



FLAT EARTH

Stolon Press
Elisa Taber
Khaled Sabsabi
29.05–
12.07.2025

Acknowledgment of Country

This project has unfolded across the unceded lands of the Kulin Nation in Victoria, as well as Gadigal and Wangal Country in New South Wales. We pay our respects to the Traditional Owners and their Elders, past and present, and acknowledge the enduring cultural and creative practices of First Peoples on these lands for over 60,000 years.

FLAT EARTH

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About this Education Resource

This education resource has been developed to support education audiences to engage with the exhibition *Stolon Press: Flat earth*. Educators are invited to use the materials provided within the resource and adapt them to meet the learning needs of their students. The resource can be used before, during and after visiting the exhibition, and in conjunction with the exhibition resources available at www.monash.edu/muma/exhibitions/current/c/stolon-press-flat-earth

Getting ready for your excursion

Contact MUMA to make a booking for your class and to find out more about:

- Gallery opening hours
- Transport options
- Cloakroom facilities
- Options for guided programs at the venue

Before visiting *Stolon Press: Flat earth*, you might like to introduce your students to the practices of the participating artists and some of the key themes within the exhibition, using this education resource as a guide.

Preparations for your excursion may also include familiarising students with expectations for gallery etiquette and respectful behaviour.

Content advisory

Educators and visitors are advised that this exhibition has recently received media attention after Monash University's decision to postpone its opening. This followed Creative Australia's withdrawal of its invitation to artist Khaled Sabsabi to represent Australia at the 2026 Venice Biennale. Some visitors may find aspects of the public discourse surrounding the exhibition which touches on international conflicts distressing. The exhibition does not contain material that has prompted the recent public debate.

Curriculum Links

Stolon Press: Flat earth is relevant to students at various stages along their learning journeys. This education resource is broadly aimed at students aged 15–18 years, but could be modified and differentiated to meet the learning needs of students at other levels.

The starting points for discussion and learning activities within this resource provide opportunities for students to engage as both viewer and artist. There are suggestions for discussing artworks in the galleries and making artworks in response to the exhibition.

The exhibition directly links to the following areas of the Australian Curriculum:

Visual Arts

Explore and Express Ideas: Students view *Stolon Press: Flat earth* and observe a variety of art forms, ideas, themes and sources of inspiration explored by the exhibiting artists. Students make their artworks in response to their experiences in the galleries by experimenting with a range of techniques, processes, materials, and technologies.

Visual Arts Practices: While visiting the exhibition *Stolon Press: Flat earth*, students will encounter various collectives, artists, collaborators and practices. They will develop an understanding of how the artists conceptualise their work and use materials to create artworks.

Present and Perform: As they view *Stolon Press: Flat earth*, students will encounter various methods of installation and presentation in the galleries. They will consider the artistic intentions of artists and curators, and how these relate to the audience experience.

Respond and Interpret: Students will speculate about the meaning of the artworks displayed in *Stolon Press: Flat Earth*. Following the visit, they undertake research how particular aspects of contemporary culture have influenced the artists



Curriculum Links

VCE Curricula + further areas of learning

VCE Curricula

Art Making and Exhibiting

Thematic Exhibitions (Unit 2, Outcome 1)

Explore the themes within *Stolon Press: Flat earth* and reflect on how artists and curators worked together to develop conceptual, material and aesthetic links between artworks on display.

Curating an Exhibition (Unit 3, Outcome 3)

Examine exhibition design and wall texts in the galleries.

Care and Conservation (Unit 4, Outcome 3)

Consider the presentation and care of various artworks and artforms on display in *Stolon Press: Flat earth*.

Art Creative Practice: Interpretive Lenses

Explore selected artworks on display in the galleries through a structural, personal and/or cultural lens.
VCE Art Making and Exhibiting

Further areas of learning may encompass:

Exploring how artworks within the exhibition *Stolon Press: Flat earth* represent aspects of the participating artists' personal, social and cultural identity

Developing an understanding of the connections between art and publishing how the artists and their collaborators select and combine new and found materials to create artworks and express ideas through their practice.

Developing knowledge about the kinds of skills and processes the exhibiting artists use to create the works on display, such as relief printing, photography, video and installation

Reflecting on the ways that artworks within the exhibition are installed and displayed within the galleries and the way these spaces are designed to enable audiences to encounter and engage with them.

Responding to, speculating about and interpreting the meaning of images, symbols, language and texts that are presented within artworks in the exhibition.

Reflecting on the participating artists' intentions and how they are communicated through the exhibition.

General capabilities

Engagement with *Stolon Press: Flat earth* provides students with opportunities to develop the following general capabilities:

- Critical and creative thinking
- Ethical understanding
- Intercultural understanding
- Personal and social capabilities

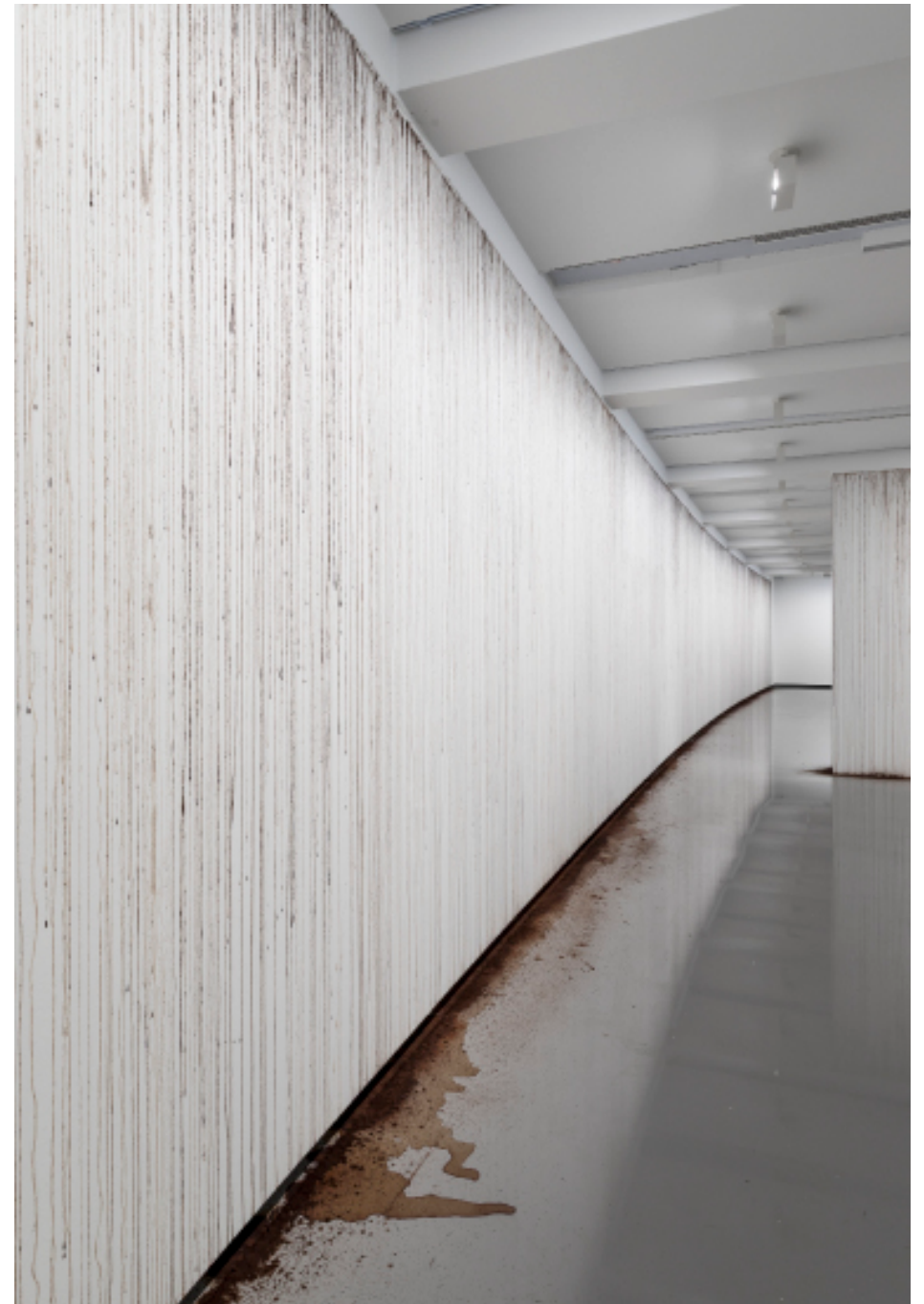
Introduction

Stolon Press: Flat earth is a group exhibition bringing together by Australian and international artists and writers including Simryn Gill, Tom Melick, Khaled Sabsabi and Elisa Taber. Together this group has come together to explore the concept of what a publication might look like in exhibition form.

Stolon Press is a Sydney-based art and publishing collective whose work sits somewhere between art and book, image and text. Established in 2019 by writer Tom Melick and artist Simryn Gill, Stolon Press has published twenty books to date, regularly involving an extended network of collaborators and friends.

Conceived as a flattened 'map', *Flat earth* creates a shared space where artistic, linguistic and material practices converge. It brings together work by longtime Stolon Press collaborators, including Buenos Aires, Asunción and Montreal-based writer and anthropologist Elisa Taber, and Lebanese-born, Sydney-based artist Khaled Sabsabi. Together with Stolon Press, the artists have evolved and reshaped the exhibition in response to its recent postponement by Monash University.

Flat earth privileges locality, process and sustained relation over singular narratives or fixed positions. It invites reflection on how language moves across borders, how memory is held in the body and in materials, and how translation—whether across languages, geographies or institutional structures—can both connect and unsettle. Through interwoven works dispersed throughout the space, the exhibition gestures toward a different kind of map: one that holds contradictions, resists erasure and insists on the value of being in relation.



Themes

Friendship is integral to the work of Stolon Press. Much of what they produce begins in informal, domestic spaces—through conversations around kitchen tables or long-distance correspondence. The exhibition values this slow, sustained mode of working together, placing relationships, care and trust at its heart.

Stolons are a variety of runner plants that grow horizontally on the surface of the ground. From one plant, many stolons can spread and produce new plants by planting their roots into the soil. Like these propagating stems, Simryn Gill and Tom Melick's goal is to generate and grow their work in a non-hierarchical space that is close to the ground.

Language appears in many forms across *Flat earth*—written, spoken, visual, fragmented, translated. Rather than presenting a single viewpoint, the exhibition shows how language shapes identity, memory and knowledge. It also asks how we communicate when language fails or becomes unstable.

Translation is considered both as the act of moving between languages and as a broader metaphor for shifts between forms, ideas and contexts. Moving between languages, media or cultural settings always involves change. The works in the exhibition attend to what is lost, added or transformed in the process of translation—and how these shifts can open up new meanings.

Mapping is both an idea and a structure used in the exhibition. The title *Flat earth* suggests a kind of map—one where different places, languages and ideas are placed side by side. Rather than following a strict order or one main story, the exhibition invites viewers to explore connections between artworks. Like a map, it helps us see how different experiences can exist together in the same space, without one being more important than another.

Migration is a thread that connects the personal histories of the artists and the themes of the work. The exhibition reflects on how movement across geographies—whether chosen or forced—shapes how we see, speak and belong. Rather than fixed origins, it presents a network of cultural crossings and layered identities.

The artists

Stolon Press

Stolon Press is a Sydney-based art and publishing collective whose work sits somewhere between art and book, image and text. Established in 2019 by writer Tom Melick and artist Simryn Gill, Stolon Press has published more than twenty books and regularly involves an extended family of collaborators and friends. Friendship for Melick and Gill is crucial to the practice. Like the kitchen table around which they often work, or the stolon after which the press friendship is a space in which new images, words and ideas can circulate and emerge.

Online links to more information about Stolon Press

stolonpress.com/

powerinstitute.org.au/events/exhibition-books-stolon-press

artistprofile.com.au/stolon-press-publishing-as-collective-practice/

Simryn Gill (born 1959, Singapore. Lives and works in Port Dickson, Malaysia and Sydney) is an internationally acclaimed contemporary artist who works with writing, drawing, photography, printmaking, books and publishing. Her practice is focussed on questions of how we live in the places we find ourselves in, and how we carry places within us.

Gill's work is held in major Australian and international collections including Art Gallery of New South Wales, Museum of Contemporary Art Australia and National Gallery of Australia as well as the Museum of Modern Art and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York; Tate, London; the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw; Singapore National Gallery; and Singapore Art Museum, among others.

Online links to more information about Simryn Gill

artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/artists/gill-simryn/

tate.org.uk/art/artists/simryn-gill-9404

Tom Melick (born 1986, Sydney. Lives and works in Sydney) is a Sydney-based writer, editor and researcher with an ongoing interest in locating authorship in people and places who often sit outside of institutions. Following formal studies in anthropology, Melick's current work considers different types of knowledge systems and the geographies within which these are produced.

Recent publications include *A Little History of Fatigue* (Rosa Press) and *Il Giardino di Olindo* (Stolon Press). With the artist Simryn Gill, he runs Stolon Press, and with Elisa Taber, he edits an online pamphlet called Slug.

Online links to more information about Tom Melick

sydneyreviewofbooks.com/writers/tom-melick

unprojects.org.au/author/tom-melick/

The artists

Khaled Sabsabi (born 1965, Tripoli, Lebanon. Lives and works in Sydney, NSW and Tripoli) is a socially engaged multidisciplinary artist who works across geographical borders and cultures to create immersive experiences for audiences. Sabsabi spent his early childhood in Lebanon before migrating to Australia as a child during the Lebanese Civil War. His family settled in multicultural Western Sydney, where he continues to live and work. Sabsabi practices Sufism, the mystical dimension of Islam that emphasises inward spiritual development, direct personal experience of the divine, and practices such as meditation, chanting and poetry. His work questions the complexities of nationhood, identity and change. Sabsabi's work has been presented in over ninety exhibitions both in Australia and internationally.

Online links to more information about Khaled Sabsabi
khaledsabsabi.com/
milanigallery.com.au/news/khaled-sabsabi-1/

Elisa Taber (born 1990, Asunción, Paraguay. Lives and works in Buenos Aires, Asunción and Montreal) is a writer, literary translator, editor, and researcher. Taber's first published book *An Archipelago in a Landlocked Country* encompasses multiple genres including interpretive descriptions, short stories and novellas.

Taber's writing and translations have appeared in a wide variety of venues, ranging from *The Journal of the Royal Anthropology Institute* to *Words without Borders*. With Tom Melick, she runs the experimental online pamphlet series, *Slug*.

Online link to more information about Elisa Taber
slug.directory/

Associated Collaborator

Trent Walter (born 1980, Melbourne, Australia) is a contemporary artist, master- printer and the founder of Negative Press, a Melbourne-based studio exploring the relationship between printed matter and contemporary art. Trent produces artists' books, prints and workshops that explore the social aspects of printmaking practice. Negative Press serves as a place for artists to explore the material qualities of printmaking and mechanical reproduction alongside notions of the copy and complex relations to authorship through a collaborative approach.

Online link to more information about Trent Walter/Negative Press
negativepress.com.au/

The artworks

Stolon Press

Mixed business (carpets) (2025)

In *Mixed business* (carpets), Stolon Press constructs floor mats from discarded cardboard print offcuts sourced from the artists' local surroundings—materials shaped by global movement and trade. These mats, sewn together by hand and distributed across the space, function as sites of gathering and rest. In the threshold between galleries, the editorial meets the curatorial in a printed text or 'colophon' acknowledging the many contributors and contingencies that have shaped the exhibition.



The artworks

Khaled Sabsabi

Aajyna (1998/2021/2025)

Khaled Sabsabi presents an extension of his early work *Aajyna* which draws on personal memories from his childhood in Lebanon. The gallery walls are stained with coffee, recalling the coarse concrete of a building's foundations where Sabsabi and his family sought refuge during the Civil War (1975 – 1990). Coffee, in Lebanon and across many cultures, is both a ritual and a symbol—served to guests as a gesture of respect and prepared slowly as a form of hospitality and generosity. These stains were installed by Stolon Press and students from Monash Art, Design and Architecture under the artist's instruction. Through the use of coffee, the museum becomes part of a shared memory and sensory experience.



The artworks

Elisa Taber

Otra isla rodeada de tierra (Another Island Surrounded by Land) (2026)

In *Otra isla rodeada de tierra (Another Island Surrounded by Land)*, Elisa Taber draws from her fieldwork and writing in *An Archipelago in a Landlocked Country* (2020), a project grounded in research with Mennonite and Nivaklé communities in Paraguay's Boquerón Department. As visitors move through the museum, they will encounter audio recordings in both English and Spanish that unfold a poetic, layered narrative.

Rather than following a straightforward story, Taber's texts move between fragments of film, translated myths, and passages from a novella. The structure resists linear storytelling and instead mirrors the delicate, looping patterns of *ñandutí*, a traditional Paraguayan lace-making technique that unravels and recomposes. Her work asks us to consider what language can communicate—and what it can't—pointing to silences, mistranslations, and shifts in meaning that are part of any cross-cultural exchange.

In the galleries, small speakers hang silently from the ceiling. On Friday 27 June 2024 at 9pm, Taber's voice will briefly inhabit the gallery space as she reads in English and Spanish. The small audio speakers, suspended from the ceiling and otherwise silent, will carry her voice, before returning to quiet.



Responding to the artworks

Learning activity

Look carefully at each of the artworks in the galleries. As a class choose an artwork to discuss as a group and reflect on these questions together:

- Is there a focal point in this artwork that first draws your attention?
- Brainstorm a list of adjectives together that describe what you can see.
- What are the materials, techniques and processes that have been used by the artists to make this artwork?
- How has the artwork been installed in the galleries?
- What is the mood of the artwork? How does it make you feel?
- How would you describe the colours and textures in the artwork?
- Are there any symbols, details or references to culture or place within the artwork? Speculate on what they might represent.
- How does this artwork relate to other artworks within the exhibition?
- Are there any words or texts in this artwork? What do they say ?
- Based on what you can see, what do you think the artist's intention was when creating this artwork?



Materials, artforms and meaning

Learning activity

The exhibition *Stolon Press: Flat earth* encompasses an array of artworks that are presented as both publications and art installations. Create a Venn diagram with your class to compare and contrast art and publishing.

What is shared and what is different for each of these forms of creative expression?

Then divide into small groups and invite each group to find examples of each of these materials within the exhibition:

- Cardboard
- Photography
- Coffee
- Text
- Sound
- Printed matter (relief, photocopy, printing press)

Reflect on the material qualities of the selected example and consider the following:

- Why might the artists and their collaborators have opted to work with these materials
- How might the material qualities within the artwork contribute to the ideas the artists is expressing and the meaning of the artwork?

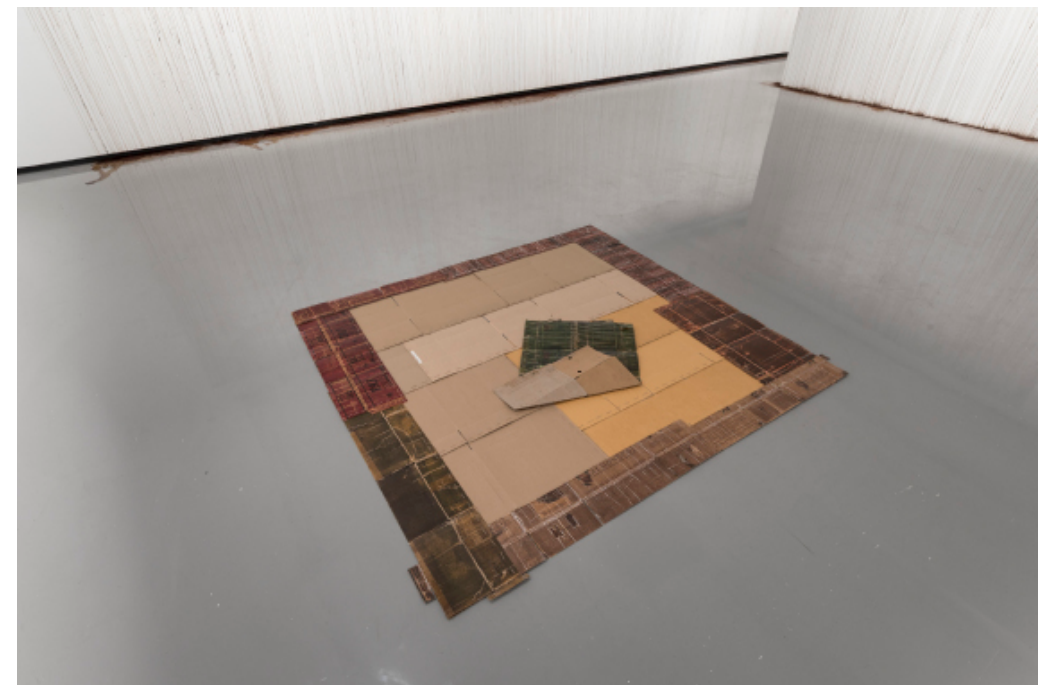


Collaboration and mapping

Learning activity

Working together is integral to the working methods of Stolon Press. They have worked with many collaborators over the years and their network continues to grow.

- Create a visual map inspired by the growth pattern or a stolon plant tendril that links all your classmates together in ways that go beyond just going to the same school. Maybe you share a favourite artform, artist or perhaps you enjoy the same sports or music.
- In this exhibition the artists all have connections to different places around the world that all have unique histories and stories. What brings all of these artists together, sharing within the exhibition?
- Think about the idea of a colophon and how Stolon Press has included one within their exhibition. If you were to include one in your visual diary, who would you thank and what information would you include?
- Map your own life like a stolon plant tendril spreading out. See where your connections and communities stem from and who in your life connects you to these places or people.



Relief printing

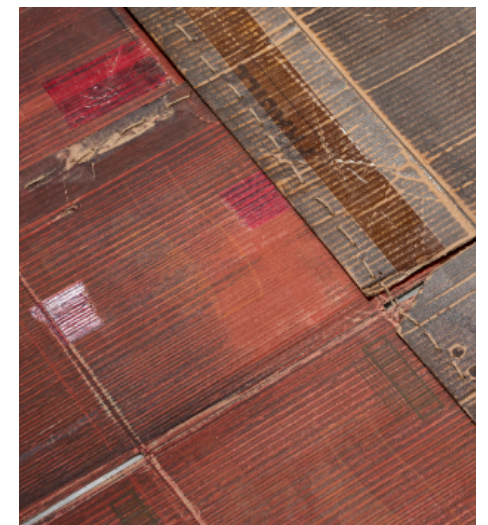
Learning activity

In *Mixed business: Al Rwad Palestinian midjewel dates* (2025), Stolon Press explores the expressive potential of humble, everyday materials through relief printing. Using discarded cardboard offcuts collected near the artists' studio in Marrickville, Sydney—fragments shaped by global trade and movement—they created prints that evoke broader socio-political narratives. One box, found on Illawarra Road, reads Al-Rwad Medjool Dates. Product of Jericho, Palestine.

Transferred in coloured ink onto washi paper, these surfaces bear traces of transit, and commerce, showing how unassuming materials can register the impacts of exchange, migration, and occupation. Rather than displaying the final prints, the exhibition presents the cardboard plates used in the printing process.

- How would you describe the composition and patterns that have been created by using found materials as the printing surface?
- Describe how the artist has applied the art element of colour within the work.
- Why do you think the artists chose to use such a commonplace, recycled packing material?
- In the classroom experiment with relief printing to produce your own suite of images using found materials from your own life. For example, you could use bubble wrap or packaging from postal items that have arrived at your house or school. Consider the porosity of these materials and explore which material works best for this method of printing.

- Each of these unique prints was created from fragments of empty Al Rwad Palestinian Midjewel date boxes, collected near the artists' studio in Sydney. The dates were grown in Jericho, with a production date of 25 August 2024 and an expiry of 25 August 2026. Stolon Press produced these works to mark the postponement of their exhibition *Flat earth*, which was originally scheduled to open at the Monash University Museum of Art on 8 May 2025. The artists have annotated the prints with the dates of production and expiry, as well as the original exhibition date. These works bear the marks of transit, commerce, and displacement—showing how even the most ordinary materials can reflect broader conditions of exchange, migration, and occupation. Why do you think the artists chose to include these annotations? Discuss.

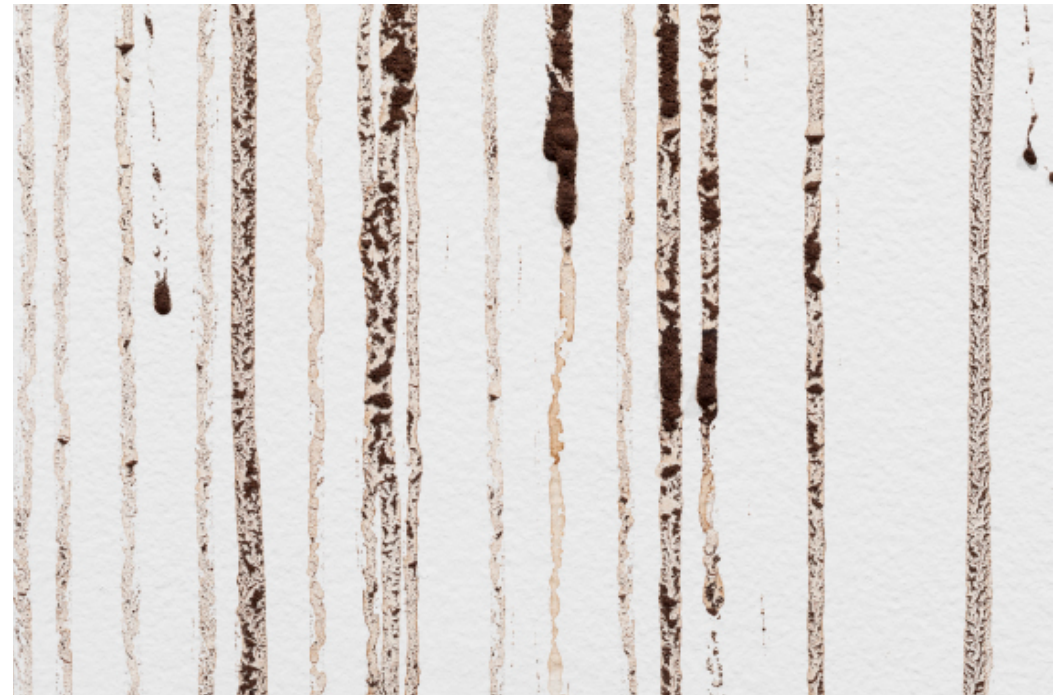


Unconventional art materials

Learning activity

For Khaled Sabsabi, the use of coffee is deeply cultural. In Lebanese and broader Arabic culture, coffee plays an important role as both a daily ritual and a symbol of hospitality. At the same time, coffee is a drink that transcends borders—shared across many cultures and geographies.

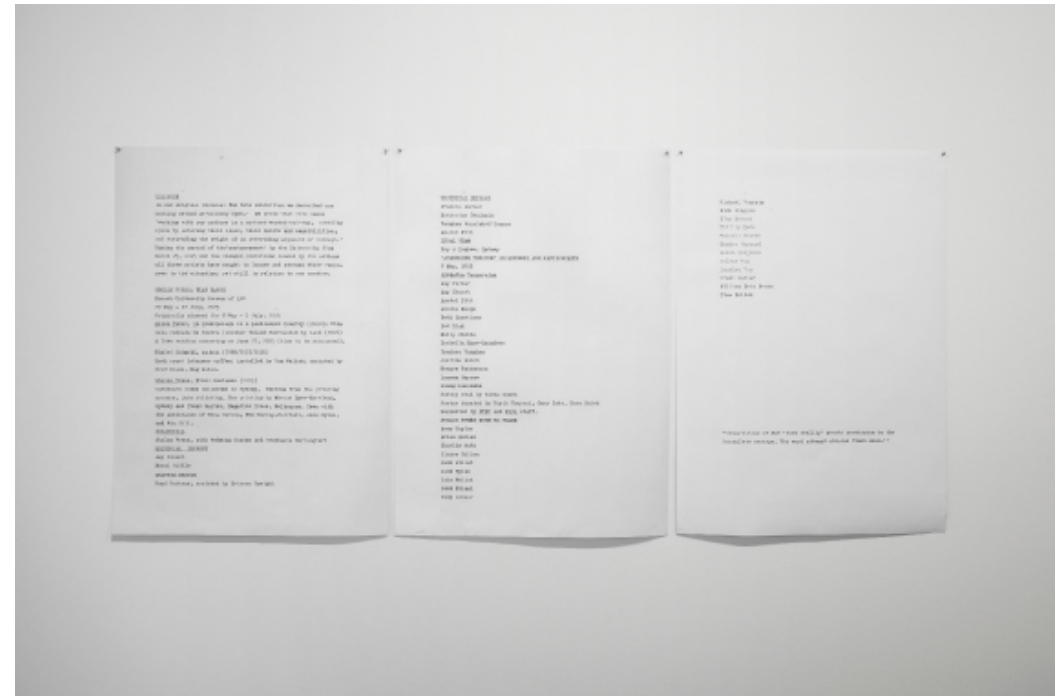
- For Khaled, the smell of coffee evokes memories of his childhood in Lebanon. What kinds of smells remind you of where you grew up? Do you have daily rituals at home or school? Try describing one of them using only what you can smell.
- Coffee and globalisation are closely linked. The spread of coffee around the world was shaped by trade routes and the expansion of empires. Research the countries where coffee is grown and explore the historical connections between the nations known for drinking coffee and the places where it is produced. How quickly can you walk to a café near your home or school? Now compare that to the time and distance it takes for coffee to travel from a farm overseas to your cup.
- Coffee is also an unconventional art material. Many contemporary artists use unusual or everyday materials in their work. Research examples of artists who work with non-traditional materials. As a class, start a list of some of the most unexpected materials you discover.
- Talk to your teacher about choosing a few safe, low-hazard materials from that list to experiment with in your next classroom artwork.



Display methods

Learning activity

- Within *Stolon Press: Flat earth*, there is a colophon printed and pinned on the walls. Why do you think the artists have used a publishing form in an exhibition space?
- Pay attention to the wall labels in the exhibition. Do they look different to other wall labels you have seen in other museums and galleries? Describe how and why they might differ.
- Elisa Taber's installation includes speakers around the gallery spaces that will play for a one-off performance of translation performance and be silent at other times.
- Is it unusual to see these speakers but only hear silence in a space? Why do you think the artists have chosen to only play the translation audio once?



Translation and language



Learning activity

The artists featured in *Stolon Press: Flat earth* come from diverse cultural backgrounds. This diversity is reflected in the exhibition through the use of multiple languages, symbols, and texts in the artworks. These elements not only highlight personal and collective histories but also invite us to consider how language shapes meaning, identity, and cultural exchange.

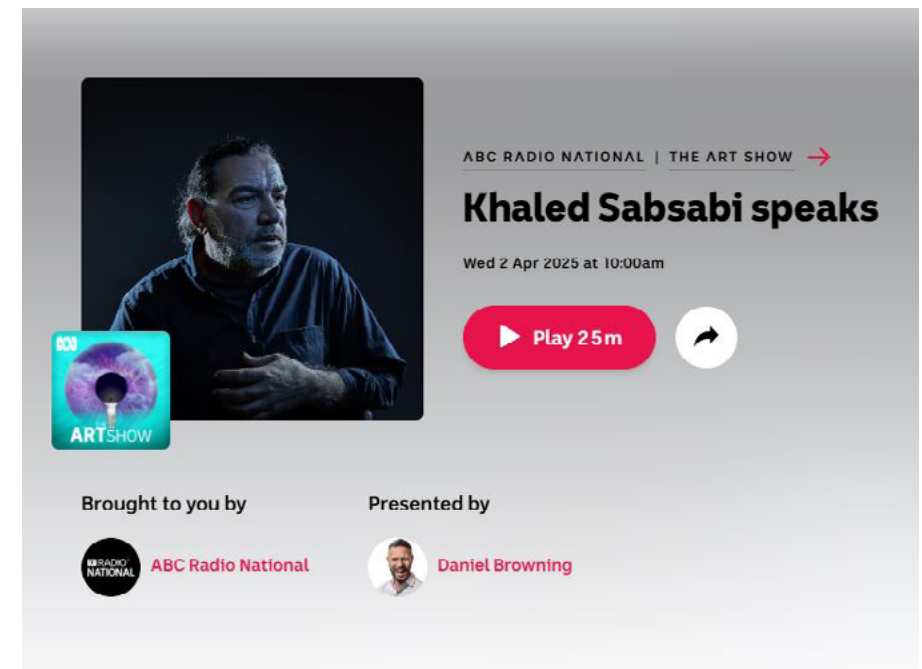
- Where in the exhibition can you find references to the artists' cultural backgrounds? Look closely at the artworks in *Flat earth*. What visual or textual clues can you identify that speak to the artists' heritage or upbringing? Do some research to discover where each artist is from and where they live now.
- How are non-English languages presented in the exhibition? Are there artworks that include Arabic, French, Chinese, or other languages? Think about how this inclusion affects your experience of the work. Reflect on your own cultural background—have you encountered languages other than English in art galleries? How did it feel?
- Do you have any books at home or at school that aren't written in English? Choose one and try translating a passage using Google Translate—or your own knowledge. Then, translate it back to its original language. What changed? What was lost or altered through translation?
- Your language experiences:
 - Do you speak a language other than English at home?
 - Are you learning any other languages at school?
 - Have you ever needed to use different words or another language to express an idea? How did it feel? Did the meaning change in the process?
- Make an artwork inspired by a language or culture important to you. What materials, colours, or symbols might you use? Would you include any specific words, phrases, or stories? How could these choices express something personal or cultural?
- Think about how books and written texts have been used as tools of influence throughout history. Who gets to write the stories? Whose voices are preserved or silenced? Why might artists choose to use the form of a book instead of a painting or sculpture?
- Why do you think the artists in *Flat earth* use the structure of a book in their work? How might a book shape or reflect dominant culture, values, or knowledge systems?
- When you next visit your local supermarket or grocer, try to find items that have original packaging in another language. How has the use of colour, shape or imagery helped you understand what the product might be? Find out if your assumptions are correct by searching what the product is on the internet.
- Choose a text you've studied at school and imagine how you might adapt it for display in an art gallery. How would you visually communicate its themes or characters to someone who has never read it? Use the floorplan of MUMA's Education Lab to plan your layout. What is gained—and what might be lost—when turning a book into an exhibition?
- What are the differences and similarities between a publication (like a book, zine, or printed material) and a visual artwork? Consider things like form, audience, message, and how they're experienced.

Art, ethics and the media

In early 2025 exhibiting artist Khaled Sabsabi was selected by Creative Australia to represent Australia at the Venice Biennale in 2026. This prestigious opportunity to produce and exhibit a new work for an international audience was withdrawn soon afterwards. In the wake of this cancellation taking place, the exhibition *Stolon Press: Flat earth* was postponed as Monash University reviewed the content and context for displaying the artwork by Khaled Sabsabi. Sabsabi was interviewed on the ABC by Daniel Browning about how the whole experience had affected him and his artistic practice.

abc.net.au/listen/programs/the-art-show/khaled-sabsabi-speaks/105050484

We are extremely hurt and disappointed in Creative Australia board's decision to rescind our appointment to represent Australia at the Venice Biennale. We intended to present a transformational work at Venice, an experience that would unite all audiences in an open and safe shared space. This reflects and builds on the work we have done for decades and will do for many more. Art should not be censored as artists reflect the times they live in. We believe in the vision of artists for an inclusive future that can bring us together to communicate and progress our shared humanity. We also believe that, despite this decision, the Australian art world will not dim and or be silent. The artistic team is still committed to presenting this work on a global platform and will seek community support to make this happen.
—Khaled Sabsabi and Michael Dagostino





ABC RADIO NATIONAL | THE ART SHOW →

Khaled Sabsabi speaks

Wed 2 Apr 2025 at 10:00am

▶ Play 25m

Brought to you by  ABC Radio National

Presented by  Daniel Browning

Art, ethics and the media

Learning activity

Initially planned to open on 8 May 2025, the exhibition was postponed by Monash University while the University conducted consultations with Monash students and community. The University recognises the work of Stolon Press as curator of, and featured artist in, the exhibition *Flat earth* and its patience while the University conducted its consultations to ensure the exhibition proceeds in the manner and spirit originally curated by Stolon Press.

Listen to the interview do some further research online to examine how this was represented in the media, then discuss the following:

- Imagine if you were Khaled Sabsabi's in this situation. How do you think you would have responded?
- Who are the people who decide what artists and artworks are represented in exhibitions and museums?
- How do institutions respond to ethical concerns that can arise when displaying artworks?
- How did people who work within the arts industry (artists, curators, gallerists) respond to this issue?

- Research other instances in art history when controversial artists or artworks have been singled out or removed from public view. For example, degenerate art, Andres Serrano, Ai Weiwei, Ron Robertson-Swann, Santiago Sierra, Mike Parr. What kind of political/ideological/cultural contexts influenced these moments?
- Stolon Press wanted to present their work at MUMA within the university context. What do you consider to be the unique qualities of university art museums in exploring and sharing ideas and knowledge? How is the role of MUMA similar and different to other kinds of galleries?
- Imagine if you were Khaled Sabsabi's in this situation. How do you think you would have responded?

Furore as university dumps artist

EXCLUSIVE
Kerrie O'Brien and Linda Morris

Monash University has indefinitely "postponed" an exhibition by Khaled Sabsabi just weeks after the artist was stripped of his invitation to represent Australia at the Venice Biennale.

Two months before its scheduled opening, the university announced *Flat Earth* - featuring Sabsabi and writer and anthropologist Elisa Taber - to be held at Monash's Museum of Art (MUMA) in Caulfield would not be staged.

While the university says the show has been postponed, no new dates have been set. Comment was sought from Sabsabi.

Sabsabi's gallerist, Josh Milani, said that decision, coming on top of the Venice developments, was devastating and potentially fatal to the artist's livelihood.

"I have previously warned Creative Australia that their decision to repudiate Khaled Sabsabi's Venice Biennale commission had already set in motion the dismantling of his career and livelihood," he said.

"This cancellation is a direct result of Creative Australia's abandonment of him as an artist and a human being. They have allowed the mischaracterisation of him as a terrorist sympathiser to go unchecked.

"It should be clear, he is against terrorism and violence in all its forms and he is against racism in all its forms, including antisemitism."

The Venice Biennale is the world's biggest and most prestigious art show. Sabsabi and Michael Dagostino had been appointed Australia's 2026 representatives.

That invitation was rescinded days later, hours after the Coalition raised questions in federal parliament about two historical works by the Lebanese-born Sabsabi, including a 2006 video artwork, *Thank You Very Much*, featuring images of the 9/11 attacks on the US.

Curator Dagostino and Sabsabi are believed to have been paid by Creative Australia 90 per cent of the artist's fee of \$100,000 and the curator's fee of \$50,000, in line with the contract terms the pair signed on February 6. However, the payment has been quarantined as they continue to fight for reinstatement.

Flat Earth was curated by Sydney-based art and publishing collective Stolon Press with MUMA director Dr Rebecca Coates and curator Stephanie Berlangieri as part of a series celebrating the gallery's 50th anniversary. It had been slated to run from May 8-July 5.

In response to questions from this masthead about the decision, a Monash University spokesperson said: "Monash University Museum of Art (MUMA) will postpone the *Flat Earth* exhibition at the Caulfield campus.

"Through consultation with our communities we have identified there is a need for the museum to deepen its collaboration and engagement on this exhibition. Postponing the event will allow this important work to be undertaken."

Writer Tom Melick and artist Simryn Gill established Stolon Press in 2019.

In the show, Lebanese-born, Sydney-based Sabsabi was to present "large, coffee-infused calligraphic paintings rooted in tasawwuf (Sufism), alongside abstracted silhouette works that employ numerology and repetition to explore spirituality and our shared human condition".

Buenos Aires, Asunción and Montreal-based Taber was to show microfilms alongside text "drawn from her ethnographic practice to think about translation, memory, and the ways language shapes and unsettles belonging".

Elizabeth Ann Macgregor, who headed Sydney's Museum of Contemporary Art for 22 years, described the decision as appalling. "Creative Australia not only failed to protect an artist from untrue allegations, it has failed to consider the consequences. The defence of 'community consultation' is simply untenable. Especially from a university," she wrote on Instagram. Milani said there was still time for the Creative Australia board to reinstate Sabsabi for Venice.

"If it does not, his career will not recover," he said. "In light of these most recent developments, I have written to Minister [Tony] Burke to request he take action to protect the interests of the sector."

Burke said that decisions about artistic merit should not be made by any minister.



Khaled Sabsabi's show has been dropped by Monash University.

Glossary of terms

Atlas: a document that outlines the world and geography on its pages often containing a collection of maps

Cohabitation - living and existing at the same time as another, often in a shared space like a house

Collective - involving two or more people working together to produce a shared outcome. Individuals that come together to act as a group with a mutual goal

Colophon - the section within a book or publication that outlines information such as where it was printed, when and who was involved. This can be found at the beginning or end of most books and acknowledges the work of collaborators other than the primary author.

Conceptual art - art in which the idea involved in the work is significant alongside traditional aesthetic, technical, and material concerns

Contemporary art - The art of now, produced by living artists. Contemporary art provides an opportunity to reflect on contemporary society and the issues of the world today.

Curatorial process - the actions and roles of professional arts workers who develop and deliver exhibitions

Editor - someone who writes, corrects, or changes pieces of text to be published.

Ethnographic - the study of peoples and cultures unique customs and habits. It explores the world from the point of view of the group being studied.

Language- a way of communicating and expressing between each other. It can be written, visual or spoken.

Locality - the position of a person or thing in a certain time or place

Migration - the movement of people or animals away from their usual region to a new geographical location. This can be across an international border or within the regions of a country.

Numerology - a belief in the divine mystical power of numbers, with each number holding significance for a diverse range of cultures.

Publication - the act of making information or stories available to people in a printed or electronic form such as a book, magazine, newspaper, or document in which information or stories are shared

Relief printing - a term to describe printmaking techniques where the raised surface of the printing material is inked transfer onto a substrate. The areas that have been cut away or are lower than the raised parts do not pick up ink and will not appear on the printed substrate. Relief prints include woodcut, linoleum cut, monoprints and rubber stamping.

Stolon - a runner plant that has the ability to root above the soil where its parts touch the ground and thus propagate

Substrate - a printmaking term that refers to the surface or material that a print is printed onto

Sufism - a branch of Islam which aims to attain mystical knowledge and love of God through meditative practices, breaking down the self, and purification of the heart.

Translation - the process of taking meaning from one language or medium and converting it to another

Image captions

Pg. 1. Stolon Press, *Mixed business* 2025, Khaled Sabsabi, *Aajyna* 1998/2021/2025. Installation view, Stolon Press: Flat earth, Monash University Museum of Art | MUMA, Naarm/Melbourne, 2025. Photo: Andrew Curtis

Pg. 5. Installation view, *Stolon Press: Flat earth*, Monash University Museum of Art | MUMA, Naarm/Melbourne, 2025. Photo: Andrew Curtis

Khaled Sabsabi, *Aajyna* (detail) 1998/2021/2025. Installation view, Stolon Press: Flat earth, Monash University Museum of Art | MUMA, Naarm/Melbourne, 2025. Photo: Andrew Curtis

Pg. 7. Khaled Sabsabi, *Aajyna* 1998/2021/2025. Installation view, *Stolon Press: Flat earth*, Monash University Museum of Art | MUMA, Naarm/Melbourne, 2025. Photo: Andrew Curtis

Pg. 11. Stolon Press, *Mixed business* (detail) 2025. Installation view, *Stolon Press: Flat earth*, Monash University Museum of Art | MUMA, Naarm/Melbourne, 2025. Photo: Andrew Curtis

Stolon Press, *Mixed business* 2025. Elisa Taber, *Otra isla rodeada de tierra (Another Island Surrounded by Land)* 2026. Installation view, Stolon Press: Flat earth, Monash University Museum of Art | MUMA, Naarm/Melbourne, 2025. Photo: Andrew Curtis

Pg. 12. Khaled Sabsabi, *Aajyna* (detail) 1998/2021/2025. Installation view, *Stolon Press: Flat earth*, Monash University Museum of Art | MUMA, Naarm/Melbourne, 2025. Photo: Andrew Curtis

Khaled Sabsabi, *Aajyna* 1998/2021/2025. Installation view, *Stolon Press: Flat earth*, Monash University Museum of Art | MUMA, Naarm/Melbourne, 2025. Photo: Andrew Curtis

Pg. 13. Elisa Taber, *Otra isla rodeada de tierra (Another Island Surrounded by Land)* (detail) 2026. Installation view, Stolon Press: Flat earth, Monash University Museum of Art | MUMA, Naarm/Melbourne, 2025. Photo: Andrew Curtis

Pg. 14. Installation view, *Stolon Press: Flat earth*, Monash University Museum of Art | MUMA, Naarm/Melbourne, 2025. Photo: Andrew Curtis

Pg. 15. Khaled Sabsabi, *Aajyna* (detail) 1998/2021/2025. Installation view, *Stolon Press: Flat earth*, Monash University Museum of Art | MUMA, Naarm/Melbourne, 2025. Photo: Andrew Curtis

Stolon Press, *Mixed business* (detail) 2025. Installation view, *Stolon Press: Flat earth*, Monash University Museum of Art | MUMA, Naarm/Melbourne, 2025. Photo: Andrew Curtis

Pg. 16. Installation view, *Stolon Press: Flat earth*, Monash University Museum of Art | MUMA, Naarm/Melbourne, 2025. Photo: Andrew Curtis

Stolon Press, *Mixed business* 2025, Khaled Sabsabi, *Aajyna* 1998/2021/2025. Installation view, Stolon Press: Flat earth, Monash University Museum of Art | MUMA, Naarm/Melbourne, 2025. Photo: Andrew Curtis

Pg. 17. Stolon Press, *Mixed Business: Al Rwad Palestinian Midjewel Dates* 2025. Installation view, Monash University Museum of Art | MUMA, Naarm/Melbourne, 2025. Photo: Andrew Curtis

Stolon Press, *Mixed business* (detail) 2025. Installation view, *Stolon Press: Flat earth*, Monash University Museum of Art | MUMA, Naarm/Melbourne, 2025. Photo: Andrew Curtis

Pg. 18. Khaled Sabsabi, *Aajyna* (detail) 1998/2021/2025. Installation view, *Stolon Press: Flat earth*, Monash University Museum of Art | MUMA, Naarm/Melbourne, 2025. Photo: Andrew Curtis

Pg. 19. Installation view, *Stolon Press: Flat earth*, Monash University Museum of Art | MUMA, Naarm/Melbourne, 2025. Photo: Andrew Curtis

Pg. 20. Khaled Sabsabi, *Aajyna* 1998/2021/2025. Installation view, *Stolon Press: Flat earth*, Monash University Museum of Art | MUMA, Naarm/Melbourne, 2025. Photo: Andrew Curtis

Pg. 21. The Art Show, Daniel Browning interviews Khaled Sabsabi, ABC website

Pg. 22. Media clipping: Kerrie O'Brien and Linda Morris, Furore as university dumps artist, *The Age*. March 2025.



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