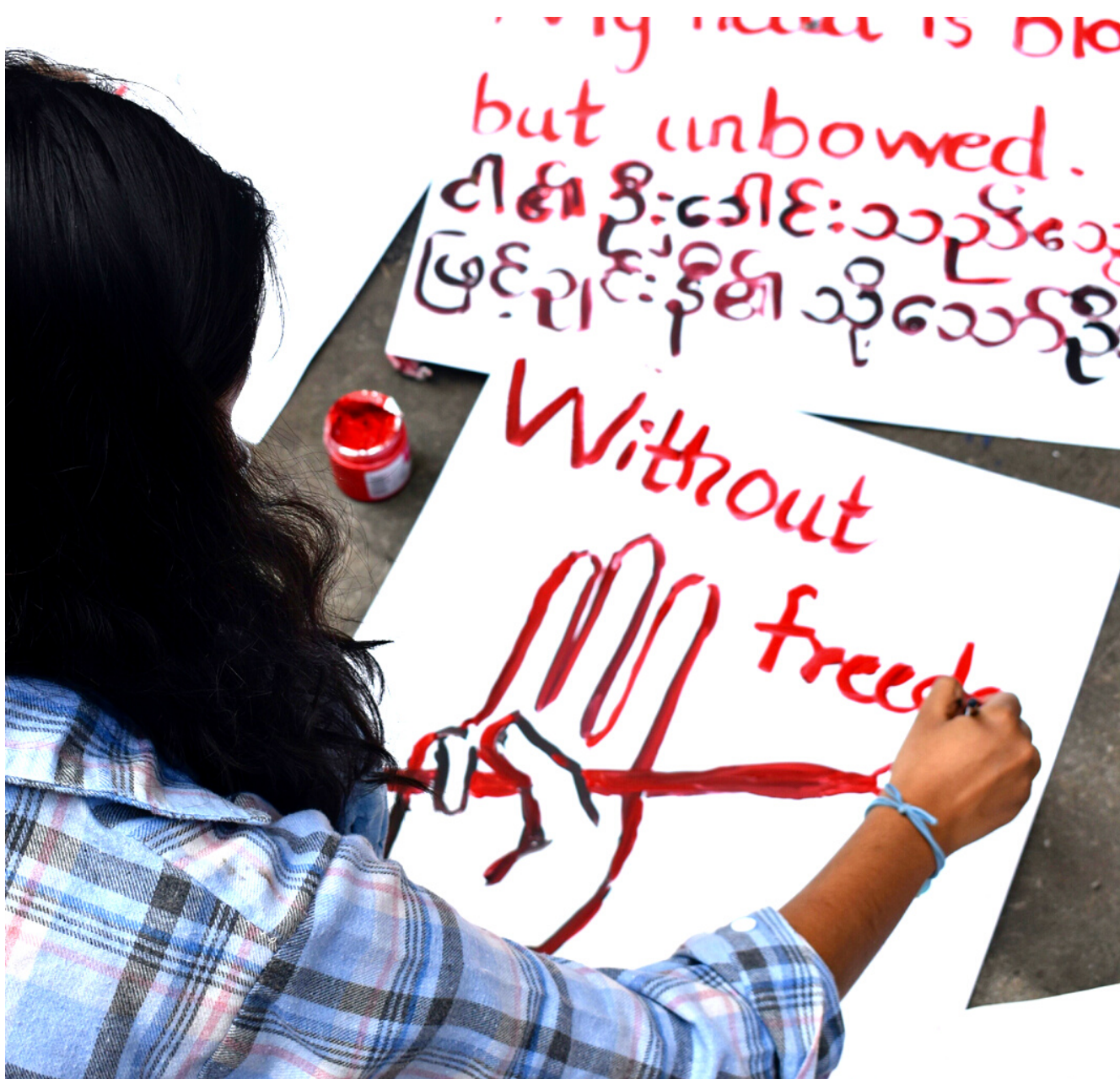


Yangon - Kyiv - Paris



B A C K G R O U N D



Following the recent military coup in Myanmar, my life, as an outspoken artist, was put in danger. After using art to protest the Military government, I was forced to flee the country as a political refugee. I attempted to rebuild in Ukraine, but once again found myself in a warzone and was made a refugee. I am currently living in exile in France. Here, I am rebuilding my life and continuing to create artwork as my livelihood. My work in the field of fine art engages with contemporary social struggles, in particular bringing to light previously hidden cultures and perspectives. The social position of women is a key concern of my work, which often combines paints, fabric, text and vintage photos as well as subversive images of women in 'traditional' dress that challenge the viewer's gaze and assumptions about the feminine.

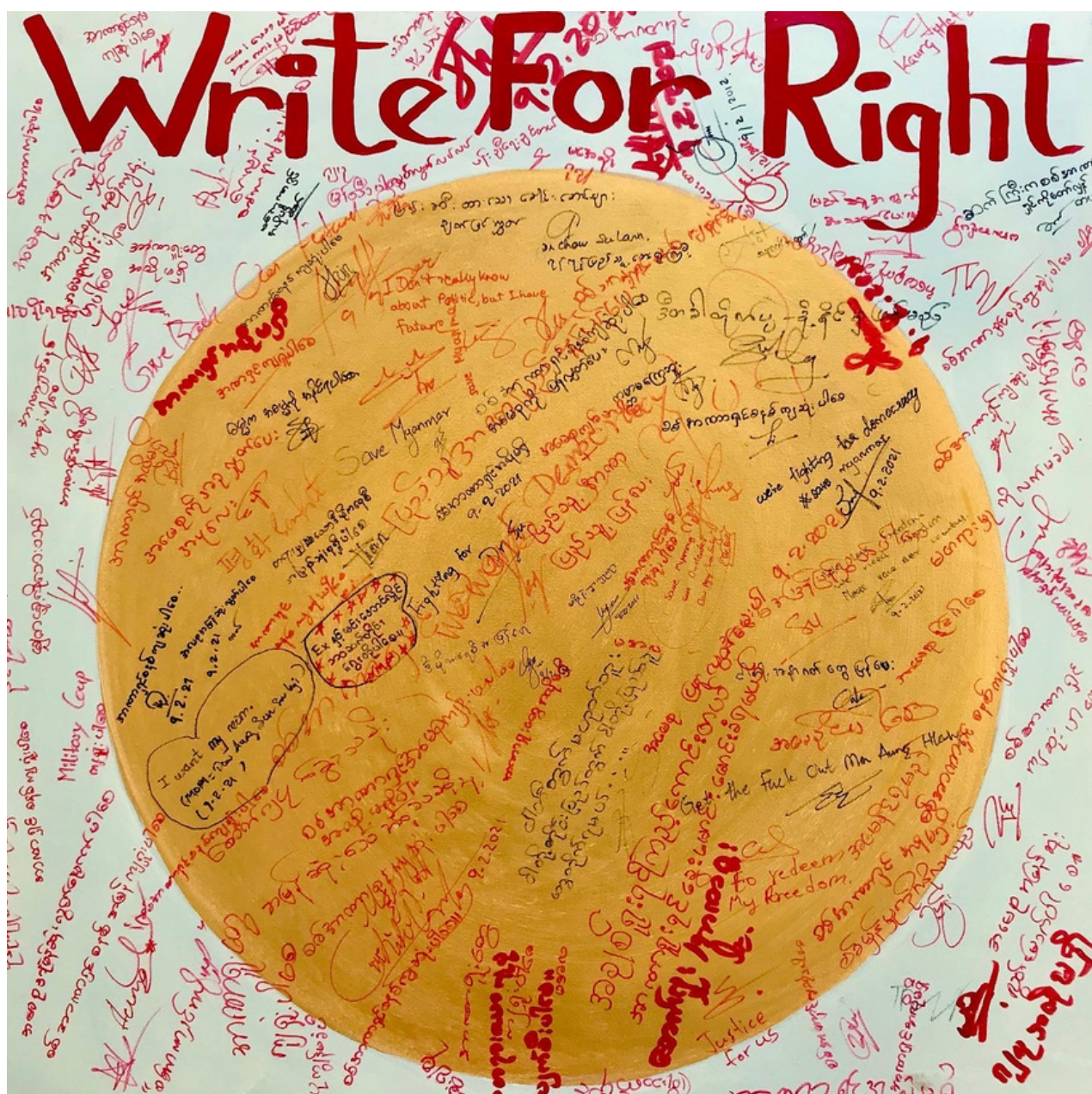
After more than 10 years of trying to become established in Myanmar as a young female artist in a male dominated art scene, I was able to exhibit my works in Yangon, New York, Canberra and around Asia. Since leaving everything behind, including my dreams, family and friends, I have faced rejections, tears and depression. However, as a result of my resilience, I have been able to produce new art, while evolving my practice in new directions such as mixed-media, murals, and performance, and showcasing it in exhibitions around Europe.

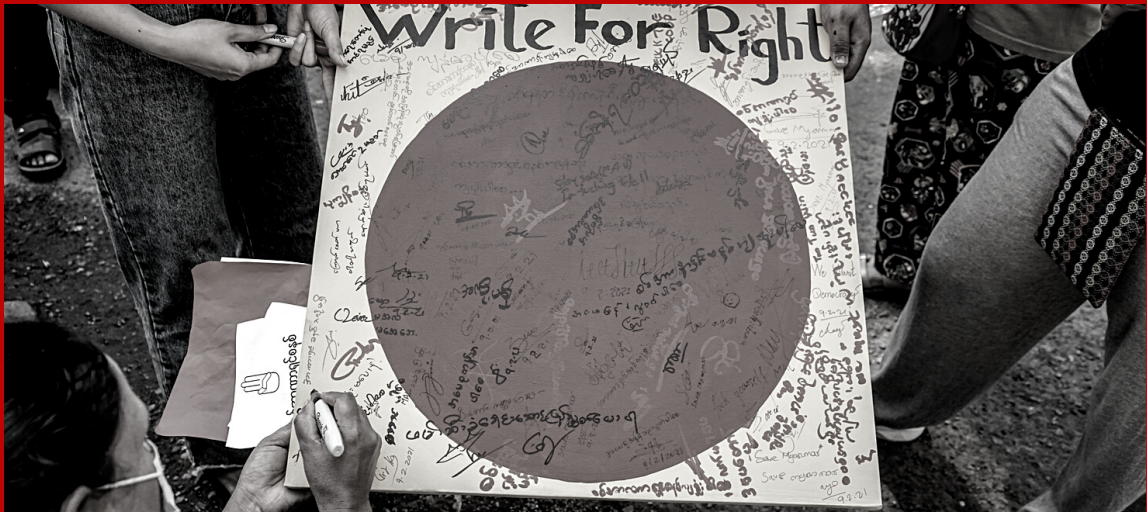
This project tells the story of my flight into exile, escaping two wars in one year. This will be a mixed media exhibition featuring paintings, photographs, sounds, videos and fabric collected before and during my journey into exile from my home land of Myanmar to Ukraine and then finally to France where I currently reside as an artist.

PROJECT

This project will feature original artwork of photos and videos that I have used to document my experiences of the past two years as well as paintings and fabric collages that depict my inner mental landscapes. Much of the materials used in this project are from my homeland and have made their way to Paris through two warzones by air, land and water. Also central to the project is its role as witness to the crimes against humanity in Myanmar and the ongoing struggle. When I fled Myanmar, I smuggled out hundreds of handwritten testimonies from protesters. My project will translate and curate these letters and thus make visible these voices. This mixed media project will involve 5-6 months of preparation as I curate and design artwork that reflects not only my personal journey, but the geopolitical forces that have shaped it.

Even though I escaped the hell of Myanmar following the Military coup, I feel a deep sense of obligation to those who remain there actively resisting oppression. This project is about maintaining those bonds of solidarity with those protesters while also making their voices, mostly invisible to the outside world, heard. This project fulfills a personal promise and makes a forceful intervention in the public discourse about Myanmar.







B I O G R A P H Y

The decision to begin a career as an artist who explores themes of gender and social justice began from a personal starting place when my underage sister was groped in a public place. Since this traumatizing sexual harassment I have chosen to walk on a path towards using art as a means to fight gender-based oppression.

My artworks tackle social and gender injustice. I convey shape-shifting women portraits with distinct, bold brush strokes on multiple seamless materials. All these different significant works are telling their own stories: traditional fabrics, representing the cultural repressions, intercontinental collage backgrounds highlighting the international approach of women situations beyond the frame, masqueraded women symbolising the women who are trapped within the traditional expectations and spotlighting prominent women figures as the essential formal elements in my artworks.

Since the military coup of 2021, I have been much more involved with political organization, working with other young artists to use public art as a way to express our opposition to the anti-democratic military. Seven days after the coup I founded WRITE FOR RIGHT, a project that created hand-painted signs for the protestors who were massing in Yangon's downtown area. This project responded directly to the requests of protesters and we painted the messages that they wanted to broadcast to the world, which included the removal of the dictatorship and the release of political prisoners.

A few months after this, a large group of policemen with guns came to my door and asked intimidating questions. It was then that I realized that my safety in the country was not guaranteed and went into exile outside the country.

I went into exile alone, leaving behind family, friends and my artist career which I had been building for more than 10 years.

Nevertheless, since leaving I have continued to maintain strong contacts in Myanmar and have used artwork to show how women are active participants in the physical and strategic frontlines of the resistance. I am increasingly aware of and wish to support movements in the country that recognise this current fight is both a political and a cultural struggle. Despite my exile, my work has continued to gain attention and has been featured in international news media such as BBC, Time Magazine, etc. I was also selected as a judge for the FIFDH human rights film festival. Even outside the country, my continued career as an critical artist has caught the attention of the military government, who, I have been informed, have an active file on me, and have forced my family who are still inside the country to move from their home to a safer location.

B I O G R A P H Y

Chuu Wai est une femme libre et engagée qui a consacré son travail à la situation de ses pairs en Birmanie avec une point de vue féministe revendiqué. Ces années de travail sur ce sujet lui ont permis d'être reconnue comme une figure incontournable de la jeune scène artistique birmane.

Pour Chuu Wai, les birmanes sont prisonnières de la tradition et finissent systématiquement par être marginalisées. Chuu travaille à redéfinir ce que le patriarcat birman fige. C'est pourquoi au centre de l'œuvre, elle représente des femme décidées, figées dans une attitude forte, avec à l'arrière-plan des motifs inspirés des longyis, vêtements traditionnel des hommes. Dans une seconde série, elle leur attribue également des signes emblématiques de divinités masculines, qui viennent apporter leur puissance à ces femmes. L'intention de la jeune artiste est de faire ainsi une démonstration de la place légitime que les femmes peuvent occuper dans la société si elles parviennent à s'émanciper de toute domination patriarcale. En s'appropriant si besoin ce qui est réservé aux hommes.

Son oeuvre artistique a trouvé un nouvel élan à la suite d'un acte de harcèlement sexuel dans la rue à l'âge de 18 ans. Alors qu'elle conduisait une moto avec sa sœur derrière elle, un homme en scooter a attrapé la poitrine de sa sœur. Furieuse, elle l'a poursuivi et percuté jusqu'à provoquer un accident et interpeller la police. Elle l'a finalement amené en justice, sans en informer ses parents. Depuis cet événement traumatisant, Chuu Wai conçoit des œuvres qui dissimulent et révèlent. Les peintures sont créées à l'encontre des mécanismes avec lesquels la société contrôle et scrute les femmes plus que les hommes, les façons dont les femmes résistent et la manière dont la culture évolue. Elle considère ses peintures comme faisant partie de cette évolution, qui a donné lieu à plus de 30 expositions nationales et internationales dont à Londres, Hong Kong, Luxembourg, Geneva, Singapore et Canberra.

