

Hazelhurst Arts Centre
Young At Heart
Artist Focus: Alexander McKenzie



Hazelhurst

**SUTHERLANDSHIRE
ARTS
CENTRE**

Developed by Hazelhurst's Public Programs & Education team in collaboration with artist Alexander McKenzie, 2021

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Alexander McKenzie



Image: Artist Alexander McKenzie, Silversalt Photography

Alexander McKenzie is a painter of landscapes that generate beauty and mood and demand our attention to contemplate and read discreetly placed symbols. A visitor to gardens around the world, he draws on classical European formal gardens, Japanese Edo gardens, topiary and wonderful waterways, all meticulously detailed with metaphors and narratives.

His compositions navigate the viewer along pathways that suggest the choice of direction we must all make in our lives. He is also a portrait painter and has exhibited in the Archibald six times, the Wynne prize eight times and the Dobell Prize for Drawing at the Art Gallery of New South Wales.

He was recipient of the 1994 Inaugural Whiteley Scholarship, Julian Ashton Art School, Sydney. McKenzie has held many solo exhibitions, exhibits in Sydney, Melbourne and London and is represented by Martin Browne Contemporary, Sydney. He exhibited Alexander McKenzie: The adventurous gardener at Hazelhurst Regional Gallery in 2018. For further information visit Martin Browne Contemporary: [Martin Browne Contemporary | Alexander McKenzie](#) and the Alexander McKenzie website: www.alexandermckenzie.com.au

ABOUT THE WORK



Image: Alexander McKenzie: *In the Danger of Knowledge* (detail) 2017

This work features a formal garden with a fountain as the centre focal point. The garden pays tribute to Russell Page a famous British landscape designer. A symmetrical composition with a central pathway leads to a grand fountain with obelisk, while curving mazes on either side act as a distraction to this pathway. A crescent moon sits on top of the obelisk, indicating the start of something new. There are scrolled buxus and yew hedges with sculpted acorns, acting as focal points, introducing colour and symbolising strength and immortality. The central pathway with mazes acts as points of distraction and alternative pathways, all metaphors for navigating one's way through life, while the central fountain is the point of aspiration.

The foreground of the painting is overgrown suggesting that this garden will return to its native state if left unattended.

Ref: Carrie Kibbler, 'The Secret Life of Trees', p 27, in *Alexander McKenzie: The adventurous gardener*, pub. Hazelhurst Arts Centre 2018



Alexander Mckenzie: *In the Danger of Knowledge*, 2017

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- What can you see? Where might this be?
- Can you find a pathway? Is there more than one pathway to reach this point?
- What is at the centre of this painting?
- Would you take the pathway that leads straight to the fountain or take the route through the maze?
- Do you think this garden is well looked after or has it been abandoned?
- How does this artwork make you feel? Would you want to visit this place?

ART MAKING

Create your own mysterious garden.

You will need:

- Images of hedges, plants, statues or gazebos – see attachments
- Watercolour paints, coloured pencils or watered-down acrylic paint.
- Glue, scissors, paint brushes,
- Watercolour paper or thick paper.

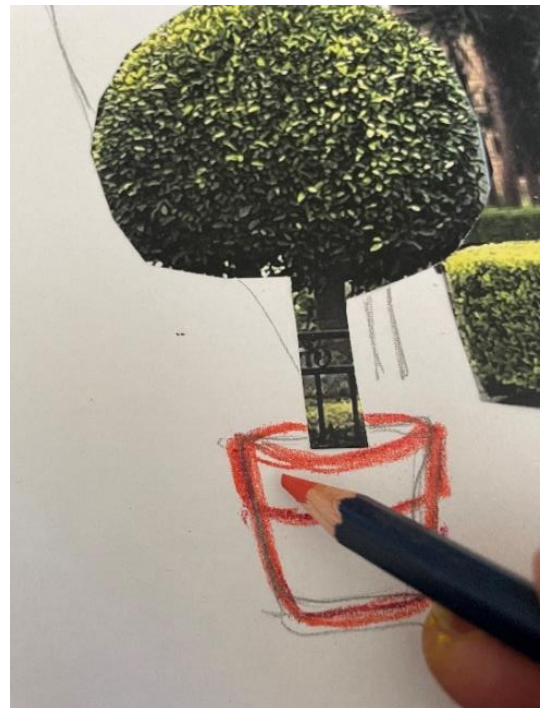


STEPS

1. Select and cut out the trees and plants for your garden. You can use the plant images attached below. You can cut out your own topiary plants from the photos of green hedges. You can also use free garden catalogues (you can find these are garden centres) or use your own images taken from your local area.



2. Select and cut out large trees, small shrubs, statues, buildings and flowers. Place everything on the paper first and do not stick down with glue until you are happy with the arrangement. Larger items would be in the foreground, while objects further away will be smaller. For the image below the flowers and shrubs were used in the foreground and the small gazebo in the background, to create distance or depth. The trees used on each side give symmetry and the path leads us to the gazebo. Once you are happy with the arrangement you can stick down your trees and shrubs. You can now draw in other details - flower pots, pathways, clouds etc.



3. Adding colour: watercolours, coloured pencils can be used to create detail – grass, sky, pathways, etc.

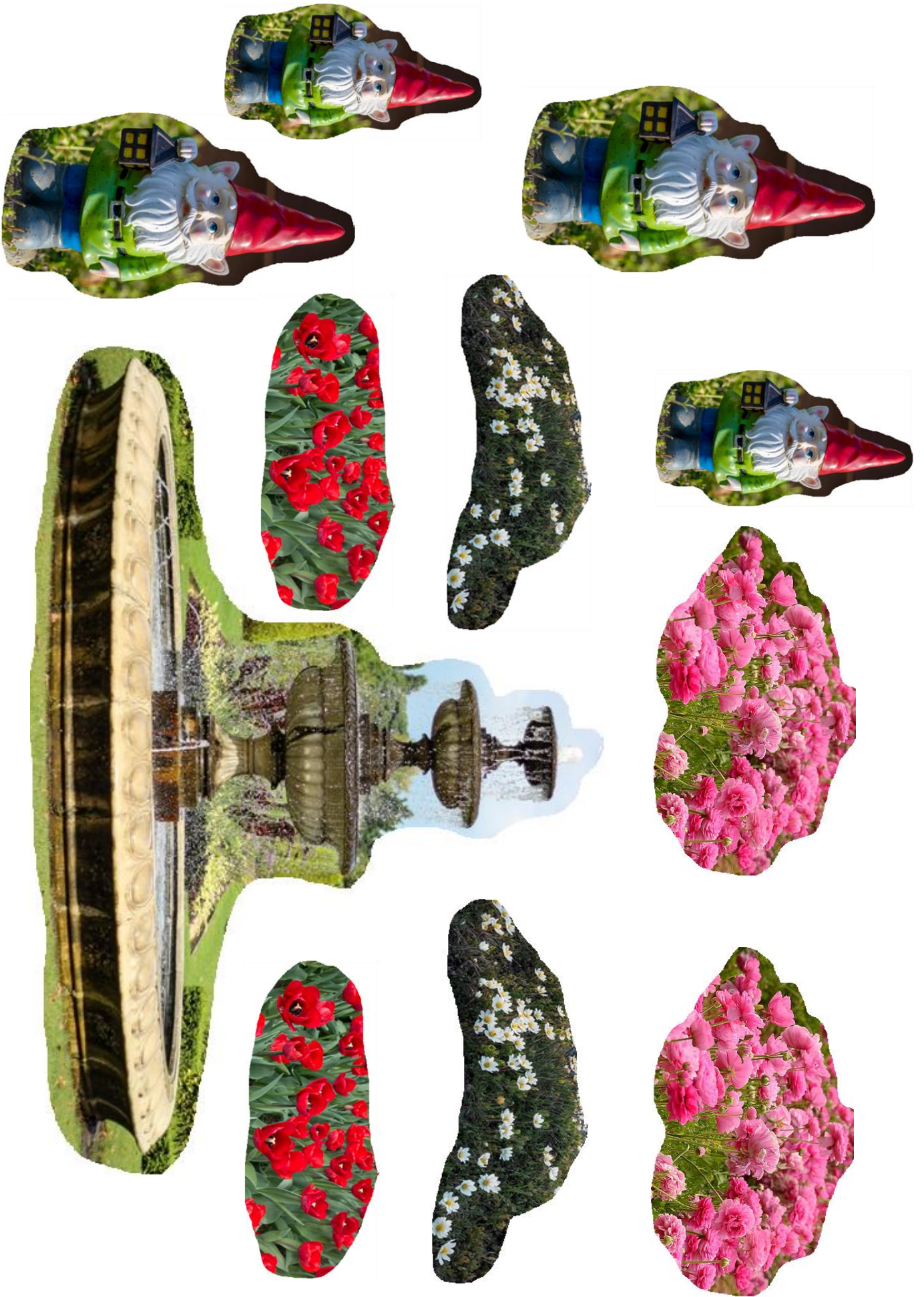


4. Finished result- note the colours used in the foreground are darker than the background.

Other ideas: You can create a gnome garden, natural bushland or cottage garden.













REFLECTION

Display and view

- What worked well?
- Can you see pathways through the works?
- What do you like most about these works?