

# Gotong Royong

Community spirit in contemporary  
southeast Asian art

Curated by Ellya Gunawan



24 February - 6 April 2024

**MEDIA KIT**



Anang Saptoto | 1982

Dian Suci Rahmawati | 1985

Fefia Suh | 1998

Kadek Dwi Darmawan | 1996

Kide Baharudin | 1990

Kusofiyah Nibuesa | 1992

Mangku Muriati | 1967

Sakinah Alatas | 1994

# MEDIA RELEASE

**SYDNEY, 20 JANUARY 2024** 16albermarle Project Space is delighted to announce *Gotong Royong: Community spirit in contemporary southeast Asian art*, an exhibition exploring and celebrating the enduring cultural concept of ‘gotong royong,’ a term rooted in ancient customs of the Malay Archipelago, where collaborative efforts symbolise the collective spirit of cultural identity.

Derived from the Javanese words gotong (“work”) and royong (“together”), the term traces its origins to age-old customs where individuals collaborated in communal efforts, fulfilling social obligations within their community. This cultural concept has profound significance across the diverse ethnic groups of the Malay Archipelago, spanning nations like Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, southern Thailand and the Philippines. *Gotong Royong: Community spirit in contemporary southeast Asian art* features articulate expressions of communal work and mutual exchange through the diverse artworks of eight contemporary artists from Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand. Featuring painting, textile installation, sculpture, ceramics, photography and prints, the exhibition spans awareness of narratives of women in domestic life, nostalgia for past history and landscapes, the need for environmental preservation, connections through traditional activities, various religious and spiritual practices, mythical creatures and an overview of daily life in the kampung, or village.

From Mangku Muriati’s painting addressing religious duties and ethical leadership during the pandemic in Bali, while maintaining the relevance of centuries-old Kamasan style painting, to Sakinah Alatas’ feminine approach, narrating the intricate stories of women in childbirth and family life through the lens of traditional Islamic principles, and Dian Suci’s religious practices in daily life, exploring her faith background in modern society, the exhibition offers a contemporary perspective on religion and spirituality.

Fefia Suh explores community spirit through integrating the playful traditional game Mancala into her sculptural ceramics, highlighting the practice of give and take in society. Kadek Dwi Darmawan merges mythical Balinese folk creatures with modern aesthetic iconography, while Anang Saptoto’s banner paintings and collaborative photographs come out of his project *Pari*, in which he and other artists worked with farmers outside Yogyakarta during Covid lockdown, to sell their produce to families within the city — gotong royong in practice. Simultaneously, Kusofiyah Nibuesa illustrates traditional life through the community market in her hometown Patani. Using printmaking techniques and textile designs, she presents the coexistence of different ethnicities in a harmonious, multicultural community in Thailand. Malaysian artist Kide Baharudin brings his childhood town, Kuala Pilah, to life through his vivid colours’ paintings. He captures the essence of traditional kampung scenes and the nostalgia of old-fashioned Malaysian pastimes, depicting the lively hustle and bustle of everyday life in their close-knit society.

The exhibition unfolds like a symphony, with each artist contributing a unique note to the collective melody. The artists seamlessly integrate traditional techniques with contemporary concerns, embodying the dynamic nature of southeast Asian art. *Gotong Royong: Community spirit in contemporary southeast Asian art* invites viewers to traverse the rich tapestry of southeast Asian art — a space where tradition and modernity converge, prompting thoughtful reflections on the evolving identity of the region in the face of globalisation and other contemporary challenges. The exhibition encourages introspection about one’s role within the collective and how one can actively contribute to the practice of ‘gotong royong’ in their community.

## Media Enquiries

John Cruthers  
+61 0433 020 237  
john@16albermarle.com



Anang Saptoto, *Customers 4.0: Credit demon cayenne pepper* 2020, photographic print on poster paper, 72 x 53 cm



Dian Suci, *Ageming ati (Soul appearance)* 2018, painting on hijab fabric, installation variable dimensions



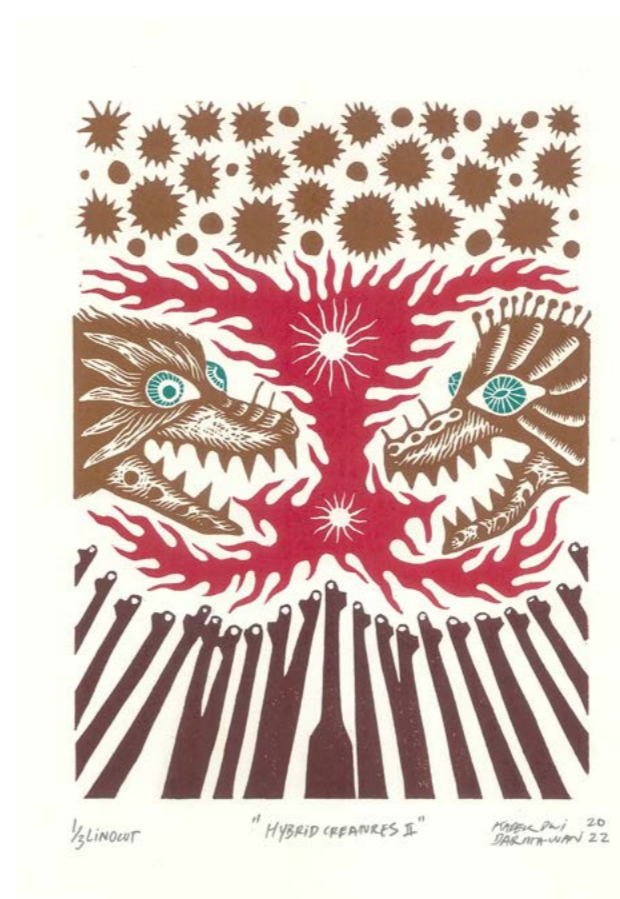
Sakinah Alatas, *Imagining what I couldn't see* 2022, mix yarn with manual and machine tufting, 220 x 170 cm



Kide Baharudin, (top) *Beceghabih (Chit - chatting)* 2024, acrylic on canvas, 92 x 92 cm  
(bottom) *Hulu hala (Chaos)* 2024, acrylic on canvas, 92 x 92 cm



Mangku Muriati, *Cremation ceremony during pandemic 19 2021*, traditional watercolour on canvas, 81 x 125 cm



Kadek Dwi Darmawan, (from top left) *Hybrid creatures I, III, II, IV* 2022, linocut print on paper, 29.7 x 21 cm



Fefia Suh, *The entire of what you need, what you have* 2022, cowry shells and stoneware, eight parts, 42.5 x 48 x 7 cm overall



Fefia Suh, *A pleasant reunion* 2020, stoneware, four parts, dimensions variable



Anang Saptoto, *Bitter melon thrives farmer groups prosper 2024*, banner painting on canvas and batik patchwork, 150 x 200 cm



Anang Saptoto, *Gondokusuman district farmer group mapping project and pare farming exploration 2024*, banner painting on canvas and batik patchwork, 150 x 200 cm



# Artist Biographies

## **Anang Saptoto**

Anang Saptoto is a multi-disciplinary artist, designer and activist based in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. He holds degrees from the Academy of Design Vision and the Indonesian Institute of the Arts, with a focus on Visual Communication Design and Television. Embracing collaboration as a central tenet of his practice, Saptoto's work is deeply rooted in addressing ecological concerns and fostering social change. Through his art, he seeks to challenge existing paradigms and explore new avenues for transformation. Actively involved in environmental and human rights movements, Saptoto collaborates extensively with various communities and demographics, including children, schools, people with disabilities and social organisations. He believes in the power of direct interaction, solidarity-building and collective action as essential elements of artistic expression. Since 2020, Saptoto has served as the co-director of Ruang MES 56, an artist-led collective in Yogyakarta. His individual and collaborative work has been showcased extensively across various platforms and galleries worldwide.

## **Dian Suci Rahmuwati**

Dian Suci Rahmawati is a Yogyakarta-based multidisciplinary artist who works across painting, video and installation. She holds a Bachelor of Architecture from the Indonesia Islamic University, Yogyakarta and her work revolves around the themes of domesticity, challenging the entwined narratives of women's politics, authoritarianism, fascism, patriarchy and capitalism. She has held solo and group exhibitions across Indonesia and Singapore and her work has been in biennales and art fairs including Biennale Jogja XV, Art Jakarta and Art Taipei. She was a recipient of the Gold Winner Award at the UOB Painting of the Year (2021) and Debra Porch Award at the Australia Council for the Arts (2020). In 2023, she was an artist-in-residence at Artisan, Queensland, where she explored Australian native bush plants to create natural dye colours and eco-friendly paints.

## **Fefia Suh**

Fefia Suh currently lives and works between Bandung and Jakarta. Her sculptural installations explore the intersection of her personal and collective experiences, investigating the realms of familiarity and surrealism. Suh received a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the Bandung Institute of Technology and is particularly interested in investigating the role of women in the creative industries and their impact on history. She held a solo exhibition at LouBelle Space in Bandung and has participated in various group shows across Indonesia and the Netherlands, including notable exhibitions at Fragment Space, Lawangwangi Creative Space, Museum Macan and Eiffel Gebouw.

## **Kadek Dwi Darmawan**

Kadek Dwi Darmawan is an Indonesian-born artist based in Bali. His work explores the interplay of reality and fantasy through graphic arts, including prints and installations. As a self-taught print-maker, Darmawan draws inspiration from his passion for comics and animations, infusing his creations with experimental creatures and monsters. His work highlights Balinese traditions and values within contemporary social contexts and offers a unique expression of cultural identity. Darmawan has exhibited extensively in galleries and art fairs across Indonesia, including art spaces such as Purga Art Space, Titik Dua, Lawangwangi Creative Space, HornBill Art Space, Ruang Arta Derau and Art Jakarta.

## **Kide Baharudin**

Kide Baharudin is a Malaysian artist based in Kuala Lumpur. His painting and mixed-media work feature elements of pop culture and the social dynamics of his homeland. Baharudin is particularly drawn to the rich traditions of the Malay, Chinese and Indian communities, as well as the charming aesthetics of kampung houses and the lifestyle they represent. He holds a Bachelor of Art and Design (Honours) from Mara University of Technology, Malaysia. Kide has participated in many local and international group shows spanning Malaysia, Indonesia, China and Australia. Notable solo exhibitions include 'Kide & The Moolah Affairs' at CIMB Art & Soul (2023), 'Kulu Kilir' at Galeri Puteh (2023), 'Sa-Hari Hari' at Segaris Art Center (2021) and 'Pe'el: Vans x Kide' at Hin Bus Depot (2020). In 2017, he was the winner of the Vans Custom Culture Asia Award. Kide Baharudin is represented by Galeri Puteh in Malaysia.

## **Kusofiyah Nibuesa**

Born in Thailand, Kusofiyah Nibuesa is a multimedia artist based in Patani. She explores themes of cross-cultural interaction, religion and community through her crafted paper relief sculptures. She utilises a variety of techniques including paper cutting, printing, weaving, hole-punching and stencilling, often based on photographs she has taken. Nibuesa brings to life vibrant depictions of everyday life in Thailand, going beyond tourist representations. She has exhibited nationally and internationally, with notable exhibitions include 'Living the Days' at Yu-Hsiu Museum of Art, Nantou, Taiwan (2023), 'Multiculturalism' at BACC, Bangkok, Thailand (2022), 'Other Possible Worlds' at Delmar Gallery, Sydney, Australia (2022), 'Muslimah Collective: Shaping Geographies, Art / Women / Southeast Asia' at Gajah Gallery, Singapore (2019) and Biennale Jogja XV Equator 5 (2019). She was the recipient of 10th White Elephant Art Award at BACC, Bangkok (2021), Silver Medal Award, 34th Silpa Bhirasri Exhibition of Contemporary Art (2017) and Young Artist Awards by the Royal Thai Consulate-General in Los Angeles (2015).

## **Mangku Muriati**

Mangku Muriati is an Indonesian artist based in Bali. She earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts from Udayana University, Bali, Indonesia. Growing up in a family deeply rooted in the arts, she is the daughter of the renowned Kamasan painter Mangku Mura. Following in her father's footsteps, she became both an artist and a priest (pemangku) in her local temple. Her work extends the Kamasan painting style by the introduction of contemporary narratives. She explores the reinterpretation of traditional knowledge from religious texts and reimagines stories to make them relevant to contemporary issues. Muriati not only keeps the Kamasan painting tradition alive but also imparts her knowledge to the next generation of Balinese artists. Among her honoured students is the artist Citra Sasmita, who contributes to preserving and celebrating Kamasan art. Muriati's work has been exhibited in group and solo exhibitions across Java and Bali, Indonesia, and she is represented in the Australian Museum, Sydney and Ibsen Museum, Denmark.

## **Sakinah Alatas**

Sakinah Alatas is an Indonesian-born artist based in Perth who explores themes of identity and freedom. Through installation and textile media, she weaves personal stories into her artwork, shedding light on the complex facets of womanhood, particularly in the roles of wife and mother. Her work challenges traditional gender norms within the institution of marriage, probing the barriers and limitations that women often face in navigating married life. Alatas graduated from Jakarta State University of Visual Arts and she is a member of art collectives ICFAM (Indonesian Contemporary Fiber Art Movement) and Buka Warung Jakarta. She has participated in artist-in-residence programs at Cemeti (2018) and Ace House (2016) in Yogyakarta. Her work has been exhibited in solo and group exhibitions across Indonesia, Australia, Thailand and India. In 2022, she won the Blake 67th Emerging Art Prize (NSW, Australia) and her work has been collected in the Casula Powerhouse, Australia.

# Exhibition Personnel

## Ellya Gunawan | Curator

Ellya Gunawan is an art practitioner and curator based in Gadigal Land, Sydney. With Indonesian-Chinese heritage, her practice revolves around the themes of identity, belonging, preservation and representation of Asian cultural narratives, particularly those of the southeast Asia region. She is interested in exploring cross-cultural topics, the in-between cultures and the dynamic interplay between tradition and contemporary expression. Through her knowledge, she aims to create thought-provoking exhibitions that engage social and cultural discourse, fostering a deeper understanding of the ever-evolving contemporary landscape. Gunawan holds a BVA in screen arts from the Sydney College of the Arts and a Master of Curating and Cultural Leadership from the University of New South Wales. She has previously been involved in exhibitions such as *Ghost from the Past: Ipeh Nur & Enka Komariah* (2023) at 16albermarle Project Space and *Silent Threads* (2024) at Redbase Art.

## Shuxia Chen | Advisor

Dr Shuxia Chen is a historian and curator of Chinese art and photography. Her research concerns cultural networks, amateur practice, art collectives, and reciprocal relations between people and objects. Chen has been working on three research projects related to photography from the Sinophone world, including “A Home for Photography Learning: The Friday Salon, 1977-1980” (2018-2024), “The Grey Zone: Amateur Photography Groups in 1980s Beijing” (2020-), and “Wayfaring: Photography in 1950s-1980s Taiwan” (with Dr Olivier Krischer, 2021-), each of which comprises an exhibition and scholarly publication. Chen is the inaugural curator of the Chau Chak Wing Museum's China Gallery, and a lecturer in the Master's of Curating and Cultural Leadership, at the University of New South Wales School of Art & Design.

## 16albermarle Project Space | Exhibition Venue

Established in October 2019 by Australian art adviser/collector/curator John Cruthers, 16albermarle presents contemporary southeast Asian art in an intimate space in inner-city Sydney. Our aim is to connect Australian audiences to southeast Asia through art and encourage their deeper engagement with the countries of the region. Alongside this cultural agenda, we also promote the artists showing here and sell the artworks to return funds to the artists, most of whom live from the sale of their work. Our exhibitions have included artists and artworks from Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia and the Philippines. The focus is on younger and mid-career artists with established practices and reputations in their home countries whose work has not been seen in Australia. Exhibitions are accompanied by public programs, catalogues and educational materials for upper secondary and tertiary students. School visits are encouraged. Artworks are available to view online and all catalogues can be downloaded for free.



Kusofiyah Nibuesa, *The cart* 2021, assembled cut paper, 120 x 98 cm



Fefia Suh's work *The entire of what you need, what you have* 2022 is a ceramic installation for playing the game Mancala, which is very popular through southeast Asia.

# Gotong Royong

Community spirit in contemporary  
southeast Asian art

Curated by Ellya Gunawan

24 February - 6 April 2024

16albermarle Project Space

16 Albermarle Street Newtown NSW 2042

Thu - Sat, 11am - 5pm, or by appointment