

# MELATI SURYODARMO PASSIONATE PILGRIM

This summer, Ikon transforms its galleries into a platform for performance art, with the first UK exhibition by Indonesian artist Melati Suryodarmo (b. 1969, Surakarta).

Melati Suryodarmo is one of Indonesia's most important living artists. Her durational performances can last several hours, testing the limits of the human mind and body. Performances, installations and films often merge live art with sculpture, drawing, photography and printmaking, interrogating notions of time, labour and identity.

## INTRODUCTION

In the 90s, Suryodarmo moved to Germany, where she studied fine art (BA, 2001) and performance (MA, 2002) at the Academy of Fine Arts in Braunschweig. There, Suryodarmo was mentored by Serbian performance artist Marina Abramović and Butoh dancer and choreographer Anzu Furukawa. Her experience as an Indonesian woman living in Europe, and the mindfulness and endurance of these artists' work, strongly influenced her first performances. Returning to Indonesia in 2014, Suryodarmo continues to be inspired by the country's cultural traditions. These include *sumarah*, a form of meditation that seeks to achieve heightened sensitivity and acceptance through deep relaxation, and the Javanese-Hindu concept of *rasa*, the 'aesthetic essence' or feeling of a work of art. She founded Studio Plesungan, located in the Javanese countryside, hosting artist residencies, workshops and events that bring together traditional and contemporary art.

The exhibition at Ikon Gallery presents live performances from Suryodarmo and delegated works performed by over 50 associated artists and community activists. A new work based on the artist's original solo performance *Passionate Pilgrim* (2010) recalls the passion, opportunities and hardship experienced by migrants and diasporic communities in Birmingham and around the world. The exhibition also explores Suryodarmo's artistic journey over the past 30 years, expressed in the title as a form of physical, emotional and creative pilgrimage.

# RECEPTION



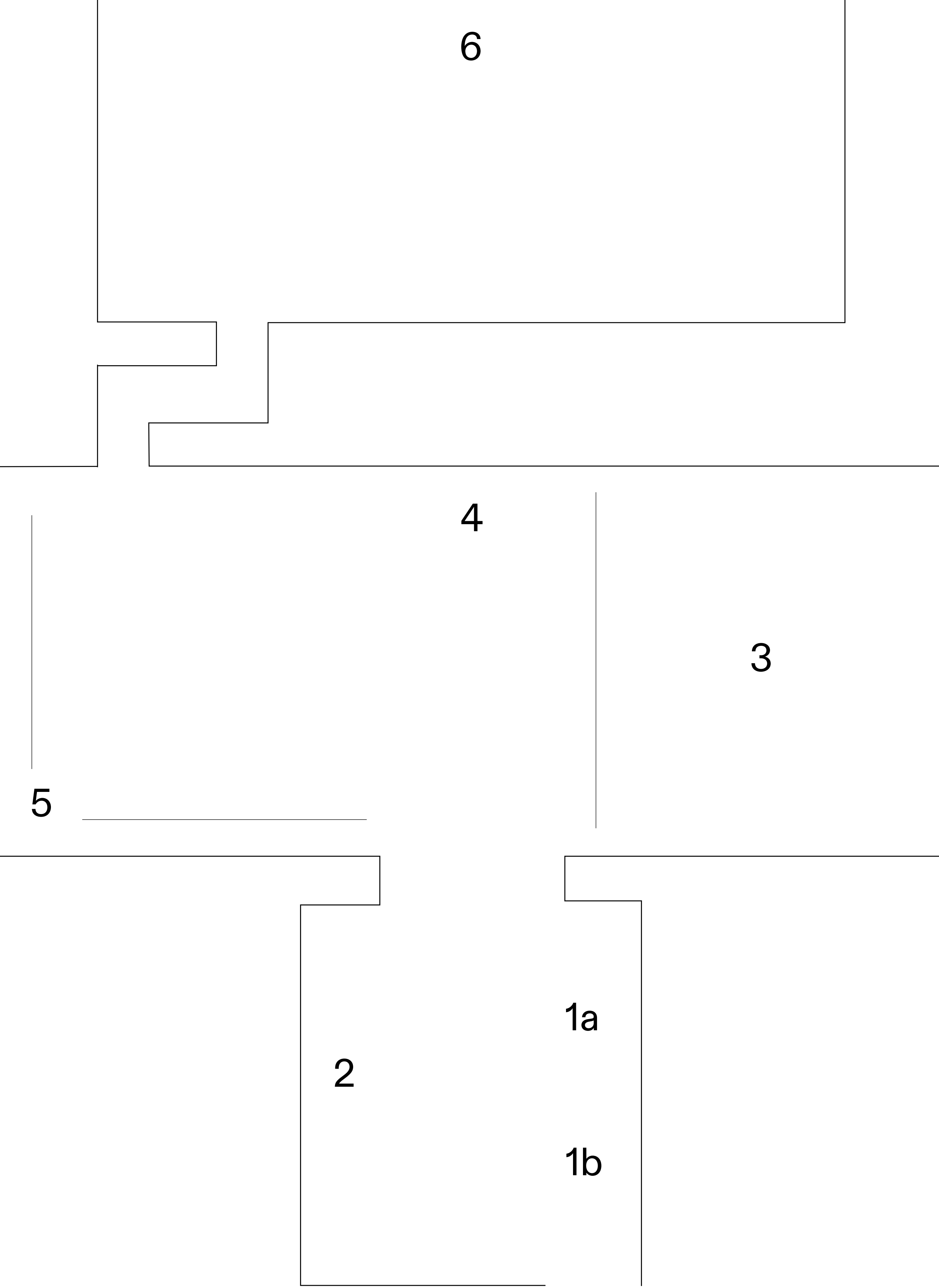
## ***Sweet Dreams Sweet (2013)***

Single-channel video, colour, sound. Documentation of delegated performance, Ikon Gallery (2023).

27 minutes. Videographer: Sima Gonsai. Courtesy the artist and ShanghART.

This delegated performance expresses the tensions often felt by women in Indonesia and around the world between individual and collective identity. Thirty young women slowly move in pairs, staining their white costumes with blue water.

FIRST FLOOR



## FIRST FLOOR



1a ***Exergie–Butter Dance (2000)***

Single-channel video, colour, sound.

Documentation of solo performance, Hebbel Theatre, Berlin (2000). 6:29 minutes. Courtesy the artist and ShanghART.

b Single-channel video, colour, sound.

Documentation of solo performance, Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Nusantara (Museum MACAN), Jakarta, Indonesia (2021). 10:59 minutes. Collection of the artist. Courtesy of Museum MACAN.

In the 20-minute performance *Exergie–Butter Dance (2000)*, Melati Suryodarmo slowly dances on blocks of butter to the sound of Javanese percussion. Her movements squash the melting butter, causing her to repeatedly slip, fall and lift herself up. Filmed more than 15 years apart, the alternating videos invite reflection on physical change and the strength of the female body.

## FIRST FLOOR



- 2 ***Passionate Pilgrim Extended (2010–23)***  
2-hour hybrid performance. 100 mirrors, each  
33 × 17 cm. Courtesy the artist and ShanghART.

This new work is based on a solo performance for *House without a Maid (2010)*, a project by filmmaker Jorge León and choreographer Simone Aughterlony which explored the working conditions, social networks and identity of migrant domestic workers. The performance at Ikon (Sunday 28 May, 2–4pm) involves Suryodarmo and women from the UK-based, activist group The Voice of Domestic Workers using cosmetic mirrors to contemplate their reflection, communicate with one another and capture the eyes of the audience. Before and after the performance, the mirrors form a floor installation.

## FIRST FLOOR



### 3 ***I'm a Ghost in My Own House (2012)***

12-hour solo performance. Charcoal, iron and stone table, stone roller, charcoal-stained dress. Courtesy the artist and ShanghART.

In this durational performance, Suryodamo grinds blocks of charcoal with a stone rolling pin for 12 hours. Her longest and most arduous work, it expresses the estrangement she felt upon returning to Indonesia in 2014 after living in Germany for 20 years. In the performance at Ikon Gallery (Friday 19 May, 10am–10pm) she physically exhausts herself, symbolising the expenditure of life's energy and the potential for renewal.

## FIRST FLOOR



- 4 ***I'm a Ghost in My Own House (2012)***  
Single-channel video projection, colour, sound.  
Documentation of solo performance, Ikon Gallery  
(2023). 39:22 minutes. Courtesy the artist  
and ShanghART.

This video documents the live performance of *I'm a Ghost in My Own House* at Ikon Gallery.



## FIRST FLOOR



- 5 **Works from the series *Falling*, *Klamauk* and *Limerence* (2018)**  
**Left wall (L-R): *Limerence* 6, 8, 3, 7, 9 and 4**  
**Right wall (L-R): *Klamauk* 4, 3; *Falling* 1, 2**  
Charcoal powder rubbed into STPI handmade cotton paper. Various dimensions. Produced at STPI—Creative Workshop & Gallery, Singapore.  
© The artist / STPI—Creative Workshop & Gallery, Singapore.

To make these rubbings, Suryodarmo stained her hands with charcoal and kneaded them into wet cotton paper. Varying pressure creates different shapes, volumes and shades. Their textured surfaces evoke the brutal gestures of Suryodarmo's 12-hour performance, *I'm a Ghost in My Own House*.

## FIRST FLOOR

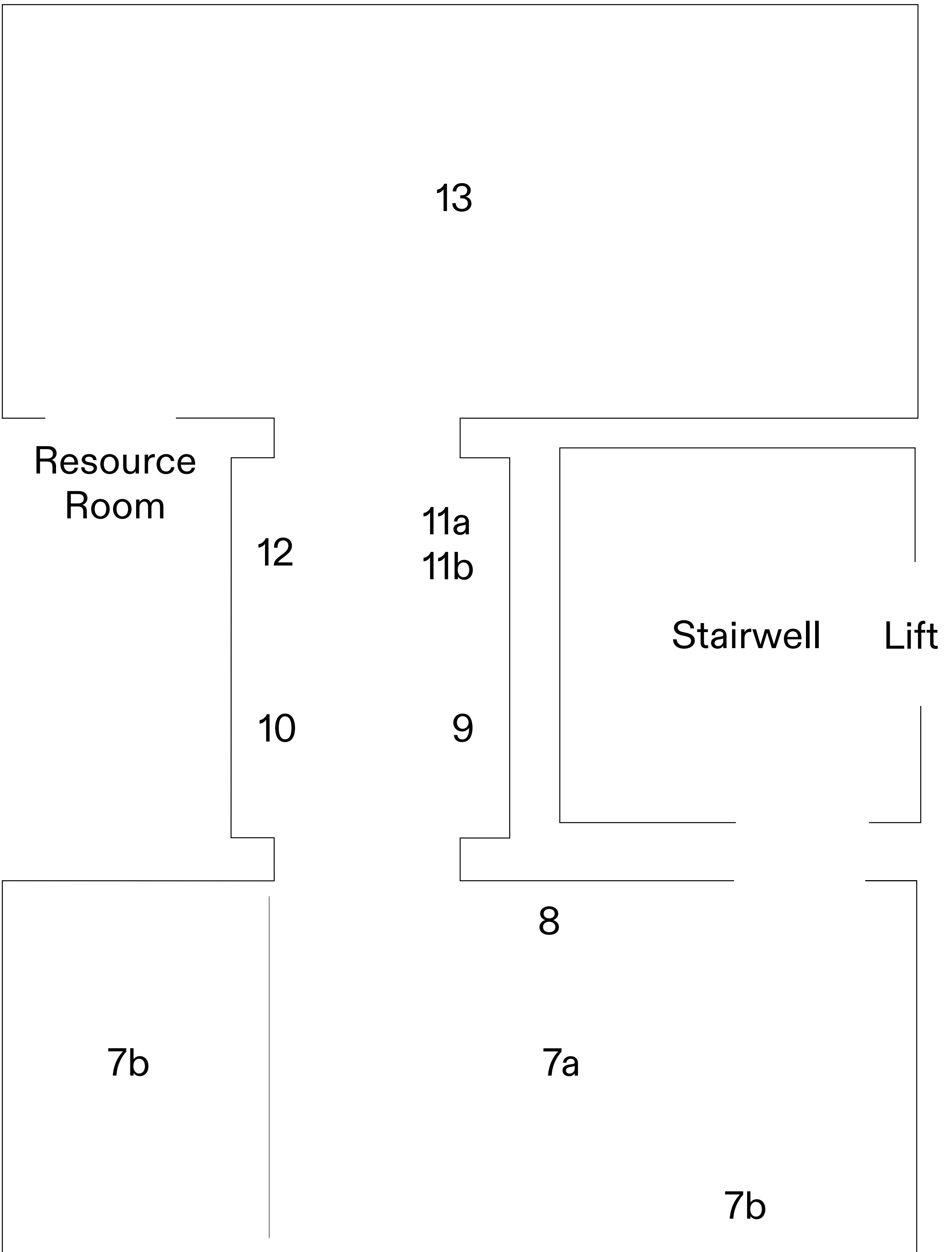


### 6 ***Memory of Water (2022)***

Single-channel HD video projection, colour, sound. 30:02 minutes. Courtesy the artist and ShanghART.

This film was made following the death of Suryodarmo's father, Suprpto Suryodarmo (1945–2019). Wearing paper costumes, the artist and two performers carry out a series of rituals and gestures in search of the 'soul' of her father's house. The dream-like sequence culminates with the artist rolling around in a field of grass and torn paper, as if in a trance.

# SECOND FLOOR



## SECOND FLOOR



7a ***Studio Plesungan (2023)***

Digital print on vinyl, wood, laminate flooring, natural palm, blinds, chairs, tables, plants, cushions. Various dimensions.

b ***Studio Plesungan Archive (2012–23)***

Digitally-printed posters, 2 iMacs, 2 videos, colour, sound. Various durations.

Courtesy the artist and ShanghART.

This installation brings the environment of Suryodarmo's artist-run space to Ikon Gallery. Vinyl prints show the surrounding Javanese countryside and wooden structures mirror its teak furniture, pavilions and architecture. Cicadas, tropical rain and wildlife are audible in a soundtrack. Audiences are invited to sit in the space and access documentation of the studio's past residencies, workshops and performances.

## SECOND FLOOR

- 8a **Kelvin Atmadibrata, *Forcing Hyacinth* (2019)**  
Single-channel video, colour, sound.  
Documentation of performance, LAPSody at Theatre Academy, University of the Arts Helsinki, Finland. 28:19 minutes. Courtesy the artist.
- b **Selina Bonelli, *pearltongue* (2015)**  
Single-channel video, colour, sound.  
Documentation of performance to camera with artist's grandmother's imitation pearls, London. 11:02 minutes. Courtesy the artist.
- c **Alastair MacLennan, *Silibant Miscible* (2022)**  
Single-channel video, colour, sound.  
Documentation of performance, The McManus Art Gallery & Museum, Dundee. 19:51 minutes.  
Courtesy of the Alastair MacLennan Archive, DJCAD, University of Dundee.
- d **Sinéad O'Donnell, *Trigger* (2021)**  
Single-channel video, colour, sound.  
Documentation of performance. 26:48 minutes.  
Courtesy the artist.
- e **Ratu R. Saraswati, *Meronce (Beading)* (2017)**  
Single-channel video, colour, sound.  
Documentation of performance at Museum Sejarah Jakarta. 2:29 minutes. Courtesy the artist and Jakarta Biennale.
- f **Marintan Sirait, *Long Distance Call from Home* (2012)** Single-channel video, colour, silent.  
Documentation of performance at Pala Project (2012), Studio Plesungan, Indonesia. 5:35 minutes. Courtesy the artist.

Video documentation of performances by artists participating in *Present to Presence*, a performance art laboratory at Ikon Gallery led by Melati Suryodarmo, 31 May–4 June.

## SECOND FLOOR



9 ***Membran (2019)***

Exhibition print, lamba on aluminium dibond, each 119 × 80 cm. Courtesy the artist and ShanghART.

10 ***Self Portrait (triptych) (2018)***

Digital C-print, each 60 × 90 cm, framed. Courtesy the artist and ShanghART.

These self-portraits capture Suryodarmo against backgrounds resembling photographic studios where identity is often staged. Overlapping outlines of the artist's body trace dynamic actions, while hairstyles, costumes and gestures reference East Asian theatre and painting. The white dress and make-up in *Membran* evoke the influence of Japanese Butoh; an avant-garde dance characterised by slow, contorted movements.

## SECOND FLOOR

11a **Eikoh Hosoe, *Kamaitachi* #17 (1968)**

Initialed in ink on recto; signed, titled and dated on verso. Silver gelatin print, printed later. Image: 36 × 55 cm. © Eikoh Hosoe.

Courtesy Michael Hoppen Gallery.

b **Eikoh Hosoe, *Kamaitachi* #23 (1965)**

Signed in ink on recto; signed, titled and dated in pencil on verso. Silver gelatin print, printed later. Image: 37 × 55 cm © Eikoh Hosoe.

Courtesy Michael Hoppen Gallery.

Founder of Japanese Butoh Tatsumi Hijikata (1928–86) is photographed performing a psychic dance in a rural landscape. Hijikata's ecstatic movements show a connection to nature and emotional release.

## SECOND FLOOR



- 12 **Karolina Nieduza, *Wavy Rock Garden* (2016)**  
Single channel projection, colour, sound.  
5:39 minutes. Courtesy the artist.

Archaeologist and performer Karolina Nieduza films Suryodarmo's father Suprpto Suryodarmo — the founder of Amerta Movement practice — on a windswept beach in Devon. Interaction with the surrounding landscape embodies the concept of multiple selves within a constantly changing environment.



## SECOND FLOOR



### 13 ***Kleidungsaffe* (2006)**

Performance–installation. 3-hour delegated performance. Clothes, wire, scaffold, foam, cardboard. 650 × 250 (diameter) cm. Courtesy the artist and ShanghART.

Translated as ‘Clothes Ape’, *Kleidungsaffe* reflects on excessive consumption and the desire to belong. The multicoloured structure contains more than 700 donated clothes from the West Midlands ethical recycling business Collection 4 Clothes. A solo performer sits on a perch and embraces it for 3 hours (Thursdays and Saturdays, 2–5pm). Their presence represents the social and economic ladder that many migrants feel they must climb to be accepted by society.

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It is developed in collaboration with Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Nusantara (Museum MACAN), Jakarta, Indonesia.

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