



ATTENTION ART EDITORS!

10 CHANCERY LANE GALLERY PRESENTS
BEAUTY WILL SAVE THE WORLD: EIGHT ARTISTS FROM SOUTHEAST ASIA
Exhibition Period: March 24-May 16, 2025



FX Harsono, *The Light of Spirit*, Plastic electric candles, LED bulbs, cast cement, wood, 2025, 200 X 174 X 200 cm.

Curated by **Iola Lenzi**, including:

Bùi Công Khánh, Chan Dany, Dinh Q. Lê, FX Harsono,
Htein Lin, Josephine Turalba, Moe Satt, and Vũ Dân Tân

Beauty Will Save the World proclaimed Prince Myshkin, the central protagonist of Dostoyevsky's 1869 literary masterpiece *The Idiot*. Set in 19th century Czarist Russia against a backdrop of social, political, and religious turmoil, the novel explores beauty as a bulwark against darkness and corruption in the world. What role can beauty play in uncertain times? What kind of beauty, formal or philosophical, does art marshal to speak back to harsh realities, and how do these qualities co-opt audiences?

This March, 10 Chancery Lane Gallery is proud to present exhibition ***Beauty Will Save the World: eight artists from Southeast Asia***, practitioners from Indonesia, Vietnam, Myanmar, Philippines, and Cambodia deploy various media, materials, and conceptual strategies to create pieces that through their uplift transcend bleakness of all kinds, including social tensions at home and beyond. Their works, some grappling critically with dire conditions such as incarceration, war, abuses of power, displacement, and environmental degradation, sparkle with humour and spirit as they mobilise viewers. Others radiate poetic light in more intimate ways, recalling humanity and the natural world. Curated by Southeast Asian art specialist Iola Lenzi, *Beauty Will Save the World: eight artists from Southeast Asia* assembles iconic artworks by Southeast Asian contemporary masters, as well as newly commissioned pieces impactful for their visual and sensorial seduction operating in tandem with their semantic play.

After a transformative stay in Hong Kong, Vietnamese contemporary art pioneer Vũ Dân Tân (1946-2009) produced his 1997 *Money (Hong Kong dollars)*. Combining references to film legend Charlie Chaplin and paper money facsimiles, the irreverent and visually irresistible jewel-coloured series wittily interrogates consumer culture, globalisation, and nationalism, topics as pressing today as three decades ago. A second Vũ Dân Tân series, the sculptural turn-of-the-millennium series *Fashion*, captures the edgy promise and risk of our contemporary condition with tactile handmade aesthetics. Burmese artist Htein Lin (b.1966) presents his poignant video and participative durational installation *A Show of Hands*, ongoing since 2013, that through the physical and metaphysical beauty of the outstretched human hand, embodies redemption, grace, and dignified resilience. Indonesian FX Harsono (b.1949), a leading figure of Indonesian and Southeast Asian contemporary art, for this exhibition presents his lyrical light installation *The Light of Spirit* that shimmering and lively, evokes the timeless transcendence of the human spirit. Moe Satt (b.1983), Htein Lin's Myanmar compatriot, given asylum by the Netherlands in 2021, addresses migration

and the quest for selfhood in faraway lands in his soulful 2025 performative photographic series *Masks and Marbles*. Manila performance and multimedia artist Josephine Turalba (b.1965) combines leather and spent bullet cartridges in striking 2025 wall tapestries that confront marine ecologies and geopolitics. Turalba's tableaux, mixing violence construed by bullet cartridges, and visual splendor evoking marine life, create conversations around ecological erosion in the Philippines and beyond. Similarly tapping unusual materials, Chan Dany (b.1984) relies on pencil shavings to compose images of the lush flora of his native Cambodia. Chan's pictures intrigue as their sumptuousness conceals their painstaking, meditatively laborious method of production over weeks as tiny pencil shavings are intricately shaped into petals, pistils, stamens, and leaves. The Khmer Kbach patterns are not just decorative elements; they carry deep spiritual meanings that connect the physical, natural, and divine worlds. They serve as a testament to the rich spiritual and cultural tapestry of Cambodia, showcasing the importance of art in expressing and preserving spiritual beliefs.

Two more Vietnamese artists also join *Beauty Will Save the World*. Bùi Công Khánh (b.1972) presents paintings, ceramics, and carved wood installations that meld the sensuality of the handmade and vernacular materials with pictorial allusions to freedom, agency, and community solidarity. Finally, the legacy of Vietnamese/American multimedia artist Dinh Q. Lê (1968-2024) is represented by his innovating photo-weaving technique that applies Southeast Asian vernacular grass-weaving methods to photography by materially weaving together documentary photographs recording conflict-era Vietnam, and photographic stills from American-made fictionalised movie accounts of the Vietnam War (known by Vietnamese as the American War). Dinh Q. Lê's oeuvre is informed by the artist's transcontinental migratory story and intercultural 'in-between' perspective. Thus, via their technique and sensitive iconographic play, his works convey the nuances of Vietnamese and American conjoined histories, opposing sides literally and philosophically woven together to produce images with an unflinching yet tenderly empathetic gaze on a shared humanity, irrepressible despite war and dislocation—in Dinh Q. Lê's art, beauty can save the world.

ABOUT THE CURATOR

Iola Lenzi, PhD, is a Singapore curator and historian of Southeast Asian contemporary art. She is a specialist of Vu Dan Tan, has published extensively on early contemporary art in 1990s Hanoi, and researches connections between Southeast Asian contemporary art and regional social-political evolutions. She teaches Southeast Asian modern and contemporary art history, as well as curatorial methods in the School of Humanities, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. Her most recent book is *Power, Politics and the Street: Contemporary Art in Southeast Asia after 1970* (Lund Humphries UK, 2024).

ABOUT 10 CHANCERY LANE GALLERY

Established in 2001, when Hong Kong's art scene was burgeoning, Katie de Tilly started 10 Chancery Lane Gallery. Along the back wall of the, then running, Victoria Prison, now the buzzing Tai Kwun Heritage and Cultural site, the little walking lane opened into a gallery specializing in contemporary art from the Asia-Pacific. Over the past 23 years, 10 Chancery Lane has worked with some of the region's great artists, curators, and museums. The gallery's motto still stands: *"We are committed to giving a breath of fresh air to the Hong Kong art scene by bringing works that can expand horizons, open minds, and view the world, and life in general, through varying eyes, ideas, and souls. Art is not just decoration for our walls but a connection with our deep inner selves and the world around us."*

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