

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## ***The Social Realism of Agan Harahap***

15 April – 21 May 2017

Solo exhibition by Agan Harahap (ID)



Agan Harahap, *Kerokan*, 2017 © Agan Harahap

Mizuma Gallery is pleased to announce *The Social Realism of Agan Harahap*, a solo exhibition by Agan Harahap.

Agan Harahap is known by many different titles: often cited as ‘master photoshopper’, others might regard him as an internet troll or even a digital manipulator, while many who may not know him may be hugely familiar with his works that are widely shared and ripped-off anonymously in online media. However, in the art scene, he has been steadily regarded as one of the most prominent contemporary artist of his generation, participating in various exhibitions such as his most recent, ‘*Mardijker Photo Studio*’ in the 2016 Singapore Biennale.

Often made with montage techniques or digital imaging effects, Agan’s works are a fusion of relevant social commentaries and pop culture references, composed in the style of glamorous publicity photo that creates parodies or surreal recreations of factual moments in history. In recent years, Agan became a viral superstar due to his ‘hobby’ of creating digitally manipulated images that he shares freely online through various social media. These images have become widely popular and highly shared memes that take on a range of various subjects: celebrities, religious clerics, politicians, and public figures. All of his subjects are depicted in either impossible, self-deprecating, or ‘Indonesianized’ situations that express a local brand of humor. Though best understood by those who are familiar with the Indonesian culture, Agan’s amusing commentaries have proven to resonate universally as well.

From here, Agan found his position and relevance as an artist playing his role in the digital era. Even more so coming from Indonesia, one of the countries with the highest social media usage globally, along with the growing polarization, political, intellectual, and religious divide, plus a countless span of issues that come as the consequence of democratization of media and information. Digital imaging is no longer just an artistic tool or a professional occupation. It has become a powerful medium of social intervention for Agan, playing around with the public's opinion with the intention of inviting others to rethink what the truth is, what is real and what is fiction – and essentially, to always question absolutism.

In this exhibition, Agan is taking his exploration to another level by presenting a series of appropriation of paintings by Indonesian art maestros, such as Hendra Gunawan, S. Sudjojono, Basuki Abdullah, and Dullah. Mainly from the 1940s to 1960s, most of these paintings embody the *zeitgeist* from a time known as the heyday of Social Realism manifesto in Indonesia, and were meant to express the grand narratives of nationalism, as well as to represent the social truth of the Indonesian society at that time. Agan 'borrows' these paintings to present his own version of Social Realism in the current *zeitgeist*: a period where religion, politics, class struggles, and consumer culture are all contesting in a culture where fake news, hoax, and media wars have become part of society's everyday consumption – and art, somehow, is still able to play a role in this divisive world we live in today.

**Agan Harahap (b. 1980, Indonesia)** graduated from STDI Design and Art College in Bandung, Indonesia, where he majored in Graphic Design. After which, he moved to Jakarta and photographed for Indonesian-based music magazine, Trax Magazine. He held his first solo exhibition in 2009 and has since been participating in various photography exhibitions around Southeast Asia and beyond. Agan's photographs depict his subjects in surreal situations that mislead the realism of his work and question our dependence on photography to inform us of reality. The past year alone has seen Agan in both the Shanghai and Singapore Biennale, as well as Bangladesh's Chobi Mela, one of Asia's most respected photography event.

### **Artist Talk**

Saturday, 15 April 2017, 4 – 6 pm

### **Opening Reception**

Saturday, 15 April 2017, 6 – 9 pm

### **Exhibition Dates**

Saturday, 15 April 2017 – Sunday, 21 May 2017

## Gallery Profile

Mizuma Gallery was established in 1994 in Tokyo, and since its opening in Gillman Barracks, Singapore in 2012, it 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 + Julia Yonetani, Jun Nguyen-Hatsushiba, Ai Weiwei, and Du Kun. The gallery also organises exhibitions featuring Indonesia's forerunner artists including Heri Dono, Nasirun, Made Wianta, indieguerillas, Albert Yonathan Setyawan, Agung "Agugn" Prabowo, Agan Harahap, and Angki Purbandono. Mizuma Gallery also participates yearly in Art Stage Singapore, and Art Basel Hong Kong.

## About Gillman Barracks

Set in a former military barracks dating back to 1936 and surrounded by lush tropical greenery, the Gillman Barracks visual arts cluster was launched in September 2012. Gillman Barracks' vision is to be Asia's destination for the presentation and discussion of international and Southeast Asian art. Gillman Barracks is now home to leading international and home-grown galleries, national research centre NTU Centre for Contemporary Art (CCA) Singapore, and art organisations Art Outreach and Playeum's Children's Centre for Creativity. The art businesses and organisations are complemented by design retailer Supermama, and an array of cafes, bars and restaurants. For more information: [www.gillmanbarracks.com](http://www.gillmanbarracks.com)

## Contact

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Hours: Tue-Sat 11-7 Sun 11-6, Closed on Mondays & PH



**Agan Harahap**



*Mentjari Kutu Rambut*  
2017  
C-print on photo paper, diasec  
100 x 150 cm

© Agan Harahap,  
Courtesy of Mizuma Gallery

**Agan Harahap**



*Diponegoro Memimpin Pertempuran  
2017*

C-print on photo paper, diasec  
160 x 120 cm  
edition of 3 + 1AP

© Agan Harahap,  
Courtesy of Mizuma Gallery