VALLEY of the DEER

Jillian McDonald

January 23 – February 20, 2015

ATKINSON GALLERY

SANTA BARBARA CITY COLLEGE

Special Thanks

Valley of the Deer was produced at the Glenfiddich International Residency in Dufftown, Scotland.

From the Valley of the Deer is a 2013 commission of New Radio and Performing Arts, Inc.
for its Turbulence website, and was funded by the Jerome Foundation
(now celebrating 50 years of the creative spirit of emerging artists)
and the Canada Council for the Arts.

thanks to
Andy Fairgrieve, without whom this work would not exist.
All the actors and musicians.
Naomi Potter, Esker Foundation curator and director.

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An immersive three-channel video installation, *Valley of the Deer* was filmed during a nine-month residency at the Glenfiddich Distillery in Dufftown, Scotland. As the artist says, "each scene is a separate composition and a nearly still image where little movement, save hair in wind or an animal moving its head, betrays the stillness." Comprised of these (almost) still vignettes and substantially longer than her previous videos, *Valley of the Deer* becomes a composite portrait of the landscape. However, while each scene is nearly devoid of movement, the frequent and abrupt cuts between them anxiously undermine the bucolic setting—both physically and psychologically.

Rooted in local folklore and indigenous animal species, the characters in *Valley of the Deer* lurk and flit in the viewer's periphery and on the edge of consciousness. The viewer watches and is watched. The culmination of the video is the most explicitly narrative—the expected, but feared conclusion is made manifest. In their final approach, the characters remove their masks and violently sever the connection between the viewer and the landscape.

For over 10 years, Jillian McDonald has been creating work that simultaneously embraces and critiques the genre of horror films. In her videos, drawings and augmented reality, McDonald distills horror's tropes and archetypes. In earlier works, the artist digitally inserted herself into popular films, simultaneously fulfilling her fangirl's desire for proximity and disrupting their well-trodden storylines by, for example, screaming in defense rather than in despair. In more recent works, including *Valley of the Deer*, McDonald explores the ubiquitous fears of the collective unconscious by collaboratively producing her horror inspired videos with local community members.
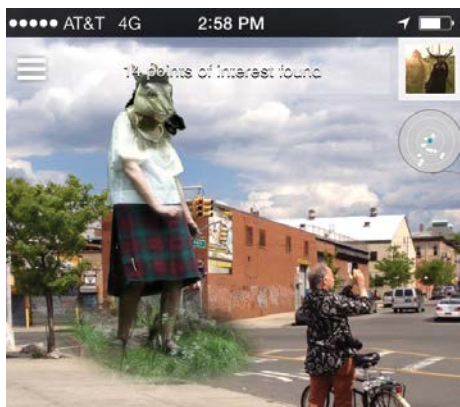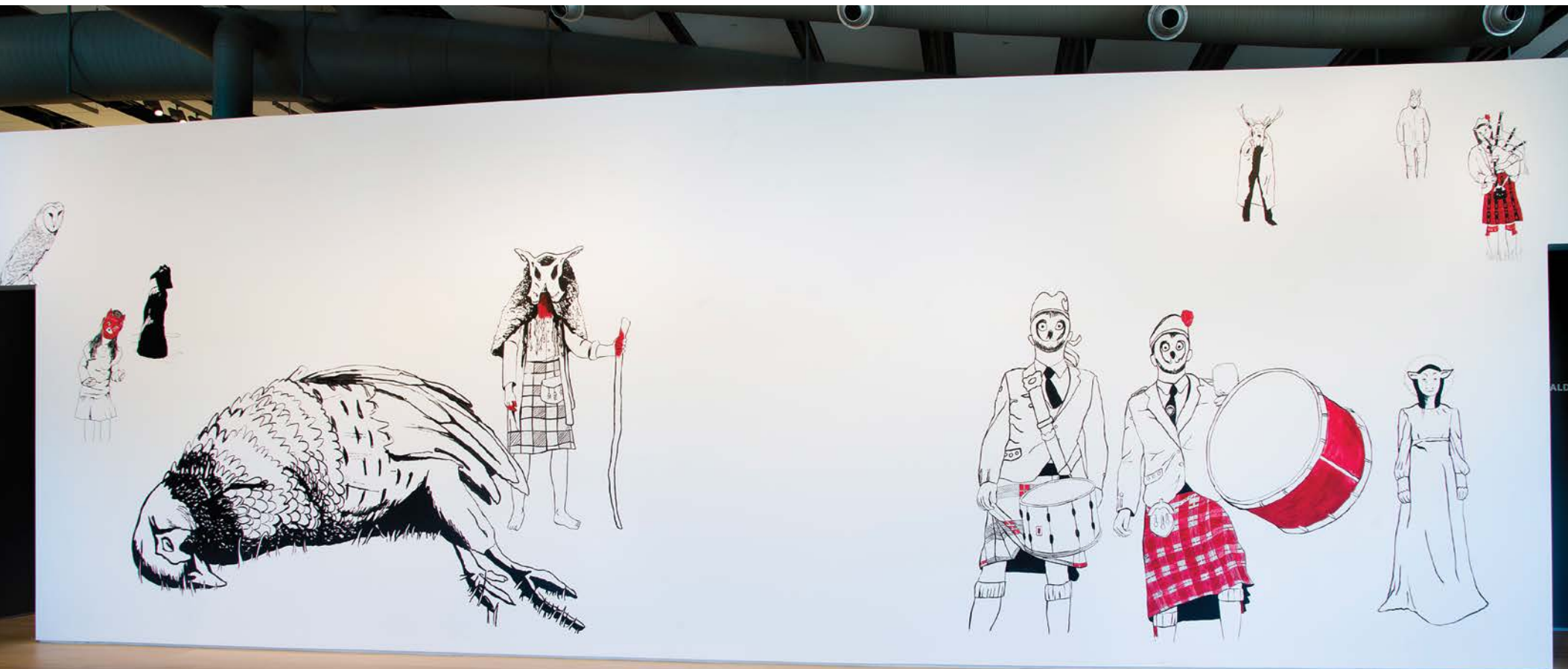
For each venue, McDonald creates a unique wall drawing featuring the characters from the video. However, while the video's dominant subject is the landscape, the drawings solely focus on the figures. Plucked from their lush surroundings and situated in the vast white space of the wall itself, the spare black line drawings still fade in and out like their video counterparts. By virtue of material and scale, these massive figures invade the viewer's space. McDonald's set of more intimate drawings on paper functions as a diary of bad dreams, a field inventory of potential predators, or a filmmaker's storyboard.

In and around each exhibition site, McDonald programs augmented reality artworks that insert characters from the video into the landscape of the viewer. In doing so, she invites viewer participation and obfuscates the separation between geographic locations (Dufftown and Santa Barbara) and between fiction and reality. In *Valley of the Deer*, McDonald taps into the universal appeal of horror films by understanding that the shared experience of catharsis is more important than fear itself.

—Sarah Cunningham, Atkinson Gallery Director
January 2015

"I was interested in the idea of people enjoying being fearful. Even though there's a lot of bad horror out there, the basic storytelling strategies are really rich and fascinating. It really gets to morality tales and primal fear; things we all have a relationship with."

From the Valley of the Deer: Augmented Reality Artwork

In addition to the gallery presentation, viewers can extend their experience of the work by using the Layar app, available on all mobile platforms. This augmented reality piece accompanies the work wherever *Valley of the Deer* is presented, and allows viewers to see characters from the video appear in and around the gallery. Screen captures taken with a mobile phone allow viewers to archive these apparitions and create individual works that can be shared with others. Instructions and more information can be found at:

http://turbulence.org/Works/fromthevalleyofthedeer

Credits

- *Valley of the Deer* (video stills), three-channel video, 2013. *(Front Cover, Pages 2, 4, 5 and Back Cover)*
- Drawing from *Valley of the Deer* series, 22" x 30", ink and watercolor on paper, 2013. *(Page 5)*
- *From the Valley of the Deer* (screenshot, Québec City), augmented reality artwork, 2014. *(Page 6)*
- *Valley of the Deer* (installation view at the Esker Foundation), wall drawing, 2013, photo by John Dean, courtesy Esker Foundation, Calgary, Canada. *(Spread on Pages 6-7)*
- Artist as quoted in article by Barry Chong in *Toro Magazine*, June 2013. *(Page 8)*
- *Valley of the Deer* (installation view at the Esker Foundation), three-channel video, 2013, photo by John Dean, courtesy Esker Foundation, Calgary, Canada. *(Spread on Pages 8-9)*
- *From the Valley of the Deer* (screenshot, Brooklyn), augmented reality artwork, 2014. *(Page 9)*
- Drawing from *Valley of the Deer* series, 30" x 22", ink and watercolor on paper, 2013. *(Page 10)*
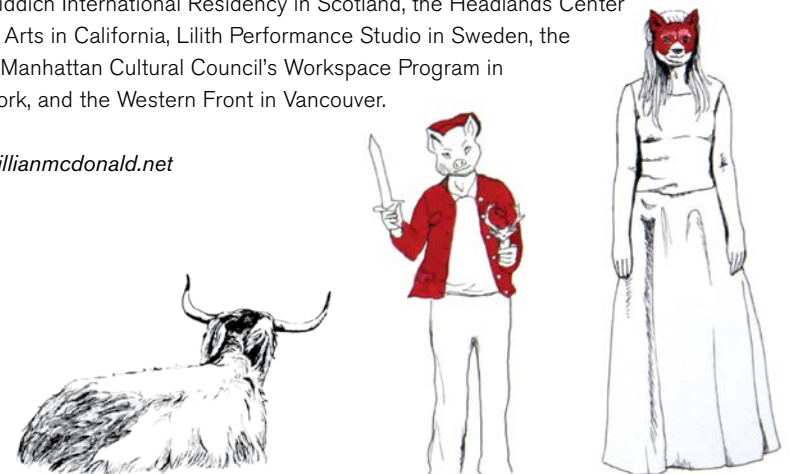
Exhibition Work List

- *Valley of the Deer*, three-channel video, 21:35 minutes, 2013.
- *Valley of the Deer*, site-specific wall drawing, latex on drywall, 146" x 327", 2015.
- Drawings from the *Valley of the Deer* series, ink and watercolor on paper, 22" x 30", 2013.
- *From the Valley of the Deer*, augmented reality artwork, 2015.

Jillian McDonald

A Canadian artist who divides her time between New York and Canada, Jillian McDonald is an Associate Professor of Art at Pace University. Her solo shows and projects include the Esker Foundation in Calgary; Air Circulation, Moti Hasson, Jack the Pelican Presents, and vertexList in New York; the San Francisco Arts Commission Gallery; Hallwalls in Buffalo; La Sala Naraña in Valencia, Spain; and YYZ in Toronto. Her work has been included in group exhibitions and festivals at the Chelsea Museum and the Whitney Museum's Artport in New York; the Edith Russ Haus for Media Art in Oldenburg, Germany; the International Biennial of Contemporary Art in Mérida, Venezuela; the Sundance Film Festival in Utah; La Biennale de Montréal; and the Centre d'Art Contemporain de Basse-Normandie in Caen, France. McDonald has received grants and commissions from the New York Foundation for the Arts, the Canada Council for the Arts, Soil New Media, Turbulence.org, the Verizon Foundation, the New York State Council on the Arts, the Experimental Television Center, and Pace University. She has also attended several international residencies including the Glennfiddich International Residency in Scotland, the Headlands Center for the Arts in California, Lilith Performance Studio in Sweden, the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council's Workspace Program in New York, and the Western Front in Vancouver.

http://jillianmcdonald.net

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