



# RON MUECK

8 May – 1 August 2010  
Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane

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Ron Mueck / Mask II 2002 / Private collection / © Ron Mueck / Courtesy: Anthony d'Offay, London



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‘Although I spend a lot of time on the surface, it’s the life inside I want to capture.’ Ron Mueck

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Ron Mueck was born in Melbourne, Australia, in 1958. Mueck’s early career was as a model maker and puppeteer for children’s television and films, notably working for the Jim Henson Company on projects such as the film *Labyrinth* 1986. In 1996, he made a sculpture of Pinocchio for the painter Paula Rego, his mother-in-law. Charles Saatchi, a well-known art collector, noticed the sculpture and a year later included Mueck in the exhibition ‘Sensation’, which opened at London’s Royal Academy. Of the 110 exhibits by some of Britain’s best known contemporary artists in this show, it was Mueck’s work *Dead Dad* 1996–97 that drew excited attention and enthusiastic responses from the public.

Since this dramatic entry onto the international art stage, Ron Mueck has continued to astound audiences with his realistic, figurative sculptures and now occupies a unique and important place in the field of international contemporary art.

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### While engaging with the works in this exhibition, secondary students will:

- explore contemporary visual arts practices and emerging technologies
- analyse, interpret and evaluate art objects, using visual language and expression to justify responses
- apply new understandings and make connections to inform future visual art experiences (e.g. researching, developing, resolving and reflecting on progression of ideas in their visual arts diaries)
- reflect on the ways visual documentation is used to develop images and objects

- refine visual literacy abilities to read and process the images
- develop personal meanings and associations about the ideas and social themes reflected in the objects

### Key words

scale, figure, sculpture, realism

### Themes

age, birth, infancy, youth, adolescence, middle age, old age, death



Ron Mueck / *Two women* 2005 / Polyester resin, fibreglass, silicone, aluminium wire, steel, wool, cotton, nylon, synthetic hair, plastic, metal, ed. 1/1 / 82.6 x 48.7 x 41.5 cm (variable) / Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2007 / Collection: National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne © Ron Mueck / Courtesy: Anthony d'Offay, London

## Realism

Mueck's figures are startlingly realistic. Each work includes many details, such as the stubble on a man's chin or the veins beneath the skin's surface.

**What are the primary materials used in Mueck's works? Why do you think the artist chooses these materials instead of marble or bronze?**

**What are some of the ways in which Mueck makes his sculptures look so realistic?**

**Can you list any elements which allude to Mueck's past experience as a puppet maker?**



Ron Mueck / *Drift* 2009 / Silicone, synthetic hair, polyester resin, fibreglass, polyurethane, aluminium, plastic, fabric, ed. 1/1 / 118.0 x 96.0 x 21.0 cm / Collection: Anthony d'Offay, London / © Ron Mueck / Courtesy: Anthony d'Offay, London / Photograph: National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

## Pose

The use of gesture, pose, and scale are also very important in Mueck's work, to engage the viewer's emotions and understand the psyche of the figures he depicts.

**Describe the different poses you can see in Mueck's work in the exhibition. Are there any similarities?**

**What feelings are reflected? What details do you notice in their facial expressions and gestures that express these feelings?**

**Write a list of emotions, feelings, or stories for each sculpture. Choose one and act it out in front of your partner. Can they guess the right emotion?**



Ron Mueck / *In bed* 2005 / Polyester resin, fibreglass, polyurethane, horsehair, cotton, ed. 1/1 / 161.9 x 650 x 395 cm / Purchased 2008. Queensland Art Gallery Foundation / Collection: Queensland Art Gallery / © Ron Mueck / Courtesy: Anthony d'Offay, London / Photograph: Natasha Harth

## Scale

Ron Mueck experiments with scale and makes us aware of the space our own bodies occupy.

As you view each sculpture, consider your scale in comparison to the sculptures. What is the purpose behind the artist presenting a human figure in a size other than life-size?

How does the scale of the works impact on your impression or experience of the work?

Imagine if Mueck's sculptures were made using the opposite scale. Would it change the story of the work?



Ron Mueck / *A girl* 2006 / Polyester resin, fibreglass, silicone, synthetic hair, synthetic polymer paint, second edition, artist's proof / 110 x 501 x 134.5 cm / Purchased with assistance from The Art Fund, 2007 / Collection: Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh / © Ron Mueck / Courtesy: Anthony d'Offay, London / Photograph: Antonia Reeve

## Themes

Have you noticed that each sculpture is isolated from a particular setting or context?

Consider and reflect on the themes you think the artist wants his audience to focus on.

What ideas about being a human being in contemporary society do Mueck's works encourage us to think about?

## Watch Ron Mueck as he makes his art.

The following videos have been produced by the National Gallery of Victoria and provide some behind-the-scenes information.

### 1 The making of *In bed* 2005

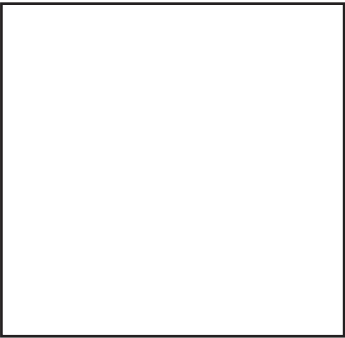
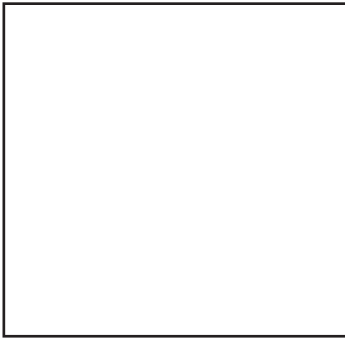
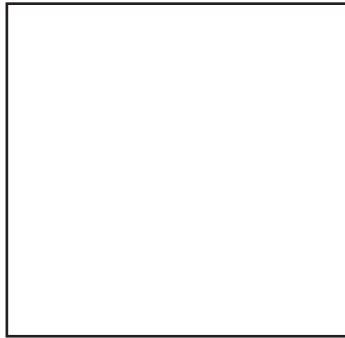
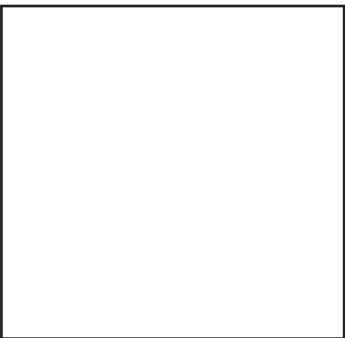
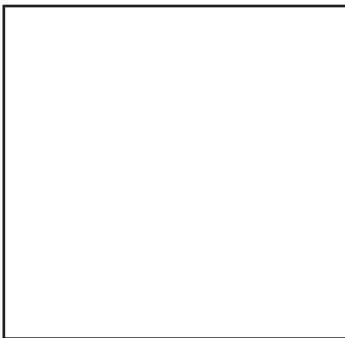
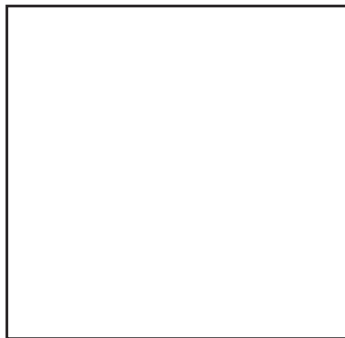
<http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/ronmueck/video.html>

### 2 Unpacking *Two women* 2005

<http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/ronmueck/video2.html>

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Research more about the processes involved in creating the fibreglass and silicone sculptures. Sketch the sequence of steps on the storyboard below and write a description for each process.

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
		
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
		
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____