****

**School: Creative Industries**

**Researcher: Sharon Clark**

**Project Title: Remodeling Theatre Narrative through Digital Technology**

**UOA: 34 – Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management**

300-Word Statement

This collection spans two large-scale theater productions – ‘The Stick House’ (2015) and ‘Ice Road’ (2017) – both of which were made through the immersive theatre company, Raucous, founded by Clark. A multi-component practice-based output, the research investigates how immersive theatre narratives can harness emerging digital media technologies to deliver a more immediate and emotive experience for a live audience. Both pieces fuse live performance, projection mapping, musical composition, smell, robotics and spatial sound. Contextual information comprises video footage, including documentation of the audience research and response.

Crucial to the methodological output of both of these works is the iterative design and development of ‘totems’ – individually designed handheld object-based media that respond to critical narrative and emotional beats within the storytelling, and which served to experiment with the ways in which audiences experienced the story and its actions. For example, these totems turned the audience into individual musicians in an orchestra, so that if the audience stood in the correct formation, they played Shostakovich’s *Leningrad*. The research process centres around how design – specifically, product design, sound design and narrative design – can deliver what are now being called ‘storyscapes’ (Blumenthal, 2016). The research makes use of both qualitative and quantitative testing with different audience segments with a baseline story outline, as well as exploration into ways of reinterpreting existing digital technology to deliver new experiences for audiences.

The research was conceived for ‘found’ spaces – railway tunnels and disused swimming baths – aiming to engage a more diverse audience. The research was co-funded by Arts Council England (£227,000 for ‘The Stick House’ and £197,000 for ‘Ice Road’), attracting a combined audience of over 6,500 and an additional 20,000 online. Both works have garnered national reviews (including *The Guardian* and *The Times*), with ‘The Stick House’ voted best theatre production in Bristol for 2015.