

The Jakarta Post

THE ARTS

Friday, May 27, 2005 **20**



Babak Baru (New run)

Dyan Anggraini on speaking from behind the mask

Carla Bianpoen
Contributor/Jakarta

Throughout history, masks have served humankind not only as artistic instruments and educational tools but also to hide expressions of power, fear, hate, malice, fragility, love or compassion.

While some artists have been inspired to search for the truth behind the mask, it seems that Dyan Anggraini, in her solo exhibition now running at the CSIS building, wishes to critique human behavior in today's society.

Unlike most artists, Dyan is a civil servant — now heading Taman Budaya in Yogya. Her observations on the bureaucracy therefore comes from within the circle where she works.

In a series called *Priyayi* she features bare male upper torsos with a tie as the only piece of clothing, thereby laying bare the real characters behind the masks that give them an important appearance.

Her critique on the political discourse in the country may be masked, but is quite poignant. *Menunggu para badut* (Waiting for the Clowns), depicting masks laid on empty chairs, speaks to anyone who has followed political machinations.

And what can be said about



Kursi Manis Cikeas (The appealing chairs of Cikeas).

Kursi Manis Cikeas (The appealing chairs of Cikeas), featuring masked male figures in poses that would otherwise be associated with the female?

Or *Sang Kurator* (The Curator), a painting featuring a strong man against a blurred background of Javanese symbols and some text?

Her political comments continue in paintings like *Masih Ada Pemain* (There are still players), where a masked strongman is featured with hands tied to what looks like toy soldiers, and in *Babak Baru* (A New Chapter), which features a line-up of masked men whose mouths are tied by a cloth, and empty chairs hanging behind them. In *Sang Nakhoda* (The Captain), a long-nosed toy clown sits, confused, amid a heap of ships made of paper.

Ships, or *perahu*, for Dyan are a metaphor for the unstable, the vulnerable. In this sense, her paintings in the series titled *Perahu Kertas* (Paper Boats) signify her various concerns with uncertainty. *Perahu Kertas II*, for instance, depicts a woman with a child expectantly sitting by the beach with a few toy boats made of paper, and may denote her concern with the lot of refugees.

Another painting in the series depicts two lone figures of children against a white-washed empty canvas, evoking a sense of compassion. Paper ships also appear in her painting titled *Bersatu* (United), featuring a woman with a basket full of paper ships marked by flags in the national colors, and one paper ship falling astray.

The woman is in a posture inviting the ship to return. Aceh is also featured in the

painting titled *Somania*, the story of a child who survived the tsunami, and, searching for her parents, found only her doll at her devastated house.

The fallacy of prominence is depicted in two paintings featuring a masked man, one with bulging eyes, a bare upper torso and a malicious grin, standing in front of a painting on the wall depicting a man covering his face with a piece of paper; the other featuring a masked man, neatly sitting with questioning eyes.

Within the context of such politically charged paintings that feature men with frightening masks, the masked women in *Suara Nurani*, dressed in green and holding their hands behind their ears, seem to hail women as the bearers of conscience.

But women in Dyan's paintings are still haunted by the power of men. This is evident in the painting *The Woman* in which a woman with her child against a background of elements from Arjuna is celebrated, in cross-gender, by a mask being placed next to a woman in fine clothing.

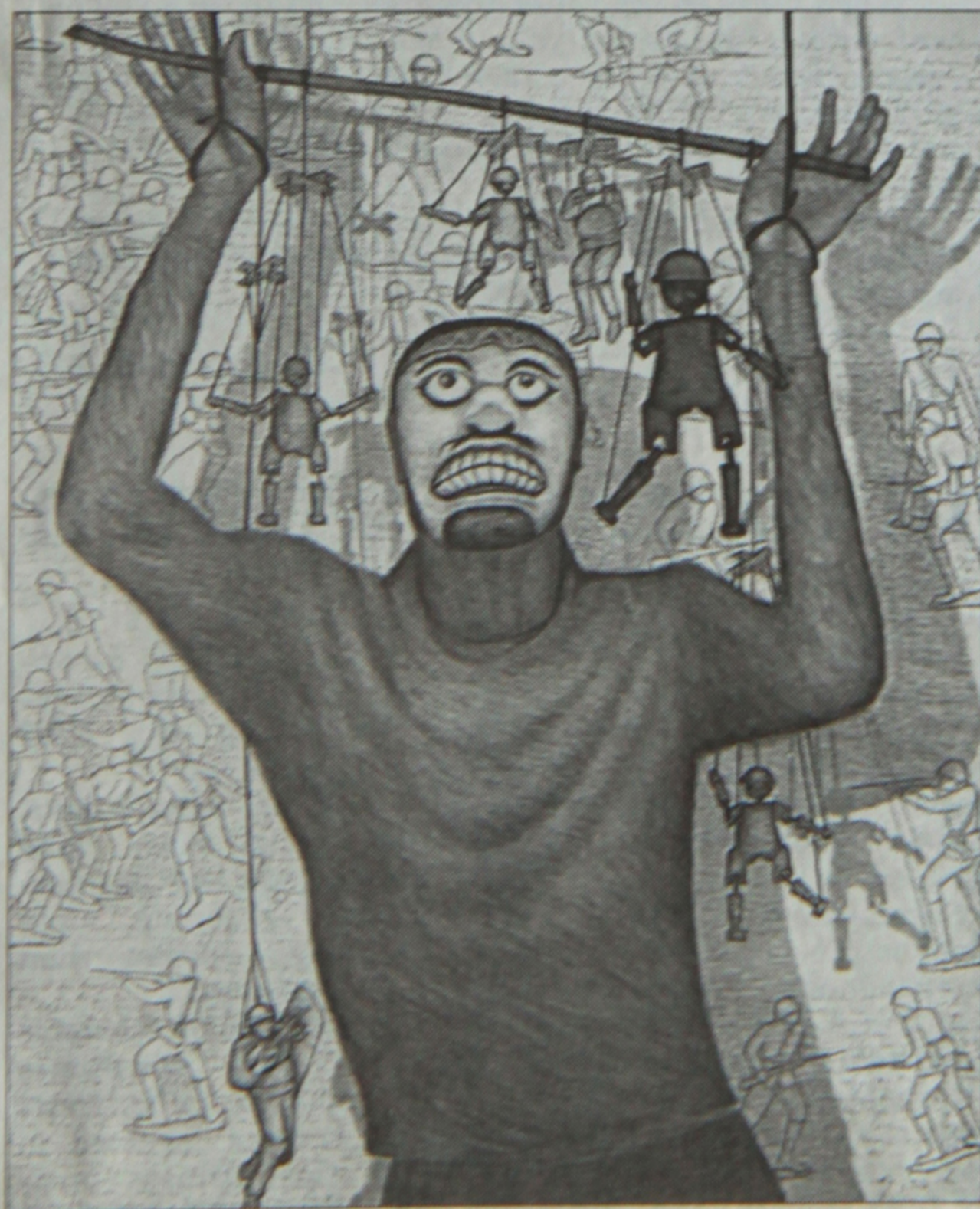
In *Gendhing Asmaradana* Ki Hajar Dewantara says, "Nothing has really changed in the teachings for girls or women; basically their chastity must be protected", and he warns, "Beware you maidens who dream of women's independence; don't ever forget moral ethics".

Dyan Anggraini Hutomo, born in Kediri, East Java in 1957, comes from a family of Tamansiswa educators. A graduate from the Indonesian Fine Arts Academy in Yogyakarta, she now heads the Yogyakarta Taman Budaya, a government institution tasked to help develop the arts and culture in their region.

Nevertheless, she remains active in pursuing her artistic goals, participating in joint and solo exhibitions in Surabaya and Yogyakarta. She was a finalist in contests for the Philip Morris and Indofood Awards.

This is her first solo exhibition in Jakarta.

In(visible)Mask
Solo exhibition by Dyan Anggraini
CSIS building, Jl. Tanah Abang III/23-27
until May 28
Tel. 8378 3818/19, Kupu-kupu Art Projects Management.



Masih Ada Pemain (There are still players).