

# Pathways

## Possible Correspondences in Indonesian and Thai Art

Rizki A. Zaelani

*"We make history; but we are also made by our history."*

-Ziaudin Sardar

A cultural theorist, Ziaudin Sardar, once explains to us that *"history is never a dead letter, even if we fail to learn its lesson, or refuse anything except reliving its mistake"*(1. As we already accustomed by a strategic role of history that individuals and societies constantly move in history and use it as a reservoir of experience, allegiance and ideals that craft identities and outlook. Sardar constantly remind us that reading and understanding the history is never an ending process.

The joint Exhibition from collections of The Indonesia National Gallery (Jakarta) and The National Gallery of Thailand (Bangkok) is a step into a variety garden of the world of art history. As specified character of its development both the history of modern art in Indonesian and Thailand are now significantly mapped within context of the coming rise of Asian art progress. During the years of the 1990's, many Indonesian and Thai contemporary artists actively joint with many international art forum in the worldwide biennale or triennial art events. During those events, the history of modern art of both countries has been repeatedly told for many times through many art dialogues and discussion. So the more intensive dialogues among art development from countries within Asian region, or more specified between countries in Southwest Asian region are go in a new phase of insight.

For Indonesian and Thai artists and writers, this kind of dialogue can be also traced to the productive period of ASEAN's cooperation of cultural program that had produced many exhibitions and seminars on art and aesthetics since the 1980's. Nevertheless this exhibition, "Pathways: Correspondences in Indonesian and Thai Art today" can be seen as a 'new' type of dialogue on perspective of art history through

a display of art collection from each national gallery in order to locate both position and its correspondence within a recent global art situation.

Hans Belting, the art historian and scholar, proclaimed the 'end' of art history as he mentioned an end of single legitimated logic of storytelling in world art history. As he sees the consequences of the end art history, contemporary art practices goes into a new type relation to the logic of history. Belting said that *"rather than continuing to represent culture and history, art engages in either than rituals of remembrance or [depending on the given audience] resistance"*(2. As Belting was once understood, now we can see a rise new creative orientation among many contemporary artist when they understand that art has lost the internal mirror of all the particular genres in which it has been created for so long. So it has come a next type of vision where the progress ceases is to keep the old sense. Progress is exchange for the concept of the "remake"(3).

Now the historical type exhibition such as this exhibition becomes important and significant to generate the today contemporary art practices. This historical exhibition do not only work in re-reading once more meaning of historical values in today context but also can actively inspire many recent art practices. As Belting remind us that *"we now use our ancestor's original motifs to interrogate the exercise of art history"*(4).

The "Pathways: Correspondences in Indonesian and Thai Art today" consist of works that emphasize some important historical lines of modern art development in Indonesian and Thai context. Those lines from both context are connect, and of course some are also disconnect, to each other through correspondences of a common cultural type of living. This exhibition can be also seen as a correspondence of each individual works from Indonesian and Thai artists within their similar concern and attention.