

Pencatat	IVAA
Tanggal	7 September 2016
Tautan	http://www.art4d.asia/news-detail.php?id=266

Date : 15 OCTOBER 2013

text Tunyaporn Hongtong

The first time I saw **Albert Yonathan Setyawan**'s work was during the **Yogyakarta Biennale** in 2011 at Yogyakarta in Indonesia. At that time, he exhibited a site-specific installation and performance piece under the title *Cosmic Labyrinth: The Bells* (2011), where he arranged more than a hundred pieces of bell-shaped terracotta ceramics in the shape of a circular labyrinth on the floor of the gallery. There was a beaded thread trailing from the center of the labyrinth to a two-dimensional image of a mandala hanging on the wall and the constant sound of ticking from a metronome.

The co-existence of free-form shapes (or what might be called natural forms) and geometric forms can also be found in his paintings. Many a times we see the artist use simple geometric shapes to refer to the powerful forces of nature, such as circles for the sun or the universe and triangles for volcanoes. Once we are familiar with the symbolism in his two-dimensional works, we can then see that they apply to his sculpture and installation works too. Thus, each ceramic is a representation of a human being, even as using a mold ensure a measure of uniformity, the fusion of clay and heat never yields two results that are totally exact, and can be likened to the uniqueness of each human being. When these objects are then arranged in the shape of a labyrinth, it is like how each of us form a part of nature, the world, and the vast universe.

“The nature that I refer to is not only the forests and the trees, and to live with nature is not simply about moving to live in the countryside, that way of thinking is too shallow,” says Setyawan. “What it actually means is to have an understanding of yourself, knowing who you are, what kind of person you are, the extent of your ability to create, and knowing how to live your life. These questions will lead us back to our original nature, irrespective of where we live, whether in the forest, in the countryside or in the city, and whether or not we want to know the answers to those questions.” From the ideas he has presented in his work, the titles he has given to them, the emotions they convey and the various forms that he has employed, it is not difficult to surmise that one of the things that interests this young artist is religion and spirituality.

Pencatat	IVAA
Tanggal	7 September 2016
Tautan	http://www.art4d.asia/news-detail.php?id=266

The development of ideas in Setyawan's work is not the only thing that we should keep an eye out for, as the development in his use of ceramic as a medium may prove equally compelling. So far, the techniques employed in his ceramic works have been quite basic, but the artist is currently enrolled in a master's degree in ceramics at the **Kyoto Seika University**, with the aim of learning Japanese techniques that are known to be very complex and particularly attentive to detail.

“After I saw the works of Japanese ceramic artists and gain an understanding of their outlook, I realized that there is a huge gap between ceramics and contemporary art in Japan. There, ceramics is considered a high art, but their value is one of craftsmanship, as there is hardly any ideas or concepts behind them, and entirely divorced from contemporary art. And what I would like to tell them is that ceramic is a medium that can be used in contemporary art, just look at some of the international artists like **Ai Weiwei** and his use of ceramic in *Sunflower Seeds* (2010) or the work by **Jeff Koons** called *Michael Jackson and Bubbles* (1988), which made use of porcelain. They may have not produced these objects themselves, but they came up with the ideas, and in the end, the idea is the most important thing.”

To liberate ceramics from its place of high art, as well as linking to the notion of physical destruction that would reveal the truth within, after exhibiting his works at the Yogyakarta Biennale, Setyawan took his works back home to show them in an exhibition called *Cosmic Labyrinth: The Bells (Performance session 5)* (2011-12). At the end of the show, he smashed all of the more than a hundred ceramic bells that were arranged in the shape of a labyrinth, to signify the destruction of all the boundaries that have been created.



Albert Yonathan Setyawan
www.albertyonathansetyawan.com