

Case study number: 08/2011

Project Title: Digitally printed and electronically knitted apparel for Junior, a 5 metre tall puppet

TDL Partner: Auckland Regional Council

Contact: Sarah Burren

Website: www.heartofthenation.co.nz/biggest-fan-gallery

Project Period: July – August 2011

Partner Profile: Over 50 individual sponsors and funding from Lottery and Auckland Council enabled 'Junior', a 5 metre tall puppet, otherwise known as 'The Biggest Fan', to take to the streets of Auckland during the Heart of the Nation festival in September 2011. Junior was first introduced in Aotea Square during the 2011 Rugby World Cup and subsequently performed at several venues around the Auckland region.

Project back ground: Creative director, Sarah Burren, developed the idea for this huge design after being inspired by the Royal Deluxe marionettes in 2009. Her idea was to create a giant marionette puppet in time for the 2011 Rugby World Cup. This project required input from a range of experts using various technologies and construction materials. It included textile designers, engineers, sail makers, prop builders and artists. The puppet was operated by a team 10 puppeteers, a mixture of local and international artists.

Sarah has worked with AUT staff and students on previous occasions and ran the idea by Faculty of Design and Creative Technologies Dean, Desna Jury. She heard about the TDL's digital print facility and Shima Seiki WholeGarment® knitting technology from a former AUT student. These technologies matched the highly specialised yet small production quantity required to produce Junior's garments. Textile designer and school teacher Mary Gast gave advice on Junior's wardrobe and documented some of the project's progress on her blog (referenced below).

Project Description: The idea for the 'The Biggest Fan' project was created by Sarah Burren. The TDL was commissioned to produce Junior's giant rugby shirt print and socks. The items had to be in the appropriate scale, be strong and durable, and feature detailed design criteria such as fading, authentic colours and specific patterns.

Project Methodology: Sarah provided the TDL with images of a rugby shirt and socks, designed to reflect the sorts of clothes worn by the typical rugby fan. Sarah also had specific colour and fade effect requirements for the digitally printed t-shirt. Peter Heslop and Gordon Fraser from the TDL visited the build workshop to take measurements of Junior. Gordon transcribed the knitted sock design to the Shima CAD system to create a programme to knit seamless circular striped socks. It was necessary to test and adjust the scale of the red and black stripes for the socks before the final garments were produced. For the digitally printed apparel, Sarah visited the TDL to choose the colours for each item of clothing from the colour pallet.

Feedback: Sarah was appreciative that Peter and Gordon visited the premises where Junior was being constructed to see its scale and take measurements. Sarah noted the easy communications with TDL staff and its good workflow processes. She expects to use the TDL again as she plans for her next creative project, expected to feature digital printing, complicated fabric structures and mathematically symmetrical knitted shapes.

Insights: Digital printing and WholeGarment® knitting technologies are able to produce one off pieces 'on demand' as well as larger scale production runs. The 'on demand' capability is perfect for costume design. The scale of the puppet meant that the garment designs had to be radically increased, which provided an interesting design and production challenge.

Conclusion: The TDL has engaged with the design and production of printed and knitted designs for film, television and theatre costumes. However, this was the first project that it had undertaken for puppetry and the large scale of Junior added new challenges to this project.

Documentation: News Coverage: <http://www.biglittlecity.co.nz/event/The%20Biggest%20Fan>

Not to be confused with the competition with the same name: <http://www.backingblack.co.nz/blog/259/the-life-the-all-blacks-biggest-fan.html>

Info on Junior's wardrobe:

<http://www.royalsociety.org.nz/teaching-learning/teacher-fellowships/profiles/2011-recipients/mary-ann-gast/>

Mary Gast's Blog.

<http://mgast.tumblr.com/>

Images:

