



HARIDAS
CONTEMPORARY

MELISSA TAN

**PARTS,
SHARED
&
ALLOTTED
PORTIONS**

02 NOV - 08 DEC 2024

Haridas Contemporary is a gallery founded by Christiaan Haridas that aims to support and grow alongside Singapore's burgeoning contemporary art scene. The gallery endeavors to create a home for emerging and mid-career Singapore and Singapore-based artists, while maintaining a satellite program with regional artists.

With 15 years of experience in the Southeast Asian art market, Christiaan hopes to advocate for promising art practices that are sensitively crafted and offer interesting entry-points into the stories and concerns of contemporary life.

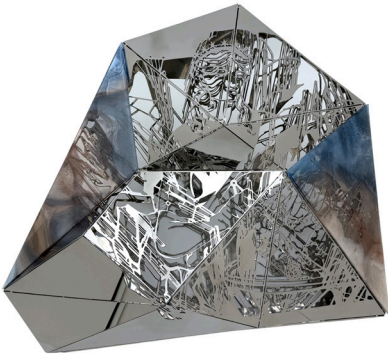
The gallery is committed to supporting artists throughout their artistic careers by seeding opportunities for exhibition, dialogue, and professional counsel. Haridas Contemporary will rally for exciting local practices to be recognised across regional and international platforms.

Artist Statement

My current body of work explores the notion of womanhood through the lens of mythology. It considers two main aspects of the series as both concept (story) and form (data), and at its intersection, resides its endeavour as a melancholy object of art and resistance.

Camouflaged within the laser-cut patterns, are images that I referenced from paintings, sculptures and antiquities that interrelate with the characters from my research. In tandem, I source for asteroids named after these characters, and are currently orbiting our solar system. The shape and folds in the metal are not, by any means, random. In fact, they correspond to data points on an astrological chart that tracks its trajectory.

These asteroids traverse vast distances away from earth, but always return via an elliptical orbit. Time-honored myths, likewise, bear new insights when critically re-examined, and eventually circles back to social consciousness.



- Melissa Tan

Exhibition Essay

by Tan Siuli

Parts, Shared and Allotted Portions is a culmination of themes and mediums explored in Melissa Tan's earlier bodies of work, centering on celestial mapping, female mythological figures and representations of their narratives and attributes. The exhibition is named for the Fates of Greek mythology who control the destiny of every individual. Their Greek name *οἴρα* (moira), means 'fate' or 'allotment', and they are represented as a triad of women from different stages of life: maiden, mother and crone. The youngest, Klotho, spins out the thread of life and destiny, Lakhesis measures it out, apportioning the lot of each man or woman, and Atropos cuts the thread. In Tan's constellation of mythologies, they are joined by the Muses of the arts and the Charities (Joy, Hope and Beauty) — collectively, a deeply personal and meaningful assembly for an artist to invoke.

These goddesses and their stories take form as scintillant metal sculptures that reference both art history as well as astronomy. Stemming from a fascination with the fact that objects in space have been named after mythological figures, Tan tracks the position of asteroids named for each goddess at a particular time, date and location, and uses the surrounding constellations as coordinates to 'map' the asteroid and create a shape around it to encase it. In this way, each sculpture she creates can be understood as the cosmic 'house' for each goddess, as well as a portal in space-time through which we may glimpse a figure, and her story. Arranged around the exhibition space, this silvery constellation references the fragments of rock orbiting our skies.

Tan's longstanding interest in mapping can be traced back to her earlier works with its meticulous tracing of terrain — its cracks and fissures — to reveal disjunctions between past and present, and layers of history and movement. The skies offered her new ground to bring together her interests in maps and storytelling, and these coalesced in the body of work she is so well known for today:

metal sculptures with gleaming, faceted surfaces incised with mythological figures, encasing a jewel-like resin heart.

Tan's figures are always women, drawn from myths around the world but predominantly from Greek mythology. Fascinated by how women have been represented, and how these tales can be re-told for our times, Tan selects her characters by delving into their stories and their iterations throughout the years. Like many tales that are handed down over time, these myths have been reshaped by their storytellers for their own ends: classicist and writer Natalie Haynes's book *Pandora's Jar* (2020) for instance, explores how women in Greek myths were, in antiquity, accorded more agency and multi-faceted roles, but more recent accounts paint the female characters in a less flattering light, and as pale versions of their former selves. In her works, Tan reclaims the female protagonist's power, adapting her classical sources to return to these women their agency and complexity, and drawing on these stories of old as parables for contemporary life.

In her 2019 presentation *Under The Arched Sky* for instance, Tan explored the stories of liminal goddesses, who could cross thresholds and bridge worlds. The artist saw parallels between their roles and that of women today, who need to inhabit multiple spheres and chart their own trajectories. *False Doors, Glass Skies* (2021) turned on ideas of protection and agency, with Tan casting her eye on what writer Samantha Yap described as "the repertoire of diversions, actions and rituals performed by different female characters in their varied attempts to assert and reclaim themselves from people and circumstances who refuse them that right"¹. The sculptures of Cardea and Daphne, for instance, re-tell in steel and stone the strategies taken by each woman to resist the amorous advances of their suitors. Their victories are ultimately compromises, and neither goddess nor nymph attain the complete freedom they yearn for, pointing to how independence is something hard-won, and women were (and are still) necessarily circumscribed. Medusa also finds a place in this firmament, her monstrous beauty invoked as an apotropaic shield to protect

¹ Samantha Yap, "How To Be Both" in Melissa Tan: *False Doors, Glass Skies*. Digital catalogue published in conjunction with the exhibition at Richard Koh Fine Art: Singapore, 5 – 27 November 2021, pg. 4.

another female figure — the goddess Athena. Here, Tan returns Medusa to the origins suggested by her name, which in Greek translates to ‘to guard’ or ‘to protect’, hence walking in the footsteps of others such as Hélène Cixous and Barbara Creed who have reclaimed the ‘monstrous feminine’ from patriarchal readings, paving the way for a more multi-faceted reading of womanhood.

What then, does the pantheon of Fates, Muses and Charities portend? The Fates have been represented and invoked countless times throughout the ages, in art, poetry, music and theatre. To conjure them is to express the idea of human will and agency pitted against the inexorable march of a pre-ordained destiny, spun out in the hands of these three goddesses:

*Our wills and fates do so contrary run
That our devices still are overthrown;
Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our own.
(Shakespeare, Hamlet, 3.2.208)*

The Fates are often invoked in moments of exasperation, resignation, or despair. As such, they are often represented as capricious forces, and at other times, as malevolent soothsayers. In Shakespeare’s dark tragedy *Macbeth* for example, they appear as the three witches or “the weird sisters” (with ‘weird’ deriving from the Old English *wyrd*, meaning ‘fate’), whose prophecies lead Macbeth to ruin.

However, Tan casts a far more sympathetic eye on her titular triad, presenting them as impassive weavers sheltering under the same tree that joins all of them in a triptych, like the thread that passes through each woman’s hands. There is a certain serenity to her Fates, who are accompanied by two dusky turtle-doves — their companion animals — just as there is a sense of purpose and certainty in each of their tasks: it is simply, a duty they steadfastly undertake. Read this way, one may see Fate as something that is part and parcel of the order of all things, and therefore learns to accept it.

Joining the Fates are the Muses, the patron goddesses of the arts. For many artists, they presented a perfect opportunity to paint comely women in beautiful robes, gazing dreamily up at the skies or coquettishly askance at the viewer. While the Muses are often depicted with the attributes or objects that symbolise their powers (a crown of stars, a globe, or a lyre), these almost always appear more as accessories to their beauty.

Tan's rendition of the Muses is far more fully-fleshed out. In her rendition of Calliope, the patron goddess of epic poetry, she reminds us that the eldest of the Muses was also a mother – to Orpheus, the legendary poet and musician who was violently dismembered by Dionysus's frenzied followers. Tan's Calliope is depicted not as a goddess with her beauty frozen for time immemorial, but as a grieving mother, holding her son's head in her hands, lyre set aside, in an image that recalls the Pietà. Tan also returns to Urania, the Muse of astronomy, a sense of purpose and power by depicting her with a forthright gaze, the strong diagonals of the background calling attention to her crown of stars and the globe in her hands. Tan's goddesses are always represented as active agents, captured mid-flight or in a dance, and often from multiple perspectives, as in the case of the Charities, thus investing each with individual agency rather than sublimating them into a group.

In this way, these distant goddesses become more human, as Tan reminds us of their agency, as well as their trials and foibles. They share and partake of our mirth as well as our laments, manifesting in their forms the breadth of human experience and aspiration. Mapped onto the stars, these myths and their eternal orbit circle, and continue to inspire, many lifetimes over.

Renowned writer and mythologist Joseph Campbell spoke of 'masks of eternity' – mythic archetypes common across cultures that function as "metaphors for the impulses that move and guide [us]"², allowing us to understand our place in the world, and how we journey through it. *Parts, Shared and Allotted Portions* reminds us that as much as our paths are our own to walk, we also share many parts with others, in joy and in sorrow. And while the Fates may sometimes twist the

2 Joseph Campbell with Bill Moyers, *The Power of Myth*, 1988. Pg. 491.

thread, the Muses and Charities are always near, their gentle wellspring of hope, beauty, joy, and art offering us the solace that makes our shared and allotted time on earth something worth living for.

About the Writer



Tan Siuli is an independent curator with over a decade of experience encompassing the research, presentation and commissioning of contemporary art from Southeast Asia. Formerly Senior Curator and Head of Collections at the Singapore Art Museum, her major exhibition projects include two editions of the Singapore Biennale (2013 and 2016), inter-institutional traveling exhibitions, as well as mentoring and commissioning platforms such as the President's Young Talents exhibition series. She has also lectured on Museum-based learning and Southeast Asian art history at institutes of higher learning in Singapore. Her speaking engagements include presentations on Southeast Asian contemporary art at Frieze Academy London and Bloomberg's Brilliant Ideas series. Siuli is currently an independent curator and Art Lead at multi-disciplinary space Appetite, as well as Contributing Editor for ART SG.

MELISSA TAN

The Fates - Klotho, Lachesis & Atropos, 2024, Stainless Steel, Epoxy Resin & Pigment, H 190 x L 285 x D 15 cm



MELISSA TAN

Kalliope, 2024, Stainless Steel, Epoxy Resin & Pigment, L 99 x B 41 x H 34 cm



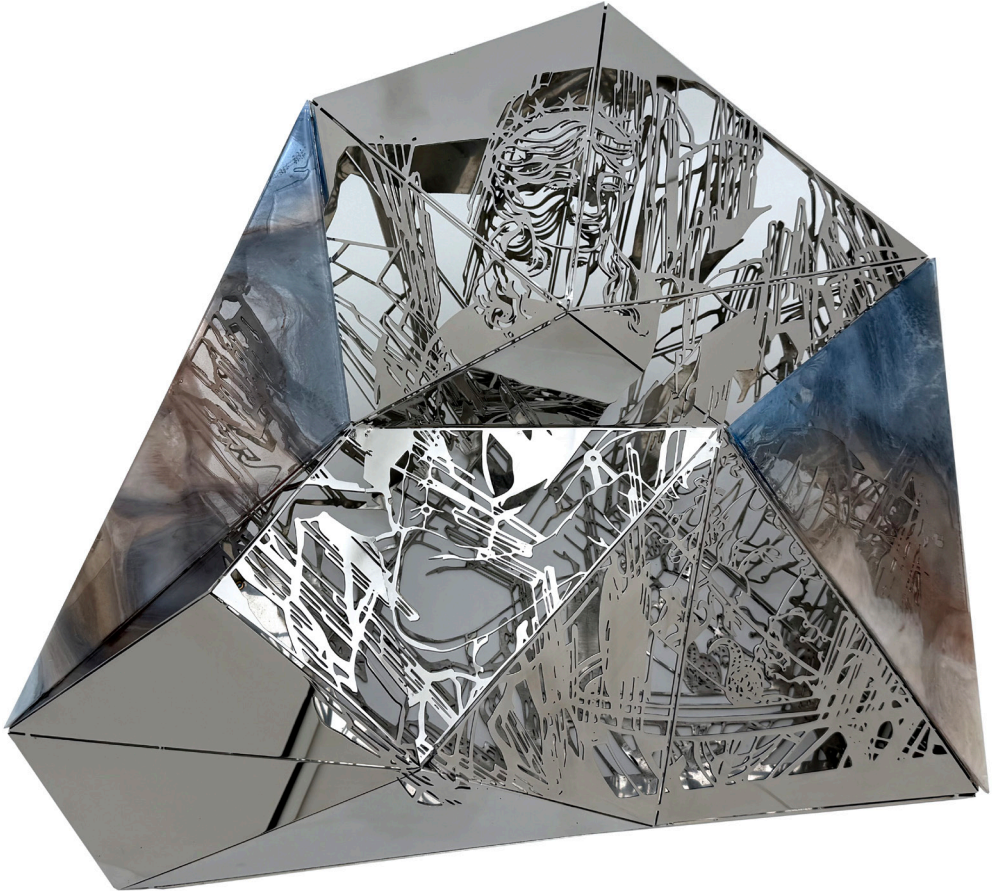
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Melpomene, 2024, Stainless Steel, Epoxy Resin & Pigment, L 64.5 x B 46 x H 36 cm



MELISSA TAN

Urania, 2024, Stainless Steel, Epoxy Resin & Pigment, L 50 x B 43 x H 20.5 cm



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Erato, 2024, Stainless Steel, Epoxy Resin & Pigment, L 67.5 x B 36.5 x H 17 cm



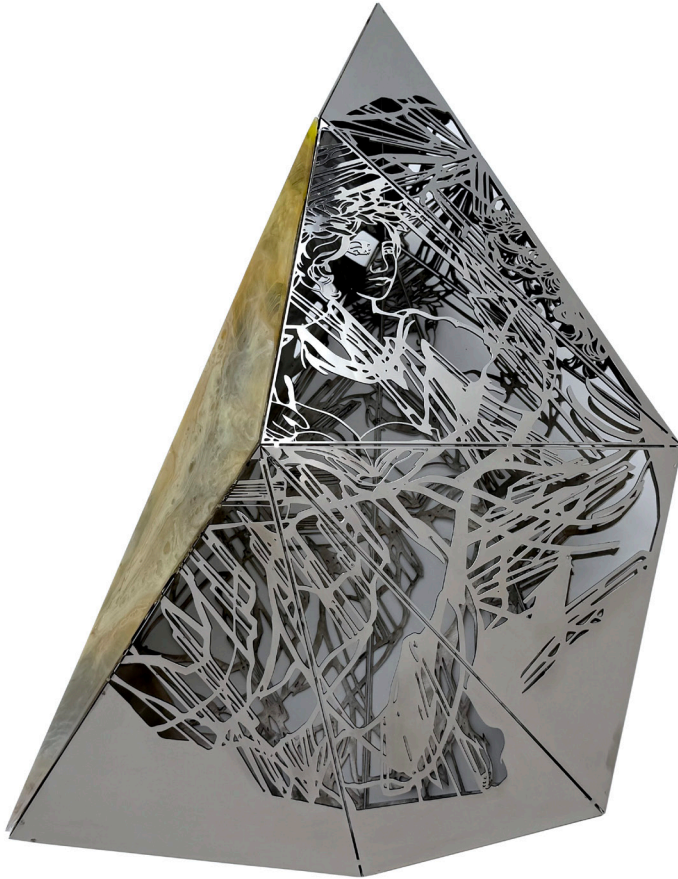
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Terpsichore, 2024, Stainless Steel, Epoxy Resin & Pigment, L 57 x B 29.5 x H 25 cm



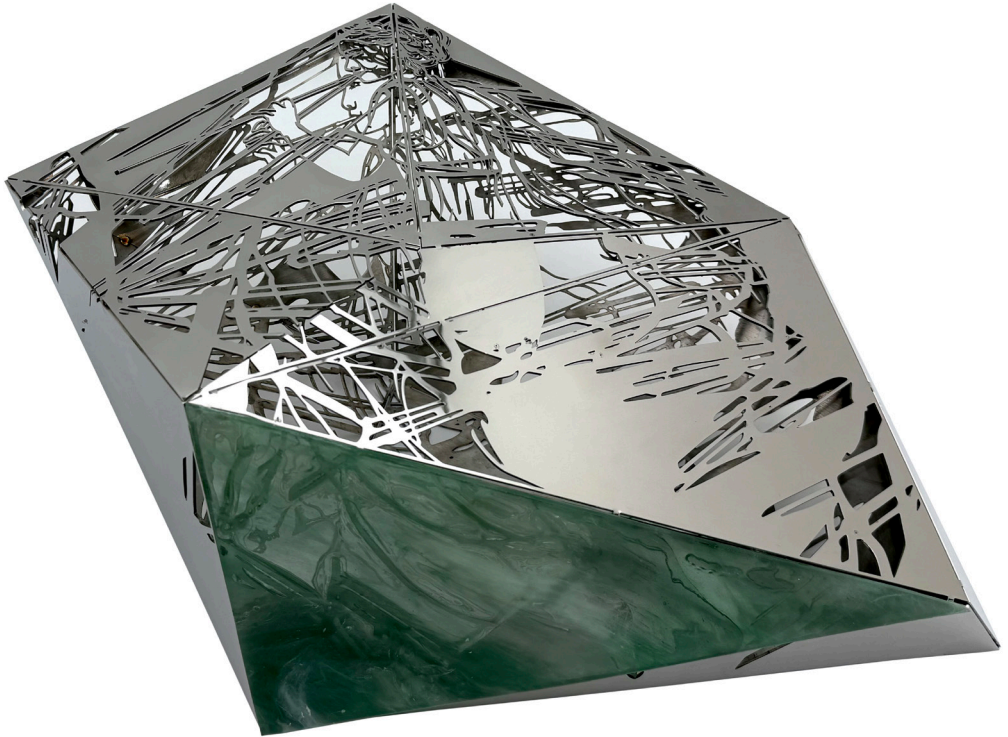
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Klio, 2024, Stainless Steel, Epoxy Resin & Pigment, L 35 x B 49 x H 18 cm



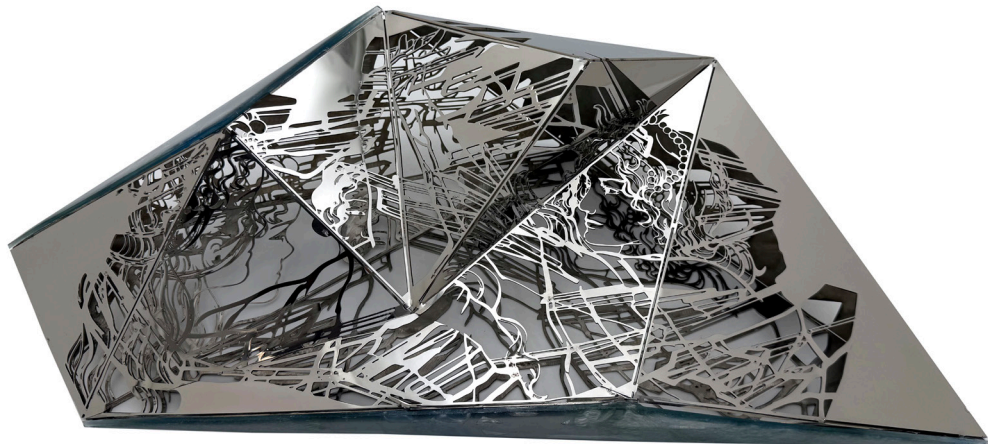
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Euterpe, 2024, Stainless Steel, Epoxy Resin & Pigment, L 48 x B 34.5 x H 15 cm



MELISSA TAN

Thalia, 2024, Stainless Steel, Epoxy Resin & Pigment, L 57 x B 25 x H 16 cm



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Euphrosyne, 2024, Stainless Steel, Epoxy Resin & Pigment, L 42.5 x B 26 x H 14 cm



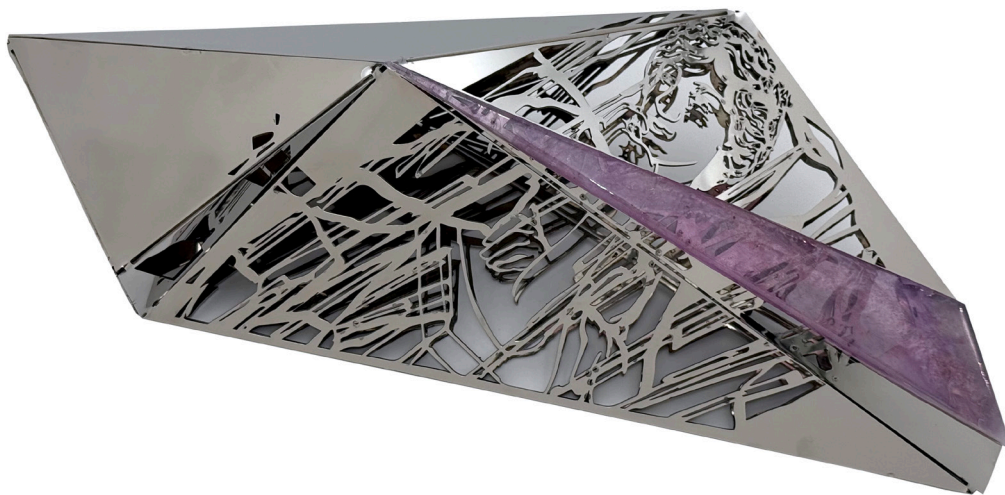
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Aglaja, 2024, Stainless Steel, Epoxy Resin & Pigment, L 42 x B 21 x H 13.5 cm



MELISSA TAN

Polyhymnia, 2024, Stainless Steel, Epoxy Resin & Pigment, L 41 x B 17 x H 10 cm



ARTIST BIOGRAPHY & CV



Melissa Tan (b. 1989, Singapore) is a visual artist based in Singapore. Her interest lies in a fascination with nature and composing different methods of mapping it. Her recent projects explore the poetics of moving space objects and rethinking of myths that are intertwined. By employing a combination of drawing, digital rendering, and laser-cut methods, she explores her concepts through the visual language of different mediums.

Since receiving her BA (Fine Arts) from LASALLE College of The Arts, Melissa has participated in seven solo shows and numerous group exhibitions. She was the youngest artist in the 2016 edition of the Singapore Biennale: An Atlas of Mirrors. She participated in several overseas exhibitions and residencies, including the Chatou, Île des Impressionnistes in France; Strarta Art Fair at the Saatchi Gallery in London; and the Dena Foundation Artist Residency Programme in France, which was supported by the National Arts Council. Her works are included in the public collections of Singapore Art Museum (SAM), Marina Bay Sands (Singapore), Government of Singapore Investment Corporation (GIC) (New York), Meta (Singapore), and CapitaLand (Singapore).

Most recently, Melissa was the recipient of the prestigious 2023 Young Artist Award bestowed by the Ministry of the Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY).

EDUCATION

2011 BA Degree with Second Class Honours (1st Division) Fine Arts , LASALLE College of the Arts

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2024 Parts, Shared & Allotted Portions, Haridas Contemporary, Singapore

2023 Of Labyrinths & Shields, Haridas Contemporary, Singapore

2021 False Doors, Glass Skies, Richard Koh Fine Art, Singapore

2021 The Dream from the Other Side, Singapore Art Museum x National Library Board, Singapore

2019 Under the Arched Sky, Richard Koh Fine Art, Singapore

2018 Back to where we've never been, Richard Koh Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur

2016 Arc of Uncertainties, Richard Koh Fine Art, Singapore

2014 And the darkest hour is just before dawn, Richard Koh Fine Art, Singapore

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2024 LASALLE 40th Anniversary Alumni Exhibition, Lasalle College of the Arts, Singapore

2024 Artistic Splendours: Thirty Years of Contemporary Art from China and Singapore, Suzhou Museum of Contemporary Art, China

2024 Fates And Furies, Curated by Tan Siuli, Appetite, Singapore

2024 Chronic Compulsions, The Private Museum, Singapore

2023 Which is Which? Curated by John Tung, Gajah Gallery, Singapore

2023 OH! Open House Fundraising Gala, OH! Open House Limited, Singapore

2023 Haridas Contemporary Inaugural Exhibition, Haridas Contemporary, Singapore

2023 SG Contemporary, Gajah Gallery Jakarta, Indonesia

2023 ART SG, Richard Koh Fine Art, Marina Bay Sands, Singapore

2022 State of Play, Richard Koh Fine Art, Singapore

- 2022 Titicara: Selected Women Artist by Syagini Ratna Wulan, ISA Art and Design Jakarta x Selasar Sunaryo Art Space, Bandung, Indonesia
- 2022 Gestures of Landscape, Richard Koh Fine Art, Singapore
- 2022 SEA Focus 2022, Singapore
- 2020 In Our Own Frame: 10th Year Anniversary, Richard Koh Fine Art, Singapore
- 2020 A Decade Apart/ Together, Richard Koh Fine Art, Singapore
- 2020 Emerging: Collecting Singapore Contemporary - Selections from the DUO Collection, The Private Museum, Singapore
- 2019 H.E.R, Presentation by ISA Art Advisory, Art Jakarta (Booth C7), Jakarta Convention Centre, Jakarta, Indonesia
- 2019 Reinventing Eve, 1Park Avenue, Jakarta, Indonesia
- 2019 Adaptations, Supernormal, Singapore
- 2017 SUPER/ NATURAL, Gajah Gallery Yogyakarta, Indonesia
- 2017 Art Stage Richard Koh Fine Art, Singapore
- 2016 Singapore Biennale 2016, An Atlas of Mirrors, Singapore Art Museum at 8Q, Singapore
- 2016 Petrichor, Chan Hampe Galleries, SHOPHOUSE 5, Singapore
- 2015 Synthesis The Art Center 7th Floor, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok
- 2015 Night of Desirable Objects Grey Projects, Singapore
- 2015 Art Stage Richard Koh Fine Art, Singapore
- 2014 Modern Love: LASALLE thirtieth anniversary exhibition, Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore
- 2014 The Machine Contemplating the Body, The SGH Museum, Singapore
- 2013 Primavera 2, CNEAI, Chatou, Ile des impressionnistes, Paris
- 2013 Strarta Art Fair, Saatchi Gallery, London
- 2013 Looking for Time, The Private Museum, Singapore
- 2013 Discovering New Endeavours, Richard Koh Fine Art, Singapore
- 2012 Looking for space, 71 Sultan Gate, Singapore
- 2012 The Singapore Show: Future Proof, Singapore Art Museum at 8Q, Singapore

MAJOR AWARDS

2023 Young Artist Award/ Cultural Medallion Recipient in the Visual Arts Category

PUBLIC & CORPORATE COLLECTIONS

CapitaLand, Singapore

Meta (Facebook) Office, Singapore

Government of Singapore Investment Corporation (GIC), New York, United States

Marina Bay Sands, Singapore

Singapore Art Museum, Singapore

Land Transport Authority, Siglap MRT Station, Singapore

HARIDAS
CONTEMPORARY

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Opening Hours

Thursday to Saturday: 12 noon – 7 pm

Sunday: 12 noon – 5 pm

Wednesday by appointment only

Monday, Tuesdays & Public Holidays: Closed

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