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GAJAH GALLERY SINGAPORE PRESENTS

SEMSAR SIAHAAN: ART, LIBERATION

An Exhibition of 28 works from 1984-2004

VIP Opening: 1 November 2017, 6.30pm

Open to Public: 2 – 29 November 2017

Tanjong Pagar Distripark, Singapore – Gajah Gallery proudly presents a solo exhibition of the late Indonesian artist, Semsar Siahaan. An important figure in Indonesian art, he stood out for his strength and resilience in shedding light on critical sociopolitical themes – not only through his career as an artist but also as a social activist. Entitled ***Semsar Siahaan: Art, Liberation***, the exhibition will be held at Gajah Gallery Singapore from 2 to 29 November 2017.

Prominently featured in the development of Indonesian contemporary art and its fight against the despotism of the New Order regime, Siahaan envisaged art as signifying humanity's liberation and in this vein as touching all humankind. As he continued to utilize his art as a tool to protest the state of social injustice, he was infamous in representing the rebellious student art movement of the 1980s, as well as the various labor rights activism in the following decade.

He departed from Indonesia (1998), fearing for his life, and he returned (2004). He traveled in Indonesia and Australia along with exhibitions of his art; he resided in Canada, creating and showing his art in Victoria. His paintings have been displayed in museums in Japan and Singapore; his art is modestly acquired and collected, privately and by public institutions.

Semsar's art is always intended to immortalize humanism and it always exudes a sense of realism. *Semsar Siahaan: Art, Liberation* displays a range of works spanning the 1980s to about 2004, including the frequently mentioned but rarely exhibited 'Olympia: Identity with Mother and Child' and the magnificent 'G-8 Pizza' – the last monumental work created towards the end of his oeuvre.

The particularity of his art's content is one which appeals to a kind of transcendent or universal humanism. Like the courageous activist fighter that he is, his works are bold and they never tire from expressing critiques towards injustice.

Exhibition Schedule

1 November, 6.30 pm: VIP opening
13 November, 5 pm: **Publication Launch**, followed by **Exhibition Discussion** with TK Sabapathy

ARTIST PROFILE

Semsar Siahaan (1952-2005) was a seminal artist of the progressive movement in Indonesia. A fervent humanitarian activist, Siahaan fought courageously during a time of vast changes to Indonesia's political landscape, which reflects in his body of work. He was enrolled in the Sculpture Department at Institut Teknologi Bandung – though he was expelled in 1981 as he put his teacher Sunaryo's work, 'Citra Irian Dalam Torso', on fire on campus grounds. His defended his radical actions with claims to support traditional art practices which he thought was highly exploited by the group of educated artists. His keen and incisive social commentary through his art was an integral part of the anti-dictatorship and pro-people movement of the 1990s.

Siahaan's works has been widely exhibited in Institutions across Japan, Singapore, and Indonesia – prior to his relocation to Canada in 1998 following the political turbulence of the New Order Regime. His grasp of history and political movements underpins his art but his inspiration came from personal experience. An outsider to all establishments, even artistic ones, he has yet to be accorded his rightful place among the ranks of great Indonesian artists.

For image, interview or other media enquiries, kindly contact:

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Upcoming Exhibitions in Singapore:

Mooi Minang (SG) 4 December 2017 – 7 January 2018

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Selected Artworks



Semsar Siahaan, 2003

G-8 Pizza and the Study of the Falling Man

Charcoal on Used Cardboard

400 x 400 cm



Semsar Siahaan, 1987

Olympia – Identity with Mother and Child

Oil on Canvas

140.5 x 290 cm



Semsar Siahaan, 2003

Blinded by UN

Charcoal on Used Shoebox

83.5 x 130.5 cm



Semsar Siahaan, 1987-1990

Timur Rumit (The Complication of East Timor)

Oil on Canvas

100 x 75 cm