



scream inside your heart
anurendra jegadeva

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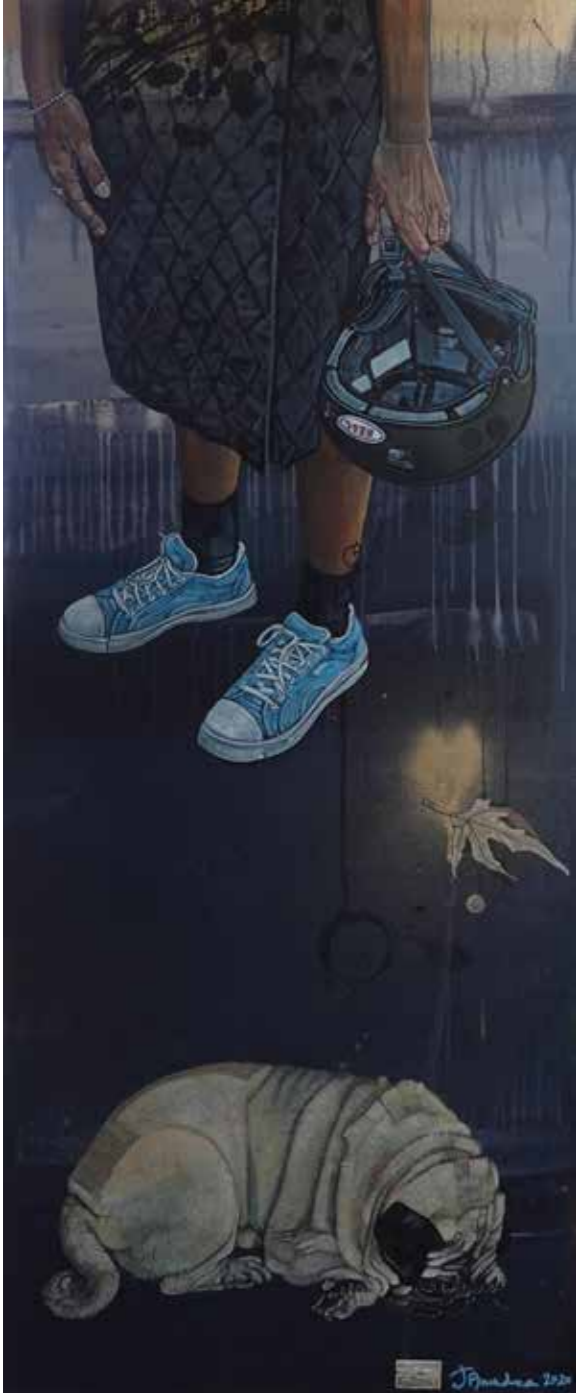
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Printed in Malaysia

scream inside your heart



... Nowhere to Go
Acrylic on canvas
121.8 x 76 cm
2020

I made **Scream Inside Your Heart** while my Mother was and still is far away from us, surrounded by family and friends but without my father. Her resilience and vigour tinged with her special brand of insanity inspires me everyday.



Seperate Together
Acrylic on canvas
with gold machineguns
60 x 140 cm
2020



Pet Peeves
Acrylic and vintage print on canvas
50 x 88 cm
2019



The Yellow Peril
Acrylic on enamel sign
30 x 45 cm
2020



FOREWARD

2020 hasn't even started and it's over....

Can we start again please?

This pandemic that has engulfed the world, has affected each and every person on this planet.

It has been so inclusive that not one of us been left out.

As I write this introduction to Anu's latest body of work, we are still wading our way through it- navigating, adjusting and adapting- trying our best to find our footing, to steady and brace ourselves through unknown territory.

When Anu did a what's app facetime call with Inpa, Yohan and myself (as we all did to stay in touch and to keep ourselves sane over the MCO!!) he excitedly mentioned that the best part of the lockdown for

him, had been the fact that he had been painting like a fiend, 'I've been making lots of work!', he eagerly chimed.

I listened and smiled, but didn't react much as I didn't want to get my expectations up.

I have worked with artists for more than 18 years, and I know that it is no easy task to put a full and resolved show together. And with age it gets even more difficult - you just naturally become harder on yourself.

I knew Anu was working, but I needed to see something solid before reacting.

When he started sending me snippets of what was to come, I started to see that he was really pushing into new territory, both from an aesthetic, as well as technical point of view. In the political climate that we



are living through, not just within Malaysia but on a global level as well, there is no shortage of fodder for artists.

For Anu it is no different as his mind is constantly working on overdrive as he observes and digests then cleverly retorts with a clever answer-as he always has.

But this time he has completely outdone himself.

This Lockdown has been really good for him. I vouch for it.

The title, "Scream inside your Heart" which absolutely and completely encapsulates how we are all feeling, as we put on a brave face and try to go about our every day as though all is A-ok, meanwhile our hearts beat wildly and anxiety engulfs us at every turn.

The pieces are each made up of a kaleidoscope of human stories all interwoven into the quilt of his own life's events.

The uncertain and difficult life of the imagined refugee, juxtaposed against the comfortable life of Frankie, his pet pug to the commanding portrait of his daughter Rupa-all grown up and a young woman. In her own right, as she and all young people who are starting out, grapple with what the new norms are.

Then there are the works which hark back to the Chinese Opera Heads and the Bharatnatyam dancers, imagery from another life, but this time all sophisticated and confident, making their 21st century debut- appropriately gas-masked to deal with this crazy world we are living in.

The works are powerful and deeply so. They touch us on so many levels-leaving us with so many questions, but also a quiet acceptance of the way things are.

What else can we do?

For once we can say we are all in this together.

No one is going anywhere.

Just come and see the show already.

Also the artist isn't showing up

It's just the works – And they say everything.

Lim Wei-Ling

Gallery Director

Wei-Ling Galleries



Same Old Song
Acrylic and mixed media on
found antique cutlery drawer
30 x 45 cm
2020

Letter to my Grandmother
Acrylic on canvas
101.5 x 152 cm
2020





ANURENDRA JEGADEVA
BY LOUIS HO

The Trials and Tribulations of
Shanghai Sally and Wuhan Wendy
Acrylic on canvas
122 x 122 cm each
2020

The Trials and Tribulations of
Shanghai Sally and Wuhan Wendy
Acrylic on canvas
122 x 122 cm each
2020





Essential Workers
Acrylic on canvas
60 x 120.8 cm
2016, 2017, 2018



Grey Dancer 1
Acrylic on canvas
100 x 107 cm
2020



Orange Dancer
Acrylic on canvas
100 x 107 cm
2020



Grey Dancer 2
Acrylic on canvas
100 x 107 cm
2020

Another Day in Paradise...
Port Authority, NYC
Acrylic on canvas
60 x 60 cm
2019





Conversation from the
Heartland I, II, III, IV
Acrylic on canvas
90 x 90 cm each
2019





SCREAM INSIDE YOUR HEART finds inspiration for its title from a news item about a theme park re-opening in Japan in the early part of the pandemic. The advertising video for the relaunch featured a safety video of two masked company execs sitting dead-pan, in suit and tie, on a roller-coaster as it took all its twists, turns and loops. They don't move, they don't stretch their arms, they don't make a squeak. At the end of the ride, they look in the camera and whisper 'scream inside your heart'.



NEW PAINTINGS FROM
SOLITARY CONFINEMENT
by ANURENDRA JEGADEVA



I Heart Mushu
Acrylic on canvas
46 x 107 cm
2020

There are two distinct series of works in SCREAM INSIDE YOUR HEART.

BC and PC - before and post Covid.

Just like real life.

The earlier works are relatively banal grumbles of a life-goes-on, pre-Covid world where people shook hands, shared food and even coughed openly in public. In a world unthinkable today, we got on planes, visited family, vacationed on a whim anywhere in the world, the more

far-flung, the better. We went to the cinema, took a crowded train to work and met at bars after an unbearable week at the office. Certainly, climate change lurked somewhere in the background, irate populist nationalism was rearing its ugly head everywhere and the rich/poor divide was in a free fall. All the stuff that we uncomfortably acknowledged but largely ignored. Gender and race inequalities were issues we saw as 'lacking' but at least - unlike our parents before us - we were finally

talking about it.

And we did more than talk! We were 'activists', part of online tribes that knew for sure that we were part of the solution and not the problem.... never, the problem.

After all, we recycled.

We went to a political rally once every 3 months or so then talked about the sad state of the world over dinner with friends who owned German cars.

We weren't offended by same-sex-

marriage.

On holiday we tipped 'generously' and empathised with the locals!

To decrease our methane footprint we even ate less beef.

We found the positives in facing our personal losses - deaths in the family, the breakdown of relationships, the stress of a too large mortgage - coming together to smile in the face of these hardships.

In Malaysia, we broke an impossible political deadlock that had shaped our Malaysian psyche since Independence. All of which, we put on full display on Instagram or if you were less *woke*, Facebook..

In my case - I made pictures about 'worthwhile' things.

Surely that was enough. In spite of

everything, we were progressing as a species.

Covid put paid to all our delusions of grandeur and pretence of enlightenment.

It seems - this, now - is our true face.

Most glaring is the broad failure of Leadership everywhere in the world. It manifests in a male dominated chauvinistic lust for power that, at any cost, wants to stay in power. The concept of a compassionate greater good is a distant, hollow call to arms.

We have squandered the well being of our elderly, our heralded 'greatest generation' and ignored the plight of genuine asylum seekers for our right to not have to wear a mask and to have the steady pull and wipe of toilet paper.

For someone like me, a homogenous blend of Biggles, Bowie and the Queen,

it has been uncomfortably revealing. As the beneficiary of that so-called superior Western styled value system that has shaped literally everything we understand and feel about freedom, politics, civilisation, history, language, place, race, culture, music and of course art, that oasis of enlightened Truth promised to us in the so-called 3rd world continues to elude me.

Instead, we fail each other yet again, along age-old tribal lines of class, geography, religion, race and most importantly, according to our financial means.

And all the while stock markets happily chug along. Speaks volumes about humanity.

As an artist at this challenging point of our human civilisation, I simply try to describe this world I am currently confronted with.

And how, like a jig saw, we all fit together.

In the process, I hope that, the autobiographical, balanced with aesthetics, humour and our common experience of the world, evokes a response in the viewer.

I have also tried (not always successfully) to inject both this humour laced with an added irreverence to test the bounds of broader sensitivities when describing that world we live in.

For the first half of this body of work, in pieces like *Brexit Blues*, *Australian*, *Another Day in Paradise* and *Pet Peeves* I relied on the absurd to lighten the unavoidably loaded narratives in my work. Many of these earlier works, continued to explore the more ludicrous states of Otherness, here in Australia as well as in the larger world.

Drawing inspiration from the histories and collective experiences of consecutive migratory groups to the 'lucky country' seen through the lens of my Malaysian heritage and always set against the backdrop of a world gone bad, levity helps keep the work from being precious or self important. Humour and satire are tools i use repeatedly to convey the realities of trying to find that sweet spot of belonging; the delicate balance between the cliches of identity and assimilation. But it could as easily be simply about missing *nasi lemak* with *extra sambal*.

Covid-19 and its fall-out, however, refutes easy depictions and levity.

Take government for example. It used to be an easy target.

Now, even the abject bafoonery of national leaders only evokes fatigue and despair.

First they alternate between authoritarian fear-mongering and delusional calls for a return to the values of yesteryear. Then they promise a brave new world and the challenges of dynamic futures.

Meanwhile, we rinse and repeat everyday. By ourselves. Far away from family whether they are just a few suburbs away, or in another country.

In the course of this body of work, I have repeatedly used the grey rooms to convey this sense of isolation during lockdown. Stripped of much of the clutter and decoration of symbols that dominated my visual vocabulary in past works, the new compositions in most part, are occupied by a solitary sitter, often quite conveniently my daughter, the other person in the house.

Letter to My Grandmother explores how big and far away the world has become

again. It is my lament about our feelings of self-imposed exile as home and family become completely inaccessible. In Melbourne, we haven't been out of a 5km radius of our home in nearly 6 months, over two lockdowns and numerous domestic tensions.

That's longer than the lockdown in Wuhan.

It is a grey existence.

This theme continues in works like *Nowhere to Go*, one of the later works in the series towards the end of Melbourne's second lock down. Having our daughter home for the duration of the lockdown while parentally fulfilling, really brings to the fore the challenges for young people, not only because of the immediacy of isolation and separation but their dread of very real, uncertain futures.

Employment, travel, education, and of course social interactions..... dating.... all the things we took for granted for ourselves as well as our children are changed forever or at the very least, for the foreseeable future.

One Day I'll Fly Away is the final portrait of Rupa. This large portrait with mask departs from her grey interiors for the backdrop of open blue skies. As if part of some AA mantra, the painting tries to speak of a pragmatic acceptance of things we cannot control and the resolve to face the challenges of this brave new world to come. The scale of the painting is the taunt of open skies at odds with the strict travel restriction imposed on us for half a year now. Personally, it also serves as a warning to us parents, that even the current closing of ranks of the nucleus family unit, perhaps the only positive



Merdeka Babies
Acrylic and collage on canvas
35 x 84 cm
2020

Heart in Hand
Mixed Media
size variable
2019
Commissioned by the
Indian Heritage Centre

effect of the pandemic, is forced and temporary.

It is my grey existence.

In the stand-alone triptych, *Grey Dancer I & II* as well as *Orange Dancer*, I revisit old friends and frequent actors from past works. The Bharatanatyam dancers are presented within their Covid contexts. The players, set within the confines of their grey isolation capture the performer sans audience... resplendent in the decoration and drama of their art form but without any real reason for being.

If a tree falls in the forest, and there is no one there to hear it, does it make a noise?

For me, as a member of the arts fraternity, the masked performers also represent a shaming of dismal governmental

initiatives and subsidies to support the arts industries and its educational frameworks during the fall out of this ongoing health and social crisis.

All over the world, across the board, the arts it seems, is not essential to society.

Likewise, the large diptych *Trials and Tribulations of Wuhan Wendy and Shanghai Sally*, echo many of the self-same sentiments as the *Grey and Orange Dancer* paintings. The *wayang* of the Chinese opera has also been a recurring theme in my work but is presented here within their grey cocoons of silence. *Wendy and Sally*, resplendent in all the detail, pomp and ceremony of performance are dressed up with nothing to do nor anywhere to go.

Just for effect - the making of these works coincided deliciously with the Trumpian call to blame China for the Virus, for creating it, spreading it, keeping it secret and then profiting from it, a call that has since been echoed, closer to home, by the Australian government.

It is their grey existence.

And like a perfect storm, in the lead-up to the terrible effects of Covid, we experienced the usual palaver and *sendiwara* of politics in Malaysia. A child of the Mahathir years, the Leader has been a constant subject since I was a school boy. Having done over 20 portraits over 40 years, *A Nation Turns its Lonely Eyes to You* commemorates the latest political cluster**** with a straight up portrait based on a famous press image

that nevertheless, pacifies my increasingly fruitless ambition to have Dr M sit for me in person.

Painted at the point of the PM's resignation (5.0?), this large portrait is a sad counter to the earlier *Mamak Kool* which celebrated the ousting of PM Najib. That election, for the first time, gave Malaysian voters the taste of an alternative to Barisan Nasional which many saw as a relic of its once glorious past.

Using a self portrait with purple voting finger, wearing a ceremonial military *songkok* and surrounded by the debris of our colonial pasts, I created an, admittedly, rambling narrative that meandered through racial stereotypes and colloquialisms. Today, in the light



of everything that has happened since, *Mamak Kool* remains, ironically, more hopeful than ever, albeit, tinged with a wistful longing for what might have been.

Like A Nation Turns its Lonely Eyes to You, IN-OUT, painted in the aftermath of that event, examines political systems, democracy and always, outcomes that inevitably, are at odds with the will of the people. Based on a photoshoot by my friend Rizal of our friend Wandu a few years ago, the depiction of the Javanese warrior sheathing and unsheathing... the in and out of the kris, gives voice to the fears of the Other on both sides of political divides, of political retribution - specific to Malaysia but in a broader global sense as well.

Finally, the glorification and the depiction

of the Malay Warrior class, a kind of right-of-passage amongst some Malaysian artists of Malay ethnicity is something I have always been curious about. In my on-going search for heroes within my own artistic practise, albeit from the vantage point of the 'outsider', I wanted to see if I could own it too. After all if I can appropriate Captain America and Batman, why can't I own Hang Tuah?

It is our grey Malaysian existence.

While the autobiographical dominates much of my favoured narratives - popular culture, music, literature and the news on TV has always informed them. Works like *Same Old Story* and *Trouble at the Border* respond directly to world events that, in one way or another, eventually touch all our lives.

The killing of George Floyd and the ensuing protests in America seamlessly intersect with those in HongKong in the 'they can't breathe' triptych. Similarly, *Trouble at the Border* references recent skirmishes at the Sino-Indian border around Ladakh and the Tibet Autonomous Region. Indian and Chinese troops gave in to their baser instincts, killing each other with sticks and stones in accordance with their non aggression peace pact of 1969. In a desperate pursuit of mirth, in my versions of the event, I imagine they are wearing masks while beating each other to death.

Yet more damning indictments of the abhorrent failure of even the most meagre examples of leadership around the world with the exemption of the few lucky countries that boast women in or

near seats of power. But that is a series of work for another time.

As a journalist and as an artist, I was always taught that my work must speak beyond the artist's or writer's own voice. Still, at this very moment, under these specific circumstances, I want to express, through these works, the deep sadness I feel about the fractured, tribal, self-serving, selfish greed of our world leaders in the calamitous years leading up to this pandemic.

It puts to rest the myth, certainly in my lifetime, of the idyll of a World Community, the marriage of Nations.

Covid has definitely stripped *that* bride bare.

From the big issues like vaccine and PPE

Mamak Kool
Acrylic and archival print
on canvas
55 x 75 cm
2019



nationalism and the failure to protect our most vulnerable, from the aged to asylum seekers on the high seas to petty refusals to wear masks or even share toilet paper, we citizens have shown ourselves to be desperately and miserably uninspired.

But hey, who cares what I think. I am nobody with my own set of bad habits.

So I made these paintings. It is the only thing I know how to do.

If nothing else I have had it relatively easy.

After all, Covid got me off my bum and it forced me to make work every day of confinement.

And when I wasn't in-studio, I was shopping. Just look at my on-line search history.

What I Bought During Lockdown is my confession that retail therapy is alive and well and does alleviate the loneliness of isolation and the desperation born of a 24-hour news cycle that spews division, contradiction and hate.

Forget about the climate and my carbon footprint, how other people are going it tough, whether my wife loses her job or not, how lonely my mother may be - I can make it all bearable with presents to myself... t-shirts, books, comics, toy cars, LEGO, a chair, a stone Ganesh, a rice cooker, a soda stream machine, fancy masks, an Afghan war rug and this limited edition large sculpted statue of Miller's Dark Knight.

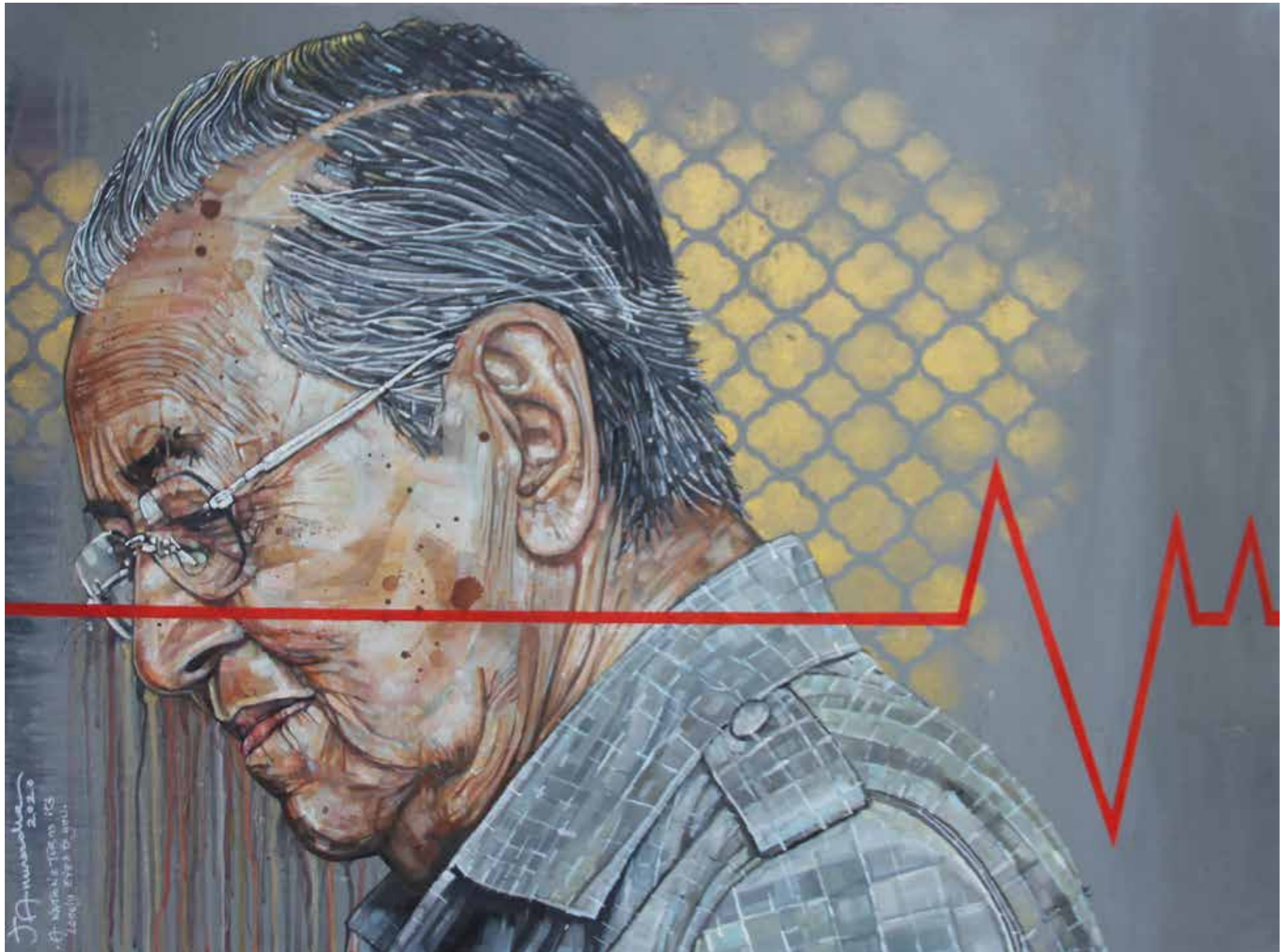
Made in China, this sculpted action figure is, for me, the very symbol of the once

proud and dynamic, so diminished, hollow state of American exceptionalism.

What I Bought During Lockdown, my still life of the Batman is the final work in my Coronavirus diary.

Finally, amidst the cacophony of so much difficult news and the desperation of isolation, I often think of home and one day I remembered Ismail Hashim. *Ismail* is my tender and loving respite from our preoccupations with self and our current realities. Painted on one of the late photographer's damaged prints that he had given me during an interview we did in Penang many years ago, my portrait of *Ismail* is a tribute to simpler times, a smaller world and an artist I loved from the day we met.

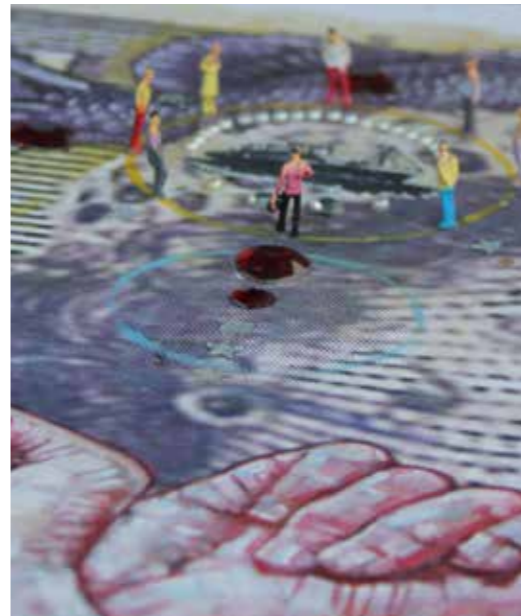
Painting him made me happy.



A Nation Turns its Lonely Eyes to You
Acrylic on canvas
75.8 x 101.9 cm
2020



IN n' OUT
(Based on a photograph by my friend Rizal of our friend Wandi)
Acrylic on canvas
100 x 214 cm
2020



Saturday Afternoon Activist
Acrylic, vintage print and collage on canvas
64 x 55 cm
2019





Australian
Acrylic on vintage print on canvas
50 x 74 cm
2019



Brexit Blues
Acrylic on vintage print on canvas
105 x 120 cm
2019



Trouble at the Border
Acrylic on canvas
82 x 221 cm
2020



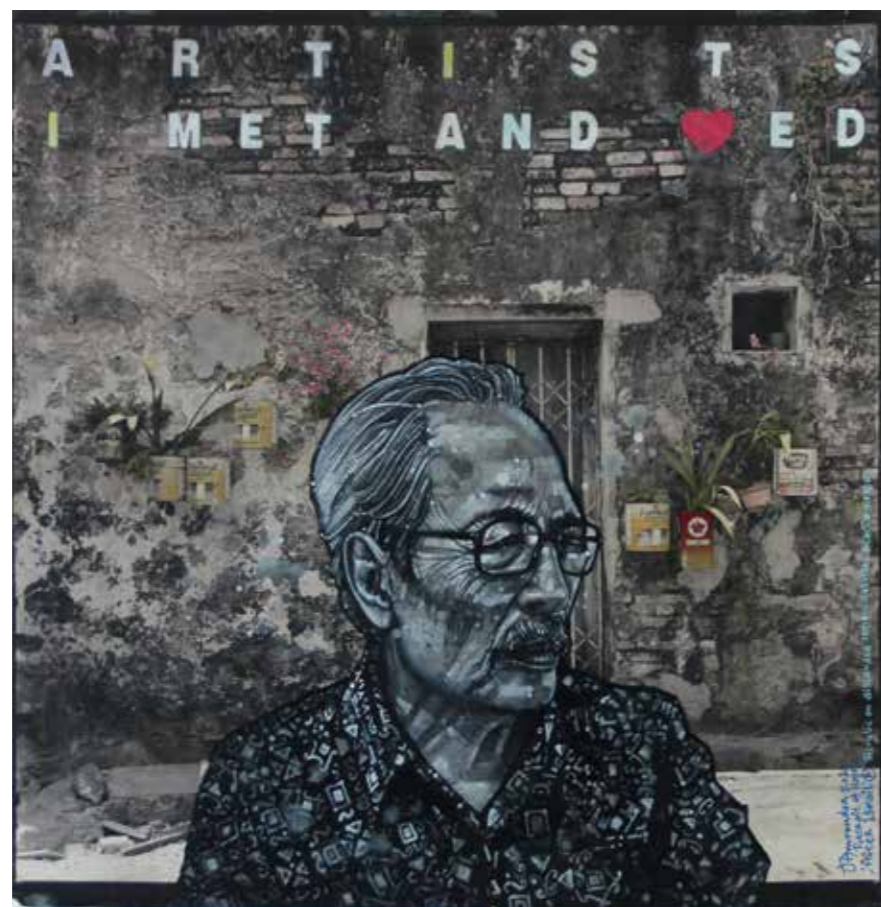
What I Bought During Lockdown
Acrylic on canvas
111 x 122 cm
2020



One Day I'll Fly Away
Acrylic on canvas
76 x 152.5 cm
2020



Love's Requiem
Acrylic and archival print on canvas
55 x 75 cm
2020



Ismail
Acrylic on hand tinted Ismail Hashim photograph
51 x 51 cm
2020

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all I would like to thank Wei-Ling for always being a positive driving force in my practise. In the light of the global shutdown, I am especially grateful that she had the ambition, endurance and some kind of foresight to realise that 2019 was THE year for a Malaysian pavilion in Venice and that I was one of the artists she chose to represent my country.

Inpa for being my anchor for more than 30 years, who has reined me in when needed yet always encouraged bad behaviour in the name of my art and for fun. I wouldn't want to spend this six-month, lock-down sentence with anyone else.

Our daughter Rupa, my constant critic, frequent sitter, in-house designer and sometime marriage counselor who always keeps us connected to the *neu*. She has come home for the duration but will go away as soon as she possibly can!

Nalina Gopal and the Indian Heritage Centre. The timely IHC commission was, on the one hand - a culmination of 30 years of issues that have driven my work - and on the other, was the beginning of a return to painting for its own sake.

Louis Ho for his essay and support for my work.

Rizal Johan for his generosity and constant friendship.

Viji for her editorial input!

As always, the expert crew at the gallery, Siew Boon, Amanda and Noel who always prioritise my work, managing every exhibition with a grace and efficiency at odds with my own general state of barely organised disarray.



A Garland for my Father
Acrylic on canvas and perspex lightbox
110 x 110 cm
2020

