

Eugenia Lim is a Melbourne-based artist of Chinese-Singaporean descent who works across video, performance and installation. In her work, Lim transforms into invented personas to travel across time and cultures to explore how stereotypes and national identities cut, divide and bond our globalized world. Lim's *Artificial Islands* is a participatory installation work where the artists and her laborer collaborators build islands to reflect upon the claiming of territory and the dynamics of power in a globalizing society to comment on the blurring definitions of nature and culture in the name of progress.

Slippage is a collaborative practice by Australian born Chinese Vietnamese artists Hwafern Quach and Phuong Ngo. Slippage examines the cycles of history in conjunction with current geopolitical and economic issues through the lens of vernacular cultures, artefacts and language. *Mooncake* makes use of celadon glazed mooncakes, originating from China, representing China's historical expansionism in Asia to comment on China's current position in the South China Sea. *The Cow's Tongue* responds to the colloquial term used to describe South East Asia, with China seeing itself as the cow's head. The artists critique the term by suggesting that the tongue denotes China's continued hunger for political, economic and geographic influence over the region, carrying over from a historical stance.

Vipoo Srivilasa is a Thai born, Melbourne-based artist, curator and arts activist,

working predominantly in ceramics but also works on paper and mixed media sculptures. Vipoo's work explores similarities between the cultures of his native home, Thailand and his adoptive home, Australia, as well as exploring cultural shifts and migration experiences. His work is a playful mix of European historical figurative and Asian decorative art with a healthy dose of quirky contemporary popular culture. *The Masks of Me* represents the various faces of the artist living between two cultures, navigating when it is appropriate to blend in or stand out, celebrating his unique position of being in and between both cultural spaces.

Hoang Tran Nguyen was born in Vung Tau, Vietnam, in 1974. As part of the Vietnamese post-war exodus his family left Vietnam as refugees and were resettled in Australia in 1982, growing up in Melbourne's northern suburbs. *Making Crackers* and *Finale* are works influenced by the Footscray Vietnamese diasporic community, in particular their love of karaoke and festive cultural practices. *Episode 11, Chapter 5* draws attention to Japanese American character Harry Aoki in the 1980s TV series *21 Jump Street* played by American Vietnamese refugee Dustin Nguyen. When producers heard of the actor's personal history, they incorporated the narrative as part of the character's true identity, thus revealing the struggle of the Vietnamese refugee community in a popular international context.

Download artist statements and biographies online <https://thesubstation.org.au/whats-on/hyphenated>

## HYPHENATED

[hahy-fuh-ney-tid]

An exhibition of contemporary art by Victorian-Asian artists living between cultural spaces

RUSHDI ANWAR, SOFI BASSEGHI AND EHSAN KHOSHNAME, ANDY BUTLER, RHETT D'COSTA, TAMMY WONG HULBERT, NIKKI LAM, EUGENIA LIM, HOANG TRAN NGUYEN, SLIPPAGE, and VIPOO SRIVILASA

**23 March – 21 April**

Co-curated by Phuong Ngo and Tammy Wong Hulbert

## NAVIGATING THE HYPHENATED SPACE BETWEEN CULTURES by TAMMY WONG HULBERT

HYPHENATED began as a conversation between two artists of different Asian heritages, discussing how our experiences were similar, but also completely different. We had both experienced living between cultural spaces as Australians of Asian backgrounds, the hyphenated space between Asian-Australian. We felt our perspectives gave us unique insights into the cultural complexity of Australian society. The conversation grew beyond the two of us into an expanded conversation to include other artists. It became the platform for our curatorial framework, a series of conversations between artists showing various insights, perspectives and experiences. The artists in this exhibition converse with multiple ideas; their various personal and cultural histories, the individual and the collective in society, loss and transformation through migration, the dynamics of power, race, place, displacement and their sense of belonging.

Each of the artists selected for this exhibition work in contemporary modes and identify as Australians of Asian heritage. The continent of Asia is a broad landmass constituting more than half the world's population, where thousands of cultures, sub cultures, art forms, languages and religions originate demonstrating astounding diversity. Mass migration to Australia has resulted in cities vibrant with transnational communities identifying

with many other cultures. Yet due to our colonial past, Australians have identified more closely with our colonizers, even though geographically our location is in the Asia Pacific region. Since the post colonial era, the conversation of how Australia re-imagines itself has been the subject of debate and discussion in both politics and the arts, particularly with the rise of Asian contemporary art since the 1990s. Our aim for this exhibition was to expand on this conversation from a Victorian perspective.

Rushdi Anwar, originated from Kurdistan, trained and practiced in Melbourne and now resides in Thailand. He works across media, reflecting on the socio-political issues of Kurdistan, Iraq and The Middle East, dealing with social equity in relation to social and political unrest of the region. *Irhal (Expel), Hope, Sorrow of Displacement* is a powerful work expressing the state of displacement through social and political forces beyond the control of individuals. The work uses domestic chairs usually representing home and safety. Now burnt and discarded, they express fragility, uncertainty and limitation as experienced by millions of people forced to flee their homes due to social and political disruption.

Iranian born Sofi Basseghi works across video, documentary, photography and installation. Migrating to Australia during her teenage years, Basseghi developed a fascination with the society in which she was raised. Her works often document the intimate lives of her female friends, presenting how they rebel in Iranian society, living between contemporary and traditional lifestyles, giving insight into the complexity of being between culture,

society and religion. *Elusive Paradise* focuses on Michka Mansour, presenting the multiplicities of her persona through fact and fiction. The work is developed in collaboration with artist and architect Ehsan Khoshnami.

Andy Butler is an Australian-Filipino writer, artist and curator, originally raised in Kalgoorlie and Perth, now based in Melbourne. Andy's interdisciplinary practice interrogates institutional whiteness in the arts through writing, performance, video, installation and curatorial projects. He critiques diversity discourse, inclusion and the distribution of power and autonomy determined along racial lines. *Model Minority* continues this exploration, critiquing whiteness in contemporary art, commenting on how artists of diverse backgrounds must assimilate into the white artistic cannon, ironically becoming the latest luxury trend.

Rhett D'Costa was born in Bombay and migrated to Australia at an early age. His artistic practice draws on his hybrid background of British, Australian and Indian culture and is extended across media. Rhett's work sits within the context of postcolonial theory focusing on the right to belong in the intersecting areas of migration, identity and nationalism. *Becoming Differently* (2018) is a series of images and objects questioning the migrant relationship to place in post-colonial Australia, woven together by a series of personal texts written by a cultural geographer. The work questions where the migrant belongs, when the conversation is usually between the colonized and the colonizers.

Tammy Wong Hulbert is an artist, curator and academic based in Melbourne, Australia, born in Sydney to Cantonese Chinese parents. In her practice she is concerned with the complicated, multi-layered and often fragmented space between cultures and is influenced by her families' intergenerational migratory connection to Australia since 1900. Her recent works have often involved a socially engaged practice working with urban communities to address issues of migration and belonging to encourage inclusive cities. *Transient Home City* evolved from collaborating with the VICSEG Iranian Asylum Seekers Social Health Group in Broadmeadows. Together, the group explored how migrants experience home as transient and mobile rather than fixed. By taking ownership of this renewed status, the work asks us to consider how a migratory society informs our globalizing cities.

Hong Kong born Nikki Lam is a visual artist and curator based in Melbourne, Australia. From video, installation, writing and performance, her practice engages in the complexity of belonging through exploration of the self, memory and space. She explores post-colonial identities and narratives in the hybrid world through rituals, language and their visual representations. *Falling Leaf Returns to its Roots* draws from the Chinese analogy used to describe the circle of life, referencing the iconic Australian image of *The Sunbaker* by Max Dupain (1937) to comment on the process of becoming through the lens of migration. *Still...what is left* reflects on the transformation of rituals, gestures, behaviors and habits, which become altered and re-imagined in a new social context.