

Nuraeni's art reflects mentor's influence

Is Nuraeni still under the shadow of her late husband, noted painter Hendra Gunawan, or has she managed to set herself free?

This question hopefully can be answered by the painter through an exhibition of 45 of her works done between 1968 and 2001. The exhibition was initiated by d gallerie manager Ulfa H. Waworuntu, with one intention, to let Nuraeni step out of her husband's shadow.

Fans of Hendra's works would be delighted seeing Nuraeni's paintings, as most of them are imbued with his strong influence.

The influence lies not only in the objects, which mostly depict the activities of ordinary people — such as in *Wanita dan Ikan* (Woman and Fish), *Cari Kutu I* and *Cari Kutu II* (Searching for Fleas I and II) and *Dagang Sayur* (Vegetable Traders) — but also in the choice of colors. Maybe, this influence helped the brisk sale of the paintings as most of the paintings were sold during the opening of the exhibition on Oct. 19.

The absence of an individual style in the 46-year-old woman's paintings, however, also disappointed many who expected to see her stamp in her paintings.

It seems that not only Hendra's ideas were absorbed by Nuraeni, but also his techniques, details in composition, space blocking, harmony and colors.

Nuraeni admitted that, like Hendra, her source of inspiration for color themes was based on colorful Sundanese cloth. However, this contradicted the widely held belief that Hendra's colors were inspired by the rich hues of fish in the ocean.

Leaving aside the debate on source of color, upon careful inspection, one can detect a hint of her struggle to discard Hendra's influence. However, the effort is not entirely successful. On the contrary her efforts disturbed the aesthetic aspect of her work, as can be seen in the paintings done after her husband's death in 1983.

The paintings produced

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since 1989 like *Gadis Model Kuning* (The Yellow Model, 2000) and *Tiga Wanita Selandang Biru* (Three Women with Blue Shawls, 1999) give the impression of being stronger and freer.

When asked why she returned to Hendra's style in her latest works, she said: "The more I wanted to distance myself from Hendra, the more I felt disturbed. Then I told *Pak* Jim Supangkat (art critic) about this and he advised me: 'That's okay, no need to distance yourself'."

The influence is understandable because Nuraeni, who has no formal art training, had been tutored by Hendra and was imbued with his influence for years.

According to Jim Supangkat, who was present on the opening night, Nuraeni is not alone. Many artists are unable to free themselves from the influence of renowned artists. In Nuraeni's case, she could not free herself from Hendra's influence while the works of Kartika, for instance, were also influenced by her father, the late maestro Affandi.

In his opinion, the influence should be turned into a strength, instead of wasting time and energy attempting to get rid of it.

Nuraeni herself is not a prolific painter. So far, she has had five solo exhibitions and taken part in 10 joint exhibitions in Jakarta and Bandung.

Exposing Nuraeni exhibition is being held at d gallerie, Jl. Barito 1/3, Kebayoran Baru, South Jakarta and runs until Nov. 2, 2001.



JP/A. Nara Krisnā

Gadis Model Kuning (Yellow Model, *photo above*) and Ngasuh II (Babysitting II) are two of 45 works by Nuraeni, wife of the late painter Hendra Gunawan.

