

When Putu was enrolled at the ISI in 1991, there were already scores of Balinese students studying at the ISI and the number increased every year. In the seventies, a number of Balinese artists started to come to Yogyakarta to study. At the time, their presence had not been conspicuous. Since the eighties, however, they started to become noticeable because they came in increasing number. Besides, they often presented “Balinese tendency,” which was notable due to the similarities in their works.

In the mid-nineties, the similarity took the form of expressive paintings. Made Sumadiyasa—a Balinese student who was already well-known when still a student and also a close friend of Putu Sutawijaya’s—confirmed the tendency. He presented expressive and abstract paintings and maintained that the basis of his expressions had been a form of energy.

At around the same time, the tendency of expressive painting also emerged in Bali. One could not ascertain whether the tendency revealed among the Balinese students in Yogyakarta had affected the development of painting in Bali, or whether there had been other causes. It was positive, however, that the two had been interlinked. In Bali, the expressive tendency was seen as signs of a renewal in Balinese painting, which had not shown any signs of real turmoil. A number of artists and thinkers in Bali even viewed it as the sign of the emergence of Balinese contemporary art. The view affirmed the relationship between the development of art in Bali with the development of works among the Balinese students in Yogyakarta amid the strong current of the contemporary art. Implicitly, therefore, the artists and thinkers in Bali stated that the tendency of expressive painting among the Balinese

students in Yogyakarta had been a part of the contemporary art.

Putu admits that in the mid-nineties, his paintings were indeed expressive. But he feels that at the time he was yet to take his painting seriously and he was therefore not quite aware of it. “At the time I hadn’t really thought whether I wanted to become a painter,” he says. “My thoughts were still wandering around.” It did not mean, however, that he spent his time outside of the art world, because that was where he hung around anyway.

At the time, he was not exactly interested in the expressive tendency. The more significant symptoms found in his paintings at the time were his interest in the issue of the body. With expressive lines and brush strokes, Putu presented bodies of couples making love, although not always explicitly so because he tended to present blown up details of the scenes and took some sort of cropping techniques so that the resulting images were those of lumps of flesh squeezed together.

Understandably, his paintings created quite a stir within the ISI campus. But he could defend his paintings and his arguments were acceptable. He reasoned that it was not unusual to find scenes of couples making love in traditional Balinese paintings. The eminent traditional Balinese painter, I Gusti Nyoman Lempad, once also created a series of erotic pictures that were more explicit than those painted by Putu. Another traditional painter, I Dewa Putu Mokoh, even adopted the issue of sexuality as the fixed theme for his works.

Putu naturally followed the development of the contemporary art that became such a hot issue and tendency among the young artists as they explored the new media. As a student, he

Ketika Putu Sutawijaya masuk ISI pada 1991 jumlah pelukis Bali yang belajar di ISI sudah mencapai puluhan karena meningkat jumlahnya dari tahun ke tahun. Kesadaran di kalangan seniman Bali untuk belajar di Yogyakarta muncul pada 1970-an. Ketika itu kehadiran mahasiswa Bali di ISI tidak menarik perhatian. Namun sejak dekade 1980-an kehadiran kelompok mahasiswa Bali mulai dirasakan karena jumlah mereka semakin banyak. Selain itu mereka sering memunculkan “kecenderungan Bali” yang terbaca karena berbagai kesamaan pada karya-karya mereka.

Pada pertengahan dekade 1990-an kesamaan itu adalah kecenderungan melukis secara ekspresif. Made Sumadiyasa—salah seorang dari mereka yang sudah terkenal ketika masih mahasiswa dan kawan dekat Putu—menegaskan kecenderungan ini. Ia memunculkan lukisan-lukisan yang ekspresif dan abstrak serta menyebut energi sebagai dasar ekspresinya.

Pada saat yang kurang lebih sama, kecenderungan melukis ekspresif itu muncul di Bali. Tidak bisa dipastikan apakah kecenderungan mahasiswa Bali di Yogyakarta itu yang memengaruhi perkembangan seni lukis di Bali ini atau ada sebab-sebab lain. Namun bisa dipastikan keduanya punya kaitan. Di Bali kecenderungan ini dilihat sebagai tanda-tanda pembaruan seni lukis di Bali yang sebelumnya tidak memperlihatkan pergolakan yang nyata. Sejumlah seniman dan pemikir seni di Bali malah melihatnya sebagai tanda kemunculan seni kontemporer Bali. Pandangan ini menegaskan kaitan perkembangan seni di Bali ini dengan perkembangan karya-karya mahasiswa Bali di Yogyakarta di tengah arus besar seni kontemporer. Secara implisit seniman dan pemikir di Bali menyatakan, kecenderungan melukis ekspresif di kalangan

mahasiswa Bali di Yogyakarta adalah bagian dari seni kontemporer.

Putu mengakui pada pertengahan 1990-an, lukisan-lukisannya memang ekspresif. Namun ketika itu ia merasa belum bersungguh-sungguh berkarya sehingga tidak terlalu menyadarinya. “Waktu itu saya belum memikirkan apa akan menjadi seniman atau tidak,” katanya. “Pikiran saya masih ke mana-mana.” Akan tetapi tidak berarti kegiatannya terlepas dari dunia seni karena pergaulannya memang di dunia ini.

Waktu itu bukan kecenderungan ekspresif yang menjadi pemikiran Putu. Gejala yang lebih signifikan pada lukisan-lukisannya adalah ketertarikan pada persoalan tubuh. Dengan garis dan blabar (*brush strokes*) yang ekspresif, Putu menampilkan tubuh-tubuh bersanggama. Gambaran ini tidak selalu eksplisit karena ia cenderung menampilkan *blow up* detail adegan ini dan melakukan semacam *cropping* seperti pada fotografi sehingga gambaran yang tampil semacam gumpalan-gumpalan daging yang berimpitan.

Lukisan-lukisannya memunculkan kontroversi di lingkungan dalam ISI. Ini telah dapat diduga. Namun Putu bisa mempertahankan lukisan-lukisannya dan argumentasi yang dikemukakannya bisa diterima. Ia memberikan alasan pada seni lukis tradisional Bali bukan hal luar biasa menampilkan orang bersanggama. Pelukis tradisional Bali paling terkemuka, I Gusti Nyoman Lempad, tercatat membuat serial gambar-gambar erotik yang lebih eksplisit daripada lukisan Putu. Pelukis tradisional lainnya, I Dewa Putu Mokoh, malah mengangkat seksualitas sebagai tema tetap pada karya-karyanya.

Sudah tentu Putu mengikuti perkembangan seni kontemporer yang waktu itu menjadi isu

was involved in many experiments, although not whole-heartedly so. He reminisced, "At the time, so many artists were experimenting. We had such bizarre spectacles almost every day at the school or outside." Putu saw it as the effect of the Creative Experiment study at the institute. "I began merely because I was doing my homework, but then I went on experimenting. It was quite fun because the study allowed us to be free, we could do anything, be as crazy as we wanted," he said.

At the time, ISI was lead by the painter But Muchtar, who since the seventies had sensed the significant change in the development of the world art. The study unit called 'Creative Experiment' had been one of his efforts to trigger the emergence of this change. The contemporary art circle at the time was not a large one, only limited to the circle of young artists and within the campus, and escaped public attention. In the nineties, however, one could not deny the fact that the contemporary art was making a huge creative leap in Indonesia.

The development began with the opportunity for Indonesian artists to enter the circle of regional exhibitions (which reflected the development of a region) since the nineties. A number of regional exhibitions that had initially opened their doors were the exhibitions of "New Art from Southeast Asia" in Tokyo in 1992 held by the Japan Foundation, as well as the "Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art" in Brisbane Australia, held by the Queensland Art Gallery for the first time in 1993.

In the early nineties the world contemporary art was indeed expanding—challenging the centralistic feature of the world art. Since the eighties, a number of regional exhibitions

were held presenting a global context outside Europe and United States. These regional exhibitions looked into the issue of marginalization within the development of modern art in the twentieth century; i.e. the sidelining of art developments outside Europe and United States. Therefore, these regional exhibitions showed the spirit to present art development from the periphery, including from Indonesia. Such a spirit was reflected in the curatorial introduction for the exhibition of "Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art," written by Caroline Turner, the curator of the Queensland Art Gallery:

While there is no theme for this exhibition there is a thesis; that is that Euro-American perspectives are no longer valid as formula for evaluating the art of this region. The confidence, relevance and vitality of the art will be a revelation to many curators in the West. The opportunities for intraregional interchange generated by forums such as the Triennial will, it is to be hoped, provide new ways of looking at art on the basis of equality without a 'centre' or 'centres', as well as an approach to cultural interchange open to the future in which we can recognise what we have in common and yet respect what is different.²

The Indonesian young artists welcomed this development because previously—for almost half a century—the Indonesian artists had been very rarely involved in the global exhibitions with the scope of a biennale (this was due to the marginalization). The art world in Indonesia seemed detached from the dynamics of the world art. In contrast, during the nineties, Indonesian artists were busy answering requests and invitations to regional and even global exhibitions—between three

ramai dan kecenderungan di kalangan seniman muda menjelajahi media-media baru. Sebagai mahasiswa ia terlibat pada berbagai percobaan tapi tidak dengan sikap sungguh-sungguh. Katanya, "Wah, waktu itu banyak sekali seniman melakukan percobaan, hampir setiap hari, lah, ada tontonan aneh di sekolah atau di luar sekolah." Putu melihat gejala ini sebagai dampak mata kuliah Eksperimen Kreatif di ISI. "Mula-mula saya ikut karena bikin tugas sekolah, tapi lalu keterusan ikut bikin eksperimen. Senang juga karena mata kuliah ini memberi kebebasan, mau gila-gilaan seperti apa juga boleh," katanya.

ISI waktu itu dipimpin pelukis But Muchtar yang sudah sejak 1970-an menyadari akan munculnya perubahan besar dalam perkembangan seni dunia. Mata kuliah Eksperimen Kreatif adalah upayanya memancing tanda-tanda perubahan ini. Lingkaran seni kontemporer waktu itu tidak besar karena terbatas di lingkaran seniman muda dan kampus, dan karena itu tidak sampai menyerap perhatian umum. Namun pada dekade 1990 tidak bisa disangkal perkembangan seni kontemporer sedang membuat loncatan besar di Indonesia.

Perkembangan itu berawal pada munculnya kesempatan seniman Indonesia memasuki pameran-pameran regional (mencerminkan perkembangan suatu kawasan di dunia) sejak awal 1990. Beberapa pameran regional yang paling awal membuka kesempatan ini adalah pameran "New Art from Southeast Asia" di Tokyo pada 1992, diselenggarakan Japan Foundation, dan "Asia-Pacific Triennale of Contemporary Art" di Brisbane Australia, diselenggarakan Queensland Art Gallery (Galeri Nasional Queensland) untuk pertama kali pada 1993.

Pada awal 1990-an itu memang sedang terjadi peluasan seni kontemporer dunia—menentang sentralisasi seni dunia. Maka sejak 1980-an bermunculan pameran-pameran regional dengan konteks global di luar Eropa dan Amerika Serikat. Pameran-pameran regional ini mempersoalkan terjadinya marginalisasi pada perkembangan seni modern abad ke-20 yaitu pengabaian perkembangan seni di luar Eropa dan Amerika Utara. Karena itu, pameran-pameran regional di luar Eropa dan Amerika Utara ini memperlihatkan semangat mengangkat perkembangan-perkembangan seni di kawasan periferi dunia, termasuk Indonesia. Semangat ini tecermin pada pengantar kuratorial "Asia-Pacific Triennale of Contemporary Art" yang ditulis Caroline Turner, kurator Queensland Art. Gallery,

Pameran ini tak memiliki tema melainkan suatu tesis; bahwa perspektif yang berpusat pada Eropa dan Amerika tak lagi sah sebagai rumus untuk menilai seni di wilayah ini. Kepercayaan diri, relevansi, serta vitalitas seni di wilayah ini akan merupakan hal baru bagi banyak kurator di Barat. Kesempatan bagi pertukaran intraregional yang diciptakan oleh forum-forum serupa Triennale ini diharapkan dapat menyediakan cara-cara baru untuk melihat seni atas dasar kesetaraan tanpa suatu pusat atau pusat-pusat, sekaligus menyediakan suatu pendekatan pertukaran kebudayaan yang terbuka bagi masa depan saat kita dapat mengenali apa yang sama di antara kita seraya tetap menghargai apa yang berbeda.²

Perkembangan 1990 itu yang dirayakan seniman-seniman muda Indonesia sebab pada

² "From Extraregionalism to Intraregionalism?" Caroline Turner. Curatorial introduction. *The First Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art*. Queensland Art Gallery. Brisbane, Australia, 1993.

² "From Extraregionalism to Intraregionalism?" Caroline Turner. Pengantar kuratorial. *The First Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art*. Queensland Art Gallery. Brisbane Australia, 1993.

to four exhibitions in a year. The dream to join the renowned biennales such as the Sao Paolo Biennale and Sydney Biennale was realized in the nineties. One could therefore imagine the zest within the circle of the young artists, especially in Yogyakarta because almost all the artists who managed to join the world art circle in the nineties were the young artists from Yogyakarta.

The risk taken by the expressive painters in the nineties was obvious. They were sidelined by the contemporary art community in Yogyakarta and did not enjoy the opportunity to join the regional or global exhibitions. Later, Entang Wiharso successfully tried to forge his way into the art world outside Indonesia. He even built a distinct community.

However, the leap in the development of the contemporary art in Indonesia did not mean that the contemporary art had been accepted and understood in Indonesia. Generally, at the time the Indonesian artists only recognized the term of 'contemporary art' because they "heard about the issue" when they were following the regional exhibitions, and especially from following the discussions held to identify the world contemporary art.

The artists merely recognized the signs of contemporary art works. There had never been any discussions that thoroughly looked into the contemporary art, for example addressing the issue of marginalization which Caroline Turner spoke about. There had been no awareness to link the issue with the presence of the contemporary art in Indonesia—while this was actually a fundamental issue. Therefore, one could not find any clear criticism in the controversy when the contemporary art circle pigeonholed the works by the expressive painters in the nineties as non-contemporary art works.

The knowledge among the public was naturally even weaker. The contemporary art was not

understood at all. Like in anywhere else, the defining feature of the contemporary art works that immediately attracted people's attention in Indonesia had been the signs of rebellion and the banal idioms.

In 1993/1994, the term of 'contemporary art' was introduced formally to the public. The event was the Biennale Jakarta IX 1993, which took the theme of the 'contemporary art'.³ Half of the artists joining the biennale were those who have exhibited their works in regional as well as global art exhibitions.

The Biennale received quite a bashing from almost all parties in the Indonesian art world—artists, critics, and art observers. The mass media added further injury by publishing articles attacking the biennale, from a period of three months between December 1993 and February 1994. The basis of the criticism was clear: a rejection of the contemporary art.⁴

The rejection clearly reflected the limited understanding among the public. Coincidentally, Biennale Jakarta IX was held around the time when there was a polemic on postmodernism.⁵ The impact, however, did not find shape in the effort to relate postmodernism with the contemporary art—which was actually the basis of contemporary art. The opinions that were often uttered in discussions or articles in the mass media were exactly the opposite: denying the relationship between postmodernism and the contemporary art. Eventually, both the proponents and of postmodernism and its opponents attacked the biennale with the contemporary art tag.

There was also virtually no awareness—even among artists, critics, and art observers

perkembangan sebelumnya—selama hampir setengah abad—kesertaaan seniman-seniman Indonesia pada pameran-pameran global berskala biennale nyaris tidak ada (akibat marginalisasi). Dunia seni di Indonesia seperti terputus dari pergaulan seni dunia. Kontras dengan keadaan ini, pada dekade 1990-an seniman Indonesia sangat sibuk melayani permintaan pameran regional bahkan sampai yang berskala global—antara tiga sampai empat pameran dalam satu tahun. Cita-cita mengikuti biennale terkenal seperti Sao Paolo Biennale dan Sydney Biennale tercapai pada dekade 1990-an ini. Maka bisa dibayangkan semangat yang bangkit di kalangan seniman-seniman muda; khususnya di Yogyakarta, karena hampir semua seniman yang bisa masuk ke lingkaran dunia pada dekade 1990-an adalah seniman muda Yogyakarta.

Risiko para pelukis ekspresif yang muncul pada pertengahan dekade '90-an bisa dibaca jelas. Mereka tersingkir dari komunitas seni kontemporer yang terbentuk di Yogyakarta dan tidak mendapat kesempatan mengikuti pameran-pameran regional atau global. Entang Wiharso belakangan mencoba sendiri mencari hubungan dengan dunia seni di luar Indonesia. Ia bahkan membangun komunitas sendiri dan berhasil.

Loncatan besar pada perkembangan seni kontemporer itu sama sekali tidak berarti seni kontemporer diterima di Indonesia dan lebih jauh dipahami. Perkembangan seni kontemporer waktu itu baru pada tingkat mengenal istilah 'seni kontemporer' karena "dengar-dengar" ketika mengikuti pameran-pameran regional, khususnya mengikuti diskusi yang selalu diselenggarakan untuk mengidentifikasi seni kontemporer dunia.

Pemahaman di kalangan seniman terbatas pada mengenali tanda-tandanya pada karya-

karya kontemporer. Tidak pernah terjadi diskusi yang secara mendasar mempersoalkan seni kontemporer, misalnya mempersoalkan marginalisasi seperti yang dikemukakan Caroline Turner. Tidak ada sama sekali kesadaran menghubungkan persoalan ini dengan kehadiran seni kontemporer di Indonesia—padahal ini hal mendasar. Karena itu, tidak ada kritik yang jelas ketika lingkaran seni kontemporer mengategorikan karya para pelukis ekspresif '90-an sebagai bukan karya-karya kontemporer.

Pengetahuan di kalangan publik tentunya lebih parah daripada itu. Seni kontemporer sama sekali tidak dipahami. Seperti terjadi di mana pun, ciri seni kontemporer yang segera menarik perhatian publik di Indonesia adalah tanda-tandanya yang mencerminkan pemberontakan dan ungkapan-ungkapannya yang banal.

Pada 1993/1994 istilah 'seni kontemporer' itu untuk pertama kalinya tampil secara terbuka dan berhadapan dengan publik. Ini terjadi pada Biennale Jakarta IX 1993 yang mengangkat tema 'seni kontemporer'.³ Separuh dari peserta biennale ini adalah seniman-seniman yang sudah mengikuti pameran-pameran seni kontemporer regional maupun global.

Pameran itu ternyata dicerca hampir semua kalangan di dunia seni—seniman, kritikus, dan pengulas seni. Media massa mengukuhkan cercean ini dengan menurunkan tulisan-tulisan yang menyerang biennale ini selama tiga bulan antara Desember 1993 sampai Februari 1994. Dasar kritik yang disampaikan dengan menyerang ini terbaca cukup jelas: menolak seni kontemporer.⁴

Terbatasnya pemahaman tecermin jelas pada penolakan itu. Kebetulan, penyelenggaraan

3 Biennale Jakarta is the first art biennale in Indonesia and therefore serves as the most prominent national biennale. It has been a regular event of the Jakarta Art Board at the Jakarta Art Center, Taman Ismail Marzuki, since 1972.

4 One trace the criticism in the archives of all print media published in Jakarta between December 1993 and March 1994.

5 Articles on *Kompas* daily, July – December 1993.

3 Biennale Jakarta adalah tradisi beinnale pertama di Indonesia dan karena itu menjadi biennale nasional paling terkemuka. Diselenggarakan secara tetap oleh Dewan Kesenian Jakarta di Pusat kesenian Jakarta, Taman Ismail Marzuki sejak 1972.

4 Bisa dikaji di arsip semua media cetak yang terbit di Jakarta. Desember 1993- Maret 1994

and reviewers in the mass media—that the contemporary art presented in Biennale Jakarta IX was not a new development at all. Its early signs had emerged in Indonesia in the beginning of the seventies and also gave rise to controversies and debated intensely in the mass media.

It was the New Art Movement (Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru) who first brought the initial signs of the contemporary art with its exhibitions between 1975 and 1979. The exhibitions were the manifestations of the seething developments that had emerged since the beginning of the seventies—which came about in parallel with the emergence of the initial signs of the contemporary art in Germany, Italy, and United States, even before the term ‘contemporary art’ had been recognized.

The exhibitions of the New Art Movement presented works that raised cultural issues and could be taken as similar to the issues found in the works by Andy Warhol, the American artist who brought the initial signs of the contemporary art in the late sixties. The exhibitions also presented banal works in the form of installation and new media art (at the time, the term of ‘installation art’ was yet to be known), similar to works by Joseph Beuys, the German artist who also initiated the development of contemporary art in the beginning of the seventies.

The similarities between the works of the Movement and those by Warhol and Beuys were due to the view propounded by the New Art Movement, as reflected in its manifesto, which was also parallel to the views advocated by the two vanguard artists—this was thus the phenomenon of juxtaposition. Viewed using today’s analyses, the Movement’s statement

constituted the fundamental problem of the contemporary art.⁶

The Movement’s manifesto maintained that the term ‘new art movement’ was meant to challenge the definition and characterization of ‘fine arts,’ which was the view taken on art by the Anglo-American tradition. In Indonesia, such delineation had been reflected in the study concentrations given in the art academies (i.e. the concentrations of painting, sculpture, and prints). The manifesto also betrayed an attitude of anti-avant-gardism and anti-universalism, as well as the beliefs in specific understanding of art (which it called ‘the Indonesian art’) and in the diversity of the world art (which it called ‘different aesthetics’).

Naturally, the initial symptoms had not been understood when it first emerged in the seventies. It was also understandable if the symptom was not clearly understood in the late eighties, when the artists of the Movement presented two exhibitions, in the form of art projects, in 1987 and 1989.⁸ But when the signs still remained to be closely analyzed in the nineties when the contemporary art had explicitly taken shape, one could not avoid arriving at the conclusion that the contemporary art was indeed not understood.⁹

The symptom showed how the development of the contemporary art during the nineties was more due to the opportunities for the Indonesian artists to join the regional contemporary art exhibitions. Such a wobbly base prevented the contemporary art from progressing—as reflected in the works. When in the late nineties the regional exhibitions, especially those in Japan and Australia, were held less often, the contemporary art in Indonesia showed signs of stagnation. The level

Biennale Jakarta IX berdekatan dengan terjadinya polemik tentang postmodernisme di media massa.⁵ Namun dampaknya bukan upaya menghubungkan postmodernisme dengan seni kontemporer—inilah dasar seni kontemporer. Pendapat yang tampil dalam diskusi maupun tulisan di media massa tentang Biennale IX malah sebaliknya: menyangkal hubungan postmodernisme dengan seni kontemporer. Pada akhirnya, baik para pengusung postmodernisme maupun penentang postmodernisme sama-sama menyerang biennale berlabel seni kontemporer ini.

Gejala lain ketidakpahaman itu, sama sekali tidak ada kesadaran—bahkan di kalangan seniman, kritikus, dan pengulas seni media massa—bahwa seni kontemporer pada Biennale Jakarta IX bukan perkembangan baru. Tanda-tanda awal seni kontemporer sudah muncul di Indonesia pada 1970-an dan menimbulkan kontroversi serta isu ramai di media massa.

Tanda-tanda awal itu dibawa Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru yang menggelar pameran-pamerannya antara 1975-1979. Pameran-pameran ini merupakan manifestasi berbagai pergolakan yang sudah muncul lebih dulu sejak awal 1970-an— paralel dengan tanda-tanda awal seni kontemporer di Jerman, Italia, dan Amerika ketika istilah seni kontemporer belum dikenal.

Pameran gerakan itu menampilkan karya yang mengangkat persoalan budaya masyarakat dan bisa didekatkan dengan persoalan pada karya-karya Andy Warhol, seniman Amerika yang membawa tanda-tanda awal seni kontemporer pada akhir 1960-an. Pameran-pameran ini menampilkan pula karya-karya banal dalam bentuk instalasi dan media baru (waktu itu

istilah instalasi belum dikenal) yang dekat dengan karya-karya Joseph Beuys, seniman Jerman yang juga mengawali perkembangan seni kontemporer pada awal 1970-an.

Kesamaan karya-karya gerakan itu dengan karya-karya Warhol dan Beuys bersifat paralel karena pemikiran Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru yang tecermin pada pernyataannya (manifesto) memperlihatkan gejala paralel pula—inilah suatu *juxtaposition*. Dilihat dari kajian sekarang, isi pernyataan gerakan ini merupakan persoalan mendasar seni kontemporer.⁶

Pada manifesto gerakan tercantum bahwa istilah ‘seni rupa baru’ dimaksudkan untuk menentang batasan ‘*fine arts*’, pengertian seni rupa dalam tradisi Anglo-Amerika. Di Indonesia, ini tecermin pada pembagian jurusan di akademi seni rupa (seni lukis, seni patung, dan seni grafis). Dalam manifesto gerakan tertulis pula sikap anti-avant-gardisme, anti-universalisme, kepercayaan pada pemahaman seni yang spesifik (yang disebut ‘seni Indonesia’), dan kepercayaan pada keragaman seni dunia (yang disebut ‘estetika yang berbeda’).⁷

Gejala awal seni kontemporer itu tentu saja tidak disadari ketika muncul pada dekade 1970-an. Masih bisa dimengerti bila gejala ini belum dipahami juga pada akhir 1980-an, ketika seniman-seniman gerakan itu menggelar dua pameran berbentuk proyek pada 1987 dan 1989.⁸ Namun, ketika tanda-tanda ini belum juga dikaji pada dekade 1990-an saat seni kontemporer sudah muncul eksplisit, tidak ada kesimpulan lain selain bahwa seni kontemporer memang tidak dipahami.⁹

Gejala ini menunjukkan, perkembangan seni kontemporer sepanjang dekade 1990 lebih

6 Admittedly, the disputes had been mostly academic in nature and not necessarily understood by the public. Proponents of the Movements were artists from the art academies—the “Asri” Art Academy and the Department of Art of the Bandung Institute of Technology.

7 *Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru*. Jim Supangkat. [ed.] Gramedia, Jakarta. 1979. p.xix

8 Comprehensively analyzed in the final paper by Asikin Hasan, “Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru Indonesia” presented at the Art and Design Faculty, Bandung Institute of Technology, 1992.

9 It was only in 2000 that the initial symptoms of the contemporary art of the seventies were put under the microscope, and published in the book *Outlet* (a compendium of essays, without editors) by Yayasan Cemeti, Yogyakarta, 2000. However, the outline of the book did not reveal a clear frame of the contemporary art.

5 Artikel-artikel pada Harian *Kompas*, Juli – Desember 1993.

6 Pergolakan ini harus diakui adalah pertentangan pendapat akademis yang tidak dipahami publik. Gerakan ini didukung seniman-seniman dari akademi-akademi seni rupa; Sekolah Tinggi Seni Rupa Indoneusa “Asri”, dan, Departemen Seni rupa, Fakultas Teknik dan Perencanaan, Institut Teknologi Bandung..

7 *Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru*. Jim Supangkat. [ed.] Gramedia, Jakarta. 1979. Hal.xix

8 Dikaji komprehensif dalam skripsi sarjana (S1) *Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru Indonesia*. Asikin Hasan. Fakultas Seni Rupa dan Desain. Institut Teknologi Bandung 1992.

9 Baru pada 2000 gejala awal seni kontemporer di Indonesia pada 1970-an dikaji. Muncul pada penerbitan buku *Outlet*. [Kumpulan karangan tanpa editor.] Yayasan Cemeti. Yogyakarta 2000. Namun penyusunan kerangka buku ini (tidak diketahui pelakunya) tidak memperlihatkan bingkai seni kontemporer yang jelas.

of participation of the Indonesian artists in the global contemporary art exhibitions declined drastically.

In the development of the world contemporary art in the late nineties, the spirit to raise the issue of the development of art in the periphery was declining; it even faded away. The regional exhibitions were also fading out. In such a condition, the politics taken by the curators as they selected the participants for the global exhibitions were far from the spirit of advocacy. They merely considered how far the work actually reflected the problems of the contemporary art, and whether it could be read using contemporary criticism. With their shaky basis of development, it was difficult for the contemporary works by the Indonesian artists to be selected for the exhibitions.

Putu Sutawijaya existed outside the contemporary art circle. Like the preceding expressive painters of the nineties, he was not considered as an artist presenting contemporary art works. Putu graduated from the Indonesian Arts Institute (ISI) in 1998, and when he was about to graduate, he firmly decided to be an artist. "With that decision, I told myself that I was going to stay in the world of art, whatever it took," he reminisced. It turned out that the expressive tendency remained in his paintings. He also continued his interest in the problem of the body, but by moving it further to look into the aspect of bodily movements unrelated to erotic themes.

Like all other artists who remained outside the contemporary art circle, Putu Sutawijaya began his career from one exhibition to the next in the circle of the private art galleries. This was also the path taken by the preceding expressive painters. When he first started—as he joined the circle of artists under the auspices of Edwin Gallery, Jakarta—the artists before him were already renowned, and their works were much talked about within the circle of art collectors.

The circle of private galleries that Putu entered to begin his career was yet another face of the art development in Indonesia in the nineties. Here also was a leap of some sort in the early nineties, as the circle expanded. There were increasingly more exhibitions due to the growth of galleries, especially in Jakarta. Parallel to this growth, the circle of art public also enlarged, in contrast with the situation in the seventies when the art public consisted of merely people from the artists' clique.

The circle of private gallery did not only emerge in the nineties. It started to grow at the end of the eighties along with the painting boom, when the buying of painting became such a craze. The painting boom had been affected by the market development in the United States in the mid-eighties, when a painting could be sold at the auction house for USD50,000,000.00.

The situation had been misunderstood. There was the assumption that all paintings would experience such a price hike; Indonesian paintings included. People thus went on a shopping spree for paintings. Responding to the increasing demands, private galleries mushroomed, side by side with the Singaporean auction houses that netted themselves many buyers from Indonesia. The circle of galleries and their patrons suddenly expanded at the end of the eighties.

As the nineties came, a number of corrective events took place. The painting boom subsided and the painting buyers—some of them would then be known as painting collectors—became more selective and critical as their understanding of art had improved. This later development gradually transformed the kinds of art works that would be put on sale in the galleries, which no longer offered any random paintings.

disebabkan terbukanya kesempatan mengikuti pameran-pameran seni kontemporer regional. Dasar yang tidak kukuh ini membuat seni kontemporer—tecermin pada karya-karyanya—tidak berkembang. Ketika pada akhir 1990-an frekuensi pameran-pameran regional menurun, khususnya di Jepang dan Australia, seni kontemporer di Indonesia menunjukkan gejala stagnasi. Kesertaan seniman Indonesia pada pameran seni kontemporer dunia menurun drastis.

Pada perkembangan seni kontemporer (dunia) akhir dekade 1990-an, semangat mengangkat perkembangan seni di kawasan periferi dunia menyusut, bahkan menghilang. Karena itu pameran-pameran regional pun memperlihatkan gejala *fading out*. Di tengah kondisi semacam ini, politik seleksi para kurator mencari peserta pameran global jauh dari semangat advokasi. Pertimbangan mereka hanya seberapa jauh suatu karya sesungguhnya mencerminkan persoalan seni kontemporer dan bisa dibaca melalui *contemporary criticism*. Dasar yang tidak kukuh membuat karya-karya kontemporer seniman Indonesia sulit menembus kriteria seleksi ini.

Putu Sutawijaya berada di luar lingkaran seni kontemporer itu. Seperti pelukis-pelukis ekspresif '90-an yang mendahuluinya, karya-karyanya dianggap bukan karya kontemporer.

Putu lulus dari ISI pada 1998 dan menjelang lulus ia memutuskan untuk menjadi seniman. "Keputusan ini membuat saya akan tetap di dunia seni, apapun risikonya," katanya mengenang masa itu. Kecenderungan ekspresif ternyata menetap pada lukisan-lukisannya. Ia melanjutkan pula ketertarikannya pada masalah tubuh namun dengan mengembangkannya ke aspek gerak tubuh yang tidak berkaitan dengan tema-tema erotik.

Seperti semua seniman yang berada di luar lingkaran seni kontemporer, Putu Sutawijaya meniti karirnya melalui pameran-pameran di lingkaran galeri swasta. Ini pula yang ditempuh pelukis-pelukis ekspresif yang mendahuluinya. Ketika Putu baru mulai—bergabung ke lingkaran seniman Edwin Gallery, Jakarta—nama-nama para pelukis yang mendahuluinya sudah dikenal. Lukisan-lukisan mereka bahkan menjadi pembicaraan di kalangan kolektor seni.

Lingkaran galeri swasta yang dimasuki Putu untuk meniti karir adalah sisi lain perkembangan seni di Indonesia pada dekade 1990-an. Di sini terjadi pula loncatan pada awal 1990-an. Lingkaran galeri ini menjadi besar. Frekuensi penyelenggaraan pameran meningkat karena pertumbuhan galeri, khususnya di Jakarta. Paralel dengan perkembangan ini lingkaran publik seni membesar, kontras dengan keadaan pada tahun 1970-an saat publik pameran terbatas dari kalangan seniman sendiri.

Lingkaran galeri swasta itu tidak muncul tiba-tiba pada dekade 1990. Lingkaran ini mulai membesar pada akhir 1980 bersama munculnya *boom* lukisan, saat terjadi pembelian lukisan secara membabi-buta. *Boom* lukisan ini dipengaruhi perkembangan pasar di Amerika Serikat pada pertengahan 1980-an, saat harga lukisan di balai lelang mencapai USD50.000.000.

Terjadi salah paham. Muncul sangkaan bahwa semua lukisan akan menunjukkan lonjakan harga, tidak terkecuali lukisan Indonesia. Maka terjadilah pembelian lukisan secara membabi-buta itu. Melayani arus kebutuhan ini, galeri swasta pesat bermunculan, di samping balai-balai lelang di Singapura yang menjaring pembeli Indonesia. Maka lingkaran galeri

In the beginning, the galleries and auction houses presented Indonesian artists' works that were already in circulation on the market, such as works by Hendra Gunawan, Affandi, and a number of foreign artists from the colonial period. Then there were also works by artists who were indeed important artists within the development of art in Indonesia, for example Sudjojono and then also Raden Saleh, an Indonesian painter of the nineteenth century, whose works are difficult to find and obtain.

In the subsequent stage of development, the galleries did not limit themselves to old works by deceased artists. A number of prominent galleries introduced working artists and even young artists in well-organized exhibitions. The exhibitions then became the materials for art criticism in the mass media.

The activities in the nineties revealed the formation of the art infrastructure, in which the coterie of galleries could be viewed as an art institution in the art world, because Indonesia had no public art institutions—i.e. the institution that had no other interests than the appreciation and development of art and culture. Although this was a peculiar condition, the activities in the circle of the private galleries practically took the position as the “art world” in Indonesia. (In the normal art infrastructure, galleries are market-oriented institutions.) Two elements of the art world were combined in this circle; i.e. the institution (the network of galleries that held the exhibitions) and the art world public known as the collectors.¹⁰

But the obvious business pressures on the circle gave rise to a number of controversies in the nineties. Like what had happened in the American art market during the eighties, the nineties saw important works by

Indonesian artists turned into commodities, which drew public protests. There were also price manipulations in which prices of the works by young artists were made to increase significantly, in a practice similar to the practice of cornering in the stock exchanges. As a result, the exhibitions held in the galleries were always viewed in suspicion as the public was wary of the manipulative practices. The works that were presented in these exhibitions were always haunted by the suspicion of being commercial in nature.

The constant controversies made the two other elements of the art world—the artists and the critics (where the meaning formation takes place)—felt some apprehension to take their position in this clique. Because its image was in a constant limbo between being recognized and criticized, the coterie of private galleries and auction houses failed to gain the credit of being an art institution, or at least as an arbitrary forum that could still be related to the development of art.

The circle of gallery was not related to the contemporary art circle, although both grew in parallel in the nineties. Both had their own interests. The coterie of galleries dominated the art activities in Indonesia through the exhibitions; while the contemporary art circle was busy responding to the invitations to participate in exhibitions abroad. The contemporary art works were not present in gallery events because their forum of choice had been the regional exhibitions abroad. From this difference, one could see how the circle of galleries had been completely detached from the global art world, while the circle of contemporary art of the nineties was virtually unrelated to the activities in the domestic art world.

dan lingkaran pembelinya membesar secara mendadak pada akhir 1980-an.

Memasuki dekade 1990-an terjadi sejumlah koreksi. *Boom* lukisan hilang dan pembelian lukisan menjadi lebih selektif karena para pembeli—sejumlah di antaranya kemudian dikenal sebagai kolektor—menjadi lebih kritis karena pemahaman mereka tentang seni meningkat. Perkembangan ini secara bertahap mengubah jenis karya seni yang diperdagangkan di galeri-galeri. Lingkaran galeri tidak lagi menawarkan lukisan yang asal-asalan.

Pada mulanya galeri dan balai-balai lelang menampilkan karya-karya pelukis Indonesia yang sudah beredar di pasar, seperti karya-karya Hendra Gunawan, Affandi, dan sejumlah pelukis asing zaman kolonial. Sesudah itu muncul nama-nama seniman yang memang penting dalam perkembangan seni Indonesia seperti Soedjojono dan kemudian Raden Saleh, pelukis Indonesia abad ke-19 yang karya-karyanya tidak mudah didapat.

Dalam perkembangannya, galeri-galeri tidak hanya menawarkan karya-karya lama yang senimannya sudah meninggal. Sejumlah galeri berpengalaman menampilkan seniman-seniman yang masih berkarya dan bahkan seniman-seniman muda, melalui pameran-pameran yang tertata baik. Pameran-pameran ini kemudian menjadi materi utama penulisan kritik seni di media massa.

Kegiatan-kegiatan pada dekade 1990-an itu memperlihatkan terbentuknya infrastruktur seni di mana lingkaran galeri swasta bisa dilihat sebagai lembaga seni pada kegiatan dunia seni (*artworld*) karena lembaga seni yang bersifat publik—tidak punya kepentingan lain selain apresiasi dan budaya—tidak ada

di Indonesia. Kendati janggal, kegiatan di lingkaran galeri menjadi substitusi “dunia seni” di Indonesia. (Dalam infrastruktur seni yang lazim, galeri merupakan lembaga yang berorientasi pada pasar.) Dua komponen dunia seni terhimpun di lingkaran ini yaitu lembaga (jaringan galeri penyelenggara pameran) dan publik seni (*artworld public*) yang dikenal sebagai kolektor.¹⁰

Akan tetapi tekanan bisnis seni yang terlalu nyata pada lingkaran itu memunculkan berbagai kontroversi sepanjang dekade 1990-an. Terjadi komodifikasi karya-karya penting seperti terjadi di pasar seni Amerika pada pertengahan 1980-an dan memunculkan protes publik. Terjadi pula berulang kali manipulasi peningkatan harga karya seniman-seniman muda seperti praktek *cornering* di bursa saham. Dampaknya, pameran-pameran yang diselenggarakan di lingkaran galeri selalu dibayangi kecurigaan, disangka praktek manipulasi. Karya-karya yang muncul pada pameran-pameran ini selalu dibayangi sangkaan bersifat komersial.

Kontroversi yang terus menerus muncul membuat dua komponen dunia seni yang lain yaitu seniman dan institusi kritik (di sini terjadi proses pemaknaan) selalu dibayangi keraguan untuk mengambil posisi di lingkaran ini. Karena citranya terus menerus mengambang antara diakui dan dikritik, lingkaran galeri swasta dan balai lelang tidak mendapat pengakuan sebagai institusi seni, sebagai paling tidak forum arbiter yang masih bisa dikaitkan dengan perkembangan seni.

Lingkaran galeri itu tidak bersentuhan dengan lingkaran seni kontemporer walau keduanya berkembang paralel pada dekade 1990-an. Masing-masing punya kepentingan sendiri. Lingkaran galeri mendominasi kegiatan seni di

¹⁰ George Dickie's institutional theory of art maintains that the art world is reflected in all the activities of the art institutions and the opinions of the art world public, which is not the same as the general public (which is not interested in art).

¹⁰ Dalam *Institutional Theory of Art* George Dickie, dunia seni (*artworld*) tercermin pada semua kegiatan lembaga seni (berikut semua institusinya) dan juga pendapat publik seni (*artworld public*). Publik seni ini berbeda dengan publik umum (tidak punya perhatian sama sekali pada seni)..

There were, however, no conflicting visions between the two circles. The dominant attitude of the art public (i.e. the collectors) within the circle of galleries prevented it from showing a clear vision. The exhibitions that put forward art thinking were ignored. Judgment on the art works, therefore, had been mostly influenced by vague sentiments—good or not good, strong or not strong, pleasing or scary, entertaining or potential investment. Such sentiments were shaky and could change or turned around rapidly any time.

Under the shadow of such process of valuation, Putu Sutawijaya started to become recognized within the circle of galleries at the end of the nineties. He started to gain recognition as a Balinese artist with unique features. One could therefore infer that the art public appreciated his works.

When Putu also created mixed media works—collage, assemblage—the public accepted his works. This showed that the art public in the circle of galleries did not reject works carrying signs of contemporary art. The art public did not reject contemporary art, unlike the “general public” which was “represented” by art criticism and art reviews.

Putu’s “experimental” works were not the only sign. A number of works that had been recognized in the contemporary art circle also entered the gallery circle at the end of the nineties as the number of the regional exhibition declined. Again, the art public in the gallery circle did not reject them. Even works that used objects as their media of expressions were also accepted by the market—they were bought, collected, or put on sale.

There had never been any discussion of whether Putu’s experimental works were works

of contemporary art or not. The contemporary art works also shared a similar fate. The attitude of the art public in the gallery circle—judging the works based on their personal likes or dislikes—made the works lose their tag as “contemporary works.” This has been Putu’s experience since he began to enter the gallery circle—his works never had a certain tag, except perhaps the tag acquired from his status as “a Balinese artist.”

Although the two distinct circles of art in Indonesia—those of the galleries and the contemporary art, both of which grew in the nineties—were not connected, it did not mean that they could not be connected—and this was exactly what happened as the year 2000 approached.

In the second half of the first decade in the twenty-first century, the issue of the contemporary art emerged in the gallery circle and even became hotly debated. There has been no analyses detailing how it began, but it seemed that the contemporary art circle suddenly made their mark in the gallery circle and the market. With this merging, the contemporary art circle left its militant tradition of the nineties.

This new development was not due to the development of contemporary art within the gallery circle. The beginning of this process was the sudden emergence of the Asian art market—especially in China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Korea. The Asian art market was inundated by works by Chinese artists. Affected by this development, in 2005 and 2006, the Indonesian art market—the galleries, auction houses, and collectors—enthusiastically welcomed works by the Chinese artists and the sales of such works experienced a period of extravagant growth, sidelining works by Indonesian artists.

Indonesia melalui penyelenggaraan pameran-pameran. Lingkaran seni kontemporer sibuk melayani pameran-pameran di luar negeri. Karya-karya kontemporer tidak hadir pada acara-acara galeri karena forum karya-karya ini adalah pameran-pameran regional di luar Indonesia. Dari perbedaan kegiatan ini bisa dilihat betapa lingkaran galeri sama sekali tidak mempunyai hubungan dengan dunia seni global, sementara lingkaran seni kontemporer pada dekade 1990-an nyaris tidak punya hubungan dengan kegiatan seni domestik.

Akan tetapi tidak ada pertentangan visi di antara kedua lingkaran itu. Perilaku dominan publik seni (kolektor) pada lingkaran galeri membuat lingkaran galeri tidak pernah memperlihatkan visi. Pameran-pameran yang menyodorkan pemikiran seni di lingkaran ini tidak digubris. Karena itu penilaian karya seni lebih dipengaruhi sentimen yang tidak punya alasan jelas—bagus atau tidak bagus, kuat atau tidak kuat, menyenangkan atau menakutkan, menghibur dan punya prospek sebagai benda investasi. Sentimen ini labil dan bisa berubah bahkan berbalik dengan cepat setiap saat.

Dibayangi penilaian semacam itu, nama Putu Sutawijaya mulai dikenal di lingkaran galeri pada akhir dekade 1990-an. Namanya muncul karena ia dikenal sebagai seniman Bali yang dipahami punya kekhasan. Maka, tanda yang bisa dibaca pada kemunculan namanya adalah ia mendapat pengakuan publik seni.

Ketika Putu mengembangkan pula karya dengan *mixed media—collage, assemblage*—karya-karyanya tidak ditolak. Gejala ini menunjukkan publik seni di lingkaran galeri tidak menolak karya-karya yang membawa tanda-tanda seni kontemporer. Publik seni ini tidak menolak seni kontemporer seperti

“publik umum” yang “diwakili” kritik seni dan ulasan-ulasan di media massa.

Karya-karya “eksperimental” Putu bukan satu-satunya tanda. Sejumlah karya yang dikenal berkembang di lingkaran seni kontemporer masuk juga ke lingkaran galeri pada akhir 1990-an, setelah berkurangnya pameran-pameran regional. Publik seni di lingkaran galeri kembali tidak menolaknya. Bahkan karya-karya yang menampilkan obyek-obyek sebagai media ekspresi diserap juga oleh pasar—dibeli, dikoleksi, atau diperjual-belikan.

Tidak pernah ada pembahasan apakah karya-karya eksperimental Putu itu terkategori karya kontemporer atau bukan. Sama halnya dengan karya-karya kontemporer. Sikap publik seni di lingkaran galeri—menilai berdasarkan suka atau tidak suka—membuat karya-karya eksperimental Putu dan karya-karya kontemporer kehilangan label ‘kontemporer’. Gejala inilah yang membayangi karya-karya Putu sejak awal ia memasuki lingkaran galeri. Karya-karyanya tidak pernah mempunyai label, kecuali mungkin label ‘Bali’.

Tidak bersentuhan tidak berarti kedua lingkaran yang sama-sama berkembang pada dekade 1990-an itu—lingkaran galeri dan lingkaran seni kontemporer—tidak punya kemungkinan menyatu. Kendati tidak terbayangkan sebelumnya, inilah yang sesungguhnya terjadi pada dekade 2000-an.

Memasuki paruh kedua dekade 2000, isu seni kontemporer muncul di lingkaran galeri dan bahkan menjadi pembicaraan ramai. Belum ada kajian bagaimana mulanya, namun lingkaran seni kontemporer tiba-tiba sudah ada di lingkaran galeri dan pasar. Penyatuan ini membuat lingkaran seni kontemporer meninggalkan tradisinya yang militan pada dekade 1990-an.

With this development, the issue of contemporary art entered the Indonesian art market. The beginning was, again, the emergence of the contemporary art issue in China—the growing recognition of the Shanghai Biennale, Beijing Biennale, and Guangzhou O'Triennial within the global art circle—and the market activities in this country. Chinese contemporary works were bought and their prices kept on increasing.¹¹ In China, activities in the art world and art market seemed to be inextricable. The biennales were often held when the art fairs took place, and both enjoyed government support.

At the end of 2006, the contemporary art issue suddenly seemed to have gained quite a strong footing in the market. Strangely, this was followed by the decline in the market interest for works by Chinese artists in the beginning of 2007 as the market turned around and welcomed works by the Indonesian contemporary artists. Parallel with this development was the entrance of the gallery circle to the Asian market by joining the art fairs in a variety of cities in China, introducing works by Indonesian artists.

The efforts to understand the contemporary art, which seemed to have been neglected since late nineties, became reinvigorated. The market that wished to build a vision—after neglecting the need for a vision for ten years—was no longer “ignorant” as members of the contemporary art circle had joined forces with them.

There were thus a number of speculative thinking on what the contemporary art actually was. The speculations did not involve thoughts that reflected an understanding of the issue, but instead analyzing the features of the contemporary art works, which might help in

the “hunt” for the artists. The analyses viewed contemporary works as works with new media and certain banality; works with conventional media but presenting texts (alphabets or actual writing) and icons; works revealing the middle class life style and urban living; works that were no longer concerned with the issues about “art” much less the ‘traditional art’; works by young artists with the “contemporary vision” and a background of the “contemporary life”, i.e. the eccentric, mischievous, and self-centered artists.

The analyses went further to identify which of the works were those of the contemporary art. The works that were considered as falling outside the boundaries of the contemporary art were sidelined. Here the term “outdated” became significant. The “outdated” works were those presented using the conventional media and revealed no “contemporary signs.” The “outdated” works revealed the (painting) styles found in the development of the modern art—expressionism, realism, cubism, abstract art, etc.

This development created certain feelings of anxiety among the artists whose works were “not contemporary”—had they become superfluous? Putu Sutawijaya, however, was an exception. His name appeared in the midst of such contemporary art craze and was recognized as on a par with a number of artists whose works were considered as contemporary art works. But Putu had actually no track records within the contemporary art circle. His main works were still the expressive works, a tendency that the contemporary art circle had questioned and even mocked in the nineties.

Considering the signs of the contemporary art that had spread in Indonesia, Putu Sutawijaya's emergence can be viewed as a

Perkembangan baru itu sama sekali bukan akibat perkembangan seni kontemporer di lingkaran galeri. Awal dari proses perubahan ini adalah kemunculan mendadak pasar seni di Asia—khususnya di China, Taiwan, Hongkong, dan Korea. Pasar Asia ini dibanjiri karya-karya seniman China. Terimbas munculnya indikator baru ini, pada 2005 dan 2006 pasar di Indonesia—lingkaran galeri, balai lelang, dan kolektor—menyerap rakus karya-karya seniman China dan membuat perdagangan karya-karya ini menjadi sangat ramai dan mendesak karya-karya seniman Indonesia.

Melalui imbasan itu pula isu seni kontemporer muncul di pasar Indonesia. Pangkalnya kembali karena kemunculan isu seni kontemporer di China sebagai kelanjutan kegiatan seni—berkembangnya Shanghai Biennale, Beijing Biennale, dan Guangzhou Triennale menjadi *event* dalam lingkup global—dan kegiatan pasar di negara ini. Karya-karya kontemporer China laku dan naik terus harganya.¹¹ Di China, kedua kegiatan seni dan pasar seperti tidak bisa dipisahkan. Penyelenggaraan biennale sering disamakan waktunya dengan penyelenggaraan *art-fair* dan keduanya disubsidi pemerintah.

Belum ada kajian yang bisa menunjukkan bagaimana isu seni kontemporer itu masuk ke pasar Indonesia. Namun pada akhir 2006 isu ini tiba-tiba sudah meluas dan sangat ramai dibicarakan. Anehnya, gejala ini diikuti berhentinya kecenderungan pasar menyerap karya-karya seniman China pada awal 2007 dan berbalik mengangkat karya-karya kontemporer seniman Indonesia. Paralel dengan perkembangan ini lingkaran galeri memasuki pasar Asia dengan cara mengikuti *art-fair* di berbagai kota di China dengan membawa karya-karya seniman Indonesia.

Upaya memahami seni kontemporer yang seperti terbengkalai sejak akhir 1990-an dipacu kembali. Pasar yang ingin membangun visi—setelah sepuluh tahun tidak peduli visi—tidak lagi “buta”, karena bergabungnya orang-orang dari lingkaran seni kontemporer.

Muncul kemudian sejumlah spekulasi tentang apa sebenarnya seni kontemporer. Spekulasi ini bukan melibatkan pemikiran yang mencerminkan pemahaman melainkan pengkajian ciri-ciri karya kontemporer yang bisa digunakan untuk “memburu” seniman-senimannya. Kajian ini melihat, karya kontemporer adalah karya yang menampilkan media baru dan banal; karya dengan media konvensional tapi menampilkan teks (tulisan dan huruf) dan ikon-ikon; karya yang memperlihatkan *life-style* kelas menengah dan kehidupan urban; karya yang sudah tidak lagi mempersoalkan ‘seni’ apalagi ‘seni tradisional’; dibuat oleh seniman muda yang punya ‘visi kontemporer’ dan latar belakang ‘kehidupan kontemporer’, yaitu seniman-seniman eksentrik, nakal, dan *self-centered*.

Kajian itu diperluas ke kajian mengidentifikasi mana karya kontemporer dan mana karya yang “tidak kontemporer”. Terjadi kemudian penyingkiran karya-karya yang dianggap “tidak kontemporer”. Di sini istilah ‘kuno’ menjadi kata kunci. Karya ‘kuno’ adalah ungkapan yang disampaikan melalui media konvensional dan tidak memperlihatkan “tanda-tanda kontemporer”; Karya-karya ‘kuno’ memperlihatkan gaya-gaya (melukis) perkembangan seni modern—ekspresionisme, realisme, kubisme, abstrakisme, dan sebagainya.

Perkembangan itu menimbulkan kehebohan dan kegelisahan di antara seniman-seniman yang karyanya “tidak kontemporer”—apakah

¹¹ In 2006, works by Fang Lijun, one of the Chinese avant-garde artists, made the list for the new acquisitions of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York. As a result, the issue of the contemporary art spread in China and works by the China avant-garde artists enjoyed a price hike in the market.

¹¹ Pada 2006 karya Fang Lijun, salah seorang seniman *China Avant-garde* masuk dalam daftar *new acquisitions* Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) New York. Dampaknya, isu seni kontemporer meluas di China dan karya-karya seniman *China Avant-garde* melonjak harganya di pasar.

phenomenal occurrence. He stays with the medium considered as conventional and still believes in emotions as a source of expression. He also maintains his interest in the problem of the body. Although the body presented in his works is the social body, the social lives Putu presents in his works are far removed from the problem of urban living, especially of the life style of the middle class urbanites. It is also impossible to see his works as being no longer concerned with the problem of art itself, and it is even more difficult to say that he, as a Balinese, is no longer bounded by tradition—the tradition of the Balinese people being inextricable from art.

Such analyses on the “defining features of contemporary art works” is the simplification in the understanding of the contemporary art, which in itself is indeed a complicated matter as it is related to significant changes in the fundamental beliefs in the Anglo-American tradition of art. This, however, is the underlying truth in the spread of the contemporary art in the world. Outside the Anglo-American tradition, the understanding of the contemporary art has been mostly present in the form of a string of stereotypes that invariably had inadequate reason but were nevertheless dominant.

Putu Sutawijaya exists in the “boundary,” an in-between area, because he can exist in the contemporary art circle, although as an idiosyncrasy. Considering how his career

developed in the gallery circle, it transpired that he could survive because he has been supported by the silent art public. The understanding of art in this circle could never be analyzed from their judgment—it is always whether they “like” or “dislike” the works—that has often been mocked. In Putu Sutawijaya’s case, however, it seems as if they are “rebellious” in silence.

It can very well be that Putu Sutawijaya is representative of a large number of artists in Indonesia—and even of artists from a larger circle, in Asia for example—who seem to exist outside the contemporary art circle. They are artists who still hold on to the conventional media; who still believe in the art tradition; who are not banal and not familiar with the lifestyle of the middle class urbanites.

In the development of the world art, in which the contemporary art became the mainstream without any alternatives, it seems like there is no space available in which we can read the works by Putu Sutawijaya and the sidelined artists. There are, however, no reasonable excuses to view these artists—perhaps constituting the majority of artists in the world—as “people of the past” and to read their works with outdated ways. One must therefore find an explanation for their presence within the development of world art today and a way to read their works within the context of the contemporary art. It sounds impossible, but actually it is not.

mereka sudah tidak berguna lagi? Putu Sutawijaya merupakan kekecualian. Namanya muncul di tengah kehebohan seni kontemporer itu dan diijarkan dengan nama sejumlah seniman yang karya-karyanya diyakini adalah karya kontemporer. Padahal Putu tidak mempunyai *track record* di lingkaran seni kontemporer. Karya-karyanya yang utama juga masih lukisan ekspresif, kecenderungan yang dipertanyakan lingkaran seni kontemporer dan bahkan dicemoohkan pada dekade 1990-an.

Melihat ciri-ciri seni kontemporer yang menyebar pada percaturannya di Indonesia, kemunculan Putu Sutawijaya fenomenal. Ia bertahan pada media yang dianggap konvensional dan masih percaya pada emosi sebagai sumber ekspresi. Ia bertahan pula mempersoalkan tubuh. Walau tubuh pada karya-karyanya adalah tubuh sosial, kehidupan sosial yang diangkat Putu pada karya-karyanya jauh dari persoalan kehidupan urban apalagi *life style* kelas menengah kota besar. Mustahil juga melihat karya-karyanya tidak lagi mempersoalkan seni dan lebih mustahil lagi memperkirakan ia, sebagai orang Bali, tidak terikat pada tradisinya yang identik dengan tradisi seni.

Pembacaan ciri-ciri seni kontemporer itu adalah simplifikasi pemahaman seni kontemporer yang memang merupakan persoalan rumit karena berkaitan dengan perubahan besar dalam keyakinan-keyakinan mendasar tradisi pemikiran Anglo-Amerika. Namun inilah kenyataan penyebaran seni kontemporer ke seluruh dunia. Di luar tradisi Anglo-Amerika, pemahaman seni kontemporer lebih tampil sebagai serangkaian stereotipe yang selalu miskin alasan tapi dominan.

Putu Sutawijaya berada di “perbatasan” karena ia bisa muncul di lingkaran seni kontemporer walau sebagai kejanggalan. Melihat benang merah perkembangan karirnya di lingkaran galeri, ia bisa bertahan karena ditunjang publik seni yang tidak bersuara. Pemahaman seni publik seni ini tidak pernah terbaca pada penilaian mereka—“suka” atau “tidak suka”—yang lebih sering dicemoohkan. Namun pada kasus Putu Sutawijaya mereka seperti melakukan “pemberontakan” diam-diam.

Putu Sutawijaya sangat mungkin mewakili sejumlah besar seniman di Indonesia—bahkan seniman dalam lingkup lebih besar, Asia misalnya—yang terkesan berada di luar lingkaran seni kontemporer. Inilah seniman-seniman yang masih bertahan pada media konvensional; seniman-seniman yang masih percaya pada tradisi seni; seniman-seniman yang tidak banal dan tidak akrab dengan *life style* kelas menengah kota besar.

Pada perkembangan seni dunia di mana seni kontemporer menjadi arus besar tanpa alternatif, terkesan kuat seperti tidak ada ruang untuk pembacaan karya-karya Putu Sutawijaya dan seniman-seniman tersingkir itu. Namun tidak ada alasan yang masuk akal untuk melihat mereka—mungkin jumlah terbesar dalam populasi seniman dunia—sebagai “orang-orang masa lalu” dan membaca karya-karya mereka dengan cara-cara yang kedaluwarsa. Maka harus ditemukan penjelasan tentang kehadiran mereka dalam perkembangan seni dunia sekarang ini dan cara membaca karya-karya mereka dalam konteks seni kontemporer. Terdengar mustahil, tapi ternyata tidak.

Art with an Accent

Art's return to culture

When Andy Warhol came up with his *200 Campbell's Soup Cans* in 1962, no one expected the work to epitomize the significant changes in the development of art in the world. The work merely presents a series of Campbell soup cans and says almost nothing in itself. Seen in the context of artworks at the time, it seemed that the work wished to depict the approach of minimalism through the rhythm of the forms, but failed to present formalistic visual calculations—the soup cans in the painting do not show any trace of visual processing, they appear just as they are, in their original forms.

Still, the work created such a controversy. Underlying the controversy was the fact that the work reflected the contemporary popular culture prevalent in the United States during the 1960s, where a variety of industrial products—in the form of advertisement illustrations or brands, for example that Campbell soup—became icons. Various comics' figures in popular stories (Charlie Brown, Superman, Batman, Zorro, and even Mickey Mouse) were adored. The American media dubbed this symptom a symptom of 'Pop culture'. Therefore, Andy's works—the tendency that followed, were called 'Pop art'.

Warhol's *200 Campbell's Soup Cans* was criticized for bringing up a cultural matter. The modern thinking which at the time was very influential believed that matters of the culture were outside the realm of art, because the modern world was seen as homogeneous and was not fragmented by the different cultures and traditions.¹ Such modern thinking saw the world with fragmented cultures as a world of the past that one must leave behind. The modernists, therefore, never used the term of 'modern culture.'

Meanwhile, the public saw art (its practices and works) as an important sign of a culture. The modern thinking "discarded" such belief, reasoning that if art was linked to the culture, one would have a variety of arts, in line with the diversity of the ethnic traditions, while the modern thinking believed that there was only one form of art in the modern world, i.e. the modern art (of the world).

Such understanding did not come about of its own accord during the modern period. Its premise already took form in the nineteenth century through the philosophical arguments by Kant and Hegel, and originated in the interpretation of the principles of aesthetics (the philosophy of beauty) which were developed in the eighteenth century—written in Latin and was initially expounded by the philosopher Baumgartner. Due to its link with the philosophy of beauty, this kind of art was seen as reflecting philosophical reasoning. Therefore, when it evolved into the modern art, its theories and practices were seen as loftier than any other forms of art in any tradition, which generally had been seen as a part of the tradition and culture. Because it was not a part of the culture, the theories and practices of modern art were also seen as separate from daily lives. In 1825, this modern art was hailed as 'avant garde art.'²

There are two bases for the labeling of art as 'avant garde art.' First, the term 'avant garde' reflected the basis of the modern thinking with its emphasis on unbroken progress. Modern art, along with modern thinking, was seen as being ahead of its era, and might therefore stay out of the social conventions. Artists were not bounded by morality and customs. Considering the significant discoveries of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the artists were seen as geniuses.

The second basic argument for such a labeling maintained that the term 'avant garde'

Kembalinya seni ke budaya

Ketika Andy Warhol memunculkan karya *200 Campbell's Soup Cans* pada 1962 tidak seorang pun menyangka bahwa karya ini akan menjadi tanda perubahan besar dalam perkembangan seni dunia. Karya ini cuma menampilkan sederetan gambar kaleng sup bermerk Campbell. Nyaris tidak bicara apa-apa. Untuk ukuran seni masa itu karya ini seperti ingin memperlihatkan minimalisme melalui irama bentuk namun gagal menyajikan perhitungan-perhitungan visual yang formalistik—kaleng-kaleng sup pada lukisan ini tidak memperlihatkan pengolahan bentuk sama sekali, tampil seperti bentuk aslinya.

Toh karya itu menimbulkan kontroversi. Persoalan di balik kontroversi ini adalah karya ini mencerminkan kebudayaan populer yang sedang muncul di Amerika pada dekade 1960-an. Pada kebudayaan populer ini berbagai produk industri—dalam bentuk ilustrasi iklan, merk barang atau produk, di antaranya sup Campbell itu—menjadi ikon-ikon dalam kehidupan masyarakat. Berbagai tokoh komik dalam cerita populer (Charlie Brown, Superman, Batman, Zorro, Flash Gordon, bahkan Mickey Mouse) menjadi pujaan masyarakat. Media massa Amerika menyebut gejala ini sebagai '*Pop Cult*'. Karena itu karya-karya Warhol—dan kecenderungan yang mengikutinya—disebut '*Pop Art*'.

Karya Warhol itu, *200 Campbell's Soup Cans*, dikecam karena mengangkat persoalan budaya. Pemikiran modern yang ketika itu sangat berpengaruh percaya bahwa persoalan budaya berada di luar persoalan seni karena dunia modern bersifat homogen dan tidak terpecah-pecah oleh kebudayaan dan tradisi.¹ Bagi pemikiran modern, dunia dengan kebudayaan terpecah-pecah mencerminkan dunia masa lalu yang harus ditinggalkan. Karena itu, para

modernis tidak pernah menggunakan istilah 'kebudayaan modern'.

Pendapat umum melihat seni (praktek dan karya) sebagai tanda penting suatu budaya. Pada pemikiran modern, kepercayaan ini "dibuang". Alasannya, bila seni dikaitkan dengan budaya, akan muncul bermacam-macam seni mengikuti keragaman tradisi etnik, sementara pemikiran modern meyakini, hanya ada satu seni di dunia modern, yaitu seni modern (dunia).

Pemahaman seni itu tidak lahir serta merta pada masa modern. Premisnya sudah muncul pada abad ke-19 melalui pemikiran filosof Kant dan Hegel serta berpangkal pada penafsiran prinsip estetika (filsafat keindahan) yang berkembang pada abad ke-18—ditulis dalam bahasa Latin dan mula-mula dikembangkan filosof Baumgarten. Karena berkaitan dengan filsafat keindahan, seni ini diyakini mencerminkan pemikiran filosofis. Maka, ketika menjadi seni modern, teori dan praktek seni diyakini punya derajat lebih tinggi daripada seni-seni dalam tradisi mana pun sepanjang sejarah umat manusia yang umumnya merupakan bagian dari tradisi dan budaya. Karena bukan bagian dari budaya, teori dan praktek seni modern dipercaya terpisah juga dari kehidupan sehari-hari. Pada 1825, seni modern ini mendapat sebutan 'seni *avant garde*'²

Ada dua dasar kemunculan predikat '*avant garde*' itu. Pertama, *avant garde* mencerminkan dasar pemikiran modern yang mengutamakan kemajuan (terobosan) terus menerus. Seni modern bersama pemikiran modern dipercaya mendahului zamannya. Karena itu seniman diperbolehkan berada di luar konvensi sosial. Seniman tidak terikat pada moralitas dan kebiasaan masyarakat. Menimbang penemuan-penemuan besar pada abad ke-18 dan ke-19, seniman diyakini adalah orang-orang genius.

¹ The belief rested on the post-enlightenment Western thinking with its four bases: (1) Emphasizing on the ethics of the individual; (2) Identifying existence through linear historicism; (3) Believing in the homogeneity of the society as the foundation of the development; (4) Applauding the autonomy of thoughts.

² 'Avant Garde' was actually a military term, referring to the advance team infiltrating the enemy territory before the actual raid. The painter Henri de Saint-Simon introduced the term 'avant garde' in France in 1825 when he proclaimed the "Avant Garde Manifesto" along with other artists, scientists, and industrialists. Henri de Saint-Simon was also a retired officer, and it was thus understandable how the military term of 'avant garde' could enter the realm of art.

¹ Keyakinan ini bertumpu pada *post enlightenment Western thinking*, yang mempunyai empat dasar. (1) Mengutamakan etika individu; (2) Mengidentifikasi eksistensi melalui historisisme linier; (3) Meyakini homogenitas masyarakat sebagai dasar perkembangan; (4) Merayakan kedaulatan pikiran.

² *Avant Garde* istilah di dunia militer. Menunjuk pasukan perintis yang masuk ke wilayah musuh sebelum serangan dilakukan. Istilah *avant-garde* diperkenalkan pelukis Henri de Saint-Simon pada 1825 di Prancis sewaktu ia mencetuskan "Manifesto Avant garde" bersama seniman lain, ilmuwan dan industrialis. Ia membentuk gerakan patriotik yang diilhami penemuan-penemuan besar individu genius pada awal revolusi industri. Henri de Saint-Simon adalah pelukis pensiunan tentara. Maka bisa dipahami mengapa istilah militer *avant-garde* masuk ke dunia seni.