

# Gertrude Studios 2024

Elyas Alavi  
Nathan Beard  
Moorina Bonini  
Arini Byng  
Francis Carmody  
Grace Culley  
Tara Denny  
Jordan Halsall  
Rebecca Jensen  
Jenna Lee  
Georgia Morgan  
Chunxiao Qu  
Yusi Zang

2 November –  
15 December  
2024

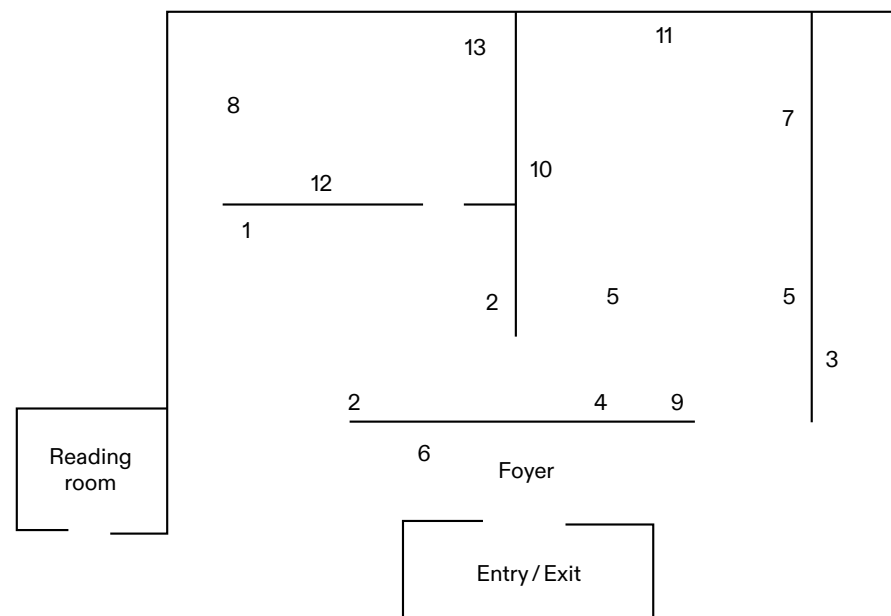
Gertrude  
Contemporary

# Gertrude Studios 2024

The annual Gertrude Studios exhibition is a collective snapshot of the practices supported by Gertrude, presenting new and recent works produced in the organisation's studios in 2024. The exhibition offers audiences the opportunity to experience a broad range of works from leading arts practitioners, while also considering material and conceptual developments in contemporary practice. This year's exhibition has been conceived by Curator Amelia Winata and Assistant Curator Brigid Moriarty alongside Gertrude studio artists, providing a chance for the artists to experiment with divergent ideas or reflect upon recent productions in new configurations—all in conversation with the work of fellow practitioners.

## ARTISTS

- 01 Elyas Alavi
- 02 Nathan Beard
- 03 Moorina Bonini
- 04 Arini Byng
- 05 Francis Carmody
- 06 Grace Culley
- 07 Tara Denny
- 08 Jordan Halsall
- 09 Rebecca Jensen
- 10 Jenna Lee
- 11 Georgia Morgan
- 12 Chunxiao Qu
- 13 Yusi Zang



# 01 Elyas Alavi

Inspired by the tradition of *آلام کشی* Alam Keshi, the religious and cultural ceremonies during the month of Muharram, *We, of Secrets Kept Unsaid* unfolds through a rich tapestry of symbols, poetry, faces, body language, and community codes, offering reflections on queer Muslim communities.

The large metal structure is a personalised version of an alam, an object used in Shi'a ceremonies throughout the world. Inscribed with drawings and poems by the artist, as well as renowned poets who wrote in Farsi/ Dari language, Alavi's alam is coded with an intimate story of his queer community. The creatures that sit upon the sculpture are drawn from stories from the artist's home region, as well as Greek mythology and Russian literature. Spanning nearly three metres wide and adorned with feathers, *We, of Secrets Kept Unsaid* is a powerful expression of pride, survival, and resilience.

## ARTWORKS

*We, of Secrets Kept Unsaid*, 2024  
gold leaf, iron, steel, prints on velvet  
dimensions variable  
Commissioned by 4A Centre for  
Contemporary Asian Art, Sydney and  
Arts House, Naarm Melbourne

## BIOGRAPHY

Expressed in poetry, painting, installation, performance, and moving image, Elyas Alavi's practice examines themes of identity and representation through the complex intersections of race, displacement, gender, and sexuality. More specifically, his work explores complex histories in the Greater Middle East region. In addition to his artistic practice, Alavi has published three poetry books in Afghanistan and Iran.

## 02 Nathan Beard

*Noi* is an exaggerated bai sri constructed from strips of clothing belonging to Beard's late mother. Bai sri are offerings exchanged for good fortune during Thai ceremonies and special occasions, typically constructed from perishable materials like flowers and banana leaves. Titled in homage to his mother's nickname, *Noi* mimics the floral embellishments of a traditional bai sri through a selection of colourful garments—comfortable floral-printed slips for day-to-day wear—and traditionally patterned Thai silk sarongs worn mostly for Buddhist celebrations. The repetitive labour of folding, pleating and pinning required to make a bai sri is intimate and devotional, transforming clothes worn as beacons of cultural pride into a vibrant monument to their owner's personal taste and style.

*Heirloom* is a silicone render of the artist's feet, knotted into an impossible configuration. Two pairs of cheap earrings that belonged to his mother pierce its fleshy surface. Inspired by the absurd tableaux often found in retail visual merchandising, this grotesque arrangement reconfigures elements of previous work with delicate personal artefacts to consider the fluidity of value and worth, and how these concepts might be generated and exchanged.

### ARTWORKS

*Noi*, 2024  
repurposed clothes belonging to the artist's late mother, steel, floristry foam, plaster, dressmaking pins  
92 × 52 × 46 cm

*Heirloom*, 2022–2024  
Noi's earrings, silicone, paint, foam  
38 × 24 × 17.5 cm  
Studio assistance from Kiana Jones

### BIOGRAPHY

Nathan Beard is a multidisciplinary artist whose work draws from his Australian-Thai heritage to unpack the porous and precarious influences of culture and memory. Through the incorporation of exchanges with his family and archives alongside broader cultural signifiers of "Thainess," Beard playfully express the complexities surrounding authenticity and diasporic identity.

Beard is represented by FUTURES, Naarm Melbourne and sweet pea, Boorloo Perth.

# 03 Moorina Bonini

*yenmatj (to burn)*

I learn from the practice *yenmatj (to burn)*,  
through listening and watching and understood  
deep within my bawu (body) the practice of my Yenbena  
(Ancestor/s).

A long-term intervention with Gertrude Contemporary is initiated through the work *yenmatj (to burn)*. South-Eastern Indigenous mark-making has been burnt into selected areas of the exposed wooden beams outside the galleries. The burning and marks used are emblematic of Indigenous knowledge. *yenmatj (to burn)* is a critique of the white cube and an attempt to reconfigure it. The markings also acknowledge the woka (Country), upon which Gertrude exists.

## ARTWORKS

*yenmatj (to burn)*, 2024  
pyrography  
dimensions variable

## BIOGRAPHY

Moorina Bonini is a proud descendant of the Yorta Yorta Dhulunyagen family clan of Ulupna and the Yorta Yorta, Wurundjeri and Wiradjuri Briggs/McCrae family. Bonini is an artist whose works are informed by her experiences as an Aboriginal and Italian woman. Her works attempt to disrupt and critique the eurocentric foundations that centralise Indigenous categorisation within western institutions. By unsettling the narrative placed upon Aboriginal people through the colonisation of Aboriginal Australia, Bonini's practice brings Indigenous Knowledge systems to the fore.

## 04 Arini Byng

Arini Byng has recently returned to painting in the studio. For Byng, whose practice is ordinarily focused on performance, video, and photography, painting opens space for distance and release. Like her durational works, Byng's paintings are "body-based," informed by memories, experiences and relationships that carry a physical resonance. The artist says, "My paintings aren't about creating a defined space. Instead, they evoke the diffuse, dappled quality of memory, prompting us to consider what memory feels like for each of us."

### ARTWORKS

left to right:

*Ashy knees*, 2024  
oil on linen  
81.5 × 81.5 cm

*Better care*, 2024  
oil on linen  
59.8 × 41 cm

*Elbow*, 2024  
oil on linen  
31 × 40.5 cm

*Aggregate*, 2024  
oil on linen  
31 × 40.5 cm

### BIOGRAPHY

Arini Byng is a multidisciplinary artist who works with the affective qualities of materials, gestures and settings. She undertakes exercises in image, movement, and form to negotiate political scenes. Her performances, photographs, videos, and paintings are complex, intimate studies in gesture and action. Frequently collaborating with dancers, musicians and visual artists, Byng has used the body in motion as a means of unpacking familial ties and histories, physical intimacy between friends, the interrelation of performance and the screen, and the potential generated by structural collapse and our means of experiencing the world.

## 05 Francis Carmody

*Hawkish: From Above* is a larger-than-life hawk's eye mounted into the gallery ceiling. Made from blown glass, resin, steel, and pigment, the eye's gradated redness spreads from its centre like a pulse.

In economics, the term "hawkish" refers to a policy stance that prioritises the control of inflation over economic growth, often by raising interest rates or tightening monetary policy. A "hawkish" stance in foreign policy supports military intervention and escalation. These meanings connect the hawk to ideas of power, control, and surveillance.

Traditionally, the hawk is seen as a predator with sharp observation, intelligence, and strength. Hawks often go unnoticed, yet the hawk's eye makes itself known here, hovering in full view. It sits in a state of intense watchfulness, observing the space below.

The adjacent drawings are schematics of Carmody's recent works, which reveal the conceptual foundations of his research-based practice.

### ARTWORKS

*Hawkish: From Above*, 2024  
blown glass, resin, steel, plywood  
and colour pigment  
200 × 120 × 80 cm

*Studio drawings*, 2023-2024  
permanent marker on paper  
9 sheets, 29.7 × 42 cm each

### BIOGRAPHY

Francis Carmody's artistic practice serves as a useful alibi to reach out to people across disciplines and technical capabilities to share stories and complete projects. Through tracing networks and natural structures, he would like to get a glimpse of where we have been and where we are going.

This process of enquiry draws on meticulous research, cold calling, persistence, and frequent rejection. He continues to create an ever-expanding list of project partners and friends including psychics, DNA scientists, neuroscientists, day-time television sales specialists, media managers, border force agents, computational designers, patent lawyers, cartoonists, graphic designers, architects, and automotive painters.

## 06 Grace Culley

*I'm being nice because I want you to like me* builds on Culley's investigations into control in social and behavioural settings. This new work reflects her personal feelings of uncertainty and discomfort tied to the everyday activity of preparing to leave the house. For Culley, this process highlights the friction between authenticity and performance. *I'm being nice because I want you to like me* also poses questions about the role that class plays when determining the cultural value of an artwork or a creative practice.

Rendered with an airbrush, the rose imagery plays on attitudes towards so-called lowbrow modes of art that have replaced creative folk practices for working-class communities. Culley mischievously uses the allure of a photo opportunity to draw parallels between self-presentation in public and the careful art of rose pruning.

### ARTWORKS

*I'm being nice because I want you to like me*, 2024  
acrylic on plywood, timber, steel  
200 × 120 × 132 cm

### BIOGRAPHY

Grace Culley uses process-based methods of problem-solving and tangential research to investigate the biopsychosocial layers that contribute to patterns of control-related behaviour. In her drawings, paintings, sculptures, and assemblages, Culley repeats visual motifs and imagery. She focuses on question-generating qualities in her material processes and, in doing so, enacts a self-reflective wrestling match with her desire to control things by 'solving' them. The resulting works consider pervasive systems of control and how these systems are subtly revealed through the actions of individuals.



# 07 Tara Denny

Sorry.  
I kept your lighter.  
I like to see in the dark.

If you want it enough it is yours.  
Anything can be yours if you take it.

My identity bag has dragged around in many forms, it  
continues on.  
This bag now takes stage in a gallery, they leave the lights  
on.  
This is not for comfort  
You look inside – a head in a worn bag.  
Inside sits a leather skin.  
A stand in for a time.  
Specific time you ask? It continues to be endured.  
I do not give you everything.  
Does the truth matter in the end?

Black shoe box under my bed  
photos and writings. Apologies of sorts.  
Sorry, you may be disappointed. That you realise you are  
not viewing the actual bag. What a rip off.

I value authentic living an artistic mode of existence.  
I question this mode of authentication. Perhaps I am just  
into the mode of living.  
Perhaps none of this is worth saying.

Sorry, it's not personal.  
It is more political than you think.

## ARTWORKS

*Sorry*, 2024  
found bag, leather jacket, resin,  
bronze, copper, permanent marker  
dimensions variable

## BIOGRAPHY

Tara Denny is an artist working with objects to materialise the vocabulary of the body. Drawing on a lineage of women's resistance, Denny's practice aims to solidify what might otherwise be lost to amnesia. Often working with found materials and scrap metals, Denny's works sparkle with living secrets.

## 08 Jordan Halsall

*Internal Drive (Gnomad)* makes use of a Content Addressable Memory device. Used by aircraft to determine their position in the atmosphere, the device projects its position onto an x and y axis, similar to a phonograph needle. Halsall came across one of these objects in a thrift store, mistaking it for damaged material from computer-automated manufacturing processes. The dented cylindrical form of the object turned out to be a precisely machine-made piece of aluminium designed to map the earth's topographical surface.

When operated, the work maps out directions for the renowned arcade game *Dance Dance Revolution*. In this game, directions on a platform are used as a guide for dancing and rewards are based on timing and consecutive rhythm. The directions plotted within Halsall's work are based on songs from an inspirational playlist published online by Praxis, a network state proposing the creation of a new city centred on political exit and the promise of vitality.

### ARTWORKS

*Internal Drive (Gnomad)*, 2024  
photopolymer, aluminium, steel,  
synthetic polymer, enamel,  
electronics  
20 × 70 × 20 cm

### BIOGRAPHY

Jordan Halsall uses art's ability to represent dissonant ideologies in order to critically address progress and growth. This investigation is shaped by an interest in practices of optimisation, vitality and notions of exit. These areas inform an approach that considers the contemporary artist as prosumer—a concept suggesting that new technologies are merging the roles of producer and consumer. With this in mind, Halsall's outcomes reflect a confused materiality relating to industrial and homemade production practices that journey through accelerated lifestyles and environments.

# 09 Rebecca Jensen

*i just get so mud sometimes* is a dance and a dialogue between non-human entities. What happens when the background becomes the protagonist?

## ARTWORKS

*I just get so mud sometimes*, 2024  
performance, split sole dance  
sneakers, fabric paint,  
modelling paste  
dimensions variable

Performance Times:

Friday 1 November, 6:30pm,  
10mins (Rebecca Jensen)

Saturday 30 November, 3:00pm,  
30mins (Rebecca Jensen with  
performers Anika De Ruyter and  
Texas Nixon-Kain)

## BIOGRAPHY

Born in Aotearoa New Zealand and based in Naarm Melbourne, Rebecca Jensen is dancer, choreographer and teacher. Her work is inspired by the equally speculative and practical forces of dance practice. Jensen's notable works include *Slip*, Tempo Festival Auckland 2024, Nelson Arts Festival 2024, FRAME Biennial, Naarm Melbourne, 2023 and the Kier Choreographic Award Naarm Melbourne and Sydney, 2022; and *Deep Sea Dances*, Dance Massive, Naarm Melbourne, 2017. She has a long-standing collaborative relationship with choreographer Sarah Aiken. Together they founded Deep Soulful Sweats. Rebecca has worked with artists including Jo Lloyd, Lucy Guerin, Shelley Lasica, Adam Linder, Harrison Ritchie Jones, and Sandra Parker. Jensen has participated in numerous residences, most recently she was the 2023 Resident Director of Lucy Guerin Inc.

# 10 Jenna Lee

These works explore the transformation and reclamation of language and the power of fire as a ceremonial healing practice for the Gulumerridjin (Larrakia) people. Fire, in this context, becomes a tool of rejuvenation and rebirth, breathing new life into previously dislocated words on the page.

*article-particle (Guyu-Gwa)* features 30 pigment jars of varying sizes, each containing the burnt remnants of multiple editions of *Aboriginal Words and Place Names*, a widely published book that presents homogenised Aboriginal words without connection to people or place. The burnt remnants are transmuted into pigment, offering a new means of writing language, and are installed in a single line of “text” with groupings of jars to resemble words.

Each jar is labelled with the Gulumerridjin word for fire, “Guyu-Gwa.” This repetitive gesture situates the word within its cultural context and serves as a personal ritual for relearning language. Each letter, punched onto a label, embeds the word into memory in an ongoing journey of linguistic reclamation. Acting as a full stop to this newly written “sentence” is a jar of ceremonial white ochre collected on Country.

Displayed alongside the installation is a series of burnt papers featuring pages from *Aboriginal Words and Place Names*. These works either burn away unprovenanced words, enacting a form of fire healing, or inscribe a known Gulumerridjin word, reclaiming agency over how language is documented.

## ARTWORKS

*Aboriginal Words and Place Names*,  
2022  
pages from *Aboriginal Words and  
Place Names*, fire  
27 × 35 × 3 cm each

*article-particle (Guyu-Gwa)*,  
2023-2024  
various pigment jars, pages of  
*Aboriginal Words and Place Names*,  
fire, labels  
30 × 230 cm

## BIOGRAPHY

Jenna Lee's practice explores language, materiality, and the transformation of inherited narratives. Deeply intrigued by what is lost in translation, Lee investigates the space between words—the felt but unseen—and the subtleties that surround language. Her work channels these overlooked nuances into immersive installations, works on paper, sculpture, and multimedia. Often engaging with materials from the past, Lee employs a process of deconstruction and reconstruction to reveal the dormant narratives they hold. In doing so, her works uncover forces shaping our understanding of history and identity, drawing attention to what time has eroded, and collective memory has suppressed.

Lee is represented by MARS Gallery, Naarm Melbourne.

# 11 Georgia Morgan

These paintings embody Georgia Morgan's use of abstraction as a means of expressing an ever-evolving subjectivity—a subjectivity informed in part by her Tamil ancestry and urban surroundings. As Lucy Bleach has observed, Morgan's work is “located within the textural grittiness of her contemporary life, and whilst ostensibly whimsical, belies a deceptive deftness in conflating personal myth, emblem and dream.”

## ARTWORKS

left to right:

*This Dream's Still Real*, 2024  
acrylic, oil pastel, Mala beads  
on board  
120 × 240 cm

*HERE, NOW AND AGAIN (AND AGAIN, AND AGAIN)*, 2023  
acrylic on board  
120 × 240 cm

## BIOGRAPHY

Georgia Morgan is a Tamil Australian artist whose multidisciplinary practice spans installation, photography, video, painting and ceramics. She describes her work as “devotional and aspirational” with roots in storytelling and Hindu custom of puja, a form of worship that involves offering physical objects—such as gold, fruit or flowers—to an image of a god. As Morgan explains “sometimes gold foil or plastic fruit or flowers are offered. This doesn't detract from the value of worship, as it is the conviction of the action that matters. This knowledge and use of material are consistent in my practice. It is what I say it is. You believe, 'cause I believe.”

## 12 Chunxiao Qu

*Tips for Contemporary Artists Who Want to Sell* was made in homage to conceptual artist John Baldessari's work, *Tips for Artists Who Want to Sell* (1966-1968). Baldessari famously copied the text for his work from an art market magazine and outsourced the painting to a sign writer, commenting on the relationship between labour, capital and artistic production. In Qu's version, written and painted by the artist herself, Baldessari's original commentary is reworked into a sharp critique of contemporary artistic practice and the pressures faced by artists (particularly regarding the timely completion of their work for exhibitions). This work forms part of Qu's *Tributes to Artists series*, where she engages in dialogue with other artists, reimagining their works within her own lexicon.

### ARTWORKS

*Tips for Contemporary Artists Who Want to Sell*, 2024  
acrylic on canvas  
173.36 × 143.51 cm

### BIOGRAPHY

Chunxiao Qu (b. 1993, China) is an artist and published poet whose work folds pointed humour into conceptual making with irreverence and serious intent. Her wide-ranging practice spans installation, sculpture, painting, neons, printmaking, poetry, and fashion. Both her poetry and art embrace play in language, provoking her audience and testing truisms regarding art and life. Humour's tricks of contrast and surprise are employed, yet irony lives side-by-side with sincerity.

Qu is represented by FUTURES, Naarm Melbourne.

# 13 Yusi Zang

*Rain* depicts traces of rainfall on a factory wall, hinting at Zang's attitude towards the weather in her adopted home of Melbourne and the anxieties associated with adapting to new environments. In *Swallow This Bitterness*, fresh bitter melons are assembled into a sculptural form that references cultural wisdom from Zang's upbringing. The bitter flavour is believed to have medicinal properties, clearing heat from the body. *Scribble While Having a Tough Conversation* developed from a moment of personal friction in which the artist doodled anxiously on a cereal bag during an argument with her partner. Displayed in an ornamental frame, Zang transforms a fleeting moment of tension into a testament to intimacy. Seemingly unrelated, these three works are registers of Zang's life since moving into her studio at Gertrude, reflecting her desire to "make the eyes discover the intensity and subtlety of things in the tedious life."

## ARTWORKS

*Swallow This Bitterness*, 2024  
bitter melons, steel rod  
25 × 25 × 100 cm

*Rain Marks on Factory Wall*, 2024  
oil on canvas  
152 × 112 cm

*Scribble While Having a Tough Conversation*, 2024  
drawing on cereal bag,  
ornamental frame  
30 × 30 cm

## BIOGRAPHY

Yusi Zang is a multidisciplinary artist working primarily with painting and sculpture. Her works reflect the challenges of assimilating into the local community while detached from her hometown. Despite their limitations, these conditions have granted Zang a sense of liberation and creative freedom, allowing her to establish a wholly self-contained creative ecosystem. Zang's works strive for a level of realism that either mimics or extracts from the everyday objects she responds to. Her paintings possess a self-aware, slacker trompe l'oeil style, while her sculptures transcend the banalities of existence through humorous invention.

Zang is represented by Animal House Fine Arts, Naarm Melbourne.

Gertrude Studios 2024  
2 November – 15 December 2024  
Gertrude Contemporary, Preston

Gertrude acknowledges the Wurundjeri people as the traditional owners and custodians of the land and waters on which we operate. We pay our respects to the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation and their ancestors and Elders — past, present, and future.

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Tracy Burgess

## ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Mark Feary

## CURATOR

Amelia Winata

## ASSISTANT CURATOR

Brigid Moriarty

## GALLERY AND EDUCATION MANAGER

Sharon Flynn

## EXHIBITION AND STUDIOS COORDINATOR

Ian Bunyi

## ENGAGEMENT COORDINATOR

Brigit Ryan

## COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR

Anador Walsh

The Gertrude team is grateful to Shannon McCulloch for installation support, Shane Selleck for exhibition signage, and Alex Ward for exhibition graphic design.

Amelia Winata is a Naarm Melbourne based writer and curator. She is a founding editor of *Memo Review* and an editor of *Index*, a peer-reviewed art history journal out of the University of Melbourne. In recent years, Amelia has been a contributor to *The Saturday Paper*, *Artforum* and *Art Monthly Australasia*, and has written for leading institutions including the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (ACCA) and the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV). She was previously recipient of the Next Wave x West Space curatorial co-commission and the Australia Council for the Arts Venice Biennale professional development program. Amelia has completed a PhD in Art History at the University of Melbourne, with her focus on the German artist Charlotte Posenenske (1930–1985).

Brigid Moriarty is a curator who lives and works between Naarm Melbourne and Sydney. In addition to her role at Gertrude, Brigid is also an assistant curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, where she has contributed to major exhibitions including *Julie Mehretu: A Transcore of the Radical Imaginatory*, *Nicholas Mangan: A World Undone*, *Tacita Dean* and *Zoe Leonard: Al río/To the River*. She was previously Associate Director of Sutton Gallery, and has worked for a range of arts organisations including Monash Art Design and Architecture, Australian Museums and Galleries Association, Peggy Guggenheim Collection and the Museum of Old and New Art (MONA).



For 40 years, Gertrude has been Australia's leading incubator of contemporary art, shaping the careers of our most celebrated artists. Non-commercial and independent, we offer artists freedom for risk-taking, innovation and ambition. Our studio and exhibition program places equal emphasis on the production and presentation of contemporary art. This enables us to support great artists in exploring new ideas and presenting risk-taking work to local audiences.

For more information, please visit [gertrude.org.au](http://gertrude.org.au) or contact us on +613 9480 0068 / [info@gertrude.org.au](mailto:info@gertrude.org.au)

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