Santarupa
A Revival of Narrative in Contemporary Art

Solo Exhibition
(The Dissemination of Applied Research Grant, from Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education of Indonesia, 2019)

Dr I Wayan ‘Kun’ Adnyana

At Thienny Lee Gallery, Sydney, Australia
176 New South Head Road, Edgecliff, NSW 2027

July 25th until August 13th, 2019
Solo Exhibition of Contemporary Painting

**Santarupa**
A Revival of Narrative in Contemporary Art


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Deep in Passion, ink & acrylic on canvas, 80X80 Cm
It gives me great pleasure to introduce the contemporary narrative exhibition, Santarupa, by critically acclaimed Balinese artist and academic, Wayan Kun Adnyana to an Australian audience. Although Dr Adnyana, an Associate Professor at ISI Denpasar, has exhibited internationally—from Indonesia and China to Taiwan, South Korea, Switzerland and the United States—this is his debut exhibition in Australia, which we are thrilled to be hosting. It is running in conjunction with the Neka Art Museum in Ubud, Bali.

When my former PhD supervisor, Professor Adrian Vickers, introduced Kun Adnyana and his latest body of work to me—with the possibility of the Thienny Lee Gallery hosting one of his exhibitions in Sydney—I instantly knew Kun Adnyana’s work would be a perfect fit for our 2019 Asian Art show. Despite Kun Adnyana’s busy schedule and the gallery’s fully-booked calendar, the problem of finding an exhibition date was quickly solved. Both parties were determined to mount this outstanding exhibition in Australia that we were each prepared to reshuffle our schedules to make it happen.

The body of work in Santarupa builds on Kun Adnyana’s show Inside the Hero, which was exhibited in Taiwan last year. In Santarupa, he presents a series of contemporary narrative paintings that are similarly centred on the ancient iconography found in the Balinese Yeh Pulu relief carvings, which Kun Adnyana has researched intently. The carvings, said to be ‘newly discovered’ in the early twentieth century on a sacred riverbank in central Bali, comprise a set of images from the 14th or 15th century that depict everyday Balinese life.

By using three approaches of contemporary narrative paintings - reframing, recasting and globalising—Kun Adnyana recreates what he calls the “multi-narration” scenes on the Yeh Pulu relief carvings. “Inspired by new metaphor that was informed by the ancient philosophy of Yeh Pulu relief, this series is a revival of narrative in contemporary art,” he explains. “Just like the chronicles that are embedded among ordinary people in Yeh Pulu, my work attempts to connect with common people via multiple narration in our modern world.” In Adrian Vickers’s words, “[Kun Adnyana] moves the ancient presence into contemporary global life.”

The exhibition is both thought-provoking and visually stunning. Kun Adnyana explores figures, forms and storylines based on the ancient relief carvings to realise theatrical compositions, reimagining them in a completely innovative way. We are treated to almost-surreal artworks, with surprising juxtapositions connecting the past and the present. In Vacation 1, ancient Balinese people appear to be enjoying a holiday in a contemporary European city, complete with skyscrapers. In Princess Rider, an ancient princess rides a motorbike. In Embracing the Goddess, a tall and elegant woman rises from a lotus flower and visually dominates a sea of ordinary people—much like a pop icon does on stage at a concert. There seems to be an element of humour in the artworks, too. In Story of Love, a man trots off on a horse while a woman pulls its tail, and in In Passion, the roles are reversed. The nature of Kun Adnyana’s work clearly challenges the commercialism of the Balinese art scene, which relentlessly rides on touristic-flavoured, romanticised art production.

It is the attachment and detachment with the Balinese art tradition that defines Kun Adnyana’s art practice. In this series of work, his choice of painting as a medium reflects this practice too, as he combines traditional Balinese tools with modern medium. All of the works in the show are ink and acrylic on canvas, with Kun Adnyana using a traditional Balinese pen and Chinese ink to skilfully create detailed drawings that contrast with unexpected and vibrant splashes of bright acrylic colours—from emerald greens and magenta reds to golden yellows and sky blues - as part of his contemporary art practice.

Kun Adnyana was born and raised in Bali, lives and works there today. In this part of the world where people have a very different pace of spiritual life, multitude of stories and tales were told. Some stories have been around for centuries while others, though ancient—such as those carved into the Yeh Pulu reliefs—have been ‘newly discovered’. Having brought up and deeply influenced by a strong tradition of narrative and figurative art in Bali, it is only natural that Kun Adnyana tells stories in his contemporary art practice. Only his oeuvre of work in Santarupa, virtually translated as “In A New Form”, offers alternative storylines, re-imagined for contemporary audiences.
Story of Love, ink & acrylic on canvas, 80X80 Cm
Let me begin by expressing our gratitude to God Almighty because of His blessing the research, creation and presentation of art which referred to as “P3S” won by Dr. I Wayan ‘Kun’ Adnyana has entered the stage of presentation or dissemination of work.

The artwork that we are all able to see here is the result of research funded by the Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education of the Republic of Indonesia through the Directorate General of Research and Community Service (DRPM) as well as the Directorate General of Research and Development Strengthening. This research uses the Applied Research scheme 2019. Kun Adnyana has successfully won this since 2017. In today’s gathering allow me to express how pleased I am to finally able to see art presentation in international exhibition through a solo exhibition entitled “Santarupa: A Revival of Narrative in Contemporary Art” held at Thienny Lee Gallery, Sydney, Australia as the result of the third year applied research. Certainly, the Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education of the Republic of Indonesia in Jakarta feel very welcome to this event and let us express our sincere appreciation to all organizer for its contribution in growing the reputation of lecturer who creates arts into the international level.

The Art Applied Research scheme is certainly a very important opportunity for lecturers, especially lecturers in Art Universities and generally for lecturers at other Universities with Art Department, to actualize themselves both in terms of creating research-based art and importantly engaging in the art presentation governance such as exhibitions, performances, festivals et cetera. This should be directed gradually from national, Asia (regional) and international.

Dr. I Wayan ‘Kun’ Adnyana is indeed a qualified person for this expertise area by observing his Curriculum Vitae both in the fields of research and presentation of art. Therefore, this solo exhibition held in this international level has important values for all. Through the chosen topic of “Ikonografi Kepahlawanan Relief Yeh Pulu” or “Yeh Pulu’s Relief Heroic Iconography”, the society is expected to use this as a reading and discussion of nowadays-contemporary art painting achievement that allows us to see the archipelago fine art scenes as the basis of art creation. This milestone is also a knot of Indonesian contemporary art painting character; the creation of art that retains the spirit of Indonesia.

Ladies and Gentlemen, that is all my speech for today. Hopefully, through the Art Applied Research scheme, the art and cultural-humanity lecturers can obtain space where they able to actualize their self based on the spirit of research, creation, and presentation of high credibility art. Let me therefore end my speech by congratulate Dr. I Wayan ‘Kun’ Adnyana for his wonderful achievement.

Jakarta, July 2019
H.E. Minister of Research, Technology and Higher of Education of the Republic of Indonesia
Prof. H. Mohamad Nasir PhD

*English translated by Aras Samsithawrati
Wayan Kun Adnyana with the President of the Republic of Indonesia Joko Widodo, at the State Palace Jakarta.
Wayan ‘Kun’ Adnyana arrived in the Balinese art world as part of the Kamasra group, a group of young art students who in 2003 challenged the art world with a series of bold criticisms of commercialism in the art world. Kun’s earlier activism was one of the first demonstrations of his deep concern for Balinese art and art history. His emergence as an artist was gradual, mainly because it came about side-by-side with his emergence as an art historian. His solo exhibitions in the last ten years have increasingly gained attention, to the point where he is beginning to overtake some of his peers from Kamasra in the eyes of Indonesian collectors. At the same time, he completed his PhD on the Pita Maha group (1936–1940), the association of modern Balinese artists who defined Balinese art for the world.

Building on his work on Pita Maha, Kun has researched the deeper roots of Balinese art in theory and practice. The enigmatic reliefs of Yeh Pulu have long mystified art historians. Probably very ancient, the stories they depict may be from ancient Indian myths of Kreshna, but may equally be local inventions. The area from which they come, Bedulu, was the ancient capital of Bali before it was absorbed into the Javanese kingdom of Majanapahit in the fourteenth century, giving us a likely date before which the carvings were created. They are of a piece with the famous Elephant Cave, Goa Gajah, also at Bedulu, and evidence a very long artistic tradition in the area, one which also led to modern paintings and to the creation of Bali’s famous Kecak or Monkey Dance.

Yet there is no written record of Yeh Pulu’s creation, nor is the identification of the story with that of Kreshna an exact match. Instead, the main thing that is known of the Yeh Pulu reliefs in Bali is the association between the carvings out of rock and the mythological giant Kebo Iwa. Kebo Iwa has many such associations, and great works are linked to him: not just the Yeh Pulu carvings, but a carved stone door in the village of Jelantik, Klungkung, and other wonders from the core of Bali’s ancient villages. In some legends he came from Blahbatuh, an early centre of power; in other stories, he led the troops that fought against the Javanese invaders, and was defeated by being buried in a well. The giant is further associated with the founding of craft traditions in Bali, particularly the work of undagi or architects. A giant statue at Sakah, between Denpasar and Ubud, is said by cultural experts to depict Kebo Iwa as a baby.

It is no coincidence, then, that Kun Adnyana’s work over the last decade has begun with figures of giants. The figurative tradition in Balinese art is a strong one, but in earlier decades was dominated by the influence of flat figures, based on the wayang kulit or shadow puppet play. One of the reasons that Kun was drawn to Pita Maha was their turn towards rounded, sculptural figures. Viewed in that light, it was an obvious step to go back further in Balinese art history to the carvings of Yeh Pulu, which represent an alternative tradition in Bali.

In the early twenty-first century, Balinese art is in danger, yet again, of being overtaken by the commercial influence of tourism. In particular, much art in recent exhibitions is heavily mannered and overly sentimental. Kun’s art is a muscular attempt to bring Bali back to its basic elements, and to reshape Balinese art in the light of global encounters. For the recent series, title ‘Santarupa’ that will exhibited in Thieny Lee Gallery, Sydney, Australia, and in Neka Art Museum, Ubud, Bali, Indonesia, Kun have been explored iconography of Yeh Pulu reliefs follows three approaches of contemporary narrative paintings: reframing, recasting, and globalising. Thus, his work moves the ancient presence into contemporary global life.

Professor Adrian Vickers PhD, professor of Southeast Asian Studies, The University of Sydney, Australia

*a part of this article has published on Inside The Hero: Creative Contemporary Painting Based on an Iconography of Yeh Pulu Reliefs (2018: 28).
In a Concert, ink&acrylic on canvas, 50X50 Cm
Background

The third year of study aimed to solve the coverage of iconography on the Yeh Pulu relief, which series is a revival of narrative in contemporary art. The findings, with regards to the narrative system, explain the theme of the relief and are then used as the conceptual basis for the process of creating contemporary painting.

The Yeh Pulu Relief, located in the village of Bedulu, Gianyar, Bali in the study by Kempers (1978: 136-138) stated a single theme, that is a narrative about Krishna. Kempers traces it from the story of a young Krishna lifting Mount Goyardhana in his fight with the Jambawat bear. But Kempers’ analysis appears inconsistent as he mentions the animal figure in the scene ‘hunting tiger’ in the book Ancient Indonesian Art (1959) as a tiger beast, while in Monumental Bali (1978) it is instead referred to as a bear beast referring to the thematic construction of ‘Jambawat bear’ (Adnyana, et al., 2018: 90). It is apparent that not all the scenes on the Yeh Pulu Relief can be referred to as part of the narrative about Krishna and quite possible that the narrative depictions of the relief are not of a singular narrative.

For example, an iconographic study of the ‘Tiger Hunting’ scene, which appears to be a strange tiger hunting technique performed by pulling on the tongue and the tail of the tiger by two tiger hunters. This constructs a connotative message, namely ‘the tongue of a tiger beast’ which connotes power of discourse (political ideology strategy) and ‘tail of a tiger’ which connotes resilient soldiers (solidarity amongst people). Both are superstructures of the state’s victory, while both can be defeated through solidarity and resistance by way of constructing an ideological discourse as well as a solid military soul (Adnyana, 2018: 159).

An iconographical study is required to recognize and discover the patterns of narration depicted by the Yeh Pulu Relief. The narrative patterns are then to be used as the foundation for creation, and the development of the narrative patterns both through the technical approach and the visual subjective approaches concerning the narrative system of the work in contemporary culture.

Method

The research methods, as in the first year of study (2017), still make use of the Panofsky iconology perspective (1871: 14), based on three stage analysis, namely: pre-iconography, iconography and iconology. This years study, puts heavier emphasis on the iconographic analysis to discover the narrative/allegorical system of the Yeh Pulu relief.

The creative process still utilizes the three stages of the analytical process: medium experiments, visual language formulation and the preparation of relevant contextualization (Sullivan, 2005: 124). The three stages have been utilized in the creation of contemporary in the first year (2017) and this year the process is evolutionary in order to accommodate the reconstruction of findings in the narrative systems in visuals of contemporary paintings.

Findings

Firstly, the findings of the first year’s aesthetic approach (2017: (a) cutting (imagining Yeh Pulu relief as if it is a comic poster, that can be freely cut); (b) coloring (applying color according to the artist’s artistic desire); (c) highlighting (establishing certain subject/scene/plot of the relief as the center of attention); (d) smashing (assembling scattered fragments and pieces of relief, as the effect of rock corrosion); (e) drawing (constructing visual subjects based on image/line technique) (Adnyana, 2017: 142), developed with two additional findings in 2018. There are: layering (layers of colors on paintings background); and deconstructing (makes deconstructing form or scene, like change of hunting a tiger scene be a women ride a tiger).

Secondly, the recent creation of these paintings involves three major approaches: reframing, recasting, and globalizing the Yeh Pulu Reliefs into contemporary global life. Like, a figures of Yeh Pulu reliefs have a holiday at the Monas Landmarks in Capital City of Indonesia: Jakarta, etc.
The followings are the visual aesthetics components and targets in three years (2017-2019) (that will be) achieved:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visual aesthetic component</th>
<th>First Year (visual aesthetics)</th>
<th>Second Year (allegory)</th>
<th>Third Year (symbol)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td><strong>Medium Exploration</strong></td>
<td>Medium findings</td>
<td>The development of medium and technique findings (first year).</td>
<td>The development of medium and technique findings (first &amp; second year).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Visual language</strong></td>
<td>New visual subject with Yeh Pulu Relief characteristics</td>
<td>Visual subject focusing on the heroism narration system.</td>
<td>Visual subject as a new sign (symbol) and also visual sign exploration of Yeh Pulu Relief.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relevant context</strong></td>
<td>Visual sensation more on the effort of creating imaginative image in comparison with the icon of Yeh Pulu Relief.</td>
<td>Visual sensation more on the effort of inserting modern heroism narration system with the narration of Yeh Pulu relief.</td>
<td>Visual sensation as the comparison of new visual sign with the symbolic sign of Yeh Pulu relief.</td>
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**Bibliography:**


* English translated from Bahasa to English by Andy McNeilly and Widiana Martiningsih, a part of this article has published on *Inside The Hero: Creative Contemporary Painting Based on an Iconography of Yeh Pulu Reliefs* (2018: 23-26).
The opening ceremony of contemporary painting “Citra Yuga” at Bentara Budaya Jakarta, August 1st, 2017.

The exhibition atmosphere of contemporary painting exhibition “Inside The Hero”, at Mizuro Workshop Contemporary, Taiwan, July 14th 2018.

Solo exhibition “Titi Wangsa” at Neka Art Museum, Ubud, Bali, opened October 12th, 2018
The exhibition, the sixth since he launched his edgy figurative style at Ganesha Gallery in 2010, forcefully demonstrates the versatility and maturity of Balinese artist, I Wayan Kun Adnyana. As in his previous exhibitions, each painting brims with visual, philosophical and intellectual references, some of which are obvious and others that are subliminal. As should be expected of a professor of art history who was recently appointed the head of the cultural office of the province of Bali, Kun has not fear of making tongue and cheek comments on social, identify and political issues. One of the most important of these is that of Balinese identity in the post-modern world and the challenges of honoring origins and traditions, while striking a balance with the exigencies of the post-modern world and economy.

In contrast to his earlier work, the majority of the paintings in Santarupa are monochrome rendered in greys and whites in a technique reminiscent of Pointillism. The figures here are also exceedingly sculptural in concept and execution. This is no surprise because they are based on the enormous Yeh Pulu (yeh = water, pulu = rice container), relief in Bedulu, Gianyar. Carved in the 15th century into a grey stone cliff outcrop next to a spring and surrounded by boundless rice terraces, this classical monument is an apt symbol of Balinese origin. It is also apt because of the fleshy, rounded high relief images of humans and animals that pre-figured Balinese painting.

Several of Yeh Pulu’s prominent images, such as a procession of musicians carrying large gongs appear in different settings - before an idyllic Balinese temple gate and in stark contrast to this, circumambulating the huge freedom obelisk built by President Sukarno in the 1960s as a symbol of Indonesian independence. Instead of tradition we see a bustling urban landscape with a jumble of high rises in the background. Another theme is kaki lima, the once ubiquitous vendors carrying baskets suspended on the opposite end of a bamboo pole balanced on their shoulders. Then there are eloquent bare-chested equestrian figures surrounded by flashes of color or traffic. In some paintings the riders have exchanged their horses for scooters and motorbikes. Another vehicle of transport is an outrigger ship sailing on a fiery sea. A symbol of change and the bonds and tensions between Balinese and Javanese culture, it is inspired by the 9th century Buddhist temple, Borobudur.

Two of the most enigmatic paintings are “Embracing the Goddess” depicting an ominous volcano spewing dark plumes, a reference to the recent eruptions of Gunung Agung, Bali’s sacred mountain. The foreground is dominated by Dewi Danu, the beautiful multihued Goddess of the Waters, standing upon a lotus flower undisturbed by the waves crashing around her as she meditates on peace. Lastly, “Deep in Passion” idealizes the male-female bond that embodies not only romantic love but also balance and the ultimate unity of polar opposites of life and the Universe.

Bruce Carpenter, writer and art critic
Advanture Time, ink&acrylic on canvas, 80X80 Cm
Holiday 1, ink&acrylic on canvas, 50X50 Cm
Party Preparation, ink & acrylic on canvas, 50X50 Cm
Relaxing Time, ink & acrylic on canvas, 50X50 Cm
A Scape of Desire, ink&acrylic on canvas, 50X50 Cm
In Passion, ink&acrylic on canvas, 50X50 Cm
Embracing the Goddess, ink & acrylic on canvas, 100X120 Cm
Vacation 1, ink&acrylic on canvas, 100X120 Cm
Holiday 2, ink & acrylic on canvas, 50X50 Cm
Princess Rider, ink & acrylic on canvas, 50X50 Cm
Tiger Boxing, ink & acrylic on canvas, 50x50 Cm
Hunting a Tiger (in Blossom), ink & acrylic on canvas, 80X80 Cm
The Treasure of Archipelago, ink&acrylic on canvas, 80X80 Cm
Pig Ship, ink&acrylic on canvas, 50X50 Cm

Email: kun_adnyana@yahoo.com

Collective Exhibitions (selected):


2012: Exhibition “Here We Ar(t)e, Here We Ar(t)e the Same” at Maha Art Studio, Denpasar. Exhibition “Homo Ludens #3th” at Emitan Gallery, Surabaya. Exhibition finalists of UOB Painting in the Year 2012 at UOB Plaza, Jakarta. Exhibition “Agitasi Garuda” at Yogya Gallery, YogyaKarta. Exhibition “Painting @Drawing” at Tonyraka Art Gallery, Ubud. Exhibition “Archive-Reclaim” at National Gallery, Jakarta. Exhibition at Scope Art Basel, Swiss, presented by Willem Kerseboom Gallery, Amsterdam.


2003: Exhibition Young Artist Solidarity (Solidaritas Seniman Muda Bali) “Lelakut” at the rice fields of Peguyangan, Denpasar. Exhibition Young Artist Solidarity (Solidaritas Seniman Muda Bali) “Renungan Merah Putih” at Taman Makam Pahlawan Margarana, Bali.

2002: Exhibition “Ruwat Sarira” Sanggar Jarak Bang at Rumah Sakit Jiwa (Mental Medical) Bangli.


2000: Exhibition “Demokrasi dalam Ekspresi Rupa” Kamasra at the House of Representatives Denpasar. Exhibition for the 33rd Anniversary of Higher School of Arts (Indonesia Institute of The Arts), Denpasar. Exhibition “Mother Earth Expression” with Sudamala Kamasra Group at Kuta Paradiso Hotel, Kuta. Exhibition “Art Reflection II” at Darga Gallery, Sanur.


1997: Watercolor exhibition at Art Center Denpasar.

Solo Exhibition:


2018: “Inside the Hero: Creative Contemporary Painting Based on an Iconography of Yeh Pulu”, Mizuiro Workshop Contemporary, Tainan, Taiwan.


2017: “Citra Yuga: Iconography of Relief Yeh Pulu” at Bentara Budaya Jakarta.

2013: “Poems From Lake Michigan”, Gwen Frostic School of Fine Art Collage, Western Michigan University, US.


2009: “Rare (Babies)” at MD Art Space, Jakarta.


Awards:

2016  Finalist of UOB Painting of The Year Competition Awards, Jakarta
2016  Best Lecturer recognition from Rector of Indonesia Institute of the Arts, Denpasar.
2014  Finalist of UOB Painting of The Year Competition Awards, Jakarta.
2013  Visiting Art Scholar Awards from Faculty of Fine Art (Gwen Frostic School of Fine Art Collage), Western Michigan University, US.
2011  Finalist of The UOB Buana Art Awards, Jakarta.
2010  Jakarta Art Awards Nominee.
2008  Best Graduate with cum laude recognition from Magister Programm of ISI Yogyakarta.
2008  Jakarta Art Awards Nominee.
2007  Widya Pataka Award (in the field of fine art critique) from Bali Province Government.
2002  Best Graduate with cum laude recognition from STSI Denpasar.
1999  Philip Morris Indonesian Art Awards Nominee.
1998  Kamasra Price for Best Painting.
1996  First Prize Teenage Painting Competition by Parpostel IX Denpasar.

Writing Experiences

Kun wrote articles for variety of art and culture issues in national media, such as Kompas, Tempo, Media Indonesia, Suara Merdeka, Jawa Post-Radar Bali and Bali Post. Kun joined the program of visiting artist / scholar in the fall semester of 2013, and awarded the Visiting Scholar Award from Gwen Frostic School of Art, Western Michigan University, USA.

He also did a research on the data of Balinese painting in the 1930s in several cities in the Netherlands, such as Leiden, Harlem, and Amsterdam (2015). Kun also becomes the curator of art exhibitions for many galleries, such as the National Gallery in Jakarta, Art 1 (Mondecor) Gallery, Tonyraka Art Gallery, Gajah Art Gallery (Singapore), Sudakara Art Space, Syang Art Gallery, Kendra Art Space, etc. Since 2016 He has been assigned to the editor of the national journal of Arts & Culture, Mudra ISI Denpasar.


Art Works Publication (selected):


Burhan, Agus., Jean Couteau, Agus Dermawan T, Eddy Soetrijono, etc. (2010), Modern Indonesian Art (From Raden Saleh to The Present Day) second revised edition, Koes Art Books, Denpasar.


Dwikora, I Putu. (2008), New Totem For Mother (The Catalogue of Wayan Kun Adnyana’s Solo Exhibition), Gaya Art Space, Ubud.

Effendy, Rifky. (2010), Tree of the Future (The Catalogue of Wayan Kun Adnyana’s Solo Exhibition), MonDecor Art Gallery, Jakarta.

Hardiman. (2009), Rare (Babies) (The Catalogue of Wayan Kun Adnyana’s Solo Exhibition), MD Art Space, Jakarta.


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