

# DIRECTING PERFORMANCE

Investigating acting performance as a core component on screen



*Tiny Darlings* (2022, Dir. Sebastian Bertoli)

## KEY QUOTE

*"Storytelling is, plain and simple, a performing art."*

- Mackendrick, A. *On Filmmaking: An Introduction To The Craft Of The Director*, 2004

## STUDIO PROMPT

How do you draw out profound and nuanced performances from actors as a director? How can you build collaborative relationships on set, working together to breathe life into the characters in your story?

## DESCRIPTION

This studio offers a journey of discovery for directors in understanding character, communicating with actors and eliciting rich, nuanced performances from them. It will be a cultivated space where we will explore the imaginative, unexpected, and connected work of performance and your role and responsibilities as a director in this space.

Techniques under investigation will include script analysis, improvisation and character backstory. In this studio you will gain insight into the processes of auditioning, rehearsal and performance. Often in the filmmaking process there can be a myopic, and often reductive, focus solely on the technical aspects - at the cost of story and performance. In this studio we will be studying the journey of collaborating with actors to bring the stories you direct to life. Throughout the semester you will experiment, research, practice and discover processes utilised in directing performance. Undertaking a series of experiments and investigations, studio members will broaden and deepen their understanding of directing performance through active and experiential learning strategies both in front and behind the camera.

In the last third of the semester you will initiate your own series of film projects, undertaking practical implementation of strategies we have explored to that point. Working both in and out of class you will develop a common language, cultivating robust and synergetic relationships with your actors, breathing life into characters and inspiring truly memorable performances.

## STUDIO LEADER BIO

Sebastian is an award-winning filmmaker, editor and actor. He has worked worldwide as an actor, appearing in large-scale productions from HBO, DreamWorks, Playtone, Bad Robot, Warner Bros Television, Fremantle Media, ABC and SBS. Sebastian has a keen interest in various modalities, creative and technical styles. He has directed over a dozen shorts and web episodes, exploring both naturalistic and stylised genre work. His background as an actor informs his keen focus on story and character, digging deep for the beating human heart at the core of the story. Currently, he is in preproduction for feature film "We Will Never Die", which he will direct and play a supporting role in.

[www.sebastianbertoli.com](http://www.sebastianbertoli.com) / [www.panopticoncollective.com](http://www.panopticoncollective.com)

# HEADS WON'T ROLL.

## Omitting the on-screen interview in documentary production



*Notes on Blindness* (2016, dir. Spinney, J & Middleton, P)

### KEY QUOTE

*“In the image-cultures of contemporary media... the face is anything but mysterious.”*

- Davis, T. *The Face on the Screen: Questions of Death, Recognition and Public Memory*, 2003

### STUDIO PROMPT

Why do some filmmakers omit on-screen interviews, and what reaction(s) might this elicit from the audience?

### STUDIO DESCRIPTION

In *Heads Won't Roll*, students will engage in a variety of studio activities (including screenings, discussion, practical exercises, and reflective tasks) which explore the various ways in which documentaries might be made without onscreen interviews (sometimes called “talking heads”). The first half of the semester finds students responding to the work of contemporary filmmakers who’ve opted not to include these kinds of materials (including Frederick Wiseman, Laurie Anderson, Asif Kapadia and others). During the first half of semester, students will also evaluate and improve their own media production skills in a series of in class exercises and sketch tasks. The second half of the semester finds students working in small groups to devise, pitch and produce a major work that adds to the genre of “headless” documentary - be it through conventional documentary practices (observational filming, collating copyright-cleared archive) or more unorthodox, experimental approaches (animation, collage/visual abstraction, perhaps even AI-generated vision). Unless otherwise negotiated, this major work will be submitted as a high-definition video of 4-5 minutes in duration, with a stereo sound mix.

### STUDIO LEADER BIO

Rohan Spong is a writer / director / cinematographer whose feature length films *ALL THE WAY THROUGH EVENING* (2012) and *WINTER AT WESTBETH* (2016) have been released in cinemas (Australia, New Zealand & US), been broadcast on television (ABC, SBS, FOXTEL, 7PLUS, and PBS/WORLD), acquired by streaming services (Binge, DocPlay) and selected by numerous film festivals (including MIFF, Sydney Film Festival, DOC NYC). His work has also been programmed at cultural institutions including ACMI, MONA, Boston Museum of Art, Lincoln Center (NYC) and the US Library of Congress.

You can read more about his work at [www.rohanspong.com](http://www.rohanspong.com).

# Social Video Enshittification

## Navigating the B.S. of social media platforms.



Image: Enshittification just keeps happening  
<https://thehustle.co/enshittification-just-keeps-happening-2/>

### KEY QUOTE

*"This is enshittification: Surpluses are first directed to users; then, once they're locked in, surpluses go to suppliers; then once they're locked in, the surplus is handed to shareholders and the platform becomes a useless pile of shit."*

- Corey Doctorow, 'The 'Enshittification' of TikTok.' *Wired*, 23 Jan. 2023,  
<https://www.wired.com/story/tiktok-platforms-cory-doctorow/>

### STUDIO PROMPT

What critical skills do you need to develop to become a professional social videographer?

### DESCRIPTION

Studio participants will explore the critical skills videographers need to learn to create quality content, understand audiences, handle complex storytelling, avoid sensationalism, consider ethical implications, build credibility, and adapt to constant technical change. These critical skills are developed through hands-on making, closely examining social video practices, and engaging with relevant theory and commentary via texts, podcasts, and online videos.

Projects will include completing social video content for a real-world scenario. In this studio, you will learn the process of making content in detail. These making processes include pre-production testing, video and audio recording, media asset preparation, resizing video frames, text graphics, colour grading, audio techniques, subtitling, making publication thumbnails, exporting and more.

A key aim will be to share real-world video production experiences that include planning, project work, learning software, working with clients, and the many things that go together in critical practice.

### BIO OF STUDIO LEADER

Dr. Seth Keen is a Lecturer and Internship Coordinator in the RMIT Media Program. Seth has decades of experience in Screen Production and is committed to industry connections and the career development of students. He is passionate about helping people and organisations realise their capabilities to use images to tell stories and share knowledge using broadcast, mobile and interactive media technologies. His current work focuses on digital innovation and co-designing fit-for-purpose photo and video-sharing software that supports action on climate change.

You can see his television, short film, experimental video and interactive media projects at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/sethkeen/>.

# THE NEW SURREAL

## Creating AI-generated experimental cinema



Crow (2023, Cr. Glenn Marshall)

### KEY QUOTE

*"Uncanny, disconcerting vibe in its first few shots. Vast icy mountains, a makeshift camp of military-style tents, a group of people huddled around a fire, barking dogs. It's familiar stuff, yet weird enough to plant a growing seed of dread. There's something wrong here... Welcome to the unsettling world of AI moviemaking"*

- Heaven, Will Douglas. *Welcome to the New Surreal*, MIT Technology Review, 2023

### STUDIO PROMPT

How might deep learning provide a creative framework for experimenting with the expansive AI-generated filmmaking field?

### DESCRIPTION

Deep learning is coming to Hollywood. If you are impressed by the recent spate of text-to-image generators, be prepared for the next step in artificial intelligence (AI) artistry: text-to-video. The surreal or hyperreal aesthetic of AI-generated video may rely on models trained on live-action footage, but the result "feels closer to dreaming". This new form of virtual media produced with the aid of AI is growing exponentially and allows for greater flexibility and diverse ways of experimental storytelling through media.

Enabled by exploration of traditional cinema and a range of immersive cloud software and apps, this studio will provide a comprehensive overview of the development of AI generation in film, the techniques used to produce artificially generated content and the industry opportunities for filmmaking and virtual production.

This course will be a comprehensive orientation to this expanding field, delving into a wide range of theories and histories of AI text-to-video technology, while grounding students in an introduction to contemporary tools and techniques. In this studio, students will research, develop and produce film, video and audio work that explore the idea of AI generation. Implementing conventional filmmaking methods combined with an experimental tool kit created by artificial intelligence, students will be asked to:

- explore the current state of AI-generated media, its positives, its negatives, and how AI is impacting the film industry
- compare and contrast with other immersive media and the methods used to produce artificially generated content
- discuss the industry opportunities for filmmaking and virtual production
- experiment with the current tools and techniques of AI-generated media to produce video content without compromising on quality or creativity

Students will create film, video and audio work that explores AI-generated filmmaking. This will potentially include an exploration of immersive media applications such as Unreal Engine metahuman creator, Runway, Substance 3D, Mid-Journey, DALL- E2, Maya, 3D LiDAR scanner Polycam, green screen chroma keying as well as traditional filmmaking & foley techniques. The class will be a blend of discourse, discussion, and practical experimentation.

**STUDIO LEADER BIO**

Cat Lew is a Video Artist, Sound Designer, Audio Engineer and Educator. She has a diverse creative practice, having produced video art and sound design for Melbourne Fringe Festival, West Projection Festival, Incinerator Gallery, Mesma Studio, Cinema Viscera, City of Melbourne and City of Maribyrnong. Her large-scale collaborative audio-visual work was recently part of an art exhibition for Creative Brimbank. She currently teaches digital media, film & sound editing and design at VU Polytechnic, the Australian Centre for the Moving Image and RMIT. Her work can be viewed at this link: <http://www.architectureofaudio.com/>