

Abdul-Rahman Abdullah

Born 1977, Dharawal Country, Port Kembla, New South Wales

Lives and works on Bindjareb Nyoongar Country, Western Australia

Pretty Beach 2019

painted wood, silver plated ballchain, crystals

500.0 x 500.0 x 500.0 cm

Created on Bindjareb Nyoongar Country

Courtesy the artist

Private Collection, Sydney

**Advisory note: This artwork contains references to suicide.
Viewer discretion is advised. Please speak with ACCA staff
members at the front counter for support resources.**

Abdul-Rahman Abdullah is an artist living on Bindjareb Nyoongar Country, on a cattle farm in the Peel region of Western Australia. Working primarily in sculpture and installation, his practice explores the intersections of identity, culture and the natural world. Informed by his own personal experiences as a Muslim Australian of mixed ethnicity, he is interested in the negotiation of collective understandings of individual identity and new mythologies in a multicultural context.

In *Pretty Beach* 2019 Abdul-Rahman Abdullah deploys his exquisite craftsmanship to address a deeply personal subject, the death by suicide of his beloved grandfather.

Abdullah reflects:

Pretty Beach is a meditation on the suicide of my grandfather in 2009. Grandpa Cliff lived in a rambling home known as the Boatshed on the Central Coast NSW, in the idyllic waterfront community of Pretty Beach. We'd visit every couple of years, making the long trek over the Nullarbor in the old 67 XR Falcon. Cliff didn't talk much, he'd chain smoke Log Cabin and chuckle at us kids with a beer in his hand. His shirts were spotted with little burn holes, and he wore stubbies all year round. He was a man of habit. He'd spent his working life delivering potatoes to the Chinese wholesalers in Paddy's Market where he was known as Honest Cliff, the man who couldn't lie.

Each home along the water had a jetty and high tide brought the water lapping up beneath the house. I remember standing out on the jetty as a kid watching a fever of stingrays' glide beneath me, tracing arcs through the shallow water. The rain drifted in like a soft curtain drawing across the bay, obliterating the rays from view as the surface of the water crumpled above them. I ran inside.

In 2009, we got the news that Grandpa Cliff had passed away. For the past few years, cancer and diabetes had been eroding his body. When his legs went, he dragged himself into his 63 EH Holden, hooked up the exhaust and faded into sleep. The choice to end his life reflected the resilience and independence with which he'd always conducted himself. While it took the wind from us there was a sense of easement in his decision that we understood. He died holding pictures of us kids and letters we'd written. I hadn't visited Pretty Beach for many years, and then he was gone.

The rain had come.

Abdul-Rahman Abdullah

Born 1977, Dharawal Country, Port Kembla, New South Wales

Lives and works on Bindjareb Nyoongar Country, Western Australia

Witness 2025

painted wood, horn, glass eyes

110.0 x 37.0 x 107.0 cm

Created on Bindjareb Nyoongar Country

This project has been supported by the Department of Local Government, Sports & Cultural Industries, Western Australia

Courtesy the artist and MOORE CONTEMPORARY

Abdul-Rahman Abdullah is an artist living on Bindjareb Nyoongar Country, on a cattle farm in the Peel region of Western Australia.

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Witness 2025, a new sculptural work consisting of a life-size sculpture of a Palestine mountain gazelle, continues Abdul-Rahman Abdullah's investigation of the narrative capacity of animal archetypes, and the majesty of nature. His sculptural subject is rendered with exquisite craftsmanship, taking on an uncanny and seductive sense of realism.

Abdul-Rahman Abdullah described the significance of his chosen subject:

The Palestine mountain gazelle embodies a sense of resilience, populating poetry with elegance in the face of adversity. Highly endangered and relying on vigilance and speed for survival, they cling to a precarious existence throughout the Levant.

Witness, or *shahid* in Arabic, translates as both observer and martyr.

Hoda Afshar

Born 1983, Tehran, Iran

Lives and works on Wurundjeri Country, Naarm/Melbourne VIC

In turn 2023 series

Left to Right: ***Untitled #5, #7, #1, #3, #6, #2, #4***

framed photographic print

165.0 x 132.0 cm each

Courtesy the artist and Milani Gallery, Meanjin/Brisbane

Hoda Afshar works at the intersection of conceptual, staged, and documentary image-making, exploring the representation of gender, marginality, and displacement. Initially drawn to the potential of the documentary image to unearth hidden realities, she is attentive to the collusion between the photographic medium and hierarchies of power. Informed by her own experience with migration and cultural displacement, Afshar's work takes the intrusiveness of the camera as a point of departure to unpack the relationship between truth, power, and the image, while disrupting traditional image-making conventions.

Afshar's *In turn* series was made in response to the feminist uprising that began in Iran in September 2022, following the death of 22-year-old Jina Amini who had been arrested by Iran's morality police for not wearing the hijab properly. These monumental photographs are a tribute and a testament to collective action and collective grief.

The women in the photographs are, like Afshar, Iranian Australians who have watched the protests unfold from afar.

Dressed in black, they cluster together and braid each other's hair. This is a direct allusion to the images on social media of women in Iran defiantly discarding the veil, and also to a practice common among Kurdish female fighters who plait each other's hair before heading into battle against the Islamic State. With their faces mostly hidden from view and their backs turned, Afshar's subjects are surrogates for their brave sisters in Iran. The doves anchor the analogy; when protesters are killed in Iran, family and friends release birds into the sky.

Afshar explains, 'The twines of a plait are referred to as pichesh-e-moo in Farsi, meaning the turn or fold of the hair. A revolution is a turning point, but it is never without loss.'

Megan Cope

Born 1982, Meanjin/Brisbane. Language group: Quandamooka
Lives and works between Minjerribah/North Stradbroke Island and
Bundjalung Country, Queensland

The tide waits for no-one 2020-21

250 kiln cast TV glass yungan/dugong bones and Minjerribah mineral
sand, plinth, lightbox

40.0 x 200.0 (cir) cm

Courtesy the artist and Milani Gallery, Meanjin/Brisbane

Megan Cope is a Quandamooka artist from Minjerribah/Morton Bay (North Stradbroke Island). She works across a range of media to explore the intricate relationships between place, environment and identity. Cope practice explores the ongoing cultural and environmental ramifications of colonisation, how systems of language, mapping and industrialisation have reshaped the Australian landscape. Conversely, she often foregrounds and the ways in which Aboriginal people have differing ways to continue their custodianship to Country.

The tide waits for no-one 2020-21 addresses the period of early colonisation of Quandamooka Country, where the hunting of Dugong and industrial scale processing became a lucrative marketplace. addresses these complex social histories, examining their impacts on the environment, and generations of its Traditional Owners, the Quandamooka people.

Between 1847 and 1969, the commercial processing of oil, bones, hides, and meat occurred with very little regard of sustainability, rather Europeans arrived with the perception of 'Bounteous Seas' and very little recognition of the sophisticated land and sea management systems upheld by the Quandamooka Peoples.

Eugenia Flynn

Born 1982, Tandanya/Adelaide. Language groups: Larrakia and Tiwi
Lives and works Boonwurrung Country, Naarm/Melbourne

for love of country 2025

ink on paper

dimensions variable

Created on Boonwurrung Country

Courtesy the artist

Eugenia Flynn is a writer, researcher, and creative, whose practice explores narratives of truth, grief, and devastation, interwoven with explorations of race and gender. As a Larrakia, Tiwi, Chinese Malaysian and Muslim woman, she works within her multiple communities to create change through literature, art, community organising, and community engagement.

Reflecting on the development of her newly commissioned text work, *for love of country 2025*, Flynn explains:

Love is a power that can manifest in both good and bad ways. The phrase ‘for love of country’ has been wielded negatively as a power particularly by those on the far right; as a call to racist and xenophobic nationalism. But even when wielded positively, when invoking remembrance of the sacrifices and service of those who defended nations, the negative aspects of love emerge. The booing of Welcome to Country at the start of ANZAC Day services, and the subsequent withdrawal of invitation for Welcome to Country at an ANZAC Day rugby game, are stark reminders of how love (of country) can be a negative force in Australian society.

I never intended to make this work contemporaneous, and the text had already taken its shape before the events of ANZAC Day 2025. Nonetheless, my original intentions for this work have been further underscored by what unfolded earlier this year. In this work I take aim at patriotic use of the phrase “for love of country”, seeking to break apart its racist and xenophobic power. In this small textual practice of repetition I extend the phrase, creating alternate versions that resist love as a particular form of power, that resist the wielding of love as the power to exclude, to be racist and to be xenophobic.

It is light, it is deep, it is personal, and it is expansive.

Let this manifestation of love resist and rise to the top.

D Harding

Born 1982, Moranbah, Queensland. Language groups: Bidjara, Ghungalu and Garingbal

Lives and works in Meanjin/Brisbane, and internationally

***She come from the low-country, he come from the high-country* // 2025**

earth pigments and acrylic on linen

left panel: Ghungalu red soil and acrylic binder

right panel: Bidjara red soil and acrylic binder

181.0 x 390.5 cm (2 panels)

Courtesy the artist and Milani Gallery, Meanjin/Brisbane

D Harding works in a wide variety of media to explore the visual and social languages of their communities as cultural continuum. A descendant of the Bidjara, Ghungalu and Garingbal peoples, they draw upon and maintain the spiritual and philosophical sensibilities of their cultural inheritance within the framework of contemporary art internationally.

In this new painting, *She come from the low-country, he come from the high-country // 2025*, D Harding uses pigments sourced from the lands belonging to their grandparents, to meditates on genealogy, culture, customs, and connection.

Harding reflects:

This painting has both Ghungalu Woori red and Bidjara Augathella red pigments in use.

The big panel on the left of the two is from Woori and the smaller panel on the right of the two is from Augathella – on the road to Carnarvon Station and Mt Tabor. Warrambagu Woori goothigoothi bulimbagu Augathella bimbird.

The two panels pushed together makes a portrait of both of my Nanna and Grandad Lawton, and is a Murri way to demonstrate genealogy / land inheritance systems. Ngaya mardindu dhalaangu Gami bigungyurri Ghungalu ngathi E. C. Lawton.

Because we are a matrilineal cultural system, the big Woori panel is the beginning of the painting, that I started to make at Woori, then I finished making it at Mt Moffatt. Ngaya mardindu wadjala burrbala Ghungalu bindala dhalaangu West Branch Bidjara yamba.

The smaller, right-hand panel of the two is Augathella red, made on site at Augathella, and then finished in Brisbane at my studio on Jaggera and Turrbal Country.

So when we can identify each shade of red by eye, and know where it came from, and know the process that I used to make the painting – that involves scale and sequence and distance – then we could speak for hours about how this is a painting about grandparents, and genealogy and land rights and language group inheritance, and how Nanna upheld some of her Bidjara roles even though she was Ghungalu, living away from country in diaspora on Darumbal.

At some point I must stop telling the life stories of my Elders, and inhabit my own experiences as a queer person – these two panels were conceived as a contained space that I have claimed for myself, where I live my Murri culture among the contemporary effects of colonial oppression in Central Queensland. Homophobia and misogyny are not ours – these two reds and their stories are my inheritance.

“Don’t look for figuration (for meaning), or for composition.”

*spacing is intentional

Saodat Ismailova

Born 1982, Tashkent, Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic
Lives and works in Tashkent and Paris

Her right 2020

HD Video

14 mins

Created in Uzbekistan

Supported by Video Jam, United Kingdom

Courtesy the artist

Saodat Ismailova is an Uzbek filmmaker and artist who came of age in the post-Soviet era. Interweaving rituals, myths and dreams within the tapestry of everyday life, her films investigate the historically complex and layered culture of Central Asia. Her work is frequently based around oral stories in which women are the lead protagonists, and explores systems of knowledge suppressed by globalised modernity.

Her right 2020 is a film collage created from Uzbek fiction and documentary films from 1927 to 1985, focusing on Khujum – a communist campaign that started at 1928 to emancipate women in Uzbekistan. The film deploys a moment in history when women found themselves flattened in-between traditional society and an imposed state ideology, risking their lives. Both veiled and unveiled women feared harassment – the veiled by the new regime, the unveiled by traditionalists.

The women's emancipation remained a major subject for Uzbek Soviet cinema. Following the fall of the USSR, the majority of the films of the Soviet era have not been accessible to the public. *Her right* was named after the 1931 Georgy Chernyak's eponymous film. Among rarely accessible silent films that were used in *Her right*, there are also fragment from iconic films of Ali Khamraev's *Without Fear*, 1971 and Shukhrat Abbasov's *The Fire Roads* 1977–1985.

The opening text of the film, written in old Uzbek (Arabic alphabet), translates as:

Kjujum was a soviet political campaign that started at 1928. It aimed to liberate local women. The campaign had dramatic consequences on Uzbek women, who were caught between traditional society and foreign state-imposed ideas. The film is dedicated to the memory of women who sacrificed their lives for the freedom of Uzbek women today.

Khaled Sabsabi

Born 1965, Tripoli, Lebanon

Lives and works on Dharug and Dharawal Country

At the speed of light 2016

11 channel HD video sculpture installation, audio, 25 x 4 gold leaf / acrylic and enamel paint work on photographic paper, 5 multilingual text panels on paper

dimensions variable

video sequences

Stage 1: 218hrs 34mins 28secs. Speed at 381 metres per second

Stage 2: 54hrs 23mins 32secs. Speed at 1,531.021888341879

metres per second

Stage 3: 13hrs 35mins 54secs. Speed at 6,123.962454549169

metres per second

Stage 4: 3hrs 23mins 59secs. Speed at 24,494.84908897786 metres per second

Stage 5: 51mins. Speed at 97,971.39150326797 metres per second

Stage 6: 12mins 45secs. Speed at 391,885.5660130719 metres per second

Stage 7: 3mins 12secs. Speed at 1,561,419.052083333 metres per second

Stage 8: 48secs. Speed at 6,245,676.208333333 metres per second

Stage 9: 12secs. Speed at 24,982,704.833333333 metres per second

Stage 10: 3secs. Speed at 99,930,819.333333333 metres per second

Stage 11: 1sec. Speed at 299,792,458 metres per second

Created on Dharug and Dharawal Country

Collection of the artist

Courtesy the artist and Milani Gallery, Meanjin/Brisbane

Khaled Sabsabi is an acclaimed, award-winning multidisciplinary artist whose work centres on social justice, reflecting his experiences after migrating from Lebanon in 1976, to escape civil war. Khaled sees art as an effective tool to communicate and converse with people, through a familiar language. For more than 35 years, Sabsabi's artistic process has involved working across art mediums, geographical borders, and with communities. Early involvement in Western Sydney's hip-hop scene alongside Arabic, Aboriginal, and Pacific Islander communities helped establish social advocacy as the core of his process and practice. Through his art, Sabsabi explores human collectiveness, and questions identity politics and ideology.

At the Speed of Light 2016 is a multi-faceted installation that considers the intersection of science, philosophy, religion, and

art in the modern digital era. It draws on Eastern, Western and ancient traditions and cultures that share a belief that humans are descended from a divine light.

Eleven screens unfurl in a circular motif across the gallery floor, all emitting bright white light. 218 hours, 34 minutes and 28 seconds of continuous footage has been compressed it into a single second-long video to represent the speed of light, split over 11 screens. Through this acceleration process, hours of footage is distilled into a singular flash, and staged in the pursuit of the Divine.

Khaled Sabsabi explains:

In Sufism (tasawwuf), it is very difficult to explain the true meaning of the Arabic word *Nur*. In Sufi text, the Divine describes Itself as being Nur and Divine mysteries become readily apparent through the Nur of knowledge. In the Qur'an it is also taught that 'Light is the purest entity that exists' and that there are different realms and worlds around us, with each realm having a functional and sustainable existence.

Muslims believe in the existence of Angels, and that Angels are part of the unseen world. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said 'Angels are created from light and that physical light is only a reflection of the true Light, and one can only think about this light in terms of their experience in the phenomenal world'.

Having considered these teachings and the scientific fact that physical light has limitations posed by its physical nature and its dependence on energy, space and time; I propose the question, 'if we are able to travel at the speed of light, will we be able to enter and interact with the unseen realms?

Larissa Sansour

Born 1973, East Jerusalem, Palestine
Lives and works in London

Søren Lind

Born 1970, Copenhagen
Lives and works in London

Familiar phantoms 2023

film

42 mins

Courtesy the artists

Larissa Sansour is a Palestinian visual artist, who has collaborated with her partner Søren Lind, a Danish author, artist, director and scriptwriter. Central to Sansour's work is an exploration of the dialectics between myth, documentary and historical narrative. She often uses science fiction to address social and political issues. Working mainly with film, Sansour also produces installations, photos and sculptures. In her recent work, Sansour has been exploring the role of nostalgia, memory and inherited trauma for personal and national identity.

Familiar phantoms 2023 is inspired by anecdotes from Sansour's own family history and her old childhood in Bethlehem, making it her most personal film to-date. Combining scenes filmed in a derelict mansion, Super 8 footage and private photos, the editing mimics the workings of memory, constantly revisiting the same imagery alongside new fragments in search of meaning. Throughout the film, the mansion serves as the seat of memory. In the rooms, vignettes are played out, adding a theatrical dimension, enlarging and exaggerating the narrative components, just as memory perpetually reworks, reinforces, adds and subtracts. While most scenes are acted out by actors, other scenes turn objects and mementos into sculptural installations, a dark space decorated with dozens of suspended love bird cages, a group of taxidermy seagulls sitting on the floor or a free-standing sink full to the brim of lemons.

Yhonnie Scarce

Born 1973, Woomera, South Australia. Language groups: Kokatha and Nukunu peoples

Lives and works in Naarm/Melbourne

N000, N2359, N2351, N2402 2014

blown glass, archive photographs

dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist and THIS IS NO FANTASY, Naarm/Melbourne
Collection of Darebin Art Collection

Yhonnie Scarce was born in Woomera, South Australia, and belongs to the Kokatha and Nukunu peoples. Her interdisciplinary practice explores the political nature and aesthetic qualities of glass and photography. Scarce's work often references the ongoing effects of colonisation on Aboriginal people; in particular, her research has explored the impact of the removal and relocation of Aboriginal people from their homelands and the forcible removal of Aboriginal children from their families. Family history is central to her practice, drawing on the strength of her ancestors, she offers herself as a conduit, sharing their significant stories from the past.

Yhonnie Scarce's *N0000, N2359, N2351, N2402*, 2014 features a series of four blown-glass domes or jars, reflecting on the containment and classification of Indigenous peoples since colonisation. Enclosed in glass domes with a cracked and fractured finish, photographs of family members are displayed in a natural history museum-style fashion. Prior to the 1967 Referendum, Aboriginal people were classified under the Commonwealth Government's Flora and Fauna Act and not thought of as human beings. Scarce's work references this policy, with image of her ancestors displayed like specimens under bell-jars. These photographs were retrieved from the South Australian Government Archives and are presented with their reference numbers fully intact – Australian Aboriginal people were photographed and tagged with identity numbers, just like common criminals and prison inmates. The first bell-jar contains blown glass Indigenous fruit. This outlines the comparison between flora and Indigenous peoples and how they once held a shared place in the white Australian conscience. The cracked finish of the bell-jars makes it hard to see the entire photograph clearly, this references the recording of Aboriginal history since colonial settlement, the truth of which is fractured and not all disclosed.

Ali Tahayori

Born 1980, Shiraz, Iran

Lives and works on Gadigal Country/Sydney

Archive of longing 2024-25 series

Left to right, top to bottom:

Untitled #19, #3, #31 (Maman Simin), #30, #18, #33, #42 (They/Them), #54, #48, #47, #27, #34b, #45, #56 (Descend), #21, #22 & #26, #41, #28, #13, #10b, #1, #43 (FAGS), #49 & #50, #35, #37, #52, #29, #55, #24, #25, and #46

UV print on glass, hand-cut glass, silicone on aluminium
dimensions variable

Created on Gadigal and Dharug Country

Courtesy of the artist and THIS IS NO FANTASY, Naarm/Melbourne

Advisory note: This artwork contains explicit language, that some may find offensive or emotionally challenging. Viewer discretion is advised. Please speak with ACCA staff members at the front counter for direction to support resources.

Ali Tahayori is an Iranian-born Australian artist, who works across photography, installation and moving image. His practice sits at the intersection of queer and diasporic subjectivities, exploring notions of home, identity, and belonging from a person of SWANA (Southwest Asia and North Africa) regional perspective. Tahayori works with mirrors, glass and photography, and incorporates the traditional Iranian craft practice of Āine-kāri آینه کاری (Mirror-works), a craft invented by Iranian artists from imported European material (glass mirror) in the seventeenth-century.

Tahayori practice combines a discourse about diaspora and displacement with an exploration of queerness—poignantly testifying to his experience of being othered. Combining fractured mirrors with text and imagery, he draws on ancient Iranian philosophies about light and mirrors to create kaleidoscopic experiences, moments of both revelation and concealment hint at the conflicted nature of his identity.

In the *Archive of longing* series 2024-25, Tahayori has drawn on his personal family archives, cropping imagery to create a heightened sense of intimacy.

Tahayori explains:

Archive of Longing is a personal search for glimpses of love and longing within family photographic archive I inherited from my

mother many years ago. Even though I had seen these images as a child, I started seeing them differently. The photographic archive was significant to me personally as it revealed hidden facets of my mother's life before her marriage, but it was also meaningful on a collective level as it reflected aspects of Iranian social life before the 1979 revolution. Revisiting these images after thirty years, I started seeing numerous possibilities, affiliations, and connections not included in my mother's original narrative. I began to tell my story with them. In the process, the family photographs are enlarged, cropped, and printed on glass. The printed glass is then broken and reassembled to create sculptural reliefs, searching for glimpses of intimacy and desire within a violent socio-political context. Photographs are fragments of reality, time, and place and in some ways, these works are fragments of fragments of fragments.

Ali Tahayori

Born 1980, Shiraz, Iran

Lives and works on Gadigal Country/Sydney

Sisterhood 2021

pigment ink-jet print

120.0 x 120.0 cm

Created on Gadigal and Dharug Country

Courtesy of the artist and THIS IS NO FANTASY, Naarm/Melbourne

Ali Tahayori is an Iranian-born Australian artist, who works across photography, installation and moving image. His practice sits at the intersection of queer and diasporic subjectivities, exploring notions of home, identity, and belonging from a person of SWANA (Southwest Asia and North Africa) regional perspective.

Sisterhood 2021 is a large format photographic collage that explores the anxieties and concerns of our time, conveying a deep longing for intimacy and connection. Delicately and painstakingly crafted from imagery taken from Ali Tahayori's family archive, the figures within the framed are subsumed by an enveloping process of erasure. Concealed behind the foreground story, and present only in the form of absence, is the threatening unknown.

Tahayori explains:

By returning to an archive of family photographs, I aim to re-contextualise the traumatic history I've inherited. Felt in my body, yet invisible to my eyes, is the shattering experience of loss and absence.

Hossein Valamanesh

Born 1949, Tehran, Iran

Died 2022, Tandanya/Adelaide

Lived and worked on Kurna Country, Tandanya/Adelaide

***The lover circles his own heart* 1993 (Paris edition 2017)**

silk, modal and electric motor, controller, support structure and wire

190 x 190 cm

Collection of the artist estate

Courtesy the artist and Angela Valamanesh

The lover circles his own heart 1993 is held in the Collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney

Hossein Valamanesh was born in Iran, and immigrated to Australia in 1973. A hugely influential figure in the Australian art scene, his diverse practice was characterised by its unique fusion of his Persian heritage with contemporary Australian life, and its engagement with the natural world. Valamanesh regularly employed simple natural materials – stones, earth, leaves and almonds – alongside ordinary domestic objects – a draped cloth, a rug – to meditate on themes of home, love, longing, identity and place.

Persian poetry was an ongoing reference within his practice, which he used to reflect on themes of personal identity and spiritual enlightenment. Inspired by Sufism, an ancient and contemplative form of Islam, the verse of Jalaluddin Rūmī (1207–1273) is particularly significant. *The lover circles his own heart* 1993 takes its title from a verse by Rūmī. Comprising of a sheet of delicate white silk that gracefully rotates in a circular motion, the work evokes the twirling, trance-like dance of whirling dervishes, and through that the quest for infinite love.

The last presentation of *The lover circles his own heart* 1993 was installed at the artists solo exhibition, *Hossein Valamanesh: This Will Also Pass* held at Institut des Cultures d'Islam, Paris, in Valamanesh's presence. The work was accompanied by this explanation of the significance of the reference to Rūmī and the whirling dervishes:

A fabric made from white silk modal is lifted by centrifugal force, like the tunic of a whirling dervish. Via the repetition of the rotating movement, *The lover circles his own heart* pursues the quest for infinite love, a fundamental precept of the practice of Sufism, the mystical branch of Islam.

Whirling dervish is the Western term for a member of the brotherhood of the Mevlevi, which was very active in the Ottoman Empire and extended as far as the Balkans.

The members of the brotherhood, inspired by the Persian mystical poet Rūmī (1207–1273), devoted themselves to the practice of the sema, or mystical ‘audition’, in memory of their master who connected with God by listening to music, went into an ecstatic state, and began to dance in a sort of gyratory movement while writing poems.

After Rūmī, this originally spontaneous dance was codified into a ritual with many symbolic meanings. The whirling movement of the dervishes is reminiscent in particular of the movements of the planets around the sun, as well as the ‘dance of the atoms’, and evokes the process of the soul’s perfection as it escapes from the carnal envelope to fly towards the world of light. As for the position of the hands—the right hand turned upwards and the left hand downwards, it means that the dervish is receiving divine inspiration and transmits it to the human world, like Rūmī (Mawlānā), whose entire poetical works are about the transmission of mystical initiation.

Excerpt from *Hossein Valamanesh: This Will Also Pass*, Institut des Cultures d’Islam, 2021-22

Hossein Valamanesh

born 1949, Tehran, Iran.

died 2022, Tandanya/Adelaide

lived and worked on Kurna Country, Tandanya/Adelaide

***In praise of the beloved* 2006**

almonds, false eyelashes on paper

29.5 x 21.0 x 1.5 cm

AP (unique edition of 7)

Collection of Abdul-Rahman Abdullah

Courtesy the artist and Angela Valamanesh

Hossein Valamanesh was born in Iran, and immigrated to Australia in 1973. A hugely influential figure in the Australian art scene, his diverse practice was characterised by its unique fusion of his Persian heritage with contemporary Australian life, and its engagement with the natural world. Valamanesh regularly employed simple natural materials – plant fibres, sticks and natural dyes – alongside ordinary domestic objects – a draped cloth, a rug – to create contemplative and ephemeral works that meditate on themes of home, love, longing, identity and place.

In praise of the beloved 2006 reflects upon the various manifestations of love, of nature and of spirituality, themes often found in Valamanesh's work. References to *the beloved* can be found throughout the poetry of Rūmī. Although this is often assigned to corporeal human experiences of love – scholars of the poet explain that references made to *the beloved* are in fact a reference to God. However, for Valamanesh, who was known to be 'inspired by Persian Poetry and Sufi philosophy the 'ambiguous elements' in his work instead 'open[s] up the play of the imagination, metaphysical questioning and quiet reflection.'¹ Perhaps one might reflect upon this and ask, *what* is my beloved, *who* is my beloved, or *to whom* am I the beloved?

1. Mary Knights and Ian North, *Hossein Valamanesh, Out of Nothingness*, Wakefiled Press, 2011