

Welcome

The SBTB's Make/Believe national exhibition project commenced in the newly redesigned Newton atrium exhibition spaces at Nottingham Trent University from 14 - 31 January 2015. Selected work represents the UK at PQ2015 in Prague from 17 - 28 June 2015, at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London from 9 July 2015 - 3 January 2016.

Make/Believe is the sixth UK national exhibition in an unbroken line of quadrennial exhibitions since 1994, but only the ninth national exhibition since the SBTB started in 1975. Contextualised and to some extent motivated by the corresponding Prague Quadrennials, these exhibitions, and more enduringly their accompanying catalogues, chart the careers of many of the UK's designers with changes in aesthetics, construction and recording materials and technologies, performance and audience contexts shaping the journey.

Over the years designers have bowed in and out of the exhibitions, taken family /career 'breaks', developed their practice in specific directions, collaborated and built enduring partnerships with directors, lighting designers, costumiers, and diversified into other areas of design including events, the music industry, film and TV, heritage and display, education and alternative training and careers in, most frequently, art therapy and midwifery! We are delighted to include established designers such as Robin Don and Russell Craig whose memorable designs for *A Midsummer Marriage* and *Oberon*, respectively, featured in the '83-'87 SBTB exhibition as well as emerging designers and the latest in a remarkable line of Linbury Prize winners, Ana Inés Jabares Pita and Alexander Ruth (2013). We are sorry to record here the recent sudden death of Johan Engels, whose wonderful set designs have been included in the past 4 exhibitions, and are here represented, accompanying Marie-Jeanne Lecca's costume designs for *The Magic Flute* on the Bregenz Festspiel lake stage.

The exhibition title, **Make:Believe**, indicates the **skills, vision and commitment** found in the diversity of performance design today. It encompasses the wide range of work that defines both the heart and wider contexts of this artform-in-industry - in music festivals, large scale events such as the Olympics, Paralympics, community opera, found space and promenade performance, in digital, landscape, heritage and media contexts, as well as the intimate and highly valued work that designers are currently doing in education, health and various community settings.

We celebrate the high quality of designs for a variety of theatre spaces, the traditions of pantomime design, the ravishing visuals that transform many children's books into stage spectacles as well as the dance and opera designs by UK designers that are notable around the world.

Make/Believe also acknowledges and promotes the development of new performance spaces, the re-envisioning of old and existing buildings and the increasing commitment to sustainable design and practices in both production and performance environments.

Performance design lives on in memorable images for those who have seen or been a part of productions and events. Exhibitions of this artform enable many more children, students, industry professionals and interested public to enjoy and engage with the imagination and skills of designers – and importantly the huge number of technical and crafts practitioners who develop and realise the designs. This catalogue is intended as both accompaniment to the **Make/Believe** exhibition in its various iterations, but also as a stand-alone publication that creates a time frame and gives insights into designers' conceptual and production processes and collaborations. The SBTB catalogues are unique in the world in this continuous record and showcase of design for performance.

The title **Make/Believe** with its various connotations and resonances is, as ever, an umbrella, applicable to all the work within, so there are no separate sections and designers are listed alphabetically (mostly). While the designers' commentaries provide context and process insights, short essays have been commissioned, have arisen from interviews, or developed from responses to our Research Project questions. Most of the essays are by individual designers, but the Birmingham Opera, Wildworks and DragonBreath companies featured are exemplars of collaborative art-form led practice that we are proud to include.

We have been talking about – and finally achieved the inclusion of Sound Designers into an SBTB catalogue (they have been included in the past 3 exhibitions) with an attached and integral CD presentation coordinated by tireless Sound Designer Karen Lauke. Our huge thanks to Marc Jennings, catalogue designer who has so carefully and inspirationally brought all this work together.

Thanks also to 3 institutions that have demonstrated the vital interdependence of Higher Education and Industry in this sector. The Backstage Academy, our major sponsor, is offering education and training

originating from and based in the industry context that employs designers such as Es Devlin and Misty Buckley. Nottingham Trent University are hosting the SBTD national exhibition for the second time. The Theatre Design course at NTU originated in the Nottingham Playhouse in 1975 and again the industry – HE relationship is strongly and practically supported here. The Royal Welsh College Of Music And Drama, now the registered and administrative home of the SBTD, hosted the previous national exhibition, Transformation & Revelation as well as the 2013 World Stage Design exhibition. The commitment and skills developed there under Sean Crowley, Head of Drama and Chair of the SBTD are evident in the brilliant exhibition team of Make/Believe, led by Patricia Grasham. The Make/Believe project is made possible with the support of these institutions, of national organisations, our many industry sponsors and supporters as well as that of members and exhibitors in the SBTD, ASD, ACTD, ABTT and ALD.

I hope that Make/Believe will provide a rich source of pleasure, fantasy, contemplation as well as stimulation, or provocation to develop new ideas, projects, technologies and contexts.

Kate Burnett,

Curator

Make/Believe: UK Design for Performance 2011-2015