

Reading between

City Library SALA Exhibition
1 August to 30 September 2022



The City of Adelaide, Adelaide City Libraries and SALA acknowledge the Kaurna people as the Traditional Owners of the Country where the city of Adelaide is situated, and pay their respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

Cover: Ida Sophia – *Votivo*, 2019–2022, Durational Performance.
Photography by Thomas McCammon

Reading between

A single sentence can have a multitude of elusive meanings. The same is also true when reading a work of art. The idiom 'to read between the lines' means to find implied connotations rather than what is explicitly stated. The exhibition, *Reading between*, examines the use of language by local contemporary artists as both a medium within their work and a strategy for creating a dialogue with the audience.

Language holds our collective thoughts and memories, carries culture, and imparts wisdom. It is also important to acknowledge that language can be used, intentionally and unintentionally, to exclude. The artworks featured in *Reading between*, welcome multiple readings and perspectives. Instead of providing answers, the artists encourage the audience to ask questions and reflect on what is often unwritten and unspoken. Language is beautifully elusive, fallible, and unstable, but it is also how we seek to understand one another.

cityofadelaide.com.au/sala

About the curator

Suzanne Close is an arts educator and emerging curator based in Kaurna Tarntanya/Adelaide. She was the 2020 recipient of the AHCAN & Floating Goose Early Career Curator program and the 2020 SALA winner of the City of Onkaparinga Contemporary Curator Award.

She currently teaches Visual Arts at University Senior Collegea and is a co-director and the financial officer at FELTspace. Suzanne has written reviews for Artlink and fineprint magazine. She has also developed educational resources to accompany exhibitions.

In 2019, Suzanne completed a Master of Art in Curatorial and Museum Studies. She is an experienced visual arts teacher with a background as a multi-disciplinary artist, holding a First-Class Honours degree in Visual Art. Suzanne is a passionate advocate for the Arts and aims to promote art, nurture artists and cultivate new audiences. Her experiences as an artist, writer and educator continue to inform her curatorial practice.

SALA

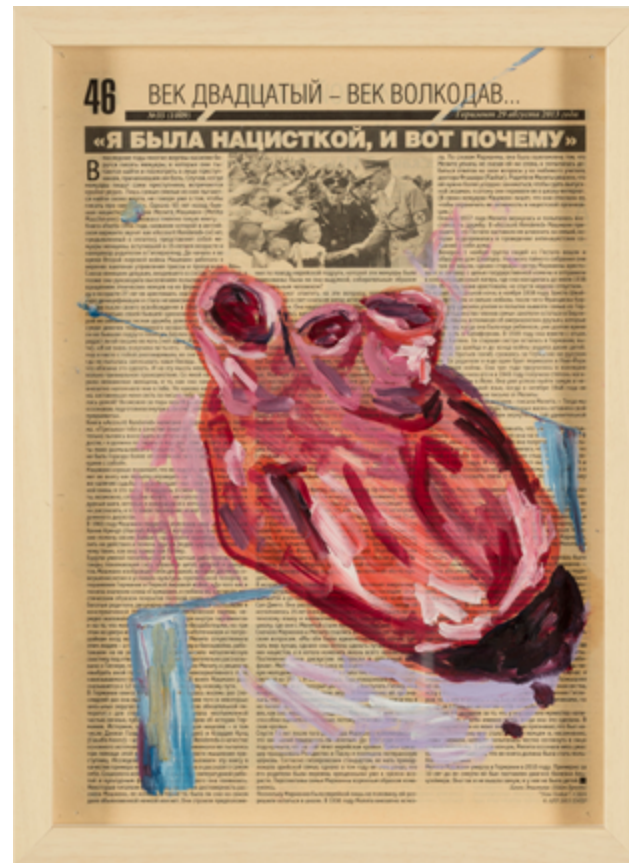


Elyas Alavi

In Elyas Alavi's ongoing series, *Hang*, 2014–2022, painterly depictions of human and animal forms are superimposed onto found newspaper pages. The headlines in various languages from across the globe report on the conflict, mostly in Afghanistan and the Middle East. The empathy and tenderness expressed in Alavi's brush strokes are in contrast with the fleshy subjects and shocking news stories. As a child, Alavi was forced to flee his home in Daikundi Provenance in Afghanistan, making his way to Iran before settling in Australia. His own experiences as a refugee offer an insight into the issues of displacement depicted in the print media on display. Alavi's use of language as an artist and poet gives voice to broader political concerns. In *Hang*, he makes connections between past atrocities and similar

events that continue to happen around the world today. With the desensitisation that comes with our 24-hour news cycle, we are prone to emotionally distance ourselves from

events happening on the other side of the world. *Hang* asks us to question our consumption of current affairs and consider the people behind the headlines.



Images: Elyas Alavi, *HANG series*, 2014–2022 (ongoing series), oil on found newspapers, dimension variable. Photography by Sam Roberts

Jingwei Bu

Jingwei Bu's series, *Connecting the Connections*, 2022, includes the initials of the people she meets during the creation of the work. This process becomes a memory game for Bu, as she tries to recall the person represented and their interaction. The activity is prone to error and refers to the fallibility of language. As we don't have access to Bu's coded language or the experience they represent, she highlights the barriers to communication when we don't speak or understand the same language. At the heart of Bu's work is the deep desire for connection.

Mandarin is a tonal language, where the meaning of a word can change depending on its pitch. In *The Tones of Time*, 2021–2022, Bu has taken tonal excerpts from poems she has written in her mother tongue. She

explains; 'It's my way of reconciling the barriers of languages by paying attention to the sound instead of the meaning.' The cabbage is a potent symbol for Bu that has the power to reconnect her with her childhood and a sense of home. The black ink of monotype prints resonate with the tones of reading the Chinese words.

In *Words Reader*, 2021, Bu translates English words into her first language, Mandarin. The English terms were found in academic texts about art. Through the act of translation, Bu draws our attention to specialised language, and how it can exclude people from accessing certain knowledge. She raises questions about the fluidity of meaning and if the words fully translate across different languages and cultures. Charlemagne is quoted as saying that: 'To have another language is to possess a second soul'. In Word

Reader, Bu's souls seem to be dislocated, each with a different way of thinking about the world. Bu's work reflects her own navigation of language as a Chinese migrant living in Australia. Although she speaks several languages, she expresses her frustration in not feeling fluent in them. Living in foreign countries for almost twenty years, she has a sense of disconnection from her mother tongue. Bu's visual language then becomes a vital form of expression and a way for her to connect deeply with her inner self and others.



Image: Jingwei Bu, *Words Reader*, 2021 performance video with sound, 1:03 minutes, looping play. Still image courtesy of the artist.

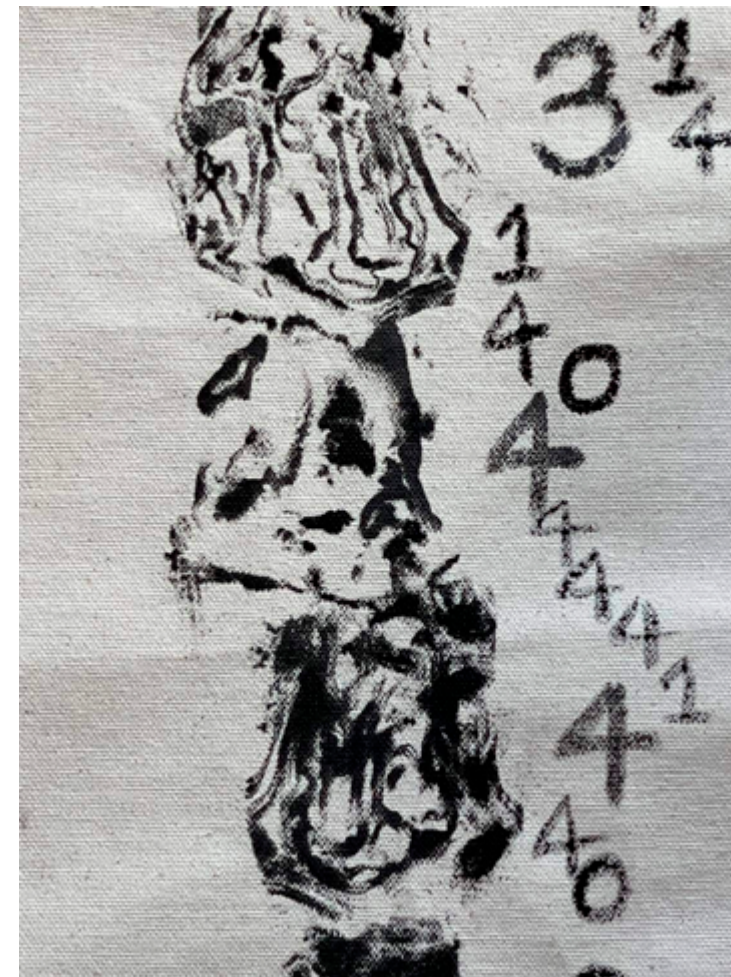


Image: Jingwei Bu, *The Tones of Time*, 192 x 30 cm, 4 pieces, 2021–2022, Chinese ink on raw canvas.

Sonja Porcaro

Sonja Porcaro's interest in translation and language is influenced by her experience of learning Italian as her first language. *Between then and now, between you and me: The sunrise, the sunset, the city*, 2020–2021, acknowledges the layered histories of languages spoken on Kurna Country in Tarntanya/Adelaide. The checkered pattern of the sheer organza makes reference to the geometric abstraction of art history, but also suggests the city grid. Within the ephemeral patchwork, there is a robust yellow rectangle, standing in acknowledgement of the forgotten or languages lying dormant ready to be reclaimed. With the soft outlines of the bands of colour, Porcaro invites a flow of possibilities, dissolving physical divisions and the borders between languages.

The title refers to the light at the beginning and the end of the day, and is symbolic of the cycle of the city as well as new beginnings and endings. The sound component comprises 26 languages spoken by 48 people recorded by Porcaro in and around the city of Adelaide. Each participant recites 'the sunrise, the sunset, the city', and through the process of translation, variations emerge. The accompanying book records the names of participants and Porcaro's notes on these translations. The recording begins with the Kurna language, followed by other First Nations languages, then extends to the subsequent languages of migrants and refugees now spoken in Tarntanya/Adelaide. This is a portrait of the city, making connections across time and cultures between the people living here.

There is a play on the word 'between' in the title, as language can be a way of finding a common ground between us but also can create barriers between us.

Language/loops, 2022 suggests the playful nature of the written and spoken word as well as gaps in translation and meaning. The loops and rhythmic repetition within Porcaro's work also reflects the vowel sounds and melodic nature of the Italian language. Porcaro invites curiosity about the complexities of language and the possibilities this brings.

Images, next page, 1,2 & 3: *Between then and now, between you and me: the sunrise, the sunset, the city*, (detail),2020-2021, sound work 5 min 35 sec loop, linen-bound artist book, textile work.

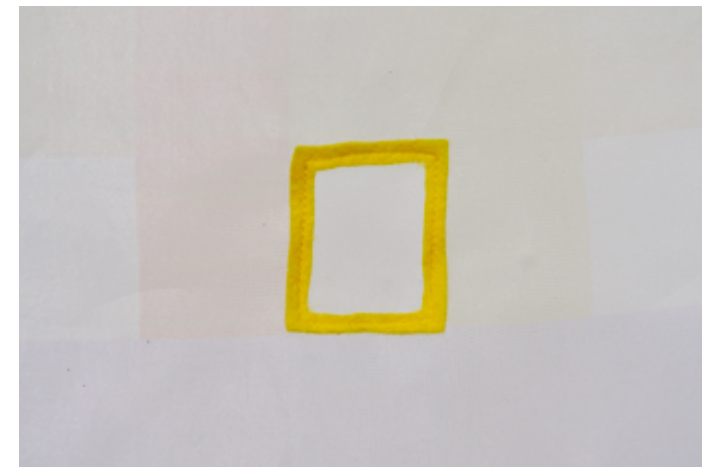
Image, next page, 4: *Language loops* (detail), 2022, felt, wire.

Photography by Sam Roberts

1



2



3



4



Ida Sophia

Ida Sophia's practice is focused on durational and participatory performance. Language is an important component of her work, as she often employs the written word to create a moment of intimate exchange with the audience. During the 5-hour performance *Votivo*, (2019–2022) Sophia stood, dressed in red, with arms outstretched. In one hand she held a candle and in the other a pen. She invited audience members to take an unlit candle and light it from hers, then scribe the name of the person they were thinking of on her skin.

In participating, the audience is provided a moment to reflect deeply upon someone who is on their mind. The writing of someone's name is an act of devotion. Sophia bears these names on the audience's behalf until the candle she holds has fully burnt

down. In *Votivo*, Sophia holds time needed for us to enter and participate in reflective spaces, to consider the sense of loss or gratitude for another. The collective ritual is cathartic.



Sophia allows us to embrace our grief, and confront the past. Her performance is a form of connecting deeply with the audience and giving time to complex emotions that are often difficult to put into words.



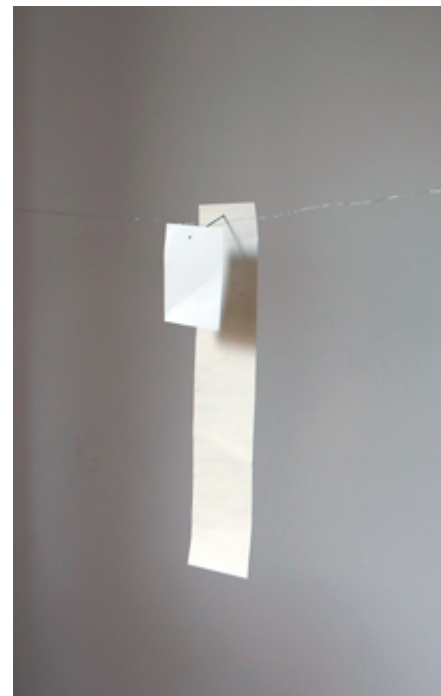
Images: Ida Sophia – *Votivo*, 2019–2022, Durational Performance. Photography by Thomas McCammon



Inneke Taal

In the moving image work, *paper and:as structure*, 2018, Inneke Taal can be seen to unfold and encase herself in a piece of paper that is the same proportion as her outstretched limbs. The sheet of paper and Taal wrestle as the burden of the page weighs her down and the paper creases. Her bodily movements become text that interact with the materiality of the blank page. Paper also becomes a sculptural form in *Language of unfixed structures*, (2018). Here the white paper draws attention to the absence of the written word. The page then becomes full of possibilities but is also a reminder of the fear of facing a blank page or screen when words elude us.

The installation *Dry Dream 2022*, features the digital page with its blinking cursor. The typing cursor cannot keep up with Taal's spoken word as it is being dictated, accentuating the space between spoken thought and the written word. The base of the moving image reveals that the dictation program is 'listening...!', as Taal's poem is projected on a scroll of paper resting on a wooden chair. The positioning of the paper on the seat has the same presence of a dear friend listening intently. The installation is a site of conversation, opening up complexities between the intention and interpretation of language.



Images: Inneke Taal – *Language of unfixed structures*, (2018), digital prints, 594 x 841 mm. Images courtesy of the artist – print 1, print 2 and print 3

Image: Elyas Alavi –
HANG series, 2014–2022
 (ongoing series),
 oil on found newspapers,
 dimension variable.

Photography by
 Sam Roberts

SALA

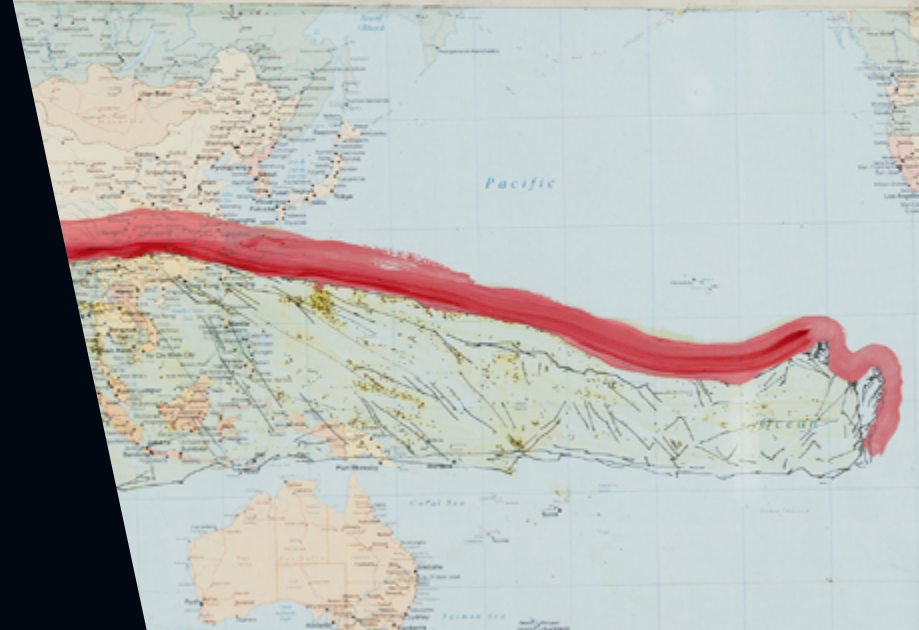
CITY OF
 ADELAIDE

CITY LIBRARY
 A place of possibility...

عربي ودولي

عمليات عسكرية واسعة واشتباكات بدمشق وريفها والقوات النظامية تعلن تدمير «أوكاز» لمسلحين و«الجيش الحر» يؤكّد مصرع وأسرمقاتلين إيرانيين

مقتل 89 سورياً والمعارضة تسقط مروحية



◆ دمشق (أسوان) - سقط 89 قتيلاً سورياً بين القوات النظامية والاشتباكات وعمليات الإعدام الميدانية أمس، في حين أكد ناشطون ميدانيون إسقاط الجيش الحر المقاتلين مروحية عسكرية في منطقة عين عيسى بمحافظة الرقة شمال البلاد. وأوضح أن قواتها نقلت ذخيرة الفوج 93 التابع للجيش النظامي ناحية الحدود التركية. وأفاد شهود أن 5 قتلى عاون استهدفت مجعاً باسم عدة أفرع أنبيا في منطقة لحمارك بقلب العاصمة دمشق أمس. ويعتقد ذلك انتشار أمني كثيف في المنطقة مع وصول من سيارات الإسعاف إلى المنطقة. من جهة أخرى، أكد مصدر عسكري في الجيش الحر مقتل واعتقال عدد من المقاتلين الإيرانيين والأكراد الجانبين بقاتلون في صفوف قوات الرئيس بشار الأسد بمنطقة رأس العين الحدودية بمحافظة حسكة. مشيراً إلى أن من بين الأسرى 3 إيرانيين يجرى التفاوض على مبادلتهم بمقاتلين تابعين للجيش المعارض لدى النظام الحاكم. وأعلنت حمصية للهيئة العامة للثورة، بسقوط قتلاً بينهم 3 خضوات تحت التعذيب في دمشق بيفها، بينما لقي 19 سورياً حتفهم في منطقة 5 سيدات وظفر. وقتل في إدلب أشخاص منهم 4 أطفال وسيدتان. بينما هددت حمص مصرع 7 أشخاص. وفي حمص، ساء 5 أشخاص بعمية إعدام ميدانية بالرصاص على أحددهم في بئر العاصي. في حين قتل 3 يريين في درعا، وخمسة واحدة في كل من دير الزور والقنيطرة.

وأفاد المرصد السوري لحقوقي باستمرار اشتباكات أصم في مدن وبلدات دمشق وريفها المقاتلين المعارضين والقوات النظامية تحاول فرض سيطرتها الكاملة على محيط أسعة الذي يتعرض للصفب بالخراب الحربي.

دمشق - سقطت عدة قتلى هاون خفيف أمام العسكري وفر كتيبة الأرباب. بمنطقة غرب دمشق. بحسب المرصد الذي نشر معلومات أولية عن وقوع إصابات. من جهتها، وثقت وكالة الأنباء الرسمية السورية مقتل 3 من قذفت هاون أطلقتها إرهابيون قرب بوطر. وشنت الأسد الجاهري في دمشق. وأعلنت منظمة الأزمات الدولية مقتل 10 أشخاص.

مشهد يظهر حجم الدمار الناجم عن قصف القوات الحكومية لعمية مرة الثعنان الخاضعة لسيطرة المعارضة منذ أكتوبر

أسس. غارات عدة على أطراف بلدة الشبابة. أكد صحيفة «الوطن» السورية المقررة من النظام أسس ما التقارير الأجنبية التي كشفت عن إحماط خطة للمعارضة لانتاج وسط دمشق. قاتلة بوقوع «محاولة جديدة لاختراق أمن العاصمة». وذكرت الوطن أن الجيش

حيث بعد بدأت كالتصاعد بتعجيز التحاري ضخم جدا وقالت إن تلاء انفجار آخر قبل أن يبدأ الفزوء. وقالت إن «الفزلاء» تلقوا «انتحاراً جماعياً عند مدخل دمشق التي ستبقى مهيبة عليهم». وفي محافظة حلب، لاور اشتباكات عنيفة