

Exhibition of the month

FX Harsono: Testimonies



The history man Harsono's work bears witness to Indonesia's political upheavals

★★★★★

Singapore Art Museum Until 9 May

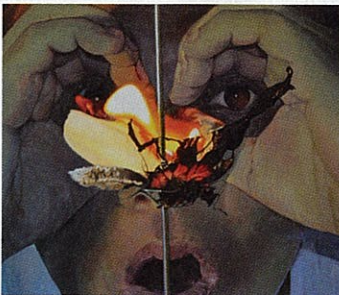
If you are unfamiliar with contemporary Indonesian history, you might be slightly confused upon entering FX Harsono's exhibit at SAM. A gun is displayed in a wooden crate, and multitudes of bottle flies are pinned onto a white canvas dinner-table setting with preserved butterflies secured on ceramic plates. You're not walking into a taxidermist's workplace; rather this exhibition serves as a retrospective of the artist's work starting from 1975, the year that Harsono and other Indonesian art rebels took on the task of redefining an indigenous art that broke away from accepted Western traditions of painting and sculpture, creating 'democratised' conceptual works that became vehicles for protest.

Harsono was at the forefront of the *Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru* (New Art Movement) of the '70s, in which artists struggled to work within the bounds of a repressive political climate that ensured Indonesian art remained depoliticised. 'Testimonies' traces the evolution of the artist's work from that era – its pieces illustrating the face of a nation oppressed under the Suharto regime – via works created post-May 1998, the beginning of the Asian economic crisis, which saw brutal riots targeting the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia, right through to those following Suharto's step down from power. Departing from earlier themes of political protest, Harsono

makes himself and his personal identity – more accurately as an Indonesian of Chinese descent – as the subject matter.

His journey to uncover his personal identity reveals that the self is intrinsically linked to the political environment in which it's depicted. 'Rewriting the Erased', an installation and performance video, projects Harsono sitting at a table in a darkened room. He repeatedly writes his name in Chinese characters with an ink brush, after which the artist neatly arranges the pieces of paper on the floor until there is no space left. What Harsono tries to recover is the 'Erased' – under Suharto's regime, various government policies aimed to fully integrate Chinese immigrants into Indonesian society by insisting that Chinese names be changed to Indonesian-sounding ones.

The artist's work reveals a technical ability – many of his works adopt a grid-like system that lays out objects in a meticulously ordered fashion, and his sculptures are arranged with painstaking attention to detail. Evading stylistic characterisation, Harsono's works range from performance art to documentary filmmaking. As much a history lesson as it is an exhibition, this retrospective offers a valuable opportunity to view the changing landscape of Indonesia's political, social and cultural history from the point of view of a seminal artist who has left an indelible mark on Indonesian society. ZR



'Kuleropong (Watching the Wound)'

Exhibitions

How to use the listings

This section consists of the month's exhibitions at fine-art museums and galleries, listed on a rotating basis. For historical, cultural and science museums, see Around Town, Museums.

* Denotes an event we particularly recommend.
▶ Before a day denotes a closing date; after a day denotes a starting date.

How to be listed

Listings must arrive in writing by the **Monday five weeks** before publication. We need the following details: address, phone number, nearest MRT, dates, times, prices and details of the event. Listings can be sent by post or emailed to listings@timeoutsingapore.com. Listings are free but, as space is limited, inclusion is not guaranteed. For Events and News, go to TimeOutSingapore.com.

Galleries

Art Retreat

#01-45/47 Ubi Techpark Lobby C, 10 Ubi Crescent (6749 0880). ☎ *Eunos or Aljunied. Tue-Sat 11am-6pm.*

Indonesian Pictures by European Artists

This exhibition of paintings depicts Indonesian landscapes and people by Indo-European artists from the first half of the last century. ▶29 May.

Collectors Contemporary

#01-03 Petro Centre, 5 Jln Kilang Barat (6878 0103, www.collectors.com.sg). ☎ *Redhill. Tue-Sat 11am-7pm.*

* **Dirty Pretty Things** Working out of his studios in New York and California, Russell Young thinks big and works big, leaning towards an eye-catching larger-than-life format to re-imagine iconic figures from history and pop culture. ▶22 Apr.

d'art Studio

#02-03 Blenheim Court, Wessex Estate, 5 Westbourne Rd (6479 7906, www.d-art-studio.com.sg). ☎ *Buona Vista. Mon-Sat & public holidays 11am-6pm; first, second and third Sun of every month 1.30-6pm.*

Water Play Artist Dick Lim combines bold sketches and acrylic washes to depict everything from koi carp swimming in ponds to women doing laundry by the river. 1 ▶30 Apr.

Fill-Your-Walls Gallery

#04-02, 21 Tanjong Pagar Rd (6222 1667, www.fill-your-walls.com). ☎ *Tanjong Pagar. Thu-Tue 10am-1pm.*

Critics' picks



Collectors Contemporary: Pop culture icons portrayed afresh in 'Dirty Pretty Things'. See Galleries.



The Luxe Art Museum: Han Sai Por makes organic forms that represent our ever-changing landscape and the horrors that it tolerates. See Galleries.



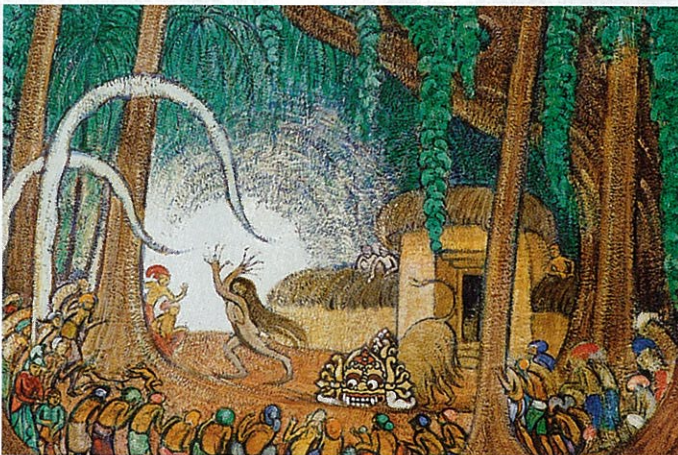
Utterly Art: Get lost in nostalgia, technology and social commentary in 'Mixed Signals'. See Galleries.

I Am a Kampung Boy Heavily influenced by the stylised aesthetics of poster and graffiti art, Zak Yeo Zhixiong's vibrant, large-scale paintings reinterpret vital milestones in the artist's life. ▶18 Apr.

The Luxe Art Museum

#02-01 The Luxe, 6 Handy Rd (6338 2234, www.theluxe.sg). ☎ *Dhoby Ghaut. Tue-Sun 11am-7pm.*

* **The Changing Landscape** Cultural Medallion winner Han Sai Por, known for



Where the wild things are Nieuwenkamp's 'Barong Dance' at Art Retreat