

Abdul Abdullah *Magical Thinking*

Exhibition dates: 3 August – 26 August 2023

Location: 69 Reservoir Street, Ground Floor, Surry Hills, NSW 2020, Australia

After several major institutional presentations including; *The National* at the Art Gallery of New South Wales (2023), *Portrait23: Identity* at the National Portrait Gallery, Canberra, Australia (2023); *Land Abounds*, Ngununggula, New South Wales, Australia (2022); *Un/learning Australia*, Seoul Museum of Art, South Korea (2022), Abdul Abdullah opens his fourth solo exhibition with Yavuz Gallery on 3 August.

Magical Thinking is a new body of work that continues Abdullah's series of anthropomorphised rocks within vivid natural idylls, presenting playful, animist encounters along an imagined journey. Abdullah paints detailed landscapes appropriated from stock image banks and then enlivens them with bold emoji faces and humanised gestures in his signature white lines. These rocky sentinels act as markers for new beginnings, offering an embrace or a wave that imply a sense of reunion after a period of departure.

The show expands upon his long-standing explorations of migration, displacement, and journeys. This holds particular significance for the artist in parallel to his recent move from Sydney to Bangkok. His new paintings greet and encourage those that wander new paths, embodying moments of joy, anxiety, and self-reflection.

The artist explains, "Coming across a bit of kindness and consideration on a hard journey can sometimes be the difference between getting to your destination and turning back. For me, these rocks are the encouragement or contemplation you might stumble across while you're on the way to where you are going."

Identifying as a Muslim and having both Malay/Indonesian and convict/settler Australian heritage, Abdullah occupies a precarious space in the political discourse that puts him at odds with easy definitions. Grounding his irreverent outlook in an expansive cultural geography that belies reductive boundaries of nationality, Abdullah represents a new face of emerging artists from the Asia-Pacific region.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

As a seventh-generation Muslim Australian of mixed ethnicity who grew up in suburban Perth (an 'outsider amongst outsiders'), **Abdul Abdullah's** (b. 1986) multi-disciplinary practice is motivated by a longstanding concern on the complex feelings of displacement and alienation associated with histories of diaspora and migration. Providing a voice to these rarely told topics, he creates carefully crafted political commentaries that speak of the 'Other' and the experiences of marginalised communities. While the fraught dynamic of Muslim experiences has provided the initial framework, Abdullah has consciously expanded his practice to include a broader sense of marginalisation, with a focus on exploring the disjuncture between perception/projection of identity and the reality of lived experience.

YAVUZ GALLERY

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Abdullah has exhibited internationally extensively across Australia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Thailand, South Korea, China, France, and Germany. Recent curated exhibitions include: *Portrait23: Identity* at the National Portrait Gallery, Canberra, Australia (2023); *Land Abounds*, Ngununggula, New South Wales, Australia (2022); *Un/learning Australia*, Seoul Museum of Art, South Korea (2022); *Monster Theatres*, Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art, Art Gallery of South Australia (2020); *Stories We Tell To Scare Ourselves With*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei, Taiwan (2019); and *DIASPORA: Exit, Exile, Exodus of Southeast Asia*, MAIAM Contemporary Art Museum, Chiang Mai, Thailand (2018). He is currently part of and *The National* at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney's largest survey of contemporary Australian art.

His work is collected by numerous institutions including: the National Gallery of Australia; Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art (Australia); Museum of Contemporary Art (Australia); and MAIAM Contemporary Art Museum (Thailand). In 2019, he was awarded the inaugural Australian Muslim Artist Art Prize. He is also a multiple finalist of the Archibald Prize, the Sulman Prize and the Ramsay Art Prize – the most prestigious art prizes in Australia, a rarity for an artist of his years.

For further information on the artist and the works, please contact:

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Selected Works



A pleasant surprise, 2023, oil on linen, 102 x 76 cm

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Promising potential, 2023, oil on linen, 102 x 76 cm



Clean air, 2023, oil on linen, 198.1 x 162 cm

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