

WORLD PREMIERE

SMALL ODYSSEYS

rawcus



ARTS HOUSE

ARTS HOUSE, MEAT MARKET

WED 13 - SAT 23
JULY 2011

"In a few short years, Melbourne company rawcus has produced a small body of work of an outstanding quality which, for me, ranks among the most exciting of the moment."

John Bailey, *RealTime*

"Where you stumble, there you shall find your treasure."

Joseph Campbell



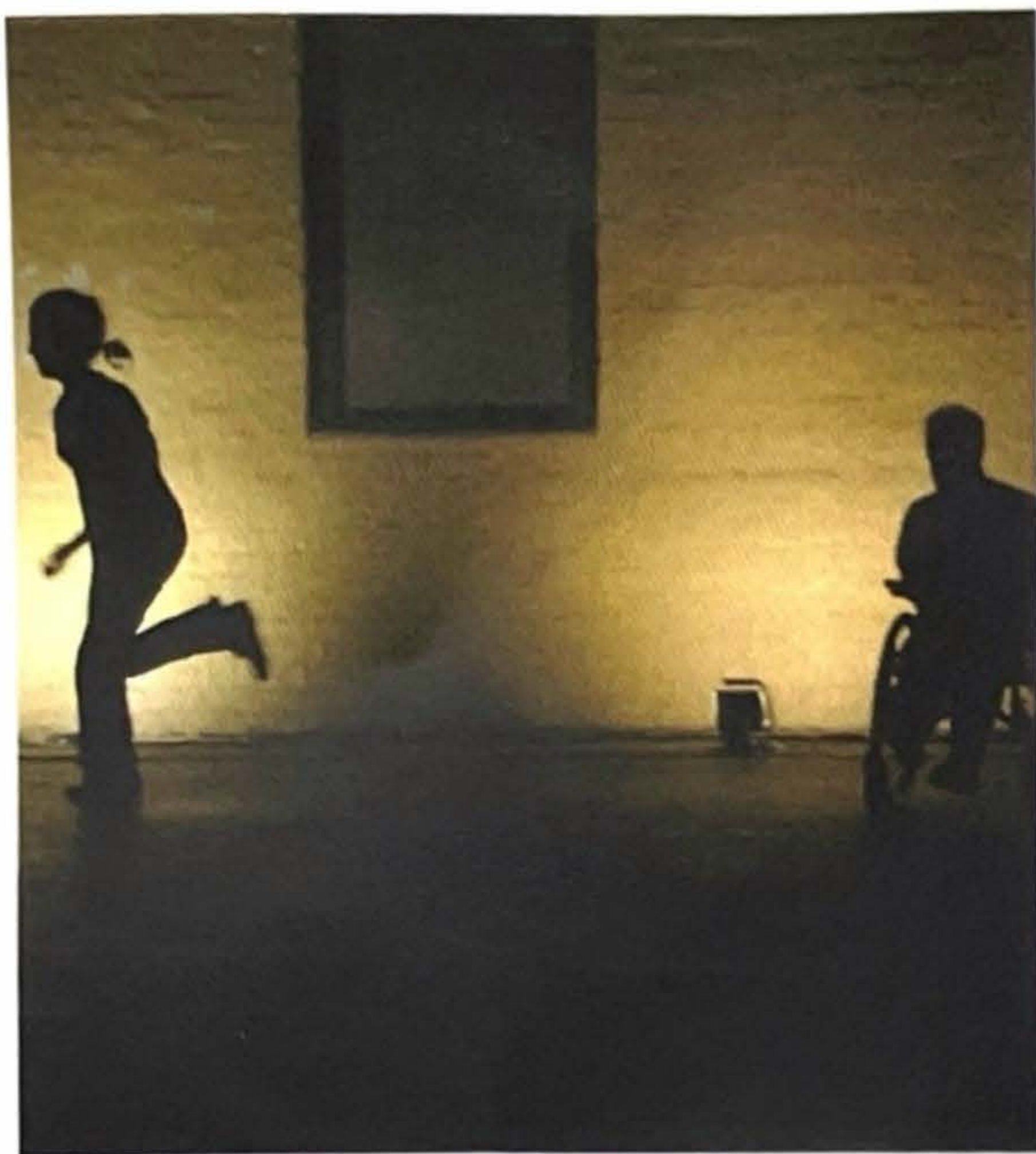
ARTS
VICTORIA



scope



The
Shulu
Foundation



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

"A genuine Odyssey is not about piling up experiences. It is a deeply felt, risky, unpredictable tour of the soul." Joseph Campbell

Small Odysseys grew out of an interest in working with scale and how our sense of our own size, significance and power can shift, sometimes very quickly. We have been inspired by the sculptural work of artists Ron Mueck and Slinkachu (*Little People in the City*), both of whom employ scale to reveal the emotional world of their subjects and inform our relationship to them.

The work developed out of conversations about moments from our lives where we felt small and insignificant, big and powerful, or conversely awkwardly large and fragile, where the agony of self-consciousness makes you want to shrink to nothing.

We were interested in when the everyday takes on epic proportions in our minds and how we navigate those journeys, those small odysseys, the moments when we are truly lost at sea.

The glimpses of stories and images that make up Small Odysseys have evolved from the extraordinary imaginations, experiences, memories and hearts of the performers and designers that make up rawcus.

CAST AND CREATIVE

Director: Kate Sulan
 Set/Costume Designer: Emily Barrie
 Sculptor/Designer: Shaun Patten
 Composer/Sound Designer: Jethro Woodward
 Musicians: Jethro Woodward, Ida Duelund Hansen
 Lighting Designer: Richard Vabre
 Dramaturge: Ingrid Voorendt
 Performers/Creators: Steven Ajzenberg, Clem Baade, Michael Buxton, Ray Drew, Rachel Edward, Nilgun Guven, Paul Matley, Mike McEvoy, Ryan New, Kerry Poké, Louise Risiik, John Tonso, Danielle von der Borch
 Auslan Interpreters: Lynn Gordon, Kirri Dangerfield
 Production Manager: Richard Dinnen, Megafun
 rawcus Company Manager: Jacque Robinson
 Producer: Insite Arts - Freya Waterson, Lee Cumberlidge

rawcus.org.au

Ensemble member and valued collaborator, Ray Drew, has become unwell at the last minute and is unable to perform in Small Odysseys. Some of his moments are captured by other members of the rawcus ensemble, who will at times use a wheelchair. Our thoughts and love are with Ray.

Small Odysseys has been supported by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body, the Shulu and Besen Foundations and the Victorian Government through Arts Victoria

HEROES' JOURNEYS, BIG AND SMALL...

by Urszula Dawkins

While Homer's Odysseus begins his epic journey after a devastating war, many odysseys start relatively small, kicked off almost accidentally in the flow of everyday life. The seemingly 'big moments' we experience can turn out to be storms in teacups; while chance events can become the foundations for major events in our lives.

In a sense, the formation of rawcus began in that accidental way - something small that grew into an adventure, and continues from strength to strength after more than a decade. The company was formed when director Kate Sulan was asked to put together a short opening piece for a conference, performed by artists with disabilities. The 15-minute piece generated incredible energy, says Sulan. "We thought, we just have to keep working together." So they made another show and that felt 'right' too. And so they made another show, "and here we are eleven years later as a company, keeping on making work together."

Sulan was keen to build a professionally focused company, recognising the need for artists with disabilities to develop their practice and take it to the next level. Today's rawcus includes artists both with and without disabilities, around a third of whom are founding members.

rawcus often takes inspiration from the work of visual artists, and as Small Odysseys developed, the sculptures of Ron Mueck began to resonate - both larger-than-life and tiny human figures that exude a potent mix of pathos and vulnerability. "When his exhibition came [to the NGV in 2010] we were so excited, because we'd been working with his imagery for about six months," says Sulan. "So we went as a company to the exhibition, and that experience has really had a profound effect on the work."

"We were also working with another book, *Little People of the City*, by an artist called Slinkachu - he makes tiny figurines and little scenarios that he places in an urban environment, so they're tiny in this massive urban landscape. We'd been looking at them and talking about our experiences, and the idea of bravery and epic journeys, and that's how the work began to grow."

While "real Odyssey buffs" might see some references to Homer's epic text, Sulan says Small Odysseys is much more about the feeling of being in an odyssey, or being lost at sea. Over the two years of development - all rawcus's work, she says, is the result of long development periods - all the company's members, from performers to lighting, set and sound designers, have responded to the idea both individually and then together, creating solos, soundscapes, texts and other elements that ultimately become the 'epic' of the finished work.

"We worked in Williamstown boat shed, and then at the Meat Market for our second development, and the space had a huge effect on the making of this work... how we inhabit a huge space, and how we negotiate... How you can be dwarfed by an enormous performance venue, and when you can actually claim it. We move between using the whole performance space, which is like the whole 50, 60 metres, to reducing the space to these little floating islands..."

On life's various journeys, fraught with the trials of the everyday, some events strengthen us, while others cast us adrift on impossible seas. But somehow, a story forms from the sum of the parts, and somehow, the journey makes sense in the end.

"That's what I think life is - it's messy and it's complicated, and when you look... You only see the narrative of life when you look at it from the end."

The odyssean journey seems also to reflect the making of the work, finding the threads that run through different experiences and shaping them into a story that, as Sulan has said elsewhere, falls into place perhaps only at the conclusion of the piece. It's a risk that also reflects the choices we make every day.

"When you're in the middle of those moments, you don't go 'oh well, that leads to that leads to that' - but you see it on reflection, and so that's why I like to make my work like that, but it is very risky. I guess that's our odyssey now, that's our heroic gesture, to share it and see what comes."

BIOGRAPHIES

rawcus

rawcus is a unique ensemble of performers with and without disabilities. Collaborating with a core creative team led by Artistic Director Kate Sulan, rawcus aims to devise new work that expresses the imaginative world of the ensemble, drawing on dance, theatre and visual art disciplines. By collaborating with artists from a range of art forms, rawcus promotes a broad notion of the arts and of where disciplines can meet to generate innovative art forms.

rawcus's work has won numerous awards and has featured as part of the Next Wave, Melbourne Fringe and Melbourne International Arts Festivals. The group has worked collaboratively with diverse Australian arts companies including Restless Dance Company, Born in a Taxi and the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra.

Kate Sulan Director

Melbourne-based director and dramaturge Kate Sulan is the founding Artistic Director of rawcus. She has worked with companies including Back to Back Theatre, Malthouse Theatre, Stuck Pigs Squealing, the Women's Circus, Next Wave Festival, Arts Access and Full Tilt at The Arts Centre.

In 2002, Kate Sulan received an Ian Potter Cultural Trust award to undertake an exchange with disability theatre companies in Europe. In 2005 she received the Fringe Festival Melbourne International Arts Festival Award. In 2010 she created a work in Ahmedabad, India, as part of an

Asialink Performing Arts Residency at Darpana Academy of Performing Arts. She has been a board member of the Next Wave Festival since 2006.

Emily Barrie Set/Costume Designer

Emily Barrie is a prolific Melbourne-based theatre designer. She has been nominated for Green Room Awards for her design of *Hunger* (rawcus and the MSO, 2007 Melbourne Festival) and for *The Heart of Another is a Dark Forest* (rawcus and Restless Dance Co., 2008). As a core member of the rawcus creative team, she has also designed *Not Dead Yet* (2005), *Collisions* (2005), *Boxset* (2004) and *Sideshow* (2004).

Emily Barrie has designed for the MTC, Full Tilt at The Arts Centre, Big West Festival, Belvoir St Theatre, Moomba, Theatre at Risk, Red Stitch, Restless Dance Theatre, The Women's Circus, Melbourne Worker's Theatre, Courthouse Youth Arts Centre, Union House Theatre, Back to Back, Arena Theatre Company, Branch Theatre Company, Die Roten Punkte, The Spaghetti Western Orchestra, Federation Square, the Melbourne Museum and Ilbijerri Theatre.

Shaun Patten Sculptor/Designer

With a background in industrial design, Shaun Patten won awards for his designs before receiving a scholarship to study production design at the Australian Film Television and Radio School. Since then he has been working in the film and television industry, specialising in animated content. In 2004 the ABC commissioned him to produce a short animated film, *Ideas Men*, broadcast in 2005. He went on to create the animated children's television series *Dunkin Monkey* with assistance from Screen West and the Australian Film Commission.

Shaun Patten was more recently construction manager for award-winning director Adam Elliott's animated feature film *Mary and Max*, overseeing a large art department on the build of over 200 sets and thousands of props. He has also been construction manager for GlenArt on the AFI-nominated short animation *Mutt* and for animated Cadbury television commercials; and has worked with The Creature Technology Company as a model maker on the *Walking with Dinosaurs* stage show.

Jethro Woodward Composer/Sound Designer/Musician

Jethro Woodward is a composition graduate of the VCA School of Music. His music and sound design credits for theatre include: *Tis pity she's a whore* (Malthouse Theatre), *Irony is not enough*

(Fragment 31), *Life without Me* (MTC), *The Urchin* (Encyclopaedia of animals), a contemporary reworking of the music from *The Wizard of Oz* (Windmill Theatre); for Company B, *Pillowman*, *Antigone* and *Black Medea* (Malthouse Theatre); for Arena Theatre Co, *Moth*, *The Girl Who Cried Wolf*, *Criminology* and *Goodbye Vaudeville Charlie Mudd*; for Stuck Pigs Squealing, *The Apocalypse Bear Trilogy* for Melbourne Festival, *Black Swan of Trespass* and *The Eisteddfod*; and for rawcus, *The Heart of Another is a Dark Forest*, (winner of the Fringe Award 2008 for Best Performance), *Hunger* (a collaboration with the MSO), *Boxset*, *Not Dead Yet* and *Sideshow*. Music for dance credits include *Human Interest Story* for Lucy Guerin Inc.; two contemporary dance works for ADT, for Womadelaide and the New Breed festival held at the Sydney Opera House. Film credits include the score for *Van Diemen's Land*, *Hells Gates* (winner best short at MIFF), and *The Heartbreak Tour* for SBS.

Jethro has received Green Room Award nominations for his work on: *The Inhabited Man*, *The Heart of Another is a Dark Forest*, *Hunger*, *Criminology*, *Black Medea*, *Duets of Desire*, *The Damask Drum*, *The Eisteddfod* and *Sideshow*. He has received awards for his work on *Goodbye Vaudeville Charlie Mudd*, *Irony is not enough* and *Moth*.

Ida Duelund Hansen Musician

Ida Duelund Hansen is a young Danish double bass player and singer, currently based in Melbourne. From an early age she performed as a singer at events including Copenhagen Jazz Festival, with high profile jazz musicians such as Jørgen Emborg. In Melbourne she has performed at the Melbourne Jazz Fringe Festival, Make It Up Club, and Uptown Jazz Café. She has also collaborated with the new-music ensemble Quiver and is co-founder of the bass duo Heilbron/Hansen and the trio Echo Mechanics. She is currently undertaking a Bachelor of Music degree at NMIT, studying with Anita Hustas, Adrian Sherriff and Nick Haywood.

Richard Vabre Lighting Designer

Winner of three Green Room Awards including the John Truscott Prize for Excellence in Design (2004), Richard Vabre has designed the lighting for companies throughout Australia including the MTC, Malthouse Theatre, Red Stitch, Arena Theatre, Polyglot Theatre, Melbourne Workers' Theatre, rawcus and Chambermade Opera.



THANK YOU

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ensemble

INSITE ARTS

Insite Arts works with artists, producers and venue partners to facilitate creative development, presentation and touring; including producing the work of Architects of Air (UK), Compagnia TPO (Italy), Fleur Elise Noble (Vic), DJ Trip (SA) and Three Men In A Tub (SA). Insite Arts was the Festival Producer for MONA FOMA and the celebrations around the opening of the Museum of Old and New Art (MONA) (Tas). Associate Producer Freya Waterson and Insite Director, Lee Cumberlandidge, have produced this season of *Small Odysseys*.

Front image: Brett Brogan

Inside and back images: Paul Dunn

ARTS HOUSE

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Arts House is a City of Melbourne contemporary arts initiative. Each year Arts House presents a curated program of contemporary art featuring performances, exhibitions, live art, installations and cultural events.

Arts House operates as a multi-dimensional resource hub for artists: producing, programming, devising, supporting and funding. Work is presented across two sites: Arts House, North Melbourne Town Hall and Arts House, Meat Market.

Arts House values arts and culture that help create a world where people are actively engaged, aware and empowered to participate, politically and culturally, to make positive change.

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