



# START OF the Season

DEBORAH ISKANDAR  
COMMEMORATES THE START  
OF THE 2018 ART FAIR CIRCUIT  
WITH SINGAPORE ART WEEK

The first stop in the art circuit in Asia is always Singapore Art Week, held in January. Most of the galleries that participated in Art Stage this year were regional galleries from Asia and of course the Singapore-based international Opera Gallery. However, Art Stage wasn't the only interesting art venue, as I visited well-curated exhibitions at Gilman Barracks. In fact, many of the Gilman Barracks galleries chose not to participate in Art Stage this year, focusing on their home turf instead. The most notable events at Gilman were held at ShanghART and Chan + Nori Gallery.

Art Stage Singapore 2018 featured established and upcoming artists from Asia and all over the globe. Since currents in the art world are ever-changing, this eventful weekend is always an excellent opportunity to enrich and expand one's art knowledge. This year, the aim of the event was to strengthen the Southeast Asian art market. A departure from the usual gallery showcase was a selling exhibition by the Tiroche De Leon collection. Tiroche de Leon is actually an investment fund, which was established to collect, promote, share, and ultimately sell works in their collection. They have Indonesian artists such as Nyoman Masriadi,

Agus Suwage and Eko Nugroho, among others, in their collection. Masriadi is a Balinese artist who uses influences from his cultural heritage to display various caricatural characters such as soldiers, super heroes, comic figures or athletes. The Tiroche collection had one of his earlier pieces, "Untitled" from 1998. This mixed media artwork depicts a surreal mythological creature with wings and a human face on a multi-coloured background. Rich with motifs, it resembles a grotesque combination of a bestial angel and a human. It was interesting to be able to compare this early work from 1998 with a more recent 2014 work to see how he has expanded and developed.

Gillman Barracks chose to showcase performance art, such as "Transactions of Hollows", a live performance by Melati Suryodarmo at ShanghART. Melati, an Indonesian-born artist based in Germany, features a combination of elements from the physical world and visual art, addressing themes of identity, politics and the relationship between the body and its environment. During her performance, the audience was invited to stay in the space while Melati was shooting arrows across the room.

One of my favourite exhibitions during Art Week was without a doubt Melati's solo exhibition, "Timoribus" at ShanghART, which I thought was a good representation of her multidisciplinary approach to art, since it includes

a wide selection of works and mediums from videography and photography to durational performance. "Timoribus" means "fear" in Latin, and through a highly physical and even absurd performance, Melati examines the feeling of fear in relation to lived reality and personal experiences, compared to the messages conveyed by the mainstream media.

Another artwork which caught my eye at Gillman Barracks was Papermoon Puppet by a former theatre performer and illustrator, Maria Tri Sulistyani, and her visual artist husband, Iwan Effendi. Papermoon Puppet is a unique concept which mixes performance art and world-renowned puppetry traditions from Indonesia, creating works that imaginatively explore questions about society and identity.



"Perfect Stranger", by Singaporean artist Dawn Ng at Chan + Hori Gallery, also attracted my attention, with an installation transforming the gallery into a soft, undulating sea of colour. Initially meant as private messages from a soon-to-be-mother to her unborn daughter, the 48 sheets spread on the floor offered the public an immersive experience. The confessions, questions, poems, lists and jokes appealed to each of us differently, making it a very intimate artwork.

In conclusion, Singapore Art Week 2018 was a promising start for art this year by offering an enriching experience of performance and visual art, from photography to puppets and immersive installations. I am already looking forward to the next art fairs and to what else this year will bring in terms of art and creativity.

1 Melati Suryodarmo, TIMORIBUS, Melati Suryodarmo Solo Exhibition 2018, ShanghART Gallery Singapore

2 Dawn Ng exhibition under Chan + Hori Contemporary Gallery at Gillman Barracks, Perfect Stranger

3 Papermoon Puppet, Pak Wi.

4 I Nyoman Masriadi, UNTITLED, 1998.

Their performance was accompanied by a talk from the creators about the values and way of life of Indonesian people. I appreciated two works in particular, "Pak Wi" (2017), made of acrylic, pencil, leather and wood on canvas, and "Chronicle of Love" (2017), made of pencil and coffee stains on paper. The story of "Pak Wi" is particularly touching as it documents the romance of Pak Wi, who was sent to study in the Soviet Union in the 1960s. As a result of the turbulence and violence in Indonesia, he was unable to return to Indonesia. He promised his fiancée he would not marry, and although he remained in exile for 40 years, he

kept his promise. His fiancée, however, did go on to marry and raise a family. This artwork reflects the poignancy of this true story and their meeting 40 years later.

Deborah Iskandar is Principal of ISA Advisory, which advises clients on buying and selling art, and building collections. An expert on Indonesian and international art, she has more than 20 years of experience in Southeast Asia, heading both Sotheby's and Christie's Indonesia during her career before establishing ISA Art Advisory in 2013. She is also the Founder of Indonesian Luxury, the definitive online resource for Indonesians looking to acquire, build and style their luxury homes.

ISA Art Advisory  
Jl. Wijaya Timur Raya No.12  
Jakarta 12170 Indonesia  
tel: +6221 723 3905 e-mail: enquiries@isaartadvisory.com