Studios: 2024, 2022, installation view. Photography by Sam Roberts.

Shared Skin

Exhibition Kit

This exhibition kit has been developed by ACE Education to support student learning and engagement with the ACE exhibition *Shared Skin*. 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.

Shared Skin, 2025, installation view. Photography by Sam Roberts.

About the artists

Shared Skin brings together a diverse group of artists exploring identity, memory, culture, and connection to Country. The exhibition features works by First Nations and international artists including Hana Pera Aoake, Atong Atem, Jacob Boehme, KTB, the Narungga Family Choir, Juanella Donovan, Jared Flitcroft, Jumana Manna, Tuan Andrew Nguyen, Bhenji Ra, Steven Rhall, Marikit Santiago, and Jennifer Tee. Their practices span visual art, performance, film, music, and sound, often combining traditional knowledge with contemporary techniques to investigate personal, cultural, and historical narratives.

Through portraiture, sculpture, installation, video, and sound, the artists examine themes such as ancestry, migration, family, language, and spirituality. Many works are collaborative or community-focused, reflecting shared histories, lived experiences, and the ongoing relationships between people, land, and memory. Together, the exhibition highlights the diverse ways artists navigate cultural identity, creative expression, and connection across generations and geographies.

Selected Artworks

The Boat People is a 20-minute single-channel video, originally shot on Super 16mm and transferred to digital, paired with immersive 5.1 surround sound. Produced by Tuan Andrew Nguyen in collaboration with Bellas Artes Projects in Bataan, Philippines, the film features five children from the local fishing village of Magac—Gryshyll Reyes Ilarina (Riana), Michael Mendoza Soronio, John Carlos Cruz Moris, Jescee Dheivid Taba Recinte, and Benedict Recinte Revelo—in their first film roles. Filming took place across a range of locations, including Las Casas Filipinas de Acuzar, Mt. Samat, the Nuclear Powerplant Village, and the Philippine Refugee Processing Center.

Set in an unspecified future on the edge of humanity's possible extinction, the film follows a group of children led by a resourceful little girl as they travel the seas, collecting objects from the ruins of human civilisation. They replicate objects in wood, seeking to piece together histories they do not fully understand, before burning their carvings in a mysterious ritual. Arriving in Bataan, they uncover layers of interwoven histories, from refugee crises and world wars to early human migrations—and engage with objects that spark existential reflection. A central moment occurs when the girl discovers a buried statue head, initiating dialogue that examines memory, history, and ritual.

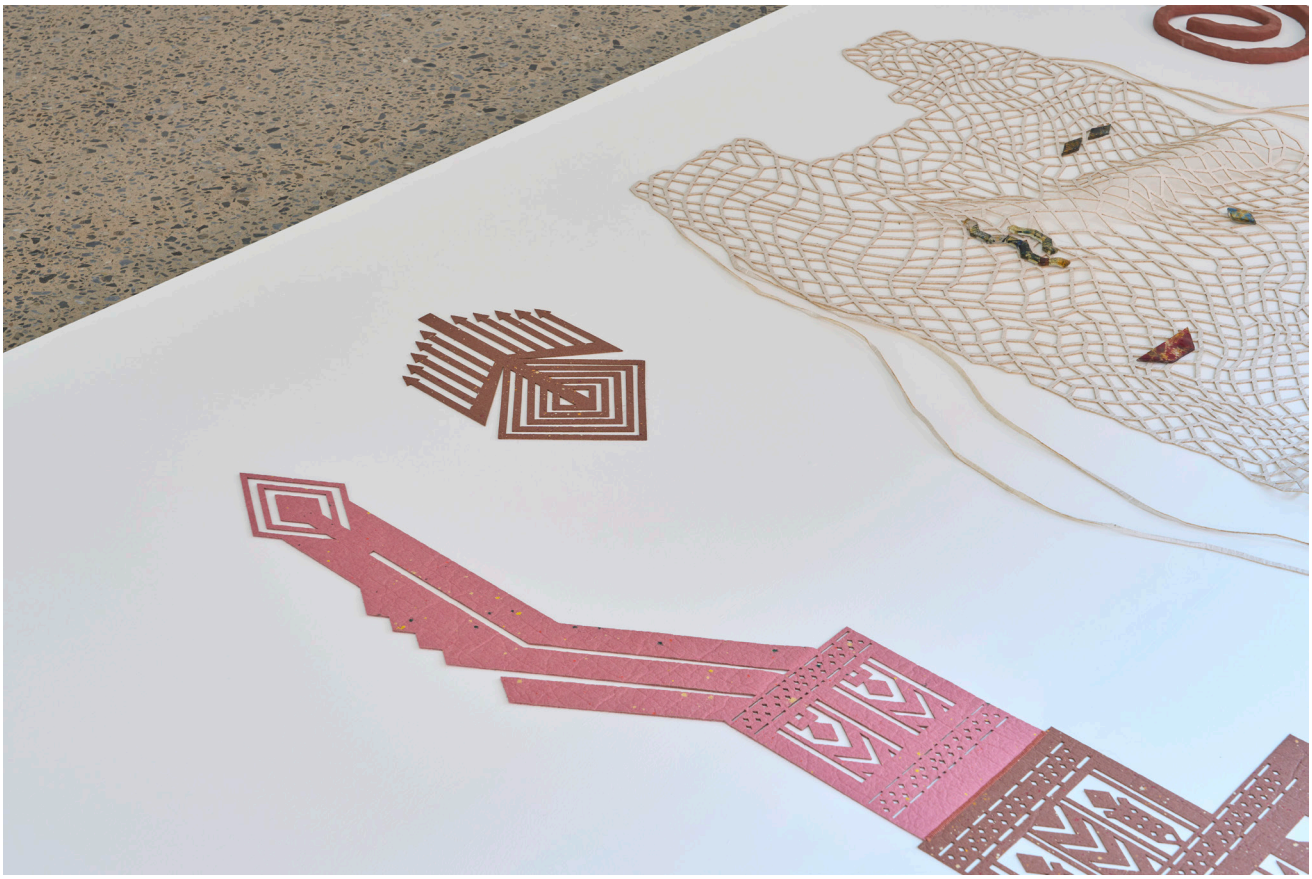
Tuan Andrew Nguyen's practice investigates the power of memory as a form of political resistance. Engaging deeply with communities affected by colonialism, war, and displacement, he explores the erasures of history and the resilience of cultural memory. Through collaborative projects, Nguyen emphasizes storytelling as a tool for healing, empowerment, and solidarity, highlighting how shared memory can resist historical and social erasure.

Tuan Andrew Nguyen, *The Boat People*, Shared Skin installation view, 2025, Adelaide Contemporary Experimental. Photography by Sam Roberts.

Discussion

- How do the children's actions of collecting, replicating, and burning objects reflect different ways of engaging with history and memory? What might this suggest about the preservation or loss of cultural knowledge?
- The film emphasizes rituals and storytelling as tools for understanding the past and imagining the future. How do these practices create meaning for the characters, and how might they resonate with audiences in thinking about human survival and legacy?

Selected Artworks



Jennifer Tee, *Tao Magic/The Moon flows out to the Sea*, Shared Skin installation view, 2025, Adelaide Contemporary Experimental. Photography by Sam Roberts.

In this artwork, Jennifer Tee weaves together ritual, materiality, and symbolic imagery to evoke a spiritual meditation on origin, movement, and transformation. The title itself speaks to the fluid interconnections of natural and musical forces. The moon emerging from the sea conjures both a celestial cycle and a mythic birth, while "Tao Magic" gestures toward Eastern philosophies of flow, balance, and unseen energy.

Tee's multidisciplinary approach, combining sculpture, performance, and installation, finds powerful expression in this work through harmonious fusion of organic and handmade materials. Petals, ceramics, textiles, and structured forms are arranged with a deep sense of care and reverence, forming what she calls "sculptural constellations". At the core of this piece is Tee's ongoing exploration of soul's journey, not as a linear path but as a cyclical, oceanic movement which is rising, falling, and returning. The use of tulip petals in vibrant layered patterns references both Dutch cultural history and natural transience. These delicate forms, often mounted on silk or paper, act as visual prayers, simultaneously fragile and powerful.

Performance has also been integral to the activation of this work. Dancers or performers have interacted with the installation in past iterations, moving through it with ritualistic intentions, subtly guiding the audience into a collective sense of slowness and contemplation.

Discussion

- How does the use of symbolic imagery, materials, and performance create a sense of ritual or spiritual meditation? What feelings or reflections does this evoke for the viewer?
- Tee combines natural and handmade materials such as petals, ceramics, and textiles. How do these materials contribute to the themes of cyclical movement, transience, and transformation within the work?

Gallery Discussion

- Shared Skin brings together artists from First Nations and diasporic backgrounds to explore family, kinship, rituals, and identity across generations and cultures. How do you define "family"? Can family be chosen as well as biological, and how does this shape your sense of belonging?

- The exhibition reflects on the ways rituals and traditions connect people. What rituals or traditions are important in your life or family? How do they help you connect with identity, memory, or heritage?

- Many works reference both personal and cultural histories through materials and forms. Which materials or motifs stand out to you, and what feelings or associations do they evoke?

- The exhibition encourages reflection on the relationship between personal and cultural identity. How does your cultural background influence your sense of self? How do these works shape your thinking about shared identity?

Classroom Activity

- Brainstorm words or images that come to mind when you think about family and belonging. These could relate to:
  – Physical connections (home, gatherings, shared meals)
  – Emotional bonds (love, care, support)
  – Cultural heritage (traditions, rituals, ancestry)

- Choose one or two ideas and create a family portrait or symbol using a medium of your choice (e.g., paper, fabric, recycled materials, or mixed media). You might depict your family literally, or use symbols, textures, and colours to show what family means to you. Consider incorporating materials or objects connected to cultural identity or personal stories, and experiment with layering, stitching, weaving, or collaging to express the complexity of relationships.

- Bring the class artworks together in a group installation. Reflect on how the collection of works reveals the diverse ways people experience family and belonging. What patterns or themes appear across the artworks?

- Walk around and respond to your classmates' works. What did you notice about how others expressed belonging? How does seeing multiple perspectives influence the way you think about family and identity?

Further Reources

- 'Shared Skin' – Curator Tour, Youtube, video
- 'Shared Skin' – Juanella Donovan Artist Talk, Youtube, video
- Shared Skin Review, The Barefood Review, article
- Shared Skin traces families and rituals across borders and generations, InDaily, article
- Adelaide Contemporary Experimental pens new exhibition 'Shared Skin', artdaily, 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

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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: Rayleen Forester

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