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MEDIA RELEASE

The Johnston Collection to collaborate with groundbreaking independent arts company

HOUSE OF DREAMS | Barking Spider Visual Theatre

Thursday 12 July 2016 – Tuesday 20 September 2016

The Johnston Collection is delighted to announce its latest collaboration with groundbreaking independent Melbourne arts company, Barking Spider Visual Theatre with the new exhibition-house tour the *HOUSE OF DREAMS* opening in *Fairhall* on Tuesday 12 July and running until 20 September 2016.

HOUSE OF DREAMS is a hauntingly beautiful new tour inspired by Carl Jung's dream theories, using the metaphors and symbols of dreams to convey stories exploring the history of William Johnston and his residence, *Fairhall*.

In the *HOUSE OF DREAMS*, Director of Barking Spider Visual Theatre, Penelope Bartlau, will work with a team of artists to transform *Fairhall* into a series of rooms installed as dreamscapes. Cross-platform arts forming part of the installation include found and historic object assemblages, sound and lighting design, visual art and creative writing. These will evoke the experiences, moods and sensations of dreams and the dreamer.

Visitors to the *HOUSE OF DREAMS* will experience powerful and evocative dreamscapes – some enchanting and mysterious, while others will be uncanny or disturbing.

HOUSE OF DREAMS will present selected items from the Collection along with works made especially for the exhibition by the Barking Spider Visual Theatre team of artists. In this exhibition-house tour, *Fairhall* will come alive with a fusion of elements of theatre combined with visual arts and sound design which will be incorporated throughout the exhibition-house space.

Bartlau says, " My dreams are always so vivid – with every sense engaged – and very often include houses. I had read about the significance of the house in Jung's dream theories. This seemed a natural fit. What better way to explore the unconscious, the uncanny, the strangeness of "the night mind", than through the lens of a glorious collection of historic objects in an elegant old Melbourne house."

Barking Spider Visual Theatre is an innovative visual and performance arts company creating projects that intersect multiple art forms. The company enjoys working with a variety of cultural institutions including a number of leading Australian museums, enabling it to engage with a broad audience. Museums they have previously worked with include Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne, the Immigration Museum, Melbourne, the

Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart and the National Museum of Australia, Canberra.

Bartlau says, “Museums are storehouses of stories. So of course working in the museum sector is like being let loose in a lolly shop of stories. TJC presents dense layers of stories – some that can be told, some that can be invented and some that must remain obscured. It is intriguing indeed to create in shadow of the forbidden. I hope that audiences to the *House of Dreams* will come away from the experience enriched, enlivened and curious.”

It was Melbourne-born antique dealer and benefactor William Johnston’s wish that his East Melbourne home, *Fairhall*, be regularly rearranged. Past rearrangements have included those by fashion designer, Akira Isogawa, architect, Pascale Gomes-McNabb, fashion-house, Romance Was Born, artist Rosslynd Piggott, Artistic Director of The Australian Ballet, David McAllister, milliner and artist Richard Nylon, and most recently, design studio Hecker Guthrie.

HOUSE OF DREAMS is a continuation of the annual *House of Ideas* series at The Johnston Collection where guest curators from the contemporary arts communities are invited to use *Fairhall* exhibition-house as an installation site to recreate and reinterpret the Collection. This series of rearrangements provides an opportunity to re-imagine William Johnston’s extraordinary collection in new ways. The Johnston Collection is thrilled to have the exceptionally talented Barking Spider Visual Theatre team continue this exciting series.

Penelope Bartlau says, “ This is an incredible invitation to create. TJC is quite unique in the opportunity it presents to artists. Unlike larger museums, artists have the time and space to mine a single collection, and an entire house in which to research, explore and present. For Barking Spider, it is a rare and invaluable opportunity also, to have our work installed for a long period as the company so often creates ephemeral work.”

For further information, images or interviews, please contact:

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Barking Spider



V I S U A L T H E A T R E

About Barking Spider Visual Theatre | barkingspidertheatre.com.au

Established in 2006, Barking Spider Visual Theatre is all about story - where, with whom, and how the company tell stories varies – but story is central to everything they create. Barking Spider Visual Theatre transforms the way people experience the familiar and encounter the unfamiliar - in museums, galleries, theatres, communities, schools, festivals, residencies and workshops. In the past ten years Barking Spider Visual Theatre has generated more than 60 works. As a part of company practice, wherever possible Barking Spider engages young people as equal creative collaborators and innovators.

About the artists

Penelope Bartlau is the artistic director of independent arts company Barking Spider Visual Theatre and is a director, theatre maker, puppeteer/performer and award-winning writer. Penelope has worked professionally in the arts for over 25 years. In the last ten years with

Barking Spider, she has generated, collaborated and directed in excess of 60 works with museums and galleries, site-specific works, community arts projects, schools works, roving pieces and writing and performing for radio and theatre.

Darius Kedros is a sound artist, sound designer & composer who relocated to Melbourne in 2013 from the UK. He has recently collaborated on a variety of installation, radio & theatre projects including the ABC's Radio National, the Festival of Live Art, Scienceworks, Federation Square, Big West festival & the State Library of Victoria, with Australian artists such as Susie Dee, Triage Live Art Collective, Matt Scholten, Kathy Holowko & Tim Minchin. His northern hemisphere collaborations & credits include The Rambert Dance Company, Momentum Pictures, BBC, V2 & Virgin Records, Nellee Hooper, Kathryn Williams, Jon Spencer and Craig Armstrong. Darius is a stable artist with Barking Spider Visual Theatre, having worked with the company for three years on 15 different projects to date.

Jason Lehane is a director, designer, lighting designer & performer who has been in theatre since 1983. He has worked with a diverse range of professional arts groups including All Human Theatre, the Victorian State Opera, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, national Museum of Australia and the National Gallery of Victoria. Jason has been working with Barking Spider Visual Theatre since 2007, in various creative roles: lighting designer, performer, puppet maker, set designer & director. Jason was a BSVT board member and Chair from 2010-2012. Outside of this company, his works also include: Donna & Damo, with Sarah Collins, Sad Bird Boy for the 2007 Melbourne International Puppet Festival (director & creator) and his set & lighting design for the Malthouse production of *I love You Bro* in 2009.

Kyoko Imazu

Kyoko Imazu is a Japanese artist whose practice encompasses a range of mediums such as printmaking, paper-cut construction, bookbinding and ceramics. Drawing inspiration from childhood memories and Japanese folklore she creates stories through her images. Kyoko has been working with Barking Spider for just under a year, on five diverse arts projects to date. She regularly exhibits her work nationally and internationally. Her work is held in collections at National Library of Australia, State Library of Queensland, State Library of Victoria, National Gallery of Australia, Melbourne Athenaeum Library, RMIT, Sydney College of Arts and numerous private collections worldwide. She completed a Bachelor of Fine Art in Printmaking from RMIT University in Melbourne, Australia where she now resides.

About William Johnston and The Johnston Collection

The Johnston Collection is an exhibition-house of fine and decorative arts centred in an historic Melbourne townhouse. William Robert Johnston (1911-1986) was a 20th century collector and antique dealer who amassed an extraordinary collection of Georgian, Regency, and Louis XV furniture, paintings, ceramics and *objet d'art* over his lifetime. His collection was bequeathed to the people of Victoria after his death, and is displayed in a constantly changing domestic setting in his former residence, *Fairhall*.

Johnston was born in Lilydale, Victoria in 1911, the only child of Robert Alexander Johnston and Louise Friedrichs. His father was a boot-maker and his mother, before her marriage, worked as a maid at Stanford House, East Melbourne.

Around the age of eight, William was given a Minton cup by his grandmother, Mary Theresa Friedrichs (nee Clarke). This became the first piece of his collection and provided the inspiration for a career in antiques that took Johnston around the world.

After an early career in window merchandising in Melbourne, Johnston relocated to London to begin a fulltime business dealing in antiques. He purchased *Fairhall* in 1952 with money made from the sale of antiques brought back from England. Originally named *Cadzow*, built

in 1860 and extended ten years later, Johnston renamed it *Fairhall* and remodelled it in order to create the appearance of a late 18th century Georgian-style townhouse. The interior rooms were converted into three rental flats.

By 1972, Johnston decided to return to live part-time in Melbourne, and gathered his expanding collection of Georgian, Regency and Louis XV fine and decorative arts into *Fairhall* and other rental properties he owned in the area. At the same time he opened Kent Antiques in High St, Armadale.

Johnston's house, collection and estate were bequeathed to the people of Victoria after his death in 1986 'as a place of historical and educational interest,' now administered as an independent not-for-profit museum by The WR Johnston Trust. *Fairhall* was converted into the exhibition-house and a garden was designed in the English manner to highlight Johnston's love of gardening. The Trust also acquires new works for the permanent collection, which now cares for over 1300 items.

This year The Johnston Collection celebrates 25 years of being open to the public, having welcomed more than 100,000 visitors to *Fairhall* during that time. The Johnston Collection displays the works from Johnston's collection in *Fairhall* in three themed exhibition-house tours each year. The Johnston Collection also incorporates a reference library, as well as a lecture space offering an active and engaging range of lectures, workshops and events for all.

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The Johnston Collection and Barking Spider Visual Theatre wish to acknowledge and thank The Friends of The Johnston Collection and Irwin & McLaren Bookbinders for their generous contributions and assistance with this project.



Since 1999, The Johnston Collection has provided visitors, from near and far, transformative exhibition and learning experiences to discover, experience and engage with artists, objects and ideas through dynamic temporary programmes based on its permanent collection.

As an award-winning and critically acclaimed museum, The Johnston Collection invites creatives from the broader visual arts and design communities, to re-interpret the Collection offering special tours, study days and lectures throughout the year, that share stories and inspire communities.

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