

Arahmaiani

Tyler Rollins Fine Art

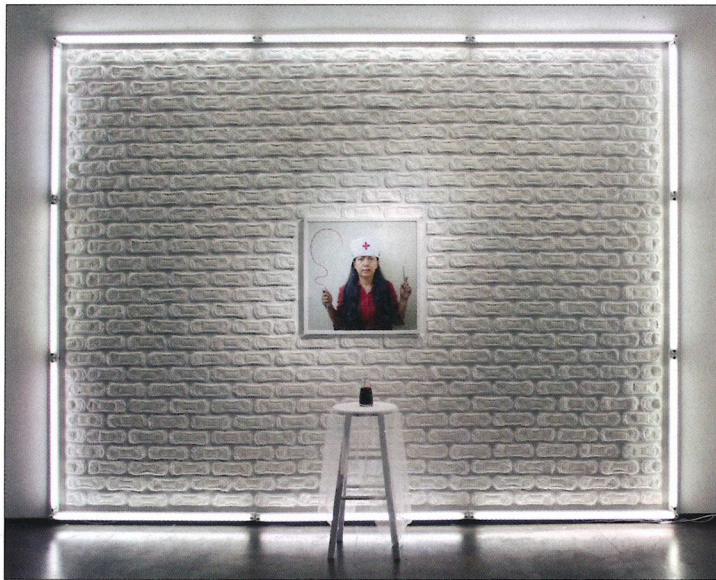
Powerful and challenging, this show introduced us to the work of the Indonesian feminist artist Arahmaiani, with an excellent presentation of photographic and written documentation of her performance and other work. The artist's mission is to represent minorities and the marginalized throughout much of South Asia and beyond.

Greeting viewers to the show was *Do Not Prevent the Fertility of the Mind* (1997–2014), a “padded cell” wall covered in white sanitary pads. In the center is a photo of the artist bearing a red-cross-emblazoned pad on her head and holding an enlarged IUD and forceps in arms raised at her sides like a deity. On a stool in front of the wall was a vial of blood.

There were also photographs and captions outlining 30 years of the artist's performances and installations. Arahmaiani has taken Joseph Beuys's “social sculpture” as an inspiration for works that engage local and global issues. Her 2004 performance *Wedding Party (LAPEN Wedding)* presents a groom and bride dressed in the flags of some 26 political parties in Indonesia. Lapen is a popular alcoholic drink, and the party as documented has devolved into chaos and parody.

The most recent work represented was Arahmaiani's contribution to the 2013–14 exhibition “Suspended Histories” at the Museum Van Loon in Amsterdam. The museum commissioned artists to make works related to the role of the Van Loon family in the Dutch East India Company, chartered in the early 17th century to colonize Asia. Arahmaiani's installation consisted of self-portrait photographs hung next to official portraits of the members of the Van Loon family. The artist is dressed in simple Javanese attire, striking a formal pose.

At Tyler Rollins, the artist's work *Sacred Coke* (1993–2014) centered on a round table covered with rice and soil and an upright Coca-Cola bottle topped



Arahmaiani, *Do Not Prevent the Fertility of the Mind*, 1997–2014, feminine napkins, fluorescent lights, wooden stool, glass vial, blood, and photograph, 108" x 144" x 22". Tyler Rollins Fine Art.

by a condom. Arahmaiani makes us aware of the historical repercussions of those early explorations and exploitations. This show was a welcome introduction to her work.

—Cynthia Nadelman

'about FACE'

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This exhibition traced the evolution of society portraiture over the course of four centuries. Of the 50 works on view, from Europe and the United States, portraits of children were most affecting. The 18th- and early 19th-century works exemplified society's tremendous emphasis on the fulfillment of social destiny. In William R. Hamilton's sumptuous *The Three Odell Children, Newburgh, New York* (ca. 1846–52), a boy, barely taller than the family dog, grips a riding crop and puts the hound in a headlock while his sisters shelter under an oak tree.

As the 19th century progressed, displays of power became less overt, yielding gradually to depictions of contemplative solitude, an attitude that came to be recognized as modern. Hermann Fidel Winterhalter's *Trois demoiselles de la famille de Chateaubourg* (1850)

shows three girls in an oval frame, the eldest presiding over the younger two and gazing past the edge of the painting as if imagining her future as a mother and wife. Fairfield Porter's *Katie in an Armchair* (1954) puts a contrasting, 20th-century face on his subject's emerging consciousness. Her eyes are black holes. She stares toward a chasm in the living room, in a universe summoned by her own imagination. On the mantel behind her is a self-portrait.

Some portraits accentuated our distance from the past; others seemed to collapse it. The impossibly chic glamour and cold stare

of the woman in *Portrait of Miss C. Burton, Texas* (1930), by Winold Reiss, appear thoroughly contemporary. In pastels by an unknown French artist (ca. 1800), two sisters in white gowns and spit-curls face each other in a confrontation that captures the eternal complexities of siblinghood. Their anonymous profiles remind us that what makes a portrait great has little to do with the sitter's identity and far more to do with a kind of presence.

—Johanna Ruth Epstein



Hermann Fidel Winterhalter, *Trois demoiselles de la famille de Chateaubourg*, 1850, oil on canvas, 40 1/4" x 32". Hirschl & Adler.