

New York

Yee I-Lann

TYLER ROLLINS FINE ART
 529 West 20 Street
 April 28–June 17

At the dark end of this gallery reside *pontianaks*—the vengeful ghosts of women who died during pregnancy—believed throughout Southeast Asia to dwell in banana trees. These long-haired, pale-faced vampires, who purportedly suck the blood of young virgins and prey on men, are at the heart of Yee I-Lann's exhibition and her thirteen-minute three-channel video *Imagining Pontianak: I've Got Sunshine on a Cloudy Day*, 2016. The video begins with female voices singing the Temptations' 1965 song "My Girl" before transitioning into a haunting Malaysian ballad. The contrast is stark, reminiscent of the scene in Quentin Tarantino's *Reservoir Dogs* when Mr. Blonde cuts off a police officer's ear and douses him in gasoline to a lighthearted Stealers Wheel tune.



Yee I-Lann, *Imagining Pontianak: I've Got Sunshine on a Cloudy Day*, 2016, three-channel video projection, color, sound, 13 minutes 11 seconds.

Cultural critic Barbara Creed once wrote, "All human societies have a conception of the monstrous-feminine, of what it is about woman that is shocking, terrifying, horrific, abject," and Yee creates a powerful testament to one of those visions here. In the video, women line up against a white wall, posed as if for eyewitness identification or for Dove's Real Beauty campaign. They bicker and laugh, gossiping or wrestling with motherhood and shaving, all beneath the wigs worn on their faces in a reference to *pontianaks*. By hiding their source, the individual voices speak not just for themselves but for women the world over. Yee reimagines these folkloric creatures to retaliate against the myths of the horrific maternal body. That "demon" is made considerably more human through dialogues that puncture those misogynist stigmas: "A good day is when my daughter wakes up and makes her own breakfast," says a woman. "I should have the right to say, 'I want an abortion,'" declares another. Fear, perpetuated by the hiding of faces—and lives—of women, is defused, leaving only unruly manes due for a haircut.

— Pimrapee Thungkasemvathana