The Curtain Breathed Deeply presents a series of newly commissioned video installations by Sydney artist Justene Williams. In this rich environment of pattern, colour and texture, curtains and screens act as thresholds between the energy of one realm and another.

For Williams, the curtain and, more broadly, the exhibition pay tribute to her father – to his life and work, as well as the hospital curtain that marked the final stage of his life when he passed away from mesothelioma. The Curtain Breathed Deeply is at once poignant and celebratory, acknowledging the life of a loved one whilst also taking pleasure in the movement of living, breathing—sexual beings.

Williams draws from many sources, for instance her personal experience of dance classes and time spent in her father’s wrecking yard; early twentieth century avante garde art and theatre; and contemporary pop culture. Found objects that draw upon the Australian suburban vernacular of the garage, inflatable pool and barbeque are amongst the many materials transformed to create a series of interconnected environments that together ‘breathe’ like a vast and mysterious body.

Coming to MUMA from Artspace in Sydney, The Curtain Breathed Deeply has been developed through a Catalyst: Katherine Hannay Visual Arts Commission and will be accompanied by a major new monograph.

**EXHIBITION DATES**
7 February - 2 April 2015

**Opening Function: Saturday 7 February 2014, 3-5pm**
With opening remarks by Anne Loxley, C3West Curator, Museum of Contemporary Art Australia

**MEDIA**
For all media enquiries please contact MUMA:
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#TheCurtainBreathedDeeply
Williams’ is one of the most exciting Australian artists working with video today. Moving between abstraction and figuration, every day and fantasy worlds, her work is hypnotic and beguiling, disrupting conventional ideas of suburban life, and the construction of gender and identity.’
Charlotte Day, MUMA Director

‘The artist cites both voodoo and the tradition of musical theatre as key reference points for the work. Williams says that the three constants in her work are ‘action, energy and emotion’. In The Curtain Breathed Deeply feelings abound, especially happiness, love, lust, confusion and grief.’
Anne Loxley

‘I sometimes talk about my work or my way of working as a subtle knowledge or an emotional intelligence. I work from the heart and I’m interested in communicating visually—seeing, reading and hearing through colour and movement.’
Justene Williams

JUSTENE WILLIAMS — BIOGRAPHY
Justene Williams lives and works in Sydney and has exhibited widely throughout Australia and internationally. Selected solo exhibitions include: The Curtain Breathed Deeply, Artspace, Sydney, 2014; Handbag Hammer Meditation, La Centrale Galerie Powerhouse, Montreal, 2013; Static Ballet, Sarah Cottier Gallery, Sydney, 2013; She came over singing like a drainpipe shaking spoon infused mixers, a public work for Christchurch Art Gallery, 2013; Turnstile Heaped on Pour Down, St Paul St Gallery, AUT Auckland University, 2012; and BIGHEAD GARBAGEFACE GUARDS GHOST DERR SONATA, Contemporary Project Space, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 2009. Selected group exhibitions include: Playtime, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, 2013; We used to talk about love, Balnaves Contemporary: Photomedia, Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2013; Contemporary Australia: Women, Gallery of Modern Art | Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, 2012; New11, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, 2011; Short Sharp Shocks, Barbican, London, 2011; and Adelaide Biennial, Art Gallery of South Australia, 2010. Her work is held in numerous collections including the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, National Gallery of Australia and Art Gallery of New South Wales. She is represented by Sarah Cottier Gallery, Sydney.

CATALOGUE
MUMA, in collaboration with Artspace, will produce an artist monograph on Williams’ work as a part of the Catalyst: Katherine Hannay Visual Arts Commission with essays by Anne Loxley, Erin Brannigan, Lally Katz and Pamela Hansford, with additional contributions from Caraline Douglas, Charlotte Day, Francis Parker, Geraldine Kimhi Barlow, and Mark Feary.

ABOUT THE COMMISSION
Catalyst: Katherine Hannay Visual Arts Commission is a unique charitable grant that supports visual artists residing in Australia to work in partnership with a cultural not-for-profit organisation to realise a major new work at a key moment of their professional development. The Commission is made possible by a grant from the Katherine Hannay Estate to demonstrate the power and importance of philanthropy in the arts sector. The Commission honours the memory of philanthropist Katherine Hannay and supports the arts, which are an essential component of a vibrant civil society.
PUBLIC PROGRAMS

CURTAIN COUTURE: CHILDREN’S FASHION WORKSHOP
with Justene Williams
21 February 2015, 10.30am-1.30pm

Using recycled and reclaimed materials, children will work with Justene Williams to design and construct their own fantastical garment incorporating pattern, colour and texture. Curtain Couture riffs off the resourcefulness and flair of cinematic heroines Maria (Julie Andrews: The Sound of Music) and Scarlett (Vivien Leigh: Gone With The Wind) who both adapted drapes to dramatic effect. The program will encourage children to reflect on sustainability and recycling in fashion, and how clothing can affect our emotional and psychological state.

APPRECIATION VS APPROPRIATION: IS EVERYTHING UP FOR GRABS IN FASHION?
with Justene Williams, Alexi Freeman, D&K and Andrea Eckersley
28 February 2015, 2.00pm-3.30pm

The Curtain Breathed Deeply melds references from art history – Picasso, Leger and Kahlo – with a range of everyday pop cultural influences including hip hop music, Milli Vanilli and musicals, such as A Chorus Line. Panel participants include artist Justene Williams, designer Alexi Freeman and D&K (an ongoing project by designer Ricarda Bigolin and curator Nella Themelios that imitates and critiques the aspirations and strategies of fashion branding). The discussion will be convened by Andrea Eckersley, Lecturer in Fashion & Textiles, RMIT University.

HYPNOFANTASY WORKSHOP
with Justene Williams
4 March 2015, 6.00pm-7.30pm

Justene Williams’ Hypnofantasy Workshop is part ad-lib lecture, part performance and part group hypnosis session staged within the MUMA exhibition The Curtain Breathed Deeply. Imagine Duchamp’s rotoreliefs, spinning wheels, chickens, internet dating and guided group hypnosis, and you can get an inkling of what you may encounter. Leave your preconceptions behind, bring an open mind and wear comfortable clothing as Williams explores and expands the rapport between artist and audience.

Curtain Couture and Appreciation vs Appropriation are presented as part of the Virgin Australia Melbourne Fashion Festival’s Cultural Program Project Series 2015. More information on the MUMA website.