



Fiona Hall is one of Australia's most well-known and innovative contemporary artists. She grew up in Sydney in a family with a keen sense of enquiry; most significantly her mother was a prestigious scientist and her brother pursued a career in mathematics. Hall's endeavours as an artist are parallel to that of a scientist; searching for understanding about humanity and the environment.

Hall works across a range of media including painting, photography, sculpture and installation. At times she uses unusual materials such as soap, sardine tins, aluminium cans, video tape, currency and beads. Hall uses these everyday objects to address contemporary issues associated with history, politics, conflict and the environment.

*Occupied territory* was Hall's first work about the British colonisation of Australia. The work consists of four native and four introduced plant specimens. The four introduced species are made from red and white beads; fig, pear, acorn and peach, while the four native species angophora, banksia, Norfolk pine and Sydney Wattle are constructed from black beads and nails. The choice of beads and nails refers to the 'gifts' offered to Aboriginal people by colonisers including Captian James Cook and Sir Joseph Banks.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Fiona Hall's keen interest in science and natural history is also woven throughout her public commissioned works. Hall has made two site specific works for Adelaide: *Grove* (2009) at the Museum of Economic Botany in the Adelaide Botanic Gardens and *Different Forms of Intelligence* (2007) at the entrance of the University of South Australia's Samstag Museum on North Terrace. In 2012 Hall was also commissioned to create *Out of Mind* for the Queensland Brain Institute, responding to the work being undertaken by its research teams.

image detail: Fiona Hall, Sydney 1953, *Occupied territory*, 1995, Adelaide, glass beads, nails, vitrine (wood, glass) 39.0 x 128.5 x 43.0 cm, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

## RESOURCES

### WEBSITES

- ABC National Radio – Conversation with Fiona Hall (Different Forms of Intelligence, 2007, University of South Australia Collection)  
<http://ab.co/2uSbIHY>
- ABC News – Does Australia have one of the 'highest loss of species anywhere in the world'?  
<http://ab.co/2fn9oJ4>
- ABC Splash – Learn to count in Karna  
<http://ab.co/2x6DFpu>
- Adelaide Review – All the King's Men  
<http://bit.ly/2v3qGU5>
- Age, The – Calls for curriculum to say Australia was invaded not settled  
<http://bit.ly/2whzt9d>
- Australian Story – Fiona Hall  
<http://bit.ly/2wc7PLu>
- Australian Government Department of the Environment and Energy  
<http://bit.ly/2wctSSq>
- Australian Government Department of the Environment and Energy – Threatened Plants Australia  
<http://bit.ly/2w3NnvK>
- InDaily – An artistic response to the waging of wars  
<http://bit.ly/2v3yR2B>
- Lake Macquarie City Art Gallery  
<http://bit.ly/2v3fIDB>
- Santos Museum of Economic Botany  
<http://bit.ly/2vESQZ6>
- Traditional Karna Greetings  
<http://bit.ly/2uRT4ZY>

### BOOKS

- Ewington, J. *Fiona Hall*, Piper Press, Annandale, Australia, 2005
- Hansen, D. 'The Folding Stuff', *Wrong Way Time*, Australia Council for the Arts in association with Piper Press, 2015

### CATALOGUES

- Fiona Hall: Force Field*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia, 2007

### KEY LITERACY WORDS

- Botany
- Classification
- Colonisation
- Endemic
- Installation
- Sculpture
- Symbolism
- Taxonomy
- Vitrine



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**RESPONDING**

Describe how Hall has made the fruit and seed pods in *Occupied territory* beautiful?

Imagine you are labelling the four native plants in *Occupied territory*. In what region of Australia are these plants usually found? Research plants native to the Adelaide Plains region and their Aboriginal names. Create a display in your classroom.

Hall's kitchen shelves are full of coral, bird nests and other objects from the natural world. What things do you like to collect? Why do you think people like to collect things?

Hall is deeply concerned about the impact humans have had on the environment. Many of Australia's plant and animal species are now extinct or nearing extinction as a result of colonisation. Investigate an Australian species of flora or fauna that is on the brink of extinction. Discuss ways we could prevent more species from becoming extinct. Write a letter to the Minister for the Environment and Energy outlining your concerns and including a list of recommendations.

Imagine you and your family arrive unexpectedly in a new country to live. What things would you need to learn?

The endemic and introduced plants represented in *Occupied territory* were grown on the grounds of Governor Phillip's house in Sydney. Governor Phillip (1788–1792) proposed that Aboriginal people be treated kindly and aimed to establish a harmonious relationship with them. Unfortunately, not all British settlers thought this way. Investigate interactions between Aboriginal people and European settlers at the time of first contact. How did these interactions change over time? What are some of the effects this has had on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people today? If you could go back in time and change one specific moment in Australian history, what would it be and why?



image: Fiona Hall together with her work *All the King's men*, 2014–15



### MAKING

While in Adelaide, Hall used the gardens and research facilities at the Adelaide Botanic Gardens as inspiration for her work. Visit the Botanic Gardens to select an endemic plant to research, photograph and sketch. Create a series of botanical illustrations of this plant.

Hall uses a variety of non-traditional materials to create her works of art, often making new worlds from today's rubbish. The most recent work by Hall to come into the Gallery's collection is *All the King's men* (2014), in which she has used a variety of recycled objects collected over a long period of time. Using Hall as inspiration, create a work of art that uses only recycled and found materials.

image detail: Fiona Hall, Australia, 1953, *All the King's men*, 2014–15, Adelaide, 18 knitted military uniforms, wire, bone, horns, teeth, dice, glass and mixed media, (dimensions variable); Gift of Candy Bennett and Edwina Lehmann, Dr Peter and Sandra Dobson, David and Pam McKee, Simon Mordant AM and Catriona Mordant, John Phillips, and Tracey and Michael Whiting through the Art Gallery of South Australia Contemporary Collectors through the Fiona Hall Appeal 2015–16, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide. Courtesy Fiona Hall. photo: Clayton Glen.

## AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

### SCIENCE FOCUS: SCIENCE UNDERSTANDING – BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES & SCIENCE AS A HUMAN ENDEAVOUR – NATURE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF SCIENCE

Consider the role of introduced species, hunting and land clearance.

How would modern day Australian food chains compare with those existing before colonisation?

Taxonomy is the science of classification. All the plant seeds listed in *Occupied territory* belong to the plant kingdom but they are grouped into more specific categories at lower classification levels. What features make them all members of the plant kingdom? Find out which family each of the seeds belong to. Why have they been classified in this way?

Observation is an important skill in art and in science. Locate other works of art in the Gallery's collection that depict plants or flowers. Look closely while completing a series of drawings based on your observation. Back in the classroom classify the plants and flowers and research the scientific names for your specimens.

**RESPONDING**

Consider the placement of Hall's objects. What is Hall suggesting by placing the black and white objects side by side inside this vitrine?

Hall stated in an interview with *The Canberra Times* 'I suspect I am not alone in thinking that many people are quite troubled by the madness and the badness and sadness of the world'. Think of either a social, political or environmental issue that you find troubling today. As a class, discuss your responses.

*"Fiona Hall's works celebrate the wonder of nature but increasingly mourn the impact of humans on it"*

Vivienne Webb, Curator

Discuss this statement using two examples of Hall's work to support your response.

Read *The Age* article 'Calls for curriculum to say Australia was invaded not settled'. Conduct a class debate over whether the Australian curriculum should replace 'settled' with 'invaded'.

Fiona Hall's work sometimes explores problems associated with colonisation and how many of these problems remain with us today. Locate other works of art in the Gallery's collection that explore similar themes. Compare signs and symbols employed in these works of art to those used in *Occupied territory*.

**MAKING**

Some of Hall's earlier works, including *Occupied territory*, both celebrate wonders of the natural world and explore how distressing it is to see it disappearing before our eyes as a result of human impact. Create a work of art that responds to a current environmental issue using materials and methods that incorporate a sense of beauty.

Each work of art by Hall is unique, made from a range of materials and methods to realise each idea. In this sense, the material and the idea are inextricably linked. Design a small sculpture that responds to a current political or social issue in Australia. Create three versions of your sculpture using different materials each time. How does your choice of materials alter the meaning of your piece?

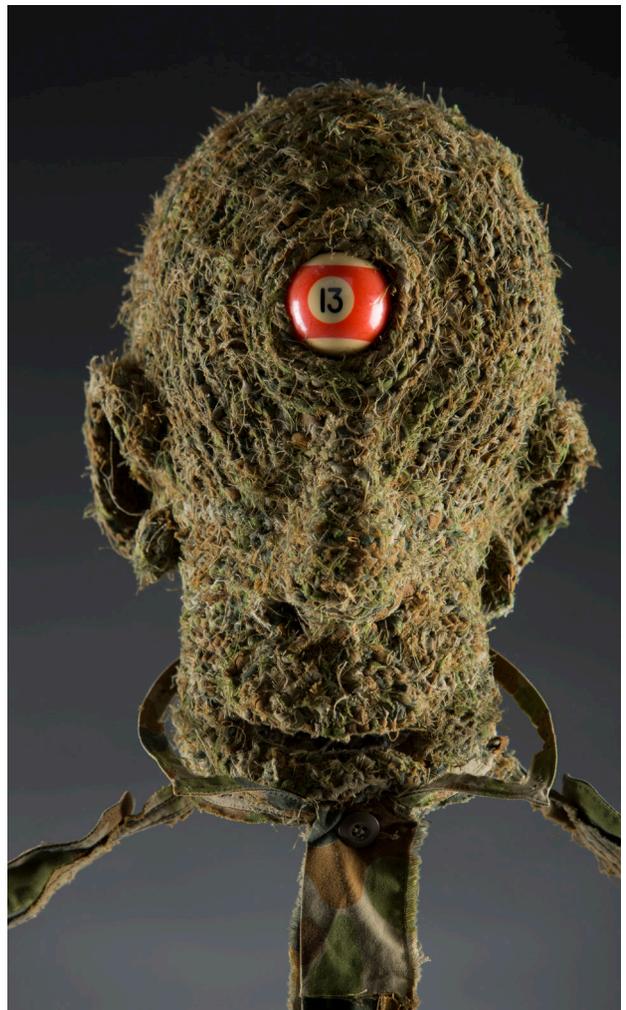


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**THINK & DISCUSS**

Writer Sasha Grishin described Australian art as having a distinctive voice. What distinguishes Australian art from art made by artists living in other countries?