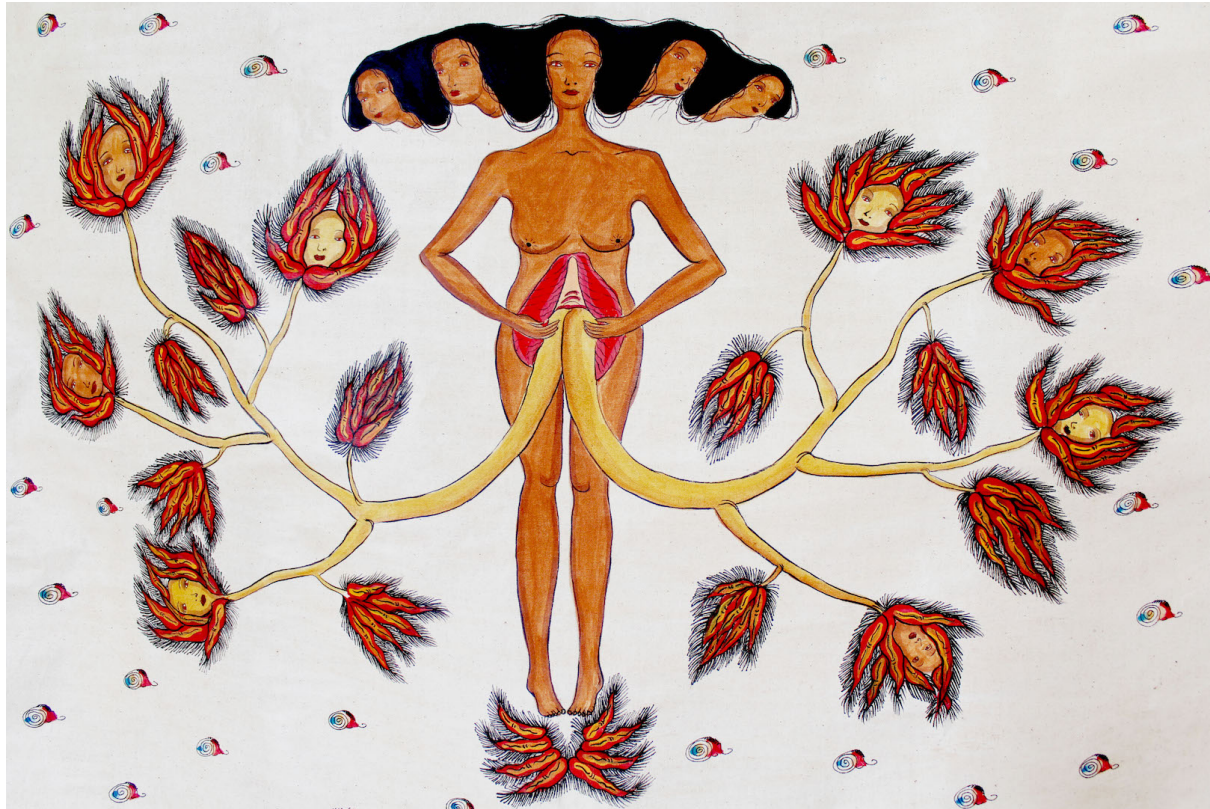


PRESS RELEASE  
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## CITRA SASMITA

### *Ode To The Sun*

10 January – 29 February 2020



Citra Sasmita, *Prologue (Detail)*, 2019. Acrylic on Kamasan Traditional Canvas, 90 x 260 cm

**Opening Day:** Saturday, 10 January 2020

**Exhibition Dates:** 10 January – 29 February 2020

**Exhibition Venue:** Yeo Workshop, 47 Malan Road #01-25 S(109444)

**Artist Talk with Alia Swastika:** 11 January 2020, 2 – 3.30 PM

**Opening Hours:** Tuesdays – Saturdays, 11 AM – 7 PM

Sundays, 12 – 6 PM

Closed on Mondays

Be greeted by the scent of turmeric and herbs when you step in to the gallery, as part of an immersive art piece. Have all your preconceived notions about Balinese art upended as Yeo Workshop presents *Ode To The Sun*, a solo exhibition by the maverick young Balinese artist Citra Sasmita.

Turmeric is traditionally used for rituals and its bright yellow colour symbolizes the sun, hence giving the exhibition its title. The artist used the spice to write text on the floor as part of her work entitled *Prologue*. The text is taken from the Kakawin, an ancient Balinese narrative poetry. The scents and text are accompanied by brightly painted traditional Kamasan canvases suspended from the ceiling in a large circular structure.

A rare exception in the otherwise male dominated world of Balinese art, Citra Sasmita challenges the patriarchal nature of Indonesian society. Her artwork unequivocally rejects the ubiquitous aesthetic depiction of Balinese women as passive decorative elements that exist primarily for the gratification of the tourist gaze. Consummately utilizing traditional elements that have been selected from the ancient but vibrant cultural legacy of Bali, Sasmita endows her female figures with a powerful agency.

The artwork of Sasmita is motivated on a fundamental level by the need to forge a connection with her past. This sentiment is clearly manifested in her various artworks that incorporate narratives from classical Balinese literature, and elements of traditional Balinese aesthetic conventions. Nevertheless, Sasmita departs from the canon of conventional Balinese art by producing artwork that often castigates the pervasive sexual and social inequality that is so deeply ingrained in Balinese society. She wishes to trace marginalized narratives of women in particular, who once played key roles in Balinese society and held influential positions. The themes that frequently recur in her artwork stem from Sasmita's deeply rooted feminist convictions and her determination to resist what she regards as the overweening patriarchy of a conservative society.

Sasmita's paintings are frequently dominated by the figures of nude women. Depicted in bright and vivid tones, these female characters are often portrayed as the heroic protagonist in conjunction with potent symbols that have been selected from the primeval realm of Balinese mysticism. Sasmita paints on a variety of mediums, ranging from canvas to leather. However, as a versatile artist, Sasmita has also ventured into the realm of the three dimensional as evinced by her creation of installations. These installations incorporate discarded materials such as words written in turmeric, natural fibers, and pieces of meat, striving to convey themes linked with female solidarity and empowerment. At a previous solo exhibition entitled "Under the Skin", one such installation consisted of vegetable fibers that had been woven together. Representing a braid of human hair, it alludes to the story of Drupadi from the Hindu epic known as the Mahabharata. Dishonored in public by the Kaurava brothers, Drupadi undertook a vow never to braid her hair again until her tormentors had been slain. Sasmita hence uses this mythical reference to symbolize female resistance in the face of ongoing efforts to suppress women.

*Ode To The Sun* is the third part of the *Timur Merah Project* that Sasmita previously presented in Biennale Jogja XV 2019. The exhibition turns a critical gaze upon the world of traditional Balinese literature which has historically confined itself to celebrating the exploits of male aristocrats while excluding female voices. Invoking a Balinese past characterised by the existence of powerful female rulers such as the 19<sup>th</sup> century queen, Dewa Istri Kanya, Sasmita transforms classic narratives of war and romance by imbuing them with a female perspective.

### **About the Artist**

Citra Sasmita (b.1990, Indonesia) was born in Tabanan, Central Bali in 1990. Descended from a lineage of performing artists, Sasmita naturally developed a keen interest in art. She initially chose to study literature and physics at Udayana University and Ganesha University of Education respectively. However, her interest in art was renewed when she chose to join a theatrical troupe as a university student.

Sasmita’s subsequent occupation as an illustrator for the Bali Post provided her with the opportunity to develop her abilities as an artist and she soon began to participate in exhibitions. In 2016, she garnered the attention of art critics when she exhibited a painting that depicted a woman kissing the severed head of a pig. Intended to serve as an indictment of the widespread abuse of women in Balinese society, the painting affirmed Sasmita’s credentials as a courageous and socially conscious artist who was not afraid to take on controversial topics. She thereafter went on to exhibit an installation entitled “Mea Vulva, Maxima Vulva” which featured an assortment of ceramic vaginas together with a set of scales. Embodying Sasmita’s musings upon the entrenched social inequalities within Balinese society. Her most recent solo exhibition called “Under the Skin”, was held at the Yogyakarta based Redbase art institution in 2018. In 2017, she was awarded the Gold Award after winning the UOB Indonesian Painting of the Year competition.



Citra Sasmita with her work at Biennale Jogja XV 2019, *Do We Live In The Same Playground*, Jogja National Museum. *Timur Merah Project: The Embrace of My Motherland*, 2019. Acrylic on canvas, wooden hanger, spices bag, turmeric powder, 450 x 90cm.

### About the Gallery

Yeo Workshop is a contemporary art gallery that produces a series of exhibitions, represented artists projects, and gallery-based programmes such as talks, symposiums and guiding research. Every few years the gallery undertakes an archival research project on a pioneer generation artist that is relevant to our reading of contemporary art, having recently held the first major retrospective for Singaporean figurative artist Solamalay Namasivayam. The gallery’s aim is to promote the work of contemporary local and international artists with a strong artistic practice, and engage with the Singaporean and visiting audience. It puts emphasis on education via programmes surrounding its exhibition.

Other projects of the gallery include *TWENTY TWENTY* presented by The Singapore Arts Club in conjunction with Singapore Art Week. The project transforms a former ship repairs workshop and warehouse at 2 Cavan Road into a pop-up art destination. Read more about it [here](#). Audrey Yeo, Founder of Yeo Workshop, was also the recent Project Director for S.E.A. Focus – An STPI project , boutique art fair showcasing Southeast Asian Galleries in its first edition, and continues to work on its VIP and education programmes.