SHADOW OF THE PAST

ARAHMANI
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One of Indonesia’s most seminal and respected contemporary artists, Arahmaiani has long been internationally recognized for her powerful and provocative commentaries on social, political, and cultural issues. Born in 1961 in Bandung, Indonesia, she established herself in the 1980s as a pioneer in the field of performance art in Southeast Asia, although her practice also incorporates a wide variety of media. For the past six years, a particular focus of her work has been environmental issues in the Tibetan plateau region, where she has been actively collaborating on-site with Buddhist monks and villagers to foster greater environmental consciousness through an array of ongoing community projects. Shadow of the Past (Sept. 15 – Oct. 29, 2016) marks the first solo exhibition devoted to her artworks inspired by her ongoing experiences in Tibet, and features new installation and video works alongside a series of paintings.

The exhibition explores themes of spirituality (particularly informed by Tibetan Buddhism), cultural syncretism, humanity’s interconnectedness with nature, and the place of the feminine in religious traditions and in spiritual life in general. Arahmaiani is fascinated by the buried past of her native Java, its rich Hindu-Buddhist cultural heritage – which is now often under-recognized – and the monumental temples that were overgrown for centuries until their rediscovery in more recent times. Indonesia once had vital centers of Buddhist learning that were sought out by students from across Asia, including Atisha (982–1054), who became one of Tibet’s most revered lamas. Tibet has become an important part of Arahmaini’s own spiritual journey, both as a woman and a Javanese Muslim. The exhibition begins with an installation, Descending Rainbow, that was inspired by her meditation practice and her focus on ecology and the feminine. It features a richer, more colorful version of a Tibetan woman’s robe, a veiled meditation mattress, and a mandala made from living plants. The installation is also the setting for a new performance work of the same title, which had its debut during the exhibition opening.

At the opposite end of the gallery, a dimly lit installation contains a bench where visitors can meditate while observing Arahmaiani’s video, Light, in which the artist and friends of different nationalities and ethnicities take turns holding a lit candle and speaking a single word that is of spiritual significance to them. Arranged on the candlelit floor beneath the video is a group of gray pillows (entitled Dukkha, referencing the Buddhist concept of suffering) that have been embroidered with certain keywords relating to emotional states such as compassion, hate, greed, etc. In between the two installations is a series of diptychs, such as Illumination and Sonam, all in monochromatic gray, a color the artist associates with the quiet peace of a meditative state. These paintings incorporate women’s faces, some crowned with inscriptions in Arabic and Tibetan, alongside flowers and other natural imagery. A second video, Shadow of the Past (Lasem, Java), is based on a performance of Arahmaiani’s that took place in early 2016, in which she covers herself with mud, evoking the long buried Buddha statues of ancient Javanese temples, and walks through the empty buildings of an abandoned Javanese town once inhabited by ethnic Chinese Indonesians. She processes through the streets, stopping to meditate in various key locations, including an empty Buddhist temple, the remnant of the spiritual life of the former inhabitants.
ARTIST’S STATEMENT

ARAHMAIANI

My latest works in the form of paintings, videos, installations, and performance, are influenced by my research into the past cultures of Animism, Hinduism, and Buddhism in Indonesia, which left behind many temples – even the largest Buddhist temple in the world, Borobudur, which was buried for 800 years and was rediscovered around 200 years ago. Also there are very ancient books of Buddhist teaching, such as Sanghyang Kamahayanikan, which was discovered in the kingdom of Lombok when it was defeated by the Dutch military in the year 1900. Furthermore, there is the relationship in ancient times between Tibetan Buddhism and local Buddhism in what is now Indonesia (which in the past was of the Mahayana/Tantrayana sect). A monk known by the name Lama Atisha, who became a reformer of the Buddhist religion in Tibet and who founded Kadampa school, once studied for twelve years in the Buddhist university in Sriwijaya (the ancient kingdom in Indonesia), where he received the guidance of a local master by the name of Dharmakirti, who in Tibet is known as Lama Serlingpa.

Besides this, my activity with the monks and the laypeople in Lab village, in the Kham region of Tibet, over the past six years, with the goal of solving environmental problems, is also of course another source of fresh inspiration which has a relation to the past of Java, my place of birth. The Tibetan Plateau – which is also known as the Third Pole and Asia’s Water Tower because it is the source of seven large rivers on which the livelihood of more than two billion people depends – is under the threat of drought. Climate change, also known as global warming, has caused the glaciers and even the permafrost to melt. There have been many disasters at the upstream areas of the rivers, such as floods and mudslides. Efforts must be undertaken to prevent larger disasters, particularly to answer the issue of the drying up of all the springs there.

Another aspect, which is no less important and is very influential in the formation of my ideas and thoughts, is my collaboration with academics in Passau University in Germany. This has given input concerning the development of science with all its challenges, issues and limitations. Also, there is my collaboration with spiritualist leaders from various faiths (Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Judaism, and Hinduism), which of course offers much input as well as understanding of diverse religions, cultures, and “spiritual traditions.” Thus my new works might be more of a contemplation on the present condition of life, which is full of issues and challenges. Which is under the threat of ecological destruction. Or which is awash with the suffering of those who are poor and marginalized in this less than just economic system that tends to be profit oriented. I try to imagine a brighter future for life and try to change the direction of thinking that causes destruction and inhuman conditions.

-Yogyakarta, August 2016
VIEW OF THE EXHIBITION AT TYLER ROLLINS FINE ART
DESCENDING RAINBOW
2016
mattress, pillow, bed spread, netting, table, candlestick with candle, book, book bag, photograph, belt, hat, robe, bag
dimensions variable
DESCENDING RAINBOW
2016
mattress, pillow, bed spread, netting, table, candlestick with candle, book, book bag, photograph, belt, hat, robe, bag
dimensions variable
(detail)
DESCENDING RAINBOW
2016
photograph
29 ¾ x 35 in. (75.5 x 89 cm)
edition of 5 +1 AP
PILLOWS OF DUKKHA
2016
10 pillows
embroidery on cotton fabric
each 26 x 26 in. (66 x 66 cm)
pictured with “Light” video
FLOWER OF LOVE
2016
acrylic on canvas
diptych
each panel: 54 x 54 in (137 x 137 cm)
HANTU BULE

2016
acrylic on canvas
diyptych
each panel: 54 x 54 in (137 x 137 cm)
ILLUMINATION
2016
acrylic on canvas
diptych
each panel: 54 x 46 in (137 x 117 cm)
SONAM
2012
acrylic on canvas
diptych
each panel: 79 x 71 in. (200 x 180 cm)
LIGHT
2015
single channel video
4:22 min
edition of 5 + 1AP
SHADOW OF THE PAST (LASEM, JAVA)
2016
single channel video
2:22 min
edition of 5 +1AP
ARAHMAIANI
SELECTED BIOGRAPHY


EDUCATION

1985 Paddington Art School, Sydney, Australia.
1983 Academie voor Beeldende Kunst, Enschede, the Netherlands. 2011

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2016 Shadow of the Past, Tyler Rollins Fine Art, New York, NY, USA.
2014 Fertility of the Mind, Tyler Rollins Fine Art, New York, NY, USA. 2010
2013 The Grey Paintings, Equator ArtProjects, Singapore.
2009 I Love You [After Joseph Beuys Social Sculpture], Esplanade, Singapore.
2007 Make-Up or Break-Up, Artspace Sydney, Australia.
2006 Stitching the Wound, Jim Thompson Gallery, Bangkok, Thailand.
Un-titled, PSI Conference #10, Singapore.
Soho Baby, 2nd Dadao Live Art Festival, Beijing, China.
Breaking Words, Nagano Expo, Japan.
Breaking Words, FIX04 Belfast, Ireland. 2009
MIP (International Performance Manifestation), Belo Horizonte, Brazil. 2008
2002 Visit to My World, Asian Fine Arts Gallery, Berlin, Germany.
Rape & Rob, Millennium Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia.
1987 My Dog is Dead and then He Flew, Centre Culturelle Francaise, Bandung, Indonesia. 2005

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

In & Out of Context, Asia Society Museum, New York, NY, USA.
2002 Costumé National: Contemporary Art from Indonesia, AXÈNEÔ?, Gatineau, Quebec, Canada and Galerie SAW Gallery, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.
Manifesto V. Arus, National Gallery of Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia.
Concept Context Contestation Hanoi: Art and the Collective in Southeast Asia, Goethe-Institut Hanoi, Vietnam. 2015
2014 Chain of Fire, prologue exhibition for Honolulu Biennial 2016, Honolulu, HI, USA.
2013 Suspended Histories, Museum Van Loon, Amsterdam, the Netherlands. 2001
Lost in China, Gallery 4A, Sydney, Australia.

Marcel Duchamp in Southeast Asia, Equator ArtProjects, Singapore.
Edge of Elsewhere 2012, Campbelltown Arts Centre, Campbelltown, Australia; and 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, Sydney, Australia.
Edge of Elsewhere, Gallery 4A Sydney Festival, Australia.
Crossing Point, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore.
Thread Stitching Wounds, Yogyo Biennale, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.
I Love You, Richmond Center for the Arts, Kalamazoo, MI, USA.
Flag Project, Museum of Contemporary Art, Shanghai, China.
Home, Gallery 4A, Sydney, Australia.
Edge of Elsewhere, Sydney Festival, Sydney, Australia.
Contemporaryity, MOCA Shanghai, China.
Tough Love, Gallery Platoforma Revolver, Lisbon, Portugal.
My Grandmother’s House, Museum Bochum, Bochum, Germany.
I Love You, Ana Tzarev Gallery, New York, NY, USA.
Crossing and Blurring the Boundaries, Andi’s Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia.
Summer Now 2010, Canvas International Art, Amsterdam.
UNERWARRET/UNEXPECTED, Von der islamischen Kunst zur zeitgenössischen Kunstmuseum Bochum - Kunstmuseum Bochum, Bochum, Germany.
Edge of Elsewhere, 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, Sydney, Australia.
Installation I, Sydney Festival, Campbelltown Art Centere, Campbelltown, Australia.
No More Bad Girls, Kunsthalle Exnergasse, Vienna, Austria.
Awareness, Canvas International Art, Amsterdam, the Netherlands.
3rd International Calligraphy Biennale, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates.
Die Wahren Orte, Alexander Ochs Gallery, Berlin, Germany.
Strategies Towards the Real, NUS, Singapore.
Global Feminisms, Brooklyn Museum of Art, Brooklyn, NY, USA.
Art Goes Heiligelndamm, Rostock, Germany.
Balance, Bad Doberan, Germany.
Premonition, J&Z Gallery, Shenzhen, China.
INTOENNE Festival, Austria.
Magnetism – Suspension, Zendai Museum of Modern Art, Shanghai, China.
Twilight Tomorrow, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore.
Reformasi, Sculpture Square, Singapore.
Asian Traffic, Gallery 4A, Sydney, Australia.
Art Summit, National Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia.
SEN1, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore.
The Rest of The World, Pirmasens, Germany.
11 June 2003, Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy.
Don’t Call it Performance Art, Reina Sophia Museum, Madrid, Spain; and Andalusia Center for Contemporary Art, Seville, Spain.
Transit, Northern Territory Centre for Contemporary Art, Australia.
10th Biennale of Moving Image, Geneva, Switzerland.
AWAS! Recent Art from Indonesia, Asian Fine Arts Gallery, Berlin, Germany.
Text & Subtext, Sternersen Musset, Oslo, Norway.
Sao Paulo Biennial, Brazil.
Gwangju Biennale, South Korea.
Site + Sight, Lasalle College of the Arts, Singapore.
Upstream Project, Amsterdam & Hoorn, the Netherlands.
His-story on My Body, Hillside Terrace Gallery, Tokyo, Japan.
His-story on My Body, Text & Sub-text, Earl Lu Gallery, Singapore; and Ivan Dougherty Gallery, Sydney, Australia.
Corporal Apology, Biennale de Lyon, Lyon, France; and Werkleitz Biennale, Germany.
The Dog’s Dream, ISP Open Studio, Tribeca, New York, NY, USA.

1999

*Breaking Bodies, Burning Countries II*, Cultural Centre Philippines (CCP), Manila, the Philippines.

*Made In Indonesia No. 1*, - Un Ab Die Post, Posthuframt Berlin, Germany.

*Newspaper Man II*, Semanggi Café, Jakarta, Indonesia.

*Cities On the Move*, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Denmark; and Hayward Gallery, London, United Kingdom.

1998


*Traditions/Tensions*, Western Australia Museum of Contemporary Art, Perth, Australia.

*Plastic & Other Waste (First Asia-Pacific Artist Solidarity Project)*, Center for the Arts, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand.

*Cities on The Move*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Vienna Secession, Austria; Musée d’Art Contemporain de Bordeaux, France; and P.S. I Contemporary Art Center, New York, NY, USA.

*Traditions/Tensions*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei, Taiwan.

*Burning Bodies, Burning Country*, Musée de Castelive, Almaty, Kazakhstan.

1997

*Womanifesto: Don’t Prevent the Fertility of Mind*, Concrete House, Bangkok, Thailand.

*Sacred Coke - Cosmology of Mutilation*, VI Biennale de la Habana, Havana, Cuba.

*Contemporary Art in Asia: Traditions/Tensions*, Vancouver Gallery, Vancouver, Canada.

*White Cases, Glimpses into the Future, Art from Southeast Asia*, Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo, Tokyo, Japan; and Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art, Hiroshima, Japan.

1996

*Offerings from A to Z*, Chiang Mai, Thailand.

*Nation for Sale*, Asia-Pacific Triennial, Brisbane, Australia.

*Traditions/Tensions*, Asia Society, New York, NY, USA.

1995


*Sacred Coke*, Contemporary Art from Non-aligned Countries, National Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia.

*Coke Circle*, Claremont Art School, Perth, Australia.

1994

*5x5 Indonesian & Dutch Artists*, Purna Budaya, Yogyakarta, Indonesia; and Erasmus Huis, Jakarta, Indonesia.

Indonesia in Emergency Aid, Yogyakarta Biennial, Purna Budaya, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

*Four Faces*, Biennal IX, Jakarta, Indonesia.

1992

*From Pieces to Become One-Homage to Joseph Beuys*, Enschede, the Netherlands.

1984

*Fibre Art and Design*, Sydney Textile Museum, Sydney, Australia.

1983


1980

*Accident I*, Bandung, Indonesia.

**SELECTED PERFORMANCES**

1998

*Breaking Words*, Richmond Centre for the Arts, Kalamazoo, MI, USA.

*Violence No More*, On Edge, Cairns, Australia.

*I Love You [After Joseph Beuys Social Sculpture]*, Esplanade, Singapore.

*Breaking Words*, Woodford Folk Festival, Brisbane, Australia.

*Breaking Words*, Sillman University, Dumaguette, the Philippines.


*His-story on My Body*, Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY, USA.

*Flag Performance 1*, Rostock, Germany.

*Toyota Era*, Matsushiro Samurai School, Nagano, Japan.

*Breaking Words*, Davis Museum, Boston, MA, USA.

*Dancing Stitches*, JT House, Bangkok, Thailand.

*Breaking Words*, Satu Kali, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

*Breaking Words*, FOI, Singapore.

*Breaking Words*, Tokyo, Toyama, Japan.


*We Are Not Hungry*, Ambulance International Performance Art Festival, Jakarta, Indonesia.


*Un-titled*, PSI Conference #10, Singapore.

*Soho Baby*, 2nd Dadao Live Art Festival, Beijing, China.

*Breaking Words*, Nagano Expo, Nagano, Japan.

*Breaking Words*, FIX04, Belfast, Ireland.


*MIP (International Performance Manifestation)*, Belo Horizonte, Brazil.

*Don’t Call it Performance Art*, Reina Sophia Museum, Madrid, Spain; and Andalusia Center for Contemporary Art, Seville, Spain.

*Visit to My World*, Asian Fine Arts Gallery, Berlin, Germany.

*His-story (III), 1st Woman Performance Art Festival, Osaka, Japan.*

1999

*His-story (III), Hillside Terrace, Tokyo, Japan.*

*Violence - Hate No More*, 3rd Performance Biennale, Israel.


*Bandung*, Yogyakarta, and Jakarta, Indonesia.

*Violence No More*, Ludwig Forum, Aachen, Germany.


*Violence No More*, Odense Performance Festival, Denmark.

*Tell Me The Story*, Za Hall, Tokyo; Japan Society, New York, NY, USA; and Shiga Museum, Osaka, Japan.

*His-story (IIII), Werkleitz Biennale, Werkleitz, Germany.*

*His-story (IIII), Funkhouse, Dresden, Germany.*


*Show Me Your Heart*, Und Ab Die Post, Posthuframt Berlin, Germany.

*Burning Bodies, Burning Countries II*, Cultural Centre Philippines (CCP), Manila, the Philippines.

*Newspaper Man*, Semanggi Café, Jakarta, Indonesia.


*Burning Bodies, Burning Country*, Musee de Castelive, Almaty, Kazakhstan.

Art Festival ’98, Nagano, Nagoya, Hiroshima, Tokyo, Japan.

Festival de Winternachten, the Hague, the Netherlands.

*Show Me Your Heart*, Nippon International Performance Art Festival, Asian Series, Nagano, Nagoya, Tokyo, Japan.

*Show Me Your Heart*, JAXPA 98: Festival of Asian Performance Art I, Bangkok, Thailand.

*Show Me Your Heart*, Cerma 6 Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia; and Jamzz, Jakarta, Indonesia.
1997  Do Not Prevent the Fertility of Mind, Concrete House, Bangkok, Thailand.
Handle without Care IV, Havana, Cuba.
Handle without Care, Who Cares?, Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo, Tokyo, Japan.
Point Zero - My Mind Gets Stuck, Marsi Gallery, Bangkok, Thailand.

1996  Offering from A to Z, Chiang Mai, Thailand.
Handle without Care I, Brisbane, Australia.
Handle without Care II - You Love Me, You Love Me Not, Z Gallery, New York, NY, USA.
Handle without Care III, Maga City, Bangkok, Thailand.

1995  Friday Sermon, Claremont Art School, Australia.

1994  Frangipani on Water, with musician Wayan Sadra, Mojosongo, Solo, Indonesia.

1993  Four Faces, Biennale IX, Jakarta, Indonesia.


1990  Knocking the Door, Malioboro Street, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

1987  My Dog is Dead and then He Flew, Centre Culturelle Française, Bandung, Indonesia.

1982  Black Bamboo and White Cloth, Bandung, Indonesia.

Accident I, Bandung, Indonesia.

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS
Asia Society, New York, NY, USA.
Singapore Art Museum, Singapore.
Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, USA.
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