Fiona Hall

Big Game Hunting

Exhibition dates: 28 March to 21 July 2013
Curator: Kendrah Morgan

Fiona Hall

*Big Game Hunting* 2013 installation view
Heide Museum of Modern Art
Photograph: John Brash, 2013

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Introduction

Over a career spanning almost forty years, Fiona Hall has been variously described as an alchemist, an adventurer, an eco-warrior, and a creative genius. She is best known for her transfiguration of commonplace materials into extraordinary organic forms with both contemporary and historical resonances. In an interdisciplinary practice that attends to the complicated relationship between nature and culture, she produces painstakingly crafted pieces which celebrate the marvels of the natural world while engaging head-on with a panorama of polemical concerns, as wide-ranging as gender politics and colonial history.

In recent years Hall has increasingly turned to the problem of worldwide environmental destruction. Big Game Hunting draws attention to the earth and its life-forms as macro- and microcosmic sites of conflict: battlefields and wastelands decimated by violent forces—the big games—of human greed and folly. Two major bodies of recent work on this theme are brought together, augmented by an array of conceptually linked installations and individual pieces highlighting environmental debate. In Fall Prey (an installation created for dOCUMENTA (13) in Germany in 2012), Hall’s focus is on critically endangered species from across the globe and the degradation of the ecosystems they inhabit. The accompanying Kermadec project shifts the agenda to the unique marine environment of the Kermadec Trench on the Pacific Rim of Fire; a ten kilometre-deep cradle of life teeming with biodiversity and under grave threat from the mining and fishing industries.

Big Game Hunting demonstrates the artist’s love and lament for the natural realm. It continues her navigation through the volatile terrain of environmental politics, exposing the active role of humankind inabetting the disappearance of species and depletion of biosystems. Her message is universal and her work communicates to everyone, though it is far from simplistic or simply didactic—it operates on multiple, often subtle levels, which must be excavated layer by layer to fully yield its secrets, like an archaeological site of successive discoveries. Visual stimulation, intellectual engagement, wit, and wonder are to be found in equal measure, underpinned by a powerful warning to humanity; in Hall’s words her work is a ‘carrion call, sounding the siren in a dying wilderness’.

Fiona Hall
Drifter 2013
wooden carpenters’ rulers, pearl shells, model ships, bottle caps, wire, paint
104 × 111 × 48 cm (installation dimensions variable)
Photograph: John Brash, 2013
An unsettling premonition of a hunter's den of the future, *Fall Prey* was created for the prestigious world art event dOCUMENTA (13) in Germany in 2012, where it was presented in a small chalet in a woodland park. The installation presents a menagerie of 'trophies' of species on the International Union for Conservation’s ‘Red List’, and as the title suggests, these creatures have fallen prey and humankind is the predator. As an amateur naturalist and ecologist, Fiona Hall is particularly mindful of the thousands of animals, insects and plants that are under immediate threat of extinction across the world. Here she constructs a selection of these from the camouflage military defence uniforms of the creatures’ nations of origin, torn up then shaped, with the garment’s remnants hanging skeletally below. Camouflage, an invention of nature requisitioned by modern warfare, is in the artist’s words, ‘a symbol of our time that transforms the patterns of nature into the fabric of conflict and hostility’.

Although these larger-than-life beasts, birds and insects recall taxidermied specimens they are embellished with the detritus of contemporary culture: from energy drink cans and coin purses to 'Hello Kitty' chopsticks. Hall’s use of these elements deliberately invokes the practice common in ‘developing’ countries of inventively using recycled materials, while also engaging them as disturbing signifiers of the consumerism that has directly or indirectly wrought havoc on the natural habitats and lives of countless species. The chimpanzee from the Belgian Congo for example, holds a Blackberry phone, a stark reference to the unregulated mining of coltan in the region for use in the electronics industry.

The trophy-beasts are set amid an assemblage of other allusive objects symbolising the balance between life and death. The accumulation creates the effect of a macabre yet wondrous cabinet of curiosities, or *wunderkammer*, an invention of the early modern period, which, like *Fall Prey*, housed a microcosm of the world’s fading diversity in a single room. Underlying the proliferation of diverse objects there is strong sense of order, an attempt to make sense of and respond to the turning kaleidoscope of existence and extinction.
Since 1999 Fiona Hall has travelled to Sri Lanka on several occasions, making a number of works that engage with the nation’s natural environment and turbulent political situation. This sculpture was created after the end of the Sri Lankan civil war between the Sinhalese military and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (widely known as the Tamil Tigers), which devastated the country for almost thirty years from 1983 until government forces seized the last area under Tamil control in May 2009.

In constructing a skull from knitted military uniforms, Hall creates an apocalyptic spectre of death that signifies the repressive brutality of a violent political regime. Portrait of the Victor reflects the artist’s remarkable ability to transform diverse materials into art works that resonate as powerful political statements.
The Barbarians at the Gate

This installation links the lives of bees, universally accepted as 'social' insects, with the colonial concept of nation-state building. With colonisation and other movements of people over centuries, bees have spread with plants and other animals into foreign habitats, forever changing world ecologies. Their ordered colonies have been likened to societies with rigorous town planning or to prisons, while their habits have inspired Western imperialists to the extent that they are now being trained by the American military to detect bombs. The term drone is used to describe unmanned surveillance and missile aircraft. Today bees are themselves threatened by colony collapse, at the hands of twenty-first century 'barbarians'.

The Barbarians at the Gate draws particular attention to the history of conflict in the Middle East. Nineteen beehives are painted in the military camouflage patterns associated with the nineteen countries that have sent armed forces to this region, which to Hall are 'very strange bedfellows', that speak 'volumes about historical allegiances and divides'. Each hive supports an architectural icon representing a regime of power within that country, alerting us to the many forces at play in both the history of colonisation and the globalisation of identities.
The Kermadec works

In 2011 Fiona Hall embarked on an expedition to the Kermadec oceanic region, travelling on a naval vessel with the New Zealand Minister of Conservation, staff from the New Zealand Department of Conservation, and a small group of other artists. This vast stretch of ocean which extends 620,000 kilometres off the northeast tip of New Zealand’s coastline encompasses the Kermadec Trench, one of the earth’s deepest ocean trenches and few remaining pristine marine environments. As such it is a safe haven for threatened species, and an ‘ocean highway’ for numerous others such as tuna, sunfish, marlin, sharks and humpback whales. It is also a breeding ground for unique organisms, many of which are yet to be discovered, which thrive off the geothermal activity generated by the 30 active volcanoes located deep within the trench.

While supporting a wealth of biological diversity, the unique geology of the Kermadec Trench also makes it rich in gold and other precious natural resources. As such it has become a contested zone, attracting the interest of mining companies and fisheries, while various conservation groups and cultural leaders argue for the region to become an international marine reserve. Hall responds to both the politics and the natural environment of the Kermadec Trench in a series of painted barkcloths that draw our attention to the looming environmental peril posed by commercial mining and fishing activities.

Made from the inner bark of mulberry trees which is dried, soaked and beaten into lengths, painting on barkcloth with natural dyes and ochres is a cultural enterprise widely practiced by women throughout the Pacific. Hall was taught this technique by local women when the expedition reached its final destination of Tonga, and the artist has readily adopted the medium to convey a potent political and environmental message.

Drawing on the physicality of the marine animals that populate the Kermadec waters, often rendered as skeletal forms in a grim forewarning of their potential fate, Hall vividly evokes the spectre of corporate plundering. These expansive barkcloths are traversed by mining ships, nets which ensnare aquatic animals, and the leering skulls and crossbones of twenty-first century pirates. Hall’s environmental statement becomes all the more pervasive through employing the natural materials and the traditional arts of the region, drawing our attention once again to the interface between culture and nature, and the tensions embodied by this age-old paradigm.
Although the Kermadec Trench lies in New Zealand’s territorial waters, the government, ironically, is reluctant to declare the region a marine reserve. Moat speaks directly to New Zealand audiences through the vehicle of the hand-scrawled text ‘I’m not scared’; a witty rejoinder to local modernist master Colin McCahon’s ‘I am scared’, inscribed on his iconic painting Scared (1976). Hall’s barkcloth image also directs a nod at contemporary Māori artist Peter Robinson’s re-working of McCahon in his painting Boy Am I Scared Eh! (1997), which includes a similar target motif inserted among the letters.

Here the artist presents us with an underwater graveyard: the decaying and skeletal remains of a humpback whale, green turtle, flying fish, squid and other creatures of the Kermadec Trench float eerily, ensnared in a spectral web. Ghost nets, which plague oceans worldwide, are deadly fishing nets that have been abandoned or discarded at sea and continue to trap and kill creatures as they drift unattended, often for years.

At the centre of this composition is a battleship fused to an inverted Māori waka, or war canoe. This allusion to war systems from two different cultures is a metaphor for the losing battle faced by the sea life of the Kermadec region, invoking the exhibition’s conceptual framework of the planet as a battlefield. The sombre tones of the painting suggest the Tongan tradition of ngatu ta’uli, barkcloth which was traditionally made for royalty and for ritual occasions such as funerals.
During the Kermadec expedition Fiona Hall photographed one of the many flying fish that landed on the deck of the HMSN Z Otago. Its winged form appears here, finely sculpted in satiny aluminium and in other works in the exhibition. Historically a naval emblem of the ship of life, the flying fish can also symbolise escape because it leaps from the sea to elude predators. Its state of suspension between the elements serves as an apt metaphor for the state of political limbo in which the Kermadec Trench currently exists.

Shoot the Breeze draws upon these symbolic associations, which are reinforced by the encased video clip of the New Zealand naval ensign, endlessly flapping in the wind.

I subscribe to the idea that all art is political, in the broader sense—it’s part of its time, even if it’s an abstract painting. I wouldn’t classify myself as a political artist because that’s a very narrow area, protest art. But a lot of my recent work touches on environmental politics, although I try to get beyond the purely political.

Fiona Hall
Fiona Hall

Bowline on a Bight 2011
Tongan ngatu dye and ochre on barkcloth, aluminium
345 × 182 cm

Bowline on a Bight is the first painting Hall made on barkcloth. It functions as a map of the Kermadec Trench and a compendium of some of the species that live in it, as well as a political banner. The sculptural form of a flying fish—which recurs in other works on display—represents the state of political suspension in which the Trench currently exists. The names of some of the sailors’ knots embellishing the border—such as False Lover’s, Handcuff and Hackamore—cast aspersions on the intentions of the parties who have interests in the region’s future, while also implying the complicated nature of the issues involved.

The work takes its title from the reliable bowline, a secure knot in a loop, or bight, of rope. The word bight also refers to a curve or recess in a geographical feature, echoed in the long arc of the Kermadec Trench that traverses the centre of the composition.
This work marks Fiona Hall's first use of camouflage patterning. It was made after a residency at Lunuganga, the house and tropical gardens of the late architect Geoffrey Bawa, in Sri Lanka. At the time Sri Lanka was devastated by civil war and as she travelled around Hall found 'the undercurrent of conflict highly visible'. She was often stopped at military checkpoints which featured army bunkers painted in camouflage patterns, the variety of which captured her attention.

The experience of this collision of fecundity and fighting influenced her conception of Understorey, which she describes as 'an exuberant yet shocking account of the interrelationships of life and death'. Inside the vitrine she juxtaposes the beaded forms of exotic Sri Lankan fruits and flowers with those of human body parts to create a memento mori that echoes in three dimensions seventeenth century Dutch still life vanitas paintings. The beads, an emblem of trade and colonisation, are one of the artist's signature materials.
Mourning Chorus

The demise of the once ‘deafening’ song of New Zealand’s native birds, documented by British naturalist Joseph Banks in his diary in 1770, provided the impetus for Mourning Chorus. The work draws our attention to the decimation of many unique species due to human impact and the disruption of ecosystems through land clearance and the introduction of predatory animals such as rats and stoats.

Eleven extinct or endangered species are represented by plastic chemical containers that are animated by the addition of carved and resin cast beaks. Each container lights up randomly as if with a flicker of life. Nine of the species are extinct, and two—the kakapo and the little spotted kiwi—survive only in sanctuaries. The glass panels of the vitrine are decorated with the forms of native New Zealand plant foliage which was once part of the birds’ natural habitats.

The work brings together characteristic aspects of Hall’s practice, such as the use of recycled materials and the ironic reference to museological specimen collections—species once visible in nature are now only seen as lifeless objects in a display cabinet.
Drowning Theory

Drowning Theory refers to a hypothesis proposed by scientists at Otago University, Dunedin, that up to 23 million years ago (relatively recent in terms of the earth’s geological past) the entire landform of New Zealand was submerged. By this argument no living organism native to New Zealand could have existed before this date.

While the theory has been vigorously contested, Hall visually and conceptually refers to its premise through her creation of mirrored forms enclosed within a vitrine. Those in the top section are cast as rock-like geological formations, which are echoed in the shapes of translucent bird beaks in the section beneath them. Through representing the beaks of various native birds that are now either extinct or extinct in their natural habitat (such as the huia, Haast eagle and kakapo), Hall evokes the ideas of both genesis and destruction.
Djalkiri

In October 2009 Fiona Hall travelled to Darwin and eastern Arnhem Land to participate in a cross-cultural printmaking project, held in the remote community of Yilpara, on Blue Mud Bay. The project, *Djalkiri: We are Standing on Their Names*, commemorated the 150th anniversary of Charles Darwin’s iconic text *On the Origin of the Species*, and involved a collaboration between Yolngu artists and visiting non-Indigenous artists.

The word *djalkiri* (literally foot or footprints), when applied to Yolngu law, means foundation of the world, thus the title of the project expresses the spiritually profound systems of knowledge that permeate the Yolngu world view. The community at Mud Bay shared aspects of Yolngu culture with the visiting artists so that they could 'walk together in the footsteps of our ancestors'.

Following the artists’ exchange of ideas, stories and images within the remarkable natural environment of the region, Hall worked with master printer Basil Hall, to produce the six etchings displayed here. The compositions respond to the native plants and animals of Blue Mud Bay and the deep connections between country and Yolngu culture explored by artists of divergent cultural backgrounds.
Fiona Hall at Heide

Fiona Hall is one of the most influential, critically acclaimed artists working today. Exhibiting since 1974, she achieved early recognition as a photographer whose black and white images captured suburbia, beach culture, and what we see now as an enduring examination of, and fascination with, nature and its biodiversity.

Since 1990 and the production of the first series of sardine can works for which she became widely known, Hall has worked almost exclusively in sculpture and installation, transforming commonplace materials into alluring but politically charged objects. Environmental fragilities and the impact of human activity on land and in oceans, and on the order of the world at large, have been central concerns of her art for two decades. Hall is conspicuous and important because she zeroed in on tough subjects long before they were engaged by political strategists and became the preoccupying anxieties of wider society.

*Big Game Hunting* is the first major survey of Hall’s work to be seen in Melbourne in twenty years. It incorporates objects and images upon which her cross-disciplinary practice continues to focus, investigating the unstable interface between nature and culture, and the social agendas, endangerment and extinction of a spectrum of species. This mix creates a potent metaphor for human consciousness and our place in the scheme of things.

*Big Game Hunting* includes compelling new bodies of work. *Fall Prey*, commissioned for *dOCUMENTA* (13) in Kassel, Germany in 2012, is the core of this survey. It pits the natural world against our cultural manipulations of it by configuring an unsettling menagerie of critically endangered species, constructed primarily from military camouflage garments. *Fall Prey* is complemented by a new series of painted barkcloths and sculptures inspired by the near-pristine and now threatened marine environment of the Kermadec Trench in New Zealand territorial waters, and a third major installation, *The Barbarians at the Gate*, commissioned for the Sydney Biennale in 2010, along with related works *Understorey*, *Mourning Chorus* and *Drowning Theory*. This survey highlights Hall’s intellectual rigor and exceptional craftsmanship—there is an integral connection between her choice of materials and the subjects of her work.

Heide is an appropriate site in which to extend the public’s interaction and engagement with Hall’s practice. John and Sunday Reed’s foundation of Heide had as much to do with their staunch advocacy of conservation concerns and their profound respect for nature as it had to do with their passion for art and its contribution to a progressive culture.

Jason Smith
Director
Heide Museum of Modern Art

An interview with curator Kendrah Morgan

How did the exhibition Fiona Hall: Big Game Hunting come about at Heide?
Fiona Hall was commissioned in 2009 to create the A native rockery garden (2009) in the Tony and Cathie Hancy Sculpture Plaza at Heide. At that time we began to discuss the possibility of presenting Fall Prey (her installation for dOCUMENTA (13) in Germany). This became the kernel of an idea for a larger survey show of her recent work based on environmental themes.

Has Fiona Hall been involved in the selection and presentation of artworks for the exhibition?
Fiona and I worked collaboratively on the selection of works for the project, drawing together works that were conceptually and aesthetically aligned. During the installation of the exhibition Fiona instructed a team of technicians in the galleries who installed the works. She mapped out the camouflage pattern on the walls to be filled in by installation staff, and painted the text on the windows and flag forms herself.

What other roles are essential to supporting the exhibition?

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How have the artworks been kept safe in travel from other locations to and from Heide?
Foam lined shipping crates were specifically designed to hold the artworks safely in place during transit. International Art Services’ climate-controlled trucks delivered the artworks to Heide.

What sort of data is recorded on the condition report and who manages the checking and recording of this data?
The Heide registrar manages the paperwork for all artworks coming in and out of Heide. The reports show the condition of each artwork prior to leaving the lender’s possession. The work is checked again upon its on arrival at Heide and once more just prior to dispatch. Photographs are taken, with any necessary details marked upon them in coloured pens to show any evidence of change, deterioration or damage.

The exhibition will run for almost four months, do the artworks require any special attention regarding preservation whilst they are on display in this exhibition?
General maintenance such as dusting, cleaning glass surfaces and monitoring the exhibition conditions are undertaken by the exhibition manager. Artworks are regularly inspected for any indication that they might have been touched or moved.
Marketing an exhibition at Heide

What promotional methods have been used to market Fiona Hall: Big Game Hunting to the public?

An integrated marketing and publicity campaign was implemented for the exhibition that included print, online, radio and outdoor advertising, social media activity, inclusion in regular Heide collateral such as the Seasonal Guide, Education Brochure, electronic direct marketing and a targeted media release that was distributed to a broad range of publications and journalists.

Exhibition Signage

Exhibition signage was installed in the foyer and entrance to the main galleries in Heide III to alert museum and café visitors and for directional purposes. Leading images from the marketing campaign featured on the Heide III window banner in the exhibition entrance, and the Heide III foyer ticketing panel in addition to wall text and panels in the exhibition space.

Website and Social Networks

The museum website, electronic direct marketing and social media platforms (Facebook and Twitter) were used to raise awareness of the exhibition and related public and education programs. An exhibition announcement was distributed to all subscribers the week before the exhibition opening, and included links to related public and education programs. This information was also featured in general monthly Member and Education emails. Exhibition related social media activity included quotes from the artist, links to relevant articles, installation images and ticket/public program offers.

Direct Marketing

Fiona Hall: Big Game Hunting and associated programs were promoted via the Heide Seasonal Guide was mailed to 1,200 subscribers. A further 10,000 Guides were distributed in galleries, bars, cafés, restaurants and tourist destinations throughout Melbourne. In addition, the exhibition also featured in the Education Brochure was mailed to a subscriber list of 1,000. An invitation to the opening was mailed to a select group of people prior to the event.

Cross-promotional Activity

Cross-promotional activity was carried out with numerous affiliated organisations, including ACMI, Broadsheet and Cinema Nova. Other cross-promotional activity included exhibition themed dinners at Café Vue Heide.
Teacher notes

This resource is designed to support both students and teachers of VCE Studio Arts study design Units 1—4. The resource details specific aspects of the study design although teachers can easily adapt any aspect to different outcomes and key knowledge according to the needs and interests of students.

The resource addresses Area Of Study 3, Unit 1: Interpretation of art ideas and use of materials and techniques and Unit 3: Professional art practices and styles.

References to Unit 4: Art industry contexts provides tasks that address key knowledge, information about the curatorial, exhibition design, promotion and other considerations involved in the preparation and presentation of the exhibition.

Questions and Tasks have been provided for Unit 2 Area of Study 2 key knowledge; inquiry into the comparison and contrast of artworks and artists from different times and cultures.

Through the investigations of themes, ideas, materials, techniques and processes evident in Fiona Hall’s work, students can better come to understand how art communicates as a visual language. Symbols and metaphors, materials and technical processes collectively present alluring aesthetic qualities that transmit linked ideas and powerful messages.

Suggested tasks and reflective questions support students’ research to address key knowledge and skills articulated in Area of Study 3 in both Units 1 and 3.

Further classroom discussions and tasks to be led by teachers may also provide students with the opportunity to reflect upon and evaluate their own art making explorations undertaken in Unit 1 and their progress through the individual design process of Unit 3.

Teachers can use the reflection questions to evoke classroom discussions to assist students practice in the use of appropriate art language and terminology to annotate their thinking and working practices.

Write your responses in your work book or visual diary, before, during and after your visit.

Tasks to undertake back at school after viewing the exhibition.

Fiona Hall
Vaporised 2013
installation detail
glass bottles, paint
Heide Museum of Modern Art
Art and nature

Nature is a mirror into which humanity looks to see itself and its history and to assess its future.¹

Over a career spanning almost forty years, Fiona Hall is best known for her transfiguration of banal, human-made materials into extraordinary organic forms with both contemporary and historical resonances. In a cross-disciplinary practice that attends to the complicated relationship between nature and culture, she produces painstakingly crafted pieces that celebrate the marvels of the natural world while engaging head-on with a panorama of polemical issues, as wide-ranging as gender politics and conservation.

Just as local and global conditions are in a constant state of flux, so too Hall’s approach has shifted, adjusted and broadened. As well as responding to the ever-rising tide of pressing concerns that attract her attention she follows the impetus of her own creations, which she has observed, often generate ‘surprising tangential offshoots’.² While her earlier work traversed a vast territory—from the body as a complex sexual, cultural and political entity, to botany and gardening, taxonomic systems and classical literary cosmologies, consumerism and mass consumption, global trade and colonial history, and modern warfare—in recent years she has increasingly turned to the problem of worldwide environmental destruction.

At the heart of Hall’s endeavours lies her preoccupation with the natural world—with all its beauty and grotesquery, potency and vulnerability, mystery and revelation. From this foundation arise two ideas that provide anchoring points for her practice: how humankind and nature interrelate, and, by extension, how nature sits in relation to culture. Throughout her career—self-described as a ‘multifaceted series of explorations and realisations’³—Hall has investigated some of the seemingly limitless possibilities of the nature/culture interface and the tensions embodied in this age-old paradigm. Hers is a profoundly personal journey and vision, for which she has been aptly characterised as sui generis: in a class of her own.⁴

² Ibid.
Interpretation of subject matter

The conceptual framework that underpins Fiona Hall’s work in *Big Game Hunting* derives from the artist’s ongoing exploration of the relationship between nature and human culture. A number of themes linking the work are evident; *our planet is a battlefield; effects of colonialism and post colonialism; environmental degradation and debate; impact of mass consumption and consumerism and; human greed and folly.* Titles of the works reinforce these themes and often—a play on words—evoke a deeper inquiry for the viewer. *Love Me Tender* and *Shoot the Breeze* for instance, incorporate layers of meaning through the juxtaposition of materials, technical processes and symbolism. Representations of animal and human life are delicately crafted from tin, incorporating the sardine can, a metaphor that has evolved from Fiona Hall’s previous celebrated *Paradisus Terrestris* series (1989–90). These new works frame video footage that speak of the themes of the exhibition.

For Fiona Hall the boundaries between nature and culture, and between humankind and other species – whether plant or animal are very fluid. Her interest lies where these realms collide and converge rather than where they deviate.

*Love Me Tender* and *Shoot the Breeze* offer an opportunity to contemplate our connection to nature:

‘My work is really bringing together the threat to the planet and the threat to ourselves’ (Fiona Hall 2010). The particular form and aesthetic qualities of *Love Me Tender* and *Shoot the Breeze*, coupled with how these works are presented in this exhibition, set up an intimacy with the viewer.

‘The artist has often said that the allure of her visual aesthetic is a deliberate ploy, which she uses *in the way that the appearance and perfume of a flower strategically lures a pollinating insect.* The viewer is enticed in, only to come face to face with a troubling message beneath the seductive surface.’

Aesthetic qualities are the visual characteristics of an artwork that can be discerned through examining the interplay of visual and physical elements in an artwork. These elements include line, colour, texture, tone, form, shape, movement, sound and light and additional aspects, such as the tactile properties of materials and the artist’s use of techniques and processes to generate meaning in the artwork. Our ability to understand and identify qualities in artworks evolves over time and can be influenced by our exposure to other artworks, critical reviews and the views and opinions of others. Responses may differ from person to person and will be affected by an individual’s lived experience, culture, life understandings, knowledge of the world and previous art experiences.

View the works *Love Me Tender* and *Shoot the Breeze*. Reflect on the following questions and write your responses in your work book or visual diary.

- How does the scale of the work engage you in the subject matter?
- What symbols offer you clues into the discussion Fiona Hall wants to have with you through this work?
- How do the materials and techniques employed in this work reinforce any themes raised?
- What emotional response does the work evoke in you? What thoughts, ideas and feelings come to mind when you view this work?

Developing language.

Record a list of words that come to mind as you view the work. For example; *death, dying, guilty, beauty, suffering, delicate, sacred, life, discomfort, sadness, awe, shiny, contrast, film, intimate, grey, detail, muted.*

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Back in the classroom, teachers may utilise the students’ recorded lists to support a group discussion that provides a rich resource for individual written task development.

Students are invited to remember their experience of the work triggered by the recorded words.

Use the words to link to an investigation. As a group or individually, lists of descriptive words can be developed and organised collectively under the following headings.

- Materials and techniques
- Ideas and themes
- Techniques and processes
- Aesthetic qualities.

Some words may fall under multiple categories. This supports students’ understanding that concepts and experiences can be intertwined in the analysis of the work.

Teachers support students in collaborative discussion to formulate model sentences as a starting point for developing descriptive responses to a number of questions.

**Interpretation of ideas and use of materials (Unit 1)**

1. What is the subject matter explored in *Love Me Tender* and *Shoot the Breeze*?
2. How has Fiona Hall used materials and techniques to support the communication of these ideas?
3. Reflect on Fiona Hall’s cross-disciplinary practice and describe how it is reflected in her artworks.

**Personal reflection on developing Ideas and materials and techniques**

- How have you utilised the expressive qualities of materials and techniques to convey individual ideas in your own artmaking explorations?
- Has Fiona Hall’s work inspired any thinking or ideas that you could investigate through exploring materials and techniques?

**Studio production and professional art practices (Unit 3)**

1. How do the artworks reflect the interpretation of subject matter?
2. What are the ideas evident in the work and how have they been communicated through materials and techniques?
3. Discuss the aesthetic qualities of *Love Me Tender* and *Shoot the Breeze*. How do visual art elements such as line, colour and texture alongside principles of contrast and focal point interplay with materials and techniques to communicate meaning?

**Personal reflection to support the individual design process**

- Throughout your design process, how have you explored materials, developed and refined techniques to effectively communicate individual ideas within your individual design process?
- How have you developed the subject matter you have selected to explore?
- What are the conceptual ideas that are evolving in your design process and how can they be developed aesthetically to support meaning identified in your exploration proposal?

**Interpretation of art ideas and use of materials and techniques (Unit 1)**

Identify and describe sources of information for artist’s ideas and production. Undertake some research on the internet to learn about Fiona Hall’s biography and life experiences as a young artist. Consider how her early family experiences initially may have shaped her interest in the environment, science and her inquiry into the relationship between the culture of humans and sustainability of nature.
To engage more deeply with the ideas and themes in the artworks, identify the countries and places Fiona Hall may have travelled to. Discuss with your fellow students to see if you can add more places to your list. How has travel and the experiences on her travels influenced Fiona Hall’s art practice? Select an artwork that demonstrates this influence.

Conduct some research into the *Exposition Surréaliste d’Objets*. What does *Fall Prey* have in common, or is different to Marcel Duchamp, Salvador Dali, René Magritte and Man Ray’s contributions to the surrealist exhibition held in 1936 at Galerie Charles Ratton, Paris?

It is evident that Fiona Hall’s expedition throughout the Pacific Islands has provided a rich source of inspiration for the development of her work. Her travels have also impacted the application of techniques in the works of the Kermadec series. The traditional use of tapa dyes and ochres on barkcloth was of great social importance to Pacific Islanders. Whilst travelling through this area Fiona Hall learned the technique of image making on barkcloth from local women. Initially the bark of the mulberry tree is collected, dried, soaked and beaten to flatten it. Then a starch coating is applied to create a surface suitable for using natural dyes and ochres.

**Ideas and styles in artworks (Unit 2)**
- Compare and contrast ways art elements have been used to produce aesthetic qualities and communicate ideas in artworks by Fiona Hall and artists of the South Pacific from different times and cultures.
- Evaluate how visual art elements, signs, symbols and images have been used to create a distinct look and to communicate ideas.

**Reflective questions for class and group discussion.**
1. How do materials and techniques of the Kermadec barkcloth artworks reinforce Fiona Hall’s inquiry into the relationships between human culture and the natural environment?
2. How is Fiona Hall’s interest in the preservation of biodiversity of underwater creatures of the Kermadec Trench represented in visual art elements, symbols and images in her artworks?
3. Fiona Hall uses a number of reoccurring symbols and images in these works including skeletons, silhouettes of battleships and tall ships, skull and crossbones and text. Propose the meanings of these signs and symbols with reference to specific artworks.

Research the traditional process of making backcloths of artists and craftspeople of the Pacific Islands. Note the variations of technique and the different terms given to aspects of the process. Share your findings in small groups.

Produce an annotated visual report that compares and contrasts Fiona Hall’s bark cloth artworks with those of traditional and/or contemporary Pacific Islander artists. In your response make reference to the similarities and differences found in the following:
- technique for applying colour and images onto barkcloths,
- visual ae such as colour, line, shape and principles of symbol and pattern,
- subject matter, ideas and themes represented on the barkcloths.

Note: When researching content make sure you record the source of material and when using the internet include specific URL addresses, text titles and publication dates and sources and where possible the titles of artworks and names of artists you have selected for comparative analysis.
Materials and techniques

Fiona Hall
_Ailuropoda melanoleuca / giant panda, China_ 2012
IUCN threat status: critically endangered
Chinese military camouflage trousers, dominoes, mesh purse, US dollar bills, electrical plugs, light bulbs, steel, wooden Buddha figurine
163 × 45 × 26 cm

**Professional art practices and styles (Unit 3)**
- analyse the ways in which artists employ materials, techniques and processes
- analyse the ways aesthetic qualities are developed
- discuss artistic practices and the ways in which artists work with various art elements.

**Research and Record**: examine the materials and techniques employed in _Fall Prey_. Use didactic panels and other exhibition materials to collate information on the meanings and messages behind the selection of materials.

Notice and record your emotional experience as you view _Fall Prey_. Make notes as feelings and responses come to mind, for example, dark, still, eerie, spoils of war, torn apart.
- What specific visual elements of each individual sculpture contribute to your experience and understanding of the artwork?
- How does the installation of the collective works impact on the aesthetic qualities of _Fall Prey_?

**Reflect and Analyse**: What are the aesthetic qualities that Fiona Hall has created with _Fall Prey_? Refer to your notes to assist your identification, drawing upon the materials and specific art elements such as colour, texture and form and principles of contrast to support your discussion.
When you access more information about materials and techniques this may extend your aesthetic knowledge of the artworks.

Back in the classroom the teacher may facilitate a discussion. Students refer to the notes they have taken when viewing the exhibition. It is valuable for the group to share their experiences and observations as individual student interpretations may offer interesting viewpoints to promote a deeper inquiry. Use the following to begin discussions;

- How have the techniques of knitting with army camouflage material to create sculptural forms contributed to the aesthetic qualities of the artworks?
- What do found objects contribute to the meanings and messages in the artworks? Offer specific examples to illustrate the discussion.

Personal reflection to support the individual design process

- How have you explored materials, developed and refined techniques to effectively communicate ideas within your personal design process?
- How might you use found objects or recycled materials to support the communication of your ideas?
- What are the conceptual ideas that are evolving or have evolved in your design process and how can they be developed aesthetically to support the meanings you want to create?

Fiona Hall
*Pan troglodytes / chimpanzee, Equatorial Africa* 2012
installation view
IUCN threat status: endangered
Belgian military camouflage jacket (also worn in the Belgian Congo, ‘jigsaw’ pattern), aluminium, leather gloves, teeth, medical model heart, plastic toy, mobile phone, nails, bottle caps
180 x 78 x 35 cm
Heide Museum of Modern Art
**Etching**

Etching requires the use of bevelled copper or zinc plates that have been carefully coated in an acid resist wax coating known as ground. A drawing is transferred onto the ground and an etching needle is used to gently remove areas of the ground to expose the plate. The plate is then immersed into an acid bath for a period of time where the exposed areas are bitten by the acid creating a slight indentation.

When the plate is removed from the acid, the ground can also be removed using alcohol. The plate is then cleaned and polished before printing. The printing technique takes great care to ensure that the print remains clean. Cotton rag paper is torn or cut to size to fit the inked plate.

Hahnemühle, a paper manufacturer in Germany, produces a heavyweight etching paper that is velvety smooth with a fine surface texture. The paper is soaked in water to soften the texture and provide flexibility in the printing process.

Etching ink is applied across the surface of the clean plate and gently wiped back to polish the surface but allows the wet sticky ink to remain within the indentations created through the acid biting process. At this stage colours can be rolled over the surface of the plate to create further variations in the printing process. Stencils can be created to mask certain areas that do not require the application of colour.

The inked plate is laid on a registration page on the bed of an etching press. The damp paper is gently blotted and then registered on top of the plate. Felt blankets cushion the paper and plate as it passes under a heavy metal roller. The paper is gently peeled back from the plate to reveal the print. This first print is known as a proof. A number of proofs may be taken throughout further etching processes before the final edition is ready for printing.

There are a number of other etching techniques that can be applied to create areas of tone including aquatint and sugarlift etching. Colours can also be achieved through colour viscosity printing.

Fiona Hall’s etchings may have undergone a number of techniques to produce line, tone and textures. It is also evident that labour intensive methods were used to lay the variety of colours used in these prints.

Students can research colour etching techniques to review how Fiona Hall’s etchings may have been produced.

Teachers can provide simple acid free etching/intaglio techniques in workshops for students using perspex plates and drypoint needles. An etching press is required to apply the appropriate pressure to gently press the softened cotton rag paper into the prepared inked plate.

**Personal reflection to support the individual design process (Unit 3)**

- Explore the properties of materials, etching ink and cotton paper through etching techniques. Can etching techniques be used to interpret the ideas identified in your exploration proposal?
- Does the technique of drypoint/etching support the effective communication of your individual concepts identified in your exploration proposal?
- Reflect on the aesthetic qualities of your print explorations, review the qualities of line and density of marks created by drypoint/etching techniques. Evaluate the degree of effectiveness of this technique when measured against the focus and goals of your exploration proposal.
Exhibition reflection activities

Now that you have spent time experiencing the Fiona Hall: Big Game Hunting exhibition at Heide see if you can answer these reflection activities.

Exhibition reflection

- What is the role of Heide Museum of Modern Art?
- How does the title Big Game Hunting support the themes and ideas of the artworks represented in the exhibition?
- How have the artworks been grouped and presented, and how does this configuration support the themes and ideas of the artist?
- How did the organisation of the artworks, positioning of walls and wall colour, installations and display boxes support your navigation through the exhibition?
- Did the lighting affect the mood of the viewer, has this had an impact on how you read and understand the themes in the exhibition?
- How have didactic panels helped you to understand more about the artworks? The artist? The issues presented by the artist in the exhibition?
- Has your experience of visiting the exhibition Big Game Hunting impacted your thinking about the themes, issues and ideas presented in the artworks?
In the classroom students share their responses with each other.
Find someone who knows an answer to any of the questions on the sheet. Write the answer in your own words and have your partner sign the sheet in the appropriate space. Offer your fellow student an answer you know to one of the other questions.

What makes you Think, Puzzle and Explore!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What do you think you know or what have you discovered about the artist and about her artwork?</th>
<th>What questions or puzzles do you have about the artist and her artwork?</th>
<th>Is there a particular artwork or aspect of the artist that you want to explore or know more about?</th>
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Step 1: **Work with classmates and find someone who knows an answer to any of the questions you have identified.** Write the answer in your own words and have your partner sign the sheet in the appropriate space. Offer your fellow student an answer you know to one of their questions.

Step 2: **Join another pair and swap partners** to share new information, perspectives and viewpoints that answer any of the questions on your sheet.
**Big Game Hunting 9 card sentences**

Teachers: This activity enables students to demonstrate their conceptual understanding of Fiona Hall’s work and it aims to provide a structure for showing the relationship among key concepts evident in this exhibition.

Cut out the nine cards below. The student then shuffles the cards and deals them out randomly in three rows of three. The student is then asked to think about, write out or speak a single statement connecting each group of three words across, down and diagonally, resulting in eight separate statements demonstrating the relationships between these concepts or terms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>nature</th>
<th>painting</th>
<th>materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>object(s)</td>
<td>extinction</td>
<td>experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>camouflage</td>
<td>metaphor</td>
<td>pollution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>war</td>
<td>consumerism</td>
<td>museum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students may work in pairs to develop statements, once developed they can then share their statements in groups and collectively build paragraphs that address the key knowledge areas:

- discuss ways the artworks reflect subject matter
- discuss Fiona Hall’s influences and how they may have affected her communication of ideas and meanings
- analyse the use of materials, techniques and processes
Further reading about Fiona Hall


For teacher notes, videos and education resources about the Kermadec Islands please go to [www.thekermadecs.org](http://www.thekermadecs.org)

For teacher notes and education resources about bees please go to [www.queenofthesun.com/educational-curriculum](http://www.queenofthesun.com/educational-curriculum)

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Fiona Hall
*A Native Rockery Garden* 2009
Various native plant species
Heide Museum of Modern Art
Heide Education

Heide’s offers a range of education programs that draw on its unique mix of exhibitions, architecture and landscape to provide a rich learning experience that goes beyond the classroom.

A visit to Heide:
- provides a stimulating environment which helps to put learning into context, and promotes an understanding and appreciation of our rich, cultural heritage
- encourages motivation, by stirring curiosity and developing an intrinsic fascination for art that can only be satisfied by firsthand experience
- supports students to make cross-curricular links between different subject areas
- greatly benefits students who learn best through kinaesthetic activities
- nurtures creativity and enables social learning
- provides learning through experience and interaction which encourages students to build on prior expectations and beliefs to create new realities
- is a cultural experience that all pupils can enjoy

Looking at original works of art with a suitably trained educator also encourages the development of the following skills:
- literacy: by encouraging discussion and extending vocabulary
- observation: by focusing concentration on detail
- critical thinking: by demanding questions and informed conclusions
- reflection: by considering rationales behind thinking processes

All education programming and resources at Heide align with the VELS curriculum frameworks and VCE Study Designs. Further information about curriculum links is available at heide.com.au/education/school-visits/curriculum-links/

Educator Forums
Heide offers a range of professional development programs for teachers of all year levels, including lectures, guided tours and workshops. Programs are designed to meet the VIT Standards of Professional Practice and Principles for Effective Professional Learning.

Bookings
Bookings are essential for all programs. For more information or a booking form visit heide.com.au/education/school-visits/or contact Heide Education: (03) 9850 1500 education@heide.com.au

- Teachers are encouraged to visit Heide prior to a booked school visit (complimentary ticket available) to familiarise themselves with the exhibitions and facilities.
- Heide is committed to ensuring its programs and activities are accessible to all. Schools recognised as having a low overall socio-economic profile on the Government School Performance Summary are eligible to apply for a reduced fee. Please contact Heide Education for more information.

Keep up to date with the latest Heide Education news and special offers by subscribing to the Heide Education e-bulletin at heide.com.au/subscribe