



Artistic Report 2007

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2007 Review of Operations

UTP undertook an ambitious program in 2007, encompassing a wide range of activities, including:

- *Unravelling the Bride* – a professional development program for emerging and established artists
- *The Folding Wife* – a new work premiering at Blacktown Arts Centre
- International Exchange with Harbourfront Centre in Toronto, and tour of *Back Home* to Toronto's international arts festival, LuminaTO
- *Stories of Love & Hate* – continued research and development for a new work scheduled to premiere in 2008
- *The Last Highway* – development and rehearsal of a new work scheduled to premiere at Sydney festival 2008

In conjunction with the collaboration with Manila-based Anino Shadowplay Collective, UTP developed and coordinated *Unravelling the Bride*, a 5-day workshop intensive for emerging and established artists, to be held at Blacktown Arts Centre prior to rehearsals for *The Folding Wife*. The workshop was facilitated by Australian and international artists, with a focus on cross-cultural and cross-art form collaboration. From an overwhelming response for participation, twelve participants were selected from around Australia.

The Folding Wife was the company's only new work presented in 2007 and continued the international exchange with Anino Shadowplay Collective. Two artists from the Philippines collaborated with three local artists, performing seven sold-out public performances and three schools performances, to audience and critical acclaim.

The most intensive project for the first half of 2007 involved the preparation and undertaking of an international tour and residency in Toronto, Canada. Harbourfront Centre commissioned UTP to present seven performances of the company's 2006 work *Back Home* as part of the international arts festival LuminaTO, and to also undertake a 4-week research and development project for a new work to be created in collaboration with Harbourfront over coming years.

Due to a combination of the intensive support required to tour *Back Home*, the risk of ongoing physical injury and the necessity to replace several original cast members, it was decided in May to cancel a 3-month tour of the work in the second half of 2007.

Development for a new major work, *The Last Highway*, commenced in August with a 4-week creative development phase, followed by a 7-week development and rehearsal phase running from October to December. Two free showings of the work were presented in December for community members and project stakeholders, prior to the premiere season scheduled for January as part of Sydney Festival 2008. Following the Festival launch in November, the company had sold 73% of tickets on sale by 31 December, and had reached box office targets by mid-December.

Throughout the year, UTP continued its Critical Dialogue writing project, with new works published by social and cultural theorist Devleena Ghosh, and collaboration between artists Deborah Pollard and Paschal Berry.

While still officially on maternity leave until September 2007, artistic director Alicia Talbot returned to the company for full-time periods to undertake the Canadian tour, and for development of *The Last Highway*. Deborah Pollard remained interim artistic director until the end of August 2007, having coordinated, facilitated and directed *Unravelling the Bride* and *The Folding Wife*.

Financial Management

As a result of increased activity in 2007, and substantial projects including the international tour and major new work *The Last Highway*, UTP's turnover increased significantly for the financial year, resulting in an end of year surplus of \$14,107.

Excluding funds auspiced on behalf of other artists or organizations, total company income increased by 39%, from \$494,065 in 2006 to \$688,094 in 2007. Primarily, this is a result of the collaboration with Harbourfront Centre in Canada, which had a project turnover of \$142,000. The project was funded by Harbourfront Centre, and supported with international travel grants from the Australia Council for the Arts and Arts NSW.

In addition to company turnover above, UTP also auspiced one grant in 2007 called *The Riot Act* for artist Karen Therese. The project had equal income and expenditure of \$20,270.

A corresponding 33% increase in expenditure from the 2006 result of \$507,133 leapt to \$674,797.

With Accumulated Reserves increased by 14% to \$114,738, the financial position of the company is very secure. Based on expected turnover in 2008, the Reserve Asset Ratio is now at 20%, while the company has an opportunity to renew its three-year funding agreement with the Australia Council for the Arts, encompassing the 2009 to 2011 triennium.

Summary of 2007 Artistic Program

#	Title	Nature of project	Presenter	Partners	Venue	Outcomes
1	The Folding Wife	Rehearsal and Production	Blacktown Arts Centre & UTP	Blacktown City Council	Blacktown Arts Centre	Production
2	Unravelling the Bride: Dissecting the Philippine Diaspora	Masterclass intensive International exchange	Blacktown Arts Centre	Blacktown Arts Centre	Blacktown Arts Centre	Open Showing
3	Back Home	International Tour	Harbourfront Centre & Luminato	Harbourfront Centre	CAMH, Toronto	Season
4	The Last Highway	Creative Development	Sydney Festival & UTP	NSW Health, Bankstown City Council, Sex Workers Outreach Project	Carriage-works, Redfern	Invited showing
5	Stories of Love and Hate	Research & Development	UTP	Bankstown Youth Development Service	UTP Premises	Showing
6	The Last Highway	Rehearsal & Community Showings	Sydney Festival & UTP	NSW Health, Bankstown City Council, Sex Workers Outreach Project,	Industrial Estate, Rosedale Ave, Greenacre	Community Showings (2)
Additional Projects						
	The Folding Wife	Critical Dialogue Essay	UTP			

2007 Summary

Works created	2
Research and Development	2
Creative Development	1
Seasons presented	1
Performances	10
Showings	4+
Artists talks	1
Tours	1
Auspices & Residencies	1

Program of Activities

Project 1 The Folding Wife

The Folding Wife was a unique collaboration between Urban Theatre Projects, Writer Paschal Daantos Berry and Manila based Anino Shadowplay Collective. The work premiered at the newly re-furbished Blacktown Arts Centre in the heart of Blacktown, home to Australia's largest Filipino population.

Timeline

Writer & Performer Residencies: UTP (Bankstown) & Asialink (Manila), 2005
Creative Development: 13 November - 1 December, 2006
Rehearsals: 19 March - 18 April, 2007
Performance Season: 19-28 April, 2007

Venue

Creative Development: UTP Rehearsal Room at Hackett House
Rehearsals: UTP Rehearsal Room and Blacktown Arts Centre
Performance Season: Blacktown Arts Centre

Creative Team

Writer Paschal Daantos Berry
Director: Deborah Pollard
Performer: Valerie Berry
Multi-media artists: Datu Arellano and Andrew Cruz*
Lighting Designer Neil Simpson

*Anino Shadowplay Collective's Datu Arellano and Andrew Cruz worked on *The Folding Wife* in The Philippines and Sydney. Other artists from Anino who contributed work for the project include: Don Maralit Salubayba, Araceli Victoria Arellano, Maria Cristina Quiocho, "Teta" Tulay and Marc Cosico

Technical Production

Production Manager (& Sound Op): Alexander Dick
Lighting Operation: Neil Simpson

Project partners

Blacktown City Council and Blacktown Arts Centre

Introduction

The Folding Wife was a popular and critical success with a mostly sold-out season that played to a culturally diverse mix of Filipino community members and general public from throughout Sydney, as well as the local constituents of Blacktown. Three special matinees were also held for local schools giving them access to live theatre in their local area.

Of particular interest to the audience development ambitions of Blacktown Arts Centre is the fact that over 53% of attendees were from the local Blacktown area, and over 90% made positive statements about the new performance venue.

The artistic success of this show was largely due to the unique talents of the collaborating artists and the two-stage development process. A longer creative

development time enabled the artists to focus on the integration of the script with the more visual mediums of performance and multi-media. As a consequence the artists already had a strong sense of a shared aesthetic when they finally began rehearsing the work for production.

Significant contributions, from Blacktown City Council and the staff at the Blacktown Arts Centre ensured the highest quality presentation. UTP was pleased to continue its partnership with the Blacktown Arts Centre, which started with the *Back Home* project, presented as part of Sydney Festival in 2006. This new project partnership builds upon our shared desire to create original, innovative and relevant work for communities in western Sydney, as well as contribute to the ongoing development of artists and audiences in the region.

Synopsis

Delicate, inventive and revealing ... this ability to shape-shift - to fold into whatever is required - lies at the heart of Filipina resilience.

The Sun-Herald

Grace, a young Filipina woman, is placing her family to rest by packing them up in little boxes. Alone, equipped only with anecdotes, she breathes life to the two women of her family who have led her to the Australian landscape. There is Clara, the grand matriarch who remembers an opulent Philippines of the Spanish era and is comforted by long-gone wealth and an impeccable breeding. Her daughter Dolores is a disappointment having given birth to Grace, after a scandalous affair. For Clara all their problems would be solved if only her daughter would marry a foreigner – *preferably an American.*

Sydney writer Paschal Daantos Berry creates a series of narrative fragments. Drawing on the recollections of Grace, *The Folding Wife* is a landscape of this young woman's selected memory. In the folds and creases of her possessions, in the images and anecdotes about the matriarchs of her family she is able to unravel her own identity.

The Folding Wife explores the external and internal landscapes that propel people to scatter across the face of the earth and the consequences it has for personal and cultural identity. It captures the anxiety of post-colonial poverty in the Philippines and the lure of the First World dream, a circumstance that sits at the heart of many contemporary migrant experiences. Does a country and the promise of a new life measure up to its imagined expectations?

This lovingly realised and beautifully performed work escapes its own cultural limitations of place. While emigration is central to the recent history of the Philippines, that's now true of here, there and everywhere. This work reminds us of the prime motives for people uprooting their lives from the comfortable and familiar to the scary unknown: optimism, hope and striving for a better life.

The Sydney Morning Herald

Writer's Report

Paschal Daantos Berry

Just thought I should tell you how much I have enjoyed being part of UTP with TFW. The experience really restored my love for writing and creating work. Thank you so much for the freedom and for such a wonderful company. It felt like such a luxury.

The Folding Wife began as a conversation in 2002, between my sister Valerie and I. The intention was to continue my exploration on inter-cultural marriages using text driven narrative. In that initial discussion, Valerie and I were interested in delving into the Philippine diaspora through the use of simple story telling and fictionalising our own experiences and our observations of the women in our family. From the beginning, we both agreed that the work would be a balance between personal history and fiction. It was important for us to have some distance from the material in order to develop the work without getting attached to any of its parts.

Val and I had always imagined that the key to "The Folding Wife" was simplicity. From that early draft, I was already looking towards working with a director who was either a choreographer or had a strong background in physical theatre. Secondly, perhaps I was slightly conscious of the amount of spoken text in that first draft and was seeking collaborators who did not feel obliged to use all the written material. In the end, Urban Theatre Project's interest in producing the work shaped the kind of process we would embark on as well as director Deborah Pollard and Anino Shadowplay Collective's involvement directed the way in which the script would develop.

The time with Anino was really important in a sense that it gave me a window for seeing what kind of work *The Folding Wife* could be. Having left the Philippines at an early age, I was aware that the script might have read like an outsider's account of historical events and that the characters could appear somewhat time-locked or old hat. Much of my time in Manila was spent with Teny Arellano, who, in the height of the Marcos era was part of the underground and the leftist resistance. I used this opportunity for a crash course on contemporary Philippine politics, leaving the script to the side so I could just listen to the anecdotes. My mother's family were descendants of colonists and had prospered during the height of the American administration so it was interesting to hear what was happening under the veneer of democracy spun by a bloody dictatorship.

My conversations with Teny shook up memories of curfews and student demonstrations. Also, it stirred more subtle images that were more linked with a specific feeling. I found myself remembering being anxious as a child and the feeling of constantly being watched. Teny and I spoke at great lengths about these women and she would speak about the characters in *The Folding Wife* as though she knew them. The return to the Philippines coupled with the intensive time I spent with Anino injected a deeper authenticity to the work. Perhaps the conversations with Teny, gave me the confirmation that these characters existed and that this narrative I had written was not just my own story.

In retrospect, this work was so much more important for me than I had thought. I suppose I had always - and this is something I loathe to admit - feared the wrath of my own community. Much of that fear stems from earlier works that tended to elicit disapproval as though it was my job as an artist to only write what is complimentary or praising or indeed...beautiful. I still remember a Filipino woman in Downstairs

Belvoir, who after seeing my work *Conversation Through the Wall*, had the most strained look on her face and was upfront enough to say: *Why does it always have to be ugly, why can't we see something nice about us?* And that question still hangs midair for me. Have I become one of those writers who only gravitate towards tales of adversity and suffering? And I guess the bigger question was who was I representing? Whose voice was I speaking if white audiences were the only ones being upfront with their praises?

The Folding Wife became my return to the community in a sense that I had sought out a discourse; I had written something that was intentionally beautiful in order to reveal the truly ugly. In Blacktown, I had hoped that Filipinos would come and witness a tale of survival and resilience- not to feel personally attacked by the content. I also hoped that I could positively contribute to the visibility of Filipino artists and that Filipino audiences could somehow be reflected in what they see in our theatres and our gallery spaces. The Filipino community is largely invisible yet everyone in this city would know at least one *Filo*. I think it's probably time for us to come out of the shadows and for a culture that is proud of its grandiose theatricality, what better place to be visible than the arts.

Process and Performance Style

The Folding Wife is a unique marriage of text, multimedia imagery and contemporary performance making. It is a non-sequential narrative that is told through the memories of Grace, a young Filipina who migrated to Australia with her mother as a child.

The performance is a contemporary theatre work created through a process of cross art-form collaboration. Using the text as the starting point, the artistic team worked closely to extend the life of the word into a rich tapestry of visual nuance, subtext and juxtaposition. From the outset the artists sort to integrate the various artistic languages so that each form was created in support of the other. Such tightly woven integration is easier if all artists are able to collaborate together from the very beginning. Instead of working separately on each component, whether that is text, performance or multimedia, they continuously worked together from the very first rehearsal.

Approach to text

The original draft script of *The Folding Wife* was written in a style similar to 'epic poetry' a wonderful imaginative script but densely written and perhaps too complex for theatrical staging. During the creative development, the group workshopped the script and assisted the writer to arrive at a more performative model. The device of "Grace" as a central narrator of the work was an important breakthrough. During this time the text was also broken into non-sequential narrative chapters, freeing up the possibilities for different modes of storytelling and performance.

Through this new direction Paschal became interested in the notion of selective memory and how this could be played out through broken narratives and visuals. This less linear approach to writing gave all the artists the freedom to explore different interpretations of the text through the various artistic mediums. The work took on a joint authorship, the writer remained present in the rehearsal room throughout the process and the script altered depending on the ideas explored by the creative team.

Approach to Performance and Multimedia

The team would often approach the staging of scenes through discussion of the underlying themes of the work. These themes would become the starting point for experimental play, creating imagery that provides subtext and juxtaposition for the narrative lines.

The director and performer played with visual actions to great effect. New dramaturgical directions were found through creative play, inspiring the writer to respond with new scenes. Anino Shadowplay members responded to performance imagery blending projected imagery that complimented the artistic intention of the staging. This tight integration of text, performance and multimedia created layers of meaning, texture, ambience and rhythm.

On occasion a text would be given to the visual artists to reinterpret through their medium. We would often experiment in this way with different kinds of processes to see how it could impact upon the overall performance style.

Anino Shadowplay Collective combine high tech video with low-tech object puppetry projected through an overhead projector and data projector. Simple mediums such as lace, sand, dye, water and transparent objects were used to create potent images that supported and juxtaposed the narratives. The simple mediums mixed with high tech video give Anino a particular and unique aesthetic that became an integral part of the visual style of *The Folding Wife*.

From the beginning Deborah was interested in integrating the multimedia artists into the stage action, they became the overall manipulators of the space. They would dress the performer, pose the performer and interact with the performer. It made dramaturgical sense of their presence in the space and created a deconstructed setting where audience could watch the artists construct the projected imagery and its more intimate relationship with the world of the performance.

It was a playful process with many laughs with each artist showing considerable generosity and consideration for each-others work. From the outset the team had a shared understanding of the kind of work they wanted to make and each artist was invested and committed to the vision outlined by the writer and the director. The project's success also comes from the personal connection the Filipino artists had with the work. The group understood the importance of representing a Filipino voice, which is often invisible in contemporary Australian arts and media. This was also reflected by the positive responses by the Filipino community to the work.

The Folding Wife also transcended a single reading, offering the general public a work about a contemporary Australian condition. The work reflects a contemporary Australian psyche and the concerns of many who have migrated to Australia in the hope of a better future.

Audience Survey results

UTP's questionnaire was displayed at Blacktown Arts Centre Foyer. There was a 21% response rate.

Data has been analysed as follows:

Most (**71%**) spectators were attending a UTP performance for the 1st time.

Over half (**52.2%**) of respondents were attending *The Folding Wife* as a result of word of mouth. Remaining attendees became aware of the performance through Email/Internet (**19%**); newspaper ad (**15%**); and direct mail (**12%**).

Respondents stated the reason for attending the performance was because it had been recommended to them by someone (**41%**); followed by the Subject Matter (**20%**); because they knew someone in the show (**15.5%**); and because of UTP's reputation (**14.4%**). A smaller number attended due to a review they read (**6.7%**), or an advertisement (**5.5%**).

An overwhelming majority (**76.5%**) of respondents had been to more than 2 performances in the past 12 months, (**41%** 2-4 times and **35.5%** 5 times or more). However there was a high number of people attending their first performance for the period (**21%**).

Most respondents (**66.6%**) loved or (**25.5%**) liked the performance. 3.3% were ambivalent. **49%** loved and **43.3%** liked the venue.

41% didn't state what they liked of the performance but of those who did, the most stated the beauty and quality of the performance (**37%**), followed by the visual effects (**11%**). Performer rated **7%** and cultural issues **4.5%**.

More than half the respondents were Female (**65.5%**). Age varied from 25 to 34 years (**29%**), 45-54 years (**19%**), 55-64 years (**15.5%**). **13.3%** were from the two remaining age groups: 18-24 and 35-44 years.

Of female attendees, **32%** were 25-34 and **23%** were 45-54 years.

88% were from Sydney, including **53.5%** from Blacktown and surrounding suburbs. **31%** of respondents traveled from Central Sydney, and **3%** lived overseas.

Surprisingly, less than half of the respondents were Australian borne (**48%**). **25.5%** were of an Asian background (including **20%** from Philippines) and **5.5%** were from a European background. Of the languages spoken at home, English accounted for (**70%**), and a range of Asian languages (**23%**) dominated.

More than half of respondents (**72%**) were in employment (**48%** full time or **24.4%** part time). Half of the respondents held tertiary qualifications (**51.1%**).

Media

The Folding Wife attracted wide-ranging coverage across all media, including local, state and national.

Sydney Morning Herald	Print	Review
The Daily Telegraph	Print	Feature article
The Sun Herald	Print	Review
Philippine Times	Print & Online	Article & Review
Bankstown Torch	Print	Article
Canterbury Bankstown	Print	Article

Express		
Blacktown Advocate	Print	Article
RealTime	Print	Review
Sydney Stage	Online	Review
Balitung Australia	TV (Australia & The Philippines)	Feature
Pinoy TV (TVS)	TV	Feature
Asia Pacific Focus (ABC)	TV	Short segment
ABC Radio National	Radio	Interview
2SER	Radio	Interview

Project 2 Unravelling the Bride

Unravelling the Bride was a collaborative workshop intensive with national and international arts practitioners exploring cross-cultural and cross-art form practices. It was a partner project to *The Folding Wife* and was facilitated by *The Folding Wife* creative team and guest artist Alfredo Juan Aquillizan, a Filipino installation artist now based in Brisbane.

Timeline

13 – 17 March, 2007

Venue

Blacktown Arts Centre

Creative Team

Curator and workshop facilitator: Paschal Daantos Berry (Writer)
 Curator and workshop facilitator: Deborah Pollard (Performer, Director)
 Workshop facilitator: Datu Arellano and Andrew Cruz (Anino Shadowplay Collective – Multi-media artists, performers)
 Guest artist: Alfredo Juan Aquilizan (Installation artist)

Participants:

Mishelle Grigor (Performer Sydney), Teik Kim Pok (Performer) Sydney, Beck Ronkson (Performer Sydney), Lynda Ng (Writer Sydney) Caroline Wake (Academic Sydney) Tessa Needha (Performer Sydney), Paola Bilbrough (Writer Melbourne), Janet Callinicos (Visual Artist Brisbane), Jonathan Vencore (Visual Artist Sydney), Maria Randall (Dancer Alice Springs), Carolyn Teo (Visual Artist Sydney) Margie Breen (Performer Sydney/Bathurst)

Project Partner

Blacktown Arts Centre

Project Description

Unravelling the Bride was a 5-day workshop intensive for emerging and established artists of various disciplines who were interested in exploring contemporary cultural identity and interdisciplinary collaborative processes.

Unravelling the Bride offered the perfect opportunity to explore creative practice as part of a vibrant artistic exchange with other artists. The workshop attracted artists from varying cultural backgrounds and art-form practices.

Developed in response to collaboration between Filipino and Australian artists, *Unravelling the Bride* was a platform for exploring and discussing notions of contemporary cultural identity and how it informs artistic practice. Through a series of discussions, artist presentations and workshops, participants engaged in collaborative projects focusing on explorations of contemporary cultural identity and cross art-form collaboration.

Unravelling the Bride created opportunities for artists to widen their networks, connect with the community and examine their own contemporary identity. The process encouraged the affirmation of one's culture and support for the development of a provisional community through creative collaboration.

An Assessment of Successes and Failures

Unravelling the Bride was an experiment that paid off. The structure of the workshop included a series of hypothetical and practical projects that encouraged participants to freely explore practice and engage in unknown processes without the pressure of having to create a public outcome. These types of experiences can help artists shift and develop their practice as well as find potential new collaborators for future work.

An emphasis on cross-cultural and cross art-form collaboration enables artists to address form and content at the same time. There is potential for a clearer understanding of the different art-form languages and the varying artistic responses possible to the same thematic starting point. To be given the opportunity to work outside your own aesthetic and conceptual concerns can be very liberating, often allowing the artists to clearly define their own practice and processes and consequently develop and shift their own work.

The five-day duration could have been longer given the amount of information and activities covered in the time. In the future, UTP is considering the development of a new workshop opportunity modeled on *Unravelling the Bride* that will be held over 10 days, allowing each activity more space to develop. The company is keen to capitalize on the knowledge gained from this initial workshop process and utilize it in future development opportunities for the independent artists' sector.

There were far more applications received for *Unravelling the Bride* than there were places in the workshop. This indicated a strong need from the independent artists sector for quality training opportunities and forums in which to meet like-minded artists. This particularly applies to cross-cultural artists who often feel marginalised. *Unravelling the Bride* offered an opportunity to meet and discuss the difficulties facing artists in this sector, as well as the opportunities. The added advantage of meeting artists from all over the country created the potential for collaborations with artists that would not have been otherwise possible.

The generosity offered by our host organisation at Blacktown Arts Centre also provided a number of new opportunities. The venue was well equipped to host such a workshop. There were a number of areas and different studio spaces that were highly conducive to a workshop environment, where teams of artists often need to separate to discuss and create work. The Blacktown environment also became an integral part of the workshop thematic with artists asked to map the cultural environs through various mediums. The dense multicultural nature and diversity of

Blacktown gave ample stimulus for discussion and work about mapping cultural identity.

Staff at Blacktown Arts Centre were very helpful and generous with their time. Staff became integrated within the workshop as guest speakers, giving informative historic information about the local area. In addition to providing equipment and access to space, staff also assisted in locating various sites for exercises in Blacktown.

Outcomes

The workshop concluded with farewell drinks for participants and an informal showing of workshop outcomes for invited peers. This included improvisational exercises with various mediums from the Anino Shadowplay Collective's repertoire and installation work created with Alfredo Juan Aquilizan.

A majority of the work explored during the workshop was process-driven and did not have a public outcome. A strong emphasis was placed on exploring working models for cross-art form and cross-cultural collaboration.

Feedback from *Unravelling the Bride* Workshop participants

The 'Anino's' were so warm, generous and egalitarian...I was struck by the way they had used limited resources as opportunities for creativity so that the limitations became a source of strength, as well as by their combinations of new media and everyday household materials.

Janet Callinicos

I found the on-location task most challenging because I had no choice on either the task, the partner, the location or the medium we were asked to use. However, being asked to create art from these imposed limits was a good experience. The challenge of working outside of my comfort zone forced me to create a different sort of art than I normally would have.

Lynda Ng

For me Unravelling the Bride was five days of images and a tool-kit to create images. The work of the Anino Shadow play had a huge impact on me. The sheer joy of creating, making mistakes and tapping into a sense of the imagination being informed by our immediate environment and identity...

Paola Bilbrough

It made me consider not only shadows, but also creative and interesting ways to shape layers of the work with darkness and light, how much these aspects can create experiences that are 'separate' or 'other' to the experience of the performance...

Mish Grigor

The workshops allowed me an insight into my own practice and the understanding that time plays an important part in the final produce and the degree and integrity allowed within that time to nurture and develop a piece to it's fullest.

Mariaa Randall

I feel more aware of the choices I make in the moment of collaborations now. I've been able to articulate my habits – which is extremely useful now to me – as I can build on my strengths and work on my flaws!

Beck Ronkson

Project 3

Back Home

Timeline

Rehearsal	23 April - 4 May
Season	1 -7 June
Research & Development	14 May – 8 June

Venue

Rehearsal Syd	PACT
Rehearsal & Season Canada	Centre for Mental Health and Addiction

Key Artists

Director	Alicia Talbot
Performer/Devisers	Buddy Danoun, Aaron Fa'Aoso, Leo Tanoi and Shannon Williams
Lighting Designer	Neil Simpson
Set Designer	Sam James
Sound Artist	Liberty Kerr
Dramaturg	Deborah Pollard
Movement Consultant	Lee Wilson
Traditional Dance Consultants	Djahn Doolan and Emmanuel Daniel

In May and June 2007 Urban Theatre Projects (UTP) toured to Canada at the invitation of Harbourfront Centre (HFC) in Toronto. This tour marks a significant commitment to an ongoing artistic partnership between UTP and Harbourfront Centre.

The partnership involved two key initiatives:

1. Presenting an existing work, *Back Home*, in a meaningful local context, as part of Harbourfront Centre's New World Stage International Performance Series and the inaugural LuminaTO, Toronto's international arts festival; and
2. An intensive research and development process for the commissioning of a proposed new work to be made in residence in Toronto and presented at a future festival.

Research and Development

This process was undertaken by UTP's Artistic Director Alicia Talbot, who was in Toronto May 12-June 16, 2007; UTP's General Manager Simon Wellington; Harbourfront Centre Artistic Associate Allison Bottomley; and Community Liaison, Lisa Pijuan-Nomura, who was hired on contract for the R&D period; in consultation with New World Stage Artistic Director Tina Rasmussen.

Alicia Talbot and Simon Wellington travelled to Toronto two weeks ahead of the *Back Home* touring party to participate in a research and development process for a new work. The R&D process focused on finding a common language between the Harbourfront team and UTP. In these initial weeks the company undertook a number of meetings with Harbourfront Centre staff, arts organisations, community and

service organisations, Toronto-based artists, community leaders, cultural thinkers and academics. Alicia Talbot focused on the research and development component of the process and Simon Wellington liaised with HFC to consolidate the production logistics and marketing requirements for the *Back Home* tour.

The first couple of days were spent in intensive discussions with HFC's Associate Director Allison Bottomley. These discussions allowed for a deeper conceptual and artistic understanding of the philosophies and processes Alicia engages with to create new work. It also allowed Alicia to gain a greater understanding of HFC's working philosophy and a snapshot of the current social and political climate in Toronto. These early discussions resulted in generating a timetable of meetings for the next five weeks.

Extensive meetings were conducted with local community groups and individuals, particularly within the aboriginal community, before the actual presentation period of *Back Home*. These groups were then invited to attend the performance of *Back Home*, either on the community showing scheduled for May 31 (ultimately cancelled due to poor weather and performance conditions) or throughout the performance run. Organizations and individuals that were met with in the pre-performance period included: The Centre for Indigenous Theatre, The Theatre Centre, Parkdale Community Health Centre, Culturelink, Jane Marsland, Workman Arts, visiting UK artist Josette Bushell-Mingo, The Dodem Kanonhsa', Elder Pauline Shirt, The Native History Project, The Native Canadian Centre, CAMH Community Relations office, Elder Vern Harper and the Woodlands Cultural Centre.

Bus Tour

Community Liaison Facilitator Lisa Pijuan-Nomura's role was to facilitate meetings with community organisations and develop the bus component for the *Back Home* tour. Initially HFC had envisioned the tour as reflecting the contemporary cultural diversity of Toronto. However, after discussions with Alicia and similar to *Back Home* in Sydney we began to focus on traditional and contemporary Native Canadian histories of Toronto.

Through research we discovered there was an existing bus tour of Toronto that detailed native Canadian histories of the area. As the decision was made early on to incorporate a bus tour component into the Toronto season, Harbourfront Centre and Urban Theatre Projects were able to enter into a partnership with the Native History Project at the Native Canadian Centre and their existing Great Indian Bus Tour of Toronto. Originated by Rodney Bobiwash and facilitated by the Native History Project coordinator Monica Bodirsky and playwright Alanis King, the existing bus tour is a 6-hour tour of the city exploring little-known and hidden aboriginal history within the urban environment; for *Back Home*, the Native History Project was able to develop and train three new participants to give an abridged version of the tour on a route along the waterfront to our performance site at CAMH. Forming a partnership with the Native Canadian Centre also meant first nation artists and community members participated in welcoming drumming ceremonies at the *Back Home* site.

Back Home Season

Back Home was presented in an outdoor site in the grounds of the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH). The cast and production team arrived in

Toronto a week in advance of the season, conducted technical and dress rehearsals on-site, had a 3-day break, followed by seven performances on consecutive days. Prior to the trip, the company held rehearsals in Sydney for two weeks.

Because of timeline difficulties, instead of freighting the existing set Harbourfront Centre contracted set and prop specialists to replicate the *Back Home* house and props. The season was well attended and very well received by local audiences.

Following the season of *Back Home*, Alicia held two consultations with artists and community members to talk about the thematic concerns, form and aesthetic of *Back Home*. In the week of June 11, two consultative sessions were held at Harbourfront Centre, facilitated by Alicia Talbot. In these sessions, groups of 5-10 community members were invited to give feedback about *Back Home*, discuss its themes and local implications, and discuss what issues or ideas they would like to see explored in a potential future production by Urban Theatre Projects to be made in Toronto. A total of thirteen people participated in the consultative sessions and were paid an honorarium; while drawn from a diverse group of artists and individuals, 90% of those in attendance were of aboriginal background or representing aboriginal organizations. These consultative sessions were extremely valuable learning and sharing experiences and provided strong bedrock for any future work to be undertaken, both with Urban Theatre Projects and for Harbourfront Centre in its own activities.

Harbourfront Centre also hosted an artist "meet and greet" during Urban Theatre Projects' visit. Attended by Simon Wellington and Alicia Talbot, Harbourfront Centre staff and 20 local artists and cultural workers, this informal evening provided UTP the opportunity to present their work and methodology to a diverse group of the local cultural community and to meet and chat with them, forging new relationships and opportunities for artistic exchange.

Impact

This was Urban Theatre Projects' first international tour and the company and the production were extremely well received. The work of the UTP has a strong international resonance and the artistic form, model of community consultation and thematic concerns addressed in *Back Home* were highly relevant to the Toronto context. Artistically, there was an emphasis on the production's unique approach to naturalism and this helped define the unique work of the company from a foreign perspective.

It sounds like a recipe for something earnest, dull, potentially sentimental and probably very fake... the results, to judge from the remarkable play the company is performing on the Queen Street grounds of the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health as part of the Luminato festival, are the very opposite: hard, raw and real.

Back Home rejoices in the kind of true naturalism that theatre has been seeking on and off since the 19th Century.

The Globe and Mail, 6 June, 2007

The presentation of *Back Home* in a new site and the R&D process also demonstrated the high level of skills and expertise UTP has in a particular niche of making and presenting new work. These skills and knowledge have come from many

years of experience producing new work that is site specific, responsive to the immediate social and political climate and is generated in dialogue with community consultants.

HFC was an excellent organisation to host UTP as there is a real *simpatico* between the philosophical underpinnings of each organisation and their practical working processes.

Harbourfront had tangible outcomes from the R&D process and the *Back Home* tour – the combination extending well beyond the delivery of just one work. HFC have increased their networks of artists from diverse non-English speaking backgrounds as well as community and artists from First Nation backgrounds. HFC recognised the need for greater networks and involvement of these sectors. Through the UTP process they were able to tangibly see how this is possible. The *Back Home* tour continued to open up a dialogue between Indigenous Australians and First Nation Indigenous Canadians. This had been initiated by previous tours such as Yirra Yaakin's *Windmill Baby*.

UTP received international exposure through the *Back Home* tour and has had more enquiries by overseas presenters about the work of the company including support from other Australian presenters and directors who were attending the festival, saw the work and advocated on the company's behalf.

Another great benefit was that members of the *Back Home* cast received international exposure for their work as performers and musicians, and therefore gained a greater understanding of the expectations and obligations of artists working in an international context.

Successes and Challenges

In Toronto

The notion of marketing process has always been difficult for UTP where, in the past we have struggled to find a way to tour particular models without compromising the artistic vision and process. The opportunity with HFC showed a potential structure of working and touring where this is possible and opens up a new arena for future collaborations and models of working.

The timeline for the R&D and performance worked well, allowing enough time for integration of knowledge learnt and contacts made. The Director/Producer combination of Alicia and Simon worked well, helping to spread the load, offering the necessary skills sets for engaging in a process of R&D for a new work and ensuring that many of the challenges for staging *Back Home* were met before the team arrived.

One of the great challenges in touring a work such as *Back Home* is that the project was the result of a very intense community consultation process within a specific location. Transplanting that very organic connection to an international location – a park within the grounds of an inner-city centre for addiction and mental health – presented questions about the appropriate context for the work, and very practical assaults on the work's intimate staging.

HFC had really struggled to find a venue within our specifications, as well as being restricted by local government guidelines for outdoor performance in public spaces, and when we saw the proposed site felt that the integrity of the work might have been compromised. After lengthy discussion, and tours to other potential sites around the city, it became that the only viable and expedient solution was to put in place some strategies to make the existing site work – in terms of aesthetics, production and amenities. A major issue was ambient sound – an adjacent street had regular cable cars and intermittent heavy traffic. This led to a decision that the show would have sound reinforcement. *Back Home* was made very much with the intention of being an acoustic work – heightening the realism and intimacy – and both the production and creative team were reticent to amplify. However, HFC spared no expense in installing an exceptional sound system and hiring a sound engineer to work with our own engineer, and find a 'realistic' solution. The result was very successful and increased UTP's awareness of technology compatible with the sensibilities of our work.

HFC's efforts to section off and secure the site also proved successful. The Toronto rebuild of our set and dedication to creating a suitable aesthetic for its staging meant that the work's potency and quality were not diminished.

In Sydney

Perhaps some of the more considerable challenges faced during this project were actually prior to departing Australia. Our invitation to participate in HFC's program was confirmed at the end of October 2006. Following our work to secure the offer and then confirm funding, including our application to the Australia Council in early November, we then set about preparing the team.

During this time, we were informed that one of our original cast members would not be available for the tour. Another cast member did not have a passport, while several cast members had previous criminal convictions that required special travel permits (these also restricted the team from travelling through the United States, the most common route to Canada).

In Rehearsal

Due to one of the original cast members being unavailable, we auditioned and cast a new performer, and increased rehearsals to two weeks prior to departure. Our cast is quite inexperienced in the professional theatre industry and, as such, unaware of the limitations of the company's resources both human and financial. There were misconceptions about what the company was able to offer and also difficulty with the challenges of touring a demanding work in an overseas environment.

While this presented small challenges to management and the artistic team, it gave the company a valuable insight into the demands of touring different works and, in some cases, the appropriateness of specific works for touring. As a result of this, we recognised that *Back Home* was not suitable for long-term touring for it would expose the artistic team to physical and emotional risk and, aware of the fact that we would have to replace another original cast member, lack the high level of artistic quality achieved during previous seasons. Based on these findings, we made the decision to cancel a three-month national tour scheduled for late-2007.

In Summary

While this was a challenging project for UTP, it was also a highly successful initiation into the complexities of international touring and exchange. The company has learnt a vast amount from producing the tour itself and has excellent systems in place for future projects.

The relationship with Harbourfront Centre is also a very strong one. HFC are now sourcing funding to initiate future stages of a new work to be developed by UTP in Toronto, following our submission of a full project proposal after returning to Sydney.

As such, support for this project should be considered a valuable investment in new ways of forging international relationship. UTP is a company that revels in the exchange of ideas, and researching and developing projects on location and in partnership with hosts and their stakeholders – often forging new partnerships for those stakeholders. Doing this in tandem with the presentation of an existing work that exemplifies the development model was a crucial factor in establishing understanding and respectful relationships that will endure into the future.

Project 4 & 6 The Last Highway

UTP undertook a creative development and rehearsal process for a new performance *The Last Highway* scheduled to premiere as part of Sydney Festival 2008. The artistic team worked in consultation with a diverse range of late night shift workers, community consultants, health professionals and cultural thinkers to develop material that culminated in a two night community showing.

Artistic Team

Director / Original Concept: Alicia Talbot

Performers / Devisors: Suzannah Bayes-Morton, Kathy Cogill, Adam Hatzimanolis, George Kanaan, Rajan Thangavelu & Yana Taylor

Creative Development Felino Dolloso, Tammie Jarrett,

Set Design Mirabelle Wouters

Lighting Design Mirabelle Wouters & Neil Simpson

Performance Consultant Lee Wilson

Dramaturg Deborah Pollard

Sound Consultant Carl Polke

Community Liaison Lina Kastoumis

Production Manager Tristan Taylor

Consultants

Lawrence Burgess, Mohammad Codmani, Craig Cooper, Sione Crawford, Tiffany Evans, Jacqueline Fennell, Melinda Fenton, Ghassan Hage, Kha Hien Huynh, Hamid Khan, Sajjad Khan, Lindsay McCormack, Sarah McLennan, Larissa Marr, Sal Mauro, Wendy Parsons, Sallie Pinwill, Suzanne Robinson, Bill Tsakonas, Rachel Wotton.

Partner Organisations

South West Sydney Area Health and HARP (HIV and Related Programs) SWOP (Sex Workers Outreach Program), NUAA (NSW Users and Aids Association), and Repidu (Canterbury Hospital Drug Unit).

Timeline

Creative Development	6 – 31 August, 2007
Rehearsal	29 October – 14 December 2007
Community Showings	6 & 7 December 2007

Description of Project

The Last Highway offers glimpses of people who are positioned at the edges of our society. People, who by circumstance and choice, live in the recesses of the night. The work examines some of the complex issues embedded within notions of contested land and territory, and dispossession and belonging. Located in a service station, *The Last Highway* explores the interactions of six personas - a service station worker, a taxi driver, a kebab caravan owner, and three street-based sex workers.

One of the key questions that has driven the creative investigation is: What gets you through the night? In dealing with this central question the work explores our contemporary social and political environment through individual transactions and interpersonal relationships. With inspiration from the writer and philosopher Ghassan Hage, this work also deals with the premise that good people can act in ugly ways and that small acts of kindness can transcend vocabularies of difference and cultural isolation - who has the right to be on this land at this moment, and how do we negotiate territory and vocabularies of hate, indifference and fear?

Through a process of discussion, consultation and structured improvisation, the intercultural cast explored the depths and complexities of individuals alongside perceived stereotypes of late night shift workers.

Development Process

In August, a four-week creative development took place at Bay 21 (the large undeveloped bay) at Carriageworks, and involved an artistic team of 12 artists working in consultation with late night shift workers, industry and health professionals. The creative development was informed by a two-week research and development phase undertaken by director Alicia Talbot, designer Mirabelle Wouters and performance consultant Lee Wilson in April 2006.

In October- December, a seven-week rehearsal process took place at an industrial warehouse in Greenacre. The first three weeks of the rehearsal were conducted in a small warehouse and the last four weeks of rehearsal we relocated to an adjoining warehouse, which was to be our final performance site for the community showings and the 2008 public season. The warehouse had two large roller doors that opened onto a public and was located in an industrial estate. The rehearsal and community showing was framed against the constant action of a late night smash repair and an isolated road.

The six performers Suzanne Bayes-Morton, Kathy Cogill, Adam Hatzimanolis, George Kanaan, Rajan Thangavelu, and Yana Taylor were drawn from a diverse range of performing backgrounds including traditional and contemporary dance,

traditional cultural forms, theatre and performance. Performers Fellino Dolloso, Tammie Jarrett were part of the original team during the creative development but were replaced by Adam Hatzimanolis and Yana Taylor in the rehearsal phase. Ahilian Ratnamohan joined the team a week prior to the community showing, to perform a cameo and by 'car handler'.

Initially, to generate material Alicia Talbot would facilitate discussions around the work's key areas of investigation and then offer provocations to the performers. Sometimes these were individual tasks requiring each performer to respond with material, and sometimes they would be active and long-running improvisations with constant interventions from the director. These improvisations would be based around blocks of action rather than focus on specific text or choreographic moves. Each moment would be based on a synthesis of physical language, an emotional state, text and a conceptual premise. During the rehearsal phase this material was reshaped and assembled into a framework and new material was also created.

Part of the early improvisation process involved artists DJ-ing their own soundtrack. Within the design there were a number of existing sound sources (the service station, the cars, the kebab van), from which performers and the director could play music and soundscapes at any stage. The ensemble drew on a wide range of music and sounds to experiment with including traditional and contemporary culturally specific music, popular culture, classical, and industrial manipulated soundscapes. Prior to the creative development period each performer was asked to compile a list of personal anthems to work with in developing material.

Sound artist Carl Polke joined the team part way through the rehearsal process. He began to create a soundscape that underpinned the tension of the work and also amplified the nightscape of the area. During the rehearsal phase Carl experimented with live and composed soundscapes. One of the key areas of investigation how the placement of the sound informed the reality of the piece – for example, the service station music coming from servo speakers, the underlying sound scape coming from behind the audience. Performance consultant Lee Wilson, who has a strong understanding of the role of sound in performance, collaborated with Carl to inform some of the directional sound choices. An ongoing challenge was amplifying the voices of the performers within the industrial space. Part of the aesthetic of the work is the liveness of spoken voice and due the aesthetic formalism and physical nature of the piece radio mics were not considered an ideal choice. As in Canada with *Back Home* we experimented with in situ mics and live mixing as a way of amplifying specific text.

Performance consultant Lee Wilson and dramaturg Deborah Pollard also worked with the team on a part-time basis throughout the two phases. Lee facilitated sessions exploring the concerns of the work through non-verbal forms and physical improvisations. Lee is highly skilled at developing performance material through layers of improvisation and assisting performers to sculpt and refine their material and physical choices. Dramaturg Deborah Pollard observed rehearsals and in smaller meetings posed questions about the overall nature of the work and some of the performative languages and representations being dealt with.

The working relationship between Deborah, Lee and Alicia has matured over a number of years, and there is a strong level of enquiry and active debate. While all three artists share a strong artistic vocabulary there are distinct formal and aesthetic

concerns for each artist that promote lively discussion. This encourages different approaches to dramaturgical and creative material and often leads to the distillation of ideas and theatrical forms.

Prior to the creative development, designer Mirabelle Wouters constructed the façade of the service station and throughout the next two stages, constructed the service station and the kebab van and detailed the set. Mirabelle comes from a background of visual art, object design and dance. She designs physical structures that incorporate lights as a key element of their design to evoke an architectural sense of space through minimalism and abstraction.

The Last Highway design was inspired a series of photos and images collected during the research and development phase in April 2006, and the painter Edward Hopper. As the work was intended to be located adjacent to a road or highway, Mirabelle constructed the façade of a service station so the audience could look through allowing the performative action to take place within the greater landscape of the site. During the creative development we used a large-scale video projection of a moving road to evoke the sense of another world. Lighting designer Neil Simpson also collaborated with Mirabelle as part of the vision of the work that experimented with domestic and commercial sources of lighting that would be found in a service station and street rather than standard theatre or gallery lighting.

Artistic Impact

The creative investigation for *The Last Highway* had a number of well known departure points that director Alicia Talbot had had experience in grappling with. However, due to the subject material of the work, the unique combination of artists, and the consultation process the material developed during the process was stylistically very different to work developed previously by Alicia.

The team of assembled artists came from such diverse artistic backgrounds that often we would be working with very different sets of performance languages and looking for the places that their ideas and the material would intersect. Deborah Pollard described the piece as working with the language of the real, the language of the abstract and the language of the symbolic.

Due to the nature of the sites, spoken text became almost impossible to hear which led to a predominantly visual and physical investigation. During the process we discussed the temporal nature of the work and notions of epic theatre and performance. Some of the raw material created through the development period lifted into moments of the surreal and the abstract. Alicia, Mirabelle, Lee, and Deborah had many discussions regarding the hyper-real nature of the work. Given the scale of the site, the scale of the set and the use of live cars the work demanded a sense of the epic and large scale.

We constantly walked a fine line of the notion of the real and the surreal. As a director, Alicia favours a work that lends itself to reality. Where the trappings of a performance space are disguised or discarded and the sound and set design, lights and performance style work to broker a performance territory that throws up questions about the real and the artificial. For example, what elements of a real service station were necessary to evoke a sense of real and what could sit as an

abstraction or absence? How did the use of real cars affect the footprint of the design and the scale of the set?

During the construction of the set, the bare bones metal facade had a *Dogville* quality to it and this influenced and changed the nature of the material the ensemble was creating. The set evoked numerous discussions and artistic provocations about the nature of the material we were making and what kind of work both aesthetically and formally it would be.

Community Consultation Process

"After the first session I felt really positive, like there was a sense at last, our little voices would be out there – Maybe people would look at us in a different light."

"I like how it's not cheesy or sensationalistic. I am proud of it – there's a piece of me, a piece of all of us in it"

The Last Highway, community consultant interviews. Nov 2007

The Last Highway also employed a unique consultative process that involved community consultants, health professionals and cultural thinkers attending rehearsals on a weekly basis and responding to material and scenes generated through extensive discussions and long-running improvisations. The consultants were considered experts in the process and paid for their time. Their critical and dramaturgical feedback would demand that the artistic team reconsider the material and look at ways of refining and developing the dramaturgical ideas and creative languages of the overall piece.

The consultation process was facilitated by Community Liaison Lina Kastoumis. Prior to the commencement of the creative development Lina and Alicia undertook a number of meetings with health professionals from South West Sydney Area Health Service and HARP (HIV and Related Programs) and two peer-based service organizations, SWOP (Sex Workers Outreach Program) and NUAA (NSW Users and Aids Association). During these meetings the philosophy of UTP and the methodology of the consultation process was explained and the process was tailored to meet the specific needs of consultants. For example, the service organisations were initially very protective of their clients and UTP conducted gender-specific consultations for the first few sessions.

Lina and Alicia accompanied NUAA and SWOP workers in their outreach work to street-based sex workers on Canterbury Rd and developed relationships with a number of workers who formed the core group for weekly consultations. In addition to the women, Lina continued to develop relationships with male shift workers and other citizens of the night including taxi-drivers, petrol station attendants, an ex-police officer who now works as a drug/alcohol counsellor, and drug and sexual health educators. Cultural and social anthropologist, Ghassan Hage also came into rehearsals during the creative development and offered dramaturgical feedback.

Statistics - Stage 1 Creative Development

There were two SWOP outreach nights 26th July and 23rd August, in this creative development period where Community Liaison and Director accompanied workers from SWOP/NUAA on outreach to Bankstown street based sex workers.

- There were 5 primary consultation days – on the 1st, 8th, 16th, 22nd & 29th August 2007..
- A total of 28 paid consultants participated in the Stage I consultation process, including Bankstown area Street-Based sex workers, Ex-policemen, Service station attendants, Taxi Drivers and Drug educators.
- Of these consultants 90% were repeat attendees.
- A total of 4 workers observed the consultation process. The workers came from the services SWOP (Sex Workers Outreach Project), NUAA and Repidu (Canterbury Hospital Drug Unit).
- A total of 12 consultants were currently sex working on Canterbury Road.
- A total of 3 consultants had previously worked on Canterbury Road as sex workers.
- A total of 3 consultants still worked nights on Canterbury Road – Service Station Attendant and Taxi Drivers.
- A total of 4 were from CALD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse) Backgrounds.
- A total of 31 people attended the creative development showing on Friday 31st of August 2007.

Statistics - Stage 2 Rehearsal Process

- There were 4 primary consultation days – on the 9th, 15th, 22nd of November and the 4th December.
- A total of 29 paid consultants participated in the Stage 2 Rehearsal process, including Bankstown area Street-Based sex workers, Ex- sex workers, Ex-policemen, Service station attendants, local food vendors, Arab-Australian community members, Taxi Drivers and Drug educators.
- Of these consultants 85% were repeat attendees.
- A total of 8 workers observed the consultation process. The workers came from the services SWOP (Sex Workers Outreach Project), NUAA and South West Sydney Area Health Service
- A total of 8 female consultants were currently sex working on Canterbury Road.
- A total of 8 female consultants had previously worked on Canterbury Road as sex workers.
- A total of 4 consultants still worked nights on Canterbury Road – Service Station Attendant and Taxi Drivers.
- A total of 9 were from CALD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse) Backgrounds.
- A total of 150 people attended the two nights of the community showings on Thursday 6th December & Friday 7th December.

Impact of the Project

The Last Highway development process was both challenging and inspiring. Creating work in non conventional spaces and drawing on hybrid processes of dialogue between artists and non-arts professionals shifts the nature of the artistic investigation beyond conventional devised performance techniques. This synthesis of artist, idea, site and consultative process influences the performance languages and aesthetics creating a distinctive layering of narrative fragments, imagery and artistic practices.

The intersection of the consultation process and artistic team brings a unique set of vocabularies and ideas to the creative process. The consultants would feedback that often references movies or make suggestions that may be considered clichéd choices for performance and theatre. The artists use a language that is often alien to the consultants and the performers/devisors are presenting work in its early stages and are vulnerable to ideas and feedback. As the director, and instigator of this particular process Alicia's observation is that quite often artists and consultants have very similar ideas about what is working and what is not working. Contributors tend to offer solution-focused ideas, which don't necessarily suit the aesthetics or formal concerns of the piece. It becomes the role of the director to decipher each of the languages offered by the artistic team and consultants and move the process forward.

In this sense the process promotes very lively and challenging artistic discussion between the artists. The unique combination of artists, ideas, site and consultants demand that each move from known territory to inhabit new forms of creating work and generating meaning. The process is also an important time for developing a shared vocabulary and understanding of each other's language. The languages at play are not immediately homogenous and the group must work at creating a hybridised working language. During the process, the artists and the consultants take on a shared language, which is the sum of all the contributors and shapes the method of creative investigation.

Excerpts from consultation notes:

Alicia: How about Raj dancing?

Laurie: Yes, that was good. It's that a night-time thing - no one is looking at you. You are protected in this isolation?

Sajjad: It was very good! Night times are sometimes completely quiet. You pass time by listening to music. Raj looked bored – that was good because that's how it is sometimes at night. Daytime is different.

Sarah: What was with the horns? (Kathy's dance with bull horns)

Tiff: You know, it's not unusual coming from Kathy's character... the way she builds up to it.

Laurie: It's shamanistic stuff. The way she went over and hypnotised George.

Mel: Is she a country girl?

Tiff: Well from the Leb side of things – you know the bull horns and all, it's like she's playing with him "Who's the boss now? You're not so tough".

Alicia: What would make it clearer?

Bill: It's like it's coming out of her imagination. Like she is stoned – she wants to dominate the male species – she controls Mr Kebab, hypnotises him... then she walks away. That's her victory.

Tiff: Yeah, how George has always cracked onto her, always shown her attention, but now she is paying back the attention – she has the power.

Rachel: I didn't like the horns. It's like "what the fuck is she doing? She's supposed to be working?" But I liked the tongs – that was strong. Showed her domination. Kathy's character is different to the other workers, she's not here for the drugs – she's doing it for another reason... there's the memorial as well. She's different.

Alicia: What do you think people will go away with from this show.

Sarah: It's emotional...you know dysfunctional people... some of them losing the plot.

Community showings

"hard to watch some of the scenes – You want to look but you don't want to look, it's sad, but that's life"

"Raw, gritty and realistic – no frills, no crap"

"It's intense – I'm still angry and emotional...I really enjoyed it"

There was an overwhelming response to UTP's invitations to each of our two free community showings held on 6 & 7 December at the Rosedale Avenue venue. Both showings played to capacity. Specifically targeted audiences included Bankstown local community health workers & professionals, particularly those working in rehabilitation and sexual health, a large number of sex worker peers and advocates from the extended SWOP and Scarlet Alliance networks, NUAA staff and extended affiliates, consultants' colleagues, friends and families, Sydney Festival staff and members of South West Sydney's multicultural arts community.

Some comments from community showing feedback which was collected by lina Kastoumis and representatives from SWOP, NUAA and Scarlet Alliance on both nights.

"The wog stuff is good because everyone is there – it's not just one guy or one ethnic"

"It was like eavesdropping on a moment"

"Respectful of characters but not tokenistic"

"It really brought home the reality and vulnerability of the street-based sex workers"

"I loved constantly panning across to catch the action. It's good. There was either something or nothing going on."

"Different to T.V – It's the first time I've seen theatre"

Successes and challenges of the project

Artistically, the creative development and rehearsal phase was inspiring. UTP is interested in work that responds to an immediate social and political climate and to reactions that are not readily expressed in mainstream media. As artists begin to respond more to the current political climate we are aware that minority groups can

be easily objectified as part of an artistic process. A consultant-driven process creates a working model to counter this response by allowing the subjects the opportunity to co-author and control any representations made by artists. We are also interested in processes that challenge our usual modes for making work. The unpredictable nature of collaborative teams with different philosophical, cultural and artistic frameworks becomes a creative think-tank offering multiple hybrid outcomes in form and content.

The project sees an ongoing relationship with Alicia Talbot, Lee Wilson and Deborah Pollard. As artists, they come from very different making backgrounds and have different skills sets but are developing a shared artistic dialogue and ways of critiquing work. These working relationships encourage and demand a rigorous process of discussion and analysis, as they develop a shared understanding of work we being collaborated on. One of the most inspiring elements of this process is that the work is not fixed in methodology or outcome. During the development for *The Last Highway* we were not looking to recreate a *Back Home* style of work (presented in 2006), but instead to artistically grapple with form and content in a way that transcended well-known narratives and performative representations of such subject material.

The relationship between Mirabelle Wouters and Alicia Talbot was also an exciting development. Mirabelle was interested in designing for a specific site and Alicia was interested in Mirabelle's strong design aesthetic. Long before the construction of the set, Mirabelle and Alicia had extensive discussions about the role of design and how Mirabelle's sense of abstraction and minimalism could combine with Alicia's love of the real. Mirabelle's collaboration with Neil Simpson as lighting consultant also supported and extended her design concept. Mirabelle had a strong vision for the lighting and often experiments through practical application, while Neil has extensive technical and design experience and, having collaborated with Alicia a number of times before, shares vision of the creative journey and understanding of the final work.

Initially we had intended to conduct the creative development in a Western Sydney site, ideally our final performance site. However, despite nearly twelve months' searching, we were unable to secure a suitable site in time. As we were looking at industrial and commercial sites for lease and for sale, most properties that were suitable for the work were in the process of being sold or leased, or agents/owners would not commit to a short-term lease. It was also unlikely that we would find a site that would still be vacant for the scheduled rehearsal and performance season later in the year. The advantages of Carriageworks was an indoor covered site that did not require cast and crew to bump out every day and work in extreme weather conditions. It was also great for the company to be located at Carriageworks for a month as there is a very exciting artistic hub developing around that centre and UTP often works in more isolated areas.

The disadvantage was that the site lent itself to certain theatricality and, without the presence of a road, it was difficult for both Alicia and the performers to locate the work in a grounded sense of reality. Creatively, Alicia also found Carriageworks a little protected and one of the underpinning principles of the work - occupying contested space - made the process a little safer for the artistic and production team.

We secured the Greenacre site a week before the rehearsal stage. Again we had a great deal of difficulty finding a site in a commercial market. The site at Greenacre involved moving part way through the rehearsal phase. This placed a great deal of strain on the production and technical crew. It also we meant would create material that had operated in a certain way for one site but then would have to be completely altered for the new site.

The ensemble of six performers was sourced entirely through an open audition process. None of them had worked with Alicia before. In previous projects Alicia had always one or two invited artists and auditioned new members to join the team. This would enable performers experienced in the process to offer a road map to the performers who had not worked in the way before. With an entirely new ensemble the languages and processes were slightly foreign to everyone. This worked as both an advantage and disadvantage. Replacing two of the performers in the rehearsal process also meant that we lost a certain amount of material and had to quickly create new material for the new performers. Without a shared vocabulary, as a team of artists we really had to work through a number of languages and hybridities to find intersections. This completely open creative process demanded Alicia extend the working vision of the piece to incorporate greater breadth and depth. This hybrid language housed in a performance framework also extended the consultants vision and working languages to describe and feed back on the work.

Project 5 Stories of Love and Hate

A research and development phase for a new work made in response to the Cronulla riots. This work will build on the artistic team assembled for Fast Cars and Tractor Engines and further explore the technique of performing a verbatim style audio script.

Timeline

Research and Development	2 weeks 2007
Creative Development	5 weeks 2008
Rehearsal & Season	6 weeks 2008

Key Artists

Director	Roslyn Oades
Research/Community Liaison	Tim Carroll
Dramaturg	Andrew Ma
Musician	Bob Scott
Performers	Mohammed Ahmed, Anthony Wong, Katia Molino

Description of Project

Developed in response to the 2005 Cronulla riots, *Stories of Love & Hate* is an original theatre work that draws upon sound, theatre and community collaboration. The production's source material, audio and performance scores are derived from an extensive interview process with community members from the Sutherland Shire and Bankstown areas. The work explores models of community engagement and builds upon the potential of a verbatim-style audio script established in Roslyn Oades' previous work *Fast Cars & Tractor Engines* (UTP, 2005).

The project investigates the notion of hate as a consequence of feeling that the things we love are under threat – to explore hate through a discussion on love. The

aim is to better comprehend the fear and self-preservation at the base of a communal implosion.

Continuing the trajectory established in *Fast Cars & Tractor Engines, Stories of Love & Hate* is theatre without paper, plot or linear narrative. The performance will combine recorded interviews and an innovative performance technique to create a compelling examination of community tensions.

Research and Development

Over three weeks in November and December 2006, Roslyn Oades and Tim Carroll met with a range of organisations and individuals within the Bankstown and Sutherland Shire local government areas to discuss the project and seek support and networks to continue developing the work. They held a number of information sessions about the project for community groups and interested individuals.

Drawing on these networks Roslyn commenced interviews with people from a diverse range of ages and backgrounds in both regions, which continued during 2007. The interviews were recorded and conducted by Roslyn and provide the source material of the first draft audio script. Over an eighteen-month period Roslyn has interviewed 56 residents (ranging in age from five to 77) from the Bankstown and Sutherland Shire areas. At various times Roslyn was assisted in her interviews by young community collaborators – in particular Mohammed Ahmed (who will also perform in the show) in Bankstown and Louise McKerihan in Cronulla. This was useful in brokering community trust and cultural insight.

In August 2007, Roslyn worked with dramaturg/writer Andrew Ma for one week discussing the dramaturgical through-line of the work and compiling the recorded material into a 30-minute rehearsal draft. The aim of this week was to come up with a sound edit of the interviews that could be workshopped with performers.

Roslyn then worked with four actors over three days at the end of August, testing the material and workshopping potential staging strategies for the work. The workshop revealed possible trajectories for the narrative of the piece as well as an abundance of technical and staging possibilities. The three-day workshop concluded with a work-in-progress showing in front of a select group of artists and peers, who offered constructive criticism and feedback that has assisted in developing the work to its next stage.

After reviewing the initial audio script, Roslyn conducted several more specific interviews with community members from September to November 2007.