

ANIMAL GALLERY

Explore animals in art and imagine your own gallery where creatures large and small can live.

VIEW ONLINE

QAGOMA
LEARNING

BHARTI KHER

THE SKIN SPEAKS A LANGUAGE NOT ITS OWN 2006

The skin speaks a language not its own is a life-sized elephant, a standard symbol of India, lying exhausted, even dying. The elephant's skin is covered with thousands of bindis — a Hindu symbol representing the 'third eye' of wisdom — small serpent-like shapes that speak a specific symbolic language. The elephant can have multiple meanings. As Bharti Kher says: 'A white elephant in Europe is a folly . . . While in Asia it is a sign of good luck, and in Thailand, the King of Siam would give a white elephant as a gift to a person he would like to destroy. Myths, legends, stories and associations are so different in different places.'

WATCH ▶

Watch Bharti Kher discussing her work.



THINK

1. Can you suggest what the artwork title, *The skins speaks a language not its own*, means?
2. The elephant is a symbol of dignity, intelligence and strength across Asia, and yet it is now regarded as an endangered species in India. What message do you think the position of the elephant conveys to the viewer?
3. Bharti Kher discusses how the elephant can mean different things depending on the cultural and social context. What does the elephant symbolise for you?

CREATE

Research endangered species in Australia (e.g. see The Nature Conservancy Australia, 'Australia's Endangered Animals', <<https://www.natureaustralia.org.au/what-we-do/our-priorities/wildlife/wildlife-stories/australias-endangered-animals/>> accessed April 2020). Select one animal to draw or sculpt, and cover the surface of your work with a symbol that draws attention to their vulnerable status.



**CÉLESTE BOURSIER-
MOUGENOT**
FROM HERE TO EAR (V.13) 2010

From here to ear (v.13) features five structures comprised of suspended coat hangers and harpsicord strings built around bird nests and feeding bowls. These structures are activated by the introduction of live finches who create an organic musical experience as they fly, feed, rest and interact with each other within the installation.

THINK 

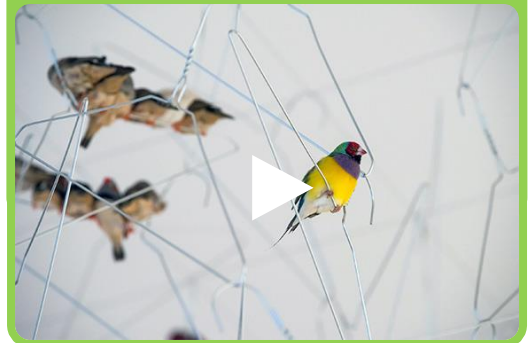
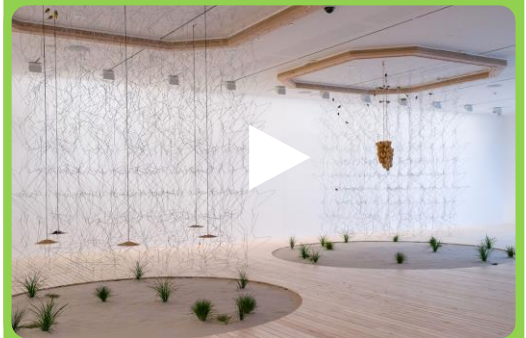
1. How has Boursier-Mougenot background as a composer influenced his art practice? Can you explain your thoughts?

2. Animals often function as metaphors or mirrors for our own animal nature. What aspect of human nature do you think the finches in Boursier-Mougenot's work could represent?

3. How would you describe the music created in the installation to someone who had not experienced it before?

WATCH 

Watch the artist's introduction to the work and then experience a sample of the musical landscape created by the finches.



CREATE 

Using objects found around your home or school, create an artwork installation or sculpture that produces a sensory experience for the viewer when nature interacts with it. For example, interesting shadows produced on a surface or sounds created by the breeze.



CRAIG KOOMEETA

FRESHWATER CROCODILE 2001

Carved wooden figures first emerged amongst the Wik peoples around 1950; up until then only smaller and simpler forms had been used for secret ceremonial use. Craig Koomeeta's sculptures represent the rejuvenation of traditional lore and culture for the Wik-Mungkan people. The work symbolises an important story for the Wik-Mungkan people where Kenh, the freshwater crocodile, fought Pikkuw, the saltwater crocodile. After the battle both of these ancestral beings returned to their territories and entered the earth. These places are known as 'aw', sacred clan totem centres, which represent the heart of clan identity.

WATCH

[Watch the artist interview.](#)

CREATE

Koomeeta has used a combination of pattern and carving to suggest the scaly texture of the crocodile's skin. Using paper and soft pencils, take rubbings of different textured surfaces. Select one rubbing and sketch an animal over the top.

THINK

1. Compare *Freshwater crocodile* to Koomeeta's *Saltwater crocodile 2002*. How has the artist represented the differences between the two species?

2. What is Koomeeta's connection to the freshwater crocodile?



IRENE ENTATA

POT: COWS 2000

Irene Entata belongs to the Hermannsburg Potters, a group of women who developed a distinctive hand-coiled style, often topped with moulded figurative lids. These elements hark back to an earlier period of pottery at Hermannsburg when, in the 1970s, a kiln was installed to produce figures as part of a tourism-based craft industry. The surfaces of the pots are often painted with landscapes in the style of the Hermannsburg School. The decoration on this pot reflects Irene Entata's direct experience of the cattle industry in Central Australia.



WATCH

Find out more about the Hermannsburg Potters by watching this [video](#) produced by the Woolloongabba Art Gallery (Note: the video is approximately 40 minutes long).

THINK

1. What do you think the cows and goats symbolised for Entata?
2. How would you describe the relationship between the hand modelled cows on the lid and the decoration on the surface of the pot? How do these two elements work together?

CREATE

Using modelling material such as air-dry clay or plasticine create a figurine of your favourite animal. Think about how you might incorporate your figurine into a pot or vessel.



MICHAEL PAREKOWHAI

THE WORLD TURNS 2011–2012

The hero of *The World Turns* is the kuril, a small native water rat. Along with the traditional Aboriginal custodians, the kuril is one of the caretakers of the land upon which this Queensland Art Gallery sculpture stands. The kuril is intrinsically linked to the mangroves that weave around the Kurilpa Point shoreline beside GOMA, which feed the animal and provide it with shelter. As the world turns — represented by the large, upturned elephant — the kuril calmly grooms itself.

EXPLORE

[View](#) the image gallery documenting the installation of this sculpture outside of GOMA.



THINK

1. Do you think the elephant in *The World Turns* is afraid of the kuril?
2. Have you ever heard of elephants or other animals being used as characters in fables or traditional stories? Can you list five examples?

CREATE

Research your local area to identify some animals that are specific to your location. Draw a design for a large sculpture involving two animals to create a visual story about identity or place. Write a short story to explain your sculpture.



PATRICIA PICCININI
THE STAGS 2008

The stags recreates two motor scooters as living creatures — a combination of nature and technology. This sculpture refers to the customised Vespas, often decorated with a multitude of mirrors, which were popular in the 1960s. Like customised vehicles, these scooters have taken on individual identities and are no longer factory-made ‘clones’. They appear to be alive and possibly even genetically unique. Piccinini’s artworks question what might be the result when humanity and technology become ever more entwined and, ultimately, indistinguishable.

EXPLORE 

Investigate what ‘mod’ culture is, specifically the customisation of motor scooters.

THINK 

1. Why did mods accessorise their scooters with large numbers of mirrors? How does this relate to the function of antlers of stags?
2. How would you describe the relationship between the two stags in Piccinini’s artwork?

CREATE 

Create your own hybrid creature that is a combination of animal and machine. Consider what your work could say about the relationship between nature and technology.

CAPTIONS

Bharti Kher / India b.1969 / *The skin speaks a language not its own* 2006 / Fibreglass and bindi / ed. 1/3 / 167.6 x 152.4 x 457.2cm (irreg., approx.) / Purchased 2007. Queensland Art Gallery Foundation / Collection: Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art / © Bharti Kher | **Céleste Boursier-Mougenot** / France b.1961 / *From here to ear (v.13)* 2010 / Five octagonal structures (each made in maple and plywood), harpsichord strings, piano tuning pins, audio system (contact microphones, amplifiers, guitar processors and speakers), coat hangers, feeding trays and bowls, seeds, water, nests, sand and grass / 400 x 1978 x 1852.1cm (installed, variable) / Purchased 2011. Queensland Art Gallery Foundation / Collection: Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art / © Céleste Boursier-Mougenot | **Craig Koomeeta** / Wik-Alkan people / Australia b.1977 / *Freshwater crocodile* 2001 / Carved milkwood with synthetic polymer paint / 23 x 125 x 23cm / Purchased 2002. Queensland Art Gallery Foundation / Collection: Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art / © Craig Koomeeta | **Irene Entata** / Arrernte/Luritja people / Australia 1946–2014 / *Pot: Cows* 2000 / Earthenware, hand-built terracotta clay with underglaze colours / 36.5 x 29cm (diam.) / Purchased 2002 with funds derived from the Cedric Powne Bequest / Collection: Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art / © Irene Entata | **Michael Parekowhai** / New Zealand b.1968 / *The World Turns* 2011–12 / Bronze / Commissioned 2011 to mark the fifth anniversary of the opening of the Gallery of Modern Art in 2006 and twenty years of The Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art. This project has received financial assistance from the Queensland Government through art+place Queensland Public Art Fund, and from the Queensland Art Gallery Foundation / Collection: Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art / © Michael Parekowhai | **Patricia Piccinini** / Australia b.1965 / *The stags* 2008 / Fibreglass, automotive paint, leather, steel, plastic, tyres / Two pieces: 177 x 183 x 102cm and 147 x 90 x 101cm; 196 x 224 x 167cm (installed, variable) / Purchased 2009 with funds from the Estate of Lawrence F. King in memory of the late Mr and Mrs S.W. King through the Queensland Art Gallery Foundation and the Queensland Government's Gallery of Modern Art Acquisitions Fund / Collection: Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art / © Patricia Piccinini

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This resource has been developed by QAGOMA Learning.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY

The Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art (QAGOMA) acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land upon which the Gallery stands in Brisbane. We pay respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander elders past and present and, in the spirit of reconciliation, acknowledge the immense creative contribution Indigenous people make to the art and culture of this country.