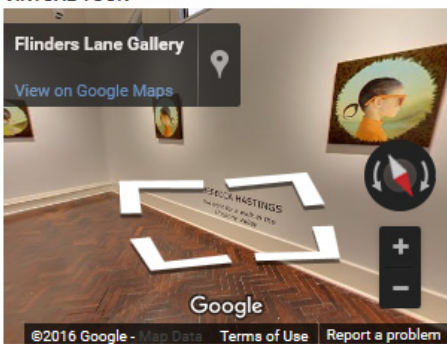


**EXHIBITIONS** Rebecca Hastings *We went for a walk in the Uncanny Valley* 11th October 2016 - 5th November 2016

**VIRTUAL TOUR**



**Artist's statement:**

*'For a while now I have become increasingly worried. Despite reports of melting ice caps, fires and floods, natural disasters brought upon us by our own hand, politicians bicker, whilst the world around us slowly fades.*

*Beyond the loss of our natural world however, there is the loss of the childhood that we all enjoyed; free and wild; yet to be superseded by devices and virtual experiences. My kids are still young, equally content to build a cubby house or an on-line world. But soon - very soon - they will be permanently connected, and at the same disconnected. Technology has made our lives easier in so many ways, but at what cost? I fear for the loss of the world that my children will never know, the adventures they will never have.'*

**Rebecca Hastings, 2016**

**WE WENT FOR A WALK IN THE UNCANNY VALLEY**

Essay by DR JACQUELINE MILLNER 2016

Human-induced climate change, environmental destruction and global economies based on the assumption of constant growth pose among the greatest challenges of our time. Artists have increasingly engaged with these issues, sometimes collaborating with scientists, sometimes drawing on the rethinking of human/non human relations in new materialist philosophy. Rebecca Hastings has taken a different approach, personalising and synthesising her response to such challenges in painted portraits of children. In these condensations of symbolism, Hastings captures broader anxieties and ambivalence about the future and the capacity of our species to survive.

Children are highly charged subjects in art that tend to



Rebecca Hastings  
*We Went For A Walk In The Uncanny Valley* 2016  
oil on board  
60cm x 60cm



Rebecca Hastings  
*We Went For A Walk In The Uncanny Valley II* 2016  
oil on board  
60cm x 60cm



Rebecca Hastings  
*They Regard Us With An Insect Calm I* 2016  
oil on board  
60cm x 60cm



Rebecca Hastings  
*They Regard Us With An Insect Calm II* 2016  
oil on board  
60cm x 60cm

wriggle free of artists' intentions. Often chosen for their associations with innocence or closeness to nature, representations of children are also open to darker interpretations.<sup>1</sup> A child may be free, but they are also vulnerable. A child may be pure potential, but they are also individuals whose steely will commonly eludes adult understanding. Children may more readily than adults express biophilia<sup>2</sup> — our innate tendency to focus on living things — but they are renowned as the most adaptive of our species as demonstrated by their astounding early adoption of new technologies. Children have become — or, some more cynical might say, have been cultivated as — the ideal 21st century consumers: unbending in their pester power and defined by their access to and knowledge of the latest tech craze.

Hastings draws a line between the technological suffusion of first world childhood and environmental neglect. As increasingly younger children are exposed more to screen worlds than to life exploring the outdoors, their regimes synchronised more with capitalist time than circadian rhythms, a new syndrome appears to be emerging: 'nature deficit disorder'.<sup>3</sup> With nature experienced more as abstract concept than lived reality, so decreases the likelihood that a deep connection — and its associated duty of care — will form.

The children in Hastings' works are strangely ambiguous: simultaneously of this world and alien, contemporary and futuristic, childlike and ageless. They could be representations of the real, or they could be fantasy humans like those created in the digital quest for verisimilitude — the quest that has given us the term 'uncanny valley' to denote the point at which the synthetic human's fine differentiation from the real causes abjection. Of course, we could say that we are already surrounded by synthetic children in their popular culture and commercial manifestations — a point not lost on Russian artists AES+F whose uncanny video installations such as *Last Riot* bring home the overlap between the commodification of childhood, the loss of the natural, and digital technologies.

Yet, Hastings works with painting. As such she necessarily summons the traditions of the medium, including the history of how children have been painted in the Western canon, quite distinct from photographic traditions and their contemporary manifestations in popular culture. Also, along with its conceptual credentials, painting remains a highly tactile medium which foregrounds its material links to earthy pigments and random mark-making. Painting's materiality, tradition and plasticity allow Hastings to intensify the ambivalence of these works that imagine a child both at home in and alienated from mediated life, a potential catalyst for new interspecies relations or a symptom of humanity's contempt for the life that supports it.

1. See Ann Higonet, *Pictures of Innocence: The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood*, New York: Thames and Hudson, 1998

2. Edward O Wilson, *Biophilia* 1984.

3. Richard Louv, *Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder*, Workman Publishing Company, 2005



Rebecca Hastings  
*Approaching the Hour Between Dog & Wolf I* 2016  
oil on board  
49cm x 49cm



Rebecca Hastings  
*Approaching the Hour Between Dog & Wolf II* 2016  
oil on board  
49cm x 49cm

Adelaide artist Rebecca Hastings' work explores themes of maternal ambivalence and subverts the sentimental romantic ideal of motherhood. Transgressing the traditional image of mother and child, Hastings charts the complexities and contradictions of motherhood, where emotions see-saw between ambivalence, affection and aggression. She describes her works as "psychologically charged images which beckon us into an unsettling and perhaps not-so make-believe world, in which the child is strange, other-worldly, confrontational and playful."

Rebecca Hastings graduated from the Adelaide Central School of Art in 2011 with a Bachelor of Visual Art (honours) and was recently awarded an **Australian Post Graduate Award** for a Masters Degree in Visual Art at UniSA. She has received numerous awards and grants including the **Pleysier Perkins Emerging Art Prize** in conjunction with FLG's **Exploration 12** exhibition, the 2012 **SALA Festival Award** at the Helpmann Graduate Exhibition and an ArtSA Project Grant. She has been Shortlisted for the **BP Portrait Prize** at the National Portrait Gallery, London, and was a Finalist in both the **Archibald and Sulman Art prizes** in 2014, and the Sulman Prize again in 2015. Her first solo exhibition at FLG, 'Disquiet' was a sell-out.

[REBECCA HASTINGS PROFILE](#)  
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