

Solo exhibition by
Ari Bayuaji

The Old Soul The New Universe

11 January —
16 March 2025

Curated by
Hermanto Soerjanto





In an era where “art could be anything and anything could be art”, the use of media and technique in art practice gives us the liberty to explore beyond the conventional. It has become not just a tool in manifesting ideas for artists, but rather they also have their own voice, identity, and statement.

Ari Bayuaji (Ari) is an artist who recognises the media he uses beyond its functional nature, as he treats the media as part of his artistic language and ideology. In his series ‘Weaving the Ocean’, he worked hand in hand with the community in Sanur where their economy was heavily impacted by the pandemic. With their help, Ari collected plastic ropes discarded from ships and fishing boats along the Sanur beach, processed them into plastic strings, and with the help of Ibu Desak, a weaver who lost her job in a traditional textile shop along the street of Sanur, weaved the plastic strings into artworks. This entire artistic process and choice of media is Ari’s artistic statement in relation to social and economic issues, cultural and tradition issues, and of course, environmental issues. The beauty in the artistic process of Ari’s ‘Weaving the Ocean’ series goes beyond the beauty of the artworks.

“The materiality of objects is very important in my art practices. This fundamental interest has led me to being more curious with the history of objects originating from different parts of the world. Over the centuries, objects have been circulated throughout the world, from one place to another and for many reasons, in much the same way that human beings are displaced from one part of the world to another.

I moved to Canada in 2005 to study Fine Arts at Concordia University in Montreal. However, in 2010 after five years of fine art studies, I chose to leave school with only two classes left to receive my Bachelor of Fine Arts degree. As an Asian art student, I could not see my future in Canada at that time because, although Asian, my work is not “Chinese” enough to represent Asian culture according to the ‘tick box’ in their definition of diversity. This was of

course very disappointing but, on the other hand, I then challenged myself to draw upon aspects of “Asian Cultures” that are actually quite similar to traditions of Western cultures that survive even to this day, such as weaving, hand-made musical instruments, and even ink! Using the theme of how objects have been circulated throughout the world in my proposal, I was accepted as the artist in residence at Impressions Artist in Residency of Montreal Museum of Fine Art with the support of Montreal Arts and Council in 2017. It gives me pleasure to say that I am an ‘artist’, not an ‘Asian artist’.

I have been consistent in my practice of using found and ready-made objects as the materials of my artwork. Often enough, I completely “destroy” a found object, transforming it into new material so much so that often the viewer can’t determine the original form or function of the object. A perfect example of this are the plastic fishermen’s ropes that were unravelled to become coloured plastic threads that were woven with cotton threads to create my works in my ‘Weaving the Ocean’ series.

However, I do also keep the original form of the ready-made objects and use them as the medium for my painting or drawing. For example, in my solo exhibition at Mizuma Gallery, I employ antique brass gongs as the medium for my painting works, which also act as wall sculptures. The material is old, but the “content” as a work of art is completely new. The drawing and paintings on the surface of the gongs represent how I visualise the music and the vibrations broadcasted by the gongs when it is struck and played. The gong is just the medium, the painting is a pure abstraction.

There are some paintings in the exhibition that are works on canvas. This was an opportunity for me to explore Chinese ink as a “ready-made” material. I challenged myself to produce ink painting that was completely different from traditional Chinese or Japanese ink painting that I have observed to often be very light and flowy, and depicting landscape, human, birds, animal or trees. My ink painting technique is, however, very different from this traditional

ink painting technique. I dropped lots of ink on the surface of the canvas and allowed the ink to dry before adding another layer and repeating these steps until it reached the desired thickness. By these means, I could create abstract paintings depicting “the underwater depths of an ocean” or “distant outer space”. It is very important for me as a contemporary artist to give a new soul to any materials and mediums I use by injecting emotion inspired by the places and time we are living in at this very moment.”

— Ari Bayuaji, 2024

In Ari’s work we can see how tradition, culture, and history collide naturally in a contemporary manner through the use of ready-made objects or materials. He uses the voice, identity, and statement of his media to narrate contemporary issues, and in a way, he shares the stage with the media he uses. His works have become a dialogue between him and the media or material that he chooses.

In this solo exhibition, Ari presents three main bodies of artwork: *Weaving the Ocean*; the ink series; and the gong series.

Weaving the Ocean

As I mentioned earlier, Ari invited a community in Sanur, Bali, that has been economically affected by the pandemic to be involved in the artistic process of creating the series ‘Weaving the Ocean’. Most of the people in the community were not related to art or art practice, and were actually street sellers and shop owners, who mainly worked in tourism related industries. Only Ibu Desak is connected to art making, as a master of traditional weaving. For the Balinese, they are quite familiar with such processes in creating artwork, as they do it for the religious rituals in the temple. Working together as a community to make decorations and offerings for the temple, doing ritual dances, and playing the gamelan are routine community activities in Bali. I think the beauty of Ari’s ‘Weaving the Ocean’ series goes beyond the visual qualities of the artwork, it represents the beauty of Balinese life and culture.

The Ink Series

Ink painting has been well recognised in Asian art globally, including in Canada where Ari has lived since 2005. As he mentioned in his artist statement, *“I could not see my future in Canada at that time because, although Asian, my work is not “Chinese” enough to represent Asian culture according to the ‘tick box’ in their definition of diversity.”*

In this series of works, Ari use the ready-made object of ink to make a statement about his identity as an Asian, by treating the ink in a different manner compared to the traditional Chinese ink painting, as he explained:

“The ink series was an opportunity for me to explore Chinese ink as a “ready-made” material. Instead of using single brush strokes on paper, my technique employs layers of single ink drops (spills) on the surface of canvas that I let dry before adding another layer of ink. The thickness of the ink creates a cracked texture when it is dried quickly in a very warm and dry room temperature. These works of art however still emphasize simplicity and spontaneity. I then have added, using acrylic paint and gold leaf, various geometrical forms to create a sense of movement on the surface of the ink. By these means, I am able to create abstract paintings depicting “the underwater depth of an ocean” or “distant outer space”.

The goal of my ink painting is to capture the spirit of a peaceful place beyond our realm.”

The Gong Series

Although the term ‘gong’ originated from Java, Indonesia, the history of gong possibly dates back to the 3rd to 2nd BC, from the Dong Son culture of northern Vietnam. Gongs play a significant part in many Asian cultures such as Chinese, Vietnamese, Indonesian, Burmese, Japanese, etc. Gongs are used to mark or signify an important moment or even in spiritual activity, as Ari explained:

“In some cultures in Asia, a gong was not simply a music instrument. It was also a symbol of a family’s wealth, authority, and protection. Very often the sound of a gong has been used in service of spiritual healing and mindfulness.

I also employed antique brass gongs that served as a medium for my painting but that also act as wall sculptures. The abstract painting and drawings on the surface of the gongs are inspired by my visualisation of the sound emanating from the gong. It is a way for me to capture and freeze the special frequency of the sound that was released to the universe. The gong as a painted sculpture may seem like just a work of visual art but in my deeper consciousness, it is the symbol of the sound as a life force, the energy that powers our spirit.”

Looking at Ari’s work is like watching a movie or reading a novel, with the media that he used as the beginning of the stories and his artistic touch as twists that lead to the unexpected ending of the stories.



Hermanto Soerjanto (b. 1970, Indonesia) went to Palin School of Arts & Design in Singapore and Akademi Teknik Desain Interior (ATDI) in Jakarta, Indonesia, before joining Cipta Citra advertising agency in 1994. Since then, he has built his career in the field of advertising and currently holds a position at Pantarei Communications as Chief Creative Officer. As an art collector, Hermanto Soerjanto is familiar with Indonesian artists, having spent much time conversing with them and visiting their studios. In 2008 he established GARIS Artspace, an art gallery in Jakarta showcasing works by contemporary Indonesian artists, where he organizes and curates the exhibitions on a regular basis. To date, Hermanto Soerjanto has organized several exhibitions, most notably *Ethnicity Now*, a group exhibition at Galeri Nasional Indonesia, Jakarta (2010), and *Unveiling Fundamentals in Contemporary Art Through Asia* at OHD Museum, Magelang, Indonesia (2015). Hermanto Soerjanto lives and works in Jakarta, Indonesia.



In Search of My Ancestors #1, 2017 - 2022

Chinese ink and acrylic paint on canvas
50.5 × 39.5 × 4 cm (unframed), 55 × 44 × 6 cm (framed)



In Search of My Ancestors #2, 2017 - 2022

Chinese ink and acrylic paint on canvas

50.5 × 39.5 × 4 cm (unframed), 55 × 44 × 6 cm (framed)



In Search of My Ancestors #3, 2017 - 2022

Chinese ink and acrylic paint on canvas
50.5 × 39.5 × 4 cm (unframed), 55 × 44 × 6 cm (framed)



In Search of My Ancestors #4, 2017 - 2022

Chinese ink and acrylic paint on canvas
50.5 × 39.5 × 4 cm (unframed), 55 × 44 × 6 cm (framed)



In Search of My Ancestors #5, 2017 - 2022

Chinese ink and acrylic paint on canvas
45.5 × 35 × 4 cm (unframed), 50 × 40 × 6 cm (framed)



In Search of My Ancestors #6, 2017 - 2022

Chinese ink and acrylic paint on canvas
45.5 × 35 × 4 cm (unframed), 50 × 40 × 6 cm (framed)



Jade Mountain, 2023

woven plastic threads and cotton threads, semi-precious stone beads
188 × 115 cm



The Waves, 2024

woven plastic threads and cotton threads, semi-precious stone beads
168 × 120 cm



The Sun Rays between Coral Reefs, 2024

woven plastic threads and cotton threads, semi-precious stone beads, copper, plastic threads
148 × 105 cm



The Moon and Thousands of Stars, 2024

woven plastic and cotton threads, mother of pearl
170 × 111 cm



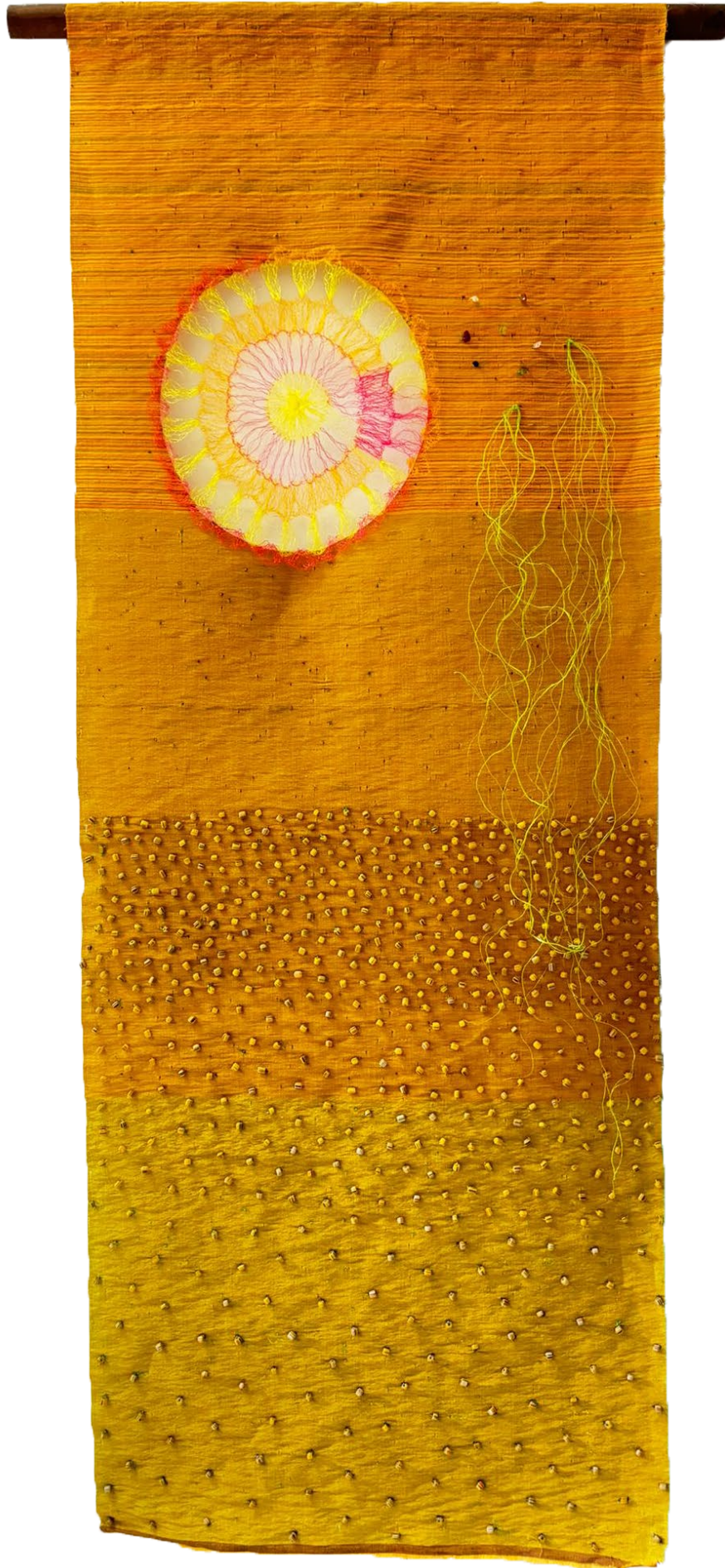
The Night, 2024

woven plastic and cotton threads
180 × 102 cm



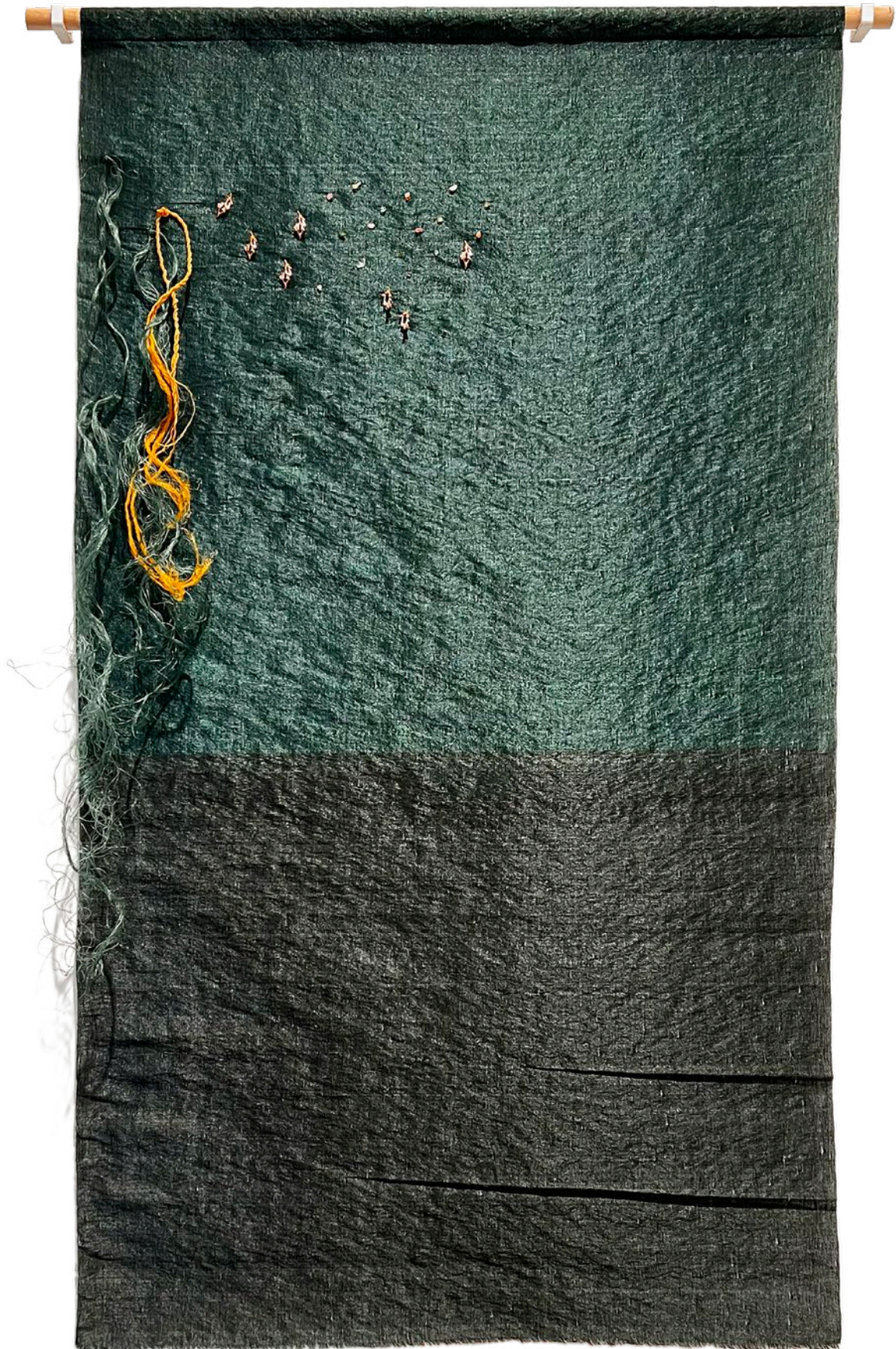
The Waves beneath the Wind, 2024

woven plastic and cotton threads, mother of pearl
190 × 112 cm



The Sundown, 2023

woven plastic and cotton threads, plastic threads
130 × 49 cm



Floating in the Deep Ocean, 2024

woven plastic and cotton threads, copper, semi-precious stone beads, plastic chords
168 × 93 cm



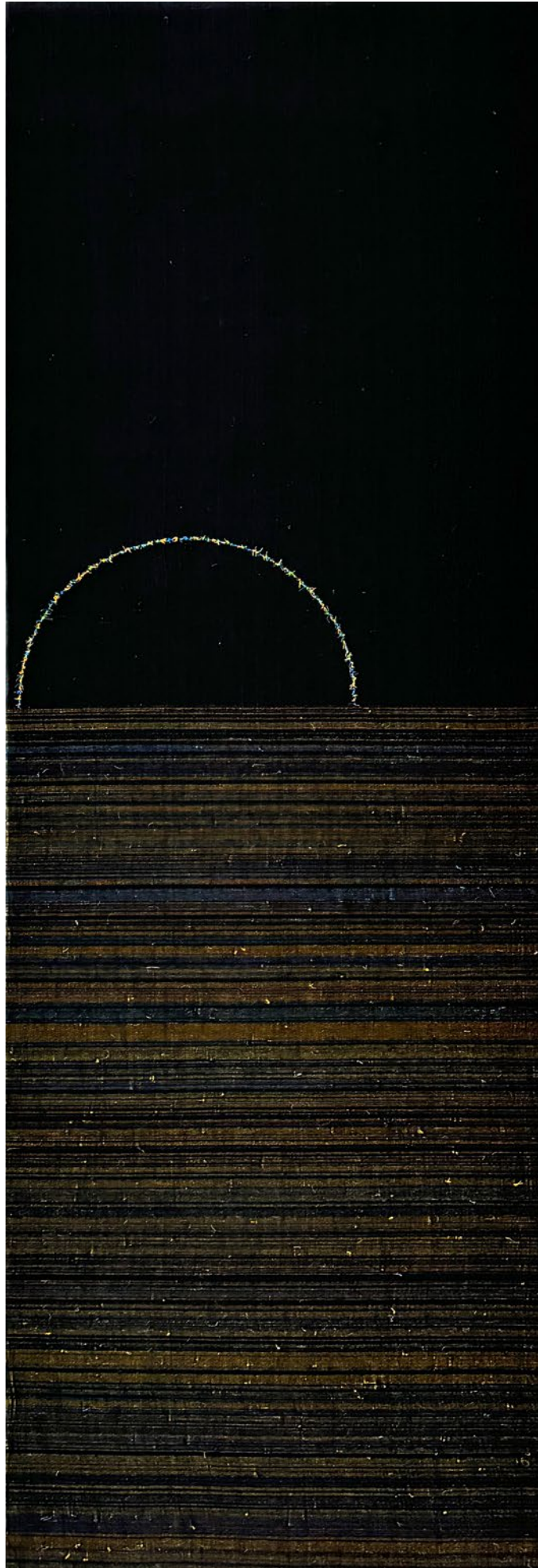
The Colours in Deep Blue Sea, 2023

woven plastic and cotton threads, plastic threads
235 × 105 cm



The Garden beneath the Ocean, 2024

woven plastic threads and cotton threads, semi-precious stone beads, plastic threads
183 × 105 cm



The Moon, the Ocean, the Dark Night, 2024

woven plastic and cotton threads on plywood
112 × 37 × 2,5 cm



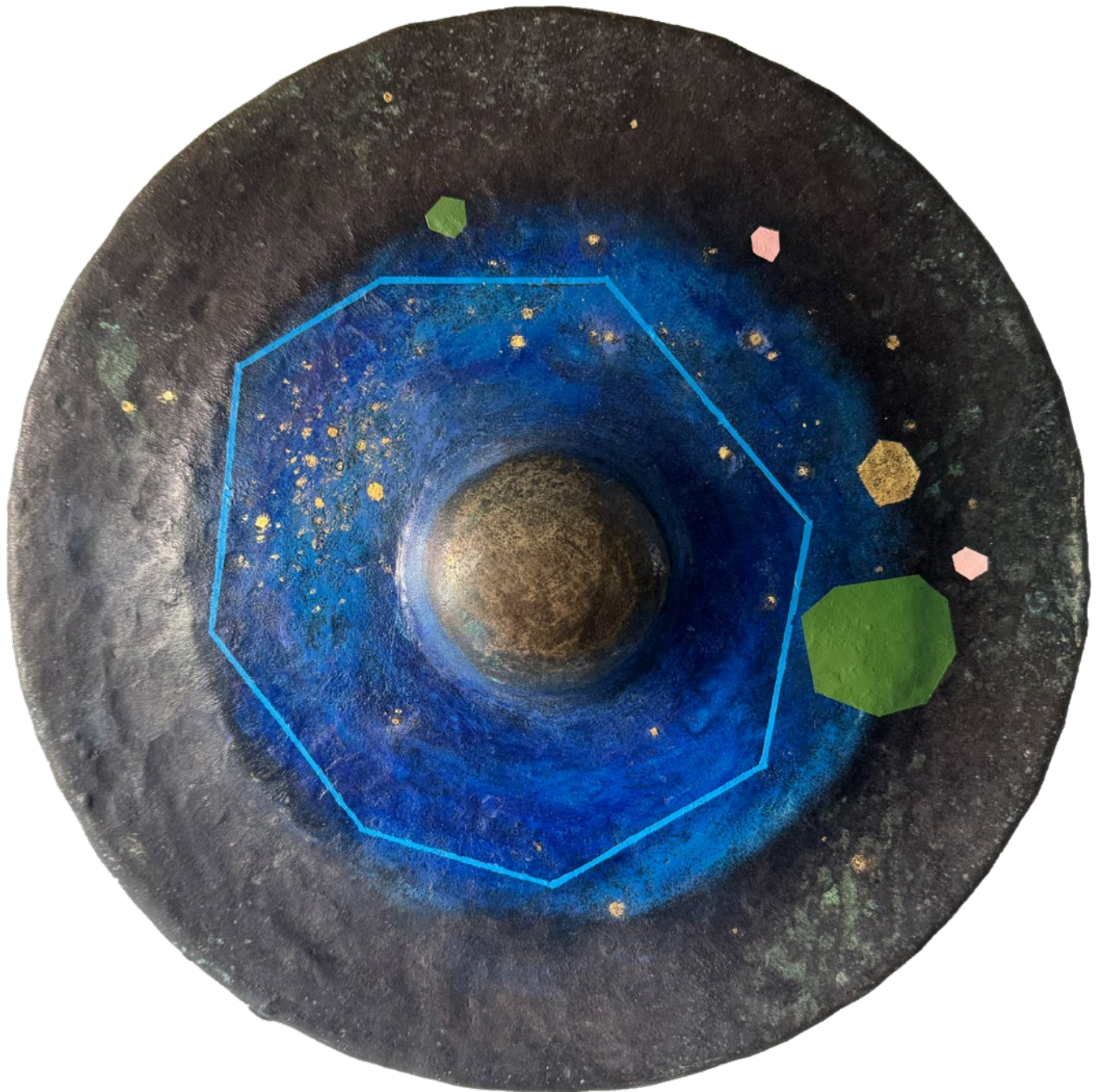
Wealthy Charm, 2024

bronze, Chinese coin, plastic threads, plastic, acrylic paint, gold leaf
29 × 21 × 5 cm



After the Big Bang #1, 2017-2023

bronze, oil stick, acrylic paint, gold leaf
Ø 36 × 10 cm



After the Big Bang #2, 2017-2023

bronze, oil stick, acrylic paint, gold leaf
Ø 36 × 10 cm



Golden Universe, 2024

bronze, gold leaf, acrylic paint
Ø 70 × 13 cm



The Fire Within, 2024

plastic threads, plastic chord, woven plastic and cotton threads, dacron, leather, mirror
155 × 40 × 40 cm



The Fire Within #2, 2024

plastic threads, plastic chord, woven plastic and cotton threads, dacron, leather, mirror
155 × 40 × 40 cm



Ari Bayuaji (b. 1975, Mojokerto, Indonesia) graduated as a civil engineer and worked in Indonesia before deciding to move to Canada permanently in 2005. Once in Montreal, he studied Fine Arts at Concordia University from 2005 to 2010 and now divides his time between Montreal and Bali. The artist is known mainly for his art installations that incorporate the use of found and ready-made objects he collects from various parts of the world, thereby exposing himself to the different cultural traditions. He is an expert in conveying aspects of daily life within a culture as his works often expose the overlooked artistic value in everyday life expressed through objects and places and their roles within a society. Ari Bayuaji has taken part in numerous artist-in-residency programs in Canada, France, the Netherlands, Indonesia, and Singapore. The artist's work has been exhibited in major solo exhibitions in Singapore, Taipei (Taiwan), Ste-Àlvère (France), Dusseldorf (Germany), Rotterdam and The Hague (The Netherlands), and Yogyakarta (Indonesia).

Education

- 2010 Fine Arts, Concordia University, Montreal, Canada
 1998 Bachelor in Civil Engineering, National Institute of Technology, Malang, Indonesia

Solo Exhibitions

- 2025 *The Old Soul | The New Universe*, Mizuma Gallery, Singapore
 2023 *Weaving the Ocean*, Biosphère, Montreal, Canada
The Ocean Called Home, Pierre-Francois Ouellette art contemporain, Montreal, Canada
Weaving the Ocean, Pierre-Francois Ouellette art contemporain (in collaboration with Fehely Fine Art), Toronto, Canada
The Water | The Body | The Spirit, Mizuma Gallery, Singapore
Weaving the Ocean: Pieces of Hope, The Apurva Kempinski Bali, Bali, Indonesia
 2022 *Weaving the Ocean*, Redbase Gallery, Sydney, Australia
Weaving the Ocean, Coral Triangle Center, Bali, Indonesia
Weaving the Ocean, Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, Lim Hak Tai Gallery, Singapore
Weaving the Ocean, Warin Lab Contemporary, Bangkok, Thailand
Weaving the Ocean, Project Casa, Montreal, Canada
 2021 *Weaving the Ocean*, NUNU Fine Art, Taipei, Taiwan
 2019 *Golden*, Parkhaus im Malkastenpark, Dusseldorf, Germany
Self-Portrait, Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay, Singapore
 2018 *Silence*, Musée des Beaux Arts de Montréal, Montreal, Canada
Island of Paradise, NUNU Fine Art, Taipei, Taiwan
Un Cabinet de Curiosites, Maison du Conseil des Arts de Montreal, Montreal, Canada
 2017 *Le Village Un Village*, Fondation Agnes B. Paris and Yves de la Tour d'Auvergne, Sainte-Alvere, France
No Place Like Home, Kunsthall Rotterdam, The Netherlands
 2016 *Censor*, Redbase Foundation, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
 2015 *Ari Bayuaji*, Rene Blouin Gallery, Montreal, Canada
 2014 *Silence*, Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay, Singapore

Group Exhibitions

- 2024 *Bangkok Art Biennale 2024: Nurture Gaia*, Bangkok Art and Culture Centre, Bangkok, Thailand
Indian Ocean Craft Triennial 2024, John Curtin Gallery, Bentley, Western Australia, Australia
Reconstructing Erotica via Post-tradition, Titik Dua Ubud, Bali, Indonesia

- Crossing Ecotones – Thousands of Threads*, Museum of Fiber Arts, Taichung, Taiwan
- 2023 *Translations: Afro-Asian Poetics*, Gillman Barracks, Singapore
- 2023 *Sea Art Festival 2023: Flickering Shores*, Sea Imaginaries, Ilgwang Beach, Busan, South Korea
- Cheongju Craft Biennale 2023: The Geography of Objects - Living in the net of biophilia*, Cheongju Culture Factory, Cheongju, South Korea
- No Paint on Canvas*, ISA Art Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia
- RiverRun Festival*, John F. Kennedy Performing Arts Center, Washington, DC, USA
- 2022 *Celebrating European Union (EU) – Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) 45 Years of Relations*, Halles St. Gery, Brussels, Belgium
- Beyond Painting*, Mizuma Gallery, Singapore
- Distrik Seni Sesi 2: Berkelanjutan!*, Distrik Seni X Sarinah, Sarinah Community Mall, Jakarta, Indonesia
- ARTJOG MMXXII: Arts in Common - Expanding Awareness*, Jogja National Museum, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
- BLEU PLURIEL(S)*, Galerie Arnaud Lebecq, Paris, France
- Lelaki Jangan Menangis*, Titik Dua x Lanö Art Project, Titik Dua Ubud, Bali, Indonesia
- Good News from Bali*, Mizuma Gallery, Singapore
- 2021 *Promenades*, Musée National des beaux-arts du Québec, Québec City, Canada
- 2019 *ART•BALI 2019: Speculative Memories*, AB•BC Building, Bali Collection, ITDC Nusa Dua, Bali, Indonesia
- Flowers and Monsters*, Galerie d'art, Centre culturel Stewart Hall, Pointe-Claire QC Canada
- 2018 *Grace au Dessin*, Nan Rae Gallery, Woodbury University Gallery, Los Angeles, USA
- 2015 *125,660 Specimens of Art History*, Komunitas Salihara, Jakarta, Indonesia
- 2014 *ART|JOG 2014*, Taman Budaya Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
- 2010 *Take Me Home*, FOFA Gallery, Concordia University, Montreal, Canada
- 2008 *Danfoss Art Award Winners Exhibition*, Danfoss Group Global, Nordborg, Denmark

Residencies

- 2018 Contemporary Art International Symposium, Baie-Saint-Paul QC Canada
- 2017 La Residence d'Artiste La Fondation Agnes B. Paris, 'Yves de la Tour d'Auvergne' Sainte-Alvère, Sainte-Alvère, France
- Kunsthal Rotterdam, Rotterdam, The Netherlands
- Musée des Beaux Arts de Montréal, Montreal, Canada
- 2016 Redbase Foundation, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
- 2015 United World College of South East Asia (UWCSEA), Singapore

Collections

Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, Montreal, Canada

Musée des Beaux Arts de Montréal, Montreal, Canada

Musée National du Québec, Québec City, Canada

Awards

2008 Bronze, International Student Art Award, Danfoss Global Group, Nordborg, Denmark

About Mizuma Gallery

Executive Director Sueo Mizuma established Mizuma Art Gallery in Tokyo in 1994. Since its opening in Gillman Barracks, Singapore in 2012, the gallery aims for the promotion of East Asian artists in the region as well as the introduction of Southeast Asian artists to the international art scene. From 2014 to 2019, the artist residency space “Rumah Kijang Mizuma” opened in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, to create a new platform for dialogue by supporting exchanges between East Asia and Southeast Asia. From 2018 to 2023, “Mizuma & Kips” opened in New York, USA, as a shared collaboration between Mizuma Gallery from Tokyo and Singapore and Kips Gallery from New York.

About Gillman Barracks

Set in a former military barracks dating back to 1936 and surrounded by lush tropical greenery, the Gillman Barracks visual arts cluster was launched in September 2012. Gillman Barracks’ vision is to be Asia’s destination for the presentation and discussion of international and Southeast Asian art. Today, Gillman Barracks is a place for art lovers, art collectors, and those curious about art. The cluster is a focal point of Singapore’s arts landscape, and anchors the development of visual art in the region and beyond.

About Singapore Art Week

As Singapore’s pinnacle visual arts season, Singapore Art Week (SAW) represents the vibrant and diverse visual arts ecosystem.

The ten-day event will see more than 100 events by the local and international visual arts community. Audiences can look forward to a dynamic line-up of programmes and arts experiences at our museums, galleries, independent art spaces and public spaces, and participate in enriching discussions, talks, walks and tours across the island and online.

SAW, a celebration of Singapore’s visual arts landscape, is an annual event organised by the National Arts Council (NAC).

Part of

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