

Eventually, reality effect no longer becomes important—is it not true that effects on reality are a part of our everyday living? When reality—no matter how complex—is represented or triggered the creation of art, a new reality is born (=the artwork) that is separate from the true reality. It does not matter that its existence is seen merely as simulacrum or copy, because there are always artists that act as the anchor behind the works. The “distinctness” of the work by an artist—compared to those of other artists—will give rise to the artist’s “identity” and “originality”, although it is the result of the effort to represent or copy the reality.

- Asmujo Jono Irianto

In this exhibition, can we say that the realistic images that show certain physical resemblance with our daily experience of seeing constitute a common language? Naturally, every realistic art expression can be considered “merely” as an object: painting, sculpture, photograph, or film; still, we have to try finding the value of art that the respective medium of expression states. The range of the media can be meaningful in so far as we are able to find a distinct recognizing capacity as an “art expression”. We will then appreciate them as valuable expressions, because we find them as a “language” that go beyond the boundaries of the common languages.

- Rizki A. Zaelani

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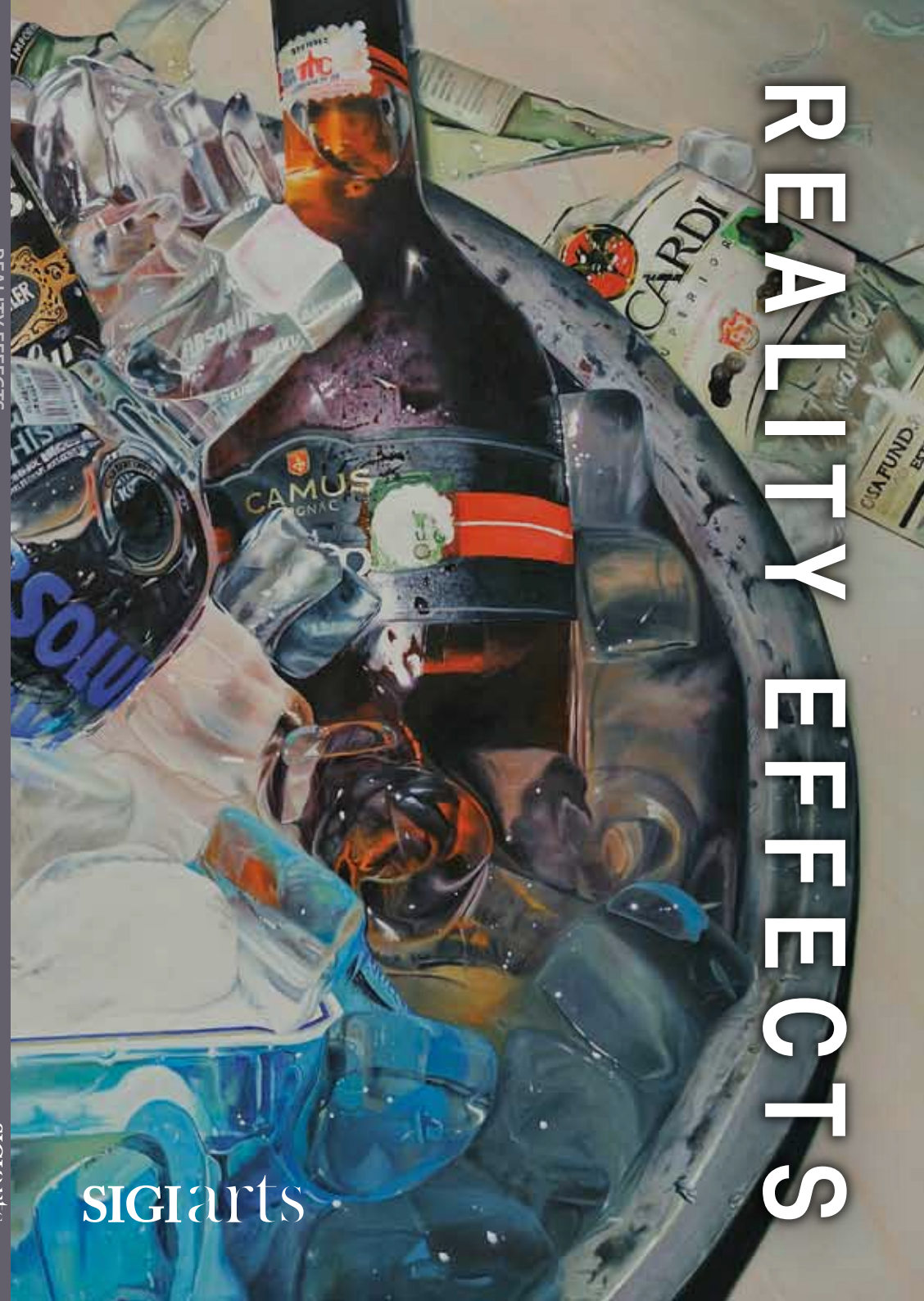
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Reality Effect: Realisme dalam Seni Rupa Kontemporer

Asmudjo Jono Irianto

*"Pictures are defined not by some magical affinity to the real but by their ability to create what Roland Barthes called 'reality effect'."*¹

Istilah *reality effect*, atau efek (-menyerupai) realitas dikenal melalui artikel Roland Barthes dengan judul yang sama. *Reality effect* dalam artikel Barthes tersebut menganalisis fungsi deskripsi yang rinci dalam novel realis. Pada prinsipnya, deskripsi yang akurat akan menghasilkan apa yang disebut oleh Barthes sebagai *illusion of reality* yang menampilkan "efek realitas." *Reality effect* juga berlaku pada citraan-citraan realis, terutama dalam foto dan film, "...we typically behave as though photographs show 'exactly what happened'—what Barthes called 'the reality effects' "²

Dalam seni lukis, *reality effect* tidak dapat dipisahkan dari kecenderungan realis dalam sejarah seni rupa Barat—sebelum ditemukannya fotografi. Hal itu ditunjukkan dengan populernya teknik *trompe l'oeil* yang secara harfiah berarti "mengelabui mata" mengacu pada seni lukis yang berupaya membangun ilusi tiga dimensi berkenaan dengan obyek yang digambarkannya. Karena itu kecenderungan realis juga kerap disebut sebagai *illusionism*. Ditemukannya fotografi sebagai medium yang dianggap lebih obyektif dalam merepresentasikan realita tentu saja mengancam eksistensi seni lukis realis. Menyurutnya kecenderungan realis dalam seni lukis modern sedikit banyak memang disebabkan oleh keberadaan fotografi. Sebagai karya seni, fotografi lebih dekat dan bergantung pada realita. Albert Renger-Patzh fotografer avant garde menjawab pertanyaan di tahun 1927 mengenai keberadaan fotografi sebagai medium yang otonom, berujar, "*The secret of a good photograph, which can have artistic qualities just like a work of the visual arts, lies in its realism.*"³

Pada kenyataannya, eksistensi lukisan realisme sebagai representasi sudah diambil alih oleh fotografi, sebagaimana dikatakan oleh Arthur Danto yang disitir oleh Eleanor Hertney,

(Details of)

Chusin Setiadikara
Kids of Kintamani

2010

150 x 285 cm

Oil on canvas

"In his essay 'The End of Art,' philosopher and critic Arthur Danto argues that photography 'solved' the problem that had face artists since the Renaissance, namely how to create a convincing representation of the visible world through painting and

*sculpture. As a result, he believes, photography freed art to pursue a different set of goals involving ideology rather than representation.*¹⁴

Ketika tugas lukisan merepresentasikan realita telah diambil alih oleh fotografi, maka seni lukis mengambil arah yang sama sekali berbeda, yaitu menyuruk masuk wilayah-wilayah yang belum dikenal, dunia yang sepenuhnya baru, berjarak dengan realita. Kita kenali itu sebagai seni lukis abstrak, yang meninggalkan “dunia” dan sibuk mencari jati dirinya sendiri: esensi seni lukis. Representasi realita kemudian memang lebih banyak ditunjukkan oleh karya-karya foto. Namun dalam perjalanannya, obyektifitas foto dalam merepresentasikan realita pun dipertanyakan. Fotografi mudah untuk dimanipulasi menjauhi atau mengingkari kenyataan. Perkembangan teknologi citraan digital bahkan memungkinkan dihasilkannya citraan-citraan—seolah—realis yang tak didasari oleh realita, namun sepenuhnya disusun melalui perangkat lunak penyusun citraan.

Perkembangan teknologi, khususnya yang berkaitan dengan produksi citraan, telah mengubah persepsi masyarakat masa kini mengenai realita, mengenai dunia. Saat ini sulit menetapkan apakah realita yang sesungguhnya, tatkala persepsi manusia dibentuk oleh serbuan citraan dan tontonan, menghasilkan apa yang disebut oleh Guy Debord sebagai *society of spectacle*. Persepsi mengenai realita pada masyarakat masa kini memang dibentuk dan bersandar pada budaya tontonan. Masyarakat tidak menyadari manipulasi politis dan komersial yang ditanamkan pada benak mereka secara langsung melalui pesawat televisi di ruang-ruang keluarga. Tak dapat dipungkiri bahwa *reality show* dan infotainment yang disajikan televisi merupakan makanan sehari-hari manusia Indonesia. Ironisnya mereka seperti merasa memiliki kontrol melalui *remote control* dengan memindah-mindahkan saluran televisi¹⁵.

Apa yang kita anggap sebagai realita saat ini sesungguhnya selalu merupakan konstruk yang dibentuk oleh berbagai kepentingan yang kadang saling bertubrukan. Karena itu sulit menetapkan apa sesungguhnya “realita” saat ini. Istilah simulakrum menunjukkan

bagaimana kita sulit menetapkan realita yang sesungguhnya, karena yang tampil dihadapan kita adalah *copy* dari *copy*.

*"Only since the 1960s—in response to a breakdown in the solidity of the 'real,' Its massive mediation by new technologies of the visible, the increasing numbers of images permeating everyday life and concomitant transformations in what considered 'art'— have philosophers, critics, and most crucially, artists themselves returned to the repressed term 'simulacrum' and revived it as a crucial concepts for interrogating postmodern artistic practices and theories of representation."*⁶

Bangkrutnya seni rupa modern mau tidak mau mengembalikan seni rupa—di era seni rupa kontemporer—sebagai wilayah representasi. Namun tentu saja representasi dalam seni rupa kontemporer memiliki motif dan urgensi yang berbeda dengan konteks representasi pada karya-karya realis sebelum masa seni rupa modern. Pada saat model dualisme antara realita dan *copy* sulit ditegakkan, maka tentu saja wilayah representasi mengalami persoalan, *"the simulacrum also disturbs the order of priority; that the images must be secondary to, or come after, its model."*⁷ Namun, di sisi lain, pada saat konsep dualisme tersebut tak lagi dapat dijalankan secara ajek, maka justru wilayah representasi menjadi wilayah yang menyediakan beragam kemungkinan petualangan. Jika segala sesuatunya adalah simulakrum (*copy* dari *copy*), bukankah juga sebaliknya: segala sesuatu bisa dianggap sebagai realita pada dirinya masing-masing? Maka *reality effect* pada seni realis kontemporer adalah efek-efek mengenai realitanya sebagai karya seni, sebagai entitas yang real dan otonom—yang tidak harus dikaitkan dengan "apa" yang direpresentasikannya.

Itu sebabnya, dalam seni rupa kontemporer kecenderungan realis—dalam berbagai bentuk dan medium kembali memiliki daya hidup. Ketidakyakinan pada realitas tak berarti menyebabkan seniman menghilangkan asumsi mengenai realita. Bagaimanapun cairnya realita, para seniman realis membutuhkan pangkal persoalan (dari wilayah yang dianggap "realita") untuk diperkarakan dalam karyanya. Saat "realita" tak lagi memiliki keajaiban, maka keterlibatan seni dalam mempersoalkan "realita" tersebut justru menunjukkan urgensi keberadaan seni. Hal itu juga

4 menyebabkan kecenderungan realis muncul dalam beragam sikap, kemungkinan dan bentuk. Karena itu tak mudah menetapkan pengertian realisme dalam seni rupa kontemporer.

Jika beberapa dekade lalu realisme dalam seni rupa kontemporer Indonesia selalu dikaitkan dengan representasi sosial-politik, maka tema yang digarap kecenderungan realisme belakangan ini semakin beragam dan kompleks. Di antara ragam gaya realis, tampaknya foto realis cukup menonjol. Tidak bisa dipungkiri bahwa saat ini banyak seniman-seniman realis yang memanfaatkan bantuan foto dan teknologi digital macam *lcd projector* dalam menggarap karya-karya realisnya. Hal itu dilakukan untuk dapat menangkap kenyataan dan obyek yang dilukis seakurat mungkin. Karena itu foto yang menjadi acuan juga bisa ditempatkan sebagai obyek yang dilukis oleh seniman. Dengan demikian yang direpresentasikan oleh seniman adalah *copy* dari realita. Hal ini berarti menunjukkan aspek simulakrum karya-karya lukis foto realis, atau karya-karya realis yang menggunakan acuan foto. Pemanfaatan foto ini sangat bergantung pada intensi senimannya, apakah semata-mata teknis, atau juga konseptual. Bukankah melukis melalui foto adalah sebetulnya upaya mendekonstruksi identitas reproduksi foto, mengembalikan citraan pada keunikannya? Pada akhirnya. Tak akan pernah ada lukisanya yang sepenuhnya sama. Keunikan seni lukis—sebagai hanya satu-satunya—bahkan mempengaruhi seniman foto untuk menghasilkan karya foto satu edisi, atau *mono-print*, satu hal yang sebetulnya tidak sesuai dengan karakter dan identitas foto yang bisa direproduksi tanpa batas.

*"In so far as contemporary art photography has become as much a creation of the market-place as an engine of it, it comes as no surprise to encounter the ultimate denial of photography as a mechanically reproducible technology in such phenomena as Emmet Gowin's recent production of 'monoprints'—edition of a single print from negative. Indeed, a recent press release from the Laurence Miller Gallery announces on the occasion of an exhibition entitled 'The One and Only.'"*⁷

Pameran ini menegaskan, bahwa pola dualisme dalam representasi (realita versus copy) tak lagi bisa dipakai sebagai satu-satunya

acuan. Di sisi lain, pameran ini juga tak ingin menihilkan karya-karya realis sebagai semata-mata *copy* dari *copy*, menjadi semacam simulakrum, sebagaimana diutarakan oleh Margot Lovejoy, “we can call a photorealist painting a simulacrum because it was a painted copy of a photograph, which was itself, inherently, a copy of the real.”⁸ Bagaimanapun, karya seni selalu berharap bahwa keberadaanya memberikan *insight* dan pemahaman lebih mendalam terhadap berbagai persoalan yang diketengahkan seniman, termasuk “realita” dan *copy*nya, pun simulakrumnya. Dalam kaitan ini kita dapat melihat bagaimana Andy Warhol ditempatkan dalam dua posisi yang saling bertentangan, di satu sisi karya-karya Warhol menurut Barthes bisa dibaca sebagai simulakral, “is to desymbolize the object, to release the images from any deep meaning into simulacral surface.”⁹ Namun sebaliknya, seperti ditunjukkan oleh Hal Foster bahwa karya-karya Andy Warhol pun bisa dikatakan sebagai representasi dari realita. Hal itu ditunjukkan oleh pendapat Thomas Crow yang menentang penilaian karya-karya Andy Warhol sebagai simulakral,

*“Underneath the glamorous surface of commodity fetishes and the media stars Crow finds, ‘the reality of suffering and death’; the tragedies of Marilyn, Liz, and Jackie in Particular are said to prompt ‘straightforward expression of feeling.’ Here Crow finds not only a referential object for Warhol but an empathetic subject in Warhol, an here he locates the **criticality** of Warhol. . . In this way Crow pushes Warhol beyond humanist sentiment to political engagement.”¹⁰*

Hal Foster melihat kedua penilaian tersebut, yaitu menempatkan karya-karya Warhol sebagai simulakral maupun sebagai representasi semata-mata sebagai pilihan, sebagai kemungkinan—yang didasari sudut pandang dan motif masing-masing pihak. Hal itu ditunjukkannya oleh Hal Foster berkenaan dengan karya-karya Andy Warhol dengan tema *Death in America*,

“Both camps make the Warhol they need, or get the Warhol they deserve; no doubt we all do. And neither projection is wrong. I find them equally persuasive. But they cannot both be right. . . or can they? Can we read the ‘Death in America’ images as referential and simulacral, connected and disconnected, affective and affectless, critical and complacent? I think we must, and we can if we read them third way, in term of traumatic realism.”¹¹

- 6 Dari kutipan tersebut, Hal Foster setidaknya mengutarakan dua pendekatan realis dalam seni rupa kontemporer, pertama *traumatic realism*, dan secara tidak langsung dia juga menyetengahkan perkara *critical realism*.

Kendati menurut Hal Foster, realisme masa kini masih mungkin dilihat sebagai citraan yang menunjukkan relasi antara realita dan representasinya, namun tak lagi memiliki keajegan hubungan sebagaimana tradisi realis di Barat pada abad 19. Demikian pula, saat ini niatan seni realis sebagai wilayah representasi tentu saja mendapatkan saingan dari media massa dan seni populer. Sering timbul pertanyaan, apa yang membedakan representasi dalam seni dengan representasi dalam seni populer? Bisa jadi cairnya batas-batas antara seni tinggi dengan seni populer disebabkan ketidak yakinan wilayah seni tinggi tentang potensi representasinya. Namun demikian, dalam beberapa hal batas-batas tersebut sesungguhnya terjaga, sebagai contoh, karya-karya yang ditampilkan dalam pameran ini memiliki "kekhususan" sebagai wilayah representasi melalui identitasnya sebagai "karya seni." Lukisan realis di era produksi dan reproduksi citraan digital tentu saja tampak "tidak masuk akal". Apa urgensinya menciptakan citraan dengan susah payah secara *hand-made* dan makan waktu lama, jika citraan yang sama dapat diproduksi dalam sekejap dengan teknologi digital? Jawabannya: citraan realis yang ditampilkan/dieksekusi melalui lukisan memberikan *reality effect* keberadaannya (=realitanya) sebagai "karya seni." Dengan kata lain, lukisan realis atau karya2 realis yang dikerjakan secara manual/*hand made* saat ini memiliki potensi kritikal terhadap budaya instan dan tontonan, justru karena lukisan dikerjakan dengan cara yang tidak masuk akal dalam pandangan teknologi produksi dan reproduksi citraan digital yang massal dan instan.

Lagi pula, bisa jadi kebanyakan perupa realis di Indonesia tak terlalu peduli pada runtuhnya realita. Karena itu model dualisme antara realita dan representasinya (=lukisan/karya realis) masih bisa dijalankan dengan cukup ajeg. Artinya karya-karya mereka bisa dilihat sebagai efek dari realita yang mereka persoalkan. Agaknya keawatiran mengenai realita yang tak lagi nyata lebih

intens terjadi pada dataran teori dan wacana kebudayaan di Barat. Dalam dataran keseharian, atau dalam wilayah *common sense*, maka apa yang disebut “realita” sesungguhnya kerap diterima begitu saja sebagai keniscayaan. Segala sesuatu yang tampak hadir sebagai materi (obyek) atau kejadian-kejadian yang *self evident* adalah “realita” yang dihadapi manusia sehari-hari. Namun tentu saja realita keseharian sebagian besar merupakan realita rutinitas kehidupan manusia. Realita tersebut menjadi hal yang khusus pada saat direpresentasikan kembali, sebagai sebuah dokumentasi, berita (jurnalis), pun karya seni.

Akhirnya, justru karya-karya lukis atau patung realis dalam seni rupa kontemporer adalah realita itu sendiri, realita yang mengenai kekongkritannya, merupakan artefak (-seni) yang disusun langsung oleh sentuhan tangan sang seniman—atau setidaknya dibuat secara *hand made*. Hal itu tentu saja menjadi antitesis dari produksi citraan massal dan instant yang menggunakan teknologi digital. Karya-karya realis *hand-made* dengan sendirinya kembali auratik karena keunikannya (=ketunggalannya). Dia menjadi *reality effect* bagi kehadirannya sebagai karya seni, yaitu karya seni yang “real”, yang konkrit, kendati kontennya, bisa saja merupakan bagian dari rangkaian simulakrum. Toh yang akhirnya dikonsumsi dalam proses produksi dan konsumsi seni rupa kontemporer adalah “karya” seni sebagai obyek, yang merupakan hasil pengkongkritan (reifikasi) gagasan seniman.

Realisme dalam perjalanan seni rupa modern dan kontemporer Indonesia merupakan bagian amat penting. Seni lukis abstrak yang menjadi tulang punggung seni rupa modern Barat tak pernah mengakui keberadaan seni rupa modern lain di luar Barat—yang menerapkan azas-azas abstrak. Menurut Hans Belting, salah satu jalan keluarnya adalah melalui kekentalan nasionalisme,

“... for the continuing hegemonial modernism still demanded the exclusion of artists other than Western . The only alternative was an excessive nationalism in representation of modern art in order to counterbalance the colonial definition.”¹²

8 Bagaiamanapun wacana seni rupa modern/kontemporer Indonesia memiliki situasi dan urgensi yang berbeda dengan wacana dalam seni rupa kontemporer Barat—kendati tak bisa dipungkiri dipengaruhi oleh wacana seni rupa modern/kontemporer Barat. Apa yang disebut realita adalah kenyataan (fakta) yang dianggap mudah ditemukan dalam keseharian masyarakat Indonesia—kendati umumnya realita yang tidak menyenangkan, menyangkut masalah sosial seperti kemiskinan, korupsi, kerusakan alam, pertentangan kelompok, kekerasan aparat, dsb. Memang, apa yang disebut realita negatif tersebut kerap tampil “telanjang” di mata publik. Kendati banyak hal/nilai dibangun menggunakan taktik dan strategi kapital yang memanfaatkan teknologi pencitraan (=politik pencitraan) yang marak dalam perpolitikan Indonesia belakangan ini, namun kebanyakan rakyat mensikapi hal tersebut sebagai realita: keinginan untuk menduduki jabatan politik dengan “segala cara.” Dengan kata lain, untuk membedakan realita dengan fiksi, yang asli dan *copy* barangkali bukan hal yang terlampau kompleks—bagi para seniman dan pengamatnya. Harus diakui persoalan kompleksnya relasi realitas dan representasinya, antara representasi dan *copy*, antara *copy* dan *copy* menjadi wacana yang dielaborasi dengan canggih oleh para pemikir kebudayaan di Barat, namun belum lagi menjadi perkara penting dalam praktek dan wacana kebudayaan di Indonesia.

Di sisi lain, bahkan seniman Barat setelah tahun 1990 dikatakan oleh Jean Robertson, tak terlampau peduli pada teori. Dalam medan seni rupa Indonesia, teori pun menjadi perkara yang bisa dikatakan tidak penting dan *determinant*—lagi pula teori seni yang mana, dari begitu banyak teori yang harus dipedulikan seniman? Karena itu sebagaimana dikatakan oleh Jean Robertson, bahwa,

*“Artists didn’t seem to pay attention to theory as much after 1990, and the debates of the previous decade over modernism, postmodernism, and poststructuralism died down... . Instead artists took up accessibility, communication, humor and play.”*¹³

Aspek komunikatif dan mudah diakses adalah salah satu ciri karya realis. Nilai-nilai komunikatif tersebut dipadu dengan pendekatan kritik, seperti dalam *critical realism*, dan aspek katarsis dan terapi

seperti dalam *traumatic realism* terbukti menjadikan karya-karya realis kembali memiliki kekuatan. Pameran ini menampilkan kecenderungan realis dalam berbagai kemungkinan. Segala pendekatan dan motif realis dalam pameran ini berpulang pada *attitude* dan motif seniman, demikian pula pembacaannya juga bergantung pada latar belakang dan motif pemirsa. Realisme dalam seni rupa kontemporer tak menyediakan jawaban siap pakai mengenai kesejatiannya, dan sebaiknya memang demikian, karena kita tak pernah lagi punya keyakinan yang pasti mengenai realita dan kesejatian.

Karena menggunakan acuan foto, maka realisme dalam seni rupa kontemporer boleh dikatakan memiliki *reality effect* yang lebih kental. Lihat saja misalnya karya fotorealis Ito “#77 Cikarang” tidak hanya tampilan yang menyerupai foto, karya-karya Ito dikerjakan mengikuti prinsip mesin cetak, digarap per lapis warna sesuai prinsip CMYK. Karena itu kendati realis namun karya Ito cenderung datar seperti tampilan foto. Karya Tommy Nelwan, menampilkan kartupos, mau tidak mau juga menghilangkan kesan kedalaman, karena yang direpresentasikannya adalah citraan kartupos yang memang datar. Namun demikian karya Tommy memberikan kedalaman waktu, seperti obyek nostalgia (masihkah kita saling mengirim kartupos pada saat foto dengan seketika bisa *upload* di Facebook?). Karya Reggie Aquara juga menampilkan citraan barang cetak, terutama karena ada teks di bawahnya. Namun yang menarik Reggie justru menampilkannya dengan *stroke* kuas yang lebar dan kasar, yang menghasilkan kesan sedikit buram. Sepertinya karya tersebut ingin mengingkari efek fotografis, dan ingin mengembalikannya pada dataran seni lukis. Maka bisa dikatakan efek realitas pada karya-karya tersebut tidak menekankan pada realita obyek yang sesungguhnya, namun realita sebagai citraan, sebagai lukisan.

Karya Dodit Artawan, Ketut Moniarta, Cecep M. Taufik dan Anggoro dalam pameran ini juga merupakan karya yang dapat digolongkan sebagai fotorealis. Karya Dodit Artawan berupa botol-botol minuman keras yang diselimuti es tanpak sangat real dan “cool”, sebagaimana judulnya. Botol-botol tersebut sangat menggoda

10 dan “mengundang” para pecinta minuman keras. Tidak kalah dengan Dodit, karya Moniarta berupa lempengan metal gilap yang terpiuh dengan merek alat olah raga di permukaanya tampak sangat real. Subject matter kedua seniman ini ditarik dari wilayah konsumsi bermerek, apakah mereka memiliki sikap tertentu? Bisa jadi demikian, dengan teknik realis yang tinggi obyek-obyek dalam lukisan mereka “menggoda”, semacam ironi tentang konsumerisme dan gaya hidup. Karya Agus Sumiantara kendati memenuhi kaidah fotorealis, namun tampak dekoratif karena pengulangan yang dilakukan. Sekilas tampak datar, karena pengulangan tersebut, tetapi jika diperhatikan justru menampilkan kedalaman, tidak dari kesan perspektif, namun dari teknik stereogram yang dikembangkan Agus pada lukisan-lukisan terakhirnya.

Cecep menampilkan *subject matter* kegemarannya, yaitu mobil. Agak berbeda dengan karya-karya sebelumnya, kedalaman perspektif dalam karyanya yang berjudul “Photorealize” tampil kuat, karena jalan dan mobil-mobil dalam kanvasnya disusun menghadap titik hilang. Karya Anggoro berseberangan dengan aspek ilusif dalam karya Cecep, kendati juga tampak sangat realistis. Sosok dalam kanvas Anggoro “diganggu” susunan plester yang “menempel” di tubuhnya. Plester yang tampak menempel datar tentu saja menimbulkan kekacauan ilusif dalam karya tersebut. Kepejalan sang sosok dianulir oleh plester yang tampak rata.

Sementara itu karya-karya Budi, Yoga membawa kita pada realita budaya populer, yang tak terpisahkan dari masyarakat kontemporer, tokoh-tokoh fiksi adalah ‘realita’ yang tak terpisahkan dari kehidupan kaum muda. Tampil dengan karya-karya tiga dimensi, para pematung ini menunjukkan *trend* terahir seni patung di Indonesia. Karya-karya kedua pematung ini multiinterpretasi. Nadia menampilkan keramik, mewakili kecenderungan “obyek” dalam seni rupa kontemporer. Karya-karya Nadia dari bahan porselen merepresentasikan botol-botol alat kecantikan tampak substil dan sublim, berbeda dengan obyek aslinya. Apakah Nadia hendak bicara bahwa kehendak kaum wanita untuk “cantik” tak pernah pudar? Atau, karya itu hendak bicara pada akhirnya yang paling perfek adalah obyek seni—yang mampu “mengekalikan”

perkara sepele. Karya Nurdian Ichsan yang juga terbuat dari poselen. Dengan meletakkan gambar berupa garis-garis perspektif di belakang sosok porselennya Nurdian tampaknya mempersoalkan persepsi tiga dimensi dan dua dimensi, antara yang real dan ilusif. Hal itu juga berarti mempertanyakan eksistensi manusia dalam ketidakajegan realita.

Triyadi Guntur, Dewa Ratayoga, dan RE Hartanto mengetengahkan drawing dalam pameran ini, namun dengan tampilan yang berbeda. Guntur dan Ratayoga menggunakan pensil dengan teknik arsir, menghasilkan sosok yang tampak bervolume. Guntur mengusung tema penting, yaitu sejarah seni rupa. Karya Guntur yang menampilkan Sudjojono mengangkat Brillo Box, seperti bicara mengenai persoalan konstruk sejarah seni rupa Barat versus negara non Barat, seperti Indonesia. Kita tahu bahwa sejarah seni rupa modern dunia/internasional hanya diisi oleh para seniman Barat. Sementara karya Ratayoga sepertinya bicara perkara efek dari perkembangan teknologi pada kehidupan tradisi. Karya RE Hartanto, menggunakan teknik drawing yang sederhana tampak datar menampilkan seorang perempuan sedang minum teh dan bercengkerama dengan sosok menyerupai mahluk jadi-jadian. Dengan penggarapan seperti itu, sepertinya Tanto sengaja menjauhi kesan “real”, terlebih narasinya pun bukan dari dunia realita. Demikian pula, karya-karya Cinanti (Keni) menggunakan cat air dengan teknik akuarel tak tampak fotorealis—kendati acuannya adaah foto. Keni pun tidak menampilkan realita, melainkan dunia imajinernya.

Mahehendra Yasa, melalui karya-karyanya selama ini menunjukkan bahwa kecenderungan realis masih terus bisa digarap dengan pendekatan yang konseptual. Dengan cerdas dia membenturkan persoalan realis dengan abstrak dalam karya-karya. *Brush stroke*, plototan yang kerap menjadi *high-light* seni lukis abstrak digarap melalui pendekatan realis. Adakalanya dia menampilkan *subject matter* (mainan, anjing, sosoknya sendiri) sebagai wahana mempersoalkan kedua perkara tersebut, sehingga menambahkan kompleksitasnya. Arah yang cukup sebangun ditunjukkan oleh karya-karya I Wayan Suja, setidaknya karyanya yang berjudul “Abstraction” memang

12 berada dalam dataran antara karya realis dan abstrak. Dede Eri dan Chusin menunjukkan bahwa mereka merupakan master “gambar akademisme”. Lukisan-lukisan mereka selalu menunjukkan dasar kepakaran drawing. Salah satu karakter penting kedua pelukis ini adalah efek *painterly* pada lukisan-lukisan mereka, yaitu jejak *brush stroke*. Dalam karya terbarunya, Dede kembali menggarap karya-karya bertema urban, namun dengan menghilangkan komponen-komponen metaforis (misalnya: kardus) seperti dalam karya-karya lamanya. Karya-karya tersebut tampak lebih kuat dan *straightforward*. Sementara Chusin dalam karya “Kids of Kintamani” juga menampilkan realita anak-anak desa di Bali. Anak-anak yang digambarkan dengan hitam-putih dan berwarna seperti menghadirkan dua lapis representasi yang berlawanan: masa lalu dan masa kini, anak-anak dan kaum dewasa. Anak-anak adalah potensi masa depan yang sangat rentan, mereka bisa menjadi generasi yang hilang, generasi yang dirusak masa depannya justru oleh generasi yang mendahuluinya. Kendati tak mencolok, namun karya-karya Chusin dan Dede memiliki aspek-aspek ktitikal di dalamnya.

Dari generasi muda, Agung TBR juga menampilkan karya dengan teknik sapuan kuas yang cukup kuat. Temanya pun mencolok: exodus umat manusia. Belakangan ini kita memang diresahkan oleh dunia yang semakin terpolusi dan teracuni pola hidup manusia yang rakus—pemanasan global sudah menjadi realita di depan mata. Wastuwidayawan dalam pameran ini menampilkan karya yang cukup berbeda dengan karya-karya sebelumnya yang menampilkan sosok yang pejal, dengan teknik kuas yang lembut. Karya “Steamboat-Willy” tampak kasar dan ekspresif, hasil dari sapuan kuas yang tak dihaluskan. Semangka pada karya Harry Cahaya dikerjakan dengan cermat dan halus, sehingga tampak pejal. Namun kepejalan tersebut sengaja diganggu dengan garis-garis lelehan cat. Persepsi ilusif semangka dikacaukan oleh garis-garis lelehan cat.

Ruang-ruang kebudayaan yang berbeda kerap menyadarkan kita mengenai keberadaan diri sendiri. Hal itulah agaknya yang dapat kita tangkap dari lukisan Dikdik Sayahdikumullah, yang berjudul

“After Looking Back to Keiga”. Jika sosok tampak belakang dalam lukisan tersebut adalah sang seniman, maka itu merupakan hal yang langka, barangkali ini pertama kalinya Dikdik menampilkan dirinya sendiri dalam lukisan, kendati tampak belakang. Jauh dari negerinya—seperti menyadarkan Dikdik mengenai eksistensinya dalam lingkungan baru. Lukisan tersebut memang berkesan melankolis.

Karya-karya Sigit Santosa dan Yogie Ginajar menarik karena menggunakan bahasa realis sebagai alegori. Alegori memang menjadi konsep utama realisme dalam seni lukis Eropa beberapa abad yang lalu. Namun tentu saja alegori yang ditampilkan kedua perupa tersebut berangkat dari konteks masa sekarang. Karya-karya Sigit kerap berangkat dari perkara yang diambil dari Kitab Injil, sementara Yogi kerap menyusun komponen-komponen alegorinya dari sosok-sosok orang Barat. Metafora merupakan pendekatan yang kerap dipergunakan Agus Suwage, sebagaimana karya Agus Suwage dalam pameran ini, “Super Flower”. “Bahasa bunga” merupakan bahasa kiasan yang memanfaatkan karakter bunga, umumnya berkenaan dengan hal-hal yang baik. Itu sebabnya teks-teks dalam karya Agus tersebut berkaitan dengan hal-hal yang positif: kebebasan, toleransi, cinta kasih, keadilan, kemanusiaan, dll. Tidak jelas apakah karya itu sebetulnya himbauan, atau ironi bahwa semua itu hanya mudah diucapkan dan diuar-uarkan, tanpa kemauan untuk menerapkannya.

Pada akhirnya, *reality effect* tak lagi menjadi hal penting, bukankah efek mengenai realita merupakan keseharian atau situasi yang kita jalani? Pada saat realita—sekompleks apapun realita itu—direpresentasikan atau memicu penciptaan seni, maka lahirilah realita baru (=karya seni) yang terpisah dari realita sesungguhnya. Tak soal, bahwa keberadaannya sekadar dilihat sebagai simulakrum, *copy*, tiruan, dll, sebab selalu ada seniman yang menjadi jangkar di belakang karya-karya tersebut. “Kebedaan” karya seorang seniman—dari karya seniman lain—akan melahirkan “identitas” dan “orisinalitas” sang seniman, kendatipun hal itu merupakan hasil dari upaya merepresentasikan atau meng*copy* realita. Tentu saja pada akhirnya segala nilai-nilai karya seni, juga parameter kualitas

14 dan orisinalitas adalah hasil kontruksi dalam medan seni yang “seolah-olah” terpisah dari realita budaya besar pembentuknya. *Reality effects* barangkali juga tak menjadi penting, sebab efek yang diharapkan oleh para seniman realis adalah terbangunnya sikap kritis terhadap perkara yang dipersoakan seniman melalui rupa realis yang dihadirkannya. Seperti dalam *critical realism*, para seniman agaknya lebih berharap efek kritikal itulah yang dapat dicapai—disamping efek lainnya, yaitu potensinya sebagai obyek fetish kontemporer.

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Reality Effects

Rizki A. Zaelani

"Everything that was directly lived has moved away into representation"
— Guy Debord, *The Society of The Spectacle*

17

'Efek-efek Realitas' [*Reality Effects*] adalah persoalan mendasar yang kini dihadapi kecenderungan 'realisme' di seni rupa Indonesia. Undangan kuratorial pameran ini mengajak para seniman untuk kembali menelusuri problematika 'realitas' demi menimbang kembali apa yang sebelumnya disebut 'realisme'. Istilah 'realisme' (*realism*) tak persis berarti sama dengan kata kunci pameran ini, yaitu: 'realitas' (*reality*). Namun 'realitas' adalah soal penting bagi cara kita memahami kecenderungan realisme, sebagaimana kedua hal itu memiliki kaitan yang tak terpisahkan. Teoritis budaya Raymond Williams, menjelaskan bahwa 'realisme' adalah salah satu pengertian kultural yang problematis. "*Realisme*", menurut Williams, "*adalah istilah sulit, yang menjadi demikian bukan hanya karena adanya intrik perbedaan dalam cara pemakaiannya terutama di bidang pemikiran seni dan filsafat; tetapi juga karena pengertian 'realisme' ini bergantung pada [konsepsi] dua istilah lainnya, yaitu: soal (i) 'yang nyata' (the real) dan (ii) 'realitas' (reality), yang masing-masing juga memiliki sejarah pengertian linguistik yang rumit.*"¹ Dalam prakteknya, pemahaman realisme sering diwakili oleh penilaian kita tentang ekspresi seni (sebuah lukisan atau patung) yang mengandung bentuk atau gambaran yang bersifat realistik. Bagi pandangan awam, realisme bahkan dianggap sebagai 'gaya seni' (*art-ism*) yang menjelaskan kemampuan seorang seniman meniru alam dan bentuk lainnya secara realistik, sehingga nampak 'alamiah' atau 'apadanya'.

Problematika realisme yang berkaitan dengan asumsi hasil peniruan yang bersifat realistik adalah gejala bahasa yang khas. Dalam kajian bahasa, sebuah gambar yang realistik disebut sebagai tanda yang bersifat 'ikonik' (*iconic*), berkaitan dengan klaim penampakan visual yang memiliki karakter 'keserupaan' (*resemblance*) dengan bentuk yang dirujuk atau hendak diterangkan. Dalam sistem bahasa yang bersifat gambar (*pictorial language*), tanda 'ikonik' merupakan petunjuk ketika seseorang mampu menginterpretasikan sesuatu gambaran tertentu dalam pola penerimaan yang hampir sama dengan seseorang lainnya. Keadaan ini bisa terjadi karena adanya semacam 'dasar penyamaan yang bersifat alamiah' (*natural generalitivity*) yang memungkinkan setiap orang

(Details of)

Nurdian Ichsan

Untitled

2010

100 x 120 cm; 12 x 7 x 38 cm

Cramic, acrylic and canvas

18 bisa mengenali tiap-tiap obyek yang digambarkan. Interpretasi piktural dengan *'natural generalitivity'* ini menyimpulkan bahwa realisme yang mengandung tanda ikonik ini dianggap bisa mengikat 'kapasitas pengenalan' yang kurang lebih 'persis' dari tiap-tiap orang untuk mengenai berbagai obyek yang ditunjukkannya, serta dianggap sebagai 'pengalaman melihat yang bersifat tipikal' mengenai dunia. Ekspresi Realisme yang telah dianggap sebagai sistem penerimaan umum yang dilumrahkan ini, sebenarnya bukanlah kemampuan manusia mengenal gambar yang bersifat 'alamiah' tetapi terbentuk melalui proses pembelajaran yang bersifat kultural dan mensejarah. Kita tahu, sejarah mencatat perkembangan realisme sebagai upaya-upaya manusia untuk bisa meniru bentuk sehingga bisa dianggap 'realistik'. Akhirnya, penemuan teknologi fotografi dianggap sebagai titik puncak dekade-dekade eksperimentasi visual untuk menemukan cara peniruan realistik dengan lebih cepat dan akurat dibandingkan apa yang sebelumnya ditawarkan oleh cara tradisional melalui gambar dan lukisan.

Pameran "*Reality Effects*" ini hendak menunjukkan persoalan via arah berbeda dibanding cara 'tradisional' mengenal realisme sebagai kerangka proyeksi sikap subyektif seniman mengenai dunia penampakkan dan realitas (sebagai obyek) yang dipahaminya. Gagasan "*Reality Effects*", sebaliknya, memahami ekspresi 'realisme' sebagai akibat perubahan situasi-situasi realitas (masyarakat kontemporer) yang sangat dipengaruhi kemajuan teknologi representasi visual yang berubah drastis sejak ditemukannya fotografi. Bagi konteks pembahasan karya realistik, ada dua kondisi yang tak terhindarkan dari peran penting media dan teknologi fotografi. Pertama, proses pengerjaan karya-karya realisme kini lebih banyak dibantu teknologi fotografi—minimal dianggap para seniman sebagai 'model' atau catatan visual bagi pengerjaan detail karya—, yang hasilnya bisa kita lihat sebagai gambar, lukisan, atau karya patung. Kedua, segala cara dan hasil pengenalan kita tentang realitas dan pengalaman hidup sehari-hari sebenarnya dibentuk dan dibiasakan oleh berbagai representasi yang bersifat fotografik (melalui macam-macam media informasi dan interaksi).

Berbeda dengan tahun 1980-an, kini setiap orang—termasuk juga para seniman—semakin mudah memiliki kamera dan ‘menciptakan’ realitas fotografik. Boleh jadi, teknologi fotografi kini sudah menjadi alat pelengkap primer bagi setiap orang untuk merekam berbagai catatan pengalaman yang dilampauinya sehari-hari. Sebuah kamera fotografi kini tak harus dibawa-bawa sebagai peralatan khusus ibarat seorang profesional, tapi telah jadi perlengkapan yang kian kompak dan mudah dioperasikan. Niscaya kini, fotografi dan realitas fotografik dianggap sebagai hasil gambaran paling lengkap mengenai dunia pengalaman kita dan menjadi karakter penting cara hidup masyarakat kontemporer. Inilah model khas produksi dan konsumsi imaji yang membedakan masyarakat kontemporer dewasa kini dengan masyarakat sebelumnya. Dengan demikian, fotografi secara prinsip telah ditetapkan sebagai agen sekaligus penyalur budaya dan teknologi masyarakat kontemporer.² Bagaimana dengan ekspresi seni rupa kontemporer?

Pengertian seni rupa kontemporer sering disalahsebutkan sebagai kecenderungan seni yang kembali ke seni realistik, realisme, atau sebagai seni ‘anti seni abstrak’. Sebenarnya, tak ada alasan pembenaran yang mendasar bagi keterangan semacam itu. Penjelasan yang lebih tepat sebenarnya berkaitan dengan lingkup perhatian ekspresi seni rupa kontemporer itu sendiri yang berusaha kian dekat dengan ekspresi hidup masyarakat dan budaya kontemporer. Ini perkara jarak yang mendekat antara seni rupa kontemporer dengan realitas hidup yang kian dipengaruhi oleh sikulus dan perkembang-biakkan imaji fotografik. Walter Benjamin, filsuf dan estetikus mazhab kritis, jauh hari mengingatkan kita pada efek keadaan realitas yang dipengaruhi perkembangan teknologi fotografi ini; bahkan, membayangkan perubahan radikal kondisi seni. Dalam kajiannya yang cemerlang, *“The Work of Art in The Age of Mechanical Reproduction”*, Benjamin menegaskan bahwa fotografi secara fundamental telah mengubah kondisi ‘alamiah’ seni. Fotografi, menurutnya, menghancurkan ‘otonomi untuk meniru’ yang dimiliki seni dalam kaitannya dengan proses perkembangan sosial dan politik, serta turut mencairkan apa yang sebelumnya dianggap sebagai ‘nilai-nilai tradisional warisan budaya’.³ Saya

rasa, para seniman kontemporer tentu tak menggunakan kamera dan imaji fotografi hanya sebagai model dan modul kerja saja, tapi memahaminya sebagai lahan persoalan baru seni yang kian memungkinkan mereka pada 'realitas' masyarakat kontemporer. Benjamin juga menjelaskan berlakunya semacam proses 'pengalihan bentuk' (*transmutation*) dari ritual yang sebelumnya dimiliki masyarakat tradisi menjadi bentuk ritual, praktek repetisi yang baru. Proses semacam ini melepaskan keterkaitan obyek-obyek seni terhadap ritual tradisional (agama dan adat) yang disebut sebagai 'nilai pemujaan' (*cult value*) seni, serta menghasilkan bentuk nilai baru yang disebut: 'nilai pamer' (*exhibition value*) seni yang bersifat otonom.⁴

Apa yang ditegaskan konsepsi 'nilai pamer' seni ini? Ekspresi seni rupa kontemporer meski bergulat dengan gagasan tradisi-budaya dan sosial-politik, dalam prakteknya, tetap memiliki medan dan model pengakuan yang berbeda dengan apa yang berlaku pada seni tradisi, bahkan juga tidak cukup hanya karena alasan '*subject matter*' (kesatuan tema: budaya-sosial-politik) yang dipilihnya. Karya dengan tema protes sosial atau ritual kematian, misalnya, tidak serta merta berharga identik sebagaimana dunia politik atau tradisi adat menghargai peristiwa atau persoalannya secara aktual. 'Nilai pamer' karya seni menegaskan berlakunya pembagian wilayah antara nilai ekspresi seni dengan nilai ritual yang bersifat aktual. Benjamin bahkan menegaskan, bahwa citraan visual yang dikonstruksi teknologi reproduksi imaji yang dipelopori fotografi itu tak lagi bisa dianggap memiliki 'aura' nilai-nilai keabadian (*timelessness*) dan kesucian (*sanctity*) sebagaimana pernah dipercayai kesenian tradisi dan klasik. Benjamin membayangkan kelangsungan 'abad reproduksi mekanik'—dan kini jadi 'abad reproduksi digital'—sebagai keadaan di mana momen kontemplasi estetik yang bersifat khas. Di era klasik, kontemplasi estetik galibnya dilakukan kaum tertentu (para terpelajar dan aristokrasi) saja; kini jadi model penyerapan yang dilakukan kelompok massa yang ditentukan oleh mood pengalaman artistik yang dipengaruhi perubahan sosial dan perkembangan teknologi.⁵ Baik para seniman (produsen), karya seni (obyek), maupun pengamat seni (konsumen), selanjutnya tak jauh dari pengaruh logika model 'produski-konsumsi'

yang terus menerus menghantam kewibawaan proses kontemplasi estetik yang bersifat khusus.

Perkembangan realisme di masyarakat kontemporer memang tak bisa dipisahkan dari watak konsumtif masyarakat pada produksi dan perkembang-biakkan imaji fotografik. Pertengahan tahun 1980-an, kritikus dan sejarawan seni rupa Sanento Yuliman turut mencatat fenomena perkembang-biakkan imaji di kehidupan masyarakat ini sebagai situasi 'ledakan gambar'. Ia jelaskan:

*"Sehari-hari, di mana-mana dan kapan saja, kita melihat gambar. Gambar ada di mana-mana, di setiap sektor kehidupan—gambar buatan tangan, gambar fotografi, gambar cetakan, gambar sorot, gambar elektronik (televisi, video), dan bermacam-macam gambar. Seandainya sejarah masyarakat kita dapat diputar lagi dengan cepat seperti film, niscaya dari zaman kuno ke zaman kita sekarang kita melihat proses perkembangan dari langka gambar menuju semacam 'ledakan gambar'."*⁶

Sanento Yuliman tak hanya cermat mengamati denyut perubahan hidup masyarakat kontemporer di Indonesia saat itu; sikapnya juga dekat dengan pandangan pengamat budaya Perancis Guy Debord yang terlebih dahulu 'menyerap' situasi semacam itu di kawasan Eropa yang kemudian dipercayainya sebagai suatu gejala internasional baru yang mulai berlangsung sejak akhir tahun 1960-an. Dalam gemuruh produksi dan sirkulasi imaji tersebut Debord menyebutnya kelahiran suatu bentuk masyarakat khas yang disebutnya sebagai 'masyarakat tontonan' (*the society of the spectacle*). "Pengertian 'tontonan' (spectacle)", bagi Guy Debord, "bukan berarti kumpulan imaji-imaji, melainkan suatu bentuk relasi sosial diantara orang-orang yang diperantarai oleh [potensi] imaji. [Dengan kata lain adalah] suatu masyarakat di mana produksi kondisi modern yang dimilikinya menghasilkan seluruh manifestasi kehidupan masyarakatnya sebagai akumulasi berbagai bentuk tontonan yang bersifat masif."⁷ Pun Debord menyimpulkan, bahwa: "Segalanya yang sebelumnya hadir secara langsung kini berubah jadi representasi."⁸ Dalam kesimpulan ini, ia mengingatkan bahwa segala pengetahuan yang kita miliki kini lebih dipengaruhi oleh 'keberadaan' suatu atau bermacam-macam [tampilan] representasi ketimbang hasil interaksi pengalaman secara langsung.

22 Dalam masyarakat kontemporer, ihwal soal representasi menjadi krusial. Apa yang dimaksud dengan 'representasi'? Dalam pengertiannya yang umum, representasi merupakan suatu atau beberapa konststruksi [pengertian, makna, arti] yang bersifat artifisial yang melaluinya kita memahami dunia tempat kita hidup. Dalam prakteknya, konstruksi semacam ini bisa dipahami sebagai representasi konseptual berupa gambar-gambar, berbagai bentuk bahasa, atau definisi-definisi, termasuk di dalamnya berbagai konstruksi konseptual berdimensi sosial, seperti: ras atau gender. Meskipun konstruksi-konstruksi konseptual tersebut bergantung pada bentuk materialnya dalam dunia kehidupan nyata, sebuah representasi secara konstan sering langsung disikapi sebagai 'fakta' yang bersifat alamiah; sehingga pada akhirnya, kesalah-pahaman ini tak jarang mengaburkan pengenalan dan pemahaman kita mengenai realitas. Akses kita pada realitas—disadari maupun tidak—diperantarai kabut ihwal masalah representasi ini.⁹ Isu kuratorial '*Reality Effects*' pertama-tama tentu adalah soal kesadaran mutakhir para seniman dalam mengenal dan menghadapi kabut representasi yang kini diposisikan sebagai 'fakta alamiah'. Lebih tegas lagi, isu '*Reality Effects*' ini lebih menyangkut soal kesadaran mengenai problematika realitas mutakhir (masyarakat kontemporer) tanpa harus berkeras menganggapnya sebagai manifestasi kesadaran 'ideologi seni' realisme.

Namun demikian, persiapan pameran ini tetap mengundang para seniman untuk bekerja dalam kerangka ideologi seni 'realisme', namun tetap dalam kontek perubahannya di masa kini. Para seniman dipersilahkan tetap menanggapi tema-tema masalah yang menunjukkan relasinya dengan masyarakat kini, yaitu:

1. *New Epoch of Mimetic Representation*

Tema ini berkaitan dengan perubahan pemahaman kita mengenai problematika 'penampakkan representasi visual yang bersifat mimetik'. Persoalan ini mengemuka terutama dalam kaitan dengan temuan dan perkembangan teknologi fotografi. Perkembangan teknologi fotografi sejak ditemukannya alat kamera hingga proses pengolahan

imaji (fotografik) melalui teknologi komputasi digital telah mengubah secara fundamental 'logika' untuk melihat dan memahami penampakan realitas. Bagaimana ekspresi karya realisme yang secara konvensional memiliki jangkar hubungan ideologis dengan klaim nilai 'kebenaran' penampakan visual itu dipahami kini?

2. *The Rise of Contemporary Urban Life*

Tema ini berkaitan dengan representasi mimetik berbagai penampakan situasi dan perubahan lingkungan kehidupan urban yang membentuk wawasan kesadaran budaya saat ini. Pada kenyataannya, perkembangan pesat teknologi representasi visual yang lebih bersifat fotografik dan digital saat ini juga terjadi akibat lingkungan kehidupan urban yang khas. Bagaimana seni rupa kontemporer menunjukkan representasi persoalan ini?

3. *Age of "the End"*

Tema 'kematian' dan kondisi batas 'akhir' adalah persoalan yang laten dalam banyak pembahasan mengenai problematika teoritis 'representasi'. Tema ini merupakan bentuk kritik terhadap logika konvensional memberlakukan makna tunggal dan tetap bagi tiap-tiap bentuk representasi. Lebih jauh, perubahan masyarakat urban cepat kini sebenarnya telah membentuk kesadaran 'baru' tentang orientasi nilai eksistensial 'diri' tiap-tiap individu secara khas pula. Kesadaran ini justru terus-menerus memperbaharui batas-batas nilai 'kebenaran' eksistensial serta cara penafsiran seseorang mengenai fakta-fakta realitas hidup yang sebelumnya telah mapan terbentuk secara konvensional/tradisional.

4. *New "Heroism"*

Tema tentang kepahlawanan 'baru' ini berbeda dengan proyek membayangkan sang pahlawan eksistensial *a'la* subyek modern yang rasional. Pahlawan 'baru' justru menimbang

penting perkara batas yang dimiliki tiap-tiap representasi (termasuk tentang kebesaran tokoh sang ‘pahlawan’ itu sendiri). Ideologi seni realisme memang, secara ‘tradisional’, memuja tema ‘kepahlawanan’ ini, dipercaya bisa tergambarkan pada sosok tertentu (termasuk diri sang seniman sendiri) yang dipercaya benar-benar bisa mewakili tabir makna kesejatan hidup. Ideologi seni realisme di masa kemunculannya dihidupi kobaran semangat empirisisme dan saintisme yang meletakkan dasar-dasar kepercayaan tak terbantahkan mengenai logika mengetahui (epistemologi): ‘sang subyek yang menilai obyek (realitas)’. Saat ini, dalam kesadaran tentang batas-batas representasi eksistensi diri dan subyektivisme, bagaimana seni rupa kontemporer menunjukkan sikap dan pembelaan pada nilai ‘kesejatan’ realitas?

Pameran ini, “*Reality Effects*” (RE), jelas menimbang penting efek teknologi fotografi sebagai jangkar persoalan ‘realisme’ yang menghubungkan pengertian kita secara ‘baru’ dengan perubahan realitas masyarakat kontemporer. Dalam pengertian ini, teknologi fotografi dipahami dalam manifestasi perluasan perkembangannya di berbagai efek teknologi digital. Sebagai suatu metoda representasi, fotografi telah mengejarkan pada kita semacam kode visual yang baru dengan cara mengangkat secara tertentu segi-segi penting dari perhatian atau minat seseorang, dan/ atau memperbesar sebagian darinya menjadi pusat perhatian khusus. Sebuah representasi fotografik pada akhirnya akan turut membentuk persepsi kita mengenai pilihan dan hasil ‘representasi’ realitas yang kita pahami secara tertentu. Maka sebuah imaji foto yang sering dijadikan rujukan itu, misalnya, pada kenyataannya berlaku sebagai semacam ‘struktur aturan’ (suatu ‘*grammar*’) dalam cara kita melihat; bahkan yang lebih jauh bisa dianggap sebagai suatu ‘etika melihat’ (*an ethics of seeing*).

Bagaimana kita kini pahami—bahkan untuk sekedar bisa mengenal kembali—peran [ekspresi] seni demi meraih makna ‘kesejatan’ realitas, di tengah lautan representasi dengan struktur aturan dan etika melihat yang dipengaruhi model penampakan visual yang ‘sempurna’ *a’la* fotografi? Bagaimana karya-karya ‘realitik’ pada

pameran ini menunjukkan signifikansi maknanya? Ada setidaknya dua kerangka teoritis, saya percaya juga tengah diupayakan para seniman dalam pameran ini, yang penting kita kemukakan. Pertama adalah upaya seni untuk merebut kembali makna penting 'aura'. Menurut Walter Benjamin, terjadinya hadirnya aspek-aspek auratik pada karya seni yang dianggap unik berkaitan secara esensial dengan kesatuan karya tersebut dalam fungsi ritualnya yang khusus. Benjamin meyakini, bahwa terjadinya 'aura' pada sebuah karya seni bergantung pada dua faktor, yaitu: (i) keberadaan suatu tradisi yang berlaku sebagai kerangka pengalaman bersama yang relatif stabil dalam suatu komunitas tertentu, di mana sebuah obyek seni bisa dianggap bersifat auratik; serta (ii) kondisi keterjagaan obyek tersebut sebagai suatu entitas fisik yang bersifat unik.¹⁰

Saya rasa, Benjamin mungkin lupa membayangkan apa yang kemudian dilakukan oleh institusi museum seni rupa di kemudian hari setelah ia meninggal. Pasca Perang Dunia Kedua dan di masa kebangkitan negara-negara Eropa Barat dan Amerika Serikat, museum menjadi institusi budaya yang penting, dan berhasil membentuk tradisi dan kerangka nilai penghayatan seni yang bersifat sosial. Museum gemilang memelihara keberadaan obyek-obyek seni sehingga kemudian kita menemukannya sebagai '*masterpiece*'. Museum bahkan tepat disebut sebagai kuil bagi hidupnya nilai-nilai auratik dan aura kesenian. Perkembangan seni rupa kontemporer yang bahkan sering dianggap 'memberontak' pada sistem museum, dalam prakteknya, tidak berlangsung dalam pengertiannya sebagai anti museum.

Semangat penting yang disokong seni rupa kontemporer adalah dorongan merayakan secara lebih 'konkret dan dekat' kompleksitas pengalaman hidup sehari-hari, termasuk di dalamnya berbagai dinamika persoalan akibat perubahan sosial, ekonomi, budaya dan teknologi. Usaha seni rupa kontemporer untuk merebut kembali aura seni bisa tempuh dengan memahami ulang apa yang pernah dimaksud Benjamin dalam perubahan konteks dan situasinya kini. Dalam sebuah catatannya yang lain, Benjamin pernah menjelaskan bahwa nilai pengalaman dalam aura, adalah

26 *"the unique appearance or semblance of a distance, no matter how close the object may be".¹¹ Apakah kondisi semacam itu tercermin dalam praktek seni rupa kontemporer? Ekpresi seni rupa kontemporer yang sering dianggap banal dan menyampaikan gagasan masalah secara langsung (menggunakan 'obyek temuan', *found object*, misalnya) pada dasarnya justru menyiapkan efek yang berbeda. Karya-karya banal itu justru berusaha membentangkan semacam 'jarak' dari karya dengan pengamatannya sambil harapan bisa memicu renungan nilai secara tertentu. Lukisan realistik tentang sebuah mobil, sebuah potret, atau obyek dengan bentuk menyerupai boneka mainan, misalnya, tentu tak benar-benar dinyatakan senimannya sebagai penampakan 'apa adanya' sebagaimana publik pernah menemukannya dalam lintasan ingatan dan pengalaman mereka sehari-hari. Ada soal renungan dan nilai penghayatan yang mesti digali di situ, yang muncul akibat jarak yang disiapkan cara penampakan karya. Jarak yang dibayangkan itu, saya pikir, bersifat subtil. Saya kemudian ingat catatan Benjamin yang mengatakan bahwa: "by 'distance,'" katanya, "I mean 'unapproachability'".¹²*

Soal 'ketidak-terjangkauan' (*unapproachability*), sebagaimana dimaksud Benjamin, membawa kita pada persoalan teoritis yang kedua, yaitu: bagaimana memahami efek realitas terhadap seni di masa kini? Lautan representasi imaji (fotografik) berperan semakin penting bahkan menjadi jalan masuk kita menuju apa yang dikenal sebagai pengalaman dan realitas. Di situ, sebenarnya sudah dibayangkan semacam rambu pemahaman melalui rujukan penjelasan teoritis seni W.J.T. Mitchell. Menurutnya, "(setiap) imaji, sebagaimana berbagai [catatan] sejarah dan [temuan] teknologi, merupakan hasil kreasi kita [manusia], namun juga umum dipahami jika ketiga hal tersebut bisa berlaku di luar kendali kita sendiri (atau setidaknya, di luar kendali seseorang); sehingga, persoalan masalah agen dan kekuasaan [mengenai ketiga hal itu] adalah pokok persoalan yang berkaitan dengan bagaimana cara sebuah imaji berlaku atau beroperasi".¹³ Dengan demikian, jika kerangka pengalaman hidup kita sudah dikungkung berbagai representasi visual yang menerus berubah dan berkembang-biak di luar penguasaan kita, maka tentu pengalaman berharga kita menghadapi karya seni adalah persoalan lain. Pada jalur pengalaman inilah kita bisa terus menggali apa yang sejatinya berharga dari [ekspresi] seni.

Renungan filsuf Jean-François Lyotard mungkin bisa jadi inspirasi bagi kita untuk meneropong kembali makna penting representasi seni di tengah arus representasi fotografik yang serba cemerlang dan menghanyutkan. Bagi Lyotard, akan selalu terdapat semacam celah di antara pengalaman yang kita miliki dan bahasa yang kita ketahui untuk menyatakannya, sehingga seseorang tentunya tak akan pernah bisa menguasai sepenuhnya tiap-tiap ‘pengalaman di luar bahasa biasa’ (*extralinguistic experience*). Dengan demikian, Lyotard yakin, bahasa tidak akan berhasil mengkonstruksi secara sepenuhnya tiap-tiap pengalaman kita; hal ini menjadi demikian karena ada peristiwa-peristiwa tertentu—suatu *event*, atau ‘*Ereignis*’ untuk menggunakan istilah Martin Heidegger—yang tidak dan tak bisa dinyatakan bahasa.¹⁴ Ihlwal ‘*eregnis*’, atau peristiwa yang mengandung ‘pengalaman di luar bahasa biasa’, ini misalnya saja adalah: segala hal yang terlalu rinci, terlalu banyak, terlalu mendalam, terlalu tragis, atau, terlalu membahagiakan, sehingga tak bisa sepenuhnya ‘dilukiskan’ dalam kata-kata, dirangkum dalam ekspresi bahasa kesaharian kita. Di pokok soal semacam inilah, representasi seni memiliki peran yang signifikan dan tak tergantikan bahasa biasa.

Dalam pameran ini, apakah gambaran realistik yang menunjukkan keserupaan bentuk dengan segala pengalaman melihat kita adalah bahasa yang biasa? Tentu saja tiap-tiap ekspresi seni yang realistik bisa dianggap ‘hanya’ sebagai obyek: lukisan, patung, sebuah foto, atau film, namun *toh* kita mesti terus berusaha menemukan nilai seni yang dinyatakan masing-masing medium ekspresi tersebut. Macam-macam medium itu bisa bermakna, sebenarnya, sejauh kita mampu menemukan kapasitas pengenalan yang khas tentangnya sebagai ‘ekspresi seni’. Kita kemudian menghayatinya sebagai ekpresi bernilai karena kita menemukannya sebagai ‘bahasa’ yang melampaui bahasa biasa. Aspek ‘keserupaan’ (*resemblance*) pada karya-karya realistik itu sebenarnya adalah kode-kode pengenalan yang sudah kita pelajari, secara sadar maupun tidak. Sejarah juga menunjukkan adanya perubahan cara bentuk tanda-tanda ikonik ini (soal tubuh fisik wanita, sebagai contoh) yang pada tiap masanya dianggap mengandung nilai ‘keserupaan’ dengan realitas. Perubahan-perubahan itu menegaskan adanya semacam jarak

28 yang memisahkan apa yang kita bayangkan sebagai 'yang nyata' (*the real*) dan 'kenyataan' (*reality*). Pada pokok pemahaman itulah kita temukan lagi nilai penting 'aura', menyangkut soal 'ketidak-terjangkauan' yang terus dicari manusia (termasuk para seniman) dengan bersemangat demi memahami nilai kesejatan hidup.

Ekspresi realistik yang menunjukkan tanda ikonik dan aspek keserupaan dengan realitas itu pun hanya akan jadi 'obyek' jika kita menganggapnya *melulu* sebagai karya seni—mungkin, bagi sebagian orang bahkan menganggapnya sebagai barang pajangan atau hiasan. Sebenarnya, ekspresi tersebut bisa jadi ruang pengalaman yang terus hidup dan menemukan reaksinya yang inspiratif ketika kita memahaminya sebagai suatu 'bacaan' (teks, *text*). Berbeda pengertiannya sebagai sebuah 'karya' yang berharga dalam aspek-aspek fisiknya, maka memahami ekspresi seni sebagai teks adalah sikap penerimaan pada semacam entitas yang memiliki artinya karena ruang interpretasi berbagai tandanya.¹⁵ Menghubungkan sebuah lukisan potret diri yang realistik dengan sebuah foto diri yang cemerlang, misalnya, tentu tak akan menghasilkan hasil pembahasan yang layak, jika kita hanya membanding-bandingkan segi-segi penampakkannya secara dangkal. Kita justru akan menemukan 'harga' dari perbandingan itu ketika kita memahami masing-masing sebagai bacaan—bacaan bagi pokok bahasan yang menarik serta menghubungkan keduanya dalam ruang interpretasi.

Sebuah karya seni akan jadi bahan proses interpretasi jika kita mentransformasikan keberadaan segi-segi fisiknya jadi tanda-tanda yang bermakna. Bahkan karya-karya yang realistik, apakah itu sebuah lukisan, patung, foto, atau video, bisa bermakna mendalam bukan karena karya itu mampu memberikan jaminan atau konfirmasi bahwa segala realitas dan pengalaman kita telah nampak persis sebagaimana ditunjukkan karya-karya itu. Sebaliknya, representasi realistik yang berharga justru adalah keberhasilan karya menampakkan nilai ekspresi seni yang berdaya, yang memberi inspirasi serta 'jarak', pada cara-cara kita membangun secara terus menerus keteguhan sikap untuk menghargai realitas. Saya ingin menghentikan pembicaraan kita dalam kutipan berharga milik Anthony Savile, seorang filsuf. Savile

meyakinkan saya dalam cara memahami diri dan realitas dengan mengatakan, bahwa: "*seni berperan menolong kita untuk mencegah pengapuran dalam berbagai cara dan asumsi kita tentang dunia serta respon afektif kita mengenai keberadaan pihak lain di luar diri kita sendiri. [Ekspresi] seni menolong kita untuk bisa merasakan penghargaan kita pada berbagai situasi mengenai si lain [di luar kita] dalam berbagai caranya secara subtil".*¹⁶

- ¹ Raymond Williams, *Keyword: A vocabulary of culture and society* (London: Fontana Press, 1976), hlm. 257 & 262.
- ² Lht. Abigail Solomon-Godeau, *Photography After Art Photography*, dalam Brian Wallis, ed. *ART AFTER MODERNISM: Rethinking Representation* (New York – Boston: The New Museum of Contemporary Art – David R. Godine, Publisher, Inc, 1984), hlm. 76.
- ³ Lht. W. Benjamin, “*The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction*” dalam, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, Hanah Arendt, ed. (New York: Schocken, 1969), hlm. 226-7.
- ⁴ *Ibid.* hlm.225.
- ⁵ Lht. Paul Mattick, “*Mechanical reproduction in the age of art*” dalam *ART IN ITS TIME: Theories and practices of modern aesthetics* (New York – London: Routledge, 2003), hlm. 87.
- ⁶ Sanento Yuliman, “*Seni Rupa dalam Kehidupan Sehari Kita Sekarang*”, dalam Asikin Hasan, ed. *DUA SENI RUPA: Sepilihan Tulisan Sanento Yuliman* (Jakarta: Yayasan Kalam, 2001), hlm. 40.
- ⁷ Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967) (New York: Zone Books, 1995), hlm. 12.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁹ Lht. Brian Wallis, “*What’s Wrong With This Pictures? An Introduction*”, Brian Wallis, ed. *op.cit.* hlm. xv.
- ¹⁰ Paul Mattick, *op.cit.* hlm. 223.
- ¹¹ Lihat. W. Benjamin, “*A Small History of Photography*”, dalam *One Way Street* (London: Verso, 1979), hlm. 250.
- ¹² W. Benjamin, “*The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction*”, *op.cit.* hlm.187
- ¹³ W.J.T Mitchell, “*The Pictorial Turn*”, dalam *PICTURE THEORY, Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), hlm.6.
- ¹⁴ Lihat. Jae Emerling, “*Jean-François Lyotard*” dalam *THEORY FOR ART HISTORY* (New York – London: Routledge, 2005), hlm. 204.
- ¹⁵ Lihat. Roland Barthes, “*From Work to Text*”, Brian Wallis, ed. *op.cit.* hlm. 171.
- ¹⁶ Anthony Savile, *The Test of Time* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), hlm. 96-7.

The Artworks

Agus Sumiantara

b. Badung, Bali, 1980

Education

1999 – 2006 Indonesian Art Institute, Denpasar, Bali

Solo Exhibitions

2009 "Portable Artworld", Semarang Gallery, Semarang

2008 "Sumiantara's Painting: Fracturing Meaning", Koong Gallery, Jakarta

Group Exhibitions (Selected on 10 last exhibitions)

2010 "Percakapan Masa", Galeri Nasional Indonesia, Jakarta

"Super Impose", D' gallerie, Jakarta

"Contemporary Art-Turn", SbinArtPlus, Singapore

"The Birth of Colors", Syang Art Space, Magelang

"Holocaust", Umah Seni, Jakarta

"Almost White Cube", CG ArtSPACE, Jakarta

"Halimun", Lawangwangi Artsociates, Bandung

2009 "Art Singapore 2009", Singapore

"Hybridization", North Art Space, Jakarta

"Revisiting The Last Supper", CGartSPACE, Jakarta

2008 "Taxu 2008: Painting Rejuvenation", SIGlarts, Jakarta

"Space/Spacing", Semarang Contemporary at Gallery, Semarang



Brush, Space, Illusion. 2010. 110 x 200 cm. Oil on canvas

Agus Suwage

b. Purworejo, Central Java. 1959

Educations

- 1979–1986 Graphic Design at Bandung Institute of Technology, Faculty of Fine Art and Design, Bandung
- 1996 Artist in Residence in QUT, Brisbane, Australia
- 1999–2000 Artist in Residence in “Sai-no-kuni” Saitama, the Museum of Modern Art, Koshigaya-shi, Saitama, Japan
- 2003 “Brito International Artists Workshop” Tepantor, Dhaka, Bangladesh
- 2009 Artist in Residence in STPI, Singapore

Solo Exhibitions (Selected on 5 last exhibitions)

- 2009 “Still Crazy After All These Years” Jogja National Museum, Yogyakarta & Selasar Sunaryo Art Space, Bandung
“CIRCL3” Singapore Tyler Print Institute, Singapore
- 2008 “Beauty in the Dark”, Avanthay Contemporary Gallery, Zurich, Switzerland
- 2007 “I/CON”, Nadi Gallery, Jakarta
- 2005 “Pause / Re-Play”, Galeri Soemardja, Institut Teknologi Bandung, Bandung

Group Exhibitions (Selected on 5 last exhibitions)

- 2010 “Almost White Cube” the 12th Anniversary of CGartspace, Jakarta, Indonesia
“Ecce Homo” Galeri Semarang, Semarang, Indonesia
“Pleasures of Chaos” Primo Marella gallery, Milan, Italy
- 2009 “Kado #2” Nadi Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia
“Broadsheet Notations: Projecting artworks on paper”, Tang Contemporary Art, Bangkok, Thailand



Super Flower. 2009. 200 x 200 cm. Oil on linen.

b. Pacitan, 1979

Educations

- 1999–2006 Institut Seni Indonesia
2008–2009 Central Academy of Fine Art, Beijing, China
Scholarship for Akili Art Award

Group Exhibitions (Selected on 10 last exhibitions)

- 2009 "Exposigns", ISI di Jogja Expo Centre, Yogyakarta
2008 "Mitos Kontemporer", Kelompok Blok 9, Sangkring Art Space, Yogyakarta
"Manifesto", Galeri Nasional Jakarta
"Freedom," Mon Décor Painting Festival, Taman Budaya Yogyakarta and Galeri Nasional Jakarta
"69 (Seksi Nian)", Jogja Gallery, Yogyakarta
"Survey", Edwins Gallery, Jakarta
"Memo", Mon Décor Gallery, Jakarta
2007 Biennale Jogja IX: "Neo Nation", Taman Budaya Yogyakarta
Shanghai Art Fair: "Inspiring Indonesia", Shanghai Mart, China
"Space Test: Tribute To Young Artists", Sangkring Art Space, Yogyakarta



Exodus. 2010. 200 x 200 cm. Oil on canvas.

Anggoro Prasetyo

b. Tanjung Pinang, 1982

Education

Universitas Negeri Padang, Sumatera Barat



Mechanic Tied. 2010. 180 x 140 cm. Acrylic on canvas.

Budi Adi Nugroho

b. Pare-pare, January 10th, 1982

Education

- 2009 Master Degree, in Institut Teknologi Bandung (ITB) Art and Design Faculty
- 2005 Bachelor's Degree, in Institut Teknologi Bandung (ITB)

Solo Exhibition

- 2007 "Playscope", Ciburial Village, Dago Pakar Timur Area, Bandung

Group Exhibitions (Selected on 10 last exhibitions)

- 2010 "Percakapan Masa", Indonesia National Gallery, Jakarta
- "Typifying", D Galerie, Plaza Indonesia, Jakarta
- "Art festival", 20th year anniversary Plaza Indonesia, Jakarta
- 2009 "In de kost" workshop exhibition with Mella Jaarsma, Selasar Soenaryo Art Space, Bandung
- "Everybody got mix feeling about function and form", Goethe Institute, Jakarta
- "A-maze", Pacific Place, Jakarta
- "Contemporary Archeology" SIGlarts, Jakarta
- "Imagining Portrait" Soemardja Gallery, Bandung
- "Bandung Art Now" Indonesia National Gallery, Jakarta
- 2008 "Easy Project#2", Rumah Buku, Bandung





I Like Contemporary, But Contemporary Like It Shiny #5. 2010. 120 x 50 x 50 cm. Resin, acrylic, paint.



Cecep M. Taufik

b. Bandung, September 17th, 1986,

Educations

2008 Art and Design Faculty, Bandung Institute of Technology

Awards

2007 The Best Student of Art Program, Art and Design Faculty, Bandung Institute of Technology, Bandung
The Best 5 West Java Painting Competition 2007, Galerikita, Bandung

2005 The 2nd Best of Ciwalk Mural Competition "Walking on the Painting", Ciwalk, Bandung Workshop

2006 Drawing Workshop With Tisna Sanjaya of Launching Bio-Fuel, Plaza Widya ITB, Bandung

2005 Drawing Workshop With Alam Muammar, Painting Studio, ITB Bandung

Exhibitions (Selected on 10 last exhibitions)

2010 Halimun/The Mist, Lawangwangi, Bandung
Bandung Initiative #5 "VEDUTA", Vanessa Art Link, Jakarta

2009 Bandung Expanding, Tonyraka Gallery, Bali
Trans Allegory: A Group Exhibition by Cecep M.Taufik, M. Reggie Aquara, and Yogie Achmad Ginanjar, Roemah Roepa, Kemang, Jakarta

2008 Soft-Launching Roemah Roepa, Roemah Roepa, Kemang, Jakarta
Surfacial, Selasar Sunaryo Art Space, Bandung
Triple Three, Auditorium CCF, Bandung

2007 26 Bandung Artists: 22nd Asian International Art Exhibition's Fund raising, Congo Gallery & Café, Bandung
Scale: 15x15x15 cm, Soemardja Gallery, Bandung
Re-Mural Siliwangi, Bandung



In Between. 2010. 70 x 100 cm. Oil on canvas.

Chhusin Setiadikara

b. Bandung, 1949

Education

Study drawing and painting from Barli Sasmitawinata (1976–1980)

Achievements

1996 Winner of 5 Best Philip Morris Asian Art Awards

Solo Exhibitions

2004 "Massa Kintamani", CP Art Space, Jakarta-Indonesia

2002 "Post Photo Realistic Portrayal" National Gallery, Jakarta
CP Art Space, Washington DC- USA

Exhibitions (Selected on 10 last exhibitions)

2010 "Percakapan Masa", Galeri Nasional, Jakarta

2009 "Indonesia Contemporary Drawing", Galeri Nasional, Jakarta

2008 "A New Force in Southeast Asia", Asia Art Center, Beijing- China

"Manifesto", Galeri Nasional Indonesia, Jakarta

"Expanding Contemporary Realism" Akili Museum, Jakarta

"Art With an Accent", China, Japan, Korea, Indonesia

Art Exchange Group Exhibition, Guangzhou, China

2007 "Balance Art in Helligendamm", in conjunction with the 33rd G8 Summit, Germany

2005 The 2nd Beijing International Art Biennale, Beijing, China

CP Biennale 2005, Jakarta



Kids of Kintamani. 2010. 150 x 285 cm. Oil on canvas.

Dede Eri Supria

b. Jakarta, 1956

Education

1975-1977 Academy of Art "ASRI", Yogyakarta

Solo Exhibitions

- 2002 Solo Exhibition "Concerning Change", at Artfolio Space, Singapore
- 1997 Solo Exhibition "Into the Labyrinth", Jakarta Stock Exchange Building, Jakarta
- 1992 Solo Exhibition at Ministry of Education and Culture Building, Jakarta
- 1988 Solo Exhibition at Taman Ismail Marzuki, Jakarta
- 1985 Solo Exhibition at Taman Ismail Marzuki, Jakarta
- 1981 Solo Exhibition at Taman Ismail Marzuki, Jakarta
- 1979 Solo Exhibition at Taman Ismail Marzuki, Jakarta

Group Exhibitions (Selected on 10 last exhibitions)

- 2010 "Reality Effect", Galeri Nasional, Jakarta
"Badut", Galeri Hadiprana, Jakarta
"From The Collectors", ArtSociates-Lawangwangi, Bandung
"Artpreneurship", Citra Galeri-Ciputra World, Jakarta
- 2009 "Common Sense", Galeri Nasional, Jakarta
"The Golden Age", Akili Art Museum, Jakarta
- 2008 "Art Singapore 2008", The Contemporary Asian Art Fair, Suntec City, Singapore
"Expanding Contemporary Realism '2008", Akili Art Museum, Jakarta
"Shanghai International Contemporary Art Exhibition 2008", Shanghai, China
"Art Taipei 2008", Taipei World Center, Taiwan



JAK Mania. 2010. 200 x 250 cm. Oil on canvas.

Dewa Ratayoga

b. Karangasem, Bali, October 5th, 1979

Education

ISI (Indonesia Art Institute) Denpasar-Bali

Solo Exhibitions

2009 "Living Beyond The Pale ", ARK Gallerie, Jakarta

Group Exhibitions (Selected 10 last exhibitions)

2009 "Indonesia Contemporary Drawing", National Gallery, Jakarta

2008 Manifesto exhibition at National Gallery, Jakarta

2007 "Texture of The Real" at Ark Gallerie, Jakarta

2005 "...membaca Realisme " at Nava Art Gallery, Denpasar, Bali

2004 "Tamarin...In Pursuit of Identity" at Nava Art Gallery, Denpasar, Bali

"Rememoration" at Taxu Art Clinic, Denpasar, Bali

2003 "ARTefak " at Taxu Art Clinic, Denpasar, Bali

"Gigir Manuk" at Radin Hotel, Sanur, Bali

2002 "Emerging World Now" at Gaya Fusion of Senses Gallery, Sayan, Ubud, Bali

"Retro Figur" at Retro, Sanur, Bali



Tren Masa Kini. 2010. 240 x 133 cm (2 panels). Pencil and oil on canvas.

Dikdik Sayahdikumullah

b. Majalengka 1973

Educations

- 1992-1997 Studied at Fine Art Department, Bandung Institute of Technology
1998-2001 Completing an Magister at Fine Art Department, Bandung Institute of Technology
2009-now Research study of Contemporary art at Kyushu sangyo University, Fukuoka, Japan.

Solo Exhibitions

- 2007 "Deja_vu", Nadi Gallery, Jakarta
2004 "Edited Memories", CP Artspace, Jakarta

Group Exhibitions (Selected on 10 last exhibitions)

- 2010 "The Beppu Asia Biennale of Contemporary Art 2010 Exhibition", Beppu Art Museum, Beppu City, Japan
2009 "Kyushu Artists Group Exhibition" Tokyo To Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan
"Kyushu Artists Group Exhibition", Bridgstone Museum, Kurume city, Japan
"Kyushu Artists Group Show", Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Fukuoka city, Japan
2008 "Bandung Art Initiative#1", Roemah Roepa Gallery, Jakarta
"Bandung Art Now", National Galery, Jakarta
2007 "Quota 2007", National Gallery, Jakarta
"Imagining Asia", AIAE Exhibition, Selasar Sunaryo Art Space, Bandung
2006 "Jakarta Bienalle", National Gallery, Jakarta
2005 "Kuota 2005: Rupa dan Peralihan", Kemang Icon, Jakarta

After Looking Back to Keiga. 2010. 120 x 80 cm.



Dodit Artawan

b. Batubulan, Bali, 1978

Education

1997 Indonesian Art Institute, Denpasar, Bali

Solo Exhibitions

2009 "(De)fermented Spaces", Semarang Gallery, Semarang

2008 "The Pleasure of the Eye", Langgeng Icon Gallery, Jakarta

Group Exhibitions (Selected on 10 last exhibitions)

2010 "Percakapan Masa", Galeri Nasional Indonesia, Jakarta

"Super Imposed", D' Gallerie, Jakarta

"Contemporary Art Turn", SBin Art Plus, Singapore

"The Birth of Colors", Syang Art Space, Magelang

"Pose Historia", Vanessa Art Link, Singapore

"Halimun", Lawang Wangi Artsociates, Bandung

"Almost White Cube", CG Art Space, Jakarta

2009 "Art Singapore 2009", Singapore

"Bazaar Art Jakarta", Pacific Place, Jakarta

"Objective Border", Srisasanti Art House, Jakarta



Cool. 2010. 150 x 200 cm. Oil on canvas.

F. Sigit Santoso

b. Ngawi, 1964

Education

1993 ISI Yogyakarta 1993

Solo Exhibitions

2005 "Paradoks Batas", Edwin's Gallery, Jakarta

2003 "PainThink", Edwin's Gallery, Jakarta

Group Exhibitions (Selected on 10 last exhibitions)

2010 "Soccer Fever", Galeri Canna, Jakarta

"Transfiguration", Semarang Gallery, Grand Indonesia, Jakarta

"Space & Image", Ciputra World Marketing Gallery, Jakarta

"Recent Art From Indonesia", Soobin Art Plus, Singapore

"Masih Ada Gus Dur", Langgeng Gallery, Magelang

"Ecce Homo", Semarang Gallery, Semarang

2009 "Kado #2", Nadi Gallery, Jakarta

"Biennale Jogja X, Sangkring Art Space, Yogyakarta

"Common Sense", Galeri Nasional Indonesia, Jakarta

Art Taipei 2009, Taiwan



Angel's Day. 2010. 150 x 195 cm. Oil on canvas.

Gede Mahendra Yasa

b. Singaraja, 1967

Exhibition

1998-2002 Indonesian Art Institute, Denpasar, Bali

Solo Exhibitions

- 2010 "As the Face No Longer Bespeaks the Soul", SIGlarts, Jakarta
2009 "Hendra's Woman: Reframing De Kooning", SIGlarts, Jakarta
2008 "The Painter's Palette", The Aryaseni Art Gallery, Singapore
"White Series: Allegory of Painting", Richard Koh Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
2007 "Hendra Membaca Pollock", Emitan Fine Art Gallery, Surabaya, East Java

Group Exhibitions (Selected on 10 last exhibitions)

- 2010 Hong Kong Art Fair 2010, Hong Kong
"Pleasure of Chaos, Inside New Indonesian Art", Primo Marella Gallery Milan, Italy
"Halimun", Lawang Wangi Artsociates, Bandung
2009 "Post-Tsunami Art, South East B(l)ooming", Primo Marella Gallery Milan, Italy
CIGE 2009, Beijing, China "Hybridization", North Art Space, Jakarta
Prague Biennale 4, Prague, Czech Republic
"Friendship Code", Syang Art Space, Magelang
2008 "Taxu 2008: Painting Rejuvenation" SIGlarts, Jakarta
"Space, Semarang Gallery", Semarang, Central Java



Brush Strokes as Mass of Muscle. 2010. 150 x 200 cm. Oil on canvas.

Harry Cahaya

b. Bandung, 1978

Education

2006 Art and Design Faculty, Bandung Institute of Technology

Selected Exhibitions (Selected on 10 last exhibitions)

- 2010 "Halimun (The Mist)", Lawangwangi Art Space, Bandung
"Exodus of Bandung", Aryaseni Art Gallery, Singapore
"Superimposed", D-gallerie, Jakarta
- 2009 "Entrance", D-gallerie, Jakarta
"Bandung Initiatives #3: Form as Attitude", Roemah Roepa, Jakarta
"Bandung Expanding", Tonyraka Gallery, Bali
"Borderless world", Srisasanti, Yogyakarta
- 2008 "B-Invasion", Canna Gallery, Jakarta
"Muslihat Tanda", Mondecor, Jakarta
"Manifesto", Galeri Nasional, Jakarta



Ito Jyoatmojo

b. Jakarta

Education

- 1973 Indonesian Art School, Yogyakarta
- 1977 Jakarta Art Academy, Jakarta

Selected Last Exhibitions

- 2010 "Contemporary Art-Turn", Sbin Art Plus, Singapore
- 2009 "Home is So Remote", K3 Project Space, Zurich, Switzerland
"Allegorical Flatness Painting", SIGlarts, Jakarta
- 2007 "Liquid", O House Gallery, Jakarta
- 2008 "Techno-Realism", CP Artspace, Jakarta
- 1977–2000 Exhibition in Australia - Germany - Indonesia – Switzerland



#77 Cikarang. 2009. 200 x 100 cm. Acrylic on canvas.

I Wayan Suja

b. Batubulan, 1975

Education

Indonesian Art College / Indonesian Art Institute, Denpasar

Solo Exhibitions

- 2009 "Mythical Beauty", National Gallery, Jakarta
"Wrapping Identity", Vanessa Art Link, CIGE, Beijing, China
- 2007 "Plush-Tick", Komaneka Fine Art Gallery, Ubud, Bali

Selected Group Exhibitions (Selected on 10 last exhibitions)

- 2010 "Homoludens", Emmitan Gallery, Surabaya
Finalist of Indonesia Art Award 2010, National Gallery, Jakarta
"Manifesto 2010: Common Conversation", National Gallery, Jakarta
"Pose-Historia", Vanessa Art Link, Singapore
"Pleasures Of Chaos: Inside New Indonesian Art", Primo Marella Gallery, Milan, Italy
- 2009 "Contemporary Arts of Indonesia", Gallery M, Daegu City, South Korea
Prague Biennale 4: "Expanded Paintings 3", Karlin Hall, Prague, Czech Republic
"War, Words and Forms", Salihara Gallery, Jakarta
"Real[!]Ti", Vanessa Art Link, Jakarta
"South-East B(l)ooming", Marella Gallery, Beijing, China



Abstraction #2. 2010. 150 x 200 cm. Oil on canvas.

Ketut Moniarta

b. Wanagiri, Bali, 1981

Education

1999 – 2006 Indonesian Art Institute, Denpasar, Bali

Solo Exhibitions

2009 "Post Branded Objects", Semarang Contemporary Art Gallery, Semarang

2008 "The Way of Seeing", Ark Gallery, Jakarta

Group Exhibitions (Selected on last 10 exhibitions)

2010 "Super Imposed", D' Gallerie, Jakarta

"Contemporary Art Turn", SBin Art Plus, Singapore

"The Birth of Colors", Syang Art Space, Magelang

"Pose Historia", Vanessa Art Link, Singapore

"Halimun", Lawang Wangi Artsociates, Bandung

"Almost White Cube", CGartspace, Jakarta

2009 "Common Sense", National Gallery, Jakarta

"Art Singapore 2009", Singapore

"Post-Tsunami Art", Primo Marella Gallery, Milan, Italy

"Friendship Code", Syang Art Space, Magelang



LA Ball. 2010. 150 x 150 cm. Oil on canvas.

Moch. Rizal Fauzi

b. Bandung, 1986

Education

FSRD ITB

Group Exhibitions (Selected on 10 last exhibitions)

- 2010 "Bandung Initiative #5: Veduta", Vanessa Art Link, Jakarta
- 2009 "Post Mortem", Vanessa Art Link, Jakarta
 - "On Going", Vanessa Art Link, Jakarta
 - "Inhabitant", Padi Artground, Bandung
 - "Bandung Expanding", Tonyraka Art Galeri, Bali
- 2008 "Freedom", Taman Budaya, Yogyakarta and Galeri Nasional, Jakarta
 - "De Paris a Jakarta", Galeri Nasional, Jakarta
 - "Surfacial", Selasar Sunaryo, Bandung
 - "Transcend", CSIS Kemang, Jakarta
- 2007 "Us/Industri", Tea House Gallery, Bandung



An Art Institution Anatomy Study. 2010. 100 x 150 cm. Oil on canvas.

Muhammad Reggie Aquara

b. 1982

Education

2001-2006 Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB), Art and Design Faculty, Fine Art Department

Exhibitions (Selected on 10 last exhibitions)

- 2010 "Recreate x Reality x Representation 15 x 15 x 15 Exhibition", Galeri Soemardja, Bandung
"Recent Art from Indonesia: Contemporary Art-Turn", S Bin Art Plus, Singapore
"Bandung New Emergence Vol. 3", Selasar Sunaryo ArtSpace, Bandung
"The Final Judgement", Umah Seni, Jakarta
"Almost White Cube", CG Artspace, Jakarta
"Halimun", Lawangwangi Artpark Launching, Bandung
- 2009 "Post Mortem", Vanessa Artlink, Jakarta
"Bazaar Art Fair Jakarta", Pacific Place, Jakarta
"Restart – Recollection", D Gallerie, Jakarta
"Bandung Expanding", TonyRaka Gallery, Bali



found image with attitude

Nadya Savitri

b. Jakarta, 1981

Educations

- 2007–2009 Tokyo University of The Arts, majoring in Ceramic Craft (MFA)
2008–2009 Research student at Tokyo University of The Arts, majoring in Ceramic Craft
2006–2008 Faculty of Visual Art and Design, Visual art department, Institut Teknologi Bandung
2004–1999 Faculty of Fine Art and Design, Design department, Institut Teknologi Bandung

Group Exhibitions (Selected on 10 last exhibitions)

- 2010 "Manifesto", National Gallery, Jakarta
"Contemporary Art-Turn", SBin Art Plus, Singapore
"Halimun: The Mist, A reflection upon the development of Indonesian contemporary art", Lawangwangi Art and Science estate, Bandung
"Bandung Initiative 5: Veduta", Vanessa Art link, Jakarta
- 2009 "Jakarta Contemporary Ceramic Biennale 1, North Art Space, Jakarta
"Contemporary Archeology", SIGlarts, Jakarta
"The 57th Tokyo University of The Arts Graduation Works Exhibition", The University Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan
"Short Circuit: The Book and The Guts", Asumu gallery, Tokyo, Japan
"The Third Annual Alien Exhibition: Foreign Artist Making Work in Japan", Tokyo University of The Arts Union gallery, Tokyo, Japan
- 2008 "The Romance of Three Kingdom: 2008 China, Japan and South Korea New Century Pottery Art Exhibition", China



Perfection (detail). 2010. 60 x 20 x 6 cm (wood rack); 4.5 x 18 cm highest ceramic piece (diameter x height). Porcelain, wood rack, plexiglass, fluorescent lamp.

Nurdian Ichsan

b. 1971, Bandung

Educations

1999-2002 Fine Art Department, Faculty of Art and Design, Bandung Institute of Technology

1993-1997 Ceramic Studio, Fine Art Department, Faculty of Art and Design, Bandung Institute of Technology

Solo Exhibitions

2009 "Nowhere Man", Hall The Japan Foundation Jakarta, Indonesia

"(di)stance", Sigiarts Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia

Group Exhibitions (Selected on 10 last exhibitions)

2010 "Percakapan Masa", National Gallery, Jakarta

"Recent Art From Indonesia: Contemporary Art-Turn", S Bin Art Plus, Singapore

"Ecce Homo", Semarang Contemporary Art Gallery, Semarang

"Halimun; the Mist", Lawangwangi's inaugural exhibition, Lawangwangi Art and Science Estate, Bandung

2009 "In Between", Jakarta Contemporary Ceramic Biennale #1, North Art Space, Jakarta

"XYZ", Edwin's Gallery, Jakarta

"Nextnature", National Gallery, Jakarta

"Reach Art Project: Unlimited Portrait", Plaza Indonesia organized by Edwin's Gallery, Jakarta

"New Friends, Art and Adventure: A Ceramic Art Exhibition", Japan Foundation Gallery, Sidney, Australia

"Milestone", Vanessa Art Link, Jakarta



Untitled. 2010. 100 x 120 cm and 12 x 7 x 38 cm (object). Ceramic, acrylic, canvas.

RE Hartanto

b. Bandung, 1973

Educations

2001-2002 Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

1992-1998 Fine Art Department, Faculty of Fine Art & Design, Bandung Institute of Technology

Solo Exhibitions

2009 "Post-North Korea Nuclear Test", H2 Art Gallery, Semarang

2004 7 Bandung Artists Drawing Exhibition, Common Room, Bandung

2000 "Unseen Wounds", Koong Gallery, Jakarta

Group Exhibitions (Selected on 10 last exhibitions)

2010 "Reality Effect", National Gallery, Jakarta

"Homo Ludens", Emmittan Gallery, Surabaya

"15x15x15, Recreate x Reality x Representation", Soemardja Gallery, Bandung

"My World, Your World, Our World", Wendt Gallery, New York, USA

"Survey #1.10", Edwin Gallery, Jakarta

"The Mist", Lawangwangi Art & Science Estate, Bandung

2009 "Middlebare Akte", Soemardja Gallery, Bandung

"Cross/Piece", Canna Gallery, Jakarta

"Common Sense", National Gallery, Jakarta

"Soul of Indonesia", Godo Gallery, Seoul



Untitled. 2010. 300 x 400 cm (dyptich). Oil on linen.

Tomy Nelwan

b. Bandung, 1985

Education

2003–2008 Bandung Institute of Technology

Group Exhibitions (Selected on 10 last exhibitions)

- 2010 "Bandung Initiative #5", Veduta, Vanessa Art Link, Jakarta
- 2009 "Oon Going", Vanessa Art Link, Jakarta
"Pameran ilustrasi KOMPAS", Bentara Budaya (travelling: Jakarta, Yogyakarta, Bali)
- 2008 "BAndung Initiative #2", A Cabinet of Sign, Roemah Roepa, Jakarta
"Transcend", CSIS building, Jakarta
"Modest Codes", OKA'S galeri, Ubud, Bali
"(Re)Citation", Galeri Sumardja FSRD-ITB, Bandung
"Surfacial, Bale Tonggoh, Selasar Sunaryo ART Space, Bandung
- 2007 "Soft Launching of Tera Rupa", Tera Rupa, Bandung

Commissary Mailboxes Closed, See Through
Post Office is the Government Building, this office
summarizing news of the day's business transactions.



Hey Tom!

We are writing you
from San Fran!!
We are going for a little
getaway over the
weekend and we've

been having marvellous time. We'd be going
to the city for a while! Due to the fact
that we only have 2 days here, so we mail
it from Indonesia - but trust us, this
is 100% authentically from San Fran.
Hope you have fun yourself.

D.E.M.



Kantor Pos dan Telekomunikasi, Gedung Sate, Jl. Sate No. 101, Bandung 40132



Tas Tomy Network

Jl. Kartiraman / Gg. Selasih Timur

No. 204a / 66

RT02 RW06 KET. Arjuna

Kec. Cicendo, Bandung 40132

Indonesia



Above
Taped Postcard #3 (From Uci)
(Front)
2010
20 x 20 cm
Acrylic on canvas.



Below
Taped Postcard #3 (From Uci)
(Back)
2010
20 x 20 cm
Acrylic on canvas.



Above

**Taped Postcard #4 (From Chita)
(Front)**

2010

20 x 20 cm

Acrylic on canvas.

Below

**Taped Postcard #4 (From Chita)
(Back)**

2010

20 x 20 cm

Acrylic on canvas.



Triyadi Guntur Wiratmo

b. Kudus, 1974

Educations

1998 BFA, Bandung Institute of Technology
2005 MFA, Bandung Institute of Technology

Solo Exhibition

2009 "Indexical Friends", SIGlarts, Jakarta

Group Exhibitions (Selected on 10 last exhibitions)

2010 "Percakapan Masa", Galeri Nasional, Jakarta
 "Contemporary Art Turn", SBin Art Plus, Singapore
 "The Birth of Colors", Syang Art Space, Magelang
 "Almost White Cube", CG Artspace, Jakarta
 "Halimun", Lawangwangi Artsociates, Bandung
2009 "Indonesia Contemporary Drawing", National Gallery, Jakarta
2008 "Expanding Contemporary Realism", Akili Museum of Art, Jakarta
2006 "Merunut Akar Jalar Desain Grafis Indonesia", National Gallery, Jakarta
1996 "Gambar dan Sketsa", Galery Soemardja ITB, Bandung
1995 "Art Exhibition '95", Kudus

Historytopia When Mr. Visible Soul Meets Mr. Kitsch Soul

2010. 140 x 180 cm. Graphite, acrylic on canvas.



Wastuwidyan Paramaputra

b. Jakarta, 1986

Education

Bandung Institute of Technology

Darwis Triadi School of Photography

Group Exhibitions (Selected on 10 last exhibitions)

- 2010 "Bandung New Emergence vol. 3", at Selasar Sunaryo Art Space, Bandung.
"TYPIFYING", at D'Gallerie, Jakarta.
"Pose – Historia", at Vanessa artlink, Singapore.
"Prive", a group exhibition with LIAISON, at viviyipartroom2, Jakarta.
"Almost White Cube", a 12th anniversary of CGartspace Plaza Indonesia, Jakarta.
"Bandung Initiative #5 Venduta", at Vanessa Artlink, Jakarta.
- 2009 "A-MAZE", Bazaar's Jakarta Art Fair, at Pacific Place, Jakarta
"Folklore", at Potluck, Bandung
"Cloak and Dagger", a debut exhibition of LIAISON art project / group, At LIAISON studio, Bandung, and Galeri Salihara, Jakarta.
- 2008 "How to Draw", a drawing exhibition, at Naripan Culture Centre, Bandung



Steamboat Willy. 2010. 200 x 170 cm. Oil on canvas.

Wiyoga Muhardanto

b. Jakarta, 1984

Education

BFA, Faculty of Art & Design, Majoring Sculpture Studio, Bandung Institute of Technology

Solo Exhibition

2008 "Window Display", Selasar Sunaryo Art Space, Bandung

Group Exhibitions (Selected on 10 last exhibitions)

2010 "Landing Soon # 6 – 11", Organized by Cemeti Art House, Erasmus Huis, Jakarta

"Halimun – The Mist", Lawangwangi Art & Science Center, Bandung

"Codex Code", Kedai Kebun Forum, Yogyakarta

"Space & Image", Ciputra World, Jakarta

"KatallogCatalog", A.O.D Artspace, Jakarta

2009 "Bandung Art Now", National Gallery of Indonesia, Jakarta

"Jakarta Bienalle 2009 (Fluid Zones)", Grand Indonesia Shopping Center, Jakarta

"Contemporary Archeology", Sigiarts, Jakarta

"Bandung Initiative # 4", Rumah Rupa, Jakarta

"Reach Art Project – Regression", Organized By Edwin Gallery, Plaza Indonesia, Jakarta



Take Your Time. 2009. 25 x 20 x 9 cm. Resin, fiberglass, NC paint, acrylic, wood, spot light.

Yogie A. Ginanjar

b. Bandung, 1981

Education

2006 S. Sn (S1) from Faculty of Art and Design, Bandung Institute of Technology

Achievements

2008 Finalist of Akili Museum of Art Award
2007 The Best 30 for West Java Painting Competition
2006 The Best 50 for West Java Painting Competition
2005 Best Student of The Year for Fine Art Departement, Faculty of Art and Design, Bandung Institute of Technology
2004 1st place for Description Writing Competition of Sri Baduga Museum Collection, West Java Province Museum

Solo Exhibitions

2009 "Neo-Chiaroscuro", Valentine Willie Fine Arts, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Group Exhibitions (Selected on 10 last exhibitions)

2010 "Percakapan Masa", Galeri Nasional, Jakarta
"The Holocaust", Umah Seni, Jakarta
"Almost White Cube", CG Artspace, Jakarta
"Halimun", Lawangwangi Artsociates, Bandung
2009 "Islam & Identity", Ritz Carlton – Pacific Place, Jakarta
"Restart–Recollection, D-Gallerie, Jakarta
"Revisiting the Last Supper", CG Artspace, Jakarta
"Trans Allegory", Roemah Roepa Gallery, Jakarta
2008 "Bandung Initiative #2", Roemah Roepa Gallery, Jakarta
"Refresh", Valentine Willie Fine Arts, Singapore



American Post Gothic with the Fall of Icarus. 2010. 100 x 80 cm. Oil on canvas.

Yuli Prayitno

b. Bandung, 1974

Educations:

- 1993–2001 Indonesian Institute of Arts (ISI), Yogyakarta
- 1997 ASEAN Youth Sculpture, Workshop, Bandar Sri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam
- 2001-2002 Glass Workshop, Bali Glass, Bali
- 2004 Workshop by Toshihiro Kuno, Bandung Institute of Technology, Bandung

Solo Exhibitions

- 2009 "I Love...", Nadi Gallery, Jakarta
- 2005 "Packaging", Cemeti Art House, Yogyakarta

Group Exhibitions (Selected on 10 last exhibitions)

- 2010 Art Hong Kong 10, Hong Kong
 - "Space And Image" Ciputra World, Jakarta
 - Survey#1.10 Edwin's Gallery, Jakarta
 - "Magainin" Jakarta Art District, Grand Indonesia, Jakarta
 - "Almost White Cube" CG artspace 12th Anniversary exhibition, Jakarta
 - "Pleasures of Chaos" Primo Marella Gallery Milano
- 2009 Biennale Jogja X "Jogja Jamming", Yogyakarta
 - "Kado", Nadi Gallery, Jakarta
 - "XYZ", Edwin's Gallery, Jakarta
 - "Next Nature", Vanessa Art Link, Jakarta





Reality Effect: Realism in Contemporary Art

Asmudjo Jono Irianto

*"Pictures are defined not by some magical affinity to the real but by their ability to create what Roland Barthes called 'reality effect'."*¹

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The term 'reality effect' or the effect of (resembling) reality became widely known from the article by Roland Barthes under the same title. In the article, Barthes analyzes the function of detailed descriptions in realist novels. In principle, accurate descriptions will create what Barthes calls "the illusion of reality" that presents "reality effects". Reality effects also apply to realist images, especially in photos and films, "...we typically behave as though photographs show 'exactly what happened'—what Barthes called 'the reality effects'."²

In painting, reality effect is inseparable from the realist tendency in Western art history—before the discovery of photography. This is shown by the popularity of the technique of *trompe l'oeil*—which literally means, "deceives the eye", referring to paintings that try to create illusions of three-dimensionality in the depicted objects. Therefore, the realist tendency is often called 'illusionism'. The discovery of photography as the medium that is considered more objective in representing reality naturally threatens the existence of realist paintings. The decline of realist tendency in modern painting was more or less caused by the existence of photography. As a work of art, photography is more closely related to, and depends on, reality. In 1927, Albert Renger-Patzh, an avant garde photographer, answered the question about the existence of photography as an autonomous medium, "The secret of a good photograph, which can have artistic qualities just like a work of the visual arts, lies in its realism."³

The presence of realism painting as representation has in fact been taken over by photography, as explained by Arthur Danto and quoted by Eleanor Hertney,

(Details of)

F. Sigit Santoso

Angel's Day

2010

150 x 195 cm

Oil on canvas

"In his essay 'The End of Art,' philosopher and critic Arthur Danto argues that photography 'solved' the problem that artists had faced since the Renaissance, namely how to create a convincing representation of the visible world through painting

and sculpture. As a result, he believes, photography freed art to pursue a different set of goals involving ideology rather than representation.⁴

As the task of painting to represent reality has been taken over by photography, painting took a totally different direction, delving into unknown territories, to completely novel realms, ones that were removed from reality. We recognize such efforts as the abstract painting, which “leaves behind the world” and is busy searching for its identity: the essence of painting. The representation of reality was thus presented more by works of photography. Along the journey, however, the objectivity of photographs in representing reality is questioned. Photography is easily manipulated, moving away from reality or denying it. The progress of the digital imaging technology even enables the creation of images that look realistic without being based on reality and are instead completely constructed by image-making software.

Technological development, especially one that is related with the production of images, has changed the perception of the contemporary society about reality and the world. Today it is difficult to determine what the true reality is as human perception is shaped by the deluge of images and spectacles, giving rise to what Guy Debord calls “the society of spectacle.” The perception of reality within the contemporary society is indeed shaped by, and depends on, the culture of spectacles. People are not aware of the political and commercial manipulations instilled in their minds through the TV sets in the family rooms. Similarly, in Indonesia the reality shows and gossip shows presented by the TVs become daily staples of the people, who ironically feel that they are in control by holding the remote controls and zapping through the TV channels.⁵ What we consider as reality today is in fact always a construct shaped by a variety of often-conflicting interests. It is thus difficult to determine what “reality” is. The term of ‘simulacrum’ shows how hard it is for us to pin down true reality, as what is present before us is often a copy of copy.

“Only since the 1960s—in response to a breakdown in the solidity of the ‘real,’ its massive mediation by new technologies of the visible, the increasing numbers of images permeating everyday life and concomitant transformations in what is considered ‘art’—have philosophers, critics, and most crucially, artists themselves returned to the repressed term ‘simulacrum’ and revived it as a crucial concept for interrogating postmodern artistic practices and theories of representation.”⁶

The bankruptcy of modern art inescapably returned art in the contemporary art era to the position of the realm of representation. Naturally, representation in contemporary art has different motives and urgency compared to the context of representation in realist works prior to the era of modern art. At the time when the dualism model between reality and copy is difficult to uphold, the realm of representation understandably undergoes certain problems: “the simulacrum also disturbs the order of priority: that the images must be secondary to, or come after, its model.”⁷ On the other hand, at the time when the dualism concept can no longer be applied consistently, the realm of representation precisely becomes the territory that provides a range of possibilities of adventure. If everything is simulacrum (a copy of a copy), isn’t the opposite also true: that everything can be considered as reality in itself? Reality effect in the contemporary realist art is the effect about its reality as an artwork, as a real and autonomous entity—that is not necessarily related to what it represents.

That is why the realist tendency—in a range of forms and media—regains its force of life in contemporary art. The distrust in reality does not mean that the artists do away with assumptions about reality. No matter how fluid reality is, the realist artists still need to question the roots of the problems (of the realm considered as “reality”) in their works. At the time when “reality” is no longer stable, the involvement of art in questioning “reality” precisely appears in a variety of attitudes, possibilities, and forms. It is thus not easy to determine the understanding of realism in the contemporary art.

96 While realism in the Indonesian contemporary art several decades ago was invariably linked with social and political representations, lately the themes that the realism genre takes on enjoy greater variety and complexity. Among the realist styles, it seems that photo-realism has acquired certain dominance. It is undeniable that today many realist artists make use of photography and digital technology such as the LCD projector in creating their realist works, in order to capture reality and the depicted objects with utmost accuracy. Thus the photograph that is used as the reference can also be viewed as the object that the artist has chosen to depict. What the artist represents, therefore, is a copy of reality. This shows the aspect of simulacrum in photo-realist paintings, or the realist works that use photographs as their points of reference. The use of photographs very much depends on the artist's intention: is it merely technical, or also conceptual? Is it not true that to paint by using photographs constitutes an effort to deconstruct the identity of photographic reproduction, to return images to their unique quality, their aura? There will be no two paintings that are completely identical. The unique quality of painting—as the one and only painting—has even influenced photo-artists to create one-edition photography works, or the monoprints, which is actually contrary to the characters and identity of photography as something that can be continuously reproduced.

“In so far as contemporary art photography has become as much a creation of the market-place as an engine of it, it comes as no surprise to encounter the ultimate denial of photography as a mechanically reproducible technology in such phenomena as Emmet Gowin's recent production of 'monoprints'—edition of a single print from negative. Indeed, a recent press release from the Laurence Miller Gallery announces on the occasion of an exhibition entitled 'The One and Only'.⁸

This exhibition affirms that the dualism model in representation (reality vs. copy) can no longer be used as the only reference. However, this exhibition does not want to belittle realist works by considering them as merely copies of copies, a kind of simulacrum, as Margot Lovejoy once said: “We can call a photorealist painting a

simulacrum because it was a painted copy of a photograph, which was itself, inherently, a copy of the real.⁹ On the contrary, as Hal Foster has shown, even works by Andy Warhol can be viewed as representation of reality. This is evident in Thomas Crow's opinion that rejects the assessment over Andy Warhol's works as simulacral:

"Underneath the glamorous surface of commodity fetishes and the media stars Crow finds, 'the reality of suffering and death'; the tragedies of Marilyn, Liz, and Jackie in particular are said to prompt 'straightforward expression of feeling.' Here Crow finds not only a referential object **for** Warhol but an empathetic subject **in** Warhol, and here he locates the **criticality** of Warhol...In this way Crow pushes Warhol beyond humanist sentiment to political engagement."¹⁰

Hal Foster saw the two choices—to place Warhol's works as simulacral works or merely as representations—as an option, a possibility, based on each party's perspective and motive. Hal Foster explains this in relation with Andy Warhol's work with the theme of "Death in America".

"Both camps make the Warhol they need, or get the Warhol they deserve; no doubt we all do. And neither projection is wrong. I find them equally persuasive. But they cannot both be right...or can they? Can we read the 'Death in America' images as referential and simulacral, connected and disconnected, affective and affectless, critical and complacent? I think we must, and we can if we read them third way, in terms of traumatic realism."¹¹

The quote shows that Hal Foster mentions at least two realist approaches in contemporary art; first, traumatic realism, and, second, critical realism, which Foster indirectly talks about.

Although according to Hal Foster realism today can still be viewed as images showing the relationship between reality and its representation, there is no longer a stable connection, unlike what the realist tradition of the West had in the nineteenth

98 century. Similarly, the intent of realist art to serve as a realm of representation is being rivaled by the mass media and popular art. There is often the question of what actually separates the representation in art from the representation in popular art. It can very well be that the fluid boundaries between high art and popular art are due to the distrust on the part of the high art regarding its representation potentials. To some extent, however, these boundaries have been maintained. For example, the works presented in this exhibition has a "distinct characteristic" as a realm of representation as they exist as "artwork". Realist painting in the era of digital images production and reproduction will certainly look "illogical". What is the exigency in creating difficult images using the hand-made technique, and consuming a lot of time, while the very same images can be produced in an instant using the digital technology? The answer: realist images presented/ executed through paintings create certain reality effect in terms of its existence (= its reality) as "artwork". In other words, the realist paintings, or other hand-made realist works today have the potentials to be critical towards the "instant culture" and the culture of spectacle, precisely because the painting is done using the technique that might seem illogical in the eyes of the people dealing with the technology of digital images production and reproduction, which are massive and instantaneous.

Furthermore, it might very well be that most realist artists in Indonesia do not concern themselves with the issue of the breakdown of reality. Therefore, the dualism model between reality and representation (= painting/realist works) can still be applied quite consistently. It means that their works can still be viewed as the effect of reality that they are questioning. Apparently, the anxiety about reality that is no longer real takes place in greater intensity on the level of cultural theories and discourses in the West. In our everyday living, or in the realm of the common sense, what is considered, as "reality" is often perceived just like that, taken for granted as certainty. Everything that appears to be present as material (object) or self-evident events constitutes the "reality" that we humans encounter in our day-to-day living. Naturally, the daily reality mostly constitutes the reality of routine activities. The reality

becomes special when it is re-presented, as a kind of documentary, news (journalist), or artwork.

At the end of the day, the realist paintings or sculptures in the contemporary art constitutes the reality itself; reality about their concreteness, their beings as (art) artifacts that have been arranged directly by the artists—or at least are hand-made. This is certainly the antithesis of the mass and instantaneous image production processes using the digital technology. The hand-made realist works automatically become auratic again due to their unique (inimitable) qualities. They act as the reality effect to the artwork's presence as an artwork, or the artwork that is "real", concrete, although the content might serve as a part of a series of simulacrum. Eventually what is consumed in the production and consumption processes of the contemporary art is the "work" of art itself as the object, constituting the concretization of the artist's idea.

Realism formed a highly significant part of the journey of the modern and contemporary art in Indonesia. Abstract painting, the backbone of the modern art in the West, has never recognized the existence of other modern art outside the West—in which the abstract principles are also applied. According to Hans Belting, one of the ways out would be through strong nationalism:

“...for the continuing hegemonial modernism still demanded the exclusion of artists other than Western. The only alternative was an excessive nationalism in the representation of modern art in order to counterbalance the colonial definition.”¹²

In any case, the discourse of the modern/contemporary art in Indonesia has different situations and urgency compared to the discourses in the contemporary art in the West—although one cannot deny the fact that it has been influenced by the latter discourses. What is called reality is the fact that is seen as easy to find in the everyday living of the Indonesian people—although in general this has to do with unpleasant realities, involving social issues such as poverty, corruption, destructions in the nature, social clashes, violence of the state officers, etc. Indeed, these “negative

realities" often appear "naked" before the public eye. Although many things/values have been constructed using the tactics and capital strategies taking advantage of spin-doctoring technology (spin-doctoring politics) that is so prevalent in the Indonesian political life of late, in general people take them as reality: the desire to gain political positions "by any way possible". In other words, to separate reality from fiction, the original and the copy, might not be too complicated—for the artists and the audience. One must admit that the issue of complexity in the relationship between reality and its representation, between representation and copy, between one copy and another, is a well-elaborated discourse, dissected in sophisticated manner by the cultural thinkers and philosophers in the West, but it has not become a significant issue in the Indonesian cultural practices and discourses.

On the other hand, even the Western artists after the nineties, according to Jean Robertson, no longer concern themselves with theories. In the Indonesian art world, theories are neither important nor determinant. Which art theories to choose, anyway, as there are so many theories that the artists must think about. Jean Robertson thus writes,

"Artists didn't seem to pay attention to theory as much after 1990, and the debates of the previous decade over modernism, postmodernism, and poststructuralism died down... Instead, artists took up accessibility, communication, humor and play."¹³

Two of the characteristics of realist works are communicative and accessible. The communicative aspects are combined with the approach of criticism, as in critical realism, and the aspects of catharsis and therapy, as in traumatic realism, have proven to endow again the realist works with strength. The exhibition presents the realist tendency in a variety of possibilities. All kinds of realist approaches and motives in this exhibition can be traced back to the attitude and motive of the respective artist, and the reading on them would depend on the audience's backgrounds and motives. Realism in contemporary art does not provide ready

answer regarding its essence, and indeed it is better that way, because we no longer have an affirmed trust in reality and truth.

Eventually, reality effect no longer becomes important—is it not true that effects on reality are a part of our everyday living? When reality—no matter how complex—is represented or triggered the creation of art, a new reality is born (=the artwork) that is separate from the true reality. It does not matter that its existence is seen merely as simulacrum or copy, because there are always artists that act as the anchor behind the works. The “distinctness” of the work by an artist—compared to those of other artists—will give rise to the artist’s “identity” and “originality”, although it is the result of the effort to represent or copy the reality. Naturally, at the end of the day, all values of the artwork, as well as the parameter of quality and originality, are the result of constructions in the art world that “seems” to be distinct from the reality of the shaping culture. Reality effects are perhaps not important because the effects that the realist artists wish to create are the development of a critical attitude regarding the issue that the artists present through the realist visual works—a kind of critical realism. The artists seem to hope that it is this critical effect that would be achieved—apart from another effect, which is the artwork’s potential to become a contemporary fetish object.

End Notes:

¹ Nicholas Mirzoeff, *An Introduction to Visual Culture*, London: Routledge, 1999, p. 37

² Tony Schirato and Jen Webb, *Reading the Visual*, Cross Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2004, p. 46.

³ Kerstin Stremmel, *Realism*, Koln: Taschen, 2006, p. 19.

⁴ Eleanor Hertney, *Art Today*, London: Phaidon Press Limited, 2008, p. 96

⁵ See Margot Lovejoy, *Digital Currents, Art in the Electronic Age*, London: Routledge, 2004, p. 113

⁶ Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff, ed., *Critical Term for Art History*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003, p. 35.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Abigail Solomon Godeau, "Photography After Art Photography" in Brian Wallis, ed., *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, Boston: David R. Godine, Publisher, Inc., 1984, p. 77.

⁹ Op. Cit., Lovejoy, p.135.

¹⁰ Ibid, hlm. 130.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Hans Belting, "Contemporary Art as Global Art," in Hans Belting and Andrea Buddensieg ed., *The Global Art World*, "Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2009, p. 53.

¹³ Jean Robertson and Craig McDaniel, *Themes of Contemporary Art, Visual Art after 1980*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2010, p. 29.



Reality Effects

Rizki A. Zaelani

"Everything that was directly lived has moved away into representation"
— Guy Debord, *The Society of The Spectacle*

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"Reality Effects" constitute the fundamental problems faced by the "realism" genre in Indonesian art. The curatorial invitation of this exhibition asks the artists to trace back the problems of "reality" in order to re-assess what has previously been called "realism". The term "realism" does not necessarily have the same meaning with the keyword to this exhibition, or "reality". "Reality", however, is an important issue in the way we understand realism, as the two concepts are inextricably linked. The cultural theoretician Raymond Williams explains that realism is one of the problematic cultural terms. Realism, according to Williams, is a difficult word not only because of the intricacy of the disputes in art and philosophy to which its predominant uses refer, but also because the two words on which it seems to depend, *real* and *reality*, have a very complicated linguistic history.¹ In practice, the understanding of realism is often represented by our judgment about certain art expressions (a painting or a sculpture) containing forms or images that are realistic in nature. To the commoners, realism is even considered as "art-ism" that explains the ability of an artist to copy the nature and other forms in realistic manners, making them look "natural" or "honest".

The issue of realism related with the assumption of realistic mimicry constitutes a distinct linguistic phenomenon. In linguistic studies, a realistic image is called an iconic mark, in relation with the claim of visual appearance with certain resemblance with the forms that the image wishes to refer to or explain about. In the system of pictorial language, an "iconic" mark serves as a sign when someone is able to interpret a certain image within the context of a similar pattern of reception with another. This is possible due to a kind of "natural generalitivity" that enables everyone to recognize the depicted object. The pictorial interpretation with this "natural generalitivity" concludes that the realism containing iconic signs can bind the "recognizing capacity" that is more or less "similar" among a group of people regarding the depicted objects, and be considered as a "typical seeing experience" about the world. Such expressions of

(Details of)

Gede Mahendra Yasa
**Brush Strokes as Mass of
Muscle**

2010

150 x 200 cm

Oil on canvas

realism that have been considered as a system of general—and generalized—receptivity are not actually representative of a natural human ability to recognize images, but have instead been shaped through a learning process that is cultural and historical in nature. We know that history records the development of realism as constituting human efforts to copy forms in such a way that they can be considered “realistic”. Eventually, the discovery of the technology of photography is seen as the peak of the decades of visual experiments to find ways of realistic mimicry in swifter and more accurate ways, compared to what had been offered by the traditional ways through the pictures and paintings.

The exhibition “Reality Effects” wishes to present the issue using a path that is different from the “traditional” ways to understand realism as a framework that projects the artist’s subjective attitude regarding the world of appearance and reality (of objects) as he or she understands them. On the contrary, the idea of “Reality Effects” is to understand expressions of “realism” as resulting from the changes in the situations of reality (of the contemporary society), which is very much affected by the progress in the technology of visual representation that has changed drastically since the discovery of photography. For the context of the discussion regarding realistic works, there are two inescapable conditions arising from the significant role played by the media and the technology of photography. First, the processes in which works of realism are created have now been increasingly assisted by the technology of photography—which the artists at least use as “models” or visual records for the details involved in the making of the works. The results of such processes are the drawings, paintings, or sculptures. Second, all the methods and the results of our recognitions about reality and our day-to-day experiences are actually shaped and habituated by a variety of photographic representations (through a range of information media and interactions).

Unlike the situations in the eighties, today it has become easier for everyone—including the artists—to own cameras and “create” photographic realities. It might very well be that the technology

of photography has now become a primary means for everybody to record the vagaries of everyday living. Today, the cameras are not necessarily used as specialized tools for professional photographers, but have rather become increasingly compact and easy to use. Photography and photographic reality are now considered as constituting the most comprehensive images of our contemporary experience and significantly characterizes the contemporary living. This is a typical model of image production and consumption that differentiates the contemporary society with the societies of the preceding eras. Photography, therefore, has essentially been defined as an agent and distributor of the cultures and technology of the contemporary societies.² But how about the expressions of the contemporary art?

The contemporary art is often incorrectly defined as constituting a return to the realistic art, or the art of realism, or “anti-abstract” art. In fact, there is no basis for such descriptions. It is actually more apt to explain it in relation with the scope of concerns of the contemporary art expressions, which try to move closer to the expressions of the everyday living of the people and the contemporary culture. This is a matter of the closing distance between the contemporary art and the realities of life that have increasingly been influenced by the circulation and the proliferation of photographic images. Walter Benjamin, the philosopher and aesthetic theoretician of the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory, has warned us of the effects of reality conditions influenced by the developments in the technology of photography and even envisioned a radical change in the art condition. In his brilliant analysis, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”, Benjamin states that photography has fundamentally changed the “natural” condition of art. Benjamin believes that photography has destroyed the art’s “autonomy to copy” in relation with the processes in social and political developments, and diluted what has previously considered as “the traditional values of cultural heritage”.³ I think the contemporary artists certainly do not use the photographic cameras and images only for their models and work modules, but also understand them as a field of new issues in art that can bring them closer to

the “realities” of the contemporary society. Benjamin also explains how a certain process of transmutation takes place, transforming the rituals that have previously owned by the traditional societies into novel ritual forms and practices of repetitions. Such processes liberate the linkage between art objects and traditional rituals (the religions and customs), called the cult value of art, and result in certain novel values, the autonomous exhibition values of art.⁴

What does the concept of “exhibition value” of art signify? The contemporary art expressions, albeit dealing with the ideas of traditions and cultures as well as the social and political issues, have in practice a field and models of recognition that are distinct from those of the traditional arts, which cannot even be adequately explained by the selected subject matters (the unity of themes: cultural-social-political). Works with the themes of social protests or death rites, for example, do not necessarily have the same values as ascribed to the actual events by the political or traditional world. The “exhibition value” of artwork confirms the separation between the values of art expressions and the actual ritual values. Benjamin even states that the visual images constructed by the image-reproduction technology set off by photography can no longer be considered as containing the “aura” of timelessness and sanctity, as we had once viewed the classical and traditional art. Benjamin envisions the existence of “the age of mechanical reproduction”—and today it becomes the “age of digital reproduction”—as a condition in which there is a moment of distinct aesthetic contemplations. During the classical age, aesthetic contemplations were commonly conducted only by certain groups (the educated and the aristocracy); today, it has become a model of reception done by the masses and determined by the moods of artistic experiences as affected by social changes and the progress of technology.⁵ The artists (producers), the artwork (object), and the art audience (consumers) are not far removed from the influence of the logic of the “production-consumption” model that unceasingly undermines the standing of the distinct process of aesthetic contemplations.

In the contemporary society, the development of realism is indeed inextricably linked with the consumptive characteristic of the public with regards to the productions and proliferation of photographic images. In the mid-eighties, the art historian and art critic Sanento Yuliman also had explained the phenomenon of image proliferation within the society as a situation of “image booming” (*Jedakan gambar*). Sanento Yuliman writes:

Every day, every where, and every time we see images. They are ubiquitous, in all sectors of life—in the handmade images, photographic images, print images, projected images, electronic images (television, video), and a range of other images. If only the history of our community could be displayed again quickly, as is the norm with films, we would be seeing the development process during the ancient time to this day, from the rarity of images to the “explosion of images”.⁶

Sanento Yuliman was not only thorough in his observation regarding the pulses of changes among the Indonesian contemporary society at the time; his attitude resembled that of the French cultural observer, Guy Debord, who had first sensed such a situation in Europe, which he then viewed as a new international phenomenon that began since late sixties. In the midst of the roaring production and circulation of images, Guy Debord mentioned the birth of a distinct form of society which he called as “the society of the spectacle”. According to Guy Debord, “the spectacle is not a collection of images; it is a social relation between people that is mediated by images. ... In societies dominated by modern conditions of productions, life is presented as an immense accumulation of *spectacles*.”⁷ Guy Debord also concluded that “Everything that was directly lived, has receded into a representation.”⁸ In the conclusion, he reminded us that every form of knowledge that we have today are more strongly influenced by the “existence” of a certain [appearance of] representations or varieties thereof, rather than resulting from the interactions of direct experiences.

110 In the contemporary society, the issue of representation becomes crucial. What does “representation” mean? In its general sense, representation constitutes a certain or a number of artificial constructions (understanding, signification, meaning) through which we understand the world in which we live. In practice, such constructions can be taken as conceptual representations in the forms of images, languages, or definitions, including various conceptual constructions with social dimensions, such as race or gender. Although in real life these conceptual constructions rely on their material forms in, a representation is often taken as a natural “fact”, and such misunderstanding often blurs our recognition and understanding about reality. Our access to reality—whether we realize it or not—is mediated by such cloud of representation.⁹ The curatorial issue of “Reality Effects” first and foremost is about the sophisticated awareness among the artists in recognizing and dealing with the cloud of representation, which is often positioned as “natural fact”. Or, in stronger terms, the issue of “Reality Effects” is more about the awareness about the problems of the latest reality (the contemporary society), without having to insist taking it as the manifestation of the awareness about the realism “ideology”.

The exhibition, however, still invites the artists to work within the framework of the “realism” ideology, but still in the context of the contemporary changes. The artists are invited to respond to the following issues that reveal the relations to the society of today:

1. *New Epoch of Mimetic Representation*

This theme is related to the shift in our understanding about the problems of “the mimetic appearance of visual representations”. This issue came to the fore especially in relation with the discovery and the progress in the technology of photography. The development in the technology of photography since the discovery of the camera to the image processing using digital technology has fundamentally changed the logic to view and understand the appearances of reality. How do we today understand the expressions of realism

artwork, which conventionally is ideologically connected to the claim of the truth of the visual appearance?

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2. *The Rise of Contemporary Urban Life*

This theme has to do with the mimetic representations of a variety of situations and changes in urban living, which shape the horizon of our cultural awareness today. In fact, the rapid progress in the technology of visual representations that today are more photographic and digitalized in nature has been due to the distinct characteristic of urban life. How does the contemporary visual art reveal how the issue has been represented?

3. *Age of "the End"*

The themes of "death" and the conditions of the "terminal" boundaries are latent in many discussions about the theoretical problems of "representation". The themes constitute criticism toward the conventional logic of applying the monolithic and fixed meaning to each forms of representation. Furthermore, the changes in the urban society have today shaped the "new" awareness about the orientation of the existential values of the "self" in specific ways. This awareness constantly renews the boundaries of the existential "truth" and the way someone interprets the facts of realities that have been previously established in the conventional/traditional manner.

4. *New "Heroism"*

The theme of "new" heroism is distinct from the project to envision the existential hero in the style of the rational modern subject. The "new" heroes precisely consider important the issue of boundaries contained by each representations (including about the greatness of the "heroes" themselves). Indeed, the art ideology of realism "traditionally" venerates the theme of "heroism", believed to be representable in certain figures (including the artists themselves), who are taken to be

able to epitomize the true essence of life. The art ideology of realism has been kept alive through the spirit of empiricism and scientism, which forms the undeniable trust in epistemology: "The subject that assesses the object (the reality)". Today, in the awareness about the representational boundaries of self existence and subjectivism, how does the contemporary art show its stance and defend the value of the "truth" of reality?

This exhibition, "Reality Effects", clearly considers important the technology of photography as the anchor for the problem of "realism" that in "novel" ways connects our understanding to the changes in the reality of the contemporary society. In this understanding, the technology of photography is understood within the context of the manifestation in its expanded development in a variety of digital technology effects. As a method of representation, photography has taught us a kind of new visual codes, by showing the significant aspects of someone's attention or interest, and/or blowing up parts of them as the focus of attention. At the end of the day, a photographic representation will shape our perceptions about the choices and the results of the "representations" of reality that we have appreciated in certain ways. A photographic image that is often used as a point of reference, for example, in reality functions as a kind of "structure of regulations" (a "grammar") in our way of seeing, and can be further understood even as an "ethics of seeing".

How do we now understand—even only to recognize again—the role of art in order to achieve the meaning of the "truth" of reality, in the midst of the ocean of representations with the grammar and ethics of seeing that have been affected by the "perfect" visual model of appearance à la photography? How do the "realistic" works in this exhibition reveal their significations? There are at least two theoretical frames that I believe have also been used by the artists whose works are displayed today, and which I believe are noteworthy. First, the effort of art to regain the significant meaning of the "aura". According to Walter Benjamin, the presence of the auratic aspects in the artwork that is viewed as unique is essentially related with the whole relationship of the work within its specific

ritual function. Benjamin believes that an artwork gains its aura depending on two factors; i.e. (1) the existence of a tradition that applies as a framework of common experience that is relatively stable within a certain community, in which an art object can be viewed as auratic; and (2) the sustainable condition of the object as a unique physical entity.¹⁰

I think Benjamin might have failed to envision what the institutions of art museums would do after his death. After World War II and during the restoration of the West European countries and the United States of America, the museums became a significant cultural institution and managed to shape the traditions and framework of art appreciation that were social in nature. The museums brilliantly maintain the existence of the art objects so that we would later define these objects as “masterpieces”. The museums can even be called the “temples” for the existence of the auratic values and the art aura. The development of the contemporary art that is often seen as rebelling against the system of the museums in practice does not take place in its understanding as something that is “antimuseum”.

The important spirit supported by the contemporary art is the spirit to celebrate the complexities of everyday living in ways that are “more concrete” and closer to the daily experiences, including the dynamics of problems resulting from the social, economic, cultural, and technological changes. The effort of the contemporary art to regain the aura of art can be taken by reviewing what Benjamin has explained, but referring to the contemporary contexts and situations. In another note, Benjamin has also made clear that the value of the experience in the aura is “the unique appearance or semblance of a distance, no matter how close the object may be”.¹¹ Are such conditions reflected in the practice of contemporary art? The contemporary art expressions that are often viewed as banal and directly presenting the ideas (using found objects, for example) basically present different effects. The banal works precisely try to create a certain “distance” from the observations, hoping that certain reflections of values can be made possible. The realistic painting about a car, or a portrait or a painting of an

object resembling a toy or doll, for example, is not presented truly as it is, referring to the public recollections of such objects as they encounter the objects during their day to day activities. Certain reflections and appreciations must be explored, arising from the distance prepared through the appearance of the work. I think the imagined distance is subtle in nature. I am reminded of Benjamin's explanation, saying that "by distance, I mean 'unapproachability'."¹²

It is the matter of unapproachability as Benjamin had meant that brought us to the second theoretical problem: How do we understand the reality effects on the art today? The ocean of (photographic) images plays an increasingly important role, serving as our entry to what we recognize as experience and reality. Here a kind of signs for understanding has actually been prepared through the explanations by the art theoretician W.J. T Mitchells, who says that "images, like histories and technologies, are our creations, yet are also commonly thought to be 'out of our control'—or at least out of 'someone's' control, the question of agency and power being central to the way images work."¹³ Therefore, if our everyday experiences have been framed by a range of visual representations that are constantly changing and proliferating out of our control, certainly our valuable experiences in dealing with the artwork constitutes a different matter altogether. It is in such an experiential path that we can keep on exploring what is actually valuable in art (expressions).

The musing of the philosopher Jean-François Lyotard might serve as a source of inspirations for us to reconsider the significant meaning of art representations in the midst of the flux of captivating and brilliant photographic representations. To Lyotard, there will always be a kind of gap between the experiences we have had and the languages that we use to represent them, so much so that someone can never master fully the "extralinguistic experiences". Lyotard is thus certain that language can never succeed in fully constructing our experiences; and this is so because there are events—or "Ereignis", to use Martin Heidegger's term—that the language cannot explain.¹⁴ The issue of "ereignis" or event containing "extralinguistic experiences" might consist of:

everything that is too detailed, too much, too profound, too tragic, or too happy, that it cannot be fully “described” in words, presented in our everyday linguistic expressions. It is with such matters that the representation of art has a significant role, irreplaceable by the common languages.

In this exhibition, can we say that the realistic images that show certain physical resemblance with our daily experience of seeing constitute a common language? Naturally, every realistic art expression can be considered “merely” as an object: painting, sculpture, photograph, or film; still, we have to try finding the value of art that the respective medium of expression states. The range of the media can be meaningful in so far as we are able to find a distinct recognizing capacity as an “art expression”. We will then appreciate them as valuable expressions, because we find them as a “language” that go beyond the boundaries of the common languages. The aspect of resemblance in the realistic works actually constitutes codes of recognition that we have learned about, deliberately or otherwise. History also shows the changes in the forms of these iconic signs (for example about the female physique), which in their respective periods have been viewed as containing the value of resemblance with reality. These changes confirm the existence of a separating distance from what we envision as “the real” with the “reality”. In this subject, we find again the important value of the “aura”, in relation with the “unapproachability” that we humans (including the artists) are seeking to conquer with zest, in order to understand the essence of life.

The realistic expressions that reveal the iconic signs and the aspect of resemblance in relation with reality will become mere “objects” if we take them only as artwork—perhaps some people will even take them as decorative objects. In fact, these expressions can act as an experiential space that is alive and inspirational once we understand them as “text”. Unlike its understanding as a “work” of art that is valuable in its physical aspects, our appreciation toward the art expression as text constitutes an attitude of acceptance toward a certain entity that gains its meaning due to

116 the interpretational space of its signs.¹⁵ To link a realistic portrait with a brilliant self-portrait will not result in a worthy discussion if we only superficially compare their appearances. We will precisely find the “value” of such comparison if we understand them as texts to intriguing themes and connect the two of them within a space of interpretations.

A work of art will become a material for the interpretational processes once we transform its physical aspects into valuable meanings. Even the realistic works—be it a painting, sculpture, photograph, or video—can have profound meanings not because they can give a certain assurance or confirmation that all aspects of reality and our experiences presented there appear just like how they are depicted in these works. Rather, a realistic representation is valuable precisely because of its success to show strong art expressions, which provide inspirations and distance and assist us in constructing our affirmation in respecting the reality. I wish to conclude our discussion with an important quote by Anthony Savile, a philosopher. Savile convinces me about ways to understand the self and reality by saying that “the role of art helps us to prevent ossification in our assumption about the world and our affective response to other. The arts help us to feel our way into the situation of others in all their subtlety.”¹⁶

End Notes:

¹ Raymond Williams, *Keyword: A vocabulary of culture and society* (London: Fontana Press, 1976), pp. 257 & 262.

² See Abigail Solomon-Godeau, *Photography After Art Photography*, in Brian Wallis, ed. *ART AFTER MODERNISM: Rethinking Representation* (New York – Boston: The New Museum of Contemporary Art – David R. Godine, Publisher, Inc, 1984), p. 76.

³ See W. Benjamin, "The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction" in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, Hannah Arendt, ed. (New York: Schocken, 1969), pp. 226-7.

⁴ *Ibid.* p.225.

⁵ See Paul Mattick, "Mechanical reproduction in the age of art" in *ART IN ITS TIME: Theories and practices of modern aesthetics* (New York – London: Routledge, 2003), p. 87.

⁶ Sanento Yuliman, "Seni Rupa dalam Kehidupan Sehari Kita Sekarang", in Asikin Hasan, ed. *DUA SENI RUPA: Sepilihan Tulisan Sanento Yuliman* (Jakarta: Yayasan Kalam, 2001), p. 40.

⁷ Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967) (New York: Zone Books, 1995), p. 12.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ See. Brian Wallis, "What's Wrong With This Pictures? An Introduction", Brian Wallis, ed. *op.cit.* p. xv.

¹⁰ Paul Mattick, *op.cit.* p. 223.

¹¹ See W. Benjamin, "A Small History of Photography", in *One Way Street* (London: Verso, 1979), p. 250.

¹² W. Benjamin, "The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction", *op.cit.* p.187

¹³ W.J.T Mitchell, "The Pictorial Turn", in *PICTURE THEORY, Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), p.6.

¹⁴ See Jae Emerling, "Jean-François Lyotard" dalam *THEORY FOR ART HISTORY* (New York – London: Routledge, 2005), p. 204.

¹⁵ See Roland Barthes, "From Work to Text", Brian Wallis, ed. *op.cit.* p. 171.

¹⁶ Anthony Savile, *The Test of Time* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), pp. 96-7.

