

Yogi paints comic situations with serious meaning

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A serious message can sometimes be conveyed in a light manner. Though they appear to be humorous and comical, paintings by Yogi Setyawan actually have a deeper meaning.

Through the deformed, funny characters in his paintings, the 30-year-old artist skillfully portrays irony, captured from his daily activities, friends' experiences and what is happening in the community.

"Life is basically full of funny things. Only that we ignore them and overlook them because we are too busy or things are just too common for us," said the Magelang-born Yogi on the sidelines of his solo exhibition being held here at Bentara Budaya Yogyakarta until Aug. 28, 2004.

Entitled *Guyon Maton*, which literally means meaningful jokes in Javanese, and was officially opened on Aug. 20, the exhibition has on display 16 of Yogi's paintings that he created from 1997 to 2004.

Among the exhibited paintings are *Pelukis dan Cantriknya* (A Painter and His Pupil), oil paint on canvas; *Bakule Duren Ayu Tenan* (The Durian Seller is Really Beautiful), acrylic on canvas; *Tukang Sulap di Pasar Malam* (A Magician at the Night Fair) acrylic on canvas; *Makan siang di Warung Ijo* (Lunch at the Ijo roadside cafe), acrylic on canvas, and *Yazinan* (Yasin

Recital), watercolor on paper.

His choice of objects perhaps, may seem incongruous, but his strength lies in the way he puts them in a asymmetric physical shapes.

"Actually, this is the way I respond to everyday living. I always look at the funny side of things, express those in paintings and hoping they entertaining, while sending a real message. So, it's not just funny but meaningful too," said Yogi, who has just graduated from the Indonesian Institute of Fine Arts (ISI), explaining why he entitled the exhibition Meaningful Jokes.

He considered the title suitable for the exhibition because it does not only show the funny side of life in the community, but displays his personal experiences and memories that have inspired him to create.

"Any experience or event is noticed by me, just like a personal log," said Yogi.

Another interesting little bit of vanity perhaps in Yogi's paintings, is that he, like Alfred Hitchcock's brief little cameos in his films, inserts a little self-portrait in almost of all of his paintings. The self-portrait, too, is a caricature that often gets a chuckle from viewers.

In *Pelukis dan Cantriknya*, for example, he pictures how he learned paintings from (the late) Maestro H. Widayat. Once, he did *nyantrik* (learn how to paint as a non-formal pupil) from H. Widayat.

He also described himself as one of the customers of a female herbal drink vendor

in *Jamune Yu Sum Pancen Lheb* (Yu Sum's herbal drink is really delicious).

"I do so because I consider myself an inseparable part of the painting, inseparable part of what I paint on canvas," said Yogi, who claimed to be the admirer of the paintings of the country's top artists Affandi, Hendra Gunawan and Sudjono Kerton.

Art critic Suwarno Wisetrotomo of ISI Yogyakarta considers Yogi's self-portrait an honest expression.

"It seems he wants to make a confirmation that the picture on the canvas is nothing but a piece of a reality show where he himself is one of the actors," Suwarno said.

Born as the sixth child of seven siblings, Yogi started painting while a vendor of souvenir plates in Yogyakarta, Bali, Jakarta and Bandung. He later went to ISI Yogyakarta in 1994 and continued selling souvenirs to pay the tuition.

He has been part of a number of painting exhibitions both in the country and abroad. He has also won a number of awards. Most notably, the Grand Prize Winner and First Place Winner at the International Poster Paintings Championship in New York, the U.S. (1998), the Best Oil Painting Award from ISI Yogyakarta (1997), and the Best Acrylic Painting Award from ISI Yogyakarta (1996). He was also among the finalists of the National Painting Contest Indofood Arts Awards (2004).



Guyon Maton Exhibition

Bakule Duren Ayu Tenan (The durian seller is really beautiful)