

DRIVE IN HOLIDAY RADIO HOLIDAY LUCKY

2005 - 2009

MAKE: Radio art, visual art, video and caravan installations

BUILD: Recognition for fragile shack communities

DRIVE: Support for single mothers and children experiencing violence

CONTEXT - THE HIDDEN STORY

Radio Holiday and *Drive in Holiday* were layered projects, looking at parallels between isolated communities and single parent families, and raising awareness of the need to support these vulnerable groups. At the heart of the project was a group of young single mothers who helped research, create, film and host the performances.

THE PROCESS

Over the previous decade, working with teenage single mothers had been a focus for Big hART's work. *Radio Holiday* and *Drive in Holiday* built on these approaches and were designed to keep horizons wide for these young women, supporting them to explore the skills and confidence they would need to rejoin the workforce. Young mothers from these communities often experience pressure to stay on welfare - however on this project, accompanied by their children, they worked hard, supported each other, and developed new pathways out of isolation.

The fragility and isolation of shack communities created a metaphor for staging an installation radio art piece with these young families. A mobile shack village was created using six vintage caravans gathered in a circle. Using this model, two

unique, mobile, site-specific performance pieces were staged for the Ten Days on the Island festival in 2005 (*Radio Holiday*) and 2007 (*Drive in Holiday*). These were presented in 5 isolated shack communities in Tasmania: Couta Rocks, Trial Harbour, Crayfish Creek, Tomahawk and Southport.

THE CONTENT

To create content, Big hART offered visual artists a 'holiday' in a shack community, and in exchange artists created work based on their experience, for installation inside a caravan. Radiophonic works created in the same community were played in each van. These five mini-installations of paintings and sound came together by corralling the caravans in a circle, forming a performance area. For *Radio Holiday* this circle also contained a micro-radio station, and for *Drive in Holiday*, it became a film set and restaurant.

The circle in the centre of the caravans came to symbolise a safe space in which children could play with toys made by the young mothers. In *Radio Holiday* the audience could interact and listen to the radio broadcast emerging around them, combined with live performance. The audience wore headphones as they explored the small village, entering caravans and experiencing separate soundscapes and images from each community involved.

These quirky, freeform performances were much loved, and *Radio Holiday* subsequently toured to the Melbourne International Arts Festival, presented in Federation Square.

Two years later, *Drive in Holiday* built upon *Radio Holiday*, and offered the young mothers more ambitious roles, such as staging, video and hospitality. This included feeding the audience luscious Tasmanian produce from guest chefs. As the audience ate this feast, served in individual eskies in the middle of the caravans, they were immersed in story on a deconstructed film set. The audience constructed their own journey through multiple narratives as moments from unfinished scenes were rehearsed and filmed amongst them.

Productions of this scale, with food, wine and a premium ticket price were unusual in Tasmania, yet *Drive in Holiday* sold out quickly. It became another marker in the life of Big hART, triggering the exploration of more ambitious scales, aesthetics, languages and site-specific hybridity, staged across vast geographies in isolated communities.



LUCKY PROJECT – A LEGACY

These projects, working with single mothers, generated a series of legacy projects over another two years on the Tasmanian North West Coast, bundled together and called the *LUCKY* Project. The title captured the many ways in which these young women were lucky, even if looked down on sometimes by their community. *LUCKY* became a useful focus. The more these women kept looking forward optimistically, exploring new skills and opportunities, the more they were able to create the future they wanted for themselves and their children.



FAVOURITE MOMENT: *In Couta Rocks (which has the highest percentage of millionaires of any town in Australia - a permanent population of two abalone divers) the show attracted 150 people. A fight broke out between two fishermen in the middle of the performance, and simultaneously between their two dogs. The audience thought it just another seamless element of an evening at the theatre.*