

# Yani Mariani Sastranegara

## seeks endless growth

As one stands before Yani Mariani Sastranegara's installation at CP Biennale in the Nasional Galeri (National Gallery), one just can't help being drawn into an atmosphere of profound pondering.

River stones that are normally stuck firmly under water or against the river-sides, are now hanging in the air, mirrored in the pool of water beneath. Suspending the more than 600 stones of varying sizes from the ceiling, fine transparent threads, of differing lengths, give the stones an even more mysterious appearance.

The awe-inspiring installation breathes the air of the forest and the river at the same time. But the stirring stones are also like surreal images coming from another world.

It reflects Yani Mariani's haunting search for truth in the phenomenon of life and death. Is there an end to life, must growth stop at a certain point, or can it continue in endless sequence?

This is the fourth stage of the artist's search. An accomplished artist whose experience with monolith sculptures is widely recognized, Yani Mariani is also a dreamer whose imagery often enters the world of illusion.

Gradually, she felt the

need for more space to express what was inside her.

A trekking, hiking and mountaineering enthusiast, she came to sense the balance of yin and yang in nature. She also found that nature evolved in a way that did not make a problem of life and death; there was no real end and growth was endless. This was the point where she started her hanging installations.

---

### Carla Bianpoen

Contributor  
Jakarta

---

In 2002 she leaped from the sculptural plains into the wide spaces of installation art. It was a leap that swept her right into the center of attention of the Indonesian art world.

Her installation of polyresin, clay and broken pieces of clay was a stirring masterwork suggesting life and decay in a world of magic that lies between fantasy and the surreal.

*Endless*, as she titled the installation in January 2002, suggests that life should have no end and growth should therefore continue at all times.

Haunted by the eternal question of where the limit

of growth might actually be, Yani's *Endless* took to the space stretching over the earth. As many as 1,800 irregular forms, abstractions of broken pieces of plant roots, were each knotted to thin transparent strings, then hung, floating in the air.

As if swept by a blowing storm, the whole lot of white polyresin little abstract cubes appears as if rising to the endless heavens, rushing over the plants and roots that seem to be breaking out from the soil.

Where actually lay the limit of growth? The question kept haunting her, and she went back to nature, to the lush forests where she

used to walk, her hand held by her father, the places where she later loved to wander in lonely solitude, immersed in the many hidden realities of plant growth and decay.

Trekking and mountaineering and staying with such ethnic groups as the Baduy in Banten reinforced her intrinsic bond with nature even more.

Feeling the tension of being pulled between the two poles of growth as well as decline, she also felt there must be a hidden power inside the earth that generates the process as it occurs in life. Nature then, does have limits for growth,

resulting in decay.

Uniquely, withering away in nature does not pose any problem, the process is peaceful; new sprouts denote a new beginning.

Life and growth, according to the artist, is like that.

Such revelations were presented in her second installation, *Endless II*, in September 2002. Cracked ceramic vessels, giving the illusion of fireworks by their illumination from within, included broken pieces hung on transparent strings above the vessels, the whole suggesting the power of nature's forces in budding as well as destroying life, but also to pick up the pieces and incite new beginnings.

It seems Yani is not easily satisfied and the issue of growth relentlessly preoccupies her thoughts. *Endless III* was a variation of *Endless II*. While she had intermittently come to the conclusion that there was no endless growth, and life and death belonged to one inevitable circle, the quest has never left her.

So she returned to the place where she was born. Here, where the river and its stones used to be part of the village's lifeblood, she made another effort to find the answer to her query.

But while its visualization evokes a sense of the awesome, the answer must bide



CP Foundation

Yani Mariani Sastranegara at work. Suspending the more than 600 stones of varying sizes from the ceiling, fine transparent threads, of differing lengths, give the stones an even more mysterious appearance.

its time. In fact, Yani had hoped to find a clue this time, when reflections of splintered stones glued to the wall and of whole stones would meet in the mirror of the pool. But the curators advised her to abandon the splintered stones.

Perhaps this was a blessing in disguise, and we may look forward to Yani Mariani's continued efforts to visualize yet another stage in her search.

For now, *Endless IV* is as haunting to the visitor as the quest to the artist.

*Endless IV at CP Open Biennale 2003. Sept. 4 through Oct. 3, Galeri Nasional, Jl. Medan Merdeka Timur, opposite Gambir Station, Central Jakarta. Open every day except Mondays.*