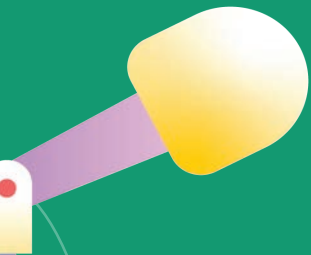


PROPEL
YOUTH
ARTS
WA.
↗



Project See & B



WHYNOT

SEE & B



Em Readman
(they/them) 24



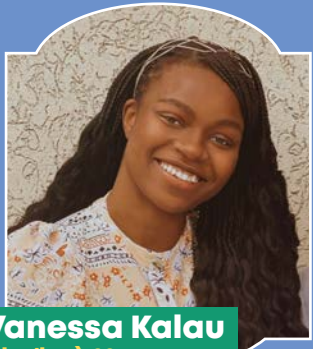
Wilson Tan
(he/him) 23



Syarisa Yasin
(she/her) 22



Alysia Tay
(she/her) 23



Vanessa Kalau
(she/her) 22



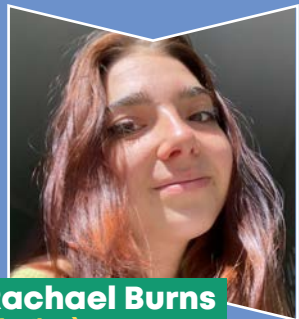
Efa Mackenzie
(she/her) 23



Mae Smith
(they/them) 23



Sofie Kerr
(she/her) 22



Rachael Burns
(she/her) 21



Lea Simic
(she/her) 19



Elisa von Perger
(she/her) 19



Beatrice Foti
(she/her) 25

Stories of 12 young creatives



Amplifying the voices of creative young people throughout Western Australia.

Join WhyNot and Project See & B for an exciting multifaceted collaboration that amplifies the voices of creative young people throughout Western Australia.

WhyNot is a digital platform developed by The Y to amplify youth voices through creative submissions, supporting emerging creatives, and adding to conversations on topics important to young people. Project See & B aims to increase visibility in the creative industry for young people from under-represented backgrounds. It's based on the simple notion that if you CAN see it, you CAN be it.

Discover the voices and talents of 12 young WA creatives as their work is showcased in an online publication, gallery exhibition, and live performance during Youth Week WA KickstART Festival 2024.

This is not just a celebration; but a call for change, inspiring the next generation of creatives to chart their own paths.



Em Readman
(they/them) 24

Em Readman is a writer from Boorloo (Perth). Their work has been published with Fremantle Press, Voiceworks, Refinery29, Overland, The Suburban Review, Aniko Press, Swim Meet Lit Mag and others. Their writing is focused on community, memory, family and queerness, as well as the transient natures of these themes.



Wilson Tan
(he/him) 23

I am Wilson Tan, an international second year student from Singapore who is majoring in Electronic Music and Sound Design and minoring in Creative Writing at The University of Western Australia. My chosen major says a lot of my immense passion for music. Through my music studies, I intend to hone my songwriting and music production skills to become a proficient DJ and music producer in the industry. But since that would take a long time, I also intend to hone my copywriting skills in my minor where I can write for media companies that publish music related news in order to have a stable career at the same time.



Syarisa Yasin
(she/her) 22

Syarisa Yasin is a Boorloo-based aspiring filmmaker and writer. She is passionate about bringing diverse and inclusive stories to life inspired by her Indonesian and Pakistani heritage. She aims to create work that speaks to women and femmes to capture the complexity of their lives, identities, and dreams. Syarisa's all-time favorite things to do include dancing, singing, and watching endless amounts of South Asian films from Bollywood to far beyond.



Alysia Tay
(she/her) 23

Alysia Tay is a visual artist and graphic designer based in Perth, Western Australia. She specialises in oil painting and digital illustration, subject matter typically consisting of beautiful landscapes and bespoke portraits. She's also currently pursuing a postgraduate diploma in Service Design whilst working full-time as an in-house Graphic Designer. When she's not busy creating art, studying or working, she can be found playing video games or buried in a good book.



Vanessa Kalau

(she/her) 22

Vanessa Kalau, a 23-year-old testament to the resilience of my parents, refugees who escaped Congo's war. For 9 years, they endured the harshness of a Zambian refugee camp, clinging to hope for their children. I spent my formative years there, with hazy memories of a distant past. Now, free from those constraints, I pursue my studies in Urban Planning at Curtin university. I aim to leverage my privilege to advocate for the children of Congo, offering them the opportunities denied to many. My journey is a testament to the power of perseverance and the promise of a better tomorrow.

Efa Mackenzie

(she/her) 23



Efa Mackenzie is an emerging independent artist, singer/songwriter, dancer/choreographer, performance-maker and actress, currently based in Perth, WA. Efa is a Bachelor of Performing Arts (2020-2022) and a Bachelor of Performing Arts - Honours (2023) graduate from the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA). Efa was recognised for being a multifaceted artist across the duration of her studies at WAAPA. Her work in the post-dramatic piece, IMELDA, won the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts (PICA) award. IMELDA's success during its second development at the PICA Museum was renowned around Perth and was selected for a third development, displayed at The Blueroom Theatre's Summer Nights Program 2023. Efa is currently a company hip-hop dancer as part of 'Faction Crew' at The Society Academy and part of the West Australian Youth Theatre Company (WAYTCO) 2023.

Mae Smith

(they/them) 23



Hey! I'm Mae, a non-binary artist from Rockingham. I am currently doing a tattoo apprenticeship, whilst navigating mental health issues and a recent-ish diagnosis of Fibromyalgia and Joint Hypermobility Syndrome. I like the colour pink, Hello Kitty, cars, anime, and my amazing partner, who pushes my wheelchair and encourages me to follow my passions.

Sofie Kerr

(she/her) 22



Sofie is a 22-year-old jazz vocalist and songwriter from Perth, WA. She is currently in her 4th year of a Bachelor of Music in jazz at WAAPA. Sofie has been in love with jazz since childhood and has gotten to perform with some of Australia's best musicians at shows around Perth. She is also in the process of releasing a pop album in a band called Tenspeed - they have a few singles out already. Sofie is passionate about equity in jazz education and in the music industry and is excited to see where the rest of her creative career takes her!



Rachael Burns

(she/her) 21

I am a 21 year old female (she/her) who holds a considerable wealth of lived experience relating to various mental illnesses. For me, a key part of my healing centres around raising awareness and opening up discussion surrounding mental health, bringing light to and destigmatising some of the challenges that I and many others face on a daily basis. I love experimenting with various art styles (from writing and painting to filmmaking and much more) which I frequently utilise as a medium to help communicate hard-hitting and all-too-often misunderstood topics.



Lea Simic

(she/her) 19

Lea Simic, a 19 year old creative, presents her poem 'Rage'. Her work explores how the Arts industry has and continues to be dominated by the male sphere influencing how works are not only perceived but funded and considered.

Elisa von Perger

(she/her) 19



I am a set and costume designer, as well as independent artist and creative based in Perth, WA. Currently, I am completing my final year of my Bachelor's degree in Production Design at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts. My personal art style is often stylistic and illustrative, stemming from my interest and background in history, fine art, and literature - I enjoy working across a wide range of media. I'm committed to the art of storytelling and world-building, reflecting this through my artistic practice. You can see more of my work on my Instagram page, @elisamariadesign.

Beatrice Foti

(she/her) 25



I'm Beatrice Foti, a 25 year old photographer passionate about nature, wildlife, cultural heritage, traditions and people's stories. I get inspired by what I perceive, reading a book, listening to a song or simply feeling anything that's alive and vibrant around me. I was born and raised in Italy and learned to appreciate the beauty of culture and nature, which, I believe, are two sides of the same coin. My desire is to discover the world and grasp the harmony and contradictions that make it unique.



Community Over Competition

Words by Em Readman

Communities of practice are an essential element of a writer's career. It's a vulnerable yet rewarding experience, finding someone to read your writing, and someone whose writing you can read, it pulls you out of the silo and places you in front of the mirror. When the community is centred, writing stops looking like a chore, becoming an action that ties you into the collective. Together you practice over and over. Sometimes it expands into regular critique groups, the sharing of opportunities, and a familiar face to share cask wine with at a book launch.

When I've found community, the hard work and the good work merge together. I have realised that the benefits of trusting people with my work and asking for feedback are less about my writing and more about the act of trust. Before, I always felt privileged when receiving someone's draft, but ashamed when giving mine to others. The shame subsides when the trust grows. I handle their writing with care, and they do the same with mine. Feedback builds instead of breaks. I celebrate their publications, and they celebrate mine. I laugh at the in-jokes scribbled in the margins, delight when I see a submission window I know someone has a perfectly themed piece for. The candor and rapport we develop blooms into solidarity, acting with a shared vision of preserving the spaces we've created, and keeping them safe. We become friends, and that bond deserves protection, too.

Writers start to get in trouble when they start to see other people's wins as their losses. Some let competition cloud their commitment to the community, instead adopting a last-one-standing strategy. I've seen how writers who are desperate to have their work accepted and recognised start to isolate themselves, growing bitter over rejections and refusing feedback on their work. Expressing disdain towards writers who have made career progress or not

sharing opportunities, thinking it better than one's own chances. It gets nasty, and quickly, too. Emerging writers have a task; to buck the need to compete in favour of finding community. Rebuking the community leaves people in an echo chamber, back in the silo, instead of engaging in the reciprocal tasks of reading, editing, consoling and celebrating. Taking turns means it always comes back around.

Almost paradoxically, I hope emerging writers can recognise that communities are not unconditional. The reciprocity is a requirement, the engagement is essential. When you back out of engaging with your fellow writers, they do not forget that sting. When you gossip about someone's deservingness for an award or a grant, they remember. We are writers, but we are also each other's readers.

In times when I feel the need to compete, I remind myself that, if you cannot bring yourself to champion others, who will be there to champion you?

Of course, no one owes another anything, but that is the beauty of a creative writing community; we do not owe each other anything, but we do it anyway. The love of the craft is a pillar of the work that we do, and when the community thrives, so does the industry. Our successes are collective, taking turns to be the individual, but most often taking the role of the audience. I hope that those who feel prickled by other's successes come to find out how nice it feels to applaud a friend.



Music is the answer

Words by Wilson Tan

Everyone in today's world has personal interests. It is those interests that entertain, enlighten, encourage, and inspire us till they eventually form the building blocks of our lives. That is how music is to me. My passion for it runs deep like no other. This is because of how therapeutic and culturally enriching it has been in my life.

I endured 20 years of hell. Years of abuse and baseless accusations made me feel like the whole of society outcasted me. I thought this was how my life was meant to be, one that was aimless, defeated, and meaningless. So, at 21, I had enough. I walked into one of those random nightclubs with the intention of getting high. I was probably thinking weed could do the trick, but I found something even better. The DJ was playing 'We Found Love' by Rihanna and Calvin Harris, and who knew that listening to this song live for the first time would be the instance that started it all.

The chorus of this favourite song of mine still stays in my head today because of just how powerful the line 'We found love in a hopeless place' is. It reminded me that even in the midst of darkness, there was hope and inspiration within my suffering. It inspired me to enrol in a music degree, whereby I learnt how to express my struggles through the creation of moody lyrics and harsh melodies. It inspired me to pick up DJING, whereby I learnt how to tone down the stress and anxiety levels that I sustained from those painful years by getting used to mixing accordingly to fit different crowds.

It gave me inspiration to continuously curate a personalized playlist of fist pumping electronic dance music songs to jam to and cheer me up whenever I feel down or tense. Just as how the saying, 'Time heals all wounds' goes, I believed music did the same for me.

Most people would say that music is a universal language that connects people of all ages. I strongly resonate with this because every time I DJ, went to a concert, or got reminded of my time in that random nightclub, the smiles on the crowd always gave me a sense of unity whereby I felt that everyone just wanted to have fun together and not be reminded of the troubles that awaited them or were currently facing. Through dancing and singing together, I made countless friends who shared my passion for the EDM genre whereby we shared our songwriting techniques, production methods and new artists to listen to, all of which served as different forms of inspiration in our personal musical journeys. Music aside, I got introduced to a wide variety of cuisines whereby I became aware of specific cafes and restaurants that serves only the best food that can provide me a comfort meal after a long day.

Just like how Henry Wadsworth Longfellow suggests,

“Music is the universal language of mankind”,

I believed it did wonders in connecting me with people of different cultures and learning so much interesting facts and opinions from them.

To conclude, music to me is more than just a sound. It is an art form that transcends boundaries because, when heard or replicated, it can alter our emotions to bring out the best versions of ourselves, allowing us to shape cultures, inspire movements, and touch lives. I thank God for the existence of music as my buddy and advisor for life. Without it, I probably would not be alive today.

Through The Eyes of Om (And I) As Fellow Dreamers

Words by Syarisa Yasin

The year was 2007. I was living in the Eastern Province in Saudi Arabia, in a small international community-compound. I was just 6 years old, sitting in the living room of my Pakistani auntie's house, when she accidentally changed the whole course of my life with a single action. She put on a new Bollywood film titled "Om Shanti Om" starring the legendary Shahrukh Khan, and as we gathered around and watched the film play out, I saw a whole new world of colours, music, melodrama, and emotions flood over me.

The protagonist, Om, wasn't just a stock character—he was a groovy 1970s-era film extra dreaming of stardom, and even more so, he was my idol! When he fell in love with a famed actress named Shanti, it almost felt like I fell harder. Most of all, upon Shanti's tragic murder by her two-timing husband, I felt my own soul die with Om's as he tried to save her, but perished...until his soul was reincarnated thirty years later, back to avenge Shanti's death and to set her wandering soul free!

Above all the weird and wonderful things that happened in this film, one line that Om delivered with such sincerity upon achieving his dream of being an acclaimed actor, really stuck with me:

“In life, just like in our films, happy endings are possible. And if life isn't okay yet, then it's not the end...the film isn't over yet!”

Deep in my heart, I wanted to write these kinds of dynamic and interesting characters, and to share my cultural heritage and style of storytelling. And while growing up in a cramped international community compound in Saudi Arabia, this goal seemed easy. People were so exposed to different cultures and perspectives that no one ever believed any stereotypes or preconceived notions on what brown girls could and couldn't do. I was accepted as a mixed half-Pakistani-half-Indonesian-kid who loved to salsa dance and sing Lady Gaga songs, just like all the other kids did.

Little did I know, I wouldn't face the reality of being a person of colour in a Western world until my own adolescent “reincarnation... as an Aussie.

At 16, I was plucked away from an American style international school and plunked into an Anglican all-girls boarding school in Perth. And being a loud and severely puberty-stricken Muslim in a predominantly white Anglican school is not a fate I would wish on anyone. People couldn't believe that a creative Muslim could exist, and that I “spoke such good English”.

Things got slightly better in university as I pursued a degree in Creative Writing and Screen Arts, but Desi and Muslim representation was still scarce. High school taught me that to survive in this world, I needed to cater to the (majority) white audiences. How else could I be accepted?

So when it came time for me to pitch a script for our university degree's final year film project, I got to thinking; maybe I could fuse a desi coming of age story with a creative, perhaps truly Western twist...?”

Picture this: a Pakistani-Australian runaway bride, Amina, who steals a car and drives into the sandy distance because she loves her fiancé, Farhan, less like a lover and more like a childhood best friend, who can't tell her concerned Papa the truth. She straps in for the ride of her life when suddenly, a ghost pops up demanding answers—the ghost of her fabulous cowgirl mother! Amina's at a loss when her mother refuses to respond to “Ammi” or “Mum” like she usually does, because this time she's going by “Sheriff” to reign in her rebel daughter, trying to connect to the cowgirl loving child she never wanted to leave. And that's how my film, “The Eyes of Gosh”, was born!



The final script bears a lot of similarities to Om Shanti Om—it was silly in a good way but also profound, and both films also featured ghosts as a key element.

But me and my crew faced a lot of challenges for this story. Our white teachers couldn't seem to grasp that brown characters, brown people

could be so audacious. I mean, had they never seen a Sharukh Khan film? Desi characters are chock full of audaciousness! All they wanted out of the characters were stereotypes: a strict dad, a bad-tempered mom, and an oppressed daughter. I almost just wanted to tell them, that we people of colour are just like you. We have cultural norms, sure, and perhaps flaws—but we can also be individuals who care about each other, and who want to lead our own paths in life.

After a year of slogging through endless film shoots, this sentiment still couldn't get through. My film didn't receive any of the enthusiasm, laughter, and love I wanted it to get when it screened for a test audience at the university's final year film awards night. The claps at the end were quiet pity claps; and I sunk. I had failed to connect with Australia. Perhaps I would have gone my whole life believing this, until one of the actors from my film, Ashish, walked right up to me and said something I could never forget:

“Thank you for giving me the chance to try out my dream of acting. And please keep making more. I want to keep seeing our community thrive.”

And I realised;

This sense of solidarity, community building, and acceptance is my “happy ending”.

Not some flimsy award or clap on the back from old white audiences. I realised that I want to make art—whether it be poetry, prose, film, or experimental installation—that makes people like me, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, feel seen and less alone in this Western world. And if one person says that I did that, then that's enough; that makes me an artist.

Potential

Words & Artwork by Alysia Tay

Potential' is about the story of my first art commission from 2021 - not what happened throughout the creative process or how I received the request, but the emotional effect it's had on me since creating it and all the events following.

To rewind a bit, I'll take you back to my childhood. I have always loved being an artist. Painting had always been the escape I needed through the lows of life. It helped that I thought I was good at it, even good enough to turn it into a career. I pondered on the decision to pursue art in university or TAFE, but ended up choosing a graphic design degree. In the blink of an eye, three years pass and I'm standing on stage at my graduation ceremony. Focused on money, I signed up for a two-year part-time post-graduate diploma in service design, whilst in my second full-time graphic design job.

It is now 2024, with a decent amount of graphic design experience under my belt... but not so much to show for art.

Can you guess how many more art commissions I've done since 2021?

The answer is 0. And I have no idea why.

Well, I have a few reasons I could think of, or should I say, excuses. Studying whilst committing to a full-time job, on top of balancing time for socialising, hobbies and general adulting does leave me exhausted 99% of the time. You could call it procrastination to the highest degree, since with this schedule, I haven't completed a single painting in years.

I wouldn't say I regret any of the choices in my career so far, although sometimes I wonder if I had been influenced a little too far into the 'traditional career/life path' by family, friends and academics. If I were living my life for others, and not staying completely true to myself.

The classic 'I don't think it's a good idea to pursue art as a career, you won't earn a stable income' saying that artists are told by everyone except fellow artists.

And to be fair, I do love design and am proud of the work I've done. I've just come to many realisations recently that I love (and am much more skilled at) art more.

Looking back, this commission made me feel like I was capable of creating art for others who were willing to pay what it was worth, for my art to be hung in others' living spaces and enjoyed for possibly generations to come.

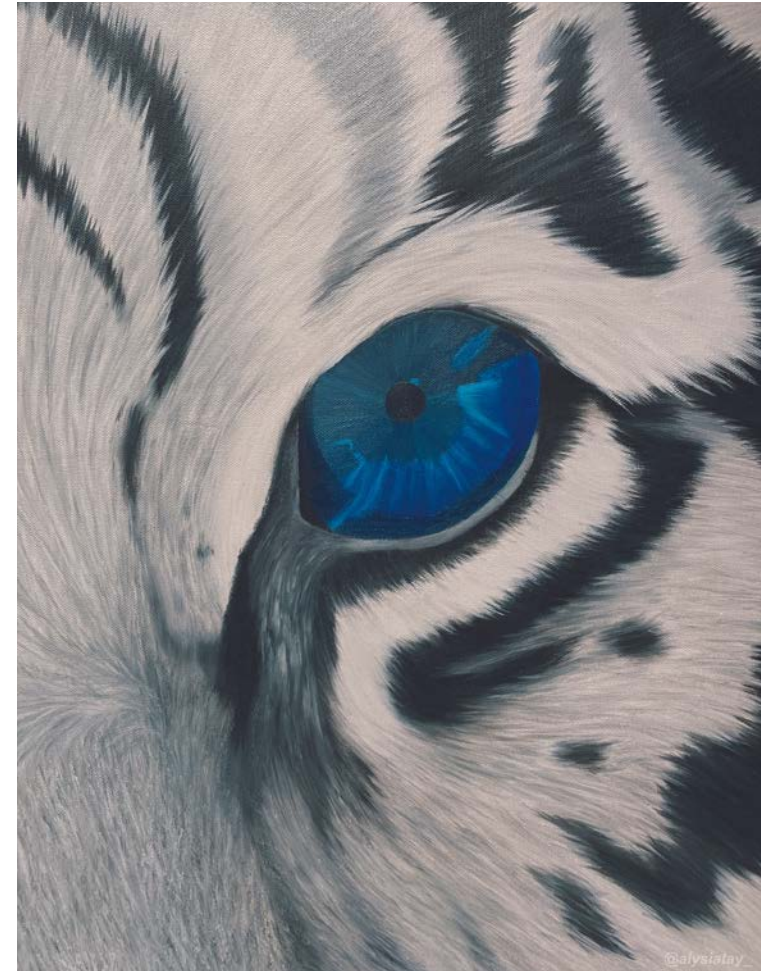
It also made me think 'I can't believe I haven't been doing this the entire time', which still never fails to echo in the back of my mind on a daily basis.

It felt so freeing to do work that I genuinely enjoyed from start to finish. And that's not a feeling that finds most people every day.

Loads of other people make money from their art and their passions - and I've asked myself a million times, why couldn't I? Did I need more courage, more faith in believing in myself and my abilities?

Perhaps I need to quit my 9-5 or drop my diploma for more time to focus on art? I don't have the solution just yet, and I think (to an extent) that's okay.

The good news is my creative journey is not over yet. It's merely just beginning. It's ongoing. You could call this a case of 'you think your time has passed but you're never too old...!', and you might be right. Maybe I need to chill, and wait until my schedule dies down.



Through this time though, I know I'm not alone. I know many other creative people feel the same way as me. Filled with self-doubt, built-up guilt, resentment, pressure and inner turmoil. Obligations, responsibilities, worries about the financial climate and general life events that pop up might throw us off our path. But we need to remember that it doesn't mean we should let it affect the direction or velocity of our path permanently.

I am very excited for my future and for what's to come. I am ready to turn my potential into reality. I can promise you that art is definitely involved.



Lolendo

Artwork by Vanessa Kalau

Hello Yellow

Words by Efa Mackenzie

The intersection of jazz music improvisation and theatre devising offered fertile ground for artistic exploration and innovation. My interest was in interrogating jazz music, specifically investigating the improvisation process, and how this can be a means to devise theatre. In my project, I drew on the theories and concepts that explored the similarities between Jazz and Storytelling with practices and methods that adapted to contemporary theatre. I used jazz improvisation as a catalyst to devise theatre to understand the intricacies of interracial identity. My project interrogated the parallels between jazz and theatre. This approach opened new avenues for devising original theatrical works that departed from scripted conventions and embraced

spontaneity, collaboration, and creativity in the rehearsal space. I created a theatrical showing at PICA, of a new work in progress, using jazz music improvisation as a tool for creation, to explore the complexities of interracial identity, facilitating a deeper understanding of myself as a Filipino-Australian woman. The project aimed to merge the principles of jazz improvisation with the art of theatrical expression and offered a transformative platform to delve into the nuances, challenges, and richness that fostered individual expression and creativity of being part of an interracial community.

In 2022, I was the Lead Creative of a short Cabaret work that I pitched to present at my Performing Arts (Performance-Making)

undergraduate graduation showcase, TILT. “RepresentAsian” was an empowering and thought-provoking cabaret that took the stage as an exploration of the representation and perception of Asian women in the performing arts industry, inviting the audience to critically examine societal expectations.

As someone who is not formally musically jazz trained, the most important first step was to collaborate with musicians who were familiar with the genre. Though my jazz vocabulary was not up to par with the jazz students at WAAPA, the musicians and I found other ways to communicate by using stimuli that triggered responses based on the five senses and exercises that use scenarios to connect our common human experiences. This small experiment was only one example of the research methodology and led to the work-in-progress new and original performance of Hello Yellow (working title). Ultimately, I found that while the work only somewhat explicitly delves into cultural identity and notions of hybridity, jazz is a dynamic musical genre to sit inside theatre conventions and produces a type of hybridisation that is useful and meaningful. Moving forward I would like to develop this further in my artistic practice. This thesis will detail the research questions, aims and significance of the project, a short literature review and a discussion of the methodology and outcomes of the research project.

I began this research with the following question, how can jazz musical improvisation be an effective theatrical devising tool for creating work about cultural identity? This research allowed me to merge cultural influences within musical and theatrical experimentation.

Through this fusion, I could delve into the complexities and intersections of diverse cultural heritage and integrate elements from different backgrounds that showed cultural hybridity which I would argue is inherent in jazz music. I coordinated a safe space that allowed for dynamic and authentic explorations of the challenges, nuances, and richness that people face as part of an interracial community. The core of the project was heavily rooted in my personal lived experience of identifying culturally as both Filipino and Australian. I am at a stage in my life where I have lived equally in both places for a long period, 10 years in the Philippines and 10 years in Australia. The narrative of the performance following Efa's (my stage name and persona) quest to find her long-lost friend was a melding of the desire to reconnect with a physical person and a metaphor for who she was, or who I was, in the past. Motivated by a desire to encapsulate what I understand as an ‘essence’ of the past, a nostalgia for childhood and thus also my Filipino past, with the present, and the future, and hence also my life as a migrant in Australia, I ultimately want this work to empower individuals to embrace their past, reconcile with their former selves, and appreciate the transformative journey they have undergone. Therefore, the research aimed to explore the intersections of various arts forms; in jazz music and devised theatre as a non-traditional fusion of performance creation to create a different type of hybrid experience. While the performance work is by no means a completed, performance-ready theatre work, the experimentations in jazz as devising for music-informed theatre have proved to be a valuable and interesting discovery.

Hey! I'm Mae, a non-binary artist from Baldivis.

Words by Mae Smith

I have been in and out of the creative space in Perth since I was about 16. Whilst completing ATAR art in high school I would draw illustrations on my iPad in my study periods for my "future store", dreaming of making shirts and seeing people walk around with my original characters on them.

Throughout highschool I had a poor attendance due to a whole array of issues- being diagnosed with mental health issues and later (7 years after the fact) Fibromyalgia and Joint Hypermobility syndrome. I always showed up to art class however, my teacher Ms Henderson being a driving force in my creative career. I put my passions on hold for a few years to work some fast food jobs, eventually opening my own small business selling stickers and air fresheners in 2019/2020. I had grown a passion for cars, and loved attending events to sell my art. It's surreal seeing a car drive around with your art on the back! This passion led me to study an automotive mechanical pre-apprenticeship, but after 6 months of working in a mechanic shop my disability caught up to me and I was thrown back into bed.

I settled for a half-way point, taking a full time job selling car parts, and selling my stickers on the side. I eventually even moved to shirts and beanies- 16 year old me would have been so excited! After working full time for 2 years and juggling these two passions I was once again facing the brunt of my Fibro, and took a leap into applying for a dream job of mine, and got a tattoo apprenticeship! I'm currently two months into this journey and i'm the happiest and healthiest i've ever been!

The idea of being able to sit down and draw for a living is a dream! Even when my wrist gets sore and stiff it feels like i'm hardly even fatigued. I cannot wait to see where this journey takes me.

The long journey of gaining a diagnosis for my disability was difficult, I gave up over and over, eventually realising I had to advocate for myself and learnt to be resilient and strong.

Now I understand my limits and have learnt how to look after myself and prevent flares a bit. The shift from working retail and being on my feet all day to doing something i'm so passionate about has helped tremendously with my mindset. When I was first diagnosed I was so hung up on the fact that I was disabled and "not normal", but through finding my place in life and following this dream i've embraced the fact that i'm just as capable as anyone else, albeit a little less energetic lol. I love driving to work every day in my sparkly car and getting all my ideas out onto paper so I can tattoo them in the near future!

I hope to look back on this in a year or two and tell myself I made it and i'm doing what I love, knee pain and all.



Everybody Knows

Words by Sofie Kerr

Since I can remember, I have wanted to be a jazz singer, go to WAAPA and eventually write my own music. By 2020, I was 18, and beginning to fulfil those dreams but was faced with some serious obstacles. I was battling an eating disorder, developed CPTSD that was triggered every day at university and experienced mental and physical symptoms for years. I refused to defer or to stop my gigging, writing and recording because I loved it all so much and was highly motivated, achieving a lot but losing myself in the process.

As my work and studies got harder, it became increasingly difficult to ignore the things my body was screaming at me.

A couple of days before Christmas 2021 I woke up with one side of my body numb and not moving. I was admitted into hospital and after many tests and questions was diagnosed with something called Functional Neurological Disorder (FND). I learnt that FND was the explanation of months of tics and seizures and had manifested from years of stress and trauma to my body and nervous system. Most doctors at the hospital had never heard of it, nor did they have much medical advice for what to do. When a person has FND there isn't technically anything wrong with them physiologically- it wasn't a stroke or an injury, every part of my body was perfectly intact. I could be fine one day and then half paralysed the next. I was terrified and didn't understand it. I thought I could never trust my own body again and that my life was over.



I had heard of FND, only in the few months prior to my own diagnosis, because another Perth jazz musician- an incredible trumpeter and composer named Jessica Carlton had had a very similar history to me and also got an FND diagnosis in hospital. I was able to reach out to her and received some ongoing support, but still felt very alone in the industry. The FND episode slowly resolved in time for Third year uni to commence, and I was ready to go back! I booked gigs, continued to write and record my album. I went to uni every day facing more CPTSD triggers. By March I was in another FND episode, this time it was my dominant side so I couldn't write. I waited it out and eventually it ended. I was having mini episodes multiple times a week- often coinciding with PTSD triggers.

In July, another major episode- I had to use a walking stick, and it took my voice. I couldn't sing or speak properly. There wasn't any point in "pushing through" anymore. My marks and attendance were dropping, I was having seizures and breakdowns in front of highly esteemed musicians who I wanted to impress in rehearsals, and now I couldn't even sing.

So, I deferred and took a break. I rested. I booked a physio appointment to start something called Feldenkrais, which I was told was going to help me. Through Feldenkrais I was very slowly reintroduced to my body. In the beginning it was very distressing, my brain refused to connect, but after months of hard work I was able to detect oncoming episodes and rest when I needed to. At home I started to read books and write poetry, started working in a theatre and rediscovered what I loved about the arts on my own terms.

After a year off I returned to uni feeling like a brand-new person. I was in a new year group, so I wasn't facing my triggers in the classroom anymore. I was managing my time better and learning more about myself. I went back to uni and gigging working on my own timeline going to bed early, managing my nervous system and staying in tune with what my body was telling me. I honestly liked music again. My seizures stopped after a while and I felt myself grow in a way I never had before.

I was, and still am, still struggling with comparing myself to those around me. It was somewhat frustrating adjusting to a life where I was making allowances for my invisible disabilities- I was worried people wouldn't believe me, or think I was lazy, but after a while it began to pay off.

My body had to be incredibly dramatic to get me to listen, but I'm almost glad it did.

FND sucks, but it forced me to work with myself and not against. I'm learning that being an artist isn't about how many hours you log in a practice room or being the most accomplished or technically proficient person in the room. Music is all about experiences and perspectives, not the hustle, and it's our differences that makes art beautiful and important.

Quasi

Words by Rachael Burns

“Have you gained weight?” You ask.

I stand staring at my thighs that rub in ways they never used to, pinching the flesh over my stomach that before was taught, acutely aware of the skin spilling sloppily over the sides of my lacy bra.

A guttural sickness. Shame. Disgust.

I shrugged, though I knew the answer better than I knew my own name. I thought of the misery packed behind such a simple inquisition. How plain and unappealing it is to live a life where the most pressing topic of conversation is of the shapes and angles that comprise one's physicality.

I thought of all the questions she could have asked instead that will forever loom.

What secrets have you never shared?

Who would you call if it were if it were your last day alive and what would you say?

When was the last time you bled, and did it hurt?

What perfume reminds you of your mother?

What toys did you play with as a kid?

Do you still sleep with soft toys?

What does the smell of sunscreen remind you of?

What lies were you served on a silver platter that you gobbled right up?

Who dressed your wounds when you were hurt?

Do you think about falling when you're standing on a balcony?

What colour would you be and why?

What posters did you hang on your wall in your teens?

Do your artworks still hang around your family home?

Do you feel like you're alone in this world?

“Well you look good,” she says. “I'm glad to see you're doing better”.

And just like that, you add fuel to the fire. A fire that has been blazing for what feels like a lifetime. A fire that has inflicted so much pain and suffering and torture and sacrifice. A fire whose heat is so painfully insufferable even those trained to face it cower in fear. A fire so persistent I question if it will ever truly be extinguished.

This beast has the power to ravage the already blackened battleground and expose the terrors buried beneath, in turn resurfacing parts of me I fight every day to destroy. The part that sees food as no more than a number. The part of me who's phone is merely a calculator, who still sees movement as a prison and who's search history is cleared daily.

The part raised in a cruel and misaligned world in which food technology teachers call sugar ‘the plague’ and line up the class from slimmest to heaviest.

This beast has the power to destroy the fragile foliage planted over brittle bones and clumps of hair stuck between fingertips and piles of blankets and baggy clothing and cyanotic skin. I hold back tears and bite my lip, knowing she you can never possibly comprehend. Knowing that there are no words to describe the feeling of being halfway.

Halfway along a winding, treacherous path. Lost in the midst of a jungle never before ventured - alone and frightened. Indeed, the crispness of the air and the depth of colours is something of a marvel, yet the unknown and inherent danger that surrounds is by no means a safe place to rest.

Patches of serenity are enticing. A moment of peace I once never thought possible that offer a safe place to rest. But rest must be sporadic as without forward motion, it too can become a trap.

Halfway between “you look like a ghost” and “I can't even tell by looking at you”. Halfway between the whirring of feeding pumps and the hum of my second-hand Hyundai Getz as I drive home from my favourite cafe. Halfway between meal plan B and midnight snacks ‘just because’. Halfway between whispers of ‘it's all for attention’ and ‘don't be dramatic’. Halfway between where I was and where I want to be.

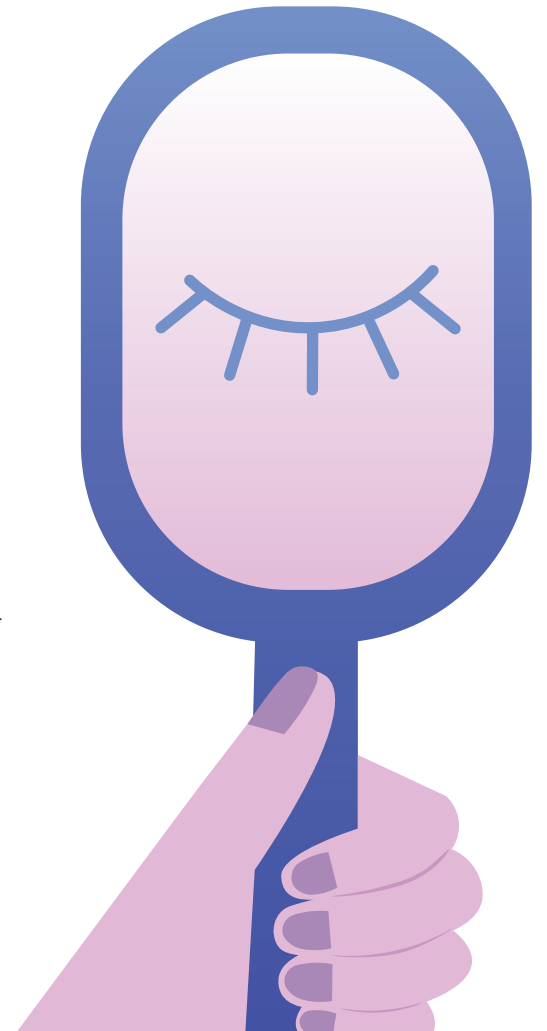
A place somewhere in the middle, where attention spans have run their course and sympathies have been stretched thin yet there is so much further to travel.

Though the pain has eased, it is still present. This crushing weight on my shoulders feel lighter and my arms far stronger. Alas, it pins me down nonetheless.

I plaster on a smile - the kind reserved for the best of intentions that still stab me in the heart. I force a terse ‘thanks’ through my cracked lips and stare once again at the foreign flesh growing on my thighs.

And the conversation continues, trailing off to another menial discussion I have no interest in hearing. I nod and laugh, though I'm not hearing what you're saying. I wonder if you cares.

I wonder if it even registers to you.



Rage

Words & Poem by Lea Simic

It is without a doubt that the Arts industry has and continues to be dominated by the male sphere influencing how works are not only perceived but funded and considered. Historically speaking, women weren't allowed to act on stage and although one may argue we have come far from that, yet in the 21st century contemporary female performance makers seem to still have their work dismissed, underfunded and overall considered irrelevant purely based on gender politics or fear mongering. The westernised language we know was created by a group of people who now have become part of the identity of every

young person in some shape or form. This then stifles the creative journey but rather than 'overcoming' this factor we must be invigorated by it to remove the barriers and pave the way for artists after us and ensure they do not feel like they do not belong in their own spaces. Young people, specifically women-identifying artists are forced to confine themselves to the few words they have taught us rather than embracing those aspects we fundamentally know through animalistic desire based on various funding bodies dominated by the opposite sex.

I solemnly swear to never write about a man
To never bring his words into mine
That those notions of identity created by him will never show his way into my works or
That I will become my own
And my name will be its own...

But,

The **rage** I hold is created by them
These words I know so well are by them I know nothing except for them

My last name will never be owned by a woman
Because it is a long dying hand of men before us,
Before her.

I will always use his words
Because his words shaped me
His words were forced down my throat
Loud, arrogant, rude.

He has started a fire he is now unable to put out
But it fuels his fantasies
One night girl so he can feel the 1% of love he is missing
Difficult girl so he can have a challenge, feel the rage she inherits
Opinionated girl so he can change her, mould her

She is ablaze at all hours
The hairs on her arm twitch as her body sways
She can not contain her fists
Whilst her words spew like a bad hangover
She will never know the terms of peace
Because she is in this game
Trying not to write, create, speak about the man

To fuel a **rage**
To share the **rage**
Yet by avoiding the **rage**
Or speaking about the **rage**
We realise he is the **rage**
And he will never be escaped.
Because by writing about how we hate, despise or mourn his loss, his words will always be ours.

Star #4 (Self-Portrait)

Artwork & Words by Elisa von Perger

As a young creative in Perth, I am in the process of establishing my artistic identity.

Being a creative can mean many different things to different people - especially as I come from a production design background, I feel my role can be extremely fluid and undefined at times.

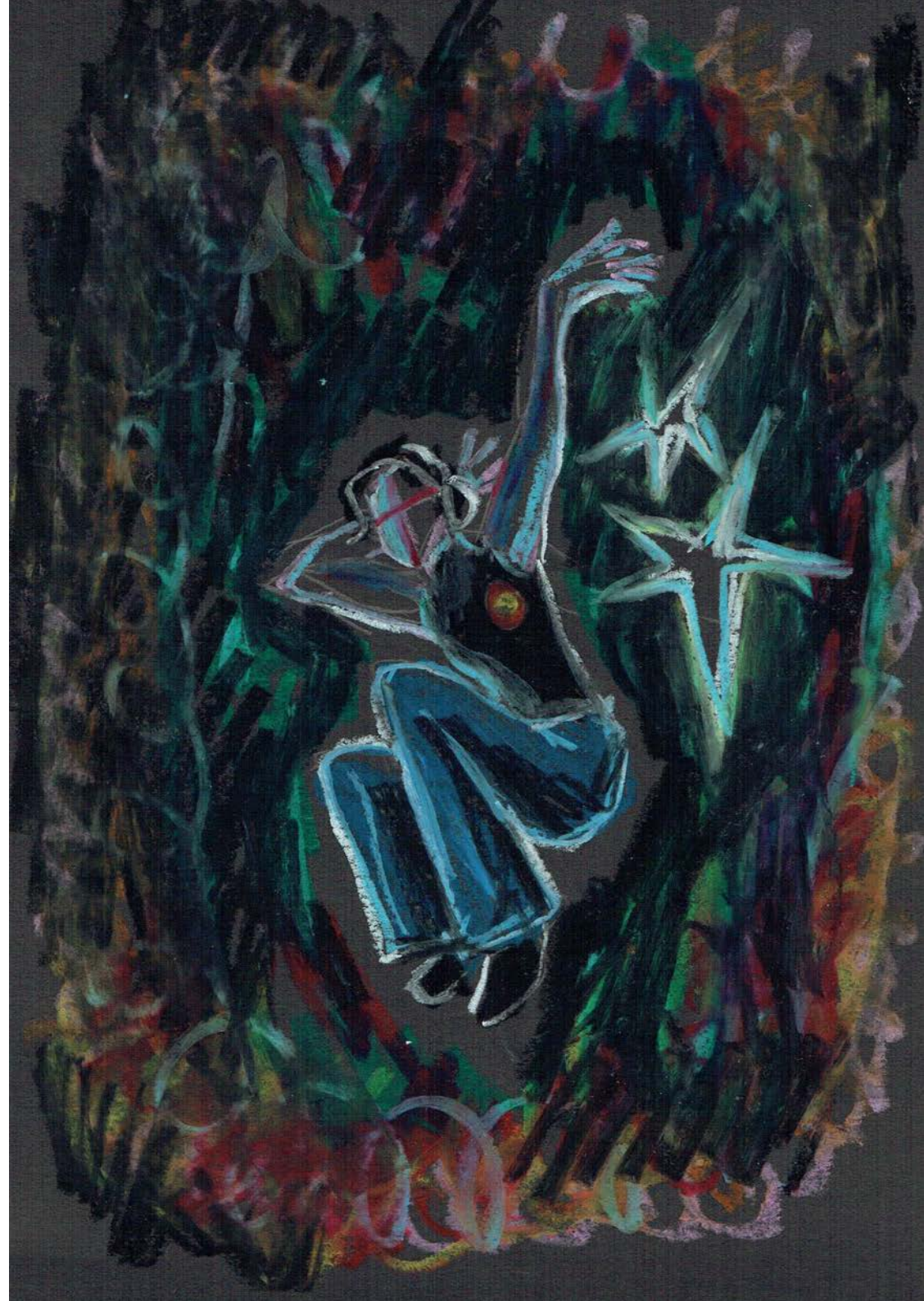
I've chosen to explore this through a series of illustrative self-portraits, defining my perspective on what my role is and how I identify within the arts sector.

At times I feel my identity is multifaceted, shape-shifting between designer, artist, writer, director and creative -

this gives me room to explore what my art is and how I express myself through different mediums, but I notice I often experience a sense of detachment, even weightlessness.

Operating across a range of platforms is both liberating and terrifying; ambiguity to the extreme. This particular illustration was drawn intuitively in oil pastel, and explores that very feeling of not being weighed down by any one role - tense, but exciting.

I'm still exploring my artistic identity through my work, I don't believe I've quite got there yet - but perhaps it doesn't need to be defined into any one role at all.



Echo

Photograph & Words by Beatrice Foti

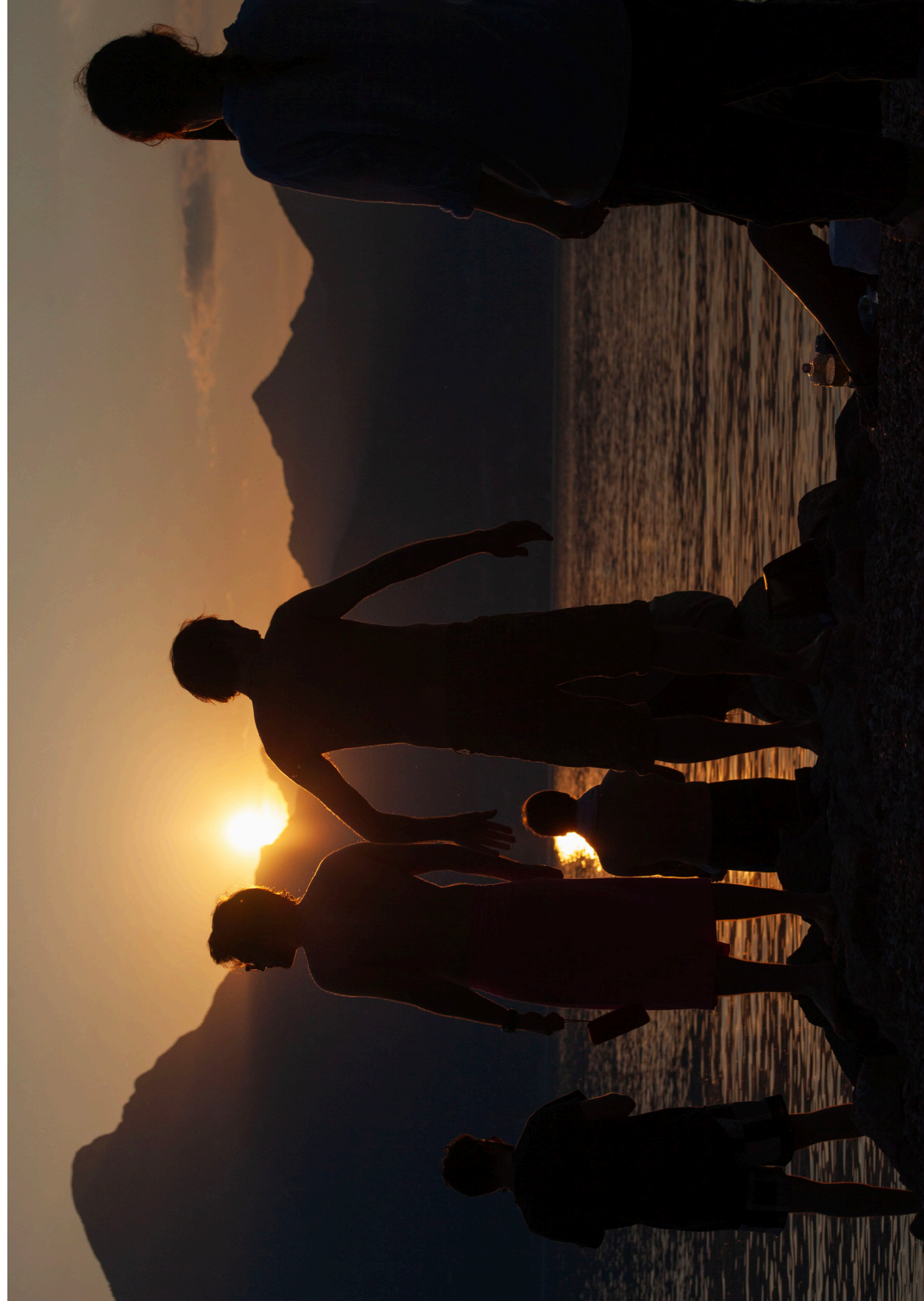
I am a young photographer looking for stories to tell and journeys to document. When I was in Italy I had the chance to work for Art Events, an agency that organizes events and exhibitions. My favourite job has been the opening of the Australian pavilion for the Venice Biennale of Architecture 2023.

Even though I enjoyed the experience very much, my goal is to become a photojournalist and I have always been very passionate about landscape, wildlife, cultural heritage and traditions. I am currently working on one project that I wish to become a photobook and possibly result in an exhibition.

I believe the main challenge for me has always been the fear of not being enough, especially in a creative field where you confront yourself with many talented artists everyday.

But I learnt to overcome that fear and I know I want to share my own way to express myself and how I see the world. This picture has a strong value for me not only because the subjects are my close friends with whom I share dreams and fears, but also because it represents our desire to look forward, to look behind the obstacles and to see the bright future that lies ahead of us, especially if we share the journey.

The definition of echo is "the reflection of the sound against an obstacle, when the distance of this is such that the sound of return is distinguished from that of departure". The reason why I entitled my picture "echo" is that if we substitute the word "sound" with "dream" I believe we can subconsciously relate to how it feels to be young.





**This is not just a celebration;
but a call for change, inspiring the next generation
of creatives to chart their own paths.**



whynot.org.au



projectseeandb.com