

# Designing the Mind of Felix Trench

## Part I

I love the writing of Felix Trench. Its play on traditional folklore and its incredible images crafted solely through the use of words inspire me. However, as a designer, none of his work gives an easy solution when it comes to staging. Seemingly innocent and straightforward roads and narrow boats quickly wheel off into endless tundra's, deep oceans, the entire cosmos. The prose is strong enough to allow the actor to take the audience on a journey without the use of any props or set.

So, where does the design come in?

As strong as Felix's prose is, we need to ask: what type of space does it inhabit? Is it possible to create a space that does not distract or control the work; but, instead, supports and augments the worlds which it creates?

I am lucky enough to have had the ability to make two attempts at accomplishing just this. It is an ongoing process; but, I know I'm getting better at it with each evolution. I look forward to developing the ideas as Felix's work moves forward in the future.

## Valkyrie: A Motorway Odyssey

**And lo the Valkyrie hung up her armour!**

**And lo the Valkyrie stabled her horse!**

**And lo she filled the tank with petrol and she paid €1.43 per litre and she bought a Nescafé cappuccino from the machine and she paid €1.80 for the pleasure and –**

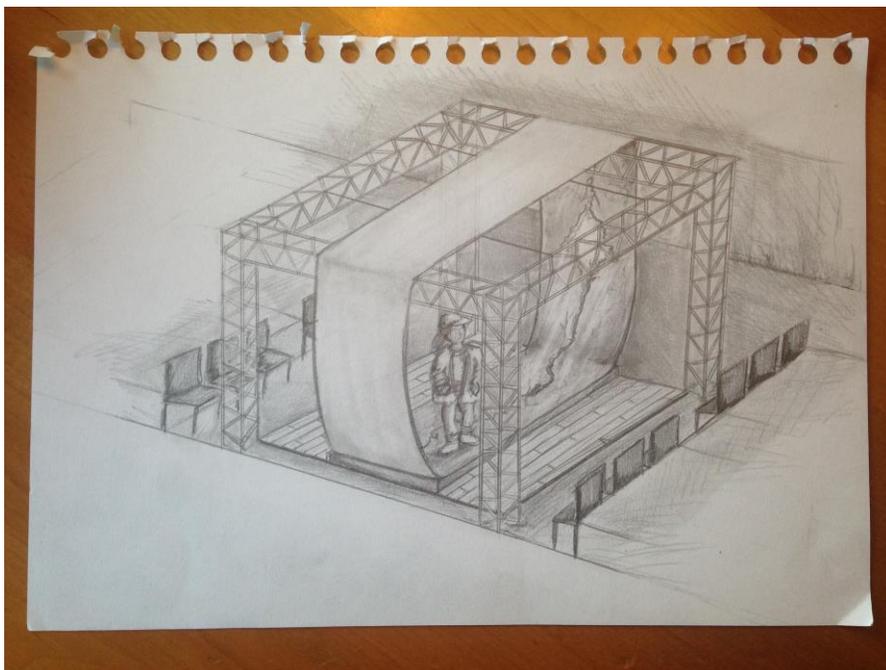
**And her contract is over.**

**Get in**

<http://www.vaultfestival.com/event/valkyrie-a-motorway-odyssey/2016-02-05/>

Valkyrie is a beautiful one-woman show about a truck-driver who drives the souls of the dead to the afterlife. Her 1000 year contract is completed and now she finds herself on a freewheeling journey away from death and towards reincarnation.

On the first meeting with Asia, the director, I had already familiarised myself with the script and come up with a number of ambitious ideas for possible sets. The conditions of working within a festival with a 15 minute get-in and 8 minute get-out every day were intimidating, but nothing I was unfamiliar with. Not wanting to distract from the text, I came up with the idea of the endless road with a giant crack down the centre that represented the fractured reality the Driver found herself thrown into.



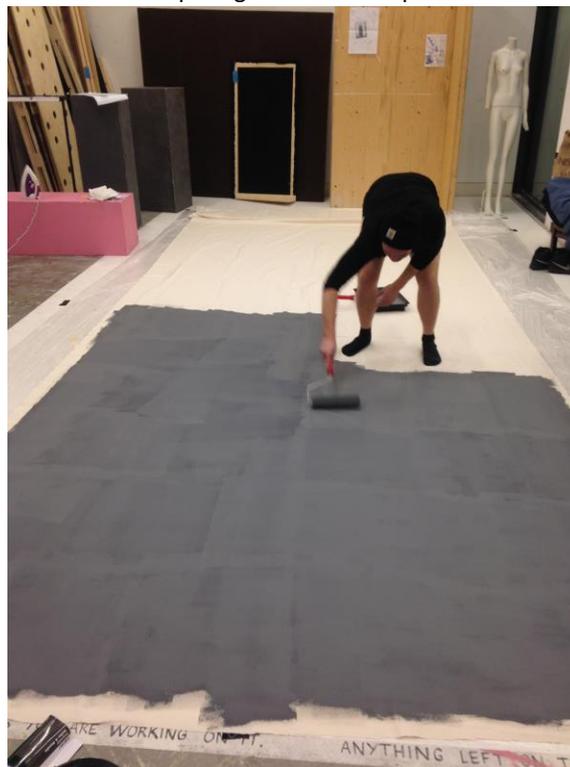
The Initial Sketch

The square truss structure that would serve as the lighting rig in the venue would be the perfect frame upon which to wrap a giant loop of painted concrete with a trompe l'oeil crack running the whole way round. I added a large cracked "eye" at one end to give a face to the bodiless voiceovers that the Driver interacted with throughout the course of her journey. My wish with the design would be that as the play progressed, its non-descript aesthetic would embody the different worlds in which the Driver found herself. Although, I never could have imagined just how successful this would be. Combined with Odinn's fantastic sound design and Clancy's beautiful lights, the set became a giant Norse monolith that loomed over the Driver.

Once this design was finalized with Asia and a few scratch models made, it was time to get onto its production. Due to my tight festival schedule, I was the venue's head designer as well; I scheduled to build the entire set 2 weeks ahead of time. So, with a team of willing helpers (I always say that anyone can paint as long as there is the appropriate instruction), we set about painting the road, all 20m of it.



Preparing the Paint Samples



Painting the Base Grey



Rolling and Speckling the Next 4 Layers



Marking and Painting the Crack



Adding the 3D Effect



Checking the Finished Product



Rigging It into Place Each Day



Lindsay in Action!