

*How They Did Art Then**

Usaha merunut kembali sejarah *video art* (seni video) bukanlah tujuan utama presentasi ini. Presentasi ini bertujuan untuk menghadirkan karya-karya bersejarah yang kerap disinggung, disebut, ditelaah, dianalisis, dijadikan acuan, dirujuk, dan lain sebagainya, dalam berbagai publikasi (dan bahkan karya lain) yang belum pernah dipamerkan di Indonesia.

Apa pentingnya menghadirkan karya-karya ini di tengah maraknya perkembangan seni video di Indonesia hari ini? Toh, sudah semenjak perhelatan pertamanya pada 2003, OK Video Festival sudah selalu menghadirkan karya-karya video termutakhir dari berbagai belahan Indonesia.

Tapi, lantas bagaimana cara kita memahami seni video di Indonesia hari ini jika berkenaan dengan sejarah lahirnya seni video di Eropa atau di Amerika Serikat sana? Melihat dan juga mengalami karya-karya pionir ini menjadi penting bagi para pelaku, pengamat, kolektor, atau penikmat seni video di Indonesia agar bisa menyadari bahwa ada kesenjangan sejarah berikut segala perbedaan dimensi sosial-historis dan juga estetis saat seni video kini makin luas dipraktikkan di mana-mana. Sekedar contoh, kita bisa perhatikan bagaimana soal “identitas pribadi” atau “identitas sosial”, misalnya, tidak atau belum menjadi soal penting saat para pemula seni video mulai merekam dan menayangkan karya-karya mereka di Berlin atau New York pada 1970-an.

Bukan hal yang baru bagi bangsa ini untuk menjadi anomali. Contoh yang menarik, misalnya, deskripsi Sasaki Shiraisi (dalam *Pahlawan-pahlawan Belia*, 2005) perihal kegiatan antar-jemput yang sangat tidak efisien dalam kehidupan modern di kota metropolitan tetap berlangsung atas nama “kesopanan”. “Yang tua yang didahulukan,” demikian kita kemudian ‘menuding’ feodalisme dengan cibir. Padahal, puluhan tahun lalu, mengendarai mobil di jalan raya merupakan salah satu dari indikasi modernitas Jakarta, selaku “wajah” dari Indonesia — bahkan eksistensi jalan aspal saja sudah merupakan indikasi kuat dari modernitas. Sampai hari ini, feodalisme, yang jelas-jelas bukan salah satu paham dalam koridor modernitas, masih berlangsung tanpa ada yang mempertanyakan efektivitasnya bagi kehidupan di kota sebesar, semacet (dan semodern) Jakarta. Kalau Sasaki menuliskan kisahnya dalam keadaan ‘terkini’, ia pasti harus menceritakan bagaimana di tengah kemacetan antar jemput keluarga yang hirarkis itu masing-masing ‘penghuni’ mobil sibuk memijit *gadget*-nya (Blackberry, iPhone, iPad, berbagai jenis *laptop*, dst), dan tetap menyahut saat orang ‘tertua’ dalam kendaraan tersebut menggumamkan hal remeh-temeh sekalipun. Tak ada yang berusaha mencari sebab-musabab bertahannya feodalisme dalam kebudayaan kontemporer kita; sedikit yang benar-benar berusaha melawannya, dan tentu lebih sedikit lagi yang berhasil; dan juga tak ada yang mencoba meredefinisi modernitas dalam konteks kehidupan di Indonesia. Padahal Indonesia belum satu abad usianya.

Absennya keingintahuan akan dualisme-dualisme itu mirip dengan bagaimana isu identitas tak nampak dalam presentasi video-video historikal ini, padahal isu tersebut sangat kental dalam berbagai karya seni video (dan juga karya seni lainnya) di Indonesia. Tak ada dari seniman-seniman pionir video ini yang berasal dari/dibesarkan di negara berkembang. Identitas bukan pertanyaan yang sulit dijawab bagi mereka yang pelajaran sejarahnya memenuhi kebutuhan pengetahuan akan asal-muasal mereka dan gencar menanamkan (apa yang dipercaya sebagai)

ideologi bangsa dan negara mereka. Bagi mereka, munculnya teknologi perekam dengan kemampuan audiovisual ini adalah kesempatan eksplorasi medium baru (sebagai alat) sekaligus mempertanyakan eksistensi dan/atau validitas media-media seni yang ada sebelumnya.

Maka, dalam video-video pionir ini tampak bagaimana *kehendak merekam* (demikian Ronny Agustinus menyebutnya dalam esai *Video: Not All Correct*, 2003) lebih besar daripada *kehendak bertutur*. Pun ketika gagasan sang seniman adalah sesuatu yang dikedepankan dalam beberapa karya video awal 1970-an ini, euforia kemampuan merekam (apa yang dianggap sebagai) realitas hadir masih sangat dominan. Tentunya perkembangan zaman sampai dengan hari ini sudah mengubah itu. Namun, sekali lagi, melihat dan mengalami karya-karya ini (dan menaruhnya ke dalam konteks zaman kemunculannya) penting untuk bekal refleksi —pun kita hidup di era yang tampaknya selalu kekurangan waktu. Merujuk pemikiran lawas —namun tampaknya masih akurat— James W. Fowler, seseorang harus mampu bersikap reflektif, sebelum mencapai pemahaman atas berbagai paradoks yang ada; barulah kemudian ia mungkin mencapai sebuah pencerahan (*Stages of Faith*, 1981).

Hampir tidak ada teks (yang ditulis oleh orang Indonesia) yang menyinggung soal perbedaan mendasar permulaan munculnya seni video di Indonesia dan seni video di dunia dalam beragam teks—baik esai, pengantar pameran, ulasan, dan—perihal video. Perbedaan mendasar ini seakan *taken for granted* dan tak perlu dibahas, seperti halnya modernitas. Padahal, kami curiga bahwa perbedaan titik berangkat ini sesungguhnya mendasari bagaimana pengambilan keputusan penggunaan video, sebagai medium (atau salah satu media dalam) berkarya, sungguh terkait dan terikat pada perbedaan tersebut.

Yogyakarta, September 2011

Enin Supriyanto & Grace Samboh

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* *Judul pameran ini tidak diterjemahkan ke dalam Bahasa Indonesia karena sesungguhnya judul ini merupakan plesetan dari judul karya John Baldessari, How We Do Art Now (1973)*

** *Kajian perihal era-era kemunculan seni video pada 1970-an dari perspektif praktik seni video di Indonesia akan kami hadirkan dalam publikasi pasca-acara.*

How They Did Art Then*

To reconstruct the history of video art is not the aim of this presentation. This presentation tries to present historical works, which is often mentioned, talked about, studied, analyzed, referred, etc, in many publications (and even other works) that have never been screened in Indonesia.

What is so important in bringing these works in today's vigorous development of video in Indonesia? After all, ever since their first event in 2003, OK Video Festival has always presented the latest video works from different parts of Indonesia.

How do we understand video art in Indonesia related to the birth of video art in Europe and USA? It is important for the video creators, observers, collector and viewers to see and to experience these pioneers' works in order to be aware of the historical gap along with the differences in socio-historical dimensions, and aesthetics, especially regarding the fact that video art is such a common practice today. As an example, we can observe how "self identity" or "social identity", for example, never or haven't been considered as an important issue at the time these beginners in video art started recording and showing their works in Berlin and New York in the seventies.

Being an anomaly is not something new in this country. One interesting example is Saya Sasaki Shiraishi's description on the inefficient family members' drop-offs and pick-ups in such a modern city that happened on behalf of "decency" (*Pahlawan-pahlawan Belia/ The Young Heroes*, 2005). "The elders' first," we then 'blame' feudalism with sneer. Whilst only tens years ago to drive a car on the main road is already an indication of the Jakarta's modernity —the existence of asphalt road itself were one of the main indications of a modern country. Up until today, feudalism —which is of course not one of modernity's traits— is still happening without anybody questioning its ineffectiveness for people living in a city as big (and as modern) as Jakarta, along with its traffic jams. If the story had to be written in today's setting, Shiraishi would've had to write how in the middle of such hierarchical act of dropping off and picking up family members, each passenger (of the car) is busy clicking their gadgets (Blackberry, iPhone, iPad, laptops, etc), yet always managed to answer (or react to) anything that comes out of the elders' mouth, even if its only a hum or yawn. Though Indonesia still less than a century old, no body have tried to investigate why feudalisms stayed in our contemporary culture; only a very few people tried to live against it; of course, fewer that actually succeeded; and no body have been trying to redefine modernity in the context of living in Indonesia, being Indonesian.

The absence of curiosity in such dualisms is similar to how identity as an issue is almost non-existing in this presentation of historical videos yet it is one of the main issues any video art (all forms of art) in Indonesia. None of these video artists come from/where brought up in a developing country. Identity is not a difficult question for those whose knowledge in their own being is completed during school time; and even their countries' ideologies are being planted ever since. To them, the invention of such 'handy' audiovisual recording device is a new chance to explore a new medium (as a tool) and at the same time to question the existence/validity of the existing media in arts.

Therefore, in these pioneering videos we can see the domination of the *will to record* (the term used by Ronny Agustinus in his essay *Video: Not All Correct*, 2003) rather than the *will to narrate*. Even when the artists' ideas and thoughts that is being presented in some of these early seventies works, the euphoria of the ability to record (what is believed as) reality is still dominating. Time has, of course, changed that state. Then again, to watch and to experience these works (and to put it in the context of its emergence) is an important baggage for reflection(s) —though we live in the era that never seems to have enough time. Referring to a classic —yet still true— thought of James W. Fowler, people should pass the step of being reflective in order to understand existing paradoxes; then he/she can achieve enlightenment (*Stages of Faith*, 1981).

There's almost nothing mentioning, even alluding, such a basic difference between the emergence of video art in Indonesia and in the world in the (recently so many) texts regarding video (written by Indonesian). It is almost as if this fundamental difference is taken for granted and there's no need to talk about it, as just modernity. Whereas we suspect that this particular difference is actually related and bounded to the underlying decision of using video as a medium (or one of the media) in creating.

Yogyakarta, September 2011

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* *The title of this text is a pun of John Baldessari's title, How We Do Art Now (1973)*

** *Further texts about the emerging era of video art within the perspective of video art practice in Indonesia will be published post-event.*



Alexander Kluge

The Eiffel Tower, King Kong, and the White Woman
25', 1988

Paul McCarthy (with Mike Kelley)

Family Tyranny/Cultural Soup
8'8", 1987

Martha Rosler

A Budding Gourmet
17'45", 1974

Joan Jonas

Songdelay
18'35", 1973

John Baldessari

How We Do Art Now
12'54", 1973

John Cage

Catch 44
39'15", 1971

Nam June Paik (with Jud Yalkut)

Video Synthesizer and "TV Cello" Collectibles
23'25", 1965-1971, color, silent

Steina and Woody Vasulka

Studies
1970-71, 21:53 min, b&w and color, sound

Interface

1970, 4:08 min, b&w, sound

Discs

1970, 5:24 min, b&w, sound

Calligrams

1970, 3:30 min, b&w, sound

Tissues

1970, 1:31 min, b&w, sound

Descends

1970, 4:12 min, b&w, sound



Decay I

1970, 1:57 min, color, sound

Decay II

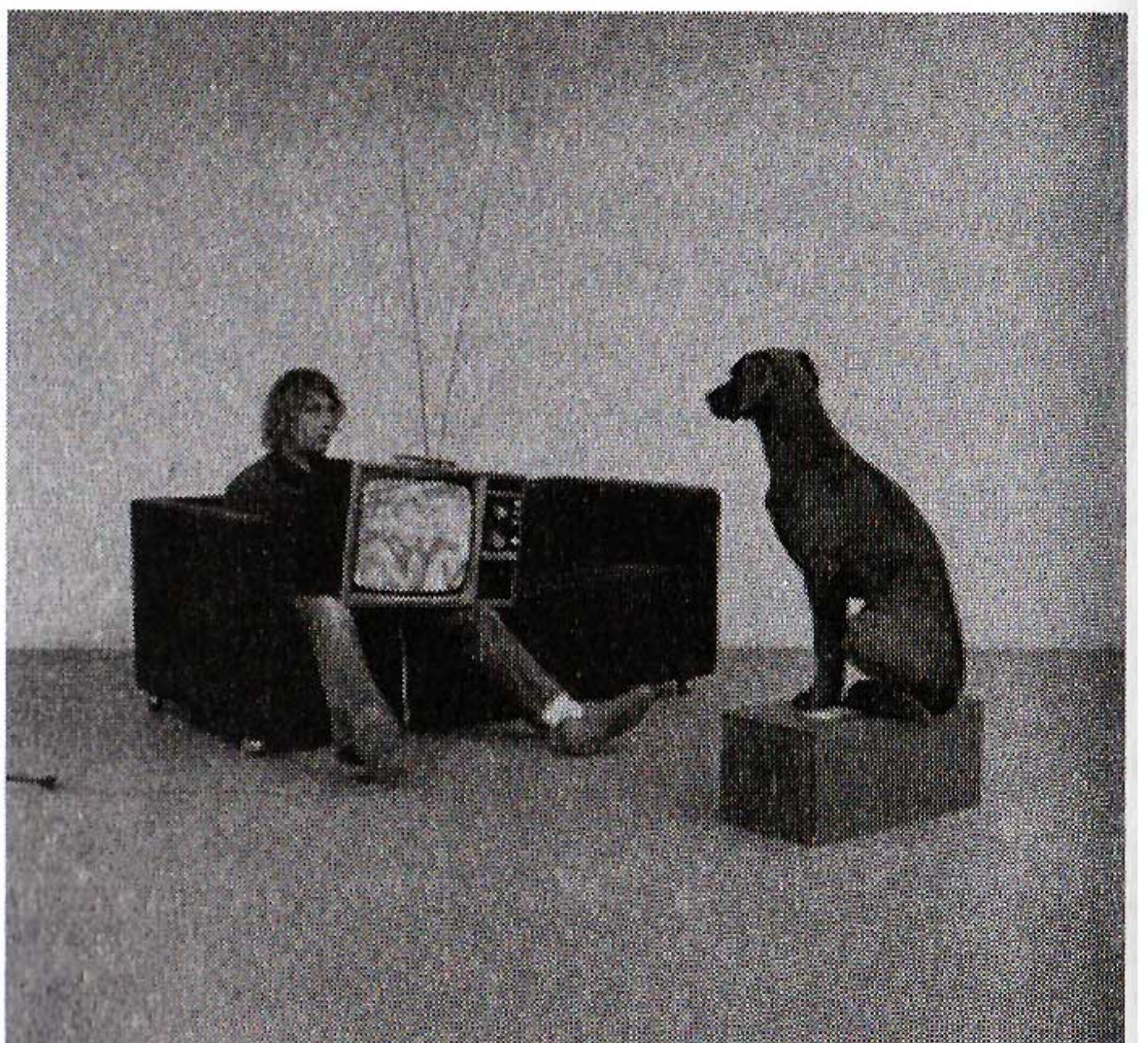
1970, 1:11 min, color, sound

Vito Acconci

Full Circle
1973, 30 min, b&w, sound

William Wegman

William Wegman: Selections from 1970-78
1970-78, 19:11 min, b&w and color



Bill Viola

Memory Surfaces and Mental Prayers
1977, 29 min, color, sound

The Wheel of Becoming
1977, 7:40 min, color, sound

The Morning After the Night of Power
1977, 10:44 min, color, sound

Sweet Light
1977, 9:08 min, color, sound

Gary Hill

Gary Hill: Selected Works I
1975-79, 26:20 min, color, sound

Objects With Destinations
1979, 3:57 min, color, silent

Windows
1978, 8:28 min, color, silent

Bathing
1977, 4:30 min, color, sound

Bits
1977, 2:59 min, color, silent

Mirror Road
1975-76, 6:26 min, color, silent

Cynthia Maughan

Selected Works
1973-1978, 27:02 min, color and b&w, sound

Scar/Scarf
1973-1974, 2:51 min, b&w, sound



Frozen & Buried Alive
1974-1975, 1:30 min, b&w, sound

Coffin from Toothpicks
1975, 1:54 min, b&w, sound

The Causes of Unconsciousness Tabulated for Ready Reference
1975, 2:21 min, b&w, sound

Taking Medicine with Gloves On
1975, 1:27 min, b&w, sound

Razor Necklace
1975, 0:48 min, b&w, sound

The Way Underpants Really Are
1975, 1:17 min, b&w, sound

Pig Mask
1976, 0:56 min, b&w, sound

Poodle
1976, 2:11 min, b&w, sound

Trailer Life
1977, 1:22 min, b&w, sound

Marzipan Pigs
1977, 2:29 min, b&w, sound

Prisoner of Chastity
1977, 0:40 min, b&w, sound

Zebra Skin Clutch
1977-1978, 2:03 min, b&w, sound

I Tell Three Cats about Jail
1977-1978, 1:39 min, b&w, sound

Tamale Pie
1978, 1:56 min, color, sound

Sex Symbol
1978, 0:31 min, color, sound

Calcium Pills
1978, 0:56 min, color,