

# SOUTHEAST ASIAN CONTEMPORARY

## Press Release

Following the staggering success of Southeast Asian contemporary artists at recent Christie's and Sotheby's auctions in Hong Kong and Singapore respectively, Indonesian auction house Borobudur, advised by leading regional gallerist Valentine Willie Fine Art (VWFA), is boldly pioneering the region's first ever specially dedicated Southeast Asian contemporary art auction in Singapore on Sunday, October 28th.

The sale, "Southeast Asian Contemporary", will feature over 100 works from Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

As prices for works by leading Chinese and Indian contemporary masters such as Zhang Xiaogang, Yue Min Jun and Atul Dodiya spiral into the millions and hundreds of thousands of US dollars, their Southeast Asian contemporaries are beginning to experience a similar boom. This is partly explained by a spillover demand from the Chinese and Indian art market and partly because astute collectors are turning to an overlooked region with a rich and vibrant contemporary art scene where artworks are priced at a fraction of Chinese and Indian contemporary art.

The first sign of increased interest in Southeast Asian contemporary art was seen at Sotheby's sale in Singapore in April 2007 when a painting by Indonesian artist Putu Sutawijaya sold for more than SGD120,000 from an original estimate of SGD8,000. At Christie's Spring session [May 2007] in Hong Kong the works of other Southeast Asian artists registered substantial price gains – some works selling at an 1800% increase from their estimated selling price. For example, Filipina artist Geraldine Javier's, "*The Absurdity of Being*" was estimated to sell between HKD12,000-18,000 (USD 1,530-2,300) but was sold at an impressive HKD288,000 (USD 36,850). On average, the actual selling price for the 20 Southeast Asian works exceeded 680% of the estimated price. This trend has continued with Sotheby's auction in Singapore earlier this month [Sept 16 2007] registering another leap in prices for contemporary regional artists such as I Nyoman Masriadi, Rudi Mantofani, Yunizar and Nona Garcia. What has become obvious at these recent auctions is that the market for Contemporary Southeast Asian art is no longer confined to the local collectors. Increasingly the new collectors come from Hongkong, China, Japan, Taiwan and Europe. In fact some of the top prices were paid by these collectors at recent auctions.

Contemporary art in Southeast Asia, like the region, is characterised by its history of deep cultural roots and rich cultural exchange, modern conflicts with colonialism and negotiations with modernity, as well as its current encounters with diversity and change. For artists living in a world in transition, this state of flux provides a constant source of inspiration and challenge, creating space for new freedoms and ideas, allowing them to redefine Southeast Asian art in compelling and powerful ways.

Borobudur and VWFA are excited to introduce a new platform for the leading names and prevalent trends in contemporary Southeast Asian art. This auction hopes to provide a broad and informed introduction to the extraordinary range of art practice in the region to international and Asian collectors, especially those keen to embrace and support our contemporary culture.

On sale will be works by key artists such as Heri Dono (*Indonesia*) Wong Hoy Cheong (*Malaysia*), Simryn Gill (*Singapore/ Malaysia*), Mella Jaarsma (*Indonesia/Netherlands*), Nindityo Adipurnomo (*Indonesia*), Manuel Ocampo (*Philippines*), Agus Suwage (*Indonesia*), Manit Sriwanichpoom (*Thailand*) as well as younger emerging artists Natee Utarit (*Thailand*), Yee I-Lann (*Malaysia*), Alfredo Esquillo (*Philippines*), Putu Sutawijaya (*Indonesia*), the Jendela Group: Yunizar, Jumaldi Alfi, Rudi Mantofani, Handiwirman Saputra and Yusra Martunus (*Indonesia*), Nona Garcia (*Philippines*) and Eko Nugroho (*Indonesia*) to name just a few.



*La Vie en Pink No. 1 (Olympia), 2004, C-Print (2/10), 80 x 99cm*  
(Estimate: SGD 4,000 – 5,000)

Prominent works in the sale include **Manit Sriwanichpoom's** (b. 1961) "*La Vie en Pink No. 1*". Arguably Manit's most distinctive creation, Pink Man turns an ironic, cheeky yet potent gaze upon a global society obsessed with material consumption. The Pink Man was originally conceived before the Asian economic crisis of 1997. He has now become a recognizable fixture, a neon light on the contemporary art landscape. Manit Sriwanichpoom is very much acclaimed internationally—he participated in the 50th Venice Biennale (2003) and was included in Blink 2002, a showcase of 100 of the world's most exciting contemporary photographers. Manit is due to receive the prestigious Higashikawa Overseas Photographer Award.



*Shameless Gold I, II & III (detail), 2002, Cocoons, horn, gold, Size variable  
(Estimate: SGD 18,000 – 20,000)*

“*Shameless Gold*” (2002) by **Mella Jaarsma** (b. 1960), made from naturally gold-coloured caterpillar cocoons comments on material wealth and the extreme socio-economic gaps within Indonesian society. Mella is internationally renowned for her elaborate costume installations out of animal skins, horns and a variety of culturally loaded materials. They are powerful metaphors of race, sexuality, authenticity and origins. Covering the body and leaving only the eyes and certain body parts exposed, are they shelter or prison, or both?





*Manusia Batu (Mr & Mrs Universe), 2001-2002, Acrylic on canvas, 225 x 125cm each  
(Estimate: SGD 35,000 – 50,000)*

Another important highlight in this sale is **Nyoman Masriadi** (b. 1973), a hot rising star from Indonesia. The monumental, sculptural and almost cubistic figures in the awe-inspiring diptych, "*Mr & Mrs Universe*" (2001-2002) is a hallmark of Masriadi's work. Influenced by American Pop, the cyber gaming culture and also by the flourishing consumerist society in Indonesia over the last decade, the artist's socio-political messages are nevertheless overlaid with humour. Masriadi was one of the winners of the Philip Morris Awards in 1998 and has since participated in a number of exhibitions in Indonesia and abroad, namely in Australia, the Netherlands and Singapore.



*A Small Town at the Turn of the Century #34, 2001, C-Print, (3/5), 91.4 x 91.4cm*  
(Estimate: SGD 7,000 – 9,000)

Another highlight is a work from the series “*A Small Town at the Turn of the Century*” (2001) by acclaimed Singapore-born, Sydney-based artist **Simryn Gill**. This portrait of local inhabitants of a small town in Malaysia is intriguing, humorous and unsettling all at once, referring not only to essentialist notions of Asia as an exotic and romantic place to the western outsider, but also to ideas of local origin and ethnicity. “*A Small Town at the Turn of the Century*” has toured to the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney in 2001. It was also included in the Sydney Biennale, 2002.



*Nomadic Sanctions*, 2005, Acrylic on canvas, 122 x 122cm  
(Estimate: SGD 3,000 – 5,000)

*“Nomadic Sanctions”* (2005) by **Louie Cordero** (b.1978) gives a good taste of the wit and audacity of a new generation of emerging Southeast Asian artists. Cordero’s grasp on contemporary culture combines urban street-wise savvy with the cosmopolitan. It stands on a unique threshold between street art and fine art, irreverently combining disparate graphic sources, heavily influenced by a distinct brand of *pinoy* (*Filipino*) *pop* and Western media. Since 2004, Cordero has been actively showing in New York City, San Francisco and Los Angeles. His most recent solo exhibition, “DELUBYO” was held at Giant Robots, Los Angeles in July 2007.





*Sulu Stories: The Landmark 8/8, 2005, Digital print on Kodak Professional Paper, 61 x 183cm  
(Estimate: SGD 3,000 – 5,000)*

Also belonging to this generation of dynamic young artists is **Yee I-Lann** (b. 1971). In “*Sulu Stories: The Landmark*” (2005), Yee has created a glorious narrative of the Sulu Sea region, the great maritime crossroads that lies between her native Malaysia and the Philippines by juxtaposing archival and current photographic images. “*Sulu Stories*” traveled to Australia and Southeast Asia and Germany as part of a project initiated by the Goethe Institute, and has been to the Noorderlicht Photofestival 2006 in the Netherlands, "Thermocline of Art: New Asian Waves" at the ZKM Museum of Contemporary Art in Karlsruhe, Germany in June 2007 and “New Nature” at the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery in New Zealand in May 2007. It was included in the 1st Singapore Biennale, 2006.

The auction will be held on Sunday 28 October 2007, 10am at the **Grand Copthorne Waterfront Hotel, 392 Havelock Road, Singapore 169663**. Previews for the public will be on display at the same venue on 25, 26 and 27 October 2007.

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