

To provide you with more insight into the development of this exhibition, we're sharing a conversation between the artist and a correspondent. The correspondent was not familiar with the artist's work and, like you, has discovered through this dialogue the often invisible choices made during the creation of this project, as well as in the artist's general working process.

Natasha Tontey in conversation with **Rocher Koendjbiharie**

As part of the
exhibition

**MACHO MYSTIC
MELTDOWN:
SUBTRACTED
ANTHOLOGY**

**1 Macho Mystic Meltdown
Chapter 2:
Monster; She Wrote
(13:00)**

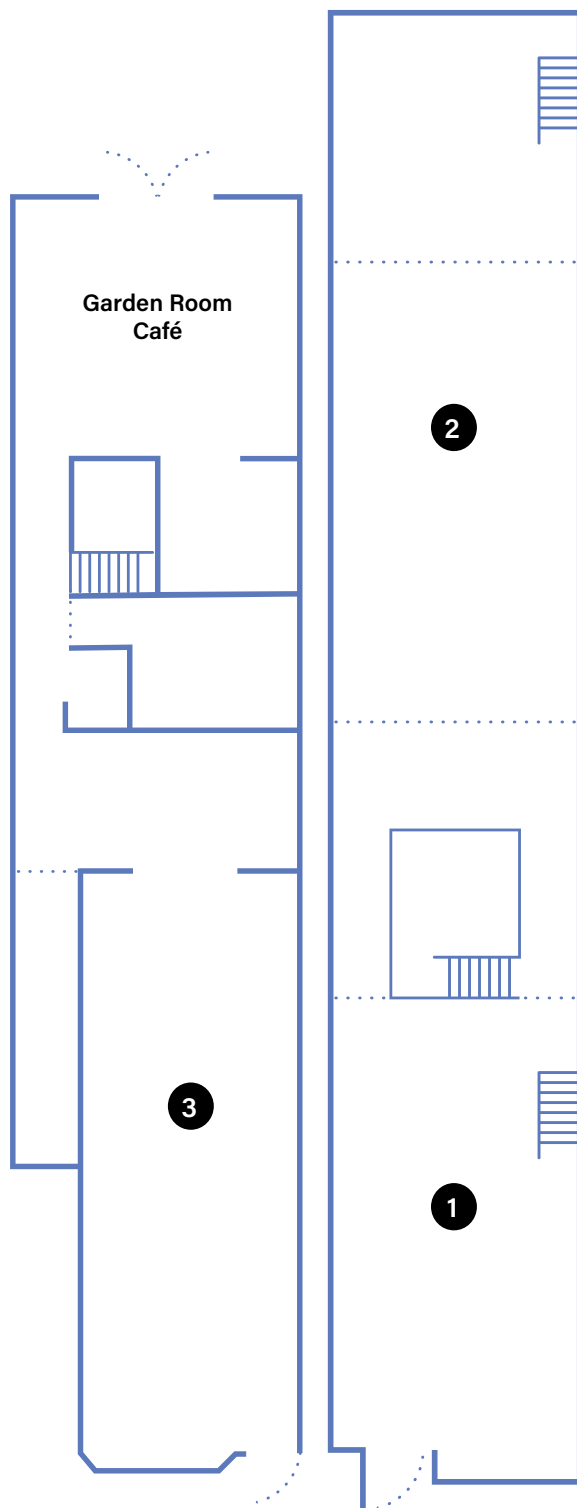
full HD video,
black and white,
16:9 format,
audio format stereo,
2026

**2 Macho Mystic Meltdown
Chapter 4:
In a Muscle Mood
(16:28)**

full HD video,
colour,
16:9 format,
audio format stereo,
2026

**3 Macho Mystic Meltdown
Chapter 1:
Oikouménē
(16:09)**

full HD video, colour,
16:9 format,
audio format stereo,
2025



Natasha Tontey in conversation with **Rocher Koendjbiharie** As part of the exhibition **MACHO MYSTIC MELTDOWN: SUBTRACTED ANTHOLOGY**

For more information about this and other projects,
check our website or scan the QR-code:



1646.nl

Natasha Tontey

Natasha Tontey (1989) is a Minahasan artist based between Yogyakarta and Jakarta. Her artistic practice predominantly explores the fictional accounts of the history and myths surrounding 'manufactured fear'. Through her work, she observes the possibilities of other futures that are projected not from the perspective of major and established institutions, but a subtle and personal struggle of the outcast entities and beings. Her fascination with speculative fiction finds expression in experimental video works and performances.

Her recent exhibitions include the solo show *Primate Visions: Macaque Macabre* (2024), commissioned by Audemars Piguet Contemporary at Museum MACAN, Jakarta, and *Garden Amidst the Flame* (2022) at Auto Italia, London. Selected group exhibitions and screenings (2021-2025) include presentations at 14th Bienal do Mercosul, Porto Alegre, Brazil; the 32nd and 34th Singapore International Film Festival; the 57th and 58th Karlovy Vary International Film Festival; the Singapore Biennale; KANAL-Centre Pompidou, Brussels; Stroom, The Hague; GHOST:2565, Bangkok; Protozone8 Queer Trust, Zürich; Arko Art Council, Seoul; Leeum Museum of Art, Seoul; Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin; transmediale, Berlin; Performance Space, Sydney; Other Futures, Amsterdam; Kyoto Experiment; and the Asian Film Archive, Singapore.

In 2020, Tontey received the HASH Award from ZKM | Centre for Art and Media Karlsruhe and Akademie Schloss Solitude. She was a fellow on the Human Machine programme at the Junge Akademie of the Akademie der Künste, Berlin (2021–2023). In 2024, she was awarded the Han Nefkens Foundation Video Production Grant.

Rocher Koendjbiharie

Rocher Koendjbiharie (1992) is a writer and journalist. He writes to create more space – especially for those who have been deprived of space and forced to live on the margins. His work focuses on identity, human rights, and society.

He is currently writing his debut book, *De Ruimtezoeker* (The Space Seeker), and a political manifesto titled *Het Flikkermanifest* (The Faggot Manifesto). Both books are set to be published by Bot Uitgevers in 2027. Additionally, he is a regular radio columnist for the show *Met Mandy!* on broadcaster Omroep ZWART and serves on the committee for project grant applications at the Fonds Bijzonder Journalistieke Projecten (a Dutch fund for remarkable journalistic projects).

He discovered his passion for writing while studying psychology, public administration, and international public management at Erasmus University in Rotterdam. Since then, he has established himself as a consistent and critical voice in the worlds of writing and journalism.

His work has appeared on platforms and in newspapers such as OneWorld, Hard//hoofd, De Internet Gids, De Correspondent, Lilith Magazine, NRC, De Volkskrant, and Het Parool. Previously, he served as editor-in-chief of the LGBTQIA+ platform Expreszo.nl and wrote a regular column for Winq Magazine.

In addition, he has been credited with several media projects. He was a co-host of the podcast *Nee, Man*, hosts and produces the podcast *Ruimtezoekers*, and co-hosts and produces the podcast *Rivalry Recap*. Furthermore, alongside Tim Hofman and the BOOS editorial team, he initiated De Controlekamer (The Control Room) – a group of approximately 2,000 members dedicated to combating misinformation and disinformation during the 2025 Dutch general election campaign.

25 May 2026

Hi Natasha,

I hope you're doing well. My name is Rocher Koendjbiharie, a writer living in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. I am very happy to meet you like this in the digital sphere.

I heard that coming September you will have a solo exhibition in 1646, which will be your first solo exhibition in the Netherlands. Sounds amazing! Could you tell me more about the exhibition? I read that the idea of the past is important in your work. How did you come to this relationship with the past? And how does this relate to the concept of the future?

Very glad to get to know you like this. Hope to hear from you soon!

Kind regards,

Rocher Koendjbiharie (he/him)

27 May 2026

Dear Rocher,

Thank you so much for your kind email, and apologies for my slow reply. I'm very happy and grateful for your willingness to have this conversation around my upcoming solo exhibition at 1646, which is currently titled *Macho Mystic Meltdown: Subtracted Anthology*. It will be my first solo exhibition in the Netherlands, so I am very excited – but also, to be honest, a little scared, because we have only just finalized the exhibition title and I have not yet started the filming.

So at this stage, the project is still very much in formation. I can share the conceptual world and the direction I am moving towards, but some things may still shift as the work develops.

My relationship with the past came from realising that the past is never really finished. It keeps appearing in the present through family memory, inherited fear, myth, oral stories, local cosmologies, and histories that are often excluded from official archives. I am especially interested in histories that arrive in fragmented forms – through rumours, ghosts, rituals, bodies, images, and unstable memories.

A large part of my process also comes from collecting stories from elders. For this particular work at 1646, one of the references comes from a Permesta war veteran who later moved to the Netherlands. After his involvement in the Permesta struggle, he founded a bodybuilding club in Jakarta around the 1950s, almost as a kind of retirement project. I am very interested in this strange intersection between militarised history, the ageing body, masculinity, performance, memory, and self-fashioning.

For me, the past is not something nostalgic or fixed. It behaves more like a living material: it mutates, haunts, disguises itself, and sometimes returns as a monster, a joke, or a malfunctioning image. In my work, I often try to approach the past not as something to preserve neatly, but as something to reanimate, contaminate, and speculate with.

This is also how I understand the future. I am not interested in the future as something clean, linear, or purely technological. I often ask: what kind of future, and whose future? The future, for me, is shaped by what has been suppressed, misremembered, or left unfinished. It grows from unresolved histories, ancestral transmissions, damaged archives, and forms of knowledge that are often considered irrational, marginal, or obsolete.

I am also interested in how ritual, myth, and technology have always been entangled. In my practice, 'advanced' technology is never separate from older cosmologies, DIY images, theatrical errors, B-movie aesthetics, or kitsch materials. I like the friction between the sophisticated and the obsolete, the militarised and the mystical, the computational and the ancestral. Through this collision, I try to imagine futures that are not smooth or perfect, but strange, bodily, excessive, and still in the process of rendering.

I would be very glad to speak with you more about this, especially as the exhibition develops. Thank you again for reaching out, and I am also very happy to get to know you.

Warmly,
Natasha

10 June 2026

Dear Natasha,

Thank you for your email and taking the time to answer my questions. No need to apologise; my response to you took me some time as well.

Let me start by saying that I like the title of your exhibition: *Macho Mystic Meltdown: Subtracted Anthology*. I love how the first letters of the first three words are the same. Was that a conscious choice, to make an alliteration out of it?

I can imagine it might also be a bit scary, especially if you haven't started the process yet. I am no artist, especially one like you, but I like to think that sometimes the process itself shows us things we could not have known beforehand. So maybe you will see new perspectives and add them to the exhibition as well? I don't know. Maybe I am babbling a bit. Like I said, I am not an artist.

Your relationship with the past really resonates with me. I think I share the same perspective on it as you do. What I also read between the lines, is that how you view the past also shows a different way of knowing. The Western world has had such an impact on how we view knowledge, science, and how we look at the world. It's very linear, very rational. But all the things you describe, like local cosmologies, how the past also shows up in the present, show that life is not linear. That knowing is not linear.

"For me, the past is not something nostalgic or fixed. It behaves more like a living material: it mutates, haunts, disguises itself, and sometimes returns as a monster, a joke, or a malfunctioning image" – this sentence did something to me when I read it. The fluidity of the past shows the fluidity of time, and how time leaves an impression on all of us but also how we might leave an impression on time. Because we, as people of this planet, named time. We did not invent actual time like how it passes in nature, with the sun rising and setting, and the moon showing her face. How we all age each and every day. But we gave time a name. We made it a construct, and in doing so, we named the construct that impacts us as well: the past. Just like we named the thing that excites or haunts as well: the future.

How far are you in the process now? And I am wondering, with all these thoughts and perspectives you have on the past and the future, what message do you want visitors to take away from the exhibition?

Have a great day and good luck with the process.

Kindly,

Rocher Koendjbiharie (he/him)

4 August 2026

Dear Rocher,

Thank you so much for your thoughtful email. I am really sorry for the delay in replying. A few days after your message arrived, my brother passed away, and since then I have been moving through a mix of funeral arrangements, pre-production work, filming, and also another round of visa applications. It has taken me a while to come back to things, and I am only now slowly finding my way back into correspondence.

I want to say how much your words stayed with me. I kept thinking about what you wrote on time, the past, and other ways of knowing. And honestly, it didn't feel like babbling at all. More like you were circling something very close to what I have been trying to hold in this project too. The idea that history doesn't sit still, that it keeps returning through bodies, gestures, inherited memories, fragments of images... that really resonates with how I have been thinking about the exhibition.

The title *Macho Mystic Meltdown* came from wanting something a bit excessive, almost playful in its rhythm, but still holding those tensions together - masculinity, mysticism, and a kind of emotional or bodily collapse underneath it all. *Subtracted Anthology* came later, and for me it feels more like the condition of the work itself: stories that are incomplete, images that are missing, memories that have been edited down or pushed out of official versions of history.

The project has moved forward quite a bit now. We filmed the fourth chapter, *In a Muscle Mood*, on 28-29 July, and I am currently in the editing and sound design stage with the team. It is still very open, still shifting, but the filming brought up things I didn't expect - small gestures, relationships, tensions - that I now want to follow further in the exhibition.

I don't think the film is trying to 'reconstruct' history in a literal way. It is more like it borrows from it, bends it, lets it echo. I am interested in these displaced men who are constantly rehearsing strength, but underneath that there's longing, trauma, precarity, things that don't resolve. And I also want to give myself permission to play with history - to rearrange it, exaggerate it, let it slip a bit - because that playfulness has become part of how I stay close to the material. It's not separate from the research for me; it's another way of thinking through its gaps and distortions.

I have put together a .pdf file for you with short descriptions of the works, some of the key references and terms, and a selection of images (there is a design of the menu that I used in the film on page 9). [\[attachment in the e-mail\]](#)

And I also wanted to share a very rough cut of *In a Muscle Mood*. [\[link in the email\]](#)
Just to say, it is still very early. We haven't reached picture lock yet, and both sound, VFX and music are temporary placeholders at this stage.

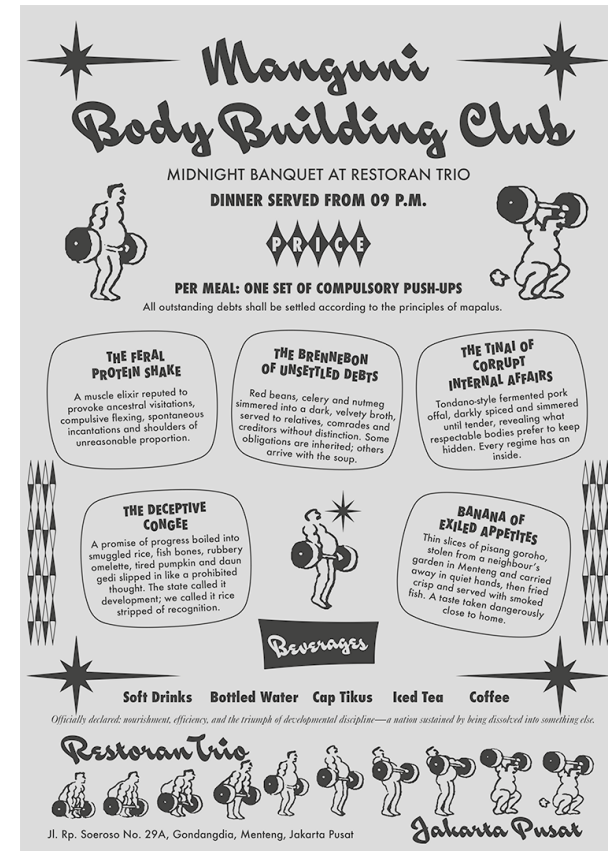
Also, BTS from the set. [\[attachment in the e-mail\]](#)

When I think about what I hope people might take from the exhibition, I don't really see it as a single message. More like a space where things don't fully settle. Where history feels close, even bodily, rather than distant or fixed. I hope it might open up questions about how political histories continue to live inside us, through family stories, masculinity, violence, intimacy, and the body itself. And maybe also what happens when those histories come back in altered forms not as clear truths, but as fragments, rumours, performances, or something more ghost-like.

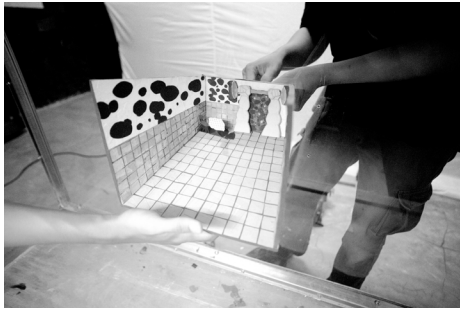
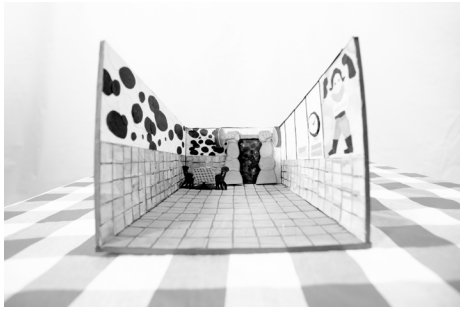
Thank you again for your generosity in engaging with the work. Your message really meant a lot to me, especially in this moment, and I am very much looking forward to staying in conversation.

Warmest wishes,

Natasha



Menu used in the film



Images from the set

Images from the set

17 August 2026

Dear Natasha,

Thank you for your email. Let me start by saying that I am so sorry for your loss. Losing a loved one is always hard, but losing someone that close to you, I cannot imagine what you must be going through. I hope you are able to find or create some space for yourself and your grief.

In regards to the project, what stage are you now in? You told me that you filmed the fourth chapter. Are there any chapters left to film, edit, etcetera?

It resonates with me that you are giving yourself permission to play around with history. Because history is a shared thing and thus we all, including you, have some say over it. But it also shows me that history is never set in stone. How you play with it, rearrange it, exaggerate it, is also how history is, I think. It is collective but also very subjective. There is this very popular saying that says that history is written by the winners. And in a way that is true: what gets seen as history, what gets recorded as history is decided by those who have power. You laying your claim on it and molding it, is you saying history is owned by us all.

Also, thank you for sharing the footage with me and giving me a look inside the process. I cannot wait to see what the final form will be.

I hope the grief will not be too heavy of a burden to carry. I know that emotions demand to be felt and that we should, but I also wish for you to find lightness in it all. Speak soon.

Best wishes,

Rocher Koendjiharie (he/him)

24 August 2026

Dear Rocher,

Thank you for this. I am finding my way back into work at a strange tempo: slowly, but also much faster than I expected.

I really appreciated what you wrote about history as something shared, unstable, and never entirely fixed.

That instability is very much where I want to work. I am less interested in treating history as something that needs to be faithfully obeyed than in exploring what happens when it is disturbed a little when memory, fiction, speculation, and unreliable recollection begin to interfere with the historical material. I suppose I'm curious about the point at which history stops behaving properly and starts mutating into something else.

The fourth chapter is now well into post-production. The edit is taking shape, and we are currently concentrating on the VFX and foley sound design. We are not planning any further filming for this chapter, so the work is now really happening within the image and sound – trying to make its world more bodily, weirder and, at the same time, more exact.

Playfulness has also become unexpectedly important to me in this process. There has been so much death around me recently, and not much space to stop and process it. Making something excessive, muscular, ridiculous, melancholic and slightly monstrous has given me a way to work through some of that without forcing grief into a clean explanation or making it completely legible.

Through making *Macho Mystic Meltdown*, and through grief, I have also become increasingly fixated on exercise – particularly Pilates and its history, as well as yoga and bodybuilding culture. Their physical disciplines, strange mythologies and relationships to ideas of the body have all begun to feel connected to the project in ways I didn't initially expect.

Perhaps this is also where grief and history begin to overlap for me: both keep resurfacing, but they never return in quite the same form.

Thank you again for spending time with the material and for thinking with me through it. I'm very curious about where our conversation might go next.

Speak soon,

Natasha

1 September 2026

Dear Natasha,

Thank you so much for your email and once again sharing your thoughts and feelings with me.

September is here and that means your exhibition is getting closer and closer. How are you feeling about it? Do you feel like you have expressed what you wanted to express in the exhibition?

What you mentioned about yoga and exercise in general resonated with me. I have picked up yoga as well in the beginning of July to foster a connection with my body and through that process it is curious to notice how your mind and body can get disconnected if you wander through life mindlessly.

I am wondering, looking back at the past few months and shaping *Macho Mystic Meltdown*: are there any lessons you have learned or insights you have picked up that you didn't expect to?

Lastly, I want to thank you for our conversation, Natasha. Thank you for telling me about your work, the events that happened to you in the past few months and how your work started as thoughts and found their way into the corporal world. I appreciate it very much. Maybe the future will hold a moment of us meeting.

Thank you so much.

Best wishes,

Rocher Koendjibiarie (he/him)

1 September 2026

Dear Rocher,

Thank you so much for this, and for our conversations over the past few months. I am sorry you have been ill since the beginning of July and have been going through burnout. I have also been pushing myself almost to my limit, and I am not sure whether I have already passed it mentally. At times I have felt quite dissociated, as though I am moving through everything without fully being present. I hope things have been a little kinder to you since then.

I am in Seoul and have just met Clara and Johan (from 1646) briefly. We were discussing the exhibition when we realised it opens in ten days, which feels completely unreal. There has been so much travelling that time itself has become rather far-fetched. I am also having to reimagine rest, since at the moment it rarely resembles stopping. It feels more like briefly disappearing from circulation before being absorbed back into the machinery.

The work is in its final tuning, although I am still improvising with the edit. I no longer really believe in a final form; perhaps there is only the last version before the doors open. Increasingly, I think of *Macho Mystic Meltdown* as a badly behaved feedback system in which images, machines, political forces, memories, flesh, and ghosts continually interfere with one another. Nothing stays stable for long. Every signal returns altered.

Perhaps this is also why yoga and Pilates, or more precisely, Contrology (the original name for the exercise system now widely known as Pilates) have become important to me. I am suspicious of the language of wellness and self-optimisation, but fascinated by the absurdity of physical control: receive an instruction, execute it, register the deviation, adjust, repeat. It becomes a small feedback loop attempting to organise itself whilst everything outside remains spectacularly disorganised.

This has fed directly into the new work and the way I am thinking about bodybuilding. The bodybuilder appears to me as a kind of cybernetic creature: continuously observed, measured, disciplined and modified. More muscle here, another repetition, another correction, another encounter with the mirror. The muscular figure performs itself as finished and sovereign whilst requiring endless maintenance – eating, tearing, repairing, posing, flexing, repeating. The monument must keep flexing.

That fantasy of control also draws bodybuilding towards militarism and masculinity. The soldier drills, the bodybuilder repeats, the nation rehearses its image of strength. Each promises something disciplined, useful and impermeable. Yet the organism remains unreliable. Muscles fatigue, organs misbehave, memories return and desires escape instruction. Control produces its own disturbances.

Another thing I have learnt through *Macho Mystic Meltdown* is to embrace what I previously found shameful or excessive, particularly around my father, and masculinity.

The first chapter, *Oikouménē*, begins with the disappearance of a father at sea and reconstructs that absence through objects, memories, and speculation. But it also emerged from the embarrassment of being a hoarder's daughter. My childhood home resembled a live-action Gummo: discarded things, Catholic icons, towers of VCDs and DVDs, and objects waiting for purposes that might never arrive.

For years, I wanted distance from that mess and from my father's hypermasculinity. Now I realise I have been rebuilding parts of it through my work. The clutter became shrines, props, archives, and narrative seeds. I have even started to understand his accumulation, perhaps perversely, as a form of world-building – a way of constructing security amidst instability.

The new chapter takes this question of masculinity elsewhere, towards Minahasan men in 1950s Jakarta, particularly those around the Manguni Body Building Club. I became interested in bodybuilding as part of a migrant social world: a way of producing camaraderie, discipline, spectacle and perhaps protection whilst living away from Minahasa. That history later brushes against Sartana in the early 1970s, where muscularity becomes entangled with performance, masculine display, and Jakarta's changing urban landscape. I am less interested in bodybuilding as a sport than in what these flexing figures might reveal about migration, belonging, and the desire to manufacture an image of strength during periods of political instability.

In that sense, something about my father also seems to leak into these historical men. Rather than simply rejecting the macho posturing, bodybuilding, militarism, and fantasies of strength, I have become interested in staying with their excess. Masculinity increasingly appears to me as theatrical, seductive, violent, fragile, and permanently under construction. The flex is never finished.

This has become more complicated since my mum died last year. Her absence has changed the way I look at my father and at the forms of masculinity I once found embarrassing or oppressive. Certain gestures now appear more vulnerable, even when they are still ridiculous. Strength begins to look less like certainty and more like something repeatedly performed in order to keep collapse at bay.

The political situation in Indonesia has made all of this much eerier. Things that once seemed historical or exaggerated within the work – militarism, obedience, nationalism, disciplined forms and persistent ghosts – suddenly feel much less safely contained in history. Sometimes it feels as though I am no longer making something about the past, but watching the past leak back into the present through a badly sealed opening. History apparently has terrible plumbing.

This also means that what I wanted to say two years ago, when I was first invited to make a show at 1646, is not necessarily what I want to say now. The work keeps receiving information from whatever is happening around it and returning something different. Perhaps intention is only the initial input; after that, the work enters its own circuit.

So perhaps the main lesson has simply been to get through and adapt, but also to stop sanitising everything along the way. To keep the embarrassing parts: the clutter, the macho posturing, the family history that refuses to organise itself into a clean narrative, and the things that should supposedly have been discarded but somehow remain.

Macho Mystic Meltdown has taught me that the work is never sealed off from life. Everything enters the edit eventually: family archives, political history, desire, shame, exhaustion, grief, and whatever else refuses to stay in its assigned place.

Thank you, Rocher, for having this conversation with me. I really appreciate the care with which you have listened whilst the work, and everything around it, has continued to shift. It has meant a lot to have a space where I don't have to pretend that work and life are separate things.

I hope we can finally meet in person someday without an exhibition deadline.

Warmest greetings from Seoul,

Natasha

MACHO MYSTIC MELTDOWN
Chapter 4

In a Muscle Mood

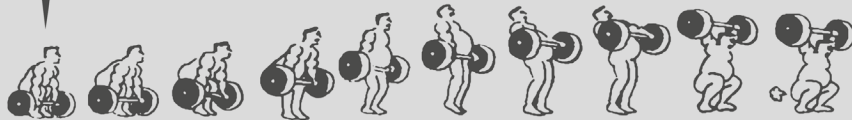
A Film by

NATASHA TONTEY



Starring

Greenhill Glanvon Weol
Aditya Pradipta Wardhana



Macho Mystic Meltdown Chapter 4: In a Muscle Mood (2026) is Co-commissioned jointly by the Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève and Kamel Lazaar Foundation for BLM'26—as part of the 8th Jaou Biennial and with the support of the Contemporary Art Fund of the City of Geneva (F.MAC) and the Canton of Geneva (F.CAC) — by 1646 – Experimental Art Space (Netherlands) and Superposition: a festival conceived for the Blue Mountains (Australia).