



Residual Memory

BUDI AGUNG KUSWARA

MIZUMA GALLERY

27.11 — 23.12.2021

Residual Memory

by TAN SIULI

Budi Agung Kuswara's paintings celebrate the treasury of aesthetic and cultural influences on the Indonesian archipelago. Trained in *kamasan* painting, Budi retains the intricacy and delicate linework of this traditional art form in his contemporary works, marrying these baroque sensibilities with observations on social tensions and dynamics.

Residual Memory continues his interest in archival images, in particular, images related to Indonesia's history and culture. While earlier works focused on vignettes of his birthplace Bali, and how these images were constructed for the foreign (tourist) gaze, Budi's new body of work turns its lens on artefacts and documents of the past that relate more broadly to how 'Indonesia' and its premodern past and culture have been represented and narrated. Retrieved from the public domain, these images of sculptures and photographs that reside in institutional collections across the world are brought together on Budi's canvas. Here, they are re-ordered and reworked into lavish, dream-like paintings, bringing together vestiges from different eras into an assemblage that explores facets of 'Indonesian' culture, history and identity, while simultaneously recalling the European tradition of still life or *vanitas* paintings with their subtext of the transience of all things.

Fittingly, the artist has chosen to title this series of works 'Defragmentation'. A term borrowed from the computing world and a nod to the artist's method of 'data retrieval' via the world wide web, 'defragmentation' involves the reorganisation of separated fragments of related data into a contiguous arrangement. Many of the artefacts that appear in Budi's paintings are notable icons that were taken from the archipelago during colonial rule, and dispersed into museum collections across the world, in particular those in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. *Defragmentation #3* for instance, is dedicated to the objects found in the Raffles Collection, with a portrait of the eponymous collector – and the figure who left an indelible legacy in Southeast Asia – placed right in the centre of the painting.

In composing his tableaux however, the artist does not seek to follow a fixed narrative, nor impose any one 'reading' on the viewer. In this way, Budi removes the artefacts of a cultural past from the 'fixity' of museological and

/ or historical narratives, and re-composes them into a fluid and floating world. For instance, in *Defragmentation #1* a bust of 14th century military leader Gajah Mada shares the same space as a plague mask and a vial of the Covid-19 vaccine. It is worth noting that in the first place, these cultural artefacts were separated from their originary contexts (often sacred sites) and presented in institutional settings unmoored from their original frames of reference; here, Budi renders these icons doubly unfamiliar or uncanny, by piecing together these cultural fragments in his baroque palimpsests where they take on more of a quality of a dream – visions seen through an indigo haze – or the capricious wonderment of a ‘cabinet of curiosities’.

There is an equivalence in Budi’s still-lives that collapses temporalities and geographies, for which the curiosity cabinet (or *Wunderkammer*, literally, ‘chamber of wonders’) might be an apt parallel. The development of these private collections of objects and specimens went hand in hand with European voyages of discovery, and the concomitant desire to collect, catalogue, map, and hence understand the world through material culture. While it is often described as a precursor to the modern museum, early curiosity cabinets may be distinguished by the fact that the selection, arrangement and display of the objects therein were often determined not by any established taxonomy, but rather by the personal interpretations of the collector, which hinged on an associative logic. In Budi’s paintings, as with those early curiosity cabinets, combinations of uncanny objects connect various places and eras in the world, making here and there, then and now coincide. The viewer is invited to assume agency as an active interpreter of history. Fittingly, the artist shares a favourite quote:

“We never look at just one thing. We are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves”.

JOHN BERGER, ‘WAYS OF SEEING’

Place as well as time are collapsed on the picture plane in Budi’s works, and central to this spirit of coinciding the ‘then and now’ is Budi’s use of cyanotype to create his artwork. This process, which relies on sunlight to bring images into being, is the artist’s way of connecting his work and his time, with the past eras of the images he works with, from the premodern kingdoms of the Singhasari and Majapahit, to more recent colonial histories. Through the sun – the same sun that has presided over thousands of years of human history – these older, ancient histories and

past eras are all present, and brought to light, in Budi's contemporary re-telling. Rendered in cyanotype and then painted over, these historical icons assume a spectral quality, almost like an after-image: a residual memory. While history may write certain eras as more significant than others, under the gaze of the sun they are but one of many arcs in a larger cosmic cycle. Tellingly, there are little details scattered throughout Budi's paintings that point to the importance of the sun as a source of life and creation, from the sprite-like figures with their heads of sun-flowers animating the tableaux, to the presence of framed photographs (literally 'light-writing') set within the depicted still-lives, calling our attention to how light has been harnessed to document, and to bear witness to history and civilisations throughout time.

The 'Juxtapose' series of works brings together these ideas of civilisations and eternal cosmic cycles. Relatively simpler in composition, the 'Juxtapose' series centres on a still life of flowers, set against a background teeming with clouds and sparring animals. The vases that hold the bouquets are all references to artefacts in notable museum collections worldwide, their blue and white colouring marking them out as prized ceramicware that once traversed oceans on maritime trading routes. On their surfaces are painted delicate scenes of women embroidering, or still-lives of flowers in a mise-en-abyme. These genteel vignettes contrast vividly with the energetic movement of the sepia-toned backgrounds, where animals hunt and spar with each other. Culture and civilisation, the high-minded pursuits of humanity – symbolised by the porcelain vase and its artistry, as well as the artful arrangement of flowers within it – are juxtaposed with the savagery of the animal world, yet both are part of a life cycle and earthly existence, equally transient within a larger cosmic arc of time, as suggested by the wave of clouds on the verge of sweeping everything away.

*The treasures of time lie high, in urns, coins, and monuments, scarce below
the roots of some vegetables. Time hath endless rarities, and shows of all
varieties; which reveals old things in heaven, makes new discoveries in earth,
and even earth itself a discovery.*

THOMAS BROWNE, 'HYDRIOTAPHIA, URN-BURIAL', 1658

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 *President's 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.





Tumbuh Hasrat di Balik Kepala
 2020
 cyanotype and acrylic on *kamasan* canvas
 145 × 250 cm



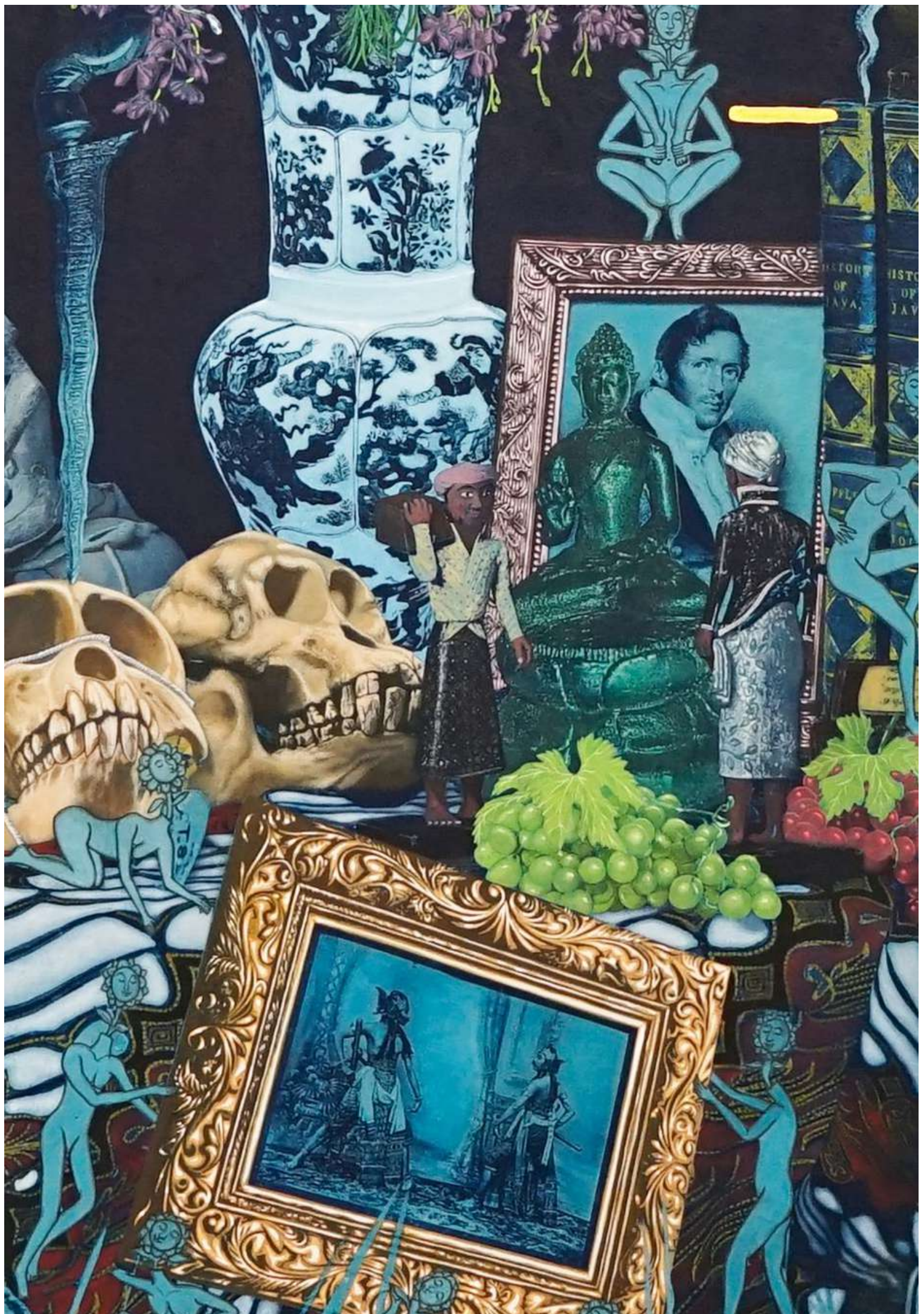


Defragmentation #2
 2021
 cyanotype and acrylic on *kamasan* canvas
 200 × 145 cm





Defragmentation #3
 2021
 cyanotype and acrylic on *kamasan* canvas
 200 × 145 cm





Defragmentation #6
 2021
 cyanotype and acrylic on *kamasan* canvas
 200 × 145 cm



Defragmentation #1
2021
cyanotype and acrylic on *kamasan* canvas
200 × 145 cm

RESIDUAL MEMORY

BUDI AGUNG KUSWARA





Juxtapose #2

2021

cyanotype, ink, watercolor and glitter on cotton paper
115 x 80 cm (unframed), 125 x 90 x 3 cm (framed)





Juxtapose #1

2021

cyanotype, ink, watercolor and glitter on cotton paper
115 x 80 cm (unframed), 125 x 90 x 3 cm (framed)





Defragmentation #4

2021

cyanotype, ink, watercolor and glitter on cotton paper
115 x 80 cm (unframed), 125 x 90 x 3 cm (framed)





Defragmentation #5

2021

cyanotype, ink, watercolor and glitter on cotton paper
80 x 115 cm (unframed), 90 x 125 x 3 cm (framed)





Defragmentation #7

2021

cyanotype, ink, watercolor and glitter on cotton paper
115 x 80 cm (unframed), 125 x 90 x 3 cm (framed)





BUDI AGUNG KUSWARA (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, Budi 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.

BUDI AGUNG KUSWARA
 Born in BALI, INDONESIA, 1982
 Lives in SINGAPORE & BALI, INDONESIA

Education

²⁰⁰⁹ Bachelor in Fine Art, Indonesia Institute of the Art (ISI), Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Solo Exhibitions

²⁰²¹ *Residual Memory*, Mizuma Gallery, Singapore ²⁰¹⁸ *Anonymous Ancestors*, Ubud Readers & Writer's Festival, Bali, Indonesia | *Arus Berlabuh Kita*, Asian Civilization Museum, Singapore (in collaboration with Samantha Tio) ²⁰¹⁵ *After Paradise*, Paradiso, Bali, Indonesia ²⁰¹³ *Jump!*, Theatre Street Cones, The Esplanade, Singapore | *Kebon Indah*, Baba House, National University Singapore Museum, Singapore (in collaboration with Samantha Tio) | *Weaving Dreams in the Wind*, Community Wall, The Esplanade, Singapore (in collaboration with Samantha Tio) ²⁰¹² *Floating Desires*, TAKSU Gallery, Singapore | *The 12th Winds of Artist in Residence*, Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Fukuoka, Japan | *The Wax on Our Fingers*, Indonesian Contemporary Arts Network, Yogyakarta, Indonesia (in collaboration with Samantha Tio) ²⁰⁰⁸ *i.self*, Komaneka Fine Art Gallery, Bali, Indonesia

Group Exhibitions

²⁰²¹ *Facing the Sun*, Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery, Schloss Görne, Kleßen-Görne, Germany | *Tonight the Air is Warm*, Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery, London, United Kingdom | *Baroque Archipelago*, Mizuma Gallery, Singapore ²⁰²⁰ *Rooted in Bali*, Mizuma Gallery, Singapore ²⁰¹⁹ *ART•BALI 2019: Speculative Memories*, AB•BC Building, Bali Collection, ITDC Nusa Dua, Bali, Indonesia ²⁰¹⁸ *ART•BALI 2018: Celebration of the Future*, AB•BC Building, Bali Collection, ITDC Nusa Dua, Bali, Indonesia ²⁰¹⁷ *Crossing: Beyond Baliseering*, fortyfivedownstairs theatre, Melbourne, Australia ²⁰¹⁶ *Love Me in My Batik*, ILHAM Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia | *Water and Land: International Showcases on Environmental Arts*, Taipei, Taiwan | *Guandu International Nature Art Festival*, Taipei, Taiwan ²⁰¹⁵ *ECONOMY*, Latent Spaces, Art Stage Singapore, Singapore | *Genetik*, ARMA Museum, Bali, Indonesia | *Oktopost*, The Esplanade, Singapore | *Conversations Beneath the Skies*, Biblioteca de Mexico, Mexico City, Mexico ²⁰¹³ *I Imagine*, Jendela, The Esplanade, Singapore | *Water*, TAKSU Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia | *TEASE!*, TAKSU Gallery, W Hotel Bali, Bali, Indonesia ²⁰¹² *Nasi Campur*, TAKSU Gallery, Singapore ²⁰¹¹ *Peripheries*, Asia Triennial

Manchester, United Kingdom | *Drawing Conversations*, Siena Art Institute, Siena, Italy | *Jogja Art Fair 2011*, Taman Budaya, Yogyakarta, Indonesia | *Foreign Exchange*, Diego Rivera Gallery, San Francisco Art Institute, California, United States | *Halo Halo 5*, Manila Contemporary, Manila, Philippines | *Bali, Making Choices*, Indonesian National Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia ²⁰¹⁰ *SDI Now*, Toni Raka Gallery, Bali, Indonesia | *ExpoSign*, Jogja Expo Centre, Yogyakarta, Indonesia | *Jogja Gumergah! Jogja Bangkit!*, Jogja National Museum, Yogyakarta, Indonesia ²⁰⁰⁹ *3 Young Contemporaries*, Valentine Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia | *Seeing You, Seeing Me, Contemporary Portraiture*, Manila Contemporary, Manila, Philippines ²⁰⁰⁸ *Reinventing Bali*, Sangkring Art Space, Yogyakarta, Indonesia | *Hybridity*, Bali Art Now, Jogja Gallery, Yogyakarta, Indonesia | *The Last Supper*, Bentara Budaya, Yogyakarta, Indonesia ²⁰⁰⁷ *KALIYUGA*, Gallery TEMBI, Jakarta, Indonesia | *Global Warming–Local Warming I Bumi*, Garuda Wisnu Kencana, Bali, Indonesia | *NEO-NATION*, Jogja Biennale IX, Yogyakarta, Indonesia ²⁰⁰⁶ *Rotten Head*, The Art Center, Bali, Indonesia ²⁰⁰⁵ *Indonesian Art Festival*, Sekolah Tinggi Seni Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia *Obesity (A performance art piece)*, Bali Museum, Bali, Indonesia ²⁰⁰⁴ *Having Fun*, Langgeng Gallery, Magelang, Indonesia ²⁰⁰³ *Open Air*, Borobudur International Festival, Magelang, Indonesia | *Termogram*, Neka Art Museum, Bali, Indonesia

Residencies

²⁰¹⁶ *GREEN ART: Water Ecology Project*, Bamboo Curtain Studio, Taipei, Taiwan
²⁰¹² *Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Residence Program*, Fukuoka, Japan |
TAKSU Kuala Lumpur, Artist Residency Program, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Commissions

²⁰¹⁹ *Busan Sea Art Festival*, Busan, South Korea
²⁰¹⁸ *RI-SING 50*, Ministry of Culture, Community & Youth (MCCY)
 and Singapore Art Museum, Singapore
²⁰¹⁵ *Our Lake of Imagination*, Torch Up Program, 28th SEA Games in Singapore,
 Singapore | *Conversations Beneath the Skies*, Ciudadela (Biblioteca De Mexico),
 Mexico City, Mexico
²⁰¹⁴ *Art Forum, Connexion by Farrer Park*, The Farrer Park Company, Singapore

Conferences

²⁰¹⁹ *Southeast Asian Arts Residencies Meeting*, Taitung, Taiwan
 | *Voice of Asia*, MOCA, Busan, South Korea
²⁰¹⁷ *Creative Climate Leadership Program*, Koper, Slovenia
²⁰¹⁶ *17th Pacific Rim College of Psychiatrists Scientific Meeting*, Kaohsiung, Taiwan



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” 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 Miyanaga, 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, Iwan Effendi, Made Wianta, Mark Justiniani, Nasirun, Budi Agung Kuswara, Robert Zhao Renhui, 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 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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