



CITRA SASMITA

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Citra Sasmita (b. 1990, Bali, Indonesia) is a self-taught artist. She studied literature and physics, then worked as a short story illustrator for the Bali Post before she began developing her expanded artistic practice.

Sasmita focuses on unravelling the myths and misconceptions of Balinese art and culture. At the same time, shedding light on the Dutch colonial history, which had shaped notions of authenticity in Bali. She is also deeply invested in questioning a woman's place in social hierarchy and seeks to upend normative constructs of gender by reimagining mythical and classical narratives of war and romance to exalt female resistance instead. Her works reflect the complexity between the Anthropocene and post-human, while simultaneously repositioning women within the historical canon – an action that is necessarily urgent in her Balinese environment.

Sasmita employs the Kamasan painting technique, which originates from a small village in Klungkung, East Bali since the 15th century and is traditionally exclusively practised by men to narrate Hindu epics. She engages with it as a reclamation of female agency, reimagining narratives drawn from ancient Balinese literature, rituals, mythologies and iconography. In recent years, she has expanded her practice to include sculpture and installation, incorporating various materials such as braided hairs, exotic animal skins, antique wooden pillars and ancient textiles to create her universe of empowered and divine cosmology.

Alongside her major UK solo debut at The Curve, Barbican, London, her work has also been featured in the Sharjah Biennial 16, Sharjah, UAE (6 February-15 June 2025) and Hawai'i Triennial 2025, Hawai'i (15 February-4 May 2025).





Stream to Land of No Return, 2024
acrylic painting on traditional Kamasan
canvas, python hide, carved wooden mask
350 x 30 x 18 cm
wooden mask: 16 x 19 x 10 cm

WOMEN WHO CARRY THE MOUNTAIN

YEO WORKSHOP, SINGAPORE

17 JANUARY - 1 MARCH 2026

Citra Sasmita's fourth solo exhibition at the gallery, *'Women Who Carry The Mountain'*, continues her deep engagement with Balinese culture and mythology, this time exploring the resilience of women as custodians of balance between humanity and nature.

Rooted in the ancient Balinese creation myth of Bedawang Nala—the colossal turtle entwined with three dragons representing the earth, sea, and wind—Sasmita's latest works reinterpret these sacred elements that represent the world's equilibrium through a contemporary feminist lens. Their harmony ensures the earth's stability, while their disturbance brings forth earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.

Through this mythology, Sasmita reflects on Bali—an island situated within the volatile 'Ring of Fire'—and the community's abiding practices of coexistence with nature's unpredictability. Rituals, storytelling and collective knowledge become acts of both reverence and survival, within which women emerge as crucial mediators and guardians. Central to rituals and ceremonies that worship the figure of Earth-Mother, a symbol of abundance and goodness, are Balinese women who serve as bearers of ancient wisdom and tradition in upholding the balance between humanity and nature.

Through painting, installation and embroidery, Sasmita evokes this intricate and divine web of feminine energy, spirituality and cosmic forces that sustain the balance of life.



Timur Merah Project XIV: Tribe of Fire 4, 2024
painted cowhide with beads
207 x 230 cm



Timur Merah Project XIV: Tribe of Fire 5, 2024
painted cowhide with beads
211 x 233 cm



Fountain of Knowledge, 2025
acrylic on traditional Kamasan canvas, ceremonial cloth, stone beads
77.5 cm x 71 cm



Open Womb, Seed of Universe, 2025
acrylic on traditional Kamasan canvas, Klungkung weaving, stone beads
73 x 76 cm



Shepherd The Night, 2025
acrylic on traditional Kamasan canvas, Klungkung weaving, stone beads
73 x 76 cm



Samsara - The Promised Land, 2026
acrylic painting of Kamasan Traditional canvas, round snake fibre frame
diameter 96 cm



Samsara - Tree of Life, 2026
acrylic painting of Kamasan Traditional canvas, round snake fibre frame
diameter 96 cm



Samsara - Wandering in Abyss, 2026
acrylic painting of Kamasan Traditional canvas, round snake fibre frame
diameter 96 cm

Labyrinth of Revelation 4, 2025
acrylic painting of Kamasan Traditional canvas
65.5 x 52.5 cm



Labyrinth of Revelation 5, 2025
acrylic painting of Kamasan Traditional canvas
65.5 x 52.5 cm



Labyrinth of Revelation 6, 2025
acrylic painting of Kamasan Traditional canvas
65.5 x 52.5 cm





Labyrinth of Revelation 6, 2025
acrylic painting of Kamasan Traditional canvas
65.5 x 52.5 cm



BEDTIME STORY
ART SG PLATFORM, SINGAPORE
23 - 25 JANUARY 2026

Bedtime Story by Citra Sasmita is featured as a Platform showcase at ART SG 2026, which draws from three of the artist's recent major international presentations: the 24th Biennale of Sydney, the Hawai'i Triennial 2025, and her installation at Frieze New York 2025. This focused presentation highlights key iterations of Sasmita's practice, underscoring the international trajectory and critical reception of her work. Monumental Kamasan scrolls and textile works create a contemplative resting space within the fair, embodying *taksu*—the Balinese concept of spiritual presence.

Fire—one of Sasmita's recurring motifs—is an elemental force in these works, reflecting its power to destroy, purify, and renew, thus mirroring cycles of creation and dissolution that underpin healing across cultures. *Cosmic Dance*, depicting open hands which gesture outward in welcome and function as offerings, further channel energy between the artworks, the surrounding space, and the visitors who gather within it.

Bedtime Story reflects Sasmita's expansive cosmology—one in which ritual, womanhood, and ancestral knowledge move fluidly into contemporary space. Drawing from Balinese visual traditions and feminist reinterpretations of myth, her work weaves together the sacred and the political, reclaiming inherited narratives while reimagining them through a contemporary lens.

Timur Merah Project XI: Bedtime Story, 2023-2024
acrylic on traditional Kamasan canvas, oak dowel, 2 pieces
800 x 150cm each







Timur Merah Project XIV: Tribe of Fire 1, 2024
painted cowhide with beads
202 x 246 cm



Timur Merah Project XIV: Tribe of Fire 2, 2024
painted cowhide with beads
212 x 220 cm



Timur Merah Project XIV: Tribe of Fire 3, 2024
painted cowhide with beads
206 x 213 cm



Cosmic Dance 1, 2025
acrylic on traditional Kamasan canvas, velvet
152 cm x 227 cm



Wisdom of The Sky, 2025
acrylic on traditional Kamasan canvas, polyster
197 x 100 cm



Cosmic Dance 2, 2025
acrylic on traditional Kamasan canvas, velvet
152 cm x 227 cm



2020-2025

SOLO
EXHIBITIONS



INTO ETERNAL LAND

BARBICAN, THE CURVE, LONDON
31 JANUARY - 21 APRIL 2025

Commissioned by Barbican, Citra Sasmita transforms The Curve into a spiritual journey entitled *'Into Eternal Land'* for her first UK solo exhibition.

Working fluidly across painting, sculptural installation, embroidery and scent, Sasmita brings visitors on a symbolic, multi-sensory experience through the 90-metre-long gallery to explore ideas of ancestral memory, ritual and migration. Sasmita draws from long histories of displacement and migration across the Indonesian archipelago, and takes inspiration from stories of heaven, earth, and hell — from the Hindu epic Mahabharata to Dante's Inferno.

The exhibition unfolds across several acts. Panoramic scroll paintings reveal women undergoing transformation and rebirth, while embroidered textiles — made in collaboration with women artisans in west Bali — honour the history of women herbalists. At the exhibition's close, Sasmita offers a space for meditation around a golden mandala of ground turmeric, welcoming visitors to take some time to sit and reflect. An ambient soundscape by Indonesian experimental composer Agha Praditya Yogaswara responds to the commission.

Into Eternal Land speaks to universal and urgent concerns: connecting with ancestral traditions, grappling with the precarity of the natural world, and proposing the possibility of feminist resistance.









ATLAS OF CURIOSITY

YEO WORKSHOP, SINGAPORE
29 JULY - 20 AUGUST 2023

Atlas of Curiosity stems from Citra Sasmita's 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.

Sasmita incorporates 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, highlighting the historical significance of fabrics in Bali as a trading port for the Dutch and British. Secret codes were hidden within fabrics and transported between kingdoms in the archipelago to disseminate information, much like morse codes used during wartime.

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.

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.









ODE TO THE SUN

YEO WORKSHOP, SINGAPORE
10 JANUARY - 29 FEBRUARY 2020

Turmeric is traditionally used for rituals and its bright yellow colour symbolises the sun, hence giving the exhibition its title '*Ode to the Sun*'. Citra Sasmita pens an ancient Balinese poem taken from Kakawin in turmeric, which accompanies a brightly painted traditional Kamasan canvases suspended from the ceiling in a large circular structure.

Motivated on a fundamental level by the need to forge a connection with her past, Sasmita incorporates narratives from classical Balinese literature, and elements of traditional Balinese aesthetic conventions into her works. Her Kamasan 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.

Ode To The Sun is a continuation 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 19th century queen, Dewa Istri Kanya, Sasmita transforms classic narratives of war and romance by imbuing them with a female perspective.





"The *Timur Merah Project* is an embodiment of my resistance to a Balinese cultural heritage that is heavily influenced by colonialism and, now, globalization. The Balinese landscape is described and represented as exotic and noble, and continues to be the background for various writings and readings of history, art, and culture. [...] counter-narratives to colonial inheritances and the neo-colonial gaze are urgently demanded. My art and research are an effort to make such contributions and demonstrate the possibilities of counter-discourses.

- Citra Sasmita



2023-2025

**RECENT
BIENNALES**



TIMUR MERAH PROJECT XV: POETRY OF THE SEA, VOW OF THE SUN

'TO CARRY'
SHARJAH BIENNIAL 16, SHARJAH
6 FEBRUARY - 15 JUNE 2025

In *Timur Merah Project XV: Poetry of the Sea, Vow of the Sun* (2024), Sasmita suspends three cage-like cubes, woven from fabric strips embroidered with images of the fire chalice and the serpent, symbols from the cosmological arsenals of Balinese poetry. Within the videos inside, a singer recalls moments from the life of Ida I Dewa Agung Istri Kanya, queen of the nineteenth-century Klungkung kingdom in Bali. A skilled warrior, she had led her people's resistance against the Dutch, yet has been somewhat sidelined in Indonesia's historical narrative. Juxtaposing the queen's feat of bravery with the cages, modeled after the *klakat bambu*—a bamboo-woven square that symbolises masculine omnipotence—Sasmita's installation reminds viewers of women's often-neglected contributions to history and nation-building.

Timur Merah Project XV: Poetry of the Sea, Vow of the Sun, 2024
3-piece installation, weaving, sequin beads, embroidery, paintings, wooden object
with mirror 200 x 200 x 300 cm each
installation dimensions variable
commissioned by Sharjah Art Foundation for Sharjah Biennial 16, 2025.

Timur Merah Project VIII: Pilgrim, How You Journey, 2022
2-channel video, 4K, colour, sound, 22 minutes



TIMUR MERAH PROJECT XIV: TRIBE OF FIRE

'ALOHA NO'
HAWAI'I TRIENNALE 2025, HONOLULU
15 FEBRUARY - 4 MAY 2025

Timur Merah Project XIV: Tribe of Fire explores the role of fire in Balinese cosmology. Here, Sasmita references the Ring of Fire, a string of volcanic and seismic activity that connects islands in the broader Pacific, recounting how natural phenomena such as earthquakes or volcanic eruptions have given birth to various kinds of rituals and mythology around fire as a sacred, purifying energy, rather than only a fear-inducing phenomenon to be escaped from. Under the theme of 'Aloha No', which is a call to know Hawai'i as a place of rebirth, resilience, and resistance—a place that embraces humanity in all of its complexities—this work highlights fire's transformative and purifying powers in rites from birth to death, while celebrating the role of women as spiritual mediators and key figures in maintaining cultural and cosmological balance.

Timur Merah Project XIV: Tribe of Fire 1-5, 2024-2025
five paintings on domesticated cowhides (*Bos torus*), charcoal
202cm x 46cm; 212 cm x 220cm; 206 cm x 213cm; 207cm x 230cm;
211cm x 233cm
overall installation dimensions variable





TIMUR MERAH PROJECT XII: LIGHT SPEED & REVELATION

'PRECARIOUS JOYS'
3RD TORONTO BIENNIAL OF ART, CANADA
21 SEPTEMBER - 1 DECEMBER 2024

Timur Merah Project XII: Light Speed and Revelation comprises paintings on traditional Kamasan canvas, neon lamps, and python skin. It addresses the encounter and coexistence of Balinese mythology and spirituality along with Western ideas of technological advancement. For the artist, myths form a reflection of reality, and still guide humans to the true light of knowledge and have the same social relevance as the instruments used by modern science.

Esoteric Dance (2024) is a series of three paintings created in the Kamasan style, depicting female bodies in various positions, resembling mythological goddesses that challenge traditional visual representations, which have predominantly portrayed men since ancient times. Some figures emit fire, while others are shown split in two, with trees and flowers blooming from the division. Female heads sprout from the vegetation, while branches grow in all directions. The women are portrayed as part of a collective body, symbolising the strength of shared experiences while advocating for political demands.

Timur Merah Project XII: Light Speed & Revelation, 2024
acrylic on python skin
installation dimensions variable

Esoteric Dance 1-3, 2024
acrylic on Traditional Kamasan canvas, horse hair
each 115 × 80 cm









**TIMUR MERAH PROJECT X: BEDTIME STORY
& TIMUR MERAH PROJECT IV:
TALES OF NOWHERE**

**‘TEN THOUSAND SUNS’
24TH BIENNALE OF SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA
9 MARCH - 10 JUNE 2024**

In *Timur Merah Project X: Bedtime Story* and *Timur Merah Project IV: Tales of Nowhere*, Citra Sasmita uses traditional Kamasan painting to reclaim the female figure as an active decolonial agent challenging the exotic aesthetic heritage of Baliseering. Following the fall of the last Balinese kingdom in 1908, the Dutch administration introduced the policy of Baliseering as a strategy of cultural diplomacy intended to establish an ‘authentic’ Bali. Javanese nationalists argued that the policy kept Bali as a ‘living museum’ that appealed to colonial aesthetics of the noble and exotic while obliterating any Balinese self-determination.

Timur Merah Project X: Bedtime Story, 2023
acrylic on traditional Kamasan canvas, oak dowels, in 2 pieces
800 x 150 cm each

Timur Merah Project IV: Tales of Nowhere, 2020
acrylic on traditional Kamasan canvas, oak dowels







TIMUR MERAH PROJECT XII: RIVERS WITH NO END

‘AFTER RAIN’
DIRIYAH CONTEMPORARY ART BIENNALE, SAUDI ARABIA
20 FEBRUARY - 24 MAY 2024

Timur Merah Project XII: Rivers With No End traces the spread of Islamic culture across the Indonesian archipelago, its arrival through sea routes, and the relevance of the port of Nusantara within this history. Carved wooden pillars — symbolising rivers, the flow of knowledge, and the fluid Islamic and Hindi civilisation of Bali — are positioned at a horizontal. Typical of Nusantara’s traditional architecture, they demonstrate the historical influence of Islam imprinted on the city. Suspending from these pillars are embroidered tapestries and flags whose forms are inspired by boats sailed from the region.

Timur Merah Project XII: Rivers With No End, 2023
9 antique wooden pillars 150 x 180 cm long, Rahim (womb) symbol, medicinal plant flags in old embroidery technique from west Bali, antique coins from 1930 Dutch/Arab Javanese money, 15 to 20 embroidery flags size approx. 80 x 60 cm, 1 scroll flag 40 x 1000 cm
installation dimensions variable







TIMUR MERAH PROJECT IX: THEATER IN THE LAND OF GOD & BEAST

‘THE OPEN WORLD’
3RD THAILAND BIENNALE, CHIANG RAI
9 DECEMBER 2023 - 30 APRIL 2024

With giant, gold-headed nagas whose bodies made of crimson braids enfold a painting depicting fiery goddesses, Citra Sasmita's sprawling 'quasi-shrine' installation *Timur Merah Project IX: Theater in the Land of God and Beast* is a nod towards the subterranean power of feminine spirituality. Rooted in the notions of genealogy, hair is a manifestation of memory, karma, and reincarnation in Balinese tradition. These 900 braids of red hair take inspiration from the story of Draupadi, the female protagonist in the Mahabharata. In certain adaptations, she washes her hair with her brother-in-law Dushasana's blood in revenge, after he had tried to harass her in public. Referring to the purifying nature of righteous anger, the end of every sinuous blood-red braid culminates in a snake head made of brass, connecting justice-seeking vengeance with a symbol of divine energy.

Timur Merah Project IX: Theater in the Land of God and Beast, 2023
braided hair, 30 pieces of snake head brass statues, acrylic on cow skin
30 braided hairs: 400 cm each
painting on cow skin: 100 x 200 cm
circular fabrication: 3 meters diameter
installation dimensions variable







TIMUR MERAH PROJECT IX: BEYOND THE REALM OF SENSES

‘CHOREOGRAPHIES OF THE IMPOSSIBLE’
35TH SÃO PAULO BIENNALE, BRAZIL
6 SEPTEMBER - 10 DECEMBER 2023

Kamasan paintings, the earliest form of painting in Bali, typically extend across hundreds of meters of canvas displayed along the ceiling of a traditional Balinese structure called ‘ider-ider’. A cosmological concept from Hinduism, an ‘ider-ider’ refers to the notion of a central axis of energy that anchors and connects the macrocosm and microcosm of our universe. Citra Sasmita incorporates this in *Timur Merah Project IX: Beyond the Realm of Senses (Oracle & Demons)*, with each painting installed as an open circle, inviting visitors to step inside and become the main actors of her depicted cosmologies. She also takes the aspect of ‘lamak’ (shrine-hanging), typically placed above a family altar as a sacred space for offerings to ancestors and deities, draping another Kamasan painting (*Allegory of The Archipelago*), over the ground like a stairway to heaven—serving as a connection between the earthly realm and the realm of the gods.

Timur Merah Project IX: Beyond the Realm of Senses (Oracle & Demons), 2024
acrylic on traditional Kamasan canvas, wooden hangers, brass and rope
70 x 550 cm each, installation dimensions variable

Timur Merah Project IX: Beyond the Realm of Senses (Allegory of the Archipelago), 2023
acrylic on traditional Kamasan canvas, wooden hanger, gold paint fiber statue, rope
90 x 800 cm, installation dimensions variable





2020-2025

**SELECTED
GROUP EXHIBITIONS**



Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2025 *Thresholds*, White Cube, Hong Kong
A Knowing, Silverlens, Manila, Philippines
The Weight of Stillness, Ames Yavuz, Sydney, Australia
All About Eve, Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery, London, United Kingdom
The Archipelagic Imagination: Seaport, Almine Rech, Shanghai, China
Layers of Accumulated Time: Depicting the World We Live in, 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, Japan
Musafiri: Of Travellers and Guests, HKW Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin
- 2024 *Repurposing: Paradise at Amandari*, curated by Krisna Sudharma, Nonfrasa Gallery, Amandari, Bali, Indonesia
A Woman You Thought You Knew, Kadist Foundation, San Francisco, USA
Disobedient Bodies: Without Gods, Patrons or Mysteries, curated by Rolando J. Carmona, BARÓ GALERIA, Spain
Translations: Afro-Asian Poetics, curated by Zoé Whitley, The Institutum, Gillman Barracks, Singapore
- 2023 *The Great Indonesia*, De Nieuwe Kerk, Amsterdam
Hoo Fan Chon, Citra Sasmita, Vuth Lyno: New Works, NTU CCA Singapore, Residencies for Southeast Asian Artist in the EU, NTU Centre for Contemporary Art, Singapore
- 2022 *Our Grandfathers Road*, 16albermarle Projectspace, Sydney
Garden of Ten Seasons, Savvy Contemporary, Berlin, Germany
Open School/Meet The Residents, WIELS Brussels, Brussels, Belgium
Flow, Yogya Annual Art 2022, Sangkring Art Space, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
New Art From Bali and Bandung, 16albermarle, Sydney, Australia
Good News From Bali, Mizuma Gallery, Singapore
- 2021 *Of Three Kingdoms*, Redbase Gallery, Sydney, Australia
ARTJOG MMXXII, Time To Wonder, Jogja National Museum, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
A Life Beyond Boundaries, JWD Art Space, Bangkok, Thailand
#Perempuan, Castlemaine Museum of Art, Sydney, Australia
Host, Edel Assanti, London, United Kingdom
- 2020 *Garden Of The Six Seasons*, Para Site, Hong Kong



Citra Sasmita, *Our Rooted Lineage*, 2025. Installation view, *Thresholds*, White Cube, Hong Kong, 2025.



Citra Sasmita, *Timur Merah Project IX: Beyond The Realm of Senses (Oracles and Demons)*, 2023.
Installation view, *The Archipelagic Imagination: Seaport*, Almine Rech, Shanghai, 2025.



Installation view, *Layers of Accumulated Time: Depicting the World We Live in*, 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, Japan, 2025.



Citra Sasmita, *Timur Merah Project VII: Divine Comedia*, 2021. Installation view, *Land of Fire*, Kunsthalle Bega, Timisoara, Romania, 2024-2025.



Citra Sasmita, *Ode to the Sun*, 2020; Timur Merah Project VII: *Garden of Earthly Delights*, 2021. Installation view, *Liquidscape: Southeast Asia Today*, Arts Maebashi, Maebashi, Japan, 2024.



Citra Sasmita, *Timur Merah Project VII: Divine Comedia*, 2021. Installation view, *Garden of Six Seasons*, Para Site, Hong Kong, 2020.



"In *Timur Merah*, with the protagonism of mythological women, muses, goddesses, creatures part-human, part-beast, part-tree, Citra Sasmita finds possible forms through which impossible perspectives finally come to life. If this was not possible in traditional Kamasan art, centuries later the artist retells the story through art."

WORDS BY LUCIANA BRITO
TRANSLATED FROM PORTUGUESE BY PHILIP SOMERVELL



CONTACT

Yeo Workshop
47 Malan Road #01-25
Singapore 109444

info@yeoworkshop.com
+ 65 6734 5168

www.yeoworkshop.com

