

# Bandung artists

## explore the physique

**L**ines made with a black pencil and white paint are spread on a large canvas measuring 100 cm by 290 cm. On the left of the canvas, they form two white hands covering a buttock.

In the middle of the canvas, the fingers on both hands are covering the face, letting part of the eyelid to be visible between the ring and little fingers. On the right, the fingers on both hands are covering one's genital.

The painting, titled *Malu, Malu, Malu* (Ashamed, Ashamed, Ashamed) by Rosid, 34, is one of the art works by three Bandung-based artists.

The other three are Arin Dwihartanto, 25, Gusbarlian Lubis, 31, a graduate of the School of Fine Arts and Design, Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB), and Rudi St Darma, 38, a graduate of Bandung Teachers' Training Institute — now being exhibited at Galeri Lontar in Utan Kayu, East Jakarta.

The theme of the exhibition, of which the curator is Agung Hujatnikajenong, also from Bandung, is *Tubuh 4* (Physique 4).

Rosid, once an apprentice at Studio R 66 and spent a stint at Sunaryo's Art Workshop is

amazingly excellent. Technically, this photography-based drawing needs great patience and observation in enlarging the size of a particular part of a human body.

Unlike his previous works, which he exhibited at Selasar Sunaryo (Sunaryo's Gallery) in Bandung last year, in this latest work, Rosid placed the body against norms, morality and the way to respond to it.

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### Yusuf Susilo Hartono

Contributor  
Jakarta

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When he depicts fingers that are covering the face, Rosid, with embarrassment, seems to be watching the drama of our bodies in confrontation with norms, either constitutionally or conventionally. In a predominantly Muslim country, how can community members freely display their genitals? Many of them even make this display of genitals a source of easy money. Isn't this really an embarrassing phenomenon?

What about the other artists? Arin Dwihartanto, winner of 2003 Indofood Art

Award, has long believed that a human body is not like a machine, of which the spare parts can easily be changed.

This time, he displays a configuration of four paintings dominated by the red color in different sizes. These paintings have been made on acrylic as well as with charcoal on canvas. Two of the paintings, called *Barbed Fire* and *Jagged Backbone*, depict two weird figures.

The two figures have their backs on the viewers while parts of the body are visible to the naked eyes as if they were being X-rayed. The structure of the backbones looks like the back of a dragon on the roof of a Chinese temple — swaying and thorny. Behind the skull there is another skull with the mouth agape and the eyeballs gazing in despair.

In the case of the other figure, which is shown to be firmly standing, there are two fists in a red flame of fire. Despite its weirdness, is it the embodiment of the spirit of *Ever Onward and Never Retreat*?

Unlike Rosid and Arin, Rudi St Darma, who usually explores great narration about human beings and civ-



JP/Yusuf Susilo Hartono

*Jagged Backbone* by Arin Dwihartanto

ilization, is now featuring a "simpler" body.

His flexible pencil-made lines and solid shading with a character show female bodies in various positions

and as different subjects. What we can interpret from these works — either on canvas directly or on a piece of canvas placed between two transparent glass sheets — is

the problem of the body in the face of solitude.

Is this a "pause" of sorts for Darma so that he can obtain a "key" for his creativity after indulging himself in the celebration of festivity for quite some time?

If this is the case, Darma's "pause" is not merely concerned with the physical body but also the body of a creative existence of an artist that has shown his superior class in Philip Morris Art Award competition and other art contests at ASEAN level.

While his three fellow artists feature the human body in their works, Gusbarlian comes out with a configuration of colored photographs about his own body in six frames under the title of *Passion*.

Each of the six photographs shows the interaction between his naked body and a brick, either in the position of sleeping on it, licking it, carrying it on the head, hugging it and even sitting on it. This work is part of his ideas about the brick as part of a partitioning wall.

Obviously, unlike other similar exhibitions, which are market-oriented, this one is discourse-oriented, a feature in tune with the spir-

it of *Galeri Lontar*.

The curator Agung Hujatnikajenong said that the manifestation of the body in fine art, particularly in the art and sculpturing tradition, can be traced back to the Renaissance period, long before modern artists like Matisse and Duchamp began their figure-painting.

At least, since the late 1990 decade, the human body as a subject has gained popularity in discourses about fine art in Indonesia. Some people suspect that this discourse is attributable to the contact between the discourse on Indonesia's fine art and social and philosophical sciences.

One relevant to ask at this junction is whether or not the market has no share at all in celebrating the use of the human body in Indonesia's contemporary fine art. To borrow from Rosid, we should not feel "Ashamed, ashamed, ashamed" to own it up.

*The exhibition is under way until July 25, 2003 at Lontar Gallery, Jl. Utan Kayu 68 H, East Jakarta (Tel. 8573388).*