

**SYDNEY  
THEATRE  
CO  
EDUCATION**

**ON CUE**

# JULIA

**BY JOANNA MURRAY-SMITH  
DIRECTED BY SARAH GOODES**



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Image: Justine Clarke. Photo: Rene Vaile

Compiled by Kelly Young.

The activities and resources contained in this document are designed for educators as the starting point for developing more comprehensive lessons for this production. You can contact the Education Team on

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**Sydney Theatre Company acknowledges the Gadigal of the Eora nation who are the traditional custodians of the land and waters on which the Company gathers. We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and we extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with whom we work and with whom we share stories.**

## CAST AND CREATIVES

# JULIA

BY JOANNA MURRAY-SMITH  
DIRECTED BY SARAH GOODES

**Young Woman**  
Jessica Bentley

**Julia**  
Justine Clarke

**Understudy**  
Caroline Craig

**Director**  
Sarah Goodes

**Designer**  
Renee Mulder

**Lighting Designer**  
Alexander Berlage

**Composer & Sound Designer**  
Steve Francis

**Video Designer**  
Susie Henderson

**Dramaturg**  
Ruth Little

**Assistant Director**  
Charley Allanah

**Voice & Dialect Coach**  
Jennifer White

**Sound Design Realiser**  
Madeleine Picard

**Video Design Realiser**  
Ben Andrews

**Production Manager**  
Ryan Garreffa

**Stage Manager**  
Stephanie Storr

**Assistant Stage Manager**  
Sybilla Wajon

**Costume Coordinator**  
Scott Fisher

**Wig & Hair Stylist**  
Andrew Keshan

**Staging Supervisor**  
Zachary White

**Lighting Supervisor**  
Tim McNaught

**Sound Supervisor**  
Madeleine Picard

**Sound Operator**  
Al Bremner

**Video Supervisor**  
Ben Andrews

**Rehearsal Photographer**  
Prudence Upton

THIS PRODUCTION OPENED AT THE PLAYHOUSE, CANBERRA THEATRE CENTRE ON 21 MARCH 2023

This play is a fictional imagining by the playwright, of true events in the life of Julia Gillard. It combines references to true events, extracts from published works, interviews, fictitious commentary and opinions which the Playwright and the Producers believe to be honestly held. Ms Gillard has not endorsed or read, nor had any artistic input into the production of, this play.

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### CO-PRODUCER

CANBERRA  
THEATRE  
CENTRE



# SYNOPSIS



On 9 October 2012, Australia's first and, so far, only female Prime Minister Julia Gillard took to the podium during question time to respond to a motion proposed by the then leader of the opposition, Tony Abbott. The motion accused Gillard of sexism and called her leadership into question.

In the months leading up to this moment, Gillard had repeatedly been criticised in the media and by politicians from across the Australian political spectrum for her unmarried status, her appearance, her decision not to have children and for her general demeanour which many commentators considered to be categorically unfeminine.

Inspired by the hypocrisy that she perceived to be motivating this accusation of sexism, Gillard delivered a now-historic speech that became an instant viral sensation around the world and cemented her position as one of Australia's most impactful and memorable political figures.

This play is an imaginative deep dive into the psychology of that speech and the woman who made it. It is an attempt to trace the influences and hidden histories that all came to head on that day in 2012, and an electrifying study of the power of words and the machinations of democracy as they function in the twenty-first century.

# CURRICULUM LINKS

## NSW DRAMA SYLLABUS

### Stage 5 and 6

- Stage 5 Dramatic Forms and Performance Styles:  
Scripted Drama
- Stage 6 Monologues
- Stage 6 The Voices of Women in Theatre (Joanna Murray-Smith)

## NSW HISTORY SYLLABUS

- Stage 5 Modern World and Australia – Overview,  
Depth Study 4 or 6

## SUITABLE FOR

Years 10 - 12

## THEMES & IDEAS

### NSW DRAMA SYLLABUS

- Gender and Politics
- Identity, Gender, and Power
- The Politics of Disgust
- Power
- Australian Politics

### BSSS DRAMA A-T-M STUDIES OF DRAMA A-T-M

#### UNITS

- Communicating Meaning in Drama
- Independent Study



# DIRECTOR'S NOTE: SARAH GOODES

“Facts have their importance – but that is where the biography comes to grief. The biographer cannot extract the atom. He gives us the husk.”

Virginia Woolf

As Joanna Murray-Smith observes in her notes, there is very little to be found in all the records and biographies of Julia Gillard's inner life. So all we can do in this production is attempt to capture the essence of her, the atom. And what better place to crack open these husks and fill them with our imaginations than the theatre – the home for imagination.

This is the third time I have directed a new play by Joanna Murray-Smith – the last one at STC was the world premiere of *Switzerland*, back in 2014. When Kip [Williams] called to propose this project, I didn't think twice. New work is not for the faint-hearted. As someone once observed when you mount a classic, all you have to do is move the furniture in and spend rehearsals deciding where everything should go but with new work you have to build the house first. However difficult this process is, it is also thrilling and exciting with a writer like Jo who is incredibly responsive to rehearsal rooms and the offers and shifts they can throw up.

Julia was ridiculed and imitated for her entire political term, so my first instinct with the piece was that I wasn't interested in exploring a typical impersonation. Instead, I was interested in playing with form. For many years I have watched Justine Clarke work on the stage and dreamed of working with her. Justine dives deep, bringing truth and heart to all her work. She is like a cormorant bird – she can fly high but she can also dive deep for the fish! We were all delighted when she accepted the challenge.

My early conversations with Justine circled around the generational intersection that Julia's speech activated. Justine and I spoke a lot about how, as women of a certain age, we felt slightly guilty for not having spoken up more when Julia was being treated as she was during her term as PM. It felt right to not meet Julia fully-formed, that we meet Justine as the narrator (an actor embodying every woman) who slowly embodies the imagined version of Julia and finally transforms into her entirely. We wanted to amplify the universal in the piece: – what it means to look back on a life and examine your choices and the times in which you were born and the tide that carries you through. Justine also spoke of how she imagined mothers and daughters might come to the show and that the conversation between generations that it might ignite.

I started to think of the waves of feminism and why they are called waves and why they occur in waves. One generation ploughs the soil and then next reaps the seeds. I had a strong sense of a younger woman waiting silently, willing and waiting for Julia to make a stand – to make the speech that (it could be argued) opened the gates for the movement that followed. Julia's 'misogyny speech' is a brilliant example of the power of words – to open doors for us as individuals as well as collectives is endlessly fascinating – how social movements, like schools of fish, can take form and suddenly change direction as one organism.

“Societies are shaped not by what is happening on the surface but by the great tidal movements underneath.”

*The Making of Julia Gillard* by Jacqueline Kent

So the decision to include Jessica Bentley in the production as a fluid presence on stage – at times the younger Julia, at times her conscience, at times the future generations – was made. The witness and watcher – our younger selves – what we sacrifice on our way through life pursuing our dreams or fighting our fights – who we become in the process and what we leave behind.

Designer Renée Mulder and Composer & Sound Designer Steve Francis and I first worked together back in 2011 on Hilary Bell's play *The Splinter*. We have since worked on many projects. Both are incredible artists and theatre makers and together with the extraordinarily talented Alexander Berlage as Lighting Designer and Susie Henderson as Video Designer, along with Charley Allannah as the Assistant Director and the brilliant Jennifer White as Voice Coach, this has been collaborative theatre at its most exhilarating.

Renée and I used, as a springboard, the work of female video artists Pipilotti Rist and Angelica Mesiti and photographer Alex Prager. Susie Henderson pointed us towards Mesiti's work whose piece *Assembly* was presented as part of the Venice Biennale. Her work really struck a chord for us about how we wanted to approach this piece – the power of space, voice, and youth.

Steve Francis and his composition is the texture we needed – we talked a lot about soil, growth, the earth, light, and transformation – how even moments and events can transform in the hands of the next generation and listened a lot to Carolyn Shaw's album *Let the Soil Play its Simple Part*.

A huge thank you to Dr Rebecca Sheehan, Ruth Little, Alice Osbourne, and the Stage Management and Production team at STC, and to STC and Canberra Theatre Centre for inviting us all to work on this new Australian work.



**Renée Mulder, Joanna Murray-Smith, Alexander Berlage & Sarah Goodes**

# FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT: JOANNA MURRAY-SMITH

## **What initially inspired you to tell the story of *Julia*?**

Kip Williams, the Artistic Director of STC, suggested the topic of Julia Gillard, but I wasn't keen. I'm not a big Australian politics follower and I felt that her story had already been told, by herself and others. But I promised I'd go and think about it and read everything I could lay my hands on. I began to realise that while her factual story is on the public record, and a great deal of political commentary, nothing explored her inner life. Some public figures give away a bit more about themselves through their temper or emotions but not Julia Gillard. Even her well written memoir is very opaque when it comes to her feelings. She has a ferocious intelligence but no instinct for self-analysis, other than in political scenarios. I started to develop an appetite to know how she felt as she was almost crucified by the opposition and the media throughout her leadership. What gave her the stamina to survive? What kind of moral dilemmas did she face as she negotiated the path to power? That kind of hypothetical thinking... wondering without knowing... is perfectly suited to theatre. Once I realised that there was room for my imagination, I felt excited. I could create my own Julia. The one I think she is or want her to be.... All of it. She is a creature of my imagination within the outline of her factual life story.

My way into Julia Gillard was within the context of the famous 'misogyny speech', the viral explosion of which I witnessed and remains indelible. The power of her rhetoric, the improvisation of the words, the strength of her tone and manner, the calm at the centre of the storm – all of it was an incredible piece of theatre quite apart from the shift in attitudes it ushered in. And of course, I was also drawn to it because it showed a different version of the female politician who barely ever referenced being female. She never "outed" or publicly confronted what she was dealing with, believing (rightly) she'd be accused of "playing the gender card." And then suddenly – KAPOW. She was right there and in full voice saying "Enough!"

## **Can you tell us about the play's exploration of Julia Gillard's childhood? Why was this important in your story telling?**

I believe everything significant in your life has its beginnings in childhood. Your passions, preoccupations, vulnerabilities, relationships... the source of all of it is childhood. As you get older, it becomes easier to trace how your history predestined you even while you thought you were in control and making decisions. Of course, it's possible to undo the past within us, but it's hard. It took me a long time to realise that the preoccupations of my plays recur because they are welded into my subconscious and were established by the time I was ten or so, conjured somehow from childhood.

Usually with invented characters, you don't spend much time ruminating on what their life was like prior to the start of your play (or post the end)! With a real woman as your character, it's inevitably different. You owe it to your writing, to her and to the audience to be forensic in your thought processes and research, even if the result of what you write is inevitably a fiction. The play is my attempt to know her better and I felt instinctively that the way into her feelings was to look back at her early life.



**The character of Julia Gillard in your work is confident, ambitious, likeable, intelligent and compassionate. Can you tell us your thoughts about the impact of gendered constructions of power on the way that Australians thought they knew Julia Gillard?**

If you're asking me how she fared as a result of attitudes to women in our country at that time, especially leading women, I think she was crucified. The opposition and the right wing press effectively tried to destroy her. Whether or not you liked her politics, the way she was treated as prime minister tells us an enormous amount about the insidious misogyny running rampant through our culture, its cowardice, callousness and crudity.

Enough time has passed now, and most importantly, we have experienced the *MeToo* movement and as a result, I think we can say that her period of leadership reflected a level of misogyny that would no longer be publicly acceptable. I remain astonished that she's an enormously productive, cheerful person, deeply engaged with the world, having gone through so much vitriol and injustice. She managed to keep her eye on the ball of her idealism and stay standing to do good things post politics. She would have been forgiven for turning into a cynic and a recluse – but as a result of her toughness, her pragmatism, and probably her ego, she has survived and thrived.

**What do you think the Gillard Prime Ministership says about Australia – both then and now?**

Essentially, she was the transition point between one Australia and another one. She fought the fight for the next female leader. She endured the blows, and her period of office provided a deeply disturbing mirror to the Australia that was. A lot has changed, at least in public discourse. We are highly sensitised to sexism now and younger men and women don't want that kind of culture. They're better educated in tolerance and inclusion than previous generations. But whether or not more of those young women will enter politics is hard to judge. Julia Gillard's experience is now well-documented, and they may still be gun-shy – believing, perhaps rightly, that while things are better, they are not best. The sexual assault and harassment stories coming out of Canberra would make any woman wary. In the daylight, so to speak, people behave much better than in 2012. But in the dark, in private spaces and shadowy corridors there is probably still a lot of intimidation of and condescension towards women, particularly young ones.



# CHARACTER ANALYSIS

## Julia

The character of Julia is not an autobiographical construction by the playwright. Rather, the character is an imagined exploration of what might have occurred for a woman who finds herself as the first female prime minister of Australia. Gillard's childhood in Wales to her early adulthood in Australia is imagined through leaps in the linearity of the narrative. Julia emerges as a feisty, intelligent and ambitious free thinker, developing into adulthood in an historical period in which progressive social movements, such as feminism allow, for the first time, young women to act freely to pursue their dreams. Gillard's home environment was also very supportive of her talent and drive and inculcated within her the class consciousness that drove Julia toward the Australian Labor Party (ALP). Gillard's parents, John and Moira, are created by Murray-Smith as being devoted to their children, having moved from Wales to South Australia to ensure a healthier lifestyle for their daughters.

Julia Gillard's statement at the time of John Gillard's death is as follows:

“He taught me to be passionate about fairness. He taught me to believe in Labor and in trade unionism. But, above all, he taught me to love learning and to understand its power to change lives. He always regretted his family background meant he had not proceeded on to higher education as a young man. He was determined that I had the opportunities he was denied. I will miss him for the rest of my life.”

Julia Gillard 9 September 2012

Murray-Smith imagines Julia's early adulthood as being joyous and purposeful:

“I'm lifting my placard above the throng of protestors marching outside parliament, and I'm with them, I'm there, in a collective glow, I'm young and thin and chanting “Wadda we want?”

I can do anything. I can run the Australian Union of Students. I can make deadlines, lobby, seduce, collaborate, manage a budget and excel at logistics. I can galvanise those with barely a heartbeat. I can fight, I can recruit, I can imagine. I can work in corporate law and talk the talk and command the room and make money. I can win a place in the House of Representatives. I can give a Maiden Speech to Parliament. I'm here for something. I'm alive to something. I'm destined for something... Bigger.”

*Julia* (pg. 7 – 8)

The narrative is set in 2012, at which time Julia has been prime minister for two years. The leap from deputy prime minister to prime minister is one of complexity, in which Julia's trademark confidence and calm is challenged by the constancy of the demands of the role, the viciousness of the media and the unexpected reveal of the intertwined narratives of gender and national identity.

## Young Woman

The inclusion of the 'Young Woman' is both a reflection of Gillard's inner world and an archetype that connects Australian women to the individual experiences of Australia's first prime minister.

# FORM, STYLE AND CONVENTION

**Playwright Joanna Murray-Smith has chosen to fuse theatrical styles to create both the interior and exterior world of an imagined Julia Gillard.**

## Form

The narrative of *Julia* is circular and non-linear. The production begins as the 'misogyny speech' is about to be delivered in the House of Representatives and moves back and forward throughout the life of the character. *Julia*'s narrative concludes with the 'misogyny speech'.

## Style

### Realism

Realism aims to recreate the experience of real life on the stage using all available theatrical elements, including acting, the Elements of Production and the narrative. The aim of Realism is to create an empathetic, emotional response in the audience as they follow the journey of the character through to a resolution.

### Monologue

A monologue is a performance by one actor. It can be the performance of a long piece of dialogue within a play. Or it can be a production that contains only one actor. *Julia* is a performance by two actors, one of whom plays the character of Julia and the other the 'Young Woman'.

### Ancient Greek Theatre: Tragedy

A form and style of theatre emerging in Ancient Greece, this style of theatre was performed outside in amphitheatres. Ancient Greek Theatre was broadly divided into Tragedy and Comedy (and Tragi/Comedy). Tragedies examined the important political and social issues of the day, and the productions were usually a metaphor for current issues in Greek society that required consideration. The protagonist in Greek Tragedy was usually destroyed by his (usually a man's) desire to challenge the natural order of the gods. This was called 'hubris'. Ancient Greek Theatre also featured a Chorus which was a group of actors that voiced the concerns of society in their interactions with the protagonist.

### Expressionism

A theatrical style that emerged in the early twentieth century as a challenge to Realism and the emergence of mass production. Expressionist theatre makers wanted to challenge the idea of an objective outer reality that could be portrayed for the audience. Instead, Expressionists wanted to explore the inner world of human thoughts and feelings. As a result, Expressionism tends to be illogical, distorted in perspective, non-linear and highly metaphorical in its exploration of the human psyche.

### **Political Theatre (Brecht)**

A style of theatre developed by Bertholt Brecht in the early 20th century as a reaction to Realism, Political Theatre sought to encourage critical thinking in the audience. As a Marxist, Brecht wanted his audience to understand the inequity in the workings of capitalism and provide them with the tools to analyse and respond to it. Brecht did this by disrupting the conventions of Realism to remind the audience that what they were watching was, in fact, a play. Rather than attaching emotionally to the work, Brecht sought to create distance from the action through direct address of the audience, the use of a narrator, the creation of roles rather than characters and an episodic narrative, all seen in *Julia* to encourage critical reflection on the issues and concerns of the production.

### **Shakespearean (Elizabethan) Theatre**

Shakespearean (Elizabethan) Theatre, is a heightened version of human experience, created by the technological constraints of the Elizabethan period and the conventions of dialogue in which poetry, seen as an elevated form of communication, was blended with prose, replicating social and cultural beliefs about status and how it was communicated.

Acting in this style is exaggerated, in order to communicate the narrative to large outdoor audiences and to create a intense emotional experience. This means that the acting, elements of production and narrative are 'larger than life' so that the emotions generated in the audience are felt more keenly, particularly in the absence of elaborate sets, costume, lighting and sound. The audience was required to imagine the world being created by the production through the language written by the playwright.



# THEMES AND IDEAS

## Gender and Politics

The Australian Commonwealth Government was established on 1 January 1901. It was modelled on the British Parliament, which, like Australian State Governments, had been part of the process of imposing British colonial power in Australia. Meeting in Melbourne and Sydney until the first Parliament House in Canberra could be built, the institution itself reflected the values of the invading power.

The British parliamentary system arose over a period of one thousand years in response to the practical needs of running England, challenges to the authority of the monarch, and the ongoing desire of all British people to be represented. Its origins are European, hierarchical and patriarchal – all of which were inherited by the newly established Australian Commonwealth Government in 1901.

One of the key results of such a history is that the masculine nature of the Australian Parliament is concealed behind the assumption of normality. That is, the deeply masculine foundations of the institution appear to be neutral. Power is held by men, expressed by men and favours men whilst at the same time, because of its familiarity, is coded as natural, normal and expected.

The expression of political power, then, is one that is deeply rooted in male privilege, hidden by its familiarity. In Parliament, this expression of political power, through the enacting of political processes, is one that is deeply misogynistic and reinforces sexist beliefs.

Australian political life, enacted and expressed in the Federal Parliament and communicated to Australians via the media, is often expressed in terms of metaphors. Metaphors enable politicians and journalists to communicate complex ideas quickly and rely on the cultural, social and historical values and contexts of the group of people to whom they are being communicated.

In Australia, there are key metaphors that are used by the media to communicate the nature of the political process. These include politics and parliament as war, violence and extreme/aggressive sports. All have implications for the way in which the Australian people understand and participate in the political process and the gendered relations of power. Murray-Smith's opening monologue begins as follows, showing the audience how women's political participation is framed in terms hegemonic masculinity, patriarchal militarism:

“It's October 2012. She's been the PM for two years and four months and she's worn down. She's been hounded, slurred, dissected, libelled. She's been violated over and over again by words. She's been attacked for being too much of a woman, for not being enough of a woman. She cannot win.”

*Julia* (pg. 1)

The metaphor of 'playing the gender card' and the more extreme 'gender wars', whilst not created by the Australian media to explicitly describe the Gillard prime ministership, was, however, co-opted and repurposed at this time, locating Gillard outside of the political process, delegitimising her leadership. Linda Trimble (2016) notes that, prior to the Gillard Government, the metaphor of a 'gender war' was used by the media as being a 'war' that was enacted upon

women. It was an action, usually negative, that positioned women, and by extension women as a class, as victims or 'casualties' of a 'war' led by men, reinforcing women as outsiders or non-participants in the political process. Gillard, however, by her very presence as a woman and with an intelligent and assured leadership style, was not able to be contextualised as a victim within this metaphor and, as we note from Murray-Smith's dialogue above, had weathered attempts to silence and sideline her. Gillard's visible resilience brought the hidden sexism and misogyny into full view, challenging its ability to hide in plain sight.

Trimble's (2016) research identifies that the repurposed 'gender war' metaphor emerged in the Australian print media one month prior to the 'misogyny speech' in response to the ALP's rejection of Abbott's conservative views on women. The Gillard Labour Government, and Gillard in particular, were reported to be playing the 'gender card' and inciting a 'gender war' to divert the nation's interest away from the government's performance. This inversion, reported in the media as an unjust act of 'war' designed to destabilise Tony Abbott, reframed Gillard's critique a weaponised choice. The inversion of the original metaphor made Gillard's analysis of sexism unworthy of public discussion. This narrative was located as an act of political warfare by Gillard, immediately shifting perceptions of her into a deeply masculine mode of action. The masculine nature of power and the strategies used to maintain it were now exposed for the Australian public to see..

"The Prime Minister uses gender as a shield against criticism.... and claims of sexism and misogyny as a sword against her critics."

Julie Bishop

The international media reported Gillard's recount of her experience of sexism and misogyny very differently than the Australian media. Rather than silence Gillard's statements in the 'misogyny speech' by rendering her unworthy to speak, their response flagged a more balanced approach to the calling out of sexism and misogyny. An example can be seen in the ABC News Report from 2012:

### **Gillard's misogyny speech goes global - ABC News**



## Identity, Gender, and Power

Joanna Murray-Smith's script explores the imagined inner world of Julia Gillard, the experience of an Australian woman thrust into political power. The space created by Murray-Smith is not a literal one but rather, a psychological one and gestures to the issues and concerns of the play through the creation of feeling, ambience and textures. Mirrored in Renée Mulder's Set Design and Susie Henderson's Video Design, Julia's inner world is created through projected images, with nods to the outer world through Realistic props and lighting. The production moves fluidly through an imagined inner world and across the public domain.

Murray-Smith's choice to allow the audience into such an imaginative space through the use of a narrator and the character of Julia, enables a shift between the inner experience of power on an individual woman in a unique context and the pressures of the external world. The Narrator, played by the same actor as Julia, is a device that connects the individual to wider society and allows the audience to see themselves in the action, drawing in the audience both empathetically and critically. The 'Young Woman', a contemporary reimagining of the Chorus, is the embodiment of the voice of society – particularly the voices of women.

Murray-Smith's script is first and foremost a study of the fictionalised character of Julia Gillard. In the theatrical style of Realism, the development of a character relies on the complexity of the character's lived experience, memories, personality and emotional reactions. As such, Murray-Smith has explored Julia's complexity as a human being first and foremost, celebrating the ambition and success of Julia as a girl, young woman and as Australia's first female prime minister. Raised by loving and socially conscious parents, Julia's internal drive to make a difference was supported by family and occurred within the context of an historical period in which women were reaping the rewards of the Second Wave of Feminism.

"I'm ace-ing a law degree but I'm not going to be an anonymous feminist lawyer in a city office. I'm not going to be a man only in spandex and pumps. I'm going to be.... bigger. I can do anything."

*Julia* (pg. 7)

In Western society, our understanding of our identity is, in part, related to our understanding of our sex and gender. The construction of gender categories, norms and relations is highly political, with the categories of men and women governed by rules of behaviour and signification that are rigidly enforced. Gender performance and the values about gender that are embedded within these performances are one of the ways in which power structures in society are maintained and reproduced. Both women and men are expected to conform to gendered norms of behaviour, and failure to abide by these rules resulting in punishment for the offending individual whose behaviour does not sit within expectations. It is worth noting here that the institution itself is not the subject of criticism.

The Australian media plays a large part in perpetuating traditional gender norms for the Australian public, working covertly behind the notion of impartiality to reinforce binary norms of leadership and power. Traditionally, political power is assertive, ambitious, active and authoritative, and coded as masculine. Women, however, are coded as caring and democratic. The result is known as the 'double bind' of leadership, in which women are held to traditional masculine notions of leadership and power and on the other, by expectations of empathy and connection. Failure to enact traditional feminine notions of leadership is punished, and so is the active demonstration of male qualities.

Murray-Smith's script and Sarah Goodes' direction appropriates conventions of Greek Theatre to explore an individual woman's relationship with political power. Whilst operating in a contemporary context removed from the ancient world

of the gods and notions of divine punishment, Julia's challenge to the 'natural order' is one that occurs through the actions of a woman with the confidence and ability to withstand the pressures of societal punishment. Rather than punishment meted out from divine rage, however, the forces of misogyny are harnessed to humble and humiliate the individual woman, and by extension every woman, who dares to dream of equality.

Murray-Smith and Goodes have employed dramatic irony in a contemporary, secular context. Moving through time from childhood and concluding Julia's narrative at the end of the 'misogyny speech' in 2012, the audience's understanding of Gillard's ultimate humiliation in 2013 when losing the leadership to Kevin Rudd, frames their experience of Gillard's speech and moment of triumph the cost of leadership.

Additionally, the dramatic irony is heightened throughout, with Julia's repetition of the question:

"Can I be that any more?  
And if I can't, what exactly have I lost and is it worth it?"  
*Julia* (pg. 22)

and

"Was this the price?"  
*Julia* (pg. 36)

Fused with Realism and the conventions of Ancient Greek Theatre are both Roman and Shakespearean motifs about the expression of power, particularly by women. These motifs express the societal constructions of 'unnatural' behaviour of ambitious and capable women, who seek their own elevation beyond what is considered by society as the 'natural' place for a woman to express political power. These traditional cultural categories are gendered and include archetypes of 'The Wife', 'The Mother' and the '*Deputy* Prime Minister'. These archetypes suggest an indirect role in the expression of power by women as being appropriate. By using the connection to Lady Macbeth, particularly in reference to Gillard's assumption of the leadership of the ALP after deposing the incumbent prime minister, Kevin Rudd, Murray-Smith's script invites the audience to make connections between Lady Macbeth and the mediated character of Julia. Both are women who wanted more than society allows. Motifs of daggers, blood and murder heightened the horror of such a contravention of societal boundaries.

"Yet who would have the thought the old man to have so much blood in him?"  
*Macbeth* (Act 5. Sc. 1) and *Julia* (pg. 25)

Murray-Smith and Director Sarah Goodes, however, use the Element of Drama: Contrast to challenge these boundaries, as well as the shift between the heightened poetic language of Shakespeare, the actor's vocal skills, a beat change and lighting states, to explore the ordinary reality of politics behind Julia's choice – behaviour that has been long exhibited by ambitious men over history.

"But – so you know –  
If we must dip our oars in blood as we sail into the future,  
Swish through its viscous crimson tide,  
To get where we must go,  
We will do so.  
We will steer that vessel,



Blood dripping from its hull,  
Beach it,  
And delete the voyage from memory.”  
*Macbeth* (Act. 3, Sc. 4)

“Beat. Light change.  
The 27th and first female Prime Minister of Australia. Sworn in by the first female Governor General.  
Two Chicks.”  
*Julia* (pg. 24)



**Justine Clarke**

## The Politics of Disgust

“You’ve got a big arse, Julia... What I want her to do is get rid of those bloody jackets.” Germaine Greer  
*Julia* (pg. 32)

Theorists including Sara Ahmed (2004) and Foucault (1995) have noted that women’s lived experience of their bodies has reframed how we understand the ways in which the human body is disciplined, controlled and regulated in order to maintain power structures in society. Manne (2018), in her work on misogyny as a disciplinary force used against women to keep them contained within “appropriate” roles in society, argues punishment of women’s bodies occurs in diverse ways and using diverse strategies, from subtle messages from individuals, messages from the media, public humiliation, to rape and murder. Manne argues that the goal of these strategies is to silence and contain within sexist gender boundaries. Fahs (2017) notes that the emotion of disgust is a particularly strong regulatory emotion that

makes space for moral judgements to be formed and enacted on women's bodies, generating shame to stigmatise and humiliate. Fahs' research points to several areas in which women's bodies are regulated through the deployment of disgust, including constructions of desirable weight and body type and the intense emotion directed towards female body and pubic hair.

“Julia Kentucky Fried Quail – small breasts, huge thighs and a big red box...”

*Julia* (pg. 35)

Freya Jansens (2019) in her analysis of media trends between 2010 – 2015 notes that with the appointment of Australia's first female prime minister in 2010, there was a significant upswing in the attention paid toward the appearance of female politicians of all political persuasions. This analysis was mediated through the discourse of dressing 'appropriately' for the workplace, which in this case, was the Australian parliament. The media's focus on Gillard's clothing and the body that her clothes were covering, can be seen as a misogynistic attempt to silence her through the evocation of bodily disgust. Designed to generate shame in Gillard and encourage her to conform to traditional understandings of femininity, her treatment was relentless.

Clothing acts as a barrier between the individual body and wider society and communicates understandings about power structures including gender, class and age. Aside from the media's focus on the bright colours worn by women of all political persuasions in parliament, one of the key criticisms of Gillard was the cut and shape of her clothing. Part of the disciplinary process for women in power is the way in which clothing is expected both to constrain and conceal the female body. Importantly, the more conservative and formal the context, the greater the restraint and concealment is required. The focus on Gillard's hips, bottom and neckline, all sites of the signification of femininity, can be seen as a reaction to the visibility of women in a workplace that has traditionally signified as masculine.

“Having to raise Ms Gillard's ill-fitting top in one shot in order to control the reputational dangers of prime-ministerial cleavage... instead of being 'sexed up', she has been 'sexed down'.”

C. Williams (2010)

“I don't think it's appropriate for a Prime Minister to be showing her cleavage in Parliament. It's not something I want to see. It is inappropriate to be in Parliament, it is disrespectful to yourself and to the Australian community and to the parliament to present yourself in a manner that is unprofessional.”

G. Collier (2013)

## **A National Conversation**

Australian society and, more specifically, Australian political culture, is a product of its history and context. Holland and Wright (2017) have noted that Australia's self-image is built on a tradition of gender and racial difference, sexism and misogyny. Intertwined narratives around mateship, the ANZAC tradition and notions of the 'larrikin' and the 'ocker' all celebrate working class, masculine qualities, which over the 20th Century, became representative of everyday Australians. These cultural tropes, then, are embedded with a sense of mateship which demonstrates what Chipperfield (2001) calls “... a touch of good-hearted sexism.” Politicians, traditionally men, have appropriated and signified these characteristics as being those of a good leader, conflating gender, power and a sense of national identity. Prime Minister Gillard, a woman, came to leadership with two narratives – gender and national identity – working in the national consciousness.

In this context, Gillard's 'misogyny speech' brought into focus the underlying values that many Australians had not considered up until 2012. For the first time, a masculine institution built on a gendered sense of national identity, was presented in a different light to the Australian people. Filtered through the media who, in the main, were complicit in perpetuating such narratives, the response of Australian society was one of distaste and, perhaps, a lack of societal awareness of how deeply ingrained and unchallenged these narratives have been in Australia.

"(Gillard's) female fans should savour their girl's takedown of Abbott because I suspect she will come to regret drawing such a nasty caricature of a man who resembles millions of Australian men."

Campbell (2012)

Joanna Murray-Smith's *Julia* was written ten years after Gillard's 'misogyny speech'. As such, it allows the audience to consider the values embedded in the context of the period whilst at the same time encouraging contemporary audiences to take stock of their own. Playwright Joanna Murray-Smith and Director Sarah Goodes have used the device of the 'Young Woman' archetype to explore the current conversation in Australian society about gender and misogyny in a way that distances the discussion from personalised experiences. Physically representing the generations that have come after Gillard's, the role of the 'Young Woman' is a physical reminder that Australia's first female prime minister has led the way for others through the difficulties of gendered notions of power. Director Goodes' choice to conclude the production with a digital representation of young people, projected onto the set, is another visual metaphor that represents change.

The exploration of the character of Julia has also allowed the creative team to explore the seismic changes in the national conversation about women. The traditional narrative, brought to our attention at the beginning of the production in the conversation between Julia and her mother and challenged by Gillard's activism and ambition in the 1980s, resolves itself for the character of Julia at the end of the 'misogyny speech'. A watershed moment for Australians that at the time appeared to be a failure for Gillard, the playwright's choice to end the character's journey at this moment allows the audience to see, as Gillard did, that society was changing. As Maley (2013) wrote:

"Gillard stood at the centre of a national conversation about sexism, and she was very conscious of that. How could she not be? We were constantly reminding her of it. What was extraordinary was how she was blamed for inspiring a sexism debate, by sheer dint of her existence."



# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

**When asking students/participants to embody characters who experience sexism, disempowerment, or oppression, encourage teachers/students/participants to:**

- a. Create a tap-out mechanism (so that no student should participate in triggering scenes if they do not want to).
- b. Debrief about experiences of intersectional oppression or disempowerment (across race, gender identity, sexuality, disability, class).

## Gender and Politics

### Activity 1

- a. Working as a class, brainstorm contemporary political leaders from around the world, over the last 10 years, noting names and countries on the white board.
- b. As a class, allocate the leaders to groups of approximately 4 – 5 students, whose job it is to find 2 images of each person on the class list and print them for the rest of the class.
- c. Place all the collected images together in the centre of the room in a 'Museum of Images'.
- d. Brainstorm the similarities and differences in the images and note the thoughts of the class on the board.
- e. As a class create a mind map in response to the following question:  
*What does political power look like?*

### Activity 2

- a. Playwright Joanna Murray-Smith begins *Julia* with a monologue delivered by a Narrator. The Narrator sets the scene for the audience and places Prime Minister Gillard in the moments before the 'misogyny speech'. As a class, use the Narrator's monologue to create the Parliament in the classroom. This might involve student actors taking on the role of The Prime Minister, The Leader of the Opposition, The Speaker, The Clerk of the House and MPs from both sides of the political divide. As a class, research the placement of the clocks in the Parliament and place them in position.
- b. Once the geography of The House of Representatives is clear, read the script again for symbols of power and authority. These symbols could be representative of Australia's coloniality, for example the Coat of Arms. These symbols could also represent gendered power. As part of this process, the class might discuss the symbolic nature of sound, proxemics and costume that is interwoven into Murray-Smith's writing.
- c. As a class, research the ratio of women to men in both the Gillard Government and in Abbot's Opposition in 2012. Collaboratively find ways of representing these numbers in the space. Students might find ties to represent men, and women's jackets to represent women but there might be other creative ways to represent these statistics.
- d. Analyse what can be seen by this recreation of The House of Representatives.

- e. Discuss with the student actors in role as The Prime Minister, The Leader of the Opposition, The Speaker, The Clerk of the House and MPs from both sides of politics how this might impact on your experience in the House.
- f. The student actor in the role as Julia could deliver the following extract from page 1 of Murray-Smith's text.
- "She stands on the floor of the Chamber... It's October 2012. She's been the PM for two years and four months and she's worn down. She's been hounded, slurred, dissected, libelled. She's been violated over and over again by words. She's been attacked for being too much of a woman, for not being enough of a woman. She cannot win."
- Julia* (pg. 1)
- g. As a class, evaluate the impact of gendered notions of power and authority on the person of Gillard as she speaks, using the following questions:
- How might the gendered nature of the House of Representatives impact on the way she sees herself in this moment?
  - How might the sounds that she can hear (bells ringing, jeering, talking) impact on her?
  - The Element of Drama: Contrast is used by Murray-Smith at the end of the monologue when the jeering and bells fade to silence. What impact might that have on the Parliament? On the audience?
  - How might Prime Minister Gillard be feeling in this situation? As a class, and using the answers from the discussion above, evaluate the way in which Gillard's power and authority as prime minister signifies at this moment. How does the circularity of the narrative change this at the end of the play?

## Identity, Gender and Power

### Activity 1

- a. Working as a class, brainstorm words that are about power and note them on the white board. Once the list has been completed, break into groups of approximately 4 – 5 students. Each group is tasked with allocating the words that have been generated by the class according to whether they felt each word was associated more with attributes that were applicable to men, women or are neutral words. Once completed, each group should share which words they felt were more likely to be associated with men and masculinity, which words they felt were more likely to be associated with women, and words that they felt were neutral.
- b. In the same groups, ask the students to create two freeze frames. One freeze frame should present an image of the more masculine group of words, the other freeze frame should present an image of the more feminine group of words.
- c. As a class, evaluate the freeze frames. What do they tell us about how our society understands identity, gender and power?

## Activity 2

Murray-Smith's script uses direct quotes from Julia Gillard's examples of misogynistic terms in her speech. These include:

- Ditch the Witch (pg. 53)
  - (Making an) 'honest woman of herself' (pg. 53)
  - Ju-liar... Bob Brown's Bitch (The sign referenced on pg. 53)
  - "Unfit for leadership because she was deliberately barren." (pg. 34)
  - "Must have died of shame..." (pg. 42)
- a. Working in groups, students work together to research one of the expressions above including its definition, its intent when spoken and cultural context. Each group presents their findings to the class.
  - b. Working together as a class, discuss the following questions:
    - What is the message being sent to the electorate?
    - Evaluate the impact of this message on the electorate.
    - Evaluate the impact of this message on Julia Gillard.
    - Evaluate the impact of this message on young, politically minded women.

## Activity 3

- a. Working in pairs, allocate pages of the script to the class so that the entire class has covered the work. Ask each pair to read their section of the script and note how often the character of Julia is told to be quiet or silent, even if she is addressing herself. As the class reports on their findings, ensure that the numbers are written on the whiteboard for the class to discuss using the following questions:
  - Who tells the character of Julia Gillard to be quiet?
  - Why might they do that?
  - Why does Gillard tell herself to keep silent?
- b. Working in groups of approximately 4 – 5 students, allocate each group a political institution that is important in Australian society. As a group, take on the role of the institution and devise a 60 second performance that presents the reasons why Julia's silence about sexism and misogyny might be in the institution's favour.

## Activity 4

- a. Sarah Goodes' production of *Julia* is reliant on sound, lighting and video design to create the imagined inner experiences of Gillard. Lighting Designer Alexander Berlage, Composer & Sound Designer Steve Francis and Video Designer Susie Henderson are key to creating the experience of the pressure on Gillard for the audience as they move between her imagined experience of the public and private domains.
  - a. As a class, brainstorm the remembered images that Video Designer Susie Henderson used to express the imagined inner workings of Gillard's mind. Arrange these images in groups to reflect the emotions that the character experiences when faced with Stanislavskian obstacles to achieving her intention. These might include pressure, frustration, sadness and grief.

- b. Working in groups of approximately 4 – 5 students, collaborate to develop your own suite of images that you might use to add to Henderson's.
- c. In the same groups, collaborate to find a contemporary soundtrack to complement the images that have been chosen. Where possible, the group could try to avoid a soundtrack that uses lyrics. As a group, ensure that your decision is grounded in Murray-Smith's text.
- d. Sound Designer Steve Francis has used the motif of the parliamentary bells to create a sense of tension in the performance of *Julia*. Working in the same groups, find two other sound effects that are appropriate for the text. As a group, ensure that your decision is grounded in Murray-Smith's text.
- e. Each group can reveal their images to the class with their sound design choices played over the top.
- f. As a class, evaluate the choices of each group using the following questions:
  - What was effective about the additional images?
  - What was effective about showing the images with sound?
  - What extra understanding did you gain from this workshop about identity, gender and politics? Justify your thoughts with theatrical evidence from the workshop.

## The Politics of Disgust

### Activity 1

Sit in a class circle. Place images of men and women in different clothing in the centre of the circle. Suggestions could include corporate suits, tuxedos, collared shirts, long trousers and shorts and a T-shirt for men. Images of women's clothing could include corporate suits, 'High Street' fashion including dresses from Country Road/Witchery, sun dresses and shorts and T-shirts. Alongside those images, include some examples of places that people might congregate. These could include church, an office, a cafe, a visit to Parliament House or attending court.

- a. Ask the class to decide, without the teacher's input, what clothes might be appropriate for the places that have been provided and provide a reason for the choice. Once the class has made their decisions, collectively present their thinking to their teacher. The teacher, after having listened to the conversation amongst the students might ask the following questions:
  - Were there any decisions made that you all agreed on? Why?
  - Was there any disagreement about the decisions taken by the class? Why?
  - If you disagreed with a decision made by the group, how would you change it and why?
- b. As a class, explore the idea of "dressing appropriately for the occasion". Questions to be considered might include:
  - What does this mean?
  - Why do we have this idea in society?
  - Who decides what is appropriate for an occasion?
  - What values does this reflect?

## Activity 2

The images below are designed by Renée Mulder, and they have been designed to evoke a sense of Julia Gillard but also to reflect the colours and shapes of the clothing that female politicians wear in Parliament.

- a. As a class, brainstorm the interesting features of these costumes, paying particular attention to colour and shape.
- b. Ask students to pose some theories as to why the colour and shape of each look is the way that it is.



**Costume Design for *Julia*, Renée Mulder**



# THE ELEMENTS OF PRODUCTION

## Questions for designer Renée Mulder

**Thank you for allowing students and teachers to view your design sketches of *Julia*. It is such a privilege to have access to your process in the Final Design Presentation. Can you tell us a little about the process of designing for *Julia*?**

The process started as a conversation with Director Sarah Goodes. We spoke about when Julia Gillard made that now famous speech and how that moment became viral around the world.

**The production of *Julia* relies on the audience being able to enter the inner world of the character. Can you tell us about the way that your set design enhances this experience for the audience?**

In *Julia* we explore the public and the private sides of the character. This is represented in the space by using reflection, refraction and isolating the stage into separate performance areas. The carpeted square serves as a public area, at other times it's a space that represents her inner thoughts. The front and side edges of the space move to a more memory space.

**Can you tell us about the way that set design works with the other Elements of Production (sound, costume, video, and lighting) to create Sarah Goodes' vision for *Julia*?**

All elements of the production work together very much hand in hand. Video and lighting provide focus and assist with the flow of the storytelling. The sonic world of the play is also incredibly important, bringing tension, suspense as well as emotion. Costume helps flesh out the character visually. All elements are equally important in a piece like this and are all key in supporting the cast's performance.

***Julia* uses props to indicate changes in time, place and situation in the character's inner and outer world. Can you tell us about the choices you made and the creative thinking behind these choices?**

As the setting for this production is sparse, any prop item that makes its way onto the stage has to be just right. For example when the character Julia is recounting a childhood memory – a vintage kitchen stool/step ladder is brought out for Justine to sit on. When she lets us in on a private thought a rather domestic floor lamp is positioned on stage. The symbol of a flower is a recurring thought and image that we see and consider throughout.

***Julia* is not biographical, but rather, an imagined journey into the experience of Australia's first female prime minister. How did this impact your choices for costume design?**

From the beginning we collectively decided that this wouldn't be a satire or strict impersonation of Julia Gillard. The character of Julia is not just Julia Gillard, she's also a narrator, an observer, the representation of the everywoman. Jessica's character floats between a young Julia, a reflection, an aid and a representation of the next generation. I've referenced a certain colour palette that was initially inspired by the colours Julia Gillard wore the day she made the famous 'misogyny speech'. However, the final costumes have really developed beyond this. For the clothes I've aimed to provide an essence of shape and function that serve all the roles that both Justine and Jessica play in the piece.

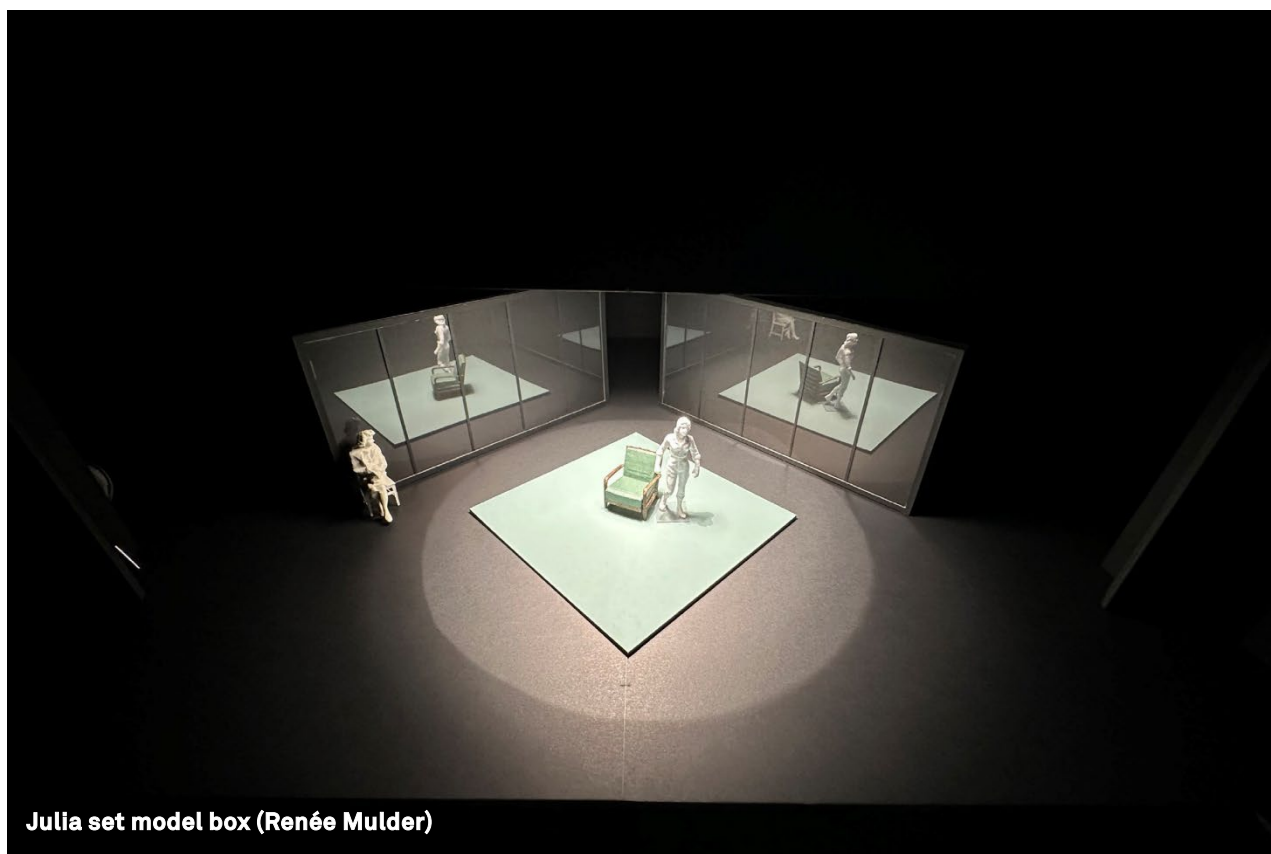
## SET DESIGN

Set Designer Renée Mulder has used various inspirational references to create a shared understanding of Julia Gillard's interior space. The work of video artist Pipilotti Rist is an evocative entry into the inner workings of Gillard's inner world. Rist's work *Ever is Over All* (1997) in which a woman, in a hopeful gesture, smashes the glass of a car window with beautiful long-stemmed flowers. Occurring in an inner-city street, this image suggests the power of feminine anger; able to change the world through the beauty of its expression.

### Pipilotti Rist. Ever Is Over All. 1997 | MoMA

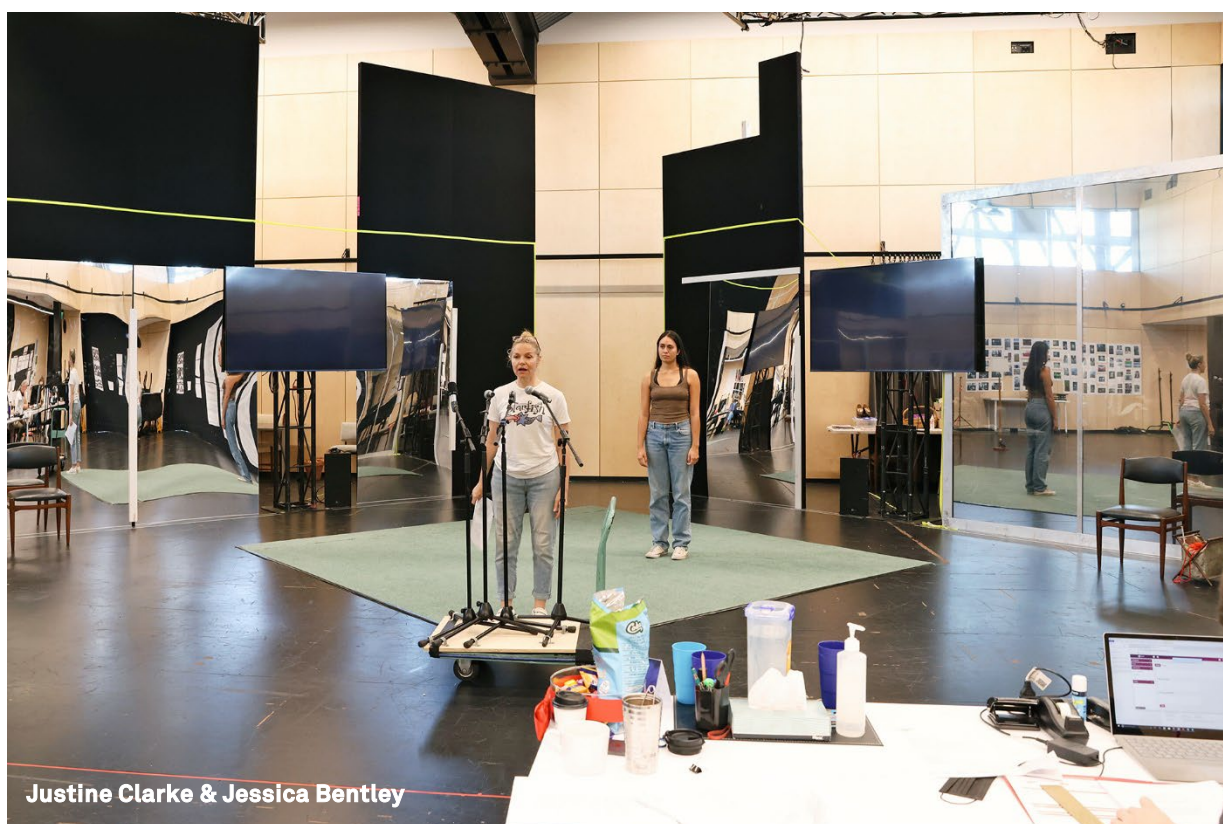
In addition, the work of choreographer Emmanuelle Hunyh, interested in the relationship dance, architecture, light, space and ikebana (Japanese Flower Arrangement) has been influential in exploring the creation of psychological space for Julia Gillard. Gillard's desire to support and develop future generations of women in the political arena is a beautiful gesture in which space is made for women to be unashamedly themselves.

Mulder's Set Model Box envisions a transformational space that reflects Gillard's psychological world as well as the material world in which Gillard lived. Mulder's design shows a mostly black space, with two 6m x 3m screens upon which images are projected. Made of glass, the screens also allow reflections to be created through Alex Berlage's lighting design. The reflective nature of glass works to communicate the intense pressure felt by Gillard as she is watched, observed and commented upon by those outside of herself. Additionally, the actor in the space can look at herself, amplifying the experience of being watched by wider society. The audience, also able to watch the reflections, is encouraged to view themselves as part of the narrative and, perhaps consider their own culpability in this period of Australian history.



The final video will be of young people slowly emerging and joining each other in the light. The projections, designed by Susie Henderson, include juxtaposed images and video. The floor of the model box has green carpet to reflect the green of the House of Representatives in Parliament and, set against the black floor of the performance space suggests the limits of the political space for Gillard, and by extension, women more broadly. The space itself will be minimal, with place, time and situation created by props that can be wheeled throughout the space. These will include swivel chairs to reflect the prime minister's chair in the House of Representatives, a kitchen stool from the 1960s, gardening tools and a trolley with microphones to represent the media.

The top, or ceiling of the space, has a large, black tubular shape in it, in which light will be used to create atmosphere that represents Gillard's feelings of isolation and interrogation. The circular shape will be suggestive of a megaphone and represents the media. The inner tube of the circular shape, painted white, has also been designed with an uneven, rough texture. This is suggestive of the ugliness and power of the oppressive weight of leadership on the prime minister.



## COSTUME DESIGN

Renée Mulder's costume design vision was to create a contemporary and casual image of the character of Julia. The creation of this character relied on the signature cut, colour and line of Julia Gillard's professional dress. It featured strong colours, fitted jackets and loose trousers, suggestive of Gillard's aesthetic, without slavishly reproducing it.

Similarly, the cut and shape of Gillard's hair is evoked through the styling of the actor's own, without relying on the use of a wig until the final moments of the production. During these moments, the deliberate donning of a red wig by the actor playing the character of Julia allows the audience to experience the original words of the 'misogyny speech' by the woman who conjured them into being.

Reinforced by the projection of Gillard's iconic red hair onto the glass screens, the power of this image evokes a strong memory of Julia Gillard, reminding the audience of past (and inappropriate) attention to her colouring and style.

The 'Young Woman' is costumed in a manner that suggests her youth, whilst making connections to the character of Julia through the similar colour tones chosen for her costume.

## PROP DESIGN

Set and prop Designer Renée Mulder has made the choice to anchor the material realities of Julia's existence with Realistic props. This fusion of the conventions of Expressionist set design, representing the inner workings of the character's mind, with the conventions of the Realistic props located in the appropriate historical context, gives insight into the perceptions of the character as she navigates her experience of the outside world. These props include swivel chairs to reflect the prime minister's chair in the House of Representatives, a kitchen stool from the 1960s, gardening implements, a house lamp and a ceramic flowerpot to which flowers are added to by the 'Young Woman' as the impact of the 'misogyny speech' begins to reverberate throughout Australia and the world.



Julia rehearsal room props

## VIDEO DESIGN

*Julia*'s video design, by Susie Henderson, makes use of abstracted images, reflections and refractions of light to allow the audience to enter the inner world of the character of Julia and experience an imagined sense of what it might be like to be the first female prime minister of Australia. Read against the Realistic props, the projections encourage the audience to engage empathetically with the creation of Julia's inner reality.

Towards the end of the production, the actor playing the character of Julia makes the choice to add the blue jacket and red hair of Julia Gillard in front of the audience to deliver the original speech for the audience. As this occurs, Henderson's video design incorporates projected images of young people listening to the speech. These images, contrasted with the newly Realistic creation of the character of Gillard, foreshadow the beginning of change as the articulation of Gillard's truth about her experience of misogyny and sexism in parliament. At the same time, the choice to transition the 'Young Woman' to the centre of the performance space, with the character of Julia stage right and the projections of young people behind, suggests that Gillard's 'misogyny speech' has had repercussions beyond its immediate context.

The emergence of a tiny flower from the floor of the set during this moment reinforces the motif of the simplicity of small acts of change, particularly those that are occurring for the first time.



Julia rehearsal room

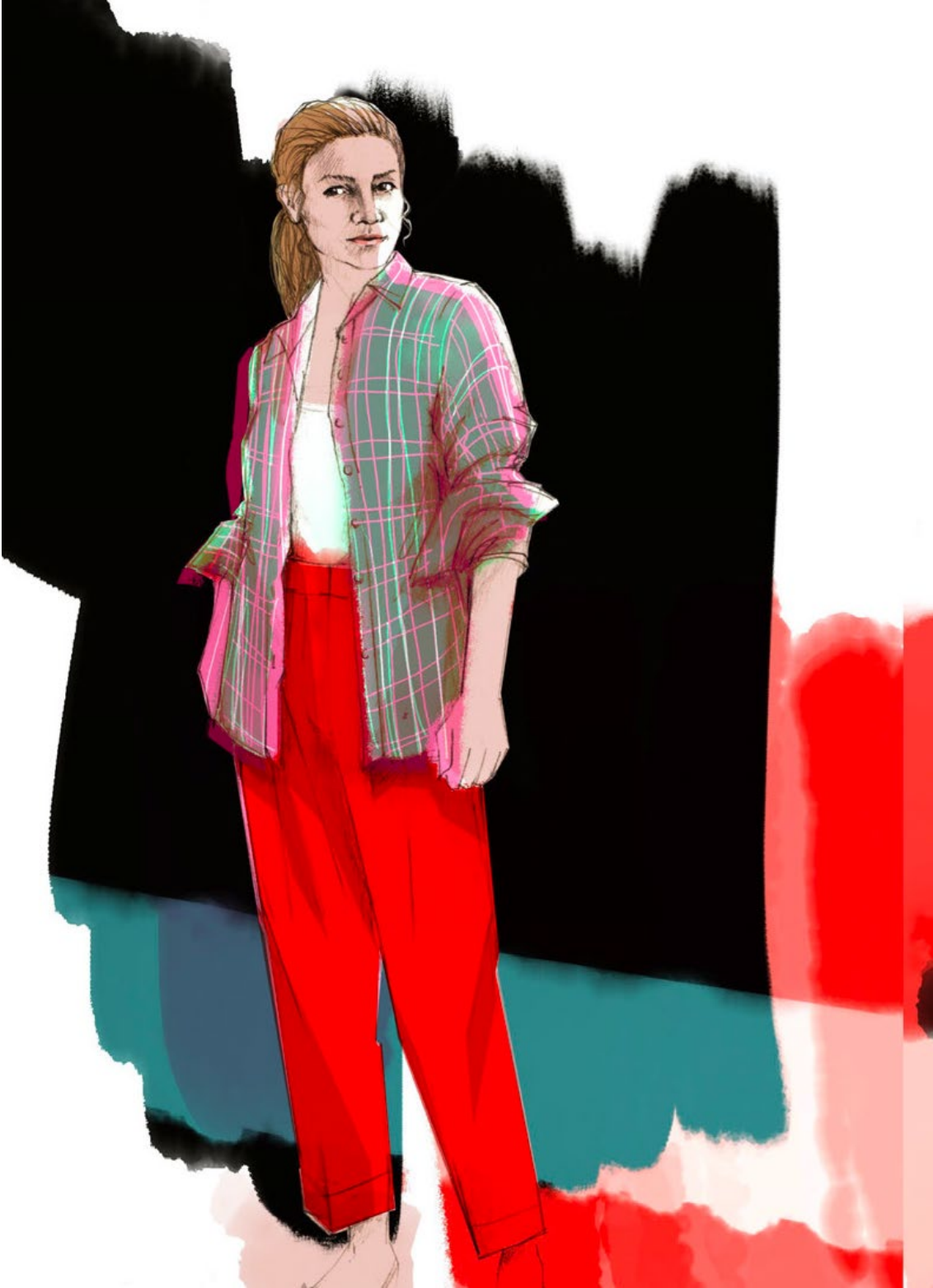


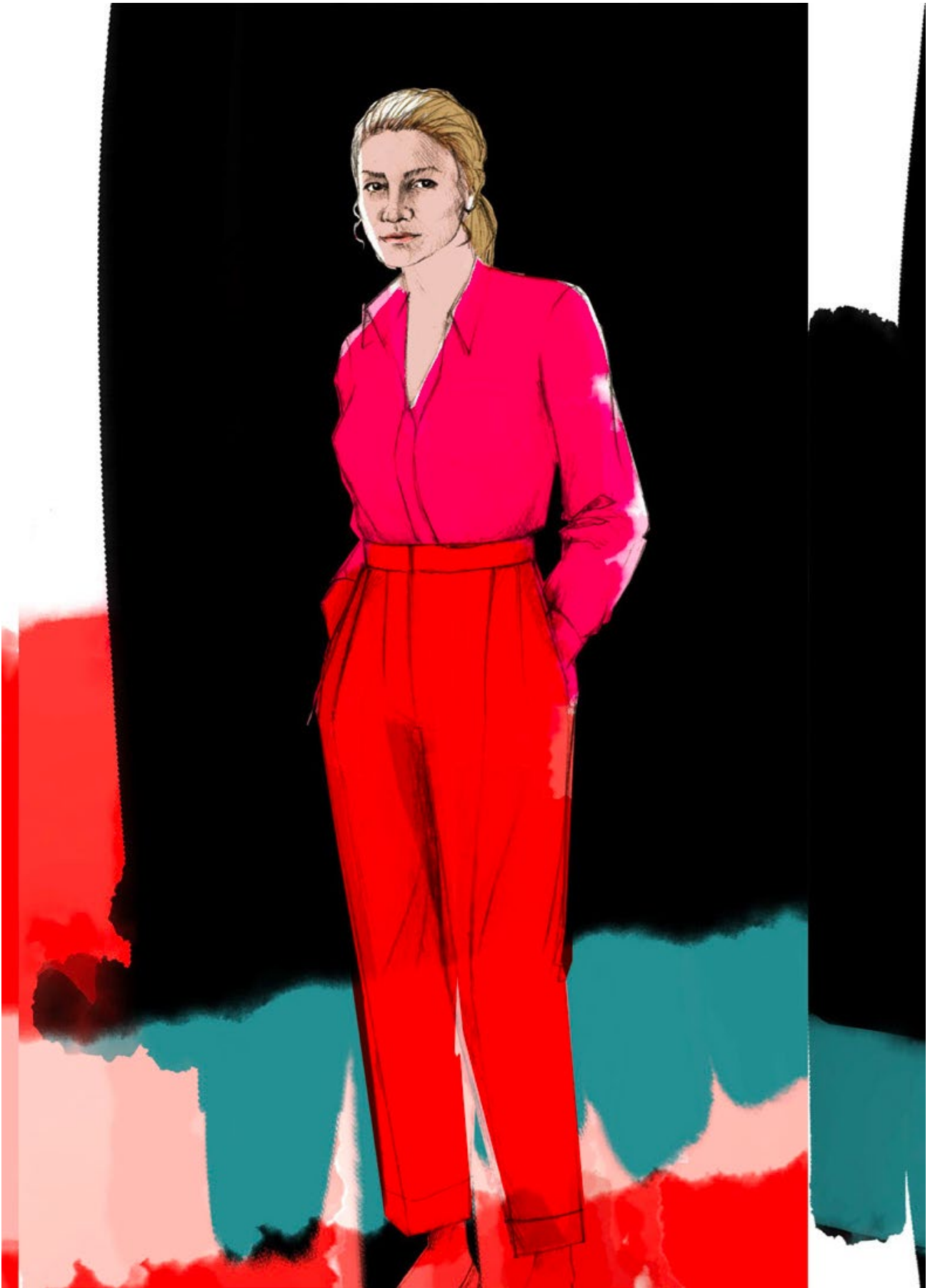
Julia rehearsal room props

# APPENDIX: DESIGN SKETCHBOOK

## COSTUME DESIGN

Costume design for Julia in *Julia* (Costume Sketch: Renee Mulder 2024 ©)



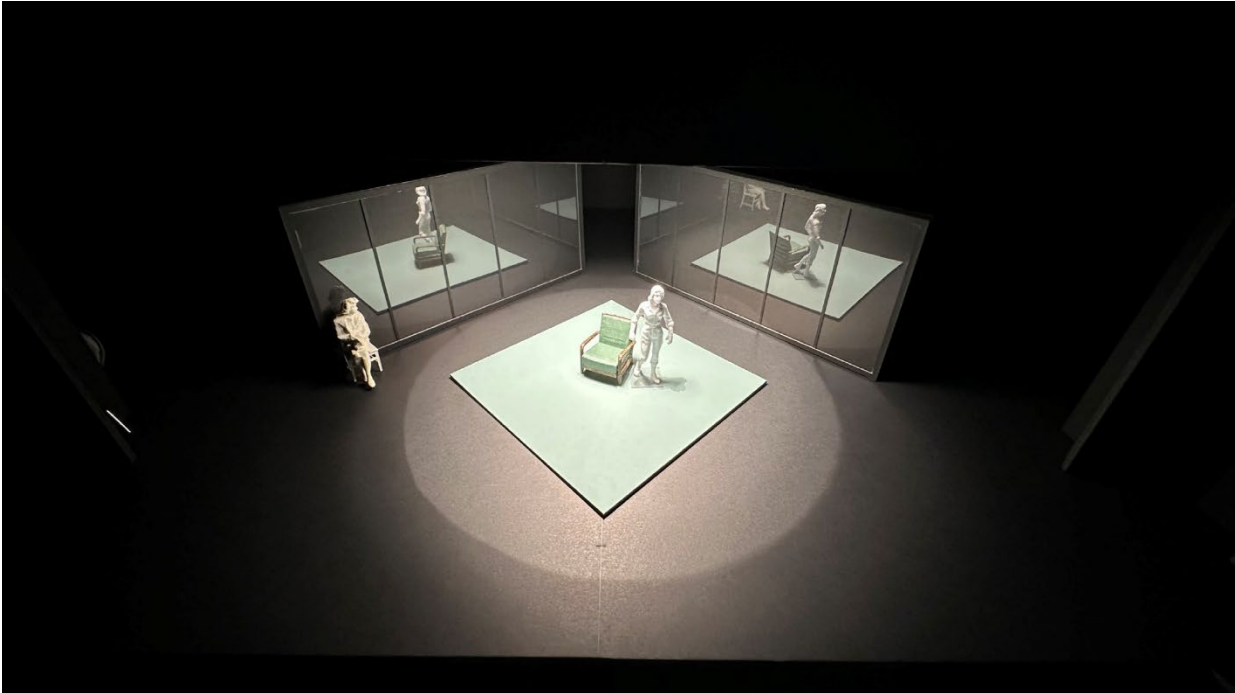






# SET DESIGN

Set design for *Julia* (Model Box: Renne Mulder 2024 ©)





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