

Beyond the Dutch

Indonesia, the Netherlands and the
Visual Arts, from 1900 until now





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from 1900 until now**

edited by
Meta Knol
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KIT Publishers

Front cover

Portrait (possibly a Self-Portrait) of Raden Sarief Bastaman Saleh

Raden Sarief Bastaman Saleh (1814-1880) [attributed] c. 1840.

(Collection Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam)

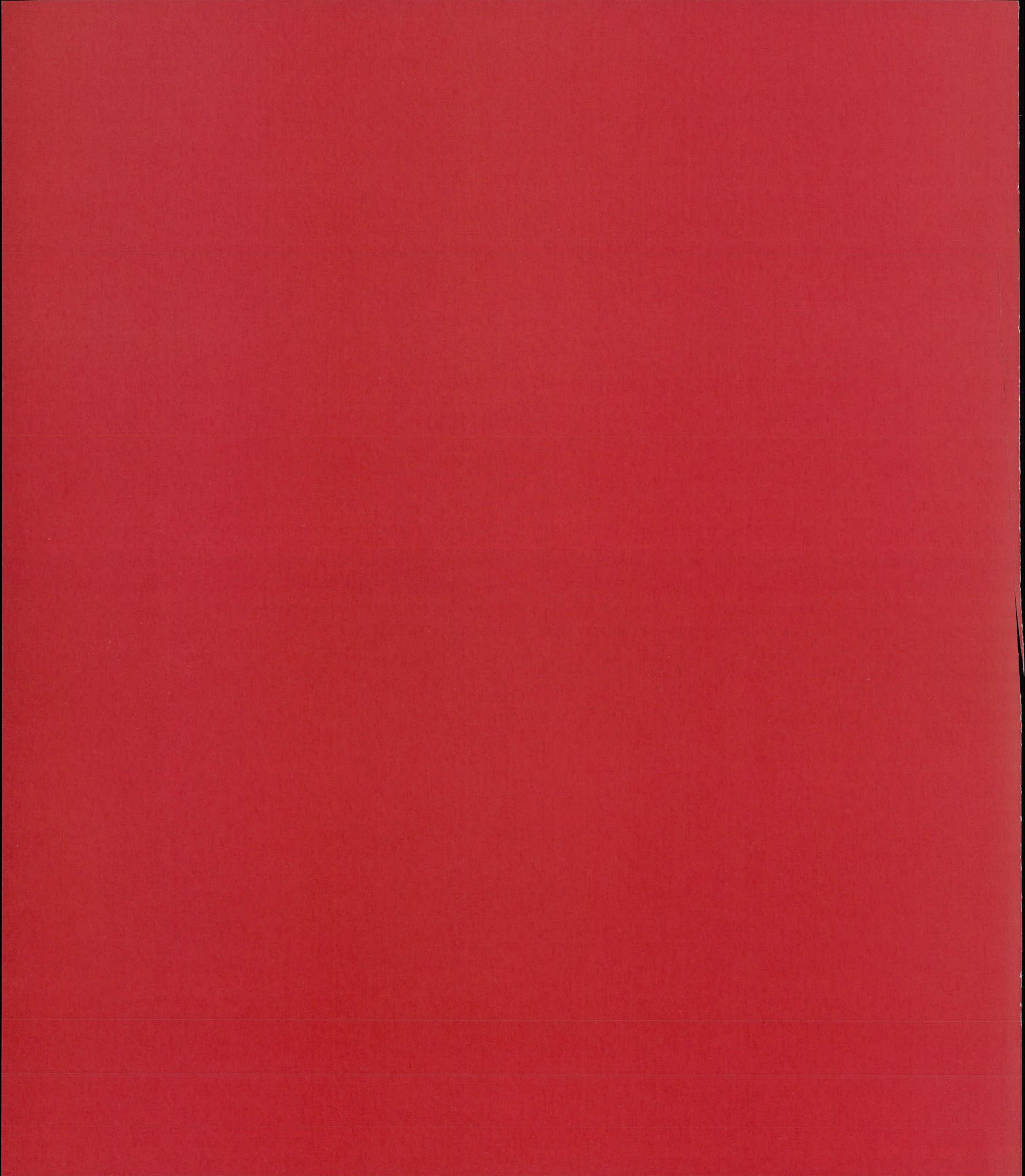
Back cover

Drawing by Peter van Dongen (2009) after *Portrait (Possibly a Self-Portrait)*
of the Artist Raden Sarief Bastaman Saleh. Attributed to Raden Sarief

Bastaman Saleh. Date c. 1840.

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Foreword

*Of course I would like to keep in touch with a project I once planted the seed for, as it were, and which also deals with topics I like to spout forth on with some regularity. We'll discuss how to do this some other time. (...)
Have a good time in Indonesia – and have a safe return home.*

Michaël Zeeman (1959-2009), e-mail to Meta Knol, 9 December 2008

Beyond the Dutch. Indonesia, the Netherlands and the Visual Arts, from 1900 until now is an exhibition that does not aim to give a full overview of developments in the visual arts in the Netherlands and Indonesia. Instead it takes the form of a critical visual essay, that will hopefully act as a 'wake-up call', focusing on three representative periods in the twentieth century, namely colonialism, decolonisation and post-colonialism. The main aim is to pose the question of how your own cultural background affects how you look at fine art. It is explicitly not concerned with the applied arts or ethnography. In the best case, *Beyond the Dutch* will encourage the public to look at fine art differently. This approach will also enable the exhibition to get the Centraal Museum's mission going and rouse the interest of its visitors. Putting together *Beyond the Dutch* has meant major changes for the Centraal Museum. Similarly, the exhibition *Be(com)ing Dutch in the Age of Globalisation* led in practice to major changes for the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven. Not that the two exhibitions are literally related, but they are both linked to the Stimuleringsprijs voor Culturele Diversiteit (Prize for Encouraging Cultural Diversity) set up in 2006 by the Mondriaan Foundation. The Van Abbemuseum won the prize in the end. It has already completed its project, which consisted of a series of three integrated phases with exhibitions, activities and projects in and around the Eindhoven museum. The new perspective that the Van Abbemuseum was looking for, and found, is – to put it briefly – to test what a museum can be and at the same time to explore how the museum can offer new perspectives for the visual arts. The Van Abbemuseum did not present cultural diversity as a problem; rather, it recognised it as a 'stage in life' that offers an opportunity for positive growth. In a similar way, *Beyond the Dutch* is also a 'stage in life' for the Utrecht Museum. The project gives us an opportunity to increase awareness, both within the museum and beyond, that art can make an essential contribution to people's self-image. Perhaps it can also improve their self-esteem, idealistic though that may sound. 'Museum' is an established concept, just like 'school', and the concept of the museum can be developed further by constantly reviewing and questioning it. There is no better and more pervasive way of doing this than through the activities the Museum itself organises. If, in doing so, the museum dares to stand in the shoes of its public, or rather, the public it is targeting, then the circle is complete.

Beyond the Dutch follows on from a multi-part project proposal by Michaël Zeeman entitled Het Edward Said Programma (The Edward Said Programme), a metaphorical homage to Said's famous book *Orientalism* of 1978.

Commissioned by the Centraal Museum, Mr Zeeman wrote the proposal in 2006 as a tangible contribution to the Mondriaan Foundation's Stimuleringsprijzen voor Culturele Diversiteit. The Mondriaan Foundation provided development money in the form of a subsidy for working out the first part of the plan in more detail. Meta Knol, the curator for Modern and Contemporary Art at the Centraal Museum, turned out to be the right person to do this. Mrs. Knol worked on a draft over a period of two years. During this time, she increasingly incorporated the overall intercultural changes taking place in society around the museum into the museum itself. She also managed to come up with a subject that touched a raw nerve in Dutch general and cultural history: Indonesia. In particular, the collapse of the superior Dutch self-image, and in line with that the classical sacrosanct Western European self-image, turned out to be an essential factor.

Mrs. Knol travelled to Indonesia frequently and discovered there how perspectives had shifted. She was able to see that a radical turnaround had taken place; the historical contradictions created by the Netherlands had almost completely disappeared. Their place had been taken by a new, topical visual art and culture that had emerged in Indonesia. That did not just happen straight off, it turned out, as an intensive process of redevelopment and updating their own cultural heritage had already been going on for more than half a century. The result was highly individual Indonesian art, rooted in self-aware artistic attitudes. Dutch art history had been pushed into the background in the course of this process. Indonesian artists had developed a new relationship with their own art history. In other words, Meta Knol discovered a modern, all-embracing Indonesian artistic identity that had long shed the frame of reference of traditional colonialism and had attained maturity with its own specific culture and its own visual language: *Beyond the Dutch*.

All in all, the project required the visual art of Indonesia to be viewed in a different way and demanded a reinterpretation of the Dutch visual art that had been brought there since the mid-nineteenth century. *Beyond the Dutch* is therefore an exhibition in which the project itself and the study it is based on really raise the question of how a particular cultural background determines how you view visual art. Providing the room to explore this fits in well with museum culture in general and with that of the Centraal Museum. After all, the strength of a museum is its freedom and ability to think in a different way about art in a kind of 'meta-sense' – to generate new meanings.

Incidentally, visual arts in Indonesia are currently still very much determined by developments on the island of Java, as Ms Knol noted during her travels and research. The major cities on Java, such as Yogyakarta, Bandung and Jakarta, are the cultural centres of Indonesia. A cultural infrastructure barely exists on the other islands. An attempt to answer as to how and why that should be so is given in an associated programme entitled Beyond Java. This part of the programme was realised in close collaboration with the Museum Maluku and Kosmopolis Utrecht.

No words can do justice to those who have contributed to this project. They are evidence of a new vitality in the Indonesian visual arts situation. That is why we would like to offer our sincere thanks to Embassy in The Hague, the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Jakarta and to the official partner, *Asosiasi Seniman Pelukis Indonesia* (ASPI). A word of thanks

is also due to the funds: the Mondriaan Foundation, VSB fund, Hivos-NCDO Cultural Fund, Prince Bernhard Cultural Fund, Prince Claus Fund. No museum and no museum programme could exist without the many artists and the exceptional works of art they create. In addition we would like to thank the many individuals and organisations providing work on loan; they have shown unselfish generosity once again, to the benefit of this project. Finally, we would like to thank Enin Supriyanto, co-curator of the exhibition, whose wisdom and insight gave this plan the broad scope it needed to grow to become a unique emancipatory plan with a powerful objective. All these people have provided the museum with the creativity and inspiration to make the exhibition actually happen.

Beyond the Dutch is an essay in layers: in breadth and in depth, in terms of history and art history, in the effect the museum can have aimed at the general public, but equally at artists, other museums and art institutions and, not to be forgotten, the government. *Beyond the Dutch* is a way of looking at the world based on the recognition that the world's existence depends on different points of view. It is an invitation to everyone to take a broader view of the past than that presented in the average art history or general history lesson.

May Michaël Zeeman be remembered. May his ideas, which provided the seed for this project, be kept in motion, towards the Eternal Orient.

Edwin Jacobs
Director of the Centraal Museum

They are Beyond the Dutch

Indonesia, the Netherlands and the Visual Arts

Meta Knol

'Self-centred thinking is a typical Western phenomenon and modern Indonesia in 1982 no longer focuses on the West. Europe is in decay, Asia is on the rise!'
(Beb Vuyk, *Reis naar het vaderland in de verte* [Journey to the faraway fatherland], 1983)

The Netherlands and Indonesia. The relationship between the two countries has been passionate, unbalanced and unsteady ever since the seventeenth century. Many minor and major events have taken place on the stage, in the house and in the dark wings of the past. Many of those events still influence the here and now, thus forming an aggregate of facts, experiences and myths. Sometimes it becomes difficult to comprehend that aggregate in its endless complexity. That makes it all the more interesting to carry out an examination of the interaction in practice between the development of the modern visual arts in Indonesia and the developments within the arts in the Netherlands in that same period. I travelled to Indonesia with this objective for the first time in December 2007. I was full of questions about the relationship between the practice of visual art in two worlds that are miles apart and yet possess a wealth of historical and current ties, as I started an investigation into the current situation in contemporary art in Indonesia and into any predecessors it might have in the art history of the twentieth century. The results of this search can be found in the exhibition *Beyond the Dutch. Indonesia, the Netherlands and the Visual Arts, from 1900 until now* and, of course, in the book that lies before you.

Others have been on a similar search in the past. They paved the way for this exhibition through their academic research, publications and exhibitions.



Meta Knol and Jet Vermaning visit Ade Darmawan, director artists' initiative Ruang Rupa, Jakarta 2009.

The researcher Claire Holt (1901-1970), originally from Latvia, was the first to carry out an extensive study of the visual arts in Indonesia. She worked at Cornell University in Ithaca from the mid 1950s, where she published the book *Art in Indonesia. Continuities and change* in 1967.¹ The Norwegian-American-Australian art historian and Sinologist Astri Wright graduated at that same Cornell University in 1991, after which she specialised in modern and contemporary art in South-East Asia with the emphasis on Indonesia. Her work was continued by the Dutch art historian Helena Spanjaard, who performed important pioneer work in numerous respects, not in the least with her dissertation *Het ideaal van een moderne Indonesische schilderkunst, 1900-1995. De creatie van een nationale culturele identiteit* (The ideal of modern Indonesian painting, 1900-1995. The creation of a national cultural identity), which was published in 1998. Finally, Leo Haks and Guus Maris provided an important overview of the numerous foreign artists who evoked the image of Indonesia in their work with their *Lexicon of Foreign Artists Who Visualized Indonesia (1600-1950)*, published in 1995; of course, this included a large number of Dutch artists.

It is notable that these studies and historical accounts were mainly performed by Western researchers. The main cause is that the universities in Indonesia have no art history departments; Indonesians who have published works about the history of modern art in their own country have tended to be artists originally, like Jim Supangkat who published the book *Indonesian Modern Art and Beyond* in 1997. If you want to operate as a researcher in such an art-history vacuum, you need a healthy dose of timidity as well as a bit of courage, whatever your background. Fortunately, there has been a big increase in the number of Indonesian publications about modern and contemporary art in the country over the past few years. For example, extensive oeuvre catalogues have been published recently for the most important innovators in Indonesian painting around 1950: Sudjojono, Hendra Gunawan and Affandi.²

In the Netherlands the arts are considered essential 'bearers of culture'. The visual arts, theatre, music, literature and film are the collective bearers of the content, status and values of 'Dutch' culture, which is characterised by artistic versatility, individual freedom and strong ties with history. The Netherlands, like so many other countries in Western Europe, have a tradition where 'high art' has always been able to develop under the protective wings of the elite, a role that was gradually taken over by the government in modern times. That relationship is totally different in Indonesia. The Indonesian past is characterised by profound historical, cultural and political fragmentation. Of course, the deep fault-lines in Indonesian history were caused by centuries of colonialism, but in the post-colonial period too the successive episodes of Soekarno's national politics of unity (1949-1967), Suharto's dictatorial government (1967-1998) and the creation of a young democracy from the Reformasi in 1998 onwards caused profound changes over and over again. In short, the cultural model in Indonesia has developed in a totally different direction, in accordance with the capricious fault-lines of history. However, an unprecedented process of cultural emancipation started after the declaration of independence on 17 August 1945, full of energy and lust for life.

Considering the close ties between both countries, it is remarkable that the attention given to the modern Indonesian visual arts has never really been able to develop to maturity in the Netherlands. The storehouses of the museums of ethnology contain a varied collection of paintings and other visual objects,

¹ For complete literature references, see the bibliography at the back of this book.

² Agus Dermawan T. and Astri Wright, *Hendra Gunawan: a great modern Indonesian painter* (Jakarta: Ir. Ciputra Foundation, 2001); Amir Sidharta, S. *Sudjojono, visible soul* (Jakarta: Museum S. Sudjojono and Canna Gallery, 2006); Sardjana Sumichan (ed.), *Affandi* (3 vols, Jakarta: Bina Lestari Budaya Foundation and Singapore: Singapore Art Museum, 2007).

of both excellent and mediocre quality; yet it is only in the past few years that they have attracted more interest.³ Until recently, the museums of ethnology mainly focused on the study and presentation of ethnographic objects. One consequence of this, for instance, is that Dutch public collections do not include any of Sudjojono's works, although he was one of the most important innovators in Indonesian painting after 1945. Furthermore, a museum culture for modern art has never fully developed in Indonesia. The National Museum in Jakarta had its origins in the Bataviaasch Genootschap voor Kunsten en Wetenschappen (Batavian Society for Arts and Sciences) which was founded in 1778 by civil servants in the Dutch East-India Company with an interest in science. In 1868, the museum opened its doors to the public with a permanent exhibition of antiquities at the current location. Today, too, the museum focuses on the long history of the archipelago, in which there is absolutely no place for the modern visual arts. However, they can be found at the somewhat decrepit Museum Seni Rupa dan Keramik in the old lower town of Kota, and at the Galeri Nasional, founded in 1998. The latter has a collection of paintings the importance of which is hardly acknowledged; at least, it was not easy for me to view the collection, which is housed in a wing of the museum closed to the general public. However, an increasing number of private collections have become open to the public during the last few years. By far the most important collection of historical Indonesian paintings can be found within the presidential palaces of Bogor, Jakarta and Yogyakarta, which in principle are closed to the public. All in all, it is not easy to gain physical access to Indonesian art history.

The exhibition *Beyond the Dutch. Indonesia, the Netherlands and the Visual Arts* does not provide a complete overview of the development of the Indonesian visual arts either. However, the exhibition does pose fundamental questions about the complex relationship between the history of Dutch and Indonesian art. Using three periods, which act as a kind of art-history 'keyhole surgery', an investigation is made into how the Dutch and Indonesian artists influenced each other (or not, as the case may be) in three crucial phases: colonialism, the period of independence and decolonisation, and the current post-colonial era. Each phase is considered a case study; constantly underlying them is the general question of how the overall politico-cultural context influenced the development of the visual arts, or more specifically: what artistic interaction took place (or not) between the visual arts in the Netherlands and Indonesia in each of the three periods. In the first instance, the answer to those questions can be found in the works of art selected. They offer a wide range of personal views and impressions, in which the personal perspective of the artist is always dominant. More than one hundred paintings, sculptures, drawings, installations and video artworks by Indonesian and Dutch artists span more than a century of modern visual art.

The large steps taken through time reveal major changes. For instance, Dutch and Indonesian painting turn out to have been quite similar, both stylistically and in terms of content, from the nineteenth century until halfway through the twentieth century; this can be traced back directly to the dominant role of the Dutch in developing the practice of the visual arts in the colony. However, from the 1940s onwards a transition took place, with Indonesian artists increasingly clearly following their own path in parallel with the political process of independence and decolonisation. Although they

3 The art historian Koos van Brakel has made an essential contribution to the knowledge and appreciation of modern Indonesian painting until approximately 1950 through his publications and exhibitions in both the Tropical Museum and other Dutch museums and art institutions.

continued working in media that were Western in origin, such as painting, sculpture and drawing, at the same time they developed a style and content of their own that are considered 'Indonesian' – most of them rejected the Dutch influence. For the current generation of Indonesian artists Dutch art is no longer part of the frame of reference and has not been for some time; they are totally 'Beyond the Dutch' and, for obvious reasons, prefer to focus on their own art world or the Asian world of art. Things are different for the reverse situation. Indonesia still plays an important role for a considerable number of Dutch artists as a source of inspiration for their work. Most of these artists have biographical or historical ties with the country – like many other Dutch people. These contemporary artists usually work within the framework of a critical, social and artistic debate, which is also reflected in their work. This did not apply so much to the Dutch artists who continued living and working in Indonesia during the period of independence and decolonisation; at least, the changed political situation had hardly any visible effect on the content of their work, although a number of these artists chose to take Indonesian nationality after decolonisation. It is precisely this complexity of content and the dynamics of the differences and similarities that become evident in the exhibition *Beyond the Dutch*.



Meeting in artists initiative Kedai Kebun Forum, Yogyakarta 2009. From left to right Meta Knol, Agung Kurniawan (artist), Jompot (artist), Enin Supriyanto (co-curator) and Jaya (assistant).

Indonesian and Dutch art are represented in equal degree as the exhibition had been subdivided into two equal parts. However, because the history of Indonesian art is still virtually unknown among the Dutch museum-going public, our objective for this book was to put more emphasis on the Indonesian side. This book is made up of essays at a higher level of abstraction alternating with texts each of which describes a specific period, style or development in Dutch-Indonesian art history. These articles alternate with a number of 'boxed texts' that provide information about individual topics in Indonesian art and art history.

As the person who set up the exhibition, I would like to take the opportunity to explain my personal impressions and motivation in this introductory essay based on a number of questions that seem to me relevant and challenging. What are the most notable similarities and differences we can point to between Dutch and Indonesian visual art? How were Indonesian artists able to break loose from the colonial reality over the course of time and how did these successive processes of assimilation, resistance and emancipation find expression in their work? And last but not least: how does the artistic relationship between the Netherlands and Indonesia fit into the current post-colonial discussions about the complexity of differences and similarities between East and West? I will try and formulate some answers to these questions in this essay. I would like to invite you to sharpen your own observations and thoughts about these topics using this exhibition and this book.

I would like to thank all who have contributed to the contents of this exhibition and this book. First, my thanks go to Enin Supriyanto, who is acting as the Indonesian co-curator of the exhibition and whose vivid mind and bright intelligence have made an essential contribution to its underlying principles. I would like to thank Mella Jaarsma too, the Dutch artist who settled in Yogyakarta as early as 1982 and who was my first guide in the Indonesian art world. Of course, I would also like to thank the other artists from the Netherlands and Indonesia for their generous and inspiring contribution to the creation of *Beyond the Dutch*. It is quite remarkable that a considerable number

of them wanted to make new work especially for the exhibition; that was the case for FX Harsono, Agung Kurniawan, Prilla Tania, Tintin Wulia, Eko Nugroho, Tiong Ang, Roy Villevoe, Mella Jaarsma and Hadassah Emmerich. I would also like to thank Helena Spanjaard who as a guest curator was responsible for a special part of the exhibition, dedicated to the artist and teacher Ries Mulder. Professor Kitty Zijlmans and Mr Remco Raben were the editors of this book together with myself. Their support and critical involvement was of great value in the realisation of this publication.

The Rise of the Modern Visual Arts in Indonesia

Until the beginning of the nineteenth century, the native communities in the Indonesian archipelago did not have any forms of visual art similar to the art that had been developed in the West in the course of centuries based on the classical, Greco-Roman cultural tradition. The creation of the 'modern visual arts' in Indonesia is closely associated with the introduction of Western art traditions by colonial occupiers; it was the Dutch who introduced the principles of Western modern art in the colony, particularly from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards. While up to then the relationship with the East Indies was mainly based on the Dutch desire to trade and urge to explore, new colonial power relationships developed in that period that increasingly had a strong cultural element.

The influence of the Kingdom of the Netherlands on social, communal, political and cultural life in the East Indies grew rapidly after the Javanese war ended in 1830, particularly on the isle of Java. There was also increasing scientific interest in the country's nature and native culture; the objects collected as a result of scientific expeditions and studies formed the basis for the later museums of ethnology and their collections. In 1837 the National Museum for Ethnography in Leiden was founded, the predecessor of the current Museum of Ethnology, which still owns the most important collection of historical ethnography of Indonesia. The Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam had its origins in the Koloniaal Museum in Haarlem, which was founded in 1864 and which opened its doors to the public in 1871. Its collection already numbered approximately 30,000 objects when it moved to the new building in Amsterdam in 1926. The objective of the Koloniaal Museum was to show 'raw materials, natural products and national industry from Dutch overseas possessions'.⁴

Similar collections of ethnographic objects, curiosities and various forms of 'national industry' were also the focal point of the colonial departments of the large World's Fairs that were held from 1851 onwards, starting with the spectacular Crystal Palace in London, which was especially designed for that fair. Although these large-scale manifestations were officially intended to portray the universal state of affairs of the human race, in practice they often took place in Western European cities where they served mainly to demonstrate the superiority and prosperity of the colonial powers. When the phenomenon of the world exhibition came to Amsterdam in 1883, Dutch organisers thought it very important to provide their own general public with insight into the exotic folk culture of the East Indies. Thus, a 'live stock' of Indonesian people was exhibited in an idyllic 'Javanese' kampong (village).⁵

⁴ Kees-Jan Donkers, 'Tropenmuseum vroeger en vandaag', <http://www.tropenmuseum.nl/smartsite.shtml?ch=FAB&id=12215>

⁵ Marieke Bloembergen, 'Van kampong tot kunst? Nederlandse koloniale mensvertoningen op de wereldtentoonstellingen, 1880-1931', in: Patrick Allegaert and Bert Sliggers (ed.), *De exotische mens. Andere culturen als amusement* (Haarlem: Teylers Museum and Gent: Museum Dr. Guislain, 2009) 115-129.

These world's fairs were extremely popular; one million people were said to have visited Amsterdam in 1883. Artists were also inspired by the growing attention given to the culture and nature of the colonies. This led to the development of the late nineteenth century 'exoticism', for example, with Dutch painters such as Marius Bauer and Isaac Israëls as its exponents.

The migration flow from the Netherlands to the Dutch East Indies increased considerably from the beginning of the twentieth century onwards due to the growing popularity of the East Indies, the greater hold of the Dutch authorities and companies on 'East Indian life' and the improvements in the transport available. The number of missions expanded, particularly on remote islands like Moluccas and Papua New Guinea. Many people who went to the East Indies took their families with them to settle permanently on Java and – to a lesser extent – the other islands of the archipelago. It was these Dutch communities that encouraged the development of a cultural climate according to a Western model. Thus the Dutch East Indies Art Society was founded in Batavia in 1902, with the objective of promoting the development of a European culture in the East Indies. The Art Society moved into a building of its own in 1914, where it presented varying exhibitions as well as concerts, dance evenings and theatrical performances. The example of the Batavian Art Society was soon followed in other Javanese cities including Surabaya, Semarang, Yogyakarta and Bandung.

It would be going too far here to describe the entire intercultural history of the Netherlands and Indonesia. However, it is important to point out the fundamental difference in power in the cultural relationships between both countries. The Dutch perspective usually determined the cultural development of the Indies in the late colonial period. The Dutch were the ones who created an Indonesian visual art climate after the Western model in Indonesia, from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards. Talented artists like Raden Saleh and Abdullah Suriosubroto were trained by European artists who travelled to the East; the most talented among these painters continued their training in the Netherlands. In the East Indies they made a living by taking commissions that were mainly dictated by the Dutch colonial government, the Javanese elite connected with the Dutch government or Dutch citizens. A popular, romanticised form of exoticism was the only way to express their Indonesian background. This found expression in the 'Beautiful Indies' paintings, for instance – a landscape genre that portrayed the phenomenal views of nature in the Emerald Belt.

There is a complex, interesting tension between the historical domination of the Western definition of art on one hand and the development of a modern visual arts climate in non-Western countries on the other hand.⁶ For instance, the relationship between Indonesia and the Netherlands is affected both by processes of assimilation and by forms of resistance, in which throwing off ballast from the colonial past is a natural reaction. For countries that have been colonised for centuries, violent (if necessary) enforcement of a break with the past is a logical step in light of the imperative ambition to develop a cultural and national identity of their own. However, personal memories, old patterns and scars seem to continue to play an important role. It is clear that Indonesian artists very much went their own way from independence in 1945 onwards. They stuck to the classical, visual disciplines of painting, sculpture and drawing, but they used these to develop a specific content of their own that was strongly associated with the search for a new, Indonesian identity.

⁶ I use the notions Western and non-Western to indicate the difference between the North-American and Western European culture and that of other countries. These notions are very much in common use but at the same time they position the West as the centre of the universe and its opposite, the non-West, as being a part of the periphery. In reality the world contains a mosaic of cultures that exist side by side with a complex network of mutual influences.

It is also clear that many Dutch artists are still clinging to the images from before the break. That *tempo dulu* (the old days) perspective is mainly determined by worn-out clichés and, it must be said, old-fashioned views. Unintentionally, many Dutch still have an image of traditional, Indonesian culture influenced by colonial times, although that image no longer corresponds with the current, Indonesian reality. To a certain extent this also applies to the arts. Whereas Indonesian artists, thinking and working in the here and now, have had to take new paths over and over again since independence and have thus visibly been developing further, many Dutch artists have melancholically focused on an idealised past.

Ethnology and Visual Art

The persistent effect of past events on life in the present becomes apparent in the practice whereby the ethnological museums in the Netherlands still seem to have the monopoly on showing modern and contemporary art from non-Western countries. Although the cultural map of the world is changing fast under the influence of rapid developments in other parts of the world, their implications have hardly registered in Dutch museum culture. As always, art museums focus on visual art from North America and Western Europe, thus ignoring both the many intercultural histories still to explore and the fundamental cultural shifts caused by recent migration and globalisation processes. In the course of the past century the 'centre' of visual art shifted from nineteenth century Paris to twentieth century New York. However, today this separation between centre and periphery has largely disappeared. It has been replaced by a postmodern mosaic of local centres with strong global claims. If we fail to incorporate these recent developments in our idea of what visual art really is, we will soon miss out on the opportunity to further refine our understanding of art; it also stands in the way of a historical revision of art history, including the nuanced questioning of the classical hegemony of the Western canon.

This somewhat conservative attitude of the Dutch museum world is probably enhanced by the academic discourse, which until now has lacked a post-colonial debate.⁷ Within the Dutch universities it is the cultural anthropologists and historians whose interest in non-Western countries and cultures results in new studies and theories, while most art history departments still confine themselves to the classical, Western canon.⁸ I remember very well that as art history students we were allowed to skip the seventh chapter of the standard work *The Story of Art* by Ernst Gombrich; that chapter discussed Islamic and Chinese culture. Given the curriculum of those days, my academic knowledge of non-Western art does not extend further than the ancient Egyptians. Unintentionally, these 'colonial blinkers' within the art historical and museum discourse have served to uphold the historical monoculture of Western ethnocentricity.

⁷ The post-colonial debate has had much more influence on academic and art-historical practice in neighbouring countries like France, Germany and, in particular, England. There are numerous foreign researchers working at American universities who are also involved with these subjects. Indonesian art history, for instance, owes a great deal to the pioneering work of American researchers.

⁸ An exception to this rule is the Art History department of the University of Leiden, which offers a World Art Studies profile. It considers visual art a global phenomenon, with global implications for art history.

Orientalism and Occidentalism: East versus West?

Even the brief outline of the situation given above shows how difficult it can be to build a bridge between different cultural backgrounds. This intransigence is also found in the relationship between the Indonesian and Dutch visual arts. The period of decolonisation has driven an – inevitably necessary – wedge between the art developments in both countries. Indonesia and the Netherlands are certainly not a unique example in that respect. In spite of the explosive increase in the exchange of information and experiences, propelled by processes of globalisation and cosmopolitanism, there are still huge intellectual, cultural and religious fault lines between East and West in this post-colonial era. That is seen, for example, in one of the most noticeable themes in the post-colonial debate: the contrasts between orientalism and occidentalism.

The first of the two concepts comes from the book of the same name by Edward W. Said, which was published in 1978 for the first time and has been reprinted numerous times since.⁹ In his book Said investigates the nature and history of Western attitudes towards the East, launching the concept of orientalism as a general term for a European, ideological construction of 'the other'. In this ideological construction 'Eastern culture' is interpreted in accordance with deeply engrained lines of a prejudiced, Western way of thinking, originating in colonialism. There is no equality between East and West; the Saidian orientalist considers cultures outside the West less developed, primitive or even completely inferior. This often unintentionally racist attitude towards the other is compensated by a well-intentioned, but nevertheless arrogant, romantic vision of the Oriental as a mystic or a romanticising of the tropical landscape as a source of original, paradisiacal natural experiences.

In the course of time the persistent orientalist view of many Westerners caused a chain of reactions, which were penetratingly summarised by Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit under the name *Occidentalism* in 2004. By this they mean: "The dehumanising picture of the West painted by its enemies."¹⁰ Occidentalists were said to reject the Western culture based on sharp judgments about the far-reaching individualism of Westerners, the proliferating materialism of the capitalist culture, the cold mechanical rationalism underlying the typical Western idea of progress, the arrogant exercise of power in the form of economic and political imperialism, and all those other wretched features that – in the eyes of radical critics – were brought together under the 'cloak' of modern democracy. Buruma and Margalit: "The mind of the West in the eyes of the Occidentalists is a truncated mind, good for finding the best way to achieve a given goal, but utterly useless in finding the *right* way. (...) Western man, in this view, is a hyperactive busybody, forever finding the right means to the wrong ends."¹¹

That the above-mentioned contrasts still apply is apparent from the fact that over the last decade the relationship between East and West has come under pressure because of the widespread fear of Muslim fundamentalism and Islamisation. Unfortunately, the collective fear created by countless media items has had a noticeable effect on the image of Indonesia; this, the largest Muslim country in the world, is followed with suspicion by many, especially after a series of bomb attacks that the country recently suffered. Without a counter-balance to put things in perspective (and be realistic) it is very possible that the image of a country with over 240 million different inhabitants and as many individual

⁹ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

¹⁰ Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit, *Occidentalism: The West in the Eyes of Its Enemies* (New York: Penguin, 2004) 5.

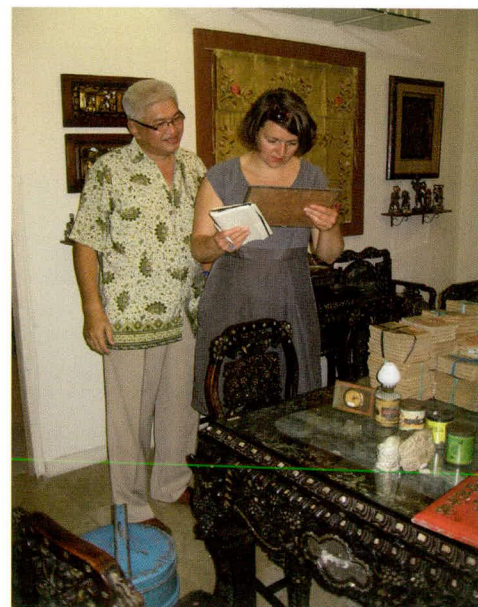
¹¹ Ibidem, 77.

religious experiences will be reduced to the spectre of Islamic fundamentalism. One source of this narrow-minded Western fear of Islamisation is to be found in the influential book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1996) by Samuel Huntington. His hypothesis concerning the shift of power from Western civilisations to emerging powers like China, and his worst-case scenario of the demographic consequences of the Islamic diaspora across the Western world have confirmed many people's stereotypical picture of East and West as incompatible, fundamentally separate cultures. Perhaps this worst-case scenario could be compared best with the book by the German historian Oswald Spengler, who published *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (known as *The Decline of the West* in English) in 1918. The book describes the rise and fall of major civilisations and predicts the imminent downfall of classical, Western culture. Particularly during the twenties and the thirties, Spengler's pessimism was fed by intellectuals who enthused about fascism. They propagated the restoration of aristocratic, classical values as a counterbalance to the 'plebianisation' of culture and society, which came about after the implementation of democracy, universal suffrage and the emancipation of citizens. Underlying Spengler's book is a fear of 'the other' similar to that in Huntington's book.

Buruma and Margalit opt for a different approach. In their sparkling analysis of the division between East and West they draw on the ideas of the Roman philosopher Plotinus (204-270 AD). Plotinus travelled to Alexandria to study the works of Persian and Indian philosophers. He developed a holistic, anti-materialistic world view in which the spiritual, untouchable unity of things is considered a leading principle; an ideal bridge between Eastern and Western philosophy. Margalit and Buruma point out that Plotinus distinguished between discursive thinking and non-discursive thinking: "Plotinus used the term 'discursive thinking' to refer to the thinking of the soul, and 'non-discursive thinking' to refer to the intellect."¹² In Plotinus's view both are essential in equal degree: the thinking of the soul as well as the thinking of the intellect. He considers intuition and rationality to be fundamentally equal. This seems a more constructive starting point to bring together the values of East and West in a respectful relationship. The difference between 'the thinking of the soul' and 'the thinking of the intellect' also plays a role when comparing Dutch and Indonesian art. Without wishing to generalise unnecessarily, it seems as if the two countries have always dealt with the complex interaction between rationality and emotion differently. There is a strong tendency in the West to consider the authority of the intellect paramount and to rely less on instinct. If what Plotinus says is true, the art discourse in Indonesia and the Netherlands could inspire each other more profoundly.

Other questions from the post-colonial debate find a response too in the project *Beyond the Dutch*. For instance, the question as to how far visual art can play a role in the development or confirmation of national identities. The exhibition focuses on points where Dutch and Indonesian cultural expressions meet and mix, but at the same time it shows how artists, under different circumstance, kept giving different interpretations of the concept of national identity under the pressure of the dominant ideas of the time. The works of art selected for the exhibition therefore reflect a dynamic complex of similarities and differences. Thus the works dating around 1900 by Dutch artists inspired by Indonesia show an orientalist influence that fits in seamlessly with the flattering image of the Netherlands as a major colonial power. Conversely, visual art in Indonesia around 1950 was largely determined by independence and the subsequent nationalist

¹² Ibidem, 76. Buruma and Margalit point out that the two names are currently often used in reverse order: discursive for reasoning and non-discursive for intuitive.



Visit to private collector Hauw Ming, Jakarta 2009.

cultural politics of President Soekarno. This not only found expression in the revolutionary genre in which the war of independence was portrayed, but also in new forms of social realism in which the 'Indonesian' and his everyday life were the focal point.

The persistency of the orientalist world view kept on emerging during the preparations for the exhibition and the many conversations that I had with co-workers and artists both in the Netherlands and Indonesia. I was frequently confronted with the assumption that the Indonesian visual arts exist by virtue of mimesis and the urge to copy, and that they actually had to be considered an inferior derivative of Western high art. These persistent judgments, in combination with a lack of knowledge, form an obstacle to healthy curiosity for art forms outside one's own cultural discourse. My experience is that my intensive familiarisation with the history and current status of the visual arts in Indonesia over the past years has resulted in a wide range of new insights into the nature of visual art and the complexity of intercultural influences. There is still a wealth of research material lying ahead of us.

Identity and Emancipation

Dutch cultural history has been mapped out in detail and described in multiple publications, which contributes to a high degree of cultural historical awareness. Although Dutch (art) history education is of course susceptible to influences, interpretation and criticism, it is fully developed. Contemporary artists also have every opportunity to become acquainted with Western and Dutch art history, and they are often very much aware of their own cultural past. On the other hand, in Indonesia both the long period of colonisation and the subsequent nationalist politics of Soekarno and Suharto's dictatorship have caused deep breaks in the knowledge of its own cultural history. Soekarno not only introduced an Indonesian standard language that supplanted regional dialects, he also introduced nationalist cultural politics that had a marked effect on education, for instance. As a result much local knowledge was lost. Much historical material was lost as a result of the climate, the successive wars and civil wars and lack of interest. What is more, art history archives and libraries are few in number or not very accessible. Art academies in Indonesia are in line with the American model, being integrated into universities and offering both theory and practice at the same time. Given the combined effect of the historical fragmentation and discontinuity listed above, it cannot be assumed that Indonesian visual artists are well informed about their own cultural history.

Fortunately, over the last few years there has been a change in cultural-historical awareness among young artists in particular. Relatively unhindered by the raw nerves and sensitivities from the colonial past and Suharto's dictatorship, they follow their own curiosity. These young artists no longer move only in the here and now, they want to investigate their own history and cultural antecedents. They feel free to explore the past, unearth their predecessors' work, preserve it, describe it and exhibit it. In doing so, they, in their own way, continue the work of 'revolutionary' painters like Sudjojono, Affandi, Dullah and Hendra Gunawan, who were the first to focus on portraying a new, Indonesian identity.

The younger generation of artists in Indonesia portrays an orientation closely associated with their own culture and history. Just like Western artists, they mainly use classical media such as painting, drawing and sculpture, but at the same time they feel strongly connected to the Asian, Indonesian or local culture. Those among them who are in their forties and fifties have built up a strong art practice of their own, in which Western and Eastern art traditions have merged. Younger artists still practise the classical disciplines, but new media, installations, comics, film, street art and graphic design are also very popular. This youngest generation is Indonesian and cosmopolitan at the same time; the artists are very well-informed about international developments in visual art. Their field of work is the Asian art world, where they are represented at the biennial shows of Taipei, Shanghai, Yokohama, Gwangju and Sydney, while museums from Singapore to Tokyo and Seoul have started actively to collect their work. There is a lack of interest from museums in Indonesia itself. But the work of modern artists is followed actively by a growing group of private collectors. As a result the market has a considerable influence on the production of new works of art. But, at the same time, there is still plenty of experimentation, for almost any artist is a pioneer in some way in the unpredictable, day-to-day reality of Indonesia. That is what makes their work so vital and dynamic.

For many artists the search for an Indonesian identity is still an important theme. In the era of Internet, globalisation and worldwide mass culture, these artists want to offer a personal counterbalance to the universal implications of worldwide, artistic levelling. Their work is often socially and politically engaged. After the student protests in 1998 and the Reformasi period after that, democracy and freedom of speech were restored in Indonesia. It had a noticeable effect on the arts. Whereas artists like Heri Dono, Agung Kurniawan and Agus Suwage had up to then indirectly incorporated their political criticism in a symbolic manner in drawings, paintings and installations, suddenly they were allowed to do so freely. The newly acquired freedom posed new problems for them too; the politico-symbolic visual language that they had used lost its topical meaning and the artists were confronted with the challenge of developing a new visual language that would fit in with the freedom they had recovered. At the same time, the youngest generations were reaping the fruits of the variety of options available to express themselves since the Reformasi took place. There has been an increase in the number of active artists in Indonesia since the late 1990s, interest in their work has risen and the cultural infrastructure is also improving substantially at the moment – although this is mainly the result of private initiatives.

The circumstances in which artists work are quite different in the Netherlands. Supported by a well-developed infrastructure and an involved government, they can elaborate further on a long tradition of historical continuity. The situation regarding the relationship with Indonesia, however, is specific: almost one in ten of the Dutch have family ties or historical ties with Indonesia. This applies to a considerable number of today's artists too; their parents came from there or they were born there themselves. Some of them look for inspiration in old family histories. Others fled to the Netherlands with their parents during Suharto's dictatorship. A third group frequently travels to Indonesia since the country is an important source of inspiration for their work. These artists use impressions from the present and the past in a personal and modern way. The tables seem to have turned now: whereas Indonesian artists have not been concerned with the Netherlands for a long time, this group of Dutch artists is still

being confronted with the consequences of their Indonesian background. Many of them think and work between two cultures. An awkward issue is the fact that artists with such a background are often called to account in the Netherlands. Over and over again they have to justify how they deal with their cultural identity and how this being 'different' finds expression in their work. Each of them handles this in a different manner. Some of them ignore those questions. On the other hand, others go a long way to find such questions in order to be able to reply to the questioners, thus contributing to a critical, artistic discourse.

Finally

An emancipation process is only completed if each individual is able to develop freely, without having to account for his/her identity, gender or cultural background. Emancipation literally means: 'Being free from legal, social, political, moral or intellectual restrictions'.¹³ Prejudiced views when approaching 'the other' can be a considerable obstruction in that emancipation process. This pitfall can also easily appear when comparing the visual art of the Netherlands and Indonesia, as we propose in *Beyond the Dutch*. After all, such an approach quickly involves generalisations that result from a pre-programmed view of the other. However, analysing and explaining the similarities and differences between developments in Dutch and Indonesian art and investigating their mutual influences also requires an acknowledgement of the difference between both cultures. The solution for this inevitable tension is as simple as it is obvious: the acknowledgment of this difference can only prosper through respect and equality.

At the central exhibition of the Biennial of Venice in 2009, artists from all generations and continents were represented. In the accompanying catalogue Daniel Birnbaum, who set up the exhibition, wrote: "If one maintains that a cultural event with participants from many cultures is to be more than a stage where one culture is put on display to another, then it may be important to insist on the complexity of individuals, not to mention the communities that they form. It makes impossible the approach to cultures that stereotypes them as static entities with fixed essences, and instead emphasises the potential of being many in a world that seems ruled by processes of homogenization. Perhaps art can be one way out of a world ruled by levelling impulses and dull sameness."¹⁴

This plea for the acceptance of heterogeneity as an essential part of human nature is something I fully agree with. It is exactly that heterogeneity that means the differences and similarities between Indonesian and Dutch art can, in the final analysis, never be interpreted unambiguously. When I travelled to Indonesia in December 2007, I went in the expectation that visual art there would in some way still be related to the historical ties with the Netherlands. When I asked Ade Darmawan, the director of the artists' initiative Ruang Rupa in Jakarta, if modern artists in Indonesia were still influenced by the Dutch, he replied: "Oh no. Come on, we're beyond the Dutch!" It set the tone for the rest of my research study. In the course of that study more and more nuances emerged, so that the large differences between the Netherlands and Indonesia in the picture they have of their mutual relationship not only became more evident but also easier to explain. In the end the exhibition also found its title in the words of Ade Darmawan. *Beyond the Dutch* shows the complex fabric of visual artists who navigate



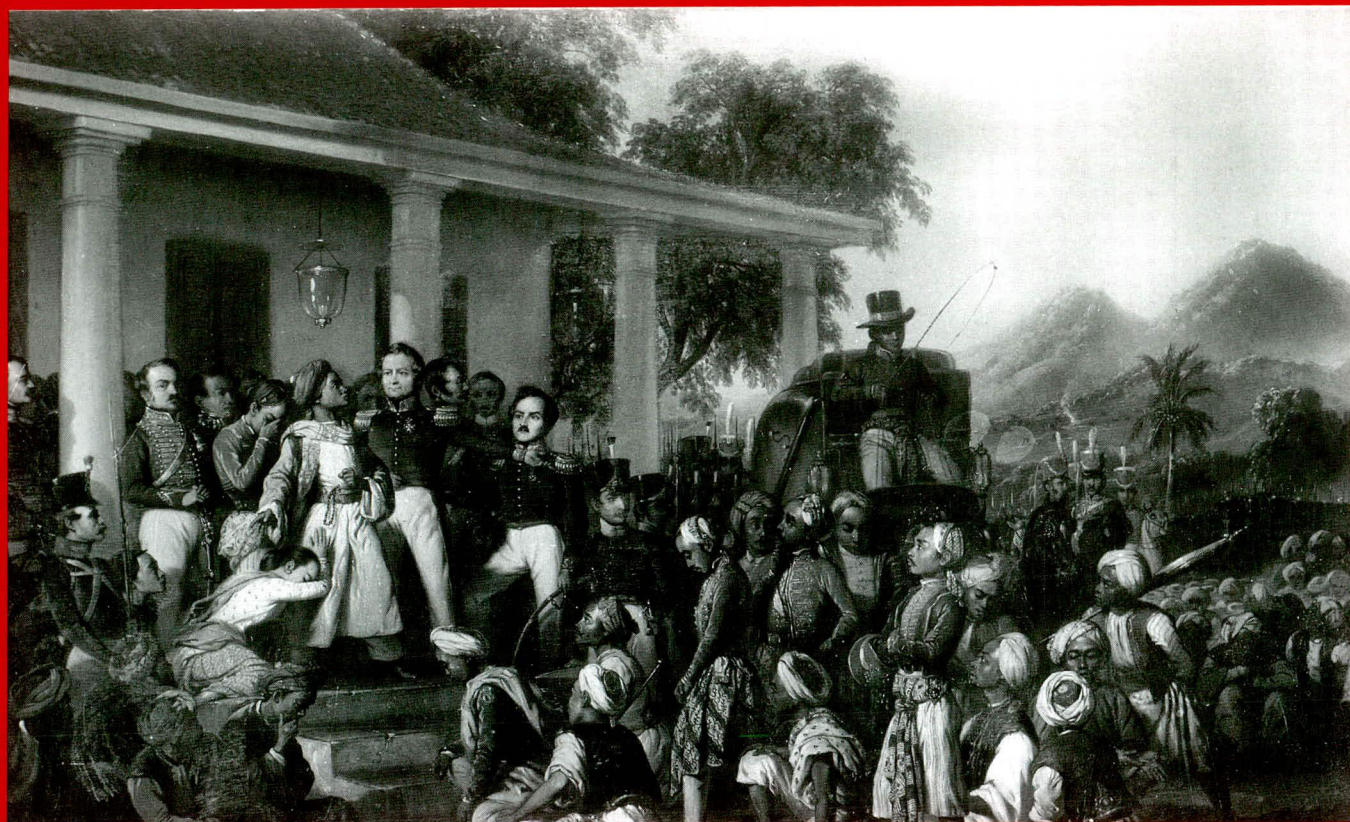
Visit to private collector Dr. Oei Hong Djien, Magelang 2009. From left to right Enin Supriyanto, Dr. Oei Hong Djien, Meta Knol and Camiel van Lenteren (project coördination).

¹³ Van Dale. *Groot woordenboek der Nederlandse taal* (the standard large dictionary of the Dutch language). G. Geerts and H. Heestermans (ed.) (12th edition; Utrecht and Antwerp: Van Dale Lexicografie, 1995).

¹⁴ Daniel Birnbaum, 'We are many', in: Idem (ed.) *Making Worlds: 53rd International Art Exhibition: La Biennale di Venezia* (Venezia: Marsilio, 2009).

between two cultures, between the present and the past of the Netherlands and Indonesia, in a long sequence of action and reaction, assimilation and resistance, innovation, development and emancipation. From a distance, each of them seems to represent a certain cultural background. But from nearby they are only idiosyncratic personalities, each one of them finding a personal visual expression for their individual thoughts, impulses and experiences.

PART ONE – THE ERA OF COLONIALISM



Raden Saleh's Legacy

Sanne Oorthuizen

'Today he is a European with only his colour showing his Javanese descent.'
(*Tijdschrift voor Neêrland's Indië*, 1846)

It is 28 March 1830. A trial of strength is taking place on the steps of the official residence in Magelang between the Dutch colonial regime and the last remnants of Javanese resistance. Pangeran Diponegoro, with his jaw line tense and his fists clenched, is standing opposite General Hendrik Merkus de Kock who, somewhat lost, shows him to a carriage. An army division is ready to accompany the rebel into exile. Diponegoro's other hand reaches out to his fellow combatants, who are falling at his feet, kneeling or bowing. The emotions on the Javanese side are in sharp contrast with the silence amongst the Dutchmen. Right of centre in the foreground is a man with his head bent down and his eyes closed; it is the artist who depicted this event on canvas in oils in 1857: Raden Saleh.²

The Arrest of Diponegoro (*De Arrestatie van Diponegoro*) would soon go down in history as one of his best-known works and Raden Saleh would be considered the forefather of modern Indonesian art. Although this seems to be generally accepted – his name is always listed first in descriptions of the history of modern Indonesian art – the first authors who wrote about him remain obscure and the bibliography is hazy.

The fact is that a lot has been written about the work and life of the Javanese artist Raden Sarief Bustaman Saleh. Raden Saleh navigated the narrow channel between two cultures. Not only his Javanese education but also his later travels to the Netherlands, France, Italy and Germany left their traces. As a result, it is difficult to define his position during the turbulent period which his native country had to cope with, troubles it would have to suffer for a long time. While a number of authors describe Raden Saleh as an instigator of

¹ Anonymous, 'Raden Saleh Sarief Bastaman', *Tijdschrift voor Neêrland's Indië* 8, 1 (1846) 277.

² Peter Carey claims that this is a self-portrait, in Peter Carey, 'Raden Saleh, Dipanagara and the painting of the capture of Dipanagara at Magelang', *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 55, 1 (1982) 1-26.

left:

Raden Saleh

The Arrest of Diponegoro, 1857

oil on canvas, 112 x 178 cm

collection The Presidential Palace, Jakarta
courtesy RKD, The Hague

Indonesian nationalism and cautious anti-colonialism, others claim that he was nothing but a Javanese aristocrat.

Earlier studies of this Javanese prince therefore focused for a long time on investigations of sources and archives in order to bring new facts to light, thus providing a clearer picture of Raden Saleh as a person. Although this type of investigation is never a waste of time, I will try to show that it is precisely this ambiguity or vagueness about the man himself that determined his place in history. It is already clear that the interpretations are not at all homogenous. It is what he left behind, his legacy, that gives him an important position in history. All the authors, anonymous or not, who have written about Raden Saleh and all the artists who found inspiration in his life and works have created their own Raden Saleh from this vague image. This emphasises his heritage, which is therefore still affecting us today.

Raden Sarief Bustaman Saleh

Raden Sarief Bustaman Saleh was born in Terboyo, near Semarang, between 1807 and 1814, the son of a noble family.³ During the early years of his life, he lived in the house of his uncle, the governor (*bupati*) of Semarang. In 1819 or 1820 the young Raden Saleh was adopted into the circle of Governor-General G.A.G.P. van der Capellen in Buitenzorg (Bogor).⁴ There he met the Belgian artist Antoine Payen, who recognised his talent and took him into his home: "Together they crossed the picturesque regions of the island, palette in hand, returning to Batavia with rich and precious sketches."⁵

In 1829 his privileged position in the upper circles of colonial society allowed him to join the retinue of De Ligne, a financial inspector, and go to the Netherlands as a clerk. In the following years Raden Saleh, with an extra allowance for a study to become a painter, served his apprenticeship with the portrait painter Cornelis Kruzeman and the landscape painter Andreas Schelfhout.⁶ His seascapes, landscapes and portraits from this period are therefore particularly well-known. Although the Dutch government expected him to return to Indonesia, Raden Saleh's departure was postponed for political reasons. In the end the painter stayed in Europe for 23 years.⁷

In 1839 Raden Saleh made a journey round European museums and collections. The first town he visited was Dresden in Germany, where he became acquainted with Ernest I, Grand Duke of Sachsen-Coburg and Gotha, and his son. After Ernest I's death, Raden Saleh was forced to return to the Netherlands, from where he left for Paris around 1844 after a short stay.⁸ He moved in the highest circles of society here too and his acquaintances even included King Louis-Philippe. It was also the place where he was introduced to the French Romanticism of Horace Vernet (1789-1857) and Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863): "Raden Saleh saw and learned a great deal during this five-year stay, copying seventeenth-century masters and visiting the salons of Paris, which allowed him to come into contact with the emerging trend of Orientalism. His well-dressed and exotic appearance sparkled at numerous galas and evening parties."⁹

In 1852 Raden Saleh, who was appointed 'painter to the king' and awarded the *Orde van de Eikenkroon* by King Willem III the year before with a monthly allowance, returned to Batavia.¹⁰ It is apparent from the following statements

³ J. de Loos-Haaxman claims that Raden Saleh's date of birth is 1814. Helena Spanjaard, among others, states however that the correct date is 1807.

⁴ Personal communication of Marie-Odette Scalliet.

⁵ Anonymous, 'Raden Saleh Sarief Bustaman', 277.

⁶ Saleh received this allowance "on the intercession of Baud, who would later become state governor." From: Ruud Spruit, *Indonesische impressies. Oosterse thema's in de Westerse schilderkunst* (Wijk en Aalburg: Pictures Publishers, 1992) 11.

⁷ Helena Spanjaard, *Modern Indonesian Painting* (Amsterdam: Sotheby's, 2003) 15-16.

⁸ I thank Werner Kraus for this information.

⁹ Spruit, *Indonesische impressies*, 11.

¹⁰ Ibidem.

that it was no longer possible for Raden Saleh to make himself at home in the Netherlands Indies: "Coffee and sugar, sugar and coffee, this is all that people talk about here. It is really a sad atmosphere for an artist."¹¹

Raden Saleh was commissioned to restore the portraits of the governors-general at the Buitenzorg palace in 1855. Later he would make copies of them for the palace in Buitenzorg. This shows not only that he was relieved from his earlier position as a civil servant, but also that he was considered a proficient painter. The assignments came pouring in. For instance, he made a number of paintings after 1870 for the Austrian emperor Franz Josef and King William I of Prussia.¹² It was during this period that one of his best-known works, *De arrestatie van Diponegoro* (The Arrest of Diponegoro, 1857) originated. Finally, Raden Saleh died on 23 April 1880 at his Javanese home Buitenzorg.

Image and Self-image

On 10 February 1870, W. A. Braasem wrote a short review of the *Verlaet rapport Indië* by J. de Loos-Haaxman in the magazine *Vaderland*.¹³ In this article, Braasem, who was born in the Netherlands Indies half a century earlier, describes his view of the artist Raden Saleh, which I will quote from here extensively because of the detailed characterisation it provides:

"The story of Raden Saleh, the way in which he ensured his benefactors kept him on at least a silver leash (if not perhaps a golden one), his visits to the European courts where he eagerly accepted one knighthood after the other and opened the polonaise with the Duchess of Coburg as well, (...) his stay as a celebrated "Javanese prince" in the bubbling Second Empire Paris of Hausmann and Napoleon II. This is, as has been so strikingly portrayed by the author, the history of the rise and triumph and finally the sad downfall of a highly remarkable figure, an extremely unusual talent for the Netherlands but not a great artist – rather in fact, an uprooted human being who did not stay Javanese and did not become European. But still a fascinating person even today."¹⁴

It is only possible to guess the veracity of this quote: maybe he really was an "uprooted human being", maybe he was only trying to alter his identity to create the most favourable conditions for himself, maybe it was a combination of the two and Raden Saleh was trying to match his means to his needs. However, one thing that is clear is that the fascination mentioned by Braasem derived at least partially from the ambiguous image that Raden Saleh created for himself.

From European dandy to Javanese prince

The irony hidden in W. A. Braasem's texts is not unusual in Dutch works about Raden Saleh.¹⁵ As early as 1880, the year of Raden Saleh's death, the *Nederlandsche Kunstbode* published a few lines on the life and works of the "Javanese animal painter". The writer shows the artist little respect and you can read between the lines that the painter's highest and only objective is the "European art of painting". "He produced a few paintings that are not unpraiseworthy, in which only the subjects chosen reveal that the painter is Indonesian. Since his return to his native country, his artificial artistic talent seems to have been entirely lost."¹⁶ Although the artificiality of his art is debatable,

11 "Café et sucre, sucre et café, c'est tout-ce qu'on parle ici. C'est vraiment un air triste pour un artiste." Peter Carey, *The Power of Prophecy: Prince Dipanagara and the end of an old order in Java, 1785-1855* (Leiden, KITLV Press, 2007) 756, note 289.

12 Spruit, *Indonesische impressies*, 11-12.

13 The thorough investigation by J. de Loos-Haaxman into authentic sources is still considered the basis for everything written about Raden Saleh. See J. de Loos-Haaxman, *Verlaet rapport Indië. Drie eeuwen Westerse schilders, tekenaars, grafici, zilversmeden en kunstnijverers in Nederlands-Indië* (The Hague: Mouton, 1968).

14 W.A. Braasem, 'Drie eeuwen Westerse cultuur aan de evenaar. Nederlandse kunstbeoefening van weleer in Indonesië', *Vaderland*, 10 February 1970.

15 An interesting point is that W.A. Braasem puts inverted commas around 'Javanese prince'. This can be considered in the light of the 'inverted orientalism' that will be discussed later in this essay. In the same article, Braasem places a caption below a photograph of Raden Saleh reading "Raden Saleh. The famous nineteenth-century Javanese painter Raden Saleh in one of his pompous fantasy costumes around 1870." His personal opinion is clear enough.

16 Anonymous, 'Necrologium', *Nederlandsche Kunstbode* 2 (1880) 183-184.

the image that Raden Saleh created for himself is at any rate susceptible to such an interpretation.

Whereas Raden Saleh dressed like a dandy during his early years in Europe, in Dresden he put on the clothes of a Javanese prince for the first time.¹⁷ His European hairstyle was hidden under a turban and he traded in his neatly starched tailor-made suit for knickerbockers and a high-necked jacket. It seems plausible that this image was encouraged by the high degree of interest in all things Oriental, which reached its peak in that period. It gave Raden Saleh the opportunity to stand out from the crowd and draw attention to himself.¹⁸ Because, as J. de Loos-Haaxman confirmed, "It was certainly also his Oriental descent that partly fascinated the public – and which they partly wondered at with not very flattering astonishment – that soon made him famous."¹⁹

So, although his outward appearance engendered both positive and negative responses, there is no denying that Raden Saleh attracted a certain kind of fascination. A description of how the artist went to galas in Paris was given in 1846: "The costumes were tasteful, rich and conspicuous. But amidst all those knights, those shepherdesses, those Arabs, those sailors and those wealthy women, all eyes were fixed on a young and handsome Indonesian, dressed in a stylish and exquisite costume. He is generally known as 'le prince Djalma', for these days Eugène Sue's novel seems to turn every *Indonesian* into a 'prince Djalma'."²⁰ Raden Saleh created a tailor-made Orientalist suit for himself, a stereotype image of the easterner that was immediately seen in the West as "the other", the Indonesian, the prince.

Lions

Oriental themes can be discovered in his paintings as well. Raden Saleh was already painting lions and other 'exotic' animals during his time in The Hague and it is obvious that it was these pictures that gave Raden Saleh fame. "Although a few good portraits by Raden Saleh are known, his remarkable talent is particularly shown in depicting the wild animal and the horse, often portrayed as noble, and he managed gradually to master these subjects."²¹

However, it is remarkable that there are no lions on Java and Raden Saleh must have come across those animals for the first time in The Hague, just like Delacroix did in Paris before him at the *ménagerie* of the French animal trainer Henri Martin, whose portrait he painted in 1837. There he could study African lions in peace in the safe environment of the circus.²² The lions served as a metaphor for the Far East, the kind of East that Raden Saleh did not know from Java, but which he created in Europe, entirely in line with Orientalism.

Inverted Orientalism

In 1978 Edward Said published his authoritative book *Orientalism*²³, in which he argues that the Western image of the Orient focused on a desire for power and self-assertion. Imperialist powers created stereotypes which had to represent the Orient or "the others". It represented a timeless, mythical and sensual world that could not be compared in any way with the diversity of languages, cultures and social groups that the Orient really possessed. Whereas Europeans were considered rational and scientific thinkers by nature, Orientals were considered to be romantic, sensitive, sensual and spiritual and therefore less enlightened or even inferior. With this stereotype of the East, the Western world could feel strong and superior and try to rationalise its colonial practices. Said calls this context, used

17 A number of painted and sketched portraits of Raden Saleh exist. The Rijksmuseum has a portrait (sometimes, probably wrongly, considered as a self-portrait) in which he is shown as a European dandy. However, the majority of portraits show him as a Javanese prince.

18 It may also be the case that Raden Saleh was trying to draw attention to his aristocratic background in order to justify his position in the highest circles of European society.

19 De Loos-Haaxman, *Verlaet rapport Indië*, 120–121.

20 Anonymous, 'Raden Saleh Sarief Bustaman', 276.

21 De Loos-Haaxman, *Verlaet rapport Indië*, 59.

22 Werner Kraus, 'First steps to modernity: the Javanese painter Raden Saleh (1811–1880)' in: John Clark, Maurizio Peleggi and T. K. Sabapathy (ed.), *Eye of the Beholder. Reception, audience and practice of modern Asian art* (Broadway: Wild Peony, 2006) 37.

23 Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (1978; London: Penguin, 2003).

by the West in its attempts to dominate unknown terrains, peoples and cultures, *Orientalism* and in his book he criticises the subjectivity of this Orientalism.

In the Romanticism of the nineteenth century, this obsession with the Orient can be found in the works of Delacroix, Ingres, Géricault and Gérôme, in which sensual women, brave warriors and exotic animals are depicted on canvas in rich colours. Raden Saleh, the Javanese prince, tried to go with the flow as quickly as he could. And this man, who had spent his childhood on Java, distorted his native country and therefore himself into an Orientalist stereotype of the East. It is a classic example of what is known as 'inverted Orientalism', in which the "other" or the easterner adopts elements of Orientalism and acts accordingly.

Raden Saleh once wrote about it himself in an autobiography that has partially been lost: "Between these two worlds [Indonesia and Europe] my heart is split. And I feel urged to offer both sides my loving thanks. I believe that I can do that best by portraying for my friends in Europe the simple, innocent life and happiness of my people at home, and by outlining for my countrymen a picture of the wonders of Europe and the nobility of the human spirit."²⁴

According to Kraus, the reasons for this new fascination with the East can be found in the German people's quest for stability after the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815). The East was seen as a society in which a restful satisfaction with the current state of affairs prevailed: "Raden Saleh the dandy metamorphosed in Dresden quickly and was reborn as a Javanese painter prince, the perfect synthesis between the rational West and the sensual East."²⁵

And Raden Saleh managed to do this wonderfully well. He was recognised and acknowledged as an exotic prince from Java, a country that was under Dutch control, yet considered remote and mysterious at the same time. He responded to the prevailing obsessions, and the synthesis between his European and Javanese backgrounds turned out to be a golden combination. In this way, he contributed to the vague picture of himself that arose and which would persist to the present day: an intangible person about whom people still write and reflect. An image that is moulded and distorted according to the protagonists' desires.

²⁴ Werner Kraus, 'Raden Saleh's interpretation of the arrest of Diponegoro: An example of Indonesian "pro-to-nationalist" modernism', *Archipel* 69 (2005) 259-294, esp. 265.

²⁵ Ibidem.

²⁶ Werner Kraus was the first fervent proponent of this interpretation.

²⁷ Peter Carey states in his article that Diponegoro's struggle was not only for independence, but was also a religious one. For example, he took the title Ratu Adil ('Just King') in order to gather different social groups together under the shared banner of Javanese Islam. "The concept of holy war (prang sabil), imagery from the Javanese shadow-play (wayang), and Javanese nativist sentiments, made up of an intense longing for the restoration of an idealised traditional order – which Dipanagara described as 'restoring the high state of the Islamic religion in Java' – all helped to forge a common identity amongst the prince's followers." See Carey, *The Power of Prophecy*, xiv.

The Arrest of Diponegoro as a Visual Testament

If Raden Saleh's legacy has determined his position in history, the work *The Arrest of Diponegoro* (1857) can be considered his visual testament. This historical painting is one of his best-known works and allegedly provides proof of Raden Saleh's hidden nationalism and anti-colonialism.²⁶ *The Arrest of Diponegoro* has not only been described in numerous articles and summary books, but through the years the painting has also been a source of inspiration for numerous Indonesian artists. Raden Saleh gave the work as a gift to King Willem III and it was returned to the Republic of Indonesia by the Oranje Nassau Stichting in 1977.

Pangeran Diponegoro

Like Raden Saleh, the rebel leader Pangeran Diponegoro (1785-1855) was of noble descent. Before the Javanese War broke out, there was a great deal of dissatisfaction amongst the Javanese population and high levels of poverty, especially in the countryside. On 25 June 1825, led by Diponegoro, the population revolted against the Dutch colonial regime.²⁷

Although for a long time it seemed that the Dutch would have to concede, a number of local sultans and other prominent figures sided with them. Eventually, Diponegoro and his followers would have to abandon the struggle in 1830, after their demands to keep his title of Sultan and to become head of the Islamic faith had been rejected.²⁸ He was exiled to Manado and later on to Makassar, where he died in 1855 as a prisoner of the state.²⁹

Two versions: Nicolaas Pieneman and Raden Saleh

Raden Saleh painted *The Arrest of Diponegoro* more than twenty-five years after the Dutch painter Nicolaas Pieneman (1809-1860) painted the same event in oil as *De onderwerping van Diepo Negoro aan luitenant-generaal Hendrik Merkus Baron de Kock, 28 maart 1830, waarmee de Java-oorlog (1825-30) werd beëindigd* [The surrender of Prince Diepo Negoro to Lieutenant-General Baron Hendrik Merkus de Kock on 28 March 1830, thereby ending the Javanese War (1825-1830)] (1830 to 1835). General De Kock commissioned Pieneman, who had never set foot on Indonesian soil, to paint this work. He considered putting down the last Javanese rebellion as the highlight of his military career: "Dipanagara was arrested without bloodshed and De Kock could boast that after five years of bitter fighting he had brought the war to an end by his own diplomacy and military skill."³⁰

The date is 28 March 1830 once again. The Dutch flag that adorns the official residence in Magelang is flapping in the wind. General De Kock, in state,

stands on the terrace and, while looking at his master sergeant Major de Stuers, points to a carriage that is to take Diponegoro into exile. Diponegoro stands on the stairs in front of the house with his hand palm up as a symbol of surrender. His fellow combatants desperately throw themselves at his feet, their spears piled up on the ground.

Raden Saleh, who must have seen Pieneman's painting, employed a similar composition for his depiction of Diponegoro, but adjusted a number of essential elements. The composition is a mirror image and the painting is almost twice the size, as well as being proportionately wider. The terrace is full of people and General De Kock has a less prominent

position.³¹ The Javanese combatants take up most of the space in the work. The colonial army, which is standing in line next to the carriage with spears pointing skywards, has turned into just a handful of soldiers in Raden Saleh's work. To the left of the background is one of Java's many much-portrayed volcanoes. The Dutch flag is nowhere to be seen. In the title, the word *onderwerping* (submission) has been changed into *arrestatie* (arrest).



Nicolaas Pieneman

The Submission of Dipo Negoro to General De Kock, 1830

oil on canvas, 77 x 100 cm

collection Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

²⁸ Ibidem, 691.

²⁹ Kyai Nogo Siloeman, Diponegoro's kris, which was said to have magic power, was taken from him and eventually ended up in the Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden [Royal Cabinet of Rarities] of King William I. Raden Saleh was asked in January 1831 to give an explanation of the symbols on the kris and its importance. See Kraus, 'Raden Saleh's interpretation', 280.

³⁰ Carey, *The Power of Prophecy*, 695.

³¹ An imaginary triangle can be found in the lower half of the composition. Although General De Kock should be the highest point, his position and composition are overshadowed by the pillar of the official residence. As a result, the eye is subconsciously led to the figure of Diponegoro.

Raden Saleh placed General De Kock and Diponegoro at the same height and painted the heads of the Dutch proportionally large, intended to make them look somewhat dull-witted. The artist has also placed Diponegoro to the right of General De Kock, which, within the Javanese system of spatial order is understood as the female side. This is again intended to relegate De Kock to second in importance. Kraus also postulates that the wind that makes the Dutch flag blow in Pieneman's work is left out in Raden Saleh's version, as if "the universe is holding its breath."³²

According to several authors, *The Arrest of Diponegoro* contains nationalistic and anti-colonial sympathies. For instance, Kraus postulates that Raden Saleh was trying to create his first and only historical painting here. The only condition for creating a 'history painting', however, was the existence of a nation, which was in Dutch hands at the time when Raden Saleh painted the work. "Raden Saleh created a 'nation-in-waiting' by painting *The Arrest of Diponegoro* the way he did. The introduction of the topic of historical painting meant the introduction of the idea of nationhood."³³

Raden Saleh did not only create a 'nation-in-waiting'; he also simultaneously portrayed a clear desire for an independent Indonesian nation. Whereas Pieneman's work glorifies the victory of the colonial regime against the Javanese, Raden Saleh shows his cautious admiration for the rebels against the colonial regime. He appropriates the event, commenting on it and transforming Diponegoro from a subjugated rebel into an Indonesian resistance hero, thereby giving him a presence on Javanese ground after 1830.

Appropriation in Modern Indonesian Art: two examples

As stated earlier, Raden Saleh is still seen as the father of Indonesian painting. This is confirmed by a number of modern artists who refer to his life and work in their art, albeit in different ways and in different media: from painting to installations and from music to dance. His life and works trigger a range of differing interpretations, and his legacy is continually being examined in a different light. The vagueness embodied by Raden Saleh's heritage and by the man himself gives modern artists room to create their own versions of Raden Saleh. I will go no further here than discussing two works that have a special relationship with *The Arrest of Diponegoro*.

In 2007-2008, Heri Dono (1960) painted *Salah Tangkap Pangeran Diponegoro (Mistakenly Capturing The Prince Diponegoro)*, in which the nation that Raden Saleh was said to long for eventually turned out to be less rosy-coloured than he might have wished.³⁴ Heri Dono let himself be inspired by *The Capture of Diponegoro* and depicts a dream-world in which justice wins, a world in which Suharto is not protected by the media, the army, doctors and lawyers and instead is found guilty of crimes such as corruption and genocide.

The composition, which largely corresponds to Raden Saleh's version, is painted loosely. Earth colours alternate with bright red. Now it is ex-President Suharto who is standing on the terrace, leaning on a cane and handcuffed by Susilo Bambang Yudoyono, the current president of Indonesia. Suharto is looking up at the roof, where Pangeran Diponegoro is giving him the finger. On the terrace and in front of it is a confusion of ex-Presidents and former politicians.³⁵ A white horse is flying over the smoking volcano, waiting for Diponegoro to return home to the island of Java that he would never see again after his arrest and to a nation for whose independence and unity he once fought.

³² Kraus, 'Raden Saleh's interpretation', 285-286.

³³ Ibidem, 290.

³⁴ *Salah Tangkap Pangeran Diponegoro (Mistakenly Capturing The Prince Diponegoro)* was shown in the solo exhibition 'The Dying King and I' at the Nadi Gallery in Jakarta. Former President Suharto, who is criticised in the work, died the day before the opening.

³⁵ Habibi is putting his head on Suharto's shoulder and Gus Dur is watching the spectacle from a wheelchair. On the left, Sudirman – general of the Republican army during the revolution – quietly smokes a cigarette while Tien Suharto throws herself at her husband's feet. In front of the terrace are the minister of public health (according to Heri Dono, Suharto always seemed to be ill when he had to appear before a judge and many doctors swore to it – but when he appeared on TV on his birthday on 8 June, he seemed perfectly healthy), a representative of Golkar, the largest Indonesian party under Suharto, and the jester Semar, a figure from the Javanese mythology. Sudwikatmono, an Indonesian millionaire and a relative of Suharto, is sitting on the carriage with a pile of gold. Heri Dono is watching the spectacle from a distance.



Heri Dono

Prince Diponegoro Mistakenly Arrested, 2007

acrylic on canvas, 150 x 200 cm

collection of the artist

Heri Dono states that Raden Saleh was an important artist, a cosmopolitan figure who never repudiated his Javanese background, who was aware of his position under colonial rule and who considered himself part of a colonised group. Heri Dono identifies with Raden Saleh, because he still felt suppressed under Suharto's regime (1966-1998).³⁶ In his work *Salah Tangkap Pangeran Diponegoro* (*Mistakenly Capturing The Prince Diponegoro*), Heri Dono attempts to make the viewer aware of the political, social and cultural situation in Indonesia and the role of the mass media in the use of propaganda.

In 2009, Terra Bajraghosa (1981) produced a painting entitled *8-bit Penangkapan Diponegoro* (*After Raden Saleh*), in which *The Arrest of Diponegoro* has been abstracted in brightly coloured pixels.³⁷ The historical subject has been transferred in digital format into the era of the technological Internet revolution, in which so much of what we see is in essence made up of pixels. The pixel has become the basis of mass culture.³⁸ For Bajraghosa himself, Raden Saleh is a legend, whom he knows from his father's books, a historical figure who studied art in Europe in a proper and serious way. As he himself puts it, "I think Raden Saleh will always be the pioneer of Indonesian modern art. He opened the gate for Indonesian artists to know and learn more."³⁹ The word 'modern' is used here for new forms of art that are no longer bound to the traditional art forms such as batik, wayang and primitive sculpture. According

³⁶ Heri Dono himself says that he was still being subjected to so-called 'brown colonialism', a concept referring to the transition from suppression by the Dutch (white) to Suharto (brown).

³⁷ Terra Bajraghosa's work '8-bit Penangkapan Diponegoro (After Raden Saleh)' was shown from 5 May to 10 June 2009 in the solo exhibition 'Power to the pixel (and to the artisan)' in Cemeti Art House in Yogyakarta. Another work was also shown here called *Boom Box Tiger* (2009), which depicts one of Raden Saleh's lion hunts.

³⁸ The word *8-bit* in the title refers to the first generation of video games from the 1990s, in which the memory only used 8 bits per pixel.

³⁹ Quotes from e-mail correspondence with the artist.

to Bajraghosa, the emphasis is therefore more on the application of the new methods rather than on the fact that Raden Saleh's education was Western-based.

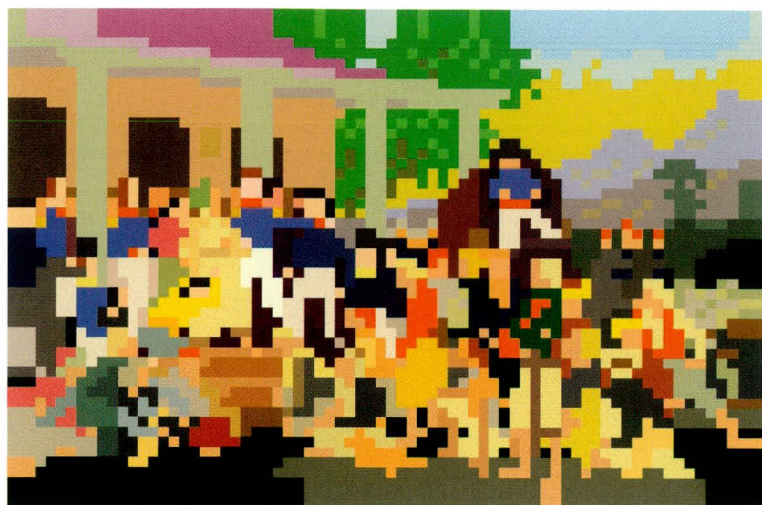
That his works are full of humour becomes apparent when Bajraghosa refers to a little joke that he likes to tell. He suggests that if Raden Saleh were still alive and looking at the young artists of today, he would burst into tears. "We put cartoon characters on canvas and call it art; we arrange some rubbish into an installation and call it art. Raden Saleh must regret that he had to go to the Netherlands to study art seriously." *8-bit Penangkapan Diponegoro (After Raden Saleh)* may therefore be considered as a tribute to Raden Saleh and at the same time as a parody of him.

Indonesian artists like Heri Dono and Terra Bajraghosa are trying to see through the modern world of globalisation, mass media and technical revolutions. Altering *The Arrest of Diponegoro* to fit their own expressions, as a kind of 'appropriation', not only adds a new historical, political and social layer to the new work, but also emphasises and modernises Raden Saleh's legacy. It seems that the icon of modern Indonesian painting and the hero of emerging nationalism has managed to withstand the ravages of time. Raden Saleh's legacy is still as valid as ever. And still just as vague. Artists are giving Raden Saleh a key role in their own stories and carrying him along with them in a flux of continuous development, renewal and personal expression.

Raden Saleh's Legacy

The images of the nineteenth-century Javanese prince, the European, the painter, the modernist and the aristocrat are all engraved on the (national) consciousness. With *The Arrest of Diponegoro*, Raden Saleh seemed to want to say that Javanese blood was still very much flowing through his veins, even though he had adopted the European culture. There was more to Raden Saleh being Javanese than just his skin colour. He brought Diponegoro to the Indonesian people as a resistance hero, and by so doing Raden Saleh finally acquired a similar status himself. Writers refer to Raden Saleh in the same breath as Diponegoro. Whereas the latter is seen as the father of Indonesian independence, Raden Saleh is celebrated as a modern Indonesian artist and proto-nationalist.

His pivotal role in modern art history is interwoven with his legacy and its effect through to the present day. References are made to him from all sorts of perspectives and he means something slightly different to everyone, because everybody can create their own Raden Saleh. Contemporary artists are now using his life and works as a source of inspiration for understanding the modern world. Right through to the present day, articles are appearing that aim to clarify the position of the artist with respect to the two cultures. With every article that appears and every work of art that is produced, the functional ambiguity that the man himself created is renewed.



Terra Bajraghosa

8 Bit Arrest of Diponegoro (After Raden Saleh)

digital print on canvas, 120 x 180 cm

courtesy Cemeti Art House, Yogyakarta

Although, as W. A. Braasem stated, Raden Saleh may not have remained entirely Javanese nor become a European, he kept his footing expertly on the narrow bridge between Europe and Java, between West and East, and between the colonists and the colonised. Raden Saleh weaved a web around himself that ensnared everyone around him and did not let them go. His legacy could thus be adapted to fit the needs of the person using it as a source of inspiration. If we ask the real Raden Saleh to stand up and be counted, we are therefore only going to hear the echoes of our own words.⁴⁰

40 I thank Terra Bajrhagosa, Nicole Baros, Heri Dono, Meta Knol, Werner Kraus, Jenny Reynaerts, Marie-Odette Scalliet, Remco Raben and Kitty Zijlmans for their contributions to this article.

1 The painting had been purchased from an East German dealer. Rijksmuseum inventory number SK-A-4703.

2 There is a drawing of Raden Saleh by the artist Carl Christian Vogel von Vogelstein where his clothes and posture perfectly match those in the Rijksmuseum portrait. That work is signed and dated 1839. An oil painting by Carl Johann Bähr in 1841 shows Raden Saleh as a Javanese prince. Kraus maintains that the portrait in the Rijksmuseum must have been painted between 1839 and 1841. Studies of other sources support his findings.

3 With thanks to Werner Kraus, who gave me insight in an unpublished article (2004) on the attribution issue. Also thanks to Jenny Reynaerts, curator for eighteenth century and nineteenth century paintings at the Rijksmuseum.

4 Ulrich Thieme and Felix Becker (ed.), *Allgemeines Lexikon der bildenden Künstler – von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, vol. 30 (Leipzig: E.A. Seemann, 1936) 285.

5 *Bildniss des Malers Raden Saleh aus Java, vor seiner Staffelei mit einem Marinebilde beschäftigt.* – Dresd. Ak. KA. 40 In: Friedrich von Boetticher, *Malerwerke des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts. Beitrag zur Kunstgeschichte*, vol. 2 (Frankfurt, 1891-1901) 653.

6 Anonymous, *Kunstblatt* 69 (27 August 1840) 292. Schregl is presumably a misspelling of Schreuel.

7 Marianne Prause (ed.), *Die Kataloge der Dresdner Akademie-Ausstellungen 1801-1850* (Facsimile print; Berlin: Hessling, 1975).

8 This is one reason why the Rijksmuseum is not entirely convinced by the attribution to Schreuel made by Kraus. Currently the work is described by the Rijksmuseum as follows: *Portrait (Possibly a Self-Portrait) of the Artist Raden Sarief Bastaman Saleh*. Attributed to Raden Sarief Bastaman Saleh. Date approx. 1840.

Raden Saleh's Portrait

Sanne Oorthuizen

In 1978, the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam bought the painting *Self-Portrait of the Artist Raden Saleh Sarief Bustaman (1811-1880)*.¹ At the time the work was thought to date from approximately 1865. However, Werner Kraus has shown that the work must have been painted as early as 1840, given that Raden Saleh began to dress in the style of a Javanese prince in about 1841. Whereas in the portrait, he still appears to the viewer in the attire of a European dandy.² Nevertheless, this work is irrefutable evidence of his position between two cultures, that of the East Indies and that of Europe. Although it is clear who the painting depicts – this is confirmed by several lithographed portraits of the artist – it is still not clear who painted the portrait.

While the composition is typical for a nineteenth century self-portrait, there are people who argue its attribution. For example, the painting is not signed, something Raden Saleh nearly always did. No other self-portraits by his hand have come to light. The brush strokes are also freer than those in other portraits that Raden Saleh painted, both before and after this time. The evidence provided is sufficient for reasonable doubt. However, deciding on an alternative attribution is not that easy.

Kraus attributes the painting to the artist Friedrich Carl Albert Schreuel (1773-1853). Research by Marie-Odet Scalliet points in the same direction. There are a number of sources that support this theory. For example, Raden Saleh was apparently personally acquainted with the artist. This is evident from his letters to his patron J.C. Baud, in which he says he met the artist 'Schruiel' shortly after arriving in Dresden.³

It is maintained in the Thieme/Becker reference work that Schreuel painted a picture with the subject 'Maler Raden Saleh vor der Staffelei, 1840'.⁴ In his *Malerwerke des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Friedrich von Boetticher states that Schreuel, the 'portrait painter', painted Raden Saleh at an easel while the latter was working on a seascape.⁵ Indeed, an anonymous author in a review of a Dresden Academy exhibition in the magazine *Kunstblatt* (1840) wrote, "A lion hunt and a storm at sea drew particular attention; both were by the Javanese Prince Saleh, whose exceedingly lifelike portrait by Prof. Schregl hangs above the seascape."⁶ However, strangely enough, the exhibition catalogue does not mention a portrait, or indeed any other work, by Schreuel.⁷

In the 1834 Academy exhibition, there was a 'Männliches Portrait, in Öl gemalt von Schreuel'. This is a reason for assuming Schreuel did indeed paint portraits, although up until now only miniatures have come to light by this artist. These are, however, stylistically incomparable to the Raden Saleh portrait. This means that while Kraus' arguments most certainly give room for thought, they are primarily based on indirect evidence. There are still numerous questions that need to be answered: regarding the composition that suggests a self-portrait; the unknown seascape on the left; the painting style; Schreuel's position in the art world of nineteenth-century Dresden and the portraits by his hand. All we can do is wait for a 'Männliches Portrait in Öl gemalt von Schreuel' to appear in order to find out more about this conundrum.⁸



Raden Sarief Bastaman Saleh [attributed]

Portrait (Possibly a Self-Portrait) of Raden Sarief Bastaman Saleh, c. 1840

oil on canvas, 107 x 85 cm

collection Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Kartini: the Mother of Indonesian Modern Art? *

Enin Supriyanto

It is generally acknowledged that Indonesian modern art started with Raden Saleh (1814-1880), on the grounds that he applied the principles of modern art in his work and was therefore accepted within the circle of European aristocratic art during his stay in the Netherlands and Germany. Yet, if Indonesian modern art is especially linked to the emergence of the discourse on modernism, the spirit of progress and humanity, and more specifically to nationalism, then the history of modern Indonesian art would point to S. Sudjojono (1913-1986) as a pioneer.

Are these the only possible views? There is another option: in the early twentieth century there was a seed of consciousness concerning the importance of art, modern attitudes and the freedom of women that took hold in the small city of Jepara on the northern coast of Central Java. This seed can be considered as a starting point for the history of Indonesian modern art. It sprang from the mind of Kartini (1879-1904), now a national heroine and a women's rights pioneer for native Indonesians. She was the eldest daughter of the Regent of Jepara during the Dutch colonial era, a woman who persistently sharpened her critical thinking despite being under the confines of feudalism and colonialism.

Because Kartini died young at the age of 25, most of her views can only be accessed from the letters she wrote to her friends. Her ideas on art and its role in Indonesian society have not been the topic of serious study. To my knowledge, Pramoedya Ananta Toer (1925-2006) has been the first and only person to analyse Kartini's role in relation to art in general. In his book *Panggil aku Kartini saja* (Just call me Kartini), Pramoedya emphasises 'Kartini's contribution to the field of art. In the chapter entitled 'Seniwati dari darah dan daging' (A Female Artist of Blood and Flesh), he describes the importance Kartini attached to artwork, to the role of art workers socially and politically, and to their relationship to the issue of empowering women in order to strengthen her nation.

Kartini wrote articles on the arts and culture, but also batik and painted. Together with her younger sister, Roekmini, she designed various decorative items and furniture. She became a Maecenas for the artists of Jepara. Her letters contain a long description of design patterns she offered to her colleagues, and include the calculation of production costs and selling prices.¹ She attempted to have the works of art from Jepara presented in an exhibition in The Hague (at the National Exhibition of Women's Labour in 1898).² To complement the exhibition, Kartini wrote a treatise on the art of handicrafts in Jepara. On another occasion, she described the beauty of the work and skills of male and female artisan carvers in an isolated village in Jepara.³

Irrespective of the fact that we are unable to examine the paintings of these two women artists, there is sufficient material from them to enable us to

* This is an abridged version of an essay on Kartini which was originally published in: Carla Bianpoen, Farah Wardani and Wulan Dirganto (ed.), *Indonesian Women Artists: The curtain opens* (Jakarta: Yayasan SeniRupa Indonesia, 2007).

¹ F.G.P. Jacquet (ed.), *Kartini, Surat-surat kepada Ny. R.M. Abendanon-Mandri dan suaminya* (Jakarta: Djambatan, 2000). This edition contains the letters of Kartini and her sisters (Roekmini, Kardinah, Kartinah, Soematri) as translated by the prominent philologist Sulastin Sutrisno. The other sources are often criticised and doubted because they are considered to have severely reduced, cut or even changed Kartini's letters for various reasons and interests.

² A fairly long impression and explanation on this exhibition can be read in Kartini's letter to Mrs. Abendanon dated 10 June 1902 in: Jacquet (ed.), *Kartini, Surat-surat*, 263-278.

³ Pramoedya Ananta Toer, *Panggil aku Kartini saja* (Jakarta: Lentera Dipantara, 2003) 190.

know that both of them fostered strong ideas on art, realised its importance to their personal advancement as women and contributed to the progress of their nation.

In one of her letters, Roekmini, Kartini's younger sister wrote to Mrs. Abendanon:

"My proposal or desire is that we could receive an education at a school for higher education in painting (or an art academy) so that, in the future, we would be able to devote ourselves to the art of Java for the sake of its further development."

(23 June 1902)

In another letter, Kartini explained Roekmini's intent and objective to her colleague Estelle Zeehandelaar:

"Who is better able to serve the interests of Javanese art than the sons of the [Javanese] people themselves, all of whom were born with an inherent love for indigenous art, who love it for itself, not because the love for it was taught to them?"⁴

(11 October 1901)

In another letter, she affirmed and clarified the importance of education and the development of art:

"And art is not a small factor for the welfare of the people."

(29 November 1901)

There are seeds of nationalism visible in these sentences. Far beyond being seen as a mere *klangenan* (leisurely) instrument of the bourgeois and aristocrats, art is considered as work, the result of one's intellect and knowledge used to shape oneself and one's nation.

⁴ Ibidem, 185.

Art in the Greater Netherlands

Questioning East Indies Art and Eesthetic Sense at the World Exhibitions, 1880-1931

Marieke Bloembergen

*"'Be yourself', I said to someone.
But he couldn't: he was no-one."*

Art or not art; that was the question. The Dutch and international general public had their first opportunity to learn about the fine arts produced by the indigenous population of the Dutch East Indies at the International Colonial and Export Trade Exhibition in Amsterdam in 1883. Visitors to the colonial palace specifically built for the Dutch colonial department exhibition did not need to look long to find the paintings of the Western-trained Javanese artist Raden Saleh – showpieces from various European collections, including royal collections. They hung in the gallery between the tropical landscapes of European artists such as A.A.J. Payen, J.D. Beynon and A. Salm. It must have been clear to most of those visitors that this was an example of respectable portrait painting and landscape painting. But what were they to think of the 'Dayak dolls, man and woman', the wooden model of a marine fish from Ternate, the 'nutmeg tree and clove tree made from feathers' from Ambon and the collection of Chinese drawings on rice paper elsewhere in the building, that had all been selected as objects of indigenous art and, like Raden Saleh, had been included in the official exhibition catalogue under the category of indigenous 'arts and sciences'? Could you really call that art? And if Raden Saleh was grouped with those other objects in the catalogue, why had he then been given such an obviously different place in the exhibition?

¹ Poem by De Génestet, quoted by J.R. de Kruyff, 'Ter Amsterdamsche tentoonstelling', *Vragen des Tijds* (1883) 261-277, esp. 265.

The answer to these questions seemed obvious in the context of the message of progress propagated by the world exhibitions and in a period when evolutionary ideas were increasingly influencing the way people thought about the world: the main purpose of the exotic art objects from the East Indies was to emphasise how different and distant they were from Western civilisation. What is more, Raden Saleh served as proof of “what has been achieved by modern-day Javanese in the field of the arts under the influence of the European colonists,” as the authoritative East Indies specialist P.J. Veth, who compiled the exhibition catalogue, explained.² Indigenous ‘art’ was not real art; instead it was interesting material for anthropologists and specialists in the East Indies and exotic embellishment for the Netherlands. Together, the Javanese Raden Saleh, the fish from Ternate and the Dayak dolls were representative of the variety in indigenous culture in the archipelago which, according to the exhibition organisers, at the same time constituted a coherent whole: the Dutch East Indies. That area, the jewel in the Dutch crown, could make the small country of the Netherlands greater, from an international perspective as well.

While the colonial exhibition’s message may have seemed unambiguous at first sight, in 1883 both the exhibition organisers and the more critical visitors turned out to have difficulty interpreting the indigenous culture that they were viewing, particularly when it came to the ‘art’ at the exhibition. They saw it as a mirror for the state of their own civilisation and consequently the state of the arts in the Netherlands. Indigenous art might be a non-existent category, but how real were the arts in the Netherlands?

This article explores the changes in the appreciation of the indigenous art in the Dutch colonial departments at world exhibitions between 1880 and 1931. The Netherlands flaunted its colonies at the world exhibitions during this period. The indigenous fine arts of the Dutch East Indies were given a prominent place in them, not so much as art, but as ornamentation, to draw attention to the Greater Netherlands, as an evolutionary lesson and as a civilisation issue – and eventually as art as well. I shall be focusing on the effect that the changing image of indigenous arts had on ideas about art and civilisation in the Netherlands. What did these art displays teach the general public about the East Indies? What did they mean to the Netherlands? Finally, how were the changes in the ideas regarding indigenous art related to the developments in colonial relationships?³

In his influential books *Orientalism* (1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Edward Said suggested that the Western view of the East was anchored in the mentality of imperialism; it was determined by the colonial balance of power and also served to maintain that balance of power. This article asks whether this view of the East might be influenced not just by power but also, primarily, by the search



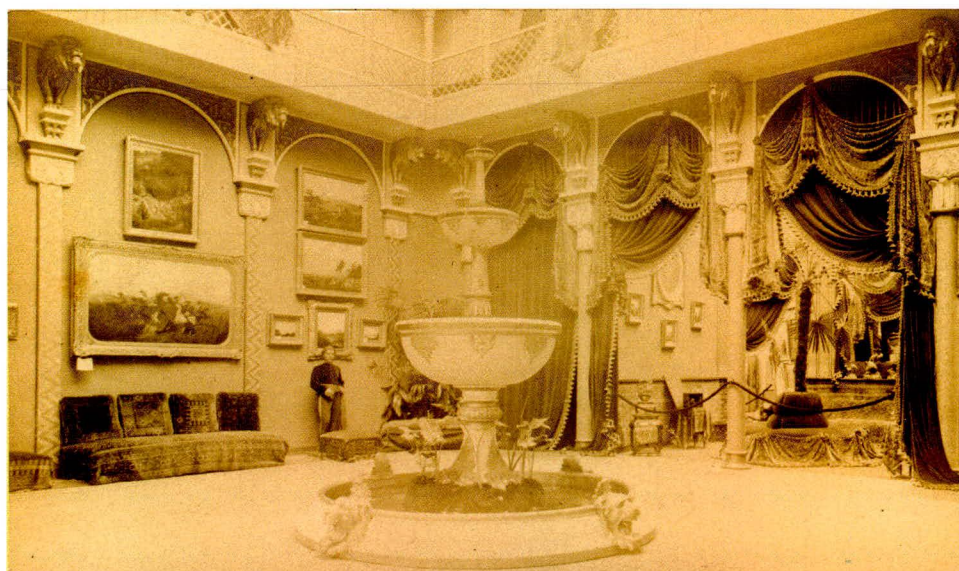
The colonial palace at the International Colonial and Export exhibition in Amsterdam, 1883, an Arab-Islamic construction from architect Stortenbeker. In front, a copy of the statue of Jan Pieterszoon Coen of Batavia.

photo: P. Oosterhuis
collection KITLV, Leiden

² P.J. Veth, *Catalogus der afdeeling Nederlandsche koloniën van de internationale koloniale en uitvoerhandel-tentoonstelling van 1 mei tot ulto. October 1883 te Amsterdam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1883) 284-289, 306-309, 322.

³ This article is based on M. Bloembergen, *Colonial Spectacles. The Netherlands and the Indies at the world exhibitions* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2006).

for their own identity and confusion and unease about developments in their own society. If that is the case, such views say more about the Netherlands than they do about colonial power relationships.



The court with a view of the colonnade in the colonial palace in 1883, where the Dutch landscape scenes and the paintings of Raden Saleh were exhibited.

photo: P. Oosterhuis
collection KITLV, Leiden

The Art of World Exhibitions

The International Colonial and Export Trade Exhibition in Amsterdam was the first – and only – world exhibition ever to be held in the Netherlands. It was also the first world exhibition that was specifically dedicated to the theme of the colonies. That was no coincidence. At that time the Netherlands enjoyed quite a reputation abroad because of its colonies. While the Netherlands was only a minor power, it was able to make a mark at world exhibitions as a progressive coloniser

of a long-established, extensive overseas empire. The organisers of this first colonial exhibition and of the subsequent exhibitions endeavoured to present the concept of the East Indies – the *Dutch* East Indies – as attractively and convincingly as possible, and to do so not just for a Dutch audience but for an international audience as well. For that reason alone, it was a particularly prestigious undertaking. This was the context in which the indigenous arts were selected, positioned and evaluated.

The world exhibitions were big crowd-pullers and therefore highly influential in determining the image of the colonies in Europe and the Netherlands. Indeed, it was the sections on indigenous culture and art at the exhibitions which attracted people's attention. These colonial art displays were a key element in the message of progress propagated by the world exhibitions. In this context the East Indies village or *kampung* at the Amsterdam world exhibition was particularly revealing, as it proudly held its own despite its small size, next to the large colonial palace and the modern gallery of machinery further along. This village consisted of authentic houses, built using wood and bamboo, from various regions in the East Indies and it was inhabited by real Javanese and Sumatrans with their carabaos. In putting on this living display, the exhibition organisers were providing the public with an anthropological sensation, and perhaps also an acute realisation of how far from contemporary the contemporaneous could be. The village was supposed to show how far removed it was from Dutch civilisation and to demonstrate the latter's superiority. It showed that not everyone had progressed as far at that point in time.

However, the world exhibitions also gave rise to confusion among alert visitors precisely because of the opportunity they gave to make comparisons and demonstrate the large differences in aesthetics and technology. The image

of the 'primitive' kampong may have given them the impression they were more advanced, but that did not necessarily mean they could be sure they were better. Particularly during this period of urbanisation and industrialisation, the apparently peaceful, simple life in the kampong houses in Amsterdam and their use of natural materials and decorative motifs evoked a romantic feeling of nostalgia among the visitors, and even admiration for what they considered to be authentic aesthetic feeling. That is why the world exhibitions unintentionally also made it clear that the changes associated with modernisation were not necessarily the same thing as progress, and in addition that art was an ambivalent concept. That was also the reason that the art and the aesthetic sense of the indigenous population of the Dutch East Indies were difficult to interpret, even as early as 1883.

Not Art?

World exhibitions were a means of creating order in a rapidly changing world and of exercising control over it by dividing things up and classifying them. However, the exhibitions did not guarantee clarity, let alone certainty about the order, if only because of the overabundance and rich variety of objects they put on display. Raden Saleh, the fish from Ternate, the Chinese rice paper and the East Indies village were part of a massive collection of natural materials, packaged trading goods, indigenous utensils, Hindu-Javanese temple reliefs, trophy weapons, model trains, paintings, maps and statistics – all sent over from the Dutch East Indies to the world exhibition in Amsterdam and brought together in the colonial palace, which was controversial from day one because of its Islamic style, or 'Moorish' in the terminology of the time.⁴

The Dutch exhibition organisers wanted to use this palace, these objects and these people to create a picture of the land and natural abundance of the Dutch East Indies, the culture and history of the indigenous subjects and the modernity of the Dutch colonial administration. They used these three aspects – nature, the indigenous population and colonisation – to bring the colony, the Dutch East Indies, home to a wider public. They legitimised the military, economic and administrative expansion of Dutch colonial domination in the East Indies.⁵ In particular, they aimed to show the public in the Netherlands and throughout the world that this colony was Dutch; in doing so, they would give the Netherlands a place on the world map as an experienced, progressive colonial power. The indigenous arts had a role to play within these terms of reference: not so much as art in itself but as part of the indigenous culture of the Dutch East Indies, i.e. as ethnography and, in the case of Raden Saleh, possibly as a development project.

As was said earlier, opinion about the indigenous artworks was ambivalent in 1883, although some experts felt able to come to a judgement. The leading anthropologist and director of the National Ethnographical Museum in Leiden, Lindon Serrurier, wrote the introduction to the sub-category 'arts and sciences' in the official exhibition catalogue; he did not consider the group 'drawing, lacquer and sculptural art' listed there, which included the Chinese rice paper drawings, the Dayak dolls and the fish from Ternate, to be art. Serrurier looked at these objects from the perspective of an anthropologist. He judged the aesthetic sense of the 'uncivilised and semi-civilised peoples' of the archipelago

⁴ In retrospect the colonial palace's style – Arabic Islamic with its minarets and pointed arches – seems a strange choice given the preconceived opinions then current about Islam in Europe and the colonies. However, that style was fashionable in Europe; in addition, the exhibition organisers considered it the most suitable style to represent the population of the Dutch East Indies as a whole. The building drew sharp criticism from cultural experts who found it artificial or not sufficiently typical of the East Indies, or who would rather have seen 'architecture from the Fatherland' in the style of the Dutch Golden Age. See Bloembergen, *Colonial spectacles*, 84–87, for this discussion.

⁵ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the origins and spread of nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991) 163–186.

to still be underdeveloped from an evolutionary perspective, and to be at the 'unaware stage'. "Art is not practiced for its own sake; it is not aimed at as an *end* in itself, it serves purely as a means; it does not rise above ornamentation." What is more, Serrurier implicitly said that the form artworks take and the standards achieved are related to a people's religion and view of the world. For example, he saw the contemporary decorative art of Java, which he considered to have the most aesthetic quality, as a faint echo of the temple art of the ancient Hindu-Javanese civilisation. On the other hand, Serrurier considered Islam, which was now dominant in the archipelago, to have had a suffocating effect on art for centuries⁶. In the light of this observation too, the exhibition organisers' choice of an Islamic style for the colonial palace seems somewhat curious.

Not everyone was as peremptory and denigrating as Serrurier in their opinion of indigenous art and aesthetic sense. For example, the wood carving on the indigenous houses in the kampong aroused admiration in the art lovers among the visitors. The new journal for architecture, *Bouwkundig Tijdschrift*, devoted a large number of detailed drawings to the subject. Two experts wrote eulogising essays on what they called East Indies art, or alternatively decorative art: F.W. van Eeden, the director of the Colonial Museum in Haarlem and the secretary of the Museum for the Applied Arts, and J.R. de Kruyff, a lecturer in style and ornamentation at the Rijksnormaalschool (Teachers' College) and the director of the National School for the Applied Arts, attached to the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam.⁷ They set the trend with their admiration for indigenous decorative art – because of the natural motifs and the functionality and directness of the form – for the interest in Oriental ornamental art forms emerging at that time in the Netherlands.⁸ In fact, the Amsterdam colonial exhibition stood at the forefront of that development.

A select but influential group of visitors faced a problem in Amsterdam: the fact that they seemed to be more advanced did not mean to them that they were necessarily better, or better off, certainly not where the arts were concerned. They found it hard to specify what made something typical East Indies art, from a feeling of uncertainty or lack of agreement about the standard of the arts in the Netherlands. However, the question remains what the general public saw here: the overfull displays in a Moorish fairy tale palace, the overabundance of utensils and a magical, simple village. On superficial consideration at any rate, it all seemed rather different and primitive compared to the modern times the visitors felt they were living in.

Indigenous Art as a Civilisation Issue

The Amsterdam exhibition set the mould for Dutch colonial contributions to subsequent world exhibitions. While the primary division into threesome nature, indigenous population and colonisation was retained, there were far-reaching changes over the course of time in the displays on the culture of the indigenous population – the central group of the three. In the 1880s they formed a single, all-embracing whole, 'primitive' and 'exotic', under the heading 'ethnography', thus serving as the context for the evaluation of indigenous art as well; however, from 1900 onwards we see more complex Hindu-Javanese and Balinese artworks being given a prominent position in the Dutch colonial contributions and being presented explicitly as 'civilisation'. These exhibitions

⁶ Veth, *Catalogus*, 306-309.

⁷ De Kruyff, 'Ter Amsterdamse tentoonstelling'; J.R. de Kruyff, 'De Oostersche versieringskunst', *De Nederlandsche Spectator*, 13 October 1883; F.W. van Eeden, 'De waarde der Indische kunst. Mededeeling in de vergadering van het museum van kunstnijverheid, den 18 mei 1883', *Tijdschrift der Maatschappij ter bevordering van Nijverheid* (1883) 134-140. See also: Flanor, 'Vlugmaren', *De Nederlandsche Spectator*, 22 September 1883.

⁸ See Jan de Hond, *Verlangen naar het Oosten: oriëntalisme in de Nederlandse cultuur, c. 1800-1920* (Leiden: Primavera Pers, 2008); Marion Duijsman, 'Batikwerk', in: Mechteld de Bois (ed.), *C.A. Lion Cachet (1864-1945)* (Assen: Drents Museum and Rotterdam: Museum Boymans van Beuningen, 1994).

point to the geographical and cultural variation and the complexity, diversity and aesthetic sense of indigenous culture. Broadly speaking, the view of their culture shifted from seeing it as simple to seeing it as complex. This development went hand in hand with a growing appreciation of art and aesthetic sense in the indigenous population.

This change in the appreciation of indigenous artworks reflected changes in ideas about the issue of civilisation during this period and, associated with this, changes in the relationship between the Netherlands and its colony.⁹ They were related to a number of important developments in the colony and the mother country. First, the expansion of the colonial state in the Dutch East Indies stimulated academic interest in the area and in the culture and society of the indigenous peoples. Second, there was a growing awareness, influenced by authoritative government advisors, such as the Islamicist and Arabist Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, that colonial policy would benefit from cooperation (association) from the indigenous elite. One of the implications of this was that knowledge of indigenous social and cultural institutions was essential in addition to a positive attitude towards their aristocratic culture. Third, around the same period a prominent cultural elite in the Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies started to appreciate the beauty in Eastern works of art and culture in reaction to the levelling off they saw in modern Western civilisation. The members of the exhibition organisation were also affected by this interest.

An element in all these motives was the question of whether indigenous culture should be changed to suit Western standards or whether it should be left to keep what was assumed to be its intrinsic value. All these factors made it increasingly difficult to form a picture of the culture and arts of the indigenous population. This was all the more the case in the context of the world exhibitions, which were, after all, a celebration of how far human civilisation had progressed. How should progress be demonstrated, given the growing awareness that this progress was not actually so straightforward?

Modernisation of the Indigenous Arts

The picture of indigenous culture given by the Dutch Colonial Department at the World Exhibition in Paris in 1900 was more complex than it had seemed in the 1880s and more sharply defined. There was now an awareness of different civilisations within indigenous culture, with different art forms of high quality. What the organisers selected as being typical referred not so much to the *Other* in that culture compared with the West as to what Western civilisation was missing or had lost. What is more, the



View in the kampong at the International Colonial and Export Trade exhibition in Amsterdam, 1883.

photo: P. Oosterhuis
collection KITLV, Leiden

⁹ See Bloembergen, *Colonial Spectacles*, 322-325 for what follows.

exhibition organisers were less inclined to assume the *Otherness* of that culture. They assumed that while there might be cultures that differed fundamentally 'from us', these too formed part of a single human civilisation, together with Western culture.

At the Paris exhibition in 1900, the Netherlands put up a replica of a Buddhist temple, Candi Sari, which was more than 1,000 years old; in doing this, the organisers were presenting the Netherlands as the guardian of a respectable civilisation to which all the great European civilisations could

be linked. Such an archaeological presentation could count on the sympathy of educated visitors from the outset in a period in which the excavations of Greco-Roman antiquities were leading to hero worship tinged with nationalism. The exhibition organisers raised the status of the Netherlands with this presentation, not so much in relation to the indigenous population of the Dutch East Indies but, in particular, in relation to the other European powers who also put great value on their own important excavations of antiquities in Paris. These presentations of antiquities were therefore primarily an expression of a Western (in this case, Dutch) need to bolster self-esteem and the associated quest for the origin

of civilisation, rather than an illustration of colonial relationships.

The reactions to this exhibition of antiquities testify to great respect for the Hindu-Javanese civilisation because of the religious world view that pervades it and the artworks it had left behind. They had now also become a source of inspiration for progressive artists in the Netherlands. The decorative motifs in the Hindu-Javanese temple reliefs were reflected in the wallpaper that C.A. Lion Cachet had designed for the Dutch colonial department in Paris, although this was for the pavilion displaying the Dutch modern works. In the end, the Candi Sari at Paris had little to do with the displays further along in the Dutch colonial department, and similarly the admiration it evoked in 1900 seemed to be an isolated case. It seemed to lead to an awareness of otherness rather than concrete reflection on the colonial relationship. There was, however, a major shift in the 'anthropological sensation', from a superficial curiosity spurred on by pleasure in the exotic to a more serious, thorough and, inasmuch as this was possible, honest interest in antiquities and art history. However, this interest was an exclusive phenomenon and restricted to a small elite group. It also focused primarily on antiquity and ancient art. Contemporary works of art produced by the indigenous population were still assigned to the field of ethnography.

The organisers of the Dutch colonial department at the World Exhibition in Brussels in 1910 went one step further in their choice of image typifying



The Dutch pavilion at the World's Fair in Paris, 1900, a copy from the thousand year old Buddhist temple Candi Sari from Java.

from: Ludovic Baschet (ed.), *Le panorama: exposition universelle 1900* (Paris: Librairie d'Art, 1900).

indigenous culture. Attention shifted here from high-level aristocratic antiquity to contemporary artistic crafts, and that had major consequences for the picture of the indigenous population's aesthetic sense and awareness of art. The high point in the Dutch department was a building in the Javanese *pendopo* style¹⁰, created by the Dutch architect E. Cuypers, in which twelve indigenous craftspeople – silversmiths, wood carvers, bamboo weavers and batik producers – demonstrated their skills. The organisers wanted to use this live craft show to bring folk art or crafts to the attention of the European public. This art form was creating a furore in Europe at that time for reasons that were both artistic and social and educational (developing taste and creating communities). In that respect, this exhibition primarily reflected a development taking place in Europe. The indigenous crafts of the Dutch East Indies had once been presented as primitive and certainly not art, but now they served as a mirror for the uninspired European arts and crafts. It had become contemporary and had acquired its own artistic value, nearly on a par with modern art. This intrinsic value made the Netherlands, the discoverer and curator of this craft, 'modern' – again primarily in the European context.

The exhibition organisers for the World Exhibition in Paris in 1931 seemed to be taking a step backwards by once again focusing on the exotic and the *Otherness* of indigenous culture. "What the indigenous population can do and knows" was best expressed in its religion and art, according to the exhibition's artistic director, the architect P.A.J. Moojen. Consequently, the exhibition organisation had selected religious and artistic features of the indigenous civilisation to provide a picture of indigenous culture: modern-day Balinese temple art and dances, a Javanese *pendopo*, priceless Hindu-Javanese art treasures from the museum in Batavia and the copy of the recently restored Buddhist temple Mendut. In a general sense, indigenous culture was raised to the level of art and more elevated cultural achievements. It was precisely because of the emphasis on the magical beauty and profound religious aspect of indigenous culture that it became elusive and once again *different* (as in 1883). In this way the distance between the indigenous culture and the Western civilisation, marked as being rational, displayed next to it increased once again in the colonial imagination of 1931, after the steps towards rapprochement in 1900 and 1910. Eastern aesthetics and Western technology stood literally side by side and opposite each other in the architecture of the Dutch colonial pavilion as well, as it incorporated indigenous architectural styles; they were two opposites, each with its own valued strengths.



The Dutch pavilion at the World's Exhibition in Paris, 1931. A mixture of Western and indigenous building styles.

collection Bloembergen

¹⁰ *Pendopo*, literally 'front gallery', is a rectangular open reception area with a roof above, placed in front of the main building in Javanese palace and housing complexes.

The 1931 exhibition clearly reflected colonial relationships. Unlike 1910, the homage to indigenous culture (in 1931 primarily Balinese culture) it seemed to express was motivated by conservative considerations. Whereas in 1910 it was still possible to discuss how far Western involvement should go in caring for and developing indigenous arts and crafts, in 1931 the colonial administration aimed to preserve what was assumed to be the specific identity of indigenous culture. Meanwhile it had become clear that the development of the indigenous elite (in the Western sense) did not necessarily mean they would concur with colonial affairs. In 1931, freezing developments in indigenous institutions and traditions helped maintain the colonial status quo, including at the exhibition. That is why, in retrospect, the enchanting cultural image of 1931 seems more of a superficial escape from a complicated relationship than the expression of admiration, which it was as well. In addition it was, not entirely coincidentally, an extremely successful attempt to seduce the general public. In that sense this exhibition again reflected a need in the West.

Mirror Images

The indigenous arts, insofar as they were even considered to be art, primarily had a supporting role at the Dutch colonial exhibitions. In this unusual context their function was to make the Netherlands greater, a progressive coloniser and respectable preserver of culture. But the art shown also gave rise to confusion, admiration and inspiration among Dutch artists, who in turn sometimes (as in the case of Lion Cachet, Cuypers and Moojen) helped give form to the Dutch colonial exhibitions and therefore the Greater Netherlands. However, in the final analysis, these exhibitions did not really have anything to do with profound interest in indigenous art.

The Dutch colonial exhibitions and the displays of indigenous art they contained primarily reflected a quest: for the most effective and correct method of colonial administration and the attitude to be taken towards indigenous culture in the colony, for the nature and development of civilisation in the Netherlands and for the position of the small country of the Netherlands in the world. In that sense, the changing appreciation of the indigenous arts from the Dutch East Indies said more about the feeling of unease among a select group of cultural critics in the Netherlands than about power. Seeing the indigenous arts did not convince these cultural critics of the existence of a Greater Netherlands; on the contrary, it made them aware of the artificial, unstable and questioning state of Dutch art and aesthetics and thus, in that respect, of the existence of a *Lesser Netherlands*.

The world exhibitions celebrated the progress made by the West partly by comparing their own art with that of the colonised lands in the East. However, that comparison did not necessarily lead to the intended self-confidence among the audience in the West. It possibly led, if anything, to self-examination. Conversely, a limited number of indigenous subjects from the colonies who collaborated on the colonial exhibitions in various roles were actually able to garner respect at home for the success they achieved in Europe. That was the case for the group of Balinese dancers and musicians, for instance, who created a furore at the World Exhibition in Paris in 1931 and were able to distinguish themselves permanently on Bali on the basis of this.¹¹ Their descendants were still



The entrance to the Dutch pavilion at the World's Exhibition in Paris, 1931. An enlarged copy of the doorway from Camenggon in Sukawati, Bali.

collection Bloembergen

¹¹ On that subject, see: Bloembergen, *Colonial Spectacles*, 331-351; Marieke Bloembergen, 'Parfum Paris in Bali. Het geheim van een succes', *Feit & Fictie* 5, 1 (2000) 48-66.

alluding to their former Parisian glory during a tour of Europe in 1998. Another example of this ironic turn of events – which was also an expression of a new historical awareness on Bali – occurred very recently. In 2006 the inhabitants of the village of Sukawati decided to restore a temple gate using an old photo from 1931. This photo did not show the original gate but the enlarged copy that served as the entrance to the Dutch pavilion at the World Exhibition in Paris. This incident says something about the scope and the sustained prestige of the former world exhibitions; the Dutch exhibition in France gave modern colonial allure to the Greater Netherlands in the 1930s. More than 70 years later it gave international historical allure to a temple in Bali.

The Wayang Sylphs of Jan Toorop

Gerard van Wezel

The most original contribution of Jan Toorop (Purworejo 1858-The Hague 1928) to art history dates from the period 1892-1893. In the autumn of 1892 he drew *O Grave, where is thy Victory?* a symbolic depiction of faith's victory over death.¹ The title was derived from a passage from the Anglican bible (Hosea 13:4; 1 Corinthians 15:55). Two seraphim free a dying man from thorn branches, symbolising suffering, to make sure his soul will have a happier existence. The figures on the right symbolise earthly passions: envy, jealousy, hatred and love, and conflict. The composition of this sheet consists of two wavy seraphs, floating in parallel, with long hair in styled curves and parallel waving weeping willows: it was Toorop's important contribution to *Art Nouveau*. Two aspects of the modern art debate are expressed in it: the line as a means of expression in its own right and the preference for non-Western cultures.

"A refined artist such as Toorop is no less a child of his time than the great Vincent", wrote the artist and critic Etha Fles in 1903. "Being half Malay, Toorop produces sensual and exotic art with superbly sophisticated qualities. (...) Every bit as much as Gauguin, Vincent's brother in arms, the appearance of Toorop reminds

¹ Bettina Spaanstra-Polak, *Het symbolisme in de Nederlandse schilderkunst 1890-1900* (Bussum: Thoth, 2004) 110-114, cat. no. 43; reissue of: Bettina Polak, *Het fin-de-siècle in de Nederlandse schilderkunst: De symbolistische beweging 1890-1900* (s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1955).

us of the fact that the countries of Europe are increasingly depending on their overseas assets."² Whereas Gauguin looked for inspiration on Tahiti for his portrayals of a primitive culture, Toorop looked at his own country of birth: Java. His themes were derived not so much from the local populace as from the good spirit from shadow puppetry, the wayang puppet with a "pointed face, almond-shaped eyes and long, thin arms with the hands pointing loosely upward and legs that merge into a never-ending train", as the musicologist Kitty Ament said to Gerard Brom.³ Wayang puppets such as these, which Toorop must certainly have seen at the National Museum of Ethnology in Leiden, were his inspiration for the sylphs or seraphs in his works from the said period.

Initially, Toorop's work was criticised in Germany. "How people laughed scornfully when Jan Toorop's typical Dutch line fantasies were shown at the Munich exhibition in 1893", wrote the art historian Cornelius Gurlitt. "People said they were complete nonsense once again, the end of Art!"⁴ Gurlitt wrote this in his book *Die deutsche Kunst des 19. Jahrhunderts* (German Art of the Nineteenth Century), which was published in 1899, by which time opinions had already changed. Gurlitt therefore continued, "His art now directs the pens of many artists. The lines try to find their own expression and formal symbolism. And those who do not understand the symbol are not allowed to join the discussion, because they are not the ones being spoken to!" In the reprint of 1907, Gurlitt mentions Toorop's Asian origins, probably influenced by Julius Meier Grafe's work *Entwicklungsgeschichte der Moderne Kunst* (History of the Development of Modern Art), in which the geographical development of modern art was based on racial classifications. However, Gurlitt did not use such racial indications. Although he no longer characterised Toorop as purely a Dutchman, but instead as the 'Dutchman who came from Java', he criticised the idea that the excuse for the strangeness of Toorop's work should be that it was the strangeness of "an Asian, since people saw him as someone who was totally unfamiliar with our spiritual life."⁵ Gurlitt believed that Toorop's work actually showed that he was "not a savage, but an over-sophisticated man, whose dreams are not the result of awkwardness, but of big-city nervousness".

Toorop came from a family of both European and Asian origin. He was born in Purworejo, where his father – a descendant of a certain Abraham Torop who arrived in Java from Rotterdam in 1762 – was a top civil servant. His mother came from a family of English, Dutch and Chinese background. Both Toorop's parents were Dutch nationals, spoke Dutch and belonged to the Dutch Reformed Church. In 1863 – when Jan Toorop was five years old – his father became administrator of a tin mine district on Bangka and moved with his family first to Muntok and later to Sungai Liat. From there, Jan left for Batavia at the age of nine for his education and then – at which point he was not even eleven years old – on to the Netherlands in 1869 for his secondary school education. He would not return to the East Indies.⁶

Toorop received a fully West-European art education at the Rijksacademie in Amsterdam (from the end of 1880 to September 1882) and after that at the Royal Academy in Brussels, where he was elected a member of the artists' group *Les XX*. As far as is known, he was not familiar with eastern painting techniques and methods. If he portrayed Indonesian subjects at all – which occurred rarely – it was done in a Western manner. This is mostly one-off work, such as a painting of the river Sungai on Bangka (1884) made from a photograph, a lamp set in copper portraying a Javanese dancer in front of his own house (1900), or a few ceramic tableaux. Only the wayang puppet-like sylphs – although they were portrayed for only a year – are a motif from Javanese art, which he used in a highly individual way.⁷ The

² Etha Fles, *Inleiding tot een kunstgeschiedenis* (Utrecht: Honig, 1903) 29.

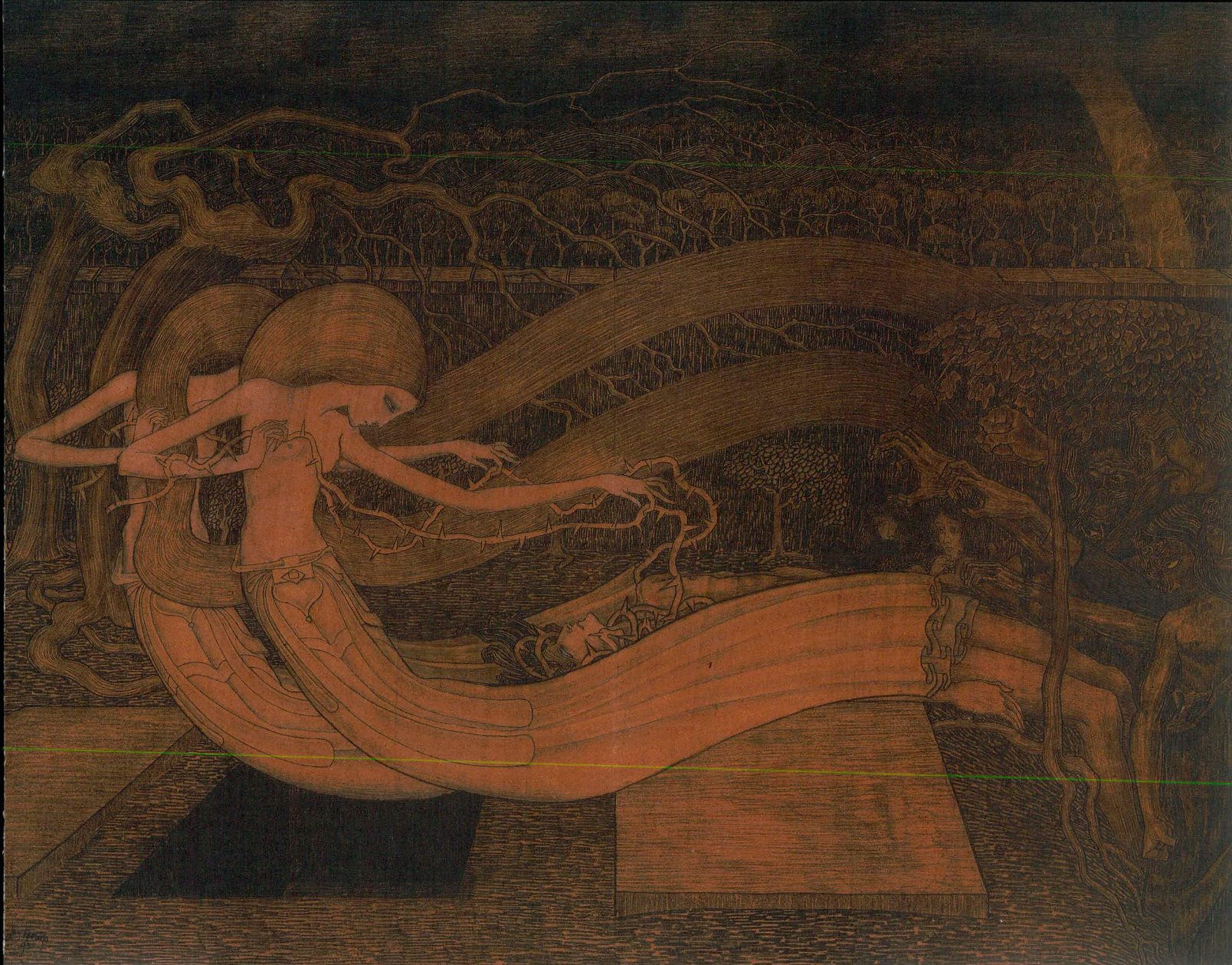
³ Gerard Brom, 'Toorop', *De Beiaard* 1, 2 (1917) 500; see also: Gerard Brom, *Java in onze kunst* (Rotterdam: W.L. en J. Brusse, 1931).

⁴ Cornelius Gurlitt, *Die deutsche Kunst des 19. Jahrhunderts: ihre Ziele und Taten* (Berlin: G. Bondi, 1899) 662 (2nd edition 1900, 3rd 1907, 4th 1924).

⁵ Cornelius Gurlitt, *Die deutsche Kunst des 19. Jahrhunderts: ihre Ziele und Taten* (3rd edition; Berlin, G. Bondi, 1907) 642.

⁶ Robert Siebelhoff, 'The family background and personality of Jan Toorop', *Canadian Journal of Netherlandic Studies* 3 (1981-1982) 71-76.

⁷ Gerard van Wezel, 'De corresponderende sylfiden van Jan Toorop', *Kunstschrift* 53, 4 (2009) 32-37.



8 G.V., 'La Libre Esthétique', *De Kunstwereld* 1,10 (1894) 8-9; Gerard van Wezel, 'Streven naar iets wat nog niet is gemaakt. Presentatie en directe ontvangst van het werk van Jan Toorop in het fin-de-siècle, in: Marian Bisanz-Prakken et al., *Toorop/Klimt. Toorop in Wenen: inspiratie voor Klimt* (The Hague: Gemeentemuseum and Zwolle: Waanders, 2006) 9-53.

inspiration is not an isolated one: his work from this period also shows influences from Egyptian and Celtic art, and Toorop had already been looking to Japanese art for inspiration for several years. In doing so he joined the international avant-garde, which aimed for a new style based on various non-Western visual vocabularies. When the Dutch press referred to Toorop in 1894 as a "delicate barbarian [who] understands the essence of our time and already senses the general idea of the time that will result from it", it was therefore meant in a positive sense.⁸

In 1883 Toorop made four water colours of figures in Eastern costume, in an environment full of eastern clothing and objects. Two of these (at the Municipal Museum in The Hague) are often wrongly called self-portraits. They look much more like the figures inside the colonial building, or the *kampong* (village) next to it, that were shown at the International Colonial and Export Trade Exhibition in Amsterdam that year. The standing self-portrait painted in 1883 (now at the Van Gogh Museum) instead shows a proud Bohemian in his studio, unmistakably dressed in Western clothes.

Jan Toorop

O Grave, Where is Thy Victory, 1892

Pencil, black, white, yellow, and light blue chalk on tan paper, 60.4 x 75.3 cm

collection Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Beautiful Indies Paintings: A colonial medium?

Koos van Brakel

The Cultural Climate in the Netherlands Indies

Art and artistic life have never played an important role in the Netherlands Indies and did not really exist until around 1900. Art and culture had a low priority in a colonial society where people had to survive in conditions entirely different from their own country and where the improvement of their social position demanded all their energy and attention. If people had any spare time at all, they preferred to look for recreation and entertainment.

There were only a small number of painters working in the Netherlands Indies in the nineteenth century. The landscape painter Antoine Payen (1792-1853), who was born in Brussels, should be mentioned first. He is the only painter who left for the Netherlands Indies with an official commission from the government. He was appointed artist in service to the country in the Netherlands Indies by royal decree on 19 May 1816. Until 1819 he travelled across Java as a member of the expeditions led by Professor Casper George Carl Reinwardt (1773-1854), a member of the Royal Committee for the colonies and the director of agricultural affairs, sciences and arts. His assignment was to provide as accurate and faithful a picture of the Javanese landscape as possible.¹ Payen returned to the Netherlands in 1826. Others that can be mentioned are: the self-taught artist Hubertus Nicolaas Sieburgh (1799-1842), who painted the antiquities of Java in the years 1837-1842,² the planters and self-taught artists Abraham Salm³ (1801-1876) and Maurits van den Kerkhoff⁴ (1830-1908), the colonial civil servants Jacob Dirk van Herwerden⁵ (1806-1878), Willem Bleckmann⁶ (1853-1942), who was born in Batavia, and Jan Daniel Beynon⁷ (1830-1877),

¹ His paintings can be found in the collection of the National Museum of Ethnology in Leiden.

² These paintings are in the collection of the National Museum of Ethnology in Leiden.

³ Salm left for Java in 1843, where he had a successful career as a tobacco and coffee planter. In his paintings he recorded the Javanese landscape. Frans Buffa and sons published twenty-four chromolithographs of paintings by Salm between 1865 and 1872, brought together in a portfolio entitled Java. The Tropenmuseum has two paintings by Salm.

⁴ He was an administrator for a tobacco company on Java. In his spare time he painted landscapes around Malang. He gave a number of them to the Colonial Museum in Haarlem, the predecessor of the Tropenmuseum. He even enclosed a cheque to pay for framing the works.

⁵ The Javanese landscapes painted by him were only made after his return to the Netherlands.

⁶ The major part of his Netherlands Indies work is at the Bronbeek Museum in Arnhem.

⁷ The Tropenmuseum has three landscapes and four portraits by Beynon.



who was also born in Batavia and was a member of the wealthy Indies-European middle classes in Batavia. He studied in Amsterdam at the Royal Academy and was taught by Cornelis Kruseman and Nicolaas Pieneman. He could afford to devote himself entirely to his painting. The Indonesian painter Raden Saleh occupies an entirely separate place and he is discussed extensively elsewhere in this publication. This short list of names of artists working in the Netherlands Indies in the nineteenth century speaks for itself and illustrates the meagre cultural life there.⁸

A change can be seen around the turn of the century. On Java, in particular, there was rapid modernisation of communication, transport and technology. The population of Europeans grew and, significantly, an increasing number of women went to the Netherlands Indies, contributing to the further Europeanisation. New urban developments and the decoration of homes became more and more European in character. Against this background there was a growing interest in art and culture. In December 1900 a small group of friends, artists and people interested in the visual arts in Batavia issued a circular, which included the following: "While there are societies for the promotion of music and dramatics in Batavia, there is still a lack of cooperation among art lovers with regard to the visual and decorative arts here." The response to this circular was disappointing and a new attempt was made in May and June 1901, this time

Leo J. Eland

Landscape of Java, 1929

oil on canvas, 106 x 156 cm

collection Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam

⁸ For an extensive description of the life and work of these painters, see: Marie-Odette Scalliet, 'Natuurtonelen en taferelen van Oost-Indië. Europese schilders in Oost-Indië in de negentiende eeuw', in: Koos van Brakel et al., *Indië omlijst: Vier eeuwen schilderkunst in Nederlands-Indië* (Amsterdam: Royal Tropical Institute and Wijk en Aalburg: Pictures Publishers, 1998) 39-89.

with more success. And so the Netherlands Indies Art Society (Nederlandsch-Indische Kunstkring) was founded in Batavia during a meeting on 1 April 1902. The Governor General, W. Roosenboom, accepted the role of patron, as would the Governors General who came after him. The first article of the Articles of Association stated: "The objective of the Society is to encourage the performance and appreciation of the visual and decorative arts among the inhabitants of the Netherlands Indies." It is noteworthy that they wanted to raise interest in both the fine arts and the applied arts, and that they wanted to encourage the active performance of these arts as well. A logical consequence of the ambitions formulated in this article was that they kept lobbying for an art museum in Batavia up until the 1930s. The lack of money and the difficulty of getting together a proper representative collection turned out to be insuperable obstacles and the museum was never built. But the Art Society was successful in acquiring its own accommodation. They had to depend on the

hospitality of other institutions for many years. But the festive opening of their own Art Society building, designed by the architect P.A.J. Moojen⁹, finally took place on 17 April 1914. However, they were never able to set up a formal training course for the visual arts. As a consequence, many Netherlands Indies painters were self-taught. However, some of them had lessons and advice from art teachers working at the secondary schools. A few received training in the Netherlands. In discussions of exhibitions, the deplorable situation of the visual arts in the Netherlands Indies was often blamed on the lack of training available in the Indies. The practice of allowing works by amateur painters and dilettantes, as they were often called,

⁹ P.A.J. (Piet) Moojen (1879-1955), an architect and painter, was a central figure in the cultural life of the Netherlands Indies. In 1904 he founded the Bandung Art Society. From 1907 he was the secretary of the Batavia Art Society for three years, after which he was chairman for fourteen years. He was the chairman of the Association of Dutch Netherlands Indies Art Societies continuously from its foundation in 1916 until his departure from the Indies in 1923. He was a board member of the Java Institute in Solo and a member of the city council of Batavia (1904-1918). Under Van Moojen's influence the architect W.J.G. Zweedijk (1897-1975) made considerable changes to his original design for the Dutch pavilion at the International Colonial Exhibition in Paris (1931).

¹⁰ Regnault owned several paint factories in the Netherlands Indies.



Piet Ouborg

Limestone and Bamboo Roots, c. 1934-1939

marouflé, 55.7 x 71 cm

collection Dordrechts Museum, Dordrecht

in exhibitions was a constant source of criticism in the media and frequently led to heated discussions among the artists themselves. On 8 January 1816 the various art societies joined forces in the Association of Netherlands Indies Art Societies (Bond van Nederlandsch-Indische Kunstkringen), which was located in Batavia. From that moment on the Art Society in Batavia was known as the Batavian Art Society (Bataviasche Kunstkring). In 1927 there were 26 art societies, only three of which were outside Java: one in Makassar on Celebes, and two on Sumatra, in Medan and Tanjungkarang.

As well as exhibitions, the art societies also organised music and drama evenings. These were much more popular than the activities in the field of the visual arts, such as lectures and exhibitions. Yet the five exhibitions, organised by the art society in the years 1934-1939 with a selection from the collection of the Laren collector P.A. Regnault, were some of the highlights in the history of the art society.¹⁰ It was only then that the public and the artists in the

Netherlands Indies were able to view works by painters such as Marc Chagall, Kees van Dongen, Paul Gauguin, Pablo Picasso and many others for the first time. The exhibitions sometimes aroused strong reactions directed against the policy of the art society in general and against the curator of the exhibitions, Ms. de Loos-Haaxman, in particular.¹¹

For instance, the well-known 'Beautiful Indies painter' Ger Adolfs (1897-1968) sent a long letter to various Netherlands Indies newspapers after the third exhibition with works from the Regnault collection. "Our Indies are too beautiful, too sunny, too happy and too contented to accept such a degenerate influence as a positive thing. We do not need to see the image of a washed-out palette – three metres square – on a canvas or a desperate monstrosity with instructions. The few artists living and working here still have in them the ability to portray what is beautiful, good and healthy."¹² The Netherlands Indies painter Breetvelt responded in a very individual way by describing Adolfs's work as 'irrelevant picture-postcard art' in a letter sent to the papers.

Those participating in the activities of the art societies belonged almost exclusively to the wealthy middle classes and the top ranks of colonial society. Exhibitions of paintings showed almost exclusively works by Dutch artists and artists of European descent working in the Netherlands Indies. The press made a clear distinction between Netherlands Indies painters and Indonesian painters. What is more, it was not until the late 1930s that work by the latter group began to be included to a limited degree in group exhibitions. For instance, an exhibition in 1939 showed works by Sudjojono, Lee Man Fong and Henk Ngantung.¹³ European dilettantes working in the Netherlands Indies also had access to these group exhibitions, which often did not have judging committees. An exhibition in August 1940 showed paintings by Sudjojono and Lee Man Fong in addition to works by the Balinese painters Ida Bagoes Kembeng and I. Renen. It was not until May 1941 that a group exhibition made up of Indonesian painters only was held. Solo exhibitions of Indonesian artists were still not an option. There were various reasons for this. On the one hand, the quality of the Indonesian painters was considered insufficient. Reviews in that period claimed that their work showed nothing original, nothing Indonesian; people considered it too much of an imitation, and what is more, a weak imitation, of the work of European painters. On the other hand, although no-one was forbidden access, the activities of the art societies were mainly organised by and for the Dutch, the Europeans and the Netherlands Indies wealthy middle classes, and it was felt things should stay that way. In these circumstances, there was absolutely no pressure to put on solo exhibitions of Indonesian artists.

Beautiful Indies Paintings

In the first half of the twentieth century nearly all painters in the Netherlands Indies worked almost exclusively in the 'Beautiful Indies' style. Exceptions to this rule are rare. The romantic image of the Netherlands Indies dominates in the paintings; the surrealist paintings by Piet Ouborg (1893-1956) and Dolf Breetvelt (1892-1975) in the early 1930s are the only exceptions to this rule. In this context the modernist portraits by Anita Daponte Rambonnet (1895-1955), who is almost forgotten now, are also worth mentioning.¹⁴ Yet it is possible to make a distinction between painters who repeated the same themes endlessly

11 J. de Loos-Haaxman (1881-1976) lived and worked in Batavia from 1922 until 1939. She was the curator of the National Collection from 1925 onwards and she led the restoration of the portrait gallery of the Governors General of the Netherlands Indies. She wrote many reviews of exhibitions in the *Javabode* between 1924 and 1929. From 1930 onwards she was the chief commissioner for the visual arts on behalf of the board of the Batavian Art Society and the Association of Netherlands Indies Art Societies. Since the activities of the art societies increasingly focussed on popular drama and performances of music, her task was to draw more attention to the visual arts by means of exhibitions.

12 In the newspaper *De Ochtend Post*, 13 April 1937, among others. See also: Eveline Borntraeger-Stoll and Gianni Orsini, Gerard Pieter Adolfs: *The Painter of Java and Bali* (Wijk en Aalburg: Pictures Publishers, 2008) 186.

13 *Javabode*, 27 February 1939.

14 See Koos van Brakel, "Immimers Indië is nu eenmaal geen land van kunst". 'Het kunstklimaat in Indië in de eerste helft van de twintigste eeuw', in: Van Brakel et al., *Indië omlijst*, 103-128, esp. 110; and 'Indische schilders', *D'Orient*, 8 July 1933.

and were mainly guided by the predominant taste – the actual ‘Beautiful Indies’ painters – and artists who knew about the developments in Europe, who often had academic training and who differed from the ‘Beautiful Indies’ painters not in their subject matter but in its execution. Their technique and opinions are those of artists working in Europe, their subject matter is that of the Netherlands Indies. Jan Frank, Charles Sayers and Willem Dooyewaard belong to the latter group. This list should also include the names of the so-called ‘transients’, painters like Isaac Israëls who were not born in the Netherlands Indies and did not live there for a relatively long period. During the late colonial period, the Indies became a popular destination for Dutch and other European artists in particular. The enthusiastic stories of earlier travelers and popular publications such as the volume *Bali* with text by Karl With and photographs by Gregor Krause¹⁵ were a significant factor in the non-stop flow of artists, film directors and film stars that visited the Indies, and Bali in particular, in the 1920s.¹⁶ This publication contains many photographs of naked women, bathing and washing themselves. This led to the image of a paradise island, not yet affected by modern civilisation.¹⁷ If we look at the Netherlands Indies paintings, it is remarkable how Bali dominates. Indeed, most artists, including Breetvelt, Dake, Sayers, Strasser and Dooyewaard, stayed on Bali briefly or for a longer period; others, such as Spies, Le Mayeur de Merprès, Hofker, Bonnet, Meier and Sonnega, settled permanently.

The name ‘Beautiful Indies’ was probably first used to describe Netherlands Indies painting in 1913 with the publication of a folder containing twelve coloured illustrations taken from watercolours by F.J. van Rossum du Chattel (1856–1917)¹⁸ and called *Mooi Indië – Afbeeldingen in kleuren van twaalf aquarellen* (Beautiful Indies¹⁹ – Illustrations of Twelve Watercolours). This folder was distributed by the bookshop and publisher N.V. Mij. Vorkink in Bandung in such large numbers that these reproductions could be found on the walls of many houses in the Indies. As a result, the name for this colonial style of painting became fixed in the collective memory and also became a characterisation. The vast majority of the artists portrayed an idealised and idyllic image of the colony in a strongly realistic style and using a colourful palette. The subjects were limited to landscapes, portraits, views of towns and water, beautiful women, ceremonies and rituals. We therefore often see endless repetitions of the same landscapes in the works of many painters. They were painted over and over again, even after these painters had finally settled in the Netherlands again. When Johannes Tielrooy²⁰ criticised the work of Ernest Dezentjé (1885–1972), he gave a perfect description of the Beautiful Indies painting. “Dezentjé paints sawahs [paddy fields] and the water glistens like silver, the little dykes are green, he puts a mountain in the background and this mountain – you can count on that – is dark blue, the mandatory palm tree is in the picture too, and in the heavens in the distance yearning yellows melt into poetic red. Thus much thought has gone into creating a soft, tender mood and, should an attribute still be required, such as a palm tree or a little native home, it can be supplied.”²¹ The young Indonesian painter Sudjojono (1913–1986) used similar wording to describe ‘Beautiful Indies’ painting, when at the end of the thirties he appealed to the Indonesian painters to concentrate on using the working conditions at sugar plantations or the living conditions of farmers in subjects for their painting.²² Neither Indonesian artists nor European artists paid heed to this appeal, for reasons mentioned by Sudjojono himself as well. Such paintings

15 G. Krause, *Bali. Volk, Land, Tanze, Feste, Tempel* (2 vols.; Hagen: Folkwang Verlag, 1920). A second edition was published in 1921, a Dutch translation in 1926, a French edition in 1930.

16 To name but a few visitors: the Mexican artist and anthropologist Miguel Covarrubias, the American photographer and film director André Roosevelt, and Charlie Chaplin.

17 See also Adrian Vickers, *Bali: A Paradise Created* (Ringwood: Penguin, 1989) and Wim Bakker, *Bali verbeeld* (Delft: Volkenkundig Museum Nusantara 1985).

18 The Dutch painter Fred van Rossum du Chattel stayed in the Indies, where his only son had a plantation, from 1908 until 1914. He made a second journey in 1916 and died in Japan in 1917.

19 Sm. in *Algemeen Indisch weekblad De Taak*, 8 December 1917, 221. Most living rooms in the Netherlands Indies primarily had photographs and reproductions on the walls. Incidentally, several publications appeared later with Beautiful Indies in the title that did not deal with art. ‘Beautiful Indies’ is the image people wanted to create of the colony in all its facets. See also J.F.L. Balbian Verster and M.C. Kooy-van Zeggelen, *Batavia oud en nieuw: met photographische afbeeldingen naar natuuroopnamen en historische gegevens* (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1921); Emiel Hullebroeck, *Insulinde; reisindrukken van Emiel Hullebroeck* (Leiden: De Vlaamsche Boekenhal, 1915); J. Jongejans, *Uit Dajakland: kijkjes in het leven van den koppensneller en zijne omgeving* (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff 1932).

20 A teacher of French and art critic in the Netherlands Indies.

21 Johannes Tielrooy, ‘Indië in de schilder- en teekenkunst’, *Elsevier's geïllustreerd maandschrift* 80 (1930), 6.

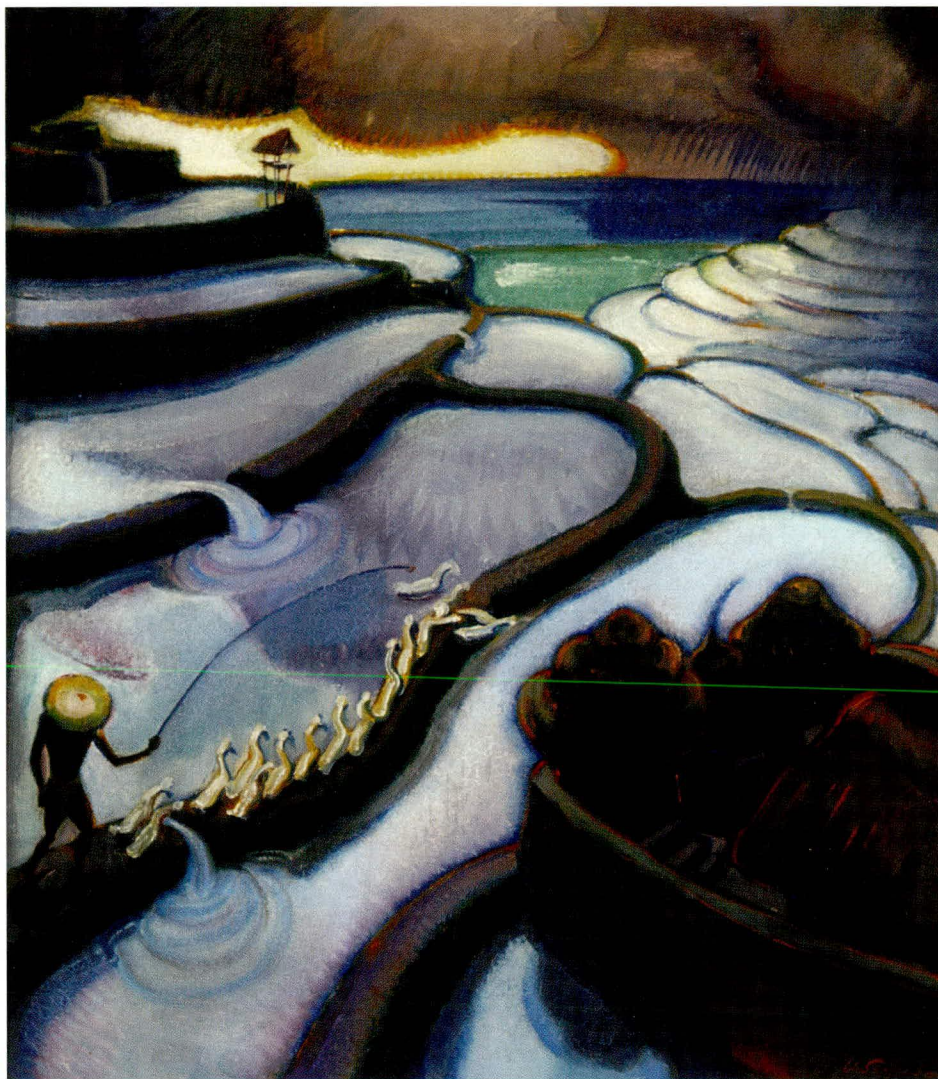
22 As quoted in Claire Holt, *Art in Indonesia: Continuities and change* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press

were totally unsellable. When Sudjojono made another appeal to his compatriots in 1940 to create a new kind of painting, he particularly emphasised the importance of having their own national, Indonesian style.²³ Sudjojono's efforts were aimed not so much at having painting in the Netherlands Indies connect up with the developments in Europe; rather, he called on others to develop an original Indonesian art not determined by the canon dictated by the 'Beautiful Indies' art.

Who Influenced and Determined Taste

The popularity of the 'Beautiful Indies' style has everything to do with the conservative taste of the potential buyers. Apart from the occasional Javanese aristocrat or wealthy Chinese individual, the buyers were mainly members of the top ranks of colonial society and civil servants belonging to the wealthy middle classes. They generally ordered portraits and paintings of the house and the plantation where they lived or worked. Many paintings were made to order and many individuals celebrating their jubilee were treated to a painting when they came to take official leave of office. Sometimes the influence of the general public's taste was so great that paintings by Ouborg and Breetvelt were removed from exhibitions because of their supposed erotic undertones. Works by Ouborg, who kept himself

aloof from the 'Beautiful Indies' style, were described in the *Indische Courant* as the "blots of a three-year-old child" and the "products from an anatomical cabinet, preserved in formalin."²⁴ The few critical notes that were sounded did not directly advocate a modernist art of painting, but only dealt with nuances within the canon of the 'Beautiful Indies' style. "Fortunately, the choice of the buyers was diametrically opposed to the usual taste of those giving commissions (jubilee sawahs, buildings and houses etc.). Unfortunately, many thousands are spent on that type of work every year. These thousands create a school of painters who finally end up being copiers of their own work, who reduce the abused beauty of the landscape of the Netherlands Indies to a worn-out cliché. It would probably be a relief to all painters if their assignments would leave them free in the choice of the subject, and the client



Charles Sayers

Ducks Guardian, 1927

oil on jute, 100 x 83 cm
collection Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam

1967) 195-196; see also Amir Sidharta, S. Sudjojono, *Visible soul* (Jakarta: Museum S. Sudjojono and Canna Gallery, 2006) 38.

23 Sidharta, S. Sudjojono, and Helena Spanjaard, *Het ideaal van een moderne Indonesische schilderkunst, 1900-1995. De creatie van een nationale culturele identiteit* (dissertation; Leiden University, 1998) 100-101.

24 *Javabode*, 6 October 1933.

would still have a painting recalling the atmosphere and beauty of the Netherlands Indies." However, the critic ends this hopeful plea as follows: "For this can be found in the dappled sun under the trees, the rippling water of a little

kampong canal, the slow rhythm of the rattling ox cart, and the sun-stained path where people walk to the market."²⁵

Not only the conservative buyers and the critics, but most painters as well were against modern developments and advocated the 'Beautiful Indies' style. Adolfs' reaction to the third exhibition with work from the Regnault collection has already been given. The artist Henri van Velthuysen also took a clear stand against 'modernities' in his capacity as reviewer of numerous exhibitions.²⁶ When writing about an exhibition of Jan Frank in the Art Society in the *Javabode*



Hendrik Paulides

Cooperation, 1938

oil on canvas, 18.4 x 34.5 cm

collection Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam

of 11 November 1938, he characterised painting as follows: "Through the ages painting has been, and will always remain, imitation of nature. We artists are and will remain imitators of nature, nothing more, nothing less, even if some painters, like Jan Frank, think that they are more than that." He then goes on to discuss the paintings shown at the exhibition. "Jan Frank's older work appeals to us much more than his latest experiments, which arouse the impression of being infantile construction-kit shapes (...) Let us hope that the Frank of old (...) does not perish in Ouborgian pictorial experiments without having the advantage of that man's intellect."²⁷

The 'Beautiful Indies' painters, among whom were Van Velthuysen, Adolfs, Dake and Eland, also sincerely believed that they were on the right track with their work. Van Velthuysen literally said that if the work of Indies artists is compared to what is exhibited by artists' societies in the Netherlands, the Netherlands Indies work is not inferior to the Dutch work.²⁸

The Art Market

The market for art in the Indies was small. When people returned to the Netherlands after a stay of many years, they bought a painting as a souvenir, some tourists bought a painting and – as was remarked on earlier – many people celebrating their jubilee received a painting as a present. The lack of paintings to be seen when browsing photo albums of Indies families and looking at the hundreds of photographs of interiors is quite remarkable. Photos and sweet little prints were used to decorate the walls. Painting jubilee sawahs (paddy fields) was a financial necessity for many artists in order to make the occasional sale in such a market.²⁹ They openly admitted it too. For instance, Willem Imandt said: "An Indies painting must have palm trees and sawahs. How many times have they not reproached us with this (...) It's true, I have painted numerous palm trees and sawahs (a painter too needs to survive and earn money when it comes to business)."³⁰ Charles Sayers said quite frankly that he would like to sell a painting occasionally³¹ and Van Velthuysen said

²⁵ J. de Loos-Haaxman, 'Vereniging van beeldende kunstenaars, schilderijen tentoonstelling', *Javabode*, 4 March 1929.

²⁶ The painter Henri van Velthuysen (1881-1954) wrote exhibition reviews for several papers, including *D'Orient*.

²⁷ VN in *Javabode*, 22 November 1938.

²⁸ H. van Velthuysen, 'Indische schilders', *D'Orient*, 10 December 1932.

²⁹ In addition, commission to paint portraits or advertisement designs were an important source of income.

³⁰ W.J.F. Imandt, 'Schilderen in Indië', *Maandblad voor Beeldende Kunsten*, 3 (1926) 338.

that Ouborg's paintings were unsellable when he discussed his work in 1933.³² Those Netherlands Indies painters who tended towards modernism could only afford to work in that way because they were financially independent. Breetvelt and Ouborg both worked as art teachers and Sayers was supported financially by his father for a long time.

Works of art were too expensive for most Indonesians, but high-ranking civil servants or businessmen could afford a painting. Even so, there was not much interest. During the 1930s, prices for oil paintings ranged between 300 and 600 guilders. Only the German painter Walter Spies (1895-1942) who had settled on Bali, could afford to set prices varying between 2,500 and 3,000 guilders and still sell. His work was so much in demand that he was sometimes unable to meet that demand. It seems that others sometimes also tried to ask such exorbitantly high prices for their work. A critic wrote somewhat crossly in 1921: "Briët³³ is asking a mere 3,500 guilders for his *Grobak met sappies*.³⁴ We prefer to buy a car for that amount. No paintings have been sold as yet."³⁵

In the journal *Algemeen Indisch Weekblad De Taak* dated 11 January 1919, an anonymous correspondent criticised the mixing of art and money. Under the heading 'Is the Association an Art Dealer?' he wrote: "The exhibitions by the Association, indeed all exhibitions by the art societies for that matter, should in the *first* place always be exhibitions where you can go to look at good art, and only in the second place somewhere where you can buy art. Looking with the thought of buying, or even just with the thought of considering the financial value of a work, is no way to look at art (...) And that is why it is wrong to state the price right next to each work in the catalogue." But an opinion like this was an exception.

Exhibitions of Indies paintings were held in hotel lobbies, in the shop windows of bookshops and photographic shops and at Freemasonry lodges. In the Netherlands, paintings from the Indies were sold during exhibitions in the various art galleries, a phenomenon almost unknown in the Netherlands Indies themselves. The exhibitions in the exhibition rooms of the art societies affiliated to the Association of Netherlands Indies Art Societies were particularly important to the artists and art culture. They were almost exclusively intended for the top levels of colonial society.³⁶ The Javabode reporter wrote the following about the opening of an exhibition by the Association of Fine Artists at the Art Society in 1929: "There is a growing interest in fine art exhibitions. It can be agreed that the opening of a painting exhibition has now turned into an important event in our society life."³⁷ The jubilee exhibition in honour of its 25 years in existence was primarily attended by Batavia's officialdom; even the members failed to turn up in large numbers.³⁸ Yet good turnouts did not always



Soekardji

Javanese Landscape, 1930-1935

oil on canvas, c. 74 x 108 cm

collection Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam

31 Jan H. de Groot, 'Charles Sayers', *Het Korenland, maandblad voor cultuur en jeugdvorming* 9, 3 (March 1932) 56-60.

32 H. van Velthuysen, 'Werk van kunstschilder P. Ouborg: een praatje over moderne kunst', *D'Orient*, nr. 46, 18 November 1933.

33 A.H.C. Briët (1867-1939).

34 Cart (*grobak*) with oxen (*sappies*) pulling it.

35 *Javabode*, 20 April 1921, exhibition by A. Briët at the Art Society.

36 The Netherlands Indies Art Society in Batavia had 737 members and 535 holders of ancillary tickets in December 1927.

37 *Javabode*, 2 March 1929.



Abdullah Suriosubroto

Mountain in the Preanger, c. 1930-1935

oil on canvas, 74.5 x 106 cm

collection Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam

guarantee good sales. If anything was sold at all, it was usually only one or two works. Only a few exhibitions were sometimes so successful that an exhibition intended for showing at all associated art societies only travelled to two towns, since most of the work had been sold by that time. This is what happened to Willem van der Does.³⁹

‘Beautiful Indies’ as Colonial Art

Neither the Dutch government nor the colonial administration made a significant contribution to the artistic climate in the Indies. They had a passive attitude. There was no art education in the Indies, no museum of modern art and with a few exceptions – a commission to paint the portrait of a mayor or governor general – the government was not a client. However, they showed off the work of the ‘Beautiful Indies’ painters at regular intervals during international exhibitions, including the large colonial world exhibitions. Both the Dutch government and the colonial administration were actively involved in the wall paintings and dioramas made especially for these colonial exhibitions. The selection of the themes, their elaboration and the selection of the painters were determined by a committee specially set up for this purpose. A good example is the four large wall paintings painted by Charles Sayers for the Golden Gate International Exhibition in San Francisco in 1939. Sayers was commissioned by the committee that was set up by the Department of Economic Affairs in Batavia. It was the Foreign Trade Information and Propaganda division of this Department in particular that was intensely involved in this exhibition. The four works are entitled *Trade and Traffic*, *Western Cultures*, *Native Agriculture* and *Art and Industry*. These works are entirely in line with the message the government wanted to send out. The Netherlands was improving living conditions in the colonies and projected an image of itself as an important player in the global economy, with products such as sugar, tobacco and oil. The Netherlands Indies painters lobbied assiduously for assignments for these exhibitions and were quick to feel they were being slighted if assignments threatened to be given to painters working in the Netherlands.

The image of the colony shown by the Colonial Museum in Amsterdam, the predecessor to the current Tropical Museum, showed major similarities with the image projected in the large colonial exhibitions. The museum also showed works by Netherlands Indies painters, particularly those by Eland, who, with his dioramas and paintings of rubber and tea plantations, pepper cultivation and the sugar industry, presents the Netherlands Indies as a model colony where great things are being accomplished. In the 1930s Hendrik Paulides (1892-1967) not only delivered large paintings for the world exhibitions in Paris

38 *Javabode* 9 January 192.

39 ‘Expositie Willem van der Does’, *D’Orient*, 24 September 1938.

(1937) and New York (1939), he was also commissioned by the Colonial Institute for a number of wall paintings at the museum and in the reception and office areas. The triptych *Het Oosten, Het Westen* and *De Samenwerking* (Cooperation) created by Paulides in the 'marble hall' of the Colonial Institute, above the entrance of the large auditorium gives a good impression of the image that the institute was aiming for. It is not so surprising that Netherlands Indies paintings from the first half of the twentieth century are to be found primarily in collections of the ethnological museums in the Netherlands. A press release issued by the Colonial Museum, dated 12 June 1937, describes the importance of Netherlands Indies painting as follows: "However much their artistic value may differ, they all form illustrative material of ethnographic importance to accompany the objects that aim to evoke an image of the diversity of the peoples in the Netherlands Indies."⁴⁰

Evaluation of Netherlands Indies Painting

Netherlands Indies painting was ignored for a long time and if attention was paid to it at all, it was mainly done in disparaging terms. This was partly because of the colonial past that people wished to forget as quickly as possible. On the other hand, this art was also dismissed as being too facile, sentimental and narrative. There has been a shift over the last twenty years. It started with the interest shown by wealthy Indonesian collectors, which caused the price of Netherlands Indies paintings to reach unprecedented heights. The increasing interest from within Indonesia also led to growth in the interest of collectors, galleries, auction houses and museums in the Netherlands. Articles were published on Netherlands Indies painting, in addition to monographs on some of the most important painters. A number of museums, including the Tropical Museum, set up exhibitions about this colonial painting.

It is true that Netherlands Indies painting is not innovative or groundbreaking, but how many of the artists working in Europe were? Netherlands Indies painting, as part of the colonial history and as the shared legacy of the Netherlands and Indonesia, deserves a place in the art history of both countries. What is more, Netherlands Indies painting in Indonesia contributed to the creation of its own modern style of painting.

P.A. Regnault's Mission

Sanne Oorthuizen

Pierre Alexandre Regnault (1868-1954) first set foot in the Dutch East Indies in 1913.¹ There he conceived a plan for an overseas expansion of his business in paint brushes, tubes of paint, oils and pigments. However this East Indies import and export company, run by his eldest son, proved in 1919 to have been built on shaky foundations. Regnault, who was an experienced trader, soon took action and decided to start producing paint in the East Indies – the first to do this. This turned out to be a major success after a somewhat difficult start and there were soon branches of 'P.A. Regnault's Paint, Ink and Can Factories' in Batavia, Semarang and Singapore in addition to the original factory in Surabaya.

At the turn of the century, Regnault had already shown himself to be a passionate art collector. He sought the company of artists who provided him with advice and new insights. Accordingly, he began investing the money he earned from his East Indies operations in his art collection. Whereas before the First World War Regnault was mainly interested in the painters of the Hague School, in the period between the wars he turned to the avant-garde, buying works by artists such as Van Gogh, Van Dongen, Chagall, Gauguin and Soutine. He said: "Exploration is of more value than imitation; the pioneers are more important than the disciples." His French background meant that the collection had a strong focus on the artists of the École de Paris. He had also become interested in the use of colour due to years of experience in the paint business. "I do not care whether a painting is abstract or figurative; all I care about is the expressiveness of the colour."

Regnault regularly loaned works of art to other parties, primarily to the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. Part of his art collection was also shown in five exhibitions held between 1935 and 1940 at the Batavian Art Society in the Dutch East Indies. The work of the modern masters shocked the visitors, who often had never come across modern 'Western' art before. The Regnault collection was in direct contrast to the dominant Beautiful Indies style with its conservative, commercial character. The reactions were therefore not very positive.

Regnault was attempting to carry out an educational mission with his 'loan museum' in Batavia. Not only did he want to generate more appreciation for the avant-garde in general, he also tried to bring Western art to the East Indies. Catalogues were therefore published with explanatory notes by the curator in Batavia, Jeanne de Loos-Haaxman, and Regnault himself. In addition, 1932 saw the first edition of *Verf en Kunst*, a brochure advertising Regnault's East Indies paint factories in which he also revealed his ideas about modern art. He felt that looking at art was more important than reading about it. "Reflections on art have merely a limited educational value; the only way to learn to appreciate the new is to look at it and look at it repeatedly."

¹ This text is based on: Caroline Roodenburg-Schadd, 'Goed modern werk': collection Regnault in Het Stedelijk (Zwolle: Waanders, 1995).

Exhibiting his collection in the Dutch East Indies was not without risk, but this did not stop Regnault from sending his works of art overseas. For example, in 1934 one of his paintings, a Gauguin, was affected by 'an airy mould, as much as 4 to 5 cm thick' due to the poor climatological conditions. However, Regnault had it removed when the painting returned to Amsterdam and did not hesitate to start preparations for the next exhibition.

In the end, Regnault's mission can best be summarised in the words he himself wrote to De Loos-Haaxman during the Japanese occupation: "Should we have the chance to carry on with our work again, the chapter we started could easily turn out to be a milestone on the road of East Indies art history." Indeed, P.A. Regnault's collection was to be a source of inspiration for nationalist artists who, in the mid-twentieth century, were to reject the Beautiful Indies style of the colonial occupiers and create a new, independent, Indonesian art movement.

The East Indies and Surrealism

Koos van Brakel

Surrealism in Indonesia will always be linked to the name Piet Ouborg (1893-1956). He introduced surrealist painting to Indonesia, adding numerous traditional motifs from the East Indies. Initially, surrealism was primarily a literary movement; the founding father was André Breton (1896-1966), whose *Manifeste du surréalisme* in 1924 marked the start of the movement. The surrealists based their ideas on the psychological theories and study of dreams by Sigmund Freud (1856-1939). Furthermore, Breton's manifesto was mainly a call for freedom for the human spirit and a clear reaction to the horrors of the First World War. Surrealism developed in two directions. The figurative surrealists, who included Max Ernst (1891-1976) and René Magritte (1898-1967), worked within the symbolist tradition; using tremendous detail, they created strange images by combining elements from dreams and the real world to give a highly alienating effect. In contrast to the figurative surrealists, the abstract surrealists like Joan Miró (1893-1983) and André Masson (1896-1987) thought that you should not assign meaning to images from the subconscious and that abstraction was the only way to give such images form.

Piet Ouborg was the pioneer of surrealism in the Dutch East Indies. He was born in the Netherlands and went to the East Indies in 1916, where he became a teacher. He was familiar with the work of the surrealist artists from the magazines *Cahiers d'Art* and *Minotaure* that he used to read. When he was on leave in the Netherlands in 1931, he visited the exhibition 'L' Art Vivant en Europe' in the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels. Here for the first time he saw works by artists – Miró, Ernst, Masson and many others – that he had up to then only seen as reproductions in art magazines. They made a huge impression on him and he immediately saw the possibilities for his own artistic development. Once back in the East Indies, Ouborg began initially to paint in an abstract surrealist style. He also made a large number of 'automatic' drawings, created without being controlled by reason and without an aim in mind. His work came closer to the figurative surrealists in the period from 1934 to his departure from the East Indies in 1938. He painted collections and 'still life' paintings of all kinds of strange articles and objects from reality. These works exude an alienating atmosphere and frequently have erotic elements. Ouborg's surrealism was strongly influenced and fed by the art (in particular the masks) and the religion and rituals of the different peoples of the East Indies. He once said himself that Indonesia encouraged the unconscious.¹

Another artist who incorporated surrealist elements into his paintings was Adolf Breetvelt (1892-1975), who settled in the Dutch East Indies in 1920 to teach drawing. He turned to surrealism in his final years in the East Indies, prior to his departure for the Netherlands in July 1937, probably as a result of his

¹ Piet Ouborg, 'Over het onderbewuste in de kunst, mede in verband met eigen werk', in: *Het masker als intermediair* (The Hague: Stichting Heden, 2008).



contacts with Ouborg. He painted surreal landscapes with trees growing like colonies of coral and often containing a female nude. Masks played an important role in his work as well.

The surrealism of Ouborg and Breetvelt was not really taken up by others. They themselves left the East Indies in 1938 and 1937 respectively. The next generation of Indonesian painters tended at first to go for a realist or expressionist style in order to achieve innovation in painting. It was only later, with the rise of the meta-realism movement in the 1970s, that surrealist tendencies such as the emphasis on the unconscious and dream worlds were once again given a place in Indonesian art.

Dolf Breetvelt

Surrealistic scene with woman's torso,
1936-1937

oil on canvas, 88 x 113 cm

collection of the estate of A. Breetvelt

A Subversive Understanding of 'Seni'

Jim Supangkat

How do issues of language and etymology reflect cultural similarities, differences, and changes, especially when it comes to the comparison of Western European/North American and Indonesian visual arts, as explained by their distinct cultural and historical backgrounds? And how might these linguistic differences still affect the current interpretation and development of visual arts in Indonesia and the 'Western' art world?

Regardless, every society in the world has its own perception and its own terms for art. Today's art (identified by Hans Belting as *global art*) is in some ways related to the understanding of art developed in the modern art era. This understanding, known through the term 'art' in English, reflected the concept of 'high art' drawn from Western thinking on art in the nineteenth century. From this point of view, artistic expression in visual forms, identified as fine art, is more significant than other kinds of artistic expression. Whether or not this particular understanding of art is clearly accepted throughout the world, it has been taken for granted as the common, worldwide definition of art. Due to the spread of this definition, contemporary art (in reaction to modern art tenets) is understood throughout the world and has become – as Hans Belting argued – a global art phenomenon.

The concept of 'high art' in today's art world (*global art*) has rapidly lost its influence, reflecting the increasing criticism of modernism. One result has been the development of various concepts of 'contemporary art'. Another

result is the inclination to replace the term 'fine art' with 'visual art'. These changes, however, concern only the canon of artistic expression – they criticised the prominence of paintings, sculptures and prints. The relationship between artistic expression in visual form and other kinds of artistic expression in these discourses is left aside. Consequently, we could conclude that the perception of art has not shifted much, regardless of the changes.

Meanwhile, the Wikipedia definition of art, which is taken from outside the discourse on art, has a wider scope: 'The process or product of deliberately arranging elements in a way that appeals to the senses or emotions. It encompasses a diverse range of human activities, creations and modes of expression, including music and literature. The meaning of art is explored in a branch of philosophy known as aesthetics.' Here, visual art and other kinds of artistic expression are related.

The term 'seni' in the Indonesian language has a meaning that is close to the Wikipedia definition of art. However, this meaning has never resulted in a clear understanding in the practice of art in Indonesia, because the meaning has been dominated by the term 'art'. In the Indonesian art world, the terms 'international art', 'modern art', 'world art', and 'contemporary art' are translated as 'seni rupa internasional', 'seni rupa modern', 'seni rupa dunia', and 'seni rupa kontemporer' – note here that the term 'art' is taken as being equivalent to the term 'seni rupa'. 'Seni rupa' literally means 'visual art'; as 'rupa' can be understood as being equivalent to 'visual'.

However, translators, whose concerns tend to lie within the linguistic sphere, will be inclined to translate these terms using the single word 'seni' instead of 'seni rupa' – thus 'seni internasional', 'seni modern', 'seni dunia', and 'seni kontemporer'. In this case, 'art' is taken as the equivalent to 'seni'. In both cases, the translations are fine. There is nothing wrong with them, because 'art' can indeed be understood as either 'seni' or 'seni rupa'. Therefore, there are two Indonesian terms for the single English term of 'art'. But the Indonesian terms of 'seni' and 'seni rupa' actually have a different definition. Conversely, books in English never contain a footnote explaining the true equivalent of the term 'art' in Indonesian – 'seni', or 'seni rupa'.

In the Indonesian art world, and especially in the art academies, efforts are afoot to neutralise the confusion by holding onto the definition for the term 'art' itself and ignoring the meanings encompassed by the terms 'seni' and 'seni rupa'. The reasoning to support this holds that the term 'art' has been supported by a long series of references that have become a body of universal knowledge of sorts. On the other side, there is a meagre understanding of the terms 'seni' and 'seni rupa', as their meaning has been given little thought. They are reduced to mere lexical definitions that are too simple to be raised to the level of discourse.

The efforts to hold onto the definition for the term 'art', however, is proving to be futile as it has not been easy to grasp what the term 'art' really means. The term garners its meaning through an intricate construct of discourses which can only be properly recognised in the West. No matter how precisely the Indonesian academics analyse and go through these references, it would never be enough to create an understanding that is equal to that which has been forged in Europe and the United States. Their understanding of the term 'art', therefore, will only ever be half-baked. But even such an understanding of the term would not be adequate to conquer the confu-

sion, because the understanding of the terms 'seni' and 'seni rupa' remains a subversive one. The dominant use of the Indonesian language in the discussions on art – including the discussions on art in the art academies – makes a proper understanding of these two terms highly relevant. As a result, a form of dualism takes shape, without anyone being fully aware of it. In the world of Indonesian art, such dualism hampers pure discussions and analyses.

Reconfirming Difference: linguistic analysis

In order to understand the domination of the term 'art' over 'seni' and 'seni rupa,' one needs to delineate how fundamental the difference is between the terms 'art', on the one hand, and 'seni' and 'seni rupa', on the other. This may first and foremost be confirmed by means of linguistic analysis. Linguistic analysis here serves as a specific tool to develop a more general cultural analysis; the linguistic analysis of these specific words is being pursued in order to pinpoint both subtle and major cultural differences in the experience and interpretation of art.

Linguistically, the English term 'art' indicates an almost absolute 'nounish' phenomenon. The term 'art' is invariably used as a noun and it always occupies the position of the subject in phrases. This shows that art is considered as an intrinsic part of an artwork (as it carries the nounish property) and can be most obviously identified in works of art (as they are concrete objects).¹ This is indicative of the perception which sees (visual) art as higher than other forms of art and views it as the standard by which all other art forms are measured. In such a perception, the term 'art' has a double meaning, i.e. in the sense as the fundamental matter in art ('seni' in Indonesian language) and a form of artistic expression ('seni rupa' in the Indonesian language).²

The Indonesian term of 'seni' is also known as a noun. Linguistically however, this noun can be interpreted differently – especially in the context of the group of phrases that uses the root word of 'seni'. Linguistic analyses would recognise that the phrase 'seni rupa' consists of two words, 'seni' (literally: art) and 'rupa' (literally: visual). The word 'seni' in this phrase is a noun occupying the position of the subject (linguistically, it would be defined as the 'head'). Meanwhile, the word 'rupa' modifies the subject and occupies a lower position (linguistically, it is called the modifier). In linguistic studies, the modifier 'rupa' can be considered as an adjective that modifies the noun. It can also be regarded an adverbial, i.e. a part of speech that modifies any other part of speech, apart from a noun. If one considers the word 'rupa' as an adjectival (the adjective that modifies the noun 'seni'), then the phrase 'seni rupa' can be interpreted as having the same meaning as the English phrase 'visual art'. This matches with the most generally accepted meaning of art as an artistic expression in visual form. In the world of art today, the term 'fine art' is also being replaced by 'visual art', whose meaning parallels that of the term 'seni rupa'.³

We can analyse the word 'rupa' further by viewing it as an adverbial. In its relation to the word 'seni,' the word 'rupa' lies on the same level as other adverbs such as the noun-adverb of 'dance' (in 'seni tari' or the art of dance), 'music', 'theatre' (in 'seni teater' or the art of the theatre), and 'literature', as well as the adverbial verbs such as 'melukis' or painting (in 'seni [me]lukis' or the art of painting), 'bercinta' or love-making (in 'seni bercinta' or the art of

1 Denis Dutton, 'But they don't have our concept of art', in: Noël Carroll (ed.), *Theories of Art Today* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000) esp. 225.

2 Thomas Munro, 'On the nature of the visual arts', in: Philip Alperson (ed.), *The Philosophy of the Visual Arts* (New York etc.: Oxford University Press, 1992) 15-23.

3 Ibidem.

love-making), and 'mengukir' or carving (in 'seni [meng]ukir' or the art of carving or sculpting). The equal positions of these adverbials indicate a perception that views visual art as equal to other forms of art, such as dance, music, and even the much less 'artistic' art of making love. 'Seni rupa' or visual art is simply a specific form of artistic expression and not a highly qualified standard by which artistic expressions are measured, unlike what the term 'art' implies. 'Seni rupa' or visual art may even be considered as having the same position as 'seni memasak' or the art of cooking. Meanwhile, the English word 'art' in such phrases as 'the art of cooking' or 'the art of love' is never considered as designating the practice of an art.

Such linguistic analysis indicates that the term 'seni' is an abstract noun that implies a general 'sensitivity' or sensory quality of a human's mental condition. Seen in this light, art is formless and only finds shape after it is expressed, not necessarily only as an art object but also as a general sensory expression. This kind of sensitivity also leaves traces in various prosaic activities such as cooking or love-making. It is this basic sensitivity that serves as the standard for all artistic expression as well as for the work and activities that produce outstanding results. From such linguistic analyses, the differences between the meanings of 'art', on the one side, and the meanings of 'seni' and 'seni rupa', on the other, can be seen more clearly.

This might seem to be only a slight linguistic difference, which lies in the distinct interpretation of the word 'seni'. The impact, however, is significant. The distinction between the respective meanings of 'seni' and 'art' goes far beyond the differences between the Western culture and the (ethnic) Indonesian culture, because the term 'seni', as seen from an historical perspective, is simply unknown to the ethnic cultures in Indonesia. The Indonesian terms of 'seni' and 'seni rupa' do not originate from one of the dialects in the Indonesian archipelago. In approximately five hundred dialects spoken by close to three hundred ethnic groups in the archipelago, there are no equal terms for either 'seni' or 'seni rupa'. In other words, ethnic cultures in the Indonesian archipelago have no indigenous concepts of 'seni' and 'seni rupa'.

The Origin of Bahasa Indonesia

The Indonesian language is a modern language that was developed in the early twentieth century on the basis of a version of classical Malay of the Riau-Johor Sultanate. Bahasa Indonesia was proclaimed as the official Indonesian language in 1928 along with the manifesto that declared Indonesia as a nation (known as Sumpah Pemuda, the Youth Pledge) at the second Indonesian youth Congress in 1928, years before Indonesia proclaimed its independence in 1945. Although it originated from the Malay language, the Indonesian language cannot be viewed as a dialect that evolved gradually and which was eventually adopted as the national language. The Malay language was deliberately chosen as the basis for the Indonesian language as it had been the common language – the lingua franca – in the archipelago and the surrounding region prior to the colonial period. This is why the Malay language constantly mixed with local languages such as Javanese, Sundanese, Balinese and even Chinese dialects. In its later development the language also included loan words from the Portuguese and Dutch.

The term 'seni' originated from the Malay language. In its adoption, however, the term was ascribed other meanings. In Malay, the word 'seni' originally meant 'fine' or 'small'. The phrase 'air seni', which literally means 'minor water' but actually means 'urine', illustrates this original usage of the word. Due to the fact that the terms 'seni' and 'seni rupa' did not originate from one of the ethnic languages in the Indonesian archipelago, the historical analysis of the genealogy of both terms cannot be made by observing artistic expressions within those ethnic cultures in Indonesia. Because the terms 'seni' and 'seni rupa' arose in the modern Indonesian language, the genealogy of both terms is inevitably interlinked with Indonesia as a modern nation, in which local cultures occupy a peripheral position. Therefore, it can be said that historical, cultural and linguistic fragmentation prevents us from connecting the merely contemporary interpretation of 'art' to the original, indigenous culture of ethnic groups in Indonesia.

The Origin of Indonesia as a Nation

The Republic of Indonesia has inherited its administrative unity from the colonial occupation. The Indonesian nation does not have its origin in a certain race or ethnic group. The Indonesian state was formed during the colonial period based on modern political principles and organisations in which the racial and cultural boundaries between originally separate ethnic groups were eliminated, first and foremost in the realm of ideas. The subsequent concept of an independent, unified Indonesian nation took shape during a century-long process that involved a transformed outlook on social relations, culture and politics in the archipelago. This process was intertwined with the confrontation between the colonial and native societies. The development of modern thinking can therefore not be separated from thoughts about humanity, religious tensions, cultural differences, as well as rights and welfare. The idea of nationalism became the umbrella under which all those simmering issues were gathered together.

The idea of Indonesia was born amid the so-called mestizo society, out of a myriad of cultural translations that had been taking place since the nineteenth century. Taken in its broad sense, mestizo society consisted of educated natives, Dutch colonial circles, and the off-spring of Dutch colonists or immigrants and indigenous mothers. With the expansion of colonial society, the mestizo community also grew, especially on Java, and became a hotbed of social action. In that community modern ideas fomented from the mid-1800s on. One of its markers was the founding of radical newspapers, such as *De Locomotief* in 1863 and the founding of pressure groups and welfare societies. The awareness of a civil society prompted this urban community to reject the monopoly of the Dutch government in all matters in the colony and the siphoning off of all financial gains to the Netherlands. In the decades to follow, several organisations were founded which advocated more rights to the peoples in the East Indies, such as education, freedom of expression and organisation, and a greater financial autonomy. Most of these demands were acknowledged following Queen Wilhelmina's famous speech to parliament in 1901 that expressed concern about the civil rights in the colony.

The Dutch government then adopted the principle of 'ethical policy' (*ethische politiek*), which acknowledged the responsibility of the colonial administration to develop the country and its inhabitants. However, the advent of politics in the colony triggered the awareness among the indigenous Indonesians of their rights as a people. This awareness developed even stronger when a growing number of educated natives from various places in Indonesia – especially from the islands of Sumatra, Sulawesi, Bali and the Moluccas – came to Java, the only place where higher education was available, and developed concepts of an independent Indonesia that crossed the boundaries of local languages and culture. It was in this group of educated natives that the concept of Indonesia took shape in the early decades of the twentieth century and gave rise to the fight for the right to independence.

The seething development in mestizo society in the East Indies revealed symptoms of cultural translations, which generated a completely novel understanding of civil society among the natives; a new concept of Indonesia.

The Genealogy of 'seni' and 'seni rupa'

One of the early signs of the establishment of a mestizo society was the emergence of a classical Javanese culture in the early nineteenth century. This culture could not be considered as entirely Javanese, as it was not the outcome of an organic, linear development. Rather, it had been formed by the Javanese nobility, Dutch experts on Javanese culture and the colonial government. It thus carried the various symptoms of cultural translation.

In this mestizo culture of the classical Java, one could find the term 'kagunan', which was indicative of the emergence of ideas concerning art. The term can be found in the dictionary of high Javanese, *Baoesastra Djawa*.⁴ The existence of the term 'kagunan' showed that, indeed, a process of cultural translation had taken place, as such a term was nowhere to be found in the older Javanese texts. The term was more closely related to Western ideas concerning art than to other older terms. Its appearance indicated the emergence of modern ideas in Indonesian culture. It is important to notice that these modern ideas were already known and expressed in Indonesia in the nineteenth century, at the same time when the West was establishing the bases for 'modern' concepts and ideas.

One cannot be certain about when the term 'kagunan' precisely arose. So far, no historical studies or linguistic research have been conducted into the term. It is possible, however, that the term 'kagunan' came into being during the development of the Instituut voor de Javaansche Taal (The Institute for the Javanese Language), established in Surakarta in 1832. In 1842, the institute was taken under the wing of the Koninklijke Akademie (Royal Academy), a training college for colonial administrators in Delft in the Netherlands, and subsequently the University of Leiden.⁵ Whatever the role of the Institute for the Javanese Language, it is very possible that the term 'kagunan' arose in the early or mid nineteenth century. It should be noted that the term 'kagunan' can be found in the book *Pustaka Purwa Raja* (Book of Kings) by the Javanese bard Ronggowarsito (1802-1873).⁶

History shows that the formation of the term 'kagunan' took place almost simultaneously with the development of the new meaning for the English term

⁴ *Baoesastra Djawa*. Th. Pigeaud et al. (ed.) (Groningen: Wolters, 1939). W.J.S. Poerwadarminta, who put together the *Kamus umum Bahasa Indonesia* (the General dictionary of the Indonesian language, which appeared for the first time in 1952), was one of the authors of the high-Javanese dictionary.

⁵ J.B. Kristanto (ed.), *Seribu tahun Nusantara* (Jakarta: Kompas, 2000).

⁶ See <http://www.jawapalace.org/ronggowarsito.html>

'art', away from its original meaning of skill and mastery, towards the aesthetics of a romantic, individual expression. The earlier basis for the Western term 'art' had been the concept of fine art or high art in the writing of such philosophers as G.W.F Hegel, Immanuel Kant, Max Scheler and Arthur Schopenhauer at the end of the eighteenth century. It was only in the early nineteenth century that their thinking spread and became known as the concept of 'high art'.⁷

Interestingly enough, the root word for the term 'kagunan' had been the word 'guna', which means 'something useful' or something related to skills. In *Baoesastra Jawa*, the word 'guna' is listed as having the meaning of character, skill, advantage, or useful result. *Baoesastra Jawa* (1939) notes that the term meant: (1) intelligence; (2) useful capacity; (3) the development of the mind by expressing the sense of beauty.⁸ The term 'kagunan' was thus not influenced by the modern meaning of the term 'art', nor was it affected by the Western concept of 'high art'.

One can immediately sense that the terms 'art' and 'kagunan' were distinct from each other. 'Art' focused more and more on the aspect of reflections (i.e. the expression of a free individual), which was far removed from daily activities or functional applications. Meanwhile, in the formulation of the term 'kagunan', the emphasis was more on the functional aspect rather than on the reflective aspect. In the meanings ascribed to the term 'kagunan', the practice of art and work in day-to-day living were not clearly distinguished.

The third definition of the term 'kagunan' – 'the development of the mind through the sense of beauty' – can be interpreted as an interaction between the mind (intellect) and the sense of beauty. In Javanese philosophy – and in the philosophy of most other ethnic cultures in the archipelago – such interaction indicates efforts to seek wisdom, which is related to morality and the noble values held by a society. Instead of focusing on the aesthetics of the individual expression as developed in the West, these connotations underline the importance of cultural expressions as the result of the strong and cohesive morality of Javanese culture. Such local influences indicate the major differences between the terms 'kagunan' and 'art'.

The Relationship Between 'seni' and 'kagunan'

When the Indonesian language was born in the beginning of the twentieth century, the term 'seni' took on the original meaning of the word 'kagunan'. There was almost no other possibility, because the term 'seni' had no equivalent terms in any other language in the Indonesian archipelago – including the Malay language. One can therefore be quite certain that the term 'kagunan' was the only reference for the word 'seni'. Linguistic studies of terms containing the root word of 'seni' – 'kesenian' (the arts), 'seni rupa' (visual art), 'seni tari' (dance), 'seni musik' (music), 'seni sastra' (literature) – also firmly indicate that the term 'seni' has its origin in the term 'kagunan'. Linguistically, the word 'seni' is an abstract noun whose meaning indicates sensibility and formlessness, and implies that 'seni' will only take shape when it serves as a basis for expressions. Just as the term 'kagunan' before it, the fundamental understanding of the word 'seni' had, at the time, not yet been influenced by the Western concept of 'high art'.

⁷ Thomas Munro, *The Arts and Their Interrelations* (London: The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1969) 26-46.

⁸ (1) Kapinteran; (2) Jejasan ingkang adhipeni; (3) Wudaring pambudi nganakake kaendahan (gegambaran, kidung, ngukir-ukir).

More recent definitions of 'seni' in the Indonesian dictionaries show a significant difference from the early use of the word. It suggests that the definition of this term in the dictionary has been influenced by the Western concept of 'high art'. The dictionary shows two definitions for the term 'seni', one of which indicates its close relationship with the original term 'kagunan', while the other refers to the modern influence of the concept of 'high art'. The first definition describes how 'seni' pertains to 'the skill to create something beautiful', which can be interpreted as having the mental capacity to express beauty. The other definition says that 'seni' is 'a work that has been produced (or made) with remarkable skills'. Despite these major differences in linguistic interpretation, the link between the terms 'art' and 'seni' has never been investigated.

Redefinition

Merely considering the current definition of 'seni' and ignoring its genealogy will not prompt anyone to link it to the term 'kagunan', and even less to consider the original meanings of art in Indonesian culture. Instead, the multiple definitions of 'seni' create confusion in the understanding and perception of art in Indonesia. In the twentieth century, Indonesia has suffered long enough from domination by the modern, 'Western' world. Even the remarkable dichotomy between 'seni' and 'art' merely serves to confirm the 'obligation' for Indonesian artists to follow the Western standard as expressed in the international definition of the term 'art'. This obligation however is now fading, as modernism saw its decline at the end of the twentieth century. With Western modernism facing its end, contemporary art discourse questions the universal concept of 'fine art' and its influence all over the world, in the South, East, North and the West.

The demise of modernism makes it possible that the confusing definition of the term 'seni' will be abolished. The definition of 'seni' should go back to and be replaced by the original definition of 'seni' as something closely related to the understanding of the original term 'kagunan'. Thus, 'seni' would be reconfirmed as a genuine Indonesian concept of art. It would be a logical step, because the understanding of the term 'kagunan' has never really disappeared, not even in the expression of contemporary Indonesian artists.

Therefore I propose that the current definition of the term 'seni', which shows the influence of the concept of High Art, should be taken out of the dictionary. Instead, I would like to suggest the following definition, which carries a genuine indigenous genealogy and thus respects the origin of art in Indonesia: 'seni' is, in the true terms of 'kagunan', 'development of the mind by expressing the sense of beauty'. This definition reinforces the link between 'seni' and contemplation, proving that 'seni' is not merely about forms of beauty that trigger a feeling of happiness due to visual aesthetics, but that it also reflects the moral esteem and spiritual development that are deeply embedded in Indonesian art and culture.

Javanese Wayang

Pim Westerkamp

The oldest form of wayang is the shadow theatre, *wayang kulit*: flat leather puppets that perform against a screen lit from behind. Later, other kinds of puppet shows came into being with round wooden puppets (*wayang golek*) and flat wooden puppets (*wayang klitik*), which are used without a screen. There are also wayang variants with actors: the *wayang orang* with unmasked dancers and *wayang topeng* with masked dancers. Finally, the rarest variant is *wayang beber*, where the stories are illustrated on a long roll that the storyteller constantly keeps turning.

The puppet show is accompanied by music from a gamelan orchestra, an ensemble consisting primarily of percussion instruments such as gongs and xylophones. One or two string instruments and wind instruments plus singing make the music complete. The orchestra is conducted by a *dalang*, who is also the storyteller for the performance. He tells the story along fixed lines in an archaic form of Javanese. Not everyone understands this language, but that does not matter. The characters can always be recognised from their appearance and everyone is familiar with the stories. Clown-like servants perform during the intervals, giving a commentary on the story and criticising society. They speak comprehensible, modern-day Javanese.

The oldest wayang stories come from India and include the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Scenes from the Ramayana can be found in portrayals as early as the reliefs in the ninth-century Prambanan temple complex in Central Java. References to shadow play performances are slightly more recent. We also know that local stories were performed. Thus in the eleventh century Javanese stories started to appear, such as the story concerning Prince Panji and that concerning the grass-cutter Damar Wulan. In all these stories noble princes, symbolising Good, engage forces of evil, demonic characters.

The wayang repertoire, the performance methods and the appearance of the characters have been constantly subject to minor changes over the centuries. For example, there were changes to the wayang following the advent of Muslim princedoms on Java from the sixteenth century onwards. The wayang puppets became increasingly stylised in reaction to the ban, although controversial, on representing humans and the stories started to propagate Islamic values and standards. The Indonesian fight for independence produced the *wayang perjuangan*, which portrayed the fight against the Dutch. Later on, puppeteers created new variants of wayang with new characters or new stories. Ki Enthus Susmono (1966) from Tegal is a controversial innovator who incorporates film and comic characters in his wayang, tells his stories in a way different to the past and has introduced modern (gamelan) music.

Contemporary artists such as Heri Dono and Eko Nugroho sometimes use the wayang tradition in their art. Both have created new sets of wayang



puppets that are closely connected with their work. They use them in performances commenting on modern life. This keeps wayang in touch with the community and shows how it continues to develop. In this way wayang, which was in danger of disappearing amongst the tumult of television, computers, PlayStations and other modern forms of entertainment, has found a way of engaging a new public.

Wajang Golek puppet

A caricature of Ki Enthus Susmono, 2004
courtesy Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam



Raden Saleh

Portrait (Possibly a Self-Portrait) of Raden Sarief Bastaman Saleh, c. 1840



Mas Pirngadi

Self-Portrait, 1930



Jan Toorop

The Three Brides, 1893



Leonardus Eland

Planting of Rice, undated

Wakidi

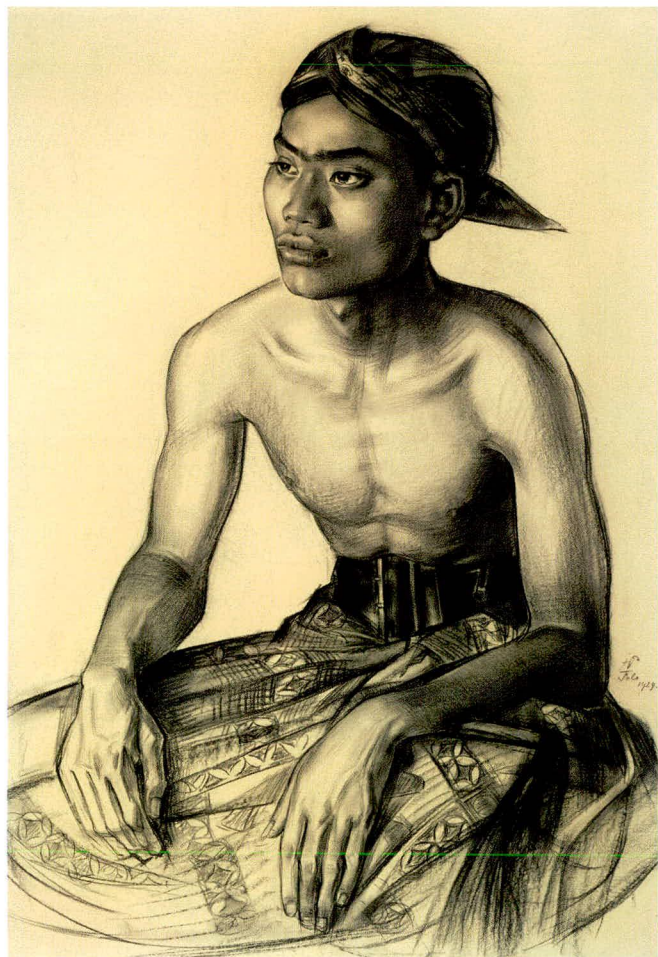
Family House, undated





Johannes ten Klooster

Dancers with Gamelan Orchestra, c. 1922



Hendrik Paulides

Young Javanese Man from Solo, 1929

Jan Frank Niemandverdiert

Bullock Cart on Java, undated

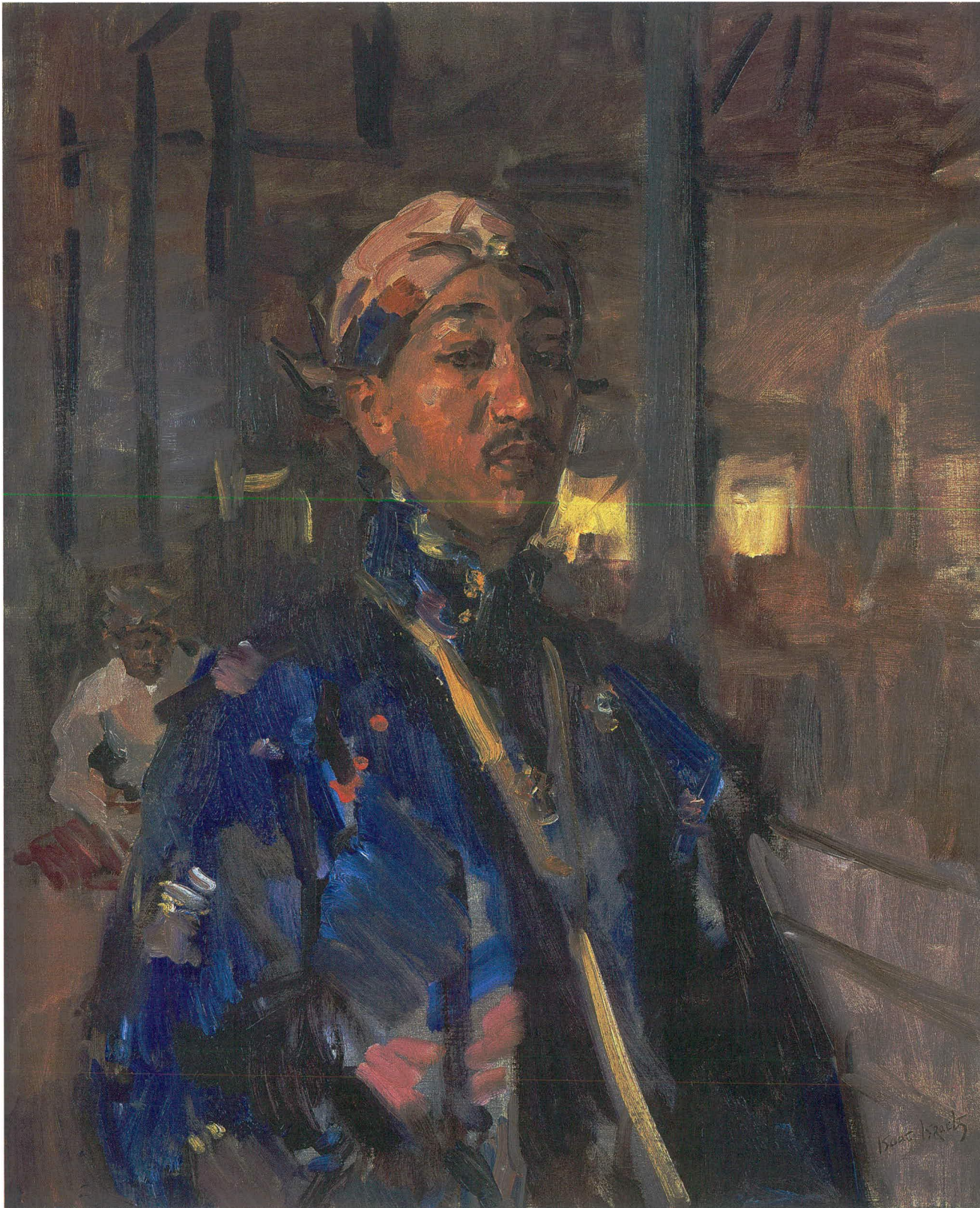




Willem Dooyewaard
Woman Selling Fruits, 1922

Isaac Israëls

**Portrait of the Javanese Prince, Sultan
of Mangkoenegara: Pangeran Adipati
Ario Praboe Mangkoenegara VII, 1922**



PART TWO – DECOLONISATION AND INDEPENDENCE

In Search of Freedom

Remco Raben

Indonesian independence was an event of epic proportions that not only left deep traces in Indonesian art but also fundamentally affected its development. The battle for the freedom of Indonesia unleashed a fieriness that was unprecedented. Political aspirations and dreams also determined the debate about the nature and direction of Indonesian art, which was very hard to consider separately from the political upheavals that had been taking place since the late nineteen thirties.

Art between the thirties and fifties offered a fine illustration of the available political and artistic options in the period of 'long decolonisation'. This period not only shows how painters embraced the Indonesian nation and contributed to the revolution and the idea of Indonesian freedom through their paintings, but also how they tried to express themselves as artists and how they looked for a visual language of their own. Although politics and art were closely related to one another, the developments in art history can only really be gauged if we consider them in terms of a long drawn-out search for individual styles and techniques that covered several decades and was more personal than political for most of them. The painters mirrored their time, not because of their strictly nationalist messages but because of their urge to experiment. In the decades between the thirties and fifties, there was therefore no single path that led to modern Indonesian painting. Although the painters' paths frequently crossed, most of them followed individual routes, with very different results.

The Proclamation of Indonesian Art

From the thirties onwards, Indonesian painting was characterised by 'emancipation' in every respect. During those years, the art world in Indonesia began to ferment, although still carefully and on the sidelines. The first abstract European works of art were exhibited in the East Indies in these years and alliances were formed between young Indonesian artists who were looking for their own 'modern' style. This 'fermentation' in the art world was a sign of the times. Indonesians began to organise themselves in all sorts of fields and were searching for individual paths to take in the modern world.

Almost any painter of the generation that began painting during the twenties and thirties came from the new Indonesian middle class, grew up in an urban environment, received a Western-style education and wanted to embrace modern life (whatever that might be). Many were children of civil servants and had the opportunity to attend the Hollandsch-Inlandsche School (HIS, Dutch-Native School) and sometimes even the MULO (Advanced Elementary School) or AMS (General Girls' School). The father of Affandi (1907-1990) was a general foreman at a sugar factory; Agus Djaya (Raden Agus Djayasuminta, 1913-1990) came from a civil servant's family; Hendra Gunawan (1918-1983) was the son of a railway official; Sudjana Kerton (1922-1994) was the son of a bank employee in Bandung. Sindudarsono Sudjojono (1913-1986) came from a somewhat more modest background: he was born in North Sumatra as the child of a Javanese contract worker who had worked his way up to become a nurse, but Sudjojono grew up under the charge of a teacher. Only the children from this social class felt attracted to the life of a modern artist.

Artists came together and founded associations, as was the case in other social fields. The first organisation of Indonesian painters was perhaps the *Kelompok Lima Bandung*, which also included Hendra Gunawan, Affandi, Sudarso, Wahdi Sumanta and Barli Sasmitawinata as its members. A little later, young artists in Batavia started to organise themselves as well. This was where Sudjojono and Agus Djaya gathered together a group of painters as the *Persagi* (*Persatoean Ahli Gambar Indonesia*, Association of Indonesian Artists) in 1938. The association was founded as an attempt to bundle the forces of artists who were just starting out and to develop ideas for a new Indonesian art of painting. It was not a particularly close community. The roughly twenty members of the association only met irregularly. They tried to develop their style by learning from each other and by discussing their work. The first public manifestation was held at Kolff's bookshop in Batavia, where Persagi set up an exhibition at its own expense. After an earlier rejection, in May 1941 the group held its first exhibition at the Batavia Art Society, the bastion of art-loving colonials. Half the exhibited works were by the chairman of Persagi, Agus Djaya.

Yet it was not Agus Djaya but Sudjojono who presented himself as the ideologist of Persagi and the first generation of Indonesian painters, and as such became vital to the image of the arts during this phase of development. Sudjojono's article '*Kesenian meloekis di Indonesia, sekarang dan jang akan datang*' (Art in Indonesia, now and in the future) of 1939 is often cited as being the 'birth certificate' of modern Indonesian painting. Sudjojono criticised the smooth portrayals of landscape painting that were common in the colonial period. He called for artists to break away from the sugary style of 'Beautiful Indies' painting and develop a new Indonesian art of painting that was closer to the

everyday reality of Indonesians. He searched for life, Indonesian life. He urged young painters to portray everyday life, but also modern society: "The sugar factories and the starving peasants, the cars of the rich and the trousers of the children. (...) That is what our situation is. That is what our reality is."¹ His plea was for *kebenaran*, which means both truth and honesty: loyalty to reality, but also loyalty to conscience; realism as a political act.

Art historians usually project the ideals of Persagi and Sudjojono onto the entire generation of painters who emerged in the thirties and forties. Persagi, and Sudjojono's programme in particular, had a strong influence on our image of Indonesian art history. Sudjojono's manifesto can be considered a proclamation of independent Indonesian fine art, and was of course also intended as such. However, the significance of Sudjojono's words was strongly influenced by events that would only take place later: the downfall of the colonial government, Indonesian independence and the activities of the painters' studios in the revolutionary period.² However, Sudjojono's programme was not just an artistic appendage of the Indonesian revolution. Above all, he expressed the need of a generation to renovate itself, to embrace modern life. Since they considered the West the source of modernity, they felt the need to acquire modern knowledge and techniques, but with the objective of creating a new Indonesia.

Persagi was more a bundling of very different forces than a close group of artists with a coherent political and artistic agenda. Many painters who associated themselves with Persagi had only had elementary drawing lessons. It was their dilettantism, their urge to develop an individual style of painting, and their marginal position in the art world of that time that created a bond between them. Although the group offered a contrast to the prevalent style of sugary landscapes, the Persagi artists did mainly work in a realistic mode. After all, that was the style that dominated the rudimentary art education that they received. Having no academic schooling and not much money, they searched for their subjects close to home: street images, folklore, portraits.

Most of them were not entirely self-taught. Almost all the artists had received some kind of schooling. Sudjojono had taken drawing lessons at the teacher-training college in Lembang before the war and private lessons from the landscape painter Mas Pirngadi and the Japanese impressionist Yazaki Chiyoji, who had visited Java for a few months. Hendra Gunawan had taken lessons from Bandung artists such as the established 'Beautiful Indies' painter Abdullah Suriosubroto. Agus Djaya followed a course at the Batavia Art Society and became an art teacher himself. Only Basuki Abdullah, Abdullah Suriosubroto's son, had been educated at the art academy in The Hague for a number of years during the thirties and had frequently travelled through Europe – an opportunity that other artists would only have after the revolution.

Soon their personal aims and development became entangled with the political upheavals and sometimes coincided with them. The young painters of Persagi learned to see themselves as the front line of a budding nation. Their personal ambitions rapidly became entangled with visions of a modern and independent Indonesia, and their positions as artists as well as their art itself became strongly intertwined with the period of decolonisation and emancipation.

The Japanese occupation was decisive for the development of the visual arts. By that time, the key artists had already acquired a high profile. Agus Djaya and Sudjojono had come to the fore as the leaders of the new generation of painters and had announced new artistic programmes. They were to consolidate

¹ S. Sudjojono, 'Kesenian meloekis di Indonesia, sekarang dan yang akan datang' (1939), reprinted as 'Seni lukis Indonesia sekarang dan yang akan datang', in: S. Sudjojono, *Seni lukis, kesenian dan seni-man* (first published 1946; reprinted Yogyakarta: Yayasan Aksara Indonesia, 2000) 5: 'akan tetapi juga mereka menggambar pabrik-pabrik gula dan petani yang kurus, mobil orang-orang kaya dan pantalon si pemuda. (...) Inilah keadaan kita. Inilah realita kita.'

² See for instance Joanna Lee, 'From national identity to the self: Themes in modern Indonesian art', in: T. K. Sabapathy (ed.), *Modernity and Beyond. Themes in Southeast Asian Art* (Singapore: National Heritage Board, 1996) 17-31, esp. 17-18.

their leading position under the Japanese government. The Japanese occupation left ample opportunity for their agenda: the artists were given an official organisation as a department of the Poesat Keboedajaan, which provided courses and held exhibitions. Painters often received prizes or allowances for the works exhibited. Some painters became more well-known during this period, such as Affandi, Henk Ngantung and Otto Djaya (Agus' brother), who was an army officer who used his drawing ability for army propaganda. It is in fact noteworthy how much the other painters tried to avoid political subjects: cityscapes and portrait art dominated.

Painting the Revolution

The revolution sheds a sharp light on Indonesian painting. A predominant interpretation has arisen regarding the first generation of Indonesian artists who were in the Republic during the revolution and supported the struggle for independence. Almost any overview of the history of art emphasises the loyalty of these painters to the young Republic and the political content of the artworks that they painted in Yogyakarta.³

The image of the artist as a political activist, nationalist and independence fighter is undoubtedly the result of the strong emphasis accorded to the revolution in Indonesian history and the political debate. Sudjojono, as a very politically engaged artist, epitomises this image. Indonesian art historians have made Sudjojono's work the prime example of the search for modern Indonesian art, a search that took place during the years around the war and revolution. As a result of this, the activities of painters during the revolution in Yogyakarta earned a leading position in art history. Later on, Sudjojono personally wrote about this: "Since the revolution broke out in August 1945, all the painters except for Basuki Abdullah immediately assembled and changed themselves into excellent makers of posters (...) Unhindered, they became instruments serving the Indonesian revolution."⁴ The painters allegedly all gathered in Yogyakarta to support the revolution through their paintings.

After President Soekarno moved his government to Yogyakarta in January 1946, many painters followed him. Sudjojono, Hendra and Affandi were among them. First Madiun, and then later Yogyakarta and Surakarta (Solo) as well, became the key centres for visual arts. The *sanggar* (studios) in Yogyakarta have come to symbolise the new Indonesian painting. Most of the painters who had emerged during the thirties and the Japanese occupation actually stayed in the temporary capital of the Republic for at least a short period.

What did the painting that 'served the revolution' look like? Surveys of art history particularly emphasise the paintings of the *laskyar*, the fighters of the revolution. Almost any painter who stayed in the Republic for even a short time ventured to portray the fighters of the revolution. This included Sudjojono of course, who painted a modern civic guard portrait with his *Kawan-kawan revolusi* (Comrades of the Revolution) of 1947, which provides a good image of the romanticism of the revolution. Hendra, Affandi, Dullah, Agus and Otto Djaya and many others also painted portraits of revolutionary fighters. These are almost all paintings of scenes behind the front lines and were probably made for exhibitions commissioned by the government. Only very few of them, like Sudjana Kerton, joined the fighters and made sketches of the war and the life

³ See for example Claire Holt: *Art in Indonesia. Continuities and change* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967) 200-201; Astri Wright, *Soul, Spirit, and Mountain. Preoccupations of contemporary Indonesian painters* (Kuala Lumpur etc.: Oxford University Press, 1994) 19; Helena Spanjaard, *Het ideaal van een moderne Indonesische schilderkunst 1900-1950: De creatie van een nationale culturele identiteit* (dissertation: Leiden University, 1998) 124: "In the period between 1942 and 1950, Indonesian painting served the revolution". See also M. Agus Burhan, 'Indonesian paintings 1940-1960: An introduction', in: Efix Mulyadi (ed.), *The Journey of Indonesian Painting: The Bentara Budaya collection* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 2008) 25-62, esp. 28.

⁴ Quoted in: Sanento Yuliman-Hadiwardoyo, *Genèse de la peinture indonésienne contemporaine: le rôle de S. Sudjojono* (dissertation: Paris: École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1981) 122.



of a Republican soldier. He had already started doing so during the first months after the revolution began, when he founded the *Pelukis Front* (front-line painters), who recorded the fighting in Western Java. His sketches are highly documentary in nature and were intended not only to spread the spirit of the revolution but also to record historical events.⁵

Expressive realism predominated and social themes were prevalent in the work of many painters. This was partly the result of a political programme of service to the nation and the revolution that was taught in the studios. The *sanggar* were also used as training centres for younger painters, who found their subjects at home and in the streets. The atmosphere of revolution as well as the dire situation within the Republic forced the artists to record life around them. Whereas painters had to go out during the last years of the Dutch East Indies to discover the real Indonesia, reality inflicted itself upon them during the revolution. Affandi painted his images of beggars and malnourished people during these years and Sudjojono produced his famous scenes from the

During the revolution in Yogyakarta, Hendra Gunawan often depicted republican militia, but above all street scenes and inhabitants of villages and towns.

Hendra Gunawan

On the Sidewalk of Yogyakarta, 1947

oil on paper on board, 70 x 108.5 cm
collection OHD Museum, Magelang

⁵ See Astri Wright, M. Dwi Marianto and Hilda Soemantri, *Revolusi & evolusi Sudjana Kerton/The revolution & evolution of Sudjana Kerton* (Bandung: Sanggar Luhur n.d.[1999]).



Sudjojono painted 'Seko' during or after his flight from Yogyakarta at the Dutch attack. It shows the ruins of Chinese houses in Prambanan.

Sindudarsono Sudjojono

Seko, 1949

oil on canvas, 174 x 194 cm

collection The Presidential Palace, Jakarta

revolution, such as the *Persiapan Gerilya* (Preparations for Guerilla War) of 1947. Other painters in Yogyakarta also used these subjects. In these years Hendra Gunawan painted both *Laskar* (1947) and street scenes, and Agus Djaya painted portraits of fighters and common people. However, looking at the artworks that survived the revolution unscathed, the revolutionary themes remained in the minority.

Sudjojono's step to move from his 'social' painting to revolutionary art was not a large one. His work from the thirties had already been motivated by a need to record social reality. Nevertheless, Sudjojono discovered in the revolution that he felt a need to paint more realistically than before – an expression of his awareness of the importance of the present time and the need to record that amazing

reality. He also spread this ideal within the artists' association that he founded in Madiun in 1946 and which had departments in Yogyakarta and Surakarta: *Seniman Indonesia Muda* (SIM, Young Indonesian Artists). Even so, Sudjojono's own work from the revolutionary period does not portray documentary naturalism, but rather a more expressive or emotional realism.

The artists groups in the Republic did not incidentally form a close-knit unit. Although Affandi joined SIM, he left it in 1948 and, together with Hendra Gunawan, he founded a group of their own, the *Pelukis Rakyat* (Painters of the people). Other painters such as Kusnadi, Trubus and Sudjana Kerton joined them. Although this could also be seen as a Bandung clique, differences of opinion about the route to be followed had arisen. Affandi could not subscribe to Sudjojono's extreme revolutionary views – for instance, Sudjojono justified the destruction of Chinese shops in the period of the 'scorched earth' policy during Dutch military actions. They also disagreed about Sudjojono's apportionment of subsidies that the SIM received from the Republican government, and about the rigid authority structures within the SIM.⁶

Indonesian Trajectories

Not all Yogyakarta art was about revolution; Yogyakarta did not have a monopoly on painting during the years of the struggle for independence. Not all artists came to the centre of the Republic, and those who were present often left again after a while. Many painters turned out to have headed for

⁶ Agus Dermawan T. and Astri Wright, *Hendra Gunawan. A great modern Indonesian painter* (Jakarta: Ir Ciputra Foundation 2001) 49; Jean Couteau, 'Beyond paradise. Affandi in Indonesia', in: Sardjana Sumichan (ed.), *Affandi* (3 vols; Jakarta: Bina Lestari Budaya Foundation and Singapore: Singapore Art Museum 2007) vol. II, 9-49, esp. 31.

Jakarta, Bandung or elsewhere by 1948, because the situation in the Republic inhibited their development. The Djayas were very active in Western Java; Affandi left in 1948, and others soon turned up in Jakarta.

In 1946, the artists' group Gelanggang (Arena) was founded in Jakarta, under the leadership of the young West-Sumatran painter Mochtar Apin (1923-1994), who stayed in Java during the revolution. Like the painters in and around Yogyakarta, Gelanggang was intensively involved in the issue of the direction that art and Indonesian society was to take. Mochtar Apin and his companions supported the national struggle but did not consider modernism as something purely Western; they produced an outspoken modernist vision of art, which emphatically left room for a local Indonesian component.⁷ In August 1948, Gelanggang organised an exhibition in the Dutch colonial bastion Hotel des Indes with works by Mochtar Apin, as well as Affandi, Kerton, Sudjojono, Hendra, Henk Ngantung, Emiria Sunasa and others.⁸ Painters remained active elsewhere too and organised themselves into *sanggar* and societies. For instance, Barli organised the Sanggar Seni Rupa Jiwa Mukti in Bandung in 1948 and other organisations were founded in Medan and Bukittinggi.⁹

Agus Djaya also followed a different route. Before the war, Agus – like Sudjojono – had resisted the 'European sweetness' of colonial painting and sought Indonesian art's own identity.¹⁰ Whereas Sudjojono's work searched for the Indonesian character in social reality, Agus' work was strongly influenced by Javanese culture. His robust, impressionistic style bore evidence of Javanese popular and classical culture: dancing, musical groups and figures from Javanese and Hindu mythology. In the revolutionary period in Surakarta, Agus also produced a number of paintings of revolutionaries, but the Javanese culture and mythology remained his predilection.

During the Japanese occupation, Agus Djaya had a central position in the Poesat Keboedajaan. After the Japanese capitulation, Agus left for Sukabumi, where he gathered artists around him once again in a Balai Kesenian Oemoem (General Art Society) during the chaotic months of the incipient revolution, which organised a congress in Jakarta in November 1945. In 1946 he and his brother Otto, who had also taken up painting during the Japanese period, were in Yogyakarta, but they only stayed there for a short while. In February 1947, Agus and Otto held an exhibition in Batavia, where Lieutenant-Governor-General H. J. van Mook bought several of their works.¹¹

Agus and Otto Djaya left for the Netherlands in 1947 to study at the Amsterdam Art Academy. At the end of 1947, the Municipal Museum of The Hague organised an exhibition of paintings by the two brothers, an absolute novelty in Dutch museum history: it was the first time that Indonesian artists had an exhibition of their own in the Netherlands. It was a sign of the times. Although the decolonisation war was raging, a growing need was felt to strengthen the ties with Indonesian artists. The exhibition was opened by the mayor of The Hague, W. A. J. Visser, who expressed the hope that the exhibition would strengthen the cultural ties between Indonesia and the Netherlands. The minister of Overseas Territories, J. A. Jonkman, also attended the opening.¹² The works of Agus and Otto Djaya were then shown at the City Museums of Amsterdam and Rotterdam, and were exhibited in 1948 in Paris, Prague and then in Amsterdam again.¹³

Not only the Djayas, but numerous other major artists also followed routes that were different from the revolutionary roadmap and did not always lead to Yogyakarta. Alternative pathways went via Jakarta, Bandung and further – to



Members of the artists' group Gelanggang (Arena), among whom Mochtar Apin, Baharudin and Asrul Sani, discuss a painting with poet Chairil Anwar, Jakarta, 1948.

photo: Charles Breijer

collection Nederlands Fotomuseum, Rotterdam

⁷ Jim Supangkat, *Provocative bodies: Interpreting the works of Mochtar Apin 1990-1993* (Jakarta: CP Foundation, 2005) 53-55.

⁸ *Pelita rakjat*, 2 Aug. 1948.

⁹ See Kusnadi, 'Periode revolusi fisik kemerdekaan', in: *Perjalanan seni rupa Indonesia. Dari zaman prasejarah hingga masa kini* (n.p. n.d. [1990]) 93-101, esp. 95.

¹⁰ Agoes Djaya and Otto Djaya, *Tentoonstelling in het Stedelijk Museum te Amsterdam* (Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, 1947) 3-4.

¹¹ *Soeloeh ra'jat*, 6 March 1947.

¹² *Pandji ra'jat*, 21 November 1947.

¹³ *Pelita rakjat*, 5 February 1948.



Agus Djaya standing next to his painting Maya at an exhibition of works of Agus and his brother Otto Djaya in the Netherlands, 1947.

collection Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam

Europe and America, or away from revolutionary realism to expressionism or even abstraction. Affandi, Henk Ngantung, Sudjana Kerton, Lee Man Fong, Salim, Ahmad Sadali, Abdul Djalil Pirous: several of these stayed in the centre of the Republic for at least a brief period, but they all found artistic work in other places too.

Liberation

Indonesian painters developed during a period of dramatic political change. The struggle for Indonesian art was a struggle of paintbrush and pen, thoroughly entangled with political changes. Yet there was no single moment when there was a collective or dominant ideology. It was their personal quests that united the painters. It was strongly determined by the absence of formal schooling among this generation of painters and by the difficult social and political circumstances: the marginalisation under the Dutch, and the poverty and political struggle during the years of the Japanese occupation and the revolution. It was the lack of schooling opportunities, materials and an art market that dominated the lives and work of these painters until the end of the revolution.

The great political events of the forties seem to have strongly determined the art of the time, but in addition to painting about the revolution, most of the painters continued to develop individually and increasingly sought a style outside the rigid framework of populism and struggle. Painting about the revolution was really just one facet of a much wider palette, in some cases even a marginal detour in an artist's development.

For this generation of painters, real liberation did not take place until the end of the revolution. It seems as if they found a fully mature visual language at that very moment. Around 1950 styles began to differ more and more, because of the fact that many painters had the opportunity of orienting themselves more widely. Sudjojono developed a sharp and realistic style, in which he portrayed the life of the everyday man and woman. At the end of the forties, Hendra created his characteristic mannerist format of stylistic figures with very long limbs using a bright palette. Around the same time, Affandi converted to the strong expressionism that characterises his later work, with powerful wild lines of paint, squeezed onto the painting directly out of the tube.

For them, independence was an excellent opportunity to step into the world, to look at Western art from close up and be educated elsewhere. Affandi who, with his paintings of poor people and fighters in the revolution, seems to be the prime example of revolutionary painting, had always remained an individualist and followed his own path. He left for India as early as 1949 to follow a training course on the invitation of the Indian government. Later on he travelled further, to Europe and the United States. Sudjana Kerton also soon left Indonesia. In 1950 he was the first Indonesian to receive a scholarship from the Stichting Culturele Samenwerking (Sticusa, Foundation for Cultural Cooperation), founded in 1948, to follow an art training course in the Netherlands. Finally he settled in the United States. Barli left for Europe in 1950 with a subsidy from the Dutch government too, where he studied first in France and later on in Amsterdam at the Rijksacademie. Mochtar Apin, who had taken lessons at the College for Art Teachers in Bandung under the Dutch artist Ries



Mulder since 1948, followed in 1951 and went to Amsterdam, Paris and Berlin. For them and many others, Europe was not the be-all and end-all, although it was the place where the roots of modern art lay and where the prestigious training centres were.

The lives and careers of the painters are closely linked to the history of how the free Indonesian state came about. The Indonesian painters of the revolutionary generation dominated artistic life in Indonesia for a long time. Sudjojono, Hendra Gunawan, Affandi, Agus Djaya and others are known as the founders of the national art world. However, their artistic development – like that of so many other Indonesian artists – cannot be explained purely by a nationalist agenda or a revolutionary goal. It is time to release the art history of Indonesia from the chains of the revolution.

During the revolution Sudjana Kerton travelled through Java, sketching political events, battle grounds and street scenes in a documentary style. Depicted here is the market area of Pasar Kramat in Senen, Batavia/Jakarta.

Sudjana Kerton

Pasar Kramat Senen, 1948

pen on paper

collection Sanggar Luhur, Bandung

Guided Emancipation

Remco Raben

The years of the Japanese occupation are still a neglected episode in Indonesian art history. Nevertheless, this period was invaluable for Indonesian painting. What had been lacking under the Dutch colonial regime – space and facilities for working and exhibiting – was made abundantly available under the Japanese to the predominantly young Indonesian painters. The Kunstkring (Art Society) in Jakarta was closed after the Dutch authorities were defeated. In March 1943, the Japanese authorities set up the Keimin Bungka Shidosho or Poesat Keboedajaan (Cultural Centre). It was led by Agus Djaya, who together with Sindudarsono Sudjojono had been the founder of the pre-war Indonesian painters' association Persagi.

During the Japanese period, Sudjojono managed to keep his position as the leader of the new generation of Indonesian painters. He became head of the art department of Poetera (Poesat Tenaga Rakjat, Centre for the People's Power), the Indonesian mass organisation under Japanese control, and later took over the leadership of the Poesat Keboedajaan, where he led the painting course. After the occupation, Sudjojono emphasised that the Indonesian painters had been allowed to develop along their own lines under the Japanese authorities and had not let themselves be used for propaganda purposes. In reality, many painters (and other artists) worked actively for the Japanese media and propaganda services, even if that was only because that was one way of making a living. Various artists made drawings of *romusha* (conscript labourers) on instructions from the authorities. They also regularly received allowances from organisations such as Poetera and its successor, the Djawa Hokokai. On the other hand, the painters were able to choose their own subjects for their free-format works of art. Indeed, the individual artists seem to have continued with the preferences that they had already developed when the Dutch were in control.

The Japanese period influenced the Indonesian art world profoundly, although not by the imposition of themes from above. It was more a case of 'guided emancipation' for Indonesian painting. Firstly, Indonesian artists were given every opportunity to exhibit in the buildings belonging to Poetera or the Poesat Keboedajaan, at the *pasar malam* (evening market or fair) and at various official events held by the Japanese military authorities. Poetera's first exhibition was held in April 1943 and it was visited by 11,000 people.¹ For many artists, the Japanese period put them on the stage in front of a broader public for the first time. Affandi's career was launched in the Japanese period by the first Poetera exhibition to be devoted to a single artist, in June 1943. Poetera's programming was not very choosy; Basuki Abdullah, the 'old school' painter who suffered so much in Sudjojono's writings, got an exhibition of his own too.

Secondly, the Japanese period encouraged the Indonesian identity of the painters, as well as the feeling that they needed to develop their own artistic forms. The Japanese had demonstrated that modern painting was not incom-

¹ *Asia raya*, 27 April 1943; *Tjahaja*, 12 May 1943.

patible with the Asiatic mind. Agus Djaya and Basuki Resobowo said to the magazine *Tjahaja* in July 1943, "We are trying to create a new visual art, namely an Indonesian (and therefore Oriental) visual art, as well as a form that is full of power (dynamism) and inspiration."²

Thirdly, the Japanese also taught the painters the political usefulness of art. Numerous artists were employed in propaganda activities for the Japanese: theatre, film and visual arts. The Japanese propaganda did to a certain extent fit in with the aims of an association such as Persagi of bringing art and society closer together.

The Japanese period was also a time of technical development. In contrast to the Dutch period, artists were given the opportunity to take educational courses. Many young artists received their first formal art lessons at the Poesat Keboedajaan. They started in July 1953 and were conducted by Agus Djaya and Basuki Abdullah. The course had two meetings per week for six months, and participation was free of charge.³ Later Sudjojono provided the painting courses, and there was also Ono Saseo, a Japanese artist who was known for his humorous sketches and cartoons for the newspapers. Sketches by Sudjana Kerton and Henk Ngantung from this time in particular seem to bear a close resemblance to those of their teacher, Ono Saseo.

Finally, the Japanese period prolonged and strengthened the status and position of the younger generation's key painters and encouraged young artists. At the transition from the Japanese period to the revolution, there was a group of painters who had worked intensively on the development of Indonesian art and saw themselves as having a political and social role. The young painter A.D. Pirous (b. 1933) spoke about those years: "I see those years as a very intensive time for the development of art awareness. (...) When we plunged into the revolutionary era, we had prepared our art well."⁴



Like many other artists the young painter Henk Ngantung made sketches and drawings of the romusha, labourers recruited by the Japanese authorities. The painters were asked to depict the workers for propaganda purposes.
pencil on paper, c. 1944

² *Tjahaja*, 24 July 1943: 'Kita mentjoba mentjptakan seni roepa baroe, jaitoe'.

³ *Pembangoen*, 22 July 1943.

⁴ A.D. Pirous quoted in: Astri Wright, M. Dwi Marianto and Hilda Soemantri, *Revolusi & evolusi Sudjana Kerton*. (Bandung: Sanggar Luhur, z.j. [1999]) 33-34.

Art and the Nation

The Cultural Politics of Soekarno

Carla Bianpoen

The birth of Koesno Sosrodihardjo in the wee hours of June 6, 1901 marked the beginnings of a great leader. At least, that was what his mother, Ida Ajoe Njoman Rai, who was of Balinese Brahman ancestry, believed and imprinted in little Koesno: "Those born at dawn will be great leaders." But Koesno was plagued by ill health. In accordance with traditional Javanese beliefs, a change of name would be in order. His father, Raden Soekemi Sosrodihardjo, promised him that his new name, Karno, would make him strong. And true enough, the change of name brought him good health and formidable strength. He did indeed become a great man, a leader later dubbed *Putra Sang Fajar* (Son of the Dawn).

With Balinese blue blood flowing through his veins, Soekarno was naturally inclined towards the arts, towards beauty and all things aesthetic. He had considerable talent as a painter himself, as becomes evident from the paintings he made during his exile in the 1930s and the few leisure moments permitted his busy schedule as president. One of his oil paintings, entitled *Rini* and dated 1958, was part of the Indonesian pavilion at the International Art Fair in New York in 1964 (it has been renamed *Sarinah*). But politics had drawn him in and he submitted to his destiny. Art and his heart, however, were never far apart and eventually art and politics became closely intertwined.

The Dawn of a New Era

The first stirrings of nationalist resistance in the Dutch East Indies began when Soekarno was only six years old. In 1908, the Indonesian medical doctor Soetomo and his colleagues at the School tot Opleiding van Inlandsche Artsen (STOVIA) founded the Javanese cultural association Boedi Oetomo (The noble

endeavour), which is considered to be the first modern Indonesian organisation. It was later followed by the Indische Partij, which was the first to pronounce the wish for autonomy, and the Islam-based Sarekat Islam, both in 1912. By this time Soekarno was attending the European primary school in Mojokerto, where his father was a teacher. In 1916 he moved to Surabaya to enter the Hogere Burger School (European secondary school). Boarding in the house of Hadji Oemar Tjokroaminoto (1882-1934), the founder of Sarekat Islam and one of the leading nationalist activists at the time, he soon came into direct contact with protagonists such as Hadji Agoes Salim (1884-1954), the President of Sarekat Islam, and the journalist Raden Mas Soewardi Soerjaningrat (1889-1959), who had been co-founder of the Indische Partij. Soewardi had just returned from the Netherlands, where he had been exiled due to an article he had published in the Indische Partij's *De Expres*. In the article, titled 'If I were a Netherlander', Soewardi had criticised the Dutch for celebrating their national liberation from Spain with money from the Indies.

Soekarno was a student at the Technische Hoogeschool in Bandung when Soewardi, who had then taken the name Ki Hajar Dewantara, established the Taman Siswa School in 1922. Education was a major tool used to confront colonialism, and the Taman Siswa schools were based on a progressive system of education that fostered a national awareness in a free, humane, creative spirit and included the arts as an important part of the system. The schools became exceedingly popular, both in Java and on other islands, despite opposition from the Dutch government against the spread of these so-called *wilde scholen* (wild/non-official schools).

Taman Siswa became a breeding ground for Indonesian artists, and it was here that the first indigenous art exhibition was held in 1937. Organised by Sudjojono, Agus Djaya and Rameli, the works on show featured images inspired by the people's social condition and the hardships they were going through. It was to be the forerunner of Persagi, the Association of Indonesian Painters, founded in 1938.



Soekarno

Rini, undated

oil on canvas, 70 x 89 cm

collection The Presidential Palace, Jakarta

Well-educated, an eager reader of world history, political theory and literature, and a good listener to national activists debates that abounded in his circles in Surabaya and Bandung, Soekarno became part of the Indonesian intelligentsia that opposed Dutch colonialism. While continuing his studies in Bandung, he wrote a host of articles in favour of the nationalist struggle and founded the *Algemeene Studieclub*, modelled after Soetomo's *Studieclub* in Surabaya. In 1927, Tjipto Mangoenkoesoemo and others founded *Perserikatan Nasional Indonesia*, which was joined by Soekarno and the *Algemeene Studieclub*. The party changed its name to *Partai Nasional Indonesia (PNI)* in 1928. In that year, the Youth Congress issued its pledge to achieve One Land, One Nation, One Language. Soekarno was becoming the leading nationalist activist and, for that reason, became the target of Dutch repression. Soekarno was jailed and later exiled to Flores (1933) and Bengkulu (1938-1942). But the idea of a free Indonesia had spread, inspiring the arts and artists of the time.

In Search of a National Style

Amid such nationalist fervour, the young painters Sudjojono and Agus Djaya founded the Indonesian Painters Association (*Persagi*) in 1938. Its aim was to develop a 'national' style, which Sudjojono, the theoretician of the group, primarily formulated as a socially engaged realism, with the ultimate objective of supporting the nationalist cause of a Free Indonesia. Their slogan was 'Technique is not important. What is important is what comes from the heart, the soul, which must be poured out onto the canvas'. Sudjojono agitated against the style he scathingly called 'Beautiful Indies', which portrayed only beautiful landscapes, romantic scenes and exotic portraits. The style was particularly popular with Europeans and was therefore in high demand with art dealers. Sudjojono viewed painters who painted in the 'Beautiful Indies' style – instead of portraying the real condition of the people – as being anti-nationalist. There is no evidence that Soekarno had been in contact with these artists-cum-nationalists at that time, but he certainly would have subscribed to their ambitions and to Sudjojono's criticism of the predominant, colonial painting styles.

Understandably, despite *Persagi's* agenda and the nationalist inspiration, the young generation of painters worked in many different styles. Some painters ignored Sudjojono's accusations. They had been educated in the European style with its emphasis on technique and aesthetics. Abdullah Suriosubroto, for instance, had studied in the Netherlands and even though he was the son of Wahidin Sudiro Husodo, a proponent of the national movement, he kept to his style. Others, such as Wakidi and Mas Pirngadi, had received European training as workers of the Dutch Archaeological Service and likewise continued to work as before.

Ironically, Sudjojono could not prevent himself in the end from painting in the style he originally had opposed. In spite of all the rhetoric about a nationalist style, most *Persagi* members were actually unable to define a nationalist style precisely other than by saying it should portray the suffering of the people. Their themes were limited to social realism and their imagery of the island of Java, with the exception of Emiria Soenassa (1895-1963), who was born on the small north-Moluccan island of Tidore. She painted landscapes and

S. Sudjojono

In Front of an Open Curtain, 1939

oil on canvas, 90 x 60 cm

collection The Presidential Palace, Jakarta



people from the various islands of Indonesia, becoming the first and only artist who, in the quest for a new nation, had the imagination to depict a modern, united Indonesia in its multifaceted diversity. Her idea actually fit in well with Soekarno's political objectives for a united Indonesia, yet there is no evidence of any contact or connection between them.

The Japanese occupation of 1942 brought new hopes and expectations for the people and for the artists. The Bataviasche Kunstkring, which had existed since the beginning of the century and had largely been restricted to Europeans, was closed. The Japanese authorities instituted a framework for cultural activities by Indonesian artists under Japanese leadership. The Keimin Bunka Shidosho, a cultural organisation that was to further the idea of an Asian identity, had all Japanese division heads. Soekarno objected and requested that Indonesian artists be included and head the visual arts department. Indonesian painters received training by Japanese and Indonesian artists. Besides, in 1943 the Centre of People's Power (Poetera) was set up under the command of the prominent nationalist leaders Soekarno, Moh. Hatta, Ki Hadjar Dewantara and KH Mas Mansur. Again politics and art went hand in hand: Poetera's art section recruited Dullah, Sudjojono, Agus Djaya, Emiria Soenassa and Basuki Abdullah. Poetera served as a mobilising force for the young artists and provided opportunities for them to exhibit their works.

Art for the Revolution

On 17 August 1945, two days after the Japanese capitulation, Soekarno and Hatta proclaimed Indonesia's independence. The Dutch refused to acknowledge it, thereby provoking the military resistance that arose after the arrival of British and Dutch troops that strove to bring Indonesia again under Dutch control. In January 1946, Yogyakarta became the seat of the revolutionary government. Many artists flocked to Yogyakarta to join the leaders of the revolution. *Sanggars* (studios) set up by Sudjojono, Affandi and Hendra Gunawan, among others, continued the promotion of nationalistic themes. The *sanggars* became hotspots of nationalist debate, in addition to producing the designs for the posters that spurred the people's revolutionary spirit. One of the most famous posters is *Boeng Ajo Boeng* and the story behind it illustrates the close relationship between Soekarno and the artists, and the relationship between the artists themselves. Soekarno asked Sudjojono whether his friends could make a poster that would inspire the spirit of nationalism. Affandi was tasked with making the design and used Dullah as a model. Featuring a man breaking free from his chains with a raised fist and sword, the poster was an example of bold determination. "Who was the model?", asked Soekarno. When he heard it had been Dullah, he roared with laughter. "Dullah? The Dutch would never think it is this little man!" The story is that, when the poster was made, the artists were at a loss as to what title to give it. Then the poet Chairil Anwar, alias *Binatang Jaling* (Wild Beast), as he had called himself in his poem *Aku*, came in and told them of the prostitutes in Jakarta's Senen area which he had just visited. "They call you to come in by saying *Boeng, Sini Boeng* (Brother, Come here, Brother)." With a slight modification, it became the battle cry *Boeng, Ajo Boeng!*

Affandi

Boeng Ajo Boeng!

poster, 1979



1 Agus Dermawan T., 'Bung Karno dan tiga pelukis istana', in: St. Sularto (ed.), *Dialog dengan sejarah. Soekarno seratus tahun* (Jakarta: Kompas, 2001) 363-372, esp. 367.

The energy of the revolution was like a stream that watered the world of art. In many places under Republican control, *sanggars* were set up by former Persagi members such as Affandi, Hendra Gunawan and others. In 1946 Affendi founded the *sanggar* Seniman Masyarakat (People's Artists), which was soon changed to Seniman Indonesia Muda (SIM) or Young Indonesian Artists and was led by Sudjojono. In 1947, some of its members left to form Pelukis Rakyat. In Bandung there were Jiwa Mukti and Pancaran Cipta Rasa led by Barli and Abedy, Sanggar Seniman Bandung (SSB) by Yudhokusumo. Nasjah Damin set up Angkatan Seni Rupa Indonesia in Medan, Seniman Muda Indonesia (1946) in Bukit Tinggi (West Sumatra), East Java Gabungan Pelukis Muda in Madiun, and Sanggar Prabangkara in Surabaya. The practice of working collectively in studios continued after the revolution. In 1952, sculptor Gregorius Sidharta and painter Widayat set up Pelukis Indonesia Muda (PIM). And the Gabungan Pelukis Indonesia was set up by Affandi in Jakarta, with members Zaini, Handrio, Nashar and Trisno Sumardjo, among others. In 1955, Lee Man Fong founded the ethnic Chinese artists group Yin Hua with as many as a hundred members, who painted in both Western and Chinese style. In 1959 Sanggar Bambu was formed, led by Sunarto Pr and Mulyadi W. Exhibitions abounded in *sanggars* and in public spaces.

In December 1949 Indonesia was recognised by the Dutch and received full sovereignty. The seat of government moved back to Jakarta and so did many artists. In the new Republic, the need for academic training was met by the establishment of art schools in Yogyakarta, Bandung, Jakarta and Surabaya. Of these, it was the Yogyakarta and the Bandung schools of art, in particular, that stood out. The Indonesian Fine Art Academy (ASRI) was established in Yogyakarta in 1950. With nationalist artists becoming teachers at this academy, it was not surprising that ASRI adhered to nationalist ideals, though they followed the techniques of the West. Of the first 160 students, some are known to have had fair success after they graduated. They included Widayat, Saptoto, Abas Alibasyah and Edhi Sunarso.

ASRI and the Yogyakarta-based *sanggars* are considered to have played a significant role in shaping the aesthetics of Indonesian art in the early years of nationhood. Art as a reflection of national identity was an enduring issue as the Bandung art school, which started out as a legacy from the Dutch, appeared to have been virtually untouched by the nationalist ideas in the art. The painters working there had been focussing on art for art's sake and employed a cubism that was alien to the nationalist painters. Originally a training college for drawing teachers under the University of Indonesia's Faculty of Technology in 1947, it was founded and directed by Ries Mulder and professional draughtsman Simon Admiraal. The Bandung School faced heavy criticism from its Yogyakarta peers. The artists in Bandung were derided as espousing the aesthetics of Western modernism and Bandung college was dubbed the Laboratory of the West. Soekarno never included a single piece from the Bandung school in his collections.

The period after 1950 was characterised not only by the debate between 'Yogyakarta' and 'Bandung', but also by a Communist dominance in the arts. In 1950 the Institute for the People's Culture (Lekra) had been set up to support the nationalist cause and propagate the values of Socialism. Populist and socially engaged, it was the largest organisation of its kind; it provided artist members with painting tools and studios and organised exhibitions, pay-

ing for the transport of works to the exhibition in Jakarta. Lekra found ready acceptance with the artists because its slogans were the same as those with which artists had worked during the revolution. Not political indoctrination, but social engagement was what brought artists to join Lekra. Painters such as Affandi, Henk Ngantung and Basuki Resobowo had leading positions there. Lekra was gradually co-opted by the Communist Party, which urged some painters to break away. One reaction was the formulation of the cultural manifesto Manikebu in 1963, which propagated a strictly individualistic attitude in artists. Lekra strongly opposed the cultural manifesto Manikebu. President Soekarno took the side of Lekra and artists who were in favour of Manikebu found their free creativity obstructed or became jobless.

The tide turned with the abortive 'coup' of 30 September 1965 and the gradual take-over of power by General Suharto. For the arts, a new era of relative freedom began, until the new government became repressive and history repeated itself.

Soekarno's Collections

With over 2,000 works, the collection brought together by Indonesia's first president is probably the largest ever owned by any president in the world. His own artistic inclinations and his close contacts with the artists during the nationalist struggle typify the importance Soekarno attached to the arts as building blocks of the nation. He had often said to Sudjojono and Dullah that the nation's struggle would be complete if what it did was based not only on politics, the military and the economy, but also on the world of culture.

Soekarno remained actively interested in the art life of Indonesia. He once said that his second choice in life would have been "to be an artist". To fulfill his artistic desires, he often invited artists to the palace to chat with them as friends, seriously discussing issues of art. He visited the artists' studios and exhibitions, which gave the artists an important stimulus. Above all, he frequently purchased works of art, becoming Indonesia's first and foremost collector.

As much as he worked with artists in the struggle for independence, Soekarno's favourites were no doubt the paintings by Basuki Abdullah (1915-1993), the Dutch-educated Indonesian painter whose naturalist style, romantic images and portraiture of beautiful women were very much to Soekarno's liking. Basuki had studied in The Hague, stayed abroad for some time, and had grown into a painter of impeccable skill, using the style of the West but imbuing his paintings with a deep touch of the Eastern mystique – which of course has Western orientalist inspirations as well. This is revealed in his stirring landscapes, but also in his portraiture of beautiful women placed against a background of combined colour hues. Sudjojono, the adversary of the 'Beautiful Indies' style, had accused him of being anti-nationalist. But Basuki proved he did not deserve such derision, having also made a range of portraits of President Soekarno and of scenes featuring the stories of the Ramayana and Mahabharata. While he painted mostly women, either in full dress of various styles or as beautiful nudes, his dramatic landscapes reveal that he was also a master of colour.

Basuki Abdullah

A Piece of Red Cloth, 1960

oil on canvas, 80 x 120 cm

collection The Presidential Palace, Jakarta



The second major part of the collection is about Bali, its women, ceremonies and landscapes. The Balinese selection displays Soekarno's pride in his ties with Bali and the island's artistic reputation. A big part of the collection consists of works by indigenous, often legendary painters such as Anak Agung Gde Sobrat, the first Balinese to take to oil in 1956, or Ida Bagoes Made, Regig, or old works by anonymous painters. These works also reveal the fascination that European painters had for everything Balinese. Soekarno's sharp eye, as a true connoisseur, recognised the superb quality of many of these painters. In his collection is Adrien Jean Le Mayeur de Merprès' painting of women gazing into the field, displaying a fantastic combination of light and dark vermillion; it is one of the best of Le Mayeur's series of favourite model and wife Ni Pollock. Many others of a similar image that have been circling in art auctions miss the depth of this specific painting. The collection also includes the works of such painters as Auke Sonnega, Rudolf Bonnet, Willem Hofker, Theo Meier and others. Bali indeed was seen as a source of inspiration and even Dullah, Lee Man Fong and Lim Wasim, the three palace painters, made many paintings of Balinese women and scenery and were influenced and inspired by the artists working on Bali.

Naturally, Soekarno also collected paintings by artists who had supported the national struggle, such as Sudjojono, Affandi, Hendra Gunawan, Agus and Otto Djaya, Henk Ngantung, Subanto, Trubus and many others, but his motivation for purchasing their work probably went beyond mere politics, as he made sure that what he collected by these artists as the best they had ever made in this genre, such as Affandi's *The Militia Plan their Battle Tactics* and Sudjo-

jono's *Kawan-kawan Revolusi*. *Wanita didepan Kelamboe*, an early work by Sudjojono, is also unique in the way it is painted and because its subject, a prostitute.

Lesser known artists such as Itjih Tarmizi and Pandi are also included in this collection. Dullah's paintings are manifold, not surprisingly, as he was the first palace artist and he was close to Soekarno. The Chinese-born Lee Man Fong, who just as Dullah had studied in the Netherlands, retained a remarkable Chinese flavour in his paintings *Tukang Sate* and *Anak Perempuan Djawa*. In Soekarno's collection were also paintings by Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, Filipino and Mexican artists. It is not known whether these paintings had been presents or his personal choice and purchase. Some

Dullah

Preparations for a Guerrilla War, undated
oil on canvas, 178 x 199 cm
collection The Presidential Palace, Jakarta



reveal how others appreciated the president's love for art. Diego Rivera, for instance, painted a Sumatran woman in *baju panjang*, and in the gardens of the Bogor Palace stands a sculpture that the then Yugoslav President Josip Broz Tito sent to Soekarno, right after the latter had praised it during his visit in the city of Belgrade.

Soekarno's collections are like a book of revelations: beautiful women of various ethnicity, stunning landscapes and mythological images. They formed the world that Soekarno revered, a world of beauty, a world away from struggle, poverty and suffering. But also a world that, in its diversity, was fundamentally and unmistakably Indonesian.

Soekarno often purchased his Indonesian paintings straight from the artists, often paying them in instalments when he did not have enough money. Sometimes artists offered paintings for sale when in urgent need of money. Affandi, for instance, was once in dire need of money and one day came to the palace to offer his works to the president. As Soekarno did not have any cash himself at that moment, he offered his pen instead. It was a beautiful pen on which his name was engraved. But Affandi really needed money, as his wife Maryati was sick. Soekarno took pity on him and asked his wife Fatmawati to loan him the money from the household budget. He also sent the palace doctor to treat Maryati.²

Soekarno may also have received paintings as gifts, for painters increasingly found it an honour when their works were included in the collection of the President. Soekarno, in his foreword to the Lee Man Fong edition, humbly admitted that not all of the works were of equal quality, but he proudly states that they are proof of the fruits of a free nation and "happy is the nation that is free".

In 1950, Soekarno appointed Dullah as the palace artist. The palace, he said, should be more than just a place for official events; it had to radiate the culture of the people. Dullah had the task, not only of producing paintings, but also with of caring for the president's collection and selecting which paintings to hang in which of the palaces – the State Palace, the Bogor Palace, the mansion in Tampaksiring or Gedung Agung in Yogyakarta. In addition, he had to accompany the president whenever asked.

On one such occasion, Dullah accompanied the president to a hill in the Kintamani area of Bali. The valley landscape was exquisite. Soekarno then exclaimed: "Dullah, Soekarno must do something here. The people must be able to enjoy this piece of heaven. Soekarno and the world must have a place to watch God's painting." Dullah obliged. On the way back from Kintamani he suggested he make a gazebo. And so it happened. Now everyone has the chance to see what Soekarno saw on that very day in Kintamani. After ten years, Dullah asked permission to resign and resume his life as a private artist. He was replaced by Lee Man Fong, who brought along Lim Wasim as his assistant.

President Soekarno was of the opinion that the people should know art. This is why he had his art collections exhibited in the palace. This is also the reason why he wanted his collections to be documented. The books that compile the works of Soekarno's collection are an important legacy. The first series of Soekarno's collections was prepared by Dullah and printed and published in China in 1956.³ On that occasion Dullah selected 206 paintings for publication in two deluxe volumes. Two more volumes with 384 paintings followed in

² Daoed Joesoef, 'Bung Karno, seni, dan saya', in: St. Sularto (ed.), *Dialog dengan sejarah. Soekarno seratus tahun* (Jakarta: Kompas, 2001) 347-357, esp. 352.

³ Dullah (ed.), *Lukisan-lukisan koleksi Ir. Dr. Sukarno, presiden Republik Indonesia / Paintings from the collection of Dr. Sukarno, President of the Republic of Indonesia* (2 vols; Peking: Pustaka Kesenian Rakjat, Republik Rakjat Tiongkok, 1956).



S. Harjadi

Biography II in Maliboro, undated

oil on canvas, size unknown

collection The Presidential Palace, Jakarta

for which we can only guess, as her work was widely exhibited in Jakarta during the 1950s.

In many ways, Soekarno has been crucial to the development of the arts and the art market in Indonesia. His collecting activities were no doubt a great boost to the production of artworks at the time. Art was his passion and he even inspired his Cabinet members to purchase works of art. His love for the arts went beyond collecting; he also thought of the livelihood of the artists. He urged wealthy businessmen to open galleries and have studios for artists. Art dealer Tjio Tek Djien responded by opening a studio in the Cideng area. Setting the trend in the arts, Soekarno's taste for nudes soon found followers and Tjio's studio received ample orders from individuals and galleries. About a dozen artists worked in the studio. They were also asked to make reproductions of successful works of Indies and international artists. As Tjio's studio blossomed, a couple of galleries and art shops followed. In Bali, where many tourists visited, Soekarno asked expatriate James Pandey to open a gallery. Pandey had been a guide for the travel agent James Cook and had taken many tourists around Bali. Pandey's gallery in Sanur became an 'importer' of Tjio's studio artists' works.

Collecting became a trend, particularly for the educated elite and businessmen. Among these were Adam Malik, who became Vice-President in 1978, and PK Ojong, who co-founded the *Kompas* daily in 1965. Other names included Tjio Tek Djien, who set up the first studio for artists, Mardanus, Alex Papadimitrou, Sunaryo Umar Sidik, Oei Boen Po, Kosasih, Nie Swan Tie, Tan Sioe Hong, Oesman Laban, Santana, Hendra Hadiprana, Harris and Ong Pok Koey.

1959. Five years later, the collection increased even more, making a second, revised edition necessary. In 1964, Lee Man Fong selected 400 paintings and 167 sculptures for publication in five volumes. These were printed in Japan.⁴ A third edition was being prepared to be published on Soekarno's 65th birthday. But Soekarno was gradually sidelined after the aborted 'coup' of 1965 and the book was never printed.

As is usually the case with private collections, Soekarno's collection does not reflect the era's art scene in its entirety. Not one work of painters from the Bandung school was included in the collection, the reason probably being that Soekarno simply had no affinity with abstract works. Absent also are works by Emiria Soenassa, the only active woman painter of that time, the reason

⁴ Lee Man-Fong (ed.), *Lukisan2 dan patung2 koleksi Presiden Sukarno dari Republik Indonesia / Paintings and statues from the collection of President Sukarno of the Republic of Indonesia* (5 vols; n.p. Panitia Penerbit Lukisan-lukisan dan Patung-patung Koleksi Presiden Sukarno and Tokio: Toppan, 1964).

Without a doubt, Soekarno's role in advancing Indonesian art was indelibly linked to his political power. From the early 1940s and throughout his tenure as president, he supported art and artists in a way that made an impact on the development and advancement of the visual arts. From the founding of Poetera to his appointment of the palace artists, his opening of the palace for showcasing his collections, the opening of galleries and studios, his visits to artists and exhibitions, the appointment of an artist as Governor of Jakarta (Henk Ngantung) and the erection of monuments in Jakarta by Indonesia's artists, i.e. Tugu Selamat Datang, made to welcome the Asian Games in 1962, Tugu Dirgantara, to honour Indonesia's air fleet, Tugu Irian Jaya, to mark the struggle for Irian, and the Monumen Nasional. He often pushed the limits of artistic skill, infusing the artists and designers with courage to explore, experiment and go beyond their limits if needed. The sculptor Edhi Sunarso, who was involved in the making of many of these monuments, admits that he was initially hesitant because he had never worked with bronze, but the president pushed him: "Do you have national pride," he asked. "If you have, you just do it." And so Sunarso came to be a sculptor of name.

In summary, in many ways Soekarno was instrumental in the development of the Indonesian arts. Born in a time of political fermentation, modern Indonesian art was closely connected to the political vicissitudes of Indonesia and its first president. The connectedness of politics and arts for Soekarno was like yin and yang, a reciprocal relationship of stimulation, inspiration and legitimization.

The author wants to thank Agus Dermawan and Setianingsih Purnomo for their input and advice.



Basuki Abdullah

Dr. Soekarno, President of the Republic of Indonesia, undated

conté on paper, 43 x 40 cm

collection The Presidential Palace, Jakarta

The Visual Arts and Islam in Indonesia

Helena Spanjaard

What role does Islam play in the visual arts? Is there such a thing as 'Islamic' modern art in Indonesia? Indonesia may be the largest Muslim country in the world, yet no real Islamic movement has emerged in the modern visual arts. The reason for this lies in the way in which the modern art world arose in Indonesia and in the background and development of its artists, art education and the art market. The formative period for modern Indonesian art was 1900-1950. There were many European artists living in the colony in that period and they left their stamp on the artistic development of the first Indonesian artists. Most of the Indonesian pioneers were self-taught due to the lack of any art schools (until 1947). They often had private lessons from Dutch or other European artists. The art of painting in the colony was very conservative, with a preference for romanticised depictions of 'country and people' in a realist or impressionist style.

The first President of Indonesia, Soekarno, had an active cultural policy during his period of government (1945-1967), with the visual arts being used to promote nationalism. The styles the painters worked in were a continuation of the pre-war 'Beautiful Indies' art, with the addition of an emotional form of expressionism. The subjects dealt with daily life, the fight for independence, or romantic portraits, landscapes and market scenes.

After 1965, under the government of President Suharto (1967-1998), the art world became more oriented towards the West, in particular through the periods of study undertaken by Indonesian artists abroad. One of them was A.D. Pirous (1933) from Bandung, who was confronted in the U.S. with his original Muslim background. In American museums the artist came across Islamic calligraphy, an art form he himself had practised during his childhood in Aceh. A 'back to the roots' movement started in Bandung in the 1970s, with modern designers looking for inspiration in the many traditional art forms Indonesia abounds in. Pirous introduced paintings and graphic art incorporating Islamic calligraphy. One example of his style is the screen print *Surat Isra II*, in which a Koran text can be seen surrounded by red areas, inspired by traditional embroidery from Aceh. The flying figure above the text is the mythical winged animal (Buraq) that carried Mohammed to heaven.

Pirous' initiative did have some followers but it never resulted in a significant 'movement' within contemporary art. The visual arts in Indonesia are closely linked to the Western classical art canon, both in form and in content. Art schools give lessons in portrait and figure drawing, sketching *en plein air* and still life painting. They do not teach Islamic calligraphy. The form of Islam practised in Indonesia is generally moderate and influenced by the older cultures of Buddhism and Hinduism. Most Indonesian artists have

a Muslim background, but in their work – which is often very realistic and figurative – they are critical of extreme forms of Islam, which they actually reject.

The Indonesian art world is dominated by artists from urban, elite circles, with little difference between artists with a Muslim background and artists with a Christian background. Modern artists from Bali, with a Hindu background, belong to the same circles. Within the modern art world, motifs derived from the Javanese and Balinese wayang tradition are more important as a source of inspiration than motifs derived from Islam.



A.D. Pirous

Sura Isra II, 1983

silkscreen, 88 x 55 cm

Ries Mulder and the Development of Modern Art in Bandung

Helena Spanjaard

In 1954 a solo exhibition by the Dutch painter Ries Mulder (1909-1973) was held in the Bandung Art Society. The oil paintings at the exhibition were mainly still lifes, city views, landscapes and stylistic female figures. The exhibition ran from 28 March to 3 April and received highly favourable comments from a critic in a Dutch-language newspaper. "This is an interesting exhibition. It is particularly interesting because this Bandung artist has only been known so far through the works of his pupils and his active role in the Bandung art world. Only a few insiders and friends knew his 'own' work and it was therefore high time for the artist Mulder to break out of his isolation."¹

Compared with most other Dutch painters who worked in Indonesia, Ries Mulder's style was unusually modern. The painting *Balinese kust* (Balinese coast) of 1950 is a good example of the direction that Mulder chose from that year onwards. The same work was shown a few years earlier in Jakarta at an exhibition organised by the Stichting Culturele Samenwerking (Sticusa, Foundation for Cultural Cooperation) on 9-23 February 1951. This exhibition showed paintings by four Dutch painters: Willem Jilts Pol (1905-1988), Wim Schippers (1902-1984), Ries Mulder and Rudolf Bonnet (1895-1978). In the Indonesian cultural magazine *Zenith*, the critic M. Balfas wrote that he considered Mulder the most important of the four. Although Mulder had been influenced by Picasso and Braque, he managed to find 'a style of his own', according to Balfas. He particularly mentions the work *Balinese kust* as being an 'accomplished painting'.²

¹ 'Ries Mulder exposeert', *Algemeen Indisch Dagblad*, 29 March 1954; *Ries Mulder* (exhibition catalogue; Bandung: Bandung Art Society 1954).

² M. Balfas, 'Empat orang Belanda bersteling di Djakarta', *Zenith* 1.3 (15 March 1953) 159-164. Invitation to the exhibition *Nederlandse Schilders in Indonesië* (Dutch Painters in Indonesia) at the building of the Foundation for Cultural Cooperation, Molenvliet Barat 13, opening 9 February 1951.

3 In a letter to his family, written on 18 October 1945 in Pakan Baru, Mulder describes how he managed to survive the war years. After the capitulation of the Dutch authorities, Mulder was held in several Japanese internment camps at Cilacap, Cimahi and finally Pakan Baru. As a military doctor, Mulder worked as a barracks nurse or at the military hospital. Although this was very hard work, this position allowed Mulder to receive sufficient food to survive. At the Cimahi camp, where Mulder stayed for a year, he painted stage settings for theatrical performances and made portraits to earn some extra money. Private archive.

4 Jos Pouls et al., *Charles Eyck 1897-1983: kunstenaar tussen vernieuwing en traditie* (Maastricht: Stichting Historische Reeks Maastricht, 1997) 135-137. Page 137 lists Ries Mulder as the assistant of Van Eyck during the execution of the wall paintings in the Our Lady of the Ascension church in Helmond.

5 The still lifes and women's portraits made by Mulder between 1946 and 1955 show stylistic similarities to the works by Otto van Rees during the Bouwstraat period in Utrecht. Both artists were interested in renovations in the field of applied art for the Catholic Church, as was Charles van Eyck. For illustrations, see I. Lesparre et al., *Otto van Rees* (Zwolle: Waanders, 2005).



In 1954 Ries Mulder had been teaching at the Bandung academy of arts for six years. Besides teaching, he developed his own oeuvre, in which the influence of some of his earlier mentors in the Netherlands can be recognised, as well as more general influences from the École de Paris. Mulder had come to Indonesia in 1948 at the invitation of the Ministry of Education to help with the foundation of the first academy of arts in Indonesia. It was not the first time that Mulder had been to Indonesia. An earlier visit in 1939 had ended up in five years of internment in Japanese camps.³ He returned to the Netherlands in 1946, where he worked as an assistant to Charles Eyck (1897-1983).⁴ Before the war, Mulder had already worked with this respected pioneer of wall painting and stained glass art for a number of years (1933-1939). In 1946 Mulder lived and worked in Utrecht, in the same building as the painter Otto van Rees (1884-1957).⁵ Mulder originally was from IJsselstein (to the southwest of Utrecht). After following a training course as house painter in Utrecht, he decided to develop into an independent artist, apart from his work as an assistant to Charles Eyck. During his first journey to Indonesia, he earned a living by painting portraits for wealthy Chinese families in Magelang and Batavia. At that time his style was figurative. It was not until his return to the Netherlands (1946-1948) that he developed a form of 'cubism' of his own, by reducing the visible reality to geometric forms with a strong rhythm, emphasised by a subtle use of colours.

Ries Mulder

Fishermen Boats in Bali, 1950

oil on canvas, 63.5 x 82.5 cm

collection Municipal Museums, Delft
(Museum Nusantara)

purchased with support of the Mondriaan
Foundation

The Bandung Academy of Arts

From October 1947 onwards, training courses were given at the University Training Course for Art Teachers, the predecessor of the academy of arts in Bandung. The training course was part of the prestigious Bandung Technical College, which taught courses for aspirant engineers and architects. In 1947, Bandung was part of the Negara Pasundan, a federal state founded by the Dutch within the proposed federation of Indonesia. At that time, until the mid-1950s, the cultural life of Bandung was mainly oriented towards the Netherlands. The training courses for art teachers were part of the wider social objective of raising the cultural level of the colony. Before the Second World War, there had been discussions in colonial circles for many years about the necessity of encouraging cultural life in the Dutch East Indies. The main objective was to provide the Dutch who lived in the Netherlands East Indies with Western culture, to prevent the colonial families from being tainted by 'native' culture.

The key initiative was the foundation of the Netherlands Indies Art Societies at the turn of the twentieth century. The Art Societies could be found in all large cities. They provided a varied cultural programme such as exhibitions, musical and theatrical performances and lectures. Other proposals to improve the artistic climate were also discussed. Plans for the foundation of applied art schools had been in the works for thirty years, but these plans were never realised. Compared to the active colonial cultural politics of Great Britain and France, the Netherlands was considerably behind the times. As early as the 1850s; applied art schools had been founded in India and Indo-China which trained native craftsmen (as in Calcutta in 1854 and Bombay in 1857). These schools later developed into art academies where Western teachers taught (such as in Hanoi in 1925). Until 1947, Indonesia had no official visual arts academy. Aspiring artists took private lessons or were self-taught. There was no museum of modern art either, where examples of Western art could be viewed. The Galeri Nasional in Jakarta, where modern and contemporary art is exhibited, did not open its doors until 1998!⁶

The foundation of the University Training Course for Art Teachers, which was expanded to include a Fine Arts department, was a unique initiative taken by a few enthusiastic teachers. They wanted to offer the Indonesians the opportunity to participate in Western culture and eventually create a modern Indonesian culture. The training course fitted into the more general policy of the Technical College, a policy that underpinned the careers of several generations of Indonesian architects. In 1947, the Department of Education and Religious Affairs commissioned art teacher Simon Admiraal (1903-1992) to make a teaching plan for a training course for art teachers in Bandung. Until then, such a diploma could only be obtained in the Netherlands. Admiraal was the first headmaster of the institute (1947-1950), which was originally called the Academic Institute. Extensive correspondence with several candidate teachers shows that Admiraal did his very best to make sure that the course would be as creative as possible. The curriculum was based on similar training courses in the Netherlands, with subjects such as anatomical drawing, line drawing, rhythmic drawing, decorative arts, board sketching and handicrafts. However, Admiraal also wanted students to be educated as fine arts practitioners and not only as art teachers. He explains this in his first

6 For the discussion about applied art schools and the foundation of a museum of modern art, see Helena Spanjaard, *Het ideaal van een moderne Indonesische schilderkunst, 1900-1995; De creatie van een nationale culturele identiteit* (dissertation; Leiden University, 1998) chapter II, 'Mooi-Indië kunst en avant-garde kunst in Nederlands-Indië (1900-1942)' and chapter III, 'Het opkomende nationalisme: Oost of West'. Regarding the developments in India and the rest of Asia: John Clark, *Modern Asian Art* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998). Also: John Clark (ed.), *Modernity in Asian Art* (Broadway: Wild Peony, 1993).

letter to Ries Mulder, whom he had met in a Japanese internment camp: "One of my complaints against educating art teachers in the Netherlands was the excessive focus on being a teacher. Being an artist turned out to be totally unimportant and one hardly got a look-in in practice. (...) I thought it would be better to work with artists rather than with art teachers, who – certainly over here – are hardly aware of modern movements in painting and sculpture, or rather of modern movements in general, and I think it would be good to introduce such ideas at this school."⁷

After much correspondence and the usual official obstacles, Ries Mulder arrived in Bandung in 1948. He taught painting, art history and art philosophy (aesthetics). During the ten years of teaching in Bandung (1948-1958), he trained the first generation of students at the academy. Some of them became teachers themselves. Their names are now well-known in the Indonesian art world: Ahmad Sadali (1924-1987), Srihadi Sudarsono (*1931), But Muchtar (1930-1993), Mochtar Apin (1923-1995), A.D. Pirous (*1933), and Umi Dachlan (1942-2009). Later correspondence between Ahmad Sadali and Ries Mulder shows how much Mulder was respected and how much his education was missed after his departure.⁸

Ries (as he was known in Indonesia) had developed his own teaching method. He dictated his lessons, basing himself on his own handwritten notes.⁹ In the correspondence for the recruitment of teachers from the Netherlands, candidates were asked to bring art books with them, in particular, since these were not available in Indonesia. Simon Admiraal wrote, for example, in 1946: "As regards Visual Arts books, I would like to have a list of books including prices, if possible. (...) Dutch, English, American, French and in this case German books can be considered. There is far too little available, in particular about modern art. Catalogues from museums and exhibitions are very welcome, as are works about the philosophy of art. I would also like to ask you to make an effort – with as much tactful persuasiveness as possible – to get the various libraries in the Netherlands to give their duplicate copies to the Academic Institute."¹⁰ Pictures from the 1950s show that the library was well-filled, and that the students are studying diligently. Mulder was an erudite man, who liked to pass on his own knowledge to his pupils. In addition to art history and philosophy of art, he taught painting in a shared studio. Its main objective was to gain a sense for rhythm, colour and composition, based on an abstraction of the visible reality. His own paintings served as examples for this, along with the great names in modern art who were the inspiration for his personal work. Still lifes were obviously the favourite subject, but Ries Mulder also took his students outside to paint in the open air. Some of Mulder's fellow teachers taught more technical subjects such as decorative drawing (Jack Zeylemaker) and handicrafts (Piet Pijpers). Simon Admiraal was the headmaster of the school until 1950. After the transfer of sovereignty, Admiraal was replaced by an Indonesian headmaster, Sjafei Sumardja, who had been trained as an art teacher in the Netherlands.

⁷ Letter by Simon Admiraal to Ries Mulder, 5 July 1947, private archive. Spanjaard, *Het ideaal van een moderne Indonesische schilderkunst*, chapter VI: 'De controverse tussen Yogyakarta en Bandung'. Herbert van Rheeden, *Formalisme en expressie. Ontwikkelingen in de geschiedenis van het teken- en kunstonderwijs in Nederland en Nederlands-Indië gedurende de 19e en 20e eeuw* (dissertation; University of Amsterdam, 1988) 199-209.

⁸ Letter from Ahmad Sadali to Ries Mulder, 20 December 1973, private archive: "Many assignments were entrusted to the Seni Rupa (academy of arts). It seems that the seed planted by you in Indonesia at that time has grown into a strong tree, the fruits of which we are eager to pluck. Indonesia is grateful to you, Ries. Two of your students, Srihadi and I, have won the National Prize for Fine Arts for 1972."

⁹ Interview with Ab Kraayenoord, one of Ries Mulder's Indonesian students, Amsterdam 1992: "You had to write enormous amounts!"

¹⁰ Letter by Simon Admiraal to Piet Pijpers, 6 July 1946, private archive.



Library of the Art Academy, Bandung, 1950s.
archive H. Spanjaard



Ries Mulder giving painting lessons to students (inc. But Muchtar)
archive H. Spanjaard



Ahmad Sadali

Central Parc New York, 1957

oil on canvas, 40 x 50 cm

photo: H. Spanjaard

Bandung, the Slave of the 'Western Laboratory'?

In 1954 a controversial exhibition by students from Bandung was held at the Balai Budaya (Culture Pavilion) in Jakarta. This kind of abstract art had rarely been shown in Indonesia. It was sharply criticised in nationalist circles around Soekarno. The Indonesian writer and painter Trisno Sumardjo (1917-1969) believed that the Bandung academy had become the slave of the 'Western laboratory'. According to the poet Sitor Sitomorang (1923), the paintings were 'bourgeois', and were lacking 'content' and a 'message'. The jargon used by both critics was closely connected with their left-wing political positions and their sympathy for the more nationalistic and socially engaged artists like Affandi (1907-1990), Sindudarsono Sudjojono (1913-1986) and Hendra Gunawan (1917-1983). These artists had followed President Soekarno in 1946 to Yogyakarta, which had been the centre of the revolution against the Netherlands (1945-1950). The artists in Yogyakarta used expressionistic, impressionistic and realistic techniques. They were of course not interested in the aesthetic, 'abstract' art made in Bandung, which was still Dutch oriented.¹¹

A year after the exhibition in Jakarta, the Asia-Africa Conference was held in Bandung. The conference (1955) had been set up by President Soekarno to bring the non-aligned countries of the Third World closer together. Student meetings were also held within the context of the conference. An

¹¹ T. Sumardjo, 'Bandung mengabdikan laboratorium barat', *Mingguan Siasat*, 5 December 1954, p. 26; Sitor Sitomorang, 'Modernism', *Siasat*, 12 December 1954. Helena Spanjaard, 'Bandung, the laboratory of the West?' in: Joseph Fischer (ed.), *Modern Indonesian Art, Three Generations of Tradition and Change, 1945-1990* (Jakarta: Panitia Pameran KIAS and New York: Festival of Indonesia, 1990) 54-77.

accompanying exhibition showed works by art students from both Bandung and Yogyakarta. The exhibition brochure contained brief information about both art academies. It shows that in 1956 eleven students had passed their final exam in Bandung and sixty were registered. During the five-year course, attention was paid to pedagogy, art history and philosophy of art, besides the practical subjects such as painting and drawing, illustration, decorative arts and applied arts. Regarding the academy of Yogyakarta, the brochure states that four students passed the entire four-year training course and eleven the two-year drawing training course. At that moment 199 students were registered. The brochure states that the following subjects were taught in Yogyakarta: painting, sculpture, woodworking and metalworking, decorative and graphical art, and the teaching of drawing.¹²

A loose stencilled brochure of the Asia-Africa conference exhibition lists all the participating students including the titles of their works. The exhibits from Bandung comprise 37 paintings by 7 students. The exhibits from Yogyakarta comprise 43 paintings by 29 students. The subjects painted show large similarities. Still lifes, portraits and landscapes dominate. The curriculum in Yogyakarta did not differ so very much from the one in Bandung. Both training courses were based on the model of a Dutch art teacher's education, with the addition of a number of elective subjects that allowed students to be trained not only as teachers but as artists too. The academy in Yogyakarta was founded in 1950, three years after the academy in Bandung. The first headmaster, Raden Katamsi Martorahardjo, had been educated in the Netherlands as an art teacher. The same applied to the first Indonesian headmaster at Bandung, Sjafei Sumardja, who succeeded the Dutchman Simon Admiraal in 1950.

Between 1950 and 1965 there were clear differences in social background between the 'Bandung School' and the 'Yogyakarta School', but from an art history point of view the differences were less clear than the similarities. The similarities lay in the subjects taught: a classical, academic curriculum that focused on figure drawing and portrait drawing, still lifes, nature sketching and the theory of composition. Bandung, where the academy was a part of the Technical University, focused on rational analysis and abstraction. Ries Mulder's interest in Western modern art and his motivation to pass on this interest to his students laid the foundations for a relationship with international abstract art movements. Opposing this technical, rational approach was the emotional art world of Yogyakarta, the former centre of the revolution against the Dutch colonial government. The pioneers of Indonesian painting (Affandi, Hendra, Sudjojono) were all more or less self-taught. They had created an artistic context that would serve as the point of reference for painting in Yogyakarta until 1965. Their style was realistic, impressionistic or expressionistic. The content of the work, the ordinary lives of workers and peasants, was socially engaged. Although President Soekarno maintained close connections with the Soviet Union and China in those days, this never resulted in rigid regulations on the subjects painted. Most of the work that was produced between 1950 and 1965 is 'romantic' in nature, and in that sense it is a continuation of the pre-war 'Beautiful Indies' art produced by Dutch artists in the former Dutch East Indies. Only the subjects changed into scenes from daily life, with 'the people' (*rakyat*) as the main subject.



Ries Mulder in a workmeeting including Ahmad Sadali, 1950s.

archive H. Spanjaard

¹² *Eksposisi Seni-Rupa* (Jakarta: The Committee of Art Exhibition for the Asian Students' Conference, 1956).

In the Fifties, the Indonesian government pursued active cultural policies with the concepts of national unity and national identity in the vanguard. Paintings that expressed these notions were given preference by officials. The predominant taste in those days is shown in the private collection of President Soekarno, and also in the exhibits for foreign events such as the Biennial in São Paulo. Among the delegates was one of the most important art critics of Indonesia, who played a leading role in foreign cultural politics between 1950 and 1990: Kusnadi (1921-1997). Kusnadi, who had once started working as an artist, was also a teacher at the academy of Yogyakarta, chief editor of the magazine *Budaya* and an employee of the Ministry of Education and Culture. In 1954, this particular critic wrote a report on the Biennial in São Paulo. There was little abstract art among the 34 Indonesian exhibits, since Kusnadi believed that "we in Indonesia do not look for the kind of abstraction made up of broken forms (cubism), since we like to paint the decorative richness and the soul of nature and the objects around us."¹³

Modern Art in Indonesia

What about 'modern art' in Indonesia during the fifties? From the end of the nineteenth century onwards, oil painting had been imported into the East Indies by the Dutch and other Europeans. The level of the artists who lived and worked in the East Indies was very average and conservative compared to what was happening in Europe during the same period. This had everything to do with the lack of art academies and good modern art museums in the former colony. The poor level of most of the Dutch painters affected the development of the first East Indies and Indonesian artists. They were self-taught, except for the few who were able to travel to the Netherlands for their education. But even those who had the privilege of attending a course in the Netherlands did not bring cubism, surrealism or Dadaism back with them. They painted realistic or impressionist landscapes, market views and other exotic scenes, which were sold to Dutch or Indonesian-Chinese private individuals.

Only a few painters were exceptions to this rule: Walter Spies (1895-1942), Pieter Ouborg (1893-1956), Jan Frank (1885-1945), Adolf Breetveld (1892-1975) and Ries Mulder. These painters were interested in the new movements in modern art, and tried to keep themselves abreast of developments in Europe. Ouborg and Breetveld earned a living as art teachers at high schools. Ries Mulder was the only Dutch visual artist who taught at an Indonesian art academy. His 'geometric' style was very daring, compared to the realism that people were used to in Indonesia. Between 1948 and 1958 some of Mulder's students spent a period abroad. Some of them went to the Netherlands on scholarships from Sticusa (Mochtar Apin, Sudjana Kerton, Baharudin, Barli), others went to the United States, paid by the Rockefeller Foundation (Srihadi Sudarsono, Sudjoko, Ahmad Sadali, But Muchtar, A.D. Pirous). This latter group in particular eventually determined the direction taken by the 'Bandung School'. Once they were abroad, these artists started wondering what had happened to the ties with their own cultural traditions. From 1980 onwards, they started focusing on Indonesia's many different cultural traditions as a new source of inspiration.

There have been heated discussions in Indonesia itself about the impor-

¹³ Kusnadi, 'Bienal II di Sao Paulo', *Budaya* 3, 6 (1954) 5-47, esp. 31. *Paintings and Statues from the Collection of President Sukarno of the Republic of Indonesia*. Compiled by Lee Man Fong (5 vols; Tokyo 1964).

tance of the 'Bandung School' for many years. However, the contrasts between the art movements have become smaller nowadays. The younger generation has international contacts that render the former differences less important. Bandung still has a strong relationship with the architecture department. Many artists from Bandung have become designers for the rapidly growing group of *nouveau riche* businessmen. They decorate hotels, banks and the private houses of the elite. Other artists supply their paintings to the same group either directly or through auction houses and art galleries. In Yogyakarta, the artists have a strong bond with the traditional culture that can be found in such abundance at the cultural centre of Java. Tradition as a source of inspiration is more instinctive there than in the more 'technical' Bandung. Yet their work follows international movements too. It is bought by Indonesian and foreign collectors. Ries Mulder's style has even affected the current generation, not only in Bandung, but also in Yogyakarta, Bali and Jakarta.



Ahmad Sadali

Composition with Golden Remnants, 1977

oil on canvas, 100 x 100 cm

photo: H. Spanjaard

14 A. Siregar, *New painting, after non-representational painting in Bandung* (Bandung: Galeri Kita, 2004). In the field of visual documentation, the best sources of information are the catalogues issued for exhibitions (both national and international), but these are rarely available in the Netherlands. The following recent publications provide extensive visual material in a large format: Helena Spanjaard, *Indonesian Odyssey: A private journey through Indonesia's most renowned fine art collections* (Jakarta etc.: Equinox Asia, 2008); Koes Karnadi, *Modern Indonesian art, from Raden Saleh to the present day* (Ubud: Koes Artbooks, 2006); Helena Spanjaard, *Exploring modern Indonesian art: The collection of Dr. Oei Hong Djien* (Singapore: SNP Editions, 2004).

Chinese-Indonesian Artists in Indonesia

Helena Spanjaard

Is there a 'Chinese' art movement in Indonesia, and what does this art look like? A small number of Indonesian artists have Chinese ancestry. Their forefathers emigrated to Indonesia in the nineteenth or twentieth centuries. They often married Indonesian women and became integrated into Indonesian society. During the colonial period, the Chinese-Indonesian group enjoyed certain privileges, including being able to follow a Dutch education. During the period when President Soekarno was in power (1945-1967), Indonesia maintained cordial relations with China. The best-known Chinese-Indonesian painter, Lee Man Fong (1913-1988), emigrated to Indonesia from China via Singapore in 1932. His works show both Western and Eastern aspects. Like the majority of older Chinese-Indonesian artists, he produced Impressionist oil paintings. In addition, he developed a style based on traditional Chinese art. Lee Man Fong, who was Soekarno's 'court painter' and curator of the presidential art collection during the last years of the regime, put together the second edition of the series of books about Soekarno's collection in 1964. The first issue in 1956 was a gift from Mao Zedong to Soekarno on the occasion of his state visit to China that year.

After the gradual takeover of power by general Suharto in the years from 1965 to 1967, the Chinese population was faced with repressive measures. People had to change their Chinese names into Indonesian ones and the Chinese language was forbidden. Creating clearly recognisable Chinese art such as calligraphy was not tolerated in public life. The situation changed after Suharto's resignation in 1998. Nowadays many Indonesians with Chinese backgrounds have reverted to their original names, and writing and painting Chinese characters is very popular. In the field of art, this means that some artists – who had to work underground for years – are now finally able to flourish. One of them, Sidik W. Martowidjoyo (1937), has developed a unique way of painting on paper with a brush. He has been invited to China a number of times over recent years to give demonstrations and lectures. The continuation and development of 'traditional' Chinese art on paper is in the hands of a small group of artists.

The current generation of artists with Chinese-Indonesian backgrounds are mostly part of a politically critical avant-garde circle. Their paintings and installations bear witness to the position of the Chinese minority, which is still troubled. Many Chinese Indonesians belong to the economic elite and are Christians. The Chinese population and the Christian churches have over recent years regularly been the target of riots venting the frustrations about the poor economic situation. The artworks of FX Harsono (born in Indonesia, 1949) comment on the precarious position of the Chinese minority.

They call for Islam and Christianity to tolerate each other – toleration that was (and is) natural to the usual moderate brand of Islam. Harsono works with Catholic priests at creating a more tolerant climate in which people can get along together peacefully, whatever their ethnicity or religion.

The riots of 1998, which targeted the Chinese minority above all, remain an important subject for many Indonesian artists. Shortly after these riots, artists from differing backgrounds (Islamic, Christian, Hindu and Buddhist) showed their concern by putting on a joint exhibition. In addition, the



FX Harsono (1948)

Republik Indochoas, 1999-2009

charcoal, pencil on paper (5 panels),
46.5 x 56.5 cm (51 x 61 cm incl. frame)

collection of the artist

current global situation – in which contemporary Chinese art has become a key player in the international art world – has altered the way in which China is seen, in a positive sense. Artists from Chinese backgrounds, such as FX Harsono and Dadang Christanto, are benefiting from the greater political openness and the internationalisation of the Asiatic art market.

The Frame of Time

A Note on the Past, Present and Future of Indonesian Art

Enin Supriyanto

A big change is the fruit of a lengthy passing of time. It does not come from the desire of those who beget it.

(Kartini, letter to R.M. Abendanon-Mandri, 18 May, 1903)

I have too often heard the praise of many: Your country is truly beautiful. And when are the Indonesian people beautiful to them? As beautiful as the land? And more so because of their civilisation and their culture? Because of what they have contributed to humanity? Because their thoughts are not constrictive and narrow?

(Pramoedya Ananta Toer, *Nyanyi sunyi seorang bisu* [The Mute's Soliloquy], 1995)

All stories begin with 'Once upon a time'.

(E.H. Gombrich, *A Little History of the World*, 1985)

Since 1945 Indonesia has seen revolution, parliamentary democracy, civil war, presidential autocracy, mass murder, and military role. Where is the design in that?

(Clifford Geertz, 'Afterword: The politics of meaning', in Claire Holt (ed.), *Culture and Politics in Indonesia*, 1972)

Currently, Indonesians are preparing to choose a new pairing of president and vice-president, who will hold these important positions in the five-year period of 2009-2014. This time, there are three contesting pairs; each with a candidate who had served as a military officer during the repressive era of Suharto's New Order regime, that lasted until 1998. Without naming names or, even less so, citing evidence, it is still a subject of debate in Indonesia today – one can safely say that the three ex-military officers, while they were still in service, had been directly involved in a variety of decision-making processes of the Suharto regime as well as in their execution, which resulted in the loss of property and the lives of their own citizens. The fact is that none of them have ever openly explained their dark past to the public through, say, a process of transparent and accountable political reconciliation. It is also a fact that they have now become Indonesia's presidential and vice-presidential candidates in these general elections, which will be held for the third time since Suharto's demise.

Their straightforward path into the political arena and into presidential/vice-presidential positions in Indonesia can serve as an interesting subject of debate: How do Indonesians view their past and history as a nation? Is it not true that those men played their military role and held their positions in an era that elapsed no more than ten or eleven years ago? Are the Indonesian people actually ignoring this fact, or have they forgotten it? In many cases, people might have assigned meanings to the past and history through a variety of historical narratives, which have been flexibly and continuously reproduced, and which have gained their respective 'truth' in a range of versions, from one period to the next, and from one generation to the next.

What is occurring within Indonesian socio-political life today with regard to the past also seems to be taking place in Indonesian art practices. It is interesting to observe how the awareness of history in the current practices of art in Indonesia seems to be framed within different structures of understanding and visual strategies, covering a range of modern and contemporary artworks. At the same time, these frames seem to have become so powerful that they are able to compress time into a limited space. Apparently, it is in this narrow space that the past – or, in its even more extensive sense, the history of art – is presented and understood by Indonesian artists; as a time and space that revolves around the axis of the 'here and now', while the rest – the bygone eras, or even possible predictions about the future – gradually fades to the back of one's memory, to become vague, and to disappear unrecognised as if swallowed by some supernatural and mysterious force. Even today, to most Indonesians the past and history are not experienced as the brightly shining lamp that can help explain the myriad of problems at hand, or that may enlighten the path to the future. In this tropical land that was once a Dutch colony for more than a hundred years, the past and national history are often presented as a 'hidden force' that exists in the dark.¹

Raden Saleh, Pieneman and Heri Dono

In 2007, Jogja Gallery, at the time a brand new gallery in the town of Yogyakarta, held an exhibition entitled *200 Tahun Raden Saleh: Ilusi-ilusi Nasion-*

¹ I borrow the metaphors about darkness and light, as well as the term of 'the hidden force' from Rudolf Mrázek's analysis of the novel *De stille kracht* (lit. 'the silent force', but translated into English as *The Hidden Force*) by the Dutch novelist Louis Couperus, which was published and in circulation in the beginning of the twentieth century. In the novel, it seems that in the ex-Dutch colony there is always something mysterious hiding in the dark. Referring to the last part of the novel, Mrázek wrote, "When it came to the climax of this novel, only a 'little nickel lamp' illuminated the scene. The wife of the Dutch official in town, the resident, was attacked by 'the hidden force' as she took her evening bath. Her naked white body was polluted by never-explained red stains, blood, or betel-red saliva, from the darkness." Rudolf Mrázek, *Engineers of Happy Land: Technology and nationalism in a colony* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002) 90.

alisme (The 200th Anniversary of Raden Saleh: Illusions of Nationalism). Because this title clearly refers to both nationalism and to the name of an eminent painter, Raden Saleh (1807-1880), and since it was a group exhibition, one can easily surmise that the works on display generally presented themes that referred back to the visual heritage of Raden Saleh; one would expect contemporary artists to reflect on, for example, Raden Saleh's self-portraits and a number of his most famous paintings, in order to place them within the framework of 'Indonesia' as a contemporary nation.

One of the works in this exhibition that captured my attention most strongly was a painting by Heri Dono, entitled *Salah Tangkap Pangeran Diponegoro* (Prince Diponegoro Mistakenly Arrested, 2007). At first glance, the painting shows all the familiar elements that one generally encounters in Heri Dono's paintings, such as the dull, brownish tone and the distorted figures painted flatly, resembling two-dimensional wayang profiles. Two things, however, distinguish it from Heri Dono's earlier paintings. First of all, the characters that he painted refer to contemporary and historical politicians and public leaders. In this painting we can still easily recognise their faces, although they have been deformed in typical Heri Dono style. We can, for example, distinguish ex-President Suharto, Amien Rais, Abdurrahman Wahid and even the current Indonesian president, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. Secondly, Heri Dono's work clearly refers to, or even appropriates, the well-known painting by Raden

Saleh from 1857, which is known to the general public in Indonesia as *Penangkapan Pangeran Diponegoro* (Prince Diponegoro's Arrest).²

Naturally, in line with his common practice so far, Heri Dono created this work as a sort of parody of, and criticism against, the wishy-washy attitude of current Indonesian leaders towards the ex-Indonesian President of the New Order regime, Suharto. Heri Dono's work came at a timely moment for the Indonesian people, who felt the need for a clear rule of law within the system of democracy that they had been enjoying for over a decade. The painting was completed and presented at the very moment that the Indonesian people were questioning whether



Heri Dono

Salah Tangkap Pangeran Diponegoro (Prince Diponegoro Mistakenly Arrested), 2007

acrylic on canvas, 150 x 200 cm
collection of the artist

or not Suharto should be brought to court to account for a range of acts of violence and graft, or whether he should be forgiven in view of his dedication to Indonesia during his reign.

Essentially, therefore, that work by Heri Dono does not really deal with problems of the past. The time and place he inserted into his frame are the time and place of the here and now. For me, it is rather problematic that this painting does not actually reveal the artist's stance towards the past. One can say without hesitation that he was not trying to question the historical com-

² According to Peter Carey's research, the painting by Raden Saleh – which describes the dramatic moments in which Prince Diponegoro was detained by the Dutch Military Commander, Lieutenant-General H.M. de Kock on 28 March, 1830, in Magelang, Central Java – actually has the full title of: Historical Painting, the Capture of the Javanese Leader Diepo Negoro (*Historische Tableau, die Gefangennahmen des Javanischen Hauptling Diepo Negoro*). See Peter Carey, *Asal-usul Perang Jawa: pemberontakan Sepoy dan lukisan Raden Saleh* (Yogyakarta: LKIS 2004) 150.

plexity of Raden Saleh's painting, whether in terms of form or content. Heri Dono simply relied on a vague and general recognition of the visual elements and basic content of Raden Saleh's painting about Prince Diponegoro in order to transfer this entire spatial and temporal context to the present. In doing so, he merely fulfils his own aesthetic need to comment humorously on the prevailing social and political conditions in Indonesia. At the same time, however, he was actually dealing with issues that could have given him the opportunity to enter the problematic realm of the Indonesian past and to immerse himself in it. One could imagine that Heri Dono was not aware of, or simply ignored the historical facts that provide specific interpretations of this particular painting by Raden Saleh. In this painting, the key figure is Prince Diponegoro, the indigenous leader of the Java War (1825-1830), which was to become one of the most significant events in Indonesian history.

Several scholars affirm that Raden Saleh's painting of *Penangkapan Pangeran Diponegoro* (1957) had been a direct reference to a similar painting depicting the same event, which had been created in 1830-1835 by the Dutch painter Nicolaas Pieneman. This earlier painting was entitled *De onderwerping van Diepo Negoro aan lieutenant-general Hendrik Merkus Baron de Kock, 28 maart 1830, waarmee de Java-oorlog (1825-1830) werd beëindigd* (The Submission of Prince Dipo Negoro to Lieutenant-General de Kock on 28 March 1830, which ended the Java War (1825-1830)). The work is now part of the collection of the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, the Netherlands. An important issue which would later become a main focus of interest was the presence of a number of changes and 'corrections' that Raden Saleh executed in his reinterpretation of this painting. As a result, Raden Saleh's version is now considered an important manifestation of the seeds of nationalism and resistance against the Dutch colonial power that grew within Raden Saleh himself during those years. As such, this painting was one of the first manifestations of the fruits that some of the colonised people harvested from the opportunity to study, work and mingle with the European nobility and intellectuals, thus emancipating themselves and strengthening their awareness of basic inequalities in the relationship between colonisers and colonised. To quote the Indonesian intellectual Jim Supangkat: "The painting of *Prince Diponegoro's Arrest* shows that Raden Saleh, who at that moment had the status of royal Dutch painter, also sided with the resistance movement that fought against the Dutch-Indies authority."³ Although Raden Saleh presented the painting to the Dutch ruler, King Willem III,⁴ Jim Supangkat was convinced that this also showed his intention to criticise the Dutch monarchy. At the same time, Supangkat doubted whether King Willem III actually 'understood the hidden criticism' of the painting.⁵ Meanwhile, Peter Carey, a diligent Java War scholar, stated in his 2001 publication on the subject that the painting clearly shows Raden Saleh's disrespect towards Lieutenant-General H.M. de Kock, the commander of the Java War.⁶

Let's keep Jim Supangkat's and Peter Carey's explanations in mind when focusing again on Heri Dono's painting. Why is his work so completely detached from the various historical complexities that were central to the historical paintings of Raden Saleh and Nicolaas Pieneman? Comparing the works of all three artists – Pieneman, Raden Saleh and Heri Dono – you could easily conclude that each work conveys a personal interpretation. In Pieneman's work, the past is framed in a cold, petrified way, recorded as a



Raden Saleh

Prince Diponegoro's Arrest, 1857

oil on canvas, 112 x 178 cm

collection The Presidential Palace, Jakarta



Nicolaas Pieneman

The Submission of Prince Dipo Negoro to Lieutenant-General de Kock on 28 March 1830, which ended the Java War (1825-1830)

oil on canvas, 77 x 100 cm

collection Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

³ Jim Supangkat, 'Raden Saleh dan revolusi 1848', in: J.B. Kristanto, *Seribu tahun Nusantara* (Jakarta: Kompas, 2000) 589.

⁴ "(...) as his (Saleh's) sign of gratitude for the education and training as an artist, which he had gained for almost 23 years (1829-1851) in Europe." Carey, *Asal-usul Perang Jawa*, 147.

⁵ Supangkat, 'Raden Saleh dan revolusi 1848', 591.

⁶ Carey, *Asal-usul Perang Jawa*, 153.

congealed moment in time. The painting served as an effort to immediately record an important event in an 'objectified' way, or as some sort of 'journalistic documentation'.⁷ In Raden Saleh's work however, we encounter a subjectively revised and reinterpreted past and history. Meanwhile, in Heri Dono's painting, the historical narrative is completely veiled or even non-existent. Heri Dono created a new, parodical narrative using his own visual language, anchored in a clear and constrained time and space: here, in the present, in the here and now of Heri Dono himself. He did not undertake any specific actions to review crucial issues of Raden Saleh's painting, despite the fact that this painting served as his point of reference.

The Wheel, Spinning in Circles

The case of Heri Dono and his work exemplifies how contemporary Indonesian artists – or even the Indonesian youth in general – approach their own nation's past and history. It is a historical detachment that might very well be related to the general Indonesian understanding of life as a continuous cycle: of time revolving around its axis in an infinite process. For each of us, for each generation or distinct group of people, this axis might be different. Within the understanding of Indonesian people, time and history are not always in line, let alone identical, with the idea of progress or a movement towards the future. In Indonesia, time – as defined in past, present and future – is not experienced as a linear process, but rather as the movement of a wheel, spinning in circles.

While reading Benedict Anderson's analysis on the biography of Dr. Sutomo, a progressive youth figure who proclaimed the advent of Indonesian nationalism at the beginning of the twentieth century by establishing the youth organisation of Budi Utomo in Batavia (Jakarta), I found a wonderful description of this phenomenon.⁸ Sutomo, a Javanese educated in the West, was a man who still viewed the past as a very simple but effective pattern, separating time in two distinct, and even contrasting, cycles: the past era (*zaman dulu*) and the current era (*zaman sekarang*).⁹ Although the relationship between these two contrasting periods is ambiguous in nature, Sutomo merely denies the complexity of this relationship, as Anderson clearly analyses: "One does not get a strong feeling that the implications are developmental or progressive at all."¹⁰ By comparing the development of his own life with that of his ancestors, that of a person living *in the past* and one living *in the present*, Sutomo actually confirmed that each political party existed within a distinct time and space – manifesting itself separately in its respective eras. In his view, the relationship between ancestors and their descendants, between former political movements and his own political struggle, constituted a cosmological encounter rather than a chronological one. Ben Anderson suggests that "Sutomo's separation from his forefathers is located exactly at this conceptual level: that he perceives himself and them encased in different times."¹¹ As a Javanese, Sutomo interpreted time as a revolving cycle or, as a natural and inherent part of the cosmological realm. This is confirmed by Ben Anderson, who indicates that Sutomo "(...) uses the old image of 'the turning world'" and who continues as follows: "In traditional Javanese thought, there was, as it were, a natural consonance between

⁷ The painting was made right after 1830, the year in which the bloody and violent Java War came to an ending. Pieneman may have been inspired by Dutch witness reports, without ever having been to Indonesia himself. The title of his work reveals a distinct interpretation as Diponegoro submitting himself to the Dutch, while historical sources indicate that Diponegoro came to Magelang in order to negotiate with the Dutch – under the protection of a white flag. His capture was thus a serious betrayal. Seen from that perspective, Pieneman's painting may be interpreted as a historical falsification, instead of an 'objectified' report. In this case, we can consider that it was Raden Saleh, and not Pieneman, who felt the need to objectify the historical event. And, Raden Saleh might deliberately have chosen to outdo Pieneman by producing a painting that was far bigger than Pieneman's relatively small work. Raden Saleh painted the work several years after he had returned to Indonesia, in 1851.

⁸ Benedict Anderson positions Budi Utomo as an organisation signifying a new era of the nationalism movement in Indonesia: "(...) Budi Utomo represents simply the earliest Indonesian attempt to cope with the colonial condition in Western (modern) ways. Even though Budi Utomo's very name was more Javanese than Indonesian; though its membership was restricted ethnically to what Clifford Geertz has called 'Inner Indonesia' and socially to priyayi students and officials; and though its formal aims did not encompass political independence; yet its structural novelty seemed to mark a clear break with the past." Benedict Anderson, 'A time of darkness and a time of light', in: *The Spectre of Comparisons, Nationalism, Southeast Asia and the World* (London and New York: Verso, 1998) 77-104, esp. 80.

⁹ Ibidem, 85.

¹⁰ Ibidem, 87.

¹¹ Ibidem, 88.

the movement of a man's life and the movement of a cosmos. The turning wheel is an image of motion and stillness, departure and return. The form of universal time is one of creation and destruction, followed by creation and destruction, and so on."¹²

It is interesting to observe how Sutomo's view has been strongly affirmed by Pramoedya Ananta Toer, an Indonesian author and intellectual who experienced the military and political violence of the New Order regime at first hand, through isolation and imprisonment on the Moluccan Island of Buru. At one time, after having watched a *wayang* (shadow puppet) performance on the remote island, Pramoedya noted, "Indeed, we have not moved away from this reality: my ancestors had built so many kingdoms, destroyed them, rebuilt them and destroyed them again, from one century to the next, so much so that they did not have the chance to record it truly, it was not wholly historical, and neither was it wholly pre-historical. It is a devil's loop, with a point of departure, and returning to that point of departure. The blood in which they bathed did not make them any younger. Indeed we are an old nation, always acting within the vicious circle: from the open gate of the colonial era to the open gate of the post-colonial period, how many blood-baths?"¹³ For Pramoedya, it seems that there is no way out of this 'vicious circle'. As if there is no time frame imaginable to enable you to escape from this oppressive cycle.

Rudolf Mrázek, in his analysis of Pramoedya's notes from the Island of Buru, considered that the 'vicious circle' that Pramoedya elucidated in his writing constituted a statement about the flow of time that is utterly vicious and even fearful: "The perilous flow of time is feared, damned, divided into little streams, and, as it had been so often before, subjected to a bird's-eye perspective."¹⁴ Therefore, he said, such a flow of time required an anchor, a tether, a signpost. In Pramoedya's case, there is no stronger signpost or anchor imaginable than the "Indonesian Independence Revolution."¹⁵

I think the cycle of the cosmos, or the wheel's cycle in Sutomo's view, or the 'vicious circle' in Pramoedya's thoughts, constitute a certain perspective that, directly or indirectly, is still present within the minds of most Indonesians today. To me – and perhaps also to Heri Dono and many other young Indonesians who have experienced the era of 'Development' (*Pembangunan*) and repression under Suharto and his New Order regime, as well as to those who have experienced the development of a democracy that, in the past decade, is still seeking its appropriate form – to us all together, the idea of time orbiting around its axis can give us both fate and hope. The spinning wheel as a fatal condition might be comforting, because we will all undergo this fate. As a sign of hope, the cycle of time promises us something, although we do not know what exactly, and we do not know when it will be fulfilled; instead, we just hope that something 'good and true' will overcome us. Meanwhile, the signposts – the 'Independence Revolution' that Pramoedya mentioned, or the 'wisdom of the ancestors' in Sutomo's view – are regarded as the noble, virtuous and grand achievements of Indonesians of a certain time, all of them limited to their respective eras. To the Indonesians of today, all of these achievements are far removed from the present. There is a non-explicit distance that separates this present from the past; viewed from here, the past is unattainable. Is it true then, that Indonesians tend to, by nature, preoccupy themselves with the here and now?

¹² Ibidem, 88-89.

¹³ Pramoedya Ananta Toer, *Nyanyi sunyi seorang bisu. Catatan-catatan dari P. Buru* (Jakarta: Lentera, 1995) 37. Rudolf Mrázek also elucidated this issue in *Engineers of Happy Land*, 204.

¹⁴ Mrázek, *Engineers of Happy Land*, 205.

¹⁵ He directly quoted Pramoedya's note: "Whatever the other circumstances might be: whoever did not pass the test of the national revolution will fail in all other tests that may follow; whatever he might do otherwise, he will be only pretending to be living; the intensity of his life vanishes, all that a man might achieve for himself, all the qualities he possibly might have given to his nation, vanishes."

The Myth of Traditional Javanese Culture

In any case, a range of practices and policies of cultural politics in different eras seem to have confirmed this interpretation of time and history, making it an unconscious niche in the minds of most people in Indonesia. To discuss this issue, I would like to refer to the history of Java, whose historical sources are indeed more accessible to me than the historical material of the other islands and cultures of the archipelago. Take, for example, the publications of Nancy K. Florida, who has long been assiduously researching a variety of manuscripts of what we know as 'Traditional Javanese Literature'. Her analysis can assist us in comprehending how policies of cultural politics have helped to create a mental cage that still prevents the Javanese from understanding their own history and the achievements of their ancestors. Florida believes that what is now commonly called 'Traditional Javanese Literature' is in fact a legacy of the Dutch colonial authority, which deliberately and systematically tried to distance the common Javanese from their own culture, right after the end of the Java War (1830) had signified the demise of the power of the Javanese kings – to be exact, right after General De Kock had arrested and incarcerated Prince Diponegoro. The end of the Java War thus marked the final establishment of Dutch colonial power on the island of Java. At the same time, efforts were made to control the elitist Javanese nobility by presenting an 'image of the break on the hand of the Javanese elite' and to subsequently create an 'ideological construction' that would later be presented as 'traditional Javanese culture'. Nancy K. Florida explicitly states: "That construct was articulated in part through a delineation and identification of high Javanese culture as an entity standing in opposition to Islam and as the exclusive and conservative realm of a hyper-refined elite class."¹⁶ With that analysis, I believe Florida has successfully provided an image of how the policy of cultural politics of the colonial era could create a false awareness of history and self-identification among the Javanese society. Such an artificial identification served to distance the Javanese from their own classical tradition.

Regarding the Javanese attitude towards this 'traditional Javanese literature' at the end of the twentieth century, Florida notes that there have been two general viewpoints: first, there are some who believe that it is a shameful accomplishment from a decadent, conservative and feudal era; second, there are others who think that these 'traditional' and 'classic' works constitute "icons of high culture, mysteriously inscribed jewels from a rich cultural inheritance"¹⁷. She subsequently states that "this classical image today belongs to a modern discursive formation I call 'the cult of *adiluhung*' – 'the beautiful sublime'." In such a cult, the 'classic', considered as the result of a most glorious past, gains respect and recognition as an ideal and noble achievement. At the same time, such a view situates 'the beautiful sublime', the *adiluhung*, in an isolated position: unassailable, unfathomable, unattainable, mysterious.

Returning to Mrázek's analysis of Pramoedya's view on the flow of time that requires anchors or signposts, we can perhaps imagine how many cases of 'the beautiful sublime' have occurred in the minds of contemporary Indonesians. To Pramoedya, it is the 'Independence Revolution'; to Suharto and his generals from the New Order era, it is their successful crushing and eradication of the Communists in Indonesia in 1965-66, or it might be their development programmes from later years; to Heri Dono, it is perhaps Raden Saleh, or S. Sudjojono, Affandi

¹⁶ Nancy K. Florida, *Menyurat yang silam, menggarut yang menjelang: Sejarah sebagai nubuat di Jawa masa kolonial* (Yogyakarta: Benteng Budaya, 2003) 27. (I refer to the Indonesian version of the book, which has been translated from: Nancy K. Florida, *Writing the Past, Inscripting the Future: History as prophecy in colonial Java* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995).

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, 33.

and others – his predecessors, the painters and artists who are considered the ‘masters’ of visual arts in Indonesia

A Devil's Loop?

At the end of the day, it might be appropriate to conceive the wheel cycle and its various signposts as a devil's loop, a cage for contemporary Indonesians. Existing and operating within such a historical and temporal confinement, contemporary Indonesian artists might ultimately situate time and history within the same, old, restrictive space of the here and now. Also to them, the past seems to be a distant, unattainable territory, whether considered as something separate, isolated ‘in *that* era’, something unfathomable or even perhaps something that is accepted as an inevitable fate, moving within the continuous cycle of a spinning wheel. This attitude of distance is an unconscious, natural one; it is not deliberately chosen to view the past with the goal of gaining an ‘objective’ understanding, or to develop a modulus of scientific research, or to develop a future strategy. The relationship between the actor and his fate is merely arbitrary, enhanced by the criss-crossing events of the here and now. The actor – the self – is not regarded as an individual that chooses and acts according to linear, causal relations between past, present and future.¹⁸ In Indonesia, there is an expression that is commonly used to explain this issue: ‘Fate revolves like a cartwheel’; sometimes up, sometimes down, always spinning round and round. In this condition, there is no concept of chronological development, like progress, evolution or revolution. The emphasis is on the mere movement of the wheel itself, a movement that exists within an exclusive and isolated frame of time and space.

Involution? Perhaps Mr. Geertz was right.¹⁹

Clifford Geertz, researcher of agriculture in Java (1963) was puzzled by the farmers’ natural submission to their fate. By comparison, many Indonesians may have come to terms with time and history, as they have accepted the cycle of seasons. Indeed, these are the dynamics of involution. Ben Anderson once stated that there had been many references to light and dawn in the initial eras of the twentieth century, when nationalism first emerged in Indonesia. They were the manifestation of the symbols of a new era, of awareness and awakening. The title of the famous collection of letters by R.A. Kartini, *Door Duisternis tot Licht* (From Darkness to Light), according to Anderson, “bears the same symbolic stamp.”²⁰ I think, however, that this particular light and dawn might not just symbolise the end of an era of darkness, moving towards an era of light. The belief in the advent of the dawn could very well represent a trust in the cosmological rationale that sees darkness and light as naturally rotating in the cycle of life. Light and dawn do not necessarily signify awareness and awakening. They might simply constitute the hope that fate will still be spinning like a wheel.

But what is actually the problem with that? And why should we define it as a problem when it comes to art? Is there something wrong with Indonesian contemporary artists simply preoccupying themselves with the here and now? Is it not true that it might mean that they are living their life full of zest and fervour, embracing the intensity of moments, enjoying each day to the full? Isn't

¹⁸ We can contrast this concept of progress with the core concept of the progress of Western civilisation in general acceptance and critiques towards the Enlightenment (or, modernity) either with Auguste Comte's idea on the ‘positive stage’ or Karl Marx's idea of ‘class struggle’. For a general discussion on this issue, see Gerard Delanty, ‘The foundations of social theory’, in: Bryan S. Turner, *The New Blackwell Companion to Social Theory* (Malden etc.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008) 23–29.

¹⁹ Clifford Geertz's idea about agricultural involution in Java was once very influential among sociologists and politicians in Indonesia in the mid-sixties and perhaps even today. Geertz's book, *Agricultural involution: The process of ecological change in Indonesia* (Berkeley etc.: University of California Press, 1963) once served as compulsory reading of sorts, sent to the department of agriculture at various universities in Indonesia. See Ben White, ‘Between apologia and critical discourse: Agrarian transitions and scholarly engagement in Indonesia’, in: Vedi R. Hadiz and Daniel Dhakidae (ed.), *Social Science and Power in Indonesia* (Jakarta: Equinox and Singapore: ISEAS, 2005) 114, esp. footnote 18.

²⁰ Anderson, ‘A time of darkness’, 79.

that an attitude towards life that recalls the vitalist expressions as immortalised in a poem by Chairil Anwar (which he, for the record, wrote in 1943 and entitled *Diponegoro*): One time meaningful / And then perish (*Sekali berarti / Sudah itu mati*)?

To me, the problem is that this fascination with the here and now, as evident in the selection of themes and forms in a variety of Indonesian contemporary artworks of today, is still part of this unconscious obstruction, the lack of historical awareness, coupled with the dizziness and often inability to face what the future holds. The act of totally enjoying the present day, which is near and at hand, might not be a deliberate choice but simply a consequence that one must endure. Within the imprisonment of the wheel of time and the signposts of 'the beautiful sublime', the *adiluhung*, the past becomes as inaccessible and hard to accept as a well of reflections. At the same time, the future is inevitably something that is incapable of being planned.

All along the tunnel of time, both of whose ends are dark, the practices of Indonesian contemporary art can only lumber forward, teetering and sometimes rife with repetitions. Many artists simply hold on to these patterns, trapped in a protracted mannerism. One of the real symptoms of such dizziness has been the absence of a tradition of critical discourse in the practice of Indonesian contemporary art, and the mere absence of scientific research in the field of modern arts in Indonesia since 1945. This condition worsens even, as the institution of the museum – that executes the task of keeping collections, conserving and presenting cultural heritage to the public and developing integrated educational programmes – has been virtually ineffective ever since museums were established in Indonesia. The most important and valuable painting collection of the twentieth century is stored and displayed in the Presidential Palaces, which are difficult to access for the Indonesian public. Other state institutions such as the National Gallery and the Art and Ceramics Museum – both in Jakarta, and housing valuable collections – have hardly developed any proper collection policies and consequently have not expanded their collections. Many works in these collections have not been well preserved either. It is only rarely (or perhaps never) that these institutions succeed in presenting events that successfully capture the public attention, luring the public into becoming familiar with their historical collections and enjoying them. To the Indonesian people, their cultural past is indeed inaccessible, isolated in a web of unverifiable myths and legends.

What has been blooming, however, is precisely the institution representing the ultimate here and now: the capitalist art market, penetrating even further into the network of global art. This market requires an artistic pattern that is stable and safe, thus creating opportunities for unbridled mannerism, trends and repetitions to thrive. It is this market that serves as the axis for artistic production, here, in Indonesia, in the present day.

Yogyakarta and Bandung: Content and Style *

Nicole Baros

In 1950, the cultural landscape of Indonesia was in a different state than today. After independence, Dutch cultural legacies were unevenly distributed over the archipelago. This was also clearly visible in the various cities of the island of Java. For instance in Bandung, Dutch influences were much stronger than in Yogyakarta, the capital of the independent Republic, where many sympathizers of the Republic had flocked.¹ Not all were fighters: also artists followed president Soekarno to Yogyakarta, where they tried to support the struggle by painting the urban and village life in the Republic and the spirit of the revolution.

Early 1950, two weeks after the formal transfer of sovereignty and the end of the struggle against the Dutch, ASRI (Akademi Seni Rupa Indonesia) in Yogyakarta opened its doors. Its curriculum stressed the skill of figurative painting. At the time of its inception, this institution was made up of a group of private homes in which classes were taught by local painters. Its first faculty consisted of the artists Katasmi, Hendra and Kusnadi. These artists championed an art which could work for the people. Displays of struggles, poverty, and desolation were not uncommon in these artist's works, and indeed in the work of their students as well. The need for a formal approach to art really had no place within these 'halls' because there was no established Indonesian form or style. To grasp the Indonesian identity was the most important aspect of these works, in what ever style it came. Therefore, in ASRI expressionistic, impressionistic and later surrealistic styles flourished.

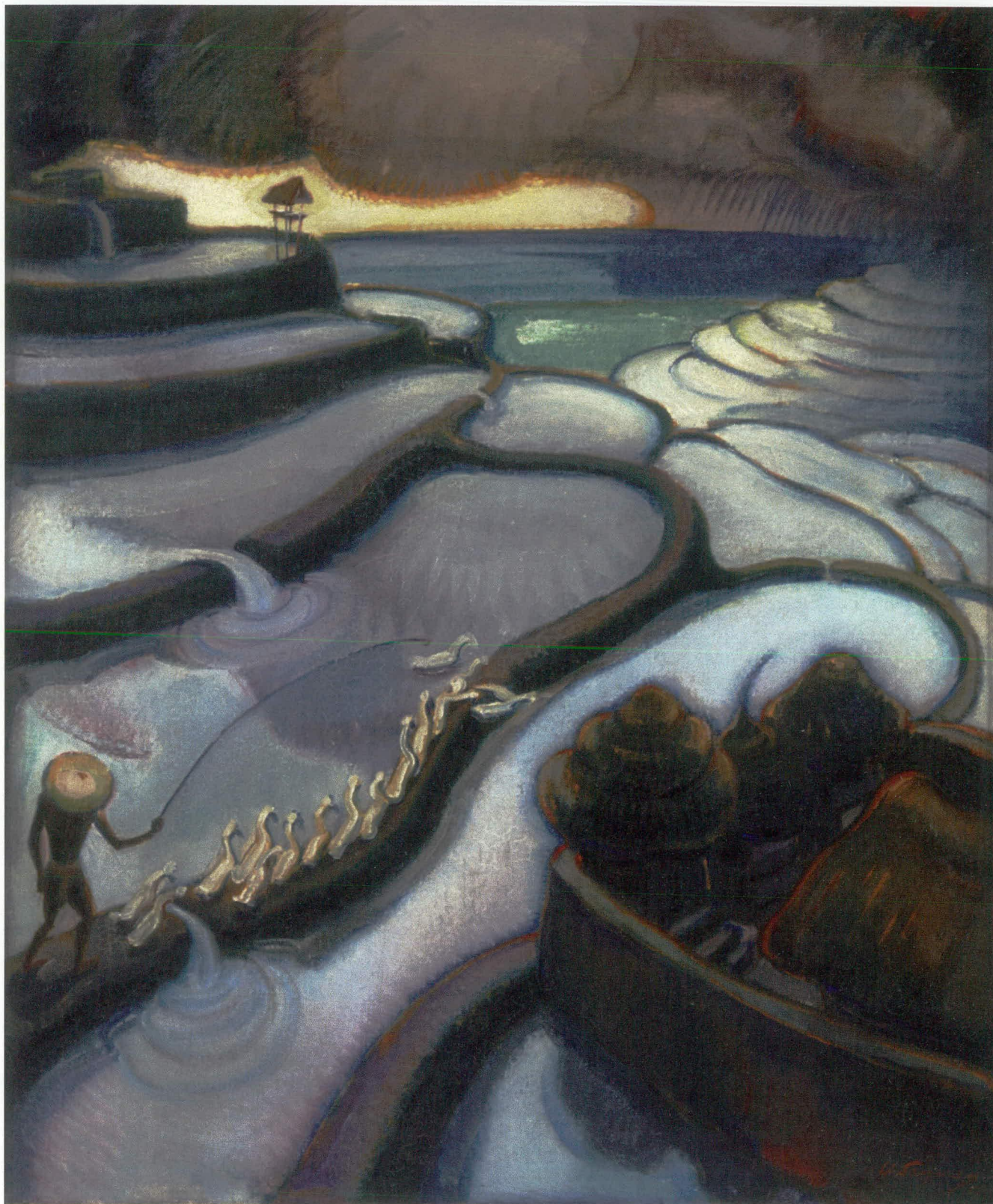
The Academy in Bandung took a different approach to art. It began in 1947 as the University Training Course for Art Teachers, where a curriculum was offered based on the Dutch system. It eventually grew to become a full-fledged art academy which was part of the Institut Teknologi Bandung. Acceptance into this school was quite stringent and the student body consisted mostly of members of the Indonesian elite. In this educational setting, style was king. Teachers taught in a modernist mode of geometric abstraction, and pushed for a philosophical and intellectual approach to art. We could therefore say that the teachers at this school adhered to a notion of art for art's sake. At a time where the government was working to promote an agenda of an Indonesian identity, one can imagine that this type of approach alienated some of the nationalist school. Therefore, throughout the 1950s the Yogyakarta approach was more in favour and promoted throughout Indonesia and abroad. President Soekarno, for instance, was a serious collector of the arts during this time, and yet died without one painting from the Bandung school.

But apart from the obvious stylistic differences and the political ideologies, did the two approaches relate very differently to Western modernisms? If

* This text is based on Helena Spanjaard, 'The controversy between the academies of Bandung and Yogyakarta', in: John Clark (ed.), *Modernity in Asian Art* (Broadway: Wild Peony, 1993) 85-104.

Bandung was painting in a Western style (leaning towards cubism or geometric abstraction), Yogyakarta was too (impressionism, expressionism). Both developed an educational system which required more than sketching. In Bandung the students were expected to take such courses as art history and geometry. In Yogyakarta, they taught anatomy and composition. Neither of the schools gave much attention to traditional heritage. Inspiration taken from traditional crafts such as batik and wayang was rarely seen, although they acquired a strong symbolic importance as 'national' culture.

Yogyakarta viewed the Bandung school as 'laboratory of the West'. This meant a school where the artworks only played with technical elements of art and lacked a meaning or message and were therefore akin to things produced in a laboratory. The Yogyakarta artists rejected this type of painting. One of the leading artists who had worked in Yogyakarta in the revolution, Sudjojono, had called for a freedom from the 'Beautiful Indies' style before the war and instead stressed the importance of developing an Indonesian identity. He looked at the works of the 'Beautiful Indies' artists as falsified images of Indonesia, an image suitable for those who wished to make the country more exotic. He wanted the artists to turn to their own reality and paint a content which would help further the development of the country as a sovereign nation rather than what he saw as selling it to the Dutch. As a painter for the revolution, realism was an important tool used to describe the battle fields in images, and Sudjojono and other artists wanted to continue that idea in their works after Independence. The goal in Yogyakarta therefore was not to reject the idea of a Western modernism but to engage with their content in a totally different way. In Bandung the content was played with through style and in Yogyakarta the style was played with through content. What separated Yogyakarta and Bandung was therefore primarily their respective discourses, not their resistance to the West.



Charles Sayers
Ducks Guardian, 1927



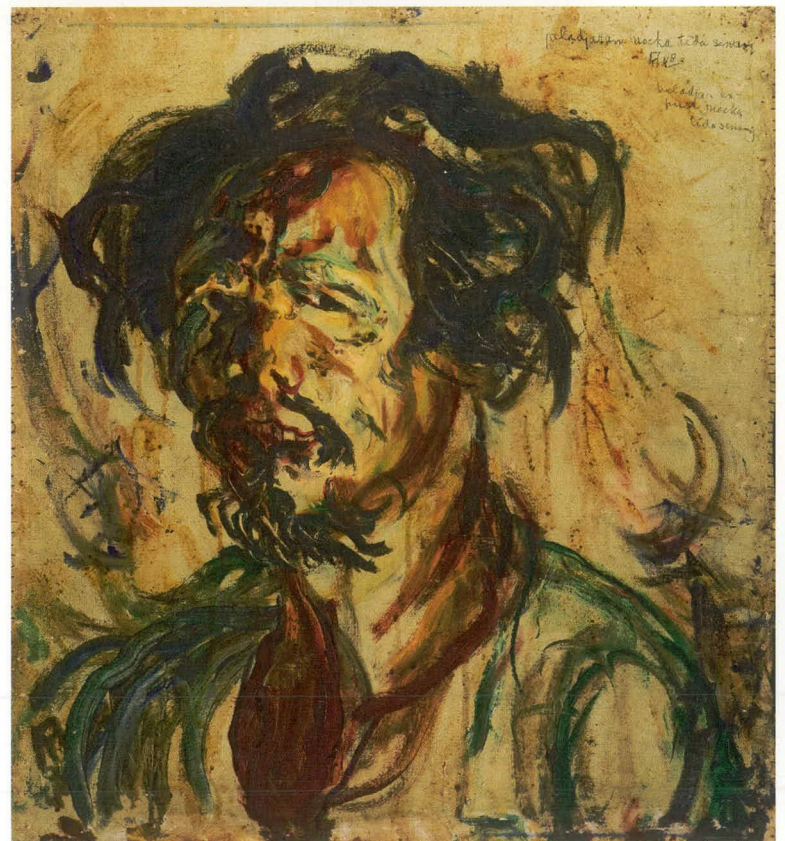
Piet Ouborg
The Ram, 1934



Adolf Breetvelt
Crater Eruption, c. 1936



Affandi
Soldiers Discussing their War Strategy, 1946



Affandi
Displeased Mood (Self-Portrait), 1948



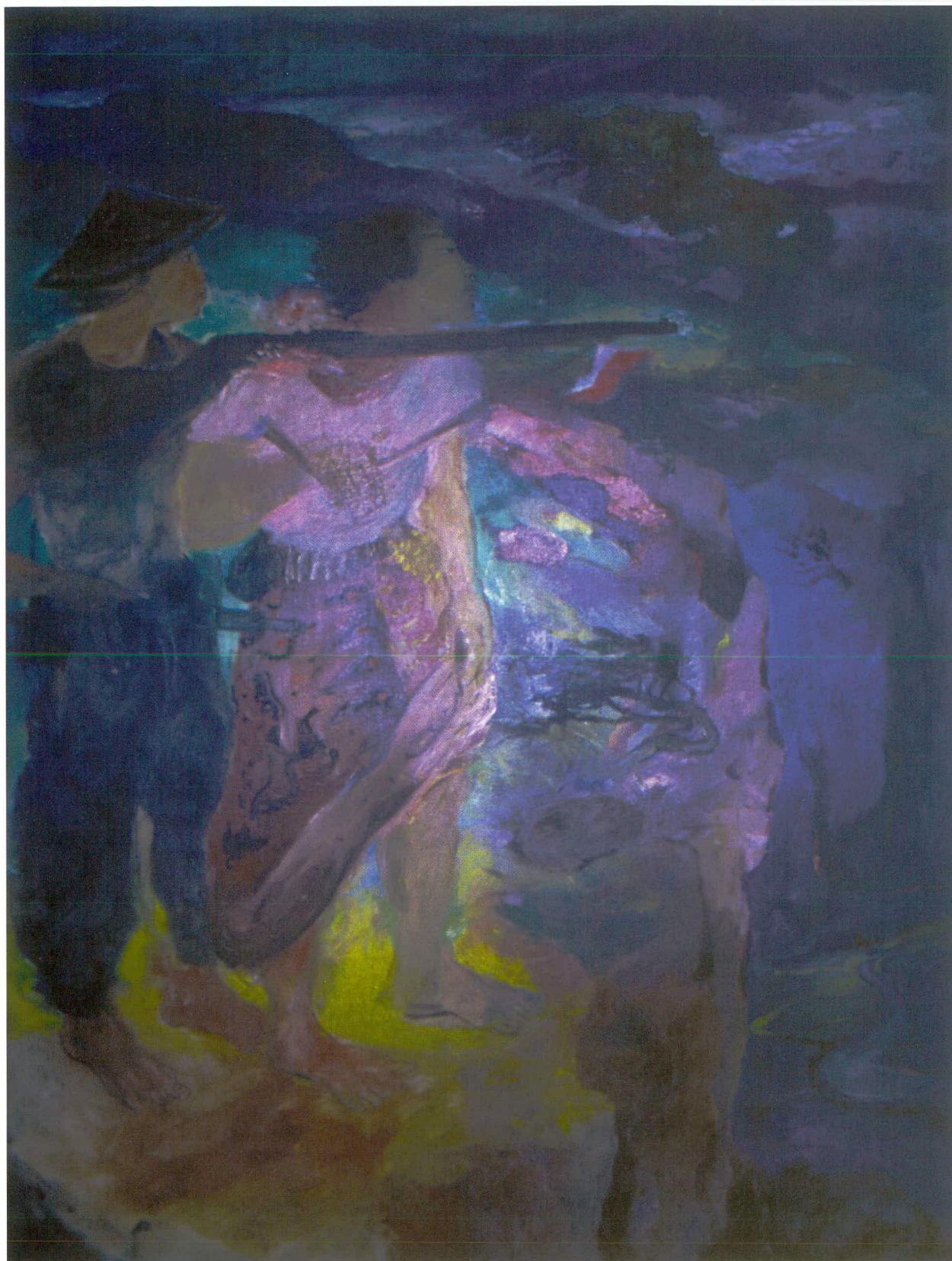
Soedibio

To You People of Yogya, 1949



Arie Smit

Temple Ceremony, 1957



Hendra Gunawan
Guerrilla Combatants, 1949



Sudjojono

Comrades of the Revolution, undated



Sudjojono

In Front of an Open Curtain, 1939



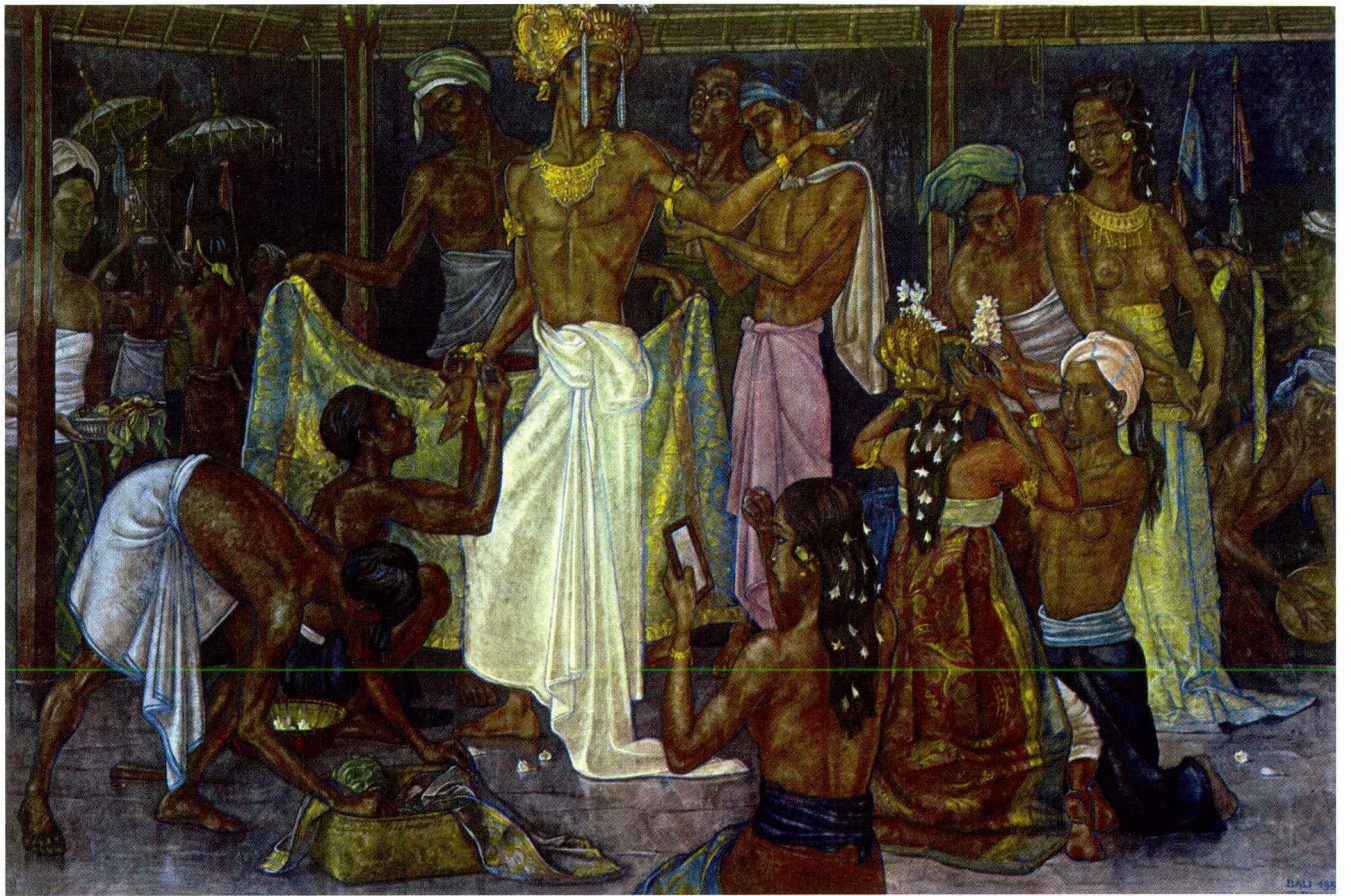
Sudjojono

Perusing a Poster, 1956



Ries Mulder

Church, Bandung, 1958



Rudolf Bonnet

Dancers from Bali Dress for a Performance,
1954

PART THREE – THE POST-COLONIAL ERA

The Contemporary Turns:

**On the Indonesian Art World and the Aftermath
of 'the '80s'**

Agung Hujatnikajennong

Contemporary art practice in Indonesia has undergone a major transformation over the last decade. Not only have the artists become increasingly aware of their own identity as the historical and colonial past fades into the background over the course of time, but their work is also affected by the modern trend towards globalisation in which technology and information play such a key role. Thus, a new post-colonial art world has developed, in which international economic and cultural networks are continuously expanding. In the myriad of contemporary world art, these artistic practices should be reviewed by taking a close look at the entire system in which local art scenes emerge.

Throughout art history, there have always been connections between the practice of art and its patronage. A common view would place it simply in a clear-cut pattern: the relation between artist and patronage is governed by a supply-and-demand mechanism. Although such a perspective may result in a platitude or perhaps, at best, an oversimplification, which we might see later on in this essay as being relevant to such, premise, yet based on both layered and varied constructs. In the present global system, the role of neoliberal and/or free-market capitalism has contributed to the emergence of a free-terrain structured by rhizomorphous relations between artistic production, art institutions and the patterns of art consumption.

Suddenly Postmodern

Before we look at the current position of artistic trends in more detail, this essay will start by analysing the state of contemporary art in Indonesia as a practice ascribed to the advent of postmodernity. Following 'postmodernism's promise' of the end of Euro-Americacentric paradigm, Indonesian contemporary art acquired a new position in the new globalised art world that emerged in the early '90s. It was not only a new phase during which the artistic practices underwent rapid changes, but also a period in which it started to engage with a new social formation. Never before has the emergence of a new international network given the Indonesian art world such an impulse in this way. Seen in a historical perspective, the postmodern phase is crucial as the dominant artistic orientation that expanded, transformed and bounced back and forth between the local and international nexus. The political upheaval in Indonesia in 1998, which was followed by fundamental democratic reform and changes in the order of society, have changed the face of today's art world and its practice.

Before the '90s, most Indonesian artists had a narrow sense of the art world outside their own country. During the Soekarno era (1945-1966), Indonesian modern art was deeply imbued by the drive to represent the birth of a new nation. The first president succeeded in paving the way for a new art infrastructure that pioneered Indonesia's character as a united, independent state. The acquisition of works by national artists and the commissioning of public sculptures in Jakarta and other cities reflected internationally an ambition to venture a new national narratives in line with the declaration of Indonesian independence in 1945. The artistic orientation in Soekarno's era was characterised by the struggle to find a new national identity, in order to confirm the existence of Indonesia as a newly founded nation that had freed itself from colonial occupation. However, Soekarno's anti-imperial ideology and good relationship with the Soviet Union and China somehow became linked to his support for the Leftist parties and their influence on art as a form of political propaganda. Marked with heated disputes on identity and ideological confrontation, generally between communism and liberalism, Soekarno's era represents Indonesia's fragile transition towards a new country amidst the hostile global political ambit that was fed by the ideological conflict between Soviet Bloc countries and the United States.

During Suharto's rule, art and cultural expression were depoliticised on behalf of 'developmentalism'. The burst of multinational investment in several big cities, particularly in Jakarta in the late '70s, resulted in the art boom of the '80s. Triggered by the Japanese art boom and the oil boom, the rise of new emerging high-class urban society, particularly in Jakarta, played an important role in the new art patronage system and the growth of commercial gallery networks. While poverty was still rampant and economic development was obviously uneven in many different parts of the country, the New Order government succeeded in maintaining national security and economic growth propped-up by foreign investment, with the slogan of 'national culture as the pinnacle of local-ethnic cultures'. Non-political and non-representational arts were made 'official' as the prevailing artistic orientation. This focus on abstract art was strongly influenced by the Bandung formalist school, which had inherited modernist tendencies from the initial teaching of the Dutch artist Ries Mulder. It can be said that the Indonesian art world of the '80s was an outstanding example of domestic com-

1 Sanento Yuliman, 'Boom! Kemana seni lukis kita?', in: Sanento Yuliman, *Dua seni rupa. Sepilih tulisan Sanento Yuliman* (Jakarta: Yayasan Kalam, 2001) 109-122. A painting boom occurred in Indonesia during the second-half of the '80s, especially on Java and Bali. This was marked by the increasing frequency of painting exhibitions, the growth of commercial galleries and exhibition spaces, auction, painting forgeries, the distribution of Old Master paintings among collectors and sponsorship from corporate business. However, within this economic system and progress in the art infrastructure, Sanento also revealed the lack of significant knowledge required among those involved in the Indonesian art market, including knowledge of the art-collecting mechanism and management, as well as art history and criticism, which made the judgment of artworks arbitrary. See also Jim Supangkat, *In search of politically works of art* (catalogue of Asian Art Triennale, Fukuoka: Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, 1999) 122.

2 GSRB was founded in 1975, following a protest action called the "Black December" staged by art students, FX Harsono, B. Murni Adhi and Ries Purwana, at the 1st Jakarta Biennale at Taman Ismail Marzuki Jakarta in 1974. The protest, staged in the form of a performance and happening, was actually an aspiration that demands a more open criterion in the exhibition because all the winners at that time were established art academy lecturers who merely worked on abstract and decorative art. Further, the movement was not only based on criticizing the decorative tendencies developed in the academies, but also in questioning all the modern tradition underlying the development of Indonesian art during 1940-1960. See anthology of publication on the movement, Jim Supangkat (ed.), *Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru Indonesia: Kumpulan karangan* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1979).

3 Jim Supangkat, *In search of politically works of art*.

4 Hereafter, the essay uses the term 'art of the 1980s' in the same sense as used by Jim Supangkat in his curatorial essay for the 9th Jakarta Biennale, *Seni Rupa Era '80, Pengantar untuk Biennale Seni Rupa Jakarta IX* (catalogue of the Jakarta Art Biennale IX; Jakarta Art Council, 1993) 13.

5 Ibidem.

6 Ibidem.

7 One of Supangkat's most noteworthy arguments in the essay is that the GSRB's platform involved institutional critique, which characterised a radical avant-garde movement. It is from such a standpoint that he calls the art of the '80s 'the post-avant-garde', which according to Charles Jencks incorporates the postmodern spirit. See Jim Supangkat, *Seni Rupa Era '80*.

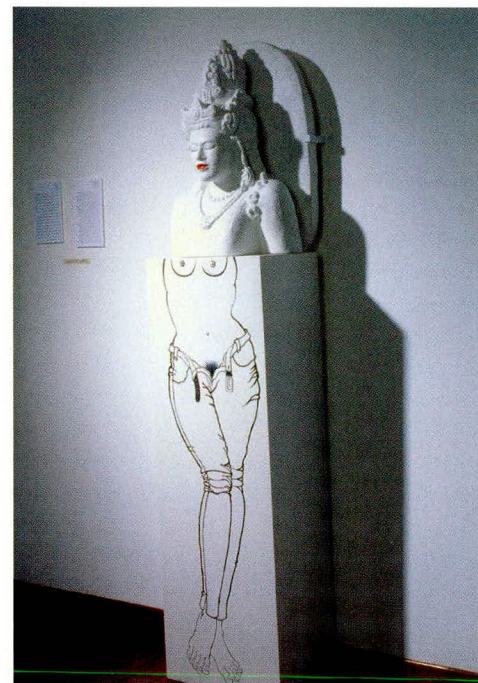
mercialisation. As such, it unintentionally intensified the segregation with artistic scenes outside Indonesia.

The late and esteemed Indonesian art critic Sanento Yuliman, who had closely observed the phenomenon, coined the term 'desolateness' to typify the dominant Indonesian art practice in the '80s.¹ The term refers to the fact that the economic boom of the era had resulted in the deterioration of both theoretical and critical discourse due to the dominant practice of painting. As most of Indonesian commercial galleries in Jakarta, Bandung, Yogyakarta and Bali operated on the basis of local market demands, experimental practices, which had already been pushed forward particularly by the avant-gardist Indonesian New Art Movement (hereafter GSRB, or *Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru*)² in the '70s, were underexposed and mostly isolated.³

By breaking the stagnant state of affairs, the effort to regain the significant position of the avant-garde was a central manoeuvre in the formation of Indo-nesian contemporary art of the '90s. Such an impetus was strongly felt in the origin of the *Biennale Seni Rupa Jakarta IX* (9th Jakarta Art Biennial) at the Taman Ismail Marzuki, Jakarta in 1993, by courtesy of Jakarta Art Council. Taking place amidst the euphoric celebration of postmodernism in Indo-nesia in the field of Indo-nesian social studies, philosophy and literature, the exhibition clearly displayed the echo of Western postmodernist discourse in the local context. The curator of the exhibition, Jim Supangkat, whose role was also seminal in the establishment of GSRB, presented a thesis on the emergence of 'art of the '80s', a term coined to identify the various practices which underlined the post-avant-garde spirit as exemplified by the artists in the exhibition.⁴ The works in the Biennial were thus presented as signs of the new, postmodern era.⁵

In trying to underline important characters of the show, Supangkat argued that the practice of art as shown in the Biennial had emerged in several international exhibitions and some alternative galleries in Indonesia, despite their relatively unknown reputation in the local scene. He also stated that the exhibition featured a particular generation of artists whose works no longer represented a confrontation with modernism – a task that already had been 'accomplished' by the GSRB – but that had already initiated a new practice identified as the post-avant-garde.⁶ It is worth noting that most of the participating artists, like Semsar Siahaan, Heri Dono, Dadang Christanto, Yudi Yudoyoko, Yoedhi Soejoatmodjo, Isa Perkasa, Arahmaiani, Krisna Murti and Andar Manik, presented works that were unlike those of the previous dominant tendency of painting. Instead, these artists presented installations, performance art, photography and video art. Supangkat wrote: "It is undeniable that the emergence of contemporary art in Indonesia is seen most in the insurgence of practice generated by the efforts to tackle the principles of modern art. This is an important consideration in holding the Biennale Seni Rupa Jakarta 1993 in presenting a post-insurgence art practice of the '80s."⁷

Mixed reactions and criticism prompted after the launch of the exhibition and marked the discourse around it as one of the most heated debates in 20th century Indonesian art history. It revealed a new phase in which the continuity, interpretation and translation of a particular Western paradigm within Indonesian art, namely modernism, started to be intensely discussed in the local context. The use of the term 'contemporary', coined by Supangkat to replace 'the modern' was highly disputed. Much of the criticism came from Indonesian

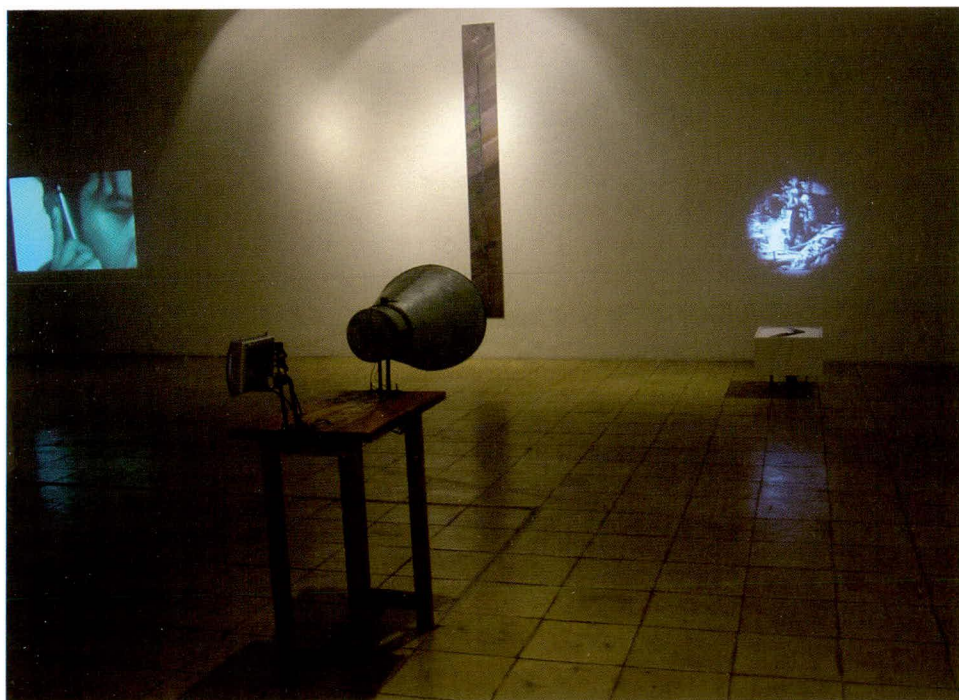


Jim Supangkat

Ken Dedes, 1975

mixed media, 180 x 40 x 30 cm

collection Singapore Art Museum



Exhibition view at the Cemeti Art House, Yogyakarta

photo: Agung Hujatnikajennong

the responses to and criticism towards of Supangkat's thesis on postmodernism were also somehow confusing and misleading.⁹ Putting aside any judgements on the theoretical validity shining through in these debates, I personally admit that Supangkat's intention to tackle the discourse on contemporary art and postmodernism at the time was still without doubt an influential manoeuvre. The Biennial has thus become a productive misunderstanding; it paved the way for new, socio-political and experimental art practices; and later on, for a new structure in the local art world that reflected international developments.

Subsequent developments after the 9th Jakarta Art Biennial were indicative of the emergence of an 'art practice of the '80s, which had previously not been integrated into mainstream gallery practice. The Biennial became legitimate stages for 'experimental' works such as installations, site-specific media, video and multimedia, photography and performance art – practices that had previously been neglected due to the commercialised and 'depoliticised' painting in the '80s. It was no coincidence that after the Biennial debate the notion of the term 'contemporary' started increasingly to convey a strong implication of socio-political criticism, especially towards the repressive New Order government, since this particular Biennial was intended to promote such practice.

The influence of art of the '80s gained momentum through the growing attention paid to it in the showcase of Indonesian contemporary art abroad. The emergence of regional exhibitions, symposia and publications in Asia and the Pacific, mostly by state-funded art centres in Japan and Australia throughout the '90s, resulted in a wider recognition of some Indonesian artists of the '80s, such as Dadang Christanto, Arahmaiani and Heri Dono. They became the new international stars. In line with the desire to explore a postmodern and multi-cultural identity in the Southeast Asian region, Indonesian artists – most of whom had been showcased in the 9th Jakarta Art Biennial – started to develop an 'international' visual language and artistic strategy that was appro-

academics and, even more interestingly, from some of the Biennial's participating artists. They attacked Supangkat's approach to postmodernism and French poststructuralist theory for being immature, shallow and controversial.⁸

This debate, which occurred in many different publications for almost a year, actually took place when the idea of postmodernism was also still triggering debates in the West. We shan't go into all the controversies and details of the Indonesian debate on postmodernism here, but there were many misinterpretations of postmodernism in Supangkat's curatorial essay. However, as the postmodern discourse tends to ignore any totalitarian and constructive views,

⁸ The debates had been featured mostly in newspaper articles, academic journals, book and magazines for almost a year. For the archive and analyses on the prolonged disputes, see Agung Hujatnika, 'Diskursus posmodernisme dalam seni rupa kontemporer Indonesia: Perdebatan seputar Biennale Seni Rupa Jakarta IX' (unpublished thesis, Faculty of Art and Design, Bandung Institute of Technology, 2000).

⁹ Ibidem.

priate for the globalised contemporary art practice. The '90s thus displayed an intense proliferation of socio-political arts among younger generations. Clearly, it was also the corrupted situation in the country that ultimately pushed these artists to explore a socio-political content in their works. This propensity obviously signalled the collapse of the New Order government in 1998, which eventually freed the artists from government censorship and gave rise to a free climate in which individual freedom of expression could be explored.

The State as Institution: In-absentia

Touching upon the development of Indonesian contemporary art in the '90s, I would like to underline a significant paradigm shift that occurred in this decade. Naturally, the domestic discourse on contemporary art in Indonesia throughout the 1990s was shaped by regional encounters and by the emergence of new networks following the post-Cold War global situation. The international art scene was in the midst of a process of 'remapping' and 'decentralisation', especially after the massive postmodern attack on the hegemonic Euro-Americacentric modernist paradigm. This 'new internationalisation' became ultimately interchangeable with 'biennialisation', a new model of global patronage of contemporary art that was marked by the inclusion of the art practice in previously peripheral geo-cultural regions such as Asia, Latin America and Africa – though not radically inclusive. These external factors pushed forward the paradigm shift in the Indonesian context.

However, aside from the extensive implosion of the Western art world in the '90s, the emergence of Indonesian art of the '80s in the international arena was also driven by internal circumstances that were specific to the local art world. In Indonesia, systematic institutional patronage and art infrastructure hardly existed until today. Despite the physical existence of museum buildings such as the Museum Nasional (National Museum, opened in the '60s) and the Galeri Nasional (National Gallery, officiated in 1998) in Jakarta, and due to the lack of support from the national and local governments, the practice of Indonesian art has moved away from any avowed grand-narratives and clear agendas. This situation is distinct from the models that generally exist in First-World countries, in which state-funded art museums still affirm their roles to validate, institutionalise and project national and Western identities. In the conventional Western sense, museums serve as cultural institutions that display and at the same time represent ideas about the people, their (art) histories and socio-political identities, altogether in one, grand narrative. Especially in the West, museum exhibitions and collections still play crucial roles in defining and disseminating the discourses as regulated in the contemporary art world. The contemporary art scene has not been 'biennialised' as much as in the East, for example.

The lack of initiatives and long-term plans for a better art infrastructure, let alone the development of state museums, have made the relation between the practice of art and validating institutions, or the awareness of any art history in Indonesia, somehow formless and arbitrary. First and foremost, this situation is reflected in the recent prevalence of non-state initiatives, which succeed in contributing significantly to the development of the current Indonesian art world.

The government's general indifference and ignorance in providing legitimate institutional structures for the arts pinpoints the crucial position of state-funded art academies, such as the ITB (Bandung Institute of Technology) and ISI (Indonesian Art Institute), in Bandung and Yogyakarta respectively. The impact of contemporary art practice however, as the heir to anti-aesthetic postmodern discourse, was strongly felt in academic circles. In 1999, a national debate was initiated on the relevance of the academic curricula in ITB. The academy strongly aligned itself to a fine art program specialised in mastering more traditional mediums such as sculpture, printmaking and painting. The '90s brought about a crisis in the role of the art academy, as some of the influential senior professors retired and left, whilst most of the young students preferred to follow new emerging contemporary artists such as Heri Dono or Arahmaiani. However, these artists do not teach and most of them do not even have academic records.

In the '90s, a striking development of so-called alternative, non-commercial galleries took place. Cemeti Art House in Yogyakarta played a particularly key role in this development. Pioneered in 1988 by the artist couple Nindityo Adipurmono and Mella Jaarsma, the gallery has since been able to inspire the development of Indonesian contemporary art, not only by promoting young, local, emerging artists whose practices had up till then been marginalised by the prevailing market, but also by offering a variety of artistic platforms and orientations. Furthermore, Cemeti pioneered the creation of international relations with foreign institutions and thus had a decisive influence on the internationalisation of Indonesian contemporary art in the '90s. It is this alternative model that eventually inspired the birth of other alternative spaces and artist-run initiative/spaces in the country, such as ruangrupa in Jakarta, Common Room Network Foundation in Bandung and Mess56 in Yogyakarta.

In addition to playing a role in Biennial's, galleries and alternative spaces, the curator also is a specific element within the Indonesian art world. Especially in the '90s, the birth of a Southeast Asian contemporary art scene was much indebted to the role of independent curators. In his extensive research on this specific topic, Patrick D. Flores analysed the roles of curators such as Jim Supangkat and Apinan Poshyananda as the pioneers of contemporary curatorial practices in the region.¹⁰ Being an artist-turned-curator and self-taught art historian, Supangkat has indeed been a key figure in the process of negotiating, promoting, analysing and legitimating Indonesian art of the '80s at a time when most of these artists were still operating 'underground'. Moreover, he executed his mission of initiating up-to-date international art discourses by launching various local curatorial projects and exhibitions, which to a certain degree have influenced the local practice of art.

Without disparaging the artists' individual networks, as well as the diverse multicultural, post-colonial and postmodern agendas that have been impressed upon the Indonesian art world by foreign art institutes, I would like to stress that the patronage shift that occurred in the '90s – from local gallery shows to museum-scale exhibitions abroad – was much indebted to the alternative gallery spaces and independent curatorial practices in Indonesia itself. It is intriguing to observe how those factors have shaped the development of contemporary art in the '90s, despite the lack of institutional backing, public interest and state funding.



'Excavation'

Site-specific installation presented at the 9th Jakarta Biennale, Taman Ismail Marzuki, 1993.

photo: Patrick D. Flores

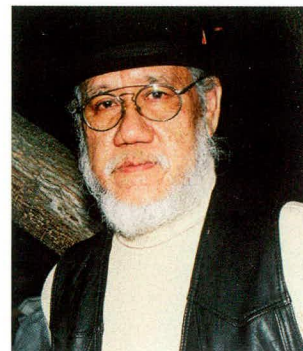
¹⁰ Patrick D. Flores, *Past Peripheral: Curation in South-east Asia* (Singapore: NUS Museum, 2008) 28.

Anything Goes?

Since 2000, the massive international expansion of the Chinese art market has given birth to a new outburst of economic globalisation. The rise of Chinese contemporary art in the international scene and the new global trend of collecting artworks as mere investments are undoubtedly also key factors in the recent Indonesian art boom. Many Indonesian collectors and dealers who have accumulated revenues from collecting Chinese contemporary art have now turned to their own local art scene and started to play the same profit-game with their compatriot artists. This marked the emergence of relatively new local institutions: the auction houses which have definitely contributed to a new culture of art consumption as an urban lifestyle, and reshaped the local art scene.

However, even this latest art boom has not yet resulted in the improvement of local infrastructures. The new auction houses, commercial galleries and art fairs seem to have replaced the former position of the Art Biennial and museum shows that firmly legitimised contemporary art practice in the '90s. The former ideal of independent curatorship has merged with commercial activities and turns out to legitimise the market value of contemporary art, thus feeding the interest of art dealers. As financial capital penetrates the local art world, fundamental changes in artistic orientation inevitably occur. Since 2000, artistic orientations have become more and more depoliticised, not only because of a lack of major political concerns but also due to the taste of a dominant commercial market.

Interestingly enough, whereas the discourse on global capitalism has always set the free-trade market system against the intervention of the state, putting the two in opposition, the current development in the Indonesian art world is inevitably distinct from that. And while the recent situation still strongly echoes the power of neoliberal economic regulation, the absence of the state has left the local art market shadow boxing with an opponent that never existed.



Jim Supangkat

photo: Selasar Sunaryo Art Space

Ken Dedes

Patrick D. Flores

Jim Supangkat's totem called 'Ken Dedes' is a seminal work. It was part of the *Seni Rupa Baru Indonesia 75* (New Indonesian Art 75) exhibition of the Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru (Indonesian New Art Movement) at the Taman Ismail Marzuki art centre in Jakarta in 1975. It proved to be a provocative piece, prompting some to regard it as coarse or vulgar and moving others to hail it as a compelling analysis of culture. This partisan commentary may have been stirred by Supangkat's appropriation of the figure of Ken Dedes, revered queen of royal lineage, the Rajasa dynasty, who ruled parts of Java during the Singhasari and Majapahit eras (roughly from the early thirteenth to the fifteenth century).

Cast in chalky plaster, the face of Ken Dedes – who is chronicled to have exuded such exceptional beauty and wisdom that men killed for it – is delineated cosmetically, primed with fiery red lipstick; a portrayal that foils the classical iconography of her hair and downcast eyes. The torso, with uncovered breasts, is painted on a pedestal that also serves as the surface on which her lower body appears, dressed in tight denim trousers, unzipped so that wisps of pubic hair are revealed. The work is fragmented: a bust that alludes to the stone statuary of a Southeast Asian empire and the minimal plinth that contains the rest of the stripped corpus, including blue jeans and unshod feet, which may imply urban and contemporary mores. These two parts are ostensibly and perhaps dialectically set apart from one another, though linked by the bare bosom that extends from the icon to the stand, rendered in street-art style with a marker pen.

Supangkat became acquainted and eventually fascinated with Ken Dedes, embodied by the well-known figure of Prajnaparamita (the goddess of the perfection of wisdom known from the Singhasari statue), when during his student days in Bandung his class was instructed to make clay copies of the statues of the temple or *candi*. Years later, he revisited the effigy and breathed new life into it. It is first and foremost a critique of sculpture as a medium that is venerated in the academy and as a stage on which the process of venerating tradition takes place, often uncritically. Secondly, it draws fraught ties between a sacred vision, hermetically sealed as edict, and a modern visibility that is exposed and open to re-interpretation. Thirdly, it is a complex play between distinct discourses of the erotic. It is said that the beauty of Ken Dedes, a monk's daughter with a sublime aura and imagined to be a diviner of kings, was fatal – when her future husband glimpsed her naked thighs and legs, he also gleaned her radiant genitalia. The shedding of a second skin (her clothes) therefore works on two levels: The disclosure of the woman's potency as told in the annals, on one level, and the fetishisation of feminine sexuality that may intimate prostitution, pornography or simply Western consumerism, on the other. Finally, the fact that this image circulates in an Islamic society confounds the already vexing proposition. It is further complicated by the political context of the Suharto's New Order regime, which had looked to the Majapahit age as a source of ideological continuity and

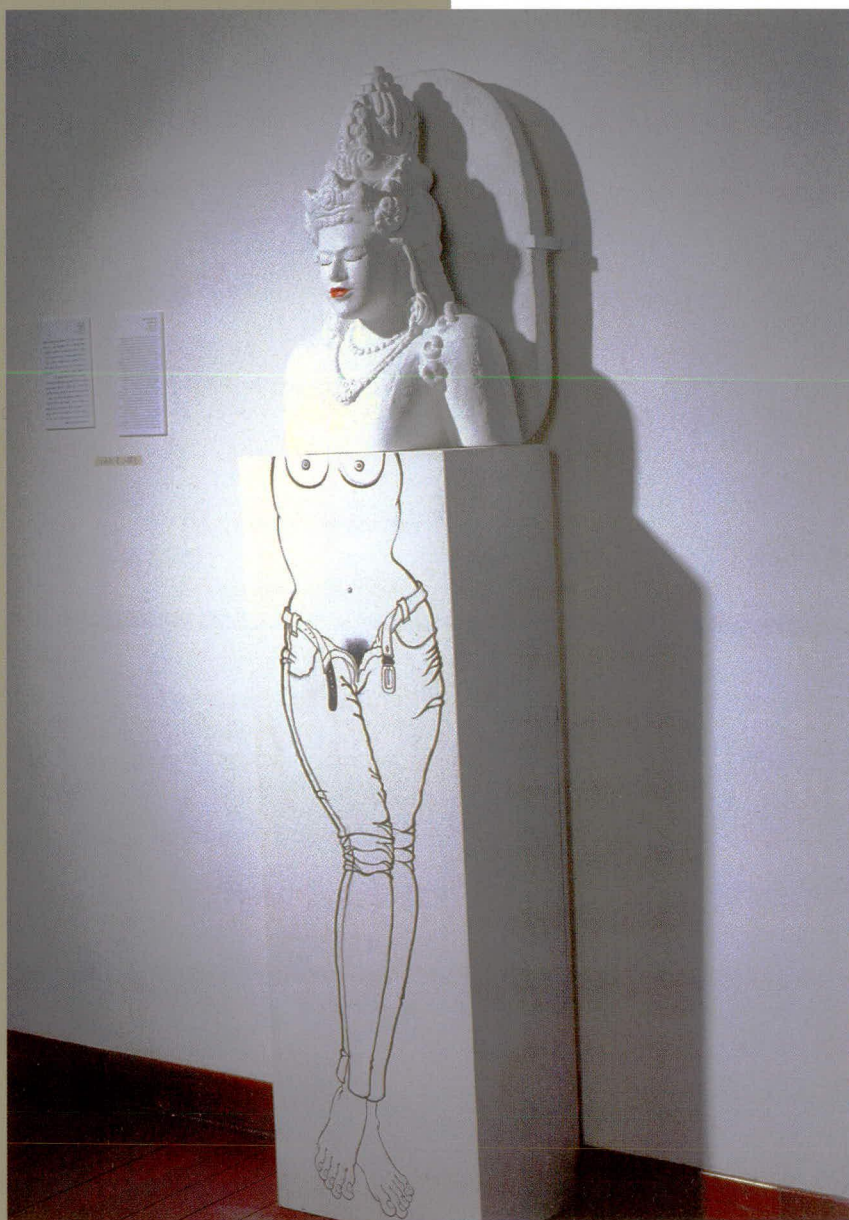
legitimacy and signalled a shift from Soekarno's socialist revolution to Suharto's liberal developmentalism of the Cold War era. Jim Supangkat, luminary of a coterie of artists that questioned the orthodoxies of both the state and the art world through their Black December Manifesto, sets up a shrine of sorts which is also a ruin of the false hopes of democracy and modernity in Indonesia – nothing less than its monuments and mistresses.

Jim Supangkat

Ken Dedes, 1975

mixed media, 180 x 40 x 30 cm

collection of the Singapore Art Museum



Some Explanations about the Birth of an Autodidactic Culture

Nuriani Juliastuti

Omnipresent knowledge gaps seem to stimulate the birth of an autodidactic culture in Indonesia. This essay tries to give a plausible explanation for this persistent alternative culture, which manifests itself in particular forms of thinking about educational institutions and in disordered ways of accessing knowledge.

The following passages serve as various illustrations, scattered pieces of stories that I have documented in order to draw some lessons from local experiences of art and culture practitioners. These passages document my attempts to study the birth of an artist, to study the culture involved in studying art and living in an art context in a broader historical sense.

The Case of Nasjah Djamin

The setting is North Sumatra in the 1940s. Nasjah Djamin – then a painter, later widely known as a writer¹ – had long cherished the dream of going to Yogyakarta to quench his thirst for knowledge about painting.² For years, despite all limitations, he had been trying to enter the visual art world through a series of self-taught practices. He established his first work as a painter at the Japanese Cultural Center office in Medan when he won a poster design competition that was held by the Japanese colonial government. During this period, some names from the world of modern art, names

¹ Among his famous short stories and novels are: *Hi-langlah Si Anak Hilang* (Long gone the Lost Kid), *Ziarah* (The pilgrimage), *Malam di Kuala Lumpur* (A night in Kuala Lumpur), and *Sebuah perkawinan* (The Marriage).

² Farida Soemargono, *Sastrawan Malioboro 1945-1960: Dunia Jawa dalam kesusastraan Indonesia* (Mataram: Lenggo, 2004). Other remarks on the life of Nasjah Djamin are assembled from this book.

such as Van Gogh, Toulouse Lautrec, Picasso, Braque and those of notable Indonesian painters such as Raden Saleh and Basuki Abdullah, were absorbed by his mind.

Traces of interventions by the colonial power that attempted to connect the Netherlands East Indies to Western intellectual products were visible in the stories and the creative processes of people living under the Dutch and Japanese occupation. Many Dutch artists had lived and worked in the Indies since early 1900s. They played key parts in nurturing local knowledge about Western art. Denys Lombard (1938-1998), one of the world's leading Asianists, writes that the establishment of the Kunstkring in 1914 in Batavia was instrumental in bringing international artworks to the colony. Batavian people could finally see the works of Chagall, Utrillo, Dufy, Gauguin, Chirico, Van Gogh and Picasso.³ In her biography, Mia Bustam, a painter and the first wife of Sudjojono (1913-1986), said that it was at the Kunstkring that she was able to see paintings made by the Western artists, and that she could read Western literature. Her father worked as an employee for the Kunstkring and gave her full access to the building. "The works of Henriette Roland Holst, Herman Gorter, Multatuli, Notosuroto, Elizabeth Browning (...) classic and modern Dutch, British, German, French and Russian literature, historical novels, folklore, and poetry. Soon, after, the Dutch withdrew from Batavia. I was able to spend more time reading at the Kunstkring library (...)." ⁴

Knowledge travels on a winding road. For young Djamin and Bustam, living in a war zone, where only the select few were granted the right to go to school and the higher education system was not in the same state as it is today, this might be a particular way of thinking that local people adhered to: each individual life path directing one to different ways of obtaining knowledge. Knowledge was about imagining modernity and any possible opportunity to obtain it needed to be secured.

I will go to Rudolf Mrázek, a leading intellectual and historian specialised in Indonesian nationalism, to seek explanations for this strong local desire for knowledge and its relationship to modernity, as seen from a historical perspective.⁵ Mrázek brilliantly describes how the Netherlands East Indies in the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century seemed to pulsate with a passion for modernity and the need to consume modern things: new products, new vehicles, new ways of expression and new sources of knowledge. Colonialism had brought this kind of modernity to the colony, as well as the influence of the Enlightenment, and the strong desire to support fast-moving, worldly ideas. These were all contributing factors in the development of the modern education system in Indonesia.

Finally, in 1947, still in the middle of war, the time came for Djamin to go to Yogyakarta. His destination was the Sanggar Indonesia Muda (Sanggar of Young Indonesia), which was led by the painter Sudjojono. A *sanggar* is a collective space where members share their learning experiences under the auspices of a highly respected mentor. Even before the Yogya journey, Djamin had been familiar with the names of the artists that participated in Sudjojono's *sanggar*, because they had been published in the *Djawa Baroe* (New Java) magazine he used to read. What was encouraged in the *sanggar*, he learned upon arrival, was the development of personal characteristics and the eagerness to test your own thoughts while making art. Painters such as Affandi and Basuki Resobowo, and writers such as Chairil Anwar, Rivai Apin

³ Denys Lombard, *Nusa Jawa: Silang budaya kajian sejarah terpadu*. Vol. 1, *Batas-batas pembaratan* (translated from *Le carrefour Javanais: Essai d'histoire globale*. Vol. 1, *Les limites de l'occidentalisation*) (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2000) 186.

⁴ Mia Bustam, *Soedjojono dan aku* (Jakarta: Pustaka Utan Kayu, 2006) 4-7.

⁵ Rudolf Mrázek, *Engineers of Happy Land: Technology and nationalism in a colony* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).



Malioboro in 2009 must have felt alien to Djamin. It is just another hectic street, successfully dubbed the center of Yogyakarta tourism. Stores, malls, supermarkets, restaurants form lines on both sides of the street. It's sidewalk is packed with people selling a myriad of crafts and Beautiful Indies style paintings. Tourists, local and international, flock to this city in all seasons.

photo: Nuriani Juliastuti

and H.B. Jassin began to enter his circle of friends. His horizon in Indonesian art was broadened.

In the early 1920s, the air was filled with nationalism and ideas on political independence ideas. They had been brought to Indonesia by Indonesian students living in Holland who, on their return to the country, developed into nationalist movement activists. This development intensified in the 1940s.⁶ Everyone and everything was in motion, with nationalist ideas criss-crossing the whole colony, creating spaces where artists, political activists and the nationalists met. Djamin became one of them. He joined the national armed forces in West Java for a short period before deciding to move to Jakarta at the beginning of 1948. Once settled into this new environment, he again acquainted himself with different artists, like those of the literary circles of Balai Pustaka, the *Mimbar Indonesia* (The Podium of Indonesia) magazine, and the famous writers Idrus, Utuy Tatang Sontani, S.K. Pamoentjak and HB Jassin. Thus, he rediscovered his old passion for literature. Back in his school years at the Neutrale Hollandse Indische School in Medan, Djamin already had read virtually every book and literary work he could find: *Panji Pustaka* (Sign of Literature), *Panji Islam* (Sign of Islam), and *Pedoman Masyarakat* (The Society Guidance), as well as Karl May, Jules Verne, Multatuli, Zola and Tolstoy.

After several attempts at writing short stories, he apparently found the literary world, which was surrounded by high walls, difficult to conquer. Both public taste and the most powerful people within literary circles were very hard to deal with. In 1952 Djamin decided to go back to Jogja in order to paint, to foster his writing skills and to learn theatre. Equivalent to the process of learning how to paint, his whole literary learning process was also conducted in a very informal manner. Knowledge was garnered through friendships, discussion sessions, by reading books and his wholehearted embrace of Malioboro, a street famous as a concourse of writers. "On Malioboro I would never be alone", he said, "for I am sure I would meet Bastari, Abdidalom, Adjib, Bose, and other writers (...). On the street I would also meet the night drifters, the *warung*⁷ women, beggars, vegetable sellers, the prostitutes (...)." More than just an ordinary street where he could meet fellow artists, the underlying reason for his fondness for Malioboro was simple: it provided exactly the creative atmosphere that he had been craving.

⁶ For discussions about Indonesian people living in the Netherlands from 1600 to 1950, as well as progressive ideas circulating between the two countries, see Harry Poeze, *In het land van de overheerser: Indonesiërs in Nederland 1600-1950* (Dordrecht: Foris, 1986), translated into Indonesian as: *Di negeri penjajah: Orang Indonesia di Negeri Belanda 1600-1950* (Jakarta: KPG-KITLV, 2008).

⁷ *Warung* is little shop, stand in Javanese.

Life is the Best School There Is

Prior to the inception of a higher education system, such as national art academies, other places for producing cultural products and art producers had existed for a long time. The *keraton*⁸, for example, was the dominant cultural centre for the Javanese people. Various cultural products ranging from dance, shadow puppet plays and classic literature to the grandiose *candi* were developed within the context of the Javanese monarchy⁹. Not only were the birthplaces of such cultural products considered elitist, the production and consumption of these cultural expressions were actually reserved for the elite.

Lombard's trilogy *Nusa Jawa: Silang Budaya* (2000) shows that the convergence and intersection of local cultures with other cultures, which had been happening for centuries, had introduced modifications, changes and valuable resources for future cultural developments. One of the signs of these changes was the diminishing influence of the Keraton as a cultural centre. Since then, the number of cultural producers has been on the rise and new places of creativity have been expanding. Djamin's story, for example, reveals that Malioboro developed into a legendary icon; an inspiring melting pot for people engaged in theatre and literature. Particularly in the 1960s, the concept of the *sanggar* was also beneficial in shaping the practice of visual art. It established itself as the locus of art production and the heart of artistic activities, where discussions about the visual arts took place and artistic ideas were developed.

One of the most salient matters to unravel for artists was the question of how to find an ideal method to represent society. One of the most dominant of such methods is *Turba*, an acronym for *Turun ke bawah*, which literally means 'get down to the grassroots'. Although it was officially set up as an art-making method, Lekra turned it into a movement around 1960, defining it as a working method: both groups that were actively involved in *sanggars*, as people individually, adopted this method by going to the community and working with them, observing them from within, hoping in this way to demonstrate their closeness to the people.¹⁰ The artists of *Turba* not only attempted to reform the appearance of works that merely emphasised the beautiful landscape of the country, such as the 'Mooi Indië' (Beautiful Indies) paintings, they also experimented by breaking with the elitism existing in the field of art production. Artists were encouraged to work closely with the people, moving away from their comforting myth of holding a distinctive position. Learning from life was believed to be the best method.

According to Hersri Setiawan, the popularity of *Turba* – this concept might be labelled differently by some people – was rooted in a Bohemian lifestyle which attracted large groups of devotees in the artistic society during the forties and fifties. Anti-establishment, a yearning for freedom and the rejection of social conventions constituted the general mood. Social engagement and a knowledge of life were acknowledged as the keys to success in fulfilling one's role as an artist.¹¹

Such ways of thinking could also be seen as resistant responses to formalism and any other forms of rigidity that carry with them the potential to keep art practitioners away from the lessons life has to teach. The art school is often regarded as a part of this restrictive formalism. The fact that schools can be vehicles for knowledge is never questioned, but experiences gained outside

8 *Kraton* means sultan's or king's palace.

9 Lombard, *Nusa Jawa*; Soemargono, Sastrawan Malioboro.

10 Antarksa, *Tuan tanah kawin muda: Hubungan seni-rupa Lekra 1950-1965* (Yogyakarta: Yayasan Seni Cemeti, 2005).

11 Ibidem, 57-58.

school have always been recognised as being very important for mental development. Numerous historical accounts also show that places set aside for the exploration of ideas have not necessarily fared well inside the strict walls of schools, but have thrived outside them.

Learn it Yourself

At the base of the Indonesian education system's history lies a complex network of political elements. In contrast to the British colonial government, which consciously provided English lessons to the citizens of the Indian colony, no matter what the consequences were (including the emergence of a longing for freedom, which eventually led to the birth of an autonomous India), the Dutch colonial government did not embrace the European-based education of natives. The question of which language should be used in the education system puzzled the Dutch. The Dutch colonial government, as the governing power and administrator of the educational infrastructure, felt the urge to establish Dutch as a compulsory language to be used both in governmental services and in educational practices, with the aim of ending the popularity of the Malay and Portuguese languages. Yet this idea, which seemed to be based on ethical principles, generated mixed feelings and reactions within the Dutch community itself. "Dutch is such a complex language, hence it was impossible for the indigenous people to master it", "the Dutch language might have the potential to lead local people towards dangerous knowledge, so limitations on its use are required", "instead of conveying the idea of freedom and establishing a self-ruling country, the European-based education should have been directed towards fulfilling the need for well-educated local state officials in Dutch government services", "how would education be best perceived: is it something leading to autonomy, or is it just a matter of paying the war debts" – these are all statements exemplifying such mixed reactions.¹²

In this oppressed society, which lacked scientific knowledge, the Dutch language had long been regarded as the road to the West and as the road to progress. But due to discriminatory restrictions that the colonial government imposed on local people who longed for education and owing to the development of nationalism, the view held of both the West and the Dutch language became increasingly ambivalent. During this period, local people started to explore their own educational programmes. A classic example of such an experimental effort was the establishment of a local education institution called Taman Siswa, which literally means *The Garden of Students*, by Ki Hajar Dewantara in 1922. This initiative was built on two fundamental principles: firstly, to provide an answer for those could not enter the Dutch educational system and, secondly, to improve the relationship between teachers and students. The formation of schools for local people thus constituted a major part of the main activist agenda of members of the early nationalist generation such as Kartini and Dewi Sartika, who believed that education paved the way towards freedom and a better future.

12 Kees Groeneboer, *Jalan ke Barat: Bahasa Belanda di Hindia Belanda 1600-1950* (Jakarta: Erasmus Taalcentrum, 1995) 162-230.

The Emergence of an Autodidactic Climate

In post-independence Indonesia, along with this increasing ability to build new educational institutions, schools proliferated. This development was reinforced by the wish to equal the level of education in other countries. Such a wish is undeniably linked to the international wave of uniformising educational systems. In an independent Indonesia the educational project has been modelled on Western examples and Western curricula, in order to express the need for becoming a full member of the world community. Yet this project has been subject to criticism. The prominent work of Everett Reimer, *School is Dead: An Essay on Alternatives in Education*, which was translated into Bahasa Indonesia in 1987, influenced the development of new thoughts on education.¹³ Some critical remarks worth mentioning are, for example, that the function of schools has been reduced to being merely a mouthpiece to communicate official ideologies aimed at promoting uniform thinking and that schools have become institutions that distance the society from its own roots.¹⁴

Such strong observations about school systems are related to the development of civil society movements since the 1990s. The staunchest elements of this criticism come from the opinions of civil-society empowerment activists such as Mansour Fakih and Roem Topatimasang, who have played a vital role in filling the gaps of the national education policy as mentioned above. This critical movement has manifested itself in the publication of books that advocate the integration of critical and participatory principles in the education system, as well as the setting up of alternative schools.¹⁵

In the fields of art and culture, as will be shown in the stories below, it is precisely this experimental culture, blended with the civil society movement that permeates the whole nation, which has given birth to an alternative culture and transformed it into a catalyst for the emergence of a dynamic local art landscape. Among all practitioners of art and culture, there are groups which express their uneasiness about the existing methods used to teach art. It is this kind of unease that has anchored itself in critical thoughts on education. Today, the autodidactic climate and independent ways of obtaining knowledge, which twenty or thirty years ago were conducted only at a personal level, have expanded widely.

Art and Politics

Entering the new millennium, recollections of the long interaction between the Netherlands and Indonesia have been well recorded and have become compulsory reading for all students. Also, traces of the Beautiful Indies style of painting, one of the styles inherited from the Dutch painters living in the colony, can still be seen on the streets as popular products of street sellers. Meanwhile, Indonesia has passed through several battles between art ideologies. A close observation of the works of the Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru (New Art Movement) in the 1970s shows an attempt to destroy the stagnation that was reflected in both the visual ideology and the aesthetic technology of the time.

The active characters within the New Art Movement developed themselves in an environment which tended to depoliticise art and culture and

¹³ Everett Reimer, *Sekitar eksistensi sekolah* (translated from *School is Dead: An Essay on Alternatives in Education*) (Yogyakarta: Hanindita, 1987).

¹⁴ Roem Topatimasang, *Sekolah itu candu* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar 1998) 34-35 and 65-74.

¹⁵ Mansour Fakih et al., *Pendidikan populer: Panduan pendidikan metode kritis partisipatoris* (Yogyakarta: Sekolah Transformasi Sosial Perdikan, 2004).

which felt the exertion of governmental pressure and censorship. Because of its strong attachment to the people, the government regarded their movement as a form of propaganda, having the potential to mobilise massive forces that would lead to political instability. Also, their practices were affiliated with communism. The political pressure brought to bear was so strong that the apparent critical remarks on depoliticisation were expressed only through discussions about subtle topics. In the 1990s, these earlier works that had shouted for change were recognised as representing the voice of the age. Depending on the specific situation, these statements and comments on the country and its strong militaristic character, in particular, were more clearly demonstrated.

In the wake of the Reformation era of 1998, when the power of the New Order and its cultural principles finally ended, another change in visual ideology took place. The combination of boredom with the intense study of political topics and the long repression of the people's identity contributed to the rise of a new generation of artists. Their works were described as 'personal', representing everyday life culture.

Art Academies

The higher education system – art departments included – have existed long enough. Increasingly, their mechanisms of art production have become democratic. Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta was founded in 1949. The Bandung Institute of Technology was established in 1959. Its precursor, called the Technische Hoogeschool, had existed since 1920. The Akademi Seni Rupa Indonesia (Indonesian Visual Art Academy) opened its doors in Yogyakarta in 1950. In the 1960s, teaching institutes that provided educational backgrounds to high school teachers were finally established. Some painters, such as Sudjojono, actively worked in open studios called *sanggar*. Others, such as Hendra (Gunawan), Affandi and Rusli, chose to teach at the new art education institutions.¹⁶

In the early 1990s, the number of art education institutions grew. Schools that offered a diverse range of new disciplines that showed close connections between art, technology and youth culture – photography, television, film and graphic design courses – became immensely popular. Given the large number of students presenting themselves to these programmes each year, one can safely say that the hunger for knowledge among these people is striking. Yet the activity of 'going to school' itself may be considered more important than the need to find out more about the history of a specific school, its foundation and quality standards.

The Case of Agung Kurniawan

Agung Kurniawan had spent four years studying archaeology at the Gadjah Mada University when he finally decided to attend the Graphic Arts Department of the Institut Seni Indonesia (Indonesian Art Institute) in 1991. He had already convincingly exhibited his artworks at the Kelompok Bulaksumur (Bulaksumur Club), a student club active in the visual arts and connected to

¹⁶ Soemargono, *Sastrawan Malioboro*.

the surroundings of the Gadjah Mada University. Kurniawan realised that the Indonesian Art Institute might not have been the best art school, but he desperately needed to have friends with whom he was able to discuss his work. He needed an environment in which he felt compelled to produce works of art. In other words, he was longing for a context with a strong visual arts tradition. Obviously, such a need could not be satisfied within the University, nor with Kelompok Bulaksmur, which was "Nothing more than a hobby club", according to Agung.

Seen from this perspective, attending the Indonesian Art Institute also represented a strategic decision. At this new biotope, he only chose courses that seemed essential to the development of his work, such as *Gambar Ben-tuk 1-7* (Form and Shape level 1-7), *Nirmana 1-7* (Composition of Colour level 1-7), and so forth. He spent the rest of his time just "living on the campus". It was precisely this dynamic campus life and the numerous activities outside the classroom that provided a tremendous creative environment. "Actually, I was bored with class activities. We didn't think the teachers were very impressive. So I preferred to hang out with friends, talking under the banyan tree," he recalls. In their meetings, they discussed a number of matters and questions that had remained unsolved inside the classroom. They also discussed concepts and ideas for new artworks and experimental projects, and commented on each others works. "Among the members of the usual crowd in our banyan tree forum were former members of *Apotik Komik* such as Samuel Indratma and Arie Dyanto, who later founded *Taring Padi*; Balinese students like Putu Sutawijaya and Masriadi, who later became known as the founders of the *Petakumpet* graphic design office (...) It was just like a *sang-gar*, but this one lacked a dominant patron. To me, this was my real school."

Agung's explanation of the meetings under the banyan tree recall the same atmosphere found in Djamin's story about Malioboro. If we could take a closer look at other formal educational institutions, we would surely encounter more, comparable experiences and stories, and we would discover that informal issues are pivotal in the personal development of artists. Agung defines his art academy years as a romantic experience: "It was as if the campus lived 24 hours a day. Everyday we woke up, attended our classes for a couple of hours, and then continued our banyan tree sessions. We knew almost all associates of the Academy. We knew how to find facilities and equipment. I could enter the library freely and take advantage of the opportunity to read books that had just been ordered by the school."

Elastic Attitudes

For 12 years now, Agung has managed the Yogya-based institution Kedai Kebun Forum (established in 1997), which has a gallery, a restaurant and an open studio. It was at the art academy that he learned how to organise an exhibition, how to write a catalogue text and how to run an art space. All these capacities were shaped during his student years. "The most remarkable exhibition for me was '40 Tahun Grafis Yogya' (40 Years of Jogja Graphic Art) in 1995. I and other friends such as Ade Darmawan, Agung Setiadi and Hartono realised that the stockrooms of the campus contained old works of visual artists that had long been abandoned. We asked permission to borrow these archives and to



Agung Kurniawan sitting at the Kedai Kebun Forum, Yogyakarta, 2009

photo: Sari Handayani

exhibit them. It was the first time for us curating a large exhibition. As such, we found out what doing this kind of work involved." From that moment on, he was anxious to realise his ambition of creating his own gallery space.

Yustina W. Neni, Agung Kurniawan's wife, told me how they learned to run Kedai Kebun Forum: "At the time, it was a huge effort to get enough customers to the restaurant, especially since the economic situation worsened in 1997, which also had its effects on the tourism industry. People were not yet familiar with the kind of art space Kedai Kebun Forum represented. We had to learn how to build an appropriate space for both exhibitions and performances, how to develop art and culture management, and we had to work on the restaurant business. You have to know how to spend your money in order to support exhibitions, performances, periodic discussions and to be able to publish the tri-monthly visual arts newsletter called *Halte*. We've learned all that on our own, just by doing it."¹⁷

We might encounter many similar stories if we developed research into the emergence of alternative spaces that have inhabited local art scenes in Indonesia since the end of the 1990s. Many people in many cities have launched initiatives to build new galleries, art film houses and spaces for discussions, alternative media and libraries. All of these efforts are being undertaken by people outside formal institutions; local people who have united in response to the lethargic development of art infrastructure in Indonesia. It is obvious that the role of an artistic individual is not stimulated by the school, but rather by his environment. This role changes accordingly to its context, and it's never static, it's always in flux. Agung, for example, fulfils the roles of artist, curator, writer, art critic, as well as a gallery owner. The essential element is his autonomous character; he represents the kind of individual that will never depend on the state.

Illegal Learning

Until the early 1970s there was a strict, educational dichotomy: one could either enter an art school or discard the whole idea of school, and thus embrace life itself as the ultimate, educational institution. Today, however, pupils seem to have a more elastic mentality; even those who are brought up in formal education systems develop their own, independent character. Such an elasticity demonstrates that the reality of today is far from 'orderly'. It also serves as an explanation of the presence of many different, disordered strategies to access knowledge.

When one lives in an environment which lacks a proper infrastructure, the only option is to act like a guerrilla, always on the move. All opportunities, whenever possible, must be exploited. Knowledge, wherever available, must be secured. There are several strategies to fulfil this quest for knowledge: students are massively photocopying foreign text books, all kinds of software and digital products are actively and constantly being pirated, and local publishing companies are flourishing as they translate and publish foreign text books. Of course, they are not dealing with issues of copyright. The fact that Indonesia has always been situated at the periphery of cultural production and distribution, combined with its limited financial capacity to gain access to and consume cultural products that are distributed under the international copyright

17 Yustina W. Neni, 'Kedai Kebun: Kisah tentang ruang dan interaksi', in: *Lébur Theater Quarterly* 2 (2004).

system, has only stimulated these messy strategies of obtaining knowledge. The volume of pirated products is overwhelming. A very thin line marks the difference between a pirated product and a real one in Indonesia – and even this line is blurring. The question whether something is real or not is no longer the primary consideration when deciding about consuming or not consuming knowledge. These disordered initiatives are, although not legal, both commonly accepted and necessary to stimulate progress.

It is this fundamental, illegal and chaotic way of learning and acting that reveals the particular need for knowledge that has to be satisfied, the discrepancy that needs to be resolved and the particular, progressive goal that needs to be achieved. It reveals an endeavour to rectify the deficiencies of the art infrastructure by seeking access to knowledge in ways that are seemingly wrong, disorderly and odd. Yet perhaps that is precisely the local understanding of progress and modernity; it can only be obtained by undermining existing rules and by constantly adapting oneself to the purposes and needs one encounters. In Indonesia, development advances spontaneously through unplanned steps and strategies.



*Agung Kurniawan and Yustina W. Neni at the
Kedai Kebun Forum, Yogyakarta*

photo: Wock the Rock

The Importance of Private Collections in Indonesia

Helena Spanjaard

The picture people in the Netherlands have of Indonesian art is dominated by associations with local Balinese painting and sculpture, Javanese shadow puppets or batik cloth. These art forms are in a category that is far removed from modern and contemporary Indonesian art. The main reason for this limited impression is the fact that modern and contemporary Indonesian art tends to be rather hidden from view. Few people know about the places where this art is exhibited in public and they are not included in the popular tourist attractions.

Indonesia only has one or two public modern art museums. The oldest is the Museum Seni Rupa dan Keramik (Museum for the Visual Arts and Ceramics) in North Jakarta. In addition, there is the Galeri Nasional in Jakarta, which opened in 1998. This building, formerly a Dutch secondary school, houses a collection of paintings brought together by the Ministry for Culture and Education. The works that are exhibited have generally been donated by artists for an exhibition. The accompanying documentation is minimal and is not available outside of Indonesia.

In addition to these two official collections, there is the private collection of President Soekarno, stored in two palaces (Jakarta and Bogor). There is no general access to the palaces, which means that the general public is not able to see the collections. The documentation dates from 1964 and is only available via antiquarian bookshops. Another significant private collection created by a politician is that of the former Vice-President Adam Malik (1917-1984). It used to be accessible to the general public. However, the museum closed recently due to financial problems and it is not known what has become of the art collection.

The art world in Indonesia operates primarily in private circles: at exhibitions in galleries, during sales by auction houses and in an increasing number of private museums. Private individuals started to collect Indonesian art in the 1950s. Most art collectors are ethnic Chinese and belong to the business elite of Jakarta, Bandung, Semarang and Surabaya. The first private museums were founded by Indonesian artists who had seen similar examples in other countries: the Affandi Museum in Yogyakarta, the Widayat Museum in Mungkid (Magelang), and the Sunaryo and Barli museums in Bandung.

A fine, continually expanding collection of artwork can be seen in the Bentara Budaya collection in South Jakarta. It was brought together by the publishers Kompas Gramedia Group and comprises nearly six hundred paintings and hundreds of other objects. There is a significant concentration of private museums on Bali. The artists' village of Ubud has some of the best known museums – Museum Neka, Museum Agung Rai and Museum Rudana – which have their origins in the success of local galleries. These museums

display modern and contemporary Indonesian art, mainly from Java, in addition to Balinese art from the past hundred years.

The greater part of the Indonesian art world remains hidden from outsiders because the art circles consist of private collectors who buy via galleries or auction houses. The role these collectors play should not be underestimated; they generally own the best works of both deceased artists and those still living. Often they have paid astronomical sums of money for these works. Over the past few years some of these collectors have built private museums that are open to the general public. An example is the collection of Dr. Oei Hong Djien in Magelang. A few collectors in the capital city of Jakarta are working on creating similar museums. This would make more good quality modern art accessible to the general public in future.



The presentation of the book Indonesian Odyssey in Jakarta Town Hall in Jakarta, April 2008, along with 21 collectors.

archive H. Spanjaard

Tiong Ang, Jasper de Beijer, Hadassah Emmerich, Fiona Tan and Roy Villevoeye

Roos van Put

One starting point for this article could be how the collective Dutch-Indonesian past is scrutinised in the works exhibited by Tiong Ang, Jasper de Beijer, Hadassah Emmerich, Fiona Tan and Roy Villevoeye in *Beyond the Dutch*. I deliberately chose not to do that, not only because the works are different in terms of their principles, content and form, but also because of the danger of explaining the art through the idea behind the exhibition, where the exhibited art becomes a portrayal of the theme. You expand the context within which the exhibited works become meaningful from your own personal view and history: in my case that of an Indonesian author who grew up in the Netherlands between two cultures, with the legacy of Dutch, Indonesian-Chinese and East Indies ancestors and parents. How do I experience art by Tiong Ang, Jasper de Beijer, Hadassah Emmerich, Fiona Tan and Roy Villevoeye?

Because of my background, I am fascinated by modern art from both Indonesian and East Indies artists and by Dutch artists who refer to the country and the history of my forebears in their work. Over the last few years I have regularly published articles on this topic. It is interesting to note that my views were always affected by my own multi-faceted identity. An example: when I wrote a review about an exhibition of Ouborg in 2004 and visited this exhibition with a

Western friend of mine, it struck me that I often found signs of the Asian world in his work. In the lines I could see Wèwè, a witch from Asian fairy tales who steals little children, whereas my friend associated them with (European) children's drawings in particular. Ouborg was a member of Cobra and she saw many of the facets of that movement in his art. I saw these too, but at the same time I saw that Asian environment in which Ouborg lived for such a long time.

In the discussion of the modern artworks by Ang, De Beijer, Emmerich, Tan and Villevoe, I had allowed myself to be led by my own outlook on the world. What opportunities can this vision, experience and interpretation of this art offer me?

Essence of Identity

In his oeuvre of paintings, video works, spatial installations and interactive processes, Tjong Ang (1961) focuses on topics such as authenticity and mortality. Ang wonders in what way the individual can be meaningful in a world with increasingly few boundaries, yet still a world that is defined by social, communal, religious and political differences. Themes such as reality and fiction, of presence and absence, of looking and being looked at run through his work.

During the initial years of his career, Tjong Ang's background did not play any role in the way his work was received. This changed halfway through the nineties. Then he was increasingly considered as a 'multicultural artist' whose work fit in excellently with the multicultural debate, which was a key topic on the political and social agenda at the time. Although he never consciously wanted to ask questions about his personal cultural identity, the approaches used in his art were often the result of thinking about his own identity as an outsider, about his position as an artist in the Netherlands, born of Chinese-Indonesian parents from a different home country.

This sounds very familiar to me: how do you experience identity if you feel that it is merely an aspect of the society and culture that surround you? What happens with that other part? Do you ignore it, just like your forebears did, or do you decide to search for elements from that other culture that so distinctly help determine your identity too? It is a situation of ongoing cultural ambivalence, that feeds on the questions you ask. Who are you? What mix of backgrounds and influences makes you an individual? Is identity a solid or liquid concept? Maybe that double, cultural identity could best be described as a hybrid self-image that you develop automatically if you have roots in more than one culture and grow up aware of the their legacies and cultural histories.



Hadassah Emmerich

The Salon, 2008

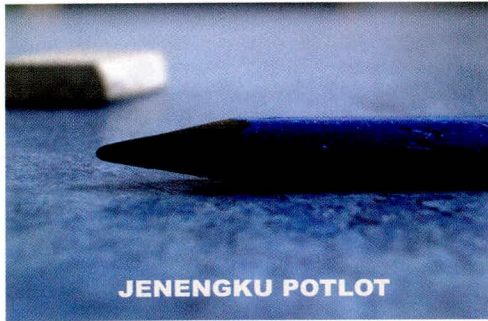
installation with works on paper and wall painting,
Galeria Kordegarda, Warschau

courtesy Galeria Kordegarda, Warschau, and
Galerie Akinci, Amsterdam

photo: Jacek Gladyskowski

Ignoring

Tiong Ang's Chinese-Indonesian parents had studied in the Netherlands and were here when Indonesia became independent. Driven by their desire to help rebuild their native country, they decided to return to Indonesia. Tiong was born there. But halfway through the sixties, the regime of Suharto, who had gradually managed to consolidate his dominant position, turned more and more against non-native Indonesians. When he was almost five years old, he and his parents returned to the Netherlands very suddenly. The Indonesian chapter of the family book was closed abruptly and they never talked about it again, a very common phenomenon among families who had similar experiences. Children who grew up in the Netherlands but whose parents were born and raised in Indonesia learn more about their own history and the country of their forefathers from literature, films and personal investigations than from the stories told within their family. In that respect, the artist's family and mine are very similar.



Tiong Ang

My Name is Pencil (Potlot! Pensil! Pencil!),
2009

series of 4
collection of the artist

Transition, Migration and Identity

For this exhibition, Tiong Ang produced a new work for which he used an autobiographical anecdote as a starting point for the first time, an event that took place during his forced departure from Indonesia to the Netherlands. In this new work, concepts such as transition, migration and identity now take on a personal meaning. At the same time, this specific work transcends the personal story – anyone whose roots are in Indonesia or the former Dutch Indies can find something of his or her family history in it. Tiong Ang's new work contains a painting, photographs, objects and a video, all brought together in an amalgam as an 'educational space'. Tiong Ang filmed pencil factories in Indonesia, where the production process of mixing graphite, woodworking, wash basins and lathes provide metaphorical images of 'creation'.

'Pencil' was the first Dutch word that Tiong Ang learned. On the plane from Indonesia to the Netherlands he was given a pencil to draw with. When he was in the Netherlands, he did not speak at first and if anyone asked him his name, he replied, "Pencil." This anecdote was the inspiration for this artwork. The artist uses it to examine the myth around this experience from his youth, ironically commenting on both the artistic discourse about migration and identity and the Asian label that has been stuck on him. If he is considered as a Dutch artist with Asian roots, then the public will see work that fits in seamlessly with this viewpoint and that can be explained perfectly using notions like transition, migration and assimilation.

With his new work about this object used for drawing and writing, he is referring to the colonial past of the Netherlands and Indonesia using four vocabularies. The consequences of a colonial and post-colonial era become evident in the simple word *pencil* and in the way in which the artist uses it. 'Potlood' is the Dutch term, and the word 'potlot' is still used on Java. The Indonesian language also has 'pensil', which is of course derived from the English 'pencil'. In modern Indonesia, all four words are alternately used by various generations; the soundtrack of the film consists of translations in these four languages.

Globalisation

This work also expresses the artist's opinion about globalisation. He is referring to the famous essay *I, Pencil* of 1958, in which the economist Leonard E. Read explains what globalisation means in practice using the manufacturing process of a pencil. The wood for the pencil is cedar from Northern California and Oregon. The wood blocks are processed in a sawmill in San Leandro, California. The graphite comes from Ceylon (now called Sri Lanka) and is mixed with clay from Mississippi. The ferrule is made of brass and the eraser is a rubber-like product obtained by reacting rapeseed oil from Indonesia with sulphur chloride. The sum of all those raw materials and industries, plus several professions and all the associated items that are required for manufacturing a pencil, illustrates in a nutshell what globalisation is.

Testing Identity

The Dutchman Roy Villevoye (1960) has a totally different background to Tiong Ang, but his art is indicative of similar themes, a parallel discourse. Villevoye produces photographs, films (often with Jan Dietvorst) and sculptures. In the mid eighties he became known as a painter in the Netherlands, rooted in the artistic tradition of Sol LeWitt, whose assistant he had been for many years. To expand his artistic abilities he went to remote regions, far away from the rules and laws that define the Western art world. In doing so he wanted to test his identity as a European and as an artist.

Villevoye also travelled to India and from 1992 regularly to Papua, the Western half of New Guinea. This region, the former Dutch New Guinea, has been part of Indonesia since 1963. Villevoye has lived and worked there with the Asmat, an original Papua population, for long periods for many years now.

View

The new work that he is exhibiting in *Beyond the Dutch* is a hyper-realistic image – both in its dimensions and its appearance. It shows a Papuan holding a cross in his arms. The man is made of silicone rubber and the cross is made of two tree trunks. The Papuan, with fuzzy hair, is dressed in modern everyday gym shorts and a shirt. It is tempting – but too simplistic – to explain the cross as a Christian, Western symbol and to identify the Papuan with that 'other' world. The majority of the Indonesian population are Muslims, whereas most Papuans identify with the Christian faith that was brought there by the previous oppressor, the Dutch. Within their magical and spiritual philosophy, the Papuans 'borrow' elements from that Christian culture.

Questions about the significance of this situation or that specific image transcend unambiguous explanations. Instead, the layers of the work offer a range of possibilities for reflection. People are very much inclined to interpret a wooden cross through Western eyes, but a different meaning is obvious, given the context in which the work was created. The Asmat are



Roy Villevoye

Preparations, 2007

C-print from digital photo, 100 x 133.5 cm
series of 5

known as very skilful wood carvers. Asmat 'think' in wood; woodworking is what they do every day – a dugout canoe, a sculpture of an ancestor or parts for a men's house. Woodworking is part of both their everyday life and their spiritual life.

Meaning also bears on the cultural legacies of both the artist Villevoye and the Papuans. The artist moves in the modern Western world of art and investigates what he might add to it with an oeuvre that is created in a remote region, while interacting with the culture there. It is customary in the Asmat culture to commemorate their ancestors through wooden sculptures. Even when they are dead, they then remain in the present as well as in the world of spirits. Making a sculpture of a living Asmat is therefore not done. What the public is now being shown is a hyper-realistic effigy of a living Asmat – the person portrayed is in fact a good friend of the artist. So isn't Villevoye now going against the habits and customs? And why would the Papuan have let himself be immortalised in a sculpture in such a way? If two persons can relate to each other in this way, actually against all accepted norms, what then does this mean?

Clichés and Carriers of Meaning

Hadassah Emmerich (1974) uses cliché images and stereotypes in her monumental murals and works on paper. Floral themes, fruits and rather exotic figures refer (ironically) to her Asian background. It is tempting to point to Emmerich's background when interpreting her art. Of course, she grew up knowing about the culture of the former Dutch East Indies and she is also quite clear about the fact that she allows this legacy to play a role in her art. I think that she clearly referred to her East Indies roots in her initial period, whereas later on she tried to approach a multivalent cultural identity. At the same time, the exotic aspect in her murals originates from a fascination for 'orientalism', the romanticising, Western colonial view of the East. She came into contact with it during her later education at Goldsmiths' College in London. Starting from that, she began to focus on mixing dissimilar elements.

She looked for sources and images that fit in with that theme and added the illusion of exotic sentiment through her choice of colours. She stayed close to her personal history and double cultural identity by bringing together East and West in her wall paintings, but she also wanted to transcend her personal history. She gradually extended her artistic choices and became fascinated by 'other' cultures, mainly inspired by the desire to travel to such an 'other' culture hoping to find happiness there. I suspect that my ancestors and parents also travelled to the Dutch East Indies to start a new life and find new happiness.

In her later work, Hadassah Emmerich still uses 'carriers of meaning', for example by portraying the feet of a wayang puppet. Not in order to make a statement about her East Indies past, but to represent alien symbols from other cultures. She personally describes it as 'a reflective, surrealist approach'. She wants to create a visual dialogue that takes unexpected turns. She tries to take the edge off the clichés by eliminating their original meaning. She asks questions about the meaning of symbolism and identity.

Hall Arrangement

Emmerich produced an installation for the *Be(com)ing Dutch* exhibition at the Van Abbe Museum using works from the collection of this museum. She was asking herself what originality and authenticity mean. She wanted to approach this theme without degrading the artworks into a mere illustration for a history, for a modern story about migration, identity and globalisation. She personally described this work method as 'bringing together different spirits in the same room'. In the new work that she is making for the Centraal Museum, Emmerich is using the same principle. She will be looking for authenticity in the context of identity. She will use the same arrangement as the one for a classical *salon*, where works of art are shown beneath, above and next to each other. She is aiming to make another attempt to create a dialogue between dissimilar parts, investigating clichés and presuppositions in an expressive way. Her well-known murals will act as a background – literally. This installation contains stereotypical images that may perhaps acquire new meaning or a new identity within this totally new context.

Emmerich's art was inspired by thinking about shuttling back and forth between different cultures. The question she specifically asks is: 'What exactly is identity?' Is identity shaped and coloured by interactions between dissimilar elements? Will it result in a never-ending conflict or in fertile cross-pollination? I think the answer to all these questions is that it will yield a mixture. Identity is a mixture of dissimilar parts that could lead to internal conflict, or to a double burden to be borne, or to fertile cross-pollination.

Shared Past

Both Fiona Tan (1966), who was born in Indonesia, and the Dutchman Jasper de Beijer (1973) are exhibiting existing works at *Beyond the Dutch*. *Smoke Screen* by Fiona Tan is a film from 1997. It shows a film fragment of three young Asian children who are smoking. The essay that the artist wrote about the film says that she felt a certain affinity with these children. At the time, Tan was researching a documentary about her family and her cultural identity. The three smoking children were filmed in the thirties on the Island of Bali; Tan found these fragments in the film *Tropisch Nederland: een reis met de film-camera door de Oostindische archipel*.

This affinity is one I'm familiar with. If you watch through 'Western' eyes, you are shocked to see children smoking at that age. But those who grew up with the legacy of the former Dutch East Indies know that people in the internment camps often smoked to stay their hunger. The children of those days were often addicted for the rest of their lives. Knowing this affects my interpretation of the images in *Smoke Screen*, even if it is about totally different children in totally different circumstances.

Still Dutch

The series of photographs entitled *Outpost* (2005) by Jasper de Beijer also provides an image of the shared past, in particular the role of the coloniser. Almost everything is manipulated and assembled in *Outpost*. The artist uses his photographs to scrutinise the behaviour of the Dutch in the former Dutch East Indies. De Beijer wanted to bring the colonial past back to life. He created landscapes and plantations using a computer program, and reconstructed complete residences and estates to scale in his studio. He assembled all the pieces and then took the photographs, meticulously arranging them into images that seem historical. In doing so, he composed a 'reality fiction' based on historical material such as old pictures, encyclopaedias and information from the Internet. With these pictures he suggests an objectivity that does not exist. The atmosphere of this work evokes associations with snapshots and random photography, which undoubtedly highlights a serious theme.

De Beijer's art is not about political statements, although you could interpret his work that way. De Beijer is not a chronicler either. Yet he gives a free interpretation of historical material, holding on to historical facts on one hand and providing personal interpretations on the other. In this work, the artist deals with both the colonial problems and modern issues regarding integration. For De Beijer, the attitude and behaviour of people who left for another country during the colonial period to start a new life was the starting point for this series of pictures. The persons in this work remained very Dutch in their behaviour and did not adapt to their new environment. In *Outpost* you can see how the Dutch fence off their estates to make it clear to strangers where the boundaries lie between 'me' and 'the other'. They stayed aloof from the original inhabitants.

Cultural Ambivalence

In this article, I have tried to explain how the art of Tiong Ang, Jasper de Beijer, Hadassah Emmerich, Fiona Tan and Roy Villevoys can be interpreted and experienced from the starting point of cultural ambivalence, and therefore from my personal cultural background. In the context of that search for identity, the objects of art may be instinctively familiar, or refer to my personal story, or the history of my family, in a confrontational way. There is no switch for simply turning off this ambiguous view. It exists. It is so endemic that I believed that Ouburg's art, which I mentioned earlier, naturally combined these two worlds. Of course, aside from those personal associations, I can also see a general layer underpinning the exhibited works of art, referring to modern issues involving migration, assimilation, globalisation, colonial versus post-colonial, power and powerlessness.

In a subtle, confrontational and sometimes even painful manner, these works therefore took me straight back into my personal family history. This was the case with Fiona Tan's film, where the lingering pictures seem to be directly related to my family story, making the experience and interpretation of the work highly personal: the smoking children could be one of the pictures in my family album. Hadassah Emmerich's art is confrontational for me too. Her search for the essence of identity sounded familiar to me. I could ask the same questions about its essence. Such an investigative approach also characterised my experience and

interpretation of the work of Roy Villevoe. The uncomfortable dialect that he intentionally confronts creates individual relationships, friendships and works of art in almost random surroundings. I see all kinds of connections: the urge to adapt constantly in an environment that only partly feels like 'home'; the search for the answer to the question of what makes you the person you are. It seems like the quest for balance between dissimilar elements in a process of continuous questioning, just as in Hadassah's work.

With his artwork, Tjong Ang contrasts *couleur locale* against the global economy and globalisation, thus questioning the concept of cultural identity: is true cultural engagement possible for someone with a multicultural background? Ang questions the current art discourse, in which concepts like migration, assimilation, and intercultural relationships are used. He also questions the urge to label 'multicultural artists' in fixed frames, and does so while leaving room for the absurd, the ironic and the humorous. Nevertheless, he

offers a cutting insight into the legacy of the Dutch and Indonesian past. A past that is reflected in four simple words – 'potlood', 'potlot', 'pensil' and 'pencil'.

Jasper de Beijer's series of photographs makes clear to me that 'I' and the 'other' belong to two totally different worlds that cannot be combined; each is happy going its own way. But if you have a multicultural background, then it is inevitable that there is an 'I' and an 'other' fighting for supremacy in your being. Will there always be a cultural ambivalence?



Jasper de Beijer

Untitled, from the series *Outpost*, 2004
 lambdaprint, 30 x 40 cm
 series of 5
 courtesy Nouvelles Images, the Hague

New Markets for Indonesian Art

Jan Pieter Glerum

The first President of Indonesia, Soekarno, had an extensive collection of paintings, possibly because he himself was a fairly competent painter and very interested in the visual arts. The more than 500 works of art in what was then the presidential palace in Bogor have been documented in no less than two illustrated catalogues: one in two volumes compiled by the 'palace artist' Dullah (1957) and one in five volumes edited by the artist Lee Man Fong (1964). Soekarno's collection recorded the developments on Bali (he was, for instance, a great admirer of the work of Rudolf Bonnet) and the works of the so-called 'Beautiful Indies' painters, as well as the work of members of the Persagi, the association of Indonesian artists who played a pioneering role in developing modern Indonesian painting. In the collection, the romanticised East Indies of 'Beautiful Indies' artists such as Ger Adolfs, Lucien Ohl, Ernst Dezentjé, Leo Eland and Carel Lodewijk Dake with paddy fields, volcanoes and carabaos hung next to works by young Indonesian painters who portrayed the fight for freedom against the colonial occupying power in a way that was often raw and in an intrinsically Indonesian style.

Following the handover of sovereignty in 1949 and Soekarno's decision to expel all Dutch citizens in 1957 (a few artists, including Dezentjé, Sonnega and Arie Smit, chose to become Indonesian), the Netherlands was 'inundated' by tens of thousands of returning citizens. Often the meagre baggage they brought back contained 'Beautiful Indies' paintings in addition to East Indies copper work, Indonesian daggers (krises), batik and other art objects. This East Indies memorabilia may have had sentimental value, but there was little interest for it in the Netherlands. The timing was wrong here, the loss of 'our East Indies' meant that everything from the East Indies (and Indonesia) faded into the background and it apparently did not mean anything to the younger generation. East Indies paintings were worth very little. Works by Dake, Dezentjé and Eland went for next to nothing; no-one wanted them any more. Shadow puppets, Indonesian daggers and East Indies copper items were more expensive in Brussels and Cologne than in The Hague.

The financial value of East Indies and Indonesian painting changed dramatically in the second half of the 1980s. The regime of the second President of Indonesia, Suharto, who had taken over control from Soekarno in 1967, brought great wealth to many individuals in his entourage. And as is so often the case, when extremely affluent trendsetters in a society have all the material possessions they need, they move on to art. After all, owning art gives you status and in some cases it can turn out to be an excellent investment. Thus the first collectors and their intermediaries were seen in the late 1990s at the specialist auctions of Glerum, Christie's and Sotheby's,

initially in The Hague and later in Singapore. At that time the concepts of quality and condition were still unknown; quantity, size and what was being represented were considered more important. Many of these first 'collectors/investors', as they called themselves, wanted to open their own museum. They bought up a large number of paintings in a relatively short space of time, in particular works by established names in the still relatively young East Indies and Indonesian history of art. Prices for paintings by Raden Saleh and Walter Spies soon broke through the barrier of one million US dollars. Some collections in Indonesia contain several hundred works.

Quality and condition became increasingly important after 2000. The buyers became more critical and were now ready to take advice. Works in the 'Beautiful Indies' style fell in price, while the best works by artists such as Theo Meier and Le Mayeur started to attract buyers internationally.

There has been a remarkable broadening of the Asian art market in recent years, due in part to growing prosperity in Southeast Asia and the Far East. Works by Indonesian artists are included in regional auctions together with Chinese, Korean and Indian art. A pan-Asian market has emerged, giving contemporary Indonesian art in particular an international stage.

Handiwirman

Kain sarong, 2009

collection of the artist

courtesy Cemeti Art House, Yogyakarta



Contemporary Art and the Museum in the Global Age*

Hans Belting

For a long time, art museums seemed to have been born with a secure identity safeguarded by their designation to exhibit art and even to provide art with the necessary ritual of visibility. Yet now, as we embark upon the global age, they face a new challenge. It remains to be seen whether the art museum, as an institution with a history reaching back at least two hundred years in the West, is prepared for the age of globalisation. There is no common notion of art that necessarily applies to all societies around the world. Contemporary art, which is what I will concentrate on in what follows, raises new and difficult questions. On the one hand, art production as a contemporary practice is expanding around the globe. On the other hand, precisely this recent explosion seems to threaten the survival of any safe notion of art, provided one still exists even in the West. Granted, new art museums have been established in many parts of the world: But will the institution survive this expansion? The presence of non-Western contemporary art in biennial's and private collections is not a clear indication of whether its institutionalisation in permanent and public collections will follow or whether, on the contrary, the new art production will undermine the profile of the museum. In other parts of the world, art museums either lack any history or are suffering from the history of colonialisation. In short, I will analyse the museum in the light of a branch of *contemporary art* that I call *global art*.

Contemporary Art – Global Art

Let me first introduce *contemporary art*, a term that still causes a lot of confusion as it is traditionally identified with the most recent production

* This article is an abbreviated version of a text first published in: Peter Weibel and Andrea Buddensieg (ed.), *Contemporary Art and the Museum: A global perspective* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2007) 16–38.

of modern art, at least in the West where this chronological or avant-garde distinction resisted even postmodern notions and remained valid until quite recently. Yet beyond the West, contemporary art has a very different meaning that is slowly also seeping into the Western art scene. There, it is hailed as a liberation from modernism's heritage and is identified with local art currents of recent origin. In such terms, it offers revolt against both art history, with its Western-based meaning, and against ethnic traditions, which seem like prisons for local culture in a global world. There are reasons behind this double resistance that deserve our attention.

On the one hand, there was no art history in most parts of the world; therefore, it could not be appropriated ready-made. On the other hand, ethnic arts and crafts, as the favorite child of colonial teachers and collectors, no longer continue as a living tradition even if they survive as a commodity for global tourism. "The death of authentic primitive art", to quote the title of a book by Shelly Errington, opens a space that contemporary art invades with its double character: as *post-historical*, with respect to the West, and *post-ethnic*, with respect to its own environments.¹ I do not say that this is a description of what is, but a description how artists nowadays *feel*. It seems that the history of art, for Western artists, has been felt as a similar burden as to what ethnic tradition has meant for non-Western artists. I also do not say that history only exists in the West and tradition only in other parts of the worlds. But the two labels have played a considerable role in building up a specific consciousness. In both respects, a new situation has arrived. It therefore makes sense that *contemporary art*, in many cases, is understood as synonymous with *global art*. Globalism, in fact, is almost an antithesis to universalism because it decentralises a unified and uni-directional world view and allows for 'multiple modernities', to quote the theme of a *Daedalus* issue dedicated to the topic in 2000. This also means that in the arts, the notion 'modern' becomes a historical definition and accordingly loses the authority of a universal model. It might even appear as a past that is linked to the West, like other cultures view their own local pasts.

Here the concepts of modern (or modernism), contemporary, and global become relevant for museums, especially newly founded ones in non-Western parts of the world that have to represent such issues both by their collection and for a local audience. Museums, in principle, have to justify their collections and represent ideas that are broader than mere personal taste. Since they are official institutions, they are also subjected to public pressure, and must rely on support from funding authorities. They must therefore offer a program which, in this case, clarifies the constellation and local meaning of modern, contemporary, and global.

The Decline of Modernism

It was in the Museum of Modern Art in New York that William Rubin celebrated the modernist myth for the last time with two famous, complementary exhibitions, which showed a nostalgic longing for a lost history. I am speaking of the great Picasso show that opened in 1980, six years after the artist's death, and the show *Primitivism in 20th Century Art*, which stirred still largely unconscious resistance in me when I saw it in 1984. The Primitivism exhibition could just as easily have been called 'Picasso and Primitive Art'.² Its aim was to reconcile the two mainstream traditions of modern and ethnic art, but in

1 Shelly Errington, *The Death of Authentic Primitive Art and Other Tales of Progress* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1998). Cf. Sally Price, *Primitive Art in Civilized Places* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989) and R. Corbey, *Tribal Art Traffic* (Amsterdam: Royal Tropical Institute, 2000).

2 William Rubin, 'Picasso', in: William Rubin (ed.), 'Primitivism' in 20th Century Art: *Affinity of the tribal and the modern* (2 vols; New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1984) vol. I, 241-340.

fact, it once again confirmed the old dualistic perspective on 'tribal art', as so-called 'primitive' art was once called, whose masks and fetishes still functioned as 'inspiration' for avant-garde art in the same way they had nearly one hundred years before, in Picasso's early years. One could have likewise spoken of an appropriation of ethnic art in modern art history, meaning the influence of ethnic artifacts on modern artists, a process that amounted to the transformation of religious practice (collective) into artistic creation (individual).

It is nearly unconceivable that only five years separate Rubin's show from the project that Jean-Hubert Martin realised in 1989 in the Centre Pompidou with his exhibition *Les Magiciens de la Terre*.³ This show cut the ties to the earlier project in that it presented non-Western production as *contemporary* rather than *primitive ethnic art* and did so for the first time on a global scale. Not only did Martin choose fifty living artists from the so-called Third World, he also displayed them alongside an equal number of Western artists. With this juxtaposition, he intended to relate them in an imaginary dialogue rather than identify either as an 'influence' on the other. Martin did not use the word 'art' and instead applied the term 'magic' in order to avoid confusion and criticism about mixing concepts. He nevertheless disappointed most critics, those in the West for undermining the autonomy of modern art and those from the third world for not having promoted their artists to the first ranks of modernism. In retrospect, we have to credit him with having created the first event in the emerging new presence of contemporary global art.

Rasheed Araeen, who participated in the event, later objected that the show did not represent "the cultural heterogeneity of modernism from all over the world" and that it had stabilised the division in which "the *self* represented a modern, universal vision" and "*the others*" were still trapped "in their ethnic origin".⁴ He devoted the whole of the sixth issue of *Third Text* to a critique of the exhibition. Two years before, in 1987, Araeen had founded this periodical in London "with the aim of providing a critical forum for third-world perspectives on the visual arts," as he writes in the first editorial.⁵ The magazine was to represent "a historical shift away from the center of the dominant culture to its periphery" and to view the center with critical eyes. In the first decade of its existence, *Third Text* was mainly "devoted to revealing the institutional closures of the art world and the artists they excluded, the second began the enquiry into (the new phenomenon) (...) of the assimilation of the exotic Other into the new world art," as Sean Cubitt reminds us. A new type of "art-institutional racism" forced the newcomers "to see their work assimilated into the system (...). For some artists, the struggle has led to a retreat from international arenas and a return to the local (...). Others have abandoned the concept of art altogether" and look for "alternative modes of cultural practice" in order to escape the assimilating forces of the art world.⁶

On the other hand, the global space absorbs the privilege of representing history, including the variant of art history in the Western world. It also threatens to undermine the system of the art world. The new presence of those who were formerly outsiders was not yet in sight when Araeen launched his project in 1987. In the meantime, art geography, too, has been changing rapidly, as is indicated by a new terminology. The term of the so-called Third World no longer characterises the new art geography. It now seems appropriate to speak of a 'global South', as Beral Madra, the founder of the Istanbul Biennial calls it. The 'global South' emerges as a new periphery in relation to other emerging centers with new

3 Thomas McEvilley, 'Ouverture du piège and Homi Baba. Hybridité, hétérogénéité et culture contemporaine', in: Jean-Hubert Martin et al. (ed.), *Magiciens de la terre* (Paris: Editions du Centre Pompidou, 1989) 20 and 24.

4 Rasheed Araeen, 'Our Bauhaus, others' Mudhouse', *Third Text* 6 (Spring 1989) 3-16.

5 Sean Cubitt, 'Prologue. In the beginning: Third text and the politics of art', in: Rasheed Araeen (ed.), *The Third Text Reader on Art, Culture and Theory* (London and New York: Continuum 2002) 1-8, esp. 3ff.

6 Ibidem.

economic power, (such as China), which rival the West in global dimensions. In this respect, the global art market has become a distorting mirror. Success in the market does not necessarily mean local acceptance in the societies whose problems are addressed by the local artists and vice versa. The art market and public acceptance are strangely divided. The market often deprives artists of their critical voice and their political significance, and their critical potential needs clients outside the 'system' whose judgment is not neutralised by assimilated global art criticism.

Acceptance in the art scene was still the issue of Peter Weibel's 1996 Graz show *Inklusion: Exklusion*, which was an important step forward in discussing (and promoting?) such a change.⁷ But 'inclusion' (of whom and for what reasons?) happened only in the newly emerging, global exhibition culture, whereas acceptance in museum collections is another matter. The Graz exhibition succeeded in drawing 'a new map of art in the era of post-colonialism', as the subtitle says. Nonetheless, 'global migration', the second part of the subtitle, remains a personal experience. Migration is reflected in the artist's imagination and shapes individual memory. Museums, on the contrary, do not migrate (even if their collections travel), but have to shape a new audience or are themselves shaped by a local audience. But, then, how do museums lend themselves to globalisation in the strict sense, if such a sense exists?

The Future of Art Museums

It may seem that 'art' in the terms of Western modernity, in whatever application, has won the game and has even become a global experience, thus defeating ethnic production and leveling off any cultural difference. In this case, art museums would expect a global future in which they look the same everywhere. But such a conclusion is premature and rests on superficial observations that conceal new and unexpected developments. Certainly, we watch the explosion of art museums in many parts of the world. They represent a new geography of institutions that sometimes are less than ten years old. They usually reflect economic prosperity and serve the representation (and global share value) of local capital. Thus, they often are sponsored by big companies with global investment, whereby the museum aspect is assigned only a secondary role within a given foundation, a situation already ridiculed by the description 'restaurant with museum'. In their mission statements, they still make the claim to serve as cultural labs or urban centres of culture, culture meaning a local outpost of advanced economy that, in this case, also means global conformity with the art market. But museums are by definition local, and they ultimately live from the expectation of local audiences. This also involves a notion of art that, currently, does not divide one society from another, but instead, separates the economic elite from the majority in any given culture. Museums cannot keep pace with such fashionable exhibitions, as the numerous biennial's and triennials around the world. Though they may serve as hosts for them, their key problem is the collection, which calls for a difficult choice, even if we exclude the intervention of private collectors: Either a museum collection is local and thus cannot capture the interest of the visitors and sponsors, or it represents an international level that is economically inaccessible and puts off local artists. Finally, such public institu-

⁷ Peter Weibel (ed.), *Inklusion: Exklusion* (Graz: Steirischer Herbst 1996).

tions ultimately rely on a local audience that does not share the taste of the art world. Its strategies of representation link it to local culture.

The question is whether, and to what extent, *contemporary art* can represent *local culture*, even with critical aims, or whether art is simply explaining its own existence. We can also turn the question around. What does a local audience, which in many parts of the world remains unfamiliar with art, expect to see in an art museum? To quote Colin Richards, we may ask ourselves: "What remains distinctive and beguiling about art?" He maintains that it is art's "relation to wider social and political dynamics" and reminds us that in South Africa, as soon as the art movement had gained momentum, there began "an ongoing debate about the *autonomy* of art vis à vis the social and political worlds in which it is embedded, and further, how the relationship between art and these worlds is best understood"⁸ On the one hand, art may be said to be "one of the few spaces left for imagining a less managed and administered life". On the other hand, art's claims for protection and autonomy easily become an obstacle to its public presence, and thus museums face a challenge that directly affects their traditional role.

As long as the outcome of globalisation is still largely a clouded mirror, the art museum's future remains unpredictable, both with respect to its survival and its possible change of profile. Yet we can guess that the museum is predestined for the representation of "contemporary worlds" to take up Marc Augé's formulation. Augé spoke of "an anthropology for contemporary worlds" in order to devise a structural change for traditional anthropology. "The world's inhabitants have at last become truly contemporaneous, and yet the world's diversity is recomposed every moment: this is the paradox of our day. We must speak, therefore, of worlds in the plural." Anthropology's situation "has to do with the coexistence of the singular entity implied by the word contemporaneous and the multiplicity of worlds it qualifies." He goes so far as to say that "every society is made up of several worlds"⁹

Applied to the case of museums, it is obvious that 'the art world' may become more heterogeneous and increasingly less defined. This does not mean only that it has multiplicity within itself. Rather, we must accept that it changes from one place to another. This is valid even for collections whose artworks change meaning wherever they are shown. They do not simply own one possible meaning or, alternatively, a universal significance, but are subjected to the comprehension of a local audience. Thus, the art world may eventually become a permeable, porous entity that disintegrates within a larger whole or yields to a diversity of systems. Its traditional opposition between 'art' and 'ethnic production' is thus exposed to new practices where such a dualism loses meaning. Even in the West, the museum age is not considerably older than what we call modern art and is thus not independent from clearly circumscribed historical and social condit.

World Art and Global Art

The new geography of art institutions affects not only the domain of contemporary art but also exerts pressure on major museums in the West when faced with the controversy over world art that brings with it possible repatriation claims. In December 2002, eighteen metropolitan museums of the West signed a 'Declaration on the importance and value of Universal Museums', thereby reusing the modern Western conception of universalism but applying it to the responsible care of a world art heritage. The declaration makes the claim to serve the globe and not just

⁸ Colin Richards, 'The wounds of discovery', in: A. Pinto Ribeiro (ed.), *The State of the World* (Lisbon: Gulbenkian Foundation, 2006) 18f.

⁹ Marc Augé, *An Anthropology for Contemporaneous Worlds* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999) 89ff. Cf. Francis Affergan, *La pluralité des mondes. Vers une autre anthropologie* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1997).

the West. Neil MacGregor, in the name of the British Museum, spoke of "a museum of the world for the world". He asked rhetorically: "Where else other than in these museums can the world see so clearly that it is one?" Mark O'Neill, director of the Glasgow Museums, however objected that museums with a world art collection, in order to act on behalf of the world, "must be open about the conflicted histories of some objects" and "reveal the Imperial as well as the Enlightenment history of collections."¹⁰

While this activity centres on world art heritage, other mega institutions, mostly museums for modern art, such as the Guggenheim Museum in New York or the Centre Pompidou in Paris, react differently to the challenge of a globalised world by expanding their spheres of influence and by establishing neo-colonial branches of modernist art in other parts of the world. The global rhetoric hardly conceals the material and economic aspects underlying such plans. Recently, it has been reported that Hong Kong has been chosen as a location for a giant art centre that will surpass anything in the West while continuing Western strategies. It seems that a clash of institutions and concepts represents a new global museum economy. Nearby, the so-called National Museum for Western Art in Tokyo was originally founded for identifying the West as a local culture and for distinguishing Western heritage and Western influence from the native patrimony. In continental China, the recently opened Beijing World Art Museum counters the Hong Kong plans by adopting Western claims for Chinese standards. The museum significantly mirrors and adapts the spirit of a newly emerging discipline of art criticism called 'world art history' in China that claims to have the competence to discuss 'world art' from a Chinese point of view.

The concept of *world art* thus deserves a closer look since it differs from *global art* in both meaning and intention. The difference may seem like word play but it enables us to distinguish global art production, as a recent experience, from an old idea signifying world art as the climax of 'world art heritage'. World art as a concept already shaped André Malraux's 'Museum without walls' that represented the heritage variant. Malraux's dreams took shape during the dark years of World War II in occupied Paris. The famous book *Le musée imaginaire*, first published in 1947, introduces world art as the sum of what was visually created in different cultures and which he identifies as 'art' beyond the Western art discourse.¹¹ His approach is entirely visual and aesthetic without allowing any boundaries of cultural and historical difference. He claimed to overcome the traditional dualism between (Western) art and (ethnic) artifacts, which he considered an outdated colonial attitude.

Malraux, paradoxically, still worshiped the museum, even if he dreamed of an ideal and universal museum. Meanwhile, the Museum, as an idea (with or without walls), has become a problem for so-called global art, which is still a recent phenomenon. Non-Western artists entertain a double bias against art heritage, both against their own ethnic traditions, and against art history in the Western sense of modernism. In their *post-ethnic* and *post-historical* attitude, they question two main functions of the Western museum. In the West, in the meantime, museums appear divided by two contradictory roles that cannot be easily reconciled. Traditionally, museums served as a collection of past art that underwent canonization inside the doors of the museum: to mention only the old French law that modern artists were not admitted to the Louvre until ten years after their death. In late modernism, however, museums have unexpectedly turned into an ephemeral stage for living art, which is often created for and even commissioned by museums. I only

¹⁰ Moira Simpson, 'A world of museums: New concepts, new models', in: Pinto Ribeiro (ed.), *The State of the World*, 101ff.

¹¹ My description in Hans Belting, *Art History After Modernism* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2003) 153ff.

remind you of so-called site-specific works and installation art. It is obvious that these two views of exhibition galleries contradict the institution's identity, although both are accepted as a legitimate use of the museum.

This leads us to the question of the *institutionalisation* of so-called global art. It is, in this respect, necessary to make a distinction. In my opinion, the question concerns the role of the local art museum, especially outside the West, and its survival. In 2005, the senior curator of the Taipeh Museum of Contemporary Art, Kao Chien-hui, addressed such issues when she launched an exhibition whose topic was the institution as such. She named her show *Trading Place*, a "commentary exhibition" staged as a "conceptual and yet visual art exhibition but more so a discourse on issues that concern the art world today".¹² The museum did not speak with its own voice, but instead, invited artists to deal with topics such as "stealing, exchanging, trading, re-presenting, and misappropriating". The artist Zhang Hongtu mounted a "replica exhibition arena" where the genuine work was questioned as a universal notion. One piece with the title *MoMAo Museum (Museum of My Art only)* ridiculed the museum for being a stage for self-promotion rather than a representative of the art world as such. The show certainly revealed a desire to involve the local audience in collection and display policies. Thus, the audience was encouraged to look at the museum and also at the contemporary art world via the mediation of the artist's views on these subjects and thus to develop their own attitude.

In the end, it does not resolve the issue to simply consider art museums as no more than economic projects and thus link them to the visions of an expanded world economy. Instead, their problem is rooted in the recognition of 'art', since this concept – in a double sense – feeds and undermines contemporary art production. Art was a Western idea that emerged in modernity against national resistance, and promoted the contested claim of an international modernism. Since universalism, in this sense, did not survive in the common sense, we may ask whether in the end art will become a local idea. Such a question reveals the complexity inherent in the museum topic. 'Local art' cannot mean arbitrary definitions that change from one place to another. The local art must and will acquire a new meaning in the face of a global world.

Museums play a critical role, especially in the realm of contemporary art, a role different from that of representing world heritage. It is currently not possible to predict what this role will be. In a positive case, it would lead to the orchestration of roles that are different but still compatible. Such roles are closely linked to the contested claim of personal creativity, including freedom of expression, which was guaranteed as an accepted ideal of aesthetic competence in the sense of a distinct quality of 'art'. At the same time, such a concept of art was the condition for creating an off-territory that we call museum, a zone protected from the grip of political power. In the latter case, such a zone remains a hope in those parts of the world where political freedom appears to be in danger. To conclude, art museums have to integrate the double role of remaining (or becoming) an independent institution and, at the same time, serving as a new political forum.

Epilogue

For three years, the Collège International de Philosophie in Paris organised a seminar that offered monthly interventions on exhibition models of contemporary art.¹³ The focus was not on the *museum collection*, but on the *exhibition space* with its manifold games and forms of entertainment. The French

12 www.mocataiei.org.tw/english

13 *L'Art contemporain et son exposition* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2002) with the text by A. Riera on 139ff.

speakers further limited the discussion by reducing it to contemporary art as a *Western* topic, as if the *globalisation* of art production, as the most conspicuous manifestation of contemporary art, had not yet happened. The artist Alejandra Riera delivered a paper entitled *An Unresolved Problem*. But what is the problem? I consider the institutionalisation of contemporary art, on a global scale, as the 'unresolved problem'. It may turn out that art museums must find several solutions and not just one, as their future depends on a local significance even in the global era.

The problem rests with the expectations of their audience. But who is their audience? On the one hand, museums need to attract global tourism, which means claiming their share in a new geography of world cultures. In this respect, global art conformism would be no solution. On the other hand, they need acceptance and support by a local audience. Culture, to begin with, is specific in a local sense, even if minorities demand their own visibility in art institutions. In the one case, the problem is an economic one, in the other it proves to be political in the sense of freedom of expression.

In the end, it does not resolve the issue to simply consider art museums as no more than economic projects and thus link them to the visions of an expanded world economy. Instead, their problem is rooted in the recognition of 'art', since this concept – in a double sense – feeds and undermines contemporary art production. Art was a Western idea that emerged in modern times against national resistance, and promoted the contested claim of an international modernism. Since universalism, in this sense, did not survive in the commonly held sense, we may ask whether, in the end, art will become a local idea. Such a question reveals the complexity inherent in the museum topic. 'Local art' cannot mean arbitrary definitions that change from one place to another. The local art must and will acquire a new meaning in the face of a global world.

Museums play a critical role, especially in the realm of contemporary art, a role different from that of representing world heritage. It is currently not possible to predict what this role will be. In a positive case, it would lead to the orchestration of roles that are different but still compatible. Such roles are closely linked to the contested claim of personal creativity, including freedom of expression, which was guaranteed as an accepted ideal of aesthetic competence in the sense of a distinct quality of 'art'. At the same time, such a concept of art was the condition for creating an off territory that we call museum, a zone protected from the grip of political power. In the latter case, such a zone remains a hope in those parts of the world where political freedom appears to be in danger. To conclude, art museums have to integrate the double role of remaining (or becoming) an independent institution and, at the same time, serving as a new political forum.

The Indonesian Artist and Modernity

Farah Wardani

The Indonesian visual arts have had to come to maturity in an area where there is tension between tradition and modernity. One form that tension took was a conflict between community spirit and individualism. Community spirit is highly prized in Indonesian culture. In many respects it is the opposite of individualism, which is actually a key element in the concept of modernity, as it gives priority to the interests of the individual.

The processes of modernisation under the successive Indonesian political regimes have had a major influence on the role of the artist in society. In the final days of colonialism and the years immediately following, the new generation of Indonesian artists, including Affandi, Sudjojono, Basuki Abdullah and Hendra Gunawan, developed a role for themselves as pioneers of a new national identity in Indonesian art. During the revolution, they were required to act as chroniclers of the revolutionary spirit (or did so out of idealism). They were supposed to give heroic expression to the resistance against the occupying forces and celebrate the lives of the lower classes in the villages. The artists created art in the name of the people. This dominant nationalistic rhetoric was expressed in powerful social realism. It linked art to the political and social ideas of the people. This was the modernism that Sudjojono announced loudly and clearly and it stood in stark contrast against the Western modernism that he abhorred so much.

The arrival of new institutions for teaching art in the 1950s actually helped Western opinions and modernism take root. There was greater emphasis on the individualism of artists. In addition, the political support for the arts that had characterised the years under Soekarno disappeared in the 1960s. Art broke loose from politics and became increasingly individualistic. The picture of the proletarian artist became outdated and the same period saw the rise of artists from the higher circles. Thus the Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru (GSRB, movement for new visual arts) appeared on the stage in 1975, with artists such as Jim Supangkat, Hardi and FX Harsono. They did not depend on their art for their livelihood. Their art no longer sympathised with an ideology that propagated its ties with the ordinary people. They discussed everything from their own individual point of view. As an aesthetic movement, the GSRB was successful in making a contribution to the development of Indonesian art. The visual arts in the 1970s and 1980s were characterised by subjectivity: art was the visual expression of the artist's individual consciousness.

It was still possible to find artists who dealt with cultural, social and political issues but they spoke on their own behalf, based on their personal views on the Indonesian reality. In the 1980s and 1990s, reflecting what was happening internationally in the visual arts, artists again started to take action against

the government. This was a period in which there was a major clampdown on freedom of speech and so the criticism of society given at exhibitions had to be 'read' between the lines. The visual artists of this generation, such as Heri Dono, Agus Suwage and Agung Kurniawan, no longer worked on behalf of the people; rather, they ventilated their criticisms freely (albeit only via their work).

Of course, the climax to this period was the Reformasi, after which the media and the people were given more freedom. There was no longer any need for works of art that criticised the government or the country. After all, there were free demonstrations, people were blogging and Internet was being used on a wide scale. Criticism no longer had to be made through works of art, and if those works of art still happened to sound a critical note then nobody took any notice of the fact. Indonesians were free to say what they wanted.

The current generation of artists is characterised by an ambiguity that is an expression of the instability felt by a young generation growing up in a multidimensional, globalising world where values are often in conflict. The visual arts are no longer charged with the task of expressing reality or bringing about change. Artists today do not speak on behalf of the people; they give voice to their own immediate circumstances, each doing so explicitly in his or her own way. The distribution of information and freedom of speech in modern society mean that the works of the current generation of artists do battle with each other. Free access to information sources means that the manner in which information is spread is sometimes more important than the information itself. The emphasis is on the way in which something is communicated.

Contemporary art is not a means of expression or the bearer of change; it *is* change. These days, Indonesian artists are just as unlikely as the Indonesian people to expect anything from the changes that were once expected to come from modernity. Instead, they look for different ways to keep their position in the global village and to take pleasure in that.



Heri Dono

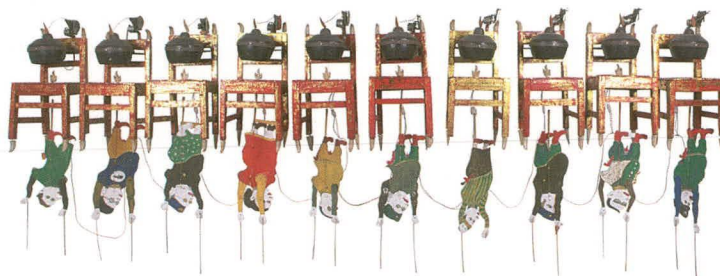
'Kuda Binal' (Wild Horse)

performance during Binal Experimental Art, 1992

courtesy The Indonesian Visual Art Archive

Heri Dono

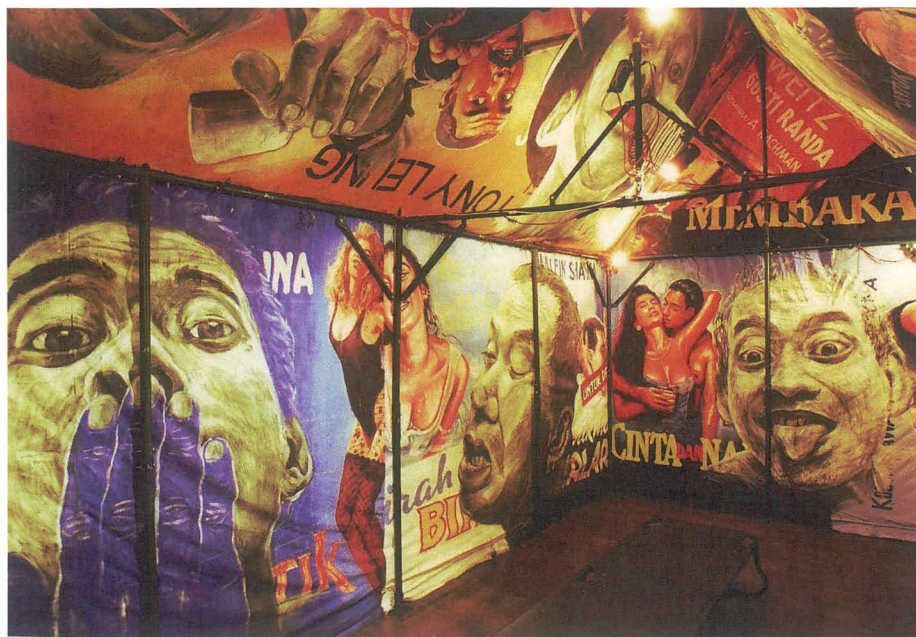
Shock Therapy for Political Leaders, 2004



Heri Dono

Political Acrobat, 2001





Agus Suwage

Pressure and Pleasure, 1999

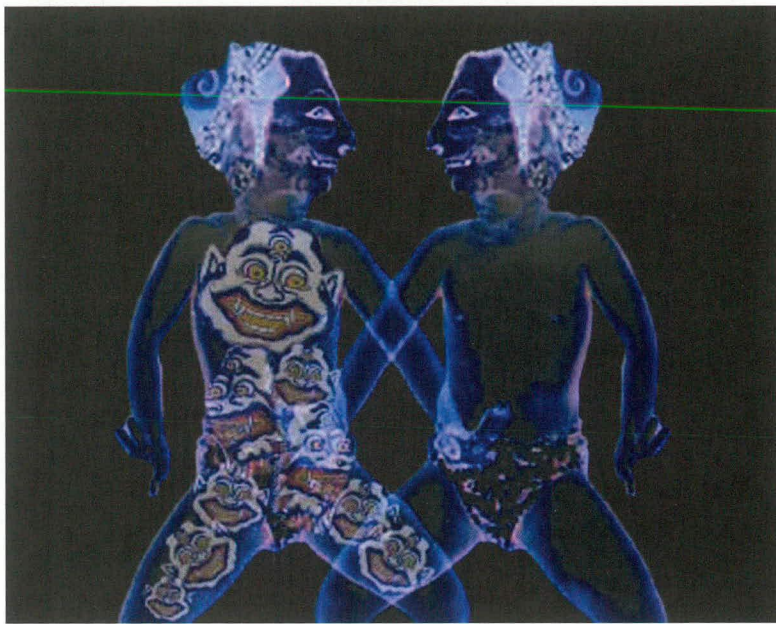


Jompet Kuswidananto

War of Java, Do you Remember? #3, 2008

Mella Jaarsma
The Square Body, 2009,





Krisna Murti

Wayang Machine, 2001-2002



Mirjam Burer

Green Strip Series, 2002



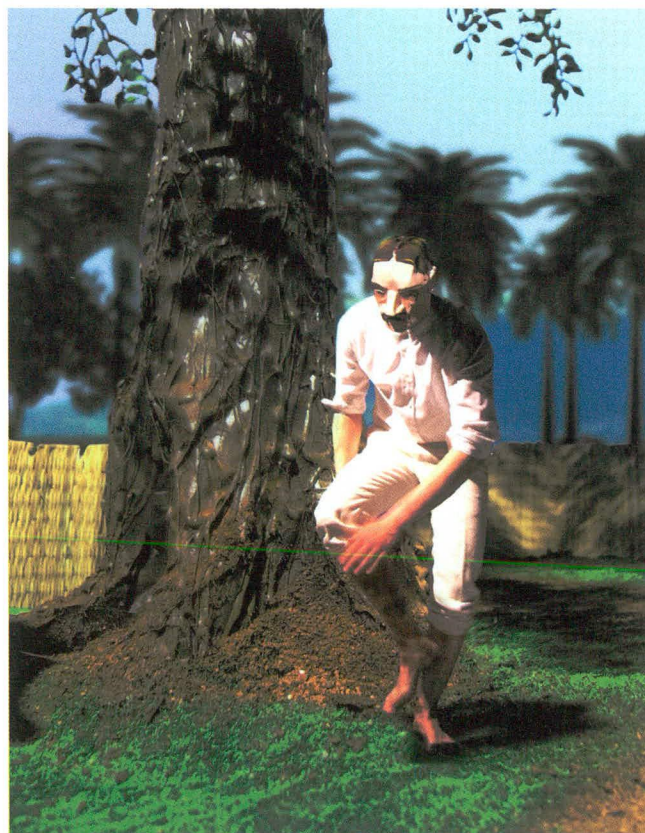
Jasper de Beijer

Untitled, from the series *Outpost*, 2004

lambdaprint 30 x 40 cm

impression of 5

courtesy Nouvelles Images, The Hague



Jasper de Beijer

Outpost, 2004

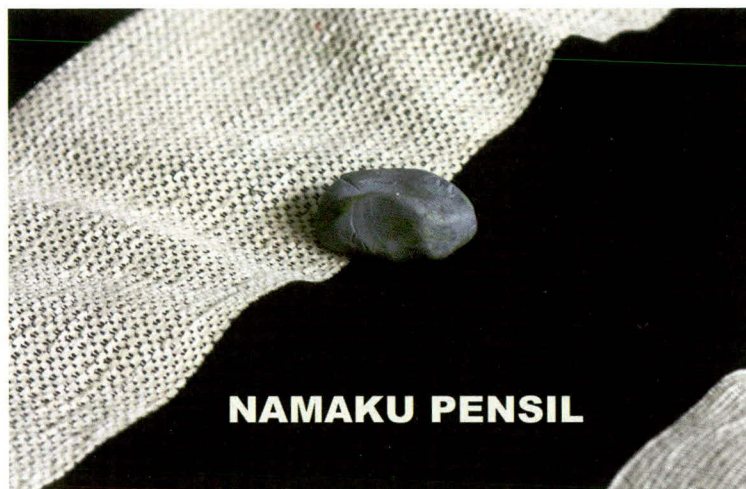


Roy Villevoe

Preparations, 2009

Prilla Tania
Harvesting Solar, 2009

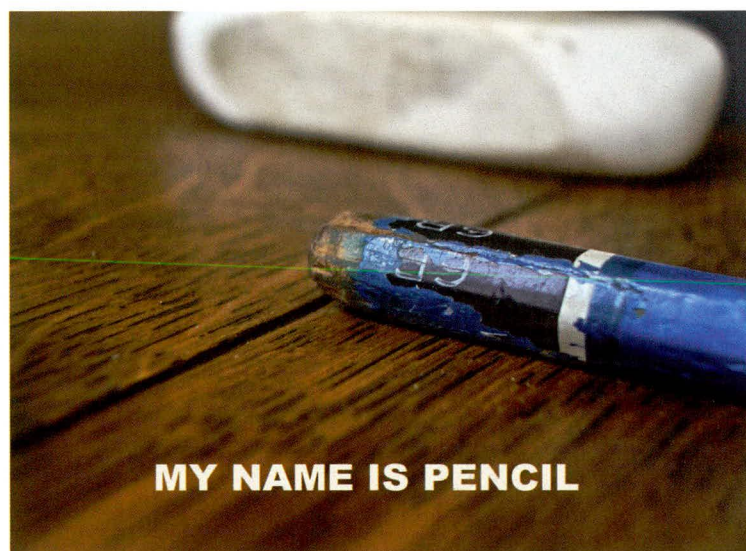




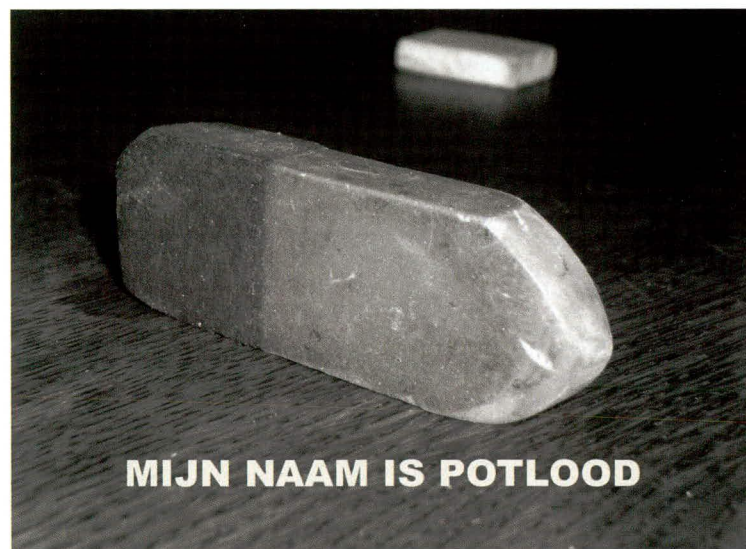
NAMAKU PENSIL

Tiong Ang

My Name is Potlood (Potlot! Pensil! Pencil!),
2009



MY NAME IS PENCIL



MIJN NAAM IS POTLOOD

A Century of Indonesia and the Netherlands

1880	Death of the artist Raden Saleh.
1901	Queen Wilhelmina announces the Ethical Policy. This marks the start of greater colonial intervention in Indonesian society.
1903	The sultan of Aceh submits to Dutch authority. In the years that follow, the Netherlands East Indies army subjugates all remaining princedoms in the archipelago.
1908	Boedi Oetomo (Noble Endeavour), the first Indonesian organisation, is founded.
1912	The Indische Partij is the first political organisation to advocate the independence of Indonesia.
1918	The Volksraad (people's council) meets for the first time. This is an advisory body with half of its members elected (by indirect vote).
1920	The Bandung Technical College, the first institution of higher education in the Netherlands East Indies, is founded.
1927	Communist uprisings in Sumatra and Java are put down. This marks the start of increased repression of political activity in the East Indies. The Perserikatan (later to become Partai) Nasional Indonesia (PNI) is founded in the same year.
1928	The second Youth Congress is held in Batavia. The participants declare themselves in favour of an independent Indonesia under the motto 'one country, one nation, one language'.
1929	Soekarno, the PNI leader, is arrested for the first time for sedition. The Dutch East Indies are hit by the global economic crisis
1940	In May the Netherlands are occupied by Nazi Germany. The ties with the East Indies are broken.
1942	In January the Japanese army invades the Dutch East Indies. The government capitulates on 8 March. Dutch soldiers are imprisoned, and later on civilians as well. Indonesians are pressed into labour on a massive scale.
1945	Japan capitulates on 15 August. Two days later, Soekarno proclaims the independent Republic of Indonesia. The decolonisation war starts after the arrival of allied and Dutch troops.
1948	The Indonesian Republic suppresses a communist uprising in Madiun. In December the Dutch army occupies the Republican capital of Yogyakarta. International protests force the Netherlands to the negotiating table.
1949	The details of the transfer of sovereignty are determined in the Round Table Conference. The Netherlands safeguards its economic interests. Indonesia is to become a federation. The transfer of sovereignty takes place on 27 December.

- 1950 The federal states are dissolved and come under the authority of the Republic. Indonesia becomes a unitary state.
- 1955 The Asia-Africa conference is held in Bandung. Indonesia positions itself at the head of the new unaligned countries in the Third World. Indonesia holds its first general election.
- 1956 Indonesia leaves the Union with the Netherlands and stops repayment of its debts.
- 1957 Dutch companies are nationalised under pressure from the people and the trade unions. The Dutch in Indonesia depart in large numbers for the Netherlands.
- 1960 The crisis around New Guinea (Irian Jaya) reaches a climax. Indonesia breaks diplomatic ties with the Netherlands.
- 1962 New Guinea/Irian Jaya is transferred first to the UN and a year later to Indonesia. Relations between Indonesia and the Netherlands are restored. Indonesia agrees to pay compensation for the nationalised companies for 30 years.
- 1965 After the 'coup' on 1 October, President Soekarno gradually loses control to General Suharto, who organises mass murder campaigns against Communists in the country. The reaction of the Netherlands to the change in power is positive.
- 1970 President Suharto visits the Netherlands. Young Moluccan nationalists occupy the residence of the Indonesian ambassador. One year later, Queen Juliana makes a successful return visit to Indonesia.
- 1975 Indonesia occupies East Timor. The Netherlands increases the pressure on Indonesia to release political prisoners.
- 1992 Indonesia breaks aid relations with the Netherlands because of the Dutch government's criticism of the Indonesian army's actions in East Timor and other human rights issues.
- 1995 Queen Beatrix visits Indonesia. She talks of her grief about the 'scars' left by decolonisation but gets a cool reception in Jakarta.
- 1998 Suharto steps down, bowing to the pressure of a major economic and financial crisis and mass protests.
- 1999 The first free elections since 1955 are held. Abdurrahman Wahid becomes president. East Timor gains independence.
- 2000 Aid relations between the Netherlands and Indonesia are restored.
- 2005 During the celebration of 60 years independence of Indonesia, the Dutch Minister for Foreign Affairs, Bernard Bot, recognises the proclamation of independence in 1945 on behalf of the Dutch Government. He expresses his 'deep regret' for the suffering caused during the military actions.

List of Exhibited Works

Raden Sarief Bastaman Saleh (1814-1880)
[attributed]

Portrait (Possibly a Self-Portrait) of Raden Sarief Bastaman Saleh, c. 1840
oil on canvas, 107 x 85 cm
collection Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Section I: Indonesia during the era of colonialism

Abdullah Suriosubroto (1878-1941)
Nature in the Sundalands, undated
oil on canvas, 60 x 95 cm
(90 x 126 cm incl. frame)
collection Andi's Gallery, Jakarta

Abdullah Suriosubroto (1878-1941)
Scenery Between Jakarta and Bandung, undated
oil on canvas, 60 x 96 cm
(90.5 x 120 cm incl. frame)
collection Andi's Gallery, Jakarta

Abdullah Suriosubroto (1878-1941)
View on Nature, undated, undated
olieverf op doek, 61 x 95.5 cm
(88 x 121.5 cm incl. frame)
oil on canvas, 61 x 95.5 cm
(88 x 121.5 cm incl. frame)
collection Pelita Harapan University Museum-Lippo Group, Jakarta

Mas Pirngadi (1875-1936)
Self-Portrait, 1930
oil on canvas, 40 x 30 cm
(57.5 x 48.5 incl. frame)
collection Duta Fine Arts Museum, Jakarta

Wakidi (1889-1979)
Scenery with Mountain and Ricefields, undated
oil on panel, 48.5 x 63.5 cm
collection Wereldmuseum, Rotterdam

Wakidi (1889-1979)
Mountainous Landscape, 1951
oil on canvas, 50 x 77 cm
(62.5 x 89.5 cm incl. frame)
collection Mr. Hauw Ming, Jakarta

Wakidi (1889-1979)
Family House, undated
oil on canvas, 94 x 170 cm
(117.5 x 195 cm incl. frame)
collection Andi's Gallery, Jakarta

Section II: Indonesia during the era of decolonisation and independence

Affandi (1907-1990)
Displeased Mood (Self-Portrait), 1948
oil on canvas, 61.5 x 53.5 cm
collection Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam

Affandi (1907-1990)
Beggar from Cirebon, 1960
oil on canvas, 88 x 125 cm
(117 x 153.3 cm incl. frame)
collection Pelita Harapan University Museum-Lippo Group, Jakarta

Affandi (1907-1990)
Boeng, ajo Boeng, 1979
oil on canvas, 128 x 98 cm
(140.5 x 110 cm incl. frame)
collection Mr. Ismail Sofyan, Jakarta

Hendra Gunawan (1918-1983)
To Respect the Demands of the People, 1947
pencil on paper, 21 x 28.5 cm
(50.5 x 58.5 cm incl. frame)
collection Pelita Harapan University Museum – Lippo Group, Jakarta

Hendra Gunawan (1918-1986)
Canteen 'Pahlawan' (Hero), 1947
pencil on paper, 20 x 28.5 cm
(50.5 x 58.5 incl. frame)
collection Pelita Harapan University Museum-Lippo Group, Jakarta

Hendra Gunawan (1918-1983)
Guerrilla Combatants, 1949
oil on canvas, 185 x 125 cm
collection Wereldmuseum, Rotterdam

Hendra Gunawan (1918-1983)
Refugees, 1949
oil on canvas, 120.5 x 169.5 cm
(143 x 193 cm incl. frame)
collection OHD museum, Magelang

Hendra Gunawan (1918-1986)
Important Guests at Dinner in Cirebon, undated (c. 1945-1949)
conté on paper, 31 x 36 cm
(51 x 56 cm incl. frame)
collection Mr. Gilbert Wiryadinata, Jakarta

Hendra Gunawan (1918-1986)
Big Gathering at Soemedang, undated (c. 1945-1949)
conté on paper, 31 x 36 cm
(51 x 56 cm incl. frame)
collection Mr. Gilbert Wiryadinata, Jakarta
Mochtar Apin (1923-1994)

To Celebrate One Year of Independence, 1946
13 woodcuts on paper, 21 x 17 cm
collection Mr. Aminudin TH Siregar, Bandung

Otto Djaya (1916-2002)
Revolution, 1947
oil on canvas, 49.2 x 65.7 cm
collection Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam

Shrihadi Soedarsono (1931)
A Dakota VT-CLA Shot by Two Combat Planes P40 Kitty Hawk; Sketch II, 1947
pencil and watercolour on paper, 21.1 x 27 cm
(70.4 x 70.4 cm incl. frame)
collection of the artist

Shrihadi Soedarsono (1931)
Dr. Ir. Soekarno, the First President of the Republic of Indonesia, 1947
pencil on paper 27.6 x 21 cm
(70.4 x 70.4 cm incl. frame)
collection of the artist

Shrihadi Soedarsono (1931)
General Meeting, Organised on the Aloon-aloon Utara in Yogyakarta. Bung Tomo Reacts on the Speaking Ban of the Dutch, 1947
pencil on paper, 22.1 x 20.7 cm
(70.4 x 70.4 cm incl. frame)
collection of the artist

Shrihadi Soedarsono (1931)
(Freedom) Fighter in the Train, 1947
conté on paper, 32 x 25 cm
(70.4 x 70.4 cm incl. frame)
collection of the artist

Shrihadi Soedarsono (1931)
S. Sudjojono, Painter. Chairman of SIM (Young Indonesian Artists) and the Department of Art of the SMNUP (Secretariat of the State Minister of Youth) of the Republic of Indonesia in Yogyakarta, 1947
conté on paper, 30.6 x 20.9 cm
(70.4 x 70.4 cm incl. frame)
collection of the artist

Soedibio (1912-1981)
To You People of Yogya, 1949
oil on canvas, 200 x 136.5 cm
(213.5 x 150.5 cm incl. frame)
collection OHD museum, Magelang

Sudjana Kerton (1922-1994)
Behind Pasar Baroe Bandung, 1947
pen and ink on paper, 36 x 29.5 cm
(62 x 54 cm incl. frame)
collection Tjandra Kerton, Bandung

Sudjana Kerton (1922-1994)

Military Police, 1947

pen and ink on paper, 42 x 35 cm
(73.5 x 65 cm incl. frame)
collection Tjandra Kerton, Bandung

Sudjana Kerton (1922-1994)

The Scene at the Handing Over Ceremony of the Military Authority in Bandung, 1947

pen and ink on paper, 32 x 25 cm
(62 x 54 cm incl. frame)
collection Tjandra Kerton, Bandung

Sudjojono (1914-1986)

Perusing a Poster, 1956

oil on canvas, 109.5 x 140 cm
(139 x 169 cm incl. frame)
collection OHD museum, Magelang

Sudjojono (1914-1986)

Sodom and Gomorrah, 1956

black chalk, pen, ink and watercolour on paper,
52 x 56.5 cm (65 x 70 cm incl. frame)
collection Pelita Harapan University Museum-
Lippo Group, Jakarta

Sudjojono (1914-1986)

A Lawless Day, 1975

oil on canvas, 60.5 x 91.5 cm
(91 x 122 cm incl. frame)
collection OHD museum, Magelang

Wakidi (1889-1979)

The Refugees, 1943-1949

watercolor on paper, 19 x 13.5 cm
(43 x 34 cm incl. frame)
collection OHD museum, Magelang

Wakidi (1889-1979)

Without Title, 1943-1949

watercolor on paper, 18 x 13 cm
(43 x 34 cm incl. frame)
collection OHD museum, Magelang

Wakidi (1889-1979)

The Leader of the Boys, 1943-1949

watercolor on paper, 24 x 16 cm
(43 x 34 cm incl. frame)
collection OHD museum, Magelang

Wakidi (1889-1979)

The Situation of the People, 1943-1949

watercolor on paper, 19.5 x 12.5 cm
(43 x 34 cm incl. frame)
collection OHD museum, Magelang

Section III: Indonesia in the contemporary, post-colonial era

Agus Suwage (1959)

Pressure and Pleasure, 1999

military tent, cinema advertisement banners,
paint, spotlights, 500 x 250 x 350 cm
private collection, Malaysia

Agung Kurniawan (1968)

Without Title, 2009

drawing, mirror, wall text and found objects
(site specific installation), variable dimensions
private collection

Bagus Pandeca (1985)

Singer (Mystery Magical Tour), 2009

vintage sewing machine, vintage turntable, LP,
100 x 40 x 90 cm
private collection

Cecilia Patricia Untario (1984)

Euro Trip (Pisa, London, Paris), 2009

glass, concrete, wood, iron, 27 x 28 x 26 cm
(Pisa), 27 x 28 x 25.5 cm (London), 26.5 x 26.5 x
26.5 cm (Paris)
collection of the artist

Dikdik Sayahdikumullah (1973)

To Sin against Allah, 2007

oil on canvas, 144 x 190 cm
collection Nadi Gallery, Jakarta

Eddie Hara (1957)

Envelope Drawings (selection of 20), undated

pen, pencil on paper, 23 x 16 cm each
collection Nadi Gallery, Jakarta

Eko Nugroho (1977)

Invasion, 2009

mural with embroidery, 500 x 250 cm (site
specific installation)
execution by the artist

FX Harsono (1948)

Deposition, 2009

photography and DVD
collection of the artist

FX Harsono (1948)

Destruction (video from a performance at
Cemeti Art House, Yogyakarta), 1997 DVD
collection of the artist

FX Harsono (1948)

Republik Indochaos, 1999-2009

charcoal, pencil on paper (5 panels), 46.5 x 56.5 cm
(51 x 61 cm incl. frame)
collection of the artist

Handiwirman (1975)

Kain sarong, 2009

aluminium plate, silicon glue, sarong,
192 x 65 x 215 cm
collection of the artist (courtesy Cemeti Art
House, Yogyakarta)

Heri Dono (1960)

Shock Therapy for Political Leaders, 2004

electric installation, 10 chairs, 10 puppets,
10 gamelan, 420 x 40 x 130 cm (max. size)
collection of the artist

Heri Dono (1960)

A Conductor Killed, 1992

acrylic on canvas, collage on paper,
65 x 80 cm
collection of the artist

Heri Dono (1960)

Political Acrobat, 2001

mixed media on canvas, 150 x 150 cm
(153 x 153 cm incl. frame)
collection OHD museum, Magelang

Indieguerillas (Santi Ariestiyowanti (1977) &

Mike Bawono (1975))

Art-Set for the Museum Shop, undated

paper toys and stickers
collection of the artist

Jompet Kuswidananto (1976)

War of Java, Do you Remember? #3, 2008

electronic installation, 2 fake rifles, 4 drums,
4 lights, 1 LCD monitor, 6 pairs of boots, 6 hats,
2 flags, 300 x 400 x 300 cm
collection Cemeti Art House, Yogyakarta

Jumalda Alfi (1973)

Blur (From the Color Guide Series), 2007

acrylic on canvas, 195 x 250 cm
collection Mr. Deddy Kusuma, Jakarta

Krisna Murti (1957)

Wayang Machine, 2001-2002

DVD (2 projections)
collection of the artist

Nasirun (1965)

Invitation-Drawings (selection of 20), undated

mixed media on paper, different sizes
collection OHD museum, Magelang

Prilla Tania (1958)

Harvesting Solar, 2009

mural (charcoal), performance, video,
258 x 190 cm
execution by the artist

TinTin Wulia (1972)

Terra Incognita, et Cetera, 2009

performance and mural, ca. 180 x 200 cm
execution by the artist

Tisna Sanjaya (1958)

The Space of Si Kabayan, 2008

acryl, lapindo mud, charcoal on paper
(9 panels), 121 x 72 cm (each)
collection of the artist

Wiyoga Muhandanto (1984)

A Hundred and One Ways to Reach

Nothingness, 2008

stone, 32 x 25 x 1.5 cm (W), 33 x 30 x 1.5 cm
(Bazaar), 28 x 21.5 x 1.5 cm (Vogue), 30 x 23 x 1.5 cm
(Wallpaper), 27.5 x 20 x 1.5 cm (GQ)
collection Edwin's gallery, Jakarta

In Between Sections III and IV

Mella Jaarsma (1960)

The Square Body, 2009

installation with 3 dresses, projections, DVD
collection Cemeti Art House, Yogyakarta

Section IV: The Netherlands in the contemporary, post-colonial era

Hadassah Emmerich (1974)

Mural, 2009

mixed media, variable dimensions
execution by the artist / collection of the artist

Fiona Tan (1966)

Smoke Screen, 1997

16 mm film print, film projector 16 mm
collection of the artist

Jasper de Beijer (1973)

Outpost, 2004

12 photographs, 30 x 40 cm and 40 x 30 cm
collection of the artist

Mirjam Burer (1959)

Green Strip Series, 2002

mixed media on canvas, 150 x 150 cm
collection of the artist

Mirjam Burer (1959)

Hands Seeds Series, 2005

mixed media on canvas, 150 x 150 cm
collection of the artist

Mirjam Burer (1959)

Hands Seeds Series, 2004

mixed media on canvas, 115 x 150 cm
collection of the artist

Mirjam Burer (1959)

Hands seeds-serie, 2003

mixed media on canvas, 115 x 150 cm
collection of the artist

Mirjam Burer (1959)

Hands Seeds Series, 2002

mixed media on canvas, 150 x 150 cm
collection of the artist

Roy Villevoe (1960)

Preparations, 2009

silicon, rubber, metal, wood, fabric, human hair,
200 x 400 x 100 cm
collection of the artist, Amsterdam

Roy Villevoe and Jan Dietvorst

Owner of the Voyage, 2007

two channel digital video, 15 min.
collection of the artist, Amsterdam

Tiong Ang (1961)

My Name is Potlood (Potlot! Pensil! Pencill!),
2009

photo, sculpture, video, painting, variable
dimensions
collection of the artist

Section V: The Netherlands in the era of decolonisation and independence

Adolf Breetvelt (1892-1975)

Surreal Landscape with Horse, c. 1936

oil on panel, 90 x 105 cm
collection of the estate of A. Breetvelt

Adolf Breetvelt (1892-1975)

Crater Eruption, c. 1936

oil on panel, 90 x 72 cm
collection of the estate of A. Breetvelt

Arie Smit (1916)

Temple Ceremony, 1957

oil on canvas, 32 x 39 cm
(61.6 x 68.5 cm incl. frame)
collection OHD museum, Magelang

Auke Sonnega (1910-1963)

Gamelan with Dancers (Bali), 1942

oil on canvas, 84.5 x 100 cm
(101.5 x 118 cm incl. frame)
collection Pelita Harapan University Museum –
Lippo Group, Jakarta

Charles Sayers (1901-1943)

Ducks Guardian, 1927

oil on jute, 100 x 83 cm
collection Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam

Charles Sayers (1901-1943)

Sacrificial Feast in the Main Temple in Besakih, 1927-1928

oil on canvas, ca. 99 x 118 cm
collection Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam

Piet Ouborg (1893-1956)

The Ram, 1934

oil on canvas, 80.8 x 65.7 cm
collection Dordrechts Museum

Piet Ouborg (1893-1956)

Three Masks, 1929

oil on canvas, 51.5 x 65.5 cm
(79.5 x 93 cm incl. frame)
collection OHD museum, Magelang

Ries Mulder (1909-1973)

Still Life with Fruit Bowl, 1939

oil on canvas, 74 x 87.5 cm
private collection, Nijmegen

Ries Mulder (1909-1973)

Study for String Quartet, Bandung, 1958

drawing on paper, 50 x 60 cm (incl. frame)
private collection, Nijmegen

Ries Mulder (1909-1973)

Woman in Front of a Window, 1950

oil on canvas, 93.5 x 54 cm (incl. frame)
private collection, Zevenaar

Ries Mulder (1909-1973)

Perahu in Bali, 1950

oil on canvas, 63.5 x 82.5 cm (incl. frame)
collection Municipal Museums, Delft (Museum
Nusantara)
purchased with support of the Mondriaan
Foundation

Ries Mulder (1909-1973)

Sumar, 1953

oil on canvas, 62 x 43 cm (incl. frame)
private collection, Groningen

Ries Mulder (1909-1973)

Church, Bandung, 1958

oil on canvas, 70 x 90 cm
collection Stadsmuseum IJsselstein

Ries Mulder (1909-1973)

String Quartet, Bandung, 1958

acrylic on canvas, 64 x 94 cm (incl. frame)
private collection, Waalre

W.G. Hofker (1902-1981)

Two Balinese Beauties and a Boy, 1939

oil on canvas, 81 x 57 cm
(90.1 x 66.5 cm incl. frame)
collection Mr. Deddy Kusuma, Jakarta

Section VI: The Netherlands during the era of colonialism

Carel Dake Sr. (1857-1918)

Scenery with Mountains, 1912

oil on canvas, 160 x 143 cm
collection Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam

Ernest Dezentjé (1885-1972)

Wet Ricefields on Java, 1925

oil on canvas, ca. 143 x 160 cm
collection Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam

Hendrik Paulides (1892-1967)

Young Javanese Man from Solo, 1929

black crayon on paper, 84 x 57 cm
private collection, Nijland

Isaac Israëls (1865-1934)

Portrait of the Javanese Prince, Sultan of Mangkoenegara: Pangeran Adipati Ario Praboe Mangkoenegara VII, 1922

oil on canvas, 72 x 91 cm

collection Frans Hals Museum

Jan Frank Niemandsverdriet (1885-1945)

Bullock Cart on Java, undated

charcoal on paper, 92 x 105.9 cm

collection Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam

Jan Frank Niemandsverdriet (1885-1945)

City View of Jakarta, 1920

oil on canvas, 50.5 x 56.5 cm

(73.5 x 80 cm incl. frame)

collection OHD museum, Magelang

Jan Toorop (1858-1928)

The Three Brides, 1893

mixed media on paper, 78 x 97.8 cm

collection Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo

Johannes ten Klooster (1873-1940)

Dancers with Gamelan Orchestra, c. 1922

mixed media on paper, 40 x 40 cm

private collection, Nijland

Leonardus Eland (1884-1952)

Planting of Rice, undated

oil on canvas, 115 x 170 cm

collection Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam

Willem Dooyewaard (1892-1980)

Woman Selling Fruits, 1922

oil on canvas, 100 x 100 cm

private collection, Nijland

Biographies

Hans Belting (1935) is a professor in art history and media theory at the Hochschule für Gestaltung in Karlsruhe, Germany. He has been a visiting professor at Harvard, Columbia University, Chicago/NorthWestern, Washington and at the École des Hautes Études in Paris. He has published over eleven books, including *Likeness and Presence and Art History after Modernism*.

Carla Bianpoen (1936) is Senior Editor of *C-Arts Magazine*, writes for *Asia Views Magazine* and has been the art critic for the *Jakarta Post* for the past 20 years, covering exhibitions both in Indonesia and abroad.

Marieke Bloembergen (1967) is a lecturer in recent history at the University of Amsterdam and a post-doctoral researcher at KITLV/Royal Netherlands Institute of South-east Asian and Caribbean Studies. Her work there involves research into archaeology, cultural heritage formation and the politics of identity in Indonesia in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Koos van Brakel (1953) is trained as an art historian and is currently Head of Collections at the Tropical Museum in Amsterdam. He has written various publications about the museum's collection and about Dutch East Indies painting.

Agung Hujatnikajennong (1976) is a curator at Selasar Sunaryo Art Space in Bandung and a lecturer at the Faculty of Art and Design at the Bandung Institute of Technology.

Nuriani Juliastuti (1975) is a cultural anthropologist, publicist and co-founder of the KUNCI Cultural Studies Center. She lives and works in Yogyakarta.

Meta Knol (1969) has recently been appointed director of Museum De Lakenhal in Leiden. Before that she was the curator for modern and contemporary art at the Centraal Museum in Utrecht. She put together the exhibition *Beyond the Dutch. Indonesia, the Netherlands and the visual arts from 1900 until now* together with Enin Supriyanto.

Sanne Oorthuizen (1984) gained her Bachelor's degree in Art History at the University of Groningen and is now studying for a Museum Curator Master's degree at the VU University Amsterdam. She was involved in the exhibition *Beyond the Dutch. Indonesia, the Netherlands and the visual arts from 1900 until now* as an intern/assistant curator for modern and contemporary art at the Centraal Museum in Utrecht.

Roos van Put (1963) is an art historian and chief editor of the magazine *Kunstbeeld*. She was an art and dance critic for the *Haagsche Courant* newspaper and Geassocieerde Pers Diensten (GPD, Associated Press Services) from 1996 to 2006 and she has regularly written about contemporary art in Indonesia and Indonesian artists.

Remco Raben (1962) lectures in non-Western history at Utrecht University and publishes on the history of South-East Asia and Indonesia in particular.

Helena Spanjaard (1951) is an art historian, resident in Amsterdam. She is a writer and researcher, and puts together exhibitions. She specialises in modern and contemporary Indonesian painting.

Jim Supangkat (1949) founded the New Art Movement in 1975; this is considered to be the start of the current contemporary art discourse in Indonesia. As an independent curator, he was the driving force behind numerous exhibitions. He has written various books and many essays about contemporary art in Asia and Indonesia. In 1997 he received the Dutch Prince Claus Award for his ceaseless work in this sector.

Enin Supriyanto (1962) is an independent curator and writer in Jakarta. He initiated and organised the 'Indonesian Printmaking Triennale' (2003-2006) and 'i-Curate', a curators' workshop for art students and young artists. In addition, he has published at least four books and put together numerous exhibitions showing Indonesian contemporary art. He was the co-curator for the exhibition *Beyond the Dutch. Indonesia, the Netherlands and the visual arts from 1900 until now*.

Kitty Zijlmans (1955) is the professor of Modern and Contemporary Art History and Theory at Leiden University. Her interests lie in art theory and methodology, the position of women in art and culture, and the current inter-cultural processes and globalisation of the (art) world. Recent publications are *World art studies: Exploring Concepts and Approaches* (ed. with Wilfried van Damme, 2008) and *Interterritoriale verkenningen in kunst en wetenschap* [Inter-territorial Explorations in Art and Science] (ed. with Rob Zwijnenberg and Krien Clevis, 2007).

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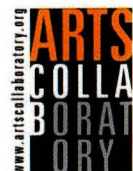
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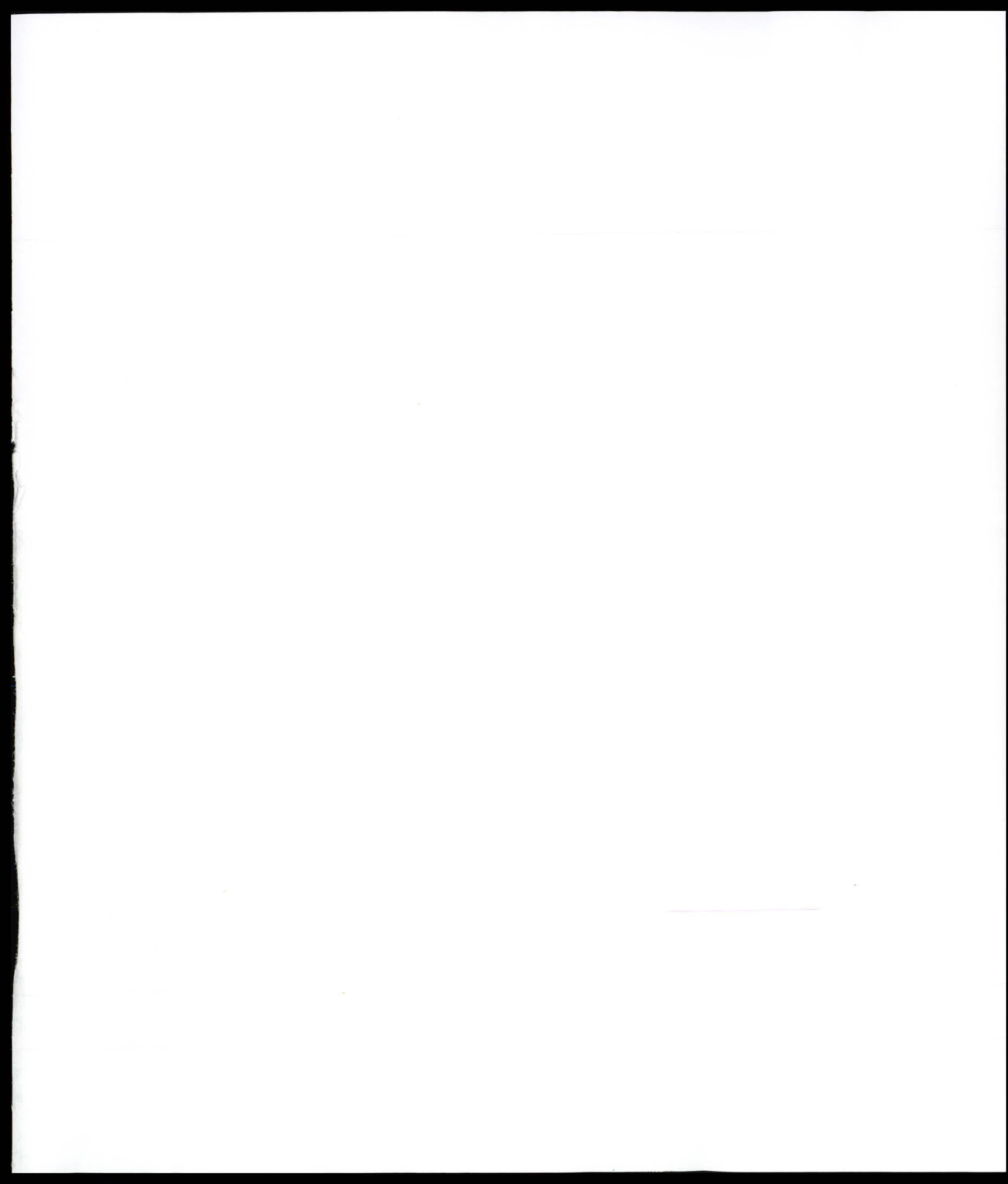
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'Beyond the Dutch', declared an Indonesian artist recently, stating that we have outgrown the influence of the Netherlands. Modern Indonesian art arose during the colonial period, but has since gradually freed itself free.

Beyond the Dutch gives a colourful picture of that struggle. Leading art historians and curators from Indonesia and the Netherlands have posed a series of questions by the history of art in the Dutch East Indies / Indonesia. What was and still is Dutch about Indonesian art? What relationship does it have with Western techniques and views? How does contemporary art in Indonesia and the Netherlands relate to the links between the two countries? And how do we actually define Indonesian art?

Beyond the Dutch is being published to accompany the exhibition of the same name at the Centraal Museum in Utrecht. The book takes three pivotal moments through fine art in the Dutch East Indies/Indonesia: the period around 1900, decolonisation and independence around 1945, and the current, post-colonial period around 2000. Only by taking a look at these three pivotal moments can a clear picture be gained of the turbulent development of art in Indonesia.

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