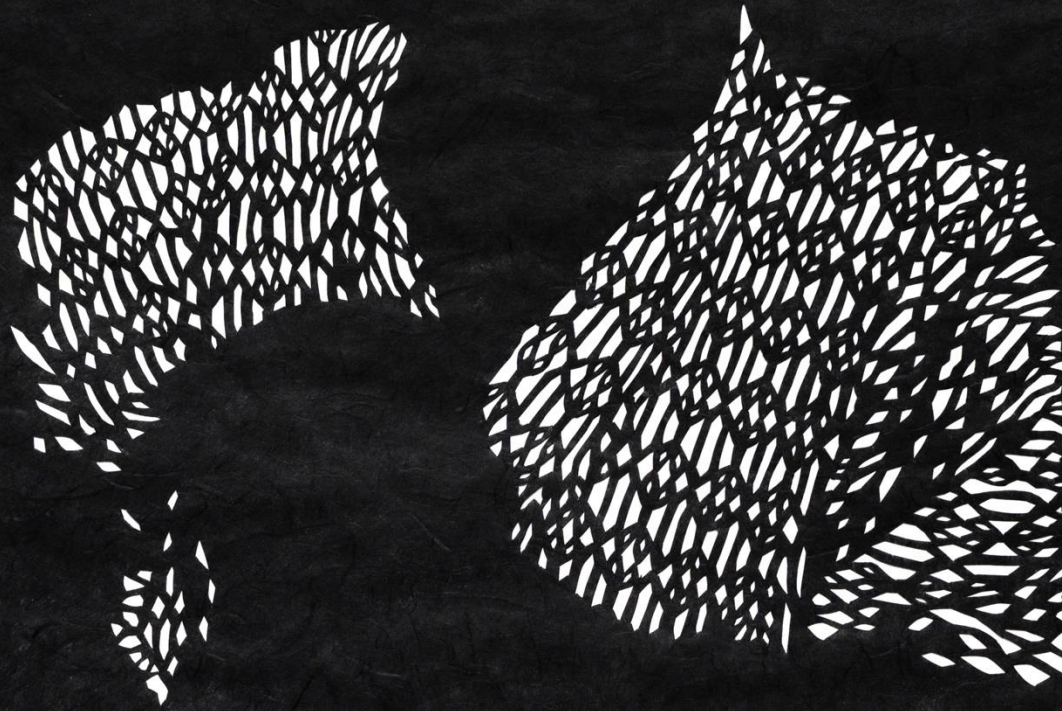


onespace



Elysha Rei

Paper Echoes

23 October – 21 November 2026

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Exhibition Dates:	23 October – 21 November 2026
Opening Event:	Thursday 22 October. Artist Talk 5:30 – 6:15pm Opening: 6:30 – 8pm
Paper Cutting Workshop:	Saturday 14 November. More information TBA.
Gallery Hours:	Tuesday to Friday, 10am – 5pm; Saturday 12pm – 5pm

Onespace proudly presents Elysha Rei's exhibition, *Paper Echoes*, in the Main Gallery. Since last exhibiting with Onespace in 2025, Elysha has had significant developments in her artistic practice, with several international group exhibitions and public art projects. Renowned for her meticulous hand-cut designs, Rei's work investigates the intersections of memory, identity, and belonging through the versatile medium of paper.

Paper Echoes sees Rei returning to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, thirty-eight years after being born in Tabuk. Here, she revisits a landscape previously known to her only through photographs, documents, family stories and archival footage.

Through paper cutting, photography, video and sound, *Paper Echoes* explores memory, inheritance and the connections between people and place. It asks how recognition can exist beyond conscious memory and how fragments of experience can reverberate across generations. Paper becomes both material and metaphor: a witness to lives recorded through passports, photographs, birth certificates and archives. Shaped by removal, preservation and chance encounters, the works consider what remains when memory is incomplete, and how inherited fragments can become part of a new, lived archive.

Paper Echoes asks us what happens to experience as it passes from one person to another, what survives the processes of remembering and forgetting, and what fragments remain capable of reverberating decades later.



Elysha Rei, *Seeds Here Opened New Outlooks*, 2026. Hand-cut black washi paper, 56 x 64cm. Photo: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Elysha Rei. Photo: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist.

Elysha Rei (b. 1986, Tabuk, Saudi Arabia) is a Japanese Australian artist based in Brisbane, Australia. Her work investigates the intersections of memory, identity, and belonging through the versatile medium of paper – often expanding into large-scale public artworks. Known for her meticulous hand-cut designs, Rei creates site-specific installations that weave together archival narratives, historical research, and cross-cultural identity. Rei holds a Bachelor of Visual Arts from the University of Southern Queensland (2008), and an MBA (2018).

Her works have been exhibited widely across Australia and internationally. Recent shows include *DIS-displaced, dispersed, dispossessed* (2026) at UVic Legacy Art Galleries, Victoria BC Canada; the International Paper Biennale Global Papier 6 (Germany, 2024) Rei has also been commissioned by Brisbane Quarter (2025), PUNQ Festival (2024) and the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre (Toronto, 2023).

In 2025, Rei represented Artisan Queensland Craft and Design at the Australian Pavilion at World Expo 2025 Osaka, participating in the cultural delegation Weaving Tomorrow's Stories: Queensland's Contemporary Craft and Design. Rei has undertaken several residencies including most recently with the Brisbane Powerhouse (2023), Past Wrongs Future Choices (University of Victoria, Canada, 2023), Tiffany & Co. Brisbane City (2022), Artspace Mackay (2020) and Barcaldine Arts Council (2019), and the inaugural artist in residence at the Museum of Brisbane.

Her works are held in the collections of the Shayher Group's Brisbane Quarter, Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre, Toowoomba Regional Art Gallery, QIC, The Westin Brisbane, Warwick Regional Council, Brisbane City Council, and The Japanese House in Ingham.

From 2022-2025, Rei was appointed the inaugural Chair of Nikkei Australia. Before dedicating herself fully to her arts practice, Rei founded the Sam Rit Residency in rural Thailand (2014) and co-founded Made Creative Space Toowoomba (2011–2013).

Artist Statement

Paper Echoes emerged from my return to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia thirty-eight years after being born in Tabuk. Until that return, my relationship to the Kingdom existed largely on paper. My passport recorded it as my place of birth, I had a Saudi birth certificate, along with photographs, family stories, objects and VHS footage made by my parents, but no conscious autobiographical memory of having lived there. It was part of my history without being part of what I could remember. What compelled me to return was not initially research or intellectual curiosity, but recognition.

When a friend sent me an image of the mountains surrounding Tabuk, I experienced an immediate and difficult-to-explain pull towards them. I had no memory of seeing those mountains, yet something about them felt familiar. I simply knew that I needed to return. That experience opened a larger question: can we recognise something that we cannot consciously remember? And if so, where does that recognition reside?

After returning, I began revisiting my parents' archive differently, noticing moments in which recognition seemed to precede remembering. Rather than treating photographs as complete images, I began searching for the fragments within them that continued to reverberate: a pattern, a horizon, a garment, a sound, a footprint, a material trace.

Paper cutting materialises this process. With every cut, a decision is made about what is removed and what remains. Memory and archives operate in much the same way. Neither preserves everything and both are shaped through selection, omission, loss, preservation and interpretation. What remains becomes the narrative. The void, then, is not necessarily an absence. Removal can reveal what carries meaning. Within *Paper Echoes*, paper becomes both material and metaphor. I think of paper as a material witness to our lives. We use it to record and verify our existence through birth certificates, passports, photographs, letters, maps and archives. It records our births, movements, relationships and deaths, and can outlive the bodies whose lives it documents. For much of my own life, Saudi Arabia existed precisely this way: as a documentary fact held by paper.

The title *Paper Echoes* also considers how memory moves between people and across generations. An echo is never identical to its source. It travels, encounters something else and returns altered. Memories behave similarly. They are transmitted through bodies, stories, photographs, documents, objects, sounds and repeated gestures. Each act of transmission may transform them, yet the impulse to leave evidence that we were here remains profoundly human.

Returning to the Kingdom complicated this process of inheritance. I travelled through landscapes I had previously known through my parents' photographs, entered the hospital in Tabuk where I was born and where they had worked, and encountered patterns and objects whose familiarity preceded my understanding of them. Chance encounters generated new relationships and journeys. I began making photographs, video and sound recordings of my own. The inherited archive was no longer something I was simply looking back into. I was beginning to add to it. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the conduit and catalyst for this body of work. My birth occurred there. My parents' memories originate there. The family archive carries its landscapes, patterns and material references. Returning generated a new energy within my practice and shifted how I understood both that archive and the methodology I had already been developing through paper cutting.

I had thought that returning might allow me to retrieve something that had been lost to memory. Instead, the journey became an act of recognition rather than retrieval. What I found was connections between inherited fragments and lived experience, between my parents' archive and the one I am now creating.

Paper Echoes asks what happens to experience as it passes from one person to another, what survives the processes of remembering and forgetting, and what fragments remain capable of reverberating decades later.

Elysha Rei

Long Ago But So Close By

What is a journey of self-discovery without an odyssey to the land in which you were born? Some of us are lucky enough to have been born, grow up, and live in one location. Others have had to move and migrate because of war, economic instability, and lack of political freedom. Elysha Rei (b. 1986) did not grow up in the land in which she was born – Saudi Arabia – and she has no memory of that land. This disconnection is familiar to many who have been displaced, and many accept it by choice or force. Rei is lucky that her family chose to leave and return to the land they call home, and that, in her odyssey to discover where she was born, she found herself recreating memories she had only seen in photographs. She comments: “I appear within that archive, but I have no memory of the experiences it records. That contradiction became fascinating to me. These are simultaneously family documents, historical records and evidence of my own existence in a place I could not remember.” For this body of works, the artist drew upon an experience she could only replicate to open a new chapter of self-discovery and repair.

Rei works with paper, cutting and shaping it into artworks that speak to her research and state of mind as a way to repair lost histories. Through her practice, she seeks the meaning and concepts behind memory, identity, and belonging. She uses the work she produces and the shapes she creates to bridge the gaps between her birthplace of Tabuk, Saudi Arabia, and both her Australian and Japanese heritage; between the contemporary and the traditional; and between the stories that have come before and after her. She also uses her art to explore different versions of herself: “There is a before and after for me, although not in the sense that returning somehow recovered something that had been lost. I did not return from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with my childhood memories restored. What changed was my understanding of what memory can be.”

Paper Echoes is the result of her practice and her odyssey: a rediscovery of memory. The series reconciles memories, a pull to another land, inheritance, and perspectives. It is a story that cannot be told from one perspective but is only completed by it. Rei is not telling the story of her parents in Tabuk; she is using the material witnesses – from the photos to her birth certificate – to tell an alternative story, not as her parents remember it, but as she would translate it into reality. With this act, she does not preserve reality: she echoes it through the act of repetition within

her treatment of paper as a way to deal with how ‘recognition can precede remembering’ and the deterioration of memory.

The Washi paper itself would say:

“I am just a material – made of bark. Yet, I represent many things. I am the witness of many moments, and my fibres are heavy with those stories. I am the documents that prove the existence of humans and the days they have spent on this Earth. I am the missing parts of the stories; I complete the cycle of search and response. I am the act of repetition – from my creation to my use, I am produced from repeated movements, and I am presented to the world through repeated movements. I help people forget and remember, so they can rewrite the story in their own words. I allow them to create a reality that does not need to match facts but to present a believable argument. I am an artwork. I am paper.”

Repetition in Rei’s work includes recognising patterns, cutting away the unnecessary, using the same material consistently, and repeating her parents’ journey. She repeats her actions to understand and analyse the fragments of her parents’ documentation. She digs into the images and pulls out patterns of recognition within the absence of memory. As Rei relays, “I became less interested in trying to reconstruct exactly what happened in 1985 and 1986 and more interested in what it means for the body to encounter traces of an experience that the conscious mind cannot recall.” Her act of cutting away all the unnecessary content, and what remains becomes the story and her own process of making memories. Her body begins to recall, through repetition, what her mind does not remember.

Whatever the ending, whatever the outcome, Rei’s odyssey helped her produce these works that reflect her own memories of her parents’ memories. While this is a moment in time from long ago, it is also close because it exists within her body as inherited memory, and in *Paper Echoes*, she brings it to life.

Hafsa Alkhudairi

Sandy Threads and Desert's Picnic

Paper Echoes

23 October – 21 November 2026

Sandy Threads and *Desert's Picnic* draw from photographs of my parents and their friends picnicking in the Saudi Arabian desert in the 1980s. Cutting directly into enlarged reproductions of these photographs, I removed the figures, objects and identifying details, reducing each image to the patterns and traces embedded within the landscape.

In *Sandy Threads*, a patterned carpet spread across the sand creates a temporary domestic space within the vastness of the desert. Isolated from the rest of the photograph, its intricate lines and motifs begin to resemble dunes, contours and shifting topographies. The carpet becomes a landscape in itself, blurring the distinction between the pattern carried into the desert and the terrain upon which it rests.

Desert's Picnic turns instead to the marks left upon the landscape. Footprints, impressions and disturbances in the sand are extracted while the people who made them disappear. These incidental marks become evidence of bodies no longer visible, preserving traces that the desert itself would eventually erase.

Together, the works consider the photograph as both image and record. One follows a pattern deliberately brought into the landscape; the other, patterns inadvertently left upon it. Translated into white washi, the original scenes are no longer immediately visible, yet their traces remain embedded within the cut surfaces.

The works reflect on how memory might operate in a similar way. Particular details disappear while textures, patterns and fragments persist. What remains is neither a complete image nor a complete recollection, but a pair of paper landscapes shaped by the traces of experiences inherited rather than remembered.

Elysha Rei



Elysha Rei

Sandy Threads, 2026

Hand-cut washi paper, 133 x 89.5cm

\$3,000

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



Elysha Rei

Deserts Picnic, 2026

Hand-cut washi paper, 133 x 89.5cm

\$3,000

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

Harmonic Heirloom recreates my mother's charm bracelet in paper, an object she assembled while living in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the 1980s. Each charm records a fragment of that period of her life, accumulating places, symbols and experiences into an intimate archive worn on the body.

As a child, the individual charms were familiar to me without my necessarily understanding their cultural references. Returning to the Kingdom thirty-eight years later transformed that familiarity into recognition. Forms I had known through my mother's bracelet appeared again in the places, objects and visual culture around me. The journey gave context to symbols that had quietly existed within my family environment for decades.

The paper bracelet is accompanied by a recording of the original jewellery being handled, its charms ringing and jingling as they move against one another. The sound offers another form of recognition. While the physical bracelet has been translated into something delicate and almost weightless, its distinctive voice remains connected to the original object.

Harmonic Heirloom considers an heirloom as more than something physically passed between generations. Objects can also transmit sounds, symbols and forms of cultural familiarity before their meanings are fully understood. Here, the bracelet becomes both a personal archive and an echo, carrying fragments of my mother's experience in Saudi Arabia into my own childhood, and returning decades later with new meaning through my experience of the same place.

Elysha Rei



Elysha Rei

Harmonic Heirloom, 2026

Gold enamel paint on hand-cut washi paper with sound component. Dimensions: 28 x 2.8cm, sound recording: 1:21.

\$2,000

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

Paternal I & II originate from two photographs of my father wearing the same patterned robe during my infancy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. I returned to these images after travelling back to the Kingdom thirty-eight years later, while reviewing my family archive and developing the ideas that would become Paper Echoes.

The repeated pattern of the robe produced an unexpected emotional recognition. I had an instant conscious memory of the garment, inciting a deep feeling of familiarity.

In both works, I omit everything else in the photographs, leaving the pattern to hold the shape and posture of my father's body. His image is absent, yet his presence remains legible through the garment. Across the two works, the same pattern shifts and folds with his body, becoming a recurring visual thread within the family archive.

The title combines *pattern* and *paternal*, reflecting my interest in the ways seemingly ordinary visual details can become carriers of familial memory. These works mark an important shift within Paper Echoes from the idea of remembering towards recognition: encountering something already familiar whose origin I can no longer consciously locate.

Elysha Rei



Elysha Rei

Patternal, 2026

Hand-cut black washi paper, 64 x 94cm

\$2,500

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



Elysha Rei

Patternal II, 2026

Hand-cut black washi paper, 64 x 94cm

\$2,500

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

Seeds Here Opened New Outlooks

Paper Echoes

23 October – 21 November 2026

Seeds Here Opened New Outlooks reflects on how returning to the Kingdom shifted not only my relationship with the past, but my sense of what might come next.

Encountering Saudi's contemporary art scene became an unexpected and significant part of my return. Visiting the Islamic Arts Biennale in Jeddah exposed me to ambitious, materially rich practices that engaged with heritage, place and identity while remaining distinctly contemporary. Equally important were conversations and connections with artists I met along the way, whose generosity and perspectives encouraged me to think differently about my own practice and where it might lead.

The work brings together the distinctive geometric forms of the former Hajj Terminal in Jeddah – the site of the Islamic Art Biennale - with patterns gathered through frottage during my return to the city. Cut and reassembled into a new composition, these fragments no longer document a single place or moment. Instead, they reflect the way encounters accumulate, overlap and alter what we carry forward.

I returned to Saudi Arabia searching for a connection to a birthplace I could not remember. What I encountered was not simply evidence of a past, but new people, ideas and ways of seeing that became part of my present.

The title here holds a personal reference, quietly acknowledging the connections that helped catalyse this shift. More broadly, it describes what the return ultimately became: the planting of something new.

Elysha Rei

Elysha Rei

Paper Echoes

23 October – 21 November 2026



Elysha Rei

Seeds Here Opened New Outlooks, 2026

Hand-cut black washi paper, 56 x 64cm

\$2,000

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

Clothed in Memory

Paper Echoes

23 October – 21 November 2026

Clothed in Memory brings together the hands and perspectives of my family across almost forty years. The work takes the form of a life-sized paper abaya, hand-cut by me and sewn by my mother, onto which digitised VHS footage filmed by my parents while living in Saudi Arabia in the 1980s is projected.

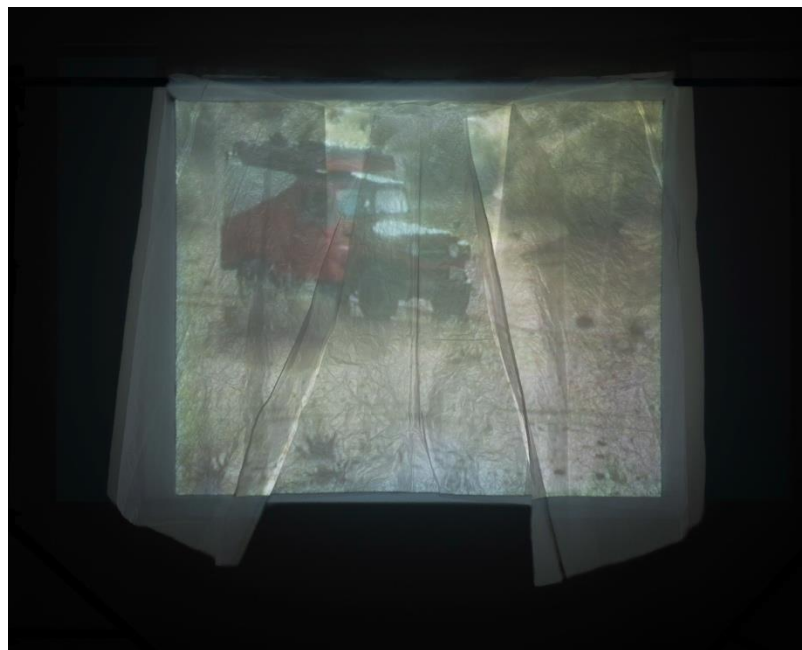
The garment draws upon the abayas my mother wore during this period, while the footage records the landscapes surrounding Tabuk shortly after I was born there. Although the family recordings contain some of my earliest years, I chose to focus on the landscape: mountains, desert plains and shifting horizons that I encountered again when I returned to Tabuk thirty-eight years later. These were places I could not consciously remember, yet experienced a powerful sense of recognition towards.

Projected across the paper garment, the landscape becomes inseparable from the body. Mountains fold into seams and creases, images disappear and re-emerge as the paper moves, and footage recorded by my parents is physically held by a garment made by their daughter and sewn by my mother decades later.

The work considers memory as something created and transmitted between people rather than held by one person alone. My father's and mother's images, my mother's sewing and my own paper-cutting practice converge within a single object, collapsing different moments of our family history into the present.

Clothed in Memory does not attempt to reconstruct a childhood I cannot remember. Instead, it gives physical form to an inherited relationship with place, one carried through my parents' images and stories before returning to me through my own encounter with the landscape. In this sense, the work is less an act of remembering than one of recognition: becoming clothed in memories that began with my parents, but have subsequently become part of my own.

Elysha Rei



Elysha Rei, Jan Hirano Kirkham and Lindsay Sales

Clothed in Memory, 2026

Hand cut and machine sewn washi paper abaya garment based on artists mother, Jan Hirano Kirkham's, pattern from Saudi Arabia. Archival video footage taken by artists parents, Jan Hirano Kirkham and Lindsay Sales in 1986, montaged as single channel video.

Video Length: 5:04; installation dimensions: 111 x 144cm.

\$6,000

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

When I arrived in Tabuk, I had one clear intention: to visit the military hospital where my parents had worked and where I was born. I had no contacts at the hospital and no idea how I might gain access.

On my first evening in the city, I set out to visit a museum and found it closed. I went next door to a tea shop to consider what to do instead. As I ordered, a man standing behind me heard me speaking English and said, “Welcome to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.” I replied, “I think you mean welcome back. I was born here.”

That man was Saad. Our conversation quickly revealed an extraordinary coincidence: he worked as a translator at the very hospital where I had been born! When I explained why I had returned to Tabuk, I asked if he could take me there. He drove me there immediately.

At the military compound, Saad explained my story and helped me gain access to the site. We drove to the hospital and I was able to see where my parents had worked. We attempted to reach the former maternity ward on the third floor, but were stopped by security due to access restrictions and the late hour. It hardly mattered. I had made it inside the hospital. A journey I had travelled thousands of kilometres to undertake, without knowing whether it would even be possible, had been enabled by a stranger I had met while ordering a cup of tea.

Saad was equally delighted to have become part of the story. Aspiring to become a tour guide, he took the following day off work and offered to drive me three hours from Tabuk to AlUla, organising a visit to the ancient tombs of Hegra along the way. That journey subsequently led me to connections in AlUla, including N.E.S.T. Gallery, creating an unexpected new pathway for *Paper Echoes*. Saad and I have remained friends since.

Not Saad, but Happy, titled after Saad’s playful way of introducing his name, holds this encounter within the journey it made possible. The work features video I recorded on our road trip from Tabuk to AlUla, accompanied by fragments of music we exchanged as we travelled. Mountains, roads and desert formations pass across the screen, echoing landscapes I had previously encountered in my parents’ photographic archive. Almost forty years after they travelled through and documented this region, I was now moving through and recording it myself.

Installed over the screen is a hand-cut paper study of the patterned textile Saad was wearing in the first photograph taken of us together, shortly after we met. His garment becomes a physical layer through which the landscape is viewed, connecting person, pattern and place within the memory of that journey.

The work considers serendipity as another way connection can be formed. My return to Tabuk began as an attempt to connect with a birthplace that, until then, had existed for me largely through documents, photographs and inherited memories. Meeting Saad transformed that abstract connection into lived experience. Through an improbable encounter, a hospital named on my birth certificate became somewhere I could enter, inherited landscapes became landscapes I could travel through, and the family archive began to expand with memories, images, sounds and relationships of my own.

Elysha Rei

Elysha Rei

Paper Echoes

23 October – 21 November 2026



Elysha Rei

Not Saad, but happy, 2026

Hand cut washi paper, single channel video file on digital tablet in box frame, 29 x 18.8 x 3cm.

\$3,000

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

Inherited Horizons I–V brings together photographs taken by my parents while living and travelling in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the 1980s. Drawn from our family archive, the images document desert journeys, roadside stops, picnics and encounters with landscapes that formed the backdrop to their lives during the years surrounding my birth.

I digitised and reassembled these individual photographs according to their horizon lines, allowing separate places and moments to meet across the edges of the images. Mountains continue into deserts photographed elsewhere; roads, dunes and rocky escarpments form new, imagined geographies. The horizon becomes the organising principle, stitching fragments of the archive into landscapes that never existed in precisely this form.

When I returned to the Kingdom, it was the landscape that generated my strongest and most unexpected sense of recognition. The mountains surrounding Tabuk felt familiar despite my having no conscious autobiographical memory of them. Returning to my parents' photographs afterwards raised questions about where that familiarity originated, and about how a relationship with place might be inherited through images, stories and repeated exposure to a family archive.

The five montages do not attempt to reconstruct my parents' journeys or recover my own forgotten landscape. Instead, they create new horizons from what was passed down to me. The photographs remain theirs, but the connections between them are mine.

Inherited Horizons I – V considers the family archive as something active rather than fixed. Images move between generations and acquire new relationships and meanings as they do. Here, the horizon becomes both a physical line through the landscape and a metaphorical thread between my parents' experience of Saudi Arabia and my own, almost forty years apart.

Elysha Rei



Elysha Rei

Inherited Horizon I, 2026

\$3,500

Inherited Horizon II, 2026

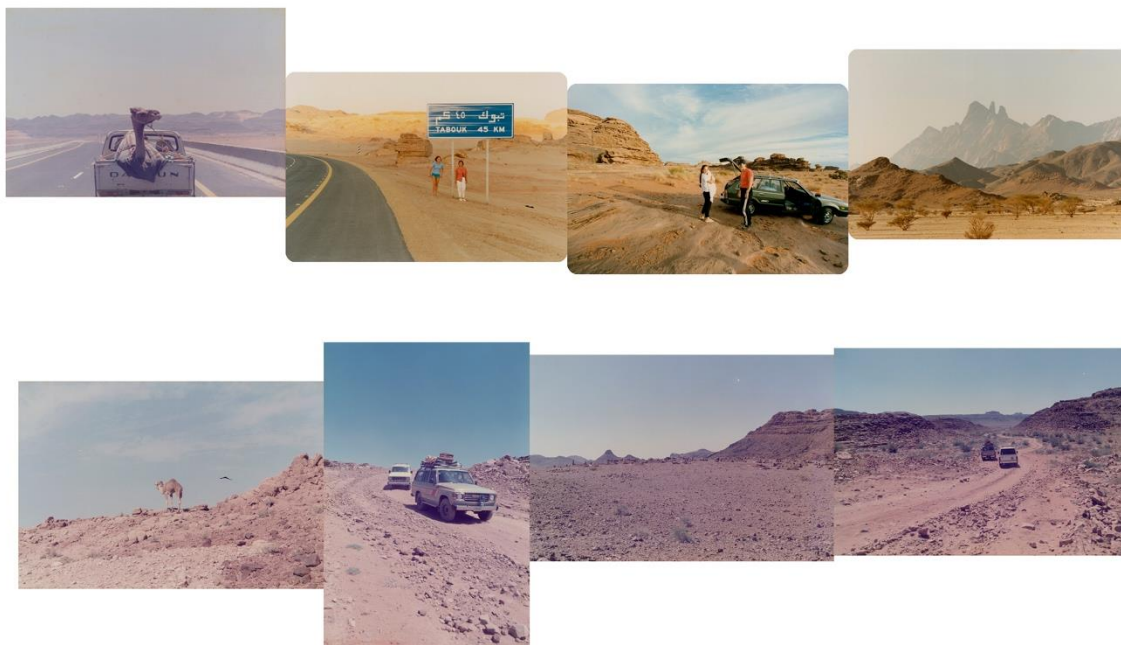
\$3,500

Inherited Horizon III, 2026

\$2,000

Individual sets of photo montages of archival photos taken by artists parents, Jan Hirano Kirkham and Lindsay Sales, in 1986. Printed as Giclee print on Hahnemühle cotton rag paper, individual set dimensions vary.

Photo: Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Elysha Rei

Inherited Horizon IV, 2026

Inherited Horizon V, 2026

Individual sets of photo montages of archival photos taken by artists parents, Jan Hirano Kirkham and Lindsay Sales, in 1986. Printed as Giclee print on Hahnemühle cotton rag paper, individual set dimensions vary.

\$2,500 (each)

Photo: Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

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

Gallery Assistant, Poppy Saines: poppy@onespace.com.au

Project Manager & Artist Liaison, Tamika Grant-Iramu: tamika@onespace.com.au

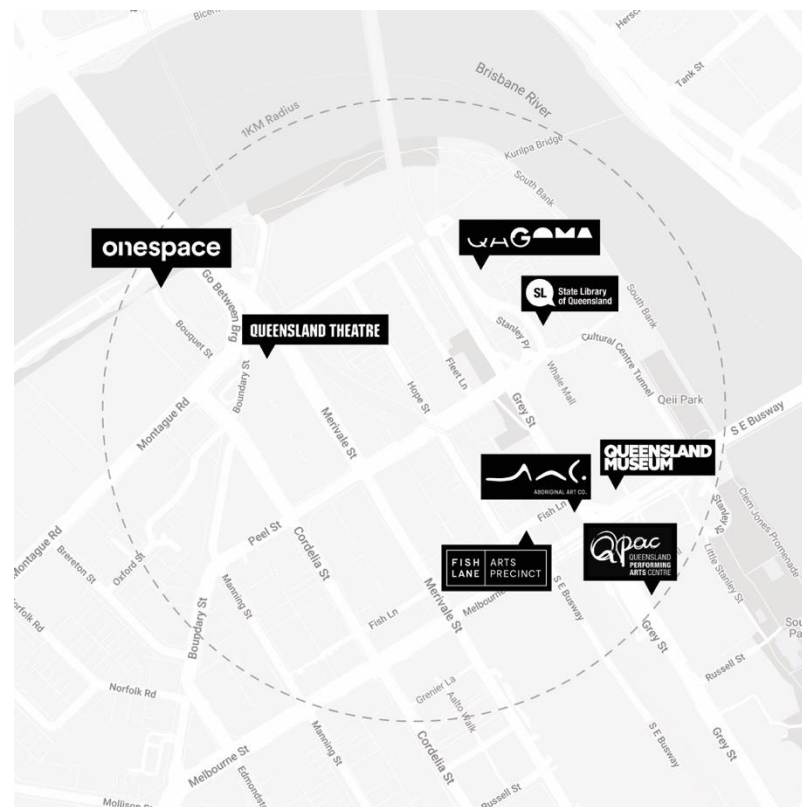
onespace.com.au

@onespace_au

Onespace Gallery Hours:

Tuesday 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.

Elysha Rei would like to acknowledge and thank Abdulmohsen Albinali, Saad Alharbi, Hafsa Alkudairi, Mohammed Bay, Becky Bligh, Jan Kirkham, Samuel Mayze, Lindsay Sales and Muhannad Shono.