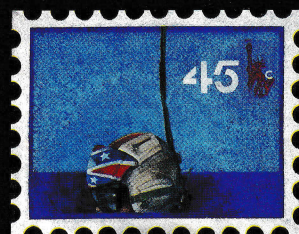




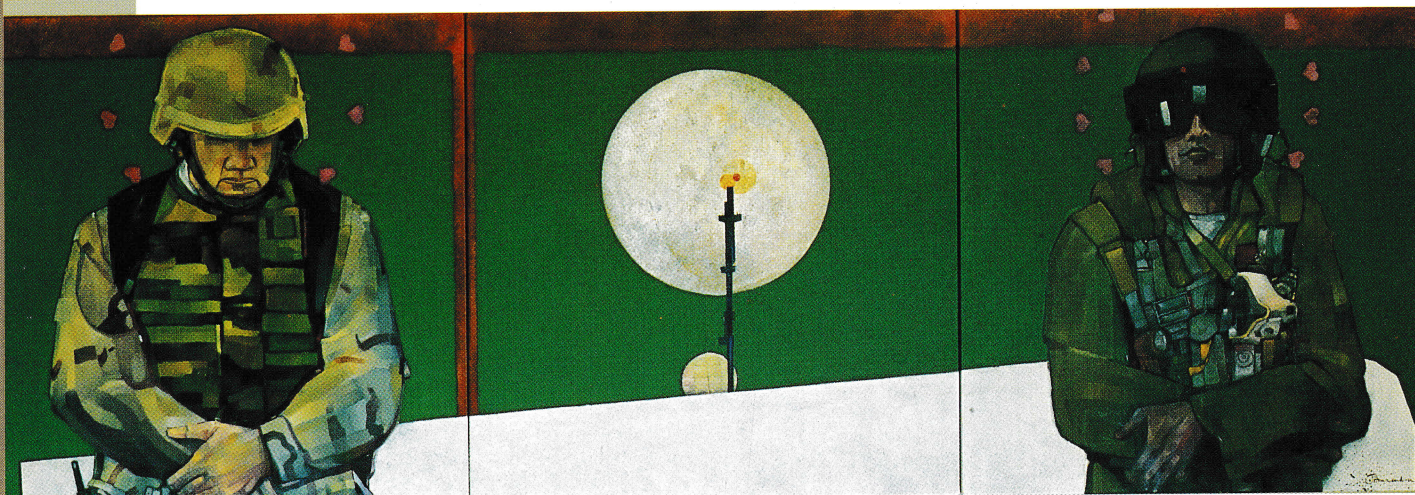
anurendra  
jegadeva  
HEADRESSES



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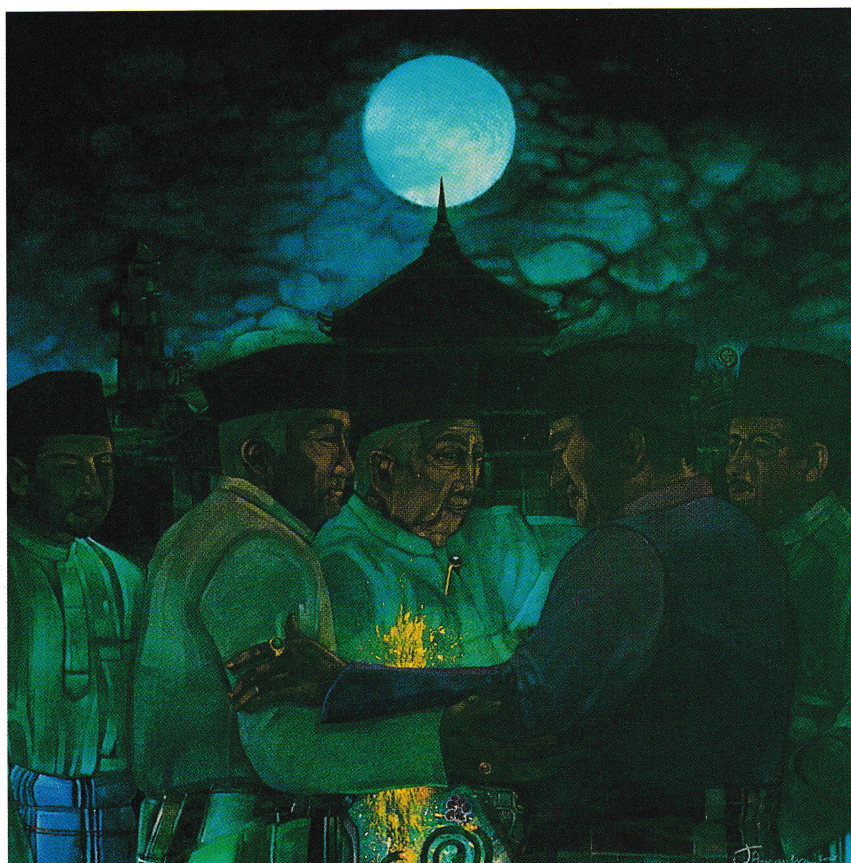
**Sentinels at the Temple of Oil**, 2004, oil on canvas, 76 x 228.5 cm (triptych)



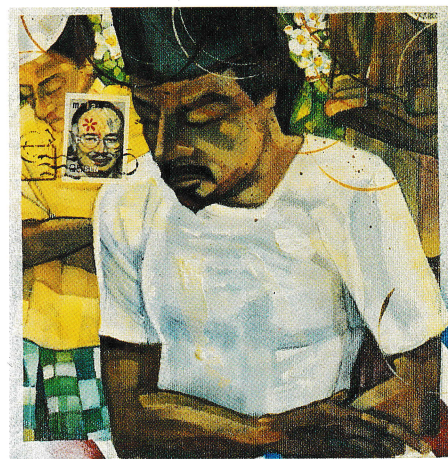
**Patriot I**, 2004, oil and acrylic on canvas, 91.5 x 91.5 cm







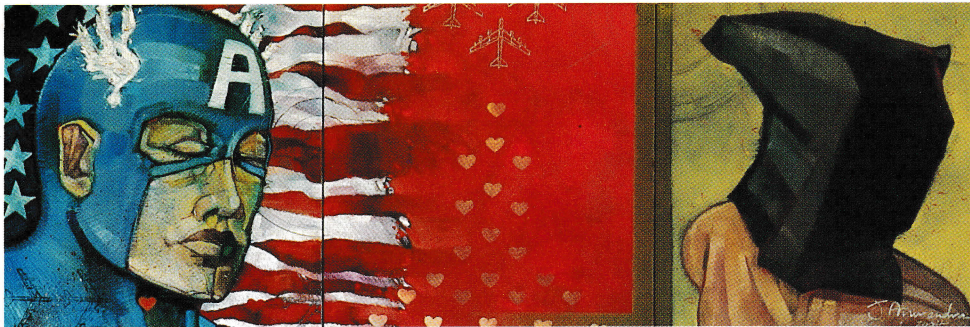
**The Promise**, 2005, oil on canvas, 91.5 x 91.5 cm, and 23 x 30.5cm (x2)



**Postcards from Nostalgia I and II**, 2004, oil on canvas, both 20.5 x 20.5 cm



**Fine Line**, 2004, oil on canvas, 20.5 x 20.5 cm (x3), and 7.5 x 7.5 cm (x3)



**Malay Madonna with Cat - 'Hitam'**, 2004, oil on canvas, 91.5 x 91.5 cm





Anurendra Jegadeva is a narrative artist, a painter of stories. He believes in the enduring power of the painted image, and has worked consistently to forge an effective narrative approach to contemporary and historical themes. His works stem from a personal response to or experience of his subject - whether the Indian community in Malaysia, Asian immigrant life in Australia, or the Iraq war on his television screen, weaving an autobiographical layer into the complex reality he seeks to capture. To accommodate that complexity, he has adopted a broad range of strategies.

*Headdresses* moves away from the "epic" form of previous exhibitions, and is instead pivoted on a motif - a common element which varies insignificance according to its context. As we move through the paintings and objects, and their many different stories, our reading is punctuated by theatrical and comic masks, skull caps and head scarves, helmets and hoods, and shaven heads. The headdress is a symbol chosen by or imposed upon its wearer to define him or her. It is this very notion of symbol and agenda - cultural, political, social, personal - which links the stories in this body of work, representing many concerns and ideas central to the artist's larger vision.

Noble Jentayuh, fearless king of the birds, defender of truth and loyalty, grown fat and dark-skinned, is lost in Geelong, Victoria. The mask of the Balinese dance sets the scene for *Headdresses*. In difficult times post the October 2002 Bali bombing, Anurendra managed to procure two masks from the son of a celebrated Balinese dancer, after years of trying (used masks are traditionally left at the temple when a dancer dies). Back in the suburbs of Melbourne, he wore the masks for two days, and translated the experience into the *Fat Rangda* and *Fat Jentayuh* paintings. Anurendra strips away the artist's romantic notion of Bali as cultural idyll to reveal a harsher reality - that of alienation and displacement, of the loss of a sense of rooted culture in the contemporary world. The artist, as Jentayuh or Rangda, struggles in his new environment, to

remember, to deal with his loss. The line between good and evil, between Jentayuh and Rangda - terrible queen of the witches, also becomes irrelevant.

Sitting on his couch last year, the artist witnessed the Abu Ghraib incident in Iraq on television, triggering an exploration of headdresses in relation to power. In *Fine Line* and *Sentinels at the Temple of Oil*, we enter the theatre of war as it is presented to us. *Patriot I* and *II*, pairing a Chinese opera figure with a Power Puff girl, describe cultural aggression. *Heroes and Villains* commemorates past icons of good and evil alike in

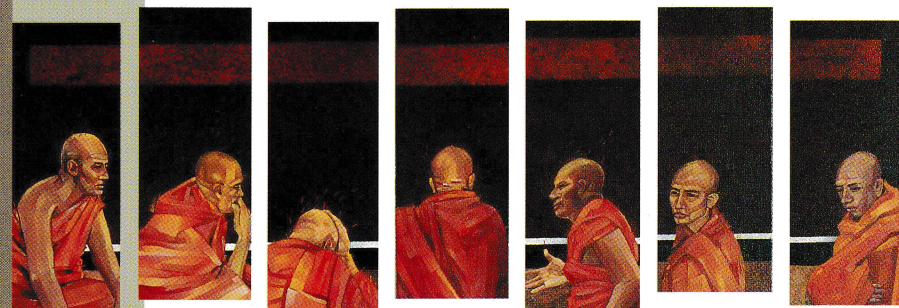
**Parliamentary Monks, 2004, oil on canvas, 23 x 7.5 cm (x7)**

a series of postage stamps. In this narrative full of loaded symbols, we can in fact no longer distinguish the heroes from the villains, and can only recline back as spectators, shaking our heads at the irony. If for Anurendra all lines seem blurred in the geopolitical arena, his stories closer to home, of Malaysia and Sri Lanka, make up an all together different narrative, where the clichés seem to ring alarmingly true. These are stories about community and specific socio-political agenda. Here the symbol of the headdress as a means of identification retains its potency - we use it to define ourselves against one another.

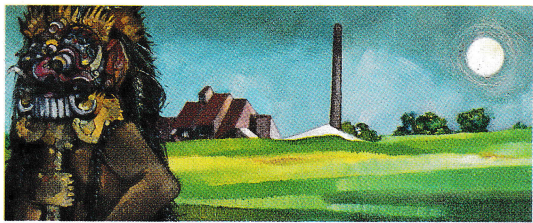
In *Parliamentary Monks* and *The Promise* we see a brotherhood of shaven heads, a brotherhood of songkok-ed heads forming a powerful corps, making decisions, making a pact. In the *Malay Madonna* paintings, the artist portrays the Muslim woman, in her tudung, as the new classic image of Malaysian female beauty, diffident and mysterious. *Head of the Family in Pink & Blue* and *Stain II* explore stereotypes of caste and religion, and the condition of women within Malaysian Indian culture. The bare or shaven head represents penance and sacrifice, also vulnerability.

The sheer range of this body of work has driven Anurendra to employ a panoply of narrative tools - recurring motifs, colour symbolism, the framing devices of temple carvers, church painters and comic book illustrators, the vocabulary of a multifarious existence, the formal integrity and ambition of a painterly figurative tradition to which he remains loyal, references to his heroes in art, Malaysian or otherwise, circumspection, a sense of humour, rage, sympathy and self confession. Alienation, moral ambivalence, cultural loss, social tension, inequity and homesickness cut through Anurendra's work like a dark refrain, and yet the artist, in his approach, stands true to all that is opposite.

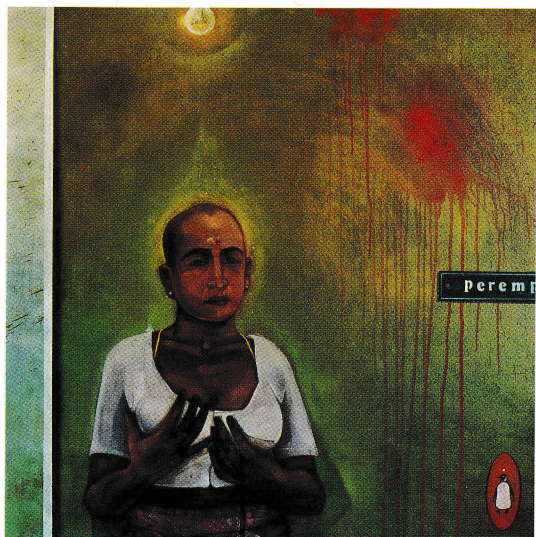
**Beverly Yong, 2005**







**Disoriented Fat Rangda I, II, III, 2004,**  
oil on canvas, 7.5 x 23 cm (x3)



**Stain II, 2005, oil on canvas, 91.5 x 91.5 cm**

front cover  
**Heroes and Villains Commemorative Series I-XIV,**  
2005, oil on canvas, 35.5 x 25.5/28 cm (x14)

**ANURENDRA JEGADEVA** - born 1965, Johor, Malaysia

#### EDUCATION

- 1986 Foundation in Art & Design, Oxford Polytechnic
- 1993 LLB Honours, London University
- 2002 Master of Fine Art, Monash University

Anurendra is currently pursuing doctoral studies in art theory and practice at the Faculty of Art & Design, Monash University.

#### SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 1992 *Solo*, Civic Center, Petaling Jaya
- 1993 *A First Work*, Australian High Commission, Kuala Lumpur
- 1998 *Monk Couture*, The Private Gallery, Kuala Lumpur
- 1999 *Women & Elections*, Grafton Street Gallery, London
- 2001 *Migrant Adventures - People, Places and Other Assorted Things*, Australian High Commission, Kuala Lumpur and Faculty Gallery, Monash University
- 2003 *Melancholic Mantras*, Valentine Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur

#### SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 1996 *Men on Women*, MIB, Kuala Lumpur
- 1998 *Art & Nationalism - 40 Years of Malaysian Art*, National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur  
*A Decade of Malaysian Art*, Brunei Gallery SOAS, London  
*APA?, Asia Pacific People's Assembly*, Kuala Lumpur  
*Around the Body*, Maybank Gallery, Kuala Lumpur
- 1999 *Experiences*, Hill-Smith Fine Art, Adelaide  
*Experiences II*, Galeri Wan, Kuala Lumpur
- 2000 *Nationalism & Peace*, Galeri Petronas, Kuala Lumpur
- 2002 *Australian High Commission Retrospective - A Gathering of Artists 1982 - 2002*, Kuala Lumpur
- 2004 *ADRIFT*, Platform Gallery, Melbourne
- 2004 *Portraits*, Valentine Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur
- 2004 *Malaysian Art Now*, National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur

#### THE ARTIST WOULD LIKE TO THANK

Rahel Joseph  
HE Dato' N. Parameswaran  
HE Mr James Wise  
the Australian High Commission  
Inpa & Rupa!  
his family



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*Southeast Asian Paintings & Works of Art*

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