

Yani Mariani and Awan Simatupang:

Trendsetters in the art of modern sculpture

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The art of sculpture as we used to know it, from the classical eras, may continue to find a place in our times, yet a growing tendency to change is evident among the younger generation of sculptors.

This is particularly highlighted in an extraordinary exhibition currently on show at Edwin's Gallery here. Despite their age difference, Yani Mariani Sastranegara, 49, and Awan Simatupang, 37, share the same views when it comes to exploring wider spaces and new ways of perceiving their sculptural inventions.

Yani Mariani, who had long pondered the issue of gravity in her own sculptures, took a big step in 2002 using the ceiling as the "base" instead of the ground. The limit of growth, or *Endless* as her series of stirring installations are titled, is an issue she is still grappling with, although she has come to understand that growth, or life for that matter, naturally must end before new life sprouts up.

This is a lesson from nature, wherein she used to roam in her younger days and where she discovered

the reality about growth and decay as natural phenomena occurring without much ado, and followed by fresh new sprouts as an equally logical sequence.

Her singular sculptures, which used to make her feel uncomfortable because of the gravity issue, have now found a new dynamism. No longer are they just images on a statue, where growing upward is hampered. Rather, they seem to fly and swing in space, albeit now supported by a piece of natural stone.

Using pewter, natural and electroplated, in combination with stones she has found, gives her sculptures that wonderful fluidity between traditional and contemporary, exacerbated by the lines forming the figure in pewter

that follow the texture of the dark stone. What is more, these feminine figures take the appearance of elves, who cast their magical powers over the environment in which they inhabit.

As Yani Mariani proceeds on her path of excellence, it seems her creativity is becoming more telling, as is her sensitivity to natural forces. The sculpture *Torn Between Two Lovers*, for instance, shows how the energy of two different rocks springs up and meets in daz-

zling unity in pewter.

Awan Simatupang whose elegant sculptures used to excite fans of such genre, in this exhibition comes out with pieces that feature simple, straight lines. No longer are his figures elegant fashion model types, rather they are tragic and so skinny that they appear to be anorexic, slumping on the massive edifices made of bronze or stainless steel.

These sad waif-like figures are meant to mirror a society where the average person ends up being the victims of politicians and their bickering. In them, Simatupang displays the fall of the house of refuge and love in human life. Yet, with all his might he endeavors to keep it steady, even if they are on the verge of breaking down, as we see in *Whatever*, 2004, (82cm by 22cm by 30cm), a house in bronze that seems to be swept by such extreme winds that its front has become transformed into bare dry branches. It is symbolic of the artist's concern with a depleting urban environment, where trees are pillaged to make way for all the shopping malls.

Some of the sculptures seem to refer to the many cases of violence, in which justice was never done.

That personal dramas are part of life is evident in *Do* where a figure tries in vain to hold up a collapsing house.

The bulging tummy of a woman in life-size bronze (50cm by 44cm by 15cm), however, indicates the coming birth of new life, denoting some optimistic outlook for the future. *Ada Untukmu I* and *II*, bronze, leaves the subtle mark of the hand on the tummy signaling a light in the otherwise dark tunnel of apprehension.

A collaborative installation shows Awan's magnified bird nests made of leaves hanging from the ceiling while a projector sheds light on clouds cruising past Yani Mariani's stones suggestively in the sky, but in fact laid on the floor.

For Awan, whose creations are usually floor-based, the view from "above" is quite a sensation, while for Yani Mariani, the clouds have always had a place in her dreamscapes.

Two Sides, a sculpture exhibition by Awan P. Simatupang and Yani Mariani Sastranegara, Edwin's Gallery, Jl. Kemang Raya 21, South Jakarta, until Dec. 12, 2004



Edwin's Gallery

Torn Between Two Lovers, by Yani Mariani, shows, in sculptural form, the energy of two different rocks springing up and meeting in dazzling unity in pewter. The work is part of an exhibition titled *Two Sides* that runs through Dec. 12 at Edwin's Gallery, Kemang, South Jakarta.