

Painter peers behind gendered masks

Susi Andrini
Contributor/Sanur

People often live with a pack of lies to hide something from others, and for rising artist Dyan Anggraini the country's men and women are all wearing masks.

"It is like dark, ugly, two-faced faces covered by beautiful masks," said Dyan, a rising female artist from Yogyakarta, who is also chairwoman of the Yogyakarta Culture and Arts Center.

Dyan is currently holding a painting exhibition titled *Beyond the Mask* at Griya Santrian Gallery in Sanur, Bali, until April 28.

"We are living in a world that is filled with hypocrisy and dishonesty," she said.

It is interesting to note that most of Dyan's painting subjects are males wearing masks.

"We have to admit that despite the rapid modernization process and changes of gender perspectives, we still

see male-dominated power at almost every level of society," she said.

In real life, the artist encounters many people from diverse social and educational backgrounds. "Yet, we can draw a similar line saying that our strong and rooted patriarchal society remains unaffected."

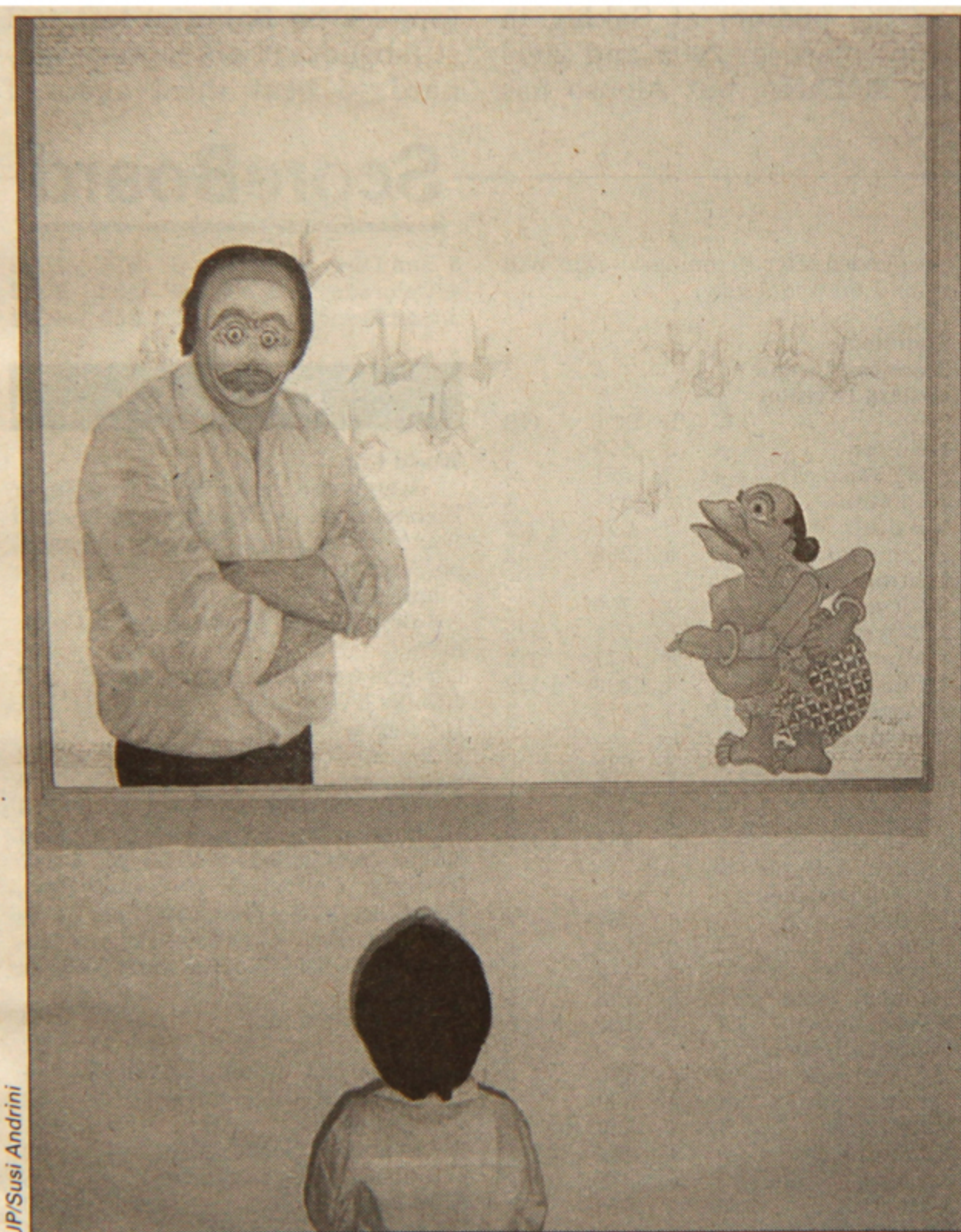
"A painting is a clear and vivid portrayal of what is happening in our daily lives," she said. Through her *Quartet and Priyayi 1, 2, 3, 4*, Dyan tries to portray the lives of aristocrat men trapped in feudalistic characters.

"I am a civil servant and I meet so many people, men in particular, who are still very proud of retaining and exposing their 'blue blood' by acting like princes and kings within their work organizations."

Dyan also portrays women, as in *Sketsa 1*, depicting two women in masks. *Perihal Perempuan* (About Women) portrays a humble woman in a mask wearing a *kebaya*, or blouse. At her feet are cheerful flowers. In *Kasih Ibu*, (Mother's



Kasih Ibu (2005), acrylic and pencil on canvas, 145 cm x 195 cm



JP/Susi Andirini

Dialog (2007), acrylic and pencil on canvas, 115 cm x 145 cm

Affection), Dyan illustrates a pregnant woman holding her toddler, surrounded by flowers with *wayang* puppets behind.

These paintings show women are still trapped in their traditional roles as mothers and wives, with their unconditional love and services.

Chairs, flowers and *wayang* figures dominate much of Dyan's work. Chairs, she said, symbolize power, while flowers represent beauty and hope. Dyan uses puppet figures to portray wisdom.

"In the past, pre-Islamic period, our country adopted Hindu beliefs in which *wayang* performances played a significant role in building the character of people."

For those who understand and read the Ramayana and Mahabharata epics, the stories provide both good and bad characters as role models. People see good deeds in the character of Rama in the Ramayana epic. Khrisna, Yudhistira, Arjuna, Bima and the twins Nakula and Sadewa are examples of honest, brave and

good people, while King Destarata symbolizes a weak, ambitious and hesitant leader.

Dyan tries to synergize the old epics with the contemporary world, touching on contentious social issues like corruption.

In *Dialog 2007*, Dyan depicts a *wayang* character, Semar, a symbol of wise father, and a young man carrying a number of chairs.

To explain her ideas, Dyan often writes lines of text on her canvases. "Text becomes one of the most important elements in my works. It serves as significant and meaningful notes about certain issues," Dyan explained.

Through her contemplative works of art, Dyan will certainly enrich the local art scene and add to the number of female artists on the Indonesian art stage.

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