



Artistic Report 2005

by

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2005 Artistic Report

Summary of 2005 Artistic Program

	Title	Nature of project	Presenter	Partners	Venue	Shows
<i>Projects</i>						
1	<i>The Water Project</i>	Research & Development	Urban Theatre Projects	Sydney Olympic Park Authority (SOPA)	Regional NSW & The Armory at SOPA,	
2	<i>Back Home</i>	Creative development	Urban Theatre Projects	Blacktown Arts Centre & Blacktown City Council, The Myer Foundation, NSW Probation and Parole, Holy Family Centre	Oakhurst Neighbourhood Centre	Public showing
3	<i>Back Home</i>	Rehearsal & community showings	Urban Theatre Projects	In addition, to the above partners Sydney Festival, Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation Delfin Lend Lease	Oakhurst Neighbourhood Centre	2
4	<i>Short 'n Sharp</i>	Production - Short works program	Urban Theatre Projects	PACT Youth Theatre	Bankstown RSL Club & PACT Theatre Erskineville	6
5	<i>Fast Cars & Tractor Engines</i>	Production	Urban Theatre Projects & BYDS	Bankstown Youth Development Service & Bankstown City Council	Bankstown RSL	6
6	<i>The Ensemble</i>	Professional development for an Ensemble of emerging artists	Urban Theatre Projects		UTP Premises	Showings throughout year
<i>Development Projects</i>						
7	<i>MoMO</i>	Creative Development (as part of The Ensemble program)	Urban Theatre Projects		UTP Premises	2 public showings
8	<i>The Folding Wife</i>	Research & Development	Urban Theatre Projects		UTP Premises	
9	<i>Image Making & Media workshop</i>	2 Workshops	Urban Theatre Projects	Bankstown City Council	UTP Premises	2 public showings
<i>Auspices</i>						
10	<i>Wages of Spin</i>	Production	Version1.0		Performance Space	8
11	<i>One</i>	Creative Development & Performance	Emma J Cooper & Keith Lim		Arts Access & Darlinghurst Theatre	5

Works created	1 major work, 1 short work season
Creative Development	2 developments
Research & Development	2 developments
Seasons presented	1 major, 1 short season, 1 community season
Performances	14
Showings	6
Workshops	9 (including The Ensemble program)
Auspices	2

Program of Activities

Project 1 ***The Water Project***

A research and development for a site specific performance spectacle developed in residence and commissioned by Sydney Olympic Park Authority. The research and development took part in two stages, a regional NSW research trip and a two-week residency at Sydney Olympic Park.

Timeline

Stage 1 23 February – 2 March
Stage 2 11 – 23 April

Venue

Stage 1 Regional NSW and Victoria
Stage 2 The Armory, SOPA

Key Artists

Stage 1 Alicia Talbot & Joey Ruigrok van der Werven
Stage 2
Co-directors Joey Ruigrok van der Werven and Alicia Talbot
Sound Artists Liberty Kerr and Reza Achman
Movement/Dance Lee Wilson
Lighting Designer Simon Wise
Production Manager Damian Leonard
UTP Ensemble Secondment (Movement) Alice Osborne

UTP Performance Ensemble: Sarah Vongmany, Kira Carden, Keith Lim, Sally Lewry, Emma Stevenson, Teik Kim Pok, Natalie Rose, Matthew Prest, Mish Grigor, Emma J Cooper, Ruby Baxter, Alice Osborne, Georgie Read, Alexis Motassam, Zoe Coombs Marr

Partners

Sydney Olympic Park Authority

Project Description

No matter where we lived, we were always surrounded by water – the river, the beach, the dam at my uncle's. Even on a hot day we kids would always be out on the lawn under the sprinkler, or mum would send us down the pool to get rid of us... These days, there's no way I'd turn on the sprinkler for the kids. At work I have grown men on the phone in tears... the old bores and windmills that have pumped fresh bore water for 150 years are drying up. At the same time, cotton and rice corporations are stockpiling huge reservoirs of water in what they call turkey's nests, pumping out the equivalent of 50 Olympic swimming pools a day - 30% of which evaporates before it even hits the fields. Over in Hay, they're buying in drinking water!

Joe Frazer, Water Bore Rig Designer – Deniliquin, NSW

The Water Project is a new work dealing with the iconic role water commands within the Australian psyche. From past notions of abundance to encroaching scarcity, the work is designed to explore Australia's love for water and the emotions it arouses - discrepancies between an enduring nostalgia of entitlement, current personal and political responsibilities, and the challenging reality of future sustainability.

The genesis of this project developed from an initial conversation with SOPA staff in late 2003. Over the last two years, we have continued to develop the blueprint for a large-scale theatre work in consultation with SOPA staff John Ferguson, Scott O'Hara and Tony Nesbitt.

The month-long research and development process in March/April 2005, included a research tour of regional New South Wales and Victoria, and a two-week residency by the core artistic team at The Armory, Sydney Olympic Park.

Stage 1 – The research tour

The research tour involved co-creators Alicia Talbot and Joey Ruigrok researching rural perspectives around water and water use, gathering images and research material. We undertook a number of formal consultations with different stakeholders in order to develop our understanding of the conflicting issues and attitudes surrounding current water practices. We travelled through the wheat sheep belt of the Riverina area - Albury/Wodonga, Shepparton, Corowa - to the rice, cotton and Merino farming areas of the Hay plains & Deniliquin to the horticultural areas of Leeton and Griffith.

During the research trip we undertook formal consultations and interviews with:

- Richard Kennedy - Aboriginal Parklands Officer
- Tony Piggin - Farmer & member of the Water Catchment Authority Board
- Liz Johnstone - Water Broker
- Richard McTernan - Environmentalist and Parklands Officer
- Hunter Landsdale - Merino & rice farmer
- Joe Frazier - Water bore designer
- Arthur Melrose - stockman and artist

We also met Charles Parkinson of Hothouse Theatre to discuss their residency program and visited their 'Month in the Country' premises and studio.

The information, material and visual images gathered during this time greatly informed the direction of the project the structure for the two-week residency at SOPA.

Stage 2 - Sydney Olympic Park

We wanted to undertake the residency at SOPA because it is an active working environment, full of social and political meanings and frequented by diverse populations all of who understand the Park in very different ways. This intersection of place, meaning, ideas and community provides an ongoing source of inspiration, in particular:

- The complex history of the site
- The philosophical framework on which the Park is founded
- The vision and expertise of SOPA staff
- The sophisticated water processing and recycling technologies
- The geographical, physical and social landscape
- And, the broader community who frequent and utilise the Park and surrounding residential areas.

During the two-week residency at SOP we were based at The Armory. *The Water Project's* key artists shared an artistic vocabulary established through a previous project, *Mechanix* (2003). This event was driven by a unique combination of site, people, structures, action and a live sound scape. The artistic team were inspired by the working process and considered it a blueprint for making future work. Due to this previous experience, the team had an in depth knowledge of each other's skill base and a confidence in the working process which enabled the team to be ambitious in the R&D creative investigation.

The residency at SOP involved a number of interviews with key staff members from the different operational sectors. We consulted with management, conservationists, engineers, archaeologists, scientists and the Arts Development unit. Each staff member offered a series of

views and ideas that, while visionary, sometimes stood in opposition to each other and at other times showed a complexity of interdependence.

Through this extensive consultation process, the staff of SOPA offered the artists a series of provocations and conceptual starting points that informed and will continue to influence both the content and form of this work. Inspired by the consultations and working in the physical environment of SOP, the conceptual terrain of the work radically shifted.

We undertook formal consultations and site tours with:

- Suzanne Ingram and Paul Irish (Archaeologist) - Aboriginal Connections Program
- Tony Nesbit – Manager, Arts Programming
- John Hudson - Information Services & Programs
- Edwina Laginestra (Scientist) – Manager, Research Programs
- Andrzej Listowski (Engineer) Manager, Water & Energy
- Felicity McDonald – Scientific Research Officer
- Terry Milham – Parklands
- Kerry Darcovich (Ecologist) Park Ecosystems Manager Education resources
- Jenny O’Meara – Ecology Projects Manager
- Greg Simms – elder and Darug custodian

During the research and development phase, artists were asked to respond to provocations through their respective arts practice. We were able to clearly examine the way each artist framed their ideas, and through this began to glean the diversity of artistic and cultural perspectives within the group. Each of the artist’s own cultural positioning added to the conceptual frameworks, from Dutch concerns of holding back rising water levels, to Australia’s desire to trap water, to Indonesia’s ongoing concern with contaminated drinking water.

In The Armory we set up a room full of drawings, books, videos, articles and newspaper clippings. The team generated texts, drawings and visual in response to tasks. The two sound artists began recording sounds from the environment and then used those source sounds as the basis for new percussion and electronic compositions. The movement director and secondment artist developed choreographies and tasks around water based activities at the aquatic centre.

The UTP Performance Ensemble

For three sessions during the residency fourteen members of the UTP Performance Ensemble came on site and began to create improvisations in response to artistic provocations and the environment. During the first session, the ensemble worked in and around the outdoor area of the amphitheatre in The Armory. This area was lit by a limited amount of theatre lights and utilised music created during the R&D. In some circumstances the Ensemble were animating visual imagery generated by the team previously in the week.

The second session involved the ensemble responding to durational performance tasks in a large car park. This event took place over two hours and attracted the attention of commuters and security guards (who watched as audience). The final day, the team spent a couple of hours in the aquatic centre creating choreographies in water and researching the kinds of movement and leisure activity people undertake in water. This material was later transferred to the stage in and around the amphitheatre in The Armory to investigate water activities on dry land.

Future Plans

This two-stage research process has provided a conceptual framework and methodology for the creative development process.

The Water Project will take the form of a large-scale visual performance work. It will be multi-dimensional in its approach to using the existing site. Drawing on the natural environment, the

performance will utilise large and small handmade contraptions and sculptures, live performance, dance and aerial work, original sound composition, living materials and sophisticated technical design. The performance will have a narrative but, instead of relying primarily on dialogue, will be told through action, image, movement, music and song.

This style of work is inspired by European companies, such as Royal Deluxe, Vis a Vis, Dogtroep, Generik Vapeur and La Fura del Baus, which are large ensembles of interdisciplinary artists who create work through collaborative processes that result in unpredictable images and actions. The images that unfold in many of these companies' works do not relay one singular narrative but, through an evolving set of visual, aural and performing imagery, create complex sets of images that affect the viewer on visceral, intellectual and emotional levels.

As *The Water Project* will be much larger in scale, the original *Mechanix* team will be complimented with additional artists, including a dramaturg, a cultural consultant, an environmental artist working with living materials, a water installation and sculptural artist, and an ensemble of emerging and established performers.

Project 2&3 ***Back Home***

Back Home was our major work for 2005 took place in two stages, a four-week creative development and a six-week rehearsal stage that culminated in a three-night community showing. The work was made in residence in the Mt Druitt area and developed in consultation with local community members. The work is scheduled to premiere as part of Sydney Festival 2006.

Timeline

Research & Development	22-26 November 2004
Auditions	19 March & 4 April
Creative Development	4 -29 July
Development & Rehearsal	24 October – 30 November
Community Showings	1-3 December

Venue

Auditions	UTP Rehearsal Room, Hackett House
Creative Development	Oakhurst Neighbourhood Centre, Oakhurst & The Shed, Holy Family Centre, Emerton
Rehearsal & Community Showings	Oakhurst Neighbourhood Centre

Key Artists

Creative Development

Director	Alicia Talbot
Performers / Devisors	Aaron Fa'Aoso, NOMISE, Leo Tanoi and Shannon Williams
Community Liaison Advisor	Lily Shearer
Set Design & Video	Sam James
Lighting Design	Clytie Smith
Production Manager	David Roberts
Production Assistant	Darren Olsen

Rehearsal & community showings

Director	Alicia Talbot
Performers / Devisors	Aaron Fa'Aoso, NOMISE, Leo Tanoi and Shannon Williams
Community Liaison Advisor	Lily Shearer
Set Design & Video	Sam James
Sound Artist	Liberty Kerr
Lighting Design	Neil Simpson

Dramaturg	Deborah Pollard
Movement Consultant	Lee Wilson
Traditional Dance Consultant	Djahn Doolan & Les Daniels
Production Manager	Nicholas Day
Stage Manager	Geri Brown

Consultants: Phil Awang, Tom Beale, David Beale, Mark Bell, Craig Bently, Abraham Butto, Jamal Daoud, Ronald Davison, Ian Dixon, Dennis Dunn, Raymond Ferguson, Daryl Hamilton, Steven Hampton, Joe Haroa, Daniel Hookey, Sandra Kelty, Jacob Kitchener, Wes Marne, Ray Martin, Pena Masaga, Craig Matthews, Daniel Matthews, Glen Murray, Lionel Murray, Desmond O'Byran, Darren Olsen, Mark Pitt, Lester Ritchie, Archie Sheppard, Greg Simms, Geoff Talavave, Pesa Tualai, Yvonne To'a, Michael Towney, Eneliko (Henry) Tuliatu, Peter Turnbull, Paina Uelesg, Kelsen Wacando, James Welsh, Lee West, Darren White and Douglas Wright

Partners

Back Home has been supported by Blacktown City Council, Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation, The Myer Foundation, Holy Family Centre, The Shed, NSW Probation & Parole, NSW Department of Housing, Delfin Lendlease

Project Description

Back Home is the third work in *The Cement Garage* (1999) and *The Longest Night* (2002) series directed by Alicia Talbot. These works have followed the lives of fictional characters that first met while living on the streets in western Sydney. The works are made by a professional team of artists working in collaboration and consultation with community members who are positioned as experts within the devising process. *Back Home* furthers this artistic investigation and explores contemporary questions surrounding dignity, knowledge and urban rites of masculinity.

The initial idea for this work was generated through the collaboration of Shannon Williams and Alicia Talbot working in-residence in The Parks Community Centre and public housing estate while creating *The Longest Night* as part of Adelaide Festival 2002. As a result of the overwhelming response to the process in Adelaide, both Shannon and Alicia began to discuss a new performance work that focused on the contemporary experiences of men from diverse cultural backgrounds living in western Sydney.

Back Home picks up the story of Shannon's character, several years on. He's organised a get together of four friends who haven't seen each other for a number of years. When they come together, it seems the bonds of mateship have stood the test of time even though the past few years have seen them go separate ways. As the night unravels we share a glimpse of their journeys – the good and not so good times from the distant past, as well as the successes and stresses of their current lives.

Some of the central questions driving *Back Home* were: "What is it to be a successful man?" "How do you navigate expectations of self, family and community?" Using these as starting points, the show branched out into many other areas, such as identity and displacement, loyalty and reconciliation. All of these issues, and many more, rose up as we explored the friendship of the four characters, and as their hopes and fears became apparent. In writing about *The Cement Garage* in 2000, Stephen Dunne described this style of work as 'fictionalised reality', invented stories grounded in everyday reality.

Throughout the creative development and rehearsal period we developed scenes through extensive discussions and long running improvisations. Similar to the previous works, we would rehearse and present this material to community consultants on a weekly basis. The consultants would critically discuss the material and offer dramaturgical feedback and script suggestions, which in turn would cause us to rework each scene and the overall structure.

In November 2004, during the one-week research and development phase, Alicia and Shannon, re-examined the impetus for *Back Home*. This research and development phase led to discussions with the NSW Department of Housing and Blacktown City Council to investigate the feasibility of creating the work in residence in the Mt Druitt area and in partnership with the Holy Family Centre, Emerton.

During the R&D stage, NOMISE (NOMISE TV, *Plaza Real* and *Jammin' in the Middle E*) was invited to join the cast of *Back Home* and the company made a decision to hold open auditions seeking to cast one other male role.

Audition Process

The company conducted an open call out for male performers between the ages of 24 to 40, from Indigenous Australian, Torres Strait Islander, Maori and Pacific backgrounds. Part of the rationale for holding open auditions was to gain a greater sense of performers who are Sydney based and interested in making devised performance work.

The company distributed the audition call-out information extensively through arts organisations and networks, media, community sectors, agents and word of mouth. Initially, there was very little response to the audition call-out and, as a consequence, the company made a concerted effort to ring every organisation, managing agent and potential lead in Sydney and Australia as a way of sourcing performers. Ultimately, we held two audition days – three men attended the first day and seven men attended the second.

As *Back Home* is a devised performance work, the audition was structured as a day-long group workshop. Building on their experience during the *Plaza Real* auditions, the workshop process was designed by Alicia Talbot and Lee Wilson and involved a series of physical tasks, improvisations and story telling. Shannon Williams and NOMISE, also participated in the audition workshop.

Both audition days followed the same format. The men spent the first two hours responding to physical tasks and then began improvising in response to a number of provocations. The performers were also invited to bring a special skill to the audition, and again each individual presented something of themselves, which showcased unique talents such as traditional and contemporary dance, stand up comedy, writing, beat poetry and song and music composition. Each individual crafted a unique response to the task and both in content and form generated theatrical material that built a complex picture of the multitude of issues and complexities facing men at this point in time.

As a result of the high standard of the audition, we altered the make-up of the artistic team, changing the role of the full time musician in order to have four performers rather than three. Leo Tanoi, who had worked with UTP in the company's 1996 production of *Danger* and Aaron Fa'Aoso (SBS mini series R.A.N.) joined the *Back Home* team.

In addition to casting the work, the audition day was an inspiring experience and each of the men involved also felt that it had been an exciting day. This led to a commitment from Urban Theatre Projects to bring these men together in a three-week performance laboratory in order to explore material they choose, in forms they wish to investigate. The project, known as *The Fellas*, is scheduled to take place in mid 2006.

Oakhurst Neighbourhood Centre

Building on discussions in 2004, UTP continued to develop partnerships within the Mt Druitt area. Blacktown City Council and Holy Family Centre became key partners in the development of the work. Blacktown City Council were interested in hosting the company and the project, and Holy Family were interested in building a community partnership with the project through The Men's Shed.

Due to the community consultation process used in developing the work, UTP wanted to develop *Back Home* in residence close to The Shed, but not directly on site. This decision was influenced by our experience in Adelaide, in which building the work in residence was so successful we were unable to effectively cope with the amount of community members who wished to be involved. In this process, we wanted to locate the work adjacent to our community partners, rather than within the site. We also wanted to present the work outside, as if we were sitting in the backyard of someone's house. Blacktown City Council gave us a tour of a number of centres in the area before we made the decision to locate the residency at Oakhurst Neighbourhood Centre. The building has a large yard and adjacent block of land, an indoor rehearsal space, kitchen, and storage and office facilities.

During the four weeks of the creative development, the four performers, community and cultural liaison, Lily Shearer, director Alicia Talbot worked daily at Oakhurst. During this time, designer Sam James was also attending rehearsals, building the set and developing an initial storyboard for projections. Production manager David Roberts was also located on site and once a week, UTP staff, General Manager Simon Wellington and Company Administrator Jessie Deane would also spend the day working on site.

Creative Development Process

The four-week creative period involved investigating the themes of the work through structured discussions, improvisations, creative tasks and community consultation. Throughout the four weeks of the creative development we worked in residence at Oakhurst Neighbourhood Centre. The centre has a number of spaces including a large hall, meeting rooms, office, kitchen facilities and a large back yard. On a daily basis the artistic team would undertake a one-hour physical warm-up, led by Lily Shearer (NAISDA, traditional dancer) and then continue developing material through long improvisations. These improvisations would be led by Alicia Talbot and were designed to generate material, but also build a strong sense of a performing ensemble.

While the four performers come from diverse performing backgrounds, none of them have undertaken more conventional performance training. Instead, NOMISE (*NOMISE TV, Mechanix, Plaza Real* and *Jammin' in the Middle E*) and Shannon Williams (South West Syndicate, *Brothablack, Hip Hopera, The Longest Night*) are both MC's and have had an ongoing relationship with UTP. Leo Tanoi (DJ, Koori Radio host of *Samoan Dreaming* and *The Black Presidents Show*) and Aaron Fa'Aoso (cultural dancer, Koori Radio host of *Soul train*, SBS mini series *R.A.N*) are custodians of traditional knowledge and dance forms.

In the first week, we spent a great deal of time discussing what some of the key themes of the work meant to each of the artistic team – ideas about respect, dignity, knowledge and some of the pressures involved in being a man, and being a leader in the community. From these discussions, Alicia would develop structures for improvisations and create individual tasks for all the performers. This generated a wealth of material, and particular scenes. At the end of each week we would discuss all the material created and give each scene and image a title (on a post it note). Throughout the four weeks we continued to build up about twenty 'scenes'. Some of them would involve only one or two performers in a scene that might be 3-5 mins long, and other scenes might involve all four performers and run over ten or more minutes.

These post-it notes became the key source of building up the story. We would talk about what each of the scenes might involve and how they might fit together in some kind of assembly. We would then shuffle around the scenes to work out what was missing. This post it note structure began a key tool in developing the overall structure for the piece and for combining elements created through improvisation into new scenes and ideas.

The creative development process culminated in a one-night showing of invited guests, funding partners and community members. Fergus Linehan, Artistic Director of Sydney

Festival attended this showing and invited the project to be part of the 2006 Sydney Festival. A total of 55 people attended the creative development showing.

Rehearsal

The six-week rehearsal period followed a similar format to the creative development. Every morning the team would undertake a physical warm-up with Lily Shearer or Wilson. Increasingly aware of the demands of performing outside and the nature of the work, they also began to incorporate a vocal warm-up, led by Alicia. The first two weeks of the rehearsal period were spent relooking at the material created during the creative development and adapting it to fit within a more dramaturgical through line. Examining the arc of the night, we also began to generate new material that would help build the overall structure of the piece. We continued to develop work through long running improvisations and discussions. However, we focussed on how the scenes would fit with one another rather than creating independent blocks of material. We began to experiment with the sequences of scenes in order to gain a sense of how the material would sit as an overall structure. We kept moving blocks of material and reordering the components that made up each scene. In shifting material around we began to find the essence of each moment within the work and began to discard scenes that did not develop the overall dramaturgical throughout line of the development of each character.

During the rehearsal phase, movement consultant Lee Wilson and dramaturg Deborah Pollard attended rehearsal once a week. These two experienced artists provided invaluable support to Alicia and the project, assisting the works' overall physical and performance components and the dramaturgical sophistication the final piece. Sound artist Liberty Kerr also joined the team on a part time basis. She began observing rehearsals and then composed music in response to particular scenes and particular tracks of music that the company were using as improvisation stimuli. Liberty's music also became the stimulus for a number of scenes developed during the rehearsal period, and while some of the tracks were not included in the final work, many of the scenes that the music influenced and shaped, were included in the work.

Due to the nature of some of the cultural material in the work, traditional dance consultants Djahn Doolan & Les Daniels conducted one off sessions with the company. In particular they worked with Shannon Williams – Djahn assisted with Shannon's work in the traditional dance scene performed to the country and western track *Born to Survive* and Les assisted Shannon with the construction of his final solo dance work. Both these dancers were invited into process as the dance movements and cultural knowledge are from North Queensland Rainforest people – Tjabuguy People and the Guguyalanji People. These were culturally appropriate dances for Shannon to be taught.

The last week of the rehearsal period was focused as a production week in order to present three nights of community showings. This was a means of presenting the material to local audiences, consultants and stakeholders before the Sydney Festival season and gaining their feedback. It was also a means of testing the work and the production values of set, lights and sound. We had scheduled three nights of community showings, but unfortunately had to cancel one night due to heavy storms. A total of 165 people including Darug and community elders, community members, clients of NSW Probation and Parole, stakeholders and funding bodies attended the two nights.

This community showing was an invaluable opportunity to push the work towards the pressure of production. Often in devised work, artists are creating the work up until the final moment of opening night and beyond. The showing allowed us to push the work, present it, and then have a further period of dramaturgical analysis before entering the final rehearsal and production phase.

Some comments passed on to Community Liaison Advisor Lily Shearer following the community showing in December 2005.

It freaked me out because living away from country moving to the city, I hadn't witnessed this type of behaviour for a long time. It also reminded me of my own personal experience living with domestic/family violence, the fear of the alcohol & drug misuse, fighting etc...So now being a single mum, it's good to not live with that and reiterated that I have the choice not to endure the trauma of these situations.

Bunjalung/Dhungutti woman (mother of five teenagers and grandmother of two)

It's great hey daughter, finally sharing our community issues in such a fantastic story that's not hurting anyone, even the actors...It's about time
Bigambul Community Elder

That's how they go on, I see it all the time in the community. It's so real, as I hang out in a similar cultural group
19 yr old community lad of Bunjalung/Anawan descent

Very raw and powerful show reflects community cultural relationship to the Torres Strait issues are very close to the bone
Community Elder of Gundungara/Yuin Descent

This is what all our young fullas need to see. Maybe they will learn other ways of dealing with violence and how they should be communicating.
Aborigine community youth worker

Design

Throughout the creative development process, designer Sam James built and constructed the façade of a house in the backyard of Oakhurst Neighbourhood Centre. This design had already been developed and partially constructed prior to the creative development. However, as Sam was working on site, the blueprint of the house could also respond to specifications of the site and Sam would slightly alter the design according in response to the material created by the performers. Most days the artistic team would spend working in the backyard while Sam, production manager David Roberts and production assistant (local volunteer) Darren Olsen would construct the house. For the next stage of rehearsals, this set was constructed from different materials and specifically designed with stand the outdoor rehearsal schedule and to easily tour, to both outdoor and indoor venues.

In addition to design, Sam was the video artist for the project. During the creative development, his main focus was set design and it was not until the last week that he began to experiment with video images. This was to be more fully realised in the next stage of development.

In the rehearsal stage, designer Sam focussed on video production. Initially the set was designed to have images projected on it throughout the show. However, due to scheduling we were not able to try these images out until four weeks into the process. While the projections of the local area were stunning and cleverly crafted by Sam, the use of video in the overall piece no longer seemed as important, as initially conceived. This was partially due to the evolving style and aesthetics of the piece that explored a gritty reality. The use of projections altered this sense of realism and gave the piece a heightened theatricalism. It was decided not to go ahead with projections on the façade of the house. Instead, Sam focussed on building video montages that were featured as part of the bus tour, conducted by the elders for the 2006 season.

Community Consultation Process

Community consultation is a vital part of the creative process.

Through UTP's partnership with NSW Department of Corrective Services - Probation & Parole and The Shed, an initiative of University of Western Sydney and Holy Family Centre, Lily Shearer consulted with workers to involve appropriate local community members to participate in the consultation process. Workers included Gordon Simon, Weber Roberts, Ish and Phyllis, from NSW Probation and Parole and Teddy Hart from The Shed, Holy Family Centre. From these contacts Lily Shearer was able to engage eight to ten local community members each Wednesday to participate in the consultation process.

Utilising The Shed as a central meeting place, Lily Shearer would organise transport for the community men to be taken to Oakhurst Neighbourhood Centre. *Back Home* community consultants were considered as experts within the devising process. At weekly consultations they were invited to formally observe rehearsal and offer critical and dramaturgical feedback to material created by the artistic team. They were not asked to disclose their personal stories to then be characterised on stage by actors, but rather invited to share their opinions and observations about the world as they see it. The consultants were paid a fee for their contribution. In addition, there was an open door rehearsal policy. This means that individuals who were especially interested in the work were able to drop in any time and inform the development of the work on a more ongoing basis.

This creative process was not only valuable to the work being developed but also the ripple effect it had on community men in recognising their own personal journeys, by associating themselves with certain characters types and/or behaviours. It opened their eyes to what cycles they had been caught in, where they were at now in their lives, the resilience they had and paths they needed to journey on, to keep the cycles broken. The men themselves identified this as an opportunity to enable self-reflection and raising self-awareness to enhance their lives to participate and contribute more positively to the local community. Some of the men also encouraged their partners and siblings to attend these consultations with them, as observers, which promoted a holistic family healing process.

Lily Shearer, Community Advisor and Liaison

Consultations were also attended by some of the local community service providers, such as other mainstream workers in Probation & Parole, Grief & Loss, Drug & Alcohol counsellors, Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers in health and police services and Mental Health Workers. Although they attended in the capacity of observers rather than contributors to the creative process, their feedback was invaluable. As they remarked to Lily Shearer, it also gave the workers more of an insight to their respected clients needs.

Statistics - Stage I Creative Development

- There were four primary consultation days - Wednesday 6, 13, 20, & 27 July 2005.
- A total of 43 paid consultants participated in the Stage I consultation process, including local and community elders, NSW Probation and Parole clients and men who attend The Shed, Holy Family Centre, Emerton.
- A total of 14 workers and family members observed the consultation process. The workers came from a number of local services including NSW Probation and Parole, Blacktown Hospital (Aboriginal Liaison Officer and Mental Health Nurse), Daruk Aboriginal Medical Service, Mt Druitt Police and Aboriginal Liaison Officer, and Ja Biah Bail Hostel.
- A total of 23 paid consultants were clients of NSW Probation and Parole.
- A total of 34 were from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island backgrounds.

Rehearsal Theatre Erskineville Performance Bankstown Season City Season	UTP Rehearsal Room, Hackett House and PACT Sir Joseph Banks Room, Bankstown RSL PACT Youth Theatre, Erskineville
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Key Artists

Artistic Consultants Performer/Devisors	Regina Heilmann and Chris Murphy Thao Cao, Jade Carden, Kira Carden, Tracy Collings, Sarah Fardell, Mishelle Grigor, Majhid Heath, Ngaire Kelly, Angela Kolio, Halley Leggett, Matt Leslie, Carmel Longhurst, Zoë Coombs Marr, Akira Matsumoto, Lynda Ng, Franzine Paulo, Rosina Paulo, Teik Kim Pok, Noha Ramadan, Ahilan Ratnamohan, Natalie Rose, Eseta Schmidt and Tito Schmidt.
Design	Clare Britton
Production Manager	Tim Dennis
Stage Manager (UTP overseas secondment)	Sanna Langereis
Technical Crew	Padaric Meredith-Keller

Partners

PACT Youth Theatre

Project Description

In 2002, UTP first presented *Short 'n Sharp*, a season of short devised performance works by emerging and established artists. Six works were curated from an open callout for proposals, developed over a six-week period and presented in a three-night season at Bankstown RSL. *Short 'n Sharp* was initially part of a strategy for generating more regular performance events in the west, and building a performance culture, in which local audiences have regular opportunities to attend professional contemporary work.

Initially *Short 'n Sharp* supported a combination of emerging artists and more experienced artists, seeking performance-making opportunities. However, due to limited fees available to artists, this gradually shifted towards emerging artists testing their performance ideas to an open audience.

During the four-year initiative, UTP developed and refined a protocol for the *Short 'n Sharp* process;

- UTP advertises the program, calling for short work proposals from local and emerging artists, with an emphasis on Western Sydney based artists.
- Applicants submit a one-page proposal outlining their project.
- Guest artistic coordinators, in consultation with Alicia Talbot, curate the program, selecting eight works for development.
- The works chosen are reflective of UTP's core values.
- Each group of selected artists works independently, setting their own rehearsal schedule, and developing their works according to each group's conceptual interrogation, aesthetic, skills and interests.
- Artistic coordinators are available to work with each group (fifteen - twenty hours over an eight-week period) supporting the development and realisation of the new works.
- Each group are given access to a rehearsal space, limited technical support and office facilities to support the creation of their work.
- A one-day technical rehearsal takes place for each group to rehearse in the performance venue and finalise technical details.
- Works are presented in a three-night public season at Bankstown.

Collaboration with PACT Youth Theatre

After three years of producing the event, UTP proposed to undertake a creative partnership with PACT Youth Theatre. This collaboration was a response to the ongoing crossover of young artists between the two companies over a number of years. Young, emerging and established artists have worked with both companies on a myriad of different creative projects. Many young artists are introduced to UTP through large community based projects or previous *Short 'n Sharp's* and having familiarised themselves with performance making, seek further opportunities with organisations such as PACT with programs like the impACT Ensemble. Likewise, impACT Ensemble members' gain initial training from PACT and then approach UTP to become involved in performance opportunities.

Short 'n Sharp 4 enabled the PACT and UTP to formalise this connection. UTP produced and managed *Short 'n Sharp 4* with a public season in Bankstown, and PACT provided artistic consultancy and presented the *Short 'n Sharp 4* program in a public season at their venue in Erskineville.

Artistic Consultants, Regina Heilmann and Chris Murphy were interested in combining a mix of artists from both Western Sydney and the inner west. The call for submissions was distributed through both UTP and PACT networks. For *Short 'n Sharp 4* UTP and PACT were interested in artists who;

- had a message to articulate and were committed to exploring an idea, concept or form to which they had given considerable thought
- were prepared to put in the time to develop their ideas and work within a specific time frame
- were representative of Western Sydney
- would create an exciting, diverse evening of work, appropriate to the organisations and venues.

Regina Heilmann, Chris Murphy and Alicia Talbot selected seven works to be included in the program. In addition, three emerging performance makers with extensive histories of working with both companies, Mishelle Grigor, Zoë Coombs-Marr and Natalie Rose, were commissioned as MC's.

The works included a cross section of genres exploring a range of ideas.

Please add in the title of each work from the program

- A Vaudeville Freak Show investigating notions of 'freak' from its sideshow origins to reality TV.
- A multi media piece examining a woman's sense of identity and displacement in a multicultural world, where heritage and memory are global.
- A dance piece exploring complex relations between aggressors and their victims - the butcher, the soldier, the surgeon - and the 'playful' euphemisms used to disguise the ways society disposes of unwanted human garbage.
- The rise and fall of Brazilian-Japanese soccer player, George Teramoto.
- A contemporary fashion show, which celebrated the beauty of Islander women, while at the same time revealing the competing demands of traditional and contemporary culture.
- A physical and stereotypical clash between two prevailing sub cultures - the Punk and the Party-Pill Popper, housed in the body of one performer.
- A physical theatre piece exploring the desire for land and the desire to change it - a violently seductive dance between cultures.

Throughout the process artists were encouraged to pursue their own artistic vision, aesthetic and form. In addition, artists encouraged to consider the importance of time management, maintaining communications and the necessity to focus on the work without relying on complex production support. To support the process and professional

development of each group, artists were offered fifteen hours of artistic consultancy. Artists were also offered access to rehearsal space and technical support for the performance. Apart from the final production week, each group was also expected to negotiate their own schedule. Each artist was given a fee and a small working budget.

One week before the Bankstown season, the entire artistic team including technical crew came together for a viewing of the works. During this time the group set a running order, gave feedback and organised final sessions with the artistic consultants. There was a one-day bump in including a tech run, followed by a dress run and technical adjustments.

I learnt that it is amazing how much a creative director can help. At the beginning I thought I was completely alone in my process, but after one meeting Reg had me roped into many more and we became a team. I think this help was invaluable, I progressed at a steadier pace and there was never a mind blank in working and paths for the piece to follow.

Artist evaluation July 2005

The experience of writing a submission and having to articulate their personal vision proved extremely beneficial to the participants. At the earliest meeting the participants were invited to talk about the initial ideas for their work. During the face-to-face sessions with the artistic consultants, throughout the development and rehearsal period, the process of being able to articulate these ideas continued.

...It was a great experience to be able to adapt a piece for two vastly different venues.

...Short n Sharp 4 offered us a licence to experiment and try something new.

Artist evaluation July 2005

Presented at Bankstown RSL, followed by PACT Theatre, the two seasons were an excellent opportunity for the performers to work and be seen in both locations. Although the program was made up of individual works, the whole performance team participated in group warm ups each night and participants took responsibility for setting up and striking set pieces during the evenings proceedings. Their support for each other's work was apparent and although each individual was engaged in their own work, it was also clearly a group process and experience. The performers were able to watch each other's performances at both venues, which contributed to the sense that they were engaged in something all together.

A highlight of Short 'n Sharp 4 was being able to perform alongside artists more diverse and experienced than myself.

I enjoyed the opportunity to see some very creative pieces of work as well as the learning experience and the talents of many artists.

Artist evaluation July 2005

Varying degrees of experience as performance makers meant that individuals had different understandings of what it was to work with an artistic consultant. Some participants were able to fully comprehend and utilise the opportunities of participating in such a project, whereas others needed more directorial assistance. The consequence of this was that additional planning and intervention was required by the artistic consultants. This sometimes felt at odds with the project intention, however had these interventions not occurred the artistic consultants felt that some of the pieces would not have reached a satisfactory performance level.

I'm not sure how well it worked having the two seasons, although I think our pieces really needed those two weeks to develop and grow, it was just a

strange experience. I felt that Bankstown really suffered from it for purely geographical reasons, which was sad.

Artist evaluation July 2005

The shows at both venues were successful, with the pieces growing throughout the season, however audiences were considerably smaller at Bankstown RSL. This meant that artists performed to smaller audiences throughout the first part of the season, and box office was considerably lower than originally budgeted for. *Short n Sharp 4* was curated from around 50% of Western Sydney artists, however, these artists were not specifically Bankstown based but from various regions of Western Sydney, with friends and colleagues from the city.

Since *Short 'n Sharp 4* a number of participating artists have gone on to develop their pieces, with two groups presenting at the Performance Space and one group submitting an application for funding to produce a full length version of their original short work.

We are starting to build our own process, but we are at the stage where we are wanting to cross over, to make better work, Short 'n Sharp 4 was like training wheels for that.

Artist evaluation July 2005

Short 'n Sharp 2005 Statistics

- 26 enquiries were received
- 22 written applications were received
- 8 groups involving 23 artists were supported
- 72% of artists had not been involved in previous UTP projects
- 54% of the artists were from Western Sydney
- 63% of the artists were from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- 26% of the artists were from the UTP Ensemble program
- Over the six-night season, 83 people attended the Bankstown performance, and 168 people attended the PACT performance.

Project 5 *Fast Cars & Tractor Engines*

A verbatim style theatre work, based on interviews with residents of the Bankstown area, and presented by a team of emerging and established local artists.

Timeline

Research and oral interviews	March – April 2005
Auditions	14 – 15 May 2005
Script development	May – August 2005
Rehearsal Period	31 August – 4 September 2005
Performance Season	7 – 10 September 2005

Venue

Interviews	BYDS and residents home
Auditions & Rehearsal	UTP Premises, Hackett House
Performance	Sir Joseph Banks Room, Bankstown RSL

Key Artists

Director	Roslyn Oades
Performers	Mohammed Ahmad, Katia Molino and Vico Thai
Concept	Tim Carroll and Roslyn Oades
Dramaturg	Andrew Ma
Sound Artist	Oonagh Sherrard
Video Artist	Fadle El-Harris

Artistic Consultant	Christopher Ryan
Production Manager	Simon Wise
Stage Manager (UTP Ensemble Secondments)	Ruby Baxter & Danielle Teddy
Technical Crew	Padaric Meredith-Keller

Interviewees

Jeffery, Ali, Mohammed and Fay Ahmad, Ibrahim and Freda Bazzi, Alex Day, Frank and Cath Don, Robert and Zena Elmasri, Greta and Ken Graydon, Sadia and Saarah Jappie, Joyce King, Ninh Nguyen, Peter Polites, Hien Tran, Constable Col Urwin, Helen Westwood, Margaret and Shannon Williams, Cecily Wray, Hildegard Zywko and Linda Zywko-Hicks.

Partners

Fast Cars & Tractor Engines was produced by UTP in association with Bankstown Youth Development services.

Project Description

It starts loudly, with a stolen fast car, drag racing down Parramatta Road at 4.20am, going 100, 110, 120 miles per hour. It concludes gently, in a tiny tractor engine-powered boat escaping from Vietnam with a desperate human cargo, struggling to make it to Singapore and safety. To make it to Bankstown...

David Williams *RealTime 70*, Dec/Jan 2005

Fast Cars & Tractor Engines begins with a story about fast cars and ends with the story of a tractor engine. In between are stories of fighting, courage and survival, as ordinary people share extraordinary stories about the fight of their life. Some of these stories are literally about dodging punches and bullets, while others are domestic fights against change or abuse. Some are youthful confessions of first love versus protective parents. All the stories are inspiring, if not at times confronting, as cultures and ideologies collide.

The performance consists of eight interwoven stories. Mohammed, his brother Ali and their father talk of stealing cars, girlfriends and going all the way for the people they love. Margaret, an Aboriginal woman, grew up in north Queensland and remembers being ambushed by white girls on her way home from school. And then there's Hilda with her passion for fast cars and money, and Ninh who escaped Vietnam on a boat powered by a tractor engine.

These stories are continually surprising which makes for compulsive listening. The unpredictable and idiosyncratic vocal rhythms, pitch, and timings of the interviewees produce a magical transformation in the bodies of the performers, who occupy a space somewhere between acting, 'being', and possession. This is probably the best performance I've seen all year and deserves to be embraced by a wider audience.

David Williams *RealTime 70*, Dec/Jan 2005

History

Fast Cars & Tractor Engines is a verbatim-style theatre piece, which practices a unique performance technique whereby three actors wearing headphones parrot word-for-word real-life interviews, which took place with residents of Bankstown. The idea for *Fast Cars & Tractor Engines* was inspired by the *Bankstown Oral History Project*, which was coordinated by Tim Carroll of Bankstown Youth Development Services (BYDS), in 2000.

Director Roslyn Oades had spent time exploring verbatim-style theatre forms with UK Company *Non-Fiction Theatre* and together Roslyn and Tim came up with the concept for

Fast Cars & Tractor Engines.

Director Roslyn Oades' work is based on oral history stories collected by Tim Carroll from the Bankstown Youth Development Service. But this is not a piece about Bankstown or the diverse inner west. This is local narrative that transcends geography, presenting the universality of human experience and slapping down the lie of unbridgeable cultural separation. It's great fun, and deeply thoughtful, worthy of a subsequent season and a wide and long tour.
Stephen Dunne, The Sydney Morning Herald, Sept 9, 2005

The first incarnation of *Fast Cars & Tractor Engines* was created and performed by emerging artists Mohammed Ahmed, Steve Karouche and Zayaan Jappie and appeared as part of the launch of the Bankstown Heritage and Oral History Project. It later appeared as a fifteen-minute piece in Urban Theatre Projects' 2002 *Short and Sharp* season. The aim of this new project was to redevelop the work into a full-length production, and to assist the ongoing artistic vision through supporting the emerging artists within a team of experienced professionals.

Fast Cars and Tractor Engines 2006

Prior to commencing the project in 2005, Roslyn spent several months collecting new interviews with a diverse cross section of the Bankstown community. This material was then edited into an audio script, with assistance from dramaturge Andrew Ma. The audio script established the timeline of the piece, to which the sound designer, video artist and performers responded with precision.

Fast Cars & Tractor Engines utilised a unique performance technique whereby three actors, wearing headphones, listen to recorded interviews and speak along to their own personal soundtrack. The actors channel multiple characters and embody real-life stories, word for word, including every cough, stumble and interruption. This creates a curious, hyper-real performance and allows many quirks and imperfections of human speech and personality to be acknowledged with authenticity.

Using a culturally diverse cast to tell culturally diverse stories, the tension is further heightened by deliberate casting against type, providing an alternative perspective on age, race, religious and gender differences. Real people who wouldn't ordinarily converse are placed side by side at the kitchen table.

This work accurately renders all the qualities of speech – the circumlocutions, fragmentary sentences, pauses, breaths and occasional nonsense. By virtue of instant imitation there's an aliveness and accuracy to the nuances of speech – the subtlety of accents and tone. It's resolutely un-actorly, though highly skilled, and is a rare example of an artificial and imposed performance idea resulting in a legible authenticity. Much of the piece's joy results from the slippage of gender and cultural identity inherent in the idea...

Stephen Dunne, The Sydney Morning Herald Sept 9, 2005

A one-week season was presented in the Sir Joseph Banks room at Bankstown RSL. The production responded directly to the space creating an inclusive hyper-real living room with multiple kitchen tables from which the audience were invited to make themselves at home. The tone of hospitality and intimacy was encouraged at every stage of the audience's journey – welcome mats leading to the door, the actors personally greeting them on arrival. Framed in four metre wide, slow-moving wallpaper, the actors spoke directly to the audience as they shifted in and out of eight interweaving interviews.

These stories are continually surprising which makes for compulsive listening. But what makes the performance so striking is its unique vocal mechanics.

The actors are listening to the interviews on headphones as they speak the words, while the audience hears the ambient sound from the location (skilfully interwoven with Oonagh Sherrard's subtly evocative soundscape and Fadle El-Harris' video backdrops).

David Williams, RealTime, Nov 2005

The performers' audio script is synchronised with video projection and a sound scape. Fadle El-Harris's video is created from footage of the interviewee's homes and interview locations, as well as found images of domesticity and public life. Likewise, Oonagh Sherrard's soundscape also draws on original interviewee material, combined with location sounds and original compositions. The visual and aural textures intensify the thematic content of interview material and place characterisations within a political and social context. These elements seamlessly blend to offer multiple perspectives for the audience that transcend simple storytelling and heighten perceptions of familiarity and intimacy.

As a work produced by UTP in association with BYDS, *Fast Cars & Tractor Engines* proved a successful combination of each organisations resources and areas of expertise. The combination of resources and skills allowed support for the professional development of a mixed team of emerging and established artists. Many of the artistic team gained new skills and heightened their experience of performance making through the production process. As an emerging director Roslyn gained the unique opportunity to fully realise her artistic vision within a supportive and capable creative team, while at the same time gaining experience in theatre making. Fadle El Harris refined and developed his video technique and approach to the work and *Fast Cars & Tractor Engines* benefited from sound designer Oonagh Sherrard's wealth of collaborative theatre experience. Mohammed Ahmad developed his discipline and skills as a performer/collaborator and both he and fellow emerging performer Vico Thai were inspired by the opportunity to perform beside a considerably more experienced performer, Katia Molino.

Within the production team two members of the UTP Ensemble took part in mentorship's, gaining support and guidance from the team and learning a variety of new production skills.

The community consultation and collaborative process, involving a diverse range of Bankstown residents proved enriching for all involved. This was due in the main to the extensive local knowledge and past networking previously initiated by Tim Carroll and BYDS. The process allowed the participants a space to explore notions of identity, a sense of self and community through performance. Many interviewees told their stories as if they actually were on stage. Almost all those interviewed attended the shows with a great sense of pride, and were happy with the actor's portrayals of their characters. They brought along family and friends throughout the season, which allowed for UTP to break into a new audience market.

Roslyn Oades, Director

Fast Cars & Tractor Engines received extensive media coverage in both local and metropolitan publications, which contributed to a sell out season.

The project fulfilled its aim to reconsider and further the artistic vision of the original version. Roslyn Oades had the opportunity to experiment with the technique and Chris Ryan's involvement as artistic consultant was a valuable resource in the exploration of the work's physical limitations.

The collection of new interviews enabled Roslyn to focus the thematic concerns of the original *Fast Cars* as well as pursue her interest in working with group interviews. The strength and candid generosity of this new material provided the backbone of *Fast Cars* and the proximity of the interviews to the actual performance heightened the community's sense of involvement.

The addition of Andrew Ma as dramaturg on the project was highly successful. Discovering a similar aesthetic, Andrew and Roslyn established a close working relationship. Andrew was an active collaborator at every stage of the show's creation and intensely so in the identification of interviews to be included.

The open auditions were a good way of meeting new performers in the area and successful in securing a talented and diverse cast. The balance of energies, appearance and personalities in the three actors was a crucial element in the script's construction and reading. The inclusion of experienced performer Katia Molina paid off. Her calmness and professionalism contributed significantly to the smooth running of rehearsals and development of the emerging team.

The project would have benefited from an extra week of rehearsal and additional access to the performance space. Bringing the elements of video, sound design and performance together in the final week proved chaotic. It would have been useful to further workshop this union as well as spend more time finessing the transition points and where those shifts might originate.

Fast Cars & Tractor Engines relied heavily on technology, and this proved challenging at times. The DVD, which ran the entire show glitched several times during the preview and first matinee. This was resolved before opening night by making multiple copies of the DVD and doing thorough checks before each performance. A more reliable set up and solid back-up plan would have been beneficial. I felt that during the process there was a focus that remained and depended upon this shifting of technologies and for a while ignored the performers as agents of precision and change. The pragmatics and understanding that the performers can forge the scene change, physically and that there are different formulae of initiating or completing a scene was discovered quite late in the performance making process.

Roslyn Oades, *Fast Cars & Tractor Engines* Director – Artist Evaluation September 2005

While the venue worked from an aesthetic point of view it proved expensive and problematic, highlighting the need for more accessible venues in Bankstown. The staff were friendly and accommodating, however there were issues regarding the lack of resources available within the venue as well as technical support. Technical requirements normally considered part of the venue hire were charged at additional rates on top of an already expensive hire fee. The cost of hire for the Sir Joseph Banks room exceeded that of the hire cost for many purpose built theatre spaces in the City Metropolitan area, which often includes technical resources and support. This meant that areas within the production were under financed in order to accommodate the hire of the space. The company felt that there was little choice regarding venues given that showing *Fast Cars & Tractor Engines* in Bankstown was essential factor at this stage.

All but two of the artistic team grew up around Bankstown LGA, which brought a greater insight into the stories and gave the work additional authenticity.

As a play made for Bankstown people by Bankstown people, Fast Cars and Tractor Engines couldn't be any more relevant.

Brett Cox, Canterbury - Bankstown Express, September 6 2005

The show had a significant impact on the Bankstown community and audience, particularly those involved in the interview process. A representative from all but two of the interviews attended and without exception the feedback was one of pride. *Fast Cars* actively engendered a positive, non-judgmental image of an often-maligned area of Sydney. The

Mayor of Bankstown, Cr Helen Westwood, opened the show and the local newspapers were enthusiastic in their coverage. Although some of the audience were regular UTP audience members, the majority were new audience members who heard about *Fast Cars & Tractor Engines* through media reviews and word of mouth. This meant that *Fast Cars & Tractor Engines* attracted a broad audience who were prepared to travel to Bankstown.

Audience Members feedback:

- *Fast Cars & Tractor Engines was an unforgettable experience, with three amazing performers telling the true stories of members within our community. I honestly felt like a guest within their home.*
- *In all honesty Fast Cars & Tractor Engines was the first theatre show I had seen and thanks to this experience it will not be my last.*
- *Love the drive up to Bankstown!*
- *Really enjoyed it, would like others to see it, good to celebrate Bankstown.*
- *A realisation came over me when I was watching Fast Cars & Tractor Engines in wonderment at the extraordinary stories; there are members of the community from all corners of the world with amazing experiences living in our local community.*

Fast Cars and Tractor Engines brings a new level of technological and performative sophistication to community theatre, reinvigorating the form. This is probably the best performance I've seen all year and deserves to be embraced by a wider audience.

David Williams, RealTime, Nov 2005

In September/October 2006, Performing Lines, an Australian company which develops, produces and tours new Australian performance, will be coordinating a three-week tour in Western Sydney of *Fast Cars & Tractor Engines*. This will begin with a one-week return season in Bankstown.

Fast Cars and Tractor Engines Survey Results

During the process of *Fast Cars and Tractor Engines*, data was collected and at the end of the production a telephone survey was conducted. The following is an overview of the statistics. The total Attendance for the season was 85.40%.

Audience expectations

Total met expectations	20%
Total not met expectations	3%
Total exceeded expectations	77%

Times attended live performance

Once	3%
2-4 times	27%
More than 5 times	70%

Reason for attending

Reputation of UTP	10%
Know someone in the show	32%

Subject matter	30%	
Review		20%
Word of mouth	8%	
New existing audience Spread		
New audience		87%
Existing audience		13%

Project 6 *The Ensemble*

The development of a new ensemble of emerging artists through a program of masterclasses, workshop intensives, mentoring, residencies, and tailored performance opportunities.

Timeline

3 Information Sessions	December 2004 – March 2005
Ensemble Registration	18 March
Program of Activities	April – November (please see following table)
Final Showings	19 Nov

Venue

UTP Premises, Bankstown Plaza & CBD, SOPA

Key Artists

Ensemble Members

Mohammed Ahmad, Victor Arces, Ruby Baxter, Kira Carden, Zoe Coombs Marr, Emma J Cooper, Ashley Dyer, Mishelle Grigor, Sally Lewry, Keith Lim, Sameer Malik, Alexis Motassam, Alice Osborne, Teik Kim Pok, Matthew Prest, Ahilan Ratnamohan, Georgie Read, Natalie Rose, Emma Stevenson, Veena Sudarsham and Sarah Vongmany

Key Artists & Facilitators

Clare Irvine, Martin del Amo, Bert van Dijk, Andrew Morrish, Neil Thomas, Katy Bowman, Brigdette Van Lerven, Deborah Pollard, Alan Schacher, Lee Wilson, Mirabelle Wouters, Joey Ruigrok, Chris Ryan, Roslyn Oades, Regina Heilmann, Chris Murphy, Jessie Deane, Alicia Talbot, Simon Wellington

Project Description

Throughout 2005, UTP offered a program of master-classes, workshop intensives, mentoring, residencies and tailored performance opportunities for an ensemble of emerging artists. Ensemble members were invited to self-select a series of training and performance opportunities, working towards the development of a major production or series of short works in 2006.

The idea of establishing an ensemble was a continuation of a previous model developed during 2000-1, during which time participants, previously involved in UTP's community based projects, were invited to be involved in a formal process of training incorporating skills development and performance making, leading to a major production, *Manufacturing Dissent* 2001, Performance Space. The formation of the Ensemble program in 2005 was based on a similar philosophy. Many community participants and emerging artists who were introduced to the company through community projects and the *Short 'n Sharp* initiative expressed a desire to be involved in ongoing skill development and performance opportunities.

The Ensemble program was aimed at supporting emerging artists development through a program of activities that encouraged participants to take responsibility for their own development through the year. This model involved artists selecting their own program of

development and initiating work according to their own interests. It was envisaged that flexible involvement would enable a larger cross section of emerging artist's access to professional development.

The training covered a range of performance-based skills including masterclasses and workshops in physical and movement based performance, vocal training and performance making. In addition the Ensemble identified areas for training including production and stage management, writing funding applications, and secondment positions both artistic and technical as part of UTP's yearly program, including *The Water Project*, *Fast Cars and Tractor Engines*, *Short 'n Sharp* and *Back Home*.

A group of 32 community participants and emerging artists who had been involved with projects such as *Asylum*, *Mechanix*, India@oz.sangam, *Karaoke Dreams* and the *Short and Sharp* initiatives were invited to come to three information sessions held between December 2004 and March 2005. During these sessions, we discussed potential a model for the program, masterclasses, guest artists and guidelines for involvement. UTP outlined a set of strategic objectives for the company and which was distributed to the Ensemble for discussion.

UTP's strategic objectives for the Ensemble program

The Ensemble program is designed to foster the professional development of self-determined artists by;

- Developing an intercultural ensemble of artists
- Providing emerging artists with a well supported training environment directly linked to professional practice
- Continuing to build on a previously successful ensemble model as a strategy for developing emerging artists
- Establishing a creative environment for artistic experimentation and risk-taking in collaboration with established artists
- Exploring and testing new approaches to cross-cultural performance making and hybrid art practices
- Fostering independence and self-reliance for emerging and developing artists
- Creating opportunities for new collaborations and self-directed works
- Fostering a training climate to generate further artistic activity in western Sydney

In addition to discussing the aims and objectives of the program and a draft program for the year, the meetings were also used to develop a guidelines and expectations in consultation with prospective Ensemble members. The final meeting was facilitated by Board member Raquel Carvajal.

At the end of this consultation process the Ensemble members and UTP created a list of guidelines for involvement and Ensemble members agreed to;

- Articulate clear goals for themselves and outline how they would go about achieving them
- Select a training program based on realistic commitment and timeframe
- Attend at least three core program activities
- Return phone calls and emails without being chased
- Arrive at least 15 minutes prior to the scheduled start time of each workshop and activity, prepared and ready to start
- Identify 3 potential workshops that they would be available to project coordinate
- Attend every activity for which they had registered
- Inform the company with reasonable notice, if they could not attend an agreed workshop
- Volunteer up to 20 hours for the Company throughout the year

- Participate in social events, jamming sessions and generate additional creative material in response to some of the workshops they attended. (These activities were to be initiated and organised by Ensemble members)
- Create a piece of work at the completion of the year, to be presented amongst peers, UTP staff and Board and funding bodies

Ensemble packs outlining program of activities were sent to 32 potential ensemble members. Prior to undertaking the Ensemble program, ensemble members were required to fill in a personal analysis and work plan. This was designed for participants to identify their strengths and weaknesses through self-reflection, articulate their goals for the year, and to take responsibility for their own professional and artistic development throughout the program.

...First and foremost I think that the ensemble program can provide me with a group of artists, most of whom I know already, who are in similar stages of development to myself. The ensemble program can provide me with a space to gain a basic level of skills development that will come through the workshops and the work with professional artists, but also I think that when I think of the term ensemble I think of a support network, a kind of community...

...Simplistic though it may sound, by the end of this year I want to know more about performance and be better at it than I was at the start of the year. Specifically, I want to have gained at least some understanding and worked within the confines of a few different performance styles previously foreign to me. I am aiming to improve my writing and devising skills and also document my creative process in an attempt to define what a sustainable creative practice means for me...

Excerpts from two Ensemble members Personal Analysis

2005 Ensemble Program of Activities

Workshop	Details	Date	Venue	Facilitator	Participation
Performance Making	A performance making class which explored improvisational and compositional forms	9-10 April & 16-17 April	UTP Rehearsal Space	Martin del Amo	10
<i>he Water Project</i>	econdment position - movement	11 – 23 April	he Armory, Sydney Olympic Park (SOPA)	licia Talbot, Joey Ruigrok and <i>The Water Project</i> artistic team	1
<i>he Water Project</i>	A devising process based within the research and development phase of a new major work, <i>The Water Project</i>	19,21 & 23 April	he Armory, SOPA	licia Talbot, Joey Ruigrok and <i>The Water Project</i> artistic team	14
<i>p My Nose</i>	A workshop facilitating the development of radical artistic practice	27, 30 April - 1 May, 4 May & 7-8 May	UTP rehearsal room	ee Wilson and Mirabelle Wouters	14
unding Bodies and grant applications	n information and advice session about grants available and how to apply for them	May	UTP rehearsal room	lare Irvine, Bridgette Van Leuven, Simon Wellington and Alicia Talbot	12
tage Management	A workshop which highlighted the roles and responsibilities of a stage manager	9 May	UTP rehearsal room	essie Deane	7
roduction Management	A workshop which highlighted the roles and responsibilities of a	16 May	UTP rehearsal room	Jessie Deane	Postponed

	production manager				
<i>Interrogating Place</i>	A workshop which explored site specificity, guerrilla action, camouflage interpretive storytelling and disruption in performance making	19 May, 21-22 May, 2 June & 3-4 June	various locations in and around Bankstown	Ian Schacher	14
<i>Short 'n Sharp 4</i>	A season of devised short works open but not limited to the Ensemble.	14-25 June	Bankstown RSL and PACT Youth Theatre	Regina Heilmann & Chris Murphy	6
<i>Short 'n Sharp 4</i>	secondment position - technical	14-25 June	Bankstown RSL and PACT Youth Theatre	Regina Heilmann, Chris Murphy, Tim Dennis	1
Museum of Modern Oddities (MoMO)	A workshop based within the research and development of a performance installation, with a performance outcome. The work was oriented towards an outdoor market event in the Bankstown Old Town Centre Plaza	5-16 July	Bankstown Plaza and UTP rehearsal room	Katy Bowman, Neil Thomas, Chris Ryan	26
Durational performance making	An intensive workshop which looked at ways of gathering material and frameworks for durational performance	6-7 Aug & 13-14 Aug	UTP rehearsal room	Deborah Pollard	9
<i>Fast Cars and Tractor Engines</i>	secondment position - technical	15 Aug – 10 Sep	UTP rehearsal room and Bankstown RSL	Oslyn Oades & Simon Wise	1
<i>Dance Hall Days</i>	The workshop will take the form of a rehearsal process. Ensemble members will work intensively - creating performance scenes and material <i>This project was altered to accommodate the needs of the Ensemble</i>	24 & 25 Aug 4 to 6 Oct	UTP rehearsal room	Alicia Talbot	6
Actors Training	A program which aimed to provide performance makers the tools for self initiated, on-going actors training	16-30 Sep	UTP rehearsal room	Robert van Dijk	6
Improvisation Performance Practice	A 5 day workshop which explored improvisation using movement and language as a performance practice	14-18 Oct	UTP rehearsal room	Andrew Morrish	10
Ensemble Showings	A showing of works developed by the Ensemble throughout the Ensemble program	19 Nov	UTP rehearsal room	Ensemble	17
<i>Back Home</i>	secondment position - artistic	24 Oct – 25 Nov	Oakhurst Neighbourhood Centre, Mt Druitt	Alicia Talbot and <i>Back Home</i> artistic team	0

Details of Activities

1. Performance Making - Martin del Amo

The workshop was a performance making class that explored various improvisational and compositional strategies to generate and structure solo performance material. The focus was

on the interplay between physical and vocal scores. The workshop took place on two weekends in April; each session ran for 7 hours and was attended by 9-10 performers.

The aim of the workshop was to heighten the participating performers' awareness for choices and decisions relating to performance making processes. After a short physical warm up, each day, I would take the performers through a series of exercises, introducing various improvisational and compositional strategies to generate and structure solo performance material. Later, I would set up varying performance parameters, and the performers were encouraged to explore freely within these parameters. The focus of exploration was on the interplay between physical and vocal scores, drawing on five elements - movement stillness, sounds, spoken word and silence.

The performers would often work in pairs. After each of the exercises, they would be given time to exchange observations and give feedback to each other. At the end of each session, the performers would show a short performance exploration in front of the whole group. The length of these explorations built from 3 minutes on the first day to 5 minutes on the last.

It was my impression that some of the performers were initially confused by all the different parameters they were introduced to and that they felt restricted by them. It took them a little while to get their head around this way of working but they quite quickly realized that the parameters were there to support and encourage them to freely create their own material, each performer according to their own interest, aesthetic, imagination and skills. From that moment on, the performers embraced the explorative nature of the work and fully committed to it.

I enjoyed teaching this workshop. It was exciting for me to see the performers' growing sense of freedom in making decisions in relation to the creation and structuring of performance material. I feel encouraged to continue to offer this kind of workshop that is not trying to broaden the participants' skills base as such but rather encourage an explorative approach to creating performance works and help participants to become more aware of their own creative interests and potential.

Total # participants registered 11

Total attendance 10

Total # workshop days 40

2&3 The Water Project – Research & Development

A performance devising workshop based within the research and development phase of a major new work, *The Water Project*. This work involved the ongoing collaboration of the professional artistic team involved in making *Mechanix*.

The Water Project is a new work dealing with the iconic role water commands within the Australian psyche. From past notions of abundance to encroaching scarcity, the work is designed to explore Australia's love for water and the emotions it arouses - discrepancies between an enduring nostalgia of entitlement, current personal and political responsibilities, and the challenging reality of future sustainability.

For three sessions during the residency fourteen members of the UTP Performance Ensemble came on site and began to create improvisations in response to artistic provocations and the environment. During the first session, the ensemble worked in and around the outdoor area of the amphitheatre in The Armory. This area was lit by a limited amount of theatre lights and utilised music created during the R&D. In some circumstances the Ensemble were animating visual imagery generated by the team previously in the week.

The second session involved the ensemble responding to durational performance tasks in a large car park. This event took place over two hours and attracted the attention of commuters and security guards (who watched as audience). The final day, the team spent a

couple of hours in the aquatic centre creating choreographies in water and researching the kinds of movement and leisure activity people undertake in water. This material was later transferred to the stage in and around the amphitheatre in The Armory to investigate water activities on dry land.

Alice Osborne also joined *The Water Project* for two weeks full time as a secondment position. She was interested in the devising process of the team, but in particular in working with Lee Wilson in his role as movement consultant. Alice was an invaluable member of artistic team throughout the research and development phase. She took part in all the tasks and undertook the role of coordinator for the Ensemble.

Total # participants registered 15

Total attendance 14

Total # workshop days 42

3. Up My Nose - Branch Nebula

Initial Project Outline

Do you watch the news and feel that as an artist you could be doing more? Do you ask yourself if you are preaching to the converted in the confines of the theatre? Is going out onto the street and making politically activist performance the answer?

Excerpt from **12 Questions**, La Pocha Nostra website – pochanostra.com
(...)

8. *Are we able to recuperate the possibility of change in a society like ours, in which all changes implode or are instantly commodified?*

9. *Is it possible to make politically pertinent art (not "political art") in the face of globalisation gone wrong, government censorship, panic culture, mindless interactivity, Reality TV, and the general passivity of the citizenry?*

10. *How can we continue to deal with extremely sensitive issues without sounding self-righteous or scaring away our audiences? (...)*

Guillermo Gomez-Pena

Drawing on personal concerns regarding community, identity, personal freedoms, fears, and current global situations, the workshop was an inquiry into the role of the artist as agitator for change.

The workshop facilitated the development of personal artistic practice by exploring tools for creating material for a solo performance. In particular the integration of existing skills, movement, varying theatrical styles, and generating and writing text for performance.

The mornings incorporated movement training, improvisation and writing tasks. Afternoons provided the opportunity to incorporate the mornings' material for short performances and homework tasks which were shared with the group.

At Lee and Mirabelle's workshop I learnt a great deal. Some of the things I gained from the workshop included advice such as the need to develop your own independent practice in order to create your own unique work. I was also left with a large question about what an artist's role is and whether or not they have a duty to create political art. This led me to a lot of reading about the artist's role and a comparison between CMI and Sydney Theatre's Two Brothers in order to try and come up with an answer to what political art had the potential to do or not do. There was a lot more I got out of this workshop but they are the main things.

Total # participants registered 15
Total attendance 14
Total # workshop days 74

4. Funding sources and preparing a grant application- Clare Irvine, Bridgette Van Leuven, Alicia Talbot and Simon Wellington

This session took place in two sections. From 3-5pm staff representatives from the Australia Council & NSW Ministry for the Arts outlined the history of the organisation, funding categories and the process of applying for grants.

An evening session facilitated by Simon and Alicia outlined what was involved in preparing a variety of submissions, including

- Developing the concept
- Where to look for support and identifying potential funding opportunities
- What to include in your application; and
- How to draft budgets.
- Writing the application
- Evaluation
- Budgeting
- Auspicing

We also looked at specific projects that Ensemble members wished to develop.

Total # participants registered 18
Total attendance afternoon session 13
Total attendance evening session 7
Total # workshop days 20

5. Production and Stage Management - Jessie Deane

These workshops highlighted the roles and responsibilities of stage and production managers. The group looked at the roles from a practical level and talked about planning and scheduling.

The aim of the stage management workshop was to pass on basic skills and knowledge of the role of the stage manager. Through an afternoon of conversation, informal exercises, and workshop role-play the participants gained an overview of the roles and responsibilities of a stage manager.

The workshop started off with a brainstorming session so the group had an opportunity to describe how they perceived the role of stage manager.

This developed into a discussion outlining stages of production and a stage managers role within this process. This discussion outlined;

1. Meeting the Director, Artists and Production Manager
2. Pre-production
3. Auditions
4. Rehearsals
5. Bump in
6. Technical rehearsals
7. Opening night & Season

The group discussed areas including, calling the show, operating, cues, schedules, and handling artistic temperaments.

Finally, the group split into groups of 3 and participated in two exercises. These included a scenario involving compiling a stage management run sheet and list of jobs required and a blocking exercise.

The structure of the workshop was successful as there was a mixture of active participation and discussion. There was a great deal of information in the session, and the group responded well, especially to the exercises. Prior to the workshop, the participants had a vague understanding of the role of the stage manager, but were surprised at the level of detail required in the role. This understanding developed over the duration of the workshop and participants articulated they had a greater clarity of the stage managers role.

The production workshop was postponed due to feedback from the Ensemble that they were beginning to feel overloaded (due to other commitments as well as the schedule of the Ensemble) and not as able to participate in activities. Unfortunately, this workshop was not rescheduled for another time.

Total # participants registered 12

Total attendance 8

Total # workshop days 8

6. Interrogating Space - Alan Schacher

The workshop was an opportunity for the group to investigate and devise methodologies and tools for artistic practice and performance making. The workshop intention was to provide an arena of different ways of working with specific places that can have a variety of approaches and outcomes. The workshop was built around an interrogation of place through an observation of everyday patterns of usage and subsequent levels of intervention.

Key concepts for this area of investigation were: site-specificity, guerrilla action, intuition, imperative, improvisation, waiting, tactics, disruption, camouflage, interpretive storytelling, authenticity, atmosphere, and zones.

From the premise that we *can* find things of interest in the urban terrain, the task was to devise and implement interventions which tested, commented on and augmented the observed environment: to influence, enhance, contradict, disrupt etc.

Working in selected sites around the central locale, the group analysed inputs to atmosphere and sense of place, from tangibles such as sound, light, smell, plants & animals, vehicular & pedestrian activity to less apparent factors: the underbelly of what makes a situation. Comparisons were made at different times of day and on different days of the week. From these snapshots and various documenting methods, a temporal map was drawn. Participants were asked to devise an interpretation of site as event, or to insert new layers to an existing situation. These ranged from almost invisible additions to the place, to storytelling, video record, guided tour, or to transposition of one place onto another locale, and working groups were able to approach the task from different angles.

The process involved discussion about the kinds of discoveries people made, the conclusions they drew and the types of investigative measures they employed. Participants were encouraged to visit their sites at other varied times to get a fuller sense of how these places were used & changed throughout the week, and to combine individual perceptions towards collaborations.

The group was highly willing and rather than a learning experience or outcome driven projects they allowed me to set up open-ended experiments. The best outcomes were the unexpected audience or rather public responses and

interjections to certain situations. Given that we purely experimented quite loosely on a very short time frame, the possibilities for highly orchestrated events seem quite exciting.

Alan Schacher – Workshop Facilitator

Total # participants registered 16

Total attendance 14

Total # workshop days 79

7 & 8 Short 'n Sharp – Regina Heilmann & Chris Murphy

Short 'n Sharp is a season of short work devised by emerging artists. Works are selected from an open callout. In 2005 UTP undertook a collaboration with PACT Youth Theatre to produce the event. Six artists from the Ensemble program took part in the process and performance.

There was also a technical secondment position available and overseas secondment student Sanna Langereis, who joined the Ensemble for a four-month period, took on the role of stage manager.

9. MoMO – what was the title of the final show?

Timeline

Creative Development	5 – 16 July
Showings	please check dates

Venue

Rehearsal & Showings	UTP Rehearsal Room and Bankstown Plaza
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Key Artists

MoMO	Neil Thomas, Katy Bowman
Consultant	Chris Ryan
Production Manager	David Roberts
Production Assistant	Clare Brittan

Ensemble Participants	Georgie Read, Matt Prest, Victor Arces, Zoe Coombs Marr, Teik Kim Pok, Sally Lewry, Mish Grigor, Keith Lim, Alexis Motassam, Emma Stevenson, Ahilan Ratnamohan, Emma J Cooper, Mohammed Ahmed
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Guest Artists	Thao Cao, Clare Britton, Jenny Chu, Sanna Langereis, Birtan Mohammed, Mariatu Tholley, Joanne, Tracy Collings, Christina De Mello.
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Project Description

For three weeks in July, Melbourne-based company Museum of Modern Oddities (MoMO) artists Neil Thomas and Katy Bowman were based in residence at UTP. For two weeks MoMO collaborated with the UTP Ensemble and local artists to produce a new work inspired by the diversity of the Bankstown area and local shopping district. This process of research and development was designed to have two public performance installation outcomes. These performances were free and were intended to test the feasibility of the project, to develop a larger scale production. The work was inspired by the culture of outdoor markets in Bankstown.

This process involved performers creating part fiction/part reality inspired stories and temporary visual art exhibits in the guise of an outdoor flea and fortune telling market. The visual materials were gathered from the tip, garage sales, hard rubbish collections, the performers' homes, and auctions.

The performance and visual aspect of the work drew on Neil Thomas and Katy Bowman's extensive experience in creating living performance installations. They have developed a process that involves an integrated approach to creating text, installation, objects, performance presentation, publication and improvisation.

Material in the workshop was generated through:

- Shared writing and reading exercises
- Improvisations based around objects/installations
- Creation of small assemblages/installations based around the theme of outdoor markets
- Field trips to op shops, local tips, roadside rubbish, abandoned buildings etc...
- Exploration of modes and styles of storytelling

During the first week of creative development, Katy Bowman had to attend to family business and Chris Ryan was brought in to collaborate with Neil Thomas in a dramaturgical capacity.

The Saturday morning performances were designed as an installation event, in which the public could interact with the performers and stalls as a regular Bankstown market. Rather than selling the aim was to create a relationship with audience members where they could interact with the performers on an intimate basis.

One of the exciting elements about the creative development was the team's approach to working and testing each installation in the Plaza. In addition to the two Saturday mornings, the entire team worked in the Plaza on the Thursday and Friday leading up to each installation. Neil Thomas felt that these trial days were almost more successful than the Saturdays themselves, as the market blended into the everyday of the Bankstown shopping village. The Saturday morning installations attracted the attention of many shoppers and passer-bys. Many people became individually involved with each stall, while others stood on the outside and observed the process.

UTP has laid down a firm foundation with its Ensemble template to easily create very meaningful and beautiful work over the next few years. The facilities, the Ensemble the staff all kick in to make a dream run.

I like the idea of a sophisticated theatre company in the suburbs creating theatre for that suburb. Serve the community. Bravo UTP you made the old Bankstown plaza new. You made the air sing with possibility.

Neil Thomas – Museum of Modern Oddities (MoMO)

Initially we were surprised at the strength of the Ensemble. There was a great respect amongst the participants, which impacted in a real positive way on the project. Within the Ensemble there was a real mix of strong and weak players and the strong ones supported the weaker ones which enhanced the overall experience for all involved.

Katy Bowman - MoMO

This creative development was also seen as a highlight by many of The Ensemble members. Most of The Ensemble participated in the process, and enjoyed the group nature of the work. Initially, many Ensemble members had difficulty with the terrain of the work – storytelling to

unsuspecting audience members. But as the two weeks progressed and The Ensemble and guest artists experienced the delight of performing and the response of individuals and community members, pleasure and satisfaction began to replace fear and uneasiness.

Being at the workshop has allowed me to believe again that the imagination isn't an escape from reality. Fiction or non-fiction are both as truthful and untruthful as one another.

I'm standing in Bankstown Plaza with purple velvet wrapped around my head. I'm wearing my nana's blue dress and square black spectacles adorn my face; I love how a costume can make you feel different. I see a woman, a middle-aged woman, she too can see that I look different, maybe I can tell her something. She is hesitant. I smile at her and say hi and over she comes. We talk, I mean really talk and once again I am overwhelmed, this is great, amazing, but I don't know how much more I can take. I'm searching desperately for that forth wall, which has seemed to disappear.

Artist Evaluation, August 2005

It's funny, traditionally theatre is not real it's make believe and although I am in my funny little costume and I am performing this is not make believe at all, this is real, as real as it gets.

Artist Evaluation, August 2005

...the MoMo creative development was a particular highlight in as it allowed each participant,s unique choice of expression to be placed in and amongst all others,. For the first time since the beginning of the program, this development really allowed everyone to be truly introduced what each other's thing, was.

Artist Evaluation, August 2005

MoMO Statistics

During the process of MoMO data was collected and the following is an overview of the statistics.

Workshop Participation

- 32 people were invited to attend the creative development
- 26 people attended the workshops
- 16% of artists participating in the workshops had not been involved in previous UTP projects
- 56% of artists participating in the workshops were from Western Sydney
- 44% of the artists participating in the workshops were from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- 56% of the artists participating in the workshops were from the UTP Ensemble program

Showings

- 19 people participated in the final showings
- 4 showings took place in the Bankstown Plaza
- Over the 4 days approximately 300 people interacted with the showings
- 16.6% of artists participating in the showings had not been involved in previous UTP projects
- 54% of artists participating in the showings were from Western Sydney
- 66% of artists participating in the showings were from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- 77.7% of artists participating in the showings were from the UTP Ensemble program

10. Durational Performance Making - Deborah Pollard

Deborah's four-day intensive workshop worked with methods of gathering material and frameworks for making durational performance.

The first week focused on performance making skills to generate small performance-based outcomes. This section culminated in participants performing in a time-based work created by Deborah specifically for the workshop participants.

During week 2, participants were given frameworks and provocations that allowed them to create ideas for their own durational work. From these ideas participants collectively chose the strongest performative idea and worked out how to stage it.

The workshop ended with a performance of the group's durational performance work.

I have asked Deb to write a couple of sentences...but nothing so far

Total # participants registered 19

Total attendance 9

Total # workshop days 36

11. Fast Cars and Tractor Engines – Roslyn Oades, Jessie Deane and Simon Wise

There was one secondment position available during this process as stage manager for one week of rehearsals and the production week. This was undertaken by Ensemble member Ruby Baxter. As Ruby was also completing her HSC trials, she shared this task with Danielle Teddy. These two young women devised a piece for Short 'n Sharp, 2004.

12. Dance Hall Days - Alicia Talbot

This workshop was initially intended to take the form of a rehearsal process. Alicia intended to work intensively with Ensemble members as if they were creating performance scenes and material for a new show. Similar to the methodology Alicia employed to create the work *Back Home*, she intended to work with the notion of extended improvisation and concept development, focussing on popular music as an improvisation source.

However, at this stage in the year, the Ensemble were feeling overloaded. At one of the Ensemble dinners, Alicia discussed changing the workshop with the group. Instead of another workshop process, she invited individuals and groups to make appointments to discuss their developing their own work for the final showing and the following year. Six people made appointments during this time to discuss different stages of their work.

13. Actors Training – Bert van Dijk

Actors Training is the process of self-discipline and self-definition.

Self-definition is knowing your own strengths and weaknesses, your artistic taste, the qualities you want to develop, the skills you need to acquire or polish and deciding on the directions you want to take. Self-discipline is being your word, say and do, put your goals into action.

As such, Actors Training is an ongoing endeavour for every artist, regardless of your discipline or genre.

Bert van Dijk

Don't know how to get this to indent left

The 5-day training program offered the Ensemble the tools to take full and effective responsibility for their own ongoing Actors Training.

Participants learnt about:

- Presence

- Dance of opposition
- Energy, rhythm and surprise
- Extended voice work
- Text exploration
- Integrating the vocabularies of body, voice, text and space
- Chorographic image work

After my initial disappointment that there were only 6 participants, I decided to let that go of that disappointment and create a workshop situation that was strongly dialogue based (= flowing of meaning and expertise), i.e. intense reflection and discussion, individual challenges and one-to-one coaching that would hopefully lead to significant breakthroughs. Most importantly I wanted to empower the participants with confidence and the ability to take charge of their own training as individual performers and as an ensemble on a level that would go a lot further than doing the same sort of exercises together. It would need to take the form of challenging boundaries and perception on a significant and fundamental level.

...I am very pleased to hear that they have taken the initiative to continue Actors Training and it would be great if you could let them know that I am more than willing to give advice or answer any questions they have.

I want to thank you again for giving me the chance to work with your ensemble and be involved with UTP and I really value our conversations even though they are brief. I am full of admiration and appreciation of the work you are doing. I love Bankstown and always enjoy coming out and tasting the different atmospheres of the various quarters.

Bert van Dijk

Total # participants registered 16

Total attendance 6

Total # workshop days 29

14. Improvisation Performance Practice - Andrew Morrish

Improvisation is a term that is used in many ways. In this five-day workshop the group explored improvisation using movement and language as a performance practice working in the following ways;

- Attention was given to "form and structure" rather than content.
- Solo and duet skills were established.
- The group worked with simple focuses of attention, and developed a sense of texture.
- The group explored skills in the transformation of language forms into movement forms and vice versa.
- Emphasis was given to the skills attached to the performer following their own interests and pleasure in performance.
- The group worked beyond the conventions of "scenario", "narrative" and "dramaturgy" and developed insights into the nature of "form".

These methods lead to a clarified understanding of personal aesthetics and created a space for participants to develop their own "style" in the use of language and movement. In addition to these skills there were regular opportunities to perform during the workshop.

The overall effect of the workshop seemed quite different to the 2004 program. There was a strong sense of the excitement of possibilities in 2004, and in 2005 this was transformed into a very strong sense of deepening and enrichment from their understanding of improvisation as performance. The benefit of seeing development in the participants between the 2004 workshop and this one was

especially stimulating and exciting for me as a facilitator, and I think this is a testament to the quality of the Ensemble program conducted by UTP in 2005. I would like to thank the team at UTP for their superb streamlined administration and management of the project and express my gratitude at the creative vision that enabled me to return in 2006.

Andrew Morrish

Total # participants registered 15

Total attendance 10

Total # workshop days 50

15. Back Home – Alicia Talbot

One artistic secondment positions was available during the rehearsal stage of *Back Home*. This was a two to six week commitment from late to October to early December, in Mt Druitt. Ensemble members were always encouraged to attend any rehearsal process in a full time capacity (to the best of their ability). No one took up this secondment position – partially as it was at the end of the year and people were feeling exhausted and partially due to the geographical location.

16. Final Showings – The Ensemble

In November 2005 the Ensemble organised an evening of works devised throughout the Ensemble program. Industry peers, UTP Board, funding bodies and friends were invited as audience members. 12 performances took place throughout the evening and those who were unable to participate in person sent in videos of their work.

In addition to the performances (around two and a half hours in length) Ensemble members organised the entire event, including the overall coordination, technical requirements and a final dinner.

Additional Activities

In addition to the yearly program, The Ensemble were given an opportunity to develop their organisational and project coordination skills by acting as project coordinators throughout the series of workshops. This involved each Ensemble member taking responsibility for coordinating the group and acting as the middle person between the workshop facilitator and the Ensemble and included, confirming participation, passing on information about and requirements for the workshop as negotiated with the workshop facilitator, communicating with the UTP office to organise keys, petty cash and access to equipment, opening up and locking the building, organising tea and coffee, setting up the space and collating participant data.

Throughout the year a series of dinners took place in the UTP rehearsal space, which were initiated by UTP and organised by the Ensemble members. During these gatherings the Ensemble were able to articulate ideas, discuss issues and self reflect. This enabled a bonding amongst the Ensemble as well as an opportunity for the Ensemble and UTP staff to come together for group and frank discussion.

A yahoo group email was set up by the Ensemble, which was used as a point of contact for discussion and planning. Ensemble members and UTP staff passed on information relating to workshops, auditions, jobs and interesting events through the group email.

Ensemble members initiated regular outings to performance events and supported each other's work throughout the year.

Final Summary

Now though that I have had time to really reflect I feel that the year was crucial for me and my development and maturing as an artist. I feel every artist has to take a first shaky step and the ensemble was that for me...I was challenged and provoked and at the end of the year I was going to chuck it all in deciding it was definitely not for me.

Six months down the track and I have changed my tune. I now really want it and thanks to the ensemble know what it is and know how much work, discipline and sacrifice it takes but I also know it will be worth it and it is in me. I am embracing who I am as an artist and being proud of what I have to offer...I feel I have taken responsibility and charge of my own work and I have only reached this point and maturity due to the year of the ensemble and the reflection I now have on the year.

So thanks guys it was awesome I feel I have come along way since then and through that year and hope to return to do more work with UTP as a real artist with a definite voice and vision.

Artist Evaluation, March 2006

Overall, the year was challenging and rewarding for both the company and The Ensemble members. It was an ambitious undertaking for the company and each individual who agreed to be part of the year. At initial consultations, Ensemble members articulated the desire for an intense program – however, the reality of masterclasses, personal expectations, work, study and family commitments meant that many people found the intensity and commitment hard to maintain throughout the year.

For me the ensemble was a great experience. But I must admit there were holes in it and I guess its pretty hard to single out the blame...People seemed to be confused and frustrated as they weren't getting some sort of manifest-able result at the end of it (i.e. a big group performance or whatever). But I was always pretty happy with how everything had panned out on that level, on a sense of my acting experience and skills level.

PS. I don't know if you heard about Constellations, but I think you'd have said it was my best performance, I was myself.

Artist Evaluation, March 2006

Both the company and participants are insightful about the program and what was achieved. The leading idea of self-determination was a difficult concept, and many of the Ensemble - some more experienced than others - found this process hard. Many current opportunities for young and emerging artists involve young artists being mentored by senior practitioners. Whereas, the 2005 Ensemble program placed emphasis on making the transition from being a mentored artist, to being one that is self-reliant. For some of the ensemble members this was a useful approach, but for some, it placed too much emphasis on individual and therefore was confronting and alienating. At some of the dinners throughout the year, people articulated that the title *The Ensemble* was misleading, as this implied more a nurtured and group based approach to the year.

I thought the program last year was absolutely amazing and a lot of fun, which is very important, because what's anything you do worth if you don't have fun with it. But I would be lying to myself if I said I was very passionate about theatre, and that's part of the reason why I had to travel and get away from that world.

One thing that Andrew Morrish once said in his workshop was something along the lines of - you have to try doing something else with your life before you decide you want to do theatre, you have to try a lot of things. This for me is

very true...It's not that I never want to do theatre ever again, I just need a break.

Artist Evaluation, March 2006

The MoMO process was a highlight for many Ensemble members, and this was due to its collaborative group approach. At the same time, the dinners throughout the year were also a highlight, as people could come together as a social group to share thoughts and ideas about what was going on. These dinners were also a useful time for people to express concerns about anything that was problematic with the overall program and direction of the year. Some of the conversations lead to a clearer understanding for both the Ensemble and the company about what the year was trying to achieve.

Having the Ensemble allowed me to jump into experiencing arts work and stuff I am interested in doing straight away. I needed to meet new and potential future collaborators, and be exposed to existing creative philosophies and art practices. The artists that UTP invited to share their skills with the Ensemble exceeded my expectations and needs, all while in Bankstown, a place I've fallen in love with.

Artist Evaluation, March 2006

Despite the workload and some of the issues that arose during the year, overall the program was highly successful. Of the 22 Ensemble members who agreed to be part of the program, only one person declined the program. Of the 21 Ensemble members, 17 people contributed to the final showing.

I just wanted to write and thank you all for the time, efforts and imaginings you invested in the Ensemble last year. Since the year ended bringing lots of occasions with various ensemble bumping-intos I've really noticed that I'm part of a community that didn't exist a year ago – a community that's resulted from the Ensemble.

I found the program challenging and interesting and of course if only I'd had MORE TIME! But the best part is that there are relationships now that will continue and they wouldn't be there if we participants hadn't had that time together.

So thanks for setting it all up for us. I think that even if the Ensemble didn't reach the immediate expectations we'd all had, that it will prove to be a force that springs reactions for a long time.

Artist Evaluation, March 2006

One of the intended outcomes was to create a major work or a series of short works in 2006 or to pursue the creative process with Museum of Modern Oddities and *The Water Project*. At one of the final discussions in November 2005, the Ensemble expressed a desire to 'land' for a while and build on their own practice. It was decided that we would leave a major project during 2006, and depending on the interest level of individuals, relook at a project or a series of works during 2007.

Ensemble statistics

During the process of *The Ensemble* data was collected and the following is an overview of the statistics.

- 39 artists were invited to participate in the overall Ensemble program
- 22 written applications were received
- 32 artists registered to participate in the overall Ensemble program
- 21 artists took part as regular Ensemble members
- 32 artists were supported throughout the program

- 64% of the Ensemble were from Western Sydney
- 45% of the Ensemble were from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

Project 9 ***The Folding Wife***

Timeline

please check

Venue

UTP Premises, Hackett House

Key Artists

Writer

Paschal Daantos Berry

Performer

Valerie Berry

Project Description

The Folding Wife is a one-woman text-based theatre that integrates movement, low-tech multimedia and narrative driven performance. It is a collaboration between writer Paschal Daantos Berry, actor Valerie Berry and Manila based hybrid artists from Anino Shadowplay Collective.

The narrative of *The Folding Wife* hangs loosely on the skeleton of Henry Lawson's story *The Drover's Wife*, using the iconic imagery of the fierce and resilient matriarch to drive a story about migration and cultural heritage. It concentrates on a dispute between three women from the same bloodline, trapped in different eras but are all anchored and weighed down by the impulse to leave or flee. *The Folding Wife* takes a personal look at the Philippine Diaspora and examines the social, cultural, physical and psychological landscape that propels people to scatter across the face of the earth; away from home.

In March 2005, Paschal and Valerie spent one week at Urban Theatre Projects to discuss and explore key ideas explicit in the first draft of the script. The process was designed to find the most important elements of *The Folding Wife* and present it to Anino Shadowplay Collective in Manila. The week was spent reading and re-reading the draft, changing and expanding certain scenes and finding ways to tackle the challenge of distinguishing three characters in one actor. As a result of the process, a second draft was written and was taken to Manila by Paschal as part of his Asialink Performing Arts Residency, where he worked with Anino towards a third draft. He is currently working on a later draft.