

Interview Ben&Julia
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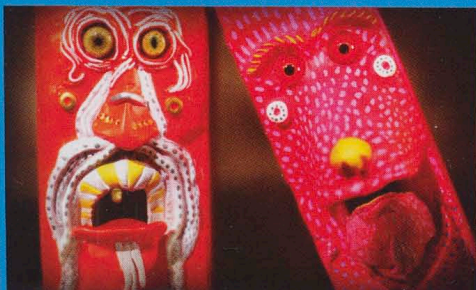
PICTOPLASMA

British illustrator **Lisa Hassell** gives a guided tour of the artists, exhibitions, workshops and entertainment of Berlin's annual character design and art festival

IN THE LAND OF THE FIVE-EARED DOG KING



Discovering the playful, colourful and surreal work of Ben & Julia was one of my personal highlights at this year's Pictoplasm. Their mix of weird and wonderful characters, live puppetry and animation inspired by a love of the 80s, and cult TV series *The Mighty Boosh* was a refreshing direction. Presenting their first exhibition, *3 Moments In The Life Of Kaluk* marked a new direction for the duo, experimenting with narrative, sculpture, and music to create a sensory experience.



LH: How was *3 Moments In The Life Of Kaluk* conceived?

B&J: "Kaluk is a five-eared dog King, of whom the exhibition depicts three moments of his life – birth, coronation & death. We were inspired by the concept of imaginary museums, creating a unique experience. We wanted the audience to have their own ideas of Kaluk and the myth, and fill in the gaps with their own imagination – we wanted to leave room for personal interpretation."

"We want to create a world around this character and a background story, how he came to be. We were inspired by Indian and Indonesian art, and we travelled a lot for inspiration."

LH: Tell me about how you work

B&J: "We create a lot of drawings and a lot of research. Reading into legends, Indian mythology. A lot of preparation, experimentation and thought has to go

into our productions, which often means bringing in friends and family to help. There are so many steps involved, using these materials, it's very intensive.

"The concept of creating exhibitions is very new but we are keen to explore sculpture as a medium for our work."

LH: How will you develop Kaluk?

B&J: "Every time we think about Kaluk, now that the story is written we get many ideas for characters and how we can develop them. The next stage of the project will be developing the world of Kaluk through animation or mixing media."

