

firstdraft

Gallery 1 and 2

18 August 2023 - 1 October 2023

in all its forms

Idil Abdullahi; Kirthana Selvaraj; Andy Diep; Liza Moscatelli; emoeba h♥rtbridge; Bonnie Huang; Anney Bounpraseuth; Rekha Dhanaram; Hedar Abadi; Emmanuel Asante Art; Tom Yousif

Western Sydney is many shades of human. Constantly evolving and in motion, it is a hub in a state of flux.

Firstdraft brings together 11 creatives from Western Sydney to interrogate states of desire, faith and belonging in communities out west.

From the streets of Liverpool to the thrum of Harris Park and beyond, this group show will showcase diverse works that examine shades of humanity - from our strengths, fragilities and constant dynamism.

Curated by Firstdraft, in all its forms amplifies emerging and early-career creatives with a connection to Western Sydney. The group show will be accompanied by a Live Night with some of Western Sydney's hottest talent.

Special thanks to Gillian Kayrooz for her guidance and generous support for this project.

Gallery 1 and 2
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Western Sydney creatives

Gallery 3
Asleep with the Fishes
Teresa Busuttill

Gallery 4
Firstdraft Screening Program
Lilah Benetti, Amy Prcevich, Jacqui Shelton, Samuel Mountford

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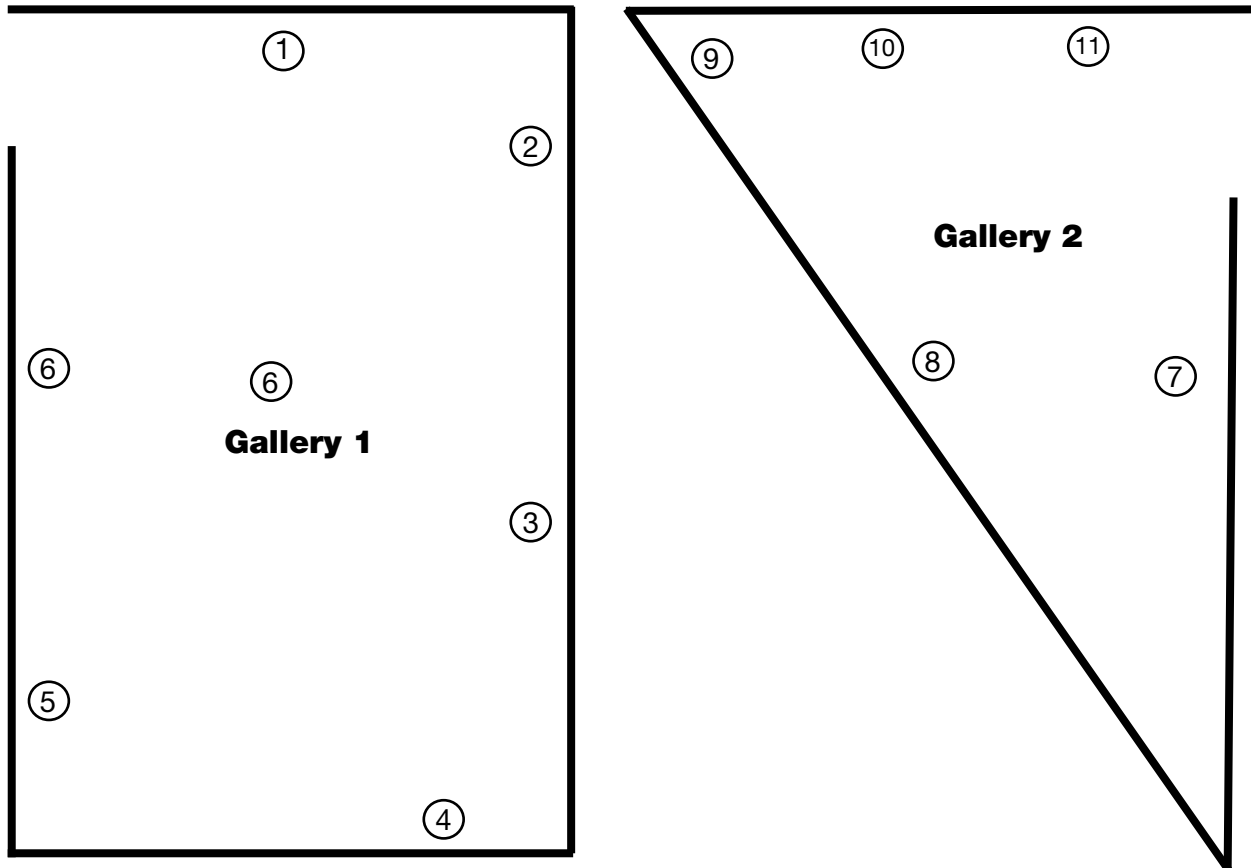


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Gallery 1

1. Rekha Dhanaram
2. Idil Abdullahi
3. Liza Moscatelli
4. Kirthana Selvaraj
5. Andy Diep
6. Hedar Abadi

Gallery 2

7. Emmanuel Asante Art
8. Anney Bounpraseuth
9. emoeba h♥rtbridge
10. Tom Yousif
11. Bonnie Huang

Gallery 1 and 2 in all its forms

Western Sydney creatives

Gallery 3

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Artworks (clockwise from left, and top to bottom)

1.

Rekha Dhanaram

Portals of Contraction and Expansion I, 2023

(From top left, anti-clockwise)

Dreaming in reality, Anger is a viper, Mother Nature soothes, There is release through the expansive beauty of it all
acrylic, pigment powder, gold leaf on cold pressed watercolour paper

20.4 x 21.2 cm

Look within, Seek beyond, 2023

acrylic, pigment powder, gold leaf on wooden panels

64 x 64 cm

'What orientates you in this world?

Migrating waters of consciousness,
An imagination of unhappened happenings
A breathe obscuring any sense of control

Intuition, imagination, inner wisdom

Mutuality gives meaning to it all

Look within, Seek beyond'

Portals of Contraction and Expansion II, 2023

(From top left, anti-clockwise)

Watchful Sighs, Coexisting organisms, Eyes closed Open, Trialling Intuition

acrylic, pigment powder, gold leaf on cold pressed watercolour paper

20.4 x 21.2 cm

Portals are transitional spaces, doorways between realms, realities and even versions of ourselves. The duality of nature is reflected through them. Portals can offer a space of pressure, tension, constraint or conversely

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expansiveness, radiance and emerging growth. 'Portals of Contraction and Expansion' is a series of reflective works completed over a period of 6 or so months. They emerged slowly, starting off as a means of seeking solace and eventuating in a discovery of new selves. This series invites you to explore your own shifting realities and see the beauty that exists in both the contraction and expansion.

2.

Idil Abdullahi

Erased, 2012

12 digital prints on metallic paper
40.5cm x 40.5 cm

Erased is a multi-layered and deeply personal artwork, born from the inspiring words of the littleknown female Somali poet and activist, Hawa Jibril. Drawing from Hawa Jibril's poignant poem that pays tribute to another courageous activist named Hawa, who was martyred during the fight for Somalia's independence from colonial rule, this artwork weaves together history, identity, and legacy.

At its heart, Erased serves as an act of remembrance and reconnection, reaching back to the strong ancestral lineage of Somali women who have been leaders, artists, and activists. By breathing life into the words of Hawa Jibril's poem, the artwork seeks to honour the resilience and power inherent in these remarkable women.

A poignant aspect of the artwork is the incorporation of hennaing the poem onto the artist's daughter's hand. Symbolically, this act becomes a bridge between past, present, and future, passing down the rich cultural heritage and the unyielding spirit of her ancestry. Through this gesture, the artist bestows upon her daughter the profound legacy of the fearless women who have shaped and guided their community.

Loss, 2012

7 slipcasted porcelain and copper wire
approx. 25–29 cm x 15 cm x 6 cm

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Loss is an evocative collection of slip-cast porcelain vessels that delves into the profound concept of loss within the context of displacement and the refugee experience. The work moves beyond the surface-level discourse that frequently surrounds refugee communities, exposing the detrimental impact of dehumanizing labels such as 'queue jumpers'.

Each porcelain vessel stands as a testament to the multifaceted nature of loss experienced by refugees. The deliberate use of visible cracks symbolizes the fractures in identity, culture, and connection that occur as a result of forced migration. The vessels, now embody the wounds and the resilience that emerges from navigating uncertain terrain.

The copper wire that delicately weaves through the vessels serves as a striking metaphor for the threads of hope, resilience, and strength that bind displaced communities together. The act of binding represents the shared experience of loss, the collective yearning for a return to the familiar, and the determination to heal and mend.

3.

Liza Moscatelli

Ifugao traditional attire, 2023

digital print mounted on foam board

29.7 cm x 42 cm

Ifugao traditional attire, 2023

digital print mounted on foam board

29.7 cm x 42 cm

Ifugao traditional attire, 2023

digital print mounted on foam board

29.7 cm x 42 cm

The 'tapis,' a skirt worn by Ifugao women, is crafted from a single piece of handwoven fabric derived from pineapple fibers known as 'pinas.' These textiles exhibit various patterns and hues, signifying the wearer's

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position and status within the community. The imagery also highlights the presence of an 'abaniko' or 'pamaypáy' (fan).

Filipiñana, 2023

digital print mounted on foam board
29.7 cm x 42 cm

Filipiñana, 2023

digital print mounted on foam board
29.7 cm x 42 cm

Filipiñana, 2023

digital print mounted on foam board
29.7 cm x 42 cm

Filipiñana (or Filipiniana) is commonly worn by Filipina women today during special events and formal occasions. It features a modern Filipiniana gown with bolero jacket. In contemporary times, Filipina women frequently don the Filipiniana attire for formal events and special occasions. This ensemble showcases a modern Filipiniana gown paired with a bolero jacket.

The clothing in the Philippines has transformed throughout centuries, shaped by indigenous groups, Chinese immigration, Spanish and American influences, as reflected in the nation's historical timeline.

This photo project serves as a preliminary concept for a larger endeavor. The series of portraits delves into the essence of women's identity by exploring the traditional attires worn in the Philippines, spanning from pre-colonial eras to contemporary times. The initial images highlight an Indigenous pre-colonial outfit, commonly worn by Ifugao women of the Cordilleras region in northern Luzon. Originating from handloomed traditional weaves, this costume has been worn since 900 AD to the mid-1500s.

During the Spanish colonial rule (1571 to 1898), efforts to propagate Christianity led to a shift in women's clothing towards more conservative styles. Exposure of body parts like ankles, feet, backs, and legs became taboo. The outfit mentioned earlier was deemed immodest and 'too revealing,' prompting the adoption of modest garments.

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Gallery 3
Asleep with the Fishes
Teresa Busuttill

Gallery 4
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The Ifugao stood apart due to their limited European and American influences. Despite enduring centuries of colonisation, they retained their values and legal systems, grounded in kinship, family bonds, spirituality, and culture. This resilience sustained them against the tide of colonialism.

Contrastingly, various regions of the Philippines embraced colonial-era dressing norms, particularly Western styles influenced by American and Chinese immigration. These diverse historical and cultural influences culminated in the emergence of modern Filipiniana attire, encompassing styles like *baro't saya*, *terno*, *Maria Clara*, and *traje de mestiza*. Filipiniana embodies pride, resilience, and the Filipina's determination to assert her rights and freedom, often donned during formal occasions.

(Note: The photographer and model have Cebuano ancestry from the Philippines and are not from the Ifugao tribe).

4.

Kirthana Selvaraj

The tourist, 2023

oil on canvas

25.4 cm x 35.6 cm

Being born in New Zealand, living in Australia and being from the South Asian diaspora, experiencing the tension of not fully knowing where or how to locate myself in my totality, I am interested in the idea of belonging. This painting references an image I took of myself standing in front of a large plastic sculpture in the Hunter Valley botanical gardens, named the Taj Mahal. During the day it appears lifeless like a forgotten relic, waiting and yearning to be discovered, at night a fiery light courses through its veins as it glows to the delight of gathering crowds. This artificial nod to an idea of India. I remember thinking, I'm like a tourist here, posing as you see many tourists pose in front of the Taj Mahal. In some ways this painting symbolises a feeling of unbelonging. The tourist encompasses the complexity of what it might mean to be a diaspora kid, the forced erasure of knowledge of language and cultural history, of trying to land somewhere, and what that might do to a burgeoning sense of self.

Gallery 1 and 2
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Western Sydney creatives

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Asleep with the Fishes

Teresa Busuttill

Gallery 4
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5.

Andy Diep

Family Lunch, 2023

2-channel video and stereo sound

6 minutes and 25 seconds

Family Lunch exists as an exploration of the themes of gender dysphoria in the context of Asian families, as well as an exploration of the nature of film editing, and how a moment in time can exist without the interference of an outside perspective (in this case, the need for a narrative “continuity” editor).

Rebuilt from rushes from Happy New Year, Ms. Luna, non-binary Cambodian-Australian director Andy Diep ran takes twice to three times as longer on set than as the script required to give the audience the feeling that they were being dropped into conversations as they were already happening in the final cut. Although the intention for the original film was always to be an experimental film in which the audience sat and watched conversations play out in long unbroken shots for 5-10 minutes, the requirements of film festivals and the need for a narrative edit simply do not allow for this.

Family Lunch is an attempt to return to the naturalism that existed within the core of the story, and before the hand of an editor was introduced to the film.

The original film itself premiered at the Mardi Gras Film Festival in 2023, where it was awarded the Audience Award, and is currently touring festival circuits internationally. Family Lunch is about a single moment in time within the film, stretched to give time for the conversation to breathe, but also places it's viewers firmly within the point-of-view of Luna, where the many voices present at Chinese New Year acts as aural assaults from various angles in an attempt to recreate the overwhelming experience that is Asian family gatherings.

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Gallery 4

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6.

For sales enquiries, please
email mariamabbas858@gmail.com

Hedar Abadi

Save our Fish from Drowning, 2019

3D artwork

150 cm x 60 cm x 70 cm

AUD\$4000

Intimacy, 2016

acrylic on paper

40 x 82 cm

AUD\$3000

Fish Honeymoon, 2016

100 cm x 70cm

oil on canvas

AUD\$7,000

Whispering & Kissing, 2014

acrylic on paper

73cm x 86 cm

AUD\$5000

I was born in Babylon, Iraq and graduated from the Institute of Fine Arts in 1988. I worked as a propaganda painter during the authoritarian reign. I'm an active member of art societies across Sydney and in 18 years living in Australia, I have held 10 solo exhibitions, and been a finalist and a winner of over 20 art prizes and also had a studio residence. I have facilitated many workshops for SSI, STARTTS (NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture

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and Trauma Survivors) and CORE (Care, Opportunity, Respect and Empowerment) Community Services to teach visual art in Western Sydney secondary schools.

I was, and still am a human contemplating nature and a good listener to it. My imagination takes me to an aesthetic conversation with places; shadow; light and various beings. I rely on visual aesthetic language as the basis for expression. I have multiple styles, and I have explored many themes throughout my experience which spans over 30 years My paintings furnish my self inner void. Through listening to depths and diving into human self to expose the pain, joy and gift...I exhibit here a collection of works that tackle alienation and displacement. Even with finding refuge in Australia and success as an artist, I still feel a connection to the waters of my homeland. I feel the same as fish in an aquarium. Australia is a very beautiful country, with beautiful water...but I would like to swim in my water.

7.

Emmanuel Asante Art

Letters 2 E, 2022

acrylic on paper

59.4 x 84.1 cm

Eight 0' Clock, 2017

pen and acrylic on canvas

123 x 90 cm

Waiting is Wasting, 2017

coffee and pen on paper

42 x 59.4 cm

Waiting is Wasting for people like me. I got inspired by the refugees in detention centers who are waiting to be free. I got an offer to study art in an art university however I deferred my offer because I dont have money for fees. Therefore I am working to save up for school. Not going school I feel like I am wasting time.

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in all its forms

Western Sydney creatives

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Asleep with the Fishes

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Gallery 4

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In creating this artwork, inspiration was drawn from my personal experience and cultural influences. During ancient times the use of symbols on stones, walls, trees just to mention a few were applied as a way to send messages in most cases secret messages containing highly classified information. As a young boy growing up, most of my time were spent with my mother and grandma and they were well-versed in the history of my heritage. Through my mother and grandma, I was able learn a lot about my heritage especially the Adinkra symbols; the Adinkra symbols are proverbial symbols mostly used by the Akan tribe in Ghana. With the use of symbols and numbers have enhanced my artistic literacy skills giving my viewers the ability to interpret my works in their own way.

8.

Anney Bounpraseuth

The Garden of Re-Birth and Celebration, 2020

donated and salvaged fabrics, fabric markers, cotton and polyester thread, and acrylic paint
241 cm x 295 cm (excluding hanging device)

The theme of Bounpraseuth's work *The Garden of Rebirth and Celebration* is 'separation' - the first phase of recovery from Religious Trauma Syndrome (RTS). RTS is a term coined and researched by psychologist Dr Marlene Winell embodying the ongoing struggle of leaving a fundamentalist faith. After leaving the Jehovah's Witnesses after 30 years, Bounpraseuth suffered dissociation or an out of body or mind experience. However, experiencing dissociation enabled her to become a life model in defiance of the bible's view on women's modesty, to regain agency of body and mind.

Bounpraseuth portrays her religious departure as a celebratory spiritual awakening. The work brims with symbols of rebirth and celebration to counteract grief and death of the self: un-forbidden fruits, a birthday candle forest, an ambiguous sunrise or sunset, and foetus-like nudes. To create these nudes, Bounpraseuth enlarged and re-drew photos of life drawings by others of her using fabric markers on collected fabrics. In her former life as a Witness, Bounpraseuth interacted minimally with the community, mainly through door-to-door preaching. Now, fabrics for her artworks are sourced through friends, call-outs on online pay-it-forward groups, her personal vintage wardrobe, and art schools where she models.

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Sewing is an important tradition in Bounpraseuth's family. Bounpraseuth learned to sew from a young age from her mother who sewed garments from home for established brands for as little as five cents per garment. Bounpraseuth's mother also sewed puff-sleeve flower girl dresses for her daughters to wear to the Kingdom Hall (Jehovah's Witness place of worship). Bounpraseuth describes her aesthetic as "Cabracadabra" after her mother and the fabric stores of Cabramatta. She reinterprets matriarchal traditions to create new narratives of self-determined identity and Post-Traumatic Growth.

Leaving the Witnesses coincided with Bounpraseuth leaving her home in South West Sydney to avoid Witness surveillance and being "disfellowshipped" (shunned). Although she has created a new life for herself in the Inner West a decade on, she remains connected to South West Sydney through working as an art educator and establishing a studio there. Although Bounpraseuth's connection to the area is bittersweet, it is an intrinsic part of her identity.

9.

emoeba h♥rtbridge

Never really leave, ok?

Never forget me.

Never let me go., 2023

mixed materials

dimensions variable

10.

Tom Yousif

Queen of Night, 2020

UV print on reinforced concrete

41 x 30 cm

The Burney Relief, also known as the "Queen of the Night," is a captivating ancient artifact that evokes curiosity

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Gallery 3

Asleep with the Fishes

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with its enigmatic beauty and rich symbolism. Believed to date back to the second millennium BCE in ancient Mesopotamia, this relief sculpture is made of baked clay and portrays a female figure with distinct features. Adorned with intricate jewelry and a headdress, the figure exudes a sense of power and mystery. Some interpretations suggest that she represents the goddess Ishtar or the Mesopotamian underworld deity Ereshkigal. The relief's dark background and relief technique give it a striking three-dimensional effect.

Blending the image of the Burney Relief into a concrete panel through the process of UV ink printing signifies a cross-generational fusion. The convergence of the ancient relief with the solid structure of the concrete panel creates a symbolic and conceptual synthesis, emphasizing the interplay between contrasting elements. The concrete panel, reminiscent of a tablet, carries associations of endurance and stability, echoing the timeless legacy of Mesopotamian culture. By imprinting the relief onto the concrete surface using UV ink printing, the boundaries can be blurred between the past and the present, inviting contemplation on the enduring relevance of ancient art. This harmonious integration prompts viewers to reflect on the everlasting significance of the Burney Relief within the context of human history.

The Lion Hunt, 2020

UV print on reinforced concrete

41 x 30 cm

The Lion Hunt of Ashurbanipal, an ancient Assyrian relief from the 7th century BCE, which vividly depicts the royal king Ashurbanipal engaging in a perilous encounter with a lion. In this section of the relief, Ashurbanipal is seen thrusting his knife into the ferocious beast, showcasing his fearless determination and prowess as a hunter. The intensity in the dynamic composition captures a moment in time full of danger and the rawness of ancient wildlife hunting. The scene serves as a testament to the ancient Assyrian civilization's admiration for the art of hunting, portraying Ashurbanipal as a skilled and dominant ruler.

Through the transformative process of UV ink printing, the marriage of the Lion Hunt relief and a concrete panel unveils a profound amalgamation that transcends generations. This overlap of ancient and modern forms encapsulates a symbolic and conceptual union, accentuating the interaction between contrasting elements. The solid structure of the concrete panel, reminiscent of an enduring tablet, imparts notions of steadfastness and stability, resonating with the timeless heritage of Assyrian culture. By employing UV ink printing to embed the relief onto the concrete surface, the demarcation between the past and present becomes indistinct. This merging together

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we acknowledge and pay respect to the gadigal people of the eora nation, the traditional owners of the land on which firstdraft is built and operates.

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firstdraft

Gallery 1 and 2

18 August 2023 - 1 October 2023

in all its forms

Idil Abdullahi; Kirthana Selvaraj; Andy Diep; Liza Moscatelli; emoeba h♥rtbridge; Bonnie Huang; Anney Bounpraseuth; Rekha Dhanaram; Hedar Abadi; Emmanuel Asante Art; Tom Yousif

seamlessly beckons contemplation on ancient art within the vast tapestry of human history.

11.

Bonnie Huang

西游记 (*Journey to the west*), 2021

kiln-formed bullseye glass, engraved float glass, UV adhesive

20 x 20 x 20cm

西游记 (*Journey to the west*) is an artwork that stems from the artist's own experience of being born in a detention centre but is a broader reflection on the liminality that is experienced by any displaced or migrating person. The title itself refers to a significant global migration pattern, whilst nodding to the Chinese classic novel about the legendary pilgrimage of a Buddhist monk and his companions to obtain sacred texts.

The work is both heavy and sturdy yet fragile and ephemeral. It plays with these opposing states of being to tangibly express the state of liminality experienced as a migrant. The plastic woven red-white-blue bag (红白蓝袋子) has become symbolic of resilience and hardship due to its utilitarian and working-class associations in Southern China, and across the world. The simplified glass form recontextualises this cultural symbol and sculpturally represents the intangible emotional journey that accompanies displacement. A cheap yet durable bag is turned into a fragile yet heavy object to express the weight these stories carry. The work is a testament to the resilience of diaspora communities, and a love for how objects hold a wealth of history and experiences within them.

In looking through the patterned glass, the red white and blue patterning becomes a prison that holds the Australian citizenship certificate captive in an unreachable space. Subverting the power dynamic to question the value of bureaucratic recognition, the bag is made with fine-art Bullseye glass while the contained citizenship paper is made of a cheaper window glass. The artist's intention to obfuscate the view of the citizenship certificate alludes to the mystical importance put to the idea of "promised lands" and subsequently pokes fun by putting an authoritative document into a more submissive position.

Having made it to "the other side" and being an "Australian citizen" now, the artist questions the societal values assigned to bureaucratic signifiers and poses the question: What does it mean to be recognised?

Gallery 1 and 2
in all its forms
Western Sydney creatives

Gallery 2
Asleep with the Fishes
Teresa Busuttill

Gallery 4
Firstdraft Screening Program
Lilah Benetti, Amy Prcevich, Jacqui Shelton, Samuel Mountford

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