





# Sugih.

## SIGIarts

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RADI ARWINDA: SUGIH

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# Kuratorial

Pameran Tunggal Radi Arwinda: SUGIH

*Asmudjo Jono Irianto*

Selama ini Radi dikenal kerap menggarap *subject matter* dari wilayah seni populer—*subject matter* yang juga banyak digarap seniman muda lainnya—namun kemampuannya menyatukan dengan persoalan lokal dan seni tradisi menjadikan karya-karya Radi berbeda. Pada pameran ini Radi bisa dikatakan berhasil memadukan aspek-aspek seni populer Jepang dengan seni tradisi—khususnya Cirebon. Kedua hal tersebut memang lekat dengan Radi sejak belia.

Melihat karya-karya Radi Arwinda tentu kita akan teringat pada karya-karya Murakami atau karya para seniman *lowbrow*. Dengan gaya dan tema yang diambil dari khasanah seni populer dan seni tradisi tentu nafas *lowbrow* pada karya-karya Radi terasa kuat. Kendati tak tegas menolak, namun Radi sendiri tak terlalu suka karyanya dikelompokkan sebagai *lowbrow*, sebab dia tak merasa bahwa karya-karya dilandasi gerakan macam *lowbrow*. Menurut Radi karya-karyanya merupakan representasi dari pengalaman dan ketertarikan personalnya pada *subject matter* yang diakrabinya sejak

kecil: *manga* dan *anime* (komik dan animasi gaya Jepang) serta seni tradisional Cirebon. Namun Radi sadar bahwa karya-karyanya terutama hadir dan menghendaki pembacaan di wilayah seni tinggi. Katakanlah Radi berkarya dalam kerangka *high-art*, namun dengan *subject matter* dan tema yang diambil dari wilayah seni populer dan seni tradisi, karena itu tidak ada semangat “anti” terhadap paradigma *fine-art*—kendati bisa saja kritikal. Tentu saja metode Radi tersebut tak baru, seniman-seniman dunia macam Andy Warhol, dan seniman yang dipengaruhinya seperti Takashi Murakami dan Jeff Koon telah memanfaatkan pendekatan tersebut.

Tak dapat dipungkiri bahwa karya-karya Radi selama ini banyak terinspirasi oleh Murakami. Radi memang mengakui bahwa dia banyak dipengaruhi oleh Murakami. Pada kenyataannya tak ada seniman kontemporer yang tidak dipengaruhi kecenderungan dan credo estetik seniman sebelumnya. Demikian pula Murakami sangat terpengaruh oleh Andy Warhol. Kendati ada “kesamaan,” namun seniman yang dipengaruhi selalu berupaya menemukan karakternya sendiri. Murakami misalnya, tak tanggung-tanggung justru memproduksi karya seni dan merchandisanya—walau dia tak membedakan kedua hal itu—melalui perusahaannya Kaikai Kiki Co., Ltd. Jika Andy Warhol sekadar menjuluki studionya sebagai *factory*, maka Murakami sungguh-sungguh membangun pabrik yang memproduksi karya sekaligus produk komersial. Demikian pula, berbeda dengan Warhol yang mengembangkan batas-batas *high art* dengan *low art* dengan pernyataan-pernyataan yang seenak dan sekenanya, maka Murakami menetapkan cairnya batas-batas antara wilayah *high art* dan *low art* melalui pemikiran-pemikiran teoritis yang dipublikasikan melalui buku dan katalog. Selain itu Murakami kerap memberikan ceramah mengenai pengetahuannya berkenaan dengan seni populer dalam kebudayaan Jepang dan Amerika. Hal itu tidak mengherankan sebab Murakami memegang gelar PhD seni rupa. Konsep *superflat* adalah salah satu hasil pemikiran Murakami, yang juga menjadi konsep bagi karya-karyanya. Keseluruhan hal itu menjadi kekuatan Murakami yang menjadikannya berbeda dengan seniman-seniman

yang menggarap persoalan seni dan budaya populer. Melalui strategi tersebut bisa dikatakan Murakami bisa mengkooptasi baik wilayah seni tinggi, seni populer dan fashion, mencampur adukan sesuka-sukanya.

*“Superflat is a tactical domination device operated by its designer as a means for taking over/making over what provincial insiders still insist on calling the ‘art world’ (as if it were a medieval guild) at the moment when that ‘world’ is being redimensionalized and reterritorialized by the uber-IED known as globalization.”*

Pada intinya konsep *superflat* mengacu pada kondisi budaya Jepang kontemporer yang homogen, kosong dan datar. Menurut Murakami, *superflat* juga mengacu pada seni populer dan serbuan citraan pada budaya kontemporer yang superfisial dan tak bermakna. Sebagai sebuah konsep seni, *superflat* Murakami menentang persoalan komunitas *otaku*, yaitu komunitas *sub culture* yang terpinggirkan dalam kebudayaan Jepang kontemporer. Para *otaku* adalah kelompok *loser* yang melarikan diri pada dunia fantasi yang dibangun dari kegilaan mereka terhadap *manga* dan *anime* serta *science fiction*. Murakami memanfaatkan bahasa visual para *otaku* ini, yaitu *manga* dan *anime* sebagai credo estetikanya—sebab di wilayah tersebut terletak kekentalan konsep *superflat*. Dengan kata lain *superflat* juga mencoba mengeksplor kegelisahan jiwa kaum muda yang terpinggirkan yang terkalahkan.

Berpegang pada konsep *superflat* tersebut, enteng saja buat Murakami menerapkan bahasa estetikanya baik pada wilayah *high art* maupun wilayah seni populer. Dengan cara itu Murakami menghapus batas antara karya seninya dengan produk merchandisanya yang lebih komersial. Murakami melihat pada intinya baik *high art* maupun seni populer adalah wilayah komersial, karena itu baginya keduanya sama saja. Namun Murakami tidak anti wilayah seni tinggi, demikian pula tidak merendahkan seni populer, dia keluar masuk dengan nyaman pada kedua wilayah tersebut. Karena itu, banyak pengamat yang menyatakan bahwa konsep, karya dan sikap berkesenian Murakami

sebagai *symptom* dari industri kebudayaan itu sendiri, yang sangat komersial, kapitalistik dan artifisial. Murakami memang kerap dituduh berjiwa komersial dan mengutamakan uang. Dalam konteks ini, pameran tunggal Radi kedua ini, dengan tema “Sugih” menjadi relevan dan menarik.

Karya-karya awal Radi lebih kental dengan gaya tradisi lokal Indonesia, yaitu gaya yang diambil dari dunia pewayangan. Tetapi pada pameran tunggalnya pertama dengan judul ©APET tahun lalu, tema dan tampilan visual karya-karya Radi menjadi sangat *manga*. Agaknya Radi sengaja ingin mengeksplor dan menerapkan ketertarikannya pada gaya *manga*. Penggunaan tanda © juga tampak pada judul pameran ©Murakami di MOCA Los Angeles. Apropriasi tersebut menunjukkan kesadaran Radi pada pentingnya aspek *branding* dalam seni rupa kontemporer sebagaimana dicontohkan oleh Murakami. Simbol *copyright* tersebut juga menunjukkan kesadaran—pun kritik—bahwa pada akhirnya karya seni adalah komoditas. Mengikuti Murakami, Radi juga menampilkan beberapa obyek komoditas dalam pameran tersebut, seperti tas, sofa, jam dan lainnya. Tak jelas benar apakah itu upaya Radi dalam mengkritik Murakami, atau sebetulnya adopsi yang mengafirmasi konsep Murakami mengenai leburnya batas-batas antara seni tinggi, seni populer dan fashion.

Simbol © juga bisa dilihat sebagai sebetulnya *self critique* Radi pada dunia seni tinggi—yaitu dunianya. Pada kenyataannya dalam seni rupa kontemporer eksistensi dan keberhasilan seniman di antaranya dibentuk melalui *branding* yang dikonstruksikan melalui pasar dan wacana. Bisa dikatakan tak ada bedanya *branding* dalam dunia seni dengan dunia komersial. Dalam pameran di *Pop Life: Art in a Material World* (Tate Modern, 1 Oktober 2009 – 17 Januari 2010) yang menampilkan para superstar *pop art* dunia, *press release* pameran tersebut menjelaskan sebagai berikut,

*Pop Life: Art in a Material World argues that Warhol's most radical lesson is reflected in the work of artists of subsequent generations who, rather than simply representing or commenting upon our mass media culture, have infiltrated the publicity machine and the marketplace as a deliberate strategy. Harnessing the power of the celebrity system and expanding their reach beyond the art world and into the wider world of commerce, these artists exploit channels that engage audiences both inside and outside the gallery. The conflation of culture and commerce is typically seen as a betrayal of the values associated with modern art; this exhibition contends that, for many artists working after Warhol, to cross this line is to engage with modern life on its own terms.*

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#### BUDAYA INSTANT DAN SUGIH

Budaya masa kini kerap dikatakan sebagai budaya yang sarat dengan jiwa konsumtif, konsumerisme dan komersial, karenanya tak ada kedalaman dan instant. Karena itu menjadi kaya dalam budaya masa kini adalah “terhormat.” Manusia masa kini adalah manusia yang terus didorong untuk mengkonsumsi—segala macam barang yang tidak dibutuhkan. “*I Shop Therefore I am*”, demikian frasa yang digunakan oleh seniman feminis Barbara Kruger. Di negara-negara maju dan kaya, produk-produk seni populer adalah produk yang murah. Sebagai gaya hidup, baik *sub culture* atau *youth culture* bisa diingkosi dengan biaya murah. Itu sebabnya tak sulit bagi para *otaku* di Jepang untuk melengkapi pelariannya dengan pernik-pernik *manga* dan *anime*. Namun tentu saja gaya hidup kaum muda, di mana pun bisa saja mahal, terutama jika menyangkut gaya hidup yang merepresentasikan produk-produk branding, yaitu gaya hidup kelas atas, yang tentu saja membutuhkan ongkos tinggi.

Masalahnya adalah pada saat dorongan mengkonsumsi tak sebanding dengan modal kapital yang dimiliki. Hal ini terutama terjadi di

negara-negara berkembang, kerap gaya hidup yang sebetulnya berangkat dari nilai-nilai *sub culture* tak murah untuk dilaksanakan. Harga sepatu *sneaker* dengan *branding* internasional—lebih mahal di Indonesia dibandingkan negara kaya—tentu hanya terbeli oleh anak-anak muda golongan atas yang berduit, begitu pula papan *skate board* kualitas baik. Demikian pula harga komik Jepang dan Amerika dalam bentuk cetakan aslinya, tentu mahal untuk kebanyakan kantong anak muda—bahkan dari kelas menengah.

Sering dikatakan bahwa mal-mal di kota besar Indonesia tak kalah mentereng dibandingkan mal di negara maju. Tanpa disadari bangsa Indonesia menjadi bangsa yang sangat materialistis dan konsumtif. Itu terjadi tanpa penyeimbang. Di kota-kota besar negara maju, tak hanya mal yang kita temui, namun juga museum dan perpustakaan yang mentereng. Museum seni rupa tak berhenti di bangun di kota-kota besar negara maju, sementara mal saja tampaknya yang menyesaki setiap pojok dan setiap sisi perempatan jalan yang strategis di kota-kota besar Indonesia. Hal itu kasat mata di kota yang ditinggali Radi, Bandung. Menjadi kaya secara instant dan mengkonsumsi segala produk *instant* dengan “rasa” global agaknya menjadi pesan yang dapat ditangkap dari menjamurnya mal tersebut.

Menjadi kaya, apapun caranya adalah terhormat, barangkali itu pesan paling telak dari karya Radi dalam pameran ini. Tampilan visual karya Radi secara meyakinkan menampilkan persoalan tersebut. Aspek perayaan, kegembiraan, kedangkalan dan kedataran tampak pada karya Radi, seolah sedang bersorak “mari kaya dengan cara apapun.” Bacaan lain yang dapat kita tangkap dari karya Radi adalah keinginan kaya secara cepat dan mudah pada dasarnya adalah *nature* manusia sejak lama. Tema sugih bagaimanapun dekat dengan mitos pesugihan, dan itu memang yang tampak pada karya-karya Radi. Dalam masyarakat tradisi, bahkan sampai sekarang menurun pada masyarakat *grass root* di *enclave* perkampungan metropolitan percaya pada praktek pesugihan, yaitu upaya manusia menjadi kaya dengan cara berubah menjadi makhluk jadi-jadian—atau dibantu makhluk jadi-

jadian. Masyarakat Indonesia cukup akrab dengan *folklore* atau mitos babi ngepet (orang yang berubah menjadi babi untuk mencuri) dan tuyul (mahluk jadi-jadian serupa anak kecil yang bertugas mencuri bagi tuannya).

Dalam karyanya Radi menampilkan lima jenis mahluk pesugihan, yaitu babi ngepet, jaran panoleh (menyerupai kuda dengan kepala selalu menoleh ke belakang), nyupang ketek (menyerupai monyet), bajul putih (buaya putih) dan ngipri ular (pesugihan menyerupai ular). Mungkin kebanyakan pemirsa tak seera menyadari tampilnya mahluk-mahluk pesugihan tersebut. Salah satu sebabnya, mahluk-mahluk tersebut tampil lucu, seperti tokoh kartun, tampak ceria dengan warna-warna cerah. Bagaimanapun mahluk-mahluk pesugihan adalah mahluk yang mengerikan dalam benak masyarakat, terlepas dianggap sebagai mitos atau sesungguhnya dipercaya ada. Mahluk-mahluk pesugihan berada dalam wilayah mitos gelap dalam kebudayaan di pulau Jawa, antara ada dan tiada, namun yang jelas aura yang dilibatkan adalah aura *black-magic* yang dipercaya menyangkut konsekuensi menjual roh pada kekuatan gelap. Karena itu, ada asumsi harusnya tema pesugihan tampil dengan aura mengerikan, sebagaimana *horror* murahan dalam sinetron nasional. Namun tentu saja Radi sadar betul bahwa kekuatan karyanya terletak pada arah sebaliknya, pada aura kedataran dan kedangkalannya. Metode yang dipilih Radi justru menjadikan karya Radi istimewa.

Karya Radi, pertama-tama tentunya dibuat demi memuaskan selera estetis dan ketertarikan Radi pada dua kutub yang saling bertentangan, seni populer Jepang dan seni *folklore* tradisional Cirebon. Dengan kata lain, Radi memang ingin merepresentasikan pengalaman personalnya tumbuh dengan dua identitas atau karakter visual, yaitu manga dan seni tradisional Cirebon. Kita tak perlu ragu mengenai kekentalan pengalaman Radi dengan dua wilayah budaya tersebut. Karya-karyanya dalam pameran ini dapat menunjukkan betapa tampilan *visual hybrid* mengalir demikian lancar, seolah-olah bersumber dari jen (*gene*) yang sama. Namun jika diamati dengan

seksama kita dapat melihat bercampurnya dua jenis jen secara sangat padu, yaitu jen Jepang dan jen Cirebon, dan yang harus dibanggakan pada karya-karya “Sugih” jen Cirebon tampak menonjol.

Tampak figur Radi berupa bocah kecil yang lucu, hal ini merupakan adaptasi dari *chibi anime*, yaitu penggambaran yang tokoh berupa anak kecil yang lucu secara berlebihan, dengan tubuh kecil, kepala besar dengan mata bulat berbinar. Pada karya-karya Radi tubuh “kecil”nya digambarkan menyerupai hewan-hewan/mahluk-mahluk pesugihan, yaitu babi, monyet, buaya, kuda, dan ular. Tentu saja dengan gaya kartun. Walaupun kepala mahluk-mahluk tersebut digubah tampak “ganas” namun karena digambarkan dengan stilasi kartun dan dalam warna yang cerah, tak ada kesan ngeri, apalagi kepala-kepala mahluk tersebut tampak seperti penutup kepala di sekitar wajah *chibi* sang seniman, dengan kacamata yang tampak menonjol. Segera kita menangkap sesuatu yang seharusnya “horor” tampak menjadi lucu dan menyenangkan.

Tokoh jadi-jadian yang *cute* tersebut tampak dikelilingi oleh gapura bergaya lukisan kaca Cirebon berikut motif hias di sudut atas dan sekitarnya. Tak ketinggalan tentunya target pesugihan: uang logam emas. Tak hanya gapura dan motif hias, sesungguhnya tampilan keseluruhan lukisan Radi diambil dari gaya lukisan kaca Cirebon. Gapura pada lukisan seperti menegaskan bahwa *frame of reference* persoalannya adalah persoalan lokal, yang disusupi atau dipengaruhi kebudayaan/seni populer Jepang. Radi berhasil mendomestifikasi gaya manga pada konteks dan gaya lokal. Hal ini seperti bicara mengenai tarik menarik antara lokal dan global, sebuah situasi yang menjangkiti seluruh kebudayaan dunia. Dengan tampilan yang datar lukisan-lukisan Radi hampir tak memiliki ekspresi, datar sebagaimana konsep *superflat* Murakami. Citraan pada lukisan Radi seperti tiba-tiba menjelma secara *instant*, seperti hasil print digital, tanpa emosi. Hal itu seperti menunjukkan kelembaman kita menghadapi perubahan budaya dan penetrasi globalisasi—tak peduli dan tak sadar pada segala resikonya.

Sedatar apapun karya Radi, namun tentu saja tak menghilangkan potensinya sebagai teks yang kritikal. Kita dapat menangkap aspek-aspek ironi, kritik, *self critique* dan alegori dari karya Radi, tentunya juga paradoks. Dengan menampilkan dirinya sendiri, tentu Radi sedang bicara bahwa dirinya pun tak terbebas dari godaan konsumerisme global, tak terbebas dari godaan fetish pada produk dan benda-benda yang dibuat untuk menggoda. Apa yang menjadi persoalan Radi tentu juga menjadi persoalan kita bersama. Tak dapat dipungkiri kesukaan dan *fetish* kita pada segala produk *branding* Barat dan Jepang—namun kebanyakan dibuat di China—sudah cukup akut. Namun toh kita menikmatinya. Dibaca sebagai teks kritik karya Radi sangat relevan dengan kondisi keterpurukan budaya Indonesia masa kini. Tampilan gaya *animix* justru menjadi kekuatan yang menyiratkan bahwa kita semua memang senang dan santai saja pada keterpurukan budaya dan posisi tawar kebudayaan/bangsa Indonesia yang barada di titik nadir. Karya-karya Radi adalah *symptom* dari akutnya situasi kebudayaan Indonesia.

Pameran ini sendiri, dengan tema Sugih membuka peluang bagi interpretasi bahwa menjadi seniman—sukses dan terbranding—merupakan pesugihan masa kini, perhatikan judul pameran ini: “Pameran Tunggal Radi Arwinda: Sugih” seperti sedang memberikan tanda bahwa setelah pameran ini Radi menjadi—semakin—sugih. Kalau memang begitu tentu bagus adanya, toh pesugihan yang dijalankan Radi ini termasuk pesugihan yang halal, menyenangkan dan tak merugikan siapapun. Pun tak masalah kalau itu terjadi dengan *instant*.



# Curatorial

Radi Arwinda's Solo Exhibition: SUGIH (Rich)

*by Asmudjo Jono Irianto*

Radi Arwinda is known for his tendency to take on subject matters from the realm of popular art—subject matters that admittedly many other young artists often choose to deal with. His ability to combine his subject matters with local issues and traditional art, however, makes Radi's works quite distinctive. In this exhibition, Radi has successfully managed to fuse aspects of Japanese popular art with the traditional art—especially that of Cirebon. The two worlds have indeed been familiar to him ever since he was a child.

As we observe Radi Arwinda's works, works by Murakami or those by the lowbrow artists will inevitably come to mind. With the style and theme originating from the realms of popular and traditional arts, Radi Arwinda's works betray strong lowbrow atmosphere. Although he does not reject this notion outright, Radi does not actually agree if one categorizes his works as lowbrow art, as he does not think that his works have as their basis a certain movement like the lowbrow movement. According to Radi, his works are representatives

of his personal experience and interest in the subject matters that have been familiar to him since he was a little boy; i.e. those of manga and anime (or Japanese-style comics and animation works), as well as of the traditional art of Cirebon. Radi, however, is aware of the fact that his works are present in the realm of high art, or should be read according to the terms of the high art. One can thus say that Radi works within the frame of the high art, but with subject matters and themes taken from the popular and traditional arts, and therefore does not reveal any “rebellious” spirit against the fine art paradigms—although it is possible that he presents some shrewd perceptions about them. Of course, there is nothing new in the method that Radi Arwinda is employing; international artists such as Andy Warhol, as well as the artists that Warhol influenced—such as Murakami and Jeff Koon—have also employed such strategy.

One cannot deny the fact that Radi Arwinda’s works show the influence of works by Murakami. Radi admits that he has been much influenced by Murakami. In reality, there is no contemporary artist who has not been influenced by aesthetic creeds or tendencies of previous artists—just as Murakami himself has been influenced by Andy Warhol. Although there are certain “similarities”, the influenced artists will always try to find their own distinct characters. Murakami, for example, goes all the way and produces his works of art and merchandise—without differentiating one from the other—through his company, Kaikai Kiki Co., Ltd. While Andy Warhol merely called his studio “factory”, Murakami truly built a factory, producing his works of art as well as commercial products. Unlike Warhol who blurred the boundary between high art and low art with casual and random statements, Murakami affirms the indeterminate boundaries between high art and low art by means of his theoretical expositions published in books and catalogues. Apart from it, Murakami often presents talks about the popular art within the framework of Japanese and American cultures. This is all understandable as Murakami holds a PhD in art. The concept of superflat is one of Murakami’s ideas as well as the underlying

concept for his works. All of these aspects as a whole serve to separate Murakami from the other artists who also deal with the popular art and culture. By employing such strategy, Murakami is able to co-opt simultaneously the high art, popular art, and fashion, mixing them as he wishes. Murakami explains:

*“Superflat is a tactical domination device operated by its designer as a means for taking over/making over what provincial insiders still insist on calling the ‘art world’ (as if it were a medieval guild) at the moment when that ‘world’ is being redimensionalized and reterritorialized by the uber-IED known as globalization.”*

Essentially, the superflat concept refers to the contemporary Japanese culture that is homogeneous, empty, and flat. Murakami thinks that superflat also applies to the popular art and the inundation of images in the superficial and meaningless contemporary culture. As an art concept, Murakami’s superflat brings to the fore the problems of the *otaku* community, or the marginalized subculture in the contemporary Japanese culture. Members of this *otaku* community are the losers of the society who find refuge in the fantasy world constructed through their penchant for manga, anime, and science fictions. Murakami makes use of the visual language of these *otakus*, employing manga and anime as his aesthetic creeds, because it is there the superflat concept is particularly relevant. In other words, the superflat concept also tries to explore the anxieties among the marginalized and defeated youth.

Using the superflat concept as his basis, it is easy for Murakami to employ his aesthetic language, whether in the realm of high or popular art. Murakami therefore does away with the boundary between his works of art and his merchandises that are more commercial in nature. Murakami believes that high art and popular art both reside in the commercial realm, and for him they are all the same. He is, however, not against the high art; neither does he belittle popular art. Rather, he comfortably comes in and out the two realms. Many

art observers are therefore of the opinion that Murakami's concepts, works, and artistic stance are representative of the symptoms of the culture industry, which is highly commercialized, capitalistic, and artificial. In this context, Radi Arwinda's second solo exhibition, titled "Sugih" (Javanese for "rich") is highly relevant and interesting.

Radi Arwinda's early works reveal stronger link to the local, traditional styles of Indonesia, or specifically to the styles from the wayang world. However, in his first solo exhibition, ©APET, held last year, Radi Arwinda's works show strong influence from the manga world. The use of the copyright sign © could also be found in Murakami's exhibition at MOCA Los Angeles, ©Murakami. Such act of appropriation betrays Radi's awareness about the importance of branding in contemporary art, as illustrated by Murakami. The copyright symbol also shows his awareness—as well as criticism—that at the end of the day, a work of art is also a commodity. Following Murakami's examples, Radi Arwinda also presents several commodities or commercial objects in this exhibition, such as bags, couches, and watches. It is not clear whether they are actually representative of Radi's efforts to criticize Murakami, or are they Radi's adoptions of Murakami's works, further affirming the Japanese artist's concept about the blurring boundaries between high art, popular art, and fashion.

One can also view the © symbol as Radi's self critique toward the world of high art—which is also his world. In fact, in the contemporary art, the artist's existence and success are also molded by branding, constructed through the market and art discourses. One can say that there is actually no difference between the branding in the world of art and that in the commercial world. In the exhibition in "Pop Life: Art in a Material World" (Tate Modern, October 1, 2009 – January 17, 2010), presenting the superstars in the international world of pop art, the press release for the exhibition explains:

*"Pop Life: Art in a Material World" argues that Warhol's most radical lesson is reflected in the work of artists of subsequent generations who, rather than simply representing or commenting upon our mass media culture, have infiltrated the publicity machine and the marketplace as a deliberate strategy. Harnessing the power of the celebrity system and expanding their reach beyond the art world and into the wider world of commerce, these artists exploit channels that engage audiences both inside and outside the gallery. The conflation of culture and commerce is typically seen as a betrayal of the values associated with modern art; this exhibition contends that, for many artists working after Warhol, to cross this line is to engage with modern life on its own terms."*

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#### THE INSTANT AND SUGIH CULTURE

One often hears the notion that the contemporary culture is rife with consumptiveness, consumerism, and commercialism, and is therefore superficial and instantaneous. To be rich, therefore, is to gain "respect". The contemporary human is one constantly encouraged to consume—use all that is not actually required. "I Shop Therefore I Am" is the phrase used by the feminist artist Barbara Kruger. In the rich and developed countries, products of popular art are cheap. As a form of lifestyle, the cost to maintain the subcultures or youth cultures can be covered quite cheaply. That is why it has not been difficult for the Japanese *otaku* to supplement their flight with aspects of manga and anime. Naturally, however, the youth lifestyle everywhere can still be costly, especially when it comes to lifestyle with branded products, or the high-class lifestyle, which naturally requires a lot of money.

The problem arises when the drive to consume does not even up the capitals owned. This is especially true for developing countries, where the lifestyle that actually originated from the subculture is

not necessarily cheap. The price of a pair of sneakers with some international brand, for example, is a lot more expensive in Indonesia relative to the general cost of living in the country, and naturally only the upper class youth would be able to buy these shoes or a good quality skate board. Similarly, original Japanese and American comic books are too costly for most youngsters, even ones from the middle class families.

It is often said that malls in Indonesia are no less luxurious compared to malls in developed countries. Gradually, Indonesia has become a highly materialistic and consumptive nation, and this development occurs with nothing to balance it out. In big cities in developed countries, one would not only see malls, but also splendid museums and libraries. Art museums keep on springing up in big cities in developed countries, while it is always the malls that we see on all strategic corners of Indonesian big cities. This is obvious in Bandung, the city where Radi resides. To be instantly rich and to consume all these instant products with the global “taste” seems to be the message conveyed in the proliferation of malls.

To be rich, by any means possible, is to gain respect—perhaps that is the most spot-on message conveyed through Radi Arwinda’s works in this exhibition. The visual presentation of each one of Radi’s works strongly conveys this. The aspect of celebration, pleasure, superficiality, and flatness are evident in Radi’s works, as if they are yelling out: “Let’s get rich, by any means!” Another message that we can sense from Radi’s works is that the desire to get rich quickly has always been human nature. The theme of “*sugih*”—or rich in Javanese—is closely related to the myth of “*pesugihan*”, or the way to get rich with supernatural help. In the traditional communities, and even today in the grass root communities in the metropolitan enclaves, there has been the belief in the practice of *pesugihan*, or the way to get rich by transforming oneself into supernatural beings, or using the assistance of supernatural creatures. Indonesians are familiar with the myth of *babi ngepet* (when a person transforms him or herself into

a boar in order to steal something) and *tuyul* (supernatural creature resembling a bald little boy with the task of stealing for his master).

In his works, Radi presents five of such *pesugihan* supernatural creatures: *babi ngepet*, *jaran panoleh* (a horse whose head is invariably turned backward), *nyupang ketek* (a kind of monkey), *bajul putih* (a white crocodile), and *ngipri ular* (a creature that resembles a snake). Perhaps most audience will not be immediately aware that these are *pesugihan* supernatural creatures. One of the reasons might be because they appear cute, looking like cartoon characters, cheerful and in bright colors. In general, people usually think of such *pesugihan* creatures as fearful beings, whether or not people actually believe that these creatures exist. The *pesugihan* creatures exist in the realm of dark myth in the Javanese culture, residing on the frontier realm between the reality and imaginary. One thing is clear, however: these creatures exude the aura of fearsome black magic, believed to be related to the selling out of one’s soul to the dark forces. There is thus the assumption that the theme of *pesugihan* theme should actually be present in certain eerie atmosphere, just like the cheap horror films in Indonesia. However, Radi Arwinda is acutely aware that the strength of his works lies in the opposite direction, or in their flat and superficial aura. The method that Radi employs makes his works special.

Radi’s works are first of all works made to satisfy Radi’s aesthetic taste and interest in the two opposing tendencies: the Japanese popular art and the traditional art of Cirebon. In other words, Radi truly wants to create a representation of his personal experience of growing up with the two visual identities or characters: those of manga and the traditional Cirebon art. There is no need to doubt Radi’s strong experience with regards to the two cultures. The works in this exhibition show how the hybrid visual presentations are so fluidly conveyed, as if originating from the same gene pool. Upon closer observations, however, one would be aware of the harmonious blending from two different gene pools: those of the Japanese and the Cirebon.

Remarkably, in these “*sugih*” works, the Cirebon genes appear strong.

One can see here Radi’s representation as a cute little boy, whose appearance is an adaptation from *chibi anime*, or the presentation of a cute boy in exaggerated forms, with a small body, big head, with gleaming round eyes. In Radi’s works, the “small” figures have been depicted to resemble *pesugihan* animals or creatures such as the boar, monkey, crocodile, horse, and snake—all in the style of cartoon works. Although the heads of such creatures are made to look fierce, because they are presented in bright colors and with cartoon styles, there is no fearsome impression, especially because the heads appear like masks donned by the artist over his *chibi* face, with an exaggerated pair of glasses. We immediately see something that should have been fearsome, but is in fact funny and cute.

The cute supernatural beings are surrounded by pillars in the style of traditional Cirebon glass paintings, complete with the decorative motives on the upper corners and around. There are of course the targets of such *pesugihan* creatures: the gold coins. The whole presentation has been inspired by the style of the traditional glass paintings of Cirebon. The pillars seem to affirm that the frame of reference is local, albeit influenced by the Japanese popular art. Radi has successfully brought the manga style into the domestic realm, with the local context and style. This is similar to the discussion regarding the tension between the local and the global; a situation that affects all world cultures. With their flat appearance, Radi’s paintings do not seem to show any expressions; they appear flat, just as Murakami’s superflat concept. This seems to refer to our resistance in the face of cultural changes and the penetration of globalization—with no concerns or awareness regarding the risks.

No matter how flat Radi’s works are, their potentials as shrewd critique remain. We can still perceive the irony, criticism, self-critique, and the allegory in Radi’s works, as well as the paradoxes. By presenting his own identity, Radi is certainly saying that he is not free from the

temptations of global consumerism, of fetish allure of the tempting products and objects. Radi’s problems are certainly also our own. One cannot deny the fact that our penchant and fetish for all things Western and Japanese—albeit made mostly in China—are already quite strong. Still, we enjoy it. If we read Radi’s works as works of shrewd criticism, these works are relevant to the weakening conditions of the Indonesian culture today. The appearance of animix style precisely reveals how relaxed we are regarding the worsening cultural positions of the Indonesian nation. Radi’s works are symptomatic of the acute problems of the culture in Indonesia.

This exhibition, with the theme of “*sugih*” or “rich”, might make us think that to be an artist—successful and with a strong brand—is to be a contemporary *pesugihan* creature. Note the title of this exhibition: “Radi Arwinda’s Solo Exhibition: Rich”—it seems to hint at the possibility that after this exhibition, Radi would become (even) rich(er). If that is actually the case, then it is a good thing, too, because the *pesugihan* practice that Radi Arwinda is doing is legitimate, fun, and does not harm anyone. And it is not a problem even if it takes place instantaneously.

# Artworks

































# Biodata



Radi Arwinda was born in Bandung, July 24 1983

*Currently work & live in Bandung*

*[www.radiarwinda.com](http://www.radiarwinda.com)*

## SOLO EXHIBITION

'Radi Arwinda: Sugih' SigiArt Gallery, Jakarta. Indonesia

'©APET' Canna Gallery, Jakarta. Indonesia

## SELECTED EXHIBITION

2010

'Shopping' Nadi Gallery JAD, Jakarta

'Bazaar Art' Ritz carlton, Pasific Place, Jakarta. Indonesia

'Soccer Fever' Canna Gallery, Jakarta. Indonesia

'Contemporary Art Turn SooBin' Art Int'l, Singapore

'ART JOG 10' Taman Budaya Yogyakarta. Indonesia

'15x15x15' Soemardja Gallery, Bandung. Indonesia

'Unsegmented' Galeri Kita, Bandung. Indonesia

'Almost White Cube' CG Art Space, Jakarta. Indonesia

'Halimun' Lawangwangi, Bandung. Indonesia

BMW Art Car 'Joy of Expression' Bazaar Art Fair  
Ritz Carlton, Pacific Place, Jakarta. Indonesia  
'Regression, Reach Art Project'  
Plaza Indonesia, Jakarta. Indonesia  
'RESTART : RECOLECTION' D galerie, Jakarta.  
Indonesia  
'Bandung Art Now' National Art Gallery, Jakarta. Indonesia  
'Deer Andry' S14, Bandung. Indonesia  
10 Tahun Selasar Soenaryo 'A Decade of Dedication'  
Selasar Seni Soenaryo, Bandung.  
'Ini Baru Ini' Vivi Yip art Room, Jakarta. Indonesia  
'Manifesto' National Art Gallery, Jakarta. Indonesia  
'Aksara Sunda' Galeri Kita, Bandung . Indonesia  
'Survey' Edwins Gallery, Jakarta. Indonesia  
'Linescape' Space 59, Bandung . Indonesia  
'Bandung Invasion, Canna Gallery, Jakarta.

2007

'4500cm3' Soemardja Mini Space, Bandung . Indonesia  
'Capo Exhibition' Common Room, Bandung . Indonesia  
'On Apropriation' Semarang Gallery, Semarang . Indonesia  
'Kompetisi Seni Lukis Jawa Barat 2007'  
Galeri Kita, Bandung . Indonesia  
'Man + Space' Dahara Gallery, Semarang.

2006

'Roman Bandung', Galeri Kita, Bandung.  
'Soft Opening Buton Kultur 21' Buton Kultur 21  
alternative space, Bandung. Indonesia  
'Bandung New Emergence' Selasar Soenaryo Art Space,  
Bandung.  
'Artivity Society In Town 2006' Hidayat Gallery, Bandung.  
'Milangkala ka-15 Taman Budaya' Rumah Teh Gallery,  
Bandung.  
'Kompetisi Seni Lukis Jawa Barat 2006'

Indonesia Menggugat (Lanraad) building, Bandung.  
'The Gates : Pre Discourse' Semar Gallery, Malang.

2005

'Petisi Bandung' Langgeng Gallery, Magelang.  
'Aku Bermain Maka Aku Ada' Nasional Gallery, Jakarta.

2004

'Steal Live' Soemardja Gallery, Bandung.  
'Lukisan Baru' Galeri Kita, Bandung.

#### AWARD

2007

5 best work on 'Jawa Barat Painting Competition'

2006

5 best work on 'Jawa Barat Painting Competition'

#### WORKSHOP

2006

'Wayang workshop & exhibition with Heri Dono'  
Soemardja Gallery, Bandung.  
'Workshop & exhibition with Edgar Heap Of Birds'  
Soemardja Gallery, Bandung.  
'Water Color workshop & exhibition with Agus Suwage'  
Soemardja Gallery, Bandung.



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**PLATFORM3:** Bang Ucok, Mas Agung, Mas Goro, kang Heru, Mba Hera, Hendra & Betet

**RESTART:** Yogie, Breg, Gareng, Angaton

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public holiday by appointment