

Bruised: Art Action and Ecology in Asia

RMIT Gallery
12 April – 1 June 2019

Bruised:
Art Action and Ecology in Asia

Arahmaiani
Alfredo and Isabel Aquilizan
Made Bayak
Yu Fang Chi
Ishan Khosla
Ryoko Kose
Pradyumna Kumar
Pushpa Kumari
Armin Linke
Ly Hoàng Ly
James Nguyen
Sherman Ong
Sarker Protick
Fitri Ranatarya
Mandy Ridley
Khvay Samnang
Gigi Scaria
Lizzy Simpson
Manit Sriwanichpoom
Kawita Vatanajyankur
Tintin Wulia
Bo Zheng

Bruised Food:
a living laboratory

Arahmaiani
Rhett D'Costa
Keg de Souza with Lucien Alperstein
Stephen Loo
Elia Nurvista

Bruised: Art Action and Ecology in Asia

Curated by *Helen Rayment*
with *Thao Nguyen*

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Bruised: Art, Action and Ecology in Asia, Foreword

by *Bronwyn Johnson*

Bruised: Art, Action and Ecology in Asia, curated by Helen Rayment with Thao Nguyen, was part of ART+CLIMATE=CHANGE 2019 presented by CLIMARTE: Arts for a safe climate.

ART+CLIMATE=CHANGE 2019 was a socially engaged festival of ideas, exhibitions and events held throughout April and May. Presenting over thirty curated exhibitions at leading museums and galleries across Melbourne and regional Victoria, the 2019 festival considered ideas and concepts around art and activism, community engagement, energy transition, and accelerated action on climate change.

Bruised: Art, Action and Ecology in Asia was a major exhibition in the festival and featured Australian and international artists examining social and environmental issues happening now in Asia and the Pacific. These issues included the politics of recycling and dumping, forced migration, deforestation for the palm oil industry, and access and rights to clean water. Many communities in the Asia Pacific region are 'bruised' from continued and unrepentant capitalism that leaves people exposed to significant environmental and social upheaval.

It is not easy to raise awareness of the existential threat of climate change and associated environmental issues in many communities, especially with strict laws and policing of dissent and protest. Yet, this exhibition showed us that small actions through complex socially engaged artworks can create meaningful empathetic and visceral responses that can lead us to act on issues that may overwhelm us. Many of the works

were artist-led collaborations with local communities. In most instances, the artists shared personal stories that reflected their lived experience and concerns. Issues concerning food security and land use in an overheating climate readily made us understand that we must act with urgency to protect Earth's ecology and that humanity is part of nature, not separate from it. Their poignant disquiet reminded us that no matter how big or small actions may be – the point is that we must act.

Prior to the exhibition, in late 2018, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warned that we have no more than 12 years to act to limit global warming not to exceed 1.5C.¹ As we have witnessed in Australia, bushfire, flood, cyclones and drought are ravaging our country like never before. Nine of Australia's ten warmest years on record have occurred since 2005.² Australia's emissions are tracking at the highest on record, according to new data from the emissions-tracking organisation Ndevr Environmental.³ Australia is not on-target to meet its 2015 Paris commitments. The climate emergency is happening now.

1. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) *Summary for Policy Makers of IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5C*, approved by governments, 2018
2. Australian Bureau of Meteorology (BOM), 2018 Climate Statement
3. Ndevr Environmental. Ndevr replicates the federal government's National Greenhouse Gas Inventory (NGGI) but releases them months ahead of the official data. Data it has produced for the year up to September 2018 shows Australia is still on track to miss its Paris target of a 26%-28% cut to emissions on 2005 levels by 2030. *Guardian*, 13 December, 2018

But, how do we make sense of the impact of global warming? How do we understand what is happening around us and act to limit the worst ravages of climate change? What is the role of the artist in these challenging times? ART+CLIMATE=CHANGE festival is a cultural response to climate change. It is the critical thinking by the curators and artists on exhibition at RMIT Gallery that provided a thought-provoking and highly creative way to share, understand and feel the scale of the environmental and climate crisis before us.

At the time of writing this foreword, a virus emerged from our stressed planet that sent us into a strict lockdown. Together we have protected our population from some of the worst ravages of COVID-19 by acting for the greater good of the collective whole and respecting the science. Now is the time to apply these same levers to action on the climate emergency to protect and care for all life on this unique planet we call home.

Bronwyn Johnson
Director, ART+CLIMATE=CHANGE 2019
CLIMARTE: Arts for a safe climate



Gigi Scaria, *When the faith revisits the environment*,
photograph on canvas. Courtesy of the artist

Bruised: Art Action and Ecology in Asia

by *Helen Rayment*

Many of the issues that we confront daily in our news feed can be too much to process — the misery of forced human migration, pollution, plastic in our oceans, forests being decimated in both Australia and Asia, in unfathomable and vast amounts. When we attempt to do something to help the environment, we are told the solutions are too complex. Take the issue of where our recycling is going — is it being shipped offshore, stockpiled reprocessed, or buried in landfill?

It was disturbing to see an ABC *Four Corners* program while organising RMIT Gallery’s exhibition, *Bruised: Art Action and Ecology in Asia*. The program revealed that much of Australia’s recycling operations have been a deception, with mountains of waste being stockpiled by dishonest operators who are cheating the system.¹ In September 2019, Indonesia announced that it would return 100 containers of contaminated plastic back to Australia to make it clear the country does not wish to become a “dumping ground for scrap waste”.²

1. ABC, *Four Corners, Trashed*, 7 August 2017, reporter: Caro Meldrum-Hanna, <https://www.abc.net.au/4corners/trashed/8770146>

2. James Massola and Karuni Rompies, ‘Indonesia to Ship 100 Containers of Contaminated Waste to Australia’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 Sept 2019

When it comes to ways in which artists address ecological issues, actions can be big or small — it’s the action that is important, however subtle. Artists agitate and share stories that we may not otherwise hear. They present surprising and novel ways to examine problems we are often too overwhelmed to tackle.

The exhibition *Bruised: Art Action and Ecology in Asia* explored the work of 22 contemporary artists whose work has been shaped by the intimate experience of their own environs and reveals their despair, hope and advocacy across the global threat of climate and environmental change. Developed with curator, artist and academic, Thao Nguyen, the exhibition tells the story of activism, empowerment and positivity through the eyes of Asian and Australian artists. This essay discusses actions for change by the participating artists.

ACTION–INFORMING

We rely on artists to actively raise awareness by bringing difficult issues to our attention and sharing stories. Thousands of people are currently moving around the world at speeds previously unseen in human history. The *2020 World Migration Report* states that migration is considered a “top-tier political issue interconnected to human rights, development, and geopolitics at national, regional and international levels.”³ Isabel and Alfredo Aquilizan’s creative practice reflects their personal

experience of migrating with their family from the Philippines to Australia in 2006. Their collaborative and community-based projects are a window into their own experiences exploring themes of identity, belonging, displacement, community and home.

The Aquilizan's installation, *Arrivals and Departures*, 2019, was the centrepiece of the exhibition — the spark of the curatorial conversation. Simple luggage trolleys were attached to sculptures of multi-storey cardboard houses, reminiscent of ethno-architecture, to emphasise the precarious state of lives in migration. The layers of metaphor continued with the work placed on artificial grass — this framed and floated the installation — pointing out both the impermanence and isolation of the community of residents. And yet, life within these structures continues. We imagine the daily routines of the inhabitants living their rich and varied lives; the sounds of children playing, neighbourhood conversations and the wafting smells of cooking and yet time appears suspended as residents wait for opportunities elsewhere.

Indonesian artist Tintin Wulia's major project, *Five Tonnes of Homes and Other Understories* is a compelling work that observes a silent issue of human migration, the lives of international domestic workers. As part of this project four massive bales of cardboard from *855 Kilograms of Homes in Another*



State circled out from the foyer into the adjacent gallery in an arc. They each weigh hundreds of kilos. The audience was guided to walk around them, experience their gravity and to consider the human stories that they represent. This project focusses on the housing problems of Filipino domestic workers, predominantly transnational mothers based in Hong Kong. They come together as a community on weekends and literally build a village out of soon to be recycled boxes.

This work has many layers, and the artist also draws our attention to both the wealth made from the lives of these labourers, as well as the recycling industry. These cardboard boxes make huge profits for one recycling company and the magnate who owns it. The artist was an active member of this community and drew on the cardboard walls of the village. The drawings made it to the surface of the consolidated bales and she intercepted them on their way to the port in Hong Kong.

Near to Tintin Wulia's installation, Berlin based photographer and filmmaker Armin Linke's documentary film *Pulau-pulau kelapa sawit [Islands of Palm Oil]*, 2017 confronted us with the story of the palm oil industry in Southeast Asia. The World Wildlife Fund states that palm oil is the most widely consumed vegetable oil on the planet with Malaysia and Indonesia supplying 86 % of the world's palm oil.⁴



3. Marie McAuliffe and Binod Khadria (editors), *World Migration Report*, 2020, International Organization for Migration, p. 19

4. World Wildlife Fund, 'What is Palm Oil?', <https://www.wwf.org.au/what-we-do/food/palm-oil#gs.7iurpg>

This film was selected for its raw and confrontational examination of the palm oil industry. It highlights Linke’s interest in documenting places undergoing historical transformation. The artist together with colleagues Giulia Bruno, Anna-Sophie Springer, and Etienne Turpin — conducted numerous interviews with residents, plantation workers, small landholders, environmentalists, government officials, and scientists as they travelled through Borneo, Java, and Sumatra. It is a terrifying examination of this industry. The confronting footage of the landscape is a stark reminder of the effects of globalisation and urbanisation, and the consequences of both on local populations.

ACTION–SEEING

Artists can be our eyes and draw our attention to the power of humans to destroy our ecologies. Indian artist Gigi Scaria’s striking six-metre photographic work, *When the Faith Revisits the Environment*, 2019, assesses the environmental damage of the Kumbh Mela, a religious festival that draws the largest congregation in the world.

In February 2019, for this exhibition, the artist travelled to Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh to witness the Kumbh Mela first-hand. He wrote: This important Hindu festival is held every 12 years. It is hosted on the sacred place where three rivers meet. It is believed that if anyone takes a dip in the Ganges during the festival, they gain salvation.⁵



India’s major environment journal *Down to Earth* reported that over the 45 days of the festival, between 150–200 million people took a dip in the Ganges. Temporary roads were built on the sensitive riverbed, which was holding the movements of millions of pilgrims in all directions in the 40-kilometre radius. Another major concern of this event is human waste. A celebration of this scale with 100 million tourists and pilgrims sees the development of a mega city where human waste is estimated at 14,000 tonnes per day. Untreated human liquid waste is left on the riverbank in huge quantities.⁶

Dhaka based artist Sarker Protick’s ethereal photographic work is vitally important in recording degradation and documenting Bangladeshi land and waterways that no longer exist. His use of haunting light enables a deep and emotional rendering of the landscape – as if time has stood still. The series *Of Rivers and Lost Lands*, 2011-2018 depicts a grey, melancholic landscape by the Padma River. This river has been diverted by humans, it can no longer cope with the monsoon, it runs too fast and lands wash away. The artist writes: “Riverbank erosion generally creates much more suffering than other natural hazards like flooding. While flooding routinely destroys



5. Gigi Scaria, February 2019. Text from artist statement supplied to the curators

6. Rashmi Verma, ‘Kumbh Mela 2019: What’s Happening to All the Waste?’ *Down to Earth*, 22 January 2019. <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/waste/kumbh-mela-2019-what-s-happening-to-all-the-waste--62915>

crops and damages property, erosion results in loss of farm and homestead land. Most places seen in these photographs do not exist anymore. As a result, they survive as visual documents of vanished lands.”⁷



In contrast to flooding, life with water shortages is equally confronting. *Flooding in the Time of Drought*, 2009 is a feature length film, by Singapore based, filmmaker, photographer and visual artist, Sherman Ong. This film confronts the challenging notion around the possibilities of the water supply in Singapore suddenly running dry. It acts with the voyeurism of a reality television program, the context is so believable, but its narrative is fiction. Eight stories in ten languages are played across the theme of individual discomfort in a hot and humid apartment building that is rich in cultural diversity. The film screened on repeat, and it worked within the gallery context allowing our viewers to catch the experience of a two-minute scene or sit down and watch the entire work. Film within the context of a fine art exhibition gives us the ability to delve deeper into the imagination of the artist.

ACTION–INVESTIGATING

Like investigative journalists, artists have the power to break stories about critical problems. James Nguyen’s installation, *Pure Water /// after Mike*



Parr, 2018 consisted of a humidifier, water, plastic canisters, water samples and video. The artist’s expertise as a pharmacist has seen him investigate the issue of chemicals in our environment both in Australia and in Southeast Asia. This installation pointedly marks the artist’s family’s story of fleeing Vietnam and being rehoused on ground that once manufactured toxic chemicals.

The work audibly bubbled away in a corner of the gallery emitting non-toxic amounts of chemicals from samples of water from Duck River, the southern tributary of Sydney’s Paramatta River. The artist states: “Manufactured by Union Carbide on the Rhodes Peninsula (at the site of the Sydney Olympics in Homebush Bay), Dioxins and other chemical precursors of Agent Orange continue to seep into the estuary, flowing upstream deep into the suburbs of Western Sydney.” In Vietnam the effects of Agent Orange are still present in the food chain, whilst in Australia toxic by-products of chemical manufacturing are part of reclaimed land for both migrant housing and community.

On the other side of this gallery space sat Indonesian artist, Arhamaiani’s installation, *A Piece of Land for Sale* 1995 – ongoing. Arhamaiani is one of Indonesia’s most respected and internationally acclaimed artists. First developed in 1995 for the Artists Regional Exchange in Perth, this version of *A Piece of Land for Sale* was made specifically for our show. The artist was on site in Melbourne and scoured

7. Statement provided by the artist, March 2019. See further information about this work at <https://sarkerprotick.com/Of-River-and-Lost-Lands>

our suburban outskirts for native grasses that were sewn together to mimic a block of land on a fringe development. Medical props including a drip and oxygen cylinder, along with a sign saying ‘Land For Sale’ captured our hungry and problematic real estate industry. The artist has also drawn our attention to the continuing saga of land being sold where there is no longer a divide between the city and the suburbs, and the fact that we are running out of accessible spaces to grow our food.

ACTION-GROWING

Nurturing our biodiversity and actively celebrating the process of growing food is central to the practice of Melbourne based multidisciplinary artist Lizzy Simpson. When this installation was created, Lizzy Simpson had recently returned from a residency in Yogyakarta, Indonesia and it is with these experiences she created the seventh iteration of her continuing immersive, performative work, *You shares me shares... everything*. Described by the artist as “an unending and mutable work” it brings together and extracts stories of connection between ecologies of objects and living things. Lizzy’s reference had been her bountiful garden in Northcote but now she incorporated her meandering explorations of the sights and sounds in Indonesia with its influence on her ideas and the relationship between us and our world.

Lizzy’s interactive installation included seedlings being raised under lights, tadpoles, snails,



and the detritus of a healthy garden, alongside a living compost pit that was regularly turned. These were accompanied by freshly baked scones and a jigsaw on the go. The artist was as much a part of this installation as the audience and all the parts that made it. It was lush, rich, and charming and reflective of the impactful experiences she shared in Jogjakarta as she journeyed the streets and became part of the local environments.

‘Ecological wisdom’ is a term used to describe the work of Hong Kong based artist, writer, theorist, and ecological activist Bo Zheng.⁸ His practice of drawing, installation and film making focuses on the interdependent life forms of plants and what we can learn from them. The artist is well-known as an ecological activist working with site-specific artworks, he has researched and preserved up to 20 distinct species of native plants. This exhibition hosted his 17-minute eco-queer film *Pteridophilia 1*, 2016, which challenges our emotional and physical relationships with plants. The human subjects in this lush and green film explore these intimate propositions.

ACTION-MAKING

The action of making can work like a balm when we feel overwhelmed. The methodical action of craft can transport us into deep meditation. The handmade



8. For further information see Biennale of Sydney website: <https://www.biennaleofsydney.art/artists/zheng-bo/>



provides the opportunity to marvel at skill – an alternative to the ubiquity of mass production. Taiwan-born, Melbourne-based jeweller and object maker, Yu Fang Chi’s shimmering and immersive installation *Remnant*, 2019, was suspended and floating from a ceiling within RMIT Gallery. The act of construction of this work saw the artist build a production line and lose herself in the process of monotonous making: cutting, sewing, knotting and finishing. The work reflected on her family’s links to the garment industry and the repetition of the making process.

The act of making is only one aspect of Yu Fang Chi’s installation — the main intent of the project was an examination of the impact of consumerism, using her hand-crafted version of the all-pervasive supermarket shopping bag. The public has been generally relieved to change from plastic bags to reusable shopping bags, and yet they are also problematic. They break easily and are often discarded. On 26 May 2017, Charis Chang reported for www.news.com.au: “Green bags commonly sold at Coles and Woolworths are made of polypropylene (a type of plastic) and take more material and energy to produce than standard single-use plastic bags given out for free ... Their impact on global warming is actually greater than single-use bags.”⁹

The problems associated with fashion production is one of our greatest environmental disasters. For this exhibition, Indonesian fashion



designer, Fitri Ranatarya developed a project around the deadly situation of the Citarum River, *Unlike Other Waste: Citarum flows Before*, 2019 and *Unlike Other Waste: Citarum flows After*, 2019. The Citarum River is the biggest river in West Java, Indonesia and the world’s most polluted. The artist points out that this river is the backbone for the lives of 40 million people and home to 3400 industrial factories. Similarly, The Diplomat has noted “every day, no less than 20,000 tons of waste and 340,000 tons of wastewater, mostly from 2,000 textile factories, are disposed directly into the once clear and pristine waterways of the Citarum River.”¹⁰

The designer created two dresses from cassava-based bioplastic that illustrate the before and after of the decomposition process, from creation to degradation. These dresses are completely biodegradable and non-toxic and illustrate the future thinking of fashion designers in our region.

ACTION–PERFORMING

Performance is an important communication tool for powerful and provocative commentaries on social and cultural issues. Thai artist, Kawita Vatanajyankur’s

9. Charis Chang, ‘The Crazy Truth about Using Green Bags’, *News.Com.Au*, <https://www.news.com.au/technology/environment/the-crazy-truth-about-using-green-bags/news-story/00d4d2aeb97b963c31fd363e18059301>

10. Dikanaya Tarahita and Muhammad Zulfikar Rakhmat, *The Diplomat*, April 28, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/04/indonesias-citarum-the-worlds-most-polluted-river/>



performance-based works highlight her formidable practices of endurance as she forces her body into awkward mechanical-like repetitions. These works also radiate with an astonishing use of colour and seductive editing tools that are influenced by the slick advertising of consumer products. The artist's video-based performances and still images have been displayed on massive screens in loud, cacophonous environments in major public spaces in Asia and around the world.

In both *Carrier II*, 2017, and *Big Fish in a Small Pond*, 2017, she continues the practice of using her own body as the main tool of her performance. In *Carrier II*, 2017, the artist highlights the plight of the invisible workforce — low-paid labourers who have been left behind by consumerism. Regarding *Big Fish in a Small Pond*, 2017, Kawita says: "It is different than any other work I have done because it is more about the conditions at the bottom of the income pyramid — the largest but poorest socio-economic group. It is a symbolic work, representing labour in the Thai fishing industry as a modern form of slavery. My body is transformed into a living victim — a fish, forced, hooked and being pulled in".¹¹ These images leave the viewer uncomfortably imagining the conditions of the workers and where these baskets of fish, which we take for granted, are bound.



11. Kawita Vatanajyankur in conversation with curator Josephine Skinner about her work *Big Fish in a Small Pond*, 2017, <https://www.kawita-v.com/bigfishsmallpond.htm>



A recurring theme of this exhibition was the displacement of local populations and indigenous communities. Two important photographic and video documentations by Cambodian artist Khvay Samnay's held pride of place in the main gallery space, *Rubber Man*, 2014 and the video performance *Preah Kunlong (The way of the spirit)*, 2016–2017.

Rubber Man, 2014 was created as the result of the artist's visits to rubber plantations in Cambodia's remote north-east, Ratanakiri Province. Here the artist explored the colonial legacy of land use which has seen 300,000 hectares of foreign-owned rubber plantations displace local villagers and destroy natural habitats. *Preah Kunlong, (The way of the spirit)* 2016–2017 saw the artist deeply immerse himself in the life of the Indigenous Chong people, exploring the long-term environmental devastation to their homelands to build a dam.



The imagination can be transformational when overcoming trauma. Ryoko Kose's art practice is based around her forced displacement to Australia by the man made Japanese 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster. It was a bold and poetic installation of red hemp yarn woven throughout the grand 19th Century foyer of RMIT Gallery. The performative installation, *Just Keep Going_It Is Like Something*, 2019 uses gentle methodical techniques with linear composition to create fresh narratives. The artist was on-site weaving the space for days, as if she were writing a diary, at one with the work. She believes that revising



our own stories is vital for our on-going wellbeing, especially for those who are at turning points in their lives, such as in the aftermath of extreme experiences.

ACTION-PROTESTING

Much of the work in this exhibition is dedicated to protest and activism for social change. Bali based Indonesian artist Made Bayak considers the major problems of tourism and development on his homelands. He writes: “Let us all be part of this phenomena of social change that is occurring - as we are...For me as a visual artist and a musician I will be socially active in these positive ways.”¹² Bayak presented two video works, *Re-claim our dream* and *future the island – the Island of Gods and Bali Raped Island*. Here the artist confronts developers with the rage of loud music and large machinery, the artist uses his body to defy the advancing bull dozers.

Alongside these performances three paintings, *Bali tolak reklamasi*, 2015; *Bali raped island*, 2013 and *Trapped behind bars*, 2013 used the map of Bali as the canvas. Here slogans, graffiti and bar codes challenge the tourist to reconsider the harm that is being done to the island of Bayak’s home and community.

The problems associated with the ecological impact of tourism and consumerism in Asia are widespread. One of South-East Asia’s leading

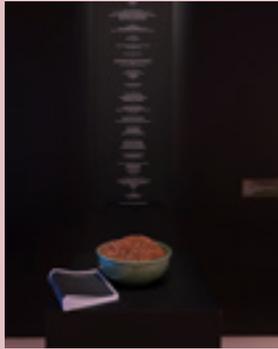


photographic artists, Manit Sriwanichpoom uses his character, Pink Man to highlight alienation towards the problems associated with the insatiable appetite of consumerism. Six images from the iconic *Pink Man in Paradise*, 2003 series lined the back wall of our largest Gallery space. In this series Pink Man wanders around the most beautiful and picturesque locales in Bali standing with his empty supermarket trolley looking for ‘paradise lost’. The artist was also deeply disturbed by the Bali Bombings in October 2012, where 202 lives were lost. He saw this act of terrorism as deeply harrowing and a contrast to the beauty of the idyllic island.

Trees powerfully and beautifully civilise our cities providing calm and respite in our boulevards, parks and gardens. We were thrilled to included two works by the Vietnamese artist, Ly Hoàng Ly. Ly lives and works in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, where for over a decade she has maintained a performance practice linked to our relationships with trees. We selected two works that spoke across the exhibition themes of a bruised landscape, firstly, the protest installation, *Hope – memory tree*, 2019 created as a response to the removal of 300 magnificent trees that lined the old boulevards of Ho Chi Minh City. Video footage recorded dramatic content of the artist protesting the removal of the trees. She reminds us of the ecology of our cities, our relationship with these trees and their surroundings, and how we are lesser without them.



12. Made Bayak, February 2019. Text from artist statement supplied to the curators



A second work, *We have become machines*, 2018 encouraged visitors to take, touch and smell, sawdust from African mahogany trees (*khaya senegalensis*) which were planted in Tôn Đức Thắng Avenue during the French Colonial period. The journey of the artist's interventions and protest are incredibly moving, and her body is deeply entrenched in her fight for ecological justice.

ACTION-SHARING

For many artists working across cultures, with the making of art comes deep appreciation, empathy and understanding. *Godh in the Lap of Nature*, 2016 is a collaboration with internationally celebrated Madhubhani artists Pushpa Kumari and Pradyumna Kumar, with Delhi based designer, Ishan Khosla and Australian artist, Mandy Ridley. From their divergent practices they used drawing to create an installation depicting a shared landscape. From Bihar in India to Gippsland in Victoria the landscapes of childhood are vastly different but there are many commonalities

The project was developed in Delhi with conversations veering between Hindi and English as the group shared stories and memories of the diverse terrains of Bihar and Kochi in India and rural Gippsland in southern Australia. The drawings were printed onto wall hangings that are theatrical and impactful in length. When installed in the gallery they invite the viewer to interact and weave through them, intimately exploring the artists' landscapes



of remembered childhoods – the warm and loving embrace of nature. This work is a stark reminder of our closeness to nature as children, the loss of the connection as adults and how lovely it is to recall these memories and reactivate that connection.

This exhibition was inspired by critics in Asia speaking out about environmental degradation undertaken by Australia – across various industries that largely go unseen, and are occurring daily, without consequence. *Bruised: Art, action and ecology in Asia* invited viewers to consider their own part in unrestrained and unethical globalisation, and its impacts on people and the environment. It encouraged us to act – now.

Helen Rayment
Curator



Sarker Protick, *Of Rivers and Lost Lands*, 2011–2018,
Inkjet prints. Courtesy of the artist

Bruised: A Reflection

by *Thao Nguyen*

I write this reflection in 2021, in the midst of a global pandemic. The relationship between climate change, environmental degradation, migration and health is further exposed. Although *Bruised: Art Action and Ecology* was two years ago, the show is relevant now just as it was back then.

I was invited to co-curate this exhibition with Helen Rayment. As a fresh-face and energetic student of the Masters of Art in Public Space program at RMIT University, this seemed like the perfect opportunity for me to get my foot in the curatorial door. It wasn't long before the initial excitement turned into a slight panic as I realised the mammoth responsibility that came with the job – the responsibility over other people's stories. The artists of this show tapped into their bottomless reserves of vulnerability, pushed physical and emotional boundaries in a display of radical storytelling. These deeply personal stories that have been entrusted to us demanded our unfaltering attention to make sure that the delivery does justice to these works and the people behind them.

There were strong and powerful female voices in this exhibition and these voices were embedded in works that goes deeper than just representation. As a female Asian-Australian, showcasing these artists was and still is important. Scattered throughout the gallery were works and performances of tenacity, gentleness, power and endurance.



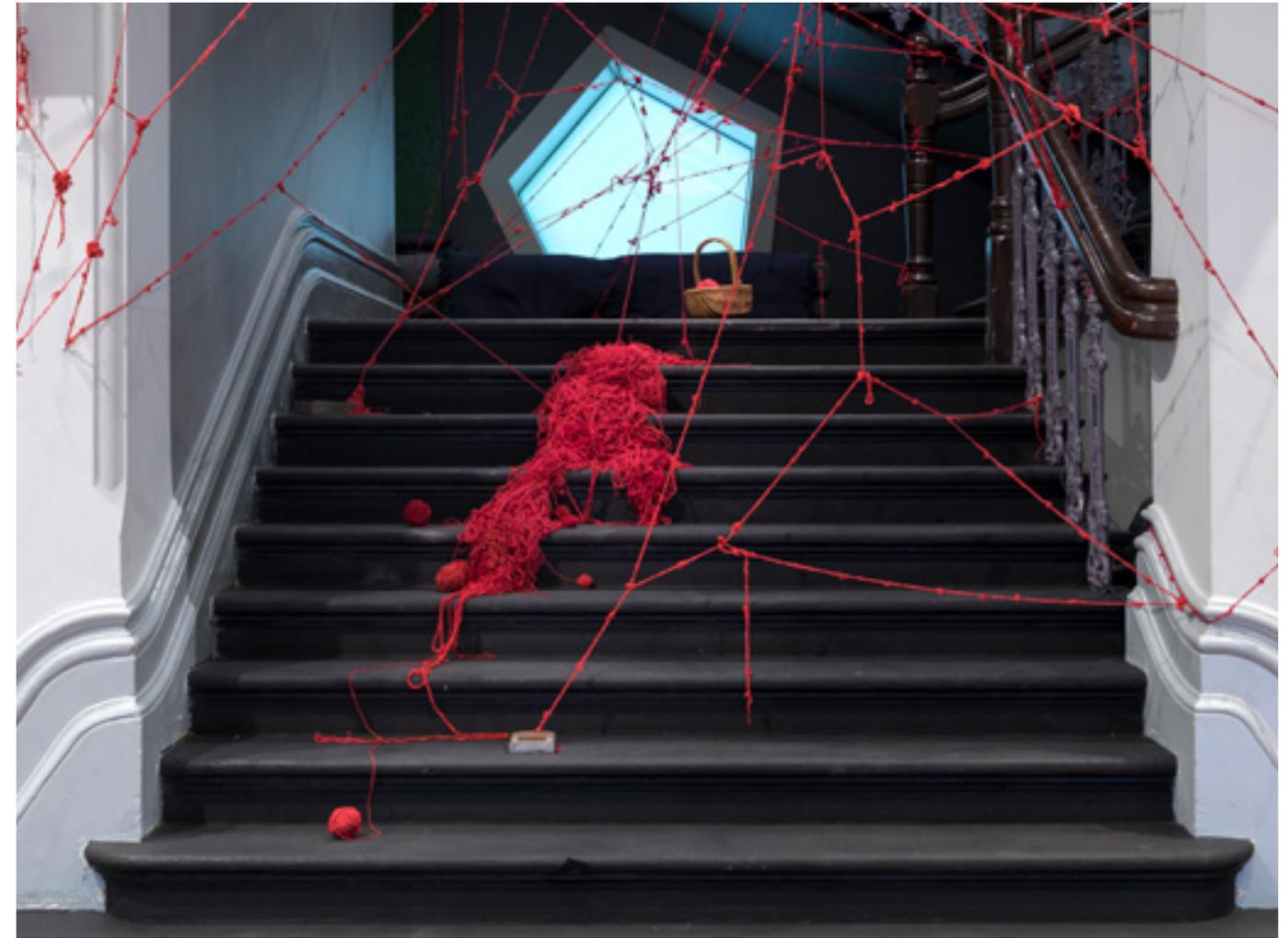
Kawita Vatanajyankur, *Big Fish in a Small Pond*, 2017, Single-channel HD video Courtesy of the artist

We saw tenacity in the work of Thai-Australian artist Kawita Vatanajyankur, an artist who utilises her body in extreme ways. Two large lightboxes depicted *Carrier II*, striking images of a machine- human hybrid performed by the artist's contorted body. In this act, her body becomes a powerful tool to raise compelling questions about gender, equality and the ethics of labour in Thailand.

We saw gentleness in Vietnamese artist *Ly Hoàng Ly's* performance and video work *We have become machines*. With the old boulevards of Ho Chi Minh City as the backdrop, the artist stands in the middle of the frame, robed in a soft white cotton dress. She holds a single branch and plants herself – bare foot to earth –rooted like a tree in protest of the removal of century years old African mahogany trees on Tôn Đức Thắng Avenue. The work is complete with sounds of bustling bodies, motorcycle horns and spoken Vietnamese language that echoes through the chambers of the gallery. Although site specific, this activism has global resonance as deforestation remains as one of the biggest contributing factors to global warming.

We saw power in Arahmaiani's *Breaking Words* performance. As curators, we were fortunate to host the artist in Melbourne and had not only witnessed but also experienced her performance. In a public program activated outside of the gallery space, the artist smashed plate after plate with great force against a brick wall. This work, which embodied Buddhist ideologies of temporality and fleetingness, was delivered with impressive conviction and had left the participants stunned and with much to reflect on.

In contrast to Arahmaiani's quick tempo work, Japanese artist Ryoko Kose's installation and performance,



Ryoko Kose, detail: *Just Keep Going_It Is Like Something*, 2019, On-site installation Hemp yarn. Courtesy of the artist

Just Keep Going_It Is Like Something, was patient and enduring. Over the course of the installation period and at the exhibition opening, Ryoko quietly entered the gallery and wove her installation. It was a striking work which consisted of hundreds of metres of red string and hours of personal labour. Although quite mesmerising and beautiful to the eye, the inspiration behind the performance derived from a sombre place. The work drew on her forced displacement caused by the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster in Japan. With disaster displacement and climate-induced migration on the rise, works like Ryoko's are disturbingly relevant.

Bruised: Art Action and Ecology in Asia shared these different stories which were told by a diverse group of people across Asia and Australia. It was important for the exhibition to highlight the intersectional approaches to achieving climate justice. As my understanding of the environmental issue grows, I realise that climate change draws on powerful forces such as patriarchy, corrupt leadership, exploitation and colonialism. I also realise that to combat these forces, you need equally powerful actions. These actions reside in the creativity of artists and advocates such as the ones you saw in this show. Again, I'd like to humbly thank all the artists for their contribution, generosity and trust.

Coming to Terms with Gaia

by *Alban Mannisi*

Environmental aesthetics at the time of our ontological crises accounts for a cohort of activists profoundly distinct from what ecological commitments could present in the past decades. The RMIT Gallery's exhibition *Bruised Art Action and Ecology in Asia* seized the opportunity of this troubled moment to present complex thoughts of an awareness that is nonetheless transitive, effervescent, and confusing, but that we do not have the luxury to ignore. Whistle blower sensor, artists anticipate our environmental changes and develop visions and alerts. Like planners, politicians, and entrepreneurs, they have also swelled the ranks of activists and conscious citizens of our Anthropocene. If the conflict production and environmental consensus reflect a Western ontology, what is happening in Asia where formerly nature and culture rippled together without ignoring to the point of engendering the conditions in which our meta-modernity is struggling? Our discussion with Yu Fang Chi, Taiwanese artist, Dr Marnie Badham, artist & curator, Dr Tammy Wong-Hulbert, Asian art specialist, and Bjorn Low, urban gardener and community activist, allowed us to establish an inventory of the particularity offered by the artistic and activist movements developed in Asia in the face of global upheaval.

The *Veiled Memory* project by artist Yu Fang Chi discusses the environmental hardship by producing the repetitive gestures of the seamstress industry labours of the native region of the artist, Nanzhi. It thus accounts for the post-war Taiwanese economy monopolised by Japanese settlers who used local civil society while deteriorating the atmospheric conditions of the largely industrialised country. Without protest or ostentation, it reflects the everyday life of indigenous population when well-being was purely dependent on economic growth to the detriment of environmental and public health conditions.

Bruised Food a Living Laboratory co-curated by Marnie Badham and Francis Maravillas expands the gentle activism in a social and process focused way. The projects draw together narratives of food and politics in ecology, migration, cultural identity, international aid, and new technologies in relation to both the self and the collective. *Bruised Food* seeks to engender forms of engagement and participation that go beyond conventional notions of exchange between strangers in a gallery. Starting with the *Only Rock We Eat* installation, tables encrusted with rock salts by artist Keg De Souza and collaborator biologist Lucien Alperstein, *Bruised Food* a living Laboratory is a performative dinner that took audience around the world through stories of salt as currency, causes of war and revolutions and part of trade routes and urban development.

Inclusive cities' curatorial project of Dr Tammy Wong-Hulbert feeds on her back and forth family's history between China and Australia for several generations. Dr Wong develops socially engaged projects which involve community groups, partnership, as well as professional artists to engage dialogues

on the right to the city. It allows, like the collaborative project developed with the community of St Andrews, to renew some cultural environmental history by questioning the shadows of our hidden commons. Dr Wong's projects reveal the relentless debates on the right of inhabitants and minorities on the city who constitute the crucial value of the Australian social ecology. *Hyphenated Navigating, The Space Between Cultures* related to the Australian Government about the discrimination against early Chinese communities during the gold rush era refer to the hybrid forum dynamics innervated in our ecological democracy.

If the hermeneutics of the environmental resistance benefits from the transfers of artistic deployment within the ecological sphere, other energies come to renew even strongly these new forms of aesthetics ontology of the built environment. Thus, it is since the hybrids forum that the implosion of the economic models renews a sector such as the agriculture that deeply scleroses after a century of intensification. Because transfers of the environmental model in Asia have produced similar displacement and degradation of living conditions that the Western 20th Century bode as inevitable. To these drifts came the same remedies. However, the independent Asian environmental ethics demonstrates an ability to rethink these patterns from appropriate and truly sustainable awareness, beyond the Sustainable Development's neoliberal issues. Bjorn Low, founder of Edible Garden City in Singapore presents an alternative to agricultural drift appeared in Southeast Asia and a revitalisation of the community commitment to the ecological withdrawal of speculative markets. Its practice attempt to mobilise the resistance's

cog developed by citizens, environmental entrepreneurs, and politicians to deploy future ethical governances.

Working previously in the advertising industry in Singapore and London, Bjorn changed his path to improve the sustainability of Singapore where 90% of the Garden city's food is imported, as only 1% of land is dedicated to farming. After obtaining a diploma in bio-dynamic agriculture, Bjorn co-founded *Edible Garden City* that is nowadays exposed around the world as an innovating Singaporean environmental agency focusing on food production and civil society empowerment. From a geopolitical and economical concern regarding the risk of such dependence, Edible Garden City provides various platforms for local inhabitants wishing to renew a more responsible relation with their beloved young nation. By reformulating the legacy of the nation's father, Lee Kwan Yew from an edible approach, Edible Garden City is reconsidering our environment from a function today forgotten by this nature that surrounds us; its ability to feed us. By reintegrating native consumable plants in the public real design, it is the whole question of biodiversity and the risk of toxicity produced by exogenous agricultural productions that are discussed with a population for whom food is a major environmental ethics component.

The slant approaches of these activists of muddled and complex environmental causes allow us to envisage the environmental craze renewal which for the last twenty years seemed blind and to vow to restore the vampiric practices of our modernity. Thanks to the intellectual diversity of these practices, we are able to savour the resilience of our little arrangements with Gaia.



BRUISED: ART ACTION AND ECOLOGY IN ASIA

12 APRIL — 1 JUNE

This exhibition examines how artists are using creative actions either big or small to open discussions around food sustainability and production, environmental catastrophes and human migration in our region.

CURATORS

Helen Rayment with Thao Nguyen

ARTISTS

Arahmaiani, Alfredo and Isabel Aquilizan, Made Bayak, Yu Fang Chi, Ishan Khosla, Ryoko Kose, Pradyumna Kumar, Pushpa Kumari, Armin Linke, Ly Hoàng Ly, James Nguyen, Sherman Ong, Sarker Protick, Fitri Ranatarya, Mandy Ridley, Khvay Samnang, Gigi Scaria, Lizzy Simpson, Manit Sriwanichpoom, Kawita Vatanajyankur, Tintin Wulia, Bo Zheng

**BRUISED FOOD:
A LIVING LABORATORY**

Curated by Marnie Badham and Francis Maravillas

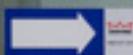
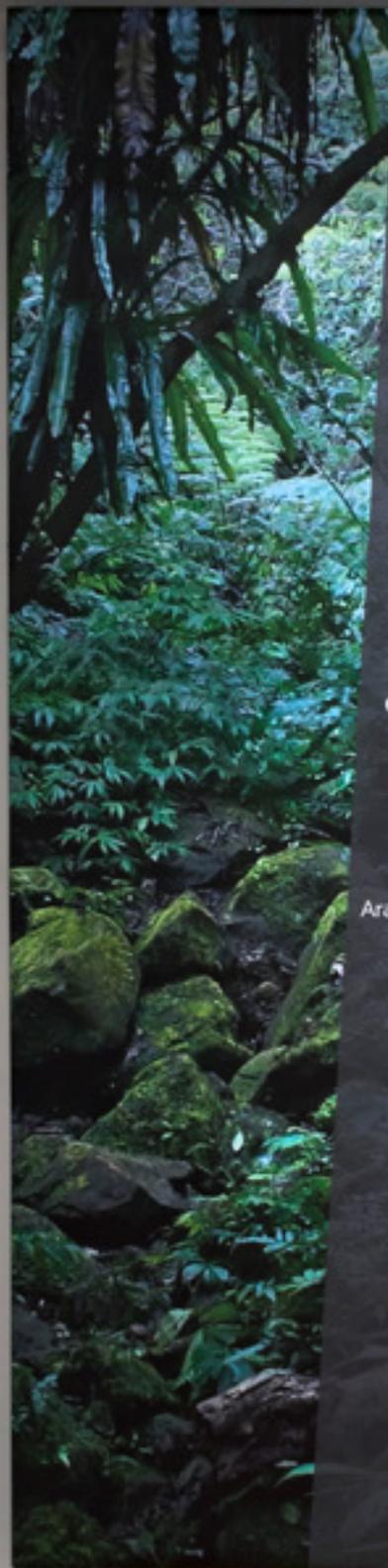
ARTISTS

Keg de Souza with Lucien Alperstein, Arahmaiani, Rhett D'Costa, Elia Nurvista, Stephen Loo

Bruised: Art Action and Ecology in Asia is part of ART-CLIMATE CHANGE 2019 (13 April-10 May), a socially-engaged festival of exhibitions, theatre works, keynote lectures, events and artist talks considering climate change impacts and the challenges and opportunities arising from climate change. For more information: www.artclimatechange.org

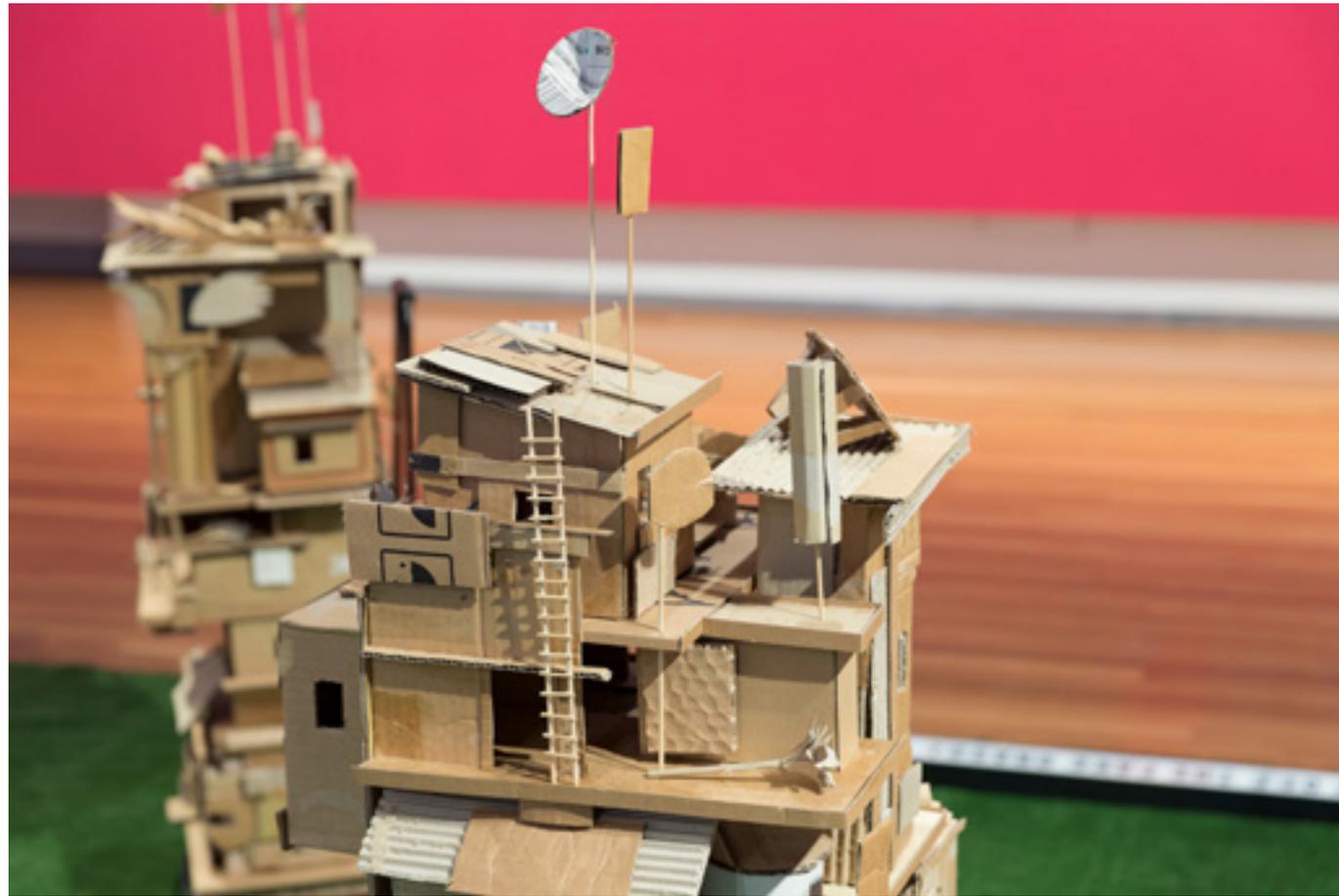


Proudly sponsored by:



Alfredo and Isabel Aquilizan, *Arrivals and departures*, 2019, cardboard, mixed media.
Installation. Courtesy of the artists and
Yavuz Gallere, Singapore





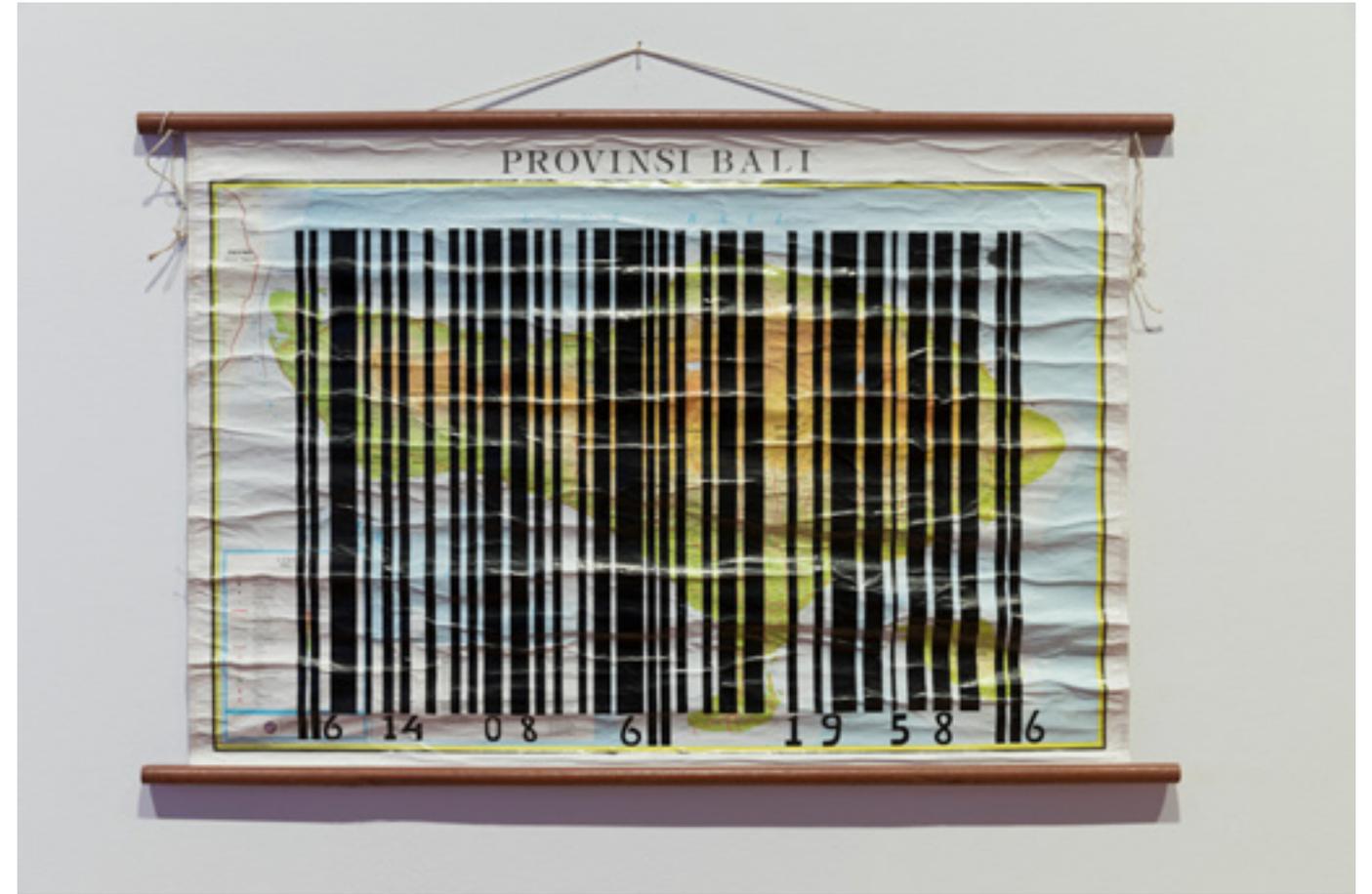
Alfredo and Isabel Aquilizan, *Arrivals and departures*, 2019, cardboard, mixed media. Installation. Courtesy of the artists and Yavuz Gallery, Singapore

Kawita Vatanajyankur, *Carrier II*, 2017,
Digital Print. Courtesy of the artist and
Nova Contemporary, Bangkok, Thailand





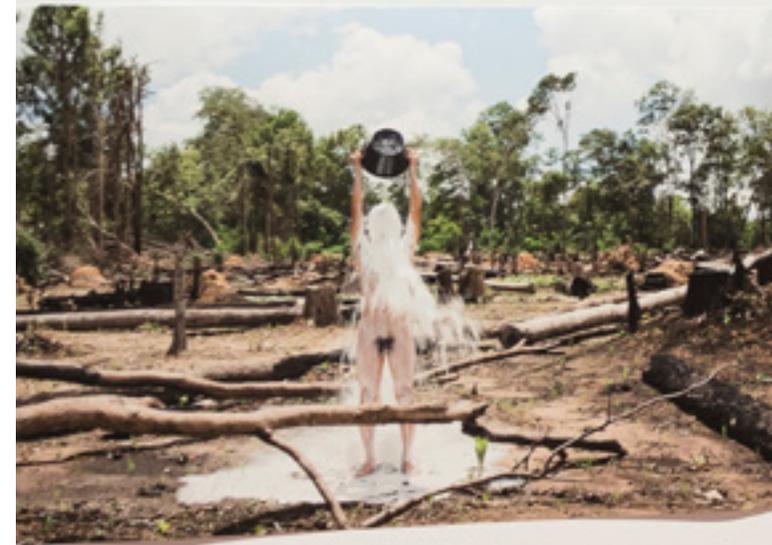
Made Bayak, *Bali tolak reklamasi*, 2015;
Bali raped island, 2013; *Trapped behind
bars*, 2013, acrylic paint on maps of Bali
Island. Courtesy of the artist



Made Bayak, *Bali tolak reklamasi*, 2015 (left); *Bali raped island*, 2013 (right), acrylic paint on maps of Bali Island. Courtesy of the artist

Khvay Samnang, *Preah Kunlong (The way of the spirit)* 2016-2017, Two-channel HD video, colour and sound, Duration: 0:18:43
Courtesy of the artist. Choreographer and dance by Nget Rady. Commissioned by documenta 14





Khvay Samnang, *Rubber Man*, 2014, Digital C-Print, Series of 5. Courtesy of the artist



Manit Sriwanichpoom, *Pink Man in Paradise*
series, 2003, Courtesy of the artist



Gigi Scaria, Detail: *When the faith revisits the environment*, 2019 photograph on canvas. Courtesy of the artist

A mourning for trees

I look up high
to the ruptured sky
a cemetery
a crippling walk

In rage – these petite green buds
still bursting by the feet of ancient trees, excruciatingly forced to death
These petite green buds are still bursting – in rage
gathering around what's left of bodies - once vast and vigorous, now cut into pieces
Still bursting – in rage – these petite green buds
What kind of belief is violently bright in the night?

I look up high
to the putrid lead color sky
Feeling tears spurring out from the tips of my toes
Weaving into roots hundreds of years old, returning to the surface of the earth

Hey tree-cutters
You are no happier, right?

Hey builders of bridges, connecting us to tomorrow's dreams
You are no happier, right?

For we have become machines.

How much labor does it take to cut into pieces hundreds of years?
How many machines does it take to cut into pieces hundreds of years?
Tell me
So I can write it down in the notebook of history

Swollen purple and blue,
the sky is jammed with tears un-cried
Un-cryable tears
As I walk, I stumble
I tremble

Oh rain, why don't you descend
to moisten this pain

This road is choked by deaths
without corpses and broken bodies
These remaining leaves are paralyzed and exhausted,
with nothing left to mourn to the wind
These bomb craters – they don't groan

Oh rain, why don't you descend
to cleanse these streams of green blood
spilling all over the atmosphere, creeping into the air I breathe
Am I still breathing?

They skinned the sky, piercing her flesh
They dug up the earth, stealing her heart
They split this hundreds of years old road, cutting her into pieces

I walk, in wonder, I walk:
My heart has been pierced
Yet I am still walking!
I must have turned into a machine
Running on the fuel named powerlessness

Cars after cars, trucks after trucks
Bikes after bikes, people after people
Sourly, we move like mummified bodies
Members of the museum of genocide
Built on ignorance and soaked in heartlessness

Tomorrow, the commute will still continue
Sourly, we will still move
Inside the biggest tomb of them all

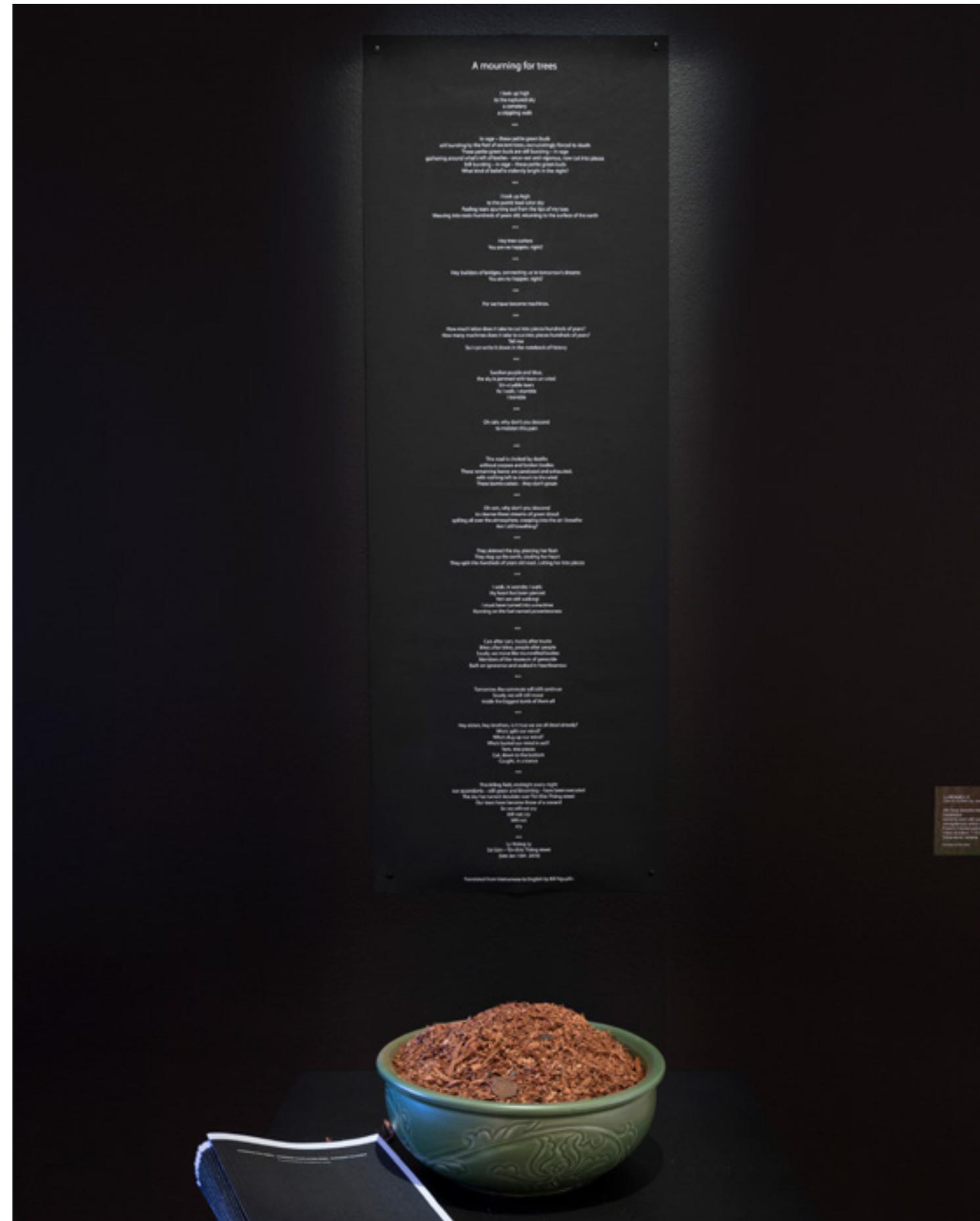
Hey sisters, hey brothers, is it true we are all dead already?
Who's split our mind?
Who's dug up our mind?
Who's buried our mind in soil?
Torn, into pieces
Cut, down to the bottom
Caught, in a trance

This killing field, midnight every night
our ascendants – still green and blooming – have been executed
The sky has turned desolate over Tôn Đức Thắng street
Our tears have become those of a coward
So we will not cry
Will not cry
Will not
cry

Ly Hoàng Ly
Sài Gòn – Tôn Đức Thắng street
(late Jan 16th 2018)

Translated from Vietnamese to English by Bill Nguyễn.

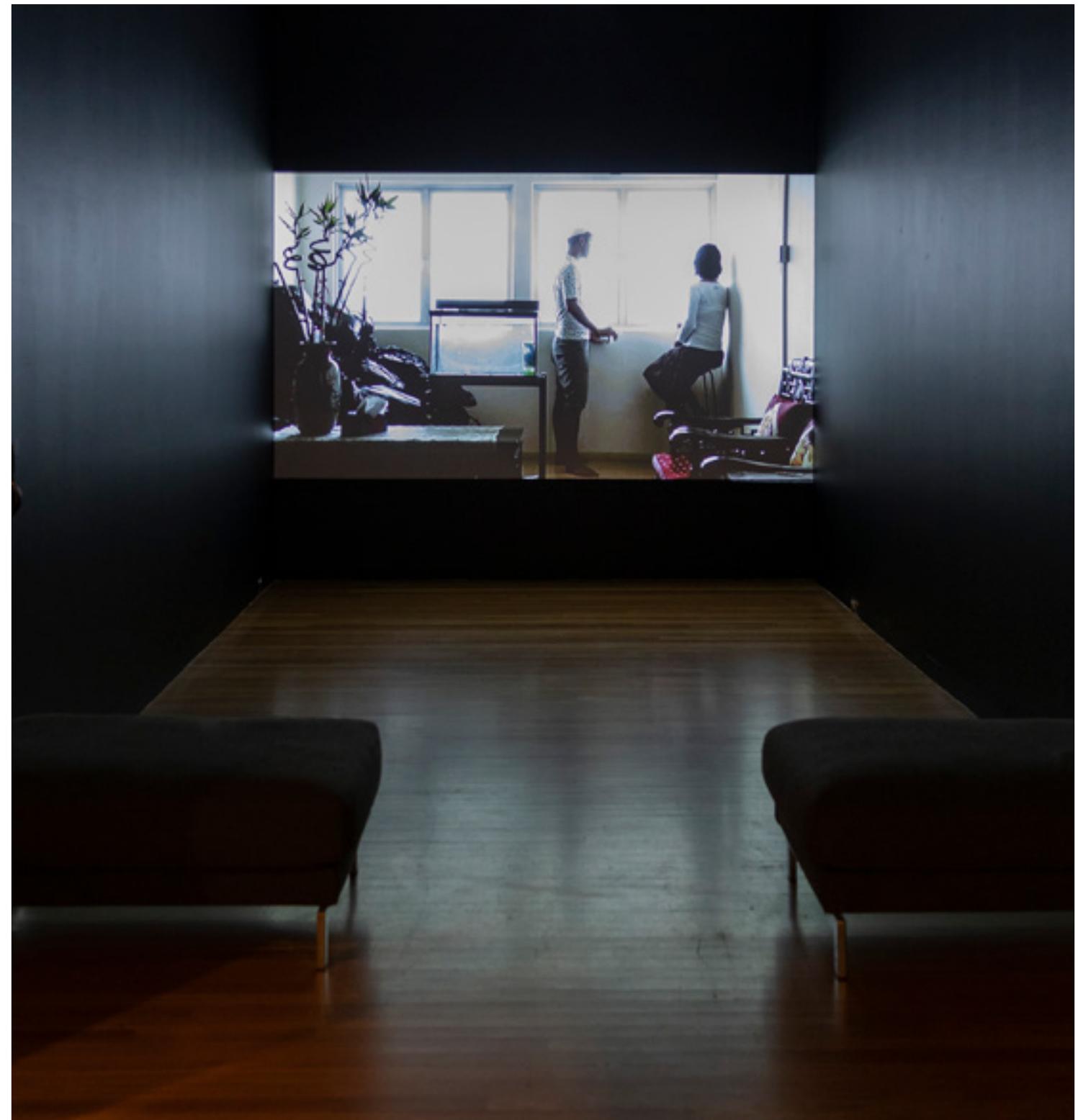
Ly Hoang Ly, *We have become machines*, 2018
Installation Ceramic bowl with sawdust from
African mahogany trees (*khaya senegalensis*)
which were planted in Tôn Đức Thắng Avenue
during the French Colonial period 100 years
ago. Video duration: 1:10:00. Courtesy of
the artist.





Ly Hoang Ly, *Hope-memory tree*, 2019, A public sculpture (7 editions) Installation Video, Sculpture, Courtesy of the artist.

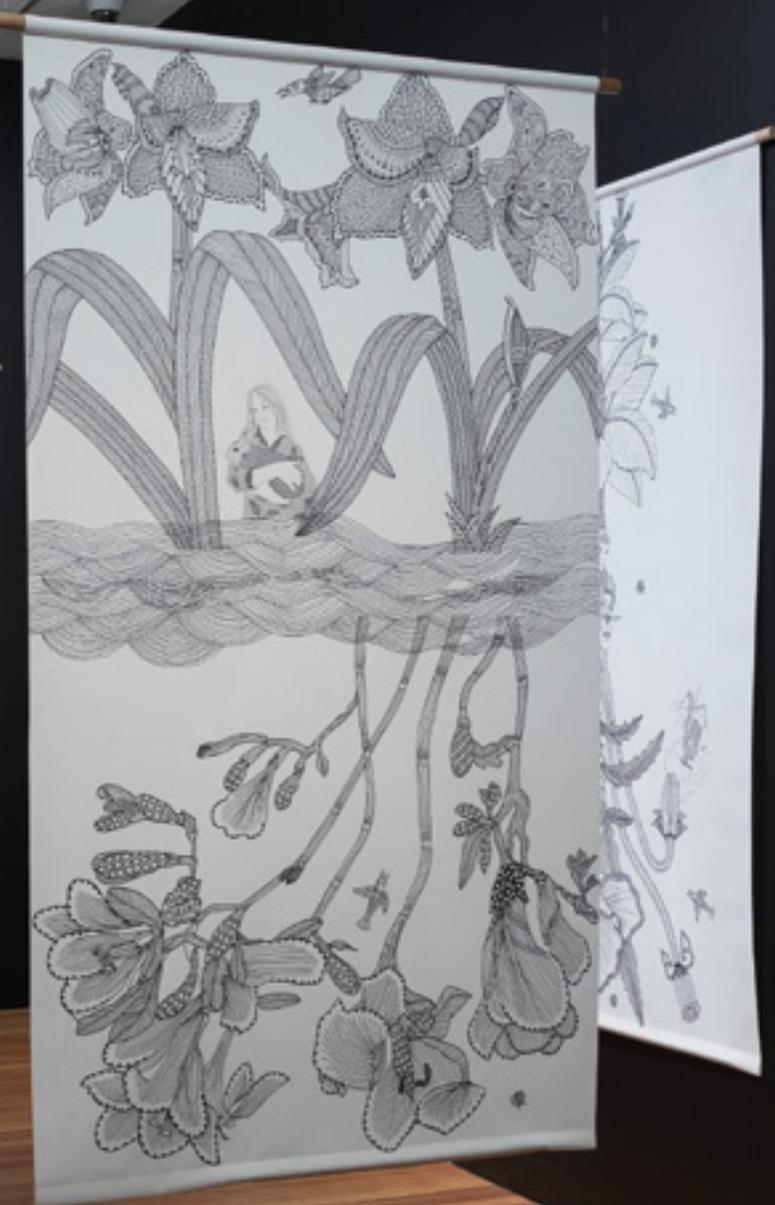


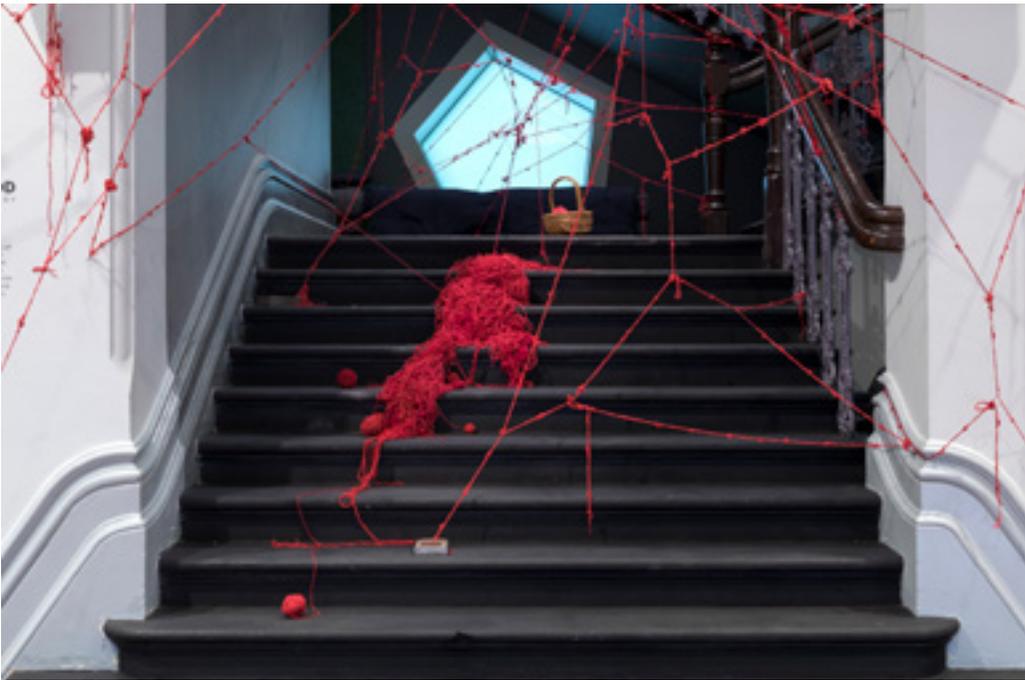


Sherman Ong, *Flooding in the Time of Drought*, 2009 single-channel video, sound and colour, English subtitles, Courtesy of the artist

Ishan Khosla, Pradyumna Kumar, Pushpa Kumari and Mandy Ridley, *Godh: in the lap of nature*, 2016 Digital print with Eco-Solvent ink on coated cotton fabric panels 9 panels, Courtesy of the artists







Ryoko Kose, *Just Keep Going_It Is Like Something*, 2019, On-site installation
Hemp yarn, Courtesy of the artist



Bo Zheng, *Pteridophilia 1*, 2016.
Video (4K, color, sound), 17 min.
Courtesy the artist

Tintin Wulia, *855 Kilograms of Homes in Another State*, waste cardboard bales, steel wire, ink, Courtesy of the artist and Milani Gallery, Brisbane







Lizzy Simpson, *you shares me shares... everything*, 2017-2019 installation: glass vitrines, electronic equipment, works on canvas, works on paper, plants installation. Courtesy of the artist







Armin Linke with Giulia Bruno and Giuseppe Lelasi, *Pulau-pulau kelapa sawit [Islands of Palm Oil]*, 2017 Video duration: 1:35:04
Courtesy of the artists

Fitri Ranatarya, *Unlike Other Waste: Citarum flows Before*, 2019; *Unlike Other Waste: Citarum flows After*, 2019, bioplastic (cassava-based).
Courtesy of the artist



Sarker Protick, *Of Rivers and Lost Lands*,
2011-2018, Inkjet prints. Courtesy of the
artist (overleaf).





Arahmaiani, *A Piece of Land for Sale*,
1995 - ongoing, wood, peat, grass,
mixed media 120 x 240 x 50 cm.
Courtesy of the artist.

Yu Fang Chi, *Remnant*, 2019 synthetic
fibre, monofilament nylon thread, Courtesy
of the artist



James Nguyen, *Pure Water /// after Mike Parr*, 2018, humidifier, water, plastic canisters, water samples from Duck River, video duration: 0:06:05, Courtesy of the artist





List of Works

Arahmaiani
Lives Yogyakarta, Indonesia
A Piece of Land for Sale, 1995 – ongoing
wood, peat, grass, mixed media
Courtesy of the artist

Alfredo and Isabel Aquilizan
Born Philippines, live Brisbane
Arrivals and departures, 2019
Installation cardboard, mixed media
Courtesy of the artists and Yavuz
Gallery, Singapore

Made Bayak
Lives Bali, Indonesia
*Re-claim our dream and future the island – the
Island of Gods*
Edited by Roberto Ariaputra
Video, Duration: 03:05

Bali Raped Island
Edited by Vifick
Video, Duration: 03:05

Bali tolak reklamasi, 2015
Bali raped island, 2013
Trapped behind bars, 2013
acrylic paint on map of Bali Island
Courtesy of the artist

Yu Fang Chi
Born Taiwan, lives Melbourne
Remnant, 2019
Installation synthetic fibre,
monofilament nylon thread
Courtesy of the artist

Ly Hoang Ly
Lives Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
We have become machines, 2018
Installation, ceramic bowl with sawdust from
African mahogany trees (*khaya senegalensis*)
which were planted in Tôn Đức Thắng
Avenue during the French Colonial period 100
years ago.

Video duration: 1:10:00

Hope – memory tree, 2019
A public sculpture (7 editions)
Installation
Video duration: 0:25:07
Courtesy of the artist

Ishan Khosla, Pradyumna Kumar,
Pushpa Kumari, Mandy Ridley
Khosla, Kumar, Kumari live Delhi, India;
Ridley lives Brisbane (RMIT Alumni)
Godh: in the lap of nature, 2016
digital print with Eco-Solvent ink on coated
cotton fabric panels
9 panels: each panel 188 x 107 cm
Courtesy of the artists

Mandy Ridley is represented by Onespace
Gallery, Brisbane
This project was supported by Asialink, Arts
Queensland and the Australia India Institute

Ryoko Kose
Born Fukuoka, Japan, lives Melbourne
Just Keep Going_It Is Like Something, 2019
On-site installation Hemp yarn
Courtesy of the artist

Armin Linke with Giulia Bruno
and Giuseppe Lelasi
Lives Berlin, Germany
Pulau-pulau kelapa sawit [Islands of Palm Oil],
2017
Video
Duration: 1:35:04
Courtesy of the artists

James Nguyen
Lives Melbourne
Pure Water /// after Mike Parr, 2018
humidifier, water, plastic canisters, water
samples from Duck River, video
Video duration: 0:06:05
Courtesy of the artist

Sherman Ong
Lives Singapore
Flooding in the Time of Drought, 2009
single-channel video, sound and colour,
English subtitles
Drought duration: 92:00
Flood duration: 92:00
Courtesy of the artist

Sarker Protick
Lives Dhaka, Bangladesh
Of Rivers and Lost Lands, 2011–2018
Inkjet prints
Courtesy of the artist

Fitri Ranatarya
Lives Jakarta, Indonesia
Unlike Other Waste: Citarum flows Before, 2019
Unlike Other Waste: Citarum flows After, 2019
Bioplastic (cassava-based)
Courtesy of the artist

Khvay Samnang
Lives Phnom Penh, Cambodia
Preah Kunlong (The way of the spirit)
2016–2017
Two-channel HD video, colour and sound
Duration: 18:43
Courtesy of the artist
Choreography and dance by Nget Rady
Commissioned by documenta 14

Rubber Man, 2014
Digital C-Print, Series of 5
Courtesy of the artist

Gigi Scaria
Lives Delhi, India
When the faith revisits the environment, 2019
Photograph on canvas
Courtesy of the artist

Source of a river in descending order, 2016
single-channel video, sound
Duration: 04:00
Courtesy of the artist

Lizzy Simpson
Lives Melbourne
you shares me shares... everything, 2017–2019
installation
Glass vitrines, electronic equipment, works on
canvas, works on paper, plants
Courtesy of the artist

Manit Sriwanichpoom
Lives Bangkok, Thailand
Pink Man in Paradise series, 2003
*Pink Man in Paradise #3, Garuda Wisnu
Kencana Cultural Park*
*Pink Man in Paradise #2, Garuda Wisnu
Kencana Cultural Park*

*Pink Man in Paradise #9, Pura Ulun
Danu- Beratan*
*Pink Man in Paradise #7, Taman Tirta
Gangga* Photographs
Pink Man performance by Sompong
Thawee Courtesy of the artist

Kawita Vatanajyankur
Lives Bangkok, Thailand
Carrier II, 2017
Digital Print

Big Fish in a Small Pond, 2017
Single-channel HD video Edition of 3 + 2AP
Duration: 18:43
Courtesy of the artist and Nova
Contemporary, Bangkok, Thailand

Tintin Wulia
Born Denpasar, Indonesia
*Proposal for a Film: Within the Leaves,
a Sight of the Forest, 2016*
single-channel video
Duration: 25:31

855 Kilograms of Homes in Another State
Waste cardboard bales, steel wire, ink
Courtesy of the artist and Milani Gallery,
Brisbane

Bo Zheng
Lives Hong Kong, China
Pteridophilia 1, 2016
HD video, sound duration:17:00
Courtesy of the artist

Artist Biographies

Arahmaiani

Arahmaiani is one of Indonesia's most seminal and respected contemporary artists. She has long been internationally recognised 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. With a strong theoretical background supporting her ideas, the artist produces artworks that embodies ecological activism and sexual dissidence.

Since completing her degree within the Fine Art and Design Faculty at the Bandung Institute of Technology in 1992, she has continued to flourish and expand her artistic career, exhibiting internationally. She has participated in shows and biennales in Australia, Japan, Singapore, Germany, Netherlands, USA, Italy, Geneva, Brazil, France, Cuba, Spain, Sweden and Indonesia.

This work was first developed in 1995 for the Artists Regional Exchange in Perth. It has ongoing resonance as land development continues to escalate around the world.

Alfredo and Isabel Aquilizan

Alfredo and Isabel Aquilizan emigrated from the Philippines to Australia in 2006. Their collaborative works address themes of displacement, change, memory and community. Large-scale installations reflect their migratory experiences, while conveying points of exchange and communication that extend beyond borders. The artists explore the meaning of home and finding a sense

of belonging. They travel extensively and this, combined with their own experience of migration lends itself to work that seeks to define notions of identity, the hardships of journey, human displacement and ideas of presence and absence in memory. These issues are processed through materials and objects that are both abstract and referential to serve as metaphors for everyday human life.

Made Bayak

Based in Bali, Made Bayak is an artist, musician and environmental activist. His artistic practice includes paintings, installations, music and performance. He explores the ecological, social, cultural and political issues that faces his island home and community. This is done through his visual art alongside his ongoing investigative project *Plasticology*; an educational campaign against plastic trash. Since graduating from the Indonesian Institute of Art in Denpasar Bali, the artist has continued his creative journey with many solo shows. Additionally, he has participated in many group exhibitions in Germany, Poland, Singapore and Indonesia.

Yu Fang Chi

Yu Fang Chi is a Melbourne based Taiwan-born artist, curator and researcher. In 2014 she relocated to Melbourne where she completed her PhD at RMIT University. Yu Fang Chi's research focuses on the development of textiles and contemporary jewellery in the Asia-Pacific Region investigating the role of femininity and its cultural connotations.

Her artwork has been exhibited internationally including at *Talente* and *Schmuck* in Germany, Cheongju International Craft Biennale in Korea, and exhibitions in Belgium, China, Japan, Norway, India, and Estonia. In 2017, her artwork was acquired by the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris. She has received the Diana Morgan Postgraduate Gold & Silversmithing Prize RMIT, and the Marzee Graduate Prize in the Netherland in 2018.

<http://yufangchi.com/>

Ly Hoang Ly

Ly Hoang Ly is a visual artist, poet and editor. She works across the medium of painting, video, installation, public art, poetry and performance. Ly Hoang Ly is the first female visual artist in Vietnam to work with performance art and poetry. Her art practice evokes conversations around the general human condition, the critical states of society as well as our shared issues of migration and immigration.

Ly graduated from Ho Chi Minh City University of Fine Arts and furthered her study to attain her MFA at the School of Art Institute of Chicago. She has exhibited in many areas of Vietnam as well as the UK, Thailand, Germany, Korea and USA.

<http://www.lyhoangly.com/>

Ishan Khosla

Ishan Khosla is a visual artist and designer interested in the human condition and works with Indian crafts. His work straddles art and design, tradition and technology, nostalgia and the future and reflects his experience living in India and abroad. Ishan has undertaken a range of international residencies. Selected exhibitions include

the celebrated *Fracture: New Directions on Contemporary Textiles*, Devi Art Foundation, 2015; *Edge Condition*, London, 2012 and *Crossing Visions*, Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Japan, 2017. Ishan's work is part of the Permanent Collection at the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney and his work has been published in the *V&A's India Contemporary Design*.

<https://www.ishankhosla.com/>

Pradyumna Kumar and Pushpa Kumari

Pradyumna Kumar is an award-winning artist, the first Indian to ever win the prestigious *UNESCO Noma Concours* in 2006. For most of his professional life Pradyumna was a land surveyor until surgery saw his life take a new path. He became an artist, creating paintings influenced by Madhubani stylistic traditions but crucially his work included themes and topics inspired by his own imagination and interest.

Pushpa Kumari is one of the finest Madhubani artists in India today. The granddaughter of Maha Sundari Devi, it was natural for Pushpa to continue this family tradition. What makes Pushpa's work special is that she has incorporated contemporary ideas into the centuries old traditions of Madhubani.

Works by these two artists are in the permanent collection at National Museums, Liverpool, UK as well as the Mingei International Folk Art Museum, San Diego, USA. Pushpa Kumari is represented in USA by Cavin-Morris Gallery New York.

Madhubani paintings are typical of the Madhubani region of Bihar, North India and are a vital part of the cultural traditions of the area. Traditionally, women drew these ceremonial paintings on walls and floors,

depicting religious and social themes. These paintings were the means of visual education, a way of passing down stories, myths and social values from one generation to another.

Mandy Ridley

Mandy Ridley is a visual artist with a diverse practice. Her projects often start with material culture research, using colour, pattern and craft to explore points of resonance between people of differing cultural experience, tracing history, influence and connection.

Mandy has had a long history of engagement with India, through residencies, research and exhibitions that commenced with the 2002 Khoj International Artists Workshop. She has visited India regularly and maintained warm relationships with a wide circle of Indian artists and friends. In 2012 she was included in an associated event for the first Kochi-Muzuris Biennale (KMB), an exhibition of Australian and Indian artists. The ongoing association with India has been of great significance in the development of her work and a great personal joy.

Her work has been exhibited nationally since 1996 and is held in Queensland collections, Artbank and privately both in Australia and India. She has also undertaken major permanent public art commissions.

<https://www.mandyridley.com/>

Ryoko Kose

Ryoko Kose is an artist who produces creative works in the form of installations that are motivated by her lived experience of forced displacement following the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster. Sociology and identity are strong themes that arise within her works as

she investigates how identity is developed, maintained and transformed in the wake of the natural and man-made disasters of this increasingly globalised and technological world.

Ryoko has recently graduated from the Master of Art (Art in Public Space) at RMIT University and is now a PhD candidate. She has exhibited widely within Australia and internationally in group exhibitions also solo shows.

<https://www.just-keepgoing.com/>

Armin Linke

Photographer, filmmaker and academic Armin Linke's work analyses the formation (*Gestaltung*) of our natural, technological and urban environment. Linke challenges the conventions of photographic practice working collectively with other artists, curators, designers, architects, historians, philosophers and scientists, the narratives of his works expand on the level of multiple discourses.

In the last five years, Linke's work has focused on the topic of the Anthropocene with exhibitions at Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin and ZKM | Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe. His most recent major project, *Prospecting Ocean*, commissioned and produced by TBA21-Academy, explores ecological and political challenges facing the oceans.

Linke's work has also been exhibited widely including at many prestigious art museums including: Centre Pompidou, Paris (2018); Tate Gallery, London (2015); Fotomuseum, Winterthur (2015). In 2019, his project *Carceri d'Invenzione* represented Germany at the XXII Triennale di Milano.

<https://arminlinke.com/>

James Nguyen

James Nguyen is a Melbourne-based artist who produces creative works in the form of drawing, installation, performance and video. His works interrogate stereotypes around migration, cultural identity and otherness, as well as examining the complexities of his own lived experience, as a Vietnamese migrant adjusting to life in Australia.

Working with documentary, installation and performance James often collaborates with members of his family to examine the politics of art, self-representation and decolonising strategies in diasporic practice. He has been recipient of the Clitheroe Foundation Scholarship and the Anne Gordon Samstag International Visual Arts Scholarship which supported his artist residency at Uniondocs in Brooklyn, NY.

The artist's works have been included in many curated exhibitions *Sentient*, Murray Art Museum, Albury, *The National 2019*, Cement Fondue, ACE Contemporary, PACT, Next Wave, The National Art School Gallery and Cambeltown Art Centre.

Sherman Ong

Malaysian born, Sherman Ong is a filmmaker, photographer and visual artist. His practice has always centred on the human condition and our relationships with others within the larger milieu, exploring the intersection between human nature and nature. His work offers an alternative viewpoint to the banal while eliciting the subtle beauty of everyday life.

Winner of the Prudential Eye Awards 2015 for Photography and the ICON de Martell Cordon Bleu Photography Award 2010, Sherman has exhibited widely around the world premiering works in art biennales, major film festivals and museums in Venice, Singapore, Yin Chuan, Jakarta Biennales,

Fukuoka and Asia Pacific Triennale, He is a founding member of 13 Little Pictures, a film collective based in Singapore. He also serves on the committee of the Singapore International Photography Festival, as an educator at schools and universities.

<http://www.shermanong.com/>

Sarker Protick

Born and based in Bangladesh, Sarker Protick is an artist and photographer. His work explores the possibilities of time, light and sound incorporating detail observations and subtle gestures to enter minimal and atmospheric, personal spaces.

Sarker had exhibited expansively with group and solo exhibitions in Australia, Germany, Bangladesh, Italy, Korea, India, France, Dubai, Portugal, USA, Malaysia, UK, Russia, Croatia, the Netherlands and Russia. Additionally, his images have been published in many highly acclaimed publications including *The New York Times*, *The Guardian* and *National Geographic*.

His multiple degrees include New Media Journalism from the University of Virginia and International Reporting from the University of Oslo Norway.

<https://sarkerprotick.com/>

Fitri Ranatarya

Fitri Ranatarya is an emerging designer and artist. Her creative outcomes are a product of skilled and detailed hand craftsmanship combined with a strong conceptual background. She utilises unconventional materials to investigate cultural identity as well as expressing her beliefs about the very pressing environmental issues of the fashion industry.

The artist attained a Bachelor of Fashion degree with Honours at RMIT University.

Khvay Samnang

Cambodian multidisciplinary artist Khvay Samnang works across the mediums of photography, sculpture, video, installation and performance. His work embodies a strong sense of social justice responding to urgent issues of environmental degradation. These issues extend to the complex influence of political and financial wrangling over the control of natural resources, unchecked development as well as the suppression of the rights of indigenous Cambodian communities. His thorough research of community structures and conditions allows him to highlight the humanitarian and ecological impacts of colonialism and globalisation.

Since graduating from the Royal University of Fine Arts in Phnom Penh (2006), Khvay has taken part in many high-profile solo and group exhibitions in the UK, Spain, Australia, Austria, Greece, Germany, Thailand, USA, Cambodia, Russia and Singapore.

The artist is a founding member of *Stiev Selapak*, an art collective dedicated to reappraising and remembering Cambodian history and exploring continuities in visual practices disrupted by civil war and the Khmer Rouge regime.

<http://www.khvaysamnang.com/>

Gigi Scaria

Gigi Scaria was born in Kerala, India and now lives in New Delhi. He completed his Bachelor's degree in painting from the College of Fine Arts, Thiruvananthapuram (Kerala),

and his Masters of Arts from Jamia Millia University, New Delhi. His work draws the viewer's attention towards the painful truths of migrancy and displacement as well as issues of non-belonging and unsettlement. Art critic, Gayatri Sinha writes: "Gigi's particular position is to investigate how city structures, social constructs, and the view of location is translated in social prejudice and class attitude."

Scaria is recognised internationally having taken part in numerous solo exhibitions and has been curated into many group exhibitions in Trinidad, Dubai, Zurich, Korea, London, Italy and Australia. He represented India in the 54th Venice Biennale and has taken part in high profile international residency programs. In 2005, the artist was honoured with the prestigious Sanskriti Award in Visual Art.

<http://www.gigiscaria.in>

Lizzy Simpson

Lizzy Simpson was born in Melbourne, Australia where she continues to live and work. She has an enduring interest in natural history, a lifelong active gardener and teacher. Lizzy works with a variety of media often combining video, living and growing matter and text into immersive and participatory installations.

She has recently been awarded international and Australian residencies and has exhibited in Yogyakarta, Indonesia and Lassalle College, Singapore.

Manit Sriwanichpoom

Thai artist, Manit Sriwanichpoom is a photographer, writer, contemporary artist and social activist. His sharp photographic works critique global consumerism, with a focus on his homeland, opening conversations around

the future of a country wracked by political and symbolic crises, a country divided.

Ever since graduating from Srinakharinwirot University, the artist has exhibited widely with solo shows in Japan, Australia, Malaysia and China. His works have been acquired in the collections of major galleries in Paris, Japan, Singapore, Australia and in numerous private collections.

He was awarded the prestigious Higashikawa Overseas Photographer Prize in 2007.

Kawita Vatanajyankur

Kawita Vatanajyankur is an artist who explores female labour exploitation particularly within the fashion industry. Her chosen forms of expression are photography, video and most recently, live performance. Since graduating from RMIT University she has exhibited widely across Australia, as well as Asia, USA and Europe. Vatanajyankur's work is held at the National Collection of Thailand and in Museum collections including Singapore Art Museum, Dunedin Public Art Gallery (Dunedin Art Museum), Maiiam Contemporary Art Museum, as well as university collections and private collections in Australia, New Zealand, Asia, Europe and America.

In 2018, Kawita was awarded the Winner of Art Category in Perspective 40 Under 40 Award from Perspective Magazine and the Winner of Young Alumni Community Engagement Award 2016 by the Australian Embassy Bangkok.

She is currently represented by Nova Contemporary, Bangkok and Antidote Organisation, Australia.

<https://www.kawita-v.com/>

Tintin Wulia

Tintin Wulia is an installation and performance artist with an impressive international reputation. Her creative mediums are public interventions, video, sound, installation, drawings, performance and telematic art. Nationality and cultural identity are recurring themes in her works.

The artist has a Bachelor of Music from Berklee College of Music in USA, a Bachelor of Engineering (Architecture) at the Universitas Katolik Parahyangan and Indonesia and was presented her PhD in Fine Arts at RMIT University. She is currently a post-doctoral researcher at the University of Gothenburg.

In 2017 she represented Indonesia at the 57th Venice Biennale (Arte). She has exhibited in major international exhibitions across Turkey, Japan, Indonesia, Russia, Korea and the United Arab Emirates with solo shows in Australia, Indonesia and the Netherlands. Additionally, her work is a part of public and private collections including the Van Abbemuseum, Singapore Art Museum, Queensland Art Gallery/Gallery of Modern Art and He Xiangning Art Museum. Tintin was awarded with a Smithsonian Artist Research Fellow in 2018 with the Waler Reed Biosystematics Unit, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution.

www.tintinwulia.com

Bo Zheng

Bo Zheng is an artist, writer and teacher committed to socially and ecologically engaged art. Well-known as an ecological activist working with site-specific artworks, the artist has researched and preserved up to 20 different species of wild plants. Interested in expressing our emotional and physical relationships with plants, Zheng proposes a

new form of ecological engagement focussing on deeper and more intimate relationships between us.

The artist has worked with a number of museums and art spaces in Asia and Europe, most recently Parco Arte Vivente (Torino), TheCube Project Space (Taipei), Villa Vassilieff (Paris), Cass Sculpture Foundation (Goodwood), Sifang Art Museum (Nanjing), and Hong Kong Museum of Art. In 2018 his works have been included in Manifesta 12, Cosmopolis #1.5, the 11th Taipei Biennial, the 2nd Yinchuan Biennial, and the 1st Thailand Biennial. He has also taught at China Academy of Art from 2010 to 2013, and currently teaches at the School of Creative Media, City University of Hong Kong. In 2016, he received commendation for outstanding achievements in the development of arts and culture from Secretary for Home Affairs, Hong Kong SAR Government.

<http://zhengbo.org/>

Dr Marnie Badham – With a twenty-five-year history of art and social justice in Australia and Canada, Marnie’s research sits at the intersection of socially-engaged art practices, participatory methodologies and the politics of cultural measurement. Her current focus includes a series of creative cartographies registering emotions in public space; expanded curation projects on the aesthetics and politics of food; and a book project *The Social Life of Artist Residencies: connecting with people and place not your own*. Marnie is Senior Research Fellow at the School of Art and CAST (contemporary art and social transformation) research group at RMIT University in Naarm /Melbourne, Australia.

Dr Francis Maravillas is currently writing a book on the aesthetics and politics of food in contemporary Asian art. He is particularly interested in the various uses of food in performance and socially engaged practices in Asia, and the sensuous, affective and relational connections they engender in the context of the gallery/ museum and public space. Francis is Assistant Professor in the Critical and Curatorial Studies of Contemporary Art program at the National Taipei University of Education, Taiwan.

Bruised Food: a living laboratory

Curated by *Marnie Badham*
and *Francis Maravillas*



The only rock we eat, 2019, Keg de Souza with Lucien Alperstein, lunch performance, RMIT Gallery, Melbourne. Photo Credit: Shannon May Lee

Overview

Staged as a living laboratory, *Bruised Food* is a social artwork that uses methods of curation and public pedagogy to frame the discourse of the politics and aesthetics of food as employed by contemporary social practice artists. Informed by an ethics of care and responsibility, this laboratory attends to the bruised ecologies of food and art by foregrounding the risks, uncertainty and frictions inherent in the potential encounters and exchanges between diverse participants.

Through an experimental and iterative approach to testing, creating, engaging with, and displaying artistic ephemera and documentation, *Bruised Food* will present a series of process-focused projects from trans-local artists (Asia/Australia) who will activate their research and audiences through performances, installations, workshops and critical dialogues around the precarious ecologies of food and art in a globalising world.

Bruised Food: a living laboratory is curated by Marnie Badham and Francis Maravillas, featuring artists Keg de Souza with Lucien Alperstein, Arahmaiani, Rhett D'Costa, Elia Nurvista and Stephen Loo.



RICE, 2019, Elia Nurvista, lunch performance, RMIT Gallery, Melbourne. Photo Credit: Courtesy of George Aki

Bruised Food: a living laboratory

In an interview in *Le Monde*, Jacques Derrida evocatively suggests that hospitality is ultimately “an art and a poetics”, even if “a whole politics depends on it and a whole ethics is determined through it”.¹ Significantly, the question of hospitality — as an artful way of relating to others and poetically welcoming the unexpected guest — is a complex one. It is both a condition of and an effect of the question of eating and the sharing of food

Indeed, Derrida undertakes to recast the theatre of hospitality by dwelling on the question of ‘eating well’ (*bien manger*) as communion, sharing and commensality — for “one never eats entirely on one’s own”.² To eat well is to consider the complex and precarious ecology of food as shaped by its encounter with people, cultures, environments, technologies and economies. Artists and curators working with food as a medium evoke this thematic ‘bruised’ ecology, foregrounding the ways in which the processes of alimentation, gustation and digestion appear as ethical frontiers, as sites for the negotiation of our relation to diverse others in the world through our relations with food.

1. Jacques Derrida, ‘Il n’y a pas de culture ni de lien social sans un principe d’hospitalité’, *Le Monde*, 2 December 1997.
2. Derrida, ‘Eating Well’, in *Points: Interviews 1974–1994*, ed. Elisabeth Weber and trans. Peggy Kamuf. al (Stanford University Press, 1995), 282.



Breaking Words, 2019, Arahmaiani,
RMIT Gallery, Melbourne.
Photo credit: Marnie Badham

Staged as a living laboratory, *Bruised Food* employed methods of curation and public pedagogy to frame the discourse of the politics and aesthetics of food as employed by contemporary social-practice artists. It took as its entry point the idea of the bruise to explore the conjuncture of food and art, their precarious ecologies, and affective economies of social exchange. Defined by its outline, like an imprint of a glass of red wine left on a table in an unbridled act of libation, a bruise is indexical, corporeal, and destined to fade. With its plum hues and mottled surface, a bruise marks the threshold of interior and exterior, and the fragile and ephemeral relations between people, objects and their environments. A bruise is also evidentiary and mnemonic, registering trajectories of contact and encounter with varying degrees of affective intensity and ephemerality. Indeed, the appearance of a bruise may be viewed as symptomatic of what Anna Tsing refers to as ‘friction’ – the “awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference”³, that arises as a result of diverse movements and interactions in our contemporary world.

In adopting a mode of curating informed by an ethics of care, generosity and responsibility, *Bruised Food* sought to engender forms of engagement and participation that pushed beyond conventional notions of relationality and convivial exchange. In particular, this project attended to the bruised ecologies of food and art by foregrounding the risks, uncertainty and frictions inherent in the encounters and exchanges between diversely situated subjects. In this regard, the jagged edges

3. Anna Tsing, *Friction: an ethnography of global connection* (Princeton University Press, 2005), 4.



Masala Mix: Opening the Anglo-Indian Tiffin, 2019, Rhett D'Costa, lunch performance, RMIT Gallery, Melbourne.
Photo Credit: Marnie Badham

of the shards of dinner plates produced from Arahmaiani's public performance not only shattered surfaces of language and identity, they also registered the potential failures of dialogue and interaction. These ethical and political stakes of food and eating were evident in the artist-orchestrated meals curated in this exhibition and the various ways they provoked moments of discomfort and anxiety as much as intimacy and sociality as the participants engaged in commensal exchange. This was evident in Stephen Loo's probing of the neuropsychological condition of ASMR (Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response), through his performative acoustic banquet whereby the sounds of mastication were amplified into the gallery in ways that recast the spaces of buccality and aurality as both an alimentary and ethical frontier.

While Loo considered the material, spatial and cultural relations between speaking, hearing and eating, other artists deployed key ingredients (salt, rice, spice) as vectors, which opened onto the jagged terrain of identity, culture and economy in an increasingly mobile and ecologically precarious world. Keg de Souza and Lucien Alperstein's performative lunch engaged the audience to think about our relationship to salt through its history and the potential future of food production and consumption, by adapting our diets to suit the changing environment around us. Elia Nurvista's artwork examined the complex entanglement of rice in global-local dynamics of exchange, including its role in the political economy of food sovereignty and food security and the contradictory and ambiguous relations it engenders in Australia's Asian diasporas. Rhett D'Costa's multi-tiered installation examined his hybrid background of British, Australian and Indian



Careful Whispers, with the Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response Orchestra, May 2019, Stephen Loo with collaborators Jen Brown, Juliana Espana Keller, George Akl and Evie Loo, RMIT Gallery, Melbourne. Photo credit: Evelyn Gall

culture. His culturally composite ethnicities, speak to the fluidity of place, belonging and identity formation, as well as, the consequences of mobility and migration in transnational environments.

Bruised Food thus resonated with the interconnection between ethics and aesthetics and tapped into the sensorial and affective agency of art. By deploying an experimental and iterative approach to testing, creating, engaging with and displaying artistic ephemera and documentation, the exhibition set the table for the enactment of radical hospitality and generosity. That enactment is one which is attuned to the performative, relational and sensuous processes of the alimentary in art, its relation to the everyday and its entanglement in the political economy of survival in a globalising world.

Marnie Badham and Francis Maravillas
Curators

<https://bruisedfood.wordpress.com/>

List of Works and Artist Biographies

“The only rock we eat”

Keg de Souza with Lucien Alperstein
Keg de Souza is an artist who lives and works on unceded Gadigal land in Sydney and uses mediums such as; temporary architecture, food, mapping and dialogical projects to explore the poetics and politics of space. This investigation of social and spatial environments is influenced by formal training in architecture and experiences of radical spaces through squatting and organising. Keg creates site and situation specific projects with people, with an emphasis on knowledge exchange. These often manifest as temporary architectures that become framing devices to host pedagogical platforms, centring voices that are often marginalised, for learning about place.

Lucien Alperstein (Adelaide, Born Sydney), a scientist working across microbiology, genetics, food waste, fermentation and science and technology studies. Lucien is interested in traditional and modern use of food and food technologies, and has worked for and collaborated with artists, restaurants, news outlets, breweries, educational and art institutions and festivals.

Masala Mix: Opening the Anglo-Indian Tiffin, Rhett D’Costa

Born in Bombay, Rhett D’Costa migrated to Australia at an early age. His practice led research draws on his hybrid background of British, Australian and Indian cultures and its ongoing relationship to colonial and post-colonial theory. Rhett’s most recent pan-disciplinary projects have centered on

the ‘right to belong’, exploring the role of resilience and optimism in the intersecting areas of migration, multiculturalism, identity, nationalism and belonging. His research has focused on ideas connected to culturally composite ethnicities, mixed race communities and the porosity of place centring around the Asia-Pacific region.

Rice (Hunger, Inc.), Elia Nurvista

Elia Nurvista is an Indonesian artist whose practice focuses on food production and distribution and its broader social and historical implications. Food in various forms — from the planting of crops, to the act of eating and the sharing of recipes — Nurvista’s entry point to exploring issues of economics, labour, politics, culture and gender. Her practice is also concerned with the intersection between food and commodities, and their relationship to colonialism, economic and political power, and status. She runs Bakudapan, a food study group that undertakes community and research projects, and her social research forms the background of her individual projects, often incorporating video or mural painting and audience interaction.

Careful Whispers, with the Autonomous Sensory Meridian Orchestra, Stephen Loo

Stephen Loo is Professor of Design at UNSW. For more than 25 years, Stephen has researched, taught and practiced in the transdisciplinary nexus of art, architecture,

design, philosophy, performance and science. He has published widely on biophilosophy, posthumanist ethics, ecological humanities and experimental digital thinking. Recent books include *Deleuze and Architecture* (2012) and *Poetic Biopolitics* (2016) and is currently working on *Speculative Ethologies* (2019 with Dr Undine Sellbach). Of Chinese Malaysian Portuguese heritage, with a childhood in Kuala Lumpur, Stephen is a part of the South East Asian food diaspora which are spread across Australia as he carries his family recipes and food practices with him.

Bruised: Art Action and Ecology in Asia
Curated by Helen Rayment with Thao Nguyen
RMIT Gallery, 12 April – 1 June 2019

Curator, RMIT Galleries
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Gallery hours: Monday–Friday 11-5, Thursday 11-7,
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