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FLUID FRICTION #2

artist(s)

ARIN DWIHARTANTO

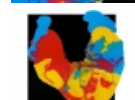
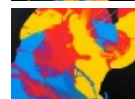
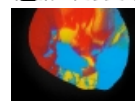
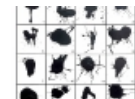
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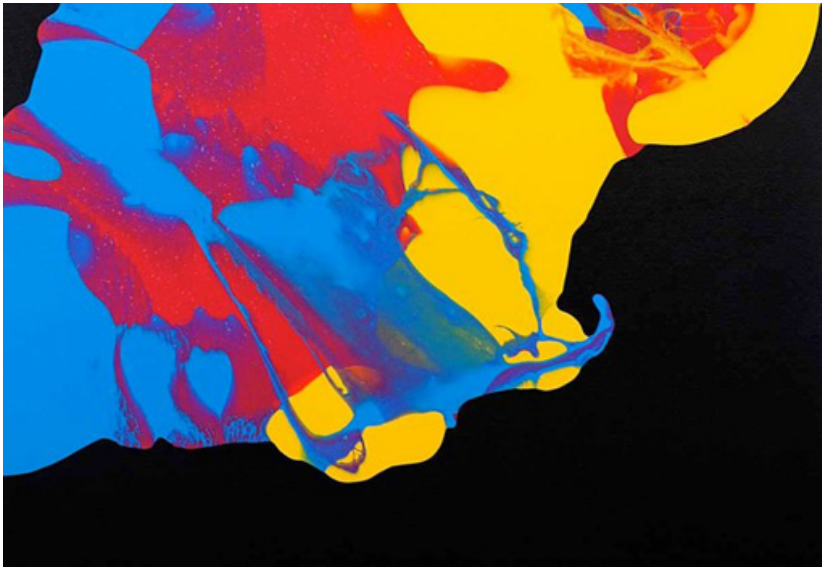
HENDRO WIYANTO

time & place(s)

SIGIarts Gallery
April 7th - 25th, 2010

view artworks





Cyan Magenta Yellow Black 3 - 120 x 100cm - Resin on canvas

"How I am forced to make compromises with the 'uncontrolled' conditions and deal with it by taking a variety of decisions, all depends on the situations at hand."

– Arin Dwihartanto

"My canvas is like a pedestal," Arin says. The painting that we see created on the canvas is envisioned as having the status as an object, resting on a pedestal. That is how Arin uses his imaginations, and even metaphors, of how he wants his works stir our emotions. Arin shrewdly defines the modes of being and the approaches he takes toward the two-dimensional planes through allusions of objects or three-dimensional allusions.

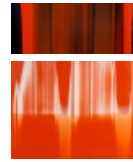
We are used to imagining (modern) sculptures on pedestals—and, naturally, paintings in frames—as aliens from outer space. Our understanding about a variety of works of art happens in such a way that it gives rise to the view that the presence of the observer vis-à-vis the observed object constitutes the margin between two different worlds. Arin, however, does not intend to signify such conflict of understandings as he tries to transform the canvas into a pedestal; rather, he wishes to convey the discord in the creative arena or chronicle. This is understandable, as all artists in the contemporary era always seem impatient to be included in the long line of artists who advertise a kind of "de-differentiation politics". They surreptitiously keep in their pockets a special agenda to disassemble and re-assemble the differentiating layers and identities: the self, the medium, the subject matter, meanings or messages, and signs.

In his studio by the asphalt road in Cigadung, northern Bandung, it seems that Arin wishes to show that to create "a painting on a pedestal" is not like taking care of some sort of plant or letting it creep. He does not arrange fragments upon fragments of images that spread across the canvas plane, like the shadows of coppices of trees that appear as if they still want to grow to adorn the increasingly barren hills of Cigadung. His artistic practices do not entirely resemble practices of "magic", the artistic style that transforms the magical sense of the canvas into a "distinct world", full of principles of the autonomy of the subject and, especially, of a myriad illusions.

(I often imagine the strategies taken by artists through the following examples: the application of red-and-white paints on the temporary portals usually installed on the Indonesian Independence Day does not necessarily make the one applying them feel immediately "liberated". The artist, however, has for some reason liberated him or herself simply by applying splashes of paints. A mother who puts butter on a slice of bread in the morning might experience it more as a task or obligation, although the act might very well be done with tender feelings. To apply spots of gloomy colors on a painting with the theme of 'humanity' will certainly be claimed as expression of tenderness or profound romanticism of the artist.)

Arin even lets his canvases empty, resting on the wall, seemingly not willing to put anything on the canvases, which—as mentioned in the beginning of this essay, serve like pedestals. Rather, he composes (if we take him as an "anti-realist") or downloads (if we consider him as a proponent of realism, who believes that there is an autonomous reality outside the artist's self) various made-up images. He embarks on a struggle in the differentiating arena of his own canvases.

We see him working intensely with a thick sheet of glass. His treatment to this kind of surface is clearly not the same with how an artist commonly approaches a flexible canvas pane. He hauls his tools, pushes, and uses a gliding board that works like a mop or a glass-cleaning tool for high-rise buildings. This is the place where a range of frictions occurs on the levels of the materials (between the luster of the paints and the random fluidity of the resins), the representations of visual plurality (between the two-dimensional aspect and the illusion of object), and his patterns of experiments (between the logic and the "non-visual" determination of the materials and the desire to establish certain "non-material" images). Photos of the artist at work are published in this catalogue and hopefully they will help explain the work process that the artist has undertaken



documentation & press

In Touch With Fluid Friction - Jakarta Globe

Arin Dwihartanto: Zeitgeist with resin drips - Jakarta Post

Fluid Friction #2 - Artist Talk

Fluid Friction #2 - Opening Night

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challenge, and reporting they will help explain the work process that the artist has undertaken.

One can say that Arin is a gestalt hunter, if we can re-use the oft-used term from the realm of psychology. Every facet from the process must be envisioned as the (return of a) pattern, or a whole arrangement, instead of isolated segments from the arrangement. Isn't it true that at the school yard we can only hear the cacophony as a whole, forming a unity of yelling and screaming, without being able to recognize the individual sources?

The artistic expressions that we eventually see as "paintings on pedestals" are not proof of Arin's intensive contact between Arin's hands and the canvas pane. Here the strategy to de-differentiate or break the distance between the artist and the treasury of differentiating elements, including the recognized set of languages or idioms, takes the form of the situating of a piece of canvas as a jealous creature.

Arin will not let his hands interfere with the canvas surface. Between the empty canvas and the artist there has even emerged a stronger margin—greater or lesser—between two different worlds. Painting is an effort to interpret the artistic journey, the conversations, and even the responses with the "method" (meta-hodos) of painting itself. Thus, if there is a consideration about the "context of justification" in a certain painting method so far, what Arin does actually constitutes an effort to insert into the context the opportunity of "discovery" (the context of discovery), to examine such cycle of legitimacy.

Arin says:

"Paintings become my main medium of choice because the painting process that I undertake has to do with the issue of how to handle the paints on the canvas. As we use paints to create works, we are always made to stand face to face with the fluid nature of the paints. Here I try to make compromises between the natural character of the media and the theme or the image that I wish to create.

"The elements of change in my work are here due to the curiosity to understand better the activities that I have done so far. Often the trigger to work arises from questions. And the fundamental questions around me perhaps also play a role in giving new perspectives about the activity of painting. Why are there drawings in your paintings? Is there a particular reason to use such brush strokes? ...perhaps they are elements of the visual language that have become a whole unit as I try to convey my ideas. But if ideas can actually be conveyed through just about any medium and method, why do we convey them using this particular medium and not the others?"

Like many beautiful ladies who had enjoyed frying eggs in the kitchen, and now turn to (and become more interested in) managing contemporary art galleries, Arin's work in his studio is, I think, akin to breaking an egg. One day, the giant wok sizzles with certain "god-knows-what" artistic passions. One can perhaps say that he "fries", mixes, and controls the frictions caused by the drips, splashes, and spills, which dissolve the materials of the paints and resins on the non-canvas surfaces. He considers and applies a range of possibilities and surprises arising from forms that might come about from the image of a broken egg on the Teflon surface, which can actually be controlled, as the spillage must immediately be calculated from its possible boiling point, its potential power to stun, the probable contingency from all facets due to the half-liquid condition of the material and the accidental nature of the interactions among the different elements.

Hard and dry slivers on the margin, clashing into one another rather randomly, "divert" a bit from the egg-frying chronicle, and are forms that cannot be ignored in such interactions. In due time, what appears and "matures" at the reverse side of the surface is then presented inside-out on the canvas. That is the "painting" that we now enjoy.

The "jealous" canvas now carries the mere function of the formal and the pragmatic nature, and has the status of being in a "polygamous" relationship. The object, which has been untouched during the frying process, no longer constitutes a paradigmatic arrangement that is often considered as the proof of an essential "marriage". All the manufactured images are synthetic.

It can very well be that Arin's practice of "egg frying" constitutes a play of interpretations of the "schemata" that have already been established as the visual premises, which operate both on the intellectual level and the imaginative-intuitive level, forming the double-edged mind, as Arnheim famously described. It is such schemata that can perhaps be envisioned and re-formed through close analyses on the fresh spillages, and even shrewd analyses on what initially appears as "wholly residual" or "totally not residual" from the experimental risks. At that time, "the egg" and "the frying pan" eventually function as mere allusions that we must forget. Apparently, the truth has become a mere verisimilitude in the development of paintings in the current contemporary era.

Arin has almost thoroughly fooled the vertical growth in the long history of painting. He stirs, shifts, and brings his surface of frictions upside-down—indeed, this is just as he once was fooled by the flatness of Glen Brown's paintings, which appear as smooth as print materials. As he is impressed by all the appropriative features of such flat nature, Arin's use of weatherproof and scratch-proof coating materials makes his works appear like photographic images sandwiched by clear sheets of glass. A super-luxurious impression arises from the use of this thin coating material.

Affandi once said, long ago, that canvases seem to make us hungry. Deliberately or otherwise, the old man indeed created paintings that resemble broken eggs with uncertain shapes—"omelette", said Deleuze and Guattary; a term that I still remember, although not from the original book.

But a "hungry" artist will never take what he or she does for granted. They will invariably assail themselves with problems generated from the engineered complexity of the conditions of genesis, exert themselves to reveal different practices or modes of work. What is important is to create something different: riding a bicycle on and around the canvas (Pollock), pulling the body of a female covered in paints (Yves Klein), hanging from the ceiling (Matthew Barney), working like an advertisement artisan (Francis Alys), or trusting the paintings into the

hands of the artisans (Zhou Tiehai or Mahendra Yasa).

We have long known about Arin's shrewd artistic sensibility. His artistic "intervention" this time, however, immediately touches upon the issues of the determination and certainty of the changed nature of the material, which has been anticipated from the start. This is one of the greatest conflicts that have been affected by the view of genesis. Why do the oceans and abyss not spill over, although they are much vaster than all the lands taken as a whole? We never "see" the roundness of the Earth or touch what we call the horizon. Apart from a number of given conditions, there are opportunities for experiments—whether we are artists or not—in order to take a novel series of steps.

The dripping, spilling, and pouring of paints, therefore, can be considered as a kind of organism or perhaps even the spilled blood in Tarantino's sadistic slow-motions. The defiance or, on the contrary, the compromises will stop at some uncertain situation, with Arin's decision or order, depending on god-knows-what. All of them seemingly guarantee that the end result will still show traces of the initial conditions. We can envision a kind of cycle of material-image-material in such narratives. The control, management, flexibility, and transparency make Arin's work do not totally constitute forms of abstractions or reductions that do away with feelings, as if they were trashes. On the contrary, on a certain level of understanding, the works will trigger some feelings or imaginations.

Arin also says:

"I decide to use the medium of resins in mid-2008. Initially, I've never thought of using resins as my main medium. At the time, I simply use resins to coat the canvas surface in order to get smooth surfaces, generating therefore certain effects as I paint with oil paints over it. Because I didn't work so neatly, the dripping resins on the edges of the canvas fall over one another when they dry. I was more interested in observing the shapes formed on the canvas edges than checking whether or not the resin surface on the canvas is already perfect."

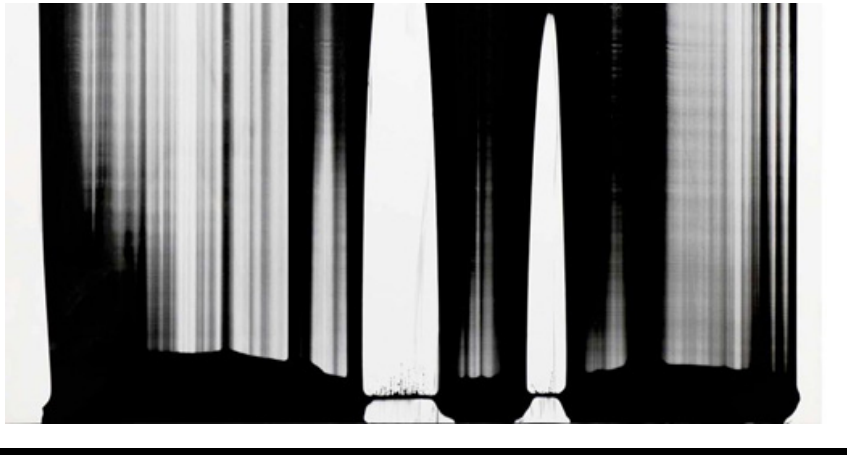
That is thus Arin's method of work. We will understand him as an artist who closely questions his own methods, which have also reflected the traditions around him. He has jumped over the fences or even defied them. "Against method," Feyerabend says. We certainly agree that Indonesia has only a few of such artists, not to say there are too few of them.

Jakarta, March 26th, 2010

Hendro Wiyanto

Exhibition curator





Untitled-3 Black White -205 x 205cm - Resin on panel

Arin's Friction: Materiality as Painter

By M. Ridwan Kamil (Architect)

The experience of observing Arin Dwiheartanto's paintings is the experience of coming across two different provocations. The first one is his art expression that has a fluid nature. The flowing movement appears strong as there are colors that have the "task" to remain still as the background, and there are colors that strongly flow and move here and there. The flowing colors appear sublime and natural. Such natural quality, I think, is part of the artistic concept that the painter wishes to convey. The harmony and the role-sharing among the painting elements are the fortes that are evident in his paintings.

The second provocation is found in the final forms of his paintings. The painting texture on his canvas feels neat, smooth, and often appears shiny. This is different from paintings that use the conventional materials of oil paints that often appear textured, easily mixed, and are sometimes rough. Such smooth and neat characters that we see in Arin's works are due to the use of unconventional materials, i.e. resin liquid. The resin liquid is able to flow but will dry quickly after a certain length of time. This viscous nature enables us to control the resin's level of thickness according to our desire.

Historically, resin is a natural element, a transparent secretion from plants, especially coniferous trees. This

transparent, viscous hydrocarbon secretion often traps insects as these alight on the trees. Because the resin becomes hard and transparent when it dries, mummies in Ancient Egypt were often coated by this natural resin to preserve them. Since the Neolithic era, hundreds-year-old fossilized resins, which had hardened and appeared shiny, were often used as decorative gemstones. In many parts of the world, these natural plant resins are frequently used as materials to make perfumes.

Subsequently, resins were synthetically produced, creating "synthetic resins". In the world of the modern interior design, such synthetic resins are often used to produce furniture, kitchen tables, or flooring materials (epoxy resins). But I think this is the first time that an Indonesian artist explores such resins as the medium of artistic expressions in paintings. The view saying that this material is environmentally unfriendly is... indeed correct. I think, however, we should consider this in the context of the scale of use. Unlike the design industry that produces objects massively, the use of resins as the media for artistic explorations, within the limited context of paintings, is interesting and it will serve us well to observe this development closely.

Arin explores the fluid or flowing nature of the resin, which forms the forte of his works. I think this is one of the greatest contributions that an artist can give: to express his art through the explorations of an uncommon and unpopular material.

In his paintings, Arin experiments with two or more colors and plays with different levels of fluidity to convey his messages. He presents his artistic statements impressively, so much so that parts of his art expressions seem to come about from the surprising fluid nature. As the canvases are shifted, turned around, and made to stand erect, they form new methods of painting using the quickly-hardened material. In other words, the unforeseeable fluid nature of the material forces Arin to make innovations in his method of painting. Sometimes this resin material even seems to perform as artist.

A distinct sensation invariably arises as we observe Arin's works. The fluid concept and the final features of his artwork, whose surface is smooth, neat, and sometimes shiny, give rise to physical sensations that seem to encourage the brain to automatically order the hand to touch and feel his canvases.

But perhaps this is precisely the strength of an artwork. It is a medium for us humans to question values of life. It is a medium that helps us in our philosophical contemplations. It often serves as a provocative break in the routines in our lives, and are simultaneously able to penetrate all of our senses, encouraging them to be involved in the process. Surprises are the most fitting expression explaining the sensations that arise as we enjoy Arin Dwiheartanto's artwork.

