



# LOOKING Back

EIGHTEEN ARTISTS GIVE THEIR INDIVIDUAL TAKES ON A HENDRA GUNAWAN MASTERPIECE

ISA Art & Design presents “Reverberation” From the Past to the Present, featuring an essential painting from Hendra Gunawan’s oeuvre as the starting point for 18 contemporary artists to respond to the work. The theme was to challenge artists to look back at Hendra Gunawan’s artwork while reflecting on intergenerational artistic expressions and issues surrounding Indonesia today. These artists are Adi Sundoro, Argya Dhyaksa, Condro Priyoaji, Erik Rifky, Ferial Afif, Galih Adika,

Hadassah Emmerich, Haiza Putti, Luh Gede, Maharani Mancanagara, Puri Fidhini, Sillyndris, Sinta Tantra, Talitha Maranila, Vienasty, Widwar, Yogie Ginanjar, and Yosefa Aulia.

In this exhibition, the young artists reflect on the spirit that drives Indonesia’s development in Hendra Gunawan’s works through new art issues and media. The topics raised by the artists in this exhibition have various expressions that bring fresh new perspectives, not only in

their artistic elements, but also in their appreciation in rebuilding the spirit of development through their works. Each artist finds and creates artistic expressions from narratives of changes that occur over time.

Hendra Gunawan (1918-1983) was a famous Indonesian artist who lived through various periods of Indonesia’s history. Because of his unique style that used exaggerated figures and bold colours, contemporary artists look up to Gunawan when creating art. The famed maestro’s work usually spoke about Indonesian reality, such as fishermen on the beach, the revolutionary period, and mother and child. It was such a sharp turn from the “Moie Indies” and dogmatic themes which were then prevalent in Indonesian art.

Hendra used a mix of styles that felt both traditional and modern, and it is difficult to determine the specific style or combination that he was accustomed to. What makes it possible is the mapping of colour, visual and theme developments that occurred in his work. During the revolution (1940-1950), until when he was a prisoner in prison, these depictions tended to be dominated by earth colours (brown, red, sienna, etc.) and had a dark and dramatic nuance, as in “Portrait of a Soldier” (1950). A



colour change contrasts with that period and after he was released from the Kebon Waru prison (1965-1978). The intensity of the colour saturation of Hendra’s work began to increase and produced brighter colours, as seen in “Fish Market on The Beach”. The colours of that period inspired and attracted a lot of young artists who participated in this exhibition, such as Condro Priyaji, who realised an intense turquoise colour in Hendra’s works. Condro was very interested in using Hendra’s colours which were quite lively, including red and orange, as accents in his own work. For visuals, Condro continues the shadow still life series that he is currently working on, combined with Hendra’s choice of colours and fish objects, which are the common themes in Hendra’s works.

It is different for Adi Sundoro, a graphic artist from Jakarta who used turquoise to print visual graphics to his media. His work is the result

of his research visiting the fish market in Jakarta to respond to Hendra’s work, “Fish Market on the Beach”. With the reality of the fish market he encounters in his daily life, Adi visually displays objects in the Kramat Jati Market, East Jakarta. Today’s market, which is sparkling and illuminated by neon lights and crowded with vehicles, is Adi’s spotlight and is applied to the holographic colours in his work.

Hendra often raised social issues of the lower class in his art, inspiring Sillyndris to present canned sardines with the brand Meranti. Meranti is food for social assistance to the underprivileged in Riau, where the majority of the population are poor fishermen. Some artists also realise the organic elements in Hendra’s works. Various visualisations of the distinctive and symbolic feet in Hendra Gunawan’s works are a source of tracing and developing ideas in Galih’s works. The sideways, expressive figure, dynamic figure movements, and high saturation colour collisions enter the narrative of Hendra Gunawan’s thought. Galih captures and tries to see the speech form of each of Hendra’s paintings and applies this to his work.

This exhibition provides a critical challenge for young artists to observe the artistic expression found in the works of previous generations. By exploring and maintaining narratives in the development of thought, artistic sensitivity, and imagination of participants, we try to rediscover the intersection of contextual fragments that still exist and are considered relevant today. Through this exhibition, we hope that the common thread for the narrative built by Hendra Gunawan can continue to be elastically interwoven and create new forms of expression that can keep up with the times.

These works will be included in a current exhibition at the ISA Art and Design Gallery. For more information about this exhibition and other ISA Art and Design Exhibitions, please visit [www.isaartanddesign.com](http://www.isaartanddesign.com).

1. Reverberation – From Past to the Present Exhibition at ISA Art Gallery
2. Footnote – Galih Adika
3. Fish Market in The Beach – Hendra Gunawan
4. Fish Market in The City – Adi Sundoro (Asun)

By Deborah Iskandar. Photo: ISA Art and Design, Galih Adika & Adi Sundoro