

please open hurry

Amalia Pica

4 August – 7 October

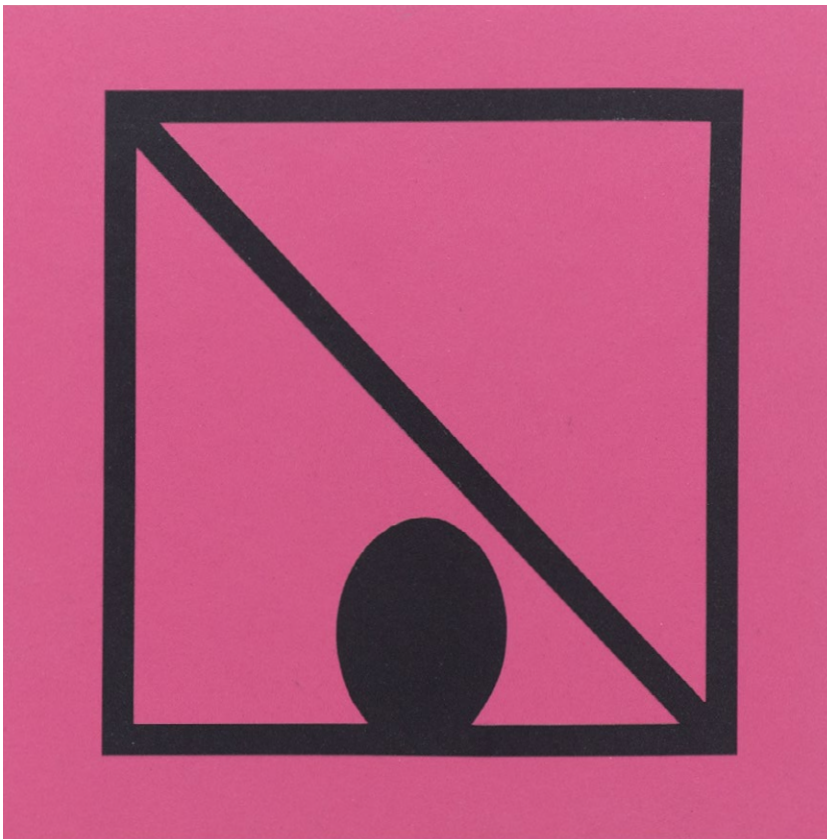


Image: Amalia Pica, *Yerkish* (detail), 2018. Photo:
Susie Blatchford

This lexigram means 'work' in Yerkish language.

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About PICA

Housed in a large and striking heritage building in the heart of Perth, Western Australia, PICA is the city's focal point for those wishing to experience the best of Australian and international visual, performance and interdisciplinary art.

PICA is both a producing and presenting institution that runs a year-round program of changing exhibitions, seasons in contemporary dance, theatre and performance and a range of interdisciplinary projects. It boasts one of the largest and most breath-taking exhibition spaces in Australia and has become known for the leading role it plays in the presentation of significant new work.

PICA's key aim is to promote, support and present contemporary arts and to stimulate critical discussion around the arts and broader cultural issues. Providing a site for experimentation, critical analysis, discussion, and debate is fundamental to its charter. PICA is known for the rigour and breadth of its artistic and education programs, high production standards and impeccable presentation.

PICA is an icon of contemporary thinking – it is a catalyst for innovative and groundbreaking art and culture. Not constrained by convention, PICA gives artists and audiences a glimpse of what is possible.

To learn more about our coming program, or to make a booking, visit pica.org.au or call 08 9228 6300.

Exhibition Summary

please open hurry

Amalia Pica | 4 August – 7 October 2018

Internationally renowned Argentinian-born artist Amalia Pica's art practice includes drawing, collage, sculpture, photography, live performance, film and installation.

Investigating her longstanding consideration of language, comprehension and misunderstandings, translation and listening, Pica also explores human/animal communication informed by studies of primates in Nigeria and North America with videos created in collaboration with filmmaker Rafael Ortega.

Pica's practice raises questions about the techniques and shortcomings of communication, individual versus collective speech, and the translation of thought to action, examining the role of the artist in conveying messages to audiences.

Curated at PICA by Eugenio Viola, *please open hurry* has been developed in partnership with The Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, and The Power Plant, Toronto with the generous support of the Keir Foundation.



Image: Amalia Pica, *please, open, hurry (in memory of Washoe)*, 2018. Photo: Louis Lim.

This education resource explores broad themes including;

CULTURE and cultural distinctions of European and Western historical and contemporary philosophies

LANGUAGE and communication, dialects, semaphore, code, interpretation and text in art

SOCIO POLITICAL social and cultural norms, cultural dislocation and displacement, migration/immigration, violence, political movements and dictatorships, philosophy, ethics and politics and the artist as social critic

ENGLISH language, Linguistics, sign language, semantics, semiotics, translation, semaphore
SCIENCE and psychology

VISUAL ART styles and periods including Suprematism and the Bauhaus, Constructivism, the Bauhaus, De Stijl, Minimalism, Cubism, Surrealism, Op Art, Post Modernism, abstraction, conceptual art, performance art, contemporary art, new-media art, sound art, new media art, design and music.

CURRICULUM LINKS

THE ARTS: Visual Arts, Visual Communication & Design, Media Production & Analysis, Music

ENGLISH: Linguistics, English Literature, English as an additional language or dialect

HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES: Intercultural Studies, Modern History, Geography, Philosophy & Ethics, Politics & Law, political and ideological expression, satire, social dissent

MATHEMATICS: Mathematical systems, series, theories, formats, formulas, dimensions, scale

LANGUAGES: verbal and non-verbal languages, dialects, lexigrams, Yerkish, Morse code, syntax, electronic language, encrypted semantics, semiotics

SCIENCE: Psychology and human and animal behaviour

TECHNOLOGIES: Computer Science, Code and Binary code, Design, Materials Design & Technology.

AMALIA PICA

Amalia Pica was born in 1978, Neuquén, Argentina and currently lives and works in London, UK.

Solo exhibitions | Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, NC Arte Botogota (2017) Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven (2014) and Museum of Contemporary art, Chicago (2013). Group exhibitions | S.M.AK, The Netherlands, Mass MoCA, Massachusetts, USA, Kusthalle Wien, Vienna (2016), Centre Pompiduo, Paris, Whitechapel Gallery, London (2015) and Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2014). Her work was featured in the Gwangju Biennale (2016) and the 54th Venice Biennale (2011).

IDEAS, INFLUENCES, MATERIALS & METHODS

Growing up at the end of the Argentinian Dictatorship, Amalia Pica's work explores the poetics and politics of communication, miscommunication and exchange expressed in the form of playful objects and signal systems, combined with the elements of chance, error, and misunderstanding that so often occur through listening, dialogue and conversation.

Pica's longstanding consideration of language extends to her 2014 experience observing the lives and single tool use of chimpanzees in Nigeria, as part of the Gashaka Primate Project (GPP) artist residency. Impacted by this experience, Pica's recent body of work explores humans mimicking animals, animals conforming to human expectations, and the shared values of tool-making and symbolic status among Hominidae (humans and chimpanzees, bonobos, gorillas and orangutans).

Here Pica's interest is in relationships, including the scientific study of intersections between distinct sets of data is a key motivation, focussing on issues surrounding (mis-) classification as communication, as well as the animal as 'Other', particularly evidenced in *Yerkish*, 2018 and *In alphabetical order (Catalogue of great ape gestures)*, 2018, a large-scale depiction of a visual language of the same name that refers to a keyboard of hundreds of lexigrams – abstract symbols corresponding to objects or ideas and one of the most complex systems of communication used with primates.

Pica's elegant casts of human hands that spell out the title of her solo exhibition, please open hurry in American Sign Language with the subtitle 'in memory of Washoe' (1965 – 2007) commemorate the chimpanzee Washoe, who signed this simple sentence when she wanted to leave her cage and go outside to play. Washoe was named after Washoe County, Nevada, where she grew up and was taught sign language by psychologists Beatrix and Allen Gardner.

PRE-VISIT RESEARCH

Explore Amalia Pica's work online:

Konig Gallerie, Berlin: <http://www.koeniggalerie.com/artists/7550/amalia-pica/works>

Herald Street Gallery: <http://www.heraldst.com/amalia-pica>

The Guggenheim: <https://www.guggenheim.org/video/asamble-at-the-guggenheim>;
<https://www.guggenheim.org/map-artist/amalia-pica>

MCA Chicago: <http://www.annamadeleine.com/blog/2013/08/09/amalia-pica-at-mca-chicago>

- Locate Argentina on the globe in relation to Australia and research Argentinian political history, particularly the coup d'état (1976 –1983) Military Dictatorship.
- Research the diversity and history of languages and Linguistics, Hieroglyphics, Roman Numerals and Latin, to modern English, languages other than English and the Australian vernacular including 'Strine'.
- Research nonverbal communication systems including flag semaphore across different cultures, Morse Code, Braille and sign language such as Auslan (Australian Sign Language) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_5NbYyUlcHU
- Research the Gashaka Primate Project (GPP): www.ucl.ac.uk/gashaka.
- Explore Anthropology and Anthropomorphism and Hominidae (humans and chimpanzees, bonobos, gorillas and orangutans) and the work of Dr Jane Goodall: www.janegoodall.org.au
- Research the work of Robert M. Yerkes (1876 – 1956), primatologist and the founder of the laboratory within which the lexigram-based language 'Yerkish' was first used.
- Explore and compare number and data systems and codes, including set theory and the Venn Diagram, decimal, binary and Partition (number theory), and the Fibonacci sequence.
- Discuss and research 'outdated' modes of communication and presentation formats such as slide projectors, 16mm film, overhead projectors, reel to reel tape recorders, analogue TVs and fixed line telephones.

YEARS 7-10 VISUAL ARTS | HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES

MAKING – exploring, investigating and developing ideas and processes

RESPONDING - expressing personal opinions, responses, production, discerning, presenting

- Examine the work of Amalia Pica and the broad themes and ideas that she expresses including the art elements and principles, style, composition, materials and technique.
- Research Yerkish and Pica's work of the same name. Design your own set of symbols or emojis/emoticons that are unique to you, that you think convey meaning in a sentence.
- Responding to the work *Yerkish*, 2017, develop your own 'coded' language and a format that others can only decipher using a 'key'. Invite your class, your family and friends to 'read' or translate the meaning in your work without a verbal explanation. Record your findings and discuss whether your work was understood or misinterpreted.
- Create a series of works that explore the theme of 'communication' and the notion of 'snooping' through photography or video.
- Research the meaning of 'gesture' e.g. friendly, confused, happy, annoyed or frustrated, and explore how this could be expressed in a 2D, 3D, video or installation work.
- Responding to Pica's video *In alphabetical order (Catalogue of great ape gestures)*, 2018, create a video or photographic series that physically expresses the behaviour of a cat, dog, bird, fish, horse, or another human.
- Refer to the work of Bridget Riley and the Op Art movement and create a Spirograph or a work with multiple codes, symbols and patterns.
- Create a unique communication system using a range of found objects including cans, string, cones, cardboard tubes etc.



Image: Amalia Pica, *In alphabetical order (Catalogue of great ape gestures)*, 2018. Photo: Louis Lim.

YEAR 11 VISUAL ARTS

Art Making / Art Interpretation / Cross-Curriculum Priorities / ICT / Critical & Creative Thinking / Personal & Social Capability / Ethical Understanding / Intercultural Understanding

UNIT 1. DIFFERENCES

ART MAKING

- Compare your cultural background and values with those of Amalia Pica and consider how you would translate a political issue or idea about your heritage in a work of art.
- Record nonverbal hand signs and signals regularly used by people to communicate and sequence your findings in a visual format from your investigations.
- In reference to *Yerkish*, create a work in a nonverbal language format that includes a hidden code.
- Draw a series of hands in a range of gestural positions to express a message that is then expanded into a series or 3D photographic or sculptural works.

ART INTERPRETATION

- Analyse the way that Pica's ideas evolve and are expressed as series of works within the theme of 'communication' using a range of approaches, styles and materials including drawing, painting, sculpture, collage, video etc.
- Select two of Pica's works and examine the ideas expressed, including the art elements and principles, style, composition, materials and technique.
- Consider the work *Yerkish*, 2018 and the way the lexigrams in the work are symbols and codes to create language.
- Research conceptual art and the Surrealist movement, along with the artist Marcel Duchamp and his creation of the 'readymade' in 1917, that has continued to impact art movements and conceptual artmaking today.
- Discuss how important it is, or is not, to understand particular periods of art history, political history and specific symbols and metaphors to interpret Amalia Pica's work.



Image: Amalia Pica, *Yerkish*, 2018. Photo: Louis Lim.

UNIT 2. IDENTITIES

ART MAKING

- Explore Pica's work in relation to conceptual artists such as Carl Andre, Donald Judd and Joseph Kosuth and develop ideas for a work that expresses your childhood memories, family history and culture.
- Analyse the importance of specific materials, objects and locations that Pica uses to assist in expressing and conveying meaning and the ideas in her work. Create your own work that expresses an idea in which the materials are significant in adding to and expressing particular meaning about your work.

ART INTERPRETATION

- Amalia Pica said, "I think my work stems from the almost childish desire to be understood". Express your thoughts about this statement in relation to her work.
- Discuss the ways in which Pica's work investigates how we communicate beyond the barriers of language and the shortcomings of communication between different species.
- Pica's work *Extended ears*, 2017 continues her engagement with the failures and impossibilities of communication and obsolete technologies. Express your opinion about her work and the ideas she expresses on this subject, as well as the importance of her choice of materials to assist in conveying meaning.
- Analyse and discuss how Amalia Pica has expressed precarious attempts that have been made in relation to inter-species communication.
- Analyse and discuss whether it is important to understand Amalia Pica's history, background, ideas and areas of enquiry to fully appreciate her work.



Image: Amalia Pica, *Extended ears*, 2017. Commissioned by The Power Plant, Toronto. Photo: Louis Lim.

YEAR 12 VISUAL ARTS

UNIT 3: COMMENTARIES

ART MAKING

- Create a work of that expresses how your ideas have been shaped or influenced by specific social, cultural or historical concerns.
- Comment on Amalia Pica's approach to ideas surrounding listening whilst considering and researching sound art; in particular the work of conceptual artist John Cage work 4'33 and the sensory and sound work of Janet Cardiff and Georges Bures Miller <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ujBg33fCLZE>, together with work by Sonia Leber and David Chesworth <http://leberandchesworth.com/installations/this-is-before-we-disappear-from-view/>. Create a sound work that is a comment on a particular social or political issue.
- Research Pica's work, *A ∩ B ∩ C*, 2011 and create a video of a choreographed sequence using a selected mathematical format or system, that expresses a particular social or political issue.

ART INTERPRETATION

- Using art terminology select two of Amalia Pica's works and identify key elements and principles, as well as using the key Critical Analysis Frameworks (Subjective, Structural, Cultural and Postmodern).
- Comment on how Pica's early art influences include the aesthetics of the Brazilian movement 'Tropicália' and other 1960s and 1970s minimalist-conceptualists including the Bauhaus, the DeStijl art movement and Op Art.
- Pica's work '*please open hurry*' has been described as being influenced by Bruce Nauman's bronze hand casts, *Fifteen Pairs of Hands*, 1996. Research Nauman's work and write about the similarities and differences.
- French Algerian-born philosopher Jacques Derrida once claimed, the question of "animality" is no ordinary one; rather, it is the "limit upon which all the great questions are formed and determined, ... all the concepts that attempt to delimit what is 'proper to man,' the essence and future of humanity, ethics, politics, law, 'human rights,' 'crimes against humanity,' 'genocide,' etc." Discuss and express your perspective of Derrida's comment in relation to Amalia Pica's work.

UNIT 4: POINTS OF VIEW

ART MAKING

- Reflecting on Amalia Pica's work and ideas, express a point of view on cultural, environmental or sustainability issues through a work or series of works across a range of media.
- In the 1970s, the artist Sol LeWitt (America, 1928–2007) introduced architectural scale work which included wall drawings based on verbal proposals or systems proposed by him and executed by others. Organise one half of the class to create a description of a work that will then be executed by the other while the whole process is videoed. Review the end result and whether there was any miscommunication in the translation or the execution or both.
- Create a series of works that incorporate alternative forms of communication, using verbal and nonverbal and coded formats and that expresses a particular point of view.



Images: Amalia Pica/Rafael Ortega, *Pan troglodytes ellioti and cousins*, 2016.

UNIT 4: POINTS OF VIEW

ART INTERPRETATION

- Discuss whether you think it is the artist's role to undertake acts of political and ideological expression, act as social critic and undertake acts of social dissent through art.
- Serbian performance artist Marina Abramović's conceptual art practice explores the relationship between performer and audience, the limits of the body, and the possibilities of the mind, whilst inviting the participation of viewers. Compare Abramović's work to Amalia Pica's and express the similarities and differences in their respective art practices.
- Pica's work explores the complications of keeping animals in captivity and in zoos and what has been termed 'civilising nature'. Analyse this aspect of her work and express your opinion about the work, *Silverware*, 2017.
- Australian artist Lisa Roet challenges fundamental scientific and behavioural theories relating to human evolution and creationism, language and communication, science and art and the relationship between humans and 'other' primates. Compare her work to Amalia Pica's series on communication and the study of primates and the similarities and differences in their approaches, media and ideas.
- Research the work and ideas of Australian artist Angelica Mesiti and her work the calling 2013-14, <https://nga.gov.au/installations/mesiti/default.cfm> which reflects Mesiti's ongoing interest in non-verbal communication and forms of expression researched in Turkey, Greece and The Canary Islands. Compare her work to Amalia Pica's work, such as *Yerkish*, and explore and compare their style of working, their interests in verbal and nonverbal communication and the presentation of their ideas.
- Directors of IMA, Brisbane, Aileen Burns and Johan Lundh commented, "In Amalia's work, contemporary art is presented in parallel with science, like two angles on the same story. "It comes at a moment when many people are coming to grips with the current geological era of the Anthropocene in which human activity has and continues to reshape the environment and climate. Amalia's new work points towards a more inclusive future that respects the knowledge and needs of non-human life on earth." Discuss and write your response.
- Write an exhibition review on Angelica Pica's exhibition in response to this comment: "*Language abounds in this exhibition, yet I can't help thinking that Pica is more interested in larger issues to do with art's role in revealing the limits of human knowledge.*" Wes Hill, Artlink, 24 Feb 2018.

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