

Nirmala Dutt Shanmughalingam, 1941–2016

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Nirmala Dutt Shanmughalingam in front her mixed-media work, *Africa II* (1980). News 6 Dec 2016

Malaysian artist Nirmala Dutt Shanmughalingam has died at the age of 75, *ArtAsiaPacific* reports. Beginning her career in the 1960s as a painter, she has been described as a pioneering artist – one of the first to employ the use of documentary photography in her work as well as engaging with ‘public art’ by distributing her work by post. She studied under Mohamed Hoessein Enas (known for his portraiture of the Malaysian royal family, politicians and celebrities), and continued her training at art schools in the US and UK before returning to Malaysia. Shanmughalingam was the first artist to exhibit an installation piece at the National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, in 1973.

Through photography and painting which often incorporated the use of newspaper cuttings, Shanmughalingam’s work focused on awakening the viewers’ social consciences of political and social struggles occurring worldwide (the Vietnam War, the Beirut conflict, the deforestation of Malaysia’s jungles and environmental pollution). Her last solo exhibition, *Tsunami 2004-2005*, took place in 2005 at Valentine Willie Fine Art in Kuala Lumpur and showcased a series of paintings based on the Boxing Day tsunami of 2004.

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