



Dolorosa Sinaga



Image courtesy : Artist

Dolorosa Sinaga (b. 1952, North Sumatra) is one of Indonesia's most accomplished and well-known contemporary artists, specializing in sculpture as her chosen form of expression. She graduated from the Jakarta Arts Institute in 1977, continuing her studies at St. Martins in London. Her love of learning also led her to attend various short courses on sculpture; she studied life-size molding techniques at the San Francisco Art Institute, bronze casting at the University of Maryland School of Engineering, and using styrofoam in sculpture at the Ringling School of Art. Dolorosa was also invited to attend the Sculpture Symposium in Malaysia, Yugoslavia, Vietnam and Italy.

Dolorosa has received several awards and recognition for her achievements in Indonesia, including the Cultural Adhikarya Image Award, the 2009 Art Award, and The Modern Indonesian Sculpture Award. She was also appointed Dean of the Jakarta Arts Institute, as well as Chairman of the Senate of the Faculty of Fine Arts. Dolorosa is a local pioneer of sculptural techniques, experimenting with unorthodox materials such as fiberglass and plastic bags.

Though already in her 60s, Dolorosa keeps herself active both within her social community as well as in her art-making practice, teaching classes at the Jakarta Arts Institute (IKJ) and working on various sculptural projects. For Dolorosa, not only is art a way to express herself, but also a medium for social advancement. In her words, "the dialogue between art and the public takes place in both a democratic sphere and a reflective arena. Art and society reserve their respective authority in the critical consideration of an artwork's identity, individuality, and expression. ... It is the artist herself who creates the chance for society to build a capacity to interpret visual arts, especially in an era where the entanglement of creative disciplines is held so tightly that it is hard to distinguish who, or what, fits where. Today, [fields] interact with one another so intimately, participating in a cross-pollination that makes the sciences and arts richer, more penetrative, and more encompassing" (5).



Image courtesy : Jakarta Post

Drawing from different insights, from art history, her personal life, and the larger socio-political society in which she lives, Dolorosa's artworks combine art and activism. Her artworks evolve alongside her career as a social activist, heavily affected by the modern world with its promises and perils, its freedom and constraints, especially in the context of the socio-cultural changes that have taken place within Indonesia in the last seven decades.

Dolorosa has insisted that none of her sculptures were created with an agenda in mind, but as reactions to certain events. "Her artistic practice is inseparable from her roles as an educator and political activist" and as she grows older and experiences more of the world, Dolorosa also becomes more radical (10). As one of Indonesia's most intriguing figures in the sphere of contemporary art and activism, Dolorosa had lived a colourful past, and continues to live to the fullest of her ability in her senior years.

Her evocative sculptures often tell the stories of women's struggles and their identity within society, as well as themes of illusions, loyalty, times of crisis, solidarity, and multiculturalism. She is now actively organizing exhibitions that provide a platform for young sculptors to showcase their works, so that they may carry on their love for the art form into the new generation.

As she built herself a name, her sculptures - though each are made to respond to a different issues - are now recognized for sharing similar characteristics: "an almost flat nose, square cliffs on both cheeks, a wide and heavy hollow in the eyes followed by a shallow swirl giving the impression of aching or lamenting" (314).

The artist believes that "it is an artist's responsibility [to] share their story" (4). She invites her audience to "see how the dialectic of artwork and its viewer can trigger precious insights" (4).

## **HISTORY**

### **1968 – 1970**

As a student at the PSKD Christian High School, Dolorosa found refuge in her drawings. Her childhood benchmates - from the St. Ignatius Catholic Elementary School and the Loyola Catholic Junior High School - were also talented artists, each encouraging the other to pursue their craft.

### **1972**

Upon graduating high school, Dolorosa made up her mind to study the visual arts in college, deciding to major in sculpture. Her decision to focus on sculpture was in large part influenced by the suggestion of her tutor, the Indonesian painter Oesman Effendi, whose work is characterized by their abstract compositions of curved lines and bright colours. Dolorosa had discovered that sculpture allowed her to express a broader spectrum of emotion, and to a greater extent than painting did.

### **1977**

She completed her B.A in Fine Arts at the Academy of Visual Arts in LPKJ in 1977; this served as a pivotal moment in her career as both professional artist and art tutor. During her years at LPKJ, and in addition, her internship in East Java, Dolorosa conducted fieldwork in several sites throughout Indonesia; this exposure to Indonesia's different sculptural traditions not only provided her with plenty of inspiration, but lay the foundation of what would become her area of expertise, and helped her understand the visual arts as an expression of reverence and appreciation of the past.

### **1979**

Still relatively early in her career, Dolorosa used cement and wood in her sculptures as she explored problems with mass and volume, producing several sculptures that displayed abstract, non-objective qualities, inspired by the English sculptor Henry Moore. Under his influence she follows his teachings that "the material can take its part in the shaping of an idea" (16).



## 1980

Dolorosa's postgraduate studies at the Sculpture Department at St. Martin's played a vital role in making her a professional artist; it is "arguably the most crucial phase" regarding its influence over her artistic identity (16). In particular, her time at the school changed her perspective on the creative process; she gained a deeper understanding of her medium, learning both sculpture's limitations and potentials. Her time studying abroad also provided her with powerful tools to further her political activism, as she sees both European and Indonesian perspectives.

## 1983

After completing her studies in the UK, Dolorosa's life and her art underwent further development as a response to her rapidly changing social world. During this time period, Jakarta underwent considerable demographic, economic and cultural transformations. The New Order's authoritarian approach to economics, along with her dialogues with her feminist and leftist friends, for example, all had an influence in her art's increasingly left-leaning direction.

## 1990

From the mid 1990 onward Dolorosa's home was a safe haven and meeting point for socially engaged artists, student activists, pro-democracy campaigners, and defenders of women's and human rights. Her home also served as the headquarters for the Volunteer Team for Humanity (*Tim Relawan untuk Kemanusiaan*) who investigated the anti-Chinese riots of 1998. She wanted to provide a space in which people of various social backgrounds could discuss a wide range of social, political, and cultural issues. These events and interpersonal encounters prompted an emergence of political themes in Dolorosa's oeuvre; the humanitarian aspects cannot be disentangled from her art.

"Eventually, those activists I met formed my friendship network. My encounter with them shaped my political stance, urging me to do something real about the various issues to which they had called my attention. As a result, justice ended up being a core value in my path of life" (83).

# CV

## Born

1952

## Education

1983 Post Graduate Program, St Martin's School of Art, London, Inggris  
Short Course, Ringling Art School, Tampa, Florida, USA

1977 Jakarta Institute of Arts, Fine Arts, Jakarta, Indonesia

## Solo Exhibition

2020 "Pameran Linimasa 40 tahun berkarya", Book Launching "Doloros Sinaga; Body, Form, Matter", Jakarta

2013 "Menarilah! / Dance Your Life" Galeri Cipta 2, Taman Ismail Marzuki, Jakarta

2009 "Power of Shape" Kendra Gallery, Seminyak, Bali.

2008 "Have You Seen a Sculpture from the Body" National Gallery, Jakarta

2007 "Perempuan Perempuan Bicara" Tondi Gallery, Medan, Sumatera Utara

2003 "Via Dolorosa" Nadi Gallery, Jakarta

2001 "Have You Seen a Sculpture from the Body" di Galeri Nasional, Jakarta

## Exhibition

2020 Art With In & Beyond Bureaucracy" Galeri Cipta II, Taman Ismail Marzuki, Jakarta.

Mahatma Gandhi's 150-year Art Exhibition in collaboration with the Indian Cultural Center in Indonesia, Jakarta Institute of Arts, Jakarta

2018 Pameran Festival Debur Ombak Ikatan Alumni Institut Kesenian Jakarta, Plaza Teater Taman Ismail Marzuki, Jakarta

"Celebrating Diversity #2, Galeri Latar, Menara BTPN, Jakarta

2017 Jakarta Distract, Galeri Cipta II, Taman Ismail Marzuki

Jiwa, penyelenggara Yayasan Jakarta Biennale, Jakarta

Wonders of Indonesia, National Art Gallery, Palace, Sofia, Bulgaria

2017 Flow into Now, Sampoerna Strategic Square, Jakarta

Temenin LBH #2, Jaya Suprana School of Performing Art, Jakarta

2015 Seni Aksi Merayakan Kreativitas, Galeri Cipta II, Taman Ismail Marzuki, Jakarta.

Peninggalan/Warisan Budaya Indonesia, Dia.lo.gue art space

Medium of Living, Edwin's Gallery, Jakarta

2014 Bazaar Seni Anugerah Saparinah Sadli, Jakarta

Melihat Indonesia, Ciputra Artpreneur Center, Jakarta

Pameran Patung dan Gambar, Galeri Java Banana Bromo, Jawa Timur

Fiesta Kota Tua Jakarta, Heripemad Art Management

2013 Fiesta Kota Tua Jakarta, Gedung Kantor Pos, Jakarta.

Indonesia Contemporary Art & Design 2013 (ICAD), Jakarta

HORIZON OF STRENGTH : INDONESIAN CONTEMPORARY CRAFT, Kunstkring Gallery, Jakarta.

Melihat/Dilihat, Galeri Nasional, Jakarta.

2012 BATAK: Perjalanan ke Tanah Leluhur" "20 tahun GFJA: "keMERDEKAan", Galeri Foto Jurnalistik Antara, Jakarta

2011 Locafore, Bale Pare, Kota Baru Parahyangan, Bandung

Ekspansi, Galeri Nasional, Jakarta

Homo Ludens #2, Galeri Seni Kontemporer Emmitan, Surabaya

Kartini: The Power of Women ini Art, Universitas Gajah Mada, Bulak Sumur, Yogyakarta

Nature, Art, & Symphony, Java Banana Gallery, Bromo, Jawa Timur

Seven Recipes Dialogue, Bentara Budaya Jakarta, Jakarta

A Room of Her Own, Dimensi Art Gallery, Surabaya

Sedekat Konde Sejauh Cakrawala, Bentara Budaya Jakarta

Intersection, Andi's Gallery, Jakarta.

1001 Doors: Reinterpreting Tradition, Ciputra Gallery, Jakarta

2010 Percakapan Masa, Galeri Nasional, Jakarta

ex-it, Galeri Cipta II, Jakarta

Tramendum, Philo Art Space Fine Art, Jakarta

- 2010 10th Anniversary, Galeri One, Jakarta  
Dimension, Elcanna Gallery, Jakarta  
Gusdurisme, Langgeng Gallery, Magelang, Jogjakarta  
Space and Image, Ciputra Gallery, Jakarta
- 2009 Exhibition with Austria Princess Gabriella Von Habsburg, Cigalontang, Tasikmalaya  
Kado #2", Nadi Gallery, Jakarta  
My Body, Andi's Gallery, Jakarta  
2nd ODYSSEY" Galeri Srisasanti, Jogjakarta  
The Living Legends, Galeri Nasional, Jakarta  
Virus K, Jakarta Convention Center, Jakarta  
Poli[chromatic] , V-art Gallery, Jogjakarta  
In Rainbow, Esa Sampoerna Art House, Jakarta  
10 Women Artists, Salihara Gallery, Jakarta  
Reborn, H2 Gallery, Semarang
- 2008 Self-Portrait, Galeri Jogja, Yogyakarta  
Manifesto, Galeri Nasional, Jakarta  
Keindahan Rasa Gerak Tubuh, Mon Décor Gallery, Jakarta
- 2007 Conscience Celebrate, Edwin Gallery, Gandaria City, Jakarta  
16@Sriwijaya, Theodoor Bakker, Jakarta  
Celebr'art'e Fire Boar, Galeri Kupu-Kupu, Jakarta, Griya Santrian, Bali.  
Relasi Tanah Air-Seni Patung dan Lingkungan, Pakuwon, Surabaya  
Indonesian Women Artists: The Curtain Opens, Galeri Nasional, Jakarta  
Karya untuk Kawan III, Galeri Nasional, Jakarta
- 2006 Bulan Purnama, Canna Gallery, Jakarta  
Ide dan Eksplorasi II, Galeri One, Jakarta  
Embodying the Present, Tonyraka Gallery, Bali  
Soliloquy, Galeri Nasional, Jakarta  
Sedulur Gempa, Goethe Institute, Jakarta  
Jakarta Biennale, Beyond the Limits and Its Challenges, Galeri Nasional, Jakarta  
Contemporary Indonesian Sculptors Exhibition, Chianti Sculpture Park Gallery, Pievasciata (Siena), Italy.
- 2005 Bali Biennale, Denpasar, Bali  
Fragments, Edwin Gallery, Jakarta  
21st and Beyond, dwinn Gallery, Jakarta  
Mata-mata Jakarta, Galeri Nasional, Jakarta  
Imprinted Images of Body, Galeri Canna, Jakarta  
Tanda Kasih, Edwin Gallery, Jakarta
- 2004 Individual Memory & Memorial Society, Langgeng Gallery, Magelang  
Membaca Kembali Konvensi, Edwin Gallery, Jakarta  
Patung Kontemporer, Fabulous Gallery, Jakarta
- 2003 Standard Charter Bank, Jakarta.  
Pameran Seni Rupa Seniman Indonesia dan Malaysia, Taksu Gallery, Jakarta  
Kado, Nadi Gallery, Jakarta  
Mc(row) Media, Langgeng Gallery, Yogyakarta
- 2002 Karya untuk Kawan, Galeri Nasional, Jakarta  
Mata, Nadi Gallery, Jakarta  
Anniversary Komnas Perempuan, Gedung Komnas Perempuan, Jakarta.
- 2001 Contemporary of Indonesian Women Artist, Bentara Budaya, Jakarta
- 1999 International Contemporary Art Exhibition: Women Imaging Women" , Museum Nasional Manila, Filipina
- 1998 Violence Against Women, Galeri Cemara, Jakarta
- 1997 Contemporary Asian Art, Museum Konferensi Asia Afrika, Gedung Merdeka, Bandung  
International Contemporary Art Exhibition: Configuration Critique, Paris, Prancis
- 1996 Inspired Elements, Lobby Regent Hotel, Jakarta
- 1995 The Inspired Image, Edwin Gallery, Jakarta
- 1994 Jakarta Design Expo, Jakarta Design Center, Jakarta  
Contemporary Art Exhibition of Non-Aligned Country, Galeri Nasional, Jakarta  
Dream Carrier, Taman Ismail Marzuki, Jakarta

- 1993 Liuk, Rongga, dan Tekstur, Galeri Cipta, Taman Ismail Marzuki, Jakarta
- 1992 Seni Rupa Internasional se-Asia ke-7, Gedung Merdeka, Bandung
- 1991 Works From A Distant Shore, Contemporary Asian Art Gallery,  
Monetary Fund, Washington DC, Amerika Serikat  
Noktah, Lippo Plaza, Jakarta  
Noktah, Arts Club, Washington DC, Amerika Serikat
- 1990 Group Sembilan Exhibition, Club Mercantile, Gedung WTC, Jakarta
- 1989 Group Sembilan Exhibition, Landmark Center, Jakarta
- 1988 Nuansa Indonesia III, Galeri Cipta Taman Ismail Marzuki, Jakarta
- 1986 Group Sembilan Exhibition, Auditorium Bank Duta, Jakarta

# Selected Artwork

Dolorosa Sinaga





The Grief  
2000  
Bronze  
60 x 30 x 25 cm



## The Grief (2000)

Dolorosa's *The Grief* discusses Indonesia's past decade. Through her sculpture, the artist mourns her country, lamenting the marginalized and the most vulnerable who are powerless against the society at large. She also expresses her loss of confidence towards the leaders of Indonesia, who according to her are divided and working towards their personal desires, neglecting the people they were supposed to protect.

The figures themselves are histrionic and sculpted intentionally roughly, representing the shared experiences of Indonesia's people. "Dolorosa's human figures anatomise deepest feelings and loudest protests in sculptural language as body, form and matter" (p10). Dolorosa sculpts expressive, but non-literal human figures to express the "agony of creation" that she sees. The figures in her sculpture bow their heads and contort their bodies as if they are in physical pain, and the static piece is given movement and life. She distorts her bodies to portray the human limits of their physical and spiritual endurance. "Dolorosa's sculptures channel suffering and solidarity, and ignite lament into existence" (27).

*The Grief* is Dolorosa's milestone work, one that encompasses in a single sculpture her mission and identity, as both an artist and an activist.



Solidarity III  
2000  
Bronze  
(open edition)

## Solidarity III (2000)

Throughout the second half of the 1990s, Dolorosa made a name for herself through her art as a feminist and advocate for women's rights. "Viewing the body as the marker of political power, Dolorosa examined how power shaped the view of a woman's body, especially in the time of political violence and disorder" (19).

"Solidarity" is a tribute to women who, in both Indonesia and the rest of the world, have injustice and oppression permeate every aspect of their lives due to their birth gender and the traditionally patriarchal society at large. The sculpture was directly inspired by the riots of May 1998 two years prior, which, even with its anti-Chinese violence, was particularly violent towards women.

Seven flattened, frail figures stand hand-in-hand like an iron chain, their bodies standing tall together to create a wall, mouths positioned open. These opposing concepts of fragility and stability are important concepts to Dolorosa.

Not only does she acknowledge the pain of living as a woman, but Dolorosa celebrates their strength as well, both as individuals and as a whole, all fighting for the same freedom. One woman raises her hand up in a strong yet silent act of protest; another stands heavily pregnant, choosing her role as life-giver and mother. In a state of turmoil and uncertainty, Dolorosa reminds the viewer of the forgotten strength that women have.

Alongside *Fighting Against Violence* (1999), *Avante* (2001), and *The Story of Women* (2001), *Solidarity* makes up what has been argued to be Dolorosa's "most celebrated series of women's 'body politics' sculptures" (19). One version of the sculpture is displayed in The National Gallery of Indonesia, while another is displayed at the National Commission on Violence Against Women (*Komnas Perempuan*).



We Will Fight  
2003  
Bronze  
123 x 64 x 73 cm  
(edition of 5)

## We Will Fight (2003)

Some of her works were made deliberately to represent multiple situations and issues simultaneously. Her 2003 bronze piece *We Will Fight* is able to touch on the issue of forced evictions. *We Will Fight* was made as a response to the government clearing out the slums, touching on the broader issue of forced evictions caused by the ever-developing urban landscape of Indonesia. The sculpture almost looks like a single entity, as the exclusively female figures “are dramatic” in their closeness. Dolorosa presents the gesture of women struggling to defend the place they have from hundreds of soldiers trying to evict land for development.

The figures who gather together and carry items that want to be saved from the eviction. Sorrow at the injustice because there are many cases of evictions that are not in accordance with procedures. The state is supposed to guarantee the right to a decent life for its citizens, which actually undermines all forms of power and its apparatus’s arrogance. Their anguish clearly seen in the poverty of their dress and the pain in their anonymous faces. In this scene all the figures are women as Sinaga points out, “ Women have to look after the children and protect their home. Lean on each other as they struggle to stand, her signature rough relief and simplified, anonymous faces portraying their feelings of loss, anguish, hunger, and poverty, while none of them are completely on their knees. “[Dolorosa] shows them in their pain, but they mourn together, not alone. They are not finished. They are shaken, but not defeated. They are weak, but not overwhelmed. They are still struggling” (322). Even their dress evokes a sense of pain, as they cling to the figures and roots them solidly to the ground.





Whispering  
2008  
Bronze  
100 x 50 x 65 cm



## Whispering (2008)

Dolorosa depicts men and women notably differently in her sculptures, especially in her earlier works as she focused on women's rights in Indonesia. Around the time she held her first solo exhibition *Have You Seen a Sculpture From the Body?* in late 2001, her men evoke feelings of anxiety, callousness, and indifference, as her women struggle to fight for their place in society. In her relatively more recent works, this attitude has shifted into one of greater empathy and love.

With a style divorced from her usual portfolio, *Whispering* is realistic instead of impressionistic. Her figures - a woman and a man - are given lifelike faces, and Dolorosa presents the narrative in a much more literal manner. The sculpture is quiet and intimate, inviting the viewer to simply observe the scene. Both the woman and the man in *Whispering* seem to be on equal footing, enjoying a conversation as Dolorosa creates an invisible bond between the two.



Sufi Dancer II  
2013  
Resin and silver color coating  
66 x 25 x 88 cm  
(Edition of 3)

## Sufi Dancer II (2013)

She had already used the dancer as a source of inspiration in the early 1980s . the idea resurfaced in her works in 2013. There are conceptual differences between them, though. Symbolic value in the dancing figures of the 1980s Dolorosa remarked, she wanted to convey a metaphor in those early female figures. For instance, Mind Dancing depicts a woman dancing on a pillow. Means that although a woman is asleep her mind still dances. In 2013 she reinterpreted the figure of the dancer as a sculptural idea. The idea of dancing can free you from many things. She think when she cant't speak anymore, she just can dance to releas all those feelings.

The dynamic, expressive forms of female dancers often show up in Dolorosa's sculptures. Their bodies move to a silent rhythm, while their skirts twirl around their legs.

When asked about her dancing figures, Dolorosa went on to say that: "The act of dancing can free you from many things. ... When I can't speak anymore, I dance. I dance to feel alive and joyful. When we talk about the arts, dancing and singing free us from all-encumbering issues" (361).

Though a significantly large body of her work is dedicated to discussing and examining the many issues of her society and reality, Dolorosa creates dancing sculptures as a reminder to her audience of art as a form of escapism and as a method of meditation, to give hope to the people in the midst of uncertainty, pain, and oppression.

#### ISA ART AND DESIGN

Jl. Wijaya Timur Raya No. 12  
Kebayoran Baru, 12170  
Jakarta, Indonesia

#### Wisma 46 - Kota BNI

Jl. Jendral Sudirman Kav. 1  
Tanah Abang, 10220  
Jakarta, Indonesia

#### CONTACTS

Email: [marketing@isaartanddesign.com](mailto:marketing@isaartanddesign.com)  
Telephone: (+62-21) 723-3905  
WhatsApp: (+62) 811-1733-553

#### VISITING HOURS

Monday to Friday : 10am - 6pm

Saturday and Sunday : By Appointment

