

HERE PRESENTS
**ASSEMBLED
IDENTITY**



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CREATING, PERFORMING, AND DESIGNING
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ASSEMBLED

Assembled Identity came out of conversations that the three of us had about identity – the deep need to understand how it is that humans choose to identify themselves and others. What is it that causes us to see a likeness or the other? We're interested in how science, with the power to alter and generate human life, influences and has the potential to control this assembling of identity.

Our conversations revolved around ethnic ambiguity, intersectionality, and authenticity in our contemporary world. As performers of color, we (Mariana and Purva) constantly navigate ethnic and cultural identity as part of our daily life as artists and humans. We field perceptions and assumptions about who we actually are and who we are allowed to represent, by pushing against the limits of our perceived identity.

Although we are from very ethnically different backgrounds, we are often mistaken for each other, asked if we are sisters and called in for the same roles, which generally don't reflect either of our ethnicities. Through the lens of ethnic ambiguity, we are in a unique position to experience shifting identity as defined by the eye of our beholder and to offer insight into these contemporary issues of race.

How do all of these new technologies shape our individual and collective identities? Thinking about this led us to cloning. In *Assembled Identity*, we explore the intersections to ask: Would cloning devalue or increase the value of an individual? Can society remain responsible when faced with the godly power of altering our genes? Are today's humans tomorrow's anachronisms?

– Purva Bedi, Kristin Marting, and Mariana Newhard

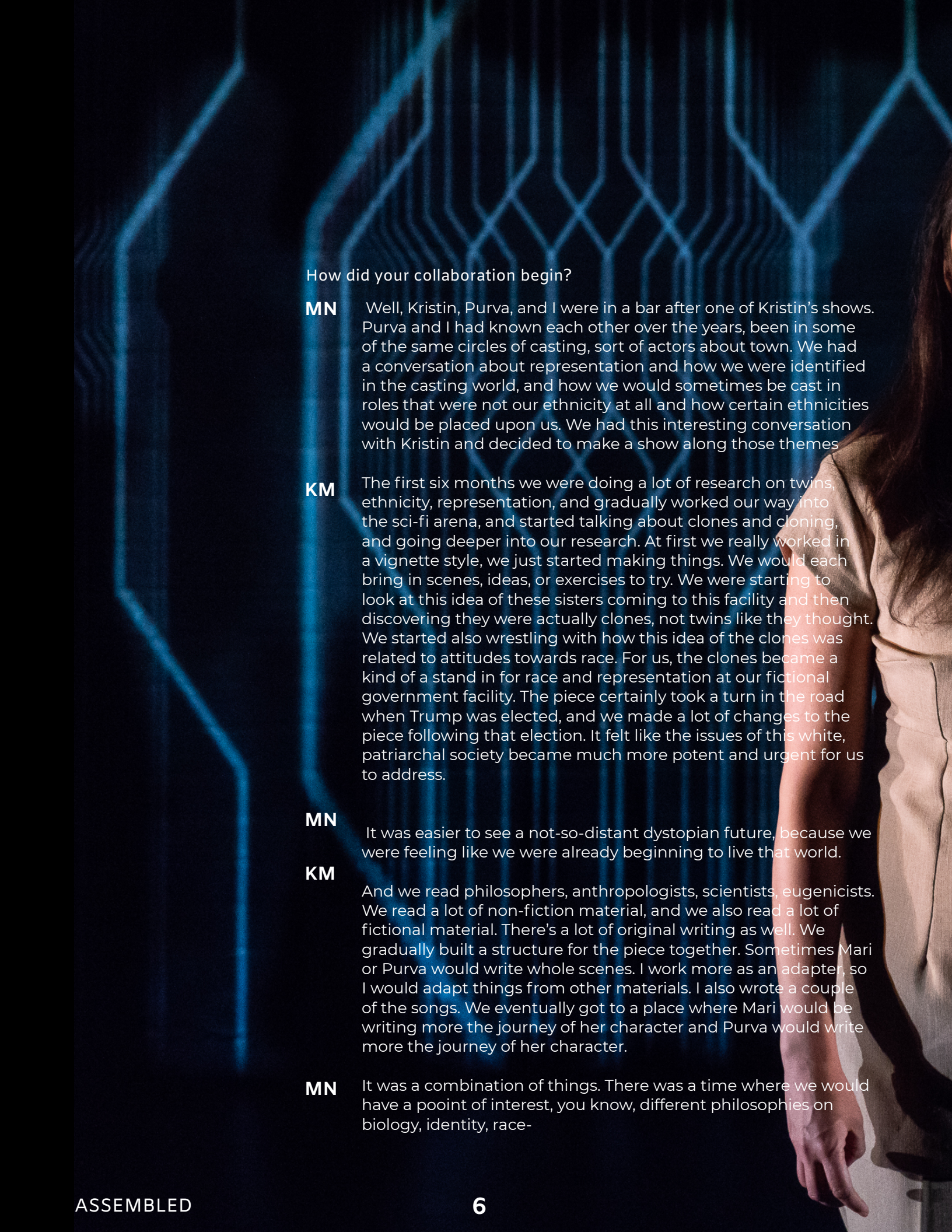
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CREATING ASSEMBLED IDENTITY

Hear directly from creators Kristin Marting (director) and Mariana Newhard (performer) on the evolution of this show over the course of three years.





A woman with long dark hair, wearing a tan-colored dress, is shown from the side, standing in front of a background of glowing blue digital lines that form a grid-like pattern. The lighting is dramatic, with the woman's dress catching some light while the background is dark with bright blue highlights.

How did your collaboration begin?

MN Well, Kristin, Purva, and I were in a bar after one of Kristin's shows. Purva and I had known each other over the years, been in some of the same circles of casting, sort of actors about town. We had a conversation about representation and how we were identified in the casting world, and how we would sometimes be cast in roles that were not our ethnicity at all and how certain ethnicities would be placed upon us. We had this interesting conversation with Kristin and decided to make a show along those themes

KM The first six months we were doing a lot of research on twins, ethnicity, representation, and gradually worked our way into the sci-fi arena, and started talking about clones and cloning, and going deeper into our research. At first we really worked in a vignette style, we just started making things. We would each bring in scenes, ideas, or exercises to try. We were starting to look at this idea of these sisters coming to this facility and then discovering they were actually clones, not twins like they thought. We started also wrestling with how this idea of the clones was related to attitudes towards race. For us, the clones became a kind of a stand in for race and representation at our fictional government facility. The piece certainly took a turn in the road when Trump was elected, and we made a lot of changes to the piece following that election. It felt like the issues of this white, patriarchal society became much more potent and urgent for us to address.

MN It was easier to see a not-so-distant dystopian future, because we were feeling like we were already beginning to live that world.

KM And we read philosophers, anthropologists, scientists, eugenicists. We read a lot of non-fiction material, and we also read a lot of fictional material. There's a lot of original writing as well. We gradually built a structure for the piece together. Sometimes Mari or Purva would write whole scenes. I work more as an adapter, so I would adapt things from other materials. I also wrote a couple of the songs. We eventually got to a place where Mari would be writing more the journey of her character and Purva would write more the journey of her character.

MN It was a combination of things. There was a time where we would have a point of interest, you know, different philosophies on biology, identity, race-



KM Eugenics, anthropology...

I'm curious to hear from both of you, actor and director, how you find a throughline of this show in rehearsal, when the tech elements play such a crucial role in the narrative.

KM Well we think the third character is the facility, and it is characterized by all the design work in the show.

What was your process like with that "third character"?

MN I think it was easier to track my character M's journey because I had a hand in creating it. In terms of the different styles, we put in place a different tone for scenes with M and P, and different tones for a clone dance, the movement sections, and in that way it was easier to link it all together.

KM We rehearsed with sound in rehearsal. Sound could not come later because sound is so present as a character. But we certainly feel the character of the facility even more now that we have video and lighting with us. The other thing is that the whole design team has been working with us throughout the development process. David and Drew have been with us since from very first workshop that we did two years ago at CULTUREMART. So we had a lot of dramaturgical conversations with our designers throughout the rehearsal and development process. We had storyboarding sessions with the designers that are a conversation for how we evolve the way that stuff works. Everyone would think about how to make those different design components fit together in a deeply collaborative way. And they all had to be sensitive to what each other is doing because it's so integrated. A lot more than previous shows I've created.

MN Yeah, it's been really interesting that way. It's all in the spirit of working together and relying on each other. The whole team has really good dramaturgical instincts. So it remains productive to have a lot of people working on crafting a single moment.

We built the show from the ground up, so along with the research we've built a backstory for every character – even the ones that don't talk. So we have access to that, and will go back to that map when we're further along in the story and we'll pull from there to help us knit things together.

KM Yeah we've made up all these stories about all these characters that the two performers play. They each play six.. No wait. How many?... four or five now? (*laughing*)

MN I know! We started off with ten. I think its... (proceeds to list all the characters) I think we're down to five now! Not counting the clones.

Easy! Explain the reasons this show is set in the future

KM We think it's a little like *Black Mirror*. It's like tomorrow is now. So there are things that are recognizable in this show, and things that aren't immediately recognizable but you know they're just five minutes from now. So I think that's where we tried to place it right now.

Is it a warning or a thought on the future?

MN I think it's a question.

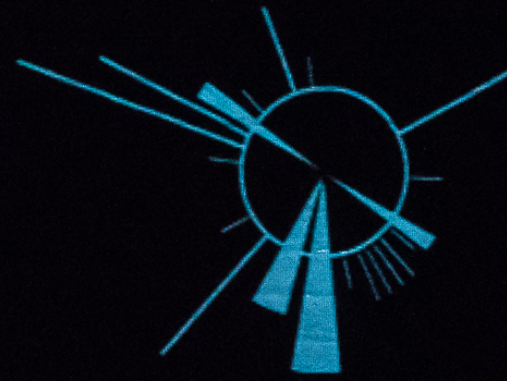


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PERFORMING ASSEMBLED IDENTITY

Take a peek inside Lipica Shah's process of joining the show and what *Assembled Identity* means to her.

What was your journey into joining the show?

I came into the show super late in terms of its development life. Purva and Mari have been working on this show for years. I auditioned initially via tape, because I was working out of town, and then had a few callbacks somewhere in December/January, and that was it! It's been a wonderful challenge and also a steep learning curve for me.

It's a quick turnaround.

Yeah! I've also never done hybrid theater so I was sort of like, educating myself about that and sort of just jumping in.

So what did you learn about hybrid theater? What new Muscles are you exercising in this medium?

From my perspective, there's just this sense of nothing is complete until tech. I'm so used to being in a world in which I need to be super clear in what I'm doing for the story to be clear, and all the elements are sort of supporting the story in this way. But in this world, you need those tech elements in order to have a complete story. So there are all these moments during rehearsal where I'm like, *boy oh boy... I wish I could see what I looked like on the screen right now!* and then *Oh day 2, we're taping things that are going to be in the show!* and I was like, *But I haven't had time to make choices! Okay... I guess we just take this!* And you hope it works out, and it did! And I'm so grateful to have Kirstin and Mari who have done Hybrid theater before and have so much experience and I have them as guides and that's been really, really, great.

You're pulling so many different texts in this show. There are so many tech elements. And then you're also your own character...but a clone. For you, how do you find your own structure and journey in a play with so many moving parts and various forms of character?

I think I'm still learning...I'm still learning new things that are like *oh right, I should incorporate this!* For me, I just started with one character at a time. I've done shows where I've played multiple characters before, so that was a familiar muscle and nice to have something familiar to latch on to. Tackling each character individually and finding their physicality and where their center of gravity is and where they place their voice and where, you know, we've done a lot of stuff where we've found a gesture or stance that feels right for that character so it's something you can return to over and over again to distinguish them from the clones. And working with Alexandra, our choreographer, finding the difference between the clones who speak (A Clones) and the clones who move (B Clones), that was also really helpful. I tend to start with physicality when I'm developing a character and then I add in other things from there. So that was nice, that I could do that as well here, and then all these elements are supporting or teaching me something new to change my direction a little bit.

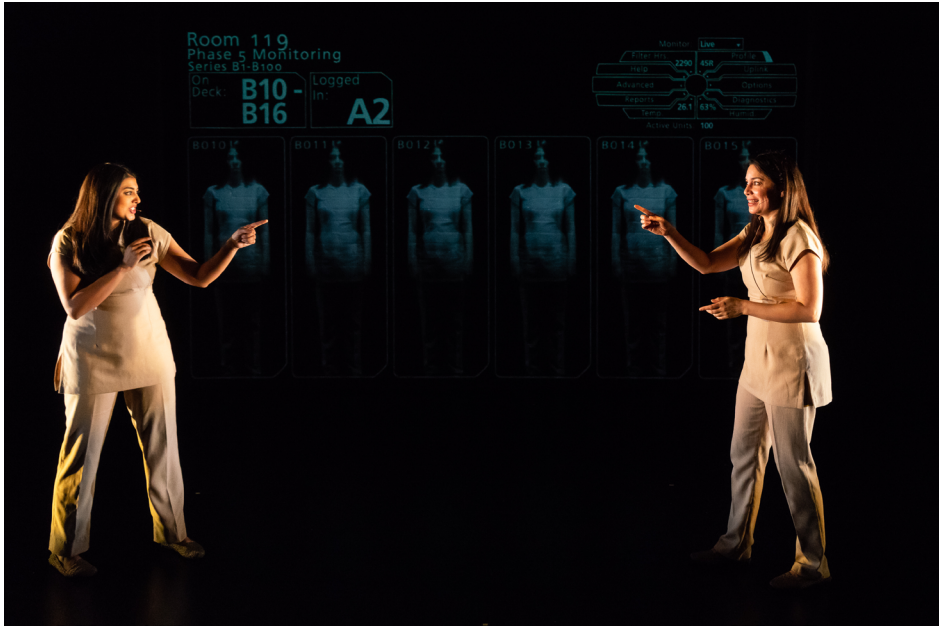
What is the show about to you?

To me the show is about identity. Where does identity come from? Who gets to decide that? If I thought this one thing about myself and now I've discovered something new, what does that mean about what I knew before? And that's a big rabbit hole that my character, P, goes through during the show. For P, there's a lot of like, "we were adopted, I don't know where I came from, I don't know anything about my birth parents or why they gave me up." Or, "who is my biological family." And that biological need is really important for her. I can identify with that sentiment a lot, to find a balance between who shapes your world from that ancestry to your DNA, and from stuff that's inherent in you versus the environment around you and the people you grew up with. The nature versus nurture debate. The interesting thing about the clones is that you don't actually know what ideas are their own and what has been implanted from their DNA during their creation. It's interesting to wrestle with these concepts on stage and then also wrestle with Who am I?

This show reflects a lot of questions we're asking ourselves now, specifically the way we create identity through socially-constructed definitions.

Yeah, and in this case there's a lot of identity through race and ethnicity too. It's worth noting that all the clones we play are from third world areas where minorities, women are oppressed or experience a lot more hardship than they might here. You can all have the same color skin, but where you grow up is going to give you a different experience of what that means. The idea of privilege, how some clones were brought here by force, and for some it's like a day at the spa, some had the privilege of healthcare access where they were, etc. So it's interesting to view the show through that lens.





“If we were to select the most intelligent, imaginative, energetic, and emotionally stable third of mankind, all races would be present. The existence of any pure race with special endowments is a myth, as is the belief that there are races whose members are foredoomed to eternal inferiority.”

– Dr. Franz Boas

DESIGNING ASSEMBLED IDENTITY: SOUND AND MUSIC

Sound Designer/Composer Drew Weinstein and Sound Engineer Hugo Fowler share their perspectives on Assembled Identity.

Would you mind introducing yourself and what your role in the show is?

HF I'm Hugo Fowler and I'm the Sound engineer.

DW I'm Drew Weinstein and I'm the Sound Designer / Composer, I guess.

Nice. So, Drew, you've been a part of the show since its original conception?

DW Mhm. That was over two years ago, yeah *(laughter)*.

What has the process been like for you?

DW It's been great. It's been really interesting – I actually don't think I've worked on a show over such an extended time in the past. To get to see it evolve in so many different ways has been totally fascinating and such a phenomenal learning experience about what the piece is, and about what Kristin and Mari and Purva want to create, and how to help actualize that. It's been really cool to see the different iterations. Every step of the way, every workshop – we've had like four or five of them now – it's like we're picking up as we go. So now we're at this point where we have this whole world of stuff that we've worked and that we've picked up and that we have to play with and mold into what we're gonna end up with.

What references did you pull? In what ways does the design reflect your own thinking on the future of technology? How did you choose this work and this soundscape and this kind of, overall aesthetic?

DW That's really evolved a lot over the years as well. Like I remember back on the first workshop, we had this very vague idea of technology and this general sense of things. We were pulling from a lot of sci-fi references... Moving forward we talked a little about Black Mirror and West World, obviously you have a massive canon in terms of sci-fi. So that was a starting place, but now I really am not thinking about those references nearly as much. For me in selecting sound, the question is partially: "What's the tech doing here?", but the larger question is always: "What is this saying in the grand scheme of things?"

HF It seems like, too, a big part of the technology... it's another character in the room and – as with any play or piece – it's about the relationship. That's always going to be the most interesting thing. So, it's about the relationship between those two [characters] and then you have this sort of impending force of technology either trying to force them to be brought together or forcing them to come apart the whole time, and interesting to watch that struggle. Their relationship dealing with all of this technology. It is a character in itself, but in the end it's still about a very organic connection. So far.

How has it been exploring this piece and jumping into the team?

HF It's been really cool – really easy. Everyone's really, really nice as far as just getting along with everybody it's been great. As far as the piece goes I'm just trying to look at the layers of it and look at the seeds and the theme and make an analysis of it. There's definitely a lot going on underneath the piece at all times, which I really like. It doesn't ever feel like there's a scene that just is there to just show technology or the future. It's pushing the action which I think is really cool.

If there's one question this show points toward, what would that question be?

HF I feel like that's the question I've been asking myself about this piece, and I feel like I'm still finding it. Maybe Drew's already found it?

DW I mean obviously, it's like a massively... massive question –

HF Who are we? What's our identity?

DW Who are you? Who am I? Who are we?

HF Am I just a bunch of DNA from my parents? Those things that have made up – part nature, part nurture – made this and I'm just carrying out these things and just going through day-to-day, or are these my choices. Am I as sentient as I think I am?

DW I really, really focus on questions of identity which is obviously crucial to the human experience and we're looking at it in many ways, and we're looking at it through this technology – through the social circumstances of our current day, questions of ethnicity and how society views different people and what is you and what is them and what is we and really it all boils down to how people build that sense of identity and where does it come from and is your identity really yours? Or is it...? And I think the cloning metaphor gets at it so beautifully, which is why so many sci-fi things are also interested in cloning. If you put a clone together you're implanting this code but it really brings home the allegory: is that personality mine, or something that has been put on me because of the societal forces swirling around. Are you really you, or who you think you are? And for me, that's always been what I'm the most excited about in the piece and the song work that I've been able to do really gets at that, and it's been really exciting for me to work on.

DESIGNING ASSEMBLED IDENTITY: VIDEO AND PROJECTION

Projection Designer David Bengali unpacks his process with Assembled Identity

What has your process been on this show?

Well, I mean the process – as I think it has been for everyone – is partly driven by the workshopping process of the show. I got involved with the CULTUREMART version two years ago... there was a script that existed but we were only looking at certain scenes from that larger script. My first way in, in terms of projections and about what they would maybe do, was about those particular scenes and some of those ideas stuck... and some of them haven't. As the piece evolved to become more and more framed by the facility, we realized we wanted projections to be – as much as possible – kind of driven diegetically by what's actually going on in that facility and how do we use that as a kind of frame for what stories we want to communicate. And then in the sections where the performers move into song or movement, we let ourselves allow the projections to depart from the literal reality of the facility into a thematic or emotional space also, so they're kind of following the same structure that the script does in terms of how they're organized.

What inspired your design and the visual elements of the show?

We as a group kind of all went through this. There's some things that we are doing that are looking around at what's around us now, and what are those things that want to be a part of this world? For example, the way the characters get called from one room to another and there's a projection event that happens which is basically stolen from the WholeFoods grocery check out line. And then there are other things – so it might come from the language of current science fiction in terms of how things are framed or structured, or also the way the writing works. Often we'll talk about a particular reference to some film or TV show or something partly because I think that allows us to have a little bit of a short hand in some situations because it's a shared context for the audience. Not necessarily saying this is absolutely what we think the near future will look like, but it's sort of like everybody's kind of agreed in the design of the near future that certain things are going to look certain ways and everyone's like "okay we understand what you're telling us," and we can pay attention to the language.

How has your view on this show and your predictions on the future changed during this process?

I don't know that my thoughts about the future have exactly changed. It's more about how has the urgency of the questions we're trying to deal with changed? And what frame of reference are people coming in with. For example, there's a scene where the characters uncover this kind of "facility welcome video" and back when we were first constructing that section, we wanted it to feel like a campaign video. At the time, when we were first

sketching it, it was before the election had been decided, and we were pulling material of the candidates and the candidates of previous elections. We were looking at what are the kind of fears that people have that are causing them to isolate themselves from each other and what is driving their voting decisions, things like that. And then, it was all a little hypothetical and now here we are and looking back at that same material, some of which is still there, it has a very different feeling because now we're not talking about what's gonna happen. We're here. So the question I have is what does the future look like given that as a nation we've made certain decisions, and day by day we're continuing to make more and more decisions that elevate the power of othering and the perceived value of sameness. As things become less and less theoretical and more and more like yesterday's views, I guess I wonder what to do with those feelings and those ideas that we put into this show. What's the value in just talking about things? Do we need to think more about how we got here and how we might get out?

How has this process been unique to you?

The thing that has been great and exciting about this process is that it's been very collaborative. The discussions between the writers, the director, and the designers about the tech and design elements are very multilateral. As opposed to coming in and saying, well here's what we're doing, it's a conversation and everyone can offer their thoughts about all of the elements at any time. And I hope that means that what we've created is integrated and we've been able to make strong storytelling decisions, because the conversation flows in many directions and that's not always the way processes work. I think that's one of the most exciting ways to work.

If you feel there's one question the show is exploring an answer to, what is that question?

I think one of the thing that it asks you to ask yourself is how do you, as a person navigating the world, consciously or unconsciously group others. And what decisions do you make about people based on what you think is true about where they come from? And in some situations, how can people's best intentions actually lead them down a path that runs counter to what they might believe?

POST-SHOW CONVERSATIONS:

May 1: Race and Representation

May 3: Sci-Fi, Science and Technology in Art and Today

Created by Purva Bedi, Kristin Marting, and Mariana Newhard

Director: Kristin Marting

Performers: Mariana Newhard and Lipica Shah

Projection Design: David Bengali

Sound Design: Drew Weinstein

Lighting Design: Christina Tang

Costume Design: Normandy Sherwood

Choreography: Alexandra Beller

Stage Manager: Kendall Allen

Assistant Director: Hilarie Spangler

Rehearsal Assistant: Sami Pyne



Biometric Data Acquisition

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Series A1-A20

On
Deck: **A1**
A2



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Layout by Wyatt Welels

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