ALICE HOY IS
NOT
A BUILDING

An Ethnographic Performance

Text for the Melbourne Season
June 2007
Wales, Donelan, Bird and Sinclair
ALICE HOY IS NOT A BUILDING

PERFORMED AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE, 11-12 JUNE 2007

DEVELOPED AND PERFORMED BY

JANE BIRD, KATE DONELAN, CHRISTINE SINCLAIR, PRUE WALES

Bowie
Alice Hall, Building Supervisor
Rose, Alice Hoy
Faith, Building Supervisor

Voice Overs: Bill Ten Eyck, Ruth Muir, Marita Rosenberg,
Patrick Donelan, Eleanor Donelan.

Technical Support: Brett Rosenberg, Robbie Ten Eyck, Ben Moore
Directorial Support: Naomi Edwards
These Hallowed Halls

The HOLLOWED HALLS

PROLOGUE

Jane, Kate, Chris and Prue all sit on stage.
Voiceover of Frank who introduces the research.

Professor Frank Worthy, B.A., M.A. (Syd), Ph.D. (Harvard)
Principal Investigator

Frank
My name is Professor Frank Worthy. I am the principal investigator in a major ethnographic study of academics teaching at the University of Melbourne. Today I am going to present some very important findings from this groundbreaking research. Thank you, Jane.
Jane goes to the computer and clicks on the first slide.

Photo of Alice Hoy.

Frank  (He reads aloud)
A photo of people teaching outside

No Jane that’s wrong. Next, (PPT5 – image of women) I told you this had to be good. (PPT6 – image of women) Why are those images in there? Where are the dot points? Where are the research questions? Get rid of the images?

**PPT. 7**

‘Aims of the study’. To Investigate the boundaries of ethnographic performance.

Frank

Ah this is better.

**PPT-8**

How can one balance the aesthetic demands of ethnographic performance with its research purposes?

**PPT-9**

Educational Journeys of Women at The University of Melbourne

How did you get here?

Frank

What’s sort of research question is that. Let’s move along to the hard data. *(The computer freezes on the last line)* Where are the graphs? Look, um, I’m sorry, this presentation is clearly under-developed. I’m not prepared to put my name to it at this stage. I’ll leave this to the ladies. It’s clearly not serious research. I can’t see the data and I can’t see the science in it. I had no idea this was just about women. But if you want to listen to some stories I’ll leave you with the ladies but don’t feel obligated to stay.

*(Sound of door slamming)*

Prue
All the fucker had to do was introduce us.

Jane

Let’s just get on with it. (Jane clicks PPT on)

PPT-10

*What kinds of knowledge are privileged or displaced when performed experience becomes a way of knowing, a method of critical inquiry, a mode of understanding?* (Conquergood, 1991)

All set up the stage, Prue and Kate marking the boundaries of the performance area with masking tape. Chris and Jane set the chairs in place. Jane dresses Chris as Bowie in coat and gives her props; tape recorder, notepad and pencil, research text.

Jane: Now remember, you represent us all.

Prue: You are the ethnographer

Kate: the performance maker

Jane: the post-post-structuralist theorist and the neophyte researcher.

Chris: So, I’m a device? Got it.

Jane: That’s it you are a device.

Prue: you are also an explorer,

Kate: an historian

Jane: and you’re a detective, …here’s your tape recorder, pad and pencil, post-it notes…
Bowie:
First question: how did you get here.

PPT-11

How did you get here?

Turns on Desklight, sits at desk, working on computer.

SCENE ONE : Going to Uni

Alice
I think I can get a second day out of this shirt. *(takes shirt and puts it on)*
(to audience) Have to go to a slightly posh-ish meeting early.  
Back to the old daggy shoes, too cold to wear my little ballet pair.  
(Looks in the mirror) cold feet, power black coat. Nothing significant to say.
I had a couple of phone calls and business things, and then I had to go on the computer and I’m going ‘shit’, I have to read Rhiannon’s masters before I go, then I had to go across to this meeting. So, at the red lights (this is true) I had Rhiannon’s thing there in the traffic, I hadn’t put any makeup on (that’s true as well) so I am doing the makeup, and reading Rhiannon’s thesis.

Rose
I woke up very sore this morning. I was so sore I kept getting up and throwing nurofen down and going back to bed. I can’t put my socks on when my back really hurts *(puts shoes on)*  I’ll tell you why I’m wearing these shoes. They’re the easiest things to put on when I can’t bend over.

Faith
I’m having a very bizarre day today. After recess I was going to the lift because I had a huge box of books and I was going up to the English classroom and I had all their
work folders. I put my key in the lift and a kid came out on crutches and there’s another teacher in there and I’ve got the keys in this hand and the big box in the other and I hear my keys drop and I go ‘shit!’.

**PPT-12**

**Defining the data**

**Bowie**

We wanted to know about women and their relationship to the university, so we developed a set of questions and thought we’d trial them … on ourselves, a group of four women researchers at the university.

We became our own data.

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**Rose**

Then I had to drive to Croydon to Mindbogglers, so Josh could buy presents for his friends. Two presents for his three birthday engagements this weekend. After that I had to drive to Belgrave to buy organic food for Sophie. Then I had to go to the supermarket. I was too tight to buy wild rice for $7. It only cost $3 at Safeway.

**Faith**

Now there’s the floor behind me and the floor in front of the lift but what happens to my keys – all my keys down the crack, underneath it, down the lift shaft. I go to the Vice Principal and I say, ‘you’re not going to believe this but this is what happened.’ And she looks at me as though I’m crazy and she says, ‘you won’t be able to get your keys out until the guy comes to do the lift maintenance, once a month. I’ll find out when he’s due.
Rose (on ladder, painting)
After fourteen years in our house we are now doing things for the first time…in fourteen years. It hasn’t been organic

Faith
(gets in car, looks in rear view mirror)
This jumper clashes.
Looking in the mirror there are days when I think, I won’t look in the mirror….At the end of the day I see myself and think, I really wish I had looked in the mirror.

Alice
…and then I went to Brunetti’s. If I can find a corner and there are not too many people talking around me it is a really good place to read.
(Orders coffee)
A latte and a glass of water, thanks. (looks in the mirror)
I’m at the stage where seriously, some days I get such a shock when I look in the mirror. Other days I go, “oh you look all right” but some days I do get a shock, especially when I am not in a mirror-looking kind of day.

PPT-10
Embodied memories

Bowie
(doing some mind-mapping on the floor)
What’s your favourite body part?
Tell me about what you are wearing today?
What great questions. What juicy stories.

Rose
(gets into car) No, it hasn’t been very organic or easy, but I’m very determined.

**SFX 2 phone ring Sex and the City**

(answers phone) Did you miss the bus? No I can’t come and get you, I’m on my way to Uni.

**SFX 3 phone ring Indiana Jones**

**Faith** (answers phone)

A month. Without my keys.

**SFX 4 phone ring Sex and city**

**Rose**

Shouldn’t really answer that when I’m driving.

**Faith**

A teacher without keys, terrible.

**Alice**

I don’t think I put any energy into being stylish or fashionable any more. I haven’t bought a new garment for a very long time. My life was on hold until I finished the PhD.

Me and my friend Mary, when we were in first year uni, we seriously wore pearls and twinsets and skirts. I mean, I went to Uni here as a student and I never thought I would come back here to work. I have had all of these cross roads and in the end I’ve taken the way that’s led me back here. I never meant to, never, never, never. And I have tried to leave so many times and I keep coming back.

**SFX 5 phone ring Bach**

Alice answers phone. *She is silent. Concerned*

Today? Now? That’s not really convenient. I have a meeting, and a student coming. Sometimes I am treated like I am invisible. *(Rose and Faith leave)* Just sometimes.

*(Alice leaves)*
**Collaborative Meaning Making: A Poem in one verse**

**Bowie:** I’ve been thinking about that.

**Kate:** I’ve been thinking about that

**Prue:** And I think I was wrong

**Jane:** That’s so interesting

**Kate:** I just want to say one thing

**P&K:** Yes, yes

**Prue:** I think I get it

**Jane:** That’s so interesting

**Kate:** What do you reckon?

**Prue:** I was thinking about that

**Kate:** I realised you were right

**P& K:** Yes, yes

**Kate:** Do you know what’s so good about that

**Prue:** It’s a great idea but

**Kate:** I know I’m not explaining this well but

**Jane:** That’s so interesting.

**Bowie:** That’s so interesting

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**SCENE TWO: Corridors**

**A teaching space at Melbourne University**

*SFX 6 Jackhammers*
Rose

(to audience) There I was, teaching the drama education students. I’m in role as Oscar the Monster with this furry cape and furry hat and I’ve got a maybe six months chunky little baby in the audience – we’ve got thirty students (not one has dropped out!) and one has a baby, and Oscar’s looking for food. At one point I’m going, ‘I like slugs!’ and I happen to look up and straight at the 6 month old baby. And he goes, ‘Agga pukka’ and I don’t know – the inner me – the performer went ‘you beauty!’ and I just went, ‘Like You!’

And everyone started laughing and I just played it and I just kept doing the Oscar thing and turning and going ‘Mmmmm…..I’m hungry’. The baby burst into laughter. Everyone was pissing themselves so I was just like – this is fun….(pause)

and then, the demolition guys started with the jackhammers right outside the door.

Kate and Prue arrive to construct the space

We still had an hour, so I had to find another space. There I was with furry cape and furry hat, and thirty BECE students and a baby, and this is where we ended up – in a corridor.

Any minute now the building supervisor is going to appear and move us along – I just know it.

Rose resumes Oscar the Monster

‘I also like mud, squishy, ozzy mud I can roll in…’ (looks up and stops performing)

Oh, there they are now, come on, this way. They never come down here.

Rose travels along corridors

Come on keep up. Watch out for those paintings they’re very old. And those photographs, they’re very dusty, I know. But look no one comes down here to the basement. We won’t be disturbed. Over there, just by that Honour Roll, that looks good. I’ll just see if I can find the light switch.

SFX 7 (Voices are heard – not very clear, overlapping, as if multiple stories are being told at once – as if the walls are talking)
Voice One

I started teaching at Melbourne Teachers’ College in February in 1969 and I finished in February 2002, so that makes it 33 years … I came as an assistant [lecturer] … I was still employed at the Education Department, so I came out of a classroom … I remember being the new staff member on the block – the same as in schools, you often get the worst timetable.

Voice Two

I always wanted to be a teacher, whenever I played anything, I was the teacher, I had the chalk in my hand, as teachers did in those days, and I went out to the front of the class. No-one else was allowed to be the teacher. So I always wanted to be a teacher… always.

Rose

On second thoughts perhaps this isn’t such a good place, come along keep moving, quick. Rose exits.

PPT-16

Historical Data

Bowie (she enters reading the History of Melbourne Uni, pauses and highlights passage. Then she reads a short passage out)

Words, stories, images of women who attended Melbourne Uni in the past – historical data. (she leaves)
In Alice Hall’s office

Sound FX 8– (Alice’s message)
I’m really sorry, so can we change it to 3. Give me a call. Alice, it’s John Tompkins, about our meeting on Thursday. Can you ensure that your report is emailed to me by lunchtime today so Janice can make copies for the meeting. The DVC is going to be there so needless to say you need to be on the ball with this. Hi Alice, this is Faith. I’m running late, I’m having a bit of a problem with my school keys, long story, tell you all about it when I see you. I’m trying to find a park now but I’ll be with you as soon as I can with my ethics. Thanks, Alice. Alice is multitasking: she is on the phone, it’s a student, she takes out her diary ...

Alice
No, I can’t do five, I’m in a meeting until five-thirty. What about five thirty-five?

Simultaneously on a split stage, Rose is moving her class into the corridor.

Rose
This will do. Why don’t we try here?

Alice
No, I can’t do that I’ve got another meeting at six-fifteen. Oh, that’s no good then. How are you in the early morning, say before school?

Rose
Right. (impro the continuation of Oscar the Monster lesson) ‘So I need a new home, with slugs, mud and water…’
Alice

No I could get up at five. *(Kate as removalist starts to dismantle office)* Let’s say Brunetti’s at six. Oh, they’re not open that early – of course, hold on

*(Removalist still dismantling the office. Alice objects but she carries on. Eventually she removes the phone from her hand, she runs after them, still with her Diary, still trying to confirm the appointment with the student.)*

Rose

‘Could I live here with you? Do you know if there are slugs around here?’ *(looks under rocks, asks students)* ‘Can you help me find a new home?’

Alice

But what are you doing. I haven’t finished my conversation – wait. Rose, hi Rose, I need to see you. I’ll be back, they’re stealing my phone. Did you know about this relocation?

Rose

I sure do now. Meet my drama class.

*SFX 9 Jackhammers*

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**Email to Laurel Richardson**

*Dear Professor Richardson*

*We’ve got a few more questions:*

1. *What is legitimate data?*
2. *In our play can we shift tenses?*
3. Can we improvise?
4. What about constructing a narrative to house the data?

Bowie: *(rolls out butchers paper to make notes)*

Email to Laurel Richardson. Dear Professor Richardson

We appreciate your time. We’ve got a few more questions for you:

1. What is legitimate data, anyway?
2. In our play can we shift tenses, say from past to present?
3. Can we improvise?
4. What do you think about us constructing a narrative to house the data?

**SFX 10 Laurel Richardson**

Bowie listens to the tape of Laurel Richardson and reads powerpoint,
Kate, Jane and Prue also stand back from the screen and read the PPT.

**PPT-19**

*Ethnographic drama is another evocative way of shaping an experience without losing the experience. It can blend realist, fictional, and poetic techniques; it can reconstruct the “sense” of an event from multiple “as-lived” perspectives; it can allow all the conflicting “voices” to be heard, relieving the researcher of having to be judge and arbiter; and it can give voice to what is unspoken but present.”*

Got ya….I think!

**PPT-20**

*Faith finds a parking spot in Carlton*

*Rose and Alice enter carrying boxes (sky high)*

Alice

Thanks so much. I can’t afford to take the risk of losing these.
Rose
What are they?

_Faith enters holding her ethics form_

Alice
Our history. Hi Faith. Got your message before they took my answering machine away. We’re being moved. So you’ve completed your ethics forms. That’s great. Faith’s completed her ethics forms, Rose. She’s done so well. It’s going to be a brilliant project. You two know each other don’t you?

Rose
Yep, Hi.

Faith
Sure, how are ya? Um, so Alice I wasn’t sure about that section on dependent relationships. I was wondering if you could just have a look at it before you sign off.

Alice
Sure. Just hold this for me.

(They exchange boxes for ethics forms. Alice grabs her handbag on top of the boxes and reaches her pen but can’t find it.)

Alice
Ooh, I can’t find my pen.

Rose
I’ve got a pen. Here hold these.

*She gives Alice the boxes.*
Faith
No I’ve got one. Here hold these.

_She puts more boxes on top of Alice’s pile. Alice sinks lower barely holding the weight._

_Rose and Faith find their pens and hand them to Alice who can’t even see them. One puts the pen in Alice’s mouth, the other holds the form up on the other person’s back. Alice reads and mumbles. Rose is holding all the boxes. Alice is signing the form._

Faith
Thanks. So now I go to the head of department, yeah.

Alice
yeah, but he’s got a meeting in five minutes so you better hurry.

_Faith and Alice leave. Rose is left holding the boxes._

Rose
hello, hello, help?

(pause)

PPT-21
_How much is enough data?_

Bowie
how much is enough data?

PPT-22
_Alice’s new office!_

_Rose constructs Alice’s new office and exits to get boxes. Faith and Alice arrive, Faith still with Ethics form in hand._
Faith
I went to the research office but the ethics lady is not doing it anymore and they said to call someone called Michael and that you would know.

Alice
Oh (pause) Okay, Michael. Let’s find the university directory.

Faith
I didn’t know it was going to be this hard. I can’t wait to start collecting data. I’m so interested in performativity. I was going to be an actor.

Alice
There were very few narrow choices if you were a kind of girl that went to the sort of school I went to, you are brainy or you did art and craft, it wasn't even home economics you know.

Faith
I’d looked into doing these acting courses in England and they’d said, ‘yes go for it. You’d be really good’. But, back in Australia, NIDA rejected me and I thought I’ve come all this way! I was going to be an actor – what am I going to do!

Rose returns with more boxes

Alice
but I was- brainy so I did languages and all of that sort of stuff so then you go to Uni, of course you go to Melbourne Uni because this is what you did, and I was the first of four and you do that I thought I had more left principles than that (laugh).

Faith
And my sister says ‘you should apply for Uni’ and I’m like ‘What?’ She suggested I apply for doing drama teaching. I was thinking, ‘You’re joking!’ And she makes me put in this form. You know, ‘You can’t hang around with nothing’. ‘You’ve got to do
it’. I’m just so sorry for myself. And I get this interview with this woman called Ann O’Malley because I’m a ‘mature age’ entry.

Alice
I was here for 4 years, I got my degree in the sixties - the Moratorium marches and the whole thing - then I just had such a great time I thought well what will I do, I will prolong my studies with a Dip Ed, but you wouldn't do a Dip Ed at Melbourne Uni, so me and my friends went over to La Trobe for the Dip Ed. (laughter) You know, I believed in state education and getting away and travelling the world and I did all of that.

Faith
I did quite well. I remember topping the written drama exam at the end of the year. I remember going up to Ann and saying “you got a couple of the answers wrong” – I’d become such a know-it-all. It was hilarious.

Alice
Drama Education bought me back here. I had done some work here sessionally, and I had to decide would I go back into the school system which I passionately believed in, always taught at high-school or would I be enticed into what I thought was a soft option, stay in tertiary. I think I always whimp out, I really do, I never take tough decisions, seriously I have always loved working with kids in the real thing but that's hard work, it's true. You have got more flexibility, you have got more status, you can work on infrastructure - you have got other kinds of pressures, but you have kind of got more power, you have got more voice. But part of me feels like that was a cop out

Faith
After two years teaching in Townsville I thought my god if I don’t do something with my life soon I’m going to end up living here for ever and ever and I don’t think I could bear it. So I rang up and Anne said to me, “you should think about doing your Masters.” Send in the paperwork. I haven’t really left since I don’t think.
Alice
Here it is. Michael Connor, Alice Hoy, Room 112B.

Rose
You access it via the basement. I’ll come with you. I want to show you something. Have you ever been down in the basement? There are all these old pictures… (they leave)

Alice
Drama Education bought me back - the thing I ran away from with the Dip Ed is actually probably sadly still here - innate conservatism, in the scarishly deeply moribund way that the education faculty used to be in 1971. I stayed. I tend to stay and fight on. Boxes. (Alice leaves)

PPT-23. Deep Space

Bowie
A good interviewer gets the most out or his or her subject. She woos her subject into a safe zone, allowing her to correct herself, to see and realise patterns of behaviour. “Oh yeah I do sit in the same place to have my coffee, and get pissed off if its not free.”

The good interviewer encourages her subject to think and reflect on her everyday actions, not to tell her story as pat, but question events, motives and purpose of actions, gives her time to answer, allows a pause, and if answer is short, asks her qualify the answer, “was it easier, how?”

There are times when we as interviewers cross the boundaries, lose distance, comment on those we know and know of. We comment on the actions, give our opinions, want to voice our feelings about how we
see our friend. Do we want to lift her up, make our friend feel good about herself by passing on our feelings. Is this good research? Good friendship? Good interviewing? Can it be all three?

She covers boxes with dust covers

SCENE THREE: Hearing Voices

PPT-24
Down in the basement.

SFX 11 Voice over quotes from the women.

Voice Three
It was a great joy really to come along to the DipEd. Terrifying at first, because you realise that it’s been a long time since you actually had to put more than maybe 1,500 words together. So to start off, I remember saying to my friends that I couldn’t hear the neurons growing. It really did feel like that I had to stop and think and bring back all the research skills again.

Voice Four
I remember thinking of university being full of all these – the intelligentsia, the people who sat around and had these great detailed conversations and all that sort of thing.

Rose leads Faith down into the Basement corridor where the abandoned paintings, photographs and honour-rolls have been stored.
Rose
It is in here

**PPT-25**
*Image of the women outside the building*

Finally, the image of the women standing outside the building flashes on the data projection – they look at it as if looking at a large framed photograph.

Rose
Look at this. Fantastic. She looks like a little bird in the wind – she (pointing to one of the women in the photograph) looks to me as if she could be blown away at any moment.

Faith
She (pointing at the tall woman) is trying to be respected. Yet she is just a little girl in long socks, standing with her legs together. I wonder: What’s the occasion?

Rose
Maybe graduation?

Faith
Teaching Rounds?

Rose
I wonder who they are posing for?

*Rose and Faith exit and Prue hands Kate and Jane their props*

**SFX 13 Voice Five**
*My first impressions ... it was huge! I was very proud to*
be a university student. I remember being in one of the lectures in the old Arts Building ... it was full to capacity and the Dean of Arts saying at the time to look at the person to the right of you and look at the person at the left of you and between the three of you, only one of you will be left when you finish your degree. I decided that it wasn’t going to be me that dropped out.

**SFX 14 Music: Gaudaemus Igatur**

Kate, Prue and Jane move forward

Kate

*(speaking for the woman)* “I wish I’d clipped my hair back, or used more hair spray. Stand tall Gabrielle – shoulders back, feet, ankles, knees together. Don’t smile, look stern, professional, cool, efficient. You’re a school marm now.”

Prue

“I am a woman who is confident, and jolly. I enjoy my life as a scholar, as well as my friends, and the company of my noisy and affectionate family. I have discovered, and this surprises me, that I have an aptitude for studies. Being at the University each weekday is such a good lark! I wonder which of my beau I might possibly marry. In the margins of my French grammar book I write, in pencil of course – Bertie? Gerald? Ronald?”

Jane

“Now I stand here, holding a certificate that means so much, even though I don’t know where it will take me. This photographer wants his novelty shot – five women emerging from the hallowed halls of Melbourne University – an amusing photograph for the social pages in this Saturday’s Argus”.

*Kate, Prue and Jane turn and walk back to the wall*
Prue collects Kate and Jane's props

They actually paid you to become a teacher in those days because there was an impending and obvious shortage. This tied you to teaching for three years – unless you got married!

Rose
Along here faith, hey this is Alice Hoy.

Faith
I always thought Alice Hoy was the name of a building.

Rose
Faith, meet Alice Hoy one of the great women educators of this University. This should be in the Dean’s office. No, let’s put it in Alice’s ‘new’ office.

Faith
You’re right with that, aren’t you? I’ve really got to find room 112B and get my ethics in.

Jane takes the photo to ‘place’ in Alice’s office - the photo of Alice remains illuminated as if now placed in Alice’s office – and Jane removes the dust covers.

Alice settles in (with picture of Alice Hoy superimposed)
SCENE FOUR: On the Margins

Alice is alone in her new ‘office’ surrounded by boxes. She starts to organise the room and move blocks and boxes. Her phone isn’t working so she uses her mobile.

Alice

Hello? Great. A person. Now look, it’s my new computer….. It’s Alice from Education, here, I’ve just been relocated and I was told my new computer would be waiting for me…. Alice…. From Education…. My new desktop computer. Where is it?….No don’t put me on hold again. I need it urgently… I have to access my email urgently. I have to send an email.…

No I can’t go to the computer lab… I can’t even find the computer lab…Are you there….hello…. (she has lost her signal- …Alice changes position ….)

Alice

Hello? Hi, this is Alice here… Sorry to bother you…just wondering about the agenda for the meeting….No….I can’t email….No it hasn’t arrived.. Yes I’ve called them…a few times…. They’re looking into it…Do you have any idea what we do now that we don’t have pigeon holes… I know I’ve been sent a hard copy, but I’m not sure where it’s ended up…. Could you?….Thanks…. I’ve gotta go…. my phone batteries going.

(Alice changes position again, trying to get a reception, makes another call)

Alice

Yes, hello Janice, it’s Alice here. (shouting) ALICE….It’s Alice, Janice….. No, you’re Janice, I’m Alice… I’m ringing about the meeting. I haven’t received all the papers. No…I can’t check my email….I don’t have a computer at the moment…. Yes, I’ve called them a few times… They’re looking into it….As you know I’ve been relocated today. You didn’t know? …Yes, I know you sent hard copies, but we don’t have pigeonholes any more…. No, no, hold on. Apparently all the internal mail is in a box, somewhere and Lisa is the only person who knows where it is, and she doesn’t
work on Wednesdays….. NO…I’m not blaming you, Janice…. You don’t have to be defensive, Janice…I just need the papers before the meeting… It’s kind of, a very important meeting… What was that? You can do what? Janice? Janice? (she loses the phone connection) Oh god…. (Lights go out.) Oh god….

**PPT-28**
**Incident Report**
**Alice Hoy Building**
**Level One**
**3.24pm BLACKOUT**
**Building Supervisor in attendance**

**Rose**

*(With torch in a playful manner)*

Dada…dada…dada…dada… I was going to be a secret agent.

Dada…dada…dada…dada… I was going to save the world.

My parents thought I would be a really good nurse and I told them to get stuffed.

*(she ‘catches’ Alice in the light beam)*

**Alice**

I got sent to this private school . . . and I was a rebel. I was naughty and wouldn't shut-up. *(Alice escapes)*

**Rose**

*(With torch in a playful manner)*

Dada…dada…dada…dada…

*(she ‘catches’ Alice in the light beam)*

**Alice**

Political stuff is really important to me. Writing is really important to me - and then when I fell in love with education, it was by mistake really because I loved being a student. And yeah, it was go and do it through education, then it was overseas and
really growing up ….(Alice ‘flies’ off)

Rose

(With torch in a playful manner)
Dada…dada…dada…dada…

(she ‘catches’ Faith in the light beam)

Faith

I was dreadful at spelling. My family always used to give me spelling tests. ‘How do you spell hippopotamus? Bet you can’t.’ ‘Oh my god you got it right, do it again.’ And I couldn’t do it again. Then they’d say, ‘that’d be right, you’re too stupid’.

(Faith escapes)

Rose

(With torch in a playful manner)
Dada…dada…dada…dada…

(she ‘catches’ Faith in the light beam)

Faith

Now, I’m hoping I finish my PhD - it’s like that’s the big milestone. Like the girl who was dumb has proved that she can actually do this thing. (Faith runs away)

Rose

(With torch in a playful manner)
Dada…dada…dada…dada…

(Can’t find the other two, comic game with torch turns to a serious reflection on the situation)

I don’t feel like it’s long term here at the Uni. It’s such a precarious employment situation. I know that to be in a University you have to have so many notches on your
belt to be able to apply for anything with stability and I can’t imagine getting through that terribly quickly. I’m a single Mum with kids. I’ve taken recently not to worry about things that I don’t have a lot of control over. I’ve really enjoyed my time here it’s opened a few doors and shown me that there’s things you can do that you never thought you could do.

*Lights come up slowly while Rose is talking*

**PPT-29**

**Incident Report**

**Alice Hoy Building**

**Level One**

**3.27 pm Power Restored**

**Building Supervisor in attendance**

**SFX 17 Jackhammers start up loudly**

Alice returns with documents needed for her meeting and her lunch. Faith enters with take away coffees in a tray

**Faith**

Ethics in… I’ve made muffins…let’s celebrate.

*The situation is obviously desperate*

**Alice**

Lovely… share… my roll… with me.

**Rose**

No thanks……no thanks. *(Shouting over jackhammer)* Nothing’s working!

*(Prue, Jane and Kate freeze)*
As researchers we’re also performing, 
it’s being you and thinking, I know you 
but actually I don’t know you at all, 
no, no, no, 
I mean in the body. 
I’m being you, who I think I know 
but actually 
when I’m there 
in the body 
I don’t know you at all. 
It’s that thing - 
is this you, 
is this you that I am creating on stage? 
the you that you see (eye contact) 
or the you that you would like to see 
or the you that you’ve never considered before? 
Do you like this you that you are seeing here? 
Do you know what I mean?

SCENE FIVE: Time

There is a gasp from Alice.

Alice: What time is it?

SFX 18 multiple phone rings
Phones ring (Faith’s and Rose’s), Alice jumps up and they all speak at once. It is still hard to get a signal for the phones so there will be a little bit of slapstick.

**Rose**
When’s the test.
Don’t cry. I don’t understand you when you’re crying like that. Take a breath.
Have you done a cheat sheet? You don’t know what a cheat sheet is?
Can Sophie help you?
Alright I’ll come home.
I have to go!

**Faith**
But I’ve done them.
I marked them last night and left the results on Paul’s desk this morning. What do you mean he can’t find them? Yes, of course I’ve got copies but they’re at home. All right I’ll go and get them now.
I have to go!

**Alice**
Oh God, I’m late for the meeting. Where’s my jacket? Oh it’s all crumpled. Do I look a mess? No one will take me seriously. What did I do with the agenda? That’s last months. Oh god, she’s given me the wrong one. Where’s my proposal. Have I got time to make copies? I have to go!

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**SCENE SIX- Nightmare**

Alice’s day continues from the previous scene – hyper-realism action.

**PPT 31 – NIGHTMARE MOVIE**

**Alice**
I was running late for the meeting.
V/O 1 (Kate as Chairperson – ‘John Tompkins’ standing on stool facing to the back)
Welcome to the meeting of the Academic Program committee.

Alice
I could see the doors in front of me but I didn’t know which one.

V/O 2
Are there any apologies?

Alice
One opened and as I walked in, the doors began to close.

V/O 3
Starred item 2.7: Future of Drama programs within the University.

Alice
I spun round in fright and saw my keys disappear down through a crack in the floor.

V/O 4
Dr Alice Hall has tabled a paper. Is Dr Hall here?

Alice
I knew I had to reach down.

V/O 5
Dr Hall is not here to speak to it, so we’ll move on.

Alice
I could see them shining. I knew if I could just turn my arms into tentacles I could get them …
V/O 6
We’ll move now to the formal motions.

Alice
I couldn’t understand why I was struggling so hard. I was climbing up the ivy on the Alice Hoy Building. Something was tightening around my waist.

V/O 7
Cancellation of undergraduate Drama Programs

Alice
Then I remembered, I promised Rose and Faith that I’d take them with me. I’d tied them on to me so I wouldn’t lose them.

V/O 8
Cancellation of Post-graduate Drama Programs

Alice
So I hacked them off. I had to, if I fell, I’d pull them down with me.

V/O 9
Drama teaching spaces to be renovated for Business and Marketing Faculty learning hubs.

Alice
Then I reached down, but nothing was there. They’d all gone.

V/O 10
All those in favour…..carried. Carried, carried.
(Alice steps off the blocks and walks off)
Alice

Bastards. Bastards, bastards.

SCENE SEVEN : Alice and Alice

PPT – 32

An Image of Alice Hoy.

Alice Hoy comes with her book, wearing her robes and hat. She sets the book on Bowie’s desk then goes to sit down. Alice Hall walks in, she is devastated. She goes into automatic pilot. She turns on her messages, brings up her email and gets out her diary.

SFX 16 Answering Machine

Messages

Mum. I think I missed the deadline for the assignment. I’ve stuffed up big time. I need your help with my lecturer, and I’m stuck. I haven’t got any money. Can you come and get me? (knock on the door) Mum, mum are you there? Can you pick up? Oh, okay. I’ll call you later… Hello, Alice, it’s Pamela. (door knock again) Wanting to catch up. I’ve rung before. I’ve left messages at home and at work but haven’t heard from you. I hope you’re all right. (knock, knock, knock) Are you coming for lunch on Sunday or not? I just need to know for numbers. Love to see you but if you’re too busy (the door knock again) … look could you just let me know. Bye… (knocks get more aggressive) Mum, Mum, just wondered if you’re on your way yet, you must be, I guess. Anyway I’m here, usual spot. Hurry up, mum. Are you coming or not … (door knocks again
and voice calls through)

**Voice**
Doctor Hall I need your help with my assignment.

**Alice**
Can you come back, I’m busy.

*The phone rings*

**Voice**
I need your help now, it’s due to tomorrow.

**Alice**
Not now, please.

*She lets the phone go to answering machine. It’s her son.*

**SFX 17 Answering Machine**
Mum, Mum? Where are you, Mum. Please pick up, please, Mum. I’m stranded. Mum, I’m waiting for you Mum. (long pause) Okay, just don’t be long okay, Mum I need to talk to you. (big pause) Okay, bye.

**Alice**
Didn’t I say not now? Look at the sign on the door. Does it say that I’m available now? (*Alice Hoy observes the scene*) Is it 2-4 on a Tuesday? No. I am not available 24 hours a day. I can’t solve every little problem for you, you know. Who do you think I am? A fucking saint. Well I’m not. I’m just trying to do my job and it’s impossible. I can’t deal with you right now. So just go away and leave me alone, please.
Voice (very small)
I’m sorry Doctor Hall. I’ll come back another day.

Alice
Yeah you do that. (pause) Oh God, what have I done (runs to door) Shit!

Alice Hoy
Well that wasn’t very nice or very professional. I hope you were not expecting me to feel sorry for you. (pause) If you want my opinion, you need to think this through.

Do you think you are the first or last woman who’s struggled here and tried to juggle a thousand things at once or who’s come up against those difficult men with too much power when you would clearly do a better job than they do? Well, do you?

No, don’t interrupt me. In 1924 I was made Mistress of Method in History at the Melbourne Teachers’ College. The pay was poor, opportunities for promotion were limited and the restrictions on our academic and professional freedom were frustrating and humiliating. So in 1928 we founded a branch of The Victorian Teacher’s Union and I became the Secretary. In 1933 the decision was made to discontinue the training of secondary teachers and so staff were displaced and removed. I was transferred to University High School …

Bowie
…of secondary teachers and so staff were displaced and removed. Alice Hoy was transferred to University High School from where she continued teaching at The University School of Education. In 1944 Alice Hoy was appointed as the first Principal of the Secondary Teachers’ College.

Rose enters

Rose
Alice, are you OK?
Alice

Yeah.

Rose

I think I left my phone behind, or something.

Alice

Rose, look I … Rose, I … the meeting … they moved … I’m so sorry … I couldn’t … the proposal … I missed it … the meeting. They didn’t tell me. We’ll lose staff next year. I’m so sorry. I don’t know what else to say. I’ve let you down.

Rose

Oh, Alice. You’re the last you’re the last person to let me down Alice. (long pause)

Alice

Rose, do you believe in ghosts?

Rose

No I don’t.

*The phone rings and goes through to message bank. Alice Hoy’s picture remains on PPT.*

*SFX 18 Answering Machine*

Hi Alice! Faith here. Just wanted to say thanks for your help today. I’m really excited about getting my study started. I thought I might spend the weekend reading those methodology chapters you suggested. It’s been a bit grim at school lately so this is a real highlight for me.*
Faith, Alice and Rose walk back on stage

Alice
I think I can get another day out of this shirt…

Rose
I woke up very sore this morning…

Faith
I am having a very bizarre day today….

They all freeze in their character positions

PPT – 33. Questions for further research

Bowie (Crosses to the three actors, moves among them)
So how do the personal stories reflect the political dimensions of these women’s lives, of their experiences at the University? How did you get here? Where do you go from here? What do you do next?

Rose
What do I do next?

Alice
What do I do next?

Faith
What do I do next?

Bowie
That’s so interesting (crosses back to Researcher’s Desk and computer)
What do we do next?

(lights out)

Voices of the three women can be heard in the darkness.

That’s so interesting, I was thinking about that. I was going to say that…etc.

Bowie turns desk light off.

The End
Alice Hoy is Not a Building

Colloquium and ethnographic performance about
Women and Education at the University of Melbourne

Welcome to this Melbourne performance of Alice Hoy is Not a Building - a play devised and performed by four women researchers from the Faculty of Education here at the University of Melbourne. This presentation is both theatre performance and research, hence the description 'ethnographic performance' or 'performance ethnography', which has been broadly defined as the use of theatrical form to represent ethnographic data and to communicate research findings.

The focus of our ethnographic research for this project was women's experiences of tertiary education at Melbourne University (and the teachers' colleges on this site) past and present. We conducted interviews, wrote fieldnotes, examined historical documents and generated data through our own research journals. We analysed this data largely through the processes of performance making - we embodied the data, we enacted the stories in the fieldnotes and used the transcripts of interviews as a major component of our text. We constructed a narrative to highlight the key themes, the questions and the tensions that we identified in the data and to house our meta-commentary as researchers. We found that working with verbatim data in an embodied way was a powerful means of deepening our understanding of ourselves and of others. In finding the rhythm of the language in performance we believe that we discovered more about the person who said those words and told those stories.

We have been working on this project for about two years, finding time in busy schedules to meet, to conduct the fieldwork and analyse and transform the data into a theatrical form, and then to learn lines and rehearse. During the making of Alice Hoy is Not a Building, in addition to our work and family commitments, there have been two PhD completions, a Masters in the making, a faculty and University restructure, job changes, overseas trips, illnesses and many cups of tea, vigorous debates, fish dinners and mobile phone calls from family members wondering if we were ever coming home.

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Jane Bird, Kate Donelan, Chris Sinclair and Prue Wales,
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