

APHIDS

ANNUAL REPORT 2024



APHIDS acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Boonwurrung peoples on whose lands we live and work. Sovereignty was never ceded and we pay our respect to past and present Aboriginal elders and community, and to their long and rich history of artmaking and culture on this Country.

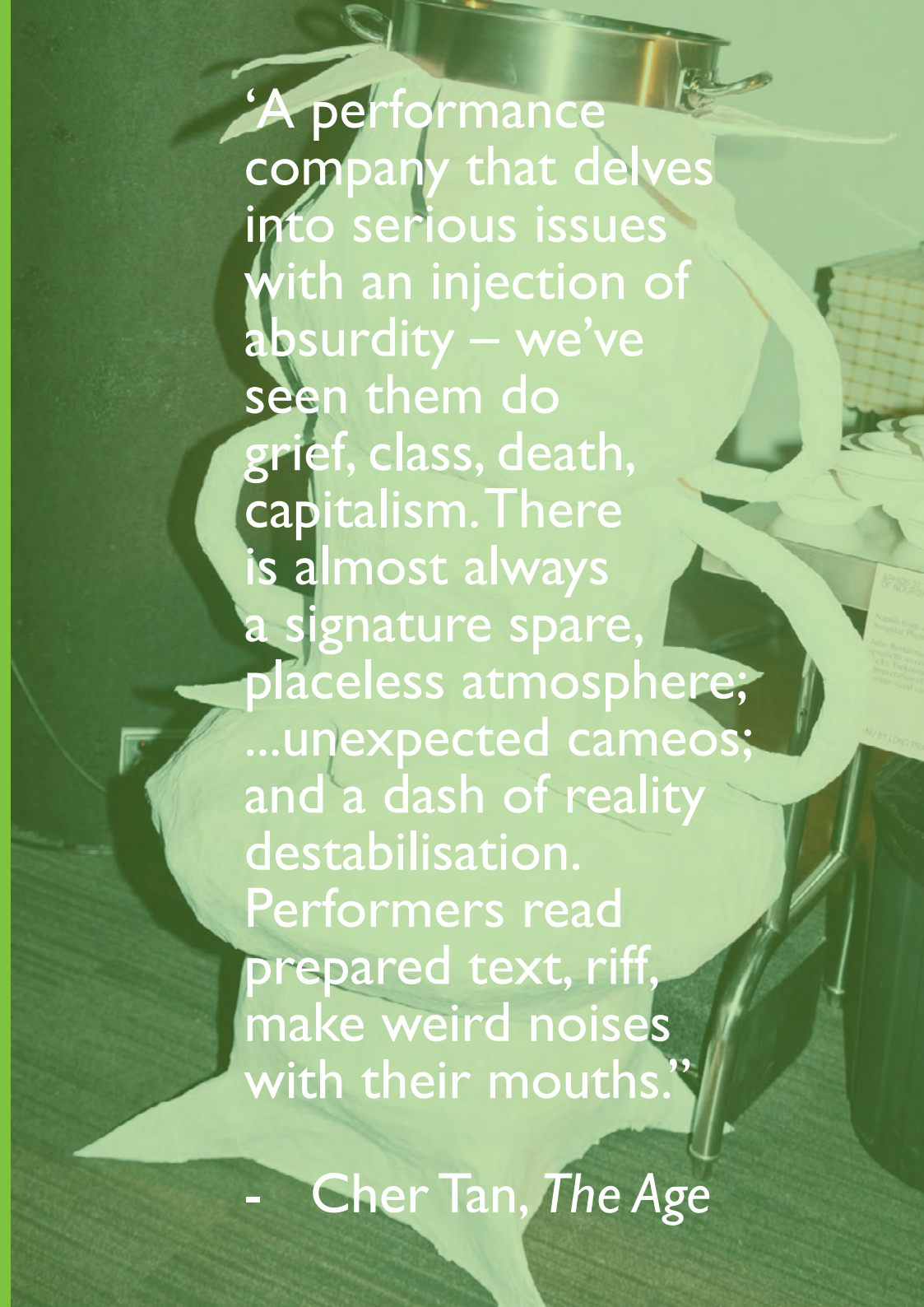
ABOUT

APHIDS is a proudly artist-led organisation, placing artistic practice at the centre of all that we do. As one of Naarm/Melbourne's longest-standing experimental art platforms, APHIDS occupies a space between the performative, the visual, and the civic. Our work is unapologetically political—spanning performing arts, moving image, publications and public art—and is grounded in a passionate belief in the social impacts of art.

Every project begins with lived experience—as a generative and contested site of knowledge. APHIDS prioritises collaboration while resisting the instrumentalisation of community. Many of our works are developed through conversation and research with 'citizen experts'—individuals with embodied knowledge—who become paid collaborators as projects evolve into multi-form outcomes with long lives.

Based at Collingwood Yards on unceded Kulin lands, we create conditions for meaningful exchange between artists and publics. Our works are not end points, but porous frameworks for collective thinking and doing. These public moments are interwoven with mentorships, peer exchange, and intergenerational dialogue that value transmission over product, and process over prestige.

This is how we imagine a future for art: collective, critical, and in constant conversation with the world.



‘A performance company that delves into serious issues with an injection of absurdity – we’ve seen them do grief, class, death, capitalism. There is almost always a signature spare, placeless atmosphere; ...unexpected cameos; and a dash of reality destabilisation. Performers read prepared text, riff, make weird noises with their mouths.’

- Cher Tan, *The Age*

STAFF

Lara Thoms, Co-Artistic Director + Executive Director
Mish Grigor, Co-Artistic Director
Dani Reynolds, Company Coordinator
Freya Waterson, International Market Consultant
Michaela Coventry, Financial and Strategic Consultant
Rebecca McCauley, Graphic Designer
Au Nguyen, FAME Group, Bookkeeper
Amaara Raheem, TRIAD
Amrita Hepi, TRIAD
Sammaneh Poutshfighi, TRIAD

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

Angharad Wynne-Jones, Chair
Georgie Meagher, Deputy Chair
Monir Safari, Treasurer
Rebecca Liley, Secretary
Marc Goldenfein, Member
Dr. Meredith Martin, Member

COLLABORATORS

Alice Dixon - artist
Amaara Raheem - artist
Amrita Hepi (Bundjalung /Ngapuhi) - artist
Anna Nalpanidis - producer
Ari Tampubolon - artist
Ash Flanders - artist
Brigid Gallacher - artist
Cassandra Fumi - artist
Catherine Ryan - artist
d duan - artist
David Young - artist
Deborah Kayser - artist
Dr George Criddle - artist
Dudo Wook - artist
Eden Falk - artist
Elena Gomez - artist

Emmaline Zanelli - artist
Eugenia Lim - artist
Fred Mora - artist
Gregory Lorenzutti - photography
Ibrahim Halacoglu - artist
Jason Hood - artist
Jen Hector - artist
Jenny Hector - artist
Joshua Tavares - artist
Julia Murphy - artist
K. Baxter - artist
Lauren Stephens - artist
Liv Fay - artist
Lz Dunn - artist
Negar Rezvani - artist
Nina Buchanan - artist
Panda Wong - artist
Pony Cam - artist
Reuben Cumming - Production
Robert Draffin - artist
Rosemary Joy - artist
Samara Hersch - artist
Sammaneh Pourshafghi - artist
Sheila Ngoc Pham - artist
Sullivan Patten - artist
Taleshi Kondo - video
Thea Baumann - artist
Theona Councillor (Naaguja-Wilunyu) - artist
Thomas McCammon - photography
Tilman Robinson - artist
Tom Smith - artist
Tommy Thoms - artist
Tra Mi Dinh - artist
Verity Mackey - artist
Yoni Prior - artist
Zoe Dawson - artist

Money spent on artists' wages

\$345 314

1

keynote work
premiere

2

interstate
tours

2

new works
in development

100%

Core staff
identifying as a
woman/non binary

60%

Contracted artists
identifying as
a woman/non binar

50%

Contracted artists
identifying as part
of the LGBTQIA+
community

ORGANISATIONAL ENGAGEMENT

7059

Social media
followers

1626

Newsletter
subscribers

80

Number of artists
employed

VISION

Urgent art for urgent times
- exploding what art can be
and who it can be made with.

PURPOSE

To be critical and active in
social concerns by making
outspoken and unexpected
art.

MISSION

To create dynamic and
unexpected art across
accessible and high- profile
platforms.

To collaborate with people
inside and outside the
arts, to bring attention to
social, political and cultural
concerns.

To interrogate power
structures and create radical
ways of working together.



VALUES

WE ARE ARTIST LED - placing artists and
collaborators at the centre.

WE CENTRE LIVED EXPERIENCE -
collaborating with and paying citizen experts —
those with lived experience of the issues that we
are investigating.

WE CHALLENGE THE STATUS QUO - making
projects inspired by contemporary issues, and
motivated by a passionate belief in the social
impacts of art making.

WE WELCOME EVERYBODY IN - creating
shared experiences that are accessible yet
rigorous in concept, content and form.

WE PUSH FORM AND STRADDLE
PLATFORMS - making art across contexts: in
the public realm, major institutions, festivals,
galleries, online, and unexpected sites that attract
audiences of all walks of life.

WE SHARE KNOWLEDGE - privileging
knowledge sharing and intergenerational
exchange and valuing collaboration over
competition.

WE IMAGINE A BETTER WORLD - prioritising
ethical practices and sustainability for ourselves,
our sector and our society.

WE BEND AND RESPOND - experimentation
requires fluidity. We pay attention to when the
temperature is shifting.

WE MAKE IT TOGETHER - at the centre of art
making is building community.

PROFILE

Now celebrating its 30th anniversary, Melbourne performance group APHIDS helped to create a DIY feminist queer aesthetic that reshaped the art form globally.

By Jana Perković.

The anti-institutional wisdom of APHIDS' Lara Thoms and Mish Grigor



Artists Lara Thoms (left) and Mish Grigor.

CREDIT: BRYONY JACKSON

DIRECTORS REPORT

Our biggest achievement in 2024 was marking APHIDS' 30th anniversary — a significant milestone that offered a chance to reflect, reconnect, and celebrate with generations of experimental art makers and audiences. The event paid homage to APHIDS' inaugural project, *An Evening of Performance*, with artists spanning three decades gathering to perform, talk, eat, and dance. The evening drew a sold-out crowd and raised funds for our collective future.

To accompany the celebration, we launched a targeted publicity campaign underscoring the importance of artist-run organisations and experimentation in the arts ecology. This resulted in a feature profile in *The Saturday Paper*. Alongside this, we published *Back and Forth*, a commissioned collection of essays reflecting on APHIDS' dynamic history. Delving into our archives — uncovering decades of ideas, beliefs, and practices — was a moving and energising experience.

As the arts sector's post lockdown 'project push' seemed to calm, APHIDS focused on our legacy and commitment to making work that engages with pressing social and political issues. Lara led a new performance, *Edging* with TRIAD member Sammaneh Pourshafighi, interrogating popular culture and border policy. This work re-connected us with long-term partner Arts House, and sold out its season two weeks in advance.

Another major highlight was standing in the green room of the Sydney Opera House, as we kicked off the *Class Act* tour. This performance, created and performed by Mish Grigor, also led to APHIDS' first novella, *You Beauty* — a sharp, funny, and meta-reflection of the work.

Beyond these major projects, our year included helping build a giant BBQ in Fed Square, touring with TRIAD member Amrita Hepi to the FTA Festival in Montréal, mentoring four artists, and hosting workshops — embodying the adaptability and reach of an artist-led organisation.

Thank you always to all of the collaborating artists and community, to our project partners, and to our generous board members.

Lara Thoms + Mish Grigor
Co- Artistic Directors

CHAIR'S REPORT

I'm excited to reflect on another year of creative growth and innovation for APHIDS in our 30th year and the magnificent celebration that brought together many of the collaborators over three decades of experimentation.

Despite the challenges we are facing as a sector, we've continued to push the boundaries of artistic practice whilst staying true to our vision and purpose of exploring new ideas, engaging with diverse communities, and providing a platform for exciting new voices. It's been a year of courageous projects, meaningful collaborations, and a continued commitment to doing things differently.

One of the highlights of the year was the new work *Edging*, led by Lara Thoms with Triad member Sammaneh Pourshafighi, interrogating popular culture and border policy in partnership with our friends, ARTSHOUSE. Meanwhile Mish Grigor's *Class Act* toured across the country including to the Sydney Opera House, no less. APHIDS has always experimented across the breadth of forms and genres, from live performance to film and installations, and now we can add publishing novellas to the list, with Mish Grigor's *You Beauty*.

It's a privilege to witness Lara and Mish mature as artists and as leaders of APHIDS as they successfully navigate the challenges and opportunities of co-artistic leadership and prove the worth of experimentation and risk for us all. Equally impressive is their commitment to the sector and supporting artists at all phases of their practice with such generosity.

We are so delighted to have the support of Creative Australia over the next four years, together with our local and state funding partners. Whilst it provides a level of stability that is essential to the success of the work our sector continues to operate in a tough environment, with our partners and colleagues navigating the impacts of the cost of living crisis and reduced state funding. APHIDS has proven its resilience and has made sure we're staying financially stable so we can keep delivering our programs.

Looking ahead, we'll continue to explore new contexts for our work and ways to engage audiences in deeper, more meaningful ways. Overall, 2024 has been a year both of growth and consolidation for Aphids. Thank you to the board members who invest their time, energy and funds in the company. Particularly thanks to outgoing board members Marc Goldenfein and Rebecca Liley. And on behalf of the board, I want to thank Mish and Lara, our incredible team, the artists we collaborate with, and our supporters for everything you've contributed. Together, we'll keep pushing the boundaries of experimental art and continue to make a difference.

Thank you!

Angharad Wynne-Jones
APHIDS CHAIR





TRIAD

The TRIAD is a space for long artistic conversations, and deep reflection over a multi year period. At a time when artists are encouraged to be output focused, in a context where their knowledge is extracted, in a world where their identities are traded as capital, the APHIDS TRIAD is an intervention.

Embedded inside of the company, the artists are often regular collaborators who are paid to actively work on projects. This year included co-creating keynotes such as *Edging*, taking on choreography roles and leading *APHIDS LISTENS*.

Additionally, the TRIAD's year is punctuated with paid meetups of critical conversations and care.

Dr Amaara Raheem is a Sri Lankan born dance-artist, writer and researcher. As part of her time as Thinker in Residence with APHIDS, she is researching methods of 'in-residence' as ways to reveal alternative narratives within colonial and decolonial systems.

Sammaneh Pourshafghi is a queer genderfluid Muslim who arrived in Australia as a refugee after the Iranian Revolution. Sammaneh is a hereditary witch, producer and multidisciplinary artist.

Amrita Hepi is an award-winning First Nations choreographer and dancer from Bundjalung (Aus) and Ngapuhi (NZ) territories. Her mission as an artist is to push the barriers of intersectionality and make work that garners multiple access points.



‘A brilliant blend of absurdist humour, serious undertones and physicality to prove their point, *Edging* isn’t afraid to push buttons.’

- Theatre Matters



EDGING

“EDGING is an extraordinary collaboration by exceptional artists who tell a story that is rarely heard.”

– Multicultural Arts Victoria

“Edging is a constantly surprising, very funny, very original, sly little show...Under the comedy, there is a sharp intelligence and a challenging wit, delivered so smoothly that we only realise and wince at the accusations later.”

– Stage Whispers

Blending humour, political critique and Australian border control practices, EDGING playfully interrogated institutional control, injected with pop culture. This powerful pat down uncovered the practices that border protection officials have tried to keep in the closet.

EDGING premiered at ArtsHouse, Melbourne in November 2024 to a sold out audience.

Director, Co-creator | Lara Thoms
Performers, Co-creators | Sammaneh Pourshafighi and Eden Falk
Dramaturg | Samara Hersch
Consultant | Negar Rezvani
Sound Design | Tilman Robinson
Video and Systems Design | Id duàn
Set and Costume Design | Kate Baxter (KB) and Lara Thoms
Lighting | Jenny Hector
Supporting Artist | Cassandra Fumi

YOU BEAUTY

You Beauty is the publishing debut of Co-Director Mish Grigor. A companion piece to *Class Act* (2023), this novella is a meta exploration of class and identity told with wit and humour.

This is a story about a middle class person trying to have a nice night out at a theatre show they heard about on some vaguely credible mailing list. Sounds fairly pedestrian, but there is a twist: the middle class person is you.

With her signature humour and tongue firmly in cheek, Mish Grigor has written a performance in a book.

APHIDS hosted a public launch event for the book at Readings in Carlton.

No APHIDS project has a singular outcome — moments of ‘going public’ in a project’s timeline may include publications, lectures, performances, workshops, exhibitions and screenings. *You Beauty* continues this commitment to polyphonic presentations.

Writer | Mish Grigor

Texts | Zoey Dawson, Sheila Ngoc Pham

Editors | Elena Gomez, Rebecca Fletcher

Designer | Rebecca McCauley





AN EVENING OF PERFORMANCE II

APHIDS was delighted to hold an event for our collaborators, artists, funders and community.

Over 30 years of artistic reinvention, APHIDS is still artist-run and is still making work that defies description.

In a house in 1994, a group of artists held a night called *An Evening of Performance*. It was part gallery opening, part concert, and part party. The event left a lasting impression on both guests and performers, leading the collaborators to continue collectively as 'APHIDS.'

An Evening of Performance II celebrated APHIDS' lineage and looked to the future with performances, video work, installations, music, food and speeches.

Artists | Thea Baumann, Lz Dunn, Tra Mi Dinh, David Young, Sammaneh Pourshafighi, Ponycam, Deborah Kayser, Catherine Ryan, Long Prawn, Sullivan.

Contributions | Willoh S Weiland, Rosemary Joy, Bec McCauley, Frances Barrett, Nat Thomas, Gena Reiss, Noni Simmons, KB, Dennis Young, Alex Wass.

CLASS ACT ON TOUR

"Class Act is refreshing and confronting. With smart directorial choices and two performers that sit right on the edge of many people's comfort zone, it's the kind of show that constantly challenges and surprises"

– Cultural Binge

Class Act is a sharp and comedic dissection of class politics and social mobility in Australia.

Working class unfortunate Mish Grigor tells the story of a grotesque world of class and social mobility straight from her dirty mouth. In this bombastic and unexpected deconstruction of *My Fair Lady*, Mish, joined by dancer Alice Dixon, shines a light on the unseen costs of a social glow up.

Class Act originally premiered at The Substation in 2022. In 2024 APHIDS were proud to tour this work to Vitalstatistix, Adelaide and to the Sydney Opera House as part of their Unwrapped Series.

Lead Artist + Performer | Mish Grigor
Performer | Alice Dixon
Designer, Dramaturg | Lara Thoms
Director, Script Dramaturg | Zoey Dawson
Lighting Designer | Jen Hector
Sound Designer | Nina Buchanan
Production Manager | Reuben Cumming
Production Co-ordinator | Dani Reynolds
Tour Producer | Freya Waterson



BACK AND FORTH

As part of the 30th Birthday celebrations, APHIDS created *Back and Forth*, a limited edition publication of essays reflecting on the past 30 years of collaboration and art making.

“With APHIDS... we are fighting for the right to shift forms, to move around, and for experimentation” - Mish Grigor

“The people we work with through APHIDS are usually doing more than it is possible to credit them for, putting their hands up for tasks often as unexpected as the art itself.”- Lara Thoms

“This mission of APHIDS, to open up a space of freedom to create, for themselves and others, a space where we don’t pay rent to sit down and where we just encounter each other, is not only rightfully seen as part of their artistic practice. It is also a civic practice. - Jana Perkovic

Texts | Jana Perkovic, Lara Thoms, Mish Grigor
Editors | Julia Murphey
Designer | Lauren Stephens





DESTINY

DESTINY is a moving-image work made in collaboration with on-demand or 'gig economy' workers, including rideshare drivers and food delivery riders that explores personal and global experiences of the platform economy, led by Eugenia Lim.

In 2024 DESTINY was presented at Glasshouse Regional Gallery, Art Gallery of New South Wales and Singleton Arts and Cultural Centre.

APHIDS
LISTENS
2024

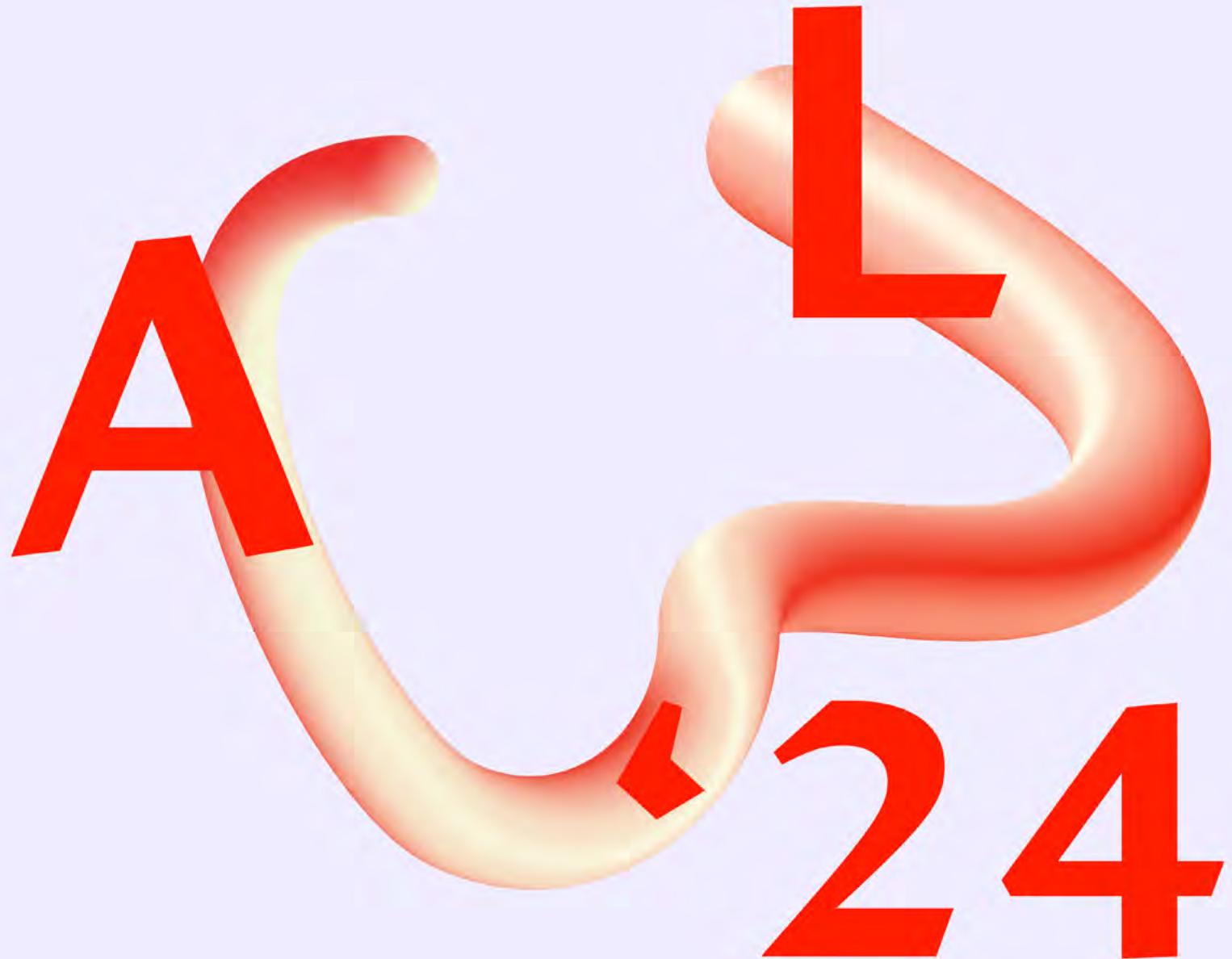
APHIDS LISTENS is a 10 year alternative archive where artists shared a work they'd made and a work they'd loved. Our 2024 episodes were curated and hosted by Triad member Amaara Raheem.

Episode 19

Thea Baumann, current Artistic Director and CEO of 4A, and a previous Executive Producer of APHIDS. Together they speak about Metaverse Makeovers, Signe Pierce, the KLF and the ethics of turning ashes into sculptures.

Episode 20

David Young, the founding Artistic Director of APHIDS from 1994-2009. David is a meditator, Alexander Technique practitioner, and he composes. Together they speak about memorable projects, the origin of APHIDS' name, perception, and composing.





SUPERDRIVE

SUPERDRIVE is APHIDS' artist development program, designed to accelerate ambitious ideas and support mid-career artists to take their projects to the next level. In a time of reduced programming across the sector, SUPERDRIVE is a strategic initiative that embeds APHIDS within some of the most innovative projects being developed today. By partnering with leading organisations and collaborating closely with artists as dramaturgs, directors, producers and critical allies, we remain at the centre of exciting art-making and sector transformation.

COOKED

FED SQUARE MELBOURNE FRINGE
APHIDS supported Long Prawn to present a performative grilling event and public artwork, *COOKED*. This three week program saw artists and chefs collaborating over a BBQ, supported by live music, performance and snacks. Dramaturgy by Lara Thoms with artists including David Williams and Ari Angkasa.

SOAPIE

IN DEVELOPMENT

Soapie is a new performance work created by Samara Hersch, in collaboration with Lara Thoms about family, queerness and disability.

THE INVISIBLE OPERA RINSE

PERTH FESTIVAL

The Invisible Opera is a contemporary music theatre work for audiences in public space created by Sophia Brous with Lara Thoms, Samara Hersch and Tilman Robinson. *The Invisible Opera* was presented on Scarborough Beach working with local performers.

FTA, MONTREAL

A solo dance work by choreographer and First Nations artist Amrita Hepi that explores the romance of beginnings and what happens next, when those initial thrills begin to fade and inertia takes over.

Created and performed by Amrita Hepi
Created and Directed by Mish Grigor.



SUPERDRIVE



SUPERDRIVE

THE FIRST BAD MAN

**RISING + UNDER THE RADAR
FESTIVALS**

A live performance based on a reading of *The First Bad Man*, a novel by Miranda July. This unclassifiable show was co-created by Mish Grigor and Pan Pan Theatre (Ireland.)

888 REST

RISING FESTIVAL

An ambient meditation on care and control and the commodification of relaxation by the neoliberal machine. This eight hour overnight event took place at the Arts Centre Melbourne, created by Harriet Gillies and Marcus McKenzie with dramaturg Lara Thoms.



IN DEVELOPMENT

CRISIS AVERTED

A contemporary performance work that examines how individuals and institutions fail to confront potential threats. The project takes a humorous yet critical look at how we attempt to stave off our fears, led by Mish Grigor and supported by The Substation.

DEAD PARENTS CLUB

Dead Parents Club is a feature length hybrid documentary that blends observational filming, experimental performance and cultural analysis to explore the orphan trope in popular culture. The film follows artists who have lost a parent, as they take on famous orphan characters and build a performance together.

SUPERMASSIVE

SUPERMASSIVE is APHIDS' exchange program, designed to support intergenerational knowledge exchange and development of artistic pathways. 2024 saw Lara work with:

Dr George Criddle is an artist, writer, and occasional curator who makes socially engaged artworks engaging with history, family, land use, and colonial silence.

Theona Councillor is a Naaguja-Wilunyu woman whose ancestors are from the Greenough and Bowes Rivers. With over 20 years of experience in the music industry and is developing her first opera.

Emmaline Zanelli is a lens-based artist who uses combinations of video, photography, sculpture and performance. She creates work that finds humour and meaning in the everyday.

Charlie Lee is a set and costume designer, and artist interested in using material-led processes as a means of queer worldbuilding, particularly in dance, devised, and community driven works.

SUPERMASSIVE DROP IN CENTRE

In a partnership with Melbourne University, APHIDS SUPERMASSIVE invited form-disrupting Victorian artists to book in for free one on one sessions to discuss their practice with APHIDS Co-Directors. Ten artists from a range of practices and experience levels joined us at Buxton Contemporary.



ADVOCACY AND INDUSTRY

MISH

- Attended Under the Radar Festival and ISPA (International Society For The Performing Arts) in New York City.
- Undertook board governance training with Creative Australia.
- Performed at Sophia Club discussion evening.
- Attended ISPA Series at the Edinburgh Fringe.

LARA

- Led a workshop at Perth Festival on site specific performance for secondary school teachers.
- Was interviewed for Georgina Bright's Melbourne University Masters Thesis.
- Attended APAM gathering for Rising Festival.
- Participated in Liveworks delegates program, Performance Space, Sydney
- Participated in the Experimental and Emerging Arts sector gathering at Adhocracy, presented by VitalStatistix, Adelaide.
- Attended Creative Australia's Victorian organisations forum, Malthouse

LARA+ MISH

- Took part in the Accelerate Leadership Development Program for Women by Nell Wilson Consulting across eight days.
- Supported emerging artists through The Substation's 'Art Date' program.



WOOKSHOP

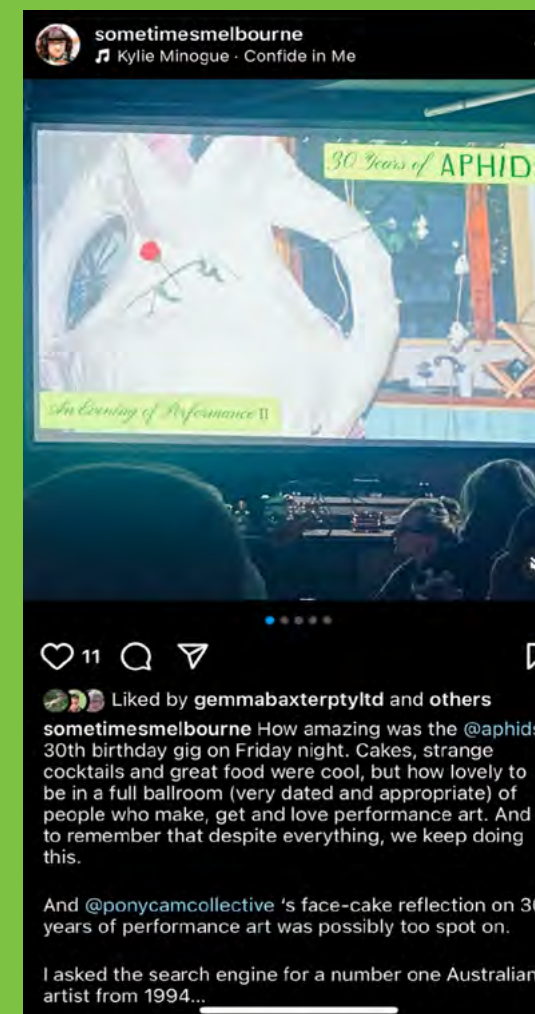
Wook joined us from Seoul to present a free workshop to twelve artists working with film, video, performance or experimental practice at Collingwood Yards, presented with Long Prawn and Fringe.

Wook is a video artist and creator of STEAK film, which hosts underground queer screenings and parties, challenging pop culture through discussion and cinema.

AFF EXPAND LAB

Lara was an artist selected for Adelaide Film Festival's Expand Lab - a collaborative development initiative where 30 Australian visual artists, video artists, filmmakers, writers, and XR and VR creatives come together to learn from each other, work with renowned mentors, and develop bold new moving image projects for Australian audiences and beyond.

“Grigor’s enormous charisma, which seems to sheet off her in beatific waves, combines with a strong core of highly-strategic physicality and a suite of performance-art elements to create layers of meaning well beyond what is said.” - In Daily



“Edging showed how the same creative arts and pop culture tactics deployed to support brutal government policies are equally able to lift the veil on them, to ensure the real life experiences of those affected are remembered by mainstream culture.”

- ArtsHub

THANK YOU

APHIDS GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGES
OUR MANY COLLABORATORS, SUPPORTERS,
PARTNERS AND FRIENDS WHO HAVE
CONTRIBUTED TO OUR ONGOING PROGRAM.

A huge thanks to our kind and generous
community of donors.

APHIDS is proudly part of the Climate Action
Union and Theatre Network Australia.

The Directors directors support Pay the Rent
(First Nations sovereignty) on a monthly basis.

PARTNERS

Creative Australia
Creative Victoria
City of Melbourne
Arts House
The Substation
Collingwood Yards
Long Prawn
Sydney Opera House
Vitalstatistix
Melbourne University
Buxton Contemporary
Readings

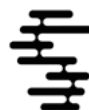
APHIDS is assisted by the Australian
Government through Creative Australia, its
principal arts investment and advisory body,
the Victorian Government through Creative
Victoria and the City of Melbourne through its
Arts & Culture Investment Program.



**COLLINGWOOD
YARDS**

ARTS HOUSE

VITALSTATISTIX



Readings
MELBOURNE'S OWN SINCE 1969



**BUXTON
CONTEMP
ORARY**

WWW.APHIDS.NET



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