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# BlackFlash

Art. Photography. New Media



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## Valley of the Deer

By Jillian McDonald

**V**alley of the Deer, from which these images are drawn, is a two-channel high-definition video installation shot on location in the Scottish highlands. The work features forty residents of Northern Scotland, the majority of whom are craftspeople and other employees at the Glenfiddich Distillery in Dufftown, Banffshire. The work was created in residence at the Glenfiddich International Artist Residency, where I stayed for the six months following July 2012, and was made in response to the local landscape, traditional highlands dress and music, oral folklore and pagan legends — both real and imagined. The haunting romanticism of the landscape figures prominently as the camera creeps through mossy glens, barley fields, heathered mountains, fairy knolls, and abandoned stone houses; uncovering fog, rainbows, water sources, majestic views, woodland creatures, animated avatars, and ghostly figures. This valley has many tales. Masked characters appear frequently in horror — at once anonymous and secret, uncanny and

hybrid, ghostly and terrifying, yet disarmingly naïve. The soundscape, created in collaboration with Knocker (aka Dave Roberts) captures the textural and aural properties attending the distillery and environs: a gurgling spring, a waterfall, wind, bird calls, footsteps on dry floors, Scottish pipe music, a hand brushing against a canvas apron or brimful barrel, a tap dripping, clinking copper, gas and liquids escaping.

My work incorporates video and performance, examining popular film genres such as romance or horror in relation to their effect on audiences. Archetypes and themes found in American horror film are my current focus. Unlike contemporary horror directors, I avoid extreme violence in favour of simplified narratives, sublime nature, and familiar characters. Research plays an important role in my work, and my process includes reading film theory, watching popular films, and exploring fan culture.

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