



MERDEKA, THE LONESOME CLUB
MINSTREL KUIK



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A digital catalogue for “Merdeka, The Lonesome Club”, a solo exhibition by Minstrel Kuik at Richard Koh Fine Art, Blk 47 Malan Road, #01-26 Gillman Barracks, Singapore 109444 from 10-25 May 2019.



Artist Statement by Minstrel Kuik

March 2019, Kajang

BACKGROUND

Merdeka, the Lonesome Club is originally the title of a photographic proposal that has gradually grown into a major thread that runs through my creative process. In the beginning, it was an attempt to address a personal malaise resulted from the difficulties for having to adapt to the new-found homeland.

Throughout the years, invisible boundaries that divide different social strata in the Malaysian society have slowly revealed themselves as a magmatic state of historical entanglement, whereas I have yet to learn how to fight against the sense of alienation that paralyzes the individual and slowly kills the desire of freedom.

Sharing the same etymological root from the Sanskrit, merdeka exists both in Indonesian and Malay lexicon to signify free or independent. Under the setting of the anti-colonial movements in both countries during the Dutch and British colonization, the word served as an effective slogan for the anti-colonialists to incite the people to rise up for their rights.

In the history of Malaysia, the Merdeka Day marks the independence of Malaya from the British in August 31st 1957. Born with its unsettled multi-racial tension, the young nation has had to forge its own destiny ever since by learning to think and act by itself. Whether or not it learns from its mistake, that will ultimately change the course of the history and our personal stories.

Meanwhile, we have to bear the solitude of living together.

Picture taken by Minstrel Kuik during the peaceful Himpunan Kebangkitan Rakyat 2013 (2013 People's Uprising Rally) organised by Pakatan Rakyat at Merdeka Stadium, Kuala Lumpur, 12th January 2013

CREATIVE TIMELINE

Since the end of 2017, I have started to focus my practice on developing a body of fabric works called *Concerning the Political Space in Art*, by using the residue of a photographic assignment that I gave to my graphic design students. Flags of different political parties collected during the 13th general election in 2013 are deconstructed and reconstructed under a string of actions such as tearing apart the fabric, ironing, layering, weaving, spacing, composing and sewing.

Prior to that, the traumatic experience of the 13th general election was transformed into a solo exhibition *After-Image: The One, the Many & the Unrepresentative* in August 2015, marking my first attempt to decipher how democracy and its representative system works. The following year was another solo exhibition *After-image: Living with the Ghosts in My House* in January 2016, which initiated my interest into the obscure connection between the perpetual internal power reshuffle of the controlling party and its ongoing racial policies.

At the same time, I was equally fascinated by the political rhetoric, strategy and tactic from my readings. What caught my eyes were two state apparatus: the Merdeka Day and the general election, working hand in hand to consolidate the power of a dominant-party state. When the racial tension in Malaysia escalated into a bloody riot in May 13, 1969 (three days after the 3rd general election on 10th May), the National Operations Council that served as the caretaker government decided to use the Merdeka Day as a tool to reinforce national unity and nation-building, thus setting the tradition of appointing a Merdeka theme each year since 1970. And the quinquennial general election has become a major bargaining chip between different communal parties within the political coalition in power, or worst, a dysfunctional system that gerrymanders the election result.

Within a span of three general elections, i.e. 2008, 2013 and 2015, on the one hand the collective emotion in the Malaysian society has reached its peak of outburst, on the other hand the political game has also become nastier. In a state of national schizophrenia, it is crucial for the individual to carve out a personal space where thinking about the nation is not at the expense of one's sanity and safety.

If freedom in our mind is a muscle, working continuously on it will but to strengthen its resilience. During that lengthy process to deal with the feeling of powerlessness, I have acquired a new visual vocabulary in my artistic practice by learning to work with material. But what really matters in the making, same as then and now, is to reconsider the relations between art and politics, and eventually, to build a firewall vis-à-vis the long-lasting effects that the political turmoil in a society exercises on the psyche of the individual.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

A decade after the independence of Malaya since 1957, the Young Turks in the United Malay National Organization (UMNO) have become impatient for taking over the power from the older leaders that represented a class of aristocrat elites in the Malay society. They accused the leaders, especially the Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman, of losing his touch with the majority of the Malay society and failing to protect their privilege. When the Alliance Party composed of three major communal parties in Malaysia, i.e. UMNO, MCA (Malaysian Chinese Association) and MIC (Malaysian Indian Congress) lost more than half of the popular vote due to the challenge of the opposition parties in the 3rd general election in 10 May 1969, the outburst of political tension transformed into the racial riot in 13 May 1969 – a pivotal change in shaping the course of history in Malaysia.

Due to the incident, the Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman was forced to resign in 1970, while the Parliament was suspended between 1969-1971. In 1971, the government headed by Tun Razak implemented the New Economic Policy (NEP) with the objective to protect the Ketuanan Melayu (Malay dominance) through a series of affirmative actions. In 1973, a new political coalition that was composed of up to 14 communal parties called the Barisan National (the National Front) replaced the Alliance Party, as a result, reinforcing stronger racial policies in Malaysia until its defeat in the 14th general election in 2018.



Picture taken by the artist during a pre-Kajang by-election campaign by the politician Anwar Ibrahim at the Catholic church of the Holy Family in Kajang, 16th February 2014. The banner on the stage says: Merdeka Rakyat Melalui Reformasi, which means to free the people through reformation.



Picture taken by the artist during the Bersih 4.0 Rally in Kuala Lumpur on the 29th August 2015, documenting a Malay woman sitting on the pavement in colour-coordinated outfit for the rally, enjoying her strawberry.

In 1970, Muhibbah and Perpaduan (Goodwill and Unity) was proposed as the first Merdeka theme after the May 13th racial riot erupted in 1969, thus marking the beginning of a national tradition. When the slogan Masyarakat Adil (Fair Society) was chosen in 1972, it is not exaggerating to say that it was a well-thought riposte to the numerous heated debates that reigned the political arena in the 1970's between the ruling government and its critics, regarding how to distribute the wealth of the country in order to fight against the social and economic disparity. However, race and class are two interchangeable terms in Malaysian politics.

By going through the long list of the Merdeka themes since its beginning, the concept of masyarakat (society) was the main preoccupation of the young nation during the first half of the 1970's, e.g. 1971, Masyarakat Progresif (Progressive Society); 1972, Masyarakat Adil (Fair Society); 1973, Masyarakat Berkebudayaan Malaysian (A Society with Malaysian Culture); 1975, Masyarakat Berdikari (A Self-reliant Society). And it has never reappeared since.

By mapping the Merdeka themes with the Prime Ministers of successive tenures, we can easily trace a vivid outline of the course of Malaysian history under its leaders who embody different political ambitions and figures of Father. When the past, present and future of the nation are deeply intertwined and rooted in the national narratives, how is it possible for the individual from any other ethnic or societal minorities to transcend the barrier?

HOW DO WE LIVE TOGETHER?

Sharing the space with other female passengers in the women's coach to each of our workplace in the early morning, I tried to combat my drowsiness by waking up the curiosity towards my surrounding.

In their respective working attire, perfumes, make-ups and weekday body, women of all ages conduct themselves on automatic pilot, making dreaming and self-regulating possible in a tiny public space like the wagon. Those who arrive aboard earlier have no problem of getting a comfortable seat, while other latecomers will have to accommodate themselves to the situation by squeezing their way through the crowd, and finding another female body or a bar to lean on.

It was too early to read the news or to enjoy a personal playlist. All we actually wanted was to stay in our respective cocoon for a longer sleep. But if in a morning my curiosity managed to stir up my senses, I would open my eyes to look at the women's coach, and wondered what made me part of them, and them part of me. Such experience has created a string of emotional loop in me, starting from a sense of detachment to an intimate communion with these morning strangers.

Yes, we are the working women in the morning train. Then why don't I belong? Isolation and protection, what a strange match! In my day dream, I see a society playing dressing up, while a thin sweat is more than enough to cover the naked emperor. Not sure for how long I can still feel alone and free. Then I overheard a conversation. Feel free to add another meaning to merdeka, a voice says.

What about being awake?







Detail of the artwork





Pictures taken in her home-studio by the artist, 29th December 2017, and published a year later on her blog <https://minstrelkuik.blogspot.com/> in December 2018.



Merdeka, the Lonesome Club

Essay by Shyan a.k.a Art KL-itique
April 2019, Kuala Lumpur

Most people interpret art through its figurative expression and emotional resonance. Historians interpret art through its symbols and provenance. Contemporary art enthusiasts interpret art through its market value and wow factor. National governments interpret art through its cultural capital. As self-styled experts and proponents of visual language, critics interpret art through all the factors mentioned above, and then some. Yet, one is likely to be stumped at the first glance, when confronted with Minstrel's wall hangings. No doubt it is art, but what criteria should one refer to enjoy it? Or, to judge it?

This essay follows a train of thought that I have cultivated as an art viewer. First, I engage the art exhibit's material ('The Flags'). Then, I imagine the context or background where the art was made ('The Domestic'). Empathizing with the artist's expressive choices is next, which includes thinking about the creative gestures, its precedents, and visually striking components of the artwork ('The Artist's Language'). Finally, I read the artist's statement, that usually describes a theme that forms a baseline in looking at the artist's creations ('The Merdeka'). Onto the essay, then...

THE FLAGS

"Yet a flag has no real significance for peaceful uses."
– H.G. Wells, *The World of William Clissold*, Book the Fifth:
The Story of the Clissolds—The Next Phase, 1926

In a Christmas Eve blog post titled "Happy New Year from the Studio!", Minstrel Kuik offers a preview of her recent artmaking efforts while working with flags. Blue and green creations fit a rectangular format, its heavily-altered and multi-layered qualities, stand out among the simple tools that made it – a scissors, an iron, a blade, a needle. The artist's studio, is also, the artist's home.

A week later, *Tidying Up with Marie Kondo* was released globally on Netflix, the commercial-free video streaming service. In one demonstration of folding a t-shirt, the home organization guru proclaims that the act of folding "... is not about making it compact, but to communicate love & gratitude for its continuous support of your body..." It was about this time, that I started to write this essay.

Despite one's political sympathies, it is difficult to imagine oneself in the act of folding a flag. The political party flag is a symbol, that appeals to a group of people whom share a similar ideology. The participative Malaysian citizen recognizes each party's logo, which is emblazoned on its flag. During the country's general election, the electorate vote for their preferred candidate, by checking a box next to the logo of the candidate's represented political party. In the weeks leading up to that moment, fervent propaganda campaigns would have embedded the logos & colours, into the Malaysian peoples' consciousness.

"To vote, an individual learns to negotiate with a larger group of people to form a government under a democratic setting. To protest, we make our voice heard by participating in a long process of building a future interwoven between our personal life and the place we call home."

Minstrel wrote the above statement referring to a body of work titled *After-image: Living with the Ghosts in My House*, which was exhibited in consecutive solo exhibitions in 2015 (Run Amok Gallery, Penang) and 2016 (Wei-Ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur). It was during this time that the artist first tried her hand at manipulating political paraphernalia, after being disheartened with the outcome of the Malaysian 13th General Election. Small flag poles are bent out of shape, plastic hand-shaped clappers are strung together with a cord plaited from banners, and flags are folded into triangles and illuminated from above with nylon lights. The political paraphernalia is no longer easily recognizable, and the internalized images become distorted.

Minstrel's approach towards undesirable things is not to avoid or silence, but to confront and re-contextualize. A rather literal interpretation of the artist's intent is evident in the 2016 work *Domesticated Politics*, where nine images of the artist folding & ironing flags are printed on fabric, then hung on a clothes line high above the gallery. What exactly, is left out to dry? In Malaysia, discussions about local politics take place in mamaks, kopitiams, and Facebook, but do heated complaints about incompetent politicians, mean anything when one is back home alone? How does a Malaysian identify as politically self-aware, when the dominant (and socially acceptable) ideology, is a democracy anchored on ethnic interests and power divisions?



Installation view.
Domesticated Politics, 2016, UV inkjet on fabrics, 17.5 x 30" each, set of 9, Collection of Singapore Art Museum.

THE DOMESTIC

Minstrel's current home of 7 years is located in Kajang, a relatively old city in the urban state of Selangor, where she lives with her partner in an apartment building. She is well-travelled – growing up in a small town along the west coast of the peninsular, then residing and studying in Taiwan and France for 12 years, before returning to Kuala Lumpur. In 2014, her submission titled *16 Sept 1963*, won the UOB Painting of the Year (Malaysia) award. *16 Sept 1963* is a charcoal drawing made with reference to an inverted photograph, of cheering women students celebrating the formation of Malaysia. Not long after winning the award, Minstrel stopped teaching art, and ventured to be a full-time artist. As the artist's studio is also the artist's home, Minstrel spends a good deal of time at home. Domestic chores, one would assume, is the responsibility of the homemaker.

It is a surprise to learn, that Minstrel does not have a sewing machine, and all the effort that goes into these exhibits are done entirely by hand. To the artist, sewing is an essential skill in life, and it is unfortunate that this laborious activity is traditionally known as woman's work. Her artmaking approach here, proposes to embody this identity of a woman, as assigned to her by societal norms. This embodied approach, has always informed Minstrel's art practice, as one can trace in her oeuvre to-date. In the ongoing series *Mer.rily Mer.rily Mer.rily Mer.rily*, the artist's hand literally reaches into the pictorial space of her photographs. Otherwise, the artist's viewpoint is clearly presented, like in the snapshots of a construction site taken from her apartment window, which are part of the splendid *Kuala Lumpur Trilogy* photobooks.

Via the manipulation of fabric, Minstrel seems to have discovered another approach, that effectively supports her claimed identity as a woman artist. During her childhood, she followed her mother to the town's morning market, where textile vendors pile large rolls of cloth underneath a tent. Cloth is bought and made into new dresses just in time for the Chinese New Year celebrations. A girl is taught how to dress from a young age, and one's dressing is an expression of this gender identity and society's expectations that come with it. This experience may have impressed the love of fabric onto Minstrel, who recalls too her interest in sewing complex dresses for her dolls when she was a girl.



Old photograph of Minstrel Kuik (right) and her sister (left) wearing dresses made by her mother for the Chinese New Year.

THE ARTIST'S LANGUAGE

Women remain a regular subject matter. In this exhibition, *Alliance of Hope - First Female Deputy Prime Minister* names a milestone that was not celebrated amidst the busy transition of power. On the other hand, *Tuntut Semula Ruang Kita (Reclaim Our Space)!* depicts a scene from the Women's March in March 2018, a rally aimed at reclaiming women's space in the public. Constructed from the inverted images of a few photographs, the artist sedulously recreates an energetic composition. Banners and placards complement the women's faces, yet it is the careful copying of their clothes, that indicates which elements of the picture gets preferential treatment.

"Where language falls short though, clothes might speak. Ideas, we languidly suppose, are to be found in books and poems, visualised in buildings and paintings, expositied in philosophical propositions and mathematical deductions. They are taught in classrooms; expressed in language, number and diagram. Much trickier to accept is that clothes might also be understood as forms of thought, reflections and meditations as articulate as any poem or equation. What if the world could open up to us with the tug of a thread, its mysteries disentangling like a frayed hemline? What if clothes were not simply reflective of personality, indicative of our banal preferences for grey over green, but more deeply imprinted with the ways that human beings have lived: a material record of our experiences and an expression of our ambition? What if we could understand the world in the perfect geometry of a notched lapel, the orderly measures of a pleated skirt, the stilled, skin-warmed perfection of a circlet of pearls?"

- Shahida Bahri, What do clothes say?, essay published on Aeon, 19 May 2016. <https://aeon.co/essays/why-does-philosophy-hold-clothes-in-such-low-regard>

In this body of work, one can interpret that Minstrel's choice of medium, serves as a counterpoint to the patriarchal nature of Malaysian politics and policy-making. Some may observe the lack of flags that represent Barisan Nasional's component parties, or if the red & white cloths reference the single-party politics of Singapore, the exhibition location. As it is with Minstrel's works, one should not read into readymade symbols, but re-imagine it as metaphorical plays on the chosen material. The artist takes her material cues, by observing the use of cloth through women's dressing. Luxurious runway fashion is glimpsed through magazines and websites; observations up close occur in more common places, such as in the commuter train ferrying citizens from the suburban into Kuala Lumpur City Centre.

In Malaysia, many Malay women are garbed in traditional baju kurung with a tudung. Societal expectation and personal choice are muddled together, when one decides what to wear, and how to wear it. Commuting in the train, the artist observes the multitude of ways that one can transform a simple swathe of cloth, via folding, pleating, tucking, etc. These tiny acts of self-expression, become markers of one's identity. As British academic Shahida Bahri writes, "...clothes are an acknowledgment of our alertness to life; we signal it in the deft and quirky ways we fix a belt, hang a tie, pin our

jewellery.” After the artist told me about her observations, I have also spent time away from my mobile to glance at the dressing of fellow commuters in the train. Being a man, I have to be careful with my gazing; Nonetheless, this is an activity that has significantly helped my appreciation of Minstrel’s approach in these exhibits.

Is a fold & tuck to hide excess cloth, or create a form? Are pleats meant to recall hair, or a narrowness that indicate the natural curves of one’s body? In Minstrel’s art output, these gestures are exaggerated to great visual effect. Cuts in the cloth define shapes, while torn or shredded sections depict raggedness. Triangular lapels signify a dignified collar in one work, yet also appear as cheeky tongues of fire, or like dogeared bookmarks in another. Sewn pockets become literal containers of meaning, although there is nothing inside the pockets. Some cloth is stretched tightly, while some small bunches are bundled together like low pile carpets. Some bits sway along with the air around it. Frayed ends recall the spoken expression ‘tying up the loose ends’. Knots & plaits interweave to create new textures and forms. Threads are purposefully extracted to create crumpled bands, the tightening effect familiar to anyone who has worn shorts with a rubber band fastener.

A persistent theme remains, of political flags as symbols of people sharing a similar ideology. Certain works play more explicitly on these characteristics. Ironed folds distort the moon in Kelantan 3, at the centre of the Islamic party flag. A ragtag collection of forms and textures, aptly describes *Parti Sosialis Malaysia, A Social Organization*. Finely shredded and heavily crumpled white cloth do not obfuscate the rocket, as the central image in *Democratic Action Party, The Progressives 1*. Political coalitions by nature, offer less cohesiveness in its ideological identity, and consequentially its flags project more strongly too as endgame positions. The incumbent is *Alliance of Hope – Putrajaya; Barisan National, The Predecessor*. The Prime Minister of Malaysia, remains the same person.

THE MERDEKA

As the popular saying goes, history is written by the victors. Our comprehension of facts & figures, always begin with the mainstream. In five decades since the 13 May 1969 racial riots in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysian citizens are periodically reminded about a power hierarchy, that has since manifested itself as a fact of life. In her art output, Minstrel notes the two state apparatuses that reinforces this political rhetoric – the five-yearly General Elections, and the annual Merdeka Day (independence day) celebrations. Capturing scenes from public rallies calling for electoral reforms, and manipulating political flags, appear to be the artistic strategy addressing the former. For the latter, the artist revisits Merdeka themes from the 1970s, as a way to trace the political climate in a time when affirmative actions was initiated. In her artist’s statement, Minstrel writes, “By mapping

the Merdeka themes with the Prime Ministers of successive tenures, we can easily trace a vivid outline of the course of Malaysian history under its leaders who embody different political ambitions and figures of Father. When the past, present and future of the nation are deeply intertwined and rooted in the national narratives, how is it possible for the individual from any other ethnic or societal minorities to transcend the barrier?”

Minstrel surprises viewers via the use of familiar materials, images, and presentation formats. This is apparent in the newer, large-scale creations which titles reference Merdeka themes from the 1970s. As a rectangular wall hanging, one notices the large swathes of colour or pattern that anchor the presentation. Positive and negative space are demarcated on the picture plane, with purposefully blank or colour-filled areas. Care is accorded to contrast and balance, where shimmering silver cut-outs or transparent gauze-like cloths, serve as equalizing factors. Many textured elements are brought to the fore, starting with the wooden grids that make up the frame, to plaits and knots and layered fabric.

Casting aside the deeply symbolic political flags, store-bought cloth is utilized instead. The general colour schemes still refer intentionally to political parties, yet the different qualities of individual materials, allow for the construction of pictorial objects that are visually arresting. In 1972, *Masyarakat Adil (Fair Society)*, the juxtaposition of two leopard prints (one featuring loops & chains!) with a blue cross-hatched pattern, black & white floral & geometrical designs, different batiks, then overlaid with white chiffon, presents an astounding confluence of visual forms resulting in a jaw-dropping work of art. Indulging oneself in the artist’s language is especially rewarding, when one tracks the points where materials meet in the artwork, which translates as ironical humour, an aspect of Minstrel’s oeuvre which is seldom mentioned.

The girl who followed her mother to the cloth seller in the morning market, now chooses and buys her fabrics from multi-storey shops operated by Indian emigrants, and home-based makers during her travels. Each piece of material has its origin story. Can we tease out Malaysia’s origin story, from a deeper reading into Merdeka themes? How differently will Singaporeans and Malaysians view these exhibits, given the audience members’ personal histories?

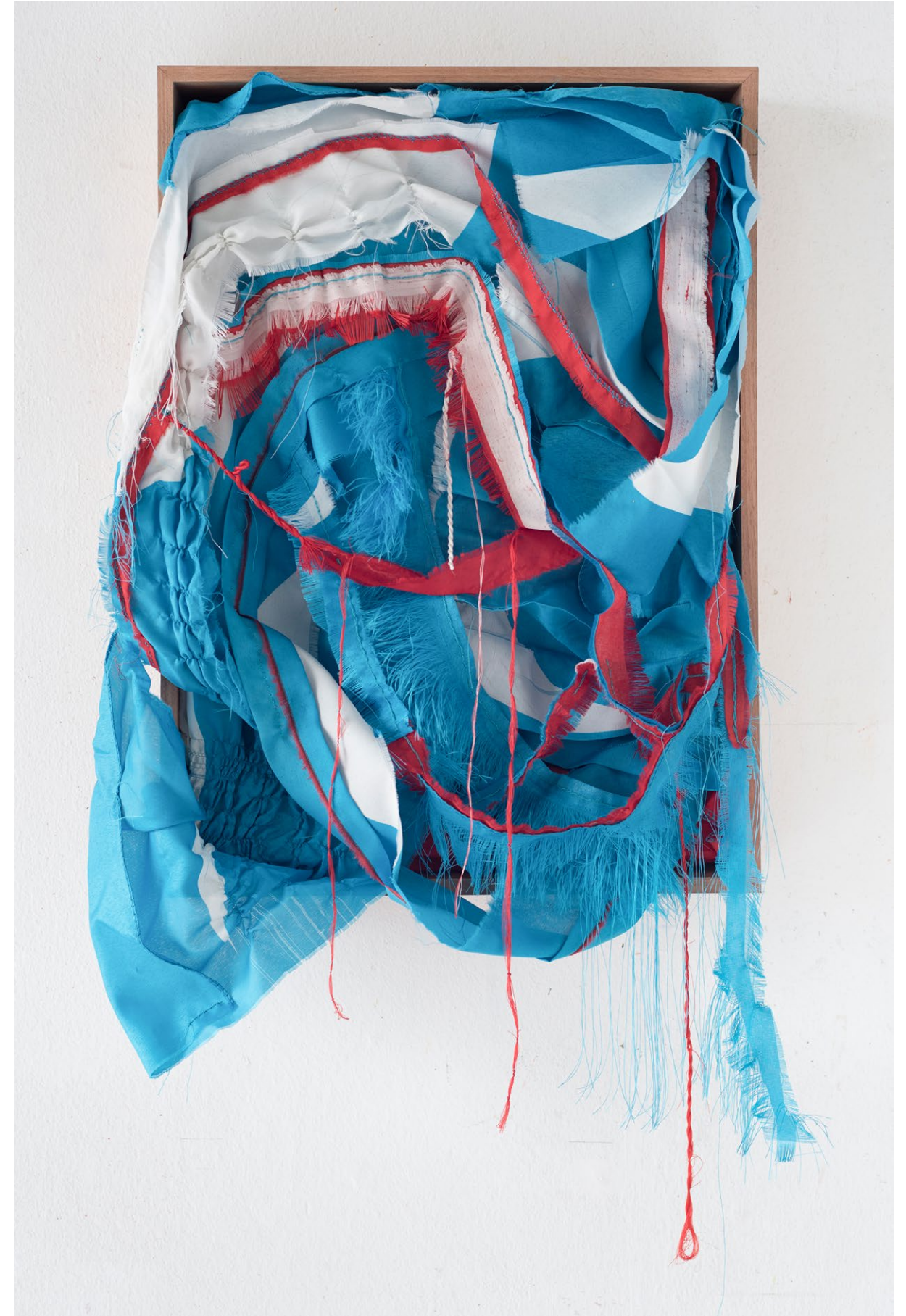
In this body of work, which medium grabs attention, it is convenient and simplistic to categorize the artist by convention. "Cloth works", "flag series", say the market. The gallery's decision to hold this solo presentation exactly one year after Malaysia's landmark 14th General Election, incidentally adds a "political art" label to the exhibits. That its exhibition location is in Singapore, a country governed by a single political party for the past 54 years, appears contentious on the surface. Nonetheless, a certain privilege avails itself to those, who can be present in person to appreciate Minstrel Kuik's works in person.

What does it mean, for a homemaker to interpret the symbols in a flag hung outside? What ideas are internalized, in the artist's choice of visual language? How do calls of affirmative action and national unity in the 1970s, affect one's self identification as a Malaysian woman riding a commuter train in 2010s?

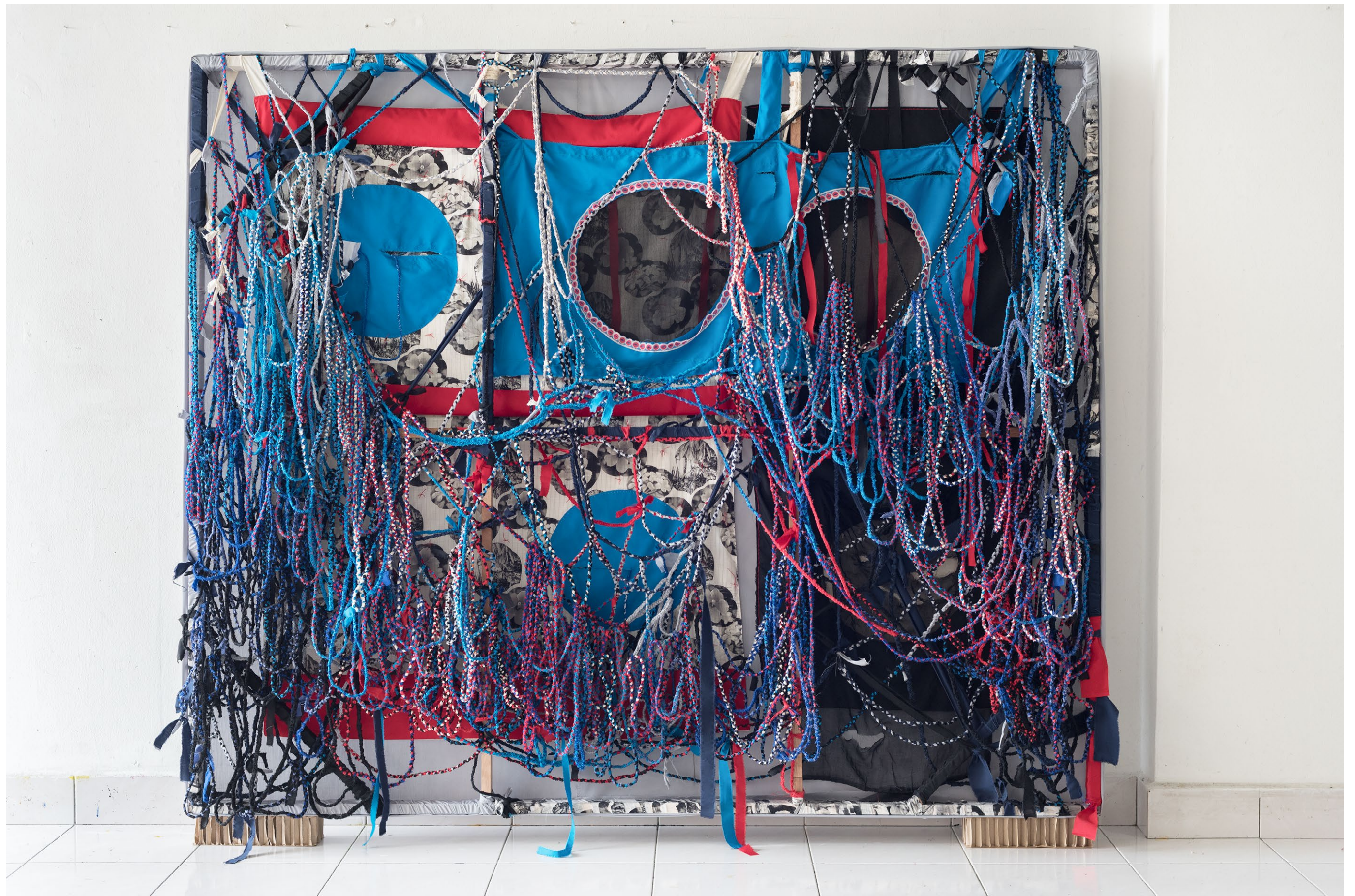
These are questions worth pondering upon, as everyone's personal history comes to bear, when appreciating these works. Look closely, and you may find that real fabric is light and malleable, unlike the solid sculptural "realism" celebrated in "realistic" oil paintings. Stare long, and you may wonder whether these flags were even made in Malaysia, the only place where its printed symbols has political currency. Linger around, and a creeping curiosity will lead the viewer, to begin noticing the frames & pins that hold the work together. Such observations heighten the criticality of one's looking, and it is this looking which will eventually help us judge, and enjoy, these works. Welcome to the club.



WORKS



Alliance of Hope, First Female Deputy Prime Minister
Mixed media (political party flags, pins and thread), 46 x 33.5 x 6.5 cm, 2019



1970, *Muhibbah dan Perpaduan (Goodwill and Unity)*, from 9 May 2018 to 13 May 1969
Mixed media (wooden structure, fabrics, threads, pins), 150 x 180 x 6.5 cm, 2018
Michelangelo and Lourdes Samson Collection



People's Justice Party, Kajang Move
Mixed media (political party flags, pins and thread), 46 x 33.5 x 6.5 cm, 2019



Alliance of Hope, Port Dickson Move
Mixed media (political party flags, pins and thread), 46 x 33.5 x 6.5 cm, 2019



Alliance of Hope, Putrajaya
Mixed media (political party flags, pins and thread), 46 x 33.5 x 6.5 cm, 2019



1971, *Masyarakat Progresif (Progressive Society)*, from *Malay Feudalism to Malay Nationalism*
Mixed media (wooden structure, fabrics, threads and pins), 150 x 180 x 6.5 cm, 2019
Private Collection, Singapore



Barisan Nasional, A Spiral Space
Mixed media (political party flags, pins and thread), 46 x 33.5 x 6.5 cm, 2019



Barisan National, Window Blind 1
Mixed media (political party flags, pins and thread), 88 x 64 x 6.5 cm, 2018



Barisan National, Window Blind 2
Mixed media (political party flags, pins and thread), 88 x 64 x 6.5 cm, 2018



Pan Malaysian Islamic Party, Kelantan 3
Mixed media (political party flags, pins and thread), 46 x 33.5 x 6.5 cm, 2018
Private Collection, Kuala Lumpur



Barisan Nasional, A Divided Space
Mixed media (political party flags, pins and thread), 46 x 33.5 x 6.5 cm, 2018
Private Collection, Kuala Lumpur



Democratic Action Party, The Decor
Mixed media (political party flags, pins and thread), 46 x 33.5 x 6.5 cm, 2018
Private collection, Kuala Lumpur



Parti Sosialis Malaysia, A Social Organization
Mixed media (political party flags, pins and thread), 88 x 123 x 6.5 cm, 2018



Democratic Action Party, The Progressives 1
Mixed media (political party flags, pins and thread), 88 x 123 x 6.5 cm, 2018



1972, Masyarakat Adil (Fair Society), The Social Contract Versus The Origin Myth
Mixed media (wooden structure, fabrics, threads, pins), 150 x 180 x 6.5 cm, 2019



Democratic Action Party, A Historical Space 1
Mixed media (political party flags, pins and thread), 46 x 63.5 x 6.5 cm, 2018



Pan Malaysian Islamic Party, A Rural Space 2
Mixed media (political party flags, pins and thread), 46 x 33.5 x 6.5 cm, 2019



Barisan National, The Predecessor
Mixed media (political party flags, pins and thread), 46 x 63.5 x 6.5 cm, 2019



Installation view of *Concerning the Political Space in Art*

PAN Malaysian Islamic Party, A Swirling Fold 1; People's Justice Party, The Secretary; Democratic Action Party, The Party's Bride; Barisan Nasional, A Nested Space 1; Barisan Nasional, A Twofold Space 1; PAN Malaysian Islamic Party, A Rural Space 1; PAN Malaysian Islamic Party, Kelantan 1; PAN Malaysian Islamic Party, Kelantan 2

Mixed media (political party flags, pins and thread), dimension variable, 2018
Linda Neo and Albert Lim Collection



Concerning the Political Space in Art
Pan Malaysian Islamic Party, A Swirling Fold 1
Mixed media (political party flags, pins and thread), 46 x 63.5 x 6.5 cm, 2018



Concerning the Political Space in Art
People's Justice Party, The Secretary
 Mixed media (political party flags, pins and thread), 46 x 33.5 x 65 cm, 2018



Concerning the Political Space in Art
Democratic Action Party, The Party's Bride
 Mixed media (political party flags, pins and thread), 46 x 33.5 x 6.5 cm, 2018



Concerning the Political Space in Art
 Pan Malaysian Islamic Party, Kelantan 2
 Mixed media (political party flags, pins and thread), 46 x 33.5 x 6.5 cm, 2018



Concerning the Political Space in Art
 Pan Malaysian Islamic Party, Kelantan 1
 Mixed media (political party flags, pins and thread), 46 x 33.5 x 6.5 cm, 2018



Concerning the Political Space in Art
 Pan Malaysian Islamic Party, A Rural Space 1
 Mixed media (political party flags, pins and thread), 46 x 33.5 x 6.5 cm, 2018



Concerning the Political Space in Art
 Barisan National, A Nested Space 1
 Mixed media (political party flags, pins and thread), 46 x 33.5 x 6.5 cm, 2018



Concerning the Political Space in Art
 Barisan Nasional, A Twofold Space 1
 Mixed media (political party flags, pins and thread), 46 x 63.5 x 6.5 cm, 2018



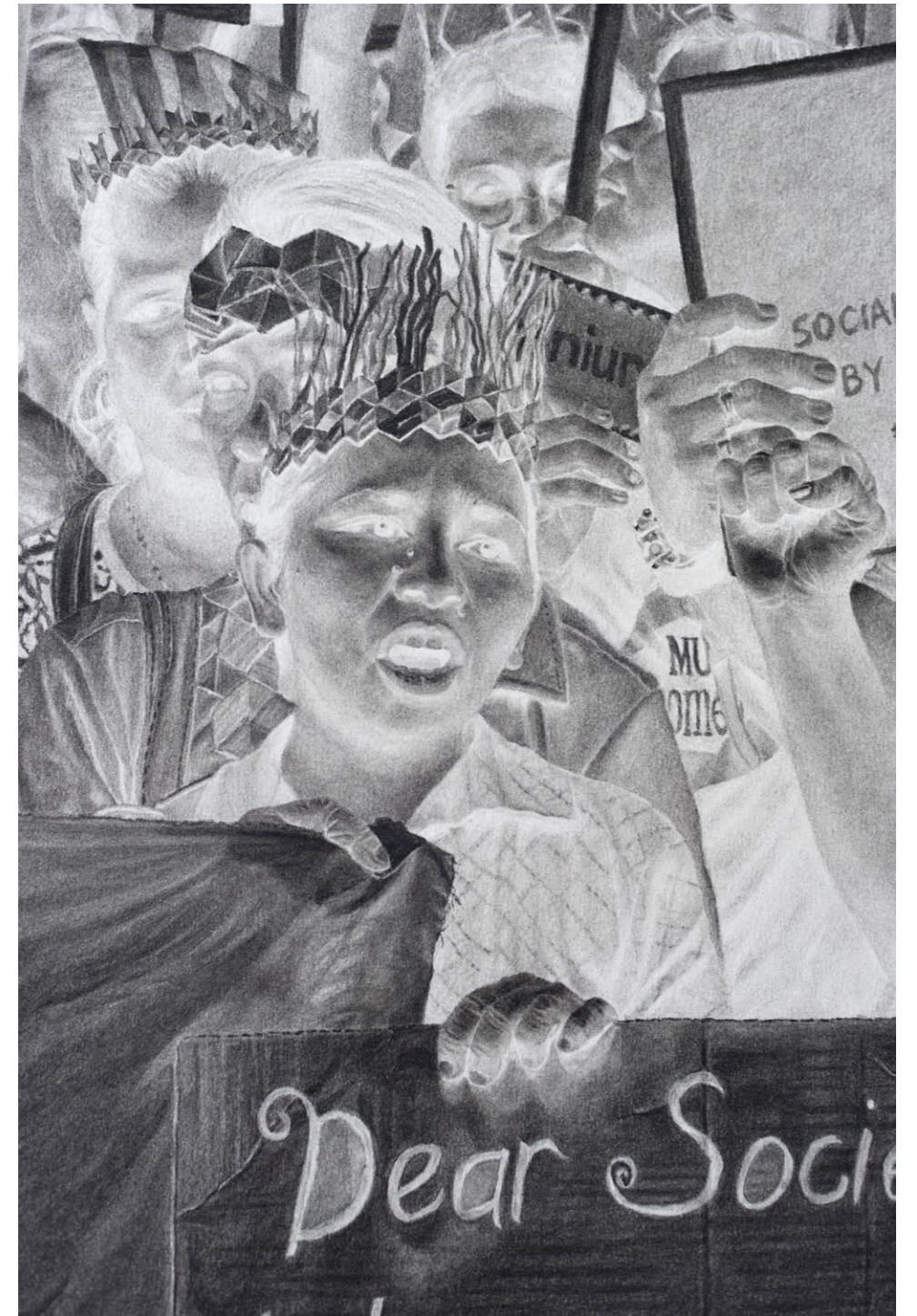
Details of *Tuntut Semula Ruang Kita (Reclaim Our Space)!*
Charcoal on paper, 100 x 150 cm, 2019



Tuntut Semula Ruang Kita (Reclaim Our Space)!
Charcoal on paper, 100 x 150 cm, 2019



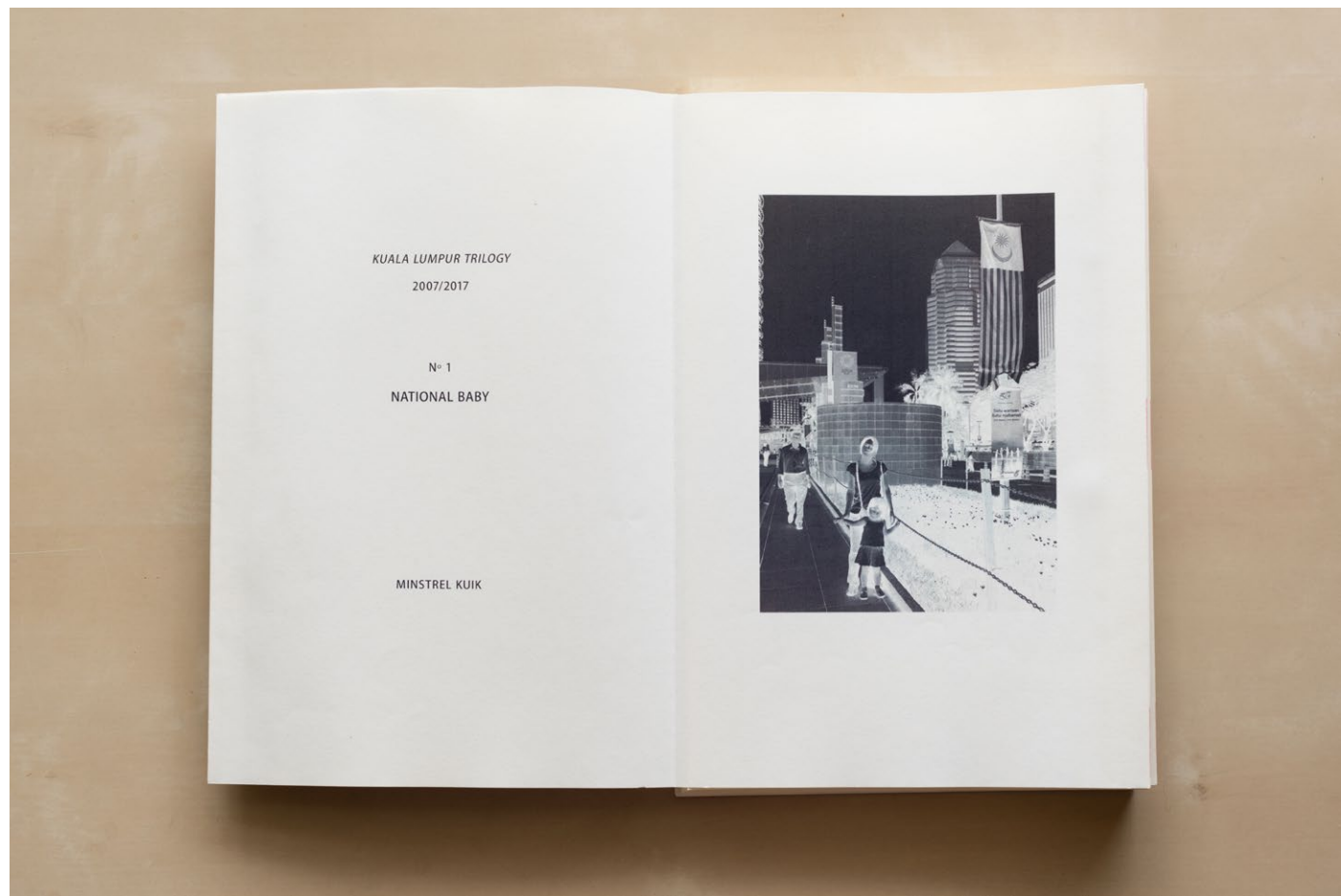
Details of *Tuntut Semula Ruang Kita (Reclaim Our Space)!*
Charcoal on paper, 100 x 150 cm, 2019



Details of *Tuntut Semula Ruang Kita (Reclaim Our Space)!*
Charcoal on paper, 100 x 150 cm, 2019



Kuala Lumpur Trilogy 2007/2017,
Volume 1, 未來的主人翁 *National Baby*; Volume 2, 訪客 *Guestroom*; Volume 3, 重遊 *Today in Memory*
Fujixerox colour laser printing on acid-free drawing paper, 30 x 20 x 3 cm each (3 editions + 2 AP), 2007/2017







Details of *Kuala Lumpur Trilogy 2007/2017, Volume 3, 重游 Today in Memory*
 Fujixerox colour laser printing on acid-free drawing paper, 30 x 20 x 3 cm (3 editions + 2 AP), 2007/2017



Minstrel Kuik, 2016. Image courtesy of Liew Kwai Fei.

MINSTREL KUIK

Minstrel Kuik (b. 1976, Malaysia), is a Chinese Malaysian born in Pantai Remis. After earning a Bachelor of Fine Art degree in Taiwan, she obtained her master's degree in photography in Arles, France. As a social actor, Kuik continues to undergo tensions coming from different ideologies, social bounds, identities and interests. Not only these daily experiences help position herself between the political society and the authorities, they also shape her artistic practice. With a belief that the private space is the major battlefield of ideological, political and economic interests, she explores art as a historical trajectory where the personal mutation through the process of reading, thinking, making and revisiting is traceable and reflective, and hopefully, transformative.

MINSTREL KUIK

Education

- 2006
- Master of Fine Arts in photography with felicitation of jury, Ecole Nationale Supérieure de la Photographie of Arles, France
- 2003
- Diploma of Fine Arts with Honors, specialized in photography, Ecole des Beaux-Arts de Versailles, France
- 1999
- Bachelor of Fine Arts (Hons) in Western Painting, Department of Fine Arts, National Taiwan Normal University, Taiwan
- 1994
- Certificate of Unified Examination, Yik Ching High School, Malaysia

Solo Exhibition

- 2019
- Merdeka, the Lonesome Club*, Richard Koh Fine Art, Singapore
- 2018
- Old Wave Brings Empty Shells*, The Cross Art Projects, Sydney
- 2017
- P for Place*, Lumenvisum, Hong Kong
- 2016
- After-image: Living with the Ghosts in My House*, Wei-ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 2015
- After-Image: The One, the Many & the Unrepresentative*, Run Amok Gallery, Penang, Malaysia
- A Kneeling Posture*, Art Stage, Singapore
- 2008
- See The Water*, Alliance Française at Lorong Guerney, The Gallery of Taylor’s University College, Help University, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 2003
- Does it burn?*, T’cha Gallery, Paris, France

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2019
- ART-staged: No Booth, Richard Koh Fine Art, Singapore
- Stories We Tell to Scare Ourselves With*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei, Taiwan
- 2018
- Againts the Day*, Our Artprojects, Kuala Lumpur
- ART STAGE Singapore, Richard Koh Fine Art, Singapore
- 2017
- Imagined Communities, Nationalism & Violence*, Rubber Factory, New York, USA
- We are here*, Richard Koh Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- Photography & Place*, Angkor Photography Festival, Cambodia
- Where Does the Future Get Made?*, Lishui Biennial Photography Festival, Lishui, China
- On Attachments and Unknowns*, Sa Sa Bassac, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

- Collective/Individuals, Urbanscapes*, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- Our Studio Selves*, Art Space, Sydney, Australia
- 2016
- The Immeasurable Here*, Outlet Gallery, Brooklyn, U.S.A
- The Past is Never Where You Think You Left it*, Wei-ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 2015
- Making Durian*, Run Amok Gallery, Penang, Malaysia
- Person(a)*, Black Box, Publika, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- My Story, My Strength*, Women’s Center for Change, George Town Festival, Penang, Malaysia
- Pause*, Photo Bangkok, BACC, Bangkok, Thailand
- Only A Fragment*, Richard Koh Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 2014
- Family Snaps – Photography in Southeast Asia*, Chiang Mai City Arts & Cultural Centre, Chiang Mai, Thailand
- 刻舟求剑 - Pulau Melayu - Lost & Found*, Lostgens’, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- Fall into The Sea to Become an Island*, George Town Festival, Run Amok Gallery, Penang Malaysia
- Eating Wind*, VT Artsalon, Taipei, Taiwan
- The Good Malaysian Woman*, All Women’s Action Society & Interpr8 Gallery, Map Publika, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- Women’s Voices-International Photography Exhibition 2014*, Soulangh Cultural Park, Tainan City, Taiwan
- My Country*, Shalini Ganendra Fine Art in cooperation with Louis K. Meisel Gallery, New York, USA
- 2013
- The Home Series*, Higashikawa Photo Festival, Higashikawa, Japan
- M for Malaise*, Magazin de Jouets, Arles, France
- Eating Wind*, Run Amok Gallery, Penang, Malaysia
- 2011
- Cross+scape, Asean-Korea Contemporary Media Art Exhibition*, Kumho Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea. Jeonbuk Museum of Art, JeonJu, Korea. GoEun Museum of Photography, Busan, Korea.
- Photoquai 2011*, Musée du quai Branly, Paris, France
- Review: KL, Datum Kuala Lumpur Architecture Festival*, Map, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- Tanah Ayeh*, Valentine Willie Fine Art and Selasar Sunaryo Art Space, Bandung, Indonesia

- 2010
- 3 Young Contemporaries*, Valentine Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur
- Through the Looking Glass*, The Annex, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; 2902 Gallery, Singapore
- 2009
- International Discoveries II*, FotoFest, Houston, USA
- Secured Area*, National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 2008
- Entry Points Community Project*, 1948 art space, Sri Kembangan New Village, Malaysia
- Out of Berlin, Pass the picture*, The Annex, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 2007
- Artsfest*, Cork Institute of Technology (CIT), Cork, Ireland
- Future Image*, Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design & Technology, Dublin, Ireland
- Out of Berlin, Pass the picture*, Goethe Institute, Berlin
- Sharing Space: Contemporary Photography of Malaysia & Japan*, Biennale of Kuala Lumpur International of Photography, The Annex, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- Photos Divers*, Festival of Levallois, Levallois, France
- 2006
- Work in Progress*, International Festival of Photography of Arles, Arles, France
- 1999
- Sales 0.99*, National Taiwan Normal University, Taipei, Taiwan

Awards

- 2015
- Regional Winner of one-month Fukuoka Asian Art Museum residency, collaboration between FAAM and UOB Painting of the Year
- 2014
- Winner of the UOB Painting of the Year for the Established Artist Category, Malaysia
- 2013
- Winner of the International Photographer Award, Higashikawa Photo Festival, Higashikawa, Japan
- 2010
- Short-listed for the Photoquai’s Residency for the project “Merdeka, The Lonesome Club”
- 2006
- Six-months scholarship by French Embassy in Malaysia for higher studies in France
- 1994-99
- Excellent academic performance for Overseas Chinese Students, National Taiwan Normal University, Taipei, Taiwan

Projects

- 2012-13
- 刻舟求剑 - Pulau Melayu - Lost & Found*, art project initiated by 4 Malaysian Chinese artists in order to engage more exchange and discussion
- 2007
- Future Image*, selected among 10 Asian emerging photographers to participate

digital photography workshop organized by Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), Ireland

- 2006-07
- Involved in glass sculpture and photography project conducted by American artist, Robert Wilson
- Publication in photographic magazine “Infra-mince” of Ecole Nationale Supérieure de la Photographie of Arles, France
- 2005
- Photographic documentation of renovation of Byrd Hoffman Watermill Foundation, New York,USA
- Involved in installation project of Brazilian resident graffiti artists Os Gemelos, Annual Watermill Center Benefit, New York, USA
- Photographic documentation of Summer Program 2005 of Byrd Hoffman Foundation Archives,including Robert Wilson’s rehearsals, site-specific installations, performances, conferences, etc

Private Collection

Linda Neo and Albert Lim Collection
Michelangelo and Lourdes Samson Collection

Public Collection

Singapore Art Museum, Singapore
Higashikawa International Photo Festival, Hokkaido, Japan
United Overseas Bank, Singapore





Richard Koh Fine Art has been in operation since 2005 and is regarded as a pioneer for introducing contemporary art to Malaysia and the region. Promoting an adventurous roster of emerging and established artists, the gallery regularly mounts exhibitions locally and abroad with a commitment to emerging practices and challenging media.

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