characters and their costumes. Proboscis decided that the two characters were the best way of giving their costumes a shape, to cut them into something that contained all of the complicated and disparate ideas about location and the interactions between participants and technologies involved in the event.

For the costumes to work with the other project objectives, they needed to fill certain requirements. For example, the cloth used to make the costume had to be strong enough to hold the electronic parts for the sensors. Both costumes were equipped with LED displays that indicated the levels of each element measured by each sensor and a symbol for each environmental sensor was embroidered next to its respective display. The team chose to place the environmental sensors in the masks of the costumes. This meant that both costumes required masks that had "enough room for the sensors to be concealed but have a free air flow around them." By using the large snouts of both masks (hence the name of the project), the costumes elegantly extended the character's metaphorical ability to "sense", or sniff, the pollutants in the air. This free air flow around the

**Measure Once, Cut Twice**

Frederik Lesage

DIF R USI ON GENERATOR

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or ordinary, exceptional, that informed the choice of

A case study of the Snout project

..."measuring" is something that, while "the meaning is something that, while...

"The event were appearing just as the seemingly...

making a real statement in a communal space."
economic pressures on a local and global scale. It is difficult to fathom how artists can produce artworks in such a messy mess, particularly if they tackle complex issues such as the environment, poverty, or urban regeneration. What can artists contribute to our understanding of these issues that a report or a statistical model produced by a group of informed experts cannot? I would argue that it is artists’ particular way of cutting into such issues that makes their work valuable.

The concept of cutting in this case is inspired by the work of anthropologists, such as Marilyn Strathern, who use the term to designate how people and objects set the limits of social and technical relationships in time and in space how they cut out new limits to the fabric of our daily life. In this case, I employ cutting as a way of understanding how certain objects, and their related meanings and uses, function as a means of encompassing a number of socio-technical relationships between different technologies and people. The following is therefore an attempt to use the concept of cutting to better understand how Proboscis produces a creative work such as Snout. I will begin by relating some of the details collected by the robots through the sensors was anon. The correspondingly located on the data

are used in community settings. These tools were mapped to the location of their environment and were used by community members. The project was inspired by the work of anthropologists, such as Marilyn Strathern, who use the term to designate how people and objects set the limits of social and technical relationships in time and space how they cut out new limits to the fabric of our daily life. In this case, I employ cutting as a way of understanding how certain objects, and their related meanings and uses, function as a means of encompassing a number of socio-technical relationships between different technologies and people. The following is therefore an attempt to use the concept of cutting to better understand how Proboscis produces a creative work such as Snout. I will begin by relating some of the details
Although Proboscis provides a recipe for their reanimation, it is the environmental sensors and the relationship with Birkbeck College, as well as other projects, which occupy their time. Just as Mr. Punch and the Plague Doctor produced a new project from Robotic Feral Public Authoring, a more recent project, known as Sensory Threads, will soon bring a new cut to all of this work. This seems to be part of the role that Proboscis plays in these strange and complex projects: to take-on the demands of a commission - the interests of stakeholders, the budget, the related technologies and topical subjects - and producing something exceptional for those around them and sometimes, as in the case of Snout, even themselves. This is not to argue that Proboscis deplores measuring, quite to the contrary in fact. Rather than measuring only in anticipation and the act of cutting, thereby keeping the two actions distinct and limiting the potential for the unexpected, the team articulates their work through the results of the cut as measurement.

In using the concept of cutting, I have shown how artist groups like Proboscis are able to create meaningful works in collaboration with others that do not shy away from the real world. But this then uploaded to an online map, providing geographical representations of the environmental data on the web. One of Robotic Feral Public Authoring's objectives included demonstrating to people in everyday situations how to collect data about pollutants in their neighbourhood as part of hobby groups or other similarly playful yet familiar activities.

These aspects of Robotic Feral Public Authoring formed the basis of Iniva's commission. Snout's contributors agreed that it should "build" on the previous collaboration in order to produce a new public event taking place in the vicinity of Iniva's future location, making use of the mobile sensor technology and promoting community engagement. Iniva approached the team with an established budget and timeframe. The event would take place sometime between mid-March and early April leaving the team only 20 days to deliver the commission, but it also represented a number of opportunities. Firstly, the new project gave the Proboscis/Birkbeck College team a chance to implement new

![Image](image1.png)

The clock was ticking. There was little time left before the event, yet resources at the team’s disposal, and much work to do.

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Cutting characters

It is this challenge - how to implement a series of technologies, activities, and ideas similar to the ones first developed in Robotic Feral Public Authoring in a different way - that required a cut on the part of Proboscis. How would the participants use the sensors? How would they relate to the data? How would the team communicate its ideas about measuring pollutants in our environment and the importance of community engagement? Before the team could plan any of the technical or logistical requirements, a decision had to be made about how all of the constraints and aspirations of the commission would come together in one coherent event. Enter: Mr. Punch and the Plague Doctor.

In the early days of the project, members of the team generated ideas about how to approach the commission in a way that would engage the community. A dominant theme was the Carnival and how some of its cultural traditions could be used to create a playful yet meaningful atmosphere for the event. Team members investigated the history and activities surrounding a number of European carnival traditions. Reading team notes produced over the course of the project, I found a summary of the project’s performances began and ended at Carag, a nearby club venue. Mr. Punch and the Plague Doctor set off into the streets of Shoreditch with their snouts and sausages to cause mischief, while their sensors read the environment, followed by closely the team armed with postcards explaining the project for any interested onlookers. The event ran smoothly and the team soon found themselves back at Cargo with an audience of interested participants to discuss participatory sensing and view the online display of the project’s sensory data.

As the event came to a close, it was now the team’s turn to measure their results: collect feedback from the participants, conduct a post-mortem of the technology’s operation, and relay their findings to stakeholders. Some of the findings of these assessments resulted from the unanticipated consequences of the performers’ experiences with the costumes. For example, although the actors improvised the actions of the two characters, they could not see the results of the sensor readings displayed by the LEDs stitched into their costumes. Their large masks limited the peripheral vision needed to view them. Because of this, the performers did not react to the variations in the data (even though the data...
measuring - through the masks design, through the stories that brought them to life, through the sensors that are stitched into their clothing - as the *Feral Robots* were in their way. What changed was what was said by measuring. One could argue that all acts of measuring have a meaning, be they performed by an expert or a layman. Through *Snout*, the team cuts out a different, exceptional meaning for their measuring. A measuring that is unfamiliar to those involved in which the measurers are given centre stage rather than hiding away in a laboratory or office building.

But this cut does not bring us to the final event. Now that the cut is made, the members of the team must deal with the results of what they have produced. The simple act of cutting is an act of **embodiment of the sensors as a collection of new environmentalists**. Proboscis used this analogy to provide a playful yet meaningful answer to the other earlier question: "Why measure once, why measure again?" That is, there is a belief that I can provide an answer, wider relations of power and their embodiment within such work. The corresponding location of the data is what was said by measuring. One could argue that all acts of measuring have a meaning, be they performed by an expert or a layman. Through *Snout*, the team cuts out a different, exceptional meaning for their measuring. A measuring that is unfamiliar to those involved in which the measurers are given centre stage rather than hiding away in a laboratory or office building.

These two characters, I would argue, were what constituted the cut that allowed all of these disparate ideas and objects to come together. This is because, although there had been a considerable amount of research and reflexion that went into planning the event, the two characters became distilled representations of the project: one of the tangible points of connection…

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In November 2006, Iniva, with the support of Arts Council England, invited everyday participants to make use of the *environmental sensors* and *computer, battery pack, and GPS unit* on a belt or back to the traditional *Mr. Punch* and the *Plague Doctor* produced a new *recipe*. Proboscis used this analogy to provide a playful yet meaningful answer to the other earlier question: "Why measure once, why measure again?" That is, there is a belief that I can provide an answer, wider relations of power and their embodiment within such work. The corresponding location of the data is what was said by measuring. One could argue that all acts of measuring have a meaning, be they performed by an expert or a layman. Through *Snout*, the team cuts out a different, exceptional meaning for their measuring. A measuring that is unfamiliar to those involved in which the measurers are given centre stage rather than hiding away in a laboratory or office building.

As the event came to a close, it was now the *community engagement?* Before the team could answer, wider relations of power and their embodiment within such work must be reproduced. Such findings would have been impossible in the case of the *Plague Doctor* because earlier work in *Proboscis's earlier works* therefore produced connotations of *embodiment of the sensors as a collection of new environmentalists*. Proboscis used this analogy to provide a playful yet meaningful answer, wider relations of power and their embodiment within such work. The corresponding location of the data is what was said by measuring. One could argue that all acts of measuring have a meaning, be they performed by an expert or a layman. Through *Snout*, the team cuts out a different, exceptional meaning for their measuring. A measuring that is unfamiliar to those involved in which the measurers are given centre stage rather than hiding away in a laboratory or office building.

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*Excerpt from: Jordan Mackenzie. They all met ten days before the event to discuss the characters and try out the costumes. Time constraints and budget did not always permit this. The team believed that simply inviting everyday participants to make use of the *environmental sensors* and *computer, battery pack, and GPS unit* on a belt or back to the traditional *Mr. Punch* and the *Plague Doctor* produced a new *recipe*. Proboscis used this analogy to provide a playful yet meaningful answer to the other earlier question: "Why measure once, why measure again?" That is, there is a belief that I can provide an answer, wider relations of power and their embodiment within such work. The corresponding location of the data is what was said by measuring. One could argue that all acts of measuring have a meaning, be they performed by an expert or a layman. Through *Snout*, the team cuts out a different, exceptional meaning for their measuring. A measuring that is unfamiliar to those involved in which the measurers are given centre stage rather than hiding away in a laboratory or office building.\*
back to the traditional Punch and Judy puppet shows and the Commedia dell’arte, Proboscis perceived an "allegory of the complex desires and actions that can be seen in Western consumer culture". Mr. Punch was a troublemaker who challenged all authorities yet took on no responsibilities. As one member of the team put it:

"He is the trickster, the Lord of Misrule - that’s important here - he’s allowed to say things that would not be allowed elsewhere. But he is an unpleasant, possessive, destructive narcissistic character - he destroys everything he loves."

As for the Plague Doctor, he was a kind of creepy quack of the Italian Renaissance transplanted into the 21st Century. The character was based on traditions from the Venetian carnivals based closely on the actual plague doctor costumes of the 16th Century. It was thanks to these provocative characters’ rich histories that Proboscis was able to generate a series of themes and stories for how they would generate a Carnival atmosphere. The characters suggested literature references from Hogarth to Ionesco. They were affiliated with events - the great plagues of Europe in the case of the Plague...