

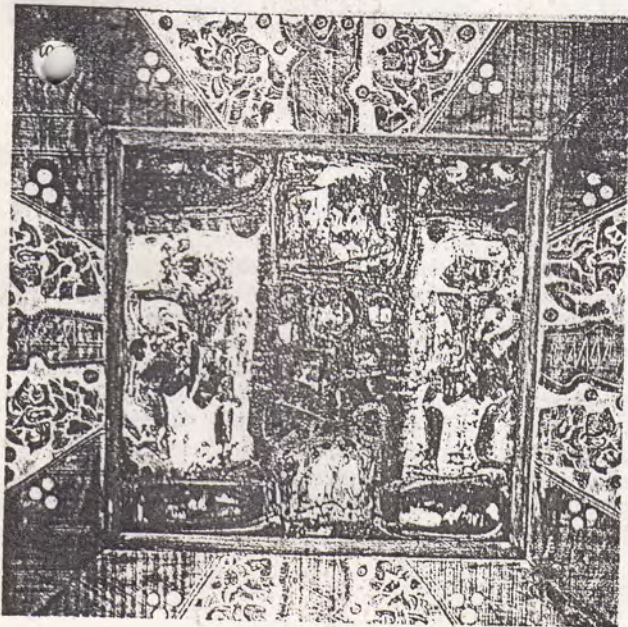
Some Indonesian artists have accepted Western notions of personal innovation and artistic professionalism, but they reject other imported attitudes, such as elitism and secularism.

lies inert, propped up on arrows, neither alive nor permanently dead, as if waiting for the moment in the next episode of the unfolding epic when it will live again.

Heri Dono (b. 1960) and Eddie Hara (b. 1957) have extended Widayat's lyrical, primitivistic painted fantasies into tough narrative drawings, sculptures and installations that are reminiscent of Dubuffet, Jean-Michel Basquiat and Keith Haring. Their works rebel against the refinement of the *wayang* and court styles. In a painting titled *Acid Rain Magicians*, Eddie Hara arranges schematized brute figures in an enigmatic, flattened space which he says expresses his concern about the environment. *Homage to the Water God*, his 1992 installation along a road in rural Bali, is a three-sided enclosure with a working spigot from which water runs. Typical of the multiple meanings and functions of many installations, this one serves practical ends (providing a new source of running water) as well as imaginative ones. Characteristically playful, the work alludes to Hindu and esoteric myths about water as well as to the serious water and sanitation needs of villagers and the urban poor.

Heri Dono is similarly playful in addressing a wide variety of issues. Some of his installations comment on corruption and lack of official concern for the needs of common people. He humorously exposes hypocrisy in a series of mechanical wooden heads which, when the power is turned on, nod up and down, chatter endlessly and roll their eyes. Like Eddie Hara, he often depicts genitalia, a form of sub-

Nyoman Gunarsa: oil on on canvas.



Ida Hadjar: *The Javanese Children*, batik, 12 1/4 by 11 1/4 inches.

ject matter which is particularly shocking in Java, where social circumspection is primary, sex is hardly acknowledged, and Muslim law enforces dress and behavior codes.

Using different imagery, the Dutch-born Mella Jaarsma also comments on Indonesian society. Jaarsma recently installed a permanent cremation site outside a remote Balinese village. Its center, a brick oven, is the torso of an 18-foot supine figure. There is a wire outline of a head over an entranceway. The villagers determined placement of the work and supplied much of the labor for construction. Used for a cremation ceremony shortly after its installation, it is impressive visually and is an outstanding example of functional, interactive public sculpture.

Jaarsma's Javanese husband, Nindityo Adipurnomo (b. 1961) explores Javanese rituals and symbols. In an altarlike installation called *Lingam and Yoni* (referring to Hindu fertility symbols) he placed the carved "male" element (lingam), decorated with jewels, in a round, "female" container (yoni) lined with batik and topped with a Javanese ritual sword.

Patterns of court dances, originating in Hindu rituals and later extended in the Muslim court of the sultan of Yogyakarta, inspire his drawings, paintings, sculptures and performances, while his Catholic religious background adds another layer of complexity to his syncretic work.

Yogyakarta is an important traditional center for batik. Among the patterns produced by this ancient process of dyeing textiles are many that encode cultural and historical information largely unreadable by outsiders. Although the textile's status is now diminished, a number of so-called batik painters are exploring its potential as a fine-art medium. This is an uphill fight, because the technique is difficult, innovation is discouraged by traditionalists, and great quantities of low-quality batik mer-

chandise are sold to tourists. Serious practitioners are generally ignored by the Indonesian art world and an important artistic potential is thus overlooked.

Ida Hadjar's batiks symbolically employ a set of stylized Javanese characters in narratives which operate like episodes in the *wayang* or in traditional dances. From memories of her childhood and from the streets of her present home in Yogyakarta, she gleams images of mothers and children, plants, animals and birds, dancers and street performers. Hadjar is respected for inventing techniques to incorporate characteristics of Western painting into the traditionally flattened space of her pictorial batik panels. Figures are defined by heavy outlines and those lines are broadened with dots of color that mimic the contouring of forms in etching. Nia Fliam, an American, collaborates with her Javanese husband, Agus Ismoyo (b. 1957), to produce large batik paintings composed of abstract shapes that refer to Hindu philosophy and cosmology.

As an art center, the city of Bandung in West Java is internationalist and abstractionist; images derived



Umi Dachlan: *Dialogue*, 1991, acrylic on canvas, 41 by 53 inches. Courtesy Braga Gallery, Bandung, West Java.

from Hindu and Buddhist traditions play a lesser role. Artists associated with the "Bandung school" are generally Muslim, urban and somewhat Westernized in education and convictions. Their subjects reflect local concerns and points of view and often emphasize Islam as a source of identity.

A.D. Pirous (b. 1933) represents his Muslim faith and Javanese identity in prints and paintings in oil or acrylic which combine areas of symbolic figuration (usually animals significant in Indonesian culture) with geometric abstraction and calligraphic texts from the Koran. Cool, rational and complex, these highly polished works are meant to be distillations of the ineffable. Stating that "calligraphy is a symbolic language" and that "the Arabic letter is a symbol containing a view of the world," Pirous has become a leader in the development of calligraphy as an emblem of Islamic identity.² He reproduces texts that symbolize religious truths to believers. An old Javanese saying that "beauty and ethics and esthet-