
Behind the Scenes: Dreaming of a Thylacine

*in*thetaking

Erth Visual and Physical Theatre Inc.

About the artwork

Title: 'The Dream of the Thylacine'

Date: 2013

In March 2013, Erth Visual and Physical Inc. premiered their production of 'The Dream of the Thylacine' at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (TMAG) as part of the Ten Days on the Island Festival in Hobart. Based on the illustrated children's storybook of the same name by Ron Brooks and Margaret Wild, Erth's production tells the story of the world's last Tasmanian tiger through life-like puppetry, set design, music and voices recounting the text and local peoples' stories about the tiger. Directed by Artistic Director Scott Wright, Erth engaged the talents of puppet-maker and artist Bryony Anderson to bring the thylacine to life.



About the artists

Scott Wright co-founded Erth Physical and Visual Inc. in 1990 and has been the Artistic Director of the company ever since. Scott began Erth as street theatre and has developed it into an internationally renowned company known for its innovative puppetry and interactive productions.

Bryony Anderson is a designer, maker and exhibiting artist whose work ranges from intricate illustrations to life sized dinosaur puppets to giant inflatable gardens. She has been working with puppetry and circus companies in and out of Australia since 1997.

Bryony: "There's a distinct moment when you're making puppets where it becomes not a collection of objects any more but a life... that's something that I hope for in the final product...in spite of an obviously handcrafted object that there can be a moment when the audience can catch their breath, because it has that spark of life..."

Scott: "What I've learnt as a Director is that the less you try to manipulate people's contributions, the greater the outcome is."



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Student response

1. Inspiration and key ideas – making connections

Bryony talks about the strangeness of the thylacine as a key idea she wants to convey in the puppet.

- What methods and sources does Bryony use to help her develop this idea?
- What is a key idea you want to convey in your artwork? What methods and sources do you use to help you develop this idea?

2. Development – processing ideas and concepts

As Artistic Director, Scott says he provides the main idea and then filters the contributions to that idea from other people. He says “the less you try to manipulate people’s contributions, the greater the outcome is.”

- How might the idea of ‘filtering’ relate to your own creative process?
- How do you ‘filter’ the suggestions or comments made by others about your work? Include some real examples from your studio practice.

3. Research – historical and contemporary influences

Historical research helps Bryony and Scott understand the thylacine’s movement and it also influences Bryony’s choice of materials for making the puppet.

- Why does Bryony choose to cover the puppet in potato sacks and not ‘fun fur’?
- What are the main historical and/or contemporary influences on your own artwork? How have they influenced the decisions you’ve made about your work?



4. Making – experimenting, testing and problem-solving

Bryony sketches, makes notes and takes photographs of the development of the thylacine puppet for different reasons in her process.

Outline all the different ways Bryony’s drawings, notes and photographs help her to make and communicate ideas about the puppet.

- How do you keep track of your work’s development? What are the best methods for you? Why?

5. Refining your work – exhibiting and reflecting

Bryony says the moment when she puts the eyes in the puppet, is the moment when the thylacine comes to life.

- What is the moment when your work ‘comes to life’ for you? How can you retain this for your viewer/ audience when you exhibit your work?
- Trial a few test pieces with friends or family. Keep a tally of which ones work best.

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