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## *Baroque Archipelago*

Group exhibition by Agan Harahap, Budi Agung Kuswara, LULULUTFILABIBI, Mella Jaarsma, Octora, TOTON  
Curated by Tan Siuli  
22 January – 21 February 2021



Mizuma Gallery is pleased to announce *Baroque Archipelago*, a group exhibition curated by Tan Siuli, featuring Indonesian artists Agan Harahap, Budi Agung Kuswara, LULULUTFILABIBI, Mella Jaarsma, Octora, and TOTON.

*Baroque Archipelago* brings contemporary art and fashion in conversation with one another, to illuminate parallel approaches in creation and exploration of current issues.

The exhibition title makes reference to both the baroque pearl as well as the Indonesian archipelago; the latter – spanning over 13,000 islands and a stunningly diverse spectrum of cultures, ethnicities and topographies – is compared to the former, an irregularly-shaped pearl celebrated precisely for its asymmetry and organic form. Embedded in the metaphor of the pearl is the process of its creation. It is formed when a foreign object is lodged within the interior of a mollusc; as a defensive mechanism, layers of nacre are secreted to envelop the external irritant, and these subsequently develop into a prized pearl. This process of formation may be likened to the *Nusantara's* negotiation of the diverse and multi-faceted cultural landscape encompassed within its geographical and national boundaries, as well as with the foreign cultures that journeyed to its shores, in the process adopting and evolving these into something uniquely 'Indonesian'.

Turning on ideas of adornment, desire and difference, *Baroque Archipelago* shines a spotlight on Indonesian creatives reinterpreting and reworking Indonesia's rich traditions, and on the archipelago as an exemplar of the region's syncretic culture, borrowing and adapting from diverse sources and cultures to evolve a distinct and unique sensibility. The notion of a syncretic identity (as opposed to a monolithic one) is also explored as a strategy of resistance against essentialist nationalism. In addition, the art and fashion creations on display question social and cultural norms and their evolution, especially as they relate to notions of identity, gender and power. In Indonesia, artists and designers often collaborate with each other and form a supportive, close-knit community; this exhibition is in many ways a celebration of these creative synergies and relationships.

## About the Artists



**Agan Haharap (b. 1980)** began his career as a painter and illustrator, and subsequently worked as a digital imaging artist and photographer for an Indonesian music publication. Today he is best known for his digitally manipulated images which are often disseminated through social media, harnessing the reach of this contemporary medium to comment on its potential and pitfalls, and on current issues.



**Budi Agung Kuswara, or 'Kabul' (b. 1982)** is the co-founder of Ketemu Project Space in Bali, an initiative that marries art collectivism and social enterprise. Trained in *kamasan* painting, Kabul retains the intricacy and delicate linework of this traditional art form in his contemporary works. His paintings celebrate the treasury of aesthetic and cultural influences on the Indonesian archipelago, marrying these baroque sensibilities with observations on social tensions and dynamics.



Indonesian designer **Lulu Lutfi Labibi's** eponymous label was launched in 2012, and celebrates the beauty of traditional textiles such as *lurik*, which has become a signature in the label's collections. The Yogyakarta-based designer has revolutionised this once-overlooked fabric by incorporating it into fluid, draped garments that reference silhouettes of Asian dress whilst embracing a *wabi-sabi* aesthetic.



**Mella Jaarsma (b. 1960)** is the co-founder of Cemeti Art House, one of Indonesia's foremost contemporary art institutions. Her artistic practice revolves around the body and its coverings as powerful signifiers of identity and its social and cultural politics. Her work often employs materials such as animal skins and horns – items charged with metaphoric potencies of race, human nature, sexuality, beliefs and origins.



**Octora (b. 1982)** adopts a multi-disciplinary approach to her art-making, investigating the intersections between image, official history and collective memory. Her interest in clothing and covering as modes of power and dissimulation has been an abiding one, manifesting in her exploration of dress and accoutrement in Indonesia.



Founded in 2012 by Toton Januar and Haryo Balitar, **TOTON** is a contemporary womenswear label that explores Indonesia's natural beauty and diverse culture with modern reinterpretations, celebrating heritage while deconstructing traditions for a new approach. The label draws on artisanal techniques traditionally used for folk and ceremonial costumes, rethinking and reworking these in contemporary iterations of ethnic garments.

## About the Curator



**Tan Siuli** has over a decade of curatorial experience with a focus on contemporary art from Southeast Asia. Her exhibition projects include two editions of the Singapore Biennale (2013 and 2016), inter-institutional traveling exhibitions, as well as mentoring and commissioning platforms such as the *Presidents Young Talents* exhibition series. She has also lectured on Museum-based learning and Southeast Asian art history at institutes of higher learning such as the National Institute of Education as well as Lasalle College of the Arts. Her recent speaking engagements include presentations on Southeast Asian contemporary art at Frieze Academy London and Bloomberg's *Brilliant Ideas* series.

## About Mizuma Gallery

Executive Director Suelo Mizuma established Mizuma Art Gallery in Tokyo in 1994. Since its opening in Gillman Barracks, Singapore in 2012, the gallery aims for the promotion of East Asian artists in the region as well as the introduction of Southeast Asian artists to the international art scene. From 2014 to 2019, the artist residency space "Rumah Kijang Mizuma" opened in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, as a platform for dialogue by supporting exchanges between East Asia and Southeast Asia. Later in 2018, "Mizuma & Kips" in New York, USA, as a shared collaboration between Mizuma Gallery from Tokyo and Singapore and Kips Gallery from New York.

## 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. Today, Gillman Barracks is a place for art lovers, art collectors, and those curious about art. The cluster is a focal point of Singapore's arts landscape, and anchors the development of visual art in the region and beyond. For more information: [www.gillmanbarracks.com](http://www.gillmanbarracks.com)

### Press Contacts

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Sun: 11am-6pm  
Closed on Mondays &  
Public Holidays

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Image: Agan Harahap, *How You Like That* (detail), 2020, C-print on photo paper, mounted on aluminium composite, 79 x 122 cm, edition of 3 + 1AP © Agan Harahap, courtesy of the artist and Mizuma Gallery.

**COVID-19 update:** In accordance with the current advisory from the Singapore Government, we require all visitors to check-in using SafeEntry and to wear their masks during the duration of their visit. For more information, please visit: [www.mizuma.sg/news/notice-to-visitors/](http://www.mizuma.sg/news/notice-to-visitors/)