Lesser Gods has been commissioned and developed through Next Wave’s Kickstart program for Next Wave Festival 2014.

EXHIBITION PROGRAM 2014

LESSER GODS
RYAN PRESLEY
21 MAY - 7 JUNE

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Cover: Transfiguration (detail), 2014.
1 / Lesser Gods (Installation detail), 2014. Image by Eugyeene Teh.

PROJECT PARTNERS

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Lesser Gods has been supported by the Human Rights Arts and Film Festival.
Ryan Presley's Lesser Gods is a personal manifesto. As you enter the installation through the head of the totemic saltwater crocodile you are immersed in a surreal cycle of images, animated paintings, gold leaf wood carvings and esoteric cymatic symbols drawn from Christian iconography. You have been swallowed like the biblical Jonah, a lesser prophet of the Old Testament, confined in the belly of the beast. The screen flashes and the dancefloor - an interactive podium - lights up through sensors under your feet. If you follow the signs on the screen and dance the sequence you create a sound piece like a musical algorithm, variations on a national theme.

Ryan Presley is a multidisciplinary artist and his work ranges freely across several media - from watercolour and oil painting, drawing and woodblock to ceramics and metalsmithing. Lesser Gods though is an exciting new tangent in his diverse multiform practice. Presley is yet another graduate of the degree course in contemporary Australian Indigenous art offered at Griffith University's Queensland College of Art. Presley is also recipient of the university's 2009 Godfrey Rivers Medal for highest achieving student and went on to do a first class honours degree. He has recently opted to focus on a PhD and its subject is no less than the intersection of Christianity and colonialism in the Australian context.

Presley was born in 1987 and grew up in Alice Springs. His family moved to Brisbane when he was 11. His paternal family is from Papunya around the Daly River region in the Northern Territory. His maternal grandfather was a professional artist who taught in Rome before he and his wife migrated to Australia to work in remote Aboriginal communities.

Presley works like an artisan, experimenting with visual language and learning new techniques along the way. Lesser Gods - commissioned for the 2014 Next Wave Festival - is much less solitary. He has worked with other artists specialising in animation and electronics, a producer and a sound composer to create an immersive, surreal and sometimes overpowering experience. But the artist's hand is clearly obvious. Presley has created several new paintings which quote from the long iconographic tradition of Western religious art, from St George and the dragon, the Holy Trinity and the Transfiguration of Christ. But these paintings are surreal new imaginings which evoke the collision of fluid Aboriginal spirituality and dogmatic Christianity.