The Secret Garden
Nathalie Djurberg & Hans Berg
11 FEB – 24 APR

EDUCATION RESOURCE PACK
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Nathalie Djurberg & Hans Berg: The Secret Garden
11 February – 24 April, 2016
All Galleries

Presented in partnership with ACCA, Perth International Arts Festival & Melbourne Festival

In their immersive landscapes, sculpture, light, sound and film mix to dazzling effect as gallery visitors are thrust into the mysterious worlds of feverish dreams, psychedelic sunsets and expanding universes.

An exciting new commission, a secret garden fit for Alice in Wonderland, is filled with giant leaves, bluebells and golden-capped acorns, gelato coloured cushions and dripping ice creams. Tied together with neon lighting and sound and presided over by a shaman rabbit, it is the stage set of the subconscious, only activated fully by each audience member’s internal direction.

This exhibition is the first time that Djurberg and Berg’s work has been seen in the Southern Hemisphere and, in addition, features a survey of the savagely humorous claymation films that first brought these artists into the international spotlight.

**PLEASE NOTE: The Secret Garden contains some artworks that contain adult themes. These pieces have not been included in the Education Notes and will be excluded from school tours and workshops.**

We are always looking for outstanding examples of student work that has been sparked by our exhibition content. If any of your students submit pieces of writing and/or art work of a high standard in response to this exhibition please forward a copy to:

Minaxi May  
Education Programs Curator  
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GPO Box P1221  
Perth, WA, 6844

OR

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Nathalie Djurberg & Hans Berg

Djurberg has developed a distinctive style of filmmaking, using clay animation to dramatize the basest of natural instincts from jealousy, revenge and greed, to submission and lust. Her partner, the musician and composer Hans Berg, conjures up the atmospheric sound effects and scores the hypnotic music for Djurberg’s animations and installations. In 2004 they began working closely together as a duo to create transgressive narratives rich in symbolic meaning and emotional reach, mining allegorical myths and grotesque, nightmarish visions. The artists' interdisciplinary collaborations increasingly blur the cinematic, the sculptural, and the performative in immersive environments that pair moving images and musical compositions with related set pieces or built objects.

Nathalie Djurberg and Hans Berg currently live and work in Berlin. Born in Lysekil, Sweden in 1978, Nathalie Djurberg received her MFA from Malmö Art Academy in 2002. Hans Berg was born in Rättvik, Sweden in 1978 and is a musician, producer and composer, working mainly with electronic music. They have exhibited widely together in group shows, including the 53rd Venice Biennale in 2009, while recent solo shows include the The Secret Garden at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne and Flickers of Day and Night at ARoS Aarhus Kunstmuseum, Aarhus.¹

THEMES AND REFERENCES IN THE SECRET GARDEN

GENRES
- Zoo
- Burlesque
- Voodoo
- Victorian
- Techno-trance
- Taboo / Dark side
- Nightmares / Horror
- Dream works / scapes
- Drama
- Narratives / Stories
- Fairytales

TIME PERIODS
- Psychedelia
- Psychological – Psychoanalysis
- Hallucinatory
- Parallel worlds
- Carnival/carnivalesque
- Hypnosis

PROCESSES
- Animation
- Claymation
- Short films
- Play
- Figurative
- Hand drawing
- Digital soundtracks / electronica
- Computer-generation

THEMES / EXPERIENCES
- Human nature
- Musical scores
- Characters
- Human and animal connections
- Animal metaphors
- Behaviour
- Transformation
- Transcendence
- Abstraction
- Immersion
- Sensory experience
- Alternative worlds
- Ambience
- Sets
- Atmospheric experience
- Instinct

MOVEMENTS
- Surrealism
- Interspecies

POPULAR CULTURE
- Alice in Wonderland
- Through the Looking Glass
- the character the white rabbit
- The Secret Garden — Victorian tales of loss and death, of childhood
- Grimm brothers
- Hans Christian Anderson
- Jefferson Airplane
The Secret Garden, 2015

Artwork

The Secret Garden is the title of the Nathalie Djurberg and Hans Berg’s exhibition at PICA as well as the title of a newly commissioned work presented in PICA’s central gallery. The Secret Garden is a work that is both beautiful and entertaining, filled with imaginings, as if in a dream. Consisting of projected animations and floor sculptures dispersed through the space, this arrangement is likened to a nest or as described by Juliana Engberg, a ‘habitat’. The handmade objects are created from a mixture of silicone, Styrofoam, modeling clay and wood, with textured surfaces such as acorns, leaves, melting icecreams, bells and flowers. Spread amongst the sculptures are coloured neon lights shaped like spirals. Made originally out of copper these were later fabricated as neons.

Berg’s sound track is digitally composed but includes some percussive elements. The percussion includes recordings of maracas and shakers. This was the first time Berg included “real” instruments in his music making. The sculptures and music are synchronised to work together — sounds building up and resonating whilst neons light up. This is an experience in tempo, a pace that is magical to see. Music is everywhere within the installation, developing like a journey from simplicity to a cascade and then to shamanic drumming, influencing the experience of the visual objects and scenarios and ultimately affecting your emotions.

3 Glanville, Nathalie Djurberg and Hans Berg, 12-13
4 Ibid.
5 Harford, Endearing images
6 Glanville, Nathalie Djurberg and Hans Berg, 12-13
Also included within *The Secret Garden* in the projection are animations of a ‘claymation rabbit who is bouncing up and down on a cushion. As he jumps he flips in the air, landing alternately on his back and stomach’. This character is made to look hand-crafted using materials including fabric and plasticine, making the rabbit look awkward and solid yet incredibly “real”. This white rabbit is reminiscent of Lewis Carrol’s Alice in Wonderland, but ‘older now and less dapper. He sits in a cardigan, like some old fella who has gone the miles’. Djurberg sees this character as the exhibition’s “shaman”, bouncing ritualistically up and down.

This piece also relates to Frances Hodgson Burnett’s classic children’s story, *The Secret Garden*, in title and content. This is a story of a walled garden in the grounds of an English manor, which remains locked and overgrown due to a dark secret that happened inside its walls many years ago. Inside the garden lie many secrets both beautiful and mysterious. It is the story of three very different children who become friends and discover the garden and it’s delights together.

Djurberg and Berg’s depiction of *The Secret Garden* references childhood, play, imagination and memory. As described by Amy Barrett-Lennard this installation is

fit for Alice in Wonderland, intent on keeping neuroses at bay. It is a magical glen of giant oak leaves and bluebells, golden-capped acorns, gelato-coloured woven and tasseled cushions and melting popsicles. Linked with spirals of neon lighting and sound and presided over by a shamanic rabbit, it is the stage set of the subconscious, only activated fully by each audience member’s internal direction.

**Discussion Questions**

- There are many floor sculptures in this piece. What are they? You can use the design elements and principles.
- What themes do you notice when experiencing this work? What emotions do you feel?
- The white rabbit is a symbol and character in this work. What does it add to this piece? How do you think the rabbit relates to ideas of a secret garden?
- Does this piece make you imagine or dream of anything particular?
- Why do you suppose the artist has used child-like themes in creating this artwork? How does this add to the understanding/experience of her ideas and art?
- Berg has included “real” instruments in the recording of the music for this piece. How is then different to the other artworks in this exhibition? What does it add to your experience of this installation?

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7 Harford, Endearing images
8 Glanville, Nathalie Djurberg and Hans Berg, 12-13
**Fever Dreams, 2014**

![Image of Fever Dreams artwork](image.png)

Nathalie Djurberg & Hans Berg, Fever Dreams (Dispersal), 2014. Polyurethane plastic and animation, 81.9 x 158.8 x 88.9 cm. Courtesy the artists; Lisson Gallery, London and Gio Marconi, Milan.

**Artwork**

... light, projection and beat-laden musical soundtracks transform four functional-looking white tables into luminescent, performing sculptures, collectively known as *Fever Dreams*.\(^{11}\)

This piece also combines animation and sculpture with six tables. The four tables with animation projections on the surface are constructed from polyurethane plastic, are white, with marbled legs. Some of these tables have silicone small sculptures on them — ice creams melting, creating a puddle.\(^{12}\) The animations ‘dance and swirl’.\(^{13}\) Timed lamps create and control the mood of lightness and darkness. Two other tables are reflective stainless steel, one gold and one, silver.\(^{14}\) Made of ‘a metal armature with wood, clay, canvas and acrylic paint applied to them’, Djurberg’s sculpted birds sit upon these surfaces.\(^{15}\)

The music is used to create a sense of the overwhelming as the sounds from each film are echoed and intermingle within the space. The viewer becomes part of the installation, immersed in the projections, sculptures and sounds.\(^{16}\)

**Influences**

Djurberg states that this work was inspired by when she was a child, sick in bed having ‘hallucinatory feverish dreams’.\(^{17}\) She was so wrapped up in the dream-state that she became confused about what was real and what was imagined. ‘The body would feel enormous and it was incredibly scary but also really fascinating’.\(^{18}\) These animations illustrate this sense of change and instability.\(^{19}\)

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\(^{11}\) Djurberg & Berg, Lisson Gallery
\(^{12}\) Glanville, Nathalie Djurberg and Hans Berg, 8
\(^{13}\) Ibid.
\(^{14}\) Ibid.
\(^{15}\) Ibid.
\(^{16}\) Ibid.
\(^{17}\) Ibid.
\(^{18}\) Harford, Endearing Images
\(^{19}\) Glanville, Nathalie Djurberg and Hans Berg, 8
Discussion Questions

• Look up “installation art” in the glossary. How has this artwork been installed? Describe use and placement of the tables? How is this experience varied from simply placing projections on the wall?
• What small sculptures can you see? Look closely. What materials are used, how, what textures, shapes and colours?
• How is the title Fever Dreams translated within the work? Think about the sculptures, video and sounds.
• What effect does light play on the entire scene?
• How does the music add another dimension to this work? How does the music and light change the mood/experience?
Gas Solid Liquid Series, 2014

Nathalie Djurberg & Hans Berg, Gas Solid Liquid (Candy) 2014. Ceramic with embedded electronic, animation and sound, 107 x 54 x 54cm. Courtesy the artists; Lisson Gallery, London and Gio Marconi, Milan.

Artwork
This artwork includes 6 large, torso-height ceramic pots clustered together in a darkened space. The space is dimly lit and as the viewer looks into/within the pots they see embedded small screens — ‘semi-abstract animations’.20

The films are made using oil pastels on black rubber-like material. They are animations made of line and drawing. They show ‘liquid and flowing forms and shapes continuously moving and transforming across the screens’.21

The title refers to the liquids depicted in the animations such as:

- blood, boiling water, rain, soap and tea... often contained in vessels such as bowls and kettles.
- Liquids move in and out of these vessels, bubbles stretch and pop as they dance in, out and around wide-rimmed bowls...22

When the viewer gets close and looks into the pot, Berg’s music and sound are amplified. The vessel acts as a sound magnifier, echoing and making the music rich in tone.23

This series of animations are all visually similar. Each film depicts animated drawings of liquid matter, and in each there are swirls and patterns of light and line. However individually they also have their very own materiality.24

20 Ibid., 7.
21 Ibid.
22 Glanville, Nathalie Djurberg and Hans Berg, 7
23 Ibid., 7.
24 Ibid.
Discussion Questions

• What do you see when looking inside the pots? How does this make you feel?
• What about the sounds, can you describe them?
• What materials can you see used in the animations? What colours and shapes?
• Why place animations inside pots?
• What is Djurberg trying to tell you in this piece?
• Can you experience any of the themes and references mentioned earlier in this work?
The Black Pot, 2013


Artwork

The Black Pot, a work similar to the Gas Solid Liquid and Fever Dreams, is a piece in a dark room, projected from floor to ceiling. ‘This video is another semi-abstract drawing and line animation in which line, colour and form interact on screen’, gliding and transforming. In this artwork, Djurberg has included aspects from mythology and ontogenesis. Images are fluid and include such forms as yolks and egg whites that combine and disperse to Berg’s dark, deep music. Unique to this work are halos and loops that stretch and bounce to the beat of the music, like rubber bands across the dark expanse of screen behind... Glowing orbs that look like stars or planets appear and disappear, and sprinklings of light and colour that appear like fireworks explode across the projection.

Djurberg wanted to create ‘something from nothing’. The central video is a ‘circular panorama’ which includes the symbology of creation, the universal and personal. ‘As in a bubbling pot, sublime and earthy senses mix in the dark space of the universe.’ The videos play in sync, with surround sound. The sounds vibrate through the space creating a loud, immersive experience that encircles the viewer.
Discussion Questions

- *The Black Pot*, is similar to *Gas Solid Liquid* and *Fever Dreams*. What are the similarities you can see/experience? What are the differences? Describe this using the elements and principles of design.

- What aspects of mythology can you see?
- What are the egg yolks and whites doing?
- What else do you see/feel in this projection?

**ART PRACTICE**

**PROCESS**

Firstly the issues and themes in the film are discussed. The techniques chosen to use are developed around the ideas.

The ideas are like obsessions whereby Djurberg fully researches her interests and checks for similar projects as to not interfere with her own unique perspective she is wanting to create. The research helps her to develop her vision and ideas, enough to keep her interested.

In order to create the characters and to have an understanding of their movements, Djurberg first practices the movements and feelings herself e.g. jumping, walking, crying etc. By doing this she is able to give the correct motions and expressions to her puppets and become “aware” of herself and her created “beings”.

Berg uses mostly electronic art — music created on the computer. But on occasion he has had to use other techniques to create the effect he desires. One such example is the process of Foley art, as used in films. In *I Wasn’t Meant to Play the Son* (2011) he used scissors for snipping sounds and the snapping of carrots for the bones breaking. The sound is used to create feeling and encourage engagement with the works.

**COLLABORATION**

A mutual friend suggested musician Hans Berg work with Djurberg and her videos. For her it was a stretch from working solitarily into a collaborative process. This seemed to give a sense of purpose to his pop, techno influenced tunes. At the same time Djurberg had moved away from familiar art processes such as painting and sculpture to animations, which like Berg’s music was able to be remixed.

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The first film they collaborated on was *Désastres de la Guerre* (2003). Music allowed this piece to enter a whole other dimension in which there was a resolution – a coming together of art and sound, narrative and atmosphere.

In the beginning they worked separately but more and more they collaborate from the beginning.

I start by looking for the obsession that I can’t let go of, then when I decide that I have found one that I want to do, I make the puppets and the scenario, and I build up the story.32

Whilst thinking about sounds and working through the process, Berg is also preoccupied with doing the lighting. Djurberg makes the puppets and performs without scripts, with her imagination guiding the development. She likes the process to develop without too much planning.

**SCULPTURE / INSTALLATION**

Coinciding with Djurberg’s increasingly abstract animations she also started ‘to make sculptural works, immersive installations and special viewing structures for her films’.33 These elements have expanded their practice into immersive installations in which audiences can enter imagined worlds. These environments include wall projected animations within darkened gallery spaces, ‘fabricated structures and sculptures around and through which the audience views the animations’.34

The elements included in their exhibitions include both stand alone and projection surfaces in the form of sculptures and platforms. These sculptures include ‘animals, doughnuts, ice creams, eggs and acorns’.35

Djurberg’s animations and sculptures are described as being ‘different versions of the same thing’.36 “Both are hand-made and it is almost as though the animations have been brought into the physical space, and spread throughout the galleries”.37

**GESAMTKUNSTWERK**

Djurberg’s are more interactive now than ever before. The audience can be a part of the work, experiencing the sound, sculptures and film. The artists can also experience what it is like to “be in” the work.38

Their interdisciplinary collaborations increasingly blur the cinematic, the sculptural and the performative in immersive environments that pair moving images and musical compositions with related set pieces and built objects.39

Djurberg and Berg’s installations with all the many components combined together — cinema, animation, theatre come together to create what composer Richard Wagner described as “gesamtkunstwerk”. Literally, the word is a German term for ‘combined work of art... a synthesis of, the unification of all kinds of arts’.40

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33Barrett-Lennard, Garden of the Unconscious
34Glanville, *Nathalie Djurberg and Hans Berg*, 4
35Ibid.
36Greg Hilty quoted in Glanville, *Nathalie Djurberg and Hans Berg*, 4
37Glanville, *Nathalie Djurberg and Hans Berg*, 4
38Neri, *The Secret Garden*, 48
39Hilty quoted in Glanville, *Nathalie Djurberg and Hans Berg*, 4
ARTS PROJECTS INSPIRED BY THE SECRET GARDEN

1. Quick Character Animation

Aim
Create a finished flip book animation.

Step 1: Brainstorming & sketching
- Brainstorm a character maybe a rabbit like in The Secret Garden, your favourite pet or something you have made up.
- Do some sketches.
- Then decide an action your character is doing e.g. running.

Step 2: Making your flip book
- Get 2 sheets of A4 copy paper or thin card and fold each in half again and again (4 times) until you have 16 rectangles.
- Cut them out.
- Stack them altogether and place a fold back clip on one of the short ends to hold together.
Step 3: Drawing
• The first page is the cover, so remember to title your animation
• From the 2nd page onwards draw your character doing each step towards your action in pencil e.g. if running, each page will only show a slight change, the slow motion of running. To do this, you can trace each page from your previous page until your sequence ends on the final page. You should have 31 drawings and a cover.
• Retrace with your marker pen & rub out the pencil lines.

Step 4: Animate
• Once complete flip through your book and see the surprising movement of your character.

Examples:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z1a7l7RxZs
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xSrDnlVgVv0

Materials:
• Pencil, sharpener, eraser
• Marker Pen
• A4 paper/card
• Flip back clips

Suitable for primary and secondary school students

2. Storyboard

To extend exercise one do a storyboard by creating a story and placing your character in an environment.

Write a short story for your character with a beginning, middle and end. Draw what your character is doing in each square. Each square is a scene, so draw in the background. This can all be done as simple sketches.

Check out:
http://curkovicartunits.pbworks.com/f/GiantBoards.jpeg
https://georgeberlin.files.wordpress.com/2009/07/1.jpg?w=1024&h=643
http://bmsresearch.weebly.com/uploads/2/3/7/5/23758913/_2426863_orig.jpg

Suitable for primary and secondary school students
3. Rabbited

Use the rabbit in the exhibition as an inspiration to create your very own three-dimensional rabbit. You could use some modelling clay like white plasticine, cardboard painted white or soft sculpture with fabric, stuffing and stitching.

Check out:
The soft sculptures of Australian artist Kathy Temin:

The cardboard art of Perth artist Steve Buckles:
https://www.instagram.com/hurben/

Remember to look at some real white rabbit pictures on the web or even some characters like Bugs Bunny, Peter the Rabbit or Miffy if you want.

*Suitable for primary and secondary school students*
SCASA K-10
English
Literature
Health & Physical Education
Movement & Physical Activity
History
Historical Knowledge & Understanding
Humanities & Social Sciences
Humanities & Social Sciences skills: questioning & researching
Technologies
Design & Technologies
Digital technologies
The Arts
Dance
Drama
Media Arts
Music
Visual Arts

WACE 11-12
Building & Construction / Construction
Dance
Design
Drama
Literature
Media Production & Analysis
Modern History
Music
Psychology
Visual Arts

Further Research
Institut für Kunstdokumentation, NATHALIE DJURBERG / HANS BERG - MAYBE THIS IS A DREAM Interviews, 8 April 2014, 7.25mins https://vimeo.com/93865510
Lisson Gallery, Nathalie Djurberg & Hans Berg: The Gates of the Festival Interview, Interview, 23 September 2014, 5.50mins https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IBqCRtkKW1I
Walker Art Center, The Parade: Nathalie Djurberg with Music by Hans Berg, 11 November, 2011, 1.03mins https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kZGjhxYVhmo
REFERENCES


Engberg, Juliana in Glanville, Georgina, Nathalie Djurberg and Hans Berg: The Secret Garden, Education Resource, October 2015, The Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (ACCA)


1. Nathalie Djurberg and Hans Berg, installation view of *The Secret Garden* at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, 2015. Photo: Andrew Curtis


