

Of Dreams and Contemplation: I am All but a Story

Selections from the Collection of Richard Koh

Private MUSEUM





Photo credit: Eiffel Chong

Richard Koh (b.1965, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia) is one of the leading gallerists in Southeast Asia with a broad range of experience and knowledge in the contemporary art markets. Koh founded Richard Koh Fine Art (RKFA) in 2005, with its first gallery space in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. RKFA now operates multiple gallery spaces across Singapore, Thailand, and Malaysia, and is regarded as a pioneer for introducing contemporary art to Southeast Asia and the region.

Richard Koh’s collecting journey began in the 1990s. Incredibly private and personal, his collection predominantly reflects his interests, experiences, and rumination of life and art. Known for his taste and insight, Koh also contributed to many of the region’s important private and public collections. Apart from his contributions to the arts, he is also an active fundraiser for various charities he holds in close regard.

A visionary, Koh established a prominent gallery in Gillman Barracks, aligning with the Singapore government’s vision of making it Asia’s leading arts destination. With strategic foresight, Koh has developed impactful programmes to promote local art and support emerging Southeast Asian artists. Under his guidance, the gallery has enabled many Southeast Asian artists to stage their first overseas exhibitions, showcasing their talent and launching them onto the global art stage. Richard Koh’s leadership has significantly contributed to the gallery’s success and the international recognition of these artists.

OF DREAMS AND CONTEMPLATION
I AM ALL BUT A STORY

SELECTIONS FROM
THE COLLECTION OF RICHARD KOH

Of Dreams and Contemplation: I am All but a Story
– *Selections from the Collection of Richard Koh*
©2025, The Private Museum Ltd
ISBN 978-981-94-1824-4
Published in Singapore

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This book is published in conjunction with the exhibition *Of Dreams and Contemplation: I am All but a Story – Selections from the Collection of Richard Koh* organised by The Private Museum Ltd, Singapore.

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PREFACE

The Private Museum kickstarts its annual programme 2025 with *Of Dreams and Contemplation: I am All but a Story – Selections from the Collection of Richard Koh*. This exhibition marks not just the beginning of a new year but a renewed celebration of artistic exploration and personal narratives, as seen through the introspective lens of one of Southeast Asia’s most influential voices in the art world.

In conjunction with Singapore Art Week 2025, this special exhibition holds particular significance, not only because it represents a continuation of Richard Koh’s first showcase with the museum in 2019, but also because it reflects the unique courage and vision of a gallerist willing to bare his personal side as a collector.

While the museum’s mission revolves around bringing forth private collections to the public, it’s rare for a gallerist to step into the spotlight as a collector. Gallerists are often seen as facilitators—amplifying the voices of artists and bridging the gap between artists and art collectors. Yet, in sharing his own personal collection, Richard invites us into a more intimate dimension of his relationship with art. This is not merely a display of artists he admires or has represented—it’s a reflection of his life, his memories, and the emotional landscapes that have shaped him.

When *Of Dreams and Contemplation* first debuted at our former home on Waterloo Street in 2019, it offered a curious glimpse into the mysterious world of Richard Koh. The monochromatic works, abstract compositions, and landscapes formed what he described as “landscapes of memory”. That exhibition stood out for its restraint, its quiet elegance, and the way it invited viewers to pause and reflect. It was an exploration of the quieter, contemplative side of collecting, presenting works not for their market value or fame, but for the personal resonance they held for Richard.

Building on the same foundation and fast-forward to 2025, *Of Dreams and Contemplation: I am*

All but a Story serves as a continuation of Richard’s visual diary—offering a reflective journey through his collection. Unlike a linear evolution, this exhibition once again reveals layers of personal meaning and narratives—one that intertwines works from different periods including pieces acquired decades ago. It is less about progression and more about revisiting, re-examining, and reinterpreting the stories that have shaped his decades-long journey as a collector.

Presented in the stately halls and rooms of the Osborne House, one of Singapore’s oldest colonial buildings, and now home to the museum, this second instalment allows us to reimagine his collection on an expanded scale. The historic space, with its centuries-old walls and storied past, offers a fascinating dialogue to the intimate gallery at Waterloo Street. Yet, even as the setting shifts, the essence of Richard’s collection remains deeply personal and rooted in his strikingly distinct perspective.

What makes this exhibition meaningful is Richard’s willingness to share not just his collection but the stories behind it. As a gallerist, Richard has spent decades championing Southeast Asian artists and shaping the region’s arts communities. He has built an international reputation as someone who connects artists with collectors—opening doors for them on a global stage. Yet, here he steps forward not as a dealer or mediator, but as a storyteller who simply loves everything that is art. Every work in his collection has its own narrative—a moment, an encounter, or a memory that made it meaningful to him.

His approach to collecting is refreshingly unpretentious. It doesn’t seek to impress with pedigree or scale; instead, it invites viewers to connect on a personal level. These are works chosen not for their external accolades, but for the stories they tell and the emotions they evoke. This boldness—to put forth a selection of works so

personal— is among the things I admire most about Richard. It is his commitment in sharing his love for art, and his display of authenticity—qualities that have also made him a significant contributor to the Southeast Asia’s art ecology. To share one’s private collection is to open oneself up to vulnerability, to take a peek into one’s private world. Richard does this with taste and artistic prowess—allowing us to see the humanity behind the collector and the dedication behind the gallerist.

For me, this project is particularly special, forged over nearly a decade of friendship and collaboration with Richard. His love for art is continuously infectious, and his insights have enriched every stage of the exhibition’s development. Through this exhibition, I have had the pleasure of working more closely with him, gaining deeper insight into his thought process behind collecting. The selection of over 50 works reflects his eclectic taste—striking a balance between themes of memory, emotion, and connection.

Throughout the exhibition, there emerges an underlying thread of humour, irony, and the absurdities of life—a dimension that offers a striking counterpoint to the otherwise contemplative nature of Richard Koh’s collection. These works challenge viewers to embrace the unexpected and to find joy and meaning in the unconventional. For Richard, art does not merely mirror life; it refracts it—bending reality in ways that reveal truths often hidden beneath the surface. Humour in the collection is not overt or exaggerated but nuanced—emerging in subtle juxtapositions, playful compositions, and the curious tension between the ordinary and the extraordinary.

This thematic layer speaks to Richard’s perspective on life and art as parallel journeys—each marked by moments of serendipity, contradiction, and delightful unpredictability. The collection features pieces that juxtapose the mundane with the surreal, inviting viewers to reconsider the boundaries between reality and imagination. A single work might evoke a quiet chuckle while simultaneously sparking a deeper reflection on life’s inherent paradoxes. This interplay of humour

and irony becomes a lens through which we can view not just the works on display but also the act of collecting itself—a pursuit often seen as serious and structured, yet one that, in Richard’s hands, becomes as spontaneous and irreverent as life itself.

By including works that celebrate these quirks and contradictions, Richard’s collection underscores the idea that art, like life, thrives on its ability to surprise, provoke, and inspire. In this way, the exhibition offers a reminder of the importance of embracing the absurdities that make life rich and meaningful. As we walk through the galleries, the pieces invite us to find parallels between our own experiences and the art on view, fostering connections that are as personal as they are profound. In the humour and irony of Richard’s collection, we are reminded that both life and art are best experienced with curiosity, openness, and a willingness to laugh along the way.

The title, *I am All but a Story*, encapsulates the essence of Richard’s philosophy as both a collector and a gallerist. He believes that every piece of art should tell a story—not just the artist’s story but also the collector’s. In his collection, we see not just the depth of modern and contemporary art, but also the journey of a man who has dedicated his life to fostering artistic dialogues. As we stand in the halls of Osborne House, surrounded by the mosaic of stories, I am struck by how much this exhibition invites us to reflect—not just on Richard’s journey but on our own. It challenges us to think about the stories we carry, the memories we preserve, and the connections we make through art.

Of Dreams and Contemplation once again serves as a compelling reminder of the enigmatic role Richard occupies in the art world. Defying conventional categorisation while blending realms that are often seen as distinct, Richard’s roles are not simply complementary; they form a complex and layered identity that mirrors the very essence of the themes in the show. His collection is more than a personal archive—it is an evolving narrative, stemmed from the dreams, memories, and relationships he has encountered in life and art. Much like the title suggests, the exhibition invites

us to reflect on the interplay between introspection and outward expression, revealing the profound yet often elusive connections between art, life, and the stories we choose to tell.

This exhibition was enhanced by the steadfast support of the National Arts Council, whose vote of confidence in this exhibition focusing on one’s collection serves a strong encouragement towards the work that we do. I would also like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to Richard Koh Fine Art and our exhibition partners—your efforts, especially during the busy holiday season, ensured that we could open this show in time for Singapore Art Week.

I wish to thank the incredible artists whose works fill this space with their stories, enriching the narrative of this exhibition and offering us new ways to dream, reflect, and connect. To the dedicated team at The Private Museum, your tireless commitment have been instrumental in bringing this vision to life.

Finally, on behalf of our founders, Daniel and Rachel Teo, as well as our board of directors,

I would like to thank Richard for trusting us with his collection and for us to collaborate once again. Your belief in The Private Museum’s mission to create meaningful artistic and cultural experiences inspires us to keep striving for excellence.

As we launch *Of Dreams and Contemplation: I am All but a Story*, this exhibition reminds us that art is not merely about the objects we see but about the stories they hold and the journeys they inspire. Thank you all for being part of this story.

For those visiting the exhibition, I hope it inspires you to begin your own journey of collecting or even to look at art with fresh eyes. Collecting is not merely about wealth or prestige; it’s about building relationships—with artists, with artworks, and with oneself. As Richard so aptly puts it, “Art, in any collection, should have its own story.”

Here is to the boldness of sharing, the beauty of collecting, and the power of art.

Aaron Teo
Associate Director
The Private Museum Singapore

FOREWORD

Of Dreams and Contemplation: I am All but a Story represents a deeply personal chapter in my journey as both a collector and a gallerist. It is a privilege to share this second presentation of my collection with The Private Museum, an intimate and reflective space that resonates with the essence of this exhibition. As with the show in 2019, this exhibition coincides with Singapore Art Week, a time when Singapore transforms into a vibrant nexus of artistic expression and cultural exchange.

Art collecting, for me, has always been a practice of introspection—a way to anchor fleeting moments, emotions, and experiences. The works featured here are not merely objects of aesthetic appreciation but are what I call “Landscapes of Memory.” They are imbued with stories, emotions, and connections that I have forged over the years in both my personal and professional spheres.

The title, *Of Dreams and Contemplation: I am All but a Story*, speaks of the dualities within these

pieces. They oscillate between the abstract and the tangible, the deeply personal and the universal, inviting viewers to form their own connections and interpretations. Each work reflects an aspect of my journey—through Southeast Asia and beyond—and captures the nuances of my relationships with life and the stories they tell.

It is with great gratitude that I acknowledge The Private Museum for their vision and collaboration in bringing this exhibition to life. I also extend my appreciation to the artists whose works have enriched my life and to the audience, whose curiosity and engagement breathe new meaning into this collection.

As you navigate this exhibition, I hope you find moments of connection and reflection that resonate with your own experiences. Art, after all, is a shared journey—one that transcends boundaries and allows us to dream, to contemplate, and to see ourselves as part of a larger story.

Richard Koh

Collector
Founder, Richard Koh Fine Art

RICHARD KOH

It can be said that the art of collecting mirrors the layered complexity of life itself. A collection, like life, is a mosaic of fragments—distinct yet interconnected pieces that together form an evolving narrative. Each item holds its own story, shaped by its origins, its creation, and the context in which it is placed. These stories, when assembled, reveal themes and patterns that echo the intertwining layers of experiences shaping a life. The act of collecting reflects both intention and spontaneity: some pieces are deliberately chosen, much like milestones in life. While others are stumbled upon, their significance emerges only in hindsight.

A collection also embodies the tension between permanence and change. While the objects may endure, their meanings evolve over time, shaped by shifting contexts and interpretations. This fluidity parallels how memories and experiences transform as we grow. More than preservation, collecting is an act of creation—a narrative built layer by layer, each addition deepening the dialogue between objects and ideas. In its richness and diversity, a collection becomes a reflection of life itself: dynamic, multifaceted, and ever-changing in its quest for meaning.

It is in this layered complexity that the art of collecting should find its most poignant metaphor. A collection, that like life itself, is built on precedents, each addition densifying it, deepening its richness, and extending its narrative and experience as a whole. This process, both deliberate and organic, mirrors the act of crafting something intricate and meaningful from seemingly disparate elements—a task requiring care, patience, and an appreciation for nuance.

In search of a metaphor or analogy, perhaps to rationalise my encounter with Richard Koh's collection, I find myself turning to something sweet. A somewhat curious confection that finds a certain rootedness in local celebrations regardless of ethnicity. A luxury by any standards yet ubiquitous, its familiarity belying its complexity and history—I speak of course of *Lapis Legit*.

A traditional cake, originating from Indonesia, renowned for its intricate, layered construction and rich, spiced flavours. Crafted with painstaking care, each thin layer is baked individually, creating a dessert that is both visually striking and deeply symbolic. Its delicate composition reflects a blend of cultures, as the cake combines Asian spices like cinnamon and cardamom with European baking techniques introduced during the colonial era. Beyond its culinary appeal, *Lapis Legit* has come to represent notions of patience, effort, and the beauty of accumulation—each layer contributing to the whole while holding its own integrity.

I have drawn a connection to the cake also as a symbolic reference to Koh's well-known enjoyment of cakes and confections. As someone of Peranakan heritage, his appreciation extends beyond mere indulgence, reflecting an admiration for the skill, care, and precision required to craft sophisticated desserts. Thus, while *Lapis Legit* may not hold a place of particular prominence in his day-to-day, it remains a fitting metaphor, and I remain devoid of doubt that Richard Koh's collection, much like the traditional confection, can be unveiled in layers—each revealing distinct yet interconnected narratives.

The collection is a sing-song of tales, encompassing personal memories, cultural dialogues, and historical reflections, all meticulously brought together into a cohesive whole. As with the making of the cake, Koh's collection demands deliberate effort: a careful layering of works that balance aesthetics, emotional resonance, and intellectual inquiry.

Akin to how disparate layers are brought together by a singular vision, the cake serves as a metaphor for the interplay of tradition, memory, and meticulous craftsmanship, making it a fitting symbol for the layered richness of life and art. Like a slice of *Lapis Legit*, each layer reveals something new, inviting us to reflect not only on the art but on the broader stories it represents. Where Richard has offered his own personal tales in the interview, I offer my contextualisation of the works in his collection here.

THE MAKER'S MARK: TEXT AND LANGUAGE AS A LENS FOR MEANING

Text-based artworks featured prominently in Richard Koh's collection, reflecting a trend in contemporary art where language serves as both medium and message. This aligns with global practices that use the interplay between text and visual elements to convey complex narratives. The integration of text into visual art has evolved through various phases, influenced by cultural, social, and technological changes. Digital technology and global connectivity have made text-based art increasingly diverse and complex. In Southeast Asia, artists use text-based art to explore cultural and political themes, engaging with identity, history, and societal change. Richard Koh's collection highlights these global and regional perspectives, demonstrating the versatility of text in art and its role in prompting deeper reflection.

Much like the maker's mark embossed on the surface of the completed *Lapis* cake, text in Richard Koh's collection serves as an imprint of identity. Words, embedded within these works, anchor their narratives, providing viewers with a starting point for inquiry while challenging their perceptions

of meaning and truth. Across Koh’s collection, text and language emerge as dynamic tools, exploring themes of truth and deception, self-reflection, and the fluid, evolving nature of meaning. Together, these themes illustrate how language acts not only as a foundation for dialogue but also as an active force that shapes the very way we interpret art and the world.

One of the most striking uses of text in Koh’s collection is its role in interrogating the construction of truth. Works like *LIES* by Ramon Enrich and *I STILL CAN’T BELIEVE I BLAMED MYSELF* by Samuel Xun confront viewers with bold textual statements, their stark clarity undercut by the layers of complexity they evoke. In *LIES*, the simplicity of the word belies its profound implications. Placed against a distressed, weathered background, the bold lettering appears authoritative yet unstable, inviting viewers to question the reliability of truth in a world shaped by manipulation and distortion. Richard Koh contends that the towel represented in the painting demonstrates the overwhelming nature of deceit, suggesting that there are so many lies that you can’t use the towel to wipe them off fast enough. On the other hand, Xun’s work uses a mirror as its surface, forcing viewers to confront their own reflection alongside the text. In conjunction with the title of the work, the phrase “BOO, IT’S NOT ME, IT’S YOU” operates on multiple levels, at once personal and universal, accusatory and redemptive. These works underscore the duality of language as both a conveyor of meaning and a site of ambiguity, where truth is always contested and fluid.

In this respect, text serves not merely as a declarative element but as a reflective one, implicating viewers in the narratives they encounter. This dual function is exemplified in Samuel Xun’s mirrored surface, which invites viewers to examine themselves alongside the words, transforming a statement of self-reproach into a shared act of introspection. Similarly, *Su Shi – The Endless River Eastward Flows* by Wang Dongling uses the abstraction of calligraphy to transform language into an emotional and reflective process, where brushstrokes compel the viewer to interpret not just words but the feelings they evoke. Despite their differing historical and cultural trajectories, text-based works in contemporary art and traditional calligraphy share a fundamental engagement with the interplay of form and meaning. Both practices use the visual presence of text to convey ideas, emotions, and cultural significance, inviting viewers to navigate the space between reading and seeing. These works, whether grounded in conceptual critique or calligraphic tradition, highlight the fluid boundaries between text as a medium of thought and as a vessel of aesthetic experience.

At its core, the use of text in Koh’s collection serves as a bridge—linking personal expression with collective experience, and the past with the present. Language becomes a shared space where viewers engage with the art on both intimate and universal levels. Text offers a point of entry, an invitation to dialogue, and an opportunity for multiple interpretations to coexist. Yet, much like the embossed surface of the cake, the text also bears its own sense of anticipation—its mark signals not only the identity

of the maker but also the layers of meaning waiting to be uncovered beneath.

In the collection, language transcends its role as a structural element to become the foundation upon which deeper narratives are built. This prominence reveals much about Koh as a collector. His focus on text-based works suggests a curiosity for conceptual depth and a desire to challenge static interpretations of truth. The collection demonstrates an appreciation for dialogue, fostering reflection both personal and collective, and highlights Koh’s sensibility for ambiguity and duality—qualities that echo the layered nature of language itself. By including works that blend contemporary text and calligraphic abstraction, the collector reveals a cross-cultural awareness, bridging artistic traditions and global narratives.

THE BROADER IMPLICATIONS OF LAYERED CONSTRUCTION

In the making of the cake, the layering process is not only its essence but also its most intricate aspect, as it constitutes the weight of the cake’s overall structure and defines its character. Each layer, individually crafted, contributes to the cumulative richness and complexity of flavours, demanding precision and patience from the baker. While the cake may appear seamless when viewed as a whole, the individual strata reveal the delicate craftsmanship and intentionality required to create it. Every layer carries meaning and responsibility, building upon the one before it, while setting the stage for those to follow. Together, they encapsulate the broader implications of unity and individuality within a larger framework—a reflection of how intricate systems can be constructed through thoughtful, deliberate repetition.

The exploration of identity and reflection operates as a commentary on the layered nature of human experience within the collection. Works engage with the idea that identity is not a fixed entity but a construct shaped by overlapping forces—self-perception, societal expectations, and the need for introspection. Together, they illustrate the layered complexity of identity while offering insights into its cultural and personal significance.

At its core, identity is a product of construction—shaped by the interplay between self-awareness and external influences. This idea is powerfully illustrated in *MIRROR, MIRROR...* by UnKnown, where the reflective surface of the black glass resists transparency, obscuring the viewer’s reflection. Instead of offering clarity, the piece complicates the act of self-examination, suggesting that identity is always mediated—by cultural narratives, societal norms, and the individual’s own assumptions. The vintage frame employed in its creation further reinforces this theme, alluding to cultural myths like the fairy-tale mirror that reflects the queen’s ego rather than her reality.

This interplay of perception and distortion suggests that identity is not merely personal but also cultural, bound

up in collective stories that dictate how individuals see themselves and how they are seen by others. The work highlights the broader implication that identity, while deeply personal, is never free from external construction, leaving viewers to question how much of their selfhood is shaped by their own understanding versus societal expectations.

In exploring the societal dimensions of identity, *Legacy Mantle* by Sui Jianguo examines the symbolic weight of inherited roles and institutional expectations through the lens of the Mao suit, an iconic garment of China’s Cultural Revolution. While the rigid, imposing form of the fibreglass sculpture evokes the authority and uniformity associated with institutional power, its hollowness reveals the absence of individuality within such structures. This contrast between an outwardly commanding presence and an interior void critiques the erasure of personal identity in favour of collective conformity, highlighting the paradox within authoritarian legacies—where power and tradition simultaneously define and suppress individuality.

In this respect, *Legacy Mantle* extends its critique to how societal roles and inherited authority frame identity. By presenting the Mao suit as both a cultural icon and a vessel of emptiness, Sui challenges viewers to consider their own relationship with societal constructs: Are they participants in or products of these frameworks? The work invites reflection on the historical and cultural forces that shape identity, particularly within contexts of tradition and institutional power. It raises pressing questions about whether these roles serve to liberate individuals by providing structure or confine them by denying personal agency, leaving the audience to grapple with the duality of legacy as both burden and foundation.

Then, in stark contrast to the external pressures critiqued in other works, *Where No Ghost Can Haunt Me* by Allan Balisi shifts the gaze inward, retreating into a world of muted tones and quiet introspection. Its contemplative composition evokes the sombre solitude of a man rowing a boat alone, surrounded by stillness yet carrying the weight of unseen burdens. The work offers a rare sanctuary—a space where identity is not dictated by societal judgement or external demands but allowed to exist freely, without the constraints of performance or critique. Its title, laden with a haunting yet protective resonance, suggests a refuge from the ghosts of expectation and memory, a realm where selfhood is unshackled from the external forces that shape and constrain it.

This emphasis on refuge underlines the profound need for moments of quietude in the formation of identity. Balisi’s work speaks to the fragility of selfhood, portraying it not as a product of external validation but as something cultivated in solitude and introspection. It is in these quiet, interior spaces—unlit by the glare of public scrutiny—that the individual can connect with their most unadorned self. The scene carries an air of melancholy, suggesting that such sanctuaries are often sought in response to the overwhelming pressures of a world that demands conformity and constant self-presentation.

The works here capture the complexity and fragility of identity without offering definitive answers. Rather, they invite us to engage with its ambiguities, suggesting that understanding oneself is an ongoing journey shaped by both introspection and external forces. Through these layers, the collection portrays identity as an ever-evolving narrative, woven from individual and collective experiences, traditions, and transformations. It does not present identity as something to be fixed or mastered but as a process of continual negotiation—a reflection of the tensions and harmonies that define selfhood.

THE TEXTURE OF HISTORY

The *Lapis Legit* is as much a product of its colonial context as it is a symbol of enduring cultural hybridity. Emerging from Indonesia’s era under Dutch rule, the cake marries spices—commodities central to the violent exploitation of the spice trade—with colonial baking techniques. Its intricate layers reflect the precision and methodical nature of Dutch patisserie, yet its flavours remain deeply tied to the tropical landscape of the archipelago. This tension, between the violence of colonisation and the creation of something sweet and treasured, encapsulates the paradoxes of cultural hybridisation.

Colonisation, with its impositions of power, left scars that remain visible today. However, the hybrid forms it inadvertently fostered reveal how the colonised not only adapted but transformed the cultural imports of their oppressors. The cake’s layers, baked one at a time with meticulous care, become a metaphor for the laborious process of negotiation, where elements of local and foreign traditions fuse to create something entirely new. Yet, the cake’s sweetness cannot obscure its origins in exploitation—an enduring reminder that hybridity often emerges not from harmony but from tension, resistance, and survival.

In this way, the confection mirrors the broader processes of history and culture, where violence and creation, destruction and renewal, exist side by side. Its enduring popularity across Southeast Asia speaks to the resilience of hybrid forms—creations that are both rooted in history and open to reinterpretation. Much like the following artworks in Koh’s collection, the cake invites us to confront the layered narratives of colonisation, memory, and identity. It asks us to consider how something born of conflict can evolve into a cherished tradition, its complexity both a testament to and a reflection of the human capacity to create meaning amidst turmoil.

A number of works presented in the exhibition reflect a similar interplay between creation and contestation, where history is layered, fractured, and reassembled into new forms of understanding. *Yuanmingyuan 07* by Gordon Cheung embodies this approach, reimagining the destruction of the Old Summer Palace during the Second Opium War through a surreal and layered lens. By using financial newspapers as

his medium, Cheung connects the colonial violence of the past to the economic forces of the present, illustrating how imperialism’s legacies remain inscribed in global systems. The fragmented nature of his compositions evokes the ruptures of historical memory, where the physical destruction of cultural heritage—like the looting of the Old Summer Palace—is echoed in the intangible scars it leaves on collective identity. Cheung’s work asks viewers to grapple with the weight of these absences and consider how such losses are woven into the fabric of contemporary life.

This act of reconstructing historical narratives is not confined to memory alone but extends to the contradictions inherent in history itself. *Bach Sonata No.2 – Horstfass’s Hue photos* by Hoang Duong Cam juxtaposes the structured harmony of Bach’s music with the raw brutality captured in photographs of the Vietnam War by Horst Fass. The deliberate pairing of these elements creates a striking dissonance, highlighting the stark gap between cultural achievement and human suffering. Hoang’s work resists closure or resolution, reflecting history as a space where beauty and atrocity coexist uneasily. By holding these contradictions together, the piece compels viewers to confront how history is framed—not as a cohesive narrative but as a patchwork of fragmented experiences and contested meanings.

If Cheung and Hoang interrogate the fractures and contradictions of historical memory, *Flammagenitus* by Zelin Seah takes a more abstract approach, evoking the cycles of destruction and renewal that underpin historical transformation. Almost like a living, sentient being, the piece evolves through the oxidisation of the copper, imbuing it with a dynamic, ever-changing quality. *Flammagenitus* with its fiery hues and dynamic composition—while not a direct reference to specific historical events—resonates with the broader rhythms of historical change. Through its exploration of fire as both an agent of collapse and a force of regeneration, the piece gestures toward the cyclical nature of history, where moments of upheaval clear the way for reinvention. Seah’s emphasis on unseen forces and spiritual contemplation lends the work a universal quality, inviting viewers to reflect on how the invisible undercurrents of destruction and renewal shape the past, present, and future. In this way, the composition captures the essence of history as a process of transformation, where even the ruins of what came before serve as the foundation for what follows.

Together, these works highlight the texture of history as layered and multifaceted, where memory, power, and transformation intersect. Like the cake, history gains its richness and complexity not from smoothness but from the interplay of its contradictions. Cheung, Hoang, and Seah each approach history as a construct that is both fragile and resilient, shaped by forces of loss, reinterpretation, and renewal. Their works remind us that history is not a static record but a dynamic entity—an ongoing negotiation of meaning that bridges the past and the present.

In Koh’s collection, the texture of history is rendered with sensitivity and nuance, revealing the dualities that define it: creation and destruction, memory and erasure, pain

and beauty. It invites viewers to reflect on the legacies of colonisation and the ways in which they are embedded in the present. While history is shown to be complex and imperfect, it is precisely these imperfections that lend it depth, allowing us to understand not just where we have been, but where we might go.

**A SLICE OF THE MAN HIMSELF:
HAVE YOUR CAKE AND EAT IT.**

Richard Koh’s collection resonates as a reflection of contemporary urgencies, offering a space where art, identity, and history converge to navigate the complexities of our time. The works in the exhibition—of which only a few I have explored—are diverse in medium and theme, exploring issues of cultural hybridity, historical reinterpretation, and the layered intricacies of selfhood. These are all concerns that align with the ever-shifting demands of a globalised, interconnected world. In this way, the collection becomes more than an assembly of objects; it is a mirror to the zeitgeist, capturing the anxieties, aspirations, and contradictions of an extended moment in the man’s life.

While the metaphor of the *Lapis Legit* may have at first glance, appeared whimsical, my conscious employment and deliberation of it here has been anything but trivial. Much like the cake, the collection is emblematic of a process of deliberate construction—a balance of effort, precision, and meaning. Layer by layer, the cake becomes a meditation on hybridity: how disparate influences—Indonesian and Dutch, local and foreign, past and present—are brought together to create something entirely unique. This layering is no accident; it is a process that demands patience, care, and an understanding of the interplay between simplicity and complexity.

In Koh’s collection, we find echoes of this same meticulous effort. The works are not arbitrary acquisitions but carefully chosen dialogues, each piece amplifying the voice of the next. Together, they tell stories that are both deeply personal and universally relevant, engaging with the layered narratives of identity, memory, and transformation. The collection underscores the power of art to navigate the ambiguities of the human condition, reminding us that understanding is not achieved through resolution but through embracing contradiction and nuance.

Simultaneously, the collection is also certainly an imprint of its creator—a reflection of Koh’s sensibilities, taste, and engagement with the art world. His focus on text-based works and hybridised narratives suggests an appreciation for ambiguity, for layers that resist easy interpretation. Koh’s approach to collecting emphasises dialogue: between traditions, between histories, and between the individual and the collective. It is this sensibility that defines the collection’s ability to both reflect and interrogate the cultural currents of its time.

Through its layered construction, Koh’s collection invites us to think critically about the nature of contemporary art and its capacity to respond to pressing global concerns. It reminds us that hybridity is not merely a blending of elements, but a deliberate act of negotiation where tensions give rise to new possibilities. The collection offers no easy answers but invites us to linger in its richness, to savour its layers, and to reflect on the narratives it unravels.

INTERVIEW

IN CONVERSATION WITH RICHARD KOH, AARON TEO, JOHN Z. W. TUNG

In the world of art collecting, where narratives are often crafted through meticulous curation or market-driven strategies, Richard Koh's approach feels refreshingly unhurried, like a journey marked by serendipitous discoveries and deeply personal connections. As The Private Museum prepares to unveil *I am All but a Story*, the second chapter of the *Of Dreams and Contemplation* series that presents his private collection in public, this sentiment resonates more than ever. Since the initial presentation within the intimacy of Waterloo Street to this new presentation in the colonial grandeur of Osborne House, Koh's collection has continued to evolve—unfolding like a visual diary, rich with stories, memories, and unexpected humour.

In the lead up to the exhibition, Associate Director Aaron Teo and Independent Writer John Z. W. Tung spend a morning with Richard Koh to explore the philosophy underpinning his collection. Meandering through the various artworks in preparation for presentation, the themes that emerge recur like old friends. The role of humour, nostalgia, and spontaneity in shaping the body of work defies easy categorisation. With anecdotes spanning misadventures in Hua Shan, the absurdity of skiing in jeans, and the tender memories of family, this interview reveals Koh's collection not as a static archive, but as a living, breathing reflection of a life well-lived—quirky, contemplative, and utterly sincere.

RICHARD KOH,
AARON TEO, JOHN Z. W. TUNG

AT Richard, your collection has always been deeply personal, reflecting both your own experiences and your journey through life. In 2019, we showcased *Of Dreams and Contemplation* (Part 1) at the museum’s old space on Waterloo Street, and now we are preparing to feature Part 2, *I am All but a Story*, in our new space at Osborne House in 2024. As someone who has cultivated a collection rich in personal meaning, how do you see this continuation of the *Dreams and Contemplation* series? How does it evolve, both for you and for your audience, as it moves into this new chapter?

RK For me, collecting is never about just amassing objects. It’s always been a deeply personal journey. *Of Dreams and Contemplation*, whether in Part 1 or now in Part 2, is about reflecting on my own sensibilities and finding meaning that is uniquely mine—something beyond market trends, societal expectations, or public validation. When Part 1 was exhibited at the old space, it was very much about reflecting a general mood of the collection. But now, with *I am All but a Story* at Osborne House, it’s not just a continuation; it’s also an opportunity for the new selections from the collection to be seen and shared in a different, yet familiar way. Like a visual diary, the story unfolds and continues.

AT The first show leaned towards monochromatic works, often abstract or landscape. Do you see any parallels between those choices and the new selections being presented? How has the narrative developed?

RK Yes, there are parallels, but the storytelling continues in a more detailed way. In Part I, the works were quieter, more meditative—almost like whispering thoughts. This time, the selections is more layered, with a mix of moods and moments. While the “landscape of memories” remains a guiding thread, the narrative has taken on a more detailed form. It’s as if the collection is growing alongside me, reflecting not just who I was but who I’ve become.

AT Osborne House provides a vastly different setting compared to the intimate space at Waterloo Street. How do you think the space influences the way the collection is experienced or interpreted?

RK The environment plays a huge role. Waterloo Street had an intimacy that drew viewers into a closer, almost private dialogue with the works. Osborne House, on the other hand, offers a very different approached to the way the works can be viewed. The colonial architecture, the natural light, the surrounding greenery—it all adds layers to the way the works are perceived. The pieces now interact with the space itself, creating a fuller experience reflecting a collector exhibition.

JT I’m of the mind that very collection begins with a feeling—an echo of something personal, perhaps a memory or a fleeting emotion. What makes a piece whisper—or perhaps even shout out loud—to you.

RK I collect pieces that resonate deeply with me, works that represent something important or remind me of a specific time in my life. For me, art has always had a therapeutic quality—it helps me process emotions, reflect on experiences, and sometimes even heal. When I look at a piece, it’s not just about the aesthetics or the technical mastery; it’s about how it makes me feel, how it connects with my own narrative.

There’s a certain uncanny deliberation to the way I approach collecting. Life is full of contradictions, humour, and absurdity, and I believe art should capture that. I don’t just want pieces that are polished, perfect, or by famous artists. I’m drawn to works that show the messiness of life, the ironies, the moments of tension and release. These pieces speak to me on a deeper level, as they reflect my own journey—the highs and the lows.

AT The term “landscape of memories” evokes a sense of journeys, both external and internal. Do you feel that the works in the current show carry a similar sense of exploration, or have they moved towards something different?

RK That sense of exploration is still very present, but it feels more multi-dimensional now in this presentation. *I am All but a Story* delves deeper into the complexities of memory—how it evolves, connects, and sometimes contradicts itself. It’s not just about recalling a moment but also about reinterpreting it, questioning it, and finding new meaning and reasoning behind it.

JT Some collectors embark on their journeys with the solemnity of historians or treasure hunters. Yours, however, feels delightfully unhurried, like a hobbyist skipping stones. Would you agree, and how do you define this charming approach?

RK Yes, That’s a pretty accurate description. My collecting approach has always felt unhurried, almost like skipping stones across a pond—light, spontaneous, forward, backwards and sometimes even stationary. I simply find things that speak to me, often in unexpected ways. You might see something that triggers a certain memory or evokes a laugh, or maybe it strikes a chord because it reminds you of a pivotal moment in your life. That’s how these pieces start to gather, one by one.



Samuel Xun, *I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE I BLAMED MYSELF*, 2022

RK The work by Samuel Xun, for example, was shown in a toilet in an old building in Singapore. It was mounted on a mirror, and it read, “Boo, it’s not me, it’s you” in bold red text. That piece immediately resonated with me. There’s a certain humour to it, and it’s so relatable. It’s playful, but also kind of cheeky, as if it’s poking fun at the very act of confrontation—the awkwardness of not wanting to take responsibility. It’s the kind of thing I’d say in a light-hearted moment, especially when dealing with the absurdities of life. It reminds me of the common quip, “The problem is not me, it’s you.”

The best works don’t just hang there, they engage with you—they start a conversation. And with Samuel Xun’s piece, it felt like the artist and I were having that conversation in real time, laughing at the same thing.

JT How does humour shape your world and sneak its way into your art collection?

RK In my career—whether in fashion, domestic interiors, or art—I’ve always dealt with people of means and character. And, honestly, many times you find yourself in situations where you have to approach things with a sense of humour. If you don’t, you can easily get lost or go off tangent. You can’t take everything too seriously, especially in these contexts. So, you end up seeing the humour in things. At the end of the day, it’s all quite simple, but people often complicate it and make it more difficult than it needs to be. I always see the humour in most situations.

JT These mischievous punctuations of humour are set amidst rugged landscapes and the shimmer of waters. Your collection feels like a map of moods and moments. What recurring characters or themes do you think star in this story?

RK There are numerous relations to places I’ve seen that brings back interesting memories—capturing a snapshot of my life in a specific time and place. Yes, a map of moods and moments, of sorts—almost like a Wes Anderson film, there’s this quirky, almost

nostalgic quality of it, where different moods—peace, adventure, humour—are layered together in a very deliberate, yet oddly playful way.



Liu Kang, 黄山松涛, 1970

RK Take Liu Kang’s 黄山松涛 (Huangshan Pine and Waves) for example. It reminds me of a misadventure I had when I trekked up Hua Shan, a mountain in China. I hadn’t done any research beforehand, and I definitely wasn’t prepared. No proper gear, no guide, and I had no idea how difficult the hike would be. But, like the pines in Liu Kang’s painting, which stand resilient against the elements, I managed to make it to the top. There’s this sense of quiet strength in the work, but also a sense of irony, because I really wasn’t prepared for what was coming after the easy ride via cable car to the top.



Yeoh Choo Kuan, *Black is the New White*, 2019

RK Then there’s Yeoh Choo Kuan’s *Black is the New White*—a piece that takes me back to the 1980s, when I went skiing in jeans, which, of course, was *absolutely* crazy. It was my first time skiing too. I’d packed the wrong clothes, and it felt completely absurd at the time. But what I remember most fondly was listening to Kate Bush’s *Running Up That Hill* on my Sony Walkman as I awkwardly navigated the slopes without breaking any bones.



Gordon Cheung, *Yuanmingyuan07*, 2023

RK Gordon Cheung's *Yuanmingyuan07* also takes me back to when I was backpacking through Tibet in the early 1990s, sitting by a lake, surrounded by the vastness of the landscape, the magical blue lake. The painting has this sense of tranquillity, but also an undercurrent of something more layered—like the way the landscape itself holds so many untold stories—like finding corals in that lake! It's a peaceful memory, but also one tinged with a kind of longing and desire for exploration.

AT If Part I represented an origin or a moment of quiet contemplation, what do you feel *I am All but a Story* represents in the ongoing journey of the collection?

RK I think Part I was more about a glimpse of the collector. *I am All but a Story* is more about the details of the collection and what it is based on. In a way, I feel I am ready to share my stories in this show. To share my personal moments with others in a way that invites them to bring their own stories into the conversation.

JT Your collection dances between the eclectic and the introspective, like a quirky cabinet of curiosities. How do you manage this delightful cacophony? Do you even feel the need to tame it?

RK No, I don't feel the need to tame it. For me, that's what life is—bits and pieces of everything. It can be eclectic; it can be serious. There are so many different facets to life, and each moment brings something new. It is like taking photos on your smartphone these days (which I don't), the works I collect reflect that—in the spur of a moment, they're just a snapshot of a particular time, a connection to something I'm experiencing or thinking about in that moment. It's all part of the same, ever-shifting journey.

JT Allan Balisi's painting strikes me as an appropriate metaphor for your approach to life, always rowing forward to the beat of your own drum. What keeps your compass true?

RK It's always been this way from the start—natural and focused, but with a sense of going with the flow. I

don't try to force things; I just let them unfold. Yet, despite the shifts in time or circumstances, I always seem to arrive at similar conclusions.



Allan Balisi, *Where No Ghost Can Haunt Me*, 2010

RK When I encountered this work by Allan Balisi, it immediately reminded me of a quote left with me by a very good friend: "You row your own boat". The quote has stayed with me ever since. I've always been doing things on my own, so this really relates to the feeling of being out in the open—in the sea—you really have to *row* your own boat most of the time.

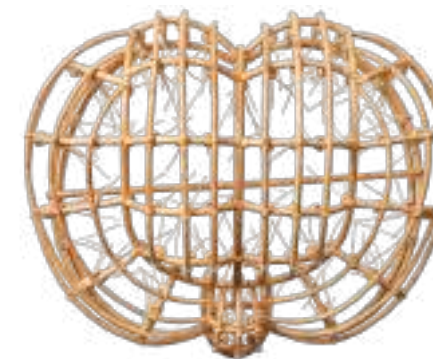
JT In that respect, many of these artworks are your companions on this journey—ones that speak to us about love, loss, and life lessons. Could you tell us about a few such pieces.



Ben Puah, *Flying birdies in my brain No. 1*, 2022

RK My father had an obsession with pigeons and kept them in all sorts of bamboo cages. He spent more time with the birds than anything else. This painting reminded me of the way the birds would fly inside the cage but still remain trapped in that square (the cage). One is never really free.

Nindityo's bamboo head bun brought back memories of my mother's hair ornament, the one she used when getting all dolled up and getting ready to go out.



Nindityo Adipurnomo, *Beautiful Pain*, 2019

RK Strange as it is, these two works really remind me of my parents.

JT You've mentioned a certain shrug of the shoulders when imagining the future of your collection. Do you ever wonder how yours might end up/be retold—or reimagined—beyond your lifetime?

RK People often ask what will happen to my collection when I'm gone, but honestly, it's not my concern or something I worry about. Art, in any collection, should have its own story. Maybe one day it will be re-evaluated, retold, or perhaps it will end up in a dumpster—who knows?

RK C'est la vie, that's life.

EXHIBITION VISUALS

9 JAN–9 MAR 2025
THE PRIVATE MUSEUM

OF DREAMS AND CONTEMPLATION
I AM ALL BUT A STORY

SELECTIONS FROM
THE COLLECTION OF RICHARD KOH





Art in my collection, should have its own story.

Art in my collection, should have its own story.

Art in my collection, should have its own story.

Art in my collection, should have its own story.





UnKnown
MIRROR, MIRROR...
 2022
 Black mirror, vintage gilded frame
 59 x 66 x 3 cm



Shao Yinong & Muchen
East Wind West Wind - 9932
 2010
 Mirror frame, cashmere
 94 x 124 x 11 cm

Art, in any collection, should have its own story.



FRONT VIEW

Thomas Houseago
Gold Walking Man
 2021
 Bronze
 196 x 104 x 215 cm
 Artist Proof 1 of 2



BACK VIEW



Nicola Samori
Stellario
 2018
 Sulfur on copper
 200 x 150 cm







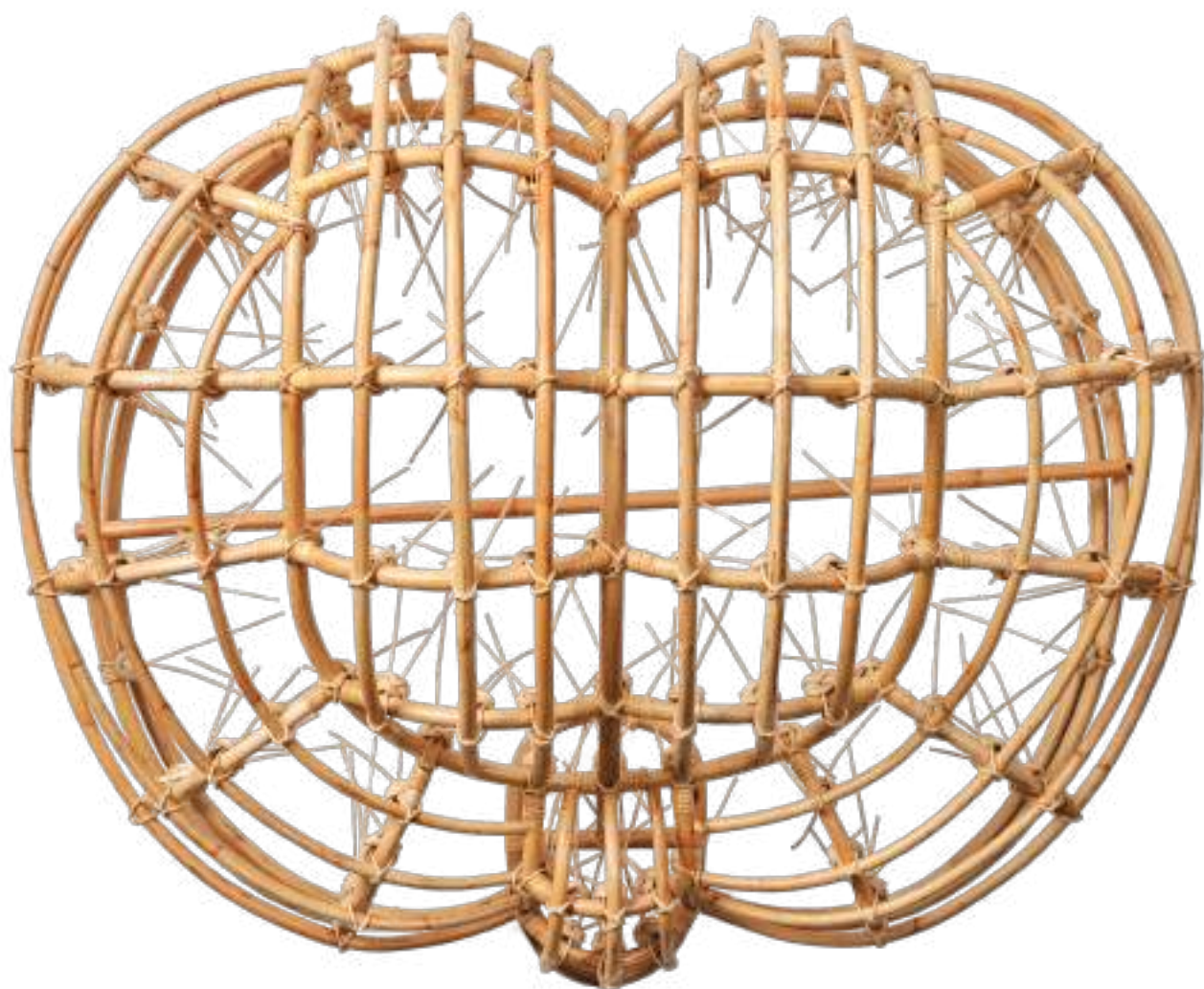
SIDE VIEW

FRONT VIEW

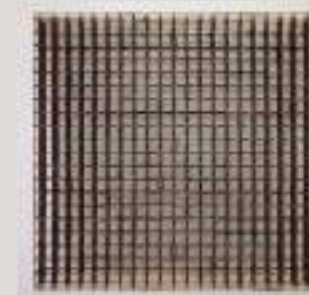
Priyageetha Dia
Late Brown Capitalism
 2020
 Grey cement cast with 24K gold leaf
 20 x 10 x 11 cm



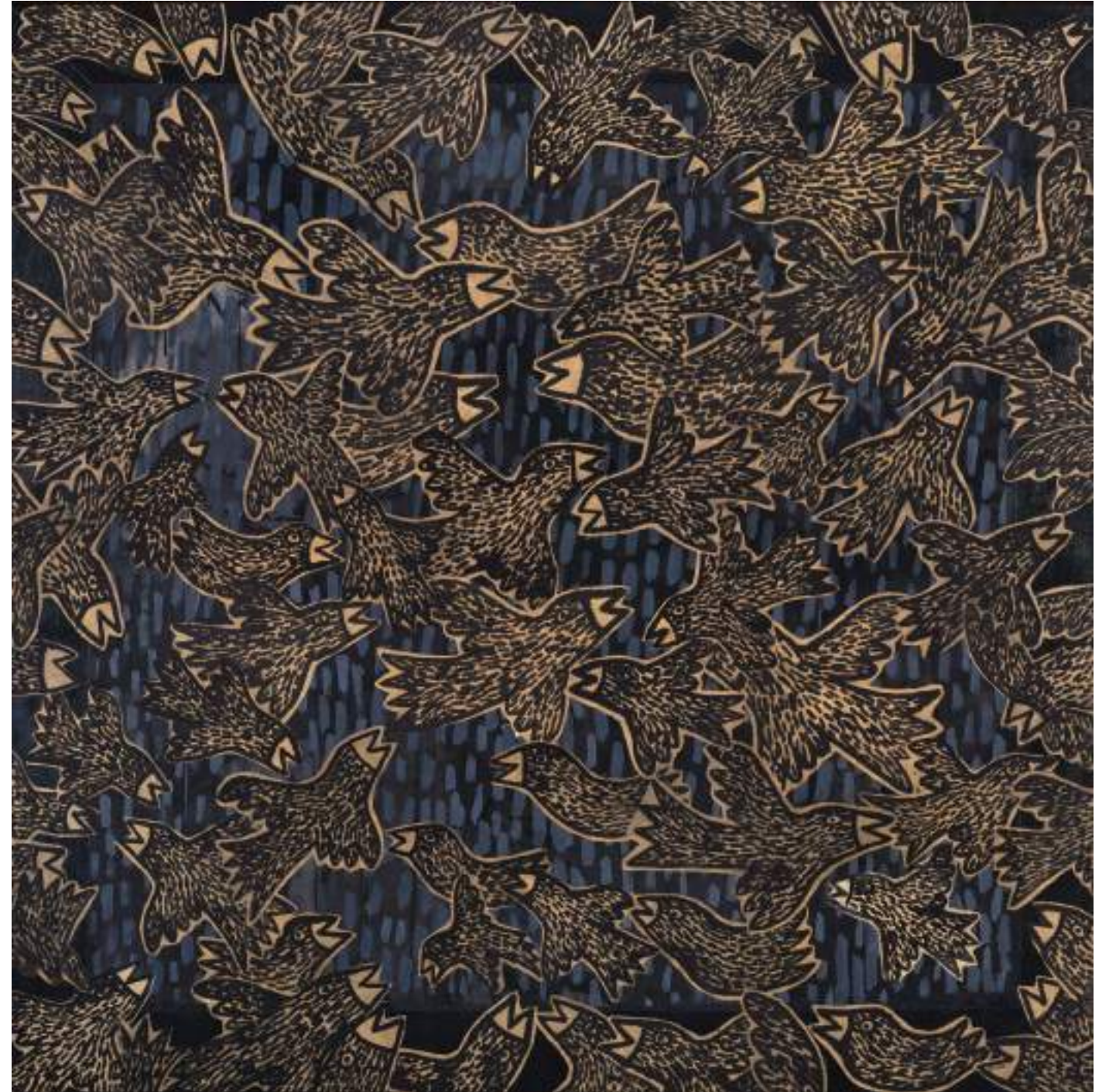
Hoàng Anh
The Outlandish Landscape #10
 2023
 Watercolour on Dó paper
 80 x 59 cm



Nindityo Adipurnomo
Beautiful Pain
 2019
 Rattan Object (rattan 'pitrit')
 100 x 115 x 50 cm



Sopheap Pich
Untitled (Red Square Wall Relief)
 2012
 Mixed media
 100 x 100 x 6 cm



Ben Puah
Flying birdies in my brain No. 1
2022
Acrylic on canvas
152 x 152 cm



Gwon Osang
Blue Ray_S
 2009
 C-Print, Mixed media
 165 x 41 x 35 cm



Emily Arcade

Emily Gallery





Caroline Terroce





Hoang Duong Cam
Bach Sonata No.2 — Horstfass's Hue photos
 2021
 Oil, acrylic on canvas
 200 x 196 cm



Justin Lim
All that you leave behind becomes the world
 2024
 Acrylic on canvas
 98 x 81 cm



Zelin Seah
Flammagenitus
 2019
 Mixed media with etching on copper
 115 x 85 cm



Zhou Chunya
Chinese Landscape
 1994
 Oil on canvas
 100 x 80 cm

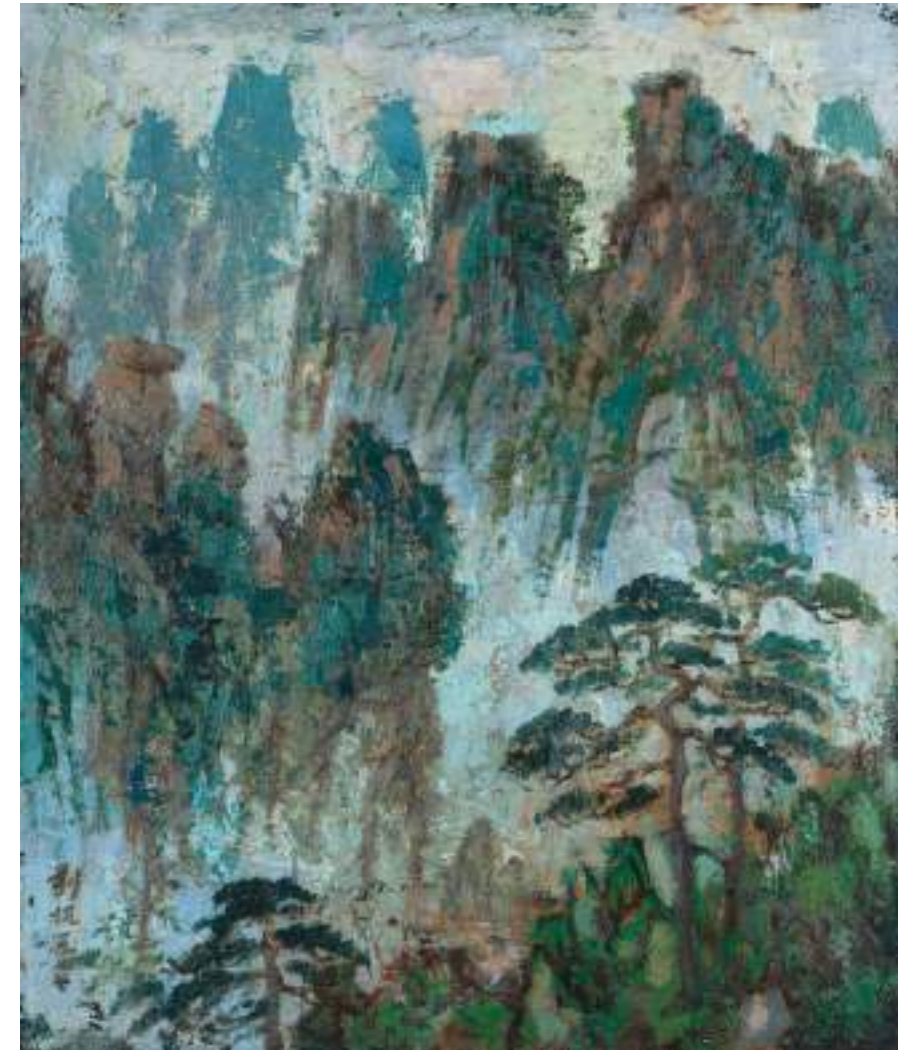
Investing in art is, at its core, an investment in emotion.



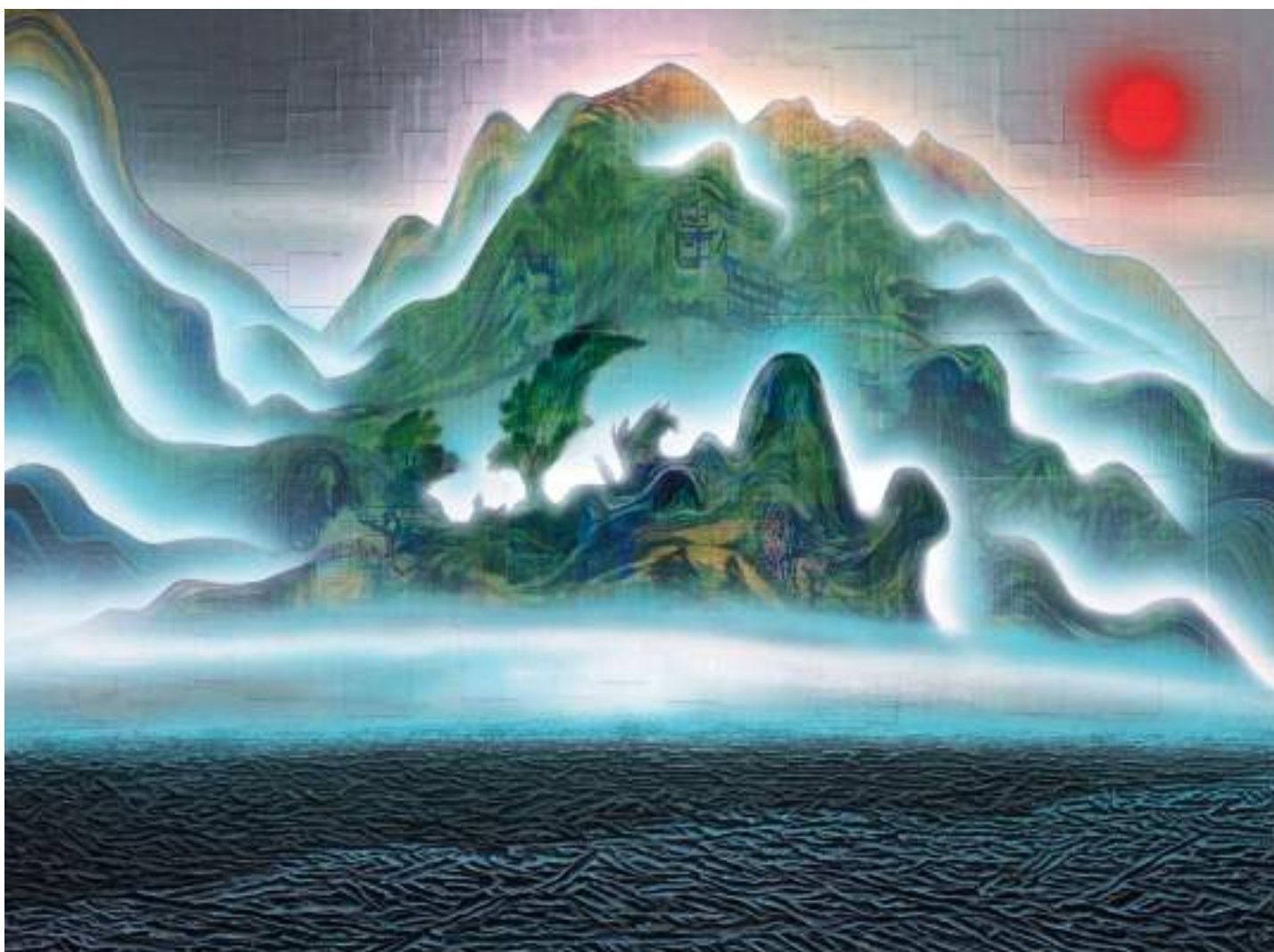
Lindy Lee
Flame from the Dragon's Pearl - Teaching without Saying a Thing
2013
Bronze
20 x 39 x 26 cm
Edition 1 of 3



Yeoh Choo Kuan
Black is the New White
 2019
 Acrylic, structuring paste on linen
 274 x 399 cm (triptych)



Liu Kang
黄山松涛
1970
Oil on canvas
54 x 45 cm



Gordon Cheung
Yuanmingyuan07
 2023
 Financial Times newspaper, archival inkjet,
 acrylic and sand on linen
 82 x 110 cm



Liu Wei
Untitled
 2006
 Oil on canvas
 49 x 35 cm



Wang Keping
Cry
1984
Bronze
88 x 45 x 34 cm
Edition 2 of 3

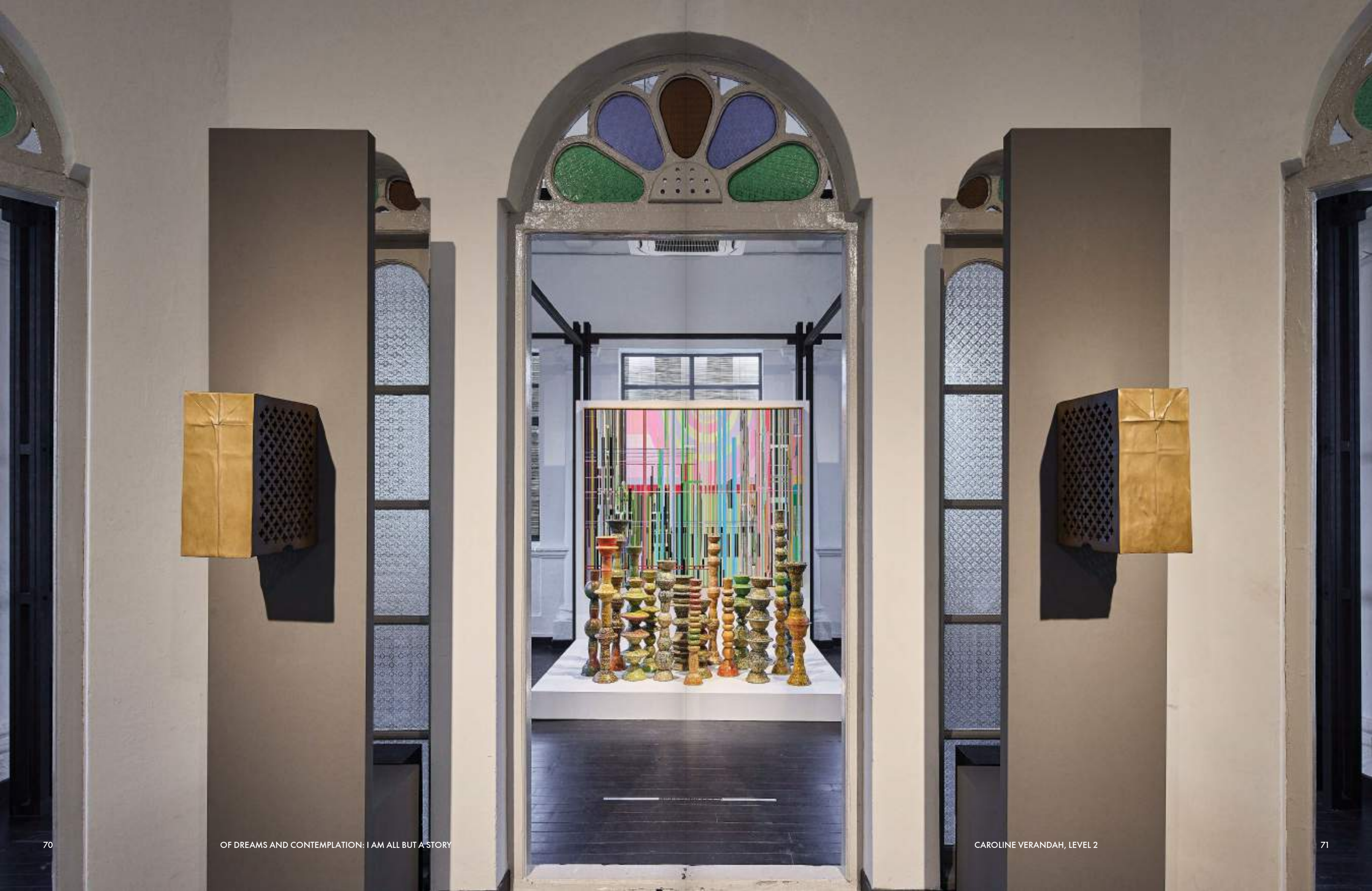


LEFT



RIGHT

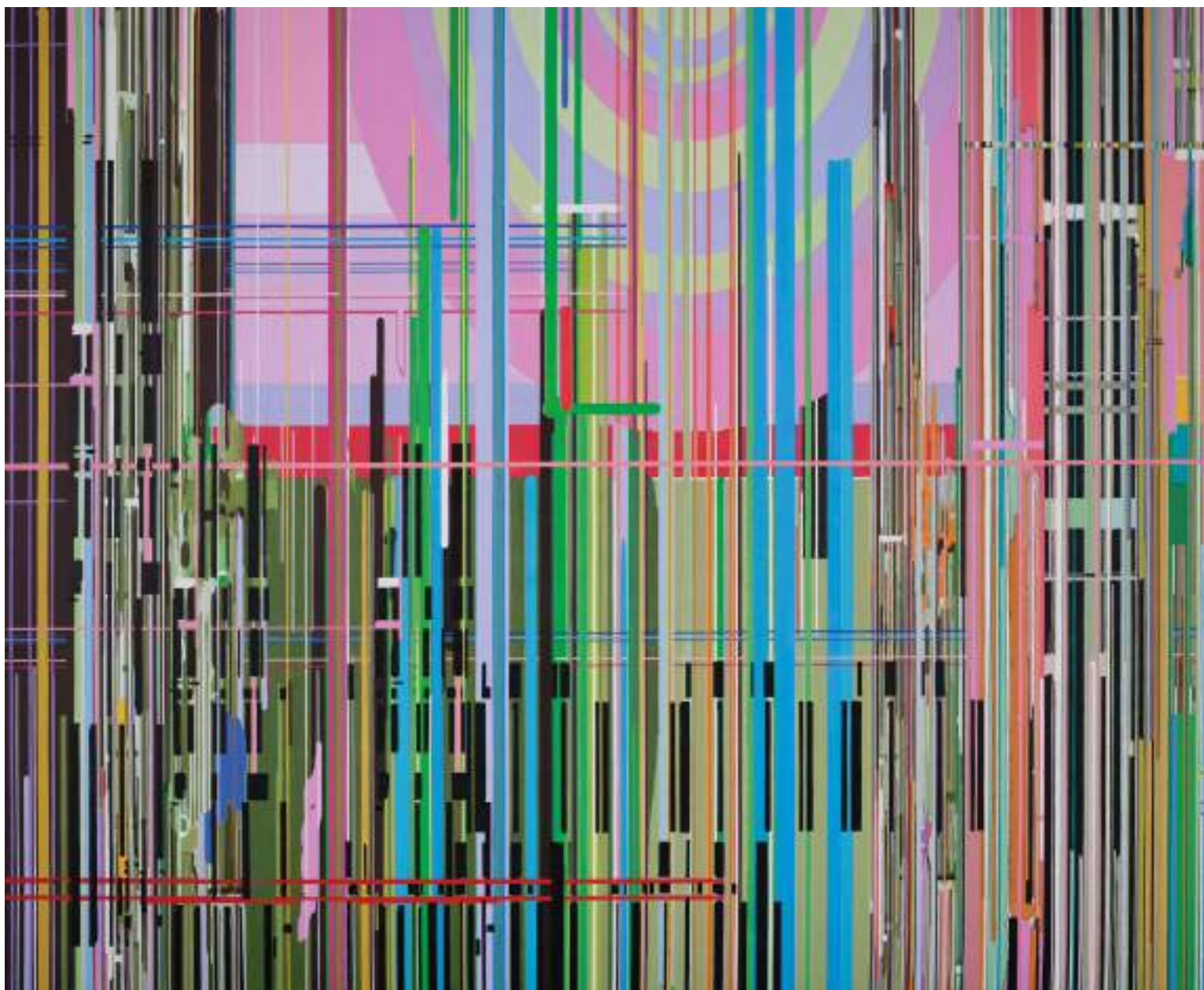
Trong Gia Nguyen
Portable Confessionals
2018
Bronze
41 x 30 x 18 cm (each)







Haffendi Anuar
Archipelago (PLT 34-51)
 2016
 Melamine tableware, cement, puttyfilla, enamel paint
 Dimensions variable

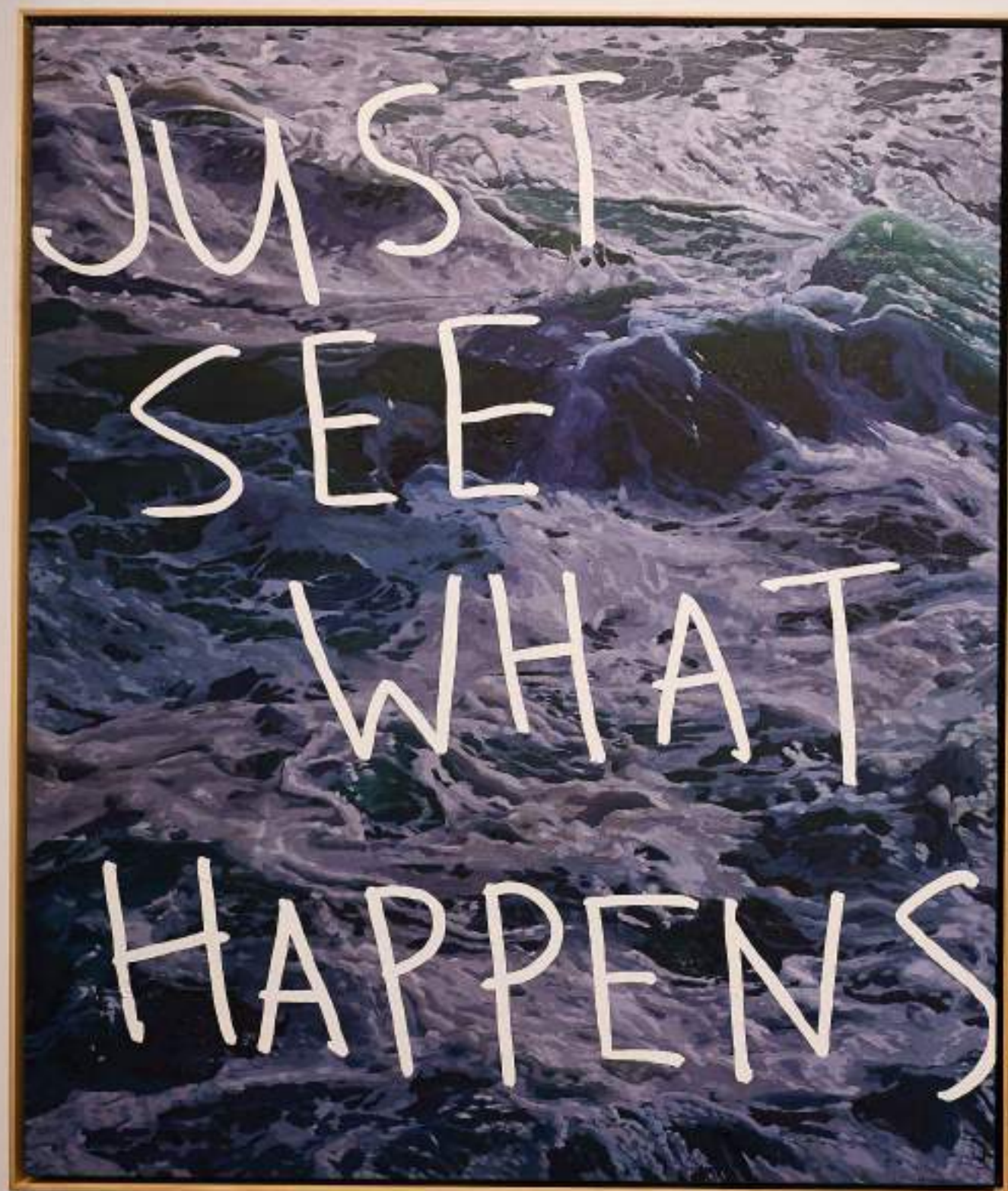


Liu Wei
Purple Air D No.3
 2010
 Acrylic on canvas
 180 x 220 cm



Kohei Nawa
Direction #37
 2012
 Paint on canvas
 250 x 200 cm







Samuel Xun
I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE I BLAMED MYSELF
 2022
 Swarovski crystal elements, vinyl on mirror
 Re-housed, 61 x 81 cm





Ramon Enrich
LIES
 2023
 Acrylic on canvas
 192 x 162 x 11 cm

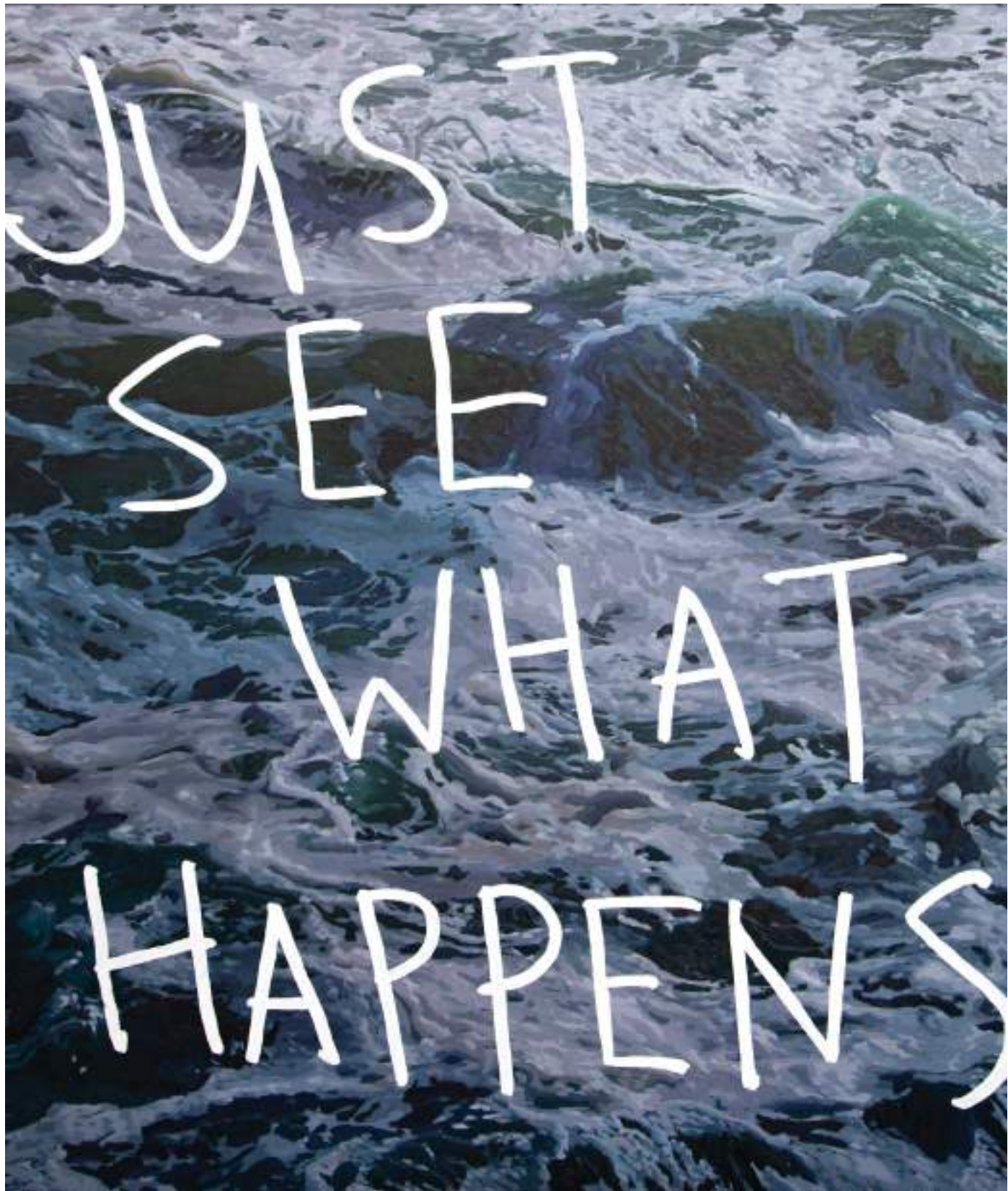


Hu Qiren
Cash is King
 2020
 Ink on "Banana Note"
 8 x 16 cm (each)



Alfredo and Isabel Aquiliza
Passage: Project Another Country

2013
 Mixed media
 62 x 82 x 30 cm



Abdul Abdullah
Just see what happens
 2021
 Oil on linen
 165 x 139 cm



Kevin Ford
Clock
 2024
 Acrylic on panel
 27 x 34 cm



Ugo Li
FUCKYOUVERYMUCH
 2020
 Oil, pastel on canvas
 76 x 54 cm



Emily Alcove



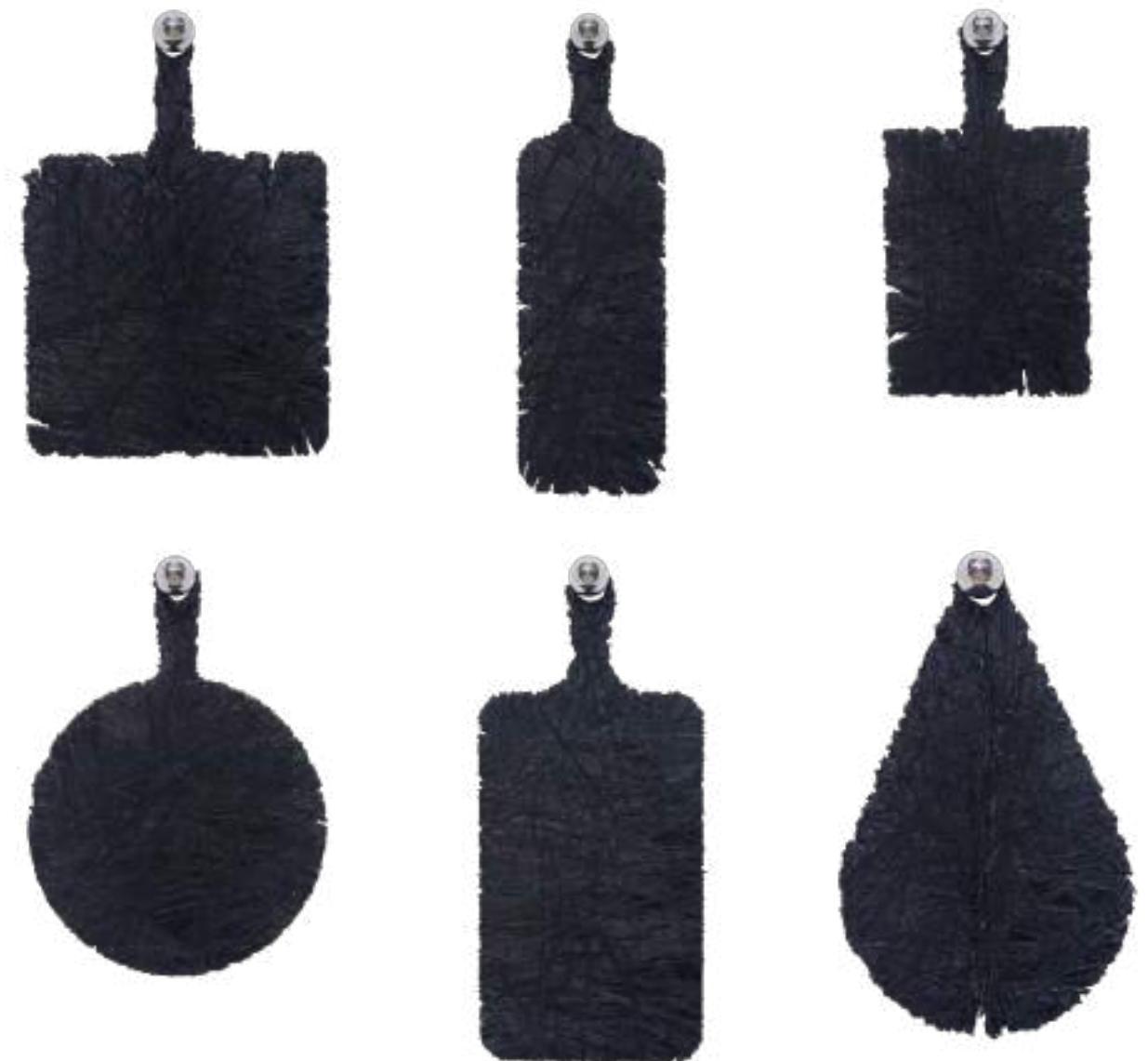
What we see is merely a matter of perspective
In black, I see a world of colours.



Natee Utarit
The Devil Who Mentions To Itself With The Black
2001
Oil on canvas
99 x 139 cm



Hu Qiren
Study of Composition with Lines (Black edition)
 2022
 Face mask loops on canvas
 100 x 100 cm



Yeoh Choo Kuan
King Crap course, Hard stomach, Wealth snack
Midnight craving, From farm to arse, Butcher's recommendation
 2022
 Custom PE board, stainless steel
 43 x 30 cm, 50 x 16 cm, 37 x 20 cm (left to right)
 41 x 30 cm, 50 x 23 cm, 40 x 25 cm (left to right)



Takesada Matsutani
Wave 50-86
 1986
 Mixed media on canvas
 115 x 89 cm



Mahalakshmi Kannappan
The Crevice III, 2020
 2020
 Charcoal on wood
 76 x 103 cm



Imhathai Suwatthanasilp
Black Landscape no.1
 2021
 Acrylic, graphite, human hair on canvas
 120 x 150 cm



Su Xiaobai
Secluded Steps 2
 2019
 Oil, lacquer, linen, wood
 47 x 44 cm



Bao Vuong
The Crossing XI
2019
Oil on canvas
129 x 208 cm

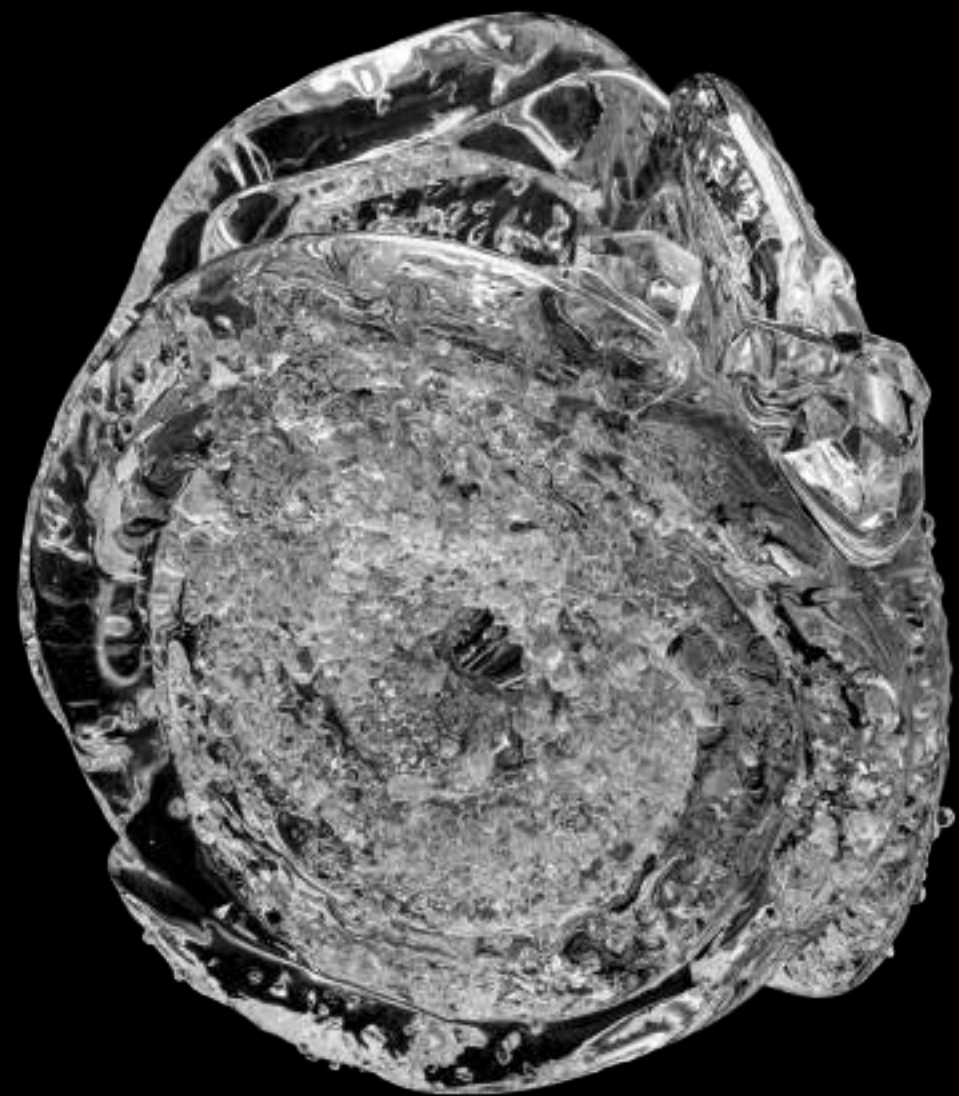


Joël Andrianomearisoa
Chanson de ma terre lointaine
 2017
 Textile
 123 x 74 cm



Xu Zhen
Under Heaven 03028ac0144
 2014
 Aluminium, oil on canvas
 45 x 60 x 12 cm

What we see is merely a matter of perspective.
In black, I see a world of colours.



Ritsue Mishima
Crystal Vortex
 2019
 Glass
 39 x 38 x 38 cm



Ritsue Mishima
Vita
 2019
 Glass
 46 x 37 x 18 cm



Ritsue Mishima
XY (#12612)
2019
Glass
25 x 32 x 32 cm

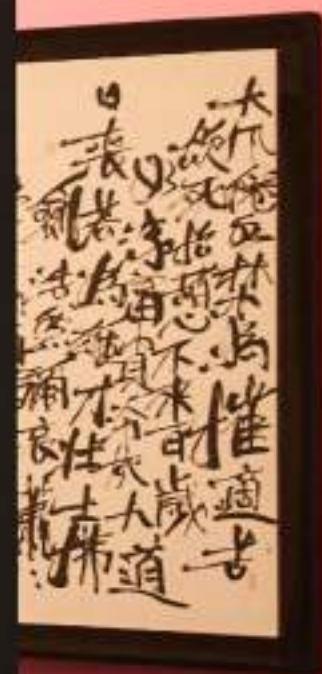




UnKnown
Overheard
 2022
 Recycled Teak frame, sticker, mirror
 55 x 75 cm (each)



Life is full of contradiction, humour, and absurdity—Isn't that Art?





Natee Utarit
Green Soldiers
2008
Oil on canvas
225 x 195 cm



Agus Suwage
Immaterial
 2019
 Oil on linen
 149 x 144 cm



Theresia Agustina Sitompul
Horizon of knowledge
 2008
 Aluminium
 49 x 71 x 35 cm



Allan Balisi
Where No Ghost Can Haunt Me
 2010
 Oil, graphite on canvas
 153 x 182 cm



Jia Aili
Untitled
 2009
 Oil on canvas
 21 x 34 cm

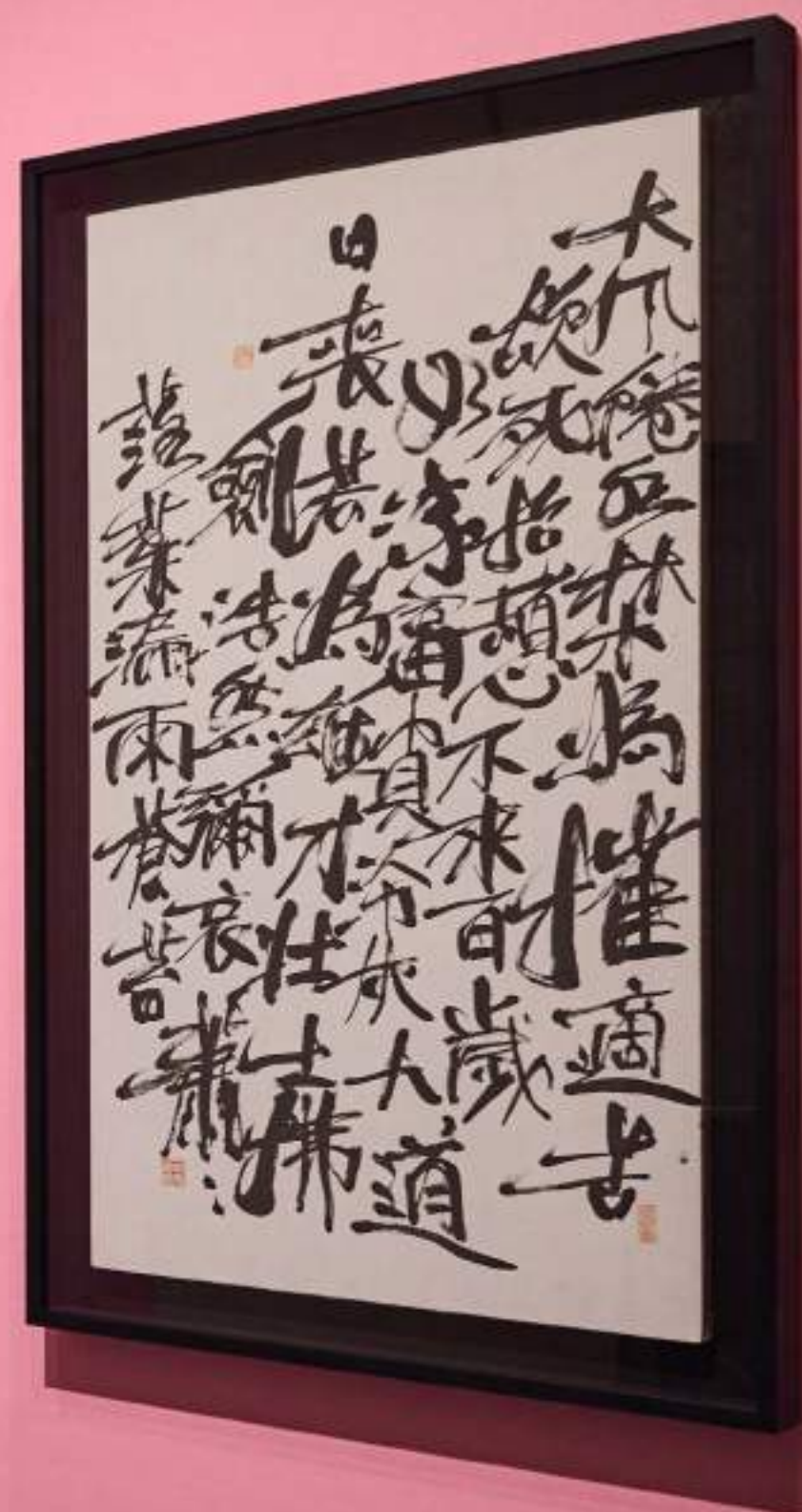
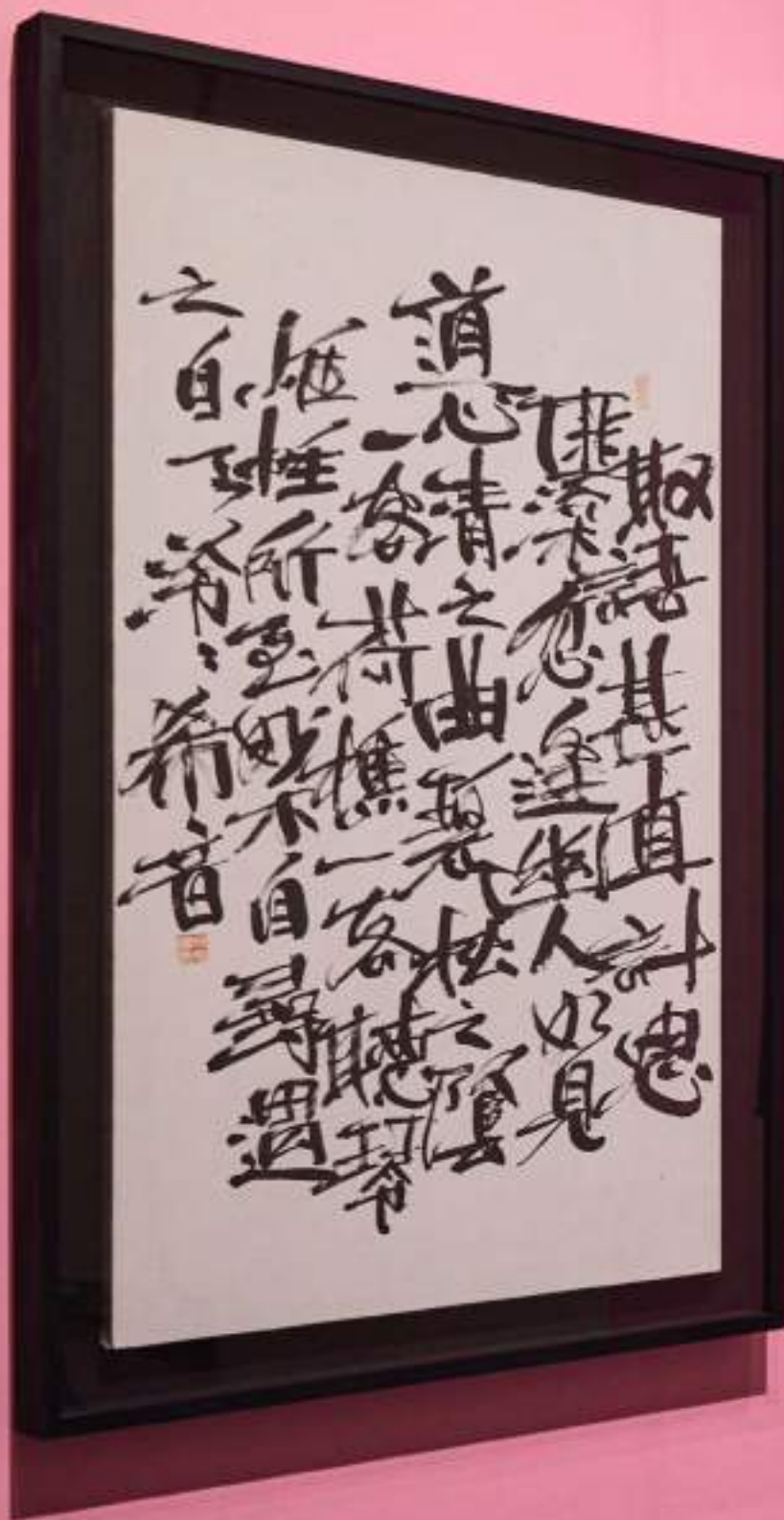
Life is full of contradiction, humour, and absurdity— isn't that Art?



Tran Tuan
Boat
2018
Paper, resin
25 x 70 x 32 cm

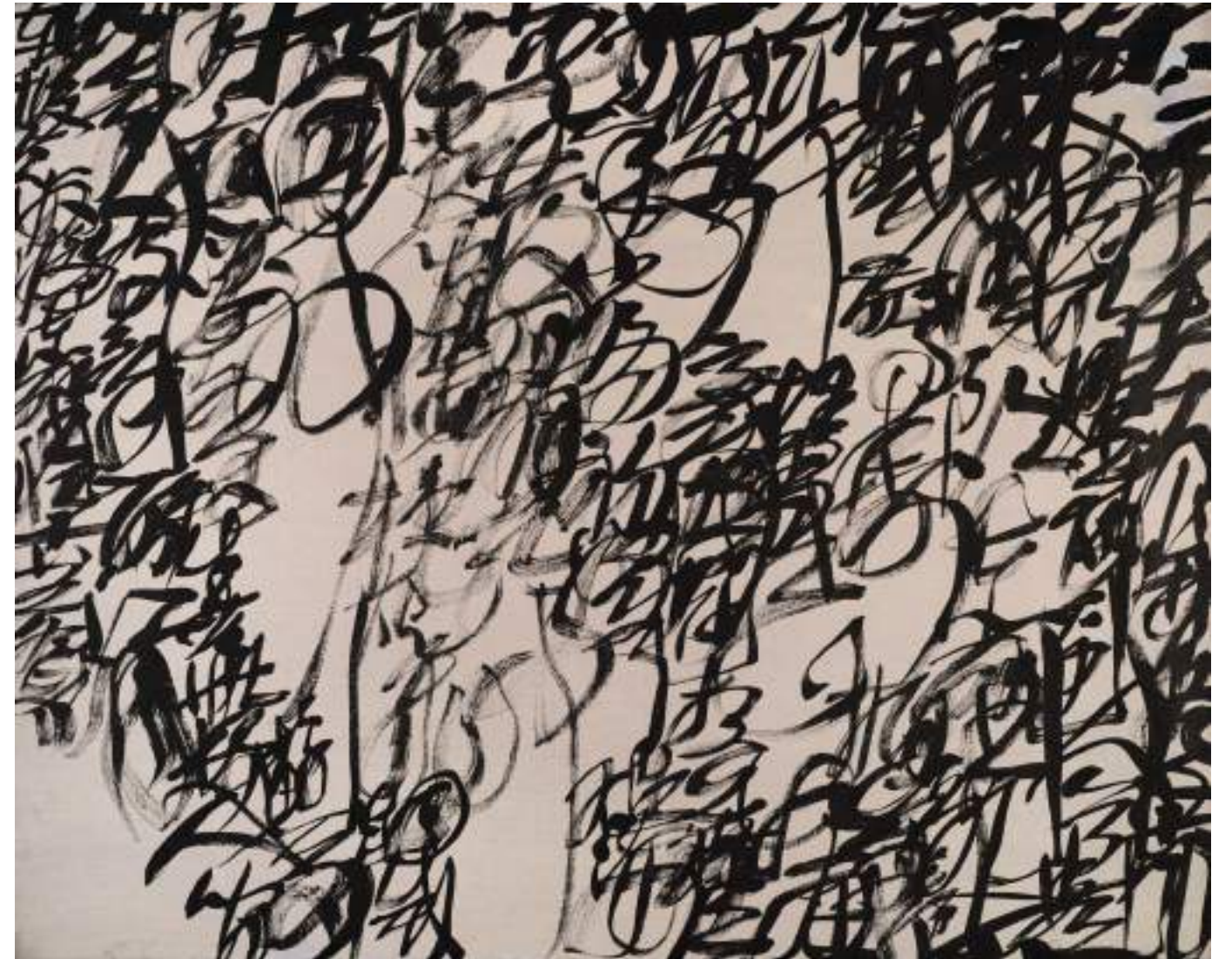


Khosrow Hassanzadeh
Ya Ali Madad
 2008
 Silk screen, acrylic, gold leaf
 180 x 225 cm

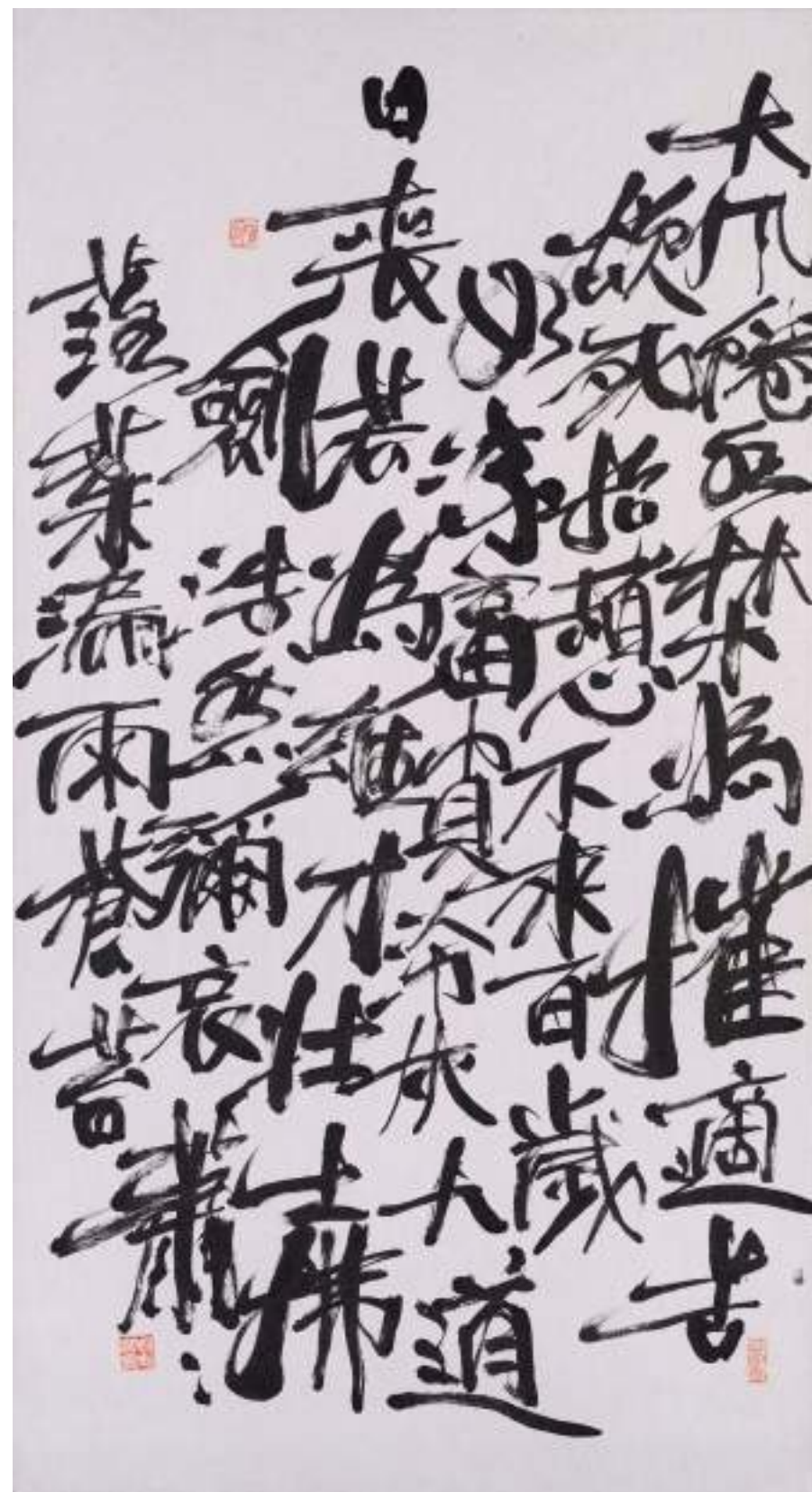




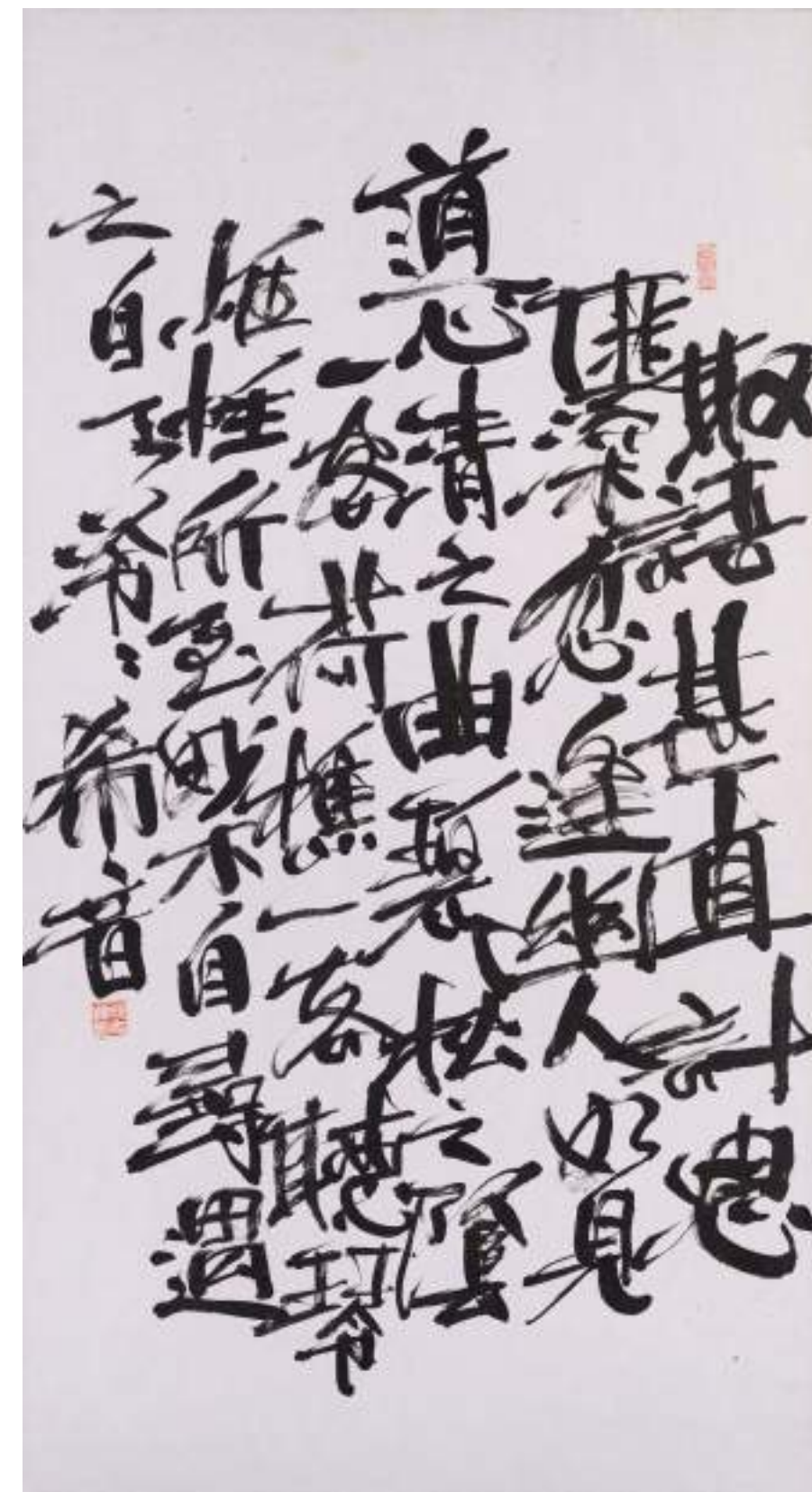
Sui Jianguo
Legacy Mantle
 2006
 Fibreglass, automotive paint
 61 x 48 x 27 cm
 Black, Edition 10 of 10



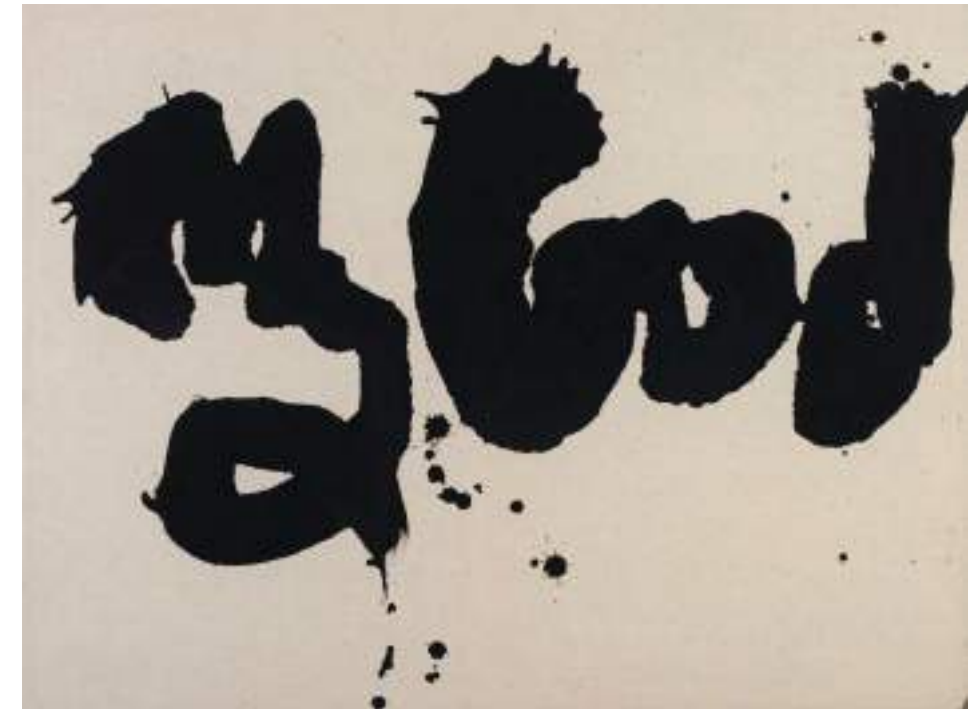
Wang Dongling
Su Shi - The Endless River Eastward Flows 苏轼·大江东去
 2018
 Acrylic on canvas
 79 x 99 cm



Qiu Zhijie
24 Poetry Grades (C)
2007
Ink, acrylic on canvas
129 x 70 cm



Qiu Zhijie
24 Poetry Grades (D)
2007
Ink, acrylic on canvas
129 x 70 cm



Yang Jiechang
My God
2002
Ink, acrylic on canvas
57 x 75 cm

FROM THE ARCHIVES

OF DREAMS AND CONTEMPLATION
(2019)

23 JAN–3 MAR 2019
THE PRIVATE MUSEUM

SELECTIONS FROM
THE COLLECTION OF RICHARD KOH

Of Dreams and Contemplation

Selections from the Collection of RICHARD KOH
23 January - 3 March 2019

In conjunction with Singapore Art Week 2019, The Private Museum is pleased to present *Of Dreams and Contemplation: Selections from the Collection of Richard Koh*. As part of The Private Museum's Collector Platform, this exhibition features contemporary works of international artists from the private art collection of veteran gallerist Richard Koh of Richard Koh Fine Art.

Presented as a whole for the first time, this is the inaugural showcase of 33 carefully-selected artworks from Koh's collection spanning more than 20 years. A gallerist by profession, Koh's distinctive way of collecting is informed by his quiet reflection and interactions with the art world. This collection is an exploration of his journey in the world of art and life, in public and in private, within Southeast Asia and internationally.

Of Dreams and Contemplation reflects a multitude of Koh's ruminations, personalities and interests through the works of 30 artists. Often referred to by Koh as 'Landscapes of Memory', each work evokes a specific memory, a tangible reminder of a fleeting moment in his life. Mostly abstract and monochromatic, the works offer rare insights into Richard Koh's private contemplations - inviting the viewer to interpret and delve deeper.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Private Museum extends our deepest gratitude to collector Richard Koh and collaborator Richard Koh Fine Art for their steadfast trust, unwavering dedication, and tireless efforts in bringing this exhibition to life.

Our special thanks goes to Mr Low Eng Teong, CEO, National Arts Council, who graciously officiated the opening reception as the Guest of Honour, adding a touch of elegance and distinction to this joyful occasion.

A heartfelt thank you goes to our esteemed exhibition partners—Currency Design, Allegro Print, AVS Printing, Helutrans Artmove, BARC Labs, FACTORY, and independent writer John Z. W. Tung—for their outstanding contributions that have significantly elevated the exhibition.

Once again, we warmly appreciate everyone involved for their time, dedication, and collaboration in making this exhibition a success.

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PUBLISHED BY

The Private Museum Ltd
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WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO

Richard Koh Fine Art

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Fung Wei Wei
Nor Harith Fadzilah Bin Ghazali

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BIOGRAPHIES

Aaron Teo (b. 1990, Singapore) is the Associate Director of The Private Museum, where he oversees programmes, outreach initiatives, and museum development, playing a pivotal role in shaping the institution’s vision and impact.

With over a decade of experience in the arts and cultural sector, Teo has impacted the Singapore’s artistic landscape—leading, curating, and co-curating more than 50 exhibitions and projects across a diverse range of themes and scales. His commitment lies in curating experiences that resonate with audiences, whether through spotlighting private art collections or organising expansive survey exhibitions that challenge artistic conventions and underscore the vital role of art, culture, and heritage in Singapore.

Having collaborated with over a hundred artists, collectors, curators, and creative professionals, his selected projects include *Strange Connections: Art and Architecture by Richard Hassell* (2024), *Chronic Compulsions: Selected Works from Art Addicts Anonymous* (2024), *Dancing with the Cosmos: Three Decades of Work by Kumari Nahappan* (2023), *Search and Discover: The Joy of Collecting – Selections from the Yeap Lam Yang Collection* (2020), *Silhouettes: Collecting Singapore Modern – Selections from the Collection of Su-Yen Wong and Fermin Diez* (2020), and *Emerging: Collecting Singapore Contemporary – Selections from the DUO Collection* (2020), among others.

John Z. W. Tung (b. 1990, Singapore) is an independent curator and exhibition-maker. In his former position as an Assistant Curator at the Singapore Art Museum (2015–2020), he curated and co-curated 9 exhibitions, alongside serving as a co-curator for the Singapore Biennale 2016, *An Atlas of Mirrors*, and the Singapore Biennale 2019, *Every Step in the Right Direction*. Three of the artwork commissions he curated for the biennales were finalists for the Benesse Prize, with one work winning the prestigious award. He is also the editor of the Singapore Art Museum’s first publication to chronicle its exhibition history, *Singapore Art Museum: An Index of Exhibitions* (1994–2018). His appointments as an independent curator include Festival Curator for the 7th & 8th Singapore International Photography Festival (2020 & 2022), Associate Curator for the Open House programme, *For the House; Against the House* (2021, 2022 & 2023), and the Curator of the first exhibition to examine the significance of the ground-breaking Singaporean artist initiative 5th Passage – *5th Passage: In Search of Lost Time*. Projects he has produced include *The Forest Institute* (2022), a large-scale architectural art installation dedicated to secondary forest ecologies, and *The Gathering: 千岁宫* (2022), a pop-up Chinese garden-teahouse experience in Chinatown, Singapore. He was also curator of the 2024 edition of *SEAFocus*, *Serial* and *Massively Parallel*.

To date, his close work with artists has realised close to a hundred artwork commissions and site-specific adaptations across 50 exhibitions. In 2023, he was the recipient of the inaugural Tan Boon Hui Curatorial Prize.

He holds a BA (Hons) in Arts Management awarded by Goldsmiths, University of London (at LASALLE College of the Arts) and an MA in Cultural Management from the Chinese University of Hong Kong where he graduated on the Dean’s List. He brings with him a decade of involvement across different fields in the arts, culture, and creative industry.

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ABOUT THE PRIVATE MUSEUM

The Private Museum is a non-profit private museum in Singapore founded by Singaporean philanthropist, art collector and real estate developer, Daniel Teo, together with his daughter Rachel Teo in 2010.

Fuelled by passionate patronage for the arts, the museum aims to be an alternative platform to bridge the gap between the private and the public. With a vision to promote art appreciation, the independent arts space engages local, regional and international audiences from all walks of life.

The Private Museum is a registered Charity and Institution of a Public Character (IPC) since 2010 and 2015 respectively.

OUR VISION

To be a leading, dynamic private museum in Southeast Asia and a national model in Singapore that engages, inspires and builds communities through art.

OUR MISSION

To serve as an independent platform in bridging gaps between public and private spheres through the exchange of ideas across cultures, educational initiatives, and artistic and curatorial collaborations with collectors and practitioners of the arts.

**Private
MUSEUM**

SINGAPORE

**THE PRIVATE MUSEUM LTD
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