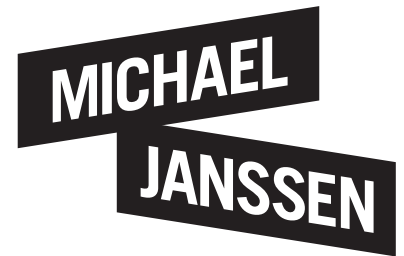


HO TZU NYEN NO MAN II

September 16 - November 11 2017



Michael Janssen is very pleased to present his first solo exhibition in Berlin with Singaporean artist Ho Tzu Nyen. After the showing of the video-installation *Pythagoras* in 2013 at Janssens gallery space in Singapore, Ho will now present a new multimedia installation entitled *No Man II*.

In his works, **Ho Tzu Nyen** (1976) examines the power of epic myths from the past up to the present day. Although always invoking their grandeur, he also reveals them not to be merely stories, but discursive tools, used to shape the present. This is surely significant to Ho's field of research: the recent historiography of Southeast Asia and especially Singapore, established as an independent city-state in 1965. Through his work, he therefore acts as a critical historian for his home region, examining hegemonies to expose their structures and faults. In his latest project *The Critical Dictionary of Southeast Asia* at the Asia Art Archive in Hong Kong, he created a platform for ongoing research on the subject. What constitutes the unity of Southeast Asia – a region never unified by language, religion or political power?

On show at the gallery is his most recent artwork ***No Man II*** (2017), a single-channelled multimedia installation. It is a follow-up on the six-channelled video installation *No Man* (2015), which was shown at the Singapore Art Museum. The film is projected on a two-way mirror glass, drawing the spectator into the designed world. Contrary to previous work, Ho chose to examine different types of narratives, not only historical ones. He brings together 50 different figures, all digitally created from online sources, that have a profound connection to popular cultural imagination.

The title refers to the famous line 'No man is an island' taken from a poem by **John Donne** (1572 – 1631). In his 17th meditation, the English poet calls out for connectivity – comparing the behaviour of people to the politics of countries. Ho makes the figures sing lines adapted from the poem, evoking Southeast Asian challenges of isolationism, solitude and enclosure.

In *No Man II*, a ghostly choir assembles in a mirror – an unruly gathering of figures of uncertain origin. They range from animals to human-animal hybrids, cyborgs and anatomical figures; some of which are manifestations of mythical archetypes, while others are cultural stereotypes. They may be a small sampling of humanity's figurative imagination across history.

These figures are animated by movements incongruous with their appearances—being of an ambiguous nature and ranging from innocuous human behaviour like loitering, to iconic movements such as breakdancing, or the convulsive and stuttering advance of zombies. Interwoven voices fall rhythmically in and out of phrase and oscillate between individual and collective utterances, singing:

"No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece
of the continent,
a part of the main;
if a clod be washed away by the sea,
Malaya is the less,
as well as if a promontory were,
as well as any manner of thy friends
or of thine own were;
any man's death diminishes me,
because I am involved in mankind.
And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls;
it tolls for thee."*

*Adapted from *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions – Meditation XVII* (1624) by John Donne.