

# **“White Paper” on the Non-Aligned Movement Exhibition**

**Jim Supangkat**

*This text is a compilation of writing published in the mass media that has been reviewed and refined.*

The majority of commentary and criticism around the “Non-Aligned Nations Contemporary Art Exhibition” (GNB exhibition) and the seminar “Unity in Diversity in International Art” that has been levelled mainly through writing in the mass media, does not, I think, broach the basic issues of the exhibition and seminar.

On the one hand it must be acknowledged, this because it was not well “marketed” by the exhibition organisers. The limitations of the organisers in public relations meant that the thinking and planning around this exhibition has not reached artists’ circles, critics and art observers.

However on the other hand, it must also be acknowledged that the issues or developments in international visual art that constitute part of the thinking behind this exhibition are not popular in our visual arts environment. The limited information and language around international art has meant that the major problems behind the Non-Aligned Nations Contemporary Visual Art Exhibition (henceforth: the GNB exhibition) have been hard to understand; many issues have been twisted and distorted.

This reality was expressed at a GNB Exhibition discussion that was held in Studio Onkor in Jakarta, 1 May 1995, after the seminar had concluded. The discussion was organised by artists: Harsono, Dolorosa Sinaga, Enin Supriyanto, Andar Manik and their friends, who actually had quite a lot of information. Through this material many of the GNB Exhibition’s problems were discussed in preparatory meetings that apparently were conducted over several days. A number of speakers

were then prepared to critically discuss the principal thinking behind the GNB Exhibition.

However when the discussion took place, almost all of the issues that arose were in fact distorted and discussed from an imprecise standpoint. This discussion became very confusing. Foreign curators and critics who attended the discussion questioned this. Fumio Nanjo (Japanese curator who was in the process of handling one of the exhibitions in the Venice Biennale ’95 and had come specifically to see the GNB Exhibition) asked me “What exactly is their position?”

Nanjo’s question reflected the confusion of other foreign curators and critics. They, I think, were disappointed that they couldn’t understand the position of Indonesian artists in problematising contemporary art and the GNB Exhibition. They are actually used to hearing the opinions of artists, who tend to attack any kind of thinking, actually it was this kind of opinion that they wanted to hear.

In fact, it took a huge effort to organise the information that the GNB exhibition wanted to disseminate widely before the exhibition took place. Not only material around the thinking behind the GNB exhibition, but also the background to the continuing dilemma of contemporary visual art or international visual art – because it is difficult to present this comprehensively. This was the problem faced by the public relations section of the GNB exhibition organisers. “Education” like this is impossible to implement just through exhibition organisers.

The emergence of this confusion in the midst of these conditions was a risk that the GNB Exhibition

organisers had to take, like it or not. And that is what happened. The majority of the critical commentary and reviews that emerged were based on the conjecture of assumption, speculation and suspicion.

These suspicions were coloured by misgivings that the presentation of the GNB Exhibition was a “politicisation of visual art.” I believe this suspicion begins with the question of what connects the political problems of the Non-Aligned Movement with Contemporary Visual Art. This suspicion or misgiving later spread, because the GNB Exhibition was a government project (Directorate General of Culture, Department of Education and Culture). There was a suspicion that this exhibition was a part of government politics, and the government’s attitude to “freedom of expression” – following the banning of several

magazines and newspapers – was under question among artists.

The other assumption, that the GNB Exhibition was forcing a “fantasy” concept, made no sense: exhibiting developing nations in the world of international visual art. This is based on a very pessimistic attitude. When the concept for the GNB exhibition was first proposed by the Director General of Culture, Dr Edi Sedyawati, in a meeting with visual art representatives in April 1993, this pessimistic attitude was already apparent. It was proposed then, in commentary, that the plan could not succeed, because of the reality that Indonesia was not on the international visual art map. This perspective of course did not recognise the changes that are taking place in the world of international visual art (because of a lack of information), that are in fact opening up opportunities for the



**"When Human Treat a Human"**  
Bayu Utomo Radjikin  
Charcoal on Paper  
123 x 93 cm  
Malaysia

emergence of visual art from developing nations.

The speculation that was closest to the mark was the perspective that saw the concept of the GNB Exhibition as “anti-West.” From this perspective the GNB Exhibition is seen as trying to demonstrate the “concept of Southern visual art” as opposed to the “concept of the North.” This simplistic view equates the problems of North-South in the GNB Exhibition to the West-East dichotomy – and this seems to be more or less the same across all the commentaries and criticisms. This conclusion is based on simplistic resemblances: West-East and North-South are opposing points of the compass; West-East and North-South as cultural issues contain opposing conditions. In fact the West-East dichotomy, which should be seen as a dialectical, is regarded in this conclusion as merely two opposing concepts.

In its more sophisticated form, this perspective sees the concept of North-South as an effort to make an issue out of diversity, although it need not actually be problematised. This perspective can still be found within frames of thinking that believes in the homogeneity of contemporary visual art that is indeed being discussed in international art forums.

In this frame of thinking the study of difference or diversity is seen as the projection of “otherness” – efforts to display national identity, visual art concepts of nationality that are associated with the politics of governance, or that show ethnic characteristics, local characteristics, tradition and indigeneity – which are difficult to discuss. In publications in the mass media, writer Enin Supriyanto touched on this, whilst in the “Unity in Diversity in International Art” seminar that took place from 29-30 April 1995, the problem of homogeneity and heterogeneity appeared in the presentations of Apinan Poshyananda, a speaker from Thailand.

### **Theoretical Framework for the GNB Exhibition**

To understand the thinking behind the GNB Exhibition – and also the “Unity in Diversity in International Art” seminar – we must first introduce the theoretical framework (which is actually unorthodox). This theoretical framework, which even within developments in international visual art, is still in the minority, is most vulnerable to misinterpretation. The majority of criticisms, comments and reviews have interpreted the thinking behind the GNB exhibition as an effort to “construct a concept” or a formulation of plans and new ideas. Let us take a look at some of these commentaries and reviews. Sides Sudyarto, in his article “GNB Visual Art and Our Contemporary Visual Art” (*Republika*, 28 May, 1995) wrote of the GNB Exhibition’s theory thus: “In the beginning, there is a concept. And the concept is thinking. Sound thinking is one thing, and sound implementation is another.” This perspective clearly identifies the thinking behind the GNB Exhibition as “concept.”

In his text “Where does the Current from the South Flow To?” (*Media Indonesia* 21 May 1995) Enin Supriyanto sees the thinking behind the GNB Exhibition as a concept that refers to “political identity.” He suspects that the GNB Exhibition intends to “formulate” Southern visual art. He writes: “What is the significance of our formulation of the ‘Southern Current’ in the world’s development of contemporary visual art, when it will only perpetuate binary positions and easily become trapped in stereotypical perspectives?” With a perception like this, Enin – and also the majority of the other commentators – see the problem of North-South in the GNB Exhibition as “Concepts of the North” and “Concepts of the South” that are diametrically different and in opposition. This is based on a simplistic equation of this problem with the West-East dichotomy. Meanwhile Teguh Ostentrik, in his writing “Untitled” (*Republika* 11 and 18 June 1995) questioned the thinking of the GNB exhibition, which he regarded as

having avoided defining a standard; indeed he wondered if the Curatorial Team were unprepared to assemble a concept.

Opinions like Teguh's were quite commonly thrown about in criticism of the GNB Exhibition. The exhibition theory is seen as unclear (an undeveloped concept) because it does not summon up "a definition of Non-Aligned Movement visual art" or "a definition of Southern visual art." In the "Unity in Diversity in International Visual Art" seminar, painter Yos Suprpto demanded that a definition be outlined. He said, "I ask for a definition of the understanding of each work used in the theme of this seminar...The question is, is it true that there is "unity" and "diversity" in international art? We are talking within a context of culture and visual art. I'm asking for clarification, in the form of definitions."

In the development of contemporary visual art theory outlined definitions are now quite rare. Various studies are more focussed on the observation of discourse, and of course have a dimension of comparison rather more broad than definition. But it is a reality that in our visual arts environment, definitions appear still to be an unnegotiable demand. It seems that visual art theory can only be discussed through concept and definition. Enin Supriyanto has a unique way of overcoming the "absence" of this concept. Still in his writing in *Media Indonesia*, he attacks the "concept" of a GNB Exhibition by beginning a complicated formulation (interpretation) of the exhibition's concept, and then criticising the concept he has himself outlined.

The ascertainment of a concept and the demands for definition behind the GNB Exhibition's thinking reveal the false premise of this interpretation. In the sense that this interpretation forces a pattern of thinking that believes that theory is a world of ideas and concepts, as the basis for the GNB Exhibition. In this way of thinking, ideas and concepts are complex contrivances that intend to change reality (for instance in the future). The truth of these ideas and concepts is determinedly located in their (self-determined, rather than through

empirical evaluation) superiority. Because that truth is determined as an absolute, it tends to be suspicious of other concepts. Consciously or unconsciously, this thinking has become most dominant in our world of visual art theory. It is as if ideas and the arrangement of concepts are the only way of thinking about all visual art. Hence the thinking behind the GNB Exhibition is immediately defined as part of this pattern of thinking.

This perception is completely incorrect. The theory of the GNB Seminar and Exhibition in fact cannot follow the thinking that trusts in absolute truths, which are certainly not the only way of thinking. The thinking-patterns of the GNB Seminar and Exhibition are an empirical study of the reality that we experienced together (following the understanding of radical empiricism) and then an attempt to pragmatically develop this into steps in a search (following the understanding of pragmatism). So one important thing must immediately be noted: the thinking behind the GNB Exhibition is not an "arrangement of concepts" but a "study of reality".

This study of reality is the basis of the curation of the GNB Exhibition. The themes presented (Confrontation, Questions, Quests, Tradition or Convention, Sign-Symbol-Script, Body, Space-Land-People) are not recognised as a kind of thinking (concept). These themes are determined based on the works submitted. The curatorial team conducted research through sorting, studying and then categorising the work.

The majority of the theory that we have known thus far has indeed followed a pattern of thinking that tends to give birth to concepts and then believe in their absolute truth. There is a faith behind this, that a concept can always be wholly realised. That reality – under the authority and power of human thought (Cartesian philosophy) – depends on structural ideas and concepts.

But it is actually conviction in the "strength" of that concept that is now facing challenges. The world is suddenly revealing massive changes whereby reality seems to have released itself from plan and concept.

With the end of the Cold War, the Soviet Union suddenly collapsed, and conversely China has become a capitalist nation, Japan has appeared as a world economic power, gender and environmental issues have emerged, the spirit of the avant garde has collapsed in Western society, sanctions against modernism have emerged; there are a number of realities that are both confusing and amazing. These strange changes occur in a barrage and without pattern. No one has any idea or concept that can claim to be the cause of these diverse change events. These changes, which have occurred by themselves, deviate from the belief of modern civilisations that great change is born out of great concepts. These are the signs of the time that have signalled the development of our current world. Big changes without pattern logically turn our thinking towards an understanding of the truth of pluralism, which does not in fact believe in absolute truths – that truth is not absolute because it follows the changes that are constantly taking place, that reality is not made up of just one substance and that because of this it is impossible to approach it through a structural dialectical. This is the conviction in which the GNB Exhibition and Seminar is founded.

### **North-South Theory**

Because the concept of North-South in the GNB Exhibition is based in the study of reality, no more and no less, it is like a fixed reality. When this concept was agreed to at the beginning of the 1970s, it was based on a desire to weave together international “cooperation” in the fields of economics and humanitarian prosperity. This cooperative agreement was initially triggered by an international gathering of the *Club of Rome* (an association of world leaders), involving developed and developing nations who were recognised as having great differences, both at the economic level and in their socio-cultural conditions. Their goals were not hard to understand: to erase the gap in the economic sector and

to avoid extended conflict between modern civilisations – Cold Wars and economic competition.

A series of discussions in the Club of Rome in the 1970s (Indonesia was part of these discussions) indicated the concept of the North-South was intended to replace the use of the phrase “Western nations” (to indicate America and its allies or other advanced economies) and “Eastern countries” (the meaning of which was not clear because it could refer to Asian nations, but also to communist countries that were known as the Eastern Bloc).

The West-East concept was seen to be coloured by conflict, both culturally (West-East dichotomy) and politically (Cold War). The observations of The Club of Rome emphasised the parameters of economic progress, and then gave birth to a new division, North-South; North for the “developed countries” and South for the “developing countries.”

These facts show that the concept of North-South is entirely different from the West-East dichotomy. This concept consciously sought an alternative to the dialectical thinking of West-East that had become an extended conflict, and had never shown any sign of synthesis – as Rudyard Kipling said, “East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet.”

In the 1970s North-South still seemed utopic, even though the ideas that were handed down through this concept – new world economic order, North-South dialogue, global programs to combat poverty – were never realised. But now, in the post-Cold War era, and in the midst of these great world changes, the concept of North-South seems to be finding its context. One sign of this is South-South co-operative projects, and North-South partnerships, the Non-Aligned Nations Movement – a neutral political movement that had previously revealed a spirit of socialist conflict. The North-South concept seems to be in keeping with pluralist theory. In the pluralist understanding – which was introduced by philosopher William James in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – reality and everything are a mix of “oneness”

and “multiplicity.” Because of this, in the consensus pluralism, agreement and cooperation are the essence of togetherness and aim to guarantee autonomy and sovereign superiority. The majority of the perspectives and opinions in this frame of thinking (beginning with William James up to the contemporary art critic Andrew Benjamin) see “unity” (agreement and togetherness) as the basis of truth. So the truth is determined by this

evident. International visual art, like international economies, is a forum where the visual art of developing countries and of developing countries is involved. Besides these measurable differences between developed and developing countries, according to economic parameters, there are undeniable connections between the progression of international visual art about marginalisation, the mainstream and the periphery, homogeneity and heterogeneity, and the difference in situations in developed countries and developing countries.



**"Trying to Grow"**  
Dede Eri Supria  
Painting  
167 x 205 cm  
Indonesia

agreement – which can change – and not by the thinking that has given birth to absolute concepts.

When we adapt the concept of economic cooperation between North-South as a basis for the theory behind the GNB exhibition, the theoretical framework is unchanged. Apart from a more basic conviction in pluralism, there is also a connection that is immediately

### **The Grey Area in International Visual Art**

Studying the different progressions of visual art in developed and developing countries does not have to be intended as an effort to generate North-South confrontation. In the foreword to the GNB Exhibition I wrote emphatically that efforts to discover a Southern

perspective in studying international visual art is not antagonistic (towards the North). This non-confrontational approach, once again, is a study of reality. As in the great changes that are taking place in the world, the development of international visual art reveals many changes. In these changes signs emerge that many confrontations from the past receded. As we know, the progression of international visual art from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the 1970s have been coloured by developments in Europe-America. This standard, which has been set through the theory of visual art history, was acknowledged without resistance as the standard of development for international visual art.

In the 1960s and 1970s the orientation of this pattern to European-American developments created tension. This began with the birth of internationalism, which claimed the world as its arena. In this understanding, the modern world was seen to have only one kind of visual art, modern world art, without national borders.

This understanding gave rise to reactions, where modern world art (international visual art) was described as rooted in the internationalisation of Western ideas, or Westernisation. In this reaction, the West-East dichotomy that had been debated since World War II, is developed into a West-East confrontation. This confrontation was seen through a series of UNESCO discussions that was initiated by French-speaking African states at the end of the 1960s. The African group regarded the concept of Westernisation as an arrogance that placed non-Western countries in an insignificant position in the modernisation of the world.

This confrontation continued until a perspective emerged that saw internationalism, internationalist visual art, and international visual art through: a) the development of a mainstream; reflected in the centres of developed visual art and (b) the development of the periphery, outside of the Europe and America. According to this belief all world artist are made absolute within the mainstream through international exhibitions. The debate re-emerged, as a result of the

perspective that the mainstream was increasingly cornering visual art developments from outside of Europe and America. This view of the mainstream stressed that the progress of international visual art could only be observed in Europe and America.

Later there also emerged issues of domination, revealed by the conditions of the time. The standards of development in the mainstream became absolute and dominated international exhibitions. These standards drew a line that clearly rejected any values, developments and standards other than those of the mainstream.

One example that stressed this reality was the refusal of museums and modern and contemporary visual art galleries in the USA to exhibit modern Indonesian works in the presentation of the Indonesian Festival in the United States in 1990, even though the participants in this exhibition were some of the most prominent Indonesian artists from several generations.

These Indonesian works, according to the Western curators, did not reflect the development of modern visual art. Apart from being “traditional,” the works were “behind the times” because they presented concepts of modern visual art from a previous era. The American curators suggested that Indonesian modern art would be best exhibited in an anthropological museum.

At around the same time modern visual art from Thailand went through the same treatment, rejected and disregarded as modern art. As in the Indonesian works, these Thai works were eventually displayed in corner galleries, and proceeded without welcome or reviews; there were no American critics interested in discussing the works because they were seen as lacking quality.

Realities like this tie the issue of domination to the issue of “marginalisation”. Criticism should be directed at critics and curators in the mainstream, who do not actually understand the development of modern and contemporary art in the outer streams, and who recklessly regard those outside Europe and America as backwards societies.



**Jose Antonio Suarez**  
Stamp (88)  
25 x 30 cm  
Columbia

In the most recent confrontations, criticisms have emerged towards the dominance of art institutions in the mainstream – museums, gallery networks, critics, curators. This harsh criticism came particularly from curators and critics in Asia, Africa and Latin America, and led to the emergence of international forums in 1990.

International exhibitions in the centres of development (Venice, New York, Sao Paolo, Kassel, Paris, Sydney) were also accused of only showing certain kinds of artists too. This criticism was then broadened into the accusation that international exhibitions were controlled by the network of museums, critics, history experts, galleries and the international art market network. In these international exhibitions no artists from Africa, Asia and Latin America were shown.

As a reaction to presentations or exhibitions like this, international exhibitions emerged in many corners of the world, among them Havana, New Delhi, Fukuoka, Seoul, Brisbane, Jakarta and Johannesburg. These exhibitions applied a new approach. However, the

reaction to domination did not only come from Asian, African and Latin America critics. A number of artists and curators from the mainstream itself were critical of the dominance of institutions and international standards

Art institutions, according to these artists and curators, had gone too far in guiding the development of international art through theories that were tied to (Western) art history.

This reaction from “within” was evident at the presentation of the “Expanding Internationalism” seminar that took place at the Venice Biennale, in 1990. This seminar was organised by independent curator Mary Jane Jacobs from the United States, and for the first time included curators from all corners of the world. This seminar problematised the presentation of international exhibitions. The discussion studied curation, the criteria for selection and the background thinking behind international exhibitions, and the increasingly narrow field for international exhibitions – with the artists who appear in general the same as before

and no more. In the “Unity in Diversity in International Art” seminar in Jakarta, 29-30 April 1995, Mary Jane Jacobs expressed her opinion that “Observations from the West, like those we have seen in the United States, are limited to observing their own development, and in this they are unaware that the world is heading to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, and continuously changing. Western observers in these centres of influence are still speaking on behalf of the world, and interpreting internationalisation as the dissemination of Western ideas....This is a 1950s mentality that is still alive in the 1990s.”

The critical attitude towards the presentation of this international exhibition emerged alongside the fundamental change in the development of contemporary visual art Europe and America. In the “Unity in Diversity in International Art” seminar, MOMA, Oxford curator David Elliot, brought up this issue. Introducing Mary Jane Jacob’s presentation he said, “Mary Jane will problematise a problem from the 1970s, when all of the avant garde ideas in the West collapsed....And the emergence of the developments of the 1980s that have been called the postmodern era, which displays multifariousness. These developments reveal the beginnings of a return to traditional values, which in my opinion depend on the search for radical values where all the idealism of High Art is challenged.”

The similarities between the reaction of the “mainstream” and the “periphery” towards the standards of international art that are now valid forms a new stream in the development of international visual art.

This stream enters the “grey zone” that signifies the fading dominance of the mainstream, and also the decline of the West-East, modern-traditional, local-global conflicts.

In these conditions, where confrontation is no longer “hot,” the pluralistic approach that stresses unity is not impossible. Unity in diversity always creates awareness of the importance of agreement, cooperation; unity. This is, I think, in process in the development of international visual art.

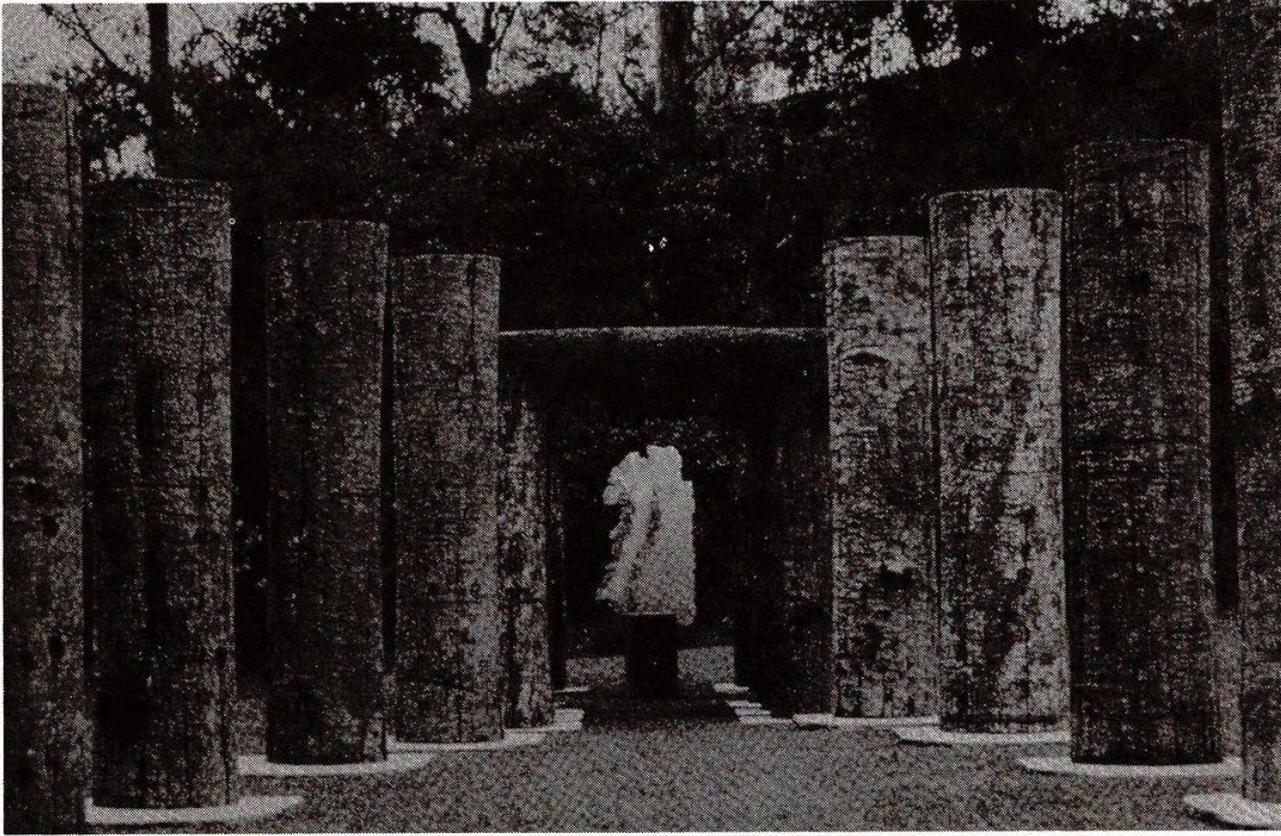
### **Contemporary Visual Art Discourse and the GNB Exhibition.**

Unity in diversity of international visual art theory seems to be a heterogeneous issue. In the debate around this issue a perspective emerges that attempts to apply pluralism and stress the importance of unity. Opinions about the heterogeneity of international visual art are challenged mainly by perspectives that believe in (absolute) universalism, and also by perspectives that believe in the homogeneity of international visual art (which is not always absolute).

Heterogeneity, diversity, or multifariousness like that proposed by David Elliot only emerged in the 1970s along with rising suspicion towards modernism, universalism and internationalism. Previously, the development of new international art placed its faith in universalism.

**"Painting No.20"**  
**Ahmed Pervaiz**  
**Painting**  
42 x 53 cm  
Pakistan





**"Fuerzas Agustinianas"**  
Lidya Azout  
Sculpture  
243 x 432 x 170 cm  
Columbia

Modern visual art, which is said to be founded on a single substance, does not acknowledge diversity. (Modern) International Visual Art in itself is seen as a homogenous development. The suspicion of modernism, universalism, and internationalism that emerged in the 1970s in international visual art occurred because of two facts.

*Firstly*, the emergence of contemporary visual art theory which opposed modernism and linear histories of modern visual art. This disavowal is not unrelated to the birth of postmodern theory which collapses the truth of the principle of modernism from within, through its own criteria. This became apparent as European and American contemporary visual art advanced. *Secondly*, the failure of modernism to prove the veracity of the principles of universal modernism. The claim that modernist truth was universally applicable was actually

far from true. Not all modern visual art practices in the world refer to the truths of (European) modernism. Modern visual art was first determined to have heterogenous development as a consequence of the interpretation and influence of local strengths that indicated that modern visual art was a plural, not universal phenomenon. This was revealed after information emerged about the development of modern/contemporary visual art outside Europe and America (especially in developing nations). This is the paradigm of diversity in international visual art. The two realities that seem to be aligned with this direction are in fact different. Both deny modernism and universalism but differ in their position towards modernism. The difference in position actually gives rise to problems in contemporary art discourse, especially if contemporary art is seen within the scope of international art.

To this day, contemporary art discourse is seen to be based more on the first reality, or, in the context of modernity and postmodernity. Contemporary art in this context is homogenous, like the modern art that it challenges. Because of this, contemporary art discourse does not really have space for the diversity that is associated with modern/contemporary art as a plural phenomenon.

This is the complicated problem that the development of contemporary art faces. If it is released from universalism, the development of contemporary art is still tied to the theoretical frameworks that believe in homogeneity. Because of this contemporary art in many ways continues to apply the same standards. The selection in an international contemporary exhibition, for example, often involves becoming trapped again in the practice of inclusion and exclusion.

To this day this kind of selection – which was the main topic at the “Expanding Internationalism” seminar – is still heavily debated and has even become a dilemma. The debate that took place floated, because contemporary art standards were not strictly applied in the selection process.

The problem is that to this day there have been no observers, critics or international art curators who have been brave enough to firmly underline what contemporary art actually is (much less define it; in limitations on contemporary art like those imagined by Teguh Ostentrik in his writing: *Untitled*, along with the majority of the rest of our visual art observers).

Basically, they are concerned about becoming trapped in the development of art, in theory and in definition, as occurred in the development of modern art (in 1961 influential critic Clement Greenberg defined the essence of modernism or modern fine art in a radio speech, and this definition was one of the triggers for the reaction against modernism).

This floating condition indicates that the discourse of contemporary fine art is at a cross-road: whether to begin to assert the discourse that has been discussed for

nearly twenty years, or to remain open and continue to seek new considerations by studying reality.

The problem of heterogeneity emerges in theories of international art, associated with the continuing openness of the contemporary art discourse. Diversity is a reality that was never studied in the development of modern art.

Diversity emerged in the contemporary art discourse when American radical critic Lucy Lippard problematised multiculturalism in the development of contemporary art in the America, in the mid-80s. This concerned the number of non-European ethnic groups in the United States that were not noted in the development of modern/contemporary art. Although Lippard attempted to see links between multiculturalism in America and in the world (she compared developments in the Third World) her perspective was unable to develop into a contemporary art discourse with a broader (world) scope.

Multiculturalism instead brought up perspectives on hybridity, which believed in intermixture and uniqueness (diversity) in the global era. This view, which Enin Supriyanto believed to be the reality of contemporary art’s development, in fact reveals a return to the problem of diversity in (international) contemporary art within faith in homogenous development.

However, the debate continues today. I think that in views of hybridity based on the study of ethnic groups in developed countries, inter-mixing may well occur. However it remains a question as to whether this assumed mix also occurs between ethnic groups in the global scope. This problem of mixing is not located in the basis of ethnic behaviour, but in how far an ethnic group (or any kind of group) has access to the world of information.

Diversity in contemporary art discourse still carries that dilemma, and this was actually the theoretical framework for the GNB Exhibition and Seminar. The paradigm of diversity in international art was studied within this framework.

Problems do emerge. Our efforts were immediately tied to basic questions, for instance: to what extent can plural modern art also be rejected in contemporary art discourse. How far can plural modern art acknowledge the development of contemporary art practice? How far can contemporary art discourse open up to the diversity of modern art's development?

To answer this question adequate information is needed about modern/contemporary art's progress in developing countries (the South) because this is the paradigm of diversity in international fine art. The debate in international forums about diversity in contemporary art indicates that there is still a great need for this information in all its forms – observation, analysis, notes on developments, opinions, artists' statements and exhibitions.

Just with faith in the existence of diversity, notes on contemporary art's progress in developing countries can be channelled into this information. And this is the goal of making the "Southern perspective" central to the GNB Seminar and exhibition. It is nothing less than an effort to build and shape information that has until now been lacking. If we actually want to study diversity in contemporary art discourse, information on the "South" is a determining factor.

The GNB Exhibition, which included 42 developing nations and exhibited about 400 works, put forward various realities as material for further study. The exhibition showed that the line between modern and contemporary art seems blurred in many developing countries, including Indonesia.

In these developments it seems apparent that there is still a breadth of painting practice (as a paradigmatic art) which signifies how approaches to painting in developing countries are not idiomatic. There are also signs of the contiguity of modern/contemporary art with local forces – cultural background, socio-political conditions and the influence of traditional art – which signify that contemporary/modern art in developing nations is unconnected to avant-garde traditions in

Europe (which are currently believed to be the basis of modern art).

To discuss diversity in contemporary art discourse, it is important to examine unity (cooperation between North and South). The "Unity in Diversity in International Art" Seminar is an effort to find a footing on which to begin this discussion, or at least an agreement to add to considerations within contemporary art discourse, which is still open. As a practical step TK Sabapathy from Singapore National University says "Critics and historians must come out of the theoretical foundations that have so far been the basis of their thinking, and adjust themselves to various unusual situations. The courage to express perspectives on art practice and values is itself unusual."

The presentations of speakers at this seminar – coming from the North and the South – showed that their attempts to find agreement through the concept of North-South were not mere empty talk. As Mary Jane Jacobs said, "I see the tensions of North-South not as a closed alternative, but as a reality that must be given an understanding and meaning. By looking for meaning that reveals that there are connections within these tensions, we may not fall back into the paradigms of Western reality, which have protected us for so long."

And, if we believe that truth is plural, then the discourse of international contemporary art must not be formed by a homogenous group. This discourse can be formed in heterogeneous conditions if autonomous groups continue to communicate difference.