

12. 02. 2021
– 07. 03. 2021

RICHMOND KOBLA DIDO (KOBLA PHOTOGRAPHY), LEILA EL RAYES, KATH FRIES, MEHMET MEVLÜTOĞLU AND FERAS SHAHEEN

CURATED BY KALANJAY DHIR, TALITHA HANNA AND TIAN ZHANG

This is Pari's first trip east. As a new artist-run space on Darug land in the shifting cityscape of Parramatta, *5 from 5* is our debut off-site project.

Pari is run by a group of nine directors who work in a collaborative and flat structure. We make decisions communally on the program, artists, operations and everything that happens in the space. The artists in this mini-exhibition have been selected collectively by the Pari team—one from each of the five exhibitions since our space officially opened in October 2019. The process of curating this project has allowed us to reflect on our first year or so, and our fledgling steps of creating an artist-run and community space. Taken together, the works represent some of the core principles of Pari's program—reflecting the intersections of the social, political and personal, as well as bringing local artists in conversation with artists from beyond.

Our inaugural exhibition, *10 Degrees Hotter* (2019), referenced the urban heat island effect that occurs when heat is trapped in the vast concrete expanse of Western Sydney. This artificial climate became a metaphor to describe the energy that emanates from artists in the area, captured here in Leila El Rayes' *Let me hear your voice, give us a call yeah* (2019). The video work flips the hyper-sexualised imagery of Orientalist harem paintings and, instead, reimagines a scene with symbols that are ingrained in the masculine identity of the western suburbs: the shisha, the motorbike and sportswear.¹ Leila has choreographed the performance to be intimidating — suffocating fumes, revs and shouts from the boys and bikes, and yet in the eye of the storm we see the tenderness of masculinity.

5 from 5 features a new iteration of Mehmet's work from *Mixed Business* (2020), an annual exhibition series that features work by some of the extended Pari family who volunteer their time to build, paint and run the space. In *Mixed Business*, Pari invokes family-run corner stores as a mode of operation for multiplicity and exchange, community and convenience. Mehmet Mevlütoğlu's *Area Drip* (2021) was a popular work from the show, cutting and sewing together cultural signifiers. Mehmet refashions the aspirational desire behind designer brands such as Louis Vuitton, alongside suburban innovation or misuse.

In *Companions* (2020), materials were active partners in artists' practices, and the subsequent works were collaborations: the result of a push and pull between human and non-human companions. In Kath Fries' *Murmurings ii* (2021) and *Respire i–ix* (2018-2020), dried fungi are encased with beeswax in glass, fixed in time, while new growth sprouts below. Rather than exhaling oxygen like plants, fungi breathe out carbon dioxide as humans do, breathing alongside us. The dried mushrooms in *Respire i–vi* are preserved, held in a kind of afterlife-limbo, communing with us to reflect on ecological endurance and fragility.

In *Sports Show* (2020), artists drew on sport as a way to tell stories about what it means to be a human interacting with other humans in the world. Permeating the boundaries between soccer and other subcultures, Feras Shaheen's playful installation fuses elements of hip hop, skating, football freestyle and klapping.² In *Another Mixtape* (2020), Feras and his collaborators infiltrate urban spaces, mashing up street and sport cultures to create a new remix. Channeling the aesthetic and ethos of these subcultures, Feras critiques the authority and commercialisation of sport.

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First shown in *Lemonade* (2020), Richmond Kobla Dido (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. Bitter and sweet, nostalgic and transformational, *Lemonade* was making the best of your circumstances; transforming adversity into something beautiful that can be savoured and shared. A bit old wisdom, a bit Beyoncé, and all fresh.

- 1 OneFour, *Spot the Difference* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ajjtzwz930>
2 Klapping is a type of street soccer

Pari's exhibitions covered in *5 from 5*:

10 Degrees Hotter, 12 October – 23 November 2019

Curation and exhibition text written by Kalanjay Dhir & Tian Zhang

Mixed Business, 1–29 February 2020,

Curated by Suzanne Claridge and Gianna Hayes. Exhibition text written collaboratively by Pari

Companions, 18 July – 30 August 2020

Curation and exhibition text written by Akil Ahamat, Rebecca Gallo and Talitha Hanna

Sports Show, 13 September – 25 October 2020

Curation and exhibition text written by Rebecca Gallo, Talitha Hanna and Tian Zhang

Lemonade, 8 November – 20 December 2020

Curated by Kalanjay Dhir, Namika Parajuli, Amy Toma and Tian Zhang.
Exhibition text written by Kalanjay Dhir, Rebecca Gallo, Namika Parajuli, Amy Toma and Tian Zhang

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Richmond Kobla Dido (Kobla Photography)

Men Do Not Cry, 2020

single-channel video, colour, sound, subtitles, 3:06 minutes

photographic prints, 4 prints, 32.3 × 42.4 cm; 1 print, 42.4 × 52.3 cm

Courtesy the artist

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.

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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!

Text by Ibrahim Intwari

Kath Fries

Respire i-ix, 2018-2020

air-dried oyster mushrooms, beeswax, glass terrariums

9 parts, each 38 × 16 × 16 cm

Courtesy the artist

Murmurings ii, 2021

pink oyster mushrooms (*Pleurotus Djamor*), substrate, bark, concrete

12 × 14 × 80 cm

Courtesy the artist

The process of breathing reaches into our bodies and beyond our skin's porous boundaries. Breathing is fundamental to humans, as it is to the metabolism of all living beings and systems of the Earth's biosphere. Breathing is meditative and interconnective, each breath we take is a reciprocal exchange with our surroundings.

Fungi – just like humans – breathe in oxygen and exhale carbon dioxide, the opposite to plants. *Respire* features lung-like glass terrariums containing dried oyster mushrooms, sealed with beeswax and preserved like a scientific collection of extinct specimens. Quietly conjuring a sense of grief, these works resonate out into an expansive awareness of loss, as Anthropocene multi-species mass extinction rates climb and the variety of life in our biosphere shrinks at apocalyptic rates. Beeswax leaching from the base of each cylinder echoes this crisis, conjuring Colony Collapse Disorder and the accelerated loss of insect populations globally. Although often overlooked, both insects and mushrooms are fundamental to the functioning of all

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ecosystems (as food for other creatures, pollinators, recyclers of nutrients and vital to soil health) so their declines will be catastrophic for all life on Earth.

As our human populations rapidly escalate, the diversity of life in our biosphere is shrinking dramatically, yet there is still hope to rebalance how we live and breathe with others in the Earth's shared airspace. With each breath we are absorbing and releasing into our surroundings, interconnected with the matter-flows of our immediate and extensive environment.

Feras Shaheen

Another Mixtape, from the series *Cross Cultures*, 2020

single-channel video, colour, sound, 19:26 minutes

Courtesy the artist

Chris' Camera, from the series *Cross Cultures*, 2020

Sony HDR-FX1 camcorder with MK2 fish-eye lens, traffic sign, plastic, aluminium, screen

105 x 95 x 95 cm

Courtesy the artist

KickRoll™, from the series *Cross Cultures*, 2020

Football (Adidas), grip tape, metal skate trucks, polyurethane wheels, stickers

26 x 22 x 21 cm

Courtesy the artist

Pharrell Williams, halfpipes & football... *Cross Cultures* explores the fluid contemporary identities of Generation Y. Street subcultures emerged as an expression of multicultural difference, defying traditional societal structures and enacting resistance. The environments and locations where street artists develop their craft are intrinsic to how street art is made. Born in Dubai to Palestinian parents and later, relocating to Western Sydney, Shaheen's practice speaks to the multicultural mix of Arabic and Australian forms of street culture and sport.

Motivated by Australian artists Ahilan Ratnamohan, Shaun Gladwell and UK writer, King Adz, *Cross Cultures* focuses on the subcultures of hip hop, skating, football freestyle and klapping to identify shared aspects of the urban body's figural and malleable language. Shaheen collaborates with Sydney-based street artists to illustrate 'street etiquette', movement vocabulary, fashion and found objects. He presents an emic expression that allows for the reinterpretation of street artists as alternate beings, no longer confined to the suburban settings of courts and skate parks. Instead, they find themselves in dialogue with art, practicing migration and carving an authentic existence away from commoditisation. Conversely, brands such as Red Bull and Nike have given street cultures a platform to further explore and create within their communities.

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In blending elements of video, photography, dance with installations of readymade objects, abstract forms and durable materials, *Cross Cultures* represents the opportunity for sport and street cultures to transcend commercialisation and ratify themselves as art forms.

Credits

Another Mixtape features DOBBY, Jackson Garcia, Tom Kentta, Yuki Tokimoto, and Feras Shaheen. Music by DOBBY ft. Feras Shaheen

Mehmet Mevlütoğlu

Area Drip (Safety Bandoulière 25), 2019

imitation Louis Vuitton Speedy Bandoulière 25, trolley safety strap

The first time I saw a trolley safety strap being used for its non-intended purpose was in early high school; the delinquent kids who were cool in spite of their rebelliousness were walking into school one morning strapped, as the smell of durries followed them. I always wanted to be the cool kid in school. Being from the area, it seems to be the norm for most of us to yearn for materialistic luxuries at one point or another. Maybe it's that done up Subi or it's an authentic Louis V Speedy Bandoulière. I'm content with my knock-off because now the scent of durries follows me.

Leila el Rayes

Let me hear your voice, give us a call yeah, 2019

4-channel video, colour, sound, 6:30 minutes

Videographer: Yiani Andrikidis

Courtesy the artist