ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: ONE WOMAN SHOW:
DIRECTING, DESIGNING, WRITING,
PERFORMING, AND SELF-PRODUCING
TERMINATION
Alexandra Kelly Colburn, Master of Fine Arts, 2018

Thesis Directed by: Assistant Professor Jared Mezzocchi, Department of
Theater, Dance, and Performance Studies

In this document is a full description and analysis of the creative and administrative process of directing, designing, writing, performing, and self-producing termiNATION, a one-woman dance theatre multimedia piece created under the NextLOOK Residency, a creative partnership between The Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center's Artist Partner Program and Joe's Movement Emporium. Included in the documentation of the process is the original proposal, initial concept, discussion of how these concepts developed over the course of the rehearsal and production process, research images, photos from the pre-production process, and the final dress rehearsal. This production was performed at Joe's

Movement Emporium on November 17, 2017 in collaboration with Jeannette Christensen (Costumes and Assistant Direction), Dylan Uremovich (Lighting), Jeff Dorfman (Sound), and Jonathan Hsu (Choreography, Training, and Photography).

ONE WOMAN SHOW:

DIRECTING, DESIGNING, WRITING, PERFORMING, AND SELF-PRODUCING

TERMINATION

By

Alexandra Kelly Colburn

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Fine Arts
2018

Advisory Committee:
Assistant Professor Jared Mezzochi, Chair
Assistant Professor Jennifer Barclay
Associate Professor Sara Pearson
Associate Member of the Graduate Faculty Erica Bondarev Rapach

© Copyright by
Alexandra Kelly Colburn
2018

PREFACE

The first iterations of *termiNATION* began in my third year of college at New York University in a Creating Original Work (C.O.W.) class lead by Tomi Tsunoda and Mark Lindberg. The goal of this class was to create a ten minute piece in which you could work with one collaborator of your choosing. It was 2010, the year the New York Times labeled "[the] Deadliest Year for NATO in the Afghan War" and the year that made room for Hollywood hits like *Black Swan, Inception,* and *The Social Network* in the wane of the early 2000's obsession with gritty war films like *Black Hawk Down, Jarhead*, and *The Messenger*. We were finally filtering war out of our social entertainment consciousness. For me the abrupt change in the output of Hollywood material did not go unnoticed as two of my male family members recently returned state-side after second tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. Other personal circumstances swiftly followed; The early and unexpected death of an uncle whom I was close to and an unexpected pregnancy leading to an abortion. The latter events challenged my inner-confidence and mores as well as triggered already brewing thoughts and interests about life, death, and what to do in between. Themes of grief, loyalty, faith, patriotism, and courage became important for me to pursue as an artist and created the foundations for the first iteration of *termiNATION*.

A flurry of questions consistently plagued me as I dived into my own twenty-one year old psyche in preparation for this piece: Who are these brave men and women fighting on the front lines for my freedom? Who are the brave men and women waiting for them back home? Can I support the soldiers but protest the war? Would I be brave

enough to give my life for my country? Would I be brave enough to marry someone in the line of fire? Would I be able to live like that? What if I give birth to someone who wanted to give their life for their country? What if I gave birth to someone who could bring more harm than good into this world? Would I want to bring them into a world like this? If I chose not to, where would that leave me?

These questions haven't changed much in the last eight years which is why I felt moved to revisit this piece.

In the wake of Donald Trump's presidential term I have found myself questioning my existence as a female and a citizen. As a female, who owns my body? Who owns my thoughts? In what ways have I been conditioned to think, act, behave, and present myself to the world? Should I curb the way I speak, the way I act, the way I think? Will I offend someone with my voice? Will I offend someone with my past? Will I be judged for that past? Do I judge other women for the things I question about myself? Do I have a right to? As a citizen, who represents me? What is it that I represent? What do I believe in? Does this system work for me or for someone else? Am I an active participant or a passive bystander? What is my role as a woman in this new age of xenophobia and fear? As a mother? As a friend? A citizen? What is my role as a human? Are these insomniatic thoughts the fear of rapidly approaching thirty as an un-married, childless workaholic or is it because I see the politics of the world changing faster than I might have anticipated

rolling us back forty, fifty, and sixty years? I can't say it *isn't* the first, but it's certainly more of the second.

So here I am eight years later taking another stab at *termiNATION*. While anyone who saw the initial performance all those years ago might say, "It's so different! It's changed so much!" it really hasn't. It's certainly a more complete version than it's predecessor, but I wouldn't say it's different. The piece follows a similar structure, asks the same questions, retains the same director, designer, writer, performer, and producer (though is beautifully catapulted forward by a well-rounded and dedicated artistic team). Perhaps the only difference this time around is just that — time. Eight years later, I still ask myself the same questions and I find I'm no closer to finding the answers. Now there are more questions and those questions are deeper and somehow even more impossible to answer. The questions hit home harder, the stakes seem higher, and the desire to connect with an audience that feels the burden of these suffocatingly heavy thoughts and feelings ever more urgent.

Sigh. Here goes everything.

Dedication

This book is dedicated to my parents, Charles and Prima Colburn, who raised me to be dangerously curious, fiercely independent, and to always follow my bliss.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To Mark Costello for his unwavering friendship, mentorship, and collaborative spirit since we embarked upon this journey almost three years ago.

To Jared Mezzocchi, my faculty advisor, whose energy and charisma convinced me to launch headfirst into the unknown.

To the design team of termiNATION whose creativity, friendship, patience, and determination to bring this story to life in the course of five days stands unparalleled in artistry and camaraderie. There is no dedication or thanks that can express the depths of my gratitude.

To the unseen performers of termiNATION, Peter Frank Antone Leibold, Annie Chowdhury, Karen Dolle, Agyeiwaa Asante, Matthew Buttrey, Brandi Martin, Jeannette Christensen, Dylan Uremovich, and Jeff Dorfman, who stepped in to save the day when I realized I couldn't play every role myself.

To Tomi Tsunoda and Mark Lindberg who introduced me to devising my own work and gave me the space to begin cultivating the seeds of termiNATION.

A special thanks is due to the Technology Shop and the Theatre, Dance, and Performance Studies' Media Lab at The Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center at The University of Maryland and Dance Place for providing us with supplemental equipment to achieve our large scale technical dreams.

And lastly, to Dylan Uremovich, who is an eternal source of artistic inspiration, support, bombastic joy, ab-tastic laughs, and insatiable love in my life. Without him, I wouldn't have the courage to attempt this monster again.

Thank you.

Table of Contents

Preface……..……..……..

Chapter 1: The Proposal Process

About NextLOOK & The Request For Proposals

The NextLOOK Series is a creative partnership between The Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center's Artist Partner Program and Joe's Movement Emporium aimed toward offering artists an opportunity to "construct innovative methods of deepening the audience's involvement in [their] creative process…by removing logistical barriers and providing a sounding board for artists creating new work… [and to] creat[e] an accessible, exploratory environment that connects intriguing artists with adventurous audiences."[1] Selected artists are given a five day residency at Joe's Movement Emporium culminating in a performance at the end of the week. Audience engagement is a priority for the NextLOOK series and "must be designed to ignite interaction and participation with the artists(s) in conversation that provides questions, feedback, and ideas about the work in progress."[2] Artists interested in applying must submit a proposal with the following: An Artist Statement, Description of Proposed Project, Plans for Audience Engagement, Goals and Outcome Assessment, Number of Artists Involved, Plan to Utilize the Five Day Residency, and provide links to samples of work as well as any links to social media and websites.

---

[1] Description of the aim of the NextLOOK Series taken from the NextLOOK 2017 - 2018 Request for Proposals.

[2] Description of the aim of the NextLOOK Series taken from the NextLOOK 2017 - 2018 Request for Proposals.

The Proposal

The Artist Statement

As an Asian-American Feminist Multimedia Designer interested in the intersection of culture, politics, design, and performance, the goal of my work as a multi-disciplinary artist is to create art that excites, engages, and inspires people across all disciplines. By studying ancient folklore from cultures all over the world and gathering stories, perspectives, and thoughts from my diverse group of collaborators, my goal is to create an urban myth. In taking these two large pools of rich content rooted in human experience to understand what universal truths may be discovered, we hope to create stories that mimic epic folklore, but are set modern day.

Description of Proposed Project

termiNATION is an in-process movement-based solo investigating life and death through the lens of a pregnant war widow. Inspired by an adolescence and early adulthood steeped in the events of post-9/11 and the recent inauguration of Donald Trump, this piece explores the role women have to play as we carry this new era of politics to term. In the maelstrom of American culture, 21st century colonialism, and the cyclical blind faith to trust the institution, we look to use the last sixteen years worth of politics, perspective, and war to ask ourselves what kind of world we want to create for our children.

The Wife of a soldier stationed in the Middle East calls him with the news that they are expecting their first child. The next morning, two soldiers appear at her door

with the news that her husband has died from an IED. In her grief and confusion, she embarks on a journey to uncover what makes war so appealing. Secluding herself inside her home over the course of her pregnancy, she creates an active war zone, teaching herself how to become a soldier in an attempt to heal in the wake of losing her husband to a war she doesn't understand.

Plans for Audience Engagement

I would like to engage the audience in a few ways: The first being a traditional talkback session at the end of the performance. Secondly, I would like to involve the audience as the "walls of the house." The audience will be seated and standing on the perimeter of a blue paint tape line in the shape of a square. They will be active witnesses and participants acting as the barrier between the world outside of the house and the life inside. As the doors, walls, and windows making up the architecture of the home, the Wife will be able to stare out of a window, but actually stare into the eyes of an audience member, or push two audience members apart to mimic the opening of a door. In using the audience as a barrier, I'd like to highlight how close to someone's grief one may be and how unable or unwilling you may be to do something about it, even when it looks you straight in the eye.

Goals and Outcome Assessment

My goal with this residency is to workshop and cultivate the first full iteration of this piece by asking myself some important questions ruminating on design, politics, and the Female Body. How successful can multimedia be with unconventional and sparse projection surfaces? How close can the audience be to the performer and still retain the safety and clarity of the fourth wall? How willing is an audience to engage in sensitive subject matter at such a close proximity? What universal truths about war, grief, procreation, legacies, abortion, life, and death can be garnered by witnessing these topics explored in such close quarters? How do we rise to the occasion when it calls us? How do we deal with grief? How do we differentiate between good and evil, right and wrong, or indifference and passion? How do we differentiate qualities and traits that are societally inherent in Male and Female? Who decides that for us? Who decides the Fate of mankind? What role do I, as a Woman, have to play in the next term of the most recent president? How is my body respected or degraded based on what I choose to do with it?

As a multidisciplinary artist I'm interested in how many ways and in how many places culture, politics, design, and performance can overlap. The answer is "In all ways! And in every way!" — but how far can we enrich our experience as performers and as audience members to be more awake, more aware, and more sensitive to the experiences of the Other. Through exposure, through rigorous study, and through rigorous experimentation, I think we can find a way to make theater as physically and intellectually athletic as possible. This creative residency can offer a pod for ideas,

thoughts, concerns, fears, and excitements for the future of the arts and the future of the arts in relation to politics and culture to incubate.

Number of Artist Involved

Approximately 4 - 7 artists will participate: One costume designer, one lighting designer, one multimedia designer, and one performer. There is the possibility of bringing on other consultants and associates to help flesh out the material as we get closer to the residency.

Plan to Use the Five Day Residency

The five day residency will act as a laboratory to explore the different ways we can play with multimedia and staging in a 360 degree environment. It would be open to the public to observe how artists collaborate and problem solve large technical feats. Five twelve hour days would be ideal (with a 2 hour dinner break in between the morning and evening session) to maximize the luxury of having a space to set up, leave, and pick up where we left off without having to lose precious time by setting up and striking each day.

Chapter Two: The Preliminary Design Process

termiNATION was accepted into the NextLOOK Series in March of 2017 and was produced in November of that year. Between March and November, I spent time assembling the artistic team, cultivating the script, and dreaming about what this piece could and needed to be.

While in the initial proposal I slated only bringing on a costume designer, lighting designer, projections designer, and performer, I knew that we would need to expand the team. What was not clear in the proposal is that I planned to take on the roles of performer, director, and projections designer in addition to writing and conceiving the beast. I had experimented with this multidisciplinary role previously at the University of Maryland in my Second Season, *untitled homage to my twenties in new york city,* in which I directed, wrote, and performed. While in *untitled homage…* I had initially planned to remain outside of the performance, focusing on directing and writing, I found that as rehearsals developed and the subject matter turned from light and cheerful to dark and morbid that I didn't feel comfortable burdening people with the responsibility of playing me at the darkest part of my history. Looking back, I don't think I had come to terms with those events and in order to fully close that chapter of my life, I would need to find a way to play myself. I would need to toe the dangerous line between performance and therapy. I would need to find a way to use my life experiences to share universal truths about the world without being masturbatory. Why was I so afraid of "burdening" my performers or my audience? I had never been fearful before.

I think this fear stemmed from worry. I worry/-ied that the types of material I am thrilled to attack as a performer, director, and writer, are not necessarily comfortable for others. A few months before *untitled homage…* I had asked a fantastic actress and close friend of mine to perform in a solo piece called *Legacy and Liveness*[3]. In the original version for an academic class[4] I took on the role of performer and projections designer but in order to shape the piece from the outside as a designer and director, I asked my friend to join us in a performance capacity. This iteration for the NextNOW Festival would last between 60-90 minutes and she would have to stand naked on stage as Rob Siler, my lighting designer, and I painted light and projections onto her body. She sobbed uncontrollably at the end of it. Was it a moment of catharsis? Had I pushed my friend to an emotional and physical limit? Did I burden her with questions, thoughts, fantasies, and nightmares I lived in? Worry. I worried I hadn't taken care of her. She said to me afterwards, "That was an incredible experience… But I'll never do it again." Then she laughed her infectious laugh and we toasted to a job well done. That experience taught me to take care of my collaborators as best as humanly possible — even if that means taking on a bulk of the work myself.

---

[3]An extension of a class project for Jared Mezzocchi's Advanced Multimedia called *Body As Surface.* The class project featured Rob Siler as lighting designer and Isadora programmer.

[4] *Body As Surface:* the assignment was to use the body as a projection surface to understand the ways in which the surface can affect the story we are telling. *Body As Surface/Legacy and Liveness* became about exploring questions about Female Body. What can the female body hold, take, embrace, defend, expunge, remember, forget, and assume? What do we project onto the female body, and how has the idea of "female" changed over time? How can we journey through history and memory to understand from where we came and to where we may go?

Between *untitled homage* and *Legacy and Liveness,* I not only resolved myself to be a more caring collaborator but I revived my love for interdisciplinary work. After all, I had been trained at N.Y.U. as an interdisciplinary artist capable of taking on a myriad of roles in any given production. Could I do it again? Could I do it again and better? After a year and a half in grad school feeling like I had to fight, defend, and debate with colleagues and advisors on every projections choice I was making on shows not built for projections, *termiNATION* offered me the opportunity to create a piece around projections and play to those long-forgotten interdisciplinary strengths. In this process I could run the show and be the show. A One Woman Show. A new vision for the piece emerged.

As exciting as this new vision was, logistically I knew I couldn't pull off a One Woman Show on my own and sought to create a well-rounded team. If I was taking on a bulk of the labor as the performer, director, writer, projections designer (and by default scenic designer), then I would need to bring on a few more minds to ease the load and expand the possibilities. In addition to bringing on Jeannette Christensen (Costumes and Assistant Director) and Dylan Uremovich (Lighting) I reached out Jeff Dorfman (Sound) and Jonathan Hsu (Choreography and Training). In assembling this team of diverse and disciplined artists, it was important for me to create a collaborative environment in which they all felt they could influence the course of the story and the overall design as an equitable member of the artistic team and not just their specialty.

With a team assembled I had to return to conceptualizing this piece for myself. Through some reflection I found there was an abundance of goals in writing, design, and physicality I wanted to achieve that needed to be whittled down to the bare essentials.

Some plot points and details that were important to maintain were a) the main character loses her husband to a war she doesn't understand, 2) the main character is pregnant and needs to decide whether or not to keep her baby, and 3) the main character undergoes a major transformation that shocks the audience. Design-wise, 1) the audience needed to be as close to the performer as possible and 2) the projections and multimedia needed to be visible from every audience vantage point. Physically, the performer needed to convincingly put herself through bootcamp over the course of a ten to twenty minute sequence towards the end of the piece. Knowing that these were the essentials of building the arc of this story, I proceeded to assemble a script.

Unable to find the original script from eight years ago, I proceeded to re-imagine the script with these new essentials in mind. The script underwent five rewrites between March and November with a bulk of the revisions happening in October and November as rehearsals, production meetings, and late-night brainstorming sessions went on. The first version of the script went out to designers in early October and we held our first production meeting on October 23, 2017.

Design Meetings & Conceptualization

Our first gathering as an artistic team took place on October 23, 2017. While most familiar with a traditional design and production process at the University of Maryland Theatre, Dance, and Performance Studies' program, we knew that due to the short schedule we could not afford ourselves that luxury. As a result the team knew it was imperative to come in prepared with thoughts, ideas, questions, and challenges to the work. As a result we were able to respond quickly and efficiently to one another, allowing each new idea to grow, expand, and connect with the other design elements. Using the essentials I detailed in the previous section, my team and I proceeded to craft an initial concept for *termiNATION*.

Initial Concept

termiNATION is the story of a woman (June) who loses her husband (Jamie) to a war she doesn't understand and through her grieving process sets out to become him in order to find out what happened. It was important for me to establish a few things 1) make a distinction between life before she loses her husband and life after she loses her husband and 2) Explore grief as both a private and public matter.

Scenically, the home needed to transform from a clean-kept idyllic suburban paradise to an active war zone that would not only represent the collapse of her life after losing her other half but also allow us to enter into a mimetic parallel where June could effectively become Jamie. We decided to work in a thrust stage configuration with

audience on three sides. The stage would be composed of a fridge, a sink, a couch, a desk, a bathtub, and a bed. A large wall would sit upstage with an aperture (to act as the front door) and surrounding the space would be four blinds (two on each side of the plan) to act as non-traditional projection surfaces. At one point, the stage would need to transform into a church during Jamie's Funeral and to make this transition happen we decided to employ the use of projections to transform the blinds into stained glass windows and the couch into a coffin. [Figure 2.1, 2.2, 2.3]



Figure 2.1 Scenic Research Plate. Idyllic Home.



Figure 2.2 Scenic Research Plate. Destruction.



Figure 2.3 Scenic Research Plate. Faith.

Projections-wise, we needed to establish her obsession with gritty war movies and macabre films, her ignorance of current events (despite the fact her husband was at the center of a scandal), her attempt to keep Jamie alive through Skype, and her reliance on social media. The blinds and the front of the house wold serve as our projections surfaces to multiply the various types of media June distracts herself with to pass the time while Jamie is away, to magnify her vulnerability when said distractions mirror her fears and anxieties about Jamie's well-being and her upcoming pregnancy, as well as depict the outside forces threatening to destroy her fragile state.

Aside from providing music for choreographed sequences, Sound needed to gauge the climate of the world outside of her home. Between worried calls from family members and friends, pressing voicemails from journalists looking to get a statement, reschedules of missed doctor's appointments, crowds of reporters stationed outside of June's home as well as whispers and gossip amidst the pews at Jamie's funeral, Sound needed to seamlessly guide the audience between "present June" and "zombie June"; A June fully attuned to her environment and attempting to distance herself from it and a June slipping in and out of conscious action.

The Costumes needed to show off the varying contradictions in June as well as aid in her transformation from a June defined *in relation* to Jamie and a June defined *by* Jamie. The June before Jamie's death is a fiercely loyal friend but a seething gossip queen. She is religious but not modest. She is hard on the outside but soft on the inside. She takes pride in her feminine appearance but would rather sit at home eating cheetos and wearing Jamie's clothes. She is bubbly and sassy but sweet and sentimental and

above all desperately in love with her husband. The June after Jamie dies is reduced to a shell without her other half, a vessel for carrying a child, and defined no longer as "June" but "Mrs. Lawton" or "the wife of Private Lawton." Additionally, costumes had the responsibility of depicting the passage of time. Between the quick succession of days leading up to the news of Jamie's death and June's growing belly, we needed to be conscious about how to keep time charging forward without slowing us down with the sheer number of clothes and changes.

Aside from indicating mood and tone, Lighting could help transform June from a passive bystander into an active participant in her own story. Journeying from clean cut delineated naturalism into a deconstructed grief-stricken reality, lighting would need to root itself in truthful depictions of the world June is familiar with while also shaping the outside forces threatening to destabilize her. As June recedes further into her grief and finds refuge in the safety of her home, practicals littered across the space could become islands of safe isolation as she shuts out the familiar world and enters fully into her grief. As those outside forces break through the shutters of the house, these isolated practicals transform into war explosions that force June to take action, pull herself out of her grief, and find acceptance at the end of a long road.

In terms of Choreography, I have always been fascinated by the inherent musicality of pedestrian bodies doing pedestrian tasks in pedestrian spaces and how the subtlety of gestures can be expanded into movement. For *termiNATION*, we determined the choreography needed to move from pedestrian to gestural to athletic. This progression could gently guide the audience from the kitchen sink grieving drama to an investigation

of the depths of grief and the ways it manifests itself in the body to a post-modern mimetic deconstruction of the role of the female citizen. Our goal was to depict June in three distinct stages: Female, Male, and then Human to aide in her transformation from passive bystander to active participant both in her private and public life.

With these things in mind, we moved forward in subsequent production meetings to negotiate our concept with the resources and time we had available.

Rehearsal and Development

With an initial concept in mind, a rehearsal schedule [Figure 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 2.7], a first iteration of the script, and four weeks to bring *termiNATION* to life, the team and I briefly went our separate ways to begin building. Before jumping into rehearsing the material, I placed my director hat on and used my first rehearsal to understand how I might use the space before I stepped into my role as performer and subsequently designer. Looking at what Writer Kelly had given Director Kelly was the first step in understanding June's world. Rehearsals continued on this way with Performer Kelly and Writer Kelly making changes to the script that Director Kelly needed to approve while Scenic Designer Kelly and Projections Designer Kelly scrambled to adapt to those new changes. Simultaneously however, Designer Kelly's would propose ideas into the rehearsal room that Performer, Writer, and Director Kelly found useful but would need to rework the intentions, actions, staging, and story arc to adapt to an ever-evolving piece. The following sections summarize, chronicle, and organize this incredibly athletic rehearsal and development process into thematic groupings for easier digestion.

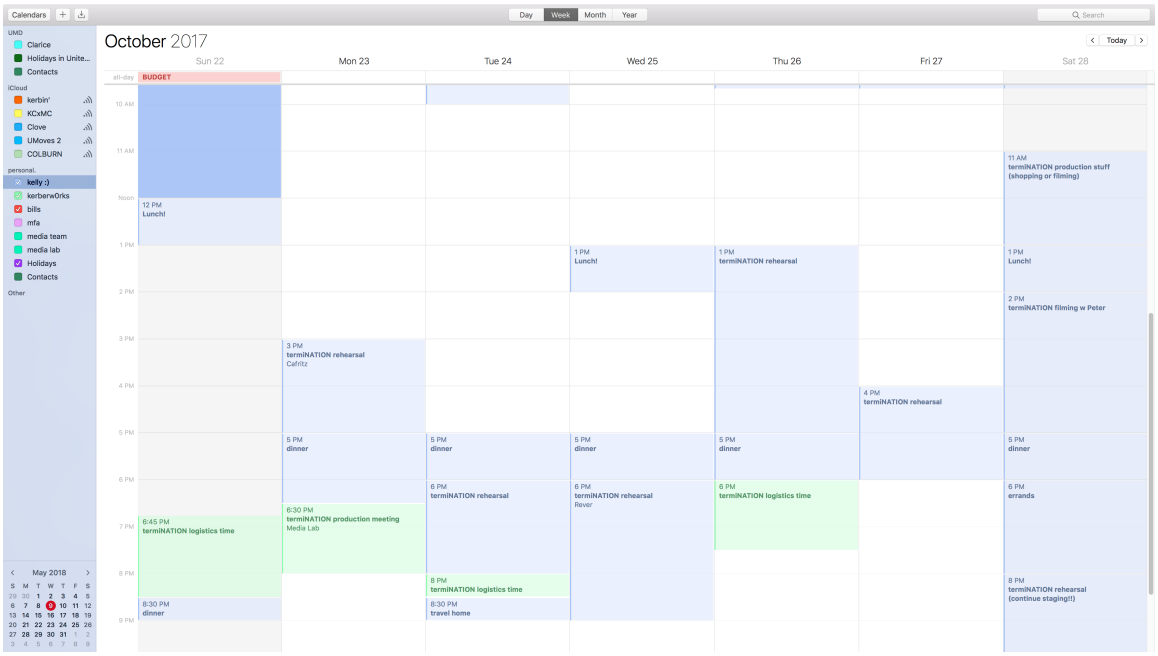


Figure 2.4. Screenshots taken from Artist's Personal Calendar of proposed rehearsal and logistics times. Tech Week. Week 1.

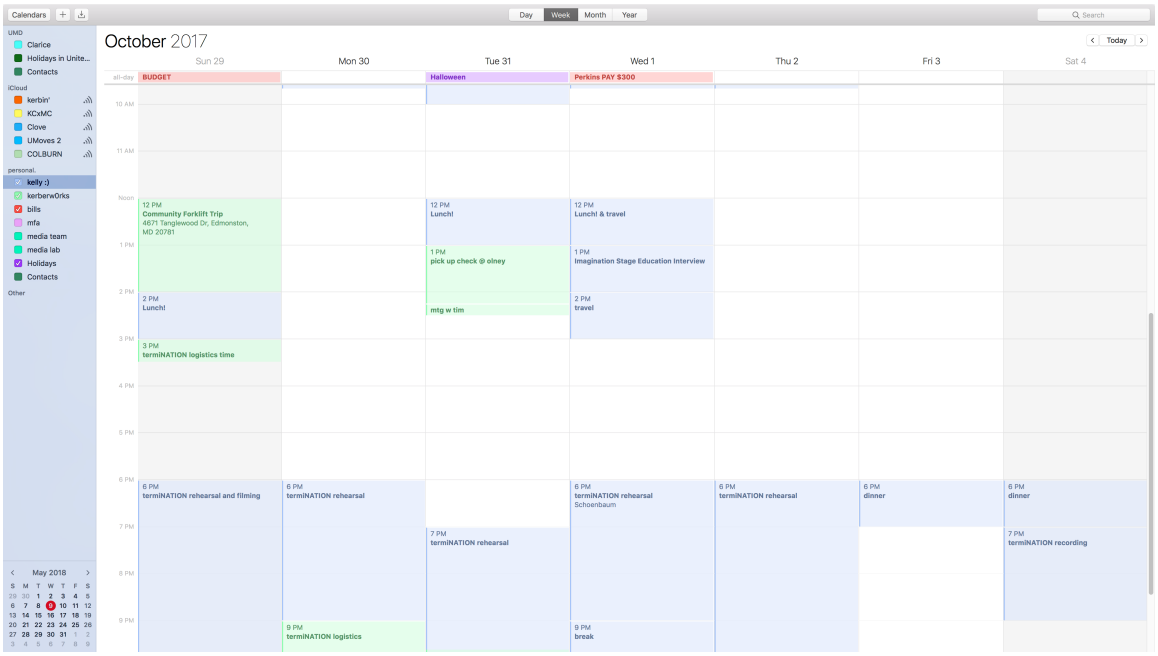


Figure 2.5. Screenshots taken from Artist's Personal Calendar of proposed rehearsal and logistics times. Tech Week. Week 2.

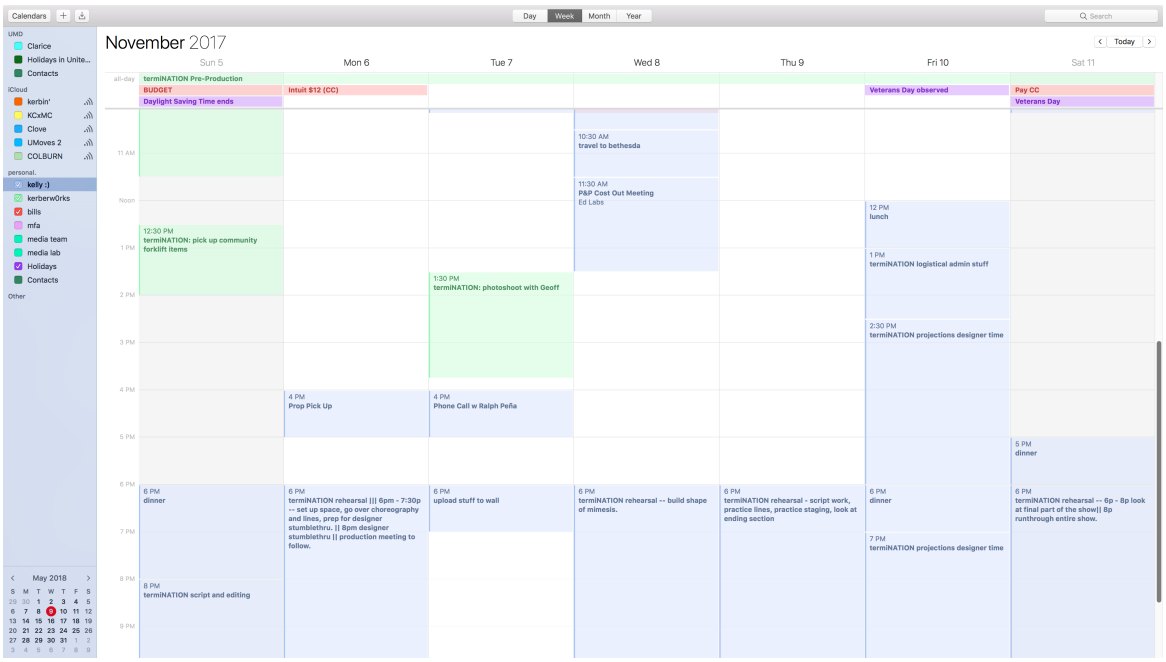


Figure 2.6. Screenshots taken from Artist's Personal Calendar of proposed rehearsal and logistics times. Week 3.

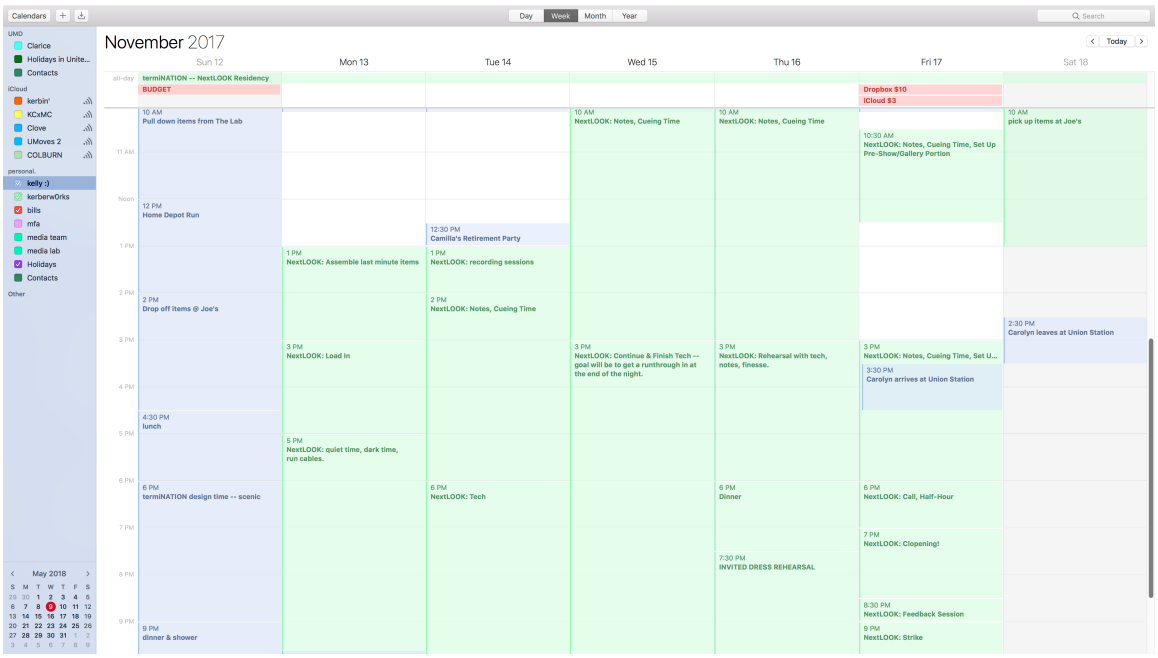


Figure 2.7. Screenshots taken from Artist's Personal Calendar of actual rehearsal and logistics times. Tech Week.

The Scenery and Audience Configuration

I focused on distilling each room of her home down to one piece of furniture that would give our audience enough information to fill in the rest. Blue painter's tape on the floor delineated the walls of each room in the ground plan to give us a sense of the layout but to also invoke the feeling that June and Jamie had recently moved in and were still putting the place together. The blue painter's tape lines created a topography inherent with staging and choreographic rules that could be broken later as June recedes from the world and enters deeper into her grief. In one sequence, June travels through the house, like a zombie, performing mundane chores and routines only to find that in her mental absence, she is washing dishes in the bedroom or folding clothes in the kitchen, traveling through the "walls" like a ghost. Later on as she creates bootcamp that turns into an active war zone, the furniture is pushed up stage into a pile to create a barrier against the door, ignoring the mechanics of the layout to flood us into her new mimetic reality[5]. Towards the end when June begins her journey of peace and acceptance, she slowly takes apart the furniture barrier to reach the door and step outside to face the public. She never fully returns the home to its previous state of order creating a deeper contrast between life with Jamie and life without Jamie.

I wanted the audience to feel like the walls of the house acting as both protection from the outside world as well as voyeurs whose penetrating glances constantly

---

[5] *Mimetic Reality/Parallel:* A term I use to differentiate June's behavior as "mimetic reality" rather than fantasy. Becoming Jamie is not a fantasy because she is actively pretending to be someone else. Her reality is one in which she assumes a new character. It does not make her life and her character any less poignant or the reality any less real, but rather an identity and reality that is something parallel to the one she exists in.

attempted to destroy June's fragile state. Because of the short period of time to tech and rehearse, we decided on a thrust stage with chairs to create a border around the exterior of the home. Rather than forcing the audience to be touched, pushed, or gazed at, this decision was made for both performer and audience safety since the material would be in development up until the residency. We found that grounding the play in a traditional audience configuration allowed for us to interrogate the role and responsibility of the audience. As June loses connection with the outside world and continues her journey inward, the audience role shifts from passive bystander to active participant when she breaks the fourth wall and reveals that Jamie was questioning his role as a soldier in the US Army. At this revelation, the performer looks at every audience member in the eye, breaking the fourth wall and casting them as complicit in her secrecy.

Projections and Multimedia

Projections and Multimedia aimed to explore grief as a private and public matter by distracting, magnifying, and threatening June throughout the course of the piece. Ranging from social media posts to gritty war films circa early 2000's to unanswered Skype messages to live streaming news footage outside of her home, Projections and Multimedia served as the various ways we fantasize, sculpt, consume, digest, and connect to one another in an age of rapidly advancing technology.

Skype Calls

Something that interested me in developing this piece and magnifying grief as a private and public matter in this social media age was the idea of a digital grave. In *Juaréz: A Documentary Mythology* by Theater Mitu, one character tells the story of a woman who misses her husband so much after his death that she writes to him on Facebook in the present tense.

> "We have one family we're very close to in Juárez. See two years ago they kidnapped the daughter and her children. The son-in-law was hit by so much grief and trauma, he died. He had to negotiate their rescue… and soon after, he died. So here's the wife, writing to him on Facebook. Her brother's on the chat, and I said, 'Can you explain to me, she's posting to her husband —posting pictures of her and her husband — but didn't he pass away?' And he says, 'she still writes to him like if he's alive.' [A beat] She writes to

him, in the present tense, and everybody sees it. And how can you not read those posts and weep — [A beat] And she says, 'How do I explain to you that the violence of my city has killed my husband, even though nobody shot him directly.' And you see the posts, and she constantly writes, I love you, I miss you, where are you… come back to me. And people say, is she crazy? And I say no — it's called overwhelming love.'"[6]

This heartbreaking and vulnerable display of grief akin to leaving flowers on a gravestone or kneeling in prayer to speak to loved ones became an incredible departure point in June's denial to accept her husband's death. Instead of directly referencing this heartbreaking and vulnerable display of grief, I decided to magnify June's embarrassment and impulse to hide her grief from the world by translating the digital grave to their Skype messages archive [Figure 2.8]. This convention became the tether between June and Jamie that could establish their primary means of communication as well as create a more private way for June to communicate with him after his death.

At the beginning of the play, June tries to get in touch with Jamie to share her pregnancy news only to reach a digital dead end. While the missed Skype dates are initially chalked up to being busy, between the continual missed Skype dates, other women on base who have lost their husbands recently, and June's nightmares depicting

---

[6] *Juaréz*: A Documentary Mythology (55).

The Hurt Locker, we witness her jovial one-sided banter slowly turn to worry as their disrupted routine builds up the anxiety and foreshadowing of *The Messenger* to come.

After Jamie's Funeral, June, in a moment of grief, exhaustion, and routine, calls Jamie on Skype in lieu of praying because, "praying to you just doesn't seem right. I wanna call you. I still wanna see your face on the other end of this line."[7] The video montage following this message depicts June in various moments in the house, lit only by the digital blue of her computer screen on stage as she cradles, sleeps, and whispers to it as if Jamie will answer one day. The content on the blinds repeats her gestures — speeding up, slowing down, and pausing to allow the weeks passing in the wake of his death to multiply the thousands and thousands of messages she leaves him in an attempt to heal across time and space, catapulting us towards the moment when she must face the world outside her front door again. To maintain the integrity of the form, style, and aesthetic, I filmed these sections using the Built-In Camera on my laptop.

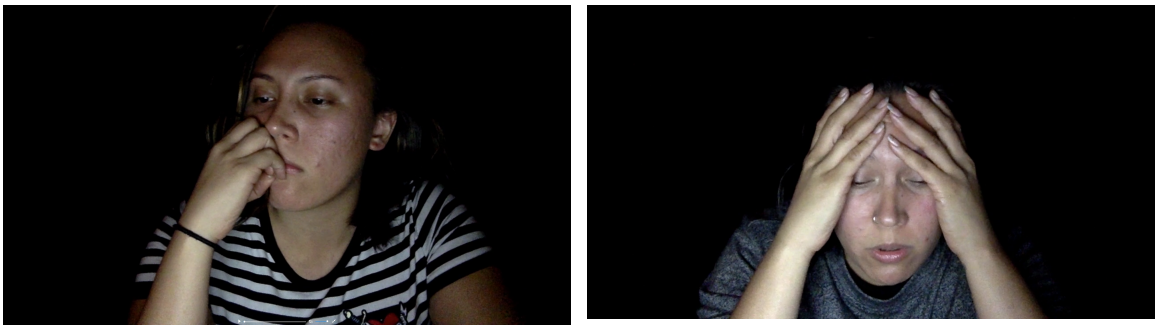


Figure 2.8. Skype Love Letters. Stills taken from RAW footage.

[7] termiNATION (11).

Social Media

Something that was important early on was to distinguish who June is pre-Jamie's death and who June is post-Jamie's death as well as define who June and Jamie were to one another. My costume designer/assistant director, Jeannette Christensen, and I felt that it was important to understand June and Jamie as one unit, as two parts of one whole so that we can understand in detail the devastation June feels when she loses her other half. Without seeing the two of them interact, we were missing part of the story. Without compromising the integrity of the form (a one woman show) we had to find an organic way of introducing Jamie without ever really meeting him in the flesh. From there, we knew social media would need to take on a larger role. To understand June and Jamie's relationship, we created a social media prologue that would allow the audience to meet Jamie through June's depiction of him through social media posts. Since social media platforms allow users to carefully sculpt and cultivate their presence, we agreed that meeting Shelley, June's best friend, through her own social media account could give the audience a third person perspective on June and Jamie's relationship so that we could trust that while June had carefully constructed her online identity and relationship to Jamie, that the two were indeed that genuinely cute and idyllic couple: desperately in love and annoying their followers. [Figure 2.9]

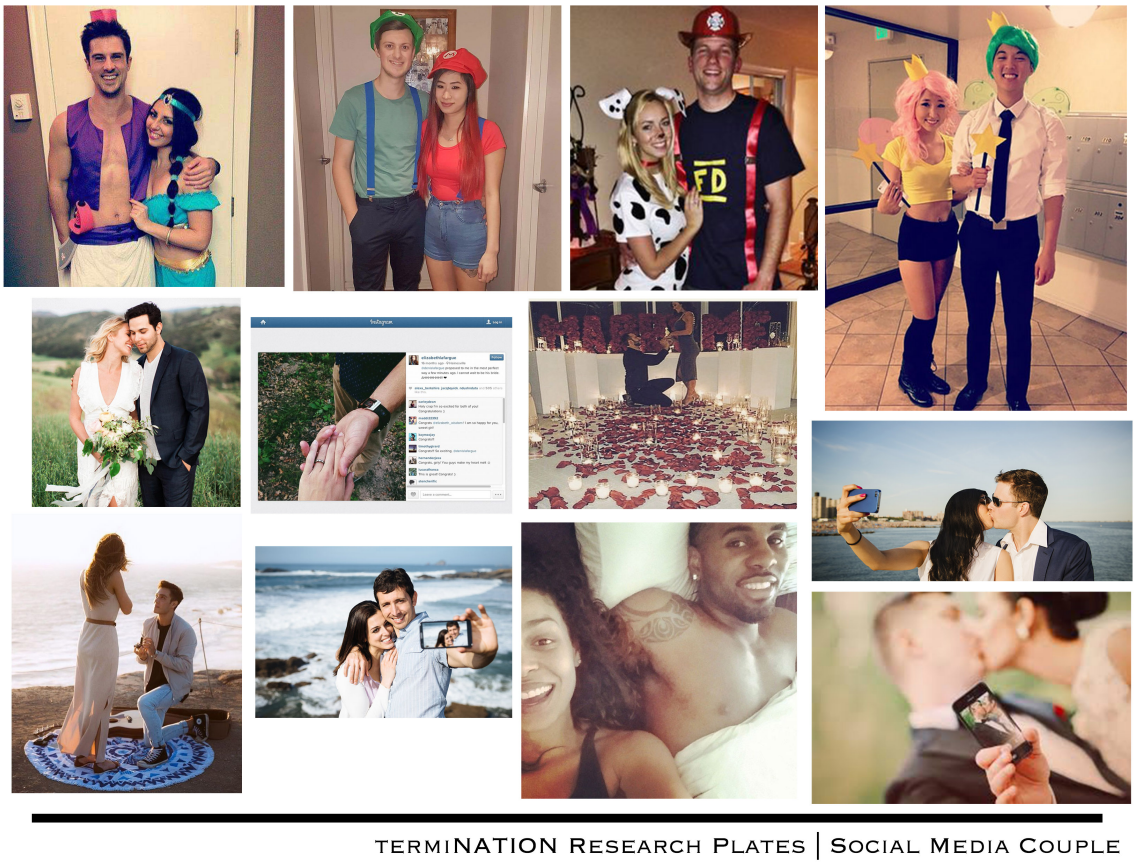


Figure 2.9. Projections Research Plate. Social Media Couples.

For the prologue, we chose a few events that would have gotten the most likes; Christmas [Figure 2.10] , Halloween [Figure 2.11] , a surprise visit home from bootcamp [Figure 2.12] , their engagement [Figure 2.13] , their wedding [Figure 2.14] , and their last day together before his death [Figure 2.15]. Told through the point of view of June and Shelley's social media accounts, using the smart phone first person perspective was important for us to maintain. All footage for these sections was created using smartphones (Androids and iPhone's) to mimic the reality of living in the social media selfie age. From a performance standpoint, these sections were not scripted but improv'd

on the spot to create a lively, energetic, and playful atmosphere that would allow myself, Peter Leibold (the actor playing Jamie), and Jeannette to fully embrace the form and allow June and Jamie's relationship to evolve as Peter and I created it on spot.



Figure 2.10 Christmas. Stills from RAW footage. Featuring Peter Leibold.

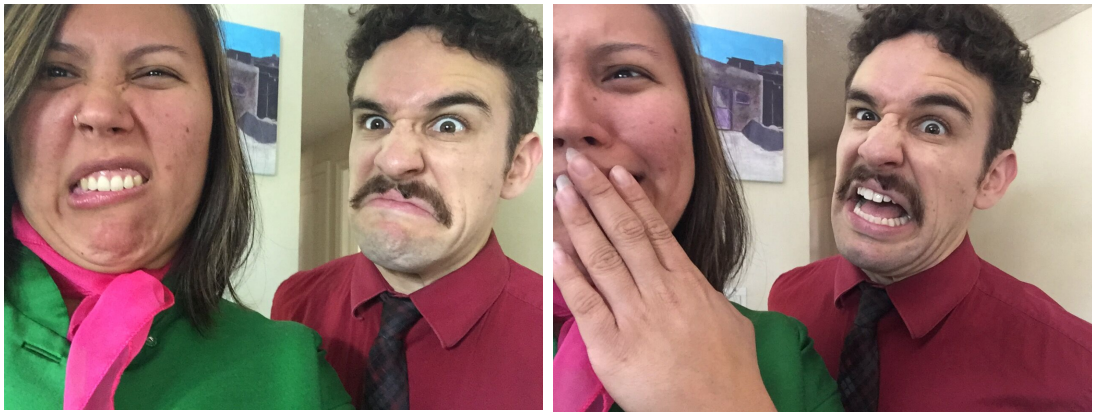


Figure 2.11. Halloween. Stills from RAW footage. Featuring Peter Leibold.



Figure 2.12. Surprise visit from Bootcamp. Stills from RAW footage. Featuring Peter Leibold.



Figure 2.13 Their engagement. Stills from RAW footage. Featuring Peter Leibold.

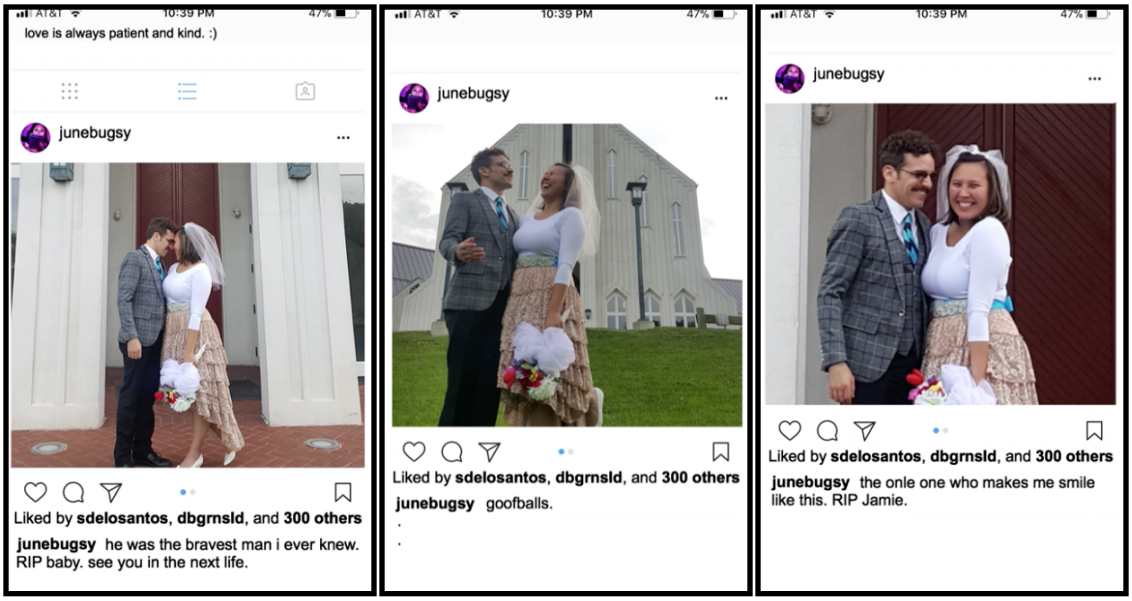


Figure 2.14. Their wedding. Stills from Post-Production. Featuring Peter Leibold.



Figure 2.15. June and Jamie's last day together before his death. Stills from RAW footage. Featuring Peter Leibold.

In establishing June as a social media queen, this empowered her as the main editor of her own story. The content she outputs on her various social media platforms (we chose to solely depict Instagram due to the scale of the design in the short amount of time) is carefully crafted, sculpted, and directly defines her in relation to Jamie. When she loses him, she begins to lose control not only over her life, but her story as the circumstances surrounding his death come to define her apart from how she defines herself.

Films

In addition to being a social media queen I also imagined June as a couch potato. Her post-work routine of coming home, taking off her shoes, and immediately turning on the TV to Cinemax to watch movies before bed became an outlet for me to allow June's distractions to reflect her psychology. When we first meet June, she is eating cheetos and sitting on the couch engrossed in a scene from *Black Hawk Down*. Simultaneously disgusted but intrigued, she leans closer and closer to the television until an explosion severs a soldier's extremity and she has to immediately turn the TV off. Instead of distracting herself from Jamie's absence with something cheerful and uplifting, she chooses to continue watching a film that could very well be reflecting the experience of her husband at that moment in time. In a later scene, she turns on the TV to *Rosemary's Baby* and catches the final scene when Rosemary realizes she has given birth to the spawn of Satan. The choice to depict *Rosemary's Baby* [Figure 2.16] in contrast with *Black Hawk Down* [Figure 2.17], *The Hurt Locker,* [Figure 2.18] and the bootcamp

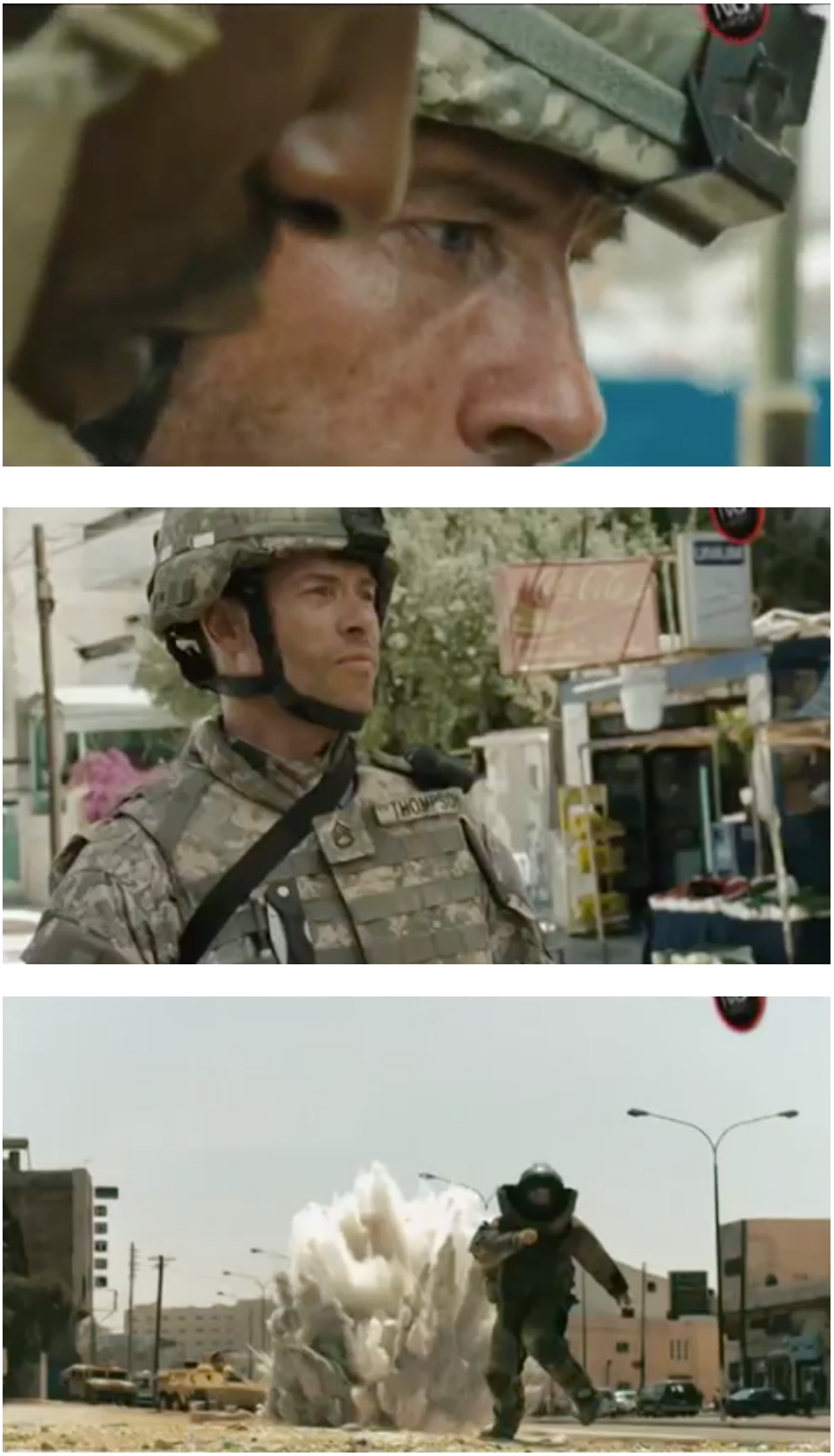
sequence [Figures 2.19, 2.20, and 2.21] at the end was intended to surface and magnify the thoughts and feelings about her upcoming pregnancy and worries of bringing more terror into the world, which she doesn't voice until the end of the play.



Figure 2.16. Stills from *Rosemary's Baby.*



Figure 2.17. Stills from *Black Hawk Down.*



2.18. Stills from *The Hurt Locker.*



2.19. Stills from Bootcamp Sequence. Selected Clips from *Jarhead*

The depiction of films that simultaneously distract June but reflect her psychology became an opportunity to explore the creation of fantasies and the way we sculpt our partner's identity. For June, the war films bring her closer to Jamie as she sees him through the lens of Hollywood. As a soldier Jamie exudes bravery, courage, loyalty, and raw masculine energy. To June, he is Jake Gyllenhaal and Guy Pearce. The more she consumes these gritty war films, the more she creates a fantasy around her husband as the hero in order to distract herself from the terrifying letter she receives that paints him as something lesser than hero.



2.20. Stills from Bootcamp Sequence. Selected Clips from *G.I. Jane.*

The films also became a way for June to cope with her reality and base her behavior on the way she has seen things on her TV. When the knock from Notification Officer comes at the door, *The Messenger* plays as a transition between the notification to the funeral. Because she's seen *The Messenger* and heard from women in the Family Readiness Group of what to expect, she can base her response by mimicking others (both real and fantasy), another way for her to maintain control over her environment by policing her actions in the public sphere. The films continue this convention of mimicking behavior as a means of coping with her husband's grief when she unplugs from the world and we move into the Bootcamp sequence. As we move from the kitchen sink grieving drama to a post-modern mimetic deconstruction of the role of the female citizen, June uses the war films she's consumed over the years to create a mimetic

parallel in an attempt to understand why Jamie might have done what he did. After achieving some sense of understanding, she can decide whether or not she should speak with the media knocking down her door, threatening to destroy the safety she's created for herself through seclusion.



Figure 2.21. Stills from Bootcamp Sequence. Selected clips pulled from *Full Metal Jacket.*

News

The news sections became another way for us to magnify June's inability to cope with her husband's occupation and establish how much control she exercises over her consumption of media. When she is getting ready for bed she turns on the TV in her bedroom where a breaking news segment announces that "four soldiers were found dead near a Shia Mosque"[8], June (who is tweezing her eyebrows in the bathroom) immediately runs to the bedroom to listen to some of the news before immediately turning it off, returning to the bathroom, composing herself, and resuming tweezing her eyebrows. Completely in control of her environment and her consumption of media, the audience is subject to learn about the world outside of her home through her perspective.

[Figure 2.22 and 2.23]



TERMINATION RESEARCH PLATES - NEWS

2.22. Research Plate. Projections. News Aesthetic.

---

[8] termiNATION (3).



TERMINATION RESEARCH PLATES - BREAKING NEWS! LIVE !

2.23 Research Plate. Projections. Breaking News/Live! Aesthetic.

After Jamie's death, she spirals into the depths of her grief, secluding herself in her home, reduced to scrolling and swiping through memories of her and Jamie on Instagram. The projections that have previously been carefully created, consumed, digested, and sculpted by June threaten the isolated stability she has created for herself. A few months into her pregnancy, the news media (literally) come knocking on her door. [Figure 2.24, Figure 2.25, Figure 2.26] The knock on the door disrupts a memory June has been watching over and over and over again, telescoping us out of her isolation and back into the wide world of reality. She opens the door, reporters (who have been calling her for months to get a statement) rush her, and she slams the door in their face. Confused and scared at the number of strangers outside of her home, she turns on the TV (something she hasn't done in months) to see breaking news segments on multiple outlets reporting that Jamie is at the center of a military scandal and labeling him a traitor.

Trapped and cornered like an animal, she can't even peek through the blinds with the faces of the news anchors staring her down and interrogating her from every vantage point. Confronted with this new information about Jamie broadcasted to the world, she further isolates herself by unplugging from every outlet that once connected her to it.



2.24. From Top Left to Bottom Center, B-Roll Footage and Live Breaking News Segment. Daniel Dyers, CNN. Stills from Post-Production. Featuring Matthew Buttrey.



2.25. From Top Left to Bottom Center, B-Roll Footage and Live Breaking News Segment. Hadassa Kwan-Perez, Fox News. Stills from Post-Production. Featuring Karen Dolle.



2.26. Live Breaking News Segment. Miriam Akua, MSNBC. Stills from Post-Production. Featuring Agyeiwaa Asante.

Environment and Live Cinema

Two scenes in the piece that didn't necessarily fall into neat categories projections-wise were Jamie's Funeral and The Bathtub Scene. Something that was important to me was June's strong ties with religion and God. While she may not be the model Catholic, she certainly is one, and so is Jamie. Jamie's Funeral was the only scene that transports us out of the home using the couch and a flag draped across it to create a coffin. Simultaneously, projections to transform the blinds and the wall upstage into the stained glass windows of a church [Figure 2.27] , became the only true scenic ask of projections in the piece. I took this as an opportunity (with sound) to visually depict June's initial descent into her grief, going in and out of conscious action, but also to visually represent her dissolution with religion. In the first Skype Love Letter to Jamie



Figure 2.27. Research Image of stained glass windows in Catholic Church.

she says, “praying to you just doesn’t seem right.” The melting and eventual fading of the stained glass windows over the course of Jamie’s Funeral marked June’s first departure and questioning of her faith.

The Bathtub scene marked my attempt to incorporate the idea of Live Cinema on stage. In an early dreaming session of *termiNATION*, before I even brought on my artistic team, I had dreamt of the iconic war films falling away to reveal June as the center/ master editor of her own film. With a projections schematic rigged with cameras in various parts of the set, I had hoped that we might be able to create a Live Film on stage in an effortless dance between lighting, projections, and sound. An example of an earlier writing session depicted the bootcamp sequence with soldiers from various iconic films doing push ups intercut with live feed of June doing pushups from various angles. Over the course of the sequence the films would cut out as live fed images of June litter the various surfaces, casting her as the main character of every film she’s ever seen, catapulting the mimetic reality into a fantasia of film. This flirtation with Live Cinema fell away as the demands of the truncated rehearsal and technical process loomed but The Bathtub scene stuck with me as a striking visual moment to retain in spite of its departure from the concept developing throughout production meetings and rehearsal. I decidedly kept this moment in to zero in on June’s desperate grief and create tension with the audience asking, is she really going to kill herself when she’s carrying a child within her? [Figure 2.28]



Figure 2.28. Research Image of woman in bathtub.

Costumes, Choreography, and Staging

Having Jeannette Christensen (Costumes and Assistant Director) and Jonathan Hsu (choreographer and trainer) consistently in rehearsals helped alleviate some of the pressure I was beginning to feel taking on the challenge of a one woman show. As spectators and collaborators on the outside, their insight was invaluable in shaping the piece. As I created this character mentally and physically from inside the process; Uncovering June's backstory, her movement, her speech patterns and intonations, and behavior, Jeannette and Jonathan molded and shaped her from the outside.

We always knew that June's physical journey would move from pedestrian to gestural to athletic and that her style would evolve from Female to Male to Human. This arc would help emphasize the disruption of her life and routine after Jamie's death and allow us to seamlessly slide deeper and deeper into her psyche as she disconnects from the world only to reinvent herself in Jamie's shoes towards the end. Jeannette and I spent a lot of time at the beginning developing how she inhabited the space pre-Jamie's death. In the first scene June is home alone in her house clothes (a comfy sweatshirt, slippers, and short spandex shorts — a shabby but sexy home look) doing various things about the house; First watching a film, then doing the dishes, then calling Jamie. We discovered that her movement vacillated between tight and still to fast and loose. When fired up on the phone in the kitchen with her best friend Shelly, she's a tornado with spins, flailing arms, and emphatic but dismissive gestures towards the heavens but when alone watching the gritty war film, she sits fixated on the image, shoulders tight, knees closed, leaning in

close. The June leaving Jamie a message about their upcoming pregnancy is a little bit of both — excitable, quick in thought, with operatic gestures contained within a buzzing container.

We start to see a different side of June as she lets down her performative and dramatic mask telling Jamie "I love you. I can't wait to start this next adventure together."[9] A still June, free of anxiety, chaos, excitement, and responsibility is a vulnerable June. We see this again when alone in the home office (about to be converted into the baby's room). She finds her center, her breathing is slow and even, and her hands gently embrace her stomach. This gentler and slower June is found again in a moment of prayer before she goes to bed. While her life may be plagued by chaos and gossip she finds peace in family and God.

One important prop/costume piece that was important to track was June's pregnancy belly. In earlier production meetings and subsequent one-on-one's, Jeannette and I discussed over how much of her pregnancy does June seclude herself and in what stages of the pregnancy we would depict her. Initially, we had discussed 3 to 5 bellies, but in the end whittled it down to 1 because of time and resources. Where and how we would mark the passage of time eluded us throughout the development process, but agreed to save this question until after the entire piece had been staged.

At a certain point Jeannette and I discussed what it is that June might do for a living. While I initially had imagined her as an unemployed military wife pursuing her interests in yoga and writing at home, Jeannette and I felt that in order to amplify the

---

[9] termiNATION (2).

disruption of Jamie's death to her life and routine, she needed to be someone who was out and about instead of already homebound. We decided to give her an office job where she had to wear a dress and heels. June had to feel well dressed but modest and conservative. For the sake of consecutive quick changes, we kept her ensemble simple. Her outfits were loose but form flattering dresses with easy to reach zippers, which would become a theme of disrupted routine for the following sections.

When the Notification Officer arrives bearing news of Jamie's death, we immediately transition into the funeral. In a carefully choreographed pedestrian sequence, June changes out of her work dress into a funeral dress with a zipper that is hard to reach. This was something I was adamant about maintaining as Jeannette and I went shopping. This is the first moment June realizes she is truly alone and the weight of a simple thing like becomes an insurmountable task without Jamie. Her other half is missing and she must learn to do some things on her own. After the funeral, June loses sense of herself and begins to break down. Her inability to unzip her funeral dress on her own leads her to sit in the tub fully clothed in a moment that is simultaneously cleansing and drowning. When she re-emerges from the tub after an unsuccessful suicide attempt, she changes out of her wet clothes into one of Jamie's old flannels. In her grief she attempts to bring herself closer to him so that she won't forget.

It is at this moment June's movement shifts from pedestrian to gestural. Using the pieces of her daily routine such as washing dishes, folding, clothes, and surfing the internet/waiting for Jamie to call became the basis for the gesture based movement sequences that Jonathan and I created. In this sequence, June travels through the house

like a zombie performing mundane chores and routines only to find that in her mental absence, she is washing dishes in the bedroom or folding clothes in the kitchen, traveling through the "walls" like a ghost. We spent some time exploring how these simple indicative gestures could grow into abstractions of themselves by playing with Mary Overlie, Anne Bogart, and Tina Landau's Viewpoints technique. Using compositional elements, particularly topography, shape, gesture, repetition and tempo we were able to successfully develop a seamless and artful descent into the depths of June's grief through physicality. This departure from realism and naturalism in the movement (which was then echoed by lights and sound) created a pocket of time that felt like a moment trapped within a forever. In this suspended moment rooted in a deteriorating reality we are in and out of time, watching helplessly as flies on the wall as June, wearing Jamie's old flannel, slips into a grief that is untouchable.

As the piece barrels towards its mimetic parallel we jump forward a few months in time. Another breaking point for June as she learns about the scandal surrounding the mysterious circumstances under which Jamie died, this news wakes her up out of her despair and into a new phase of healing. In an effort to understand why Jamie might have deserted she becomes him, donning his clothes, and putting herself through bootcamp. Jonathan and I put together a training schedule with some simple exercises that would help build up my endurance and strength in preparation. Mimicking bootcamp sequences from iconic films like *Jarehead, D.I., G.I. Jane, Hacksaw Ridge, and Full Metal Jacket* the hope was that June spirals deeper into this mimetic parallel. By doing so, she finds purpose and intention with each drill, getting stronger and stronger. She is simultaneously

losing herself and becoming someone else. We would see June transform from feminine to masculine, Female to Male, from wife to husband, from citizen to soldier, from June to Jamie. Out of this grief a new June emerges, no longer complacent or asleep, but fully awake, active, and engaged. Even as she spirals into the fantasy of mimesis, she gains truth and purpose.

One of the essentials that had yet to be fleshed out was how June would undergo a major transformation that would shock the audience. While the bootcamp sequence could impress the audience with female physical power, what could we do to truly shock the audience? In a late night brainstorming session between Jeannette and I, we discussed the possibility of June shaving her head. We discussed the possibility of *me* shaving my head on stage. It was a moment of shock and fear for the both of us. Could we do that? It was a one night event, so why the hell not? If this character who takes pride in her feminine appearance needed to transcend gender to achieve humanity, then shaving her hair (similar to Demi Moore in *G.I. Jane*) would become one way of crossing the bridge into her mimesis of Jamie.

Only a few weeks away from the residency, juggling the multiple responsibilities of director, designer, writer, producer, and performer, I could not keep up with the training schedule and exercises Jonathan created for me. While I had been slowly introducing these exercises into my regiment, when it came down to choreographing the bootcamp sequence I found I was not able to convincingly perform these drills. Jonathan and I decided to reduce the complicated nature of this sequence down to one thing: running. In the five to seven minute montage of bootcamp sequences I designed, we

decided that another way of building up strength while simultaneously exhausting myself could be through suicides. For the duration of the five to seven minute montage June would run from upstage to downstage as fast as humanly possible. This way, we could still achieve the athleticism of the movement journey without continuing on with the original sequenced drills.

Rehearsals On My Own — Directing Myself

The inability to keep up the training schedule and exercises was not an isolated incident of goals burning to a crisp on the back burner. While my rehearsals with Jeannette and Jonathan proved fruitful, I cannot say the same for rehearsals on my own as time went on. While Jonathan, Jeannette, and I would nail down staging and choreography, I found the time I spent rehearsing on my own became dedicated more to Designer content generation and Playwright re-writes rather than rehearsals. Designer Kelly and Writer Kelly were consistently treading on the toes of Performer Kelly. As a result, the subsequent rehearsals with Jeannette and Jonathan ended up being a review of the previous rehearsal rather than building upon it. However, the process of rehearsing by myself was not always stunted.

During the initial exploratory process I found ways to combine research and rehearsal that proved successful. In one rehearsal, I listened to an NPR story on All Things Considered called *Moving On: Project Helps War Widows Recover,* and one of the women interviewed said something that inspired an additional movement section. The transcript reads as follows:

GLORIA HILLARD: In 2007, ErinRuctor's husband, Army Sgt. Blake Stephens, was in Iraq. He too called her the night he died, but she didn't pick up in time.

ERIN DRUCTOR: For some reason I didn't answer the phone, and he left me a voicemail. And I still have that voicemail, and I still listen to it 7 1/2 years later. I can't erase it. Just because that war is over, it doesn't mean that ours is over. Like, our journey is still continuing."

What struck me was not the missed connection but the feeling that this message was Ms. Ructor's final tether to her husband that she didn't want to erase even though her life needed to continue without him. As I listened to the four-minute story on loop, I created a gesture sequence called SHAKE, WIPE, REMEMBER, REMIND, FORGET physicalizing the struggle these women endure as they attempt to heal: shake yourself out of your misery, wipe away your tears, remember him, remind yourself to be happy, and try not to forget him in your pursuit of happiness. While this sequence did not end up in the final performance, it proved fruitful in creating internal actions for me to play as a performer as we entered into the grieving section of the piece.

I found that this embodied research, a combination of dramaturgical research and improv, was an incredible way of generating content but the difficult part was finding a place to put it. I wasn't always creating staging or choreography for particular moments in the show but generating backstory, digesting information about military wives and

widows, and creating stakes for myself as a performer. While this exploratory process was necessary in combining the work of my multidisciplinary roles, it meant that I would need to find ways to insert this embodied research into the circumstances of the piece. While some of these embodied research sessions became staging, others fell away in lieu of pushing the story forward (like SHAKE, WIPE, REMEMBER, REMIND, FORGET), making way for events based on action rather than moments based on research.

Some scenes in rehearsals on my own were given time to develop while others were glossed over. I found myself rehearsing the bathtub scene consistently in order to mine the many different textures of grief immediately after losing someone by crafting each and every moment to the music. However, other scenes like the phone calls with Shelley in various places of the house offering exposition rather than action felt tedious to rehearse and I found myself marking through the actions instead of diving into the staging and the dialogue to make it more succinct. In general, I found it easier to choreograph and stage moments with music than with dialogue. In all fairness, this was due to an attempt to learn lines in a different way than I had been trained as an actor.

Once upon a time I heard that actors I admired and respected, like Michael Caine and Gary Oldman, would read their lines out loud over and over again so that the words would be so ingrained into their memory they could more seamlessly play the action in any given scene, delivering a new dynamic every time. Towards the end of my acting training (before launching headfirst into directing and designing full time), I wondered if you could memorize and emotionally connect to your lines without ever voicing them aloud except in the rehearsal room. In theory, every time you spoke the lines aloud in

rehearsal those thoughts, actions, feelings, and words would be the closest to the truth of your character. Just as you would be saying the lines for the first time, so would your character. I had never attempted to do this before and as I convinced myself that this approach to acting would challenge my strengths as a performer, it certainly hindered the process, continually allowing me to gloss over some sections as I told myself, "I'll memorize them before I go to bed tonight."

However, as rehearsals slowly progressed our calendar caught up with us and before I knew it we had reached our first runthrough. While the initial hope was to have made it through the entire show, I had only rehearsed and refined about half, making it up to the moment June barricades the door. Feeling that showing progress to the team was more important than cancelling and attempting to develop more of the content. From a Writer Kelly standpoint, this was where the material took a definitive turn and I had no idea what to do after this. The rest of the script was a scattered deconstructed mess that Director Kelly had no idea what to do with.

Lighting and Sound

After the first runthrough, we launched into more concrete discussions about Lighting and Sound. While these elements remained in an ever-evolving conceptual stage until a few weeks before the residency due to the fluctuating nature of Dylan, Jeff, and my schedules, the first run-through offered us the first definitive landscape of the piece. I met with Dylan and Jeff in on-on-ones acting as both Director and Projections Designer to discover in what ways each of these elements could play nicely with projections but also have their own arcs. In our subsequent meetings we found that Lighting, Sound, and Projections could indeed live in similar worlds but would need to diverge as the main puppeteer (June) begins to lose control over her reality. These elements in tandem became important forces of design that embodied the various ways the outside world threatened to destabilize June's fragile state. However, they could also be forces pushing June towards the final stages of acceptance and healing.

Beginning as purely environmental sounds tied directly into the realism and naturalism of each scene, sound became yet another element in June's control. The sound of *Black Hawk Down*, a faucet turning on and off, a TV turning on and off, Whitney Houston playing over a speaker, the foley sounds of a refrigerator opening or the iconic Skype ringtone were all within the realm of what June could puppeteer. As June loses control over the world, the sound instigates it, feeding her desire to disconnect by overwhelming us aurally before dropping us into a new scene.

As the show goes on and we reach *The Messenger* sequence with the Notification Officer and we meet our first disembodied character. The first disruption in June's carefully created reality is introduced. Jeff picked up on this change intuitively and introduced me to a sound that could provide an incredible bridge between June falling in and out of conscious action as the things in her control begin to slip away. If the first portion of the show prior to Jamie's death is a world dictated by the rules of naturalism then funeral marks a departure from the way we experience sound in the space. With a previously environmentally heavy design with sound curated and controlled by June (a song playing through a speaker, a faucet turning on and off, a radio turning on and off), the introduction of the piercing 8k sound was very effective in producing an uncomfortable tension in the room. The sound is high pitched and resides somewhere between annoyance and intolerable discomfort, akin to tenitis. As June loses her train of thought in her eulogy at Jamie's Funeral, the 8k became a sharp and fleeting aural way that grief can seep into our senses. This intolerable and yet permeating discomfort provided an incredible transition between the ensuing scenes (Funeral to Bathtub, Skype to A Series of Phone Calls). As the world torpedoes around her and she finds herself jumping from one space to another, "a little unsure of how she got there"[10] The 8k became a way for June to literally tune out the real world and descend into the depths of her grief, almost like turning the dial from one radio station to static.

When we reach the active war zone, the 8k assumes its rightful role as tenitis. We blast our way into June's fantasy as explosions left and right crescendo. The war makes

---

[10] termiNATION (7).

its way into her home, an omniscient and responsive presence as she confesses her fears of becoming a single mother and the possibility that through her she could bring more violence and pain into the world. As she finally admits, "I'm afraid!"[11] the explosions slowly dissipate as this outwardly voiced confession opens up to a moment of peace and truth. June finally realizes, in the peaceful silence that ensues, that fear cannot hold her back from living life.

Jeff was interested in creating much of the environmental sounds from scratch. We held a recording session at my home to capture the sounds of washing dishes, a a faucet opening and closing, the tap running, and a fridge opening. The intent was to record these sounds to mimic the timing I would have on stage to create a more robust aural landscape. These sounds could then be used in other sections to distort or disrupt the naturalism of each scene as June descends into her grief and the familiar world around her disappears. We knew that not all of these sounds could be generated in our recording sessions, but I think Jeff took the One Woman Show concept another level by attempting to capture sounds that were created by me.

Lighting, similarly to sound, would begin in what I call complacent naturalism. Each room would embody its own quality of light adhering to the rules of the real world as best as possible in a theatrical space. Dylan and I were excited by the possibility of practicals littering the space and the endless opportunities of the blinds presented us [Figure 2.29]. The blinds could create a feeling of entrapment or protection. If lit sharply from the

---

[11] termiNATION (24).

outside with the slats slightly open, the texture could slash across June in her more vulnerable states. If the blinds were closed we could create a looming pulsing glow threatening to break into her isolation. At the end of the play, as she accepts the new reality of her circumstances with a newfound courage, the harsh light of day that has consistently been attempting to break in, showers her in an angelic and salutatory light, no longer beating down on her but illuminating her in a new truth. [Figure 2.30]



Figure 2.29. Lighting Research Plates. Blinds



Figure 2.30. Lighting Research Plates. Salvation and Truth.

As Dylan and I learned more about the technical specifications of Joe's Movement Emporium, we realized that including practicals in the space would severely limit the number of dimmers available to the plot in the air. If we did decide to move forward with this idea, the practicals would have to be actor operated entirely. At an early point in our dreaming stage, we cut them in lieu of finding other ways to magnify June's isolation. We knew that between Jamie's Funeral and the breaking news segment that the previously bright, bubbly, and naturalistic world would soon turn into an island of

isolated grief as June spirals deeper into herself. In tech, we found another way of achieving intense isolation without the use of practicals.

As we transition into the Breaking News segment, we had to feel the abrupt disruption the knock on the door creates in June's world. In a space lit only by projections of a video June watches over and over again, the darkest we would ever live in the space lighting wise, the knock would bring us back to the realism and naturalism of the previously ordered world. From the chaos of the projections, lighting could match the crescendoing sound of reporter's voices amplifying and the quick succession of cuts between the various news channels reporting on Jamie to launch us into June's mimesis. After this point, anything could be possible as June's grief taken a severe turn towards madness. Back in some kind of control over the world, it changes at her will, transforming from an army training camp into the middle of a night bombing in the Middle East. The fantasy she has created gets away from her, paralyzing her in a nightmare where she is forced to wrestle with her demons before waking up. Along with sound, lighting becomes an omniscient and responsive presence forcing June to confess her fears before letting up, dissipating, and basking June in a new day.

Producing, Community Engagement, Branding, and Marketing

Alongside the rehearsal and development process I needed to devote time as the producer/Resident Artist to the responsibilities I had agreed to as part of the NextLOOK series. As part of the NextLOOK Residency, Joe's Movement Emporium and The Clarice encourage the artists to find exciting ways to engage with the community. As part of the proposal I made two suggestions for engagement: 1) Open up technical rehearsals to the public so that they could get a sense of what happens in preparation for opening night and 2) Offer an artist talkback at the end of the performance for audience members to ask questions and offer feedback or suggestions.

In my first meeting with Neena Narayanan (Director of Marketing at Joe's Movement Emporium), Patrick Mullen (Technical Director at Joe's Movement Emporium), Brooke Kidd (Executive Director of Joe's Movement Emporium), and Jane Hirshberg (Assistant Director of Campus and Community Engagement at The Clarice), we discussed a few different options for audience engagement. Jane was interested in the healing and grieving process and suggested that we offer a safe space for the public to enter and discuss their relationship to losing loved ones as way to inform how the second half of the show could develop. This was something I didn't feel comfortable leading as my expertise is not in social work and I was fearful of appropriating someone's vulnerability and performing it on stage. The script, as it stood (and stands today), is purely fictional but drew from people and events that had already been publicized or published in some way. It was Patrick who suggested that we use the Skye Love Letters as a jumping off point. He suggested that we record the Skype Love Letters, upload them

to a platform, and encourage friends, family, and community members to record their responses to June; To answer the letters to Jamie that would never be answered use some of those responses in the show. This excited me as a way for the audience to engage and contribute to the material we were continually developing. I went ahead and recorded the videos, uploaded them to my website under the *termiNATION* tab [Figure 2.31], shared the link and directions in an email blast [Figure 2.32] inviting friends, family, collaborators, and Joe's Movement Emporium subscribers, and waited.

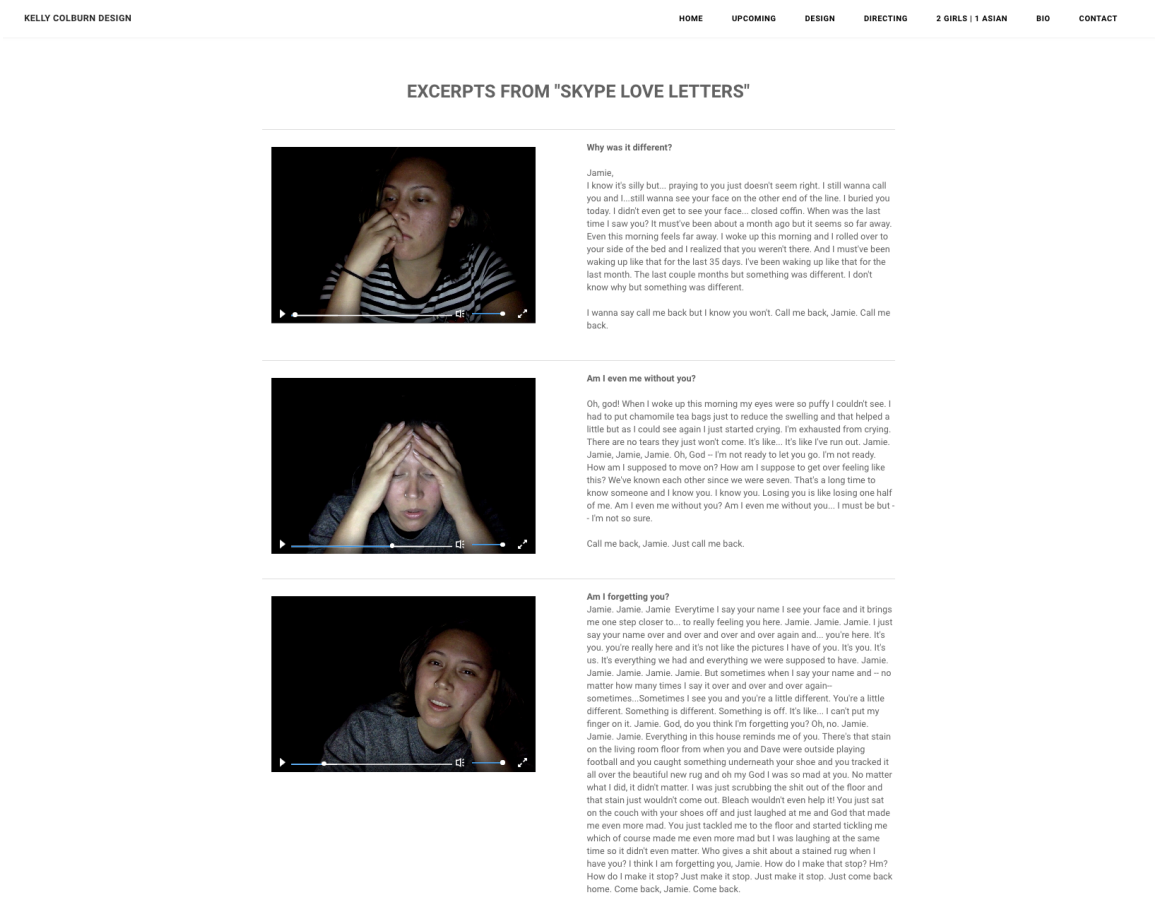


Figure 2.31 Snapshot taken of termiNATION tab at www.kellycolburn.com

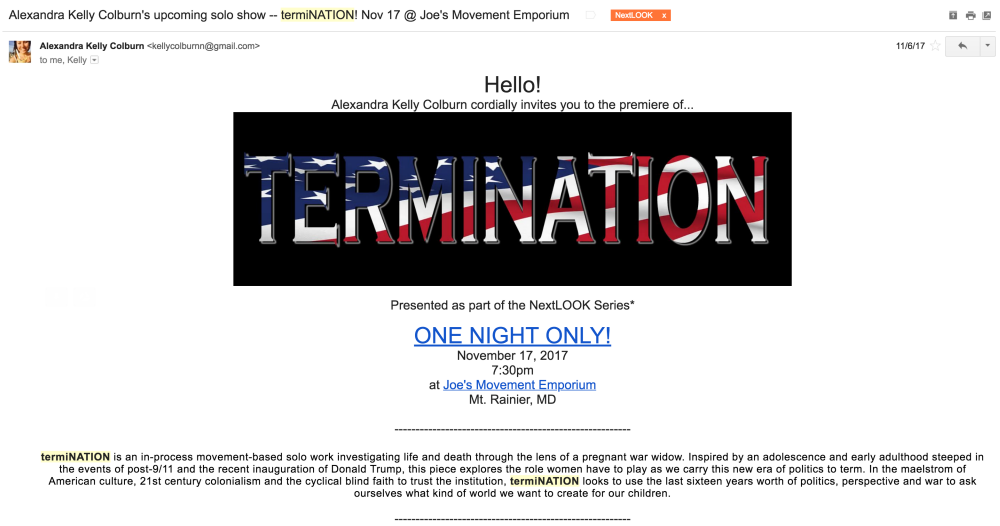


Figure 2.32 Snapshot taken of the email blast sent to mailing list.

My first and only response came from a gentleman named Phil Ryerson who responded through the contact submission form of my website with the following:

> "Equating 9/11 with Donald Trump's presidency makes you look like a fucking lunatic. 'Colonialism'? You mean like Obama dropping tens of thousands of bombs on innocents in Iraq, Syria, and the 'stans? I'm sure you didn't make a peep during that. What you need to 'get woke' is that you don't care what Democrats do. And you rage at what Republicans do. That doesn't make you smart. It makes you a willing servant of a political party. Moron."[12]

[12] Quote courtesy of the artist archives.

It took some time for the shock to die down but then the anger set in and I drafted a response to him using my most collegiate and elitist language… Only to find that he had used a fake email address. I felt my privacy, in some ways, had been invaded. All of a sudden I realized I was much more visible than he was. Between the anger and the fear, I found that Phil's response plagued the next few days of rehearsal and development as I wondered if he had friends who would also find the website and without watching the videos respond based on the synopsis. Would they show up to the performance and protest? Were they even in Maryland? If they found the website, what did they know about me? Was I in danger? How could I get myself out of this situation? Did I need to change the synopsis? Erase it? Delete it? Modify it? How could I fight a faceless, anonymous, digital beast? Did I need to fight it? Did I have any reason to be worried? Then it hit me. I was thinking like June.

Phil's response was a blessing in disguise. It came as a wake-up call. While the content of the story, the plot, the events, and the overall theme were related to love, grief, and loss, the synopsis certainly framed the show in a completely different way. My intention was less about equating 9/11 with Donald Trump's presidency but rather to give us sixteen years worth of fuel to understand and explore the political, social, and global implications that arose from that event. How did we get from there to here? How long have we subjected ourselves to confusion, hate, fear, and loss? How long have we subjected others to confusion, hate, fear, and loss? Being a millennial with a vivid, albeit naive memory of 9/11, and the implications it had for my male family members serving in the military as well as being a fiercely independent progressive female enduring the

chauvinism of Donald Trump's presidency, I found that the intersection of perceived Female-ness and Male-ness could be interrogated through this piece about a woman who must learn to be a single mother. The burden of carrying on her husband's tainted legacy as well as the weight of carrying her husband's unborn child instilled a fear within me, as the writer, that I knew needed to be parsed. It was then that my convictions in creating this piece were solidified — my character needed to not only grieve her husband's death but needed to assert her loyalty to truth and justice rather than continually put faith into the institutions that bound her. The piece, at this point, didn't have a definitive ending and it was here that her journey fell into place. I had received notes from my Faculty Advisor, Jared Mezzocchi, that June was unlikable and stunted, and I thought I had solved that with the Social Media Prologue, but June still hadn't learned anything from this journey — she was wallowing in her own grief, pity, and despair and even after her mimetic acivation, she still had nowhere to go. Between Phil's letter and Jared's notes, I found the second half of the show catapult forward into an intense interrogation of the role of the Female citizen. Not only did I need to call myself to action but I needed to call June to action. The stakes rose, thanks to Phil Ryserson and I found myself taking more responsibility for every single choice I made — partially in an effort to prove Phil wrong but also to not let myself off the hook even for a second.

My design team was thrilled with the response from Phil however Brooke, Neena, and Jane raised some concerns that I had copied Joe's on my response to Phil. My privacy concerns were echoed with them. Lucky for us, Phil used a fake email address, but this situation certainly brought to light our collective fears of invasion of privacy and

mental and physical safety. We didn't hear more from Phil or anyone else like Phil. To this day I consider him a great collaborator in this process as he challenged me to take more responsibility for my actions, words, and content.

Soon after the incident with Phil we began thinking of how to market the piece. Previous marketing materials for the residency used a photo from another production of mine, *untitled homage to my twenties in new york city,* where I am wearing a lacy red shirt, a checkered scarf, and a fedora from Banana Republic, embodying the twenty year old hipster New York version of myself. [Figure 2.33]



Figure 2.33. NextLOOK Marketing from Joe's Movement Emporium.

Emphasis on the marketing thus far had been placed on Alexandra Kelly Colburn the artist and not *termiNATION* the in-process movement-based solo investigating life and death through the lens of a pregnant war widow. With the newfound conviction in emphasizing the role of the Female Citizen, I reached out to Geoff Sheil for a

photography session to produce an image that would capture the theme and mood of the show.

The collaboration between Geoff and I was incredible. We sat down a few times to discuss the arc of the story, what the piece was about, how it was developing in the rehearsal room, and some of the things I wanted the viewer to know or feel immediately upon seeing the poster. I wanted the viewer to feel called to action, aware of the military themes, and maybe afraid that the subject was about to wreck havoc. Geoff expressed interested in using key props or scenic elements that would add some visual dynamics to the poster. I mentioned there was a scene in which the main character sits in the tub full of water after her husband's funeral. He suggested we find a way to use the tub as part of the composition. We decided to stage a scene for the camera that would blend the exciting possibilities of play within the bathtub with the intense glare of a strong female figure rather than attempt to recreate a moment true in the production. [Figure 2.34].

After selecting this photo as the main marketing piece, I created various file sizes to share on various social media platforms. In composing each digital advertisement [Figure 2.35, 2.36, 2.37] I had to find a way to incorporate all the pertinent information including but not limited to (the title, Joe's logo, The Clarice logo, date, copy pertaining to NextLOOK, and the tagline.) Understanding which parts of the advertisements took precedent on smaller pieces, like Instagram, versus larger pieces, like The Kay Wall at The Clarice, took some time to negotiate but in the end I was able to create a unified aesthetic across all digital materials.



Figure 2.34. RAW Photo from filmshoot with Geoff Sheil. Photography by Geoff Sheil.

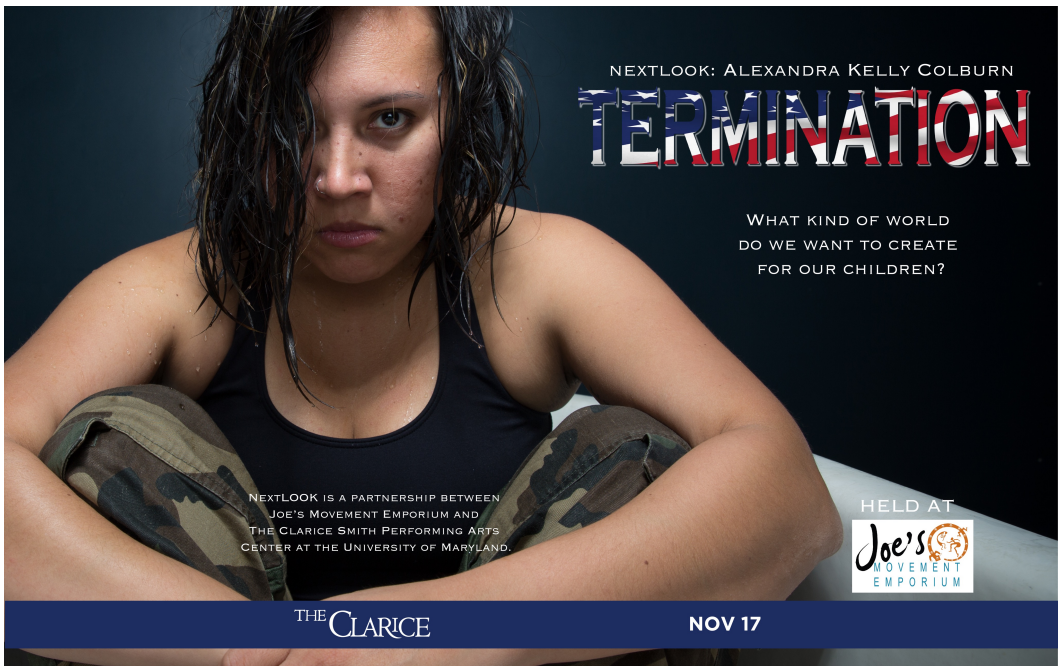


Figure 2.35. Kay Wall Marketing Image.

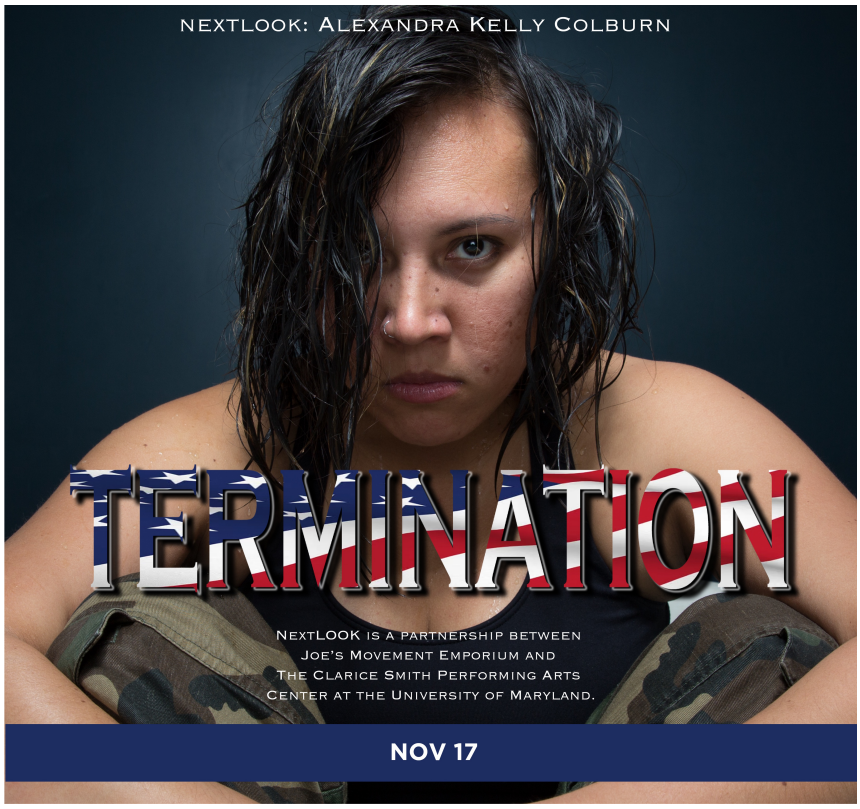


Figure 2.36. Instagram Marketing Image.



Figure 2.37. Facebook Banner Marketing Image.

In addition to the targeted marketing materials, I also posted snippets of rehearsal and production meetings on social media to promote the show [Figure 2.38]. Not only was it a way to document my process but to let my audience at large peek into the development of the piece. An updated email blast was sent out to the mailing list with the new image. [Figure 2.39]

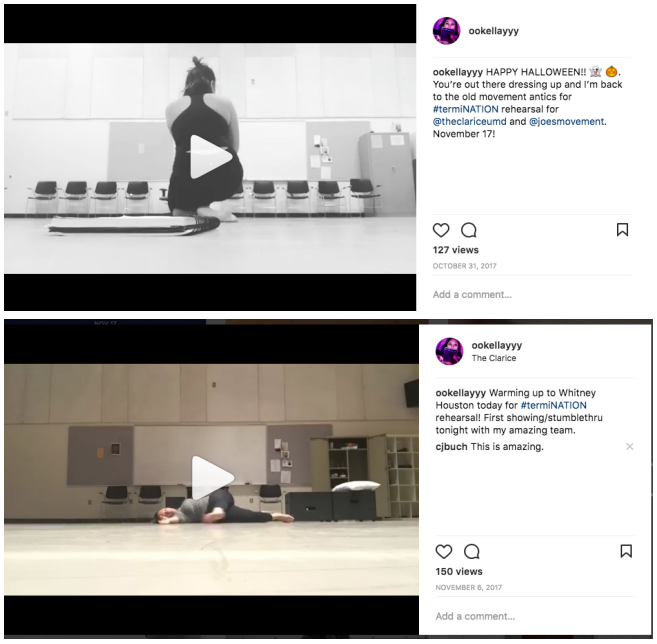


Figure 2.38. Instagram posts for promoting the show.

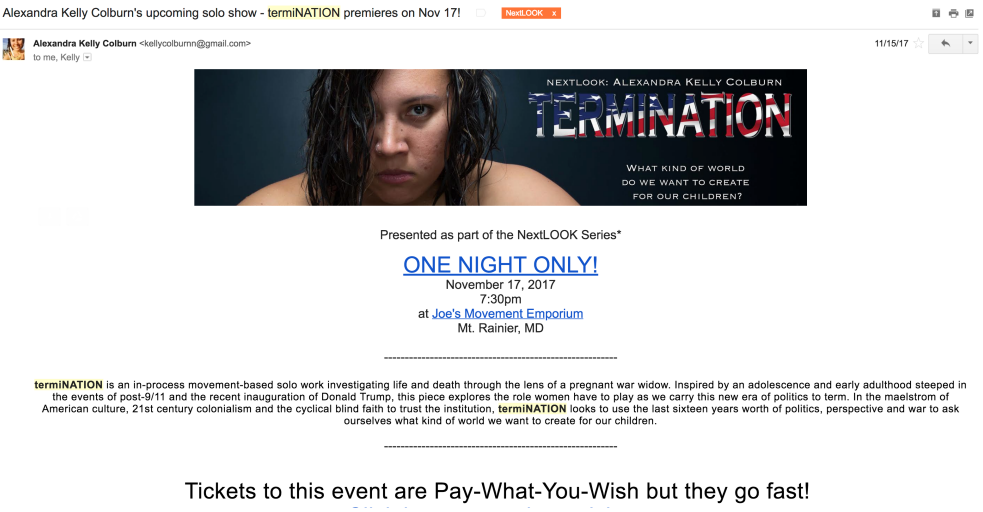


Figure 2.39. Instagram posts for promoting the show.

Chapter 3: The Pre-Production Process

Synonymous with the rehearsal and development process, my team and I transitioned from the conceptual into the practical. After negotiations with Joe's Movement Emporium on resources of the space, community engagement plans, and residency time, my team and I began creating paperwork, troubleshooting the technical aspects of the residency and show, and creating an achievable plan for ourselves based on our previous meetings.

Part of the challenge leading up to tech was coming to terms with the scale of the design we had dreamed up while taking into account the limited resources of the space. Joe's Movement Emporium was willing to give us 25 hours of technical support time out of the 50 hours of residency time we had been allotted through the NextLOOK Residency. Our technical support included two resident technicians and apprentice overhires. Due to insurance policies, we were not allowed to climb ladders or touch Joe's Movement Emporium instruments though if we brought our own ladders and equipment we could do technical work in the space on our own equipment. This lead Dylan Uremovich (Lighting) to work within the confines of the rep plot with a few changes to use the plot to our advantage. Jeff Dorfman (Sound) worked within the confines of the inventory but rented equipment from Dance Place for supplements. I borrowed equipment and props from The Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center and The School of Theatre, Dance, and Performance Studies' Media Lab to ensure that expedite our truncated load-in, tech, and performance time.

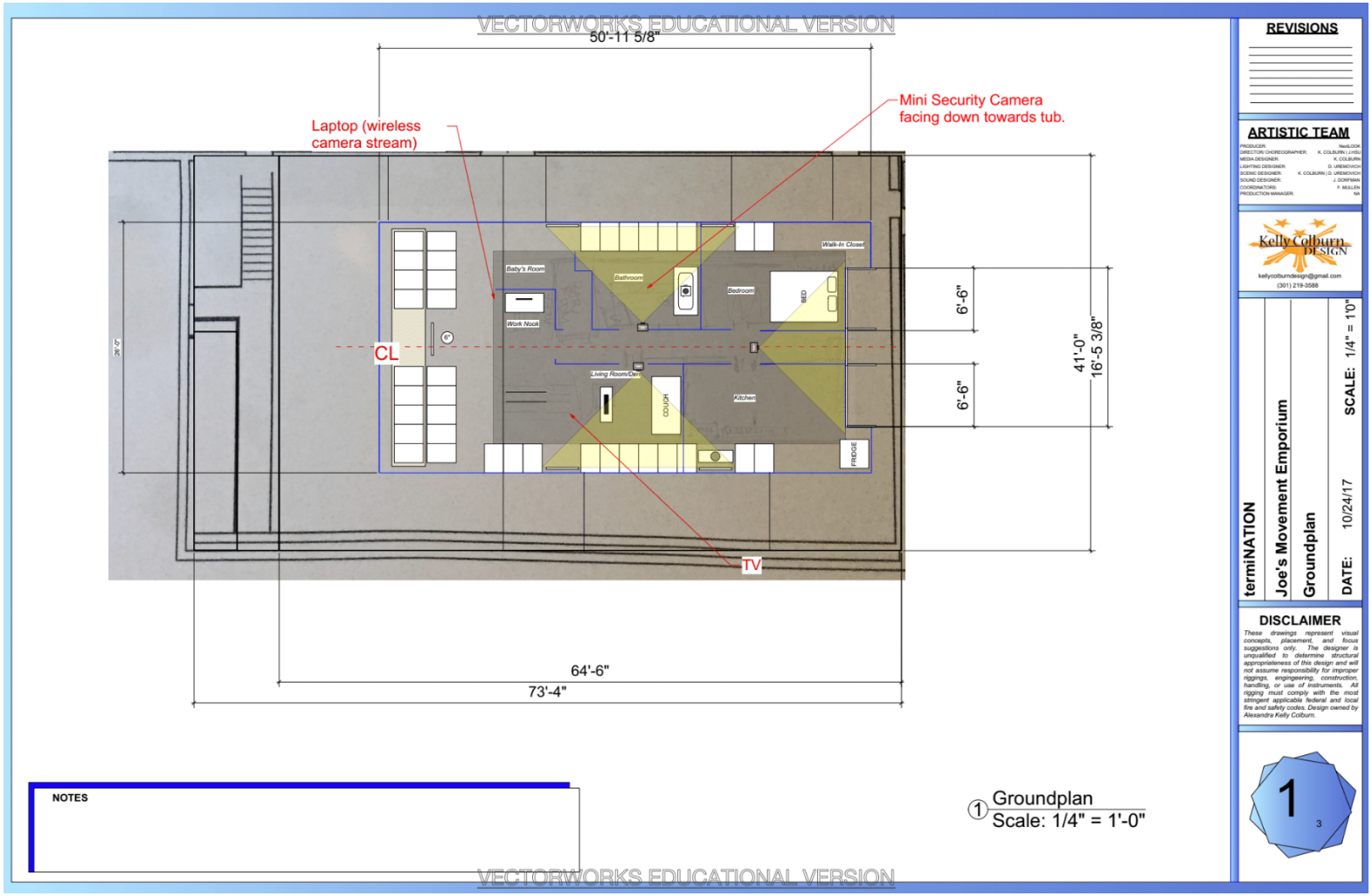


Figure 3.1. Projections Paperwork with Groundplan of Scenic.

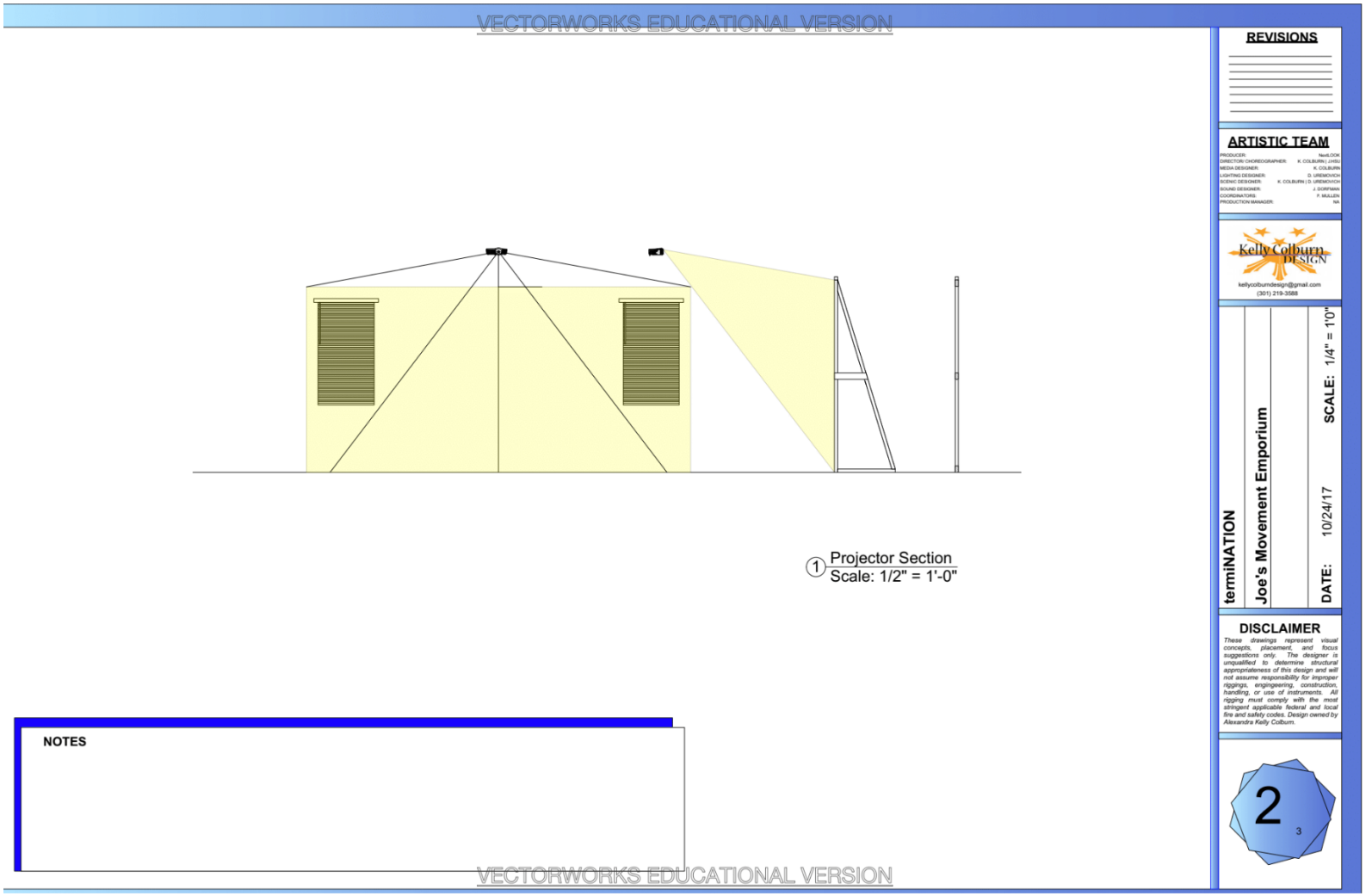


Figure 3.2. Projections Paperwork. Section View of Scenic and Projector Placement.

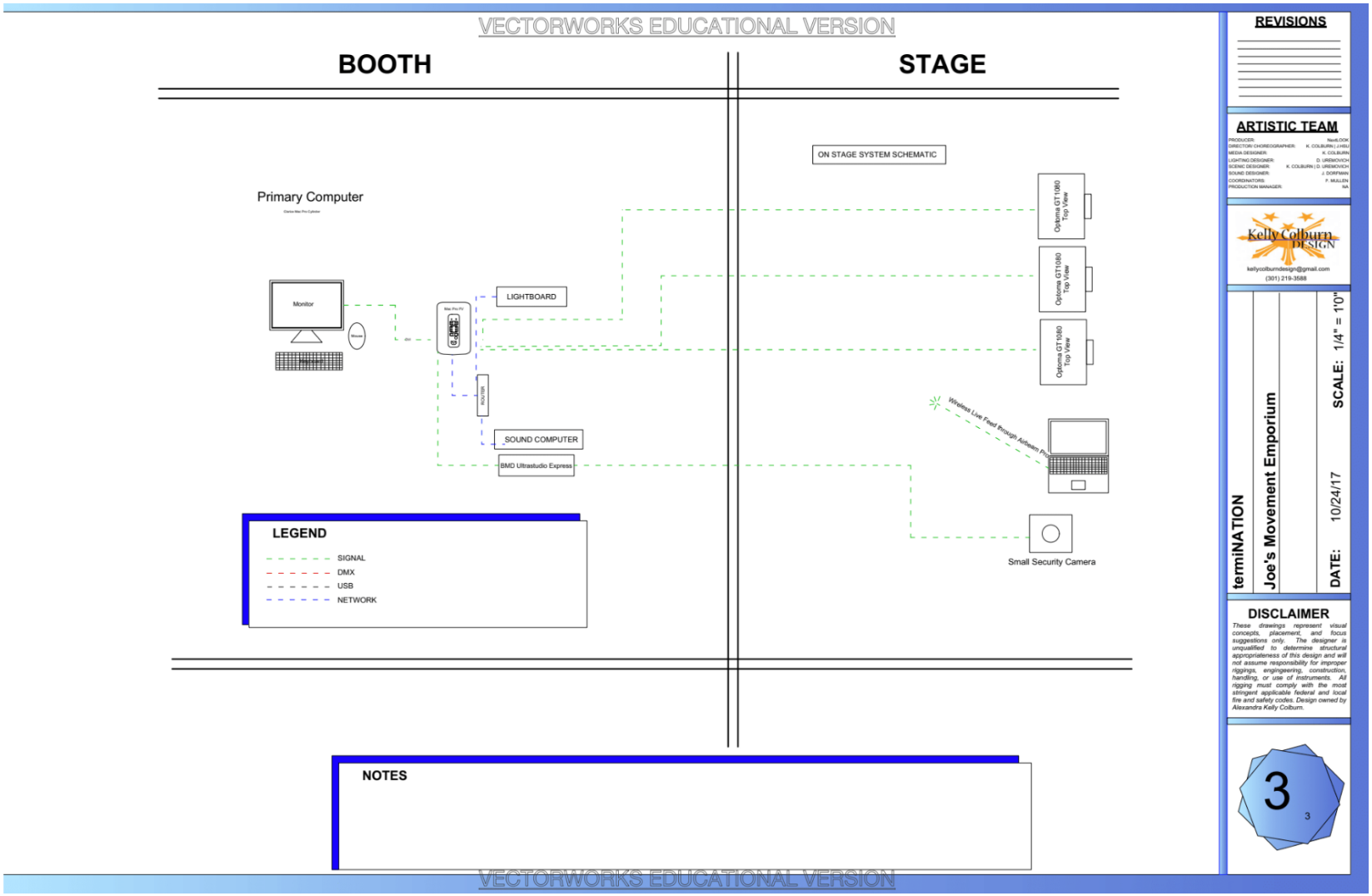


Figure 3.3. Projections Paperwork. Schematic.

We decided on a three projector set up, a TV, and two live feed sources. One projector for the front of the house, one projector for the two blinds stage left, and one for the two blinds stage right. For the live feed portions, a small security camera would be hung in the grid facing down to capture June's face during the bathtub scene and the Skype Calls would be live fed through the laptop on stage. Jeff suggested for the Skype Calls that we use Airbeam Pro to live stream video from the laptop on stage to the projections computer in the booth so pair down the amount of inputs going into the computer. We decided to move forward with Isadora as our primary media server because of my familiarity with the program.

While early on in the Rehearsal and Development process we sought out a stage manager, they were unavailable for the production. Coming from a professional stage management background, my standards for a stage manager was impossibly high and at the University of Maryland I had only worked with one stage manager who I trusted to be a strong asset to my process. When they were unavailable I turned to my artistic team to help make a decision as to whether or not we should include someone. The artistic team and I agreed that we could likely do this show without a stage manager. That left us to decipher who would take cues during the one night performance. Dylan agreed to take on the role of board operator and as a result we decided to link projections and sound to the light board over Open Sound Control. Using OSC Router, Dylan was able to fire lighting, sound, and projections all from the same G-O button. Jeff designed and networked the system for us.

Our plan was to dedicate the first day of our residency to load-in, technical rehearsals on the second and third day, stumble through with tech on the fourth during the day with an invited dress in the evening, and round out the fifth day with notes in the morning before our first and only performance in the evening. Figure 3.4 depicts our proposed tech week schedule to Joe's Movement Emporium, Figure 3.5 depicts our agreed upon tech week schedule to Joe's Movement Emporium, Figure 3.6 depicts a screen shot of the anticipated use of time agreed upon by the artistic team, and Figure 3.7 depicts the actual time used during our residency.

Pre-Tech Week:
Sound, Lighting, and Projector Plots to Patrick and Team for pre-hangs.
-- If I bring in the scenic earlier (blinds and wall), is that something we can get up before we walk in on Monday?

Monday Load-In and Pre-Cueing
(6) hours of time with Joe's Staff/Technicians -- 4pm - 10pm
1) Focus lights with Dylan
2) Focus projectors with Kelly
3) Set levels with Jeff

Tuesday Tech
(6) hours of time with Joe's Staff/Technicians -- 4pm - 10pm
(Likely have notes time in the morning)

Wednesday Tech
(6) hours of time with Joe's Staff/Technicians -- 4pm - 10pm
(Likely have notes time in the morning)

Okay! We are at 18 hours with 2 more days to go.

My goal is that on Thursday we can do notes, run a few times, and then do an Invited Dress Rehearsal in the evening.
IDR -- 1 hour with Joe's Staff/Technicians

Friday I'd love to do some notes on the show and then spend time setting up the pre-show engagement portion.

Figure 3.4. Screenshot of Proposed tech week schedule submitted to Joe's Movement Emporium via email.

Sunday:
Kelly drops off equipment and scenic elements at Joe's. Time TBD.

Monday:
5pm - 10pm
Scenic, Projections and Sound Load In & Cueing Time

Tuesday:
5pm - 10pm
Lighting Focus, Begin Tech.

Wednesday:
5pm - 10pm
Finish Tech, First runthrough

Thursday:
5pm - 10pm
Tech Notes, Dress Rehearsal

Friday:
5pm - End
Notes, Showing, Feedback Session, Strike.

Figure 3.5. Screenshot of Agreed upon tech week schedule approved by Joe's Movement Emporium via email.

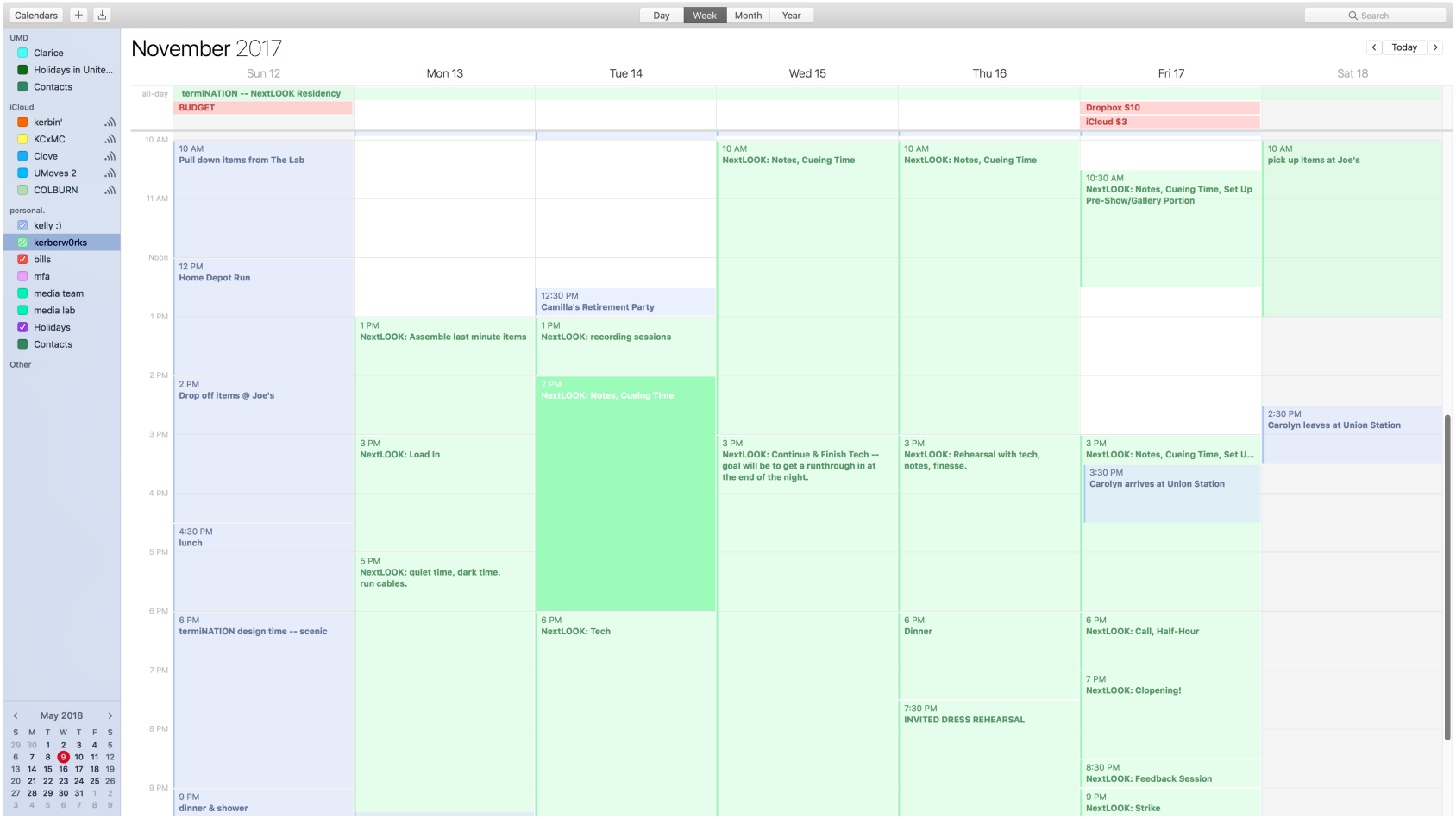


Figure 3.6. Anticipated use of time agreed upon by the artistic team.

SUNDAY	
	Kelly drops off equipment and scenic elements at Joe's.
MONDAY	
5:00pm	Scenic, Projections, Sound, and Costumes Load-In. Lighting Hang occurs.
10:00pm	End of Day. Production Meeting.
TUESDAY	
1:00pm - 5:00pm	Notes, Begin Pre-Cueing.
5:00pm	Lighting Re-Hang, Circuiting, and Troubleshooting.
10:00pm	End of Day. Production Meeting.
WEDNESDAY	
10am - 3pm	Began tech, came across Projections technical issues, Lighting and Sound continued working while Projections troubleshot.
3pm - 10pm	Return to place where Projections went awry, re-teched show to integrate Projections. Reached approximately "A Private Matter".
10:00pm	End of Day. Production Meeting.
THURSDAY	
10am - 8pm	Continued tech-ing the show. Reached "Active".
8pm - 10pm	Run-through of material tech-ed so far.
10:00pm	End of Day. Production Meeting.
FRIDAY	
10am - 12pm	Film Bathtub Scene
3pm - 6pm	Continue tech-ing end of show.
6pm	Strike tech tables, move to booth, set up chairs for audience, prepare wall installation
6:30pm	Kelly transitions into Performer Mode.
7:10pm	House Opens

Figure 3.7. Approximate use of residency time created post-residency.

Chapter 4: Technical Rehearsals

In any given theatrical process there will inevitably be delays and unforeseeable hiccups that can set back progress ranging from minutes to days. In our case, while our team came in prepared to complete our work by the end of the first day of load-in, there were some miscommunications between what our venue was responsible for versus what we were responsible for, which set us back two full days.

Due to the insurance policy dictating that only Joe's Movement Emporium Staff members could operate and handle Joe's Movement Emporium equipment and instruments, Lighting fell behind a full day of tech. Scenic, Projections, and Sound equipment were provided by outside sources and so progress moved forward. Knowing in advance that Dylan would be unavailable on Monday for Load-In, I negotiated with the Technical Director at Joe's that the lighting plot could be hung and circuited prior to load-in to facilitate a smoother tech during our residency. My hope was for Dylan to arrive on Tuesday evening to focus after light hang had occurred. Unfortunately, the plot and paperwork submitted to Joe's was not implemented when we got in the space and the pace at which the on-staff technicians worked was too slow to complete in a timely manner. Additionally, the work completed by the on-staff technicians did not match the paperwork in terms of plot placement or circuiting. On Tuesday, in an effort to expedite hang, focus, and troubleshooting, Dylan took on the responsibility of executing the plot on his own. This caused tension between our team, the technicians, and the Technical Director, but in five hours Dylan was able to accomplish what the technicians were unable to accomplish after one day. We were not approached or reprimanded for breaking

protocol and agreed as a team we would rather ask for forgiveness than permission. As the Resident Artist, I was apprehensive at first, but decided to trust in the expertise and confidence of my lighting designer to execute and implement his own technical design in a safe manner. I made the right decision.

While Lighting challenges were solved Projections challenges arose. Our technical residency was where I felt the most pressure of my multi-disciplinary role as director, writer, performer, designer, and producer overwhelm my abilities. With a half-written, half-memorized, and half-staged production, I found that for the first few days of the residency I needed to focus on the technical aspects in order to move forward. This proved more challenging than anticipated as the process caught me off guard with the amount of technical hiccups I encountered.

By Wednesday, day three of our residency, we were finally ready to begin technical rehearsals proper but as we began cueing the first few moments of the show I found that Isadora, our media server, was running at a very low frame rate, causing some videos to consistently freeze midway. Even after checking the codecs and resolutions to make sure they all matched, we still ran into some problems. For one, the computer we borrowed was running off of an old operating system (Mavericks) and needed to be upgraded. Online Isadora forums cautioned against upgrading to Sierra since the recent upgrade had some functionality issues but running off of an older operating system had problems of its own. Encouraging my design team to continue forging onward without me, I proceeded to upgrade the system, which set us back an hour or so.

While some functionality was regained, other problems arose. One, for instance, was the inability of the Movie Player actors to play in performance mode. I found that if I switched to Interactive mode Isadora was more likely to play the videos when jumping into the scene but still inconsistently. Additionally, there were some issues with jumping in and out of scenes when resetting to run through sections we had teched through. Between consistent software crashing and technical hiccups, we found at the end of our first day of technical rehearsal we had not made it as far as we would have liked.

Additionally, we had trouble with the live feed security camera for the bathtub scene. Running signal over SDI into an External Blackmagic Capture Device is our standard method of procedure at The Clarice, but we never tested signal on the ground and by the time we were ready to begin tech we had already fallen behind and I made the executive decision to cut the live feed portion and pre-record it for the performance. It was in these first few days of our residency that I felt the pressure of the multi disciplinarian role I had given to myself begin to overwhelm my ability to compartmentalize each discipline.

One of the challenges of this multidisciplinary role in tech was that I was pulled in many different directions. While working as the designer programming and troubleshooting projections issues I was simultaneously having conversations with Jeff about sound, or Jeannette about costumes, or Dylan about lights, or Jonathan about choreography. Additionally, as producer, I had to make sure my team was fed, taking breaks, and receiving as much support as I could give them in their varying capacities. As a result of being pulled in many different directions it was difficult for me to

communicate ideas clearly and succinctly or communicate changes as they arose. In the performer/director role working with Jeannette on stage on a quick change, we would make a decision to make the change less effortful only to forget to communicate to Dylan the change, which would affect when he would need to take the cue. This caused some frustration in the room, but continuing to forge forward, I began to rely heavily on Jeannette and Jonathan to help make sure notes on stage were being communicated to Jeff and Dylan behind the tech tables. Vice versa, we would make some changes on the Lighting, Sound, and Projections end that would affect costumes and choreography that did not get communicated clearly enough to Jonathan and Jeannette. It took some time for us to find our stride but once we did we found ourselves excited by the work we were creating.

Very early on I realized that switching between performer and programmer was eating up precious time and so instead of continually walking back and forth from on stage to off stage behind a tech table, I screen shared my laptop (being used as a prop in the show but simultaneously running the live feed for the Skype sessions) to my computer in the booth so that we could trim out unnecessary physical travel time as I transitioned from performer to programmer. This proved to be extremely useful not only in facilitating my constant transition but also in the Skype Love Letters scene when June leaves Skype messages for Jamie beyond the grave. We wanted the scene to feel isolated and digital so we created a simple cue in Isadora using Shapes and color to create a mobile light source so June could be seen as she travels to each room of the house embracing, laughing, giggling, and crying; treating the laptop as though it were Jamie.

An incredible and invaluable design moment found in the technical rehearsal process, the laptop as a light source posed one small problem, it meant that we would need to find something else to put on the laptop screen for other scenes. Moments when the laptop wasn't in use were easy, we would create a black screen so it didn't pull focus but with an audience on three sides, we wondered if we might need to create some sort of graphic/animation for anytime June was at the laptop. In the end we decided that we did not have time to fully flesh out the logistics of the laptop screen as an additional surface, but it did mean that we would need to find a way for Dylan and myself to know what cue number we were in since we wouldn't be able to see the Isadora interface. We decided to add Text/Draw actors to every scene to indicate what cue we were in. We made the font small enough that the audience wouldn't be able to see, but large enough that with a glance from Dylan or I at the screen, we would determine rather quickly.

Thursday we had planned to have an invited dress rehearsal that evening but by 6pm we still had not made it to the end of the piece. We had only gotten through half of the bootcamp sequence leaving the rest of the bootcamp sequence, the letter, and the clean up of the house to tech. We decided to cancel the invited dress, reaching out to those who had RSVP'd to attend, and do a stumble through of the material we had so far in lieu of continuing to tech. This also gave us an opportunity for Jonathan to take photos for documentation and further marketing purposes. Our goal for Friday was to finish teching the end of the show, have some time for work notes, and then do another run before the performance began at 7pm. Part of the challenge with the remainder of the show and our short window of time to tech is that the designers had never seen a full

version in rehearsal. The first and only time they had seen a run-through of the show was a week before. Frankly, no progress had been made in terms of staging since that run-through as the demands of Projections Designer Kelly eclipsed the demands of Performer and Director Kelly. Friday we would be walking in completely blind with nothing but a half-written script and our initial concepts. We knew the midnight hour of this process would be challenging but the team was ready to jump in and create something out of nothing.

Friday rolled around and we hit the ground running. Post Thursday night stumble through we decided we should all take the morning to take care of our notes from the night before and attempt to build in a framework of cues launching us into the final sequence. Dylan and I remembered that I still had not filmed the bathtub scene in lieu of the live feed we cut earlier in the week. We took the morning to film the bathtub scene but ran into a few hiccups. What we anticipated would take thirty minutes took two hours as we didn't take into account the physics of water and the position I wanted to film in.

With Dylan taking on the role of the cameraman and myself slipping into the role of the performer our first challenge was troubleshooting ways to alleviate my discomfort underwater. Everytime I went underwater, the position of my body in relation to the water caused an intense amount of pain as water shot up my nose and into my sinuses. While we attempted to look up film techniques to cheat this, a quick google search did not yield the results we wanted. The sequence is supposed to take approximately 38 seconds but I was unable to stay underwater in this position for longer than five. Eventually, we used earplugs as nose plugs to keep the water out, but since the material is porous, I was still

only able to stay underwater for about 15 seconds. Luckily, this was enough time and when I got the footage into Premiere, I slowed down the footage so that it would take the entirety of 38 seconds.

When we returned to the theater, we hit the ground running. First, Producer Kelly needed to check in the Joe's to discuss the logistics of house opening and a pre-show gallery installation I had completely forgotten about. It was there that we discovered my marketing materials had listed the start time of the event at 7:30pm but Joe's had listed it at 7pm. Neena Narayanan, the Marketing Director, sensing my oncoming anxiety attack quickly took charge of the situation and decided that we should open the house around 7:10, allow approximately 15 - 20 minutes of pre-show and audience filtering into the theater, and begin as close to 7:30pm as possible. Additionally, she said she and the Joe's staff would set up the pre-show gallery installation for me so that I could prepare for the performance. Feeling the most cared for by Joe's Movement Emporium I had all week, my team and I raced to the finish line. We finished teching the show around 6pm, knowing full well that the doors would open at 7:10pm. We scrambled to clean up the tech tables and move them to the booth, set out chairs for our audience configuration, delineate each room with blue painter's tape, white gaff unsightly seams in the set, fill the bathtub with water, do a clean sweep of the stage before we started, set up a camera for archival purposes, set props and costumes at top of show placement, and have some downtime to center myself and be ready to perform. It was an all hands on deck situation.

Chapter Five: The Performance

The Pre-Show Gallery Installation

The pre-show audience engagement installation I had planned was to create a wall where people could write down the name of a deceased loved one they wanted remembered. Using brown butcher's paper and post-it notes, we created a Remembrance Wall where audience members could do just that. About 10 people partook.

The Program Notes

The program, created by Joe's, included both my Artist's Note and Side Notes. The Artist's Note, the same as a program note, was created to give the audience a context through which to understand the show and the Side Notes were a series of questions curated by Jane to give the audience more insight into my work as an artist.

The Artist Statement read as follows:

> First and foremost, this piece is about the depths of grief; How we deal with grief and the multi-faceted and sometimes terrifying ways it manifests itself. It's about grief as it relates to war and politics. Grief as a private matter and a public matter. Grief as a means for self-improvement. Grief as a process of shedding layers. Grief as a process of radicalization. Grief as a necessary part of life. It's also about losing faith; How strong or weak it makes you. Sometimes both. Sometimes neither.

This piece has been with me since my undergraduate days at NYU. I've always been fascinated by women who have husbands in the line of fire. I've always been grotesquely fascinated and conceitedly appalled with war since we steeped ourselves in the Middle East in 2001. Since the Middle East came to us in 2001. I've been afraid since the age of twenty one about what kind of mother I would be and if I would be able to raise someone in a world like this -- or how anyone has the strength to raise a child. I've also recently been wrestling with the fact that I'm a minority politically, culturally, and racially in this country. And so, this evening is a manifestation of all of these thoughts, anxieties, and dreams. It ebbs and flows through grief, through anger, through numbness, through dumbness, through routine and interrupted routine, between dance and theatre, between film and performance, between life and death,

between boredom and excitement -- but most importantly between audience and performer.

Thank you for witnessing. Let's see what kind of evening we make together.

The Side Notes read as follows:

JANE: You approach your creative process through multiple lenses...acting, directing, design, and more. When you're making work, how do these varied parts of your creative identity inform your process? Does one identity ever lock horns with another?

KELLY: The answer is that they are always informing forever everyday until the end of time. I trained as an interdisciplinary artist so for me it's wildly important to never see the play just through one lens. With any process I enter into (performing, designing, directing, etc.) I never think about what department I'm "representing" or at the end of the day will be credited for. I first and foremost seek to find what story I'm telling and then whittle, hone, and dive into what my role is at the end of that initial discovery process. In my work specifically, I tend to play this multi-disciplinarian constantly and so my various artistic identities are always battling -- for better and for worse. That's why I try to surround myself with artists who will give honest feedback and who want to be a part of the creation process. It's incredibly important that even though I am at the center that my collaborators feel ownership over the piece because of their overall artistic contributions regardless of their credited role.

JANE: What aspect of your personal history is most present in the work you make...in general?

KELLY: I am obsessed with guilt, poor decision making, recreating identity, and New York City. I think in the work I've made so far those are the themes that are most apparent based on very specific instances and time periods of my life.

In my first piece, *Southeast* (my thesis in undergrad) two artists spiraling downwards in art and life continually and serendipitously bump into each other on the streets of New York City. In *Kingfishers*, a couple realizes that in order to be the best parents to their daughter, they have to let her make her own decisions. *untitled homage to my twenties in new york city* explored the exhilaration and fear of actively witnessing the death of your youth. *termiNATION* doesn't necessarily mark a departure from the themes I listed before, but it certainly incorporates and repackages some and reframes it through a different lens.

JANE: You talk about creating "urban myths" in your mission statement. One definition of "myth" is a widely held but false belief or idea. Another is a traditional story, especially one concerning the early history of a people or explaining some natural or social phenomenon, and typically

involving supernatural beings or events. Which definition most accurately describes what you are investigating in your creative process?

KELLY: I think it's a little bit of both but certainly leans harder towards the latter.

When I was working and living in New York, an "urban myth" was a way I described the stories I was telling -- taking old myths and reimagining them into a contemporary NYC landscape or creating stories based on this idea I had that NYC was a mythical place full of fate and chance encounters. With each chance encounter, with each story, with each interaction, there was something to be learned that could be passed down through the ages. My intention was to create things called urban myths in the hopes that they would be universal, personal, and purposefully New York.

At the end of the day, there are some stories that stand the test of time and that's what I'm interested in creating. The audience should be able to sit down and ask themselves, "What was Kelly trying to tell me?". I want you to look at the work like a modern day myth or parable or fable -- something that describes the origins of a person or peoples or event or politics or social phenomena -- and actively consider what this story has to

do with your life, your behavior, your thoughts, your ideologies. What can you learn from this? What can you identify with? How did you get here to this moment?

JANE: You are working on a production for children that will premiere in January 2018. What are some of the most stark differences of developing work for young eyes, ears and minds that you are discovering as you work on that piece?

KELLY: In developing work for young audiences I have to constantly remind myself that they are anywhere between 20 - 30 years younger than me and so I have to put myself into that mindset. What was I interested in at that age? What did I gape and gawk at? What made me question the world? What made me excited about the world? You kind of have to keep the subject matter positive and active. How can my positive actions make an impact while I'm here? If this is geared towards the younger generation of future thinkers, inventors, and storytellers -- how can I be a positive influence on them without condescending to them? The work also needs to be tied up nicely so that there is a strong moral message at the end. Make the world the place you want to live in! Stand up for what you believe in! Make your own legacy! In many ways, these questions aren't any different than the questions I might ask myself artistically for work geared towards

older audiences, but I can definitely step back and have a little more fun. I get to be a kid again!

JANE: What music or song comes up most frequently on your mix these days?

KELLY: "Don't Wanna Be Your Girl" by Wet. I listen to this song on repeat. Her voice is so beautiful and haunting. This song is featured in the show!

Curtain Up

While audiences arrived as early as 6pm, the house opened at 7:15pm, and the performance began a little after 7:30pm. There was some confusion at the top of the show where and how to begin, but luckily I was using my real phone on stage and without breaking character I could text my designers in the booth and tell them we were ready to start. After a short introduction from Jane Hirshberg and Brooke Kidd, the room (and myself) buzzing with excitement, opened the first and final performance of *termiNATION*.

The performance had a few technical hiccups on the projections end which added ten to fifteen minutes on top of the already slated 70 minute show. The first being an issue with the live feed for the Skype sections. Within the first 3 seconds of the first

Skype cue, I could tell that the live feed was not working. Summoning up all the courage I had, I informed the audience that I had to call a hold to troubleshoot technical difficulties. Dylan, Jeff, and myself scrambled to figure out what the problem was and found that when we struck the tech tables and reinstalled them in the booth, Airbeam Pro (the software running the live feed) had not been reconnected. Once we zeroed in on the problem we quickly started the software back up and got it working. In my flurry of nervousness, I forgot to Show Stages on Isadora so the show could go on and continued to troubleshoot a problem that was very easy to fix. Not too long after, I realized my mistake and was able to get content back up on the surfaces. The crowd cheered and we continued on.

The second hiccup came during the *Rosemary's Baby* section. The problem we had on the first day of tech, Movie Player unable to play content unless in Interactive mode, caused the patch to crash. A second hold was called as we re-started the program and tried to find our placement. It took a few restarts of the program to get the scene to play and in my embarrassment, I almost ended the show there. However, knowing full well that these things do happen and that there was a room full of supportive friends, colleagues, and artists, I took a deep breath and attempted to regain my focus after yet another technical difficulty.

The third came during June's first Skype Love Letter to Jamie after the funeral. The live feed cut out again. Fed up with the technology and on the verge of tears (as both June and Kelly), I decided to let my audience know that we had indeed reached the third

technical difficulty of the evening and instead of trying to troubleshoot the problem we would push forward.

The rest of the performance went off without a hitch. However, we were approaching yet again unknown territory as we came to the bootcamp sequence. While we had rehearsed the staging, the costume change, and mimicked the hair cut and shave, we had never done it in real time or in real life. This was part of the radical physical transformation June had to make. While I was unable to achieve the physicality of the bootcamp sequence, I most certainly needed to shave my head. We had approached the scene I had simultaneously been dreading and living for as director, designer, writer, performer, and producer. Fueled by my fear, I took the scissors in the box, using my own shadow in the reflection of the tub as my mirror, and sheared the first chunk of hair. Every slice of the scissors challenged my fight or flight response, but I found myself continually cutting. I could feel the audience around me tighten up as locks of hair fell into the tub. My fear and excitement matched theirs. As I approached the two minute mark in my hair cutting sequence, my nerves continued to swallow me whole as I picked up the electric razor. With a flip of the switch and the whir of the machinery, I began to shave. As the final two minutes slowly ticked down, I felt my fear and embarrassment fall away as the rage at what I had done to my hair, what I had subjected the audience to sit through, the technical difficulties mid-performance, and the challenges of this week caught up with me. From this point on, June was gone and Kelly replaced her. It was Kelly running back and forth wearing a fake pregnancy belly. It was Kelly attempting to do push ups and sit ups after not training properly for weeks. It was Kelly on the verge of

throwing up and running off stage. It was Kelly asking how to bring a child into a world full of war and violence. It was Kelly voicing her fears about becoming a mother. It was Kelly asking for someone to give her answers. It was Kelly asking for permission to be scared.

As the war sequence came to a close and the gentle diffused light of day streamed in through the blinds creating a moment of honesty and exposure. The lighting no longer beating down into the space blinding the fragile performer and the sound no longer aggressively attacking our aural senses from every side, Kelly could finally see and take in the audience and sink into the sound of silent shock. Looking out into the audience I expected to see a sea of boredom, but instead was greeted with interest, compassion, and engagement. Kelly's fear and rage dissipated and June returned. A blank slate where the performer could sink back into the role, fully aware and fully embodied.

As the lights went down in the final blackout and the curtain music started, fearful and embarrassed Kelly returned. Without the mask of June, Kelly as performer, director, designer, writer, and producer re-emerged exhausted, emotionally drained, vain, and fearful to face the audience. How did my hair look? Did I get all the pieces? Has the reality of what hit the audience set in? Are they tired of sitting in this theater? Are they ready to go home? Will anyone stay for the talkback? Hopefully they won't stay for the talkback and I can go home and cry. I'm bowing and people are clapping. That's probably good right? Don't forget to signal to the booth. Bow again. They're still clapping. You're crying. We gotta get out of here. And next thing I knew I was sobbing by myself in a dressing room. Jeannette quickly came to fetch me with big smiles and congratulations.

She cleaned up my hair, gave me some water, and helped me into my talkback dress. Choking up with fear, I re-emerged from the dressing room to a crowd of friends, artists, and colleagues smiling, clapping, and ready to engage in honesty and rigorous feedback.

Chapter 6: Audience Response and Feedback

The audience at the first and only performance of *termiNATION* exceeded all expectations in the feedback session. Jane lead the talkback session, first opening up the forum for general thoughts and comments about the performance that would then lead into some specific questions on my end to help develop the piece in its next iteration. Overall, the response was positive! We began the feedback session by first asking the audience members which moments particularly struck them before eventually transitioning into asking curated questions by me. Below are some paraphrased audience responses in the open forum:

"When the projections appeared on the blinds during the news section, I really got the sense that you were trapped on all sides."

"The use of cinema to encapsulate the honor/stoicism of the army was a lovely counterpoint to sit and witness. It gave us the extra sensation that June created this world."

"The army sequence was extremely cathartic."

"As someone who struggles with anxiety I know what it is to fight with yourself and what its like to struggle with grief."

“The audience really felt like a fly on the wall.”

“When you were in the bathtub I didn’t know if you were on the verge of a suicide or attempting to cleanse yourself.”

“When you shaved your head my heart dropped.”

“I appreciated your attention to detail especially in when folding the flag.”

“I’m a hopeless romantic so I kept hoping Jamie would walk through the door.”

“The bridge between realism and the abstraction was well balanced.”

“The space felt very intimate.”

“You taught me a lot about bravery.”

“I thought June running back and forth was very effective. It made me think she was preparing herself for the struggle of becoming a single mother.”

“Was she losing her mind before Jamie died? It looked like she put her groceries in the sink.”

"That was disturbing. I was disturbed."

"You look great with a shaved head."

Even as we transitioned into the curated questions, I found that many of the things I wanted answered had been. When asked if June was likable, the audience generally agreed that she was. While she seemed shallow at first she became more complex towards the end. She was an engaging and compelling character with a straight forward, no nonsense way of talking. She was up front and honest about her feelings. She was not trying to be fake. Mark Costello noticed that she carefully crafts the audience's perception of her by telling us how we should see her: "I may be a bitch but I am a fierce and loyal friend." That prompted me to ask the audience whether she deserved what happened to her: they responded with a resounding no because, "no one deserves that." They were generally touched by her vulnerability because they were just as shocked as she was when she found out her husband died. "People don't think something like that will happen to them."

When asked, "What do you think happens when June steps outside the door at the end?" people generally agreed that she was leaving to tell the truth. She was not hiding anymore. Like a phoenix rising from the ashes, she was someone new. This general agreed upon response excited me because, in truth, I never knew what June did. I wanted the audience to decide for themselves. As a performer, I kept myself in a limbo state,

focusing on running through the pros and cons of telling the truth even as I stepped through the door. Did she tell the truth or did she choose to keep Jamie's secret? In one version of the script, June opened the door and prepared to wreck havoc on the world, radicalized by this experience and prepared to burn it all down. In this version, we kept it vague and less violent.

When asked about what was easier or more difficult to accept, I received a wide range of answers from critiques on tackling an emerging historical period to the design and technical aspects. "I missed other voices. Americans are not the only ones affected by this conflict in abroad. In focusing on this particular American experience of grief we forget that others are closer in proximity to this conflict." This was something that hit me hard emotionally and inspired me to ensure that I bring a dramaturg who specializes in drama and conflict. In another response, a few audience members mentioned that the emotional toil with the belly in the bootcamp sequence was very nuanced that they didn't think the films were necessary. "While I understood the films interacting with each other, I was so captured by her running back and forth that I'm not sure the films did anything to that scene." In regards to the technical, one audience member said, "I would rethink the door placement. The aperture makes some of the content larger on the walls difficult to see properly."

Throughout the week following the performance I was lucky that people wanted to continually engage with me in the halls, before classes, in between classes, and in on-on-one's. I found our Team Projections Video Critique an invaluable source of feedback focused on the projections and multimedia content. As part of our Projections Curriculum

at The University of Maryland, we hold a critique after every show to discuss the successes and challenges of each process as well as offer constructive criticism. While the general audience of *termiNATION* offered some incredible feedback to the performance, I knew I could rely on Team Projections to discuss and interrogate the process and product from a design perspective.

The first item that came up were the Holds and we spent a fair amount of time discussing the best ways to troubleshoot technical problems quickly on stage. How can we take into account the technical hiccups and build them into the fabric of the show? Is there a way so that even as the challenges arise mid-show, Kelly can remain in character? After explaining to the group how Dylan and I used Text/Draw in each scene to sync up on cue numbers, a few solutions to other ways the board ops in the booth and the performer on stage could communicate were voiced into the world. Could there be a contingency scene that if either the board op or the performer press a button, color bars appear everywhere to indicate something has gone wrong that requires an extended amount of troubleshooting time? Can the board op troubleshoot while Kelly goes off stage to compartmentalize Kelly as Performer vs. Kelly as Designer and Programmer? We all agreed a programmer or an associate of some sort would be a tremendous asset to the team.

The team all responded well to the ripping of the ethernet cord from the audience. The ripping, to them, became central to moving on to the next part of the show. June destroyed her own world rather than removed herself from it, purposefully ruining her own existence instead of doing what she can to continue shutting the world out. Equally,

it showed an awareness of the theater as a performer and spoke to the simultaneity of the real and imagined worlds fusing on stage. The metatheacricality of this moment was effective especially when June spoke directly to the audience.

They all agreed that the Pre-Show Social Media Montage made them empathize more with June. The specific events like Christmas, Halloween, The Engagement, etc. built up the relationship between her and Jamie so that we felt her loss even deeper when she finds out he has died. Since it is social media and June is a social media queen, the team agreed that a few social media fads would also be effective in telling time: the ice bucket challenge, the 100 black and white pictures challenge, and others would give a sense of how long June and Jamie had been together.

The team also all agreed that some of the more compelling moments in the show were when they watched me troubleshoot during the technical hiccups. Not only did it show the audience that this project pushed boundaries in technology but also spoke to my growth as a designer and programmer. In times of crisis, I was able to keep my cool, diagnose the problem, and get us back on track without asking for help.

One thing the team questioned was whether there had been discussion about how we treated content on the wall versus the blinds. While the initial intent was to have a 360 view for audience, Dylan and I agreed that from a lighting standpoint we would most likely blind the audience rather than offer them an immersive experience. We had discussed blinds in place of the wall up stage, but thought that perhaps a physical barrier to the outside world that could double as a larger projections screen would be more effective. The wall could be a backstage changing area, a barrier against the outside

world that was stronger than the blinds, and a place to hide props we didn't want to reveal yet. From an internal standpoint, a large wall was more convenient for performance purposes than blinds. From an outside perspective, it created a traditional proscenium, big white projection screen set up in which the audience on thrust sides had to decide whether to focus on June or the content behind her. Problematic. The team encouraged me to think harder when making decisions valuing convenience over concept, reminding me to keep in mind how the treatment of surfaces can affect the story and the audience's perception to it. Just as in *Legacy and Liveness* the Female Body as a surface sought to ask questions about the female experience, swapping it out for a Male Body or Queer Body would change the context of the content and thus the meaning. The same lesson can be applied to the wall and the blinds.

Additionally, they wondered how the content could be curated to each room of the house. Are there certain types of genres June watches in the living room but would never watch in the bedroom? In the same way that the reporters appearing on the blinds to entrap her was effective in dictating a shift in the world, how can her journey into grief, mimesis, and salvation be supported with the rules of the multimedia world transforming along with her?

The critiques and comments from Team Projections provided a thriving well of invaluable thoughts to ponder for the next iteration of *termiNATION* from a technical and design standpoint. In addition to their cirituqe, I was lucky enough to receive some notes from Jennifer Barclay in regards to the writing. These notes offered me another perspective on ways to expand upon the material already present.

While the Pre-Show Social Media Montage did give us a sense of June and Jamie's relationship prior to the play, Jennifer said relying on Pre-Show for exposition can be tricky. In theater, we typically do not pay attention to pre-show and from a storytelling perspective it can be an ineffective device, especially if critical information is shared. Jennifer craved more of their backstory weaving itself into the dialogue of the play.

Additionally, she felt that the announcement of the pregnancy felt "on the nose" and encouraged me of finding ways that crucial plot points can be revealed in more subtle ways. I made a note to look up playwrighting classes.

If some moments felt too obvious then others were not obvious enough. For instance, the moment June finds out Jamie is dead is not clear in the script, though the dialogue in the play clarified it. Looking back at the script, this could have something to do with the untraditional formatting or with the lack of rising action. I highlighted this thought in my notes to ponder for the next iteration… And re-circled my note about looking up playwrighting classes.

Jennifer also mentioned that the early phone conversations with Shelley made her want to meet Shelley. This is tricky with a solo show, but "we never want the audience to wish that another character will enter." My intention was to create the suspicion of scandal around the mysteriously high number of Privates dying in a short amount of time, but I agreed with Jennifer's note. I made another note, just as prominent as the previous two, to do more research on solo performers and their work.

Overall, Jennifer felt that *termiNATION* was successful in merging form and content. June's obsession with war films, her online presence, and main connection with husband over a teleconferencing app, all became ways in which projections successfully integrated into the framework of the story. Considering that the impetus for re-examining *termiNATION* sprung from an attempt to build projections from the ground up, seamlessly integrating its presence into the action of the piece, I was glad to hear my attempts were effective.

One question that arose was about the repeatability of shaving the head mid-performance. Since the decision was made between the artistic team and I solely on the fact that it was a one night event, I had to think early on about what this would mean for a longer run. My answer to that thrilling conundrum was and is this: Hire as many actresses as there are performances. This multitude of actresses across a performance run allows for the shocking transformation to remain a part of the action (which I feel catapults the piece even further into the mimetic reality and would never want to lose) while also creating a new show every night.

Between the feedback I received from the audience immediately after the show, the Projections Team Critique, and Jennifer Barclay's notes, I feel as though this iteration of termiNATION has been an utter success in the development of new work. While we still have a long way to go in re-writing, re-conceptualizing, and re-examining the priorities of the piece, I cannot wait until my hair grows back and we can re-assemble my team of artistic super heroes to tackle this beast once more. Onward!

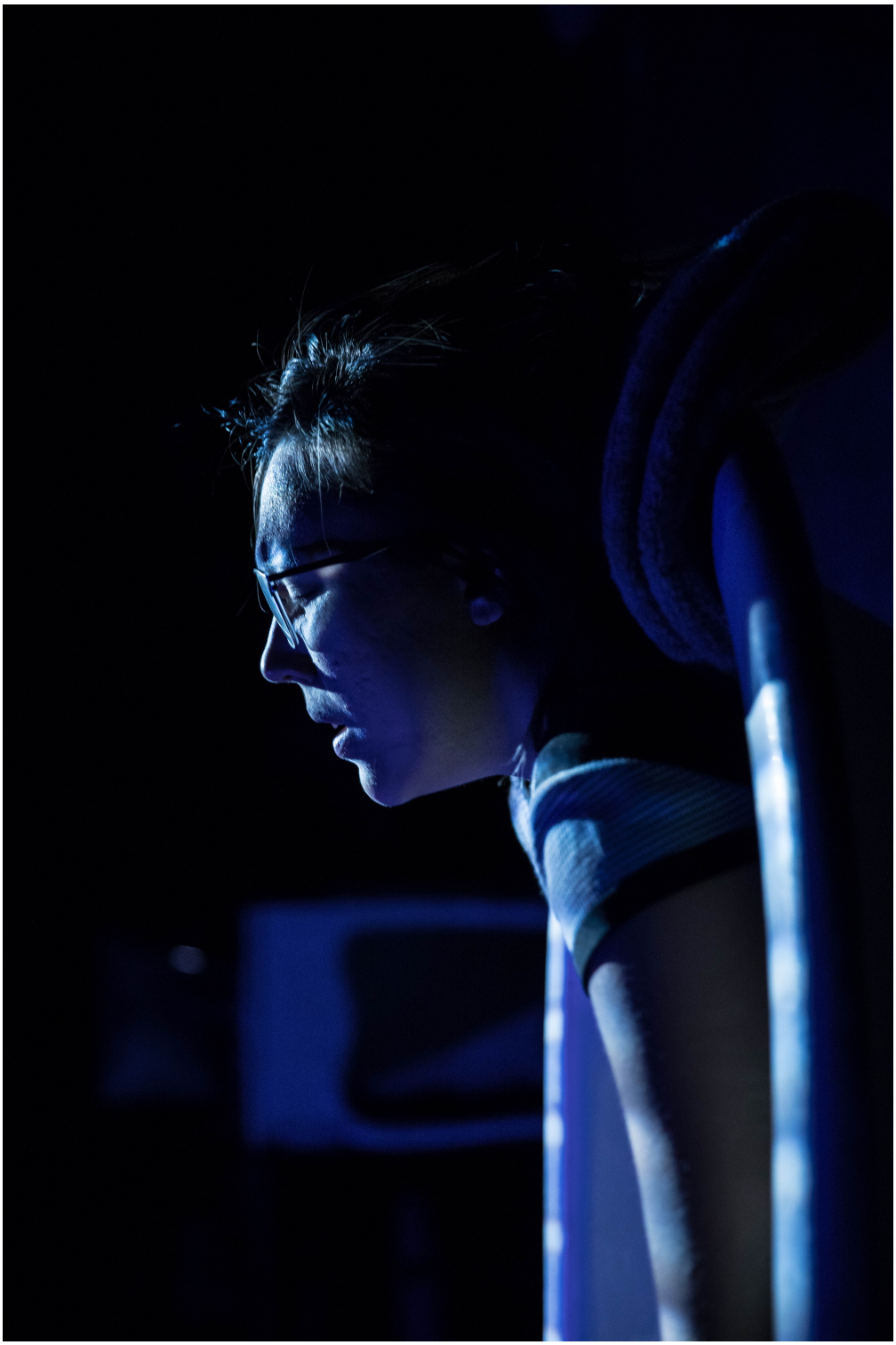
Chapter 7: Production Photos

The following section contains documentation of the Dress Rehearsal and Performance. Photography credit to Jonathan Hsu Media.









EXIT







EXIT

22

Chapter 8: Reflections

Looking back at the development, residency, and performance of *termiNATION* I could not be more proud of the work my collaborators and I produced. Over the course of six weeks we were able to create a story that challenged, disturbed, and moved an audience to think about their proximities to grief, war, and politics. Because of the whirlwind residency with large technical feats we wished to accomplish in a short amount of time, my artistic team and I were pleasantly surprised with the outcome. As we muddled through the week with technical challenges, a half-written script, and little sleep, we were not entirely aware of each and every choice we were making in the moment but felt confident that we had created strong enough concepts to carry us through. For the most part, I think we achieved the goals we set out to accomplish and if we let go of some ideas over the course of development, they were certainly for the better. The feeling of joy and accomplishment as we struck the set radiated throughout the room, emanating from my team and a small group of friends who saw the show and stuck around to help strike this monstrous beauty.

One thing I was adamant on is that the NextLOOK Residency would be the first iteration of this piece, version one if you will. I believe that gave us the freedom to let ideas come and go gracefully as we took into account what we believed to be possible given the time and circumstances. A phrase I like to say a lot is, "in the Broadway version…" and I think this helped us put our large ideas into perspective, allowing this version to be whatever it ended up being. While I can't say I necessarily look back at the

product each and every time I revisit the process with a complete sense of accomplishment, I do look back and see it as a great source of learning and growth.

This show certainly taught me that I cannot make art alone. Being a one woman show was a delightful challenge, but when the role became to large for me too handle, I was extremely grateful for a close group of collaborators and friends who were able to see the places and times I was struggling, and step in to assume leadership and responsibility at any point they could.

I also learned a lot about time management when assuming multiple roles. I found that even when I carved out time in my varying capacities as writer, director, designer, performer, and producer that those times were not always realistically given the space they needed to thrive. More often than not, Kelly as writer/director/designer/performer/ producer worked in the room simultaneously and as a result the overwhelming amount of personalities/responsibilities in the room created moments of crippling fear that lead to procrastination. However, fear and procrastination do eventually lead back to courage and productivity and sooner rather than later it was easy enough to get back on track.

In assuming these multiple roles I found that when it came to technical rehearsals, an associate projections designer and a programmer would be very useful in this process. An associate projections designer could help create and manage content while a programmer would alleviate the pressure of feeling like I had to be in two places at once. That still left Kelly as writer/director/performer/producer in the room, but the sub-roles of Projections Designer in a technical rehearsal process (that I forgot about and struggle even when I'm a one-woman-design-show) could be expanded.

A dramaturg would have been a wise choice to include in the artistic team. As a result of the time constraints and various roles I was playing, a dramaturg could have helped flesh out some of the more political, social, and historical implications of the last sixteen years worth of content I was looking to explore as it relates to American Colonialism in the 21st century. That sentence is a lot to unpack and given our good friend and collaborator Phil who reminded us of the liberal bubble we live in, a dramaturg on board could help writer Kelly redirect and sculpt this initial impulse into a mine more valuable to pick at.

Honestly, I can't believe we did this without a stage manager and/or production manager. While I took on the bulk of disseminating information to the design team after each rehearsal and wrangling schedules, a stage manager and/or production manager would have alleviated the pressure the designers felt in tech to be their own timekeepers. A stage manager/production manager would have been an incredible asset to me in my roles as performer/director/producer to take on some bulk of the administrative duties and run a tight(er) ship during tech.

Considering that a major reconceptualization of the bootcamp sequence needed to occur late in the process because of my inability to build up my physique, a trainer would be instrumental to the next iteration of this piece. While the hair shave certainly marked a transformation of the character into a new reality, a physical journey to match would continue to interrogate inherent Maleness and Femaleness as it pertains to both civilian and solider.

Between the audience feedback, colleagues' constructive criticism, and my own in depth analysis of the work, I believe we did accomplish a majority of the essentials: Plot-wise, the main character did lose her husband to a war she didn't understand and underwent a major transformation that shocks the audience. While we did not explore the possibility of June aborting the child, we did pose questions to the audience about the strength of a woman who chooses single motherhood as an option. Design-wise our thrust audience configuration brought the audience as close to the performer as possible and the projections (for the most part) were visible from every audience vantage point. We hit problems when the sides of the audience had to choose between watching the content displayed on the large wall up stage or focus on the performer. While I did not achieve all I wanted to physically, I now know the value of an extended and rigorous rehearsal period and the importance of including a trainer into the artistic team.

Reflecting back on the myriad of questions I asked myself at the beginning of the process, as early on as the proposal, I believe I am closer to answering them but still have a long way to go. Multimedia can be incredibly successful with unconventional and sparse projections surfaces, especially when you treat those surfaces with care conceptually. The audience can be as close to the performer as they allow themselves to be while still retaining the safety and clarity of the fourth wall. Audiences (with whom I have built up trust) are willing to engage with sensitive subject matter at a close proximity.

As to the other questions, they become more difficult to answer in a declarative sentence. All I know about war, grief, procreation, legacy, abortion, life, and death is that

they are universal and they impact us differently at different times in our lives. We never know when, how, or if these themes will intersect our paths but they affect us all in minor and major ways. How do I rise to the occasion when it calls? With a deep breath and a strong conviction even in the face of fear. How do I deal with grief? I'm *still* dealing with it! How do I differentiate between good and evil, right and wrong, or indifference and passion? I try to set my moral compass to neutral and take each conflict in stride. How do I differentiate qualities and traits that are inherently Male and Female? I don't anymore. I've learned nothing is black and white just as nothing is binary when it comes to gender. We decide who and what we are for ourselves. I decide the Fate of mankind by living my life truth, purpose, and kindness to all those around me. As a woman, I can create safe spaces, peace, and understanding as we endure a period of fear, tyranny, and xenophobia. It is not up to someone to determine my worth from afar when they have not lived this life.

Huh, I guess I answered more of these questions than I anticipated.

At the end of the day, directing, writing, designing, performing, and producing *termiNATION* was an unforgettable and incredible process that challenged and stretched the limits of my artistry. I learned less about "how to design better" and more about "how to collaborate more deeply." As a result, we created a piece of work that embodies the collaborative spirit more effectively than any other process I've worked on. As I slowly recover from the end of a three year long journey that culminates in this monstrosity of

literature, I cannot wait to revisit this work in another year (when my hair finally grows back) to assemble the original team and include some much needed personnel. In the Broadway version we'll make decisions based purely on art rather than convenience or finances. In the Broadway version we'll take the time we need to interrogate every line of artistic inquiry. In the Broadway version we'll bring on a director to focus solely on shaping the piece from the outside. In the Broadway version we'll bring a dramaturg to help place our story within the context of the emerging moment. In the Broadway version I'll have an associate designer and programmer who will alleviate the stress I begin to feel in tech by taking on multiple roles. In the Broadway version we'll have a company of thirty actresses ready to shave their heads and put themselves through bootcamp.

In the meantime, I'll keep dreaming.

Appendix A

Projections Cue Sheet

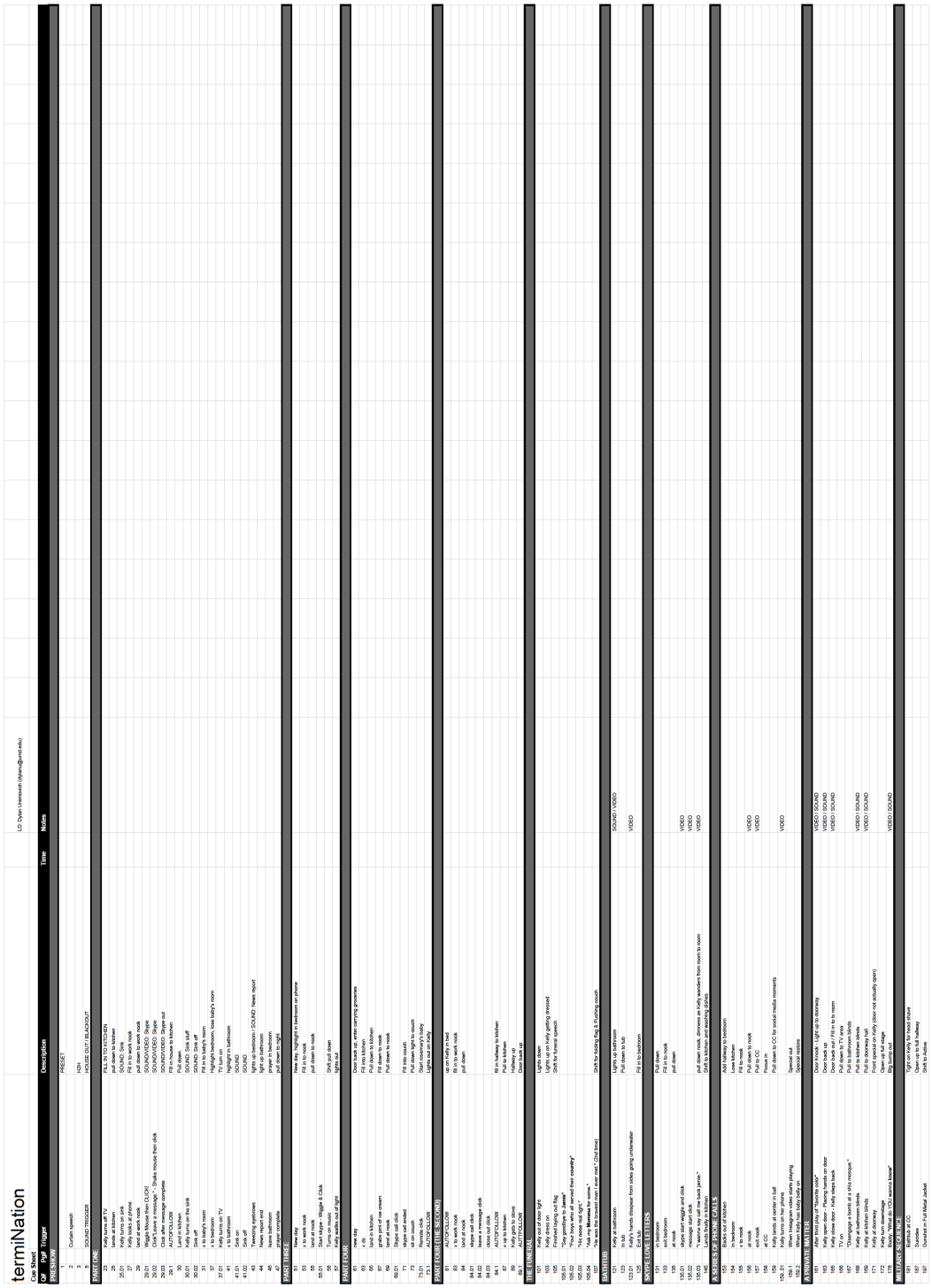
termiNATION

PAGE	CUE	TIME	PLACEMENT	PURPOSE / ACTION	WALL	Blinds 1	Blinds 2	Blinds 3	Blinds 4	TV	LIVE FEED
ALL HARDWARE ON, PRE SHOW CHECKLIST											
1	**v.500**		Pre-Show	Social Media	x	x	x	x	x		
	v. 505		Top of Show	Violence Prologue	x	x	x	x	x		
	autofollow			Watches a scene in Black Hawk Down						x	
	v. 510		Turns TV off	Black Hawk Down out							
	v. 515		Sets laptop down	Skype Ring Icon and her live feed image in bottom corner	x						LAPTOP
	55.02		Sad Skype sound.	Everything out							
	55.03		Clicks button hard	Live Feed back on	x						LAPTOP
2	**55.04**		"Love you. Bye."	Live Feed off							
5	**69.01**		Sits at desk	Skype Ring Icon and her live feed image in bottom corner	x						LAPTOP
	AF		Sad Skype sound.	Everything out							
	73.01		Turns on TV	Rosemary's Baby						x	
	AF		Rosemary's Baby ends	The Hurt Locker beginning						x	
	AF		TBD	Hurt Locker spreads to the walls of the house.	x	x	x	x	x		
	AF		Everything out.	End of Hurt Locker, jump into next scene							
6	**v. 545**		Sits at desk	Skype Ring Icon and her live feed image in bottom corner	x						LAPTOP
	[AF] 547		Sad Skype sound.	Everything out							
	v. 550		Goes back to computer	Live Feed	x						LAPTOP
	v.555		Clicks mouse	Everything out							
7	**v. 560**		with lights	The Messenger plays briefly	x	x	x	x	x		
	v. 563			Messenger out							
8	**v. 565**		She arrives at her husband's funeral	Stained glass windows		x	x	x	x		
	v. 570		"a good football player and a good catholic"	Stained glass windows melt (30 seconds?)		x	x	x	x		

10	**v. 580**		"Don't Wanna Be Your Girl" begins	The blinds pulse white.		x	x	x	x			
	v. 585		"I don't wanna be your girl no more"	Live feed everywhere.	x	x	x	x	x		CAMERA	
	v. 590		She gasps for air	Live feed OUT.								
11	**v. 595**		She sits at the computer.	Live Feed up	x						LAPTOP	
	v.600		"Call me back, Jamie. Call me back"	Mix of live-feed and pre-recorded videos	x	x	x	x	x		LAPTOP	
	v. 605		June closes the laptop	Everything fades out 30 seconds?								
14	**v. 610**		June pulls out her phone.	Swipes through pictures and videos of her and Jamie (wedding)	x	x	x	x	x			
	v613		Sound outside	Instagram video out.								
16	**v. 615**		June goes to door.	Reporters attack house.	x	x	x	x	x			
	v. 620		June closes door.	Reporters out								
	v.625		June turns on TV	Reporters on.						x		
	v. 630		"disengage a bomb at a Shia mosque"	TV off								
	v. 635		She looks out the blinds.	Reporters on other side of blinds.				x	x			
	v. 640		Looks out the other blinds	Reports on other side of blinds,		x	x					
	v. 645		Goes to wall to peek through door	Reporters on the wall	x							
	v. 647		"applications she frequents"	Reports on wall out								
16	**v. 650**		Center of the room deleting applications.	Reporters return on all the walls and blinds	x	x	x	x	x			
	v. 655		She unplugs!!!	Static	x	x	x	x	x			
	v. 660		TBD	Bootcamp/Drill Sequence begins	x	x	x	x	x			
23	**v. 665**		ACTIVE begins	END OF PROJECTIONS!!!!	x	x	x	x	x			

Appendix B

Lighting, Projections, Sound Cue Sheet[13]



termiNation

LD: Dylan Uremovich (dylanu@umich.edu)

Cue Sheet

Cue	Page	Trigger	Description	Time	Notes
PRE SHOW					
	1		PRESET		
	2	Curtain speech	HOH		
	3		HOUSE OUT/ BLACKOUT		
PART ONE					
	23	Kelly turns off TV	FILLER POSITIONS		
	25	beats, at kitchen	pull down to kitchen		
	25.01	Kelly turns on sink	SOUND: Sink		
	27	Kelly turns off sink	SOUND: Sink		
	29	lizard at work nook	pull down to work nook		
	29.01	Wiggle Moose then CLICK	SOUND/VIDEO: Skype		
	29.02	Kelly turns on sink + Shake mouse then click	SOUND/VIDEO: Skype		
	29.03	Click after message complete	SOUND/VIDEO: Skype out		
	29.1	AUTOFOLLOW	Fill in house to kitchen		
	30	Kelly turns on the sink	Pull down to sink		
	30.01	Kelly turns on the sink	SOUND: Sink stuff		
	30.02	Sink off	SOUND: Sink off		
	31	Kelly enters room	Fill in house to kitchen		
	37	x to bedroom	Highlight bedroom, lose baby's room		
	37.01	Kelly turns on TV	TV turn on		
	41	Kelly enters bathroom	Highlight bathroom		
	41.01	Sink on	SOUND		
	41.02	Sink off	SOUND		
	43	Phone rings/vibrates	Highlight bathroom / SOUND: Neon impact		
	44	Hears report end	light up bathroom		
	45	leave bathroom	prayer in bedroom		
	47	Kelly enters room	pull down to light		
PART THREE					
	51	new day	New day, highlight in bedroom on phone		
	53	lizard at nook	Pull down to nook		
	55	lizard at nook	pull down to nook		
	55.01	Start skype - Wiggle & Click			
	57	Skype call ended	Sink out/ down		
	57	Kelly walks out of light	lights out		
PART FOUR					
	61	new day	Door back up, enter carrying groceries		
	63	x to nook	Pull down to kitchen		
	65	Liard in kitchen	Pull down to kitchen		
	67	grabs pint of ice cream	Fill down to nook		
	69	grabs pint of ice cream	Fill down to nook		
	69.01	Skype call click	Pull down to nook		
	71	skype call ended	Fill into couch		
	73	Kelly sits down	Pull down baby to couch		
	73.01	Remote click	Start rosemary's baby		
	75	Kelly turns on TV	Lights out on Kelly		
PART FOUR (THE SECOND)					
	81	AUTOFOLLOW	up on kelly in bed		
	83	x to work nook	fill in to work nook		
	84	x to work nook	pull down		
	84.01	skype call click			
	84.02	leave a message click	fill in hallway to kitchen		
	84.03	skype call ends	Pull to kitchen		
	84.1	AUTOFOLLOW	Pull to kitchen		
	87	x up to kitchen	Pull to kitchen		
	89	Kelly enters room	Door back up		
	89.1	AUTOFOLLOW	Door back up		
THE ENDING					
	93	Kelly turns off desk light	Lights down		
	103	Kelly zones on	Lights up on kelly getting dressed		
	105	Finished laying out Reg	Shift for funeral speech		
	105.01	"Your boys who all served their country"			
	105.02	"Your boys who all served their country"			
	105.03	"His loose real tight."			
	106.04	"He was the meanest man I ever met."			
	107	"He was the meanest man I ever met." (2nd time)	Shift for finding Reg & Pushing couch		
BATHTUB					
	121	Kelly at bathroom	Light up to bathroom	SOUND / VIDEO	
	123	Kelly in	Pull down to sink		
	123.01	Kelly's hands disapear from sides going underwater		VIDEO	
	125	Kelly sits up	Fill x to bedroom		
SNUG LOVE LIGHTS					
	131	to bedroom	Pull down		
	133	exit bedroom	Fill in to nook		
	135	at nook	pull down		
	135.01	skype start wiggle and click		VIDEO	
	135.02	message start click		VIDEO	
	135.03	"Hello, you've reached Chuck [corrs-"	pull down nook, dimmers as Kelly wanders from room to room	VIDEO	
	140	Lands finally x to kitchen	Shift to kitchen and existing dishes		
A NEW SHIPMENT ARRIVES					
	153	Kelly at kitchen	Add hallway to bedroom		
	154	to bedroom	Lose kitchen		
	155	x to nook	Fill to nook		
	156	at nook	pull down to nook	VIDEO	
	157	exit nook	Pull to CC	VIDEO	
	158	at CC	Focus in		
	159	Kelly sits at center in bull	Pull down to CC for social media moments		
	159.01	Kelly turns on her phone	Special out	VIDEO	
	159.1	When Instagram video starts playing	Special out		
	160.2	Kelly puts phone down	Shift for scares		
A PRIVATE MATTER					
	161	After third play of "Psycho sops"	Door knock - Light up to doorway	VIDEO SOUND	
	163	Kelly opens door - Kelly leans back	Door back up / Fill in to tv room	VIDEO SOUND	
	165	Kelly opens door - Kelly leans back	Door back up / Fill in to tv room	VIDEO SOUND	
	166	TV on	Pull down to TV area		
	167	Kelly turns x beside at a shiko mocquet	Pull down to kitchen		
	168	Kelly at bathroom blinds	Pull to kitchen blinds	VIDEO SOUND	
	169	Kelly at kitchen blinds	Pull to doorway hall	VIDEO SOUND	
	171	Kelly at doorway	Open up full hallway (door not actually open)		
	172	Kelly runs into hallway	Open up full stage		
	179	Boyce "What do YOU wanna know"	Big bump out	VIDEO SOUND	
MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT					
	181	Bathtub at CC	Tight on Kelly for head shots		
	187	Suicides	Open up to full hallway		
	197	Dumbed in Full Metal Jacket	Sink to Active		

[13] Provided by Dylan Uremovich, Lighting Designer and Board Op

termiNation

LD: Dylan Unemovich (dylanu@umd.edu)

Cue Sheet

Q#	Pg#	Trigger	Description	Time	Notes
197.01		"Baby I'm here!"	EXPLOSION		
ACTIVE					
203		"Come on Jamie, let's go home!"	EXPLOSION		
207		"Child into a world like this."	EXPLOSION		
211		"God, how did we get here?"	EXPLOSION		
215		"But now I'm afraid."	EXPLOSION		
221		"I won't know until I try."	Pul to CC for final letter		
221.01		"Jaine. The future is too..."			
223		Stands up to go to blinds	Shift		
225		Open blind 1			
227		Open blind 2			
229		Open blind 3			
231		Open blind 4			
233		Pull away bathtub	Door back up / highlight CC for final words		
235		"Too good to waste on lies."	Fade to just doorback		
237		AUTOFOLLOW	Out		
CURTAIN CALL					
301		Curtain Call			
303		Actor exit			
305		House Up			

Appendix C

Final Version of *termiNATION* heading into technical rehearsals. It has not been changed to reflect the changes made during technical rehearsals or the performance.

termiNATION

a tale of grief and redemption in 36 weeks

PRE-SHOW.

America The Beautiful hums underneath this section. The audience enters and we hear the sounds of a life. On the wall and the blinds we see a life of two people— children playing and hitting each other, a birthday, a wedding, vacations, a soldier coming home, hanging out at the house. It's a love story. On loop. On repeat. Until we're ready to start the show.

PART ONE.

When we are ready to begin, the lights go down but the images remain. They bleed into war movies where loved ones are ripped apart. Pearl Harbor. — We hear sounds of someone trying to make contact through a shitty radio?

It comes to a climax with the helicopter crash from Black Hawk Down.

PART TWO.

It's a scene we don't expect. A woman is sitting on a couch eating a bag of cheetos watching TV. She abruptly turns the TV off. She stands, licks her fingers, wipes them on her shirt and heads to the kitchen. She stands by the faucet, turns it on, and mimics washing her hands. She turns the faucet off, flicks her wet hands, looks around for a washcloth, finds none, then wipes her hands on her pants. She stands against the counter and checks her phone. Nothing. She reaches into her pocket and pulls out a pregnancy test. She cracks her neck, puts one hand to her stomach, her cheek to her shoulder, and smiles. She places the test back into her pocket and goes to the refrigerator. She opens the freezer, grabs a Ben & Jerry's ice cream, closes the door, opens a drawer, grabs a spoon, closes the drawer, puts the spoon in her mouth as she opens the ice cream. She goes to a desk in the living room, following the invisible lines of the house that mark her groundplan. She situates herself in the desk chair, comfortably. We see her image in front of the computer all over the house. The digital blue from the screen and a gentle tangerine glow from the desk lamp light her. A few clicks here and there. The sound of dialing, like Skype or something.

She takes her hair out of the messy bun, attempts to make herself more presentable. The sad sound of a call that doesn't get picked up. She decides to leave a message.

Woman:

Hi Jamie! It's June again. I tried calling you a few times this morning but I guess you were busy.

(A long silence.)

There's a care package I sent your way this afternoon but I'm too excited to keep this in any longer. Baby, we're pregnant! Crazy, right? I already told my Mama and prayed to Daddy and Grandpa to let them know. Shelly, I called her third and so you know by now that it's all over the yoga group because sweet Shelly can't keep a secret for the life of her. Oh! I'm thinking about posting something on Facebook but I want to get a screen shot of the two of us together with maybe some kind of cute sign or something like they do on that Chick-Fil-A commercial. I don't know! Something fun and flirty to announce! Oh, baby, I'm so excited. Well, call me back! Call me back soon so we can talk. I miss you, baby. I can't wait for us to start this next adventure. I'm gonna go get ready for bed and pray. Maybe stay up and watch another movie. Okay. Anyway. Love you. Don't forget to wear sun block! Love you. Bye.

The woman turns off the camera but not the computer or the desk lamp. The digital blue remains. She picks up her phone, heads to the kitchen to wash dishes, and calls someone, a friend.

JUNE: Hey Shelley. I'm good, how are you doing? Yeah? You know.. I tried calling Jamie all day today and didn't get an answer either. You know he better have a damn good reason for not picking up. (laughs). Girl, I know. We married the wrong kind of men. I can't even get mad at him. Mhmm. Yeah…

Am I going to Debbie's tomorrow? Hell no. You know how many times Debbie and her little friends in the Grieving Widows Club have tried to play me? *(She knows she said something bad. Apologetic.)* I know. Listen, I know it makes me look petty but I can't help it. I don't like her! Ugh, yes. It's awful. I know. I know. I'm a terrible person. But you know me, I can't be anywhere near her or that group. I can't even say the name. Ugh, I get shivers. I don't want their bad luck - it may rub off on me. Well, if she wasn't so heinous I might be a little less harsh. Listen, bad shit doesn't happen to good people. She is *not* good people. Mhmm… Mhmm… *(laughs)* Okay, okay. You're right. I better go pray and ask for forgiveness before somebody tries to strike me down. Oh, yes, Shelley. One Our Father and three Hail Mary's. *(laughs. Shelley says something on the line that concerns June.)* Hey, hey. It's okay. Don't think like that! You know, it'll be

Thanksgiving soon enough and our mens will be watching the game on the couch again. Yeah, you too. Love you, Shell. Talk tomorrow. Bye.

She hangs up the phone and goes to her room, following the invisible lines of the house that make up her groundplan. She walks past an empty room, pauses, doubles back, enters, looks around. It's the baby's room. She takes in the space, turns and looks at the walls, touches her belly. Pauses. Breathes. Walks out of the room. She goes into her room, turns on the TV in there, it's a commercial.

She walks into the bathroom, opens the medicine cabinet, takes a make up wipe, and starts taking off her make up. She tosses the wipe when she's done. She dips her hands into the basin acting as a sink and tosses water on her face. She dabs her washcloth on her face. She grabs tweezers, and begins to pluck at her eyebrows.

The commercials turn into news. It underscores the following section:

REPORTER VOICE
And in today's news four soldiers were found dead near the border of Afghanistan and Pakistan…

She stops abruptly and walks back into her room.

Originally sent on a mission to disengage a bomb near a Shia mosque the team drove over an IED on the way back to their base. There were no survivors. In a press conference this morning, the US Army declined to release more details about the event in the hopes of finding out exactly what happened. What we do know—-

June immediately changes the channel to a Keeping Up With The Kardashian's episode. She heads back to the bathroom and continues the rest of the routine in with this underscoring. When she's done, she discards the tweezers. She inspects her face before grabbing her moisturizer from the medicine cabinet, twists off the top, scoops some out, maneuvers the lid back on, places it down, and then gently rubs the moisturizer onto her face. When she's done, she wipes the remainder on a wash cloth. Inspects her face once more. Takes out her cellphone. Selfie!

She walks back to her room, phone in hand. She kneels next to her bed, does a sign of the cross, clasps her hands together, and places her forehead to them. We see her mouth moving, and hear indistinct but familiar words. A prayer. She signs again, and hops into bed and gets comfy with her phone — posting to Instagram, probably. She stops abruptly! Jumps up and runs into the living room. She left the ice cream out on the desk. She quickly replaces it in the fridge before returning to bed, turning off various lights in other rooms as she travels back to her bedroom.

She slips back into bed, the Kardashian's are still playing on the TV. She continues trolling social media as the lights go down.

PART THREE.

Another day.

(There should be an abrupt shift. She is folding her laundry.)

JUNE:

Poor, Charlotte. Oh, no. I can't even imagine that, can you? Really? Whew, I can't even imagine what I'd be like if they came to my door. No, Becky said when she showed up to the house she was sobbing, and I mean *sobbing* behind the couch. Inconsolable. They had to call the medics, she was barely breathing. Just heaving. Ugh, that hurts my heart. Charlotte. Mmm. Bad things shouldn't happen to good people like that. Have you told her to join Debbie's group? Oh, shut up! *(laughs)* Listen, anything to get our Charlotte feeling herself again. Yes, even if that means consorting with the enemy. Oh, you're fine! *(laughs again)* Stop it. I'll see you tomorrow night for ladies night out? They say one glass of white wine won't kill you. They did! Look it up! If you and Dave are gonna start trying when he gets back you better know what's up. Mhmm. Okay. Bye, lady.

June hangs up with Shelley and checks her phone. No messages. Checks her computer. No messages. She goes to the living room and starts and connects her phone to Bluetooth. She starts playing "I Wanna Dance With Somebody." She's dancing with her baby.

PART FOUR.

The door to her house opens. June enters carrying groceries talking on the phone with Shelley. Over the course of the monologue she puts groceries away and then opens the freezer and grabs a pint of ice cream.

JUNE:

…*another* wife on base? This is absolute madness. It's unimaginable. That's.. what… three in the last year? Two in the last month? No, I don't know her very well. Does she go to church? Yeah, I didn't think so. She lived a few doors down from us before they moved on base. Mhmm.. Mhmm! You better bake her a cake or something. I'll make a boozy care package. Well, I don't like Debbie! This other girl. What's her name? Katy? Katy. Well, she didn't do anything to deserve my wrath. *(laughs)*. Hey! I'm a bitch but a fierce and loyal friend. Listen, Shell, try calling Dave again. I got a feeling he'll answer this time.

She goes to the computer and sits down. She hops on Skype again and calls Jamie. It starts to ring.

No, I'm trying him right now. Yeah, I'll tell him you said hi. Okay. Bye, mama.

She hangs up just as Skype stops ringing. No answer. She doesn't leave a message.

She turns off Skype and sits back in her desk chair. Slowly swivels. She rubs her belly, gently, and decides to start watch some TV. She goes to the couch, picks up the remote, and turns on the TV. Rosemary's Baby *turns on. She starts watching and slowly falls asleep. The movie ends and The Hurt Locker begins. It spreads to the walls and floors of her house. Imagery of men and women approaching IED's, in Explosion Suits, confining spaces, the desert, explosions, etc. Overlaid is her face dreaming. Her body contorts.*

PART FOUR:

She wakes abruptly in a cold sweat. In bed. It's daytime. The TV channel has changed to something else — Oprah?. She must've changed the channel again in her sleep. The rumble of explosions (small) underscores her transition from the bedroom to downstairs. She turns off the TV, jumps up out of bed, races down the stairs to the computer and tries calling Jamie. Skype rings. Ends.

She sits for a moment. Rubs her belly. The explosions return again.

She calls him again. Skype rings. No answer. She leaves a message.

JUNE:
Hey Baby. You're getting me worried. We haven't talked in a few days. Send me a message or something? Call me? Text me? Just want to make sure you're okay. Okay. Love you?

She turns off Skype and sits back in her desk chair. Slowly swivels. She checks her watch, taps her foot a few times, and then goes to the kitchen to make some coffee. She does. Noticing the grocery bags she left out overnight, she peers over the top of the bag. It smells. She throws the groceries in the trash and starts making coffee. Her phone rings. Is it Jamie?! No. It's Shelly. She butt dialed June.

JUNE:

Shelley! Shell.. Girl… YOU BUTT DIALED ME AGAIN!

She hangs up the phone. Sends Shelley a quick text. There's a knock on the door. She's confused. She wasn't expecting anyone.

JUNE:
Just a moment!

She finishes her text message, washes her hands, flicks them, wipes any residual water on her shorts as she heads for the door. She opens it, pleasant but confused at first. What she sees breaks her heart.

Lights Dim.

THE FUNERAL

The Messenger[14] playing on the TV in the room is the first source of light we see flickering. It spreads onto the walls and surfaces of the house.[15] It is of two men preparing to give news to the widow that her husband has passed away. It's first very real and then very dreamlike.

As June walks backwards The Messenger spreads onto the blinds.

She stops down center near the living room.

At her feet is a pool of fabric and sensible heels. She slips on the dress, has trouble with the zipper for a bit, and then finally gets it on without any help. She slips the shoes on to her feet, smooths out her dress, checking herself out in the mirror, pulls a piece of paper out of the pocket of the dress and mouths a few words.

As the above happens, we hear the conversation between June and The Messenger:
Hello, are you Mrs. James Lawton III?
Yes, I am. Please come in.
(feet shuffling, people sitting in chairs, slight pause)
M'am, I'm here to —
I know what you're here for. How did he die?
Ma'm, I have been asked to inform you that your husband has been reported dead in Afghanistan at 0100 on September 4th, 2017 from wounds sustained due

to an improvised explosive device on a recent mission. On the behalf of the Secretary of Defense, I extend to you and your family my deepest sympathy in your great loss.
Thank you.
Is there anyone we can call?
No, his mother and father have passed.
I mean for you, M'am.
No. I thank you for your time, sir. I know this must be difficult for you—

She begins to arrange the furniture into a coffin. She pulls an American Flag out and lays it on the coffin. June stands at the center of the room at her husband's funeral. A little confused how she got there but not letting the world see that.

JUNE:
Good morning, everyone. *(A murmur of 'Good Morning' from the crowd.)* I'd like to thank you all for making your way out here on this rainy day to say goodbye to Jamie. (*She looks at the coffin.)* I'm sorry you couldn't see Jamie one last time. His proximity to the bomb and the objects within the… (*She stops as she sees women in the audience crying.)* Sorry.

(The sounds of an angry mob outside, but far away. Interrupting her train of thought and the beauty of the service. Reporters, church whispers etc.)
(hearing the voices, but purposefully pushing forward)
James Christopher Lawton III was born January 1, 1986 in Hagerstown, Maryland. Son of James Christopher Lawton II and Denise Sawyer Lawton, James (or Jamie was we always knew him) was the youngest of four boys who all served their country.

Jamie was always the two things his father wanted him to be: a good football player and a good Catholic… He…

*(**Church, Reporters, 8k beep**)*

I… I first met Jamie in the second grade and it was love at first sight. He used to sit across the way form me and I just fell in love with those brown eyes and those cute little curls and the funny little way you could tell he was about to sneeze. He used to scrunch up his nose real tight and shake his head and the tiniest little sneeze would come out of his nose…

*(**Church, Reporters, 8k beep**)*

… We were married in a small, simple ceremony with Father Dyers who confirmed the two of us. There wasn't much money, we had to ask my momma for some.. But it couldn't have been more perfect.

The mob takes over one last time…

He was the bravest man I ever met. He was the bravest man I ever met…

SHAKE, WIPE, REMEMBER, REMIND, FORGET

At a certain point she stops speaking but the words swirling around the room continue. Her hands shake so hard they rip the paper. She's confused at her own strength. Her hands shake uncontrollably. She stops them. She wipes the slate clean. Her hands touch her sides, one hand slowly moves up towards her neck to her face, she turns her face to the side abruptly, flicks her hand from her face. This sequence continues as she she attempts to abate her fear and push down Jamie's memory. Just to get through the day. Just through this one, terrible, day.

Sound of an angry mob take over as she makes her way back to her home.

The lines of the blinds type out Remember. Remind. Forget. Over and over and over again.

Eventually, she transitions back into her home. The lines of the blinds race past her like speeding cars on a highway at night as she makes her way to the bathroom.

BATHTUB

*June standing next to a bathtub in her funeral clothes. The music is contemplative but rings through her body. "**I don't wan't to be your girl**" by Wet plays. Her thoughts rattle around in her head. Through the walls of the house. "You abandoned me. You left me here. Who am I without you? etc." They make their way onto the blinds.*

She tries to step out of her funeral attire. She cant get the zipper off. In her frustration she kicks off her shoes and jumps into the bathtub. She stares at the water. Very slowly, incredibly slowly, she steps into the bathtub and sinks into the water. Her head lays on the rim of the tub. She occupies various positions. She places her hands on her belly. Long periods of time. Slowly, her hands make their way downward and she touches herself.

She comes to a climax and feels guilty.

She slowly sinks into the bathtub where we can't see here. Projection appears on the wall of her sinking beneath the water. She holds her breath as long as she can.

We sit. We wait. She waits. She comes up gasping for air. Projection disappears. Her hair is wet, her eyes are large.

SKYPE LOVE LETTERS

Still wet from the bathtub, she goes into her room. She takes off her wet clothes and places them on the bed. She goes into the closet and finds Jamie's clothes. She lays them out on the bed. Then, she picks them up and smells them. She holds them. She puts on something comfortable. Holding the clothes, takes them carefully downstairs to her study nook. She sits in front of the computer. June appears as almost a disembodied figure. She looks exhausted. Tired. Drained. Zombie-esque. The familiar skype dial tone plays to a sad ending.

JUNE:

Jamie,
I know it's silly but... praying to you just doesn't seem right. I still wanna call you and I...still wanna see your face on the other end of the line. I buried you today. I didn't even get to see your face... closed coffin. When was the last time I saw you? It must've been about a month ago but it seems so far away. Even this morning feels far away. I woke up this morning and I rolled over to your side of the bed and I realized that you weren't there. And I must've been waking up like that for the last 35 days. I've been waking up like that for the last month. The last couple months but something was different. I don't know why but something was different.

I wanna say call me back but I know you won't. Call me back, Jamie. Call me back.

From here on out, the videos are pre-recorded and playing on the walls of the house. June stands in each room of the house remembering. Then she cradles the computer in each room of the house.

JUNE:

Oh, god! When I woke up this morning my eyes were so puffy I couldn't see. I had to put chamomile tea bags just to reduce the swelling and that helped a little but as I could see again I just started crying. I'm exhausted from crying. There are no tears they just won't come. It's like... It's like I've run out. Jamie. Jamie,

Jamie, Jamie. Oh, God -- I'm not ready to let you go. I'm not ready. How am I supposed to move on? How am I suppose to get over feeling like this? We've known each other since we were seven. That's a long time to know someone and I know you. I know you. Losing you is like losing one half of me. Am I even me without you? Am I even me without you... I must be but -- I'm not so sure.

Call me back, Jamie. Just call me back.

JUNE:

Jamie. Jamie. Jamie Everytime I say your name I see your face and it brings me one step closer to... to really feeling you here. Jamie. Jamie. Jamie. I just say your name over and over and over and over again and... you're here. It's you. you're really here and it's not like the pictures I have of you. It's you. It's us. It's everything we had and everything we were supposed to have. Jamie. Jamie. Jamie. Jamie. Jamie. But sometimes when I say your name and -- no matter how many times I say it over and over and over again-- sometimes...Sometimes I see you and you're a little different. You're a little different. Something is different. Something is off. It's like... I can't put my finger on it. Jamie. God, do you think I'm forgetting you? Oh, no. Jamie. Jamie. Jamie. Everything in this house reminds me of you. There's that stain on the living room floor from when you and Dave were outside playing football and you caught something underneath your shoe and you tracked it all over the beautiful new rug and oh my God I was so mad at you. No matter what I did, it didn't matter. I was just scrubbing the shit out of the floor and that stain just wouldn't come out. Bleach wouldn't even help it! You just sat on the couch with your shoes off and just laughed at me and God that made me even more mad. You just tackled me to the floor and started tickling me which of course made me even more mad but I was laughing at the same time so it didn't even matter. Who gives a shit about a stained rug when I have you? I think I am forgetting you, Jamie. How do I make that stop? Hm? How do I make it stop? Just make it stop. Just make it stop. Just come back home. Come back, Jamie. Come back.

June has managed to make it to the kitchen and starts washing dishes.

A SERIES OF PHONE CALLS

June standing in the kitchen washing dishes. Then folding clothes. Then surfing the internet until it is an incoherent swirl.

The phone rings continually.

VOICE OF JUNE AND JAMIE
Hi, you've reached June. And Jamie! Leave us a message. (beep)

VOICE OF SHELLEY:
June! Hi, honey. It's me. It's been a few days and I haven't heard from you since the service. How are you? Call me back as soon as you can. I love you, mama.

A long beep that extends into a ***sequence about wrenching your guts out.***

The beep ends and her mother is on the phone.

VOICE OF MOM:
Hi Honey, please call me. Why aren't you returning my calls? The Doctor called and said you haven't been yet. It's important that you go, okay? June, call me back so I know you're okay. We're still in Iceland for the next few days but I'm on my way back to you soon. I love you, June. O-o? Sige, mahal kita. Call me back.

A long beep.

VOICE OF REPORTER:
Hello, I'm trying to get in touch with June Lawton? This is Hadassa Kwan-Perez from the daily news. We're very sorry for your loss but we wondered if you might be interested in an interview with us. We've uncovered some information about the mission your husband was on and wonder if you'd like to comment. You can reach us at—

A long beep.

VOICE OF SHELLEY:
June. I drove by the house today and knocked but you weren't there. Or so it seemed. I know you're there. Stop hiding and TALK TO ME. Call me back. Have you been to the doctor? —

A long beep.

VOICE OF DOCTOR SECRETARY:

Hello, Miss Lawton. This is Dana from Dr. Lee's office. You missed your appointment last week —

Beep.

VOICE OF DOCTOR SECRETARY:
Hello, Miss Lawton. This is Dana from Dr. Lee's office. You missed your appointment few weeks ago and I wonder if you want to reschedule —

Beep.

VOICE OF DOCTOR:
Miss, Lawton. This is Doctor Lee. We've been trying to get in touch with you for quite some time —

Beep.

Shelley.
Mom.
Reporter.
Doctor's Secretary
Doctor.
Shelley.
Mom.
Reporter.
Doctor's Secretary.
Doctor.
Shelley.

It becomes an incoherent swirl.

———————————

It ends with June in a ball at the center of the house.

She pulls out her cellphone and begins looking at pictures of her and Jamie. We see these pictures on the walls. A few videos.

Halloween
Christmas.
Engagement.
Marriage.
Stuff from their last day together…

The last video we see is —

What's your favorite color?
Gold.
What's your favorite color?
Blue.
(laughs) That doesn't sound like it was true.
It's blue.
It's blue. Gold and blue.
When's your birthday?
June 12, 1986
What's your middle name?
Jeannette
I love you!
I love you!
You better.
(laughs).

A PRIVATE MATTER

An aggressive bang on the door.

June looks up. Surprised. Scared. June gets up quickly and heads for the door. Is it Jamie?! She opens the door and is attacked by flashes. On the walls of the house we see from the POV of camera men a woman open the door. We hear ***"Oh! She's here. Mrs. Lawton!"*** *They rush for her. Before they get too close she slams the door. The cameras disappear. She leans up against the door. Thinks. Runs to one of the windows and briefly opens the blinds. We see a house. Her house. Her blinds. Her eyes. June pulls away. The POV disappears. She turns her TV on and it appears everywhere.*

NEWS REPORTER:
Reporting to you live from Camp Springs, Maryland. Just outside the naval base we are at the address of 21509 Lincoln Drive the residence of the now since passed Private First Class James Christopher Lawton III. His wife, June Lawton, is inside the house, refusing to answer calls or emails from the throes of reporters stationed outside her home—

Since news broke this morning of the controversy surrounding the violent ambush in Afghanistan that happened almost eight weeks ago concerning her husband's unit, journalists have been eagerly awaiting Mrs. Lawton to respond to the accusations made against her husband that he *deserted* the mission to disengage a bomb at a Shia mosque.

In fact, reports that Mrs. Lawton has secluded herself inside the house for the last six to eight weeks have been verified by friends, family, her employer, and acquaintances — and even her doctor, who has said he's tried to get in touch with her multiple times — as she made several appointments with him about her pregnancy.

June looks down. ***Her baby bump has grown.*** *She then runs to each of the blinds and closes them. Immediately, she begins moving furniture to barricade the front door.*

Fellow army wives of Mrs. Lawton's acquaintance have voluntarily provided statements to the press on the absence of Mrs. Lawton on social media and at various events but Shelly de los Santos, wife of Private First Class David de los Santos, and one of Mrs. Lawton's closest friends, declined to speak with reporters ——

For our viewers who are just joining us, we are outside the residence of Private First Class James Christopher Lawton III, the man who *deserted* his unit in the midst of an ambush by ISIL forces just eight weeks ago. Private Lawton's wife, June Lawton remains inside the house, avoiding the throes of reporters stationed outside her home. As of now, she has made no statement, and has been unusually absent from social media — particularly snapchat and instagram — applications she frequents.

She erases her instagram account. She goes to twitter, deletes that account. She goes to Facebook, deletes that account.

Her prevailing absence at work, the various groups and organizations she frequents, and her social media continue to raise questions about what Mrs. Lawton knew and what she didn't. Her last Instagram post on October 28th, 2017 featured a picture of the two of them on their wedding day with the caption, "he was the bravest man I ever knew." October 28th marks their four year anniversary after a twenty-four year courtship that spanned from Maryland to Texas. Private Lawton died on September 4, 2017 of this year along with three other members of his unit. The three other members were found at the scene of the ambush, though Private Lawton was found almost one mile away —

What we want to know is whether or not Mrs. Lawton knew what her husband intended to do? Why did he run?—

She holds the baby bump turns off the TV.

Realizes that she's still "plugged in". She races to the computer and unplugs it.

She pulls on an ethernet cord that is extremely long. It never ends. It gets stuck.. She yanks on it.. It breaks. TRULY UNPLUGGED NOW!

This is some kind of metaphor for taking herself off-line as well as choosing to investigate herself and her relationship to men who fight in the name of their country deeper. To go deeper she has to disengage.

Everything goes out!

A light comes up. The sound of a bathtub being pushed into the center. June begins putting on her uniform. Lastly, she grabs a pair of clippers. Apprehensive at first. She turns it on. The whir of the blades underscores this transformation. She begins to shave her head.

JARHEAD (sound)

You are no longer black, or brown, or yellow, or red. You are now green! You are light green or dark green! Do you understand?

SIR YES SIR

Swafford?

SIR YES SIR?

Are you the maggot whose father served in Vietnam?

Sir Yes Sir!

Outstanding! Did he have the balls to die there?

Sir No Sir!

Too fucking bad. He ever talk about it?

Sir only once sir!

Good, then he wasn't lying!

D.I.

Speak!

Sir, private Casto reporting as ordered sir!

Casto your shirt is unbuttoned, your belt isn't lined up, your feet aren't at a 45 degree angle, your hair is square to the front you're looking at the sky what are you a bird watcher?

No sir!

Get your head down.

Yes sir!

You were 58 pounds overweight when you came down here weren't yah?

Yes sir!

You were a fat slob. You looked like the great white whale didn't ya?

Yes sir.

How much you lost?

Sir, 30 pounds sir.

You're gonna lose every ounce of the 58 pounds ya hear?

Yes sir!

Everyday at chow you will show me your tray.

Yes sir!

You ain't gonna eat no bread no corn no pie no cake no desserts of any kind no whole milk no beans no butter no sugar no potatoes candy ice cream no salad dressings or peanut butter.

Yes sir!

You came here with nothing but fat. You're gonna leave here with nothing but muscle.

Yes sir!

Pretty soon you're gonna look like the ——, aren't ya?

Yes sir!

All right you get back in the squad bay.

Aye aye sir!

G.I. Jane

I never saw a wild thing sorry for itself
a bird will fall frozen dead from a bough
without ever having felt sorry for itself

The ebb and flow of the atlantic tides
the drift of the continents
the very position of the sun along it's ecliptic
these are jus a few of the things i control in my world.

Is that clear?

Yes Command Master Chief!

Is that clear?

Yes Command Master Chief!

HACKSAW RIDGE

You are a very strange looking individual if you don't mind me saying so private. Name?

Andy Walker.

How long have you been dead son?

Sir?

I AM NOT SIR. I AM SERGEANT HOWELL OR SARGE. SIR YOU SAY FOR USELESS PEOPLE

FULL METAL JACKET
From now on you will speak only when you are spoken to and the first and last words out of your filthy sewer will be sir. Do you maggots understand that?

Sir yes sir!

Bullshit. I can't hear you. Sound off like you got a pair.

Sir yes sir!

If you ladies leave my island. If you survive recruit training. You will be a weapon. You will be a minister of death waiting for war. But until that day you are pubes. You are the lowest form of life on earth. You are not even human fucking beings. You are nothing but unorganized —- pieces of amphibian shit. Because I am hard you will not like me. But the more you hate me the more you will learn. I am hard but I am fair. There is no racial bigotry here. I do not look down on n—-, kikes, or greasers. Here you are all equally worthless. And my orders are to weed out —- to serve in my beloved corps. Do you maggots understand that?

Sir yes sir!

Bullshit. I can't hear you.

Sir yes sir!

Well, not shit. We got a fucking comedian — Private Joker. I admire your honesty. Hell, I like you. You can come over to my house and fuck my sister. You little scumbag. I got your name I got your ass. You will not laugh. You will not cry. You will learn by the numbers. I will teach you. Now get up. Get on your feet. You best untuck yourself or I will unscrew your head and shit down your neck.

Sir yes sir!

Private Joker why did you join my beloved corps?

Sir To kill sir!

So you're a killer?

Sir yes sir!

Let me see your war face

Sir?

You got a war face? Ahhhhhh! That's a war face. Now let me see your war face.

Ahhhh!

Bullshit. You didn't convince me. Now let me see your war face.

Ahhhh!

She begins suicides as bootcamp training sequence videos play. Fast and dirty compilation of Full Metal Jacket.

G.I. Jane

She stops middle of the room and begins doing pushups-modified.

Quit playing with your hair O'Neil and drop down.

If you can't do these right O'Neil do them on your knees.
I like these just fine, sir!
…
Hey I'm just having a sexual fantasy here, man.

You don't even have to be harder than the average man to get into this program. But I know some of you are already thinking seriously about quitting. Come on! You don't need this abuse.

I think I have a quitter. Do I have a quitter?!

She turns over and begins doing flutter kicks..?

Be ashamed for the rest of your fucking lives. Pain is your friend! Your ally! It will tell you when you are seriously injured. It will keep you awake! And angry! And remind you to finish the job and get the hell home! But you know the best thing about pain?

I KNOW.

It lets you know you're not dead yet!

She doubles over in pain. The baby?!

I've seen girl scouts move quicker than that! You people are pathetic!

She begins suicides again.

She stops to catch her breath as the Private Pyle scene starts.

ACTIVE

After the clip of Pyle shooting the drill sergeant, we DROP INTO AN ACTIVE WAR ZONE.

Bombs dropping. Gunshots firing. How did she get here?!

She pushes the furniture around and creates a fort. She sits inside it and tries to contact Jamie.

June:
(crackle) Jamie, it's June. Can you hear me? (crackle)
Jamie, it's June. Are you there? Over.
Jamie.
Jamie.
Jamie!

Jamie I came for you!
I came to bring you home!
If you're out there — If you can hear me — I'm here! Baby, I'm here.

A huge explosion. She's force to scramble out of the tent. And rearrange the furniture. She hides behind something and tries to look for him.

I didn't believe them when they said you deserted. I know you're out here trying to come home. Just —-

She looks over something and hides.

Just come with me, Jamie. Come on, Jamie. Let's go home!

Another huge explosion. She rearranges the furniture. She feels a pain in her belly. She doubles over.

Jamie! Please. Please. Please come home. I can't do this alone! Don't make me do this alone. Don't make me do this without you…
I'm scared, Jamie. I'm terrified.

How am I supposed to bring a child into a world like this?

Explosion. She races over to another place in the room and hides behind something.

This big, huge, terrifying, ugly, scary fucking world where
children die from bombs made of shrapnel and barrels

children drown when crossing a large and turbulent sea
children bleed in the streets because a man sworn to protect fears for his life

God, how did we get here?

Explosion

There was a time I thought I was living in the most blissful heaven.
I never feared what was outside of my yard.
I never feared what was just down the road.
I never feared what was across an ocean.

But now, I'm afraid.

Explosion

I'm afraid!

I'm afraid my child will enter into this world of fear and hatred and killing.
I'm afraid my child could be the victim of hate, of revenge, of conflict.
I'm afraid my child will be hate, revenge, and conflict.

How do I create something good — SOMEONE GOOD — when everything around me is a lie? When everything around me is sick.. and twisted.. and nothing like the garden of Eden we are supposed to enter… How do I keep her safe? How do I keep her good? How do I make her good? How can I make sure she is good?

The explosions begin to dissipate.

She chuckles.

I know. I can't.

Chuckles again.

I know, Jamie. I know. I won't know until I try.

LEAVING THE HOUSE

JUNE stands up and looks around her. The war zone is gone.

(To the audience.)
There's something I never told you.

She pulls out a piece of paper.

June
The future is too good to waste on lies. And life is way too short to care for the damnation of others, as well as to spend it helping fools with their ideas that are wrong. I have seen their ideas and I am ashamed to even be american.

The horror of the self-righteous arrogance that they thrive in — It is all revolting. In the US army you are cut down for being honest... but if you are a conceited brown nosing shit bag you will be allowed to do what ever you want, and you will be handed your higher rank... The system is wrong. I am ashamed to be an american. And the title of US soldier is just the lie of fools. ...

The US army is the biggest joke the world has to laugh at. It is the army of liars, backstabbers, fools, and bullies. The few good SGTs are getting out as soon as they can— I am sorry for everything here. These people need help, yet what they get is the most conceited country in the world telling them that they are nothing and that they are stupid, that they have no idea how to live...
We don't even care when we hear each other talk about running children down in the dirt streets with our armored trucks... We make fun of them in front of their faces, and laugh at them for not understanding we are insulting them.

There are a few more boxes on their way to you. Feel free to open them, and use them.

I love you.
I'll see you soon.

She rips the letter apart.

Maybe I knew. Maybe I didn't.

I'm not here to say whether what he wrote was true or not. I can't say he was right or wrong. I can't even begin to imagine what he must have been through.

Maybe he ran. Maybe he didn't. That's not for me to decide and I doubt they'll let me anyway.

I secluded myself because grief ought to be private.
But everyone is here to witness it.
And now a private grief becomes public.

I secluded myself because I found that it was easier to grieve that way
than to admit to anyone else that I was weak
that my faith had been broken
that I miss him—
flawed and beautiful and dumb as he is
I miss him—

I used to wonder who I would be without Jamie.
And now I know.

He was my first love.
He was my best friend.
He was the kindest man I ever knew
The bravest man I ever met.
And he would have been the best father for my baby girl.
But he was also a killer. A deserter. A murderer. A patriot. A hero. A savior.
Can someone be all of those things and still be good?

I don't know.

June heads to each of the blinds and opens them. Lights, beautiful sunlight she hasn't seen for days shines in, illuminating the room in a pleasant flow. She heads for the front door — the door she's been ignoring for a long time.

The future is too good to waste on lies.

She takes a deep breath. Opens it.

Flashes, camera flashes, thousands of them, silhouette her.

Blackout.

END.

Bibliography

1. *Black Hawk Down.* Ridley Scott. Josh Hartnett, Ewan McGregor, Tom Sizemore, Eric Bana, William Fichtner, Ewen Bremmer, Sam Shepard, Nikolaj Coster-Waldau. Columbia Pictures, 2001. Film.

2. Colburn, Alexandra. "termiNATION". 2017. Theatrical Script.

3. The D.I. Jack Webb. Jack Webb, Jackie Loughery, Don Dubbins, Lin McCarthy, Monica Lewis. Warner Bros. 1957. Film.

4. *Full Metal Jacket.* Stanley Kubrick. Matthew Modine, Vincent D'Onofrio, R. Lee Erney, Adam Baldwin, Dorian Harewood, Arliss Howard, Kevyn Major Howard, Ed O'Ross. Warner Bros. Columbia —Cannon. 1987. Film.

5. *G.I. Jane.* Ridley Scott. Demi Moore, Viggo Mortensen, Anne Bancroft. Hunan Vista Pictures. 1997. Film

6. Google Image Search. *http://www.google.com (accessed April 2018)*

7. Hacksaw Ridge. Mel Gibson. Andrew Garfield, Sam Worthington, Luke Bracey, Teresa Palmer, Hugo Weaving, Rachel Griffiths, Wince Vaughn. Summit Entertainment and Icon Film Distribution. 2016. Film.

8. Hillard, Gloria. “All Things Considered/Moving On: Project Helps War Widows Recover.” 2014. Television/Radio. Accessed via *www.npr.org* October 2017.

9. *The Hurt Locker.* Kathryn Bigelow. Jeremy Renner, Anthony Mackle, Brian Geraghty, Evangeline Lilly, Ralph Fiennes, David Morse, Guy Pearce. Summit Entertainment. 2008. Film.

10. Hsu, Jonathan. Production Photography. November 17, 2017.

11. *Jarhead.* Sam Mendes. Jake Gyllenhaal, Peter Sarsgaard, Chris Cooper, Jamie Foxx. Universal Pictures. 2005. Film.

12. *The Messenger.* Oren Moverman. Ben Foster, Woody Harrelson, Samantha Morton, Jena Malone. Oscillioscope Laboratories. 2009. Film

13. Polendo, Ruben and Theater Mitu. “Juárez: A Documentary Mythology”. 2014. Theatrical Script.

14. *Rosemary’s Baby.* Roman Polanski. Mia Farrow, John Cassavetes, Ruth Gordon, Sidney Blacker, Maurice Evans, Ralph Bellamy. Paramount Pictures. 1968. Film.