

## First Floor continued

Léuli Eshraghi

*Home (for Roya)* (2014)

acrylic on Fabriano paper

100 x 71cm.

Courtesy the artist.

Léuli Eshraghi

*Home (for Ezzat)* (2014)

acrylic on Fabriano paper

100 x 71cm.

Courtesy the artist.

Léuli Eshraghi

*Home (for Enayat)* (2014)

acrylic on Fabriano paper

100 x 71cm.

Courtesy the artist.

Léuli Eshraghi

*Place de la Libération, ode aux celles à venir / Freedom*

*Square, ode to those to come* (2014)

acrylic on Fabriano paper

100 x 71cm.

Courtesy the artist.

Léuli Eshraghi

*Khoon-e ma / Our blood* (2014)

acrylic on Fabriano paper

100 x 71cm.

Courtesy the artist.

Centre:

Léuli Eshraghi

*'o loimata o' Apaula (o' loimata e tolu) (Tears of Apaula*

*(three tears))* (2015)

white ink drawing on black prisma paper

29.7 x 42cm.

Courtesy the artist.

Léuli Eshraghi

*Aleph-e Pahlavi* (2015)

white ink drawing on black prisma paper

29.7 x 42cm.

Courtesy the artist.

Léuli Eshraghi

*An fenjan haye chai ke ba ham nanooshidim (chaharta)*

*(Those cups of tea we didn't share (fourth))* (2015)

white ink drawing on black prisma paper

29.7 x 42cm.

Courtesy the artist.

Léuli Eshraghi

*We are the first* (2015)

white ink drawing on black prisma paper

29.7 x 42cm.

Courtesy the artist.



## FUTURE ARCHAEOLOGY

30 OCTOBER - 17 DECEMBER 2015

*Future Archaeology* presents work by a group of artists currently based in Australia who conceptually engage with notions of tradition through contemporary cultural artefacts. Through an appropriation of the discipline of archaeology, the exhibition presents artworks that excavate cultural artefacts as sites for the interrogation and unpacking of the social and political forces within Asia-Pacific that have led to mass migration, cultural displacement and environmental destruction. The exhibition also draws on a leading theme of multiplicity – of numerous geo-historical trajectories borne of moments of disruption, rather than continuity – as a means to consider both historical moments and contemporary developments that have shaped the cultural landscape.

Commissioned especially for *Future Archaeology* is a new performance and installation by Colombian born artist, Claudia Nicholson. Adopted by an Australian family at a young age, Nicholson often focuses her practice on attempts to establish a psychic connection with her Colombian family and heritage through an exploration of traditional Colombian cultural forms. Originating in Europe, the alfombra de asserín (sawdust carpet) emerged in South and Central America as a result of the widespread introduction of Catholicism. These vibrant and highly decorative forms are traditionally made to celebrate Corpus Christi, or Easter. But rather than simply replicating their European counterparts, the alfombra de asserín incorporated pre-Columbian folkloric symbols and narratives, becoming a bricolage of religious imagery. Nicholson's own alfombra de asserín, *On Our Terms* (2015) weaves together a complex narrative that links the colonialism of the Americas and the current destruction of the landscape to the artists own experiences of cultural dislocation.

Also concerned with physical experiences of diaspora is Thai-Australian artist Nathan Beard, who has developed a new video work, *Hiraeth* (2015) which takes as its starting point a reel of Super 8 footage that the artist found in his mother's home. Filmed by his paternal (Australian) aunt, the short video captures the rural landscape surrounding his mother home in Thailand, as well as family members and friends. The work takes its title from the Welsh word, *Hiraeth*, which refers to a melancholic longing for a home which no longer exists. By reframing this family video as a cultural artefact, Beard reflects this intimate portraits of family and place, allowing his mother - as well as the audience - to collapse the temporal and physical distances between his mothers home in Thailand and her current home in Australia, suggesting an alternative location where ones longing for home is both recognised but unfulfilled.

After travelling with her mother to Saigon to visit her own home, Andy Mullens embarked on a new body of sculptural works which address the multiple narratives of history that emerged as a result of the Vietnam War and the subsequent mass migration. *Still* (2015) appropriates the Vietnam State flag rendering it in cool fluorescent light and white silk. The desaturation of colour and glaring light reads as almost sterile as if Mullens is resisting a personal



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engagement with a former era of Vietnam. Instead, through the lens of inherited trauma and with a conflicted sense of cultural ownership, Mullens incorporates formal components of American Minimalism, Vietnamese traditional materials and the flag as a cultural artefact to consider the convergence of social and political forces in Vietnam, both historically and in the contemporary context.

Born in Yuwi country and based in Warrm, Melbourne, of Persian and Samoan heritage, Léuli Eshraghi has drawn extensively on the visual traditions of his cultural heritage to produce a hauntingly beautiful and timely body of work which speaks to personal experiences of political persecution as well as the impact of the broader destruction of marginalised cultures from the Pacific and the Middle East. Vivid in their colour and geometry, the series *Home* (2014) nonetheless speak to the murder of the artist's family members in his homeland of Iran and the subsequent erasure of their graves. These paintings emanate a sense of defiant joy, echoing in their own abstract form architectural flourishes, ornate bridges and garden fountains from Iranian culture. Through the act of, for example, repeating Aleph, the first letter in the Pahlavi script, or annotating the location of a specific site, Eshraghi ensures through his own gestures the continuity of these voices.

As the child of Lebanese parents who migrated to Australia, Deanna Hitti has developed a strong interest in comprehending the diverse cultural traditions of Australia's varied populations, and as a printmaker and artist her work often interrogates the nuanced power dynamics that occur between countries from the Middle East, Asia and the West. Her artist book, *Assimilation Museum* (2015) features reproductions of works by artists such as Inges, Gerome and Delacroix which Hitti has scanned directly from educational art books found in Shenzhen which have then been screen printed on Chinese NiJin gold paper. Each image is accompanied by 'fake' titles comprising randomly selected characters from the Arabic alphabet. In doing so, Hitti investigates how historical notions of the East, characterised by exoticism, romanticism and orientalist can act as a kind of lens to reflect upon contemporary representation of the Middle East in Australia.

Abdullah M.I. Syed's ambitious series *Brut for Men* (2013) is the result of a two year collaboration with Pakistani truck artists based in Karachi, Pakistan. *Brut for Men* alludes both to the popular mens fragrance, designed to reflect a modern sense of masculine strength, and its extreme opposite found in the word 'brute'. Made of hand-beaten and hand-crafted tickets (Chamak Patti) the *Brut for Men* sculptures combine masculine strength with a sense of fragility and beauty by including a number of non-traditional design components and images such as the lion and the deer in *Brut for Men: Target* (2013). As a collaborative project, *Brut for Men* also speaks to the process collective cultural production and the transference of skills between artists and artisans. Through this confluence of religious, spiritual and political beliefs, Syed is able to produce a body of work which reflects the complexity of cultural identity.

Through an interrogation and excavation of these cultural artefacts the artists in *Future Archaeology* proposed systems of communication and bodies of knowledge transferred through cultural production. The exhibition suggest that rather than static objects, the artworks and indeed cultural can be responsive to its environment, and that there is much to be learnt. By excavating and reinvigorating traditional cultural forms, the artists in *Future Archaeology* suggest alternative histories of the aesthetic and conceptual development of culture within the contemporary landscape.

## LIST OF WORKS

### GROUND FLOOR

Claudia Nicholson  
*On Our Terms* (2015)  
sawdust, dye glitter  
2.5 x 5m.  
Courtesy the artist.

### FIRST FLOOR

Left to Right:  
Abdullah M.I. Syed  
*Brut for Men: Heart* (2013)  
hand-beaten and chamak patti (hand stickers  
ornamentation), metal medallion, wood, stainless  
steel  
149.86 x 116.84cm  
Courtesy the artist and Aicon Gallery, New York.

Abdullah M.I. Syed  
*Brut for Men: Rose* (2013)  
hand-beaten and chamak patti (hand stickers  
ornamentation), metal medallion, wood, stainless  
steel  
149.86 x 116.84cm  
Courtesy the artist and Aicon Gallery, New York.

Abdullah M.I. Syed  
*Brut for Men: Lotus* (2013)  
hand-beaten and chamak patti (hand stickers  
ornamentation), metal medallion, wood, stainless  
steel  
149.86 x 116.84cm  
Courtesy the artist and Aicon Gallery, New York.

Abdullah M.I. Syed  
*Brut for Men: Target* (2013)  
hand-beaten and chamak patti (hand stickers  
ornamentation), metal medallion, wood, stainless  
steel  
149.86 x 116.84cm  
Courtesy the artist and Aicon Gallery, New York.

Abdullah M.I. Syed  
*The Fragrance of Moon* (2013)  
Brut for Men bottle, Perspex and transparency  
projector  
dimensions variable.  
Courtesy the artist and Aicon Gallery, New York.

Deanna Hitti  
*Assimilation Museum* (2015)  
screen prints on BFK Rives 210gsm, NiJin gold  
paper, hardcover book  
34 x 44 x 4cm  
Courtesy the artist.

Nathan Beard  
*Hiraeth* (2015)  
single-channel HD video  
1:27 mins.  
Courtesy the artist.

Andy Mullens  
*Still* (2015)  
silk, fluorescence lights, power cord, brackets,  
metallic thread  
dimensions variable.  
Courtesy the artist.