

Bitter and sweet, nostalgic and transformational, *Lemonade* is making the best of your circumstances; it is transforming adversity into something beautiful that can be savoured and shared. It is persistence, self-care, wry humour and generosity. This lemonade is not saccharine — there's always that hint of acid, of something sharp and honed — but the edges are softened and warmed over time.

Lemonade is a bit old wisdom, a bit Beyoncé, and all fresh. The idea for the show emerged from Pari's inaugural open call, bringing together common themes found within the proposals. Shorthand for the phrase 'when life gives you lemons, make lemonade' and a nod towards that iconic 2016 album, this exhibition focuses on the power of transcending circumstance and overcoming obstacles.

While the bitter taste of lemons is something that can be appreciated over time, its acerbity can often linger. In *Besharam* (2020), emerging filmmaker Hersh Nat paints an intimate and earnest picture of the complexities of diasporic shame among young women. Scored by a conversation between friends and featuring evocative but defiant video portraiture, there is a staunch air to the young women smoking and saying f*** you to the boys and aunties who cast evil eyes on them.

Conversely, Kobla Photography's expressive series *Men Do Not Cry* (2020) responds to the social expectations placed on men to hide their feelings and the subsequent toll this takes on their mental health. Moving away from this narrative, the gentle strength and raw intimacy of the photographs portray a more sensitive form of masculinity.

Making lemonade involves a process of squeezing and straining to produce the precious juice. Leanne Tobin's self-portrait *My Story is More Than a Skin Colour* (2006) was made during a period of intense questioning and growth for the artist. Drenched in symbolism, the painting represents her journey breaking free of the barbed confines of colonial oppression to embrace her Darug heritage and responsibilities.

Amy Prcevic's *Workaround* (2019) also reflects on difficult past experiences to uncover the complexities and shortcomings of the workplace. Scrawled on offcuts purloined from her job, Prcevic's anecdotes convey a gradual unfolding of awareness of and resistance to imbalances of power.

The laborious process of making lemonade resonates with Jayanto Tan's paper and ceramic installation, which draws links between the Covid-19 pandemic, the AIDS epidemic and the artist's own personal memories. Made in the midst of Covid-19 restrictions, the folded paper ingots are typically used for Taoist funeral rites; however, here they are interpreted as fortune cookies, in homage to Felix Gozales-Torres' installations made in the height of the 1990s AIDS epidemic. Like a ceremonial offering, this work has been made to be shared and given away — visitors are invited to receive a paper object so that by the end of the show no paper remains.

Sugar is a necessary addition to lemonade to make the lemon juice more palatable. Similarly, in Martyn Reyes' three-channel video *Ikaw Ang Ligaya Ko* (2020), the artist, his brother and his father sing kundiman, Filipino songs of colonial resistance historically

disguised as love songs. In recalling these songs, Reyes and his family enact another form of resistance — against the loss of language in diasporic communities.

James Nguyen's installation *Self-portrait as a shitty fountain* (2020) also references ideas of transformation and disguise. Based on a previous work installed in an inner west Sydney gallery using contaminated water from Parramatta River, this iteration takes water from the sites of gay beats around Parramatta River, Duck River and Hunter's Hill. In this kinky and self-deprecating portrait, the fountain is a potent and playful symbol of sexuality at once bubbling and contained.

Finally, the window installation by Pari's florist-in-residence Sri W. Dhir was made in response to *Lemonade*. Featuring rare species of cacti and succulents, these plants thrive in tough environments and using very little resources, something Sri thinks we can all learn from.

– Kalanjay Dhir, Namika Parajuli, Amy Toma and Tian Zhang, 2020

Pari is supported by the NSW Government through Create NSW.

Lemonade is powered by Lupa Media Player.
More information at lupaplayer.com



Kobla Photography*Men Do Not Cry, 2020*

single-channel video, photographic prints

3 min 6 sec, 323 × 424mm, 424 × 523mm

Men do not cry!

Men do not cry!

Men do not cry!

I come from a hood where “men” don’t cry. We are praised for holding in the pain and misery. The hood where it is all good and men do not show their emotions. I come from Man-hood. For as long as I remember, I was told to suck it all in and keep on moving because this is Man-Hood and

Men do not cry!

I come from a culture, where my feelings are mostly expressed in harsh anger like a vulture. Where I would have to swallow, swallow and swallow all the intense emotions I feel. Just keep it moving because, Men do not cry! It was okay to express my emotions through anger, strength and volume, but not shed a tear since men do not fear. So, man Up because

Men do not cry!

After days, weeks, months and years of fears boiling up deep down in my gut, I wanted to express it but I had no idea how to. For years, my peers would tell me it is okay to be vulnerable and talk about how I was actually feeling, but I tried all ways of healing since I didn’t want to be less of a man. I was never taught how to be vulnerable nor did I hear any man being vulnerable about their true feelings. No male figure in sight to help me figure out how to deal with my mixed emotions. I turned to my brothers but all they could tell me was,

Nta mugabo urira!

Men do not cry!

I would only cry alone in the bathroom where no one could hear me cry for help. Drowning in depression, anxiety and insecurities with no one to pull me out for a grasp of air. Anchored to the bottom of the ocean by the words “Men do not cry”, but I was screaming in silence so I could shed one tear for someone to understand “I was not okay” I was actually in need of someone to understand that I was really not okay and there’s a lot I was battling with. My only coping mechanism was to smile, which eventually molded me into an eccedentesiast.

Men do not cry!

And that was the best way for me to deal with it all,

I just want to finish off by saying that I am finally free and, in a place, where crying is normal. I am free to express my emotions by speaking it out to someone who is willing to listen and help me heal. Hiding and crying on the bathroom floor is no longer my healing process. I built a strong relationship with the bathroom floor, but I had to let her go. Instead I can now cry right in front of anyone and it actually cleanses all the burdens I have been feeling deep inside. Here, you are not seen less of a man when you cry. But I do hope you felt and understood this eulogy. I am Sorry but this was the only solution I found from all the mental breakdowns I was having boiling inside of my soul. But now I Rest knowing it is okay to cry, because I learnt that

Men Do Not Cry!

Credits: text by Ibrahim Intwari, video by Aleese Musa.

Hersh Nat

Besharam, 2020

single-channel video

6 min 27 sec

Hersh Nat is a documentary filmmaker from Western Sydney that empowers the voices of diverse diaspora communities. *Besharam* (translation: Shameless) illustrates bold and dreamlike portrayals of girlhood by juxtaposing a delicately feminine representation of South Asian women, along with raw and nostalgic experiences. The film challenges traditional conceptions of identity, urging audiences to question who has the power to uplift the marginalized and overcome transgenerational cycles of trauma.

James Nguyen

Self-portrait as a shitty fountain, 2020

water samples, various containers, solar-power water pumps

dimensions variable

Self-portrait as a shitty fountain refers to Kenneth Anger's *Eaux d'Artifice* and Bruce Nauman. The queer and sexual connotations of the fountain is simultaneously an outpouring and formal evocation of containment. Pissing in a bucket, swimming in your own ejaculate. The water samples collected for this work are from well known gay beats along the Parramatta River, they also carry the chemical leachate and radiation markers of environmental violence and disaster along these waterways. As a conduit for poisoned water, the self-portrait seeks purity through contamination.

Amy Precvich

Workaround, 2019

matboards, untreated ply

1800 x 1400mm

The last time I worked full-time, I wanted to maintain a point in the day when my body could work through motions that didn't include touch typing or sitting at a standing desk, so I forced a swim into my day. I would optimistically cram in laps between 6.36 and 7.20am, in a way that never left enough time for sleep, or a relaxed breakfast, or writing, or thinking, or making, and contributed to a steady pattern of me running seven minutes late for work. Instead of fulfilling its role of mental recalibration, swimming was in competition with writing, eating, dressing, teeth brushing. My preferred morning activities were compromised in intensity or focus, or abandoned altogether, to fulfill my responsibility of arriving at my paid employment at a moment that approximated "on time".

Workaround situates paid labour as a structure that asks us to relinquish some autonomy over our own lives, with personal priorities often placed in competition with the mechanisms of power, surveillance and negotiation that operate in a workplace. By extension, *Workaround* recognises that human interaction is at the core of any workplace, and with that comes the possibility of incremental, human-focused revolutions in social and occupational space.

Martyn Reyes

Ikaw Ang Ligaya Ko, 2020

three-channel video

video: 3 min 15 sec

Kundiman is a traditional Filipino ode to the country that emerged during Spain's 300-year colonial rule. Locals weren't allowed to show signs of patriotism and as a result, the Kundiman was disguised as a form of love song directed at a particular person. The songs can be seen as a direct form of colonial resistance, however the loss of language both within contemporary Philippines and diasporic communities can be seen as a direct consequence of colonisation. This tension of oppressive resistance and consequence is explored through the close examination of the physical mechanics of language from the mouths of my father, brother and myself -- first and second generation Filipino-Australians.

Jayanto Tan

after felix gonzalez-torres (maling kundang), 2020

ceramic

100 × 140 × 140mm

masquerade ball party (topeng monyet), 2020

recycling paper, red thread

340 × 270 × 70mm

mon amour, not here not there nowhere (buah simalakama), 2020

recycling paper

variable

The 'thousands of fortune cookies' created during Covid-19 restriction, and responded to a comment made by 'the artist's friends' about what kinds of work would be made during the isolation. These simply meditation work reflects on social realities through representation of the thematic trinity of race, class, economic and the diverse spirituality that combines Taoism and Queer politics.

For Jayanto, as a Chinese-Sumatran immigrant artist living in Sydney, who fled poverty and political repression in search of a better life, these objects revive memory of family loss. And through colours as an expression of identity that culminate in a celebration of liberation and creative freedom that proposes a bridge from the past to the present, from trauma to healing, now to a diverse future not of 'difference' but of 'togetherness' in our today's contemporary Australia.

This work recalls the generosity and love expression that providing to share 'fortune cookies' with friends and acquaintances.

Leanne Tobin

My Story is More Than a Skin Colour, 2006

acrylic, mixed media, ochre, collage on hardboard

1400 x 1000mm

This painting tells my story of being pale-skinned, aware of being a Darug Aboriginal living on the land of my ancestors yet being afraid to talk for fear of criticism; a situation facing many Indigenous Australians today. In the foreground I am standing on one side of a barbed wire fence that's been broken representing the new-found freedom in acknowledging my heritage. The barbed wire fence represents the repression and denial of our culture, a result of a new way imposed upon us with the confiscation of our lands and subsequent decimation of our family structures. The shadows of my ancestors reach across the Cumberland Plains of Western Sydney up into the Blue Mountains, still here watching over their traditional country, now blanketed by the roads and buildings that now cover their homelands.

The crows in the distance are symbolic; guardians of secret knowledge. The smoke is the cleansing smoke of the Eucalyptus leaves connecting me with my past, preparing me to take on the responsibility of being a Darug custodian of this land and to speak the truth.

The Willy-Wagtail is my messenger; holding great significance to me. He is holding a red string in his beak, a clue: remnants of the past. The landscape has been painted using the red ochre collected from my traditional land. The white dots traversing the land symbolize the tracks of the Creator Spirit and the continuous link with my heritage, a blood link that still holds me despite the whitening of my skin colour.