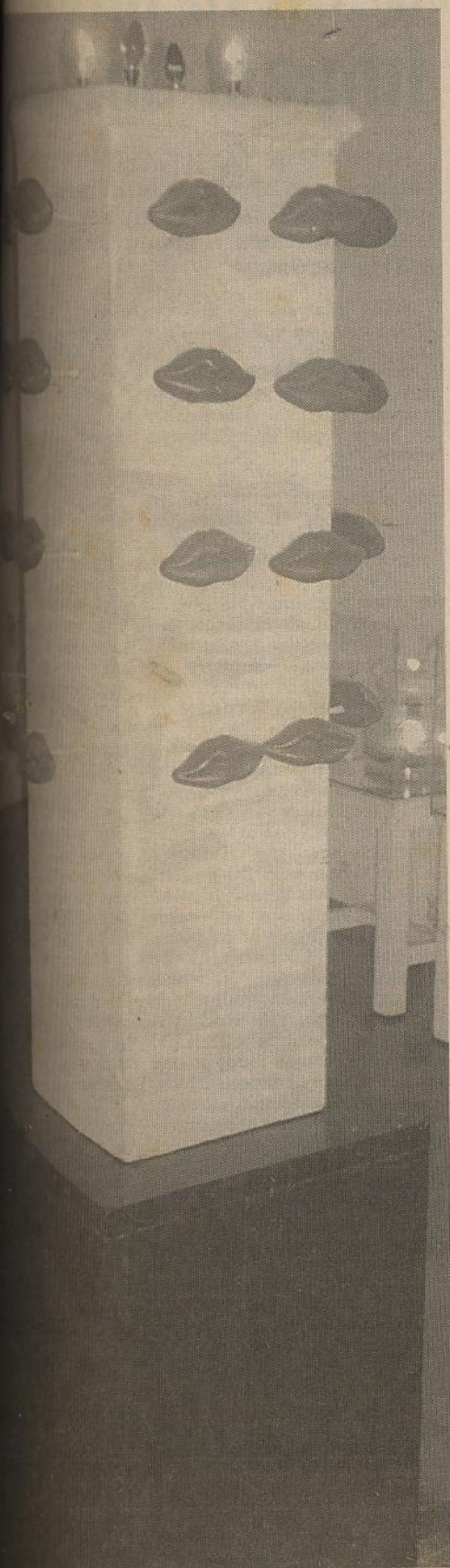


# Features: Art/Design

## Artists plug into their crea



YOGYAKARTA (JP): Artists generally shy away from exhibitions centered on a special theme, fearing that these may cramp their individual creativity. Putting paid to this perception is the ongoing *Slot in The Box*, displaying markedly different interpretations of the title theme by 22 artists.

The works, to be exhibited from April 6 to May 31 and organized by Galeri Cemeti and Yayasan Cemeti, take up nearly all the space in the small confines of the gallery. The artists opt for several fields, ranging from the conventional, such as oil on canvas, to very contemporary, including the art of video installation.

*Slot in The Box* provides the artists with the starting point to enter the mysterious world of the individual creative process. The curator has left it up to them to decide for themselves the form of their interpretations.

"The artists were not chosen for their intellectual capacities alone, but their life experience was also a contributing factor," said Nindityo Purnomo, the owner of Galeri Cemeti and curator of the exhibition. "They are free to interpret the theme."

Viewers may derive greater political insight from the show, particularly because its theme is symbolic of the voting process and it is being held right before the general election. While individual interpretations will inevitably vary, on a basic level the exhibit is an artistic exploration of social phenomena. An artistic eye will bring a better understanding of the works on display.

### Individuality

The exhibition reaffirms the individuality of the artists. Bandung graphic artist Tisna Sanjaya translates the theme as a holistic process leading up to the beginning of something through his installation work *Air Kaki* (Water for the Feet).

A canvas dominated by brooding brown colors is streaked with the slogan *Pribumi Muslim Asli* (the indigenous Moslem). The words evoke images of recent riots sparked by religious conflicts.

Another picture shows a person cleaning the feet of a woman. Bowls on the floor are filled with water from four

Text and photos  
by R. Fadri

bottles, each of which has been used to clean four separate pairs of feet. The bottles are laid in a circle around a small rambutan tree.

It could well be that Tisna's work holds no political message for some viewers, as is the case with Eddy Hara's interpretation. Known for his naively styled paintings, his *Treasure* comes in the form of a glass box attached to one wall. The box holds several souvenirs from abroad. Eddy Hara replaces the souvenirs with postcards and envelopes from foreign friends on particular days.

Several artists interpret the theme from one aspect alone, including an ear-shaped voting box in Hari Wahyu's work, the eye symbol in a piece by Hedi Haryanto, the mouth in a rendition by Weye Haryanto, even brains in a work by Edi Prabandono.

Wahyu's *Telinga* (Ear) appears to serve a political function in portraying the public's vocal expression. Thousands of worms crowd the fiberglass structure, seemingly indicating an undermining of the ability to hear and be heard.

### Public Secret

The sense of being watched looms large in Haryanto's *Rahasia Umum* (Public Secret). The sculptor, a graduate of the Indonesian Art Institute, has interpreted the phenomenon of the ballot box as a pyramid-shaped wooden installation. At the base of the pyramid, glued to the wall in a horizontal position, a mirror is attached to reflect the shadow of a fiberglass eye.

The reflection of three eyes is seen if one peers into the pyramid through a lens in the top, creating a disquieting feeling of being watched.

Hedi Haryanto intensifies the foreboding by hanging an arrow-shaped object, which is seemingly poised to hit the voyeur. The message seems to be that everyone is free to look at the inside of the pyramid, but they must understand that misfortune might strike at any moment.

The exhibition hall, comprising two sections measuring 7 meters x 4 meters each, is packed to near capacity

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FX. Harsono's video-taped art performance.

satirical version of power in his work *Memperingati 30 Tahun Berkuasanya Keluarga Suci* (Commemorating the 30th Anniversary of the Power of the Holy Family).

Among the skilled video installations is one by FX. Harsono. The work consists of videos of art performances held at the southern square of

the Yogyakarta Palace, only about 200 meters from Galeri Cemeti. Clad in the garb worn by lecturers of the Indonesian Art Institute, he burned three wooden masks atop three wooden chairs. Harsono's face, too, is covered with a mask painted mostly black.

He then proceeded to dismember each chair and the

masks with an electric saw. The performance can be viewed on a monitor, placed in the middle of the broken chair parts and masks in the gallery.

Not all aspects of the ballot box phenomenon are expressed in the works on show. But they do represent interpretations by a small group of Indonesians of the

five-yearly political process known as *demokrasi* (People's Democracy).

With whatever taken into account, interpretations are still much richer political options available in the election.