

In the time it took for Pari to form and to negotiate our lease, a whole stadium was built down the road.<sup>1</sup> On Friday and Saturday nights, there's a steady pilgrimage of red and black, or blue and gold down O'Connell Street. With apologies (and greetings!) to these crowds of Bankwest Stadium devotees, the artists in Sports Show aren't necessarily obsessed with sport itself – although some definitely are. They draw on sport as a way to tell stories about what it means to be a human interacting with other humans in the world.

Sport can be synonymous with some of the most aspirational human qualities: peak achievement, endurance, strength – and collaboration. People come together, wear their colours and get swept up in the passion of a common goal. Sport can also go hand in hand with conflict, violence, discrimination, corruption and abuse. Like those who play it, sport is complex and at times contradictory, and this is why we're drawn to it. It's joyful and empowering, messy and political, as the works in this show attest.

During Covid, the role of sport within our community has been a point of contestation. Many of us have had to postpone (or give up) our seasons in order to keep each other safe and yet sport was also one of the first activities to enjoy loosened restrictions. Marian Abboud and Vicki Van Hout's collaborative work *ريصع (Juice)* (2020) was devised in the midst of Sydney's lockdown, and filmed as restrictions eased. Abboud, Van Hout and collaborators Tania Abbi-Assaf and Susan Abboud humorously test the limits of their bodies and minds within the limitations of this current time, making do with the ubiquitous half-time orange as a stand in for weights, pom-poms and exercise ball.

Aspects of sport often bleed into other parts of life and vice versa. Permeating the boundaries between soccer and other subcultures, Feras Shaheen's playful installation fuses elements of hip hop, skating, football freestyle and klapping.<sup>2</sup> In *Another Mixtape* (2020), Shaheen 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, Shaheen critiques the authority and commercialisation of sport.

The cultural importance of sport has been embedded in this land since time immemorial. In *Australia I Black and Gold* (2012), Brook Andrew appropriates an ethnographic sketch from the 1850s showing a group of Nyeri-Nyeri men playing marngrook, a ball game that is the precursor to Australian rules football. In appropriating this imagery, Andrew reclaims the cultural lineage of our much-loved national league. The work is a testament both to the endurance of First Nations culture and its tendency to be consumed by the colonial narrative.

Marikit Santiago's *Tagsibol/tagsabong* (2018) is an epic history painting that captures the viral moment when Australian and Filipino national basketball teams clashed in an on-court fight. Sport is an outlet where we can channel primal urges, but in this instance the tension spilled into real-life violence. This testosterone-fuelled scene sits alongside the central figure, Santiago's mother, who radiates strength and serenity.

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1 RIP Parramatta Pool

2 Klapping is a type of street soccer

13. 09. 2020

– 25. 10. 2020

MARIAN ABBODD & VICKI VAN HOUT, BROOK ANDREW, CIGDEM AYDEMIR,  
DHINAWAN DREAMING CONNECTION, ELVIS RICHARDSON, MARIKIT SANTIAGO,  
SAMIA SAYED & KOUMBAH SEMEGA-JANNEH, FERAS SHAHEEN

ORGANISED BY REBECCA GALLO, TALITHA HANNA AND TIAN ZHANG

There is conflict and tension in the collaborative work of Samia Sayed and Koumbah Semega-Janneh. Working together across continents, they make work in response to one another: a back and forth, a one-two combo, a slow tango. Sayed carries her mother on her back as a tender symbol of strength and support. Semega-Janneh is dynamic and fierce shadowboxing in front of a small audience. She raises her arms in victory but ultimately faces her demons alone.

Similarly, Cigdem Aydemir's work documents an eight-hour performance in which she faces a ball machine that throws out a ball for every tweet of the word 'terror'. Unpredictable and unrelenting, the machine becomes a physical manifestation of the micro and macro aggressions that Muslim communities experience. While Aydemir is equally as relentless in her return of serve, the necessity to respond to each ball is exhausting.

Elvis Richardson's *The Field* (2008/2020) is a collection of mini triumphs and tribulations. While trophies are a symbol of success and peak performance, as objects they are cheap and kitsch, discarded and forgotten once the moment passes. Brought together in this dramatic montage, they coalesce into a battle scene of competition, an army of glistening faux-gold.

Included in this exhibition are three jerseys designed by and for Dhinawan Dreaming Connection, a Gomerioi rugby league club. The club participates in the Koori Knockout, one of the biggest First Nations gatherings in the world and considered a contemporary corroboree. Two of the jerseys show Gomerioi Dreaming stories while the third is a tribute to late team member Ty Powell. With its focus on pathways for young people, the club is a testament to how sport can be used to galvanise and give back to community.

Sport intersects with, amplifies and mirrors back to us so many elements of individual and social life. It is an arena in which our emotions, drives and values can play out. Behind the commercialisation, commodification and simulated competition, sport – rather like art – is a reason to come together over shared customs and rituals, and find common ground.

– Rebecca Gallo, Talitha Hanna & Tian Zhang, 2020

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**Marian Abboud & Vicki Van Hout in collaboration with Tania Abbi-Assaf and Susan Abboud**

ري صيغ (Juice), 2020

photographic prints on rag paper, CRT TV array with propaganda video, disused performance flags  
video: 12 min 18 sec

ري صيغ (Juice)

A pair of eyes stand behind an abandoned building.  
A hand rolls love notes towards a 2-hour commitment.  
Two legs walk backwards holding an internal monologue. On repeat  
"Give me a lifetime of promises and a world of dreams  
Speak the language of love like you know what it means  
Mm, and it can't be wrong, take my heart and make it strong, babe  
You're simply the best, better than all the rest  
Better than anyone, anyone I ever met  
I'm stuck on your heart, I hang on every word you say  
Tear us apart, baby, I would rather be dead". (T.Turner)

ري صيغ

The substitute lover

Visits every day since January 22nd

This work was developed during Covid-19. Three participants reimagined their sports routines, increasing levels of difficulty each week until the impossible becomes the new impossible.

**Brook Andrew**

*Australia I Black Gold*, 2012

black ink on gold foil

79 x 121 cm

Humans are social creatures, relying on a sense of collective identity to ensure emotional and physical wellbeing. Brook Andrew's tableau, *Australia I*<sup>1</sup>, 2012, is an acknowledgement of the vital role collective physical activity plays in the creation of a community.

Based on a colonial ethnographic study from the late 1850s, the work depicts a group of Nyeri-Nyeri men from north-western Victoria participating in a game of marngrook, an indigenous precursor to Australian Rules football. Consequently, *Australia I*, 2012 was included in the 2012 Basil Sellers' Art Prize, an award celebrating contemporary art works addressing sport, creating a bridge between the nation's most revered pastime and its cultural counterpart.

<sup>1</sup>The work in Sports Show is a smaller work in the same series

This work is one of six large-scale historical scenes (*Australia I – VI*, 2012 – 2014) that re-present a selection of etchings by Gustav Mützel, a German artist who never stepped foot on the Australian continent. Commissioned by Prussian geologist and naturalist William Blandowski to immortalise the findings of his expedition to the Murray Darling basin in 1856 – 57, Mützel used original ethnographic sketches executed by Blandowski himself and his colleague Gerard Kreft to create composite illustrations.

The drawings since lost, many of these images only remain in the minuscule photographic albumen prints composed by Mützel (each measuring 70 x 40mm) published in the illustrated account, *Australien in 142 Photographischen Abbildungen*, 1862, only two full copies of which are extant in libraries in Europe. The image upon which *Australia I* is based also exists as a photographic print in the Anthropology Library of the British Museum. Largely unseen by Australian people, indigenous or otherwise, these archives have recently been excavated by scholars and artists, stimulating a post-colonial critique of documentary images of indigenous Australians during the colonial period. Already employed in Andrew's earlier series, *The Island*, 2008, examples of Blandowski's visual documents are appropriated and transformed, their well-worn format blown up to a vast scale and applied by a screen-printing process to a coloured foil support.

Text by Lucie Reeves-Smith, courtesy of Deutscher and Hackett (footnote added by Pari)

Brook Andrew is represented by Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney and Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris and Brussels.

### **Cigdem Aydemir**

*The New National Sport*, 2018

video documentation of eight-hour live performance on 8 December 2018, Argyle Square, Melbourne

2 min 53 sec

In this live endurance performance, Cigdem Aydemir must return serves sent from a tennis-ball throwing machine, which ejects a ball whenever the word 'terror' is tweeted. With tweets appearing once every few seconds, *The New National Sport* questions the stamina of a society inundated by – and desensitised to – the news of terror.

Like a player in a macabre tennis game, Aydemir ducks and weaves to negotiate the unpredictability of the machine, which is connected to a screen displaying the emerging tweets. Her relentless vigilance reflects that of the Muslim community – of which she is a member – regardless of whether or not a new act of terror occurs or is committed by a Muslim. Over eight hours, *The New National Sport* attempts to visualise how news of terror impacts the human body – and by extension, the larger, socio-political body.

Terror – if it doesn't kill us, will it make us stronger?

Credits: Live performance presented by Artshouse, Melbourne. Technical programmer: Warren Armstrong. Production Manager: Tony MacDonald. Producer: Tara Prowse. Video credit: Wendyhouse films.

**Dhinawan Dreaming Connection**

Dhinawan Dreaming Connection Aboriginal Rugby League Club Jerseys  
designed by Dylan Brown and Michael Fardon

Dhinawan Dreaming Connection is a Gomeri rugby league club started by Nathan Brown and Dylan Grundeman as a way to pay respects to their Elders up on Country. In each competition, the club pays tribute to a different person who has passed. They are interested in using rugby league as a pathway for young people from across Gomeri Country in northern NSW to learn skills, create opportunities and positively impact their communities. The club's four key values are: strength, honour, integrity and family.

In 2020, Dhinawan Dreaming Connection paid tribute to late club member Ty Powell:

*Ty Powell was a proud Wiradjuri man from the Condobolin and Griffith area. He was a respected member of the Griffith community. He was a devoted family man and member of our Dhinawan Dreaming Team. He was a sportsman but also a man of culture who fought for the First Nations rights of our people. He sadly passed away at age 17 in 2020. We miss him dearly.*

**Elvis Richardson**

*The Field*, 2008 (reconfigured 2020)  
found trophy figurines, polystyrene, stand  
120cm diameter

*Credits*, 2008  
single channel video  
15 min

Trophies are most commonly associated with sporting activities but really they exist in all areas of our lives. Competition is something we are subjected to from the get go. The trophies' history as a military heraldic device such as a coat of arms regained with heroic iconography is more than just an ideal of the elite but also testifies to their role as emblems that display recognition and social status. The trophies are a way in which even the most humble competitor can acquire prestige and honour in our material culture. Trophies also remind me of death, not only because I purchase them abandoned to op shops and Ebay, but in the trophy plaques in the way they record a person's or event's time and age in particular almost like a photograph, an embodied object as a document. Also the shapes of the rises and the figurines as a more gaudy reflective silhouette of a necropolis, its this hallowed reverence for sport and sporting heroes in Australian culture that evoke the memorial, in particular the war memorial can be recognised in both *The Field* and *Credits*.

Elvis Richardson is represented by Hugo Michell Gallery, Adelaide and Galerie pompom, Sydney.

**Marikit Santiago***Tagsibol/Tagsabong, 2018*

acrylic, oil, pyrography, pen, paint markings by Maella Pearl, aged 4; and Santiago Pearl, aged 2, on found cardboard

156.5 x 226 cm (framed)

*Tagsibol/Tagsabong* appropriates Botticelli's Renaissance painting *Primavera*. The work is painted on a large, flattened cardboard box and applied with media such as oil paint and 9ct gold leaf conveying a richness in texture and imagery. The work considers my ethnic identities as an Australian and Filipina, and the conflation of this with my social identities as a woman and mother. The maternal and sexualized modes of femininity are represented as simultaneously powerful and vulnerable, defiant and submissive. My practice, represented in this painting, allows a visual language for which to interrogate the conflicting sensations, values and ideals associated with the tensions that exist between and within my plural identities.

**Samia Sayed & Koumbah Semega-Janneh***The indifference of bystanders / a heavy weight stitched, 2020*

dual channel video

24 min / 8 min 11 sec

Koumbah and Samia revisit a work they collaborated on, *you're my mecca* (2017), a live endurance performance, wrestling each other for an hour. In this iteration they both make a work separately, in response to sport and exhibit the creative spaces they are currently residing in. Making autonomous works yet sustaining a connection through an ode to women and an honouring of rage using their athletic bodies. Both their works are then woven together with a shrine, inviting the audience to engage with an offering.

Samia's film explores domestic labour as a sport. Recognising women, particularly her mother – in her everyday life. The home as an arena, her body as an athlete and her chores as a sport. Samia uses her big fat body as strength and protection to hold her mother through the labour she has witnessed her endure but never be championed for.

Koumbah's work is a testament to the loneliness of victory. We prefer to celebrate the dead rather than make space for the bitterness accompanied.

Credits: Andre Da Fonseca, Leila El Rayes, Priya Panchalingam, Mona Sayed & Justine Youssef

**Feras Shaheen***Cross Cultures series**Another Mixtape, 2020*

single channel video

19 min 26 sec

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*City Rail Worldwide, 2020*

polystyrene, alumigraphics grip outdoor floor sticker, vinyl and matte stickers  
60 x 139 x 92 cm

*Chris' Camera, 2020*

Sony HDR-FX1 camcorder with MK2 fish-eye lens, traffic sign, plastic, aluminum,  
screen  
105 x 95 x 95 cm

*KickRollITM, 2020*

KickRoll™, football (Adidas), grip tape, metal skate trucks, polyurethane wheels,  
stickers  
26 x 22 x 21 cm

*Number 7, 2020*

AC Milan replica polyester jersey with heat press vinyl  
Size XXL

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.

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