

# Case study

## *Cockfight*

### Details

**What:**

Queensland based Animal Farm Collective (now THE FARM) produces dynamic dance and theatre work. Arts Queensland funding supported the second stage creative development of a new work by the collective titled *Cockfight*. Working on this project from THE FARM were Gavin Webber, Josh Thompson and Kate Harman. The work centered on male identity, aging, office politics and battered egos and was performed by two dancers from different generations to a soundtrack of classic seventies music.

An innovative creative process through improvisation was developed as a way to discover choreography and scripting. *Cockfight* pushed boundaries between art forms and highlighted the possibilities that exist in the world between dance and theatre. Workshops were undertaken as part of the creative development which helped disseminate information to the broader community.

The performers were challenged and their practice extended through a commitment to physical storytelling, dance, dramaturgy and theatre. The project also nurtured relationships with industry partners for future development of the work.

The project was developed in partnership with NORPA (Northern Rivers Performing Arts) who provided valuable production, marketing and venue support. NORPA's Artistic Director Julian Louis is also part of *Cockfight*'s creative team. A partnership was also formed with the Judith Wright Centre of Contemporary Arts through the Fresh Ground program providing venue and technical support. Arts Queensland Projects and Program Funding has led to the development of a formal business plan and more importantly, a newly formed company.



Image by Kate Holmes

**When:**

January – August 2014

**Where:**

Judith Wright Centre of Contemporary Arts, Brisbane,  
The Arts Centre Gold Coast, NORPA, Lismore

**Key stats:**

- Number of activities 16
- Number of attendees 506
- Number of participants 75

**Arts Queensland contribution**

\$39,649 – Projects and Programs Fund

**Contact for further information:**

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Website: <http://norpa.org.au/productions/cock-fightworking-title/>

Links: <https://vimeo.com/100578212>



Image by Kate Holmes

## Outcomes

- Many partnerships were nurtured and developed during the project including: NORPA, Performing Lines, The Judith Wright Centre of Contemporary Arts, The Brisbane Powerhouse, The Bleach Festival (Gold Coast), The Sophiensaele (Berlin), Theater Freiburg (Germany) and Theater Neumarkt (Zurich). These partnerships have contributed significantly to the production of *Cockfight* by providing a rich tapestry of interest and support and will help carry the company forward into the future.
- The partnership with NORPA involved production support in the development of *Cockfight*, marketing and venue support as well as creative input from NORPA's Artistic Director Julian Louis. Since the public showing NORPA and Performing Lines have come together to co-produce the work to ensure its presentation in 2015-2016.
- This partnership with PLines also resulted in Animal Farm Collective redefining the company logo and brand, which has resulted in rebranding the company THE FARM.

- An exciting and significant outcome of the project was the development of a three year artistic and business plan for the newly formed THE FARM. This has resulted in securing seed funding from the Gold Coast City Council and is part of a larger vision by the company to be established more permanently.
- An excerpt of the work was performed in Lismore, NSW for NORPA's season launch. The performance was received enthusiastically and generated overwhelmingly positive feedback. A review quoted the work as "*Choreography on steroids*".

## Learnings and reflections

The creative development period was extremely positive with significant artistic results, which found innovative ways of creative development of material and working.

The project enabled successful collaborations and new relationships between artists across the art forms of dance and theatre, which re-invigorated the work. The inter-generational artists collaborating on the project also gave the work longevity, a broad reach and accessibility to new audiences and challenged the artists artistic perceptions

There were challenges between four core creative members, which were managed through open communication and discussions. A foursome of artists is harder to balance than a traditional core collaboration involving a trio, a standard in past productions. Despite these difficulties the work flourished with new input and influences.

There was a direct interaction between workshops and the creative development, sharing new techniques and practice with the Queensland dance sector; and conducting workshops regionally. However, the number of workshops that could be comfortably delivered was over estimated during the development phase, and next time the company will reconsider and review the amount.