

# firstdraft

Gallery 3

4 May – 13 Jun 2022

## sister +++++ familial formations

Marian Abboud

*sister +++++ familial formations* looks at the act of collecting, capturing, constructing, charting, ordering, relocating and deconstructing a family.

This work invites participants to join the family. It was influenced by the work of Rene Girard, a French-born philosopher and anthropologist, who was interested in the impact of violence, envy, rivalry, conflict and desire on society. *sister +++++ familial formations* questions the idea of identity by examining modifications and adaptations through sacred order, prohibition and the collective memory.

If memories belong to the individual, their associations extend far beyond the personal. They spread into an extended network of meaning that brings together the personal with the familial, the cultural, the economic, the social, and the historical. Memory work makes it possible to explore connections between “public” historical events, structures of feeling, family dramas, relations of class, national identity and gender, and “personal” memory. In these cases histories outer and inner, social and personal, historical and psychical coalesce; and the web of interconnections that binds them together is made visible.

*sister +++++ familial formations* is the second iteration of the ongoing *bloodline* series, conceived in 2018 and first presented at Hobiennale 2019.

**Marian Abboud** is a multi-disciplinary Western Sydney-based artist. She works across various technologies to create collective outcomes through projected images that feed into performance, installation and site-specific works. Marian uses multilingualism through movement, video, sound and text to develop live performances for civic engagement and social activism.

Marian Abboud’s exhibition *sister +++++ familial formations* is powered by Lūpa Media Player. More information at [lupaplayer.com](http://lupaplayer.com)

**lūpa**

[www.lupaplayer.com](http://www.lupaplayer.com)

Gallery 1

**Temples of Doom**

Ryan Andrew Lee

Gallery 2

**Shoe Bathers**

Shireen Taweel

Gallery 4

**Born to Draw**

Matthew Clarke

**firstdraft**  
**gadigal land**  
**13–17 riley street**  
**woolloomooloo**  
**nsw 2011**  
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Marian works with participants from diverse communities to develop agency and socially responsive projects using curiosity as the springboard for cultural exchange and developing unique learning opportunities through creative expression. She is passionate about forging connections and creating meaning across perceived borders of place, language and identity.

Her interests lie in oral histories, ancestral knowledge and collective mythologies, navigating themes of memory, loss and resilience. Marian's practice is the result of a constant attempt to translate internal psychological conflicts into physical experiences. Her works connect this individual awareness with the collective political and social environment. Although Marian's works develop from deeply personal and daily experiences, they often reference layered and complex history that point to universal experiences of sovereignty, geopolitics and migration. Marian creates complex narratives by engaging with the community to build multi-layered works.

Marian graduated from the University of Western Sydney with a Bachelor of Visual Communication. She has exhibited extensively locally and nationally and has collaborated on many dance and performance-based projects including MONA FOMA, Hobart; *24 Frames*, Carriageworks, Sydney; as well as *Not Her Reflection*, a travelling performance at Artspace, Sydney. Marian has worked as an artist educator for the Art Gallery of NSW, Kaldor Public Art Projects, Information and Cultural Exchange (ICE), Urban Theatre Projects (UTP), Arab Theatre Studio (ATS) and Save the Children. Marian was a One Year Studio Artist at Artspace in 2020, as well as Artist in Residence for UTS Library in 2021.

### Artwork

*sister +++++ familial formations*,  
part of the ongoing *bloodline* series, 2018–  
site-specific installation, suspended sugar rocks,  
silk and organza; video projection (7 minutes,  
looped), CRT TVs  
dimensions variable

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*the rituals we perform*

Dr Paula Abood

Marian's work immediately speaks to a world of textured identity and stylised, ritual, gendered performativity and emotional memory. This work by Marian Abboud resonates deeply with my own sense of being in this world, namely as a sister in a female-dominant family, as well as a dutiful daughter whose sense of familial rootedness transcends place, generation, language and identity labels.

As a site-specific installation, this multi-layered work brings into question the very idea of identity in ways that are almost as ethereal as the airy fabric upon which the images of the artist and her sisters are projected. The stylised ritual shots mimic the exalted acts we perform as 'culture' and for 'community'. In this instance, the optics of gendered mourning thematically take us into the familial laws of governance, as sisters and daughters are socialised to perform in particular ways, as are sons and brothers. The artist embodies this narrative of gendered duty – *wabj* – in how she positions the sisters as figures suspended in space, present and visible, timelessly floating as each image on fabric drops down to the ground with a mirrored reflection in reverse.

The positioning of the images and the mixed-media textures trigger emotional responses that bring to light the traditions that define how we mourn, how we move, what we wear, how we behave, in contrast to how our brothers are in the world. This makes me think of John Berger's landmark work *Ways of Seeing* in his reflection on the 'social presence of a woman'. He writes, 'A woman must continually watch herself. She is almost continually accompanied by her own image of herself. Whilst she is walking across a room or whilst she is weeping at the death of her father, she can scarcely avoid envisaging herself walking or weeping'<sup>1</sup>. Certainly, this work engages with creating a secular space to perform sacred rituals to mark death and life. This work has its origins in the life and death of the artist's father, whose embrace of his daughter's creativity and practice, and his lifelong participation in her artistic production and projects make this work all the more emotionally deep and compelling.

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Equally, the work raises questions for me about how we express our Arab-ness. Once removed we are born here. How we grieve in between the code-switching liturgy of community, seemingly devoid of spiritual comfort? For me, this work problematises identity formation in terms of being visible and invisible. The work moves us towards connecting the sacred with the secular. I read this work not so much as memorialising the rituals of death, but rather memorialising the death of culture, of connection, and in some ways, community.

- <sup>1</sup> Berger, J. 'Ways of Seeing' in *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader*, Ed. Amelia Jones  
Routledge, London and New York 2010 p49

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