focuses on creating connections with audiences and communities; both technical connections (the digital interface), and emotional connections. Franks emphasises the importance of developing emotional connections with audiences so that they can become active and engaged members of the institution's community, and that digital story-telling is a powerful tool for enabling that reciprocal emotional engagement.

The power of story-telling to build and deepen relationships between cultural institutions and the geographically, socially and culturally diverse communities whom they reflect and serve is a recurring theme of the changes that are occurring in the GLAM sector. These changes have created significant opportunity for the digital telling of cultural stories, and have informed the design of this project. An awareness of the curatorial frame as something that can be seemingly neutral, or highly interpretative, together with an understanding of the relationship between the artefacts produced, the site they are a part of, and the communities who engage with them were also key considerations when designing the filmed portraits produced for this project.

### **Filmed portraits, rules and strategies**

The 'screen test' filmed portraits produced by Andy Warhol in the 1960s are mostly held in the collection of the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh, USA. I experienced these projected at cinema scale at the *Pop To Popism* exhibition at the Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, in 2015.<sup>25</sup> Seeing them juxtaposed with his screen-print portraits reinforced the similarities between his screen-print portraits of the 1960s and his filmed portraits of the same period. The subjects portrayed in

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<sup>24</sup> Franks, R. (2013). Establishing an emotional connection: the librarian as (digital) storyteller. In *The Australian Library Journal*, Vol. 62, No. 4. Canberra. (p. 288).

<sup>25</sup> Stills from these filmed portraits are reproduced in the exhibition catalogue: Tunnicliffe, W. & Jaspers, A. (ed.s). (2015). *Pop to Popism*. Sydney. Art Gallery of New South Wales. (pp. 102-103).

both media were portrayed either head and shoulders or full-length and with the subject viewed from eye level. Both forms of portrait making used popular technology of the day (screen-printing and black and white 16mm film) to document the people around him.

The filmed portraits were usually four to four and half minutes in duration (the length of a 200 foot roll of film), filmed in a single shot, with the camera locked-off on a tripod. They were filmed using black and white 16mm film (amongst the cheapest film stock available at the time), with no sound. The camera was simply placed in front of the subject, who mostly look directly at the lens, the camera was turned on, and when the roll of film was finished, the camera would be turned off. These filmed portraits provide a framed single point-of-view window into Warhol's studio and those who inhabited it.

Brazilian academic Vinicius Navarro describes these films as not being about plot or narrative in any conventional sense, but rather as being documents of particular moments in time with particular people.<sup>26</sup> The unedited single shot approach offers a single point-of-view in real time, in a way that edited film sequences shot from multiple perspectives do not. American art critic Max Kozloff, writing about the appeal of portraits to those who view them, characterises humans as being 'face reading, socially inquisitive animals', and for those viewers inquisitive about Warhol of the 1960s, these portraits offer the opportunity to vicariously experience the individual characters who visited The Factory, his studio and place of work, through the eye of his camera.<sup>27</sup>

An ostensible simplicity of approach and utilisation of popular forms in unexpected ways also characterises the work of American composer John Cage. He is perhaps best known for his 1952 composition 4'33", which consists of a musician performing silence for the duration of the title of the composition.<sup>28</sup> This work marked the beginning of a series of instruction-based compositions by Cage which

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<sup>26</sup> Navarro, V. (2012). Nonfictional Performance from Portrait Films to the Internet. In *Cinema Journal*, 53, No. 3. Texas. (p. 137).

<sup>27</sup> Kozloff, M. (2007). *The Theatre of the Face: Portrait Photography Since 1900*. London. Phaidon. (p. 7).

<sup>28</sup> The score states: '4'33", FOR ANY INSTRUMENT OR COMBINATION OF INSTRUMENTS, John Cage'. Facsimile reproduction in: Daniels, D. & Arns, I. (ed.s). (2012). *Sounds Like Silence, John Cage 4'33", Silence Today*. Leipzig. Spector Books. (p. 137).



were characterised by the generous degree of interpretation afforded and required of the performers, within a tightly controlled range of parameters. It also signalled a re-positioning of the role of composer as someone whose work requires active collaboration with, and input from performers and audiences.<sup>29</sup>

Cage's championing of chance, surprise and indeterminacy as key components of his practice, together with his belief that there was no differentiation between his life and his work, that everything he did was music, was a formative influence on English artist and musician Brian Eno.<sup>30</sup> Building on Cage's instruction-based work, Eno began producing instruction and rule-based work in a fine art context in late 1960s.<sup>31</sup> While the work of both artists involved the creation and presentation of strategies and rules which invite a range of actions and interactions beyond the control of the artists, Eno notes that the difference between their approaches is that Cage would necessarily accept the outcomes of those actions whatever they happened be, to an extent that Eno would not.<sup>32</sup>

Eno's harnessing of the surprises that come from chance and improvisation, as opposed to those which come from the exercise of learned skill, echoes German philosopher and cultural critic Walter Benjamin's suggestion that, 'These are days when no one should rely unduly on his 'competence'. Strength lies in improvisation. All the decisive blows are struck left-handed'.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Marcel Duchamp is commonly cited as the first western artist to create instruction-based work. His 1919 work *Unhappy Readymades*, for instance, consisted of Duchamp posting instructions from Argentina to his sisters in Paris to 'buy an encyclopedia and cross out all the words that can be crossed out.' Quoted by Hans Ulrich Obrist in: Obrist, H.U. (2014). *Ways of Curating*. London. Allen Lane. (p. 17). Facsimile reproductions of a representative selection of Cage's scores, detailing the requirements of the performers, can be found in: Maffei, G. & Carboni, F. (ed.s). (2012). *Sound Pages, John Cage's Publications*. Milan. Edizioni Vianindustriac. (pp. 89-124).

<sup>30</sup> Scoates, C. (2013). *Brian Eno, Visual Music*. San Francisco. Chronicle Books. (p. 27).

<sup>31</sup> His work *Simple Piece For Two Players*, for example, consists of the instruction, 'two players playing identical tune at *moderato*. Both play till one makes a mistake. At this point the second player begins a second tune etc. etc.' Facsimile of this work, along with a representative selection of other works by Eno, is reproduced in: Scoates, C. (2013). *Brian Eno, Visual Music*. San Francisco. Chronicle Books. (p. 71).

<sup>32</sup> Eno: '[...] although I don't interfere with the completion of a system, if the end result is not good, I'll ditch it and do something else. This is the fundamental difference between Cage and me. If you consider yourself to be an experimental musician, you'll have to accept that some of your experiments will fail. Though the failed works might be interesting too, they are not works that you would choose to publish.' Interview with Eno in the British Arts Council, *Sound and the City Lecture Series*, October 17 2005, as quoted in: Scoates, C. (2013). *Brian Eno, Visual Music*. San Francisco. Chronicle Books. (pp. 27-28).

<sup>33</sup> Benjamin, W. (1978). *Reflections: essays, aphorisms, autobiographical writings*. New York. Schocken Books. (p. 68). As cited by New Zealand sound artist Bruce Russell in: Russell, B. (2009). *Left-handed Blows, Writing on sound, 1993-2009*. Auckland. Clouds. (p. 1).

The *Oblique Strategies* are a set of playing cards developed by Eno and artist Peter Schmidt in 1975. They are designed, to use Benjamin's metaphor, for the left hand. Eno suggests that they be used 'when a dilemma occurs in a working situation'.<sup>34</sup> The cards offer strategies for the user to view their dilemma from a perspective that may be counterintuitive (*Emphasize the flaws*), encourage empathy (*What would your closest friend do?*), embrace the unexpected (*Honour thy error as a hidden intention*), or consider the work from the context in which it is placed or of what surrounds it (*Make a blank valuable by putting it in an exquisite frame*), for instance.<sup>35</sup> They offer the person using them strategies to short circuit the decisions that they might make through habit or learned skill or convention, instead suggesting alternate ways of viewing and responding to dilemmas.

The simple and ostensibly neutral approach that Warhol took to producing his filmed portraits, and the resulting insights that they offer as documentary archive, have informed this project. When combined with Cage and Eno's examples of how chance, surprise and indeterminacy can be constructively harnessed within creative projects, they offer technical and conceptual examples of how the production of filmed portraits of artists might be approached.

This chapter has outlined the key ideas that have informed the design and production of this project. The production and dissemination of first-person biographical portraits of artists was looked at in the text-based work of Sylvester and Obrist. Digital innovation within the GLAM sector and the resulting changes in how GLAM institutions organise and disseminate their content, together with how digital story-telling is being used as a vehicle to deepen connections between institutions and their communities was reviewed in the work of Franks and Robinson. The work of Warhol offers an example of the filmed portrait, and Cage and Eno offer methodological approaches that might be applied to the creation of creative works such as the filmed portraits produced for this project.

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<sup>34</sup> Brian Eno and Peter Schmidt, quote from the instruction card included in: Brian Eno and Peter Schmidt, *Oblique Strategies*, fifth edition, 2001.

<sup>35</sup> All strategies quoted are from: Brian Eno and Peter Schmidt, *Oblique Strategies*, fifth edition, 2001.

## Chapter two: Design of the work

### Context and selecting the artists

This project grew out of a desire to record and share the stories of a small number of New Zealand musicians. I wanted to record them audio-visually, and to have them publicly available and form part of an archive. In early 2016 I approached Simon Grigg from AudioCulture, to ask if he would be interested including long-form, filmed portraits of musicians on their website.<sup>36</sup> I had known Grigg since the early 1990s and he was familiar with my music documentary work.<sup>37</sup> He had wanted to include filmed interviews on AudioCulture but this was beyond their budget.<sup>38</sup> He responded positively to my proposal and agreed to the project.

My goal was to create simple long-form interview-based portraits of artists that could be produced in a D.I.Y. manner. I would use equipment and technology that was easily available and inexpensive. In deciding who to create portraits of, I set three criteria:

1. Each artist had to have a sustained career in music, have had a depth of experiences, and be still producing music.
2. The artists would not be the most well-known musicians (but also not the most obscure).
3. I liked their music. i.e. I had a long-standing awareness of and engagement with their music, and cared about it. This criterion was highly subjective.

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<sup>36</sup> Simon Grigg established AudioCulture and was its Content Director from 2012 until late 2016. Grigg has been involved in the New Zealand music industry since the late 1970s, as an owner of record labels and music venues, and has worked extensively as a writer. Although he is no longer Content Director he is still involved with AudioCulture in an advisory capacity.

<sup>37</sup> In 2015 I digitised some 40 filmed interviews with New Zealand musicians which I had produced over many years and gave copies of them to AudioCulture to use on their site.

<sup>38</sup> Grigg: *'Moving visuals have always been key to AudioCulture and it was designed with these in mind. It was my intent from day one that the site contained video interviews with the subjects of our stories but sadly we have been limited by budgets [...] we are unable to capture that emotion and depth of feeling in just words or still images.'* Email communication with the researcher, 7 February 2018.

I discussed a short list of 24 potential interviewees with Grigg. He was responsive to each of them, and pointed out challenges I might encounter with some, due to physical distance, or psychological or interpersonal characteristics of the artists. Over some months we chose four: Peter Jefferies, Karl Steven, Moana Maniapoto and Delaney Davidson.<sup>39</sup>

### **Technology utilised**

The portraits were all filmed on an iPhone 6 (128GB). This can store approximately 13-14 hours of video at full HD (High Definition) resolution which is more than enough for any one interview. I used the app FiLMiC Pro to record video on the phone. This app offers manual control of exposure and focus, and so gives the person filming a degree of control more commonly associated with professional cameras. Audio was recorded using a Rode lapel microphone plugged directly into the phone, so the audio was recorded in sync with the video as a single file. While filming audio was monitored with Bose noise-cancelling headphones. The iPhone was mounted on a small portable Manfrotto tripod with a fluid head, enabling me to easily pan and tilt to find the shot I wanted. When traveling out of town to film I used a MacBook Pro and a portable hard-drive to upload video files. The portraits were edited on an iMac using Adobe Premier Pro. All graphics, colour control, and audio mixing were done within Premier Pro. The completed files were output at full HD (1080) resolution, and transferred to the AudioCulture web technician via Dropbox. I could do all of this independently, without support.<sup>40</sup> The web technician would then upload them to the page that had been created for them on the AudioCulture site so that they could be accessed by the public.

### **Portraying the artists**

Building relationships with the artists was central to the success of the project. In order for me to get them to share personal and revealing stories there had to be a

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<sup>39</sup> For general background on these artists, see the text-based stories about them on AudioCulture. The filmed portraits are designed to complement these text-based profiles:

Peter Jefferies: <https://www.audioculture.co.nz/people/peter-jefferies>

Karl Steven: <https://www.audioculture.co.nz/people/karl-steven>

Moana Maniapoto: <https://www.audioculture.co.nz/people/moana-maniapoto>

Delaney Davidson: <https://www.audioculture.co.nz/people/delaney-davidson>

<sup>40</sup> See *Fig. 1* for an illustration of the technology used in the project.

level of trust and I put considerable energy into this process. I already knew Moana Maniapoto and Karl Steven as I had interviewed each of them previously. Both were familiar with and supportive of my documentary work, so there was a certain level of trust already established. I had not met Peter Jefferies, although I knew his work well and had seen him perform many times over a thirty year period. Grigg had known Jefferies since the 1980s, and he shared some of my documentary work with him, vouched for me, and then connected us. The relationship with Delaney Davidson was bridged in similar terms by AudioCulture Content Director, Chris Bourke.<sup>41</sup>

I discussed the project with each of the artists before agreeing on the next steps. I described the aim and methods of the project, and sought their input into the scope and detail of what we might and might not discuss. Central to the design of the portraits was an unadorned focus on the artist: the portraits would consist solely of them talking. I would conduct each interview, but my interview questions would not be included in the finished portraits. I would not use photographs, music videos or any other archive material and there would be no 'sequences' or 'cutaways' used.<sup>42</sup> Similarly there would be no music. The portraits would not be illustrated in any way other than through the image and sound of the artist talking.

I would use graphics very minimally. Each interview would have an opening title, closing credit, and intertitles, each of which would consist of text on a black background. The opening title would note who the artists is, the date it was recorded, the geographical location it was filmed in, how long it is, and who produced it.<sup>43</sup> Intertitles would introduce subjects or themes.<sup>44</sup> A credit asserting copyright would be placed at the end of each portrait.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Chris Bourke took over the role of AudioCulture Content Director from Simon Grigg in late 2016. Bourke has been writing about New Zealand music since the early 1980s and is the author of several books on New Zealand music, including: Bourke, C. (2010). *Blue Smoke, The Lost Dawn of New Zealand Popular Music 1918-1964*. Auckland. Auckland University Press.; and: Bourke, C. (2017). *Good-Bye Maoriland, The Songs & Sounds of New Zealand's Great War*. Auckland. Auckland University Press.

<sup>42</sup> Sequences being a series of shots filmed from more than one viewpoint, commonly to document an action and enable the film maker to contract or expand time and/or visually cover audio edits. Cutaways beings shots that are utilised to cover an edit between two matching shots so as to avoid a 'jump-cut' (a jump-cut is an edit between two very shot that are very similar, and in conventional film-making is considered something to be avoided).

<sup>43</sup> This approach was informed by that taken by archivists, who gather collection data to associate with a new piece of archive that has been added to the collection. See pages 8-9 of the Background section in this exegesis for a description of this approach.

These long-form filmed portraits would include the features of conversation that are conventionally removed in broadcast documentary story-telling such as the umm's and aah's, asides, pauses, and changes of topic. I decided to include these as they characterise a person's way of talking and communicating, and give the viewer a sense of what it would be like to be in the room with that person in real-time.<sup>46</sup>

My expectation was that each portrait might be between one and two hours long, but as there was no constraint or requirement on durations, I encouraged the artists to talk in whatever way they felt most comfortable and for as long as they chose on any given topic. My hope in taking this approach was that viewers would get a sense of the artist that the artist felt rang true.

The interview questions were designed specifically for each artist, with some recurring themes across all four. All were conducted in loosely chronological order, starting with questions about the role of music in their upbringing and then through their teens, and later years. All were asked about collaboration, performance, recording, relationships, audiences, aspirations, revelations, and aging, and individually they were asked much more. Most of the questions were presented as 'feel' or 'reflection' questions, intended to elicit descriptions of emotional states or analytical reflections, as opposed to solely narrative descriptions of actions.<sup>47</sup>

For each interview I prepared the question lines, mind-mapped the relationships between the questions, memorised them, and left them at home when conducting the interview. I did not want to have any pieces of paper between me and the artist when I was interviewing them. This enabled me to maintain eye contact and focus on listening and responding to what was happening in the room. I kept my questions as short and open as possible, and actively used silence as a tool to encourage the artists to talk further. I would wait an extra five seconds or so after

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<sup>44</sup> Intertitles are titles that occur between filmed scenes, most commonly associated with silent films.

<sup>45</sup> See *Figs 6-13* for examples of these graphics.

<sup>46</sup> Applying a similar approach to that described by David Sylvester. See Sylvester, D. (1980). *Interviews with Francis Bacon 1962-1979*. London. Thames and Hudson. (p. 6).

<sup>47</sup> i.e. 'how did it feel when...', or 'what did you learn from...', etc.

the artist finished telling a story, to give them enough time to consider something that they perhaps didn't mention and then start sharing that. It is not uncommon that these moments can be the most revealing, and there are several of them in these portraits.<sup>48</sup>

When talking with Davidson in the lead-up to interviewing him it became apparent that he was deeply interested in collaboration, in surprise, and in the forms that creative endeavours might take. I decided that this was an opportunity to try a more experimental way of eliciting story and capturing a portrait. Consequently I designed a series of 24 cards, each of which had one, two or three words on it. The words used came from my research notes and were selected for their ability to abstract responses.<sup>49</sup> On the day of filming, after we had completed a question-and-answer based interview, I gave these cards to Delaney and asked him to read each one and respond, while I filmed. This resulted in him talking for 31 minutes while I filmed and said nothing.<sup>50</sup> The intent was to apply a strategy that would elicit responses more revealing than could be done by asking questions. I wanted the cards to work something like Rorschach tests.<sup>51</sup>

The interviewees were each filmed in a single shot in their own environments. Maniapoto and Steven were filmed in their studios, and Davidson and Jefferies in the living rooms of their homes.<sup>52</sup> The wide-shot framing enables the viewer to read the body language of the artist, and offers a wide view into the artist's environments. The viewer gets to see what the artists surround themselves with.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> For examples of this see the Jefferies portrait, from 01:47:36:00 through to 01:49:26:00, and the Davidson portrait, from 01:07:30:00 through to 01:09:02:00.

<sup>49</sup> The 24 cards read: *versioning, translation, audience, surprise, distortion, collaboration, bastard sons, humour, alchemy, epiphanies, sacrifices, revelations, unrealised projects, punk, Delano, Beefheart, trance/blues, Suicide (the band), technology, fantasy band, the road, time and a place, adventure, focus*. This use of cards as a tool to direct a creative output was inspired by Eno's *Oblique Strategies*.

<sup>50</sup> The resulting unedited portrait sketch, called *Delaney Davidson Reads the Cards*, can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/HN-myIPSKYk>

<sup>51</sup> The test developed by Swiss psychologist Hermann Rorschach, which involved patients being shown ink blots and then asked to describe what they see. They were designed as a way of getting patients to reveal their underlying thought processes in a manner that they may not be willing, or able, to do consciously.

<sup>52</sup> See *Figs 2-5* for screen shots of these portraits.

<sup>53</sup> In this sense they draw on the conventions of the 'attributes' portrait, where an individual is portrayed accompanied by objects that suggest the interests, profession, status or other aspects of their character or standing. In addition to this, they also draw on the approach taken by Warhol in his "screen test" portraits.

I set myself a rule that I would use only available light and would not rearrange anything in the rooms in which I was filming. The creative challenge was to find the position in the room that offered the most telling view of the person in relation to the space, had sufficient and appropriate light, and would sustain a long interview. Once I found that frame I locked the camera off and did not move it. I also locked the exposure and focus, however in several instances needed to adjust exposure during the interview due to changes in the natural light.

I would film a test frame with each of the artists before we started the interview so that they could see the shot and give feedback, so I could be confident that they were happy with it. It was a no-surprises approach.

### **Constructing the portraits post-interview**

When editing I applied a rule that I would keep the entire interview in the order that it was recorded in, and simply remove the parts that I felt either did not add to the story, or distracted from it. I would not rearrange any parts of the interview.

Once each portrait was edited I shared it (privately) via YouTube with the artist so that they had the opportunity to view it and offer any feedback or suggestions. Once they approved it I then shared it with AudioCulture to get their approval. Neither of these approvals were contractually required, but I chose to seek them because it was important to me that each of their opinions and perspectives were listened to and represented in the work. Once we all agreed on a cut I would then do a fine edit and audio mix of the portrait and deliver that, along with a series of shorter excerpts made from the final edit, to AudioCulture. The intent of having both the full version of the portraits along with shorter excerpts was to give viewers options as to how long they watched for, and select what thematic content they may prefer to watch.

For each portrait I wrote a short (300-500) word text to introduce the portrait on the AudioCulture page it was loaded on to.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> See *Fig. 15* for an example of this layout.



## Dissemination

Once the portraits were live on the site, the AudioCulture team promoted them through their Facebook and twitter feeds, as well as in their monthly (e)newsletter.<sup>55</sup> The broader AudioCulture network also promoted them via a range of social media channels.<sup>56</sup> AudioCulture is funded via NZonScreen, and so each of the portraits will also be deposited with NZonScreen.

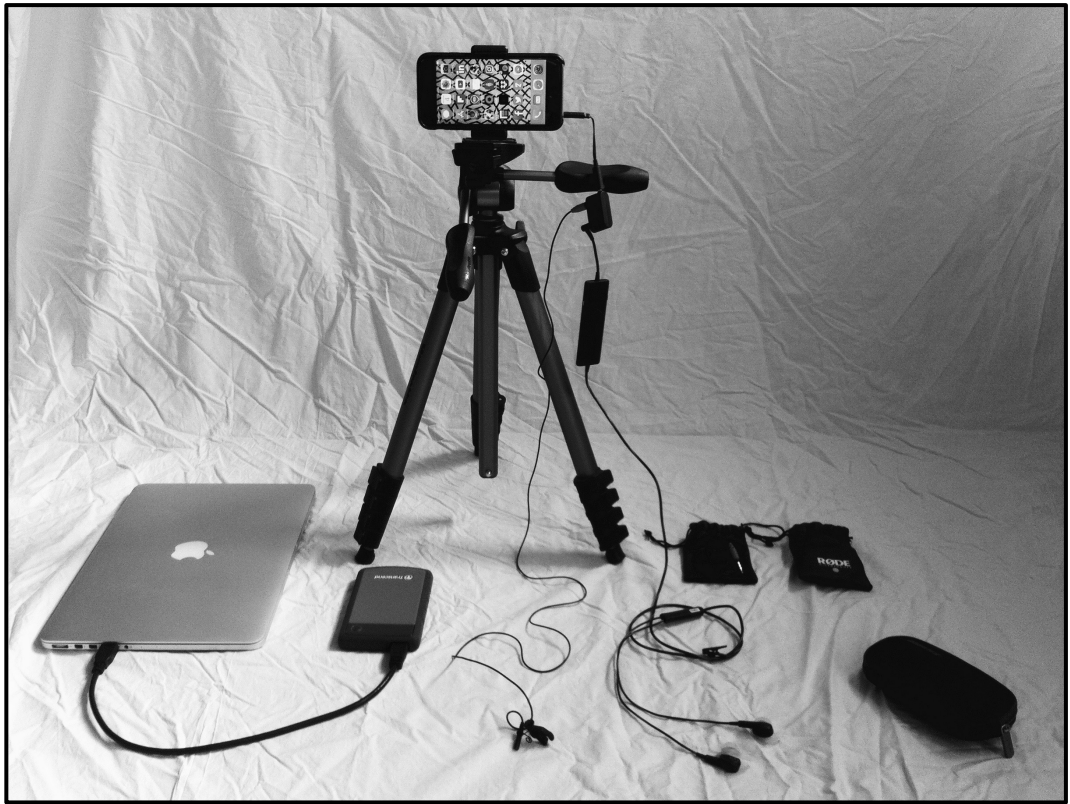
These four filmed portraits were designed and produced independently in a D.I.Y. manner. The decision to use a single wide shot and minimal graphics for each portrait was intended to suggest a seeming neutrality in the story-telling: the only person we see and hear in each portrait is the artist. The design of the interview methods, as well as the visualisation of the portraits, was informed by disciplines outside of documentary story-telling. Building and maintaining relationships with the artists and with AudioCulture were central to the success of the project.

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<sup>55</sup> See *Fig. 16* for a screenshot of a Facebook post about the Jefferies portrait, and *Fig. 17* for a screenshot of the (e)newsletter announcing the publication of the Steven portrait.

<sup>56</sup> Notably Russell Brown, via his Public Address blog. Brown is also a member of the AudioCulture board and regular contributor to the site.

## Illustrations



**Fig 1.**

**Technology used to film the portraits:**

iPhone 6 (128GB)  
Rode lapel microphones (x 2)  
Bose headphones  
Manfrotto tripod  
MacBook Pro (256GB)  
Portable hard-drive (1TB)  
Cygnett portable charger

The portraits were filmed on the iPhone using the app FiLMiC Pro, and were edited on an iMac using Adobe Premiere Pro. All editing, colour grading, graphics creation and audio-mixing were done within Premiere Pro.



**Fig. 2.**

Screenshots from the portrait of  
Peter Jefferies



...music had been the be-all and end-all, it was my whole life. That didn't mean to say I didn't have relationships or things like that. But if I had to choose, music won every time... music still wins, but it doesn't win every time...

**Peter Jefferies**  
17 December 2016



**Fig. 3.**

Screenshots from the portrait of  
**Karl Steven**



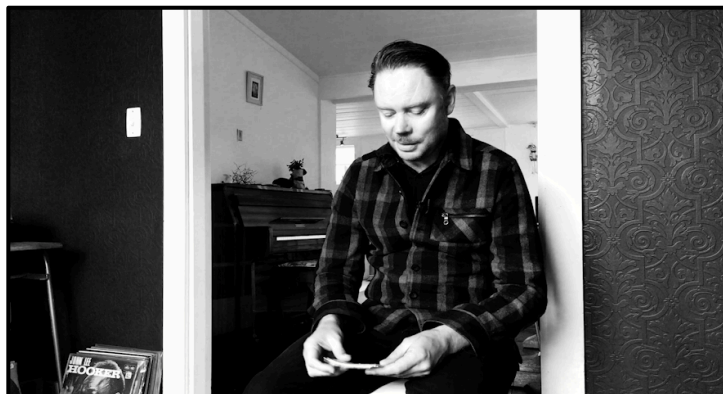
...it's not about record companies and sales and success and the press,  
that's not an important part of it... it's about people making music 'cause  
they kinda have to, and sharing it because they want to, or they're good  
natured, and then us listening to it and enjoying it...

**Karl Steven**  
**2 January 2017**



**Fig. 4.**

Screenshots from the portrait of  
**Delaney Davidson**



...I remember saying this thing to myself – ok, if there's ever going to be a choice between anything, just choose music... and that means that you loose a lot and you gain a lot... it was, and is still, heavily about just being immersed in the music, finding where it takes you and being there to enjoy it...

**Delaney Davidson**  
29 April 2017





**Fig. 5.**

Screenshots from the portrait of  
**Moana Maniapoto**

...a lot of the time we were writing songs or performing songs in the earlier days it was to make a point, y'know. By fusing haka and poi and language with dance music, it was really fun creatively, really fun, but also it was like making a point... and now I don't have to make that point any more. I can just do whatever I like. If I want to do a country bloody album I'll just do it, and that's quite liberating...

**Moana Maniapoto**  
21 May 2017



Fig. 6.

Opening title from the portrait of  
**Peter Jefferies**

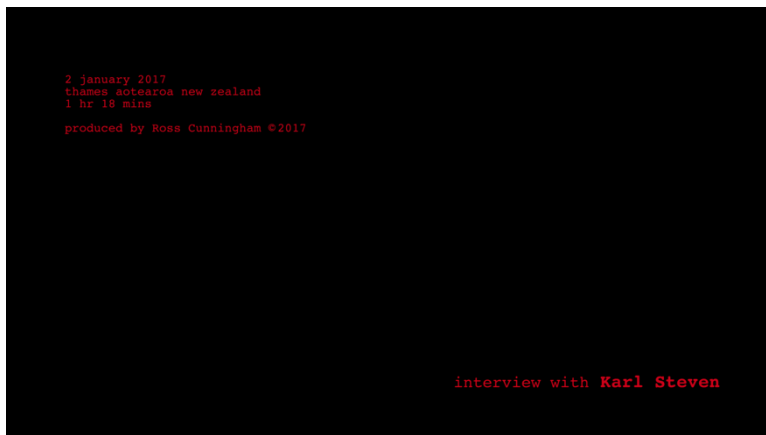


Fig. 7.

Opening title from the portrait of  
**Karl Steven**



Fig. 8.

Opening title from the portrait of  
**Moana Maniapoto**

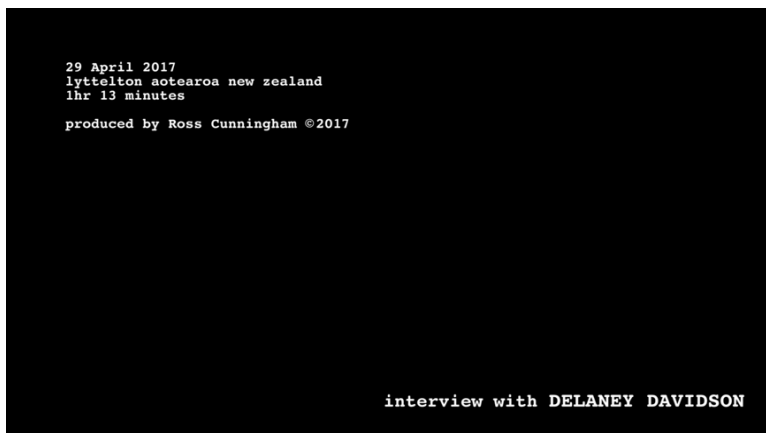


Fig. 9.

Opening title from the portrait of  
**Delaney Davidson**

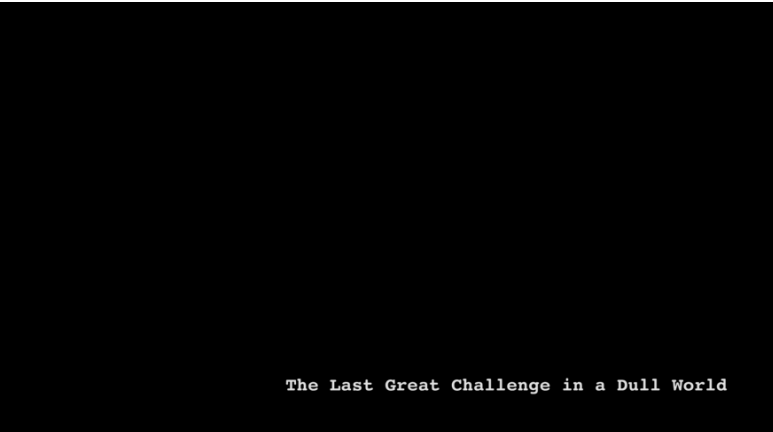


Fig. 10.

Intertitle from the portrait of  
**Peter Jefferies**

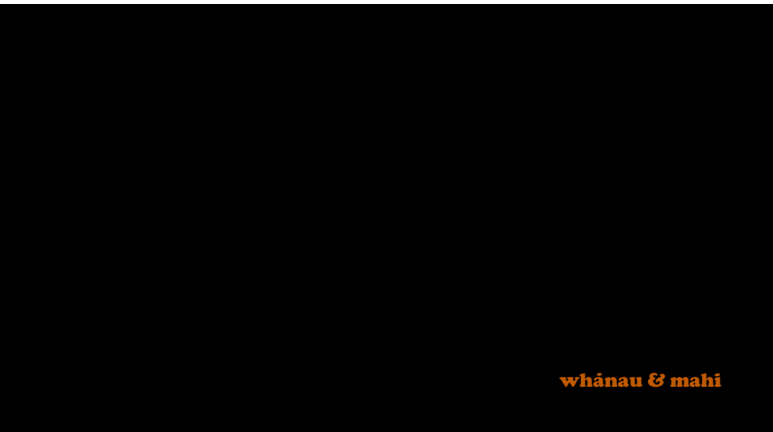


Fig. 11.

Intertitle from the portrait of  
**Moana Maniapoto**

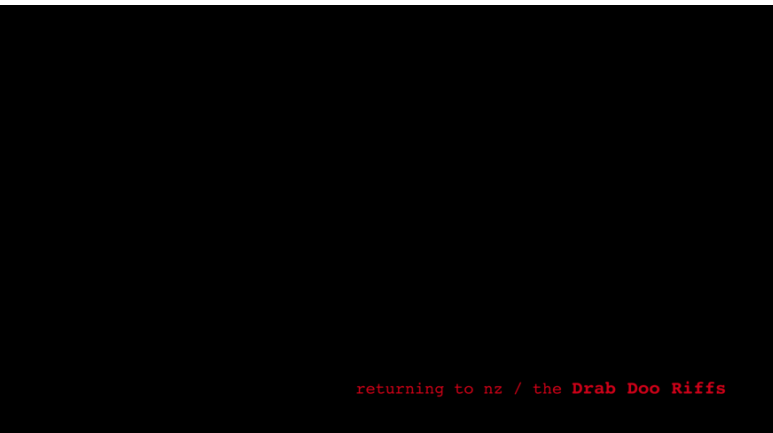


Fig. 12.

Intertitle from the portrait of  
**Karl Steven**



Fig. 13.

End credit from the portrait of  
**Delaney Davidson**



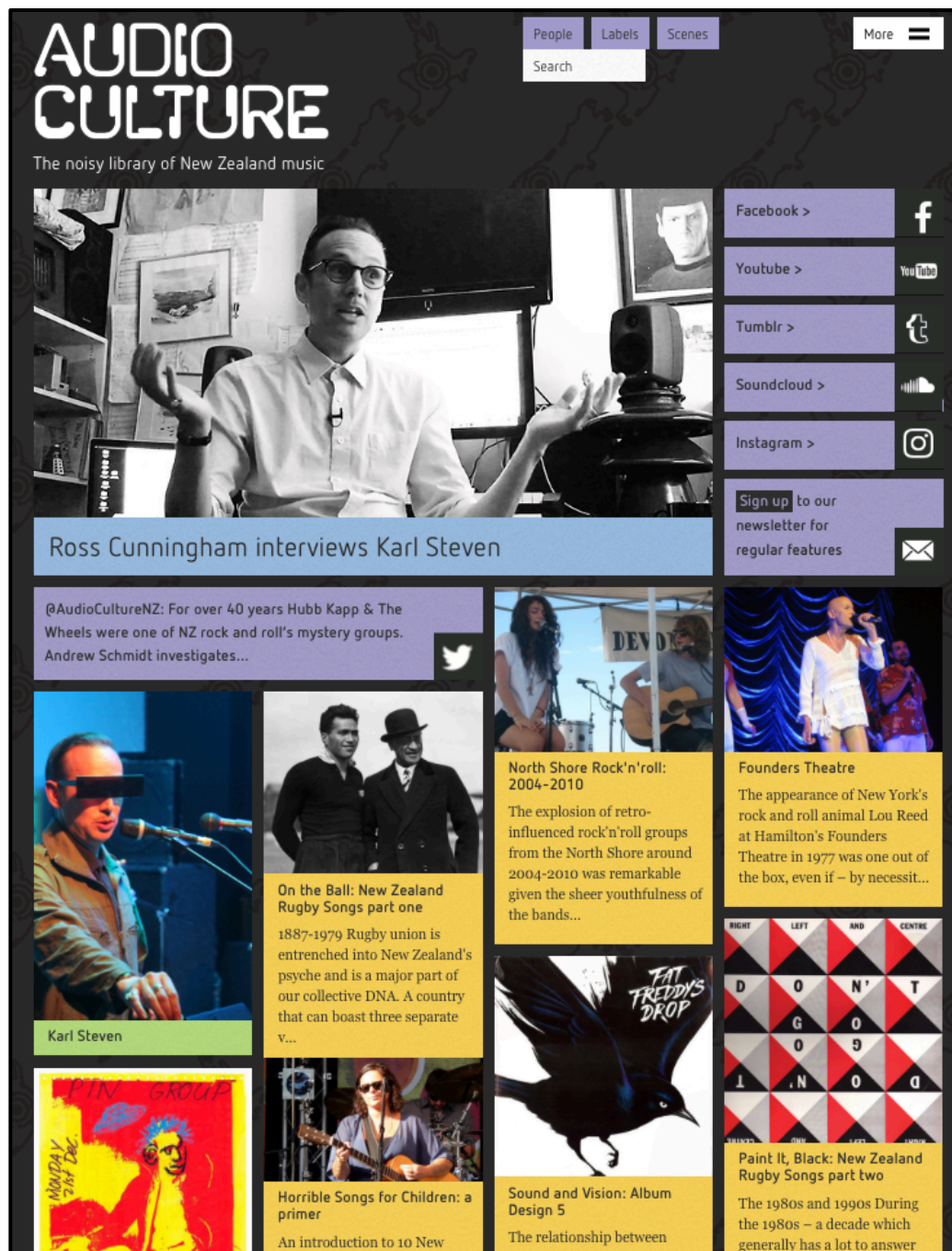


Fig. 14.

Screenshot of the AudioCulture homepage, 3 July 2017

AudioCulture categorise their content according to three types: *People*, *Labels* and *Scenes*, as illustrated by the tabs at the top of screen. When a new story is added to the site it is teased on the homepage, with a link to the story. The new content is added to the top of the homepage, which can be scrolled like a blog.



Fig. 15.

Screenshot of the **Peter Jefferies** story page on AudioCulture

Content about individual people on AudioCulture is organised into three categories: *Profiles*, *Stories* and *Discography*, as illustrated in the tabs near the top of screen. *Profiles* are text-based with accompanying aggregated archive (photos, videos, posters, and ephemera). The filmed portraits are categorised as *stories*.

The portraits are available in their entirety as well as in a series of shorter excerpts. On the left of screen are fifteen selectable tabs which allow viewers to choose which segment of the Peter Jefferies portrait they watch.

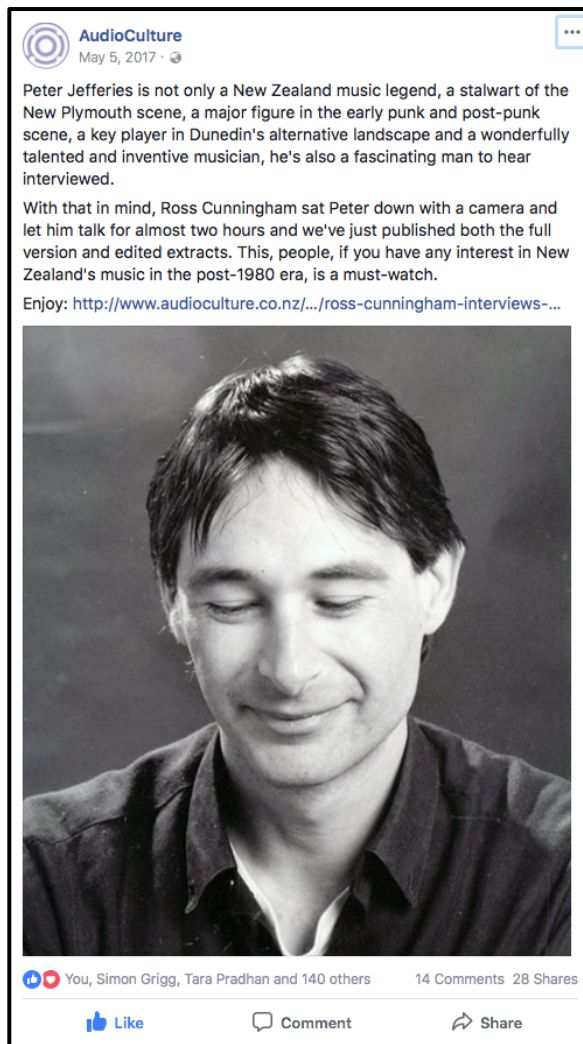


Fig. 16.

Screenshot of the AudioCulture Facebook post teasing the **Peter Jefferies** portrait, 5 May 2017



Fig. 17.

Screenshot of the AudioCulture (e)newsletter teasing the **Karl Steven** portrait, 30 June 2017

### Chapter three: Discussion

As practice is the primary site of research in this thesis, the following discussion is focused on the outcomes that the filmed portraits achieve through the application of the design approach described in chapter two. These outcomes are situated in relation to the work of other practitioners.

#### Independent and D.I.Y.

The four filmed portraits produced as the practice-based component of this study were conceived, researched, produced and post-produced independently of any funding body or commissioning agent.<sup>57</sup> I worked alone, and there were no externally imposed formats or durations to comply with.<sup>58</sup> The project was conceived and produced in a D.I.Y. manner.

Filming on an iPhone enabled me to shoot whenever I chose without expensive and cumbersome equipment. The small size and unobtrusive nature of the iPhone enabled what Sylvester refers to as the ‘cosiness’ of informal conversation which is difficult to achieve in a professional filming environment with a crew.<sup>59</sup> With solely myself and the artist in the artist’s home or studio it was relatively easy to develop a rapport and talk for as long as we chose. There was no sense of the production clock ticking.

The approach applied to post-production was similarly simple. I chose not to illustrate or overtly interpret what was being said. My intention was to document the artist’s stories in as neutral and uninflected a way as possible, so that viewers could draw their own conclusions. When editing I simply jump-cut between shots. With the Jefferies portrait, for instance, this meant that the original almost three hours of interview was edited down to just under two hours. The decision to use

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<sup>57</sup> After the project had been initiated and agreed to by AudioCulture, however, the AudioCulture team made the decision to offer a small payment for each delivered portrait as acknowledgement of the work, as they do for each text-based story delivered.

<sup>58</sup> Formats and durations can vary greatly, depending on the commissioning agent and delivery platform/s, and are mostly highly prescriptive.

<sup>59</sup> Sylvester, D. (1980). *Interviews with Francis Bacon 1962-1979*. London. Thames and Hudson. (p. 7).



the single shot size, with no additional filmed sequences, music or pre-existing archive material created a viewing experience that feels something like simply sitting down with a friend for a chat.<sup>60</sup>

Much as it was for Warhol, the decision to use the single wide-shot was partly pragmatic, partly aesthetic and partly psychological. A single shot, as opposed to a sequence of shots, is easier to execute. The single wide-shot point-of-view invokes the conventions of theatre and the proscenium arch, with the point-of-view essentially being that of the surrogate viewer. I wanted to encourage the sense of the viewer having a vicarious experience of being in the room with the artist in what seems like real-time.

### **Rules and strategies**

The rule that I set when editing to kept the order of the interview as it occurred while filming and simply remove sections that I did not need is one I borrowed from the art of carving. The carver of stone or wood removes parts of their raw material to reveal an underlying form or structure, sometimes removing a lot and sometimes very little, depending on what they are trying to express. To do this well requires a sensitivity to the underlying structures of the material that is being worked with, and it was this sensitivity to the raw material of the interview that I was aiming for in taking this approach.

When deciding whether or not to remove a section I asked myself if the section in question revealed something insightful about the artist, and something that had not been already revealed in another part of the interview. If the answer was yes to both questions then I left it in, and if it was no to either question then I removed it. One of the challenges of this approach is that I was attempting to make these judgements with a sensitivity not only to the artist, but also to what future audiences may be interested to know about these artists. These were sometimes difficult decisions, and if I was ever unsure then my strategy was to include the section in question, so future viewers could then make their own decisions.

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<sup>60</sup> This impression was re-enforced by AudioCulture when they did a Facebook post about the portrait going up on the site. They described it as “*Ross Cunningham sat down with a camera and let him talk for two hours.*” See Fig. 16 for a screenshot of this AudioCulture Facebook post.

When editing the Maniapoto portrait, and watching the interview unfold over the approximately two and half hours of raw material, I observed that over the time that I had been filming that there was a gradual change in the amount of light in the room, and that this change from bright to dark suggested the passing of time in a way that seemed to mirror the scope of the stories that Maniapoto was sharing.<sup>61</sup> As I was working solely with natural light and had set a rule that I would keep all of the interview in the order in which it was shot, it was acceptable that the light changed as it simply illustrated what was happening in the room while we were filming. That this change in light supported the story was an unexpected accident. To paraphrase an Eno *Oblique Strategy*, I honoured this accident as a hidden intention, as it constructively added to the story being told.<sup>62</sup>

As well as constructive accidents, the D.I.Y. approach to filming also led to some challenges. Filming very long single segments using only natural light meant that any changes that occurred in the light were obvious, and difficult to avoid. As I was not moving any of the segments around when editing, this was mostly acceptable, as the viewer simply sees the weather in the room that the artist is in. However, there were moments in some of the interviews where the changes in light were erratic and extreme and became a distraction from what was being said. For the Jefferies, Steven and Davidson interviews I was able to mitigate these distractions by removing the colour from the portraits, as the light changes were less obvious in black and white than in colour. However there were a few short segments at the beginning of Davidson interview that I chose not to use in the final portrait as the changes in light were continual and extreme and distracted from what he was saying.

### **Portraits, relationships and spaces in-between**

Following Obrist's practice, I spoke very little in the interviews, focusing on listening to what was being said and responding with questions intended to deepen

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<sup>61</sup> I filmed in the late afternoon, from approximately 3.00PM through to 6.00PM in early autumn. See: *Fig. 5* for selected screen shots illustrating the change in light during the Maniapoto interview.

<sup>62</sup> The strategy is: *Honour thy mistake as a hidden intention*. See: Brian Eno and Peter Schmidt, *Oblique Strategies*, fifth edition, 2001.

the story that was unfolding, or suggesting another aspect or tangent or reflection. There are many instances in each of the portraits where there is a silent pause while the artist is thinking, and I left these in as they offer the viewer that uncommon opportunity in non-fiction screen story-telling to listen and watch the person being portrayed thinking, as opposed to talking. The inclusion of these what might be called ‘between’ moments, the moments of reflection and silence between expressed thoughts that are conventionally removed from non-fiction screen story-telling, supports the use of the term ‘portrait’ to describe this work. What we see is as important as what we hear.

The experimental approach taken with Davidson to capture a sense of him, his character and his way of thinking by asking him to respond to a series of cards, was based on empathy of a different order. The approach was inspired by Eno’s *Oblique Strategies*.<sup>63</sup> The intent was to replace questions with opened ended and minimal provocations, and in doing so to gain insight into Davidson’s character and personality and way of thinking in a less prescriptive manner than asking questions. It introduced an element of chance and risk into the ‘interview’ process.

Unlike the filmed portrait of Davidson that is now available on AudioCulture, the *Delaney Davidson Reads the Cards* portrait sketch is not currently available to the general public. I did however, include four excerpts from it in the AudioCulture portrait, as they offered a deepening of what was said in the filmed in the portrait. This is the one instance in the four portraits where I broke the rule of keeping all elements in the portraits in the order in which they were filmed. My willingness to break this rule aligns my approach more with Eno than Cage.<sup>64</sup>

### **AudioCulture and their communities**

In order for a protest against forgetting to be effective it needs to be preserved, so that it can be seen and heard. AudioCulture is the platform on which these portraits

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<sup>63</sup> Brian Eno and Peter Schmidt, *Oblique Strategies*, fifth edition, 2001. After each interview I gave the artist a koha. Davidson I gave a set of the Brian Eno/Peter Schmidt *Oblique Strategy* cards. I chose this as I felt that they may be a fruitful tool for him to use in his practice.

<sup>64</sup> As noted on Chapter 1, Eno claims to be prepared to abandon the outcomes of rules and strategies in a way that Cage is not. See: Interview with Eno in the British Arts Council, *Sound and the City Lecture Series*, October 17 2005, as quoted in: Scoates, C. (2013). *Brian Eno, Visual Music*. San Francisco. Chronicle Books. (pp. 27-8).

are preserved, and can be seen and heard. It is a publicly funded cultural site which can not be easily categorised as an archive, library, museum, or gallery. It draws on aspects of each of these institutions, and is an example of convergence in the GLAM sector that is discussed by Robinson.<sup>65</sup>

AudioCulture works partly as an aggregator site, bringing pre-existing artefacts about musicians and music scenes (photos, videos, posters, print articles, and various ephemera) together with new text-based work. Members of the public are able to contribute artefacts and stories to the site, complementing the work of professional writers, resulting in a site which tells stories from multiple perspectives.<sup>66</sup> It is a cultural institution dedicated to preserving the memories, stories and artefacts of niche and popular communities, and offers a rich example of Robinson's notion of 'remembering things differently'.<sup>67</sup> These four portraits will continue to be available on AudioCulture, and will also be available via NZonScreen, AudioCulture's sister-site, should AudioCulture cease to exist for any reason.<sup>68</sup>

The four artists portrayed each had pre-existing text-based stories on the site. The filmed portraits are designed to complement those stories and offer audiences the opportunity to hear the artist's stories in their own words. Viewing analytics indicate that the filmed portraits have been viewed some 2,090 times, as of 1 March 2018.<sup>69</sup> These viewing numbers, particularly in light of the short length of time that the portraits have been available, suggest that there is an appetite for this work amongst AudioCulture's communities.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Robinson, H. (2012). Digital Heritage – Remembering things differently: Museums, libraries and archives as memory institutions and the implications for convergence. In *Museum Management and Curatorship*, Vol. 27, No. 4. London.

<sup>66</sup> For example of a 'fan' story see:  
<https://www.audioculture.co.nz/scenes/flying-nun-records-1981-1991-a-fan-remembers-the-first-10-years>

<sup>67</sup> For examples of these two extremes see: West Auckland punk scene of the mid-1980's:  
<https://www.audioculture.co.nz/scenes/vicious-circle-dead-image-and-the-mid-1980s-west-auckland-punk-scene>  
and Dave Dobbyn: <https://www.audioculture.co.nz/people/dave-dobbyn>

<sup>68</sup> AudioCulture is publicly funded on an annual basis, and so while it has been a very successful initiative, there is no long-term surety of funding.

<sup>69</sup> Analytics provided by AudioCulture to the researcher, 8 March 2018.

<sup>70</sup> The Jefferies portrait was uploaded in April 2017, the Steven portrait in June 2017, the Maniapoto portrait in October 2017, and the Davidson portrait in January 2018.



While these portraits are currently available solely as audio-visual files, there are potentially other formats in which they could be disseminated. Podcast versions of the portraits could be created by editing audio-only files. These would likely cater to an additional audience, as podcasts can be engaged with in a broader range of environments and circumstances than audio-visual stories. Similarly, text-only transcriptions of the interviews could be produced. Text versions could be more quickly read than a filmed version can be watched, and would also make the content easier for researchers to search and reference. From an archivist's perspective it is advantageous to have an analogue output (a printed transcript for instance) that exists outside of the digital realm, should anything catastrophic occur to the digital artefacts. Although outside of the scope of this project, these outputs are all possible and are worth considering. These additional outputs could all be produced in a D.I.Y. manner.

When viewed from AudioCulture's perspective, and through a pragmatic business lens, part of the attraction of these portraits is that they can be produced very cheaply. The D.I.Y. approach enables the portraits to be produced for a fraction of the commercial rate to produce work of this scale and depth. As GLAM sector institutions increasingly utilise digital platforms to disseminate content and engage communities, the ability to produce content with modest budgets is a sought-after production characteristic. This work offers an example of one way in which digital story-tellers can work with modest budgets to create work for cultural organisations.

This chapter offered a discussion of the key considerations of this project. The simplicity of filming on an iPhone with natural light only and editing with a single wide-shot and minimal graphics, resulted in portraits focused simply on what the artists say and how they look and sound when they say it. The application of rules and strategies from the disciplines of music and fine art led to some unexpected outcomes in the portraits, the majority of which (but not all) were harnessed for the benefit of the portraits. The emphasis placed on developing and maintaining relationships with the artists and with AudioCulture through each stage of the

project has contributed to the successful completion of this work.<sup>71</sup> The portraits have been delivered to AudioCulture and are now available to the public. That they have been viewed in significant numbers in the relatively short amount of time that they have been available to the public bodes well for the production of more work of this type. There are potential additional outputs that could be easily produced from the raw material of these portraits. Those additional outputs, along with further portraits, could be produced D.I.Y. and very economically.

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<sup>71</sup> New Zealand historian Michael King's approach to capturing and disseminating biographical stories was influential in my decision to prioritise this aspect. See the chapters 'Biography and Compassionate Truth' and 'Maori Oral History: Some Cultural and Methodological considerations', in: King, M. (2001). *Tread Softly For You Tread On My Life, New & Collected Writings*. Auckland. Cape Catley. (pp. 9-17, and 163-186).

## Conclusion

It might be said that all archives protest against forgetting. My aim in this project has been to turn up the volume of this particular protest. I believe that the bodies of music produced by the four artists profiled in these portraits are important cultural artefacts and should not be forgotten. It is my intent that through offering insights into their lives and experiences, that these portraits lead to a deeper engagement with the music that the artists have produced.

Telling these life-stories simply and in the artists own words has been central to achieving this. An independent and D.I.Y. approach was successfully applied to the design and production of the four filmed portraits that form the practice-based component of this thesis. These portraits are a new digital offering for AudioCulture, the New Zealand GLAM website on which they are now available, complementing the predominantly text-based story-telling that has featured on the site to date.

Production of the portraits was informed by rules and strategies borrowed from fine arts and music (in particular), and this led to some constructive surprises. In the portrait of Maniapoto it resulted in a use of light that re-enforces the theme of time passing. The open-ended and abstracted interview approach applied in the *Delaney Davidson Reads the Cards* portrait sketch created a view of the artist quite different to that which I captured in the question-and-answer based portrait of Davidson. For all four portraits, taking an approach to editing based on the art of carving has led to portraits which give a sense of a captured moment in time, with the subject's characteristic pauses and digressions intact. Each of these aspects offers an additional layer to the biographical narrative of the portraits.

The building and maintaining of relationships has been key to the success of this project. While it has been a privilege and responsibility to create portraits of these four artists, it has also been a delight. I have enjoyed it. That the artists have been represented in a way which they endorse is a key outcome of this approach. This is important on a personal level as well a professional level.

This study offers two key contributions: there are now first-person long-form biographical filmed portraits of these four artists on record and available as part of a public archive (AudioCulture); and it offers a technical and conceptual approach to the production of first-person filmed portraits that could be applied to people other than artists, disseminated by organisations beyond the GLAM sector, and utilised by other digital story-tellers.

The concept of ‘a protest against forgetting’ has been central to this study. At its heart this has been about me identifying artists whose work I believe is important and should not be forgotten, and then creating and disseminating filmed portraits of them. I chose a D.I.Y. methodology as that approach offers a simple direct route to capturing those life-stories, and I chose to share the portraits publicly via AudioCulture, because I wanted to make sure that this protest was heard, and will continue to be heard. I hope that this project offers others a model for similar protests.

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## Appendix A

### Links to filmed portraits

These links are to the *story* pages about each of the artists on the AudioCulture website. Each of these pages has an introductory text, the full portrait, and a series of short excerpts from that full portrait. For the purposes of this study, the full portraits should be viewed.

Filmed portrait #1: Peter Jefferies:

<https://www.audioculture.co.nz/stories/ross-cunningham-interviews-peter-jefferies>

Filmed portrait #2: Karl Steven:

<https://www.audioculture.co.nz/stories/ross-cunningham-interviews-karl-steven>

Filmed portrait #3: Moana Maniapoto:

<https://www.audioculture.co.nz/stories/ross-cunningham-interviews-moana-maniapoto>

Filmed portrait #4: Delaney Davidson:

<https://www.audioculture.co.nz/stories/ross-cunningham-interviews-delaney-davidson>

The *Delaney Davidson Reads the Cards* interview sketch is not currently available to the general public. It can be accessed via the below unlisted YouTube link.

Delaney Davidson Reads the Cards:

<https://youtu.be/HN-myIPSKYk>