

13.04.2025  
– 08.06.2025

ORGANISED BY EMMA CAO, SEHEJ KAUR SEHMBHI, NAOMI SEGAL  
EXHIBITION TEXT BY DONNALYN XU

# Shape- Shifting

First there is movement: shedding skin, rupturing, altering form—perhaps escaping form entirely. Shape-shifting is mythical, often seen in picture books and fairytales, but it is also a queering that responds directly to our environment and experiences. It involves code-switching and adapting to a world that is not built for particular bodies, which asks us to continuously take new shapes and explore different avenues as a method of survival.

The artists in this exhibition interrogate the past, upholding their lineages by turning material scarcity into abundance. Cultural preservation is a transformative act—whether it is meditating on the quiet intimacy of an object, continuing traditional practices through contemporary mediums, or weaving lost tapestries into an imaginative interpretation of what could have been. *Shape-shifting* looks beyond the binary framework of reaction and resistance and asks us what it means to move beyond our current state and enter a new one; to gather our resources, repair, and rebuild.

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## 1. Justin Cueno

*Skin*, 2025  
Dual channel video  
9:18 min

*Skin* is a multi-sensory installation exploring Filipino diaspora, identity, and cultural memory. Featuring a two-channel video performance, the work reimagines Filipino history through contemporary media arts.

This project reflects on the tension between connection and disconnection—an experience shared by many in the diaspora. As a second-generation migrant, I navigate a fragmented sense of identity shaped by colonial histories and cultural erasure. *Skin* uses performance, and immersive installation to question what it means to be Filipino when our stories feel obscured.

In the video performance, my body is covered in white paint using a *walis tingting* and wrapped in banana leaves—a gesture symbolising colonial imprints on language, religion, and tradition. The self-portraits, with my face obscured by banana leaves and set against rural landscapes, echo themes of longing, erasure, and reconstruction.

Originally conceived as a decolonisation project, *Skin* has become a personal meditation on displacement, inheritance, and reimagining. It asks: What remains when history is rewritten? How do we reclaim what was lost? And how do we create meaning when records of our past no longer exist?

## 2. Zuraisa

*An-Nisa*, 2024  
Ceramic tiles  
40 x 50 cm

*Indische Vrouwen*, 2024  
Ceramic tiles  
30 x 40 cm

Zuraisa explores the intersection of religious symbolism and feminine identity through her ceramic tiles. She juxtaposes the intricate patterns of Islamic art with the fluid, organic shapes of a female form, creating a dialogue between tradition and personal autonomy. The artwork reflects a subtle yet powerful critique of the rigid gender expectations imposed by patriarchal structures within religious contexts. By fusing these elements, Zuraisa challenges the conventional portrayal of women's roles within Islam, offering a nuanced commentary on

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resistance to prescribed gender norms. The use of delicate curves in contrast with the geometric precision of Islamic ornamentation serves as a visual metaphor for the tensions between conformity and liberation, ultimately questioning the imposition of restrictive ideals on women's bodies and spirits.

### 3. Leo Bagus Purnomo

*Untitled, 2023-2024*

Dye on cotton-silk voile

Dimensions variable

These fabric works were created through a combination of batik-inspired wax-resist dyeing processes, exploring the affective potential of these gestures in shaping an Indonesian-diaspora identity.

The photographic-like images are created by screenprinting a wax-emulsion that resists the water-soluble cold-dye, creating an effect reminiscent of cyanotypes. However, the flow of the emulsion and the two-step waxing and dyeing process result in blurred, bleeding, and obscured imagery. Some pieces also incorporate flowing lines characteristic of traditional batik, created by applying hot wax with a janting — a traditional tool for applying hot wax. These designs evoke a contemporary tattoo style called cybersigilism, which blends technological structures (such as circuitry and flowcharts), magical sigils, and tribal patterns into intricate, organic abstract forms.

By utilising these techniques, I aimed to create works that embody the perceived 'not-quite-ness' of diaspora identities, questioning the complexities of self-teaching traditional methods via the internet to bridge cultural gaps from afar.

### 4. Georgia Mulholland

*It's Your Head That Bleeds, 2024-2025*

Sound and moving image installation; printed book

92 min; 84 pages

*It's Your Head That Bleeds* unfolds as both a printed book and sound installation, born from the first phase of the artist, Georgia Mulholland's, residency with Wonder Cabinet in Bethlehem, Palestine. In late 2024, Georgia engaged in a series of intimate interviews with her Palestinian friends in the West Bank, asking them to speak on their experiences in a moment defined by the ongoing echoes of 13 months of genocide.

The voices within the project are not just stories; they are living expressions of resilience, fear, hope and guilt — directly transcribed from those conversations. This work is an attempt to carry their voices across borders.

The accompanying video, created specifically for *Shape-shifting*, invites viewers into a space of stillness and deep listening. Shot in black and white, its minimal visuals — a silhouetted listener, the slow, mechanical rhythm of a cassette player — echo the act of bearing witness. As time

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stretches and softens, the absence of spectacle becomes its own form of attention. In this space, viewers are not asked to watch, but to listen — not just to voices, but to the weight of what they carry.

The work responds to the theme of *Shape-shifting* by seeking new forms of expression when existing ones are made impossible — an act of resistance against the erasure of culture and narrative, and a gesture toward preserving what refuses to be silenced.

*Book Details:*

Stories within this book are written in both Arabic and English, developed through a close collaboration with Palestinian architect Bara'a Alaraj. Each book was delicately hand wrapped by the artist with fibrous mulberry paper.

84 pages, 40 individual stories. Limited print-run.

Printed on 100% Recycled Envirocare Paper.

**5. Samer Almansour**

*The Coffin of Secrets (#1), 2019*

Copper and silver

15 x 10 cm

\$1500

*The Coffin of Secrets (#2), 2019*

Copper, silver and ceramic

10 x 5 cm

I create handmade antique-style artworks using repurposed metal wires, twisting and shaping each piece by hand. This method is both a necessity and a reflection of my commitment to sustainable craftsmanship.

Back home, I worked as an artist, creating custom pieces, but after moving to Australia as a refugee, I had to pause my practice for stability. Now, working from my shed after long days, I explore themes of culture, displacement, life, and death—how experiences shape us and what we leave behind. My work revives traditional skills, honouring the past while sharing my heritage in a new context. I am ready to return to my artistic roots and showcase my work in Australia.

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## 6. Jenn Tran

*Khâm Thơ (Pearl Poem), Series 2, 2025*

Clay brick, mortar, steel, reflective heat transfer vinyl  
55 x 52 x 22.5 cm

*Khâm Thơ (Pearl Poem), Series 2* is a meditation of suburbia and my Vietnamese heritage through a brick-and-mortar stool embellished with reflective vinyl inspired by *khâm xà cừ* (mother-of-pearl inlay).

*Khâm xà cừ* is a traditional Vietnamese craft where nacre is flattened, cut, and inlaid into *đồ gỗ* (wooden furniture), *tủ thờ* (altar cabinets) and other objects. Historically expensive and made for the upper class, it remains one of many cultural crystallisations of Vietnamese craft to this day.

My parents, who fled Vietnam for Australia during the war, larger *khâm xà cừ* were reserved for the motherland as it was impossible to bring over but some artworks were brought over decades later. "*Ngư: a fisherman, Tiều: a lumberjack, Canh: a rice field worker, Mực: a young buffalo farmer*" my mum would explain, pointing at a small polyptych *khâm xà cừ* that hangs in the sunroom to me. I was always fascinated by *khâm xà cừ*. It's connection to land and sea, the iridescent texture and the distinct motifs which all became the foundation of this work.

The substitution of nacre with reflective vinyl honors my father, a postal courier, whose hi-vis taped polo I would remember shining in the sunlight. The brick material is reminiscent of the homes we have lived in the suburbs — the housing commission unit in Ascot Vale and the terracotta brick home in Avondale Heights. And the stool shape, mimicking a real *khâm xà cừ* chair, is a construction of my diasporic experience, where I tread distantly yet yearn for meaning in my Vietnamese identity that feels true to me.

## 7. Amy Hill

*Walking on Country, 2020*

Acrylic on canvas  
120 x 90 cm  
\$650

*Native pigface flower, 2020*

Acrylic on canvas  
120 x 90 cm  
\$650

The pigface flower blooms in vibrant hues, its delicate petals unfolding like a symbol of hope and resilience. This artwork captures the essence of walking on country, where every step reveals a new story, a new connection to land, and a new sense of belonging.

For sales inquiries please contact Amy via [mrsamyhill@hotmail.com](mailto:mrsamyhill@hotmail.com).

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### 8. Intizor Otaniyozova

*druzhba narodov (friendship of peoples), 2023*

Single channel video

25:15 min

Spring day in Almaty. Uyghur women gathered at a cafe in Sultan-Qorgan to compete in preparing traditional dishes. It is difficult for the jury, because they understand the importance of their mission. Food, dress, dance, language, song — everything needs to be preserved and not forgotten. For collective memory, it doesn't matter whether the memory actually happened. Let Shakespeare's tragedies be staged in theaters, but in the Qorgan cafe everyone's heart is already burned.

### 9. Lige Qiao

*我,父亲,白桦林: Why are we still sitting here when it's winter outside?, 2022*

Oil and acrylic on MDF boards, metal hinges

183 x 275 cm

Merging childhood memories with the white birches through the train's window, Lige tries to reallocate their early lived experiences by deliberately layering different periods of their life. This work is dedicated to the younger self of the artist, who would take 14-hour train ride to visit their father, who worked remotely in Northwestern China, a ritual that continued almost every year until adolescence. Lige finds themselves keep going back to the time when they did not question their father's incompetence and patriarchal authority during the making, in which an obscure correlation between the birch trees and their father was developed.

Pari is supported by the NSW Government through Create NSW, and the City of Parramatta.

Pari is assisted by the Australian Government through Creative Australia, its principal arts investment and advisory body.

Shape-shifting is powered by

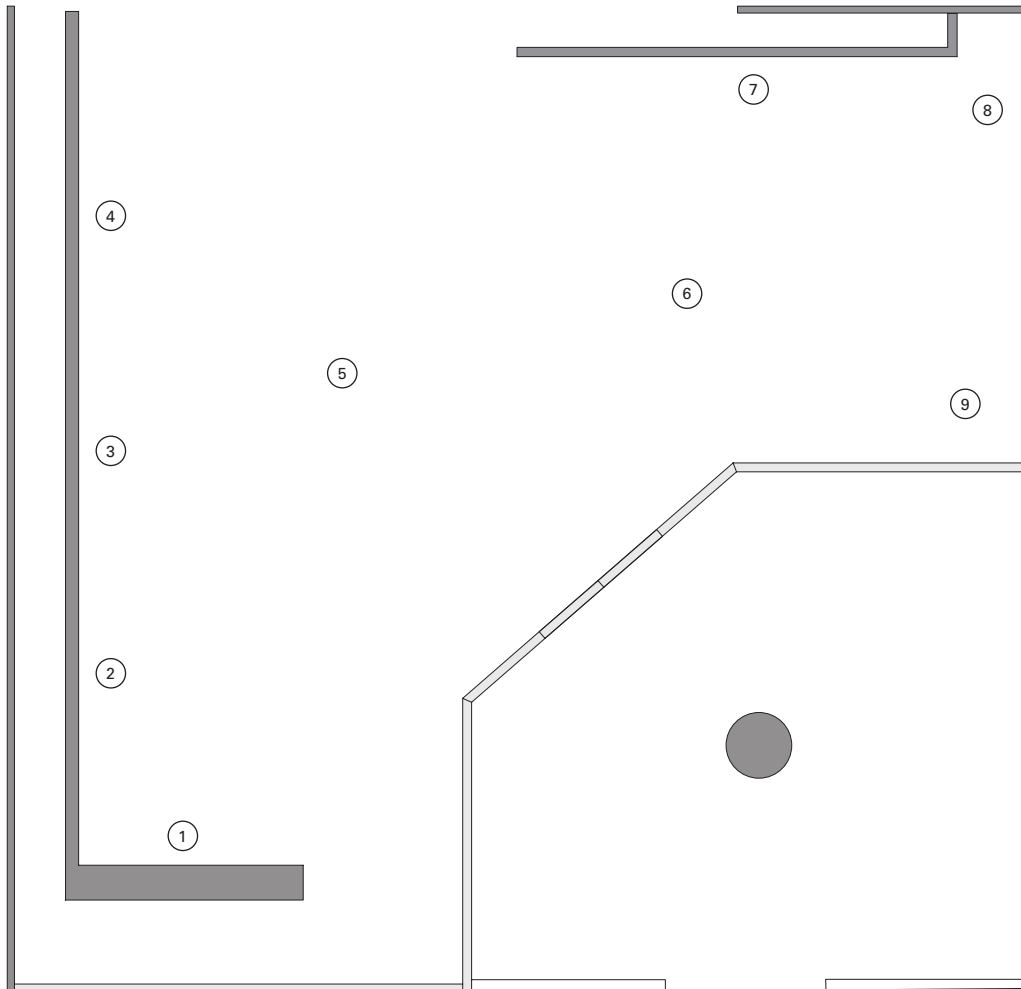
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- 1 Justin Cueno
- 2 Zuraisa
- 3 Leo Bagus Purnomo
- 4 Georgia Mulholland
- 5 Samer Almansour

- 6 Jenn Tran
- 7 Amy Hill
- 8 Intizor Otaniyozova
- 9 Lige Qiao