

Lucia Hartini releases images of the subconscious

At the opening of her third solo exhibition at Bentara Budaya Jakarta on Jan. 31, Lucia Hartini looked another person. Healed from a physical condition that had left her virtually immobile during the past three years, Hartini, in her display of 13 paintings, celebrates the Spirit in which she has found a new dynamic to continue pursuing Life.

If her previous works used to be dominated by the magic powers of the sea, which fused the past and present, conscious and unconscious in a single blinding moment of clarity, her latest works seem to be driven by the new spiritual dynamic that has taken her out of the corners of anxiety and depression.

Her colossal work titled *Spirit of Life* measuring 300 x 900 cm can be seen as her own personal journey from the caves of darkness on to the light. It took her two-and-a-half years to finish the work.

"Because of my physical condition, I could only work seven days each month," she revealed. Yet, as the herds of horses gallop out of the prehistoric-looking caves on canvas and their runway sours into the sky to avoid an attack by a dragon serpent, which comes out of the vortex, one can't help feeling a sense of awe for the strength and endurance that the artist has been able to muster up.

The right-hand part of the painting shows a gong, symbolic of the end, but placed against it is a woman figure and a baby jumping up from the waves, a hint at her belief in the cycle of life that moves on to new beginnings. Symbols rebound in this sense. There is dragon ser-



Payung 2000 (Umbrella 2000) by Lucia Hartini

pent, a symbol, among others, of life's force and power, there is the lotus flower, in itself a symbol of the cycle of life, and there are also the never failing balls moving around the universe, which in Hartini's values represent the several worlds that a person in meditation passes through.

Among the most impressive in the exhibition is her earlier painting made in 1996 and titled *Payung 2000* (Umbrella 2000).

A prophetic painting, it

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depicts a tall, woman figure clothed in white amid a rolling sea and rocky corals, whose face is turned away.

I didn't know who she was at the time, said Lucia Hartini, confessing she had a strong feeling that help for her many problems would come from this person.

The figure holds an umbrella, which Hartini has depicted in her own surrealist way, featuring intensive swirls and a dream-like condition with the four planets floating against its surface.

When the painting was first exhibited soon after its completion, people who appeared to be the followers of a religious group recognized their spiritual leader, Ching Hai, who they believe to be the reincarnation of the

Buddhist Kuan Im. Lucia then followed them and found solace, a new meaning in life.

Two paintings depicting her spiritual guru in prayer are less striking.

Another painting that attracts the attention is *Prahara Televisi* (Tempest on TV), a painting made in 2001 when TV programs spoiled her moods.

To rid herself of her emotion, she decided to put it on canvas.

The result is a small TV set

on a neat table and another smashed against the waves of a sea in turmoil, with smoke coming out, not unlike the images on TV of the tumbling twin towers of the World Trade Center on Sept. 11 last year. Lucia now wonders whether she had felt the crash coming in her subconscious.

Lucia Hartini's works have been marked by her ability to transform terror into marvels of yearning or awesome visions, epitomized by a spiraling vortex and meticulously painted waves or skies built up with layers of small and carefully modulated brush strokes.

Her painstaking attention to the details of painting further suggests an almost obsessive preoccupation with personal reality, at the same time articulating spiritual forces that place her in direct contact with the powers of the sea.

I like to dwell by the sea where I sense its deep mysteries, discloses Lucia. This is particularly true for the esoteric world within the South Sea, to which she says she communicates in a spiritual manner.

Roh Perahu Nuh (The Soul of Noah's Ark), depicting the remains of the ark amid the blue waters and gray-colored corals with one lone eagle standing out in the desolation of an ancient landscape, has a profound spiritual quality, while a similar atmosphere surrounds *Sumur Sulaiman* (Solomon's Well), and the eight eagles that fill the surreal landscape in *Delapan Elang Perkasa* (the Magnificent Eagles).

Lucia Hartini's third solo exhibition also brings a new feature, which she is obviously still exploring. Adding realistic figures from Javanese tradition, such as in the painting *Karno Tandling* and *Begawan Ciptohening Mintorogo*, and even the woman figure to represent the usual male figure of Semar in *Eyang Ismoyo*, seem to have reduced the strength and the marvel that used to mark her earlier works.

Spirit of Life painting exhibition by Lucia Hartini runs until Feb. 10 at Bentara Budaya Jakarta, Jl. Palmerah Selatan 15, Central Jakarta.