

Atomic survival: the role of the
creative arts in imagining the long
nuclear future.

Paul Brown

Screening: “Ngurini” (Searching)



The Nuclear Futures Arts Program

- 'Ngurini' (Searching for home) is one of 22 projects within a three-year community arts program titled 'Nuclear Futures: exposing the legacy of the atomic age through creative arts'
- This is participatory creative arts with atomic survivor communities in Australia, Japan and UK. (www.nuclearfutures.org)
- 'Ngurini' involved visiting digital artists and photographers working with actors, carvers, painters and storytellers from Yalata in far west of South Australia.
- 'Ngurini' features the post-colonial migration story of families dislocated from Maralinga homelands at the time of British nuclear testing in 1950s-60s.
- This storytelling explains the evolving uncontrolled experiment that is nuclear testing, from a 'rebellious' and 'unofficial' perspective.

For more details, credits, photo images and an extract from the film got to:

<http://nuclearfutures.org/immersive-projection-installation-exposing-the-legacies-of-the-atomic-age/>

Projects 2014-16

- Photography: “Portrait of a whistleblower”
- Sculpture: “Steel Malu”; “Tree of Life” (more below)
- Theatre: “Romancing the Atom” and “Penney’s People”
- Publishing: “Maralinga’s Long Shadow” and “Reimagining Maralinga Emu and Monte Bello”
- Pottery: “Ebay makes the Bomb”
- Radio: UK Descendants stories
- Music: “Sing Maralinga” – Yalata Band and Johnny Lovett
- Digital storytelling “The Global Hibakusha Project”
- Digital Projections: “Ngurini”, “10 Minutes to Midnight” (more below)



The Program (Cont)

Focus on two projects:

- Digital Projections: “Ten Minutes to Midnight” and “Ngurini”
- The Nagasaki sculpture gift

Thinking about how stories pass into the future, and other themes....

Themes

- Catastrophe and migration
- Colonialism
- Land and culture
- Community development
- Keeping the story alive
- Contemporary nuclear politics
- The long nuclear future

“Ngurini” (Searching)



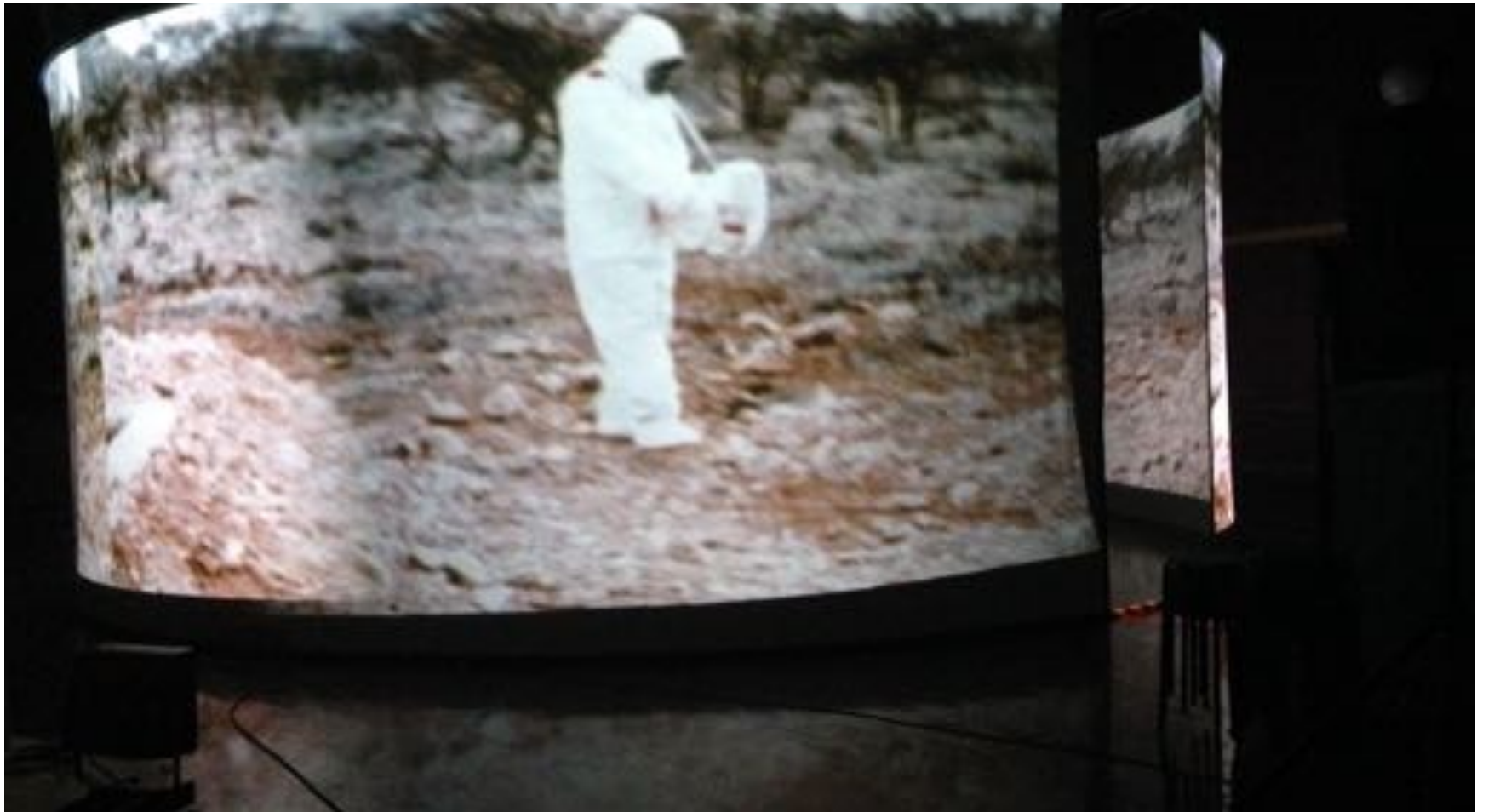
“Ngurini” (Searching)



“10 Minutes to Midnight”



“10 Minutes to Midnight”



“10 Minutes to Midnight”



Showcase at Tandanya

- In 2016, we showcased 'Ngurini', '10 Minutes to Midnight' and other related artworks in Adelaide at Tandanya National Aboriginal Cultural Institute.



No Dump Alliance

- The showcases gained valency in failed attempts by the SA government to promote new nuclear industry, especially nuclear waste dumps.
- Artists joined the No Dump Alliance campaign.



Rebellious Art: pushing back against the nuclear state

- As the South Australian Nuclear Industry Royal Commission unfolded, community arts projects and their creative outcomes became juxtaposed with scientific and economic research, and their presentation ran parallel with a citizen jury.



Protest and decision making



We also used more deliberate processes of 'bridging' to decision-making forums, helping to 'make trouble' as communities pushed back against the nuclear state.

Nagasaki Sculpture Gift

“The wind, it can
blow an idea
away. A sculpture
holds that idea
forever”

Keith Peters

Maralinga

Tjarutja elder



Yalata Sculpture Project



Nagasaki Sculpture gift



Nagasaki Sculpture Gift









Summary

- We all contend with the inevitable colonisation of environments and bodies through radiation impacts.
- The Nuclear Futures program explores memory and narrative to create new understanding of arts-culture-science-environment interactions.
- It provides a case study in the role of community based arts in protest and disruption of 'official' histories.
- It provides new avenues by which atomic survivor communities might seek justice.

Conclusions

- The processes of community arts and cultural development (CACD) are conducive to knowledge construction.
- They harness the participants' *suspended doubt* (McDonell), and facilitate their social negotiation.
- The ensuing artworks and showcases 'publish' and disseminate agreed interpretations.
- This 'produced' knowledge serves as an adjunct, often a corrective, to official accounts.
- It underscores the 'unruly' character of (nuclear) science, and brings a form of justice to communities through recognition and authority to speak.
- Rebellious knowledge-making through community arts and cultural development enacts participatory processes at the arts-science interface and operationalizes the artist in making new ecological knowledge.

Follow up

- Details at www.nuclearfutures.org.au
- Forthcoming special issue “Reimagining Montebello, Emu and Maralinga” for *Unlikely: journal for creative arts* (mid 2018).
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