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Consequential Privileges of the Social Artists:

Meandering through the Practices of Siti Adiyati Subangun, Semsar Siahaan and Moelyono

GRACE SAMBOH

Abstract

How do artists work with people? How do artists work with many people? What do the people who work with these artists think about the work? Does the fact that they are artists matter to these people? What makes being an artist different from other (social) professions? Is the difference acknowledged? Is the difference fundamental? Does it have to be different? In the effort of locating different forms of artistic practice and planetary responsibilities, this essay addresses these questions through artists' contexts and works, be it artworks, collective projects, collaborative efforts, living and working choices or writings.

We want to open ourselves to the fact that problems in the arts are no longer limited to artists' [and artistic] issues, but also any problems related to our society, be it in the world of science, technology, society or even the day-to-day.

—Siti Adiyati Subangun et al., 1991¹

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*The essence of art is freedom,
The essence of freedom is human rights,
The essence of an artist is for human rights for freedom.*

—Semsar Siahaan, 1994²

*The essence of art is democratization. Art has to be able to push
a proportional democracy so that every subject realizes their own
rights. The goal is to encourage independence.*

—Moelyono, 1994³

All three of the artists I quote above were trained in fine arts. Yet, unlike those who were molded by modern—often used interchangeably with ‘Western’—arts education, each of them have always rendered the social and the political as a natural part of their practice. Born in Medan, North Sumatra, Semsar Siahaan (1952–2005) grew up in line with his father’s military career. After his early education in Yugoslavia and Belgrade, Semsar began studying sculpture in the technocratic Institut Teknologi Bandung in 1977. The same year, in Yogyakarta, Moelyono (b. 1957) started studying painting. Born and brought up in an agricultural society, which is of course entangled with various forms of ritual and folk art, in Tulungagung, East Java, his artistic practice has challenged precisely the understanding of ‘fine’ (or finesse) in the arts. Meanwhile Siti Adiyati Subangun (b. 1951), who was born and grew up in the inner circle of the Special Region of Yogyakarta’s monarchy, refused to continue her family’s dancing legacy and studied painting instead. Trying to locate artists’ social roles through their artistic practices, this essay revolves around these three artists, their artistic practices and the exhibitions that they have been a part of or related to.

Adiyati, Semsar and Moelyono were not born in the *centres*. They have had to move for either higher education or to work with the capital in order to be heard and generate greater resonance. In terms of (modern) art education, the centres would have been Jakarta, Bandung and Yogyakarta. Meanwhile for work opportunities, the centres would have been Jakarta, Surabaya, Medan, Makassar and Bandung. In this essay, I want to argue that a certain kind of privilege is consequential for an artist or an art worker. Even though this essay is not based on the study of these (economic) classes, it is important to call out this ‘consequential privilege’ since it is exercised in the practices of these three artists.

Unity in Rejection

Adiyati was not allowed to continue her education in ASRI due to the Black December manifesto (1974), yet she continued making works and exhibiting

them until 1989. When she was living in Paris and Japan—where her husband had to study and work during the 1980s—she regularly published her encounters with art events through essays in Indonesia’s national newspapers, magazines and art journals. Not long after returning to Indonesia, she triggered the rediscovery of the “Jakarta-Paris 1959” exchange. This rediscovery led to a project that conserved the works, archived the communication and recorded the people involved in the exchange, which then became an exhibition (in 1992) and finally is its own chapter in the collection of what we now call the National Gallery of Indonesia.⁴

In 1981, Semsar was kicked out of ITB due to a performance piece considered an insult to his lecturer.⁵ His clear political stance brought him into several activist groups. Indeed, his boldness, courage and ‘provocateurism’ is mentioned in all of his obituaries. He never stopped creating works even if he had to relocate to Singapore and Canada for almost a decade. When he finally came back, he was welcomed with a semi-retrospective solo exhibition in the National Gallery of Indonesia in 2004.

In 1985, ISI declined to accept Moelyono’s installation as his final project because “students from the painting department have to submit paintings as their final project”. His rejected final project became another landmark of rebellion against the ‘old values’ of (modern/fine) art. He continued his practice in the peripheries, conducting long-term projects, navigating between what are generally understood as folk art practices and art as a tool of (Paulo Freire’s idea of) conscientisation, as well as exhibiting various forms of ‘products’ in the centres, in typical gallery spaces or art biennials.

In 1979, all three artists were somewhat involved in the *Pameran Seni Rupa Baru Indonesia*, in the Jakarta Arts Center Taman Ismail Marzuki.⁶ I say somewhat because, according to Semsar’s notes in his CV,⁷ the documentation of a performance he did earlier that year was requested by Jim Supangkat to be exhibited in conjunction with choreographer Sardono W. Kusumo’s *Meta Ekologi*. Meanwhile, in conversation with me, Moelyono did not remember that he was a part of that exhibition. Even when I flashed out the leaflet that mentioned his participation, he could not recall which work of his was exhibited. For Adiyati, this was the fourth exhibition that she had done under the banner of *Seni Rupa Baru*. Simply put, the three of them are known for their rebellion against the ‘old values’ of art or the official understanding of art as enforced by state-abiding institutions like schools, universities, even the art centre.

The fact that Adiyati, Semsar and Moelyono are artists (even without degrees or formal papers), and that they have chosen to continue making and exhibiting their art, does not limit their livelihood only to the art world, let

alone the art industry. It actually enables them to play some very particular roles in the other worlds that they had turned to. By the mid-1980s, all three of them were involved in different forms of social and political activism, with varying activities and works as their outlets, which I will explore thoroughly in this essay.

Java, Towards *Reformasi*

It is worth questioning why artists from Indonesia would speak of liberation, freedom, independence and democracy, as quoted in the beginning of this essay, particularly in 1994, almost 50 years after the nation's independence. For Indonesians, the 1990s was a period crowded by overt human rights violations enacted by the state. What we call the 1991 Dili Incident is known worldwide as the Santa Cruz Massacre: a shooting of at least 250 pro-independence people in Timor-Leste demonstrating against the Indonesian occupation. Along with other human rights activists, such as Roem Topatimasang, Indro Tjahjono and Saleh Abdullah, in 1989 Semsar pioneered the Indonesian Front for the Defense of Human Rights (INFIGHT), which managed to secure the support of the Netherlands as one of the biggest financial supporters for developmental programmes under the New Order.⁸

In 1990, a group of artists and art writers gathered and published their own journal, *DIALOG Seni Rupa* (literally, Arts' Dialogue) from 1990–94 (see Figures 7 and 8). The initiators were Siti Adiyati Subangun, Gendut Riyanto, FX Harsono and Hendro Wiyanto. The fact that the publication ended in 1994 is significant. To the world, this was the year Kurt Cobain and Guy Debord killed themselves by gunshot. For us, in Indonesia, this was the year that the authoritarian New Order regime banned *Tempo* and *Editor* magazines, along with the tabloid *DeTik*, because they were reporting on the corruption surrounding the purchase of 39 retired East German warships. The banning of these media platforms triggered many demonstrations, not only by activists and students, but also by the citizenry in general. The international media condemned the assault against free speech.⁹

Growing up in a military family, Semsar had always been concerned with the abuse of power. Indeed, other terms used to mark the New Order regime was either 'authoritarian regime' (due to its repressiveness) or 'dictatorial regime' (due to its homogenising policies). Semsar, who had always been both an activist and an artist, was a field coordinator for one of the demonstrations protesting the banning of several media platforms. He protected his friend, activist Dita Indah Sari, from the riot police who attempted to break up the demonstration. Semsar was beaten with a rattan stick and rubber baton.

Three bones of his feet were broken and pins had to be inserted so that he could walk again.¹⁰

Let us look at Semsar's works from this period in order to understand how the socio-political climate informed his work. For the Jakarta Biennale IX in 1993, Semsar created a work entitled *Penggalian Kembali* (literally, *Re-Excavation*; contextually, *Re-Exhumation*) (Figure 1). It was an on-site installation, in what used to be one of the galleries in the Jakarta Art Center, which was slated to be demolished. When offered the chance to participate in the Biennale, Semsar quickly agreed and chose the site of his solo exhibition held five years prior, after which, he burnt all 250 featured drawings in a work titled *Seni Peristiwa Monumental Menentang Pemilikan Pribadi atas Karya Seni* (Monumental Art Event Against Individual Ownership of Artworks).

As part of the Biennale, Semsar dug up the central area of the gallery, which used to be a garden-like open space. He did not allow anyone, including the organisers, to enter the building until the opening night. He made everything himself, from the sculpted human figures formed from soil, as if they were just exhumed, to the murals on the surrounding walls of the gallery, depicting victims of human rights violations of the New Order regime from 1965 up to the recent murder of Marsinah, a labour activist in East Java. Throughout the exhibition, Semsar was always with his work, whether it was taking visitors on tours or simply spending time with friends. Some say that this was due to his paranoia regarding censorship and a fear that people might add unwanted messages to his installation, particularly to the murals.¹¹

On 5 May 1993, Marsinah, a labour activist from East Java, was found dead after having been tortured and raped. Four days earlier, on 1 May, she was the orator for a demonstration demanding higher wages at her workplace PT Catur Putra Surya. Under the New Order regime, it was common for any businessman to have military backings. Benjamin Waters highlighted that "[T]he Marsinah case is considered to be the first instance of a wholly pre-meditated killing of a worker by the military."¹² Labelled as Case 1773 by the International Labour Organization, once again, this case drew international attention to the New Order's authoritarianism and suppression of labour. Later that year, Marsinah received the Yap Thiam Hien Human Rights Award and Semsar created the poster for this event.

Coming from East Java, Moelyono could not ignore this; he was compelled to be a part of it, not for any primordial reason, but because throughout his artistic practice, he had sided with the peripheries that he believed to have been victimised by Jakarta as the centre for governmental and capital activities. Marsinah's workplace was in Surabaya, which despite being the capital of East Java as well as the second capital of the country, is still considered

FIGURE 1: Semsar Siahaan, *Penggalian Kembali* (Re-Exhumation), 1993, site-specific installation, variable dimension. Image courtesy of Indonesian Visual Art Archive and the artist's estate.

periphery when compared to Jakarta. Moelyono has repeatedly stated in different ways and on various occasions that, “The foundation of my artistic practice is humane sensibility and conscience upon the sufferings of lower-class society—the part of society in which I locate myself and I am morally siding for.”¹³

Since the early 1980s, Moelyono had been working with people in remote villages of East Java. As soon as he heard about the Marsinah murder, he initiated contact with Marsinah’s labour friends. He planned an event to commemorate her death, which is a social ritual that we carry out anyway, usually on the 3rd, 7th, 40th, 100th and finally 1000th day. He titled the event *Pameran Seni Rupa untuk Marsinah: Mengenang 100 Hari Gugurnya Marsinah* (Art Exhibition for Marsinah: 100 Days Remembering the Fall of Marsinah) (Figure 2).

Gugur, or ‘the fall [of]’ is an amazing word in the Indonesian language. Though it usually refers to the fall of flowers and leaves, it is also commonly used for fallen heroes. By using this word in the title, Moelyono elevated Marsinah from a suppressed, silenced second-class citizen from the periphery, to a national hero. Staging it as a national event was a prophetic gesture as nowadays Marsinah is one of the monumental figures mentioned in every

FIGURE 2: Moelyono’s exhibition shot: *Pameran Seni Rupa untuk Marsinah: Mengenang 100 Hari Gugurnya Marsinah* (Art Exhibition for Marsinah: 100 Days Remembering the Fall of Marsinah). Image courtesy of the artist and Hyphen —.

FIGURE 3: Left: the drawing (ink on paper); Right: the poster (silkscreen print). *Marsinah*, 1993. Semsar Siahaan explained, "I did design a poster commemorating Marsinah's death as a martyr that was printed in five hundred copies in December 1993 for the Indonesian pro-democracy activists, for the Yap Thiam Hien human rights award. The award that year went to Marsinah's father and family. The poster was disseminated among all the Indonesian non-governmental organizations concerned with labor and others." Image courtesy of Gajah Gallery. See: Yvonne Owens, *Inside Indonesia* 64 (Oct.–Dec. 2000).

conversation about labour issues and human rights. Indeed, Moelyono's practice has always involved society and by this, I mean that instead of representing other people's problems, he would put himself in the shoes of these people so that he would be speaking with them.¹⁴

With this aesthetic strategy, he approached (and led workshops with) Marsinah's friends and colleagues to create woodcut prints, which were later turned into an exhibition. To one side of the space were life-sized human figures made of straw. They held black banners, with one of the figures hung from the ceiling. In the middle of the space were thirteen straw figures facing two tables, one standing upright and the other upside down. Central to audiences' eyes was a sculpture of Marsinah cast in cement and installed on a pedestal. As a background to this centrepiece, there were reliefs of fisted hands; surrounding the space were installed woodcut prints that recounted a labourer's daily life in the factory and, mixed with the prints, there were

many plaques that read *inggih*. The word is Javanese for ‘yes’ and is used by the lower class to respond to higher class, by an employee to the boss, or by a child to the parent. This ‘traditional’ submissive gesture is also a form of critique of the reigning regime, which was militaristic with a touch of Javanese hierarchical culture. Even the international media acknowledged this. Four days before the regime collapsed, this headline appeared in the *New York Times*: “Suharto, a King of Java Past, Confronts Indonesia’s Future”.¹⁵ Although the exhibition was officially cancelled and the organisers kept the main door closed, the works remained installed. For those who asked to see it, they would open the door.¹⁶ Many of the newspapers unequivocally praised the exhibition. Indeed, this was one of the incidents that were widely covered by various media, leading to the eventual ban of the three media outlets mentioned above.

Towards the downfall of the authoritarian New Order regime, Semsar, along with 21 other artists, participated in an exhibition titled *Slot in the Box*. The show was put together by and held in Cemeti Contemporary Art Gallery, Yogyakarta, a month before the presidential election that Suharto and the New Order regime won for the last time.¹⁷ Although the art world in Indonesia tends to have acute amnesia, *Slot in the Box* is nevertheless remembered as one of the most vocal exhibitions leading up to the people’s protest against the New Order regime. Semsar’s contribution to the exhibition was titled *Tiket Searah Menuju Bencana (One Way Ticket to Disaster)*, 1997. His painting was full of anger towards the one-sided idea of national development, as well as the depoliticisation of citizens through education, healthcare and societal neighbourhood units. Indeed, the New Order regime had been in power for three decades by then (Figure 4).

When *Slot in the Box* was still on exhibit in the month of the presidential election, Galeri Bentang Yogyakarta—belonging to a rather radical publishing company, Bentang Yogyakarta—launched Moelyono’s monograph, along with an exhibition titled *Tumpengan Kelapa (Coconut Feast)*.¹⁸ Like *Slot in the Box*, this exhibition was also cynical towards the election, reflecting what people had at the back of their minds at the time. Moelyono had chosen the coconut as his main material because in a matter of days after installation, the fruit would start to rot and immediately turn yellow—the colour of Golongan Karya, a political party that backed the New Order regime.

The efforts of students’ and citizens’ movements in dethroning Suharto from his presidency finally succeeded. The *Reformasi* is (still) believed to mark a new beginning towards an Indonesian democracy. Yet, even before Suharto officially stepped down on 21 May 1998, people were already questioning: “Indonesia has little experience with democracy. Its institutions have

FIGURE 4: Exhibition shots from *Slot in the Box* (1997). Image courtesy of Cemeti Institute for Arts and Society and Indonesian Visual Art Archive.

atrophied after three decades of paternalistic rule, and the economy is in shambles. And, unlike elsewhere in Asia, there is no solid middle-class base on which to build a new democratic state.”¹⁹ So, what would come next? Nobody seemed to be sure. But people were definitely celebrating the moment of freedom.

Immediately after *Reformasi*, in June 1998, Moelyono’s installation for Marsinah, which had been banned, was immediately exhibited in Cemeti Contemporary Art Gallery.²⁰ The art scene was also certainly part of the celebratory atmosphere. In retrospect, the *Reformasi* was the moment that opened the Pandora’s box by allowing people to gather and express themselves in

public. Looking back on the moment two decades later, it is clear that many groups, communities, initiatives or collectives (as they are now termed) were formed. Some of them died pretty quickly, some of them have remained, and some of them have become an establishment, if not an institution. On 2 December 1998 in Yogyakarta, Taring Padi declared its existence as an artists' collective with Leftist preferences.²¹ In 2000, ruangrupa was launched, as an artists' initiative concerned with critical acts of living in metropolitan Jakarta. In August 2003, Common Room was officiated as a new media exploration group in Bandung. In 2005, Jatiwangi art Factory, an initiative made up of local citizens, artists and activists, was formed in a rural area of West Java that is currently aiming to be one of the biggest industrial districts in Indonesia. In 2008, C2O Library and Collabtive was founded as an alternative library with a multifunction space (for exhibitions, discussions, etc.) in the country's second largest metropolitan area, Surabaya.

All of these initiatives have been contextualised as the products of the new freedom of expression, along with many other groups that came and went after *Reformasi*. Up until now, these initiatives are still active and have reformed in so many ways due to their constantly changing living situations: political, economic, social and ecological.

Moelyono, Semsar and the (So-Called) Internationalisation of the Art World

The banning of Moelyono's 1993 *Marsinah* exhibition became highly significant for some parts of the international art world. Catalogues would even highlight next to the listing of the exhibition that it had indeed been banned by the police.²² However, since the 1990s are often celebrated as the turn towards the international, it is important to state that only Japan and Australia started to support Indonesian contemporary art practices at this time. In other fields, and having different agendas, other countries were closely involved with practices that indirectly impacted the artistic field. For example, presumably driven by post-colonial melancholia, the Netherlands has long invested in Indonesia through developmental and educational aid. Meanwhile, in the realms of the economy, state politics and policy-making, the United States has had a significant presence through their scholars, technocrats and businessmen, specifically those from Cornell University in New York and the University of California, Berkeley. This relationship has always been convoluted—from the CIA's Cold War inheritances, up to the 1965 genocide and the consequent banning of the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI) in 1966. Like the Netherlands and the United States,²³ Japan was also

welcomed by the New Order regime, hence their presence in the Indonesian art world.

For some background, let's step back a bit. The Fukuoka Art Museum in Japan began their regional work in ASEAN countries in the late 1970s. It started building a collection by the early 1980s and held its first Asian Art Exhibition in 1979 (by the fifth edition in 1999, the event was renamed as the Fukuoka Asian Art Triennale). In 1991, the museum changed its name to Fukuoka Asian Art Museum (FAAM). A little after Japan's first moves, Australia decided to regionalise itself, beginning with the ANZART (Australia and New Zealand Artists Encounter, 1981–85) series of exhibitions and events, continuing with ARX (Artists' Regional Exchange, 1987–99), and finally the APT (Asia-Pacific Triennial, 1993–present). The latter is run by the Queensland Art Gallery|Gallery of Modern Art (QAGOMA), which is also a collecting institution in Brisbane. The event is known for its rather unique position: they commission artists to make new works, but they also acquire works presented at the triennial, including new commissions.

Even though FAAM and QAGOMA are both collecting institutions that hold survey exhibitions and commission new works as well as acquire them from artists, their entry points into Indonesia have been completely different. FAAM has worked through official channels, namely the government, while QAGOMA has relied on individuals' recommendations. These opposing entry points defined the kind of work that FAAM and QAGOMA were showing as well as their research (and discovery) interests. For example, the 1989 ARX worked with Jim Supangkat, who exhibited the final project of the Indonesia New Arts Movement (*Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru: The Silent World*), criticising the governmental (and therefore also society's) take on AIDS at the time. Meanwhile FAAM's 3rd Asian Art Show, also held in 1989, was titled *Symbolic Visions in Contemporary Asian Life*, and was pretty much trying to nail what may be considered as an Asian aesthetic. The participants comprised two generations of artists who are, in the case of the first, known for their constant search for an Indonesian national identity by merging symbols and elements from completely unrelated regions and cultures in the country, and for the latter, known for reclaiming modern styles (particularly realism and surrealism) and 'localising it' through their subject matter.²⁴

At this time, Japanese scholars' take on art practice was more focused on the ruptures of modernism, rather than on the social or the political; by contrast, Australia showed camaraderie towards artists (and intellectuals) who were more openly political and therefore those who were against the New Order regime. Thus Moelyono was invited to participate in the 1995 ARX. A separate catalogue was put together by scholars who had been closely

observing developments (and, to some extent, been involved in them), in order to highlight what the artist called *seni rupa penyadaran* (the Art [for] Conscientisation).

Although both the term and the articulation of this concept were first developed by Adiyati, she is rarely mentioned, let alone is her significance acknowledged. (The concluding segment of this essay will come back to her.) At the 1996 APT, Semsar was invited to speak on the panel “Artists and the Social Dimension”, and his presentation was entitled “Individual Freedom Approaching Creative Society”.²⁵ After the beating that he had received in the 1994 demonstration, Semsar became the symbol of the regional oppression of freedom of speech, be it in the context of Southeast Asia or the Asia-Pacific. Scholars and experts in Indonesian studies found ways to stage him here and there, to demonstrate the polemic and the culture of resistance.

By the mid-1990s, Japanese scholars finally caught up with the socio-political urgencies within contemporary art practices. In 1997, with the assistance and support of the Japan Foundation, the Tokyo Municipal Museum of Modern Art and the Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art held the exhibition *Art in Southeast Asia: Glimpses of the Future*. Moelyono’s work in the exhibition, *Scream of Grave Sorrow*, refers to the peaceful demonstration that was conducted by the biggest Islamic organisations in the world, Nahdlatul Ulama, a demonstration that was led by Abdurrahman Wahid (Gusdur), who later became Indonesia’s most tolerant president—then or, dare I say it, until now. At the time, riots and rebellions against the new regime were increasing across the country, including in small towns and villages. Crowds were prone to provocations, and many incidents occurred all over the country, hence Moelyono’s reference to sacrifice. President Gusdur’s way of redirecting the masses was to make them gather and do *istighosah* (chanting prayer). Later on, in 1999, Moelyono contributed a work about the violent riots in which Chinese-descent Indonesians were targeted, raped, robbed and even killed (Figure 5).²⁶ The Chinese-Indonesians were targeted as scapegoats due to the economic crisis of 1997.²⁷ However much the world paid attention to this—some countries even issued travel bans on Indonesia—this particular case that led to riots and so many human rights violations remains unsolved until today.²⁸

For this generation of artists, humanity has always been the drive of their art practices and their aesthetics. By the end of the 1990s, Semsar had moved out of the country. The pain caused by his earlier activism had made him more prone to stress. Artists and activists in Singapore had organised several months of residency there in order for him to work in peace and, at the same time, undergo medical check-ups and treatments. In 2000, he fled to Canada.

FIGURE 5: Moelyono, *The Animal Sacrifice of the New Order*, Asia-Pacific Triennale 1999. Image courtesy of the artist and Hyphen —.

Ever since his beating, his works tended to be drawings and paintings, rather than happenings, events or installations.

International Gestures of the Indonesian Government

From an Indonesian governmental perspective, the 1990s was the time they started building international connections. From 1990–91, the government held an exhibition of traditional, modern and contemporary art in several university museums in the USA. The project was literally titled *Kesenian Indonesia di Amerika Serikat* (KIAS, *Indonesian Art in the USA*), and it was accompanied by a book that tried to historicise mainstream art practices in Indonesia.²⁹ Other than the fact that they were merely expanding on facts and perspectives already presented by Claire Holt, the catalogues were never properly distributed, even if they were published in Bahasa and English.³⁰ The copies remained stuck in governmental institutions' warehouses and therefore inaccessible.

Immediately after this, the Jakarta Biennale IX 1993 took place. Ever since its inception in 1974, as well as being an exhibition, the Biennale has always had another dimension: it is, at the same time, a competition, with 'winners'. As I mentioned previously, Semsar's work *Penggalian Kembali* won the 1993

competition. The reward was supposed to be the inclusion of the work in either the 22nd São Paulo Biennial or the 5th Havana Biennial, both held in 1994. I say *supposed*, as that never really happened. Some speculated that it was due to the criticality of one of Semsar's works.³¹ Others indicated that they were sent out as observers, instead of as participants.³² Two other winners, Andar Manik and Anusapati, said that they had received some money as a reward but the trip never happened.³³ Andar Manik remembered that there was a plan to send them to either of the biennials, but was unsure why it was cancelled: "I was too young to care," he said.³⁴ Since the early 1980s, ASEAN had presented travelling exhibitions, as well as sculpture parks, and this kind of arrangement demonstrates the typical government to government (G-to-G) collaboration model within the art world of the time.

Operating within this simplistic G-to-G model, in 1995, the government initiated *Pameran Seni Rupa Kontemporer Negara-negara Gerakan Non-Blok: Mencari Perspektif Selatan? (Exhibition of Contemporary Art from the Non-Aligned Countries: Seeking a Southern Perspective?)*. The Non-Aligned exhibition was held in the current National Gallery of Indonesia. It was curated by the renowned artist and curator Jim Supangkat, along with an international board of curators consisting of Emmanuel Arinze (Nigeria), Piedad Casas de Ballesteros (Colombia), T.K. Sabapathy (Singapore), Gulammohammed Sheikh (India), Apinan Poshyananda (Thailand) and AD Pirous (Indonesia, Figure 6). This international board of curators was not involved in the selection of artists in the exhibition's general scope. Each participating nation appointed a curator (or a curatorial team) responsible for selecting the artists to be exhibited and for writing an introduction about them. A two-day symposium was held alongside the exhibition; speakers included international scholars and practitioners such as David Elliot, Geeta Kapur, Kuroda Raiji, Mary-Jane Jacobs, Apinan Poshyananda and many more. The directorate general of culture at the time, Edi Sedyowati, mentioned that the event was organised in remembrance of the Asia-Africa Conference (also known as the Bandung Conference, held in 1955). This G-to-G exhibition was the only one at which the authoritarian president Suharto officiated by giving a speech.³⁵

I argue that Suharto had to pay attention to this initiative because of how Edi Sedyowati had framed the event. She proposed this exhibition at precisely the moment when the central government was proud of itself for hosting the 1992 Non-Aligned Summit in Jakarta. As part of the Summit's entourage, participants attended the launching of a Non-Aligned Solidarity Monument in Taman Mini Indonesia Indah. As a matter of fact, right after Suharto was re-elected in 1997, (again) slightly before *Reformasi*, the regime had ordered three new dioramas for the National History Museum located in the basement

FIGURE 6: One of the International Curators Committee members, AD Pirous, giving a guided tour to President Suharto on the opening night of *Pameran Seni Rupa Kontemporer Negara-negara Non-Blok* (Contemporary Art from the Non-Aligned Countries, 1995). Image courtesy of Galeri Nasional Indonesia & Hyphen —.

of our National Monument. Installed in 1998, the three dioramas were of Timor's Integration in 1976, the Non-Aligned Summit in 1992, and BJ Habibi's aeroplane manufacture in 1995. These particular events were deemed necessary to display as *the* achievements of the authoritarian New Order regime. A masculine, competitive or Freudian way of reading their understanding of their achievements would be: if Sukarno had managed to 'liberate' Papua from the Dutch, then Suharto had 'integrated' Timor—little that they know that in the coming year, it would free itself from Indonesia's colonisation. If Sukarno managed to host the Asia-Africa Conference in Bandung in 1955, then Suharto could host the Non-Aligned Summit in Jakarta in 1992. And, finally, there was definitely no technological achievement during the Sukarno times depicted in the dioramas, yet Suharto managed to command one of Indonesia's local engineers to make an aeroplane.

What about Adiyati?

While the government was exercising its simplistic G-to-G model in the arts, Adiyati took a rather peculiar role, at least at that time. In the early to mid-1990s, when she co-initiated the journal *DIALOG*, she was also interested in

FIGURE 7: *DIALOG Seni Rupa* journals. Image courtesy of Hyphen —.

what the nation-state categorised as ‘arts’ (Figure 7). She spent a lot of time looking closely at the collections of the National Museum. There, she found an interesting batch of works that were by European modernists, mostly French-based artists. Out of curiosity, and since she had a good French connection due to her husband’s studies in Paris, Adiyati investigated where these works had come from. When she discovered that 160 works had come from one point of exchange, namely, *The Jakarta-Paris 1959*, she rigorously conducted interviews and searched for all the works. Finally, Adiyati’s research was exhibited in what we now call the National Gallery of Indonesia and became a chapter in their collection. To make this happen, Adiyati worked as a researcher as well as interlocutor of various state-owned, state-directed and private institutions including the Education and Cultural Ministry, Foreign Affairs Ministry, Cultural Directorate’s Art House, Jakarta Art Center—Taman Ismail Marzuki, Sinematek Jakarta, Televisi Pendidikan Indonesia, Indonesia Petroleum Club, Hotel Le Meridien, Companie Arienne UTA, Yayasan Dayanata Antarnusa, Resource Productivity Center, Galeri Archipelago, Pertamina and the *Jakarta Post*.³⁶

Even if she had stopped exhibiting her artworks since 1989, I argue that we need to look at these various *modus operandi* as also being part of Adiyati’s practice. This is especially important because Adiyati has always written throughout her decades of practice. In fact, if not for her text in 1976, one of the exhibitions presented by the *Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru Indonesia* (Indonesia New Arts Movement) would have been forgotten, as many writings about them are based on interviews and therefore limited to people’s memories—as well as their distortions. During Adiyati’s travels in the 1980s, she diligently noted her findings and thoughts, and published them in various local media.³⁷

Adiyati travelled the planet with her children and late husband Emmanuel Subangun. At first, these travels took place when Emmanuel did his master's at Sorbonne University, Paris, then later when both Adiyati and Emmanuel conducted a series of social research experiments for Kyoto University, Japan. Adiyati wrote as if her text was an extended museum-styled caption (Figure 8). By this, I mean that she wrote visual descriptions in the manner of encountering the installed work, introducing the artist's practice, stating the artist's concern addressed by the particular work, and contextualising the work for the public that she was writing for—Indonesian-speaking people.³⁸ This approach recurs as a kind of formula in Adiyati's writings: there is no special treatment for works (or exhibitions) that she saw in any part of the planet, except for longer contextualisations depending on the works, not the locations.

It is precisely the tone of Adiyati's writings that made me realise the atmosphere of artistic practices at the time. This was a time when international NGOs had just started brewing and thereby shaking up our intellectual understanding of our own society. It was as if artists had to choose between doing things according to the values that they had grown up with, or else keep themselves updated with rapidly changing worldviews. This was also the time when more and more middle- and upper-class people were uniformised through products of capitalism such as Coca-Cola and Marlboro—in 1981, Televisi Republik Indonesia (TVRI) started dedicated timeslots for advertising. By 1985, the Jakarta government had launched its first amusement park. In 1987, the Indonesia New Arts Movement held its first project-based collective work, criticising consumerism with a pun in its title: *Pasaraya Dunia Fantasi* (*Fantasy World Supermarket*).³⁹ Carrying the spirit of newness, the project is often talked about as an example of the early collaborative methods in exhibition-making, or the reviving of a collective gesture. Adiyati was one of the key figures in coining the working methods of the project, hence the involvement of an influential research team from *Kompas* as well as the Gramedia group, which was led by Adiyati's husband.⁴⁰ By this time, the eminent critic and thinker Sanento Yuliman not only wrote for or about the movement, he had finally joined them.⁴¹

Sanento's thinking and writings were influential in the efforts to define visual arts in Indonesia. He defined the newness of the Indonesia New Arts Movement when they first exhibited in 1975 by their anti-lyricism, and argued for the necessity of concreteness in materiality.⁴² A year after that exhibition, the Jakarta Arts Council published Sanento's book titled *Seni Lukis Indonesia Baru* [New Painting in Indonesia], in which he expounded on the 'concreteness' of such practices, in opposition to the 'lyricist' practice before them:

Oleh Siti Adiyati

siu Christa memilih Pont Neuf sebagai sasaran obyeknya, meskipun sebelumnya ia memilih beberapa jembatan sebagai calon. Tentu saja selain pertimbangan teknik, keindahan dan keadaan fisik jembatan itu sendiri yang jadi

SEBELUM DAN SESUDAH — Pont Neuf sebelum (atas) dan sesudah (bawah) dibongkas. Sebelum dibongkas nampak pekerja-pekerja di atas dok kapal. Dan setelah ditutup, di latar belakang tampak toserba ada Samaritaine yang ikut berpartisipasi dengan posteranya.

Kesenian orang kaya
Proyek Pont Neuf yang menghabiskan sekitar 70.000 jam kerja, kurang lebih menggunakan 1000 terhitung pemasukan dari buku dan barang-barang suvenir lainnya. Meskipun demikian jangan diabaikan bantuan istrinya Jeanne-Claude yang menjadi arsitek di tim, tanpa keahlian, tanpa pengetahuan, tanpa pasar, tanpa kuis sama berbagai pihak dan tentu saja dibutuhkan wawasan yang luas serta pemikiran yang tajam lagi mengulang.

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FIGURE 8: Newspaper clippings of Siti Adiyati Subangun's writing on Christo and Jeanne-Claude's installation in Paris (1985) as well as Moelyono's exhibition (1988). Generated from *KOMPAS* digital archive. Image courtesy of Hyphen —.

If lyricism filters and transforms experiences and emotions into the world of the imaginary, then through this tendency we see artists avoiding this filtering and transformation. It is not a picture of the objects on display, but rather the objects themselves. It is not the feeling of disgust that is drawn out and into the imagination, but an actual feeling of disgust, presented without distance, which makes people turn away in disgust [...] These artworks are not a slice of the imaginary world contemplated at a distance, but rather the concrete object which physically involves the viewer.⁴³

This oppositional reading of practices from a different generation feels like another man-made dualism to me. Left or right, right or wrong, up or down, win or lose, etc.: one needs to be in opposition of the other. Another seminal essay of Sanento's is "*Dua Seni Rupa*" [Two Art], in which he defines two types of art in Indonesia: high art and low art. Both are defined by the social classes in which the art circulates, along with the materials used, techniques, skills and intangible values. My itching dissatisfaction with this categorisation of art is its limited exploration of the so-called Western-influenced practices that are often interchangeable with what is called 'modern art'. There is almost no suspicion that the modern may as well be *the state*—as it was the one signing off the curricula taught in art schools as well as the one insisting on the possibility of having a 'national identity' in various forms of art that are done with modern techniques.

Meanwhile, for Adiyati, as an artist herself, the artist's way of life encompasses his/her material, technique and skill in generating values within society, be it something that we would then categorise as an artwork, a project, a happening, or something that manifests in other outlets which the artist does not seek to label as anything but his/her urgency within the society in which he/she is siding. As Patrick Flores puts it, "Siti Adiyati in a move to validate the expression around the concrete seeks to generate a social value for both the deed and the doing. [...] the word concrete can qualify art and life and that it is the commitment to the concrete that invests the art and the life with value."⁴⁴

In 1988, Adiyati wrote a seminal exhibition review titled "*Seni Rupa Penyadaran*" [Art for Conscientisation], a piece from which Moelyono took the titular term to describe his own practice, as briefly noted at the beginning of this essay.⁴⁵ The exhibition itself was titled *Pameran Seni Rupa Dialogis Transformatif* (*Exhibition of the Dialogical Transformative Art*). As a figure from a generation heavily influenced by Paulo Freire, this term remains relevant

in readings of Moelyono's practice. What I find interesting in this case is the fact that Adiyati's essay did not mention Freire at all. Later on, she said that there was no urgency to theorise or immediately relate to a theory because, much like the title of that exhibition, unfamiliar words would distance people from the practices that are actually around them. Furthermore, Adiyati said, had I not reminded her of Freire, she would not have remembered him as a reference, not because she declined to acknowledge Freire, but because to her, reading is a way to enhance knowledge, and practice is how knowledge becomes actualised in society.⁴⁶ In 1988, Adiyati wrote:

So, where is the line between what is art and what is not if social issues have become the center of both its thinking and its articulation. Yet, for this particular drawing teacher [Moelyono], art is a way of living life. His way of life is to take clear side to the lower-class society. It is as if art has become his way of dissecting social injustice. His art do not remain in the higher classes societies. If, so, can we really say that a kind of transformation has happened or is happening, like what is indicated by the introduction of this exhibition?⁴⁷

Her writings also made me realise that there is a certain kind of fascination with artistic practices that were impossible to act upon during the New Order regime due to the censorious climate and socio-political repressions. The fact that some forms of practice are simply rendered as impossible has turned some artists into their most basic human quality: a social being. Those who cannot express their social function through their artistic practices (especially in designated exhibition spaces) would find other outlets. Thus, Adiyati writes, Semsar did his activism work, and Moelyono builds playgroups and day-care centres with villagers.

Nowadays, whatever artists do in different contexts may be regarded as artistic practice; we can even claim their various activities as being artworks or art projects, but back then, this definition did not really matter for Adiyati, Moelyono or Semsar.

Around the time of Moelyono's *Pameran Seni Rupa Dialogis Transformatif* and Indonesia New Arts Movement's *Pasaraya Dunia Fantasi*, Semsar started a new idea that was only articulated in a solo exhibition staged slightly before *Reformasi*. In 1987 Semsar started picking seeds from whatever plants he found on the streets and throwing them to the other side of the street that had no plants. Not long after, he realised that the seeds he threw had grown.

He started doing this more often, and with more seeds of fruits rather than flowers. He started naming this activity *The Eco Seeds Action* by 29 January 1993. Semsar saw how simple it was for plants to grow, how they made themselves self-sufficient, and how even when they were eaten all the time by humans, they managed to keep growing. Despite the increasing population of humans, the fruit eaters, these trees managed to remain in existence.

In 1997, Semsar started thinking about the limitations of space in which these trees could grow. He invited people who ate these fruits to throw the seeds into whatever available piece of soil they encountered. Soon after he started this project, Semsar realised that it should not be limited to the seeds of plants but should also encompass seeds of hope for a better future.⁴⁸ This understanding of the (living) environment is the best way to connect to what is simply dubbed as *seni lingkungan*, which was never really big but had some particularly important occurrences from the late 1970s to the mid-1980s. *Seni Lingkungan* can literally be translated as 'environmental art', but in the practice of these artists I am speaking about, and in the context that they were living in, it encompasses community art, outdoor art, street art, body art, performance art, process art, conceptual art, land art and finally contemporary art in general.

But, more importantly, *seni lingkungan* addresses and at the same time involves the society around which the work was situated, made and exhibited. The necessity to label this kind of practice as 'environmental art' at the time was due to its opposition to the limited nature of what Sanento categorises as high art, and therefore as modern art. The term 'modern' was indeed used in addressing the kind of practices that were taught through the existing art institutions that were, of course, using the New Order regime's curriculum and search for a so-called national identity. The role of arts and culture in this was limited to the creation of symbols of that national identity.⁴⁹ At the time, any form of criticism towards cultural, let alone national, identity was not favoured. The fact that *Slot in the Box* was held in such a repressive climate is one of the reasons people appreciated the courage of the project. Semsar's *The Eco Seeds Action*, held in March 1998, was a follow-up to this mannerism in terms of the production and distribution of critical thinking, however limited the outreach of an art gallery may be. I would argue that Semsar was fully aware of such limitations, hence he kept his other foot in activism. Meanwhile, Moelyono tried to disturb such limitations. He would, for example, exhibit drawings and artworks of the children that he worked with in typical art galleries; make gigantic installations in villages with the villagers; or invite various folk art groups to perform in a gallery setting. Other than writing, the other outlets adopted by Adiyati is another story.

When Adiyati and her family came back to Indonesia after their journey in the 1980s, they had grown together. Indeed, she and her husband eventually became a solid team for agricultural experimentation in notably different landscapes of Indonesia that differed not only in geographical location but also in the structure of the societies. Adiyati and her husband have a variety of fields, crops and plantations in Kediri, East Java; in Tomohon, North Sulawesi; in Bali; and lastly in Gunung Kidul, Yogyakarta. It never is merely about agricultural activities for them, but rather learning and earning with what you have and with the people around you. It is not simply about surviving or sustainability, but about the advancement of humanity.

As for the sites of their work, their choices were driven by their curiosity about the society in which their lands are located. It was never really just farming and neighbouring activities; rather, in these places many kinds of courses, workshops and social experimentations were organised. When asked, why Bali?, Adiyati's answer was, "Bali is particularly interesting because it is so difficult to understand their culture. And this is [not] only due to hiding the 1965 genocide, but there are so many layers. Where does their Hinduism stem from? How did they deal with foreigners that came in as traders since hundreds of years ago, and finally the Dutch who occupied the existing palaces? What does it mean to be Balinese amongst what seemed to be a very *international* site?" How could a farmer answer these questions? "Well, by owning a piece of land, we become their neighbours. We are localized, we are in solidarity. Whatever may happen to them, will happen to us."⁵⁰

Bali is a good place to end this quest, for now. In Astri Wright's obituary⁵¹ and her historicisation of Semsar's "liberation art",⁵² she points out how Semsar immediately joined in activism for human rights upon his arrival in Canada. Of course, everything was different there: the context, history, language and culture. But for Semsar, all human beings deserve their freedom and therefore their rights. After four lively years in Canada, Semsar decided to move back to Indonesia, despite his troubled health. He was welcomed with a solo exhibition in the National Gallery of Indonesia, Jakarta. That exhibition displayed many of his latest works, through which one could see his political life in Canada. His return to Indonesia meant that he wanted to build a new life, in a new place. This place was Tabanan, Bali. He had bought a piece of land on which he built from scratch what he called Pusat Kebudayaan Kerakyatan Sedunia (Cultural Centre for the People of the World). In the words of one of his best friends, Semsar is a true internationalist!⁵³

I want to end this essay with a line of questions based on this consequential privilege of deciding the places one wants to live, reside in, practise or revolve. Since an artist chooses the kinds of environment she or he wants

to reside and practise in, doesn't that immediately mean that an artist is choosing the society she or he wants to function in? How could artists avoid their society?

The essay is expanded from "BECOMING: In search of the social artists, locating their environments and reorienting the planet", published in *Making Another World Possible: 10 Creative Time Summits, 10 Global Issues, 100 Art Projects*, ed. Corina Apostol and Nato Thompson (London: Routledge, 2019).

BIOGRAPHY

Grace Samboh (b. Jakarta, Indonesia, 1984) cannot stay put, so she works in Yogyakarta, Jakarta, Jatiwangi or Medan. Due to questioning too many things at once, she does curatorial work as well as groundwork research. She is interested in unravelling how social realities, relationships and the past formulate in various contemporary practices.

NOTES

- ¹ Siti Adiyati Subangun, Hendro Wiyanto, FX Harsono, et al., 1991. Editorial notes in the journal *DIALOG Seni Rupa* No. 3, Th. 1 (Jan.). The author's translation.
- ² Entry in his diary, 11 Jan. 1994. Published in Hendro Wiyanto, ed., *Semsar Siahaan (1952–2005)* (Jakarta: Jakarta Biennale Foundation, 2017), p. 66. On Semsar's life and aesthetics, see: Brita Miklouho-Maklai, *Exposing Society's Wounds: Some Aspects of Contemporary Indonesian Art Since 1966*, Flinders University Asian Studies Monograph Vol. 5 (Australia: Flinders University, 1991); Astri Wright, *Soul, Spirit and Mountain: Preoccupations of Indonesian Contemporary Artists* (Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 219–23; and the two recently published monographs edited by Hendro Wiyanto (2017) and T.K. Sabapathy (2017).
- ³ SP, "Moelyono; Seni Rupanya Berpihak" (Moelyono; His Art Practice Takes Side), *Kompas*, 29 April 1994.
- ⁴ *Paris-Jakarta 1950–1960*, exhibition catalogue (Jakarta: Directorate of Culture, Education and Cultural Ministry, 1992/1993).
- ⁵ It is fair to say that Semsar's *Oleh-oleh dari Desa, II* is commonly misunderstood as merely a rebellious act of burning a sculpture of his lecturer. See: *Oleh-oleh dari Desa, II*, in *Semsar Siahaan (1952–2005)*, pp. 36–51.
- ⁶ Susiana Darmawi, "Grup Seni Rupa Baru Indonesia: Realitas sosial menjadi tema favorit" [Indonesia New Art Group: Social reality as the favorite theme], *Suara Karya*, 19 Oct. 1979.
- ⁷ *Mengenang Semsar* (Remembering Semsar), an exhibition at Cemara Gallery, 22 May–15 June 2008. A blog post on their website serves as the online catalogue and includes a CV that I would argue was written by the artist himself, considering the wording. See <https://cemara6galeri.wordpress.com/event-2008/mengenang-semsar/> [accessed 6 July 2020].
- ⁸ INFIGHT was considered as one of the biggest threats to the ruling regime due to its direct connection with the Netherlands. See Yayak Yatmakan, "Art of Liberation and People's Art", in *Semsar Siahaan (1952–2005)*, pp. 15–34.
- ⁹ See Sitok Srengenge, ed., *Bredel di Udara: Rekaman Radio ABC, BBC, Nederland, VoA* [Banned on Air: Recordings from ABC, BBC, Nederland, VoA Radio] (Jakarta: Institut Studi Arus Informasi, 1996).
- ¹⁰ Yayak Yatmakan, "Art of Liberation and People's Art", pp. 15–34.
- ¹¹ See Hendro Wiyanto, ed., *Semsar Siahaan (1952–2005)* (Jakarta: Jakarta Biennale Foundation, 2017); T.K. Sabapathy, ed., *Semsar Siahaan: Art, Liberation* (Singapore: Gajah Gallery, 2017); Asikin Hasan, "Expansion: Thirteen Years After That Triennale", in the catalogue of *Expansion* (Jakarta: National Gallery of Indonesia & SigiArts Gallery, 2011); Agung Hujatnikajennong, "Perdebatan Posmodernisme dan Biennale Seni Rupa Jakarta IX (1993–1994)" [The Debate of Postmodernism

- and the 9th Jakarta Biennale (1993–1994)], unpublished BA thesis, Bandung: Fakultas Seni Rupa dan Desain ITB, Skripsi Program Sarjana, 2001.
- ¹² Benjamin Waters, “The Tragedy of Marsinah: Industrialization and Workers’ Rights”, *Inside Indonesia* 36 (1993): 12–3.
 - ¹³ Moelyono, “Seni Rupa Dialogis Transformatif: Satu-Proses-Pencarian” [Dialogical Transformative Visual Arts], catalogue of *Pameran Seni Rupa Dialogis Transformatif* (Exhibition of the Dialogical Transformative Art), Lingkar Mitra Budaya, Jakarta, 26–31 Aug. 1988 (Jakarta: Yayasan API, Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia (LIPI) & Yayasan Karti Sarana), p. 4.
 - ¹⁴ He once stated: “Artists who refuse the dichotomy between Subject and Object, or the gap between the artist (the subject who reveals an issue) and the owner of the issue (the object that is dealt by the revealer) have to be dialogical. Artist and the people (of whom the artist speak for/with) need to be together in facing the same social issue. [...] The way to do it is (as an artist) by taking the stance as a subject and at the same time treating the people equally as subjects. As subjects, these people too have potentials, aspiration, and their own critical mechanism in facing indifferences. By creating these chances, people can then articulate their own issues through the arts yet with their own ways.” *Ibid.*, pp. 4–11.
 - ¹⁵ Nicholas D. Kristof, “Suharto, a King of Java Past, Confronts Indonesia’s Future”, *New York Times*, 17 May 1998.
 - ¹⁶ gas, rza, 1993. “Pelarangan ‘Pameran Seni Rupa untuk Marsinah’ Merupakan Keberhasilan” (The Banning of ‘Art Exhibition for Marsinah’ is a Form of Success), *Surabaya Post*, 16 August 1993.
 - ¹⁷ Other participating artists were: Ade Darmawan, Agung Kurniawan, Andar Manik, Anusapati, Eddi Prabandono, Eddie Hara, Edo Pillu, Firman, FX Harsono, Hanura Hosea, Hedi Hariyanto, Herly Gaya, Iwan Wijono, Marintan Sirait, Ong Harry Wahyu, Pintor Sirait, Rotua Magdalena Pardede, S. Teddy D., Semsar Siahaan, Tisna Sanjaya, Ugo Untoro, Weye Hartanto and Yustoni Volunteero. The exhibition catalogue is accessible at: <http://archive.ivaa-online.org/events/detail/38> [accessed 23 Sept. 2018].
 - ¹⁸ Afnan Malay, “Tuan, Terimalah Kepala Kami” [Sir, Please Accept Our Heads], *Ummat* weekly magazine, No. 25. Thn. II, dated June 9/4 Saffar 1419 H, 1997, p. 87.
 - ¹⁹ Keith B. Richburg, “Indonesians Ask, After Suharto, then What? ‘Reformasi!’ A Common Cry, but What Form Would it Take?”, *Washington Post*, 17 May 1998, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1998/05/17/indonesians-ask-after-suharto-then-what-reformasi-a-common-cry-but-what-form-would-it-take/14f7629d-b029-4458-b9f0-30eb173e6c8b/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.0c37f3ae1704 [accessed 23 Sept. 2018].
 - ²⁰ Raihul Fadji, “Pameran Instalasi Desa: Dari Marsinah sampai Pemilu” [An Exhibition of Installation from the Village: From Marsinah to Election], *Detektif & Romantika*, 27 June 1998, pp. 57–9.

- ²¹ Muhidin M. Dahlan, "Seni dan Politik: Yogyakarta sebagai Arena" [Art and Politics: Yogyakarta as an Arena], *EQUATOR* 3, 3 (2015): 4–15, a newsletter of the Yogyakarta Biennale Foundation.
- ²² See, for example, *Torque: Exhibition Catalogue of the 1995 Australia & Regions Artists' Exchange* (Sydney: Fine Arts Press, 1995), p. 22.
- ²³ During the reign of the repressive New Order regime, which began in 1966, the Ministry of Trade and Industry, as well as the Ministry of Finance, were led by a number of UC Berkeley-graduated military officers who were nicknamed the 'Berkeley Mafia'. Any international relationships prior to this authoritarian regime were restarted under these new conditions, especially with countries where communism was dominant.
- ²⁴ The artists involved are: AD Pirous, Agus Kamal, Dede Eri Supria, I Gusti Nengah Nurata, Lucia Hartini, Ivan Sagito. See *Symbolic Visions in Contemporary Asian Life*, exhibition catalogue for the third Asian Art Show (Fukuoka: Fukuoka Art Museum, 1989).
- ²⁵ Caroline Turner and Rhana Davenport, *Second Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art: Brisbane Australia 1996: Present Encounters—Papers from the conference* (Brisbane: Queensland Art Gallery, 1997).
- ²⁶ Adi Wicaksono, "Moelyono", catalogue of the 3rd APT, *Beyond the Future: The Third Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art*, ed. Caroline Turner, Rhana Davenport and Jen Webb (Brisbane: Queensland Art Gallery, 1999), p. 64.
- ²⁷ Seth Mydans, "Indonesia turns its Chinese into scapegoats", *New York Times*, 2 Feb. 1998.
- ²⁸ Seth Mydans, "In Jakarta, reports of numerous rapes of Chinese in riots", *New York Times*, 10 June 1998.
- ²⁹ Mochtar Kusuma Atmadja, Rahmad Adenan, Kusnadi, Sudarmadji, Soedarso Sp. and Agus Dermawan T, eds, *Perjalanan Seni Rupa Indonesia: Dari Zaman Prasejarah Hingga Masa Kini* [Streams of Indonesian Art: From Pre-Historic to Contemporary] (Jakarta: Direktorat Jenderal Kebudayaan (Directorate General for Culture), 1990).
- ³⁰ Claire Holt, *Art in Indonesia: Continuities and Change* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967).
- ³¹ Yvonne Owens, "The Art of Living Dangerously", *MONDAY Magazine* 30, 28 (25–31 July 2002), https://www.academia.edu/19988700/The_Art_of_Living_Dangerously_Semsar_Siahaan_1952--2005 [accessed 4 Nov. 2018].
- ³² Amanda K. Rath, "Contextualizing 'Contemporary Art': Propositions of Critical Artistic Practice in Seni Rupa Kontemporer Indonesia", unpublished PhD thesis, Faculty of the Graduate School of Cornell University, 2011, pp. 4–15.
- ³³ Personal communication with Anusapati, 4 Nov. 2018.
- ³⁴ Personal communication with Andar Manik, 4 Nov. 2018.

- ³⁵ Like many of Suharto's speeches, it is accessible via this website: <http://soeharto.co/1995-04-28-sambutan-presiden-soeharto-pada-pembukaan-pameran-dan-seminar-seni-rupa-kontemporer-negara%C2%AD-negara-non-blok/> [accessed 3 Dec. 2019].
- ³⁶ Catalogue of *Paris-Jakarta 1950–1960*, Education and Cultural Ministry, 1992.
- ³⁷ It is now conveniently compiled and published by the Jakarta Biennale Foundation, titled *Dari Kandinsky Sampai Wianta: Catatan-catatan senni rupa 1975–1997* [*From Kandinsky to Wianta: Visual art notes 1975–1997*]. Only available in Bahasa.
- ³⁸ Siti Adiyati Subangun, "Seni dari Plastik dan Tali" [Art from Plastic and Rope], *Kompas*, 6 Oct. 1985.
- ³⁹ Pasaraya (literally, supermarket) was a brand of one of the early local department stores established in 1974. Meanwhile, Dunia Fantasi (literally, Fantasy World) was Indonesia's first amusement park built by a New Order-backed tycoon and is run by the Jakarta government's administration.
- ⁴⁰ *Katalog Pasaraya Dunia Fantasi*, 1987.
- ⁴¹ It may be worth noting that Sanento obtained his master's from Ecoles des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris from 1976–81. Adiyati's husband, Emmanuel Subangun, obtained his doctorate from the same school in 1987.
- ⁴² "It is absurd, for instance, to scrutinize the seams and creases of Harsono's plastic objects, or to examine the details in Munni Ardhi's windows, or every span of a hand of Jim Supangkat's sculpture or Nanik Mirna's cross. It is also futile to follow each part of Ris Purwana's geometric composition or Muryoto Hartoyo's slots, or to contemplate every lane of colour in Anyool Subroto's work, for they are all the same. **Towards "unreality", the illusions of an artistic experience, they offer concrete objects.** If Anyool does not paint "anything" at all, does not even aim to stir up emotions, then he creates two-dimensional objects. Colours are used in order to unleash physical effects: to shake up our optics. If Bachtiar Zainoel uses aluminum sheets, rolls of wire cords among other things, pressing them and pulling them, tearing them apart to put them back together, he **does not aim to transform it into something else: the physicality of these materials, the physical properties attached to them, become more striking.** In his own words: **creating things out of things.**" From Sanento Yuliman, "Perspektif Baru" [New Perspectives], in the catalogue of *Pameran Seni Rupa Baru Indonesia* (Jakarta: Taman Ismail Marzuki, 1975). English translation by Indonesian Visual Art Archive. The highlights are mine.
- ⁴³ Sanento Yuliman, *Seni Lukis Indonesia Baru* [New Paintings of Indonesia] (Jakarta: Dewan Kesenian Jakarta, 1976), p. 101. Translated by Elly Kent in "Entanglement: Individual and Participatory Art Practice in Indonesia", unpublished PhD thesis, College of Arts and Social Sciences, Research School of Humanities and the Arts, Australian National University, 2016, p. 55.

- ⁴⁴ Patrick Flores, “Communicating the Concrete: The Criticism of Art in the Contemporary”, in *Seni Rupa Baru 1975–1989*, ed. Enin Supriyanto, Ratna Mufida et al. (Yogyakarta: Hyphen —, 2020), p. 321.
- ⁴⁵ Siti Adiyati Subangun, *Dari Kandinsky Sampai Wianta: Catatan-catatan seni rupa 1975–1997 [From Kandinsky To Wianta: Visual art notes 1975–1997]* (Jakarta: Jakarta Biennale Foundation & Penerbit Nyala, 2017).
- ⁴⁶ Series of interviews with Siti Adiyati Subangun, 25 April and 6–7 Dec. 2016 conducted by myself and Haruko Kumakura for an archive show at Mori Art Museum, Tokyo (2017) and for Hyphen’s research on GSRBI (Indonesia New Art Movement).
- ⁴⁷ Siti Adiyati Subangun, *Dari Kandinsky Sampai Wianta: Catatan-catatan seni rupa 1975–1997 [From Kandinsky To Wianta: Visual art notes 1975–1997]*.
- ⁴⁸ Semsar Siahaan, in the press release published by Cemeti Contemporary Art Gallery for his solo exhibition, from 4–30 March in Yogyakarta.
- ⁴⁹ Two remarkable examples that demonstrate the regime’s need for a national identity are: in 1973, the commissioning of a group of Bandung-based artists and lecturers, Decenta, to fully decorate the interior of the Parliament Hall in Jakarta, and in 1975, the building of Taman Mini Indonesia Indah, the amusement park dubbed the miniature of Indonesia, with 26 provinces for a start, as East Timor was not forcefully integrated into Indonesia until 1976. On the commissioning of Decenta, see Chabib Duta Hapsoro, “Identitas Keindonesiaan dalam Elemen-elemen Estetik Kelompok Decenta: Representasi Praktik Depolitisasi Orde Baru dalam Bidang Kebudayaan”, paper presented at the Equator Symposium, Yogyakarta, 2014. Also accessible at: https://chaduha.wordpress.com/2015/06/29/identitas-keindonesiaan-dalam-elemen-elemen-estetik-kelompok-decenta-representasi-praktik-depolitisasi-orde-baru-dalam-bidang-kebudayaani/#_ednref2 [accessed 8 Nov. 2018]. On Taman Mini Indonesia Indah, see Manneke Budiman, “The middle class and morality politics in the envisioning of the nation in post-Suharto Indonesia”, *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 12, 4 (2011): 482–99. Also accessible at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14649373.2011.603912>.
- ⁵⁰ Series of interviews with Siti Adiyati Subangun, 25 April and 6–7 December 2016 conducted by myself and Haruko Kumakura for an archive show at Mori Art Museum, Tokyo (2017) and for Hyphen’s research on GSRBI (Indonesia New Art Movement).
- ⁵¹ Astri Wright, “Goodbye from Canada”, in *Semsar Siahaan (1952–2005)*, pp. 132–7.
- ⁵² T.K. Sabapathy, ed., *Semsar Siahaan: Art, Liberation* (Singapore: Gajah Gallery, 2017).
- ⁵³ Yayak Yatmakan, “Art of Liberation and People’s Art”, in *Semsar Siahaan (1952–2005)*, pp. 15–34.

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