

This summer, ACCA proudly presents the international debut of two timely exhibitions...

**r e a : c l a i m e d**  
and  
**Tourmaline: Transcendent**

The Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (ACCA)'s 2025–2026 Summer Season highlights the work of two leading artists: **r e a**, a Gamilaraay, Wailwan and Biripi digital media artist who examines the bonds between our bodies, our politics, our memories, our place and our futures, and **Tourmaline**, an American artist, filmmaker, activist and writer, whose practice highlights the experiences of Black, queer, and trans communities and their capacity to change the world.

Running from 12 December 2025 to 15 March 2026, both **r e a : c l a i m e d** and **Tourmaline: Transcendent** showcase a combination of existing and newly commissioned works, providing nuanced insights into the challenges faced, and agency claimed by trans, Black, and First Nations peoples today.

Hailing from the Southern and Northern Hemispheres respectively, **r e a** and **Tourmaline** have emerged from two distinct contexts and have developed unique approaches to their chosen mediums. These concurrent solo exhibitions are linked by their powerful reflections on trans and queer experiences during a time of renewed urgency for trans rights worldwide.

Together, **r e a : c l a i m e d** and **Tourmaline: Transcendent** span photography, video, sculpture, installation and site-responsive work, exploring themes of identity, history, reclamation, politics, and resilience. In their own distinct ways, both artists explore the capacity for immersive audiovisual elements to activate feelings—such as joy, peace, frustration, and loss—and harness the power of contemporary art to create positive social change.

**r e a : c l a i m e d**

**r e a : c l a i m e d** is a focused survey of Gamilaraay, Wailwan and Biripi digital media artist, **r e a**, highlighting some of their most significant works from a career spanning more than three decades. **r e a** first exhibited at ACCA as part of the landmark group exhibition *Blakness: Blak City Culture!* in 1994, curated by Hetti Perkins and Clare Williamson. Now, more than thirty years later, **r e a** returns to ACCA with a solo exhibition that includes digital media art, sculpture, installation, and video.

***rea:claimed*** captures the breadth and impact of **rea's** practice, from examples of their trailblazing work at the forefront of the Indigenous new media movement in the early-1990s to the global premiere of a major new audiovisual commission, *tRAKa-tRAKn (burra beedee)* (2025). The culmination of more than five years research, this immersive sound and video installation has been realised with the support of ACCA.

Alongside the exhibition, ACCA is equally proud to present the artist's first monograph that covers more than thirty-years of **rea's** work. Bearing the same name, ***rea:claimed*** is a significant new publication featuring new scholarship from esteemed contributing authors:

- Judith Ryan AM, Senior Curator, Art Museums at the University of Melbourne;
- Professor Lynette Russell AM, Sir John Monash Distinguished Professor and Australian Research Council Laureate Fellow;
- Sophie Gerhard, Curator, Australian and First Nations Art, National Gallery of Victoria;
- ACCA colleagues Dr Shelley McSpedden, Senior Curator; Sophie Prince, Curator; and Myles Russell-Cook, Artistic Director & CEO.

Rich in imagery that ranges from never-before published scanned slides of original new media artworks and installation views, to digital images and video stills, ***rea:claimed*** is an ambitious publication that cements **rea's** status as one of Australia's leading figures in contemporary art.

For over thirty years, **rea** has consciously maintained innovative approaches to their chosen mediums and has developed a deep research-based practice and a singular aesthetic. Their work shines a light on the ongoing consequences of colonisation, focusing on queer and Indigenous bodies through a framework which engages with concepts of the 'contemporary'. Informed by new media theory, **rea** is known for layering text, images, and bold colours, to trace transgenerational histories. Their work interrogates how attitudes toward race and gender can be expanded through both language and art.

***rea:claimed*** continues ACCA's commitment to presenting the work of Australian artists at pivotal moments in their careers, celebrating **rea's** place as a changemaker and senior figure in Australia's contemporary art landscape.

**ACCA's Artistic Director & CEO, and curator of *rea:claimed*, Myles Russell-Cook**, comments:

'**rea** has used their body and their life as inspiration and metaphor to develop a thoughtful and nuanced practice that gets you right in the guts. There is a playfulness to their work that sits uncomfortably at the intersection of comedy and tragedy, with subversive references to an international art canon seamlessly woven into a local story about identity, community, and resilience. This is a tough show, with works that explore Australia's history of missionisation, indentured slavery, dispossession, linguicide, and Stolen Generations, situating these reflections within a contemporary framework to reflect pressing matters of our time, such as Indigenous youth suicide, the desecration of sacred lands and waterways, and the struggles both trans and Indigenous people face navigating Australian society'.

# Tourmaline: Transcendent

ACCA is equally delighted to present ***Tourmaline: Transcendent***, a brand-new solo exhibition developed for ACCA's iconic atrium gallery. This exhibition marks the first Australian solo presentation of work by acclaimed American artist, filmmaker, activist and writer, **Tourmaline**. A leading figure in contemporary art, **Tourmaline's** work has been acquired by major collections both in Australia and internationally, including The Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), Museum of Modern Art (New York), the J. Paul Getty Museum (Los Angeles), the National Gallery of Victoria (Melbourne) and Tate Modern (London), as well as many others.

***Transcendent*** is an elegant and powerful exhibition that brings together three bodies of work to offer a timely reflection on contemporary issues. **Tourmaline** is known for her thoughtful practice, that challenges audiences while also highlighting the importance of nurturing joy as a form of resistance. The exhibition includes brand new work commissioned by ACCA, including *Transcendent* series (2025), seven luminous large-scale photographs shot in Venice, Italy, that engage with and propel forward the tradition of self-portraiture.

**Tourmaline's** newest work, *A Flower That Lives Forever* (2025), is also making its global debut at ACCA. *A Flower That Lives Forever* is a single channel video that is presented in a large-scale cinematic format, made possible thanks to the support of the Rob Gould Foundation. First exhibited at the Whitney Biennale in 2024 and showing for the first time in Australia, *Pollinator* (2022) layers together archival footage with Tourmaline's own catalogue of videos to create an evocative work that speaks to LGBTIQ+ experiences through an expanded approach to biography—a style for which the artist has become known and revered.

**Tourmaline** layers archival footage and her own original imagery to introduce audiences to the life and legacy of one of her personal heroes, transgender American activist Marsha P. Johnson. For over two decades **Tourmaline** has undertaken deep archival research and conducted first-hand interviews with people from her community, to explore and recentre the life of Johnson, a much beloved figure within the LGBTIQ+ communities of New York and beyond.

**Tourmaline's** research has been captured in her recent book, the first comprehensive biography on Johnson's life, ***MARSHA: The Joy and Defiance of Marsha P. Johnson*** (2025). The book charts Johnson's story, from her iconic role at the outbreak of the Stonewall Riots on 26 June 1969—where many claim she 'threw the first brick', becoming the catalyst for a watershed event that changed the course of the gay and trans rights movements—to the countless examples of her enduring effort to 'show up and show out' through activism and community care. Johnson sustained her commitment to her community through the heights of the AIDS epidemic, becoming a muse for artists including Andy Warhol, Diana Davies, Alvin Baltrop, and Peter Hujar.

With trans rights under increasing political scrutiny, ***Tourmaline: Transcendent*** honours the work of trans and queer icons, while inviting reflection upon the importance of beauty, creativity, joy, and dreams, in sustaining individual and collective engagement with the political present.

**ACCA Curator and curator of *Tourmaline: Transcendent*, Sophie Prince, reflects;**

'Featuring work created during or shortly following the publication of *MARSHA: The Joy and Defiance of Marsha P. Johnson*, a book five years in the making, *Tourmaline: Transcendent* exists as one of the refractions of Marsha's light and love beamed from the past into the present through Tourmaline's tender and poetic synthesis of Masha's life and legacy. By nature of photography and video art being distinct to writing, *Transcendent* consciously embraces alternate, less proscriptive ways of learning and knowing, as Tourmaline dually explores and invites the important powers of subjectivity and the senses for visitors to be moved toward understanding, not only about Johnson's legacy, but of the humanity underpinning advocacy work of the trans liberation and LGBTQIA+ rights movements'.

#### **About the artists:**

**r e a** (b. 1962, Coonabarabran, New South Wales) lives and works on Darug and Gundungurra Country, also known as the Blue Mountains. For over thirty years, r e a – of the Gamilaraay, Wailwan and Biripi peoples – has been a leading figure in Indigenous new media art in Australia and internationally.

r e a is the artist's full name. Due to academic conventions, some texts appear under r e a Saunders or Dr Regina M. Saunders (Morris). The name r e a noir is also used – referencing the colour black and a playful nod to French Impressionist Pierre-Auguste Renoir.

**Tourmaline** (b. 1983, Roxbury, Massachusetts) lives and works in Miami, Florida. Recent solo and group exhibitions include MASP, São Paulo; MUDAM, Luxembourg; Chapter NY, New York; the 2024 Whitney Biennial, New York; and the 59th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, Venice.

#### **Exhibition Details:**

**r e a : c l a i m e d**

**Dates:** 12 December 2025 – 15 March 2026

**Venue:** Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (ACCA), Melbourne

**Curator:** Myles Russell-Cook

#### **Public Programs:**

- **Thursday 11 December, 2025, ACCA**  
Opening Celebrations, 6–8pm. FREE.
- **Saturday 13 December, 2025, ACCA**  
Artist talk and book launch with r e a and Myles Russell-Cook, 11:30am – 12:45pm. FREE.

**Publication:** *r e a : c l a i m e d* is accompanied by the most comprehensive monograph on r e a's work to date.

#### ***Tourmaline: Transcendent***

**Dates:** 12 December 2025 – 15 March 2026

**Venue:** Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (ACCA), Melbourne

**Curator:** Sophie Prince

#### **Public Programs:**

- **Thursday 11 December, 2025, ACCA**  
Opening Celebrations, 6–8pm. FREE.
- **Thursday 22 January 2026, ACCA**  
We need to talk: Artist talk with Tourmaline and Sophie Prince, 6–7:30pm. FREE.

[IMAGES AVAILABLE HERE](#)

MEDIA PLEASE NOTE: Installation photography will be included in the media kit by Monday 22 December.

**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](http://acca.melbourne)

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For further media information:

Bridget Thompson

Marketing and Digital Communications Manager

[bridget.thompson@acca.melbourne](mailto:bridget.thompson@acca.melbourne)

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.



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