ANNUAL REPORT 2025

APHIDS

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 impact 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.

ANNUAL TURNOVER **$468 031**
MONEY SPENT ON ARTIST
AND CREATIVES WAGES **$382 603**

3 PREMIERES	**3** UPCOMING WORKS	**10** TOUR VENUES
53% LGBTIQ+ ARTISTS	**72%** WOMEN or NONBINARY ARTISTS	**100%** WOMEN or NONBINARY STAFF
1843 SUBSCRIBERS	**62** ARTISTS EMPLOYED	**9283** SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWS

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
Au Nguyen, FAME Group, Bookkeeper
Amrita Hepi, QUAD
Sammaneh Poutshfighi, QUAD
Julia Croft, QUAD
NIsha Madhan, QUAD

BOARD

Angharad Wynne-Jones, Chair
Georgie Meagher, Deputy Chair
Monir Safari, Treasurer
Ben Weintraub , Secretary
Sullivan Patten, Member
Diletta Legowo, Member
Michaela Coventry, Member (until Sept)

COLLABORATORS

Alice Quinn Banville
Anna Nalpantidis
Ari Tampubolon
Ash Flanders
Babs Rapeport
Blu Jay
Brigid Gallagher
Cassandra Fumi
Cathy Tipping
Celina Mack
Charlie Webb
Daniel Jenatsch
Danish Sheikh
Emily Parsons-Lord
Elena Gomez
Faith Jones
Francesca Carey
Fred Mora
Gabriella Imrichova
Georgia Banks
Grace Connors
Grace Macpherson
Gregory Lorenzutti
Hanto Canto
Harrie Hogan
Harriet Gillies
Ibrahim Halacoglu
Jason Hood
Johanna Cosgrove
Joshua Tavaras
Katie Sfetkidis
Lauren Stephens
Liz Rosenfeld
Lorena Corso
Lz Dunn
Marcus McKenzie
Margot Morales
Mazzy Ronaldson
Patrick McCabe
Rebecca Jensen
Rebecca McCauley
Samara Hersch
Solly Frank
Takeshi Kondo
Thomas McCammon
Tom Smith
Tommy Thoms
Verity Mackey
Xanthe Dobbie

PARTNERS

Creative Australia
Creative Victoria
City of Melbourne
Yarra City Arts
Collingwood Yards
naarm ngarrgu Library
Town Hall
Pan Pan Theatre
Performing Lines
Kensington Town Hall
Queer PowerPoint
RISING
RMIT Culture Galleries
Substation
Long Prawn
National Gallery of Victoria
Vitalstatistix

VISION

A world where artists redefine what art can be and who it can be made with.

PURPOSE

To create outstanding art through deep thinking and unexpected collaborations that respond to our complex world.

MISSION

To lead through artistic innovation and experimental practice.

To honour our legacy while pushing the boundaries of contemporary art.
To create dynamic art across accessible and high profile platforms.

To actively respond to political and social challenges through our artistic work.

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.

DIRECTORS REPORT

2025 was an eclectic year — hyper-local experiments alongside expansive international touring.

Yfel, developed and presented with Pan Pan Theatre Company (Ireland), received rave reviews at Project Arts Centre in Dublin. Marcus McKenzie and Mish Grigor delved into the ethically murky edges of art-making in a production that was both hilarious and eerie. Closer to home, *Eating Out* transformed Kensington Town Hall into a multi-course performance extravaganza, reflecting on meat consumption, gender-fluid oysters, and the unexpected connection between Microsoft's Clippy and pineapples.

Mish's collaborations with Amrita Hepi on *RINSE* and *The Act* (produced by Performing Lines) continued to gain momentum. Rinse work toured to the world-renowned Festival d'Avignon (France) and APHIDS favourite Transform Festival in Leeds (UK), alongside several other international venues.

Back in Naarm, we hosted our first major advocacy event, *Resilience Roundtables,* supported by the City of Yarra — a gathering that reimagined forms of sector-led support for artists locally and nationally. Through our Supermassive program, Lara supported Georgia Banks to perform for the first time in a theatre context at Platform, Geelong, whilst Mish supported Zack Lewin with the creation of his Mate Manawa series outcome HOT YOGA, a meta-autobiographical publication project. We celebrated these projects in a shared book launch with international and emerging queer artists.

2025 marked our first year as a four-year funded organisation with Creative Australia, providing greater lead time for ambitious projects and new stability for our operations. We remained active members of the Collingwood Yards community, contributing to the Tenant Action Group and ongoing collaborative initiatives.

We feel incredibly fortunate to share this varied work with such bold and brilliant collaborators. Our heartfelt thanks to our magnificent board and to Company Coordinator Dani Reynolds for another super-stimulating year.

Lara Thoms + Mish Grigor
Co- Artistic Directors

CHAIR'S REPORT

2025 was genuinely remarkable for APHIDS, with deep local connections and international acclaim, it seems you can have it all, when the company is held with care, rigour and ambition by the incredible leadership of Lara and Mish.

So to the work, because alongside being a company that is accountable, viable and highly functioning, the beating heart of APHIDS is the art, the artists and the courage to experiment. *RINSE* received a standing ovation at Festival d'Avignon — one of the most prestigious performance festivals in the world. Amrita Hepi and Mish Grigor have made something extraordinary together, and seeing it travel across Europe and the UK, landing with audiences in Cork, Leeds, London, Nottingham and beyond, felt like a genuine vindication of APHIDS' belief in long-form artistic relationships. The *YFEL* collaboration with Pan Pan Theatre in Dublin with great reviews I might add, shows what's possible when you find the right international partners.

Closer to home, *Eating Out* at Kensington Town Hall was the kind of event that makes you glad to be alive and in the room — a collaboration with the phenomenon that is Queer Power Point, there were oysters, pineapples, Clippy, and a lot of people who maybe didn't quite know they'd signed up for, but trusted APHIDS to deliver and loved every minute of it.

The evolution of TRIAD into the APHIDS QUAD — welcoming Julia Croft and Nisha Madhan alongside Sammaneh Pourshafighi and Amrita Hepi — feels significant. In a sector that is required to measure value in outputs and metrics, the QUAD is a quiet act of resistance: a space for artists to think slowly, together, over time.

Resilience Roundtables in August was a highlight for me personally. Asking hard questions about how we keep creating in the face of exhaustion and precarity — and doing it in community, with generosity and care — felt very APHIDS. Lara was the impeccable and generous host of those conversations, and the published findings will guide how we as APHIDS and the broader sector work with each other into the future, navigating the huge challenges and disruptions ahead.

The operational side of APHIDS is not glamourous, its hard graft, but the stability it provides is everything when you're trying to make art that takes risks. Thank you to Lara and Mish for your resilience and commitment to APHIDS and to the sector. And to Creative Australia for their investment in the company over the next 4 years. We can already feel and taste the difference that assurance brings in our first year. Our thanks also to our consistent and adventurous partners and funders across the sector. It takes a village to raise the wild child that is APHIDS. We appreciate your support.

Thank you to my fellow board members — Georgie, Monir, Ben, Sullivan, Diletta, and Michaela — for your energy, wisdom, generosity, and grace throughout the year. An extra debt to gratitude to the extraordinary arts champion that is Michaela Coventry who left this year after such incredible service. To Dani Reynolds, who held so much together with such skill and good humour. And to Lara and Mish, who continue to astonish me with their ambition, rigour and humanity. It is a privilege to be in your orbit. Thank you!

Angharad Wynne-Jones
APHIDS CHAIR

QUAD

Embedded within the company, the QUAD collaborate artistically, consult on projects, and help shape APHIDS' strategic direction. Formerly known as the TRIAD, the group shifted in 2025 as we bid farewell to Amaara Raheem and welcomed Julia Croft and Nisha Madhan, joining Sammaneh Pourshafighi and Amrita Hepi to reform as the APHIDS QUAD.

At a time when artists are pressured to be output-focused, when their knowledge is extracted and their identities traded as capital, the QUAD operates as an intervention. It creates space for sustained artistic conversation and deep reflection over a multi-year arc. Practice, well-being, and professional development are processed collectively rather than individually. The result is a shared inquiry into how we make art, build community, and generate meaningful change in troubled times.

Sammaneh Pourshafighi is a queer, gender-fluid Muslim who arrived in Australia as a refugee after the Iranian Revolution. They are a performer, producer, and multidisciplinary artist.

Amrita Hepi is an award-winning First Nations choreographer and dancer from Bundjalung (Aus) and Ngapuhi (NZ) territories. Her work pushes the boundaries of intersectionality, creating performance with multiple points of access.

Julia Croft is a performance maker from Aotearoa. Drawing on critical theory and pop culture, she creates theatrical, visual, and comedic works, exploring matter and materiality through a feminist and queer lens.

Nisha Madhan (India/Aotearoa) is an independent artistic director and producer, and Creative Producer at AsiaTOPA. Her practice spans experimental live art, performance, producing, and critical writing across stage and screen.

"I love getting to work with APHIDS, it's so meaningful, as a mid career artist, to keep connected with younger performers."

- Lz Dunn, Artist

EATING OUT

"I feel thrilled to be able to ground myself in the community and commitment to queer excellence that APHIDS provides!
– Johanna Cosgrove, Performer

Presented by APHIDS, Queer PowerPoint and Long Prawn, this three hour event took place over two nights and combined a menu of experimental performance, history and special guests.

Artists Lara, Harriet, Xanthe delivered a series of PowerPoint presentations examining the cultural histories of oysters, meat and pineapples. Each presentation was precisely timed with a curated food service by Long Prawn and Chef Lorena Corso, and choreographed interventions by a waiter-performer ensemble, transforming Kensington Town Hall into a site of simultaneous dining, performance and discourse.

Performers and co-creators | Lara Thoms, Xanthe Dobbie, Harriet Gillies with Julia Croft
Menu and Service Design | Long Prawn
Producer | Dani Reynolds
Performers | Gabriella Imrichova, Margot Morales, Solly Frank, Blu Jay, Sammaneh Pourshafighi, Julia Croft, Johanna Cosgrove and Lz Dunn
Chef | Lorena Corso
Costumes | Babs Rapeport
Sound Design | Solly Frank
Stage Manager | Stefan Grudza
Production Manager | Max Gabauer
Support | Rebecca Jensen
Hair and Makeup | Queenie Thirlwell Carling

YFEL

"The price of creativity is an age-old question. This APHIDS co-production finds some encouraging answers."

– The Irish Times

YFEL is a subversive interrogation of the labour, ego, and Faustian bargains embedded in contemporary theatre-making. Presented as an international partnership between APHIDS and Ireland's Pan Pan, the work operates as a performing arts school for the artistically deranged.

Drawing on the tactical debris of dodgy artist memoirs, manifestos, and acting manuals, *YFEL* probes the friction between the lived reality of the artist and the art itself. It exposes the pressures, paradoxes, and perversities of live performance with wit, precision, and unapologetic theatricality.

YFEL premiered at Project Arts Centre, Dublin, in 2025.

Cast | Mish Grigor, Faith Jones, Marcus McKenzie, Mazzy Ronaldson
Director | Gavin Quinn
Set Design | Andrew Clancy
Lighting Design | Suzie Cummins
Sound Design | Alice Quinn Banville
Associate Director | Emma Coen
Script Editor | Signe Lury
Stage Manager | Grace Donnery
Assistant Stage Manager | Aoife Malin
Chief LX | Susan Collins

THE ACT

"The results are arresting"

– ARTS HUB

The Act explored the transactional limits of art, erotic power, and performance — examining the body as a site of desire, labour, and expression. Through movement and intimate dialogue, it exposed the parallels between contemporary dance and sex work, tracing the tensions between personal expression, professional service, and market demand.

Created by Amrita Hepi and Tilly Lawless, and developed with co-writer and director Mish Grigor, the work brought together choreography, authorship, and lived experience in a charged and unflinching collaboration. Produced by Performing Lines, *The Act* premiered at Chunky Move for Rising.

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Co-creator and Performer | Amrita Hepi
Co-creator and Performer | Tilly Lawless
Director and Co-writer | Mish Grigor
Composer and Sound Designer | Daniel Jenatsch
Lighting Designers | Katie Sfetkidis and Harrie Hogan
Set Designer | Francesca Carey
Costume Designer | D&K Ricarda Bigolin and Chantal Kirby
Production and Stage Manager | Celina Mack
Production Images | Gregory Lorenzutti
Produced by | Performing Lines and Vitalstatistix

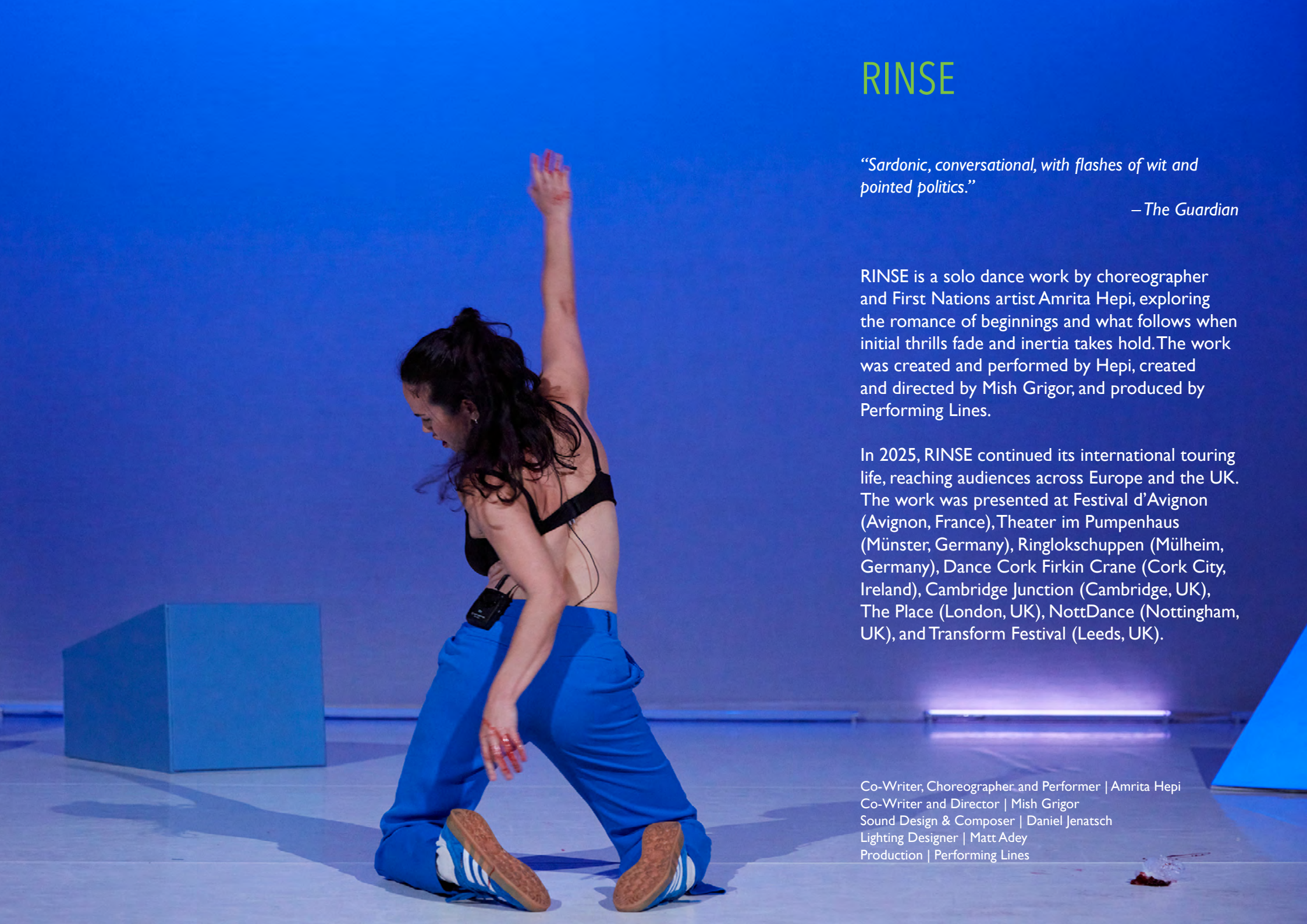
FAWN

FAWN is a short video work that queers the notion of family and acknowledges that loss doesn't always lead to a heroic coming of age adventure.

Originally commissioned by ACMI, *FAWN* was presented as part of *The Mourning After* exhibition at RMIT, curated by Larissa Hjorth.

The exhibition explored practices of mourning and kinship in response to ongoing permacrisis, bringing together personal, cultural and collective experiences of grief. Through a constellation of works the exhibition created space for reflection, connection and the possibility of more hopeful collective action.

Lead Artist & Director | Lara Thoms
Producer | Anna Nalpantidis
Dramaturg | Mish Grigor
Performers | Liv Fay, Jason Hood, Panda Wong, Yoni Prior, Joshua Tavaras, Elena Gomez, Robert Draffin
DOP | Alice Stephens
Gaffer | Alec Barnett
Costume Designer | Verity Mackey
Hair & Make Up | Lou McLaren
Editor | Tommy Thoms
Sound Design | Tom Smith



RINSE

"Sardonic, conversational, with flashes of wit and pointed politics."

– The Guardian

RINSE is a solo dance work by choreographer and First Nations artist Amrita Hepi, exploring the romance of beginnings and what follows when initial thrills fade and inertia takes hold. The work was created and performed by Hepi, created and directed by Mish Grigor, and produced by Performing Lines.

In 2025, RINSE continued its international touring life, reaching audiences across Europe and the UK. The work was presented at Festival d'Avignon (Avignon, France), Theater im Pumpenhaus (Münster, Germany), Ringlokschuppen (Mülheim, Germany), Dance Cork Firkin Crane (Cork City, Ireland), Cambridge Junction (Cambridge, UK), The Place (London, UK), NottDance (Nottingham, UK), and Transform Festival (Leeds, UK).

Co-Writer, Choreographer and Performer | Amrita Hepi
Co-Writer and Director | Mish Grigor
Sound Design & Composer | Daniel Jenatsch
Lighting Designer | Matt Adey
Production | Performing Lines

ODYSSEY ODYSSEY

"This is the kinda support that helps artists get out of emerging artist categorisation purgatory.
– Ari Angkasa, perfromer

APHIDS convened an afternoon of new performance at narrm ngarrgu Library foregrounding process over product. *Odyssey Odyssey* gathered works-in-progress by Ari Angkasa, Danish Sheikh and Grace Connors, each sharing a 15-minute excerpt from developing projects.

The performances engaged with religious colonialism, queer legal dissent, and the everyday surrealism of debt collection — revealing practices that are politically sharp, formally experimental, and unapologetically in development. A concluding conversation invited the artists to reflect on the ideas, questions, and uncertainties shaping their work.

RESILIENCE ROUNTABLES

"Beautifully hosted - great pacing and duration - great balance of discussion with spoken and performed contributions"

– Resilience Roundtables participant

In August, we hosted a roundtable discussion at Collingwood Yards exploring the question:
How do we continue to create and connect in the face of exhaustion, precarity, and change?

Artists and arts workers across performance, dance, theatre and interdisciplinary practice—both emerging and established—came together to consider where the sector was at, how practitioners could better support one another, and how the industry might be reimagined. The free event was structured around small-group discussions led by local organisations and independent artists, encouraging active participation, collaboration and peer support. Opportunities for informal connection were also built into the day.

Interspersed throughout the program were four artist contributions by Emily Parsons-Lord, Nisha Madhan, and Sammaneh Pourshafighi translating the day's themes into performative, participatory and experiential forms. Participating organisations included Auspicious Arts, Collingwood Yards, Dancehouse, ILBIJERRI, MAV, Performing Lines, Strange Engine, Temperance Hall and others.

Supported by the City of Yarra.

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

Is a feature length hybrid documentary in post production 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.

BRUNSTOPIA

Is a feature length doccofiction in development. The work collaborates with five eccentric artists living in a gentrifying suburb who are trying to survive. Personal stories, community bonds, and moral dilemmas are set against a portrait of a suburb in flux.

PUBLICATIONS

In October we held a Queer Publications Launch which included the Australian book launch of *Crossings: Creative Ecologies of Cruising* by João Florêncio and Liz Rosenfeld, and featured a Q&A with Liz, faciltated by Frances Barrett. The event also promoted new publications by APHIDS Supermassive artists Zack Lewin and Georgia Banks.

Not long after we realeased *Resilience Roundtables Findings*, a digital publication designed by Hanto Canto that shared the outcomes of the gathering. Writer Grace Macpherson documented the talks, performances and table discussion and offered some provocative and practical ideas for what can change.

MERCH

Timed to coincide with the presentation of *Eating Out*, we launched four new APHIDS merchandise pieces: a custom cap, two limited-edition Nalgene bottles created in collaboration with Hanto Canto, and an earring designed in partnership with Newend Jewellery.

SEX WORK AND ARTISTIC PRACTICE

As we prepared to work on *The Act* (produced by Performing Lins), APHIDS held a closed-door consultation with a group of artists who are also sex workers. It centred the lived experience of balancing sex work and art-making: where they intersect, where they fuel each other, and where they might come into conflict.

SUPERMASSIVE

"The SUPERMASSIVE program is a diamond in the rough. It's flexibility allows for big ideas to grow, and means the program is able to follow artists through their individual practices. It is an important and rare opportunity for emerging artists."

– Alia Ardon, 2025 Supermassive Artist

SUPERMASSIVE is APHIDS' artist exchange program, designed to engage and support the development of the experimental arts community in Australia through ongoing intergenerational knowledge sharing and building tailored artistic pathways. In 2025 SUPERMASSIVE included Georgia Banks, Zack Lewin and Alia Ardon.

Alia Ardon is a Moroccan-French-Australian filmmaker and artist with a deep interest in history, particularly ecological imperialism and the plurality of historical narratives.

Georgia Banks makes performance art even when you think she doesn't. Her works have been shown at ACCA, NGV and Gertrude Contemporary. Georgia focused on the creation of theatre project Death Warmed Up for Platform.

Zack Lewin is a takatapui multidisciplinary artist from Bidjigal land in Sydney. Specialising in transmedia and digital dramaturgies, Zack focused on the creation of his Mate Manawa series.

SUPERDRIVE

SUPERDRIVE is APHIDS' embedded development program, through which the co-directors partner with mid-career women and non-binary artists to propel ambitious projects forward. Working across dramaturgy, directing, producing, and strategic support, the program offers sustained collaboration to build the long-term future of new work.

RIGHT TO ERASURE

In 2025, SUPERDRIVE supported a creative development with Mish Grigor, Tamara Saulwick, and Nick Roux in collaboration with Chamber Made. The project examines the phenomenon of women's images being stolen and inserted into pornographic material without consent — grafted onto content with which they have no prior connection.

The development included consultations with citizen experts: women who have experienced this violation and have since become activists in the field. Their insights informed both the ethical framework and creative direction of the work.

SOAPIE

Soapie is a new performance work in development created by Samara Hersch with her cousin Zak in collaboration with Lara Thoms, focusing on family, fantasy, queerness and disability.

ADVOCACY AND INDUSTRY

MISH
Artist talks at The Place (London) and Nottdance Festival (Nottingham).
Consultancy for Melbourne Theatre Company around participation.
Attendance at Avignon festival.

LARA
Presented Artist workshop Norwich and Norfolk Festival (UK),
Consultant, Artistic Programming framework, Bunjil Place.
Co-designer of ARTSPAY grant initiative.
Member Collingwood Yards Tenant Advisory Group.
Professional program at Santarcangelo Festival (Italy).
Guest presenter for Arts Management Masters students at University of Melbourne.

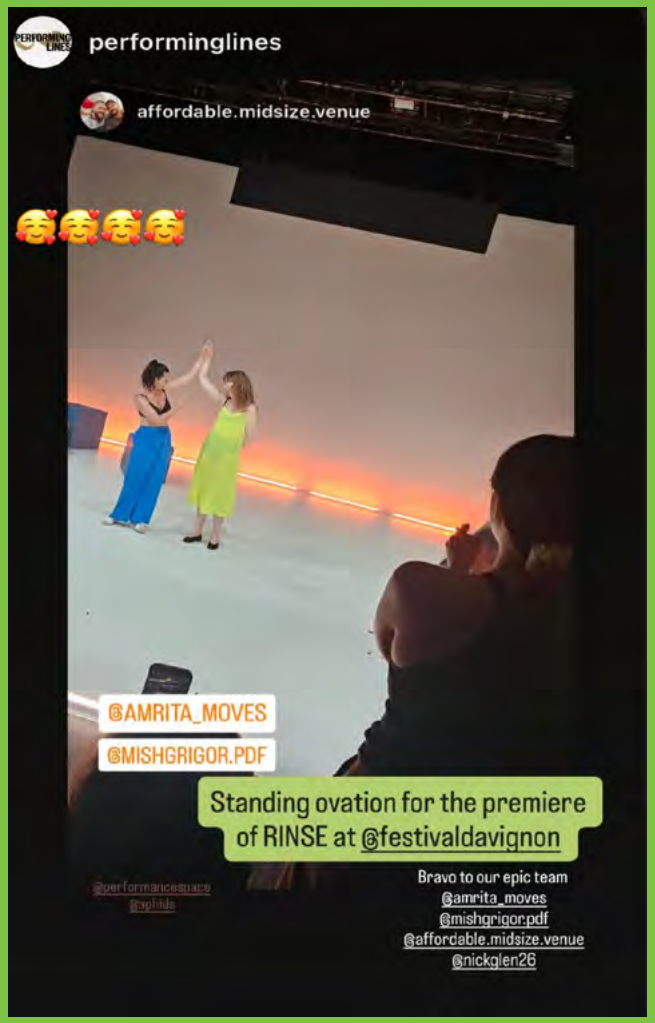
MABF

In May APHIDS was a stallholder at the three day Melbourne Art Book Fair at the NGV. We presented publications including: *You Beauty*, *Back and Forth: Ways of making APHIDS*, *Flyway*, and *HOWL* along with a suite of limited edition merch.

RESPONSES

misklectic
And then I slurped oysters into a microphone, and then a man sat like a roast chicken with rosemary in his butt, and then they threw salad at the table and a saxophone player mounted the chair and clippy wants a human body to feel pleasure and did you know eels travel 2000km to fuck??

dansheikhed
How can we fight the extractivist imperatives that stifle arts work?
How to liberate - and not just "save" - the arts?
How can we transmute resilience into a collective concern?
A lovely day dreaming up arts utopias with a bunch of kind and clever arts workers courtesy of @aphids


performinglines
affordable.midsize.venue
@AMRITA_MOVES
@MISHGRIGOR.PDF
Standing ovation for the premiere of RINSE at @festivaldavignon
Bravo to our epic team
@amrita_moves
@mishgrigor.pdf
@affordable.midsize.venue
@nickglen26

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 Co-directors support Pay the Rent (First Nations sovereignty) on a monthly basis.

APHIDS is supported by; the Australian Government through Creative Australia, its arts funding & advisory body; the Victorian Government through Creative Victoria and Business Victoria; the City of Melbourne through its Arts & Culture Investment Program.