

ADAPTED FOR THE STAGE BY **DUNCAN MACMILLAN**

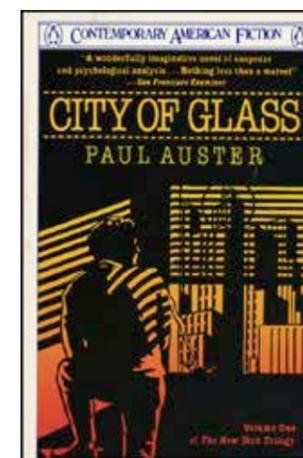
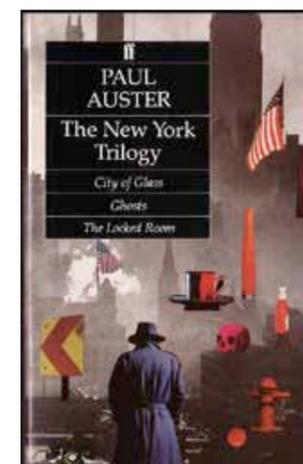
FROM THE FIRST NOVEL OF THE **NEW YORK TRILOGY**

AND THE GRAPHIC NOVEL BY PAUL KARASIK AND DAVID MAZZUCHELLI



Spoken by unnamed woman at Grand Central Station, *City of Glass*

## CITY OF GLASS



## INTRODUCTION

Following his acclaimed debut autobiographical work *The Invention of Solitude*, *City of Glass* was the first work of prose fiction by renowned American writer Paul Auster. Published as the first part of *The New York Trilogy* in the 1980's, the novel sets out in the guise of a mystery thriller in the noir detective genre, before ultimately revealing itself to be concerned primarily with the life-or-death psychological struggle of its main protagonist. It sets up many of the long-running themes of Auster's literary career: identity, coincidence and choice.

Adapted into graphic novel form by Paul Karasik and David Mazzucchelli in 1997, the book has achieved cult status and been translated into over 20 languages, beguiling readers around the world.

59 Productions has secured the rights to both the original novel and the graphic novel adaptation, and - working with playwright Duncan MacMillan and co-producers HOME (Manchester, UK), Lyric Hammersmith (London) and Karl Sydow - is adapting this seminal work for the theatre. It will be launched in 2017 - the year of Auster's 70th birthday.

“  
IT WAS A  
WRONG  
NUMBER  
THAT  
STARTED IT  
...”

## CITY OF GLASS

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### THE STORY

*City of Glass*, the first novel in Paul Auster's *The New York Trilogy*, sets off in the apparently familiar genre territory of a pulp detective thriller. A broken man, Daniel Quinn, receives a mysterious phone call in the middle of the night asking for a private detective. Desperate to find a way to create some meaning in his life following the tragic death of his wife and son some five years earlier, Quinn - who is actually a writer of crime fiction himself - assumes the guise of professional sleuth and takes the case.

He is hired to protect a young man called Peter Stillman from his father Stillman Snr., a sociopathic theologian and academic who locked Peter in a darkened room as a child in order to prove a theory about God's true language. Stillman Snr. is about to be released from jail, and has apparently threatened his son with "a day of reckoning".

Far from drawing Quinn back into the real world, the pervading darkness surrounding the Stillman family (including Peter's equally mysterious and seductive wife Virginia) threatens to consume him altogether. The religious theories of the old man and the prophetic visions of his abused son become obsessions of Quinn's, who starts to look for patterns in the chaos that confronts him. It becomes entirely plausible that Quinn is being set up - somehow drawn into a mystery that may or may not have any basis in reality.

Auster, one of America's finest contemporary novelists, has a reputation for genre-defying literature. Whilst he adeptly draws the reader into the story with the style of an impeccably executed noir detective mystery, it is only after our protagonist Quinn has become entirely consumed by the mystery - to the point of losing his own grip on reality - that the reader belatedly realises that Auster is in fact concerned not with the intricacies of the Stillman case, but with the fundamental question of Quinn's survival. Will he find renewed purpose and meaning through his quest, or will it simply lead him ever deeper into the abyss?

Narrator, *City of Glass*

“ HE FOUND  
HIMSELF ALONE  
IN A ROOM,  
FIRING A PISTOL  
INTO A BARE  
WHITE WALL.”

## THE PROJECT

59 Productions is adapting this extraordinary and hallucinatory literary thriller for the stage. Working with writer Duncan MacMillan (*Lungs, People, Places and Things, 1984*) and a multiple Tony and Olivier award-winning creative team including Gareth Fry (*The Encounter, Let the Right One In, Harry Potter*) and composer Nick Powell (*Wolf Hall, The Nether, The Wonderful World of Dissocia*), this will be the company's first full-scale self-produced theatrical work, and will make use of the groundbreaking theatrical and technological techniques that have made 59 Productions “the leading purveyors of video for theatre in the world” (*The Guardian*).

The production will be directed by 59's founding director Leo Warner who has led the company's award-winning creative team for over 15 years on projects such as the London 2012 Olympic Opening Ceremony (video design), Lighting the Sails of Sydney Opera House (director), the United Nations Global Goals Launch (director). He has also worked extensively across Europe with director Katie Mitchell (*Waves, Reise Durch Die Nacht, Forbidden Zone*), and he also co-directed *Fräulein Julie* with her for Schaubuhne, Berlin.

Having worked extensively with actors both on screen and on stage, *City of Glass* is Leo's solo directing debut for the theatre. He will lead a unique design process, working with 59's in-house architect and designer Jenny Melville who will design the set hand-in-hand with 59's Lysander Ashton, who will lead the video design.

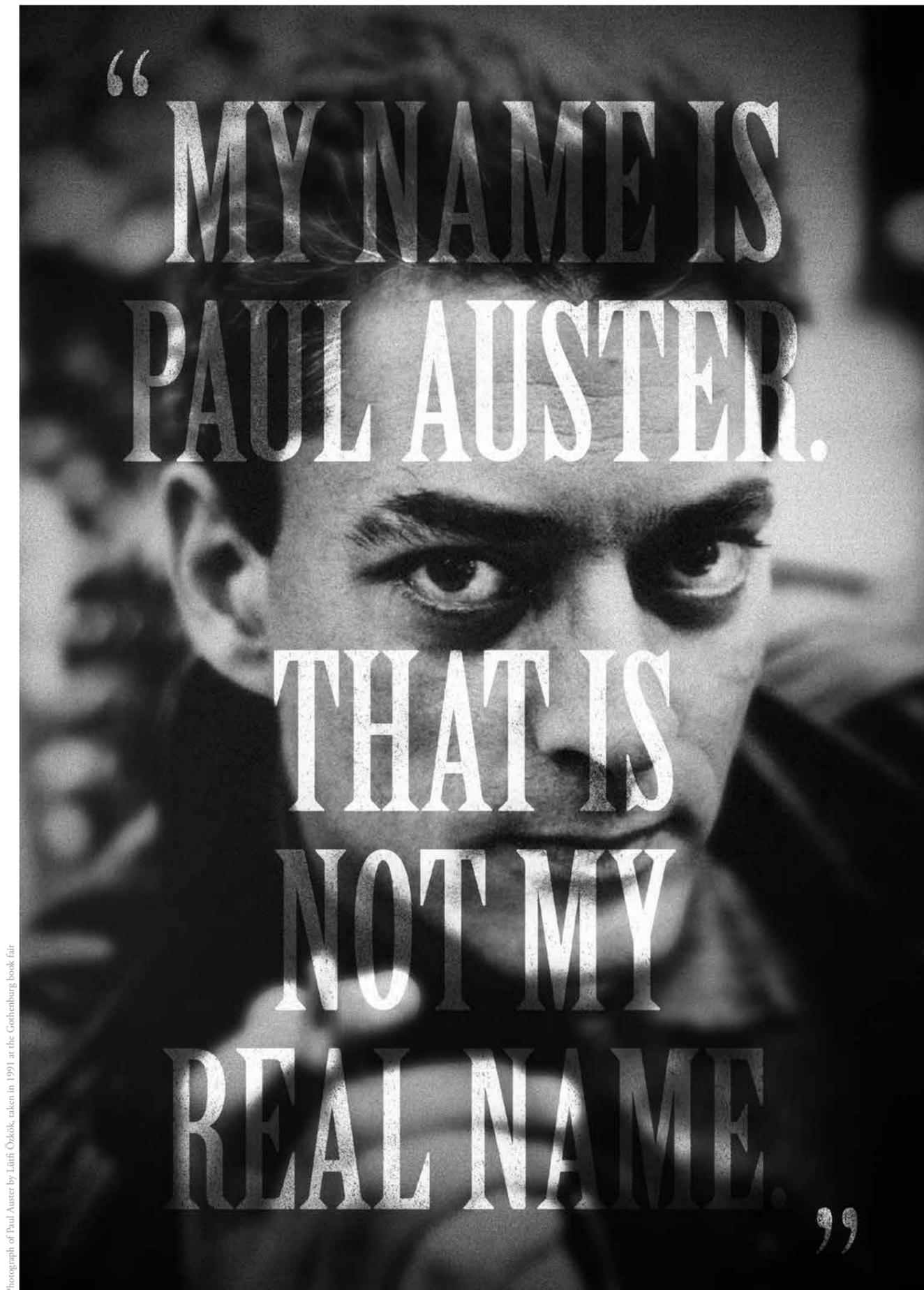
Leo will work with renowned Danish choreographer and movement director Kim Brandstrup (London Royal Ballet, Danish Royal Ballet, Rambert) to achieve the delicate balance of physical performance and dramatic delivery required from the actors in order to deliver the story.

The acting company will comprise 4 actors plus a young boy. Two actors will play Quinn, facilitating some staging sleights of hand, as well as doubling as Quinn's analogue Auster, and a number of other minor roles. In addition to this the role of the narrator will be shared by both of the Quinn actors. Conversely, one actor will play both Peter Stillman and his father Stillman Snr. A female actor will play the roles of Virginia Stillman, Auster's wife Siri, and the women in Grand Central Station and Quinn's flat.

By keeping the core set and projection design elements within the 59 creative studio, the team will create the **continuum of physical architecture and projection augmentation** required to serve the unique demands of this production, in which everything that appears solid must mutate, fracture and transform along with the mental decay of the lead protagonist. 59 are world leaders in using projection to dynamically transform architectural spaces both inside and outside the theatre, winning a Tony Award for their work in this field on the Broadway musical *An American in Paris* in 2015.

The production will combine live actors and physical set with revolutionary projection and light-based illusions, as well as theatrical tricks and stage magic to create a fluid world capable of providing an extraordinary and disorientating visual analogue to the lead protagonist's total psychological fragmentation.

Narrator, *City of Glass*



Photograph of Paul Auster by Lirif Oskok, taken in 1991 at the Gothenburg book fair

### ABOUT PAUL AUSTER

Auster, who has given his personal support to the project following a number of meetings with director Leo Warner, celebrates his 70th birthday in 2017. He lives with his wife (writer Siri Hustvedt) in a classic brownstone terrace in Brooklyn, the basement of which remains his primary work space. Auster still works and reworks his novels and other writings painstakingly in manuscript form, before transferring them into type on his manual typewriter. He lives in perpetual fear of the manufacturers discontinuing the ribbons.

Auster began his literary career as a poet and translator. *City of Glass* - his first work of prose fiction - sets forth his literary agenda for the coming decades, and to this day remains typically difficult to categorise. Whilst many of his books are framed in strong genre terms - particularly those of the detective thriller - the deeper themes of his work are often profoundly existential, exploring questions about chance and coincidence, and frequently investigating the link between language and identity.

It is significant that the real Paul Auster once received two unexplained phone calls asking for a private detective. To this day, Auster says that he regrets not having tried to help the stranger on the phone. Through Quinn and *City of Glass* he allows himself to imagine an alternative world in which the phone rang for a third time, and the course of his life was altered.

Auster's protagonists are often writers who establish meaning in their lives through writing, in an effort to find their place within the natural order.

In Quinn, Auster creates a protagonist whose connection to the world is inextricably bound up with his identity as a writer. As Quinn encounters the world of the Stillmans the connection between language and object is brought into question, ultimately leading him to hypothesise himself out of existence.

A committed family man, Auster imagines a world for Quinn in which his mind has already been stretched to near-breaking point by the loss of his wife and son some five years before the novel begins. When Quinn meets Auster within the story, he is confronted by the real Auster's apparently perfect family - his wife Siri and son Daniel. Quinn has no choice but to imagine that Auster is somehow taunting him "with the things he had lost". As Auster said of the novel shortly after it was published, "It's a fictitious subterranean autobiography, and attempt to imagine what my life would have been like if I hadn't met [my wife]. That's why I appear in the book as myself, but at the same time Auster is also Quinn, but in a different universe..."

When Quinn disappears at the end of the novel, leaving no trace but the red notebook on the floor of the abandoned Stillman apartment, it is the fictional Auster who discovers it, before handing it over to the unnamed narrator who ultimately condemns Auster for his indifference towards Quinn, a man "who was so obviously in trouble". Auster, we are told by the nameless narrator in the closing paragraph, "behaved badly throughout".

Spoken by Daniel Quinn, *City of Glass*



## STAGING & DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The drama in *City of Glass* revolves around the main protagonist, Quinn, and the isolated world in which he lives his misanthropic - almost ascetic - life. He lives in the Upper West Side of Manhattan in an apartment he once shared with his wife and son.

In the novel (and in our production) **Quinn simultaneously occupies several alternative universes.** There is the world in which we find him at the start of the novel: a bleak, liminal place in which he lives an isolated life, bereft of his family. At the same time, he is haunted by flashes of an alternative reality in which his wife and son are still alive - reverberations of the perfect life he feels he *should* be living. As he tries to reinvent himself in the role of a private detective, he draws on the imaginary world of his own detective mystery novels, frequently telling himself to look at a scene through the eyes of his fictional detective hero, Max Work.

Throughout the piece Quinn moves back and forth between these various different versions of reality. As he does so, the space around him will appear to transform - sometimes subtly, sometimes radically. We will watch through Quinn's eyes as these realities emerge and recede. This will be achieved by staging the piece in a realistic physical set, and then projection-mapping every physical surface, allowing us to use the transformative magic of light to mutate the space.

When we first meet Peter Stillman - the young man psychologically abused as a child by his father - we are introduced to a world in which the barrier between language and object has been eroded. **When Stillman speaks we also see the words escape from his mouth and crawl over his face,** before travelling into the void around him and transforming from words into apparently solid objects.

This surreal visual language that emanates from Peter Stillman is released into Quinn's febrile consciousness, and begins to eat away at it. **As his thoughts become corrupted, we see the physical world around him start to fracture.** At the very end of our story, when Quinn is alone and naked in the Stillman apartment, writing thoughts in the red notebook hypothesising about the nature of the universe, the physical world around him breaks apart completely, leaving Quinn suspended in a black void. **He experiences an apotheosis, in which his words manifest in the air around him.**

In the final moment, Quinn vanishes before our eyes, seconds before Auster and the unnamed narrator enter the abandoned apartment and discover the red notebook on the floor.

Conversation between Daniel Quinn and Daniel Auster, *City of Glass*

## APPENDIX **ELEMENTS OF THE DESIGN**

1. PHYSICAL SET
2. PROJECTION AUGMENTATION
3. FACIAL PROJECTION MAPPING
4. MAGIC AND STAGE ILLUSIONS
5. VOLUMETRIC 'HOLOGRAMS'

“ LITTLE BY LITTLE THE DARKNESS HAD BEGUN TO WIN OUT OVER THE LIGHT. ”

Quinn observing the apparent shortening of the days, *City of Glass*

## DESIGN ELEMENT 1: THE PHYSICAL SET



Early architectural massing model of the physical set design in progress

An architectural facsimile of Quinn's apartment will be the foundation of the visual design, representing the 'reality' of Quinn's physical existence, as well as an analogue of his inner psychological landscape. **The space will be modelled on a typical Upper West Side New York loft**, with all of the inherent architectural eccentricities familiar to anyone who has spent time in rented residential properties in uptown Manhattan.

**The apartment will exist 'suspended' within a black void of imperceptible depth**, within which it can move laterally along an unseen track, changing the audience's angle and perspective on the architecture.

When Quinn visits other locations - the Stillman apartment, for example - subtle alterations in the physical makeup of the room will accentuate differences in location without completely revealing whether Quinn has ever *actually* left his own apartment.

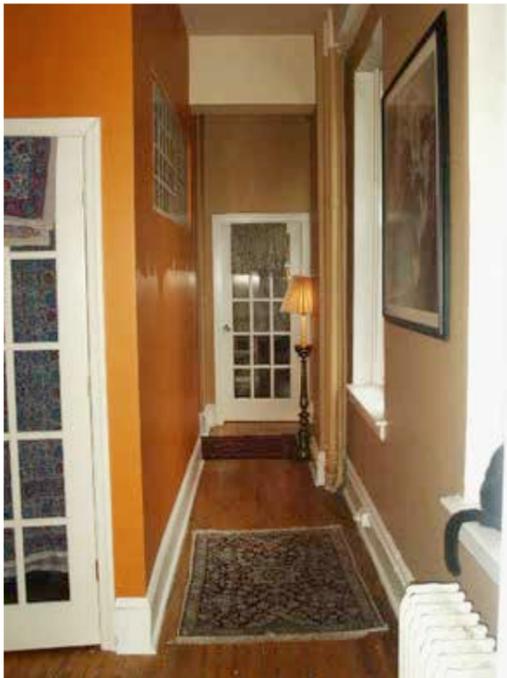
While the main space will appear to be real and solid, **the doors which lead upstage and offstage will open onto a variety of different spaces** - some extensions of the literal apartment (bathroom, child's bedroom, etc.), and some surreal interventions (like the tops of escalators in Grand Central Station, or an infinite white void representing 'the outside world').

The set will be designed to split apart entirely for the final 'apotheosis' moment, leaving Quinn suspended in the void.



Early architectural massing model of the physical set design in progress

REFERENCE / INSPIRATION IMAGES  
FOR THE SET DESIGN



References for the interiors of Stillman's Apartment

References for the interiors of Quinn's Apartment

“  
HERE I AM  
OF THE AIR.  
A BEAUTIFUL  
THING FOR  
THE LIGHT TO  
SHINE ON.  
”

Peter Stillman, *City of Glass*

## DESIGN ELEMENT 2: PROJECTION AUGMENTATION



Mapped projection being used to augment physical set in  
*Emil and the Detectives*, National Theatre 2014



Mapped projection being used to augment the United Nations  
headquarters in Manhattan, *Global Goals Launch* 2015

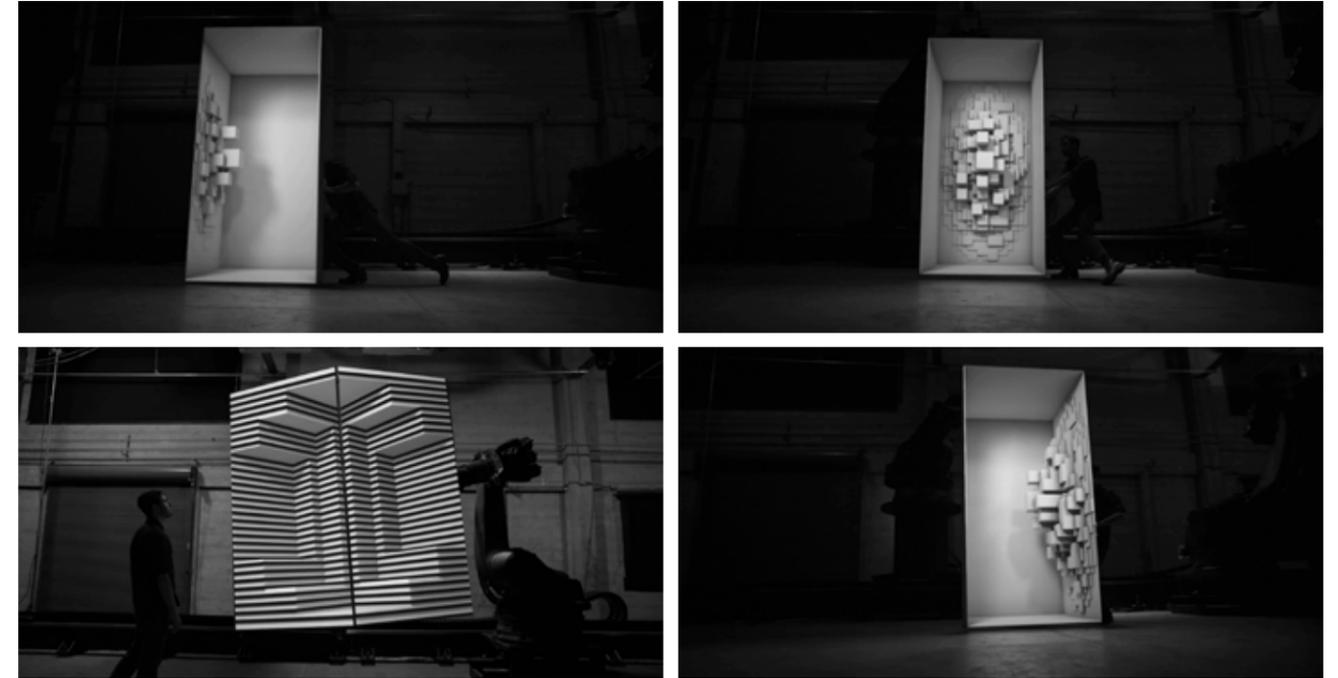
59 Productions are specialists in using projection to transform architecture, both internal and external. Through pinpoint mapping of every single architectural surface within the apartment we will be able to transform the space in a heartbeat, shifting through the multiple layers of Quinn's realities. As well as changing colours and textures, projection augmentation will allow us to manifest apparently solid architectural features as well as fixtures, furniture and fittings.

By creating a world in which the line between physical set and projection & lighting is imperceptible, we provide ourselves with an apparently solid, tactile environment which can transform and mutate and - ultimately - dissolve or shatter.

REFERENCE / INSPIRATION IMAGES  
FOR PROJECTION AUGMENTATION  
OF PHYSICAL SPACE



*Inside Out* (2015), Projection Mapping Installation by artist Leigh Sachwitz



*Box* (2013), illusory 3D depth created on a flat 2D surface by artists Bot & Dolly



*Solanum* (2014), Projection used to augment physical sculpture by Urbanscreen



*Sony Playstation Launch event* (2011), Projection mapping the interior of a room by Marshmallow Laserfeast

“  
HE NO LONGER  
WISHED TO BE DEAD.  
AT THE SAME TIME  
IT CANNOT BE SAID  
THAT HE WAS GLAD  
TO BE ALIVE  
”

The narrator on Daniel Quinn, *City of Glass*



### DESIGN ELEMENT 3: FACIAL PROJECTION MAPPING

In addition to the architectural projection-mapping onto the set, 59 has been developing techniques for **live position tracking and mapped projection onto actors' faces**. When Peter Stillman first appears and delivers his extraordinary monologue describing his abusive childhood at the hands of his father, **we start to see words crawl out of his mouth onto his face and body before filling the air around him** and permeating the walls of the apartment.

Using this technology **we will also be able to transform Peter Stillman into his father**, into the young boy he was when abused, and even into Quinn himself.

### DESIGN ELEMENT 4: MAGIC AND STAGE ILLUSIONS

The use of light, projection and technological tricks will enable us to deliver most of the complex visual narratives that the production demands. However, there are certain analogue effects that will demand mechanical solutions, not least the 'disappearance' of Quinn at the end of the piece, which - contrary to the serene beauty of the apotheosis moment - needs to feel like a highly tangible physical disappearance. **We will be working with a consultant stage magician** to realise this and other complex staging effects.

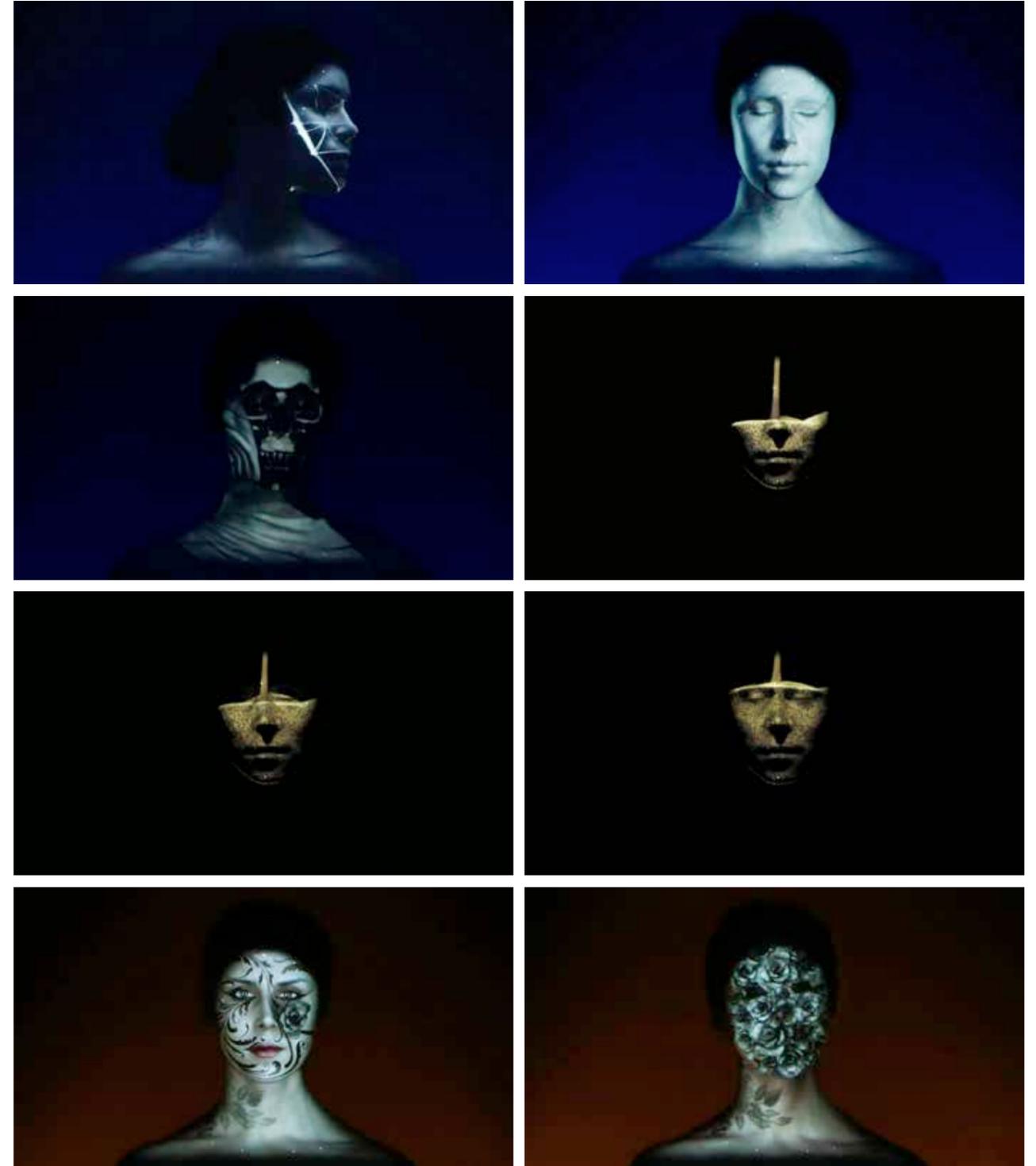
REFERENCE / INSPIRATION IMAGES  
FOR FACIAL PROJECTION MAPPING



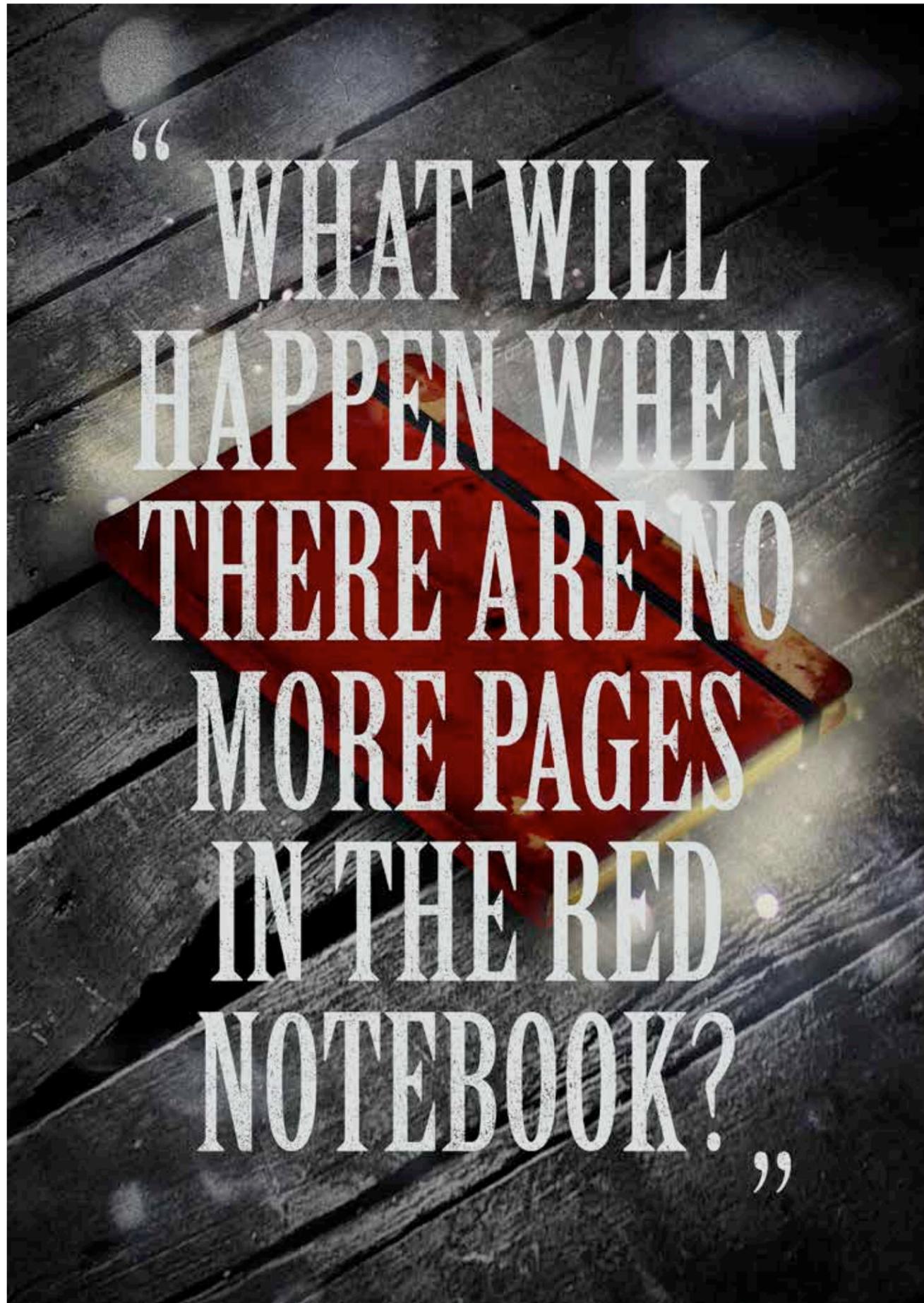
*Omote* (2014), Real-time face tracking and projection mapping by artist Nobumichi Asai



*Face-Hacking* (2015), Real-time face tracking and projection mapping by artist Nobumichi Asai



*Launch Event for Kat Von D Beauty* (2015), Real-time face tracking and projection mapping by artist Kat Von D & Wildbytes studio



“The last sentence in the red notebook reads: what will happen when there are no more pages in the red notebook.” *City of Glass*

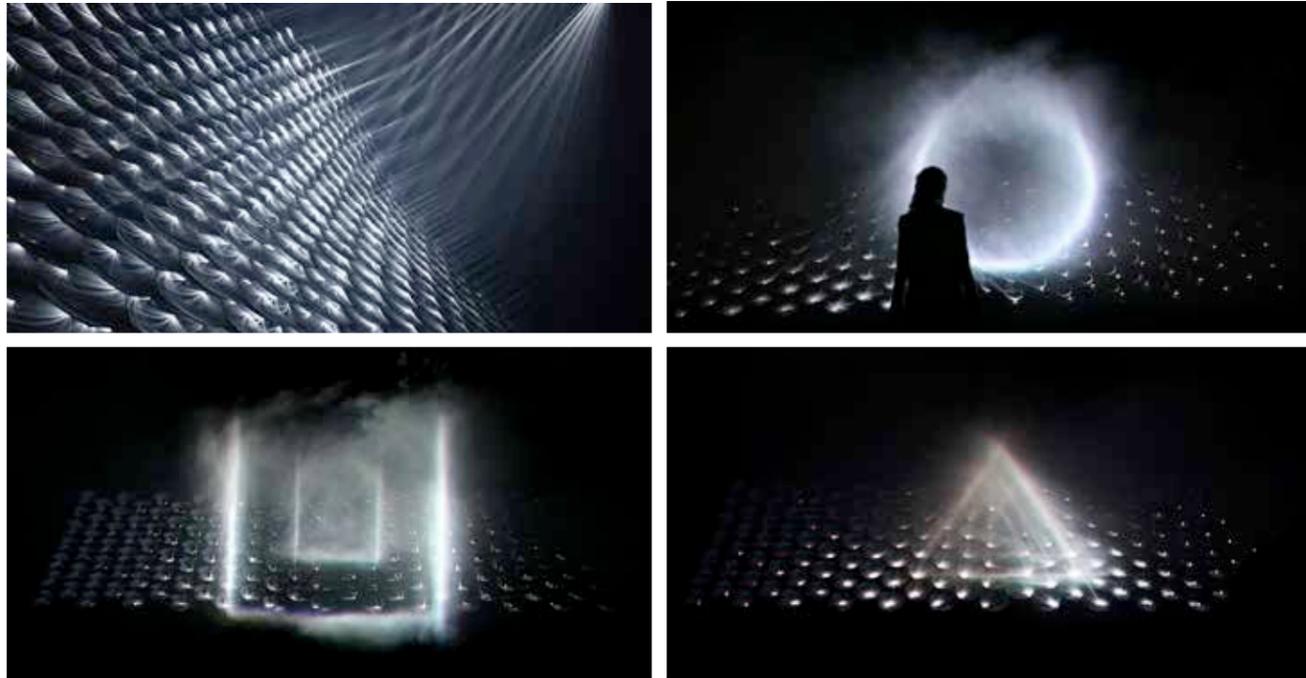


## DESIGN ELEMENT 5: THE APOTHEOSIS / VOLUMETRIC ‘HOLOGRAMS’

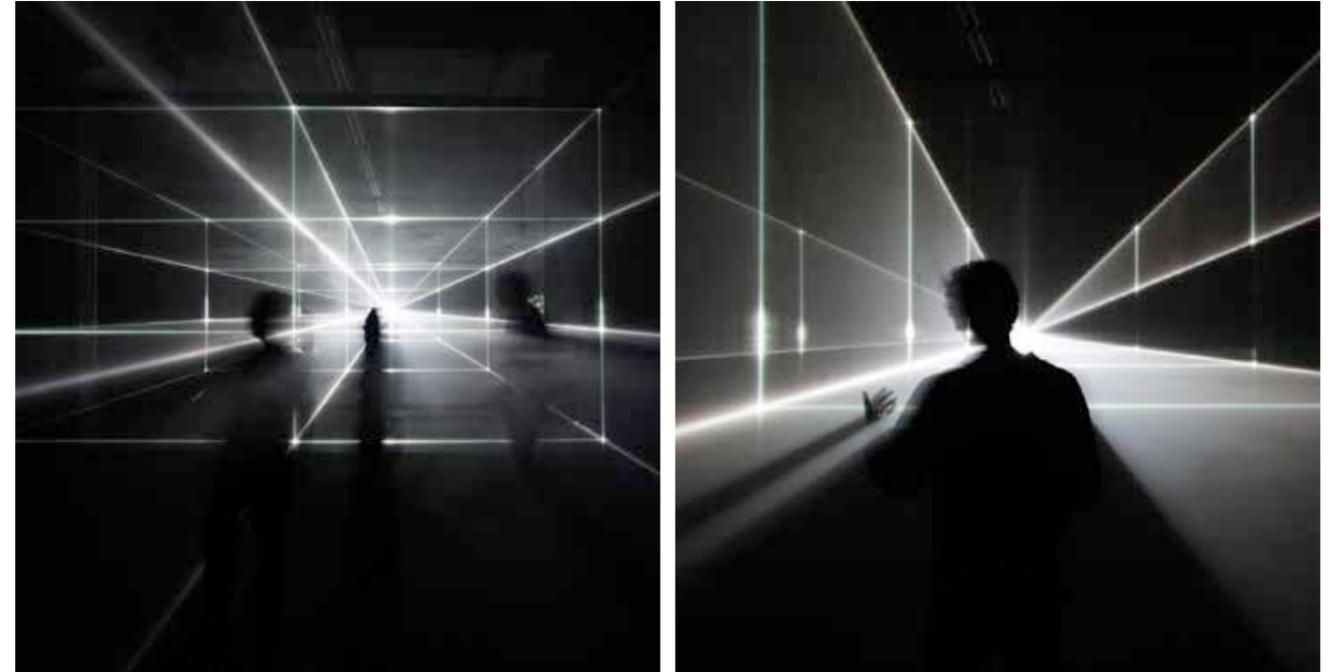
In the final transcendental phase of his story when the dreaded moment of running out of space in the red notebook finally arrives, **Quinn discovers that his words have been ‘severed’ from him**, that now they were a part of the world at large, as “real and specific as a stone, a lake or a flower.” He remembers the moment of his birth, “the infinite kindness of the world and all the people he had ever loved”.

For this moment of transcendental beauty we are exploring the use of **‘volumetric’ projection into haze, bouncing projection beams off thousands of small mirrors and re-assembling them in 3D space** around Quinn centre-stage. Collaborating with the Korean artistic collective Kimchi and Chips we will utilise ground-breaking technology to manifest first Quinn’s words and then his visions of “the stars, the earth, his hopes for mankind”. It is the apotheosis of the ‘darkness’ released by Stillman into Quinn’s mind, and also heralds the moment at which Quinn himself physically vanishes from the stage.

REFERENCE / INSPIRATION IMAGES  
FOR APOTHEOSIS / VOLUMETRIC HOLOGRAMS



*Light Barrier* (2014), Installation with convex mirrors and projection by Kimchi and Chips



*Vanishing Point* (2013-14), Light Installation by United Visual Artists

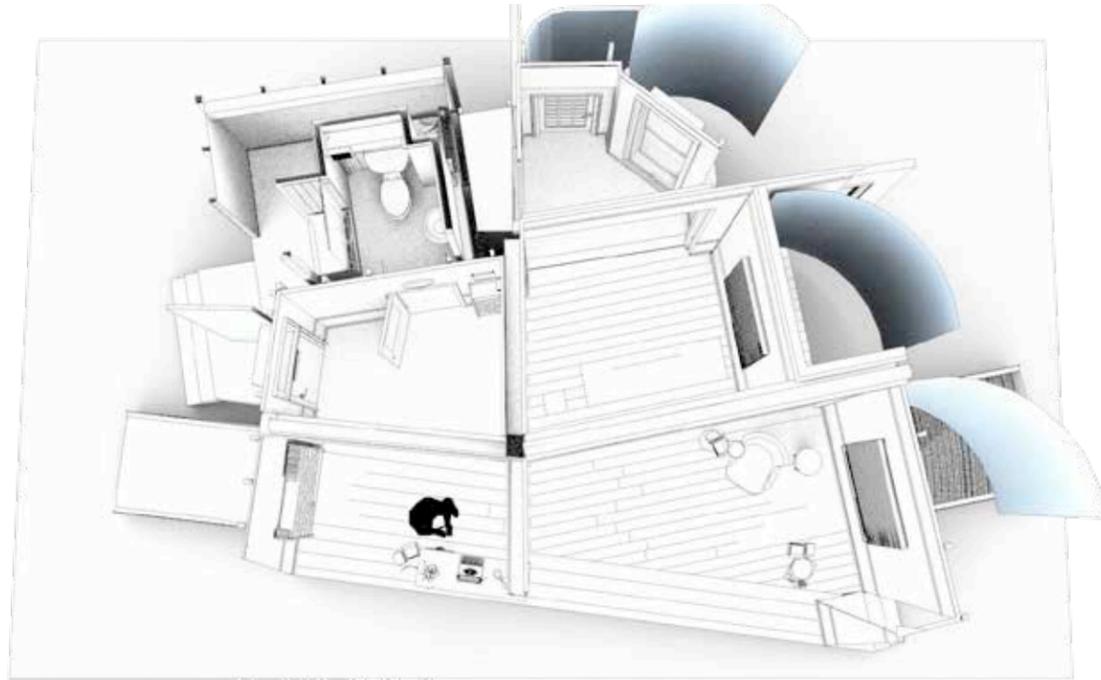


*Light Falls* (2015), Projection Design using Holo Gauze by 59 Productions



*Beauty* (1993), Artwork using water spray device and light, by Olafur Eliasson

SET DESIGN  
DIAGRAM VIEWS



*City of Glass*, Diagram plan view for Quinn's Apartment



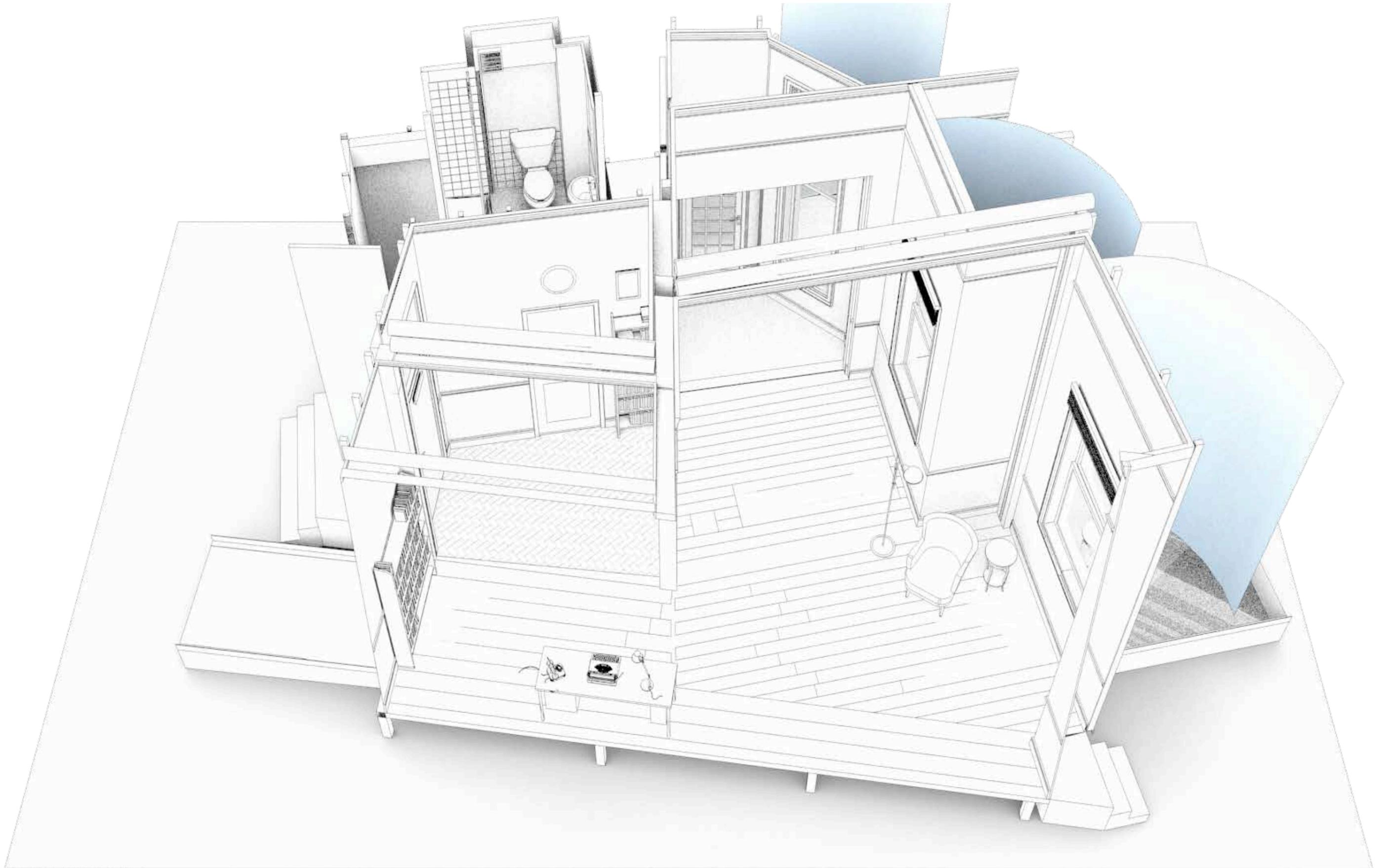
*City of Glass*, Room overview for Quinn's Apartment



*City of Glass*, Diagram elevation view for Quinn's Apartment



*City of Glass*, Desk detail for Quinn's Apartment



*City of Glass*, Set Design Aerial view of Quinn's Apartment

SCENE LOOKS



NEUTRAL SET STATE (NO PROJECTION)

*City of Glass*, 3D Set Render



RENDERING WITH PROJECTION

*City of Glass*, Projection visualisation for Quinn's Apartment



APOTHEOSIS LIGHTING EFFECT

*City of Glass*, Lighting Visualisation



RENDERING WITH PROJECTION

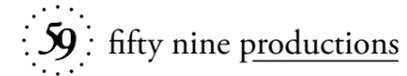
*City of Glass*, Projection Visualisation for Max Work's world



*Isles of Wonder (Olympic Opening Ceremony) 2012, Video Design by 59 Productions*



*Rewind (500th Anniversary of Hampton Court Palace), 2015, Event direction, design and production by 59 Productions for Historic Royal Palaces*



## ABOUT THE PRODUCERS: 59 PRODUCTIONS

Whether creating stage productions, museum installations, live music performances, large scale events or films, 59's team generates creative and technical ideas to help realise ambitious artistic projects.

Since 59 Productions was founded in 2006, the company has established itself as one of the world's leading providers of video projection design for the stage. Extensive experience of the theatre making process, a breadth of artistic talent and cutting edge technical research has helped the company push the boundaries of the medium.

59 Productions has created visual content and technical design work for many of the world's greatest venues, including: the National Theatre of Great Britain, English National Opera, the Royal Opera House, The Metropolitan Opera New York, Lincoln Center, Salzburg Festival, Schaubühne Berlin, and the Sydney Opera House, as well as for many productions in London's West End and on Broadway.

Recent theatrical productions include: *Get Carter* (Northern Stage), *wonder.land* (MIF, National Theatre), *An American in Paris* (Tony award-winner, Broadway), and *War Horse* (National Theatre, West End, Broadway, UK, US, Chinese and Japanese international tours).

In 2012, 59 Productions undertook the video design and production for the Opening Ceremony of the London 2012 Olympic Games, working with director Danny Boyle. As well as the 70,000 people in the stadium that night, including hundreds of world leaders, the ceremony was viewed on live TV by over 1.5 billion people.

Also in 2012, 59 Productions was commissioned by the V&A Museum, London, as creative directors and designers for an exhibition about global cultural icon David Bowie. The resulting exhibition *David Bowie is* was visited by more than 300,000 people over the course of its 5 month run, making it the most successful exhibition in the museum's history. It continues to tour (and break box-office records) worldwide, including to Toronto, Chicago, Berlin and Paris.

In 2014, the company was invited to create a new projected artwork to be presented on the iconic 'sails' of the Sydney Opera House, as the centrepiece for the city's festival of light, *Vivid LIVE*. The resulting 15-minute piece, which looped for 6 hours every night over 6 weeks, went viral on social media within seconds of its launch, as well as attracting the attention of the world's press. It was viewed live by over 3 million people.

Subsequent architectural projection-mapping projects have included the 500th anniversary of Hampton Court Palace, the worldwide launch of the Global Goals for the United Nations, at the UN headquarters in Manhattan, and the gala opening of the 2015 Edinburgh International Festival.

Whether working on a small scale studio show or on a major production at a leading venue, whether providing video projection design or set design services, 59's approach is the same: namely that a combination of creative thinking and an inventive approach to the use of technology can help make magic happen.

*“59’s numerous and varied contributions to productions at the National Theatre over the last decade are unified by certain qualities: attention to detail, intellectual rigour, and boundless imagination. Working with them is always inspiring and I can’t wait to see what they come up with next.”*

**Rufus Norris**

Artistic Director, National Theatre of Great Britain



*Emil and The Detectives* (2014), Projection Design by 59 Productions, National Theatre (London)



*An American in Paris* (2015-16), Video Design by 59 Productions, Chatelet Theatre (Paris) & Broadway (NYC)  
5 Tony Awards, including Best Scenic Design of a Musical for 59 Productions and Bob Crowley

*“I’ve long been a fan of 59’s work. They have collaborated on a number of shows at the Young Vic, most notably Feast, producing stunning results. There is, quite rightly, a great deal of interest in the idea of them creating their own work in its entirety.”*

**David Lan**

Artistic Director, Young Vic



*The Harmonium Project* (2015), Projection Mapping event by 59 Productions for Edinburgh International Festival

*“I have been aware of the work of 59 Productions for many years and have worked closely with them on two projects, one at the Sydney Opera House and one at the Edinburgh International Festival. In both cases 59 Productions were responsible for the conception, realisation and delivery of these outstanding works of art. The company is unique in that it is equally proficient working as a part of a team and when creating and delivering full original works. I look forward to the next chapter of this remarkable company.”*

**Fergus Linehan**  
Director, Edinburgh International Festival

*“I have followed Fifty Nine Productions’ evolution since seeing their ‘live cinema’ collaborations with Katie Mitchell. I have no doubt that they have reached the point at which their theatrical sensitivity, creativity and technical ingenuity could be thrillingly channelled into their own productions.”*

**Benedict Cumberbatch**  
Actor



*Get Carter* (2016), Design by 59 Productions, currently touring in the UK

## CREATIVE TEAM

**PAUL AUSTER'S**  
CITY OF GLASS

ADAPTED BY  
**DUNCAN MACMILLAN**

FROM THE FIRST NOVEL OF **THE NEW YORK TRILOGY**, AND THE GRAPHIC NOVEL BY **PAUL KARASIK & DAVID MAZZUCHELLI**

DIRECTED, DESIGNED AND PRODUCED BY  
**59 PRODUCTIONS**

DIRECTOR  
**LEO WARNER**

SET DESIGNER  
**JENNY MELVILLE**

VIDEO DESIGNER  
**LYSANDER ASHTON**

LIGHTING DESIGNER  
**FABIANA PICCIOLI**

SOUND DESIGNER  
**GARETH FRY**

COMPOSER  
**NICK POWELL**

MOVEMENT DIRECTOR  
**KIM BRANDSTRUP**

COSTUME DESIGNER  
**MOLLY EINHCOMB**

CASTING DIRECTOR  
**JULIA HORAN**

A  PRODUCTION

CO-PRODUCED WITH:

**HOME**  
*Lyric*

AND

**KARL SYDOW**

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JON & NORALEE SEDMAK

“ WHAT WILL  
HAPPEN WHEN  
THERE ARE NO  
MORE PAGES  
IN THE RED  
NOTEBOOK? ”