Patricia Piccinini uses a range of different media to explore concepts such as empathy, responsibility and acceptance. The contexts of her works, whether they be real-world relationships or fantastic stories and fables, focus on human thoughts and responses to change and difference. By drawing on our past and present relationships, Piccinini constructs scenarios to encourage us to engage with the grey areas of life and humanity, areas which are often complex and confronting, particularly as we move into the future. She is interested in relationships: the relationship between the artificial and the natural, between humans and the environment, between beings within families, between strangers, and finally, the relationship between the audience and the artwork.

Over the years Piccinini has built up a type of alternative world that exists just beyond the real world we live in. Strange but familiar at the same time, it exists as moments, objects and images that overlap with the ‘real world’ of the gallery space. For Piccinini, the art-making process begins with research and drawing. She then works with a team of fabricators and technicians who use a range of specialist techniques to create the incredibly lifelike appearance of her creatures.
The Young Family (2002)
Silicone, polyurethane, leather, polyester, human hair
80 x 150 x 100 cm
The seminal sculpture. The Young Family, encapsulates many of the key issues dealt with in Piccinini's practice: difference, empathy, maternity and technology. Inspired by science, specifically the use of other animals such as pigs to generate human replacement organs, the work is underwritten by a singular emotion: anxiety. Is this cause for concern? How should it be dealt with? Is this sculpture was made when the idea of pig-human chimera was still a hypothetical, 2002? What if? What if these chimeras successfully created in a lab? How long would they be, the only two creatures of their kind, and somehow they have found each other? They carry the possibility of reproduction, and the possibility for a future outside the known domesticated boundaries of their lives. This is a present that the mother, the child and the child within (her womb) might exist and collapse the boundaries between fields remains.

Teenage Metamorphosis (2007)
Silicone, fibreglass, human hair, found objects
127 x 22 x 75 cm
Teenage Metamorphosis pushes the possiblities of hybridity beyond transgressing to suggest a more surreal admixture of life matter and mundane objects. The work references the successful creation of human-animal chimeras and address the shortcoming of donor organs, bringing to mind the long-term implications of such scientific advancements. Is it uncertain whether this creature is part shoe, or if he merely affects a shoe-sole carapace for more effective camouflage in the modern world.

The Couple (2012)
Silicone, fibreglass, human hair, clothing, taxidermied parrot
116 x 60 x 55 cm
The Couple captures the uncertain moment between a boy and a parrot that has just settled on his head. Does he hope to catch the parrot gently, or does he intend to strike it violently? This transitional moment investigates the orence-uncertain outcome of action, even when the result may seem obvious in retrospect. In both cases the boy represents the transitional moment of any adolescent, just as he might perceive the ontological adolescence that genetic engineering is currently undergoing. In other words, we are uncertain of the outcome of the boy’s gesture lie we are uncertain of the outcome of genetic engineering. There is an expectation that artificial nature is ‘good’, even though real nature is sometimes not. This boy is not as easy to love as some of Piccinini’s figures, yet does he show the same inherent susceptibility?

DVD 16:9 PAL, Stereo
3 minute loop
The Gathering is a video work that focuses on one of Piccinini’s enduring fascinations. Time and again her work returns to children, and their ambiguous relationships with the uncanny animals that she creates. Children embody a number of the key issues they directly express the idea of ‘genetics – both natural and artificial’ – but also imply the responsibilities that a creator has to those concepts. The young child and vulnerability is also powerfully emotive and evokes empathy, while their presence softens the hardness of some of the more difficult ideas, but can also elevate the level of humanity in the animal. The children in Piccinini’s work evoke the idea of vulnerability, however, it is often difficult to work out whether the most vulnerable creatures in the “Family” is a monster’s sense of isolation and rejection leads him to beg his creator for a new creature. The Coup (2012)
Silicone, fibreglass, steel, wood, furniture
137 x 25 x 75 cm
Teenage Metamorphosis is a response to these questions, offering an environment where boundaries are dissolved and categories are fluid. Each plant is different: size, orientation and physiognomy varies from stem to stem. The viewer is left with a sense of the extraordinary variety and complexity of even the simplest ecosystem. Flowers are the sexual organs of plants and are a resumé form in Piccinini’s work in reference to viciusly, a way of finding a language to discuss sexuality and fertility that is beyond the specificity of species.

The Breathing Room (video) (2000)
3 channel video installation with sound
The centre of the universe is where life begins and ends. On earth, the moment of conception is usually described as the moment a sperm fertilizes an egg. How does it feel to be inside it? Neural crest is a response to these questions, offering a body inside a proposed environment where boundaries are dissolved and categories are fluid. Each plant is different: size, orientation and physiognomy varies from stem to stem. The viewer is left with a sense of the extraordinary variety and complexity of even the simplest ecosystem. Flowers are the sexual organs of plants and are a resumé form in Piccinini’s work in reference to viciusly, a way of finding a language to discuss sexuality and fertility that is beyond the specificity of species.

The Young Family (2002)
Silicone, polyurethane, leather, polyester, human hair
80 x 150 x 100 cm
The seminal sculpture. The Young Family, encapsulates many of the key issues dealt with in Piccinini's practice: difference, empathy, maternity and technology. Inspired by science, specifically the use of other animals such as pigs to generate human replacement organs, the work is underwritten by a singular emotion: anxiety. Is this cause for concern? How should it be dealt with? Is this sculpture was made when the idea of pig-human chimera was still a hypothetical, 2002? What if? What if these chimeras successfully created in a lab? How long would they be, the only two creatures of their kind, and somehow they have found each other? They carry the possibility of reproduction, and the possibility for a future outside the known domesticated boundaries of their lives. This is a present that the mother, the child and the child within (her womb) might exist and collapse the boundaries between fields remains.

Teenage Metamorphosis (2007)
Silicone, fibreglass, human hair, found objects
127 x 22 x 75 cm
Teenage Metamorphosis pushes the possiblities of hybridity beyond transgressing to suggest a more surreal admixture of life matter and mundane objects. The work references the successful creation of human-animal chimeras and address the shortcoming of donor organs, bringing to mind the long-term implications of such scientific advancements. Is it uncertain whether this creature is part shoe, or if he merely affects a shoe-sole carapace for more effective camouflage in the modern world.

The Couple (2012)
Silicone, fibreglass, human hair, clothing, taxidermied parrot
116 x 60 x 55 cm
The Couple captures the uncertain moment between a boy and a parrot that has just settled on his head. Does he hope to catch the parrot gently, or does he intend to strike it violently? This transitional moment investigates the orence-uncertain outcome of action, even when the result may seem obvious in retrospect. In both cases the boy represents the transitional moment of any adolescent, just as he might perceive the ontological adolescence that genetic engineering is currently undergoing. In other words, we are uncertain of the outcome of the boy’s gesture lie we are uncertain of the outcome of genetic engineering. There is an expectation that artificial nature is ‘good’, even though real nature is sometimes not. This boy is not as easy to love as some of Piccinini’s figures, yet does he show the same inherent susceptibility?

DVD 16:9 PAL, Stereo
3 minute loop
The Gathering is a video work that focuses on one of Piccinini’s enduring fascinations. Time and again her work returns to children, and their ambiguous relationships with the uncanny animals that she creates. Children embody a number of the key issues they directly express the idea of ‘genetics – both natural and artificial’ – but also imply the responsibilities that a creator has to those concepts. The young child and vulnerability is also powerfully emotive and evokes empathy, while their presence softens the hardness of some of the more difficult ideas, but can also elevate the level of humanity in the animal. The children in Piccinini’s work evoke the idea of vulnerability, however, it is often difficult to work out whether the most vulnerable creatures in the “Family” is a monster’s sense of isolation and rejection leads him to beg his creator for a new creature. The Coup (2012)
Silicone, fibreglass, steel, wood, furniture
137 x 25 x 75 cm
Teenage Metamorphosis is a response to these questions, offering an environment where boundaries are dissolved and categories are fluid. Each plant is different: size, orientation and physiognomy varies from stem to stem. The viewer is left with a sense of the extraordinary variety and complexity of even the simplest ecosystem. Flowers are the sexual organs of plants and are a resumé form in Piccinini’s work in reference to viciusly, a way of finding a language to discuss sexuality and fertility that is beyond the specificity of species.

The Breathing Room (video) (2000)
3 channel video installation with sound
The centre of the universe is where life begins and ends. On earth, the moment of conception is usually described as the moment a sperm fertilizes an egg. How does it feel to be inside it? Neural crest is a response to these questions, offering a body inside a proposed environment where boundaries are dissolved and categories are fluid. Each plant is different: size, orientation and physiognomy varies from stem to stem. The viewer is left with a sense of the extraordinary variety and complexity of even the simplest ecosystem. Flowers are the sexual organs of plants and are a resumé form in Piccinini’s work in reference to viciusly, a way of finding a language to discuss sexuality and fertility that is beyond the specificity of species.

The Young Family (2002)
Silicone, polyurethane, leather, polyester, human hair
80 x 150 x 100 cm
The seminal sculpture. The Young Family, encapsulates many of the key issues dealt with in Piccinini's practice: difference, empathy, maternity and technology. Inspired by science, specifically the use of other animals such as pigs to generate human replacement organs, the work is underwritten by a singular emotion: anxiety. Is this cause for concern? How should it be dealt with? Is this sculpture was made when the idea of pig-human chimera was still a hypothetical, 2002? What if? What if these chimeras successfully created in a lab? How long would they be, the only two creatures of their kind, and somehow they have found each other? They carry the possibility of reproduction, and the possibility for a future outside the known domesticated boundaries of their lives. This is a present that the mother, the child and the child within (her womb) might exist and collapse the boundaries between fields remains.