



Chua Ek Kay and Putu Sutawijaya's collaborative art at RISING 50 Exhibition

A YEAR In Review

DEBORAH ISKANDAR TAKES US
THROUGH THE KEY EVENTS IN
THE ART WORLD IN 2017

Keeping up with the happenings in the art world is a full-time job, both for collectors and professionals. As 2017 ends, we review the most influential and memorable artist's records, exhibitions and events in Indonesia and around the world. The Indonesian art market was relatively quiet compared to recent years, so it's a good opportunity to start collecting. The economic and political situation has made collectors more cautious about luxury spending so it's not as competitive a market.

The Mori Art Museum in Tokyo, Japan presented "Sunshower: Contemporary Art from Southeast Asia 1980s to Now" in July. The exhibition commemorated the 50th anniversary of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and explored the development of contemporary art in ASEAN from a political and historical perspective. Indonesia was represented by Melati Suryodarmo, Jompet Kuswidananto, Heri Dono, Agus Suwage, Mella Jaarsma, Aditya Novali, Albert Yonathan and FX Harsono. FX Harsono's artwork, "Voice

Without a Voice", was one of the standout pieces of the exhibition. It features a row of nine panels, each with a gesturing hand to spell out the Indonesian word "demokrasi" in sign language. In front of each canvas is a rubber stamp of the corresponding letter and piece of paper on which visitors are invited to stamp the word, therefore making the visitors a part of the country's own democracy by stamping each word on paper.

The year 2017 marks another important diplomatic anniversary between Indonesia and Singapore. To celebrate this occasion, PT Jakarta Land, the Singapore Tourism Board and ISA Art Advisory joined forces to bring an art exhibition that showcased established Singaporean artists with Indonesian artists that have lived, worked or studied in Singapore and consider the island nation influential to their artistic careers. "Rising 50: The Contemporary Art of Singapore and Indonesia" was held at the World Trade Centre 2 and was opened by His Excellency, Anil Kumar Nayar, Ambassador of Singapore to Indonesia. The highlight of the exhibition was a collaborative artwork by Chua Ek Kay and Putu Sutawijaya, reflecting their different approaches to abstraction but

coming together as a whole. "Untitled" was executed in 2006 during Chua Ek Kay's visit to Jogjakarta. The artist met Putu Sutawijaya over two evenings, and they painted side by side. The meeting was mutually inspiring for both, on an artistic and personal level. The exhibit also included works by senior Singaporean artists Kumari Nahappan and Robert Zhao coupled with Naufal Abshar, Irfan Hendrian, Kendra Ahimsa and Kinez Riza, who are rising stars in the Indonesian contemporary art world.

The Yayasan Mitra Museum held its second exhibition to celebrate the re-discovery and restoration of Srihadi Soedarsono's historical paintings "Jayakarta" (1975). "Jayakarta" tells the story of our Jakarta's evolution since independence until the 1970s. Ironically, Srihadi created an earlier artwork entitled "Air Mancar" (1973), depicting grey skies, traffic jams and blaring neon lights bearing advertisements of Japanese companies. When Ali Sadikin, (the Jakarta Governor at the time) saw the painting, he thought Jakarta looked like a Japanese prefecture and promptly took a marker to write his thoughts about the painting directly on the canvas "f##&&*!": When it was pointed out to the Governor that Srihadi's version of Jakarta was accurate, he publicly apologised and commissioned Srihadi to produce a second grander and more progressive view of Jakarta, hence the birth of "Jayakarta".

The most historic art event in 2017 was the opening of the MACAN Museum. The museum, founded by Haryanto Adikoesoemo, is home to over 800 works of modern and contemporary art collected for over 25 years including works by blockbuster artists like a Yayoi Kusama "Infinity Room". First produced in 1965, Kusama has created over 20 renditions in museums around the world. It's a multimedia environment that provides a kaleidoscopic view of infinite space. MACAN hosted a few "sneak peeks" of its educational program in August and September with the installment called "First Sight". Six artists from Indonesia and China delivered performance art during the two-day opening. Accomplished Indonesian artist, Melati Suryodarmo, performed "Eins und Eins", where she envisions herself as the embodiment of a disgruntled nation, twirling and spitting ink on a pristine environment.

Another Indonesian artist that flourished this year was Sinta Tantra, the Bali-born, UK-based contemporary artist. Sinta was selected to design the winning flag (the 'drappellone') for legendary horse race festival, Palio di Siena, in Siena, Italy. This race dates to the 16th century, when jockeys rode bareback around



FX Harsono's Voice without a Voice at SUNSHOWER Exhibition



Yayoi Kusama's Infinity Mirrored Room - Brilliance of the Souls - 2014

the square to win the flag. A great honour, the drappellone is a significant part of the race, and the selection of the artist to design the flag is quite rigorous, following iconography that involves sacred symbols and colour theories. Sinta's flag visualises her signature bright-hued geometrical patterns infused with imagery of ancient Roman figures and architecture, to capture the liveliness of the event. Sinta was also chosen for the Folkestone Triennial to paint The Cube building. Inspired by a 1947 rail advertising and the works of Sonia Delaunay,

she wraps the building in her signature colours and patterns.

Overall, 2017 was a strong year for select segments of the Indonesian art market. The most important development for art in Indonesia was the increased engagement of the public by the bringing in of more international quality exhibitions. The steps taken in 2017, by both the public and the private sectors, should progressively elevate art in Indonesia to a wider international audience.

Deborah Iskandar is Principal of ISA Advisory, which advises clients on buying and selling art, and building collections. An expert on Indonesian and international art, she has more than 20 years of experience in Southeast Asia, heading both Sotheby's and Christie's Indonesia during her career before establishing ISA Art Advisory in 2013. She is also the Founder of Indonesian Luxury, the definitive online resource for Indonesians looking to acquire, build and style their luxury homes.

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