

  
TRANSMISSION

Presents

# WHITELEY



Directed by **JAMES BOGLE** / Release Date **11 May 2017**

Featuring **BRETT WHITELEY, WENDY WHITELEY, FRANNIE HOPKIRK**

#### PUBLICITY REQUESTS:

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#### IMAGES

High res images and poster available to download via the DOWNLOAD MEDIA tab at:

<http://www.transmissionfilms.com.au/films/whiteley>

**Distributed in Australia by Transmission Films**

# **WHITELEY**

# **PRODUCTION NOTES**

**A NORTHERN PICTURES PRODUCTION**

**Presented by**  
**Screen Australia, ScreenWest and Lotterywest, Screen NSW**

## **WHITELEY**

### **Logline**

WHITELEY is a portrait that looks intimately at the artist Brett Whiteley's incredible life and legacy.

### **Short Synopsis**

A visual journey into the life and legacy of one of Australia's most celebrated artists, Brett Whiteley. Through archive, drama and visual effects, this raw and intimate film shows Whiteley's driving passion to express himself through his art.

### **Synopsis**

Brett Whiteley is an Australian cultural icon. Nearly a quarter century after his death, there has never been anyone like Whiteley in the history of Australian art.

WHITELEY is a visual journey into the life and legacy of one of Australia's most celebrated artists. The story, told in Brett's own voice, opens a rare window into an artist's mind.

The film records Whiteley's life and artistic process and gives us an insight into Australia's cultural and artistic history.

While his brief, dazzling life was erratic, combustible and tragic, Whiteley also created a highly productive and brilliant artistic vortex around which much of our 70s and 80s sense of self-worth as an aggressively creative nation emerged.

In his personal life, he adored his wife Wendy but would also have affairs. Many of his most successful paintings were odes to Wendy and were in no small part successful due to her uninhibited expressiveness before Brett's devouring gaze.

When tackling the life of Brett Whiteley, it's almost impossible not to categorize his public persona into some very distinct types: The pure artist who knew his art history backwards but would cry when one of his own favourite paintings was sold to a stranger; the volatile egotist who could be destroyed by the smallest criticism but who was fearless in painting-large the most intimate of his inadequacies; and the showman entrepreneur who would put on full-tilt glitz and tinsel openings even as he complained about his work not being taken seriously. Whiteley was full of such incongruities and contradictions.

Despite the tabloid headlines, Whiteley's life as an artist was defined by a vigorous work ethic, an exhaustive commitment to study of the work of others, and a willingness to take risks in his own work.

In the end and despite his inglorious demise, Whiteley was able to manifest an outstanding body of work that elevated him beyond his notoriety into the international echelons of preeminent modern artists.

## Director's Statement – James Bogle

It was my intention with this film - my mission if you like - to collect, collate, and create an intensely interpretive, penetrating and emotional experience of Whiteley's life.

Brett Whiteley was always destined to paint his life large in great big red letters across the art world and he only knew one way to do that. He believed that all great artists were larger than life. He believed in the fantastical romance of towering "characters" like Van Gogh and Dali and believed that he needed a story to equal that stature. In many ways, this film is the story of Brett forever reaching out for this. The many images of his muse were important in his making - but her voice as the silent partner, was perhaps more so. Wendy was his first and foremost critic and would become his wife, the carrier of his only child and then later, in dramatic circumstances, his ex-wife and finally the guardian of his legacy. They met when she was 15, he, 17.

With the irrepressible Wendy as Brett's muse and lover, the pair blazed a narcotic path through the art-world. WHITELEY is driven by Brett and Wendy's voices - his voice at the cause of his story, her voice at the effect. Wendy has been a generous collaborator; sharing her private archive which includes never before seen notebooks and personal effects.

Every piece of the dialogue in the film is authentic – either captured on the archival footage our researchers discovered in all kinds of places, or recreated from notebooks and interviews by our actors who play Brett and Wendy with such perception. The private perspective is so important to this film: the moments of triumph, confusion, achievement and destruction; the intimacy of family moments, the note book entries about personal issues like fear, drugs, anger, rejection, paranoia.

Our archival footage spans over four decades. We've become so used to the images of a middle-aged Brett with his halo of red curls and creased face, that it is startling to see and hear the short-haired and intense 20 year old Brett, already on a fast track to art acclamation. Amongst the discoveries in the rushes tins from a 60 Minutes profile from the 1983 is a moving and intimate moment when Brett's art hero, Lloyd Rees, speaks to him about technique. There is another unforgettable moment on film with the young Whiteley family, including baby daughter Arkie, lazing in the sun at Whale Beach after their return from London, Wendy's bikini-ed bum so instantly recognisable from so many of Brett's paintings.

Throughout the film I've chosen paintings to represent different periods in Brett's life. For example, *The American Dream* which came to symbolize Brett's time living at The Chelsea Hotel in New York, and *Alchemy*, a difficult and challenging piece on 18 panels which he painted on his return to Australia after living in the US and Fiji.

Paintings, stills, archive, drama— these are woven throughout the story to build a portrait of this complex genius. Like every artist, Whiteley wanted to be great and be recognized for that greatness. As a man, he was riven with contradictions. He was both public and private; he was outrageous, introspective, absurd, witty, dark, exhilarating and he was brilliant. The film takes audiences on an exhilarating journey deep inside Brett Whiteley's world and, I hope, will remind us all of Brett's extraordinary talent, his contribution to Australian art and, importantly, to our country's sense of itself.

### **Producer's Statement – Sue Clothier**

The last time there was a story of any significance told about Brett Whiteley was in the 1988 documentary *Difficult Pleasure*. Brett was still alive and it was some five years prior to death. I was always attracted to Brett Whiteley's story but didn't know very much about him or his life, other than the news item and of course that he had died in a tragic and seemingly lonely way. About five years ago I started researching Brett's life and work, and I became convinced that it was time to take a fresh look at one of Australia's most culturally significant artists of the 60, 70s and 80's.

I started exchanging ideas with Director/Writer James Bogle, someone I have known for years, and wanted to work with, but had never found the right project for us to collaborate. James is a feature director but with his early career roots in documentary.

Brett was a larger than life character and taking a traditional biopic documentary approach didn't feel right. Brett's major works like *Alchemy* and *American Dream* needed a bigger screen, so James and I started thinking about framing Whiteley as a theatrical documentary. I'd produced *Unfolding Florence* in 2006 and knew that to attract a cinema audience was no easy thing to achieve so we set about digging deeply into Brett's life and what emerged is a rich, layered story that is, fragile, sad, exhilarating, exotic, funny, emotional and dramatic. The resulting story transcends anything an audience will have seen before about Brett Whiteley, his life, his love and his art.

## **THE FILMMAKERS**

### **WRITER/DIRECTOR JAMES BOGLE**

James Bogle has co-written and directed four feature films, *Closed For Winter* (2009), *In the Winter Dark* (1999), *Mad Bomber in Love* (1993) and *Stones of Death* (1989) and is in development on his fifth, based on the award-winning novel *Strange Objects* by Australian writer Gary Crew. He has directed more than 50 episodes of television drama including *The Circuit II* (his episode nominated for Best Direction of a TV Drama by Australian Directors Guild, 2011), and 14 episodes of *Lockie Leonard I&II*, (Winner, Best Children's Drama Series Logie 2008, Winner Best Children's Drama Series, AFI Awards 2007). More recently he directed an episode of James completed work on a four-hour documentary series for ABC TV, *The War That Changed Us*, which was nominated for Logie Award for Most Outstanding Factual Program.

James served as a board member at Western Australia's state film funding body, ScreenWest from 2001-4, and as an Executive Committee Member for the Western Australian Branch of the Australian Directors Guild from 2010-12. James also directs television commercials, teaches tertiary film studies and works as an industry consultant and script editor with a special interest in the development of young and indigenous filmmakers.

### **CO-WRITER VICTOR GENTILE**

Since graduating from AFTRS in 1986, Victor Gentile has worked as a producer, writer and script developer on projects ranging from short films to documentaries, children's drama, telemovies and feature films.

As an independent producer and overseen some dozen television documentary projects including the ABC's *Faces of War* series, Megan Simpson Huberman's *War of Distance*, *Cenotaph* by Chris Tuckfield, David Caesar's *Convictions*, and *The Golden Pig* for SBS. He created a pilot tv series *Conspiracy* (director, Brendan Young) for Network Ten with Alex Proyas and Andrew Mason as producers. Along the way, he has also produced the short films *Urn*, by director Miro Bilbrough, and Peter Rasmussen's *The Picture Woman* amongst others.

He was a founding director of the film production company, Oracle Pictures, and the sound post-production studio, Counterpoint Sound, and was Project Development Manager at Western Australia's screen funding and development agency, ScreenWest.

In recent years, Victor has written on children's TV series such as *Streetsmartz*, *Parallax* and *Stormworld* for Western Australian producer Paul Barron as well as for Electric Pictures developing, researching and writing various TV documentary projects from concept to production. He has worked as a freelance writer, researcher, developer and consultant for companies as varied as Perth-based Taylor Media and Andrew Mason's Sydney-based City Productions for whom he has recently written a feature film (*Spike*) soon to be shot in Beijing in Mandarin.

## PRODUCER SUE CLOTHIER

Sue Clothier is recognised as one of Australia's leading factual production executives and creative producers. In a career spanning more than two decades in the entertainment industry, Sue has produced or overseen the production of more than 120 hours of original broadcast programming.

Sue is Managing Director of Northern Pictures Pty Ltd, a specialist factual production company she established in 2010. She is also Managing Director of the RACAT stable of market-leading independent television production companies: Northern Pictures based out of Sydney (Australia), NHNZ based out of the Washington (USA), Dunedin (NZ) and Beijing (China), and Beach House Pictures in Singapore.

Previously, Sue was General Manager, ScreenWorld Pty Ltd and Head of TV Factual Production at Becker Entertainment (now ScreenWorld Pty Ltd) and worked on establishing the company as a leading global producer of high-end documentary programs. She oversaw the initial development and production of the popular global science series *One Step Beyond* for Discovery Networks International. Before joining Becker Entertainment in (1999), Sue was the Production Supervisor of the Indigenous Unit at public broadcaster SBS.

Sue's many career highlights as a producer include the critically acclaimed feature docu-drama directed by Gillian Armstrong, *Unfolding Florence: The Many Lives of Florence Broadhurst*; Australia's only official selection at the 2006 Sundance Film Festival, the Logie-nominated drama-doc series *Darwin's Brave New World*, the SBS series *Food Investigators* and the ATOM Award winning Best Documentary (Science, Technology & the Environment), *The Silent Epidemic*.

Accolades for programs Sue has produced include a Silver World Medal (New York Film Festival), Special Jury Award (The Explorers Club Documentary Film Festival), Silver Award (Omni Intermedia Awards), Bronze World Medal (New York Festival 2003) and the Special Jury Award (The Explorers Club Documentary Film Festival).

Her Executive Producer credits include the recent series *Life on the Reef*, *Changing Minds*, *Cronulla Riots: The Day That Shocked A National*, *Kakadu*, *Once Upon a Time in Cabramatta* and *Once Upon a Time in Punchbowl*.

## **CREDITS**

### **The Filmmakers:**

Director	JAMES BOGLE
Producer	SUE CLOTHIER
Writers	JAMES BOGLE VICTOR GENTILE
Executive Producers	SUE CLOTHIER ANDREW MACKIE RICHARD PAYTEN MEGAN YOUNG
Co-producers	PETA AYERS JAMES BOGLE
Editor	LAWRIE SILVESTRIN ASE
Composer	ASH GIBSON GREIG
Directory of Photography	JIM FRATER ACS
Production Designer	EMMA FLETCHER
Costume Designer	GAIL PETHER
Hair and Make Up Supervisor	KAREN SIMS

### **Featuring the Voices of:**

Brett Whiteley, Wendy Whiteley, Frannie Hopkirk, Barry Pearce, Kathie Sutherland, Phillip Adams, Andrew Olle

### **With additional Voices by:**

Brett Whiteley	ALAN DUKES
Clem Whiteley	MICHAEL LONEY
Arkie Whiteley	VIVIENNE HOLUB
Michael Driscoll	KINGSLEY JUDD
Bryan Robertson	MICHAEL LONEY



Mary Coles  
Italian Art Expert  
Newsreaders

James Gleeson  
Laurie Thomas  
Daniel Thomas  
Rodney Milgate  
Lenore Nicklin  
Elwyn Lynn

**Cast:**

Brett Whiteley – Older  
Brett Whiteley – Younger  
Wendy Whiteley  
Arkie Whiteley  
Brett Whiteley – Child  
Italian Cable Man  
Marlborough Man  
Receptionist

JANET PETTIGREW  
JAMES HAGEN  
DON SMITH  
MICHAEL LONEY  
ANDY KING  
MICHAEL LONEY  
KINGSLEY JUDD  
ANDY KING  
MIKE DJUKIC  
JANET PETTIGREW  
KINGSLEY JUDD

ANDY BLAIKIE  
CAMPBELL GREENOCK  
JESSICA WHITE  
OLIVIJA STRAUTINS  
JACK BARNES  
SEBASTIAN CRAIG  
KINGSLEY JUDD  
JESSICA HEGARTY