

Art is freedom for young artist Shawnee



Jakarta artist Shawnee Puti in front of some of her works.

JAKARTA (JP): It's an unusual, startling self-portrait, where nothing is plainly visible in terms of form as the artist offers only the power of colors, composition and firm lines.

That is all that Shawnee Puti makes clearly visible of herself in *Self Portrait II*.

It is interesting to observe how this young artist, born in Jakarta 25 years ago, powerfully conveys the piercing symbolism in her works, which are on display in Jak@art2001 Gallery on the ground floor of the S. Widjojo Center, Jl. Sudirman 71, Central Jakarta, until March 25.

Shawnee has had a uniquely dynamic life, and the seething restlessness in the strokes she makes with her brush only intensified upon studying how to paint formally in an art and sculpture course in New York two years ago.

For her, painting is an expression of freedom in the freest sense of the word.

"Actually, I do not have any particular concept — for me, painting simply flows. When I am in the mood I will pour my ideas on the canvas. On the whole, my works are the result of this process. I take painting as a means to express freedom

By Aendra H. Medita

in a very liberal sense," she said. "It is through painting that my emotions can be discharged. And for me, freedom is painting an emotional freedom which gives strength for a major goal, namely the work."

So she goes in her adventures in life and painting, following the waves of her emotion and restlessness. It is out of her great curiosity that she has resorted to putting all of her adventures on canvas.

Poet and journalist Goenawan Mohammad noted in his remarks when opening Shawnee's exhibit that she is an artist fed with a new energy in her own creative adventure, seemingly unaffected by what is now happening in the country.

"Emotional waves and restlessness may be part of my journey in painting because I have a great curiosity, a curiosity which is free and unfettered," Shawnee said.

Shawnee is exhibiting 21 of her paintings, great in diversity and at times shocking. These works reveal a spatial contem-

plation of a new capacity for the wishes of the artist, the manifestation of a restlessness about a tumult, either felt meaningfully or related to the surroundings.

Her pictures give an idea about what is seen within the surge of power of symbolism. Shawnee's works have other forms that imply a sublime power in a discourse about herself, where bitterness, levity and depression become noticeable as one, in such a way that her works have their own essence. Despite the brief sparkle of the works, only a subjective tumult is found within.

Shawnee tries through her art to get close to subjects that other artists do not touch. These constitute the dynamism of the lines based on Shawnee's journeys in a number of her works, her wandering to create paintings based on her spirit and work.

Take a look at *Untitled 1998*. Here Shawnee glues on the canvas a long piece of wood she found in New York and then worked on with yellow, black, red and blue. She added the heads of matches, a Polaroid photo and the picture of an eye cut from a magazine. All these things combine into one and are stuck on a white canvas with the right-side left empty, for the viewer to fill in. That is her strength.

Sky Eye II shows a head, Shawnee's accent in creating a collage of paintings with meta's

and a small mirror used as the object of an eye. This work obviously differs from her other paintings, because her spontaneous scrawls makes the head dominant in the space.

In *Self Portrait II*, Shawnee is capable of playing with manipulative symbolization in presenting a self-portrait that is not conventionally visible, a reason to call this work the manifestation of alienated restlessness.

In *One Without Eye*, the composition manipulated is no longer a symbol but a shocking, rambling use of colors.

In these works, Shawnee shows greater contemplation so that the impression arising from her adventures can be conveyed with greater wisdom.

In addition to these works from 1997 to the present, there are six sketches, a memory of trips to Israel and New York and her life Jakarta. Although there is nothing particularly prominent in the sketches, they are more than mere symbols as they go deep into the artist's own experience, showing her restless heart.

Imaginative, intuitive and with that shocking quality which arrests the viewer, Shawnee Puti's works do not make for easy interpretation. But she is delving deeply into herself, and in exploring her own journeys also challenging observers to look into themselves.