



Simone Eisler

My work has always explored the animal behaviour of humans and the delicate balance we have with nature. My interests have led me to the use of animal materials in my work and the insertion of my own body into installations and performative photographic works.

As well as an interest in the possible hybridity between animal and human species, I also explore existing connections between these species and how this relationship is affected by belief systems, socialized behaviours and primal desires.

I use a range of materials in my sculptural practice such as bone, skins, shells and wood. The choice of my animal materials is selective in that I collect materials that would otherwise be discarded or deteriorate. I also isolate materials such as fish scales, shells and sand as a reference to marine species; skulls and horns of cattle, goat and deer as a reference to land species and add beaks to reference avian species.

Previously, I have focused on the reanimation of hybrid animal forms and the animal colonisation of humans; an exploration of exoskeletons, protective layers, and clothing. In 'New Order' at Gallerysmith in 2010 I created new life forms that were ambiguously terrestrial, avian and amphibious including human forms spawning fish scale skins and animal skulls bearing protective armour. At times I burnt the skins to transform them—as though they had been through some kind

of environmental catastrophe which brings forth new life and possibilities.

I am pushing my ideas about human-animal hybridity and transformation through an investigation of human accoutrement—additional items of dress or equipment carried or worn by a person—particularly masks and headwear. This has allowed me to place a greater focus on the presence and absence of human form and to give myself room to play with ritual, sexuality, and protection.

This began last year while on a residency in Gozo, Malta. I began making mask-like veil forms, initially from local newspapers soaked in glue and then from salmon skins, as an exploration of my long-term practice. The salmon skins were beautiful to work with, so when I returned to Australia I learnt how to cure and tan salmon skins by talking and working with fish taxidermists and rattlesnake skin specialists in America.

Alongside the use of salmon skin I am also working with metal alloys—melting the metal and pouring it into mask moulds. The metal adds a further element to the work, opening up the idea of warrior-like armour, both ancient and futuristic, but also the notion of a deeper history of civilisation as a kind of fossil skeleton.

The symbolism of the veil and mask allows me to explore pre-enlightened states, hidden knowledge, secrecy, illusion and ignorance. There is also a religious reference that symbolises the primacy

of the word over the image and the suppression of nature and change, growth and evolution.

The veils are painted and polished to a gleaming black, emphasising the eradication of identity but I am also exploring other materials to coat the veils with—reversing what is normally covered by a veil—for example hair/skin—and putting it on the outside. This allows me to expose social and psychological preconceptions.

By inserting and integrating the masks, metal beaks, shells, skin, armour—and nature in the form plants or trees—into these veil forms, I am looking to highlight the notion of cyclical time as opposed to the religious eternal.

My overriding purpose is to undermine human vanity and the drive towards anthropomorphism. I am interested in a new world where humans no longer create animals in their own image but are equally part of the mix; equally vulnerable and intertwined. I want these works to be forms that are constantly in the process of change, harbingers of a future time that is dangerous and hostile. ■

Simone Eisler is represented by Gallerysmith, Melbourne
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01 Nocturnal, 2010, synthetic dolls, ilmenite, barramundi scales, within area 50 x 85 x 15cm (install view)

02 Works made during Gozo Contemporary, Malta, residency, 2010, salmon skin, within area 45 x 150cm (install view)
Courtesy the artist and Gallerysmith, Melbourne



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