

# CARTE BLANCHE: ANXIETY

27 MAY - 24 JUNE 2017

CURATED BY GRACE SAMBOH

ANANG SAPTOTO
BAMBANG "TOKO" WITJAKSONO
CINANTI ASTRIA JOHANSJAH
CUT AND RESCUE
HANDIWIRMAN SAPUTRA
IWAN EFFENDI
JULIA SARISETIATI
KOKOK P. SANCOKO
KRACK
PRIYANTO SUNARTO
R.E. HARTANTO.



## CARTE BLANCHE: ANXIETY

THINKING THROUGH AND ALONGSIDE SOME ARTWORKS

"Visible things can be invisible. If somebody rides a horse through a wood, at first one sees them, and then not, yet one knows that they are there. In Carte Blanche (1965), the rider is hiding the trees, and the trees are hiding her. However, our powers of thought grasp both the visible and the invisible—and I make use of painting to render thoughts visible."

– René Magritte

How to use an exhibition to make thoughts visible and real? This exhibition began with my thoughts about sensory sensations of a number of artworks; those that I had experienced first-hand and those that I had learnt of.

Artworks are made with materials from this earth. Supposedly, they provoke new perspectives on existing meanings and life. By nature, artworks potentially connect the general, the universal, the global, with the specifics, the private, the local. Facing an artwork, the audience's body is a piece of blank paper, ready to be written or to be shaped. What is then recorded on (or build with) this paper depends on each artists' material and the readiness of the sensing agent to experience the work.

#### Let go of control, choose only what is needed

I will begin with an artwork that unfortunately cannot be shown in this exhibition. Gerak-Gerik (Movements, 2002-2003) by S. Teddy D. depicts many human figures drawn on a huge piece of paper (300 x 200 cm). This drawing is suspended from the ceiling, curved almost 360'. A lightbulb hanging in the middle of the circle makes it looks like a store fitting room. From the outside, audiences are unable to see the drawing, not even faintly. The paper is layered with a thick material, as if to preserve its privacy. Audiences have to peek or enter into the artwork to be able to observe the depicted figures, who seem to be the same person in many different gestures and movements. They are marching, fighting, dancing, picking themselves up, meditating, squatting, sitting, half sleeping, sleeping, sleeping soundly, etc. These figures are presented by Teddy only by using simple lines, full of confidence.





S. Teddy Darmawan
Gerak-Gerik (Movements)
2012-2003
mixed media
300 x 200 cm
installed at
Cemeti Art House, Yogyakarta.
Photo courtesy:
Indonesian Visual Art Archive.

The abundance of human forms in Gerak-Gerik (Movements, 2002-2003) is not a meaningless repetition, but rather a necessity. In a conversation with Blora, his daughter, Teddy confirmed one aspect of necessity in his drawing practice. "Even without eyes, Blora knows that this is a head, right?" "Yes, I know that this is the shape of a head. But heads have eyes, nose, ..." "Yes, correct. I wanted to draw a head. So I made this [points at the outline]. Apparently this has become a drawing of a head. Even without having to draw the eyes, it already is a head. So, why do I have to draw the eyes?"1 Having had drawn his face hundreds of times, Teddy's oeuvre have always been away from duplication or appropriation. Teddy's non-verbal strength are visible in his drawings, a plurality he called gambar sari (the essential drawings)". Through drawings, he bridges the easily-digested world and the complex world in regards to the profound meaning and no-meaning of the gesture.<sup>2</sup> In Gerak-Gerik (Movements, 2002-2003), not only that he presented the human movements in the form of a drawing, Teddy also choreographed his audiences to move around in order to see his work

According to Saputra, without shared experience, connecting to others is out of the question. Therefore, his objects has the tendency to be physical and material-oriented. He aims to trigger people's sensorial and spatial experience. The audience are entitled to build any kind of relationship, be it bodily or intellectually, with his presented forms. Saputra sees his steps in artmaking as essentially the same as the processes that the audience go through in savoring the works. He aspires for people to generate a certain attitude towards his works; not

necessarily to read it nor to be inspired, but to discover his materials; ponder upon the relation between, amongst, and around the matters, and how they are presented together. Ultimately, he yearns for people to act upon their discoveries. Saputra's work have never been a formulation of thoughts nor a representation of something other then itself.

The pedals at the bottom of Hisap/Keluarkan (Inhale/Exhale, 2011) seem to beg to be stepped on, and indeed, they were created for that. When the audience steps on the pedals, the pink object on the left deflates, while another similar-looking object on the right inflates. As the audience come closer to observe these objects, the fragility of the material appears—it is made of handmade paper. It generates the feeling of not wanting to step on the pedals again. The effect triggered by each step is always different. The more the audience become anxious, the likely they become more careful. As these two objects inflate and deflate, audience tends to speculate that they are a pair of lungs. For the artist, it is completely unimportant what they think of the reference or the intention. What is important is their ability to experience the presence of these objects, and it can be as simple as having the courage to step on those pedals.

#### Proceed in the right direction

Anamorphic Series by Anang Saptoto invites the audience to reconsider the idea that the true form can only be seen from one viewpoint. The term 'anamorphic' refers to images that are distorted because of projection or perspective. To see Saptoto's image, we have to stand on the right spot, as otherwise it looks distorted. While working with information and facts from past and present, Saptoto often adopts this technique. His poetics are simple and apt. There is only one viewpoint to

**Anang Saptoto** Mohammad Sarengat in Nine Memories (Anamorphic Series) 2014 artbooks, marker ink, wood, iron, stickers book size 21 x 30 cm, 9 sets

installed at ICAD, Grand Kemang Hotel, Jakarta.



see his image correctly, although at the same time, the distorted viewpoints do exist, and they are as real as the truth. By forcing the observer to stand on a specified viewpoint. Saptoto attempts to create a spatial experience towards two-dimensional objects without actually giving them volume. With the abstract paintings', the artist cancelled the two-dimensional truth by presenting the works in threedimensional objects. However, by bringing the audience to the right viewpoint, he distracts them from seeing the three-dimensional reality of his works, and instead, leads them to focus on experiencing the singular truth.

In 2010, Kokok P. Sancoko made his audience climb a wooden ladder placed in the middle of the exhibition space of Kedai Kebun Forum, Yogyakarta. While standing on top of the ladder, they could observe the liveliness of the various drawings stuck on the floor, walls, pillars, and ceiling of the gallery. These drawings were of course flat, but Sancoko made them to appear three-dimensional, as if they truly exist amongst the space. Optic illusion. said some writers of this Mitos (Myth) exhibition.<sup>3</sup> His untitled drawings in this exhibition also tricks us into thinking that there may be stories or memories behind the works. After all, it does look like photographs. While it is true that these figures, situations, and conditions are present in his drawings, we should not quickly assume that there is a story behind them. The thin vibrating lines Sancoko presented are manifestations of his exploration on possible compositions and forms, rather than thoughts or stories.

#### Accept and observe thoughts and feelings within forms, values and figures

Iwan Effendi freezed his puppeteering experimentation at the phase before stories existed. Audience may easily be fooled, thinking that a narrative exist, as the setting might have suggested. In Effendi's words, a puppet is a collection of movements that is then identified as life within itself as an object. In this work, the puppets move as freely as the the puppeteers' hands. Each time the audience begin to recognize a characters movement as afragment of a specific scene, they get disappointed more and more. There is no coherent narrative offered here; there are only

movements. Before a puppet becomes a figure—with names and all that—, it is free from the values of gender, ethnicity, religion, attitude, etc. At this stage, Effendi is often surprised to see how his puppets are played by other puppeteers. He enjoys discovering the movements of a new puppet before it is burdened by its narrative, its script, or its representational purposes. At this stage, the puppet has a chance to be anyone with any characteristic It can even be developed according to the potentials of its bodily movements. Later when the puppet has become a character, its movements will be recognized as 'gestures', and each movements contribute value to its character.

On the contrary, R.E. Hartanto's starting point is a figure's personality. He has painted more than 30 figures for his ongoing series, Manusia Indonesia Baru (New Indonesians. 2014-...),. Each person was selected because of Hartanto's particular interest on their physical figure, as well as their characteristics as working professionals. I seriously meant the physicalities and realities of human faces; from the wrinkles, curves, skin colours, eyes, jawlines, etc. Hartanto created this watercolour series using one of the Neoclassic principles: eliminating the presence of fleeting emotions (sadness or joy) in portaitures. One example of the expressions that Hartanto tries to capture is the imperfect smile of Mona Lisa (Leonardo da Vinci, c. 1503-1506). In this series, Hartanto photographed most of his subject matters, so that he could exercise control over the lighting and the expression.

Still in the matter of the expressions, Hartanto usually begins his photography session by directing his models to be calm. authoritative, and almost stoic, except for an Archaic smile, and then directing them show anxiousness. He requires this expression of

anxiety to add some tensions in his works. He believes that other than the technical skills required, complexity of each person's facial shape requires specific lighting to bring out their characters and facial lines. That is his minimal requirement to a successful piece of watercolour portrait. Thus, he regards that out of more than 30 watercolour paintings produced in this series, only seven works shown in this exhibition are successful.

#### Be mindful of the present moment

Uneasiness is also expressed by Cinanti Astria Johansjah (Keni) in her work, Are We There Yet? (2017). Before we look further at the facial expression of the subject matter, the composition and use of space had already signal annoyance—if not impatience. Whereas Cut and Rescue presents the secret workspace of a Pelatih Serangga (Insect Trainer, 2014) from the future. Although cockroaches are sometimes seen as the source of domestic disasters, they are also often said to be a species that can withstand any climate. Perhaps it is about time to agree and consider that an Insect Trainer maybe a profession to save the future world.

Bambang "Toko" Witjaksono once created a controversy among the organizers of Biennale Jogia XI - Jogia Jamming, 2009. At that time, his work was an extraordinary irony. 4 Price List (2009), was literally a price list of all artworks exhibited in the Biennale, an event known to be free of commercial transactions. This work was displayed next to the guestbooks in every gallery where the Biennale took place. Imagine being one of the exhibiting artists when he saw the price list that included his work, when no one had previously asked him for artwork price. Different reactions were triggered by this



Marvel artist Ardian Syaf hid antisemitic and anti-Christian messages in X-Men Gold Comic, April 2017. Photo courtesy: The artist and Marvel.

controversy – artists angrily questioned the organizers, and interested buyers' responded by contacting the phone number listed in that price list.

#### The utopia: Labelling worriness

The printmaking community Krack! presents a variety of the Indonesian dreams through various advertisements from past to present. Some recurring themes are: independence. heaven, democracy, winning the lottery, big house, career, celebrity, sex, and (lately) smartphones. "We are determined by what we dream of," they said. This statement is simple, yet complex at the same time. The capitalization of life is inevitable, and what follows is the commodification of everything. Those who are unable to sell themselves in the job market became the 'rejects' of the society, and vulnerable. How do they live their lives? In fact, how do we, human beings, live, deal and struggle with insecurities and uncertainties in our daily lives?

Julia Sarisetiati worked together with anthropologist Budi Mulia to do a further research on what Guy Standing called *the precariat*. <sup>5</sup> Basically, he posited that globalization has led to a new emerging

social class who are not only suffering from job insecurity but also identity insecurity and lack of time control, not least due to workfare social policies. Throughout Sarisetiati and Mulia's observation, they found the *togel* gamblers (*toto gelap* or illegal Toto – numbers betting game). The way they see it, the uncertainties and insecurities of our everyday existence resonance with the gamblers albeit its different nature. Predictions and speculations and hope (of getting the number right) is constant cycle.

According to John Dewey, "...works of art are the most intimate and energetic means of aiding individuals to share in the arts of living. Civilization is uncivil because human beings are divided into non-communicating sects, races, nations, classes and cliques,"6 In Sarisetiati's Sharing Strategies of Uncertainty (2013), it is unimportant what their race, ethnicity, religion, and identity is. The important thing is, all four of them are togel gamblers, and this shared preoccupation makes them equal in this conversation. The four togel gamblers are invited to talk about their gambling strategy. All of their conversations are recorded from various angles, and edited to

emphasize on certain importances, particularly on the words used, and the close and intimate observation of the human expressions. In the beginning, their conversations seem flat, almost emotionless, and full of speculations based on their experiences, but the more the audience listens to and engages deeper with the topics, the more exhilarating it becomes.

Priyanto Sunarto evokes our thoughts on the subject of equality through satire while relying on the use of text. The work *Hak Azasi Pasir* (1979) appears to be a protest sign demanding for sand rights. Sunarto even included the actual grain of sands. In its presence, this work seems to dictate audiences as they could instantly understand its intention and meaning. When it was first exhibited in 1979, the work was displayed next to a series of postcards written from his artist friends, about their opinions toward sand rights. I came to know the other side of this work through my conversation with Bonyong Munni Ardhi, one of the artists who

received a postcard from Sunarto. In the postcard, Bonyong regarded Sunarto as an elitist. While others attempted to create works various social issues, Sunarto was merely preoccupied by a grain of sand. Let's give it a little more thought, what is the purpose of talking about sand rights? Sand is not even a living being. Is it because the artist - like us - are humans thus we have the rights of other objects? Like the French language that assigns gender to objects? Bonyong's story taught us how Sunarto had successfully triggered a fundamental anxiety in his artistic practice at that time. Unfortunately, I never had the chance to speak to Sunarto himself. However, Bonyong's story is adequate for me to convince you that art, no matter how inconsequential, has the power to provoke and bring sensation to the audiences.

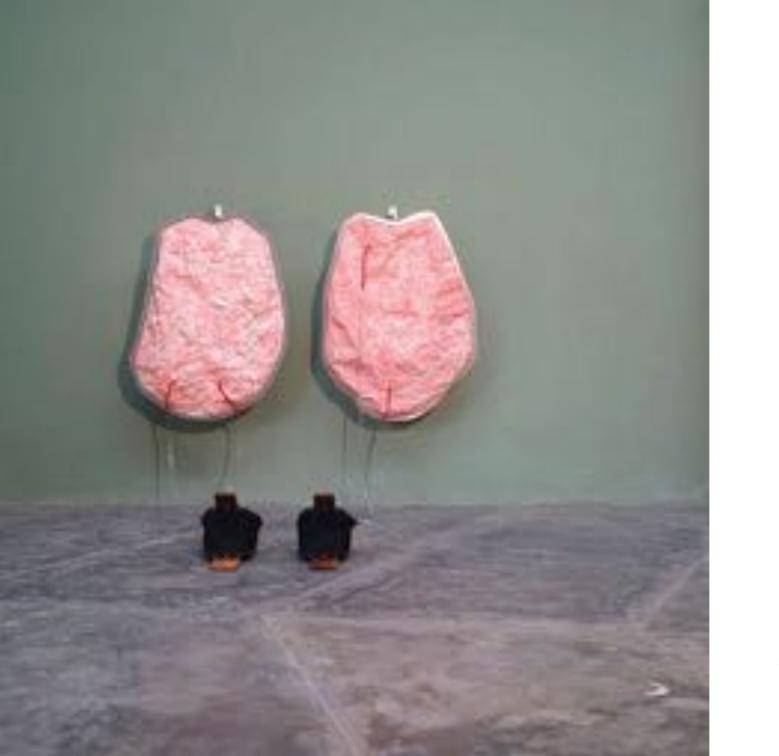
#### Grace Samboh Curator

#### endnotes

- 1. I recorded this conversation when I was doing a series of interviews with S. Teddy D. (between March June 2011) to prepare for his retrospective exhibition "REPOSISI: Art Merdekal" at Langgeng Art Foundation, Yogyakarta, 2011 & ICA Lasalle, Singapore, 2012.
- 2. Hendro Wiyanto, "Mengenang S. Teddy D. (1970-2016): Kembali ke Muasal Gambar" in daily newspaper Kompas, 4 June 2016.
- 3. One of them is Heru CN (2010). "Merespons Ruang dengan Efek Tiga Dimensi Semu dalam Harian" in daily paper Tempo, 7 April 2010.
- 4. Also see, Grace Samboh (2011). "Looking at the market issue in the archives of Jogja Biennale" on http://biennale-jogja.org/
- 5. Guy Standing (2011). The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- 6. John Dewey (1934). Art as Experience. New York, Minton, Balch & Co., p. 336
- 7. "So, Priyanto sent us the postcard with the stamp, and a return address. We, friends from Seni Rupa Baru, there were many of us. All of us received the same letter from Priyanto. "Pak Bonyong, I have a sand. This sand was picked from this for this, this specific place." With a cellotape. He used a tape to stick it on the paper. This one I picked from this site. This sand I picked up from this place, on this date. I would like to hear

your comment, Pak Bonyong. He said that to me. So, at that time, I was still very keen to talk about the politics, so... I reprimanded him. You are such an elitist. You know that site. For me, I just remembered what I wrote. "Meanwhile other people are thinking of the problems of the society, and you are thinking of just a grain of sand?! What do you want??? You are turning this grain of sand into an artwork?! You are an elitist artist! You are making such a fuss about a sand, a tiny pebble. If in the past, S. Sudjojono talked about a person looking at two really thin men eating a small portion of rice. He stood for the poor people. But that's just that, just representation. With our generation, we talk about politics directly. We do not represent problems."

Priyanto had been working on this concept for a while. So this work was created beforehand. There was a lot of difference between what Hardi said, and what Jimmy said. And we did not know that he would exhibit all the comments from his friends. Wow! Everyone was thrilled to see the different reactions. Some were supportive, some were against the idea, some reacted this way, some were angry, etc. The work was so conceptual, and it was not accepted as fine art. Our seniors said that this work was not art, it was literature. [...] (Conversation between Bonyong Munni Ardhi, Grace Samboh and Haruko Kumakura, 8 December 2015.)



## Handiwirman Saputra

## Hisap/Keluarkan (Inhale/Exhale)

2012

STPI handmade abacá paper (pigmented & air-dried) in aluminum structure with silicon rubber tubes and wooden air pumps 197 x 360 x 90 cm







Kokok P. Sancoko

:tanpajudul 2017, pencil on paper, 57 x 77 cm Kokok P. Sancoko

:tanpajudul 2017, pencil on paper, 57 x 77 cm







Priyanto Sunarto

Hak Azasi Pasir (The Sand's Right) silkscreen on paper with added sand, unframed: 50 x 25 cm, framed: 89 x 66 cm edition 18 of 20







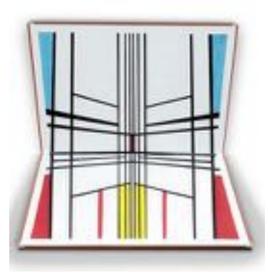
### Julia Sarisetiati

## Sharing Strategies of Uncertainty

2013

in collaboration with Budi Mulia single-channel HD video installation (1 h 3 min 5 sec) two drawings on paper, 153 x 272 cm and 21 x 29.7 cm





## Anang Saptoto

## Left to Right:

Finding Perspective 1 (Yellow Prison with Underground Conduit, Peter Halley, 1985) 2017 anamorphic artbook, watercolor on paper 45.5 x 64 cm

Finding Perspective 2 (Composition no. 10, Piet Mondrian, 1939-1942) 2017 anamorphic artbook, watercolor on paper 45.5 × 64 cm



















New Indonesian Series:

- 1. Painter #1
- 2. Poet #1
- 3. Poet #2
- 4. Geologist #1
- 7. Octologist // 1
- 5. Geologist #2
- 6. Interior Designer #1
- 7. Crafter #1





2016 watercolour on Canson Montval 300 gsm acid-free paper dimensions variable (37 x 27 cm, 39.7 x 29.7 cm) **D.J. Rachmansyah** is my painting teacher. He graduated from the Fine Arts faculty of ITB in the '60s. I had requested him to focus on one point with an expression of anxiety or solicitude, while wearing his favorite beret. As he is almost 80-year-old, he has wrinkles and lines on his face. His skin tone is actually light, characteristic of a Sundanese, but it is covered by dark spots. Regarding his expression, I adopted some principles of Neoclassicism. A portraiture has to appear calm, authoritative, and almost with no expression except for an Archaic smile.

Weslly Johannes is a poet from Ambon who is currently pursuing his MA in Theology in Satya Wacana University, Salatiga. Curly hair, defined cheekbones, full lips, moustache, and beards are some of Weslly's features that fascinate me. I think this is one of the strongest portraitures that I've made. His persona and presence are captured well by my paint brush. This is the facial shape that I consider as "problematic" (look-wise), which makes it easier for me to work on it

Theoresia Rumthe moved from Ambon to Bandung in the early 2000s, to escape the violent conflict that was happening at that time. She used to work as a radio broadcaster before she started conducting public speaking classes. I still think that painting a woman is more difficult compared to painting a man, as there are less lines on the face, consistent with today's beauty standards. Theo has a nice jawline and attractive lips, especially when she laughs.

**Gyaista Sampoerno** is a graduate from the Geology department of ITB (Institute of Technology, Bandung), a nature lover, a freelance mining worker, and a manager of a restaurant which he started with his wife and friends. His small build does not hinder him from his passion for mountaineering. His extraordinary stamina led him to join his friends for an expedition to Langtang, Nepal, where he did a pilgrimage to the site where three of his friends vanished during the April 2015 Nepal earthquake.

**Ir. Sudjatmiko** is a geologist who is passionate about various mineral stones of Indonesia. Characterized by lines due to his old age and dark skin, his facial features are very challenging to be captured in a painting, whether by using oil paint or watercolour. As his skin tone is similar to a South Asian's, I used warm Burnt Sienna mixed with Yellow Ochre, and cool colours as the middle-tones.

I've been wanting to paint **Mugi**, my friend from FSRD (Faculty of Fine Arts and Design) of ITB. Mugi studied interior design, and up to now, he often travels between Bandung and Jakarta to work on his projects and to teach. Mugi has strong and protruding cheekbones. His lower lip looks strangely curved, but to me, it looks really nice. I have tried painting his face many times without any satisfying result. This portrait is the most successful among 4-5 works that I've done.

**Suryanti Halim**, also known as Isur, is an enthusiastic craftswoman. She was one of my students in Klinik Rupa dr. Rudolfo. Still believing that painting a woman is more difficult than painting a man, I took the liberty to engage Isur as my subject matter. Isur does not have a pronounced feature, apart from her small eyes and soft cheekbones. Isur's face is usually dewy, and I haven't quite managed to capture that in my watercolour painting.









#### Iwan Effendi

The Puppet Moment 2017 single-channel video (13 min 32 sec), papier-mâché puppet in wooden frame 32.7 x 32.7 x 10 cm (frame)

















#### Krack!

Tanah/Impian (Dream/Land) Series:
1. Indomie, 1970
2. Anggur Beras, 1970
3. Papanya Cynthia Lamasu, 2009
4. Exposition de Paris 1900,
Neerlandies pavillion, 1900
5. Kekoeatan Asia, 1943
6. Tembako Nusa Harapan, 1930

2014 - 2017 silkscreen on Canson Montval paper dimensions variable (30 x 40 cm, 40 x 53 cm, 53 x 70 cm) edition no. variable total of 26 pieces





## Cinanti Astria Johansjah

Are we there yet?
2017
watercolour on Arches 850 gsm cold pressed paper 56.5 x 111 cm
(triptych, each panel 56.5 x 37 cm)













Pelatih Serangga/Insect Trainer (Re-edit)

2014 - 2017

blotter print, cutting sticker, laser light, audio tutorial dimensions variable





## PRICE LIST ARTWORKS BIENNALE JOGJA X - 2009

#### Bambang "Toko" Witjaksono

Price List
2009
digital print on paper
20 x 30 cm, book of 26 pages
edition of 10



11 DETEMBER 2009 - 11 JANUARI 2009

Tainan Budaya YOQYAKARTA JOQJA HATTONIA BUSESIN SANGROMG ART SPACE

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107.	Heri Dono	Spider Jamming 300 x 300 cm Mixed Media 2009	Just joglo antik jasii indoni Harga mulai Rp. 45.000.000	
108.	Ivan Sagita	Batas Ruang Batas Alam Dimensi variabel Brons 2009	Terima pembuatan kotak pos. Diantar ke rumah, Harga nego	

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# CARTE BLANCHE: ANXIETY 27 MAY - 24 JUNE 2017

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## GILLMAN BARRACKS

Mizuma Gallery is a part of Gillman Barracks (GB) is Asia's up-and-coming destination for contemporary art. It is distinguished as a vibrant centre in Asia for the creation, exhibition and discussion of contemporary art. Named after the late British General Sir Webb Gillman, GB is now home to 12 internationalart galleries, five restaurants, as well as the NTU Centre for Contemporary Art (CCA) Singapore. For more information, please visit www.gillmanbarracks.com

# MIZUMA GALLERY

Mizuma Gallery was established in Singapore's new art cluster Gillman Barracks in September 2012 by director Sueo Mizuma. The gallery was established in 1994 in Tokyo, and since its opening in Singapore aims for the promotion of Japanese artists in the region as well as the introduction of new and promising young talents from South East Asia to the international art scene. The gallery creates a new vector of dialogue within Asia, by exchanging art projects between East Asia and South East Asia.

Mizuma Gallery has featured the works of Japanese artists including Aida Makoto, Amano Yoshitaka, Tenmyouya Hisashi, Ikeda Manabu, Aiko Miyanaga, and Yamaguchi Akira. Moreover, it has showcased the work of renown East Asian artists such as Ken and Julia Yonetani, Jun Nguyen-Hatsushiba, Susan Philipsz, Ai Weiwei, and Du Kun. The gallery also organises exhibitions featuring the creations of Indonesia's forerunner artists including Heri Dono. Nasirun, Made Wianta, indieguerillas, Albert Yonathan Setyawan, Agan Harahap, Agung Prabowo, and Angki Purbandono. Mizuma Gallery also participates yearly in Art Stage Singapore and Art Basel Hong Kong.

