



The Australian National University



Institute of the Arts

Canberra School of Art

GRADUATE DIPLOMA OF ART

Setianingsih Purnomo

REPORT

PRESENTED IN FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE

GRADUATE DIPLOMA OF ART

1994

ABSTRACT

TRANSITION AND CHANGE : research into western artists whose work has been influenced by non-western art. The research paper investigates the way modern artists establish their own visual language through Eastern traditional art forms. A study taking the form of an exhibition of computer generated prints exhibition at The A.N.U. - Drill Hall Gallery - from August 3 to 21, 1994 which comprises the outcome of the Studio Practice component (80 %), together with a Research Paper (20 %), and a Report which documents the nature of the course of study undertaken.

Acknowledgments

I wish to thank all of my various supervisors, Jörg Schmeisser and Gillian Mann in practical work, Dr. David McNeill and Gordon Bull in theory, and finally my convenors Nigel Lendon and Ingo Kleinert for their encouragement and support during my one and a half years of study at the Canberra School of Art. In particular, I would like to thank Nigel Lendon whose challenging of my ideas has been invaluable.

I am grateful to Robert Mendham and other staff members and students at the Printmaking Department for their help.

It is a pleasure to acknowledge the help of Alan Königer for his assistance in overcoming technical computer problems.

For moral support and advice I would like to thank Darani Lewers, Ray Arnold, Sudarso Sp, Dr. John Clark, Dr. Virginia Matheson-Hooker and also the other postgraduate students.

Many thanks to the Australian International Development Assistance Bureau who sponsored my study in Australia, and also to Canon company for their printing-sponsorship of my enlarged images.

Thank you very much to Sonia Wilson who helped me to edit this report.

Lastly, many thanks to the family with whom I lived, John and Katherine Beauchamp, and especially little Charlie Wood, who made me feel at home.

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The contemporary art scene is becoming ever growing in size and the
art is coming from tradition and academically in the a
turning point. In fact and substance, there may be a
collective artistic expression that is a combination
can be seen in the contemporary art scene.

Abstract

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A. D. Pissal

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Pissal, A. D. *Indonesian Contemporary Art: A Journey to the Future of Indonesian Art*
in the Museum of Contemporary Art, November 2010, issued in London, the
Journey of the West 2010, Indonesia, pp. 1-10

Introduction

Preface

This report is a record of one particular work. It began in June 1984 in a computer graphics room. The work starts "... the contemporary art forms in Indonesia are growing in the midst of a turmoil of influences from tradition and from modern life. In the turmoil, in the search for form and substance, there may be a collisions of value into one artistic expression that is symbolic; this can be seen as something distinctly Indonesian".

A. D. Pirous¹

¹Pirous, A. D. *Indonesian Contemporary Art*. Lecture held on the occasion of symposium in the Museum of Ethnology Rotterdam, 3 November 1988, quoted in *Bandung, the Laboratory of the West ? Modern Indonesian Art*. 1990. p. 76

Introduction.

This report is a record of nine months' work (October 1993 - June 1994) in computer generated prints. The seven months preceding this period (March - September 1993) were considered as cultural adjustment time.

It is a big change in my life, coming from Indonesia where tradition and society rule my life, to Australia where individuality is privileged over other ways of being quite strong in daily life. By living in a different culture, speaking in a different language, learning in a different education system and experiencing a different life style and way of thinking, I have learnt through questioning and analysing how to see my own traditional background from a ' foreign ' point of view . I have opened my limited horizon about tradition, loosened the shackles of Javanese tradition which ruled my life for a long time. Tradition informs every aspect of our life, and from my tradition I have tried to establish my visual language in art.

I started my work by recalling my childhood. At the beginning of my computer work, I drew lines and chose bright colours. When the images were printed out I realised that the lines were derived from Javanese batik patterns and calligraphy. It took a while for me to understand that I was reacting to tradition. I deliberately changed the form and its character, denied the symbolism and meaning. Moreover I used bright colour to against the original design. In terms of using bright colour, I was influenced by Matisse' colour. In the meantime I read a lot about how abstract-expressionist artists, in particular Jackson Pollock, visualised their thought in an abstract style. For them, the way they visualised their idea was through sub-conscious mind whilst I consciously used my traditional background in my work.

The next step was forming dancing figures from calligraphy lines. In traditional Javanese dance, every single gesture and posture is for worshipping the spirit. In my work, I changed the posture of the dancer, so that it became meaningless.

After finding a way to form my visual language, I began to ask myself : what was I going to do with my tradition ? How should I use visual language to express my concern about the socio-political issues in a developing country ? In which particular

issue was I really interested ? In what way could I visualise the idea ? Once again I referred to my own country as an example of development not being shared in an egalitarian manner, and began to analyse closely what is happening, how it is happening, in what way, what is the result, etc.

In this series of works done from March to June 1994 for my final postgraduate exhibition, I was inspired by Y. B. Mangunwijaya's writing on the socio-political issues in Indonesia during the 1970's¹ . Mangunwijaya is an Indonesian priest who received permission from the Catholic Church to serve the people outside the church in everyday life. Moreover he is a quite well known writer in particular areas such as the historical novel, socio-political issues and socio-theology. As well as Mangunwijaya's writing, I am also influenced by Slamet Raharjo's film *Langitku, Rumahku* (My Sky, My Home, 1991), which talks about a friendship between two children from different social backgrounds. This film portrays the differences between rich and poor society; unfortunately *Langitku, Rumahku* was harassed by the cinema monopoly who showed the film only one day without any clear explanation.

Phase 1 visualises the power holder who are supported by the corrupt power holder.

Phase 2 shows the majority of people who live in poverty.

Phase 3 visualises the people's reaction to the power holder.

Phase 4 represents the chaotic conditions of revolution.

Phase 5 shows the situation after the conflict is over, where there is a possibility of dialogue with the power holder to obtain better socio-economic conditions.

Phase 6 visualises the new role of Pancasila again through clearer colour. These colours represent a positive collaboration between the power holder and the people.

¹ Mangunwijaya, Y. B. *The Mission of the Administration of Pancasila in the Stage of the Transition* (1970) an unpublished manuscript, 1981 p. 45. This document is now in the collection of the author's personal library. The author is grateful to the author for providing access to this document. The author is also grateful to the author for providing access to this document.

¹ Mangunwijaya, Y. B. *Puntung-Puntung Roro Mendut*, Gramedia, Jakarta. 1986

Concept.

As stated in my original proposal (see Appendix), my idea was to express the anger I feel against tradition and the socio-economic conditions in a developing country. My work gradually developed from simple lines to a complex-abstract form; from simple colours to using complex colours related to characters derived from *wayang* (puppet art form), and from an easy and pleasant form to a chaotic and emotional form.

My work is divided into eight phases which portray the process of development.

Phase 1 visualises a country represented by an Indonesian - Buddhist temple - Borobudur² - form. There are three variations of Borobudur showing Borobudur from the distance.

Phase 2 explains how corruption occupies the whole nation, decay sets in.

Phase 3 visualises the upper class who are supported by the corrupt power holder.

Phase 4 shows the majority of people who live in poverty.

Phase 5 visualises the people's reaction to the power holder

Phase 6 represents the chaotic conditions of revolution.

Phase 7 shows the situation after the conflict is over, where there is a possibility of dialogue with the power holder to obtain better socio-economic conditions.

Phase 8 visualises the ideal form of Borobudur again through clearer colour. These colours represent a positive collaboration between the power holder and the people.

² Borobudur means " The Mountain of the Accumulation of Virtue in the Ten Stages of the *Bodhisattva* " (Holt : [Art in Indonesia, continuities and change](#). 1967. p. 42). It has three spheres (*dhatu*) which represent desire (*kamadathu*) at the base, the sphere of form (*rupadathu*) on the middle level, and the formlessness (*arupadathu*) on the top. Borobudur as Mount *Sumeru* is perfect blend of Javanese and Buddhist concepts. According to Javanese belief gods live on sacred Mt. *Sumeru*, whilst for Buddhist pilgrim, they can practice self-denial and overcome physical discomfort in order to reach enlightenment. To me, Borobudur is representing a nation.

Working Method (I) - theoretical.

Stages in Process

Idea

My goal is to express my concern about socio-political issues in developing countries using my traditional background as a source of visual language.

Framework

This idea is visualised through form and colour.

1. Form :

A traditional Javanese long scroll of *wayang beber*, in a 1 : 3 proportion. This is taken from the proportion of Borobudur.³

2. colour :

The colour theory is taken from *wayang's* colour character.

Working on computer

Working on computer facilitates expression of the idea through scanning, manipulating and drawing.

colour character due to technology screen, the scanner and printer.

³-- Borobudur, Golden Tales of the Buddhas. Boston. 1990. p 36 - 37

Working Method (II) - technical

a. drawing

- a.1. manual drawing : black and white drawing : - water colour
- crayon
colour drawing (acrylic)
- a.2. computer drawing

b. computer scanning and manipulation

- drawings
- other artists work : the aim is to get 'short cut' colour which cannot be reached from computer drawing.
- photograph : to get details of people and building.

c. process

I have combined various files for one particular image.

d. technical problem

There is a technology limitation that I have to accept by working through computer : mostly my colours were not printed out properly. There is a different system from computer to printer colour calibration due to incompatibility between the computer and printers.

Conclusion

These prints are the final production of a long process of defining my visual form on computer. This process involved adapting ' non - Indonesian ' thought into my work by searching, investigating, questioning and analysing my background. The visual language was established through cultural conflicts. Whereas the Eastern way is based on intuitive feeling, the Western relies on analytical thought.

To create my art work, I used both ways. Firstly, in order to clarify my idea I was questioned by my supervisory panel and also questioned myself about where I should start, where the idea came from, how should I visualise it, what kind of visual elements I was going to use and where they came from, etc. However, whilst I was creating my images, I relied on my personal instinct to create the whole composition.

Lastly, I am deeply indebted to Zao Wou Ki. I admired Henri Matisse for colour, Jackson Pollock for expression and Pablo Picasso for his concepts, but it is Zao Wou Ki with his Chinese-nature contemplation who really helped me to find myself as an Indonesian.

List of illustrations.

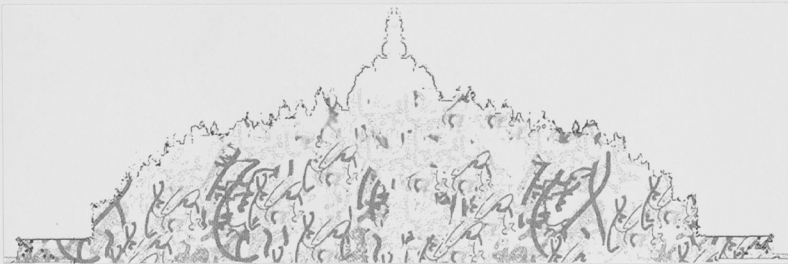
Contents

Phase 1 & 2

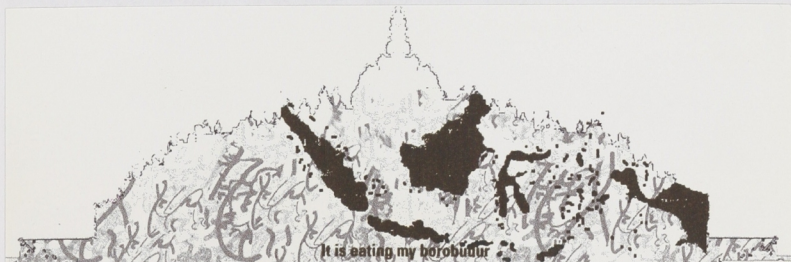
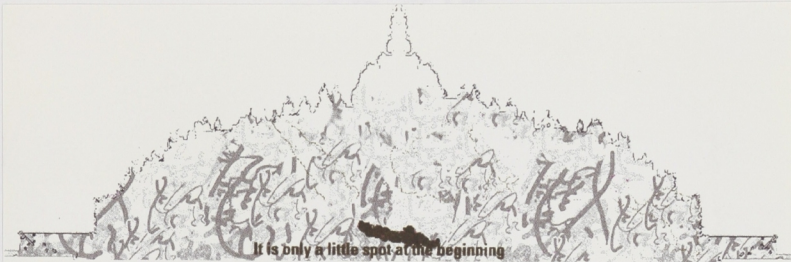
variation : 1.

title : My Borobudur
size : 7 (105 x 35 cm)
technique : Photoshop
printer : Bubble jet
year : 1994

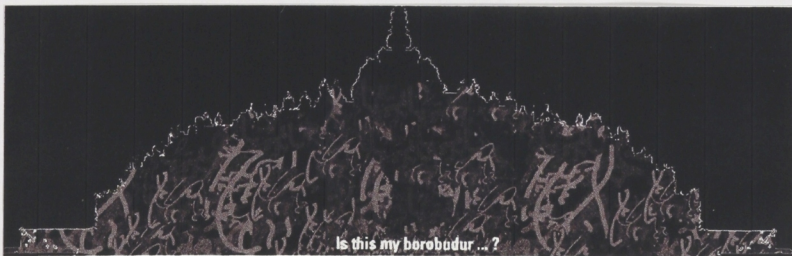
This series of seven images visualises a country which has been decayed by corruption. The Borobudur form represents the nation. (phase 1, one image).



At phase 2 (six images), corruption is emerging from a small spot at the beginning, growing bigger and bigger, and eating into the Borobudur form. I chose the Indonesian map deliberately to highlight where the corruption comes from. It started from Jakarta - Java which has the highest population in Indonesia and also is a centre of the whole archipelago. In the next image, the islands Sumatra and Kalimantan turn up clearly and in the following image, the whole Indonesian map appears.



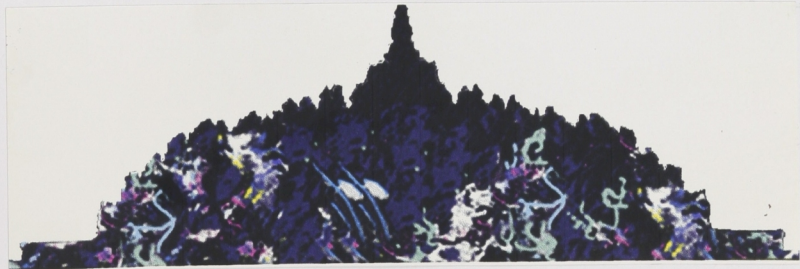
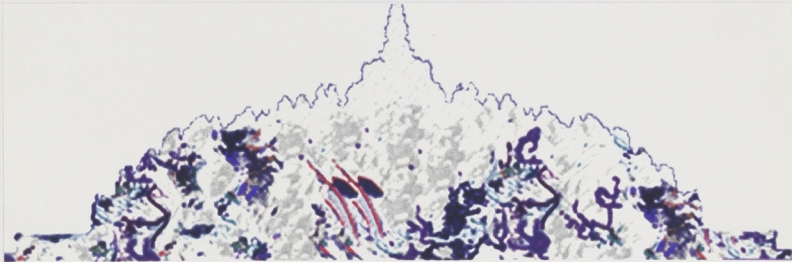
I chose a dark green colour to represent the corruption as an algae. This algae sprang up in the Borobudur form, and destroyed the whole form. At the end of the series, Borobudur now totally decayed, is depicted in black



variation : 2

title : Dancing in the Borobudur
size : 3 (105 x 35 cm)
technique : Photoshop
printer : Bubble jet
year : 1994

This series of three images shows how a particular country has strong traditions and resources - represented by dancing figures in golden and vivid colours (the first phase - one image). In the next phase, the Borobudur has changed colour into grey and then into black.



variation : 3

title : Borobudur in the Power

size : 4 (105 x 35 cm)

technique : Photoshop

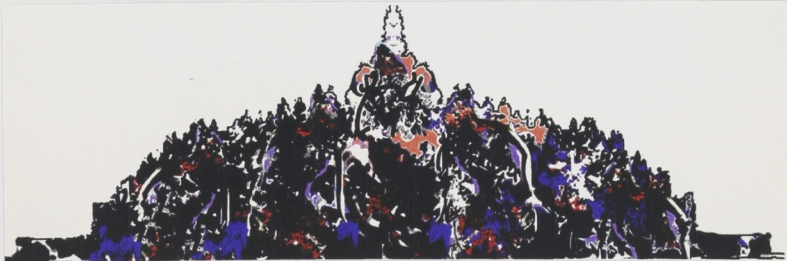
printer : Bubble jet

year : 1994

This series of four images shows how the power holder occupies the whole form. In the first phase (one image), a Borobudur has been built from a dynamic movement in black, red, blue and grey colour.



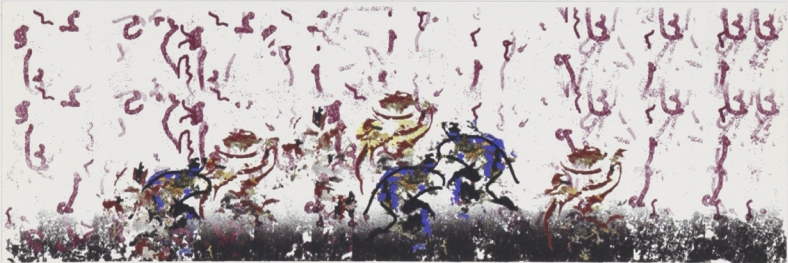
Then, in the second phase (three images), the dancing figures slowly emerge. These figures are derived from *wayang* character, *Umayi* - the wife of the highest God in the *wayang* legend . Her evil character is visualised through dark brown-red colour. In the next image, the figures appear strongly in a darker colour, and Borobudur has changed its colour to grey. In some small areas, blue spots still come up clearly. This is to show that the power holder is not entirely evil. At the end of this series, Borobudur is now destroyed.



Phase 3 :

title : Fiesta
size : 3 (26.80 x 8.90 cm)
technique : Photoshop
printer : Bubble jet
year : 1994

There are three different variations in this series. In this phase I visualise the rich people who supported by the corrupt government are enjoying harvest time. They are represented by dancing figures and thus associated with a party situation. The ribbons are thrown up to create a fiesta atmosphere. The chosen colours are cheerful, vivid and lively. I have tried to visualise the glamorous aspect of this society.



Phase 4.

title : Poverty
 size : 3 (26.90 x 8.90 cm)
 technique : Photoshop
 printer : Bubble jet
 year : 1994

This series of three images portrays the majority of people who live in poverty. I scanned some photographs :

Image 1. War Photographs 1939 - 1945 by C. Beaton

- "A street scene in Kweilin" plate 150
- "Spring planting in Wiltshire in 1940" plate 1

Image 2. War Photographs 1939 - 1945 by C. Beaton

- "Onlooker gathering for a demonstration of air raid precaution in Chungking" plate 151

The American West in thirties by A. Rothstein p. 42

Russian Journal 1965 - 1990 by I. Morath

- "Photo of Kaheti Valley" 1967. p. 85

Shadow from Wire, poems and photograph of Australians in the Great War edited by G. Page

- "Inscription at Villers-Bretionex" pp. 94 - 95

Image 3. Shadow from Wire, poems and photograph of Australians in the Great War edited by G. Page

- "Poizieres" pp. 94 - 95

Changi photographer, George Aspinall's record of activity by T. Bowden.

- "The Selarang Barracks Square incident" p. 91

The Depression Years as photographed by A. Rothstein

- "Farm auction, Nebraska. 1938" p. 22

Changing reality : recent Soviet photograph.

by L. Bendavid-Val

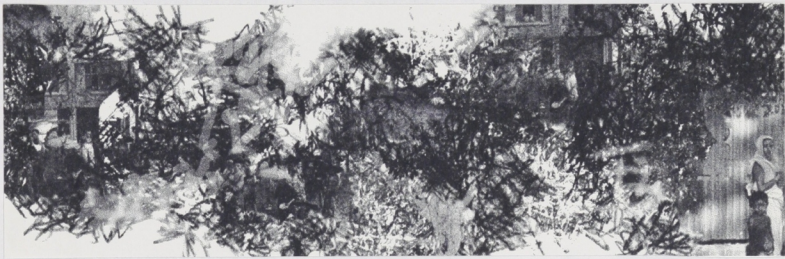
- "Welders in Metallurgical plant" V. Sokolayev p. 114

and also my crayon drawings. I combined both scanned photographs and drawings, manipulated them and finally drew directly on the computer as a finishing touch.

Phase 5

title : Thunder storm
size : 3 (25.40 x 4.50 cm.)
technique : Photohelia
printer : Subbiah M
year : 1994

This series of three images shows the aftermath of the
revolution and the complete earth-quake
always



Phase 5

title : Thunder storm
size : 3 (26.80 x 8.90 cm)
technique : Photoshop
printer : Bubble jet
year : 1994

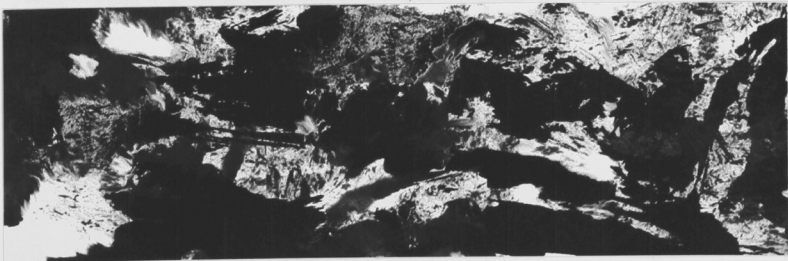
This series of three images shows the suppressed people in revolution. To visualise these images, I scanned my water colour and crayon drawings, combined and manipulated them on the computer. For this series I referred to nature - thunderstorm and earthquake. The idea came from *wayang* story where war time is always represented as the act of nature.



Phase 6

title : Conflict
size : 6 (26.90 x 8.90 cm)
technique : Photoshop
printer : Bubble jet
year : 1994

This series of six images shows chaotic conditions where the anger of the people about their uncertain future becomes the main subject. I used my crayon and water colour drawings to build an atmosphere of dejection and lost hope.



Phase 7

title Spring
size 5 (20.50 x 4.00 cm)
technique PhotoShop
printer Bubble jet
year 1994

The series of three photographs depicts the same scene, but with

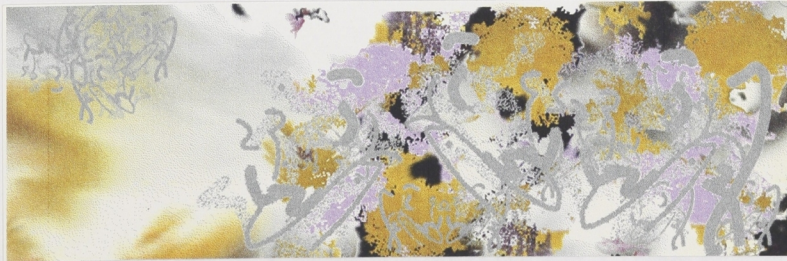
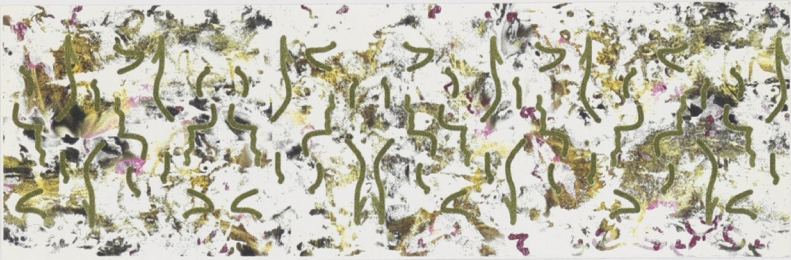
more
more
more
more
more



Phase 7

title : Spring
size : 3 (26.90 x 8.90 cm)
technique : Photoshop
printer : Bubble jet
year : 1994

This series of three images depicts spring time when the war is over. The possibility of dialogue with the power holder is represented in spring time by flower blossoms with golden and fresh colours as a background. Lines in the foreground are taken from calligraphy and painted in cheerful and pleasant colours.



Phase 8

title : Borobudur
size : 3 (26.90 x 8.90 cm)
technique : Photoshop
printer : Bubble jet
year : 1994

At the end of this series of works, as the last phase, the Borobudur form which is based on calligraphy appears once again, but in a clearer and stronger colour than in the first phase. This represents an ideal country where the power holder and the people can work together in an atmosphere of mutual trust and understanding.



Subject matter / aims of the proposal :**Subject Matter :**

Anger (the expression of anger)
Autobiographical, with cultural tradition (Javanese) and Western system and the conflicts between these two.

Aims :

To express my concern about art development, especially in modern Indonesian art. I am interested in the conflicts that we - the artists - are facing in Indonesia. These are conflicts between modernity and tradition, which arise from transition and change in our society. This is a very interesting sequence for us, although our government does not pay a lot of attention to this particular area.

As a developing country, our main development program is on economic growth. We want to be on the same level as a developed country. As Chandra Singh Hardy (from The World Bank) said in 1987 "... there is what the twentieth century or post war world offered, called development. It is a simple model, very clearly defined. It is mechanistic, it is technological, and it has limited ranking of values. You save, you invest, you acquire, you dominate, you beat another person, and that is what is development "1.
In Indonesia, economics means politics; and politics means power. Power is held by certain people who claim to be democratic. In fact they use power for their own purposes.

I am very lucky to have grown up in a strong Javanese tradition where fine art exists as part of our daily life (our fine art is dancing, crafts - *batik*, *wayang*, *keris*, mask - and calligraphy). Then, when I grew up and became interested in social, economic and political issues, I realised that we do not have the freedom to ask for something, that it is difficult to get clear and correct information and that we are not able to express our opinion. We have always been told and never asked by our government. To me, this is feudalism and totalitarianism.

I thus became very angry with feudalism and totalitarians. For a long

1Mohammad, K. *Pembangunan Rasa Malu*, Tempo. February 1994

time, I never had a chance to speak up and visualise exactly what I thought. I felt I was shackled by tradition and system. Moreover, I did not know how to break through. One thing that came up in my mind was that I wanted to move. I wanted to create movement, break through the shackles of tradition and obtain freedom.

Now that I am away from my country, staying in another culture, experiencing a different way of life and thought, I can see my culture from another point of view, which is very good for me. I think this is the ideal time to express my ideas in art; to create something new in my work based on what I have experienced before.

Starting from my anger, I began my work. In the beginning, my work was about denial of my culture through creating lines without any symbolic meaning and using unusual colours.

The second stage was when I looked at someone else's work (ie. Matisse, Zao Wou Ki). I have learnt how to see their work from a different perspective instead of accepting their work as the way it is. I am manipulating it and creating a new art form using the computer.

The next stage is developing my own visual language which is based on the rhythm of writing Javanese calligraphy and creating a movement through the dancing figure. Furthermore, I have to recall the beauty of the traditional colours.

In my current phase, I am expressing myself through the character of colours which is based on the characters of wayang. This constitutes my language.

Form of work : A Narrative

- In a scroll form, approx. h. 27 x 9 cm long or 105 x 35 cm

Research/ working process

Work done so far in 1993 as preparation for new work.

Historical and conceptual basis :

- The conflicts between colonial, traditional (Javanese) and contemporary (Western) experience in my country's development and my reaction to this. My search for identity as a primary source, and the differences between the expressive values (Eastern and Western Art).
- I began to develop these ideas in 1993, identifying my own symbols of cultural expression : calligraphy, colour, movement, autobiographical reference (ie. the child).
- Understanding anger - the rejection and acceptance of my cultural values.
ie. A Western education and a traditional upbringing and the conflict within me. This reality has been recognised since I have been here.

Methods and Materials :

- I used the computer reference material that I developed in 1993 as the starting point of my new 'language '
- Computer graphics : a long scroll.
The idea is inspired by :
 - Kelly Thompson (MA student in Textiles Dept.)
 - Technical input by Alan Köninger
- I looked at Javanese scroll (*wayang beber* - originally influenced by Indian epic stories) for form and background, myth and legend ie. colour characteristics.
- Based on traditional Javanese ancient long leafed books .
- Work based on drawings which have symbolic reference as my language (Javanese script, dance)
- Abstract expressionism : Jackson Pollock
ie. the conflict between meaning and non meaning,
consciousness and sub consciousness.

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Roro Mendut. Jakarta 1980
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- The Associated Press. China From the Long March to Tiananmen Square. N. Y. 1990
- Toer, P. A. A Child of all nations. Victoria. 1984
Footsteps. Victoria. 1990
House of glass. Victoria. 1992
Korupsi. Jakarta 1980
This earth of mankind. Victoria. 1982

SETIANNINGSIH PURNOMO

Turner, C (ed) Tradition and Change. Queensland. 1993

Born 1965, Surakarta, Indonesia

Education

- 1983 Candidate for Graduate Diploma in Art (Visual Practice and Research), School of Fine Arts, Institute of the Arts, UGM
- 1983-1989 Bachelor of Art / Visual Arts, Institut Kesenian Sepuluh Nopember

Group exhibitions

- 1991 An Indonesian Following Group, Centre Jakarta
- 1995 Following Exhibition, 1000 Freedom Gallery, Jakarta
- 1996 Following Exhibition, 1000 Freedom Gallery, Bandung
- 1997 Following exhibition, Lembaga Indonesia - Amerika, Jakarta
- 1995-1999 Group 40's exhibition, Lantai Atas Gedung, UGM

Solo exhibition

- 1998 Solo exhibition, Gedung 1000

Working Experience

- 1992-1993 Designer at PT. Garuda Indonesia
- 1993-1994 Designer at PT. Garuda Indonesia
- 1995-1996 Junior Designer, PT. Garuda Indonesia
- 1997-1998 Art & Design Consultant, UGM

SETIANINGSIH PURNOMO
SELECTED CURRICULUM VITAE

Born 1965, Surakarta, Indonesia

Education

- 1993 Candidate for Graduate Diploma of Art (Studio Practice and Research), Canberra School of Art, Institute of the Arts, A.N.U.
- 1983-1990 Bachelor of Arts (Visual)
Institut Kesenian Jakarta (IKJ)

Group exhibitions

- 1991 1st Indonesian Printmaking Biennale
Gallery Jakarta
- 1989 Printmaking exhibition
Japan Foundation Gallery, Jakarta
- 1988 Indonesian Printmaking
Decenta Gallery, Bandung
- 1987 Printmaking exhibition
Lembaga Indonesia - Amerika Gallery, Jakarta
- 1985-1988 Annual IKJ's exhibition
Taman Ismail Marzuki, Jakarta

Solo exhibition

- 1989 Final exhibition
Gallery IKJ

Working experiences

- 1990-1992 Secretary of Fine Art Department
Faculty of Fine Art and Design, IKJ
- 1989-1992 Junior Lecturer
Art & Theory Department, IKJ