

SNUFF PUPPETS



ANNUAL REPORT

2022

ARTISTIC REPORT



Beasts Of Oz, Moomba Parade

WE HONOUR AND RESPECT ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE AS THE TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS OF COUNTRY. ALWAYS WAS, ALWAYS WILL BE ABORIGINAL LAND.

Snuff Puppets' 30th year of existence was characteristically big, bold and ambitious.

We delivered a huge programme across all three of our streams: workshops, roaming and mainstage, while also pushing forward with developments to our Drill Hall, hosting an emerging artist residency, and laying the groundwork for an equally action-packed 2023.

The fact that we achieved all this in a year of a pandemic and contracting resources is a testament to the strength and depth of the roots Snuff Puppets have established locally and internationally, through three decades of engagement with artists, communities and audiences.

Our response to the challenges of 2022 made clear more than ever what our strengths are - our unique methodology, our DIY ethos, our global audience, our Footscray home, and our network of incredible artists with the passion to share the joy and power of radical creativity in the way that only a Snuff Puppet can.

Our highlight for the year was the world premiere of *SWAMP*. We asked audiences how they would describe *SWAMP* to someone who hasn't seen the show yet - the words they used were... **"mesmerising... entertaining & edifying... using a macro lens on Australia... heart rending... bleak and hopeful... visual explosion"**.

In 2022 we said goodbye to our brilliant Creative Producer Lauren Bok, and welcomed to the board the wonderful Joanna Feely and Kate Callingham.

Snuff Puppets feels to me like a precious and unique commodity in this cultural climate. We have so much history and so many incredible connections, and our style and methodology continues to speak to people across cultures, languages and generations, to give voice to the voiceless, and to transform lives.

A big thank you to everyone who contributed and supported Snuff Puppets in 2022.

- Andy Freer Artistic Director/CEO

Watch a [VIDEO](#) celebrating 30 years of Snuff Puppets

ABOUT SNUFF PUPPETS

Snuff Puppets is a community of Naarm-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



SWAMP, Creative Development

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**

MAINSTAGE SHOW
SWAMP



**“Swamp...
gigantic works of
incredible art”**

– Artshub

Our first major new mainstage work since 2015’s Everybody, SWAMP is the culmination of many years’ research and development, trialing and testing, and exploring new technical and artistic frameworks.

Developed in parallel with the Beasts of Oz roaming suite, SWAMP takes those characters off the street and fulfils their theatrical promise in a surreal, symbolic and fantastical realm of evolution, decay and transformation.

It’s the challenges of realising a vision of this scale that force us to keep pushing the boundaries of what we thought possible, to keep innovating, to stay at the cutting edge of our craft: How to make a 26-meter snake curl through a tight space while shedding its skin; how to design dynamic layered sets that transform into unexpected and unrecognizable scenes again and again; how to projection map handpainted scenes onto handpainted surfaces and bring separate elements together into a cohesive world.

After many false starts and covid disruptions, in 2022 we finally brought to life a vision that’s grown over many

years: We held a creative development period with a team of fifteen artists, resulting in a sold-out premiere run at our Footscray home.

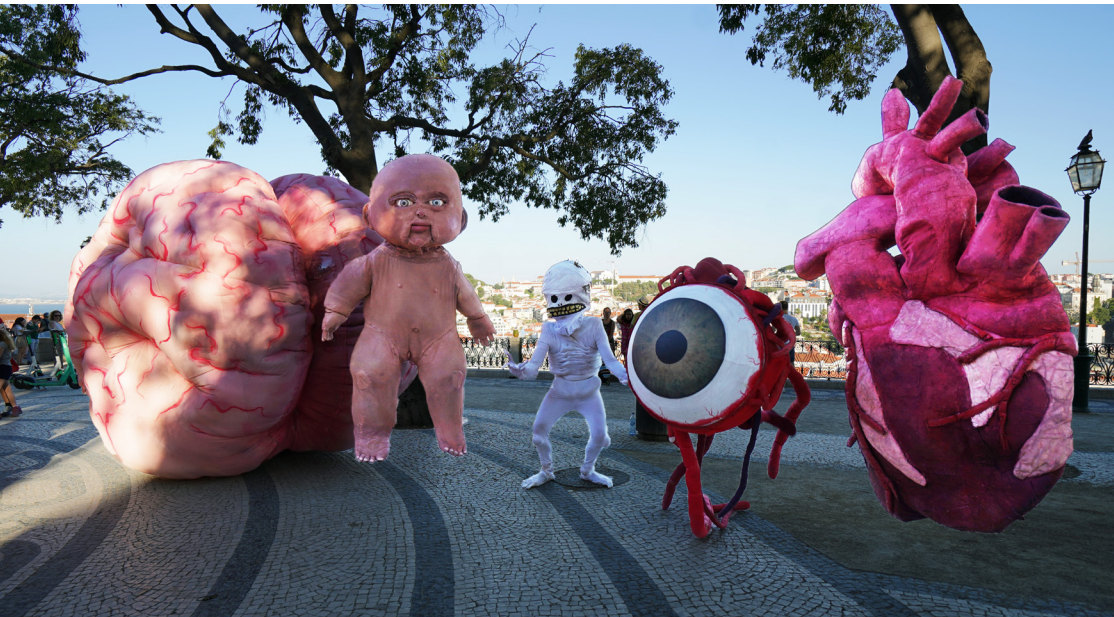
We’re super proud and excited about this major work for the company, and look forward to bringing it to many more audiences in the coming years.

Creative Team:

Andy Freer – Director
Nick Wilson – Associate Director + Performer + Builder
Daniell Flood – Filmmaker
Gina Gascoigne – Lighting Designer
Eben Greaves – Multimedia Designer
James Wilkinson – Sound Designer
Nick Barlow – Performer + Builder
Erin Hall – Builder
Colleen Burke – Builder



**"It was brilliant... sure of its place -
powerful, irreverent, desperately sad
but somehow unifying. Beating heart"**
- Angharad Wynne-Jones



INTERNATIONAL LISBON, PORTUGAL

After two years of lockdowns, the return to international touring was a welcomed inspiration and a reminder that our presence in public spaces not only catches the eyes, but sparks the imagination - no matter where you live.

While the pandemic greatly affected freight and heightened travel processes (each country had their own COVID policies), what shone through was the company's absolute commitment to reclaiming public streets for art. Collaborating with A Tarumba Program Directors and old friends Rute Ribeiro and Luis Vieira, HUMAN BODY ORGANS took over nine specular heritage sites across the beautiful city of Lisboa. Every performance was followed by shouts of "Bravo Baby!".

Watch a [VIDEO](#) from Lisbon.

INTERNATIONAL BADEN, SWITZERLAND

**The Human Body Parts visited
Baden, Switzerland for the Figura
Theaterfestival!**

Our performances coincided with the start of a heat wave that blasted across Europe. This meant that between every performance you could find our team floating in the river Limmat.

Inspired by the river and the wonderful team at Figura (Eveline Gfeller and Irène Howald), we made a special **SHORT FILM** featuring our puppets floating through the town. The video has been viewed 900,000 times on Youtube in 6 months.

One highlight of the festival was meeting a young fan who travelled all the way from Italy with his family to see us. Luca brought with him a homemade puppet Mozzie gift inspired by our SWAMP Mozzie. Luca's puppet proudly hangs in our Drill Hall.



Puppeteer, Aidan 'Jet' Min



Human Body Parts, Baden, Switzerland



INTERNATIONAL KRAKOW, POLAND

We undertook a giant puppet-making workshop and performance at the Jewish Culture Festival in Kraków, Poland.

The one-week workshop was run by Stuttgart-based artists Stefanie Oberhoff and Snuff Puppets.

New giant puppets were designed, built & puppeteered by a team of participants from France, Pakistan, Poland, Ukraine & the United States.

The show called Pigeon Girls featured live music from a French violinist, Livia Castello Nicolai, and the Korali choir from Ukraine.

Old Ukrainian war legends inspired Pigeon Girls:

"After losing her beloved to the war, a young girl, transformed by grief, turned into a cuckoo and continued to fly around, crying for her husband. From the tears of a Ukrainian mother who lost her three sons to the war, small white flowers – daisies – grew underneath the melting snow."

CREDITS:

Jewish Culture Festival in Krakow, Curatorial Collective for Public Art, Stefanie Oberhoff, Snuff Puppets, Ukraine Korali Choir

Participants:

Karina Basiura, Zofia Wydra, Muhammad Meer Hasnain, Chiara Scibilia, Chiara Diavini, Katarzyna Zborowska, Sofia Alves, Livia Castello Nicolai & Chaya Holch.

Coordinator: Monika Krawczyk.

Jewish Culture Festival Curators:

Curatorial Collective for Public Art (Berlin): Yael Sherill, Lianne Mol, Julia Kawka; HaMiffal (Jerozolima): Meydad Eliyahu; FKŻ (Kraków): Paweł Kowalewski

This project is co-financed by the Foundation for Polish-German Cooperation and the Goethe-Institut Krakau. This project has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council for the Arts, its arts funding and advisory body. Project support from Stuttgart - meine Stadt. Snuff Puppets tour luggage generously supplied by Crumpler.



INTERNATIONAL STUGGART, GERMANY

GLOBAL MELTING DAYS

We wrapped up our European tour with a collaborative residency in Stuttgart, concluding in two days of performances with our extended network of Europe-based colleagues.

Based on the idea of a 'melting-pot', the days were an eclectic mix of puppetry and music featuring both *Punch Agathe* and *Human Body Parts* and many associated characters, and involving 25 artists from around the world.

It was also an opportunity to train up some Europe-based puppeteers in the operation of the *Human Body Parts* before storing them in Stuttgart, as part of our plan to make European touring more accessible, economical and ecological into the future.

A production of GÜTESAMP CULTURE* by and with: Marius Alsleben, Jule Bröcker, Anne Brüssau, Fabius Büttner; Stefanie Oberhoff aka BALABALA ART, Boris Dick, Jegor Dick, Léa Duchmann, Lara Epp, Daniell Flood, Andy Freer, Kayumba Fabrice aka STROMBO, Christian Kipoke, Len Königs, Helga Lázár, Vera Niess, Claude Bwendua Marta Pelamatti, Mehdi Pinget, Philip Riediger, Adeline Rüss, Marle Runge, Rebecca Rutter, Claudia Sill, Ronja Stromberger, Snuff Puppets, Gudule Theatre, MISTER VAST, Anniek Vetter, Christian Vida, Johannes Werner, Nick Wilson, Viny Wyombo

Concept and idea: Stefanie Oberhoff, Andy Freer, Fabrice Kayumba aka STROMBO
Music direction: Johannes Werner
Production Management: Helga Lázár, Anniek Vetter and Birgit Gebhard / The Real Office

Supporters of the project: Supported as part of the institutional promotion of the city of Stuttgart. This project has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body. Snuff Puppets touring luggage supplied by Crumpler.

GLOBAL MELTING



DAYS

COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

Our People's Puppet Project with the East African Women's Foundation saw us collaborating with the local Somali community of Brimbank to make a giant puppet performance for the AQUAL exhibition at their new Braybrook headquarters.

The community decided to tell the story of Deghdeer, a Somali folk-tale about a

canniving witch and her magic pot, and together we built five puppets including a life-sized camel.

The team also got an opportunity to experience outdoor roaming, performing the puppets at Be Bold festival in St Albans later in the year.

Funding by Brimbank City Council







Human Body Parts, Melbourne Pride

MELBOURNE ROAMING GIGS

In 2022, our giant puppets returned to the streets and festivals of Melbourne.

Melbourne Pride

To celebrate the 40th anniversary of the decriminalisation of homosexuality in Victoria, Snuff Puppets served up some *Human Body Parts* at the Melbourne Pride street party.

Be Bold Festival

Giant puppets created and performed by the East African Women's Foundation Youth Group entertained crowds at Creative Brimbank's Be Bold Festival.

Footscray's New Years Eve

The *Beasts Of Oz* entertained crowds at our local Footscray Park.

THICK 'N' JUICY

Snuff Puppets got down again at THICK 'N' JUICY Horny Halloween party!

Children's Week Picnic

Magpie, Koala & the Frilled-Neck Lizard made a special appearance at Children's Week Picnic at Werribee Park.

Flavour Fest

Seagulls flew down to the City of Melton's Flavour Fest

Melbourne Fringe

The 24-year-old *Boom Family* were refurbished for the return of the Melbourne Fringe Parade & Block Party!

State Library

Albrecht the Rhino visited the State Library Victoria's Kid's Takeover Day!

Moon Lantern Festival

Bufo The Cane Toad and Mozzie from the *Beasts Of Oz* performed at the Moon Lantern Festival at the North Richmond Public Housing Estate.

Moomba Parade

The *Beasts Of Oz* & *Seagulls* joined the Moomba Festival Parade today!

Melbourne University

Skullies welcomes new students to Melbourne University.

MELBOURNE ROAMING GIGS

Melbourne Docklands

Over four weekends our Beasts of Oz roamed Melbourne's Docklands.

Partnering with the City of Melbourne, with the support of the City Activation Grants program, our untamed and wild Aussie animals took over the waterfront.

This project felt incredibly cathartic, as we had all collectively been in lockdowns a long time. Getting outside and reconnecting with Melbournites, hearing their screams of joy – even when behind a mask, vindicated the power of puppetry and art in our lives. We had missed performing. We could also feel how much locals had missed the pure magic of seeing their familiar outdoor city landscapes transformed by cultural events.





Snuff Hubb an inclusive safe art space

OUR HOME SNUFF HUBB

INFRASTRUCTURE WORKS

This year we made important steps forward in our vision to transform our HQ at the Footscray Drill Hall into a multipurpose creative studio.

With funding from Creative Victoria's Creative Neighbourhood Infrastructure Support Program, the company was able to purchase a new lighting desk, lamps, projector and Tarkett performance floor.

During our world premiere season of SWAMP we got a taste of Snuff Hubb's brilliant potential – starting with the workshop/build of the show's puppets, followed by a rehearsal and technical experimentation period, and topped off with a full public season complete with a seating block and pop-up bar.

There is still a long way to go to fully outfit our space; however, this year has proven to us that Snuff Hubb at the Footscray Drill Hall will be the perfect home for puppeteers, artists, and audiences to experience all things giant in arts.



Lachlan Plain paints SWAMP'S inflatable gum tree



OUR HOME SNUFF HUBB

RESIDENT ARTISTS

Two Melbourne multidisciplinary artists took over the Drill Hall to work on radical projects as part of our new Snuff Hubb residency program.

Snuff Hubb residencies include free access to our workshop space, tools, materials and mentorship from the Snuff Puppets core staff.

Remi Cady Freer worked on *"Who is doing what to whom"*, an audio sculptural artwork, designed and fabricated for artist Thembi Soddell. The work was a 2m tall black cube, that contained 16 speakers held in precise position to create an intangibility spacial audio experience.

With support from Maribyrnong City Council's Found Works mentorship program, OPAL built and rehearsed their first major puppetry work *HELLMOUTH22*, in preparation for their Melbourne Fringe Festival season at the Bluestone Church Arts Space.

"The Drill Hall is like a home, and Snuff Puppets is like a really fun insane family. A huge massive space for me

to create my first major work with the support of the silliest serious people you've ever met. Turns out you can do just about anything you set your mind to with pulleys, cane, foam, an electric knife, a glue gun and rope. I made a show about how billionaires are killing the world, I wonder what the next person will make?" - OPAL

ARTISTS TAKEOVER

In 2022 we hired out our Drill Hall for low-cost/ free rehearsal space to two companies.

Kimberley Twiner and The Bouffons rehearsed their show *'We Too Us Too Me Too Too Too'*, which premiered at La Mama.

Caito Zacharias and the Zigzag Collective, rehearsed and premiered at the Drill Hall their children's work *'Big Business Time Band'*. The show was part of the Midsumma Festival.

We also want to say a massive thank you to our neighbors Women's Circus, who we swapped spaces throughout the year with, helping both companies deliver big shows for the year.

COMMUNITY ACTIVISM

AGL Protest

Skully joined a mass "die-in" of medical workers from Healthy Futures outside AGL Australia HQ calling for more ambitious carbon transition plans.



Skully, AGL Australia



Three Million+ Views: [‘Human Body Parts Leave Melbourne’](#) video

ENGAGEMENT ONLINE AUDIENCES

Snuff Puppets reach millions of people online in 2022.

Snuff Puppets award-winning Youtube channel enjoyed 45 million views generating \$17,000 in revenue.

YouTube subscribers increased by 80,000 to over 500,000.

Tiktok followers grew from 75,000 to over 90,000.

Instagram followers grew from 15,400 to 19,700.

Facebook followers remained steady all year at over 31,000.

The *snuffpuppets.com* website averaged 54 visitors a day, with 20,000 online user sessions in 2022.

We push the conventional boundaries of theatre and puppetry in the digital age.

**45 Million
Youtube
views in
2022**

PEOPLE ARTISTS + STAFF + BOARD

Snuff Puppets Artists

Nick Barlow
Lauren Bok
Julian Chapple
OPAL
Olivia Floate
Daniell Flood
Sal Frances
Andy Freer
Remi Freer
Gina Gascoigne
Eben Greaves
Erin Hall
Mitch Jones
Hugh McNab
BJ Morriszonkle
Lachlan Plain
Jet Phoenix
Daniele Poidomani
Shannon Quinn
Rebecca Rutter
James Wilkinson
Nick Wilson
Caito Zacharias

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
Kate Callingham – Committee Member
Erin Farley – Committee Member
Joanna Feely – Committee Member
Daniell Flood – Committee Member
Kelly Farrow – Committee Member
Andy Freer – Committee Member





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