

The House of Dreaming

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Chris, tell us about *The House of Dreaming*. Is it theatre, installation art or an adventure playground?

It's an immersive installation for children and their families. We're trying to create a space of wakeful dreaming.

But it has theatrical content?

There are 12 linked rooms, each with its particular theme inspired by the language of dreams, but then, yeah, there's an overarching narrative as well.

Tell us about some of the unusual artists you're collaborating with on this project.

Danielle Brustman is both a set designer and also an interior designer, while Matt Gardiner is an interactive systems designer who specialises in 'origami robots', or 'oribotics'. We're also working with a milliner who is making hats

for the audience to wear as they pass through the house, and a fabrics specialist working with felt and wool, helping us with one of the rooms.

It's an interesting context for them all to come together.

It's been a giant research and development project for everyone involved, a 'dream' opportunity for them to try things they've always wanted to but never had the time. Jethro Woodward, for instance, who has worked in sound design for many years, has developed a special motion-triggered soundscape for us.

What excites you about working with a younger audience?

The best thing about it is the energy you get from having to think more about who your audience is. Before I worked at Arena, when I imagined my audience I just imagined myself. Although there's a freedom in that, I find that having to think of yourself as a seven-year-old, for example, to think about where theatre fits into the world of a seven-year-old, means you have to work a lot harder, and I find that really energising.

What kind of experience are you hoping that kids will have in *The House of Dreaming*?

I'm trying to create an experience that is incredibly rich, a half hour pregnant with meaning and full of presence. In a way, the show is about time: how we exist in time and how the architecture around us affects our experience of time. These are quite heady concepts, but children, I think, have a special relationship with time. Think about when you were five, how time was profoundly marked by birthdays, Christmases, and the coming of the seasons. Time exists very differently.

***The House of Dreaming** is presented as a part of the Melbourne Festival. Chris Kohn will be leaving Arena and relocating to Brisbane with his family after the Festival.*