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PRESS RELEASE

Element Art Space

Raffles Hotel Arcade

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Gallery Hours: Open Daily 11:00AM - 7:00PM

(Closed on Public Holidays)



LAILA AZRA: Over, Through and Under

Thursday, 20 November – Sunday, 28 December 2014

Opening Reception: Thursday, 20 November from 6:30 to 8:30 PM

Element Art Space, Singapore, proudly presents Laila Azra's third solo exhibition entitled "Over, Through and Under", marking another chapter of her artistic journey. The Singapore-based Indonesian mixed media artist known for her multi-layered and intricate abstract canvases will showcase her latest body of work, including an installation piece and her largest painting yet – 5 metres in length. The exhibition will run from 20 November – 28 December 2014.

Laila views painting as a passage to explore her roots and identity by finding and realizing her personal voice and purpose in life. Issues surrounding culture and life encounters thus remain a common theme. "Our understanding of what we see is conditioned by our personal and social cultural experience," she says. Born to a Sundanese father and an Acehnese mother, Laila spent most of her life in Bogor, West Java, before moving to Singapore in 2004. For this show, Gedek or weaved thin bamboo shafts was adopted to represent her hometown. In other words, the Gedek immortalised a distant but treasured memory – a life memento.

Quoting Azra's artist statement – *'my paintings and creative works are reflections of what life is. Despite the confident start, we cannot be certain how it will end.'*

Graduated from Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA) in Western Abstract Painting, the influences of Abstract Expressionism techniques made popular in 1940s by the likes of Jason Pollock, Willem De Kooning and Mark Rothko, resonate in Azra's art making. She adapted gestural painting method where she uses her hands and body movement to drip, splash, and scrape on a canvas often positioned flat on the floor. This resulted in bold, rhythmic lines and texture-rich artworks, which are characterised by the weaving and interweaving layers of acrylic paint as well as her other chosen mediums.

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Laila often starts her painting with only an idea of which colour or hue of paint she will use. Everything else in the creation process is free flowing and happens intuitively. In the new collection of work, it is evident that Laila has grown more confident in using experimental materials such as liquid latex, water effects, threads and streamers spray, forming additional dimensions to her often densely composed paintings. Standing in front of Laila's work is like peeling off layers and witnessing each of her step in the art creation process. The work's meaning becomes less important and methodology rises as champion.

With the recent rise of conceptual art in the Indonesian art realm, artworks that are not tied to a grand concept are somehow deemed weaker. This is why Laila's works, which has little emphasis on the matter, is refreshing and less intimidating. Art becomes great if it is understood, but more important it is supposed to stimulate and intrigue the senses. Only then, can artwork 'speak' to the viewer. "I fell in love with abstract [style of painting] because it gives you space to imagine ... [where] anyone can freely have interpretations, which in a way makes the painting their own (not only mine anymore). I like that idea of sharing," Laila adds.

Over, Through and Under is composed of 14 artworks. The exhibition will run until 28 December 2014.

Laila Azra was born in Jakarta on 29th November 1970. She obtained a degree from the prestigious University of Indonesia in Social and Political Science. After working for a multinational company, she moved to Singapore in 2004 with her family and studied Western Abstract Painting in NAFA (Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts). She began her artistic journey in 2010 when she had her first solo exhibition.

About Element Art Space

The gallery first opened in October 2009 under the mentorship of Chua Soobin—one of the most prominent gallerists in South East Asia and was the first to introduce avant-garde Chinese art to the region. Initially named S.Bin Art Plus, the gallery changed its name to Element Art Space in 2011. Drawing from Soobin's more than 20 years of experience in the art industry, the gallery's aim remains consistent: to promote great and innovative artists from South East Asia and provide exchange and dialogue with artists, galleries and collectors from throughout the world. The gallery also offers residencies to a highly selected number of emerging artists from the region. The gallery's inaugural exhibition, "Harmony," featured the works of 33 painters and sculptors from throughout the world, many of which have never been displayed to the Singaporean public before--marble sculpture by Fernando Botero and gold-plated sculpture by Marc Quinn just to name a few. Following this grand entrance to the Singapore art scene, the gallery continues to be the advocate for compelling and challenging contemporary work by today's most exciting emerging and mid-career artists.

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Image: LAILA AZRA, *Through Thick and Thin*, mixed media on jute, 200 x 200 cm, 2014 © Element Art Space