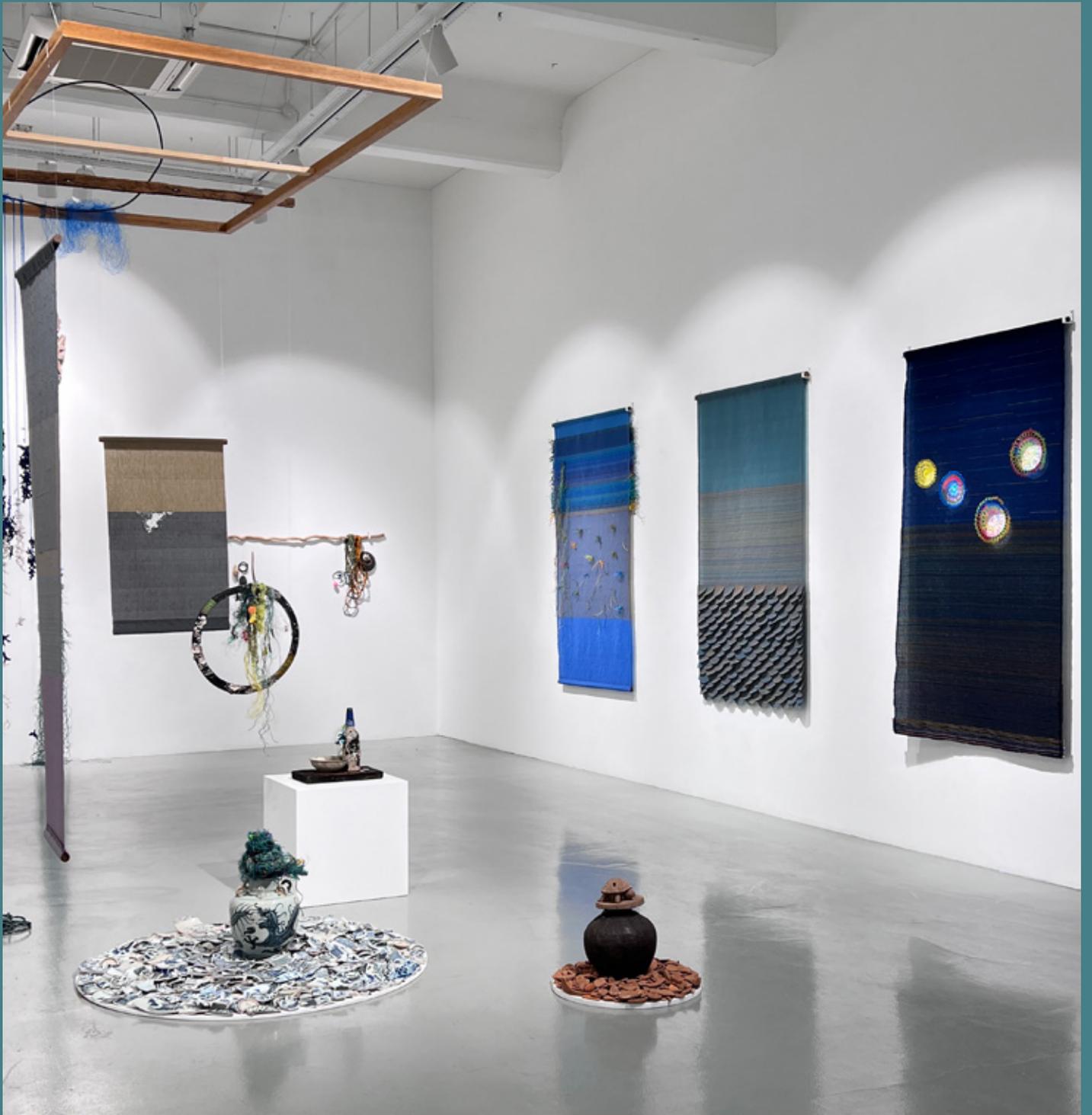


# THE WATER THE BODY THE SPIRIT

Solo Exhibition by

ARI  
BAYUAJI

25.02 -  
02.04.23



Bali is a small island in the Indonesian archipelago about 153 kilometres from east to west. Embraced by a unique ecosystem of freshwater rivers, tropical flora and fauna, and fertile volcanic plateau, Bali is one of the top tourist destinations, bringing people from around the world to savour its iconic landscape and lifestyle. Indeed, due to its strategic geography along colonial maritime routes, Bali has historically been the anchorage for diverse civilisations—from India, China, to the Middle East—defining its influential role in the region both culturally and economically. In 1343 Bali came under the Majapahit rule until the empire fell in 1478, from which time most of the Hindus in the archipelago migrated to Bali. The island remains to this day the only Hindu-majority province in Indonesia. From the early 19th century to 1943, Bali, as well as the rest of the archipelago, fell to Dutch colonisation. Having witnessed centuries of religious and cultural crossovers, Bali has adapted to global events thanks to its geographic location, its cultural diversity, and its tropical beauty. As a largely agrarian society, Bali's single most important industry today in terms of income is tourism. While tourists are essential to the economy of the island, it has become apparent during the pandemic that, if unregulated, their large numbers jeopardise the very existence of Bali's natural ecosystem. Shortly before the pandemic, the arrival of 5.7 million tourists urged the local government to declare a "garbage emergency" across the 5-kilometre coastal stretch covered in plastic waste<sup>1</sup>. Today, Bali's overtourism threatens its sustainability.

Can the preservation of the island's natural environment and local traditions coexist with global imperatives? How can we promote a resilient economy from within the island?

Ari Bayuaji's art intervention is based on these premises, at the intersection of global growth and traditional knowledge. Originally from Mojokerto, East Java, and currently living between Bali and Canada, Bayuaji spent the pandemic years of 2020–21 on the island. Witnessing the deterioration of Bali's natural beauty, matched by the unavoidable crash of local economies, he felt

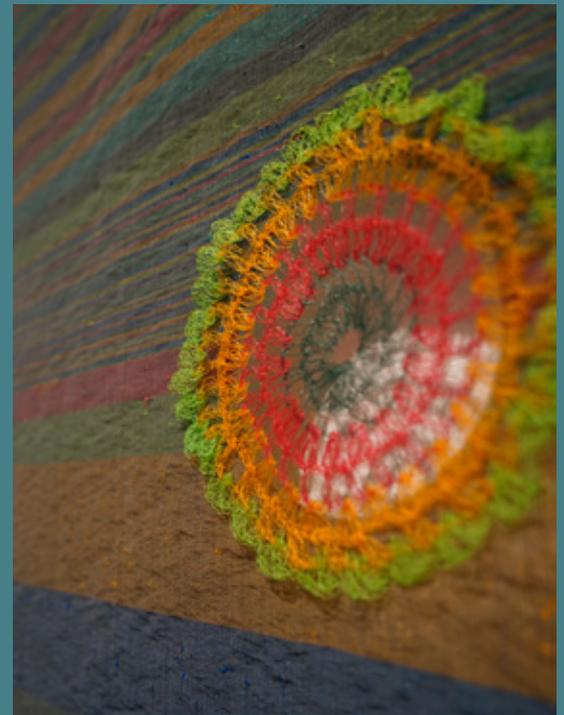
compelled to gear his art practice towards the communal cause. During his long walks on Sanur beach, where he lives, it became clear to Bayuaji that the coasts were disappearing under discarded nets, ropes and plastic bottles washed ashore by the tides, entangling mangroves forests, and disfiguring the idyllic scenery into a ghostly landscape<sup>2</sup>. "I was inspired to collect discarded plastic ropes and fishing nets polluting the coastline," Bayuaji shares with me, "I recognised the material had creative potential, which I wanted to explore." It was at this time that he incepted the transformation of discarded ropes to majestic textiles that echo the deep blue and turquoise hues of the ocean.



Image of discarded ropes and nets.

The process was laborious at first and based on trial and error. His initial efforts were focused on untangling and cleaning the ropes in order to separate the threads by colours. Next, in the weaving process he aimed at reviving traditional textile practices by collaborating with weavers in Sanur. Unfamiliar with the rope medium, his weavers devised a combination of nylon and cotton threads to create traction for the loom to intertwine the yarn while manipulating the weaving action slowly<sup>3</sup>. The result was magnificent: from discarded marine ropes they created exquisite tapestries and garments in an aquarium of colours. These first textiles completed in 2020 marked the beginning of the ongoing *Weaving the Ocean* project. Since then, Bayuaji has gathered a team of over 10 full-time staff, among them weavers and tailors,

and several part-time assistants to work on his art projects, thus significantly contributing to the economy of the community. Gaining local and international attention, *Weaving the Ocean* not only provides us with visually mesmerising art pieces, but also, crucially, enables his art-making process to respond to issues of sustainability, waste management and upcycling, through rejuvenating useless materials into objects of greater value, artistically and environmentally.



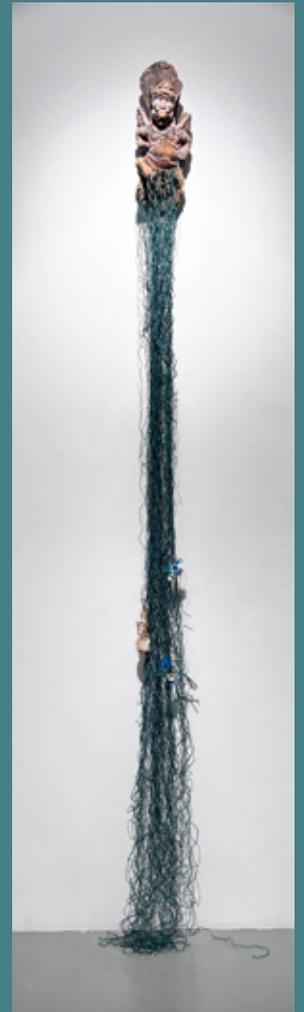
Detailed images of *The Waves Under Blue Moon* and *Deep under the Volcano Sea* (L-R).

Part of *Weaving the Ocean*, Bayuaji's latest exhibition at Mizuma Gallery Singapore titled *The Water | The Body | The Spirit* delves further into the condition of Bali's seashores, from a socio-philosophical perspective. As the title suggests, the exhibition examines three fundamental aspects of the artist's practice: the water, which is his source of inspiration, a bountiful womb that carries away and restores to the shore fragments of past lives; our human body as we intervene on and relate to the environment and to history; and the spirit, a mystical essence that conveys and transforms energy through regeneration. Water is a conduit, bearing stories from the past to the present and towing with it memories and heirlooms: the ropes, twisted and contorted by the

depth of the sea, are reused and manipulated in Bayuaji's tapestries; also, ceramic remains and found objects become compelling sculptures and mixed-media installations in the exhibition. Expanding on his initial intent of recycling only ropes, fishing nets and plastic bottles, in *The Water | The Body | The Spirit*, Bayuaji includes driftwood and sculptures, as well as terracotta and ceramic fragments that through the decades have morphed with the unrelenting sea.

Towering on the exhibition main wall is the totemic sculpture *Garuda (From the Ocean)* (2023), which the artist found among driftwood on Sanur beach near the mangrove forest where he regularly retrieves the ropes. Measuring approximately 65 × 30 × 20 centimetres, *Garuda (From the Ocean)* "spits" green plastic ropes coiled like ribbons that echo their once supple form now swollen by prolonged exposure to seawater. With an expression that seems to question the viewer, the sculpture embodies the spirit of the project, serving as an emblem of our thoughtless behaviour towards the ecosystem.

A mixed-media installation in the middle of the gallery conjures an aquarium. Floating from the ceiling to the ground are hundreds of ropes dangling blue and white corals. What our eyes cannot distinguish at first glance, however, is the actual material of the corals: recycled plastic. Mimicking Bali's coral reef, now critically endangered, Bayuaji has devised a method of first melting and reducing plastic bottles to powder, then bonding with pigments and moulding the plastic into a different life of tiny coral branches.

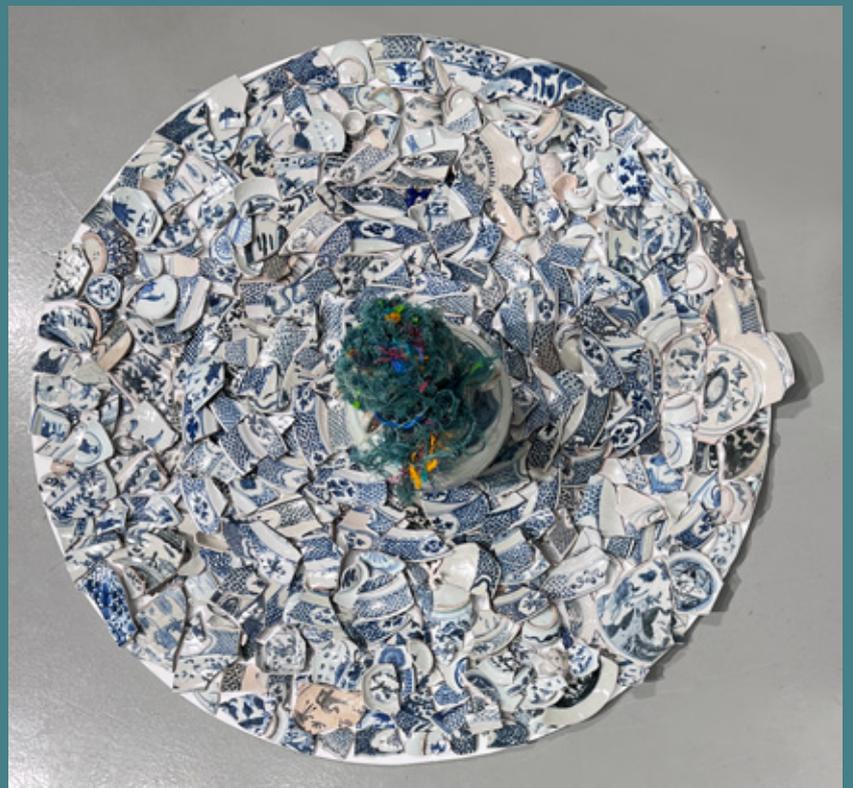


Ari Bayuaji, *Garuda (From the Ocean)*, 2023



Ari Bayuaji, *Corals*, 2023

The blue-and-white theme continues at the bottom of the re-created coral nursery, through ceramic fragments scattered on the floor as part of the installation. Reminding us of the role Bali played in colonial maritime trade, these salvaged ceramic fragments are of religious objects, such as containers for holy water or temple decorations. The legend goes that on May 27, 1904, the ship of Peranakan Chinese trader Kwee Tek Tjiang flying the Dutch flag sank along the coast of Sanur. The precious cargo comprising mostly ceramics and coins, scattered in the waters, were retrieved by the people—a stark contrast to the plastic litter on Sanur today.



Ari Bayuaji, *Blue and White Shrine*, 2023

The analogy of maritime trade, and of cultural crossovers, is also approached by another found-object sculpture. Titled *The Goddess of the Sea* (2023), this terracotta Venus-like sculpture, swathed in ropes encrusted with natural corals and barnacles, enters in conversation with registers of Western/Eastern cultural belonging and the ubiquitous ocean as a transitional space. Indeed, upon entering the gallery, the allusion to water is manifested across all the works. Whether evoked by the shimmering aquamarine

tapestries, the driftwood sculptures, or the immersive mixed-media installations, the dual existence of water, as an element and a transformative spirit, conjures what I describe as “aesthetics of the organic” that honours both the communal making of the works and their tribute as art.



Ari Bayuaji, *The Goddess of the Sea*, 2023

Immersed in the dreamscape of the gallery, we become part of the ocean’s aura of mystery where once “found” objects transition from death to new life.

<sup>1</sup> Simon Roughneen, "British diver exposes sea of plastic rubbish off Bali coast," *The Telegraph*, March 6, 2018, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/03/06/british-diver-exposes-sea-plastic-rubbish-bali-coast/>. Indonesia is one of the world's largest plastic polluters, with some estimates suggesting the country is the source of around 10 percent of the world's plastic waste.

<sup>2</sup> Coincidentally, it was on Sanur beach where the first international hotel Bali Beach Hotel was built in 1963, initiated by the former president Sukarno (1901–1970) to boost tourism, the same phenomenon that is now disfiguring the beach.

<sup>3</sup> Ari Bayuaji, conversation with the author, February 1, 2023. "We use the traditional Balinese weaving loom. We need the cotton threads as the 'warp' which is attached to the machine's harnesses and beater. The plastic threads are rolled and placed inside the loom as the 'weft'. The cotton threads hold the plastic threads tightly so that we are able to create high-quality textile."

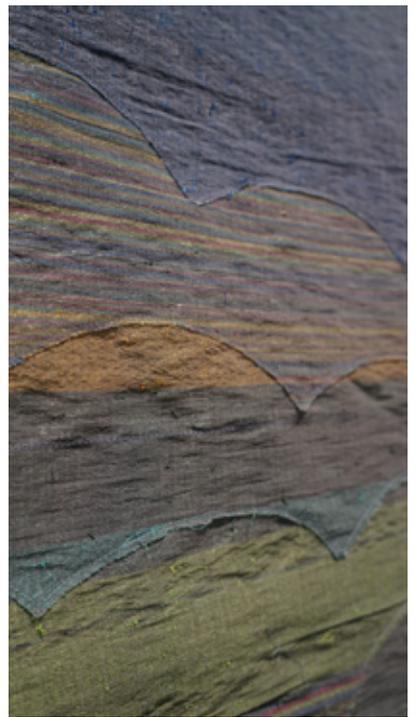


**Loredana Pazzini- Paracciani** is an independent scholar and curator of Southeast Asian contemporary art. Her research and curatorial practice revolve around critical sociopolitical issues in Southeast Asia, advocating a counter-hegemonic and non-Western-centric discourse. Her articles have appeared in several academic journals such as *Visual Anthropology*, Routledge UK; *Photographies*, Routledge and University of Westminster UK; *Frames Cinema Journal*, University of St Andrews, UK; *Convocarte: Revista de Ciências da Arte*, Lisbon University, Portugal; and *M.A.tter Unbound*, LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore, among others. Together with Patrick D. Flores, she co-edited the anthology *Interlaced Journeys: Diaspora and the Contemporary in Southeast Asian Art*, published in 2020 by Osage Art Foundation, Hong Kong. Notable museum exhibitions she has curated include *Déjà vu: When the Sun Rises in the West* solo show by Natee Utarit at Silpakorn Art Center, Bangkok (2022); *Homecoming / Eventually* at UP Vargas Museum, Manila, Philippines (2021); *Diaspora: Exit, Exile, Exodus of Southeast Asia* at MAIAM Contemporary Art Museum, Thailand (2019); and *Architectural Landscapes: SEA in the Forefront* for InToAsia: Time Based Art Festival 2015 at Queens Museum, New York. In 2022 Loredana was invited to curate the online program for the ASEAN-EU Cultural Festival titled "Youth Voices" to celebrate the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ASEAN-EU cross-cultural relations. Loredana is one of the appointed curators for the Bangkok Art Biennale 2022.

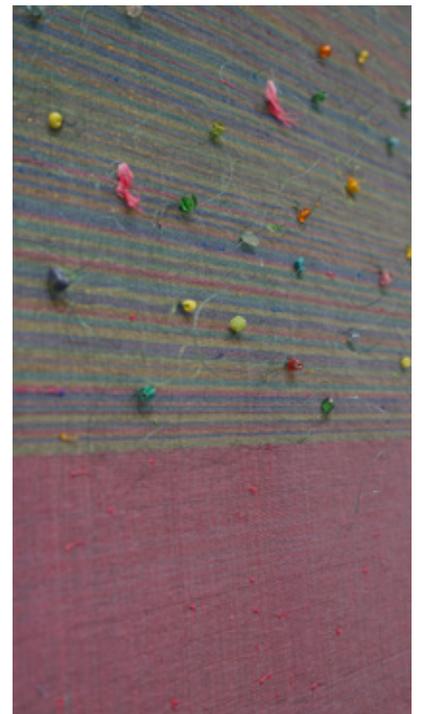




*The Waves Under Blue Moon*  
2023  
woven plastic and cotton threads  
178 × 106 cm



*The Shrine by the Beach*  
2022-2023  
woven plastic and cotton threads  
182 × 105 cm



*Brilliant Light of Sunrise under the Water*  
2023

woven plastic and cotton threads, stone and glass beads, plastic threads, polyester  
83 × 51 cm



*Blue Moon*  
2023  
woven plastic and cotton threads  
88 × 45 cm



*Deep under the Volcano Sea*  
2023

woven plastic and cotton threads, crocheted plastic threads  
135 × 120 cm

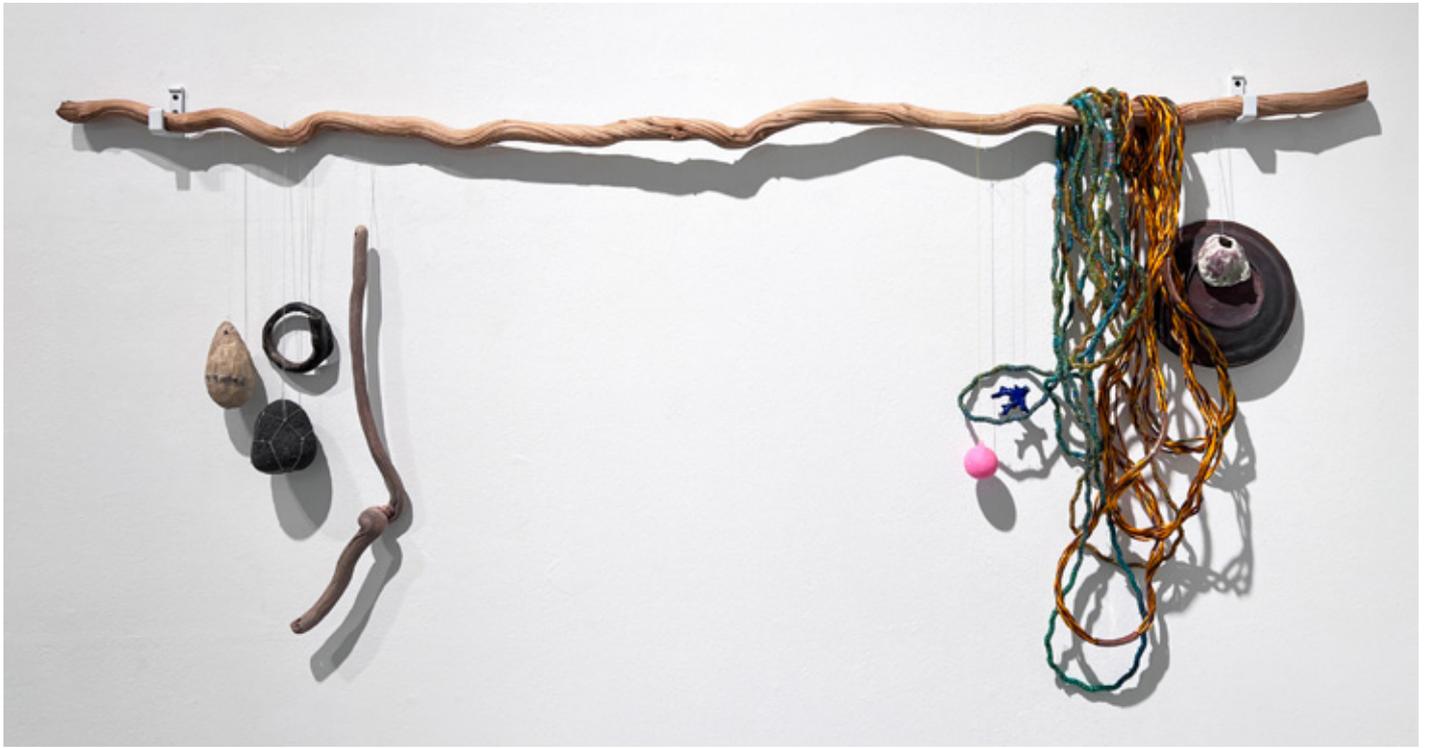


*I Fixed the Moon on the Horizon*  
2022-2023

woven plastic and cotton threads on plywood, steel  
dimensions variable, 86 × 92 × 4 cm (frame), 97 × 94 × 1 cm (steel)



*Garuda (From the Ocean)*  
2023  
wood and plastic ropes, styrofoam, barnacles on plastic ropes  
355 × 23 × 22 cm



*The Offerings*

2023

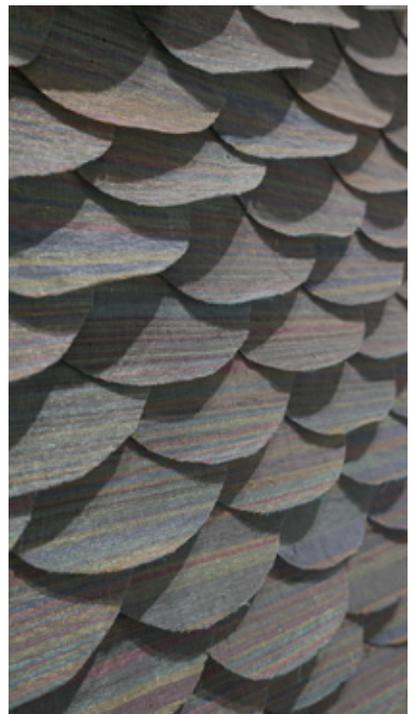
wood, stone, barnacle, porcelain, copper plate, plastic, plastic threads

149 × 68 × 12 cm



*Golden Sunrise at the Beach of Banda Neira*  
2022

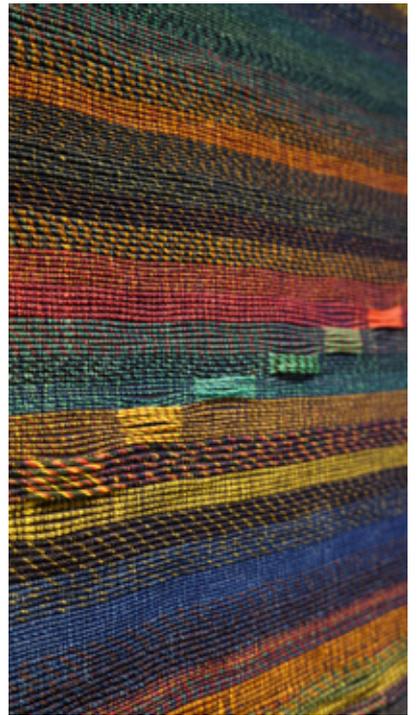
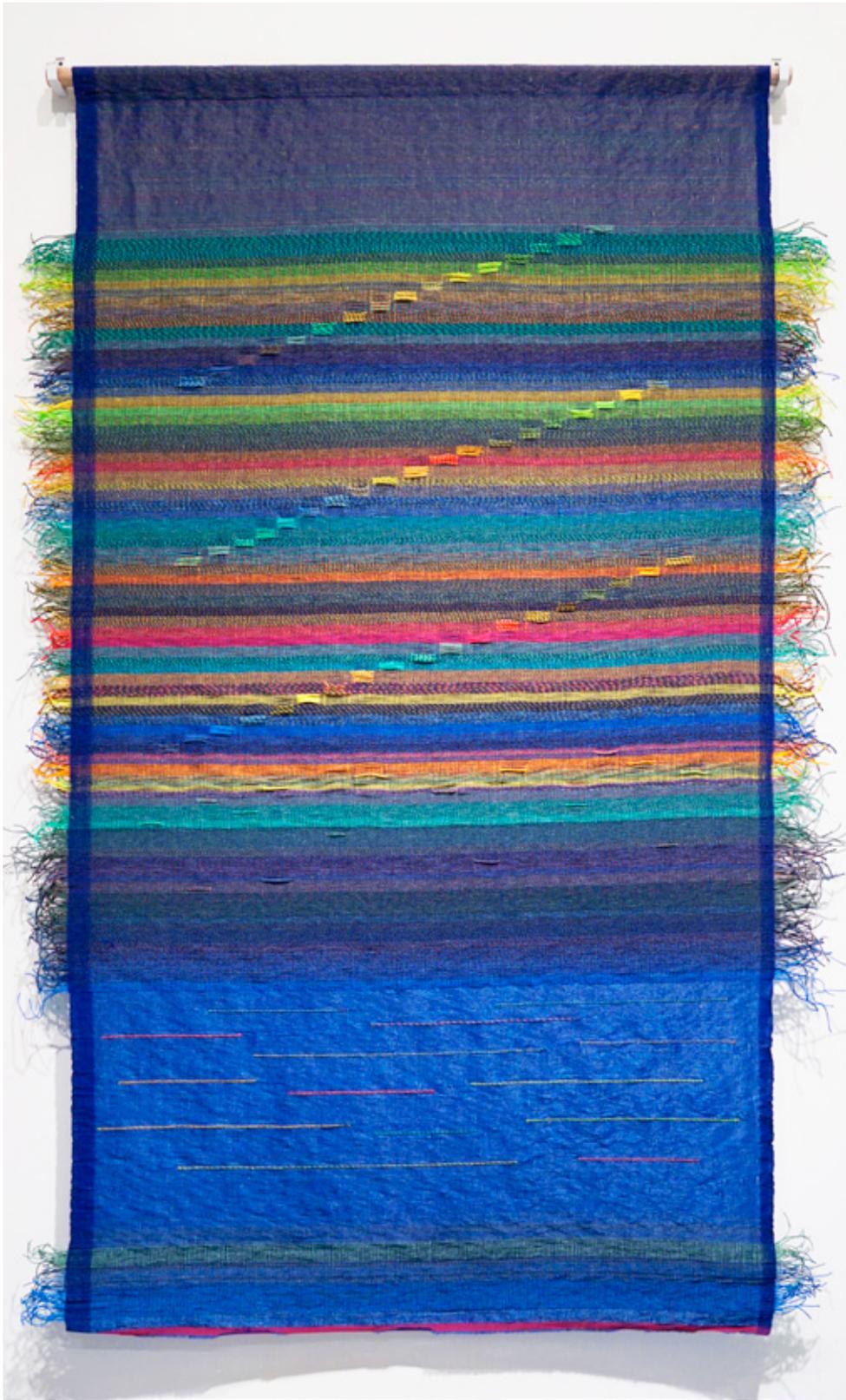
woven plastic and cotton threads, plastic ropes, stone beads  
190 × 120 cm



*The Calm Wave of Sanur*  
2022-2023  
woven plastic and cotton threads  
190 × 106 cm



*Hot Rocks Diving*  
2022-2023  
woven plastic and cotton threads, crocheted plastic threads  
195 × 105 cm



*Mount Agung*  
2023  
woven plastic and cotton threads  
190 × 125 cm



*Remembrance of the Full Moon in Ubud*  
2023  
woven plastic and cotton threads  
184 × 52 cm



*Looking through the Sea*

2023

woven plastic and cotton threads, fishing net with naturally grown corals

84 × 50 cm



*The Treasure*

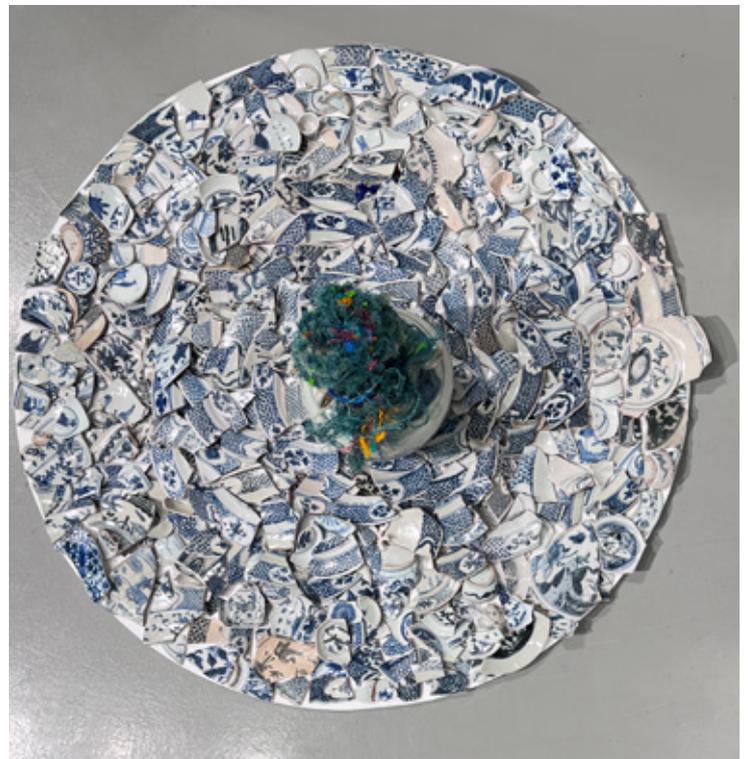
2023

rubber tyre, plastic thread with naturally grown corals, coins, stone beads, wood, lead, terracotta shards, woven plastic ropes, copper, ceramic, glass bottle, stone  
70 × 45 × 8 cm (tyre), 32 × 35 × 24 cm (bottle & bowl)



*The Water and the Land*  
2023

wood, ceramic, woven copper wires, copper, coins, plywood, terracotta  
35 × 50 × 50 cm



*Blue and White Shrine*

2023

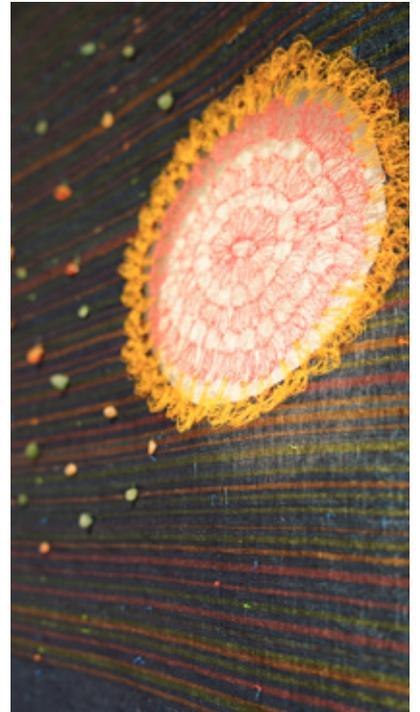
ceramic shards, ceramic jar, plastic ropes, plywood, plastic

45 × 123 × 123 cm



*The Goddess of the Sea*  
2023

painted terracotta, terracotta shards, coins, copper wire, porcelain plate, copper plate  
40 x 45 x 41 cm



*Remembrance of Night Diving in Banda*  
2022  
woven plastic and cotton threads, plastic threads, stone beads  
110 × 115 cm



*The Night Rain*  
2023

woven plastic and cotton threads, plywood  
90 × 14 cm

*Little Mermaid*  
2023

woven plastic and cotton threads, plastic threads,  
plywood  
90 × 14 cm



*I Went Deep into the Ocean. It Was Wonderful*  
2022

painted wood, plastic threads, glass beads, barnacles, bronze, rubber  
185 × 32 × 12 cm



*Holy Water Container #1*  
2023

ceramic, carved buffalo horn, plastic threads with naturally grown corals, coins, jade, glass beads, wood, driftwood  
55 × 15 × 8.5 cm



*Holy Water Container #2*

2023

ceramic, carved wood, plastic threads with naturally grown corals, coins, stone and glass beads, wood, driftwood

18 × 34 × 10 cm



*Holy Water Container #3*  
2023

ceramic, carved wood, plastic threads with naturally grown corals, woven plastic ropes, glass beads  
16 x 17 x 13 cm



*Holy Water Container #4*

2023

ceramic, driftwood, plastic threads with naturally grown corals, coins, stone and glass beads  
21 x 23 x 13 cm



*Holy Water Container #6*  
2023  
ceramic, woven plastic threads, driftwood  
38 × 7 × 8 cm

*Holy Water Container #5*  
2023  
ceramic, drift bamboo, plastic threads with naturally  
grown corals, coins, glass beads, driftwood  
23.5 × 9 × 9 cm



*The Lingga*  
2023  
drift bamboo, plastic ropes, silver  
59 × 17 × 14 cm







## Ari Bayuaji

Born in Mojokerto, Indonesia, 1975  
Lives in Montreal, Canada and Bali, Indonesia

## Education

**2010**  
Studio Arts Major, Concordia University,  
Montreal, Canada

**1998**  
Bachelor in Civil Engineering, National Institute  
of Technology, Malang, Indonesia

## Solo Exhibitions

**2023**  
*The Water | The Body | The Spirit*, Mizuma Gallery, Singapore

**2022**  
*Weaving the Ocean*, Redbase Gallery, Sydney, Australia  
*Weaving the Ocean*, Coral Triangle Center, Bali, Indonesia  
*Weaving the Ocean*, Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, Lim Hak Tai  
Gallery, Singapore  
*Weaving the Ocean*, Warin Lab Contemporary, Bangkok, Thailand  
*Weaving the Ocean*, Project Casa, Montreal, Canada

**2021**  
*Weaving the Ocean*, NUNU Fine Art, Taipei, Taiwan

**2019**  
*Golden*, Parkhaus im Malkastenpark, Dusseldorf, Germany  
*Self-Portrait*, Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay, Singapore

**2018**  
*Silence*, Musée des Beaux Arts de Montréal, Montreal, Canada  
*Island of Paradise*, NUNU Fine Art, Taipei, Taiwan  
*Un Cabinet de Curiosites*, Maison du Conseil des Arts de Montreal,  
Montreal, Canada

**2017**  
*Le Village Un Village*, Fondation Agnes B. Paris and Yves de la Tour  
d’Auvergne, Sainte-Alvere, France  
*No Place Like Home*, Kunsthal Rotterdam, The Netherlands

**2016**  
*Censor*, Redbase Foundation, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

**2015**  
*Ari Bayuaji*, Rene Blouin Gallery, Montreal, Canada

**2014**  
*Silence*, Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay, Singapore

## Selected Group Exhibitions

**2023**

*RiverRun Festival*, John F. Kennedy Performing Arts Center, Washington, DC, USA (forthcoming)

**2022**

*Celebrating European Union (EU) – Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) 45 Years of Relations*, Halles St. Gery, Brussels, Belgium  
*Beyond Painting*, Mizuma Gallery, Singapore  
*Distrik Seni Sesi 2: Berkelanjutan!*, Distrik Seni X Sarinah, Sarinah Community Mall, Jakarta, Indonesia  
*ARTJOG MMXXII: Arts in Common - Expanding Awareness*, Jogja National Museum, Yogyakarta, Indonesia  
*BLEU PLURIEL(S)*, Galerie Arnaud Lebecq, Paris, France  
*Lelaki Jangan Menangis*, Titik Dua x Lanö Art Project, Titik Dua Ubud, Bali, Indonesia  
*Good News from Bali*, Mizuma Gallery, Singapore

**2021**

*Promenades*, Musée National des beaux-arts du Québec, Québec City, Canada

**2019**

*ART•BALI 2019: Speculative Memories*, AB•BC Building, Bali Collection, ITDC Nusa Dua, Bali, Indonesia  
*Flowers and Monsters*, Galerie d'art, Centre culturel Stewart Hall, Pointe-Claire, QC, Canada

**2018**

*Grace au Dessin*, Nan Rae Gallery, Woodbury University Gallery, Los Angeles, USA

**2015**

*125,660 Specimens of Art History*, Komunitas Salihara, Jakarta, Indonesia

**2014**

*ART|JOG 2014*, Taman Budaya Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

**2010**

*Take Me Home*, FOFA Gallery, Concordia University, Montreal, Canada

**2008**

*Danfoss Art Award Winners Exhibition*, Danfoss Group Global, Nordborg, Denmark

## Residencies

**2018**

Contemporary Art International Symposium, Baie-Saint-Paul, QC, Canada

**2017**

La Residence d'Artiste La Fondation Agnes B. Paris, 'Yves de la Tour d'Auvergne' Sainte-Alvère, Sainte-Alvère, France  
Kunsthall Rotterdam, Rotterdam, The Netherlands  
Musée des Beaux Arts de Montréal, Montreal, Canada

**2016**

Redbase Foundation, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

**2015**

United World College of South East Asia (UWCSEA), Singapore

## Collections

Musée des Beaux Arts de Montréal, Montreal, Canada  
Musée National du Québec, Québec City, Canada

## Awards

**2008**

Bronze, International Student Art Award, Danfoss Global Group, Nordborg, Denmark

Executive Director Suelo Mizuma established Mizuma Art Gallery in Tokyo in 1994. Since its opening in Gillman Barracks, Singapore in 2012, the gallery aims for the promotion of East Asian artists in the region as well as the introduction of Southeast Asian artists to the international art scene. From 2014 to 2019, the artist residency space "Rumah Kijang Mizuma" operated in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, providing a new platform for dialogue by supporting exchanges between East Asia and Southeast Asia. In 2018, a new gallery space, "Mizuma & Kips" in New York, USA, as a shared collaboration between Mizuma Gallery from Tokyo and Singapore, and Kips Gallery from New York.

Mizuma Gallery features the works of Japanese artists including Aida Makoto, Aiko Miyanaga, Amano Yoshitaka, Ikeda Manabu, Tenmyouya Hisashi, and Yamaguchi Akira. Moreover, it showcases the works of renown East Asian artists such as Ai Weiwei, Du Kun, Jun Nguyen-Hatsushiba, Ken + Julia Yonetani, and Zhao Zhao. The gallery also features the creations of prominent and emerging artists from the region including Agan Harahap, Albert Yonathan Setyawan, Angki Purbandono, Ari Bayuaji, Ashley Yeo, Ben Loong, Budi Agung Kuswara, Entang Wiharso, Gilang Fradika, Heri Dono, I Made Djirna, indieguerillas, Iwan Effendi, Kemalezedine, Made Wianta, Mark Justiniani, Nasirun, and Robert Zhao Renhui.

Set in a former military barracks dating back to 1936 and surrounded by lush tropical greenery, the Gillman Barracks visual arts cluster was launched in September 2012. Gillman Barracks' vision is to be Asia's destination for the presentation and discussion of international and Southeast Asian art. Today, Gillman Barracks is a place for art lovers, art collectors, and those curious about art. The cluster is a focal point of Singapore's arts landscape, and anchors the development of visual art in the region and beyond.

Mizuma Gallery Pte Ltd  
22 Lock Road #01-34  
Gillman Barracks  
Singapore 108939  
T. +65 6570 2505  
F. +65 6570 2506  
www.mizuma.sg  
www.mizuma.shop  
info@mizuma.sg

Tue-Sat: 11am - 7pm  
Sun: 11am - 6pm  
Closed on Mondays and Public Holidays

Facebook.com/mizumagallery  
Instagram @mizumaartgallery

Executive Director  
Mizuma Suelo

Director  
Fredy Chandra

Gallery Manager  
Theresia Irma

Project Executive  
Marsha Tan

Writer  
Loredana Pazzini-Paracciani

Design  
Raissa Ali

Published in Singapore, 2023.

Text © Loredana Pazzini-Paracciani

Artwork Images © Ari Bayuaji

© 2023 Mizuma Gallery, writer, artist. All rights reserved under International copyright conventions. No part of this leaflet may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording or any other information storage and retrieval system without prior permission from the publisher.