



ATONG ATEM CURRICULUM VITAE

Atong Atem is an Ethiopian born, South Sudanese artist and writer living in Naarm/Melbourne.

Atem's work explores the inherent intimacy of portraiture and photography as well as the role photographers take as story tellers, interrogating photography as a framework for looking at the world and positioning people in it. She takes framing into a fantastical direction with the small portals over the subjects' faces, inviting the viewer to look at them through a surreal and constructed lens.

Atem references the works of 20th century African studio photographers Malick Sidibe, Philip Kwame Apagya and Seydou Keita to create a visual representation of a relationship to culture. She works primarily with photography, video and textiles to explore migrant narratives and postcolonial practices in the African diaspora, the relationship between public and private spaces and the exploration of home and identity through portraiture.

Atem has exhibited her work across Australia, including National Gallery of Victoria, Art Gallery of New South Wales, National Portrait Gallery, Immigration Museum, Gertrude Contemporary and Australian Centre for Contemporary Art. Atem has exhibited at international art fairs including Photo London 2023, Photo Basel 2022, Unseen Photo Fair 2024, Vogue Fashion Fair in Milan and Paris Photo 2025.

Atem has exhibited internationally at the Tate Modern, London, Rotterdam's Wereldmuseum, Fotografiska Shanghai and with PHOTO Australia at the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A). She also exhibited at the prestigious Rencontres d'Arles, France in partnership with PHOTO Australia in 2025. In partnership with the V&A, Atem has also exhibited in the Africa Fashion exhibition at the National Gallery of Victoria. Atem's work is featured in a permanent exhibition at the National Maritime Museum of the Netherlands.

Atem was the recipient of the inaugural La Prairie Art Award from the Art Gallery of New South Wales in 2022 and the National Gallery of Victoria and MECCA M-Power scholarship in 2017. She was selected as one of six nominees for the Prix de la Photo Madame Figaro in 2025. Her work is held in numerous collections including the National Gallery of Victoria, the Art Gallery of New South Wales, the State Library Victoria and the National Portrait Gallery, Australia.

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- September 2024: Unseen Photo Fair, Amsterdam
- Feb – April 2024: Gosford Regional Gallery: Banksia, NSW
- Dec 2023: DUST, MARS Gallery, Melbourne
- Sept - Oct 2023: Atong Atem, New Annual, Newcastle
- June - July 2023: DUST, Photo Ireland, Ireland
- Feb 2023: Paintings, MARS Gallery, Melbourne
- Apr - June 2022: Banksia – Benalla Art Gallery, Benalla
- Feb – March 2022: Everything in Remission – Gertrude Contemporary, Melbourne
- Feb 2021: Monstera Obliqua - MARS Gallery, Melbourne
- Nov 2020: To Be Real - Immigration Museum, Melbourne
- Jul 2020: Studio Story - Messums Gallery, London
- Feb 2020: Portals - MARS Gallery, Melbourne
- Aug - Sep 2017: Come Home (Channels Festival) - Blindside, Melbourne
- Feb-Jul 2017: Us - Customs House, Sydney
- Jan - March 2017: The Process of Feeling - Centre for Contemporary Photography, Melbourne

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS AND ART FAIRS

- November 2025: Paris Photo 2025, Grand Palais des Champs-Élysées, Paris, France
- November 2025 - April 2026: Revealing Dress, Liverpool Powerhouse, Sydney, NSW
- October 2025 - February 2026: Summ Summ Summ, Stadtgalerie Saarbrücken, Germany
- September 2025: Sydney Contemporary, Sydney, NSW
- August 2025: Spring1883 Art Fair, The Hotel Windsor, Melbourne

- July - October 2025: On Country: Photography from Australia, Rencontres d'Arles, France
- June - November 2025: Living Archive: Blak Resistance and Joy, Redcliffe Art Gallery, Queensland
- June - September 2025: HOME 25: Invisible Cities, The Walker Street Gallery and Arts Centre, Dandenong
- May - June 2025: MOTHER, DRAW Space, NSW
- April – June 2025: 25 Moments: Gosford Regional Gallery, NSW
- February - May 2025: A World in Common: Contemporary African Photography, C/O Berlin, Germany
- February - April 2025: Shared Skin: Adelaide Contemporary Experimental (ACE), Adelaide, South Australia
- Nov 2024 – July 2025: Cats & Dogs, The National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
- September 2024 (permanent exhibition): Shadows on the Atlantic, The National Maritime Museum, The Netherlands
- September 2024: Sydney Contemporary, Sydney, NSW
- August 2024 – December 2025: Marvellous Realism, Fotografiska Shanghai, China
- May – Oct 2024: Africa Fashion, The National Gallery of Victoria, NGV (in partnership with the Victoria and Albert Museum), Melbourne
- March – August 2024: A World in Common: Contemporary African Photography, Wereldmuseum, Rotterdam
- Feb – June 2024: UQ Art Gallery: How we remember tomorrow, Brisbane, QLD
- May 2024: PLC Sydney, Adelaide Perry Gallery, Sydney, NSW
- March – May 2024: Tweed Regional Gallery – synergy: identity portraiture and the moving body, NSW
- October – November 2023: Arts Projects Australia: Tones of Home
- July 2023 – Jan 2024: A World in Common: Contemporary African Photography, Tate Modern, London
- March – August 2023: Melbourne Now, Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia, Melbourne
- March – June 2023: Portrait 23: Identity, National Portrait Gallery, Canberra
- May 2023: Photo London, London
- March – May 2023: 100 Faces, Museum of Australian Photography, Melbourne
- Feb – April 2023: Other Horizons, Fremantle Arts Centre, Fremantle
- Sept 2022: Aotearoa Art Fair, Auckland
- Mar 2022: Who are You: Australian Portraiture – Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia, Melbourne
- June 2022: Photo Basel, Basel
- Apr – May 2022: Surat – Old Treasury Building, Melbourne – Commissioned by Photo Australia for PHOTO 2022
- July 2021: Australian Tapestry Workshop, Melbourne
- Dec 2020: Triennial - National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
- Nov 2019: FASHIONING BLACK IDENTITY, Monash Gallery of Art, Melbourne
- Feb 2019: FASHIONING BLACK IDENTITY, Cairns Art Gallery, QLD
- Apr 2018: Site of Passage - Customs House, Sydney
- Dec 2017 - March 2018: Unfinished Business - Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne
- May 2016: - Nataal: New African Photography, Red Hook Labs, NYC
- May - June 2016: ua numi le fau, Gertrude Contemporary, Melbourne

AWARDS

- November 2022: 15 Artists 2022 Art Prize
- March 2022: La Prairie Art Award
- June 2018: Lightwork New York Artist Residency
- Nov 2017- Nov 2018: NGV + MECCA Cosmetica M-Power Grant
- Jul 2017: Brisbane Powerhouse: Melt Portrait Prize

SELECTED COLLECTIONS

- National Portrait Gallery
- National Gallery of Victoria
- Art Gallery of New South Wales
- Murdoch University Art Collection
- Wesfarmers Art Collection
- Deakin University

- State Library Victoria
- Shepparton Art Museum
- Artbank
- Benalla Art Gallery
- ANZ Art Collection
- MECCA Collection
- Bendigo Art Gallery
- AkzoNobel Art Foundation
- Schulting Art Collection
- National Maritime Museum, the Netherlands
- HYDE Melbourne Place Hotel Collection
- Monash University
- Gosford Regional Gallery

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