

firstdraft

Gallery 1

5 May – 13 Jun 2021

Traversed Differences

Lisa Myeong-Joo, Tanaporn Norsrida,
Jana Ortanez, Natalie Tso
Curated by Sineenart Meena

Traversed Differences explores the way we can express and represent identity, spirituality, otherness. The project presents the voices of four emerging women artists, selected for how they explore their identity and the representation of self through their shared perspective as artists of mixed Asian heritage living in Australia.

Through performance, portraiture and representation, they focus on the body as a contested site to consider alternative ways of thinking about self-representation, personal history and cultural hybridity. In each artist's work – identity, experience or memory leave a trace on the body. This trace is seen on the skin and face, in gesture and movement; understood through language and felt deep in the bones. The physical experience draws us together as humans irrespective of cultural differences.

Sineenart Meena (b. Lopburi, Thailand) is an emerging curator, and currently undertaking a Master of Curating and Cultural Leadership at UNSW Art & Design. She graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Art in Jewellery Design at Srinakharinwirot University, Bangkok, and is an accomplished jewellery designer. As a curator she is particularly interested in installation and cross-disciplinary practice, and is focused on creating opportunities and contexts for cultural exchange across the Asia-Pacific.

Gallery 2

**Sometimes when I feel empty,
I eat a second breakfast.**

Laetitia Olivier-Gargano

Gallery 3

to make a basket

Edwina Green

Gallery 4

'Enua Mānea

Morgan Hogg

**firstdraft
gadigal land
13–17 riley street
woolloomooloo
nsw 2011
+61 2 8970 2999
firstdraft.org.au**

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the traditional owners of the land on which firstdraft is built and operates.**

**firstdraft is supported by the NSW
Government through Create NSW; and
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Lisa Myeong-Joo is an emerging artist working on Wangal and Gadigal lands. Documenting the shifting forces of opposites, her practice often attempts to inhabit the space between, which began as a way to articulate her identity as a Korean adoptee. Lisa holds a Bachelor of Interior Spatial Design, University of Technology Sydney, and has recently completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts at UNSW Art & Design, after gaining an alternative arts education through studio residencies in South Korea and India. She is an exhibiting artist at Hatched: National Graduate Show 2021 at Perth Institute of Contemporary Art (PICA).

Tanaporn Norsrida is a Bangkok-born emerging artist based on Gadigal land. Her works often act as a vector for reconnection in a post-migratory context. Having migrated to Australia at a young age, their childhood between rural Australia, metropolitan Bangkok and Isaan, Thailand informed their outlook on culture, family and self. Tanaporn is currently undertaking a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Honours) at UNSW Art & Design and has exhibited at Kudos Gallery, and was a finalist in the 2019 Kudos Emerging Artist & Designer Award.

Jana Ortanez is a Filipino-Australian emerging artist working on unceded Darug and Gadigal lands. Jana's multidisciplinary practice often incorporates drawing and photography to create her own references for paintings and spatial forms. Jana has recently completed a Bachelor in Fine Arts (Honours) at UNSW Art & Design. She has been involved in several group shows across Sydney exhibiting at Kudos Gallery, Goodspace Gallery and AIRspace Projects and was also selected as a finalist in the 2020 Jenny Birt Award.

Natalie Tso is a Hong Kong-Australian emerging artist based on Cammeraygal and Gadigal lands. Natalie's practice activates intimate materials including hair, salt and a new materiality she created called 'skins' – often performing with them and producing sculptures from their residues. Natalie has completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Honours: First Class) at UNSW Art & Design. Since 2016 she has exhibited throughout Australia in both solo and group shows. Recently, she has received funding from Create NSW to exhibit and undertake a residency in Hatched, National Graduate Show 2021 at Perth Institute of Contemporary Art (PICA).

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Artworks (clockwise from left)

For sales enquiries, please

email sineenartmeena@gmail.com

Lisa Myeong-Joo

Drawing for 2 Languages, 2021

performance, blackboards, chalk

The artist will perform at 2pm Saturday 22 May

Jana Ortanez

Interrogation of Self, 2020–21

75 × 100 cm (each)

acrylic on canvas

Tanaporn Norsrida

eidolon, 2019

78 × 113 cm

graphite on paper

NFS

self 2563-2564, 2021

78 × 113 cm

graphite on paper

AUD\$300

catharsis, 2019

78 × 113 cm

graphite on paper

AUD\$300

Natalie Tso

Peeling II, 2021

dimensions variable

glue, acrylic paint, salt, cleaning detergent, plaster,
wires, water

AUD\$4,000

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**13-17 Riley St
Woolloomooloo
Australia**

Lisa Myeong-Joo

Jana Ortanez

Tanaporn Norsrida

Natalie Quan Yau Tso

**05.05 2021
13.06 2021**

Traversed

Differences



Curated by Sineenart Meena

Traversed Differences

Curated by Sineenart Meena

A curator's note:

Think of what the meaning of 'difference' is.

This has come up in my thoughts, as a question, while I have been living in Australia. I have been confronted by racial discrimination including insults, humiliation, intimidation even sexual harassment, which made me lose confidence in expressing my cultural identity. The feeling of difference and otherness led me to want to conceal my identity. I haven't encountered racism in some time now, yet the memories are not erased. The stigma and feelings still linger leaving traces inside and on the surface of my body.

Identities are continuously redefined and re-formed within society and through social interactions. Difference could perhaps be understood as a way to expand and express uniqueness of identity rather than the basis of discrimination. If we can hope to be on the road to appreciating celebrating and cherishing cultural diversity, the reality is that along the way we will still encounter the warfare of culture, mis-representation, identity crisis and othering. These encounters leave a trace on the body. These traces of experiences lived are seen on the skin and face, in gestures and movement, understood through language and felt deep in the bones.

This exhibition concerned with the means by which identities are formed, lived and defined and in discussing diasporic experiences through issues of representation and discrimination. I am interested in how these four emerging women artists, of diverse Asian backgrounds, utilise their practices to counter, reformulate and navigate their cultural identity. With a focus on the human body – from hair through skin, gesture and movement - they bring their own narratives to an understanding of the meaning of 'difference'.

The artists raise awareness of their lived reality and start a conversation that has the potential to extend further into a significant sustained discourse. The exhibition draws on the artists' personal experiences to understand what a lived experience of 'difference' means. This highlights what ultimately is a shared experience of being human, drawing us together irrespective of cultural differences.

Sineenart Meena



Drawing for 2 Languages, 2021
Performance, blackboards, chalk

Drawing for 2 Languages is an ongoing series of performances by Lisa Myeong-Joo. This work extends from an initial series, *Drawing for 2 Hands* (2013), where the artist practices for the first time, not with her dominant left hand but with her right. In *Traversed Differences* Lisa presents an iteration of her ongoing series of two-handed drawings, where she uses both hands simultaneously to write in Korean and English on either side of a blackboard. The work shows a slow adjustment as Lisa moves in and out of two languages; one foreign, one familiar. Within her, these two sides meet; two hands come together. In the work, her body is a site of difference but also unity.

“It is between these parts that I try to work to place my body as my body with two hands working against but also in harmony with one another.

My body presents the site of unity between these differences. My body is nourished by these differences to form who I am, an identity in a flow of gestures that is always active.” – Lisa Myeong-Joo.

Lisa Myeong-Joo

This performative series revisits embodied sentiments felt across her time in South Korea as a Korean adoptee. In between the changing words and acts of writing, an absence-presence is performance; although the meaning remains the same.



Jana Ortanez



Interrogation of Self, 2020 - 2021
32 x 40 inches (each),
acrylic on canvas

Jana Ortanez is a Filipino-Australian multidisciplinary artist based in Sydney. Her works often use drawing and photography as references for paintings and spatial forms. Inspired by her plural identity and experiences within the everyday, her current art practice delves into self-portraiture.

Interrogation of Self (2019 - 2021) contemplates the representation of the intercultural body. Through abstraction and collage, she explores notions of plurality within her identity as a diasporic Filipino migrant. Her portraits overlay and multiply the image of the self to speak of the complexity of the idea of 'origins'. Her works seek to create a dynamic between colours and their tonality whilst re-engaging with traditional cultural fabric patterns such as the 'Barong'. The sophisticated patterns used in her work connect to knowledge of cultural roots that represent a homage to her Filipino identity - containing histories that connect to her personal experiences and memories.



eidolon, 2019
78 x 113 cm, graphite
on paper



catharsis, 2019
113 x 78 cm,
graphite on paper

Tanaporn Norsrida

Tanaporn Norsrida is Bangkok born and migrated to Australia at a young age. She spent her childhood living between rural Australia, metropolitan Bangkok and Isaan (northeastern) Thailand, informing her outlook on culture, family and self. As a response to prolonged dislocation from Thai culture and identity, her works act as a vector for reconnection in a post-migratory context. In *Traversed Differences*, her drawing of hair explores ideas of origins connected to her Thai heritage and the exoticisation of the Asian body. Through her works, the act of drawing is underlined as a primary form of human expression – both inward and outward. The lines used in her work, lead to the exploration of her personal history.

eidolon (2019) reflects on her personal history – trauma, childhood and mental illness – describing a spectre of a past shaped by cultural dislocation and migration. *catharsis* (2019) shows a body of hair suspended behind a hair-outlined void. The work seeks to display contradictory themes projected onto the Asian feminine body; it is a reflection on an act of release from the tension of discrimination, the body existing suspended in a liminal space of dualities. *self 2563-2564* (2021) is a self-portrait depicting personal turbulence experienced as a consequence of COVID19 and the anxiety of existing as a diasporic Asian woman.

The collective trauma that asian women carry in their bodies:

I approached Traversed Differences thinking about the collective trauma that asian women carry in their bodies.

my body is already weaponised against me,
how can I stop fighting with myself
 how can I fight with the tsunami of trauma

need to shed
 need to shed
the hair,
 is the first to part my body, if the witness of my trauma leaves maybe I can erase
anything that has ever happened
 maybe I'll be safer

both wanting to remember and recall and say me too
and wanting to forget and deny and live without this memory

I keep making these skins to erase the trauma that my body keeps remembering
 to stand back from my wounds and realise the power I have
 realising I no longer have to hold on
 if people can't wash their gaze off of me, i can wash it off of myself

but traumatic memories don't make me who I am
 sometimes the feelings of my voiceless powerless body rush in unannounced,
shaking through my core
 sometimes I wonder what life is like if I am not so scared of men, of the fear of
people blanketing me as a submissive asian woman, of being a test, of being a challenge
to violate, of being a checklist, of being a porn category, of being any less than just being
 sometimes I get a tinging sensation in my bones, because if my body travelled a
thousand years back I would have been traded as a sex slave, or an exotic decor, or a
disposable another
 it is these that still haunts how people see me
 so it is these that I peel off

to see these skins
living as they are

to being wounds now healing on their own,
away from my body no longer constraining me

me becoming
 i am not my wounds

Natalie Quan Yau Tso



Peeling II, 2021
dimension variable, glue, acrylic paint, salt,
cleaning detergent, plaster, wires, water

Natalie Quan Yau Tso

Natalie Tso's installations and performances engage with the abject material experimentation of hair, glue and salt to process bodily memories located on the skin. As a Hong Kong-Australian woman, Tso engages in performative acts of cleansing, hair-cutting and peeling to reclaim cleansing from the warfare of cultural erasure and assimilation, both in Hong Kong and Australia.

Peeling (2020 -2021) is a newly developed large-scale installation that poetically enacts the process of removing trauma from the body. As an installation, it creates an intimate and engaging environment. Her work creates a sense of inclusiveness and invites audiences, through conversation and exchange, to discover what is behind traces inscribed on the skin of the work.

Acknowledgements

Like all such endeavours, this exhibition and catalogue could not have been achieved without the participation of many. Thanks firstly to Firstdraft for the opportunity to develop and print this exhibition. Thanks to Firstdraft's team, Emmaly Langridge, Jesse Rye and JD Reforma for being super professional and supportive. Thank you John Cruthers and the 16albermarle Project Space team for encouraging me. A huge thank you for the emotional support from my family, friends and my partner.

A special note of appreciation and gratitude to my mentor 'Consuelo Cavaniglia' who supported, encouraged, accompanied and helped me to make this exhibition come true. Without you I don't know that I could have been brave enough to make this happen. Thank you so much.

Lastly, a big big thanks to all artists whose works are the core and main subject of this show, for your trust, support and efforts toward this undertaking. Thank you Thank you Thank you!

Traversed Differences acknowledges and pays respect to the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, the traditional custodians of the land. The exhibition is indebted to the opportunity, knowledge, research, and labour of thinking, making and working from past till present.



Peeling II, 2021
dimension variable, glue, acrylic paint,
salt, cleaning detergent, plaster, wires,
water