



A.I.

HAFFENDI ANUAR
Flat Lands

Haffendi Anuar
Flat Lands

2 - 7 November 2021
4 Cromwell Place (Gallery 1)
South Kensington
London
SW7 2JE

10-27 November 2021
1a Tenter Ground
London
E1 7NH

A.I. is pleased to present a solo exhibition by artist **Haffendi Anuar** (b. 1985, Malaysia) at 4 Cromwell Place (2 – 7 November 2021) & 1a Tenter Ground (10-27 November 2021) titled *Flat Lands*. Co-curated by Tatjana LeBoff & co-produced by Pembroke College JCR Art Collection, Oxford, as part of the Emery Prize, which the artist was awarded in 2020.

“The body: the warmth it provides, the sweat it secretes, the thin fabric that covers it, its ghostly presence in images and its desire to be seen are ideas which I investigate in Flat Lands. Exploring the body through an everyday artefact, the kain pelikat, a sarong predominantly worn by men and omnipresent in parts of Southeast and South Asia, I think of the clothing in relation to the bodily frame, with and without it, as a piece of architecture or a grid and its depiction in images in popular culture, archives, social media and books. What does the fabric mean to me? What does it say about my home country (Malaysia)? And what started as an anecdote told by mother that as a child, I used to spend countless of hours under my father’s kain, has now developed into an exploration of my identity as a queer Southeast Asian artist working in my current home - London. The seemingly procedural gestures of layering, propping, sewing, flattening, cutting and combing articulate a methodology that push and pull an elastic and contextual body of works; in the process of evolution.”

-the artist, 2021



View of Artist in Studio, London



Haffendi Anuar (b.1985, Malaysia) presents a new body of works which reference and explore the *kain pelikat*, a type of colourful tubular transnational garment usually worn by men in parts of Asia. Oriented in relation to his childhood memories of encountering and being physically enveloped by the fabric, his research and exploration into the iconography of the garment encompasses personal family photos, archive images, selfies on Instagram and texts describing the Malaysian landscape. The research materials are used as stimuli in developing textile-based sculptures, paintings, mixed media collages, and works on paper which consider the contemporary context of his home country, identity, and colonial capitalism in the region.

This is exemplified in *Unit*, the sculptural family which occupy the gallery space – a same-sex couple with their children each donning their own *kain pelikat*. In this work, Anuar sets up the *kain pelikat* in a contemporary Malaysian context, thinking about family, love and relationships. The ‘figures’ are basic in form and so, it is the *kain pelikat* which denotes each individual, becoming anthropomorphised, whilst also linking the family unit together through colour and pattern[1].

Layering is an inherent process in Anuar’s oeuvre. In the draped textile installations, *Drying Rack*, whereby printed text, paint and fabric - including felt, painted and dyed canvas, rice sacks, denim and kain pelikat are placed in voluminous stacks creating a whole. The work references clothes drying racks and specifically, the inhabitants of homes in Southeast Asia who would sun-dry their laundry, suspended from the upper floors of their high-rise apartment windows. These vernacular forms display Anuar’s commitment to utilizing a sculptural language that utilizes inspiration from the everyday life.

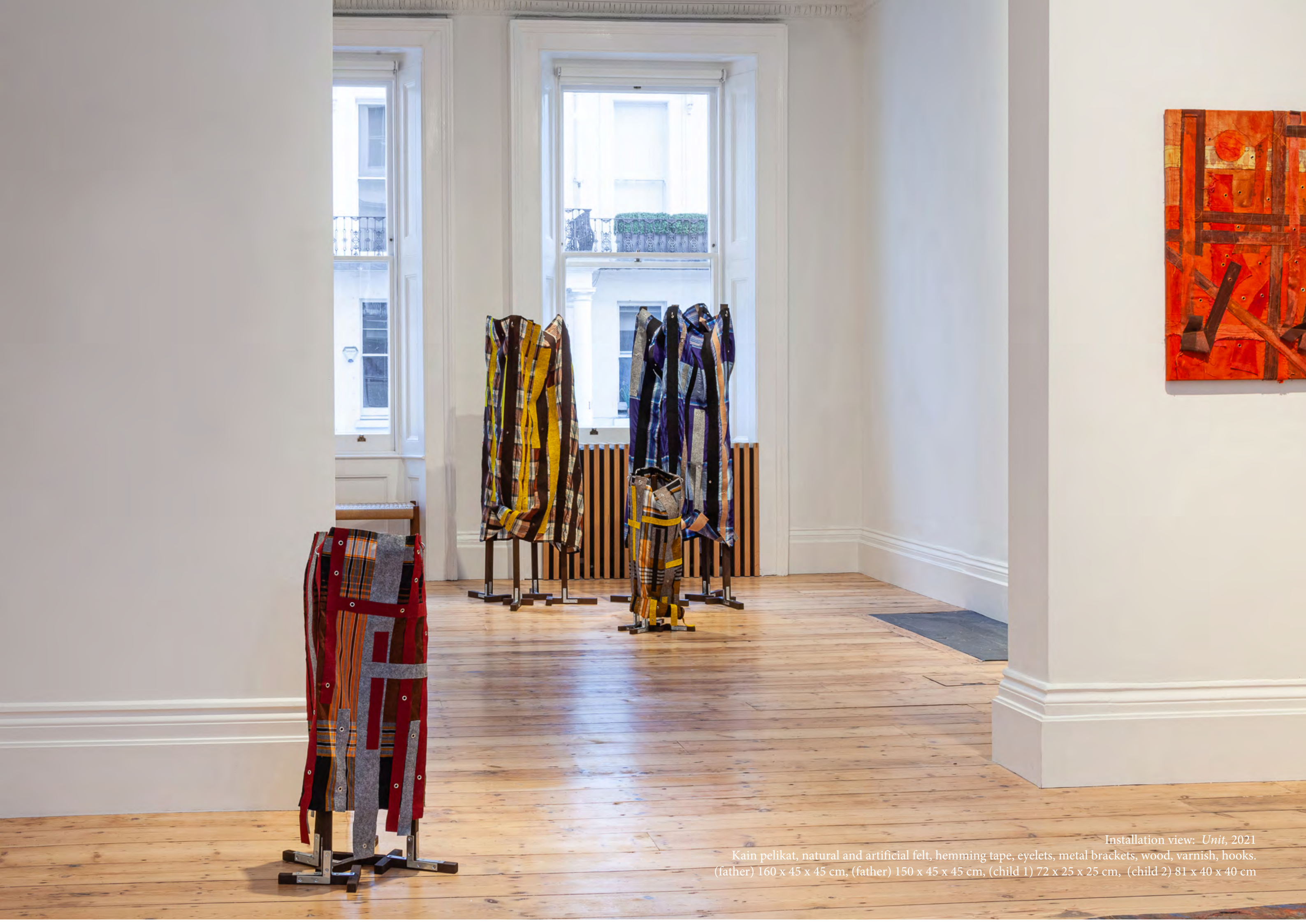
No matter which medium he works in, Anuar begins by cancelling out the ‘white background’ by prepping the surface with an initial layer of his own making. The draped textiles receive a wash of coloured paint – applied roughly with a large brush creating an uneven surface. Photographs, hand-painted and drawn elements, text, sewn lines and other textile elements are subsequently added building up the complete artwork.

The artist's paintings and works on paper are also something sculptural, working in layers again to create multi-dimensions. Often these works begin with layers of newsprint, creating a black and white ground for painting or collage, as can be seen in *Bodybuilders Duet*. This diptych - the most explicitly figurative work on display - echoes again the notion of same-sex coupling. A pair of muscular bulging torsos face each other. The thickly applied contours are created using squeeze sauce bottles. The paint application process reminiscences one of Anuar’s childhood fast-food favourites – the Ramly burger, a ubiquitous street-food in Malaysia. Dripping layers of toppings and sauces such as mayonnaise and chilli sauce are heavily applied onto halal meat patties using such containers. Notions of indulgent desires and an obsession of one’s body are explored in these works whilst also hinting at the artist’s own regimented workouts at the gym.

The imagery used in the *Cobweb* series is carefully selected in reference to Anuar’s own identity and cultural heritage. A selection of the works utilise fragments of photographs of his family members sourced from his own familial photo albums. In doing so, Anuar explores his constantly shifting sense of identity and self in relation to his own upbringing. Conversely, certain works in the *Cobweb* series utilise found archive imagery. Whilst completing his MFA at the Ruskin School of Art in Oxford, Anuar explored documentation and photographs in relation to the *kain pelikat* from the colonial era in the collections, archives and libraries of the Pitt Rivers Museum and the Bodleian Library. In doing so, Anuar interrogates the Western gaze by overlaying the images with the motif of the web in reference to the post-colonial empire and its over-arching reach, as well as a means to reclaim the images as his own.

The exhibition presents some of the artistic outcomes of Anuar’s practice, but it is not a conclusion. Instead, in his own words, he describes it as a ‘pit stop’; a moment of reflection in order to share his journey. The audience is invited to delve into his practice, uncover the layers of canvas, texts, books, photographs, reference material and imagery that make up Flat Lands.

[1] Whilst same sex couples do exist, albeit marginally, and are socially accepted in metropolitan circles in Malaysia’s capital, Kuala Lumpur, these couplings are not official recognised by the government or institutions and rarely seen in rural towns.



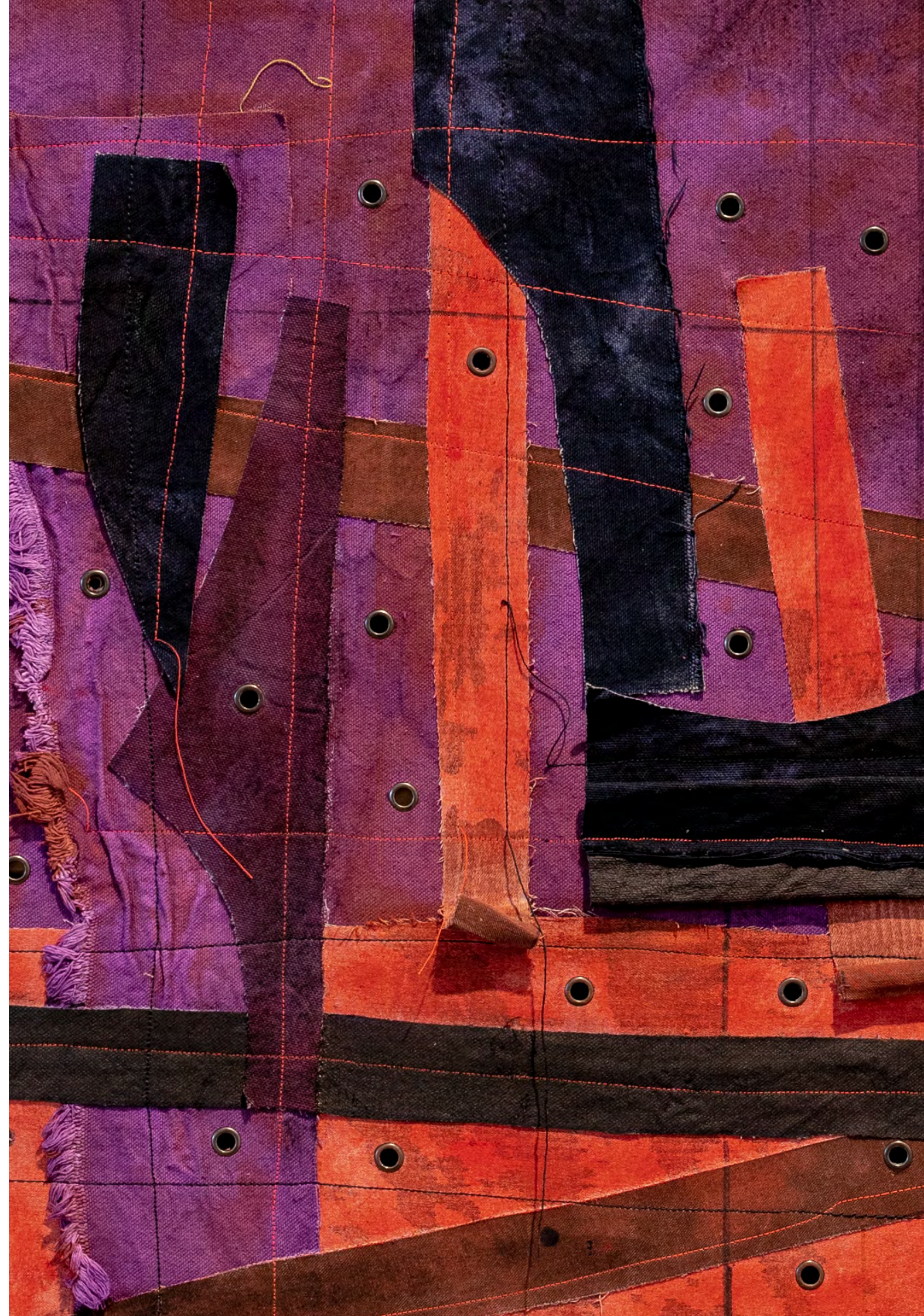
Installation view: *Unit*, 2021
Kain pelikat, natural and artificial felt, hemming tape, eyelets, metal brackets, wood, varnish, hooks.
(father) 160 x 45 x 45 cm, (father) 150 x 45 x 45 cm, (child 1) 72 x 25 x 25 cm, (child 2) 81 x 40 x 40 cm



Tanah dan Air, 2021
Dyed and painted canvas, rice bag, printed text, textile, wood, eyelets, thread, hemming tape
174 x 200cm



Untitled, 2021
 Dyed canvas, acrylic, oil, eyelets, thread and stretcher bars
 60 x 45 x 2 cm





Untitled, 2021
Dyed canvas, acrylic, oil, eyelets, rugby jersey logo, digital print on velvet, thread and stretcher bars
60 x 45 x 2 cm





Untitled (Jasmine), 2021
Dyed and painted canvas, calico, rice bag, oil, acrylic, eyelets and stretcher bars
75.5 x 55 x 2.5 cm

Installation View:

Drying Rack 2, 2021

Painted and dyed canvas, textiles, kain pelikat, denim, digital, rice bags, print on canvas, thread, wood and screws

136 x 153 x 35 cm (dimensions vary depending on exhibition sites)





Installation view at Cromwell Place





Windows, 2021
Image transfer, oil and acrylic on canvas board
25 x 35.5 cm



Installation View:
BBs Duet (Flat Lands), 2021
Oil, acrylic, sand, modelling paste, Time Out magazine clippings on board
Two parts, each: 46 x 35 x 0.5 cm





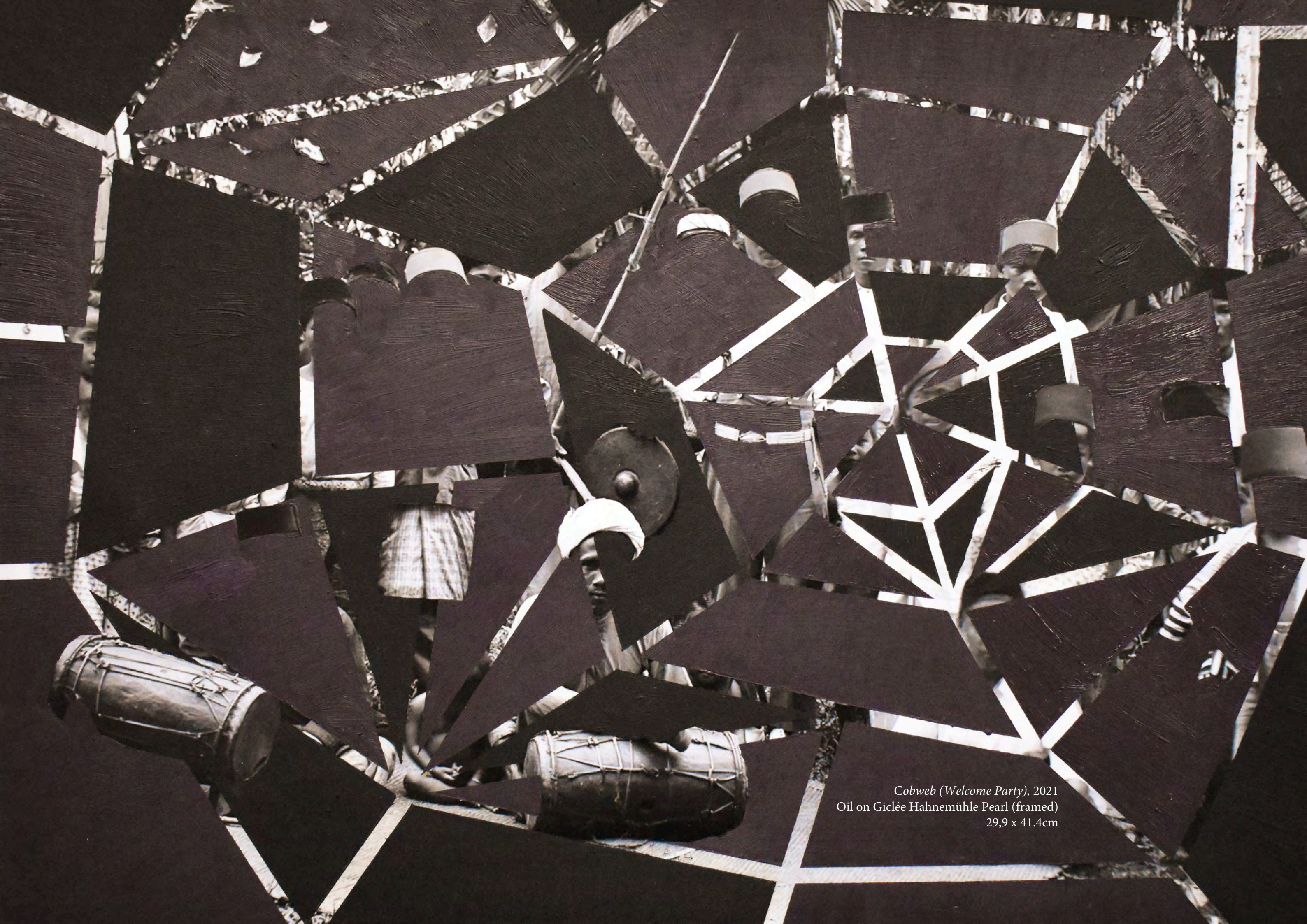
Installation view at Cromwell Place

Cobweb (home), 2021
Oil on Giclée Hahnemühle Pearl (framed)
42 x 29.2 cm





Cobweb (bachelor pad), 2021
Oil on Giclée Hahnemühle Pearl (framed)
40.8 x 30.4 cm



Cobweb (Welcome Party), 2021
Oil on Giclée Hahnemühle Pearl (framed)
29,9 x 41.4cm



Cobweb (kitchen), 2021
Oil on Giclée Hahnemühle Pearl (framed)
29.9 x 42cm

About the artist

Haffendi Anuar is a multidisciplinary artist living and working between Malaysia & UK. Anuar's practice includes sculpture, paintings, installations and drawings. His recent work looks at the construction of identity and postcolonialism through objects, history, iconography and architecture, more specifically centred around memories and histories documenting the garment kain pelikat.

Anuar completed a BFA at Rhode Island School of Design, USA and a BA (Hons) Sculpture at Central Saint Martin's College of Art and Design in London (2013) as well as an MFA at Ruskin school of Art, University of Oxford (2020). He is the joint winner for the first outdoor sculpture commission for the Battersea power station development in partnership with the Cass Sculpture Foundation in 2017. Anuar was the recipient of the Vivien Leigh 2020 award from the Ashmolean Museum. Anuar's work was exhibited in Head Heap Heat at The Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA), Singapore and The Horizon is Just an Illusion: New Thoughts on Landscape, Our ArtProjects, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in 2018. The artist has exhibited internationally. Recent exhibitions include: Condo Shanghai (2018), J:Gallery, Shanghai; The Foot Beneath the Flower (2020), Nanyang Tech University ADM Gallery, Singapore; Midday Stanza (solo) (2019), Richard Koh Fine Art, Singapore; head, heap, heat (2018), Institute of Contemporary Arts, Singapore and Powerhouse Commission (2017), Battersea Power Station and Cass Sculpture Foundation, London.

Anuar attended Kooshk Residency, Tehran (May 2019). In September 2019 Anuar was selected as one of the artists in the publication '100 Sculptures of Tomorrow' by Kurt Beers.

About the curator

Tatjana LeBoff is the Curator of the Pembroke College JCR Art Collection, as well as an independent curator. Having previously worked at the Barbican, London and the National Trust, her interests and work are diverse, from contemporary installations to historic interiors; from Georgian print culture to post-war photography. What interweaves through her curatorial practice is a focus on cultural identity, social history and modes of representation, looking for new ways to create experiential exhibitions. Previous exhibitions include The Women Who Made the Collection (Pembroke Gallery, Oxford, 2020); Donna Mann: Reckless Behaviour (Pembroke Gallery, Oxford, 2019); Theaster Gates (Prada Mode, Art Basel Miami, 2018); Es Devlin: Mask (Photo London, 2018); Trajal Harrell: Hoochie Koochie (Barbican, 2017); Station to Station: A project by Doug Aiken (Barbican, 2015) and Eddie Peake: The Forever Loop (Barbican, 2015).

About the Emery Prize & Pembroke College JCR Art Collection

The Emery Prize is awarded annually to a Ruskin School of Art, University of Oxford, BFA or MFA finalist. Judged by the Pembroke College JCR Art Fund Collection Committee, the prize is a strand of the committee's work which looks to support emerging artists. Pembroke College JCR Art Collection was established in 1947, and today consists of over 350 paintings, drawings, photographs, sculpture and prints. The collection now contains works by some of the most notable post-war British artists, and continues to grow with contemporary acquisitions. With a programme of free exhibitions and events, the gallery space is open to students and the public to enjoy the collection, as well as collaborative projects with local artists, curators and students.

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About A.I.

Based in London, A.I. is a gallery platform for early career artists; it is committed to encouraging dialogue and challenging the notions of the East and West.

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