

# Sri Warso Wahono exploits women's beauty in sketches

**A** lone, idle, displaying fatigue, loneliness and restlessness, here and there, naked and waiting — on the bed or on a chair in the sitting room.

These are the women of Sri Warso Wahono's sketches, being exhibited at Galeri Cipta III, Taman Ismail Marzuki, Central Jakarta, from Nov. 1 to Nov. 10, along with his sketches of other subject matter, like fish, flowers, cities and landscapes.

Of course, the women in Warso's sketches are different from those featured in the works of Liem Keng (Surabaya), who usually depicts his subjects performing physical labor, such as carrying a load on their heads (common among Madurese women) or taking a great quantity of vegetables to the market in a *becak* (three-wheeled pedicab) or even selling fish in the market.

The expressions we can observe in the women Warso has captured in his sketches may be related to his fondness for drawing female models in space - a room or a house - with two kinds of awareness running together: the awareness of an artist and the

awareness of a model deliberately posing for a sketch. He also has his own creed for the creative process: a sketch equals beauty!

The two kinds of awareness referred to above can also be found in photography. A salon photographer takes pictures

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in co-operation with his subjects, while a war photographer does his job with a one-way awareness, in the sense that he takes a picture only when the artistic moment is right. In other words, his subjects do not realize that they have become subjects.

Warso, however, is not a sketch painter who likes to "steal" artistic moments. He is not like Teguh Ostenrik, for example, who turns his models upside down in his pursuit of unusual angles. That's why the women in Warso's sketches generally appear in a familiar perspective.

What is unusual is his lavish use of lines. Lines with

dots, dark and bright, shaded and smudged with pencil, the gradation of the black ink and the white base of the canvas or the paper and the confusion in texture - they all conspire to emphasize the presence of objects in the spatial and temporal context.

In sketches, there are at least two prevailing techniques that ensure the survival of the art form at home and abroad. Some sketch artists are highly economical in their use of lines while others, like Warso, apply them in a much more generous way.

Nevertheless, the more mature the painter, the deeper his level of thought about the essence of things, a situation leading to a more economical use of lines. Such a painter can be likened to a highly skilled swordsman.

With one movement of the sword, a thousand heads will be separated from their bodies. On the other hand, a novice in the use of a sword will move his weapon many times without beheading anybody because the direction of his blade is wide of the mark.

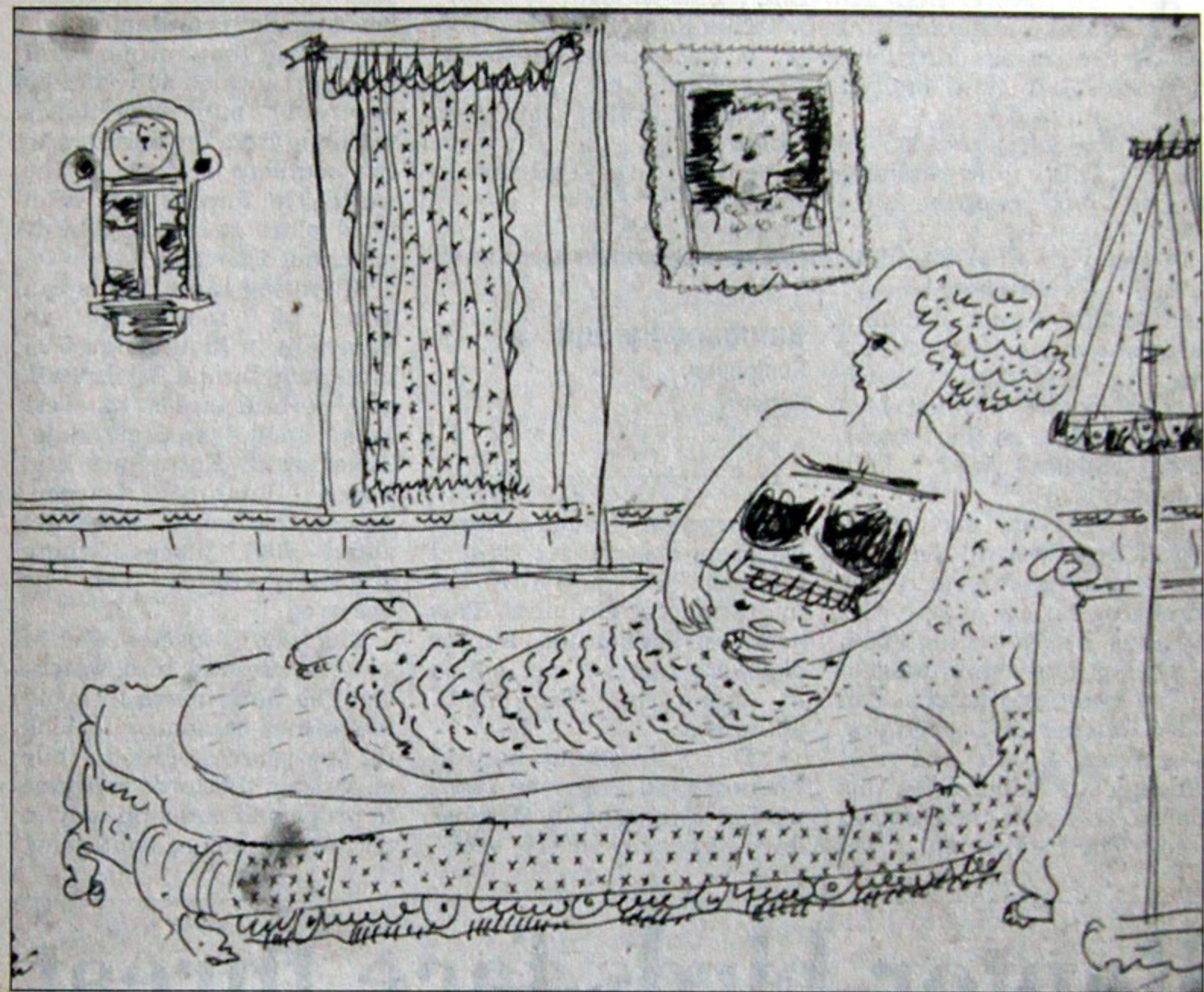
Warso is indeed no newcomer to fine art circles. Born in Surakarta, Central Java, in

1948, he has completed some 200 sketches since 1978, most of which are featured in the exhibition now under way.

He has 14 solo exhibitions to his credit and has joined dozens of joint exhibitions at home and abroad, such as the Bienalle International in Poland, the ASEAN Fine Art Exhibition, the KIAS program and an exhibition in Brazil.

Warso is also widely known as a speaker and observer of the fine art scene, although he is not as prolific as Agus Dermawan T. A civil servant working for the Jakarta administration, he is currently assigned to the Museum of Shadow Puppets. Between 1985 and 1996 he was a member of the executive board of the Jakarta Arts Council as first secretary or head of the fine arts committee.

His present exhibition is part of the program drawn up to commemorate the 33rd anniversary of the Jakarta Arts Center. It is interesting to consider why, despite the celebratory mood, the women in Warso's sketches do not look dynamic. Are they overwhelmed by a great concern for the future of the Taman Ismail Marzuki?



JP/A. Nara Krisna

Sri Warso Wahono's *Di Sofa* (On the Couch) is one of his sketches on display at the Galeri Cipta III, Taman Ismail Marzuki, Central Jakarta.