



Chantal Fraser:

The Ascended

Griffith University

Art Museum

15 June -

2 September 2023

EDUCATION KIT

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

This resource has been created for use by teachers and students to engage with art works and themes in the exhibition *Chantal Fraser: The Ascended* at Griffith University Art Museum.

The resource contains material to utilise with school groups before, during or after visiting the exhibition.

The concepts in this exhibition and information in this resource are suitable for Secondary Students studying Visual Arts, specifically:

ACAVAR131

Analyse a range of visual artworks from contemporary and past times to explore differing viewpoints and enrich their visual art-making, starting with Australian artworks, including those of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and consider international artworks.

Link 1 – <https://www.scootle.edu.au/ec/search?accContentId=ACAVAR131>

ACAVAR129

Present ideas for displaying artworks and evaluate displays of artworks.

Link 2 – <https://www.scootle.edu.au/ec/search?accContentId=ACAVAM129>

ACAVAR130

Evaluate how representations communicate artistic intentions in artworks they make and view to inform their future art making

Link 3 – <https://www.scootle.edu.au/ec/search?accContentId=ACAVAR130>

Author: Naomi Evans, Curator, Griffith University Art Museum

Advisory warning

Teachers are advised that this exhibition contains nudity.

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

Bringing together new works by Sāmoan-Australian artist Chantal Fraser, *The Ascended* explores the aesthetics of power and reflects on the experiences of the artist's family and community in class-based discrimination. As a starting point, Fraser references the 1911 poster *La Pyramide du systeme capitaliste / Pyramid of Capitalist Society* (reproduced below) which depicts tiers of society held up by a working-class majority. Inverting this structure, Fraser uses beauty and ornamentation to elevate the materials and objects associated with working classes and racialised capitalism to a state of ascension.

Initiated pre #blacklivesmatter and Covid-19 protests and realised here in its first major iteration, *Riot Gear* (2015 - ongoing) presents an armoury stocked with adorned welders' gear, riot shields and makeshift self-defence tools. In a powerful demonstration of love, the five-chapter video *The Ascended* (2023) bridges the heavenly and earthly realms as Fraser identifies Moana Nui (Pacific Ocean) people as *Atua* (deities).

Within Fraser's exhibition concept, a community-making space claims part of the museum and offers it for the use of the public. Interested Sāmoan and community groups are invited to learn more about the program and make bookings for the space via reception or email artmuseum@griffith.edu.au

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ABOUT THE ARTIST

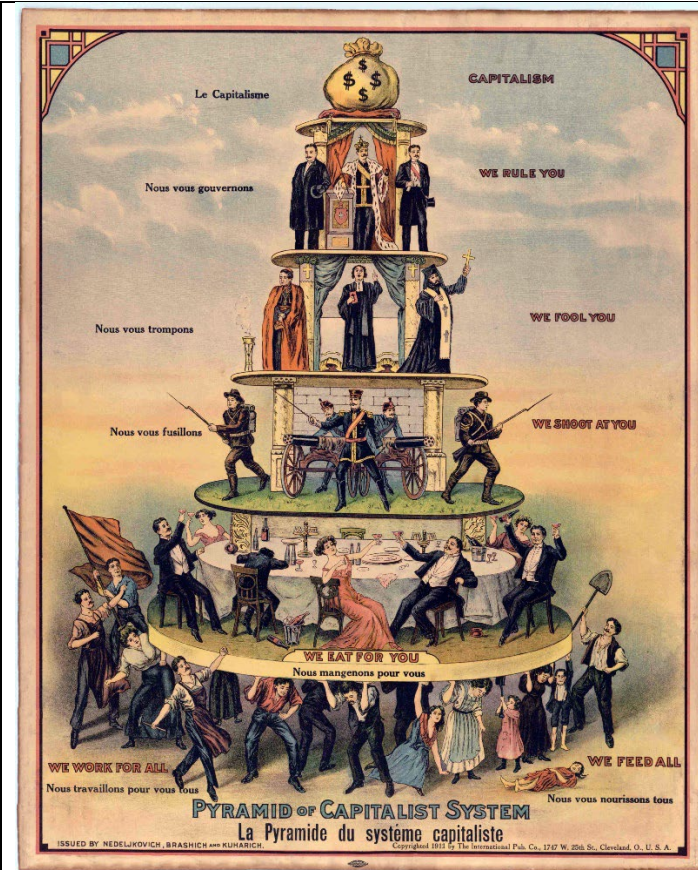
Born in Aotearoa/New Zealand, Chantal Fraser is a Brisbane-based Sāmoan artist working across photography, performance, and sculpture. Fraser's practice examines and subverts the structures of capitalism and state authorities, often by using ornamentation and personal adornment to liberate her identity from stereotypes and to maintain privacy. Fraser's work has been included in numerous exhibitions nationally and internationally, including at the Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane; the Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane; the Vancouver Art Gallery, Canada; and La Cité Internationale des Arts, France.

KEY CONCEPTS

Adornment
Capitalism
Community
Decolonial
Feminism

Hybridity
Identity
Performance
Placemaking
Privacy

SECONDARY – MODULE A

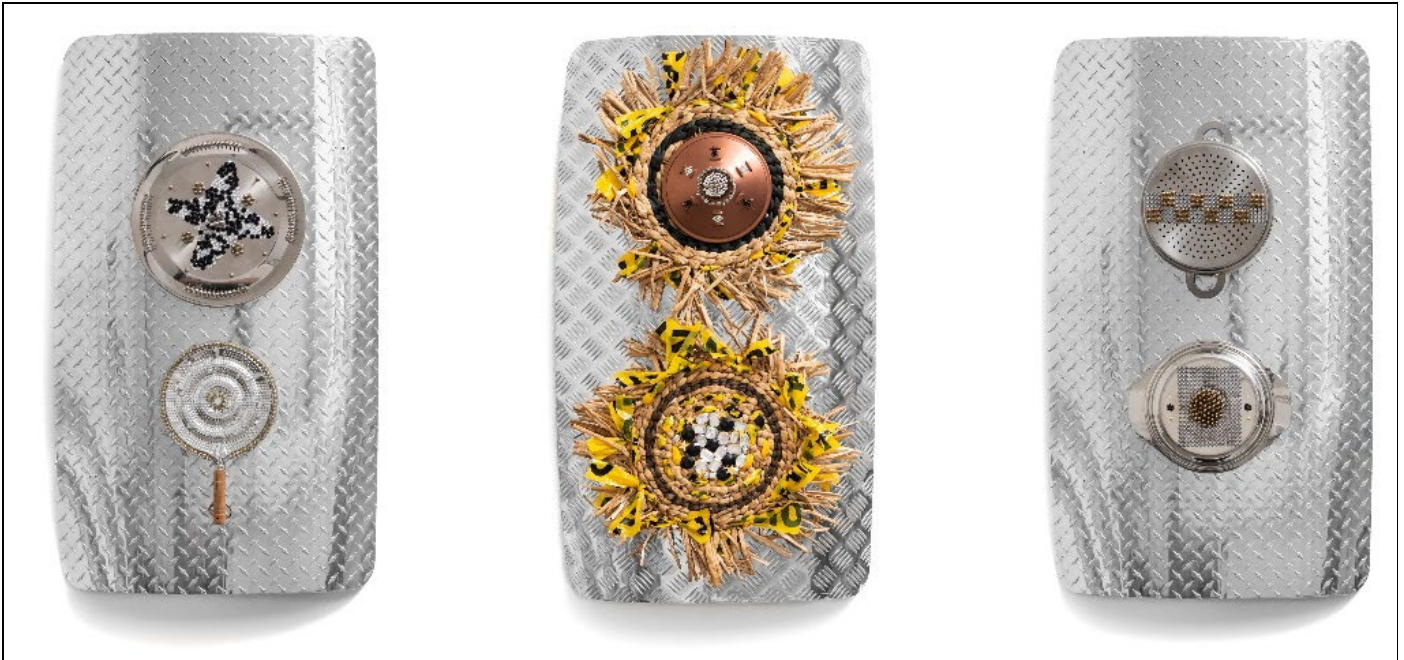


Pyramid of Capitalist System / La Pyramide du système capitaliste, issued by Nedeljkovich, Brashich, and Kuharich, 1911
Published by The International Pub. Co., Cleveland OH (do we need copyright clearance here?)

Discussion:

Who do you think has the hardest life in this picture? Why?

Do you think that discussions of social class are relevant to contemporary life in Australia?



Body Amulets 2023

Aluminium plates, steel, wire, tin, brass, metal screws, nails, string, hazard tape, adhesive, acrylic crystals, rhinestones, mirrored glass

100 x 60 x 20cm (each)

Photo: Louis Lim

Discussion:

Do you know what the word amulet in the title means?

Look at the materials used in the artwork, why do you think specific materials have been used, what ideas do you think they are trying to convey?

These shields are part of a larger series of sculptures that Fraser calls *Riot Gear*. She started making body armour pieces in 2015, after her brother had a terrible interaction with some Police officers. Fraser's brother is a fitter and turner and he helped her learn how to melt and mould metal.

Can you recognise some of the objects that Chantal Fraser has used to make these shields more detailed? Research examples of shields from Australia, from other continents, and from historical periods.



Fantômas Silver 2023
Welding helmet, adhesive,
acrylic rhinestones, metallic
glass shards
30 x 26 x 21.5cm
Photo: Patrick Lester



Crown Rabble 1 2023
Welding helmet, adhesive,
acrylic crystals, metal
screws
30 x 20 x 23cm
Photo: Louis Lim

Discussion:

The figure of a welder is important in this exhibition because they know how to soften hard materials, and how to join and transform them.

Why do you think the artist might cover them in crystals or screws? Why is the idea of protection important?

Research the figure of Fantômas from the silver sculpture's title?



The Ascended (stills) 2023

Five HD video projections, three 4:3 MDF screens, colour, sound, 23:46 mins

Videography: Joshua Maguire; Soundtrack: Jesswar; Performers: Jori Etuale (artist), Lisa Fa'alafi (Hot Brown Honey); Punipua Fa'alaitaua Elizabeth Thomsen Fraser (artist's mother); Saskia Sassen (Daughter of Papa)

Discussion:

Fraser's video work *The Ascended* (2023) presents figures as if they are *Atua*--the Sāmoan word for deities. Fraser believes that the people she knows and loves in her community should be valued and understood as divine, wise, and important. *The Ascended* can also refer to people who have passed away, like ancestors. She pays respect and love across time whether in heavenly or earthly realms, creating a better future.

Who in your circle of carers, friends or community have influenced you? Do other people know how important they are to you? How do they make your world a better place? What are some of the ways you pay respect to those you love?

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RESPONDING

- Describe Fraser's artwork *The Ascended* (2023) in five words.
- The artist has created outfits for each performer in the video to wear. What is the effect of not seeing a person's face clearly?
- Draw and describe some of the different types of adornment the artist has used in her work.
- Fraser has used symbols in her work to represent her ideas. What could some of the symbolic associations be when considering items like candles and caution tape, or hand and body gestures?

MAKING

- The artist uses everyday materials like plastic, fibres, fabric, second hand objects and protective gear to construct body adornments. These can explore connections between the cultural and personal. Using everyday materials in your classroom or home, create a body adornment of something that is personal and reflective of your politics.

RESOURCES

Share your creations with us by tagging @GriffithUniversityArtMuseum or #GriffithUniversityArtMuseum on Facebook and Instagram or email photographs to artmuseum@griffith.edu.au for us to share on your behalf.