

Presentasi Khusus | Special Presentation

Marcos Kueh

Kenyalang  
Circus

MUSEUM  
MACAN

23.05-02.10.2026

# Introduction

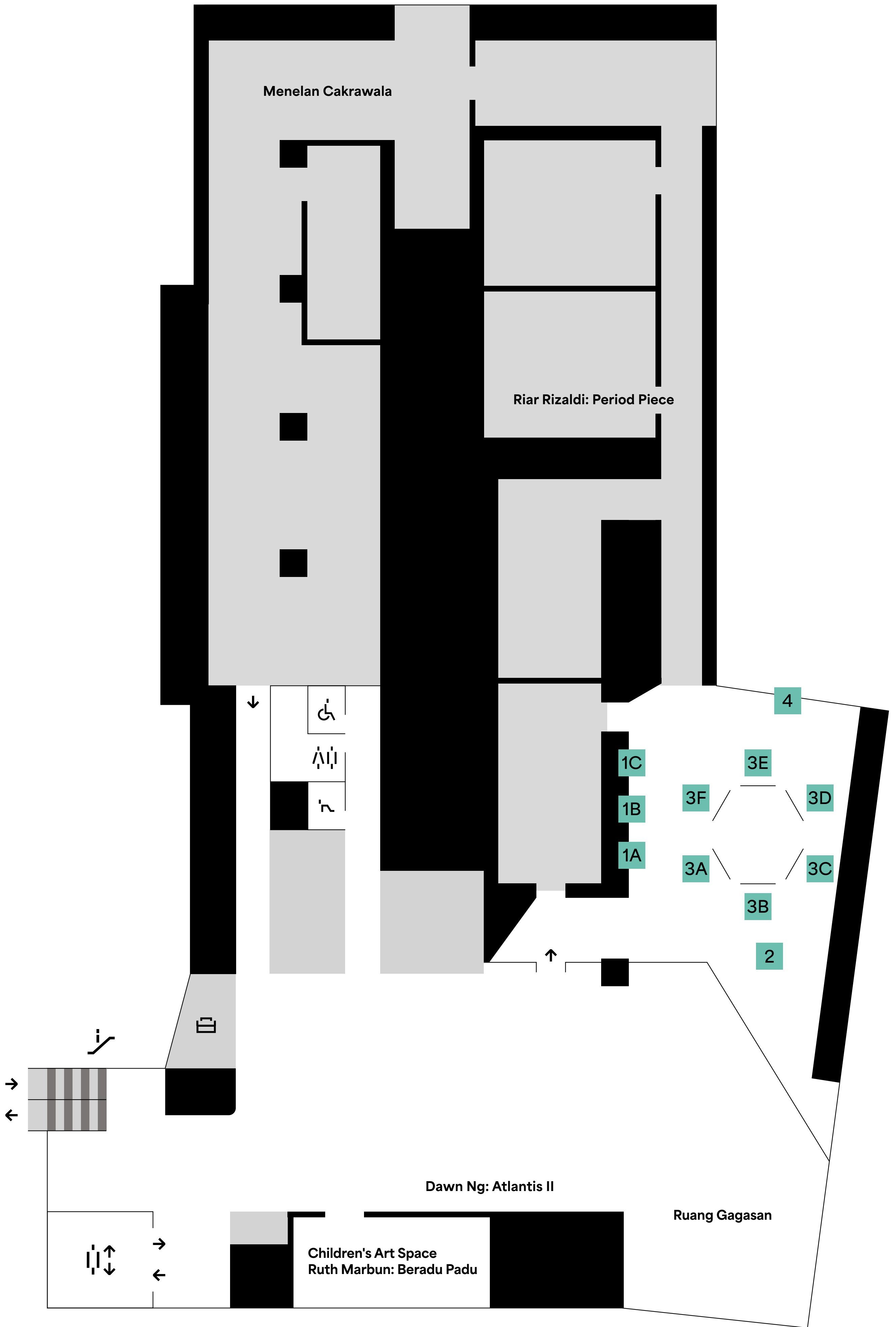
Museum MACAN presents the work of Marcos Kueh (b. Malaysia, 1995), a textile artist from Sarawak whose practice engages the shifting meanings of cultural imagery in a rapidly transforming region. Trained in graphic design, Kueh operates at the intersection of vernacular textile traditions and the visual languages of contemporary popular culture. Through industrial digital weaving, he reworks sacred Bornean symbols and transforms them into complex visual fields that question how cultural traditions are mobilised, circulated, and reinterpreted within modernity.

The works in *Kenyalang Circus* emerge from the socio-economic landscape of Sarawak, where tourism and development have increasingly framed cultural identity as a resource. Since the nineteenth century, particularly following the era of the White Rajahs, Sarawak has often been represented through colonial narratives that cast the region as an exotic frontier. By the late twentieth century, these narratives found renewed expression through ethno-tourism, where cultural practices from indigenous communities were repositioned within staged performances of heritage. Within this context, Kueh draws attention to a critical tension: spiritual artefacts that once mediated relationships between human and spirit worlds are reconfigured within the circuits of global capital and spectacle.

Kueh's work resonates with broader conditions across the Nusantara region, where cultural distinctiveness is increasingly mobilised as symbolic capital within tourism economies. At the same time, his practice foregrounds a temporal disjunction. Processes of weaving that once unfolded slowly; embedded within ritual, memory, and communal knowledge, are translated into the accelerated logic of industrial digital production.

Ultimately, *Kenyalang Circus* asks how cultural inheritances endure under contemporary pressures. In doing so, Kueh reveals how memory, identity, and spectacle are continuously negotiated within the shifting economies of the present.

# Exhibition Map



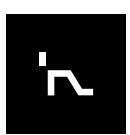
Cloakroom



Toilet



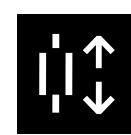
Escalator to Level 2  
(Museum Lobby & Ticketing)



Nursery



Accessible Toilet



Elevator to Level 2 (Museum Lobby & Ticketing), G, B1 (ATM, Mushalla, Parking Area)

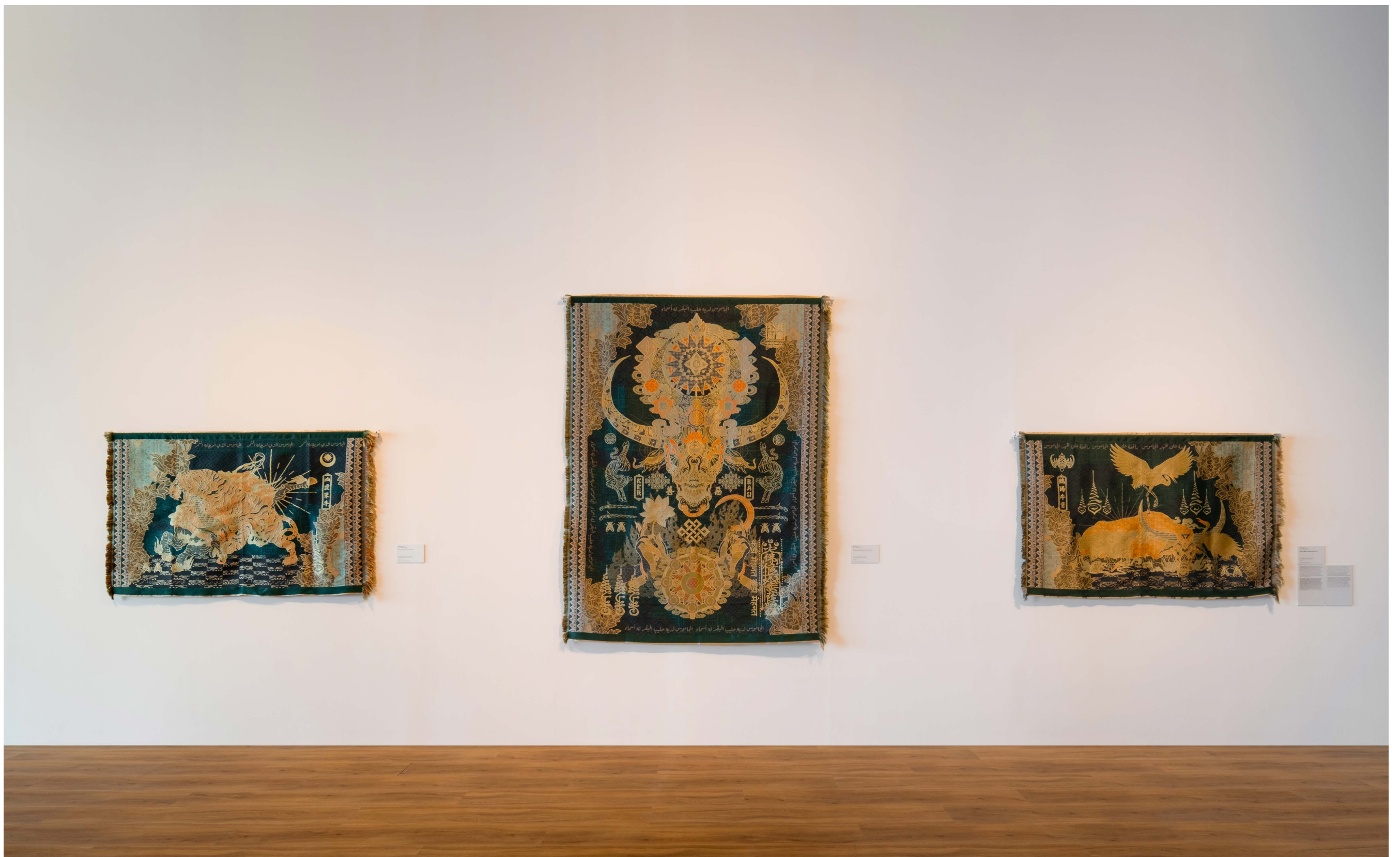
- 1A ***Kerbau Ditangkap Harimau*** (2024)  
Industrial weaving (8 colours) with recycled PET  
110 x 170 cm  
Courtesy of ara contemporary
- 1B ***Kerbau punya Susu, Sapi punya Nama*** (2017)  
Industrial weaving (8 colours) with recycled PET  
235 x 170 cm  
Courtesy of ara contemporary
- 1C ***Bangau Hinggap di Belakang Kerbau*** (2017)  
Industrial weaving (8 colours) with recycled PET  
110 x 170 cm  
Courtesy of ara contemporary
- 2 ***Kenyalang Circus: Gratitude*** (2023)  
Industrial weaving (8 colours) with recycled PET  
Dimensions variable  
Courtesy of Galerie Ron Mandos
- 3A ***Woven Poster #09a: Homo Savagius Obedius*** (2023)  
Industrial weaving (8 colours) with recycled PET  
235 x 170 cm  
Courtesy of The Back Room
- 3B ***Woven Poster #07: Money Minded*** (2023)  
Industrial weaving (8 colours) with recycled PET  
235 x 170 cm  
Courtesy of The Back Room
- 3C ***Woven Poster #09b: Homo Maiden Exotica*** (2023)  
Industrial weaving (8 colours) with recycled PET  
235 x 170 cm  
Courtesy of The Back Room
- 3D ***Woven Poster #07: Money Minded*** (2023)  
Industrial weaving (8 colours) with recycled PET  
235 x 170 cm  
Courtesy of The Back Room
- 3E ***Woven Poster #10: Homo Servants Erotica*** (2023)  
Industrial weaving (8 colours) with recycled PET  
235 x 170 cm  
Courtesy of The Back Room
- 3F ***Woven Poster #08: Primitive Performance*** (2023)  
Industrial weaving (8 colours) with recycled PET  
235 x 170 cm  
Courtesy of The Back Room
- 4 ***Kenyalang Circus: Nenek Moyang*** (2023)  
Industrial weaving (8 colours) with recycled PET  
Dimensions variable  
Courtesy of Galerie Ron Mandos

***Kerbau Ditangkap Harimau (2024)***  
***Kerbau punya Susu, Sapi punya Nama (2024)***  
***Bangau Hinggap di Belakang Kerbau (2024)***

Industrial weaving (8 colours) with recycled PET

Variable dimension

Courtesy of ara contemporary



In *Kerbau* series, Kueh examines how animal symbolism reflects social hierarchy, labour, and systems of value within Malaysian society. Across the series, the buffalo appears as a figure associated with agrarian labour and obedience. In Malay proverbs “kerbau dicucuk hidungnya” (“a buffalo led by a ring through its nose”), the animal often signifies submission and unquestioning labour. Yet throughout the nusantara archipelago, the buffalo has historically remained inseparable from agricultural survival, where its physical strength sustained cultivation and communal life.

In Chinese culture, the white cranes, as seen in *Bangau Hinggap di Belakang Kerbau* (2024), carry symbolic association with wisdom, spiritual elevation, and longevity, while the Malayan tiger on *Kerbau Ditangkap Harimau* (2024) functions as a symbol of authority and power. The buffalo’s horns are rendered monumentally, almost crown-like, transforming the animal from a figure of burden into a sacred presence. The cranes perch upon the buffalo’s body, while the tiger appears locked in confrontation with it, revealing a social dynamic in which prestige and power remain structurally dependent on labour that is both essential and often undervalued.



***Woven Poster #06: Exotic Hospitality (2023)***

***Woven Poster #07: Money Minded (2023)***

***Woven Poster #08: Primitive Performance (2023)***

***Woven Poster #09a: Homo Savagius Obedius (2023)***

***Woven Poster #09b: Homo Maiden Exotica (2023)***

***Woven Poster #10: Homo Servants Erotica (2023)***

Industrial weaving (8 colours) with recycled PET

Each 235 x 170 cm

Courtesy of The Back Room



Several hybrid figures appear as cleaners, factory workers, or service labourers wearing traditional masks from Indigenous communities in Borneo. Historically, these masks functioned as mediators between humans, ancestral spirits, and the unseen world. Kueh combines Bornean motifs with Mandarin phrases such as 发财 (prosperity), 异国风味 (exotic flavour), and 服从 (obedience), reflecting his position as a Chinese-Malaysian artist from Sarawak while producing a visual language where multiple cultural inheritances converge. Through these juxtapositions, cultural identity becomes entangled with tourism, labour, and contemporary economies.

These tensions mirror broader labour conditions across Southeast Asia. Malaysia continues to host one of the region's largest migrant labour populations, with recent estimates suggesting more than three million non-citizens living in the country, many originating from Indonesia, Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar, and India. Kuala Lumpur remains a major centre for migrant labour, particularly in sectors associated with so-called "3D jobs," a term derived from postwar Japanese labour discourse and later adopted globally to describe work considered "dirty, dangerous, and demeaning."

# Kenyalang Circus: Nenek Moyang (2023)

Industrial weaving (8 colours) with recycled PET

Variable dimension

Courtesy of Galerie Ron Mandos



**Across several Indigenous communities in Borneo, waterfalls are understood as passages connecting the earthly realm with the world of ancestors, where spirits are believed to descend temporarily into human life. In *Kenyalang Circus: Nenek Moyang*, Marcos Kueh translates this cosmological belief into a monumental textile installation composed of vertically suspended woven banners that resemble cascading waterfalls.**

**Rather than presenting ancestry as a distant memory, Kueh positions ancestral presence as something that continues to observe the present, as if witnessing the “circus” of contemporary life unfolding below. The repeated phrase “reconciliation” introduces an ongoing negotiation between different temporal orders: ancestral cosmology and the accelerated rhythms of contemporary society. Rendered through fluorescent industrial weaving techniques associated with advertising banners and mass-produced imagery, the work collapses distinctions between sacred space, spectacle, and commercial display.**

**Do not touch the artworks,  
even clean hands damage artworks.**

**No food and drink are permitted in the galleries.**

**Cameras are not allowed; DSLR, SLR and Polaroid.**

No selfie stick and other professional camera equipment are allowed.

**Only phone photography is allowed. No flash photography.**

**For security reasons, all bags will be checked at  
the Gallery entrance.**

All belongings measuring more than 32 x 24 x 15 cm must be stored in the Cloakroom.

**Speak softly and walk calmly.**

**Set your phone on silent mode and refrain from  
phone conversations in the galleries.**

**No running or roller shoes allowed.**

**Pencil sketching is permitted in the galleries with  
sketchbooks no larger than A4 in size.**

Charcoal, pastel, permanent markers, watercolour and oil paint are not permitted.

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