



UNIVERSITY ART MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA

18 February 2025

### **Statement in support for Australia's 2026 Venice Biennale Representatives**

University Art Museums Australia expresses deep concern over Creative Australia's decision to remove artist Khaled Sabsabi and curator Michael Dagostino as Australia's representatives for the 2026 Venice Biennale. This decision raises serious questions about the independence of artistic representation and risks undermining confidence in Australia's cultural leadership.

Sabsabi's decades-long contribution to Australian and international art demonstrates a deep commitment to engaging diverse perspectives on faith, identity, and representation. His work reflects Australia's proud sense of cultural plurality and fosters positive and meaningful dialogue—values that align with Creative Australia's stated commitments. Similarly, Dagostino's commitment to community engagement in the arts is evidenced by his strong career as an arts leader and curator, one that centres on inclusivity and learning.

We urge Creative Australia to reinstate the artistic team, support artistic expression and resist external pressures that risk politicising cultural representation. A robust and independent arts sector is essential to fostering open, critical engagement with the world rather than restricting it.

University Art Museums Australia remains committed to the principles of education, artistic expression, diversity, and critical discourse. These principles should guide cultural decision-making, ensuring the arts remain a space for dialogue, reflection, and exploration, free from undue interference.

University Art Museums Australia members:

Dr Karen Annett (La Trobe Art Institute, La Trobe University)  
Dr Joanna Barrkman (Charles Darwin University Art Collection and Midpul Art Gallery)  
Clothilde Bullen OAM (ECU Art, Culture and Collections, Edith Cowan University)  
Katrina Cashman (NAS Gallery, National Art School)  
Associate Professor Susanna Castleden (John Curtin Gallery, Curtin University)  
Caine Chennatt (Curatorial and Cultural Collections, University of Tasmania)  
Dr Rebecca Coates (Monash University Museum of Art, Monash University)  
Dr Theo Costantino (Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery, University of Western Australia)  
José Da Silva (UNSW Galleries, University of New South Wales)  
Charlotte Day (Potter Museum of Art and Buxton Contemporary, University of Melbourne)  
Rhonda Davis (Macquarie University Art Gallery and Collection)  
Angela Goddard (Griffith University Art Museum)  
Erica Green (Samstag Museum of Art, University of South Australia)  
Stella McDonald (UTS Gallery & Art Collection, University of Technology Sydney)  
Dolla Merrillees (Western Sydney Creative, Western Sydney University)  
Anthony Oates (Drill Hall Gallery & ANU Art Collection, Australian National University)  
Peta Rake (UQ Art Museum, University of Queensland)  
Helen Rayment (RMIT Gallery, RMIT University)  
Fiona Salmon (Flinders University Museum of Art)  
Mark Stewart (Murdoch University Art Collection)  
Vanessa Van Ooyen (QUT Art Museum, Queensland University of Technology)  
Phillippa Webb (University of Wollongong Art Collection)  
Megan Williams (USC Art Gallery, University of the Sunshine Coast)