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Shopfront Recognised as Key Producer by Australia Council

Cutting-edge urban youth Arts Company recognised as Key Producer

Thursday 13 December, 2007 — Key Producer status has been granted to Shopfront, Australia's cutting edge urban arts centre, providing six years recurrent funding from the Australia Council Community Partnerships Committee. There are only eleven companies across the country which are recognised as Key Producers.

Shopfront is celebrating this landmark achievement in a year of exponential growth.

Four years ago the management team under the steerage of Artistic Director and CEO TJ Eckleberg mapped Shopfront's future direction. With full ownership of their bricks and mortar as a financial foundation, a rigorous and courageous artistic program was undertaken in partnership with local government, arts funding bodies, community organisations and some of Australia's top artists.

"We banked on our thirty two year history, our industry alumni and the courage and vision of our team to jump into new and exciting works – challenging boundaries and demonstrating the depth of what young artists have to offer. The Australia Council's recognition of this concerted effort is proof we are on the right track," says Eckleberg.

If the past 12 months are anything to go by, the company has set the bar extremely high. August 2007's *A City of Shadows and Ice* was a free multi-disciplinary original work in Kogarah Town Square over four nights – including live band (**Entropic**), original music score, dance, spoken word, a six metre shipping container and a moving set of fire and ice. Major contributions to 2007 were made by Shopfront's **ArtsLab07** artists in residence who immersed themselves in Australia's only full-year artistic residency for 18-25 year olds. Six new works were created by **ArtsLab07** artists – who leave the program with striking and original work – set to tour and perform in festivals and professional venues across the country in 2008.



Shopfront has a rich history, recognised by its industry alumni as a haven for young artists to create, explore and connect with like minded peers as they embark on an artistic life. “Our history and networks provide the foundation for young artists to make courageous, unique work. Being not-for-profit and owning our own arts complex means artists have time to take risks and develop their vision through experimentation. The industry’s ongoing support for the annual performance season, master classes and mentoring continue to be an invaluable resource for Shopfront,” say Eckleberg.

“Next year’s program is ambitious and again connects community, young artists, members, audiences and industry. 2008’s major production (*lost toy story*) is a performance and installation project that explores our life stories through our relationship with our toys.” says Eckleberg.

(*lost toy story*) will push artistic and community boundaries late in 2008. **ArtsLab08** is in the process of attracting seven young artists from all disciplines to position themselves for a full-year of creative development. **ArtsLab08** is Australia’s only multi-disciplinary residential program for young artists (aged 18-25) and positions will be hotly contested – final places will be awarded late January 2008.

ABOUT: Shopfront is an innovative contemporary arts centre for under 25s - a not-for-profit co-operative started in 1976 by young people eager to have a place to turn their ideas into realities. Using cross-disciplinary process and multi-platform work, Shopfront embraces multi-media and performing arts skill development to foster the long-term engagement and empowerment of young people. Shopfront currently has more than 600 active members. In recognition of Shopfront’s key position within the arts community and the success of the first year of ArtsLab in 2007, the company recently received ongoing funding from the Australia Council for the Arts Community Partnership Committee’s as a *Key Producer* – a significant achievement in Shopfront’s history. Shopfront receives support from The Australia Council for the Arts, NSW Ministry of Arts and Department of Community Services, Rockdale, Hurstville and Kogarah Councils and various philanthropic organisations from around Australia.

ATTENTION EDITORS AND PRODUCERS: Shopfront’s Artistic Director, TJ Eckleberg is available for interviews by contacting: Jenny Muir at Primary Communications on 02 9212 3888 or email: jmuir@primary-pr.com

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