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Title
Coffee! A Misunderstanding

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Through this piece, my goal is to explore the role that technology plays in our social interactions, and in culture as a whole. By interspersing videogame-like branching narrative interactions, as well as visual language such as dialogue menus and unlockable achievements, with live performance, I want to express how what we see and interact with on a screen on a regular basis might affect the way we interact in our offline lives. In addition, by forcing actors to constantly look at a mobile phone while performing their lines, I want to highlight the idea that our lives in a constantly connected society have become both more social and more antisocial at the same time. As our interactions are mediated more and more by text, how is our ability to communicate in person affected?

Furthermore, I hope to explore the ways in which embodiment affects empathy. Given that the characters in this piece can be played by anyone – a straight white man can volunteer to play a queer woman of colour, for instance – how might people feel when portraying a person with radically different life experiences? Moreover, what are the effects of abstracting decision-making as separate from enactment? Are there particular play experiences that increase empathy, or, conversely, highlight alienation?

These interactions will be enabled through a multi-screen JavaScript app, which uses Node.js and Socket.IO to allow all of this information to be displayed to and controlled by the performers. The user interface for the app will be refined through several rounds of test performances, in order to strike an optimal balance between allowing performers to grasp what to do more intuitively while still preserving the awkward nature of the interaction.