

## Ay Tjoe's explorations of life and the self

The exhibition of works by Ay Tjoe Christine *Eksekusi Ego* reveals the artist's continuous questioning of even the most simple things that are usually taken for granted in daily life. Eating for instance is questioned, for what's the point of taking in food when it leaves the body again? This is manifest in expressions using her signature drypoint technique, extended with drawings, paintings, objects and digital prints.

If her previous solo at Edwin's (2003) revealed an Ay Tjoe opening up from her introverted appearance, the current exhibition, also at Edwin's Gallery, tries to kill the ego in an effort to comply with real life where togetherness is valued highly.

But her explorations through various mediums reveal the dominating ego that seems to be hard for an artist to do away with, even if the notion might be different. Surely it is interesting to see how she blurs the ego by concealing the faces or identities in the collective of figures that now appear in layered meanings. Remarkably, in the beautifully executed works in pencil, vague contours of what could be a figure and drawn in the likeness of drypoint go over the drawing as if to proclaim the artist's presence.

While the pencil drawings at first sight may appear as a flower bouquet or dreamlike images, a closer look reveals an inner struggle. In *Bertigapuluh #3*, for instance, human heads with distinct faces or covered by hair, appear as if wanting to get out of their limited spaces. In *Bersepuluh #2*, a woman's breast hesitantly appears, while in the background, a vague drawing of an embracing couple is discernable. Sometimes the features in her drawings give the impression of struggling in the air, were it not for the two skeleton-like feet that carry the lot. Legs never fail to take the appearance of skeletons or stalks, while feet resemble paws. Yet, in comparison to her previous pencil works, such features are becoming vaguer and may just be a remainder of the past.

Yet they recur in full in the acrylic painting *Berenam #2*, in which the faces are also covered with horse images. Is she trying to work out comparisons of animals and humans? Or is she taking the horse as a metaphor for strength and endurance? Whatever it may be, the artist seems to be against everything that is taken for granted. She says as a child she always seemed to do things that did not comply with the norms set by the wider community or society. Highly sensitive and compassionate, she used to wish she could take a beggar home, whenever a beggar would cross her way.

**Carla Bianpoen**, Contributor, Jakarta

It seems Ay Tjoe, who used to be self-contained, is now desperately trying to comply with society. But as her paintings show an intertwining of body parts, the faces remain masked or blurred, with only one or two showing parts of facial features, and her drawings still appear like human wrestling in the air. Her objects show yet another side of the artist who started making objects as a leisure activity. Expressing life's issues, her puppets come to life hovering between refined handicrafts and fine art. Some of them have been ""preserved"" in a fine glass box, others appear in digital print on canvas.

Photography has thus entered the range of mediums she uses. Ay Tjoe explains that she came to use photography as she wanted to show only one side -- a specific one -- of the objects or installation.

As Ay Tjoe continues to explore life and experiment with mediums, the drypoint technique remains her forte. It seems it is here that her emotions get their full due. The artist says that it is still this medium that gives her the greatest satisfaction. The series *Table Generation* include many of the issues that hold the artist under their spell.

Ay Tjoe, born in 1973, is a graduate of the Bandung Institute of Technology, majoring in Graphic Art at the Faculty of Fine Arts and Design. This is her fourth solo exhibition, while she participated in numerous joint exhibitions. In 2001 she was among the five Tops of the Philip Morris Indonesia Art Award.

*Eksekusi Ego* A Solo Exhibition by Ay Tjoe Christine Until September 30, 2006 Edwin's Gallery Jl. Kemang Raya 21, Ph 7194721, 71790049