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Four Malaysian artists (from left) Anurendra Jegadeva, Zulkifli Yusoff, Ivan Lam and H.H. Lim have been selected to represent the country at the first Malaysian Pavilion at the upcoming 58th Venice Biennale, the art world's global extravaganza, in May.

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4 Malaysians make art history at La Biennale in Venice, Italy

BY ROUWEN LIN

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ilham-gallery-hom-arttrans-sharon-chinprintmaking-ivan-lam/) Four Malaysian contemporary artists are set to make history in May at the country's first national pavilion at the 58th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia. Italy.

The works of Anurendra Jegadeva, 54, H.H. Lim, 65, Ivan Lam, 44, and Zulkifli Yusoff, 57, will be featured in an exhibition titled Holding Up A Mirror.

This exhibition, curated by Lim Wei-Ling, the owner of private gallery Wei-Ling Contemporary in Kuala Lumpur, is a discourse on the concept of identity within economic change.

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which paves the way for Malaysia's first pavilion participation on this international platform.

Gowri Balasegaram is the co-curator of this art installation-centred show,

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A work by Rome-based Malaysian artist H.H. Lim called *The Mental Trip* (installation, 2017). Photo: H.H. Lim

"These artists have established a name for themselves both within Malaysia and on the international front. I have had the pleasure of working with them at some point during my 17 years of running my gallery and curating exhibitions in Malaysia," says Lim of the artist selection, in an announcement ceremony at the National Art Gallery in KL.

"I have seen how they have evolved and grown as contemporary artists, who are making statements about the world in which they live. They will do us proud in representing Malaysia on this international platform,"

"It is a big dream for Malaysia to have a pavilion at this prestigious and historic international art event, and we are very pleased to be part of this collaboration with Wei-Ling. We hope that this participation in the Venice Biennale (http://www.labiennale.org/en) will mark the start of a brighter and more vibrant future for the arts in Malaysia," says Amerrudin Ahmad, National Art Gallery deputy director general.



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Zulkifli Yusoff's work Merdeka 57 (mixed media, 2009) exhibited at the National Art Gallery in KL in 2017. Photo: Filepic

The Venice Art Biennale, first held in 1895, is the original biennale upon which others in the world have been modeled.

This year, Malaysia joins 90 other participating countries in this prestigious event, including South-East Asian neighbours Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines, who have had their artists represented in previous editions of the biennale.

"Malaysia's omission from the list of national pavilions in Venice has always left me bereft. With the changes the nation is undergoing since last year, I felt compelled and energised to make a difference for the country by spearheading Malaysia's first National Pavilion at the 58th Venice Art Biennale.



Anurendra Jegadeva's Yesterday In A Padded Room (2015), one of his many internationally exhibited works.

"Malaysia's inaugural national pavilion is a first step forward for the country and I hope it will mark the beginning of many more pavilions at future editions of the Venice Art Biennale," says Lim.

This year's biennale, directed by American-born, London-based curator Ralph Rugoff, is themed May You Live In Interesting Times.

The inaugural Malaysia Pavilion is supported by the Creador Foundation, BRDB Developments and Big Tree, and endorsed by the National Art Gallery, and the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture of Malaysia. It is commissioned by Professor Datuk Dr.Mohamed Najib Dawa, director general of the National Art Gallery.

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The exhibition Holding Up A Mirror will be on view at the Malaysia pavilion to be located at the Palazzo Malipiero, a palace built in the 15th century.

The Venice Biennale opens on May 11 and runs through Nov 24.

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