

# FX HARSONO NAMA



**NAMA**

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# FOREWORD

TYLER ROLLINS

Tyler Rollins Fine Art is pleased to present *NAMA*, a solo exhibition of new works by FX Harsono, one of Indonesia's most revered contemporary artists. Harsono has been a central figure of the Indonesian art scene for over forty years. In 1975, he was among a group of young artists who founded Indonesia's Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru (New Art Movement), which emphasized an experimental, conceptual approach, the use of everyday materials, and engagement with social and political issues. Over the course of recent decades that have seen enormous transformations in Indonesia, Harsono has continuously explored the role of the artist in society, in particular his relationship to history. During Indonesia's dictatorial Suharto regime (1967-98), his installation and performance works were powerfully eloquent acts of protest against an oppressive state apparatus. The fall of the regime in 1998, which triggered rioting and widespread violence, mainly against Indonesia's ethnic Chinese minority, prompted an introspective turn in Harsono's artistic practice. He embarked on an ongoing investigation of his own family history and the position of minorities in society, especially his own Chinese Indonesian community. The recovery of buried or repressed histories, cultures, and identities – and the part that the artist can play in this process – have remained a significant preoccupation. Through looking into his own past, Harsono has touched on concerns that resonate globally, foregrounding fundamental issues that are central to the formation of group and personal identities in our rapidly changing world.

*NAMA* ("names" in Indonesian), focuses on Chinese Indonesian personal names and their function as both markers of identity and symbols of remembrance. During the Suharto period, Chinese culture was suppressed in Indonesia, and Chinese Indonesians were required to change their names to more typical Indonesian ones. This attempt at the erasure of identity through legalized oppression harkened back to the more violent hostilities against the Chinese Indonesian community in the late 1940s, when many thousands were massacred during the unrest of the national independence movement. The exhibition centers on a video in which Chinese names are recited as a litany and then replaced with Indonesian names. "The chanting of prayers invites us to contemplate, without anger or revenge, the forced act of changing one's name, which resulted in the Chinese being uprooted from their traditions," Harsono explains. Other works explore the physical forms that names can take, as seen in memorial inscriptions, written signatures, official documents, and even embroidery. A large wall installation functions as a memorial monument to the massacre victims, its delicately embossed paper panels symbolizing fragility and vulnerability. A series of paper collages and light boxes incorporating texts and images pay tribute to individuals, both victims and survivors, commemorating the specificity of personal tragedies alongside the collective loss, and bringing light to a past that had long been consigned to darkness.

In recognition of his decades long "commitment to art and to freedom of expression in art," Harsono was awarded the Joseph Balestier Award for the Freedom of Art in 2015, presented by the US embassy in Singapore, and in 2014 he was given the Prince Klaus Award honoring his "crucial role in Indonesia's contemporary art scene for forty years." His work has been shown in over one hundred exhibitions around the world, including the seminal *Traditions/Tensions: Contemporary Art in Asia* at Asia Society in New York (1996), and the first Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art in Brisbane, Australia (1993). The Singapore Art Museum mounted a major mid-career retrospective, *FX Harsono: Testimonies*, in 2010. He presented his first solo show in the United States, *Writing in the Rain*, at Tyler Rollins Fine Art in 2012, and in 2018 the main video from that exhibition was featured in a month-long screening in New York City's Times Square. In 2017 his work was included in two major survey exhibitions: *SUNSHOWER: Contemporary Art from Southeast Asia 1980s to Now* at the Mori Art Museum in Tokyo; and *After Darkness: Southeast Asian Art in the Wake of History* at Asia Society in New York.

# NAMA

## ARTIST'S STATEMENT

The word *nama* in Indonesian is adopted from the Dutch word *naam*, which means name. But the word *nama* (*nāma*) can also be found in Sanskrit, which means designation or appellative. William Shakespeare once asked, "What is in a name?" Perhaps this was acceptable for Westerners. But what about the meaning of names for Asians? For nearly all ethnic groups in Indonesia, a name holds specific meaning and signifies the social status of the name bearer. The same applies to the Chinese community in Indonesia. Chinese Indonesians still adhere to the name-giving traditions of their Mainland Chinese counterparts. Parents bestow on their children three names: the first signifies the family's name; the second shows the line of generation the person was born into; and the third is a specific name referring to the child.

There are many ways and patterns in how the Chinese in Indonesia changed their names. Some maintained their family name. For instance, Tan was transformed into Tanton, Tandyo, Hartanto, etc. Some translated the meaning of the name in Mandarin into Indonesian. Chinese names hold deep meanings, and according to Chinese beliefs a name could determine the destiny of its owner. A name is one's pride, and the name psychologically influences its owner, whose behavior and emotions are shaped by the meaning behind the name. On December 27, 1966, a law regarding name-giving was enacted. People of Chinese descent who already held Indonesian citizenship were asked to change their names into Indonesian names. This law on name change was stipulated under the Decision of Ampera Presidium Cabinet No 127/U/Kep—12/1966 on "Peraturan ganti nama bagi warga negara Indonesia yang memakai nama Tjina" (regulation of name change for Indonesians who use Chinese names), signed by the Chairman of the Presidium, Army General Suharto.

The law of name change was a form of discrimination, leading to psychological pressure deliberately created by the regime in power to suppress the freedom of the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia. This psychological pressure in turn created an awareness that the ethnic Chinese were a minority, alien, immigrant, non-indigenous. This psychological pressure caused them to become second class citizens. The discrimination against Chinese Indonesians has been going on for ages. From 1946 to 1949 there were a series of murders, burglaries, and arsons of homes and factories in Java. The ethnic Chinese were accused of being Dutch collaborators with the intention of recolonizing Indonesia. The murderers were *Lasykar* (paramilitary troops) who collaborated with criminals.

Since 2009, I have carried out extensive research regarding the killing of ethnic Chinese in Java. In my research, I discovered ten mass graves that can still be visited. The mass graves are in good condition and well kept. The tombstones in each graveyard bear the names of the deceased. There are approximately 1,800 victims buried in these graves.

The works of art that I create are always based on my research, and for this exhibition I am interested in the "name" issue and all the problems behind it. The works are representations honoring the owners' names. Names that were deleted and changed into new names. Names that grow in social and cultural life. Names that flow in history. Names of people who witnessed the history that was never written. Names that represent people who have been oppressed and discriminated against.

\* \* \* \* \*

Names are given by parents as a kind of prayer attached to their child, to protect his life so he will be a dignified, respected, and a happy human being. In the video **NAMA**, I imagine names as a form of prayer, recited repeatedly as a litany. I could easily have expressed protest or anger in the video, in which the Chinese names are chanted and then replaced with Indonesian names — but I chose not to. Instead, I present them as a litany of chants without accusing anyone. The chanting of prayers invites us to contemplate, without anger or revenge, the forced act of changing one's name, which resulted in the Chinese being uprooted from their traditions.

I found nearly 1800 names inscribed on ten mass graves in various cities in East Java, Central Java and West Java. Not to mention the names recorded in Indonesian or Dutch official documents and archives, or in newspapers published

during the era. The names engraved on the cold tombstones look like a line of letters that form three words, constituting the names of massacre victims from the years 1947-49. My attempt to imagine the faces of the victims whose names are written on the tombstones does not provide any meaning. Instead, I only feel how those innocent people were slaughtered. They were helpless, surrendered, and could not resist. Thus, thousands of names burst into my mind, unstoppable. Thousands of names represent surrendered souls. I really wanted to build **Monument of NAMA** not from sturdy, hard, fierce, and arrogant materials, but instead as a paper monument that is shattered and destroyed when submerged in water. It is a monument that symbolizes fragility. A monument that is inherent in the history of its people, as paper was originally developed by the Chinese. *Monument of NAMA* is my homage to the victims.

Among the people who were massacred, there were some who could avoid being murdered. Those survivors are now getting older, most of them over 90 years old. Only a few people are left. **History of the Survivor** tells us about a few people who managed to survive, even supporting their children whose husbands were killed in 1948. One of them is Tjoa Er Ries, now 94 years old.

A series of massacres becomes the dark history that survivors, eyewitnesses, and old Chinese people want to forget. The harder they try to forget, the harder these memories are imprinted in their minds. Every April 5, called Ching Ming Day, the Chinese welcome the arrival of spring. They go to the tombs of their ancestors, clean them, pray, sprinkle flowers, and start telling stories about their ancestors. Memories arise. Gloomy stories are retold as they cannot endure the burdens of the past. My work **NAMA from the Last Survivor** was born out of this.

Humans create events. A series of events turns into history. History is always written by winners. Those who lose must wait until the time comes to speak up, so that the dark episodes which befell them, their families, and the Chinese community around them, become historical realities. With **NAMA that Flow within History**, names are a representation of individuals who have neither power nor authority — frankly, they are no one in the great history. Names are drifting in a wave of history.

The Chinese experienced discrimination in many ways during the New Order regime (1966-98). Political discrimination resulted in a number of restrictions. Teaching in Mandarin was prohibited. Celebrating the Chinese New Year was prohibited. Displaying Mandarin script in public spaces was prohibited. Chinese names had to be replaced with Indonesian names. These restrictions caused Chinese society to be culturally uprooted. Later, political change happened. All the restrictions were revoked. A euphoria erupted as people celebrated the culture that they had not been able to practice. They missed a culture that they did not fully understand, which for four decades had been deliberately erased from their lives. Now they attempted to rebuild the old culture over the remains of scattered collective memories. Their collective memories had been partitioned, disconnected, and are not fully integrated into their lives today. A hybrid Chinese was formed. Thus, the idea of **NAMA in the Box of Memory** came about.

FX Harsono  
April 2019



VIEW OF THE EXHIBITION AT TYLER ROLLINS FINE ART



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**NAMA THAT FLOW WITHIN HISTORY / NAMA YANG HANYUT DALAM SEJARAH**

2019

collage, hand embroidery on paper

3 pieces

each 23 ¼ x 33 in. (59.25 x 84 cm)



**HISTORY OF THE SURVIVOR / KISAH DARI PENYINTAS**

2019

print on paper, digital photo, pastels, and paper collage

5 pieces

18 x 24 in. (46 x 60.75 cm)

edition of 5 + 2 AP



## MONUMENT OF NAMA / MONUMEN NAMA

2019

Debose home made recycled paper mounted on aluminum

264 pieces

overall dimensions: 90 ½ x 462 in. (230 x 1173 cm)

each piece 10 ½ x 14 ¾ in. (26.5 x 37.5 cm)

edition of 3 + 2 AP

On exhibit: 174 pieces



**NAMA FROM THE LAST SURVIVOR / NAMA DARI PENYINTAS TERAKHIR**

2019

collage, hand embroidery, crochet on tablecloth on canvas, pencil drawing and acrylic on  
*kebaya encim* blouse on canvas

2 pieces

each 41 ½ x 45 ¼ in. (105 x 115 cm)





**NAMA**

2019

single channel video, 5.1 surround sound

12 min.

edition of 10

# FX HARSONO

## SELECTED BIOGRAPHY

Born 1949 in Blitar (East Java), Indonesia. Lives and works in Jakarta, Indonesia.

### EDUCATION

1987 – 91 Jakarta Art Institute, Jakarta, Indonesia.  
1969 – 74 Sekolah Tinggi Seni Rupa Indonesi (STSRI "ASRI"), Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

### SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2019 *NAMA*, Tyler Rollins Fine Art, New York, NY, USA  
2018 *Midnight Moment: Writing in the Rain*, Time Square Arts, New York, NY, USA.  
2016 *The Chronicles of Resilience*, Tyler Rollins Fine Art, New York, NY, USA  
2015 *The Life and Chaos of Objects, Images, and Words*, Erasmus Huis, Jakarta, Indonesia.  
*Beyond Identity*, Nexus Arts, Adelaide, Australia.  
2014 *Things Happen When We Remember / Kita Ingat Maka Terjadilah*, Selasar Sunaryo Art Space, Bandung, Indonesia.  
2013 *What we have here perceived as truth we shall some day encounter as beauty*, Jogja National Museum, Jogja, Indonesia.  
2012 *Writing in the Rain*, Tyler Rollins Fine Art, New York, NY.  
2010 *FX Harsono: Testimonies*, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore.  
2009 *Re:petisi/posisi*, Langgeng Art Foundation, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.  
*The Erased Time*, National Gallery of Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia.  
*Surviving Memories*, Vanessa Art Link, Beijing, China.  
2008 *Aftertaste*, Koong Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia.  
2007 *Titik Nyeri/ Point of Pain*, Langgeng Icon Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia.  
2004 *Mediamor(ell)phosa*, Puri Galllery, Malang, Indonesia, Indonesia.  
2003 *Displaced*, National Gallery of Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia.  
*Displaced*, Cemeti Art House, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.  
1998 *Victim*, Cemeti Art Gallery, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.  
1996 *Suara (Voice)*, Cemeti Art Gallery, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.  
1994 *Suara (Voice)*, National Gallery of Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia.

### SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2018 *Two Houses: Politics and Histories in the Contemporary Art Collections of John Chia and Yeap Lam Yang*, LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore.  
*A Sheet of Paper Can Become a Knife*, Prince Klaus Fund Gallery, Amsterdam, Netherlands.  
*Moving Pledges: Art and Action in Southeast Asia*, LASALLE College of the Arts, Earl Lu Gallery, Singapore.  
*Awakenings*, MOMAT, Tokyo, Japan.  
2017 *The Modern and Contemporary*, OHD Museum, Central Java, Indonesia.  
*Art Turns, World Turns*, The Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Nusantara, Jakarta, Indonesia.  
*Power and other things: Indonesia & Art (1835-now)*, Bozar, Centre for Fine Arts, Brussels, Belgium.  
*SUNSHOWER: Contemporary Art from Southeast Asia 1980s to Now*, Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan.  
*After Darkness: Southeast Asian Art in the Wake of History*, Asia Society, New York, NY, USA.  
*Rosa's Wound*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei, Taiwan.  
2016 *Rethinking Home*, Nieuw Dakota, Amsterdam, Netherlands.  
20th Biennale of Sydney, *The Future is Already Here – It's Just Not Evenly Distributed*, Sydney, Australia (Mar. 18 – Jun. 5).  
BACC International Exhibition: *Concept Context Contestation: art and the collective in Southeast Asia*, Cemeti Art House, Jogyakarta, Indonesia.  
2015 *Concept Context Contestation Hanoi: Art and the Collective in Southeast Asia*, Goethe-Institut, Hanoi, Vietnam.  
*Tell Me My Truth*, 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, Sydney, Australia.  
2014 *The Roving Eye*, ARTER Space for Art, Istanbul, Turkey.  
Contemporary Art, Shanghai, China.  
2013 Jogja Biennale, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.  
2012 *Encounter: Royal Academy in Asia*, Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore.  
2011 *Edge of Elsewhere*, 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, Sydney,

Australia.  
*Closing The Gap*, Melbourne Institute Of Fine Art (MIFA), Melbourne, Australia.  
2010 *Contemporaneity/Contemporary Art in Indonesia*, Museum of 2003 *Exploring Vacuum 2*, Cemeti Art House, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.  
CP Open Biennale, Jakarta, Indonesia.  
2009 *Beyond The Dutch*, Centraal Museum, Utrecht, the Netherlands.  
2008 *Highlight*, ISI, Jogja National Museum, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.  
*ALLEGORICAL BODIES*, A Art Contemporary Space, Taipei, Taiwan.  
3rd Nanjing Triennale, Nanjing, China.  
*Manifesto*, National Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia.  
2007 *Imagine Affandi*, National Archive Centre, Jakarta, Indonesia.  
2006 *Out Now*, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore.  
*The Past Forgotten Time*, Cemeti Art House, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.  
2005 *Taboo and Transgression in Contemporary Indonesian Art*, Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, NY.  
*Text Me*, Sherman Gallery, Sydney, Australia.  
*Reformasi*, Sculpture Square, Singapore.  
*Past Traditions/New Voices in Asian Art*, Hofstra University Museum, Hempstead, NY.  
*Finding your place in the world: Asian photomedia*, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, Australia.  
*Market Forces - Erasure: From Conceptualism to Abstraction*, Co-presented by Osage Art Foundation and City University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong.  
2001 *International Print Triennial*, Kanagawa, Yokohama, Japan.  
*Print in The Future*, Cemeti Art House, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.  
2000 *Reformasi Indonesia, Protest in Beeld*, Museum Nusantara, Delft, the Netherlands.  
The Third Kwangju Biennial, Kwangju, Korea.  
*Setengah Abad Seni Grafis Indonesia*, Bentara Budaya, Jakarta, Indonesia.  
1999 *Art Document 1999*, Kanazu Forest Museum, Kanazu, Japan.  
*Volume & Form*, Singapore.  
1998 *Meet 3:3*, Purna Budaya, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.  
1997 International Contemporary Art Festival (NICAF), Tokyo, Japan.  
1996 Museum City Project, Fukuoka, Japan.  
*raditions/Tensions*, Asia Society, New York (continued to Vancouver, Canada; Perth, Australia; Seoul, Korea).  
1995 *Asian Modernism*, Japan Foundation, Tokyo, Japan.  
1994 Jakarta Biennial Contemporary Art Taman Ismail Marzuki (TIM), Jakarta, Indonesia.  
Baguio Art Festival, Baguio, Philippines.  
Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, Australia.  
1992 Artist Regional Exchange (ARX 3), Perth, Australia.  
Artists Week, Adelaide Festival, Adelaide, Australia.  
1987 *Pasar Raya Dunia Fantasi*, Seni Rupa Baru (SRB) Proyek I, TIM, Jakarta, Indonesia.  
1985 *Proses 85, Art on the Environment*, Galeri Seni Rupa Ancol (in cooperation with Walhi and SKEPHI), Jakarta, Indonesia.  
1982 *Environmental Art*, Parangtritis Beach, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.  
1979 *Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru (New Art Movement III)*, TIM, Jakarta, Indonesia.  
1977 *Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru (New Art Movement II)*, TIM, Jakarta, Indonesia.  
1976 *Concept, New Art Movement*, Balai Budaya, Jakarta, Indonesia.  
1975 1st Exhibition Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru (New At Movement), TIM, Jakarta, Indonesia.  
1973 *Kelompok Lima Pelukis Muda (KLPM)*, Yogyakarta and Solo, Indonesia.

### PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, USA  
Albright Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, USA.  
Singapore Art Museum, Singapore.  
National Gallery of Singapore, Singapore.  
Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing, China.  
Arthub Asia, Far East Far West collection, Shanghai, China.  
Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Fukuoka, Japan.  
OHD Museum, Magelang, Indonesia.  
National Gallery of Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia.  
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, Australia.  
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia.  
Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, Australia.  
Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation, Paddington, Australia.

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AT TYLER ROLLINS FINE ART

529 WEST 20 STREET, 10W

NEW YORK, NY 10011

TEL. + 1 212 229 9100

FAX. +1 212 229 9104

INFO@TRFINEART.COM

WWW.TRFINEART.COM

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