



Interview with Jessica Wilson

Can you please briefly describe your practice?

I began by making site specific visual based work. I was always drawn to the power of the image and sound to tell a story. In my theatre practice, I'm interested in surprising the audience and in transporting people through a landscape - be it real or imagined. I also make interactive works that sit between theatre and the visual arts. Two recent pieces are [Passenger](#)¹ which takes place on board a moving bus and [The Edge of Us](#)² which is a small town transformation project using community made light sculptures.

When did you start making work with and for children and why?

I started doing children's work at Terrapin Puppet Theatre because that was part of their charter. Then when I began developing my independent practice I made larger theatre works including [Still Awake Still](#)³ which toured all over Australia and the USA. At the moment, I'm working on smaller projects which are more nimble and which find the transformation between individuals on a smaller scale. *I See You Like This* is a kind of studio process where children create portraits using their parent's face as a sculptural canvas. I'm currently interested in seeing how my work with and for children can be more embedded in landscape and public spaces. I also want to explore the child as citizen - how much control do children have over their environment and how can we, as adults, become more aware of how our actions and values influence their lives?

How do you know a work is going to be for children?

I start all my projects with an interest in a thematic idea, so those for kids are most recently driven by my observations of myself as a parent. I get excited about the sophisticated dramaturgical territory I can explore with a work for an adult audience. I think work for children is sophisticated as well of course, but with adult work I often go to a darker place.

What are the differences between adult and child-orientated work?

I think the concepts are sophisticated in both but the outer communication is perhaps more 'conscious' in works for children. When I make work that requires intuitive engagement from any audience there has to be a dramaturgy running through it, no matter how slight. But when that dramaturgy is for children it needs to be laid out differently. I have to put in clues that relate to how they see the world. So I need to find a different way through it than I might in an adult work.

I don't think it's patronizing to say that children don't have all the layers of society in their heads yet; that they often don't understand how the world works socio-politically. I embed socio-political ideas in my adult work but I don't put them in the dramaturgy of the work for children in such an obvious way. It's more in the undertone of that work. The layer that they're using to find their way through it is narrative, or story, or participative engagement and or interaction with their parents.

For more information about Jessica's work, go to her [website](#).⁴

¹ <http://jessicawilson.com.au/passenger/>

² <http://jessicawilson.com.au/the-edge-of-us-1/>

³ <http://jessicawilson.com.au/wwwstillawakestilltoursnet/>

⁴ <http://jessicawilson.com.au/>