

Tensile Connections

7 March – 5 April 2025

onespace



Sonja Carmichael
Elisa Jane Carmichael
Niloufar Lovegrove (Pishva)
Elysha Rei

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

Exhibition Dates | 7 March – 5 April 2025

Opening Event | Saturday 15 March, 5pm – 7pm | Artist Talk, 4pm – 5pm

Onespace Gallery Hours | Wednesday to Friday 10am – 5pm, Saturday 12pm – 5pm

Tensile Connections brings together a dynamic collection of works on paper by Sonja Carmichael, Elisa Jane Carmichael, Niloufar Lovegrove (Pishva), and Elysha Rei. The exhibition explores the tensile qualities and materiality of paper, while metaphorically highlighting the deep connections these artists maintain with their cultural identities that endure with unwavering strength. The exhibition will feature Niloufar Lovegrove's (Pishva) *Equable Goddess*, an ambitious 54-panel lino-cut print that spans the gallery's largest wall. Japanese Australian artist Elysha Rei delves into transcultural identity, family history, and the untold narratives of Japanese Australian migration through intricately hand-cut paper works inspired by Japanese garden design. Meanwhile, Sonja and Elisa Jane Carmichael present a series of prints, including unique embossed works created with organic materials sourced from Quandamooka Country on Minjerribah (Stradbroke Island).



Elysha Rei *Shi sedai (four generations)*, 2022, Hand cut polymer paper, 112 x 75 cm. Image: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Image: Saul Steed. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

Sonja is a senior Quandamooka weaver. In her practice, she draws inspiration from the many stories connected to traditional Quandamooka weaving and also explores contemporary materials and techniques – in particular, discarded ‘ghost nets’ and fishing lines – that directly respond to concerns about the preservation of the natural environment.

An active member in her community, she is a leader in the regeneration of Quandamooka weaving, passing on cultural knowledge and skills through workshops, exhibitions, and field research.

Her work is held in the collections of numerous galleries including the Queensland Art Gallery, Museum of Brisbane, National Gallery of Victoria, National Museum of Australia, Art Gallery of South Australia, and Redland Art Gallery.

She has shown in group exhibitions, including: *Mare Amoris Sea of Love* (2023) Art Museum University of Queensland; *TarraWarra Biennale: ua usiusi fa’ava’asavili* (2023), Tarrawarra Museum of Art, Victoria; *Gone Fishing* (2023), QAGOMA; *Perspectives of Brisbane* (2023), Museum of Brisbane; *The Space Between Us, Nuit Blanche*, (2022) Toronto; *HEAT* (2022), Redcliffe Art Gallery, Queensland; *Undertow* (2022), Freemantle Arts Centre, Western Australia; *Dabiyil Bajara: Water Footprints* (2022), Tanks Art Centre, Cairns; *Carriers of Memory* (2021), Museum of Brisbane, Queensland; *Open Hands* (2020), Tarnanthi, Art Gallery of South Australia; *Long water: fibre stories* (2020), Institute of Modern Art, national touring venues; *Legacy: Reflections on Mabo* (2019), Umbrella Studio Contemporary Arts and national touring venues; *Australian Art Collection* (2017), Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art, Queensland; and *Gathering Strands* (2016), Redland Art Gallery, Queensland.



Image: Courtesy of the artist and Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art.

Elisa Jane Carmichael is a Ngugi woman belonging to the Quandamooka People (Moreton Island/Mulgumpin and North Stradbroke Island/Minjerribah, Queensland). Elisa has a Bachelor of Fine Arts, Queensland College of Art, Griffith University; and a Master of Fine Arts, QUT. Her practice visually explores the beauty of nature and surrounding environment, drawing inspiration from her cultural identity and heritage.

Elisa and her mother, Sonja, have collaboratively been at the forefront of gathering knowledge, learning, and experimenting, to revitalise the unique traditional practice of Quandamooka weaving and explore its creative applications to contemporary fibre art. Elisa further develops her practice through both new techniques and materials, acknowledging, nurturing, and protecting her culture and the resources of Quandamooka Country.

Elisa is a third time finalist in the Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards (2023, 2021, 2018). Recent group exhibitions include *ua ususi fa ava asavili, is an alagā upu*, Tarrawarra Biennale 2023, *Naadohbii: To Draw Water* at the Winnipeg Art Gallery (2022, Canada), *Bunjilaka* Aboriginal Cultural Centre, Melbourne Museum (2022-23), and *Pātaka Art + Museum* (2023, New Zealand); the *Busan Biennale* (2022); *Undertow* at the Fremantle Arts Centre; *Primavera 2021* (Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney) and *Tarnanthi* (Art Gallery of South Australia 2020).

Elisa's public artworks include the Woolloongabba train station as part of the Cross River Rail Station Art Program (2024), *Ozcare Newstead, QLD* (2023) *Strings of Waterholes*, Herston Quarter, Brisbane QLD (2022), *Maitland Regional Council, Newcastle NSW* (2022) and *Water is Life* (2021) at South Bank Parklands, Brisbane, QLD.

Elisa's works are held in private and public collections across Australia, including The British Museum, Museum of Contemporary Art (Australia), Art Gallery of South Australia, National Gallery of Victoria, Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art, Art Gallery of Western Australia, University of Queensland Art Museum, Griffith University Art Museum, QUT Art Museum, Queensland Museum, and Bendigo Art Gallery.

Niloufar Lovegrove (Pishva)

Tensile Connections

7 March – 5 April 2025



Image: Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

Niloufar Lovegrove, originally from Iran, is a printmaker and visual artist based in central Queensland, living on Darumbal land. Her work blends contemporary themes with mythological Persian narratives, aiming to transcend cultural boundaries and explore shared human experiences. Her more recent large-scale installation, *Equable Goddess* and delicate series of blue prints allow for profound new perspectives on environmental issues that intertwine with her cultural identity and unique stylistic quality. Niloufar's work focuses on her distinctive approach to conveying complex narratives through cultural imagery, optimism, feminism, and playful mythology. Her contemplative approach to the medium strikes a balance between craftsmanship and visual storytelling.

Niloufar has exhibited widely in her region, where she has been awarded the prestigious Bayton Award (2023). Her recent successful ventures beyond the region have led her to being shortlisted for the National Works on Paper (NWOP) (2024), as well as winning the renowned Burnie Print Prize (2023). These accomplishments identify her as an exciting new voice in the realm of print-making. Niloufar recently had a solo exhibition with Artspace Mackay (2022-23), and will continue her successful trajectory with a solo exhibition at Creative Whitehorse and Onespace this year.



Image: Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

Elysha Rei (b. 1986 Tabuk, Saudi Arabia) is a Japanese-Australian artist based in Brisbane, Australia, whose work delves into the intersections of memory, identity, and belonging through the versatile medium of paper. Specializing in intricate hand-cut designs from single sheets, Rei is renowned for her site-specific installations that intertwine archival records with historical research. Her diverse body of work spans hand-cut paper installations, private commissions, and public artworks exhibited both in Australia and internationally over the past two decades.

Rei holds a Bachelor of Visual Arts from the University of Southern Queensland (2008), an MBA (2018), and is currently pursuing a PhD at Queensland University of Technology. Her doctoral research focuses on how Nikkei Australian identity and history are archived through contemporary paper-cutting arts practice. Her work has been featured in the International Paper Biennale Global Papier 6 in Germany (2024) and commissioned by notable organizations such as Brisbane Quarter (2024), PUNQ Festival (2024), the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre in Toronto (2023), BrisAsia Festival (2023, 2016), the Westin Brisbane (2018), QIC Toowoomba (2017), Brisbane City Council (2018, 2020), and Warwick Regional Council (2019).

Rei has completed artist residencies at the Brisbane Powerhouse (2023), the global research project Past Wrongs Future Choices in Canada (2023), Tiffany & Co. Brisbane City (2022) and Artspace Mackay (2020).

Her works are in the collections of the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre, Toowoomba Regional Art Gallery, QIC, the Westin Brisbane, Warwick Regional Council, Brisbane City Council, and The Japanese House in Ingham. In 2022, Rei was appointed the inaugural Chair of Nikkei Australia, reflecting her leadership within the Japanese Australian community.

Before dedicating herself fully to her arts practice, Rei founded the Sam Rit Residency, an international artist residency program in rural Thailand (2014), and co-founded the artist-run initiative Made Creative Space Toowoomba (2011–2013).

Rei's work continues to evolve, bridging cultural narratives and personal histories through the delicate yet powerful medium of paper.

Tensile Connections brings together new and existing works by Sonja Carmichael, Elisa Jane Carmichael, Niloufar Lovegrove (Pishva), and Elysha Rei: four artists working with paper to reimagine material culture and retrieve ancestral stories. The word ‘tensile’—relating to tension but also to the ability to be stretched—is apt in describing the practices of these four women, who each capture longing, struggle, loss, and resistance in their delicate objects and images, but also a profound sense of flexibility, resilience, and transculturation.

This spirit of adaptability and transformation is palpable in a collection titled *Spirit Reeds* by mother and daughter duo Sonja and Elisa Jane Carmichael, Ngugi women from Quandamooka, Minjerribah (North Stradbroke Island), and Mulgumpin (Moreton Island). Central to this series of prints, produced during a 2024 residency with Magandjin/Brisbane-based master printmaker David Jones, is a new material exploration of ungaire reeds, often used by the artists for weaving vessels, mats, adornments, and other objects. Here, the ungaire reeds have been rolled through a large press, leaving behind a trace of their material existence. The presence of absence is felt strongly in these delicate blind embossings that seem to teeter on the brink between the pictorial and the sculptural. The ghostly presence of the ungaire reeds pressed into the paper might suggest ‘missing pieces’ or losses associated with ongoing colonial processes, such as occupation, assimilation, dispossession, and epistemic violence. Simultaneously, like a shell curling around its own central cavity, the craters established by the pressure applied to the reeds through the printing press could be seen as vessels or openings: spaces carved out for new ways of weaving connections between the past and the present on Country.

In Niloufar Lovegrove’s (Pishva) *Equable Goddess* (2022), the figure of a Persian woman stands tall to the right-hand side of a large linocut printed across an expanse of fifty-four paper panels. Dressed in an embroidered gown, she is pouring a jug. Her long hair flows freely, extending out beyond her body, snaking up, across, and around the composition like a dark, fast-flowing river. Surrounding this river of tresses are repeated visual references to horses prancing, birds flying, people playing music and dancing; the river sustains them, they sustain one another, they live. For Lovegrove (Pishva), this painstakingly carved depiction of a humble and nurturing goddess aims to challenge traditional tales of vengeful gods unleashing natural disasters on people and lands below. The force of nature could be seen here not as a punishment or warning, but as a flood of nourishment and care that transcends the scale of the individual. Additionally, for audiences familiar with the 2022 murder of Iranian woman Mahsa Amini and subsequent protests targeting government violence against women, the goddess and her river of free-flowing hair might also be read as a symbol of freedom, strength, and unity.

Fragility and strength abound in Elysha Rei’s paper-cuts depicting species of animals and plants intimately connected to the artist’s Japanese cultural heritage and historical narratives relating to her family’s migration to Australia. Many of these works come from a larger project titled *Yohaku no bi/The Beauty of Empty Space*, a title that encapsulates the ambivalent emptiness characterising Rei’s work (and works by others in this exhibition). Rei’s delicate wall-mounted paper-cut trees—each a reference to a species of bonsai growing at the Brisbane Botanic Gardens, Mt Coot-tha—hang upside down from the holes they were cut from, the edges ruffled and curled like old peeling wallpaper.

For the artist, the tree's connection to its roots or origins works like a metaphor to suggest her family's ongoing connection to Japan. The paper remnants or discards scattered below each wall-mounted tree suggest cultural remnants preserved through oral histories and the sharing of material culture. And the central void in each work offers a moment of visual silence within which to contemplate the impact of cultural loss and the pain of assimilation.

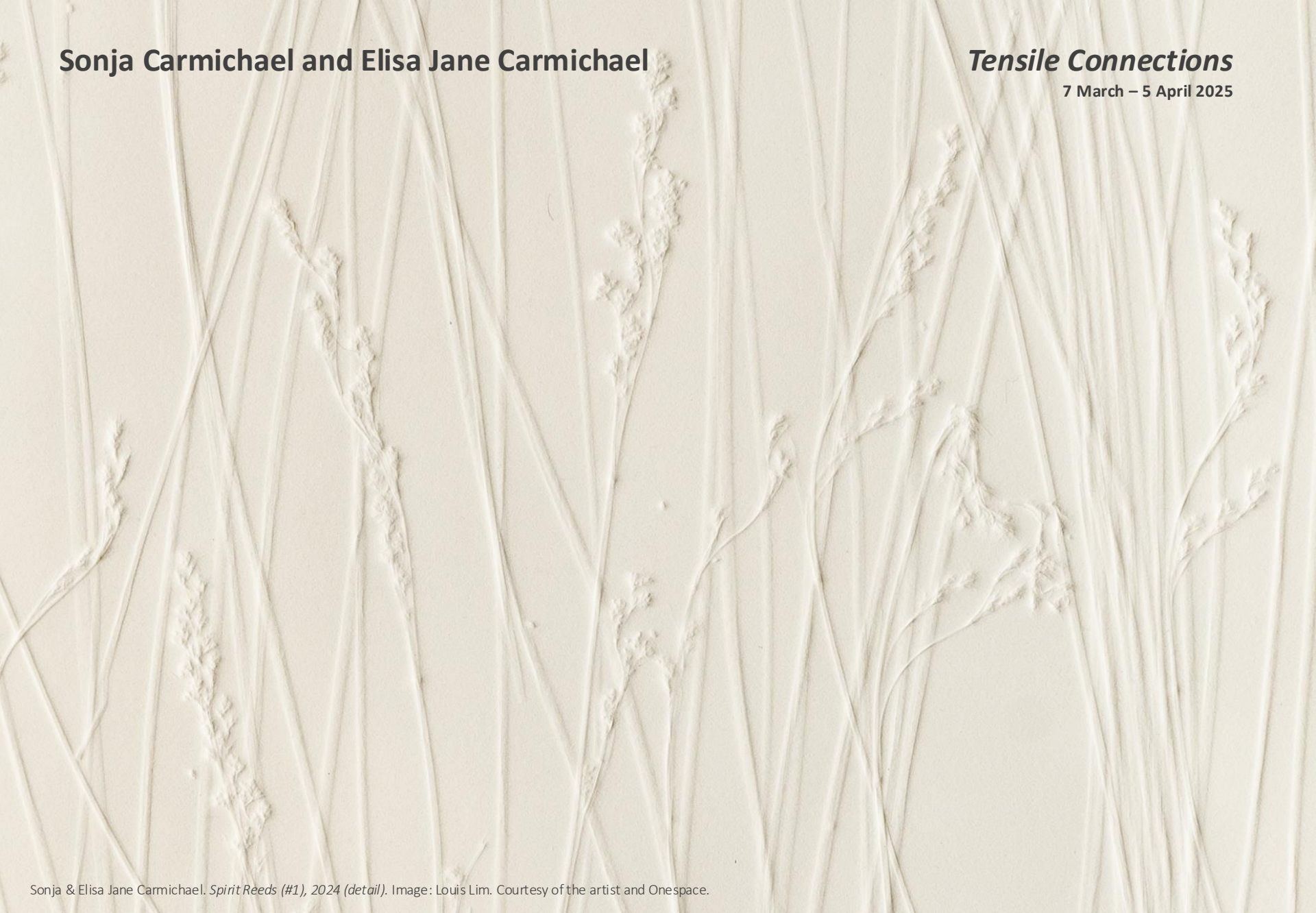
Overall, this exhibition presents a diverse collection of works by women artists retrieving, reviving, or reimagining their cultural heritage. Central to these explorations is paper, which, in its most basic sense, is thin, nonwoven material made from cellulose fibres bonded together through processes involving soaking, sieving, pressing, pounding, and drying. Just as a start, the presence of this materiality offers meaningful access points for thinking about ancient technologies, historical global trade centres, and the evolution of mechanical reproduction. But this exhibition's focus on paper also points the way to histories of liberation and oppression. Because paper was used in the service of empire to record, document, and control Indigenous communities, as well as to spread propaganda and misinformation, paper is political. Consequently, it might be this shared approach to materiality that lends works in *Tensile Connections* a collective sense of powerful softness: a tactile strength registered in the artists' use of paper toward cultural resurgence, but also resistance.

Sally Molloy

Sonja Carmichael and Elisa Jane Carmichael

Tensile Connections

7 March – 5 April 2025



Sonja & Elisa Jane Carmichael. *Spirit Reeds (#1)*, 2024 (detail). Image: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Sonja Carmichael and Elisa Jane Carmichael
Spirit Reeds (#1 – #3), 2024

Unique State embossed reeds on paper, 124 x 49.5cm (each)

\$1,500 (unframed) each

Images: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace

Sonja Carmichael and Elisa Jane Carmichael

Tensile Connections

7 March – 5 April 2025



Sonja Carmichael and Elisa Jane Carmichael
Talwalpin bark string (#1-3), 2024

Monoprint derived from various lengths of string on
Hahnemühle 300gsm Weiss and Canson Edition
300gsm, 80 x 32 cm

\$1,200 (unframed) each

Image: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Sonja Carmichael and Elisa Jane Carmichael
Ungaire reeds growing in swamp lands, 2024

A la poupee soft ground etching on Hahnemühle 300 gsm Weiss,
50 x 50 cm, 2AP + Edition of 20

\$1,500 (unframed)

Image: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Sonja Carmichael and Elisa Jane Carmichael
Sunlight, 2024

A la poupee soft ground etching on Hahnemühle 300 gsm Weiss,
50 x 50cm, 2AP + Edition of 20

\$1,500 (unframed)

Image: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

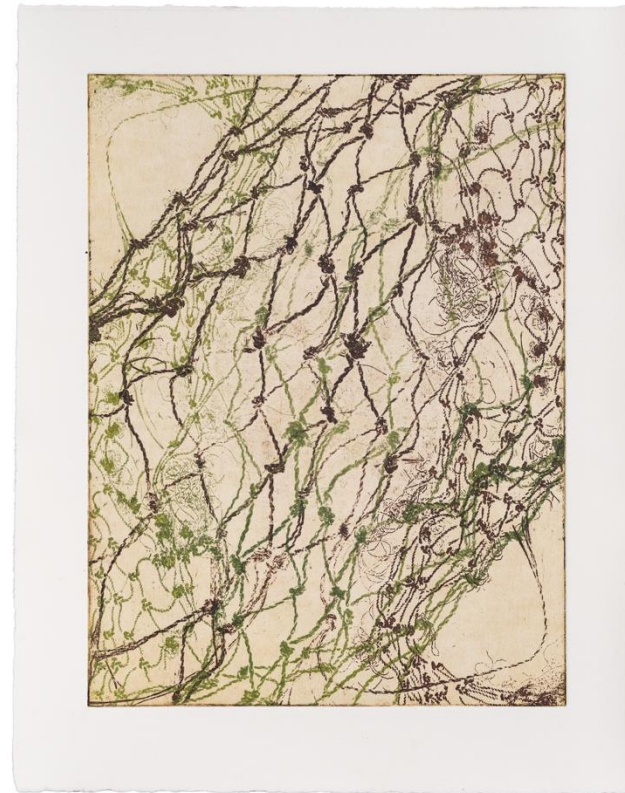


Sonja Carmichael and Elisa Jane Carmichael
Ngamu, 2024

A la poupee soft ground etching, Hahnemühle 300gsm
Weiss 33 x 25cm, 2AP + Edition of 20

\$750 (unframed)

Image: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Sonja Carmichael and Elisa Jane Carmichael
Talwalpin nets, 2024

A la poupee soft ground etching Hahnemühle 300gsm Weiss,
33 x 25cm, 2AP + Edition of 20

\$550 (unframed)

Image: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Sonja Carmichael and Elisa Jane Carmichael
Our gulayi, 2024

A la poupee soft ground etching Hahnemühle 300gsm Weiss,
50 x 33cm, 2AP + Edition of 20

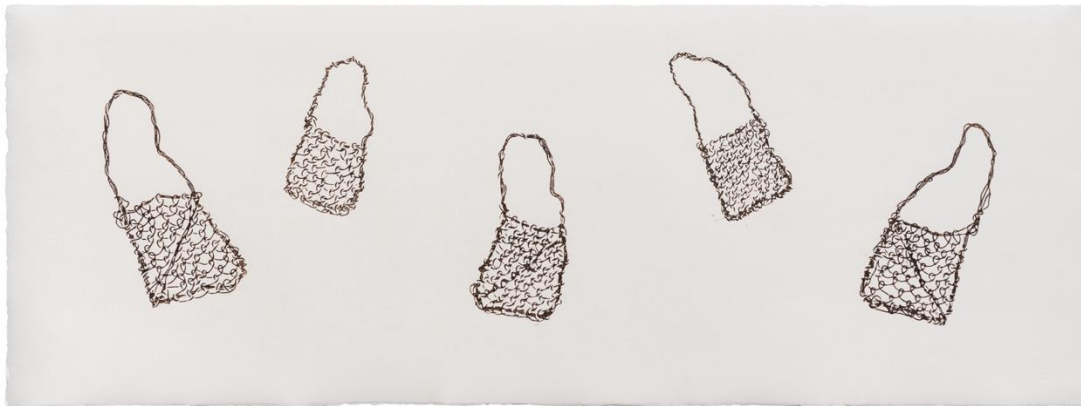
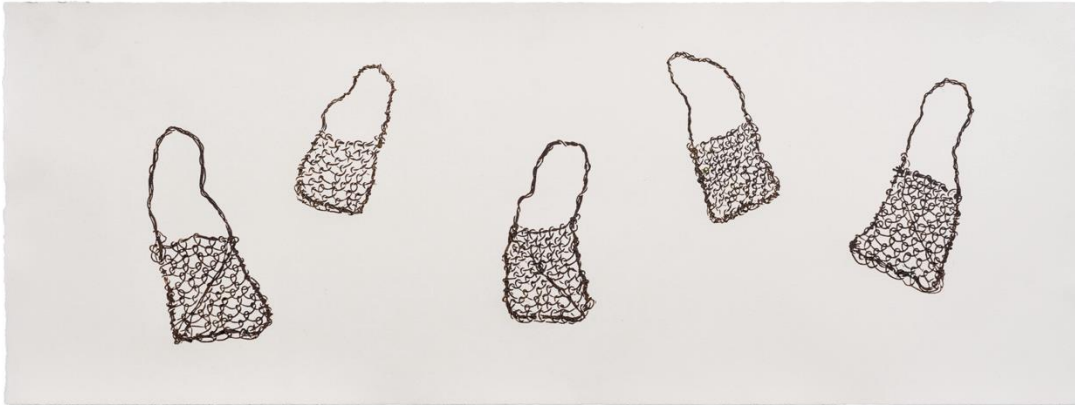
\$1,500 (unframed)

Image: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace

Sonja Carmichael

Tensile Connections

7 March – 5 April 2025



Sonja Carmichael
Bunbi (#1 and #2), 2024

Monoprint on Hahnemühle 300gsm Weiss,
30.5 x 81cm

\$2,500 (unframed) each

Image: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

Niloufar Lovegrove (Pishva)

Tensile Connections

7 March — 5 April 2025

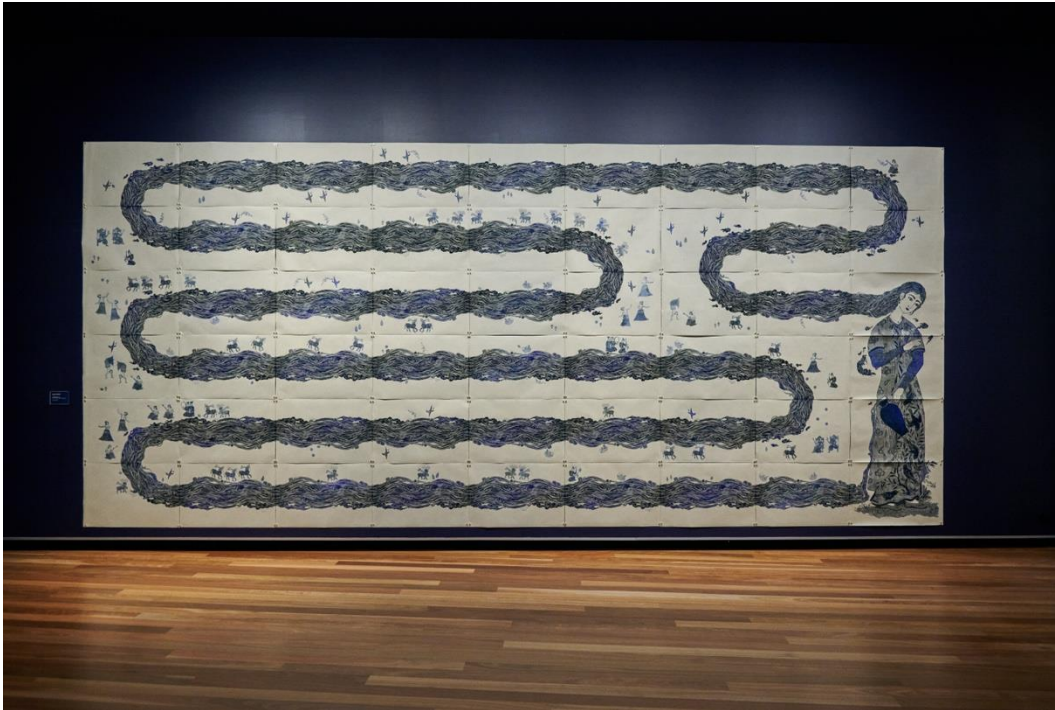


Niloufar Lovegrove (Pishva). *Equable Goddess*, 2022 (detail). Image: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

Niloufaur Lovegrove (Pishva)

Tensile Connections

7 March – 5 April 2025



Niloufaur Lovegrove (Pishva)
Equable Goddess, 2022

Hand printed lino of Kitakata & Tengucho,
Installation comprising of 54 panels, 309 x 688.5cm

\$20,000 (unframed)

Image: Jim Cullen. Courtesy of Artspace Mackay.



Niloufar Lovegrove (Pishva)
Horse with Ribbons, 2022

Handprinted lino on Lokata, 25 x 25cm

\$150 (unframed)

Image: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace



Niloufar Lovegrove (Pishva)
Ram with Ribbons, 2022

Handprinted lino on Lokata, 25 x 25cm

\$150 (unframed)

Image: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace



Niloufar Lovegrove (Pishva)
The Queen of Susa, 2022

Handprinted lino on Lokata, 25 x 25cm

\$150 (unframed)

Image: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace



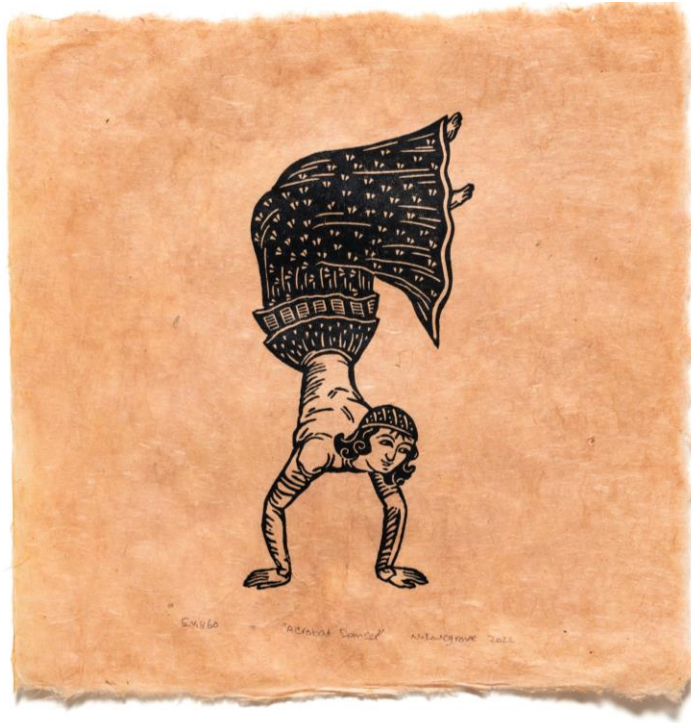
Niloufar Lovegrove (Pishva)
The King of Susa, 2022

Handprinted lino on Lokata, 25 x 25cm

\$150 (unframed)

Image: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace





Niloufar Lovegrove (Pishva)
Acrobat dancer, 2022

Handprinted lino on Lokata, 25 x 25cm

\$150 (unframed)

Image: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace



Niloufar Lovegrove (Pishva)
Tar Player, 2022

Handprinted lino on Lokata, 25 x 25cm

\$150 (unframed)

Image: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace



Niloufar Lovegrove (Pishva)
Goddess with red rage, 2022

Handprinted lino on Lokata, 25 x 25cm

\$150 (unframed)

Image: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace



Niloufar Lovegrove (Pishva)
Goddess with blue rage, 2022

Handprinted lino on Lokata, 25 x 25cm

\$150 (unframed)

Image: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace

Niloufar Lovegrove (Pishva)

Tensile Connections

7 March – 5 April 2025



Niloufar Lovegrove (Pishva)
Blooming Hands, 2025

Hand printed lino on Unryushi & Okawara, hand sewn together
94 x 64cm, 2AP + Edition of 10

\$1,200 (unframed) | \$2,200 (framed)

Image: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace



Niloufar Lovegrove (Pishva)
Echoed Shelter, 2025

Hand printed lino on Unryushi & Okawara, hand sewn together
64 x 45 cm, 2AP + Edition of 10

\$750 (unframed)

Image: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace

Niloufar Lovegrove (Pishva)

Tensile Connections

7 March – 5 April 2025



Nilofaur Lovegrove (Pishva)
Golden Horizon, 2025

Hand printed lino on Unryushi & Okawara, hand sewn together,
64 x 96 cm, 2AP + Edition of 10

\$1,200 (unframed) | \$2,200 (framed)

Image: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace



Nilofaur Lovegrove (Pishva)
Fertile Offering, 2025

Hand printed lino on Unryushi & Okawara, hand sewn together,
41 x 64 cm, 2AP + Edition of 10

\$750 (unframed)

Image: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace

Niloufar Lovegrove (Pishva)

Tensile Connections

7 March – 5 April 2025



Niloufar Lovegrove
Bearer of Clouds, 2025

Hand printed lino on Unryushi & Okawara, hand sewn together,
41 x 64 cm, 2AP + Edition of 10

\$750 (unframed)

Image: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace



Niloufar Lovegrove
Harvsting the Seeds, 2025

Hand printed lino on Unryushi & Okawara, hand sewn together,
41x64 cm, 2AP + Edition of 10

\$750 (unframed)

Image: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace

Elysha Rei

Tensile Connections

7 March – 5 April 2025



Elysha Rei. The Condensery exhibition installation, 2024. Image: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and The Condensery.

Elysha Rei

Tensile Connections

7 March – 5 April 2025



Elysha Rei
The root cause, 2022
Hand cut polymer paper, 70 x 50cm

\$2,750 (unframed)

Image: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and The Condensery.



Elysha Rei
Camellia bonsai, 2022
Hand cut polymer paper, 70 x 100cm

\$2,750 (unframed)

Image: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and The Condensery.

Elysha Rei

Tensile Connections

7 March – 5 April 2025



Elysha Rei

Sweet Gum Bonsai, 2022

Hand cut polymer paper, 100 x 70cm

\$2,750 (unframed)

Image: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and The Condensery.

Elysha Rei

Tensile Connections

7 March – 5 April 2025



Elysha Rei
Swamp Cypress Bonsai, 2022, Hand cut polymer
paper, 100 x 70cm

\$2750 (unframed)

Image: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and The Condensery.

Elysha Rei
Swamp Cypress Bonsai II, 2022, Hand cut polymer
paper, 100 x 70cm

\$2750 (unframed)

Image: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and The Condensery.



Floor Piece, Front Right:

Issei (first generation), 2022

Hand cut polymer paper, 71 x 89 cm

\$750 (unframed)

Centre Floor Piece:

Nissei (second generation) (centre floor piece), 2022

Hand cut polymer paper, 60 x 73cm

\$750 (unframed)

Floor Piece, Far Left:

Sansei (third generation) (far left floor piece), 2022

Hand cut polymer paper, 40 x 52cm

\$550 (unframed)

Wall Hang, Centre Piece:

Shi sedai (four generations) (Centre piece), 2022

Hand cut polymer paper, 112 x 75cm

\$1,650 (unframed)

Image: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and The Condensery.

Elysha Rei

Tensile Connections

7 March – 5 April 2025



Elysha Rei
Koeru (Pass Through), 2022

Hand cut polymer paper, 172 x 114cm

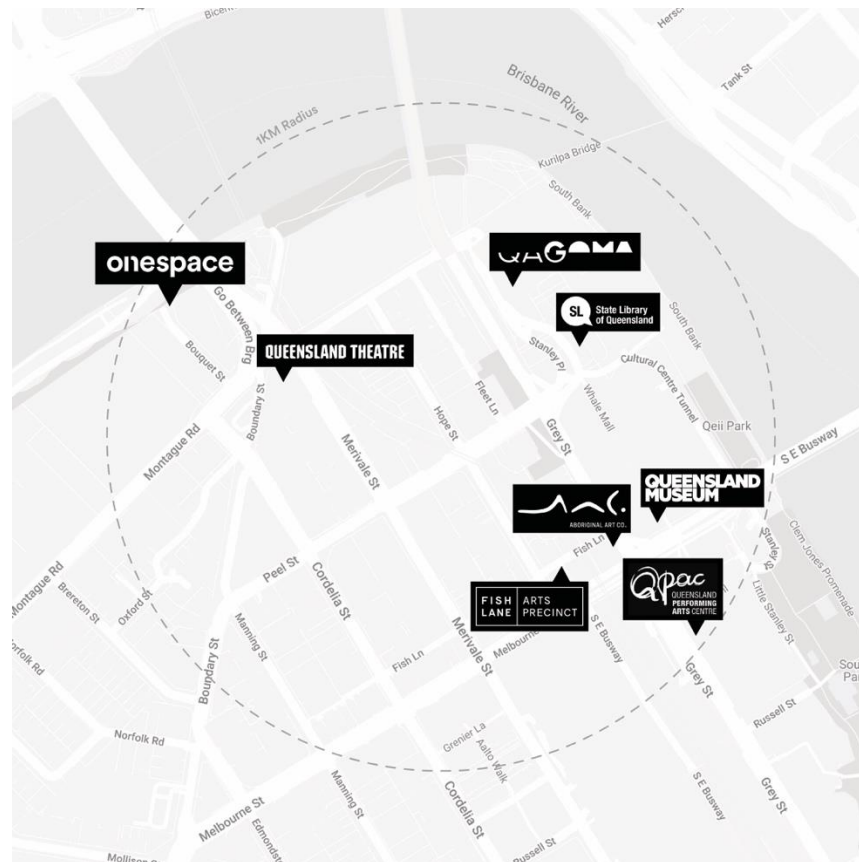
\$1,650 (unframed)

Image: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and The Condensery.

Onespace is a Brisbane-based gallery that presents and sells contemporary art, including work by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists.

We curate an exhibition program exploring diverse themes and media, showcasing emerging, mid-career and established artists whose works inform, stimulate and challenge. Onespace welcomes you to engage with the artists and artworks we exhibit.

Onespace is uniquely located adjacent to Maiwar (Brisbane river) beneath the Spice Apartments near the Go Between Bridge in South Brisbane. We are proudly surrounded by the dynamic buzz of the Queensland cultural precinct that is significant to this area of Brisbane.



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Director, Jodie Cox: jodie@onespace.com.au

Exhibitions Manager, Demi Conrad: demi@onespace.com.au

onespace.com.au

[@onespace.au](https://www.instagram.com/onespace.au)

Onespace Gallery Hours:

Wednesday to Friday 10am – 5pm, Saturday 12pm – 5pm

25A Bouquet Street, South Brisbane Q 4101 Australia

Onespace acknowledges the traditional custodians of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to the land, waters, culture and community. We pay our respects to elders past and present.