

HAVE you ever imagined being stuck in an elevator?

You're not alone.

In fact, you're packed in with the rest of us this week.

Hobart artists Pip Stafford and Amy Spiers are not your typical artists-in-residence.

They are residing in the Argyle Street Car Park elevators this week, giving short performance lectures featuring fascinating elevator facts and anecdotes, interacting with passengers and gathering information.

The public is then invited to participate in their performance of *Going Up* next Friday.

"In films, elevators are used in lots of different ways; they're places where people have epiphanies," Stafford said.

"They're also used as a conduit between teams in movies. They're also places of fear and horror.

"We came up with the idea because we had been reading this article from the *New Yorker* which talked about the guy who was trapped in the elevator for 41 hours and how it changed his life.

"It talked about how elevators are an important social construct, as well as a mode of transport."

Elevators are surrounded by fear and urban mythology, but the artists are more interested in our other fascinations with being closed in a box with strangers.

"It's a strange social situation, when you think about it," Stafford said.

"Amy and I both make work about connections and misconceptions between people. We see the lift as emblematic of the disconnection of people, because it acts as a kind of microcosm.

"There are so many unspoken social rules or etiquette about the elevator, and we're interested about how that fits into the broader scope of how people communicate or not communicate."

Going Up is a HyPe Creative Development and JUMP Mentoring Showcase by Stafford and Spiers.

HyPe is a three-year initiative by the Salamanca Arts Centre to support the creation of new contemporary hybrid theatre in Tasmania, funded by the Australia Council for the Arts and supported by Hobart City Council.

Stafford is currently being mentored by Nancy Mauro-Flude through JUMP, the Australia Council's national mentoring program for young and emerging artists, and admits she has reservations about taking the lift.

"I myself am claustrophobic so I'm actually really frightened that I could get stuck in a lift that we're doing our installation in. It's battling my own fear as well.

"Whereas Amy wants to get stuck - she thinks it would be really good for the project if we did get stuck. So it should be interesting to see."

But don't worry, they're not going to interrupt the flow of traffic in and out of the elevator, Stafford insists.

During the week, the artists will be situated in the elevator, inviting the public to share their elevator stories and observe how people use the lift.

"In the Argyle Street car park, each floor has a colour. We became fascinated with the floor colours," Stafford said.

"We're asking people to email us and we'll get them to wear a colour, and on the night we'll be stationed on each floor.

"For an hour, our aim is to keep the lift at capacity. When members of the public get in and out, our participants will fill the gap or create a gap, depending on which floor they get on and off."

She said the project was inspired in part by a film clip for the band The New Pornographers which features an aerial shot of people wearing different colours and walking through busy spaces.

"We wanted to create a really visual way to show the flow of traffic. It's an experiment," Stafford said.



Amy Spiers, left, and Pip Stafford at the Argyle St car park.

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Going Up

When: next Friday May 6, 6-7pm

What: A performance/art/experiment in the Argyle St Car Park elevator. Entry: Free