

Push / Pull exhibition view, 2025, Adelaide Contemporary Experimental. Photography by Sam Roberts.

Push/Pull

Exhibition Kit

This exhibition kit has been developed by ACE Education to support student learning and engagement with the ACE exhibition *Push/Pull*. Inside, you'll find a curatorial overview, background information on the artists, and insights into selected artworks.

The kit includes discussion prompts to encourage critical thinking, along with a flexible activity designed for use in the classroom or gallery setting. Educators can adapt the content to suit primary or secondary students, integrating it into broader visual arts, history, or cultural studies learning.

ACE

About the Exhibition

Shared Skin is an important offering that highlights our interconnectedness and reveals our humanity. Collectively these artworks and performances communicate that the family unit is a pliable form resting not only to our kin or ancestry but to landscapes, cultures and the cosmos. Shared Skin welcomes the collaboration between elders, parents and children proposing that intergenerational learning and sharing can shape our future thinking.

Rayleen Forester curates this group exhibition with new commissions and existing works by internationally recognised contemporary artists from First Nations and culturally diverse backgrounds. Each artist explores the concept of identity and family in deeply personal and culturally resonant ways. Through diverse mediums and approaches, Shared Skin invites visitors to consider the various forms and definitions of family, whether biological, chosen, or community-based. These works challenge traditional perceptions, offering new narratives on belonging, inheritance, and the impact of shifting global identities.

Shared Skin presents a mix of sculpture, installation, video and performance works all offering new perspectives on familial bonds and belonging. What unfolds across each gallery is a gesture to uplift a culture that has been disvalued or intentionally erased from our shared history to favour the nuclear family structure that embodies a model that no longer aligns with our growing understanding of gender and gendered roles. Underlying the show's premise is an ideology that sovereignty lies in these worldly knowledge systems and must be shared with our kin. Shared Skin attempts to examine social relationships beyond the immediate family, presenting networks shaped by the material conditions of social life. That family is also a mode of self-selected references, replacing that of the biological. It is here that the social becomes the material for art.



Shan Michaels, *Can Touch This*, *Push / Pull* exhibition view, 2025, Adelaide Contemporary Experimental. Photography by Sam Roberts.

About the artists

Push/Pull brings together a diverse group of contemporary artists, showcasing a range of practices, perspectives, and media. Featuring both emerging and established creatives, the works reflect explorations of identity, place, culture, and innovation, spanning painting, sculpture, digital media, sound, and performance.

The artists represented include Antony Abbracciavento, Elyas Alavi, Emiko Artemis, Stephen Atkinson, Troy-Anthony Baylis, Alycia Bennett, Jingwei Bu, Patrick William Carter, Luna Chan, Allison Chhorn, Amber Cronin, Dylan Crismani, Eleen Deprez, Stephanie Doddridge, Adam-Troy Francis, Paul Gazzola, Alex Grant, Sasha Grbich, Dominic Guerrera, Ray Harris, Aidan Hughes, Matt Huppatz, Heidi Kenyon, Kirsty Martinsen, Monte Masi, VNS Matrix, Shan Michaels, Ariella Napoli, Alexandra Nitschke, Chris Reid, Tikari Rigney, Yasemin Sabuncu, Fiona Salmon, Cynthia Schwertsik, Gabriella Smart, Soundstream, Trudy Tandberg, Sione Teumohenga, Sarah Tickle, Henry Wolff, Shirley Wu, Robert Wyatt, Jake Yang, Yasser Yassin, Shenshen Zheng, and students from the South Australian School for the Visually Impaired.

Selected Artworks

Regional QLD artist Shan Michaels began this project by asking: What if we centered blind gallery-goers from the start, rather than adapting sighted experiences after the fact? The result is a touch-first, immersive environment that invites exploration with hands, body and sound.

Can Touch This is a tactile installation designed with and for the BLV community in South Australia. It features soft sculptures, costumes, a sensory soundtrack by blind composer Antony Abbracciavento, self-portraits and a wayfinding created with students from the South Australian School and Services for the Visually Impaired. Students from SASSVI also took part in sewing workshops where they made what Michaels refers to as "long threads" - 3 meter long tubes of stuffed fabric that hang from the gallery ceiling. Visitors with sight are encouraged to experience the space through touch - using optional mindfolds to shift focus away from the visual.

In addition, a series of special events and activations is presented alongside *Can Touch This*. A blind community day, a "braille bombing" session where playful braille labels will be posted on buildings adjacent to ACE, and an afternoon of talks featuring words from Michaels, Abbracciavento and AcE artistic director Danni Zuvela who will discuss the history of de-visualising the gallery experience.



Shan Michaels, *Can Touch This*, *Push / Pull* exhibition view, 2025, Adelaide Contemporary Experimental. Photography by Sam Roberts.

Discussion

- In what ways can touch, sound, and movement convey emotion or narrative in ways that visual art cannot?
- How might using blindfolds or engaging with tactile elements alter visitors' understanding of space, presence, or connection to the work?
- Consider how the project brought together artists, composers, and students from SASSVI. How does collaboration across abilities and disciplines shape the final work?

Selected Artworks



Emiko Artemis, *Push / Pull – Deeply Hanging Out: Day 2 – Performance* (2025), event documentation, Adelaide Contemporary Experimental. Photography by Morgan Sette

On day 2 of Deeply Hanging Out, within the Push/Pull exhibition at ACE, artworks open to a dynamic and multilayered performance space. The atmosphere is one of convergence between artists, audience, and space itself which collide through movement, voice, and presence. Live and durational performances dominate the scene as figures inhabit the space with deliberate pace, engaging in sustained gestures that feel both formal and improvised. Whether through subtle repetition or expanding movements, these actions convey intimacy, tension, and embodied time.

The setting feels both archival and experimental where there's palpability to the references of fragments of older performances, gestures with generational echoes, and the palpable weight of history. Yet everything feels current, restless, experimental, and animated not only by what came before, but by what's happening in the moment. This live artwork feels less like a performance you simply watch, and more like an immersion in collective attention and creative tension. Held in the present, yet resonating across time.

Discussion

- How does movement, voice, and physical presence communicate meaning beyond words or visual imagery?
- What do subtle, repeated gestures reveal about time, attention, and human connection in performance?
- How does shifting from passive viewing to immersive attention change the role of the audience?

Gallery Discussion

- Push/Pull is about the tension between things - like presence and absence, or the physical and the ephemeral. What kinds of tensions do you notice in the artworks? How do these tensions make you feel?

- Artists in Push/Pull use a variety of materials and forms, including sound, movement, and interactive elements. Which materials or forms stood out to you, and how do these choices affect your experience of the artwork?

- Some works invite personal interaction or reflection. Which artwork did you connect with the most, and why do you think that is?

- The exhibition includes works by both established and emerging artists, often created in collaboration with communities. How does collaboration influence the artwork? What role does community play in shaping the exhibition experience?

Classroom Activity

- Brainstorm words or ideas that come to mind when you think about tension or balance in your own life. These could relate to:
  – Physical experiences (push, pull, weight, stretch)
  – Emotional states (conflict, harmony, resistance)
  – Social dynamics (rules, cooperation, boundaries)

- Choose one or two ideas and create a small artwork using a medium of your choice (e.g., paper, cardboard, fabric, clay, or recycled materials). You might make a sculpture, structure, or mixed-media work that explores opposing forces, movement, or contrasts. Consider adding texture, colour, or objects to show whether the tension feels positive, negative, fragile, or strong. You can also alter or interact with your work—stretch, pull, twist, break, or rearrange it to change the sense of tension. Think about how movement, force, or change affects what the work communicates.

- Bring the class artworks together as a group installation. Reflect on how the works interact when placed together. Do they create harmony, conflict, or something unexpected? Walk around and notice repeating ideas or approaches. What similarities and differences do you see? How does combining individual works change the overall meaning of the installation?

Further Reources

- ‘Push / Pull’ Opening Night Performance – ‘2025–1976: After Pam Gilbert’ by Jingwei Bu, Youtube, video
- ‘Push / Pull’ Deeply Hanging Out – Day 2: Performance, Youtube, video
- The balance of tension, art guide, article
- Push/Pull welcomes a new era at Adelaide Contemporary Experimental, The Saturday Paper, article

Curriculum Links

Australian Curriculum / Visual Art /
Years 11–12 SACE Objectives

- Implement ideas and representations
- Apply literacy skills
- Analyse and interpret visual language, expression and meaning in art
- Evaluate art practices, traditions, cultures, and theories
- Experiment in response to stimulus
- Create meaning through the knowledge and understanding of art materials, techniques, technologies, and processes
- Realise responses to communicate meaning

Australian Curriculum / Visual Arts /
Years F-10

- Use materials, techniques and processes to explore visual conventions when making artworks (AC9AVAFD01 - AC9AVA10D01) (AC9AVAFC02 - AC9AVA10C02)
- Explore ideas and artworks from different cultures and times, including works by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, to use as inspiration for their own representations (AC9AVAFE01 - AC9AVA10E01) (AC9AVAFE02 - AC9AVA10E02)
- Respond to art works and consider where and why people make them, including visual art works of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (AC9AVAFE01 - AC9AVA10E01) (AC9AVAFE02 - AC9AVA10E02)
- Develop ways to enhance their intentions as artists through exploration of how they use materials, techniques, technologies, and processes (AC9AVA10D01) (AC9AVA10D02)
- Practice techniques and processes to enhance representation of ideas in their art making (AC9AVAFD01 - AC9AVA10D01) (AC9AVAFC02 - AC9AVA10C02)

Visit Us

Adelaide Contemporary Experiemntal

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North Terrace (West End)
Kaurna Yarta
Adelaide SA 5000

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Tours

We welcome visits from education groups, primary through to tertiary, and encourage self-guided visits to our exhibitions. For more information about how to book, visit our website or email us.

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Curator: Danni Zuvela

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