

# Five Acts of Love

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Arts Review

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Examining what we gain and what we give up when we love and are loved, ACCA presents [Five Acts of Love](#) – a new exhibition curated by Dr Nur Shkembi OAM, featuring international and local contemporary artists who explore various expressions of love.

“Love is broadly seen as an intimate emotional and/or physical convergence between people,” says Dr Shkembi. “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.”

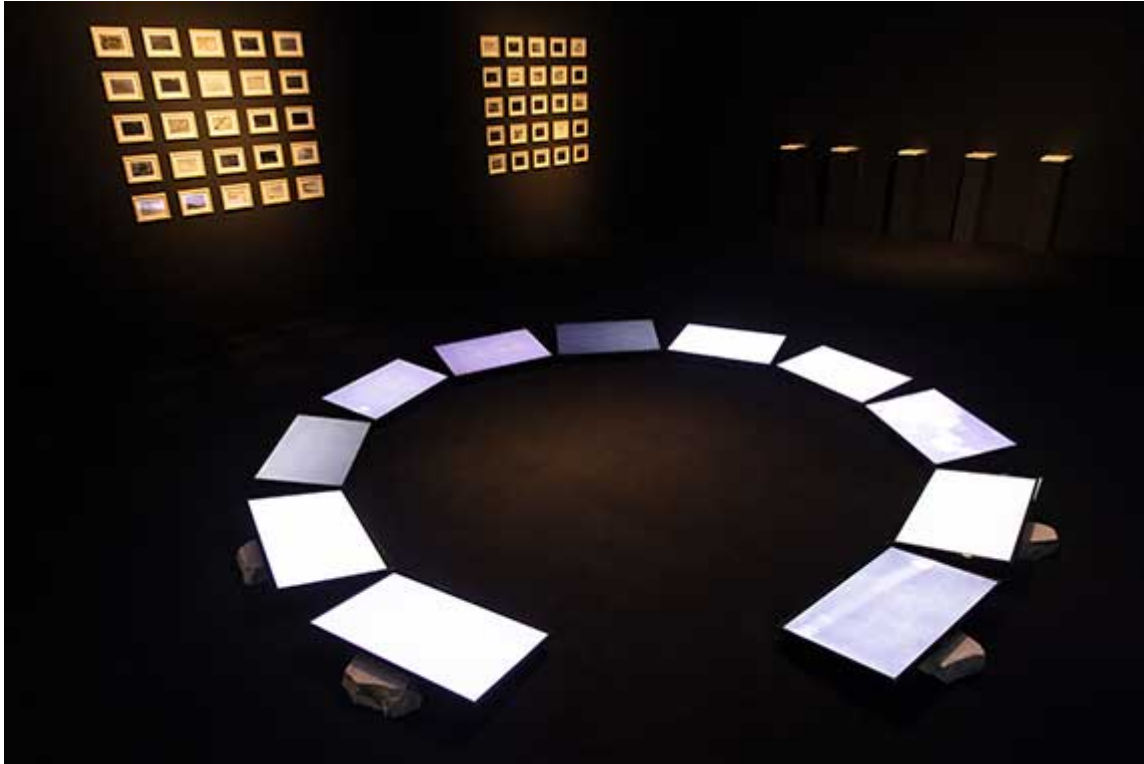
“In this current moment it is difficult not to see love in proximity to the tumult and turmoil of the world. We see love manifesting in great numbers, as solidarity between friends, communities and between complete strangers in various movements across the globe.”

“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,” says Shkembi.

*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 said 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," says Russell-Cook.

"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 of *Five Acts of Love* 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 Skhembi OAM 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***

Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (ACCA), 111 Sturt Street, Southbank Exhibition continues to 24 August 2025

Free entry

For more information, visit: [acca.melbourne](https://acca.melbourne) for details.

**Images:** Megan Cope, *The Tide Waits For No One*, 2020–21, installation view, *Embodied Knowledge*, QAGOMA, Brisbane, 2022–23. Courtesy the artist and Milani Gallery – photo by Natasha Harth | Khaled Sabsabi, *At the Speed of Light*, 2016, installation view, Campbelltown Arts Centre, Campbelltown, 2021. Collection of the artist. Courtesy the artist and Milani Gallery, Brisbane – photo by Anna Kucera