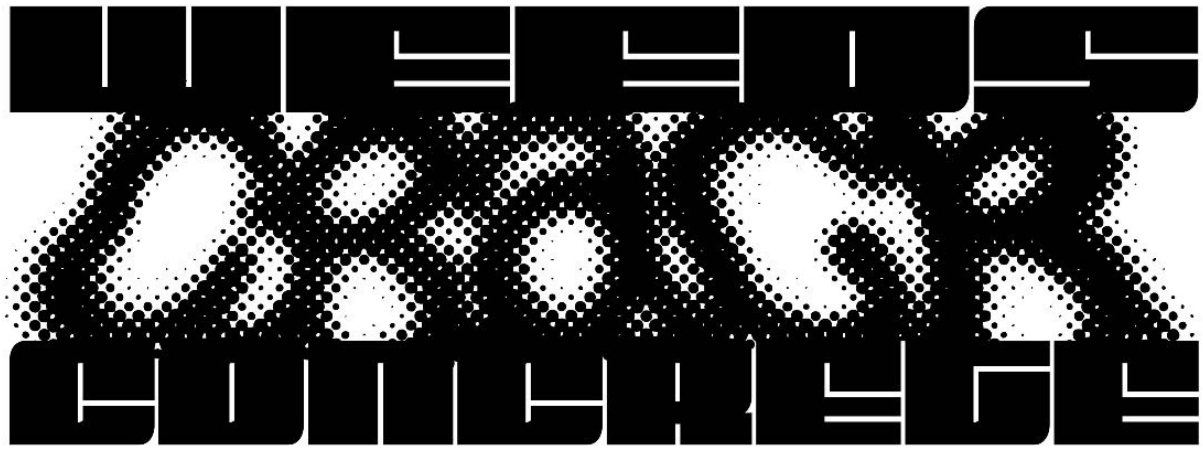
WEEDS CRACK CONCRETE

ABDUL ABDULLAH, COLE COCHRAN, JULIAN HAMMAN, SIM KAUR, GILLIAN KAYROOZ, NELSON NGHE, THAO NHI LA, RIFF RAFF, JOAN ROSS

22.06.2025
– 17.08.2025

ORGANISED BY LEVENT CAN KAYA, JEYNE WADE, EMMA CAO
UPCOMING ESSAY BY EMILY GREENWOOD



Plants become weeds when they are out of place in agricultural settings, but they also become weeds in other non-natural settings when they disrupt an inherent order. For example, weeds are those plants that get in the way of the programs, agendas, or desires that we project into spatial constructs. Ivy quickly becomes an invasive species when it disrupts the functions of windows or walls.

—David Giseen, *Subnature: Architecture's Other Environments*

Stubbornly, weeds crack concrete; they endure from the bottom up, warping the flat order of asphalt pavements, the grid-lines of property. The artists in Pari's 29th exhibition visualise the ways class, capital and colonialism mediate our views of home, space and people—how power decides who, what, and where is a weed. Some confront the cruelty of this condition, its predation: gambling, policing, aristocratic sensibilities, suburban alienation. Others give us reprieve, honouring the enduring resilience of plants, family, community and tradition against it. We weave together established Western Sydney artists with those still sprouting in our gallery in Parramatta—a place where things are increasingly designated as weeds, being ordered to leave. For weeds cause more trouble when tangled together.

1. Thao Nhi La

Four Generations, 2023-25
Acrylic on canvas
4 panels each 91 x 91 cm

Sitting down on a sunny afternoon...eyes wandering... capturing the array of hues scattered across my palette. I brush strokes of vibrant colours across the fresh, blank canvas. This is what I love to do. Spread creativity and happiness - this is how I experience true joy.

My artwork titled, *Four Generations,* utilises acrylic on canvas as its medium.

With my strong sense of connection towards family and culture, I incorporated a significant personal element into my painting; having grown up in a large family of four generations and 37 family members, my aim was to create a harmonious artwork - one portraying unity and interconnectedness. Inspired by the pigs represented in Vietnamese Folk paintings, as well as Dong Ho's woodblock printing, I strived to depict a family that is not only abundant in size, but in happiness, joy and warmth as well.

In my artwork, each pig represents a member of our family. The first generation is denoted by the largest pigs. In contrast, the fourth generation is depicted as the smallest pigs. Moreover, I believe it is crucial to truly recognise and appreciate one another's individuality and unique qualities. Thus, I have purposefully dedicated a different coloured pig to each family member.

Each pig in my artwork features either a lotus or a daisy flower on its body. The lotus represents the male pigs, while the daisy symbolizes the female pigs. These two flowers are not only meaningful to me but are also iconic in Vietnamese culture.

The first two canvas pieces, completed in 2022, depict 25 members of my family. The remaining 12 family members are featured in the third and fourth canvases, which I completed in 2025.

In these latest two artworks, I incorporated three iconic landmarks from three different countries: the Sydney Opera House and Harbour Bridge (Australia), the Golden Gate Bridge (United States), and Ben Thanh Market (Vietnam). These places hold special significance, as my extended family now lives across these three countries.

2. Sim Kaur

Pravaah, 2023
sound and moving image installation, found objects
1:30 min

Pravaah is a short experimental Bharatnatayam dance film featuring Anjana Chandran.

The dance talks about mother nature and the cycle of life and death. Anjana takes on the form of the divine feminine, expressing love for the beauty of the sky, water, wind, rain, and a deer jumping. She goes on to talk about destruction, the deer being killed, trees being cut off, breaking her down. In that pain and suffering, from a teardrop, new life is born, and a flower blooms. The video is installed on a CRTV, surrounded by personal objects from my bedroom - worn books, family photos, incense, quiet offerings from my bedside. This altar traces the line between the personal and the eternal, the sacred and the everyday.

3. Joan Ross

Don't let leaves into your house, 2023
Hand-painted digital print on rag paper
60 x 98 cm

Don’t let leaves into your house is a visual poem.

Inside this poem are motifs. Motifs I use in response to trappings of what ‘nice houses’ allow in, but in turn, leave out. In the making of this work, I kept circling back to why people can’t tolerate nature –in the form of leaves or spiders, actual real nature, not images, from the outside, into their homes or even their driveways! Leaf blowers incessantly shooing leaves away from the boundary of my neighbour’s home as if they were life’s biggest threat. But in that exact home are carbon copied pictures of waves and Landscapes.

In this visual poem, life is upside down — paintings, vases and cups are balancing on corners, headless birds in vitrines, leaves found reclining on the furniture, spiders guarding the walls — it’s how ‘nice rooms’ should look to me. In my world, I keep spiders and let leaves into my house.

4. Cole Cochran

untitled (Xanthorrhoea sp.), 2025
Framed photographic print
42 x 59.4 cm

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untitled (Eucalyptus parramattensis), 2025
Framed photographic print
42 x 59.4 cm

untitled (Eucalyptus sideroxylon), 2025
Framed photographic print
42 x 59.4 cm

untitled (Ozothamnus diosmifolia), 2025
Framed photographic print
42 x 59.4 cm

untitled, 2025
Postcards in photo book
15 x 21 cm

The works included in *Weeds Crack Concrete* are part of a wider project that studies local remnant vegetation within the urban areas of Western Sydney. These photographs document plants from the Cumberland Plain Woodland community growing along the fence lines of the T2 and T3 railway corridors.

To many commuters, this vegetation may seem of little significance. Yet these remnants mark the eastern perimeter of a critically endangered ecological community and support plant species of both local and regional significance. The work considers how such places are recognised – or often overlooked – within planning frameworks and to those who pass by.

The framing of these landscapes invites a greater understanding of how social, political, and environmental forces have shaped – and continue to shape – these local remnants amid ongoing urban expansion, revealing not only their ecological importance and aesthetic potential, but also their role in revealing the wider histories and contexts of a place.

5. Riff Raff ARI

Roots, 2024
Single channel video on CRTV
8:35 min

Creative Director: Divya Lotliker
Videographer: Daniel Bailen
Music: Jamie Smith
Editors: Daniel Bailen, Felix Jackson
Humans: Cath Barcan, Toby Chapman, Holly-Lee Dickson, Emma Griffiths, Felix Jackson, Divya Lotliker

*Roots i*s a short film that follows us, as artists and co-founders of Riff Raff, as we ask ourselves what it means to be artists in Western Sydney today. Filmed across familiar streets in Penrith's CBD using lo-fi camcorder and phone footage, the work blends documentary and improvisation to reflect the resourcefulness and DIY spirit that Western Sydney artists have long relied on.There hasn't been an artist-run initiative in Penrith since the 1990s. That era, when community arts spaces were more accessible, feels increasingly distant amidst the rising cost of living, limited infrastructure and digital disconnection. Roots quietly documents the labour of rebuilding those networks, creating space, visibility and connection from the ground up.

Along the way, we met with Toby Chapman, Director of Penrith Regional Gallery, and Cath Barcan, Head of Visual Arts at Nepean TAFE, who share insights from their own experiences and pivotal moments that have shaped their work in the community. Their reflections, alongside our own, become part of a broader inquiry into what it feels like to make art here, what's seen, what's supported and what's still waiting to grow. *Roots* becomes both a personal and collective act of tending; to the past, to the present cultural life of Penrith, and to the fragile beginnings of something still taking shape.

6. Abdul Abdullah

Troubling the Margins, 2022
Digital print
125 x 120 cm

Troubling the Margins is part of a series of art works titled *The Interloper,* a series of prints made up of three self-portraits by Abdul Abdullah, where the artist wears a fox mask amongst goats, sheep, and chickens. For the artist the fox mask nods to an experience of othering, marginalisation, and vilification. As an introduced species living on the urban fringe Abdullah relates to vulpine survival - the barely tolerated, unwelcome guest. In these works, Abdullah

presents himself in intimate proximity to livestock – the property of an unseen landowner. This positioning disrupts a dynamic of possession and implies a threat to long-held hierarchies.

7. Nelson Nghe
I Bet You, 2024
mixed media
90 x 137 x 110 cm

Western Sydney is often spoken of as a place of resilience, diversity, and working-class pride. It's where families build futures, where cultures meet and mix, and where the idea of "home" carries deep emotional weight. But beneath this surface, Western Sydney is also home to one of the most concentrated and invisible forms of suffering in the country—gambling harm. This is my community, but it's also a place where too many stories remain untold.

Australia has the highest gambling losses per capita in the world, and Western Sydney bears the brunt. Nowhere is this more visible than in the glow of poker machines behind suburban pubs and clubs, or in the quiet habit of checking a betting app in the privacy of a lounge room. Every day, over $2 million is lost to poker machines in Western Sydney alone. This landscape of harm rarely looks like a crisis. It looks like a regular Saturday night. A trip to the shops. A bill unpaid. A child waiting.

I Bet You explores the quiet collision between childhood innocence and adult harm—between memory and reality—right here in the place I call home. Many of us grew up in Western Sydney, shaped by both joy and quiet trauma, unaware of the systems operating just beneath the surface of our lives.

Using the visual language of childhood—colourful stickers, toy houses, and familiar, playful textures—I reconstruct a space that feels safe at first glance. But nestled within are objects that quietly unsettle: gambling memorabilia, betting slips, and lottery tickets. Calendar dates once marked with stickers to celebrate a loved one's birthday are now paired with lotto numbers—rituals that once signified joy, now shadowed by chance and risk. The familiar becomes uncanny. These small, seemingly innocent gestures reveal how gambling practices slip into the everyday—normalised within the rhythms of family life. Fun becomes risk. Celebration becomes loss.

Across the walls, the phrase "Blow Up the Pokies" appears in Chinese—炸掉老虎机. The word for poker machine in Chinese, 老虎机 (lǎohǔ jī), literally translates to

"tiger machine"—a name that evokes both danger and seduction, something playful yet predatory. This phrase becomes both protest and cultural reflection, a gesture toward the multicultural communities most targeted by gambling industries, yet least heard in conversations about reform.

This work speaks to the invisible legacy of gambling harm: how it seeps into homes, into relationships, and into the memories we carry from childhood. For every person experiencing gambling harm, up to ten others are also impacted—emotionally, financially, psychologically. But the shame and stigma surrounding gambling often keep these stories hidden. *I Bet You* seeks to challenge that silence—to create space for truth-telling, compassion, and collective accountability.

It blurs the line between domestic comfort and creeping danger, asking: what happens when the place that should protect us instead becomes a source of harm—and when will the systems built to protect us finally take responsibility?

Gambling harm is not inevitable. It is the outcome of deliberate policy failure, targeted exploitation, and silence. We need gambling reform—real, systemic change that listens to communities, protects families, and reclaims the meaning of home.

8. Julian Hamman

Parkland, 2023
Dual channel video installation
32:35 min

With *Parkland*, I wanted to create a work that in some way, dealt with the empathy we show, or choose not to show, towards strangers every day. The apathy of a bystander. I wanted to render the audience as mere witnesses to aggression and tragedy. A passive experience where you can choose to engage in whatever way; walking in and out. A place to listen, watch and offer sympathy.

The idea started with thinking about the medium - how often we go to movies and experience moments of violence in a passive sense. Especially video art. How often we walk in halfway through a video work and have a few seconds where we decide whether to stay or leave. In essence, I think the gallery experience can be distancing for video works. I've tried to use this distance within the piece - detached camerawork presenting mundane activities,

punctuated by aggression.

9. Gillian Kayrooz

Leave your shoes at the door, 2024
Three-channel video, 4K, stereo sound
4:30 min

Artist: Gillian Kayrooz
Director: VERSUS (Tanya Babić & Jason Sukadana)
Production: Subversus
Performers: Natalie Ang, Martin Ang, Mali Ang, Melvin Ang, Matt Cater, Harry Jun, Amy Kayrooz, Elizabeth Kayrooz, Frances Kayrooz, Stuart Kayrooz, Alex Parnell

This film was created and filmed across Darug Country. I acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land and their continuous connection to Country, community and storytelling. I pay respect to Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

Leave Your Shoes at the Door is a personal and intimate performance work with family and friends, extrapolating an everyday domestic action as an expanded site for collective memory.

Set in locations imbued with personal significance, the work teases a near-tangible archive reflecting a period of significant regional change. These locales include the back of my aunt's apartment block in Parramatta, the backyard of my best friend Nat's family home in Merrylands, and the heritage-listed Blouza Hall in Granville.

There is an inherent sense of gratitude that is performed in the work, acknowledging and building from the necessity of travel, recognising both migratory lineages and closer to home acts of moving between suburbs and cities out of necessity.

The pace fosters a more deliberate observation, inviting contemplation on the intersections of personal and public thresholds, the transitions between departure and arrival, and the significance of ritual and routine—all while intricately interweaving personal narratives, cultural traditions, and local landscapes.

Pari is supported by the NSW Government through Create NSW, and the City of Parramatta.
Pari is assisted by the Australian Government through Creative Australia, its principal arts investment and advisory body.

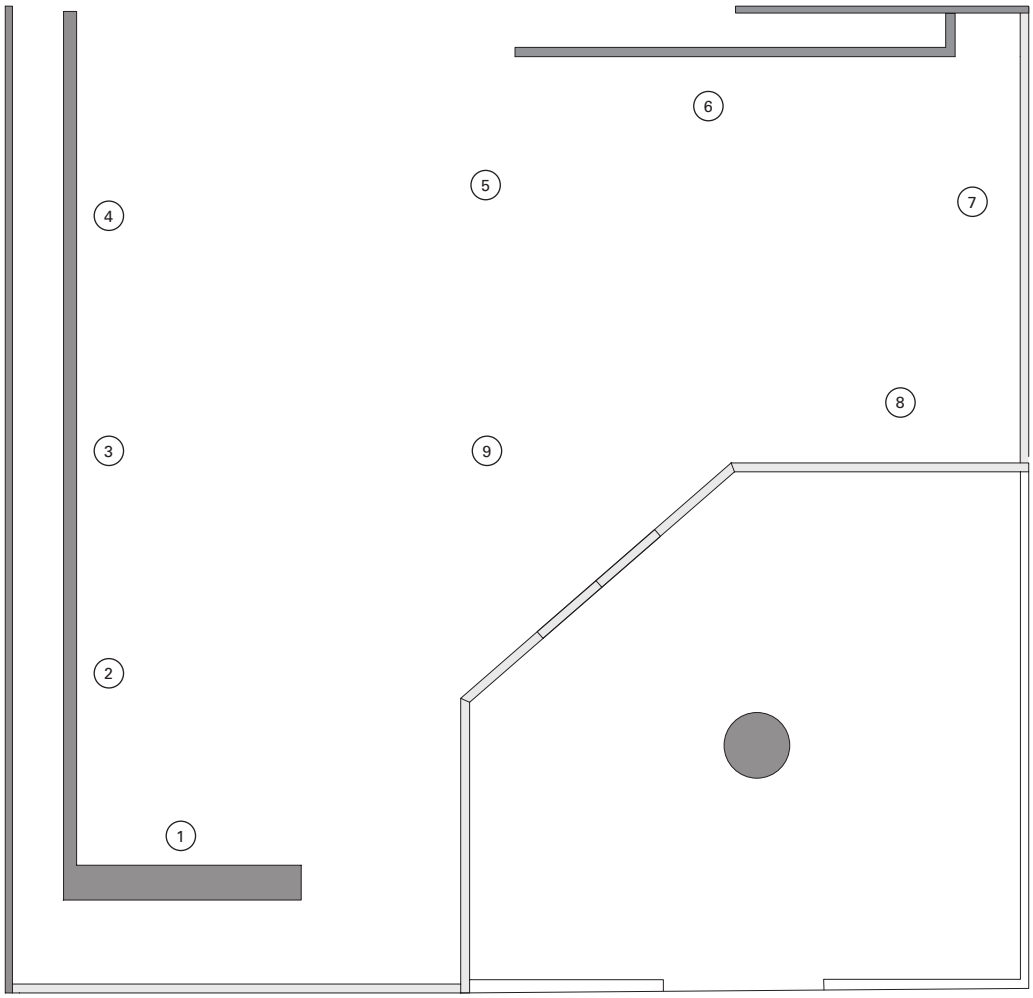
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