



SCATTERED TACKS

Silvertree and Gellmann

Presented by Arts House

8.30pm, Tuesday 16 March 2010

8.30pm, Wednesday 17 March 2010

8.30pm, Thursday 18 March 2010

8.30pm, Friday 19 March 2010

8.30pm, Saturday 20 March 2010

6pm, Sunday 21 March 2010

45 mins

Warning: full frontal nudity

The Circus behind the Spectacle

Scattered Tacks was first developed in 2008 when the three members of the newly formed Silvertree and Gellmann moved into a squat in an old block of apartments in South Yarra. Over eight months in dark unlit rooms late at night they worked and experimented, stripping circus back to reveal the ugly truths and hidden intricacies. In this confined space with limited resources they created a rich, sensuous and detailed work that responds to popular contemporary circus.

Scattered Tacks premiered at the 2008 Melbourne Fringe where it won the Village Award for Most Outstanding Production. Since its beginnings the show has undergone many stages of redevelopment, and has appeared in the 2009 Brisbane Powerhouse season as well as its international debut at the Noorderzon Performing Arts Festival in the Netherlands.

The artists hope you will enjoy the current incarnation of **Scattered Tacks**.

Artistic Credits

Created and performed by: Terri Cat Silvertree, Skye Gellmann, Alex Gellmann.

Project Management: Aneke McCulloch and Anna Pidgeon at Seesault

Biographies

Alex Gellmann

Alex has been training and performing circus since he was six years old, when he chose his first stage name, Salty the Clown, and trained with Cirkidz in his hometown of Adelaide. In 2006 he co-founded the *The Rambutan Circus Collective* which won the 2007 Adelaide Fringe Award for Best Dance/Circus/Physical Theatre Production by an Emerging Ensemble. Alex's recent work in *Scattered Tacks* has been described as 'exquisite' (RealTime Arts) and the show has been a perfect outlet for his artistic practice of taking juggling and object manipulation to new extremes.

Skye Gellmann

Alex's older brother, Skye is also a multi-skilled circus artist and survivor of the National Institute of Circus Arts. In his professional career he has won a number of awards including the Short and Sweet Most Promising Male Actor in 2006, and three Melbourne Fringe accolades: Best Circus in 2007, Emerging Artist and the Village Award in 2008. Skye credits his most outstanding achievement as living in a university building undetected for an entire month.

Terri Cat Silvertree

Terri is a physical theatre and performance artist and director who also began her circus career with Cirkidz in Adelaide. In 2006 she co-founded the award-winning *Rambutan Circus Collective* and has earned a reputation for work that is "simultaneously elegant and breathtaking" (Adelaide Theatre Guide 2007). Terri can do a handstand, but she can't do a backflip.

Silvertree and Gellmann was first formed through conversations between the artists about spectacle, power, performing bodies and the history of circus. Together, they set out to reveal the humans at the heart of circus.

A twisted, weird and delicate circus

By Urszula Dawkins

'Inherently scattered' is how Silvertree and Gellmann's Skye Gellman describes the three creators of **Scattered Tacks**. But you can't afford to be scattered as you spin on a bowling ball or do a handstand on it, or balance three juggling balls on your spine. Or perform complex acrobatics on a darkened stage with just a high-powered torch strapped onto your head. It's long way from traditional circus – for the audience, the oohs, aahs and squeals of delight are replaced by silence on stage, held breath and a straining of all the senses. By focusing on exploring objects – on the performers' relationships to 'things' – Silvertree and Gellman have created a tense, tender and compelling vision: in Skye Gellmann's words, "a twisted, weird circus".

Terri Cat Silvertree, Alex Gellman and Skye Gellman go back a long way – Alex and Skye are brothers and all three began their circus training as children at Adelaide's Cirkidz. Between them they've collected a swag of fringe festival and other awards: Skye's **Asleep in a Secret** won the Best Circus (2009) and Village (2009) awards at the Melbourne Fringe; while **Shuttlecock!** by The Rambutan Circus Collective, of which Alex and Terri are both founders, won the Best Dance/Circus/Physical Theatre award at Adelaide Fringe 2007. **Scattered Tacks**, created when the three found themselves all living and working in Melbourne, won the Melbourne Fringe's 2008 Village award, and in 2009 has toured to the Adelaide Fringe, Brisbane's Powerhouse and the Noorderzon Performing Arts Festival in the Netherlands.

Circus it may be, but there's no glitz and glam, no spangles or sequins – indeed, no lighting or artificial sound whatsoever. The whole point, says Skye Gellmann, is to take the form back to its essential elements: the bodies; the people performing.

"First idea," says Gellman: "The reality of what's happening. Second idea: to create something that had the least amount of gratuitous elements; that was really refined back."

"We don't try to entertain...instead we draw attention to things other than presenting tricks as a spectacle. We're presenting them as realities, and trying to break them down."

Watching **Scattered Tacks** is less a narrative journey than an 'experience'; a heightening of the senses that takes place often in near-total darkness. The tension that builds around the group's 'tricks as realities', illuminated and fragmented by harsh beams of light, is matched by an ethereal beauty at times as the same harsh light renders skin almost translucent, glowing beneath the performers' simple costumes.

"**Scattered Tacks** is about the audience's experience more than trying to communicate a story," says Gellmann. "It's about the senses, it's about sight and it's about hearing all the little sounds and drawing attention to the tiny details, and finding the joy in those little things. It's a very minimal show – I guess to shift perspectives is important... You have to use different senses that you don't use in everyday life, but also your sense of what a show should be."

This fierce reduction of theatre to bodies, objects and an intently focused audience grew out of a reaction to the 'performing monkey' syndrome experienced at times by individual members of the group – Skye in particular has a 'second life' as a corporate circus performer.

"We have things to say about the world other than 'look at my handstand'," he says. "So we started pulling apart circus and seeing what else it could mean, other than 'I'm going to show you this trick'."

The high-powered flashlights and bare staging also reflect the location in which **Scattered Tacks** was created: a squatted apartment block in South Yarra where the group lived, worked and rehearsed for several months – initially with no electricity, and developing a necessary affinity to "sneaking around in the dark". Surrounded by wealthy neighbours and squeezed between a high-rise parking station and a luxury car dealer, Skye says squatting was both liberating and alienating, and bred a sense of isolation that inevitably found its way into the show.

"I see it as a kind of blessing more than anything, because we actually had a lot of space... We had a whole apartment we were using as a workshop, so we could make stuff there; we had multiple rooms that were studios."

"It's hard to make a show in a room though, because a room is still a room, it's small and restricting. But because we had restrictions as well as new freedoms, it just gave us new options, and it brought new discoveries."

Even in a traditional theatre space, there's a strongly intimate feel to **Scattered Tacks**, and although 'audience involvement' is not an overt intention, for Skye especially, it's a crucial, if indefinable, relationship.

“I feel like I’m having a conversation with the audience sometimes about what I think, instead of trying to just impose how the audience feels... I let them feel things...”

Silvertree and Gellmann’s manipulations of teapots, bowling balls and an onion, among other things, reflect life in the darkened apartment block, but more tellingly, the curiosity of three humans about the objects they encounter. Their relationship with the viewer is a focused and absorbing collaboration that ranges from breathtaking tension to a shared understanding of human fragility, to joy and delight. As one reviewer has commented – it will be unlike anything you’ve seen before.

Thank you and Acknowledgements

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About Arts House

Arts House, a key program of the City of Melbourne, is Melbourne’s centre for contemporary and experimental performance and interactive artforms, providing a nexus for cultural expression and social connection in a city environment. We support new and diverse ways to make and experience art. We produce and present art which is participatory and experiential, interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary, curated through a balance of provocation, responsiveness and collaboration with artists and audiences.

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Acknowledgement of Country

Arts House acknowledges the traditional land upon which we are located, of the Wurundjeri and Boon Wurrung people of the Kulin nation, and pay our respect to Elders both past and present and, through them, to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.