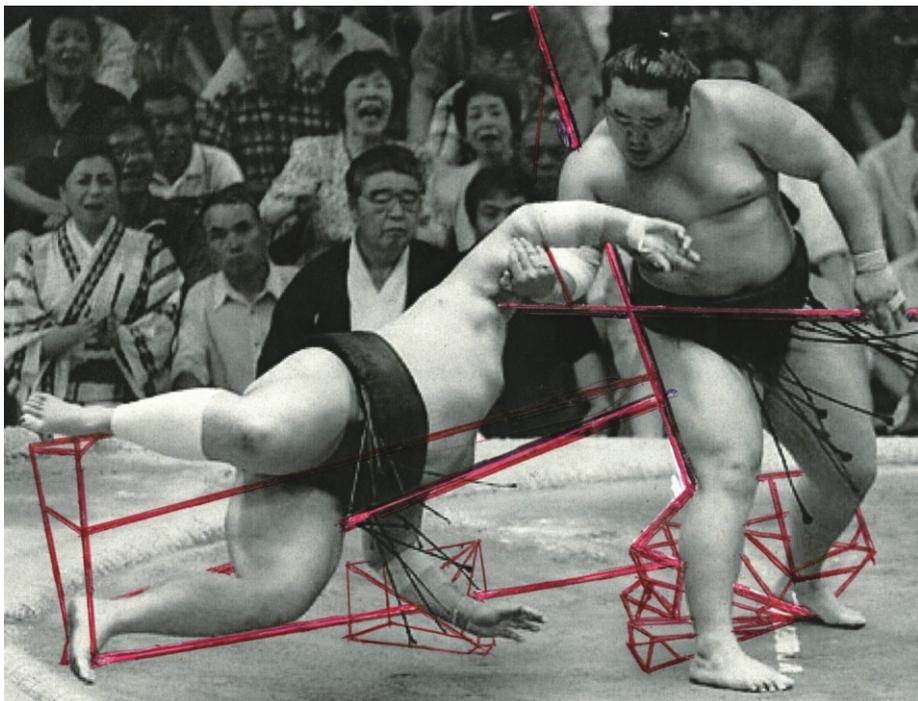


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Firoz wants to fight Tyson

NAEEM MOHAIEMEN



Firoz Mahmud announces that these people are 'celebrities, entertainers, politicians' who are both popular and controversial. Keeping in mind his Bengal tiger expedition in Sharjah Biennial 2009, I was expecting at least one character in this rigged gallery to be from Bangladesh. There isn't, and given the sadism he's about to inflict, that is perhaps a good thing.

At Sharjah Biennial, where 'NinKi: Urgency of Proximate Drawing [NinKi:UoPD]' was first exposed through his 'Halcyon Tarp' project, there were newspaper clippings and photocopies of a Bengal tiger. Tiger burning too bright, neglected in Dhaka zoo, dying from heat exhaustion. There were geometric lines there too, framing but also harpooning that majestic cat.

Why no felines this time? Perhaps the Tokyo humane society protested.

Firoz says his plan is to rescue icons from detritus, but something sinister is at play in these brutalist lines. Mike Tyson is the anchor in all this. A carnivorous phantasm (in pre-animation wireframe) climbing on his face, a crazy cat's cradle during a press conference, and the beginnings of a larva head all over his mouth. All of it, insistently, channeling Tyson's unmoored, fractured, aggressive, frightening id.



I was watching John Carpenter's 'The Thing' again after many years. Like many films that scared the bejesus out of us as teenagers, time has not been kind to the fear factor. The flesh-eating alien is now revealed as crude 1980s make up effect.

And then it came to me. Look closely, the alien does remind you of Firoz's minimal, zigzag, ink on paper contraptions. Or the other way round. Animation before high-speed computers. Each cel drawn here in ballpoint. But to mix it up, he does change colours.

Firoz wants people to remember why Tyson fell. Remember the bundle of violence that bit Evander Holyfield's ear, and finally careened out of the ring into a horrific rape case. Not the self-caricaturing crooner in two 'Hangover' films (with a pet tiger in the first film!). Tyson's facial tattoo is now the safe punch line for what

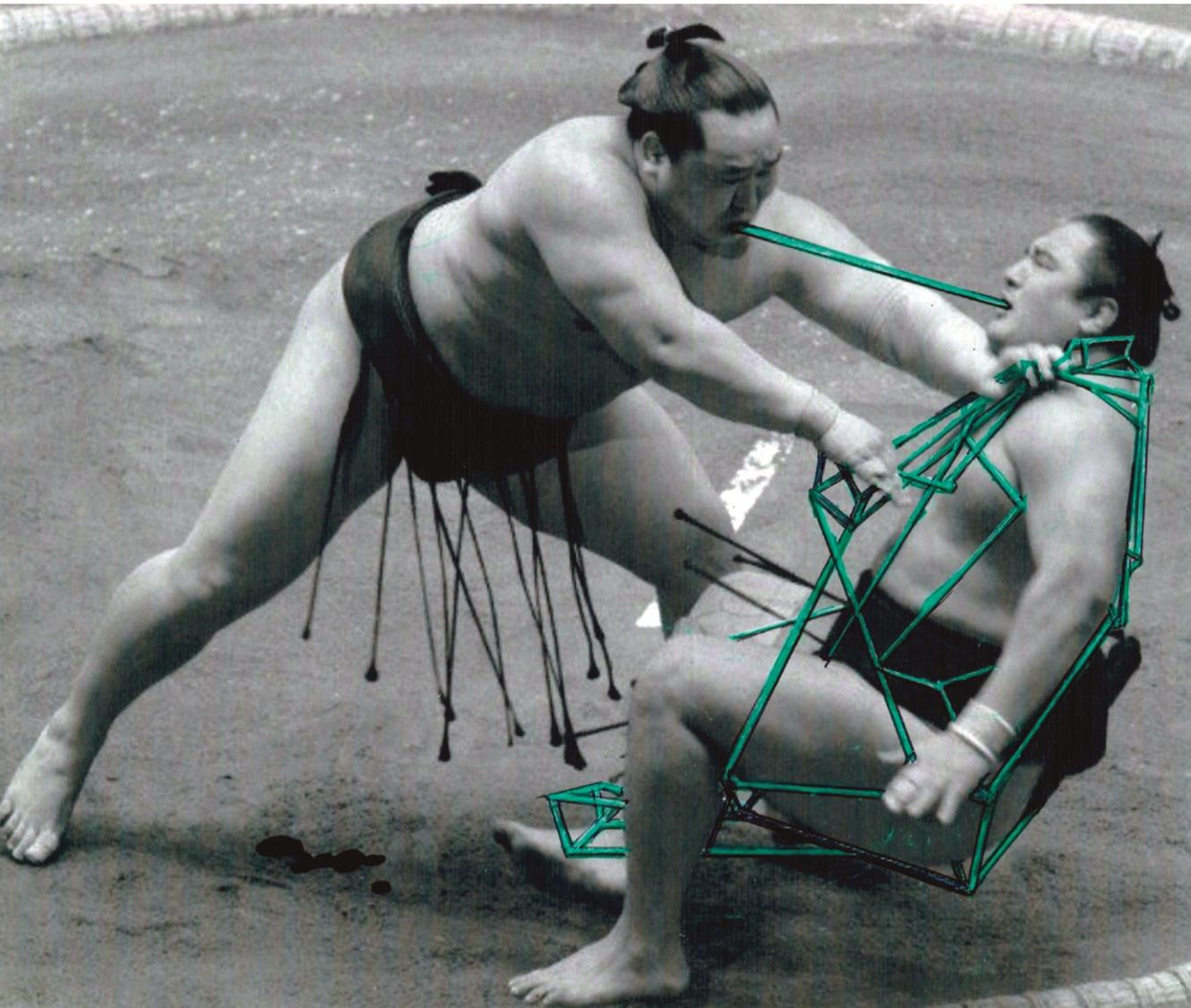
happens when American men party too much in Thailand.

Bangkok has them now.

Looks like a summer blockbuster can rehabilitate anyone.

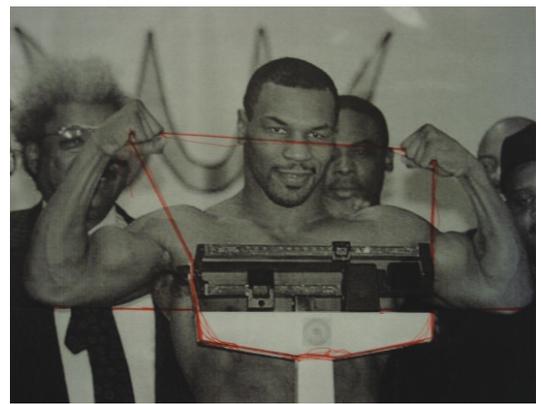
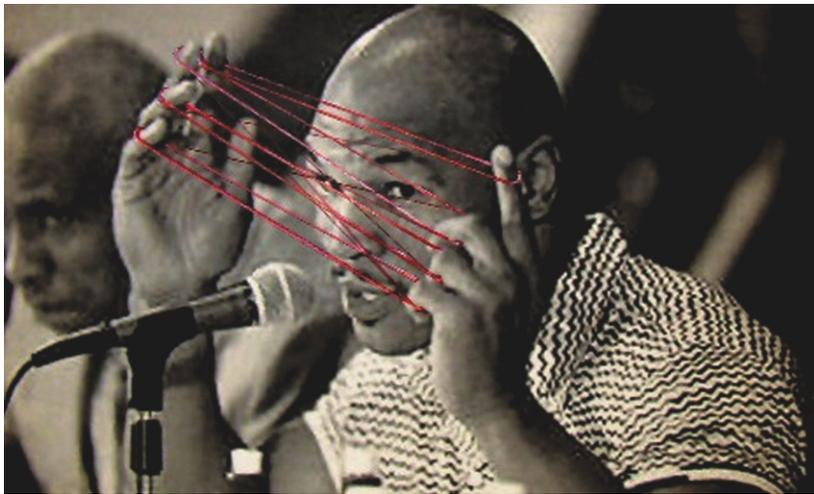
But wait; enter Firoz, with his violent lines.

Maybe that drawing is meant to be a muzzle. This will hurt, a lot.



NAEEM MOHAIEMEN is a writer and artist working in Dhaka and New York. This essay is included in a forthcoming book of Firoz Mahmud's drawings 'Urgency of Proximate Drawing [NinKi: UoPD]' (Editor: James Jack, Aryan Snowball, Cindy Rodriguez. 2011)

Firoz Mahmud and Naeem Mohaiemen's works was installed at, respectively, Sharjah Biennial 2009 and 2011.



All images are from the series 'Urgency of Proximate Drawing (NinKi: UoPD)'
Courtesy: Fee'Rose Studio & B A D Museum of contemporary Art (BAD MoCA)