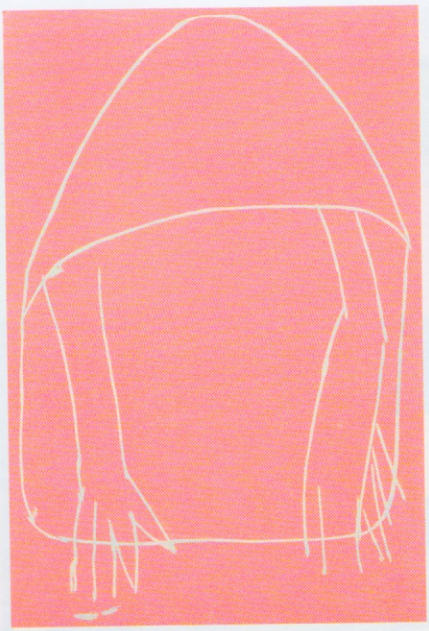
na, art-making is an optimistic
. After all, palm trees are a
alent motif in many of his canvases,
ing the cliché of Singapore, and
heast Asia more broadly, as an idyl-
opical getaway. However, Darma
s these verdant canvases with
ch, washing out their bright colours
rendering them radioactive and
; displayed alongside are Darma's
d' experiments in this vein: a section
anvas, for instance, that was
ocably browned due to excessive
ch exposure.
That Surya is also an Indonesian
d of cigarettes is an unexpected
gruence made known to viewers
ugh an exhibited poem, which the
t penned in the guise of his alter
Fyelol Dana – a pseudonym that
rences a gross misspelling of his
e by an arts journalist. In aligning
transcendental symbol of the sun
consumer commodities, Darma
des to the other textile-based pieces
display whose components he either
chased or produced as artworks to
old. By evacuating these pristine
ical symbols of their feel-good
eziness, Darma hints at the region's
erlying complexities.
'Sunny, your smile ease the pain' is
uably Darma's most astute showing
ate. It encapsulates key tenets of his
ctice – from anxieties around artistic
tainability in geographically decen-
d contexts to the tension of being both
er-visible and invisible as an artist.
ile Darma is himself a skilled techni-
n, he frequently diffuses his individual
stic agency by outsourcing creative
duction and inviting other artists
d artisans to fabricate components
is works, such as the ornate custom
mes. 'Sunny' is not, therefore, simply
astiche of Darma's previous works,
t also a gathering of the various
ents that contributed to their fruition.
parodying the retrospective genre,
e show unravels the false binaries of
ccess and failure, and comments on
e coveted and contested ownership
creative capital.

ong Bing Hao



ON VULNERABILITY AND DOUBT
Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, Australia

Although we all know what it means – and moreover, how it feels – it's worth noting that the word 'vulnerable' originates from the Latin *vulnerare*, 'to wound'. This sense of puncture and injury inevitably links to the notion of suffering, and both philosophy and art have had much to say about this. Contemporary philosopher Martha Nussbaum argues that vulnerability is an essential experience, and that to be open to the world – precisely in its capacity to harm or injure – is a fundamental part of not just being human but being good. Suffering differs from mere pain inasmuch as it is not localized but affects the entirety of one's being, pervading one's sense of self in the world.

Many of the works by the eight artists in 'On Vulnerability and Doubt' – which was curated by ACCA artistic director Max Delany – pull back the skin on suffering and selfhood, touching the wound of personal anguish in ways that extend beyond individual circumstance and swell into universal experience. Cherine Fahd's photographic series 'Fear of' (2011/19) documents street posters inscribed with phrases conveying the artist's worries: 'fear of getting old' or 'fear of never being happy'. Pasted onto building exteriors that back onto laneways, the overlooked nature of the facades adds pathos to the work's confessional tone and its conjuring of broader human anxieties. Pathos intensifies in Andrea Büttner's row of large-scale woodcuts on paper, 'Beggar' (2016), each adumbrating a hooded figure with arms outstretched. Drawn with lines abbreviated to near abstraction, the sketchy figures' supplicant gestures impart an anguish at odds with the candy-coloured monochrome grounds.

The Four Cruelties (1982) by Linda Marrinon valorizes the importance of vulnerability in images that depict its opposite. Featuring cartoonish figures, this early series of paintings on cardboard explores a lack of empathy or 'excessive confidence' – what current parlance would call 'mansplaining'. Taking its cue from William Hogarth's *The Four Stages of Cruelty* (1751), Marrinon's work, while equally satirical, coruscates with a feminist bite.

It's not that masculinity *per se* is the problem so much as what psychoanalysis has come to call phallocentrism – of which Tala Madani is shrewdly aware. Her 47-second animation *The Crowd* (2017) shows a sketchily drawn group of men and a giant, glistening pink phallus. Worshiping its towering might, the crowd capitulates to the tumescent phallus before it bludgeons them to smithereens. It's hilarious and unsettling in equal measure. More disturbing is her adjacent work, *Mr Time* (2018), a seven-minute animation of a man shunted up and down a mall escalator, repeatedly bashed by a group of thugs to the point of dismemberment, his body parts reduced to dislocated fragments of human sentience.

More salutary notes on vulnerability appear in Charlie Sofo's cluster of works. His found objects and videos draw straight connections to predecessors like Francis Alÿs and Gabriel Orozco, notably *Lost Soccer Balls (Removed from Circulation for the Duration of the Exhibition)* (2019). Sofo's sensitivity to the minor register of the everyday implicitly asks the viewer to re-attune themselves to banal objects such as broken bricks or gnarled branches; an attention to the prosaic that is poeticized in *Low Notes* (2019), a text-based video showing stills of the artist's musings. ('Lettuce gets lighter in colour as you eat it'.)

Puncture might be the leitmotif of the exhibition but, if so, it takes on a different meaning in Brent Harris's suite of introspective paintings, 'Borrowed Plumage' (2007). Harris's reductive pop aesthetic, drenched in Edvard Munch-like ennui, often probes existential questions, but here the brooding paintings turn on the Biblical narrative of doubting Thomas: the Apostle who only believed in the resurrection when permitted to plunge his finger into Christ's wound. With arms reaching into black voids and finger-like forms penetrating flesh-coloured folds, these paintings thematize the experience of doubt. As the philosopher Sören Kierkegaard declared, *'de omnibus dubitandum est'* – everything must be doubted. Doubt presupposes vulnerability, and vulnerability doubt: the experience of the world lies in the circuit between them.

Sophie Knezic

This page
Andrea Büttner, *Beggar*, 2016, woodcut on paper, 126 × 90 cm

Opposite page
Above
Yu Linhan, *Gentian Violet 3*, 2019, acrylic on canvas, 2.1 × 2 m

Below
Fyerool Darma, 2019, exhibition view