



# Eye Knew New:

Navigating world views in panorama.

Joe Citizen, 2014

# Interactive 360° video

- Frequently positioned as 'new' or 'innovative', but is this really the case?
- What might it mean for documentary practice in Aotearoa / New Zealand?
- How can interactive 360° video technologies negotiate contemporary representational concerns?



Nukyala at Fairfield skate bowl

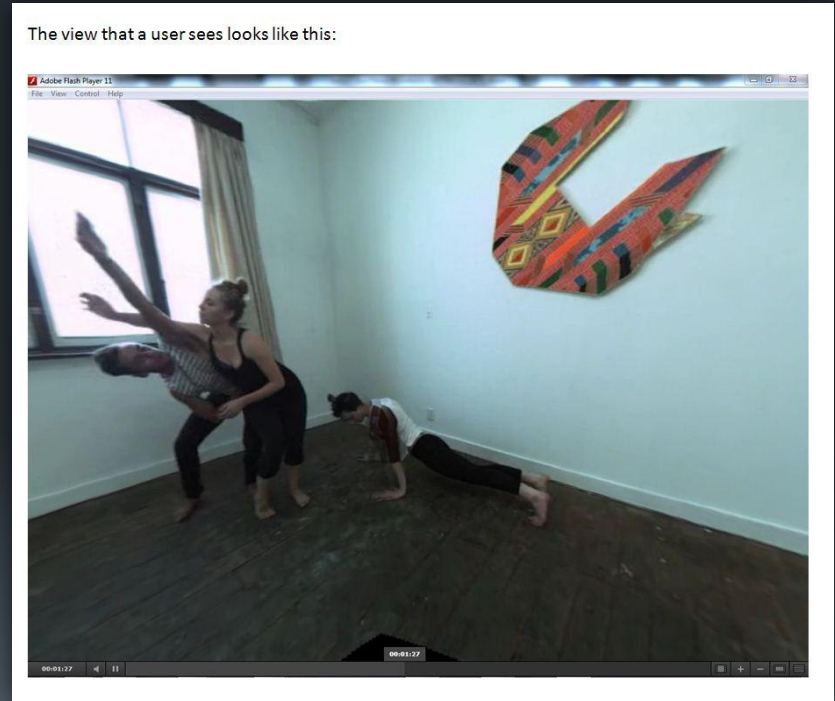
# Project synopsis

- *Oh Yes We Are* is a documentary project by Joe Citizen and Jason Long that uses interactive 360° video to document contemporary creative practices in Hamilton, New Zealand.
- Specifically interested in using these technologies to help reveal the interconnecting links between practitioners.
- Draws on Bill Nichol's (2001) participatory and performative modes to help inform documentary production.
- Continues a larger body of research interested in exploring the codes and conventions of haptic-audio-visual immersive interactivity, that I have been researching since 2010



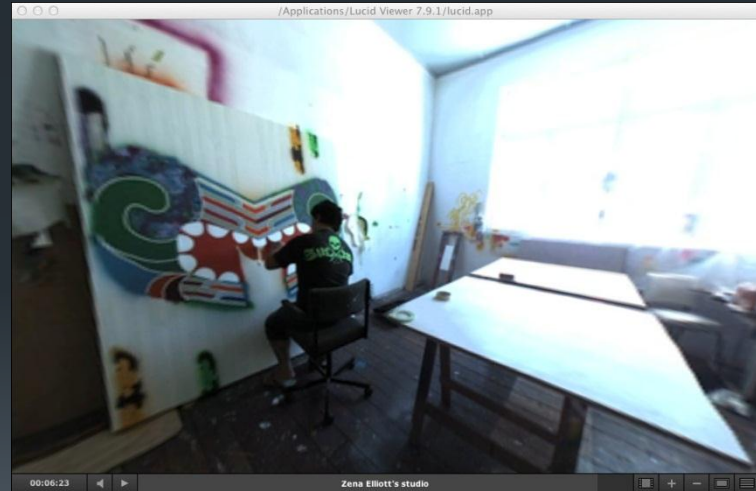
# Methodology

- Using an action-research model that engages with practice to inform my understanding of theory as part of a “feedback loop between speculation and experimentation” (Brown & Sorensen, in Smith & Dean, 2009)
- *Oh Yes We Are* initially advertised through word-of-mouth and social media, followed up by phone conversation and email correspondence.



# Participants

- Wide range of creative practices documented, but tended towards either fine arts or performance based arts.
- Can be divided into solo based or collaborative based practitioners.
- Project grew in organic fashion, more people became interested as it progressed.
- Original survey was of 20 practitioners/groups.
- Not everyone who engaged with project were included in final work, for a variety of reasons.



Zena Elliott in her studio

# Consultative process

In the following example, widescreen images have been used to show how links could work:

Zena's work could link to her studio (and back).

The 'outside world' could link to the Meteor.

Matthew could link to the Wirtec Hothouse (etc.)

- Participants were asked:
- “How would they like to be documented?”
- Who and/or what would they like be linked to through their own recorded scene?
- What objects would they like to have in their mise-en-scene, to act as these links?
- Hoped that this strategy might encourage negotiated co-creation of documentary representation.
- Hoped that this would encourage links between practitioners to be revealed.

# Informed conversations



Online access allowed potential participants to see concept

<http://www.waikatoindependent.co.nz/2014/05/interactive-hip-hop-video-to-premiere-at-wintec/18219/>



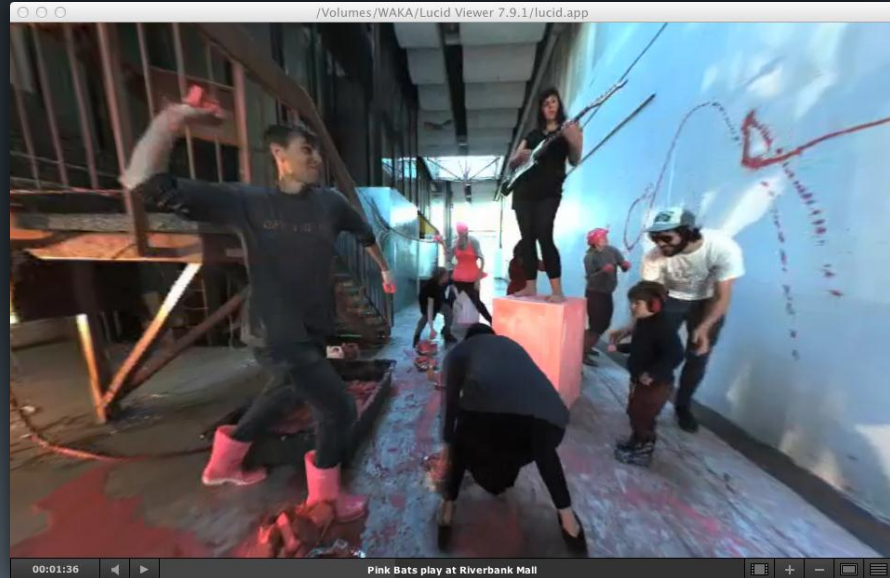
BYOB / Draw Inc event at Media Arts, Wintec

Image courtesy of Draw Inc.



# Participatory documentary

- Over 6 month shooting period, I became increasingly aware of my own role as an active participant – as a common connection between participants, and as a creative practitioner.
- This led to me actively participating in some of the documentary performances.

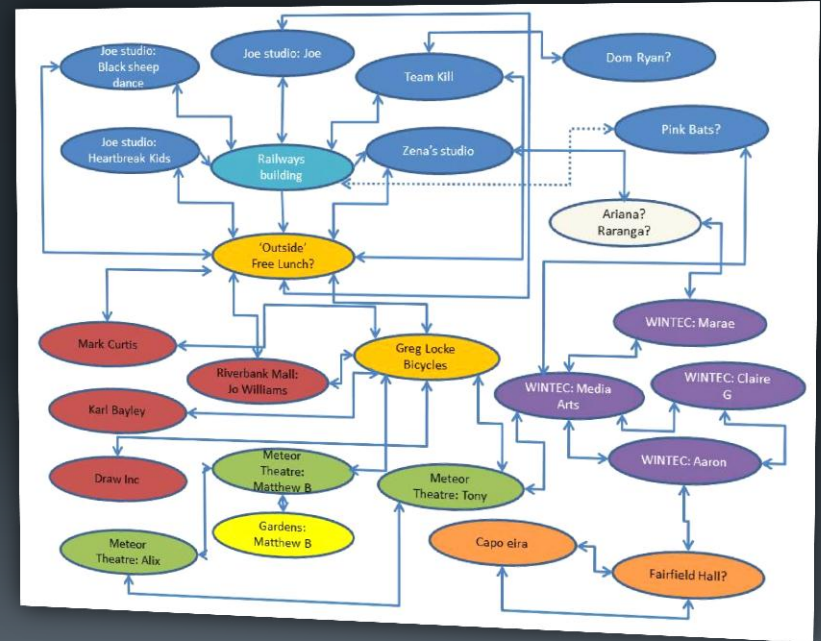


Pink Bats play at Riverbank Mall



# Preliminary findings

- Although participants could identify who or what informed their practice, this was not something they typically considered when thinking about their own self representation.
- The event of being filmed with 360° video tended to overshadow participants thoughts about being symbolically linked to others.





# Preliminary critique



Free Lunch Street Theatre agency

- Current concerns with immersive image spaces are not a new phenomenon, and need to be considered in relation to the socio-cultural concerns of their times. (Bruno 2010, Grau 2003 and 2006, Griffiths 2008, Kenderdine 2007)
- So what is meant by 'innovation'; and is 360° video 'new'?

# 'Innovation' & 'new' in education environment

- 'More, for less' in tertiary education: "The pressure is for reduced costs, for greater scale and scope, and for innovation through technology." (Laurillard, 2002)
- Increased alignment of tertiary education with the 'Market', because the "the goal of a high-tech 'knowledge based economy' of perpetual innovation has been elevated into a guiding principle and salvatory strategy for advanced capitalist economies." (Reynolds & Szerszynski, in Pellizzoni & Ylönen, 2012)
- Indicators of this include references to 'industry' and 'the creative industries' which seek to marry "specialised cultural creativity in industrialised form." (Bilton & Cummings, 2014)
- To some extent however creativity and innovation can be considered contradictory, as innovation within an industry context is predicated on how useful something is, and not all creativity is useful to industry. (Bilton & Cummings, 2014)

a hybrid of moving image, interactive media and video game design. We aim to be leaders within this emerging technology field, in both its practical application and its theoretical implications.

# The practice of innovative research

**‘More, for less’ + industry alignment + ‘new’**

**= ‘off the shelf’ + novel combinations.**

Innovation on an academic shoestring – the equation of time/ money/ quality. Less money = more time.

➤ Terminology has to fit with discourse. We are: leaders; pioneers; visionary; at the forefront; at the leading edge; able to deliver ‘out of the box’ solutions; provide ‘innovative delivery’; using a ‘special’ camera; and ‘first.’

➤ But ‘new’ is relative. Project has been in existence since 2010, but both users and participants consider it ‘new’. (Unmet before = new).

## New Zealand’s first 360 degree film to screen at Spark Festival

by Ali Brady on August 10, 2013



A new kind of interactive movie experience will have viewers wishing they had eyes in the back of their head.

Revolutionary Acts is New Zealand’s first 360 degree film, allowing viewers to see the story play out from all angles.

# Participants, the public & the 'new'

- Public comments usually confuse media technology with my contribution i.e. exclamations of how amazing it is referring to 360° viewing and thinking that I was responsible for this.
- General comments from viewing public consider this media to be 'new'.
- Documentary participants also consider this media to be 'new' e.g. "a new type of music video", "a new type of interactive video", or, "a new type of dance film."





# Panoramas are not 'new'

- Immersive image spaces have a long history in Western art: “the idea goes back at least as far as the classical world, and it now reappears in the immersion strategies of present day virtual art.” (Grau, 2003, p.5)



R.G. Shaw in his studio



# Lack of public awareness



Free Lunch Street Theatre agency

- Ladybug 3 camera doesn't look like a conventional camera – is often ignored or mistaken for something else e.g. “Is that a laser light?” and “Are you going to have a party?”
- Even when told that if they can see any of the lenses then the camera can see them, typically, the general public tend to ignore the camera.
- Only exception was when I was asked “Are you Google Earth?”

# But digital is 'new'

- The cinematic apparatus has been transformed by the electronic apparatus: Interaction with the image can occur because the image is subject to modularity, automation, variability, and transcoding. (Manovich, 2001)
- “Instead of the image of the world, electronic cinema offers the image-as-world.” (Kluszczyński, in Grau, 2007, p. 210)
- 360° video similar interaction to another type of digital media – videogames.

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# 'Real' or 'Game'?

- Increased realism with game-like interaction means different things to different people.
- Difficult to continuity edit meant for some people footage used was one continuous shot – therefore this would create a more 'true' representation. Typically, these people came from a fine arts background.
- Ability to navigate around image gave 'extraordinary' ability for others however – less interest in 'true' and more on public image. Typically, these people came from a performance based background.



# Conventional concerns about 'truth'

- Typically, fine art practitioners wanted unscripted and more 'spontaneous' documentation.
- This group also tended to understand the montage-like possibilities of hyperlinked objects built into the mise-en-scene.
- Typically, performance based artists were more concerned with how they 'looked' than ideas about 'accuracy'.
- This group did not typically engage with the possibilities of using hyperlinks to symbolically link to others.
- Single exception to this was a musician who wanted to link to his website.

# Genre



Team Kill and friends

- Genre codes and conventions are still relevant to both participants and users.
- Like first person perspective videogames, genre conventions can allude to narrative without usual narrative concerns (e.g. characterisation, plot etc.)
- Meaning created by user through intertextual knowledge.

# Potential implications of 360° video



The Waikato River

# Privacy

- As project progressed, observers began to consider possible implications – surveillance, privacy etc.
- Need to consider the ethics of filming in public more than normal – particularly when people not really aware they are being filmed, even when they are told that this is the case.

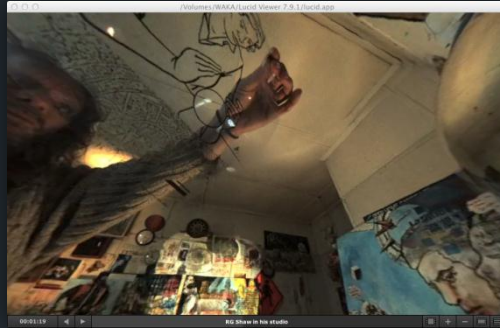


Free Lunch Street Theatre agency



# Tracking

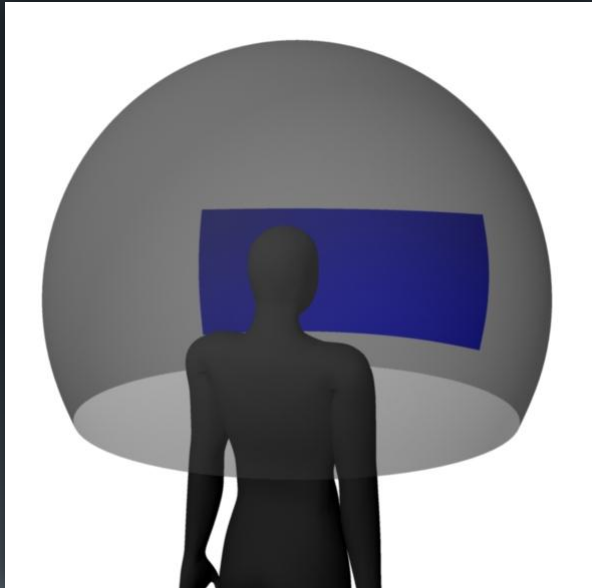
R.G. Shaw in his studio



- Combining 360° video with existing technologies such as facial recognition, movement tracking, Global Positioning System co-ordinates, preferentiality, and database cross-referencing, has potentially immense implications:
- Behaviour tracking
- Insurances
- Targeted advertising etc.

# Collapse of the subject-object distance?

Image courtesy of Luke McConnell



- By virtually placing the user into the centre of the field of relations, 360° video promises to escape the objectivising function of the frame, allowing the user to rove around the spherical image space.
- This virtually collapses the subject-object distance as experienced through conventional perspective schemes, so that the user becomes part of the scene and not separate to it.
- This promise is unfulfilled however – software players such as Lucid recreate the frame as a means to navigate the sphere.

# Perspective both distorted and hidden

Image courtesy of Luke McConnell



- 360° video stitches together multiple fisheye lenses: Objects towards infinity appear smaller than standard lenses.
- Verticals are less imposing exponentially, not logarithmically.
- Horizons appear flatter, with increased prominence of the sky/ ceiling.
- People appear less important than their environment, as less distance is required to 'see' the whole body. Can be countered by placing camera near floor, but camera appears more 'toy-like' to passers-by.
- Perspective space still exists, but is hidden from the user, who endlessly recreates it when they navigate the sphere.

# Disappearance of the 'fourth wall'



*Revolutionary Acts*

- By recording 80% of the sphere around the camera, production technologies are often in evidence.
- Lighting and sound apparatus must be built into set, if 'fourth wall' aesthetics are desired.
- Tension between realist codes that represent truth as actuality, and illusionistic codes, that seek to hide the means of production.

# Movement and navigation



# A shift in aesthetics from mental to navigational

- Unlike conventional Western aesthetics, 360° video offers images that are navigable through haptic visuality (Verhoeff, 2012) i.e. physical movement is used to navigate both hyperlinked and panoramic visual scenes.
- Engagement is therefore participatory, as users choose to view the work differently each time.
- Viewers no longer ‘read’ images, rather users ‘navigate’ representational relationships: Image as behaviour.
- “the navigational paradigm [...] entails a shift of focus from texts or objects to relations, practices and processes.” (Verhoeff, 2012)



The Waikato River



# Enjoyment of movement

- With 360° video, enjoyment of movement becomes apparent, as users seek to look around ‘themselves’.
- Many users make some comment about this ability to move around, and typically users want to engage with a work more than once.
- Many comments regarding the ability to track a moving person or object.
- Some users make movements for the enjoyment of moving e.g. spinning in circles.



Nukyala at Fairfield skate bowl



# Lack of movement = 'boring'

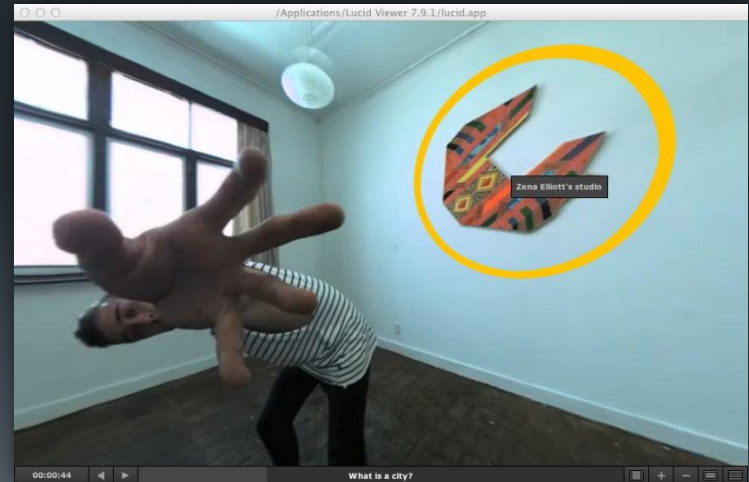


Karl Bayley at Pilot gallery

- For most users, lack of movement in a scene provides less opportunities to 'track' movement, and therefore considered less interesting.
- For documented participants, this quality was hard to anticipate, although only one group considered a reshoot.
- More movement = more interesting, therefore circular movements around camera are more interesting than non-circular movements.

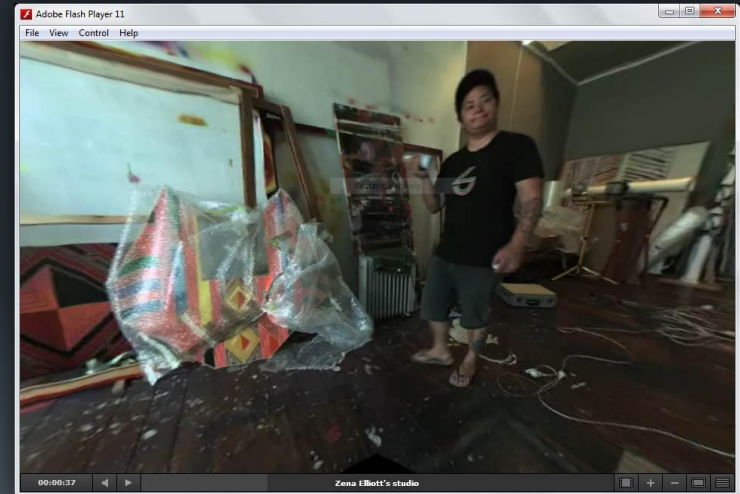
# Participatory montage

- Users clicking on hyperlinked objects embedded in the mise-en-scene, can engage in symbolic movement between scenes.
- Hyperlinks can be embedded in XYZ space, can exist for a defined amount of time, and can be made to move to follow a moving person or object.
- Multiple hyperlinks can originate and traverse multiple scenes, in a rhizomatic manner.
- Both documented participants and users are therefore engaged in participatory montage.



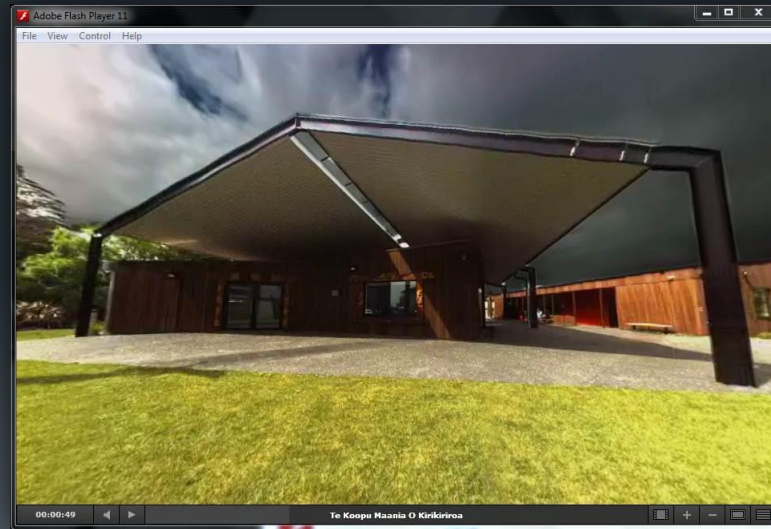
# Intertextual behaviour

- Sequencing of scenes via hyperlinks is by user choice through physical movement.
- Cultural 'knowledge bank' not necessarily determined by maker, therefore preferred meanings are renegotiated.
- The ideological link between images and associative meanings is negotiated through behaviour, not mental contemplation.
- BUT, mise-en-scene can be constructed to refer to other domains e.g. videogames, genres, interpellation etc.



Zena Elliott in her studio

# 360° video and Te Ao Māori



Te Kōpū Mania o Kirihiroa marae

<http://student.mediarts.net.nz/lucid/>

# Navigating Descartes

- How does the virtual collapse of the subject-object distance affect perceptions of a Cartesian nature-culture divide?
- If, as Mere Roberts (2012) argues, that Cartesian discourse “imposes a distinctly Western framework upon Māori ways of knowing”; what might be the implications of this type of media technology?
- Can Māori ways of knowing inform the use of this media technology?



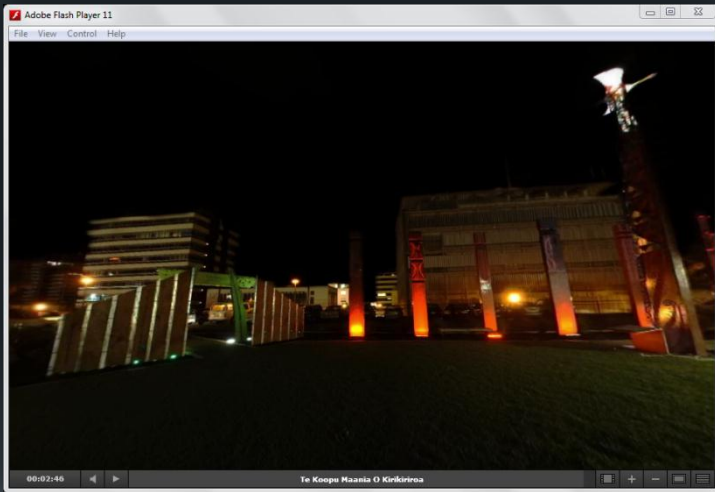
# Performance and participation

- Potential for this media to be used to introduce rituals of encounter (e.g. tikanga of a pōwhiri) by selectively accessing scenes after specific actions / navigations have occurred.
- To what extent could the performative and participatory aspects of this media be used to introduce mataūranga Māori through interlinked content? (e.g. waiata, korero, links via whakairo etc.)
- Potential to introduce symbolic and non-realist concepts, through participatory montage.



# Navigating representational concerns

Te Kōpū Mania o Kirikiriroa marae



- Greater implications than conventional filming techniques, due to potential of unintended recording.
- Imagery is easily replicated – might not suit representation of tīpuna. (Although kiosk software can limit access to user groups).
- Need to consider consultation/ tikanga for unused footage.
- Flash based software could be customised to emphasise different aspects.



# Conclusions



Pink Bats play at Riverbank Mall

# New...



Joe Citizen in his studio

- Innovation discourse means positioning research as 'new'.
- Users and participants declare 360° video as 'new' but this dependent on not having encountered it before.
- Digitality means image-as-world, not image representing world.

## ... or Knew?

- Critique of 360° video reveals these ideas are not 'new'.
- Participation and performance are key features.
- Shift in Western aesthetics away from representation and towards navigation.
- Intertextuality is navigated through behaviour, not contemplation.
- Implications for and from Te Ao Māori.



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