

## PART A – Project Submission

### 1. What is your project?

*House of Dreams* was curated by Barking Spider Visual Theatre (BSVT), for The Johnston Collection (TJC), as a site-specific, art-based installation, integrating new sound and lighting design, creative writing, paper-cutting and kinetic, performer-less shadow puppetry.

**The experience** - Boldly knock on the front door of *Fairhall* exhibition house, and step into a house of dreams and nightmares. Dimly lit, ghostly suits hang in the hallway, the men once wearing them no longer living here, but their presence lingers. You continue into the *Green Room*, and spend a moment observing an upside-down world, an illusion of non-sensical space in sickly, green light. The mildness of the next space exaggerates the unexpected. Unused china settings once belonging to a now deceased friend seem benign, until you observe a single, spinning saucer levitating over a table. In a cloying warm-lit room full of glowing, menacing rabbits, clocks all sit still, pointing to 11 o'clock, the time of William Johnston's death. Soft wails and children's whispers emerge through the walls as you hesitate. A miniature China army stands, buried in the kitchen, ready for command - and yet lost in soft sand. The whispers continue. You alight the blood-red staircase and enter an uncanny room; do you see monsters or fairies? Is this a dream or a nightmare? The lights dim further as you manoeuvre your way through gently laid bones, grit, decay, sequins and gold. You finally make your way into the Safe House, only to realise that you are too big to fit in the space, so you're left outside, forever peering in, unable to reach the just audible child hiding deep within.

Room-by-room, BSVT artists interpreted TJC's site and objects, as noted 19<sup>th</sup> century psychiatrist Carl Jung's dream theories and principals as the interpretation modality. According to Jung, various floors of a house in a dream represent the various levels of human consciousness. After detailed research, artists evoked hidden dimensions of the personality and life of Mr Johnston (founder of TJC), through representation of aspects of his life in evocations of dreams and indeed, nightmares. The resultant room-by-room dreamscape was provocative, beautiful, haunting, uncanny and poetic. Carl Jung (1875-1961) was a Swiss-born psychiatrist and psychotherapist. He thought that art and the images in dreams, could alleviate or contain feelings of trauma, fear or anxiety and so repair, restore and heal the psyche. Dreams could then help to achieve physical and mental health.

Established in 2006, BSVT is a Victorian-based, independent, multi-art form company. BSVT's work transforms the way people experience the familiar and encounter the unfamiliar. The company's work allows audiences to feel, delight, dream and be inspired. Like its namesake, BSVT weaves a web that interlinks, includes and marries different social, artistic and institutional partners with each work it creates. BSVT interprets the stories of individuals, communities, place and/or history, using a combination of art forms including theatre, puppetry, percussion, sound design and immersive art-installation.

*House of Dreams* was a collaborative project between TJC and BSVT and created in conjunction with students and teachers at Fitzroy High School (FHS) as part of the continuing *House of Ideas Series* at TJC. The purpose for this exhibition was to greatly broaden its demographic and engage with new audiences in different ways. Contemporary performance artists, theatre audiences and secondary school students were just some of the new audiences that were attracted and inspired to attend the exhibition. *HOUSE OF DREAMS* also provided an opportunity to re-ignite repeat visitors' interest by presenting the permanent collection in an alternate, changed and challenging way. The exhibition met the museum's continued objective to both introduce and promote knowledge, understanding and enjoyment of the arts to a broader demographic. This was further achieved by lowering ticket costs (a 2-for-1 deal) for the duration of the exhibition, thus attracting a new audience that may have previously not been able to attend.

Awareness of the exhibition was raised with excellent reviews (see links below) along with wide social media reach. Additionally, TJC promoted *HOUSE OF DREAMS* through sponsored advertising, in particular with boost postings on social media platforms Instagram and Facebook to reach a younger audience. International visitors engaged in *HOUSE OF DREAMS* using platforms such as Instagram and TripAdvisor.

TJC's general audience is an older audience. Often TJC visitors (audience) tend to have fixed ideas in what is an appropriate style and method to represent the interpretation of a prestigious heritage collection, with often quite a fixed and conservative point of view. Louis Le Vaillant, Director of TJC, is deliberate in his strategy of bringing in artists for a '*House of Ideas*' series each year - to shake-things-up. BSVT artists were an ideal company to bring in for the 2016 radical season.

### 2. How does it demonstrate excellence and best practice in heritage interpretation?

BSVT's interpretation demonstrated excellence in heritage interpretation through high-level research into William Johnston's background, the TJC *Fairhall* (exhibition-house) site, and collection objects used in the installation. Artists worked alongside heritage specialists and practitioners to ensure best practices were followed and adhered to, with regard to the handling and display of objects, and also the use of the heritage building. The exhibition-house itself is full of quirks and provides a set of unique parameters within which BSVT artists worked successfully. There was a harmonious collaboration between TJC staff and artists in working together to realise the *HOUSE OF DREAMS*, with much delight, learning and sharing of information along the way.

Objects were selected and arranged for historical and aesthetic relevance to the subject matter, that is, Jung's Dream Theories. However, the collection objects were often positioned and used unconventionally in order to succeed in this interpretation. Additionally, non-heritage objects, including natural objects (including a cubic metre of cow and horse skulls and bones!) were included alongside heritage items as part of the overall interpretation to realise the *HOUSE OF DREAMS* vision.

Artists negotiated in particular with Louis Le Vaillant, TJC Director, for guidance, assistance and permissions. Louis' style as an exhibition house director is unique (and delightful!). His rule is simple, "Everything is a Yes until I say No." Penelope Bartlau (BSVT's Artistic Director) and Louis forged an excellent, fruitful and harmonious and supportive working relationship (which has endured past the *HOUSE OF DREAMS* season). As example: Penelope asked about bringing in the cubic metre of bones, which artists had found on a salt-lake in regional Victoria, and which were riddled with bugs and plant material. Louis assisted the realisation of vision for 'From Dirt to Gold' room in the *HOUSE OF DREAMS* (the room with all the bones), by organising the bones to be frozen in Melbourne Museum deep freezers. Best museum practice was followed as artistic vision was realised. *HOUSE OF DREAMS* was planned holistically, with an overview to the vision of the whole exhibition-house and the audience / visitor experience and journey in mind. Each room of the exhibition-house was distinct: each representing an aspect of Johnston's life and each a completely different dream experience. However, there were visual and sonic motifs that flowed through the entire installation / exhibition e.g. rabbits, boot lasts, anthuriums, masculinity, monsters, wealth vs poverty, childhood.

The motifs were drawn from collection objects and combined with other art works and objects created for and brought into the *House of Dreams* installation. With an extremely short installation period (one week), which was interrupted by a new security system being installed at the same time, artists and museum staff were extremely well organised, with a rigorous plan, keeping everything on track. Even under pressure, the teams would stop and take cake and tea at 11.00 am every morning throughout the installation period (proper tea – china cups, tablecloth and a tea pot). This small time taken out from a hectic installation schedule proved one of the cleverest ideas. Staff and artists relaxed for 20 minutes and were able to connect and to problem solve. This part of the planning truly paid off, providing overall smoother execution of the installation and greater well-being for all concerned.

### Key messages, themes and storylines

Based on noted 19<sup>th</sup> century psychiatrist Carl Jung's dream theories and principals; "*various floors of a house in a dream represent the various levels of human consciousness*" Penelope Bartlau constructed an overarching narrative in *Fairhall* to expand her concept.

*HOUSE OF DREAMS* offered a radical interpretation of the Collection and challenged visitors to consider the objects in the Collection not just as objects with their own particular histories but as items in a tool-kit or characters in a language with which new narratives can be conveyed.

### Design

Extensive research, detailed planning and excellent communication was the foundation for all the design aspects of *HOUSE OF DREAMS*. Artists were provided in-depth detail of each object belonging to the collection, a complete and detailed background of Mr Johnston, as well as access to information about *Fairhall's* history.

This information, provided by TJC, provided the foundation for all the interpretive and artistic decisions made by artists, which meant that any design problems were headed off at the pass. The aesthetic appeal of the *HOUSE OF DREAMS* was in its striking originality and creative inventiveness. The freedom to imagine was the door opened by TJC to BSVT artists. TJC chose BSVT to interpret the collection as BSVT is renowned across the museum and gallery sector for their particular interpretative skill and visual aesthetic, meaning that there the company was commissioned by TJC because of the appropriateness of their prior works. BSVT artists worked hand in hand with TJC marketing, providing a photographer for the promotional photos and a 3D Scanner company (Scanned) to document the work (see attachment B).

### Environmental considerations

Everything brought into TJC by BSVT was upcycled, recycled and/or recyclable. BSVT and TJC as independent organisations have a best practice approach to the procurement and use of materials, seeking ethically sourced materials if any are to be purchased new, and working with zero-waste policies in both organisations. This made for a very harmonious working environment, to have collaborating organisations working from the same philosophical and practical basis with regard to the environment.

### Key messages, themes and storylines

The following key themes could be found through the exhibition with the purpose of sharing stories, and creating platforms for their telling;

<p><i>Rabbits</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alice in Wonderland/down the rabbit hole</li> <li>• Japanese culture – Japanese see a Rabbit in the moon.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Clocks</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The illusionary nature of time</li> <li>• Warping of time in dreams</li> </ul>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The moon is connected with the human unconscious mind.</li> </ul>	<p>*NOTE: All clocks in the exhibition are set to 11o'clock, the estimated time of Mr. Johnston's death</p>
<p><i>Dolls</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connect to Johnston's past/childhood</li> <li>• Many people have nightmares with dolls/puppets and Clowns</li> </ul>	<p><i>Anthuriums</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Symbol of male fertility/the masculine</li> </ul> <p>Suits, hats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Old-school masculinity</li> <li>• Johnston's influence and presence throughout the house</li> </ul>
<p><i>Shoes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A set of smart loafers can be found in most rooms. Each is indicative of the presence of Mr. Johnston in that room/where he sits, from our imagined perspective.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Skulls</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decay/Death</li> <li>• Mortality</li> </ul>
<p><i>Upside-down-ness and Inside outside-ness</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The improbability of the dream world: nothing behaves according to logic or the laws of physics</li> </ul>	<p><i>Single beds</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflect the child-state and child-mind.</li> <li>• The power of the dreams and nightmares of childhood</li> </ul>
<p><i>Black &amp; white/shadow</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jung states that the shadow is the unknown and dark side of the personality.</li> <li>• Manifest in dreams, this is the uncontrollable/the Unconscious</li> </ul>	<p><i>Bootlasts</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They are seeded throughout the installation as a reference the looming presence of his boot-maker father, and how Johnston turned his "humble beginnings" into "gold"</li> </ul>

### Communication – techniques and channels / choice of interpretive media

As an example, 'Camera Obscura', in THE GREEN DRAWING ROOM, centred on an immaculately-set dining table incorporating the Collection's Georgian-era glasses, gold cutlery and dinnerware, which was spot-lit in a darkened room. (see images 9 & 10 in attachment B).

The scene was accompanied by a soundscape of guests at a dinner table clinking their plates and glasses. A muffled conversation develops into loud mocking laughter – a scene referencing William Johnston's real-life experience when he discovered guests at an event, he attended laughing behind his back at his so-called 'rough' accent and manners.

*HOUSE OF DREAMS* used a number of art forms to create the installation, with theatrical techniques applied. This included the *HOUSE OF DREAMS* (Art-Poem Book) which was a signed, limited edition run of 20 of these books has been created specifically for the installation and for each room. Poetry was by Penelope Bartlau and prints by Kyoko Imazu. Each art-poem book was opened at the page specific to the room. TJC visitors were able to read the text and see the associated image (where applicable). The art-poem book was designed after the "Album" book from TJC (black leather, gold exterior decoration).

Copies of these books were available for purchase at the museum shop and copies are now housed collections at the the National Library of Australia, Canberra and the State Library Victoria, Melbourne.

### Engagement

**MEDIA** TJC receives wide media coverage throughout the year for its exhibition-house tours, lectures and special events. BSVT is critically reviewed and rated highly with the company's unusual visual-theatre works.

### MEDIA REVIEWS

1. <http://www.stagewhispers.com.au/reviews/house-dreams>
2. <https://theatrepress.com.au/2016/07/13/barking-spider-theatre-and-the-johnston-collection-present-house-of-dreams/>

### TJC's regular media strategy includes

- ongoing printing and general distribution of TJC DL fliers
- 10,000 DL fliers for each exhibition period distributed in and around Melbourne and Victoria, particularly in the 3000 Melbourne zone, and by participants
- electronic direct mail (EDM) distributed to over 14,000 subscribers monthly

TJC's regular social media engagement;

<b>Facebook</b> @TheJohnstonCollection (1,500 followers)	<b>Twitter</b> @TJCMuseum (100 followers)
<b>Instagram</b> @tjcmuseum (1,521 followers)	<b>TripAdvisor</b> @TheJohnstonCollection (100, 5-star reviews)

### **BSVT's regular media strategy includes**

- Instagram: [https://instagram.com/barking\\_spider\\_visual\\_theatre/](https://instagram.com/barking_spider_visual_theatre/)
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/barkingspidertheatre>
- Twitter: <https://twitter.com/barkingspiderth>
- You tube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCFNIO2DCmucWj0uIHFc9Mjw>
- Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/barkingspider>
- Soundcloud: <https://soundcloud.com/barkingspidervisth>
- Website: <http://www.barkingspidertheatre.com.au>

### **Implementation**

TJC's '**July to October**' '*House of Ideas*' series offers, with each stand-alone and unique interpretation an opportunity to interpret, respond and create in one of Australia's most magical exhibition-houses and unique collections. This series continues along the line of more experimental ideas, with the collection to generate a broader demographic. TJC has in the past and will continue to offer opportunities to view William Robert Johnston's collection through another person's eyes.

Part of the purpose of these projects is to share with our visitors' other responses to this rare and intriguing collection. The aim then of this '*House of Ideas*' exhibition series, by inviting guest artists, is to encourage visitors to consider and reconsider objects, and interiors beyond their initial impact, and preconceived ideas.

### **How project worked in conjunction with other facets of the operation (e.g. marketing)**

TJC's annual exhibition-house program schedule is now divided up into three (3) periods of four months with the following overarching themes:

#### **'RAD' | 'House of Ideas' series**

explores more experimental ideas based on the items in the Collection to broaden our demographic. The 'house of ideas' is our annual 'Radical' exhibition where we invite guest curators to curate based on their response to the Collection

Each individual 'House of Ideas' exhibition commissions a guest curator to use Fairhall as a site-specific installation space to 'radically' reconceptualise the exhibition-house, possibly incorporating specially made works, or loan items, for their reinterpretation.

#### **'INSPIRED' | Summer | Christmas at TJC**

invited artists, guilds and societies, inspired by the collection, William Johnston, and Christmas

#### **'TRAD' | WILLIAM JOHNSTON: His Residence & Collection**

17 February 2020 – 26 May 2020

Foundation Collection on, recognises William Johnston by focusing on his collection

Through this inclusive, balanced and dynamic range of exhibition programming, the Collection's aim is to engage, inform, inspire, even bemuse existing and new audiences to consider old objects in new ways.

### **Access**

TJC sees its role as a museum is to provide access, understanding and enjoyment of the visual arts and design through the lens of the Collection. By continually facilitating and commissioning specific projects incorporating new work by contemporary artists, designers, and writers – as TJC has done since its inception - exhibitions such as the *HOUSE OF DREAMS* also promote, develop, and contribute to the Australian creative economy.

### **Training**

#### **Training and development programs for staff, volunteers or other stakeholders such as tour operators.**

TJC volunteer guides presented tours of *HOUSE OF DREAMS* each weekday at 10.00am, 12.00pm, and 2.00pm (after hours tours are restricted by the conditions of the city of Melbourne permit under which TJC operates as a museum in a residential area).

The week before the exhibition opened, the museum's volunteer guides spent a day with the BSVT team of interdisciplinary artists led by Director, Penelope Bartlau. Bartlau and her team elaborated on the conception and processes involved in producing the exhibition. This workshop with creatives behind the *HOUSE OF DREAMS* enabled the museum's guides to give a deeply informed and insightful presentation of the exhibition to visitors. The exhibition was supplemented with a complete set of *TOUR NOTES* that underpinned and expanded on the Training Day.

The museum also presented a *Walk & Talk* with the guest curator series, where Penelope Bartlau took small groups of visitors through *Fairhall*, intimately discussing the exhibition and providing visitors with greater insight into BSVT's collaboration with TJC. Accompanying the exhibition, and continuing with the themes explored in the *HOUSE OF DREAMS* was a Study Series, *DREAM PLACES*, a series of ten lectures reflecting on the themes of dreams and dreamers, presented by well-known art, cultural and social historians.

**3. Identify the resources needed for your projects (e.g. staff, materials, money). Demonstrate how you used these resources effectively.**

2016 Jul-Sep House of Dreams - Exhibition costs		In-Kind expenses	
Curator/designer fee - Barking Spider Visual Theatre	\$ 11,900.00	In-kind TJC - Volunteer installation assistance	\$ 8,500.00
Installation - Title/Untitled	\$ 2,197.27	In-Kind TJC - Volunteer guides	\$ 12,800.00
Removal & storage - James H. Simpson & Sons	\$ 6,720.00	In-kind - Director Louis Le Vaillant .1 FTE (half day per week) research for the project (\$239 per day for 26 weeks)	\$ 6,214.00
Other - Angletons Office Products Depot	\$ 6.31	In-kind - Photography	\$ 800.00
Other - Ausign Pty Ltd (Window Block out + Etch)	\$ 860.00	In-kind Editing and design of exhibition catalogue	\$ 2,000.00
Other - Volunteers' lunches	\$ 161.33	In-kind - use of office and office consumables	\$ 120.00
Other - Bunnings/Ikea/	\$ 440.29	In-kind - venue hire	\$ 6,500.00
Invitation printing	\$ 2,009.00		
Documentation - Photography	\$ 750.00	<b>In-Kind Subtotal</b>	<b>\$ 36,934.00</b>
Documentation - Videography	\$ 1,680.00		
<b>SubTotal</b>	<b>\$ 26,724.20</b>	<b>Total Project Cost</b>	<b>\$ 63,658.20</b>

**4. How has your project met clear and measurable outcomes for your client/organisation and stakeholders?**

TJC's aim for this exhibition was to broaden its audience, particularly to engage with contemporary performance arts audiences and secondary school students, and to re-engage repeat visitors by presenting the Collection in a fresh way. This exhibition also met the museum's objectives to promote knowledge, understanding and enjoyment of the designed world to diverse audiences.

To create awareness of the exhibition to both new and previous visitors, the exhibition was widely promoted through paid advertising, as well as social media – Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. As well, the museum's 15,000 local and international subscribers were regularly informed of the exhibition through e-bulletins, with special offers and discounts made to further encourage visitors to see this exhibition.

**How success of the project was measured**

*HOUSE OF DREAMS* contributed to cultural tourism by providing another cultural activity for local, interstate and international visitors to enjoy. There was increased interstate visitation. This was revealed through our visitor booking system which records the postcodes of all visitors to the Collection.

*HOUSE OF DREAMS* also contributed to the local East Melbourne economy by attracting many tourists to the municipality each day. The exhibition also met the museum's objective which is to promote, develop and contribute to the Australian creative economy by commissioning, supporting, facilitating and curating specific exhibitions incorporating new work by contemporary makers.

*HOUSE OF DREAMS* was reviewed in a number of online theatre blogs including Theatre Press and Stage Whispers, further promoting the exhibition to Australian theatre communities. BSVT also promoted the exhibition on their website and social networking activity, creating further awareness of the exhibition. This wide promotion of the *HOUSE OF DREAMS* across all media resulted in many first-time visitors to TJC to see the exhibition– this was gauged from booking system data collection – along with many repeat visitors to the museum.

TJC has since its inception, fostered relationships with educational institutions and provided optimum access to the Collection to students at all levels with the aim of inspiring students with an engaging view of life and art, especially relating to Johnston's collection from the English Georgian and Regency period. The museum's guided tours help students to "learn to look" and, armed with this skill, enables them to learn to interpret art for themselves, helping to develop critical thinking and to inspire and encourage their own creative practice. Two Melbourne secondary schools – Fitzroy High School and Ivanhoe Grammar School - also incorporated *HOUSE OF DREAMS* into their visual arts and theatre studies coursework. The students generated cross-platform art works incorporating creative writing, sound design, installation creation, mask-making, and film, all works inspired by the exhibition. As well, a student from Swinburne Secondary college who visited *HOUSE OF DREAMS* independently, based her final year VCE visual arts installation project on the exhibition.

In addition, BSVT continued to work with one of the schools, Fitzroy High School, on an immersive theatre project titled the *Balance of Curiosity*, which was created by the students in response to the *HOUSE OF DREAMS* exhibition. Facilitated by artists from BSVT, the project was wholly driven and realised by the students, enhancing critical and creative thinking in the students involved in the project.

<http://barkingspidertheatre.com.au/community-school-works/the-balance-of-curiosity/>

### **Commercial criteria (e.g. repeat business from your client or an increase in sales that can be directly attributed to your interpretation)**

Along with guided tours of *HOUSE OF DREAMS*, a series of *Walk & Talks* with BSVT's, Penelope Bartlau, and an accompanying Study Series, DREAM PLACES (as described above and all of which enabled the museum to engage more closely with audiences and interest groups), TJC also participated in a number of external events to engage with the broader community, targeting groups who might not ordinarily visit the museum. These included participating in the Open House Melbourne (OHM) event on 30 July 2016 during the period of the *HOUSE OF DREAMS* exhibition. TJC received an overwhelming response to this event with all places filled within four minutes of becoming available on the OHM website. Participating in this event brought a new and diverse audience to the museum to see the exhibition. As well, it enabled our museum to support the sustainability of this important annual Melbourne cultural event.

Cross-promotion of *HOUSE OF DREAMS* with other organisations also brought in new audiences. Some of the social and professional groups who visited the museum during this exhibition included The Friends of the Melbourne Arts Centre, and some speakers and attendees from the International Conference on Portraiture held at the University of Melbourne. The number of visitors to the museum and opening times are restricted by conditions imposed by the City of Melbourne permit under which TJC operates as a museum in a residential area. In order to bring the exhibition to a wider audience, a YouTube video was commissioned and uploaded to TJC channel enabling those who could not physically visit the museum to view the exhibition highlights on YouTube.

### **Pre /post project or audience research, monitoring, evaluation and consultation that has been conducted or is planned, including peer review and client assessment**

Visitors were encouraged to leave reviews on TripAdvisor and social media to "spread the word" about the exhibition, resulting in many positive reviews. This social networking activity brought many international and interstate visitors to the exhibition, confirmed through our booking system data collection.

Visitor booking system data collection showed that *HOUSE OF DREAMS* drew many first-time visitors to the Collection. To create further awareness of the museum, particularly with a view to attracting younger visitors to this tour, TJC Instagram, along with our Facebook and Twitter accounts, received good responses.

### **Aspects of the project that did and did not work.**

*House of Dreams* challenged pre-conceived ideas of what a house museum *should* be exhibiting, doing and presenting. Certain aspects of the exhibition were found to be generating negative reviews, such as dolls heads in the Study, which triggered some visitor's childhood traumas. This was an opportunity for TJC volunteer guides and staff to reconsider and discuss these matters together, resulting in appropriate and sensitive responses during any tours of the exhibition where an audience member found the exhibition unsettling or uncomfortable.

Through a range of programs, TJC constantly aims to encourage visitors to view and consider all objects in the Collection, and ideas around collecting, in new and challenging ways. By presenting evocative, and sometimes provocative reinterpretations of William Johnston's collection, TJC aims to challenge visitors' assumptions about the visual arts and design.