

Announcing...

Five Acts of Love

In this new exhibition curated by Nur Shkempi, both international and local contemporary artists explore various expressions of love, examining what we gain and what we give up when we love and are loved.

'Love is broadly seen as an intimate emotional and/or physical convergence between people', **Dr Shkempi** said. 'There is also parental and familial love, the love shared between friends or the ecstasy of finding spiritual or other worldly love, of *fa'naa* (the Sufi concept of the dissolution of the self or ego in the presence of God) and love of the Divine.'

'In this current moment it is difficult not to see love in proximity to the tumult and turmoil of the world. We see love manifesting in great numbers, as solidarity between friends, communities and between complete strangers in various movements across the globe. We also see the love of individuals, and of humanity, or even nature as a form of resistance, ever evolving, anew. Reflecting on the words of Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Rūmī, to love is to risk everything.'

Five Acts of Love explores the multifaceted beauty and intensity of love. Works of art centre love manifest in human action, love inherent to transformative change and participation, in moments of connection, memorialisation and reflection that collectively embrace notions of transgenerational grief and a shared humanity.

ACCA's Artistic Director and CEO, Myles Russell-Cook stated that the exhibition serves as a significant reflection of art's ability to connect people through their humanity. "The works featured in this exhibition explore how we respond to and experience love in all its forms. It presents a gentle and poetic collection from some extraordinary artists, each expressing and reflecting on the theme of love as it has been felt in moments, experiences, and events that have deeply impacted them."

Highlights include:

- The late Iranian-born, Australian artist Hossein Valamanesh's work *The lover circles his own heart* (1993) is the centrepiece of the exhibition and explores the Sufi spiritual ritual of 'self-pivoting' through the practice of 'whirling', which is an active form of meditation that increases body-mind focus – a reminder of God and unity with the divine.
- Iranian born, Melbourne based artist Hoda Afshar presents her acclaimed series *In Turn* (2023), created in response to the feminist uprising that began in Iran in 2022, following the death of Mahsa Jina Amini who was arrested by Iran's morality police for not wearing the hijab properly. Afshar's monumental photographic works are a tribute and a testament to collective action and grief. Here, Afshar shares with us a vision, a prequel to the resistance through the act of [love] women braiding one another's hair.

- Lebanese born, Sydney-based artist Khaled Sabsabi's 2016 work, *At the Speed of Light*, an 11-channel sculptural video work featuring eighteen hours of recorded footage, compressed it into a single second-long video, challenging ideas of perception in the pursuit of the Divine.
- Iranian born, Sydney based artist Ali Tahayori shares a yearning for intimacy with *Archive of Longing* (2024), which can be understood as a personal search for glimpses of connection, love and belonging within an inherited family archive. Family photographs are re-photographed, cropped enlarged and printed on glass, broken and reassembled in a contemporary rendering of traditional Persian glass cutting Techniques and geometric patterns called Āine-Kāri aine.
- Abdul-Rahman Abdullah will present a significant new sculptural commission, a meticulously hand-carved gazelle or ghazāl emanating powerful notions of grace, beauty and love. Abdullah's installation work *Pretty Beach* (2019) also features in the exhibition, which is a deeply considered and moving meditation on the suicide of the West Australian artist's grandfather, and provides a solemn and devastatingly beautiful encounter with transgenerational grief through personal and familial memory.
- Palestinian/Danish artist Larissa Sansour and partner, philosopher Soren Lind's experimental documentary film *Familiar Phantoms* (2023) interweaves threads of memory, history and trauma to explore the impact of fiction on the creation and reinterpretation of memory.
- Yhonnie Scarce' *N0000, N2359, N2351, N2402* (2013) reveals familial memories and stories held within delicately hand-blown glass objects. Born in Woomera, South Australia and from the Kokatha and Nukunu peoples, Scarce's laborious work of transforming sand particles into glass, an act of love and resistance, honours the images of family contained within.

Dr Nur Skhembhi is an award-winning Melbourne based curator, writer and art historian specialising in Islamic art history and contemporary art, and postcolonial theory. Nur has produced and curated over 150 events, exhibitions and community engagement projects. Nur holds a Masters from the Victorian College of the Arts and a PhD in Art History from the University of Melbourne.

Five Acts of Love

27 June – 24 August 2025.

Guest curated by Dr Nur Skhembhi.

Artists: Abdul-Rahman Abdullah, Hoda Afshar, Megan Cope, Eugenia Flynn, D Harding, Saodat Ismailova, Ali Tahayori, Larissa Sansour & Soren Lind, Khaled Sabsabi, Yhonnie Scarce, Hossein Valamanesh.

[IMAGES AVAILABLE HERE:](#)

Australian Centre for Contemporary Art

111 Sturt Street, Southbank VIC 3006

Melbourne, Australia

Opening hours: Tuesday – Friday 10am–5pm, Weekends 11am–5pm,

Free entry

acca.melbourne

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ACCA proudly acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung peoples as the sovereign custodians of the lands and waterways on which we work and welcome visitors, along with the neighbouring Boonwurrung, and Bunurong peoples, and wider Kulin Nation. We acknowledge the enduring custodianship of Country that has shaped what we now recognise as Australia. We also honour the artistic work of First Peoples, including their art, design, and material culture, which we celebrate as the only art that is entirely unique to this continent.