The first meeting with Julie Brown, the festival director, was to select a suitable venue in Lancaster. Having viewed a variety of buildings, including the Town Hall, it was agreed to use the Judges’ Lodgings as the site for the work, as it had the best audience line of view and offered the possibility to use all the windows in a building. A proposed budget of £8,500 was submitted and approved.

This Grade 1 listed building, although temporarily closed, housed the Children Toy and Gillow Furniture collections. This created a variety of issues that had to be negotiated with the Council. These included the re-arranging of artefacts, display cabinets and furniture inside the building, the removal of drapes and blinds from windows, approval for attaching screens in window frames, removing ambient street lighting and permission to play a music soundtrack from the building. Further site visits were needed for measuring up and producing site plans for Lumen the production company that I commissioned to supply and fit the technical equipment needed. (see site plan attachment)
The festival concept was ‘The Natural World’ and having been given an open brief, time was spent producing a variety of ideas. I also decided that, with this opportunity to work on such a large scale, to utilise and experiment with the highest quality stock video footage I could access. This was an opportunity to test out the visual capabilities and possibilities of this new projection technique.

The original title, ‘Sparrow Fart’ (later changed through objection to ‘Dawn Chorus’) inspired an idea of a journey starting in darkness with the early morning ‘passing of wind,’ then the emerging dawn through a series of extravagant scenarios, culminating in the destruction of the planet. The accompanying soundtrack of the opening, Dvorak ‘Morning Mood’, harmonises the surreal story and was subverted by changing the climatic finale with an explosive ‘passing of wind’ to create a circular narrative.

The final 6-minute film was constructed and rendered in Adobe Premiere Pro using stock footage and animation, playfully exploring the relationship and contradiction between human and animal life with an awareness of engaging with a predominantly family audience.

The single film, constructed in Adobe Premiere Pro, was then cropped, re-sized and rendered into twelve separate films. These were then programmed to synchronise by Lumen with each film running on a separate media player attached to a projector.

There was a very tight set up schedule for the opening night. Lumen supplied and installed the technical equipment including 3000 lumen projectors, media players, projector stands and cabling, PA and speakers in one day. It also took a full day to cut and pin up cotton material screen into the 20 windows over three floors. The festival provided stewards and safety barriers and the museum a curator to maintain security and health and safety precautions within the building.

The audience viewed the work from the adjacent square and the road opposite consistently from 6 – 11pm for both evenings. I commissioned a team of film students from Leeds Arts University who documented the project.
An illuminating guide to our magical event

DAWN CHORUS
@ Judges’ Lodgings

The stillness of the night is broken by the sound of a solitary bird. As she raised her, her, there’s seen a cacophony to welcome the first light of day. A Dawn Chorus explores the beauty of the evolving day... and then goes slightly sorry!

Graham Tansley and Niladri

NO.3 ON THE MAP