

SNUFF PUPPETS



ANNUAL REPORT
2021



Beasts Of Oz, Wangaratta

ARTISTIC REPORT

While 2021 was at times an almost impossible year to do business in the arts, it was a year where we learnt to slow down, reflect, and think more about our art and how to survive, sustain and grow. In many ways 2021 was a year that highlighted Snuff Puppets mission, to “make art for everybody”.

It was a year where things fortuitously fell into place, between lockdowns we were able to meet and work with the incredible leaders, teams and communities from the East African Women’s Foundation, The Goulburn and North East Arts Alliance (GANEAA) and the Vietnamese Community in Australia Victoria Chapter (VCA Vic). We experimented with making films, live- streamed and developed our most ambitious mainstage show to date, *Swamp*.

The highlight work of the year was undoubtedly the world premier of our newest roaming act *Beasts of Oz*, after years of development we were finally

able to present this crazy collection of marauding Australian native animals to regional Victorian communities in Wangaratta, Beechworth and Whitfield.

Lastly 2021 saw us start work on our multi-year capital works project *Snuff Hubb* - transforming our home at the Footscray Drill Hall into a flexible multipurpose creative studio.

We are incredibly grateful to every artist, staff member, board member, core funder (Creative Victoria and Maribyrnong City Council), supporter and audience member - you all made it possible for Snuff Puppets to continue making our art for all people everywhere. Thank you.

- Andy Freer, Artistic Director

ABOUT SNUFF PUPPETS

Snuff Puppets is a community of Melbourne-based artists, artisans and performers dedicated to the art and craft of giant puppet making and the theatre of puppetry.

Since 1992, Snuff Puppets has been unleashing its giant puppet spectacles on millions of people worldwide. Our work is a collision of visual art, sculpture, design, engineering, sound, movement, performance and physical theatre. At the heart is our giant puppets – sometimes gorgeous; sometimes grotesque – and the unpredictable ways they are brought to life.

From our home in Footscray's Drill Hall, in Melbourne's inner western suburbs, our artists and our works regularly travel to dozens of countries across five continents. Our People's Puppet Projects have created more than 25 new works in partnership with communities worldwide.

We specialise in performing for free audiences and non-traditional arts audiences; reclaiming streets and public spaces for creativity, art and humans.

We collaborate with communities to create giant puppet roaming acts, community workshops, puppet performance master classes and main-stage shows, often in reclaimed public indoor and outdoor spaces.

Our stages are the streets, parks, towns and villages that our audiences worldwide call home. We work with them to produce and perform our work, challenging and delighting audiences of all ages.

Snuff Puppets are deliberately anarchic, rebellious and dangerous. Our work tackles difficult, awkward and taboo topics that challenge our audiences with irreverence; simultaneously causing discomfort and delight. We deliver



visceral, electric performances that blur the traditional lines between audience and performer; creating other worlds that are unfamiliar, uncomfortable and, at times, unsafe and scary.

beaten-track destinations globally. Snuff Puppets are ambassadors for a distinctive and recognisable Australian culture.

Snuff Puppets' aesthetic and our approach to theatre making are unique: the audience for our work has been invented simultaneously with the work itself. Snuff Puppets'

lofi, spontaneous, collaborative, devised, quick, experimental approach inspires creativity and allows us to leave behind the legacy of our art form and our approach in remote, off-the-

**experimental
approach
inspires
creativity**



**a darkly comic
allegory of violent
transformation on
the cusp of
the Anthropocene**

Snuff Puppets continued creative development on our latest work, SWAMP.

The creative team met for one week to experiment with technical elements: lighting, digital mapping, live score, and inflatables. Due to COVID restrictions the world premiere has been rescheduled to 2022, we did however have an opportunity to showcase our SWAMP puppets at APAX.

SWAMP is an oily primordial muck, where life begins with blood and ends with ash.

A Mosquito, Magpie, Lyrebird, Koala, Snake and Frilled-Neck Lizard each eke out their quiet lives. A Thylacine paces back and forth. A dormant whirlpool begins to swirl, descending into a world of dust and blood, water and flame, strangled trees, dissolved skin, pools of tears, blankets of bones. The Serpent consumes the scene, and then itself. Whether it's a cycle or an ending is up to us.

Creative Team:
Andy Freer – Director
Nick Wilson – Associate Director + Performer + Builder
Daniell Flood – Filmmaker
Jenny Hector – Lighting Designer
Eben Greaves – Multimedia Designer
James Wilkinson – Sound Designer
Nick Barlow – Performer + Builder
Erin Hall – Builder
Colleen Burke – Builder

Supported by Australia Council & Besen Foundation

It was so good! My kids haven't stopped talking about it.

– Beechworth audience feedback

NEW WORK

BEASTS OF OZ

The Beasts of Oz in 2021 were six giant puppet characters: A crafty Magpie; A bloodthirsty Mosquito; A dopey Koala; An egocentric Lyrebird (he thinks he's the star of the show); A skittish Frilled-Neck Lizard (she's as afraid of you as you are of her); A grand old Thylacine (the last one left alive).

The Beasts took over Wangaratta, Beechworth and Whitfield as part of our regional tour for the Across The Arts Forum in May, garnering press, new fans and excited locals looking for relief after a tough year in Regional Victoria.

"Instead of 'public space' being somewhere to be frightened of contagion of Covid-19, the giant puppets for an interval, inverted that fear turning public space into somewhere joyful and lucky to be. A place to laugh with strangers and for taking pleasure in human ingenuity, generosity and creativity." - Cassandra Pollock, organiser, GENEAA

This project is supported by the Restart Investment to Sustain and Expand (RISE) Fund – an Australian Government initiative.



Beasts Of Oz, Wangaratta

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Larger than life puppets spread joy

SNUFF Puppets made quite an impression in Wangaratta and district earlier this month.

These larger than life Melbourne-based puppets materialised in King George V Gardens and played a prominent role during the Goulburn and North East Arts Alliance's Arts Forum.

Not only did they entertain those at the forum's official opening at the Wangaratta Art Gallery, but the Snuff Puppets also roamed the city streets and were part of the attractions at the KinGRAValley event at Whitfield.

WOULD I LYRE TO YOU: Ayla Kiely from Dockers Plains and fellow bird enthusiast Blaine Stewart from Wodonga got to meet the largest Lyre bird in the world in King George Gardens last week.

The lyrebird was among the larger than life snuff puppets that were in town to assist with Wangaratta Gallery's 'Across the Arts' opening on Friday evening. PHOTO: Kieren Tilly



MY, MY, WHAT A BIG FLY: Paddy Milne wasn't sure what to make of this over-sized dragonfly at the Wangaratta Art Gallery. PHOTO: Belinda Harrison



KING KOALA: Amity May with delighted to meet this large, cuddly koala at the Wangaratta Art Gallery. PHOTO: Belinda Harrison



AREN'T YOU EXTINCT? Kaliah Billing gets up close with the Thylacine at the Wangaratta Art Gallery. PHOTO: Belinda Harrison



**Omg this looks
amazing, I'm
coming to
Melbourne**

– yungyokouno via instagram

DIGITAL ART **SNUFFLIX**

With a Victorian Government pandemic grant we invested in filmmaking equipment and undertook a creative development with filmmaker Alena Lodkina and musician BJ Morriszonkle.

In January we presented a live interactive streaming series, *Off The Shelf*, reaching over 200,000 viewers worldwide.

Off The Shelf had three themes: The Butcher & Friends, Human Body Parts and Swamp.

Off The Shelf with the Human Body Parts made international news headlines in six countries and was shared with over a million people via blogs and popular Instagram accounts including the 'Brown Cardigan'.

Digital support grant from the Victorian Government's 'Coronavirus (COVID-19) Organisations Strategic Investment Fund - Stage 2'. 'Off The Shelf' funded by Maribyrnong City Council



OUR HOME SNUFF HUBB

The company began implementation of Snuff Hubb, working towards the transformation of our workspace into a flexible digital and live performance space connecting the community with giant puppetry.

Staff undertook a massive hall cleanup to prepare the space. With additional support from Creative Victoria (Stage 2 investment) and the Stronger Communities Programme, Snuff Puppets purchased equipment to enhance the hall's digital and live performance capability. A new Cyc and rails were installed, as well as donated curtains from The Village were hung. An open meet and greet day was held in January for artists to see the space and to learn more about future venue hire opportunities.

**Snuff Hubb
an inclusive
safe
art space**

We completed stage one of Snuff Hubb's transformation with stage two scheduled for 2022.

COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

GIANT PUPPETS OF A HUNDRED EGGS

After a successful People's Puppet Project in 2020, Giant Puppets of 100 Eggs was brought back to life in 2021 at various celebrations in the Vietnamese community.

The whole show was performed outdoors at Creative Brimbank's Be Bold Festival, as well as cultural events for the King Hung Vuong Festival at Civic Plaza in St Albans and the Vietnamese Cultural and Heritage Centre in Sunshine.

Snuff Puppets with community puppeteers and children came together to perform the story of Lạc Long Quân (Dragon King) and Âu Cơ (mountain fairy), who fall in love and give birth to 100 eggs which hatched 100 children known as the Bách Việt the original people of Vietnam.

Lead Artists: Nick Wilson and Lachlan Plain

Lead Performers: Trang Nguyen and Andrew Doe

Coordinator: Jennifer Tran

Music: Andrew Do

Thank You: Tina Nguyen, Kim and the voices of the Vietnamese Community in Australia

Supported by Brimbank City Council



100 Eggs, People's Puppet Project, St Albans



COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS SNUFF SKOOL

Snuff Puppets delivered four one-day performance workshops at the Bowery Theatre St. Albans, in partnership with the City of Brimbank.

The first of these was a collaboration with the *East African Women's Foundation*, which introduced the Youth Group to our performance style and laid the groundwork for an extended PPP with them in early 2022.

Two further workshops were open to the public, and all resulted in roaming public performances in central St. Albans.

In addition we added a Snuff Skool to our regional *Beasts of Oz* tour, giving North-eastern Victorians a chance to learn from our troupe of performers for a day, before performing in our giant puppets through central Wangaratta.

It was a great feeling to be part of a performance team

– snuff skool graduate

MELBOURNE ROAMING GIGS

Between Melbourne's pandemic lockdowns we got out for a few roaming gigs...

Heide Museum of Modern Art

Snuff Puppet Cows grazed the Sculpture Park at the *Summer Festival* in January and February.

State Library Victoria

Mirabelle the Snail helped *Kids' Takeover Day!* at the State Library Victoria. Video of the Snail at the Library was shared on Instagram reached over one million people.

Melbourne Zoo

Two *Beasts Of Oz* puppets entertained families at special day for the *Association of Children with a Disability*.



Cows and Butcher, Heide Museum of Modern Art



A Fight For Survival – Northlands by Northlands Collective Mob



Healthy Futures Protest, Victorian Parliament

COMMUNITY ACTIVISM

Northlands Collective Mob

Northlands Collective Mob borrowed an old *Scarey* puppet for thier show, *A Fight For Survival – Northlands*, at the Yirrambo Festival 2021. In the 1990's, Snuff Puppets performed at a Northlands Secondary College benefit.

Healthy Futures Protest

Skullie joined a 'Healthy Futures' protest and took Everybody's Lungs and giant Heart to State Parliament demanding CLEAN AIR!

Fire in Albury

While on tour in northern Victoria, Snuff Puppets Fire puppet joined the *Extinction Rebellion* in nearby Albury. #ClimateAction

ENGAGEMENT ONLINE AUDIENCES

A Digital Artist was permanently employed to feed content to our huge online audience in 2021.

Youtube videos enjoyed over 63 MILLION views generating over \$26,000 in revenue.

YouTube subscribers increased by 108,000 to 430,000.

On Tiktop, 35 MILLION views of our *Everybody Shits* video helped grow followers from just 14 to over 75,000.

Instagram followers grew 38% to 15,400.

Facebook followers remained steady all year at over 30,000.

The *snuffpuppets.com* website averaged 44 visitors a day, with 16,000 online user sessions in 2021.

**63 Million
Youtube
views in
2021**



PEOPLE ARTISTS + STAFF + BOARD

Snuff Puppets Artists

Nick Barlow
Lauren Bok
Julian Chapple
Opal Crafter
Olivia Floate
Daniell Flood
Eben Greaves
Erin Hall
Alena Lodkina
BJ Morriszonkle

Lachlan Plain
Jet Phoenix
Daniele Poidomani
KT Prescott
Shannon Quinn
Rebecca Rutter
James Wilkinson
Nick Wilson

Snuff Puppets Staff

Andy Freer – Artistic Director
Ro Bright – Executive Director
Lauren Bok – Creative Producer
Nick Wilson – Artistic Associate
Daniell Flood – Digital Artist
Hugh Nguyen – Accounts Manager

Snuff Puppets Board

Dave Roper – Chair
Annie Hariharan – Treasurer
Janis Lacey – Secretary
Alex Cleary – Committee Member
Andy Freer – Committee Member
Erin Farley – Committee Member
Daniell Flood – Committee Member
Kelly Farrow – Committee Member



Beasts Of Oz touring company, Beachworth



WWW.SNUFFPUPPETS.COM