



A BESTIARY OF REVERIE

by Dr Nicola Hooper

A BESTIARY OF REVERIE

“And what of monsters?
Can they love too?
We know quite well they can.
For we know that they do.”

*Alice Hoffman, *The Museum of Extraordinary Things*, 2014

In the exhibition “*A Bestiary of Reverie*,” Brisbane (Meanjin) - Logan-based artist Dr. Nicola Hooper has transformed the gallery into a Victorian Gothic-inspired salon of extraordinary creatures. The exhibition acts like a room-sized wunderkammer—a cabinet of curiosities—where human-animal hybrids of dark dreams, myth, and tales adorn the gallery walls.

The atmosphere is set with blood-red

walls, intricately designed wallpaper, chandeliers, and gilded frames, creating a dramatic backdrop for the exploration of zoonotic pathogen transmissions through human-animal hybrid forms. Some of these creatures have historical origins in mythology, while others represent potential hybrid beings created from interspecies virus transmission. The gold ornate frames elevate the creatures from mere oddities to celebrations of natural beauty and wonder.

“*A Bestiary of Reverie*” is the second in a series of large-scale exhibition projects that delve into the zoonotic pathogen transmission between humans and animals. This ambitious project aims to raise awareness and provoke thought about the intricate and often perilous relationship between humans and the animal kingdom.

In this exhibition, Hooper employs traditional storytelling methods through lithography, photography, and painting to create an environment where past,

present, and future representations of the 'bestiary' are explored. Each piece is meticulously crafted to draw the viewer into a world where the boundaries between human and animal, reality and myth, are blurred.

Throughout the exhibition, Hooper invites the viewer to question their relationship with viruses and animals. By presenting these hybrids in a setting that evokes the grandeur and mystery of a bygone era, she encourages contemplation on how these relationships have evolved and how they continue to impact our world today.

This body of work explores a range of zoonotic viruses that pose significant threats to humanity, including leptospirosis, avian influenza, swine influenza, parasitic worms, and aquatic zoonoses, to name but a few. Through her art, Hooper aims to amplify and balance the perception of animals in the natural world, highlighting both their inherent beauty and the potential dangers they may carry as vectors of disease.



"A Bestiary of Reverie" is more than just an art exhibition; it is a profound exploration of the delicate and often fraught relationship between humans and animals. By immersing the viewer in a Victorian gothic-inspired environment, Hooper challenges us to rethink our understanding of zoonotic pathogens and the hybrid creatures they may spawn. Her work serves as a reminder of the interconnectedness of all living beings and the importance of respecting and understanding the natural world.

Niomi Sands

Creative Industries Program Leader
Logan City Council



‘Research has shown that people tend to associate red with negative, danger-bearing emotions, since it is the colour of blood, fire and sometimes of poisonous or dangerous animals.’

*Moller A.C. et al. [pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov 2009](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/2009)

A *Bestiary of Reverie* recontextualises hybrid creatures into compelling narratives, drawing from the historical traditions of a ‘Bestiary’ using these creatures as cautionary symbols. With a circus sideshow aesthetic, the artworks are informed by anecdotal stories where mythical creatures have historically represented various human behaviours. In today’s context, they emerge as metaphors for issues such as anthropomorphism, zoonotic pathogen transmission, and human-animal interactions.

The artistic approach is subversive, challenging established perspectives and urging viewers to reevaluate their ecological roles.

(Previous page *Contagion Chair*, 2025 and *Avian Influenza Chandelier*, 2025. 95cm x 55cm, mirror acrylic, hair, chain, LED light, suspended from ceiling.

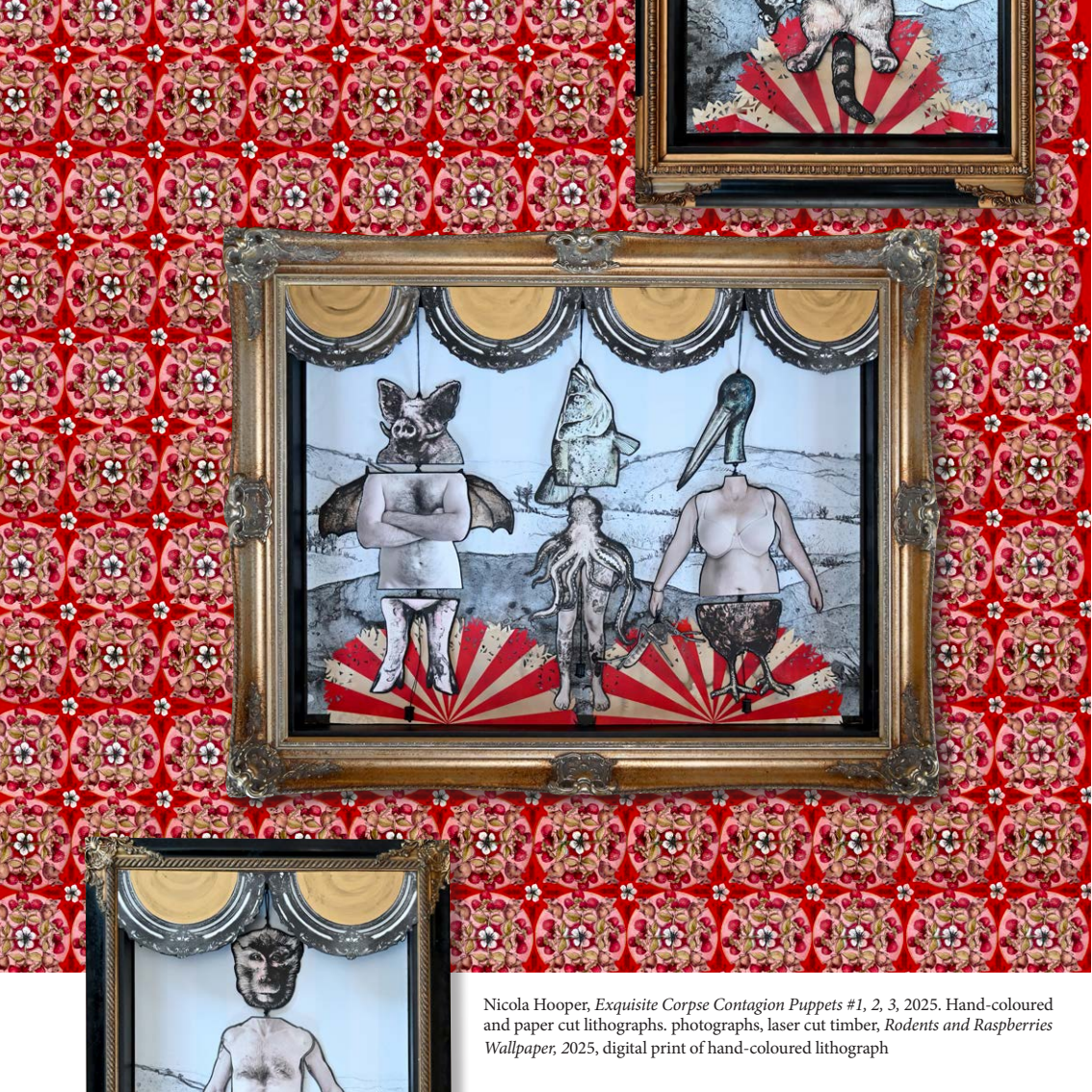


Nicola Hooper, *Red Crows*,
2023-2025 hand-coloured
lithographs.
*Porcelain Heart and
Pig Tails* 2023.

The narratives explore the complexities of zoonotic transmission and the resulting feelings of isolation and societal stigma that can turn infected individuals into pariahs. The creation process combines traditional lithography and modern photography, exploring themes of blood and flesh through various mediums like wallpapers, porcelain, paper sculptures, and paintings. These works pay homage to natural history illustrations and the Victorian sideshow, serving as a commentary on the consequences of our actions toward animals and the profound impacts on humanity. 'A *Bestiary of Reverie*' ultimately encourages reflection on the delicate balance of our planet and our relationship with animals.



Nicola Hooper, *Python and Piggy Tails Chandelier*, 2025. 95cm x 55cm,
mirror acrylic, hair, chain, LED light, suspended from ceiling-



Nicola Hooper, *Exquisite Corpse Contagion Puppets #1, 2, 3, 2025*. Hand-coloured and paper cut lithographs, photographs, laser cut timber, *Rodents and Raspberries Wallpaper*, 2025, digital print of hand-coloured lithograph



Nicola Hooper, *Kyra*, 2024. 125cm x 100cm, hand-coloured lithograph printed over photograph.
Avian Influenza Wallpaper, 2024, digital print of of hand-coloured lithograph and drawing



Nicola Hooper, *Pig man*, 2023. 120cm x 90cm, hand-coloured lithograph printed over photograph.
Avian Influenza Wallpaper, 2024, digital print of hand-coloured lithograph and drawing.



Nicola Hooper, *Merbaby*, 2023. 90cm x 70cm, hand-coloured lithograph printed over photograph.
Mirror, Mirror, 2023. 75cm x 57m, watercolour and gouache painting. *Yarrow and Tumour* 2023. 20cm x 35cm, hand-coloured paper cut lithographs. *Fishy Pythons Parade Wallpaper* 2023, digital print of of watercolour and gouache drawing.

LIST OF WORKS

Nicola Hooper *Rodents and Raspberries Wallpaper* 2025, digital print of hand-coloured lithograph.

Nicola Hooper, *Avian influenza Wallpaper* 2024, digital print of hand-coloured lithograph.

Nicola Hooper, *Fishy Pythons Parade Wallpaper* 2023, digital print of watercolour and gouache drawing.

Nicola Hooper, *Pythons and Piggy Tails Chandelier* 2025. 95cm x 55cm, mirror acrylic, hair, chain, LED light.

Nicola Hooper, *Avian Influenza Chandelier* 2025. 95cm x 55cm, mirror acrylic, hair, chain, LED light.

Nicola Hooper, *Pig man*, 2023. 120cm x 90cm, hand-coloured lithograph printed over photograph.

Nicola Hooper, *Kyra*, 2024. 125cm x 100cm, hand-coloured lithograph printed over photograph.

Nicola Hooper, *A Bestiary of Reverie Artist Book* 2025. 16cm x 42cm, hand-coloured digital prints of lithographs and photographs.

Nicola Hooper, *Contagion Chair*, 2025. 100cm x 100cm x 100cm, vintage chair, gold paint, upholstered in twill fabric printed with wallpaper designs, digital print of lithograph and drawing.

Nicola Hooper, *Merbaby*, 2023. 90cm x 70cm, hand-coloured lithograph printed over photograph.

Nicola Hooper, *The Sad Tale of the Mad Cows*, 2022. 115cm x 115cm, hand-coloured lithograph.

Nicola Hooper, *Mirror, mirror*, 2023. 75cm x 57m, watercolour and gouache painting.

Nicola Hooper, *Raspberries and Rodents*, 2025. 60cm x 80cm, hand-coloured lithograph.

Nicola Hooper, *Yarrow and Tumour* 2023. 20cm x 35cm, hand-coloured lithographs paper cut.

Nicola Hooper, *Sanguinary* 2022. 120cm x 120cm hand-coloured lithograph. paper cut and stitched lithographs.

Nicola Hooper, *Fish face and hands* 2025. 115cm x 115cm, hand-coloured lithographs paper cut.

Nicola Hooper, *Exquisite Corpse Contagion Puppets #1* 2025. 130cm

x 100cm x 10cm, hand-coloured lithograph. laser cut timber, string hung over paper cut lithographs.

Nicola Hooper, *Exquisite Corpse Contagion Puppets #2* 2025. 100cm x 80cm x 10cm, hand-coloured lithograph. laser cut timber, string hung over paper cut lithographs.

Nicola Hooper, *Exquisite Corpse Contagion Puppets #3* 2025. 110cm x 70cm x 10cm, hand-coloured lithograph. laser cut timber, string hung over paper cut lithographs.

Nicola Hooper, *Red Crows* 2023-2025. 25cm x 10cm, hand-coloured lithographs.

This project is supported by the Regional Arts Development Fund (RADF). RADF is a partnership between the Queensland Government and Logan City Council to support arts and culture in regional Queensland.



