



# KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOUR

Abdul Abdullah · Susan Cohn · Hannah Furmage ·  
Oliver Hartung · Seamus Heidenreich · Mehwish Iqbal ·  
Refugee Art Project · Ella Rubeli · Shireen Taweel ·  
Curated by Ineke Dane

**18 MARCH – 23 APRIL 2017**

**THE  
LOCK  
UP**

A large, bold, black letter 'W' is positioned on the left side of the page. The background is a solid orange color. The 'W' is composed of two 'V' shapes joined together, with a slight gap between them. The letter is partially cut off by the right edge of the page.

**e have all** experienced arriving somewhere new, the anticipation, the hope that we will be welcomed, the journey to get there and the memory of where we have left. The works in *Know your neighbour* speak to those experiences in ways that are gentle and reflective, personal and political, confronting and emotive.

They are presented at a time when the narratives surrounding migration, immigration and asylum are inescapable and highly charged. So where does art and this exhibition fit in that picture? Art is a way of expressing our personal joys and sorrows, of cutting through, of seeing the world through a shifted lens that doesn't hold the answers but asks us to question, reflect, consider and perhaps connect with something beyond our pre-conceived notions; to break down and break through barriers and in the process, perhaps even connect with our own deepest humanity.

The artists in *Know your neighbour* and their works are a tiny selection of the innumerable stories and approaches to art making currently being expressed by artists around the globe. A number of public programs held in conjunction with the exhibition seek to further expand on the ideas and experiences expressed in the exhibition and to create forums for discussion, sharing and connection.

The panel *Arrival* in partnership with Newcastle Writers Festival will introduce audiences directly to artists, creatives and community workers, asking the question: what is the role of creativity and creative spaces for those who have newly arrived. A community welcome day will invite and welcome a diversity of people to The Lock-Up spaces encouraging people to connect with each other and the issues through art, performance, family activities and food.

*Know your neighbour* has been informed by the wonderful sharing of experiences, information, ideas and networks by artists and individuals who have experienced the realities of flight and arrival and organisations who are working with and supporting those who have.

The Lock-Up and curator Ineke Dane would like to thank all those who have shown such generosity of spirit to this project and to particularly thank (in no particular order) all the artists and public program participants, Safdar Ahmed and the Refugee Art Project, Lulu Tantos and Northern Settlement Services, Sister Betty and Sister Di from Zara's House and Refugees & Partners, Astrid Gearin from Newcastle Community Youth Development Project, John Sandy and CatholicCare Social Services, the Hunter Multicultural Youth Network and Jo McGregor from STARTTS at Hunter TAFE.

**Jessi England**

Director, The Lock-Up

Then he actually breaks into song,  
throws in the cards as soon as the hand is finished,  
and falls asleep until his head topples  
and rests on the shoulder of his neighbour.  
And all the time, sideways, countryside and  
towns are passing the window.

– John Berger & Jean Mohr<sup>1</sup>

**It wasn't far** back in the world's  
memory that people could move as  
freely as the capital they generated.  
Today that movement is curtailed by  
barriers, camps and detention centres  
built provisionally or makeshift in  
unvalued spaces yet becoming more  
and more permanent: cities made  
from tents.

Fundamentally we share a common  
experience, the act of arriving  
in a new space, city or land. Yet  
the details enveloping this arrival  
hinge enormously on age, religion,  
wealth, culture and education.  
People move or migrate because  
others have inflicted injury upon  
them: physically, environmentally,  
economically, or because of their  
skin colour or beliefs.

## migrate

mɪˈɡreɪt, ˈmɪɡreɪt/

verb

### 1.

(of an animal, typically a bird or fish) move from one region or habitat to another according to the seasons.

“as autumn arrives, the birds migrate south”

*synonyms:* roam, wander, drift, rove, travel (around),

voyage, journey, trek, hike, itinerate, globetrot

“wildebeest migrate around the Serengeti Plains”

The artists in *Know your neighbour* explore migration in a time where the movement of stateless peoples worldwide proportionately rivals that of the post WWII era. Migration in its many forms is documented historically in art. But today, in Australia and abroad, displacement, shelter and ‘shadow architecture’<sup>2</sup> are found at the centre of an increasingly prolific artistic discourse,<sup>3</sup> endorsed by institutions from MoMA in New York<sup>4</sup> to Sydney’s Casula Powerhouse.<sup>5</sup> This discourse echoes a real-time footprint.

<sup>1</sup> *A Seventh Man*, London & New York 1975. Page 64

<sup>2</sup> Shadow architecture is a term used to describe the impermanent structures that fill spaces between government sanctioned architecture, such as make-shift houses and market stands. See *Shadow Architecture*, Aleksandra Wasilkowska, Warsaw 2012

<sup>3</sup> See artists Alex Seton, Ai WeiWei, Ben Quilty, Emily Jacir, Adel Abdessemed, Kader Attia, Stephen Kelly, Rabih Mroué, Larissa Sansour, Sissel Tolaas, Francis Alÿs, Anri Sala, Bouchra Khalili, Aman Mojadidi et al.

<sup>4</sup> *Insecurities: Tracing Displacement and Shelter*, 1 Oct 2016–2 Jan 2017

<sup>5</sup> *Refugees*, 30 July–11 Sept 2016

Give me your tired, your poor;  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!

– Emma Lazarus<sup>6</sup>

In 2015 former Prime Minister Tony Abbott announced that Australia would accept a one-off intake of 12,000 refugees from Syria.<sup>7</sup> This was a response to what is now a six-year strong conflict, begun as an attempt to overthrow the Assad Government, now morphed into a bigger and near indefinable juggernaut with dozens of tribes and factions warring against each other and against internationally recognised states. In such a climate, tied to the individual choice of peace is the act of migrating.

Oliver Hartung's photographs across the Syrian landscape pre-date the current conflict, yet their sparseness is prophetic. The series, *Syria Al-Assad*, is shot from a moving car between 2007 and 2009 and is deliberately devoid of any political statement, instead forming a typology of monuments and billboards. These monuments are like holy tributes, erected by councils or corporations across the landscape as invocations to the greater honour of the Assad family.<sup>8</sup> Oliver's display – a large grid plastered with poster glue to a wall – is deliberately cheap and impermanent in emphasis of the lack of stasis his images contain.<sup>9</sup>



»Thou, who was raised in the h



House of the glorious leader! Thou, who are higher than the highest! You, our hope! Faculty of Administration, Directorate of Administrative Affairs.<sup>6</sup>  
Between Idlib and Aleppo, 2009.

**Oliver Hartung**

*Syria Al-Assad 2007–2009*

© the artist

<sup>6</sup> Extract from *The New Colossus*, 1883

<sup>7</sup> Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull says Australia will permanently boost its annual refugee intake to almost 19,000 in 2018–2019, from 13,750 refugees in 2015–16; ABC News 21 Sept 2016

<sup>8</sup> Artist statement

<sup>9</sup> In 2014 *Syria Al-Assad* was published as a book. Each page has perforations, so it can be torn out. Oliver says 'the owner of the book has all the power in the end, and nothing remains static or definitive'



**Susan Cohn**

*All Welcome* 2015

© the artist

More than 11 million Syrians have left or been displaced since the beginning of conflict in 2011.<sup>10</sup>

But after any departure there must eventually be a welcome.

Newcastle has a strong history of welcoming migrants and will be taking its share of people from Syria in the coming year. Susan Cohn has created an installation that speaks to the experience of the newly arrived, titled *All welcome*.

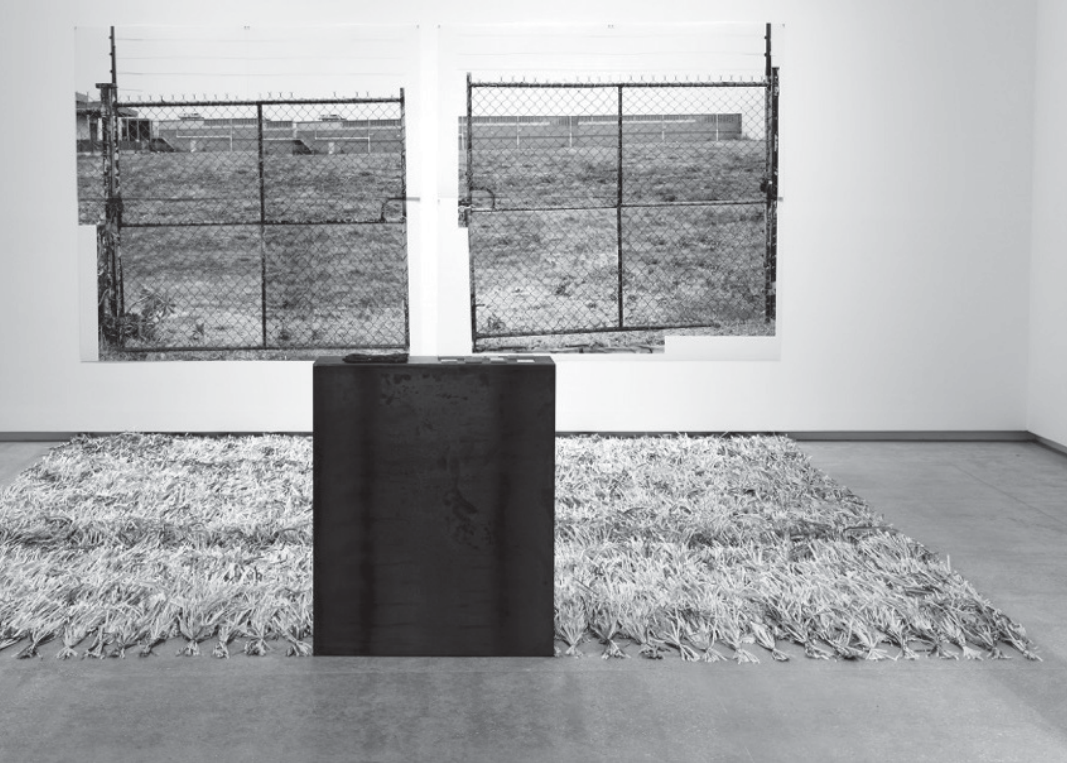
Susan covers a large floor area with 1,100 paper bunches laid out in tribute, like flowers laid for victims, a gesture for those lost along the way. Each bunch contains a shredded newspaper article about refugee policy, comment and debate. At the wall-foot of the paper tributes is a photographic collage of gates, hung deliberately with a gap in the middle to suggest openness, future, possibility. While ultimately optimistic and generous, the crudeness of the gates coupled with the soft, opinion-laden carpet attaches this sentiment specifically to Australia's asylum seeker policies.<sup>11</sup>





People who were born in Australia are often surprised that poetry by migrants is so often about the sadness of living in a foreign land

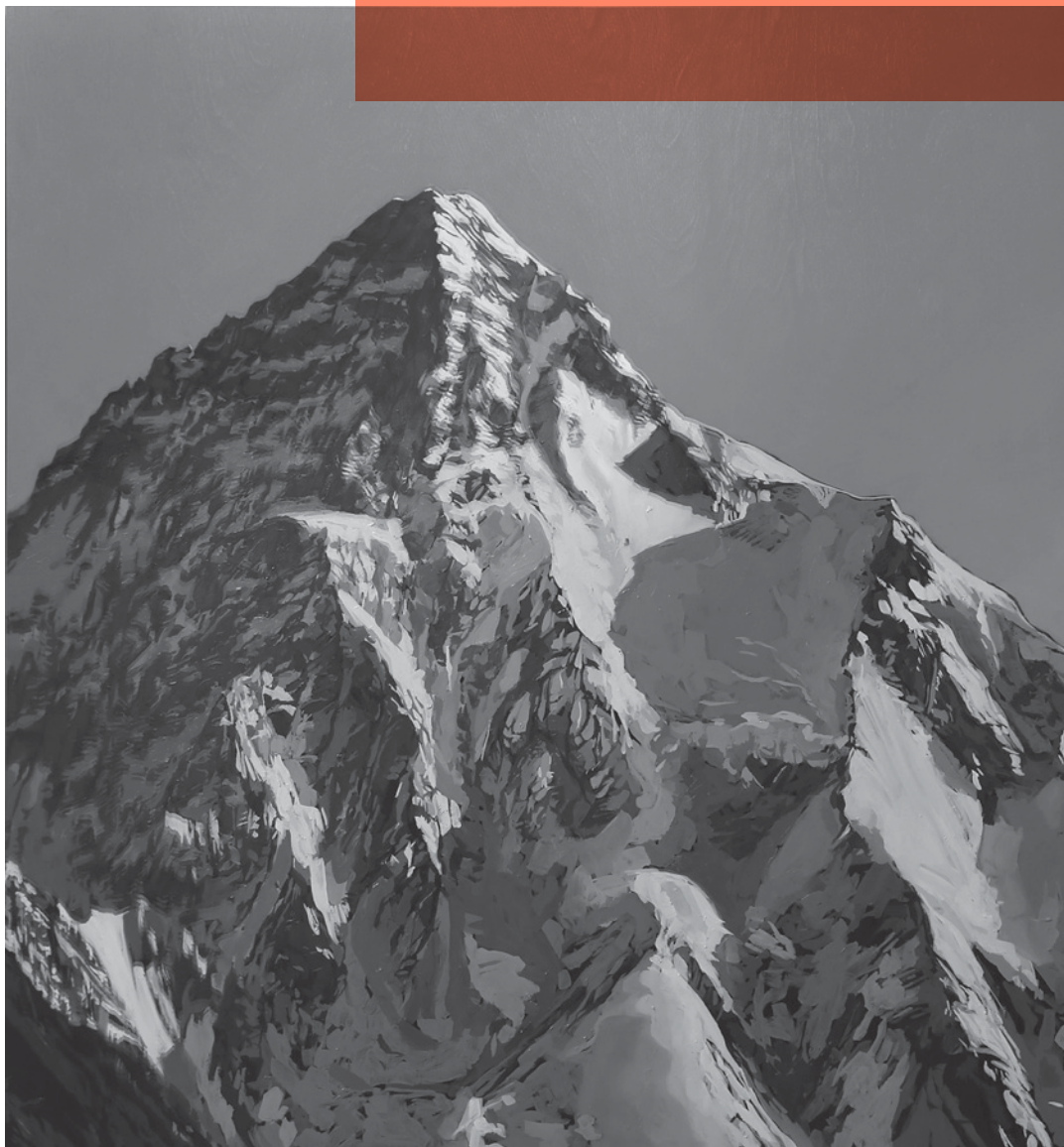
– Mark O'Connor<sup>12</sup>



<sup>10</sup> More than 4.5 million people have left Syria; a further 6.5 million are internally displaced: 'Syria, the story of conflict', BBC News, 11 March 2016

<sup>11</sup> Statement for TarraWarra Museum of Art Biennial 2016

<sup>12</sup> Two Centuries of Australian Poetry, Australia 1988, Page 77



**Abdul Abdullah**

*View from Villawood II 2017*

© the artist



Last year I met Abdul Abdullah in his Sydney studio. I vividly recall an anecdote he told me about visiting a young person seeking asylum from the Afghan border region of Pakistan. On the visit Abdul used a public toilet frequented by asylum seekers housed in the area. The block was blue-lit and covered with Arabic script graffiti. When Abdul had this translated he found the men were using the toilet block as a forum, a place to communicate anonymously and express frustrations: with Australia, with living in a new land. Abdul's paintings *View from Villawood II* and *View from Manus II* came from chatting with and getting to know young Hazara men from the border regions of Pakistan seeking asylum in Australia. Abdul says 'many who I spoke to, while stressing the immediate danger they were in, living in proximity to the Taliban, looked back fondly at the places they had come from where they had been separated from their friends and family.'<sup>13</sup> Abdul's paintings are a 'look back'. Their tile-trim echoes the toilet block walls and their contents, blue-tone mountains, painfully juxtapose the beauty of the Hazara homelands with the reality of their journey and landing.

<sup>13</sup> Artist statement

## To be homeless is to be nameless

– John Berger & Jean Mohr<sup>14</sup>

A detention centre is not a home.

It takes time to realise what's happening in Hannah Furmage's *The Villawood Project*, an intervention documented by video. Hannah's project attempts to find creative and unauthorised ways to communicate across borders with detained refugees at Villawood Detention Centre, NSW.<sup>15</sup> Immediately provocative, the work is equally sympathetic in its rupturing the groundhog day of the detainee. Hannah's communication gifts respite with colloquial and playful messages in the language style of young teenagers or new lovers. The interaction created is, at one point, jarringly punctuated by the background voice of a Villawood matron. What we might consider 'normal' in language or 'frivolous' to these men is a privilege; the project starkly exhibits that they are starved of it. Hannah's disruption is awkward in anticipation but this pales to the detainee's immediate plight, where social control and power corrupt visions of who should be free and who should be unfree.



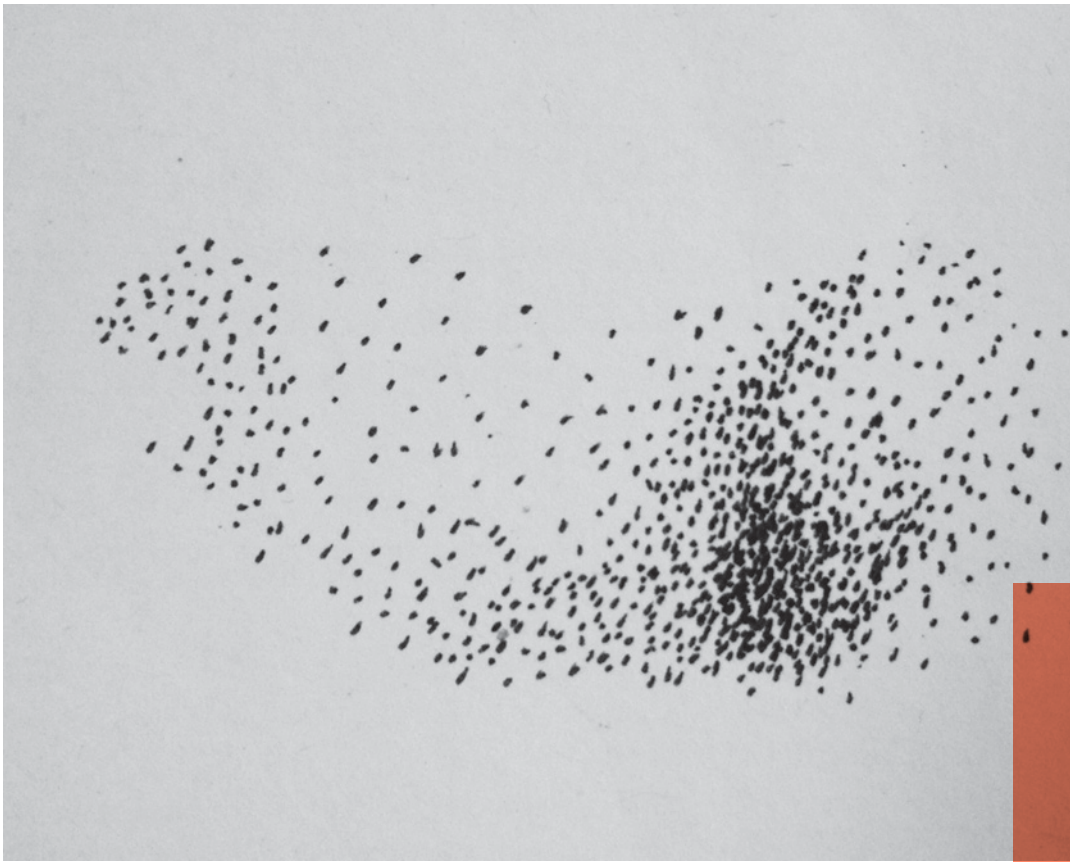




**Hannah Furmage**  
*The Villawood Project* 2016  
© the artist

<sup>14</sup> [A Seventh Man](#), London & New York 1975. Page 233

<sup>15</sup> Artist statement



Modern people began to leave Africa over 60,000 years ago, first occupying Australia.<sup>16</sup> Humans migrate, it is a characteristic of our species. More than 240 million people worldwide are international migrants; refugees account for fewer than 10 per cent of the total.<sup>17</sup>

Ella Rubeli removes hierarchy from humans in her work *Self propelled particles*, stripping name and shape from the animal and highlighting instead that all matter is in constant, rhythmic, movement. Ella's stop-motion video made up of bird-flock-like speck-drawings plays on loop, never landing and never ending.



**Ella Rubeli**

*Self-propelled particles* 2017

© the artist

A self-propelled particle is a concept used by physicists to describe agents that convert energy into persistent motion. In nature, some collections of self-propelled particles are insect swarms, fish schools, bird flocks and human crowds.

As humans, movement is in our marrow. Like our travelling ancestor homo erectus, we are programmed to respond with collective movement toward focal points as well as away from dangers or threats. In this drawing I wanted to explore the state of perpetual movement and adaptation, a state inherent to all humans but particularly poignant for those who are forced to flee from threats and adapt to vastly foreign environments.

– Ella Rubeli<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Bruce Pascoe *Dark Emu*, Broome 2014, Page 48

<sup>17</sup> 'On the road again' article by Debora MacKenzie in New Scientist, 9 April 2016, pages 30–31

<sup>18</sup> Artist statement





**Shireen Taweel**

*tomorrow, InshAllah (arch) 2016*

© the artist

*tomorrow, InshAllah* focuses on the process of metallurgy, specifically copper, as the material speaks of a richness of ancient traditions... The geometric metal piercings indicate something distinct and inherent about cultural practices that are simultaneously reworked in new contexts. This shift in process reflects conversations around the sensitivities of the migrant experience of transience and how one may transform and make room for different practices, simultaneous to echoes of tradition and heritage of origin.

– Shireen Taweel<sup>20</sup>

Mathematics tells us that satellite towns to a given metropolis (such as Newcastle) more poignantly notice the arrival of refugee populations, not least by virtue of ratio and numeric proportion.

It is natural to feel safe amongst those you recognise and with whom you share similar cultural habits. But what of those beyond? Australia has for a long time touted itself as a multicultural country. Shireen Taweel's pierced copper sculptures celebrate what can

happen when cultures morph and evolve with time, specifically drawing on her own heritage within the Islamic Decorative Arts. Her series *tomorrow, InshAllah* 'expresses a sense of transience through the impression of shifting foundations. The works speak of movement, upheaval and rupture. This encompasses a constant interaction with new practices, behaviours and customs, and the experience of being the *Other*.'<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Artist statement

<sup>20</sup> Artist statement

Charcoal being the material that my mother often used for cooking became a constant reminder of her presence in foreign spaces and absence of loved ones.

– Mehwish Iqbal<sup>21</sup>

In the 1800s Afghans built many of the railways we still use across Australia, but today we see Afghanistan and its people through a lens of war and fear. Mehwish Iqbal's *Letters to my mother* take the nationhood from migration and intimately focus on individual experience. Mehwish has inscribed pieces of raw charcoal with her native Urdu tongue.

More explicitly and drawing from war experience, paintings and drawings from the Refugee Art Project exhibit with piercing clarity the overwhelming experience of the individual or family in the face of war and organised armed forces. Art for these refugees proved a vehicle for expression and agency, where personal themes could be conveyed that may otherwise be difficult to put into words. The act of telling these stories can be one step towards the reconciliation of past traumas.<sup>22</sup>



**Mehwish Iqbal**

*Letters to my Mother – Series 2* 2017

© the artist



<sup>21</sup> Artist statement

<sup>22</sup> Refugee Art Project: [www.therefugeartproject.com](http://www.therefugeartproject.com)





Living in Austria, Seamus Heidenreich has witnessed the sheer number of migrants making their way to Germany holding a promise for a better life. His installation *Keep off my lawn* mimics a rudimentary tactic with water-filled bottles used to deter dogs from marking their territory or wandering into a yard not theirs. Seamus draws an analogy with the actions taken by a society to discourage loitering or infiltration of one's space.<sup>23</sup> In the cell toilet he plants a palm, symbolic of places we go to in our mind or on holiday for respite, calm, air.

**Seamus Heidenreich**

Study of *Keep off my lawn* 2017

© the artist

The migrant takes with him his own resolution...  
Yet his migration is like an event in a dream dreamt by another.  
As a figure in a dream dreamt by an unknown sleeper,  
he appears to act autonomously, at times unexpectedly; but  
everything he does – unless he revolts –  
is determined by the needs of the dreamer's mind.

– John Berger & Jean Mohr<sup>24</sup>



**Refugee Art Project**

Thiru War 2013

© the artist

<sup>23</sup> Artist statement

<sup>24</sup> A Seventh Man, London & New York 1975. Page 45

# LIST OF WORKS

## **Abdul Abdullah**

born 1986 Perth, Australia  
lives in Sydney, Australia

*View from Villawood II* 2017  
Media oil and tile on board  
90 x 120cm

*View from Manus II* 2017  
Media oil and tile on board  
90 x 120cm

courtesy the artist

## **Susan Cohn**

born 1952 Sydney, Australia  
lives and works between Melbourne,  
Australia and Europe

*All Welcome* 2015

Installation:

*Gate*  
Photographic collage  
207 x 500cm, each gate 217 x 207cm  
Photographer: Koray Kiliçi

*Paper Tributes*  
shredded *The Saturday Paper* and  
*The Age*, rubber bands  
500 w x 450 d cm

*Lectern*  
steel, mixed media  
100 x 82 x 30cm

courtesy the artist and Anna Schwartz  
Gallery, Melbourne

## **Hannah Furmage**

born 1977 Taranaki, New Zealand  
lives in Newcastle, Australia

*The Villawood Project* 2016  
single channel video with sound; variable  
message sign board 268 x 405 x 273cm  
duration 10:04mins

courtesy the artist, kindly supported  
by Inner West Council – Thirning Villa  
residency program

## **Oliver Hartung**

born 1973 Ruit, Germany  
lives in Berlin and Leipzig, Germany

*Syria Al-Assad* 2007–2009  
media: photographs, Inkjet prints on  
poster paper, pasted onto wall  
313 x 310cm

courtesy the artist



**Seamus Heidenreich**

born 1983 Caringbah, Australia  
lives between Sydney, Australia and  
Vienna, Austria

*Keep off my lawn* 2017

installation: plastic, water (from the river  
Danube, brought from Vienna in artist's  
luggage), thread, timber, concrete, sand  
dimensions variable

*Throw them up* 2017

digital print and transfer on canvas,  
silk organza, spachtelmasse, thread  
and timber  
146 x 200cm

*Uprouted* 2017

UV print onto aluminium panel  
43 x 28.5 x 0.3cm

*Paradise Lost* 2017

installation (plant in toilet)

courtesy the artist

**Mehwish Iqbal**

born 1981 Sheikhupura, Pakistan  
lives in Sydney, Australia

*Bird Song* 2010

etching, collagraph  
130 x 84cm

*Scattered* 2010

etching, collagraph  
105 x 64cm

*Letters to my Mother – Series 2* 2017

charcoal  
dimensions variable

courtesy the artist and  
M Contemporary Sydney

**Refugee Art Project**

Amir *Afghan man* 2012  
charcoal on paper  
38 x 25cm

Keethan *The Sri Lankan War* 2013

acrylic on canvas  
76 x 102cm

Rajnini *Home* 2015

oil on canvas  
41 x 21cm

Kamaleshwaran Selladurai *Tamil asylum  
seeker* 2012  
oil on canvas  
61 x 46cm

Shokufa Tahiri *The Journey* 2013

oil on canvas  
92 x 61cm

Thiru *Bombardment* 2013

acrylic on canvas  
61 x 61cm

Thiru *War* 2013

acrylic on canvas  
50 x 60cm

courtesy the artists, Refugee Art Project  
and Safdar Ahmed

**Ella Rubeli**

born 1990 Maitland, Australia  
lives Central Coast, Australia

*Self-propelled particles* 2017

stop-motion film using graphics,  
paper, photography  
duration 00:30mins

courtesy the artist

**Shireen Taweel**

born 1990 Bankstown, Australia  
lives in Sydney, Australia

*tomorrow, InshAllah* 2016–17

Series of three works:

*Untitled (arch)* 2016

pierced copper  
80 x 100 x 20cm

*Untitled (grounded work)* 2016

pierced copper  
45 x 77 x 50cm

*Untitled (commission)* 2017

pierced copper  
125 x 105 x 106cm

courtesy the artist

**Letter writing project**

installation to evolve over exhibition  
duration by participation and contribution  
of the public

A4 letters using various mediums and  
language: personal accounts of arriving  
in a new space, city or land



**Headjam**



**NEWCASTLE  
HERALD**

**Museums  
& Galleries  
of NSW**

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