



# MARYANTO: A JOURNEY OF FORKING PATHS

20 September - 27 October 2019

# MARYANTO: A JOURNEY OF FORKING PATHS

20 September - 27 October 2019

Yeo Workshop, Gillman Barracks



This catalogue is published on the occasion of the exhibition *Maryanto: A Journey of Forking Paths* at Yeo Workshop, Singapore from 20 September to 27 October 2019.

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NATIONAL ARTS COUNCIL  
SINGAPORE

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GILLMAN BARRACKS

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Listen to the stories told in black and white by Maryanto's monumental landscape works at his solo exhibition, *A Journey of Forking Paths*, presented by Yeo Workshop. Featuring the Yogyakarta-based artist's most detailed works to date, the exhibition will be showing his latest monochromatic canvases and paper works.

Hauntingly dark yet sublime, Maryanto's typical oeuvre depicts landscapes with dualities of once idyllic spaces that have been corrupted by systems of power. The landscapes are rendered beautiful and sweeping by the artist, but in reality, are inspired from exploited geographies. The title of the show came about as Maryanto found the image of a forking path apt, in illustrating the duality he encounters in his thought process when looking at an interesting landscape. He is faced with the stories the landscape has to tell of its past, and imagine its uncertain future of preservation or destruction. The metaphor of the forking path also points to how these landscapes are not eternal, and is affected by every decision we make, every path we choose. As such, the title of the show is a premise to look at the scenes the artist has captured in his works, and he hopes to inspire the audience to reflect on the effects people have inflicted on the natural environment.

Maryanto captures these landscapes through a tedious method of layering and scratching, creating permanent images in the form of hyperrealistic paintings. Being process-focused, he patiently carves and etches fine lines and forms, gradually revealing the hidden images within the canvas covered in black acrylic paint. This show also features a large graphite drawing and a mural, where he explores depicting scenes with a different medium, but with equal intensity. In uncovering these images, he also uncovers stories of unspoken truths, bringing messages hidden in plain sight to light in these deeply dangerous and political spaces.

As a research-based artist, Maryanto's final compositions are a culmination of his critical investigation into industries involved in the exploitation of natural resources. Focusing largely on geopolitical and environmental issues, the artist's examination into such topics also forms part of a much wider critique on postcolonial discourse in Indonesia. By subverting the romantic imagery commonly seen in traditional Indonesian landscape painting, his works in its meticulous effort may be viewed as a silent protest against widespread devastations to the environment – a result of institutionalized corporate land grabbing and human rights abuses fueled by rising consumer demands.

## *A JOURNEY OF FORKING PATHS*

Unlike the artist's previous method of storytelling through creating sets and themes within each solo exhibition, the current exhibition is comprised of individual works with ruminations of their own. The works in *A Journey of Forking Paths* deal individually with a theme on spiritual enlightenment, society and politics, economics and tourism, and the exploitation of natural resources. Where in previous exhibitions, interactivity involved sitting around a centralized sculpture or installation scribbling in sketchbooks about "what is utopia to you?", the exhibition now requires quiet contemplation of the stories these powerful images are trying to tell us. We expect the audience to be inundated right away by the painstaking craft in its fine lines and meticulous detail using etchings and cross-etchings on each canvas. Each work is now a scenery on its own without forming a whole chapter as the artist had done previously in his exhibitions.





Installation View of *Maryanto: A Journey of Forking Paths*.





Installation View of *Maryanto: A Journey of Forking Paths*.





Installation View of Maryanto, *Path of Enlightenment*, 2019. Scratching, Acrylic on Canvas, 150 x 200 cm.





Maryanto, *Terragouging*, 2018. Scratching, Acrylic on Canvas, 100 x 200 cm.

A talk between Maryanto whose practice, based in process and research, with an interest in environment, landscapes, can dovetail with interests of Matthew Schneider-Mayerson, Professor Assistant Professor of Social Sciences (Environmental Studies) at Yale-NUS College. Discussion topics include trends in climate change awareness movements, as well as how artists mediate the concepts and tackle hardships of the human environment using aesthetics and ultimately, optimism.

Maryanto's research interest stems from his early encounters during his childhood with foreign corporations extracting resources from natural landscapes, leading to urbanization and the displacement of many Indonesians. Maryanto's landscape works are a powerful critique of the exploitation of nature by mankind for resources, inspired by various locations he has visited. From his homeland in Yogyakarta to his residencies in Korea and the Netherlands, the artist conducts research by immersing himself at these various locations that inspired him to create his works. Each work becomes a narrative of what the artist has learnt through his interactions with the locals who passed down stories and myths about the particular location, or his own personal observations and encounters.

The artist shared some photographic images and stories of the landscapes he has encountered during his residencies in Korea and Indonesia, as well as how he works at his studio back home as a kick-off point before delving into

*Artist-in-Conversation:*  
*'Terragouging' with*  
**Matthew Schneider-Mayerson**  
**21 September 2019**  
**4 - 5:30 PM**

deeper discussions with Schneider-Mayerson about these landscapes and their respective research approaches to climate change. The talk addressed some questions: how does the artist plan to expand his research and continue to find research points from, given that he has been painting about the environment for several years? How can he present an alternative paradigm to the mainstream media, corporate sustainability programmes or environmentalists in viewing these problems?

Maryanto and Schneider-Mayerson have previously collaborated on the latter's book *An Ecotopian Lexicon*, that presents thirty novel terms that do not yet exist in the English language to envision ways of responding to the environmental challenges of our current generation. The artist contributed created an art work *Terragouging* (2018), in response to the "loanword" "terragouge" that is meant to be used as a verb to describe the effects of resource extraction, industrial farming, and urbanisation by humans on the Earth, transforming its natural environment. In this talk, they will be revisiting the term and discussing pressing issues about human impact on the environment in relation to Maryanto's works and research at various residencies, and how it can raise the audience's awareness to these issues.

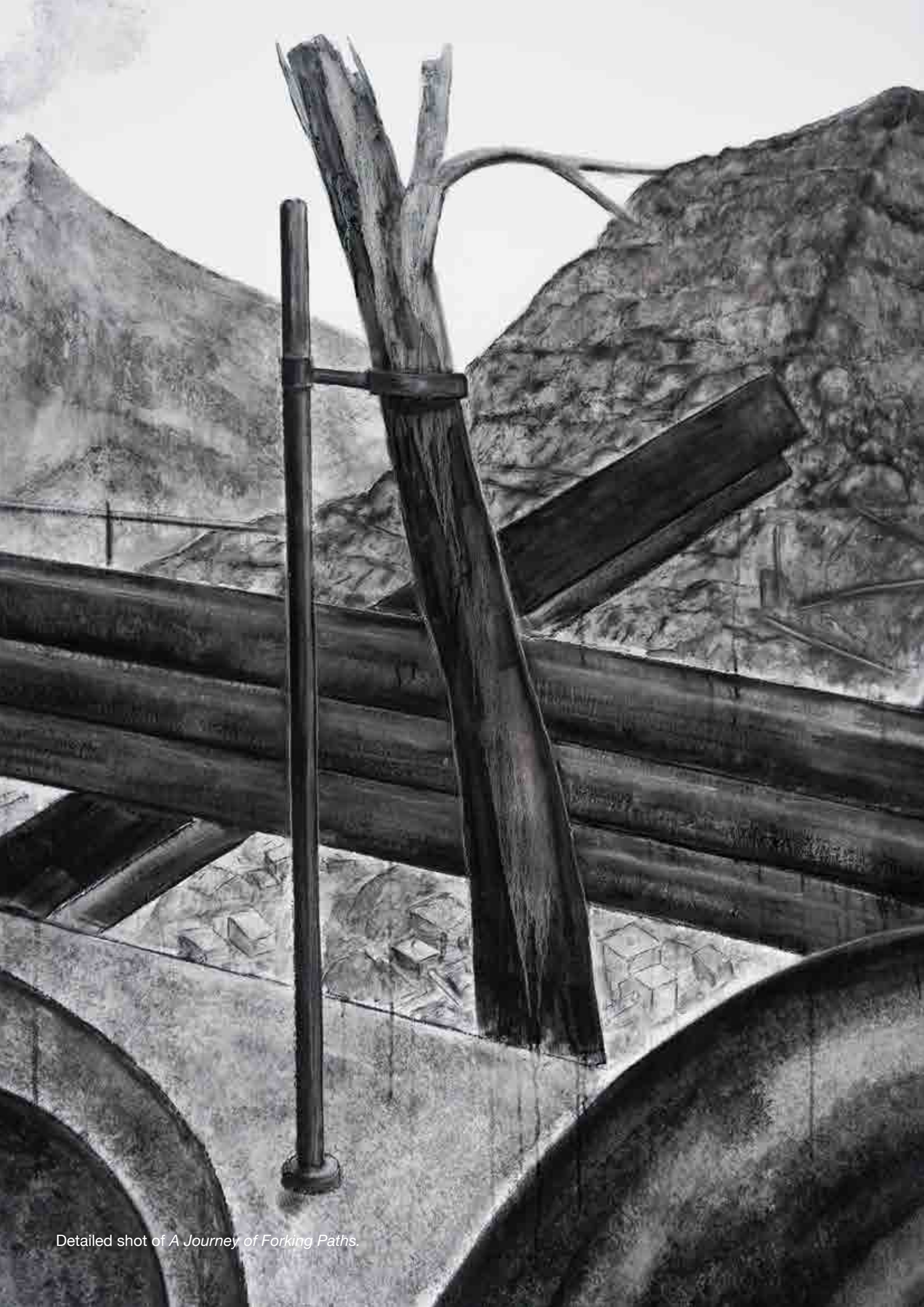


*A Journey of Forking Paths*  
2019  
Charcoal and Pigments on Wall  
340 x 495 cm



Maryanto, *A Journey of Forking Paths*, 2019. Charcoal and Pigment on Wall, 340 x 495 cm.





Detailed shot of *A Journey of Forking Paths*.

Bursting with dynamic energy, this mural is rendered live and site-specifically by the artist with charcoal and pigment. The mural acts as a precursor to the journey through the themes that will be explored in this exhibition: industry, politics, tourism and spirituality. With each theme, there lies a forking path where the audience reflects on how every decision lead to various outcomes and impacts on the natural environment; hence giving this exhibition its title *A Journey of Forking Paths*.

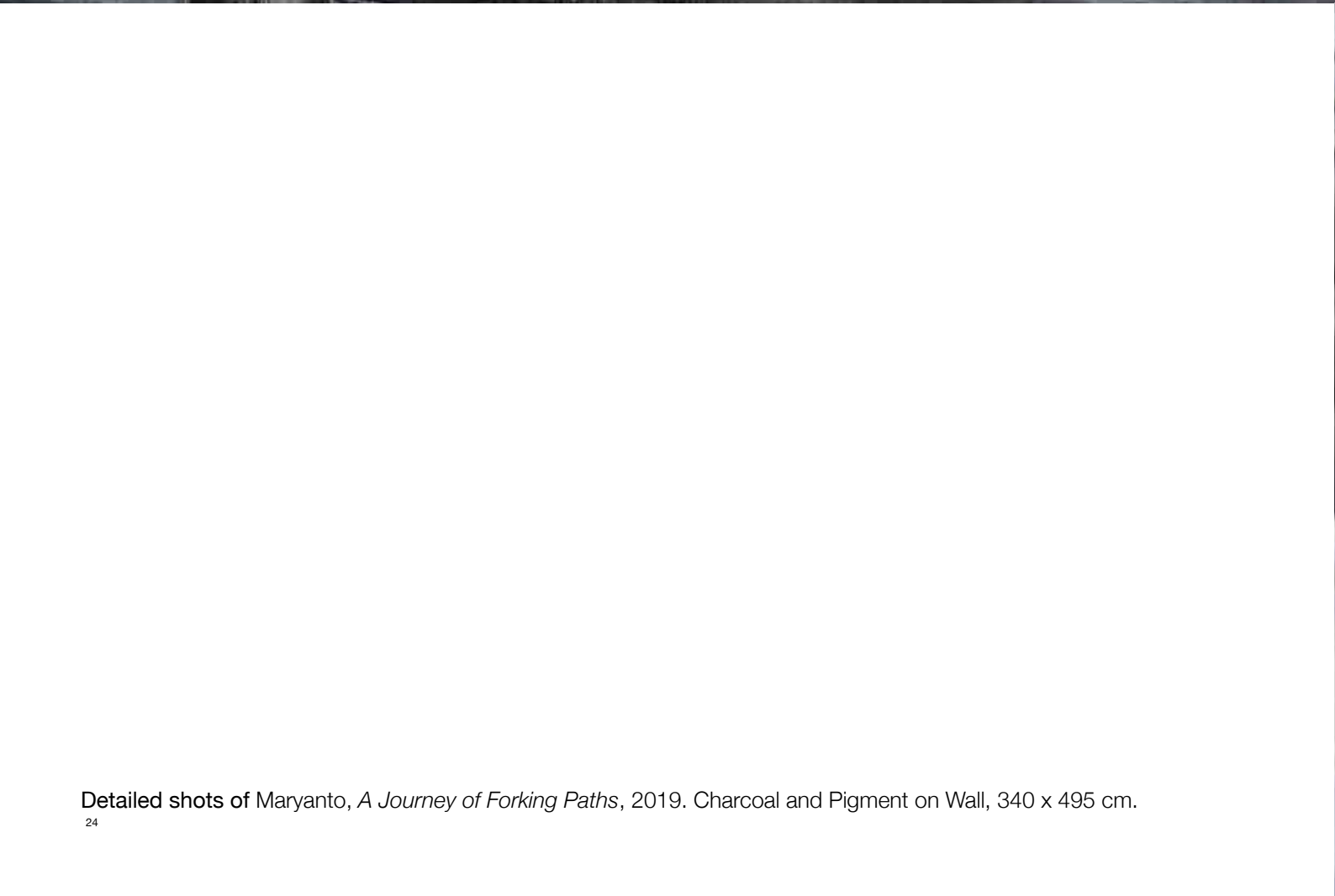
The tree depicted in the mural appears organic and soft, yet entangled with tough metal pipes and it is unclear when each begin and end. Maryanto was inspired by the idea of Mother Earth, where nature plays a maternal role nurturing all living things. During his residency in Gwangju, Korea he learnt about the phenomena of “moving trees” where trees are uprooted and moved when an area was marked for development. By doing so, the constant moving and replanting of these trees lead to weak roots that are unable to grasp firmly into the ground and the trees being prone to toppling during a storm. Similarly, he reflects on how moving nature out of our lives leads to uprooting our foundational relationship with nature and the world around us.





Detailed shot of *A Journey of Forking Paths*.





Detailed shots of Maryanto, *A Journey of Forking Paths*, 2019. Charcoal and Pigment on Wall, 340 x 495 cm.





Detailed shots of Maryanto, *A Journey of Forking Paths*, 2019. Charcoal and Pigment on Wall, 340 x 495 cm.

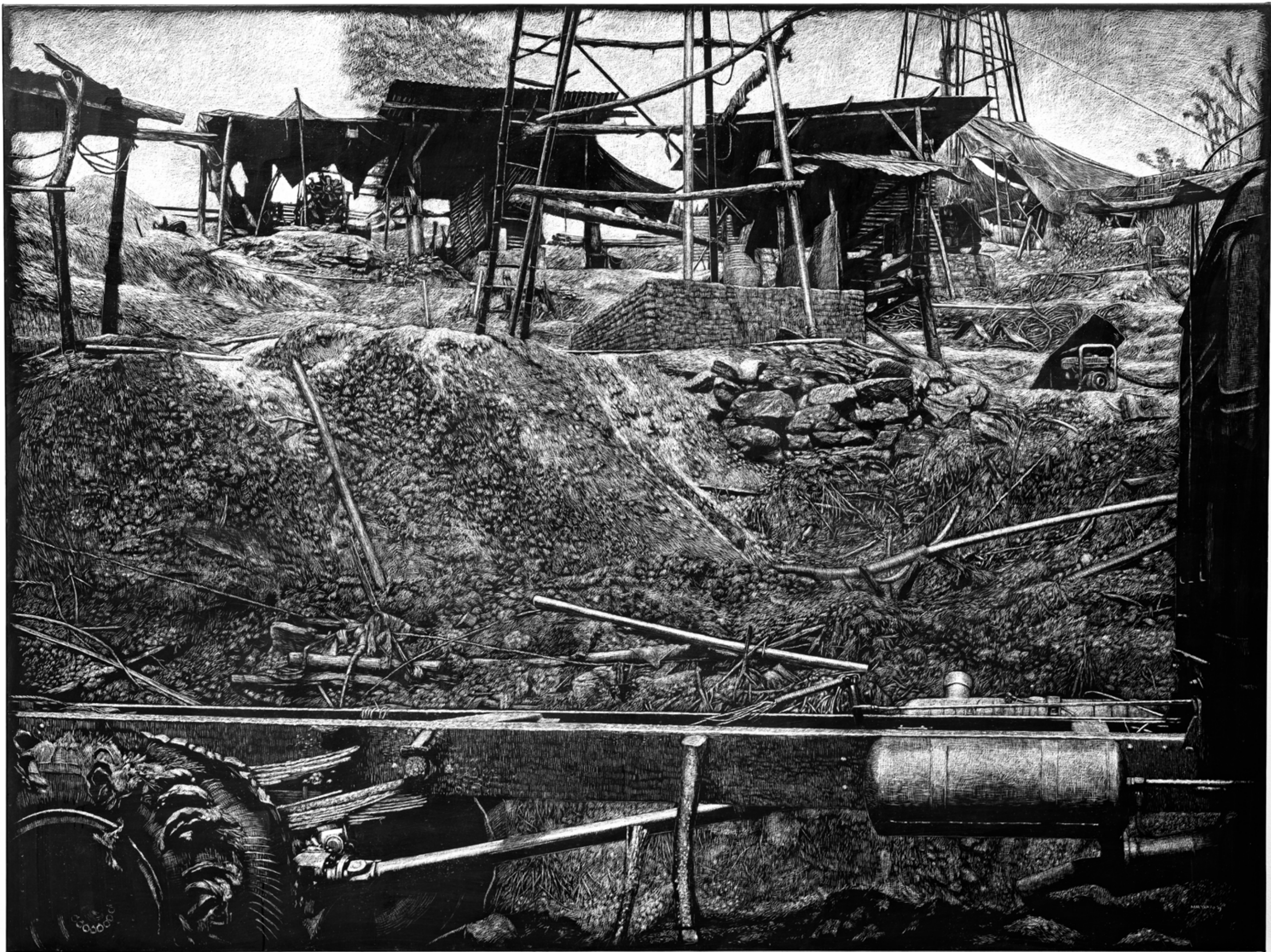
*Wonocolo*

2019

Scratching, Acrylic on Canvas

150 x 200 cm









“Texas” Wonocolo, Bojonegoro is a traditional oil mine in East Java, Indonesia. The mines were initially built by the Dutch colonialists and were abandoned during the Japanese Occupation. After Indonesia’s independence, the locals convinced the government to revive the oil mines and took ownership of them. While seeing this as a symbol of sovereignty as compared to other mines that were owned by large foreign corporations, the government is in the midst of implementing policies and regulations to mitigate the environmental impacts of excessive mining by the locals.

Maryanto visited the mines while pursuing his research interest in oil mining in Indonesia and Nigeria, and created works that were shown in the Yogyakarta Biennale 2015 and Jakarta Biennale 2015. This work revisits the research with a new perspective and is presented in a new context with these other thematic works.

Wonocolo is a commentary on the industries and its impacts on the environment, along with complications and intricacies when dealing within these issues. The work is foregrounded by industrial equipment and pipes rendered in a photo-realistic style that creates a sense of depth in the work, immersing the viewers into the scene. While human figures are not present and actively working, the empty shelters and equipment found in the background hints at the operations of heavy industrial activities. The darkness of this painting in this case is an accurate representation of the mining sites, covered in slick black oil as it spews out from the oil pumps on to the ground. This work prods the audience to reflect on a tenuous issue, as mining has become an important source of income for the locals and created many jobs for them, yet it is a double-edged sword as it strains the environment from these human activities. The situation is now facing a forked path that is dependent on the government’s policies and ability to manage the situation.





Installation View of *Wonocolo Series* at ArtBasel Hong Kong 2016.





20 Drum diisi dgn minyak yang akan memuncrat  
~~dan~~ secara bergantian, berirama. background mural.  
 landscape dan pertambangan minyak tradisional di Wonocolo Bojonegoro.  
 didasar instalasi adalah kolam minyak sedalam 15 cm.

Mangauto, 2015





Installation View of *Tumpah Ruah di Wonocolo (Brimming in Wonocolo)* at Jakarta Biennale 2015.



*The Border between North and South*  
2019

Scratching, Acrylic on Canvas  
150 x 200 cm







This painting is a scenery styled after a landscape that the artist chanced upon as he wandered to the demilitarized zone (DMZ) between North and South Korea during his residency at the ACC Gwangju. He realized that these lush dense biodiverse forests are enchantingly beautiful but highly politicized and dangerous, guarded and littered with mines. Similar to the political standstill between North and South Korea, the politicization of the landscape created an unintended effect of preserving the pristine landscape. The forests have become frozen in time and untouched by mankind, allowing nature to take over and flourish in abundance.

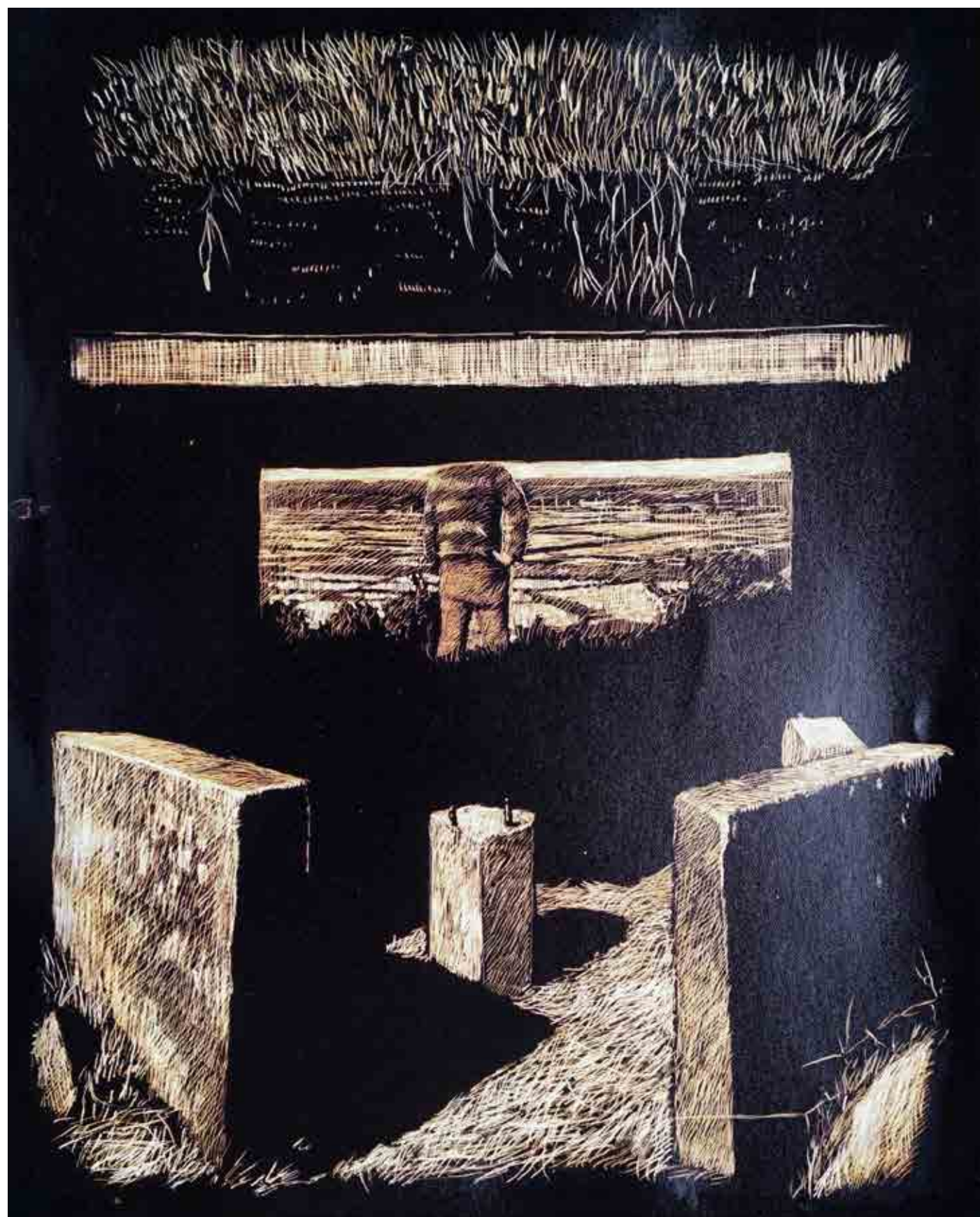
In these highly detailed paintings, where no effort, time and labour of the artist has been spared, this particular painting also sees a figure re-introduced after years of making canvases with only industrial landscapes, exploited landscapes, machinery without figures. The last characters were seen in Maryanto's paintings in 2011 and represented his family, neighbours and friends. The character in the ghillie suit is hidden in camouflage as it advances between the borders of north and south, perhaps representing an intention as the artist departs from his usual subjects of deforestation, oil mining and land exploitation in oil fields, landscapes spoilt by touristic exploitation and urban development, to explore more overtly political landscapes. The identity of the figure is a mystery, and it is hard to determine whether it is friendly, aggressive or even human, much like the uncertain political landscape of Korea embodied by the DMZ.





Installation View.





Maryanto, *Ice Cream Hill*, 2018. Scratching on Photo Paper, 25 x 20 cm.



Maryanto, *Beautiful Danger*, 2018. Scratching on Photo Paper, 25 x 20 cm.





Maryanto, *Hole on the Wall (Cheorwon)*, 2018. Scratching on Photo Paper, 20 x 25 cm.



*Path of Enlightenment*  
2019  
Scratching, Acrylic on Canvas  
150 x 200 cm









Detailed shot of *Path of Enlightenment*

Maryanto was inspired to create this work when he was hiking on a Mudeungsan mountain during his residency in Gwangju, Korea. Through his conversations with the people he encountered, he observed their relationship with nature. Many of them were avid hikers who climb the mountain every weekend, especially the elderly, and they have formed a familiar community. The hikers would enjoy lunch and soju with a view, or visit the temple nearby. When asked by the artist why the people enjoyed climbing the mountain, they replied that they enjoy looking at the horizon where the sky meets the earth.

Maryanto associated the sky with the spiritual and the earth with reality where we currently live in. He likened the mountain view with that of a utopia, where we encounter the fine line between the spiritual and reality; and we are able to leave our everyday realities such as our problems and the crowded city at the foot of the mountain below. *Path of Enlightenment* captures the serenity and calmness that the forest provides, and depicts a quiet pathway into the wilderness leading to a hidden temple. The artist captures our innate desire for high places and isolation from our worldly problems, with nature providing a form of spiritual escape.





Detailed shots of Maryanto, *Path of Enlightenment*, 2019. Scratching, Acrylic on Canvas, 150 x 200 cm.



*Ratapan Angin (The Wailing of the Wind)*

2019

Scratching, Acrylic on Canvas

150 x 200 cm









Detailed shot of *Ratapan Angin* (*The Wailing of the Wind*).

Ratapan Angin depicts a violent windy scenery of a moment where a tree, snapped at its base, will fall over. This is a classically built composition, with varying sharpness and details in resolution, and is a hyperrealistic depiction of a natural phenomenon intended to arrest the audience. Maryanto came across this scene while he was hiking at the Dieng Plateau, near Wonosobo, Central Java.

Visitors are rewarded after climbing the plateau with a serene view of Telaga Warna, a tricoloured lake that is said to be blue, green and purple. Maryanto uses the symbolism of the fallen tree to illustrate how tourism has changed the view where sacrifice is required to make way for changes, and the wind will no longer blow through the trees.

The panoramic site and the village near it currently face a paradox, and its future remains undetermined. With the increasing number of tourists travelling to visit the plateau and lake, the villagers and farmers are presented with job opportunities and the need to develop their infrastructures to accommodate the tourists. While the villagers decided together as a community to develop into a tourist destination, there are repercussions on the land. Trees are being cut down, new structures such as hotels and shops are being built in order to make the picturesque view tourist-friendly. Ironically, in attempting to capture the view of the lake, the developments have also started changing this picturesque landscape. The upside of the development however is that raising awareness of the area also brings the possibility of conservation of these places. The artist himself was caught in a dilemma between bringing our attention to these landscapes through his art, or retaining a selfish desire to preserve it, and for his own selfish enjoyment.





Detailed shots of Maryanto, *Ratapan Angin*, 2019. Scratching, Acrylic on Canvas. 150 x 200 cm.





Detailed shot of *Ratapan Angin* (*The Wailing of the Wind*).



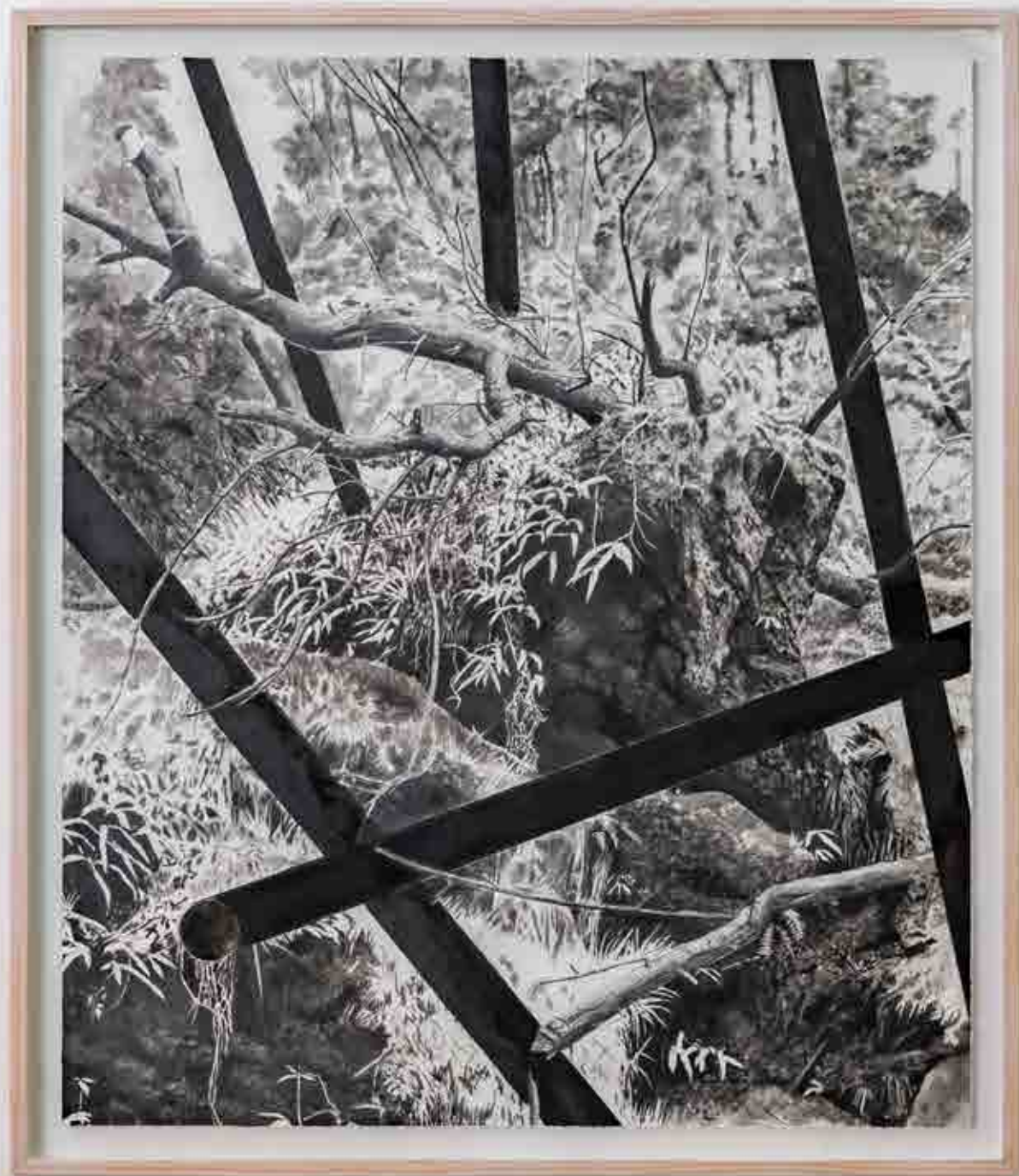


Installation shot of *Maryanto: A Journey of Forking Paths*.



*Telaga Warna*  
2019  
Graphite on Paper  
115 x 135 cm





This large graphite drawing is an abstract observation derived from the same site as the painting next to it - Ratapan Angin. It also deals with the same idea of anthropogenic geomorphology through the intervention of the touristic man. It offers a different view and perspective of the plateau, similar to how the development of the area would change the view. The thick black lines across the drawing are iconic in Maryanto's canvas works but also a representation of infrastructural frames that are being built in the area. The lines from the pipes and beams are intriguing to the artist, who see it as an artistic device to frame an image and thus this landscape, but also a violent foreign intrusion into it.



Maryanto (b.1977, Indonesia) creates evocative, black and white paintings, drawings, and installations that undermine the romantic language of traditional landscape painting to examine socio-political structures in the physical spaces that he depicts. Through fable-like and theatrical settings, these landscapes are subjected to the whims of colonisers and capitalists through technological development, industrialisation, pollution of the land and exploitation of its natural resources.

## *THE ARTIST*

### **EDUCATION**

1997 – 2005

Faculty of Fine Art, Indonesia Institute of the Art, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

### **SOLO EXHIBITIONS**

2019

‘A Journey of Forking Paths’ Yeo Workshop, Singapore

‘permanent osmosis’ LIR Space, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

2017

‘Story of Space’ Yeo Workshop, Singapore

2015

‘Space of Exception’ Yeo Workshop, Singapore

2013

‘RABKopen 2013’, Rijksakademie van beeldende kunsten, Amsterdam, Netherlands

‘Contemporary Indonesia: Maryanto’, ArtAffairs, Amsterdam, Netherlands

‘The New Order’, Heden, Den Haag, Netherlands

2012

‘RABKopen 2012’, Rijksakademie van beeldende kunsten, Amsterdam, Netherlands

2011

‘Once upon a time in Rawalelatu’, Galeri Semarang, JAD Main Hall, Jakarta, Indonesia



2008

‘Rawalelatu’, Kedai Kebun Forum, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

2005

‘A graphic art exhibition’, Wisma Ary’s, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

2003

‘Minggiran’, Quatro Gato Cafe, Alicante, Spain

## **SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS & ART FAIRS**

2019

Art Jakarta 2019, JCC Senayan, Jakarta, Indonesia

2018

‘Java Art Energy’ Institut des Cultures d’Islam, Paris, France

‘Il. Industrial Art Biennial’, Labin Art Express XXI, Labin, Croatia

‘Pressing Matters’, Framer Framed, Amsterdam, Netherlands

‘Behind the Terrain - Sketches on imaginative landscape’, Koganei Art Spot  
Chateau, Tokyo, Japan

2017

‘After Utopia: Revisiting the Ideal in Asian Contemporary Art’, Samstag Museum of  
Art, Adelaide, Australia

‘ACC-Rijksakademie Dialogue and Exchange’, Asia Culture Centre, Gwangju,  
South Korea

‘Europalia’, Bozar Centre for Fine Arts, Brussels, Belgium

2016

‘Behind the Terrain - sketches on imaginative landscape’, Studio Kalahan,  
Yogyakarta, Indonesia

‘In Search of Balance’, Setouchi Triennale, Naoshima, Japan  
Art | JOG | 16, Taman Budaya Yogyakarta, Indonesia  
Art Basel Hong Kong , Discoveries Section

2015

‘Maju Kena Mundur Kena: Learning in The Present’, Jakarta Biennale, Jakarta,  
Indonesia

‘Hacking Conflict’, Jogja Biennale XIII, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Art Bazaar Jakarta 2015, Jakarta, Indonesia

Art | JOG | 15, Taman Budaya Yogyakarta, Indonesia

‘AFTER UTOPIA’, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore

Art Paris Art Fair 2015, Grand Palais, Paris, France

2014

‘Drive’ Public Art Project, Gillman Barracks, Singapore

‘Socio-Landscape’, National Museum of Cambodia, Cambodia

ART | JOG | 14, Taman Budaya Yogyakarta, Indonesia

‘Neo Icono Clasts’, Langgeng Gallery, Magelang, Indonesia

Art Stage Singapore, Marina Bay Sands, Singapore

2013

‘made in commons’, Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam, Amsterdam,  
Netherlands

‘Space of Exception’, 5th Moscow Biennale, Moscow, Russia

ART | JOG | 13, Taman Budaya Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Kunst Rai Art Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Netherlands

‘Turning Targets - 25 years of Cemeti ’, Cemeti Art House, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

‘Gloomy Prospects and Lucid Adventures’, Nest, Den Haag, Netherlands

Art Fair Art Warehouse, Rotterdam, Netherlands

‘RABKopen 2013’, Rijksakademie van beeldende kunsten, Amsterdam,  
Netherlands

2012

‘Permeabilities’, CEIA, Belo Horizonte, Brazil

‘Drawing a distance: drawings from 3 cities’, House of Matahati, Selangor, Malaysia

‘Legacy, a Trace of Civilisation’, ESA Sampoerna Art House, Surabaya, Indonesia

‘Equator#2’, Biennale Jogja XI, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

‘RABKopen 2012’, Rijksakademie van beeldende kunsten, Amsterdam,  
Netherlands



2011  
‘Beastly’, Salihara, Jakarta, Indonesia  
‘PAUSE: Automatic Drawing Simple and Dangerous’, Langgeng Art Foundation, Yogyakarta, Indonesia  
‘Crop Cycle’, Gallery Canna, Jakarta, Indonesia  
‘Wedhus Gembel’, Yogyakarta, Indonesia  
‘Bandar’, Sogan Gallery, Singapore  
‘Beastly’, Cemeti Art House, Yogyakarta, Indonesia  
‘Mix Hang #2: Fine Art Graphic’, Tembi Contemporary, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

2010  
‘Cells Button #4 Invincible Cells’, House of Natural Fiber, Yogyakarta, Indonesia  
‘Comical Brothers’, Andi’s Gallery, National Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia  
‘Space & Image | Artpreneurship’, Ciputra World Marketing Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia

2009  
‘Happening Kota Komik’, Kedai Kebun Forum, Centre Culturel Français, Yogyakarta, Indonesia  
‘Hello Print!’, Edwin Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia  
‘Indonesia Printmaking Today’, Tembi Contemporary, Yogyakarta, Indonesia  
Contemporary Wedding Tobacco ‘Roro Blonyo’ #2, Oei Hong Djien, Magelang, Indonesia  
‘IVAA Book Aid’, Edwin Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia

2007  
‘NEO NATION’, Jogja Biennial VII, Yogyakarta, Indonesia  
‘Open Studio Grafis Minggiran’, Cemeti Art House, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

2006  
‘The Past The Forgotten (Masa Lalu Masa Lupa) #2’, Cemeti Art House, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

2005  
Lessedra 4th World Art Print Annual, Lessedra Contemporary Art Project, Sofia, Bulgaria  
‘Republik Art’ Public Art Project, Kedai Kebun Forum, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

2004/2003  
Lessedra 3rd World Art Print Annual, Lessedra Contemporary Art Project, Sofia, Bulgaria  
Lessedra 2nd World Art Print Annual, Lessedra Contemporary Art Project, Sofia, Bulgaria  
  
2002  
‘Serangan Fajar’, Museum Benteng Vredeburg, Yogyakarta, Indonesia  
‘Yogyakarta-Liechtenstein Journey’, Taman Budaya Yogyakarta, Indonesia

**RESIDENCIES**

2015  
Jogja Biennale ‘Equator’ Artist-in-Residence, Lagos, Nigeria

2012  
Rijksakademie van beeldende kunsten, Amsterdam, Netherlands

2004  
Escuela de Orient programme, Casa Asia Barcelona, Mallorca, Spain

**FELLOWSHIPS**

2012  
Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, Netherlands

**SELECTED COLLECTIONS**

Tropen Museum, The Netherlands  
KPMG, The Netherlands  
Museum MACAN, Jakarta, Indonesia  
Sifang Art Museum, Nanjing China  
Nijvest Asia Corporate Collection, Singapore  
Various private & corporate collections



