

NEWSLETTER SIGNUP

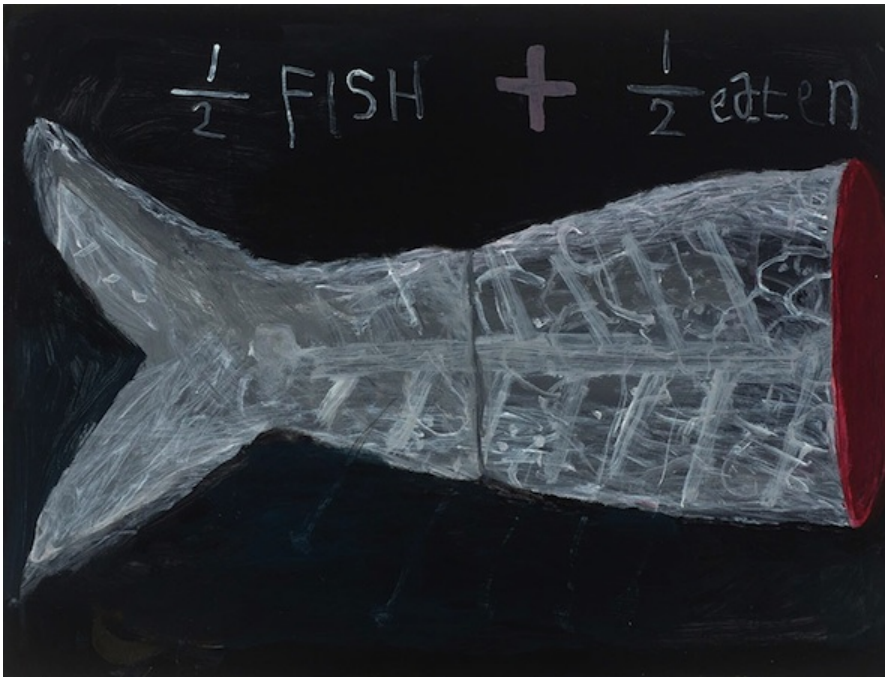
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Jumaadi: 1/2 fish 1/2 eaten

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11 April 2017 | Anna Madeleine

“This exhibition invites the audience to intimately share my attempt to paint and draw the complex nature of survival, questioning the current and ongoing displacement of people and things from where they should be, and to display the tender and yet powerful presence of love in the world”, Sydney-based Indonesian artist Jumaadi says of his upcoming show at Watters Gallery.



Jumaadi, Half Fish and Half Eaten, 2016, acrylic on board 60 x 79.5cm. Courtesy the artist and Watters Gallery, Sydney

Its title, ‘1/2 fish 1/2 eaten’, is a perfect example of Jumaadi’s skill in conveying mystery, love, loss, and the familiarity of everyday activities in a single sentence or artwork. In this case, we will see 25 paintings, three large drawings, and a painted bed, all new work from 2016 and 2017 in which Jumaadi continues his exploration of human experience and emotion through interpretations of the natural landscape. Rain, mountains, clouds, rivers, trees, horizons, and the cosmos are recurring motifs in the artist’s work, along with creatures such as snakes, fish and buffalo, and men and women.



Jumaadi, Field Trip, 2016, acrylic on board 60 x 45.5cm. Courtesy the artist and Watters Gallery, Sydney

Explaining his attraction to elements of nature, Jumaadi says, “they never fail to offer their body to use as a metaphor for things beyond or beneath them. They are basic materials to narrate moments and tragedy in life, whether love is absent or present.”

Juxtaposing these symbols in ways that alter their ‘normal qualities’ of gravity and scale, he forms relationships that are metaphorical and ignite curiosity. His distinctive style of line work and mark making shows these emblems to be fundamental yet mysterious, simple though complex and common while utterly majestic.

We see this in his portrayal of raindrops. “I paint rain and drizzle in the open or from the window to depict its drops to a singular shape – forming as tears, or rice-grain like, suggesting the similarity of nature to human emotions, or even to culture”, he says.

Jumaadi’s works often refer to personal memories and stories, as well as traditional folklore from the villages he grew up in and still frequently visits in Indonesia. While more overtly seen in his shadow puppetry performances, subtle yet affecting glimpses of narrative are conveyed in his paintings and drawings, where passages of text are often incorporated into the work.

The surfaces that Jumaadi uses also inform the understated sensibility of his work. In ‘1/2 fish 1/2 eaten’, many of the works are made on recycled and found boards and paper. Collecting these materials is an important part of the artistic process.

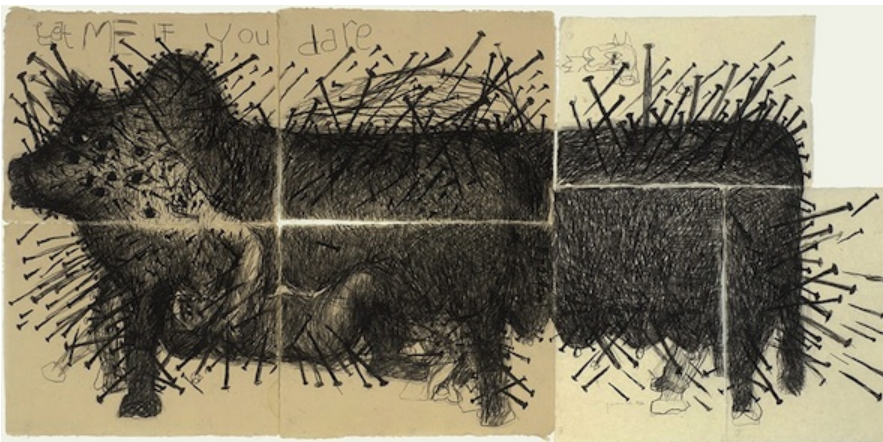


*Jumaadi, Some kind of record, 2016, acrylic on 24 index card dividers 119 x 99cm.
Courtesy the artist and Watters Gallery, Sydney*

“Some of the boards are given to me by friends and some are found or bought at second hand shops or garage sales. I am attracted by the surface, shape, colour which has a unique quality that resonates with me”, Jumaadi says.

This ground provides a dynamic space in which the artwork unfolds. “I guess these boards offer me their life, memory, and the potential to make additions to it. The boards are the field for us (the paintings and I) to start a play which sometimes takes a long period of time, or can be straight forward.”

Jumaadi describes his process as an ongoing dialogue between artist and materials in search for a potential poetic nuance, where “marks, dots and lines fill their way into the boards. Images appear, disappear, and are replaced and shifted and so on until work by work, they are finalised.”



Jumaadi, Pain Killers, 2016, Chinagraph on paper. Courtesy the artist and Watters Gallery, Sydney

Accompanying the paintings and drawings in this exhibition is *Stage of Love* (2016), a hand-painted bridal bed originally commissioned for a project by Blacktown Arts Centre. The bed is spectacularly eye-catching because of its brightly coloured panels adorned with paintings of characters, creatures, trees and landscapes, yet it has much darker political undertones.

Originally from a village on the island of Madura, north of Java, it is similar to traditional bridal beds which – coming from a Muslim community – would have been used in arranged marriages. Traditionally, newlyweds sleep in the bed while family members sleep on the floor nearby, hence naming it a stage for love.



Jumaadi, Stage of Love, 2015, acrylic on wood 183 x 203 x 200cm. Courtesy the artist and Watters Gallery, Sydney

Through the cultural history of the bed, the work explores the expectations of arranged marriage, the union as a motive for migration, and how these potentially harmful aspects of relationships are played out through this symbolic object. It becomes apparent after learning of narratives like these that Jumaadi's work engages with much deeper, fundamental issues of human nature than what might first meet the eye.

Many of Jumaadi's paintings conjure poignant moments of finding love, express the ebb and flow of life partnerships, or play out moments of happiness and tragedy. Combining these ideas with imagery that evokes the awe-inspiring essence of the natural landscape, his work skillfully considers inter-personal relationships and our connection to the cycles of nature.

Anna Madeleine is an artist and writer based in Canberra.

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