



H. H. Lim

The Gaze of Sleepwalkers



The Gaze of Sleepwalkers

Wei-Ling Gallery presents 'The Gaze of Sleepwalkers' that marked H.H. Lim's highly anticipated second solo exhibition in Malaysia after a decade, following his debut exhibition, 'The Beginning of Something', featured at Wei-Ling Contemporary in 2014.

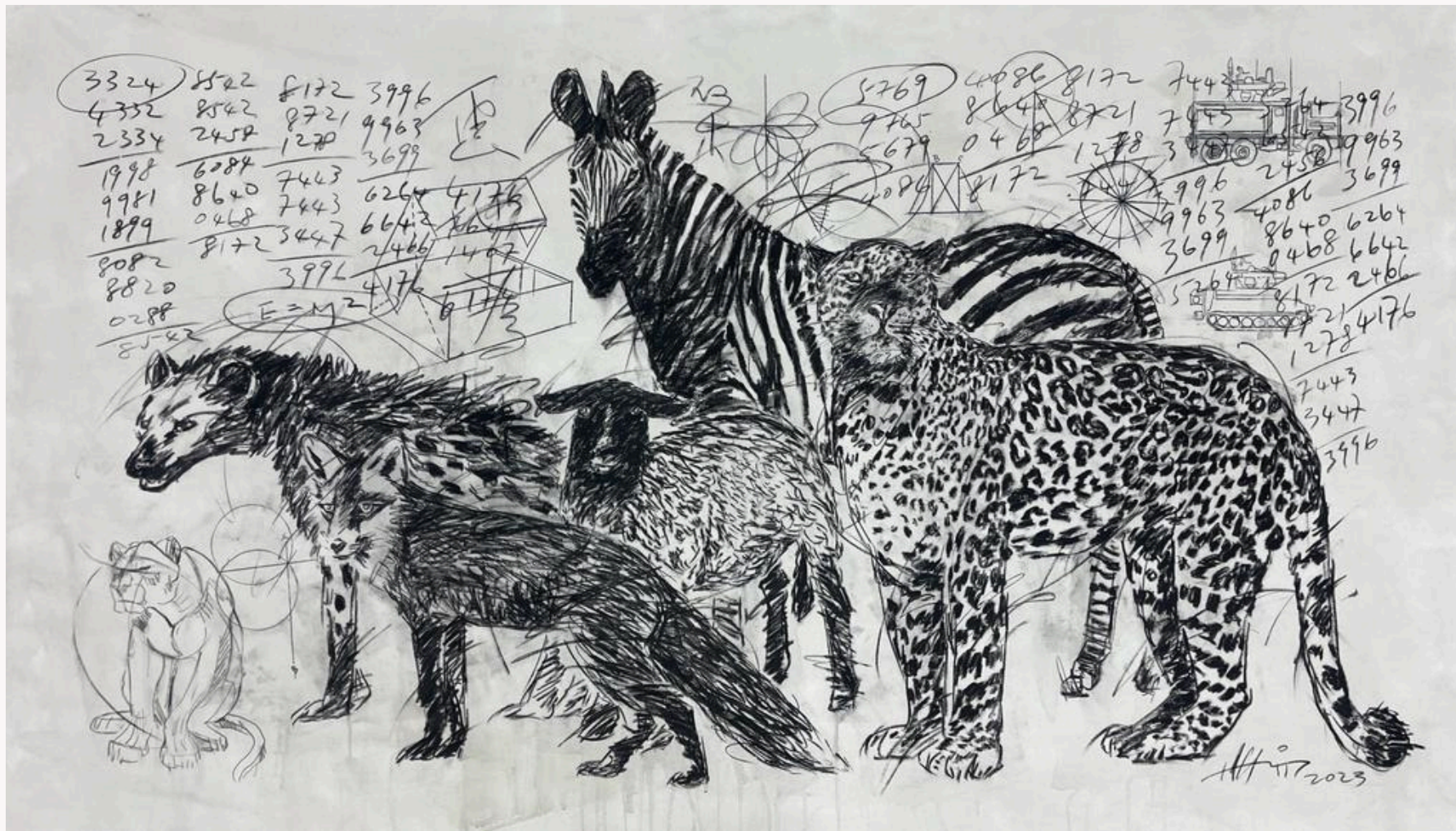
In this series of thirteen paintings and installation pieces, Lim draws a parallel between the human condition and the surrounding ecosystem. Wild animals, coexisting within their isolated habitats, appear as observers casting a contemplative gaze upon humanity's current state of being. The narrative dissects the dichotomy between the observer and the observed, exposing our collective stance as involuntary 'sleepwalking' participants in a world rife with turmoil and unrest.

H.H. Lim describes this connection by stating, "One of the longest journeys of my life is the day-by-day and year-by-year journey between home and the studio. It's a repetitive journey akin to a happy-go-lucky sleepwalker, walking on a razor's edge. Incredibly, each path is never the same, both visually and emotionally, particularly in the nuances of the path entrusted solely to the senses, with the mind absent. What an emotional sensation to feel disoriented in my own world!"

Lim unveils a striking truth: despite technological advancements, humanity remains ensnared in primal instincts, chasing ephemeral desires of wealth and power. The symbolism embedded within the works subtly addresses socio-political themes, notably the pervasive influence of materialism and its impact on our ethical compass.

A recurring motif, a money sack, is a commentary on societal values. Its understated presence within the installations hints at the inherent imbalance between opulence and necessity, prompting viewers to ponder the incessant demand for resources in a world increasingly divided by disparities.

H.H. Lim's adept visual storytelling in 'The Gaze of Sleepwalkers' beckons the observer to explore a nuanced reflection of their existence. It encourages a stimulating reexamination of behaviour, akin to waking from a dream, regarding shared responsibility in shaping a more conscientious and equitable world.



Code 3324
Charcoal on canvas
105cm x 190cm
2023



Code 2036
 Charcoal on canvas
 105cm x 190cm
 2023



Code 3037
 Charcoal on canvas
 105cm x 190cm
 2023



Code 9384
Charcoal on canvas
140cm x 200cm
2023



Code 1297
 Charcoal on canvas
 140cm x 200cm
 2023



Code 8363

Charcoal on canvas

140cm x 200cm

2023



Code 5879

Charcoal on canvas

140cm x 200cm

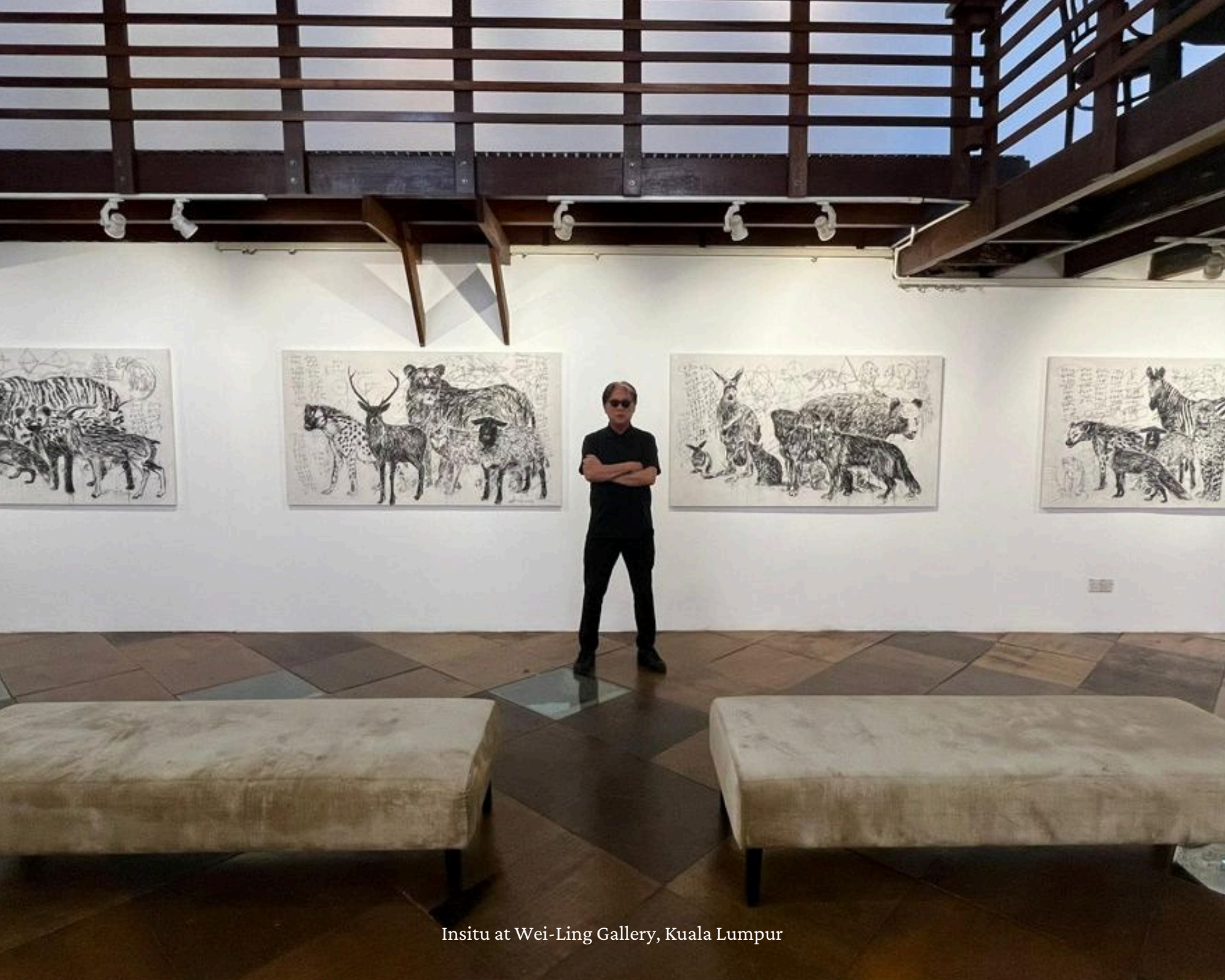
2023



Wake me up
Acrylic on canvas
105cm x 105cm
2022



Insitu at Wei-Ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur



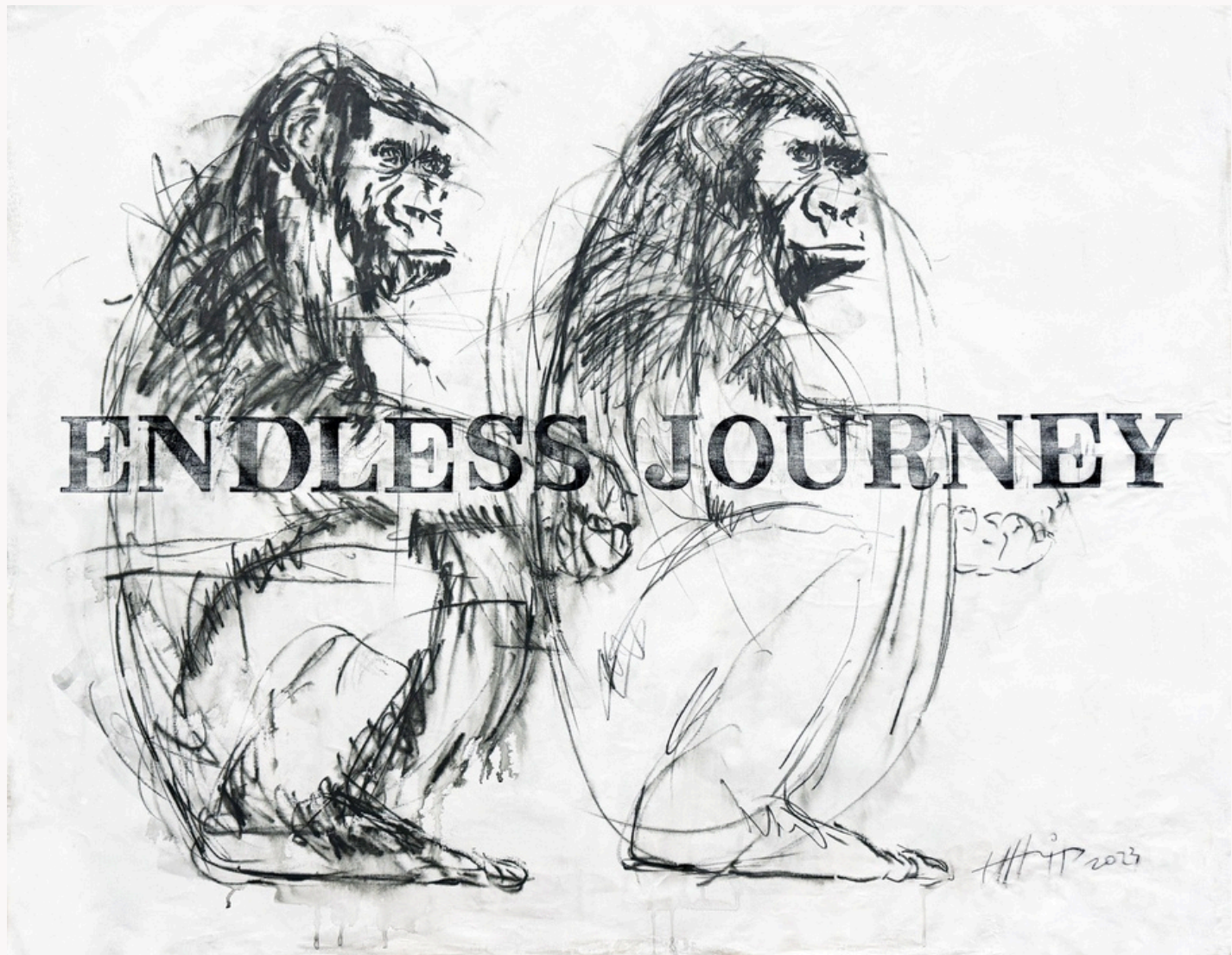
Insitu at Wei-Ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur



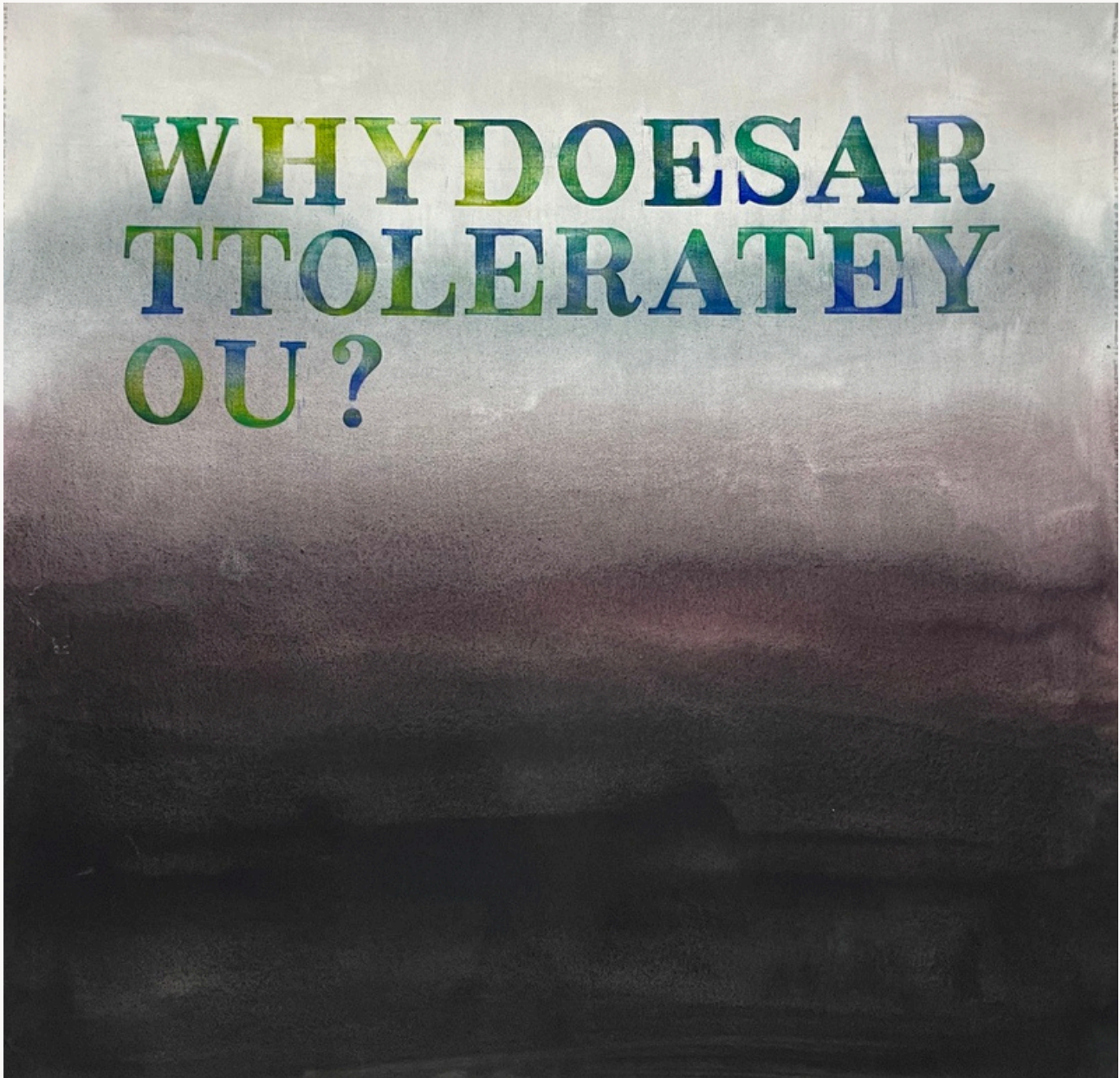
Insitu at Wei-Ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur



Lucy
Charcoal on canvas
110cm x 110cm (each), total 6 pieces
2022



Lucy 2
Charcoal on canvas
105cm x 130cm
2023



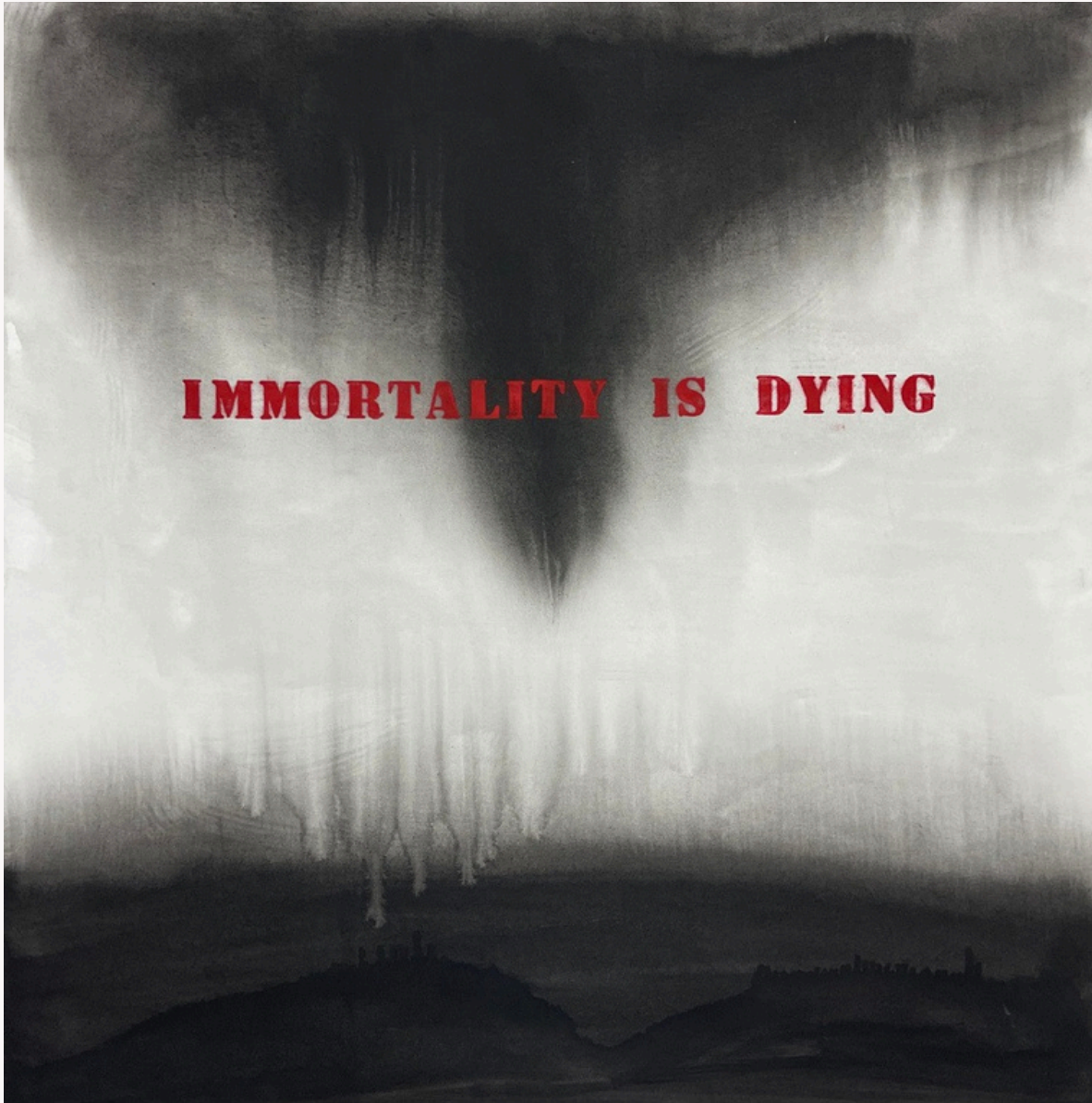
WHY DOES ART
TOLERATE
YOU?

Why does art tolerate you?

Acrylic on canvas

105cm x 105 cm

2022

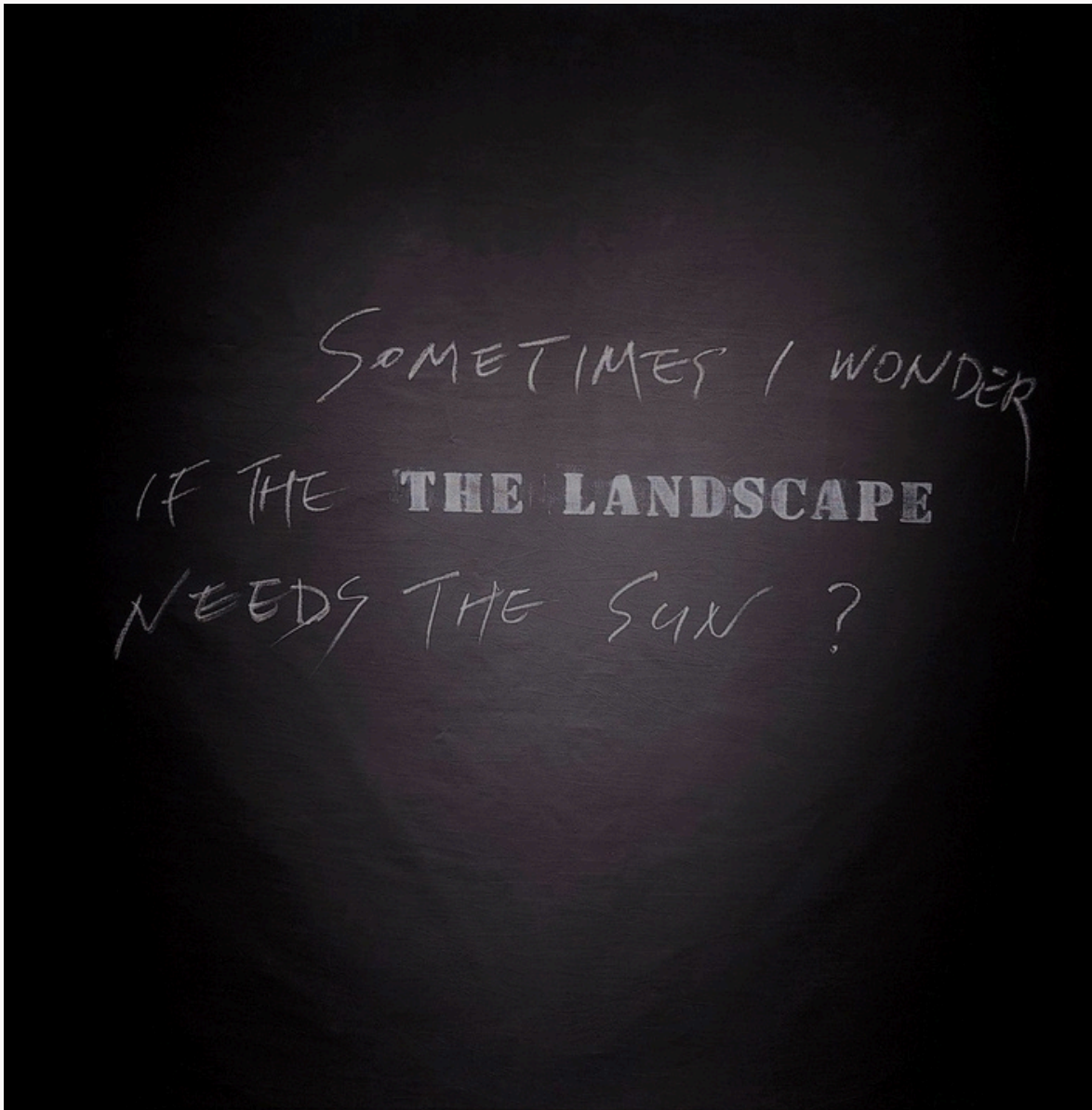


Immortality is dying

Acrylic on canvas

105cm x 105cm

2022



Sometimes, I wonder if the landscape needs the sun?

Acrylic on canvas

105cm x 105cm

2022



Evolution of the sitting sculpture

Acrylic on Indian cotton

103cm x 99cm

2021



Gold
Installation, Mixed Media
Variable Dimensions
2023



Enter the Parallel World
Performing Arts, Video
00:28:25 Multiversion
2001 - 2016

WHY DOES A R
TOLERATE Y
?



SOMETIMES I WONDER
IF FOR THE LANDSCAPE
WAS THE SUN?

SOMETIMES I WONDER
IF FOR THE LANDSCAPE
WAS THE SUN?

GOLD
9999K

DON'T
ANSWER

Insitu at Wei-Ling Contemporary, Kuala Lumpur

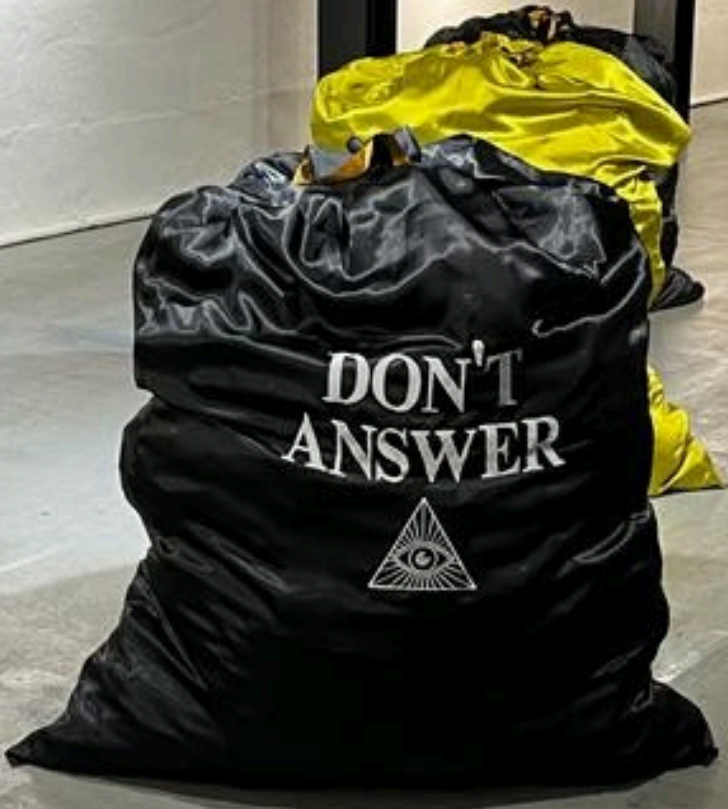


KELUAR

Smart and Energy
of the landscape
with the sea?

Insitu at Wei-Ling Contemporary, Kuala Lumpur

WHY DOES AR
TOLERATE Y
?



Insitu at Wei-Ling Contemporary, Kuala Lumpur



Insitú at Wei-Ling Contemporary, Kuala Lumpur

The Gaze of Sleepwalkers

H.H. Lim, a pivotal artist renowned for his thought-provoking creations, has been sharing his artwork worldwide and is currently presenting 'The Gaze of Sleepwalkers' (2024) at Wei-Ling Contemporary in Kuala Lumpur. This exhibition reflects upon the human condition in society, our endless journeys, and the state of unconsciousness, leading to the ceaseless evolution of mankind. "We don't see the fundamental problem of life because we don't stop to think about it. We get up, commute, work, eat, work, commute, sleep. But occasionally a breakdown occurs, a Chardos-like moment in which a beat is skipped and the question of purpose arises." In this exhibition, the artist H.H. Lim delves into several intriguing nuances, providing a shifting gaze that transcends perceptions by disrupting the obvious, allowing contemplative purposes and observing beyond from the apparent. "In order to relate attention to the life of consciousness, [one must] show how a perception awakens attention." stated by Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

'Home-world' and 'alien-world' are terminologies from Martin Heidegger, wherein an 'alien' merges into an unfamiliar territory full of a non-identical civilization, faces linguistic barriers and a sense of obscurity, which enables one to discover and stimulate self-questioning. H.H. Lim's cross-cultural circumstances from the East to West, needless to say, contribute opportunities to reinvent perspectives of a new world and a transformation of identity. The intricacy of art lies in the ability to observe and the exploration of diverse possibilities, empowering Lim to seek for self-development. His 'Sitting Sculptures' (created over various years) Fig 1 serve as an example of his introspective expedition, in which he challenges the notion of identity by using chairs as a symbol of one's shadow.



Fig 1
Timeframes
Pavilion of Malaysia at the 58th
International Art Exhibition – La Biennale
di Venezia
2019

Even in the midst of cultural mayhem, H.H. Lim preserves his authenticity through diving into the equilibrium principle of life. A unique delicate blend of cultural philosophies and languages is submerged into his creations. This is particularly evident in ‘Enter the Parallel World’ (2001-2006) Fig 2, which draws from Eastern tradition in its search for the understanding of balance. Additionally, ‘The Cage, the Bench and the Luggage’ (2011-2017) Fig 8 and ‘The Beginning of Something’ (2014) Fig 5 all seem to investigate the equilibrium between internal and external, life and death, positive and negative. Undoubtedly, ‘The Gaze of Sleepwalkers’ (2024) explores the interconnectedness of human experiences and the interplay between opposite forces, such as humans and animals, peace and chaos, reality and dream.

H.H. Lim’s artistic creations are engaged profoundly with the use of language, as he playfully integrates linguistic elements into his visual compositions. This is evident in the work ‘Why does art tolerate you?’ (2022) Fig 3, where Lim adopts a deceptive element by altering traditional sentence structures, navigating disorientation, and challenging conveniences and comfort. Similarly, in ‘No Words Can Speak’ (2023) Fig 4, he demonstrated his ideologies by employing the word “axioms”, creating a puzzle-like game that reveals uncertainties of thoughts beneath the obvious. It involves searching to interlock the absurdity of everyday dialogue. Furthermore, in ‘Red Room’ (2004) Lim employs the idiom of ‘tongue nailing’ as a metaphor for incessant chatter.



Fig 2
Enter the Parallel World
Performing Arts, Video
00:28:25 Multiversion
2001 – 2016

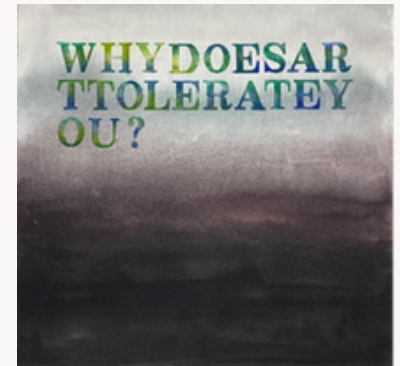


Fig 3
Why does art tolerate you?
Acrylic on canvas
105cm x 105cm
2022

Fig 4
No Words Can Speak
Fondazione Baruchello, Rome
2023



Delving into symbolism in H.H. Lim's creations, which play a significant impact, include works such as 'The Beginning of Something' (2014) Fig 5 and 'Gone with the Wind' (2010) Fig 6 at UCCA Ullens Center for Contemporary Art in Beijing. The imagery of helicopters highlights both the exterior and interior chaos of our living world, signifying the struggle for salvation amidst relentless storms. It presents an illusion of colourful fantasy, where we seek hope and answers that transcend reality. However, the flying helicopter in 'The Gaze of Sleepwalkers' (2024) exists more than mere hope; it symbolises the human condition and the summoning of our enlightenment. Moreover, Lim delves into the complexity of human expression and communication, particularly focusing on the art of sign languages. In the work 'Sign Language Series' (2009), the depiction of his own profile with sign languages portraying a profound collection of thoughts, imaginations, emotions and changes, prompting to communicate and interplay within himself. This sophisticated practice has evolved to recent work 'Code 8363' (2023), symbolising the introspective journey and key imagery of H.H. Lim.

In discerning and embracing a fresh interpretation of things, H.H. Lim demonstrates his ability to absorb and sense experiences in their purest essence. This empowers him to express and touch his canvases with raw strokes, combining his web-like mind to enable numerous possibilities and answers through his art. Lim's inclination towards journaling his expeditions and accumulated thoughts is visible in the recognizable yet disordered visual components of his current work. This artistic practice can be traced back to his previous creation, 'Four Seasons' (2019) Fig 7 exhibited at the 58th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia, showcasing 'Timeframes', which similarly compiles elements from throughout his lifetime.



Fig 5
The Beginning of Something
Wei-Ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur
2014



Fig 6
Gone with the Wind
UCCA Ullens Center for
Contemporary Art, Beijing
2010



Fig 7
Timeframes
Pavilion of Malaysia at the
58th
International Art Exhibition
– La Biennale
di Venezia
2019

'The Gaze of Sleepwalkers' (2024) is indeed a continuous exploration of H.H. Lim's commentary on society, reviving elements from his existing creations and evolving into a profound remark. Certainly, significant themes such as humanity and consumerism can be traced back to Lim's past practices. 'The Cage, the Bench and the Luggage' (2011-2017) Fig 8 conveys the conflict that represents our history of mankind, between temptation and freedom. The desire to chase treasures hidden inside a confined prison implies that protection comes with a form of control, contradicting the sitting bench across the cage, which symbolises nothingness and freedom. In addition to that, 'The Beginning of Something' (2014) Fig 5 showcasing the juxtaposition between possession and abandonment, and our excessive consumption of luxurious goods. This current exhibition reveals the truth of the present where we live – the primitiveness of humanity and the transformation of 'Lucy'. The veracity puts us in the seduction of gold, living restlessly in our constrained society. Undoubtedly, Lim's intention suggests endless evolution as a survival mechanism, considering traces of existence in this universe. Thus, the circle of life continues.

H.H. Lim's art serves as a bridge to convey truth in society, with his diverse range of mediums and input offering a fresh perspective, provoking contemplation of one's significance and functionality. The complexity and ambiguity of linguistic elements and symbolic images that appear in his works are certainly incomprehensible, enlightening a sense of cynicism. Most importantly, these perplexities prompt self-exploration of our individuality and the balance in life amidst obscurity. As Socrates said, "I know you won't believe me, but the highest form of Human Excellence is to question oneself and others."



Fig 8
The Cage, the Bench and the Luggage
Iron cage, bench and luggage
484 × 216 × 228 cm
2011-2017



About the Artist

H.H. Lim

(B. 1954, Penang, Malaysia)

Based in Rome

H.H. Lim is an artist who has resided between Rome and Penang Island in Malaysia since 1976 and founded Edicola Notte in 1990, a renowned art space in Rome. His multidisciplinary practice reflects the fusion of Eastern and Western cultures, expressed through a diverse range of mediums such as video, installation, painting, and performance. Conceptually inclined, Lim's works explore the transient nature of significance, often piecing together elements of the subconscious, symbolism, memory, and language in a playful yet irreverent manner. His pieces frequently acquire new and paradoxical meanings when juxtaposed with others.

Lim's artistic footprint extends globally. In 2019, he represented Malaysia at the 58th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia, showcasing 'Timeframes', a collection encapsulating cerebral and physical journeys within a triptych painting and an installation featuring 28 chairs and four video films. These works reflect Lim's peripatetic life, intertwining time, place, and memory as foundational elements in his exploration of meaning.

His exhibitions span a vast chronology of international showcases, beginning with 'Sweet Taboo' 'Go Inside' at the 3rd Tirana Biennial in Albania (2005) and progressing through notable shows such as 'Gone with the Wind' at UCCA Ullens Center for Contemporary Art in Beijing (2010), 'Hidden Treasure' at the GNAM National Gallery of Modern and Contemporary Art in Rome (2011), the 55th Venice Biennale (2013), the 6th Prague Biennale (2016), 12th Dakar Biennale (2016) and the Singapore Biennale (2016). Lim's presence continued with exhibitions at the KL Biennale at National Arts Gallery in Malaysia (2017), MAXXI in Rome for two major exhibitions called 'PLEASE COME BACK. Il Mondo Come Prigione?' (2016) and 'RE-EVOLUTION. The Place To Be' (2017), as well as 'Seen' (2018) and 'Aesthetics of Silence' (2021) at Wei-Ling Contemporary, Kuala Lumpur.

Further highlights include exhibitions at the Biennale of Urbanism Architecture in Shenzhen, China (2019), and his participation in the Thailand Biennale organised by the Office of Contemporary Art and Culture (OCAC) and the Ministry of Culture (2021), in addition to that he also presented, 'Out of the dead end' at OCAT Shenzhen Pavilion, China.

In 2022, Lim participated in 'Opera Opera' at Palais Populaire, Berlin where it featured the important protagonists of Italian contemporary art and numerous international artists from the MAXXI collection.

Continuing his prolific display into 2023, Lim showcased his work at various locations in Italy including 'In dialogo con Giotto' in GiottoHouse Museum in Florence, 'In Ceramica' at MAXXI L'Aquila in Abruzzo, 'The long journey around one meter seventy' at Chiesa di Santa Maria ad Nives and 'No words can speak' at Fondazione Baruchello, both in Rome.