

Case study

Kaleidoscope

Details

What:

"Other people will learn and get an insight on how Ethan sees the world, how differently he interprets everything and what an amazing little boy he is. The project is important because not many people know what Asperger's syndrome is and what it does. This project isn't just telling them about it, it's showing them as well." Kelsey Shepherd, Performer

A creative development by Flipside Circus explored the life, thinking and creativity of Ethan, a young student at Flipside Circus with high functioning Autism. The work *Kaleidoscope* aims to challenge audience members and to get them to attempt to see life through the eyes of those who see the world differently.

Inspiration for the development was drawn from the book *Kaleidoscope* which was written by Ethan's mum Johanna Wharton, about their day to day experience of Aspergers.

Driven by Ethan's idea, a small group of artists worked with Ethan in exploring ways to tell his story using circus and physical theatre.

Flipside Circus are in the process of developing the work into a show.

When:

January 2015



Image courtesy Flipside Circus.

Where:

Flipside Circus Training Centre, Alderley

Arts Queensland contribution:

\$14,800 – Projects and Programs Fund

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Links:

[Kaleidoscope Creative Development youtube](#)

Outcomes

- The project provided an opportunity for Ethan to work creatively with artists and extend his circus skills.
- Artists were challenged to find new and flexible ways to develop the work whilst also providing flexibility for Ethan. Artists especially noted they learnt:
 - allowing a young person to have a voice and how to value and respect this but help shape it into ideas which can have strong outcomes
 - when introducing new things or people to the environment the space majorly changes and how best to work with this
 - about time and working on a creative clock rather than a time keeping clock.
- Flipside Circus used a number of social media platforms to promote and document this creative development including facebook and instagram. This has received overwhelming support.
- A draft show outline has now been developed and is ready for rehearsal to begin.



Image courtesy Flipside Circus.

Learnings and reflections

Flipside Circus staff had the following reflection on the creative development:

One of the biggest learnings was the great success in bringing together an inspiring young artist who sits outside the 'neo normal' with a team of professional artists and watch the young person lead this team into places they would not have taken themselves. We were unsure how Ethan would work in a creative process and if we would all be able to adjust to his time and needs. All the artists involved found their way to engage and work inside the mind and creative thinking of Ethan. This was so inspiring to see and will be the key to the ongoing success of the project. This will give us the true experience.

In turn, having the professional artists in the room really allowed Ethan to reach new artistic and skill outcomes. He found himself right inside circus acts which he watches and admires. Meanwhile, the professionals found a new sensitivity which bought great beauty to the piece.

This was a very exciting project to be part of in the history of Flipside Circus as this is the first attempt at the development of a professional work. Flipside Circus has a long standing reputation as a community arts organisation delivering and providing arts experiences to young people throughout the country. This project is a milestone for the company's development and aims to take the heart of community onto the professional stage.