

# The 2024 Sovereign Asian Art Prize

14 May 2024

*Southeast Asian artists selected by the Sovereign Art Foundation*

**By A&M**

The Sovereign Art Foundation announced 30 artists shortlisted for The 2024 Sovereign Asian Art Prize, which is in its 20th edition. We speak to the Southeast Asian artists among them: Atit Sornsongkram, Demet, Kanchana Gupta, Rocky Cajigan, Sim Chi Yin, Sinta Tantra, Veronica Peralejo and Zelin Seah. We ask them each to tell us more about their artwork, and what it means to have it shortlisted. Here are their works, and their responses.

## **Atit Sornsongkram, nominated by Brian Curtin**



Atit Sornsongkram, 'Waterfall', 140 x 105cm, edition 1 of 5 + 2AP, photography, inkjet-print.  
Image courtesy of the artist and the Sovereign Art Foundation.

This work observes technology through nature. To me, the paradoxical coincidence captured reflects the ways in which images are currently produced and interacted with in our everyday life.

This is a new experience for me. I am excited and feel thankful to be part of it.

**Demet, nominated by Cid Reyes**



Demet, 'PPE, Paint Palette Emulation', oil on canvas, 122 x 150cm. Image courtesy of the artist and the Sovereign Art Foundation.

My subject, the palette, signifies my art process, and it is what I value most. Literal and metaphorical, my piece expresses my feelings, thoughts and observations and it portrays and emulates the contemporary plain we're in... a visually overloaded profound state. The palette represents our human existence, our battles and struggles as well as our celebration of victories through our unparalleled unity.

It is a badge of honor. To be shortlisted provides me a sense of confidence, and gives recognition, exposure and accomplishment that encourages me to continue my artistic journey. It also gives me an opportunity to participate in the foundation's noble cause.

**Kanchana Gupta, nominated by Seet Yun Teng**





Kanchana Gupta, 'Open and Close #03', oil paint skins burnt and stripped of French lace, 143 x 80cm. Image courtesy of the artist and the Sovereign Art Foundation.

'Open and Close #03' is part of my new series of works that aims to explore the intricate relationships between lace and gender identity as well as the gender politics surrounding its materiality, patterns, and its emergence as a fabric that sexualises and eroticises the female form. Created through a labour-intensive process of layering oil paint over lace for many weeks, only to be burnt and torn later, the work creates an evocative and powerful interplay of lace patterns to captivate and confront the audience, evoking both decorative and uncomfortable sensations on a sensual and visceral level.

This is a new series and having an early work included in the shortlist means that people can connect and resonate with the work, its intricate process and the concept at various levels. I am also excited to be able to contribute to a great cause through my art.

### **Rocky Cajigan, nominated by Rica Estrada**

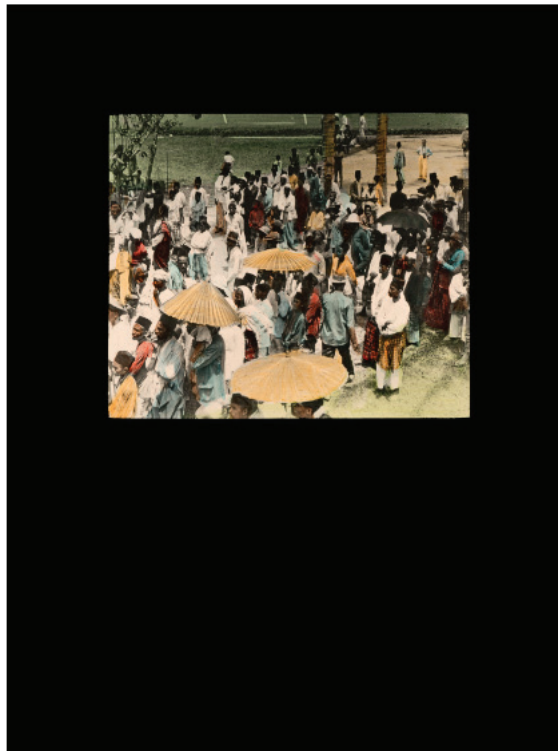


Rocky Cajigan, 'Pendulum Redux', mixed media of butcher hooks, human hair, Guatemalan ikat textile, embroidery, gauze, aluminum cable crimps, 123 x 150cm. Image courtesy of the artist and the Sovereign Art Foundation.

I look at objects as if they were found in a museum. I am fascinated by how museum objects are new objects or have at one point carried that stature and yet, are given that stature based on a weird history of the gentry's cabinets of curiosities. As a response, there becomes this urgency to create new objects to directly identify the failings of institutional definitions against indigenous peoples.

I am honoured to be part of the longstanding history of the prize in acknowledging and affirming different artist voices from all over Asia alongside the goals of the foundation in helping children.

**Sim Chi Yin, nominated by Seet Yun Teng**



Sim Chi Yin, 'The Suitcase Is A Little Bit Rotten, Crowd', 2023, UV print on museum glass, light box, mahogany replica vintage stand, 37 x 29 x 60cm, edition 2 of 5 + 2AP. Image courtesy of the artist and the Sovereign Art Foundation.

The work is from a series 'The Suitcase Is A Little Bit Rotten' in which I reappropriate Magic Lantern slides from the early 1900s and teleport my late socialist grandfather — who was executed for his politics during the Cold War — and my toddler son into an imagined landscape of Southeast Asia. The series contemplates trans-generational inheritance.

It's always nice for work to have a new and different circulation and one never knows when it resonates with a viewer/visitor. That's the magic in art.

**Sinta Tantra, nominated by Sofia Coombe**





Sinta Tantra, 'Bird of Paradise (Night)', tempera and 24ct gold leaf on linen, 120 x 100cm.  
Image courtesy of the artist and the Sovereign Art Foundation.

I wanted to convey the feeling of a tropical night sky with pink and purple filters suggestive of tropical flowers or glowing sunsets. Central to the painting is a white organic form depicting the 'Bird of Paradise', from which the artwork takes its name. Here, the bird is both a creature of majestic beauty and a symbol of the Asian 'other', exploring colonial history and looking at my own identity and place in the world.

Being shortlisted for this prestigious art prize and having the opportunity to exhibit in Hong Kong alongside such talented regional artists is a profound honour. This recognition not only validates my own artistic journey but also serves as a beacon of hope, inspiring others to pursue their creative passions and make a positive impact in their communities.

### **Veronica Peralejo, nominated by Maria Victoria 'Boots' Herrera**

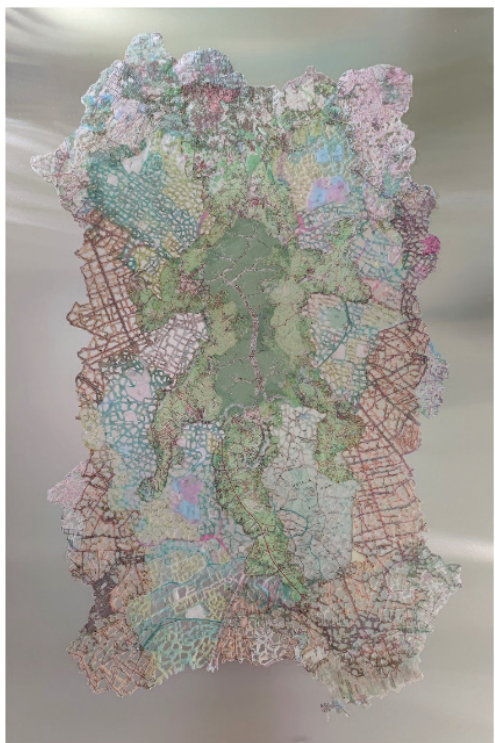


Veronica Peralejo, 'All You Holy Monks and Hermits', concrete pour, sand, incense, 46 x 46 x 13cm.  
Image courtesy of the artist and the Sovereign Art Foundation.

The COVID-19 pandemic led me to explore my own personal faith as coping mechanism. "All You Holy Monks and Hermits" is about creating nonspecific places for meditation and contemplation. The 9-piece sculpture of concrete cubes with various cavities represent the heaviness this experience brought about the world, and with an attempt to visualise the abstract nature of rituals in clearing spaces. I imagine the smoke from the incense gently carving out terrains through time and persistence. The title comes from the Litany of the Dead which my family and I prayed for 9 days (together, online, in different parts of the world) after my Aunt's passing in 2022.

I have been privileged to have an art career in the Philippines, and the recognition given to me by the distinguished judges of the Sovereign Asian Art Prize is a most welcome opportunity for me to possibly expand my artistic dialogue with other cultural practices and artistic pursuits in the region.

**Zelin Seah, nominated by Tanya Michele Amador**



Zelin Seah, 'U\_U\_A\_A', washed, burnt, and waxed topographic maps mounting on aluminium, 97 x 150 x 5cm. Image courtesy of the artist and the Sovereign Art Foundation.

The work stems from my profound emotional bond with neglected wildlife coexisting within human habitats, my questioning of authorities regarding land use, and reflects my personal journey of navigating between worlds while growing up in a developing city and witnessing the changing landscapes and lifestyles.

Receiving a nomination followed by being shortlisted is a significant acknowledgment. Here, I find resonance in bringing attention to species that, while not rare, are in difficult circumstances.

*These artworks can be seen at an exhibition at 9/F, H Queen's, 80 Queen's Road Central, Central, Hong Kong from 8 to 16 May, and the public can cast their votes in person and online for their favourite work. The most popular one will win the Public Vote Prize.*

*Two other prizes, the Grand Prize, worth USD30,000 and the Vogue Hong Kong Women's Art Prize, worth USD5,000, will be decided by a judging panel. They are David Elliott, writer, curator, and museum director, acting as Chair Judge; Billy Tang, Executive Director and Curator at Para Site in Hong Kong; Debbie Han, artist and former Prize recipient; Marion Pastor Roces, independent curator, critic, and policy analyst; and Parul Gupta, artist and winner of The 2023 Prize.*

*The shortlisted artworks, aside from the one that wins the Grand Prize, will be auctioned off, and the proceeds will be shared equally between the artists and the Sovereign Art Foundation's expressive arts programmes.*

*[Click here](#) for more information.*