

Vito Acconci, a video artist once wrote about television audience that acts as if “owning a television within themselves, like cancer. (...) Television audience has also been *replaced* and *displaced*... With television people are finally able to become a “model person”, but the person is a model, a nonself. People functions as “screen”, a simulation of self... Television strengthens the diagnosis that the border between the inside and the outside is blurred: the diagnosis of “self” as concept is old fashioned...¹¹⁾

The works “Displaced #1, #2 and #3” (2003) also provokes us about “self”. Harsono present his self portrait wearing black plastic bag. His naked body is pictured sitting down quietly holding plastic flowers. At first in “Displaced #1” the figure is presented as mere outline, together with Chinese characters, so weighed with stigma, that mean “*double happiness*” as the background colliding with the body. Two other series (#2 and #3) is moving towards more realistic image to emphasize the real paradox: a *desaparecidos* (victim of forced disappearance) and a bride in waiting. Rather than experiencing double happiness as the Chinese bride expected, “double happiness” is a double discourse about body being celebrated and body being condescended.

Harsono has created a “little monument” as a memorial of the downfall of a leader after having been in power for 32 years, that “honorably” created enormous reservation within his self, both as a citizen and an artist. The work is a serial stamp parody entitled “Republik Indochoas” (1998), an unofficial stamp without the publication of its first day cover. Republic is *res-extensa*, public spaces where the supposedly-solid, existing identity of the *cogito* is once and for all mortgaged. But the

space is now inside a chaos everywhere, and the *cogito* who thinks dissolved... No more authority of the single guarantor of identity or body. An artist who is aware of these shifts will be challenged by the heat of questions slowly begin to burn places where one places one’s bum.

1. Quoted from Renato Poggioli, “The Concept of a Movement”, The Theory of The Avant Garde, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1968
2. See Ignas Kleden, “Membangun Tradisi Tanpa Sikap Tradisional”, dalam “Sikap Ilmiah dan Kritik Kebudayaan”, LP3ES, 2nd Edition, 1988.
3. FX Harsono, “Dua Pola Pikiran dalam Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru”, Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru Indonesia, editor Jim Supangkat, 1979).
4. FX Harsono, “Upaya Mandiri Seni Rupa Pembaruan”, Kompas, 25 October 1992
5. Moelyono, “Upaya Hidup Seni Rupa Pembaruan”, Kompas, 11 October 1992
6. See Harsono, Gendut Riyanto dan Winardi, “Seni Rupa kembali ke Masyarakat”, discussion paper, 5 July 1985
7. FX Harsono, “Mengapa Seni Rupa”, in “Suara’, Pameran Seni Rupa Kontemporer FX Harsono, Gedung Pameran Seni Rupa Depdikbud, Jakarta 23-29 July 1994 (catalog)
8. Quoted from Jean-Fracois Lyotard, “The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge”, in Lawrence E. Cahoone, From Modernisme to Postmodernism: An Anthology (Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1996).
9. Tim Gabungan Pencari Fakta (TGPF)/*Joint Team of Investigation* noted 1200 victims were scorched, 8500 buildings and vehicles burnt, more than 90 Chinese women raped and harrassed during 13, 14, 15 May 1998 riot in Jakarta. After 5 years the case has not yet been associated with any suspects. (See: TEMPO, Five Year of *Reformasi*, 25 May 2003).
10. See: Joseph E. McHugh, “Connecting the Dots: Sigmar Polke’s Rasterbilder in their Sociopolitical Context”, in Sigmar Polke, Back to Postmodernity, Liverpool University Press, 1996.
11. Vito Acconci, “Television, Furniture, and Sculpture: The Room with the American View”, in Illuminating Video, Aperture/BAVC, 1990.

the transition

artist's statement

fx harsono

My creative journey in visual arts is at the moment in a period of transition. Presenting social issues in my works, initially thematic and based on ideas explored through a research and gaining intensity through a cultural point of view still interest me. The process can still be used in a creative process, but I began to move away from raising thematic social issues.

The creation of a figure does no longer interests me. Creating a figure has been interpreted as rejecting and resisting injustice. In later development, I have used themes like destruction as well as texts that which are verbal in nature in my works prior to and after the fall of Soeharto.

A print work on paper using photo-etching technique titled "*Republic Indochaos*" (1999) – in a form of a stamp – was a little monument I used to mark the fall of Soeharto. Another monument I created was a picture on paper titled "*Thy Kingdom Come*" (1998). The title was part of the text of one of the essential prayer among the Catholics to praise the Lord, seeking His blessing and a statement of affection between human beings. I placed the text above a picture of riot, destruction and death.

After Soeharto regime fell, the culture of violence appeared clearer before our society. Ignorance towards the fate of the people on one hand and over-prioritization of group interest on the other hand made me so sick of the current situation. This nausea and pessimism is the strongest reason that pushed me away from social themes. I felt the loss of orientation on moral, ethics, even nationalism. If the subjects

are still often brought up, I feel it as empty and meaningless slogans.

Afterwards, I feel I've lost my ground and feel alienated among my own society. This society was something I once considered as a group to fight for through art. I also feel foreign among the people I once consider as having similar vision of change. In nudity and plainness shown from their behavior, I suddenly question, who are they really?

In a change like this, I try to see myself over again. I was born in Blitar, a small town in East Java as a Chinese descent. I came to know Javanese culture in the village where I lived with my grandmother who was of Javanese descent. I learn a bit of Chinese culture from my parents and my childhood surroundings. From kindergarten to the third grade in elementary school, I went to a Chinese school. And then all the habits were erased just like that when I started to go to a Catholic school and grasp Western culture – although it can hardly be said as the real Western culture – through Catholic education and the missionaries. In 1969, I studied visual art in Yogyakarta and soon encountered a finer Javanese culture in this city of art. A few years afterwards, I decided to leave Yogyakarta and moved to Jakarta.

This journey indicated that a homeland or the roots of a life was not something important to me. I can even say there is no geographical or cultural location that I can refer to as my homeland or cultural root. I can only mention stories of where I was born and brought up. To me, historicity is more important than cultural roots.

By that I mean the “original” culture forming the background of my life is non-existent and no longer important. Identity is not based on the place I originate, but more related to historicity and historicity does not halt on a single culture, it was created out of diversity. All of these turned me into a part of the hybrid entity. The absence of a solid cultural root in my life drew my interest to and made it easy for me to familiarize myself with digital icons provided in the cyberworld or graphic design. The life of metropolis Jakarta for instance, have made it easy for me to identify geographic space with all its signs in the form of shopping malls, skyscrapers with all its meanings and the complexity of the issue of space.

Yet in the time when global culture around the globe continually undergo the process of deterritorialization, any other boundary also becomes blurred. Then I am provoked to ask “what kind of local value would I still be able to come up with? Aren’t I already uprooted from the cultural roots of my ancestors? And isn’t my national identity as an Indonesian no longer has a cultural meaning for me?”

Before me stretches a borderless digital universe. Communication technology with its visual products and photographic manipulation in this universe can continue to develop. If since 1975 I’ve never been interested on the identity created by my own hands, as many painters venerate the character of manual strokes or colors as the materialization of self identity, then at the moment I am contented with using various computer softwares with all the possibilities they can offer.

I do all this without having to bother myself with the question of individual identity. Thus political themes became less and less interesting. Nevertheless I can’t easily dispose the

issues I have dealt with since the 70s, like one takes off one’s clothes.

However, the transition from the old situation to the newer one as the one I presently experience makes me uncomfortable. That is what I try to describe through using the word “*displaced*”, or the wrong placement, the place where I am is yet the one that makes me feel not rooted to the place itself. +++

FX Harsono

Blitar, March 22, 1949

1987-1991 Studied painting at IKJ (Jakarta Art Institute).

1969-1974 Studied painting at STRI "ASRI", Yogyakarta.

2002 - 2003 as an artist in residence at The Amsterdam Grafisch Atelier, in Amsterdam, Holland

2001 Group exhibition "Reading Frida Kahlo" at Nadi Gallery, Jakarta.

- Group exhibition "Print in The Future" at Cemeti Art House, Yogyakarta.

- Participate on "International Print Triennial in Kanagawa" Yokohama, Japan

2000, The Third Kwangju Bienalle, Korea

- Group exhibition in "Museum Nusantara" Delft Holland

- Group exhibition "Half a Century of Indonesian Printmaking" at Bentara Budaya, Jakarta, Indonesia

1999 Group exhibition Contemporary Sculptor "Volume & Form" Singgapore.

- Group exhibition in Kanazu Forest "Art Document 1999 in Kanaz"

- Group exhibition Contemporary Art "Forum Kecil Bandung", Lembang, Bandung, Indonesia.

1998 Group exhibition in Purna Budaya, Yogyakarta, "Meet 3:3 in Yogyakarta" 3 artists from Indonesia and 3 artists from Germany.

- Solo exhibition "Victim" in Cemeti Gallery, Yogyakarta

1997 Group exhibition in Tokyo, International Contemporary Art Festival, Japan (NICAF).

- Group exhibition in Cemeti Gallery, Yogyakarta "Slot In The Box"

1996 Group exhibition in New York "Tradition/Tension" held by Asia Society, exhibition continued to Vancouver- Canada, Perth - Australia, Seoul - Korea.

- Group exhibition In Fukuoka, Organize by Museum City Project.

1995 Group exhibition In Tokyo "Asian Modernism" held by Japan Foundation.

1994 Biennial Contemporary Art TIM, Jakarta

- Solo exhibition "Suara"(Voice), National Art Gallery, Gambir, Jakarta.

1993 Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, Australia

- Bagoio Art Festival in Bagoio, the Phillipine

1992 Speaker during Artists Week at Adelaide Festival

- Artist Regional Exchange (ARX 3) exhibition in Perth, Australia

- Took part in an artists exchange program for 3 months at the South Australian University, School of Art, in Adelaide, Australia

1990 Published "Dialog Seni Rupa" Magazine with Hendro Wiyanto and Siti Adiyati under the Dialog Seni Rupa Foundation

1989 Solo exhibiton for S1 Examinations at Jakarta Art Institute Gallery

1988 Graphic Design Exhibition with IPGI and JAGDA at DEPDIKBUD Art Gallery in Gambir, Jakarta

1987 SRB exhibition "Proyek I - Pasar Raya Dunia Fantasi" at TIM, Jakarta

- Graphic Design Exhibition with IPGI and Japan Graphic Design Association

1986 Exhibition at Purna Budaya in Yogyakarta

1985 Exhibition of Art on the Environment, "Proses 85" at Galeri Seni Rupa Ancol, Jakarta, in cooperation with Walhi and SKEPHI

- Graphic Design Exhibition with IPGI at TIM, Jakarta

1983 Graphic Design Exhibition with Ikatan Perancang Grafis Indonesia (IPGI) at Mitra Budaya, Jakarta

- 1982 Art on the Environment exhibition at Parangtritis, Yogyakarta
1979 SRB III Exhibition at TIM, Jakarta
1977 SRB II Exhibition at TIM, Jakarta
1976 Concept SRB Exhibition at Balai Budaya, Jakarta
1975 Established New Art Movement (Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru:SRB) with 10 young artists from ITB, Jakarta and ASRI
- Exhibition SRB I at TIM, Jakarta
1974 Exhibition at PPIA Surabaya with KLPMY
- Three-man exhibition at Balai Budaya
- Took part in All-Indonesia Painting Exhibition I at TIM, Jakarta
- Took part in Black December movement in Jakarta
1973 Set up Kelompok Lima Pelukis Muda Yogyakarta (KLPMY)
- Exhibition in Solo with KLPMY

Others:

- 1994 Consultant for Artists Regional exchange Perth (ARX 4), (as a curator for Indonesian artists) Australia, 1995
1993 Writing article for "Seni" (art journal), KOMPAS, TEMPO, FORUM, Bentara.
- Overseas Editors for Artlink, Australia Contemporary Art quarterly, for Contemporary Arts of the Region South East Asia and Australi issues November March 1993/1994
1992 Setting up and writing articles on contemporary art for "Dialog Seni Rupa" bulletin
1990 Researched and wrote thesis entitled "The Theme of the Masses in Art In Indonesia - From the Time of Persagi Until Now "for S1 Program at the Jakarta Art Institute.