

Pencatat	IVAA
Tanggal	6 September 2016
Tautan	<a href="http://jakartaglobe.beritasatu.com/features/modern-art-takes-center-stage-new-exhibition/">http://jakartaglobe.beritasatu.com/features/modern-art-takes-center-stage-new-exhibition/</a>

## Modern Art Takes Center Stage in New Exhibition



*An ongoing exhibition at the Pacific Place mall in Jakarta hopes to emphasize to collectors and the public that there is so much more to Indonesian contemporary art than paintings and sculptures. (JG Photos/Tunggul Wirajuda)*

**By : Tunggul Wirajuda** | on 12:50 PM July 23, 2014

**Category : Life & Style, Arts & Culture**

As images of Sukarno hobnobbing with foreign dignitaries or celebrities go, this one was nothing out of the ordinary, considering his iconic status as Indonesia's founding father and a leading figure in the Non-Aligned Movement.

He was also something of a ladies' man, so it made sense that he appeared at ease in the company of Jackie Kennedy, Marilyn Monroe and Elizabeth Taylor, seemingly holding them in thrall with his wit and charm.

But the photo has more up its sleeve than meets the eye.

"The work depicting Sukarno and the celebrities isn't really a photograph, it's actually a photomontage," says art collector Wiyu Wahono of the work "Sejarah X 6" by Indonesian contemporary artist Agan Harahap, which is part of his collection.

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“While Sukarno was known to have been acquainted with Kennedy, Monroe and Taylor, he never actually met all of them at the same time. ‘Sejarah X 6’ is Agan’s way of touching on our collective memory and challenging our notions of reality, as well as the idea that photographs can’t lie. The work shows how this perception still persists, despite advances in technology that saw the development of Photoshop and other photo editing applications.”

Wiyu notes that Agan’s challenges of perceptions don’t end there. “At first glance, Agan’s ‘Deus Ex Machina’ series is not art, it’s nothing more than a set of X-rays. But take a closer look, and you will see that he will put in cogs in the skeleton’s heart, a gun among their brains, and other mechanical contraptions,” he says of the work, which is in the collection of fellow aficionado Indra Leonardi. “The X-rays are maybe Agan’s apt commentary on the increased dependence of people on items like cars and smartphones today, a development made possible by strides in technology.”

Curator Carla Bianpoen agrees as she highlights the juxtaposition between the fineness of the human body and the roughness of the workman’s tools, in what is perhaps also an allusion to industrialization.

Agan is one of 13 contemporary Indonesian artists whose works are featured in the exhibition “No Painting Today,” which is on show from July 14-20 at the Pacific Place mall in Jakarta. The 21 works come from the collection of Wiyu, Indra and other collectors like Arif Suhirman, Nicholas Tan and Tom Tandio.

“The exhibition title ‘No Painting’ is a form of protest against the excessively major standing of painting among Indonesian art collectors, and how a fixation on the artform, as well as sculptures, has kept the true message of contemporary art from being disseminated,” Wiyu says.

“Though I’m not averse to painting, provided it has a strong context, contemporary art is more than just painting and sculpture, as it’s not specific to any medium, in line with the artists’ efforts to attain more artistic freedom and make works that are more in the round.”

This determination not to be pigeonholed and to find something new in art can be seen in the anonymous gallery, that is only identified as “Pacific Place Level 1 Unit 67.”

### **Getting a start in art collecting**

“I started collecting art in 1999, a year after I got back to Indonesia after living for 20 years in Berlin. When I started out, I collected paintings like any other art aficionado,” says Wiyu, a mechanical engineer specializing in plastic ware who previously lectured at the Technical University of Berlin.

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“I only started collecting contemporary art seven or eight years ago, though I was familiar with the genre after seeing it in Berlin’s New National Gallery. I also refined my taste over time and by reading art books to get a better perspective of contemporary art,” he says.

“I started off by collecting the works of contemporary artists from Yogyakarta, though in recent years I expanded to collecting the works of contemporary artists from Bandung as well. As home to Indonesia’s two art centers, the Bandung Institute of Technology [ITB] and the Yogyakarta Indonesian Fine Arts Institute, they’ve really brought out the elements that make the contemporary artworks distinctive.”

Wiyu adds that as an institution founded by the Dutch, ITB is noted for its by-the-book, analytical approach, while the Fine Arts Institute is more spontaneous, as Sukarno charged it to establish art without formal foundations or art theory.

“Though the former seems colorless compared to the latter, the context behind their art carries it through, while the latter’s sporadic outbursts of creativity are erratic and make them one of a kind,” Wiyu says.

Wiyu and his fellow collectors continue to explore the potential of the artists. He says that doing so will maintain their livelihood and keep their visions alive.

### **A microcosm of diversity**

Wiyu says that much of Indonesia’s contemporary art derives its strength and character from the nation’s diversity, a trend that art critic Jim Supangkat calls pluralist modernity.

“Many great artists make masterpieces when they move from their homeland and get transplanted to another culture, like Willem de Koning from the Netherlands to New York City, or Paul Gauguin from France to Tahiti,” he says.

“Artists in Indonesia don’t need to go such long distances to get inspired. For instance, an aspiring artist from Bali can make great art if he moves to Bandung, as Sundanese culture might add another perspective to his craft that can complete it. An artist from Bandung can move to Jakarta and make great work after getting inspired by its hustle and bustle. Even foreign artists aren’t oblivious to this, as they keep coming to Indonesia to be inspired.”

But Wiyu says challenges still remain.

“The narrow perceptions of what constitute art held by many Indonesian collectors keeps them from seeing this potential wealth and hampering many Indonesian

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contemporary artists from realizing their full potential, as they only emphasize decorative arts and form over function, which makes them seek the works of past masters like Raden Saleh or Affandi. On the other hand, much of contemporary art is all about context, especially with the times or zeitgeist, which runs counter to their notion of using aesthetics in art to move emotions,” he says.

However, Wiyu says these challenges have not stopped artists like Angki Purbandono, whose work “The Secrets of Honor” is in his collection.

“It’s is a scan of a pendant on a square of butter. The texture of the butter gradually melting is captured in detail that’s rare to catch” Wiyu says of the work, which perhaps alludes to how nothing lasts. “His other work, ‘Sunflower Snack,’ which is in Nicholas Tan’s collection might just be a generic scan. But it’s a poignant reminder of the time he did behind bars for drug use, as he noted that the other inmates were also snacking on it.”

Wiyu is optimistic that contemporary art will thrive and evolve in Indonesia.

“Perhaps contemporary art will turn into what I call post-contemporary art, which is deep in context, aesthetics and mass appeal. This might just happen due to the pluralism of Indonesian society and the growing interest the Indonesian people take in the arts,” he says.