



Media Release

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## Two photographers unite to change the lives of a quadriplegic Aussie mother and her young son.

Photographers Karen Alsop (AUS) and Benjamin Von Wong (USA) completed an epic three day shoot showcasing unbreakable bond between mother and son.



Two photographers have joined forces to complete a photography project for **Sarah-Jane "SJ" Staszak**, an inspirational woman who woke up from back surgery to find she had become a quadriplegic.

Released to celebrate Mother's Day 2017, the images show 43 year-old SJ with her 8 year-old son, Hamish, battling the elements in a series of extraordinary scenes.

There are five photos in the collection, two from highly-acclaimed viral photographer **Benjamin Von Wong**, and three composite art scenes from award-winning Australian photographer **Karen Alsop** from **Story Art**. Each of the images, created in the style of their respective photographer, were designed to showcase the unbreakable bond of love between a mother and her son.

The images were produced as part of **The heART Project**, an Australian photography initiative designed to help change the lives of others through creativity.

"I feel very special," said SJ. "Hamish and I loved our experience on the shoot. It was a new opportunity for both of us to be involved in such a fascinating art project and to work with such inspiring artists," she added.

Karen Alsop said she was particularly moved by SJ's story, which encourage her to make the project extra special. "I just couldn't imagine waking up one day and being unable to walk, let alone even hold my children," she said.

“What SJ went through, the shock, the sadness, breaks my heart but her perseverance through it all is inspiring - I wanted to capture that love between SJ and Hamish... that love moves mountains.” she added.

Benjamin Von Wong added “I love sharing experiences with people - and having the opportunity to connect with SJ and to get her inspiring story out there was something that was really special,”

Upon seeing the photos, which in Von Wong’s series show her rigged in her wheelchair dangling over the spectacular cliffs of the Blue Mountains, and in Alsop’s scenes - thanks to some digital magic - running across a crumbling stone bridge, SJ was taken aback.

“When I saw the finished product I felt incredibly impressed by the passion and talent of both of these artists,” she said.

“I felt very special and privileged to have these amazing masterpieces created for me and my boy. This is definitely something for the pool room!” she added.

The project was proudly supported by major The heART Project sponsor Adobe Australia. Additional support was provided by EIZO, Kayell Australia, the Blue Mountains Adventure Company and a team of amazing volunteers.

A fundraising page has been set up to help SJ realise her dream of purchasing ramps to increase the amount of wheelchair-friendly shops and businesses in her home town. If you would like to contribute to that fund, please visit: <https://www.gofundme.com/sarahjanestaszak>

#### **MEDIA INFORMATION:**

**To access media assets - including hi-res imagery, video and other BTS content, please visit [www.theheartproject.com.au/media-centre/](http://www.theheartproject.com.au/media-centre/)**

**Karen Alsop, Benjamin Von Wong and SJ Staszak are available for interviews. For more information, to submit questions or interview requests please email [media@theheartproject.com.au](mailto:media@theheartproject.com.au) or phone 0416 233 451.**

**For more information on the projects, visit:**

Karen Alsop from Story Art - <https://storyart.com.au/adventuremother/>  
Benjamin Von Wong (Blog) - <http://blog.vonwong.com/mother/>