

*Flesh  
& Spirit*

SELECTIONS FROM THE  
**LINDA NEO & ALBERT LIM  
COLLECTION**

## Foreword

The adage “art speaks to me” reflects an artist’s intent to provoke a response from the viewer to his or her artwork. Art may ‘speak’ to the viewer’s personal experience, past and present, such as memories of one’s childhood and places one frequents, or through paintings and objects that evoke sensory pleasure.

Art collecting for us started with our association with friends who were already collectors. We were exposed to the art world where auction houses and galleries were dishing out a visual feast of works by Southeast Asian artists.

It began with collecting art that told a story that connected with us. Then it became a learning journey as we discovered new artists using new mediums. Our visual appetite changed with the explosion of newer art forms that expanded the horizon for our collecting opportunities.

We now have stories of our own to share. Our acquisitions have morphed into reflections not just of taste but also of life narratives.

*Flesh and Spirit* is the fourth exhibition curated at our art space, the first three being *Ink & Paper* (2015), *Rise & Fall, Ebb & Flow: Works of Jane Lee* (2017) and *Reimagining Paper* (2019). The current exhibition seeks to engage the audience to formulate their own views about how humanity might negotiate the realms of the flesh and the spirit, through a diversity of artistic perspectives. Some of the works are provocative, some emotive, and others are contemplative. The range of artistic mediums and approaches represented in *Flesh and Spirit* reflects the vibrancy of the art coming out of this region, and is intended to open up avenues for multisensory experience and interpretation.

As private collectors, we seek to address the gaps in the art ecosystem, educating the public by exhibiting curated shows. It will be a platform to tell stories from a personal perspective and to explore different ways of experiencing art. Above all, our art space is an opportunity for us to share with audiences — both new and old — the art that we love and enjoy, and to cultivate conversations around art and artists.

**Linda Neo & Albert Lim**



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Throughout time, the very crux of the human condition has been the struggle between the desires of the flesh and matters of the spirit. This tension between the corporeal and the metaphysical has been a constant preoccupation of cultures, philosophers, and religions: how does one reconcile one's embodied experience of the world — with all its attendant pleasures and travails — with our aspirations towards the transcendental and the divine?

*Flesh and Spirit* is a meditation on how we negotiate our place between these realms. The selection of artworks circles the arc of human experience and emotion, starting with the intimations of birth and the beginning of primordial time, to encompass ideas around survival and sacrifice, faith and ideals. Other artworks suggest the illusory nature of our constructed realities, and prompt a reckoning with the self and ego. Yet others plumb the depths of the human psyche, and hint at elemental forces too great to be contained by rational enquiry, gesturing towards other means of apprehending the world and our place within it. Last but not least, a passage of works suggests that the transcendental, to which we aspire, is not entirely separate from our embodied reality; rather, it manifests itself in familiar or natural phenomena, offering us a fleeting glimpse of a threshold where we may briefly reach towards or apprehend the sublime.







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Ian Tee

**Karmic Mirror / MOTH INTO FLAME**

2017

Destroyed aluminium composite panel  
with mirror finish

150 × 122 cm

The mirror is a potent symbol for self-reflection, recognition, vanity, ego and desire. Tee's *Karmic Mirror* disrupts this reverie with its scarred and distressed surfaces, the flame-like motifs licking the edges of the frame reminiscent of hellfire. Created with an angle grinder, the expressive slashes are cut into the pristine mirrored surface at various depths and angles to create tonal effects and spatial depth, punctuating the unity of the reflected image. These scars recall gestures of self-harm as well as violence, a cumulative layer or record of past mistakes — a karmic debt. Read in proximity to Kamolpan Chotvichai's *Magga ('Path')* as well as Mella Jaarsma's images of predatoriness and privation, *Karmic Mirror* is a powerful and poetic moment of self-reckoning, a confrontation with the self and ego.

Ian Tee (b. 1994, Singapore) works between painting, textiles and collage, drawing on visual vocabularies from the history of painting as well as rebellious youth cultures. 'Karmic Mirror' is an early series started during the artist's second year at LASALLE College of the Arts; its distinctive flame-like motifs which bring to mind the fires of purgatory and the notion of judgement or punishment, recur in other works such as *Solemn Judgement* (2019–2020).





Kamolpan Chotvichai

**Magga (Path)**

2015

C-type print and hand cut canvas

110 × 112 cm

*Magga* belongs to a series of black and white self-portraits where the artist willfully subverts the sensuality of the human form by cutting into the canvas. The shreds obscure and hence disrupt the pleasure of viewing the complete image, while suggesting a negation of the world of flesh and the self. In Buddhism, '*magga*' refers to the Path, or the way to enlightenment, and the annihilation of the self and ego is an important step towards this awakening. The split down the middle of the canvas and the ensuing white space — a blinding void in contrast to the realistic detail in the rest of the image — suggests a sundering of subjectivity, a tearing apart of the superfluous or material world. At the same time, this 'negative space' or void hints at a vastness beyond the confines or bounds of corporeal or material form, an infinite realm beyond the constructed reality of the frame and by extension, our understanding of the world.

Kamolpan Chotvichai (b. 1986, Thailand) explores notions of identity and gender in her photographic self-portraits. Drawing on ideas from Buddhist teachings, the artist obliterates her own image by cutting up the canvas into sinuous strips, a process symbolic of the relinquishing of attachments to body, matter, and the material world.



Mella Jaarsma

**Feeding The Nation I**  
2020

Photograph in 3 parts  
85 × 77 cm, 85 × 135 cm, 85 × 75 cm  
Edition 3 of 5 (+ 2AP)

*Feeding The Nation I* was created as a response to Jaarsma's dismay at the state of the world at the start of 2020 — on the brink of ecological as well as human disaster. The stark black and white image invites audiences to rethink basic human needs and the delicate balance between individuals, communities as well as the natural world. Jaarsma locates her imagery in a timeless present: the unclothed male and female figures recall the archetypal couple in creation narratives, and their hard-angled limbs and the inclusion of crocodile skulls were inspired by totemic ancestral sculptures such as those from Papua.

There is an ambivalence and intimation of danger in how the figures gesture towards each other, enfolding notions of offering, ritual, sacrifice as well as predatoriness. *Feeding The Nation I* harks back to primal impulses in human nature, and asks how one might strike a balance between giving and receiving, and the cost of our actions as well as our sacrifices.

Mella Jaarsma (b. 1960, The Netherlands) is the co-founder of Cemeti Art House, one of Indonesia's foremost contemporary art institutions. Her artistic practice revolves around the body and its coverings as powerful

signifiers of identity and its social and cultural politics. Her work often employs materials such as animal skins and horns — items charged with metaphoric potencies of race, human nature, sexuality, beliefs and origins. The crocodile recurs in an earlier piece titled *Lubang Buaya (Crocodile's Pit)*, 2014, a work remembering a dark chapter of Indonesian history where a number of military officers were murdered and their bodies abandoned in a well. The incident ignited a spate of violence targeted at Communist sympathisers and Suharto's subsequent seizure of power.

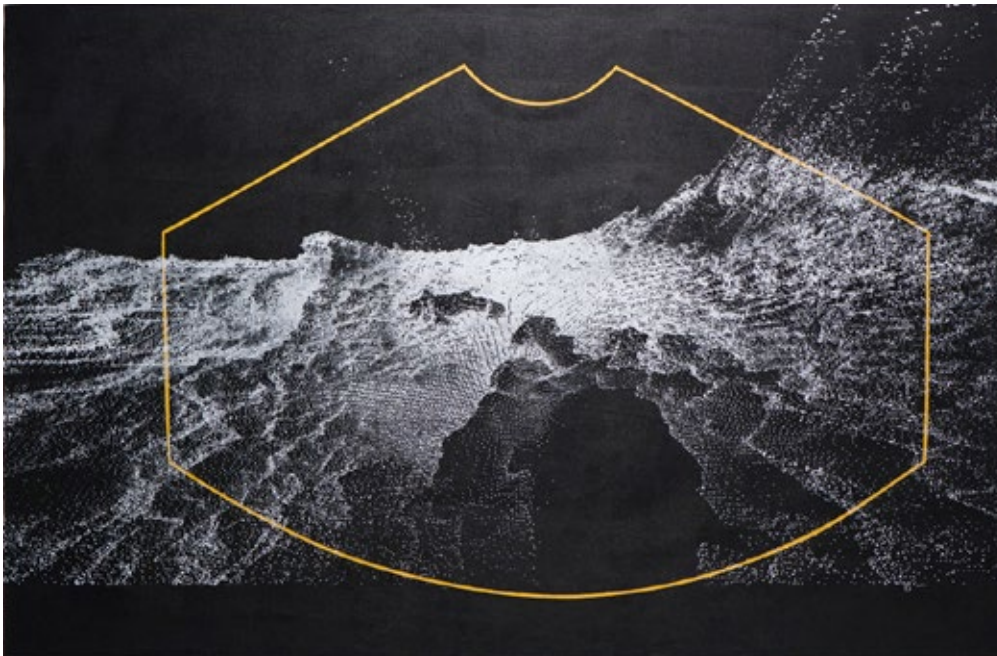
Genevieve Chua

**Ultrasound #1**

2012

Acrylic and screenprint with  
enamel on linen

118 × 180 × 4.5 cm



In her *Ultrasound* paintings, Chua manipulates digital images of sonar scans of Singapore's reservoirs, to produce a series of images of water's force and movement, framed by an ultrasound scan motif. *Ultrasound #1* was made in response to a spate of suicides in Bedok Reservoir, the ultrasound scan motif conflating ideas of life and death via the image of bodies held in water: that of a child's in its mother's womb, as well as that of a body in the depths of the reservoir. The ultrasound scan, a scientific tool to uncover 'what lies beneath' the surface, may be understood as a rational method of probing and understanding (unseen) phenomena. There is however no rational containment in Chua's paintings, as the body of water on her canvas escapes the boundaries of the ultrasound frame. Tiny pixels coalesce into a powerful

crescendo of dark water, a metaphor for the unleashing of elemental forces, the unfathomable depths of the human psyche, as well as an echo of the Biblical flood.

Genevieve Chua (b. 1984, Singapore)'s earlier works often explore the fear of the unknown, and is informed by Southeast Asian superstitions and horror genres. The *Ultrasound* series of paintings was inspired by two separate incidents around the time of the works' creation, both involving water. The first was a succession of flash floods in Singapore which severely impacted public infrastructure; the second was a spate of suicides at Bedok Reservoir. Collectively, they suggest the limits of the rational frameworks or technological systems we may attempt to put in place to contain and understand elemental forces or the human psyche.





Pannaphan Yodmanee

**Primordial Time**

2020

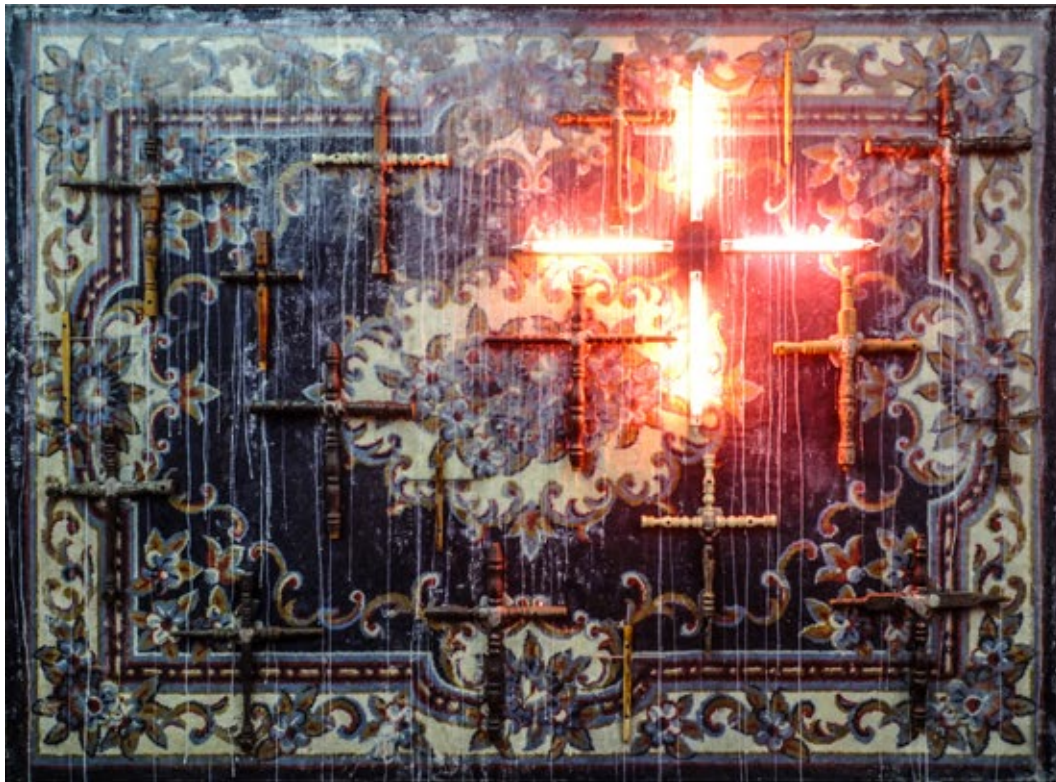
Mixed media on linen

120 × 100 cm

*Primordial Time* brings together creation mythologies and iconography from Eastern as well as Western spiritual traditions, centered on the unitary and unifying figure of the goddess who traverses multiple realms. Pannaphan's image of the goddess is an intriguing blend of icons, recalling Botticelli's Venus, Da Vinci's multi-limbed Vitruvian Man, as well as the many-armed deities of Hindu and Tantric art. This female figure is surrounded by a ring of planets with Earth centered in her womb, suggesting a powerful creative and generative force at the heart of the cosmos. That divinity is imagined in fully fleshed human form is significant, for it suggests an apprehension of the divine or transcendental through humanist principles.

Pannaphan Yodmanee (b. 1988, Thailand) was trained in traditional Buddhist mural painting, and is best known for her staggering installations that resemble modern ruins, delicately painted with scenes that reference epic histories and conquests, mapped against registers of earthly as well as spiritual realms. Her interest lies in the role that faith and religion play in our lives, and their capacity to foster peace as well as destruction and conflict. This work marks her first foray in translating her installation works onto canvas, and brings together many motifs and approaches that characterize her earlier work, including an invocation of the three-world cosmos (or *traiphum*) and the use of vivid blues and gold leaf often found in Thai Buddhist art.





Norberto Roldan

**Crusade**

2015

Wooden crosses salvaged from demolished old houses, beeswax drenched panels, Middle Eastern carpets, neon lights  
168 × 540 cm

An estimated 10 million Filipinos (a tenth of the country's population) are employed as migrant labour, with a large proportion based in the Middle East. The carpets in this installation are popular souvenirs brought home by these OFWs (Overseas Filipino Workers) — many of whom are given a hero's welcome when they return — and the crosses overlaid on the rugs may represent their faith that sustains them during their sojourns abroad, which are often trying and difficult. In this way, these symbols of faith act as beacons of hope, and the travails of the OFWs may be likened to a modern day 'crusade' of sorts.

At the same time, the searing red fluorescent crosses recall the original crusades, where war and fiery persecution were waged in the name of religion. Where faith can sustain, it can also maim. The crosses also resonate with current-day unrest in Mindanao, where Catholicism and Islam remain in conflict with each other. In Roldan's work, the past is alive in the present, and one is read through the other.

Norberto "Peewee" Roldan (b. 1953, Philippines) is an artist and curator at the forefront of contemporary art developments in the Philippines. In 1986 he founded Black Artists in

Asia, a collective focused on socially and politically progressive practices, and in 1990 he initiated the longest running Biennale (VIVA EXCON) in the Visayas region. Roldan juxtaposes images, objects, and fragments of text to question historical certainty, and to open up spaces for new narratives. With regards to *Crusade*, the artist has stated: "traditionally, art-making was part of the struggle for survival and the rituals attendant to it. Art as magic was integral in ritual performances. Beyond their aesthetic forms are layers of beliefs, a system of communication and a clue to encoding meanings about the ancestral past".





Jane Lee

**Nowhere**

2018

Acrylic mirror tiles, reflective vinyl sticker, acrylic paint, enamel, silicone, resin and wood

Dimensions variable

*This artifact was part of Jane Lee's **Nowhere** (2018), a site specific installation for **OUTBOUND**, commissioned by National Gallery, Singapore.*

Like *Karmic Mirror* in the adjoining gallery, this work disrupts the reverie of the gaze that seeks affirmation and wholeness, dissolving form and space into fragmented reflections. The title of the work, *Nowhere*, reinforces this sense of displacement, and explores the illusory nature of our constructed realities, while a play on the words 'now' and 'here' serves as a philosophical reflection on the transience of lives and matter, and the importance of cherishing the fleeting present. One may also read into the title a reference to Utopia (which means 'no place' or 'nowhere'): with its shimmering, mirage-like surfaces, Lee's mirror-tiled wall offers up the possibility of an alternative imaginary from that which we currently inhabit.

Jane Lee (b. 1963, Singapore) works across a range of media, spanning painting, sculpture and installation. Her work often crosses these boundaries and challenges simplistic categorisation. Originally conceived in response to — and intended to reflect — her monumental work *Raw Canvas* which is permanently installed in the grand stairway of the National Gallery Singapore, *Nowhere* dissolves the unity of that iconic image and by extension, the status associated with that artistic accomplishment. In this sense, *Nowhere* is a poignant moment of self-reflection, expressing the transience of our earthly travails and achievements.





Natee Utarit

**Parrhasius Painting (Black and White)**

2005

Oil on canvas

100 × 140 cm (diptych)

Inspired by the legend of Parrhasius, one of the greatest artists of ancient Greece who tricked a fellow artist with his remarkably realistic painting, Natee Utarit's diptych explores the possibilities of painting as it plays with ideas around perception and illusion. From afar, the paintings appear as black and white canvases; they reveal themselves only on closer inspection, suffused with a myriad complex tones of each colour, with the suggestion of something resembling a horizon line, or a length of rope just faintly visible underneath the surface of each canvas. The use of black and white harks back to Natee's earliest monochromatic works, while the treatment of the

canvas surface recalls his other abstracts where intimations of figuration are just barely visible or suggested. Where Parrhasius excelled in his mimetic mastery of a concrete object, Natee's abstraction reaches instead towards a world of sensing-seeing, a treasury of images beyond that of immediate visual perception — the realm of metaphysical truths. The faint horizon line of his diptych echoes that of Ando's *Cloud Moon Mandala*; it is perhaps also not coincidental that Natee's squares and Ando's circle are primordial shapes that have been employed in art throughout time to express and encompass cosmologies and spiritual realms.

Natee Utarit (b. 1970, Thailand) interrogates the making and meaning of images through his paintings. He is perhaps best known for his large-scale figurative works that may be likened to classical history painting, and which are often veiled allusions to contemporary politics and society. Abstraction is another trajectory of his practice, a means of linking the world of reality with that of imagination. The artist sees "the concrete and the abstract (as) two sides of a single coin", believing that "images can exist in physical objects as well as in our feelings and the deepest recesses of our minds and memories".



Miya Ando

**Cloud Moon Mandala**

2013

Dye, pigment, phosphorescence and resin on stainless steel

91.5 × 91.5 cm

Mandalas have long been used for meditation and inner transformation, and Ando's circular portal is an evocation of elemental form, nature, and its deep spirituality. *Cloud Moon Mandala* offers a window onto the infinite cosmos, and a glimpse of how it may reveal itself to us through natural phenomena. Devoid of figuration, it is at once emptiness as well as a representation of the vastness of the universe, an evanescent koan expressing a fundamental and profound knowledge. Ando has referred to Nature as "a universal vocabulary"; an encounter with and within Nature is a fleeting, shared experience of the divine and the spiritual that lies beyond denomination and background, and one that can move us to realise, in Ando's words, that "the temple is inside".

Miya Ando (b. 1978, USA) spent her formative years in a Buddhist temple in Japan as well as on a large expanse of forest in the Santa Cruz mountains. Her work is characterized by a deep interest in natural phenomena. A descendent of Bizen sword makers, Ando is best known for her 'metal paintings' which combine the traditional techniques of her ancestry with modern technology, culminating in otherworldly, abstract works of art.

Suzann Victor

**Wing Manger**

2018

Crushed stained glass

47 × 86 × 25 cm

*Wing Manger* comprises a pair of golden wings clasped together to form a cocoon. It immediately invokes imagery of angels — intermediaries between the worlds of flesh and spirit, and a reminder that the divine often manifests itself in forms that are familiar to us. At the same time, these wings, detached from divine bodies, recall stories of angelic beings cast out of heaven for their disobedience and transformed into mortal flesh as their punishment. By its very title, *Wing Manger* also brings to mind scenes of the nativity, its gently curved form evoking a protective, nest-like comfort. However its surfaces, enveloped with glittering shards of crushed stained glass, keep us at bay —



a precious, unearthly encounter that recalls the Biblical injunction *Noli me tangere* ('touch me not'), suggesting that ultimately the spiritual must be apprehended through faith rather than through the physical.

Suzann Victor (b. 1959, Singapore)'s rich and expansive artistic practice encompasses painting, performance and installation art. She is perhaps best known for her site-responsive installations, which often have a performative element and are highly public in their address. A recurrent motif in Victor's work is her predilection towards glass as a medium, and its qualities are explored in Victor's

works which span decades of her artistic practice. *Wing Manger* comes from a series of work conceived and developed out of a residency at the Yogyakarta Art Lab in Indonesia. Victor was delighted to find, in the midst of a predominantly Muslim country, a shop selling Catholic icons, indicative of the thriving industry replicating Catholic figurines and sculptures for sale around the world. The context of the making of this work thus challenges easy binaries of faith and speaks to an intermingling of spiritual beliefs. The use of crushed glass in *Wing Manger* also harks back to an earlier work created for the Asia Pacific Triennial in 1996, *Tintoretto's Risen Christ Arresting Lazy Susan*.



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