

# PearlLam Galleries

Singapore

## IN SILENCE

Featuring works by Golnaz Fathi, Jenny Holzer, Sayaka Ishizuka, Qian Jiahua, Ezzam Rahman, Melati Suryodarmo, Tao Hui, and Zen Teh



Golnaz Fathi b. 1972, *Untitled*, 2013, Pen on canvas, 146 x 128 cm (57 1/2 x 50 3/8 in.)

Exhibition Dates 14 July–4 September, 2016 Tuesday–Saturday, 11am–7pm; Sunday, 12–6pm  
Performance *Eins und Eins* by Melati Suryodarmo / Thursday, 14 July, 7pm  
Venue Pearl Lam Galleries, 9 Lock Road, #03-22, Gillman Barracks, Singapore 108937

**Singapore**—Pearl Lam Galleries is delighted to present *In Silence*, a group exhibition that explores the introspective qualities of art from the contemporary era. The show features works by eight artists from international strongholds in contemporary art: American artist Jenny Holzer, Chinese artists Qian Jiahua and Tao Hui, Indonesian artist Melati Suryodarmo, Iranian artist Golnaz Fathi, Japanese artist Sayaka Ishizuka, and Singaporean artists Ezzam Rahman and Zen Teh. The exhibition title draws inspiration from Nyepi Day, or day of silence, which marks the coming of the Balinese New Year. On this day of self-restraint and reflection, people withdraw from each other with all social activity halted from 6am. 24 hours later, the healed rouse themselves and begin the renewal of ties with each other. The observance of prohibitions is a ritual similarly practiced and expressed in a variety of ways in art. *In Silence* seeks the essence of this day of recollection and meditation, establishing renewal and reconciliation as a shared concern.

As a practitioner of classical Persian calligraphy, Golnaz Fathi (b. 1972) subscribes to the disciplinary belief that movement, breath, thought, and emotion come together and are expressed in the flow of the line, which is created using a *qalam*, a reed pen used in Persian calligraphy. The highest level is achieved when the calligrapher is able to disengage from the ego, abstracting him or herself from the process. In Fathi's calligraphy, readability is abandoned in favour of sign. The specific sign isn't a fixed visual form but lies in the marks of her *qalam*, which are delicate, restrained, and forceful. A highly volatile tool, the production of each line is a challenge to the calligrapher and evidence of her mental disengagement.

Where Fathi seeks to let go of the ego, Jenny Holzer (b. 1950) deals with the unconscious inflation of it in the speaking world. Her truisms are simple declarations that challenge their audiences' perception of the world through irony and double entendre. "不良意圖也能產生好結果 (BAD INTENTIONS CAN ALSO YIELD GOOD RESULTS)" is one truism that features in this exhibition. While her truisms tend to declare their presence as text, they are often also deliberately difficult to read, flashing and moving on LED panels and projected on uneven building surfaces, dissolving into displays that play out a scenario where the aforementioned truism runs true. Text, moving text, and text on uneven surfaces are made deliberately difficult to read, echoing John Baldessari's idea of "wrong" art. Despite playing out a situation where readability is put in question, Holzer continues to produce a "good" result, making a witty statement against those who believe themselves to know it all. The world is vast and infinite, ever changing, and bigger than the self.

In today's globalised world, we are simultaneously growing more distant and virtually closer to each other in terms of cultural history, way of living, and social identity. Tao Hui (b. 1987) uses technological procedures to force viewers to confront this conflicted situation, often challenging the barrier between what is public and private and blurring the boundaries between the personal and institutional. In *Talk About Body* (2013), he removes his private emotions from the anthropological description of his body in order to find a semblance of balance in identity and being. In order to understand himself, Tao abstracts his mind from the body and seeks virtual intimacy in physical distance.

Understanding ourselves as beings who are distinct from each other does not necessarily lie in the physical. Ezzam Rahman's (b. 1981) work, made up of performance for photography, found and everyday objects, and skin sculptures, captures the aftershock of a social high. Alternately intimate yet isolating, Rahman infuses dark humour in his work, commenting on us as individuals who are unconsciously driven toward each other. We reach out in embrace, but despite the euphoria of physical contact, the body still finds itself bereft of emotional intimacy. It remains hungry for a connection in a mistaken corporeal yearning, which only manages to accentuate the feeling of isolation.

Each person, self-contained as a living being and differentiated from the next, is an island. We are literally marooned from each other. Performance artist Melati Suryodarmo (b. 1969) takes this as one of her starting points. Best known for her durational performances made up of simple gestures and actions repeated laboriously over time, she forces her body to repeat and move in what has to be seen as a non-productive manner: nothing is ever completed, only repeated. By repeating spoken phrases and movements, her works question the efficacy of action or inaction and the significance of words and gestures. For Suryodarmo, she is trapped in a constant attempt to reach out to the world in vain.

For some people, they are also marooned within themselves. Working with the body's presence in space, Zen Teh (b. 1988) presents situations that challenge the way we orient ourselves in the gallery. Geometric shapes are layered, overlapped, and continuously present new dimensions of the visible world, thwarting any normative attempt at spatial negotiation. Alternately confrontational and vertiginous, Teh plays with our habitual reactions toward material like concrete and reflective surfaces in order to displace the visitor. Meditating upon the possibility of the mind accepting singular or multiple perspectives depending on the situation, Teh expresses its alternately rigid and fractured identity, alone in its own way.

Qian Jiahua (b. 1987) plays with painting's reliance on its singular objecthood, reducing her paintings into multiple pieces of canvas elements that integrate the wall into the painting-installation itself. Strongly sensitive to the impact of space and its relationship with objects, Qian strives to integrate the experience of painting with the experience of painting-object through its considered placement in the exhibition environment. In a certain way, each canvas could stand alone as a single painting but would quickly reintegrate itself into the larger work through the viewer's attention of the surface, littered with thin diagonals that lead the eye subtly from one canvas to another. Alternately systemic, diagrammatic, and random, the communication process is constantly being challenged through a process of reduction. The ties that bind are fragile and demanding, requiring constant attention and work.

These ties are often found in the everyday. Sayaka Ishizuka (b. 1980) uses grains of rice as a metaphor for individuals. Beginning her creative process on the level of the real, the lived, and the experienced, Ishizuka selects personal histories, memories, daily rituals, and processes as the point of departure in fleshing out her simple yet profound spatial diagrams of the ties that bind us. Rice grains come together to form patterns and shapes on her canvases, expressing an instance of communal harmony. For her, rice's double status as seed and food in her social and cultural life means there is simultaneously a potential for new life and the end of the current one. This serves as a metaphor for human life, which is like a long journey with a constant promise for new life. Grains of life touch each other, sometimes even literally threaded together in gold, reflecting abundance and the valuable connections made and preserved between people.

For the works chosen for this exhibition, encompassing pen and paint, organic and industrial materials, video and performative media, the link lies not in the material but in their joint respect for a presence. Works that belie a retreat and discipline are brought together with the intention of touching upon how art reflects and expresses the varied human interaction with the world made up of people, society, and our natural environment.

## OPENING PERFORMANCE

*Eins und Eins* by Melati Suryodarmo      Thursday, 14 July, 7pm

"Nevertheless, we live our individual lives and certainly carry our own personal histories. We cannot always classify ourselves as one with others. As individuals, we are unique beings with specific molecular constellations within our bodies."

—Melati Suryodarmo

On the occasion of the opening reception for *In Silence*, Suryodarmo will present a new performance piece at Pearl Lam Galleries Singapore that expresses the pressures of an ever-changing sociopolitical environment upon the individual who has been shaped by his or her personal experiences within society.

With the support of: GILLMAN BARRACKS

## About the Artists

### GOLNAZ FATHI

Golnaz Fathi (b. 1972, Tehran, Iran) is one of only a tiny handful of women trained to the highest level within the discipline of traditional Persian calligraphy. An influential member of a currently thriving generation of artists to surface in Iran over the last twenty years, Fathi appropriates the form, practice, and technique of calligraphy in modern media.

Golnaz Fathi has works in the collections of Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Brighton & Hove Museum, England; Carnegie Mellon University, Doha; the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur; Asian Civilizations Museum, Singapore; British Museum, London; Devi Art Foundation, New Delhi; and The Farjam Collection, Dubai. She has received a number of awards, including the Best Woman Calligraphist in Ketabat Style in 1995 by the Iranian Society of Calligraphy in Tehran, and she was chosen by a jury to receive the Young Global Leader award in 2011 at the Sharjah Calligraphy Biennale. Fathi currently lives and works between Tehran and Paris.

### JENNY HOLZER

Jenny Holzer (b. 1950, Gallipolis, Ohio) graduated with a BA from Ohio University in 1972, and received her MFA from the Rhode Island School of Design in 1977. She has honorary doctorates from the University of Ohio (1992), Williams College (2000), the Rhode Island School of Design (2003), The New School, New York (2005) and Smith College (2009). Starting in the 1970s with the New York City posters and up to her recent years with light projections on landscape and architecture, she has rivalled ignorance and violence with humour, kindness, and moral courage.

For more than thirty years, Holzer has presented her astringent ideas, arguments, and sorrows in public places and international exhibitions, including 7 World Trade Center, the Reichstag, the Venice Biennale, the Guggenheim Museums in New York and Bilbao, and the Whitney Museum of American Art. Holzer received the Leone d'Oro at the Venice Biennale in 1990, the Crystal Award from the World Economic Forum in 1996, and the Barnard Medal of Distinction in 2011. Holzer currently lives and works in New York.

### SAYAKA ISHIZUKA

Sayaka Ishizuka (b. 1980, Shizuoka, Japan) graduated from the Painting Department of Joshibi University of Art and Design in 2004. Her quietly arresting works are matched by the attentiveness to the lived histories, cultural associations, and evocative potential of the commonplace found objects that are frequently her chosen medium.

In 2009, Ishizuka participated in the Wellington Asia Residency Exchange artist-in-residence programme in Wellington, New Zealand. She has held several solo exhibitions in Tokyo and Kanagawa, Japan, and her work has been shown widely around Japan in group exhibitions, as well as the Setouchi Triennial and the Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennial. Ishizuka currently lives and works in Oiso, Kanagawa, Japan.

### QIAN JIAHUA

Qian Jiahua (b. 1987, Shanghai, China) graduated from the China Academy of Fine Art in 2011. Visually provocative, her canvases, often properly seen as parts of painting-installations, are carefully layered with colours that come through only when physically regarded by the eye. Populating her canvases with areas of colour, subtly un-geometric shapes and conscientiously placed lines, Qian joins some of the most interesting artists today in questioning the category of abstraction.

Qian has received significant critical attention, having been included in curated exhibitions at Long Museum, Shanghai, China; Time Art Museum, Beijing, China; art-st-urban, Lucerne, Switzerland; among others. She currently lives and works in Hangzhou, China.

### EZZAM RAHMAN

Ezzam Rahman (b. 1981, Singapore) graduated with a BA (Hons) in Fine Arts from the University of Huddersfield, UK and was formally trained as a sculptor at LASALLE SIA College of the Arts, Singapore. Presently he is undergoing his MFA with Goldsmiths, University of London, UK, at LASALLE. A multi-disciplinary artist, Ezzam sees his work as unfinished glimpses of the basic human emotions, improvisational objects in which the constructed of ready made are used to question our own making of the world through memories, feelings and senses.

Ezzam's miniature artist's skin sculptures were commissioned by the Singapore Art Museum and showcased in the exhibition *Unearthed* in 2014. He presented an installation-cum-performance artwork at SingaPlural, an anchor event for Singapore Design Week 2015. Ezzam is also a joint winner of the Grand Prize for the President's Young Talents 2015 and awardee of the People's Choice Award at the Singapore Art Museum. Ezzam currently lives and works in Singapore.

#### MELATI SURYODARMO

Melati Suryodarmo (b. 1969, Surakarta, Indonesia) studied at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste Braunschweig, Germany under Marina Abramović from 1994 to 2003. As a performance artist, Suryodarmo explores the relationship between a human body, the culture to which it belongs, and a constellation where it lives.

Since 1996, she has presented her work in various international festivals and exhibitions, including *Marking the Territory* (2003), Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin, Ireland; *Räume und Schatten* (2005), Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, Germany; *Erotic Body* (2007), 52nd Venice Biennale Dance Festival, Venice, Italy; *Manifesta7* (2008), Bolzano, Italy; *Medium at Large* (2014), Singapore Art Museum, Singapore; and *FantAsia* (2015), Seoul Museum of Art, Seoul, South Korea and 8th Asia Pacific Triennale (2015), QAGOMA, Queensland, Australia. Suryodarmo currently lives and works between Gross Gleidingen, Germany and Surakarta, Indonesia.

#### TAO HUI

Tao Hui (b. 1987, Yunyang, Chongqing province, China) graduated from Sichuan Fine Arts Institute with a BFA in Oil Painting in 2010. He is interested in his culture and in traditional art and folk culture, which have become main factors in his works. Tao works with various mediums, including graphic arts, painting, video, objects, and installation.

Tao's work has received international acclaim. In 2015, he won the Grand Prize at the 19th Contemporary Art Festival Sesc\_Videobrasil | Southern Panoramas for his presentation of *Talk About Body* (2013). Tao was also awarded the Art Sanya Huayu Youth Award in the same year. Most recently, he has held the solo exhibition *New Directions: Tao Hui* (2015) at UCCA, Beijing, China. Group exhibitions include *Essential Matters—Moving Images from China* (2015), Borusan Contemporary, Istanbul, Turkey; and *UP-YOUTH, China Young Artists Exhibition* (2011), Times Art Museum, Beijing, China. Tao currently lives and works in Beijing, China.

#### ZEN TEH

Zen Teh (b. 1988, Singapore) graduated with a BA (Hons) in Art Design Media in 2011 from Nanyang Technological University, Singapore with a specialisation in photography and digital imaging. An emerging Singaporean artist dealing in the photographic arts through the perspective of painting, Teh is constantly investigating alternative ways of photography and image making to raise environmental awareness.

Teh's work has been represented in both group and solo exhibitions. In 2014, she presented works as part of *The Art Incubator 5: From When We Last Met*, held at the Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore. Most recently, Teh held her second solo exhibition, *Sensing States: Healing Spaces* (2015), at Art Science Museum, Singapore. She currently lives and works in Singapore.

## About Pearl Lam Galleries

Founded by Pearl Lam, Pearl Lam Galleries is a driving force within Asia's contemporary art scene. With over 20 years of experience exhibiting Asian and Western art and design, it is one of the leading and most established contemporary art galleries to be launched out of China.

Playing a vital role in stimulating international dialogue on Chinese and Asian contemporary art, the Galleries is dedicated to championing artists who re-evaluate and challenge perceptions of cultural practice from the region. The Galleries in Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Singapore collaborate with renowned curators, each presenting distinct programming from major solo exhibitions, special projects, and installations to conceptually rigorous group shows. Based on the philosophy of Chinese Literati where art forms have no hierarchy, Pearl Lam Galleries is dedicated to breaking down boundaries between different disciplines, with a unique gallery model committed to encouraging cross-cultural exchange.

The four branches of Pearl Lam Galleries in Hong Kong, Shanghai and Singapore represent an increasingly influential roster of contemporary artists. Chinese artists Zhu Jinshi and Su Xiaobai, who synthesise Chinese sensibilities with an international visual language, are presented internationally with work now included in major private and public collections worldwide. The Galleries has also introduced leading international artists, such as Jenny Holzer, Leonardo Drew, Carlos Rolón/Dzine and Yinka Shonibare MBE, to markets in the region, providing opportunities for new audiences in Asia to encounter their work. Pearl Lam Galleries encourages international artists to create new work which engages specifically with the region, collaborating to produce thought-provoking, culturally relevant work.

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## Press Enquiries

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