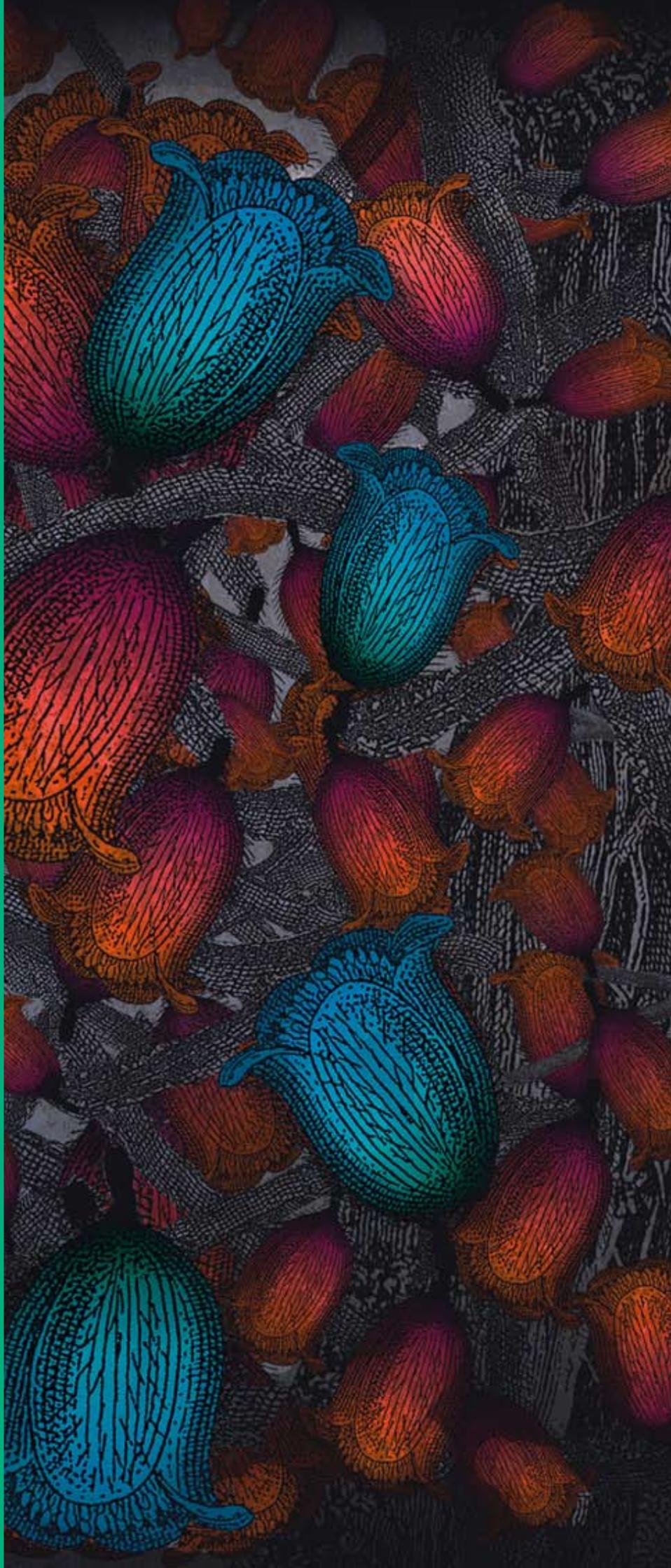


The enchanted forest

education resource

new gothic storytellers

A Geelong Gallery & NETS Victoria touring exhibition





Deborah KLEIN
Eustixis laetifera
2007
from the series *Moth masks*
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
Photographer: Viki Petherbridge

Courtesy the artist

Cover image:
Milan MILOJEVIC
Terra nocturne I (detail)
2007
digital print, woodcut

Courtesy the artist and
James Makin Gallery (Melbourne)

Contents

About this education resource	04
Starting points	06
The enchanted forest	10
Fairytales and femininity	16
Metamorphosis and shape shifters	22
Environmental themes	28
New gothic storytellers	34
Glossary and endnotes	36

The enchanted forest

new gothic storytellers

A Geelong Gallery & NETS Victoria touring exhibition

About this

education resource

This education resource is intended as a starting point for generating ideas and classroom activities before, during and after a visit to *The enchanted forest: new gothic storytellers* and is intended to complement and be used in addition to information provided in the exhibition catalogue, gallery wall texts and on the NETS Victoria website. The resource includes an introduction to the exhibition, suggested points for discussion and practical activities for junior and senior students. It is suggested that teachers select relevant sections of this resource to compile their own exhibition response sheet for students prior to their planned visit.

Pre-viewing planning

Before visiting *The enchanted forest: new gothic storytellers* it is suggested that you contact gallery staff to determine the following:

- Suitability of exhibition content and subject matter for the year level you plan to bring
- Staff availability to give introductory talk/tour
- Opening hours, transport and parking options, cloakroom facilities and if admission fees apply
- Education and public programs, artist talks etc that coincide with the exhibition

Curriculum links and connections

As this exhibition is touring nationally teachers are encouraged to adapt the curriculum links given in the list below to suit the relevant state curricula. Use this list to generate ideas, activities and points for discussion, and where suitable contact Education staff at your local gallery for further ideas and suggestions.

Visual/Creative/Studio Arts

- Artist's practice: ideas and inspiration
- The role of the artist: artist as social commentator, artist as storyteller
- The use of symbolism and development of personal iconography/mythologies
- The relationship between the artist, subject, artwork, art museum/gallery and audience
- The diversity and range of media, materials and techniques used by contemporary artists
- Responding to artworks: analysis and interpretation using appropriate language

English and Media Studies

- Responding verbally to visual images
- Creative writing and responding
- Analysis of narrative in artworks
- Critical essays, responses and reviews
- Examination of the recurring patterns, motifs and archetypes in fairytales

Studies of Society and the Environment

- Artworks as commentary about interconnectedness between humans, society and environment
- Social issues including environmental sustainability, identity, gender issues, migration and cultural displacement
- Visual arts as a reflection of ideas and beliefs in contemporary culture and society
- The role of fairytales and folklore in society

Australian History

- Immigrant cultures, mythologies and histories
- Oral history traditions

Starting

points

Some of the key motifs and ideas explored in the exhibition can be used as starting points. These can be developed according to the year level and interests of your students. Consider the following:

- **The natural environment**
- **Flora and fauna**
- **Fairytales, folk tales and legends**
- **Self-identity**
- **Mythical creatures and landscapes**
- **Metamorphosis**
- **Representations of femininity**
- **Symbolism and iconography**

Introduction to the exhibition

The enchanted forest: new gothic storytellers includes new and existing artwork by six mid-career and established artists who work across a range of mediums including sculpture, installation, painting and printmaking. Drawing on the tradition of fairytales and folklore, they create their own personal iconography and mythologies while investigating ways in which our perception of the natural world has been constructed and represented. The exhibition includes works by artists: Jazmina Cininas, Deborah Klein, Milan Milojevic, James Morrison, Louise Weaver and Louiseann Zahra-King.

Artists' backgrounds

Jazmina CININAS

Melbourne-based printmaker, writer and curator Jazmina Cininas was born in 1965. Her work has been exhibited locally and internationally and is represented in numerous public and private collections. Jazmina currently lectures in the Fine Art Department at RMIT, where she is undertaking a PhD. Her intricate reduction linocuts chart the evolution of the werewolf myth, and the parallel histories shared by women and wolves in the popular imagination throughout the centuries, to explore the notion of the female werewolf as social barometer. Her complex colour prints are made using the reduction linocut technique. The plate is systematically cut away and destroyed with each layer of colour printed. Cininas' heroines are drawn from folklore, medieval werewolf trials, psychiatric literature, eco-feminist writings and popular culture.

Jazmina Cininas is represented by Port Jackson Press Australia (Melbourne); and Impressions on Paper Gallery (Canberra).

Jazmina Cininas is also the curator of *The enchanted forest: new gothic storytellers*.

Deborah KLEIN

Deborah Klein was born in 1951. Her work has been exhibited locally and internationally and is represented in numerous public and private collections. She holds a Master of Arts (Visual Arts) from Monash University, Gippsland. Referencing historical representations of women, social mores and manners and the science of taxonomy, Klein has developed a distinctive personal iconography with which to investigate and challenge representations of femininity. *Swarm* and *Moth masks*, Klein's body of works for *The enchanted forest: new gothic storytellers*, draw inspiration from the insect world. Her immaculately coiffed women are as exquisitely decorative, still and collectable, as the luminous, jewel-like butterflies and moths that accompany them.



Milan MILOJEVIC

Milan Milojevic was born in Hobart in 1954. He has exhibited nationally and internationally, and his work is in major public and private collections in Australia and Europe. He is a Senior Lecturer and Head of Printmaking at the Tasmanian School of Art, University of Tasmania. Using hand-mixed pigments, overprinting in multiple layers and manipulation of a digital laser printer, Milojevic combines digital and traditional relief printing techniques to produce his large-scale digital prints and friezes. For the past two decades Milojevic's work has explored ideas of identity and cultural diaspora; drawing directly upon his own German and Yugoslavian ancestry. More recently issues of identity and displacement have been expressed through the creation of imaginary hybrid beasts; based on the fantastical creatures catalogued in Jorge Luis Borges' *Book of Imaginary Beings*.

Milan Milojevic is represented by James Makin Gallery (Melbourne); Colville Street Art Gallery (Hobart); Grahame Galleries + Editions (Brisbane); and Impressions on Paper Gallery (Canberra).

James MORRISON

Born in Papua New Guinea in 1959, James Morrison moved to Melbourne in 1972 and currently lives and works in Sydney. He has exhibited widely and his work is included in a number of public and private collections. His paintings combine the exacting empiricism of botanical painting, the exoticism of oriental art, the awkward rendering of colonial landscape painting, and the narrative drive of magic realism. Morrison's landscapes and histories draw from an eclectic range of sources and cultural references, defying chronology and operating according to their own idiosyncratic logic. The artist's unexpected and whimsical combinations evoke children's stories and fantasy novels. Morrison's painting, *Freeman Dyson*, created especially for *The enchanted forest*, features an Antipodean landscape merged with a future interplanetary space colony.

James Morrison is represented by Darren Knight Gallery (Sydney).

Louise WEAVER

Louise Weaver was born in Mansfield, Victoria, in 1966. She is a visual artist and lecturer in painting at RMIT School of Art. She has an extensive exhibition history in Australia and overseas and her work is represented in major public and private collections around the world. Weaver creates sculptures, drawings, prints and installations that draw on nature, haute-couture fashion and the artist's personal history. An ongoing concern in her practice has been the transformations that occur in nature: decay, regeneration, camouflage and metamorphosis. Drawing on anthropomorphic traditions in art, she creates sophisticated hybrid creatures; encased and disguised in crocheted 'skins' and embellished with embroidery, pelts, diamantes, sequins and studs. The floor installation* Weaver has created for *The enchanted forest* presents new and existing work, and incorporates taxidermy models and found objects to evoke the creatures of folktales.

Louise Weaver is represented by Darren Knight Gallery (Sydney).

* The complete installation of *Moonlight becomes you* will be exhibited at Geelong Gallery and Bendigo Art Gallery only.

Louiseann ZAHRA-KING

Born in Melbourne in 1972, Louiseann Zahra-King has exhibited widely in Australia and her work is represented in numerous public and private collections. Zahra-King's practice embraces a range of media and technique with a special interest in textiles, metal casting, sound, photography and film. Her elaborate and intricate installations speak of the natural world, melancholia and mortality. Fragility and the ephemeral have been ongoing concerns in Zahra-King's practice, with previous works incorporating discarded objects, found textiles, feathers, animal blood and flowers. She created the floor installation, *indigofera australis* especially for *The enchanted forest*; indigenous flora and fauna are transformed by the artist into a theatrical woodland, sparkling with glass, opalescence and silk.

Louiseann Zahra-King is represented by [MARS] Melbourne Art Rooms, (Melbourne).

Louiseann ZAHRA-KING

indigofera australis (detail)

2007-08

etched glass, bronze, mirrors, wood, silk

Photographer: Jeremy Dillon

Courtesy the artist and [MARS]
Melbourne Art Rooms, (Melbourne)

The enchanted

forest

The forest is the setting for many of the artworks in this exhibition. In fairytales the forest is often a dark, psychologically loaded and liminal zone, into which the protagonist must venture in order to fulfil their quest. In Freudian psychology and dream interpretation the forest is often seen as a metaphor for repressed or unconscious desires and fears.

The artists in this exhibition all share a fascination with the natural world. Using distinctive imagery and narratives they represent the forest as an enchanted place: where animals and plants are magically transformed and the boundaries blur between the civilised and natural worlds.

In Louise Weaver's sculptural installation *Moonlight becomes you*, elegantly attired wild animals frolic in a moonlit clearing. Referencing cyclical patterns and regenerative powers of the natural world, Weaver presents the forest as a place of metamorphosis; where woodland creatures adapt and transform to survive a changing world.

To create her elaborately camouflaged creatures the artist uses taxidermy models. These are encased in a 'skin' of intricate crocheted coverings, and further embellished through the use of embroidery and the addition of diamantes, sequins, studs, and pelts. Although reminiscent of the dioramas in natural history museums that represent animals in their natural environments, Weaver's sophisticated creatures have been transformed to suit their glamorous and artificial environment.

Deborah Klein's *Moth masks* paintings depict the female face concealed behind a series of elaborate and intricately rendered masks. The Latin titles refer to the predominantly Indo-Australian moth species on which the masks are based. Masks and masquerade balls are equated with the night, with mystery and intrigue. By concealing the wearer's true identity, the mask allows the wearer the freedom to adopt another persona. Yet Klein's impassive females, with their immaculately coiffed hair, appear as constrained and imprisoned as insect specimens pinned in museum display cases.

Louise WEAVER

Moonlight becomes you (possum) (detail)

2007

hand crocheted lambswool over high density foam, artificial fur, wire, sequins, cotton thread, silk organza, diamantes

Photographer: Jeremy Dillon

Courtesy the artist and
Darren Knight Gallery (Sydney)





Louise WEAVER

Moonlight becomes you (detail)
2002-03

bobcat: hand crocheted lambswool and cotton embroidery thread over high density foam with silver painted pigskin and aluminium studs (recouped from a 1980s Prue Acton garment)

mink: hand crocheted polyamide thread and lambswool over high density foam, cotton thread

rock: hand crocheted lambswool, silver lamé thread and silver polyester flowers cut and sealed with high-frequency sound waves (recouped from Issey Miyake evening bag) over granite cast resin tree limb carpet

Courtesy the artist and
Darren Knight Gallery (Sydney)

Junior

Questions

Look at Louise Weaver's work *Moonlight becomes you*.

- What does this artwork make you think of?
- How does the title change your initial ideas about the artwork?
- What animals can you find in this artwork?
- Do these animals look as though they belong in the wild?
- Do you think these animals would play together in the wild?
- What materials has the artist used? Are the materials natural or man made?
- How do the materials the artist has used relate to the subject matter?
- What particular issues or themes does the artist seem concerned with?
- How do you think this artwork relates to the exhibition title of *The enchanted forest*?
- What adventures might these animals have together at night? Write a short story about their forest adventures. Illustrate your story with drawings of these animals.

Classroom activity

- Read a selection of Aesop's fables in the classroom. Discuss the meanings and morals presented in these fables. How are animals represented in the fables you read? What animals can you think of that have particular traits associated with them? Is this based on their behaviour in nature? For example a fox is often described as wily, fast and cunning.
- Animals often have human characteristics associated with them. Why do you think we like to imagine that animals have similarities to us?
- What is your favourite wild animal? Write down any traits or human characteristics that you associate with this animal. If this animal had to adapt to life in an urban environment how might it have to change? Might it need a costume, camouflage or decoration to enable it to blend in and conceal itself? Might it need wheels, wings or larger ears to detect danger and make a fast getaway? What would you call this creature?
- Make a drawing of your imaginary hybrid animal in its new environment and write down three ways that it has had to adapt to a new environment.



Jazmina CININAS

Wolfsbane works on dingoes too

2004

reduction linocut

Photographer: Viki Petherbridge

Courtesy the artist and
Port Jackson Press Australia (Melbourne)

Senior

Questions

- Louise Weaver is interested in ideas of camouflage and transformation. How are these ideas explored in the work *Moonlight becomes you*?
- Discuss the different materials that Louise Weaver has used in her work in the exhibition. How does the artist incorporate texture and embellishment in her work? What effect does she create through her use of embellishment?
- How has the work been installed in the gallery? How is the atmosphere of a moonlit forest achieved? What components of the work add to this atmosphere? How does the placement of the objects add to their meaning?
- The artist had a serious accident as a child that left her encased in plaster for a long period of time. Does this affect your understanding of the work? How do you think she has drawn on or referenced this experience in this artwork?
- How does Louise Weaver represent nature in her work *Moonlight becomes you*? Compare and contrast this with the way that James Morrison represents nature in his painting *Freeman Dyson*?
- Anthropomorphism is the attribution of human characteristics and qualities to non-human beings, inanimate objects and/or natural or supernatural phenomena. In both Louise Weaver and Jazmina Cininas' artwork the animals have anthropomorphic qualities. Discuss the different ways that the artists imbue their creatures with human qualities.
- Compare and contrast the way in which Deborah Klein and Louise Weaver explore ideas of disguise and concealment in their work.

Classroom activity

- Imagine you are an artist working at a graphic design company. Your brief is to create a new publication ('zine, comic book etc.) for children that will raise awareness of environmental sustainability. Create your own super eco-warrior hero or heroine based on a native Australian animal. What traits might this super-being need on their quest to save the environment? Design and illustrate a cartoon strip that introduces this character and their mission to save the forests of Tasmania.
- Exploring ideas of metamorphosis and transformation create an installation at your school that incorporates found objects. Consider what the objects might mean. How does the placement of the objects create meaning in the space? Consider how you might create atmosphere using sound and lighting. Title your work. Consider how the title of a work can add to or affect the audience's understanding of the work.
- Forest imagery is integral to European art and mythology. Research European artists including Georg Baselitz (born 1938, Germany) and Caspar David Friedrich (born 1774, Germany) who have explored representations of the dark, Northern European forests. German-born artist Mariele Neudecker (born 1965, Germany) is best known for her 'tank works'; time-effected sculptural installations that recall the tradition of the German romantic sublime. Her atmospheric landscapes are immersed in chemical compounds that mimic changing weather conditions and are housed in glass vitrines. Her work *I Don't Know How I Resisted The Urge To Run* (1998) consists of a glass vitrine containing a miniature dark forest landscape submerged in murky water. Lit from above it conjures a misty forest scene illuminated by the last rays of a sunset. The title adds further to the sense of mystery and suspense evoked in the work. Find out more at: http://www.artbathspa.org/research/fine-art/mariele_neudecker.htm

Fairytales and femininity

Around the world fairytales are considered repositories of eternal wisdom, providing a safe environment in which to teach children ways of navigating reality and how to survive in an adult world. Fairytales transcend their historical context, history and culture by addressing significant and eternal childhood issues.

As the protagonists in fairytales (often children themselves) undertake their quest they are confronted with challenges that must be overcome. Reading or hearing these tales can provide children with models of coping with conflict and trauma that they might not conceive of independently. Children respond to fairytales because — despite the anxious thoughts and images that they conjure — they almost always result in a happy outcome.

However as Marina Warner points out, there are concerns about the formulaic happy-ever-after ending of traditional fairytales, particularly in relation to young girls, who may be encouraged to aspire to: "...wedding bells and nothing much else from life... except a castle or two — the dream of becoming a Princess Di." ¹

Many fairytales prescribe specific traits and virtues that are required by the protagonists in order to succeed in their quest. For example, the boy must be heroic, and overcome his fears in order to vanquish a shape-shifting beast and rescue the girl. The girl is often in some sort of distress (imprisoned or under a spell) and is pretty, often flaxen-haired. As Warner points out: "...popular transmission of fairytales, especially in the post-war period, has catastrophically emphasised beauty as the feminine virtue most needed to succeed." ²

Both Deborah Klein and Jazmina Cininas engage with ideas of gender, identity and feminism in their work. Cininas draws on the history of lycanthropy, eschewing the traditional masculine hero of fairytales to create her own shape-shifting heroine — the wolf girl. The women in Klein's paintings share more traits with their female counterparts in fairytales, they are elegant, decorative and contained: presented as beautiful objects to be prized and collected.



Jazmina CININAS

One wolf girl battles against all mankind

2007

reduction linocut, woodblock

Photographer: Viki Petherbridge

Courtesy the artist and
Port Jackson Press Australia (Melbourne)

Junior

Questions

Look at Jazmina Cininas' lino print *One wolf girl battles against all mankind*.

- Is the 'wolf girl' animal or human? Why?
- Does she remind you of anything else? In what way?
- What do you think has just happened to her? What do you think might happen next?
- Imagine that you are the 'wolf girl'. Describe how you feel and what you can see, hear and smell.
- Create your own action hero or heroine. Are they animal or human or both? Imagine they are fighting to save the environment. What disguise or costume might they wear? What tools or equipment would they use? Draw a picture of them and one of their adventures.

Classroom activity

- Discuss the origin of fairytales. Ask children from different cultural backgrounds to contribute fairytales and stories that they have been told. Have children heard different endings to some familiar fairytales?
- Choose three well-known fairytales that include a forest scene or have animals in them. Read these aloud. Discuss children's ideas, feelings and opinions about the texts. What does the forest represent in each of the fairytales? What characteristics do the animals in the fairytale have?
- Many fairytales include a quest as the key part of their structure, where the main characters (often children) must successfully undertake a series of challenges in order to reach their goal. Discuss these recurring themes in fairytales.
- Using texts that have been read out in class as a starting point, children can work together in small groups to write a story in this genre. They can design and make costumes for each of the characters. Have each of the groups perform their fairytale to the class.
- Many cultures around the world have storytelling traditions. For Indigenous Australians storytelling is an integral part of life, playing a vital role in teaching children. Explore Indigenous Australia through storytelling, cultures and histories. The Australian Museum website includes 'Stories of the Dreaming', teachers' resources and content for students: <http://www.dreamtime.net.au>



Senior

Questions

- Deborah Klein's series of paintings, *Swarm* and *Moth masks*, juxtapose intricately rendered insect species (butterfly and moth) with the female face and form. What comment do you think the artist is making?
- Do Klein's paintings remind you of anything? What is it, and why?
- How does the way her paintings are presented influence your understanding of the work? Why might the artist have presented the works in this way? Discuss in relation to either *Swarm* or *Moth masks*.
- What do you think the moth and butterfly might symbolise in these works? Are there any other symbols in the artworks? What are they?
- Discuss the use of ornamentation, detail and display in Deborah Klein's work.
- Issues of identity, gender and feminism are explored in both Deborah Klein's and Jazmina Cininas' works. Discuss how the artists address these issues. In your response refer to at least one work by each artist.
- Discuss the use of personal iconography in both artists' works and the way in which this relates to representations of feminine identity.

Classroom activity

- What purpose do you think that fairytales and folk tales serve in contemporary society? Approximately 90% of Australia's population live in urban areas, making us increasingly removed from nature. Have urban myths replaced folk tales and fairytales, which were often set in natural environments? What urban myths do you know? Do think they play a comparable role in contemporary society to traditional fairytales and folk tales?
- In *The enchanted forest* Milan Milojevic's work is displayed in a frieze format. James Morrison's work consists of five related panels. Discuss how the central narrative of a fairytale or folk tale might be conveyed in an artwork.
- Draw on your own cultural background or where you live to research legends, myths or folklore that is meaningful to you. In the tradition of the six storyteller artists in this exhibition, make an artwork in response to your chosen legend, myth or folk tale. To get started you may want to visit the Australian Government Recreation and Culture Portal, which includes information on the origins of Australian folklore:
<http://www.cultureandrecreation.gov.au/articles/folklore/>
- Research the work of Paula Rego (born 1934, Portugal) who draws on the world of childhood fairytales and nursery rhymes as the inspiration for her paintings, collages and prints. You can find out more about the artist and view images at:
http://www.saatchi-gallery.co.uk/artists/paula_rego.htm

Deborah KLEIN

Swarm (detail)

2002

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Photographer: Jeremy Dillon

Courtesy the artist

Metamorphosis and

shape shifters

“Even a man who is pure in heart and says his prayers by night, may become a wolf when the wolfbane blooms... and the autumn moon is bright.”

In this poem from the film *The Wolf Man* (Dir: George Waggner, 1941), the plant wolfbane signals a time of magical transformation. Under the light of the full moon those bitten by a werewolf are powerless to avert their transformation into the very creature that attacked them. Fairytales are full of shape-shifting creatures with the ability to undergo metamorphosis. Marina Warner writes that: “Shape-shifting is one of fairy tales dominant and characteristic wonders... more so than the presence of fairies...metamorphosis defines the fairy tale.”³

Strange beasts and creatures with the ability to shape-shift and transform appear in the work of both Milan Milojevic and Jazmina Cininas. As inspiration for their work both artists draw on their cultural heritage. Cininas is of Lithuanian and Australian ancestry and has for some time been fascinated with the evolution of the werewolf myth, with a particular focus on representations of the female werewolf in Northern European literature and folklore and the parallel histories of women and wolves in the popular imagination throughout the centuries. Her female figures are derived from actual and fictional women throughout history. More recently the dingo pelt has featured in her work, reflecting her Australian heritage.

For over two decades Milojevic has explored issues surrounding identity; drawing on his own experiences as a first-generation Australian (born of German and Yugoslav parents) as inspiration for his art. In his large-scale digital print and woodcut *Terra frieze* he gives visual form to the sense of ‘otherworldliness’ and cultural, geographical and historical displacement experienced by those living between cultures; depicting an enchanted forest filled with imaginary, exotic flowers and hybrid beasts. The artist’s works recall the mappa mundi of the Middle Ages, created by early European cartographers to record known and unknown areas of the world. Living in Tasmania, a place described by early French Explorers as ‘The World’s End’, the artist clearly subscribes to the idea of ‘here there be monsters’; the phrase used by mapmakers to warn of great beasts abiding in unexplored locations on a map.

Milan MILOJEVIC

Terra frieze

2005

digital print, woodcut

Courtesy the artist and
James Makin Gallery (Melbourne)



Junior

Questions

Look at Milan Milojevic's work *Terra frieze*. The artist combines both digital and traditional relief printing techniques to achieve his complex and highly detailed images.

- Do you recognise any of the animals or plants in these prints?
- Do you think they are real or imaginary animals? Why?
- Have you ever seen a dragon or a mermaid in real life? How do you know what they look like?
- Why do you think the artist has invented these imaginary creatures?
- What might they represent?
- Does the forest in this artwork look like a safe place to visit? Why/Why not?
- Do you think the separate panels in this artwork tell a story? What might it be?
- How does the artist represent nature in this work?
- How does looking at this work make you feel?

Classroom activity

Explore the myths and legends of other countries through books, film and song. Research the Celtic myth of the selkie — a creature (half woman and half seal) thought to occupy the sea around the Orkney and Shetland Isles. The film *The Secret of Roan Inish* (Dir: John Sayles, 1995), and the book on which it is based, *Secret of the Ron Mor Skerry* (Auth: Rosalie K. Fry, 1985), explore family history, tradition, legend and change through the eyes of a 10 year old girl who discovers her family's hidden history and connection to the 'selkie'.

- Using Milan Milojevic's work *Terra frieze* as a starting point, make a list of the mythical beasts and animals you have heard of that are half human and half animal.
- Are there mythical beasts or animals that are particular to your cultural background? Ask your parents or grandparents and then research the legends and stories around this mythical creature.
- Create and draw your own mythological creature that is half human and half animal.
- Write your own myth to explain the story behind how the creature came to be like this.
- Make a mask to represent this creature. You could use the following: fake fur, felt, silver foil, feathers, sequins, velvet, coloured paper.





Senior

Questions

As inspiration for his work Milan Milojevic draws on his own cultural background as a first generation Australian, born to Eastern European parents.

- How do you think the artist explores issues of identity and cultural displacement in his work?
- What might his use of hybrid creatures represent?
- What do you think Jazmina Cininas' use of the shape-shifting werewolf might represent?
- Choose one of the artists in this exhibition and discuss how they have combined new and existing technologies in their work?

Classroom activity

- Explore your own family history by speaking to your parents and or grandparents about their experiences. Ask if you can borrow photographs from your family archive. Photocopy these and use as the starting point for a work that explores your own background and identity. Experiment with combining digital and traditional relief-printing techniques in the way that Milan Milojevic does. Or you might scan a photograph, manipulate it in Photoshop, print it on a colour printer and then use over-painting or over-printing to add layers of your family or your own story. You might like to create your own iconography as a way of expressing your identity and cultural background.

Milan MILOJEVIC

Terra nocturne II

2007

digital print, woodcut

Courtesy the artist and
James Makin Gallery (Melbourne)

Environmental

themes

Although less than 10% of Australians live in non-urban areas, perceptions of ourselves and popular ideas of Australian identity have largely been shaped through the rural landscape.

Curator Jazmina Cininas speculates that, in recent generations, an awakened interest in traditional folklore and belief systems has coincided with increasing concerns for the environment. Commenting on *The enchanted forest* exhibition she says the included artists:

deal with the mythology surrounding the forest, the mythologies that link the human world with the natural world. There has been a revival in that kind of interest in nature now that we are at a crisis point. Where do we fit in with the natural world and how are we going to sort out our relation to it because, if we don't work out a way, nature will take care of itself in some form, and not necessarily in a way that suits us. ⁴

James Morrison's five-panel oil painting *Freeman Dyson* depicts what at first appears to be a distinctly Antipodean landscape, reminiscent of early colonial artists' awkward renderings of the Australian bush. However the familiar is soon revealed as uncanny: unfamiliar planets hover in strange skies; magpies and ravens dwarf the scrubby native vegetation, and a giant space-traveller is felled in their midst. Parallel universes seem to have collided or maybe a futuristic experiment has gone horribly wrong.

Morrison draws on an eclectic range of cultural references including *Gulliver's Travels*, the giants of fairytales and theories of space colonisation. The title of the work refers to the American theoretical physicist and mathematician, Freeman Dyson (born 1923, England). Dyson is renowned for his serious theorising around futurism and science fiction. He has had a lifelong interest in space travel, the colonisation of space and the search for extraterrestrial intelligence. Perhaps Morrison is speculating that the only hope for the survival of human and animal species is to colonise space as Freeman Dyson proposed.

Louiseann Zahra-King deals with ideas of beauty, melancholy, death and the act of collecting in her installation *indigofera australis*; which presents nature as both ephemeral and contained. Using the lost wax casting process (where the original object is destroyed as it is recast in metal) the artist transforms fallen native birds into bronze memorials. Their animation suspended, her fallen birds are contained within delicately etched glass bell jars — the collector's perfect specimen.

James MORRISON

Freeman Dyson

2008

oil on canvas

Photographer: Jeremy Dillon

Courtesy the artist and

Darren Knight Gallery (Sydney)



Junior

Questions

Look at James Morrison's painting titled *Freeman Dyson*. It is an oil painting on five separate canvases.

- Do you recognise the animals, planets and plants?
- Is there anything unusual or strange about them? What is it?
- What do you think the birds might represent? Why?
- How has the artist used detail and size in this painting?
- In what way do you think this landscape is 'enchanted'?
- What feeling do you get from looking at this painting?
- Imagine that you are an early explorer and you have discovered this scene. Where are you exploring and what have you found? Write a journal entry that records your discovery.

Classroom activity

- Discuss the plot of *Gulliver's Travels* (Auth: Jonathan Swift, 1726) and in particular Gulliver's adventures in Lilliput. You may also like to discuss other stories and fairytales that feature giants. What do they represent?
- Using James Morrison's work *Freeman Dyson* as a starting point imagine your own enchanted forest. What would it contain? What sort of animals or people might dwell in this forest? What mood or feeling would you experience being in this place?
- As a class design a panoramic picture (consisting of separate panels that join up) that represents your idea of an enchanted forest and the flora and fauna that would be found there. Work in small groups to complete the separate panels. Use paint, collage, textured paper, crêpe paper etc. to create your enchanted forest.





Louiseann ZAHRA-KING

indigofera australis

2007-08

etched glass, bronze, mirrors, wood, silk

Photographer: Jeremy Dillon

Courtesy the artist and [MARS]
Melbourne Art Rooms, (Melbourne)

Senior

Questions

- Look at James Morrison's panoramic oil painting *Freeman Dyson*. In a short response discuss how the artist uses detail, scale, framing (cropping) and perspective.
- How is the work displayed? Why do you think the artist has painted the work on five separate panels, rather than one large canvas?
- Discuss how James Morrison's oil painting *Freeman Dyson* draws on the tradition of Australian landscape painting.
- In what ways is the natural environment imagined and represented by the artists in this exhibition? Choose two artists and compare the different ways that they represent the natural environment.
- What comment do you think Louiseann Zahra-King's work *indigofera australis* makes about the natural environment?

Classroom activity

- Some of the artists in this exhibition reference the act of collecting and museological methods of display in the presentation of their work. Deborah Klein's works reference the act of collecting and the rigid taxonomies imposed on the natural world. The display and presentation of Louise Weaver and Louiseann Zahra-King's works recall the dioramas of natural history museums. Research Australian artists including Janet Laurence (born 1947), Fiona Hall (born 1953), Kate Rohde (born 1980), and international artists such as Fred Wilson (born 1954, American), and Damien Hirst (born 1965, UK) who both reference and critique museum methodology in their practice.

New gothic

storytellers

The Gothic art period took place in Europe between the 12th and 16th century. The Gothic movement was originally a style of medieval architecture, epitomised by Notre Dame in Paris, with its flying buttresses and vaulted ceilings. The movement also brought significant changes to sculpture and painting and “gave its name to a new sensibility in eighteenth-century fiction typified by a fascination with darkness, horror, the supernatural, the grotesque, sexuality and tragedy.”⁵

Jazmina Cininas, curator of *The enchanted forest* writes of the artists included in the exhibition:

“[they] acknowledge a gothic understanding of the forest, of a nature that comes with its own inherent dangers. The precarious relationship between humankind and the natural world creates new monsters, both more dangerous and more marvellous than those in any fairytale.”⁶

Senior

Questions

- What meaning and or associations does the word ‘gothic’ have for you?
- As a sub-culture what style of dress and music are ‘Goths’ associated with? How do you think this relates to the gothic movement in art?
- In what way do you think the artists in this exhibition are ‘new gothic storytellers’?
- Why might Australian artists be interested in ideas of the ‘gothic’?
- Choose one of the artists in this exhibition and discuss the use of motif and narrative in their work.

Classroom activity

- Research the Gothic movement in art and literature. What was the Gothic movement in literature characterised by? By referring to the artists in this exhibition as ‘new gothic storytellers’ what parallel was the Curator drawing between their artwork and works of literature characterised as gothic?
- There are a number of past and contemporary Australian artists who have been interested in exploring ideas of the ‘gothic’ in their art. You might like to research the work of Tony Garifalakis (born 1966), Sharon Goodwin (born 1973), David Noonan (born 1969) and Albert Tucker (born 1914).

Glossary and endnotes

Anthropomorphic: Suggesting human characteristics for animals, inanimate things or occurrences.

Chimera: A mythological, fire-breathing monster, commonly represented with a lion's head, a goat's body, and a serpent's tail. Or any similarly grotesque monster having disparate parts, especially as depicted in decorative art.

Diorama: A three-dimensional representation of a scene, either full-sized or miniature.

Frieze: A commonly used term in architecture used to refer to either: 1. A plain or decorated horizontal part of an entablature between the architrave and cornice or 2. A decorative horizontal band, as along the upper part of a wall in a room.

Gothic: The Gothic art period took place in Europe between the 12th and 16th century. The Gothic movement was originally a style of medieval architecture, characterised by pointed arches, rib vaulting, and a developing emphasis on verticality and the impression of height; epitomised by Notre Dame in Paris, with its flying buttresses and vaulted ceilings. The movement also brought significant changes to sculpture and painting. In Literature the term relates to a style of fiction that emphasises the grotesque, mysterious, and desolate.

Hybrid: Composed of elements of different or incongruous kinds.

Installation: Art made for a specific space. The term became widely used in the 1970s and 1980s, largely replacing the term 'site-specific'. Installations may be temporary or permanent, and some only survive to posterity through documentation.

Metamorphosis: A transformation; as if by magic or sorcery. A marked change in appearance, character, condition, or function. In biology, a change in the form and often habits of an animal during normal development after the embryonic stage.

Relief print: A print that is printed from the ink on raised portions of a wood block or some other form of relief block (e.g. linoleum). The portions not to be inked and printed are cut away so that what remains, stands out in relief.

Taxidermy: The art of mounting the skins of animals so that they have a lifelike appearance.

Taxonomy: (from Greek taxis meaning arrangement or division and nomos meaning law) is the science of classification according to a pre-determined system. Originally the term taxonomy referred to the classifying of living organisms (now known as alpha taxonomy); however, the term is now applied in a wider, more general sense and now may refer to a classification of inanimate and animate things, as well as to the principles underlying such a classification.

- 1 Marina Warner (ed), *Wonder Tales*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 1994, p.6
- 2 Marina Warner, op cit, p.6.
- 3 Marina Warner, *From the Beast to the Blonde: On Fairytales and their Tellers*, Random House, London 1994, p.XV
- 4 Megan Backhouse, 'The enchanted forest new gothic storytellers' in *Art Gallery Guide Australia*, March/April 08, www.artguide.com.au/features/the-enchanted-forest-new-gothic-storytellers/ [Last accessed 20 March 2008].
- 5 Jazmina Cininas, *The enchanted forest: new gothic storytellers* [exhib. cat], Geelong Gallery, 2008. n.p.
- 6 Janine Burke, *Australian Gothic: A life of Albert Tucker*, Random House, Australia, 2002, p.XV

The enchanted forest: new gothic storytellers

A Geelong Gallery & NETS Victoria touring exhibition

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We are the peak body for visual arts touring in the state of Victoria. NETS Victoria provides opportunities for regional Victorians to access and engage with the best contemporary art, craft and design. We work closely with curators and galleries to develop ambitious and stimulating exhibitions that foster the exchange of ideas and promote new works by a diverse range of artists.

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A comprehensive online resource featuring background information, updated tour itinerary, artist biographies, education resource, interviews with the artists and guest curator, and a media release.

Exhibition and Tour Partners



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The Geelong Gallery is supported by the Victorian Government through Arts Victoria and the Community Support Fund, and through the Visual Arts and Craft Strategy, an initiative of the Australian, State and Territory Governments.



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Deborah KLEIN

Chelepteryx collesi

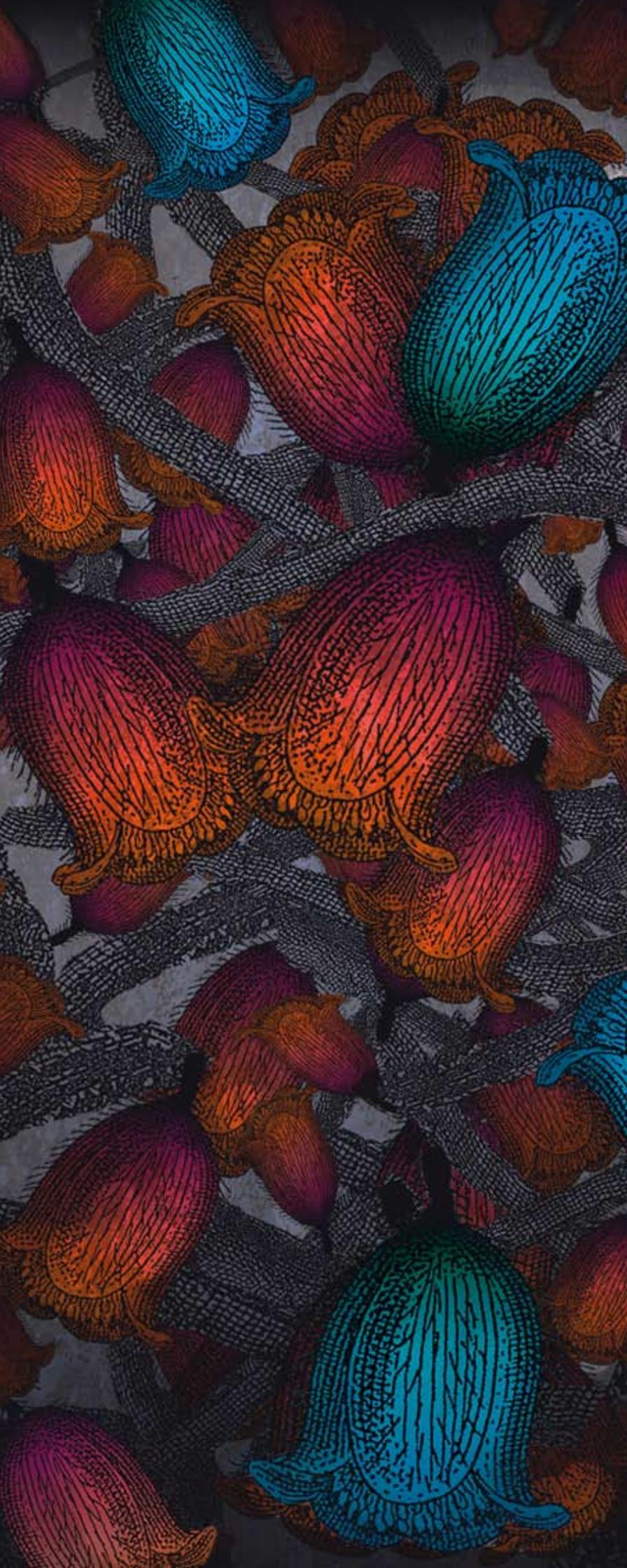
2007

from the series *Moth masks*

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Photographer: Viki Petherbridge

Courtesy the artist



Jazmina Cininas
Deborah Klein
Milan Milojevic
James Morrison
Louise Weaver
Louiseann Zahra-King

Guest curator – Jazmina Cininas



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