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Review: Jillian McDonald's "Valley of the Deer," at the Ontario College of Art & Design

Posted on [September 12, 2013](#) by [sfaq](#)



Valley of the Deer, Single Channel BluRay Video, 48:30 minutes, 2013

Here's a scary movie to play at your avant-garde haunted house. Jillian McDonald's "Valley of the Deer," recently shown at Ontario College of Art & Design, was shot at the Glenfiddich International Artist's Residency in Dufftown, Scotland using local residents and costumes and masks made by McDonald on site in response to the area.

The actors, standing solitarily or slowly ambling toward the screen, confirm there is something scary about people in animal masks (if the Hollywood blockbuster "You're Next" hadn't already done that for you—though I can never be too terrified of anything with a title that requires such careful grammar.)



Valley of the Deer, Single Channel BluRay Video, 48:30 minutes, 2013



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The Scottish woodland and farms lend themselves to a romanticized, mythic pastoral imbued with ominous foreshadowing, in full realization of the cinematic power to give landscapes a psychic emotional connection to the viewer. McDonald plays up a magical realism with muted wide shots of vast land, and a haunting soundtrack.

At times the tension created by these scenes is broken by rainbows, or mythic looking glowing animals, as a nod to the supernatural forces in folkloric tradition, but there's no clear distinction of good and bad, rather the hard indifference of nature. Ultimately, it's not a horror movie in the sense that it offers something explicitly scary (though, spoiler, someone dies,) it doesn't scare, but it points out that we have the emotion, how quickly it can be provoked or soothed in response to what we're seeing, and how uneasy we naturally are with the unknown.

For more information visit [here](#).

-Contributed by Kathryn McKinney

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