

Leyla Stevens

GROH GOH (Rehersal for Rangda), 2023

single channel video, 28 minutes

Writer/Director/Editor: Leyla Stevens

Cinematography: Gotaro Uematsu & Wayan Martino

Choreography: Adhika Annissa (Ninus)

Sound Composition: Isha Ram Das

Performances

Rangda: Karina Utomo

Rangda's Disciples: Ni Ketut Putri Minangsari Ida Ayu Wayan Prihandari (Bumi Bajra), Ni Kadek Thaly Titi Kasih (Bumi Bajra), Ni Kadek Dwipayani (Bumi Bajra), Ni Komang Trisnadevi (Bumi Bajra)

Master Rangda Performer: Jro Mangku Serongga

Sound Mix: Bob Scott

Colourist: Yanni Kronenberg

Rangda Costume Design: Aleisa Jelbart

This project has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia council, its arts funding and advisory body, and through the NSW Government through Create NSW.

What does it mean to perform in the diaspora, and how does the translation of traditional cultural artforms change in a transcultural context? This question is the nucleus of Australian-Balinese artist Leyla Stevens' *GROH GOH (Rehearsal for Rangda)* (2025), a moving image artwork which uses bodily movement and vocalisations to reposition the mythical demon queen Rangda as a subversive and empowering female force.

A prominent figure in Balinese theatre, Rangda is portrayed as a malevolent entity with gruesome tusks and a horrifying visage who is defeated by Barong, king of the spirits. Stevens authoritatively repurposes Balinese theatre – an artform for male performers only – as an avenue for collective women's cultural building, unlearning and re-learning Rangda as not only a character but as a disruptive matriarchal figure.

Central to the invocation of Rangda is the act of vocalising the mythic figure. Throughout Stevens' moving image work, we hear and see the transformative power of Rangda's guttural barks and banshee-screach cackle as the performers harness the witch queen as a conduit for a female agency. The film culminates with Javanese-Australian extreme metal vocalist Karina Utomo embodying a new depiction of Rangda – a forceful human woman seething with the black magic of her ancestors, unchallenged by any other force, natural or supernatural.

GROH GOH (Rehearsal for Rangda) represents Stevens independently bridging gaps and translating cultural knowledge through the reconfiguring of traditional and contemporary artforms, renewing the relevance of mythological symbology in their new context.

Allison Chhorn

Disintegrate/Regenerate ('Memory House' Revisited), 2025

single-channel video, 12 minutes, 35mm black and white
photographs, sheer linen

Produced by Chris Luscri.
Produced on Kaurna Land.

Courtesy of the artist.

The process of disintegration is often gradual – a slow, fibrous crumbling into decay and dust. This physical and conceptual phenomenon is core to the work of Cambodian-Australian filmmaker and artist Allison Chhorn as she examines the challenging and knotty relationship between place and memory. In *Disintegrate/Regenerate ('Memory House' Revisited)* (2025), Chhorn engages with her personal archive of still and moving images, reinterpreting the photographic series *Memory House* (2022) through the examination of material and visual degradation, housed in a ghostly, floating installation.

Built around a collection of 35mm black and white photographs taken between 2012 and 2013, *Memory House* documents the artist's life and experience working on her family's market garden on the outskirts of Adelaide. The series served as a study for Chhorn's docu-fiction film *The Plastic House* (2019), a haunting piece about grief and the passage of time anchored to memories tied to location.

For this exhibition, the artist coalesces the diverse stands of her practice into a new installation exploring the relationship between reproductive disintegration and recollective memory. As time passes and people change, the clarity of a memory obscures into evocative symbols, analogous to Chhorn's material treatment of transposing film photography into a digital medium and again back into a new object through projection. With *Disintegrate/Regenerate ('Memory House' Revisited)* Chhorn poses a subtle provocation: With every reproduction, as the image disintegrates, does it also generate something new?

Khaled Sabsabi

***Tawla*, 2011**

single-channel HD video installation, 12 minutes

TV, audio, adapted coffee table, wood and acrylic paint

Courtesy of the artist and Milani Gallery, Meanjin/Brisbane

A good game of backgammon thrives on misdirection and advantage, seizing opportunities to set your opponent back in a race to bear off your checkers. In Khaled Sabsabi's native Lebanon, backgammon – or طولة (tawlé, table) – is an intrinsic part of daily life; a daily habit of passing time gossiping with friends – as important as coffee and a cigarette. *Tawla* (2011) features a kaleidoscopic array of six concurrent games as two dozen laboured hands rush back and forth moving 180 pieces across 144 sawtooth points. When placed edge to edge, each board becomes interwoven into a textile echoing the intricate patterning of rugs ubiquitous throughout the Arab world.

Filmed in Beirut, *Tawla* places us in a scene commonplace throughout the country and thrusts us into a hectic space riddled with argumentative gestures and deceptive sleight of hand. Sabsabi reframes backgammon as a tense metaphor for power and control, an oscillating battle for occupancy echoing ideas of conflict and resistance. Abstracted into an everyday activity, the work highlights the ubiquity and normalisation of conflict within the communal and social fabric of Lebanon.

Khaled Sabsabi

South @ Part B, 2017–2019

acrylic, enamel paint and oil stick on canvas,
MDF board and paper

Collection of the artist

The southern border of Lebanon has long been a region of contestation and segregation, with partitioning lines drawn and redrawn across the rise and fall of empires. In his asymmetrical series of paintings, Khaled Sabsabi expresses the emotionally numbing experience of life at the forefront of violent division rendered with an application of a monochromatic colour palette. *South @ Part B* (2017–19) delves into notions of suffering and the oppressive power systems driven by political ideologies and the rhetoric of division and distance that sets us against one another.

Evocative of illustrations on a blackboard on chalk markings on the road, Sabsabi's almost-naïve rendering of a neighbourhood locates us beyond southern Lebanon in a statement of global struggle. By eschewing any formal representation of landscape, the artist places us in fractured blocks of housing and bureaucracy bringing to mind the controlling environments of immigration detention facilities both in Australia and abroad. *South @ Part B* shows Sabsabi challenging systems of power and the roles they play within the grand scale of order and chaos.

Jenna Mayilema Lee

dis/bound re/bound, 2021

pages of 'Aboriginal Words and Place Names', bookbinding
thread, varnish

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

Poetry in her body, 2025

found book cover, pages of 'Myths and Legends of Australia', rice
starch glue. Mounted on a 19mm Cradled Painting Panel

Courtesy of the artist and MARS Gallery, Naarm/Melbourne

Originally published in 1977, A.W. Reed's compendium *Aboriginal Words and Place Names* was presented as a factual study and communication resource. For Jenna Mayilema Lee the publication represents a careless collection of inaccurate translations, wrongfully homogenising the vastly diverse language groups across a multitude of Aboriginal nations. With decolonial intent, Lee collects and pulps old editions of Reed's book and transforms their material properties into woven sculptural works. Her piece *dis/bound re/bound* (2021) sees the artist create a series of dilly bags, reinterpreting the everyday tool into a vessel for reclaimed cultural knowledge drawing on her experiences as a proud Gulumerridjin (Larrakia), Wardaman, and KarraJarri woman with mixed Japanese, Chinese, Filipino and Anglo-Australian ancestry.

Presented alongside *dis/bound re/bound* are a pair of quietly pathétique pieces made upon upcycled book covers. *In sun, moon and stars* (2025) and *Poetry in her body* (2025) continue Lee's material experimentation with existing publications, this time extracting snippets of text to remove and recontextualise these words through artistic agency. Lithely applied to hardcovers painted in the artist's signature crimson hue, the artist co-opts text from *Myths and Legends of Australia*, authored by A.W. Reed and first published in 1965. Lee erases the colonially-minded anthropology and in turn reclaiming the elegant and ever-changing oral histories and dreamings from their printed form, frozen in letters.

Visaya Hoffie

Silent Series, 2025

acrylic house paint on felt

Courtesy of the artist

Silent Series (2025) is a symphony of four unique paintings bound through a shared visual language in which Visaya Hoffie investigates the use of sound as a compositional element. Experimenting with an expanded approach to material substrates, this work draws upon the alchemising properties of acoustic felt, becoming a pictorial composition where loudness and aggression are rendered mute. Comprising Hoffie's signature illustrative mischievous caricatures, sheet music notation and ironic textural statement, *Silent Series* offers a conceptual bridge between the status nature of painting in contrast to the fluidity of sound-based artistic expression.

Art history is redolent with descriptions of artists who have made attempts to paint sound, from Wassily Kandinsky's synaesthetic expressionism to Roy de Maistre's academic colour orchestrations. Visaya Hoffie contemporises this methodology of painterly composition with a dense and layered quadriptych centred around the concept of sonic absorption. Scientifically, acoustic felt dissipates sound energy into heat, absorbing into the panel. Mimicking this process, Hoffie's aesthetically disparate yet conceptually linked painted layers seep into her canvas of felt fibres distorting the kinetic energy of her brushstrokes to create a conductor's score detailing the interplay of the artist's visual ensemble. The ingrained musicality of *Silent Series* is amplified in our mind as we follow Visaya Hoffie's painting at full volume, yet the work materially sits hushed, dutifully soaking the ambient sounds of the gallery itself.

Tiyan Baker

***Building a longhouse at the site of the first
Bukar Bidayûh settlement , 2025***

digital video, sound, bamboo, nuts, bolts, sisal rope, wire

Top view of Bung Sadung and surrounding villages, 2025

digital print mounted on dibond

***Ancestral longhouse - view from inside
topography at night, 2025***

digital print mounted on dibond

***Ancestral longhouse - view from inside
topography at midday, 2025***

digital print mounted on dibond

Ancestral longhouse - birds eye view in the morning, 2025

digital print mounted on dibond

Commissioned by Goolugatup Heathcote as part of the 2023
Digital Art Prize. Courtesy of the artist.

Playing with ideas of ownership, authenticity and access, Tiyan Baker's ongoing series *Player Count One: Studies of Bung Sadung in Fortnite* (2025) sees the artist recreating and building upon ancestral lands in present-day Sarawak, Malaysia. Using the widespread industry and hobbyist video game engine Unreal Engine 5, Baker has dutifully sculpted and inhabited her matrilineal homeland of Bung Sadung and its surrounds in a custom *Fortnite* map. Her digital print works *Top view of Bung Sadung and surrounding villages* (2025) and the *Ancestral longhouse triptych* (2025) are studies in traditional architectural construction and statements of geopolitical reclamation, building upon Indigenous lands in a custom environment bereft of their contemporary colonial context.

Fortnite is a game of conquest – a 100-player contest to dominate the island through an arsenal of weaponry and militaristic structures. Adapting this language and gameplay loop, Tiyan Baker deconstructs the implicit violence of the game to comment on the contested history of Bukar Bidayûh lands. For centuries, Bukar Bidayûh peoples and their heartland have been subject to external colonial rule from the Bruneian Empire in 1512 to the British protectorate Raj of Sarawak until 1941, to the ensuing Japanese Occupancy during World War II and current constitutional monarchy of Malaysia. Baker's moving image work *Building a longhouse at the site of the first Bukar Bidayûh settlement* (2025) records the artist's avatar re-occupying the original settlements on Bung Sadung in an act of defiant Indigenous sovereignty, rendered in the online battleground of the defining video game in our modern era.

Ali Tahayori

Kill Me Softly, 2024

hand-cut mirrors and plaster on vintage window frame,
single-channel HD video, 2 minutes 53 seconds

Courtesy of the artist and THIS IS NO FANTASY, Melbourne

Silent, meditative, contemplative; a window into infinity fragmented and fractured. The artist, Ali Tahayori, uses these words to describe his mixed-media installation *Kill Me Softly* (2024), a work which is both autobiographical and allegorical in its exploration of queer identity and LGBTQIA+ rights in his homeland of Iran.

Nested within a salvaged arched window frame from Tahayori's family home is a sophisticatedly ornate mirror, sliced and assembled in the lineage of the ancient Persian decorative artform of آینه‌کاری (Āine-Kāri, or mirror work). Tahayori has long incorporated Aine-Kāri into his artistic practice, mobilising the intrinsic function of the artform into explorations of light as a medium. Combined with projected moving images, the artist allows the inherent luminosity of his moving images to reflect into physical space, distorting the image while questioning the perceived rigidity of borders.

In *Kill Me Softly*, we see Tahayori and an ex-partner embrace in a fleeting moment of intimacy before separating. Watching through arched windows, our reading of their meeting is clandestine in nature, speaking to the prohibition of same-sex relationships in Iran. Tahayori's mirror mosaic glisteningly obscures the figures' identities while their body movements ebb and flow in the shimmering reflection emanating across the gallery. The work raises awareness of the LGBTQIA+ struggle, not only in the Islamic world but also globally, told through a universal story of desire, connection and separation.

Zico Albaiquni

***In 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

***In 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

***In 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

Courtesy of the artist and Amez Yavuz, Gadigal/Sydney

Zico Albaiquni works with contemporary painting to critically engage with the social, political and cultural history of Indonesia. His approach to the medium fractures traditional notions of perspective and figurative representation, manifesting across symbolically rich vignettes of intersecting narratives. Albaiquni twists the imperialistic context of Dutch colonial-era Mooi Indie landscape painting with transhistorical references to touchstones of anti-colonial resistance alongside the contemporary political climate of Indonesia.

His recent series *In the Search of Lukis in the Sense of What It Used to be* (*Mencari Arah menuju pengertian lukis sedia kala*) (2024) is a proactive investigation of the concept of 'lukis.' Albaiquni – expanding upon the work of Indonesian art critic Sanento Yuliman – redefines 'lukis' as the bringing forth of ideas in visually pleasing compositions through the action of creating using hand tools, with divine provenance.¹

The artist's large-scale oil and giclée on canvas works are layered with pre-colonial cultural figures depicted in saturated colours, disrupting the romanticised realism of the Mooi Indie movement and reclaiming the archipelagic states which constitute present day Indonesia. In parallel to Albaiquni's inquiry into lukisan practice is an inquiry into nation-making myths, a pertinent criticism of the increasing Javafication of Indonesia and homogenising of diverse ethnic and racial groups in a political effort to unify the country under one identity on the global stage.

¹ Sanento Yuliman & Zico Albaiquni, 'The Lukis Tradition In Indonesia: Lukis In The Sense Of What It Used To Be.' Art and Australia. com https://artandaustralia.com/A__A/p245/the-lukis-tradition-in-indonesia-lukis-in-the-sense-of-what-it-used-to-be

Hirofumi Uchino (aka Defektro)

The Taste of Poisons 3, 2025

metal sheets (iron, brass, copper, aluminium, titanium, tungsten, indium)
and vibration speakers with sound

Courtesy of the artist

Noise as a form of music has roots tracing back to the Italian Futurist movement of the 1910s, extending through the French musique concrète compositional method to avant-garde electroacoustic art music. For Japanese-born, Sydney-based musician, artist and DIY effect pedal and instrument engineer, Hirofumi Uchino (aka Defektro), noise is a pure form of sonic expression, standing in place of notes and chords. His performed and recorded practice oscillates between extreme harsh noise, elemental drones and junk metal grinding, finding new musical possibilities for found and manipulated sounds.

Uchino's installation and performance artwork *The Taste of Poisons 3* (2025) investigates the auditory qualities of different metals.

Crucial to Uchino's experimental orchestration was his involvement in the highly regarded 'Japanoise' scene since the 1990s, a wildly unorthodox music movement built on a punkish DIY mentality and penchant for sonic extremity. Developing from these roots, *The Taste of Poisons 3* sees Uchino take on dual roles of performer and conductor, intuitively composing for a septet of makeshift, reclaimed industrial instruments with a reverence generally reserved for western chamber music.

Scan the QR Code to watch
The Taste of Poisons at Backstage
Music's Clarity Engine Showcase at
Woodburn Creatives, Waterloo

