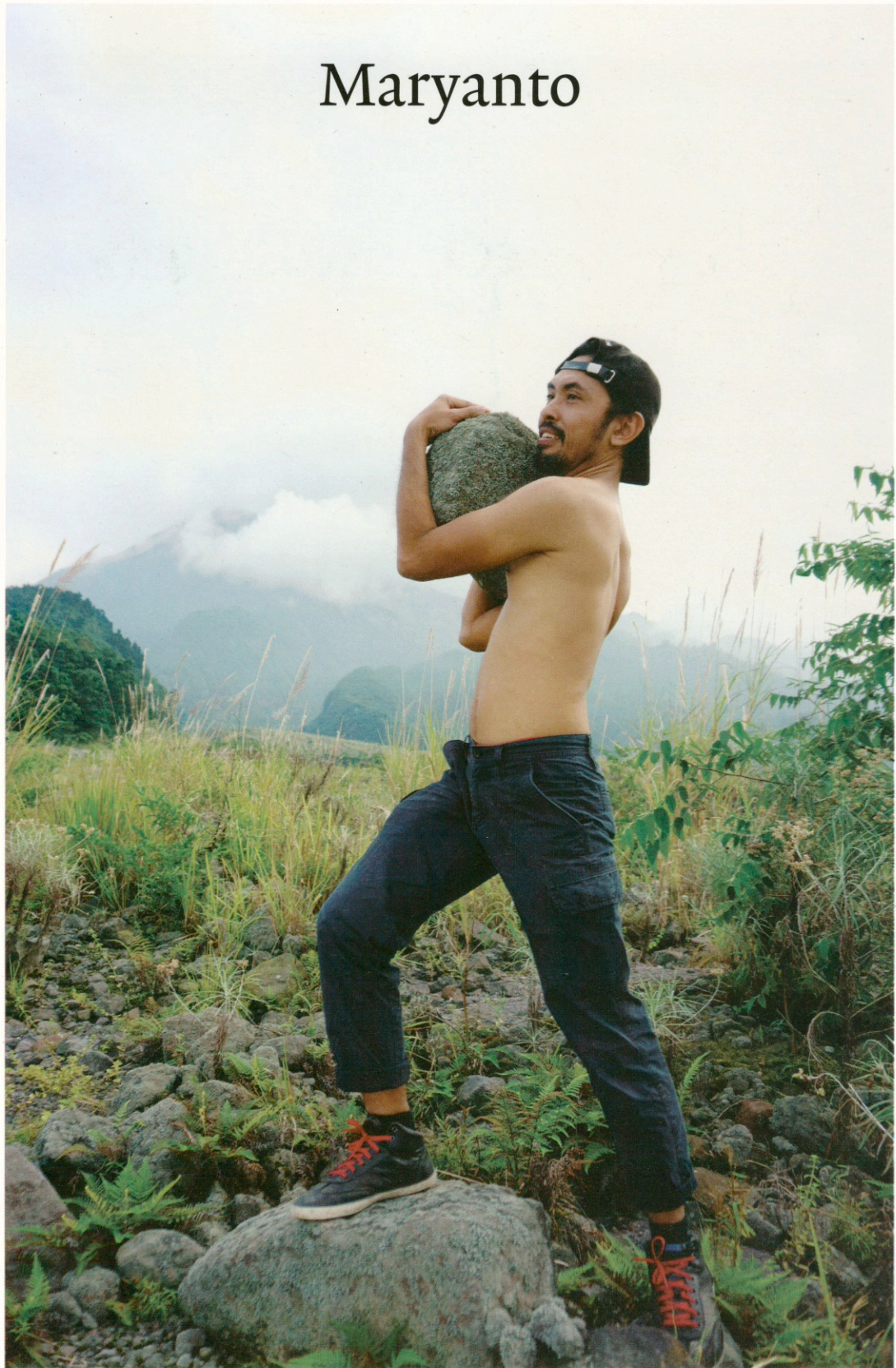
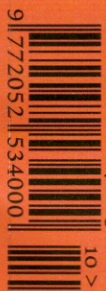


ArtReview Asia

Maryanto



HK \$90



vol 4 no 3

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Nature, culture and politics in Indonesia

Staging Film: the relation of space and image in video art

Busan Museum of Art 29 January – 17 April

When it comes to moving image in South Korea, audience encounters tend to be framed by two prevalent activities: first, the active search for and playing of videos on the Internet, accessible anytime and anywhere; second, going to see movies on a more passive basis in the cinema (figures released by Korea Film Council in 2014 show that South Koreans are the world's most frequent cinemagoers). And it is these two approaches to moving image as a medium that effectively function as the poles between which *Staging Film* allows viewers to analyse aesthetic and political strategies in video art.

The exhibition places the viewer into the middle of a series of grey-walled hallways leading to 12 rooms, each of which contains a single videowork. Apart from a floor plan and captions, no information about the works is offered prior to your encounter with them. The viewer explores the room in which a videowork is 'staged', comes back to the thought-provoking grey zone and repeats the process.

Without explicit contextualisation, the viewer experiences and engages with the works directly. For example, it is not mentioned that Anri Sala's two-channel video installation *UNRAVEL* (2013), presenting a DJ's attempt to synchronise two different recordings of Ravel's Piano Concerto for the Left Hand in D major

(1929–30), was originally filmed and shown in the German Pavilion (although Sala was representing France, with whom Germany had swapped pavilions) at the 2013 Venice Biennale. However, the theme of dissonance is still fully rendered here by the audiovisual combination of a subtle frown and a distorted-sounding harmony. Likewise, without knowing about the British experimental musician Bryn Jones (1961–99), to whom Hassan Khan's single-channel video *Muslimgauze R.I.P.* (2010) pays homage, the viewer can enjoy the purely sensuous quality of the delicate sounds caused by a curious boy's rubbing and touching of items in a room. This type of experience is amplified in Mikhail Karikis's *SeaWomen* (2012–13), which explores the daily life of female divers (*haenyeo*) who harvest marine products without any underwater breathing equipment in the Korean province of Jeju. The installation immerses the viewer in a two-channel video and 12-channel soundtrack that approximates the divers' multidimensional experience in and out of the sea.

Gender is a recurring topic in several works, though the strategies used to address it are very different. In her two-channel video installation *Rapture* (1999), Shirin Neshat places two screens on opposite walls, showing respectively men with white shirts and women in black chadors.

Meanwhile, Siren Eun Young Jung's *Act of Affect* (2013) questions a gender dichotomy still rampant in South Korean society by focusing on *yeosung gukguek*, a Korean classical opera form that swept the nation during the 1960s and was known for an all-female cast that performed the roles of both genders. Taking things a step further, Wu Tsang addresses gender fluidity and genderlessness in the two-channel video *The Looks* (2015). The work records a performance by an androgynous singer – played by performance artist Boychild – whose body is covered with glittering spangles in a way that seems to refract and diffuse the light reflected off the performer's glittering skin, through the screen, to be absorbed into the totally white room in which the work is installed.

Ultimately, as a result of its avoidance of a chronological or themed organisation, *Staging Film* encourages the viewer to contemplate the characteristics of each work and draw analogous and/or disparate correlations between them. At a moment when many South Korean art-lovers are commemorating the tenth anniversary of video-art pioneer Nam June Paik's passing, this exhibition reminds us of the importance and pleasure of an experiential approach that often seems lost amidst the cacophony of contemporary visual culture. *Young-jun Tak*



Hassan Khan, *Muslimgauze R.I.P.*, 2010,
HD video, sound, 8 min 7 sec.
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris



Mikhail Karikis, *SeaWomen*, 2012–13,
2-channel video & 12-channel sound installation, 25 min.
Courtesy the artist