

States of rapture: Albert Yonathan Setyawan's 'Speaking in Tongues'

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Albert Yonathan Setyawan: Speaking in Tongues, installation view, Mind Set Art Centre, Taipei, 2022; courtesy Mind Set Art Centre, Taipei; photo: Zhu Chi-Hong



Albert Yonathan Setyawan, Aeviternum, 2022, detail; terracotta, slip-casting, 210 x 210cm (536 pieces); courtesy Mind Set Art Centre, Taipei; photo: Zhu Chi-Hong



Albert Yonathan Setyawan, Capturing Silence, 2019, installation view, 'Speaking in Tongues', Mind Set Art Centre, Taipei, 2022; terracotta, slip-casting, 25 x 9 x 4cm (480 pieces); courtesy Mind Set Art Centre, Taipei; photo: Zhu Chi-Hong



Albert Yonathan Setyawan, Infinitude, 2022, installation view, 'Speaking in Tongues', Mind Set Art Centre, Taipei, 2022; terracotta, slip-casting, 400 x 1700cm (2552 pieces); courtesy Mind Set Art Centre, Taipei; photo: Zhu Chi-Hong

Monumentality is often associated with grand structures occupying a space. Sometimes this effect can be achieved with small delicate forms arranged precisely to command dedicated attention. Indonesian artist **Albert Yonathan Setyawan**'s solo exhibition '**Speaking in Tongues**' at Taipei's Mind Set Art Centre exemplifies this through 11 large-scale ceramic installations.

The most impressive is *Infinitude* (2022), a 17-metre-long wall installation made up of 2552 palm-sized terracotta pieces. Each has been slip-cast from a tear-shaped mould, with the design of an eye and flames above it. Installed with lighting that creates multiple soft shadows under each piece, the ensemble resembles a mesmerising scene of suspended rain. The varying shades of deep red from different clays prevent the repetition from being monotonous, and encourages a prolonged gaze across the meticulous arrangement to observe such subtle differences between each ceramic.

Perfectly calculated to fill up and reach the ends of the gallery's longest wall, *Infinitude* is elegant and captivating, and the most straightforward presentation of Setyawan's practice in the exhibition. Show-cased here and elsewhere is the artist's ongoing fascination with symmetry, visual order and totem symbols while, at the same time, exploring the reproduction and sculptural quality of clay. Setyawan describes his laborious and repetitive process as one that inspires spiritual contemplation.

This extends into Setyawan's other installations, where the works all share a meditative quality. The patterns, layouts and spacings between individual pieces are deliberate and clear; there are seven rows and columns of perfectly organised circles of leaf-like terracotta in *Aeviternum* (2022), in which smaller leaf configurations are sandwiched in-between to make up the square wall work. A hypnotising pattern is present within each installation, where the focal point is not singular but, rather, dispersed and scattered across the consistent repetition of uniform terracotta pieces.

Geometric configurations have become entwined in Setyawan's visual language, with the artist having previously created works informed by the mandala and ideas of the labyrinth. *Capturing Silence* (2019), the only floor installation in the exhibition, is connected to these themes. Inspired by Antony Gormley's massive *Field* (1989–2003), it consists of 480 clay standing figures that fill a corner of the gallery space. *Capturing Silence* also quite literally presents the notion of the collective through 'strength in numbers'.

The title of his exhibition, 'Speaking in Tongues', has a biblical source, but Setyawan emphasises the linguistic aspect of this expression – one of deciphering and interpreting symbols. It is also a term that suggests a state of dissociation or incomprehension. However, more pertinent to Setyawan's practice are the states of trance, of rapture and of enthralling moments that come with it – common experiences in viewing his work.

Annette An-Jen Liu, Taipei

Curated by Ruoh Ling Keong, 'Albert Yonathan Setyawan: Speaking in Tongues' is on view at Mind Set Art Centre, Taipei, until 14 July 2022.