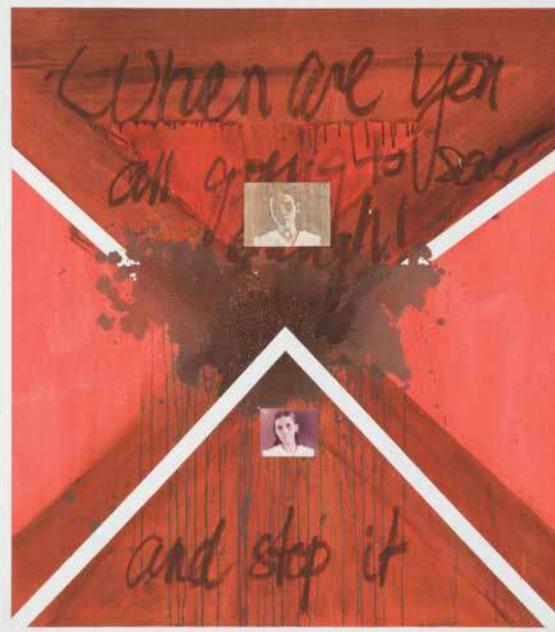


ARTWORK 3 SELF- PORTRAIT

1999

You stare into the lens of a camera, steady and unblinking, before pressing the shutter button. You photocopy your photo and place both images on a red canvas. You scrawl your message across the surface: *When are you all going to say enough! And stop it.*



Nirmala Dutt
Self-Portrait
1999
Collage and acrylic on board
101.8 x 91.4 cm
Collection of National Gallery Singapore

1 How can the question be written in a way that is urgent and not just a message?

2 How can anger become powerful instead of destructive?

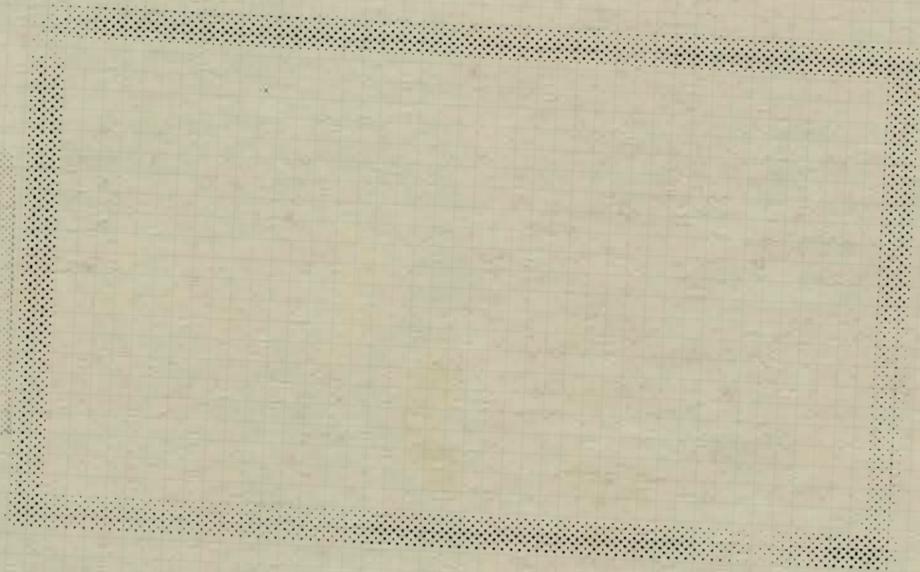
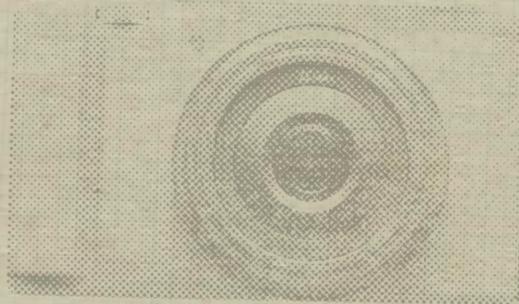
3 What feelings could be elicited with this composition and message? Would it spur action?

CREATIVE MISSION

1 Draw a portrait of yourself.

2 Choose a pose and take a photo.

3 Look at the photo and draw yourself in the space provided.



4 Include a quote or a question you want to ask yourself. Write it on your self-portrait.

5 Think of a way to write it so that it carries energy and emotions.

REFLECTION

When you look in the mirror, ask yourself what is quietly growing in your heart that you want the world to hear.

FEAR NO POWER
fear no power
women imagining otherwise

"I am an artist first and foremost — not necessarily just a woman artist or feminist artist or political artist."

Nirmala Dutt and Wong Hoy Cheong, "Let the Bamboo Grow in Your Heart: A Conversation with Nirmala", 1988.



NIRMALA DUTT

CHOOSE YOUR ARTIST
ROLE-PLAYING TRAIL

This self-guided trail invites you to explore five pioneering Southeast Asian women artists who used their art to champion equality and justice. Follow their journey through their artworks as they make choices that reflect the challenges they have faced.

NIRMALA DUTT

Nirmala Dutt (b. 1941, Malaysia; d. 2016, Malaysia) gained prominence in the 1970s as an artist committed to raising awareness of the social, political and environmental struggles through multiple art forms. At a time when many artists were focused on abstract styles, Nirmala used art to address real-life issues. Whether through painting, collage or photography, she showed that art can challenge the world and spark change.

ARTWORK 1 STATEMENT II

1975

It's 1975 and you live near Jalan Damansara in Kuala Lumpur. One day, you learn from the news reports that the squatter communities will be cleared for new residential projects. You visit the squatter communities and document what's happening in order to raise awareness of their plight. Over the next decade, you create a series titled Statements, focusing on places like Mile 4.



Nirmala Dutt
Statement II (Impressions of Life in Squatter Areas)
1975
Photographic Essay
95.8 x 170 x 2.7 cm
Collection of National Gallery Singapore

1 How can the photos show people, not just poverty?

2 How can the framing of the photos reflect larger issues of poverty and inequity?

3 What feelings will surface when reality is seen through lived images that are not posed or polished?

CREATIVE MISSION

1

Look closely at the photos in *Statement II* (Impressions of Life in Squatter Areas).

2

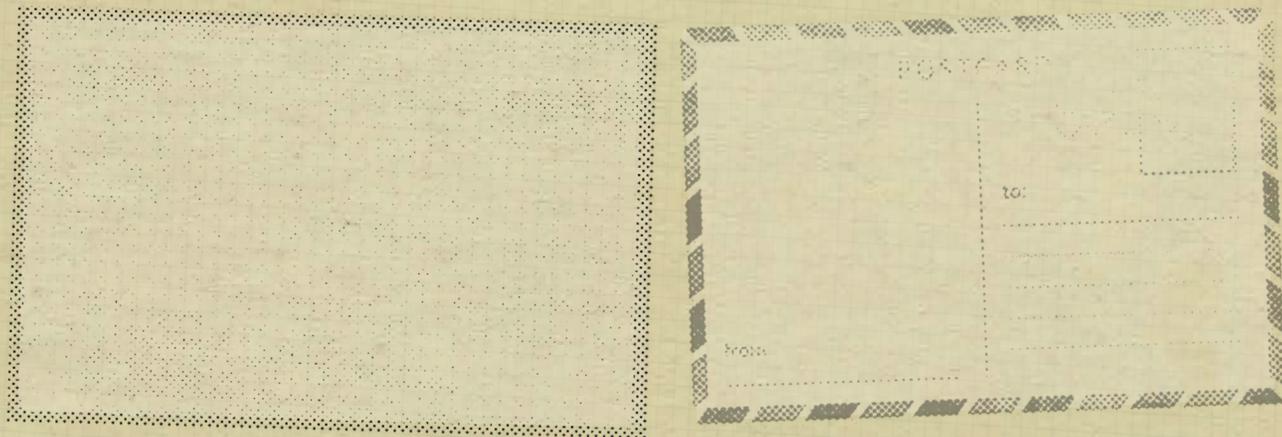
Design a postcard based on a place in current society that feels forgotten, messy or about to change.

3

What image would you choose and what message would you write on the back?

4

Send your design to someone to start a conversation about poverty and inequality.



REFLECTION

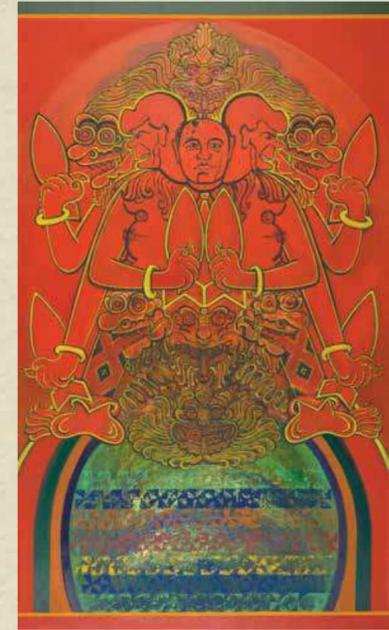
Do you agree that art should reflect social realities? Why or why not?

ARTWORK 2 ANTI-NUCLEAR PIECE

(COMMEMORATION OF HIROSHIMA DAY)

1988

It's 1988 and the world is tense with two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, locked in a nuclear arms race. Working in your studio at the height of the Cold War, you reference the *wayang kulit* (traditional shadow puppetry found in Southeast Asia) and paint world leaders as puppet masters above a globe, surrounded by *raksasas* (mythical villains).



Nirmala Dutt
Anti-Nuclear Piece
(Commemoration of Hiroshima Day)
1988
Acrylic on canvas
205.5 x 120.8 cm
Collection of National Gallery Singapore

1 Who are the leaders as puppet masters pulling the strings of the world?

2 How might traditional arts like the *wayang kulit* speak out about social issues in a way that's different from the West?

3 How do feelings come through differently when messages are told through traditional arts compared to modern media?

CREATIVE MISSION

1

Think of the wars that are happening right now.

2

Reference this artwork and draw puppet masters as the cover for an anti-war playlist.

3

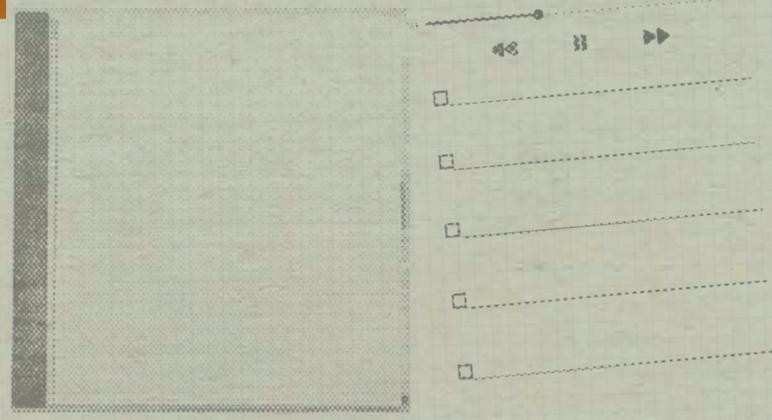
Draw the current world leaders as puppet masters.

4

Give your playlist a name and write the songs in the space provided.

5

Share your favourite songs and your thoughts on wars with someone.



REFLECTION

Have you ever seen someone being treated unfairly? What did you do? Do you believe that small actions can make a difference?