

Yesterday



WE WALKED, YOU TALKED OF STORIES OLD, DESCRIBED THE OPPOSITE OF EQUAL,
 THE MEANING OF YOUR QUESTION CONFUSED MY FIRST THOUGHT WITH ITS SEQUEL.
 REPEAT THE CYCLE, CLOSE THE CIRCLE, REVERSE THE VERITABLE VERSION,
 TO SOME SYMBOLIC FOCUS FROM EUPHORIC MOOD IMMERSION.
 PURSUIT OF TRUTH AND BEAUTY REMAINS A POWERFUL ADDICTION,
 UNDERMINED BY LOSS OF FAITH, REDUCING FACT TO FICTION.
 MY CERTAINTY IS FREQUENTLY AN ATTEMPT TO HIDE MY FEAR
 AND OFTEN ON REFLECTION THINGS ARE NOT WHAT THEY APPEAR.
 A FLASH OF LIGHT AT SUNSET CAN PERSUADE THE HEAVY HEART
 THAT IN THE DYING OF THE DAY THERE IS HOPE ON NATURE'S PART
 THAT SOME ANGELIC PRESENCE MIGHT INFORM THE MODERN AGE,
 THAT GOD IN ALL HIS MANY FORMS WILL ETCH HIS SPIRIT ON THIS PAGE
 OF TIME, AND THUS, THE LIGHT AND DARK OF KNOWLEDGE STRENGTH AND MALICE
 ARE JUST ASPECTS OF THE "MYSTERY" AND A SIP FROM HEAVEN'S CHALICE.

Richard Morgan Evans

ABOUT THE WORK

Anurendra Jegadeva is one of Malaysia's leading contemporary artists and has exhibited actively for over 25 years both locally and internationally. As an artist, writer and independent curator, he is interested in the issues of difference that drives the world around him and has worked consistently to forge effective and fresh narrative approaches to the contemporary and historical themes in his work.

With his new work *Yesterday in a Padded Room...* Anurendra draws from the Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa (تاريخ مروج مہاوڤسا), also known as The Kedah Annals, a work of Malay literature that chronicles the bloodline of Merong Mahawangsa and the foundation of the province of Kedah, a state in Malaysia. This earliest known Malay literary work is thought to have been written in the late 18th century. While it is written around historical accuracies, there are also many incredible assertions that enable Anurendra to embellish his aesthetic exploration of particular themes in the epic narrative with humour and irony.

The era covered by the text ranged from the opening of Kedah by Merong Mahawangsa, allegedly a descendant of Alexander the Great of Macedonia till the acceptance and dominance of Islam over an existing Hindu presence. Using a blend of painted thrones and customized cushions, Anurendra creates a war room, imagining the negotiations between Hindu deity Garuda, the mount of Lord Vishnu and the Prophet Solomon or Sulayman the Wise, recognized in the Quran as a prophet and a divinely appointed monarch. As the story implies – the South East Asian region would be divided according to their respective systems of beliefs.... everything above the borders of Thailand to India would be Hindu and everything below that line – including Malaysia and Indonesia – would be Muslim. Through this new room installation, Anurendra attempts to convey the duality of tensions and confrontational differences that still dominate the social, political and religious contexts of a world that continues to drift further away from sanity with every passing day.

Anurendra studied Art and Design at Oxford Polytechnic in 1986 before reading law at London University and doing his Masters in Fine Art at Monash University.

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Yesterday in a padded room...

AN INSTALLATION BY ANURENDRA JEGADEVA

Wei-LingGallery

Yesterday,



Yesterday,



The meeting place of opposites, the Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa - the Kedah Annals - commences with the fabled Hindu bird, Garuda, attempting to frustrate a marriage between a Prince of Rome and a Princess of China - a union set to unite the spheres of the world. Stating his case to the Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) "to whom the dominion of the whole world and every living thing in it was entrusted by God," Garuda is reminded by the Prophet of the sanctity of unions and accords but allowed to "break the bond if he is so able." Defeated by the Captain of a vessel of the Emperor of Rome, Merong Mahawangsa, Garuda then resigns his fate to the Prophet Solomon and is commanded, following his defeat, to "depart, far away from the land where mankind dwells..."

The Prophet Sulaiman then bequeaths a realm, and the laws that govern it, to Merong Mahawangsa, that it remain under his guardianship to commence a lineage that would begin with him.

To traditional colonial attitudes, this assemblage of myths attested to the fact that "no real history exists there... only shards of myth and fable." Nevertheless, the Tale of Merong Mahawangsa remains one of the earliest of Southeast Asia's epics, a genealogical rendering of one of the earliest Southeast Asian polities - Kedah, in the northern Malay Peninsula - and epitomizes the sprawling, discursive influences that forged the historical imagination of early Southeast Asia, established the negotiated mythologies of the Southeast Asia region and carved the geography of influences that continues to endure in this archipelago of paradoxes.

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