

ARTISTIC STATEMENT – CLOUD MAN

When Lewis and I first worked together in 2009 we soon discovered we shared a work ethic; a belief in precision and detail without losing playfulness and fun, a belief in the dreamy and poetic without losing a sense of story and character.

The Cloud Man puppet was the starting point for the show, sparking off improvisations, drawings and games. Niroshini Thambar's intricate and magical Cloud Man music was also in the room from the beginning, we were always thinking about the total aesthetic of the piece. Niroshini and Nik Paget-Tomlinson as composer and sound designer respectively worked closely with us throughout to ensure the sound world developed as a fully integrated part of the process.

The realm of Cloud Man naturally emerged as one of thoughtfulness and mystery, and so Cloudia, the obsessive and fastidious cloud scientist was borne as a sort of natural counterpoint. Cloud Man lives in music, poetry and drifting. Cloudia, in charts, explorations and machines.

The story was primarily developed on its feet. We played and found things we thought were moving, intriguing or funny. We wanted to collect as much material as we could, and then observe which moments resonated with others. A story began to emerge about outsiders, characters watching another world and trying to make sense of it. Cloudia sacrifices a normal life to search for Cloud Man, to understand them; and when this lonely eccentric character finds the thing she has spent her life searching for, she has to work out what to do next.

We realized we were exploring human desires to pursue and understand, to make sense of the world around us. questions were emerging about our interaction with the natural world; Do we attempt to control and manipulate to our advantage? Or do we put samples in jars? Do we believe in what we can't see? We were happy that such questions were arising, but we never pushed them. Our focus was to create an emotionally rich and compelling theatre experience.

When we had a sense of the story we were telling and how we were telling it, we brought in Alasdair Satchel for the final stages to direct the show. He had a particular and invaluable insight due to his later entrance to the process. His expertise in physical storytelling was a great addition to the process and brought the story and all its components together.

The show uses visuals, music and text to create a delicate and fantastical experience for the audience. At times Cloudia talks to the audience directly, but there is also much subtler forms of interaction, in the collective myth making which goes on between the performer and audience. The audience see the inanimate objects being brought to life and agree to invest in them, a story is woven in front of them and they become part of the legend of Cloud Men as it is constructed in the space. They join Cloudia in seeing the beauty and surreal in the everyday, and watching the world for long enough to see something very special indeed.