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ArtScience Museum opens a door to the bizarre world of fantastical hybrid creatures in Singapore

The confluence of technology and nature creates an inspiring showcase of future possibilities at Patricia Piccinini: We Are Connected



Patricia Piccinini and Honor Harger with Kindred, 2018

SINGAPORE (2 August 2022) – It's magical, it's unsettling, it's alluring, and it's bizarre. From 5 August, visitors can experience a sculptural universe that imagines a world where human-animal hybrids, cloned creatures and cyborgs exist alongside humans. Presented in collaboration with the Institute for Culture Exchange, *Patricia Piccinini: We Are Connected* marks the Australian artist's first major solo showcase in Southeast Asia, bringing together more than 40 significant artworks forged at the intersection of art and science.

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Over the last 30 years, Piccinini has explored the evolving relationships between humans and nature as biotechnological advancements such as genetic engineering has progressed. She has since emerged as one of the world's leading contemporary artists, representing Australia at the Venice Biennale in 2003 and holding notable solo shows in Europe, the United States, South America, Australia and Asia.

Her menagerie of hyperrealistic sculptures is brought to life through a sophisticated process that combines silicone, fibre glass, resin, automotive paint and unorthodox components like human hair. These strange and wondrous creatures straddle the artificial and natural, embracing potential new lifeforms and the ever-changing human body that may emerge from today's digital age.

Despite their alien appearance, Piccinini depicts her hybrids as engaging intimately and lovingly in everyday scenarios through vivid installations. In these futuristic yet domestic narratives, vulnerability and tenderness are brought to the forefront, prompting a sense of empathy among viewers in the face of the unfamiliar. By imagining new communities and kinships across species and contemplating societal ideals, visitors are encouraged to adopt different perspectives when relating to others.

"As a museum that celebrates the intersection of art and science, we are thrilled to present the first major Southeast Asian exhibition by world-renowned artist, Patricia Piccinini. Over the last three decades, Piccinini's hyperreal sculptures of hybrid creatures have played out amidst cross currents in science, technology, and ethics. Depicting possible evolutionary leaps and unusual mutations, her works celebrate all that is different and challenges boundaries among humans, animals, and plants. They reimagine a different relationship between people and nature – one that is equal and shared in outlook," said Honor Harger, Vice President of ArtScience Museum and Attractions at Marina Bay Sands.

"By encountering her tender and surreal creatures, we explore anxieties and hopes related to new scientific advances such as genetic engineering and cloning, as well as our interconnected relationship with all living creatures. *Patricia Piccinini: We Are Connected* is ultimately an exhibition that invites visitors of all ages to ponder our possible futures and find poetry and beauty in the connected, the strange and the diverse," she added.

"I'm interested in reflecting on the experience of contemporary life. There are so many challenges facing us in the world today, but I believe that there is a way forward through art and connections between beings. Nowadays it is increasingly hard to work out where technology starts and nature ends. Perhaps this is a chance to reimagine our relationship with nature. Perhaps we can again see ourselves as part of nature, so caring for the world is also caring for ourselves," said Piccinini.

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Patricia Piccinini: We Are Connected Highlights

There are seven key sections in the exhibition that feature sculptures, installations, videos and collages by the artist from the early 2000s to 2021. Among the issues she confronts in her work are DNA editing, cloning, interspecies connections, scientific intervention, evolution, and their roles in the present and future based on the bioethical challenges associated with humans' manipulation of nature.

In addition, several artworks also address pertinent issues such as climate change, technology and existence, as well as challenge conventional notions of beauty, perfection and the ideal body.

In Patricia's universe, children and adults alike are invited to step into a world of loving interspecies kinships, where messages of empathy and care are communicated for not only the creatures and plants we share this planet with, but also those who will follow.

Introduction: Kindred, 2018



Kindred, 2018

Patricia Piccinini: We Are Connected opens with *Kindred*, which invites visitors to shift their focus from the differences to the connections and similarities they share with other living creatures.

Traditionally, humans have viewed themselves as uniquely different from, and superior to animals. It is this belief that has enabled humanity to exploit the environment and other beings,

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though both genetic analysis and scientific observation has shown that those differences are actually very small and, humans are part of – not separate from – the world around them.

This artwork depicts a strong, proud, yet also vulnerable and strikingly humanoid orangutan mother holding her young. In the same way as humans, orangutan mothers educate and nurture their children for years. The ape-like mother and two children shown here differ in appearance, with the mother being the most animal-like, while one child appears more human and the other has more hybrid features. This strange, uncanny, and soulful image seeks to remind visitors of their own animal nature and invites them to reflect on the idea of identity as part of a continuum.

Section 1: The Blossoming of Ideas

Piccinini is fascinated by the complexity and beauty of nature, yet her work extends far beyond pure aesthetics. This first section sets the scene for many of the ideas that visitors will encounter throughout the exhibition: difference, empathy, and emotional connection across species, all of which brings into sharp focus the need for humankind to reframe itself as part of, rather than apart from, the natural world.

The Bond, 2016



The Bond, 2016 (detail)

The Bond is a piece that unveils the profound and ambiguous maternal relationship between a human and transgenic child within the contemporary world. The borders between nature and culture are blurred as the creature takes on a strange physiognomy, its back is essentially the sole of a running shoe. This significance is twofold – firstly, it refers to the common evolutionary trait where animals' deep connection with the environment they inhabit affect their ability to disguise themselves as part of it. In this case, the hybrid's mimicry of consumer sportswear comes

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as a product of our world. It also evokes the idea of ever-changing forms in today's age of biotechnology. The surreal possibilities that genetic manipulation affords is presented through this uncannily familiar sculpture.

Section 2: Welcome Guest

In this section, visitors are invited into lifelike scenes with an unknown creature that at a distance might seem frightening, but turns out to be strange and fabulous being exchanging warm smiles and close connections with a human child. The caring interaction transforms what appears to be alien and discomfoting into something wonderful and familiar. Through this childlike curiosity and playfulness, visitors are encouraged to step away from fear of the unknown and to embrace difference.



The Welcome Guest, 2011

The Welcome Guest displays an emotional connection between a sloth-like figure with impractical claws and a fearless girl. In this work, Piccinini reflects on the beauty and strangeness of nature. The artist states that she is often struck by how bizarre and extraordinary real creatures can be. For example, the very thing that makes a peacock beautiful is, in reality, what makes it very useless; it simply exists for the sake of being beautiful. By creating the sloth-like figure with impractical claws and decorative hair on its back, she imagines a creature as unnecessary as the peacock. This goes against the idea behind genetic engineering, which tends to place utility above everything else. Piccinini points out that if it is good enough for nature to create useless yet beautiful things then perhaps it should be good enough for humans.

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Section 3: Bizarre Beauty

Unlike Hollywood's often dystopian visions of science fiction, where strange aliens, monsters or robots pose dangerous threats to mankind, Piccinini celebrates everything that is 'different'. Her hybrid creatures tease the senses by balancing the grotesque and the compelling, the repulsive and the seductive, and engages the viewer in an emotional relationship with her works. In this section, she challenges cultural norms and stereotypes of 'the body beautiful' with both humour and seriousness. What might be shocking to one person may be wonderful to another, and a broadening of perspectives leads to a more harmonious coexistence.



Sanctuary, 2018

Piccinini's works are about love and intimacy, and these are prominent themes in this work titled *Sanctuary*. Taking inspiration from the African Bonobos Ape – a highly social species that is genetically one of the closest to humankind, her sculpture is of two elderly Bonobo-like creatures locked in a loving embrace. Through this, Piccinini questions why in many cultures, intimacy tends to be exclusively synonymous with youth when in many ways, intimacy grows in meaning with age.

Section 4: Artificial Naturalness

Technology has become an essential part of human life. From organs and living beings produced in petri dishes, and electronic devices operated into the human body to improve or extend life, to

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animals in the food industry being artificially managed and bred, it is impossible to say where the natural and the artificial begin and end. In this section, Piccinini's fleshy stem cells, mechanical organs and laboratory-produced creatures blur the boundaries between the natural and the technological body creating a weird form of 'techno-nature'.



The Comforter, 2010

The Comforter is an optimistic work that portrays a moment of mutual love and empathy, demonstrating the potential of interspecies care and communication that Piccinini is so fascinated by. It depicts a young girl with her back resting in a corner who has her attention entirely focused on the amorphous and eyeless being she tenderly holds. The delicate newborn's skin forms a contrast to the girl's body, which is unexpectedly covered with dark hair. Visitors are left to wonder about the lifeform which is being so compassionately cared for, and its relation to the girl.

Section 5: Chimera Welfare

This section explores the potential of hybrid creatures in our not-so-distant future. Such fascinating hybrid creatures would be termed 'chimeras', a name taken from a strange beast written about in Greek mythology that was said to be part lion, goat and serpent.

Such mythologies could become a reality due to a new gene editing technique, known by the acronym CRISPR, which has revolutionised cancer research and the treatment of hereditary diseases. The technique also opens up the possibility of combining human, animal and plant genetics. While bio-ethical debates over the consequences of CRISPR for humanity are on-going, Piccinini turns her attention towards the chimeras themselves – what is our responsibility towards that which we create? What will be their place in our ecosystem? Are they our workers or our children?

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The Young Family, 2002

Created two decades ago, this seminal sculpture continues to encapsulate the core ideas of Piccinini's practice. Inspired by developments in biotechnology, *The Young Family* features a transgenic mother figure, half-pig and half-human, lying isolated on a sterile plastic bed with a litter of four. It imagines this creature to be bred for organ transplants, bringing to light the potential conflict between the purpose humanity has chosen for her and the side effect of having children of her own that she nurtures and loves. This artwork was also included in the exhibition: *The Young Family (2003)*, which was featured in Piccinini's show at the Australian Pavilion during the 50th Venice Biennale.

Section 6: Future Families

Seeds, pollination, hatching and suckling bodies – Piccinini's universe is full of life. Her works lament the current loss of species and biodiversity while paying homage to nature's many different, and extraordinary forms of reproduction, caring and life-giving systems. Here, visitors can encounter motherly 'eagle-men' who have turned their bodies into nests to protect their fragile eggs; a laboratory creature with pouches running along its back, each providing a temporary home for a small, wombat-like creature, and lastly a couple captured in a tender moment, having created their own nest-like safe space. Visitors are invited to picture different types of future families and ponder the unique connections and communities will occur as a result of new biotechnologies.

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The Couple, 2018 (detail)



The Eagle Egg Men, 2018

In *The Couple*, Piccinini reimagines the seminal sci-fi classic *Frankenstein*, where the lonely monster gets the partner it desires. We see the couple during a tender moment where they have created their own safe space. The work considers how man-made lifeforms could have their own agency, stepping out and away from the existence originally imposed on them with humans unable to control their actions and destinies.



We Travel Together (2021) film still

© Courtesy of the artist and the Institute for Cultural Exchange

We Travel Together explores the encounter of a girl with a seemingly man-made creature. No explanation is offered as to what purpose the creature serves or how it came to be. Piccinini chooses to focus on the nurturing and loving bond between the girl and the creature, with the girl travelling with it to eventually find it a home.

Section 7: Embracing Life

The last section draws inspiration from the flora and fauna of different parts of the world alongside tales of science fiction, folklore and the surreal. Here, Piccinini presents us with an alternate

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universe teeming with bizarre and fascinating creatures and landscapes that are natural as they are synthetic, and recognisable yet at the same time, different.



The Field, 2015-2018

This large-scale installation is a dense field of 'plants' made up of over 3,000 'stems' resembling something between an animal, a Venus flytrap, and female reproductive organs. Appearing radiant in the darkened space, *The Field* invites visitors to discuss the topics of sexuality and fertility. Visitors are also invited to follow the paths through the space and encounter other bizarre yet beautiful hybrid creatures.

A book-reading with Patricia Piccinini and upcoming programmes

Event:	Date and Time:	Venue:	Description:
Spotlight Artist Tour with Patricia Piccinini	<i>5 Aug, Fri</i> 4pm	Level 3 Exhibition Entrance	<p>Join Patricia Piccinini for an insightful tour of her solo exhibition <i>We Are Connected</i> at ArtScience Museum and discover her beautifully bizarre world.</p> <p>Patricia Piccinini's practice encompasses a variety of mediums from sculptures to installations, drawings, collages and films. This is a rare opportunity to discover her exploration of science and technology through art.</p> <p>English tour is available at S\$5 per participant. Same-day exhibition tickets will</p>

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			<p>be required for the tour. Due to limited capacity, guests are encouraged to pre-book their slots online via this link.</p>
<p>Book reading with Patricia Piccinini</p>	<p>6 Aug, Sat 11 – 11.45am 2 – 2.45pm</p>	<p>Rainbow Room, Basement 2</p>	<p>Join us for a cosy reading session of <i>Every Heart Sings</i> with Patricia Piccinini, the book author and artist behind <i>Patricia Piccinini: We Are Connected</i>.</p> <p>The book follows the journey of the skywhale family and talks about nature, family, evolution, care and wonder.</p> <p>This event is complimentary. Due to limited capacity, guests are encouraged to pre-book their slots online via this link.</p>
<p>Drop-in Sessions: Make Your Own Hybrid Friend</p>	<p>Every last Friday of the month (starting 26 Aug) 11am – 1pm 3 – 5pm</p>	<p>The Sun, Basement 1</p>	<p>This drop-in encourages young visitors to ponder and imagine the future. How would it be like living among new species?</p> <p>Using an array of materials provided, participants will create their own little hybrid friend to bring home!</p> <p>This activity is at S\$5 per participant. Due to limited capacity, guests are encouraged to pre-book their slots online.</p>
<p>Public Guided Tours</p>	<p>Saturdays (13, 20, 27 Aug) 4pm</p> <p>Sundays (14, 28 Aug) 11am</p>	<p>Level 3 Exhibition Entrance</p>	<p>Have you ever thought of how it is like to live with new human hybrids? Join us to discover Patricia's Piccinini's beautiful hybrids which seem very possible in the near future.</p> <p>In this tour, we explore our existence with other new forms of life and understand how science and technology have a big role in shaping the future of our ecosystem.</p> <p>English tour is available at S\$5 per participant. Same-day exhibition tickets will</p>

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			be required for the tour. Due to limited capacity, guests are encouraged to pre-book their slots online via this link .
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Patricia Piccinini: We Are Connected will run from 5 August 2022 to 29 January 2023.

Tickets and Reservations

Tickets are available for purchase at all Marina Bay Sands box offices and website. Due to limited capacity and timed entry of the exhibition, guests are also strongly encouraged to pre-purchase tickets online prior to their visit.

Ticket prices as follows:

	SINGAPORE RESIDENT (SGD)	STANDARD TICKET (SGD)	SRL TICKET (SGD)
Adult	18	21	14.70
Concession	14	16	11.20
Family	50	58	-

For more information on *Patricia Piccinini: We Are Connected*, visit <https://www.marinabaysands.com/museum/exhibitions/patricia-piccinini.html>

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About Marina Bay Sands Pte Ltd

Marina Bay Sands is Asia's leading business, leisure and entertainment destination. The integrated resort features Singapore's largest hotel with over 2,200 luxurious rooms and suites, crowned by the spectacular Sands SkyPark and iconic infinity pool. Its stunning architecture and compelling programming, including state-of-the-art convention and exhibition facilities, Asia's best luxury shopping mall, world-class dining and entertainment, as well as cutting-edge exhibitions at ArtScience Museum, have transformed the country's skyline and tourism landscape since it opened in 2010.

Marina Bay Sands is dedicated to being a good corporate citizen to serve its people, communities and environment. As one of the largest players in hospitality, it employs nearly 10,000 Team Members across the property. It drives social impact through its community engagement programme, Sands Cares, and leads environmental stewardship through its global sustainability programme, Sands ECO360.

For more information, please visit www.marinabaysands.com

About ArtScience Museum

ArtScience Museum is a major cultural institution in Singapore that explores the intersection between art, science, technology and culture. It is the cultural component of Marina Bay Sands. Since its opening in February 2011, ArtScience Museum has staged large-scale exhibitions by some of the world's major artists, including Leonardo da

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Vinci, M.C. Escher, Salvador Dalí, Andy Warhol and Vincent Van Gogh, as well as exhibitions that explore aspects of science and technology – including particle physics, big data, robotics, palaeontology, marine biology and space science. For more information, please visit www.marinabaysands.com/museum.html

About IKA – Institute for Cultural Exchange

Based in Germany, the Institute for Cultural Exchange is a partner for museums and companies in the fields of art history, cultural studies, graphic design, exhibition scenography and public relations. Since its establishment in 1990, IKA has organised more than 100 exhibition tours internationally and primarily stands out for its interdisciplinary way of collaboration that accentuates the uniqueness of each exhibition project.

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For hi-res images, please click [here](#). (Credit images as indicated in the captions)

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ANNEX I



Patricia Piccinini (b. 1965)

Patricia is an Australian contemporary artist whose work spans the disciplines of sculptures, photography, installations, videos, and drawings. Best known for her hyper-realistic human-animal hybrid sculptures, her practice seeks to examine the increasingly nebulous boundary between the artificial and the natural as it appears in contemporary culture and ideas.

Patricia represented Australia at the 50th Venice Biennale in 2003 with her exhibition *We Are Family* and went on to install various museum exhibitions around the world, with notable solo shows in Australia, Japan, Brazil, USA, Korea, and Taiwan, among others. In 2016, Patricia was named the most popular contemporary artist in the world by The Art Newspaper after her show in Rio de Janeiro attracted nearly half a million visitors. Patricia currently works with an in-house team at her studio in Collingwood, Melbourne to create intriguing exhibits that herald a new frontier of museum experience.