

ART COLLECTOR



THIS IS NO FANTASY PICKS UP BADRA AJI

The Melbourne gallery announces representation of the Indonesian-born drawer and videographer.

Words: Rose of Sharon Leake

Melbourne's THIS IS NO FANTASY gallery today announced its new representation of **Badra Aji**. The Melbourne-based, Indonesian-born artist works primarily with drawing and video to directly connect with his experience of immigrating to Australia.

"I make work directly from my personal experiences," he says. "In a way, my practice is an investigation of my personal life and art-making. Having moved to Australia in my teenage years, I find poetic resonance in things that are displaced. When I first arrived I was drawn to the everyday objects that felt foreign to me. As I spend more time in Australia, I feel as if certain things here remain unfamiliar to me, while some things from my own culture become more and more distant. For me, my drawings and videos are the manifestations of this feeling."

To date Aji has been a finalist in numerous top art prizes, including the Paul Guest Drawing Prize in 2018 and the Dobell Drawing Prize in 2019, and he was awarded the Majlis Travelling Scholarship upon graduating from the Victorian College before receiving a City of Melbourne Arts Grant in 2020 for his work *Lonely Is Not Always Quiet*, a series of video works about finding comfort in the company of oneself. Representation by one of Melbourne's premier galleries has hence come as no surprise.

"We were attracted to Badra's work because of the intimate and personal nature of his drawings and video works," says THIS IS NO FANTASY directors **Nicola Stein** and **Dianne Tanzer**. "We like the way Badra's work hints at his experiences, both here and in Indonesia, while always remaining enigmatic. Badra's works feel like personal snapshots or a personal diary that he allows us to glimpse. Migrant experiences are also an important part of the Australian narrative. It's not often that we see a young artist with such fine skill sets in drawing."

The gallery will show a series of Aji's works online at Sydney Contemporary Explore next month and will present a solo show of his new works in July 2022.

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Image: Badra Aji. Courtesy: the artist and THIS IS NO FANTASY, Melbourne.

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