

Tutu Gallery

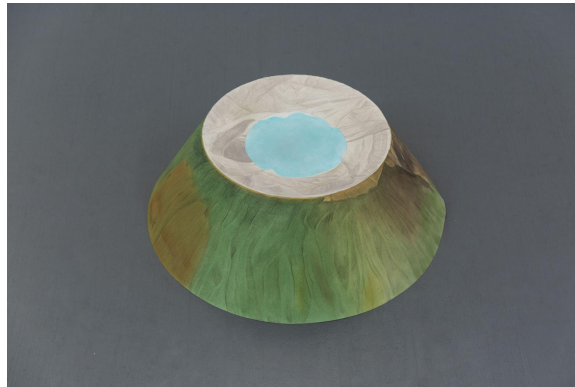
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Samuel Alexander Forest & Megan Nugroho

Land Language / Bahasa Bumi

Tutu Gallery

October 20 - December 3, 2023



Tutu Gallery presents Land Language/Bahasa Bumi, a two-person show by Samuel Alexander Forest and Megan Nugroho. Having grown up in Indonesia from opposing sides of Java, they take the homeland within and build their own spirited worlds through drawing.

Megan Nugroho reimagines the natural outside world and the human body as one. Her work explores a mystical land where bodies are rooted to the earth, limbs take on lives of their own, and flowers' reproductive organs go wild. In Javanese lore, the goddess of the sea channels her mystical essence through the color green that spreads and permeates everyday motifs and objects. These drawings, suffused with enchanting hues of green and other earthy colors of Java, provide a place where magic and drama flourish.

Taking on familiar motifs, her drawings infuse new and eased meanings. The human body, often so restricting and angular, finds its freedom. It softens and grows as it pleases, curving and turning. The spiral, a divine symbol used to represent life and growth and which reoccurs through several pieces, more so resembles movement and rest. The creature lying down in leisure, nesting in a spiral as a spiral.

Down below, the land unfolds beneath the surface. *Neraka*, the underworld, is often described in layers, like the earth, whose hidden facades are rendered in these works as different colored soils and sediments. Critters and plants living within, split open to reveal the underground's architecture. Altogether they enchant you into a world above and below, far away and up close, outside and within.

Samuel Alexander Forest's mountains reflect on myth-making and spirituality. Based on mountains and volcanoes in Indonesia, they have been recreated for and transported into the gallery space through his practice of making sculptural drawings.

Growing up in the city, he always yearned for the natural and pilgrimages to these great sites. The largest work in the suite, Bromo, is the only one he's been to and the closest to his hometown. Three hours away from his childhood home, legends and ritual sacrifices are kept alive. Krakatau, the historic volcano whose catastrophic explosion in 1883 produced the loudest sound ever recorded, is haunting yet beautiful. Destroying all its surroundings and itself, it sank into the strait where it stayed below the surface for 44 years. The Jayawijaya mountain range boasts the highest peak across the islands and Indonesia's only sighting of snow. Considered sacred to the locals, it is, however, melting away due to the climate crisis. Lastly, at the center of Ijen is an alluring turquoise—the most acidic lake on earth. When it gets dark, electric blue flames light up from sulfur burning around the lake. Meanwhile, a village nearby is said to entrance and entrap visitors into a spirit realm.

Samuel's works take these as their own and place them in his understanding of spirituality and reverence for the land, through his attempt at remaking them with the modest means of pencils, pastels, and folded paper and imbuing them with as much life as he can muster through his fingers.

Megan Nugroho (b. 1998, Tangerang, Indonesia) is a Chinese-Indonesian artist based in New York. Her recent works explore themes of wildness, the natural and the alien body in interaction with the environment. She creates colored pencil drawings to evoke childlike and magical perspectives. Nugroho was an AXA Art Prize Finalist and she has shown at the New York Academy of Art, Fortnight Institute, 80WSE Gallery, and more. Her work has recently been featured in Artmaze Magazine, Friend of the Artist, and Visionary Art Collective. Nugroho holds an MFA from NYU Steinhardt and a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Samuel Alexander Forest (b. 1998, Surabaya, Indonesia) lives in New York and maintains a primarily drawing-based practice. Through book, video, and sculpture forms, his works take special attention to the overlooked and slip-across moments of poetry and humor. He received his BFA from the Cooper Union in 2021 and is a 2024 MFA candidate at NYU Steinhardt. He is exhibiting with 80WSE, Tutu Gallery, Fragment Gallery, and LaiSun Keane in 2023.

Tutu Gallery is a DIY space located in Bed-Stuy Brooklyn, founded in July 2019 by Tutu (cat) and her human assistant April. Tutu's aim is to show art slightly "off the wall", in the space, and with interesting people. As of October 2023, the gallery has presented 31 projects, mostly first solo or two-person shows of emerging international artists. The gallery is featured in i-D and Hyperallergic Spring 2023 Art Guide and has been written by Harper's BAZAAR China, Whitehot Magazine, BOMB Magazine, and more.

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Tutu Gallery website: <https://www.tutugallery.art/>

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