

Born

1961 BANDUNG, INDONESIA

Lives/Works

YOGYAKARTA, INDONESIA

ARAHMAIANI

Dutch Wife (2013)

Arahmaiani (1961, Bandung, Indonesia, lives and works in Yogyakarta) is one of the front runners of the Indonesian avant-garde. Her radical and at times controversial political and social engagement is a logical consequence of her own life story. Arahmaiani grew up under the New Order Regime of General Suharto that saw oppression, corruption, injustice and violence. She was born in a diverse family, with a father who was a Muslim leader and a mother who was a Javanese Hindu-Buddhist. There were many social and political issues for Arahmaiani to revolt against, but also a lot of conflicting interests for her to try to unite with each other. Her name was the result of a concession her parents made. *Arahma* goes back to the Arabic language meaning 'loving', and *iani* means 'human being' in Hindi.

Arahmaiani gains her international reputation foremost from her performances in which she aims at critical awareness amongst the public towards political, religious and social issues. She also produces paintings, installation, photography and video, and publishes extensively in international media about a range of global and local issues that she is concerned about. Arahmaiani gives a voice to minorities and to the oppressed, through participatory projects developed with social and religious communities. Since 2010 Arahmaiani has been working with Tibetan Buddhist monks toward implementing ecologically sustainable uses of the Tibetan Plateau: a vital source for water, for the entire region.

Arahmaiani often touches upon her personal experiences and circumstances in her work: as a female artist and a Muslim who fights against extremist beliefs, laws and regulations. At the Indonesian Pavilion for the 50th Venice Biennale in 2003, Arahmaiani featured her installation *June 11th 2002*, referring

to a series of traumatic experiences, the year before. On a stop over at Los Angeles International Airport, on her way to Canada, she got arrested for not holding a transit visa. It was just after 9/11, and during her four hour-long ordeal she was placed under constant surveillance by two male officers, for fear that she could be a terrorist.

For *Suspended Histories* Arahmaiani has made a special photo installation for which she did extensive research on female slaves in the former Dutch Indies. With this work she wants to draw attention to the fact that the oppression of women in this world is still a fact, even today. It did not vanish when the former Dutch colonies became free and independent nations. With globalization, a modern kind of slavery has emerged. These slaves of the past become the domestic workers of the present.

Arahmaiani graduated from the Faculty of Fine Arts and Design at the Institut Teknologi Bandung (ITB, Bandung) in 1983 and studied both in Australia, at the National Art School in Sydney, and at the Academie voor Beeldende Kunst in Enschede. Her work was celebrated in an important retrospective, *Slow Down Bro..!* at the Jogja National Museum in 2008. She's shown her work in group exhibitions in, among others, MOCA, Beijing (2011); 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, Sydney (2011); Bentara Budaya, Yogyakarta (2009); Alexander Ochs Gallery, Berlin (2008); J&Z Gallery, Shenzhen (2007); Brooklyn Museum in New York (2007); Jim Thompson Art Centre, Bangkok (2006). She also participated in Biennale Jogja 11, Yogyakarta (2011); Sydney Festival (2010) and the 50th Venice Biennale (2003).

Arahmaiani, *Dutch Wife*,
2013, digital photo prints



Arahmaiani
Dutch Wife
2013, photography
Anke Teunissen
retouch Patrick de Bas/
DOG postproduction



