

Through Rose- Tinted Glasses

Annabelle Ng
Anurendra Jegadeva
Cheng Yen Pheng
Chin Kong Yee
TOPY
Diana Lui
Fairuz Sulaiman
Kim Ng
Michal Macku
Ruzzeki Harris
Sean Lean
Yim Yen Sum

Through Rose-Tinted Glasses

6th December 2017- 31st January 2018

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The pieces presented in ‘*Through Rose-Tinted Glasses*’ exhibition portray both personal and social issues that are significant to the artists’ lives. As opposed to criticizing the realities, the artists are challenged to meditate on existing conditions and envision an alternative, more hopeful version of reality. Each artist sheds a light on an issue that is affecting them, some with the hope of providing the viewers with a new perspective of the issue at hand – a fresher way of looking at the world and coping with its complexities. Other artists go on to showing hints of their vision regarding the future of our society. Their works do not include waiting passively for things to get better, but provoke discussions about the potentiality of modeling tomorrow – seeing ideas, whether utopic, artificial or not, as possibilities. As Henri Matisse said, “*There are always flowers to those who want to see them.*”

The exhibition features twelve distinguished artists: Annabelle Ng, Anurendra Jegadeva, Cheng Yen Pheng, Cheong Kiet Cheng, Chin Kong Yee, TOPY, Diana Lui, Fairuz Sulaiman, Kim Ng, Michal Macku, Ruzzeki Harris, Sean Lean and Yim Yen Sum. Their works range from painting on canvas, wall painting, photogram, silkscreen print, to audio-visual performance and installation.

In *Secretion*, *Concealment* and *Stealth* (2017), a series of three silkscreen on pre-painted canvas, Kim Ng explores the idea of concealing truths. His focus on human behavior leads him to observe cultural and political situations in Malaysia and reflect on existing social issues in a subtle way. As an artist, Ng is concerned about the future of the next generation. As he notes, while Malaysia exists in a state of peace, its history has been shaped by many conflicts. These social and political conflicts are occasionally brought up and discussed intensively, but tend to should be. The layers of materials, overlaps of colors and repetitions of gestures inside the work create garden-like landscapes, which serve to emphasize the necessity of looking at state of things through a more positive perspective. The artist affirms that despite being bound by political restrictions, individuals need to exercise their freedom of speech and not fall silent when confronted with injustices. The artist’s role becomes, what Ng likes to call, a “reviewer” of the society we live in.

To Diana Lui, artists are more than observers. They bear the responsibility of creating an alternative, albeit a positive space, which we can retreat into when the pressures of modern life isolate us from our sense of self. This idea is illustrated in Lui’s life-size photogram, *AUM #3* (2015), in which she depicts both life and darkness. The title of the work refers to the mantra “Aum”, which ancient Yoga scriptures describe as the sound of creation. This sentiment of re-awakening is echoed by her choice of materials (sand, seeds, crystals and sunflower) that she collected throughout her travels to different parts of the world while on a personal journey to rediscover the depths of her identity. Most remarkably the sand being from Aswan, Egypt and the seeds from the rain forest of Taman Negara, Malaysia. To Lui, the process of disconnecting from the world for a certain period of time is her approach towards becoming a more conscious individual. To exist in harmony with one’s surrounding, one must be knowledgeable of his or her personality. For the artist, journeying through Egypt was her way to “reinitialize” herself. While walking along the Nile river for the first time, Lui was overcome with a sudden feeling of déjà vu. Her soul and body reacted powerfully to the place as if it was her origin. This emotional experience lead her to reflect on her life path and role in society. Wearing multiple “hats”, both as a mother and a professional artist, her work also examines the role of women in current society. “More than ever, women have the capacity or freedom to choose, but there is a lot of work and learning involved in finding the right balance.”

A distinctive approach to seeing the current political situation in Malaysia can be found in Sean Lean’s mixed media on canvas, *Blue Circle, Red Circle, Green Hexagon and Yellow Triangle* (2017). In this work, he depicts a taboo subject that people avoid talking about; the national election. By that, he criticizes how our society tends to evade critical conversations by directing the public’s attention somewhere else. This is what the artist calls the act of “sugar-coating”, which is emphasized here by the choice of bright colors. The blurred effect created within the work refer to how digital censorship alters and conceals the truth. By directing the viewer’s attention to the act of censorship, he seems to say that it is not the right way to resolve problems. As he mentioned, “*You can’t put off fire using paper.*”

ANNABELLE NG

From left to right:

Notation II
Charcoal, acrylic, printed photographs on canvas
53cm x 45cm
2017

Notation III
Acrylic on linen
44.5cm x 55cm
2017

Notation IV
Mixed media on canvas
53cm x 45cm
2017

The *notation II, III, and IV* are the continuous composition from the idea of mapping, recording and tracing the visual and sonic experience from time to time.

Each works noted down reflections of thoughts through the pages; looping signals in specific landscape. The concept of this series is the melodic sequence accumulated for the time being in present, the optical impressions in the mind.

The *Notation* is based primarily on the notation of time as it passes by. Annabelle sees time as relevant to all life, with each living organism being granted a pre-ordained time frame. Understanding her own collection of memories and experiences as a way to mark the passage of her allotted time, Annabelle began her pre-production process through a poetic reflection on the aforesaid memories.

Notation III begins with embroidered stitch work of a pictorial house. Being erased and deconstructed, Annabelle divided her thoughts to the opposite side. Expanding her idea of notation and balance as a whole.



ANURENDRA JEGADEVA

Left:

Black Princess

Oil and mixed media on canvas

91.5cm x 91.5cm

2017

Right:

White Prince

Oil and mixed media on canvas

91.5cm x 91.5cm

2017

Today, more than ever before – it seems as if we exist separately; whether it is on the internet – probably because of it – or in our “real” daily lives, we can choose to live our entire lives within like-minded tribes based on our racial, religious, sexual, economic, philosophical and political beliefs and bias.

What is even more prevalent is that we are closed off, and tend to resent the “other” in more blatant terms than we could have imagined in those distant pre-Trump years.

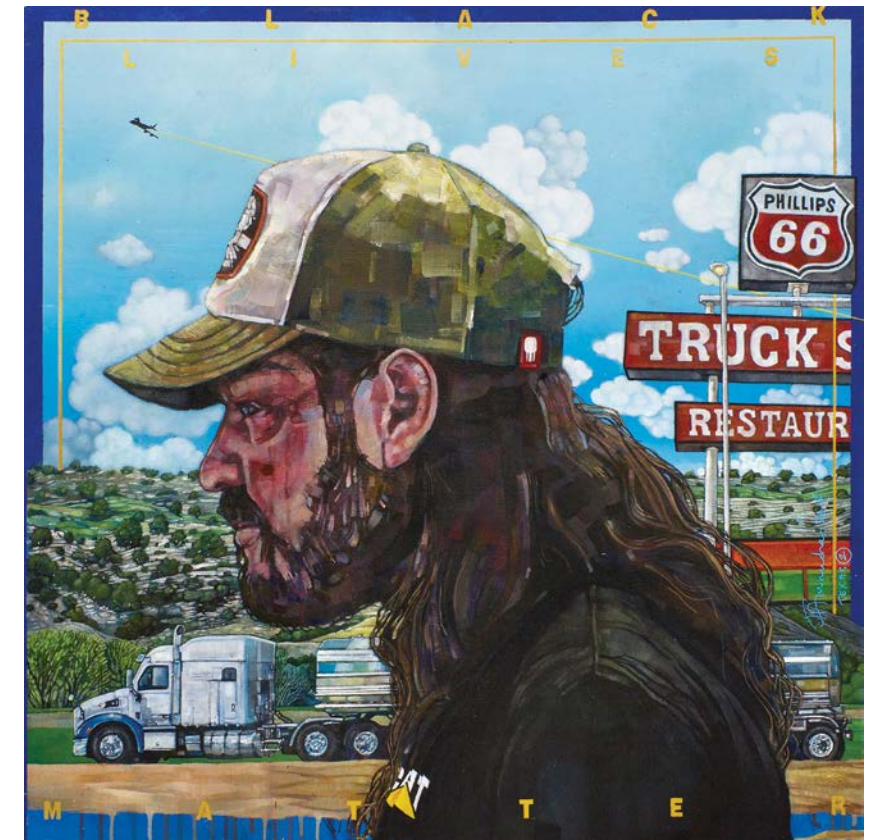
The Brexiters hate the stayers. The left abhors the right. The old migrants hate the new refugees. The colonizers of yesteryear pay no heed to the original people. The yes-campaigners disgust the no-stalwarts. The orang asal tolerate the latter-day pendatang. The rich exploit the poor.

And a lunatic racist fringe, in the guise of Nationalists and Patriots, have hijacked universal, compassionate human values and condemned it to a smelly, combustible scrapheap of well-intentioned political correctness that accounts for nothing.

And always we think of that ‘other’ as having the benefit and privilege of seeing the world and living their lives through rose-colored glasses.

I recently decided to witness this madness at source. So we drove from New York to San Francisco via New Orleans. *Black Princess* (2017) and *White Prince* (2017) are the first portraits in my American Series. Their meanings yearn for a world where opposites attract and we all simply just get along.

And a rose-tint lingers.



CHENG YEN PHENG

Untitled

Stitching on rice paper, long coarse grass' roots

110cm x 130cm

2017

*"No sweat!
Hang in there!
I am with you!
You are almost there!
You're on your way!
Keep it up!
Keep your chin up!
Stick to it!
Cheer up!
Come on, go!
Way to go!
I'll be rooting for ..."*

They have to work so hard to live in this competitive society. They always have to tolerate the outdated, conventional and conservative old ideas. Sometimes, they try to change it. Do you think it is possible for them to weed off this deeply rooted lalang (long coarse grass) away?



CHEONG KIET CHENG

Johnny Johnny Yes Papa..

Acrylic on canvas
160cm x 200cm
2017

This painting depicts the artist's rhapsody after her 1st and 2nd childbirth. This includes the artist's relationship with her husband, the relationship between her children and their father, and their love for their daughters. Time flies without traces and we stay within our comfort zone. The details in life are related to human interaction. It's about how to live with friction and not to suffocate in the undercurrent.



CHIN KONG YEE

Maze

Oil on jute

Horizontal: 130cm x 380cm (Diptych)

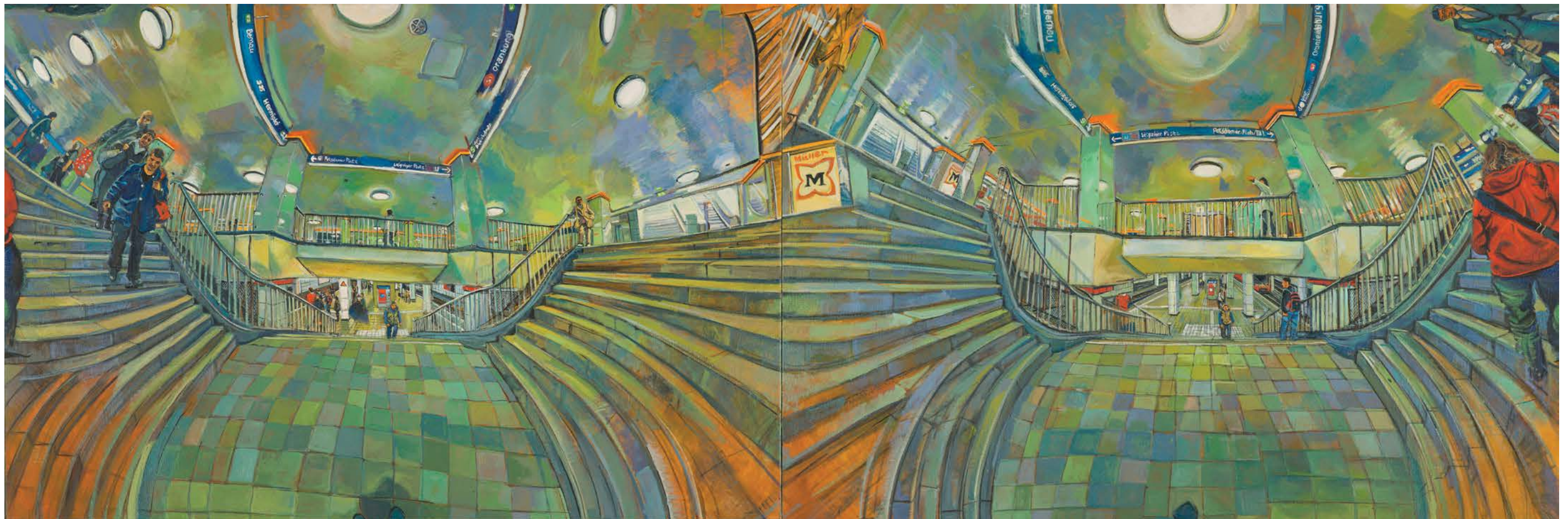
Vertical: 260cm x 190cm (Diptych)

2015-2017

I was roaming in the city of Berlin aimlessly after my German class. I forgot how I ended up in the station but suddenly felt as if I was in a maze because I didn't know where to go.

I asked a man: *"I am lost!! Is this a Maze?"*

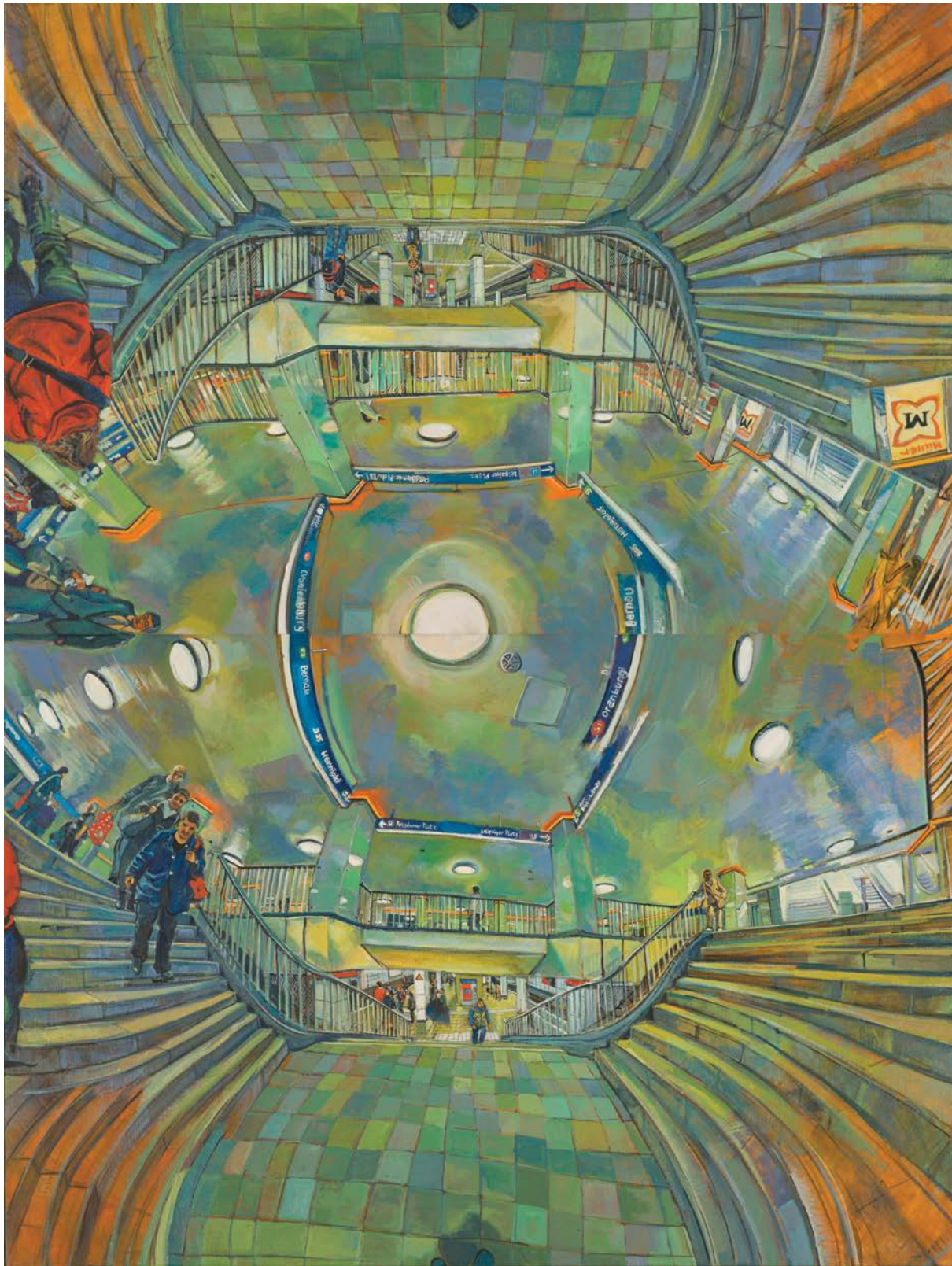
Man said: *"The signboards around have always shown all of the directions. This is not a maze if your destination have been made."*



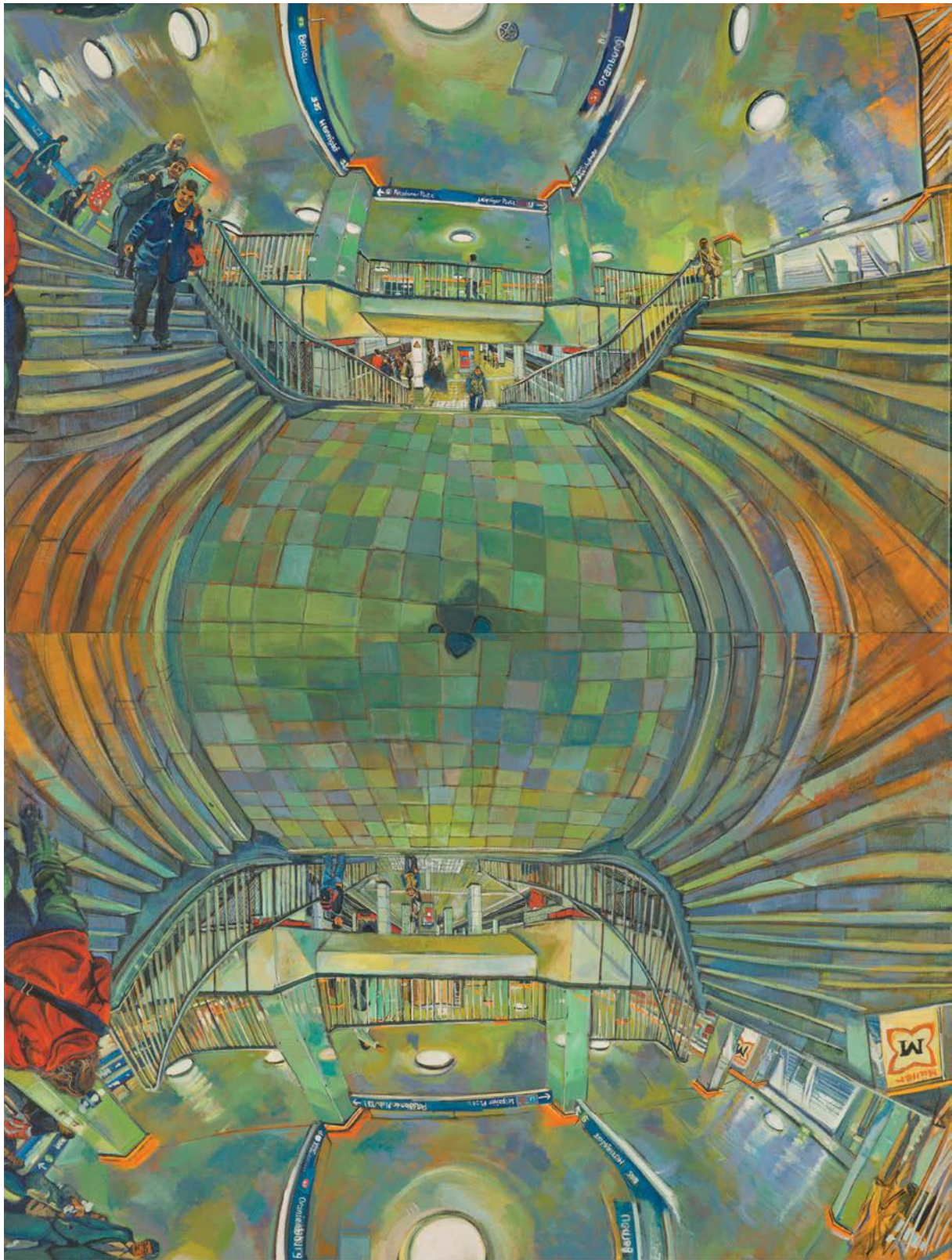
Arrangement 1



Arrangement 2



Arrangement 3



Arrangement 4

DIANA LUI

AUM #3

Large format photogram

Materials used: human body, sunflower and seeds, sand from Aswan, Egypt, seeds collected from the rainforest Taman Negara, Malaysia, crystal pieces, hardened wax, etc.

122cm x 205cm

Edition: 1

2015

*“Aum”*¹- the sound of the Universe, the sound of Existence, the essence of Breath, of life, the origin of everything, the Beginning, the ultimate mystery of life, of truth, of Self-knowledge, the liberation of the Self.

AUM #3 is a photogram* of a life-size self-portrait, where objects and/or a person – in this case myself – are placed on a large piece of light-sensitive photographic paper in complete darkness. The making of this photogram took several hours, as I had to feel my way in the dark on the large sheet of photo paper. The installation was then exposed to light, and the photo paper hand-developed in a darkroom. The results of photograms are always unexpected as it’s done “blindly”. In *AUM #3*, I was surprised to discover an image resembling a tree of life.

AUM #3 is an intuitive performance in the dark and this photogram is the only trace of my communication between the invisible and the unknown during several days of trial and error. It is created from a deep desire, as a woman in the 21st century, to reconnect with the feminine within. The feminine being the selfless act of nurturing, healing, giving, infinite patience as well as the abundance of beauty, sensuality, creativity and enduring strength.

In this fast-changing, often violent and egocentric world, the pure act of creation is the only way I know how to be. In creating, I let go of any projected control and perception of my environment and myself. In creating, I’m centered. In creating, I am whole. In creating, I continue to perpetuate an intuitive way of being and from this arises an acute sense of responsibility for oneself and others, one’s environment and one’s *“raison d’être”*. My life’s work has always been about the essential self, the primordial self. Instead of making portraits once again with my 8 x 10 inch view camera, I decided to begin from the beginning.

So, I began in the dark as if in the beginning of the Universe. I used a camera-less process and laid down upon a light-sensitive surface. Light flashed for a second like lightning and I had left a trace of myself on the surface – but for how long?

“Aum” is everything and nothing, the sound of Creation and the Universe.

*Photogram: A photogram or camera-less photography is a photographic image created without the use of a camera by placing objects on a light-sensitive material such as photographic paper and exposing it to light. The exposed photographic paper is then developed using photographic chemicals in a darkroom.

1 Om (or Aum[ॐ], Sanskrit: ॐ) is a sacred sound and a spiritual icon in Dharmic religions. It is also a mantra in Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism.

References:

Jan Gonda (1963), The Indian Mantra, Oriens, Vol. 16, p. 244-297.

Julius Lipner (2010), Hindus: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices, Routledge, ISBN 978-0415456760, p. 66-67.

James Lochtefeld (2002), Om, The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Hinduism, Vol. 2: N-Z, Rosen Publishing. ISBN 978-0823931804, p. 482.

DIANA LUI

AUM #3

Large format photogram

Materials used: human body, sunflower and seeds, sand from Aswan, Egypt, seeds collected from the rainforest Taman Negara, Malaysia, crystal pieces, hardened wax, etc.

122cm x 205cm

Edition: 1

2015



FAIRUZ SULAIMAN

you are not your eyes

Mixed media

Size variable

2015

When creating visuals for live music, the inherent concern is always in translating something as abstract as sound into a tangible, visual experience. My early experimentations incorporated different vehicles of the visual form; multiple screens, back projections, and mobile screens. In my current explorations, I turn my attention to experimenting with the different processes in creating live visuals.

The process begins by creating two different types of loops; an analogue loop (*A*) and a digital loop (*D*). A few set of parameters (*P*) within those loops are created, allowing whatever image (*I*) that appears to present itself. These visuals are self-generated and constantly changing, tied to its surrounding sound (*S*) and human (*H*) error.

$((A \times D) + P) \times (S + H) = I$

you are not your eyes was initially conceived as a 40-minute live audio-visual performance by visual artist Fairuz Sulaiman, with Euseng Seto performing live music. This performance was first showcased at KaleidoSoup, the first visual art performers gathering in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam in late 2015. The original setup from this performance has been slightly reworked, to be presented as an installation in a gallery space.



KIM NG

From left to right:

Secretion

Silkscreen print and pencil on
pre-painted canvas
85cm x 85cm x 3cm
2017

Concealment

Silkscreen print and pencil on
pre-painted canvas
85cm x 85cm x 3cm
2017

Stealth

Silkscreen print and pencil on
pre-painted canvas
85cm x 85cm x 3cm
2017

This new series of works is about covering up, and about things being hidden and buried.

In comparison to previous works, identifiable images have been omitted in these new works, while still maintaining the multicolours that I usually use.

The process involves repeating and overlapping silkscreen-printed colours over a pre-painted canvas, as an intention to hide and bury the cause. The act of overlapping layers of colours onto the same canvas is like denying or concealing what has been done and happened in the past. The way of repeating prints becomes an act of disguise. It covers up and buries each layer of colours during the process of printing, until it reaches a desirable visual effect.

The idea of hiding, to conceal and to disguise, is an approach that often associates with the social and political motive, where the original fact has been altered and make-believed to suit an ulterior intention, then eventually comes out with a different interpretation to the origin. The repeating action of printing lets the visual to take form by itself, and yet, the final outcome is very much based on the personal aesthetic decision.



MICHAL MACKU

Glass Gellage LIX

Glass Gellage
40cm x 20cm x 15cm
2017



RUZZEKI HARRIS

Malodorous

Oil and spray paint on canvas

159cm x 198cm

2017

Malodorous depicts the abuse of power, which indirectly causes bad reputation to an individual. These individuals always slander and judge others. Being malodorous, they are poisonous and contagious. They will indirectly attract and poison the society with the same thinking as theirs, like a cadaver attracting the flies.



SEAN LEAN

Blue Square, Red Circle, Green Hexagon and Yellow Triangle

Mixed media on canvas
250cm x 250cm (Tetrptych)
2017

This is part of the *"Filters"* series, which aims to illustrate the lengths one needs to circumnavigate what is considered controversial or inappropriate when expressing one's opinion. To mask or alter images that the state or mainstream society would avoid and shun. To tread the line between conformity and dissent.



TOPY

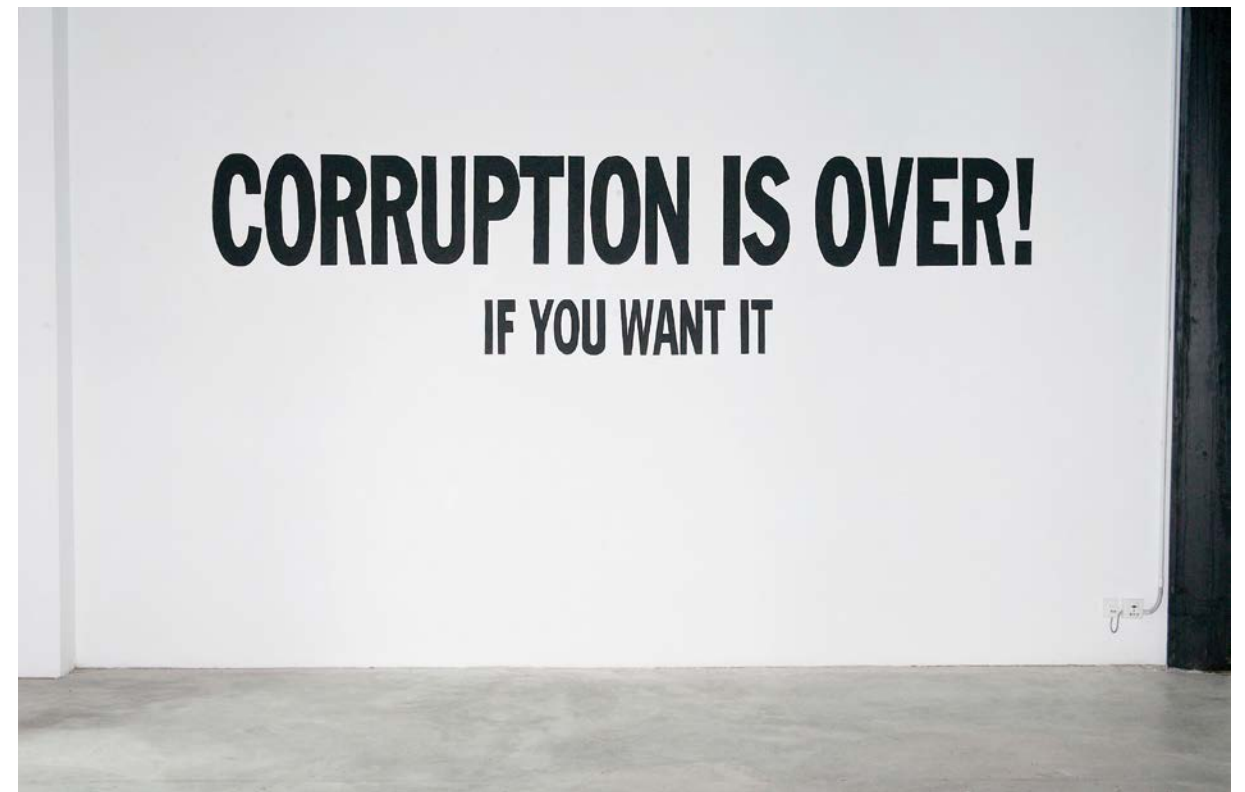
Corruption Is Over! If You Want It

Wall painting
Dimensions variable
2017

In 1969, Yoko Ono and John Lennon created a peace campaign poster against the Vietnam War.

In 2017, TOPY quotes and changes the slogan, rebelling against the culture of corruption.

CORRUPTION IS OVER!
IF YOU WANT IT



Installation view

YIM YEN SUM

What are you looking at I?

Embroidery on gauze, gauze dyed in acrylic
130cm x 50cm, 150cm x 75cm (with frame)
2017

Where there is man, there is culture. Our culture should be in a state that could be seen everywhere, including on blocks, traditional buildings, craftworks, and so on, as a bridge connecting the city and its people.

The existence of traditional and modern culture is the key to form a city. Sadly, the existence of such state has become more and more blurred. Our traditional culture has been replaced by the modern, which signifies the phenomenon of culture disappearance or vanishing.

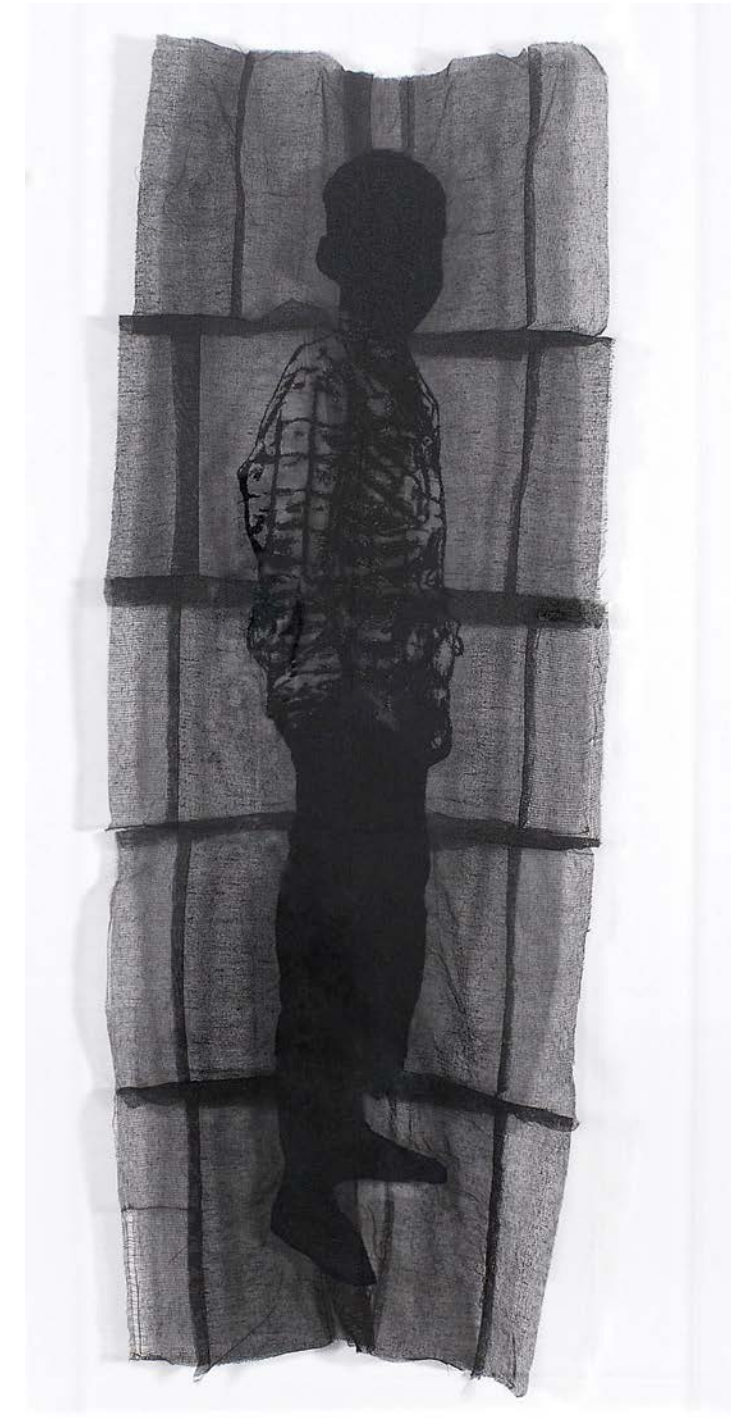
It's time for us to re-examine the relationship between city and people, culture and city, as well as people and culture. What is the relationship between man and the city? What can we do to safeguard these various cultures that have been gradually forgotten?

The subjects described in my work were formed by fragment of my memories, like a patchwork. For me, gauze symbolizes self-healing as we use gauze when we are injured.

Our culture and tradition, and the relationship between people and people (the trust between us) are injured, therefore requiring care and attention to recover. I hope we can be more sensible in our life, to be able to embrace the people we meet.

The uncertain relationships and distances between people may trigger various imaginations and inner feelings that can lead to ineffable personal feelings and memories. The space or ground and the memories we share are what bind us together.

In my artwork, needlework has become a very important medium. I feel that in the process, each needle narrates a different sentiment, and this sentiment unites certain parts that were separated. I constantly find myself making use of soft and flexible materials in my works, as they can be shaped and managed easily. I tried to draw out the main themes by using these materials, which to me are metaphors of care.



YIM YEN SUM

Left:

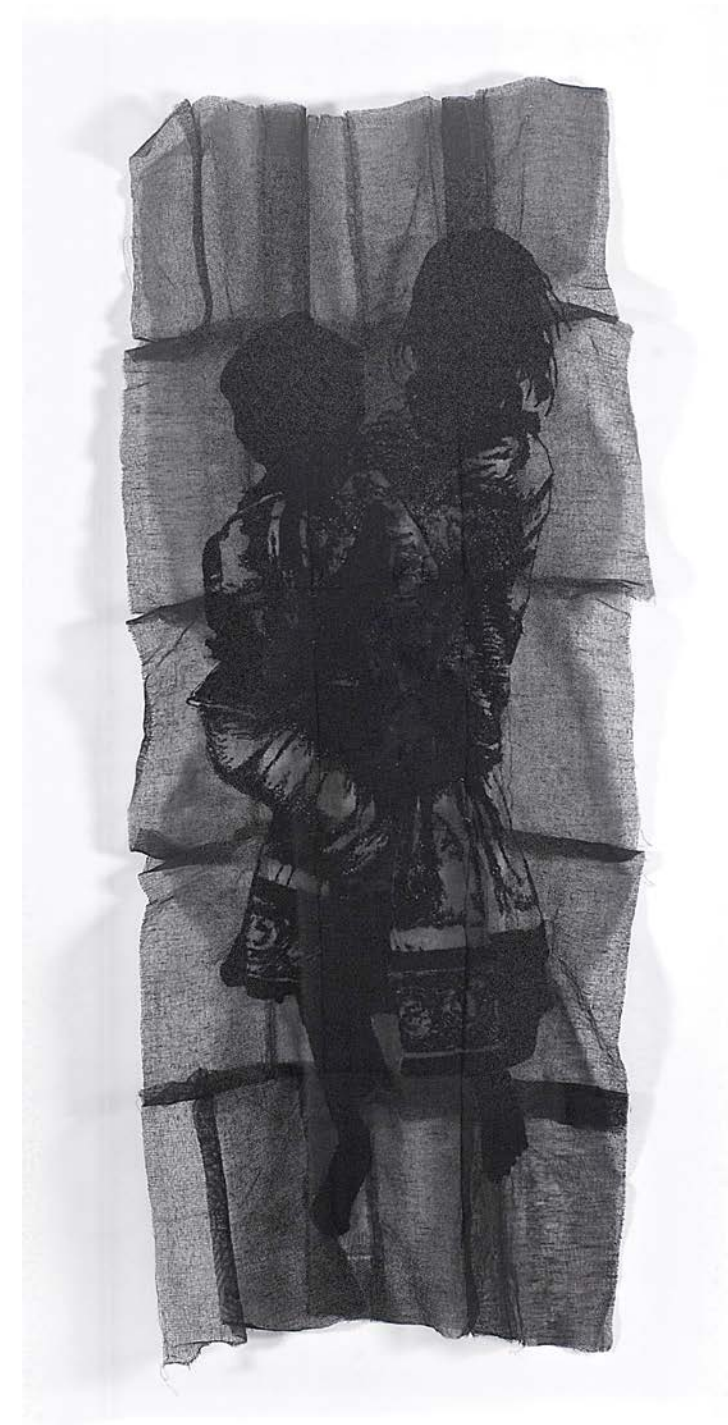
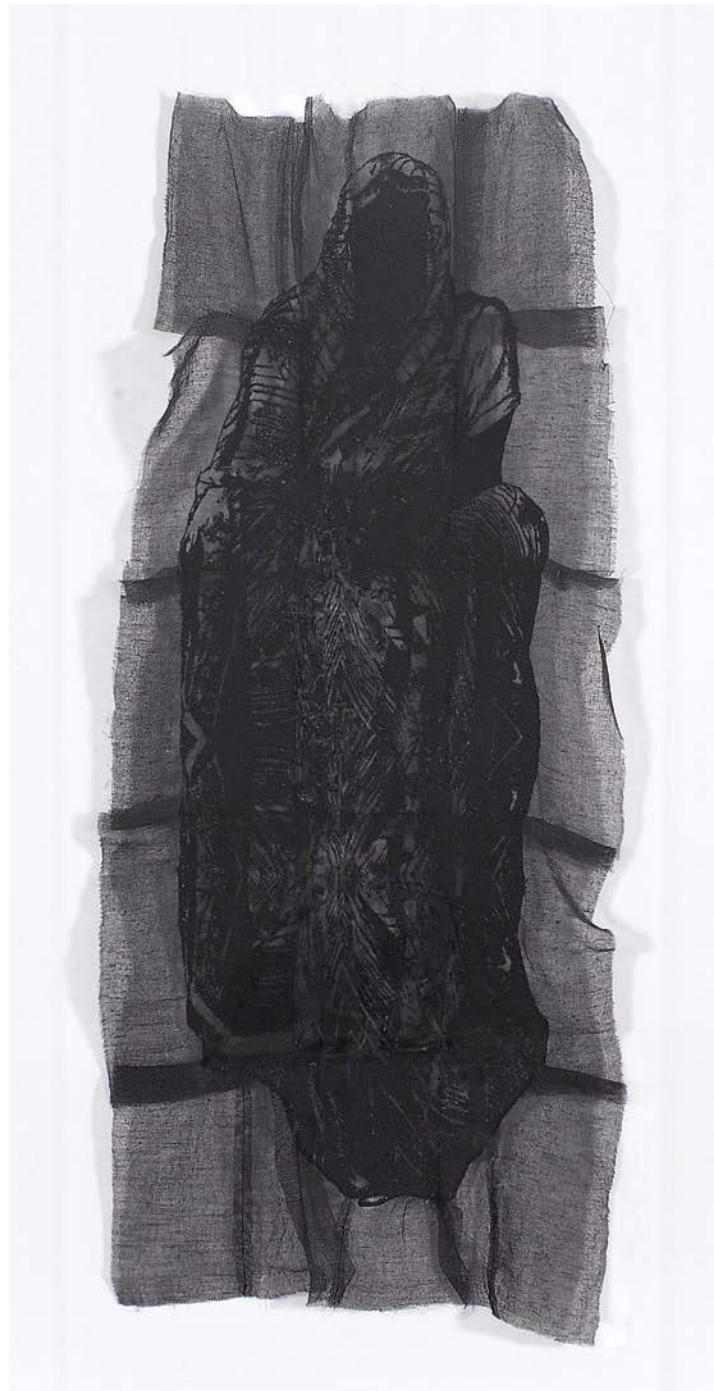
What are you looking at II?

Embroidery on gauze, gauze dyed in acrylic
122cm x 55cm, 150cm x 75cm (with frame)
2017

Right:

What are you looking at III?

Embroidery on gauze, gauze dyed in acrylic
123cm x 54cm, 150cm x 75cm (with frame)
2017





To accompany the exhibition entitled '*Through Rose-Tinted Glasses*' from 6th December 2017-31st January 2018 at

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