



Fiona Pardington *My Mother's Roses, Pomegranates and Silver Platter of Ihumoana, Ripiro Beach 2013.*

**City
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Te Whare Toi

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Fiona Pardington: A Beautiful Hesitation

22 AUGUST - 22 NOVEMBER 2015

About the Exhibition

A Beautiful Hesitation is an exhibition of photographs by New Zealand artist Fiona Pardington. It brings together over 100 images from the past 30 years. The title of the show comes from the artist's description of photography as being a "hesitation in time".

The exhibition tracks her use of different photographic processes, from analogue hand-printing to large scale digital works. Images range from photographs of the things and people that surrounded her, which she made at Elam art school in the mid-1980s, to images of objects and taonga from museum collections here and in France. Pardington's recent still lifes incorporate materials salvaged from beaches, riverbeds, second-hand stores and the side of the road. These images are layered with deep personal and cultural meanings. This salvaging of found objects and images runs as a theme throughout the exhibition.

Work in focus



My Mother's Roses, Pomegranates and Plastic Bottles, Ripiro (2013) is a still life photograph. Many of the objects were found washed up onto the beach and accepted by Pardington as 'gifts of Tangaroa, the god of the sea'. Tangaroa threw up majestic forms, like the silvery ihumoana (stinging jellyfish), but also human waste, like plastic bottles. The wai (water) they hold was collected from South Island creeks and rivers that connect Pardington to her dual Ngai Tahu and Clan Cameron heritage.

Discussion

- What can you see in the picture?
- Describe the colours used.
- How has the artist arranged and lit the objects?
- What is the main focal point of the image? How has the artist drawn your eye there?
- What might these objects symbolise? What do you associate with these things?
- The ihumoana in this picture are both beautiful and dangerous, but Pardington considers the discarded plastic bottles far more deadly, why that might be?
- Look at some traditional momento mori paintings online and compare them with this photograph.
- Compare and contrast this work with these contemporary artworks:

Ricky Swallow *Killing Time* (2003-04)

<http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/exhibitions/new-contemporary-galleries/featured-artists-and-works/ricky-swallow/>

Bill Culbert *Pacific Flotsam* (2007)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OOoi0E-lfyE>

About the Artist

Fiona Pardington was born in Auckland. She is of Maori (Ngai Tahu, Kati Mamoe and Ngati Kahungunu) and Scottish (Clan Cameron of Erracht) descent. She holds a doctorate in Fine Arts from the University of Auckland. Pardington's work has been included in numerous exhibitions in this country and abroad including Biennale of Sydney (2010). In 2011 New Plymouth's Govett-Brewster Art Gallery mounted her solo exhibition *The Pressure of Sunlight Falling*, with an accompanying book published by Otago University Press. That year, she also became an Arts Foundation Laureate.

Kupu Maori we may use during your visit

Taonga – Ancestral treasures.

Mauri – Energy or life force which binds and animates all things in the physical world.

Art Terminology we may use during your visit

Still life - A picture of arranged objects.

Symbol - A recognisable object that stands for something that would be hard to show in a picture like an idea or a force of nature.

Memento Mori - A type of still life painting popular in the seventeenth century, which used symbols such as skulls, dead animals, guttering candles, fruit and flowers to remind the viewer of the shortness and fragility of life.

Pre or Post-Visit Classroom Activities

- Watch excerpts of a documentary on Pardington in *Kete Aronui* (2006). Fiona discusses her life path, her Maori roots, wanting to be a photographer at the age of six and the hard road to making a living as an artist.
<http://www.nzonscreen.com/title/kete-aronui-fiona-pardington-2006>
- Look at Pardington's series of seven hei tiki photographs *Mauria mai tono ano (Bringing to Light, Claiming again)* (2001) and hear an introduction to the work narrated by New Zealand actor Miranda Harcourt.
<http://christchurchartgallery.org.nz/multimedia/audio/from-the-collection/fiona-pardington-mauria-mai-tono-ano/>

Pardington is well known for taking photographs of taonga from museum collections. Think of a treasure that is precious to you – it could be a family heirloom, a gift, a letter from a loved one, or something curious that you have found and kept. Draw or photograph your treasure to create a black and white image using similar composition and tonal range as Pardington's hei tiki works. Write about your treasure explaining why it's special to you and then create a class display of your work.

- Help to clean up your local beach and record the objects that you find. Carefully clean any interesting discoveries to use as in a still life composition inspired by Pardington's work. Visit loveyourcoast.org for information on organising a beach clean-up.

Investigate how rubbish ends up in our oceans and find out more about the great Pacific garbage patch. Make a poster or a short film to tell people about what you've discovered.

Further Information

Visit the exhibition page on the city gallery website

<http://citygallery.org.nz/exhibitions/fiona-pardington-beautiful-hesitation>

Images of Fiona Pardington's work can be seen at

<http://www.starkwhite.co.nz/fiona-pardington>

and

<http://fionapardington.blogspot.co.nz>