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Cultural Inheritance: Fracture, Change and Transformation

Art Practice-Led Research Exhibition 2026

Artists:

Kareen Adam, Maryam Attar Bashi, Mita Chowdhury,
Wenqin (Echo) He, Lingam. K, Samira Khadivizand, Ching2 Liang,
Yiwon Park, Leo Bagus Purnomo and Maria Thaddea, Pratyay Raha,
Shannon Ningfei Xiao, Bea Yu and Mingyu Yan

Curatorial Team:

Mita Chowdhury (co-curator), Pratyay Raha (co-curator),
Ling Wang (curatorial intern) and Mingyu Yan (curatorial intern)

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Dr Tammy Wong Hulbert

Exhibition Identity Design:

Xinyuan (Caesar) Li

Publisher:
ACAE Gallery 82A Wellington Street,
Collingwood, Vic 3066

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'Cultural Inheritance: Fracture, Change and Transformation' at ACAE Gallery

Exhibition Introduction:

Cultural Inheritance: Fracture, Change and Transformation is an4aa's inaugural exhibition of contemporary art by practice-led researchers, held at ACAE Gallery, Collingwood, Melbourne. The exhibition brings together artists in postgraduate research in Asian and Asian diaspora art from universities across Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand to showcase the breadth and depth of art-based research inquiry. This exhibition highlights the innovative artistic practices, with participating artists engaging in diverse methods, materials and disciplinary approaches to generate new knowledge in relation to Asian and Asian diasporic contexts.

Spanning a wide range of themes, the researchers explore and interrogate their relationship to diverse communities; inherited cultures and ancestral knowledge, as well as experiences of diaspora, place, displacement, rupture and belonging. Together, the artists critically examine how cultures, subcultures and identities beyond borders are formed, contested and reimagined in shifting social, cultural, political and ecological landscapes. By foregrounding art practice-led research, this exhibition offers us a vignette of emerging approaches to Asian Art in Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand.

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A Restful State

Kareen Adam

Monash University



Artist Statement:

This artwork is part of a broader body of work that explores the layered realities behind luxury holiday destinations, especially island archipelagos like the Maldives. Island landscapes and beaches are often seen as symbols of an ideal life and romantic escapes, places to get away from the daily grind and unwind. Here, the classic deck chair, associated with relaxation, sunshine, and carefree moments, takes on a more complex meaning. The sand-coloured fabric calls into question the authenticity of the curated natural environments presented to tourists. The fabric seat invites the body to rest, yet its camouflage pattern also symbolises the state's control, corruption, and violence. The chair is precariously balanced on four cowrie shells, a historic form of currency, making it an unstable place to rest. Together, these elements disrupt the idealised notion of leisure and relaxation and ask: What is the true cost of rest?

Artist Biography:

I am a Maldivian visual artist based in Narm (Melbourne), Australia. My position as a migrant-settler from an Island geography strongly informs my practice. Through drawing, sewing, digital print media, video and installations, my work explores themes of home, belonging, representation, and the socio-political forces that shape people's mobility and connection to Place. Drawing on familiar tropes of island destinations, my work aims to evoke curiosity and, at times, discomfort, creating space for broader, more nuanced imaginings of tropical islands and their peoples.

I maintain close ties with Maldivian artists to pursue collaborative projects across the distance, and have exhibited in both the Maldives and Australia. I earned a BA(Hons) in psychology from the University of Queensland before shifting to the arts and completing a Master of Creative Industries at Melbourne Polytechnic in 2020. I am currently pursuing a PhD in Fine Art at the Wominjeka Djeembana Lab in the Monash Art Design and Architecture Faculty, Monash University.



Credit for Artwork: Kareen Adam
Credit for Headshot: wani toaishara

Unveiled, Like a Scream

Maryam Attar Bashi

RMIT University

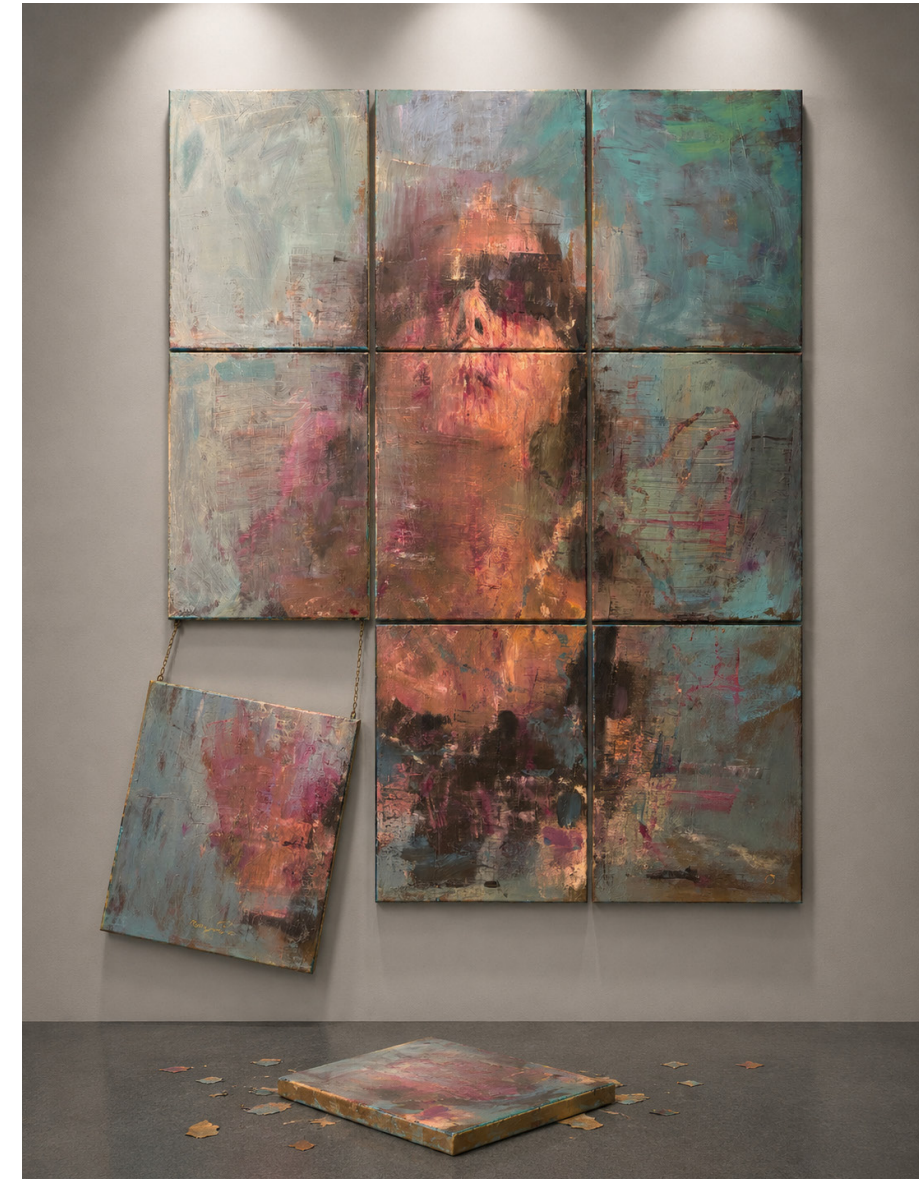


Artist Statement:

'Unveiled, Like a Scream' explores the existential condition through fragmentation, vulnerability, and the constraints that shape human existence. The portrait is divided across nine canvases: six remain anchored to the wall, while the others are torn, suspended by thread, or collapsed onto the floor. These fractured forms embody the tension between freedom and limitation, suggesting that existence is continually negotiated within forces beyond our control. Drawing on existential philosophy, the work proposes that identity is never fixed but continuously reconstructed through lived experience, choice, and resilience. The blindfolded figure is not a symbol of blindness but of confronting uncertainty, responsibility, and the burden of being. Extending beyond the painted surface into physical space, the installation transforms the gallery into a site where rupture and endurance coexist, inviting viewers to reflect on how meaning is created despite the constraints, fragility, and incompleteness inherent in existence.

Artist Biography:

Maryam Attar Bashi is a Melbourne-based visual artist specialising in immersive installation and expanded painting. Her practice explores existentialism, activism, and resilience through fragmented imagery and material experimentation. Working across painting and installation, she investigates the relationship between the body, memory, identity, and the constraints of human existence. Maryam holds a Bachelor of Visual Communication Design from Deakin University and a Master of Fine Arts from RMIT University. She has exhibited in solo and group exhibitions across Melbourne and is an award-winning artist whose work invites viewers to reflect on vulnerability, endurance, and the human condition.



Credit for Artwork: Maryam Attar Bashi
Credit for Headshot: Maryam Attar Bashi

Fabricated Memory, Holding on My Mother's Arms

Mita Chowdhury

RMIT University



Artist Statement:

This work brings together the only surviving childhood photograph of myself and my mother with images recorded during my return to our ancestral home in Shariatpur decades later in 2023 for a couple of hours. Although I was photographed there as a child, I have no clear memory of the house. My understanding of it has been shaped through postmemory, oral stories, and imagination. When I returned, my mother had already been gone for eleven years. The house still stood, but it had become inaccessible. I could stand before it, but I could not enter.

Through layering, repetition, and reconstruction, the work compresses these temporal encounters into a single image. The repeated presence of my mother reflects a longing for her companionship in that moment of return. Rather than recovering a lost past, the work inhabits the distance between memory, desire, and an unreachable home.

Artist Biography:

Mita Chowdhury is an interdisciplinary artist and PhD candidate at RMIT University, Melbourne. Born in Bangladesh's river delta region, her practice explores memory, migration, place, and belonging through digital image-making, installation, textile practices, and socially engaged art. Drawing on photographs, oral histories, postmemory, and material culture, she investigates how personal and collective histories are remembered, reconstructed, and transmitted across generations. Chowdhury has exhibited widely in Australia and Bangladesh, including the 2022 Asian Art Biennial in Dhaka, and has presented numerous solo exhibitions since 2021. She received the RMIT Cultural Vision Scholarship (2022) and ADFAS Yarra Young and Emerging Artist Award (2023).



Held in Pieces

Wenqin (Echo) He

RMIT University



Artist Statement:

'Held in Pieces' begins with the memory of '百家被 (bai jia bei)', a Chinese patchwork quilt made by gathering fragments from many households. In this form, small pieces are not made identical before being joined; they carry their own histories, yet come together as something that can cover, hold and protect. In her work, cloth is reimagined through handmade paper. Each piece carries traces of fibre, pressure, touch and drying. Stitched together, the papers remain uneven and open, allowing their gaps and fragile edges to stay visible. Suspended in two layers, the work allows light and air to move through it. A shadow falls onto the wall behind, forming another soft and temporary covering. Between paper, thread, light and absence, 'Held in Pieces' reflects on how cultural memory and belonging may be gathered gently — not as a complete form, but through fragments held in relation.

Artist Biography:

Wenqin (Echo) He is a Melbourne-based communication designer and artist working across publication design, typography, visual storytelling and material experimentation. She completed her Master of Communication Design at RMIT University, where her practice explored culturally engaged visual communication, archival narratives and experimental typographic systems. Moving between printed matter, language and tactile materials, her current work focuses on handmade paper, fibre, stitching and embodied forms of cultural communication. Through these processes, she is interested in how memory, care and diasporic experience can be approached through quiet material gestures.



Credit for Image: Wenqin (Echo) He
Photographer: Adrian Jing Song

Melting Icescape – Ngozumpa Glacier 2024

Lingam. K

RMIT University



Artist Statement:

Image of the Ngozumpa Glacier taken during fieldwork in June 2024. Printed on Nepalese handmade paper, the work brings together photographic documentation, material process, and site-specific encounter. The image is a stamp of time: a record of the glacier at a specific moment in its ongoing transformation. Yet it asks what does the photograph show, what does it obscure, what stories can it tell? Stories of movement, melt, loss, and cultural meaning that remain beyond the visible frame? It is a material and temporal encounter with glacial change.

Artist Biography:

Lingam is a research-based visual artist whose practice navigates the intersections of art, science, cultural knowledge, and ecological transformation. His practice-based research explores the visualisation of glacial melt, drawing on scientific data, field observation, and cultural narratives. Informed by ongoing field research in Nepal's Khumbu region, his work employs sensory and phenomenological approaches to document and interpret glacial landscapes. Through embodied fieldwork—including trekking, sound recording, and photographic exploration—he engages with the shifting presence of ice, translating its slow disappearance as both a scientific reality and a felt experience into a visual reflection on environmental change.



Credit for Artwork: Lingam K
Credit for Headshot: Jodie Grillmeier

Land/scape

Samira Khadivizand

RMIT University



Artist Statement:

Emerging from the lived experience of diaspora, my painting 'Land/scape' attempts to frame a suspended state between sky and earth—neither horizontal nor vertical. Through abstraction, it navigates the interplay between the tangible and the intangible, presence and absence, distance and attachment, belonging and alienation, fragmentation and integration, order and dissolution, and moments of calm and tension.

'Land/scape' explores diasporic existence through a symbolic language of geometric forms, linear structures, and layered gestures. Drawing on Iranian Sufism and historical architecture, the work explores a sense of human presence that is materially grounded yet extends beyond physical limits through thought and memory, reflecting on displacement and the fluid boundaries of perception.

Artist Biography:

Samira Khadivizand (she/her) is an Iranian Australian interdisciplinary artist based in Melbourne. Her practice explores emotional and psychological dissonances shaped by transcultural identity and displacement. Drawing on classical Persian literature and architecture, she transforms symbolic meanings into abstract imagery to reflect on memory, identity, and belonging. Her work navigates the tensions of dual nationality and a suspended state between realms.

Khadivizand holds an MFA from RMIT University. Since migrating to Australia in 2010, she has exhibited widely, receiving multiple awards, including the 2025 ADFAS Award and NAVA Ignition Prize.



Credit for Image: Samira Khadivizand
Credit for Headshot: Alireza Shakoori

Blooming Above the Mud

Ching² Liang

Monash University



Artist Statement:

This self-portrait emerges within a shifting universe where the human figure and dragon background share the same realm. Drawing on my Chinese surname - 龍, I reimagine the dragon not as a symbol of power or masculinity, but as a space of transformation, vulnerability and feminine voice. Subtle scales surface beside a red, mouth-like opening, sharing the courage to express one's voice.

Throughout my practice, my figures have closed eyes, not to escape the world, but to experience a moment of contentment where external expectations fall silent. Within this stillness, an inner universe awakens, creating a relational agency between memory, intuition, the artwork and the viewer, allowing hope to be reawakened. For me, mud is never simply hardship. It is the living world itself, cradling beings, nature, relationships, grief, joy and lived experiences. We grow through it, discovering that hope begins when we listen deeply to ourselves to find our own identity.

Artist Biography:

Ching² Liang | 龍清清 is a Malaysian-born contemporary interdisciplinary storyteller based in Naarm. Through a feminine, childlike lens, her intuitive, practice-led approach examines cultural memory, diaspora identity and hope, navigating her Chinese heritage, Malaysian upbringing and Western influences. Reconfiguring Eastern symbols and mythologies through contemporary frameworks, her work utilizes reclaimed materials and everyday objects to create spaces where personal and collective stories meet, inviting viewers to reconnect through shared humanity. Anchoring a transcultural lived experience where art and life are inseparable, she fulfilled a childhood dream, graduating with a Bachelor of Fine Art from Monash University in 2026 at age 53.



Jindgo Story

Yiwon Park

RMIT University



Artist Statement:

My interdisciplinary art practice about water and light is that formed my own ritualized creative response to place and its impact on my sense of identity. The Pacific Ocean, the physical boundary between Korea and Australia, defines my geographical and cultural identity, identifiable as a specific geographic entity, yet, being comprised of water, simultaneously formless and in a perpetual state of flux. Also, in Korean belief systems, water represents the boundary between the mortal world and afterlife. Water and ritual have become significant aspects of my practice since my parents passed away. Making work is the way I understand the boundary world I live in. It is to understand the relationship between the world and myself. For me the feeling of insecurity arises from the uncertainties that come with inhabiting not just the boundary between cultures but also between past and present, physical and psychological, life and the afterlife.

Artist Biography:

Yiwon Park is a Korean-Australian artist based in Melbourne now. She grew up in Korea and immigrated to Australia 2003. Yiwon obtained her BFA in Korea and she completed Masters by research at UNSW Art and Design in 2014. Yiwon has had solo exhibitions and has participated in a number of group exhibitions in Seoul, Sydney, Hong Kong and Melbourne including galleries such as Artartium, RMIT Gallery, First Draft gallery, gallery of UNSW, Tin shed gallery and Janet Clayton gallery in Australia. Yiwon also interested in cross-cultural art project between Australia and Korea. She worked as a liaison and participated artist for 'Korean-Australian contemporary prints' in 2016. Yiwon participated in the Artist in the Residency program at Artspace Hue in Korea from 2015-2018. Yiwon is a current PhD candidate at RMIT University in Fine Art.



Indo Me

Leo Bagus Purnomo and Maria Thaddea

Leo Bagus Purnomo - Monash University



Artist Statement:

'Indo Me' (2024-present) is an ongoing exploration of Indonesian identity through the familiar form of Indomie Mie Goreng noodles. Earlier iterations took the form of satirical monoliths, critiquing superficial conceptions of identity through a commodified, pre-packaged signifier. This collaborative version shifts toward a more playful enquiry into the process of identification, drawing on new materialist and animist perspectives.

The work combines Maria's ceramic sculpture with Leo's hand-painted cardboard plinth, supporting a fictional podcast interview between a human host (Leo) and sentient cup of Indo Mie noodles (Maria). Echoing Maria's experiences as an Australian-born Indonesian diaspora who spent her adolescence in Indonesia, Indomie is produced from Australian-grown wheat, shipped to Indonesia to be made, and returned to Australia to be sold and consumed. 'Indo Me' (2026) considers identity and culture as continually circulated and negotiated, exploring how these flows can be articulated through artworks and the blurring of subject-object dichotomies.

Artist Biography:

Born in Central Java, Indonesia, Leo Bagus Purnomo is a Naarm/Melbourne based artist and researcher. Working across multiple mediums—including painting, performance, and lukisan—his practice examines epistemic structures and the ways they shape our understanding of ourselves and the world. Leo is currently a PhD candidate at MADA.

Maria Thaddea is an emerging artist currently practicing on Gadigal land. A sentimental artist in practice and medium, she works in ceramics, print, textiles and immersive installations; artefacts and dreamscapes of a lost girl. Her works are a melancholic negotiation of memory and heritage—an ode, in sentiment still, to her femininity and diaspora.



Credit for Image: Leo Bagus Purnomo
Credit for Headshot: Kim Feng Photography
Credit for Headshot: Maria Thaddea

Entangled Kinships

Pratyay Raha

RMIT University



Artist Statement:

Wetlands do not sit still. They breathe, flood, recede, and rot — thresholds rather than places, always mid-transition between water and land, silence and noise. 'Entangled Kinships' listens to this condition as sound: not birdsong captured and cleaned up, but a live field of frequencies negotiating with one another.

Following Steve Goodman's politics of frequency, I treat sound as never neutral — every frequency carries force. A wetland like the Sundarbans (India) is a contested acoustic territory: agricultural infrastructure and encroaching development press against mangrove forests, insect chorus and wind through reeds. I read sonic disturbance as evidence of what a wetland has survived, and acoustic resilience as its capacity to reorganise and keep a rhythm of life audible under duress — one ongoing negotiation, not two opposites. Underlying this is an ontology of vibrational force as discussed by Goodman: to exist is to vibrate, and all entities share a frequency before they share meaning. This is where affect enters — a listener is moved before they interpret. Nothing in a wetland vibrates alone.

Artist Biography:

Pratyay Raha is a sonic arts practitioner whose work listens closely to the entanglements of ecology, colonial legacies, and the uneven terrains shaped by human impacts on ecological systems. Through sound art, field recording, and critical sound studies, his practice develops listening cartographies that trace the frictions, vulnerabilities, and more than human agencies shaping contested environments. Working through the spatial and relational possibilities of sound, he approaches listening as both a poetic method and a political practice of place making, attuned to the lifeworlds impacted by climate crisis, environmental shifts, and social injustice. Through immersive sonic works and critical listening practices, he aims to foster dialogue, sharpen collective awareness, mobilise shared responsibility toward the preservation of endangered environments and amplify voices of the communities who inhabit them. Pratyay holds an MA in Composition and Creative Music Practice from the University of Limerick, Ireland, and is currently undertaking a PhD in Fine Art at RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia.



Healing Mātrix

Shannon Ningfei Xiao

Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington



Artist Statement:

'Healing Mātrix' is a multi-channel video work emerging from the artist-researcher's translocal journey between the forests of Asia and the waters of the Pacific. The work forms part of Xiao's PhD creative research, which explores the performative and relational capacities of shamanic healing, bringing these practices into dialogue with art and architectural research.

The film series draws on embodied, mindful, and spiritual resonances with more-than-human worlds. Collaborating with Indigenous and diasporic artists, including Evenki tradition bearer Mani Nigelai Kuderin, Māori artist Te Ahirei (Ash) Gibson, Chinese filmmaker Lu Pang, and Congolese musician Sam Manzanza, Xiao re-enacts spatial rituals often overlooked within dominant infrastructures, re-situating them within a womb-like matrix of healing. A selection of autoethnographic poetry films unfolds as reflective encounters with urban and ancestral landscapes. 'I Wander Te Aro as a Projectionist' uncovers hidden layers of the city through birch bark, waterways, reindeer, and imaginary sites, while 'I Hear a Chanting to the Mātrix' calls toward collective earth origins through rhythmic, embodied memory.

Artist Biography:

Shannon Ningfei Xiao is a transdisciplinary artist, architect, musician, and migratory feminist researcher working across China, Aotearoa New Zealand, and internationally. Through film, sound, installation, performance, spatial practices, and transdisciplinary research, Xiao collaborates with women artists, multi-ethnic communities, galleries, and institutions, including Te Whare Manaaki o Toda Gallery (Aotearoa) and Rockbund Art Museum (China). Her work has been supported by the Wellington City Council Public Art Fund and presented internationally at F.stop Photo Festival (Aotearoa/Chile), UP-ON International Live Art Festival (China), and Fringe Arts Bath (UK). She is currently a PhD candidate at Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, and a postgraduate representative for the Australasian Network for Asian Art.



Day in Day Out

Bea Yu

RMIT University



Artist Statement:

'Day in Day Out' reflects on the quiet rituals that shape our everyday lives—the simple act of tearing away a calendar page, one day after another, and the routines we repeat without question. Through the cyclical motion of circles, the work considers the patterns we create and become accustomed to, asking whether we are truly living or simply moving through the motions of survival.

Yu explores repetition as both a ritual and a way of remembering. It can be comforting, but it can also become a cycle that keeps us from moving forward. 'Day in Day Out' asks: how long can we remain within the same circle? And when the familiar no longer feels like living, do we have the courage to step outside it, to break the pattern, reclaim our time, and begin again?

Artist Biography:

Bea Yu is a Chinese-Filipino multidisciplinary artist based in Naarm, whose practice explores spirituality and animism. Working across ink drawing, animation, and installation, she uses repetition and layering to investigate interconnectedness, memory, and inheritance, bridging the tangible and spiritual realms. Born in Manila, Bea completed her Master of Fine Art at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology in 2024. Her work has been exhibited across the Philippines, Japan, China, Indonesia and Australia. Her evolving practice reflects an ongoing journey of spiritual inquiry and cultural renewal.



Credit for Image: Bea Yu
Credit for Headshot: Bea Yu

Adrift

Mingyu Yan

RMIT University



Artist Statement:

'Adrift' is a participatory photographic and textile installation that reflects on migration, place, displacement, and belonging within an Asian-Australian context. Developed through disposable cameras circulated among strangers in Melbourne, the work uses public participation as a method for tracing how connection can emerge in an unfamiliar city.

The photographs taken by strangers were later transferred onto curtain fabric. Curtains mark a threshold between private and public, home and the world outside. In this work, they become a surface where anonymous encounters, urban movement, and fragile forms of belonging are held.

Working from my position as a Chinese-born artist in Australia, 'Adrift' considers how diasporic identity is shaped not only through inherited culture, but also through everyday acts of being seen, taking part, and returning. The work asks how strangers, images, and shared spaces can form temporary relationships across social and cultural distance.

Artist Biography:

Mingyu Yan is a Chinese-born artist from Yunnan, currently living and working between Naarm/Melbourne and Sydney. Her practice is grounded in participatory art and practice-led research, focusing on migration, place, displacement, and belonging within Asian-Australian contexts. Working from her position as an Asian artist in Australia, Yan uses ordinary objects and shared actions, including disposable cameras, found images, and personal stories, to create situations where strangers become temporary collaborators. Her work explores how identity, connection, and diasporic belonging are shaped across borders, public spaces, unfamiliar social environments, and acts of being seen.



Source photographs contributed by participants in 'Adrift';
developed and transfer-printed by Mingyu Yan.
Credit for Headshot: Gray Ma

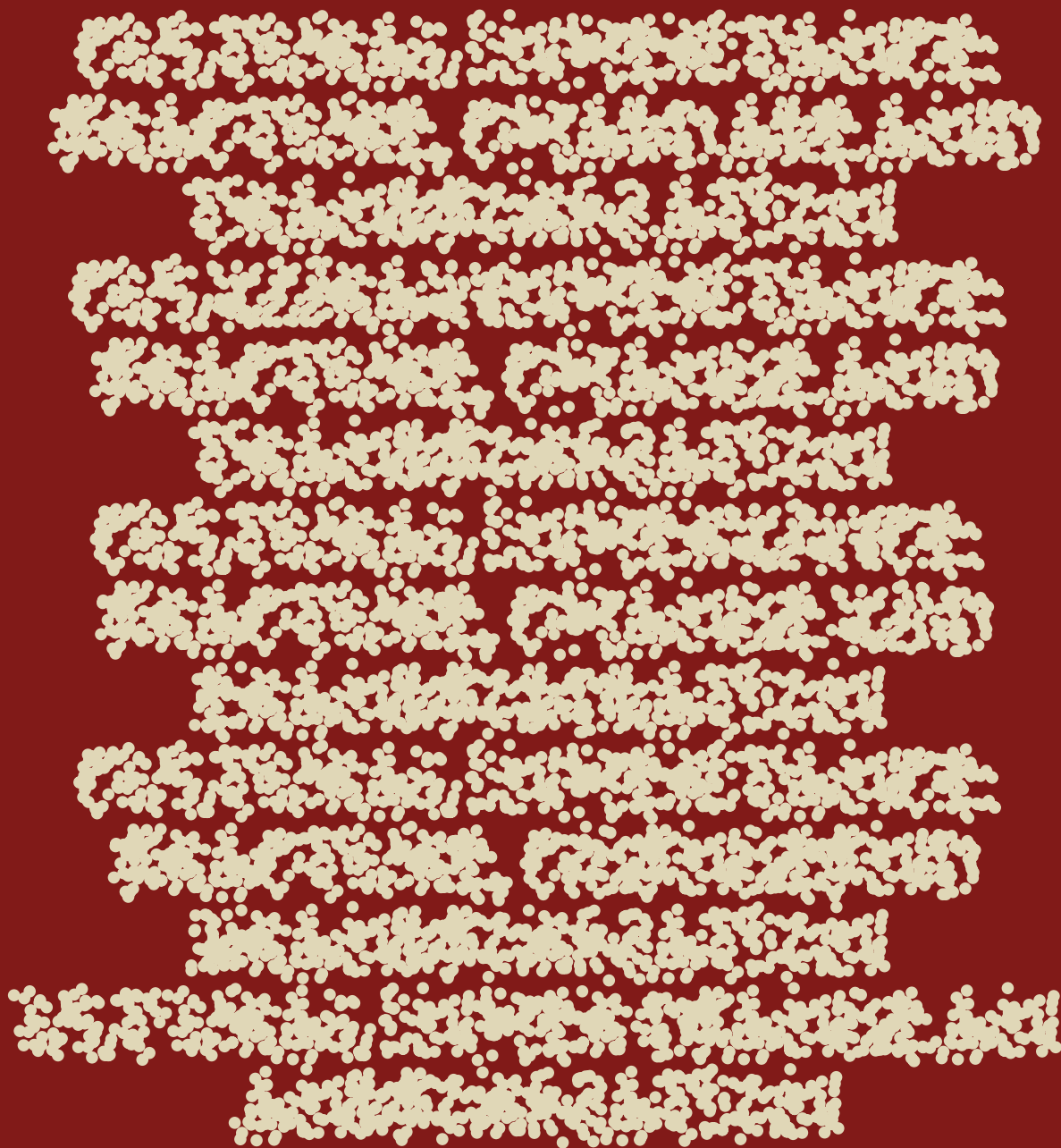
an4aa is a research network focused on the research
of Asian art and visual culture in Australia and
Aotearoa New Zealand including academics, post-graduates, artists,
curators and historians to foster a scholarly community.

Partnering institutions include Australian National University, University
of New South Wales, Monash University, RMIT University and
The Art Gallery of South Australia.

For more information:
an4aa.org

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