

# Codes in Parallel

Fremantle Arts Centre

Artists: Bappaditya Biswas (India), Patrick Bongoy (South Africa), Jacky Cheng (Malaysia/Australia), Wossy Davey & Ashley Hunter (Ingarigalandij Art & Culture, Bardi Australia), Alfred Lowe (Australia), Maharani Mancanagara (Indonesia), Ankon Mitra (India), Mujahidin Nurrahman (Indonesia), Baharak Omidfar (Iran), Abdi Setiawan (Indonesia), Vipoo Srivilasa (Thailand/Australia).



JESS VAN HEERDEN



The second instalment of the Indian Ocean Triennial, IOTA24, offers a diverse look into contemporary craft practices throughout the Indian Ocean region. IOTA24's impressive international exhibitions consists of six shows distributed between John Curtin Gallery, Holmes á Court Gallery, Yagan Mia Wireless Park, Bunbury Regional Art Gallery, Rockingham Arts Centre and Fremantle Arts Centre. This year's theme, *Codes in Parallel*, recognises the (often unsung) capacity of contemporary craft practices to transcend temporal and spatial boundaries. Fremantle Art Centre's contribution to IOTA24 exemplifies this theme in the linkages and exchanges emerging between the dynamic selection of 12 highly skilled makers.

Entering via reception, viewers are greeted with Baharak Omidfar's delicate and regal wearable sculptures, where beads and stones are nestled between intricate lattices and elegant, golden patterning. A tribute to the role of women in Iranian mythology and culture, these works are justified in their eminence of quiet authority. The pairing of a larger-than-life-sized model's downcast stare, fixed in poster print, and a framed photograph of the corresponding jewelled object, recalls the display tactics of luxury advertising. For me, this seems an unfortunately reductive diptych (particularly in an exhibition that so consciously pushes back against the derogatory historical separation of fine art and craft practices).

♦ IOTA24 artists at Fremantle Arts Centre opening night: Ashley Hunter, Russell (Wossy) Davey, Warrick Palmateer, Madoda Fani, Jacky Cheng, Vipoo Srivilasa and Bappaditya Biswas.

From here, the exhibition is an assemblage of installations, solo exhibitions, group shows and participatory art spanning the full labyrinth of scattered spaces that the heritage building has to offer (including the hallway-cum-gallery that is surprisingly suited to Maharani Mancanagara's narrative works). The strong parallels between works create a cohesive and communicative exhibition, uniting distinct bodies of work despite the exhibition's scattered spatial arrangement.

In Wardong Gallery, the largest of the centre's exhibition spaces, Ankon Mitra's *A Tapestry (Of Many Codes Overlaid)* swirls overhead in a simmering explosion of hand-folded origami forms. A beautiful dichotomy is created between the flowing, organic whole and its geometric components; mass repetition of identical, tessellating parts created using CAD/CAM patterns and lines of code. Mujahidin Nurrahman's *The Wave* engages similar tactics. The rhythmic rise and fall of deep-ocean waves (summoned also in Bappaditya Biswas' adjacently displayed innovative Jamandi style weaving works) are emulated by continuous patterns of hand-cut paper. Yet upon close inspection, the tapestries of lace

corrode. Each blooming 'floral' is an AK-47, a shocking juxtaposition between content and apparent form.

Alfred Lowe's *Idol Series*, a particular talking point on opening night for its eye-catching vibrancy and tender silliness, runs diagonally across Wardong Gallery. Witty arrangements – like tiny vessels being playfully ridiculed by their dramatically grand neighbours – and friendly, organic forms, proudly celebrate the random quirks and 'imperfections' associated with hand-built ceramics. Lowe's clay forms, influenced by senior Adelaide Arts Centre artists and their artistic and cultural practices, represent his ongoing investigation of how identity, culture and connection to Country "can be navigated and manifested in current times."

Walking into *The Rite of Division*, Jacky Cheng's body of work in the Karrak Kathleen O'Connor Gallery, is to enter a sacred space (or so it feels). After pushing back the blackout curtains and being embraced by the dim room's soft light, one is met with a peaceful soundscape of low, melodic hums and the purposeful, twinkling clatter of moon blocks coming to rest upon the ground. Accompanying the soundtrack, *Wishing*, is a series of sculptural works made from materials evoking, for the artist, a sense of nostalgia and intergenerational relationships, including joss paper, horsehair, gold Cricula silk cocoons as well as blue pearl leaf. Displayed from invisible wire as if floating, their shadows seem the heaviest mark of their presence. In Cheng's works traditional materials and practices are elegantly reconsidered to contemplate questions of 'belonging' and 'home' that sit within a 'bi-cultural experience.' Russel 'Wossy' Davey and Ashley Hunter's installation in the Djiti Gallery likewise works across time, employing materials and techniques associated with rich histories and traditions to remind viewers of Milymilonjoon Jawals ('spiritual stories from the dreamtime when everything began') contemporary resonance.

Abdi Setiawan's dramatic tableau, *What else could we think about? Bon Appetit*, occupies Doongorok Gallery.



◆ Jacky Cheng with her work in *Codes in Parallel* at Fremantle Arts Centre.

The intricately hand carved teak installation depicts an anthropomorphic antlered-primate dinner party, so lifelike it appears a lively moment paused. An intentionally empty chair invites viewer occupation. Yet whether sitting or standing, the inclusive body language and chummy, implicating monkey gazes make it clear viewers too are implicit in the depicted affair of grandeur and waste. A beautifully crafted – yet cutting – criticism of our compliance in the power, greed and gluttony destroying the planet, allowing few to occupy most.

IOTA24's international exhibition at Fremantle Arts Centre demonstrates the contemporaneous nature of the diverse craft practices on display, with artists each drawing from traditional materials, techniques or modes of thinking to navigate their contemporary present. But aside even from its successful testimonial for the cross-temporal nature of contemporary craft, it was simply a breathtaking show. This is not just another run-of-the-mill, buzzword-heavy festival affair (excluding perhaps the well-intended kid's club evocative weaving room). *Codes in Parallel* at Fremantle Art Centre offers an unconventional grouping of innovative and engaged artistic practices – including an unfortunately rare combination of emerging and established artists. It is not to be missed.

*Codes in Parallel* at Fremantle Arts Centre is on show until 27 October.

◆ Abdi Setiawan with his work at Fremantle Arts Centre.

