

Big hART—a model for social and cultural change

Christopher Saunders

Big hART is one of the country's most prolific arts companies, producing eight new works and presenting at eleven major arts festivals in 2006/07. Over sixty artists are currently contributing to seven projects with communities around the country. Big hART's work incorporates many art forms including theatre, film, photography, music, poetry, opera, dance, painting, sculpture, ceramics, sonic art, online delivery and computer-generated imagery.

Big hART's mission is to provide the opportunity for people experiencing the effects of marginalization to make positive changes to their lives through participation in the arts. As well as this, the company aims to create new work for national arts festivals and forums, and to foster a more inclusive Australian culture.

The following are just three of the most recent projects that have had a digital media or new technology component:

Junk Theory

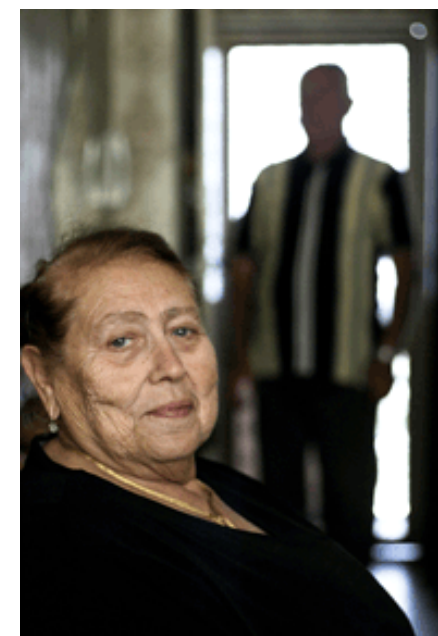
At dusk throughout December and January 2006/07, around the foreshores of Port Hacking and Sydney Harbour, a Chinese Junk glided past residents, pedestrians and picnickers. Projected onto its sails were a series of diverse portraits and evocative films made by artists and residents of the Sutherland Shire. Shot in both colour and black and white, utilizing both still and moving image, the visual projections were accompanied by music, sound scape and live song wafting from the vessel's decks. *Junk Theory* was designed as a response to the Cronulla riots, to create a beautiful and thought-provoking picture of the values that make up our society. Digital technology played an important role in creating the content for the final work and in designing a system by which the works could be screened and played on the junk.

Ngapartji Ngapartji

Ngapartji Ngapartji is a long term, inter-generational language arts project based in Alice Springs. The project seeks to highlight the status of indigenous languages and generate a national and international groundswell with a desire to maintain and preserve these languages. This includes the development of the "ninti site"—an



Junk Theory. Photo courtesy of Keith Saunders.



tenant by tenant—Raissa and Iofim by Iofim. Photo courtesy of Keith Saunders.

online Pitjantjatjara language and culture site where the young people, assisted by their families and elders, become the language tutors for the national and international audiences of the *Ngapartji Ngapartji* production. This production is a high profile and beautiful touring theatrical work, incorporating filmed work and imagery, and which is performed in Pitjantjatjara and English at international festivals.

Northcott Narratives

The *Northcott Narratives* work 2002-2007 produced five films including the ATOM Award-winning documentary *900 Neighbours* which screened on ABC TV in February 2007. It included, as part of the 2006 Sydney Festival, the on-site multimedia performance sensation *Stickybricks* and the *tenant by tenant* photography exhibition. A resource box of art works and information, *Northcott Narratives—Say Hello* was published as a legacy to the work in November 2006. The work won a National Crime and Violence Prevention Award in 2005 and the community was given World Health Organisation accreditation as a Safe Community in 2006.



StickybrickS. Photo courtesy of Keith Saunders.



Ngapartji Ngapartji - Pukatja girls. Photo courtesy of Ngapartji Ngapartji team



Ngapartji Ngapartji - Batesy and Sadie Photo courtesy of Ngapartji Ngapartji team

Links

Big *hART*
<www.bighart.org/bighart>

Ngapartji Ngapartji
<www.ngapartji.org>

Junk Theory
<junktheory.org>



Ngapartji Ngapartji - Language lesson planning
Photo courtesy of Ngapartji Ngapartji team