

Fine arts, a medium to tie RI and Germany

What does "multicultural" mean? What is a subculture? The definitions cover a wide range of things.

Multikulti in Germany, for example, certainly means the gathering of different nationalities, while in other parts of the world the gathering of two neighboring villages could be seen as a multicultural event.

Not only underground movements like punk or ska can be regarded as subculture; it

enon, will find its justification.

"Reading Multi-Sub-Culture" is therefore the title of a contemporary Indonesian paintings exhibition that opened on Jan. 8 at the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Berlin in cooperation with the Indonesian Embassy in Berlin.

Its planners wanted exactly to express these different dimensions and the wide range: Of 9,000 young Indonesian artists from throughout the country curator Maman-

example — beside the bon-bon-colored, round-headed protagonists of Bunga Jeruk's.

Her painting, *Aku ingin anak lagi* (I would like another child) presents a full-breasted mother, with four children already, talking into a microphone, becoming the mirror for "normal" people in a transition from a traditional to a modern-media society.

There are the abstract mixed media works *Wajah-Wajah yang disalibkan I+II* (Crucified Faces) of Antonius Kho as well as the pale women's faces in



JP/Christina Schott

Works by Rosid (above) and Teddy S (top right) are included in an exhibition of Indonesian artists being held in Berlin. The exhibition, titled Reading Multi-Sub-Culture, Two-Dimensional Indonesian Fine Arts, is meant to bolster ties between Indonesia and Germany.

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can also define a subordinated culture within a larger regional or national context.

In Indonesia — with all its numerous different peoples and cultures, various communities and movements — probably every definition, from a global level to a local phenom-

noor had to pick 24 to represent the contemporary arts scene in the archipelago.

"The works to be seen are, of course, only a small part of what I would have liked to show," Mamannoor said. "But the curatorial process is limited by time and space."

The exhibited paintings are indeed a mixture of styles and ideas, representing a cross-section of contemporary Indonesian painters. There are the introverted, sloping figures in S Teddy D's *Archeolog* and *The Last Message* for

Anna Zuchriana's works *Jujum and MeiMei* and *Abdi, the Urang Sunda* (I am a Sundanese), which relates the forced transformation of a Chinese identity.

The exhibition also include pictures from Agung Suryanto, Bilaningsih HS, Ojite, Rosid and many more — unfortunately there is not enough space to mention all their works.

It was the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs that offered the *Lichthof* (light courtyard)



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of its building as space for this exhibition at the Indonesian Embassy at Berlin. This program is part of a series of exhibitions, where different countries can present their contemporary artists in the huge entrance area. The Indonesian Embassy, of course, was pleased to accept the invitation and gave the curatorship to Yayasan Seni Rupa Indonesia (Indonesian Arts Foundation) in Jakarta.

The foundation is responsible for the organization of the Philip Morris Awards Competitions in Indonesia and has launched already several international exhibitions of Indonesian contemporary arts in Madrid, Moscow, Switzerland and China.

"Every exhibition involves an act of diplomacy between cultures. Artistic works always talk about the nature, the society, the wishes and experiences of their creators: They show a new cosmos, create a certain cultural climate — so that the audience can

read, and hopefully better understand, this culture," said Mamannoor, who is also curator of the National Gallery Jakarta and teaches at the Higher School of Fine Arts and Design at Bandung.

It is an idea that was fully confirmed by speakers at the opening ceremony. "Art has a prominent place in building intercultural relations — it reflects the spirit of the people and gives substantial space to their culture", marked Rahardjo Jamtomo, the Indonesian Ambassador to Germany, in his oration.

Among all the official events, speeches and explanations, the artists themselves were somewhat ignored. The only painter present at the opening was Fauzi As'ad, who has lived for eight years in the small principality, Liechtenstein, close to Switzerland. His works usually carry a liberal dash of social criticism within an intercultural, global context.

The painting *Mundschutz*

— *wie lange noch?* (Breath protection — how long again?) shows a distressed figure with a white mouth mask in front of an abstract, red and blue background. The letters SARS dance above unreadable lines of text. *Such A Rubbish Story* is Fauzi's interpretation of this worrying medical condition and portrays an analogy between the suppression of a deadly epidemic and limitations on freedom of expression.

Nevertheless, although he would have wished to have a little bit more time and space for the artists in this exhibition, Fauzi appreciates the efforts made to realize an event of this international and multicultural significance. "Contemporary Indonesian artists are represented well; in a satisfying way," the painter and sculptor said. "I really hope now that as a result of this we shall arrive at a better understanding between people here and can build up a new intercultural exchange."