



ARTIST

Leonard Suryajaya

TITLE

Mask Fitting

DATE

2020

DIMENSIONS

16" H x 20" W

MEDIUM

Inkjet Prints

IMAGE NOTES

Edition Print 1/5 +3 AP

CATALOGUE NUMBER

2021.009

CURRENT LOCATION

2024-8D

LEONARD SURYAJAYA

BORN

1988

BIRTHPLACE

Indonesia

GENDER

Male

CITIZENSHIP

Indonesia

CULTURAL HERITAGE

Chinese, Indonesian

LIGHT WORK RELATIONSHIP

Artist-in-Residence, 2020
Remote Residency

LIGHT WORK PUBLICATIONS

Contact Sheet 212

BIOGRAPHY

Leonard Suryajaya (Chicago, IL) uses his work to test the boundaries of intimacy, community and family. He uses photography, video, performance and installation to show how the everyday is layered with histories, meanings and potential.

ESSAYS

/Lost in the papers and pounds of floral fabrics, /booming colors and all kinds of crazies and beauties, /hidden in the details of Leonard Suryajaya's photographs, /there is something inside these pictures that is truly—stranger. /Pick a most striking part. That's not an easy task. Heart beats in rhythm, pounding out of control. Anxiety sinks in through the slits and slips of what's unknown, but only at first. Suryajaya's art is about taking time, time to reconsider so you might allow imagination to reassemble what is possible. The probable is not limited to the control. Control is the hope of terror, taking the time to face what seems obtuse unleashes the reality of freedom. Free forms take flight in these pictures. People unite under the semblance of Suryajaya's lens. There it is! Flashes of folds and piles of paper get strung out on walls and body parts. Sometimes Cheerios too. Faces stretched, showering shots of color and light. The kinds of images that Suryajaya captures imagine what else is beyond the reach of reality. Elements cry out in celebrations. A formidable frown or a group smothered in simple gestures. All of the parts of the frames feeding currents of questions clustered around who it is to be an Indonesian immigrant, queer, caring being of desires and comforts. What is found is fabulous because Suryajaya is committed to play, reinvention, collaboration, and interpretation. 2020 was a long-term investment. Harmful, hurtful, uniquely advantageous, and complex. The emotions of quarantine are rife with the feelings associated with any human relation. Plant on top of all that the challenges of gaining citizenship, and what you will find already exists in the pictures Suryajaya constructs. But these frames are not solely his; they belong in part to the cooperation of those in the frame as well. The wealth of dynamism in the pictures is boundless because they have histories and humanity. They swell with the sorts of revelations that can only come from a vivid imagination. Countries we call home are hounds sometimes. Those places are all informed by complex systems of supremacy. Grounded in traumas and threats, they reflect the way different is viewed by figures and foundations that would never allow for such ideals to exist. So where these works are imaginative, they are not imaginary. They are still bound to what is realistic. Every day the capability of people is subjected to institution, to perceived dreams, to the trappings of an America that has coopted and capitalized that name. The United States is no America. Through Suryajaya these lands, rightfully so, have lesser-drawn borders. This language is necessary. It is necessary to realize that a civilization must acknowledge its biases. Our borders are an invention. These pictures are bound to the innovations of individuals who share their bodies and accoutrements. Doors open by way of growth when dreams come together to form better selves and better ideals. Dreaming is nice, but conquering a hurdle is nicer still. Suryajaya brings vision to the state of this red, white, and blue-blooded country. As battered as we may be and as indefensible as our founders and leaders continue to be, something is truly revealed in the minds of those like Leonard. Day-to-day life as an immigrant is different; he must recognize where his power is. Taking risks is where he makes home best. We're fighting for our lives here. Everyone wants better. We won't achieve that until we learn better how to build safety and support. Our next investments need to be in relationships by way of the feelings we permit one another. Time is temporary. Filling that space with the camaraderie of the uncertain will provide opportunities to let things bloom across tables and minds and ideals. Oppressors don't want makers like Leonard Suryajaya to have power like this. And why? Because these forms of power in the hands of folk like him will lead to others thinking new thoughts, formulating new ideas that will address blind spots that have existed for hundreds of years. 2020 was not a rehab. /Isolation can feel like that kind of a possibility, /but deeper than that, /what this time has been is an opportunity to work with fear as a baseline, /to form new ways of making creative fears that won't take control, /but will expose ignorance's and bigotries that might improve in ways we don't fully understand yet. Efreml Zelony-Mindell Efreml Zelony-Mindell is a white non-binary curator, editor, and artist working and living in New York City. www.efremzm.com Leonard Suryajaya lives in Chicago, IL, and completed his Light Work residency in the fall of 2020. www.leonardsuryajaya.com