

“what i really  
love to do  
is trivial”



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**“what i really  
love to do  
is trivial”**

Bunga Jeruk  
23 Januari - 5 Februari 2011

Emmitan CA Gallery  
Jl. Walikota Mustajab 76 Surabaya

Opened by  
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Ibu Erkin Limantoro  
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Tahun 2002, bersama istri saya Emmy Christina (almarhum) saya melihat pameran karya Bunga Jeruk. Waktu itu saya dan Emmy tertegun, karya Bunga Jeruk betul-betul artistik, matang, lucu dan memiliki pesan yang saya anggap alami. Setelah kami berunding, kami berdua sepakat untuk mengoleksi sebuah karyanya. Itulah untuk pertama kalinya saya mengenal lukisan Bunga Jeruk.

Setelah itu, saya selalu berminat untuk mengoleksi karya Bunga, tapi tak pernah kebagian. Saya duga, tiap kali pameran karya Bunga sudah direserve paling tidak oleh tiga orang. Dan saya selalu kebagian nomor urutnya, bukan karyanya.

Gaya hidup Bunga sederhana. Rumahnya di Yogyakarta merangkap sekaligus studionya, penuh oleh tumpukan buku seni rupa. Tiap kali William mengunjunginya, pasti Bunga sedang berkarya atau kalau tidak membaca.

Pernah William bertanya: sebagai perupa perempuan, bagaimana Bunga membagi waktu untuk pekerjaan sebagai ibu rumah tangga dan berkarya seni?

Jawaban Bunga: “*Bro*, aku telah memiliki landasan hidup yang jelas untuk kesenian dan keluargaku. Aku membagi waktu sehari 24 jam menjadi delapan jam untuk seni, delapan jam untuk keluarga dan delapan jam sisanya untuk istirahat.”

“Sampai kapan?” tanya William lagi. “Sampai detak jantungku berhenti, *Bro*,” jawab Bunga.

Menurut saya, Bunga memiliki sikap dan tujuan hidup yang matang dan dewasa. Dia akan menolak order kolektor atau *art trader* yang datang ke studionya. Ia hanya akan menjual karyanya lewat pameran yang berkuratorial bagus dan cocok. Ia hormat dan patuh pada infrastruktur kesenian yang ada. Pada pameran tunggal di Emmitan CA Gallery ini, Bunga memamerkan lima lukisan dan sepuluh buah patung.

Terakhir saya ingin mengucapkan terima kasih dan penghargaan kepada para *host* pameran: Ibu Semiwati L. Soenaryo, Ibu Erkin Limantoro, Ibu Christine Radjimin dan Ibu dr. Melanie Setiawan yang meresmikan pameran ini.

Selamat menikmati.

Hendrotan  
Emmitan CA Gallery

In 2002, along with my late wife Emmy Christina, I saw an exhibition of works by Bunga Jeruk. We were mesmerized. We found Bunga Jeruk's works truly artistic, mature, witty, and convey messages that I considered genuine. After we talked about it, we agreed to collect one of her works. That was the first time I was introduced to Bunga Jeruk's paintings.

From then on, I always wanted to collect more of her works, but I never had the chance to do so as they were all sold out. I presume that every time she held an exhibition, her works had already been reserved by at least three people. I always had the calling number, but never the artwork.

Bunga Jeruk lives simply. Her home in Yogyakarta, which also serves as her studio, is full of piles of art books. Every time William came to visit, he will find Bunga working or reading.

William once asked: as a female artist, how does Bunga divide her time between working as an artist and as a mother?

Bunga answered, “Brother, I have set a clear basis for my life, for art and my family. I divide the 24 hours in a day into three: eight hours for art, eight hours for my family, and the remaining eight hours to rest.”

“Until when?” William further asked. “Until my heart stops beating,” Bunga answered.

I think Bunga has a clear and mature attitude and objectives. She rejects orders by collectors or art traders who come to visit her in her studio. She will only sell her works through exhibitions with good curatorial quality and ones that suit her. She respects the existing art infrastructure. In her solo show at Emmitan CA Gallery today, Bunga presents five paintings and ten sculptures.

Last but not least, I wish to extend my gratitude and respect to the hosts of the exhibition: Mrs. Semiwati L. Soenaryo, Mrs. Erkin Limantoro, Mrs. Christine Radjimin, and Mrs. Dr. Melanie Setiawan, who opens this exhibition.

Please enjoy the show.

Hendrotan  
Emmitan CA Gallery



## BJ

Sampai kapanpun kiranya dia tak akan mengubah namanya, misalnya menjadi Bunga Mawar, Melati, Kenanga, atau Cempaka. Nama-nama bunga itu memang lebih populer sebagai judul lagu, aktris pop, nama real estate, mal atau apalah. Tapi Bunga Jeruk? Soal nama itu memang ada kisahnya. Di pekarangan luas rumah eyang putrinya dulu, di Solo tumbuh satu-satunya pohon jeruk yang konon bunganya berbeda dari pohon jeruk kebanyakan. Bunga jeruk dari pohon itu bercahaya di malam hari. Seperti apa cahayanya, hanya intuisi seorang penyair yang bisa menangkapnya. Maka, diberilah dia nama: Bunga Jeruk. Yang pasti, sampai dewasa ia belum pernah satu kali pun menyaksikan ada bunga jeruk bercahaya malam-malam seperti kata sang penyair, bapaknya dulu. Tapi ia memang bukan bunga jeruk; ia adalah "Bunga Jeruk" atau BJ!

Tiap kali BJ –entah kenapa dan bagaimana- diam-diam perlu menengok ke masa kecilnya. Urusan namanya yang ajaib itu, biarlah ditinggalkan saja di pekarangan rumah eyang di masa yang sudah lewat. Yang justru tetap bercahaya sampai di masa remaja dan kelak ketika dewasa adalah masa kanak-kanaknya. BJ sudah menuturkan warna-warni masa kanaknya di buku *Living Colors* (diterbitkan oleh Badd Painting, Solo, Indonesia 2002).<sup>1</sup> Kulkas di rumah eyang di Jogja, beberapa kali boyongan rumah, baju baru, suasana ulang tahun, kucing-kucing, tv pertama di rumah, dongeng-dongeng yang dikisahkan eyangnya, boneka-boneka mahal yang cuma bisa dihayalkan, sampai dandanan ibunya, semua itu mewarnai masa kanak-kanaknya.

Pameran tunggal BJ yang pertama muncul pada 1996. Tapi adalah pameran *Animaux!* (Lembaga Indonesia Perancis (LIP), Jogja dan Sculpture Square, Singapura (2000) yang telah melejitkan namanya. Dengan pameran tunggal yang kedua itu, BJ mulai dikenal sebagai seniman dengan objek-patung satwa yang menampilkan permukaan halus patung-patungnya serupa porselen, sebelum *boom* seniman-seniman kontemporer Cina datang dan mempengaruhi cara berkarya banyak seniman di Indonesia. Tidak cuma menghaluskan, BJ bahkan mengecat sebagian patung-patung itu seperti layaknya melukis. *Animaux!* seperti menunjukkan gejala penyimpangan, ketika para perupa -khususnya pasca 1998- tampak sangat tertarik pada tema-tema sosial-politik, sesuatu yang 'besar' dan dianggap lebih berguna. Manusia adalah *zoon politikon*, binatang politik, tapi seniman yang tertarik pada gejala politik dan ingin mengubah keadaan tidak mengurus satwa atau 'politik satwa'.

Di tengah kecenderungan seperti itulah, BJ merasa perhatian dan tema berkaryanya berbeda dengan umumnya para seniman. Di halaman 66 *Living Colors* -sampulnya gadis cilik menitikkan air mata- saya menemukan sebuah kutipan dari BJ. Pernyataan itulah yang saya pungut untuk judul pameran ini. Bagi BJ, tema pokok karyanya akan dipandang oleh sebagian besar 'seniman politis' sebagai sesuatu yang remeh-temeh atau sepele. Mereka –para seniman yang ingin mengubah dunia- tidak cuma melihat karya, tapi menilai apa saja yang telah mempengaruhi kehidupan seniman. Para seniman yang berpihak pada rakyat, misalnya bersumpah tak akan menginjakkan kaki di kedai cepat saji McDonald's.

Catatan:

<sup>1</sup> BJ menulis melalui surel ke saya (13 Januari 2011), bahwa buku *Living Colors* itu sebagian diakui sebagai tulisan Omi Intan Naomi (1970, kakak kandungnya yang dikenal sebagai penulis. “Ada bagian bagian yang sebetulnya aku kurang setuju. Tapi buku itu dicetak waktu aku di New York tahun 2002 dan aku belum sempat baca sebelum naik cetak,” tulis BJ. Dalam pengantar ini, yang saya maksud dengan masa kanak-kanak BJ sebagian bersandar pada tuturan dalam buku itu, ditambah wawancara dengannya melalui email.

Bagi BJ pandangan semacam itu berlebihan kalau tak dapat disebut menggelikan.

Di mata BJ, kehidupan seniman sepenuhnya adalah 'living colors'. Pengalaman masa kanak-kanaknya, macam-macam hobinya yang 'sepele', kehidupan sehari-hari, barang-barang di pasar maupun pernik-pernik di toko- semua itu akan membuat kehidupan seniman menjadi lebih menarik. BJ lebih tertarik untuk menjadi seniman semacam itu ketimbang seniman politis yang anti nonton MTV, menolak musik pop, tak punya idola pemain bola atau *ogah* mengurus hobinya yang personal. Tautan antara berbagai kepingan pengalaman keseharian yang penuh warna dan masa silam yang telah membentuknya justru mempesona BJ. Maka, bagi BJ masa kanak-kanaknya yang penuh warna bisa bercahaya dan ditafsirkan lagi di masa sekarang, seperti bunga jeruk yang bercahaya di halaman rumah eyang putrinya dulu. Suatu ulang-alik rahasia – tak jarang juga antagonis- antara berbagai kepingan itu adalah proses kreatif yang tentunya cuma BJ sendiri yang tahu.

### “Makan hati” BJ

BJ melukis taman bunga seluas langit dengan cucuran air terjun jernih, putri cantik dan gadis mungil yang dikelilingi oleh kupu-kupu dan kucing-kucing yang seakan tak kalah cantiknya. Halaman rumah eyang putrinya atau rumahnya di pinggiran Solo dulu pasti tidak seperti itu. Pemandangan itu seperti petikan dari sebuah dongeng. Ruang keluarga dengan jendela-jendela lapang dan gordena tebal serta pelapis dinding warna cerah -semua mulus tanpa cela- dilukis rata dan terang-benderang di atas kanvasnya. Di pojok itu kita melihat kulkas dua pintu berwarna kuning dan abu-abu, lebih gede dibandingkan *merchandise*-nya seniman EddiE haRA yang mahal itu. Barang semacam itu dulu begitu ajaib bagi BJ kecil, kini seakan dijaga oleh sekumpulan anak dan kucing-kucing. Mereka tengah berpesta-pora “makan hati”. BJ menemukan lagi *living colors-nya sebagai seniman dengan imajinasi yang melambung seperti* kucing-kucingnya yang dilukis jungkir-balik, berakrobat di tepian semesta. Bagi BJ sebagian masa silam itu memang “makan hati”. Tapi, betapapun merongrongnya masa itu, ia tak akan tega melampiaskan emosinya dengan mencemplungkan babi kecil ke dalam mangkuk sup seperti



dilukiskan oleh Michael Sowa, seniman yang disukainya. Karena tetap bebas dalam memilih bahasa artistiknya sendiri -yang “sepele” dan nonpolitis- BJ condong untuk “makan hati”nya sendiri. Irisan-irisan pengalaman dan pengamatannya yang halus terkadang melahirkan setengah kiasan dan setengah kenyataan yang dibungkus dengan imajinasi dan mungkin juga sejenis romantisasi.

Kita dapat mengatakan, untuk berkomunikasi dengan dunia yang “makan hati”, BJ telah menciptakan semacam alter-ego, rujukan yang membuat ia atau kita bisa keluar dari kungkungan sempit sang ego sendiri. Alter-ego adalah aku atau kita yang “lain”, sejawat yang kita percayai dalam percakapan imajiner, yang mampu membentangkan jembatan-jembatan rahasia antara kita dan dunia.

Seperti kita lihat pada berbagai rupa karyanya, sosok anak-anak adalah *alter-ego BJ tiap kali ia pergi ke dunia imajinasinya. Bisa jadi, “pergi” di sini juga berarti “pulang”, atau sebaliknya, “pulang” adalah “pergi*. Dengan cara itulah rupanya BJ secara tak langsung membuat penilaian terhadap dunia kaum dewasa, kekuasaan orang dewasa dan paham kedewasaan. Kita tahu, bahwa sejak zaman Pencerahan dulu menjadi dewasa artinya lebih kurang adalah percaya pada kedigdayaan nalar, seberisiko atau seinstrumental apa pun tindakan atau jalan yang disebut bernalar.

Seniman umumnya tidak menyukai nalar yang serba total. Bukan semata karena mau mengelak dari risikonya, melainkan karena mereka –secara intuitif- tak mungkin tunduk pada totalitasnya yang ganjil. Dengan begitu, para seniman mempunyai paham sendiri mengenai nalar dan paham kedewasaan yang lebih kontekstual dengan seninya, kalau boleh dibilang begitu. Kalau anda percaya yang sebaliknya, bagaimana mungkin gambar-gambar dan patung binatang dari planet ajaibnya Eddie haRA atau 'paspor-paspor Peter Pan terbang' nya Tintin Wulia dapat kita pahami? “Dunia Sophie” Jostein Gaarder akan semata-mata menjadi teks filsafat yang menjemukan dan kehilangan kemisteriusannya. Di dalam dunia yang tak berlaku hukum sebab-akibat – dan itu dia satu-satunya sandaran bagi nalar- para senimanlah yang pertama-tama akan bersorak gembira, seperti kata Alan Lightman. Jika BJ senantiasa gemar bertamasya ke *alter-*

*egonya, agar tidak ter“makan hati” begitu saja oleh hitam-putih nalar dunia, di dunia imajinatif seperti apa anak-anak dibayangkannya bermain?*

### Dunia pasca-sekolah

Bertrand Russel dengan sinis pernah bilang, bahwa tak ada anak yang dilahirkan sebagai bodoh, adalah lembaga bernama sekolah yang telah membuat mereka 'berubah' menjadi demikian. Alam, menurut kita adalah maha-pintar. Tapi semua sekolah tidak dibuat untuk mengakui begitu saja bahwa alam memang maha-pintar. Maka ada yang bikin buku tentang anti-sekolah yang kemudian menjadi laris dan sangat terkenal. Sekolah pendeknya adalah mengandaikan bahwa kita semua akan selalu lebih dan lebih pintar sehingga kelak mampu bersaing dengan alam, kalau tidak mempecundangnya. Kira-kira begitu 'iman' orang sekolahan. Belakangan kita diberi tahu, bahwa kepintaran atau kecendekiaan ternyata tidaklah satu jenis, dan di antara hampir selusin penggolongan itu kita tak menemukan ada kategori 'bodoh'.

BJ mengirim surel-nya kepada saya, mengatakan bahwa kita -kaum dewasa- pada dasarnya tak pernah tahu, akan menjadi apa kelak bayi-bayi yang sudah terlanjur kita lahirkan. BJ sendiri telah melahirkan dua bayi. Tentu saja mereka tetap akan menjadi manusia. Tapi, Ted Bandy, kriminal top atau orang-orang yang suka merampas motor yang melintas sepanjang jalanan Bantul di tengah malam itu, sehingga membuat tercekam masyarakat Jogja, kenapakah mereka itu? Sejak kapan anak-anak telah menjadi begitu yakin dan bebas memilih untuk 'masa depan' mereka sendiri, antara gula-gula lolipop, segepok duit atau pistol, dengan cetakan wajah sumringah yang persis serta ekspresi yang sama tak berdosanya ? Sambil membayangkan harimau bernama Shela di Kebun Binatang Taman Rimba, Jambi yang tewas diracun, pikir BJ, apakah tidak sebaiknya orang-orang jahat di dunia kita dibunuh saja?

Ada kisah terkenal dari novel karangan Mochtar Lubis (1922-2004) mengenai kehidupan sang Bromocorah yang sering dikutip oleh sosiolog Ignas Kleden (1996) untuk menjelaskan hubungan antara gejala kriminalitas dan struktur sosial. Suatu ketika, seorang Bromocoah telah



bertekad untuk mengubah hidupnya dari kebiasaan untuk membegal desa-desa lain. Ia tak lagi mengajarkan ilmu silat kepada anaknya, bahkan telah memutuskan untuk mengirimnya ke sekolah, dan ia sendiri bergegas pergi ke kantor transmigrasi untuk mencari kemungkinan kehidupan lain di tempat yang baru. Beberapa bulan kemudian jawaban yang ditunggu-tunggunya pun tiba, mengabarkan bahwa permohonan transmigrasinya telah ditolak karena ia adalah seorang bromocorah.

Mochtar Lubis menulis dalam novel “Bromocorah” (Sinar Harapan, Jakarta, 1984) itu, antara lain begini: “Dia tidak terkejut. Ia telah menduga demikian. Sebagai telah dibayangkannya sendiri, bagi orang seperti dia, tidak ada jalan keluar. Hanya kalau masyarakatnya berubah, baru hidupnya bisa berubah...”

BJ membenci kemiskinan dan kejahatan karena keduanya seakan menghukum kita agar kita tak bisa beranjak kemana-mana, seperti kehidupan sang Bromocorah yang tetap harus bertahan di dunia para begal. Dalam wawancaranya dengan Omi Intan Naomi (1970-2006) di buku *Living Colors* itu, ia mengatakan selalu sedih mengingat masa kanak-kanaknya. Tak kesampaian punya boneka kecil, mengenakan baju baru setahun sekali hanya di saat ulang tahun, tak jarang membuat BJ masih merasa berang sampai sekarang. Kemiskinan menjerat anak-anak dari kemungkinan untuk berkembang sepenuhnya, dan membiarkan mereka bersandar begitu saja pada keajaiban alam atau keniscayaan sosial. Adapun kejahatan akan menghukum kita bukan sebagai ibunda yang penuh belas kasih atau guru yang baik, yang menjewer atau menjebloskan kita ke kamar mandi, supaya kita mendengar tangisan dan sesal kita sendiri. Kejahatan berpusat pada egoisme, dan egoisme itu selalu ingin menghukum dengan cara mengakhiri kehidupan yang lain.

Untuk melakukan ulang-alik secara rahasia ke dunia kanak-kanaknya, BJ menciptakan sosok anak-anak yang begitu *real* dari masa kininya. Kiranya, inilah realisme pop-nya BJ, bahkan 'realisme lolipop' yang digarap serupa pernak-pernik di toko: 'keindahan' yang sepenuhnya ingin dipresentasikan oleh yang apa yang tampak di permukaan, yang selalu mulus dan berwarna-warni. Tapi pengalaman dan persepsi manusiawi sebenarnya menuntut untuk melampaui yang permukaan. Di sinilah BJ membangun

makna karyanya dengan menggunakan sejenis *alter-ego* yang dekat dengan dunia anak-anak. Kita tahu, BJ telah menciptakan Animaux yang dibayangkannya sebagai sejenis kesadaran dan kecintaan mendalam pada diri manusia terhadap (kehidupan) satwa. Dan lebih-lebih lagi, Animaux! - sebagai gambaran metaforis BJ- juga ingin mengatakan bahwa “semua adalah satwa”.

Ada relasi aneh yang menghubungkan anak-anak dan kehidupan satwa. Yang mengaitkan keduanya adalah semacam kandang imajiner yang tak nampak. Dari sana sejenis gambaran idealistis BJ mengenai ketulusan muncul, memantulkan semacam kesadaran akan kesetaraan atau katakanlah kerinduan akan kesatuan ontologis di alam. Gambaran populer semacam itu adalah lumba-lumba yang menolong orang tenggelam atau anjing menyelamatkan tuannya dari kebakaran, kata BJ. National Geographic yang saya tonton bersama anak saya malam-malam menyiarkan, tak lama lagi kita akan paham semua bahasa satwa.

Lihatlah satwa pun memiliki sejenis kepekaan untuk membedakan diri dengan *liyan*, seperti terbukti melalui uji cermin. Anak kucing berlari ke arah lain ketika melihat bayangannya di cermin untuk memburu yang dikiranya teman main. Gajah, kera dan lumba-lumba lebih canggih, karena mereka langsung dapat bereaksi ke arah diri sendiri ketika diberikan tanda pada bagian badan tertentu dan dihadapkan ke cermin. Sejenis burung gagak mencemplungkan batu tepat ke dalam bejana untuk menaikkan permukaan air. (“What Animals Think”, TIME, 16 Agustus 2010,). Apakah kita masih juga berpikir bahwa binatang hanya punya satu jenis naluri sederhana saja untuk mempertahankan hidup, yakni dengan cara memangsa yang lain? Casper (1998-2010) adalah seekor kucing yang menjadi terkenal karena gemar pulang-pergi dengan Bis Kota No 3, menunggu di halte bersama penumpang-penumpang lain untuk keluyuran menikmati pemandangan kota Plymouth di Inggris selatan, sebelum mati tertabrak motor.

“Itu mungkin dapat disebut sebagai kebaikan binatang. Termasuk misalnya menyediakan diri sebagai makanan manusia,” kata BJ. Memang ironis karena binatang bahkan tidak memangsa jenisnya seperti manusia yang memakan apa saja.

Kemiskinan itu berat, kejahatan itu kasar. Dengan andaian semacam itu kita dapat membayangkan atau mengidentifikasi semacam alusi atau pandangan estetis tertentu –yang entah disadari atau tidak- digunakan BJ untuk memuluskan semua permukaan patungnya, terutama sejak tahun 2000 dengan pameran Animaux! itu. Kehalusan atau kemulusan semacam itu seakan tidak mengizinkan kita untuk menyentuh patungnya, kecuali hanya untuk dipandang-telusuri secara imajinatif dari suatu jarak. Ya, karena kita datang dari dunia yang selalu terancam oleh kemiskinan dan niscaya terjerat oleh kejahatan. Kehalusan itu menyenangkan dan kemulusan tidak menghambat.

Realisme lolipop BJ ini –terutama menyangkut patung- misalnya terasa sebagai datang begitu saja dari dunia sehari-hari, dunia yang tiap saat dapat kita amati. Tetapi kita bisa melihatnya sebagai representasi sebuah dunia yang justru tak langsung kita temukan maknanya karena dunia itu adalah dunia anak-anak yang bermain, dunia pasca-sekolah. Anak-anak tidak bermain sesuatu, mereka berada di dalam dan mengalami sepenuhnya dunia permainan itu sendiri. Dunia permainan itu begitu luas, seperti gambaran BJ tentang gadis cilik dan kucing-kucingnya- binatang yang paling sukses menjinakkan diri sendiri di dalam sejarah satwa selama jutaan tahun- yang riang gembira jumpalitan di tepian gelap semesta. Sementara itu, bagi BJ anak lelaki lebih sering mendengar isaknya sendiri dan terjebak di dalam kakus. Bukankah realisme lolipop BJ ini ternyata bertentangan dengan realisme yang selama ini diajarkan di sekolah? Awas, bocah laki-laki pantang menangis dan anak perempuan tak patut keluyuran sendirian...!

Itulah dunia permainan yang ditampilkan BJ untuk membebaskan diri dari kategori “nalar”, batasan sosial dan cara-cara yang selama ini dianggap sekolahan.

Dunia permainan itu ajaib seperti dongeng. Dan BJ masih mengingat sebuah cerita yang kerap didongengkan eyang putrinya dulu:

Kisahny adalah tentang perempuan bernama Sewidak Loro (Jawa; dalam bahasa Indonesia, artinya 62). Perempuan itu buruk rupa, jumlah helai rambutnya cuma 62. Tiap malam ibunya menghibur hati Sewidak

Loro, dengan selalu bertutur bahwa Sewidak Loro adalah perempuan cantik. Para tetangga kemudian mendengar hal itu dan menertawakan ibunya.

Ketika tersiar kabar seorang Raja tengah mencari calon permaisuri, orang beramai-ramai mendaftarkan Sewidak Loro. Tujuannya tak lain adalah agar Raja kecewa lalu Sewidak Loro dihukum. Datanglah saatnya Sang Raja bertandang ke rumah Sewidak Loro, dan dilihatnya raut wajah Sewidak Loro yang cantik jelita. Demikianlah, tak lama kemudian Sewidak Loro pun menjadi permaisuri Raja.

“ Para Dewa telah mendengar doa Ibu Sewidak Loro ”, kata BJ.

Itulah satu-satunya dongeng yang berakhir bahagia, yang pernah didengar BJ di masa kecilnya dulu. + + +

Jakarta, 13 Januari 2011

Hendro Wiyanto  
Kurator Pameran



# BJ

She will never change her name into, perhaps, Bunga Mawar (Roses), Melati (Jasmin), Kenanga (Ylang-ylang), or Cempaka (Frangipani). In Indonesia, at least, those flowers are more popular for song titles, names of pop actresses, real estate or mall names, etc. But, Bunga Jeruk or Orange Blossom? There is a story behind the name. In the large yard of her grandmother's house in Solo, there was an orange tree whose blossoms differed from those of other orange trees. This particular tree had flowers that glimmered at night. Only a poet could see them glimmering. And so the baby girl was named "Bunga Jeruk", Orange Blossom. Unlike the poet, her father, to her adult days, she has never seen any glimmering orange blossom. But she is no orange blossom, anyway; she is Bunga Jeruk, or BJ!



Every time BJ—somehow and for some reason—feels the need to return to her past. Let us just leave the story about her peculiar name at her grandmother's yard, in an era that has gone by. What remains sparkling through her teenage years and on to her adulthood, however, is the memory of her childhood. BJ has talked about her colorful childhood in the book *Living Colors* (published by Badd Painting, Solo, Indonesia, 2002). <sup>1</sup> The fridge at her grandma's house in Yogyakarta, the frequent relocations, new clothes, birthdays, cats, the first TV set at home, the stories her grandma told her, expensive dolls she could only dream of, her mother's make up—all of them have painted vivid colors to her childhood.

BJ's first solo exhibition took place in 1996, but it was the Animaux! exhibition at LIP (Lembaga Indonesia – Prancis) Yogyakarta and at Sculpture Square in Singapore (2000) that propelled her name to people's attention. With that second solo show, people started to recognize BJ as an artist with porcelain-like animal sculptures. This took place before works of Chinese contemporary artists inundated Indonesia and influenced the work of many Indonesian artists. BJ does not only smoothen the surface of her sculpture; she also paints parts of the sculptures, treating them like canvas surfaces. Animaux! seemed to reveal a certain deviation at the time when Indonesian artists—especially the post-1998 artists—seemed to preoccupy themselves with social and political themes; themes that were considered “grand” and more useful. Humans are *zoon politikon*, political animals, but artists who are interested in the political phenomena and want to change the situation do not concern themselves with animals or “animal politics”.

With such a prevailing tendency in the Indonesian art world, BJ felt that her concerns and creative themes differed from most Indonesian artists in general. On page 66 in *Living Colors*—whose cover presents a tearful little girl—I found a quote from BJ, and I use the quote for the title of this exhibition. To BJ, most “political artists” would consider her themes as trivial or superficial. They—the artists with a desire to change the world—do not only concern themselves with the artwork, but will also evaluate everything that affects an artist's life. The people-orientated artists, for example, swear that they will never set foot in McDonald's. To BJ, these artists are making a mountain out of a molehill, if not a bit ridiculous.

To BJ, an artist's life is embroidery of “living colors”. Her childhood experience, her “trivial” hobbies, her daily activities, things she finds at the market or the store—all of them contribute to make life interesting. BJ is more interested in becoming such an artist rather a political artist who refuses to watch MTV, rejects pop music, has no sport idol or favorite soccer player, or does not want to be engaged in personal hobbies. The connections between the various colorful fragments and the past that has shaped her intrigue BJ. To BJ, her colorful childhood can retain its sparkle and be reinterpreted today, just like the glimmering orange blossom at her grandmother's backyard. The secretive—and often also antagonistic—journeys back-and-forth among the various fragments of life constitute her creative process that only she understands.

#### Eating her heart out

BJ paints a garden as vast as the sky, with a crystal-clear waterfall, a pretty princess, and a little girl surrounded by similarly-beautiful butterflies and cats. Her grandmother's house or her childhood home on the outskirts of Solo would certainly not look like that. The landscape seems to be originating from a fairy tale. A family room with large windows, thick curtain, and bright-colored wallpaper—all impeccable and flawless—painted smoothly and brightly on her canvas. On the corner we see a two-door refrigerator in yellow and grey, bigger than EddiE haRA's expensive merchandise. Such an item was a marvel for little BJ, and now it seems to be guarded by a group of children and cats. They are having a party and “eating their hearts out”. BJ is rediscovering her living colors as an artist with leaping imaginations, like the cats that she depicts as bouncing around, performing an acrobat on the edge of the universe.

To BJ, parts of her past was indeed disappointing, making her “eat her heart out”. No matter how distressing that time had been, however, she did not have the heart to pour out her emotions by painting a little pig in a bowl of soup, as Michael Sowa, an artist she likes, has done. As she is still free to choose her own artistic idioms—“trivial” and nonpolitical they might be—BJ tends to “eat her own heart out”. From time to time, the overlaps between her experience and her shrewd observations give rise to a mixture between

<sup>[1]</sup> BJ wrote an email to me (dated January 13, 2011) that the book Living Colors was in part written by Omi Intan Naomi, her sister who was known as a writer. “There are parts that I don't entirely agree with, but the book was published when I was in New York in 2002, and I did not have the time to read it before it went to print,” wrote BJ. What I write about BJ's childhood in this introductory essay is partly based on the narratives in the book, complemented by my e-mail interviews with her.

metaphor and reality, wrapped in imaginations and perhaps also given a romantic tinge.

We can say that in order to communicate with the disappointing world, the one that forces her to “eat her heart out”, BJ has created an alter-ego of sorts, a point of reference that enables her or us to get out of the restrictive prison of the ego. The alter-ego is the “other I” or we; a partner we trust in imaginary conversations, who are able to establish secret bridges between us and the world.

As we have seen in her various works, figures of children constitute BJ's alter-ego every time she goes to her imaginary world. Here, “going” might as well mean “coming home”, or, on the contrary, “coming home” might mean “going away”. By taking this route, BJ indirectly passes her judgment about the world of adults, the power of adults, and the understanding of adulthood. We know that ever since the Enlightenment, to become an adult means to believe in the supremacy of reason, no matter how risky or instrumental the action or path that we consider as rational.

In general, artists do not like the overarching supremacy of reason. It is not only because they wish to avoid the risk, but also because they—intuitively—find it impossible to submit to its peculiar totality. Artists, therefore, have their own understanding about reasons and maturity, which are more relevant to their art. How else can we understand the images and sculptures of animals from EddiE haRA's extraordinary planet, or Tintin Wulia's “flying passports of Peter Pan”? Jostein Gaarder's *Sophie's World* will become a mere philosophical treatise that is boring and has no mystery. In the world where no law of cause and effect applies—and it is reason's sole support—it is the artists who will cheer out first, as Alan Lightman has predicted. If BJ always enjoys taking a trip into her alter-ego, to avoid being disappointed by the black-and-white reasoning of the world, in what kind of imaginary world that she envisions the children to be playing?

### A post-school world

Bertrand Russell once said, cynically, that no child was born stupid; it is the institution called school that makes them so. The nature, we think, is all-

encompassing, and the smartest of all. No school, however, was built to make the immediate acceptance that the nature is the smartest of all. Someone then wrote a book about “de-schooling society”, which became a best-seller and very popular. In short, the school envisions us to become increasingly smarter, so much so that we will be able to compete with the nature, if not to conquer it. That is thus the “belief” of the scholars. Lately we know there is no one way to be smart or intellectual, and among the different categories—numbering almost a dozen—there is no category of “stupid”.

BJ sent me an email in which she said that we, adults, will never know what the babies we have given birth to would end up with. BJ herself has given birth to two babies. They, of course, will stay as humans. But, Ted Bandy, the top criminal, or the men who rob people of their motorbikes along the streets of Bantul in midnight, what is wrong with them? When did the children become so certain about their lives, free to choose their future, between the lollipops, piles of money, or a gun, all the while wearing their happy, innocent expressions? As she thinks about the tiger named Shela at Taman Rimba Zoo in Jambi, who was poisoned to death, BJ wonders, will it not be better if we just kill the criminals in the world?

One is reminded of the famous novel, *Bromocorah* (literally, ex-convict) by Mochtar Lubis (1922 – 2004) about a thug. The sociologist Ignas Kleden often uses the novel to explain the relationship between crime and social structure. One day the thug decides to change his life and stop robbing other villages. He no longer teaches his son martial art, and even decides to send him to school. The thug rushes to the Office of Transmigration to find possibilities of a new life in a new place. Several months later, he receives an answer: his transmigration plea is rejected because he is an ex-convict.

In *Bromocorah* (Sinar Harapan, Jakarta, 1984), Mochtar Lubis wrote: “He is not surprised. He has expected it to happen. He could see how for people like him, there is no way out. His life will change only if the society changes...”

BJ hates poverty and crime because both seem to punish us, making us unable to move, like the ex-convict, the *bromocorah*, who is forced to remain living in the world of villains. In her interview with her sister, Omi Intan Naomi (1970 – 2006) in *Living Colors*, BJ says that she is always sad when she remembers her childhood. She never had the chance to own dolls, wore new

clothes only once a year on her birthday, and such experiences embitter her even to this day. Poverty traps children and robs them from the opportunity to blossom, leaving them into the hands of nature or social determination. Crime or violence will punish us not like a loving mother or a good teacher does, who will reprimand us or send us to our room so that we can cry our hearts out, listen to our own wailing, and be sorry. Crime is centered upon selfishness, and such selfishness always wants to punish by ending other lives.

In order to undertake her secret journeys back and forth to the world of her childhood, BJ creates figures of children of her present who appear very real. This, apparently, is BJ's pop realism, or even "lollipop realism", which she processes to the extent that they resemble souvenirs sold in shops: "the beauty" that seeks to be shown through its superficial reality, as on the surface they invariably look beautiful and colorful. Human's experience and perceptions, however, actually demand us to go beyond the superficial. Here BJ constructs the meaning of her works by employing a kind of alter-ego that is closely related to the world of children. We know that BJ has created her *Animaux*, which she envisions as being a kind of consciousness and love that we humans have for animals' lives. Furthermore, as BJ's metaphorical images, the *Animaux* wants to say that "everyone is an animal".

There is a peculiar relationship connecting children and animals. What links them is a kind of invisible imaginary cage. Thence arises BJ's idealistic depiction about sincerity, reflecting a kind of awareness about equality or, say, a longing about ontological unity in the nature. Such a popular depiction is found in the image of a dolphin that helps a drowning person, or a dog that save its master from a fire, BJ said. The National Geographic show that I watched with my kid at night reported that we would soon understand the language of animals.

Consider this: animals also have a kind of sensibility to differentiate themselves with others, as evident in the test using the mirror. A kitten runs to another direction as it sees its reflection on the mirror, trying to seek what it thinks as a friend. Elephants, monkeys, and dolphins are more sophisticated as they can immediately react when we indicate points on the mirror reflections. The rook, a member of the crow family, drops stones into a pitcher to raise the water surface. ("What Animals Think", *TIME*, August 16, 2010.)



Do we still think that animals only have one simple instinct to survive, i.e. by eating others? Casper (1998 – 2010) was a cat who became famous because it enjoyed going back and forth on No. 3 City Bus, waiting on the bus stop along with the other passengers, enjoying Plymouth's cityscape in southern UK, before it was hit by a motorbike and killed.

“Perhaps we can call it 'animal's decency', which includes, for example, submitting themselves to become our food,” said BJ. It is indeed ironical, because animals do not even eat their own kind, unlike humans who will eat just about anything.

Poverty is hard, crime is violent. With such a supposition, we can envision or identify a kind of allusion or certain aesthetic opinions that BJ employs—deliberately or otherwise—as she smoothens the surfaces of her sculptures, especially since 2000 with her *Animaux!* exhibition. Such a smooth and sheer quality seems to prevent us from touching her sculptures, making us feel that they exist only to be observed from a certain distance. Indeed, it is because we come from a world that is invariably threatened by poverty and will certainly be caught by crime. Such smoothness is pleasing and the sheerness does not obstruct.

BJ's lollipop realism—especially when it comes to her sculptures—seem to come from our day-to-day world, the world that we can observe every time. We can, however, view it as a representation of the world whose meaning we do not immediately grasp, because it is a world of playing children, the post-school world. The children do not simply play something; instead, they exist within that world and experience the world of play thoroughly. The world of play is so vast, just as BJ's depiction about the little girl and her cats—the family of animals who have in the history of animals been most successfully domesticated, bouncing around cheerfully on the edge of the universe. Meanwhile, BJ thinks that boys often hear their own cries while being punished in the room. Doesn't BJ's lollipop realism run contrary to what is being taught at school? Boys should not cry and girls should not run around by themselves!

That is the world of play that BJ presents to liberate herself from the categories of reasons, social boundaries, and manners that have been considered as “scholarly”.

The world of play is marvelous, like fairy tales. BJ still remembers a story that her grandmother often told her. It is about a girl named Sewidak Loro, which is Javanese for sixty-two. The girl was ugly and had only 62 strands of hair on her head. Every night, however, her mother consoled her and says how beautiful she was. Her neighbors heard it and laugh at them.

One day, news spread that the King was looking for a wife, and the villagers submitted Sewidak Loro's name, expecting the King to be disappointed and punish Sewidak Loro. When it was time for the King to visit Sewidak Loro, he saw how beautiful Sewidak Loro actually was. And so Sewidak Loro became the King's wife.

“The gods heard the prayers of Sewidak Loro's mother,” said BJ.

It was the only happy-ending fairy tale that BJ heard in her childhood. + + +

Jakarta, January 13, 2011

Hendro Wiyanto  
Exhibition curator





LADY WITH LONG HAIR

150 cm x 200 cm  
Oil on Canvas  
2010



MAKAN HATI #5

200 cm x 150 cm  
Oil on Canvas  
2010



MAKAN HATI #6

150 cm x 150 cm  
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2010



MOONLIGHT GIRL

150 cm x 200 cm  
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GOOD NIGHT, SWEET HEART

150 cm x 150 cm  
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BALLERINA

150 cm x 235 cm x 55 cm  
Polyester resin & Auto paint  
2010



CHA, CHA, CHA...BURN, BABY BURN ! DOR, DOR, DOR...

61 cm x 42 cm x 29 cm (each figure)  
Polyester resin & Auto paint  
2010





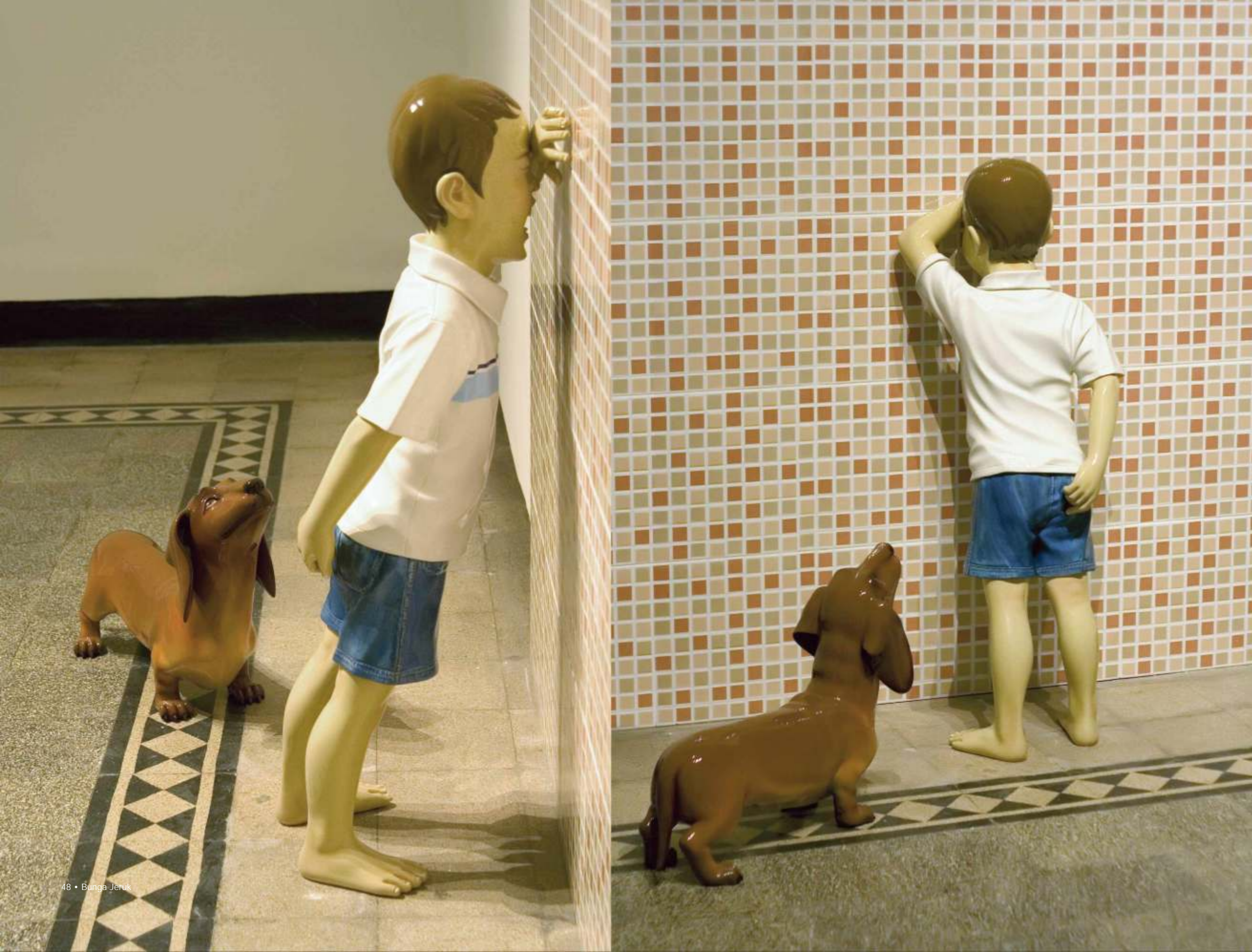
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2010

BIRTHDAY WISH

16 cm x 85 cm x 42 cm  
Polyester resin & Auto paint  
2010





## Education

1996 Graduated from Faculty of Fine Arts and Design, Indonesia Institute of Arts (ISI), Yogyakarta

## Solo Exhibitions

2011 what i really love to do is trivial, Emmitan CA Gallery, Surabaya.  
 2009 Just Bunga, Edwin's Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia.  
 2002 Every Dog is # 1, Edwin's Gallery, Jakarta.  
 Dat Was Now Dis Is Then, Cemeti Art House, Yogyakarta.  
 2000 Animaux!, Lembaga Indonesia Prancis, Yogyakarta - Animaux!, Sculpture Square, Singapore.  
 1994 Solo Exhibition, Kafe Solo, Solo.

## Group Exhibitions

2009 Artpreneurship, Ciputra World, Marketing Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia.  
 The Birth Of Colors, Syang Art Gallery, Magelang, Indonesia.  
 Jogja Art Fair, "Indonesian Art Now the Strategies of Being", Taman Budaya Yogyakarta Indonesia.  
 In Rainbow, Esa Sampoerna Art House, Surabaya.  
 Oemar Bakrie, Jogja Gallery, Yogyakarta.  
 Reality Bites, Edwin's Gallery, Jakarta.  
 Exposigns, Jogja Expo Center, Yogyakarta.  
 Biennale Jogja X-2009, Yogyakarta.

2008 The Highlight dari Medium ke Transmedia, Jogja Nasional Museum, Yogyakarta, Indonesia  
 Loro Blonyo Kontemporer, Gedung Tribakti, Magelang, Indonesia  
 A New Force In Southeast Asia Group Exhibition Of Indonesian Contemporary Artists, Art Center, Beijing, China.  
 Animal Kingdom, The Last Chronicle, Jogja Gallery, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.  
 Renjana, Edwin's Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia.  
 69 Seksi Nian, Jogja Gallery, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.  
 Manifesto, Galeri Nasional, Jakarta, Indonesia.

2007 A Beautiful Death, Bentara Budaya Yogyakarta, Orasis Gallery, Surabaya,  
 Darga Gallery Sanur Bali, Gedung Perpustakaan Umum dan Arsip Malang.  
 Common Grounds : A Glimpse of Indonesian Cotemporary Arts, Galeri Nasional, Jakarta.  
 Animamix Biennale: From Modernity to Eternity, Museum of Contemporary Art, Shanghai, China.  
 Indonesian Contemporary, 1918 Artspace, Shanghai, China.

2006 Metafora Metamorfosa 2, Puri Gallery, Malang.

Broken Mirror, Langgeng Icon Gallery, Jakarta.  
 Draw, Museum dan Tanah Liat, Yogyakarta.  
 Biennale Jakarta XII, Taman Ismail Marzuki, Jakarta.  
 Mysterious Dolls, Old Prints, Erasmus Huis, Jakarta.  
 Galerie Serieuze Zaken, Bilderdijkstraat 66, Amsterdam.

2005 Tanda Kasih, Edwin's Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia.  
 Small World, Vanessa Art House, Jakarta.  
 21st and Beyond – Personality and Variance --, Edwin's Gallery, Jakarta.  
 Sculpture Expanded, CP Artspace, Jakarta, Indonesia.  
 Culturen in Contact II, Het Oude Raadhuis Museum, Leerdam, Belanda.  
 Kecil Itu Indah 13, Edwin's Gallery, Jakarta.

2004 Multi Sub-Culture, Two Dimensional Indonesian Fine Art, Berlin, Germany.  
 Melbourne Connection Asia, Cemeti Art House, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.  
 Olimpiade, Nadi Gallery – Pakubuwono Residence, Jakarta.  
 Equatorial Heat, Sichuan Meseum, China.  
 Reformasi, Contemporary Indonesian Artists Post 1998, Sculpture Square, Singapore.  
 The Eye of the Orient, the Hand of Memories, Urasoe Art Museum, Okinawa, Jepang.  
 Objecthood, Taman Budaya, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

2003 Museum Der Moderne Salzburg, Austria, February– March.  
 National Museum of Abruzzo L'Aquila, Italy, April - June .  
 All You Need is Love, Nadi Gallery, Jakarta.  
 READ!, Cemeti Art House, Yogyakarta.  
 READ!, Gedung Perpustakaan UGM, Yogyakarta.  
 CP Open Biennale, National Gallery, Jakarta.  
 Melbourne Connection Asia, large scale poster format in Melbourne's public transport stops connecting Australian audiences to art in the region 24 hours a day, everyday. Countrybution, Yogya Biennale VII, Gedung Societet, Yogyakarta.  
 Kecil Itu Indah 11, Edwin's Gallery, Jakarta.

2002 Diobok-Obok, Museum Kueppersmuehle Sammlung Grothe, Duisburg, Germany.  
 Awas ! Recent Art from Indonesia, Bentara Budaya, Jakarta.  
 Alam Hati Kecil, Edwin's Gallery, Jakarta.

2001 Awas! Recent Art from Indonesia, W 139 Gallery, Amsterdam, Holland.  
 Awas! Recent Art from Indonesia, Ludwig Forum, Aachen, Germany.  
 Kecil itu Indah 9, Edwin's Gallery, Jakarta.

- Not Just Political, Widayat Museum, Magelang, Indonesia.  
Art Singapore, Santec Building, Singapore.
- 2000 Knalpot, Museum Puri Lukisan, Denpasar, Bali.  
Awat! Recent Art from Indonesia, Australian Center of Contemporary Art Melbourne, Australia.  
Contemporary Art Space, Canberra Ivan Dougherty Gallery, Sidney, Australia  
Awat! Recent Art from Indonesia, Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art Hiroshima dan Hokkaido Asahikawa Museum of Art, Asahikawa, Japan.  
Touring Exhibition of Asean Art, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore.  
Diobok-obok, Continuities & Contingencies, South East Asia Art Today Sculpture Exhibition Outdoor, The 30 Anniversary of Erasmus Huis, Jakarta.  
Ruang Rupa Foundation, Cemara 6 Galeri, Jakarta - To Rusia with Art, Moscow, Rusia.  
Dunia Luar Dunia Dalam, Edwin's Gallery, Jakarta.  
Kecil itu Indah 8, Edwin's Gallery Jakarta.
- 1999 Yogyakarta 6th Biennale, Purna Budaya, Yogyakarta.  
Media dalam Media, Installation Art as Media Expression, National Gallery, Jakarta.  
Proyek Seni Knalpot, Cemeti Art House, Yogyakarta - Makasar Art Forum, Makasar, Sulawesi Selatan.  
Ragam Bahasa Pelukis Muda, Edwin's Gallery, Bali.  
Jelang Indonesia Gemilang, Edwin's Gallery, Jakarta.  
Awat! Recent Art from Indonesia, Museum Benteng Vredeburg, Yogyakarta.
- 1997 Bunga and Isa Perkasa Exposition, Cemara 6 Galeri Kafe, Jakarta.  
Join Exhibition, Museum Universitas Pelita Harapan dan Sepia Galley Grand Hyatt, Jakarta.
- 1996 Fine Arts Exhibition, Taman Ismail Marzuki, Jakarta.  
The 10th Biennale, Taman Ismail Marzuki, Jakarta.  
Bercermin di Kalbu Rakyat, Pagelaran Kraton, Yogyakarta.
- 1995 Dual Exhibition, Dimata Gallery, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.
- 1994 Seni untuk Semua, Ambarrukmo Palace Hotel, Yogyakarta.  
Pratisara Affandi Adi Karya, Yogyakarta.
- Grants  
2002 Join International Studio and Curatorial Program (ISCP) at the Elizabeth Foundation, New York. Sponsored by Asian Cultural Council (ACC), New York, April - July 2002.

## Daftar Karya List of Works

/

LADY WITH LONG HAIR  
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Bapak Suhanto  
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Mas Basuki  
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Udi Mulyanto dan Fitri Hartatik (Potlot Planet Airbrush)  
Iwan Potlot  
Didit Sukmara  
Mas Mboret  
Pak Mono  
Mbak Sari dan Mbak Tatik

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