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博 士 論 文

From Matter to Spirit:  
Analyses of Materiality, Spirituality and Pituallity in  
Hendrawan Riyanto's Artistic Practice

物質から精神へ：  
ヘンドラワン・リヤントの芸術実践における  
物質性・精神性・儀式性の分析

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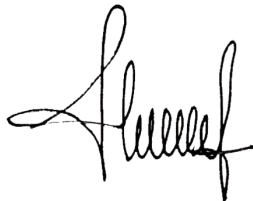
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## **DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY**

I hereby declare that the dissertation presented here is the outcome of the research project undertaken during my candidacy, that I am the sole author unless otherwise indicated, and that I have fully documented the sources of ideas, references, quotations and paraphrases attributable to other authors.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Albert Yonathan Setyawan', with a stylized, cursive script.

**Albert Yonathan Setyawan**



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## **ABSTRACT**

This dissertation is a study of Hendrawan Riyanto's diverse and multidisciplinary art practices from 1978 to 2004. The focus of this study is to outline the transformation of his works from his early modernist-abstract-non-representational sculptures to his multi-media installations and performance art pieces, and to trace several key concepts that have influenced this transformation. Hendrawan discovered spirituality through the materiality of objects in the study of material culture. He saw clay as a metaphor of spiritual transformation and through his engagement with some indigenous communities of potters who used earthenware (terra-cotta) and open field firing technique He had discovered myths, symbols and rituals practiced by these communities as part of their syncretic form of religious tradition. This dissertation proposes an analysis that Hendrawan Riyanto's artistic transformation and exploration were driven and influenced by these ritual practices that he himself was involved directly. Thereby, the study of Hendrawan Riyanto's art reflects an intersection between traditional arts, contemporary approach of art-making and the study of religion and material culture.

I have done this research has been done since 2016 based on a compilation of archives consisted of photographic documents of artworks, exhibition catalogues and publications, sketches and notes and personal interviews. The purpose of this research is to create a body of archives and some critical description and analysis of them that will be useful for further research in Indonesian art. I contextualize Hendrawan Riyanto's practice in two contexts, the first is contemporary Indonesian ceramic art and the second is contemporary Indonesian art in general. This dissertation is divided into three main chapters: Chapter 1 contains the historical contexts, Chapter 2 contains the main body of the thesis which is Hendrawan Riyanto's life and works, including their analysis, while Chapter 3 contains the frameworks in which Hendrawan Riyanto can be placed in the history of Indonesian art.

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## INTRODUCTION

### Background and Objectives

“Art is inescapably religious, so it is said, because it expresses such things as the hope of transcendence or the possibilities of the human spirit.” wrote James Elkins in the preface of his book *On the Strange Place of Religion in Contemporary Art*, published in 2004. And yet, he argued, despite what is apparent that art and religion are entwined, there seems to be the absence of openly religious art from the Western modern art institutions and part of it is due to the series of rejections and refusals of the idea that art is a vehicle for religious narratives. These rejections lead to the alienation of religion and art from one another and further development in Western modern art that seemingly defined that the word “religion” can no longer be paired and aligned with the driving ideas behind art. However, modern artists might well be religious in some respects or they might not be religious, but their works sustain religious ideas even if they are not expressed explicitly. Mark Rothko embraced religious faith in his paintings, even without the presence of religious symbolism.<sup>1</sup> Other examples are Bill Viola’s and Kira Perov’s site-specific video installations for St. Peter’s Chapel, Auckland Castle, and other numerous Cathedrals and Chapels that are described as “faith art”.<sup>2</sup>

Yet, some might argue that these are not expression of religiosity but spirituality – that spirituality is different from religiosity in a way that it is a personalized, subjective and non-institutional form of experience of the transcendent or the supernatural, while religion/religiosity refers to institutionalized religions, in which case the experience is more formal and dogmatic. The word

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<sup>1</sup> See for instance, Hudson, M. (2008) ‘Rothko Exhibition: Art Replaces Religious Faith’, *The Telegraph*, September 25, 2008 [Online] <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/art/3561167/Rothko-exhibition-art-replaces-religious-faith.html> (accessed October 11, 2019)

<sup>2</sup> See also this article, Brown, M. (2015) ‘Bill Viola Video Installation Heralds New National Exhibition Space for Faith Art’, *The Guardian*, June 14, 2015 [Online] <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/jun/14/bill-viola-video-installation-heralds-new-exhibition-space-for-faith-art> (accessed October 11, 2019)

“spiritual” is often used to describe existential orientation by people who see themselves as free from any affiliations with formal religion whose views are rather conservative. However, the meaning of this word is sometimes unclear, some people might find their spirituality through formal religion, while other people might see themselves as completely secular but open to the idea of something transcendence and spiritual. So, are religion and spirituality basically the same ideas or are there fundamental differences between them? Religion and spirituality always find themselves in a strange, complex and contradictory positions in relation to art and an artist’s life and practice. Some artists can be openly critical towards religion even anti-religion, some find art as part of their expressions of something transcendence without seeing themselves as being religious, and some are not so concerned to even talk about religion in art, while for some, art is an expression of faith.

Indonesia has been exposed to the influence of different religions from Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity, not to mention other influences of cultural and religious traditions. Islam is the most adhered to religion in Indonesia, around 87% of the Indonesian population identify as Moslem. In the island of Java, the majority of people there practice a highly syncretic form of Islam. Although this has changed significantly over the last few decades where the practice of a locally oriented non-standard form of Islamic traditions has declined and has been replaced by the more conservative and normative form of Islam.<sup>3</sup> Islam *abangan* is the common term referring to the more syncretic form of Islam in Java. The *abangan* is more fascinated with ritual details, its counterpart, the *santri*, is more concerned with the study of the doctrine and its interpretation. Many artists in Java who have brought in the theme of religion or spirituality in their works are

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<sup>3</sup> Hefner, R.W. (2011) ‘Where Have All the Abangan Gone? Religionization and the Decline of Non-standard Islam in Contemporary Indonesia’, *The Politics of Religion in Indonesia: Syncretism, Orthodoxy, and Religious Contention in Java and Bali*, Routledge Contemporary Southeast Asia Series.

well informed by the more syncretic form of religious traditions – Islam meets local religious traditions and wisdom.<sup>4</sup>

This dissertation addresses the intersection of this religious syncretism, spirituality, rituality and materiality as embodied in the works of Hendrawan Riyanto. Among other contemporary Indonesian artists whose works have been influenced and informed by the religious syncretism of Islam and local traditions, Hendrawan's works have shown the most vigorous and extensive exploration on religious symbolism and mythologies in Javanese and Sundanese culture in West and Central Java. Hendrawan studied ceramics and had expanded his practice into the realm of installation art and eventually into performance art. All of these three were not exclusive to each other, many times they appeared together in one set of work.

Hendrawan saw the materiality in ceramic, especially low-fired terracotta – the most basic type of materials in ceramic – as a source of metaphor for conveying the transcendence and the spiritual. As a ceramic artist, instead of pursuing material and technical mastery, he went the opposite way to the most “primitive” form of ceramic-making which is the field-baked low fire pottery. His attention shifted from how to make a finished object into how to present a simulation of experience through the relation of body and object in space, and with this he had expanded his practice into the realm of installation art and performance art. Hendrawan also brought in ephemeral and transience materials into his works such as bamboo, soil, rice hulls and sand. His installations and performances were ritualistic and complex, visceral and concrete, but fleeting at the same time in a way that their structures were changing constantly. One installation can have various different configurations in different time and place.

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<sup>4</sup> Astri Wright wrote a specific chapter about the syncretic artists in Java, in her PhD dissertation *Soul, Spirit, and Mountain: Preoccupations of Contemporary Indonesian Painters* published in 1994.

For about a decade before he passed away in 2004, Hendrawan Riyanto had participated in several major group exhibitions throughout his career, which include the 8th Asian Art Exhibition in Fukuoka, Japan, the 9th Asian Art Exhibition in Taipei, Taiwan and the exhibition *Modernities and Memories: Recent Art from The Islamic World* as one of the Collateral Events during the 47<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale in 1997. In the early 2000s, he participated in *CP Open Biennale: Interpellation* 2003 at The National Gallery, Jakarta and in the 11th Bangladesh Biennale in Dhaka, Bangladesh. In his academic career at Institute of Technology, Bandung (ITB), he became a senior lecturer in the Ceramic Art Studio and the Head of Fine Art Department shortly before he passed away suddenly in 2004. Late in his career, he had participated in several performance art events in Indonesia and became well known in the community of performance artists. His presence was deeply felt by community of artists and performers, students, cultural advocates and educators in Bandung.

Some of Hendrawan's works have been reviewed in several major newspapers and magazines, but they have never been included in any major publications focusing on the development of Indonesian contemporary art. By far, there are only two available publications that I consider to be the only comprehensive sources of information about his practice. The first is the catalogue from his very last solo exhibition titled *Ning* published by Bentara Budaya Jakarta and the second is a collection of essays related to Hendrawan's works titled *Modern Miring (Slanted Modernism)*, edited by Aminudin TH. Siregar, published a hundred days after his death in conjunction with a retrospective exhibition to commemorate his life and work at Selasar Sunaryo Art Space, Bandung in 2004. Most of Hendrawan's installations were scattered and possibly destroyed in different places and many of his performances were never documented in a video format. Without the presence of the artist himself and the lack of detailed physical records, it has become extremely challenging to preserve and archive his works which is the main objective of this research – to create a comprehensive archive of Hendrawan Riyanto's life and works.

From the 1980s to the late 1990s when Hendrawan first started his career as a young ceramic artist and as an educator, he was in an oppressive era for any forms of cultural activities and artistic expressions. The authoritarian new regime of Suharto that lasted for 32 years had created an oppressive condition where freedom of speech was extremely limited and any forms of cultural activities were tightly monitored and censored. Any forms of cultural activities that were suspected to be potentially critical towards the regime would be depoliticized and silenced. Many artists who were critical towards the government would secretly engage in radical politics. When the new regime of Suharto was finally ended in 1998 – which marked a new era of what is known as the reformation era (*era reformasi*) – many artists who had been secretly expressing their discontent and critical view towards the government in their practice suddenly were faced with the wide-opened opportunities to freely express their opinions in public.

As a result, contemporary Indonesian art presented within and outside of Indonesia during the 1990s were dominated by works charged with social and political critics.<sup>5</sup> These presentations of contemporary Indonesian art were also driven by the growing interests among art researchers and curators to study art in Indonesia, mainly in Bandung and Yogyakarta which were considered as the center of contemporary art in the 1990s. Many of these researchers have worked to showcase contemporary Indonesian art outside of Indonesia. Also, networks of artists and curators within and outside of Indonesia had grown since, resulting in an increased participation of Indonesian

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<sup>5</sup> One example of this is the exhibition titled *AWAS! Recent Art from Indonesia* held from November 27, 1999 to January 29, 2000 at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (ACCA), Melbourne, Australia. The exhibition examined how the recent social, political and economic changes in Indonesia were manifested in the works of fourteen contemporary Indonesian artists hailing from Bandung and Yogyakarta who worked in various media including video, drawing, painting and performance art. The exhibition was a manifestation of how these artists who had experienced working and living through the new regime responded to Suharto's resignation in 1998 and to the country's future democracy and freedom of speech.



artists in regional and international art exhibitions. Contemporary Indonesian art then began to be viewed within the context of the development of contemporary art in Asia or Southeast Asia.<sup>6</sup>

Many academic and scholarly publications on Indonesian art from the 1980s to the present have been focussed on the historiography of Indonesian art and the genealogy of modern or contemporary Indonesian art. These publications are ranging from PhD dissertations to catalogues of major exhibitions that included essays from art critics, curators, academics and artists. In general, the focus and purpose of these researches are trying to understand the “big picture” of what has been going on in contemporary Indonesian art as a reflection of the socio-political conditions and cultural lives of Indonesians. Their main subject is a number of contemporary artists with analyses of their practices and analyses of several major exhibitions that have been held mainly in three major cities such as Jakarta, Bandung and Yogyakarta. Some examples of these publications are: *Soul, Spirit, and Mountain: Preoccupations of Contemporary Indonesian Painters* by Astri Wright published in 1994; *Feminisms and Contemporary Art in Indonesia: Defining Experiences* by Wulan Dirgantoro published in 2017; *Individual and Participatory Art Practice in Indonesia* by Ellen Kent in 2016 (unpublished); *Taring Padi: The Politics of Radical Cultural Practice in Indonesia* by Heidi Arbuckle in 2000 (unpublished); and *Surrealist Painting in Yogyakarta* by Martinus Dwi Marianto in 1995 (unpublished). There are also non-academic publications, some of them are: *Indonesian Modern Art and Beyond* by Jim Supangkat published in 1994 and *Contemporary Indonesian Art: Artists, Art Spaces, and Collectors* by Yvonne Spielmann published in 2017.

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<sup>6</sup> *Contemporary Art in Asia: Traditions/Tensions* was one of the first major exhibitions of Asian contemporary art presented outside of the Asian continent. It was held from October 4, 1996 to January 5, 1997 simultaneously in three different locations in New York City (Grey Art Gallery, Queens Museum of Art and Asia Society Galleries). The exhibition was organized by Vishakha N. Desai, director of the Asia Society Galleries, and curated by Apinan Poshyananda, curator and art historian from Thailand.

This type of scholarly work proposes an overarching narrative, which is very useful in understanding the development and the general tendency of art practices in a particular place and time. However, there is also a possibility that they may exclude certain forms of art practices that do not fit in the proposed narrative, even if these practices occur in the same location and period of time. Such as the case of Hendrawan Riyanto's works in Indonesia. Hendrawan built his art practice from the 1990s to the early 2000s. He belongs to the same generation that had experienced engaging in cultural activities during the militaristic and oppressive regime of Suharto. He was aware of the social and political condition of his time. However, his works did not reflect the same attitudes shown by many of his contemporaries in their works. Hendrawan's contemplative works were barely political from the outset and less outspoken when compared to the works of other artists of his generation, such as Tisna Sanjaya, Agus Suwage, Arahmaiani, Dadang Christanto, FX. Harsono, Mella Jaarsma and Nindityo Adipurnomo, to name a few. These artists, in the major part of their practices if not all, have used their works as vehicles for social critique of and commentaries on society whereas Hendrawan, through his contemporary ceramic art was focussed on re-discovering the values of traditional society in Java as reflected in their highly syncretic religious traditions and ritual practices. This is something that does not quite fit in the socio-political framework of the post 1998 reformation era narrative which has dictated the discussions on contemporary Indonesian art up to the present day.

Therefore, artistic practices like Hendrawan's needed to be studied using a different approach. Some researchers conducted studies that started from the micro level of one individual artist's practice by focusing on the biography of the artist and his/her artistic development to understand the much wider social, political and cultural contexts on a macro level. An example of research using this methodology is Sanento Yuliman's PhD dissertation titled *Genese de la Peinture Indonesienne Contemporaine: Le Role de S. Sudjojono* (*Genealogy of Contemporary Indonesian Painters: The Role of S. Sudjojono*) which was written in French and has never been translated

into Indonesian yet. His dissertation was considered as the earliest PhD research on individual artist's works viewed from the post-colonial perspective and the current social and political context in Indonesia at that time. Sanento Yuliman (1941-1992) was one of the leading art critics and art historians in Indonesia whose works have been very influential for other scholarly works about contemporary Indonesian art. Another example is the work of Kenneth M. George on A.D. Pirous's "Islamic Art" titled *Picturing Islam: Art and Ethics in a Muslim Lifeworld* published in 2010. It is an ethnographic portrait of the artist with a mixture of anthropological and art historical perspectives on the influence of Islam in contemporary Indonesian art.

## **Methodologies and Chapters Outline**

Documents such as photographs, publications and catalogues of exhibitions, copies of newspaper and magazine articles, and a few personal notes from the artist have provided me with valuable information to build my description and analysis of some of the major works and projects Hendrawan had created for over a decade. However, these documents have their limitations and oftentimes, they do not provide me with complete information about Hendrawan Riyanto's elaborate and complex installations, and without the presence of the artist, it has become one of my main challenges in conducting this research. Therefore, I have also used (audio) interviews to obtain more information which cannot be attained from any printed documents.

The first interview sessions that I conducted was with Hendrawan Riyanto's wife, Rini Darwati, from which I have collected a significant amount of information on Hendrawan's early life and his educational background. Kyoto Seika University and Chitaru Kawasaki have also provided me with some information related to his travels to Japan in 1992-1993 and his early art-related activities within and outside of Indonesia. The interview session with Kohar Kartiwa, his former assistant, who is an expert artisan in bamboo, has also provided me with more insights into Hendrawan's art-making process, especially for the works I discuss in this dissertation. The interview sessions with Tisna Sanjaya, Setiawan Sabana and F.X. Harsono, who were some of Hendrawan Riyanto's closest colleagues and fellow artists, have provided me with more insights on his conceptual approach and certain aspects that influenced his artistic decisions in the late 1990s. A.D. Pirous and his Serambi Pirous have assisted me in collecting some photographs of Hendrawan's terracotta works. Through interview sessions with A.D. Pirous and Rita Widagdo, I was able to gather essential information to outline the history of Ceramic Art Studio at ITB and to confirm some of the historical facts that I had discovered in the earlier stage of the research.

The theoretical approach I use is based on Mircea Eliade's theory on myth, symbol, ritual and sacred space among what he called as "archaic society" to analyze the meaning of the religious symbolism in Hendrawan Riyanto's installations. Clifford Geertz's archaeological study on the religion of Java provides a conceptual basis to describe the spiritual and syncretic aspects of Hendrawan's practice while Astri Wright's study on the spiritualization of Indonesian modern art and on the topic of syncretic artists provide the framework to place Hendrawan's works in the development of contemporary Indonesian art after the 1990s.

This dissertation is divided into three chapters **Chapter 1** outlines the historical contexts to understand Hendrawan Riyanto's artistic practice in Indonesia. It consists of three subchapters that I consider important to build the framework to contextualize Hendrawan Riyanto's art in the development of contemporary Indonesian art and ceramic art. These subchapters contain aspects of the history of modern and contemporary art in Indonesia: 1) Modern Art Education at ITB, 2) Modern and Contemporary Indonesian Ceramic Art, and 3) The Indonesian New Art Movement in the 1980s.

The first subchapter focuses on the history of modern art education at ITB. It explains the strain of influences of modern art that emerged in Bandung, Indonesia through art education at the Faculty of Fine Art and Design at ITB. It also describes the development of abstract and non-representational style of painting developed by graduates from ITB which became the defining characteristic of modernist art from Bandung in the 1950s to 1970s. The emergence of abstract art in Bandung was followed by debates around the issues of nationalism and identity among Indonesian modern painters. These debates have shaped the dynamic of modern art development in Indonesia for over two decades.

ITB has become the center for art education in Bandung since it was first established in the 1940s. In the 1960s, it began to expand its scope of practice by building several new departments and one of them was the Ceramic Art Department. The roots of the development of modern/contemporary ceramic art in Indonesia can be traced back to the establishment of the first Ceramic Art Studio at ITB in 1963 which is the focus of the second subchapter. It explains certain aspects that influenced the early development of ceramic art at ITB and how it has evolved into a more diverse and experimental form of ceramic practice up to the present day. The third subchapter focuses on the emergence of the Indonesian New Art Movement which was considered to be the contemporary turns in Indonesian art marked by the emergence of the more socially, politically and environmentally engaged art practices.

**Chapter 2** contains the main body of this dissertation that focuses on Hendrawan Riyanto's life and work divided into seven subchapters. The first subchapter starts with a brief explanation about Hendrawan's early life and art education at ITB. The second one focuses on outlining his early career as a ceramic artist including some examples of his early works and art-related activities from 1978 to 1993. Subchapters three to seven are dedicated to present a critical description of Hendrawan's artistic development from around 1994 to 2004. Each of these subchapters is dedicated to discuss one particular work that represents Hendrawan's conceptual and technical exploration underlined by three themes: materiality, spirituality and rituality. *Inner Mothers* represents Hendrawan's exploration on the notion of materiality through his use of terracotta and traditional open field firing technique commonly used in Central Java. *Makan Malam bersama Sri (Dine with Sri)* reflects his contemplation on mythologies associated with earth and soil believed by the pre-industrial agricultural society in the island of Java – a society that practices a syncretic form of religion. Hendrawan discovered this syncretic religious practice and his own personal connection with it through his engagement with some indigenous communities of potters in Central and West Java. *Form Follows Myth* shows a further and deeper exploration of this subject.

Both *Dine with Sri* and *Form Follows Myth* marked the significant change in Hendrawan's artistic trajectory where he began to incorporate performance, dance and music in collaborative projects. *Ning* is an analysis of Hendrawan's final solo exhibition before he passed away on May 22, 2004. Subchapter seven contains analysis of several drawings and sketches that are connected to Hendrawan's contemplation and meditation on movement and performance.

In **Chapter 3**, I aim to build the framework to contextualize Hendrawan Riyanto's art practice in the development of Indonesian art. I have divided it into two parts based on the historical context outlined in Chapter 1. The first part is focused on the context of contemporary Indonesian ceramic art and the second one is focused on a much broader context of contemporary Indonesian art. In the context of contemporary ceramic art, Hendrawan's works present an interesting intersection between traditional arts, modern art practice and study in material culture. He is also considered to be one of the first ceramic artists who brought in the language of performance art into ceramics. Meanwhile, in the context of contemporary art in Indonesia, his works offer examples of a syncretic artists whose practices are heavily informed by religious syncretism in Java.

## CHAPTER 1

### The Historical Context

#### 1.1 Modern Art Education at ITB Bandung

Modernism in art in Indonesia came from two strains of influences centered in two major cities in the island of Java, one in Yogyakarta in Central Java province and the other in Bandung in West Java province. The artists and the art they developed in these two cities would then dominate the debates and discussions related to the issues of identity in modern Indonesian art in the next few decades since the 1950s. For the context of this research, I will focus on briefly explaining the history of art education in Bandung centered at ITB where Hendrawan Riyanto had studied and built his practice as an artist and educator. However, before that, it is also important to understand briefly what happened in Yogyakarta around the same time ITB was formed to see the social and historical differences between these two cities of major art center in Indonesia.

In Bandung the influence of modernism in art came through a formal training in an art academy. The first art academy in Bandung was established in 1947 and it was called *Universitaire Leergang Voor Tekenleraren* or *Balai Pendidikan Universiter Guru Gambar* (Academy of Drawing Teachers) as part of the Faculty of Technical Sciences alongside the Faculty of Engineering under the University of Indonesia with the main campus located in Jakarta. The curriculum was designed by two Dutchmen, a drawing teacher Simon Admiraal and a painter Ries Mulder for Indonesian students. The original curriculum covered a three-year course and it was similar to the teacher training curriculum in the Netherlands. It consisted of two parts, practical and theoretical subjects. Practical subjects included anatomical drawing, linear drawing, rhythmical drawing, decorative art and hand work training. The theoretical subjects included Western and Eastern art history, cultural history, psychology, pedagogy, geometry, perspective, knowledge of materials and



philosophy. In 1950, one of the first graduates named Syafei Sumardja became the first Indonesian teacher in the academy and he took position as the Head of the Academy from 1951 to 1961 (Spanjaard, 1990).

In the Painting Department at ITB, Ries Mulder brought in the tradition of still life, figure studies and portrait paintings into the art curriculum at ITB. He was a self-taught artist who was born on January 1, 1909 in IJsselstein, Netherlands and came to Indonesia in 1939. He went to the internment camp during the Japanese occupation in 1942 - 1945 where he met Simon Admiraal. As a self-taught artist Ries Mulder have experimented with different styles of paintings. However, he started painting in the style of Cubism when he began his teaching in Bandung. He applied geometric abstraction, often in the manner of a mosaic into his still life, portraits and landscape paintings using subdued pastel hues (figure 1). Ries Mulder may not be considered as one of the main proponents of Cubism style, nevertheless, his paintings have had a great influence on the first generation of modernist painters coming from the Faculty of Fine Art and Design, ITB. Some of these painters are Srihadi Sudarsono, Ahmad Sadali, Edie Kartasubarna, Mochtar Apin, But Muchtar, Popo Iskandar and A.D Pirous. Some of their early works show a similar approach to colors and compositions as to what Ries Mulder has done in his paintings. Example of this can be seen in Ahmad Sadali's *Skyline of New York* in 1957 (figure 3) and But Mochtar's *Dancers* in 1960 (figure 4) in comparison with Ries Mulder's *Reclining Nude* in 1952 (figure 2).

Ries Mulder had spent time working and living in Paris before arriving in Bandung. His main influence in Cubism was the work of the French cubist painter Jacques Villon (1875 - 1963). His teaching method was described as to provide an introduction to the language of form in the widest possible sense – to discover all possibilities of line, tone, colour, form and space in their use in art expression as applied in various cultures and different parts of the world. But, he also admitted that elements of personal influence remain inevitable (cited in Grijp, 2009, p. 199). In his own

works, Ries Mulder used stained glass as models for his study of fragmented pictorial planes. A.D. Pirous, one of Mulder's students who arrived at ITB in 1955 from Aceh, northern part of Sumatra island, described his teaching as sometimes arrogant, demeaning and cruel. He would use condescending words that would hurt his students (George, 2009). Nevertheless, his teaching on cubist geometries, colors, and abstraction, had influenced the outlook of modern art in Bandung in the 1950s.



Figure 1: Ries Mulder at ITB studio.



Figure 2: Ries Mulder, *Reclining Nude*, oil on canvas, 50 x 120 cm, 1952.



Figure 3: Ahmad Sadali, *Skyline in New York*, oil on canvas, 45 x 75 cm, 1957.

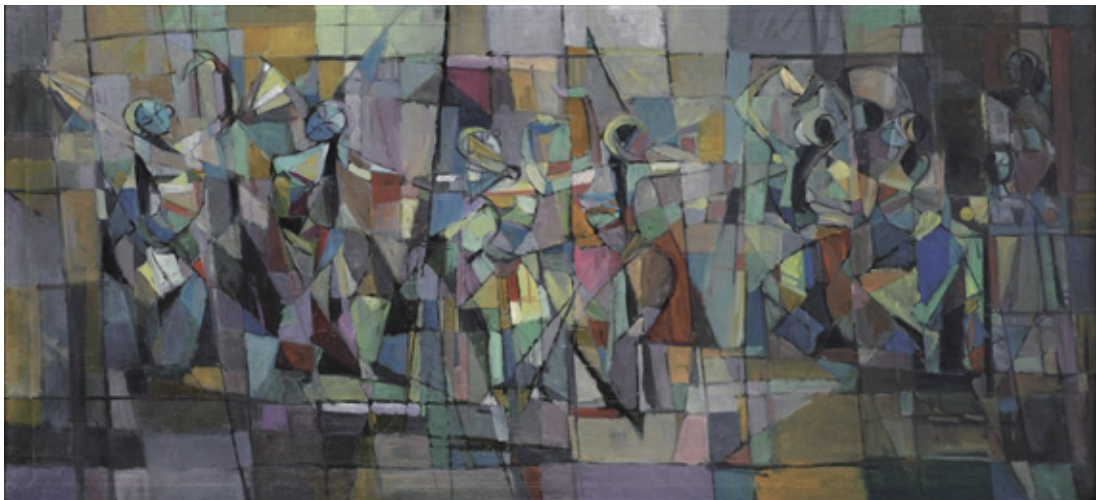


Figure 4: But Mochtar, *Dancers*, oil on canvas, 60 x 129 cm, 1960.

Indonesia declared its independence on August 17, 1945. However, the independence was not acknowledged by the Dutch until 1949. During those four years, the political condition was still uncertain for the newly formed Indonesian state and there was still a struggle for independence and the fight against the reoccupation of Indonesia by the Dutch. The Dutch army sent two military offensives to Java and Sumatra in 1947 and in 1948. Because of the fear of another possible military aggression, it was decided on April 4, 1946 that Jakarta was no longer safe as the central of political activities and so, the capital city was relocated temporarily to Yogyakarta only to be relocated again to Sumatra island in 1948 to evade the second military offensive by the Dutch army. Yogyakarta was the heart of the newly born Republic and many of the young revolutionary intellectuals moved to Yogyakarta at this point (Dolk, 2012, p.63). The art activities in Yogyakarta in those years were always set against the background of struggles for revolution and independence. The questions of nationality and individuality became the main theme. The key challenge was how to create art that was “modern” but at the same time it was “Indonesian” (Spanjaard, 1990). Yet, Bandung artists did not seem to ask these questions and it had become the source of antagonism between Bandung and Yogyakarta for more than a decade since the beginning of the 1950s.

In Yogyakarta, the influence of modern art can be traced back to the formation of PERSAGI, the acronym for *Persatuan Ahli-Ahli Gambar Indonesia* (Union of Indonesian Painters) which was founded by S. Sudjojono (1913 - 1986) and Agus Djaja (1913 - 1994) in October 1938. Agus Djaja served as the leader, while S. Sudjojono served as the secretary and the main spokesperson of PERSAGI. Sudjojono was strongly against the tradition of “*Mooi Indie*” or “Beautiful Indies” paintings introduced and practiced by many Dutch artists and some Indonesian artists during the Dutch colonial occupation. Even though he himself was trained in this style of paintings, he rebelled against it through PERSAGI. To him and the rest of the PERSAGI members, this style does not reflect the reality of Indonesians during the revolution. PERSAGI artists turned their



subject matters from romantic and beautiful landscape into guerilla fighters, farmers, poor peasants, or views of local markets. Sudjojono propagated that Indonesian artists should break free from any colonial past, be independent and to express the reality of life of many Indonesians at that time, a credo famously known as “*jiwa ketok*” or “*jiwa mampak* (visible soul)”.

The struggle of the PERSAGI members to pursue a new form of art to be embraced was not only the issues of individuality or individual expression but also the issues of identity and nationality. PERSAGI was formed just a decade after the Indonesian language was declared as the official national language. Sudjojono was the first person who introduced the word “*seni*” as a direct translation of the word “art” or “fine art”. The members of PERSAGI saw themselves as part of the socialist-nationalist front who aimed at the creation of a new national consciousness (Sambrani, 2016). Many of its members were involved in guerilla activities themselves (figure 5). The question for PERSAGI members was not how to create a new style of paintings but more on how to create an art that is uniquely “Indonesian” reflected through its subject matter. And this question would become the main source of debates in the 1950s between the art that was based in Yogyakarta where PERSAGI was formed, and the art that came from Bandung where the first art academy was established in 1947. PERSAGI was only one example of these unions of artists, other unions, such as *Seniman Indonesia Muda* (Indonesian Young Artists Union) and *Sanggar Pelukis Rakyat* (The People’s Painters Union), were also significantly important in driving the development of art in Yogyakarta during and after the revolution. In Yogyakarta, these unions of young painters eventually evolved into an art academy around 1950 and it was called the Indonesia Academy of Art before it was officially changed into Indonesia Institute of the Arts around 1968.



Figure 5: S. Sudjojono, *Kawan-Kawan Revolusi (Friends of the Revolution)*, oil on canvas, 95 x 149 cm, 1947.

In the debates between Bandung and Yogyakarta, Bandung artists were accused of serving the “Western laboratory”, lacking the “Indonesian soul” and not representing the “Indonesian experiences”. The phrase “Western laboratory” was first brought up by an art critic based in Yogyakarta, Trisno Sumarjo (1917 - 1969) in an article titled *Bandung Mengabdikan Laboratorium Barat* (Bandung Serves the Western Laboratory) in *Siasat* magazine on December 5, 1954 that marked the start of the debate.<sup>7</sup> In the article, Trisno Sumardjo strongly criticized the works of eleven Bandung artists exhibited at the *Balai Budaya* (Cultural Hall) in Jakarta on November 20 - 27, 1954. Many of the artists in the exhibition were still studying at the Department of Design and Plastic Arts (under the University of Indonesia at the time). When using the word “laboratory”, Trisno was referring to the school buildings of the art academy that were part of the Faculty of Technical Sciences. In his writing he strongly accused these school buildings as “Western

<sup>7</sup> Sumardjo, T. (1954) ‘Bandung Mengabdikan Laboratorium Barat’, *Mingguan Siasat (Siasat weekly)*, no. 391, p. 26-27. Many of the young revolutionary Indonesian intellectuals in 1945, famously known as the *Angkatan '45* - many were writers and critics - were gathered around the magazine *Siasat* (the word means “strategy” in Indonesian).

laboratory” where the “Indonesian soul” and the experiences of being an Indonesian were ignored, a place where artificial and synthetic results produced were guided by the soul and the experiences of the west. He started his critique in a sentence like this (translation provided by Albert Yonathan Setyawan):

*“Siapapun, sebagai seniman Indonesia atau kritikus dan peminat lainnya yang bertolak dari kehidupan tanah air sendiri dengan masalah-masalah dari dalam dan manusianya, dia akan kecewa melihat pameran ini karena hampir tak ada yang cocok dengan jiwa dan pengalamannya.”*

“Whoever they are, as Indonesian artists or critics or others who have an interest and concern in the art that is based on the life of the people in our homeland with their challenges and problems would be disappointed in seeing this exhibition, because none of the works reflect the souls and the experiences of Indonesians”

(Sumardjo, 1954)

Trisno also emphasized that the “true” Indonesian art should be born naturally from the experiences of Indonesians, so the art made inside the confines of these “Westernized” school buildings would always be artificial.

Trisno went on to describe each of the artists’ works and stated that these eleven artists made their works based on “imported” materials like the style of some well-known artists such as Georges Braque, Paul Klee, Pablo Picasso, and Henri Matisse who, according to him, clearly influenced these young artists. The influence of Cubism through the teaching of Ries Mulder at ITB was already well known among artists and art critics at that time. Harsh criticism was directed at the works of Srihadi Soedarsono, Popo Iskandar, Eddie Kartasoebarna, Soedjoko, But Mochtar and Achmad Sadali, that they were just some forms of mannerism of the European modernism, especially Cubism. In just after week, Trisno’s harsh criticism was then followed by two other articles, one was written by Sitor Situmorang titled *Modernism* on December 12 and the other was

written by Sudjoko titled *Kritik Terhadap Pelukis-pelukis Bandung (Critique of the Painters of Bandung)* on December 19, 1954.<sup>8</sup>

The article carried an even more unpleasant undertone, calling these works were just visual expressions of the painters' private world and they could never serve a cultural purpose in Indonesia. He also underlined that they were just a fashionable play of composition and color contrasts derived from the bourgeois taste with no significant contents, messages, and vision for the Indonesian people. Even though this debate would be slightly diminished in the 1960s, certain antagonism persisted. This abstract, semi-abstract or non-representational style of paintings practiced in Bandung became known as *Mazhab Bandung* (The Bandung School) whereas in Yogyakarta, the style of social realism became the main characteristic of the Yogyakarta School in opposition to what was happening in Bandung. This polemic continued on for several years overshadowing the development of art in Bandung, especially among ITB artists, as shown by yet another article published on December 3, 1958 by Jusuf Effendi titled *Seni Rupa Bandung Tiada Nafas Ketimuran? (Bandung Art Lacks the Breath of Eastern Values)*. This time, the attack was focused on the issue that painters from Bandung were lacking any sort of "Eastern" values.<sup>9</sup>

There was the issue of nationalism that underlined the debate. For Yogyakarta artists, their art represented the "East" as opposed to ITB art as a representative of the Western influence. They saw their art as uniquely and authentically "Indonesian". However, Helena Spanjaard argued that it was an unfounded debate without strong foundation and clear factual basis that modern art of Yogyakarta was really "Indonesian" only because it depicted the struggles of Indonesians against the colonial ruler, while modern art of Bandung was not "Indonesian" enough because it came as

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<sup>8</sup> Situmorang, S. (1954) 'Modernisme', *Mingguan Siasat (Siasat weekly)*, no. 392, p. 27;

Sudjoko (1954) 'Kritik terhadap pelukis-pelukis Bandung', *Mingguan Siasat (Siasat weekly)*, no. 393, p. 26-27.

<sup>9</sup> Effendi, J. (1958) 'Seni Rupa Bandung Tiada Nafas Ketimuran?', *Mingguan Siasat (Siasat weekly)*, no. 599, p. 29



a result of the art education that followed Western criteria or Western art theories. She argued that the Yogyakarta artists failed to see the fact that the style of paintings in which they had worked on, such as realism and expressionism, were also in many ways just as “Westernized” as the non-representational and abstract art of Bandung. And that the major difference between the two was just in the subject matter.<sup>10</sup>

The seeds of abstract art were actually present in Yogyakarta, albeit not as strong or as concentrated as in Bandung. Agus Burhan, an art historian and art critic based in Yogyakarta who is now the principal of the Indonesia Institute of Art, Yogyakarta explains that the influence of abstract art was also present in Yogyakarta in the 1950s through the works of artists such as Oesman Effendi and Zaini. In the 1950s, both of these artists began to create abstract and non-representational paintings based on their personal intuition unaffected by any social or political issues (figure 6). Oesman Effendi and Zaini were former members of *Seniman Indonesia Muda* (Indonesian Young Artists Union). After they left the union some time before 1957 and moved to Jakarta, other two young artists, Nashar and Wakijan emerged and continued their style of paintings in abstract and non-representational forms.<sup>11</sup> Gregorius Sidharta is also another example of artists from Yogyakarta whose visual style of paintings is strongly influenced by the Analytical Cubism (figure 7). Sidharta went to study at the *Jan van Eyck Kunst Academie* in Maastricht from 1953 to 1956. Before that, he started painting in *Sanggar Pelukis Rakyat* (The People’s Painters Union) in 1947 and he was one of the first students when the Indonesia Academy of Art was opened in 1950. He relocated to Bandung in 1965 to teach at ITB. Together with But Mochtar and Rita Widagdo, they founded the Sculpture Studio at ITB.

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<sup>10</sup> Helena Spanjaard is one of the earliest art historian and art researcher of Modern Indonesian art. Her essay titled *Bandung, the Laboratory of the West?* specifically argue about the basis of this debate between Bandung and Yogyakarta in the 1950s, published in 1990 in *Modern Indonesian Art: Three Generations of Tradition and Change, 1945-1990* edited by Joseph Fischer.

<sup>11</sup> See Burhan, A.M. (2013) *Seni Lukis Indonesia Masa Jepang Sampai Lekra (Painting in Indonesia from during the Japanese Occupation to Lekra)*, Surakarta, UNS Press p.115

Gregorius Sidharta along with some other artists I have mentioned here who are not originally from Bandung show that the tendency to practice an abstract or non-representational style of paintings was not only exclusively occurred in Bandung. The tendency occurred almost simultaneously in several major cities, such as Yogyakarta, Bandung, Jakarta and Bali as Burhan proposes. The difference is, however, it seemed to occur sporadically in each artist's practice in all cities except in Bandung where it was more concentrated and systematically practiced in the art academy. Also, due to the critiques of the Bandung painters, they got significant exposure in the media at that time.



Figure 6: Oesman Effendi, *Awan Berarak (The Clouds Marched On)*, oil on canvas, 63 x 93 cm, 1975.



Figure 7: Gregorius Sidharta, *Bulan Purnama (Full Moon)*, oil on canvas, 122 x 72 cm, 1960.

In Yogyakarta, it was not until after 1964 when some students at the Indonesia Academy of Art began to practice abstract paintings similar to the style that the students of ITB had practiced two decades prior. This group of non-representational painters are “lyrical” painters. Lyrical in a way that these artists tend to emphasize on their highly personal expressions and reflections in an imaginative way, sometimes symbolic, on humanity and on the relationship between human and nature (Burhan, 2013, p. 113-115). He also uses the term “universalist” painters as these artists

struggle to find universal humanism in their works and to see art as a platform for subjective expressions and personal reflections separated from any political ideologies.<sup>12</sup>

The tension in the 1950s between the people's painters of Yogyakarta and the universalist painters of Bandung (as Agus Burhan puts it) intensified in the 1960s as some of the members of the union painters became closely involved in the *Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat* or commonly known as LEKRA which is a literary and social movement associated with the Indonesian Communist Party founded in 1950. In 1956, LEKRA released a statement that any forms of art should be used against oppression, colonialism and feudalism. Art should serve the people and reflect social progress and social realities, hence the choice of paintings in the style of realism was preferable and encouraged (Burhan, 2013, p. 104-106). This extreme ideological stance resulted in the alienation or exclusion of other painters who were involved in the union but had chosen to free their art from any forms of political activities.

In relation to the debate between Bandung and Yogyakarta in the 1950s, I think it would be inaccurate to consider the argument as false. The accusations and statements that mentioned Bandung was a "Western" laboratory might have some level of truth in them. Bandung was indeed one of the most "Westernized" cities in the island of Java and in Indonesia during the Dutch East Indies colonial period. John R.W. Smail's studies of Bandung in the early revolution era in 1945 - 1946 presented some facts about the history of Bandung. Smail stated that:

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<sup>12</sup> See also Burhan, A.M. (2008) 'Kehadiran Pelukis Salim Dalam Sejarah Seni Lukis Modern Indonesia (The Significance of Salim the Painter in the History of Modern Indonesian Paintings)', *ARS Jurnal Seni Rupa & Desain* (September - December 2008), FSR ISI Yogyakarta, p.1-12 [Online]. Available at <https://media.neliti.com/media/publications/217738-kehadiran-pelukis-salim-dalam-sejarah-se.pdf> (Accessed 3 December 2019)

“In August 1945, at the threshold of the Revolution, the city of Bandung was what it had been through most of the earlier years of the twentieth century and is today, an administrative and educational center. Like most cities in Indonesia, it had little industry; in economic terms it depended on the services it performed for government and private offices and schools and for the plantations established during the previous six or seven decades in the mountainous areas around the bowl.”

(Smail, 1964, p. 3)

Smail also stated that the population of Bandung in 1946 was approximately 437.000 people, based on the municipal records compiled in 1946 quoted from page 3-4 in a separate appendix of *Perdjoangan Kemerdekaan dalam Kota Bandung* (The Struggle for Indonesian Independence in the City of Bandung), published in Garut in 1946.

Regarding its demography and social statistics, the population of Bandung at that time consisted of Indonesians, Europeans, Chinese, Indians and Arabs. Much of the largest group in the population was that of the Indonesians (most of them were Sundanese). The second major element of the population was that of the Chinese who were mostly merchants, while the third major element was that of the Europeans, consisted of Dutch, Eurasians and other nationalities and there were about 16.000 of them based on municipal records in 1945. Before the war, in around 1940, there were about 27.000 Europeans (many of them - the Dutch - occupied higher positions in the government offices) living in Bandung. The decreased in number was due to the Japanese occupation as many of them (Dutch and Eurasians) were sent into internment camps located in Cimahi, in the western part of the city (Smail, 1964, p.4-7). Regarding the presence of schools and of higher education in Bandung, Smail stated:

“The first four decades of the 20th century saw a radical transformation of the Indonesian elite in Bandung. The most important influence behind this change was that of Western education which became increasingly available for Indonesians - though there were never enough schools to satisfy the demand - after about 1910. Western education broke down parochial barriers both intellectually and socially; it provided another criterion for prestige besides birth and Islamic learning; above all it was a passport to the small number of better jobs made possible by the developing economy: as clerks in private businesses and government offices, as civil servants, as teachers, as doctors, lawyers and engineers.”

(Smail, 1964, p. 8)

Since the beginning of the 20th century, Western education had changed the outlook of the city of Bandung into an international and modern city, and a center of education, even to this day. As stated by Smail above, the education in Bandung broke down parochial barriers and gave way to the rise of the new secular elite group which consisted of the educated young people living mostly in the inner part of the city. Out of this group of young people grew several nationalist political and cultural organizations (Smail, 1964, p. 8-11). One more important fact about Bandung that supported this description of Bandung as an international city and a center for education was that Bandung was chosen as the venue for the Asian African Conference also known as The Bandung Conference on April 18<sup>th</sup> - 24, 1955.<sup>13</sup> The preparation leading up to the conference itself had significantly changed the face of the city.<sup>14</sup>

The above information on the existence of many schools and their high demands in the beginning of the 1900s set the background for the history of ITB in Bandung. The history of ITB itself can be traced back to the 1920s when it was first established by the Dutch colonial administration under the name *de Technische Hoogeschool te Bandoeng* or THB. When Indonesia declared its independence in 1945, the name was changed to *Sekolah Tinggi Teknik* (Technical High School) consisted of the two faculties I have mentioned in page 17. And in 1947, these two faculties became part of *Universitas Indonesia* (University of Indonesia) which was also a newly formed academic institution based in Jakarta, initially consisted of several different academies in various cities across Java. On March 2, 1959, they were declared as an independent academic entity set apart from the main campus of the University of Indonesia in Jakarta. In 1956, still under the Faculty of Technical Sciences, the Academy of Drawing Teachers was transformed into the

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<sup>13</sup> For information about the history of the can be accessed on this website: <http://asianafrikanmuseum.org/>

<sup>14</sup> For a comprehensive and detailed account of the conference see, Jack, H.A. (1955) *Bandung: an on-the-spot description of the ASIAN-AFRICAN CONFERENCE Bandung, Indonesia, April 1955*, Chicago, Toward Freedom - A Newsletter on Colonial Affairs [Online]. Available at <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015024705959&view=1up&seq=3> (Accessed 5 December 2019)



Department of Architecture and Plastic Arts and then, the name was changed to Department of Design and Plastic Arts when ITB was established. Architecture would be integrated gradually into a different faculty in the 1970s along with the Department of Planology and Engineering.<sup>15</sup>

After 1950, many Dutch teachers who were teaching at ITB left the city. In 1959, Ries Mulder was asked to return to the Netherlands and he left ITB in 1960. Some of his students, such as Srihadi Sudarsono, Ahmad Sadali, Edie Kartasubarna, Mochtar Apin, But Muchtar and A.D. Pirous, became teachers at the Department upon graduating. This first generation of modernist painters in Bandung would expand the scope of art education at ITB between 1960 and 1970. Prior to that, they received support and grants to study painting in the Netherlands and the United States of America at institutions, such as *The Stichting voor Culturele Samenwerking* commonly known as STICUSA and The United States Information Studies or USIS (cited in Burhan, 2008, p. 3). The STICUSA was established in Amsterdam in February 1948. It was a foundation subsidized by the Dutch Parliament to support cultural cooperation between the Netherlands, Indonesia, and the Dutch colonies in the West (Suriname and the Antilles). STICUSA's activities in Indonesia were extended to literature, music, film and exhibitions including exhibiting the works of European/French painters such as Picasso, Braque and Matisse.<sup>16</sup> Srihadi Sudarsono, Achmad Sadali, Edie Kartasubarna, But Mochtar and A.D. Pirous went to study at different universities in the United States, while Mochtar Apin went to the Netherlands and other parts of Europe. Another institution that also supported Indonesian artists to study in the United States of America is The Rockefeller Foundation who sponsored A.D. Pirous for his study in Rochester, New York.<sup>17</sup> In the 1960s, upon finishing their studies, some of these artists came back to ITB and established a few

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<sup>15</sup> Information from the brief history of the faculty from The Faculty of Fine Art and Design ITB website. (<https://fsrd.itb.ac.id/profil/sejarah/>)

<sup>16</sup> See Liesbeth Dolk's essay about the STICUSA and Indonesia's affair from 1948 - 1956 in *Heirs to World Culture - Being Indonesian 1950 - 1965*, Lindsay, J & Liem, M.H.T (ed), Leiden, KITLV Press

<sup>17</sup> Cited from an interview with A.D. Pirous on August 25, 2017 in his residence in Bandung.

new studios. But Mochtar opened the Sculpture studio, A.D. Pirous helped to develop the Printmaking Studio and opened the Graphic Design Studio, while Edie Kartasubarna opened the Ceramic Art studio. This group of artists had shaped the development of art education at ITB into what we know in the present as the Faculty of Art and Design, ITB with its diverse branches of practices including art, craft and design.

### **1.2 Modern and Contemporary Indonesian Ceramic Art**

The Ceramic Department in The Faculty of Fine Art and Design, ITB, is the earliest Ceramic Art course to be offered in an art university in Indonesia. It was founded in 1963 by two painters Eddie Kartasubarna and Angkama Setjadipradja who had just came back from their studies in the United States. Edie went to the School of Art and Design at Alfred University, New York, while Angkama went to the Department of Art at Ohio State University. Although both of them studied painting, they had a mild interest in ceramics which led them to undertake a one-year post-graduate training in ceramic art in the United States. Upon returning to Bandung, they were appointed by ITB to open a new course in Ceramic Art.

As a new branch of study, the studio faced certain problems including lack of technical expertise and a guiding vision of where the ceramic department should be directed. Both founders were not particularly interested in developing ceramic art pieces on a regular basis and although it was moderately equipped, the teaching staffs lacked any clear concept “Ceramic Art”. The curriculum introduced some methods and theories of ceramic technology but failed to equip the students with the ability to develop their own artistic and practical explorations (Soemantri, 2000). However, this would soon change slightly in 1965 when Rita Widagdo (maiden name Rita Wizemann), a sculptor of German descent, came to ITB to further develop the Design Department, Sculpture Department and Ceramics Departments.



Between 1965 and 1966, it was discussed at a faculty meeting whether to continue the recently opened Ceramic Art Studio or to close it soon due to the lack of technical expertise and facilities and most importantly, a clear basic curriculum. Some of the faculty members, including But Mochtar who was the Head of the Faculty at that time, considered that they were not ready yet to have a Ceramic Art studio. However, Rita Widagdo felt that it would be a waste of resources and potential if the decision was to close the studio and she proposed to keep the studio. Rita had a little experience in ceramic art when she took it as a minor course prior to her arrival in Bandung. After the meeting, Rita was appointed as the Head of the Ceramic Art Studio and was given the task to set up a basic curriculum.<sup>18</sup>

Rita Widagdo (figure 8) first came to teach at ITB in the Sculpture Studio in 1966 which was established by But Mochtar and Gregorius Sidharta two years prior to her arrival. Rita Widagdo received her art education from the Stuttgart State Academy of Art and Design where she was immersed in the ethos of the Bauhaus School. This influenced not only her personal approach to artmaking, but also her teaching style. Founded by an architect, Walter Gropius in Weimar, The Staatliches Bauhaus, commonly known as The Bauhaus was arguably one of the most influential modernist art school of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, operational from 1919 to 1933. Its main philosophy was to combine fine arts, crafts, design and architecture to eventually create the totality of the work of art (Hopkins, 2018). In 1966, Rita Widagdo helped set up the basic curricula for first-year students in the Faculty of Fine Art and Design which are still used today. Some of the major courses that Rita started in 1966 were three-dimensional design and two-dimensional design which used to be called *Nirmana 3D* and *Nirmana 2D*. These subjects are now called *Rupa Dasar* which is an Indonesian synonym of the word “*nirmana*”. *Nirmana* means “basic form” or “essential form”. The aim of both curricula was to train students to have sensibilities over all formalist visual aspects

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<sup>18</sup> Cited from an interview with Rita Widagdo in November 2018 in her residence in Bandung.

such as compositions, forms, shapes and colors to create something that is non-representational, merely based on knowledge of materials and the mastery of technical skills.<sup>19</sup>

In 1967, when Rita was appointed as the Head of the Ceramic Art Studio, she integrated the methodology she used to teach these basic subjects with the curriculum of the Ceramic Art Studio, so as to make it look like it was an extension of these subjects, with the main goal was to create a formalistic, non-ornamental and abstract forms through the understanding of materials as can be seen in one of her own sculptures titled *From Two to Three Dimension* (figure 9). Because of her background in sculpture, the characteristics of ceramic art practice at ITB became more sculptural without having completely abandoned all the traditional pottery techniques such as the throwing wheel. Although students in those years were still practicing the basics of pottery, there was not much freedom to explore the decorative aspects of pottery.



Figure 8: Rita Widagdo in front of one of her sculptures shown at her solo exhibition titled *Marking the 1965-2005 Journey*, Jakarta, 2005.

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<sup>19</sup> Nedina Sari and Imam Santosa, who are both professors at the Faculty of Art and Design ITB have done studies about the influence of Bauhaus School on the development of art education at ITB. See Santosa, I., Sari, N. (2014) 'The Influence of Bauhaus School on the Education of Three-Dimensional Form (Nirmana Space) at Bandung Institute of Technology', *Arts and Design Studies*, Vol.16 [Online].

Available at <https://iiste.org/Journals/index.php/ADS/article/viewFile/10290/10492>



Figure 9: Rita Widagdo, *Dari Dua ke Tiga Dimensi (From Two to Three Dimension)*, painted steel plate, 105 x 119 cm (dimension unclear), 1982.

The modernist approach to art education at ITB emphasizes on the importance of formal elements – the purity of form. Under Rita Widagdo’s teaching, decorative tendencies were dismissed, in perfect agreement with Adolf Loos.<sup>20</sup> Based on the Bauhaus philosophy and aesthetics for design and applied arts, form should always reflect and enhance function, and in the case of non-functional art such as fine art, any forms, shapes and colors complemented each other and communicate a specific idea or emotion to the viewers. In this process, ornament is considered a nuisance and is totally unnecessary. With her Bauhaus sensibilities, Rita brought progress to the Ceramic Art Studio and succeeded in sharpening her students’ sense of forms. However, similar to the case of Edie and Angkama, she was not sufficiently familiar with clay to be able to evoke the beauty and richness of the material. In many cases, instead of developing the form from the unique physical feature of the material itself, following certain formal ideas was forced (Soemantri, 2000). In other words, Rita was considered to be lacking the sensibilities of a potter or a ceramic artist.

Even though the formalistic style was very strong at that time, some students had different perspectives and felt that they might lose the unique character of clay and its decorative aspects. They were also more interested in advancing their technical expertise in ceramics rather than just manipulating material for the sake of creating beautiful forms, so that the form can really come out of the unique characteristic of clay with its own grammar and syntax. In other words, they were more interested in developing ceramics toward the “craft” domain. Among these young artists was Hildawati Soemantri (1945-2003) or Hilda Soemantri as she used to be called, who went on to form the Ceramics Department at the Jakarta Institute of Art in 1976. Hilda was a ceramic artist and an art historian. She was one of the first students who studied at the Ceramic Art Studio at ITB. Upon finishing her study in 1969, Hilda went to the United States to further

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<sup>20</sup> *Ornament and Crime* is the title of Adolf Loos’s essay in 1908. See Loos, A. (1971) ‘Ornament and Crime’, *Programs and Manifestoes on 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries Architecture*, Conrads, U. (ed), Cambridge, Massachusetts, The MIT Press

study ceramics and art history. She earned her Master in Practice from Pratt Institute in 1976 and her Master's Degree in Art History from Cornell University in 1993. She also received her Doctorate Degree from Cornell University in 1995 for her research on the history of terracotta art from the *Majapahit Kingdom* in Eastern Java dating from the 13<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> century. Hilda's dissertation is an intersection between art history and the study of material culture.<sup>21</sup> Hilda Soemantri (figure 10) is the first Indonesian female artist to ever hold a solo exhibition outside Indonesia in 1978. She is also the first ceramic artist in Indonesia to ever expanded her ceramic works into the territory of installation art.<sup>22</sup>



Figure 10: Hilda Soemantri (right) with one of her works titled *Gunungan III (Mountains III)*, raku-fired ceramic on board, 55 x 55 cm, 1998 (left).

<sup>21</sup> In 2003 Hilda Soemantri's essay on the art of terracotta from *Majapahit* was included in the proceedings of the Singapore Symposium on Premodern Southeast Asian Earthenwares. See Soemantri, H. (2003), 'The Terracotta Art of Majapahit', *Earthenware in Southeast Asia*, p. 146 – 161, Miksic, J. (ed), Singapore, Singapore University Press. See also Soemantri, H. (1997), *Majapahit Terracotta Art*, Jakarta, Ceramic Society of Indonesia

<sup>22</sup> Wright, A. (1998) 'Victoria's Peaks Inspire Pioneer Hilda', *The Jakarta Post*, 24 May 1998, Jakarta. See also Carla Bianpoen's article 'Hilda's Groundbreaking Ceramics in Retrospect' available online at <http://archive.ivaa-online.org/files/uploads/texts/Hildas%20groundbreaking.pdf>

Hilda admitted that in the early development of ceramic art education at ITB, the teaching of Rita Widagdo had had a great role in building the students' sensibilities of formal aspects. However, for her, ITB at that time was still lacking what was really important and necessary in developing a proper ceramic art course. She says that a work of art is not just a manifestation of an idea, it is also the result of how the idea is being materialized. Hilda's concern is directed at the importance of both conceptual thinking and practical skills in ceramic-making, without either of them an artist will be left with a feeling of discontent for not being able to give form to his emotion and ideas. Hilda further describes her experience:

"In ceramic art, these challenges are compounded by the fact that the material is physically different from the end product. Wet clay looks different from fired clay, and glazes have a totally different texture and color before and after firing. It is only with sufficient practice that the student knows the properties of the material and is able to utilize its great potential to the fullest. Lack of practice will leave the ceramic artist with a meager vocabulary for composing a visual "poem." Unfortunately, at ITB practice was seriously impaired by the poor availability of support facilities and the lack of involvement by the teaching staff in their medium, a failing that undermined their ability to support and guide the students. Because of the restricted facilities, the development of knowledge was consequently also restricted. The studio at ITB had only two low-fire electric kilns, thereby depriving the students from developing their knowledge of high firing, wood and gas firing, and of techniques in building a kiln. Conceptually, clay was viewed as a material to be molded into a form, rather than as a living mass in itself with rich potential for color, texture, and expression. The studio ground out sleek forms that were reminiscent of abstract sculptures rather than ceramic pieces."

(Soemantri, 2000, p.75)

Hilda's argument was first directed at the issue of facilities which she described as being poor and seriously impaired. This is a common problem faced by any Ceramic Art Studios, not only an educational institution like ITB but also individual ceramic artist who wanted to open her/his studio. Due to a lack of technical guidance, Hilda and her fellow students looked for guidance from Japanese and Western ceramic books and blindly copied many forms from there without any proper understanding on, in her own words, the "essence of craft". "Our forms were awkward and our glazes did not match the forms" Hilda said in her essay (2000, p. 75). This was the period before Rita Widagdo came to teach at ITB. The painter A.D. Pirous also described that it was like



looking at a workshop for beginners or for kids who just wanted to play around with clay without any serious idea what to make out of it.<sup>23</sup>

This argument leads to Hilda's second argument directed at the type of works the ceramic studio at ITB produced at that time which she described as "sleek forms reminiscent of abstract sculptures rather than ceramic pieces". Hilda was questioning the artistic currency in ceramic-making. For her, conceptual ideas and the sensibility of formal aspects have to balance with some level of technical mastery. In the case of ceramic-making, it connects with the notion of function and practicality as the main currency in craft practice that the ceramic course at ITB seemed to be lacking at that time. Hendro Wiyanto, an art critic, described it as the legacy of formalism – modernist ceramics from Bandung that leaned more towards the abstract sculpture territory (figure 11).<sup>24</sup> Some of these works belong to several ceramic artists in Bandung who were heavily influenced by the teaching of Rita Widagdo, such as Bambang Prasetyo, Lengganu and Hendrawan Riyanto who became the second generation of teaching staff at the Ceramic Art Studio at ITB after Rita retired from teaching in the late 1980s.

Determined to improve the condition of ceramic art education in Indonesia, Hilda went to the United State to further her training in ceramic at the Pratt Institute, New York. One year upon returning from her study in 1977, she established a course major in Ceramic Art at the Jakarta Institute of Art (*Institut Kesenian Jakarta*) under the Craft Department which sets it apart from ITB where the Ceramic Art course was in the Fine Art Department. Only until the late 1990s that ITB began to have two ceramic studios, one belongs to the Fine Art Department focusing more on

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<sup>23</sup> Cited from an interview with A.D. Pirous on August 25, 2017 in his residence in Bandung.

<sup>24</sup> Hendro Wiyanto, a well-known art critic in Indonesia wrote a review of an exhibition showing ITB's collection of students' ceramic works made since the 1980s. See Wiyanto, H. (2016) 'Harta Karun Keramik ITB (ITB's Ceramic Treasures)', *TEMPO*, 11 April 2016 [Online]. Available at <https://majalah.tempo.co/read/150458/harta-karun-keramik-itb>

into clay as a medium of pure artistic expressions, while the other belongs to the Craft Department focusing more on its functionality and design.

However, this distinction was not to be seen as a clear-cut separation, because in reality, some of the students from the Fine Art Department embraced functionality and ornamentation whereas students from the Craft Department quite often delve into the issues of personal artistic expression in their functional or semi-functional objects. A clear distinction between the two sides of Ceramic Art – the functional and non-functional – is never present in Indonesia. Many ceramic artists in Indonesia deal with both aspects in their practice freely and organically. Ceramic artists such as Suyanta, F. Widayanto, Elina, Bonzan E.R and Deni Yana established their own ceramic studios and have been producing functional wares for retail whilst creating their own personal works. It is important to underline that the works of these artists have deviated from the non-representational and formalistic style of ITB. They create figurative works and some of them involve the use of decorative elements and ornamentation which are very much opposed by Rita Widagdo. The best example can be found in the works of F. Widayanto (figure 12).

If Rita Widagdo brought in the sensibilities of forms into the Ceramic Art at ITB, Hilda Soemantri brought in the idea of craftsmanship and the importance of material knowledge. Both of these figures have shaped the early development of modern Indonesian ceramic art. Especially Rita Widagdo because without her initial efforts to keep the studio, the ceramic studio at ITB would have been closed in the late 1960s. In the beginning of the 1980s, the condition that Hilda described as lacking and impaired gradually improved. But, many ceramic artists in Indonesia still struggled to face the challenges in technical aspects and limited availability of raw materials. Many of them had to come up with their own solutions to try to overcome these issues. This situation provided some ceramic artists with the opportunity to form communities or independent studios outside the ITB to help each other to further develop better kiln building technique, better clay and



glaze materials, and also, to promote ceramic art to a much wider audience. Independent ceramic studios such as KERANI Studio and Elina Keramik in Bandung served this role.

Another studio that is worth mentioning is Liem Keng Sien's independent ceramic studio. Known as a self-taught ceramist who never had any formal education in art, Keng Sien (1954 -2014) established his own ceramic studio in the 1980s and began to give ceramic classes for beginners. For years, he accepted many students who eventually developed a great passion for clay and ceramic-making both on the functional and non-functional spectrum. Ceramic artists such as Evy Yonathan and Nia Gautama are among those who studied from him and established their own career as prominent ceramists.



Figure 11: Some examples of ITB Ceramic Art students' works made in the 1980s. The works belong to Nugroho Sulistianto (top) and Asmujo J. Irianto (bottom), dimension and year of creation are unclear.



Figure 12: Some examples of F. Widayanto's figurative sculptures.

Hilda further explained that in the 1980s, amid all the gradual progress of infrastructures within the art institution and also the growing number of independent studios, the conditions were still far less than ideal. Many ceramic artists had to face a poor interest even from within the art community itself. Their position had been rendered marginal compared to artists who worked with a much more well-known and favorable mediums. She described it as:

“The small number of practicing ceramic artists has rendered the position of Indonesian ceramic art relatively subdued within the general scene of Indonesian modern art. Though ceramic art has always been included in prestigious national and international exhibitions, the small number of ceramic entrants in these exhibitions has made its position marginal. As a result of this marginal position, discourses on ceramic art have been, at best, rare. In the event of an exclusively ceramic exhibition, commentaries in the mass media are primarily of a descriptive nature and the essays are written by individuals who have little or no knowledge about ceramic art and can hardly distinguish between a souvenir and a fine art piece.”

(Soemantri, 2000, p.76)

To name a few, the small number of artists were Suyatna, F. Widayanto, Hendrawan Riyanto, Bonzan E.R, Asmudjo J. Irianto, Lie Fhung (figure 13) and also, Nurdian Ichsan (figure 14) who came a little later in the 1990s. Facing the poor level of appreciation, the lack of art infrastructures such as galleries and museums that supported ceramic art, including the market for collecting ceramic art pieces had forced other students of the Ceramic Art Studio at ITB to work in completely different fields. Those who were still passionate about art went to study art history or became curators. Asmujo J. Irianto, Rifky Effendi, Rizki A. Zaelani and Wulan Dirgantoro are among the well-known curators and art historians in Indonesia who graduated from Ceramic Art at ITB. Other younger artists who graduated in the 1990s, reacted to the unfavorable infrastructures by venturing into the domain of installation art, performance art, happening and even video art in their practice.

The lack of basic and proper infrastructures for ceramic art have created an opportunity for many young ceramic artists who have ventured into different practices outside the conventional ceramic art to eventually expand the field of ceramic art in Bandung and Indonesia. Asmudjo J. Irianto represents this young generation of contemporary ceramic artists in Indonesia. Known as a “rebel” artist, Asmujo takes up any mediums available freely and blurring or even eliminating boundaries of several different art practices. To eliminate hierarchy of categories in the art practice, he often uses the term “anything goes”, a term he borrows from Arthur Danto’s lecture on postmodern art in 1997.<sup>25</sup> Besides occasionally exhibiting his works, Asmudjo has been actively involved in various curatorial projects not only exclusively for ceramic art exhibition, but also contemporary art in general (figure 15). He and some other younger ceramic artists in Bandung have eventually changed the outlook of the ITB Ceramic Art Studio from the modernist abstract tendency to a more diverse, plural and multidisciplinary practice.

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<sup>25</sup> Danto, A., Altieri, C., Wagner, A. M., Cascardi, A. J. (1998) *"Anything Goes": The Work of Art and the Historical Future*, Christina M.G. (ed), Berkeley, University of California, Townsend Center for the Humanities.



Figure 13: Lie Fhung, *Life Force: Vulnerable Series*, porcelain, copper, glass, mixed media, various dimensions, ongoing project since 2011.



Figure 14: Nurdian Ichsan, *Fragments*, earthenware and cement, variable dimension (each brick is 4 x 4 x 2 cm), site specific installation, 2005





Figure 15: (Top) Figure 15: Asmudjo J. Irianto, *A Very Happy Couple from a Very Funny Country*, various dimensions, low-fired raku ceramic, 2008. (Bottom) Installation view of *Unoriginal Sin II: Art in the Expired Field*, Asmudjo J. Irianto's solo exhibition at Langgeng Art Foundation, Yogyakarta, 2014.

Since the establishment of Ceramic Art Studio at ITB, what can be called modern/contemporary ceramic art in Indonesia is a practice that emerged out of and centered around the art university without any direct continuity with any form of indigenous ceramics. Ceramic works considered as “contemporary” are almost naturally considered part of the contemporary art practice. The debate and dichotomy between art and craft that have been and are still happening in the Western art world never occurs in Indonesian ceramic art. Many ceramic artists seem to have the freedom of bringing different mediums that are unconventional to ceramic practice, such as installation art, performance art, video art, including ephemeral and time-based works. This does not mean that it is without problems. There is still a stigma of being considered as “low art” because of its association with domestic functional and handicraft objects made of low-fired terracotta that are very common in Indonesia.

Speaking of ceramic art, it is almost impossible to discuss this subject without considering the terminologies and ideas related to the craft practice. Most ceramic artists in Indonesia have earned the knowledge and have built their practice from the formal art education at a university level. They have learned all the terms and adopted the aesthetics that are rooted in the Western art and craft tradition. Regardless, the Western dichotomy between art and craft is never present. Over the years, there are many ceramic artists in Indonesia who have developed their practice and hold positions that are considered as anomaly and unique in relation to modern or contemporary art development in general. The struggle to elevate ceramic art practice from “low art” to the realm of “high art” does not exist mainly because in Indonesia, it is not considered as “low art” in the first place. Many ceramic artists or artists who use ceramics in their practice can be quite easily embraced by the contemporary art world so long as their work conforms to certain characteristics common to the practice of contemporary artists.

One example in Indonesia is the existence of Jakarta Contemporary Ceramics Biennale (JCCB), which was first held in 2009. Since the first Biennale, with its premise of creating a dialogue between the contemporary art world and ceramic art practices, this medium-specific art biennale promotes the engagement of contemporary craft and contemporary art practice by inviting not only ceramic artists but also some contemporary artists who have never worked with clay or ceramics as their primary medium before. The Biennale later expands its scope by inviting international artists from within and outside of the Southeast Asian region.<sup>26</sup> The Biennale was first organized due to the dramatic increase of contemporary art activities in Indonesia with the purpose of providing more exhibition spaces and more opportunities for object-based works and sculptures using ceramics as the medium, either as a primary or auxiliary element.<sup>27</sup>

In the second JCCB exhibition catalog, one of the advisors to The Biennale, Asmudjo J. Irianto, who is a senior contemporary ceramic artist, curator and educator in Indonesia, explained:

“I often say that specific biennial events, those that highlight the identity of specific media – a ceramics biennale, for instance – carry particular risks when seen in connection to contemporary art paradigms. Holding a ceramics biennale seems to highlight ceramic art’s position as being outside the developmental trajectory of modern and contemporary art. It appears to be dilemmatic, at first, but I believe that a ceramics biennale is ultimately beneficial for the growth and development of both ceramic art and contemporary art in general. In the Indonesian art world, the dichotomic tension between contemporary craft – often considered as the place for ceramic art and contemporary art, is not immediately evident. Truthfully, Indonesia is often a welcome haven for ceramic artists – especially those who are cognizant of contemporary art paradigms – allowing these artists to easily break into the realm of contemporary art.”

(Irianto, 2012, p.6)

This part of the introduction to The Biennale summarized the state of ceramic art at the time and its relationship with contemporary art in Indonesia: that the opportunity and freedom for any

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<sup>26</sup> See this article ‘Artist residencies lead up to Jakarta Contemporary Ceramics Biennale’ published on [www.culture360.asef.org](http://www.culture360.asef.org), July 7, 2014. Available at <https://culture360.asef.org/news-events/artist-residencies-lead-jakarta-contemporary-ceramics-biennale/>

<sup>27</sup> ‘About JCCB’ <https://jakartacontemporaryceramic.wordpress.com/history-of-the-jccb/>

ceramic practitioners to engage with the contemporary art world are always present. One thing that almost every ceramic artist experiences as a challenge is that objects made of ceramics are sometimes considered inferior to other forms of media in contemporary art, due to their association with the “handicraft” ceramic objects or low-fired domestic ceramic objects commonly found in Indonesia, such as roof tiles, bricks, large sized pottery, and traditional tableware. This has become a stigma for every ceramic artist. However, these indigenous ceramic objects and their makers never really achieve the status of crafts-maker or crafts-artist in the Western conception of craft practice. They occupy an area separate from both modern and contemporary art and craft practice in Indonesia. They are usually considered as part of the much wider studies in material culture.

In the last installment of The Biennale in 2019, it changed its name into Indonesia Contemporary Ceramic Biennale and took place in the Jatiwangi Art Factory (JAF) in Jatisura, West Java. Jatisura is a small village where its residents earn their livelihood by practicing pottery and agriculture. Established in 2005, JAF has organized community projects and workshops in visual arts, film, music and photography for more than 10 years. JAF is a community-based organization that focuses on examining how contemporary art and cultural practices can be contextualized within the daily life of people in rural area.<sup>28</sup> One of their earlier projects was creating musical instruments in collaboration with local potters using the same materials that they used to make terracotta bricks and rooftiles. JAF is based in the former brick factory building turned into an alternative art space run and organized by an artist-curator Arief Yudhi. Arief with his team have been working on creating a space for communication and collaborations between visual artists and the local community.

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<sup>28</sup> For more information about JAF see this link: <https://jatiwangiartfactory.tumblr.com/run>



Among all the studies that are conducted in relation to modern and contemporary art in the Southeast Asian region and specifically in Indonesia, studies related to materiality or material expression in contemporary art are still very limited. Material expression or material specificity is the basis of building an identity of craft practice, in this case, ceramic art. However, in Indonesia, to understand the development of ceramic art practice as something separate to modern or contemporary art practice is almost impossible. Art practitioners in Indonesia who studied art from the 1980s have engaged with so many other forms of art outside their former major or main interest. For example, some students who studied ceramic art at ITB in the early 1980s became independent curators by the end of the decade or early 1990s, working in the contemporary art field not just in the ceramic art world. Another example is, some ceramic artists who studied in the 1970s built their own practice later in that decade, incorporating contemporary “happenings” and performance art practice while maintaining their interest in ceramic making. These conditions were mainly because of the absence of proper art infrastructures in that particular period in Indonesia, along with the absence of an art market, limited number of galleries, including visibility and recognition from international art audiences. They forced themselves to broaden their knowledge and interest hoping that they would still be able to pursue their interest in visual art and to build a career. As a result, there were very diverse practices, too complex to be confined just in the domain of ceramic art practice but at the same time, they were also influencing and broadening the boundaries of this medium-specific practice.

### **1.3 Indonesian New Art Movement**

Many art researchers and art historians specializing in contemporary art from the Southeast Asian region theorize that the “contemporary art” in the region began in the early 1980s. The term “contemporary art” is understood as the art of the recent era in terms of its historical period which

was previously accepted as “modern art”.<sup>29</sup> They proposed that many artists in this region began to experiment with multidisciplinary practices and unconventional media as a reaction towards postmodernism and postcolonialism. Many artists began to intensely question the relations between art practice and socio-political issues, cultural identity and history. In Indonesia, art practice by younger generation of artists (artists who were in the 20s/30s) emerged in the 1980s was considered to be the “contemporary turns” marked by the encounter of socio-political art and postmodern theories that questioned the art establishment, historical and cultural construct of that period.<sup>30</sup>

In 1975, eleven young artists from ASRI Yogyakarta (now Indonesia Institute of Art, Yogyakarta) and Department of Fine Arts, ITB, organized an exhibition at Taman Ismail Marzuki (Ismail Marzuki Garden), a cultural institution in Jakarta. These eleven young artists (many of them were still students) are Anyool Subroto, Bachtiar Zainul, Bonyong Munni Ardhi, F.X. Harsono, Hardi, Jim Supangkat, Muryoto Hartoyo, Nanik Mirna, Siti Adyati, Ris Purwana and Pandu Sudewo. They proclaimed themselves as GSRB – *Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru* (The New Art Movement). Initially, the movement was an expression of the young generation artists’ criticism towards their predecessors whose works were viewed as stagnant and lacking in creativity. The movement also questioned the aesthetic categories and the basis of the categories of art commonly perceived at that time.<sup>31</sup> In just a few years, this short-lived movement had attracted several more artists both from Bandung and Yogyakarta such as Dadang Christanto, S. Prinka, Dede Eri Supria, Priyanto

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<sup>29</sup> The most recent exhibition of contemporary art from Southeast Asia was *SUNSHOWER: Contemporary Art from Southeast Asia from 1980s to now*, curated by Mami Kataoka and Naoki Yoneda at Mori Art Museum and The National Art Center, Tokyo in 2017 was based on the same premise, that the start of the so-called “contemporary art” in Southeast Asia can be traced back to the 1980s.

<sup>30</sup> See Hujatnikajenong, A. (2012) ‘The Contemporary Turns: Indonesian Contemporary Arts of the 1980s’, *Negotiating History, Home and Nation* (exhibition catalogue), Lenzi, I. (ed), Singapore Art Museum

<sup>31</sup> Hasan, A. (1992) *Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru Indonesia*, bachelor’s thesis, Faculty of Fine Art and Design ITB.

Sunarto (who was involved in designing the catalogue), Hardi, Nyoman Nuarta and Satyagraha. Jim Supangkat and the art critic Sanento Yuliman became the spokespersons of the movement.

It is important to underline that the emergence of this movement signaled that the polemic and debate between Bandung and Yogyakarta artists dominating the art scene in the previous years had practically ended. These young artists considered themselves as part of a generation that questioned the art establishment and regarding forms and contents, the movement was concerned not only with ideological contents, but also with forms that they see as equally important (Miklouho-Maklai, 1989). From 1975 to 1987, The New Art Movement organized five exhibitions. The exhibition in 1975 was the first, followed by two others in 1977 and 1979. After the third exhibition, the group was disbanded for a short while before they re-emerged in 1987 with an exhibition titled *Proyek I: Pasaraya Dunia Fantasi (Project I: Fantasy World Shopping Mall)*. The exhibition was followed up by another one in 1989, which was also their last titled *Project II: The Silent World* held at Taman Ismail Marzuki (TIM), Jakarta. It was also exhibited in Australia which was the first time the movement gained attention outside of Indonesia.

In 1987, the group published a manifesto inserted in the catalogue of the exhibition that looked more like a compilation of photocopied images of printed advertisements and popular magazines with cartoons and caricatures representing their arguments and statements about the present state of Indonesian art with articles and writings that did not seem to have any chronological order (figure 16). The manifesto began with the phrase “*seni rupa pembebasan, pembebasan seni rupa*” which could be translated into “the art of emancipation, emancipation of the art”.<sup>32</sup> The translation

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<sup>32</sup> The full version of the manifesto inserted in the 1987 exhibition catalogue together with its English translation provided by Indonesian Visual Art Archive (IVAA) and Asia Art Archive in 2015 can be accessed from these links: Original copy of the catalogue: <http://archive.ivaa-online.org/files/uploads/texts/1987-katalog-PasarayaDuniaFantasi.pdf> English translation of the manifesto: [http://archive.ivaa-online.org/files/uploads/texts/1987\\_Pasaraya%20Dunia%20Fantasi\\_Catalogue\\_Manifesto\\_ENG.pdf](http://archive.ivaa-online.org/files/uploads/texts/1987_Pasaraya%20Dunia%20Fantasi_Catalogue_Manifesto_ENG.pdf) English translation provided by Indonesian Visual Art Archive (IVAA) and Asia Art Archive in 2015.

and the definition of the word “*seni rupa*” here was vital. In the beginning of the manifesto, the group basically demanded that the definition of the word “*seni rupa*” (understood as fine art) and the categories it implied to be reconsidered. For the group, “*seni rupa*” was a diverse and plural practice and its definition could not be confined only to the currently accepted categories of painting, sculpture and print-making. The word “*seni rupa*” the group was referring here was basically similar to the definition of visual art, even visual culture in general. In short, they demanded that art – visual art – to be considered as a diverse practice in a much wider context of visual culture. Hence eliminating hierarchy between “high art” or “fine art” and anything that was not considered as art at all which meant that all aspects of visual culture in Indonesia in their own specific contexts could serve to transmit meaning to the audience. They also claimed that “Indonesian modern artists made an idiomatic mistake by using the language of Modern Art without understanding its aesthetic and that the “romantic” lifestyle (of a modernist artist) has turned into an epigone of eccentricity. Explorations of individualism have been replaced by megalomaniacal egoism” (quoted from the translation provided by IVAA and Asia Art Archive).

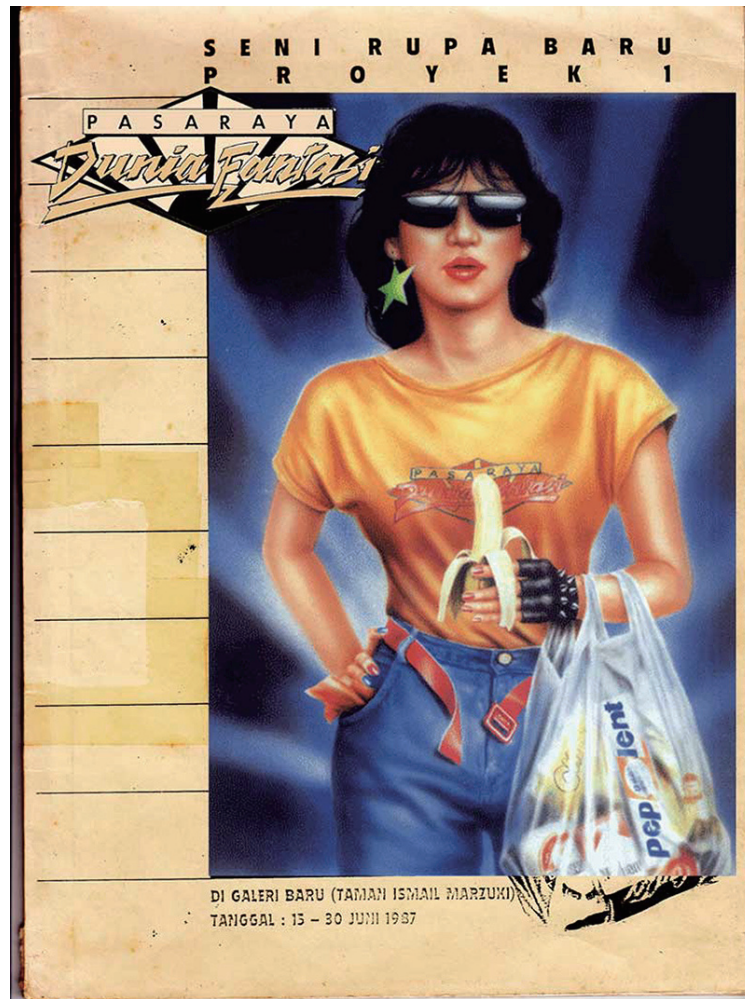


Figure 16: Front cover of *Project I: Fantasy World Shopping Mall*, The New Art Movement exhibition catalogue in 1987.

In their exhibitions, the Indonesian New Art Movement artists presented site-specific art, installation art, performance art, ready-made and fabricated object juxtaposed with conventional art media, popular imagery found in commercial ads, texts, and cooked food, and some of the works had interactive value to them. Even their exhibition catalogues and publications could be considered as an artistic manifesto filled with illustrations and comic imageries conveying satire and dark humor, “*Seni rupa sehari-hari menentang elitism*” (everyday art against elitism) as Jim Supangkat and Sanento Yuliman, the spokespersons of the group, put it in their statement. F.X

Harsono made a small mountain of pink pistols made of crackers in the work titled *What Would You Do if These Crackers Were Real Pistols?* (figure 17). Dadang Christanto took some parts of real *becak* (a cycle rickshaw commonly used as a mode of public transportation) to create an installation titled *Ballad for Supardal* (figure 18). Supardal was the name of a frustrated *becak* driver from Bandung who committed suicide by hanging when *becak* was outlawed as he saw no hope when the government failed to offer any alternative forms of employment for many of the former *becak* drivers.



Figure 17: F.X. Harsono, *What Would You Do if These Crackers Were Real Pistols*, crackers, wooden desk and stool, note-book, 1977. Image courtesy of National Gallery of Singapore.

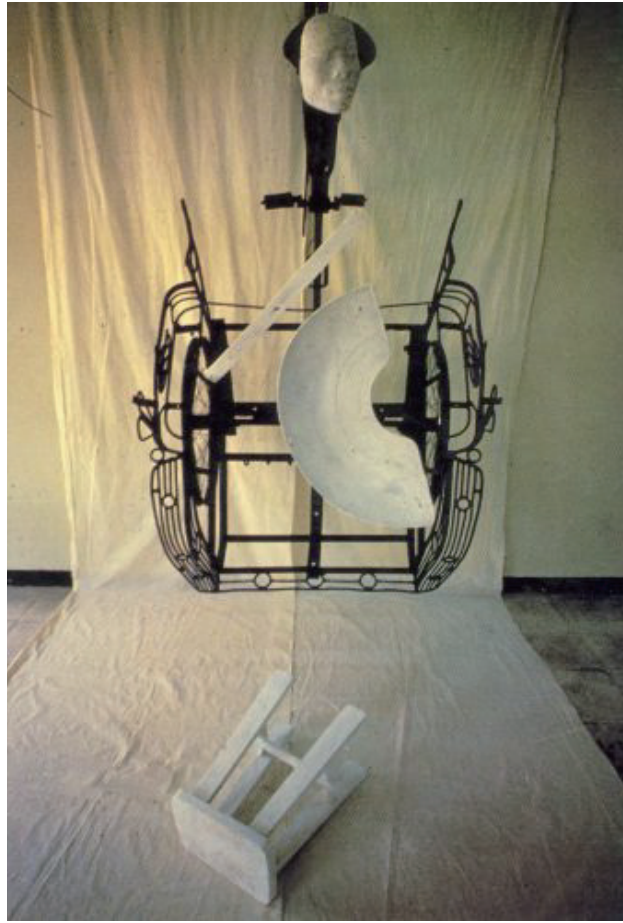


Figure 18: Dadang Christanto, *Ballad for Supardal*, rickshaw's steel structures, fabric, wooden stool, installation, 1986

The most controversial work included in one of the exhibitions was Jim Supangkat's sculpture titled *Ken Dedes* in 1975 (figure 19). The sculpture was composed of two parts, a plaster cast of the head and shoulders of one of the famous figures in classical Javanese sculptures, the Goddess of Transcendental Wisdom named Ken Dedes, known for her beauty and workmanship, placed on a white pedestal which had been painted with an outline of a topless young woman exposing her midriff and hips, wearing jeans with an open zipper also exposing some of her pubic hair. The work sparked some controversies and heated debate, some called it just a mere vandalism and borderline pornography.





Figure 19: Jim Supangkat, *Ken Dedes*, plaster, wood, marker pen, paint, 1975, Collection of Singapore Art Museum.

One of the well documented debates is between Kusnadi and Sudarmadji who wrote several articles published in *Sinar Harapan* and *Kedaulatan Rakyat* newspapers. In response to Kusnadi's previous critique that the group was just some immature art students who mistook immorality for creativity, Sudarmadji replied with two articles titled *Visi Masa Lampau Kusnadi* (*Kusnadi's Vision of the Past*) and *Seni Rupa Baru Memancing Perdebatan* (*New Art Fishing for Debate*). Responding to Sudarmadji's arguments, Kusnadi published an article *Menilai Pembelaan Sudarmadji pada Seni Rupa Baru Indonesia* (*Evaluating Sudarmadji's Defense of the Indonesian New Art Movement*).<sup>33</sup> The debate brought up some arguments from the interpretation of the value

<sup>33</sup> Hasan, A. (1992) *Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru Indonesia*, bachelor's thesis, Faculty of Fine Art and Design ITB. Translation of the thesis provided by IVAA can be accessed from this link:

[http://archive.ivaa-online.org/files/uploads/texts/1992-Pasaraya\\_excerptAsikinHasan\\_ENG.pdf](http://archive.ivaa-online.org/files/uploads/texts/1992-Pasaraya_excerptAsikinHasan_ENG.pdf)



of art in the historical context of Western art, even the issues of morality among Indonesians. During the debate, Sudarmadji became well-known as the critic who positively defended the movement for its creative freedom in cleverly portraying the contemporary conditions of urban Indonesia.

There were several notable issues that triggered the emergence of the group. In the larger national scale, the Indonesian New Art Movement was set against the background of the so-called *Polemik Kebudayaan* (Cultural Polemics) among cultural intellectuals which first appeared in 1935 and carried on to the 1950s and the 1970s. The polemics carried several questions related to post-colonial issues: “What forms of future “Indonesian” culture or art should take?”, “Does modernization synonymous with westernization?” and “In the face of change after Indonesia’s independence, how should we preserve our indigenous identity?” and most importantly, “How could we define an Indonesian identity?” (Holt, 1967).

According to Jim Supangkat, criticism and critical attitudes in visual art were brought forward by Soedjoko in 1970, a lecturer and cultural critic at ITB, that challenged the aesthetic values prescribed by art academies had inspired him and his fellow young artists to form the movement. Soedjoko criticized the romanticism of modern Indonesian artists who adopted an elitist, urban, Western definition of fine arts and placed their own aesthetic heritage represented by traditional culture into a lower position of crafts. Supangkat explained that:

“Soedjoko denied the existence of modern art and doubted its function. He based his view on Javanese aesthetic and cultural concepts. In high Javanese language (a form of Javanese used in court culture), art is known as *kagunan* or skill. More specifically, it was a special skill which expressed wisdom and beauty in the creation of utensils and ritual objects.... Soedjoko had practiced a sort of ‘shock therapy’. His denial of modern art was only a theoretical denial. He attempted to place Indonesian art within the context of society by emphasizing its real function. He opened up a new channel in the search for the identity of Indonesian art. According to Soedjoko, art had an identity only if it was contextual.

Modern art that developed in Indonesia had neglected the factors of society, communication and function. He argued that the societal theme which appears in Indonesian paintings was merely a ‘romantic agony’”

(1990, p. 60)

Soedjoko argued that the true identity of Indonesian art will only emerge if it was built in its context and in this context lies three major components: society, communication and function. Soedjoko’s critique of modern Indonesian art inspired the young artists who were involved in the New Art Movement to bring social awareness into their art practice and to contextualize it so that it could be relevant with the present condition of Indonesian people. The problem of identity has always been the main question in the development of Indonesian art since the 1950s. The difference was that in the 1950s, societal issue was more grounded in the problem of style and subject matter in paintings, while in the 1980s, the pluralistic approach of the New Art Movement brought in social awareness by using various media challenging and blurring the line of what was accepted as art or not art. By doing this, they had overcome the east/west debate that happened in the earlier periods of their predecessors and this diverse and plural approach of art practice would be the main characteristic of “contemporary” Indonesian art from the 1990s to the present day.

## CHAPTER 2

### Materiality, Spirituality and Ritual Practice: Hendrawan Riyanto's Artistic Practice from 1978 to 2004

#### 2.1 Early life and education

Hendrawan Riyanto was born in Yogyakarta on January 15, 1959 to parents who both worked for the National Postal Service. The family lived in several cities across the island of Java - Bandung, Magelang, Semarang before settling in Yogyakarta (Hamdani, 2011). Hendrawan was the second child in the family. In total, he had two sisters and five brothers. His father was of Javanese descent, originally from Yogyakarta city in Central Java, while his mother was of Sundanese descent, hailing from Tasikmalaya city located in the southeastern part of West Java province. Hendrawan spent most of his childhood in Yogyakarta (figure 20). Due to his father's relocated office, he entered Loyola Senior High School in Semarang on the north coast of Central Java from 1975-1977. At high school Hendrawan met Rini Darwati, originally from Semarang, who would later become his wife. Right before graduating high school, his mother had to move to Bandung in West Java for a new work position. Hendrawan, wanting to stay close with his mother, decided to follow her and moved to Bandung after graduating high school.



Figure 20: Map of the Island of Java.

Hendrawan thus lived far away from Rini for a few years. However, they visited each other and maintained communication regularly. During an interview session, Rini reflected back on her experience during those times that she would receive letters from Hendrawan and in those letters he was always very enthusiastic in telling her about his studies in ITB and his life in Bandung. After Hendrawan moved to Bandung, Rini went to study at the Faculty of Law in Diponegoro University in Semarang from 1978-1983. Soon after finishing her studies Rini received a job opportunity to work at the office of *Bumi Daya Bank* (one of the well-known national banks in Indonesia) in Jakarta from 1983 -1988. Rini relocated and they married on December 27, 1986.

By the time Hendrawan was in high school, he was already interested in studying visual art and fortunately one of the top two art universities at that time was located in Bandung. He decided to enter the Fine Art Department at Bandung Institute of Technology also known as ITB. He was awarded a Bachelor's degree in 1986 and continued to live there with Rini, working as a junior lecturer at the Ceramic Art department at ITB before he eventually became a permanent lecturer in 1998.

Hendrawan Riyanto was no stranger to art during his childhood in Yogyakarta. His father had several collections of *Wayang Kulit* (Javanese traditional puppets made of leather) and a keen interest in literature and even dedicated his retirement to writing and publishing novels in the Javanese language. To this end, he established a small printing company in the Riyanto house and printed mostly fiction novels and local comic books. Hendrawan grew up in an old *rumah joglo*, a type of traditional Javanese house belonging to his father's family. The house used to be a place where performers would gather to practice traditional dance such as, *Serimpi*, *Bedaya* and *Bondan* dance. During *Ramadhan* season, the house was also used as a place to perform the *Tarawih* prayer. This is a special prayer that is only performed in the month of *Ramadhan*. It is an obligatory prayer for Muslims and is performed after the *Isha* prayer (night time prayer) at home in a small group

or in a congregation at a mosque. However, at the same time, the house was also used by some elders of the local community to gather and discuss stories related to Javanese mysticism and spirituality which is typical of the syncretic nature of different spiritual traditions in Indonesia. Some of these people were local writers and illustrators for novels written in the Javanese language. Hendrawan's childhood house was a communal space where people would gather to discuss topics ranging from the arts, culture to spirituality and mysticism. There were even rumors about spirits or spiritual beings who guarded the well in the front yard of the house.

Today, the Riyanto family house in Yogyakarta is used as a studio/workshop for Hendrawan's younger brother, Garin Nugroho Riyanto who is a film-maker.<sup>34</sup> Three out of the six brothers including Hendrawan became very interested in the field of art since they were children and it was their father who instilled this influence. Hendrawan himself spent a lot of time making sketches and drawings during his senior high school year after they moved to Semarang. One other thing that also help foster Hendrawan's interest in the field of art was his older brother, Hermawan Riyanto. Hermawan had close connections with a local group of visual artists called Taman Siswa who used to gather in the Riyanto family house. Through this group Hendrawan was introduced to various examples of modern art. His father's library was also full of numerous collections of books about anything related to the ideas and theories of modern art.

Hendrawan Riyanto came from a family with a mixed heritage of Sundanese and Javanese cultures. This had a significant impact in the development of his artistic practice, especially as manifested in the latter part of his career. Sundanese people are one of the three principal ethnic groups that occupy the western part of Java island. Although Javanese and Sundanese cultures share

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<sup>34</sup> Hendrawan Riyanto is the older brother of a well-known Indonesian filmmaker Garin Nugroho Riyanto. This information was quoted from a short biographical article about his brother in one Indonesian newspaper, *The Jakarta Globe* and also confirmed through interview with Riyanto's wife in Bandung, May 2018

similarities based on a mixture of Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and indigenous beliefs in animism, both cultures still have distinct and particular differences in languages, customs, and religious practices. These differences are distinguished for example by the languages that are spoken across the island and by their approach to religious practice, especially to Islam. Both of Hendrawan's parents were said to be practicing Islam as much as the tradition of animism and/or dynamism present in the Javanese folk religion *Kejawen* and at the same time they were also liberal and tolerant towards other, different religious practices.

This paper focuses on Riyanto's artistic development and transformation, and the complexity of interweaving ideas between materiality, identity and tradition, performance and ritual practice, and spirituality. In order to illuminate the transition and changes of ideas in his art practice, I investigate them chronologically, in several different stages, starting with underscoring his art education background and early ceramic works from 1978 to around 1993. From there, I track the development of his terracotta sculptures, installations and performances as represented in the *Inner Mothers* installation, *Makan Malam Bersama Sri (Dine with Sri)* installations and collaborative performances made between 1997-2001, the *Form Follows Myth* installation which was his postgraduate project at ITB, realized in 2002, and *Ning* - Hendrawan Riyanto's final solo exhibition. This final show was also the title of the main installation in this exhibition. The final section of this chapter lays out an overview of his drawings, sketches and notes, which represent his conceptual processes. Each of these moments represent different aspects of his practice, from his exploration of spirituality through materiality; performativity and collaborative performance involving dance and music; and exhibition practice.

## **2.2 Art Education and Early Works from 1978 to 1993**

Hendrawan came to Bandung soon after he finished high school and entered the Fine Art Department at Bandung Institute of Technology in 1978. He majored in ceramic art and he completed his degree in 1986. In that period the Fine Art and Design Department at ITB had already become an independent faculty separated from the Department of Architecture and City Planning. The Faculty of Fine Art and Design at that time consisted of a Fine Art Department and a Design Department. The Fine Art Department held courses in Painting, Sculpture, Printmaking, and Ceramic Art Studio, while the Design Department offered Graphic Design, Interior Design and Product Design Studio. The Craft Department was not established until later in the 1990s.

Hendrawan studied under the supervision of Rita Widagdo who was the head of the Ceramic Art studio at that time. Hendrawan's early works, before he graduated and for several years after, were very much created in the vein of this formalistic approach. Monumental and sculptural, non-functional and anti-ornamental ceramic objects, free from any association with social or political concern and tradition (figure 21). What we can see from Hendrawan's early sculptural works made in between the late 1980s to the beginning of 1990s are compositions of formal elements such as lines, textures, and geometric shapes, mainly rectangular and circular shapes overlapping or opposing each other. He uses slab-building and free-form hand-building techniques to get his basic forms and then cut those forms, deconstructed and reconstructed them, reducing them to produce sharp lines or edges (figure 22, 23 and 24). Colors are used in a very minimal way, they are mainly monochromatic and in some of the works, the compositions of colors, textures and shapes are done almost in a painterly way that make them look like abstract paintings.

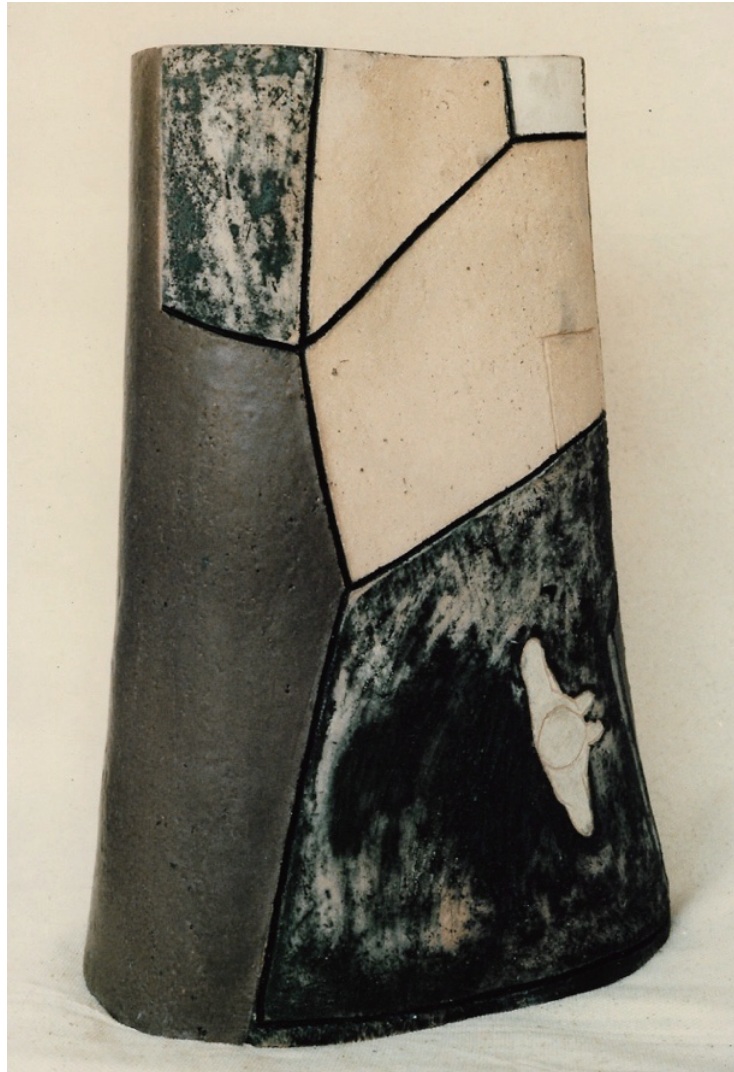


Figure 21: Hendrawan Riyanto, *Untitled*, date and dimension unknown.



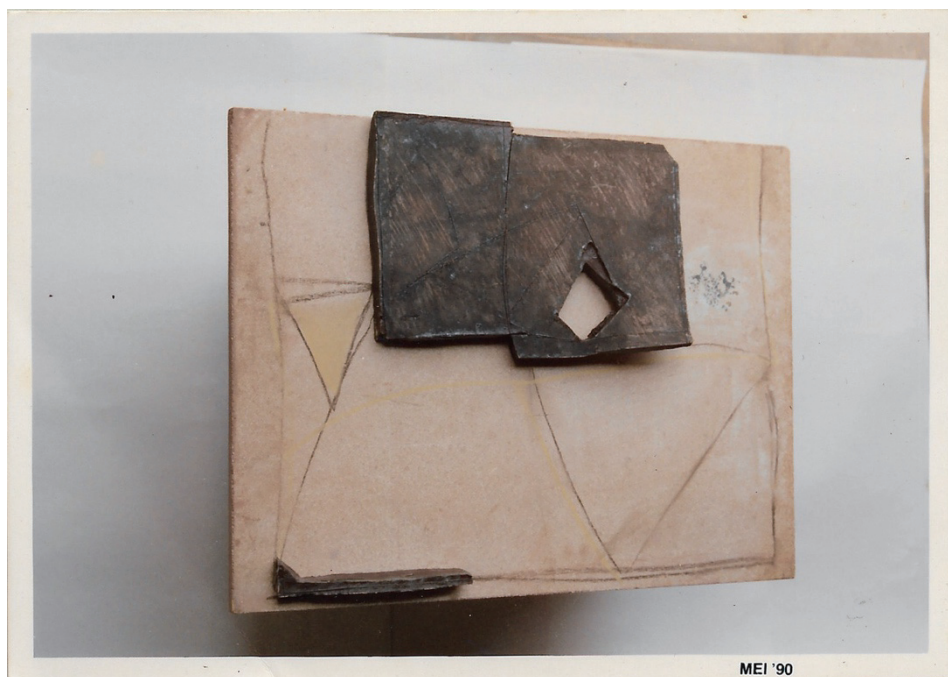


Figure 22: Hendrawan Riyanto, *Untitled*, 1990.

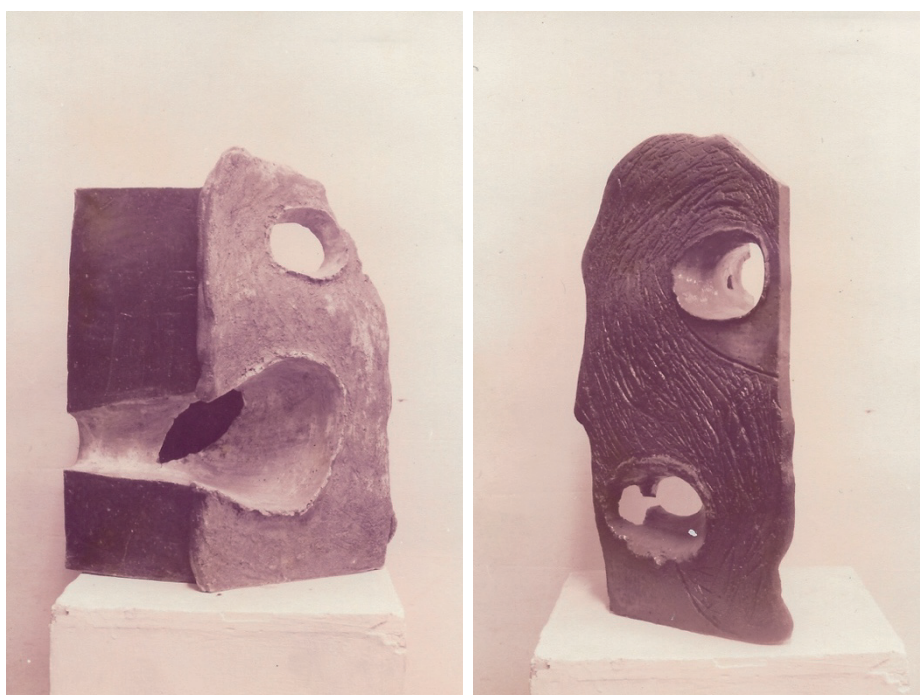


Figure 23: Hendrawan Riyanto, *Untitled*, date and dimension unknown.



Figure 24: A view of Riyanto's studio space when he was studying in Japan in Kyoto Seika University from 1992 to 1993. He built his abstract forms using free form hand-building technique which is a common technique for ceramic artists working in the field of sculptural ceramics.

Hendrawan's academic career started as a studio assistant for Rita Widagdo's classes in 1984 when he was still a student at the Ceramic Art Studio at ITB in 1984. In 1986, shortly after he graduated, he started teaching officially as a junior lecturer in the Ceramic Art Studio. He continued working as a senior lecturer until he became appointed as the head of the Fine Art Department in 2001. Beginning in 1984, as a junior lecturer, he started developing his ceramic art practice inside and outside of the academic environment. Figure 25 is a newspaper clipping from one of the local newspapers in Bandung called *Pikiran Rakyat* reporting on an exhibition Riyanto had participated in together with two other ceramic artists, F. Widayanto and Suratani. The exhibition was held at the Art Gallery Nikko from December 5 - 15, 1987, in Bandung. The gallery itself is no longer active and it is unclear until when the gallery was actively organizing exhibitions. In the 1987 show, Hendrawan exhibited some of his functional wares and rounded geometric non-functional objects, while F. Widayanto showcased his highly decorative functional wares such as vessels and food containers and Suratani showcased his low fired terracotta wares.



**Tahun 1987 Masa Cemerlang Kriya Keramik Jabar**

## **Keramik Karya Kriya Hendrawan Menantang Apresiasi Masyarakat**

PEKAN ini, 5-15 Desember 1987, bertempat di Art Gallery Nikko Bandung diselenggarakan pameran keramik karya pekriya muda Hendrawan (28) yang tergabung pada studio Master Six di Jalan Terusan Buahbatu. Hendrawan sehari-hari bekerja sebagai asisten ahli di FSRD-ITB, tidak merasa canggung untuk bekerja dengan tanah lempung yang kotor, hingga terbentuk menjadi benda keramik yang indah. Menurut pengamatannya, tingkat apresiasi masyarakat di Bandung terhadap keramik bertambah maju dan menantang. Dari tahun ke tahun selalu ada tuntutan baru, baik jumlahnya maupun mutu artistiknya.

"Keadaan itu sangat menggem-birakan perajin seperti saya, yang sekaligus saya jawab dengan karya keramik yang lebih bermutu terutama secara teknologis dapat dipertanggungjawabkan, yaitu keramik bakaran tinggi hingga 1280 derajat Celcius yang istilah teknis disebut stone ware," demikian kata Hendrawan yang pernah meraih juara pertama dan umum dalam lomba desain Dewan Kerajinan Nasional Jawa Barat pada tahun ini.

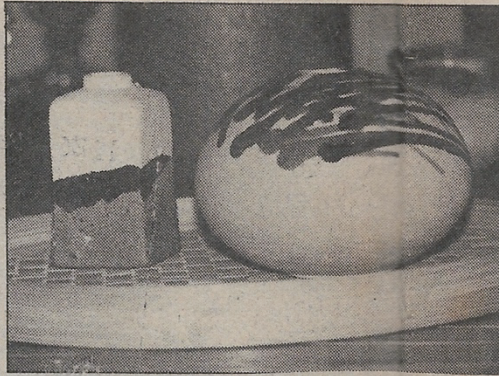
Agaknya tahun 1987 merupakan puncak kriya keramik di Jawa Barat, dibuktikan dengan beberapa seniman pekriya keramik seperti Suratani (Plered), Hendrawan (Bandung) dan F Wi-

dayanto (Bogor) merebut kejuaraan lomba desain kriya di tingkat nasional dan daerah. Masing-masing pekriya itu memiliki keistimewaan, seperti F Wi-dayanto untuk produk wadah sajian makanan ala Indonesia; Hendrawan dengan keramik bakaran tinggi yang artistik sedang Suratani yang tetap bertahan dengan keramik bakaran sedang dan tanah merah yang khas Plered.

Industri kecil keramik Bandung sudah tumbuh sejak tahun 1955, di Kiaracondong, Jl. Pungkur dan Jl. Cipaganti, tetapi kini sudah tidak berjalan lagi. Bekas rintisan itu diteruskan kini oleh

(Bersambung ke hal 4 kol 7)

### **Pikiran Rakyat**



— YUSUF AFFENDI

*BEBERAPA kriya keramik dari Hendrawan (28) yang dipamerkan di Niko Art Gallery, berbentuk bulat dan berbagai wadah, dengan bakaran tinggi 1280° Cel. kaya dengan tekstur dan warna abu-abu kecoklatan.\**

Figure 25: A short article about Hendrawan Riyanto's exhibition at Nikko Art Gallery in Bandung, 5-15 December 1987, published in one of the local newspapers called *Pikiran Rakyat* (date of publication unknown).

In this article (Fig 25 – see appendix G for English translation of the article), Hendrawan, who was 28 at the time, expressed that appreciation towards ceramic art has been increasing gradually, and that it was a very good opportunity for ceramic artists or potters like him to respond to the increasing appreciation by creating a much better quality of ceramic works by using high-fired stone-ware clay fired at 1280°C. This article shows that in 1987 there were not many ceramic artists yet in Bandung or even in the larger region of West Java province. The indigenous pottery tradition which centered in several pottery villages that produce jars, large vessels, brick and roof-tiles using field-baked firing techniques across Java island had already been established centuries ago, however small independent ceramic industries that could be considered in relation to modern studio-based pottery practice, only started to appear in 1955 in Bandung. These studios were barely surviving at that time. A few ceramic artists coming from ITB started to establish their artistic practice in the 20 years after the Ceramic Art Studio was first established. Hildawati Soemantri and F. Widayanto are among those who graduated from ITB and studied with Professor Rita Widagdo. As this paper implies, Riyanto is considered to be one of this first generation of ceramic artists based in Bandung.

One other thing this paper argues is that at that time, high-fired clay such as stone-ware clay was still considered a new type of materials, compared to the more commonly used, low-fired earthenware or red terracotta clay that is usually fired at 1000–1050°C. Because of its high firing temperature, stoneware clay produces different shades of colors and a more durable and stronger ceramic body compared to the low fired earthenware clay most commonly known in Indonesian as *gerabah*. Hendrawan's statement in this article reflected a complicated use of terms related to ceramic art practice at that time. In which objects that were made from high-fired clay are called *keramik* in Indonesian, which is a direct transliteration of the English/Dutch word “ceramic/keramisch”, while that which is made of a low-fired earthenware whether glazed or not are usually called *gerabah*. The word “*keramik*” carries with it the association of a more

sophisticated, advance and modern practice, while the word “*gerabah*” is mostly associated with the traditional pottery making that has taken place since the prehistoric period in various forms such as jars, crocks, urns, pots and large vessels, architectural parts such as bricks and roof-tiles and including materials for statues.<sup>35</sup> The word “*gerabah*” originally comes from Javanese language which refers to the various crockeries and kitchen-wares. The using of the word “*gerabah*” is not commonly found outside of the Javanese society (Raharjo, 2009).

Generally, clay can be categorized into three types based on firing temperature and physical properties. Those categories are, low-fired clay (800-1000°C) commonly known as earthenware, mid-fired clay (1200-1250°C) commonly known as stoneware and high-fired clay (1250-1300°C) commonly known as porcelain or bone-china. These temperatures refer to the range of temperature where vitrification will occur during firing. Earthenware is usually very porous and contains a high level of iron oxide which results in its low firing temperature and its reddish color. Stoneware and porcelain sometimes fall into the category of high-fired clay, except that stoneware still contains a certain amount of iron oxide resulting in its higher vitrification point and lower level of porosity. Stoneware clay sometimes can have a lighter color, ranging from very light yellow, light brown, white or grey white. While porcelain, contains almost zero level of iron oxide and zero level of porosity because of its high vitrification point.<sup>36</sup> Porcelain contains a high amount of silica and is not naturally available in the Indonesian archipelago and in the Southeast Asian region.

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<sup>35</sup> Even among artists and art educators who are not familiar with the process of ceramic making, the word ‘*gerabah*’ was still used many times to refer to the traditional low-fired earthenware pottery as something different to what the word ‘*keramik*’ stands for. During an interview session with the painter and educator A.D. Pirous in August 25<sup>th</sup> 2017, he mentioned several times the word ‘*gerabah*’ in describing the type of material that was commonly used by students when the Ceramic Art Studio was just opened. He mentioned that high-fired clay like stoneware or porcelain which he called ‘*keramik*’ were not available yet at that time instead, ‘*gerabah*’ just as what all the traditional potters have been using until now was the only type of material students could use.

<sup>36</sup> Vitrification is a partial fusion of particles in a clay body as a result of a firing process. This fusion resulted in the progressive change in the level of porosity of the clay body. Gradual increase in the level of temperature will resulted in the gradual decrease of the level of porosity, therefore vitrification is responsible for ceramics impermeability to water. With a high amount of silica contained in porcelain, the level of porosity in porcelain is almost close to zero. Zero porosity can be understood as a 1% of water absorption which makes porcelain or bone-china a highly vitrified body impermeable even without glaze application.

Earthenware is the most naturally available material across the Indonesian archipelago from the island of Sumatra, Java, Kalimantan, to Bali and Lombok. Each region produces earthenware with slightly different shades of color from yellow, light brown or orange to brown red.

The other term that is commonly used to refer to this type of material is “terra-cotta” (Indonesian: *terakota*) which is another word people use to describe *gerabah*. Terra-cotta (originally from Latin: *terra-cocta*) literally means baked-earth, is a highly porous unglazed low-fired earthenware. Across the island of Java, terra-cotta earthenware has been used to create various kinds of objects such as containers and jars in various sizes and shapes related to the life of agricultural communities where domestic, ritual and religious matters are inseparable. It is also used to create various kinds of ritual offerings and decoration for architecture. Examples of this can be found in the collection of The Trowulan Museum, an archaeological museum in East Java province, Indonesia, home to various kinds of terra-cotta artifacts including figurines used for ritual offerings from the Majapahit Kingdom era in the island of Java (13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> century). Trowulan itself is an archaeological site from the same era where several Hindu-Buddhist temples and some other architectural structures were made out of red bricks.

In the early years of his career, as a young ceramic artist and lecturer, Riyanto was also involved in a community of ceramic artists called KERANI studio in Bandung which was started in around 1982-1983. He was already involved in it a few years before he graduated from ITB in 1986. KERANI studio focused on exploration and experimentation of materials and firing techniques. KERANI studio was seen as a facility that helped its members to open up opportunities and experiences in developing each of its members’ practices. For example, by providing studio space and organizing exhibitions (figure 26, 27). They were not only creating individual personal works but also functional wares that are more accessible to the general public. It is still a common practice for ceramic artists even to this day to have these two different lines of practice, one that is a more



personal artistic works and one that is more commercial, usually order-made decorative ceramics for daily use to earn a more stable income to support their own artistic practice. KERANI studio is no longer active since the late 1990s and unfortunately there are only very limited records related to its activities.



Figure 26: Hendrawan Riyanto showing some of his functional ceramic works at the State Palace in central Jakarta in 1990.



Figure 27: A view of KERANI studio's exhibition booth showcasing its members' ceramic works. Date and place of exhibition unknown.

In 1988, Hendrawan went to Japan for the first time to study ceramic painting techniques in Tajimi, Japan. His interest in Japanese ceramics grew stronger and he came to Japan for a second time to study as a research student at Kyoto Seika University between 1992 to 1993 under the supervision of Professor Chitaru Kawasaki. In the documents related to his application to Kyoto Seika University and his correspondence with Kawasaki, Riyanto mentions a book titled *Primitivism in Contemporary Ceramics* that he received from Kawasaki, showing his interest in exploring Japanese Modern Ceramic Art and the tendency of many contemporary ceramic artists to incorporate so-called primitive or archaic aesthetics in their work. The book is an exhibition catalogue published to accompany an exhibition of contemporary Japanese ceramics at the Shigaraki Museum of Contemporary Ceramic Art in Shiga prefecture, Japan, held from June 2 - September 2, 1990.



In Kyoto, during his one year of study, Hendrawan created several sculptural ceramic works that were mainly abstract as shown in some of the images below. All of the pieces were a continuation of his exploration on form, texture, color, and structure, combining ceramics with other materials. He constructed a vertical structure which appears to be made of two pieces of cubes stacked together forming the bottom part. Each of the cubes is not made simply by forming a rectangular shape, but they seemed to be made of some circular masses, squeezed and pushed together, cut and attached, which then eventually became cubes. The other half of the structure - the upper part - is composed of vertically stacked triangular shapes (figure 28). He used black clay for most of the structure except on the front side and some other parts of the upper half that have a much lighter color. Hendrawan used a technique called marbling to create several different textures or colors on the same plane by mixing roughly different types of clay into one single mass and then cut it with a single wire to expose the mixture. Another piece made during the same period is also showing the same characteristic and approach to the medium (figure 29).



Figure 28: Hendrawan Riyanto, Untitled, 1993, Dimension unknown. One of the works Riyanto made during his short study in Kyoto, Japan. It was included in his solo exhibition titled *On Improvisation with String* at Beni Gallery (ギャラリー紅) in 1993, Kyoto, Japan.

During his short stay in Kyoto, Hendrawan exhibited his works in several exhibitions. Two of them were a group show with Kyoto Seika University's ceramic art students at Maronie Gallery in 1993 as well as a solo exhibition at Beni Gallery (figure 30). The title of the solo exhibition is *On Improvisation with String* which refers to the geometric forms that are formed through the process of cutting with a piece of string, reducing it and assembling it to form a single construction. A process that is not far from what he had learned earlier from Rita Widagdo at the Ceramic Art Studio at ITB. Hendrawan's works since he started his study at ITB until his visit to Japan from 1992-1993 are considered here to be his early period of artistic development. Most of the works he created during this period are non-representational, with a high emphasis on aesthetic qualities of formal elements.

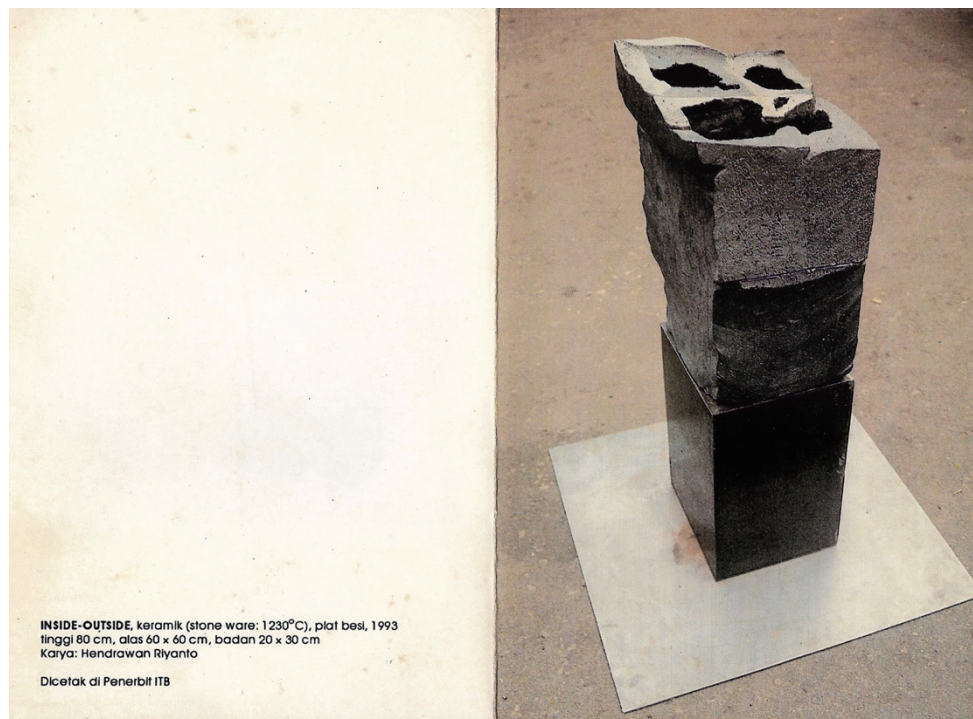


Figure 29: Postcard showing Hendrawan Riyanto's work created in Kyoto, Japan, titled *Inside-Outside*, ceramic (stoneware) 80 x 20 x 30 cm, steel plate 60 x 60 cm, 1993.

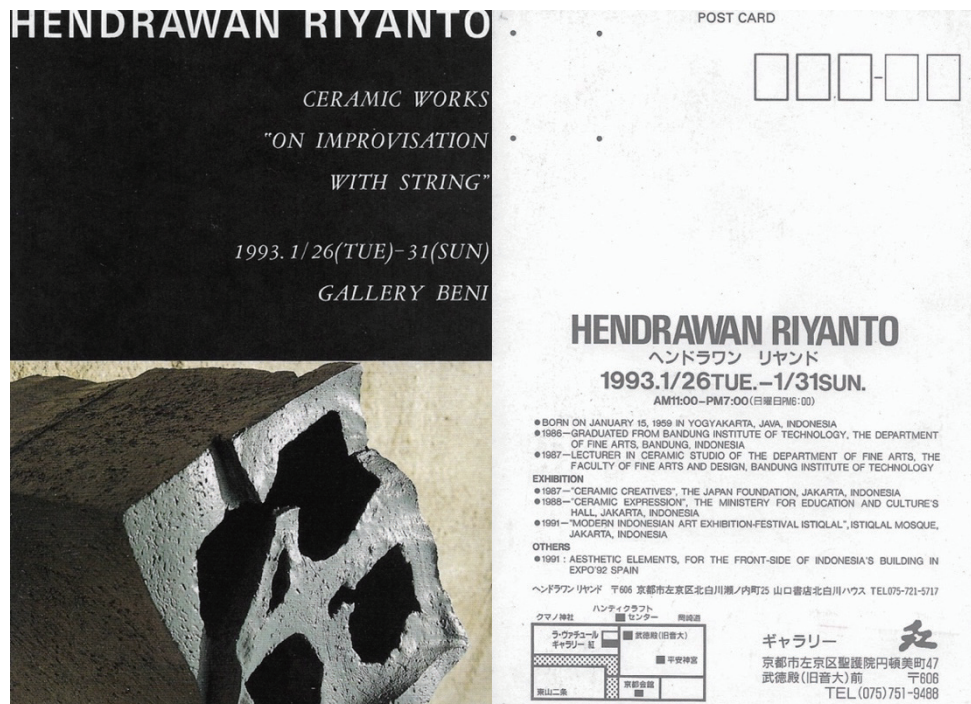


Figure 30: Postcard invitation of Hendrawan Riyanto's exhibition titled *On Improvisation With String*, at Beni Gallery (ギャラリー紅) in 1993, Kyoto, Japan.

Chitaru Kawasaki, who at that time was the head of the Ceramic Art Major in Kyoto Seika University have had a really keen interest in the traditional fired-baked low-fired terracotta in Java island. He was especially interested in pottery tradition located in Pagerjurang Village, Bayat, Klaten city, Central Java, where all the craftswomen use a slanted pottery wheel called *perbot* to throw their pots. This technique is unique to this village and nowhere to be found in other parts of Java Island (Adi, 2017). Hendrawan was already familiar with this tradition long before he came to Japan to meet Chitaru Kawasaki. Klaten City is located not very far from Yogyakarta where Riyanto was born and in that period, around the late 1980s to 1990s, Pagerjurang village is one of the destinations for ITB ceramic art students to go on a field trip study possibly once every year. Thereafter, Hendrawan and Kawasaki built their connection over the same interest to develop the traditional pottery in Pagerjurang village through field trip research for several years starting in around 1992-1993. Kawasaki also had taken several students from Kyoto Seika University regularly every year on these field trips.



After visiting around 20 pottery villages across Java and Bali island, Chitaru Kawasaki documented his research in a book titled *インドネシアの野焼土器 (Indoneshia no Noyaki - Indonesia Field-baked Earthenware)*. The book was written in Japanese language and published by Kyōto Shoin in 1998. Kawasaki finally decided to focus his research into Pagerjuran pottery village. For over several years this research has resulted in several major developments that have improved the life and social welfare of the craftspeople in that village and help preserved the pottery technique. In March 10 - 17, 2000, Bentara Budaya Jakarta organized an exhibition of traditional pottery made by craftswomen of Pagerjuran village (figure 32, 33). Both Kawasaki and Hendrawan were involved in organizing this event. Over several years, Kawasaki was also responsible for some major developments of ceramic-making facility in the village. Image of the kilns can be seen printed in the back of the poster of the exhibition (figure 33) accompanied with writings by Hendrawan himself, JB Kristanto, director of *Bentara Budaya Jakarta* (Jakarta Cultural Council) and Hendrawan's older brother, Hermawan Riyanto as representative of *Yayasan Mata Air* (Mata Air Foundation), a non-profit organization based in Jakarta.



Figure 31: Hendrawan Riyanto at his solo exhibition at Beni Gallery in 1993 with Professor Chitaru Kawasaki, Kyoto, Japan.

Jakarta - Yogya - Solo - Bandung - Bali

PAMERAN KELILING  
KERAMIK RAKYAT DAN  
TEKNIK PUTARAN MIRING

# PAGERJURANG

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Produk Budaya dan  
Membangun Industri Rakyat**

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Teknik putaran miring ini diciptakan berlandaskan teknologi sederhana yang cerdas yang ternyata memberikan solusi untuk kecepatan, hemat energi dan dibuat berdasarkan dasar-dasar etis dan filosofi para pekerjanya yaitu wanita.

Hidup matinya industri keramik rakyat ini sangat tergantung dari pertumbuhan pasar. Namun upaya pelestarian produk budaya ini seharusnya tidak tergantung oleh faktor tersebut tetapi tumbuh bersama sebagai bagian dan pertumbuhan industri rakyat.

Riset telah dimulai oleh Jurusan Seni Keramik .FSRD ITB sejak 1975, kemudian pelatihan dan pengembangan diadakan awal tahun 1999 hingga kini oleh Universitas Kyoto Seika Jepang dan Jurusan Seni Keramik FSRD-ITB dengan didukung Jurusan Keramik UNS Solo, Balai Besar Keramik Bandung.

Tujuannya memperbaiki mutu, melestarikan produk budaya dan meningkatkan kualitas industri rakyat.

Keramik putaran miring ini yang kemudian disebut sebagai Keramik PAGERJURANG, beserta industri rakyatnya dipamerkan keliling mulai dari Bentara Budaya Jakarta dan Yogyakarta hingga Bali.

**Bentara Budaya, Jakarta 10 - 17 Maret 2000**



**The Jakarta Post**

**Mataair**

Figure 32: Poster of the exhibition of traditional pottery from Pagerjurang village, Central Java (front side).



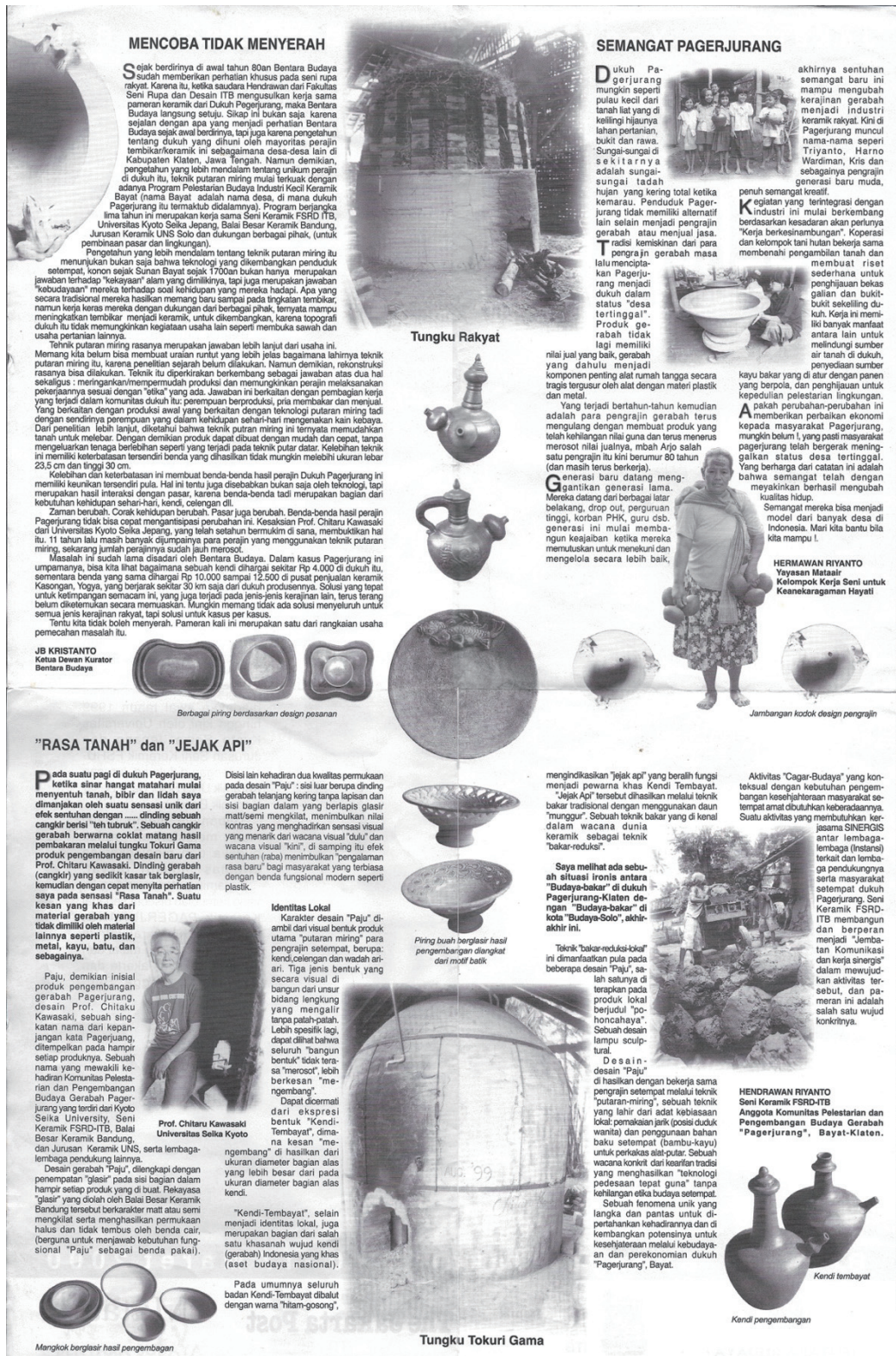


Figure 33: Poster of the exhibition of traditional pottery from Pagerjuran village, Central Java (back side).

In April 14, 2005, *Gedung Pusat Keramik Putaran Miring* (The Center for Development of Side-wheel Throwing Technique) was officially opened in Melikan village, Bayat, Klaten city. The center has been functioning as a training and education center in decorative and traditional pottery with a curricula equivalent to a vocational high school or college that provides technical skills training. Chitaru Kawasaki had spent time there for more than three years as an educator at that time. His activities in Bayat, both as an educator and an artist were well documented and have gained significant attention from the public in Indonesia.<sup>37</sup> Through his research in Pagerjuran village, he was acknowledged as a pioneer at a time when no one else seemed to consider the potentiality of a ceramics industry in Bayat (Trisnanto, 2013, p. 20). Besides engaging in social activity in developing a pottery training center, Kawasaki was also engaged with his own artistic practice by creating several sculptural pieces using the same type of material and technique that are unique in Bayat as a way to introduce and promote tradition (Marianto, 2017, p. 31-32). Chitaru Kawasaki had a solo exhibition at the National Gallery of Indonesia from September 28 - October 12, 2012, titled *Knot, Connection, & String Playing*.



Figure 34: Chitaru Kawasaki at the opening of the exhibition of traditional pottery from Pagerjuran village, Central Java, 2000.

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<sup>37</sup> See this article, Ayuningtyas, K. (2015) 'Bayat's Unique Pottery Technique, Color & Female Workforce', *The Jakarta Post*, October 9, 2015 [Online] <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2015/10/09/bayat-s-unique-pottery-technique-color-female-workforce.html> (accessed October 30, 2019).





Figure 35: Hendrawan Riyanto at the opening of the exhibition of traditional pottery from Pagerjurang village, Central Java, 2000.

Besides being actively involved in Kawasaki's research in Pagerjurang village, Riyanto frequently travelled to other pottery villages across Java, such as Plered pottery village in Purwakarta and Sitiwinangun pottery village in the city port of Cirebon, both located in West Java province. The purpose of these travels was to further his understanding of the connection between pottery practice and agriculture in agricultural communities.<sup>38</sup> For these communities, pottery practice is one of their sources of income and strengthens the local economy but it is also something that has shaped their beliefs, customs and traditions. Riyanto was interested to discover more about local folklores and mythological stories closely related to clay and pottery practices that would eventually inspire his artistic practice.

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<sup>38</sup> As documented in *Kultur Padi (Paddy Culture)* – an exhibition catalogue of Hendrawan's collaborative project titled *Dine with Sri* in 2001 which I will discuss later in this chapter.



Hendrawan's collaboration with Kawasaki over the course of a few years in researching indigenous field-baked pottery tradition in the island of Java gradually influenced his own artistic practice which I demarcate as the second phase of his artistic development. In this phase, Hendrawan incorporated ideas about tradition by using low-fired earthenware clay and traditional methods of firing that are used by most indigenous potters in the island of Java. In field-baked pottery firing, the kiln structures are barely present, so the firing is done directly on the ground, outdoors, in the field using readily combustible materials such as rice hulls, straw and dried leaves. Because of the absence of physical kiln structures, the level of heat insulation that may be produced is very low, hence it is hard to bring the firing temperature to reach any higher than 700 or 800°C and this method of firing is usually quite a laborious process that takes up a considerable amount of time and communal effort. In this method of firing, the unfired-clay wares are usually stacked on top of each other so that heat can be transmitted easily between the objects and help raise the temperature faster. This results in the impossibility of glaze application or any surface treatment using silica-contained raw materials that melt at a low temperature (figure 36). This is not to say that there are no opportunities at all for decoration or surface treatment, there are several, albeit limited, techniques that can be used. Some of these techniques are for example slip decoration, burnishing, or something that Hendrawan had done in his works by exposing the cracks on the surface of the clay.



Figure 36: Two villagers attending to their pots at the end of the firing process.

### **2.3 Inner Mothers and Other Terracotta Works (1996-1997)**

Starting around 1995-1996 Hendrawan Riyanto began a new body of work which was significantly different to his previous explorations into non-representational forms. He seemed to be gradually moving away from the sophistication of medium and technical mastery in his practice. Gradually, his works became imbued with symbolic representations of his spirituality or religious beliefs and the syncretic and hybrid nature of his cultural identity as a Javanese/Sundanese Indonesian. His encounter with indigenous pottery practices and his collaboration with Kawasaki are credible indicators in accounting for the progress and major transition in his artistic practice between 1995/1996 and 2004.

Hendrawan used traditional firing methods where he would cover the sculpture with straw and dried leaves, which creates smoky black marks as a result of the amount of oxygen taken out of the clay body in the reduction process during firing (figure 37). Several pieces of bamboo accentuate the sculptures and sometimes they are tied together to form the basic structure of the shape. He used bamboo and welded wire mesh to construct the basic form of his sculptures and then covered them with red earthenware clay, sometimes in a very muddy and watery condition. The relatively thin layer of clay that covers the wire structure eventually dries and creates many cracks on the surface of the object but still remains intact on the wire structure (figure 38). These cracks, that are usually considered a technical flaw by many potters, in this case, create a strong visual property, yet also exposing the vulnerability of low-fired earthenware. It is hard to ignore these cracks because they are so apparent in almost all of Hendrawan's sculptures and installations. He deliberately used these cracks and even manipulated them to create poetic visual properties.

I enlist the reader to juxtapose Riyanto's aesthetics of imperfection with John Ruskin's lecture in 1858 regarding the poetry of rust. Rust is a form of imperfection caused by natural processes, and in Victorian Britain, it was considered the lowliest, most every day and mundane nuisance, yet for Ruskin, it spoke to the poetry of a natural process, a metaphor of memory, loss and decay (Frost, 2012). Ruskin's observations may be similarly applied to what Riyanto did with the cracks in his works. The cracks are the imperfection in the process of making and firing. Yet, he used it to explore memories of his own cultural traditions. These cracks speak to the metaphor of a body that breaks, but may also refer to a symbolic attitude towards a spiritual journey in transcending the confines of the material and physical body.



Figure 37: Some of Hendrawan's terra-cotta sculptures in his studio. Two pieces on the left are already been fired while the one on the right that is covered with straws is ready for firing. Hendrawan can be seen standing at the back behind the sculptures.



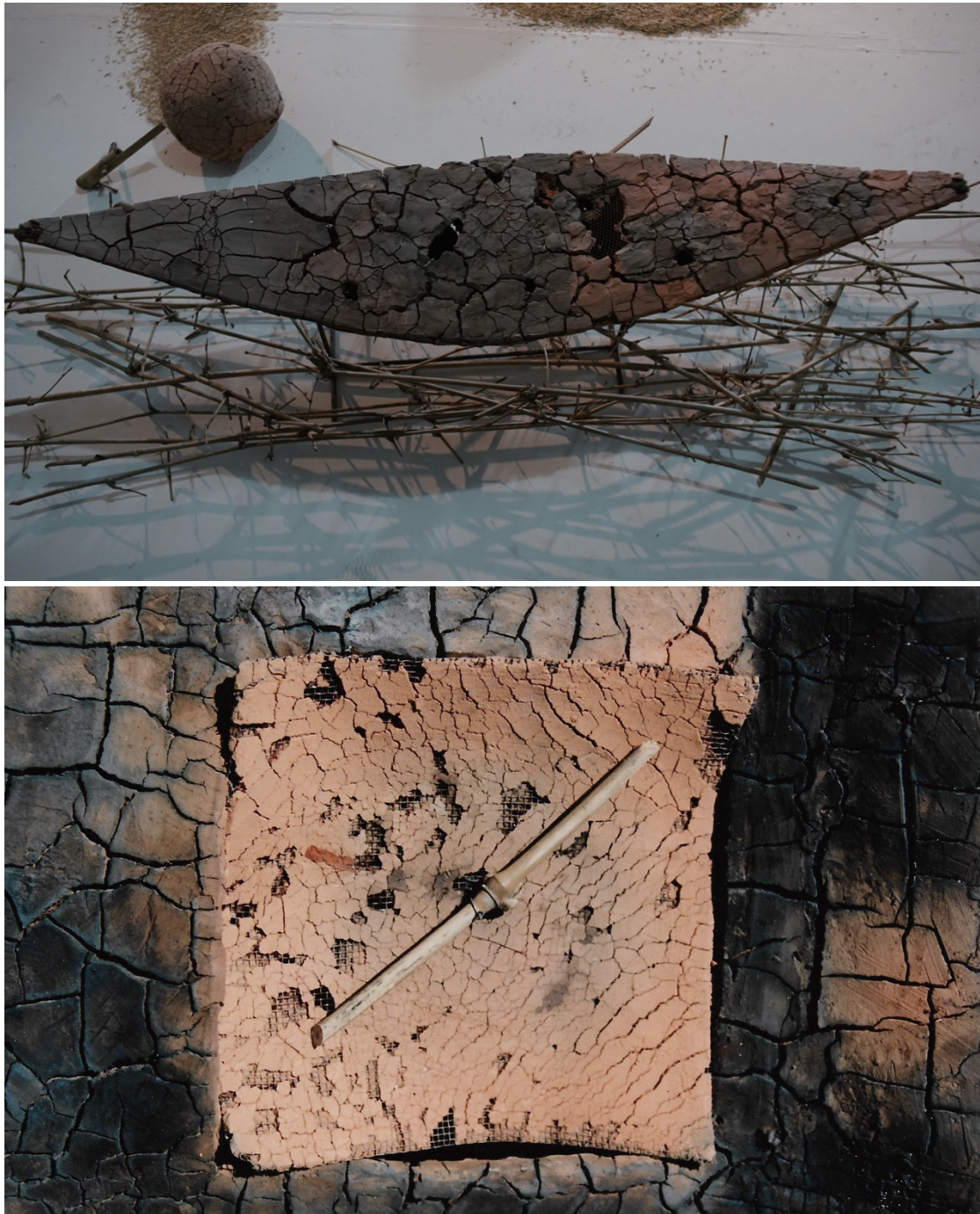


Figure 38: Detailed views of the cracks on Hendrawan Riyanto's terra-cotta sculptures.

Hendrawan continued to base his sculptures on abstract and non-representational geometric shapes. One shape that constantly appears in various sizes and proportions is the circular or oval shape reminiscent of a pebble or stone. Some stand on the ground, supported by a steel and wire armature with an open space underneath it (figure 39, 40) and others are lying on the ground freely with a group of wires attached to it that resemble the shape of an embryo, a cocoon, or a tadpole such as in the work titled *Anak dan Ibu Bumi (Child and Mother Earth)* (figure 41). The idea of clay, soil, or earth as a primordial image of Mother Earth that breeds and nourishes life has been found throughout the world in countless forms. The earth is seen as a symbol of fertility, as a womb that breeds and nourishes life (Eliade, 1959, pp. 139).

This conceptual idea is in parallel with the conceptual idea behind Riyanto's exploration of cracks on the surface of his sculptures. These cracks signal the presence of fire or heat that transforms clay into ceramic, a new form of material that is strong yet also at the same time fragile. He sees ceramic practices as a way to contemplate processes of transformation, both physical and spiritual. For example, in the work titled *Catching the Cocoon Spirit*, an elongated terracotta sculpture encased inside a steel construction and suspended from the ceiling with its bottom slightly touching the floor (figure 42). In this work, the title reflects his contemplation on the idea that transformation is achieved through a slow and subtle process like a metamorphosis of an insect into a butterfly. The word cocoon refers to an idea of a skin or a container, an idea similar to that of a ceramic vessel that has to be hollowed out so that it can go through a firing process. To Riyanto:

“A piece of clay has a flexible capacity to be changed into a 'personalized' figure, since a piece of clay is also an example of a piece of life, with the same vitality imbued in all creatures. The clay is not only an object, it is a subject. Human beings should love this natural subject, since they all will become earth/clay themselves in the end. When I play with clay, it is as though I open the pages of a book of science: from the 'page of fire', the 'page of air', the 'page of water', up to the 'page of earthen conclusions'. They are part of a process of temporary understanding, about pages being briefly read.”

(Riyanto, 1997, p. 50)



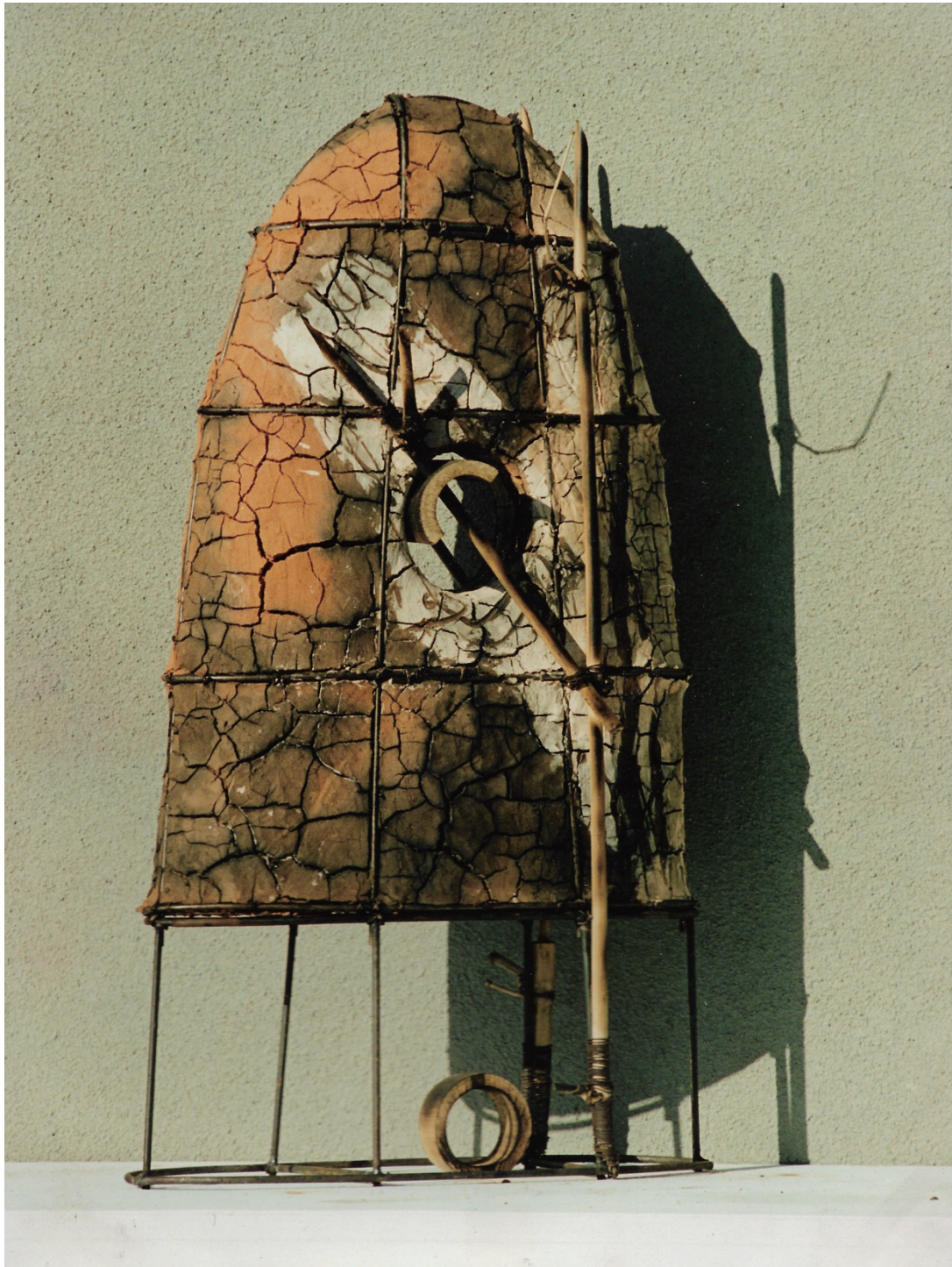


Figure 39: Hendrawan Riyanto, *Javanese Spirit II*, terra-cotta, steel, and bamboo, 15 x 60 x 80 cm, 1997.



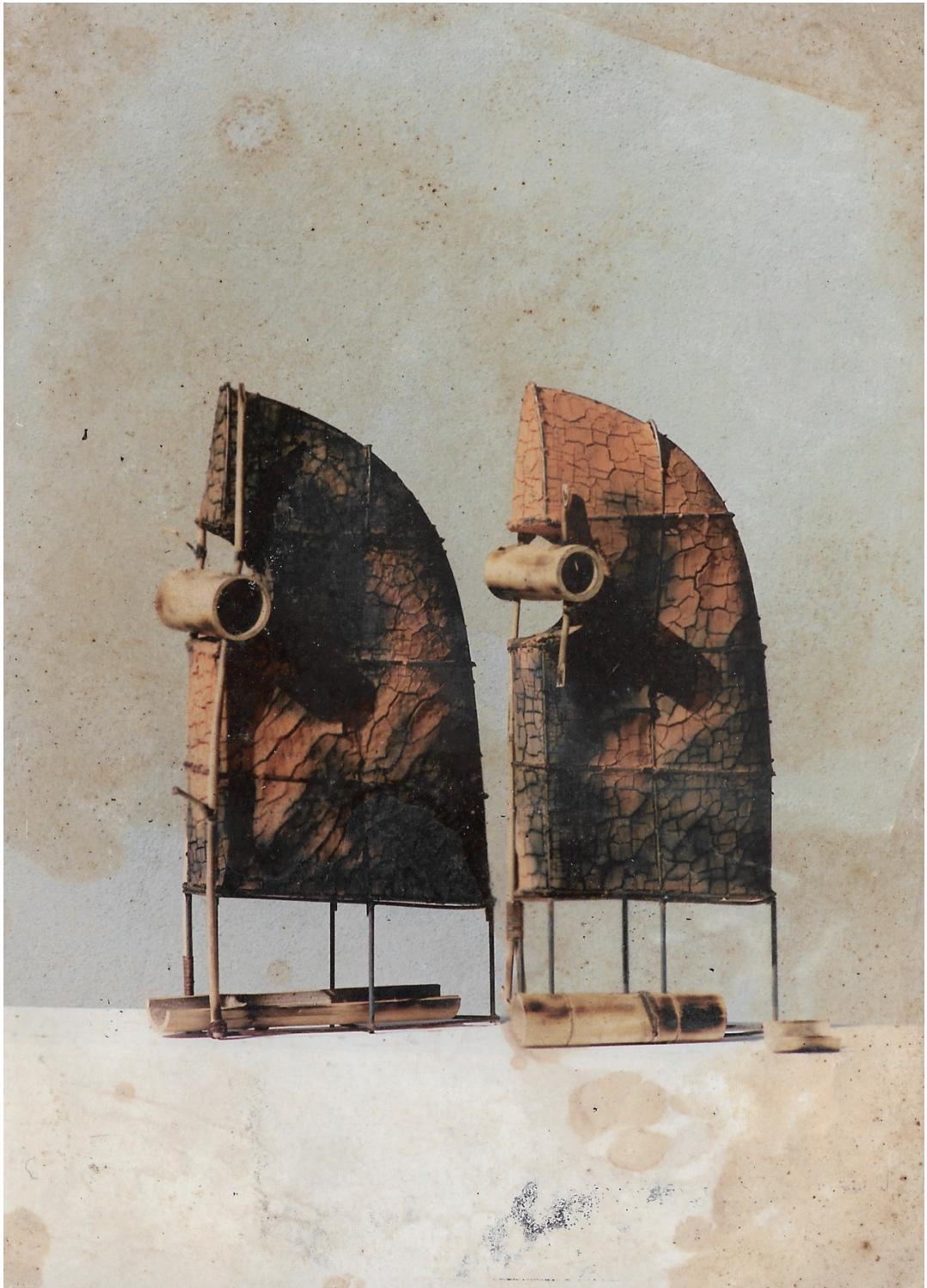


Figure 40: Hendrawan Riyanto, *Javanese Couple*, terra-cotta, steel, and bamboo, dimension unknown, 1996.





Figure 41: Hendrawan Riyanto, *Anak dan Ibu Bumi (Child and Mother Earth)*, terra-cotta, steel, and bamboo, 1997, site specific installation.

Breaking free from his previous non-representational and formalistic approach, Riyanto began to see clay or ceramics as a metaphor for the human body and the cycle of life. A material imbued with symbolic meaning that relates to our experience of the world through our own body and senses and this idea is consistently represented in several other works including the installation titled *Inner Mothers* that was exhibited in *Modernities and Memories: Recent Works from the Islamic World* exhibition, a satellite event accompanying the 47<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale in 1997. *Inner Mothers* is an installation consisting of several sets of terra-cotta sculptures with steel exoskeletons and bamboo. The major part of this installation was actually shown in Riyanto's solo exhibition in 1996 titled *Perkawinan Siang dan Malam (The Marriage of Day and Night)* at Gallery R-66, Bandung (figure 43). This exhibition was the first solo exhibition to showcase his new explorations into low-fired terra-cotta sculpture. Rita Widagdo wrote the curatorial introduction of the exhibition (see appendix D for English translation of the exhibition's curatorial text). Some of

Riyanto's sculptures that were initially made separately as individual works appear and reappear in several different versions of installation, sometimes under different titles or configurations. This tendency for reconfiguration was especially true for installations that involved performances.

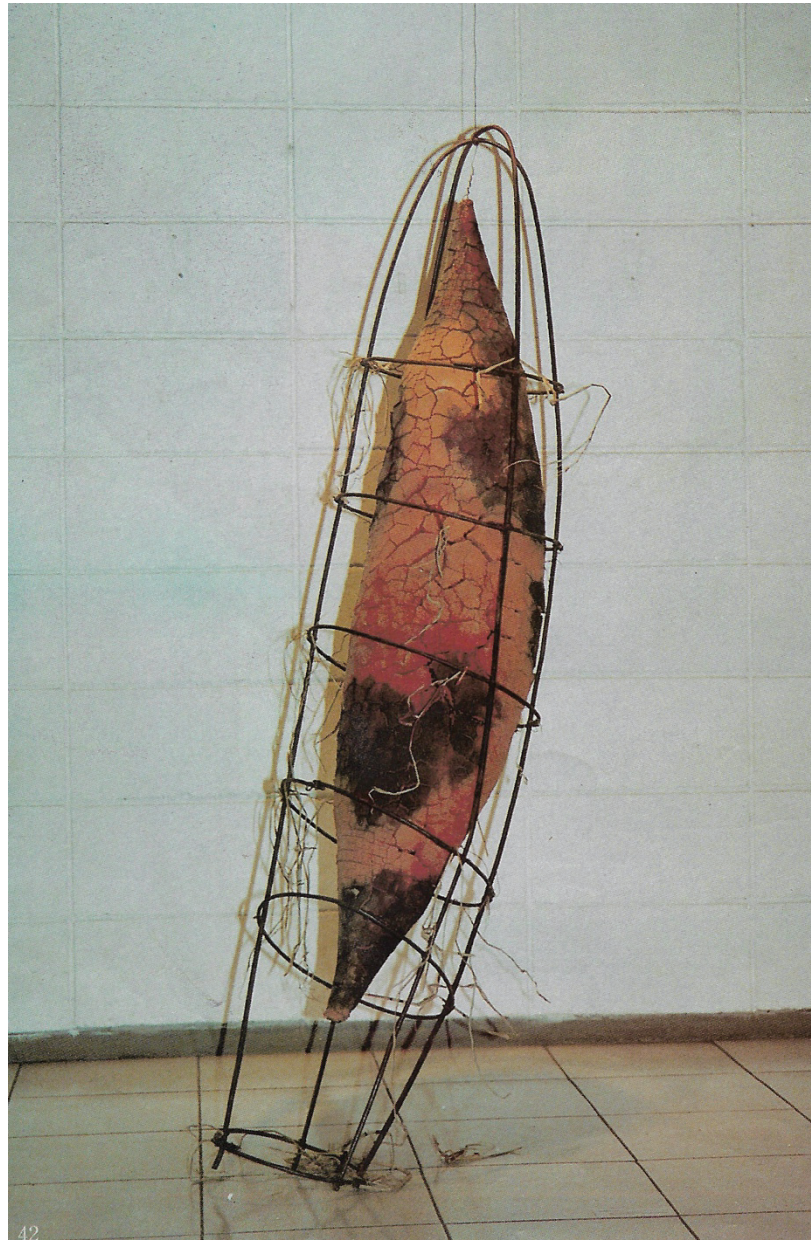


Figure 42: Hendrawan Riyanto, *Catching the Cocoon Spirit*, terra-cotta, steel, and bamboo, dimension unknown, 1996.



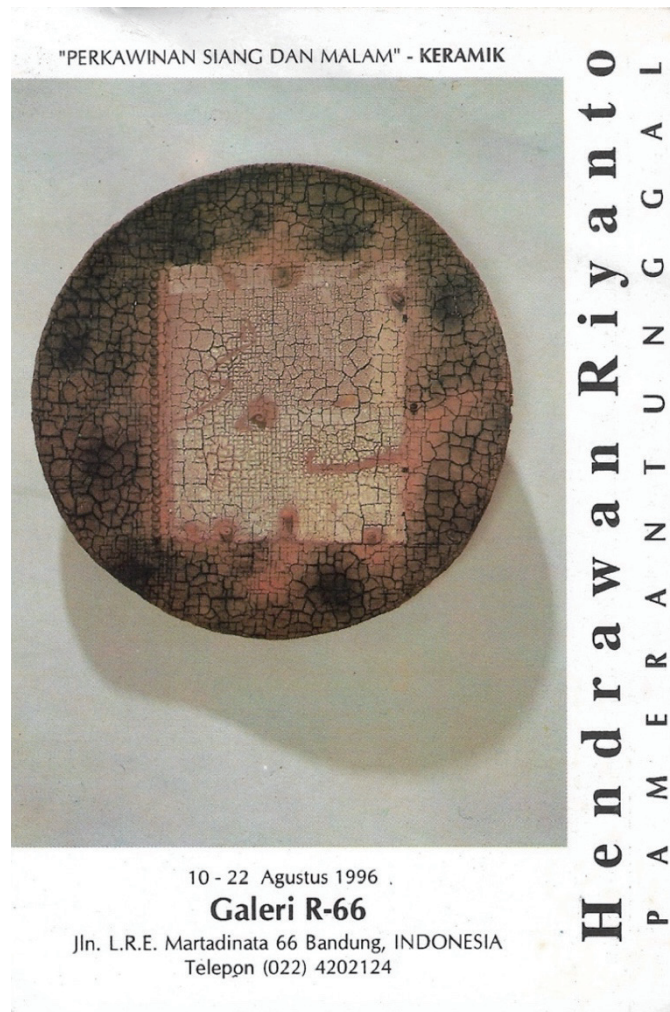


Figure 43: Postcard of Hendrawan Riyanto's solo exhibition titled *Perkawinan Siang dan Malam (The Marriage of Day and Night)* at Gallery R-66, Bandung, 1996.

Hendrawan Riyanto used his artistic practice to try to rediscover the complex relationship between tradition, spirituality and material culture. His works can be seen as a representation of his effort to reinterpret and redefine his own cultural identity and the values of his practice. It was through activities related to ceramic art that he discovered the spiritual values embedded in clay culture or terra-cotta culture. He looked through the past in search for values among traditional society or what Mircea Elide called as the “archaic society”. The first thing that he encountered in his search was folklores and mythologies that underpin ritual practices among Sundanese/Javanese people. One of the most important myths among them is the story of *Dewi Sri* (Goddess Sri), which is a

central figure in this region's customs and religious tradition. Stories of *Dewi Sri* are mainly associated with the mythical origin of the rice plant and the symbolic meaning of the land or soil.

*Inner Mothers* is a symbolic representation of a spiritual journey and a story about the creation of life. In the title itself, the word “inner” refers to the spirit, something unseen and hidden, something that doesn't belong to the material world, while the word “mothers” refers to fertility and the creative power. In Sundanese folk religion, Goddess Sri is the central figure that has dominion over birth and life. Sundanese people believe that Goddess Sri controls the rice production hence she is the symbol of life, wealth and prosperity (Kalsum, 2010). The word “mothers” in this work may also refer to the figure of a mother, an enduringly important figure in Riyanto's life. In several interviews conducted with Riyanto's wife between 2017-2018, Rini Darwati Riyanto mentioned that her husband had a very close relationship with his mother, so close that when he was living in Japan for one year, he never skipped a night of calling his mother, just to greet her or to ask if she is doing well. Rini reflected that Hendrawan was very open with his mother and always shared his feelings and his ideas with her to get some advice. *Inner Mothers* was initially titled as only *Mothers* and was shown in his solo exhibition at Gallery R-66 in Bandung in 1996 (figure 44).

The installation consisted of three groups of objects made of mainly terra-cotta sculptures with steel and bamboo structures, stones and rice hulls. The terra-cotta sculptures in each group have different shapes and sizes. The armatures of the sculptures are made of steel and welded wire mesh assembled into grids. At the center of the installation there are two sculptures which seem to be the main part of the set. The flat elliptical objects look like stone pebbles cut in half, and situated on the ground. They measure about the same as an average human height, 150 to 160 cm. Surrounding this were several other terra-cotta objects, at different sizes, accompanied by a small egg-shaped stone sitting on the floor and piles of rice hulls circling the objects (figure 45). All of these objects are arranged in a way as to create an association of a family relationship and life of

a mother and a child. The work is a metaphor of the inner quality of an everlasting family relationship and the never-ending love of a mother (Pirous, 1997, pp.50).<sup>39</sup>

Black planes cover the body of the red-orange terracotta objects and they look indiscernible at first sight. However, the one on the left seems to embody a symbol for a human embryo (figure 46). While it is unclear what the black planes on the other object might represent, we can assume that these two objects represent the idea of the child and the mother. These black planes on the surface of the objects are the result of the reduction process often present in the traditional wood firing or field-baked pottery. The black planes that resemble the image of an embryo on the surface of an elliptical object seem like the symbolic representation of the life of a fetus conceived in a mother's womb. This may also take us back to the significance of the figure *Dewi Sri* (Goddess Sri) as a symbol of fertility, wealth and prosperity who has the power over land that gives the people all the resources to support their daily life. It seems that Hendrawan is projecting his own personal experience of motherhood into the figure of a Great Mother in Sundanese/Javanese mythologies.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> See appendix E for English translation of A.D Pirous's curatorial text on Hendrawan Riyanto's work.

<sup>40</sup> Reference to the story of *Dewi Sri* (Goddess Sri) among Sundanese/Javanese Indonesian community appeared several times in Riyanto's works. For example, in the installation titled *Makan Malam Bersama Sri (Dine with Sri)* which he deliberately used the name in the title of the work. Another example is in an article about one of Riyanto's exhibition titled *Keramik - Syekh Siti Jenar (Ceramic - Syekh Siti Jenar)* in MATRA magazine no.129, an Indonesian magazine published in April 1997, where it was mentioned in page 40 that one of the folklores that he used as a point of reference in his works was the story of *Dewi Sri* as the protector of the nature that gives the community their primary source of food production. The story of *Dewi Sri* plays a central role among Sundanese and Javanese community, especially those who practice agriculture. *Nyai Pohaci Sanghyang Asri* is the most popular name among Sundanese community to refer to *Dewi Sri*.

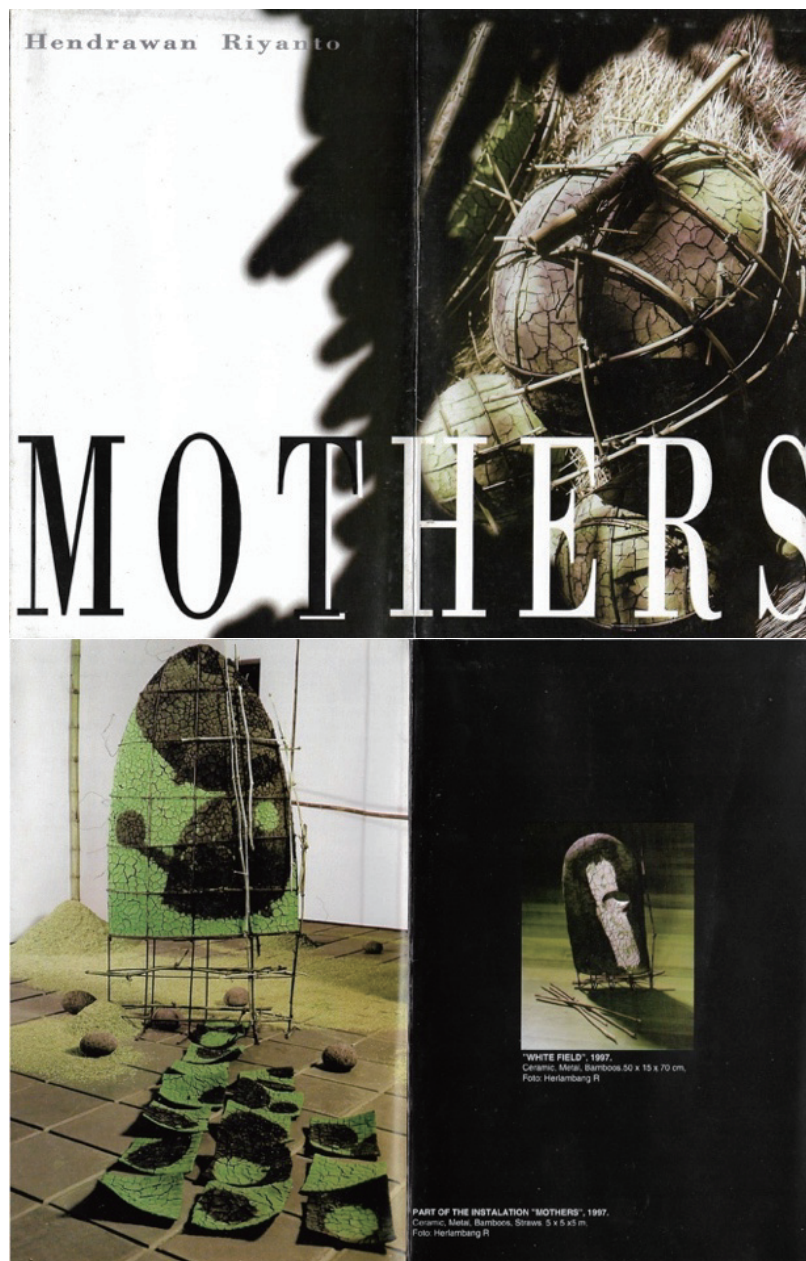


Figure 44: Leaflet of Hendrawan Riyanto's exhibition at Gallery R-66, Bandung, 1996. It shows an image of *Inner Mothers* that was initially called *Mothers*.



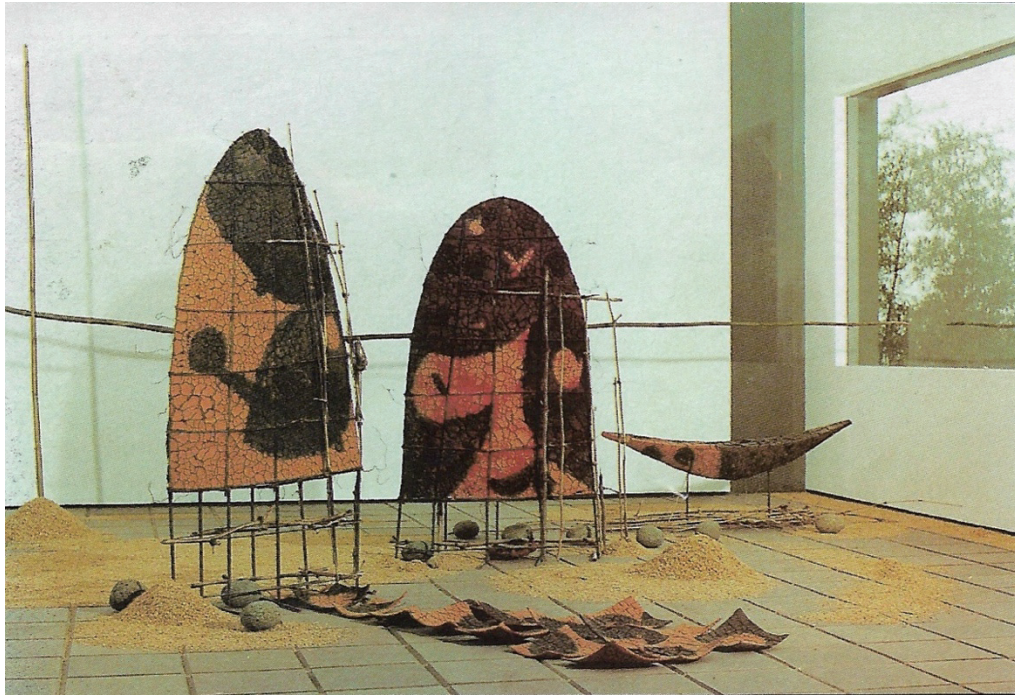


Figure 45: Hendrawan Riyanto, *Inner Mothers*, installation made of terra-cotta, steel and wire mesh, bamboo, and rice hulls, 1996. On the exhibition catalogue, it is written that it consists of four group of objects with the details as follows: group 1: 400 cm (diameter), group 2: 100 x 100 cm, group 3: 650 cm (diameter), group 4: 50 x 50 cm.

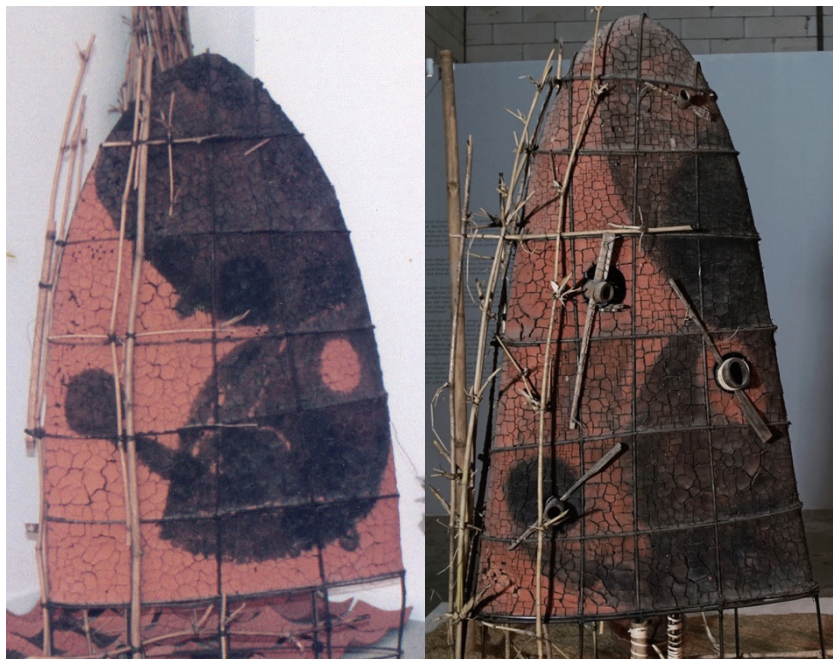


Figure 46: Detailed view of one of the objects in *Inner Mothers*. Older version in Venice, 1997 (left) reconstructed version in Jakarta, 2017 (right).

*Inner Mothers* was reconstructed at Jiwa: Jakarta Biennale 2017, which took place at Gudang Sarinah Ekosistem, an alternative exhibition space in Jakarta from November 5 to December 10, 2017 in a special section called *Revisiting History* organized to address the legacy of several artists in Indonesia who have built a unique practice and left a significant impact on the contemporary art discourse of recent decades (figure 47). The reconstruction of the artwork was done posthumously and since there was no sketch of the layout available, and because of the fragile and ephemeral nature of the objects and materials involved in it, it is extremely difficult to reconstruct the whole configuration and set it up exactly as it was installed in 1997 based only on photographic documentation. This has resulted in some slight changes in the configuration of the bamboo structures and the rice hulls around the main objects. The site-specificity and performative nature of the artwork is in fact one of the main reasons that Riyanto's works expanded the scope of ceramic art practice in Indonesia.

The main piece of *Inner Mothers* is surrounded by several relatively small sized terracotta sculptures, some piles of bamboo branches, and some piles of rice hulls. The small size terracotta sculptures consist of a group of square-shaped plates, a simplified form of a boat, an elongated shape like the shape of a cocoon, and some small rounded egg-shaped objects. The object that looks like a simplified form of a boat has the subtitle *Inner Mothers - Journey to Earth* printed in the *Modernities and Memories* exhibition catalogue in 1997 (figure 48). Another sculpture that is part of the installation is *Inner Mothers - Emptiness and Fullness* is an elongated flat object that looks like a shield horizontally attached onto a piece of wood approximately 160-170 cm in height. It has a slightly pointy edge on both its left and right side with a small opening on the middle upper left part. The shield-like object is attached slightly above the center of the wood forming an image of a cross (figure 49).





Figure 47: Reconstructed version of *Inner Mothers* at JIWA: Jakarta Biennale in 2017.



Figure 48: Hendrawan Riyanto, *Inner Mothers-Journey to Earth*, part of *Inner Mothers* installation, 1997.

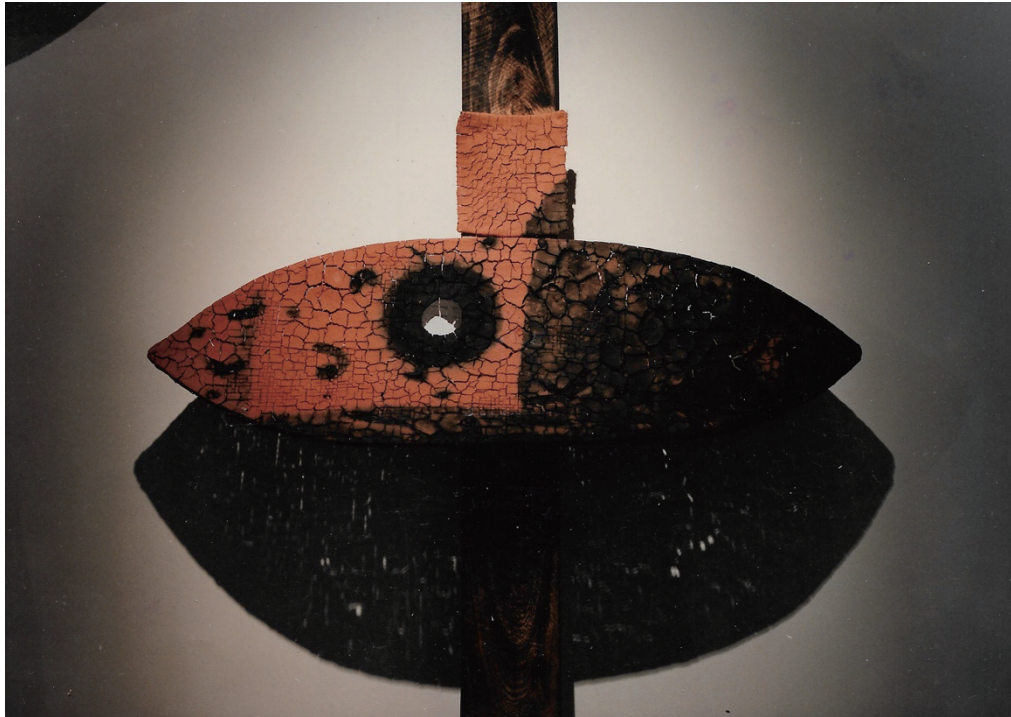


Figure 49: Hendrawan Riyanto, *Inner Mothers-Emptiness and Fullness*, part of *Inner Mothers* installation, 1997.

#### **2.4 Makan Malam Bersama Sri (Dine with Sri) (2001)**

This underlying theme related to the myth of *Dewi Sri* can be found in another work titled *Makan Malam Bersama Sri (Dine with Sri)*, which is a collaborative project between Hendrawan Riyanto and Komunitas Padi (The Paddy Community), an informal organization consisting of a group of visual artists, poets, writers and researchers, musicians, dancers, and craftsmen/craftswomen. Riyanto was in charge as the chief coordinator of the project. The artwork was shown in Jakarta at The National Museum of Indonesia as part of the Jakarta Art Festival 2001. The project took the form of an elaborate installation that functioned as a setting for several performances involving video, music, dance and poetry recital. It was a form of appreciation and reinterpretation from an artistic point of view of the rites of fertility that are practiced in various forms across the island of

Java as explained in the line below quoted from the exhibition catalogue (translation provided by Albert Yonathan Setyawan):

*“Sebagaimana halnya sebuah karya seni, presentasinya merupakan apresiasi seniman berdasarkan penelitian kualitatif pada wilayah geografis diatas terhadap objek material, lingkungan (suasana) maupun kode-kode (tanda: ikon, indeks, simbol) yang dapat membawa pemahaman-kualitatif apresiator terhadap kultur-padi melalui apresiasi Mitos Dewi Sri. Rupa karya merupakan gabungan nilai-nilai tradisional maupun kontemporer yang dikemas instalatif dan dilengkapi dengan unsur gerak dan bunyi untuk mewadahi dimensi ritus. Dengan kata lain, presentasi karya seni yang berjudul “Santap Malam bersama Sri” berupa “Seni Rupa-Pertunjukan” (Performance-Art).”*

“As a work of art, this presentation is the artist’s appreciation based on qualitative research on the subject of material culture, environment, and also the symbolism that could bring about the knowledge and understanding of paddy culture through an appreciation of the Goddess Sri mythology conducted in a certain geographical location. This visual work represents the combination of traditional values and contemporary ideas in a form of installation art accompanied by sound and movement to create a ritualistic feature. In other words, this presentation titled “Dine with Sri” is a form of performance art.”

(Komunitas Padi (Paddy Community), p.7, 2001)

The purpose of these rituals is to invoke the spirit of *Dewi Sri* who is believed to bring blessings and good luck during the rice planting season, especially at the beginning of the season before the first seeds are planted.

Unfortunately, the only available sources of data for this project are some photographs and essays about the project in the form of a catalogue/book. The catalogue itself does not provide any visual record of the project although it contains substantial information about the purpose of the project and everyone who was involved in it. I created the layout below by analyzing all visual information available in the photographs. It is an estimation but provides significant information, gleaned from the photographs, to understand the overall structure of the work. For the purpose of giving as comprehensive a visual description as possible, I separated the installation into seven different components (figure 50) with details as follows:

1. Five sets of table and chairs made of terracotta lined up in a row and set on top of a low and long rectangular floor made of earthenware bricks. The tables measure approximately 70 x 70 cm and 60 cm in height (figure 51 bottom).
2. A rectangular shape made of a flat pile of soil which is referred to as the mandala in the catalogue, approximately a third to a quarter of the size of the brick pedestal, with a red ribbon (a piece of fabric) placed on top of it. The soil is surrounded by piles of rice hulls formed into some sort of wavy line ornaments (figure 51 top).
3. A water buffalo terracotta sculpture filled with black inscriptions that look like letters or symbols, measuring approximately two meters in length and one meter in height (figure 52 top image – left).
4. A structure that looks like a tower connected to a bridge made of bamboo approximately three meters in height. The structure is connected to one of the pillars inside the building (figure 52 top image – center to right).
5. A decapitated water buffalo terracotta sculpture, slightly bigger than the other water buffalo sculpture in the set, suspended upside down from inside a three-legged bamboo structure (plate 52 bottom image – center to right).
6. Three white pedestals with the head of the water buffalo terracotta sculpture at the center and some set of meals or delicacies as *sesajen* (ritual offerings) on the other two pedestals (plate 52 bottom image – left).
7. Piles of rice hulls shaped into some kind of wavy patterns circling the outside of the main set of the installation, they look like traces of soil in water irrigation system for rice planting. Some circular mountain-shaped piles of rice hulls referred to as mandalas in the catalogue can be seen also circling the installation, together with some tools for wet rice planting made of wood and bamboo placed in between them (figure 53).

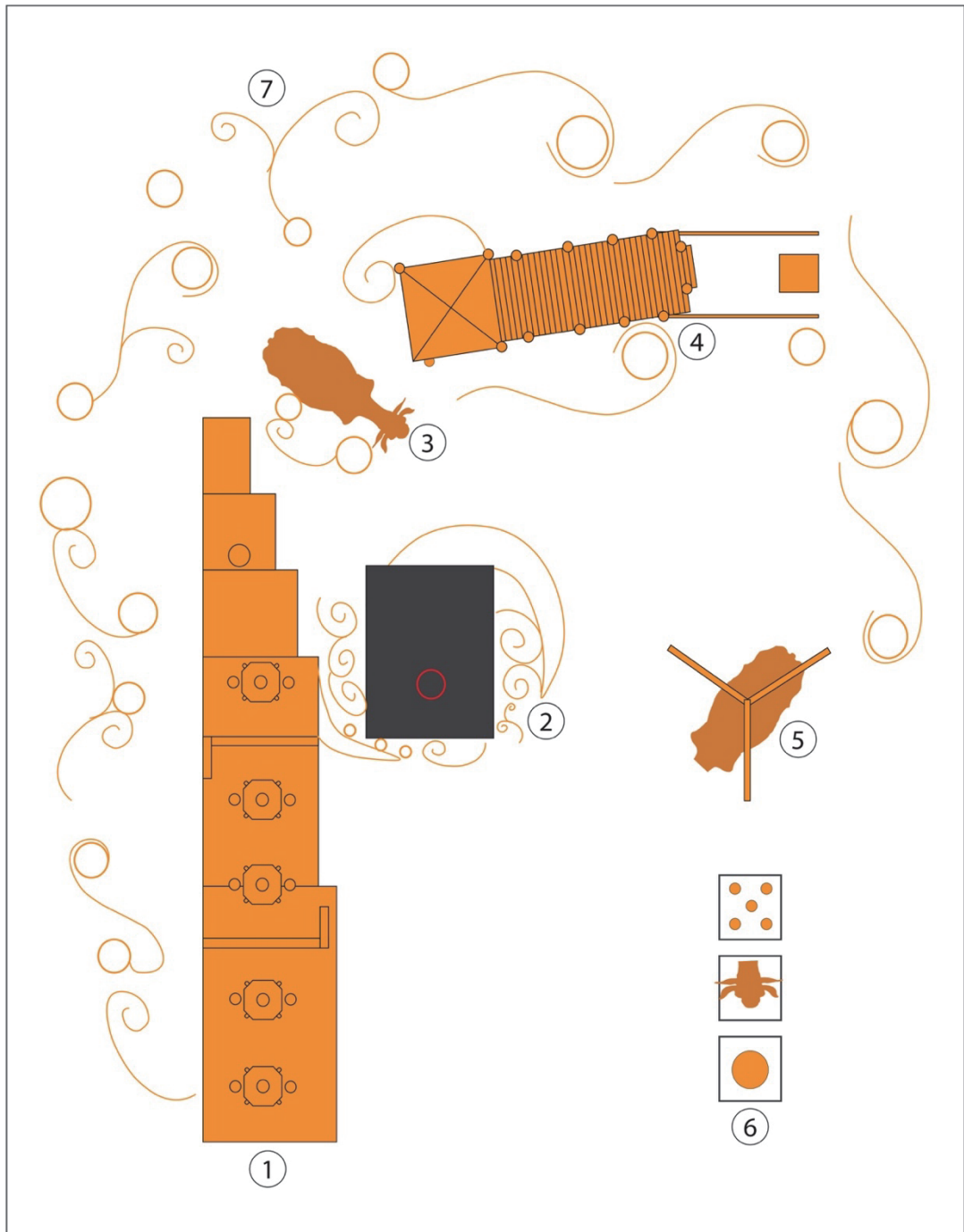


Figure 50: Layout sketch for collaborative installation and performance *Dine with Sri*, 2001.  
(Illustration by: Albert Yonathan Setyawan)



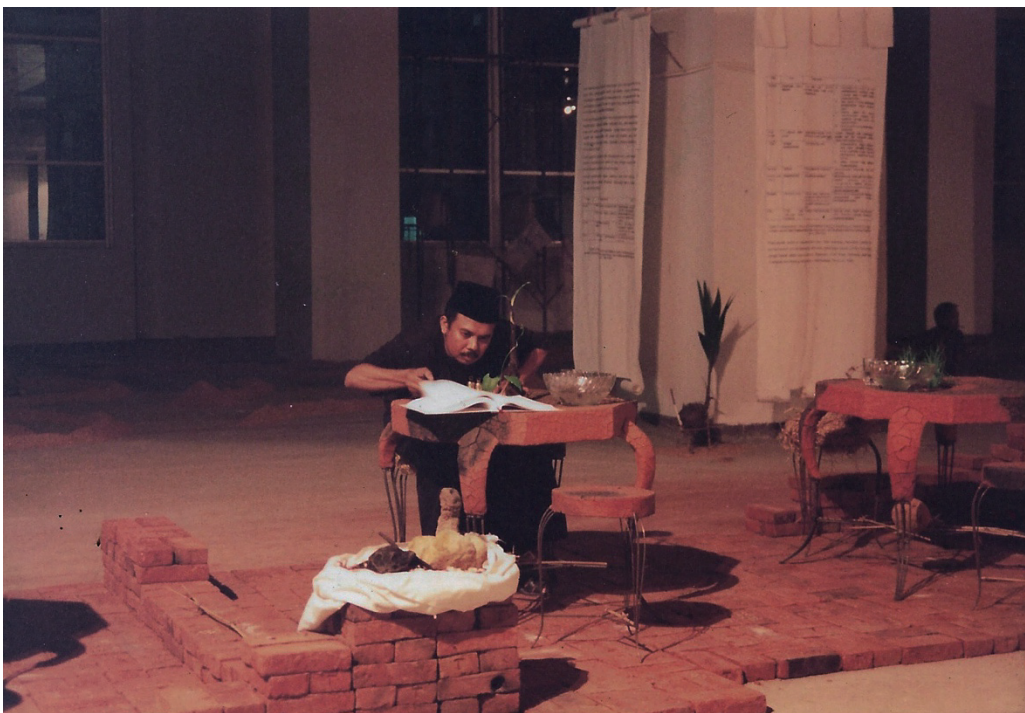


Figure 51: Detailed view of collaborative installation and performance *Dine with Sri*, 2001.





Figure 52: Detailed view of collaborative installation and performance *Dine with Sri*, 2001.





Figure 53: Detailed view of collaborative installation and performance *Dine with Sri*, 2001.

In the course of researching this exhibition, no data emerged that would explain the chronological details of the performances.<sup>41</sup> However, through all the available photographic documentation and the catalogue we may still be able to extract some general information about the event. The performances seem to have been conducted in several different sets at different times of day. Several different activities were set inside different parts of the installation. Riyanto himself also used one part of the installation for his performance that involved sound and chanting or mantra reading. He sat in front of one of the terracotta tables with a book, bowl, and some other items set on top of the table, performing a *ruwatan*, a form of Sundanese syncretic tradition of a ritual of cleansing which is still being practiced today in many Sundanese communities in the west and central Java regions. The purpose of this ritual performance, according to these communities, is to cleanse and prepare the site and then to invoke the presence of *Dewi Sri* during the performance.

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<sup>41</sup> The following sources were consulted: Kohar Kartiwa – a bamboo craftsman based in Bandung - who used to work as Hendrawan's assistant; Nanu Muda – educator and performer based in Bandung – who had collaborated with Hendrawan in many of his performance pieces.

Another person involved in this performance was Ottih. Inside the installation Ottih was reading a poem referred to as a mantra while also performing a dance as the personification of *Dewi Sri* or commonly known in Sundanese community as *Nyai Pohaci* (figure 54). In the mythology of Goddess Sri, it is said that in the middle of a conflict that arose in the heavenly kingdom, despite her innocence *Nyai Pohaci* was poisoned by other gods and died instantly. Her body was then brought to earth and buried somewhere in a hidden place. At the time of her burial, out of parts of her body grew some useful plants that would benefit human beings. From her thighs grew various types of bamboo and from her belly button grew rice.

All of these performances were accompanied by musical compositions performed by Rusli Keleeng, Tamar and Jajang, video projection by R. Amin D. Rahman, sound performance by Tony Broer and Deden Sambas, and equally important to all the artists and performers involved were Ira Adriati and Hermawan Riyanto (Hendrawan Riyanto's older brother) who contributed texts and literature studies for the project.<sup>42</sup> Some other performers with costumes can also be seen performing some set of movements or dances inside the rice hulls set up outside the main part of the installation (figure 55).

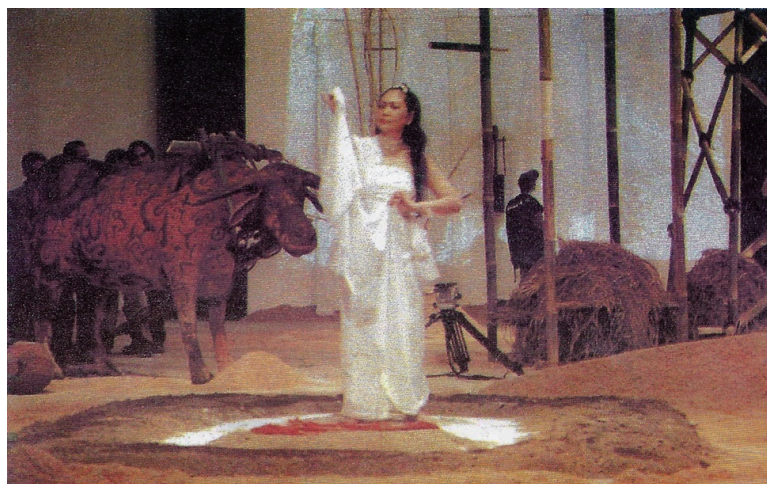


Figure 54: Detailed view of collaborative installation and performance *Dine with Sri*, 2001.

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<sup>42</sup> All of these data are available in the catalogue of the project titled *Kultur Padi (Paddy Culture)* published by The National Museum of Indonesia in 2001 in conjunction with the event Jakarta Art Festival (JakArt) in 2001.





Figure 55: Detailed view of collaborative installation and performance *Dine with Sri*, 2001.

The meaning of rituals and pilgrimage in Hendrawan's installations are not only symbolically represented during the performances but they are also there in the early process of making and preparing the work. Many of the objects presented in this installation are genuine ritual objects that are commonly used as offerings. They are not merely there to represent a creative or artistic idea but they each also have ritual functions in a religious context. Hendrawan sought to bring actual ritualistic experiences into his installations/performances, not as a mere simulation, but as a real and visceral experience for the audiences. Sometimes certain rituals had to be performed before the work was installed or the performance began. He would travel to seek counsel from shamans or "learned men", people who are spiritually trained in what is known as *ilmu kebatinan* (the science of the inner-self), so that every decision regarding the physicality of his work is not only based on artistic endeavor or imagination, but it is also based on their advice. He would also seek out opportunities to be involved directly in the activities of indigenous communities that include ritual practices.

From an interview with Kohar Kartiwa (familiarily known as Pak Kohar), a bamboo craftsman based in Bandung, who used to be one of Hendrawan's assistants, I discovered some facts about the process of preparing *Dine with Sri*. Kohar supervised every part of the installation that involved bamboo and also helped Hendrawan in the making of the terracotta pieces in this installation. The water buffalo and the table sets were all made in Hendrawan's studio in Bandung and then they were transported to Sitiwinangun village for an open field firing (figure 56). Due to the absence of the physical structure of the kiln, maintaining an even temperature can be quite challenging in an open field firing, especially if dealing with a relatively large object (the water buffalo sculpture in this case). So, for the objects to be fired evenly, some small openings in the body of the sculpture are necessary, so that the flame can enter the interior of the form and fire the body properly. One of these openings is located right on the belly of the water buffalo. Prior to this, Hendrawan had reminded Kohar to place some ritual offerings and perform a prayer. He believed that the water

buffalo is sacred, and hence a spirit may dwell in it and should be respected. However, Kohar forgot to perform the offerings and proceeded to punch a hole in the belly of the water buffalo. He confessed that this action resulted in him experiencing an excruciating pain in his abdomen in the evening when they all had gone back to Bandung. He also confessed that the pain did not stop for more than a week after, until he asked a local shaman – a “learned man” to tend to him and perform a ritual of cleansing. Not knowing about Kohar’s activity prior to this, the shaman claimed that the pain was caused by an angry spirit whose dwelling was disturbed.

Sitiwinangun is a village in the port city of Cirebon, in the northern part of West Java where its people practice agriculture and pottery. Similar to Pagerjuran village, Central Java, the potters of Sitiwinangun still practice a traditional field firing technique, which is known as *tungku ladang* (open-field kiln). They stack their hand-made pots, jars and other crockery in an open field, cover them with hay and straw and then bake them very slowly. For practical and economic reasons, the firing is usually organized at a relatively large-scale communal event, where potters from every household in one village gather their pottery and work together to organize the firing. And so too, the process of firing Hendrawan’s sculptures became a communal event, and also a way for him to communicate his ideas and intentions to the community.

The sculptures were then transported back to his studio in Bandung before they were sent to Jakarta. Hendrawan would take some parts of his previous installations and combine or re-arrange them into a completely different work, such as the case with the water buffalo sculpture. One year after Jakarta Art Festival where *Dine with Sri* was presented, the sculpture was shown as a completely different installation/performance titled *Terracotta in Journey to Fertility Sign* at Langgeng Gallery, in Magelang city, Central Java in a collaborative work with local community surrounding the area of Mount Merapi and Merbabu (figure 57).





Figure 56: Open field firing at Sitiwinangun village, northern coast of West Java.





Figure 57: Hendrawan Riyanto, *Terracotta in Journey to Fertility Sign*, Langgeng Gallery, Magelang, Central Java.

## 2.5 Form Follows Myth (2002)

In the years after Hendrawan began his field research on the indigenous pottery traditions across Java island, he also discovered many mythological stories and examples of folklore among the local communities that practiced agriculture including cosmogony myths or myths about the origin of the world, such as for example the story about the origin of rice and Goddess Sri. He was particularly interested in cosmogony myths that manifested in these rituals which led him to conduct his research and culminated in his postgraduate final project at ITB titled *Form Follows Myth*. The project was realized and exhibited in 2002 at Institut Français d'Indonésie (IFI-Bandung) formerly known as Centre Culturel Français (CCF-Bandung). *Form Follows Myth* is a complex set of architectural structures, sculptural objects and paintings that functioned as a stage for a set of performances.

Many of the folklores Hendrawan had discovered are manifested in rituals in numerous forms that may involve for example traditional dance, *wayang golek* (Javanese puppet theatre) performances, and *pantun* citations. *Pantun* is a form of a poem that usually contains long epic stories of myths and legends accompanied by the playing of musical instruments such as *kecap* (zither/sitar) and *suling* (flute). Most of these rituals are usually performed in special events such as harvest celebrations, weddings, or the purification of a person, house or object (Van Zanten, 1984). As I previously mentioned, another term commonly used for such purification rituals is *ruwatan*. The act of performing the ritual is called *ngeruwat* which means to purify. *Ruwatan* can be performed by someone who is considered to be a spiritual leader of the community at any time or event, as needed.

First, I will discuss the title of the work itself. It seems that Hendrawan wanted to underline his critical attitude towards the famous modernist credo “form follows function”. By using the title *Form Follows Myth*, he created an antithesis to that aphorism—a form of appropriation that is confronts the initial meaning with a new one, yet still using its original structure, which in this case is the idea of form and how it comes to be and what precedes it. However, the meaning of the term has been quite often misunderstood and quoted incorrectly. It has often been misattributed<sup>43</sup> to famous figures in modernist architecture and design such as Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe from the Bauhaus School, when in fact it was originally coined by the modernist architect Louis H. Sullivan (Rawsthorn, 2009).

The term actually first appeared in an article *The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered*, in Lippincott’s monthly magazine (Lippincott’s Magazine) published in March 1896 in Philadelphia.

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<sup>43</sup>Another famous modernist architect Frank Lloyd Wright, who as a young architect worked for Louis Sullivan has pointed out that the term has been misunderstood as cited in the overview of the architecture of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (available at <https://www.guggenheim.org/arts-curriculum/topic/form-follows-function>). Frank Lloyd Wright extended the term, that form does not only follows function, form and function in fact are one.

To understand the context and the meaning of the phrase fully, I considered that it was important to see precisely how Louis Sullivan articulated the term. He wrote:

“Yet to the steadfast eye of one standing upon the shore of things, looking chiefly and most lovingly upon that side on which the sun shines and that we feel joyously to be life, the heart is ever gladdened by the beauty, the exquisite spontaneity, with which life seeks and takes on its forms in an accord perfectly responsive to its needs. It seems ever as though the life and the form were absolutely one and inseparable, so adequate is the sense of fulfillment.

Whether it be the sweeping eagle in his flight, or the open apple-blossom, the toiling work-horse, the blithe swan, the branching oak, the winding stream at its base, the drifting clouds, over all the coursing sun, form ever follows function, and this is the law. Where function does not change, form does not change. The granite rocks, the ever-brooding hills, remain for ages; the lightning lives, comes into shape, and dies, in a twinkling.

It is the pervading law of all things organic and inorganic, of all things physical and metaphysical, of all things human and all things superhuman, of all true manifestations of the head, of the heart, of the soul, that the life is recognizable in its expression, that form ever follows function. This is the law.”

(Sullivan, 1896, p.403)

The complete term was actually written “form ever follows function” not “form follows function”. As reflected in this line: “It seems ever as though the life and the form were absolutely one and inseparable, so adequate is the sense of fulfillment.”, Louis Sullivan was actually suggesting a balanced relationship between form and function, between something organic and inorganic, between the physical and the metaphysical. This is different from the already generally accepted meaning of the term that function precedes form, that whatever the outward manifestation of an idea of an object is, it should always refer to its very function hence everything else outside of it is deemed unnecessary. And as a result, artists and designers reacted to this idea by proposing neologistic aphorisms such as “form follows fun” or “form follows nature” to emphasize the idea that the value of form in a design is not necessarily based on its rational and utilitarian principles but can also be defined by other principles.

In his master's thesis accompanying the artwork, Hendrawan never really addressed any particular reason why he chose the specific title. However, looking back at his education background, during his study at ITB, abstract formalism and the emphasis on the purity of form were the main characteristics of visual art that came from ITB, not only in Fine Art but also in the Design department that was already developing at this point. The term "form follows function" was thrown out among teachers and students and became a really familiar term among art students at ITB. Presumably this is where Hendrawan first encountered the term. The term at that time was generally understood to represent rational and practical thinking. Rita Widagdo who brought in the influence of the Bauhaus approach to a certain degree, was very firm in teaching that any form of ornamentation and decoration is unnecessary and should be eliminated to focus on the substantial forms. Hendrawan's use of the phrase was a form of critical stance towards this rational thought. Through several years of his field trip studies into local myths and rituals, he discovered that form does not always come from a rational way of thinking, sometimes form can come from the irrational or the supernatural.

*Form Follows Myth* is the symbolic representation of the concept of *dwitunggal* prevalent among Sundanese/Javanese society which can be articulated as the unification of two opposing principles, as addressed by Hendrawan in his writing. He also articulated his idea behind the project as a form of interpretation of the myth of cosmogony prevalent among traditional agrarian Sundanese communities in the form of rituals that involve musical performance and dance. He particularly addressed the ritual performances practiced by the people of Sukamelang village in Subang, a small city in the northern coast of West Java province. The rite itself is called *Mauludan* rite, which is also related to the commemoration of the birthday of the prophet Muhammad formally known as *Maulid Nabi Muhammad SAW*. The word "maulid" or "milad" in Arabic means birthday. Members of the community who participate in the celebration or the ritual will join in a dance called *Ketuk Tilu*, which is a type of social dance originated from West Java province formerly



believed to be the symbolic expression of gratitude towards Goddess Sri during rice harvest celebration. Hendrawan referred to this particular ritual as the main point of reference in creating the project *Form Follows Myth*.

The installation itself is made of 12 wooden columns that sit on top of another 12 truncated rectangular pyramid-like pedestal made of stone and each of the columns are raised on top of several individual black wooden plinths. A one-third of the area of the structure is covered with wooden panels painted on both sides. As for the upper part of the structure, from the top of each of the columns, 12 wooden beams are laid upon to form the structure of a ceiling or a rooftop, all joined together at the center point of the structure. Here at the center is a thin flat circular wooden ring measuring about half the size of the structure in diameter and suspended not far from the ceiling. Another circular structure of the same shape, but bigger in diameter is cut into two parts and also suspended from the ceiling, one half of it on the same level with the small circular plate and the other half significantly lower at about the same height as the stone pedestals (figure 58). The installation contains certain objects such as: wooden sculptures in the form of a human head and hand; stones suspended from the ceiling; and some painted wooden masks. On the wooden panels we can see images such as: *lingga* and *yoni*; some overlapping lists of punctuation marks like commas and question marks; and a list of vertical bars and cross marks. The images on the panels are made using various different techniques such as hand painting, printing and mark making using burnt charcoal. And on top of all these images we can also see some type of lettering that Hendrawan refers to as the *raja*h (tattoo) which appears to be, although indistinctly, similar to Arabic scripts (figure 59).



Figure 58: Installation view of *Form Follows Myth* at Centre Culturel Français (CCF-Bandung), 2002.



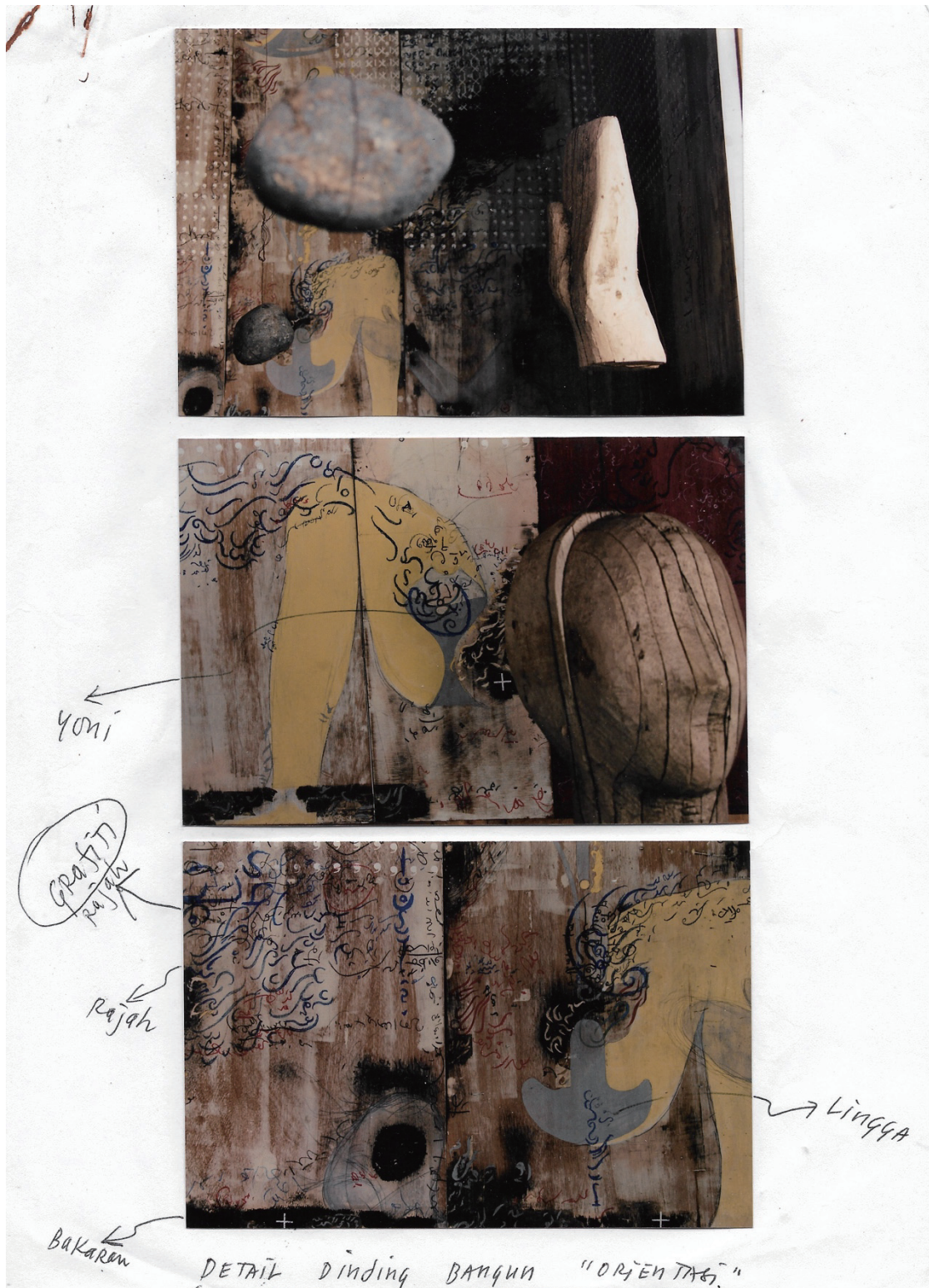


Figure 59: Detailed view of the installation *Form Follows Myth* at Centre Culturel Français (CCF-Bandung), 2002.

The structure resembles the *rumah joglo* (traditional Javanese house) or a *pendapha* (also spelled *pendopo* in Javanese language) which is one of the fundamental elements of Javanese vernacular architecture. A *pendapha* is a structure built on columns on top of a square or rectangular elevated floor plan that is open on all sides so it provides shelter from the heat and rain but also at the same time allows wind breeze and indirect sunlight (figure 60). *Pendapha* exist in many different sizes and can be constructed as a separate stand-alone structure in the front or attached to the wall of the inner structure of a traditional Javanese house. It is a communal space, a space for gathering and it can also be a spiritual space where certain rituals and ceremonies are held. In Javanese cosmology, a traditional Javanese house is seen as a symbol of spiritual journey, a trajectory from materiality to spirituality as symbolically represented by the hierarchy of spaces from the *pendapha* towards the main chamber of the main building called the *krobongan*. The *pendapha* represents the material world while the *krobongan* represents the spiritual world as explained by the concept of *sangkan-paran* (Wismantara, 2012). In Javanese “*sangkan*” means a point of origin or point of departure while “*paran*” means a point of destination, *sangkan-paran* is a journey towards Allah The Almighty, a concept that is highly syncretic in nature as a result of hybrid confluences between the animistic tradition of *Kejawen* and Islam.

Hendrawan chose this house-like structure as a symbolic representation of the myth of creation which is also inherent in the concept of *sangkan-paran*. That at the end of the journey, being enlightened, human beings are created anew and therefore they must go back to their material world and help build their community. Mircea Eliade speaks about the construction of sacred space as some form of orientation of a fixed point or the center as equivalent to the creation of the world:

“So it is clear to what a degree the discovery – that is, the revelation – of a sacred space possesses existential value for religious man; for nothing can begin, nothing can be *done*, without a previous orientation – and any orientation implies acquiring a fixed point. It is for this reason that religious man has always sought to fix his abode at the “center of the world.” *If the world is to be lived in*, it must be *founded* – and no world can come to birth in the chaos of the homogeneity and relativity of profane space. The discovery or projection of a fixed point – the center – is equivalent to the creation of the world; and we shall soon give some examples that will unmistakably show the cosmogonic value of the ritual orientation and construction of sacred space.”

(Eliade, 1959, p.22)

Here Eliade also speaks about the creation of a sacred space as some sort of a break or an alteration in the homogeneity and relativity of profane space where a space is just a mere physical space, like any other space that has no spiritual or religious significance. Therefore, for a religious man, the function of the cosmogonic ritual is to find the center of orientation that would finally determine the creation and separation of the sacred space from the secular space.



Figure 60: *Pendapha* in Keraton Kasepuhan (Kasepuhan Palace) located in the city of Cirebon, northern part of West Java province.



Hendrawan also addressed this idea concerning the orientation of the center for the construction of *Form Follows Myth*. The layout of the installation is based on a basic structure of a mandala. The word “mandala” itself in Sanskrit simply means a circle. It is the symbolic representation of the universe in Hindu and Buddhist tradition, a cosmic diagram that possesses radial symmetry. The basic principle of a mandala in its various manifestations is a combination of a circle inside a square with a point in the center. This center point in Sanskrit is called the *bindu*. *Bindu* as a central point of the circle is the representation of supreme reality and the manifestation of creative dynamism. It can also mean the vibratory sound that relates to unconditional consciousness.

Even though most mandalas take the form of a two-dimensional diagram, the concept of mandala can also be connected to religious architecture, where a mandala diagram is used to form the basic floor plan of the temple. Jaffer Adam Ayub Khan in his doctoral dissertation titled *The Infinite Space - Manifestation of Bindu and Mandala in Architecture*, explains how the diagram of the *Vastu Purusha Mandala* has been used to lay down the basic structure and space organization of not only temples but also houses, palaces and even cities. *Vastu Purusha Mandala* is the diagram of the universe in miniature. The word “*purusha*” is believed to be the embodiment of pure consciousness, represented as a masculine divine contained in a square grid showing his harmonious unification with the feminine divine or the Mother Earth represented by the point or the *bindu* located at the center of the diagram. There are two different types of *Vastu Purusha Mandala*, the 8 x 8 grids which are called the *Manduka Vastu Mandala* used mainly in temple architecture and the 9 x 9 grids which are called the *Parasayika Vastu Mandala* and are mainly used in the design of residential spaces (Khan, 2017). Each section inside the mandala symbolically represent the five elements of earth, water, fire, air (or wind) and cosmos. The south-west is associated with earth, south-east with fire, north-east with water, north-west with air or wind, and the center space with the element of cosmos (figure 61).

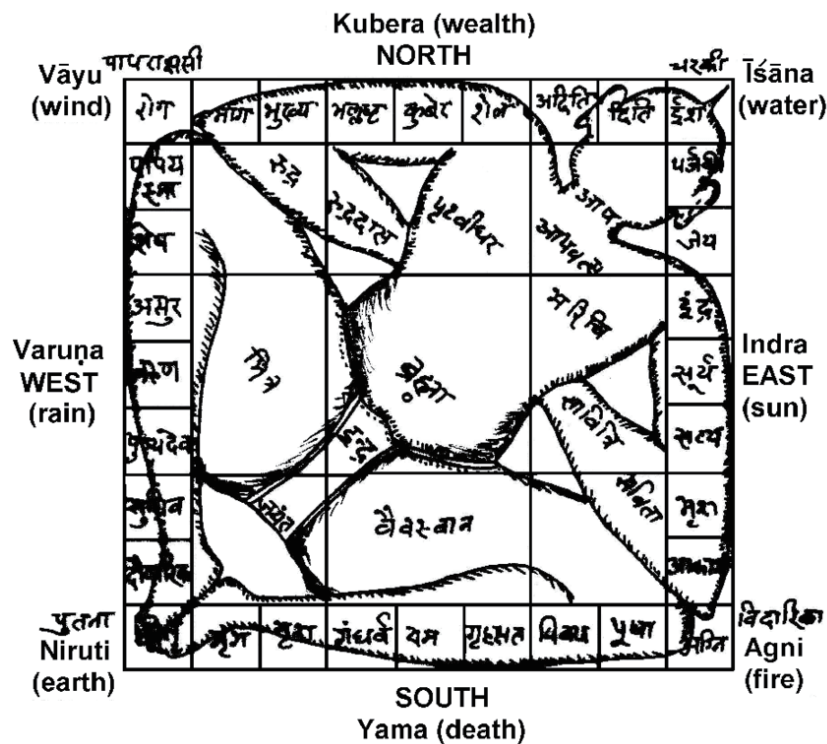


Figure 61: 9 x 9 grids *Vastu Purusha Mandala*.

Hendrawan based his structure for the *Form Follows Myth* installation on the 9 x 9 grids *Vastu Purusha Mandala* as he explained in his master dissertation in 2002. However, there seem to be some inconsistencies in the way he referred to the 9 x 9 grid mandalas as the basic floorplan of the *candi* (Indonesian word for Hindu or Buddhist temple). As I have mentioned in the previous page, the 8 x 8 grid mandalas are mainly used for temple architecture and not the 9 x 9 grids, which are mainly used for residential architecture. Nevertheless, his references are in line with the conception of the Javanese house as a symbolic representation of a spiritual journey as represented in its trajectory of different spaces from the *pendapha* in the front part to the *krobongan* – the inside chamber and the spaces in between. In Hendrawan’s installation, all of these spaces and stages are represented in one single structure. On figure 62 we can see the diagram of the

installation from above its ceiling overlooking the overall structure. The structure is approximately 4 meters high. The 12 pillars form a square measuring approximately 4 by 4 m in length and width. The much bigger wooden rings inside the structure form a circle and another smaller wooden ring suspended from the center of the structure. There is also a circular steel construction that can be moved and rotated. Each of the pillars stand at the same distance to each other and if an imaginary line is drawn from each of them, they would form a grid of nine squares (figure 63).

In the center grid on the diagram, placed on the floor right at the center of inside the structure is a stone container commonly known as *peripih*. *Peripih* is a stone container that is usually used to bury some ritual deposits underneath the architecture of the Candi (Hindu or Buddhist temple in Indonesia, built during the Hindu-Buddhist period from 4<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> centuries). In some cases, the word “*peripih*” sometimes is used to describe the ritual deposits placed inside the container and not the container itself, but most of the time *peripih* is understood as both the container and the objects placed inside it as one object (figure 64). The ritual deposits placed inside the container may vary depending on the purpose of the temple from gemstone, gold plate with sacred text or symbol engraving, small sculptures such as linga-yoni. The placement of *peripih* underneath the consecrated land where a temple is planned to be built involves a form of ritual. The process is usually started by creating a relatively deep well to bury the container and then once it is buried, right on top of it usually stand the statue of the most important deity closely associated with that specific temple, for example in Shiva temple in Prambanan temple complex in Yogyakarta, Central Java, *peripih* was located deep underneath the statue of the Shiva god (figure 65).

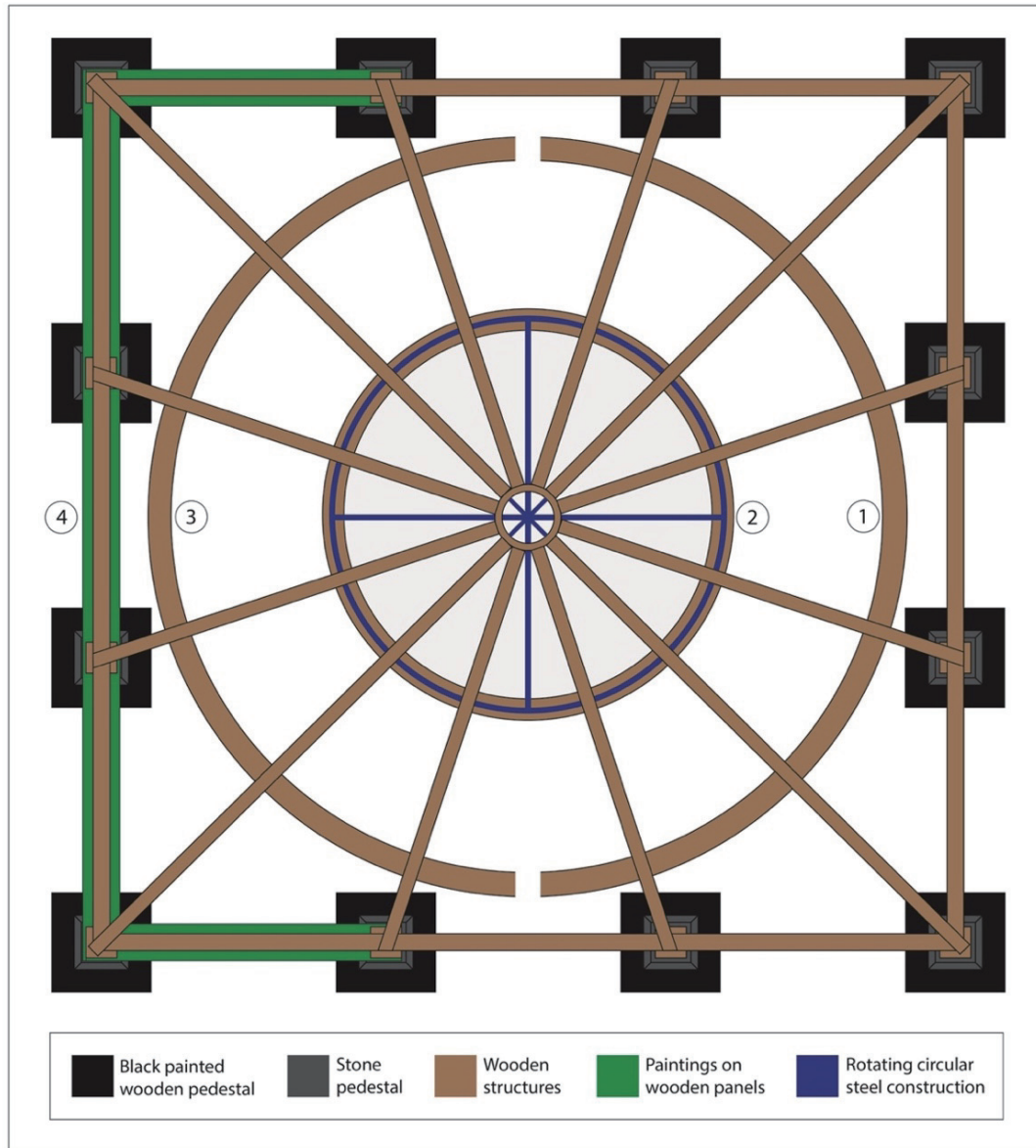


Figure 62: Diagram of the structure of *Form Follows Myth* installation.  
 1. Suspended circular wooden structure (lower part), 2. Rotating circular steel construction,  
 3. Suspended circular wooden structure (upper part), 4. Paintings on wooden panels.  
 (Illustration: Albert Yonathan Setyawan)



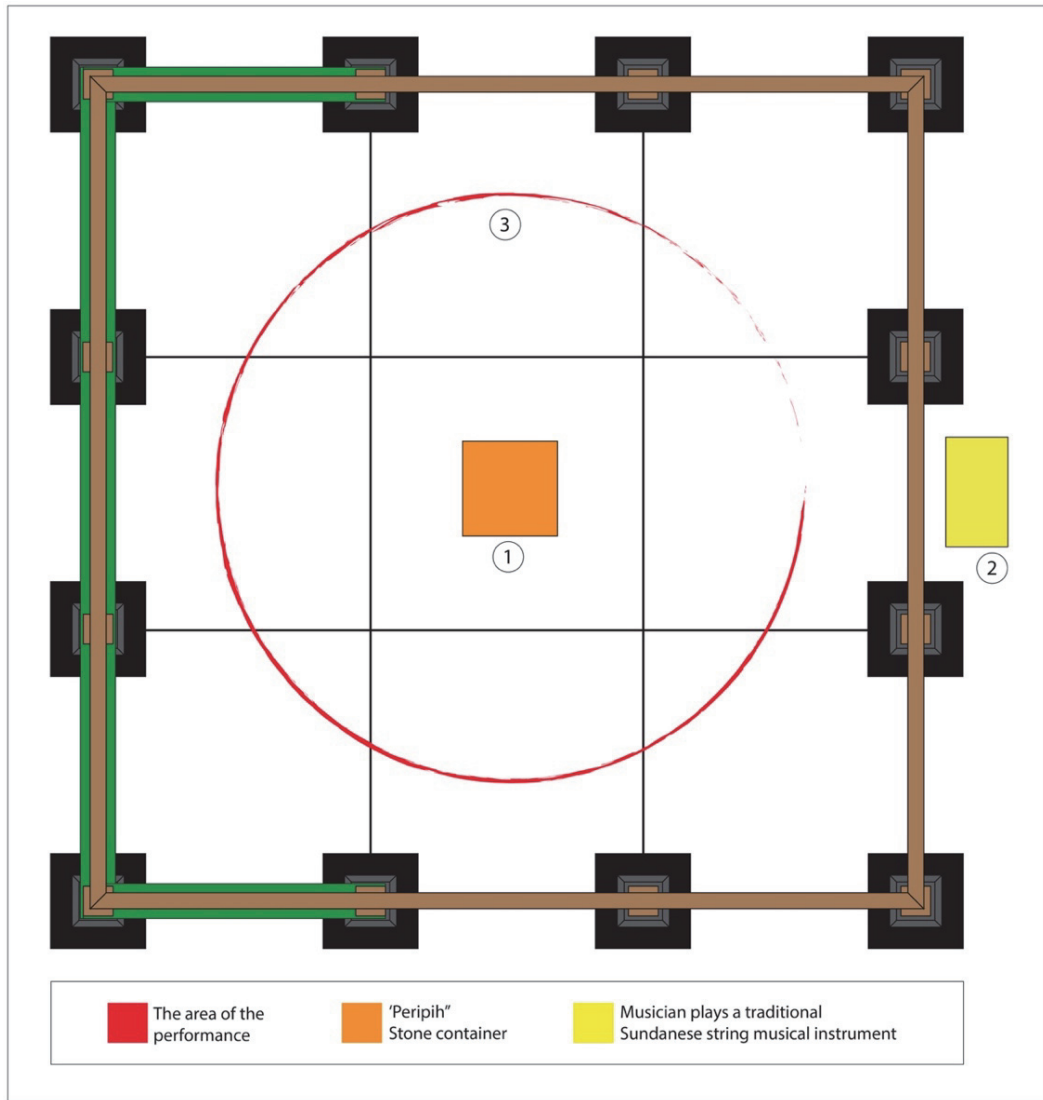


Figure 63: Diagram of *Form Follows Myth* installation showing the area of the performances and the position of the *peripih* (stone container) on the floor at the center of the structure.  
 1. Peripih, 2. The position of the musician, 3. Area of the main performance.  
 (Illustration by: Albert Yonathan Setyawan)

*Peripih* in Hendrawan's installation symbolically represented the *bindu*, the axis of creative dynamism where the ritual of cosmogony is performed, and together with his collaborator Nanu Muda, he also performed a set of ritualistic acts or dances accompanied by music surrounding this object. Their movements are circular suggesting an imaginary circle that is also signified by the presence of the white sand on the floor that both of them stepped on during the performances (figure 66). The interior structure of *peripih* may vary from only one to nine compartments yet all of them follow the same basic principle of dividing the form or the interior space into nine symmetrical grids. Hence, the structure of *peripih* and its spiritual and symbolic function provided Hendrawan with the conceptual foundation for the physical construction of *Form Follows Myth*. It symbolically represents the relationship between microcosm and macrocosm, a structure inside a structure.



Figure 64: *Peripih*, a stone container buried underneath the architecture of the Candi (Hindu/Buddhist temple) in Java.

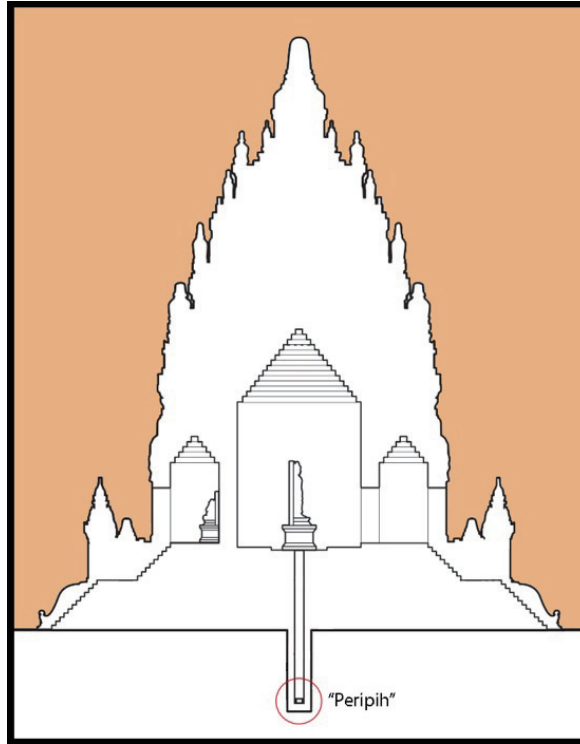


Figure 65: The position of *peripih* underneath Shiva temple inside the Prambanan temple complex in Yogyakarta, Central Java. The image above does not show the complete details of chambers inside the temple, it is made only to specifically illustrate the position of *peripih* hidden underground.  
(Illustration: Albert Yonathan Setyawan)



Figure 66: Installation view of *Form Follows Myth* - at the center of the structure is the *peripih*.

In *Form Follows Myth*, Hendrawan used form, sound and movement to create an experience of a total work of art. Rendering on the ideas found among traditional Javanese or Sundanese societies where art and ritual are inseparable and art is not only seen as a form of visual experience but further as a cohesive and holistic practice involving the sound, music and movement that is contained in religious ritual behavior (Dissanayake, 1979). This series of ritualistic acts activated the installation and the objects contained in it so that it became an active setting where Hendrawan and his collaborator Nanu Muda then performed specific dance movements while moving or wearing some objects around them, such as opening and closing the lid of the *peripih* or wearing some of the masks at the beginning of the performances accompanied by a Sitar player.

Documentation in the form of photographic stills provided the basis for my description of this work, however, one of the challenges of describing this particular performance is the lack of video documentation, so it is hard to prove the originally intended chronology of the performance from start to finish. Photographic stills provide the basis for my description

The music starts at the beginning of the performance to help set the tone of the event as a ritualistic setting. It seems that Hendrawan together with his collaborators, started his performance from the outside of the structure by enacting a movement that somewhat resembles the sitting, standing and bowing seen in muslim prayer rituals. Hendrawan then began circling the structure from clockwise before he finally entered. Upon entering the installation, Hendrawan started to dance in circles around the central object. At some point during the performance he also starting to wear some of the masks while dancing, after which, Nanu Muda entered the structure and joined Hendrawan's performance. In some scenes Hendrawan would be performing alone and in some other scenes he was together with Nanu Muda (figure 67). In an interview with Nanu Muda, conducted by the author in October 2018, he described that the performance was done without any instruction or choreography, it was almost purely improvisational. He also explained that during the

performance, even though they were in their own zone performing their movements in an almost trance-like state, they were still aware of each other's presence and tried to interpret and respond to each other's movements throughout the performance.

Hendrawan Riyanto's exploration on dance movements are also documented in some sketches that he made over the years since the late 1990s, which I will discuss more in the final part of this chapter. Reportedly, the sketches were made when he was under a dream-like state or some kind of a trance induced state. Most of them contain images of human figures with lines suggesting the movements of the body. Almost of them were made when he was alone in his studio or in his office at ITB and so there is still no evident that this statement is true. Nevertheless, the sketches show an interesting connection with his exploration of movements of the body under altered state of consciousness, in which the mind can be aware but is not in its usual wakeful condition, such as what happens during hypnosis, meditation, trance or a dream-like state. What is popularly referred to as "altered consciousness" may not reflect an actual alteration of consciousness itself or subjective experience exactly, but more of an alteration in the representational relationships between consciousness and the world as suggested by Finnish cognitive neuroscientist Antti Revonsuo (et al., 2009). A study that investigates performance artists like Hendrawan and trance-practices in Indonesian rituals would be a rich area for further study, but it is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, I signpost it here as a credible angle from which to examine correlations between Hendrawan's sketches, performance and dance movements.





Figure 67: Hendrawan Riyanto and Nanu Mudah during the performance of *Form Follows Myth* at Centre Culturel Français (CCF-Bandung), 2002.

Regarding the performance, Riyanto explained in his master thesis that he used the philosophy of *Joged Mataram* (the dance of Mataram) as the conceptual foundation for the idea of all the movements. *Joged Mataram*, is a form of court dance developed out of Yogyakarta and modelled on the principals of *Wayang Wong* (dance theatre). The process and development of what came to be known as *Joged Mataram* can be traced back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century after the division of the Javanese kingdom of Mataram. The philosophy of it was formulated out of an influential text titled *Joged Mataram* by Gusti Suryobrongto (1976) which is about the principles of the Yogyakarta court dance. The dance represents the *Kejawen* tradition from which all Javanese cultural elements, including dance were formulated. It is considered to be a spiritual art as noted by Hughes-Freeland:

“Joged Mataram represents the transformation of ritually resonanced performance into art with an aesthetic rather than a ritual instrumentality, but it has not eliminated the relationship between expression and spirituality which we have already encountered.”  
(Hughes-Freeland, 2008, p. 163)

*Joged Mataram* embodied philosophical and moral principles not only for the purpose of performing the dance but also for everyday life. It is based on the idea that the reality of life is composed of visible and invisible forces, and that we have to find balance between them through practice and training. This is the foundation of a spiritual tradition known as *kebatinan* in Javanese *Kejawen* tradition which informs the main principle of *Joged Mataram* into four points: 1) *Sawaji* – the concentration of mind, will and action into one purpose; 2) *Greget* – to have a high level of enthusiasm while keeping the balance between passion and self-control; 3) *Sungguh* – to have self-confidence without arrogance; 4) *Ora mingkuh* – to be diligent and responsible, not giving up and staying focussed on the purpose of life. Through constant practice of these four principles, the dancers may be able to perform the dance so that they would arrive at a mental state described as:

“The dancer must lose self-consciousness, but not consciousness. A set of physical practices, as already noted, can become a means to transcend the body: when skilled dancers are dancing, they are not making physical gestures; these happen mechanically, and the dancer’s self is beyond the weakness of the body, beyond human failings, heroic and also in contemplation of totalities. *Joged Mataram* does not describe the movement of emotional force into an artistic form; it teaches how the control of emotional movement defines the nature of the form. It is not muscle which dances, but consciousness.”

(Hughes-Freeland, 2008, p. 193)

Through several of his performances Hendrawan Riyanto sought to achieve this mental state of losing one’s self-consciousness but not consciousness itself. Where forms manifest not from rational thinking but rather from the irrational, from mythological stories and engagement with religious ritual practices as reflected in Garin Nugroho Riyanto’s statement cited in the catalogue of JIWA: Jakarta Biennale 2017:

“Specifically, for the Jakarta Biennale 2017, Garin Nugroho has created an essay film to commemorate the artist Hendrawan Riyanto (1959-2004), who is also his older brother. In the last years of his brother’s life Garin felt a stronger bond with him. Their conversations were sparked by Hendrawan’s inclination toward syncretic and archaic culture in Java. For Hendrawan, that direction would open up new avenues for his exploration of contemporary art. The inclination was observed by Garin, including behavioral changes—almost to a state of possession—that were a cause for concern for their mother.”

(Wiyanto, 2017, p. 68)

What Garin's said as "behavioral changes to a state of possession" was explained in a little bit more detail in another publication titled *Modern Miring (Slanted Modernism)* published in 2004. Garin was never really had a close relationship with his older brother Hendrawan. However, sometimes in the late 1990s, both of them found a turning point in their relationship that they started communicating more often, exchanging and discussing stories about Javanese tradition, especially its mysticism in which Hendrawan had a particular interest. During this time Garin noticed that his brother, that he knew as a quiet and an introvert person gradually turned into someone that was very open, able to express himself freely in words and actions. Garin explained that he had witnessed his brother several times suddenly burst out into dancing almost uncontrollably as if he was experiencing a trance.<sup>44</sup>

Hendrawan's search for forms was not driven so much by a quest for aesthetic values or artistic self-expression in the modern sense. Rather, he was interested in the state of losing himself in the process of searching for the forms – of being overtaken or succumbed by some external force to create the forms and this process not only appeared in his performances but also in the process of creating, constructing, selecting and preparing the objects for his installation. Since his close collaboration with Nanu Muda which started sometime in the late 1990s, Hendrawan had engaged in a process where he would travel to certain villages based on Nanu Muda's guidance to attend and participate in their rituals. On some occasions they would travel together to make a pilgrimage to local Islamic religious leaders or other places they considered sacred.<sup>45</sup> Hendrawan would bring certain objects back from there to be included in his installation, such as for example in this case the *peripih* and the wooden masks. Some other objects that he brought in included amulets or

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<sup>44</sup> Siregar, A.T.H., Piliang, Y.A., Adriati, I., Harsono, F.X., Sabana, S. (2004) *Modern Miring: Shamanisme, Mistisisme dan Seni Rupa Kontemporer (Slanted Modernism: Shamanism, Mysticism and Contemporary Art)*, Siregar, A.T.H. (ed), Bandung, Panitia Mendak Pindo (Natus).

<sup>45</sup> In an article written by Putu Fajar Arcana in KOMPAS daily newspaper in 2004, Hendrawan mentioned briefly his experience of visiting local shamans or spiritual leaders as part of this pilgrimage. See appendix L for English translation, quoted in paragraph 8.

magic spells written in Arabic script (one example of this can be found in the final part of this chapter). Hendrawan believed in the more holistic values of traditional society where the objects of aesthetic, spiritual, social and moral values are not separated but are all interconnected in the practice of their rituals. He believed that to be able to deliver these values in his art, it would not be enough to merely recreate the physical product of a particular culture but one also has to integrate more deeply and participate in their rituals. Hendrawan's engagement with Sundanese and Javanese mysticism had completely shifted his practice in a very short period of time starting in the late 1990s and *Form Follows Myth* is the best example of this development.

## **2.6 Ning (2004) – Analyses of an Exhibition**

*Ning* is the title of Hendrawan's solo exhibition in 2004 that showcased a number of works ranging from his early terracotta sculptures to his most recent installations, including *Form Follows Myth*, which was presented in a slightly different configuration to its previous setup and was accompanied by a different set of performances. Several paintings and drawings were also included, which make this exhibition definitively the most comprehensive exhibition representing the scope of Hendrawan's artistic practice in every stage of its development. The exhibition was held in Bentara Budaya (figure 68), a prominent cultural institution based in Jakarta, which for several decades since 1982 has been promoting a wide spectrum of Indonesian cultural activity—from traditional arts to modern and contemporary art exhibitions and also performing arts. At that time Bentara Budaya was considered to be an important meeting point of various cultural activists, journalists, writers and intellectuals which set its activities apart from other art exhibitions in commercial galleries in Jakarta.

The exhibition can be seen as an effort to contextualize and summarize the significance of Hendrawan's work up to that moment in the Indonesian contemporary art scene. The catalogue of the exhibition is by far the most comprehensive single source of data about the artist and includes

not only images but also several texts that address several key points about the underlying ideas that inform the narrative of Hendrawan's practice. Those writings are from: FX Harsono, a fellow contemporary artist and one of Hendrawan's close friends that focuses on how Hendrawan translated his spiritual experiences into visual art, and that these experiences were achieved by directly engaging in certain rituals of local communities; Yasraf A. Piliang, an educator and researcher in cultural studies who focused on Hendrawan's idiosyncratic signs and symbolism and their analysis; Ira Adriati Winarno, an educator and researcher in visual art and traditional arts who wrote about the process of looking back into tradition and local culture in search of the meaning of being 'Indonesian' amongst Indonesian contemporary artists; and as important as these other writings is an introduction from Dr. Paul Stange, a researcher in Javanese tradition and culture, a philosophical reflection of the word "*ning*" that sets the tone of the overall exhibition. These writings however, despite strongly addressing the conceptual foundation, still failed to address one of the most important key points that laid the foundation of Hendrawan's practice. This key point is the notion of physical and material experience as a starting point of spiritual reflection as reflected in his constant fascination in clay and ceramic art tradition. I will try to elaborate more on this idea in the next chapter.



Figure 68: The front view of Bentara Budaya Jakarta.



The complete title of the exhibition is a phrase in Javanese “...naliko Ning Semeleh...” as written in the front cover of the catalogue with an Indonesian translation “...ketika hening diletakkan...” which means “...when silence is placed...”. The word “*naliko*” can be translated into “in the moment of...” or “at times when...”, while the word “*ning*” which is usually understood as a shorter version of the word “*hening*” can simply be translated as silence. But, in Javanese tradition this word implies a much deeper meaning than just simply silence. It refers to a form of stillness, the calming of emotions to achieve clearness of insight, a state of no content at all and a complete emptiness.

Anthropologist Clifford Geertz’s work, *The Religion of Java*, is one of the most cited studies into the syncretic religious traditions found in the Mojokuto (present day Pare) region of Java. Owing to its comprehensive documentation, I have found Geertz’s anthropological notes and theoretical explanations very useful in analysing the meaning of Javanese symbologies used by Hendrawan Riyanto. Geertz postulates several key ideas in an effort to understand the mysticism he encountered—the belief that underneath basic human feelings of everyday life, such as good or bad feelings, happiness or unhappiness, there lies a pure basic feeling-meaning (his translation of *rasa* in Javanese), which is at once the individual’s true self, and at the same time, the manifestation of God within the individual. The aim of a religious or spiritual life is to know this ultimate *rasa*. Further, he documents that to know and comprehend the ultimate *rasa* is the purpose of all mystical endeavor and the very aim of a religious or spiritual life, and that this comes in two main stages: the first is *neng*, which literally means quiet or stillness and the second is *ning*, a clear insight which is usually described as a complete state of empty *batin* (inner-self) (Geertz, 1960, p.310, 317). This idea leads us to the last word in the title, “*semeleh*”, which can be interpreted as “to stand still and be at peace.” A similar idea is explained in one of Geertz’s summaries, known as *bedja*, which means order and peace within – not happiness or unhappiness

– just simply peace, a state of *dwitunggal* (the term Hendrawan often use in explaining his project *Form Follows Myth*) or a non-dual state.

Hendrawan used the word *ning* as both the title of the exhibition and the title of his most recent work at that time, which occupied the main area of the exhibition space. In addition to all the conceptual explanations about Javanese mysticism embodied in the word “*ning*” that are mentioned above, the word itself could also refer to the idea of a vibration of sound or voices. Referring back to Geertz, in his second postulate, based on his study of one of the religious sects named *Budi Setia* found in Mojokuto whose practices are based on a mixture of Javanese mysticism and Islam. This sect has a concept known as *swara ing asepi* meaning “the voice in the quiet” that can only be achieved through meditation practice. *Swara ing asepi* can further be interpreted as the voice of God in the individual—the manifestation of God in the depths of one’s inner life (Geertz, 1960, p.315), the core and the deep center of human beings. Hendrawan translated the meaning of this word into the idea of a cosmic sound or vibration manifested visually in an installation made of a set of large-scale *genta* sculptures made of constructed low fire red terracotta bricks. *Genta* in Indonesian simply means a bell or the sound or vibration of a bell (most of the time it refers to a large-scale bell) and it can also refer to any instruments that can produce percussive sound.

Hendrawan’s *Ning* consists of five large-scale terracotta sculptures each of them in different sizes, made using ready-made low-fired brick that is commonly used for housing in Indonesia. Each of these five sculptures are made of several parts that were constructed separately and then stacked vertically. Lumps of soil are placed on the floor circling each sculpture. On the surface of the sculptures are thick steel wire cut in different lengths with their edges bent and curved, submerged and attached into the clay itself. (figure 69). Each of the sculptures has several different objects attached to them: one has a group of steel wires suspended from the ceiling of the gallery space

and attached to its surface; the other one has a group of bamboo strands, also suspended from the ceiling which fall right on top of it. Another two have two stacks of round circular objects made of different colored fabric which were placed on top of them (figure 70).

The used of bamboo strands seems to be of significance here. They can be seen scattered in almost all parts of the exhibition space in many different forms: hanging loosely on the wall or tied into knots, braided into cocoon-like shapes, placed on the floor freely and joined with some other objects made of bamboo. Some of these bamboo strands, especially those that are tied into knots or hanging loosely on the wall, seem to loosely resemble tadpoles. Their forms and how they were shaped gives them the visual appearance of an elongated, slender living creatures (figure 71). These tadpole and cocoon sculptures made of bamboo as well as a number of terracotta sculptures occupied the other half of the exhibition space. They are arranged together organically so as to eliminate boundaries or any delimitation that might suggest that they are separate individual pieces. Each of the sculptures in the exhibition are somehow interconnected with each other in one big installation (figure 72) divided into two sections by a painting in the middle of the space.

Hendrawan believed that tadpoles and cocoons are metaphors of metamorphosis and spiritual transformation in life.<sup>46</sup> The use of bamboo in Indonesia is a big part of the material culture of many indigenous communities all across the archipelago and therefore it would have been a commonly available logical choice. For example, in the island of Java, bamboo is used to make a variety of objects and utensils, from kitchen equipment and interior furniture to musical instruments and even as a residential construction material. Bamboo plants may also possess symbolic and spiritual meanings related to important events and rituals. For example, in Bali there is a tradition to make a bamboo knife to cut the umbilical cord of a new born baby, which is

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<sup>46</sup> Riyanto, H. (2002) *Form Follow Myth - MFA thesis in visual art*, Faculty of Visual Art and Design, ITB Bandung.

considered one of the most important life events and is usually accompanied by rituals. Bamboo is also used to make a pole called *penjor* which decorates the streets during the religious celebration of *Galungan* day. In Java, yellow bamboo is believed to have a supernatural power to avert and ward off evil spirits and there are numerous stories about this circulating among people in indigenous communities, some believe it to be true and some simply dismiss it as superstition. Whatever the case here, we can establish that bamboo is significantly present in the life of many Indonesian people and Hendrawan used this as his conceptual reference.



Figure 69: Installation view of *Ning*, showing details of the structure.





Figure 70: Installation view of *Ning*, showing details of the structure.



Figure 71: Installation view of sculptures made of bamboo in *Ning* exhibition.





Figure 72: Installation view of terracotta sculptures and sculptures made of bamboo in *Ning* exhibition.

Hendrawan uses the materiality of bamboo strands to create a metaphor for the connection between the spiritual and the material. He refers to the idea that for traditional societies the navel in our body is the center of a human being's existence in a mystical spiritual sense as opposed to the head as the 'center' in the rational sense for modern society. The head being the place where our brain and nervous system are located that functions like a computer and network that controls how our body is functioning on a daily basis. Hendrawan believed that the navel, the place where the umbilical cord used to be, has a significant spiritual meaning in human life. The umbilical cord is the channel between the developing embryo and placenta in the mother's womb and is physiologically and genetically part of the fetus during prenatal development. He believed that the umbilical cord symbolically represents the spiritual connection between a child and its mother.<sup>47</sup>

This idea is articulated in another work that is included in the exhibition, titled *Sumber III (Source III) – Exploring Vacuum* (figure 73), a life-size human figure made out of layers of red bricks. The figure is neatly bound up with a long thick bamboo string from head to toe and at the navel there is a long bamboo string attached and left hanging to the ground, circling the figure. A planter is placed at the top of its head. The figure is suspended diagonally with its feet touching the ground from a four-legged metal structure covered with some bamboo tubes. The string attached to the center of the figure symbolically represents an umbilical cord which points out the spiritual meanings I have explained above.

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<sup>47</sup> Riyanto, H. (2002) *Form Follow Myth - MFA thesis in visual art*, Faculty of Visual Art and Design, ITB Bandung. Hendrawan mentioned many times throughout his master thesis about this idea. Burying a baby's placenta or umbilical cord is considered to be an important tradition in Javanese and Sundanese society, the umbilical cord is believed to represent the spiritual connection with the mother. For example see this article by Dewi Sundari, *Tradisi Mengubur Ariari Bayi & Tata Caranya (Tradition and Procession to Bury a Child's Placenta)*, Kompasiana, 26 May 2016, (<https://www.kompasiana.com/dewisundari/5927896bba22bd3416a5e72b/tradisi-mengubur-ariari-bayi-tata-caranya>). A somewhat similar tradition related to baby's umbilical cord can also be found in Japan for the same symbolic reason that it represents the link to the child's mother. The difference is that instead of burying it Japanese have a tradition of preserving it in a small container. See this article by Ry Beville, *The Japanese attachment to umbilical cords*, 8 September 2002, The Japan Times (<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/community/2002/09/08/general/the-japanese-attachment-to-umbilical-cords/#.XgolHjIzbOR>).

Originally this installation was created as a collaborative work with F.X. Harsono on an exhibition titled *15 years Cemeti Art House: Exploring Vacuum - 1988-2003* at Cemeti Art House (now Cemeti Institute for Art and Society) in Yogyakarta in 2003. It was installed in a small garden next to an old well inside the gallery compound. The initial idea (figure 74) was to suggest that the figure is being pulled towards the well, resulting in a change of position from lying to halfway standing – from sleeping into waking, spiritually—a symbol of spiritual transformation Hendrawan believed to have significant meaning in his practice.<sup>48</sup> During its actual exhibition however, this idea was never fully implemented, possibly because of technical difficulties. Instead of being pulled towards the well the figure was pulled towards an area opposite of the well (figure 75).

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<sup>48</sup> Riyanto, H. (2002) *Form Follow Myth - MFA thesis in visual art*, Faculty of Visual Art and Design, ITB Bandung.





Figure 73: Hendrawan Riyanto, *Sumber III (Source III) – Exploring Vacuum*, 2003/2004.



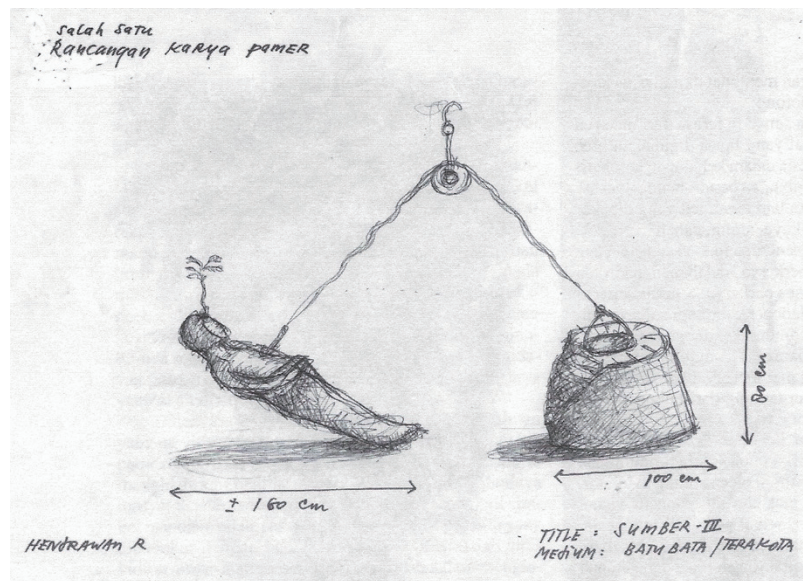


Figure 74: Sketch of initial plan of *Sumber III* (Source III) – *Exploring Vacuum*, 2003.



Figure 75: Hendrawan Riyanto and F.X. Harsono (left, middle) accompanied by some assistants are installing *Sumber III* (Source III) – *Exploring Vacuum* at Cemeti Art Gallery, 2003.

F.X Harsono spent some time in Hendrawan's studio in Bandung to work on his own project at the time. They were having a lot of discussions about their own practices and realized that they have a very different form and approach in their art. Harsono, being one of the notable members of the Indonesian New Art Movement that emerged in 1974, was always self-consciously critical towards social problems, the art establishment and the government in his work. While Hendrawan's work was more self-reflective and less political. Despite the differences, they found a common ground when discussing the notion of tradition in contemporary Indonesian art.<sup>49</sup> When the invitation came, Harsono personally asked Hendrawan to create an installation with him for the exhibition. Hendrawan agreed and went straight away on a so-called short spiritual journey to discover ideas that would make the work unique to the Cemeti Art House. At some point during this preparation, being counselled by some local "learned men" – experts in Javanese mysticism, he discovered that the old well in Cemeti Art House is considered to be the central axis in Yogyakarta city. A point that connects the southern coast (Parangtritis beach) and the mountain in the north (Mount Merapi) by the exact same distance, and he believed that in it dwells a spirit of a child. Both of these places are sacred places and possessed mystical and spiritual values among Javanese people in Yogyakarta. This information was documented from a conversation between Harsono and myself in 30 June 2019, Sydney, Australia. While the accuracy and truth about these ideas are highly debatable (especially on the geographical measurement of the site), it is however still very important to bring this point into the discussion because this somewhat mystical-creative process is what had become one of the major characteristics of Hendrawan's practice and dominated the discussion about his works in the Indonesian contemporary art scene.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> F.X. Harsono wrote a review about Hendrawan Riyanto's Ning in KOMPAS daily newspaper, published on February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2004. Harsono's interpretation of Hendrawan's works gives insight into their discussion about the notions of traditions, art and society. See appendix K for English translation.

<sup>50</sup> A few articles such as: *Keramik - Syekh Siti Jenar (Ceramic - Syekh Siti Jenar)* by Sides Sudyarto D.S. in MATRA magazine, no.129, April 1997 and a short article in BERNAS (local newspaper in Yogyakarta) titled *Ada Gunungan di Alun-Alun Selatan (There is a Gunungan at the South City Square)* published on July 7, 1998 are examples of articles that focus on this mystical creative aspect in Hendrawan Riyanto's works.

Hendrawan Riyanto's installations never stayed the same over the course of different exhibitions. This also applied to *Form Follows Myth* which was reconstructed again in this exhibition. This time the installation was placed outdoors, in front of the main entrance with some major differences in its interior setting. The *peripih* and the wooden masks were replaced by several wooden sculptures (of some unidentified shapes) and a lantern. The wooden sculptures were all covered in white fabric, some were placed on the floor and some were suspended from a wheel set vertically at the top of the structure. The wheel was also present in the previous setting. Some other similar looking wooden sculptures also covered in fabric were also placed in several different locations not far from the structure. These sculptures were set on fire during the performance (figure 76).

For this performance Hendrawan collaborated with Suprpto Suryodarmo (familiarily known as Pak Prpto), an artist, educator and also the inventor of the Amerta Movement (alternatively known as *Joged Amerta*), which is an exploratory practice, sometimes used in mindfulness-like therapies, using non-stylized, freeform movement, the practice of *Vipassana* and Javanese *Sumarah* meditation techniques. Suprpto Suryodarmo himself is a Buddhist and his performance practices reflect his beliefs in Theravada Buddhism and the relationship between nature and spirituality. Amerta Movement can also be thought of as a form of somatic performance.<sup>51</sup> Hendrawan's interest in dance, movement and performance had brought them together to collaborate in this event. Hendrawan's performances often involved a high level of spontaneity, however, it was never really fully improvisational and was always more or less carefully planned (for other example of Hendrawan Riyanto and Suprpto Suryodarmo's collaboration, see appendix J). Even though there was not any form of narrative or rigid plot whatsoever, the movements of

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<sup>51</sup> More information about Amerta Movement can be found here: <https://www.amertamovement.co.uk/>  
As explained on the introduction page that Amerta Movement is a practice based on basic movements in daily life such as walking, sitting, standing, crawling and lying down and transitions between them. One of the integral aspects of Amerta Movement is moving in nature as embodied study of human and non-human presence.

each of the performers and how they might react towards each other and towards the objects were more or less imagined and illustrated in sketches (figure 77). This included the position of the objects and how those objects were to be moved during the act. The performance included lighting the sculptures on fire and rotating them while they were still on fire. Hendrawan added a new title or perhaps subtitle to this installation-performance which was, *Mandala Peteng* and the word *peteng* (Indonesian: *gelap*) means “dark” in Javanese.





Figure 76: Installation view of *Form Follows Myth* showing some details of the structure, 2004.



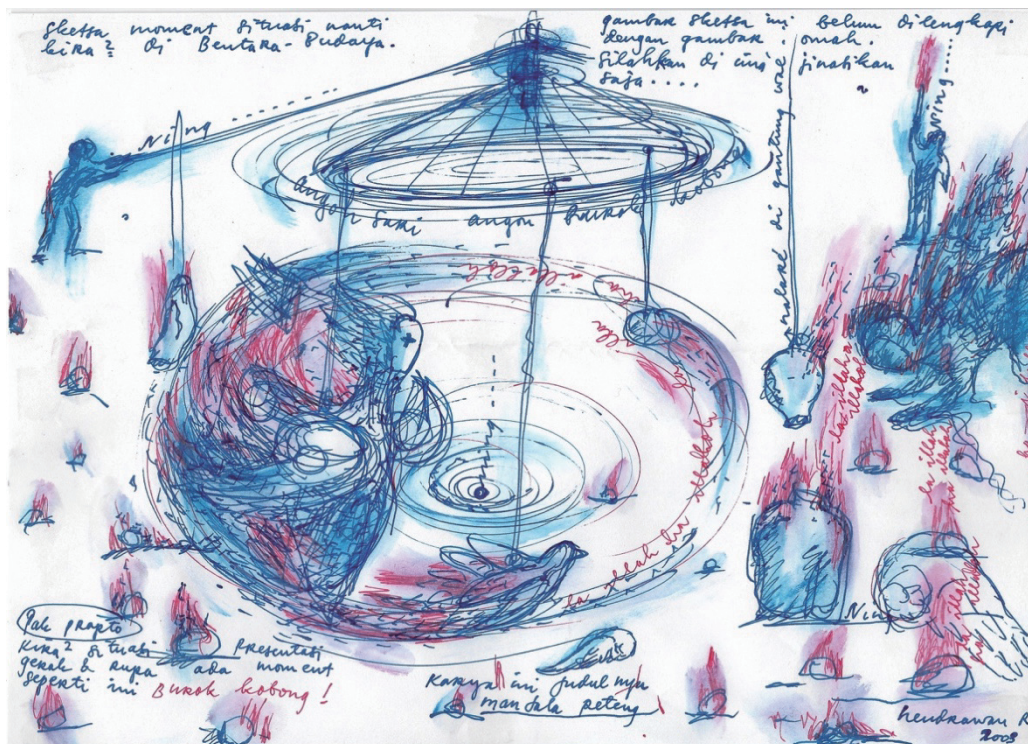


Figure 77: Illustration of *Mandala Peteng* with notes saying: “Mr. Prapto, this is how the situation of the presentation of sound and movement will be like, more or less” (bottom left corner) and “This work is titled *Mandala Peteng*” (bottom center).

Hendrawan frequently used transient materials in his works— materials that are not easily preserved. Most of the bamboo (excluding that which was used as part of the terracotta sculptures) such as the strands and tubes and also the rice hulls—these were all destroyed. Even though these materials could easily be replaced in any future restoration attempt, because of the nature of the installation decisions, which were highly improvisational, without the presence of the artist himself, they would be really challenging to reconstruct. Most of the steel wire and steel construction has also rusted and degraded at the time of writing.

Several of the smaller terracotta sculptures (whether individual works or part of some installations) as well as a few of Hendrawan's early works are still in relatively good condition and they are kept safe and preserved by his wife, Rini Darwati Riyanto in their family residence in Bandung. A few of them became part of the private collection of his brother Garin Nugroho, and also the artists and former ITB professors A.D. Pirous and Sunaryo in his Selasar Sunaryo Art Space. In spite of this, many of Hendrawan's much bigger installations were never collected by any art institutions either inside or outside of Indonesia. Rini Darwati, reported the challenges she experienced in preserving these installations and one of the biggest challenges has been space. Since Hendrawan passed away it has been hard for her to find a space large enough to contain all of the parts of the installations, so some of them were left outside in fields close by to Hendrawan's previous residence. The main elements of the *Dine with Sri* installation, such as the water buffalo sculpture and the tables were almost completely destroyed, one out of five was destroyed completely and the rest are still intact but not in a good condition (figure 78). Parts of *Form Follows Myth* installation (both the 2002 and 2004 setups) such as some parts of the painting, the wooden masks, wooden sculptures, lanterns, and most importantly the main structure of the house were either destroyed or scattered and they were nowhere to be found. While for *Sumber III (Source III)* (figure 79) and *Ning* installations, even though the forms are all still intact, almost all



of the components are now missing and the surface of the sculptures are now covered with mold due to the intense exposure to rain, heat, and highly humid atmosphere (figure 80).



Figure 78: Recent condition of the water buffalo sculpture, a component of *Dine with Sri* installation. Photograph taken from a location nearby Rini Darwati's residence in 2018.



Figure 79: Recent condition of *Sumber III* (Source III). Photograph taken from a location nearby Rini Darwati's residence in 2018.





Figure 80: Recent condition of the components of *Ning* installation.  
 Photograph taken from a location nearby Rini Darwati's residence (top) and  
 Faculty of Visual Art & Design ITB (bottom) in 2018.

## 2.7 Selected Drawings, Sketches and Notes (1994)

Hendrawan Riyanto was not unfamiliar at all with the use of two-dimensional in his artistic practice. He had been producing several drawings and sketches sporadically since around 1994. Although not all of these drawings have survived, some of them have been well preserved and have been shown in a few exhibitions. This collection of drawings made of mostly pen on paper can be classified into two different types. The first, is drawings that were made as illustrations of the installations and including how the performances (interactions between the performer and the object) were imagined to be like in the actual event. The second, which I will discuss here is a group of drawings made in between 1994-1996 that does not have any connection with any of the installations, but may show us some connection with Hendrawan's ideas of movement and dance in his performances. As I have briefly mentioned earlier in the description of *Form Follows Myth* installation, Hendrawan's performances very often involve some form of free dance choreographies or free movements that were done in an altered state of mind or trance-like situation. These drawings are evidence that his ideas related to these movements were already present earlier before the actual performances took place.

From a brief interview I have conducted with Rini Darwati in her residence, during the preparation of Selasar Sunaryo Art Space 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary exhibition where some of these drawings were shown, Rini briefly explained the process of how these drawings were made. She confessed that Hendrawan was in some kind of a trance or dream-like state when he drew those images. He would have visions or dreams in which some obscure mystical quasi-religious figure would appear and reveal his/her identity and origin. He would draw this figure and write some notes surrounding the portrait. There things that are apparent in Hendrawan's drawings: portrait of a human figure, notes consist of short phrases and the date when the drawing was made which make them look almost like a diary or a journal. There is no particular or specific title for any of the drawings ever recorded, because they were not originally intended to be shown as finished works.



One example of this can be seen in a drawing made in March 21, 1994 (figure 81). The line “*Kyai Haji Ibnu Abdul Syukur Bin Ismail*” (*Kyai Haji* is a title given to an important Islamic spiritual and sometimes political leader in Java) is written on the top of it followed by a phrase “1817 before the time of the Dutch invasion” and the word “Batavia (present day for Jakarta)” below it, on the left side, suggesting the figure’s time and place of origin (details on figure 81). The figure is portrayed in a sitting position lifting his left and right arms with both of his hands in a position as if he is dancing. These notes correspond to the actual fact about Batavia which was founded in 19 August 1816 as the capital of Dutch East Indies during the Dutch occupied Indonesia. However, the name itself seems to be a rather obscure and unclear whether it really corresponds to a real person.

Yet another example of this mystical figures can be found in these two other drawings. One is a figure named *Kyai Haji Ibnu Abdul Munsyi Bin Ismail* where the body is obscured, consisting only of curved lines suggesting the movements of the body leaving only the face, the hands and the feet (figure 82). There are no notes here suggesting the figure’s origin, only a few words and phrases such as: “continuous, growth, under control”; “moving forward, thrown into the center of *tauhid*”; and “hold ground, under control”. The other one is named *Sufi Tun Akqirobi* portrayed in a sitting position with his arms folded. The figure is said to have come from Persia and his task was to be a *parawanitra* – the meaning of *parawanitra* is unclear (figure 83). There is also the word “*tauhid*” written here. *Tauhid* (*tawhid*) is from an Arabic word, which means the unification or oneness with God, which implies the unification of one’s physical and spiritual existence as reflected in another note on the right side of “*Kyai Haji Ibnu Abdul Munsyi Bin Ismail*” figure (figure 82): “to seek the center, requires the unification of *raga* (body) and *rasa*”. As I have explained prior to this, the word *rasa* in Javanese mysticism means the pure basic feeling-meaning – the true self and at the same time the manifestation of God in the inner-self.

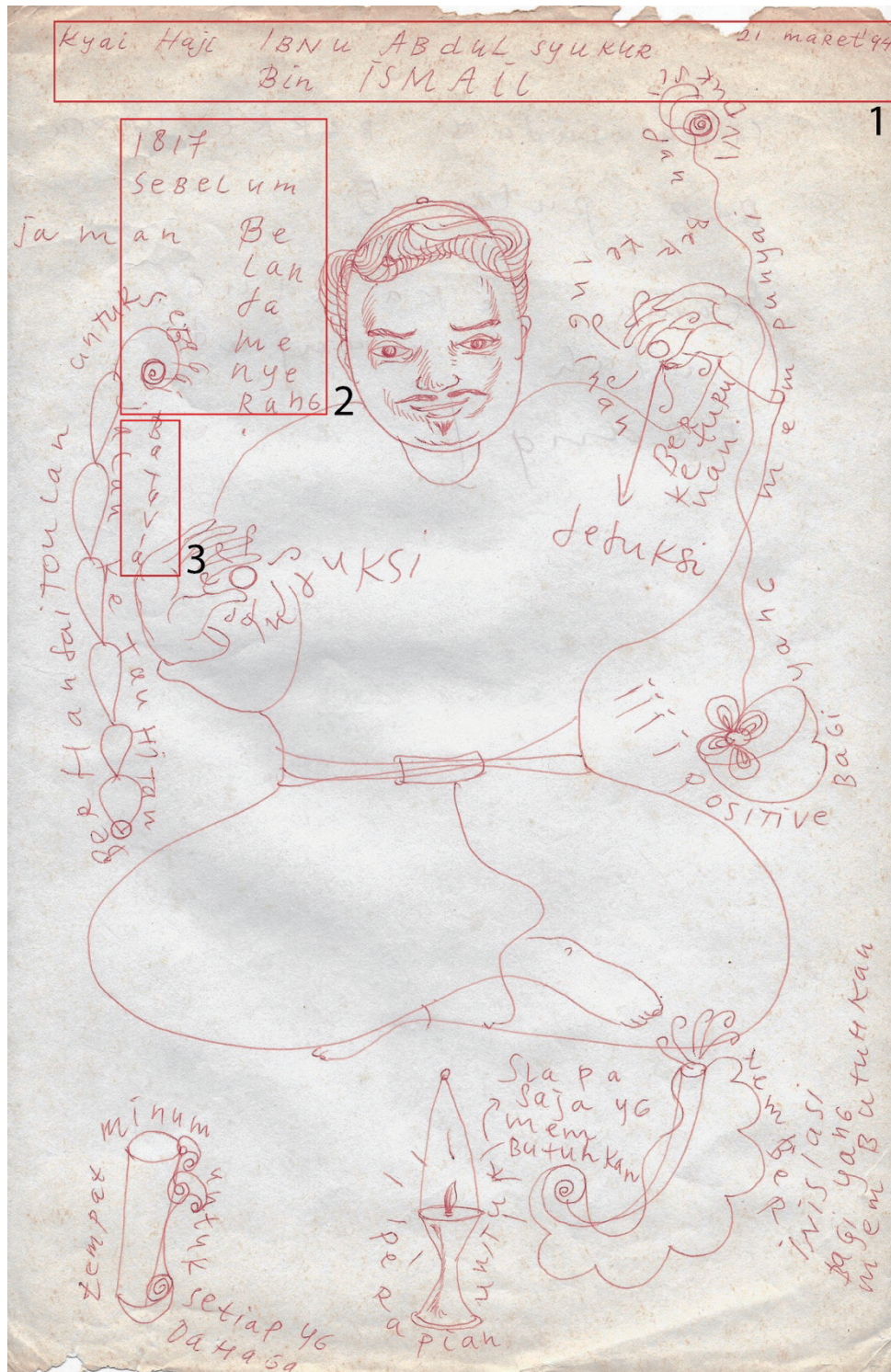


Figure 81: One of Hendrawan Riyanto's drawings made on March 21, 1994.  
Details: 1. Kyai Haji Ibnu Abdul Syukur Bin Ismail; 2. 1817 before the time of the Dutch invasion; 3. Batavia







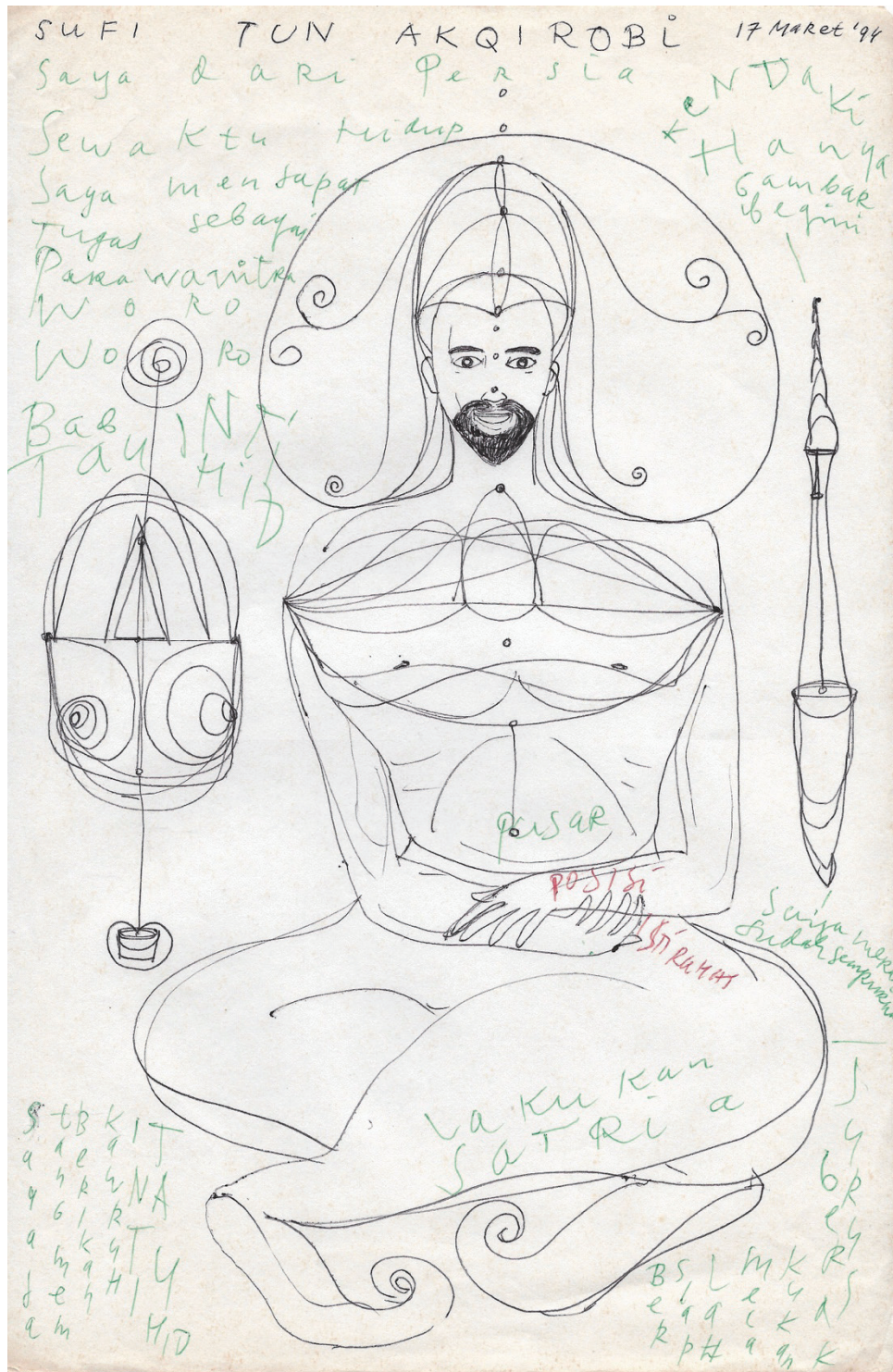


Figure 83: One of Hendrawan Riyanto's drawings made on March 17, 1994, a figure named Sufi Tun Akqirobi who is said to have come from Persia - the word "Tauhid" is also written right after that phrase (top left side).



The body of many of these figures in Hendrawan drawings are often obscured and abstracted, portrayed only by a combination of curved lines intersecting and circling one another, suggesting a set of movements. It is as if the body is dissolving and lost in these movements – becomes transparent, light and airy, as if it has no weight. The intersection and overlapping of the lines and the words are so complex, that the meaning of words become almost indiscernible and the lines ceased to represent the image of the body – as if the body is overtaken by some unseen forces almost violently – and yet on the contrary the facial expression looks still very calm and centered (figure 84). In one drawing, the body is completely disappeared, leaving only an empty space in the middle (figure 85). These drawings are self-portraits of Hendrawan himself, reflecting his psycho-spiritual development and the different aspects that have informed and influenced his practice. Some reference to pottery or ceramic-making and to Javanese traditional dance can be seen here in figure 86 and 87.

In between 1994-1995, Garin Nugroho, Hendrawan's younger brother, received a phone call from his mother, telling him about the unusual transformation of his brother's character that seem to be taking place lately. She told him that his quiet and introvert brother seemed to suddenly turned into a different person lately, expressing himself, dancing and conducting some spiritual activities she could not understand herself.<sup>52</sup> Some of Hendrawan's former colleagues at ITB also had confessed that in some occasions, Hendrawan would burst out dancing almost uncontrollably in the presence of other people with no apparent reason. In the beginning, Hendrawan's drawings are the manifestation of his contemplation on dance and movement as spiritual expression. Hendrawan transformed his thoughts and experiences in his drawings into actual movements through his own

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<sup>52</sup> This confession was taken from the book *Modern Miring: Shamanisme, Mistisisme, dan Seni Rupa Kontemporer (Slanted Modern: Shamanism, Mysticism, and Contemporary Art)* edited by Aminudin TH. Siregar, page ii, published in 2004 shortly after Hendrawan Riyanto passed away. The book is written in Indonesian and the part written in this paper is an emphasis of the original verse and not a direct translation.

body and with great intensity, these mystical-spiritual experiences eventually manifested into performance act and became an integral part of his overall practice.

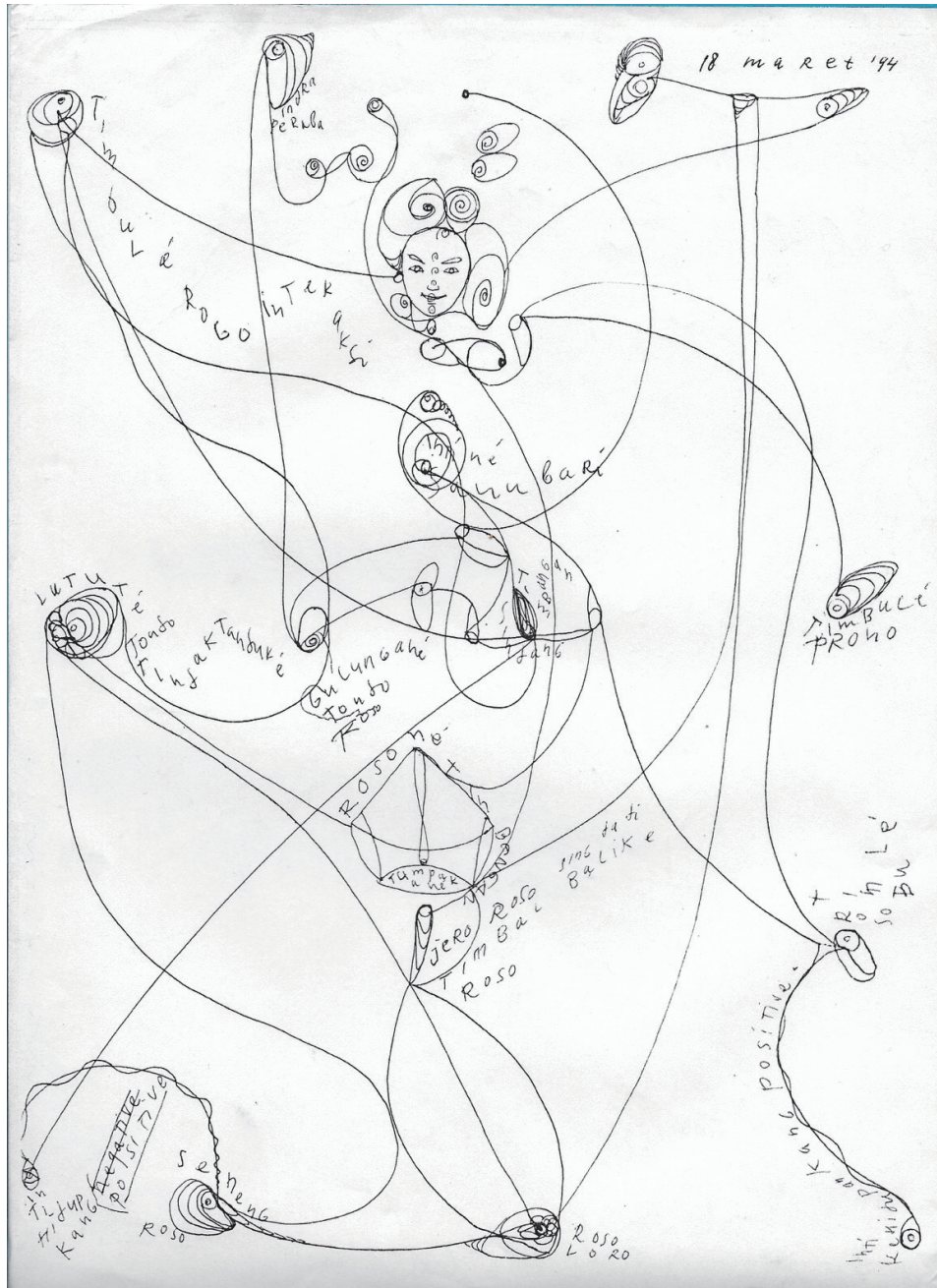


Figure 84: One of Hendrawan Riyanto's drawings made on March 18, 1994.





Figure 85: One of Hendrawan Riyanto's drawings made on March 28, 1994.



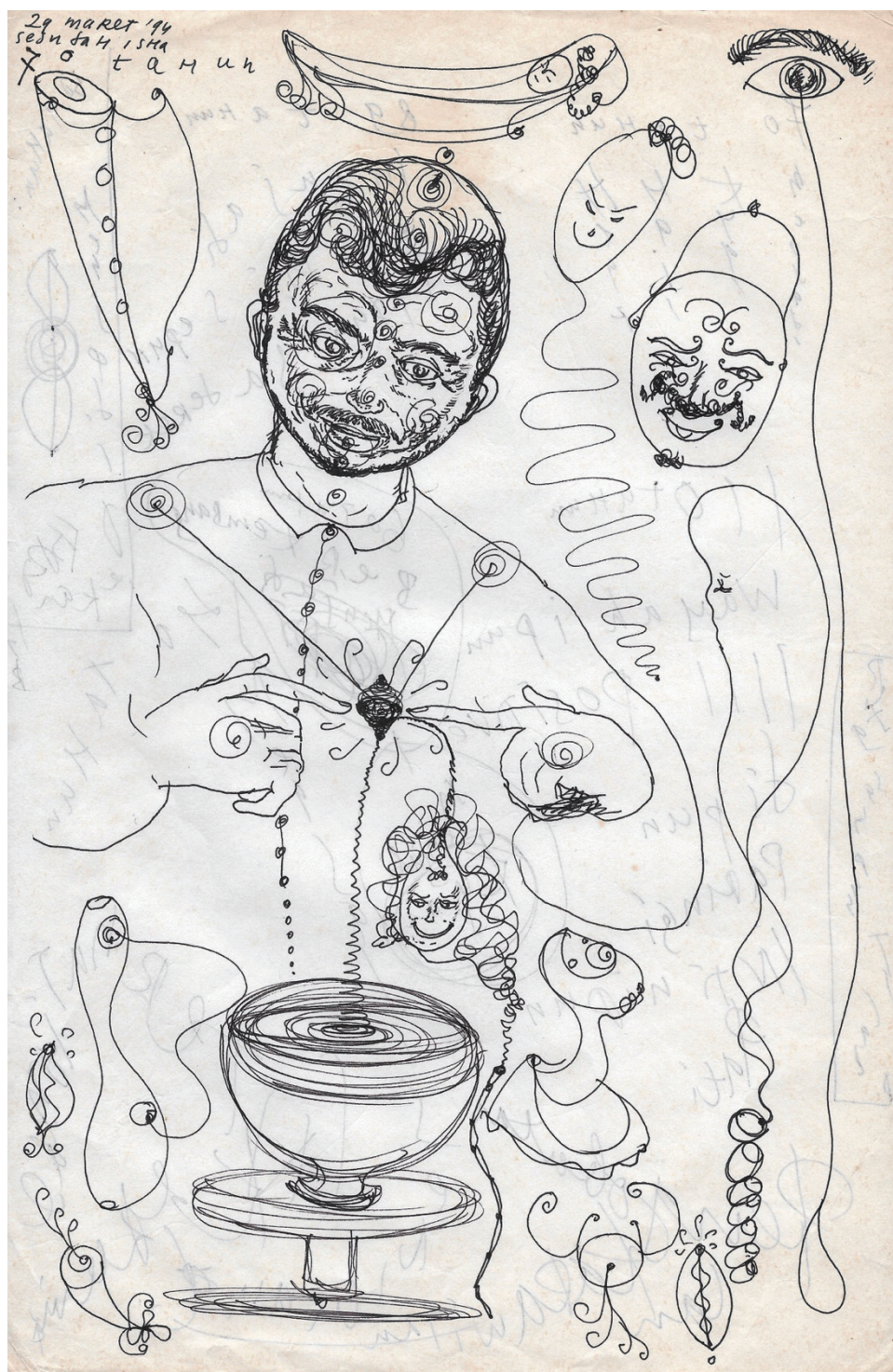


Figure 86: One of Hendrawan Riyanto's drawings made on March 29, 1994.





Figure 87: One of Hendrawan Riyanto's drawings made on March 18, 1994. The phrase "Tari Topeng ki Ronggolawe" is written on the top, *tari topeng* means "mask dance" in Indonesian – a variation of Javanese traditional dance).



Figure 88: One of Hendrawan Riyanto's drawings made on March 23, 1994



## CHAPTER 3

### **Contextualizing Hendrawan Riyanto's Practice in Contemporary Art and Contemporary Ceramic Art in Indonesia**

The aim of this chapter is to contextualize Hendrawan Riyanto's art practice in two domains of practice, contemporary ceramic art and contemporary art and the interconnection between them in three main ideas: materiality, spirituality and rituality. In relation to "materiality", the analysis is grounded in the domain of ceramic art as a medium specific art practice, "spirituality" and "rituality" are focused on the expression of syncretic spirituality reflected in the idiosyncratic images and symbology of Hendrawan's installation and performance art practice. In my analysis, I will use some reviews of Hendrawan's artworks and exhibitions in the media as examples. As I have mentioned in the beginning of this dissertation that as part of the methodologies, I have been using some forms of art journalism in collecting data about Hendrawan's practice albeit very limited. I have found that these articles and reviews are very useful to gather some insights about the transition that he had gone through in developing his work from the earlier period of his formalistic ceramic sculptures to the later period of his elaborate performative installations.

#### **3.1 Hendrawan Riyanto and Contemporary Indonesian Ceramic Art**

To fill the need for a national art gallery, *Balai Seni Rupa Jakarta* (Jakarta's Municipal Art Gallery) was established in 1976. It stored a number of collections of modern Indonesian art (paintings and sculptures by early modern Indonesian artists) and traditional arts. However, because of the significant amount of ceramic ware (predominantly traditional pottery from Indonesia, Thailand, China, Japan and Europe) it had also stored, a ceramic art museum was established inside the art gallery in 1977. In 1990, the name officially became *Museum Seni Rupa dan Keramik* (Museum of Fine Art and Ceramics). The museum had shown some exhibitions of ceramic art in the 1980s, for example, an exhibition titled *Pameran Keramik Mutakhir Bergaya Antik* on December 21, 1983 – the title can be translated into *Exhibition of the Latest Ceramic Art*

in “Antique” Style (figure 89). The title showed what seemed to be contradictory ideas, the Indonesian words “*Keramik Mutakhir*” in this context mean the advanced, the latest and the most up-to-date and contemporary ceramics, however, these ceramic works were also described as having an “antique” style. This document reflected the level of understanding about ceramic art among the general art public in Indonesia in the 1980s that even though the appreciation towards ceramic as a medium of fine art was already growing, there was still a lack of understanding about the scope of modern ceramic art practice. This issue fits Hilda Soemantri’s arguments and concerns that I have briefly outlined in chapter one about the early development of modern ceramic art in Indonesia from the 1970s to 1980s.



Figure 89: A publication banner of a ceramic exhibition at the Ceramic Art Museum - Jakarta's Municipal Art Gallery on December 21, 1983.



Compared to artists working in other mediums, there were still a very limited number of ceramic artists including Hendrawan who had to face the denigrating stigma of ceramic medium (especially the low-fired terracotta) as “handicrafts”, considered secondary to fine art represented by painting and sculpture. This denigrating view is not based on the same hierarchy between art and crafts in the Western art world where craft practice is usually viewed as secondary to fine art with one of those reasons being is it does not possess the same capacity to immediately express the ideology of the artist such as in painting. Instead, in Indonesia, the stigma (the word Asmujo J. Irianto often uses in his curatorial practice) comes from the association of low-fired clay as cheap materials used for handicrafts, bricks and roof tiles production. And based on Hilda Soemantri’s explanation, because of the very limited availability of materials and facilities for high-fired ceramic at that time, many students at ITB were still using low-fired clay, the same material for those handicrafts. Despite of a strong formalistic and modernist approach to sculpture being taught by Rita Widagdo in the Ceramic Art Studio in the 1980-1990s, many of the art audiences outside of ITB still viewed ceramic sculptural pieces as different from sculpture in fine art.

Hendrawan experienced this issue firsthand in 1998 when he began to shift his practice from his earlier formalistic style, as shown in the following article written by Sujiwo Tejo, published in KOMPAS newspaper, March 18, 1998 (figure 90 – see appendix I for English translation of the article). The headline of the article: *Saya Bakar Patung, Bukan Keramik (I Fired Sculpture, Not Ceramic)* refers to Hendrawan’s own statement in an informal discussion with some artists and curators as a response to a question raised about the second installment of Jakarta Triennial, a prestigious event for young sculptors curated by Gregorius Sidharta. The question was circled around the reasons why Hendrawan’s work was not included in the exhibition where 38 works from 32 young sculptors were selected. Hendrawan’s ceramic work was turned down or not selected particularly because it was made of ceramic despite the fact that the 38 works included in the exhibition were made from various mediums such as wood, old steel, brick, bamboo, string,

nails and dried leaves as described by Sujiwo Tejo who also participated in the discussion. According to the artist Chandra Johan, that problem was because there was so many unclear and confusing definitions related to aesthetic terms and categories in fine art which was still happening in many art universities in Indonesia, says the article. Another artist, Syahnagra, commented that eventually it all went back to how an artist positioned herself/himself in the artworld, whether Hendrawan wanted to be seen as a ceramic artist or a visual artist. He also concluded with a little sense of humour: "Hendrawan seemed to be comfortable in positioning himself as a ceramic artist, so maybe next time whenever you meet other fellow artists, don't say that you are going to fire a ceramic, just say you are going to fire a sculpture instead."



Figure 90: Article about Hendrawan Riyanto's sculpture in KOMPAS newspaper, March 18, 1998 written by H. Sujiwo Tejo.

The article above reflected the condition of the art scene Hendrawan was facing in the 1990s. There was still a gap of understanding among art practitioners at that time on what modern ceramic art was in Indonesia, something that had been the main concerns to Hilda Soemantri that inspired her to study art history at Cornell University in 1995. This gap would gradually diminish in the 2000s after the first installment of the Jakarta Contemporary Ceramic Biennale where its main focus was to promote ceramic as a medium of expression in contemporary contexts among leading contemporary artists in Indonesia. However, in the 1990s, many ceramic artists like Hendrawan often struggled in justifying and defending their ceramic works to the art public that they also deserved to be acknowledged to be part of the contemporary art in Indonesia. Many ceramic artists found themselves standing in between two platforms of practice, the domain of crafts where they produced functional objects and contemporary art where they created sculptural and non-functional work. Indonesian art critic Agus Dermawan described it as “expressive ceramic” to differentiate itself from functional ceramic like pots and table-ware.<sup>53</sup>

Agus Dermawan T. wrote an article about an exhibition of nine contemporary ceramic artists titled *Terra Indonesia* in Jakarta in 1997 (figure 91). Those nine ceramic artists were Hildawati Soemantri, F. Widayanto, Suyatna, Keng Sien, Lidia Poetri, Hendrawan Riyanto, Sri Hartono, Harsono Salim and Asmudjo J. Irianto. He described the exhibition as a surprise for the art public in Indonesia by using the word “*murtad*”, which could mean “rebellious or transgressive” because of the unconventional exploration done by all the artists with ceramic against the general understanding of ceramic art as pottery. This article presented an idea of Hendrawan’s position in the development of contemporary ceramic art in Indonesia in the late 1990s. He had practically left his modernist art practice and embraced the more unconventional languages of contemporary art manifested in his utilization of raw materials and clay in his installation art. In this exhibition

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<sup>53</sup> Dermawan, A. (1998), ‘Keramik ‘Murtad’ Sembilan Perupa’, *KOMPAS* newspaper, 4 January 1998.

Hendrawan presented the same form of installation he had presented at the Venice Biennale earlier in year. Agus described Hendrawan's work as a poetic and symbolic expression of spirituality through earth.



Figure 91: An article written by Agus Dermawan T. about a group exhibition of contemporary ceramic art titled *Terra Indonesia* in the Art Gallery at The Ministry of Culture and Education, Jakarta, December 12 – 20, 1997, published in KOMPAS newspaper, January 4, 1998.

This idea of poetic and symbolic expression of spirituality that comes from “earth” is also underlined in another article titled *Syekh Siti Jenar's Ceramic* written by Sides Sudyarto D.S. published in MATRA magazine, April 1997 (figure 92 – see appendix H for English translation). The article discusses on Hendrawan Riyanto's profile and his ceramic practice. Sudyarto underlined his interpretation of the mystical and spiritual aspect of Hendrawan's ceramics by choosing the words “*Syekh Siti Jenar*” in the title. The used of the word “*Syekh*” in Indonesian (can also be written *Shaikh*, *Sheik* or *Sheikh*) refers to the spiritual leader in an Islamic community. The word itself originated from the Arabic language and was first introduced during the early



period of the spread of Islam in Indonesia. *Syekh Siti Jenar* also known among Muslim people in Java as *Sunan Jepara* is one of the earliest Sufi Islamic leaders who helped spread the teaching of Islam in Java. He is part of the nine earliest Islamic leaders in Java famously known as *Walisongo* or *Walisanga*. There are many mysteries and mystical stories circulating around the life of *Syekh Siti Jenar* or *Sunan Kalijaga* that he is almost considered to be a myth.<sup>54</sup>

Out of those stories, the one that the writer refers to is related to the origin of the name *Siti Jenar*. The story is that at one particular time, one of the famous Syekhs named *Sunan Kalijaga* was giving his sermon to some of his disciples on the boat called *Kala Duta* (Messenger of Time). When the sermon ended, he asked if they all understood what he had just taught them and none of them answered yes. However, after asking the same question for the third time, he heard a voice said “Yes, understood”, he then asked “Who’s speaking?” and the voice answered “It’s me, worm”, he responded “How could a worm speak like a human being?” and then, the worm instantly turned into a person - a man. And because the worm lived underneath the red soil before it turned into a man, he was then called *Syekh Siti Jenar*, “*Siti Jenar*” means red soil.

The writer of the article used this mystical story of the Syekh as a metaphor to illustrate his interpretation of spiritual transformation that Hendrawan Riyanto had gone through in his practice. Hendrawan had spent some time travelling to several indigenous pottery villages, such as in the region of Plered, Siti Winangun and Demak in the West and Central Java provinces. Through these travels he discovered stories, myths and legends that were still told among these indigenous potters who also practiced agriculture. Their myths reflected an adoration of mystical figures associated with clay or earth such as the story of *Siti Jenar* or *Dewi Sri* (explanation in chapter 2). These

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<sup>54</sup> For a comprehensive story on the life and teaching of Syekh Siti Jenar see: Mulkhan, A.M. (1999) *Syekh Siti Jenar: Pergumulan Islam-Jawa (Syekh Siti Jenar: The Struggle of Javanese Islam)*, Yayasan Bentang Budaya, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

stories inspired Hendrawan, said the article, to take on terracotta or low-fired clay as his main medium, shifting from his earlier modernist non-representational sculptures into a more symbolic forms reflecting the idea of clay as a metaphor of life and spiritual transformation represented in several examples of his terracotta works one of them is *Inner Mothers* in 1997.



Figure 92: An article written by Sides Sudyarto D.S. about Hendrawan Riyanto's terracotta sculptures and installation art, published in MATRA magazine, no.129, April 1997.

Hendrawan Riyanto's practice stand in the intersection between the issue of identity, Javanese syncretic tradition and the study of material culture in his ceramic practice. Through this study and research, I consider Hendrawan to be the first Indonesian ceramic artist to have used terracotta intensively both as an aesthetic and conceptual reference. His terracotta work offers a new perspective, bridging the study of indigenous low-fired pottery tradition and contemporary ceramics in Indonesia.

Jo Dahn, a researcher and curator of contemporary ceramics proposes four ideas that define the new directions in contemporary ceramic practice: performance/performativity, installation, raw clay and figuration. She claims in regards to performance/performativity that:

“Ceramics has always incorporated performance. Rituals that address the uncertain alchemy of firing have been enacted since time immemorial and the transformation from ‘raw’ clay to the ‘cooked’ ceramic still excites a sense of wonder in practitioners and audiences alike.

(Dahn, 2005)

What Jo Dahn describes as “excites a sense of wonder” above is echoed in one of Hendrawan Riyanto's statements about his fascination with clay that I have quoted in chapter 2 (see page 79). Hendrawan draws his idea of spirituality from the physical transformation of clay that involves all of the five elements in nature: earth, water, air, wind and fire – the alchemy of firing addressed in some rituals enacted since time immemorial claims Dahn. Jo Dahn based her studies on the practice of British contemporary ceramic artists. She defines that performativity in contemporary ceramics usually manifested in four examples but not limited to: performance firing, festival based-performance, relational practice and craftivism and performance and the digital realm.

Related to Dahn's theory that the language of performance is used by many ceramic artists to expand their contemporary practice, the same thing can be said in the case of Indonesia. Performance has become a familiar method for some ceramic artists to bring their practice into a

more experimental domain. The Indonesian Contemporary Ceramic Biennale (previously Jakarta Contemporary Ceramic Biennale or JCCB) so far has provided a good example in which a number of the artists have worked with interactive performance and relational art practice. Jatiwangi Art Factory led by Arief Yudhi is the most recent example of ceramic artist and art community that have engaged in performance and relational art practice setting their feet not only in the domain of ceramics but also contemporary art practice. Through this research and study, I have found that Hendrawan can be considered as the first Indonesian ceramic artist who brought performances or performative elements to the domain of ceramic art in Indonesia.

Garin Nugroho also explained that to him Hendrawan's works were very much related to their personal life experiences and their syncretic Javanese cultural root:

“Garin’s essay film traces the path of Hendrawan’s search from the *joglo* house where their family lives in Yogyakarta. For Garin, this Javanese house is the point of connection between Hendrawan’s academic thoughts and his struggle to search for “feeling” in Javanese syncretic culture. In Javanese culture, man is situated between the great universe and the small universe. The “center” is not a place of rational, logical thinking, rather, it can mean the “*tali pusar*” (umbilical cord) that connects each human being to their mother, simultaneously describing the “underworld” and “the upper world”.

Another interest of Garin’s is Pagerjuran village in Klaten, Central Java. Hendrawan found his artistic spirit in this place where he, together with Professor Chitaru Kawasaki—a lecturer at Kyoto Seika University, Japan—revived the tradition of pottery. For Garin, this pottery village reinstated Hendrawan as a Javanese-subject and ceramic artist who was reawakening the magical, mystical dimensions and *olah rasa* in his art practice.”

(Wiyanto, 2017, p. 68)

The word “feeling” Garin used here refers to the same concept of “*rasa*” (feeling-meaning) Clifford Geertz described in his study of religion in Java (see again page 126-127). Hendrawan’s ceramic installations and performances were based on his search of “feeling” in Javanese syncretic tradition. This search manifested in his highly ritualistic performance activities as reflected in the second paragraph of the citation above that Hendrawan’s experience in the Pagerjuran pottery village reinstated his awareness culturally as a Javanese and as a ceramic artist who was drawn to



the magical and mystical dimensions of *Olah rasa*. *Olah rasa* is one form of Javanese traditional meditation techniques, similar to what Prapto Suryodarmo is practicing in his Amerta movement (see again page 137). It is a study of training and organizing one's thoughts and emotions to a spiritual, and almost transcendental level of absolute peace, total concentration and focus. And with this topic of syncretic Javanese tradition I will address the second theme in contextualizing Hendrawan Riyanto's practice which is in the study of the expression of syncretic spirituality in Indonesian contemporary art.

### **3.2 Hendrawan Riyanto's Expression of Syncretic Spirituality and Rituality in Indonesian Contemporary Art**

“Some contemporary artists in Indonesia, specifically in Central Java, consider the making of art not an end in itself but a part of their spiritual practices. Some strive to know the iconography of monuments of the past, not as archaeologists do, but in order to understand the mystical messages embodied in them. At the same time, they are developing a personal, modern visual language of their own. Their spiritual orientation causes them to see mythology and monuments as living texts relevant to the choices contemporary Indonesians make in their daily lives. These spiritual views, in turn, influence the artists' view of the creative process and the self in relation to this process.

(Wright, 1994, p.78)

In her thesis on Modern Indonesian Painters, Astri Wright dedicated a chapter for the topic of the spiritualization of modern Indonesian art and a form of religious syncretism reflected on the practices of some contemporary Indonesian painters. One of the stages in this process of spiritualization is the presence of Javanese mysticism that informs the daily life of some contemporary Indonesian artists. This mystical view of life in turn informs these artists' spiritual views that would eventually influence their creative process as some forms of spiritual practices as summarized by Astri Wright above. She called them the syncretic artists with examples of painters: Widayat, Nindityo Adipurnomo, Eddie Hara, Mulyadi W., Suhadi and Agus Ismoyo and Nia Fliam.

Astri Wright's analysis was based on the study of Indonesian painters mainly in Central Java. However, the same analysis can also be conducted for the practices of contemporary Indonesian artists working with other mediums outside of painting as in the case of Hendrawan Riyanto's works. I have found her study and analysis about the preoccupations of contemporary Indonesian painters to be very helpful in contextualizing Hendrawan Riyanto's art practice in contemporary Indonesian art. Wright's decision to choose the title *Soul, Spirit and Mountain* in fact reflected an idea that in her studies there was a strong underlying spiritual aspect closely related to almost all of the artists she had studied and not only limited to the list of artists she described as the syncretic artists.

In the study of religion, religious syncretism is generally understood as a mixture or combination of diverse form of beliefs and practices. However, this mixture is not only a mere mixture. The concept of syncretism is differentiated from the concept of synthesis in this way:

“But for the specialist in the study of religion there is no such thing as a *mere* mixture. A mixture is interesting. What sort of a mixture might it be? A syncretistic situation is interesting in that it contains multiple possibilities in coherent tension. Synthesis implies that, out of multiple possibilities, a new conclusion has been reached. In a syncretistic situation however, the potential claims of the constitutive elements are still alive. Syncretism should therefore be differentiated both from mere mixture and from synthesis.”

(Pye, 1994, p. 220)

As Michael Pye's described above that this process contains “many possibilities in a coherent tension” in which the constitutive elements of each of the religions blended in are still alive. Parallel to this description, Pascal Boyer also proposed a similar definition with his reference to the ritual of *Slametan* in Javanese tradition. He added that in syncretism, the activity of fusing, mixing or blending different domains does not present a problem to the human mind, and it does not mean also that different religious systems are “confused” or simply “fused” in the minds of people (cited in Leopold et al., 2016, kindle edition, part I, *When Religion Travels*). Pye and

Boyer's descriptions refer to a situation in which several different religious traditions - however conflicting and contradictory they may seem - blended in and even though this process may cause produce some conflicts, these conflicts are maintained in what Pye calls a "coherent tension".

Astri Wright continued to elaborate her explanation on the syncretic feature of the Javanese religious traditions which she based on Clifford Geertz's studies on religion in Java:

"Far from a strictly codified, dogmatic belief system, Javanese mysticism is one of the cultural creations of Java that illustrates the idea of syncretism - the combining of elements from different religions or cultures, which from the perspective of Western logic appear to contradict each other"

(Wright, 1994, p.79)

Javanese mysticism is the result of a balanced syncretism of myth and ritual of the Hindu-Buddhist culture, Islamic doctrines and the underlying animistic traditions (Geertz, 1973, p. 147) This process of balanced syncretic assimilation is based on the belief of the "oneness of existence" in Astri Wright's words. This idea of "oneness of existence" does not mean to eliminate the previous characters of the seemingly contradictory combining elements but instead, they are maintained harmoniously in what the Javanese known as the concept of "*dwitunggal*", the term Hendrawan repeatedly used to explain the idea behind his works (see page 126).

In his definition, the term, "*dwitunggal*" (see page 126) can be translated into a spiritual idea of non-duality – a mature state of consciousness in which the dichotomy of two opposing ideas is transcended.<sup>55</sup> To understand more of Hendrawan's idea about the concept of "*dwitunggal*" which

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<sup>55</sup> However, the term *dwitunggal* was also associated with political idea of the first Indonesian president and vice president, Soekarno and Mohammad Hatta (often called *dwitunggal-dwifungsi* (non-dual – dual function)) for a short period of time in the early days of post-independence Indonesian in the 1950s. It refers to the idea of Indonesia being led by the leadership of the two at the same time (the non-dual leadership of Soekarno-Hatta with their own political ideologies). For further information see: Lev, D.S. (2009) *The Transition to Guided Democracy: Indonesian Politics, 1957-1959*, Jakarta, Equinox Publishing.

informed his practice, I quoted below his own statement printed in the catalogue of the exhibition

*Ning* in 2004 (English translation by Albert Yonathan Setyawan):

*“Saya adalah generasi yang hidup diantara ‘dua kutub’ nilai; nilai lama (tradisional) dan nilai baru (modern). Saya tak hendak menolak ataupun memungkiri bahwa keberadaan saya sekarang ini merupakan bentukan dari dua kutub nilai tersebut.*

*Melihat nilai lama dan nilai baru terasa sama jaraknya. Dalam konteks sekarang, sungguh sulit untuk saya menyatakan diri sebagai anggota masyarakat modern tulen (baca: Barat).*

*Alam pikir ‘rasional’ dan ‘irasional’ menjadi bagian dari aktivitas berfikir saya, merupakan kebutuhan hidup sehari-hari, masuk ke dalam alam pikiran komunal: masyarakat Indonesian pada umumnya. Bangun alam pikiran yang kira saya dekat dengan alam pikiran masyarakat Arkhaic, masyarakat yang menyakini adanya ruang “asal-mula” (Roh, Tuhan), sebagaimana masyarakat peladang/petani pada umumnya.*

*Saya cenderung untuk memilih proses hidup (kreasi) melalui pendekatan prinsip “Dwi-Tunggal” (pasangan oposisi: harmoni) ketimbang prinsip “posisi-biner” (kultur modern-Barat).*

*Pilihan-pilihan tersebut menempatkan saya pada penyingkapan bahwa realitas transenden sebagai realitas tertinggi dan realitas yang tercerap panca indera (inderawi) sebagai “pasangan oposisi” nya.*

*Melalui mediasi tanda/ikon-ikon dari “Mitos-Mitos Lama”, “Mitos-Mitos Baru”, dan juga budaya material yang ada pada masyarakat di sekitar saya.*

*“Wujud-tanda” yang saya bangun adalah informasi, realita kebudayaan sinkrit yang kini masih tumbuh di Indonesia.”*

**English translation** (by Albert Yonathan Setyawan):

*“I am from a generation who have been living in between two values, the old (traditional value) and the new (modern value). I have no intention to reject or deny my own presence as being shaped and formed by those two values.*

*I feel that I am in the same distance in my relationships with both traditional and modern values. In the present, it is hard for me to see myself as fully part of a modern or modernized society.*

*Both the “rational” and “irrational” ways of thinking have been part of my own ways of thinking, they have become part of my daily necessity and routine, to be part of the communal realm of thought of the Indonesian community in general. To me this is close to the realm of thought of the “archaic” society, a society that holds a belief in the presence of the “cosmogonic space” as reflected in the life of the peasantry (pre-industrial agricultural society).*



I tend to choose artistic creation based on the principle of “*dwitunggal*” (non-duality) than the principle of “binary position” (modern culture).

And through these choices, I was able to see transcendent reality as the ultimate reality, while the reality we experience through our senses as its “counterpart”.

Through adaptation of signs and symbols from the “old myths”, the “new myths” and the material culture of my surrounding society, the symbolism that I have formed is information on the reality of some parts of “Sanskrit” culture that is still present in today’s Indonesian society.

(Riyanto, 2004)

Hendrawan’s statement above expresses his understanding of the “*dwitunggal*” concept. The first three lines emphasize his understanding of his own identity in the society caught in between two different kinds of value – his own cultural roots as a Javanese/Sundanese Indonesian and at the same time as a modern Indonesian immersing himself in modern culture through art and education. He realized the differences between these two ideas and found that through the concept of “*dwitunggal*” those differences could be reconciled, not by choosing either of them but by maintaining the balance between the two. And the last four lines emphasize on Hendrawan’s choices to use this principle as the basis of his artistic practice. In the last line, Hendrawan mentioned that his symbolism as coming from the influence of “Sanskrit” culture that is still present today. This line proves that he himself was fully aware about the syncretic nature of his practice. The word “Sanskrit” refers to the classical and liturgical language of Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism originated in India. When Hendrawan mentioned “Sanskrit” culture, he was referring to the traces of influences from Hindu-Buddhist culture in Indonesia that could still be seen in Indonesian language including in words and the naming of places, monuments, rituals, and even concepts and ideas.

Hendrawan Riyanto’s journeys in discovering ceramic art had led him to discover a deeper and underlying syncretic nature of his belief, identity and his relationship with his community and his

surroundings. Astri Wright's studies of the syncretic artists was predominantly focused on Indonesian painters since the 1950s to 1990s. In this essay, if the scope of the category is to be taken in a much broader context of artistic categories, Hendrawan Riyanto's art practice can also be included in the same category to represent generation of artist from the 1980s to the early 2000s. His installations and performances have found their place in the intersection of contemporary art, traditional arts and material culture.

From around 1998/1999, Hendrawan had been involved in many performance art activities in Bandung, Yogyakarta and Jakarta. He was briefly involved in a community of artists in Bandung known as *Jeprut* Art group. *Jeprut* Art was an open community of local artists, performers, musicians and other members who did not have any background in art but who had the same concerns in social and environmental issues and saw art as a medium to protest and to make changes. Some of the members of the group are Tisna Sanjaya, Isa Perkasa, Herry Dim, Rahmat Jabaril, Marintan Sirait and Deden Sambas. In Sundanese, the word "*jeprut*" comes from the verb "*ngajeprut*" which carries a connotation of "suddenly lose one's self control" or "behaving like a mentally ill person". Tisna Sanjaya who pioneered *Jeprut* Art through his experimental printmaking, multimedia installations and performance art became the most notable figure of the group. The term "*jeprut*" is sometimes used to describe Tisna's creative manifestation as a form of protest against the social-political and environmental problem in his community. Edwin Jurriens described Jeprut Art as:

"In Sundanese, a language spoken by about 40 million people predominantly in West Java, *jeprut* is an onomatopoeia that imitates the sound of something breaking. It can refer to the snapping of the string of a kite or the burning of wires in a short circuit. Both physically and spiritually, it embodies something breaking because of an imbalance in energies. It interrupts the normal state of affairs, and can create unforeseen opportunities, by releasing the particles of a whole in new and unexpected directions."

(Jurriens, 2015)

Edwin Jurriens also added that Jeprut Art as reflected in Tisna Sanjaya's performances, at times may have some spiritual overtones, illustrative of the syncretic character of religious belief in many parts of Java, Sanjaya's performance rituals include elements of Islam, Hinduism, as well as animism.<sup>56</sup> The activity of Jeprut Art group provides another framework in understanding Hendrawan Riyanto's performance art pieces.

In Javanese syncretic tradition, meditation is considered to be an important way to gain insight and strength. In its syncretic nature, there are many schools of thoughts and teachings about meditation in Java.<sup>57</sup> This meditation techniques may involve, for example, taking a pilgrimage to certain monuments, tombs or religious sites to communicate with the spirits of ancestors or other powerful supernatural beings.<sup>58</sup> Hendrawan Riyanto was also involved in this form of activities he personally called "ziarah" (pilgrimage) which means travelling to some far and unknown territories to gain spiritual revelation or insight. Hendrawan had collaborated with some shamans or local "healer", people who are believed to possess some kinds of supernatural power or instinct. Even though some people dismissed his activities as irrational, erratic and even heresy, Hendrawan claimed that those pilgrimages were part of his meditation to train his *rasa* (feeling-meaning) and his inner-self and also, to search for religious values and wisdom of past societies.<sup>59</sup> As a result,

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<sup>56</sup> Jurriens, E. (2015) 'Tisna Sanjaya and the Art of Snapping and Mapping', *Indonesian at Melbourne*, The University of Melbourne, 15 December 2015 [Online]. Available at <https://indonesiaatmelbourne.unimelb.edu.au/tisna-sanjaya-and-the-art-of-snapping-and-mapping/> (Accessed 4 January 2020). See also another article about Jeprut in Bandung by Edwin Jurriens: Jurriens, E. (2018) 'Art is Capital: Between Cultural Memory and the Creative Industry', *Art & the Public Sphere*, vol. 7, no.1, 1 July 2018, pp. 43-62, Intellect [Online]. Available at [https://doi.org/10.1386/aps.7.1.43\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1386/aps.7.1.43_1) (Accessed 4 January 2020).

<sup>57</sup> From his study at Modjokuto, Geertz wrote detailed notes about various mystical sects existed in Central Java at that time during his field research. According to Geertz, each of these mystical sects who based their practice on the mixture of Islam, Hindu-Buddhist and animist beliefs, employed various different methods to train their members in meditation. See Geertz, C. (1960) *The Religion of Java*, Chicago, p. 339 – 352, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.

<sup>58</sup> See for example Astri Wright's explanation about the meditative art of Agus Ismoyo, a painter in Yogyakarta, in the section titled *A Case of Art and Healing* in Wright, A. (1994) *Soul, Spirit, and Mountain – Preoccupations of Contemporary Indonesian Painters*, p. 80-81, Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press.

<sup>59</sup> Arcana, P.F. (2004) 'Hendrawan, Seni dari Ruang Asal Mula', *KOMPAS*, 2 May 2004.

Hendrawan's performance art pieces were imbued with strong ritualistic presence. He brought certain objects - oftentimes objects discovered during his spiritual pilgrimage into his performance to form a theatrical stage in which the event will take place.

I have gathered as much information during interviews with Kohar Kartiwa, Setiawan Sabana, F.X. Harsono, Tisna Sanjaya, A.D. Pirous and Nanu Muda. They have provided me with some valuable information to confirm the clarity of the data shown on some of the photographs, especially for *Dine with Sri* and *Form Follow Myths*. The following images are records of a few other performance pieces Hendrawan had done since the 1990s that involved certain ritualistic acts performed by himself inside a configuration of sculptures and/or found objects as some forms of a theater stage.





Figure 93: Hendrawan Riyanto's performance art piece at Gallery R-66, Bandung (title, date, year and place of event unknown). The document is showing Hendrawan performing a set of movements/dances inside an installation art piece made of various objects including a video projection.

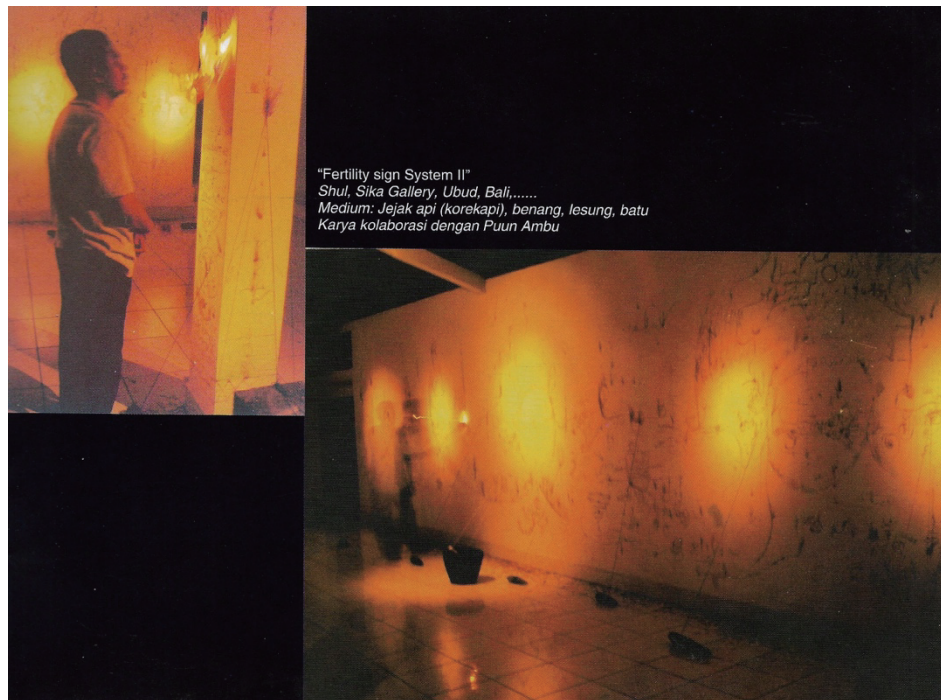


Figure 94: Hendrawan Riyanto, *Fertility Sign System II*, performance and drawing at Shul, Sika Gallery, Ubud, Bali, date and year of performance unknown. The installation is made out of thread, stone bowl, pebbles, matches and paper.

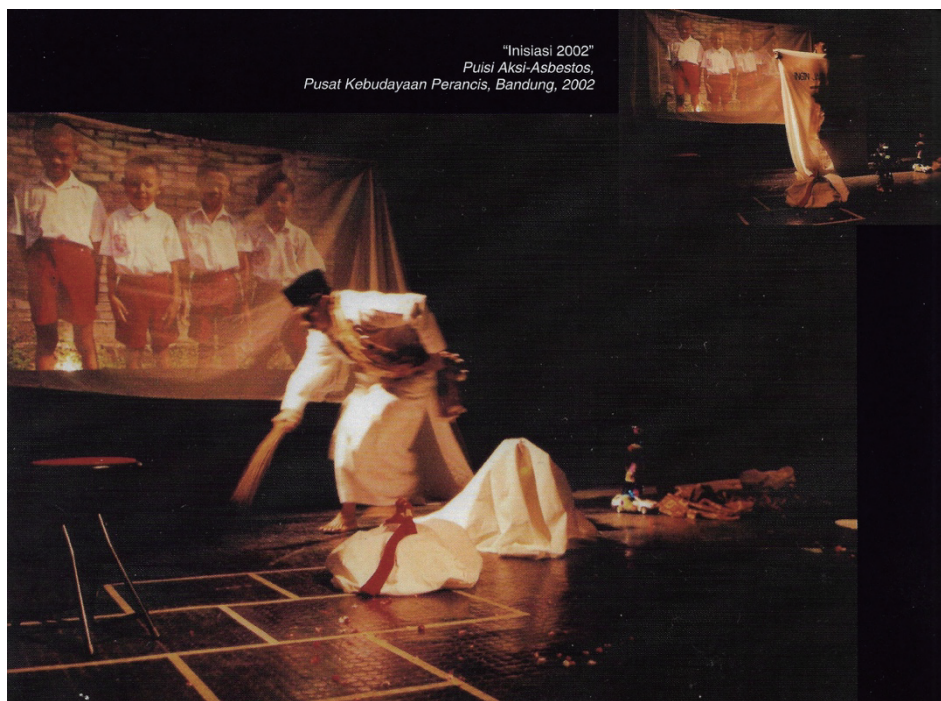


Figure 95: Hendrawan Riyanto, *Inisiasi (Initiation)*, performance art at Centre Culturel Français (CCF) Bandung as part of the event *Puisi Aksi (Action Poem) – Asbestos* in 2002.



"Performance Art Festival"

## Seni yang Hidup di Kepala Masing-masing

KETIKA sebuah pertunjukan dihasratkan mengonstruksi nilai-nilai yang sebelumnya cerai-berai, sesungguhnya kita sedang memompakan berbagai referensi yang hidup di kepala kita masing-masing. Pertunjukan jenis ini biasanya berupa fragmen-fragmen yang dicuplik dari deretan peristiwa, tetapi kemudian diberi bingkai baru sehingga menjadi pintu bagi sebuah wacana besar yang ada di belakangnya.

**P**ERSOALANNYA sekarang, akan kita posisikan di mana pertunjukan jenis ini karena ia bergerak meninggalkan estetika "biasa" dan kemudian hanya meninggalkan jejak-jejak kecil untuk melihat hubungannya dengan kesenian. Ia menjadi lebih dekat dengan amatan-amatan terhadap realitas sosial, tetapi kemudian mengkritiknya secara ekstrem.

Cobalah kita lihat apa yang disajikan selama "International Performance Art Festival" 28-30 April 2004 di Rumah Nusantara, Bandung. Para "seniman" menangkap kondisi tadi dengan beragam-ragam. Gejala paling umum yang tampak, mereka tidak mau lagi menantikan mata penikmat, tetapi justru "menerorinya" dengan pre-

sentasikan karya berjudul *Menelan Bendera*, dengan benar-benar menelan bendera Merah Putih, reaksi yang terjadi pada sebagian besar penonton hampir-hampir seragam: muall! Ketika ia terus-menerus melakukan pertunjukan, semua orang tahu bahwa mulutnya tidak cukup lebar untuk menelan bendera. Maka di situ ada ketegangan yang dalam waktu singkat berubah menjadi muall dan sudah pasti jengkel.

Peristiwa hampir sama terjadi ketika "seniman" asal Jepang Arai Shinichi menyempal mulutnya dengan sobekan-sobekan majalah. Apalagi pada saat bersamaan ia juga melakukan aksi telanjang bulat, yang makin membuat penikmat terkoyak-koyak. Ia kemudian membuat bulatan Matahari merah dalam bendera Jepang de-



Pisang — Perupa Hendrawan Riyanto menggelar ritual berjudul Keluarga Pisang dalam "Performance Art Festival" di Bandung.

Figure 96: Hendrawan Riyanto's very last performance art piece titled *Keluarga Pisang (Banana Family)*, at the International Performance Art Festival, April 28-30, 2004, Rumah Nusantara – Bandung.

The article above shows a review of Hendrawan Riyanto's very last performance piece titled *Keluarga Pisang (Banana Family)* presented at the International Performance Art Festival in Bandung, April 28 - 30, 2004 (figure 96). The performance incorporated a collaborative act in which Hendrawan invited the audience to participate in a feast. The meal served was rather simple, consisted of a few varieties of dishes made from banana and a big batch of "sambal tomat" (traditional tomato chili sauce) that Hendrawan made in the beginning of the act. He invited everyone to enjoy the meal which was greeted cheerfully by everyone in the audience. In this performance, Hendrawan was trying to address the sense of collectivity, communality and the feeling of togetherness among members of the community that were declining at that time, the post-industrial society, according to him in the article. He created this performance as a symbolic

metaphor that this sense of togetherness and communality could easily be achieved by performing some of the really simple and mundane acts like making a “*samba*” and having a simple feast. This performance piece is one example of Hendrawan’s activities as part of the *Jeprut* Art group in Bandung.



## REFLECTION AND CONCLUSION

Hendrawan Riyanto died at the age of 45 in the city of Semarang, Central Java province on May 22, 2004 due to heart disease. Hendrawan was on his way from Bandung to Semarang on Thursday evening to visit his wife and his four-month-old daughter. Shortly after he arrived in Semarang, he started having breathing problems and was later taken to a nearby hospital on Friday evening but it was already too late, as Rini Darwati confessed. Hendrawan passed away on Saturday afternoon at 16:26 WIB (Western Indonesia Time). His sudden death shocked his family, many of his colleagues at ITB and his fellow artists in Bandung. "I had no idea that it was going to be our last chance to see each other. Hendrawan was a fighter in art, a highly dedicated and committed educator and an artist that delivers deep spiritual values through his works." said the artist Setiawan Sabana, one of Hendrawan's closest colleagues at ITB (figure 97).

### Perupa Hendrawan Meninggal Dunia

**PUBLIK** seni rupa Indonesia telah kehilangan seorang perupa potensial. Hendrawan Riyanto yang meninggal Sabtu (22/5) pukul 4.26 WIB di Semarang. Perupa yang juga staf pengajar FSRD ITB dan pernah menjabat Ketua Jurusan Seni Murni ini, meninggal akibat serangan jantung mendadak, ketika berlibur ke rumah mertuanya.

Jenazah dibawa ke Kota Bandung dan disemayamkan di rumah duka di Kompleks Bank Mandiri Cicagra, dan sekira pukul 15.30 WIB dimakamkan di Kompleks Pemakaman Keluarga Besar ITB Cibarunai Sarijadi, setelah dilepas oleh Dekan FSRD ITB Prof. Dr. Setiawan Sabana dan seluruh rekan sejawatnya, termasuk sejumlah seniman Bandung.

Menurut Joko, kakak iparnya, pada Sabtu subuh almarhum sempat membangunkan istrinya, namun lantas Hendrawan tidak sadarkan diri sampai dilarikan ke Rumah Sakit Telogo Rejo. Namun, tidak lagi bisa tertolong. Kepergian Seniman yang dikenal dengan pembawaannya yang tenang dan mudah akrab ini memang sangat mengejutkan.

Prof. Dr. Setiawan Sabana mengungkapkan, bagaimana pada hari Rabu sore itu almarhum masih menyapa dan bergurau dengannya. "Saya tidak mengira bahwa itulah untuk terakhir kalinya kami bergurau. Almarhum adalah seorang pejuang seni, seorang pendidik yang gigih, seorang seniman yang memancarkan nilai-nilai spiritual dalam karya-karyanya," ujar Prof. Dr. Setiawan Sabana terbuta-bata.

Sementara seniman tari Mas Nani Muda lebih terperanjat lagi mendengar kepergian Hendrawan. "Padahal malam tadi kami sempat ngobrol lewat telepon," katanya dengan mata berkaca-kaca.

Hendrawan Riyanto, seniman kelahiran 15 Januari 1959 yang juga kakak dari sineas Garin Nugroho, telah banyak menampilkan karyanya berupa terakota dan *performance art*. Terakhir tampil dalam Festival Performance Art Internasional (IAPAO) di Rumah Nusantara, 28 April 2004 lalu dengan presentasi karyanya "Keluarga Pisang". (Ahda Imran)\*\*\*



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#### PERJALANAN KERETA API

Bandung - Jakarta (Gambir)	Jakarta (Gambir) - Bandung
Parahyangan 04.00 - 06.53	Parahyangan 05.00 - 08.20
Parahyangan 05.00 - 07.53	Parahyangan 05.30 - 08.17
Parahyangan 06.05 - 09.04	Parahyangan 07.30 - 10.29
Parahyangan 08.15 - 11.15	Parahyangan 08.30 - 11.50
Parahyangan 09.35 - 12.42	Parahyangan 10.30 - 13.29
Parahyangan 11.00 - 14.23	Parahyangan 11.40 - 14.44
Parahyangan 12.10 - 15.13	Parahyangan 13.00 - 16.08
Parahyangan 13.30 - 16.36	Parahyangan 14.45 - 17.41
Parahyangan 15.00 - 17.58	Parahyangan 15.50 - 18.16
Parahyangan 17.15 - 20.14	Parahyangan 17.20 - 20.28
Parahyangan 19.20 - 22.18	Parahyangan 18.30 - 21.38
Parahyangan 19.35 - 22.53	Parahyangan 20.50 - 23.35
Parahyangan 05.30 - 08.09	Argode I 06.45 - 09.25
Argode I 06.35 - 09.14	Argode II 09.10 - 12.14
Argode II 07.20 - 10.39	Argode III 10.00 - 13.27
Argode III 09.00 - 11.39	Argode IV 11.00 - 13.41
Argode IV 10.20 - 13.11	Argode V 12.30 - 15.15
Argode V 13.15 - 15.54	Argode VI 14.10 - 18.55
Argode VI 14.25 - 17.04	Argode VII 16.40 - 19.43
Argode VII 16.50 - 18.49	Argode VIII 18.05 - 20.49
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Ket: \* Senin dan setelah libur \*\* Jumat s.d. Senin \*\*\* Setiap hari Minggu

Surabaya-Klaracandong:	Klaracandong-Kediri:
Pasundan 06.30-22.44	Kahuripan 19.20-09.52
Surabaya-Bandung:	Solo-Yogyakarta-Bandung:
Argowis 07.00-17.52	Lodaya 20.00-04.07
Mutiara Selatan 17.20-06.35	Bandung-Yogyakarta-Solo:
Turangga 19.00-07.39	Lodaya 07.30-15.44
Klaracandong-Surabaya:	Kutoarjo-Klaracandong:
Pasundan 06.30-21.44	Kutoarjo 20.30-15.31
Bandung-Surabaya:	Klaracandong-Kutoarjo:
Argowis 07.00-17.58	Mutiara Selatan 20.30-03.59
Mutiara Selatan 17.00-08.15	Kroya-Klaracandong-Jakarta:
Turangga 19.00-07.14	Serayu 1 07.00-13.50-18.09
Bandung-Semarang Via Cikampek:	Serayu 3 17.00-22.20-02.40
Harna 20.30-04.00	Jakarta-Klaracandong-Kroya:
Kediri-Klaracandong:	Serayu 2 09.40-14.55-21.10
Kahuripan 16.00-08.13	Serayu 4 19.25-22.20-06.08

Figure 97: Hendrawan Riyanto's obituary published on Pikiran Rakyat newspaper May 2004 (date unknown).

For artists who are interested in medium specific art, Hendrawan Riyanto's works have shown alternative ways to engage with traditional arts and to build a platform by mixing and that collaborating contemporary art approach and material culture of indigenous arts. Hendrawan's art is the embodiment of spirituality through matter. Aspects of the Javanese syncretic mysticism in his work are reflected in a more concrete way through material culture of traditional society not only through pictorial representation. Hendrawan strived not to represent but to present directly the reality of mystical and spiritual aspects of Indonesian society. He had found his way to do it through the physicality and materiality of clay and ceramic. In his art, clay is not seen as a mere passive and static medium but it is seen as spiritual, poetic, and performative which embodies mystical and ritual aspects. It is a value that is inherent in the syncretic and animistic beliefs of indigenous society in Indonesia in which boundaries between spirit and matter, the natural and the supernatural, are often times not clearly defined. Spirits may dwell in objects and matters and vice versa, certain objects may generate spiritual meaning.

Through this research, I have learned the importance of research on individual artist's practice in Indonesia for the purpose of archiving, documenting and preserving the works of the artist and the understanding of them. Particularly in Indonesian contemporary art today where the force of the art market and the presence of many commercial galleries that up to a certain degree have had positive influences for the development of the local art scenes. However, they also present a challenge for academic works that focused on documenting, preserving and presenting them to the art audiences both within and outside of Indonesia. The challenge is that there is a tendency to focus too much on the "trend" of the time or on what is considered new and cutting edge forgetting about what have happened in the past and the knowledge that comes with them. Contemporary art tends to overemphasize on the "new" and work on the opposite direction towards building and constructing art history.

As an artist who came from the same background of ceramic art in Bandung, this issue has become one of my main concerns, not for the sake of mere nostalgia but for the purpose of learning and building a multi-faceted and non-linear art history. I have also realized this issue in the earlier stage of the research that there is a danger that Hendrawan's diverse and multifaceted art practices in his considerably short career may be forgotten and lost in the memory of the art public in Indonesia. This realization has driven me to pursue this research for the purpose of compiling all forms of information related to his practice and do a critical analysis of some of his major works so that the result of this study may be useful for other art historical research on contemporary Indonesian art.

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- Figure 62: Diagram of *Form Follows Myth* installation showing the different parts of the structure from above.  
Illustration: Albert Yonathan Setyawan
- Figure 63: Diagram of *Form Follows Myth* installation showing the area of the performances and the position of the *peripih* (stone container) on the floor at the center of the structure.  
Illustration: Albert Yonathan Setyawan
- Figure 64: *Peripih*, a stone container buried underneath the architecture of the Candi (Hindu/Buddhist temple) in Java.  
Source: <https://kebudayaan.kemdikbud.go.id/bpcbjateng/pripih/>
- Figure 65: The position of *peripih* underneath Shiva temple inside the Prambanan temple complex in Yogyakarta, Central Java. The image above does not show the complete details of chambers inside the temple, it is made only to specifically illustrate the position of *peripih* hidden underground.  
Illustration: Albert Yonathan Setyawan
- Figure 66: Installation view of *Form Follows Myth* - at the center of the structure is *peripih*.  
Source: Artist's personal archives
- Figure 67: Hendrawan Riyanto and Nanu Mudah during the performance of *Form Follows Myth* at Centre Culturel Français (CCF-Bandung), 2002.  
Source: Artist's personal archives
- Figure 68: The front view of Bentara Budaya Jakarta.  
Source: Artist's personal archives
- Figure 69: Installation view of *Ning*, showing details of the structure.  
Source: Artist's personal archives
- Figure 70: Installation view of *Ning*, showing details of the structure.  
Source: Artist's personal archives
- Figure 71: Installation view of sculptures made of bamboo in *Ning* exhibition.  
Source: Artist's personal archives

- Figure 72: Installation view of terracotta sculptures and sculptures made of bamboo in *Ning* exhibition.  
Source: Artist's personal archives
- Figure 73: Hendrawan Riyanto, *Sumber III (Source III) – Exploring Vacuum*, 2003/2004.  
Source: Artist's personal archives
- Figure 74: Sketch of initial plan of *Sumber III (Source III) – Exploring Vacuum*, 2003.  
Source: *Ning* exhibition catalogue
- Figure 75: Hendrawan Riyanto and F.X. Harsono (left, middle) accompanied by some assistants are installing *Sumber III (Source III) – Exploring Vacuum* at Cemeti Art Gallery, 2003.  
Source: *Ning* exhibition catalogue
- Figure 76: Installation view of *Form Follows Myth* showing some details of the structure, 2004.  
Source: Artist's personal archives
- Figure 77: Illustration of *Mandala Peteng* with notes saying: "Mr. Prapto, this is how the situation of the presentation of sound and movement will be like, more or less" (bottom left corner) and "This work is titled *Mandala Peteng*" (bottom center).  
Source: Artist's personal archives
- Figure 78: Recent condition of the water buffalo sculpture, a component of *Dine with Sri* installation. Photograph taken from a location nearby Rini Darwati's residence in 2018.  
Source: Albert Yonathan Setyawan
- Figure 79: Recent condition of *Sumber III (Source III)*. Photograph taken from a location nearby Rini Darwati's residence in 2018.  
Source: Albert Yonathan Setyawan
- Figure 80: Recent condition of the components of *Ning* installation. Photograph taken from a location nearby Rini Darwati's residence (top) and Faculty of Visual Art & Design ITB (bottom) in 2018.  
Source: Albert Yonathan Setyawan
- Figure 81: One of Hendrawan Riyanto's drawings made on March 21, 1994. Details: 1. "Kyai Haji Ibnu Abdul Syukur Bin Ismail"; 2. "1817 before the time of the Dutch invasion"; 3. "Batavia".  
Source: Artist's personal archives
- Figure 82: One of Hendrawan Riyanto's drawings made on March 22, 1994. Details: 1. "Kyai Haji Ibnu Abdul Munsyi Bin Ismail"; 2. "continuous, growth, under control"; 3. "moving forward, thrown into the center of *Tauhid*"; 4. "hold ground, under control"; 5. "to seek the center, requires the unification of body (*raga*) and *rasa*".  
Source: Artist's personal archives

- Figure 83: One of Hendrawan Riyanto's drawings made in March 17, 1994, a figure named "Sufi Tun Akqirobi" who is said to have come from Persia - the word Tauhid is also written right after that phrase (top left side).  
Source: Artist's personal archives
- Figure 84: One of Hendrawan Riyanto's drawings made on March 18, 1994.  
Source: Artist's personal archives
- Figure 85: One of Hendrawan Riyanto's drawings made on March 28, 1994.  
Source: Artist's personal archives
- Figure 86: One of Hendrawan Riyanto's drawings made on March 29, 1994.  
Source: Artist's personal archives
- Figure 87: One of Hendrawan Riyanto's drawings made on March 18, 1994. The phrase "*Tari Topeng ki Ronggolawe*" is written on the top, "Tari Topeng" means "Mask Dance" in Indonesian – a variation of Javanese traditional dance).  
Source: Artist's personal archives
- Figure 88: One of Hendrawan Riyanto's drawings made on March 23, 1994.  
Source: Artist's personal archives
- Figure 89: A publication banner of a ceramic exhibition at the Ceramic Art Museum - Jakarta's Municipal Art Gallery on December 21, 1983. (Photograph Sudarmadji)  
Source: Astri Wright's Soul, Spirit, and Mountain – Preoccupations of Contemporary Indonesian Painters
- Figure 90: Article about Hendrawan Riyanto's sculpture in KOMPAS newspaper, March 18, 1998 written by H. Sujiwo Tejo.  
Source: KOMPAS
- Figure 91: An article written by Agus Dermawan T. about a group exhibition of contemporary ceramic art titled *Terra Indonesia* in the Art Gallery at The Ministry of Culture and Education, Jakarta, December 12 – 20, 1997, published in KOMPAS newspaper, January 4, 1998.  
Source: KOMPAS
- Figure 92: An article written by Sides Sudyarto D.S. about Hendrawan Riyanto's terracotta sculptures and installation art, published in MATRA magazine, no.129, April 1997.  
Source: Artist's personal archives
- Figure 93: Hendrawan Riyanto's performance art piece at Gallery R-66, Bandung (title, date, year and place of event unknown). The document is showing Hendrawan performing a set of movements/dances inside an installation art piece made of various objects including a video projection.  
Source: Artist's personal archives

- Figure 94: Hendrawan Riyanto, *Fertility Sign System II*, performative installation at Shul, Sika Gallery, Ubud, Bali, date and year of performance unknown. The installation is made out of thread, stone bowl, pebbles, matches and paper.  
Source: Artist's personal archives
- Figure 95: Hendrawan Riyanto, *Inisiasi (Initiation)*, performance art at Centre Culturel Français (CCF) Bandung as part of the event *Puisi Aksi (Action Poem)*–Asbestos, 2002.  
Source: Artist's personal archives
- Figure 96: Hendrawan Riyanto, *Keluarga Pisang (Banana Family)*, performance art at International Performance Art Festival, April 28-30, 2004, Rumah Nusantara – Bandung  
Source: Artist's personal archives
- Figure 97: Hendrawan Riyanto's obituary published on Pikiran Rakyat newspaper May 2004 (date unknown).  
Source: Artist's personal archives



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## **APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX A

### List of exhibitions and art-related activities

#### Workshops

- Workshop on indigenous materials for ASEAN artists, Manila, The Philippines, 1993

#### Solo Exhibitions

- *On Improvisation with String*, Beni Gallery, Kyoto, Japan, 1992
- *The Marriage of Day and Night*, R-66 Gallery, Bandung, Indonesia, 1996
- *...Naliko NING Semeleh...*, Bentara Budaya, Jakarta, Indonesia, 2004

#### Group Exhibitions

- *Pameran Seni Rupa (Lukisan Kaca, Lukisan Canvas, Keramik)*, Galeri Decenta, Bandung, Indonesia, 1986
- *Studio Master Six Ceramic Exhibition*, Nikko Art Gallery, Bandung, Indonesia, 1987
- *Ceramic-Creative*, The Japan Foundation, Jakarta, Indonesia, 1991
- *Ceramics-Expression*, Ministry of Education and Culture, Jakarta, Indonesia, 1991
- *Modern Fine Arts*, Festival Istiqlal I – Indonesian Islamic Culture Exhibition, Jakarta, Indonesia, 1991
- *The Journey to the East and Pohaci Jero Bebegig* (collaborative work), Akademi Seni Tari Indonesia (ASTI), Bandung, Indonesia, 1991
- *Fine Art Exhibition of Bandung Group*, The Japan Foundation, Jakarta, Indonesia, 1991
- *Liwa Earth Quake and the Journey to the East* (collaborative work of visual art, dance and music), Republika-Festival, Jakarta, Indonesia, 1991
- Cultural Exchange of Indonesian and Dutch Artists, Erasmus Building, Rotterdam, The Netherlands, 1996

- *Modernities and Memories: Recent Works from the Islamic World*, Zenobio Institute, 47<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy, 1997, Istanbul Bilgi University, Istanbul, Turkey, 1998
- *Terra Indonesia - Ceramics Exhibition*, National Art Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia, 1997
- *Medium in Medium*, National Art Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia, 1999
- *7 Ceramists Exhibition*, National Art Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia, 1999
- *A Dialogue with Ronggowarsito*, Gelaran Gallery, Yogyakarta, Indonesia, 1999
- *Sharing Time-Soul Boat*, Tejakula, Bali, Indonesia, 2000
- *For A Country*, National Art Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia, 2000
- *Shul*, Sika Contemporary Art Gallery, Ubud, Bali, Indonesia, 2001
- *Dine with Sri*, (collaborative work of visual art, dance and music), JAK-ART, National Museum, Jakarta, Indonesia, 2001
- *10<sup>th</sup> Asian Art Biennale Bangladesh*, Shilpakala Academy, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2001
- *Performing Mandala Wisata*, Samuan Tiga, Bedulu, Bali, Indonesia, 2002
- *Puisi-Aksi (Poem-Act)*, Centre Culturel Français (CCF), Bandung, Indonesia, 2002
- *Water and Earth Ritual* (collaborative work of visual art, dance and music), Selasar Sunaryo Art Space, Bandung, Indonesia, 2002
- *Printmaking Exhibition*, Bentara Budaya, Jakarta, Indonesia, 2002
- *Orientatio-2002*, Centre Culturel Français (CCF), Bandung, Indonesia, 2002
- *Polygame-Performance Art*, Ruang Rupa, Jakarta, Indonesia, 2002
- *CP Open Biennale: Interpellation*, National Art Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia, 2003
- *LAAL, The Passion of Zahoor ul Akhlaq*, Art Gallery of Mississauga, Ontario, Canada, 2003
- *11<sup>th</sup> Asian Art Biennale Bangladesh*, Shilpakala Academy, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2003



## APPENDIX B

### Correspondence Letters with Chitaru Kawasaki 1991 - 1992

Bandung, November 12 1991

Mr Chitaru Kawasaki

Dear Sir,

First of all, by this letter, I would like to say thank you of your kindness to send me a book (Primitivism in the contemporary ceramics). It is very usefull for me to get reference about developing modern ceramic arts in Japan to day. And I use it in my lectures in order to get comparative studies about modern ceramic in the world. In this case, I think modern ceramics in Japan always get much attention from my students.

Beside the above point, I am sorry that I haven't sent any letters yet about my progress in preparing my study in Japan since our last meeting in ceramic department of Faculty of Fine Arts and Design ITB Bandung Indonesia.

But now, I might get a chance to have a study program abroad, The Japan Foundation will give me a sponsor-ship to make a Comparative-study concerning education material and teaching method in the field of ceramic-arts and if it is possible, this program will be held in some educational institution by Government as well as private institution in Japan. It starts in April 1992-March 1993 for about 12 months.

For that reason, The Japan Foundation have suggested me to contact some ceramic artist to ask them to be my advisor.

I will be very happy if you would like to be my advisor in this program. But I understand you might have a very tight program

But now this chance has come, and referring to our conversation in and last time, I feel very honoured to have you as my advisor. And I am grateful for your kindness and attention you gave me that time.

Would you be so kind to send me your reply as soon as possible for the Japan Foundation needs a written approval by the end of November 1991.

Thank you very much and I hoping to hear from you soon.

Your sincerely,



HENDRAWAN RIYANTO

Note:

Here attached :

- Some photos of my ceramic Departments activity
- Some photos of my works

82-22-81214



MARCH 26, 1992  
PROF. CHITARU KAWASAKI  
KYOTO SEIKA UNIVERSITY  
FAX: (075) 722-0838

DEAR PROF. CHITARU KAWASAKI,  
I HAVE RECEIVED THE JAPAN FOUNDATION'S GRANT LETTER ON  
MARCH 24, 1992. THE JAPAN FOUNDATION HAS DECIDED TO  
OFFER ME UNDER THE JAPANESE STUDIES FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM  
FOR A PERIOD OF 8 MONTHS, BEGINNING: APRIL, 1992 AND  
TERMINATING NOVEMBER 1992.  
IT COULD BE DONE BECAUSE OF YOUR GREAT-HELPING TO SUPPORT  
ME. THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

I LIKE TO DO MY FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM ON APRIL OR MAY,  
BUT IN THESE TIME, I HAVE TO PREPARE MY COLLEAGUE  
TO REPLACEMENT MY ACTIVITY ON LECTURES IN CERAMIC  
STUDIO - ITB, AND ALSO THIS MONTH UNTIL THE END  
OF APRIL I HAVE TO FINISH MY OBSERVATION ON "FORM  
AND DECORATIONS" FROM SOME TRADITIONAL-CERAMIC-  
CENTER ON WEST-JAVA. THE RESULT OF THIS OBSERVATION  
WILL BE GIVEN TO MY STUDENT FOR REFERENCES ON  
THEIR CREATIVE'S ACTIVITY.

BASE ON THAT REASONS, MY SCHEDULE FOR THE JAPAN  
FOUNDATION FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM STARTING ON:

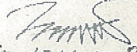
"JUNE 1992 UNTIL JANUARY 1993"

(THE DETAIL OF MY DATE OF ARRIVAL IN JAPAN, ETC. STILL  
IN DISCUSSION WITH THE JAPAN FOUNDATION - JAKARTA  
INDONESIA). I WOULD LIKE YOU TO COMMENT THIS SCHEDULE.

DEAR PROF. CHITARU KAWASAKI,  
I WOULD LIKE TO ASK YOU ABOUT THE NEXT PROCEDURES  
WHICH I MUST DO IN CONNECTING WITH THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR TAKING MY PROGRAM IN KYOTO SEIKA UNIVERSITY, ETC.  
AND IT WILL BE A GREAT HELP IF I CAN GET SOME INFOR-  
MATION ABOUT ACCOMMODATIONS WHICH I CAN BE  
CONTACTED DURING THE TERM OF MY FELLOWSHIP.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR KINDNESS TO REALIZE MY  
FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM.

YOURS SINCERELY

  
HENDRANAN RIYANTO

ENCLOSURES: THE JAPAN FOUNDATION'S  
GRANT LETTER.



May 7, 1992

To Prof. Chitaru Kawasaki  
Ceramic Departement  
Kyoto Seika University

Dear sir,

Thank you very much for your kindness to provide me other to work on the same place as other students and using other facilities such as kiln. Relating with my fellowship programme, it is a good opportunity to me.

I have already written my study plan in The Japan Foundation Japanese Studies Fellowship program application form. But I would like to complete my study plan which it is focussed on teaching of art in ceramic as a medium of expression.

CERAMIC AS A MEDIUM OF EXPRESSION is a new branch of art in Indonesia, in the field of art education in FSRD-ITB. It is the youngest art education compared with other art department, such as painting, graphic art, sculpture department. It needs assistance in its development programme, to give new values on all aspects of art education, such as:

- Educational material
- Teaching Methods
- Staffing Management
- Information in new knowledge and technology
- and, Methodology of how to increase the level of public appreciation on ceramic arts.

Relating with the time of the fellowship programme, it is very hard to get information on all those aspects.

In this short-time programme, I would like to concentrate on :

A. Teaching Methods

To get to this point, it will be a great help if this aspect could be done in a class activity. To do ceramic activity with a tutor. I hope this can make a good-way to fell and to know-deeper the teaching method.

B. New Knowledge and Technology

To work in a ceramic studio or workshop (private studio) which will give various experiences knowledge in material and technology, and it would be a great help to support teaching ceramic art on my department.

2 # : MARTEL, ITB, BANDUNG



C. Methodology to increase the public appreciation level on ceramic arts.

This point due to the developing ceramic art in Indonesia good relationship between "public appreciation" and art institution (art education) will support it. In my opinion, to develop the increasing public appreciation is also a responsibility of educational of art institution. I would try to get the methodology to increase the public level on ceramic art by observation on some ceramic centre, museums, galleries, etc.

I would like to discuss my programme with you and also the duration of each of the schedule of my programme to make a better programme.

I has got the day of departure from Indonesia on June 13, 1992. Base of this date of departure, I think, I can start to contact Kyoto Seika University on June 15, 1992, and I hope, I can discuss my fellowship programme with you as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,



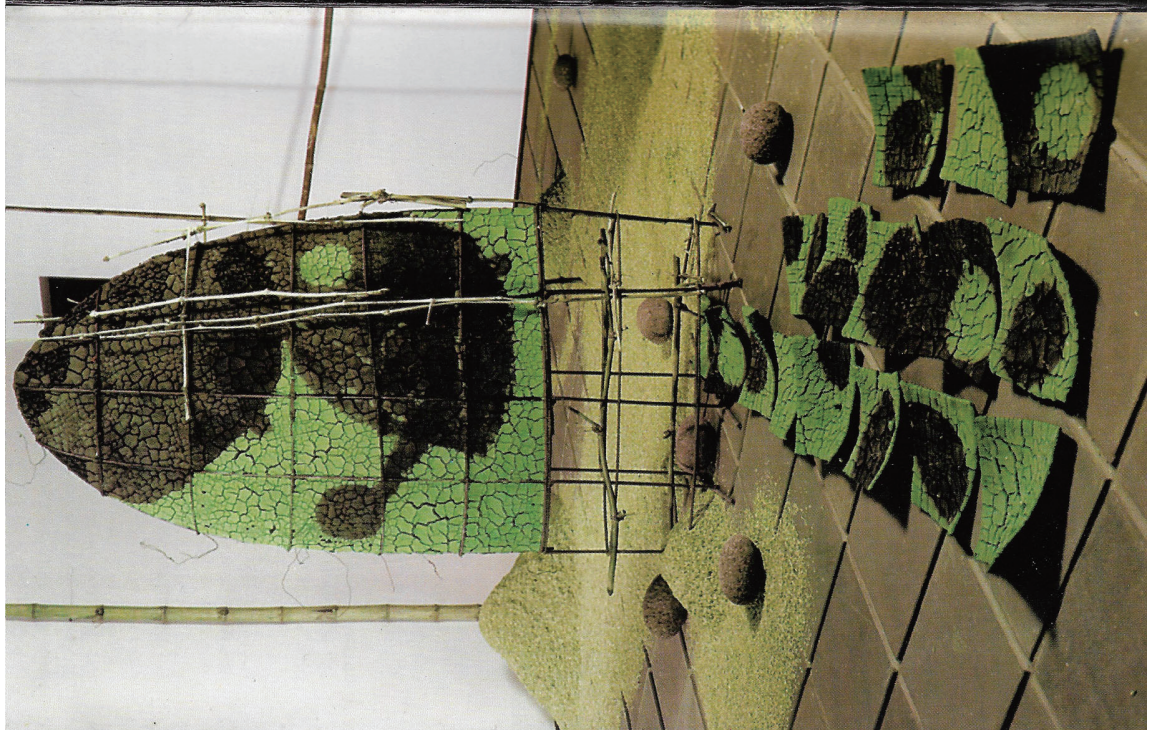
Hendrawan Riyanto



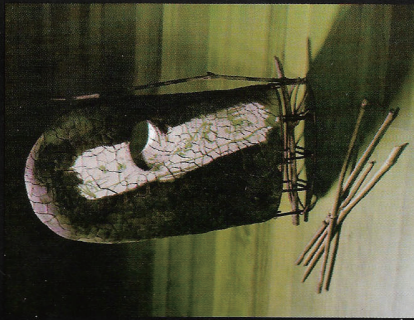
## **APPENDIX C**

### **Exhibition Leaflet**

***The Marriage of Day and Night* - Hendrawan Riyanto's solo exhibition at R-66 Gallery,  
Bandung, Indonesia, August 10 - 22, 1996**



**PART OF THE INSTALATION "MOTHERS", 1997.**  
Ceramic, Metal, Bamboos, Straws. 5 x 5 m.  
Foto: Herlambang R

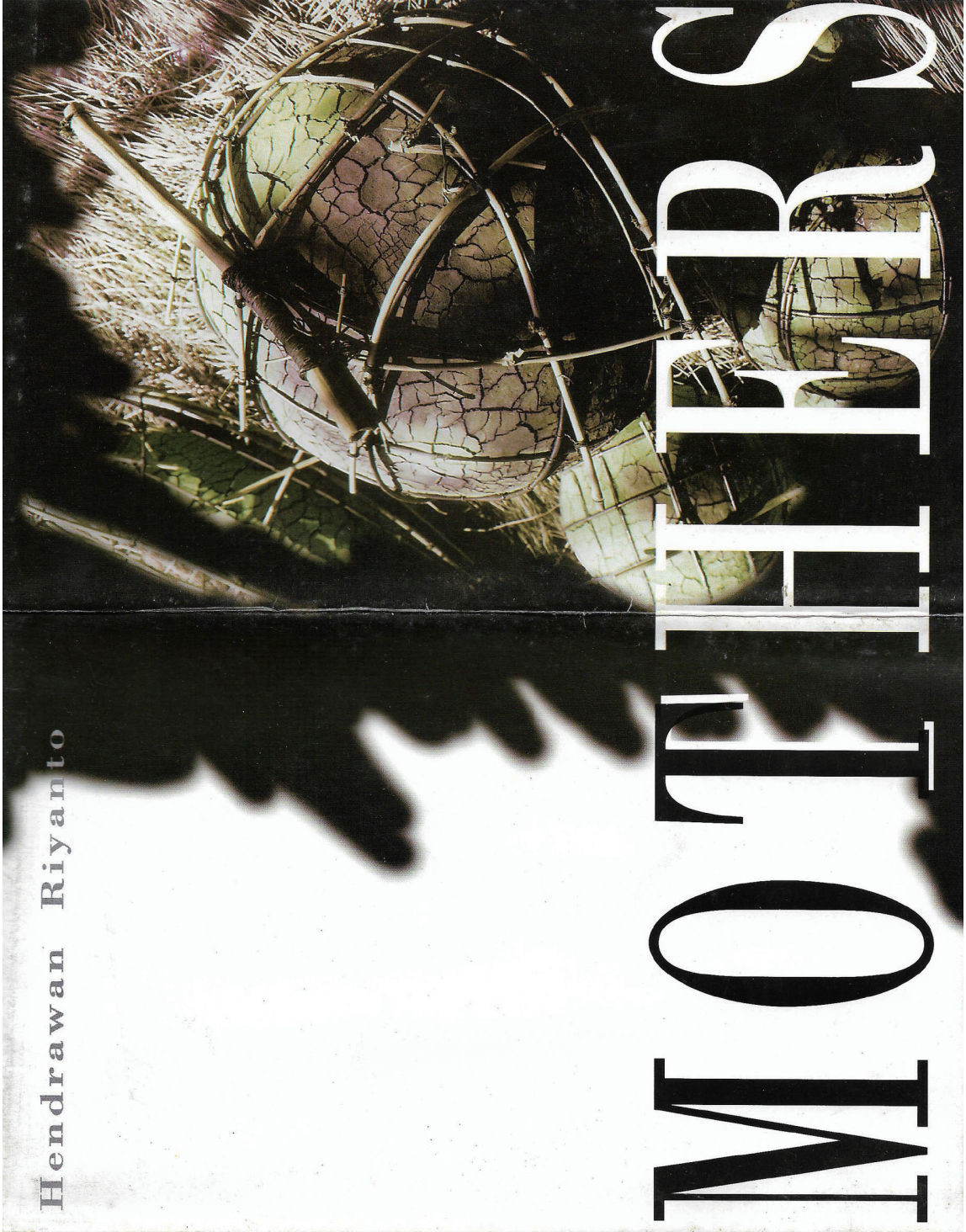


**"WHITE FIELD", 1997.**  
Ceramic, Metal, Bamboos. 50 x 15 x 70 cm.  
Foto: Herlambang R



Hendrawan Riyanto

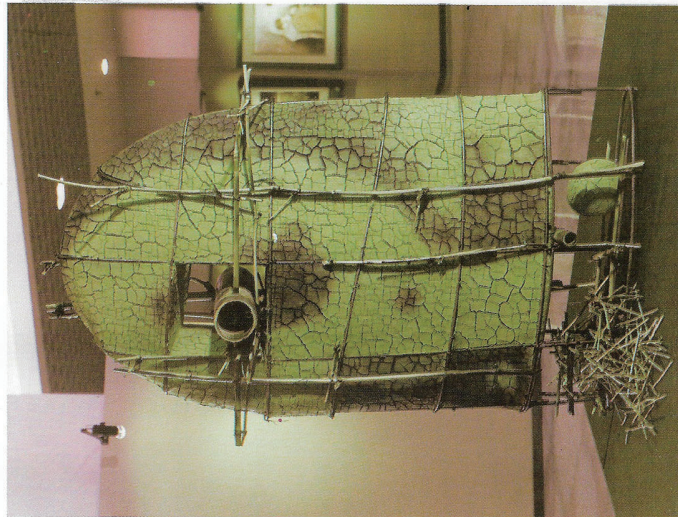
# MOTIFERS





**HENDRAWAN RIYANTO**

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 Phone/Faximile : 62-22- 301531, 62-22-761624



**"QALBU - FIELD", 1997.**  
 Ceramic, Metal, Bamboos. 80 x 80 x 80 cm, Foto: Anas Siragar



**PART OF THE INSTALATION "MOTHERS", 1997.** Ceramic, Metal, Bamboos, Straws.  
 5 x 5 x5 m, Foto: Herlambang R.



Education :

- 1986 : Graduated from Department of Ceramic  
Faculty of Fine Arts and Design - ITB
- 1987-now : Lecturer at Faculty of Fine Arts and Design - ITB
- 1988 : Decoration of Ceramic at Tajimi-Nagoya ,  
Japan sponsored by : JICA
- 1992-1993 : Study Ceramic at Kyoto - Japan  
(under Professor Chitaru Kawasaki-Kyoto Seika University)  
sponsored by: The Japan Foundation.
- 1993 : Workshop on the indigenous materials for ASEAN artists,  
Manila, The Philippines

Exhibition :

- 1987 : "Ceramic - Creative", The Japan Foundation Jakarta, Indonesia
- 1988 : "Ceramic - Expression", Depdikbud, Jakarta, Indonesia.
- 1991 : "Modern Fine Arts", Festival Istiqal I, Jakarta, Indonesia
- 1992 : Solo Exhibition "Ceramic Works", Beni Gallery, Tokyo , Japan
- 1993 : "8th Asian Art Exhibition", Fukuoka, Japan
- 1994 : 1) "9th Asian Art Exhibition", Taipei, Taiwan  
2) "The Journey to the East and Pohaci Jero Babegig"  
ASTI Bandung, Indonesia  
3) "Fine Arts Exhibition of Bandung Group,  
The Japan Foundation, Jakarta  
4) "Liwa Earthquake and the Journey to the East",  
Plaza TIM, Jakarta, Indonesia  
5) "Varieties of Fine Arts, 1994",  
Taman Budaya, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
- 1995 : 1) "Contemporary Arts of the countries of Non Aligned Movement",  
Jakarta, Indonesia  
2) "Contemporary Arts - Istiqal Festival II", Jakarta, Indonesia  
3) "International Ceramic Design", Tajimi, Japan
- 1996: 1) "Arts Across Overseas - Pohaci Jero Babegig",  
Kopenhagen, Denmark  
2) Solo Exhibition : "Ceramic - Arts Festival of Surabaya",  
Surabaya, Indonesia  
3) Solo Exhibition: "The Marriage of Day and Night",  
R-66 Gallery Bandung, Indonesia.



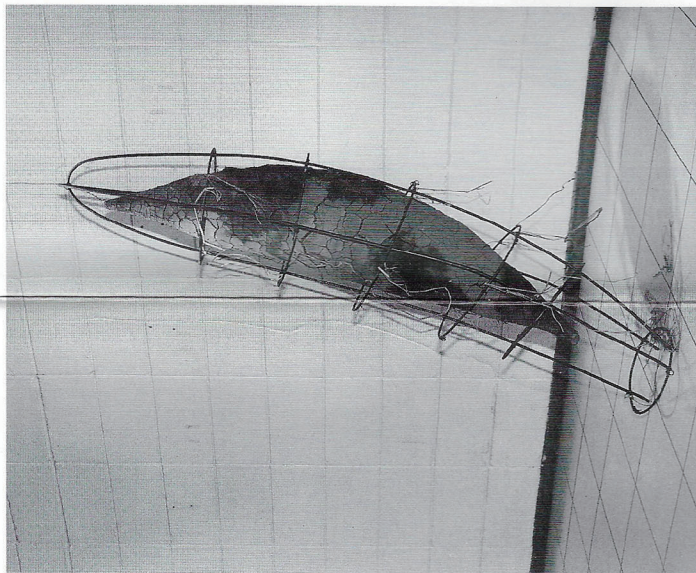


August 1996

Most of people's hustle bustle is related to an effort to survive life, less attention being paid to other purpose. Possibly writing about philosophy and creating art works are human activity which is not attached to the provision of physical needs. As it has been stated by a huge philosopher, Wittgenstein : "After all physical needs being fulfilled, our real needs - that is spiritual one - have not been touched. In creating works of arts such as literature, fine arts, people concentrate to the non-pragmatical things, and the created works are not beneficial for the life of materialistic domain. The works are right in the centre of spiritual life atmosphere, which is real for forming our existence as human beings. It is as real as the realities that can be touched and measured .

The field of arts is a real locus for a participation of individual in the process of thinking that reflect, and at the same time, realize the existence of human being in this world. From century to century on the history of culture, works of arts have emerged as a visualization of the various views of basic questions about life.

In facing the ceramic works of Hendrawan Riyanto, we can



"CATCHING THE COOCON SPIRIT"  
ø 50 cm, H 140 cm

1997. Ceramic, Metal, Grass.

named anew : ceramic.

The clay material has been arranged by the artist - or in Hendrawan's term : being coordinated by a number of element Esthetic

meet and befriend with a person who chooses his life as a thinker or reflector, and as a ceramic artist he can re-examine his reflections through creation process. In his effort to match his ideas and insight to a real material - clay - he can search carefully his prediction or belief which has been filtered from his life experience to be shaped into formula, and further he can put forward some constellation of very innovative and personal ideas. Hendrawan tried to see himself and all of his surrounding by taking a distance. My impression is, Hendrawan is courageous to questionize things which seems to be quite common around us, not to hesitate them, nor to reject them, but he needs to know and love them more. I dare say that Hendrawan's ceramic works reflect his love carefully and attentively in order to know better the most common element : clay - which is usually under our feet - to be managed, shaped until they can function and "speak out". In Hendrawan's hands, clay has become a full, connotative medium of expression. Appreciator only sees the earth, the fired clay then changes its characters until it is then

elements in such a way until there it is created a form that provides a wide room of interpretation, without any ikon that will direct and limit the appreciator's knowledge. Openness of the art works toward interpretation is intended to provide for the appreciator a new experience, that enrich their horizon from the unpredictable point of view.

PART OF THE INSTALATION "MOTHERS", 1997. Ceramic, Metal, Bamboos, Straws. 5 x 5 x 5 m, Foto: Syalbin Ilyas



What did Hendrawan do, and what did he create?

First of all, he observed the condition and nature of the clay in nature before it is touched by people. It is reactions to rain, sun, pressure, he realizes the different visualization and characters in each condition, such as that emerges through lines of cracks, or textures of the surface as well as colour tones, and chose a number of special characters to be exploited further.

The realization phase from the raw materials to visual forms which is called art works, is easily followed in Hendrawan's works: wet clay is placed on the frames of iron bars on its dual surface, and without waiting for its driedness - as those which is commonly demanded in the field of ceramic - , the bulk of clay is then given to element of fire. In the firing process - which is dramatic in nature the original characters of clay are realised and eternalized. The firing process completes the biography of

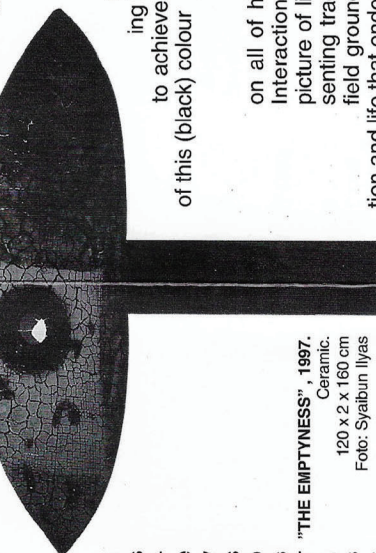
clay, its fertilizing character disappeared, and its forms cannot be changed anymore. With this end result, for this form and final status, Hendrawan is fully responsible. Impressions and messages given by the art objects is a temporary conclusion of this young artist towards his life situation.

Hendrawan has worked without guidance, in a sense, he has no example to be followed. His plan is based on the characters of available materials, and caught the analogous characters in themselves, in human condition in general. Some inputs from the natures of materials, are as important as the hands that shake ideas for the creative process, it is really difficult to know which present first: enthusiasm towards materials exploitation, or enthusiasm to express ideas, and actually creation process for Hendrawan flows in a two process or domain that do not always work gradually, that do not always work interchangeably: his hands begins to shape the materials, his brain watches and analyse the physical development, and then a newly-found technique, or a certain technical obstacle, open imagination and support preceding idea to a direction that has not been investigated before. In the condition of half done, Hendrawan is eager to continue his job in his dedication to the reality of the materials and he

attachment or arrangement of clay in big bulks possible. This frame also direct the presentation of cracks, and determine the degree of plasticity on the surface field with its concavity and curvatures. Mathematical clarity on the frames obviously present a

minimum of regularities of cracks, exposing tissues as the beginning of regularity, at least. There emerges similarities in shapes and sizes. However, the element of change by chance can be overcome as long as it is necessary, and the integrated works are guaranteed.

On this base or background, in form of bulks of clay, Hendrawan then add "something", as a black ribbon, that repeat the basic forms, to more clarify vertical direction, and emphasis to the vertical direction immediately "speaks out", for example it shows standing-stillness, which we always associate with life, the growth of positive values. But the character of the black colour in the centre of relief field in fact add to the tone that we usually relate to difficult, serious or formal experience. The warmly red as an indication or evidence of the firing process, and gloomy black results a contradiction, and stimulate our association. We may remember the distance - that we often regret about - between our vitality to live prosperously, meaningfully, against all of weaknesses or handicap that obstacle our daily efforts. For Hendrawan as a ceramic artist, the colouring of black by way of reductive firing is a common thing, although it is not easy to achieve, but the main reason in the presence of

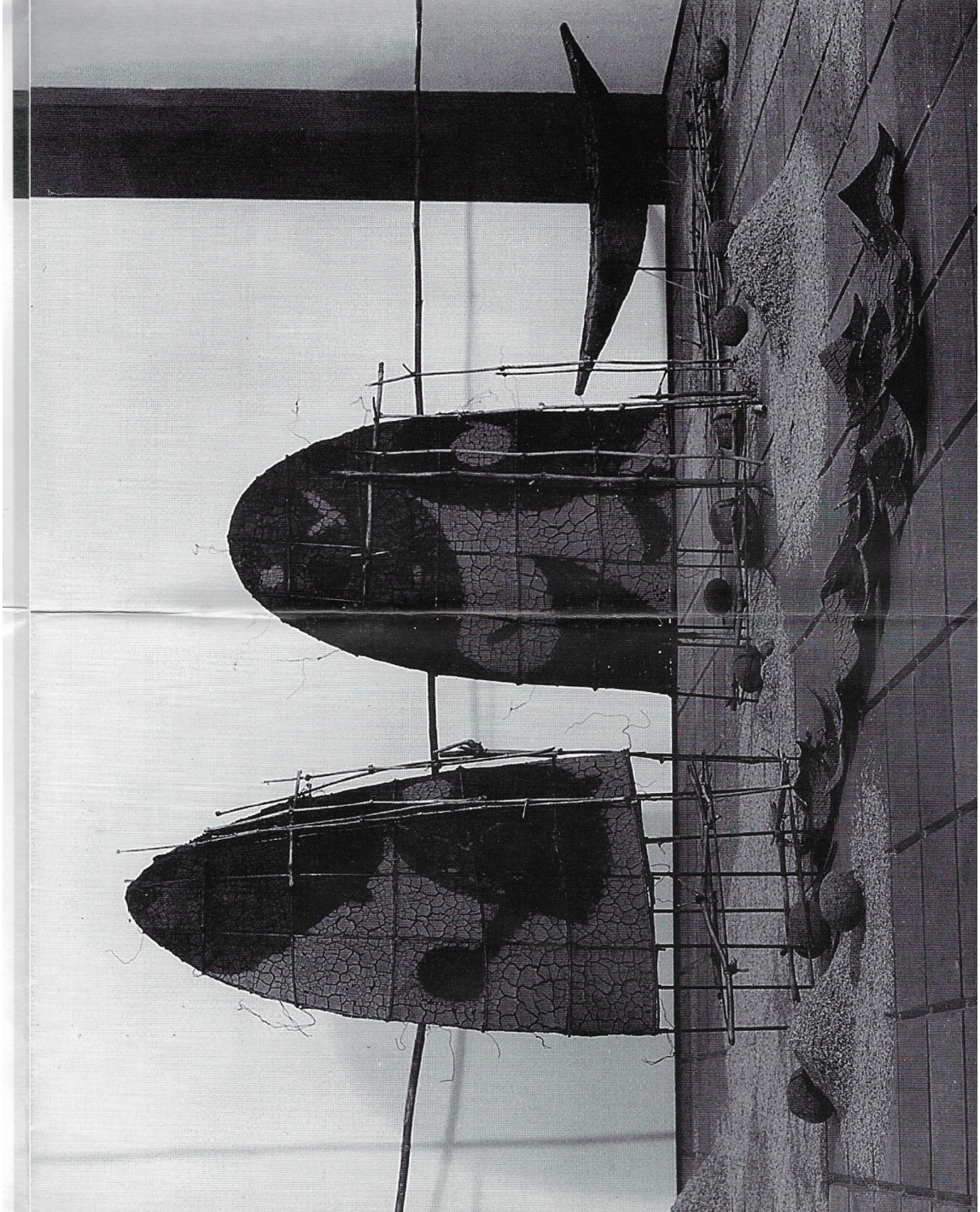


on all of his works in this period is not technical. Interaction between red and black is abstracting a picture of life in the villages, as a pure visual, representing traces which are created by fire on the rice-field ground after harvest time as a trace of fertilization and life that ended.

This condition - by Hendrawan - is understood as an inevitable phase, a phase that precedes a new life. In further connotation Hendrawan articulates unity of thin black layer and the body of ceramic individually: "I am as earth, and my shadow is an evidential sign of my presence". Maybe as an analogy I could say that the high

"THE EMPTYNESS", 1997.  
Ceramic.  
120 x 2 x 160 cm  
Foto: Syaibun Ilyas







even sacrifices his former ideas when it is necessary. This means that Hendrawan does not begin from sketches which are then magnified and realized through the certain material. Neither does Hendrawan begin from a certain concept that promote his realization of works. He knows the final forms of his works at the time he considers that his works are completed. It is obvious that the characters of materials, techniques of treating materials, also determines visualization and final characters of his works. The art works available in this exhibition is not intended to express a certain concept, Hendrawan wants to survive his freedom to continuously change, or to be more precise: to be changed by a number of factors, that is found both in his professional field as well as social bound (attachment) with peoples. As it is stated by him: "I do not mean to conclude any concept at all. I only recite a comment." The iron and wire frame as a base for clay has a certain size and "shape", its function is not only for to make

quality of Hendrawan's works, is also a proof of his presence among us, that signs temporary position of a human being that reflects himself and his environment. And he looks serious and happy. Are Hendrawan's works beautiful? Is it appropriate to call them aesthetics?, it seems that those both two terms cannot be articulated before these works, which is not beautified with glaze and their colours, but they express identities of ceramic bodies which is natural, common, honest instead.

In my opinion, the Hendrawan's language - his visual language - is very obvious that we are all able to

understand, after appreciating and comparing his works, and reflect, and it is possible that the reflection can enhance our understanding to a wider and more comprehensive awareness.

perface of Solo Exhibition at Studio R-66, August 1996. by Rita Widagdo, (sculptor, lecturer of Faculty of Fine Arts and Design Bandung Institute of Technology - Indonesia)



"A piece of clay has a flexible capacity to change or to be changed into a figure "personalized", since a piece of clay is also an existence of a piece of Life Vitality. The vitality that gives advantages for all creatures. The clay is not only an object, it exists as a subject. Human being should love this (natural) subject, since won't human being become earth some time in the future ?

And...

Playing with clay as though I open the book of science unlimited of its pages. From "page of fire", "page of air, "page of water" up to "page of earth". Conclusions arised are just a process of temporary understanding about page quantity being read.



## APPENDIX D

**Exhibition text by Rita Widagdo for Hendrawan Riyanto's solo exhibition: *The Marriage of Day and Night* - Hendrawan Riyanto's solo exhibition, R-66 Gallery, Bandung, Indonesia, August 10 - 22, 1996.**

Agustus 1996

Sebagian besar kesibukan manusia berhubungan dengan upaya mempertahankan kehidupan, hanya sedikit perhatian diberikan pada tujuan lain. Mungkin menulis tentang falsafah dan menciptakan karya seni adalah salah satu kegiatan manusia yang tidak terikat pada penyediaan keperluan jasmani. Namun seperti dikatakan oleh seorang filsuf besar abad ini, Wittgenstein: "Setelah semua kebutuhan jasmani terpenuhi kebutuhan kita yang sebenarnya, yang batiniah, belum tersentuh". Dalam berkarya seni seperti di bidang musik sastra, seni rupa, manusia berkonsentrasi pada hal-hal yang tidak pragmatis, dan karya yang dihasilkan memang tidak berguna dalam Kawasan hidup yang materiil, tetapi berada tepat di tengah lingkungan kehidupan spiritual, yang sebenarnya bagi pembentukan eksistensi kita sebagai manusia, sama nyata seperti realitas yang dapat diraba dan diukur. Bidang seni adalah lokasi nyata bagi partisipasi seorang individu dalam proses berfikir yang merefleksikan dan menyadarkan keberadaan manusia di dunia ini. Dari abad ke abad sepanjang sejarah kebudayaan, karya seni tampil sebagai visualisasi dari aneka pandangan terhadap pertanyaan-pertanyaan dasar mengenai kehidupan.

Menghadapi karya keramik Hendrawan Riyanto, kita dapat bertemu dan berteman dengan seorang yang memilih hidup untuk merenung, dan sebagai senirupawan ia dapat menguji kembali renungannya melalui proses mencipta. Dalam upaya mengikat kembali ide dan pandangan pada suatu bahan nyata – tanah – ia dapat menyelidiki secara cermat dugaan maupun keyakinan yang telah disaring dari pengalaman kehidupan untuk dirumuskan, dan lebih jauh ia dapat melontarkan suatu konstelasi pemikiran yang inovatif dan sangat pribadi. Hendrawan berusaha untuk

memandang dirinya sendiri dan seluruh isi lingkungan hidupnya secara serius, dengan mengambil jarak. Kesan saya, Hendrawan berani mempertanyakan hal-hal yang nampak seakan-akan lazim di sekitar kita, tidak untuk meragukannya, atau untuk menolak kehadirannya, melainkan untuk dapat lebih mengenal dan mencintainya. Saya berani mengatakan bahwa karya keramik Hendrawan mencerminkan cintanya yang secara berhati-hati dan seksama menjajaki elemen yang paling biasa: tanah, yang biasanya ada dibawah kaki kita, diolah, dibentuk, sampai dapat berfungsi sebagai tanda yang “berbicara”.

Di tangan Hendrawan, tanah menjadi medium bagi ungkapan yang penuh konotasi. Pengamat sebenarnya melihat tanah saja, tanah yang dibakar kemudian berubah sifat sehingga diberikan nama baru: keramik. Bahan tanah itu oleh seniman telah diatur – atau dalam istilah Hendrawan: dikoordinir dengan sejumlah unsur visual sedemikian rupa sehingga terciptalah suatu ujud yang menyediakan ruang interpretasi yang luas, tanpa ikon yang akan mengarahkan dan membatasi pengertian pengamat. Keterbukaan karya bagi interpretasi dimaksudkan untuk menyajikan pada pengamat suatu pengalaman baru, memperkaya wawasannya dari sudut pandang yang tak terduga.

Apa yang Hendrawan berbuat, dan apa yang ia hasilkan? Pertama, ia observasi keadaan dan sifat tanah di alam sebelum disentuh oleh tangan manusia, yaitu reaksinya terhadap hujan, matahari, tekanan, ia sadari perbedaan rupa dan karakter pada masing-masing kondisi, seperti yang tampil melalui garis-garis retakan, atau tekstur permukaan serta nada-nada warna, dan memilih beberapa ciri khas untuk dieksploitir lebih jauh. Langkah-langkah realisasi karya seni dari bahan mentah sampai pada bentuk visual yang disebut karya seni, mudah untuk diikuti dalam karya Hendrawan: tanah basah ditempatkan pada suatu rangka besi beton dari kedua mukanya, dan tanpa menunggu pengeringan seperti yang umum dituntut di bidang keramik, lempengan tanah yang besar itu diserahkan pada elemen api. Dalam proses pembakaran – yang sebenarnya dramatis, sifat-sifat

asli dari tanah muncul dengan jelas, dan diabadikan. Proses pembakaran menyelesaikan riwayat hidup dari tanah, kesuburannya hilang, dan bentuknya tak dapat berubah lagi.

Atas hasil akhir ini, atas ujud dan status final ini, Hendrawan bertanggung jawab penuh. Kesan dan pesan yang disampaikan oleh objek seninya merupakan kesimpulan sementara dari seniman muda ini terhadap situasi hidupnya. Hendrawan bekerja tanpa pegangan dalam arti: tidak ada contoh yang ditiru. Ia merancang berdasarkan sifat-sifat pada bahan yang tersedia, dan menangkap ciri-ciri analog dalam dirinya sendiri, dalam kondisi manusia secara umum. Input dari sifat-sifat bahan, dan tangan yang menggoncangkan pemikiran sama-sama penting bagi proses kreatif, susah untuk mengetahui yang mana hadir duluan: gairah terhadap eksploitasi bahan, atau gairah untuk mengungkapkan suatu ide, dan sebenarnya proses cipta bagi Hendrawan berjalan dalam dua yang tak selalu bergantian: tangannya mulai membentuk bahan, otaknya mengawasi dan menganalisa perkembangan ujud, kemudian suatu penemuan teknis yang baru, ataupun suatu halangan teknis tertentu, membuka imajinasi dan mendorong ide awal ke suatu arah yang belum pernah diselidiki sebelumnya. Justru dalam keadaan setengah jadi, Hendrawan bernafsu untuk melanjutkan pekerjaan dalam dedikasi pada kenyataan materi, mengorbankan ide semula bila perlu. Ini berarti bahwa Hendrawan tidak mulai dari suatu sketsa yang kemudian diperbesar dan dipindahkan ke dalam suatu bahan tertentu. Hendrawan juga tidak mulai dari suatu konsep tertentu yang mengendalikan realisasi karya. Ia mengetahui rupa akhir dari karyanya baru pada saat dimana ia menganggap karyanya sudah selesai. Jelas bahwa sifat bahan, teknik pengolahan, ikut menentukan rupa dan karakter akhir dari karya. Benda-benda seni yang dapat disaksikan dalam pameran ini tidak diciptakan untuk mengungkapkan suatu konsep tertentu, Hendrawan ingin mempertahankan kebebasannya untuk terus menerus berubah, atau lebih tetap: untuk diubah oleh aneka factor, yang ditemukan baik di bidang profesinya maupun dalam keterikatan sosial dengan sesamanya seperti yang dikatakan Hendrawan: “Saya tidak bermaksud menyimpulkan suatu konsep. Saya hanya menyampaikan suatu komentar saja”.

Kerangka besi dan kawat sebagai alas bagi tanah mempunyai ukuran dan “shape” tertentu, tetapi gunanya tidak saja untuk memungkinkan penyusunan tanah dalam ukuran agak besar. Kerangka besi itu sekaligus mengarahkan berlangsungnya retakan, dan menentukan derajat plastisitas pada permukaan bidang dengan cekung-cembungnya. Kejelasan matematis pada rangka ternyata menghadirkan suatu minimum akan keteraturan pada retakan, menampilkan jaringan-jaringan sebagai permulaan akan regularitas, paling sedikit. Timbul kemiripan dalam shape dan ukuran. Dengan demikian unsur kebetulan dapat dijinakkan seperlunya supaya keutuhan karya terjamin. Diatas dasar atau latar belakang berupa lempengan tanah itu, Hendrawan kemudian menambahkan “*sesuatu*”, seperti sebuah pita hitam, yang mengulang format dasar, memperjelas arah vertical, dan penekanan pada arah vertical segera “berbicara”, umpama mengenai ketegakan, yang kita selalu mengasosiasikan dengan kehidupan, pertumbuhan sebagai nilai-nilai positif. Namun karakter dari warna hitam di tengah bidang relief ternyata menambahkan suatu nada yang kita biasanya mengaitkan dengan pengalaman yang gawat, serius atau resmi. Merah-hangat sebagai indikasi atau bukti bagi proses pembakaran, dan hitam-suram menimbulkan kontradiksi, dan merangsang asosiasi kita. Mungkin kita teringat pada selisih yang kita sering sesalkan antara daya hidup kita yang ingin menjadi subur, yang ingin berguna, dan segala kekurangan serta cacat yang menghambat upaya kita sehari-hari.

Bagi Hendrawan sebagai ahli keramik, pewarnaan hitam itu melalui pembakaran reduksi adalah hal yang wajar, meskipun tidak mudah tercapai, namun sebab utama dalam kehadiran warna hitam itu pada semua karya periode ini tidak bersifat teknis. Interaksi antara merah dan hitam mengabstraksikan suatu gambar dari kenyataan hidup di desa, sebagai penyederhanaan visual yang sangat murni, mewakili bekas-bekas yang ditinggalkan oleh api di atas tanah sawah sesudah panen sebagai jejak dari kesuburan dan kehidupan yang telah berakhir.



Keadaan ini oleh Hendrawan justru dimengerti sebagai fase yang tak dapat dihindari, fase yang mendahului kehidupan baru. Dalam konotasi lebih jauh Hendrawan mengartikan kesatuan antara lapisan hitam tipis dan badan keramik secara pribadi: “Saya sebagai tanah, dan bayangan saya sebagai tanda bukti kehadiran saya”. Mungkin sebagai analogi boleh saya menyebutkan karya-karya Hendrawan yang bermutu tinggi ini, juga sebagai bukti kehadirannya antara kita, yang menandai posisi sementara seorang manusia yang merefleksikan dirinya sendiri dan lingkungannya. Dan ia Nampak sebagai manusia yang sekaligus serius dan bahagia. Apakah karya Hendrawan indah? Apakah tepat bila disebut estetis?, rupanya kedua istilah ini sama-sama tidak dapat disebut di depan karya keramik ini, yang tidak dipercantik oleh lapisan gelasir dengan warnanya, melainkan memperlihatkan identitas body keramik yang berciri alamiah, wajar, jujur. Menurut hemat saya, bahasa Hendrawan – bahasa visualnya – adalah sangat jelas sehingga kita semua akan sanggup mengertinya, setelah mengamati dan membandingkan karyanya, dan merenung, dan mungkin hasil renungan itu dapat mengangkat pengertian kita ke tingkat kesadaran yang lebih luas, dan komprehensif. Terima kasih pada Hendrawan Riyanto yang telah mengantar pemikiran kami melalui karyanya pada hal-hal yang esensiil.

Bandung, 23 Juli 1996

Rita Widagdo

## APPENDIX E

**Curatorial text by A.D. Pirous on Hendrawan Riyanto's work in the exhibition: *Modernities and Memories: Recent Works from the Islamic World*, Zenobio Institute, 47<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy, June 15 - November 9, 1997.**

Participating artists: Abdoulaye Konaté (Mali), Adel El Sawi (Egypt), Anusapati (Indonesia), Farid Belkahia (Morocco), Hasan Musa (Sudan), Hendrawan Riyanto (Indonesia), Inci Eviner (Turkey), Rachid Koraïchi (Algeria), Serhat Kiraz (Turkey), Setiawan Sabana (Indonesia) Zahoor ul Akhlaq (Pakistan), Zulkifli Yusoff (Malaysia)

### **Hendrawan Riyanto / Indonesia**

A piece of clay has a flexible capacity to be changed into a 'personalized' figure, since a piece of clay is also an example of a piece of life, with the same vitality imbued in all creatures. The clay is not only an object, it is a subject. Human beings should love this natural subject, since they all will become earth/clay themselves in the end. When I play with clay, it is as though I open the pages of a book of science: from the 'page of fire', the 'page of air', the 'page of water', up to the 'page of earthen conclusions'. They are part of a process of temporary understanding, about pages being briefly read.

Artist Statement, 1997

Hendrawan Riyanto is a ceramic artist whose visual expression is often enriched by natural forms and materials such as straw, bamboo, stone, etc. The materials are familiar and support the process of ceramic making. Hendrawan appreciates clay, for he believes that clay and human beings are close to one another. He refers to Adam as a human being who originated from clay, and notes that human beings will always eventually return to the earth.

Hendrawan is a lover of land and its spirituality. He is against man's commercial treatment of land when it ignores the spiritual aspect. He believes that earth is an important part of human life although it is formless. The earth accommodates even unfriendly interventions by humans, and because it has no 'form' of its own, it takes on human identity.

Hendrawan's "Inner Mothers" seems to be inspired by these thoughts about clay, and intends to portray a spiritual life between human beings and their environment, as well as to portray family relationships. The forms, appearing from the ground, resemble the symbol of motherhood, standing, bowing and seated. The main form is surrounded by other natural materials, such as egg-shaped stones, bamboo, paddy, straw and other pieces of clay. All these objects are arranged to create a family relationship between the mother and her children. Here is the inner quality of an everlasting family relationship. The love of a mother is not affected by the physical process (being young, old, good-looking, strong or weak). Hendrawan sees earth as an apex of the eternal process, like the never-ending love of a mother.

A. D. Pirous, January, 1997

## APPENDIX F

### **Curatorial Text by Hendro Wiyanto on Hendrawan Riyanto's work in *JIWA: Jakarta Biennale 2017*, Gudang Sarinah Ekosistem, November 5 - December 10, 2017.**

Participating artists: Abdi Karya, Afrizal Malna, Alastair MacLennan, Alexey Klyuykov, Vasil Artamonov & Dominik Forman, Ali Al-fatlawi, Wathiq Al-ameri, Aliansyah Caniago, Arin Rungjang, Chiharu Shiota, Choy Ka Fai, Dana awartani, Darlane Litaay, David Gheron Tretiakoff, Dineo Seshee Bopape, Em'kal Eyongakpa, Eva Kot'átková, Gabriela Golder, Garin Nugroho, Gede Mahendra Yasa, Hanafi, Hito Steyerl, Ho Rui An, I Made Djirna, Imhathai Suwatthanasilp, Jason Lim, Karrabing Film Collective, Keisuke Takahashi, Kiri Dalena, Luc Tuymans, Marintan Sirait, Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc, Nikhil Chopra, Otty Widasari, Pawel Althamer, Pinaree Sanpitak, PM Toh, Ratu Rizkitasari Saraswati, Robert Zhao Renhui, Shamow'el Rama Surya, Siti adiyati, Ugo Untoro, Willem de Rooij, Wukir Suryadi, Ximena Cuevas, Yola Yulfianti, Komunitas Bissu, Dwi Putro Mulyono (Pak Wi), Ni Tanjung, Dolorosa Sinaga, Hendrawan Riyanto, I Wayan Sadra, Semsar Siahaan

Hendrawan Riyanto

1959 - 2004 / Archival material, artworks

Hendrawan Riyanto was a ceramic artist who is being given special attention at the Jakarta Biennale 2017 in the Revisiting History section. The section showcases both the works and the archives of artists who are considered to have contributed distinctively to the world of fine arts. Even after his death, the traces and echoes of his work are still present in the world of arts.

Hendrawan studied ceramic arts at the Faculty of Arts and Design, Bandung Institute of Technology, and then respectively at Tajimi-Nagoya, Kyoto Sheika University (under the guidance of the Japanese ceramics expert Professor Chitaru Kawasaki), and Shigaraki, Japan.



For him, there was no medium more fundamental than clay. His art practice was a parable akin to the opening of a great book of science. He found in it the knowledge of “fire”, “air”, “water”, and “earth”. Rita Widagdo, a senior artist and sculptor from the Bandung Institute of Technology, observed that Hendrawan’s creative process was double-faced. It contained a passion for exploration at the material stage—which was clay—and enthusiasm for expressing personal ideas. These two parts of Hendrawan’s creative process were not mutually interchangeable; it could not be established which came first. His observations about the particular nature of the material were parallel to his sensitivity to the human condition around him. It was at this point that the young Hendrawan could no longer base his work on the creations of previous artists. He had no predecessors in this unique ceramic realm.

For Hendrawan, a lump of clay contained a flexible capacity to change or be changed into unique forms. The material of clay has the vitality of life. It is this vitality that drives all creatures; thus clay is not just an object, but a subject. Humans should love this natural subject because one day in the future we will all return to the soil.

As an art branch that is often categorized as craft, ceramic art is considered lower than fine arts or “Art”. This distinction is based on an ontological view in the long history of art. Admittedly or not, that situation is not seldom faced by artists in this field, including Hendrawan. However, Hendrawan saw the opposite: the broad spectrum and flexibility of clay make it a medium that is unparalleled in the way that it breaks down the boundaries of hierarchical categories in the realm of art.

With a deeper awareness, Hendrawan attributed his ceramic art practice to a syncretic cultural heritage and premodern Indonesian spiritual values. In this culture, the knowing subject makes the reality of his consciousness an object outside of himself. The pattern of relationships with nature

is not merely rational, but it also possesses an immersion of emotion. At that moment, the subject perceives itself as an object. The subject-object distance is abandoned and replaced by the concept of integration and participation. That very dimension of feeling was what was studied and lived by Hendrawan in cultural practices in the country, specifically Javanese culture. When he revived the tradition of pottery-making in Pagerjuran, Bayat, Klaten, in Central Java with Professor Chitaru Kawasaki several years ago, he felt that he had discovered the spirit of his artistic virtue in this place.

Like some other vanguard artists in Indonesia, Hendrawan realized that he existed between two cultural entities at once, the culture of reason and the culture of intuition. The first gave birth to modernity with all its novelty or progressive noise, the latter being our “colder” or “old” cultural heritage. As an artist living in the present, he believed that he was at a point of equidistance between the two. The former is based entirely on the consciousness of the autonomous subject that looks forward, even the subject as the center, totality, and standard (*subjectum*). This modernity gave birth to the autonomy and freedom of the secular individual, but for Hendrawan the subject should also be traced to its origin, because its position is “subjected”, i.e. under a certain sovereignty.

It was at this point that Hendrawan attempted to trace back the mythical space within society—especially in Java—which he called “archaic”, the “origin space” as practiced by the cultivators and peasants. The space is, of course, not a secular space; instead, it refers to a transcendent reality that Hendrawan identified in terms of “spirit,” “God,” “*ning*” or “silence” (“*hening*”). The development of his work then focused on efforts to represent “silence” or “*ning*” as a discourse against the noise of the modern world in which he lived.

At this meeting point, Hendrawan began to trace and recognize the reality of his surroundings, which contained traces of religiosity or sacredness. Sacredness exists in matter, the earth, plants, inanimate objects, and of course man himself. He also acted as “*homo religiosus*”—according to Mircea Eliade. Hendrawan saw the reality of the archaic people still present around him; a society that retained the “cosmogonist myths” and “myths of origins”. In this view, the subject becomes a silent subject, no longer acting as *subjectum*, but *subjectus*—which is more open and can be “submissive” to the object. As a *subjectus*, Hendrawan’s artwork practices through soil or ceramic medium and performance were particularly willing to present a “*sumeleh*”<sup>1</sup> situation. To be “*sumeleh*” means being open to the experience of quietness, moments of silence; there is nothing but “*ning*” or silence. The goal is to find a “true sense”, a mystical awareness of life. This is what appears in the basic forms of his installations, not rarely using various local and “living” materials. We see the plurality of mediums presented in his works through fundamental things, namely earth, wood, bamboo, betel, stone, fire, and even cow’s blood.

His performance practices that began intensively around 2002 remind us of mystical behavior in “archaic” societies. Perhaps it is similar to what Paul Stange, an anthropologist who studies the practice of Javanese spiritual culture, called *sujud- sumarah*, the meditative openness to the spirit, not to the ego. That is the mystical behavior of the peasant and cultivator culture studied by Hendrawan.

More resolute with his choice of performance practices, Hendrawan then expanded his clay art practice as a configuration of mixed-object installations. The artistic potential of clay materials—shapes, colors, patterns, and naturalness, burning process—gained new meanings and practices. Techniques and ceramic art tools in his hands spun unexpected opportunities. The manifestation

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<sup>1</sup> In Javanese, it refers to a state of complete surrender to reality, fate or God; contentedness and acceptance.

of Hendrawan's performances also stepped into the practice of "ceremony"; "performance" in the postmodern era.

Symbolic forms such as mandala, *rerajah*<sup>2</sup>, or offerings; local materials such as bamboo, earthenware, wood, soil, stone, betel, coconut, banana leaf, and cow's blood; all became his rite-performance elements to reconnect with the old world, the culture of peasant societies and cultivators. For them, transcendent and sensory realities are harmonious pairs. For Hendrawan too, they were not oppositional, but something akin to yin and yang. His works, such as the 2001 performance *Malam Bersama Sri*, the 2002 installation *Mandala Peteng*, the 2002 performance *Inisiasi*, the 2003 installation *Hati Batu... Hati Batu... Hati Batu... Hati Batu...*, and *Ning...* (2004) show the direction to find the vitality of life in a realm of unique culture.

Hendrawan himself wrote: *Ada yang melihat/ lalu berbuat, dan baru mendengar...// Ada yang lebih dulu/ berbuat, supaya terlihat dan harus didengar...// Ada yang mendengar,/ lalu berbuat/ dan jadi terlihat//* (Someone saw/ and did, and then heard... // Another did, so that they were seen and must be heard... // Some other heard,/ then did/ and became visible//)—(Exhibition brochure *Naliko Ning Semeleh...*)

In his performance practice, the "ning" or "silent" situation involved hearing sensitivity rather than vision. For him, this situation brought us closer to a more intrinsic feeling rather than an idea of form visibility. The vitality of life that he first discovered in clay now wanders toward the direction of artist's quest for "true sense", which is the mystical awareness that exists throughout life.

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<sup>2</sup> A typical Hindu art piece in a form of a piece of cloth decorated with a drawing of a creature from Balinese culture



Through his work and art practice breakthroughs, Hendrawan Riyanto paved the way for new articulations in Indonesian fine arts. He redirected creative outlook and drew his inspiration from sources of Javanese traditions and spiritualistic culture that hinge upon emotion. His innovations in ceramic art discourse simultaneously affirmed his place as part of the practice of contemporary art. [HW]

## APPENDIX G

Article by Yusuf Affendi in *Pikiran Rakyat* Daily Newspaper, Bandung, 1987 (date of publication unknown).

Tahun 1987 Masa Cemerlang Kriya Keramik Jabar

### *Keramik Karya Kriya Hendrawan Menantang Apresiasi Masyarakat*

PEKAN ini, 5-15 Desember 1987, bertempat di Art Gallery Nikko Bandung diselenggarakan pameran keramik karya pekriya muda Hendrawan (28) yang tergabung pada studio Master Six di Jalan Terusan Buahbatu. Hendrawan sehari-hari bekerja sebagai asisten ahli di FSRD-ITB, tidak merasa canggung untuk bekerja dengan tanah lempung yang kotor, hingga terbentuk menjadi benda keramik yang indah. Menurut pengamatannya, tingkat apresiasi masyarakat di Bandung terhadap keramik bertambah maju dan menantang. Dari tahun ke tahun selalu ada tuntutan baru, baik jumlahnya maupun mutu artistiknya.

"Keadaan itu sangat mengembirakan perajin seperti saya, yang sekaligus saya jawab dengan karya keramik yang lebih bermutu terutama secara teknologis dapat dipertanggungjawabkan, yaitu keramik bakaran tinggi hingga 1280 derajat Celcius yang istilah teknis disebut stone ware," demikian kata Hendrawan yang pernah meraih juara pertama dan umum dalam lomba desain Dewan Kerajinan Nasional Jawa Barat pada tahun ini.

Agaknya tahun 1987 merupakan puncak kriya keramik di Jawa Barat, dibuktikan dengan beberapa seniman pekriya keramik seperti Suratani (Plered), Hendrawan (Bandung) dan F Wi-

dayanto (Bogor) merebut kejuaraan lomba desain kriya di tingkat nasional dan daerah. Masing-masing pekriya itu memiliki keistimewaan, seperti F Wi-dayanto untuk produk wadah sajian makanan ala Indonesia; Hendrawan dengan keramik bakaran tinggi yang artistik sedang Suratani yang tetap bertahan dengan keramik bakaran sedang dan tanah merah yang khas Plered.

Industri kecil keramik Bandung sudah tumbuh sejak tahun 1955, di Kiaracondong, Jl. Pungkur dan Jl. Cipaganti, tetapi kini sudah tidak berjalan lagi. Bekas rintisan itu diteruskan kini oleh

(Bersambung ke hal 4 kol 7)

## Pikiran Rakyat



— YUSUF AFFENDI  
BEBERAPA kriya keramik dari Hendrawan (28) yang dipamerkan di Niko Art Gallery, berbentuk bulat dan berbagai wadah, dengan bakaran tinggi 1280° Cel. kaya dengan tekstur dan warna abu-abu kecoklatan.\*

## **Year 1987 The Brilliant Time for Ceramics in West Java**

### **Ceramics by Artist Hendrawan Challenges Public Appreciation**

This week on 5-15 December 1987 at Nikko Art Gallery Bandung, a ceramics exhibition is held for a young artist Hendrawan (28) who is a member of studio Master Six on Terusan Buahbatu Street. Hendrawan works as an expert assistant (lecturer) at FSRD-ITB who never feels uncomfortable to get his hands dirty when working with clay to create beautiful ceramics. Based on his observation, the level of public appreciation of ceramics in Bandung is thriving and challenging. There are new demands every year, both on quantity and artistic quality.

“This is very exciting for artists like myself and I respond with more high-quality ceramics that can be technologically accountable, such as ceramics fired at a high temperature up to 1280 degrees Celsius, technically called stoneware,” said Hendrawan who won first place in this year’s National Handicraft Association of West Java Design Competition (*Dewan Kerajinan Nasional Jawa Barat*).

The year 1987 is evidently the peak year for ceramics in West Java proven by several ceramic artists namely Suratani from Plered, Hendrawan from Bandung, and F Widayanto from Bogor, winning handicraft design competitions in national and regional levels. Each artist is unique with F Widiyanto creating food serving products *ala* Indonesia, Hendrawan creating artistic stoneware while Suratani maintaining his Plered-style earthenware and terracotta.

Small scale ceramics industry in Bandung started to flourish in 1955 on Pungkur Street and Cipaganti Street in Kiaracondong, that are no longer in operation.

*Pictures: Some of Hendrawan’s (28) ceramics exhibited at Nikko Art Gallery, varieties of stoneware bowls burnt at 1280 degree Celsius with rich in textures and colours*

English translation by Sandra J. Lambey



## APPENDIX H

Article by Sides Sudyarto D.S. in MATRA Magazine April 1997.

**BUDAYA**

# keramik

## Syekh Siti Jenar

ALKISAH, SUNAN KALIJAGA SEDANG MEMBERIKAN WEJANG-an kepada para wali yang lain di atas kapal *Kala Duta* ("Utusan Waktu"). Sudah berkali-kali beliau memberikan wejangan. Namun, setiap ditanya apakah ilmunya itu sudah dimengerti, semuanya menjawab "tidak" atau "belum". Ketika ia bertanya untuk yang ketiga kalinya, tiba-tiba terdengar jawaban "sudah".

"Siapa yang bilang 'sudah'?" tanya Sunan Kalijaga.

"Saya."

"Saya siapa?"

"Saya, cacing."

"Cacing bisa berbicara seperti manusia?"

Sejak saat itu, berubahlah cacing kecil itu menjadi seorang manusia. Karena cacing itu terdapat dalam tanah merah (*siti jenar*), orang tersebut kemudian juga bernama Syekh Siti Jenar. Begitulah legenda yang pernah dituturkan dalam wayak golek Ki Soedarno (almarhum), yang hidup di sekitar daerah Tegal selatan, Jawa tengah.

Legenda demi legenda dan pandangan hidup masyarakat sezaman sekitar tanah liat (lempung) yang berkaitan dengan dunia keramik terus diburu dan dicari Hendrawan Riyanto. Ia ingin merenungkan dan menimba inspirasi dari kekuatan mitologis seperti itu. Tentu saja ia mempunyai pandangan dan sikap tersendiri terhadap nilai-nilai dan sejarah keramik itu sendiri. Lalu, apa katanya atau pandangannya mengenai tanah dan keramik itu?

Segenggam tanah liat (lempung) memiliki kapasitas untuk berubah atau untuk diubah menjadi figur yang mengalami personifikasi. Sebab, tanah liat juga merupakan sekeping vitalitas hidup. Vitalitas itu merupakan berkah bagi semua kehidupan. Tanah bukan hanya objek semata, melainkan berada sebagai subjek. Manusia hidup harus mencintai subjek alami itu. Bukanlah manusia itu sendiri akan menjadi tanah di kemu-

**Pencarian Hendrawan Riyanto dengan menekuni seni keramik mengantarkan dirinya menjumpai legenda yang masih hidup dalam kalangan masyarakat agraris di beberapa tempat: bahwa Syekh Siti Jenar adalah seorang wali penganjur sikap hormat dan cinta kepada tanah, kepada bumi.**

**Oleh SIDES SUDYARTO D.S.**

FOTO: FOTO • DOK. SIDES SUDYARTO D.S.

MATRA, APRIL 1997

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dian hari? Dan ... bermain dengan lempung bagaikan membuka buku ilmu yang tak kunjung habis jumlah halamannya, dari "halaman api", "halaman air", hingga "halaman tanah".

Pikiran atau cara pandang seperti itulah yang dijumpai Hendrawan Riyanto,

studi keramik di Tajimi-Nagoya pada 1988 dan di Kyoto serta di Shigaraki, Jepang, 1992-1993.

Sejak masih mahasiswa ia sudah punya minat menekuni keramik, sehingga hari-harinya habis untuk mencari dan melakukan berbagai eksperimen tanpa

syarat yang dalam kehidupan kesehariannya masih bergulat dengan keramik.

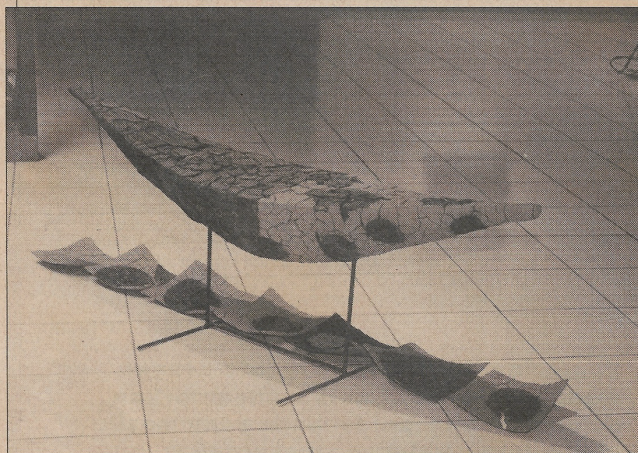
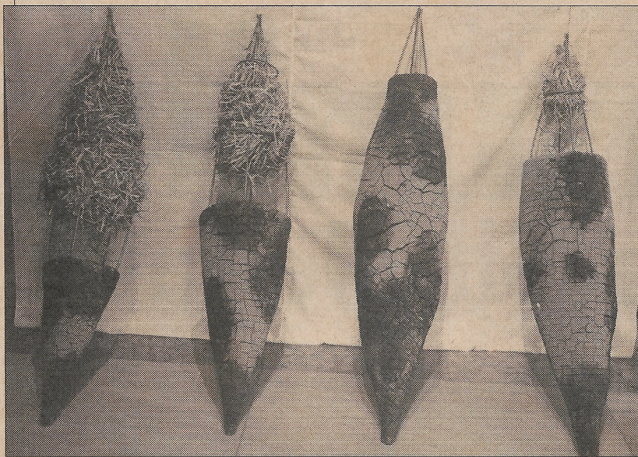
Hendrawan mencoba menyelami masyarakat keramik di Plered, Siti Winangun (Arjawinangun), Demak, dan sebagainya. Dalam teknik keramik terdapat unsur tanah (liat) sebagai bahan baku, yang dalam prosesnya harus terkait dengan air agar bisa diolah dan dibentuk, lalu berjumpa dengan unsur api (pembakaran) dalam tahap akhirnya.

Bukankah manusia hidup itu sendiri juga tidak lepas dari unsur-unsur tanah, api, dan air? Pengembaraannya di Jawa Barat dan Jawa Tengah membawa dirinya mendengar dan menyimak legenda yang masih hidup dalam hidup masyarakat di sana. Mereka masih fasih berbicara bahwa seorang wali yang bernama Syekh Siti Jenar menganjurkan kepada mereka agar senantiasa menaruh hormat serta mencintai tanah atau bumi, yang telah memberikan kebajikan bagi kehidupan tapi juga senantiasa diinjak-injak dan terkadang dinistakan. Begitulah pandangan orang di sekitar Arjawinangun dan begitu pula di Demak, Jawa Tengah.

Mengapa masyarakat keramik masih "memelihara" kepercayaan atau pandangan seperti itu? Adakah hal itu masih terkait dengan keramik itu sendiri, yang mulanya tanah liat dan kemudian setelah dibakar berubah menjadi komoditi yang bisa menghidupi mereka? Kiranya itu tak berbeda dengan cerita rakyat (*folklore*) yang berkisah bahwa Dewi Sri adalah Dewi Padi, yang senantiasa melindungi jenis tanaman yang merupakan bahan makanan primer bagi sebagian besar masyarakat kita.

Pertanyaan yang selalu mendera renungan Hendrawan itu tak kunjung terjawab. Sebab, pada umumnya masyarakat keramik tradisional masih begitu sederhana cara berpikirnya — sebagai masyarakat agraris taraf pedesaan. Keramik sebagai keramik tentu tidak lebih dari sebuah karya hasil kerajinan tangan (*handicraft*). Sebagai karya seni terapan, jelas keramik bukan hal baru, bahkan telah punya sejarahnya yang panjang. Baik para pakar arkeologi maupun masyarakat awam percaya bahwa keramik dalam bentuk tembikar merupakan budaya yang cukup purba. Perbendaharaan kata seperti "gerabah", "talawengkar", dan "kereweng" adalah sisa-sisa vokabularium dari alam budaya keramik.

Gerabah pada mulanya adalah sebutan untuk berbagai alat rumah tangga (dapur) yang terbuat dari tanah liat, misalnya gentong, dandang, cobek, kuai, poci, cangkir, anglo, padasan (tempat air wudu), dan jambangan (besar). Alat-alat seperti itu, karena diproses dengan teknologi yang sangat sederhana, mudah pecah. Pecahannya itu kemudian



**Sejak masih mahasiswa ia sudah punya minat menekuni keramik, sehingga hari-harinya habis untuk mencari dan melakukan berbagai eksperimen tanpa mengenal lelah. Kehausannya untuk melakukan pencarian membuat ia tidak puas dengan *textbook* dan ilmu yang ditimba dari para pengajarnya.**

seniman keramik yang lahir di Yogyakarta pada 15 Januari 1959. Hendrawan, yang berdarah campuran Jawa dan Sunda, adalah lulusan Jurusan Studio Keramik Fakultas Seni Rupa dan Desain Institut Teknologi Bandung (ITB).

Hendrawan juga sempat melakukan

mengetahui leleh. Kehausannya untuk melakukan pencarian membuat ia tidak puas dengan *textbook* dan ilmu yang ditimba dari para pengajarnya. Maka, ia pun tidak jarang melakukan perjalanan dan penjelajahan. Ia menengok dan sekaligus berguru atau menjadi murid ma-



saja melahirkan tetumbuhan untuk menghidupi hewan dan manusia. Tanah hanya bisa diam. Tanah tak pernah dendam. Tanah tak pernah benci. Tanah tak pernah marah dengki. Tanah selalu memberi, hanya memberi.

Tak jarang Hendrawan juga melihat pohon bambu yang tumbuh berumpun-rumpun di pinggir dusun, di pinggir tebing, atau di aras lembah sepi. Akar-akar bambu itu, yang jalin-menjalin bersatu padu, mencengkeram tanah, menjaganya dengan setia agar tidak tergerus erosi.

Daun bambu, ranting-rantingnya yang menjulur berirama, dan juga ruas-ruas batangnya, bagi Hendrawan, sangat karakteristik, unik, ritmik, dan artistik. Karena itulah banyak karya keramik Hendrawan yang juga menyertakan unsur bambu. Bambu kemudian menjadi elemen yang akrab untuk banyak karyanya.

Bambu kuning (pering gading) terutama yang paling disukai Hendrawan. Warna kuning yang alami itu, agaknya, memberikan kekuatan warna bagi komposisi warna keramik, yang biasanya berona merah dan hitam karena proses pembakaran di atas tungku.

Sudah beberapa kali Hendrawan berpameran, di Bandung, Surabaya, Yogyakarta, dan Jakarta, baik secara tunggal maupun bersama-sama dengan handai tolannya. Ia pun ikut tampil dalam pameran seni kontemporer untuk memperingati atau merayakan hari ulang tahun Gerakan Nonblok. Sayang sekali, dalam pameran bersama di Jakarta itu, Hendrawan lebih dikenal sebagai seniman instalasi. Ini tidak aneh. Sebab, dalam instalasinya itu, seni keramik yang berjudul *topeng* dan lain-lain hanya merupakan elemen yang tidak dominan.

Namun, itu tidak berarti karya keramik Hendrawan hanya kecil-kecil volumenya. Karyanya yang berjudul *Catching the Cocoon Spirit* ("Menangkap Spirit Kepompong") memiliki tinggi 160 sentimeter dengan diameter 60 sentimeter. Karya ini merupakan medium keramik yang dilengkapi bahan metal. Mengapa "spirit kepompong"? Karya ini mengingatkan kita pada proses metamorfosis jenis kehidupan tertentu. Kupu-kupu melahirkan ulat. Sebelum menjadi kupu-kupu, ulat itu harus bertapa dulu dalam kepompong. Masa bertapa itu, tidak bisa tidak, merupakan proses yang harus dilalui. Masa bertapa adalah masa kesabaran untuk menunggu dan menjemput nasib hidup selanjutnya. Setelah itu, barulah (kalau selamat) ia lahir sebagai kupu-kupu yang baru. Tidaklah demikian pula kehidupan manusia, yang harus juga mengalami detik-detik saat kesabaran, keprihatinan, dan keheningan kontemplatif sering diperlukan?

Kreasinya yang lain, *The Emptiness*

("Kekosongan"), adalah karya keramik dan kayu dengan lebar 120 cm dan tinggi 60 cm. Karya yang mirip sebuah perisai ini berposisi vertikal dan melekat pada sebatang kayu yang memanjang horizontal. Di tengah-tengah perisai itu terdapat lubang tembus. Barangkali lubang itulah yang merupakan simbol "kekosongan". Karya ini seperti ingin menyentuh kesadaran dan ingatan kita bahwa kekosongan adalah awal keberangkatan dan sekaligus titik tujuan segala sesuatu yang pernah hidup atau pernah ada. Barangkali itulah makna dari ujaran dalam masyarakat Jawa: "*sangkan paraning dumadi*" (tempat asal dan tujuan segala ciptaan Tuhan). Kekosongan adalah ketiadaan, tapi ketiadaan itu juga "ke-Ada-an. Bukankah dalam dunia estetika Cina klasik juga dikenal falsafah seni yang mengatakan bahwa "kekosongan itu adalah kepenuhan"?

Ada pula karya Hendrawan yang terdiri atas empat unit keramik tapi terpadu di bawah satu judul: *Catching the Palawija Spirit* ("Menangkap Spirit Palawija"). Panjang setiap unitnya 120 cm dengan garis tengah 40 cm. "Palawija" adalah kosakata bahasa Jawa yang telah masuk ke dalam bahasa Indonesia, yang artinya "segala tanaman yang merupakan makanan pelengkap (bukan baku), seperti kacang, kedelai, terung, kubis, sawi, labu, timun, dan tomat". Adakah karya ini ingin selalu menyadarkan bahwa tanah dan hasil pertanian itu tak pernah terlepaskan? Karya yang satu ini tidak terlalu ekspresif dalam bentuk ataupun kandungan maknanya.

Karya Hendrawan yang berjudul *Keluarga* sudah mulai menjurus ke arah seni instalasi dengan unsur keramik yang paling dominan.

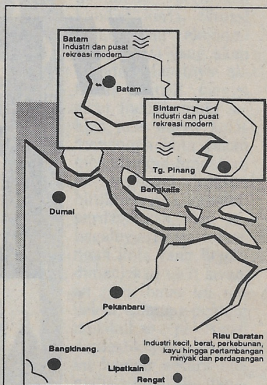
Dilengkapi dengan elemen dari bambu, ditambah batu pahatan berbentuk persis seperti telur ayam, karya ini tampak menghadirkan dua tokoh utama dalam keluarga, ayah dan bunda, serta anak-anak pinak yang tergeletak diam di sana sini menyaksikan perjalanan waktu. Di kiri kanan karya-karya keramik itu tampak gundukan-gundukan sekam, yakni kulit beras yang berwarna keuningan. Selain itu, ada sebuah perahu, yang dalam dunia aktual merupakan alat transportasi melalui sungai atau laut.

Pengertian atau nilai simbolis apakah yang bisa ditangkap dari karya dengan judul yang sederhana itu? Adakah Hendrawan ingin berbicara bahwa keluarga hingga kini masih merupakan "habitat" yang esensial dalam kehidupan masyarakat yang makin tercabik-cabik dimensi moralitasnya? Tidaklah seniman keramik ini menangkap gejala yang disebut "penyakit pembusukan" dalam kualitas "keluarga bati" sebagai gugusan paling inti dalam struktur masyarakat modern?

M

Harian Pagi  
**Riau Pos**  
Jawa Pos Media Group

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## **Ceramic Syekh Siti Jenar**

**By Sides Sudyarto D.S.**

*Hendrawan Riyanto's search by studying ceramics has brought him to meet legends that are still alive within the agrarian society in several locations: that Syekh Siti Jenar is a saint who promotes respect and love towards the soil, towards the earth.*

Once upon a time, Sunan Kalijaga is giving some advice to the other saints on a ship called *Kala Duta* (Delegation of Time). He has given the advice a couple of times. However, when he asked if the other saints understood it, all of them said “no” or “not yet”. When he asked them for the third time, suddenly someone said “yes”.

“Who said yes?” asked Sunan Kalijaga

“I did”

“I, who?”

“I, the worm”

“A worm can talk like a human?”

Then, the small worm turned into a human. Because the work is in the red soil (*siti jenar*), he is then named Syekh Siti Jenar. That's the legend told by a *wayang* (Javanese shadow puppets) puppeteer, the late Ki Soedarno, who lived in the southern of Tegal, Central Java.

Legend upon legend and the view of life of people living around clay that is related to the world ceramics are always hunted and searched by Hendrawan Riyanto. He wants to contemplate and gain inspiration from the power of such mythology. He obviously has his own views and attitudes towards the values and history of ceramics. So, what does he say or what are his views on the clay and ceramics?

A handful of clay has the capacity to transform or to be transformed into personifying shapes. This is because, clay can also be a piece of vitality in life. Vitality is a blessing for life. The soil is not just an object, but it is the subject. Living people must love this natural subject. Don't humans turn into earth at some point? And... playing with clay is like turning pages on a book of science that never ends, from the "fire page", the "water page", until the "earth page".

This type of view is what is found by Hendrawan Riyanto, a ceramic artist born in Yogyakarta on 15 January 1959. Hendrawan, who is mixed races of Javanese and Sundanese, is a graduate of the Faculty of Fine Arts and Design, Institute of Technology, Bandung.

Hendrawan also had a chance to study ceramics in Tajimi-Nagoya in 1988 and in Kyoto-Shigaraki, Japan in 1992-1993.

He already had an interest in ceramics when he was at university where he spent most of his time to research and experiment tirelessly. His hunger to discover more about ceramics made him feel dissatisfied with textbooks and the knowledge taught by his lecturers. As a result, he often does his own traveling and exploration. He goes to places, learns and becomes a student to communities whose lives still revolve around ceramics.

Hendrawan tries to have an in-depth understanding on the ceramics community in Plered, Siti Winangun (Arjawinangun), Demak and so on. In the ceramic-making techniques, there is earth (clay) as the main ingredient that requires water to shape, and it meets fire (burning) in the final step of the process.

Our life is inseparable from the elements of earth, fire and water, isn't it? His journey to West Java and Central Java brings him to listen and to pay attention to the legends that still exist in the communities there. They are still talking about how a saint names Syekh Siti Jenar encourages them to always respect and love the soil or earth which has given so much to our life, but it is also



something that we always step on and sometimes tainted. Same goes with the communities around Arjawinangun and also in Demak, Central Java.

Why do the ceramics communities still “preserve” this belief or view? Is it still related to the ceramics made from earth and after being burnt, they become a commodity that they can live on? This is no different from a folklore about *Dewi Sri* or *Dewi Padi*, the Goddess of Rice, the protector of this particular plant which is the main source of food for the majority of our people.

That same question which Hendrawan always asks himself is never answered. This is because it is common for the traditional ceramics communities to be simple minded as agrarian people living in villages. Ceramics as ceramics is not more than handicrafts. As an applied art, ceramics is not something new, it even has a very long history. Archaeologists and the public believe that ceramics is actually an ancient culture. The vocabulary such as *gerabah*, *talawengkar* and *kereweng* are words inherited from the ceramics culture.

*Gerabah* originally refers to kitchen utensils made of clay, such as water jugs/containers, boilers, mortars, pans, cups, portable stove/oven, bowls, and large vases. These utensils, because they are made with such low technologies, are easily broken. The broken pieces are then thrown away to the ground – from the ground and back to the ground. However, as a side note, before money which is made of metal and paper known as a currency exchange, people once used pieces of ceramics (*kereweng*) as a currency in the open market.

In the vast growing industrial era, rapid changes also occur. Homewares and kitchen utensils made of clays are left behind and cannot compete with the products of high technology. One element of culture can disappear. So, how about ceramics?

Hendrawan wants to do something. He wants to upgrade ceramics by giving it a new dimension: aesthetics. He creates ceramics as way of self-expression in the form of art.

Industry is understood as a process to improve the purpose of a tool, so it becomes (more) functional. *Sulak* (Javanese) or *kemoceng* (Sundanese) is made of chicken feathers that are supposed to be thrown away. Paintings of chicken feathers with a tag price of more than ten million rupiahs and there are similar feathers that are piling up in the dump.

Why not do the same with ceramics? It seems like this kind of thinking is what made Hendrawan more determined to further experiment and explore ceramics as pure art. And the results?

After *anjajah desa amilang kori* (meaning “exploring villages like counting doors of people’s houses”), Hendrawan is now “forced” to travel around the world, bringing his artworks to different countries. He has shown his artistic ceramics in Japan (1993), Taiwan (1994), Denmark (1996), The Netherlands (1996), Australia, and Venezia. However, upon returning to his birth country, Hendrawan is always back to look down to the ground.

The ground still receives everything that is done to it calmly and in peace, sincerely and gladly. It never complains. It is never sad in tears. It is where life stands and exists. It gives life to plants to support animals and humans. It can only stay still. It never hates. It never gets angry. It always gives, only gives.

Often, Hendrawan also sees bamboo trees on the edge of a village, a cliff, or above the quiet valley. The roots of those trees, tangled together, grabbing the ground, faithfully taking care of it to prevent soil from erosion.

Bamboo leaves, branches spreading rhythmically, to Hendrawan, they are characteristic, unique, rhythmic, and artistic. Hence, a lot of Hendrawan’s ceramics include elements of bamboo which then become the most common thing you would find in his artworks.

Yellow bamboo (*pering gading*) is Hendrawan’s most favourite type of bamboos. The natural yellow colour is what seems to be the dominant colour in his composition which usually tends to be red and black because of the (clay) burning process.

Hendrawan has held several exhibitions in Bandung, Surabaya, Yogyakarta, and Jakarta, as a solo artist or together with his peers. He also participates in a contemporary art exhibition to commemorate or celebrate the anniversary of the Non-Aligned Movement. Unfortunately, in the exhibition held in Jakarta, Hendrawan is more known as an installation artist. This is not surprising because in his installations, the ceramics are in the shape of masks and others are only non-dominant elements.

However, this does not mean that Hendrawan only created ceramics in small volume. His artwork titled “Catching the Cocoon Spirit” is 160cm high with 60cm diameter. This artwork is in the medium of ceramics supported with metal wires. Why “cocoon spirit”? This artwork reminds us of the process of metamorphosis of a certain lifeform. Larvae of butterflies turn into caterpillars. Before they turn into butterflies, the caterpillars ‘meditate’ inside cocoons. This meditation process is unavoidable, a process that they must go through. Meditation is a time to patiently wait for the next stage of life. Then, if survived, they become new butterflies. Isn’t it the same with human life, going through much needed time of being patient, concerned, and contemplative silence?

His other creation, “The Emptiness”, is ceramic artwork with wood of 120cm width and 60cm height. The artwork that looks like a shield, positioned vertically and attached to a log wood lied horizontally. There is a hole in the middle of the shield. Perhaps, that hole is a symbol of emptiness. This artwork is trying to ‘touch’ our consciousness and memory that emptiness is the beginning and the destination point of everything that has ever lived and existed. This may be the meaning of a Javanese saying: *sangkang paraning dumadi* which means the beginning and the destination of all God’s creation. The emptiness is nothingness, but nothingness is also somethingness. Isn’t there also a philosophy in the Chinese classic-aesthetic world stating that “emptiness is fullness”?

Hendrawan’s artwork consists of four units of ceramics under a single title *Catching the Palawija Spirit*. The length of each unit is 120cm with a diameter of 40cm. *Palawija* is Javanese word which

has been absorbed into the Indonesian language, which means “all plants that are complementary (not mandatory), such as peanuts, soybeans, eggplants, cabbages, mustard greens, pumpkins, cucumbers, and tomatoes”. Does this artwork want to enlighten people that soil and crops are connected? This particular artwork is not too expressive in shapes and its meanings.

Hendrawan’s artwork titled “*Keluarga*” (“Family”) tends to be more of an installation art with dominant elements of ceramics. Complemented with the elements of bamboo, with carved stones shaped like chicken eggs, this artwork shows two main characters in a family, a mother and a father, and children that are laid silent here and there watching as the time goes by. On both sides of his artworks, there are piles of yellow-ish unhulled rice husk. Besides that, there is also a boat that, in real life, is a mode of transportation in the sea and river.

What insights or symbolic values that can be captured from the simple-titled artwork? Does Hendrawan want to state that a family is still an essential “habitat” in society with shredded dimension of morality? Doesn’t this ceramic artist capture the symptoms of the “disease of decaying” in the quality of “nuclear family” as the nucleus in the structure of the modern society?

English translation by Sandra J. Lambey



## APPENDIX I

Article by H. Sujiwo Tejo in KOMPAS Daily Newspaper, Jakarta, March 18, 1998.

Halaman 10 KOMPAS, RABU, 18 MARET 1998

# Saya Bakar Patung, Bukan Keramik

OBOHOLAN santai di luar forum resmi seringkali, kalau tidak selalu, lebih menarik ketimbang pembicaraan di forum resmi tersebut. Tak kecuali forum diskusi seni rupa di Jakarta pekan lalu tentang rencana pembentukan Galeri Nasional, yang menampilkan pembicara Jim Supangkat dan Mamannoor. Di luar forum, salah satu pertanyaan yang muncul: Mengapa keramik karya Hendrawan Riyanto (39) tidak disertakan dalam Trienal Jakarta II, sebuah peristiwa bergengsi bulan lalu di Taman Ismail Marzuki (TIM) Jakarta.

Bergengsi, menurut pelukis Syahrugra Ismail, karena dalam pameran yang tetap mendudukkan TIM sebagai faktor penting itu berlangsung kursi yang sangat baik. Ia menilai pematang G Sidharta Soegyo, kuratornya, sangat dedikatif untuk memilih dan menetapkan karya peserta. Maka, hanya karya-karya yang betul-betul berkualitas yang bisa muncul di Galeri Cipta II TIM itu. Dari 38 patung oleh 32 pematang itu di antaranya terdapat material kayu, besi bekas, batu bata, bambu, tali, paku, dan daun-daun kering.

"Kalau memang patung itu bisa terbuat dari bahan apa saja, kayu, besi, batu, mengapa karya keramik saya tidak dibuat patung (patung yang terbuat dari keramik)?" kata Hendrawan.

Seandainya bukan oleh Hendrawan, mungkin pertanyaan itu lebih terdengar sebagai kebohokan umumnya seniman yang belum pantas diakui tetapi ngotot ingin diakui. Maka ikut simbrang-lah, di antaranya, perupa Marah Djalil, Chandra Johan dan pengamat S Malela Mahagasari. Mungkin karena pengajar seni rupa di Institut Teknologi Bandung yang juga kakak sutradara Garin Nugroho itu, memang dianggap sudah pantas diakui dan didengar.

Salah satu karyanya dalam Biennale di Venesia tahun 1997, cukup menggegerkan. Karya itu pula yang ditawarkan Jim Supangkat ketika Dirjen Kebudayaan, Edi Sedyawati, menginginkan karya Hendrawan untuk calon koleksi Galeri Nasional. Selain di Italia itu, Hendrawan dengan ciri khas karyanya berupa retak-retak keramik dan mempertahankan struktur logam maupun bambu sebagai "pendukung" proses pembuatan, sejak tahun 1967 kerap berpameran di luar negeri lain Jepang, Belanda, termasuk Denmark, bersama pematang Sunaryo, dan pelukis AD Pirous.

"Mungkin karena masih banyak kerancuan definisi di Indonesia," kata Chandra Johan, yang juga pengamat seni rupa. Ia menyebut bahwa seni rupa modern di sini selalu digembar-

gemborkan bermula dari Raden Saleh. Apakah seni rupa selalu identik dengan lukisan dan apakah Borobudur bukan karya seni rupa modern di sini? Nyaris sama dengan munculnya Departemen Pariwisata, Seni dan Budaya serta Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, begtu pula kerancuan pada munculnya Sekolah Tinggi Seni Rupa dan Desain Indonesia di Bandung.

"Apakah desain itu bukan seni rupa," kata Chandra. Atau definisi itu tergantung tempat. Katanya, ketika belum lama ini meja-kursi dari sapu-sapu lidi karya seorang seniman tidak diakui sebagai seni rupa, jadilah itu desain hanya karena Rano Karno mengambil alih untuk interior kafe-nya di Kemang. Syahrugra menambahkan, apa boleh buat mungkin klasifikasi karya tergantung pada bagaimana sang seniman menempatkan dirinya. Sadar atau tidak, seperti pada pamerannya di Tokyo, Surabaya, dan Jakarta, Hendrawan menempatkan karyanya dalam pameran-pameran bertajuk "keramik".

"Jadi, Wan, kamu itu kalau ketemu teman dan mau buru-buru pulang, jangan bilang mau bikin atau rebeker keramik, bilang saja mau bikin patung. Terus saja ke semua orang seperti itu, termasuk pers," kata Syahrugra sambil cengepe-



**KERAMIK ATAU PATUNG — Karya Hendrawan Riyanto.**  
Patung atau keramik.

san. Teman lainnya menimpal, tapi nanti kalau ada Trienal keramik, jangan-jangan Hendrawan tidak bisa ikut karena dianggap pematung.

(H. Sujiwo Tejo)

## I Burn Sculpture, Not Ceramics

A casual chat outside an official forum is often, but not always, more interesting than the official forum itself. The official Fine Arts forum in Jakarta last week is no exception where there was a discussion on plans to establish a National Gallery, with guest speakers Jim Supangkat and Mamannoor. Outside the forum, one of the questions being asked is why ceramics by Hendrawan Riyanto (39) were not included at the Trienal Jakarta II, a prestigious event held at Taman Ismail Marzuki (TIM) Jakarta in the previous month.

Prestigious, according to painter Syahnagra Ismail, because the exhibition positioning TIM as an important factor was well curated. He considers sculptor G Sidharta Soegiyo, the curator, is very dedicated in selecting and deciding on participants' artwork. Therefore, only high-quality artwork that could only be shown at the Gallery Cipta II TIM. From 38 sculptures by 32 sculptors including materials such as wood, used steel, bricks, bamboos, ropes, nails, and dry leaves.

"If these sculptures can be made from any materials, wood, steel, stone, why wasn't my ceramics artwork called sculpture (sculpture made of ceramic)?" said Hendrawan.

If the question wasn't asked by Hendrawan, maybe it would sound more like a complaint from most artists who are yet to be recognised but insist on getting recognised. Joining the discussion, artist Marah Djibal, Chandra Johan and art critic S Malela Mahargasarie. Perhaps because the lecturer at Bandung Institute of Technology who is also the brother of the well-known movie director Garin Nugroho, is considered as an established (artist) whom should be heard.

One of his artworks at the Biennale in Venezia in 1997, was riveting. It was the artwork that Jim Supangkat offered to the General Director of Culture, Edi Sedyawati, when he asked for one of Hendrawan's artworks as a potential part of the collection at the National Gallery. Other than the event in Italy, Hendrawan with his unique artworks, "cracked" ceramics with metal or bamboo as "support" keeping its structure during the creating process, has joined international exhibitions since 1987 in Japan, Holland, including Denmark, together with sculptor Sunaryo and painter AD Pirous.

"Maybe because there are many confusing definitions in Indonesia," said Chandra Johan who is also a fine arts critic. He mentioned that modern fine arts in here is always highly-regarded, starting with Raden Saleh. Is fine arts always identical with painting and is Borobudur temple not a modern fine art in here? Almost at the same time as the establishment of the Department of Tourism, Art

and Culture, and the Department of Education and Culture, that the confusion arose when the Academy of Fine Arts and Design Indonesia in Bandung was established.

“Is design not fine arts?”, said Chandra. Or a definition depends on location. He said, recently, chairs and tables created by an artist are not recognised as art but they then become design because Rano Karno takes over the interior of a café in Kemang. Syahnagra added, “What can we do, maybe the classification of an artwork depends on how the artist positions themselves. (As you are) aware or not, just like his exhibition in Tokyo, Surabaya, and Jakarta, Hendrawan included his artworks at art exhibitions with the theme of “ceramics”.

“So, Wan (Hendrawan), when you meet your friends and need to rush home, don’t tell them that you’re going to make or burn ceramics, just tell them that you’re about to make some sculptures. Keep telling that to everyone, including the press,” said Syahnagra, sneering. Other friends added that if there is a ceramics Triennale, Hendrawan may not be able to participate because he may be considered as a sculptor.

English translation by Sandra J. Lambey

## APPENDIX J

Article in BERNAS Daily Newspaper, Yogyakarta, July 7, 1998.

BERNAS, SELASA PON, 7 JULI 1998

\* Bagian Aksi Seni Rupa Publik

### Ada Gunungan di Alun-alun Selatan

**Yogya, Bernas**  
Beberapa seniman asal Bandung, Yogyakarta dan Solo melakukan kolaborasi aksi seni rupa publik di Alun-alun Selatan. Suasana di sana kemudian berubah bagi sebuah bangunan perkemahan.

Di tempat itu didirikan beberapa instalasi seni, menyerupai sebuah gunung, terbuat dari bambu dilapisi kain putih bekas kantong tepung terigu. Sekelilingnya diberi pagar bambu. Instalasi ini ditempatkan di sebelah kanan dan kiri dua pohon beringin kurung. Di dalamnya tergantung beberapa botol infus. Sedang di pinggir pagar ditumpuk beberapa karung berisi pasir. Terpasang juga beberapa tiang bambu tempat menggantungkan sangkar burung.

Beberapa seniman hadir, sekaligus mengisi acara aksi seni rupa publik itu, pada malam pertama dimulai dengan tampil secara bersama pantomimer Jemek Supardi, Bambang Subarnas seniman asal Bandung. Lantas ada Suprpto Suryodarmo dan kawan-kawan dari Padepokan Lemah Putih Solo yang melakukan kolaborasi seni gerak cukup menarik perhatian para penonton dengan hanya

diiringi suara alat tiup. Suasana yang dibangun berkesan sangat menyayat hati.

Hendrawan, seniman asal Bandung, yang juga salah seorang pengagas acara ini, Sabtu malam (4/7) menjelaskan, aksi seni ini merupakan wujud rasa kebersamaan seniman atas berbagai krisis yang terjadi di negeri ini. "Sebab, berbagai krisis yang terjadi tidak hanya dialami satu orang saja, maka aksi seni ini pun dikerjakan tidak hanya oleh satu orang, melainkan bersama-sama," kata Hendrawan, yang juga staf pengajar pada jurusan Seni Rupa ITB.

"Rencananya aksi seni rupa publik ini akan digelar dalam tiga malam berturut-turut. Aksi seni pada malam pertama disebut wiwitan, malam kedua tengah malam, dan malam ketiga sebagai pamungkasnya," tambahnya.

"Kami sengaja memilih waktu aksi saat ini yang bertepatan dengan Sekaten yang memiliki makna kultural dan kontemplatif. Ini sesuai dengan keinginan kami yang tidak hanya sekadar melakukan ekspresi seni, tapi juga sekaligus mencari solusi. Maka kami membangun instalasi gunung sebagai sebuah simbol hubungan vertikal,"

imbuh Hendrawan.

Ia jelaskan, instalasi botol-botol infus yang digantungkan di dalam gunung sebenarnya merupakan simbol keadaan masyarakat kita yang selama ini hanya menerima tanpa diberi kesempatan untuk melakukan sesuatu secara aktif. Simbol suatu masyarakat yang selalu dicekoki secara paksa oleh berbagai macam kepentingan," katanya.

Menurutnya tumpukan karung pasir menggambarkan timbunan sembako yang merupakan bahan kebutuhan pokok/pangan manusia yang selama ini sangat dibutuhkan sekali. Sedangkan tiang gantungan burung menggambarkan manusia yang selalu tergantung dan terbelenggu sehingga tidak bebas bergerak.

Suprpto Suryodarmo mengatakan, seni adalah sarana menyelesaikan suatu masalah kehidupan yang dialami manusia dan bukan hanya sekedar refleksi. "Kami mencoba mencari penyelesaian terhadap berbagai persoalan yang terjadi melalui usaha-usaha kesenian seperti dalam aksi seni rupa publik ini," katanya. (\*/ee)



**GUNUNGAN** - Inilah karya kolaborasi seniman dari Yogya, Solo dan Bandung. "Gunungan" yang dipajang di Alun-alun Selatan Yogyakarta. Suasana di tempat itu jadi berubah, penuh nuansa seni.



**Bernas – Tuesday, 7 July 1998 | Section: Public Art**

### **Mountains in the South Plaza**

#### **Yogya, Bernas**

Several artists from Bandung, Yogyakarta and Solo collaborated in creating public art in the South Plaza. The place is transformed into something that looks like a campsite.

There are some art installations that look like mountains, made of bamboo covered in white flour sacks. Bamboo fences are built around them. These installations are placed on the right and left side of two banyan trees. Inside, infusion bottles are hung. On the edge of the fence, there are some sandbags. There are also several bamboo poles to hang some bird cages.

Several artists are present to be part of the public art event; on the first night, it started with a performance by a pantomime artist Jemek Supardi and Bambang Subarnas from Bandung. Then, there is Suprpto Suryodarmo and friends from Padepokan Lemah Putih Solo (a type of community residential) in their captivating performance art with the sound of wind instruments creating a poignant atmosphere.

Hendrawan, an artist from Bandung, who is also the founder of the event, on Saturday evening (4 July) explained that this art event is artists' sense of togetherness as a response to crises in the country. "Because, these crises are not experience by one person, therefore this art event is created not only by one person, but together as a group," said Hendrawan who is also a lecturer of Fine Arts at ITB.

"The event is to be held for three consecutive days. The act on the first evening is called *wiwitan*, the second is *tengahan*, and the third one is the finale," he added.

"We purposely hold the event to be on the same day as *Sekaten* which has cultural and contemplative significance. It is our intention to not just expressing ourselves in art but to also

find solutions. That is why we build this mountain-like installation symbolising a vertical relationship,” added Hendrawan.

He explained, the infusion bottles hung inside the ‘mountain’ actually symbolise the condition of our people who only receive without being given the opportunity to actively do something. A symbol of a community that is always forcefully fed by different interests.

According to him, the piles of sandbags depict piles of much needed *sembako* which are nine kinds of basic needs, i.e. foods. The poles to hang the bird cages depict humans that are always dependent and repressed so they cannot move freely.

Suprpto Suryodarmo said, art is a medium to solve a problem in our lives and not just a reflection. “We are trying to find solutions to many problems through our efforts in art such as this public art event,” he said.

*Picture: Mountains – this is the collaborative artwork created by artists from Yogya, Solo and Bandung. “Mountains” that are on display on the South Plaza, Yogyakarta. The atmosphere in the location changes, feeling very arty.*

English translation by Sandra J. Lambey

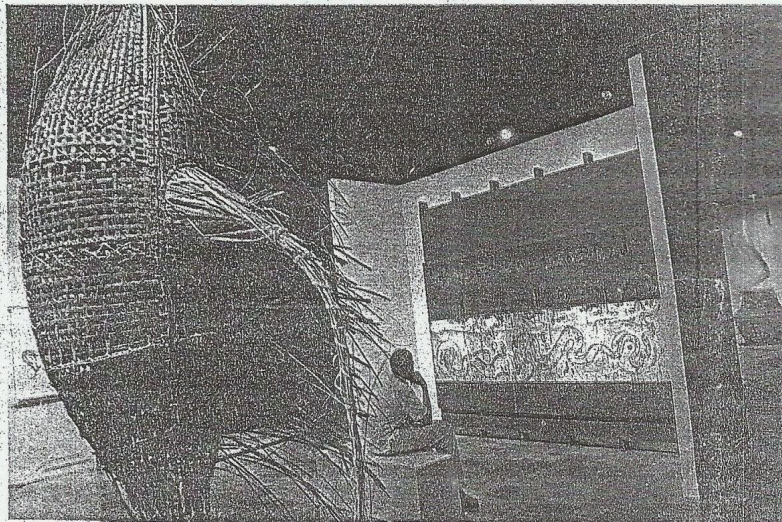
## APPENDIX K

Article by F.X. Harsono in Kompas Daily Newspaper, Jakarta, February 22, 2004.

# Ketika HeNING Tidak Lagi Senyap

FX HARSONO

SEBUAH genta, bel, lonceng, atau klonongan yang biasa tergantung di lenter sapi, semuanya dalam ukuran besar dan tergeletak di atas lantai, senyap tak bersuara. Memang tak akan pernah bersuara karena semua wujud yang menyerupai benda-benda yang selama ini lokat dengan penghasilan bunyi ini terbuat dari bahan batu bata, semen, dan pasir. Meski demikian, karya seni rupa yang dibuat Hendrawan tetap diberi judul "Ning".



KORNAWASTI KURNIA

ANPA melihat judul karya yang merepresentasikan suara—ketika melihat benda-benda tersebut tiba-tiba hadir dalam imaji kita "suara". Konotasi ikon lonceng segera akan membangkitkan memori penonton terhadap suara yang diproduksi oleh benda lonceng tersebut. Di dalam he-niing tak selalu senyap, di dalam senyap tak selalu diam, suara tak selalu bunyi, suara bisa hadir dalam imaji. Gagasan yang terdapat dalam karya-karya Hendrawan. Pendekatan dan pemahaman terhadap arti kehidupan yang dibangun oleh masyarakat adat atau masyarakat yang mengait tradisi lama mampu melahirkan kearifan-kearifan yang kemudian menghasilkan karya seni rupa kontemporer, hal ini dibuktikan Hendrawan Riyanto, seorang perupa, yang berdomisili di Bandung, menjabat Ketua Departemen Seni Murni, Fakultas Seni Rupa & Desain ITB.

Dalam pameran tunggal Hendrawan Riyanto yang bertajuk "Ning Semeleh" yang artinya adalah Ketika Hening Diletakkan, yang diselenggarakan di Bentara Budaya Jakarta, 20-29 Februari 2004, menampilkan 10 karya seni rupa instalasi.

Sebagai manusia yang hidup dalam alam modern, Hendrawan tidak menerima modernitas seutuhnya. Dia hidup sebagaimana layaknya manusia modern dalam kehidupan masyarakat kota besar, namun sekaligus juga menjalankan ritual-ritual yang berakar pada budaya masa lalu. Ia merasakan sesuatu yang kontras antara ke-

**Instalasi Hendrawan — Detail dari Suwung Ono Ing Kotekan 2004 (kiri) dan Ngersaning Ono 2001 merupakan bagian dari pameran karya Hendrawan Riyanto, bertajuk naliko NING Semeleh di Bentara Budaya Jakarta, 20-29 Februari 2004.**

hidupan modern yang rasional, profan, materialis, konsumtif, sementara budaya masa lalu yang spiritual, sakral, mistis dan marjinal.

Kekontrasan, perbedaan tidak dilihat sebagai pertentangan yang diametris, kehadiran budaya modern tidak harus menyingkirkan yang tradisional, keinginan untuk mendamaikan lebih bisa diterima dan memberikan ketenteraman batin. Cara berpikir sintesis itu, percaya kepada dunia gaib dan kepada hubungan dengan orang-orang yang telah meninggal, merupakan sifat-sifat kebudayaan petani ladang yang bisa diketemukan kembali di seluruh Indonesia dan oleh karenanya dapat disebut sebagai ciri-ciri khas kepribadian Indonesia modern.

Hendrawan melihat realitas ini sebagai fenomena kebudayaan yang tak terpisahkan dari kehidupannya sebagai manusia modern sekaligus berada dalam kebudayaan masa lalu. Realitas tersebut menempatkan nilai-nilai lokal dari budaya masa lalu secara baik pada sebuah penciptaan karya seni rupa, dengan keyakinan justru akan merevitalisasi nilai-nilai dalam seni rupa kontemporer.

KEBETULAN bahwa saya bisa melihat secara dekat bagaimana kesungguhan Hendrawan dalam menggali kebudayaan masyarakat yang masih memeluk budaya masa lampau.

Ia memberikan penghargaan yang sejajar terhadap mereka dengan menyebutnya "masyarakat arkaik" bukan "masyarakat tradisional".

Masyarakat arkaik adalah masyarakat yang hidup dalam pandangan primordial dari dan dengan mitos-mitos yang berkaitan dengan alam, roh, kesucian, dan kekuasaan para dewa. Adapun sebutan "masyarakat tradisional" dipandang sebagai kategori yang bersifat orientalis. Masyarakat tradisional dipahami sebagai sebuah masyarakat dalam kondisi pra-modern atau bukan masyarakat teknokratis.

Pandangan hierarkis ini menempatkan masyarakat yang berpandangan kuno dan lebih rendah dari masyarakat modern yang meluk kebudayaan modern. Setiap kebudayaan memiliki konteks ruang dan waktu, setiap kebudayaan memiliki eksistensinya sendiri dalam ruang dan waktu tersebut. Berlandaskan pada konsep tersebut, pemahaman terhadap mitos, ritus, mediator dan simbol sepatutnya diletakkan dalam cara pandang kebudayaan yang tidak hierarkis.

Berangkat dari keyakinan dan pemahaman tersebut, Hendrawan mencoba meletakkan proses penciptaannya bukan saja dari pemahaman yang teoritis, melainkan mempunyai konteks dan keterlibatan langsung dengan budaya dari masyarakat arkaik. Ia memulai

perjalanannya dengan berdiskusi dengan paranormal, dukun, dan pemimpin upacara adat masyarakat arkaik, dan penjaga makam. Percakapan dilanjutkan dengan mengunjungi tempat-tempat yang dianggap suci, kemudian melakukan ritus bersama mereka. Aktivitas ini bukan sekadar untuk memenuhi rasa ingin tahu, melainkan juga untuk menambal pengalaman spiritual. Hendrawan melihat semua ritus yang bertujuan mengagungkan Tuhan adalah baik adanya.

Perjalanan untuk mendekatkan dirinya dengan hal-hal yang spiritual ia lakukan dengan mengunjungi masjid tua di Pegunungan Dieng, daerah Sunda, Jawa, candi-candi, makam tua, hingga ia naik Haji ke Mekkah dan terakhir ia ke Kathmandu, Nepal. Semua ini adalah bagian yang tak terpisahkan dalam proses penciptaan karyanya.

Pengalaman spiritual haruslah dialaminya sebagai bagian dari ritus yang akan mendekatkan hal-hal yang profan kepada saat-saat yang suci. Pengalaman spiritual yang lahir dari ritus yang dilakukannya, baik sendiri maupun melalui mediator, adalah sebagai mata air yang menghasilkan ide-ide keseniannya.

SEBAGAI seorang perupa lulusan lembaga pendidikan yang menempatkan ilmu sebagai bagian penting dalam kehidupan dan berkesenian, yaitu ITB, ia

langit-langit ruang pameran seolah menggemakan suara. Bentuk kepompong yang selalu berputar tidak menunjukkan keiruh-rendahan atau kesemrawutan. Semuanya menyatu memberikan ketenangan seperti sebuah bola pendulum yang bergerak-perak di depan mata seseorang yang sedang dihipnotis, bergerak dalam ketenangan.

Kalau penjelajahan dalam karya ini diteruskan, kita akan melihat simpul-simpul kecil dari rotan yang merupakan satuan unsur dari sebuah anyaman besar yang tertata di dinding. Kita sangat kenal dengan bentuk, unsur anyaman, anyaman itu sendiri meski barang kali kita tidak bisa menyebutnya dengan tepat nama atau bentuk anyaman tersebut, namun dalam kehidupan sehari-hari anyaman hadir dalam keseharian kita. Berhubungan dengan karya ini, kita ingin menekankan kembali jejak budaya masa lalu, arti kehidupan masyarakat arkaik, namun kita juga tidak bisa mengatakan, karya-karya ini sekadar menampulkan budaya lampau dalam karya seni rupa.

Kekinian hadir dalam nilai-nilai pertautan yang melengkapi antara rasional yang berhubungan dengan indrawi yang lebih mendasarkan pada keterukuran, teraba, dan konkret. Adapun estetika masyarakat tradisional merupakan bangun yang tidak konkret, tak terukur karena mengutamakan kelangsungan



Riyanto, seorang perupa, yang berdomisili di Bandung, menjabat sebagai Ketua Departemen Seni Murni, Fakultas Seni Rupa & Desain ITB.

"Dalam pameran tunggal Hendrawan Riyanto yang bertajuk dalam bahasa Jawa 'naling NING: Semeleh', yang artinya adalah Ketika Hening Diletakkan, yang diselenggarakan di Bentara Budaya Jakarta, 20-29 Februari 2004, menampilkan 10 karya seni rupa instalasi.

Sebagai manusia yang hidup dalam alam/modern, Hendrawan tidak menerima modernitas seutuhnya. Dia hidup sebagaimana layaknya manusia modern dalam kehidupan masyarakat kota besar, namun sekaligus juga menjalankan ritual-ritual yang berakar pada budaya masa lalu. Ia merasakan sesuatu yang kontras antara ke-

seluruh Indonesia dan oleh karenanya dapat disebut sebagai ciri-ciri khas kepribadian Indonesia modern.

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SEBAGAI seorang perupa lulusan lembaga pendidikan yang menempatkan ilmu sebagai bagian penting dalam kehidupan dan berkesenian, yaitu ITB, ia memperdalam studi keramik di sana dan juga di Jepang sehingga jejak *craft* tampak jelas dalam penciptaannya.

Latar belakang *craftsmanship* yang tinggi dan ide-ide penciptaan yang bersumber pada ritus bukan bertujuan untuk membuat benda seni kerajinan, sebaliknya memanfaatkan kerajinan sebagai media ekspresi juga bukan disengaja sebagai tujuan. Kedua unsur menyatu, mengalir bersama-sama, saling mengisi sehingga tercipta sebuah karya seni rupa yang tidak bisa lagi dikategorikan sebagai benda kerajinan.

Demikian juga pemakaian bahan serta teknik penciptaan karya sangat diperhitungkan. Hal ini tampak dalam karyanya, baik dalam *Ning, Suwung Ono Ing Kotekan*, dan *Mandala Peteng*. Ketiga karya ini adalah karya yang monumental dalam pameran ini.

Sensitivitas Hendrawan tampak jelas dalam mempresentasikan nilai mistis, analisis rasional maupun kejawan, dalam membentuk wujud/perwujudan karya dan representasi ikon-ikon mistis. Semua ini dilakukannya dengan mengacu pada pengamatannya terhadap temuan artefak ritus berupa bangunan, benda-benda pusaka, kostum, wadah, benda-benda simbolis, yang dia amati dan rasakan dari pengalaman ritus di mana artefak ritus tersebut dibuat para ahli dengan nilai estetis yang tinggi. Semua itu dibuat berdasarkan pakem yang ketat agar benda-benda tersebut mampu menjembatani nilai-nilai profan menjadi nilai spiritual. Fakta sejarah ini dipahaminya sebagai suatu realita yang kemudian diadopsi sebagai landasan pembuatan karya. Dengan itu karya-karyanya yang bersifat analitis sekaligus mistis sangat menonjol.

Anyaman bambu yang berbentuk seperti kepompong atau bisa juga seperti sarang burung manyar yang menggantung di dahan-dahan pohon besar adalah wujud dari karyanya yang berjudul *Suwung Ono Ing Kotekan*. Keterangan anyaman berlanjut dengan kesemrawutan, ruang kosong di dalam anyaman yang menggantung di

itu sendiri meski barang kali kita tidak bisa menyebutnya dengan tepat nama atau bentuk anyaman tersebut, namun dalam kehidupan sehari-hari anyaman hadir dalam keseharian kita. Berhubungan dengan karya-karya ini untuk menelusuri kembali jejak budaya masa lalu, arti kehidupan masyarakat arkaik, namun kita juga tidak bisa mengatakan, karya-karya ini sekadar menempelkan budaya lampau dalam karya seni rupa.

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Hendrawan menyadari sepenuhnya representasi karya-karyanya yang dengan konteks kebudayaan masyarakat arkaik yang komunal ke dalam galeri yang berjalan di atas infrastruktur seni rupa modern sarat dengan kode-kode individual dan elitis. Sedangkan masyarakat arkaik yang mengambil kode-kode dari alam yang kemudian disepakati sebagai simbol kehidupan keseharian yang bersifat komunal.

Keberadaan dua unsur budaya adalah bulan sebagai oposisi biner di mana kedua unsur budaya yang saling dipertentangkan dan meniadakan, melainkan diposisikan saling melengkapi, saling menyadarkan, menyadarkan pemahaman manusia pada ruang lain, yaitu ruang asal, asal kehidupan.

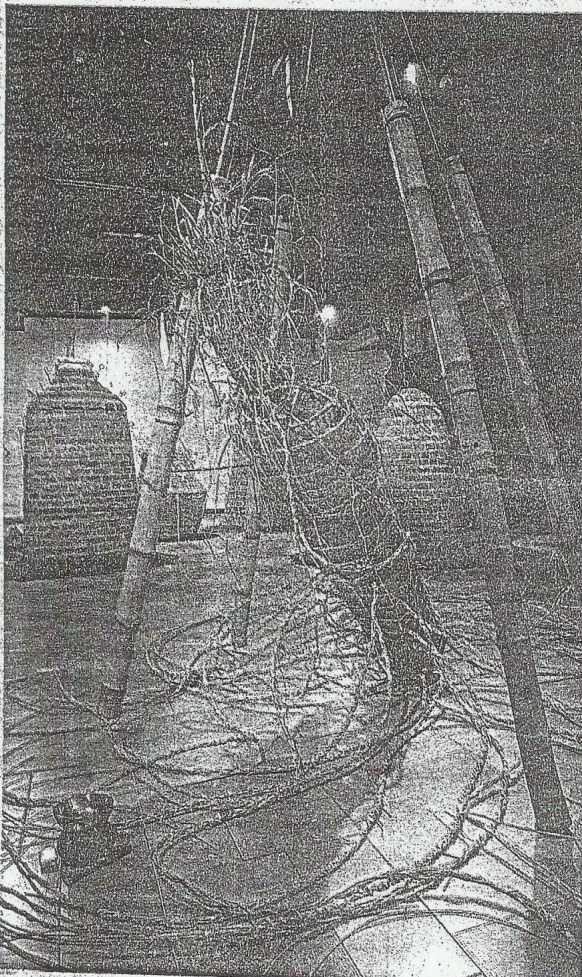
♦ ♦ ♦

KESADARAN ini barangkali bukan hal baru dalam dunia seni rupa Indo-nesia; namun kesadaran untuk menetap dalam posisi dialogis serta kesungguhan untuk masuk dan berada di dalam dua unsur budaya tersebut menjadikan Hendrawan, sebagai seorang perupa yang patut untuk dilihat dalam konteks dunia ketiga dalam arus global.

Permasalahan lokal global tidak cukup untuk dipahami sebagai wacana, melainkan dipahami dalam konteks kebudayaan yang jelas. Perupa yang secara serius berusaha masuk dalam arus lokal global harus bisa melihat dengan jelas di mana posisi mereka dalam konteks budaya lokal maupun budaya modern.

Tanpa kejelasan pemahaman, kesungguhan untuk terlibat dan analisis yang baik, isu lokal global hanya berhenti sebagai isu penciptaan. Dengan mudah karya-karya semacam itu akan terjebak dalam aktivitas yang bersifat manipulatif terhadap budaya lokal atau karya-karya itu hanya bergerak dalam seputar isu lokal-global yang eksotis.

FX HARSONO  
Perupa



"Pawon" — Simbok Ngedekake Pawon 2003-2004 dan Ning 2001.

KOMUNIKASI KUNING



## **When “*HeNING*” is No Longer Silence**

**By FX Harsono**

A bell that is usually worn around the neck of a cow, large in size, is laid on the floor, quietly without a sound. It will never make any sounds because the shape that looks like something that creates sounds is made of bricks, cements, and sand. Nevertheless, the artwork created by Hendrawan is given the title *Ning*.

Without seeing the title of the artwork – which means sounds – the images of “sounds” will pop in our head when we see it. The connotation of a bell icon will bring back everyone’s memory to the sounds it makes. In silence, it is not always quiet; in quietness, it’s not always still; a voice is not always a sound, a voice can appear in images. This clever and philosophical idea can be seen in Hendrawan’s artworks. The approach to and the understanding of the meaning of life built by traditional society or those who believe in old tradition, create wisdoms resulting in contemporary artworks, as proven by Hendrawan Riyanto, an artist based in Bandung who is also a Chair for the Department of Fine Arts at the Faculty of Arts and Design, ITB.

Hendrawan Riyanto’s solo exhibition titled in Javanese “*Naliko NING Semeleh*” which literally means “When Silence Is Laid Down”, is held in Bentara Budaya Jakarta on 20-29 February 2004, showing 10 art installations.

As a person who lives in a modern world, Hendrawan does not accept modernity as a whole. He lives the way modern people live in big cities who also practices rituals from the old culture. He feels the contrast between the modern life that is rational, profane, materialistic, consumptive, and the old culture that is spiritual, sacred, mystical and marginal.

This contrast, difference, is not seen as diametrical conflict; the presence of modern culture does not eliminate the traditional culture because the intention to reconcile is more acceptable and will provide inner peace.

This synthetic way of thinking, believing in the mystical world and the relationship with the dead, is one cultural characteristic of farmers found all over Indonesia which therefore, can be considered as a characteristic of modern Indonesians.

Hendrawan sees this reality as a cultural phenomenon which cannot be separated from his life as a modern person who also believes in the old culture. This reality places local values of the old culture well in the creation of an artwork, believing that it actually revitalises values in contemporary art.

Coincidentally, I get to see closely Hendrawan's sincerity in embracing the society that still practices the old culture. He rewards them by calling them "archaic society" instead of "traditional society".

Archaic society is one that lives in a primordial perspective believing in mythology related to nature, spirits, purity, and power of the Gods/Goddesses. The term "traditional society" is seen as a category that tends to be orientalist. The traditional society is understood as society living in pre-modern conditions or non-technocratic. This hierarchic view positions traditional society as old-fashioned and of lower class when compared to the modern society with its modern culture. Every culture has its own context of time and space, every culture has its own existence within that time and space. Based on this concept, the understanding of myths, rituals, mediators, and symbols should be seen in a non-hierarchical cultural perspective.

Derived from these principles and understanding, Hendrawan tries to place his creation process not only from a theoretical perspective, but it also has a context and direct correlation with the culture of the archaic society. He began his journey by having discussions with psychics, shamans, and traditional ceremony leaders of the archaic society, and cemetery caretakers. He follows up these conversations by visiting locations that are considered sacred where he participates in the

rituals with the local community. These activities are not only to satisfy his curiosity but to also gain more spiritual experience. Hendrawan sees all rituals to glorify God are always good.

His journey to be close with everything spiritual is done by visiting an old mosque near Mount Dieng, areas around Sunda, Java, temples, old cemetery, even going on the Hajj to Mecca, and lastly, visiting Kathmandu, Nepal. This is an inseparable part of his creation process.

He must experience the spiritual journey as part of the rituals to bring profanity closer to sacredness. The spiritual experience he gained from these rituals, both by himself and with mediators, is the source of his art ideas.

As an artist graduated from an institution that highly regards science as the most important part of life and art, that is ITB (Institute Technology of Bandung); he did an in-depth study of ceramics there and Japan, so his craft footprints is very obvious in his artworks.

His background in skilled craftsmanship combined with his ideas originated from rituals are not for the purpose of merely creating crafts, on the contrary, he uses crafts as media of expressions that are not intentionally serve as his purpose. All of them become one, flowing together, completing each other, to create an artwork which can no longer categorised as craft.

Also, the use of materials and techniques is meticulously planned. This can be seen in most of his artworks, in *Ning*, *Suwung Ono Ing Kotekan*, and *Mandala Peteng*. These three artworks are the most monumental pieces in the exhibition.

Hendrawan's sensitivity is evident when presenting mystical values, rational analysis and *kejawen* (Javanese traditional spiritual teaching); when creating the artwork and its surface, and when representing mystical icons. All of this is done by focussing on his observations on ritual artefacts he found in different forms, such as buildings, heirlooms, costumes, bowls, and symbolic items he observes and feels from the rituals that were created by skilful craftsmen with high aesthetic values. They were created based on strict guidelines so they are able to bridge profane values in

becoming spiritual values. He understands these historical facts as reality which he adopts as the foundation of his artworks. Hence the analytical and mystical values are very prominent in his artworks.

Bamboo plaits shaped like a cocoon or a bird's nest hung from a bough of a tree, is his artwork titled *Suwung Ono Ing Kotekan*. The structured plaits end with messy plaits, the empty space inside the cocoon that is hung from the ceiling seems to echo some sounds. The cocoon shape that is always spinning does not reflect busyness or chaos. All is brought together to show silence like a moving pendulum, in front of someone's eyes who is being hypnotised, moving in peace.

When we continue exploring this artwork, we will see small knots of rattans that are part of larger plaits placed neatly against the wall. We are very familiar with the forms of plaits even though we may not know exactly the type of plaits they are, but they are present in our daily lives. Seeing the artworks, we are encouraged to trace back our old culture and the meaning of life for the archaic society, but we cannot say that these artworks are simply gluing old culture on artworks.

Current trends are present in the values of connectivity to complement rationale related to the senses which tends to be measured, palpable, and concrete. Whereas aesthetic of the traditional society is non-concrete, impalpable, and immeasurable because it prioritises the cosmic continuity of life where humans orientated in mystical world or as spirits.

Hendrawan is fully aware of what his artworks represent in the cultural context of archaic society that is communal, into a gallery that is on infrastructures of modern art filled with individual and elitist codes whereas the archaic society captures codes from nature which is then agreed as a symbol in its daily communal life.

The presence of both cultures is not a binary opposition where they are opposing and eliminating one another but they are actually positioned to be complementing and relying on one another, to understand the presence of another space, that is the space of origin, the beginning of life.



This awareness may not be new in Indonesian art but the awareness to stay in the dialogist position and the determination to enter and to be in both of these cultures are what makes Hendarawan as an artist should be seen in the context of the third world in the global stream.

The issue of local global is not only to be understood in a discourse but in a wider context of cultures. Artists who are serious in getting into the local global stream must be able to see where they are positioned in the context of local and modern cultures.

Without the clarity of comprehension, determination to be involved in good analysis, local global issues will only end in issues of creation. These artworks will easily be trapped in manipulative activities towards local cultures or the artworks only revolve around the exotic local global issues.

English translation by Sandra J. Lambey

## APPENDIX L

Article by Putu Fajar Arcana in Kompas Daily Newspaper, Jakarta, 2004 (date of publication unknown).

2004

### Hendrawan, Seni dari Ruang Asal Mula

KETIKA para seniman sibuk dengan pikiran-pikiran besar dan memeluk erat apa yang disebut *performance art*, perupa Hendrawan Riyanto (45) justru hadir dengan hal-hal "sepele". Dalam perhelatan seni yang berjudul gagah "International Performance Art Festival", 28-30 April 2004 di Bandung, ia mengajak para tetangganya. Mereka, antara lain, adalah manusia-manusia marginal dengan profesi pedagang ketupat-tahu, tukang becak, dan satpam. Sudah pasti profesi-profesi ini sangat jauh hubungannya dengan dunia kesenian yang elitis tadi.

**H**EBATNYA lagi, setelah memperkenalkan mereka satu per satu, Hendrawan mengajak mereka "menyambal" tomat di pentas. Seluruh prosesi pembuatan sambal, pinuk daun pisang, dan mempersiapkan nasi dilakukan dengan sikap berjongkok. Begitu tomat, bawang merah, terasi, dan cabe diulek, "meledaklah" aroma yang merangsang nafsu makan. Sebagian penonton akhirnya secara beramai-ramai menyantap nasi, sambal tomat, dan lalap kangkung.

Apa yang bisa dipetik dari pentas yang "hanya" seperti memindahkan realitas sehari-hari yang remeh-temeh? Umumnya orang Indonesia tidak peka terhadap peristiwa-peristiwa keseharian lantaran menganggapnya lumrah. Namun, kita bisa melihat betapa ritual membuat sambal itu mengungkapkan beberapa hal.

Sikap jongkok merupakan etika kaum marginal di dalam menghayati "ritual-ritual" di sekitar dirinya. Ia timbul dari semacam perilaku "ketimuran" yang sering dinilai "tak sopan" dan "kacamat Bant". Tapi begitu, sambal hidangkan mereka direbut ramai-ramai. Tak kurang beberapa peserta asing juga turut berebut.

Pada bagian akhir pertunjukannya, Hendrawan mengugurkan bagian "daksinya". Beliau, pisang sebagai ikon agrikultur sering dilupakan karena kita terpeku pada padi. "Karena itu, hak pernah kita dengar ada budidaya pisang kan," kata perupa yang juga dosen di Departemen Seni Murni Fakultas Seni Rupa dan Desain Institut Teknologi Bandung (ITB) ini. Bahkan, katanya, kebudayaan agro itu perlahan-lahan "dimusnahkan" dengan kecenderungan memilih peradaban "baru" melalui penempatan teknologi. Padahal, dalam beberapa hal teknologi tak mampu menolong manusia keluar dari kesulitan. Ia justru mengering kita ke dalam problem baru alienasi!

♦ ♦ ♦

**KELUARGA Pisang** judul pertunjukan Hendrawan, hanyalah satu jendela untuk meneropong apa yang tengah dilakukan perupa ini. Ia lahir di Yogyakarta, 15 Januari 1959, dalam keluarga yang pekat unsur-unsur kejawaannya. Ia memperoleh pendidikan formal dengan menempuh studi keramik di ITB, di mana ia pernah menjadi Ketua Departemen Seni Murni. Pendidikan ini telah memberinya dasar-dasar berpikir rasional sebagaimana masyarakat Barat menganggap berbagai misteri kesenian.

Berdasarkan pemikiran ini Hendrawan merasa perlu mendalami ilmu keramik sampai ke Jepang. Tahun 1988 ia belajar keramik dekoratif di Tajiimi, Nagoya dan tahun 1992 mempelajari studi keramik di Kyoto Seika University dan Shigaraki dengan Prof Chitara Kawasaki. Sampai akhirnya ia tiba pada satu pameran tung-

gal di Jepang tahun 1992 dan seorang Jepang berpendapat, "Keramikmu seperti keramik Jepang...," tutur Hendrawan menimuk pendapat orang itu. "Ini pulan yang amat telak. Saya ingin kembali ke ruang asal mula saya...," katanya.

Sejak tujuh tahun silam suami dari Rini D dan ayah Sekarsari Ning Pitri (4 bulan) ini memulai sebuah perjalanan yang membawanya banyak dicibirkan. Sebagai seniman dengan pendidikan formal-akademis, perjalanannya menyusuri situs-situs purbakala dan kemudian di situ mengasah batinnya sungguh tak masuk akal.

"Teks formal akademis sudah saya jelajah, tetapi memahami ruang asal mula dengan kultur isian tantangan yang lain. Saya kemudian menemui kiai dengan kultur lokal yang dalam serta para dukun yang setidaknya menguasai dan memahami secara intuitif ruang asal mula."

Sesungguhnya penjelasan Hendrawan ke akar kulturalnya tetap dalam kerangka memberi jawaban atas kebutuhan pencariannya dalam rasionalitas Barat. Ia kemudian sering kali "berkolaborasi" dengan dukun. Itu dimulai ketika seorang dukun sahabatnya memberi petunjuk bahwa harus mendalami jejak leluhurnya di Bukit Selarong di selatan Yogyakarta. Di sebuah goa ia menemukan

artefak-artefak yang mencitrakan sinkretisme peradaban pra-Islam. "Saya juga mengalami beberapa kebetulan yang sulit dipecah nalar. Itu mungkin yang disebut pengalaman mistis," kata dia.

Atas petunjuk teman dukunnya, pada bulan purnama ia kemudian mengadakan riset dengan menelusuri Pegunungan Dieng. Dalam sebuah goa ia menemukan patung-patung di mana orang banyak melakukan meditasi. "Saya lihat cahaya bulan yang menembus dinding gua, begitu menenangkan. Mungkin saya menemukan diri saya di situ," katanya.

Pengalaman-pengalaman ini, kata Hendrawan, agar tak diletakkan dalam kerangka pencarian ilmu gaib. Tapi harus dipahami sebagai penelusuran jejak masa lalu untuk melatih kepekaan batin. Ia sampai pada kesimpulan bahwa seni harus memuaskan dua hal: nalar dan batin.

"Seni rupa modern yang mengadopsi rasionalitas Barat tak pernah bisa menyeimbangkan keduanya. Padahal, menurut saya seni itu berada pada tataran indrawi dan non-indrawi. Khusus untuk seni non-indrawi, saya harus belajar pada sekolah alternatif, yaitu guru-guru saya para dukun itu," katanya.

♦ ♦ ♦

**SELAIN** pencarian ke ruang-ruang arkais dari masyarakat Timur, yang menarik justru keberangkatan Hendrawan mendalami ilmu keramik, tetapi kemudian beralih kepada bentuk-bentuk berupa artefak yang justru menjauhi dari studi formalnya. Karya-karyanya, seperti *Ning, Starung Ono Ing Kotekan, Mandala Peteng*, termasuk *performance Keluarga Pisang*, itu hampir-hampir tak meninggalkan jejak keramik. Ia hanya menyisakan "ketangguhannya" di dalam menciptakan wujud artistik.

Menurut Hendrawan, keramik justru telah menggiringnya menemukan kembali jejak leluhur yang sangat erat kaitannya dengan kultur "padi". Pada saat kita mengenal padi yang masuk dari daratan China, saat bersamaan masuk pula bentuk-bentuk keramik.

"Keramik waktu itu diperlakukan sebagai wadah," katanya. Kalau ditelusuri lebih dalam, elemen keramik terdiri dari tanah, air, api, dan udara. "Keempat elemen ini pula yang sebenarnya menciptakan makro dan mikrokosmos. Ini jalan bagi saya untuk kemudian meneropong ruang dalam manusia," kata dia.

Maka perpaduan antara studi formal-akademis, perjalanan ke situs-situs purbakala, penjelajahan teks-teks arkais, serta kolaborasi dengan para dukun telah menghasilkan sebuatan kesenian yang tidak saja indah secara bentuk, tetapi memendam bayangan-bayangan artefak ritus di masa silam. Ia merupakan sebuah perwujudan yang kaya bentuk dan makna.



KOMPAS/PUTU FAJAR ARCANA (PUTU FAJAR ARCANA)

## Hendrawan, Art of the Beginning

By Putu Fajar Arcana

When artists are busy with their huge thoughts and they hold closely to what is called performance art, the artist Hendrawan Riyanto (45 yo) actually presents something "miniscule". At the art event gallantly called "International Performance Art Festival", 28-30 April 2004 in Bandung, he invites his neighbours. They are, among others, marginalised people whose professions are *ketupat-tahu* (local cuisine) sellers, *becak* (local rickshaw) drivers, and security guards. These professions are, of course, very distant from the elitist world of art.

The great thing is, after introducing them one by one, Hendrawan invites them to the stage to make *sambal* with tomatoes (local chilli sauce). The whole process of making the chilli sauce, preparing the banana leaf wrappings and making the rice, is done while squatting. Once the tomatoes, shallots, shrimp paste, and chillies are grounded with a stone mortar and pestle, the appetising aroma “explodes”. Some audience eventually eat the rice and chilli sauce with raw *kangkung* (local water spinach).

What can be taken from what seems like “only” bringing a “miniscule” daily activity onto the stage? Indonesians are generally unaware of daily activities that are considered normal. However, we can see how the ritual of making chilli sauce revealed a few things.

The squatting is the ethics of marginalised people to appreciate their daily “rituals”. It grows from the sort of “Western” behaviour that is often seen as “impolite” from the Eastern perspective. Nevertheless, many people in the audience eagerly grab the chilli sauce including expatriates.

At the end of his performance, Hendrawan spilled out his “brain”. He explains that bananas as agricultural icon is often forgotten because we are fixated on rice. “That is why, we never hear banana cultivation, right?”, said the artist who is also a lecturer at the Department of Fine Arts and Design, Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB). Moreover, he said, the agro-culture is slowly “destroyed” by the tendency of opting for the “new” culture through the application of technology. In some instances, technology is not even capable to help humans get out of troubles. It actually leads us to a new problem: alienation!

*Banana Family*, the title of Hendrawan’s performance, is one way to examine what the artist is doing. He was born in Yogyakarta on 15 January 1959 in a family with strong Javanese values. He received formal education at ITB studying ceramics where he is also a Chair, Department of Fine Arts. This education provides him with the principles of rational thinking the way Western people reveal various art mysteries.

Based on these principles, Hendrawan feels the need to study ceramics extensively in Japan. In 1989, he studied decorative ceramics in Tajimi, Nagoya, and in 1992, he studied ceramics in Kyoto Sheika University and Shigaraki with Professor Chitaru Kawasaki. Until he finally had a solo exhibition in Japan in 1992 and a Japanese commented, “Your ceramics look like Japanese pottery...”, said Hendrawan impersonating the person. “This is a huge blow for me. I want to go back to my beginning...”, he said.

Seven years ago, a husband to Rini D and a father to Sekarsari Ning Fitri (4 months old) began a journey that made him an object of mockery. As an artist with a formal academic education, his journey visiting various archaeological sites to sharpen his spiritual senses does not seem to make “sense”.

“I have learned the formal academic text but to understand my beginning with spoken culture is another challenge. I then met with a local *kiai* (Islam teacher) and several shamans who, based on the local culture, are experts and intuitively understand about the beginning.”

Hendrawan’s pursuit of his cultural origin is in fact to provide answers to his research within Western rationalisation which reaches a dead end. Later on, he often “collaborates” with shamans. It began when a friend, a shaman, advised him to track his ancestors in Bukit Selarong in south Yogyakarta. In a cave, he found artefacts that characterise syncretism of pre-Islam civilisation. “I also experienced coincidences that are illogical. Maybe, that is what people called mystical experience”, he said.

As guided by his shaman friend, on the night of the full moon, he conducted a research by walking through the Mount Dieng area. Inside a cave, he found sculptures where there were many people meditated. “I saw the moon light penetrates through the cave walls, so peaceful. Maybe that was when I found myself there,” he said.



These experiences, said Hendrawan, are not to be put in a context of studying witchcraft. It must be understood as an exploration of the past to train one's spiritual awareness. He comes into a conclusion that art must satisfy two things: logic and spiritual.

"Modern Fine Arts which adopts Western rationale never balances both. In fact, I think art is within sensory and non-sensory levels. Particularly, for the non-sensory art, I must learn from my teachers, the shamans," he said.

Besides his search of Western archaic spaces, the interesting thing is Hendrawan starts from studying ceramics and then, he shifts to the forms of artefacts that is actually moving away from his formal study. His artworks, such as *Ning*, *Suwung Ono Ing Kotekan*, *Mandala Peteng*, including *Banana Family* performance art, leave almost no traces of ceramics. He only leaves his "toughness" in creating artistic forms.

According to Hendrawan, ceramic has actually led him to trace his ancestors that are closely connected to the "rice" culture. We know that rice comes from China and forms of ceramics come at the same time. "Ceramics were used as containers at that time," he said.

When investigated further, elements of ceramics are earth, water, fire, and air. "These four elements also form macro and microcosmos. This is my way to scrutinise spaces within humans," he said.

Therefore, the combination of formal academic study, visits to archaeological sites, exploration of archaic texts, and collaboration with shamans, have resulted in an art that is not only in beautiful form, but it also shadows ritual artefacts from the past. It is a manifestation of something that is rich in forms and meanings.

English translation by Sandra J. Lambey

## APPENDIX M

**Hendrawan Riyanto's Obituary in Kompas Daily Newspaper, Jakarta, 2004 (date of publication unknown).**

**Perupa Hendrawan Riyanto Tiada**

JAKARTA, KOMPAS — Akhir April lalu dalam satu wawancara perupa Hendrawan Riyanto mengatakan, "Saya ingin kembali ke ruang asal mula saya...."

Kutipan ini bukan hendak menegaskan bahwa kakak kandung sutradara film Garin Nugroho ini seperti sudah punya firasat akan hari akhirnya. Tetapi lebih sebagai ingatan terakhir, sebagai kesan yang begitu mendalam sebelum ia benar-benar tiada.

Perupa kelahiran Yogyakarta, 15 Januari 1959, ini telah meninggal dunia pada Sabtu (22/5) pukul 05.00 di Rumah Sakit Telogarejo, Semarang, Jawa Tengah. Menurut penuturan Garin Nugroho, Hendrawan pada Kamis lalu mengendarai mobil sendiri dari Bandung ke Sukabumi.

"Setelah urusannya selesai di Sukabumi, ia langsung menyusul anak dan istrinya yang sedang berada di Semarang. Ketika tiba sudah batuk-batuk dan sesak napas. Jadi, Jumat malam langsung dibawa ke rumah sakit, ya sudah tak tertolong....," kata Garin yang ketika dihubungi sedang berada di Bandung. Almarhum meninggalkan seorang istri, Rini D, dan seorang anak



**Hendrawan Riyanto**

berusia empat bulan, Sekarsari Ning Fitri.

Hendrawan Riyanto, kata Garin, memang sejak lama menderita asma. "Ini sebenarnya sakit turunan, tetapi ia jarang mengeluh tentang sakitnya," kata Garin.

Jenazah Hendrawan dimakamkan di pemakaman khusus Institut Teknologi Bandung (ITB), Sukajadi, Sabtu pukul 15.00. Terakhir, kata Garin, kakaknya memang memutuskan untuk istirahat dari berbagai kesibukannya, baik

di kampus maupun kerja keseniannya. "Tak tahu apa istirahat itu maksudnya ini, waktu dia bilang begitu, saya tak ada firasat apa-apa," kata Garin.

Terakhir, Hendrawan menjadi peserta yang paling mengesankan dalam perhelatan International Performance Art pada April 2004 di Bandung. Sebelumnya, pada Februari 2004 ia menggelar pameran tunggal berjudul *Naliko Ning Semeleh* di Bentara Budaya Jakarta (BBJ).

Semasa menjalani laku keseniman dan mengajar di ITB, Hendrawan dianggap sebagai orang yang berhasil memadukan antara pembelajaran Barat dan permenungan Timur. Karya-karyanya penuh dengan jalinan antara eksplorasi sisi intelektual dan spiritual. Ia bahkan tak sungkan "mengunjungi" situs-situs yang memiliki nilai kesejarahan terpendam di berbagai tempat di Indonesia.

"Secara teknis akademis saya sudah pelajari kesenian di kampus, tetapi institusi itu tak memberikan saya jawaban ketika mempertanyakan tentang spirit. Maka saya ingin kembali ke ruang asal mula....," katanya. (CAN)

### Artist Hendrawan Riyanto Passed Away

Jakarta, Kompas – In an interview at the end of April, the artist Hendrawan Riyanto said, "I want to go back to my beginning..."

This quote is not to confirm that the brother of film director Garin Nugroho had a feeling of his last day, but as a last impression, a profound memory before he was gone.

The artist born in Yogyakarta on 15 January 1959, passed away on Saturday (22/5) at 05.00am at the Telogarejo Hospital, Semarang, Central Java. According to Garin Nugroho, Hendrawan drove by himself from Bandung to Sukabumi last Thursday.

“When he finished with his business in Sukabumi, he went straight to see his wife and child in Semarang. When he arrived, he had already been coughing and asphyxiating. So, he was brought to the hospital on Friday night, but he couldn’t be saved...” said Garin who was in Bandung when contacted. The late Hendrawan left a wife, Rini D, and a 4-month old daughter, Sekarsari Ning Fitri.

Hendrawan Riyanto, said Garin, has suffered asthma for a very long time. “It is actually a hereditary condition, but he never complains about it,” said Garin.

His body was buried in a cemetery for Institute of Technology, Bandung (ITB), in Sukajadi on Saturday at 3.00pm. Recently, said Garin, his brother had decided to take a break from his activities, on campus and his work in art. “I don’t know if this is what he meant by resting, when he said that I had no suspicions at all,” said Garin.

He was the most impressive participant at the International Performance Art in April 2001 in Bandung. Before that, in February 2004, he had a solo exhibition titled *Naliko Ning Semeleh* in Bentara Budaya Jakarta (BBJ).

Throughout his career as an artist and a lecturer at ITB, Hendrawan is considered as someone who succeeded in combining the Western learning and Eastern reflections. His artwork is full of connections between intellectual and spiritual explorations. He is not reluctant to “visit” sites with hidden historical values all over Indonesia.

“Technically and academically, I have learnt art on campus, but the institution doesn’t give me answers when I ask about spirit. So, I want to go back to my beginning...” he said.

English translation by Sandra J. Lambey