

The Last Stand – Kaung Su

Modern culture is characterized by the age of consumption, and thus all resources, human and natural, even traditional cultures are becoming commodities for the sole purpose of commerce. Our capitalist economic system, driven by corporate governments relentlessly exploits the environment and the people drawing the wealth from the soul of the planet (the earth and people) up into the control of the ruling elite. The future of the planet looks bleak, especially when we consider the ongoing threats of nuclear war and increased natural disasters due to climate change as well.

Certain minority groups, however, are prepared to stand up for the people and the environment from the increasing danger of having their sovereignty stripped completely from them. Artists, as well as those other inquisitive and creative individuals such as writers, environmentalists, musicians, and performers etc, form the basis of the intellectual communities across the planet, and these minority groups hold onto a vital key.

These people are the eyes, ears and the heart of the community. Their consciousness is driven by a sensitivity that encompasses the collective. Not only that of their fellow man, yet of all organic life in our physical world - that of the collective planetary organism, the living, breathing earth.

While it may appear that the majority of humanity is “asleep”, on the other hand these people are compelled to act, and to voice their opinions. And in doing so they become the conscious voice of the community, communicating to the masses about critical social, political and environmental issues.

Contemporary artist Kaung Su (b. 1973 Yangon, Myanmar) presents a body of 12 works, drawings, paintings, neon lights and installations, that comprises his seventh solo exhibition, “The Last Stand” at the New Zero Art Space in Yangon, Myanmar. This exhibition is his dire, yet heart felt statement about what he is witnessing all around him.

Dubbed “liquid fire”, for their ability to dazzle people, neon lights came into popular use in the USA in around 1925. Visible day and night, neon lighting quickly became a popular fixture in advertising – a new “weapon” on the senses as marketing became increasingly persuasive in the new consumer era.

Kaung Su adopts the visual phenomena of neon light in “Are We In (A) Heat Trap?” and “Thirsty Cities” to convey his observations on urban living, along with the issues of climate change, emphasizing the ignorance and lack of responsibility of the post-industrial society in the face of extreme climatic conditions due to global warming. Our cities have become increasingly hot and dry as we are confronted by a water crisis. Humanity’s consumptive methods are not sustainable.

In his drawings in charcoal and spray paint on paper and his two paintings Kaung Su’s, expresses deep, dark emotions about the destruction and violence against nature. The focal point of his compositions are remnants of scorched dry wood, which he arranges in sculptural like shapes giving appreciation to the previous life forms of magnificence. Although all green life has gone, as an omen a dark wooden structure stands, as a defiant reminder of life.

Kaung Su believes that nuclear catastrophes and global warming are the routes to mass extinction and to avoid these events there reduction should be high on humanities agenda. His works “The Extinct Footprint” # 1 & 2 reveal the only possible remnants of our existence left on earth after the “on coming holocaust”. Cement, wire and bones are the chilling indicators of previous life.

The installations “Fire Wood” and “The Last Stand” are metaphors for human and environmental life. Kaung Su’s boxes are symbolic of empty life, rigid, overwhelmed by their inability to be resilient in the face of the oncoming disaster. The wood is dry, the moisture of the earth has been spent and the life force has gone. In “Fire Wood” life human has been besieged by environmental issues that crush it down onto the earth. The forests have been cleared, there is trouble looming ahead in this serious, yet also satirical observation of humanity.

The works featured by Kaung Su in “The Last Stand” are blatant reminders to us all of our responsibilities to mankind and mother earth. In the face of a daunting future on a planet that is that is becoming increasingly hostile to human life, could it be that the courageous few, the activists and the artists like Kaung Su are our last line of defense?

“Migrasi Kolong Meja #21” is a work of unique character and a definite highlight. The fusion of lengths of timber of equal portions, yet varying slightly in the rich natural grain becomes the “table” and the subject. Upon the bottom portion of the work he creates a open draw, complete with brass handles and a hessian sack stuffed inside, in grey and black paint he implies an abstract image of a table above. Hanafi here emphasizes the practice of money being placed under the table.

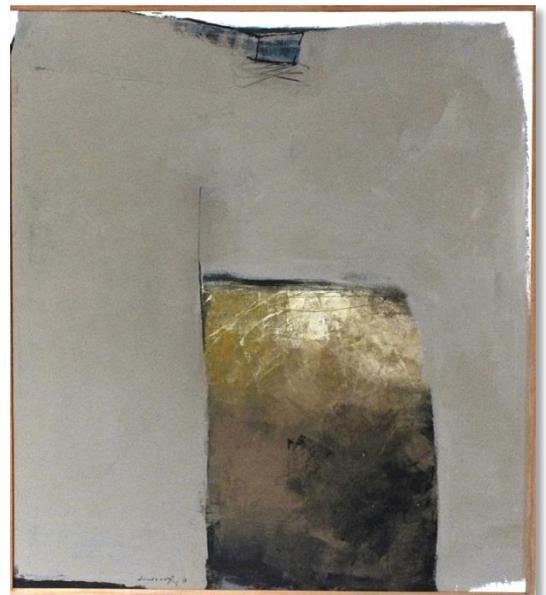
Abstract art is an avenue for artists to explore and bring to the attention, or life an essence that mysteriously seems to live in an internal non-visible world. The works encourage freedom of the imagination while not having to reference the “known” and for those with the patience and willingness to observe objectively the rewards are many. An intimate personal journey is on offer.

Besides the serious issue of corruption brought to our attention, driven by the responsibility of an artist committed to communicating to and with the community, Hanafi confirms that there is more to the physical world than meets the eye.

“Migrasi Kolong Meja” – Hanafi continues through to 22 January 2014.
Komaneka Fine Art Gallery. Jalan Monkey Forest Ubud Open Daily. Ph: 03614012218



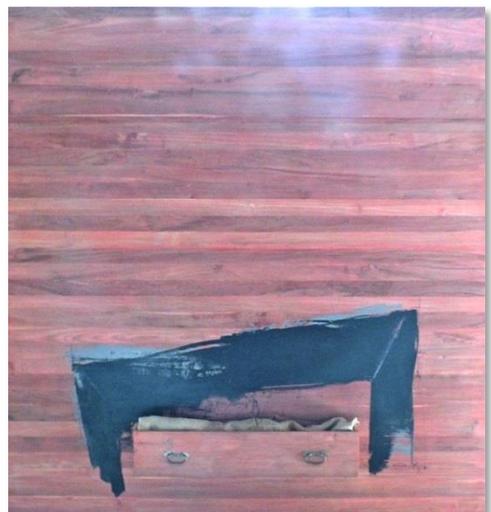
Magrasi Kolong Meja 14 Hanafi, Acrylic on canvas, 175x195cm.



Magrasi Kolong Meja 18 Hanafi 2013, Acrylic on canvas



Migrasi Kolong Meja 1 Hanafi, Acrylic on paper. 2013, 100x100cm.



Migrasi Kolong Meja 21 Hanafi, 2013, Acrylic and Wood, 210x200cm