

Artworks that Inspire Us

As Indonesia Design celebrates their 11th year of publication, milestones often allow us to reflect and appreciate the changes and developments that have occurred in order to move forward. The contemporary art market has certainly had a roaring 2014, with record-breaking auctions achieving

record prices for many artists during a hurried frenzy to acquire art. *‘Three Studies of Lucien Freud’* by Francis Bacon became the most expensive artwork in the world when it sold at Christies in May 2014 for US\$142.400,000. Closer to home, in April this year a painting by S.S. Sudjojono *‘Our Soldiers Led Under Prince Diponegoro’* sold for US\$7,500,000 at Sotheby’s. With all these big sums flying around, it is worth scrutinizing - does price indicate an iconic artwork?

STORY BY Deborah Iskandar



Deborah Iskandar

Art Consultant

In this Art in Design section of Indonesia Design, **Deborah Iskandar** shares her knowledge and love for art. Regarded as a pioneer in the auction world in South East Asia, she knows how to navigate the current evolving market trends of the Art World.

After more than 20 years’ experience collectively, within the art world, she founded her own advisory firm, ISA Art Advisory® in 2013. Being widely respected in Indonesia and Singapore ISA Art Advisory®, aims to aid buyers, sellers and collectors to approach the art world with ease and to build collections that will retain value over time.

ISA Art Advisory®
Jl. Wijaya Timur Raya
No. 12
Jakarta 12170
Indonesia
t. +6221 723 3905
e. enquiries@isaartadvisory.com

ARTWORKS THAT INSPIRES US
CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT

Hendra Gunawan’s *“Snake Dancer (Penari Ular)”*, 1977, oil on canvas. Photo courtesy of Sotheby’s

Affandi’s self *“Portrait”*, 1968, oil on canvas. Photo courtesy of Sotheby’s

Girl with a Pearl Earring by Dutch painter Johannes Vermeer



Renoir once said the only true value of a painting is its selling price. And value is defined as what two people are willing to pay on a given day. With this in mind, it can be argued that open auction prices are the most transparent way to determine the value of an artwork. But prices and records were made to be broken. So, we need to look back at the spirit of art to see what defines an iconic artwork.

In the classical realm of art the obvious choices are the *‘Girl with a Pearl Earring’* by Vermeer or *‘Mona Lisa’* by Leonardo Di Vinci. What do these two pictures have in common? The secret is in the eyes. In both portraits the female subjects have that knowing glance, or smile, as if she is keeping a secret and we keep returning hoping she will share her knowledge with us. Popular

culture throughout the ages preserved these paintings as icons in the art world. But, what is an icon? An icon is defined as an “image of a person or thing that is revered” so it begs the question; is the actual art piece itself or the imagery depicted within the art what makes it iconic? Marilyn Monroe is still considered an icon of American culture. Although she died more than 50 years ago, Andy Warhol immortalized her image in portraits, so she is still popular today. Our memories of Marilyn Monroe are of a tragic beautiful woman who left us too soon. It is the tragedy in her life that elevates her to the status of an icon. The same is true of Elizabeth Taylor, who was known for her legendary beauty. Taylor was also immortalized by Warhol’s paintings. Warhol is considered an iconic artist but what makes his work so

sought after? He created a very distinctive style that is identifiable at every level of society. He also was the master marketer to cultivate collectors with his society portraits. It was a status symbol to have a portrait by Warhol. With his use of strong primary colors, and diamond dust highlights, Warhol portraits receive my vote as the 20th century iconic paintings.

In the 21st century, the most iconic image would be Kate Moss. Artist and photographers alike have immortalized her image. She seems to inspire so many different looks, the coy, waifish “lolitaesque” look, the super-model, to the girl next door. She has served as the muse for designers, artist and musicians alike. Mark Quinn’s sculpture of Kate practicing yoga reveals a raw sexuality that makes it an iconic artwork.

Who would we consider in Indonesian art as an icon? While S.Sudjojono *‘Our Soldiers Led Under Prince Diponegoro’* holds the record as the most expensive Indonesian painting, the picture would probably not be considered iconic because of its subject matter and it hasn’t been exposed in the public realm. It may appeal to a certain level of society that appreciates its historical importance but perhaps not to the average person.

Paintings by Hendra Gunawan could be considered as iconic works of art, because of his strong use of color and distinctive style. An



ARTWORKS THAT
INSPIRES US
FROM TOP

— Marc Quinn's 'Sphinx'.
Photo Courtesy of Christie's

— S. Sudjojono's 'Our
Soldiers Led Under Prince
Diponegoro', 1977, oil on
canvas. Photo courtesy of
Sotheby's

iconic work by Hendra would be the 'Snake
Charmer' which sold at Sotheby's in 2011 for
a then world record price of Indonesian art of
HK16, 340,000 (US\$2,106,000) It is Hendra's
distinctive style, use of color and of course
the imagery of the real life in Indonesia that
raises him to star status in Indonesian art.

Affandi would also be considered a
seminal Indonesian artist, particularly his
self-portraits. The bohemian image of Affandi,
with his wild white hair, donning a sarong is
a frequent image in the textbooks. His style
of painting was also very distinctive, using
his hands to apply the paint to the canvas
in a frantic motion. As a result, it is his self-
portraits that garner the most attention.

Iconic artworks can be debated among
scholars, curators and collectors. But, at the
end, it is the taste of the viewer that defines
the most memorable artworks. Some icons
might be instant, and other may become
iconic over time with the price does not
always indicate the iconic value, after all, to
the artist his work is priceless. **id**



ULTIMATE FINE DINING IN THE SKY

Complete your First Class experience with a wide selection of the finest cuisines from Indonesia, Japan and Europe inside your First Class private suite. Delicately prepared by your personal Chef on Board. You will also be complimented with the best amenities kit in the sky to elevate your first class experience to a whole new level.

For more information & reservations, please call our First Class Call Center at +6221 29 655 777 or visit www.garuda-indonesia.com/firstclass