

WILDWORKS



A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings | Hayle, Cornwall 2005

WILDWORKS

WILDWORKS is an art led international theatre company founded in 2005 by Bill Mitchell to focus on site-specific events. **WILDWORKS** makes landscape theatre - large scale spectacular performances and artworks that grow out of their locations: quarries, cliffs, harbours, derelict industrial sites, castles, empty department stores...

Narrative is at the centre of our work. We bring the seeds of a story to a site and weave in the strands that tie people and place together.

As a company we are drawn to stories that are both epic and intimate, human stories that can touch and resonate with audiences across barriers of language, age and nationality.

The **WILDWORKS** approach to place and community is distinctive. The meaning of the work develops from research, from chance encounters, from probing the feelings, thoughts, stories and memories of people. This is the creative heartbeat, found by attending carefully to the place, the genius loci, and working in a spirit of mutual hospitality with the people who inhabit the physical space. We work in both rural and urban settings, often choosing to work in locations and with communities that are facing dramatic change - finding new purpose after the collapse of traditional industry, post-conflict, or on the brink of radical development.

We believe that this way of working touches people in profound ways. We have seen its effect, felt it. We have been energised and humbled by it. It has uncovered layers of meaning and resonance that we have found missing in the conventional theatre process. This work attracts new audiences, people who have never wanted to go to the theatre, and makes them active. We create sensory worlds where everything is narrative: the light, the night, distance and closeness, from vast to tiny, a flag on the horizon, a character holding a rose so close you can smell it.

WILDWORKS

“ I see WILDWORKS as a vehicle for exploration and experiment. The work is directly connected to place, and the people of that place.

Bill Mitchell | WILDWORKS Director

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A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings | Malta 2003

The Beautiful Journey | Wallsend, Tyneside 2009



“WILDWORKS genuinely empowers communities and builds a legacy

The Guardian



Souterrain | Colchester 2006

WILDPROCESS

WILDWORKS has developed ways of working with communities and giving voice to their values, memories, fears and aspirations. Our methods rely utterly on mutual trust and generosity. We believe that our engagement with a place and its people can only become meaningful through immersing ourselves in the location. This work takes time. The duration is necessary to build relationships, to exchange knowledge, build together, bring into play the knowledge and sensitivity of everyone (the artists' as well as the residents') and produce a performance which evokes meaning not only at the local level but also at the universal.

We start the process with detailed preliminary research around the place and the people who inhabit it. We gather memories, images and stories from community members. We hold conversations about the community's fears and aspirations. We hold events, tea parties and community celebrations to facilitate hospitable spaces where residents may talk to each other. We make ourselves at home and accept hospitality. The stories and images we gather are woven into the fabric of the show. In this way communities experience both a sense of ownership and of connection with other communities that have contributed to the show.

WILDWORKSHOPS are an integral part of the process. We use Landscape Summer Schools to bind new working groups together, to teach outdoor performance skills, and to generate a working culture of open-hearted creativity.

We understand the power of this work in building confidence and pride in host communities. The relationship with the community is honest and clear. We need them. It's a truly authentic partnership. We are not doing it because it is good for them. We need them to make the work happen.

It gives participants a reaffirming experience of art, celebrating what they do, whether they are a crane driver, artist or town councillor. It places their culture, aptitudes and environment centre stage.

WILDPROCESS




The Beautiful Journey, WildWorkshop | Devonport Guildhall 2009

Souterrain | Colchester 2006

“ I think we can call it a 150% European project. Bill Mitchell knows how to make all the artists from different horizons work together. We must continue working on projects that lead the audience, that enable things to be owned and shared, linking community with artistic production

Philippe Berthaud | Co-Director of the Viva Cité Outdoor Theatre Festival
Director of Cultural Affairs at Sotteville-lès-Rouen





“Souterrain remains one of the great shows of the century”
The Guardian

WILDPLACES

WILDWORKS' emotional home is Cornwall, where the work started and where many company members live. Our practice draws together several threads that are defining features of the arts and culture ecology of Cornwall. Our work draws its form and inspiration from our geographical peripherality, our extraordinary natural and post-industrial landscapes and from the diversity of artists and art-forms working in close proximity in a narrow peninsula...

Our physical environments are heavily marked by the history of human activity, written into the landscape in so many ways we scarcely notice. We started to explore these narratives of place in Cornwall, but our work has taken us to many different locations: A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings flew over the Grand Harbour in Valletta, the Green Line in Nicosia and a working fishing quay in Hayle, Cornwall. Souterrain explored underworlds in seven venues from the coalfields of Northern France to the tin mines of the far Cornish West. The Beautiful Journey launched a boat each night from the Royal Navy Dockyards in Devonport and from the shipyards on the Tyne. Enchanted Palace conjured up the shadows of seven sad princesses out of the shaken fabric of Kensington Palace during renovation works.

The landscape has ghosts; it has narrative and it has meaning. In each new residency we look for powerful locations that have deep resonance for communities in transition.

The event grows on site. Working in the open landscape demands truth above all else - you are working in a very real world, unlike the fictional worlds we create in studios and theatres. So we choose to work with real materials - water, salt, ice, fire, earth. We use local materials whenever we can - in Malta wreckage from the local boatyard; in Hayle rusting steel ladders from the quay and live spider crabs; in Devonport and Tyneside, cranes, scissor lifts, welding equipment. The place is the story is the place.

WILDPLACES

A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings 2005

Hayle, Cornwall

A Co-Production with Kneehigh Theatre

Made in partnership & supported by: Arts Council England | THOC, State Theatre of Cyprus | St James Cavalier, Malta | Esme Fairbairn Foundation | European Union Social Fund
British Council, Malta | British Council, Cyprus | Heritage Lottery Fund | Cornwall County Council

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Souterrain 2006 | 2007

Stanmer Park, Brighton | La Citadelle, Amiens | The Minories and Keddy's Department Store, Colchester | The Grove School, Hastings | La Chartreuse des Dames, Gosnay
Sotteville-lès-Rouen | Dolcoath Mine, Cornwall

Co-Commissioned by Zap Arts & PECA

Made in partnership & supported by: Arts Council England | Zap Arts | PECA | INSITU | Atelier 231, Sotteville | Esme Fairbairn Foundation | Mercury Theatre, Colchester | First Site
Kerrier District Council | Mineral Tramways | The Cornish Mining World Heritage Site | The Eden Project | Carnegie Trust UK | Creative Partnerships | The Works

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The Beautiful Journey 2009

Devonport Dockyard, South West | Oceana, Wallsend, North East

Made in association with Theatre Royal Plymouth & culture¹⁰

Made in partnership & supported by Arts Council England | INSITU | DRCP | Heritage Lottery Fund | Plymouth City Council | RiO | The Customs House | Find Your Talent
Carnegie Trust UK and was part of North East England's programme of world class festivals & events for 2009 developed by culture¹⁰ and funded by One & Northern Rock Foundation

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The Enchanted Palace 2010 | 2012

Kensington Palace, London

Made in association with Historic Royal Palaces, Kensington Palace

Incorporating the work of: Dame Vivienne Westwood | Stephen Jones OBE | Boudicca | Aminaka Wilmont | William Tempest | Echo Morgan



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