

EVENTS

PERFORMANCES:
UNIFORM AND BENJAMIN ORD
Friday 6 April, 7pm
Free, no booking required
Sriwhana Spong is joined by long-term collaborators, art collective Uniform and dancer and choreographer Benjamin Ord, for performances using instruments and a score from the exhibition.

EXHIBITION TOUR
Saturday 27 April, 2–3pm
Free, booking advised
Simone Hesselberg, Spike Island/
UWE MA Curating student discusses the role of textile, sculpture and performance in Sriwhana Spong's work.

IN CONVERSATION:
SRIWHANA SPONG AND VERA MEY
Thursday 23 May, 6.30–8pm
£5/£3 (free for Associates), booking advised
Sriwhana Spong discusses her exhibition and the wider themes in her work with curator Vera Mey, whose area of focus is modern and contemporary Southeast Asian art.

Sriwhana Spong's exhibition is supported by Henry Moore Foundation, Creative New Zealand and Jan Warburton Charitable Trust.

The artist wishes to thank Andrew and Michael at Michael Lett Gallery, Stephanie Post, Jan and Clare Warburton, Made Gede, the Sanur family, and household pets, Ore and Ingot, Owen Pratt, Vera Mey and Tendai Mutambu, Tina Pihema, Stefan Neville, Sjionel Timu, Benjamin Ord, and Nikki Morgans at the Forestry Commission.

INFORMATION

Spike Island is an international centre for the development of contemporary art and design, located in Bristol's harbour area. Admission to the gallery is free.

Spike Island
133 Cumberland Road
Bristol BS1 6UX

0117 929 2266
admin@spikeisland.org.uk
spikeisland.org.uk

Facebook: Spikeland
Twitter: @_Spikeland
Instagram: @Spikeland

OPENING HOURS
Gallery: Tuesday to Sunday, 12–5pm
(during exhibitions)
Café: Monday to Friday, 8.30am–5pm
Saturday to Sunday, 10am–5pm

Spike Island

SRIWHANA SPONG *IDA-IDA*

6 April – 16 June 2019

Sriwhana Spong's exhibition *Ida-Ida* includes sculpture, film and live performances that inhabit the central gallery space and circle around it. Several works have been made specifically for this exhibition, while others are part of an ongoing series, such as Spong's personal orchestra of instruments. There are ever unravelling threads and ties between the works, which all come together in her new film *The painter-tailor* (2019).

Spong's practice draws thematically on subjects including the writings of medieval women mystic writers; her knowledge of dance and music; and how the colonisation of Indonesia impacted on image making and her own family history. Her work can be enjoyed for its colours, forms, sounds, the atmospheres it creates, and the behaviour of the materials she chooses. This text introduces some of the varied influences that resonate throughout the exhibition.

IDA-IDA

'Ida' (pronounced 'eeda' in Balinese) is used to denote someone from the Balinese Brahmana priestly caste and means 'highness'. It is also the name used to refer to the bats from the temple near the artist's ancestral home in Bali, which feature in *The painter tailor*. In this sense, 'Ida' describes the way the banner dramatically draws the eye from the ground right up to the heights of the gallery and bathes it in a beautiful tinted daylight. 'Ida', as in the Western name, comes from the Germanic word 'id', meaning 'work' or 'labour'. These layered meanings within language reflect Spong's interest in the balance

between the sacred and profane, the spiritual and the everyday. Language, as a carrier of meaning and a device for concealment, is one of many themes that flit and weave between the works in this exhibition.

For *Ida Ida* (2019) Spong has hand-dyed silk in tea and Coca-Cola and sewn it into panels to create a banner, which has been torn from top to bottom to create a threshold into a second 'room' containing her orchestra of instruments. The use of PG Tips to dye the silk is a nod to the building's previous use as a tea-packing factory. This series is inspired by American musician and writer Ian F. Svenonius's essay *The Bloody Latte: Vampirism as Mass Movement* (2006). Svenonius tells a history of beverages and describes their movement across continents as acts of colonial bloodsucking, whereby colonisers develop a voracious taste for drinks derived from the produce of the lands and peoples they have colonised.

INSTRUMENTS

The instruments are part of an evolving personal orchestra based on the gamelan, a traditional music ensemble made up of percussion instruments. Traditionally the pitch of the Balinese gamelan varies between villages, each using slight variations of tone, meaning that the instruments from one gamelan cannot be used in a gamelan of another village. Therefore sound becomes an indicator of a community's unique relationship to place, history, body, and custom.

Instrument E (Tina) (2019) is a new instrument based on a 'bell tree'. It was made in Bristol with the assistance of local bronze foundry Ore and Ingot. The bells have been made from eight separate casts of the artist's cupped hands, so each one is unique and has a different pitch. The instrument is named after Spong's friend and collaborator Tina Pihema, who will perform with the instrument for the first time together with her artist collective Uniform on the opening night.

Each instrument in the orchestra has an accompanying costume. *Costume for Instrument D (Vera)* (2018) is a dress dyed in Coca-Cola and painted with vegetable oil. Spong's use of everyday imbued liquids is an attempt to create an intimacy between the audience and the work through recognition and the bodily memory of tasting and drinking. As with the liquids used to dye the silk for *Ida-Ida* (2019), the aluminium cast french fry chimes of *Instrument D (Vera)* (2018) refer to the daily offerings made by her family in Bali, in which commonplace objects become sites of the sacred.

On the hour, visitors will hear the striking of the gong of *Instrument C (Claire)*, but for most of the exhibition, the instruments exist as sculptures, only occasionally activated by musicians during performances (see Events on back page).

THE SCORE

Cum vox sanguinis (Spike Island) is a score written for *Instrument C (Claire)* that combines part of the score for a 12th century hymn written by the German mystic Hildegard of Bingen and the opening hours of the Spike Island galleries. By forcing two systems together—the system of musical notation and the opening hours of the gallery—a score is created that enables the gong to be struck by a Spike Island volunteers at various points in the day.

THE DEATH OF BHOMA

Each section of this large hanging canvas is painted in Indian Ink. It notates three different metres found in the epic 12th century poem, *Bhomāntaka*, which was composed in Old Javanese by an unnamed author. The different rhythms of each section, which rest on the opposition of long (–) and short (U) syllables, create a dense pattern on the canvas. The three verses describe the death of Bohma, the scene depicted in the painting by Spong's grandfather I Gusti Made Rundu (1918-1993) which features in the film *The painter-tailor*.

In the first verse of the poem, the poet asks that the text become a worthy place for Kāma (the God of Love) to inhabit. The poet sees the poem as a temple, an architecture, in which Kāma can inhabit the material realm. The canvas acts as both an architecture for a body (repeated in the *Costume for Instrument E*), the score for a performance, and a threshold between two parts of the gallery.

MOTHER

The four wax and clay sculptures are based on the line of the Virgin Mary's lap in Michaelangelo's *Pietà* (1498–1499)—the marble Renaissance sculpture of Mary holding the body of Christ. Spong has repeatedly drawn the line of

Mary's lap from memory, so that there is slight variation between each length of waxed and painted wood. During the exhibition, the porcelain that has been placed on top of the wax framework will slowly dry out, shrink, and pull away from the structure that supports it. The clay thus both resists and relies on its base, a movement much like the way we experience language—as something that writes us and through which we find our own ways of speaking.

THE PAINTER-TAILOR

A number of threads are brought together in Spong's new film, *The painter-tailor* (2019). The film constructs a family portrait from 16mm film and HD video, collected by several family members, centred on the courtyard of the the ancestral home in Sanur, Bali. The hook to which the film repeatedly returns is an untitled painting by Spong's grandfather, I Gusti Made Rundu, which hangs in one of the bedrooms. The narrative weaves a net made from the knots and loops of familial ties and everyday life, in which fragments relating to the effects of colonisation, invasion, and tourism are caught.

The frame is a structure repeated throughout the exhibition and also within the film: the ornate frame of I Gusti Made Rundu's painting, the photographic frame, a frame of film, the way the sweeping curtain and the lengths of black rope frame the gong in the double height space. The frame is a structure of support and of boundary. In Spong's work it relates the political with the private. From a crate of paintings brought as gifts by the Dutch East India Company, the introduction of the pictorial frame by the Dutch painters who settled in Bali, to tourists' demands for framed work and the frame of their Western gaze, colonisation changed the nature of image making in Bali. The frame, its boundaries and what exceeds it, is explored through her family's intimate relationship with a single painting.

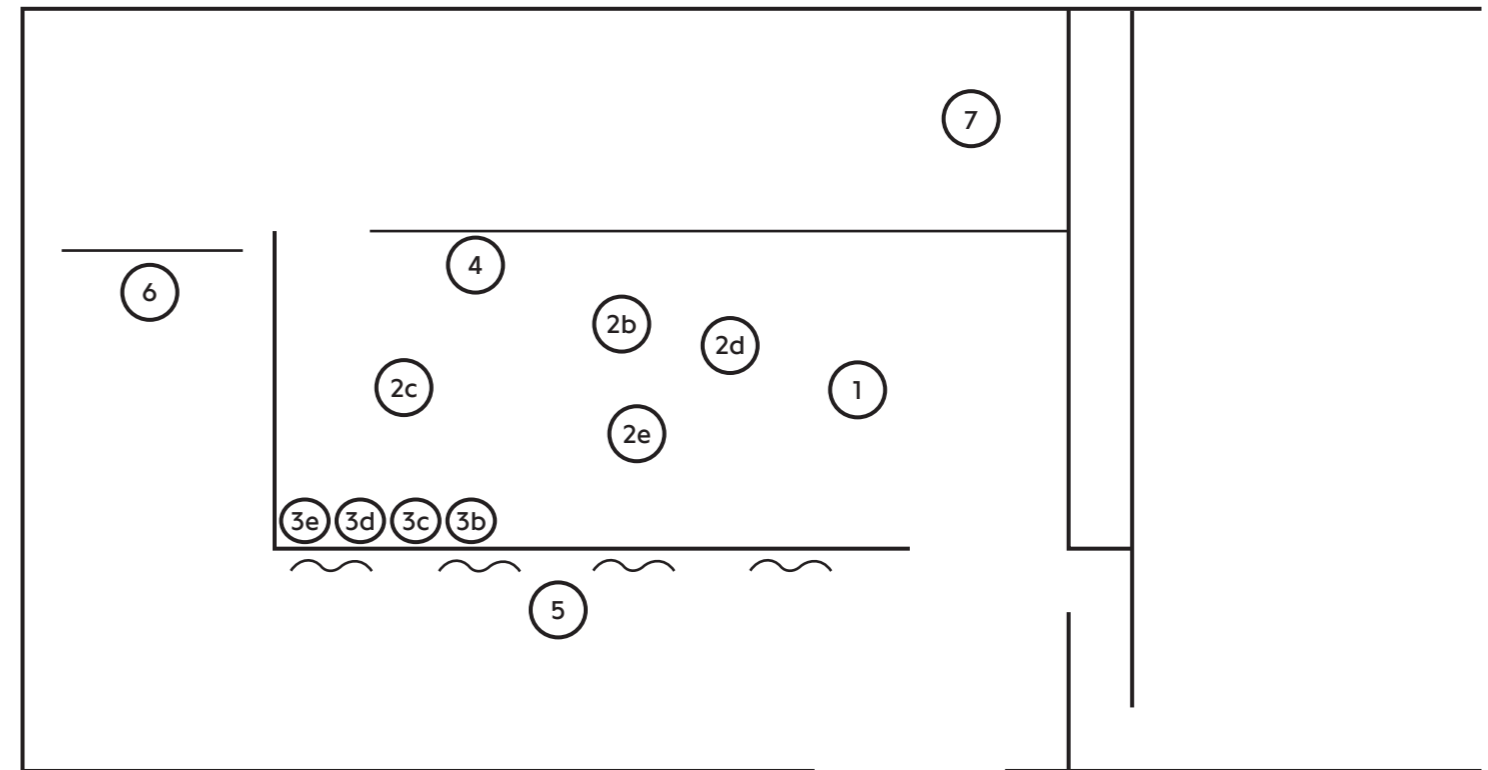
BIOGRAPHY

Sriwhana Spong is a New Zealand artist currently living in London, UK. In 2012 she was nominated for the Walters Prize, New Zealand's largest contemporary art prize. Recent solo exhibitions include: *A hook but no fish*, Pump House Gallery, London; and the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth (2018); *having-seen-snake*, Michael Lett, Auckland (2017); *Im Wintergarten*, daadgalerie, Berlin (2016); *Oceanic Feeling* (with Maria Taniguchi), ICA, Singapore (2016).

Recent group exhibitions include: *Great Movements of Feeling*, Gertrude Contemporary, Melbourne; *If These Stones Could Sing*, KADIST, San Francisco; *Can Tame Anything*, Dowse Art Museum, Lower Hutt (2018); *The Score*, Ian Potter Museum of Art, Melbourne (2017); *Inhabiting Space*, Adam Art Gallery, Wellington (2016).

She has undertaken residencies including: Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth (2018); Gasworks, London (2016); DAAD, Berlin (2015); ISCP, New York (2008).

FLOORPLAN



LIST OF WORKS

1 *Ida-Ida* (2019)
850 × 450 cm
Silk hand-dyed in Coca-Cola and tea, metal chain

2b *Instrument B (Vivian)* (2016)
47 × 76 × 26cm
Aluminium bars, wood, Perspex, rubber, felt, brass
Courtesy Michael Lett Gallery, Auckland

2c *Instrument C (Claire)* (2017)
93 × 63.5 × 0.5 cm
Aluminium bell plate, foliage, rope, wood
Courtesy Michael Lett Gallery, Auckland

2d *Instrument D (Vera)* (2018)
59 × 157 × 32 cm
Aluminium, steel, lacquer, plastic
Courtesy Michael Lett Gallery, Auckland

2e *Instrument E (Tina)* (2019)
c. 200 × 100 × 100 cm
Steel, bronze

(costumes for instruments)

3b *Costume for Instrument B (Vivian)* (2016)
Dimensions variable
Courtesy Michael Lett Gallery, Auckland

3c *Costume for Instrument C (Claire)* (2017)
Dimensions variable
Courtesy Michael Lett Gallery, Auckland

3d *Costume for Instrument D (Vera)* (2018)
Dimensions variable
Courtesy Michael Lett Gallery, Auckland

3e *Costume for Instrument E (Tina)* (2019)
Dimensions variable

(score printed on paper and pasted to wall with honey)

4 *Cum vox sanguinis (Spike Island)* (2019)
42 × 59.4 cm
Print on paper, honey

5 *Mother* (2019)
Dimensions variable
Wood, paint, wax, porcelain

6 *Death of Bhoma* (2019)
375 × 320 cm
Canvas, Indian Ink, steel tube and pulley system

7 *The painter-tailor* (2019)
16mm film transferred to HD video, digital video, iPhone video
(Sound by Owen Pratt)