

THERE'S A FUN IN FUNERAL

AGAN HARAHAAP

24.4—30.5.21



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Arham Rahman

The Covid-19 pandemic has taken a lot from us and it often creates frustration. Agan Harahap reads the rapidly occurring change in our life's behaviour and the chaotic condition caused by the pandemic as a moment of mourning. However, according to him, like the pallbearers in Ghana, this mourning needs to be responded to elegantly—by 'putting the fun in funeral'.

In his previous works, Agan often played along the threshold between fiction and reality, filling up the grey area that connected one fact with the others. This grey area that Agan responded to has become a 'new reality', or more accurately, some kind of false reality. For example, in his art project *Sejarah_X (Membidik Sejarah and Mardijkers Photo Studio)*, Agan offers an alternative history of Indonesia, documented in photos and archives. Agan created fictional narratives of history and shared them through social media. His other works, mainly the ones that he frequently shares in social media, have a similar tendency.

At a glance, *There's a Fun in Funeral* seems different from Agan's works in general, especially if we are used to his 'internet-based' works. In a sense, its aesthetic features are also determined by the nature of social media being used as transmission tools. Public interaction that happens on social media (e.g. like, click, share, comment, etc.) are the most important elements that shape the aesthetic features of a digital work on social media platforms. The more engagement there is, the more aesthetically pleasing it becomes.

The uniqueness of Agan's artistic strategies is still very much present in the series *There's a Fun in Funeral* and what differs from his other works is simply its method of transmission. Agan seems to recognise the limitations of the social media platforms that he has been using to mediate his works. During this pandemic, many visual strategies take advantage of digital technology because of the limitation of offline meetings, whether as an exhibition or as an artistic strategy. However, as we often say, there is nothing really new and astonishing. It is all just a repetitive use of social media features in the devices we use daily.

Fictionality and satirical visual language are still the main elements of Agan's works in this series. Agan does not merely 'copy the reality' (*analogon*), but he creates his own reality by connecting paradoxical visual objects, especially on the three works in his new series: *Dump Yard* (2021), *Feeding Time* (2021), and *The Butterfly* (2021). In these three works, Agan connects the odd overlapping visual objects and creates an entirely new narrative. The bull, the cranes, and the pile of trash are put in one frame, just like the crow that feeds its chicks a used condom. Each object has its reference and when it is presented in the same frame, it refers to something else. Those three works are similar to his previous series, *Garden Fresh* (2012), in which Agan created an irony by combining different visual objects.

Some of Agan's other works share the same visual logic although they might have different narratives. There are also some works in this series that look quite different from the others, be it the theme or the visual logic, such as *The Watcher* (2021) and *Never Mind the Bollocks* (2021). These two works—borrowing Roland Barthes' term—appear traumatic, whereby the texts (caption/title) are tendentious and the explanation of the message seems to obscure the space for other meanings. Photos/images appear traumatic when the captions are unable to summarise the whole narrative of the image. This impression may occur, but Agan is used to playing with captions. He is not 'silencing' the message, but rather 'delaying' our reading when we are faced with the images he offers.

In *The Watcher* (2021), for example, it seems like we are the ones watching, but at the same time, we are also being watched. Who is 'the watcher'? Who is watching and who is being watched?

This caption becomes ambiguous, but at the same time, delays our judgment/reading of the image as well. We are invited to see the 'whole' image within a frame, but we also quickly discover the other details behind the cracked glass, which is an eye that stares back at us. What would we do when the object we watched watched us in return?

Suppose we are the character of Aadam Aziz in Salman Rushdie's novel, *Midnight's Children*, who for three years treats the landlord's daughter through a seven-inch hole cut in the middle of a large white bedsheet. The longer Aadam waits, the bigger the desire that he has for her, although he sees *partes extra partes*—a part which makes us feel like we have seen the whole. At one point, Aadam thinks that she watches him in return, and that stare becomes the catalyst that changes his perception.

Overall, we can see the works in this series as Agan's way of 'having fun' during the pandemic. There is no one single theme that can connect all the works in this series. But, quoting Agan's words: "*This series is a reflection and expression of my resistance towards this uncertain time. I create a reality and immerse myself in it, as a response to the many things that I experience and that are happening around me.*" This series is a summary of some of the problems that Agan encountered within the last year—from the personal, social, to his own artistic practice.

Arham Rahman is a curator and visual art researcher who lives and works in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. He graduated from the Magister Program of Religious and Cultural Studies, Sanata Dharma University in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Besides his research on art and cultural issues, he also writes and curates exhibitions. Arham Rahman was the managing editor of *The Equator*, a quarterly newsletter of the Yogyakarta Biennale Foundation (2014-2016), the director of the first *Makassar Biennale* (2015), a curator of *Biennale Jogja XV: Equator #5* (2019), and is currently the in-house curator of Galeri Lorong, Yogyakarta (2017–present).



Fun in Funeral

2021

C-print on photo paper

87 × 120 cm

edition of 3 + 1 AP



I'll Follow the Sun

2021

C-print on photo paper

110 × 140 cm

edition of 3 + 1 AP



Morning Glory

2021

C-print on photo paper

100 × 150 cm

edition of 3 + 1 AP



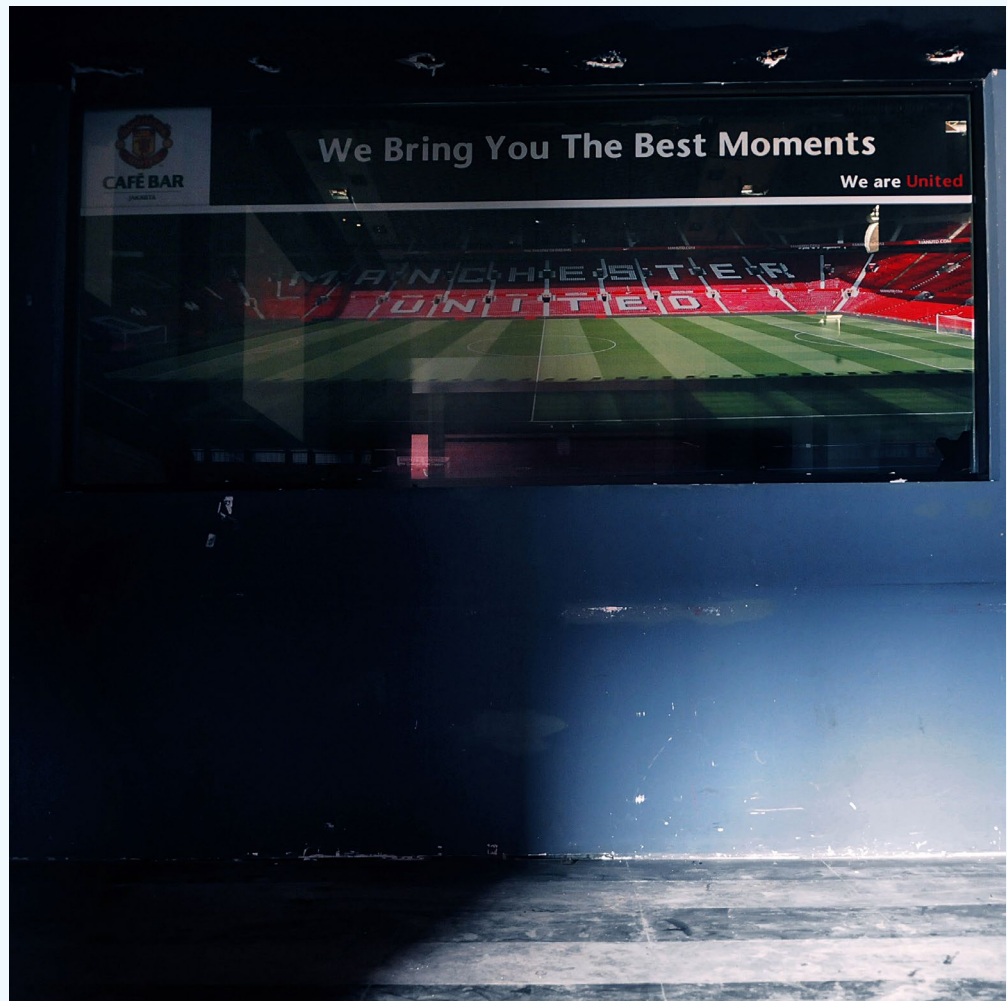
Never Mind the Bollocks

2021

C-print on photo paper

77 × 120 cm

edition of 3 + 1 AP



Yes. It was a good moment

2021

C-print on photo paper

100 × 100 cm

edition of 3 + 1 AP



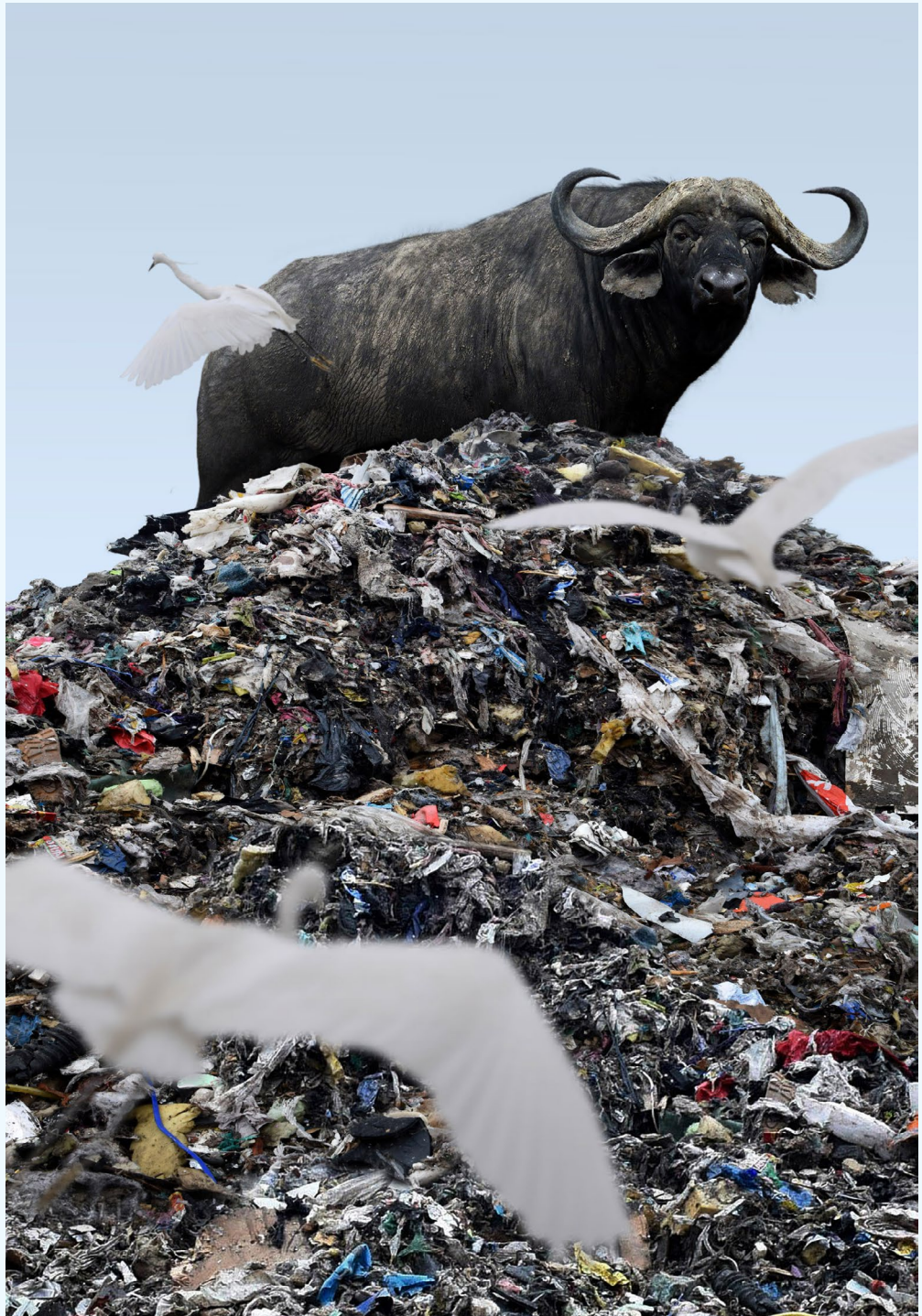
Desert Storm

2021

C-print on photo paper

100 × 80 cm

edition of 3 + 1 AP



Dump Yard

2021

C-print on photo paper

120 × 90 cm

edition of 3 + 1 AP



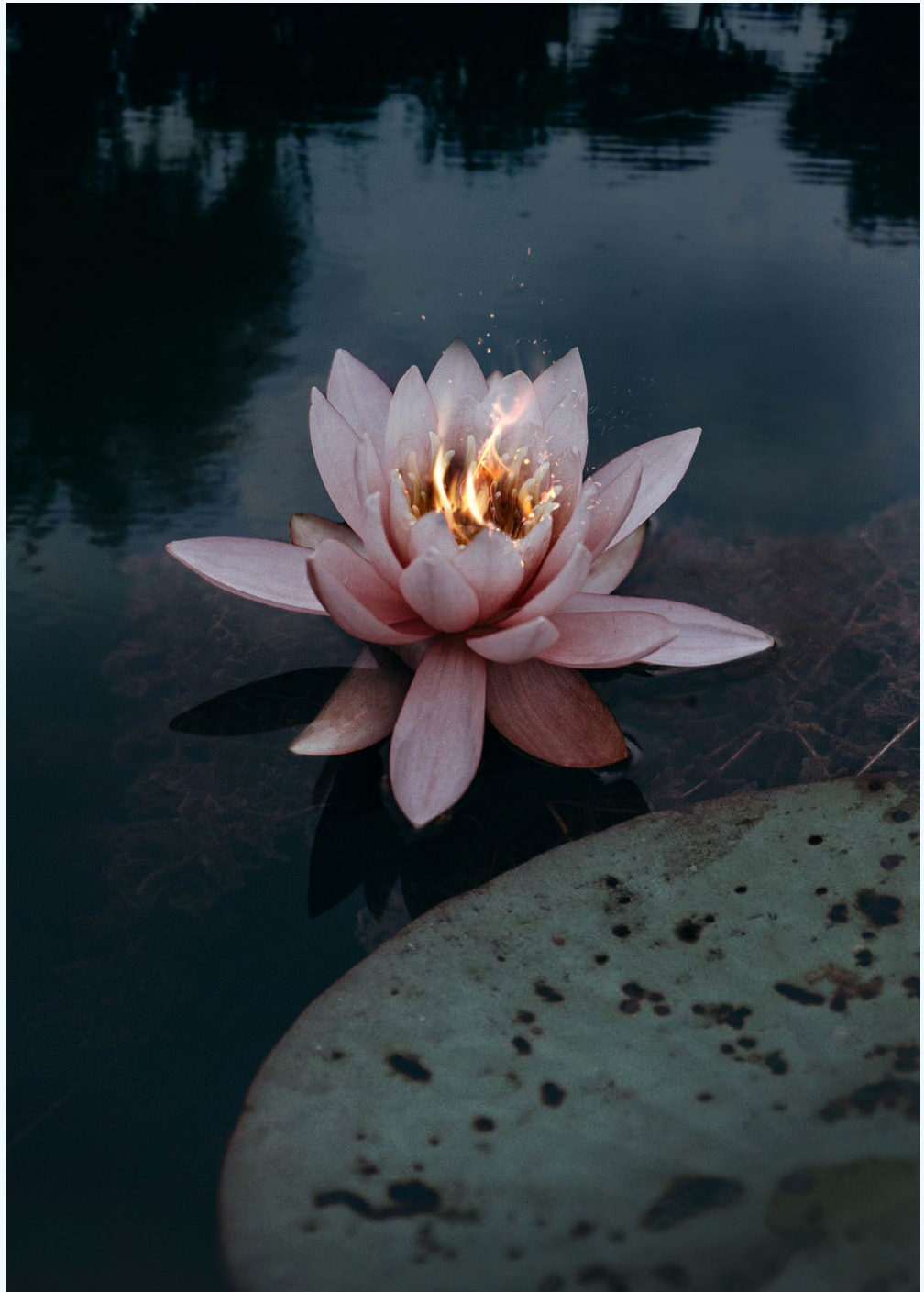
Feeding Time

2021

C-print on photo paper

120 × 90 cm

edition of 3 + 1 AP



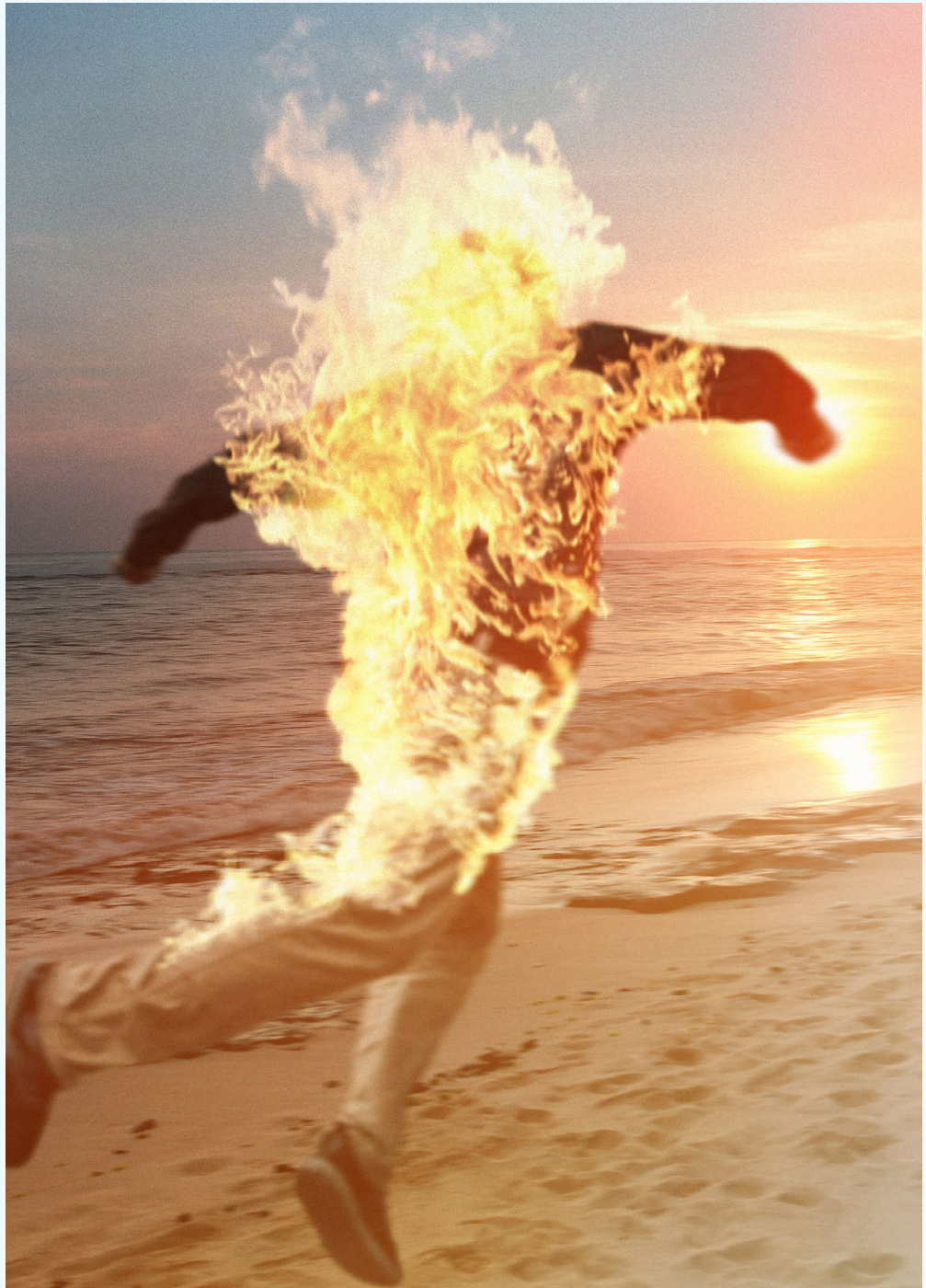
Light the Fire

2021

C-print on photo paper

100 × 77 cm

edition of 3 + 1 AP



The Burden of a Light Bearer

2021

C-print on photo paper

120 × 92 cm

edition of 3 + 1 AP



The Butterfly

2021

C-print on photo paper

100 × 78 cm

edition of 3 + 1 AP



The Watcher

2021

C-print on photo paper

120 × 95 cm

edition of 3 + 1 AP

**AGAN HARAHAAP**

Born in Jakarta, Indonesia, 1980
Lives and works in Yogyakarta, Indonesia

EDUCATION

- 2005 BA in Graphic Design, STDI (Design and Art College), Bandung, Indonesia

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2021 *There's a Fun in Funeral*, Mizuma Gallery, Singapore
- 2017 *The Social Realism of Agan Harahap*, Mizuma Gallery, Singapore
- 2012 *Garden Fresh*, Element Art Space, Singapore
- 2011 *Holy War*, Richard Koh Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Holy War, Project Stage, Art Stage Singapore, Singapore
Superhistory, ION Art Gallery, Singapore
- 2010 *Superhistory*, Vivi Yip Art Room, Jakarta, Indonesia
- 2009 *Safari*, Ruang MES 56, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2021 *Baroque Archipelago*, Mizuma Gallery, Singapore
Pause, Rewind, Forward #2, KINIKO Art Management, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
- 2020 *It's done!*, Mizuma Gallery, Singapore
ARTJOG: RESILIENCE, Jogja National Museum, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
Matter Matters: New Media, Materiality, and The Artworld, Can's Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia
- 2019 *Luar Ruang*, Riau Province, Pekanbaru, Indonesia
62 Years After Hamilton, Mizuma Gallery, Singapore

Poor Imagination, Sullivan + Strumpf, Singapore
Arts in Common: common/space, ART/JOG MMXIX, Jogja National Museum, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
Diverting Politics of (Re)presentation, Gajah Gallery, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
Apa Kabar?, Showroom MAMA, Rotterdam, The Netherlands
Bandung Contemporary Art Award: Assemblage, Lawangwangi Creative Space, Bandung, Indonesia
Hopes & Dialogues in Rumah Kijang Mizuma, Mizuma Gallery, Singapore

2018 *FINLAND*, Bibliothekswohnung, Berlin, Germany
From the Archives, Mizuma Gallery, Singapore
PhotoBangkok Festival 2018, Bangkok Arts and Culture Centre, Bangkok, Thailand
Enlightenment, ART/JOG/11, Jogja National Museum, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
Hello World. Revising a Collection, Hamburger Bahnhof - Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin, Germany
Prime Meridian, Vinyl on Vinyl Gallery, Manila, Philippines

2017 *OFF THE MENU*, Mediterranea Restaurant by Kamil, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
The Launch of Malaria House, Deus Ex Machina, Bali, Indonesia
During the Exhibition The Gallery Will Be Online, SaRanG Building 1, Bantul, Indonesia
Unsettling Time(s), Cemeti, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
Traces of the Future: Contemporary Art from Southeast Asia, Mizuma Art Gallery, Tokyo, Japan
Changing Perspective, ART/JOG/10, Jogja National Museum, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
The History of Boys: the MES 56 and Beyond, DECK, Singapore
Beyond Boundaries - Globalisation and Identity, Liechtenstein National Museum, Vaduz, Liechtenstein
Chobi Mela IX, Dhaka, Bangladesh

2016 *Minimal Art Gallery (MAG) | HOME*, REDBASE Foundation Yogyakarta, Indonesia
11th Shanghai Biennale, Power Station of Art, Shanghai, China
5th Singapore Biennale, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore
Dear Art World, Visma Arts & Design Gallery, Surabaya, Indonesia
SEA+ Triennale, National Gallery of Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia
Why are we doing what we are doing?, Mizuma Gallery, Singapore
Kolektif Kolegial, Cemeti Art House, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
Universal Influence, ART/JOG/9, Jogja National Museum, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
Costume National: Contemporary Art From Indonesia, AXENEO7, Quebec, Canada
Historia Docet, D Gallerie, Jakarta, Indonesia

2015 *No Other Color*, Kunstkring Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia
Effervescence, ROH Projects, Gillman Barracks, Singapore
Biennale Jogja XIII, Jogja National Museum, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
Transforming [RE]-Affirmation Channels, Jogja National Museum, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Noorderlicht Photo Festival (Making One Self), Noorderlicht Photo Gallery, Groningen, Netherlands

BitterSweet, Cemeti Art House, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Pursuing The Future, Ruci Art Space, Jakarta, Indonesia

Full House, Ruang MES 56, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Infinity in Flux, ART/JOG/8, Taman Budaya Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

NO WORRIES : HALAL, Vanessa Quang Gallery, Paris, France

FAD Democracy, Mizuma Gallery, Singapore

2014 *#Masalalujamanbaru*, SaRanG Building, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Put Up A Signal, Ruang MES 56, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Kontrak Dan Transaksi Lainnya, Ruang MES 56, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Afterimage: Contemporary Photography from Southeast Asia, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore

The 5th Indonesian Contemporary Art and Design, Grand Kemang Hotel, Jakarta, Indonesia

Local Fest, Grand Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia

MANIFESTO #4, Galeri Nasional Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia

Fiesta Kota Tua, Kantor Pos Fatahillah, Jakarta, Indonesia

La Super Expo!, Sakura Gallery, Paris, France

The Invisible Monuments, Art14 London, London, UK

SUPERHEROS, Galleries Forum Meyrin, Geneva, Switzerland

2013 *Jakarta Biennale*, Taman Ismail Marzuki, Jakarta, Indonesia

Fetart 15, Arles, France

KUOTA 4, Langgeng Art Foundation, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Beyond Boundaries, Umahseni, Jakarta, Indonesia

Grand Opening of the new Element Art Space, Raffles Hotel Arcade, Singapore

Beast/Bloom for Thee: Biota Etc, Galeri Canna, Jakarta, Indonesia

2012 *TOP COLLECTION #3*, ruangrupa, Jakarta, Indonesia

Looking East, ART/JOG/12, *A Gaze Upon Indonesian Contemporary Art*, Taman Budaya Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Zeitgeist, Bataviasche Kunstkring Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia

40 x 40, Dia.Lo.Gue Art Space, Jakarta, Indonesia

Tribute To Mentor, OHD Museum, Magelang, Indonesia

Saturations, Element Art Space, Singapore

2011 *Money Culture*, Garis Art Space, Jakarta, Indonesia

Beastly, Salihara Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia

PMR Cube, Sampoerna Strategic Square, Jakarta, Indonesia

APOGEE - A Compilation of Solitude, POLISTAR, Tophane/Istanbul, Turkey

Ruang Mes56: Contemporary Photography from Indonesia, Center for Contemporary Photography, Melbourne, Australia

Beyond Photography, Ciputra Marketing Gallery Kuningan, Jakarta, Indonesia

Asian Photography Section, Bazaar Art Jakarta, Ritz Carlton Hotel, Jakarta, Indonesia

New Pop New World, Element Art Space, Singapore

We Are Now Open, Garis Art Space, Jakarta, Indonesia
Beastly, Cemeti Art House, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
Month Of Photography Tokyo, Ricoh Ring Cube Gallery, Tokyo, Japan
The Howler Terror Club Interstellar Artist, The Goods Dept., Jakarta, Indonesia
FOTOGRAFICA BOGOTÁ 2011, Galeria Christopher Paschall S.XXI, Bogota, Colombia
1001 Doors: Reinterpreting Traditions, Ciputra Marketing Gallery Kuningan, Jakarta, Indonesia

- 2010 *Mental Archive*, Cemeti Art House, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
Digit (all), Umah Seni, Jakarta, Indonesia
The 2nd Jakarta International Photo Summit, National Gallery of Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia
All (but) Paper, Dia.Lo.Gue Art Space, Jakarta, Indonesia
Daegu Photo Biennale 2010, Daegu Culture and Arts Center, Daegu, South Korea
Shopping, Nadi Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia
Bazaar Art Jakarta, Ritz Carlton Hotel, Jakarta, Indonesia
10th Anniversary One Gallery, One Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia
The Loss of the Real, Selasar Sunaryo, Bandung, Indonesia
Room is Mine, Edwin's Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia
Mendamba Tubuh, Goethe Haus, Jakarta, Indonesia
Crash Project: Image Factory, SIGIarts Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia
- 2009 *URBANTOPIA – Contemporary Photo Exhibition*, North Art Space, Ancol, Jakarta, Indonesia
Cut 09: figure – New Photography from Southeast Asia, Valentine Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and Singapore (traveled to: Manila Contemporary, Manila, Philippines)
- 2008 *APPAF International Photo Festival*, Estremoz, Portugal
Move Heaven N Layer, Oktagon Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia
Indonesia Art Award, National Gallery of Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia
INTER-MIS-SION: A Pause or Break, PVJ, Bandung, Indonesia
- 2007 *JPG Fashion Photography*, Space Gallery, San Francisco, California, USA
- 2004 *It's All About*, STDI, Bandung, Indonesia
Miceun Runtah Dina Otak, Dago Street, Bandung, Indonesia
Aku Cinta Kamu Dulu Baru Aku, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI), Bandung, Indonesia
- 2003 *Selera Kita Rasa Idaman*, Gedung YPK, Bandung, Indonesia
- 2001 *Manusia Diatas Kertas*, STDI, Bandung, Indonesia

AWARDS

- 2018 Nominee, Best Emerging Artist, iD Indonesia Design Best Design Award
- 2008 Nominee, Best Photography, Indonesia Art Award, National Gallery of Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia

RESIDENCIES

- 2017 Objectifs Centre for Photography and Film, Singapore
- 2012 Element Art Space, Singapore

PUBLICATIONS

- 2018 *Album Kenangan*, Kamboja Press, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
- 2012 *My Own Wilderness*, catalogue, Christopher H Paquette, PHOTO/arts Magazine, USA
Positions: Asia Critique Vol. 20, journal, Duke University Press, Durham, North Carolina, USA
- 2011 *APOGEE – A Compilation of Solitude, Ecology and Recreation*, book (German/English), Revolver Publishing, Berlin, Germany

COLLECTIONS

Sigg Collection, Mauensee, Switzerland
Freunde der Nationalgalerie, Berlin, Germany



Executive Director Sueo 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” operated in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, providing a new platform for dialogue by supporting exchanges between East Asia and Southeast Asia. In 2018, a new gallery space, “Mizuma & Kips” in New York, USA, as a shared collaboration between Mizuma Gallery from Tokyo and Singapore, and Kips Gallery from New York.

Mizuma Gallery features the works of Japanese artists including Aida Makoto, Aiko Miyana, Amano Yoshitaka, Ikeda Manabu, Tenmyouya Hisashi, and Yamaguchi Akira. Moreover, it showcases the works of renowned East Asian artists such as Ai Weiwei, Du Kun, Jun Nguyen-Hatsushiba, Ken + Julia Yonetani, and Zhao Zhao. The gallery also features the creations of prominent and emerging artists from the region including Agan Harahap, Albert Yonathan Setyawan, Angki Purbandono, Entang Wiharso, Gilang Fradika, Heri Dono, indieguerillas, Made Wianta, Mark Justiniani, Nasirun, Budi Agung Kuswara, Robert Zhao Renhui, Zen Teh, Ashley Yeo, and Ben Loong. Mizuma Gallery participates annually in international art fairs including Art Basel Hong Kong and The Armory Show New York, promoting Asian artists on an international art scale.

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

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Public Holidays

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First published in
Singapore, 2021, in a print
run of 300.

TEXT © Arham Rahman

IMAGES © Agan Harahap,
courtesy of Mizuma Gallery.

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