

Translation of “Rekamen diskusi kaset 1”
Megan Hewitt

Discussion recording cassette 1:

RIKI

Since this is not a ceremony, we can begin without having to beat a gong or cut a ribbon.

Um...heh...heh...

Oh, Fadin may want to cut the ribbon? No? No...no...oh hehehe...

Okay. Um...ahem... First, of course, we have to thank all our friends who have taken the time to be here. I mean it, this is not just lip service.

Alright. Um...ahem...

As we all know, and as was written in the invitation letter, um...this discussion today takes place in a long series of events that we are referring to as the “Binal Experimental Arts.”

Um...This year the Binal Experimental Arts started on August 27th and will end today, July 4th.

Um...the Binal Experimental Arts...um...takes place in several locations, namely around Bulaksumur UGM, at SeniSono, in private homes, and also in...um... the North Square (*Alun-Alun Utara*). We are also planning something at...um...Tugu Station (*Stasiun Tugu*).

In each of these locations we present the works of...um...of young artists from Jogjakarta.

Overall...um... the events and activities of the Binal are intended to make the life of art more dynamic in Jogjakarta.

To “make more dynamic” means...um...honestly, those of us that organized these activities feel that there is something...something stagnant in the life of art in Jogjakarta.

Um...more about the Binal will be discussed later by our colleague Dadang Kris.

However ahem...um...as with other arts events...um...the Binal, we can assume...um...is just the tip of the iceberg. Which means that this is just the small and easily visible part of a much larger and not as apparent structure underneath.

Um...the intention for this discussion is to attempt to dive down and better identify underlying cultural structures. Therefore, let me present our speakers. Um...speaking first and sitting beside me is Franky Raden.

Um...Franky was born in Jakarta in 1953. Later in 1974...um...according to this entry it says... um...Franky? It is that you entered or left?

FR

Entered...entered...hehe...

FIKI

Entered. So not...not left, okay. In 1974, he entered The Arts Institute of Jakarta (*Institut Kesenian Jakarta*). And then in 1976 also entered into the Driyakar School of Philosophy (*Sekolah Tinggi Filsafat Driyarkara*). Then in 1990...um...received your MA, yes? ...at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, majoring in ethnomusicology. And now...um...Franky is currently finishing his PhD dissertation at the same university, ahem...majoring in ethnomusicology and performance art. I don't think I need to elaborate any further.

Um...why don't we go ahead and begin. We will start with Franky Raden. We are not restrained by time but I think we also do not need to elaborate too greatly. With that, please, go ahead.

FR

Hello...Test...

Thank you Riki.

Um...um...It is an honor and a wonderful opportunity that I can be here in the midst so many friends. Up until this point I had only come to Jogja as not much more than a...tourist who visits for a few days just to return home again. This time I wanted to spend more time in Jogja and, by chance, there also happened to be this exciting event. Therefore I was offered to speak in this forum and I gladly...um...accepted Dadang's offer. He called me in Jakarta and asked me to speak on the topic of counterculture. At that time, I was somewhat...um...I was somewhat bothered, actually. I didn't want to confirm or reject the topic Dadang proposed to me over the phone, it would take too much time to explain and cost a lot in phone bills. So I agreed at that time. But, it is actually a bit...um...difficult for me to talk about the problem of counterculture because, for example, speaking about counterculture means that we assume there is a mainstream culture, of which I don't see as a problem in the context of Indonesia. I am afraid of being caught in a seemingly very thin dichotomy between mainstream culture and counterculture. I do, however, understand your intentions, Dadang, in what you wanted to ask me to speak about. Therefore, I wrote a paper that may allude to the question of counterculture. It is just...um...not exactly what was requested by Dadang. Um...in this case I will talk about the position and role of modern art in the context of...um...our society. Of course, this is an immense topic and I know will...will.. if I talk about this, what will happen is a great simplification of the problem. Nevertheless I think this forum might be an interesting and exciting place for...um...talking about modern art in the context of...um...our society, especially within the Binal event. I also think that in order to discuss this topic in a way that is...um...simple, I might...maybe I will dare to justify some simplifications...some simplifications in my paper. With that, I have decided to talk about this topic today.

Um...in traditional society, art is a part of practical, everyday life. One does not need to create a specific space or time for artistic activities. Art is not an institution that stands autonomos and alone in the midst of the practical life of the community. Art in traditional societies is the motor representing the social, cultural, moral, and religious aspects of life.

Let me tell you about my experience a few years ago observing the cultural life of a community of Dayak people in East Kalimantan. At that time I lived in a village named *Tanjung Manis*, where there is a tribe called the *Kenyahukma'tau*, or *Ma'tau*. The *Ma'tau* live in houses they called *lamin*. The *lamin* houses can be divided into separate rooms to fit a number of families. The porch on a *lamin* house is a long hallway. The *Tanjung Manis* community live as farmers with a mobile farming system. Every morning nearly all of the residents leave their houses around 5AM in the morning to go to fields far from the village. Around 5PM they return from the fields. After resting for a moment, residents of the *lamin* come out of their rooms one-by-one and gather on the long porch. Some of them bring stringed musical instruments called a *sampek*. They usually begin this gathering by sharing stories of what they experienced in the fields that day. Eventually the *sampek* players begin playing. After all of the residents of the *lamin* have

gathered, they then begin to sing a kind of choral music, called *kendau* or *alau*. Poems of *kendau* recount important events in the history of their tribe, especially moments from the battlefield. These poems form moral teachings in the context of their system of cultural values. Everyone from every segment of their society are interested in hearing these stories, especially the children and teenagers. They gathering on the porch takes place nearly everyday, and is basically a process of transmitting cultural values represented in the arts. Thus, the arts occupy a vital position in their everyday lives; art is part of the practical life of the community. Art has a clear function and status here. Now we have to ask ourselves, what is the role of modern art in our environment, in an urban community? Before answering this questions, we must first parse through the environmental situations of modern life in Indonesia today. From the position of culture, I get the sense that our environment is increasingly oriented toward the West. What Sutan Takdir Alihsjabana aspired to 60 years ago during the outbreak of cultural debates, now seems to have manifested itself. At that time, destiny seemed be encouraging us to transfer Western culture into ours, especially in terms of science and technology. Science and technology could not be obtained without capital. Therefore, what was recommended by fate was then realized when, in the mid-60s, the New Order regime carried out development strategies oriented towards a capitalist economic system. Now, I would like to invite you to understand what is truly at the core of the capitalist system. Capitalism is a cultural system, a Western ideology, debated even at the moment of its emergence. Some historical experts say that capitalism has existed since 12th century Europe. While other experts say that it emerged in the 15th or 18th centuries when the feudal system began to fracture. In essence, capitalism is an economic system referring to an endless pattern of profit and capital accumulation. Success in the system presupposes the existence of maximum surplus. The capitalist system has many ways of pursuing a maximum surplus. The first is through extremely efficient production, for example, by creating intensive division of labor. The second, by pressuring workers to work harder with as little pay as possible. Third, by expanding the market as wide as possible to justify aggressive political and military pressure or propaganda, and not hesitating to confront the norms that exist in society.

As a consequence of this system, capitalism requires a collective mechanism encouraging consumerism in all aspects of human life. The most effective way to achieve this is to create apparent needs, meaning that these needs do not come from the individual. Propaganda is used as a tactic to exploit and manipulate human consciousness. To monopolize on satisfying these apparent needs, capitalism seeks to create an integrated and uniform value system worldwide. From here emerge the efforts of capitalists to industrialize culture. What is currently heralded by the term “globalization” is actually another face of westernization because it contains the seeds of Western cultural hegemony. Therefore it cannot be...um...culture today cannot be interpreted as an arena of battle. Western nations are most concerned with the spread of the capitalist system. In order to win this war without the use of military and technology, they use other weapons that are no less powerful; they use the ideologies of universalism and modernism. With these ideological weapons, Western nations then successfully convince third world societies that they are backward nations, and that Western culture is universal culture and therefore it becomes legal to own all other nations. The historical development of modern Indonesian culture reveals how our intellectuals, especially Sutan Alihsjabana in the early 20s, have been consumed by a capitalist ideology. In 1960, Rostow made a very convincing

argument about the ideology of modernism. He said that the development of the world is divided into 4 stages: a traditional stage, a transitional stage, a “leveling-off” stage, and a stage of prosperity.

In this context, Western society is the only society to achieve a level of prosperity. Therefore the development of Western civilization, according to Rostow, should be taken as a model for the future development of third world societies. Inevitably, and without a doubt, the New Order regime...the New Order regime, controlled by the Berkeley mafia, are currently risking the development of national life, of our national lives, in the arena created by Rostow mentioned previously. If we think critically about this, we can see that the ideologies of modernism and universalism, and no other set of attitudes, are very ethno...ethnocentric and superior.

Equipped with three sources of strength, as mentioned earlier: military, technology, and ideology. It is no wonder that Western nations have managed to create networks of exploitation stretching across the majority of nations on earth. Indonesia is not excluded from the global capitalist system, or what we now call globalization. By observing the patterns and behaviors by which the government applies mechanisms of development in Indonesia, it is clear to see that this approach is based on what is called “Instrumental Reason.” A mode of reasoning in capitalist society oriented towards things that are pragmatic and materialistic. Take for example how they [the Indonesian government] handle...tackle the current economic crisis. They exploit natural resources for the purpose of export, exploit cultural life for the purposes of tourism, place trust a capitalist state, and resolve social problems with brutality.

The development strategy of the New Order regime places emphasis on economic issues [modeled from the West], at the same time neglecting to realize the failure of modernization in Western capitalist countries whose path of development have already severely afflicted human dignity and created 1001 insurmountable social problems. From my experience living for 5 years in America—a giant capitalist country—I have seen with my own eyes how the capitalist system is oriented to the accumulation of capital, and is terribly dismissive of millions of human lives in the pursuit of profit in order to avoid material losses. An example is the case of Northrop, a giant nuclear factory in America. At one time this company faced a problematic deadline set by the United States government to complete an order for making nuclear weapons. At that time there were several broken parts on the warheads. If they ordered the spare parts, however, it would take more time than their deadline allowed. Northrop faced a major potential loss for their company. In this situation, and without thinking once about the millions of souls their decision could effect, Northrop decided to buy the necessary spare parts at RadioShack, an electronics store found in many public shopping centers. This is a portrait of the core ideology of capitalism, oriented solely towards big profit. Additionally, American society over emphasizes the development of science, technology, politics, and economy, and because of this, also faces many negative social and environmental problems resulting as a kind of boomerang from a capitalist cultural system. For example, problems emerge such as drugs, AIDS, prostitution and underage sex, abortion, rape, crime, racism, pollution, and so forth. The capitalist system only accounts for the development of science, technology, politics, and economy. In order to measure the level of prosperity or success in creating sustainability, other social problems need be included in the same package. If we can do that, then we can situate the problems of Western culture in fuller context and critically consider the pros and cons of attempting to transfer their cultural life to ours. This transfer is what was recommended by

Sutan, then really took-off during the time of Rostow, and is today conducted by government programs.

Our problem now is determining the role of Indonesian modern art in communities like I have described. What can modern Indonesian art contribute? And what strengths does modern art bring in an attempt to perform this role? Before we can answer these questions, we need to first discuss modern art in the historical context of the development of our society. For that, allow me to tell another story. Once upon a time, not so many years ago, there was a young man from a middle class family who aspired to be an artist. This man imagined for himself a natural life, full of freedom; freedom of dress, freedom to act, and possibly even sexual freedom. With these thoughts this young man entered into the Jakarta Arts Instituted, located in *Taman Ismail Marzuki* (TIM). TIM, and everything associated with it, is considered by many youth to be the perfect portrait of the artistic world. Dressing like an artist this young man stepped confidently into this sacred area. Here he came to know many well established artists. Realizing that he was caught up in an entirely new world with his friends, especially the more senior artists, the young man began to read art books from the West, to focus his own art practices, and would often lose track of time as engaged in discussions with his family about the problems of art. This young man moved away and with time no longer felt like a strange creature, but rather began to form his own sense of individual character. His world narrowed, now limited to the world of the arts. He only moved around the physical environment of *Taman Ismail Marzuki*. Thus this young man grew to be anti-social; he truly became “anti-society” before ever fully understanding society.

Now, who among us can honestly identify with this young artist? This young man is indeed an extreme picture of a man who wants to become an artist. Variations of this same process are, however, not much different. In other words, the portrait of this young man within the environment of TIM is characteristic of our modern art world. TIM itself, as an arts organization, is commonly criticized in this way. We cannot deny that our representation of the modern art world is rooted in the West. Most of the tools of modern Indonesian art come from there. Historically, the presence of Western art forms in society—such as classical music, theater, and literature—are already well established in Indonesia, especially in urban centers of Java since the late 19th century when the former colony of the Netherlands reached its height of economic prosperity. Modern art appeared in the West in the 18th century, at the collapse of the feudal system. The artists who had previously worked in the palaces of Europe were suddenly cast out, stranded to look for work in a market already overwhelmed by the capitalistic economic system. It is at that time that art became an autonomous institution standing in the middle of society. This is what distorts the construction of our modern art, because it takes Western art as a model. Our modern art has become a separate organization from the practical life of Indonesian society. It is an organization that now requires formal educational institutions, auditoriums, prosceniums, concert halls, exhibition spaces, and so forth. In this context the development of Indonesian modern art must be oriented towards something more functional in our society. Modern Indonesian art must seek alternative forms to convey...to convey ideas and communicate effectively to the general public. Only then can a new world of modern art be expected to not only...oh sorry I was not there yet. I will go back a bit. In this context, the development of Indonesian modern art must be oriented towards something more functional in our society. Modern art must seek alternative forms to convey ideas and communicate

effectively to the general public. This the role I see for the events of the Binal. However...sorry...the Binal is, in my interpretation, an art movement that resists the mode of reasoning that has become a strength of capitalist culture, “Instrumental Reason” discussed previously. Manifestations of this resistance appear in works at the Binal that refer to the anti-institutionalization of art, both institutional...commercial institutionalization and institutions of social power, as well as the manner of integrating art into the social life of the community. Thus the art...the art world...oh sorry...sorry...this paper needs some editing. Um...the manner of integrating art into the social life of the community. But, an important thing to realize is that alternative forms offered at the Binal alone are not enough to change the position of Indonesian modern art in society. The birth of this alternative form must also be accompanied by the birth of new forms of study and of art criticism. In this context, disciplines of study and art criticism must seek support from other disciplines such as the social sciences and humanities. These disciplines developed with support from art theory, especially in the field of literature. Thus we should expect the new world of modern art not just to be coupled with social sciences and humanities, but also share a close disciplinary friendship...standing shoulder to shoulder with the social sciences and humanities in order to find a way out of the problems posed as a result of the mechanisms of a capitalist cultural system pressing Indonesia today.

Thank you.

RIKI

Um...I don't think I need to draw any conclusions from what our colleague, Franky Raden, has shared. It is not our goal to summarize or...um...recommend one particular idea, but rather try...um...together...um...to test ideas, be they ideas offered by Frank Raden or individually. With that, we will open the floor for comments. Um...should we start by giving three people the opportunity to speak? Or reply one-by-one to each comment? Um...yeah...so that we don't forget, let's start with one question followed immediately by a response.

Um...go ahead.

And if you ask a question, please state your name.

Oh...

RAHIMI HARUN

Um...my name is Rahimi Harun from AP Art Galler in Kuala Lumpur.

Um...um...I would like to hear your opinion regarding the importance of third world countries. That is, how third world countries have been colonized...yes...colonized...and the ways in which colonization introduced capitalism...

Um...there are three important words here, “modern,” “modernism,” and “modernity.”

Um...these three words each carry different meanings. So um...capitalism is also something that has been carried out all over the world. Um...what I want to ask is...um...how do art critics here...um...[use] this alternative...yes...alternative way of thinking? Alternative thinking to approach...um...to socialize art for society.

Um...I have seen similar problems in Malaysia...um...where all painters...um...or at least many of them receive...um...Western education. So, [text missing] so important. So, this transformation is taking place in Malaysia. Does this also become...an activity...or a stimulus in Indonesia?

Thank you very much.

RIKI

Thank you.

FR

Sorry, what was your name? I forget.

RAHIMI

Rahimi

RIKI

Rahimi

FR

Rahimi. Thank you Rahimi.

Um...yes, this is how I see it. For me, and as I mentioned in my paper, while the Binal is perhaps born from...um...was born as a reaction to the Biennale, the problem is of course limited to the issues of art, meaning that this is still just art reacting to art. But my own interpretation goes much further than that, and I see this also in the works of our friends currently presenting in the Binal. I see there is a sort of, like I said, a sort of effort to find a new form, to be able to deliver ideas, especially social criticism, or...um...matters relating to social problems in a manner that is more effective, more communicative, and more diffuse in practical everyday life. This is a particular symptom that is most...most striking today, and is currently taking place. On the other hand, I also see various...um...efforts from other artists to find alternatives elsewhere.

I can mention one example...um...something done in the early 70s by...um...a group of dancers, musicians, visual artists, and theatrical artists at the Jakarta Art Institute (*Institute Kesenian Jakarta, IKJ*). This was before the time that the state service learning program for college students (*Kuliah Kerja Nyata, KKN*) became instituted by the government. KKN is, in my opinion, an artificial and often patronizing way in which students try to complete studies about the arts within society. It is surprising for a large group of student to suddenly descend on a local community, and even disrupting to the social life of the community. But, this group from IKJ, they didn't just...um...their education was not like the KKN program. This small group entered local communities gradually and...um...they didn't begin working directly within the arts, but tried to change and transform themselves first. Not to transform the society, but transform themselves in order to become part of the society. They began by farming and joining in other daily activities until eventually they began to see...um...to focus on the role of arts in that society. Only after they realized they could do these other activities did they then try...um...to create a dialectical understanding with that society. For example, to give an arts presentation based on the results of their collaborations with the local community. This is just one example. There are many other concrete examples in Jogja, such as what Emha is doing...um...at this time, if I'm not mistaken. I see Emha as...um...Emha's presence as an activist also provides one...um...one form for finding an alternative to the usual image of modern art in

Indonesia today. And there are probably many other examples out there. This is what I have seen, what I have observed.

Thank you.

Please correct me if I am wrong.

RIKI

Next question?

It seems as though Franky's thoughts...hehe...are exactly what we need, so no need to ask any more questions...hehe...

Um...Teguh?

Afnan?

What if...if...

Maybe we can come together again after the next addresses. Um...how about that? Do we all agree? We'll move on to the next speaker? Or...or we can give someone else an opportunity to speak...to ask questions specifically about the problems discussed by Franky.

Okay, go ahead.

TANTO

Assalamu'alaikum wr.wb.

Let me start by saying that I am offended by some of the material discussed by Franky. Um... years ago I observed a writer, an observer of contemporary art and music in Indonesia. He had been writing about modern avant-garde art in the newspaper *Kompas* since 1975, giving examples of artistic developments in the West by such artists as Senakis, Keits, Altosumpeah, and so on. He was credited as a representative speaker for Indonesian contemporary art. I also lived in a village for over 15 years. Suddenly millions of people from villages started making contemporary art, but I was offended that they were not mentioned in the news. The only ones mentioned were a small minority of groups, such as those from TIM, Emha, Bagong, Suprpto, and so on and so forth. I will give an example for you all, as I am an expert in rural areas, especially rural arts. In 1945, one village made contemporary art far from the palace, far from *Ismail Marzuki*, far from W.R. Supratman. Unlike those found in the palace, they made arts such as *Langin pitutur, Wijil, Sinom, and others. Even Megatruh*.¹ They began their own contemporary reflections, starting with *megatruh*. This was very avant-garde for 1945. None of this is included in the data from IKJ, ISI, or STSI. Then in the 60s, it is as if social criticism emerged for the first time purely because Renda started making social criticism. He was an outlaw artist, a marial arts expert. But in 1960 they made *Kubrosiswo*² in the village. They created social criticism about the Javanese phrase, "come, grandparents, don't forget to pray, times are changing, don't make trouble" (Javanese: "*ayo simbah-simbah, nuli dhong ibadah, jamane wis bubrah, ojo kakehan polah*"). They criticised Westerners with mixed identities. They criticised Japan. This was in 1960, if you can believe it! This history is never mentioned by contemporary Indonesian figures such as Emha Ainun Najib or Goenawan Mohammad, but contemporary art was already being made in the 60s. After 1970, however, contemporary art began to disappear in the countryside because they made poetry about "Indigenous

1 reference? lakon outside of the palace tradition?

2 needs some explanation to readers, reference?

Development.” They made a poem that says, for example,...JAVANESE³ This was very contemporary. The poetry was not like aristocratic literature. They used a mixed form of Indonesian language. They would create anything until it was clear, so P and K translated it, and then it was clear.⁴ It is clear that they understood, but the ones creating village art translated this incorrectly because people in the village use a different dialect of Indonesian. If Aburizal speaks, he has...um...he speaks in a regional and very localized dialect that Purwodarminto or Yasin would not be able to follow. I think that the definition of someone from the village is not very clear here.⁵ Definitely not.

RIKI

Excuse me, but could you possibly shorten your comment.

TANTO

I'm sorry, but I have to speak at length because I am speaking for thousands of people.

RIKI

Yes, but I think you might be able to shorten your sentences.

TANTO

Excuse me, yes okay...I'm just giving you information, actually there is still much more. **Last night I also made *langin pitutur*.**⁶ Very contemporary. But it has never been...um...this is just information for Emha. Um...I realize that after returning from America...um...Franky had a new understanding of things. I don't know, but maybe being educated in America where there is more written on the subject makes one more...more...able to understand society. Too long... I've been speaking for too long. Honestly what surprises me about Franky's writing is that, in my opinion, longer pieces of writing are better when printed or copied, rather than read for Slamet Abdul Sukur, for me, or for world figures like Harry Roesli or Saptorahardjo. So um... unfortunately I am...out of time. It's just that...um...I don't feel represented by a speaker on contemporary art from Jakarta. Franky, please excuse me, but you must study more in Indonesia.

Thank you.

FR

Thank you, Tanto.

3 Javanese: “*jangan tidur yen durung moco igh...igh..ightifar. Betul Emha? Ightifar, gitu ya?*”

4 This sounds very strange in English...I think it is significant that he uses a mix of language here to illustrate his point about how village communities are grappling with language and translation in art...would be nice find a way to reflect this dynamic in the English, perhaps by including some of the Javanese with translations in parentheses. “*Kemudian bikin kalo sudah terang, lakonono' Kemudian diterjemahkan oleh P dan K nek wis mesti, kerjakan.*”

5 Javanese: “*nek wis ceto*”

6 same reference as footnote #3 above (an art form?)

I feel truly at fault here because now I see that Tanto is here. I honestly forgot, and now I want to...another thing that I'd like to convey is that, in my presentation I spoke about only one alternative model. Um...what we call modern art, Tanto is currently doing everyday. Tanto was a composer, living for more than 10 years in a village, trying to...trying to intimately integrate his activities in local village society. I feel that while the arts were his mode of operation...um... what he did was perhaps more intensive but not far off...not much different from what I discussed earlier with the students at IKJ. It's just that they only lived a maximum of 1 year in a village. I truly value you Tanto, and I forgot to answer your question because I did not see you here. He has said so much...so...what I see here is that Indonesian society... Indonesian artists are searching for an alternative to what we call modern art.

Thank you.

RIKI

Um...is that good enough?

Perhaps there are other "Tanto's" out there that don't yet feel satisfied or represented in this discussion?

Ahem...

Okay. We still have around 20 minutes for Q&A.

Um...go ahead, Harsono.

HARSONO

Thank you.

I would just like to try and explain the problem that has come up in this discussion, what Tanto was speaking of just a moment ago, about people's art (*seni rakyat*), or if I may refer to it as "folk art." The problem in what Franky discussed previously lies in the ambiguity between modern and contemporary art. Now, the problem of modern art is that it will always refer to mainstream thinking...um...and mainstream thinking is born from...from an understanding of "high art" and "low art." All the artistic activities of mainstream thinking are going to enter into the category of "high art," and the people's art (*kesenian rakyat*), which do not refer to mainstream thought, are going to be considered "low art." Low art is not considered art. But, if contemporary art rejects mainstream thought, and rejects modernization, or the ideology of modernism, then people's arts (*seni-seni rakyat*) or "low art" is not longer a problem. Like the activities of Mulyono. Mulyono entered into a community...um... a fishing village in East Java known as *Prumbun* society or *Ngerangan* society. Um...Mulyono's activities are not considered modern visual art because they did not enter into textbooks or mainstream dictionaries...there is no such thing as "Mulyono art" within mainstream art. But we can still find a space within contemporary thinking to accommodate the art of Mulyono. Likewise with Tanto's thoughts on the interaction between an artist and society. The position of an artist is not just as a person absorbing or seeking sources for ideas from the people or from tradition, but also inviting society to participate in the creation of their own art in order to give rise to new understandings. It is what is sometimes referred to, not just by me but generally within scientific research, as "Participatory Action Research." In my own art, I tend to refer to this as participatory art, meaning that there is a process of interaction between artist and society. It is a creative process that...um...forms art as well. Now, the problem at the moment is that the

critics, organizations, and art institutions never refer to these activities as art. They are social activities, or educational activities...um...artists without work who are then just trying to enter into society, or something like that. This is something that Mulyono experienced in *Tulungagung*, as well as many others. This is what we should...we need to articulate the problem in order to think clearly, to differentiate between what is modern and what is contemporary art. I am currently writing a paper on this subject...um...where I will try to explain the differences between modern and contemporary, as well as the characteristics of contemporary visual art and modern visual art in Indonesia.

Thank you.

FR

What we each consider to be contemporary can be contentious. In actuality, all art is contemporary. Even traditional arts are contemporary because the process of realizing art involves self actualization. Artists are always contemporary in their respective time period. Art is not static. So...if we use the term "contemporary art," it is very difficult to agree upon a single definition. I hope that Harsono will be able to explain the difference between contemporary art and modern art.

Frankly, I'm not brave enough to explain the differences or attempt to classify contemporary art and modern art. Modern art is automatically contemporary art, but contemporary art is not necessarily modern art. This is one of the...um...things that I have...that I have tried to present here.

Thank you.

RIKI

Harsono raised a number of questions, but we are still circling around the problem of um... terminology. Um...there are certainly a number of overlapping issues emerging, so...um...let's try to raise a few questions. Questions about the actualization of these concepts.

Marselino?

Yes? How about you? It seems like we might need some energy pills (*supertin*) so we're not too sluggish...ahem...or Frank, would you like to say any more?

Okay, if not then let's go straight into Harsono's session. I believe Harsono can explain and clarify some of the questions concerning modern and contemporary art. I'm sure more problems will arise in the process. So, let me invite Harsono to the front, as well as...um...Gentong, who has agreed to guide this portion of the event. Please go ahead.

Um...Gentong and Harsono have 1 hour. It is 11:25 right now, so...

GENTONG

Assalamu'alaikum wr.wb.

Um...I have been assigned to accompany Harsono, not to guide him. And...I will only make brief reference to Harsono's paper that deals with history at greater length. I think it will be good for us to listen to his paper because he has compiled a lot of data to help us understand the current events taking place at the Binal. Okay, rather than my being long-winded, let's give the time we have directly to Harsono.

Please, go ahead.

HARSONO

Thank You.

Um...good morning. Honestly my paper does not refer directly to the...um...Binal events because...um...I have not been a part of the Binal until now. But, this does not mean that what I wrote...um...has no relation to the Binal. I hope that my thoughts...my writing will clarify and support the events of the Binal. I was initially invited by Dadang to help give feedback about this Binal. I know much about the concept of this Binal, even though I have not seen the events or been given clear information. But I hope that...um...my paper will be able to clarify some things. Thank you.

Issues in the Development of Indonesian Contemporary Art.

In talking about the development of art, it is difficult to separate this discussion from historical connections. Likewise with a discussion of contemporary art in Indonesia. We are most immediately confronted with the issue of terminology, which varies according to the specific conditions, social situations, politics, and culture of a nation. Because of this, it is irrelevant to use a term derived from another nation to discuss the development of Indonesian contemporary art. Nevertheless, I will try to use...or...think about "modernization," as proposed by Thomas Mc Aveley, as a rationale to explain the meaning of contemporary art in Indonesia. The rejection of the ideology of modernism by a post-modern group, in my opinion, is what created the ideas and values that underly the development of contemporary art. For example, the rejection of the new path of Indonesian art, that is, the new path of Indonesian art that is considered valid only when referring to visual art centered in the West. The rejection of universality, whereby every social group or nation has the right to develop "Value Adjustment" or an assessment of individual value in accordance with their own historical situation and condition. According to Thomas McAveley, understanding what is modern means taking into consideration an ideology of values underlying any nation. These values are created to defend and justify certain social situations, class structures, and forms of repression. The ideology that was born from the Renaissance, developed and flourished alongside the development of industrialization. These developments created European superiority. The entire development of that social situation led to colonialism and imperialism. Modern ideology is a cover for colonialism and imperialism. After World War II, modernism then gave birth to the myth of Europe and America as cultured nations wishing to uplift low societies to become high cultures, making modern culture part of mainstream history, namely a history of Western art.

Communities of artists aspiring to develop high valued art, visual art, in this case the fine arts (*seni murni*). The reason why I refer to this as "seni murni" is because art is mainly divided into two categories, "Applied Art" and "Fine Art." The arts considered to have a high value are the fine arts. And um...this conception actually also comes from mainstream thinking. Art would not have a high value without referring to and becoming part of mainstream art history. It is difficult to separate a mainstream understanding of the notion of universality from the history of Western art, which is defined as the art of Europe and America. The whole notion of modernism as an ideology gave birth to the differences between Western, non-Western, high, low, center, and periphery. But when a society rejects the ideology of modernism, the whole hierarchy is lost. Perhaps this is...um...in that context of what I was trying to explain about high art and low

art, the early stages of post-modern thought began with a reversal of these modern values. By reversing the values of modernization we can identify a change in the levels of hierarchy. Mainstream becomes decentralized, colonialism becomes a search for a post-colonial era that brings together cultural currents. We can regard post-modern thinking as the foundation for our observations of Indonesian contemporary art; passing through stages of development in accordance with the development of social, economic, political, and local culture here. Based on this discussion we try, I try to situate the development of Indonesian contemporary art. These observations revolve around concepts of art, the creation of idioms, a general orientation towards the problems of social, political, economic, and local culture. Now, these are the things that create distinctions between...um...traditional and contemporary art. Traditional art is determined by a particular time and place that is different from contemporary art. And this...this is where we can determine whether it is a tradition or not. As I have shown, it is impossible to separate the development of art within a nation during a certain time from the historical elements which constitute it. This is also the case with Indonesian contemporary art.

Political pressure on the development of the arts in Indonesia gave birth to its own forms of art. This pressure seems to be a natural phenomenon for a third world country, or a newly independent country. Political pressure persists in both the Old Order and the New Order. What is different is the power and ideology behind the politics.

Each pressure will give rise to resistance groups, and each group will give birth to resistant cultures and their own value systems. Political pressure by the Old Order government, known as Guided Democracy, and political power dominated by the Communist Party of Indonesia gave birth to their own kinds of art. The resistance group at that time was represented by the group *Manikebo* (*Manifes Kebudayaan*, or Cultural Manifesto), which spawned its own artistic thinking. The climax of this conflict is the...um...G30S (*Gerakan 30 September*, or 30th September Movement). G30S itself spawned...um...events that really made an impression on the ideas of art and artists, it created a politics of fear and trauma. So, um...many artists who initially had a social conscience were then forced to dampen...um...their concerns and divert their thoughts to...um...other forms. But...um...in addition to those pressures, for the modernist group of Indonesian artists, the “*ex-Manikebo*” groups felt a sense of freedom after their...um...after the events of G30S PKI (*Partai Komunis Indonesia*, the Communist Party of Indonesia). That is, they felt free to experiment. This group...um...was especially prevalent at ITB (*Institute Teknologi Bandung*, Bandung Institute of Technology), including Ki Sidharta, Muchtar Apin, Wid Mochtar, Sadali, and several others. Um...they called this group *Kelompok Sebelas* (Eleven Group). They did...um...experimental activities. Even before then we see in Yogyakarta the emergence of the works Bagong Kussudiharjo...um...then known as Amri Yahya, who was working with batik. Then...um...some others. But the fact is that the...um...that it seems that they were still holding on to the ideology of modernism connected to mainstream thinking. So...um...those experimental thoughts were not developed because they returned to the question, is this art or not?

If they questioned whether or not this was art, they would think back on the notions of “High Art” and “Low Art.” If the art did not refer to Western criteria or values, it was not art. Now,

the result is that they returned once again to the...um...the conventional arts. Even though...
um...their thinking would also...um...have an effect on...um...younger artists, especially if they
problematized the roots of Indonesian culture. They realized that modern art in Europe was
rooted in European culture. Now, if we want to talk about our modern art, then we also have to
look at our own cultural roots.