

PRESS RELEASE *For immediate release* – 11 July 2023

Citra Sasmita: Atlas of Curiosity

Opening Sat 29 July 2023
Exhibition Runs until 20 August 2023



Citra Sasmita, *The Green Paradise*, 2023, antique wood carving hanger, fabric, acrylic on traditional Kamasan canvas, 165.5 x 117 cm

Yeo Workshop is pleased to present *Atlas of Curiosity* by Citra Sasmita, the artist's second solo exhibition at the gallery. This new body of work stems from her long-term ongoing research project *Timur Merah*, meaning 'The East is Red', which traces historical narratives around the Malay-Indonesian archipelago (also known as Nusantara), particularly those about Bali. For this exhibition, Sasmita continues to incorporate textiles in her traditional Kamasan paintings as a symbolisation of body and souls. She takes inspiration from *Fabricating Power with Balinese Textile* (2018) by anthropologist and doctor Urmila Mohan, who wrote extensively about the historical significance of fabrics in Bali particularly its trading history when the Dutch and British had vied for control over Bali's port, and its later emergence into a valuable commodity for communication. Secret codes were hidden within fabrics and transported between kingdoms in the archipelago to disseminate information, much like morse codes used during wartime.

At the same time of embedding her paintings within this subtext, Sasmita also accentuates the ceremonial importance of textiles for strength and protection in her culture. In ritualistic practices like prayers, offerings, and marriages, one is wrapped in fabric to demarcate time and space, signifying cosmological unity between the wearer and divine spirits. Echoing this revered manifestation of intimacy and continuity, she has carefully sourced fabrics that were manufactured between 1998 and 2000 for Balinese rituals, and patterned after older collections, to frame her Kamasan paintings. Sasmita says, "The combination of textile patterns reflects our traditional language of belief systems, while my paintings represent an accumulation of my cultural memory, especially my encounters with the Balinese sacred symbol known as the 'Rajah'."

Extending the personification of her paintings, Sasmita introduces hair and wooden carvings as an intuitive development to her practice. Rooted in the notions of genealogy, hair is a manifestation of memory, karma, and reincarnation in Balinese tradition. Where there is an absence of a formal collection of cultural artefacts in Bali, the wooden carvings deftly gesture to the broader repatriation and conservation issues that persist in the region. They also recall past traditions of recording time and sovereignty, where animal motifs and symbols are inscribed to reflect astrologic years and were emblematic of the ruler at the time. In other carvings, they reveal traces of migration such as ancestors who moved from Java to Bali at the end of the Indic Majapahit kingdom. Adapting the form of mandala boats and Balinese architecture for the hang of her works, Sasmita illuminates the profundities in the semiotics and semantics of cultural objects and iconography from her hometown. *Atlas of Curiosity* embodies a sense of searching for a primordial experience that is peculiar, as fragments of time, history and memory are unearthed and permeating the space.

Probing the role of women in Indonesian literary and artistic canon in manifold ways, spiritual and emphatic, these works urge deeper reflection on access and autonomy, in relation to gender and class constructs in society, and Dutch colonialism during the 19th century. Bali's colonial history had shaped notions of authenticity and who was considered valuable in Balinese artistic heritage. This exhibition sheds critical light on the important but often overlooked role of women in Indonesian history, challenging existing post-colonial narratives that perpetuate gender stereotypes and inequality. Imbued with a powerful cosmology, Sasmita's works inevitably pull you into her own expansive, prophetic universe of divine heroines—one that is undeniably perceptive and convincing. Each work acts as a repository of spellbinding chronicles that invites you to look closer and ponder about its prolific meanings.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY



Citra Sasmita (b. 1990, Bali, Indonesia) focuses on unravelling the myths and misconceptions of Balinese art and culture. She is also deeply invested in questioning a woman's place in the social hierarchy and seeks to upend the normative construct of gender. In her practice, she revisits ancient Balinese mythologies and retools traditional artistic techniques and materials to address misconceptions that persist in contemporary society. Using the vibrant and thriving genealogy of Balinese traditional painting, Kamasan, her works often reimagine an empowered mythology of womanhood.

Sasmita will be included in the forthcoming 35th São Paulo Biennale: *'Choreographies of the Impossible'* (2023), 3rd Thailand Biennale: *'The Open World'*, Chiangrai (2023), the 24th Biennale of Sydney (2024) and *Perforated Sovereignty*, SECCA BEGA, New South Wales, Australia (2023). Selected exhibitions include: Kathmandu Triennale, Patan Museum, Kathmandu (2022); *Garden of the Six Seasons*, ParaSite, Hong Kong (2020); and Jogja Biennale, Yogyakarta (2019). She was also Artist-in-Residence at WIELS Brussels in 2022 under the inaugural Studio Residencies for Southeast Asian Artist by NTU CCA Singapore in the EU.

>> [Artist bio & CV](#) >> [Checklist of works](#)

ABOUT THE GALLERY

Yeo Workshop is a leading art gallery based in Gillman Barracks, Singapore since 2013. It shows innovative practices of contemporary artists. Covering a multi-disciplinary approach, the gallery defines itself by its progressive engagements.

Opening Hours:

Tue – Sat, 11am – 7pm; Sun, 12pm - 6pm; Closed Mon and Public Holidays.

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