

Nengah Sujena

Songs of Solitude



KOMANEKA

FINE
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GALLERY

Front cover:

The Embrace
Dekapan

acrylic on canvas

150 x 130 cm

2007

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Nengah Sujena

SONGS OF SOLITUDE

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Nengah Sujena

Songs of Solitude

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The Quiet Spaces Between

When we met, I sensed a kindred spirit in Sujena. As he showed me his paintings, I recognized something primal in his imagery of raindrops, solitary leaves, tall trees and rough-hewn triangles heralding a profound awe of the holy mountain. The simple shapes are rich with texture embedded with ancient scripts and symbols. Despite its contemporary appeal, I find his work arrestingly familiar with my vision of the Bali of old.

The artist is quick to point out that there is no political message in his work of the past one-and-a-half years that make up his **Songs of Solitude**. “All I wanted to do was to voice the song in my heart,” he kept telling me.

Reminiscent of the Moai stone figures of Easter Island, Sujena’s figures also have the evocative simplicity of the primitive figures I used to find carved out of wood or fern-tree-bark in ancient mountain temples of my childhood.

The culture and religion of Bali is multifaceted, varied and layered, with no distinct boundary

Sela yang Hening

Ketika berjumpa dengan Sujena, saya merasa bertemu kawan seperjalanan. Selagi ia menunjukkan lukisan-lukisannya, saya mengenali suatu nilai hakiki dalam caranya menggambarkan rinai hujan, helai daun, pohon-pohon yang jangkung serta perwujudan segi tiga yang memercikkan takjub pada gunung yang suci. Bentuk-bentuk sederhanya ini kaya dengan tekstur berupa aksara, simbol dan guratan. Meski bisa dianggap kontemporer, bagi saya karya-karya ini akrab dengan pandangan pribadi saya tentang Bali masa lampau.

*Seniman yang satu ini segera menegaskan bahwa tidak ada pesan politik apapun dalam karyanya selama satu setengah tahun terakhir yang kini dirangkai dalam **Nyanyi Sunyi**. Berulang kali ia berkata “Yang ingin saya lakukan hanyalah menyampaikan suara hati saya”.*

Seperti pencitraan figur batu Moai di Pulau Paskah, sosok-sosok dalam karya Sujena juga memiliki kesederhanaan abadi dari figur primitif yang dulu sering saya temukan dalam pahatan kayu atau batang pakis di beberapa pura pegunungan selama masa kanak-kanak.

between culture and religion. It varies from village to village and is the product of millennia of evolution. There are still traces back to megalithic times, when awe of the dynamic forces of nature entwined with ancestor worship. Seeded with Hindu and Buddhist philosophies that entered the archipelago during the heyday of spiritual, intellectual and physical trade between China and India, the resulting mélange of beliefs that give Bali its orientation is unique.

Primitive pieces of 'temporary art' made from whatever materials locally available have become a rarity. Perhaps they belonged to the days when the layperson still had ample time on their hands and still dared to donate art to their temples instead of hiring artisans. For greater longevity, sandstone, faux mud-brick and concrete seem to have taken over, and the style has become more ornate, more reflecting palace architecture than that of the original temples.

It's refreshing to rediscover these guardians of my childhood mountain temple pilgrimages appearing on Sujena's canvas. While his ancestry also heralds from the mountain slopes, he is unaware of

Budaya dan agama di Bali memiliki banyak segi yang bervariasi dan berlapis-lapis, tanpa batasan jelas antara keduanya. Antara satu desa dengan desa yang lain berbeda, dan ini merupakan hasil evolusi selama ribuan tahun. Di dalamnya masih terdapat jejak-jejak zaman megalitikum, ketika kekaguman terhadap kekuatan alam yang dinamis berjalain erat dengan pemujaan kepada roh leluhur. Diperkaya dengan benih filsafat Hindu dan Buddha yang masuk ke Nusantara pada masa jayanya pertukaran spiritual, intelektual dan barang dagangan antara Cina dan India, perpaduan kepercayaan yang memberi arahan bagi Bali sangatlah unik.

Wujud-wujud primitif 'seni sementara' yang dibuat dari bahan-bahan yang tersedia di alam sekitar kini sangat langka. Mungkin perwujudan ini berasal dari suatu masa ketika masyarakat masih memiliki cukup waktu dan keikhlasan dalam menyumbangkan karya seni untuk pura mereka ketimbang memanggil tukang. Agar lebih tahan lama, batu paras, batu bata dan beton telah menggantinya, dengan gaya yang semakin semarak, lebih menyerupai arsitektur Puri (istana) daripada pura sebagaimana aslinya.

their personal significance to me. The days of discovering distinct architectural motifs across Bali are nearly over since the difficulties of materials transportation have been overcome. Even renovations at Pura Puncak Penulisan north of Kintamani, for instance, and the remote temples up the slope of Mount Abang, now use materials from afar. At those two temples, intricate gargoyle-like concrete or sandstone statues have replaced the fern-tree figures

Sujena's color combinations are timid and careful but effective. 'Mother with two children' shows two small white figures nestling within the shape of a golden-hued mother bathed in fresh green environs. The gold imparts a regal aura to the mother figure, while her presence within the green inspires calm.

'Adam & Eve' on the other hand, is predominantly red. Masculine and feminine outlines with barely discernible Balinese script labels of 'Adam' and 'Hawa' (the Indonesian word for Eve) are separated by a red leaf that blends into the background. The figures are demarcated by a thick outline that defines the separate identities within the unity of red. Is de-

Sungguh menyegarkan bisa menemukan kembali citra para penjaga pura pegunungan di tirta yatra masa kecil saya dalam kanvas Sujena. Walaupun nenek moyangnya juga berasal dari lereng gunung, sang seniman sendiri tak menyadari maknanya secara pribadi bagi saya.

Masa-masa ketika seni arsitektur yang unik dapat ditemukan di berbagai pelosok Bali sudah nyaris berlalu sejak kendala transportasi dapat diatasi. Bahkan renovasi di berbagai pura, misalnya Pura Puncak Penulisan, serta beberapa pura di lereng Gunung Abang kini menggunakan bahan yang didatangkan dari jauh. Di kedua pura ini, patung-patung batu paras dan beton telah mengganti sosok-sosok dari batang pohon pakis.

Kombinasi warna yang dipilih Sujena terkesan hati-hati dan malu-malu, namun tetap efektif. 'Ibu Dua Anak' menunjukkan dua sosok putih melesak di dalam figur ibu berwarna keemasan yang diselimuti rona hijau segar. Emas memberi aura kewibawaan ningrat pada sosok ibu sedangkan kehadirannya dalam nuansa hijau seolah memberi kesejukan.

Disisi lain, 'Adam dan Hawa' hampir sepenuhnya dikuasai warna

lineating boundaries of identity necessary for peace in the battle of the sexes?

Growing up in the agrarian region of Bangli, within the neighborhood of Bali's one and only hospital for the mentally ill, Sujena traveled to complete his studies in art at Yogyakarta, where he chose to continue to live the life of a struggling artist. At the time, he considered Yogyakarta to be more nurturing for the ideas he was developing for his art.

“In terms of exploration, I prefer Yogyakarta – almost every kilometer along the road in the community I lived in I would find an artist friend who I could talk to about art. Who can I speak to about art in Bangli? I have to travel to Sukawati and Ubud if I want to have a decent conversation on contemporary art.”

Koman Wahyu Suteja tells me he felt eager to display these works because he finds a rare quality in them that Sujena has achieved – something few Balinese artists have managed to do. He has refrained from reproducing mainstream Balinese imagery; the classical motifs so strongly ingrained into the psyche of every Balinese.

merah. Sosok maskulin dan feminin dengan guratan aksara Bali 'Adam' dan 'Hawa' terpisah oleh sehelai daun merah yang menyatu dengan latar. Batasan antara sosok-sosok tersebut diperjelas oleh garis batas tebal yang menegaskan dua identitas yang terpisah dalam warna merah yang menyatu. Apakah menjaga batas-batas identitas diperlukan untuk menghadirkan damai dalam seteru antar gender? Dibesarkan di kawasan pertanian di Bangli, dalam lingkungan satu-satunya rumah sakit jiwa di Bali, Sujena merantau untuk menuntaskan studi seninya di Yogyakarta, tempat dimana ia kemudian menetap setelah tamat untuk menjalani hidup sebagai seniman. Pada masa itu ia berpikir Yogya lebih mendukung ide-ide yang ingin ia kembangkan dalam berkesenian.

“Dari segi eksplorasi, saya lebih suka tinggal di Yogya – hampir di setiap kilometer sepanjang jalan dari rumah, saya bisa bertemu dengan teman seniman yang bisa diajak bicara tentang seni. Dengan siapa saya bisa bicara tentang seni di Bangli? Saya harus pergi ke Sukawati atau Ubud kalau mau bicara panjang lebar tentang seni kontemporer.”

Koman Wahyu Suteja antusias memamerkan karya-karya ini sebab di

On Sujena's canvas, there is no Rangda or Barong, no Kris jagged daggers, dancers or terraced ricefields. There are no Patra or Boma patterns. His art heralds a departure from these traditional surrounds.

With tortured slashes, jabs and scrapes he builds towards an imagery of the ideal state of mind that he strives for. The resultant layers of laboured symbols and the juxtaposition of harsh and soft techniques sit surprisingly at ease together.

Sujena is an artist who works on an empty canvas with no pre-conception of the end product. His art is a process of unravelling emotions. The objects found upon his canvas are icons selected through this journey. In seeking a new vantage point from which to see his environs, he has rediscovered symbols that depict Bali's 'life philosophy'.

Sujena returned to his ancestral home in order to go back into his self. Forced to uproot from Yogyakarta by the July 2006 earthquake, he instead found a restlessness that greeted him day by day. Uncomfortable with his dependence to his extended family,

dalamnya ia menemukan suatu nilai langka yang berhasil digali Sujena – sesuatu yang hanya berhasil dilakukan oleh segelintir seniman Bali. Ia telah berhasil mengekang hasrat untuk mereproduksi pencitraan Bali yang umum; motif-motif klasik yang begitu kental dalam pribadi setiap orang Bali. Pada kanvas Sujena tidak ada perwujudan Rangda atau Barong, tidak ada Keris, penari atau persawahan berundak. Tidak ada pola-pola Patra atau Boma. Karya seninya merupakan penggambaran yang telah beranjak dari lingkungan tradisional.

Dengan guratan, hentakan dan torehan ia membangun suasana hati dan pikiran ideal yang ingin dicapainya. Hasil karya yang penuh lapisan perlambang serta perpaduan tehnik kasar dan lembut ini ternyata bisa hadir secara berdampingan.

Sujena adalah seorang seniman yang bekerja dalam sebidang kanvas tanpa ide awal mengenai apa yang ingin dilukisnya. Seni baginya adalah suatu proses untuk mengurai emosi. Obyek-obyek yang muncul dalam kanvasnya adalah ikon-ikon yang ia pilih selama menempuh perjalanan ini. Dalam mencari sudut pandang baru untuk melihat lingkungan sekitarnya,

dissatisfied with domestic issues while facing financial pressures, he found that his work soon became a kind of self-therapy. Not familiar with meditation techniques, he chose to paint the Buddha as his meditation. Upon the canvas he provided space for a flower, his symbol of purity. A leaf is his symbol of peace, of the coolness one would feel under the canopy of a mountain forest. In the heat of an anxious moment, he would paint a leaf to refresh his mind.

Symbols have enormous power that few understand fully, despite their wide use and recurring presence around us. In cultures where learning is experiential, the way we develop meaning, make predictions and apprehend the world is through the rich world of symbols. The layperson grasps these intuitively. Only initiates, so Bali's law of Ajawera says, are allowed to unveil and investigate this intuitive world of meaning.

The Balinese are brought up with a versatile framework of philosophy and not a dogmatic worldview. Their 'life philosophy' is absorbed through child's play, entertainment, drama, communal ritual as well as formal education

ia telah menemukan kembali simbol-simbol yang mengandung filsafat hidup Bali.

Sujena pulang ke kampung halamannya untuk kembali pada diri sendiri. Terpaksa meninggalkan Yogyakarta setelah gempa bulan Juli 2006, yang ia temukan ternyata suatu keresahan yang menghantui setiap hari. Karena merasa tak nyaman dengan ketergantungannya pada keluarga besar, tak puas dengan kondisi rumah tangga yang menghadapi kendala keuangan, seni kemudian menjadi proses terapi diri baginya. Mengaku tak mahir dalam teknik meditasi, ia memilih untuk melukis sang Buddha sebagai gantinya. Dalam kanvas ia sisakan ruang untuk sekuntum bunga, lambang kemurnian baginya. Daun adalah perlambang damai, kesejukan yang bisa ditemukan di bawah rimbun hutan di pegunungan. Pada puncak keraguan dan keresahan, ia melukis sehelai daun untuk menyejukkan pikirannya.

Simbol memiliki kekuatan dahsyat yang jarang dipahami seutuhnya, meskipun begitu sering dan luas pemaakaiannya di sekitar kita. Dalam suatu budaya di mana proses belajar diperoleh dari pengalaman, bagaimana manusia mengembangkan makna, membuat ramalan

at school. At the core of it all is a sense of awe and gratitude to the universe.

It is this sense of awe that I find in Sujena's works of art.

Between anxiety attacks, he would find brief calm: quiet spaces of solitude filled with golden silence. It is to this tune that he would like his heart to sing, manifesting as strokes of fresh green and white, the occasional strong black or red, and accents of gold.

Still, like most of us, every day Sujena would have bouts of negative energy expressed in his feelings, emotions and thoughts. He chooses not to dwell on these because he believes that if we all harboured such dark thoughts, the world would be a terrible place.

Sujena himself is always surprised with the art that manifests upon his canvas. While his grandfather took to woodcarving as a craft to supplement the family income, Sujena paints everyday to keep his sanity.

Upon his canvas Sujena has poured his tortuous journey in search of equilibrium and the sense of peace that he has found.

dan mengemas arti dunia adalah melalui simbol. Orang awam memaknai naluri untuk memahami hal ini. Hanya mereka yang telah melalui proses penyucian, menurut konsep Ajawera Bali, boleh menyibak tabir dan menelisik dunia makna yang intuitif ini.

Orang Bali dibesarkan dengan kerangka filsafat yang luwes, bukan suatu cara pandang yang dogmatis. Filsafat hidup mereka diserap melalui permainan kanak-kanak, hiburan, drama, ritual bersama dan juga pendidikan formal di sekolah. Jantung hati semua itu adalah suatu kekaguman dan syukur pada semesta.

Rasa takjub semacam ini yang saya temukan dalam karya seni Sujena.

Diantara desakan-desakan kere-sahan, ia terkadang menemukan kedamaian sesaat: ruang hening nan sunyi yang dipenuhi kesenyapan sempurna. Dalam nada hening inilah ia bisa mendengar hatinya bicara, suara yang menjelma menjadi kibasan warna hijau segar dan putih, terkadang hitam atau merah yang kental, disertai nuansa keemasan.

Namun tetap saja, seperti kita semua, setiap hari Sujena dilanda energi negatif yang mempengaruhi

I am glad to have glimpsed this calm through the windows of his work, reminding me of the words of the Buddha: “Peace comes from within.”

- Kadek Krishna Adidharma

dunia rasa, emosi dan pikirannya. Ia memilih untuk tak berlama-lama menyimpan emosi ini sebab ia percaya bahwa bila kita semua rela dijadikan tempat berlabuh bagi pikiran gelap, dunia ini tentu akan jadi mengerikan.

Sujena sendiri selalu heran pada karya yang terwujud dalam kanvasnya. Bila kakeknya dulu jadi pematung dan tukang ukir untuk menambah pendapatan keluarga, Sujena melukis setiap hari agar tetap waras.

Pada lembaran-lembaran kanvasnya Sujena telah menuangkan lika-liku perjalanan mencari keseimbangan dan rasa damai yang berhasil ia temukan. Saya lega bisa melihat ketenangan ini melalui jendela karya-karyanya yang mengingatkan saya akan kata-kata sang Buddha: “Damai datang dari dalam diri.”

- Kadek Krishna Adidharma



Trees
Pohon

acrylic on canvas
170 x 140 cm
2007

“ I recognized something primal in his imagery of raindrops, solitary leaves, tall trees and rough-hewn triangles heralding a profound awe of the holy mountain. ”

Saya mengenali suatu nilai hakiki dalam caranya menggambarkan rinai hujan, helai daun, pohon-pohon yang jangkung serta perwujudan segi tiga yang memercikkan takjub pada gunung yang suci.



Yearning for Rain
Merindukan Hujan

acrylic on canvas
145 x 145 cm
2007



Fresh Shadow
Bayangan Kesejukan

acrylic on canvas
100 x 65 cm
2007

“ Two small white figures
nestling within the shape of a
golden-hued mother bathed
in fresh green environs. ”



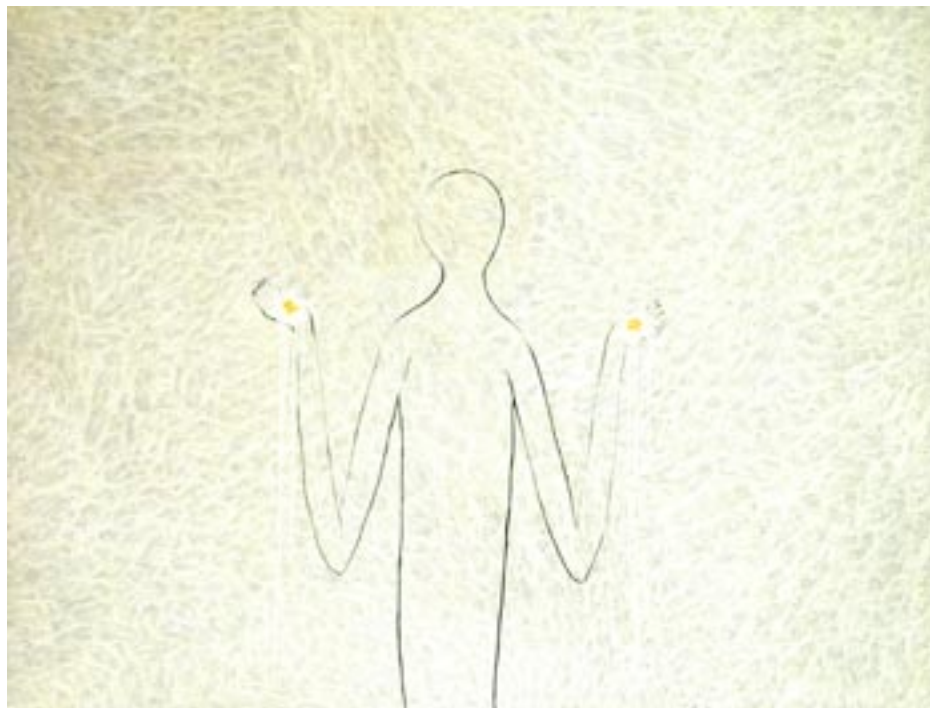
Mother with Two Children

Ibu Dua Anak

acrylic on canvas

140 x 60 cm

2007



Meditation I

Meditasi I

acrylic on canvas

140 x 180 cm

2007



Melepas Lelah
Relaxing

acrylic on canvas
75 x 55 cm
2007



Adam and Eve
Adam dan Hawa

acrylic on canvas
150 x 145 cm
2007

“ The figures are demarcated by a thick outline that defines the separate identities within the unity of red. Is delineating boundaries of identity necessary for peace in the battle of the sexes? ”

Batasan antara sosok-sosok tersebut diperjelas oleh garis batas tebal yang menegaskan dua identitas yang terpisah dalam warna merah yang menyatu. Apakah menjaga batas-batas identitas diperlukan untuk menghadirkan damai dalam seteru antar gender?



Moon
Bulan

acrylic on canvas
150 x 145 cm
2007



Concentration
Konsentrasi

acrylic on canvas
140 x 45 cm
2007

“ With tortured slashes, jabs and scrapes he builds towards an imagery of the ideal state of mind that he strives for. ”



Seeking Freshness
Mencari Kesejukan II

acrylic on canvas
140 x 80 cm
2007

I Nengah Sujena

Bangli, Bali, on 21 Januari 1976

Graduated from ISI Yogyakarta (2005)

Exhibitions

- 2006** Group exhibition of SDI Yogyakarta in Bali
Exhibition at Sawah Art Gallery, Singapore
- 2005** Pre Bali Biennale exhibition
Trio exhibition at Sika Gallery, Bali
Bazar exhibition in Yogyakarta
Group exhibition in Museum Ullen Sentalu, Yogyakarta
Group exhibition in Hotel Possesio, Jakarta
Group exhibition of SDI in Gallery Langgeng, Magelang
- 2004** Exhibition “Perjalanan Seni Lukis Indonesia” at Bentara Budaya, Jakarta
Group exhibition at Kedai Kebun, Yogyakarta
Group exhibition Benang-Benang 96 in Santi Art Gallery, Jakarta
Group exhibition Benang-Benang 96 in Puri Art Gallery, Malang
Drawing exhibition at Sekretariat SDI in Yogyakarta.
- 2003** Group exhibition SDI at Neka Museum, Bali
Group exhibition at Regent Hotel, Jakarta
Exhibition Pratisara Affandi Adi Karya in Yogyakarta
Exhibition “6 Rupa 6 Warna” at One Gallery, Jakarta
Group exhibition SDI Yogyakarta in Yogyakarta
- 2002** Group exhibition Detik 96 in Yogyakarta
Group exhibition Jarak Bang in Bali
- 2001** Group exhibition Benang-Benang 96 in Yogyakarta.
Exhibition “Mister !!!” in Yogyakarta.
Exhibition “Identitas” in Bentara Budaya, Yogyakarta
Group exhibition at Santi Gallery, Jakarta
Group exhibition SDI at Gallery Nasional, Jakarta
Exhibition “Bali Kontemporer” at Bentara Budaya, Jakarta
Exhibition Dies Natalis ISI in Yogyakarta
Group exhibition Jarak Bang in Bali

- 2000** Group Exhibition Benang-Benang 96 in Bali
Exhibition Philip Moris Art Award in Jakarta
Exhibition “Indonesia Expression” at Soabian Gallery, Singapore
Exhibition Five Young Artists at Embun Gallery, Yogyakarta and Jakarta
Exhibition Young Artist at Purna Budaya, Yoyakarta
Exhibition Asia Pacific Nokia Art Awards in Singapura
- 1999** Exhibition Nokia Art Awards in Jakarta
Exhibition Prastisara Affandi in Yogyakarta
Group exhibition SDI 6 in Bali
Group exhibition Detik 96 in Yogyakarta
Group exhibition Benang-Benang in Yogyakarta
- 1998** Group exhibition SDI in Yogyakarta
Exhibition Philip Morris Art Awards in Jakarta
Exhibition “Refleksi Zaman” in Yogyakarta
Exhibition Dies Natalis ISI Yogyakarta
Exhibition FKY Yogyakarta

Awards

- 1998** Finalist of Philip Morris Art Awards, Jakarta
1999 Big five of Nokia Art Awards, Jakarta
2000 Merit Awards of Asia Pacific Nokia Art Awards, Singapore
2003 Big ten of Prastisara Affandi Adi Karya

Komaneka Fine Arts Gallery is a new generation gallery that features paintings by artists with higher education in the art and experience or study abroad. Through their unique works they show the world with a new and exciting visions of awareness that parallel the lifestyles of contemporary connoisseurs.

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