

More ceramic artists break away from tradition

Despite the mushrooming of exhibitions of mainstream art, there were few exhibits of ceramic works last year. The year of 2002 opens with a ceramic exhibition at Galeri Benda.

Four Yogyakarta-based ceramic artists are displaying their works in an exhibition titled Reflective Medium up to Jan. 15.

In the exhibition room, there are 13 ceramic artworks on the floor and the wall. One of the artists, Noor Sudyati, has created four sculptural artworks with pinch and pressing methods.

They have rough textures with dark-bright colors and shapes like flame-like tongues on several parts of the ceramic bodies. Her ceramic work entitled *Bringing a Mission* (2001), for example, has concentric circles on a duck-like statue.

Another called *Mystery Space* (2001), which is shaped like a pyramid with spiral notches on the ceramic body, shows her mastery of the pinch method. She has carefully placed crystals of melted car windshield glass on the ceramic body.

Unlike Noor's works, Hadi's ceramics show detailed texture. One of his ceramics in the form of a stalagmite-like stone, once won an award as the best ceramic work from the Indonesian Art Institute (ISI) when the institute celebrated its anniversary.

Hadi, who teaches at ISI's fine arts faculty, lets the clay drip in small trickles in his artwork entitled *Rock Imagination* (2000), which

took about five years to complete.

Wisnu Prastawa, introduces five works with asso-

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ciative and functional forms in the exhibition. His work entitled *The Birth of a Hope* (2001) resembles a teapot, which has a personal meaning for the ceramic artist, a lecturer at the Indonesian Art Higher Learning Institute (STSI) in Padang.

His product entitled *Si Cempluk* (The Chubby One) (2001) is a naive artwork which is inflated and has legs. We can peep into the contents of the tube by opening its upper lid. Another artwork of Wahyu, entitled *Kontaminasi* (Contamination) (1999) with the words *infiltrasi* (infiltration) and *kolonialisme* (colonialism) engraved on the work is more verbal in nature.

Compared with the other works, Mali's, for example in his *Menu Hari Ini* (Today's Menu) (2001) show the presence of additional non-clay elements.

While Hadi, Noor and Wisnu struggle hard with formalism in shapes, Mali — who has been named the best fine artist in conjunction with ISI anniversary celebration — has created his ceramic installation by using four *Kasongan* (ceramic stoves) and arranged them in such a way they give the impression of a cooking scene. It is quite eerie, as you

can see a hand, a foot and a face cooking in the cooking pot with broth made of resin.

Mandi Kembang (A Show-

er of Flowers) (2001), features the figure of half a human torso seemingly feeling self conscious as the face



J.P/Tarko Sudiana

Menu Hari Ini (Today's Menu), a work produced by Mali last year, is being exhibited at Galeri Benda in Yogyakarta along with the works of three other ceramic artists.

is covered by the hands. This work stands in an iron tub with flowers strewn around the ceramic statue. Mali's works specifically shows an inclination not to abide by the standard norms of pure ceramic art as he has a penchant for using non-ceramic materials to express his ideas.

What these four ceramicists are displaying demonstrate expressionist ceramic works. In addition, these ceramics also show the elements of modern fine art with the presence of originality, authenticity and autonomy in different shapes.

It must be remembered that, unlike manufactured ceramics, these works are not reproduced.

Mali's works, however, clearly show that he has introduced an esthetic touch to objects he has discovered and ready-made objects.

The ceramic art has often been included in an exhibition under the label of modern ceramic art, contemporary ceramic art, skilled art, contemporary art and sculpture; evidence that at least there is a diversity in perspectives in understanding ceramic expression.

While this is a constructive development in ceramic art, it may at the same time lead to confusion in understanding ceramic expression.

On the other hand, however, efforts to trace back and identify ceramic expression may begin with the rigidity in this dimension of art, for example from a study of the shapes of ceramic objects to an evaluation of their esthetic aspect.