

# ART STAGE SINGAPORE

# REPORT INDONESIA

## The Evolution of Modern Indonesian Art

By Rifky Effendy\*

Provocative, emotive, and sometimes even disturbing, the Indonesian Art we know today had very different characteristics to begin with. By tracing its origins and subsequent development, this report reveals how Indonesian Art has evolved into what it is today.



Three Modern Masters (from left) Basuki Abdullah, S. Sudjojono and Affandi. Image courtesy of Rifky Effendy.

### S. Sudjojono, the master

Historians consider Sudjojono the father of Indonesian modern art, not because he developed a modern painting style that was distinctly Indonesian in nature, but rather because he was a mentor who had brought the awareness of ideological politics to the Indonesian painting practice from the 1930s-1960s. The artistic ideology of Sudjojono was closely related to the social, cultural, and political realities of the society in general, and therefore seemingly left-wing.

### Affandi

Known for his distinct expressionist style, Affandi has been often described as “painter of genius” and is considered the leading 20th century artist of Indonesia. A self-taught painter, his unique technique was to directly squeeze paint out of its tube onto a canvas. His works have been exhibited all over the world in countries like, Brazil, India, America, England, Belgium, France, Italy and Sweden. His museum in Yogyakarta houses 250 of his works.

### Revolutionary art: Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru

In English, this means “New Art Movement”, arising from the reactions toward the tendency for art in Indonesia to stay “sterile” under the control of Suharto’s New Order regime. Jim Supangkat, FX Harsono, Bonyong Muny Ardhie, and other proponents of this movement published a manifesto questioning the elitism of art, and demanding changes in the views about art being limited to painting and sculpture. It was, from the 1970s to 1990s, both an avenue for artists to speak up against social injustices, and explore new media, as in FX Harsono’s use of toy guns and everyday objects to create art installations.

The Cemeti Gallery in Yogyakarta, initiated by the artist couple Mella Jaarsma and Nindityo Adipurnomo, served as a significant art hub during the 1990’s. Works displayed there provide a glimpse on how art had also expanded in performance, installation, video, and photography media.



S. SUDJOJONO “Arakan Pengantin”, 1976, Oil on canvas, 69 x 89 cm. Image Courtesy of OHD Museum.

### Who’s hot now?

One cannot deny the fact that the contemporary art boom in Indonesia involves the crucial role of the collectors, who have made the Indonesian art market so dynamic. They dominate the auction houses in Jakarta, Singapore, and Hong Kong; fight for works by “hot” artists such as I Nyoman Masriadi, Agus Suwage, Handiwirman Saputra, Yunizar, Jumaldi Alfi, Ay Tjoe Christine, Eko Nugroho, J. Ariadhiyana Pramuhendra, Radi Arwinda, Radi Arwinda, Wiyoga Muhardanto, Albert Yonathan Setiawan, Syagini Ratnawulan, Wimo Affandi, Lee Man Fong, and S. Sudjojono. The last few auctions in Hong Kong have seen some surprising record prices.

### I Nyoman Masriadi

One of the most prominent Indonesian contemporary artists, I Nyoman Masriadi, specialises in acrylic paintings that comment satirically on the human condition. One his most notable works is The Man From Bantul (The Final Round), which eventually sold for US\$1,000,725 at Sotheby’s (Hong Kong) - five times its estimated price.

### Handiwirman Saputra

A gifted painter and sculptor, Saputra uses unexpected combinations of artistic media to transform everyday objects into masterpieces. He always manages to give objects new symbolic and often ambiguous interpretations. Saputra is a member of the Jendela Art Group (which includes Jumaldi Alfi, Handiwirman Saputra, Rudi Mantofani, Yunizar and Yusra Martunus), a group that shot to fame in the mid-1990s, and is known for its strong focus on formalism. In a country where its art is closely associated with its socio-political commentary, he and his fellow Jendela members offer a fascinating alternative.

### Jumaldi Alfi

Co-founder and member of the Jendela Art Group, Alfi hails from Lintau, West Sumatra, Indonesia. His paintings have shifted in themes and styles in the last decade - initially reflecting autobiographical theme, then later evolving into metaphysical themes like life struggles and man’s identity. He has consistently explored new possibilities with painting techniques and tradition and combines expressionism, raw art and realism.

### Agus Suwage

Known for his provocative drawings, installations, paintings and assemblages, Suwage is an internationally acclaimed artist. He incorporates popular culture and religious imagery into his art, and examines the relationship between humans and animals.

### Rudi Mantofani

A sculptor and painter, Mantofani is known for presenting elements of surprise in his work. While his sculptures are focused on form, scale and the metaphorical, his paintings revolve around landscape. He constantly challenges painting tradition with visual ploys, like flattening pictorial space through heavy repetitions. He has exhibited widely in group shows in Indonesia and around the region.

### Ay Tjoe Christine

Born in Bandung, Ay Tjoe is a master at dry-point, a printing method where a design is etched directly on a metal printing plate. She has also explored various techniques alongside her signature dry-point: photography, painting, installation and even comics.

### Nyoman Nuarta

The Bali-born award-winning sculptor has works all over the country, including public sculptures and monuments throughout the peninsula. Nuarta is also the owner of the Studio Nyoman Nuarta, from where he actively produces his works, and founder of The Mandala Garuda Wisnu Kencana Foundation, a private cultural park where heavy metal band Iron Maiden played in February 2011.

### OTHER NAMES TO KNOW

#### ESTABLISHED ARTISTS

- Entang Wiharso
- Heri Dono
- Sri Astari
- M. Irfan
- Agapetus A. Kristiandana

#### UP-AND-COMING ARTISTS

- Yudi Sulistyio
- Ronald Manullang
- I Made Widya Diputra
- Erianto
- Anggun Priambodo
- Melati Suryodarmo
- Andy Dewantoro

### Overseas buzz

Large-scale exhibitions of Indonesian art works have been held abroad in the last three years: “Contemporaneity/Contemporary Art in Indonesia” (Shanghai, 2010), a special Indonesian section at ART PARIS + GUESTS (2010), the “Trans-Figurations – Indonesian Mythologies” at the Espace Culturel Louis Vuitton (Paris, 2011), and the “Indonesian Eyes” exhibition at Saatchi Gallery (London, 2011).

\*Born and based in Jakarta, the author trained as a ceramic artist in the Fine Art and Design department of the Institute Technology of Bandung. He has worked as an independent curator since 1997.

(Translated into English by Rani E. Ambyo).

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44 CLUB STREET SINGAPORE 069421

O +65 6224 4975

F +65 6224 4695

[www.artstagesingapore.com](http://www.artstagesingapore.com)

[info@artstagesingapore.com](mailto:info@artstagesingapore.com)

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