

A TEAR IN THE FABRIC

Zico Albaquni
Tiyan Baker
Allison Chhorn
Visaya Hoffie
Jenna Mayilema Lee
Khaled Sabsabi
Leyla Stevens
Ali Tahayori
Hirofumi Uchino



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On Distortion or, Acts of Aesthetic, Conceptual and Material Transgression

Distortion is a wide and nebulous term: an adjective and a noun loosely detailing the shifting of something recognisable into a new form. To distort implies an action actively imposing a disruption to the previous whole. Distortion describes the irregular treatment of something pure, an avenue for untapped chaos to disturb the status quo. The simplest and most recognisable form of distortion of most is the audio signal processing of an electric guitar, resulting in the crunchingly dense timbres found in rock and heavy metal. The act of distorting is frequently radical and often violent, and stands as an historically significant conceptual tool in pioneering artistic expression.

Using this simple definition of distortion, we can revisit one of the defining artistic moments of the 20th Century: the mythologised premiere of *Le Sacre du printemps* (*The Rite of Spring*), composed by Igor Stravinsky with choreography by Vaslav Nijinsky. First performed in Paris at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées on 29 May 1913, *The Rite of Spring* maintains a storied reputation of having caused a riot among the audience, attributed to Nijinsky's barbaric treatment the established forms and function of ballet, combined in equal part with grinding and primal avant-garde compositional approach from Stravinsky. This enduring tale demonstrates the power of distortion to both elicit an emotional response but also push the boundaries of art from aesthetic, conceptual and material perspectives.

Listening to *The Rite* now, Stravinsky's prominent 'Augurs' chord—which ebbs and flows throughout the entire ballet—may appear as an antiquated albeit abrasive harmonic element yet maintains its discomforting efficacy. Yes, harmonic dissonance existed as a compositional tool in Western art music centuries before 1913, but never before had it been so brazenly deployed to cause a riot. Herein lies the inherent power of a distorting act: the ability to unsettle, which, when pursued, can lead to a radical shift in cultural hegemony.

It is this thinking which informs *A Tear in the Fabric*, an exhibition founded upon ideas of artistic transgression to tell stories and provide new insights into established modes of thinking and documentation.

While contemporary research into primary and secondary accounts of *The Rite*'s opening night at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées hardly depict lawless anarchy, we can assume the response was at least unruly from a typically reserved and modest crowd. We continuously mythologise this evening in cultural memory for its influential visual imagery – that art can be so shockingly twisted in form it functions as a radically profound statement that viewers become emotionally affected to such a degree. *The Rite* is not the prettily pastoral ballet the name suggests but it is vulgarly beautiful. Decades prior to Nijinsky and Stravinsky, Claude Monet disrupted the Parisian art scene with his groundbreaking application of colour and technical embrace of visible brushstrokes. Impressionism was met with disdain, with Monet's paintings appearing as sloppy and unfinished to the established artistic caste. His retrospectively revolutionary peers found value in this beguiling aesthetic style and the rest, as they say, is history.

Monet and Impressionism's beauty is now undeniable, and influentially pioneered an avant-garde conceptual approach which shattered the constraints of painting. The liberation of artistic practice allows crucial and critical perspectives to be expressed from the most diverse of voices globally. This is extremely pertinent in a hyperconnected online global cultural ecosystem. We can access disparate and specific regional cultures which platforms marginalised stories of resistance, reclamation and assertion. A simple online search can lead you to the fascinating artistic microclimates of the burgeoning metal scene in Nairobi, the lauded poetic cinema of Iranian filmmakers and the grassroots Gaza Skate Team who allow children to mentally escape the tragedy of an ongoing genocide in Palestine. In every hardship there is beauty; the concrete rose.

A Tear in the Fabric continues this lineage of disruption through contemporary artistic aesthetic, conceptual and material transgressions.

Jenna Mayilema Lee and Tiyan Baker present defiant statements of decolonial defiance; from authoring new Indigenous knowledge narratives from a self determined perspective, to the idea of play in historically contested geographies respectively. Questions of memory, acceptance and identity are challenged by first and second generation members of diasporic communities while simultaneously expanding upon traditional ideas of artistic media by Allison Chhorn, Khaled Sabsabi and Ali Tahayori. Technically, Visaya Hoffie and Hirofumi Uchino actively explore painting and sound art through their uniquely new material experiments. Sociopolitical hegemony is fractured in Zico Albaquni's multidimensional and technically proficient works on canvas, and completely rewritten in the cinematic work of Leyla Stevens as she recodifies the language of Balinese theatre with a feminist lens.

Disparate as their methodologies and conceptual frameworks may be, each artist presented in this exhibition evokes an emotional response in their interventionist approach to contemporary art.

Words by Con Gerakaris
Curatorial Program Manager
4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art

A Tear in the Fabric is co-presented with
4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, Warrane/Sydney.



List of works

1. Allison Chhorn, *Disintegrate/Regenerate ('Memory House' Revisited)*, 2025, single-channel video, 12 min, 35mm black and white photographs, sheer linen, dimensions variable. Produced by Chris Luscri. Courtesy of the artist.
2. Visaya HOFFIE, *Silent series*, 2025, acrylic house paint on felt, four panels, 101.6 × 137.1cm (each). Courtesy of the artist.
3. Jenna Mayilema Lee, *dis/bound re/bound*, 2021, pages of 'Aboriginal words and place names', bookbinding thread, varnish, dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist and MARS Gallery, Naarm/Melbourne.
- Jenna Meyilema Lee, *In sun, moon and stars*, 2025, found book cover, pages of 'Myths and legends of Australia', rice starch glue, mounted on 19mm Cradled Painting Panel, 12 × 19cm. Courtesy of the artist and MARS Gallery, Naarm/Melbourne.
- Jenna Meyilema Lee, *Poetry in her body*, 2025, found book cover, pages of 'Myths and legends of Australia', rice starch glue, mounted on 19mm Cradled Painting Panel, 12 × 19cm. Courtesy of the artist and MARS Gallery, Naarm/Melbourne.
4. Tiyan Baker, *Building a longhouse at the site of the first Bukar Bidayŕh settlement*, 2025, digital video, sound, bamboo, nuts, bolts, sisal rope, wire, 160 × 190 × 180cm. Courtesy of the artist.
- Tiyan Baker, *Top view of Bung Sadung and surrounding villages*, 2025, digital print mounted on dibond, 45 × 45cm. Courtesy of the artist.
- Tiyan Baker, *Ancestral longhouse - view from inside topography at night*, 2025, digital print mounted on dibond, 45 × 90.5cm. Courtesy of the artist.
- Tiyan Baker, *Ancestral longhouse - view from inside topography at midday*, 2025, digital print mounted on dibond, 45 × 77.7cm. Courtesy of the artist.
- Tiyan Baker, *Ancestral longhouse - birds eye view in the morning*, 2025, digital print mounted on dibond, 45 × 74.8cm. Courtesy of the artist.
5. Leyla Stevens, *GROH GOH (Rehearsal for Rangda)*, 2023, single channel video, 28 mins. Courtesy of the artist.
6. Ali Tahayori, *Kill Me Softly*, 2024, hand-cut mirrors and plaster on vintage window frame, single-channel HD video, 2 min 53 sec, 100 cm x 85 cm.C ourtesy the artist and this is no fantasy, Naarm/Melbourne.
7. Hirofumi Uchino (aka. Defektro), *The Taste of Poisons 3*, 2025, metal sheets (iron, brass, copper, aluminum, titanium, tungsten, indium) and vibration speakers with sound, dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist.
8. Khaled Sabsabi, *Tawla*, 2011, single channel HD video installation, 12m, TV, audio, adapted coffee table, wood and acrylic paint, 80 × 40 × 40cm. Collection of the artist.
- Khaled Sabsabi, *South @ Part B*, 2017–19, 22 acrylic, enamel paint and oil stick on canvas, MDF board and paper, dimensions variable. Collection of the artist.
9. Zico Albaiquni, *In the Search of Lukis in the Sense of What It Used to be (Mencari Arah menuju pengertian lukis sedia kala)*, 2024, oil and giclee on canvas, 225 × 140cm. Courtesy of the artist and Ames Yavuz, Singapore and Gadigal/Sydney. `
- Zico Albaiquni, *In the Search of Lukis in the Sense of What It Used to be (Mencari Arah menuju pengertian lukis sedia kala) II*, 2024, oil and giclee on canvas, 225 × 140cm. Courtesy of the artist and Ames Yavuz, Singapore and Gadigal/Sydney.
- Zico Albaiquni, *In the Search of Lukis in the Sense of What It Used to be (Mencari Arah menuju pengertian lukis sedia kala) III*, 2024, oil and giclee on canvas, 225 × 140cm. Courtesy of the artist and Ames Yavuz, Singapore and Gadigal/Sydney.

