

Aesthetically enhanced

In any city worth its name, large sculptures and monuments command their own space. That is if big-business concerns do not shunt them aside. **Carla Bianpoen** meets a real estate developer that is including art in its grand designs.



Yani Mariani Sastranegara



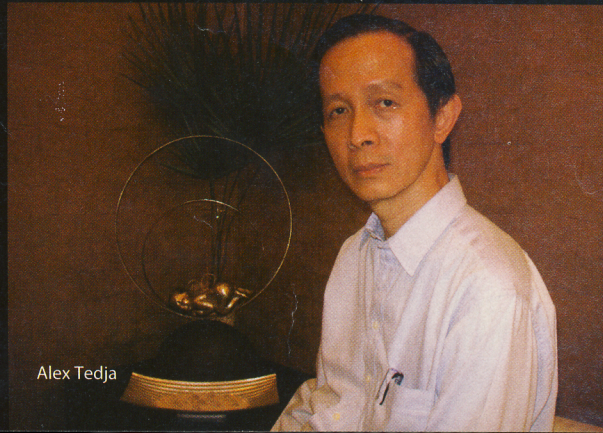
Awan Simatupang



Redy Rahadian



Liang



Alex Tedja



Monuments symbolize what a society chooses to remember or forget. They also become lasting landmarks for specific points in the city; in Jakarta, there is the National Monument, known as Monas, and the Welcome statue at the Hotel Indonesia traffic circle.

Other monuments have lost out to urban sprawl here, including Rita Widagdo's eight-meter-tall sculpture *Dinamika dalam Gerak* (Dynamics in Movement), which was erected in Slipi, West Jakarta, in 1974. The work *Sinar dan Bayangan* (Light and Shadows) by Tridjoto Abdullah, who was Indonesia's first professional sculptor, besides being the first woman in the field (according to art expert and curator Agus Dermawan), was first publicly displayed in 1954. But it has disappeared from view. Such saddening occurrences leave many in the capital wondering about the city administration's will to include art in public spaces, and what criteria apply.

Fortunately, there is growing awareness among developers that art and aesthetics cannot be excluded from the objective of improving the quality of life. At Bumi Serpong Damai, a satellite city of Jakarta, Yani Mariani Sastranegara's monument in BSD's The Green uplifts the spirit with new imagery and concepts on the cycle of life.

With contemporary art continuing to make its way into the public

domain, the country's second largest city of Surabaya is not being left behind, with developers realizing they have a role to play. Among them is Eiffel Tedja, the son of the owner of Pakuwon City, Alex Tedja, and the development's CEO. In conjunction with the 25th anniversary of the Pakuwon Group, Eiffel, in cooperation with Edwin Rahardjo of Edwin's Gallery Jakarta, organized an exhibition of 34 Indonesian sculptors.

Although their number included established and emerging artists, only a few were able to respond skillfully and with the necessary esthetic finesse to the theme, Relation: Tanah Air as the Base of Awareness.

Yani Mariani has always derived inspiration from the natural world, and the winds of nature flow within her, she says. Blessed with a vivid imagination, she often creates works imbued with the illusion of the surreal, with an esthetic that never fails to uplift our senses. In her work *Randai Menggapai Cakrawala* at Pakuwon, which is made of combstone (pulverized white stone), white-colored winged creatures appear as feminine dragons driven by the wind. Seen from another angle, they look as if they are struggling against the wind's force, evoking the sensation of experiencing an extraordinary tale, combining classic legends and futuristic visions.

The sculpture measures 8 meters by 2 meters, but a larger version, measuring 30 x 8 meters, will take its place at the traffic circle of the

Pakuwon City development toward the end of this year.

Awan Simatupang, who uses sculpture to reveal his ponderings on life's dynamics, presented a finely executed work, tackling both the complicated issue of meeting housing needs for growing populations and the deteriorating environment. The wind, both threatening and beautiful, is felt in *Pohon* (Tree). Measuring 180 x 60 x 180 cm, its branches made of bronze show the movement of the wind. On the bottom branch, a tiny figure clings to the trunk, symbolizing man's dependency on the environment. Placing the sculpture on the grass field in front of the ballroom provided a wonderful accentuation of Awan's artistic ability.

Although Redy Rahadian's *Perjalanan* (Journey) did not really respond directly to the exhibition theme, it was chosen to be placed at the traffic circle in Pakuwon City. Measuring 7 x 7 x 5 meters and made of steel, it features steps leading up to an Aztec temple-like structure. Its tiny figure on top attests to the long, hard climb needed to reach success.

The sculptures of Liang, a new talent in the genre, tell of human beings and the environment. The universe, *tanah air* (literally meaning earth and water, but broadly referring to one's native land) and nature are intertwined with the life of the humankind. Whatever happens to nature or the environment inevitably affects human life, and vice versa. A circular shape made

of stainless steel, with a tiny baby made of plated silver placed at the bottom of the circle, depicts an environmental-friendly universe providing protection to humankind. Placed on a specially selected stone, the work, obviously the result of profound meditative thought, is beautiful in its simplicity.

Plans for Pakuwon City to introduce contemporary sculptures to the public took shape after Eiffel met Edwin, who is known as one of the first gallery owners to promote sculptures in his Jakarta space. "My passion for sculptural works hasn't left me," said Eiffel.

He also revealed that plans are in the offing to have a sculpture park in addition to the landmark contemporary monuments in Pakuwon City, which will provide a contrast to the huge arches and portals of grand eclectic styles at the 60-hectare estate.

The Pakuwon Group, which began in 1986 with the establishment of Tunjungan Plaza in Central Surabaya and has since diversified into many real estate ventures, with Alex and his wife Melinda at the helm, will continue its art association. It will hold a charity exhibition in conjunction with the opening of its Gandaria Main Street superblock later this year. It will again be organized by Edwin.

Hopefully this interest in contemporary art will prove steadfast and based on genuine strategies to further the arts, and at the same time improve the quality of life in the urban landscape. ■

photos: Carla Bianpoen, Pakuwon City, Edwin's Gallery