

**INDONESIA - THAILAND
PAINTING EXHIBITION**
NATIONAL GALLERY OF THAILAND, BANGKOK
4-30 OCTOBER 2024

BLENDING SOULS



Curators :

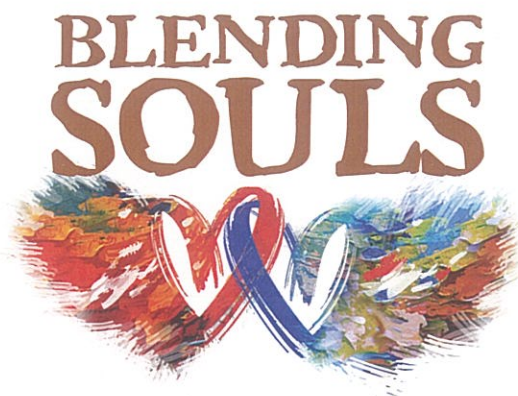
Agus Dermawan T, Mikke Susanto, Asst. Prof. Dr. Phadung Prommoon

Banlu Wiriyapornprapas
Camelia Mitasari Hasibuan
Chalernsak Radanachan
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Special Artist: H.E. Rachmat Budiman

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FOREWORD



H.E. Rachmat Budiman

*Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia
to the Kingdom of Thailand/Permanent
Representative of the Republic of Indonesia
to the UNESCAP*

In the spirit of fostering deeper cultural connections and artistic collaboration, the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Bangkok proudly presents the Indonesia-Thailand Painting Exhibition, *Blending Souls*. This year's theme builds upon our previous exhibitions, *Bridge of Colors* (October 5-31, 2022) and *Blossoming Curiosity* (October 4-29, 2023), both of which were held at the National Gallery of Thailand,

Bangkok.

The *Blending Souls* exhibition aims to celebrate the shared cultural heritage of Indonesia and Thailand, showcasing the rich artistic traditions of both nations. Through the universal language of art, we strive to deepen the cultural relationship between our countries—a relationship that has flourished for many years and serves as a bridge for greater mutual understanding. This exhibition reflects the enduring importance



of cultural diplomacy in strengthening the ties between our peoples.

The paintings featured in this year's exhibition span a diverse range of styles and movements—realist-naturalist, decorative, abstract, expressionist, naïve-decorative, and traditional—each representing the unique perspectives of the artists. We hope this exhibition serves as a space for creative and emotional exchange, where the hearts and minds of Indonesian and Thai artists and audiences can connect, fostering a true blend between our two communities.

This year's exhibition brings together some of the most prominent names in the art world, whose work continues to captivate both domestic and international audiences. We are honored to showcase the talents of Indonesian artists, namely Camelia Mitasari Hasibuan, Edi Sunaryo, Erica Hestu Wahyuni, Galuh Tajimalela, Heri Dono, I Made Ruta, Made Toris Mahendra, Ketut Muka Pendet, Ni Nyoman Sani, Prajna Dewantara Wirata, Putu Sutawijaya, Rendra Santana, Sugeng Pramuji Hidayat, and Wayan Kun Adnyana. They are joined by renowned Thai artists Banlu Wiryapornprapas, Chalernsak Radanachan, Kreingkrai Kulphun, Panupong Kongyen, Pannaphan Yodmanee, Phunsee Srisuphar, Pongpan Chantanamattha, Sompote Singthong, Somsak Chowtadapong, and Suchart Vongthong.

We invite you to immerse yourself in this vibrant cultural journey, where art becomes a bridge of understanding, and where the creative spirit of Indonesia and Thailand comes together as "*blending souls*".

Enjoy the exhibition!



MESSAGE

from the Minister of Culture of the Kingdom of Thailand
(H.E. Ms. Sudawan Wangsuphakijkosol)
on the occasion of the publication of the book on
"Blending Souls: Indonesia-Thailand Painting Exhibition"



The publication of a book on "Blending Souls: Indonesia-Thailand Painting Exhibition" is a part of the painting exhibition with the same title, organized by the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia. The "Blending Souls" Painting Exhibition is held at the National Gallery of Thailand, Bangkok during 4-30 October 2024. Following the success of previous two painting exhibitions entitled "Bridge of Colors" in 2022, and "Blossoming Curiosity" in 2023 also held at the National Gallery of Thailand, this year's exhibition will showcase a collection of artworks, as presented in this book, by talented Thai and Indonesian artists delving into the rich tapestry of life in the societies of Indonesia and Thailand through the lens of painting. This collection is not merely an assembly of beautiful artworks but a vivid dialogue between two neighboring cultures, each with its unique yet intertwined history, traditions, and modern realities.

In 1950, Thailand and Indonesia embarked on a journey of diplomatic engagement, recognizing the



importance of mutual respect, understanding, and collaboration. Our relationship has since flourished, encompassing various sectors such as trade, education, tourism, and culture. Thailand and Indonesia, while geographically distinct, share a common thread of cultural vibrancy that is reflected in their art.

This book with the collection of works by Thai and Indonesian artists invites everyone to explore a fascinating blend of similarity and contrast, encouraging a deeper understanding of how these two societies view themselves and each other. It is an opportunity to appreciate the beauty and complexity of Indonesian and Thai cultures, seen through the eyes of their most talented artists. This collaborative project also serves as a beacon of the enduring friendship between our two nations as we approach the 75th Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations between our two countries in 2025.

Lastly, I would like to convey my gratitude and express my sincere appreciation to the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia and those involved in organizing the painting exhibition and publishing this book and to all the artists who have participated in this exhibition, for their dedication and passion. I believe this exhibition will showcase the rich creativity and talent from both nations and stands as a testament to the enduring cultural cooperation and deep-rooted friendship between Thailand and Indonesia.



MESSAGE

from the Director of the National Gallery of Thailand



The National Gallery of Thailand is the national art institute, a sub-organization of the Fine Arts Department. Our main objectives have been focused on collecting, studying, and displaying significant pieces of art, diverse from traditional style till the post-modern era. Apart from encouraging talented Thai artists on making their way through the public eyes by providing art spaces, we also hand out for international scale of collaboration through art exhibitions, as part of soft power on strengthening global relationship between Thailand and other countries.

In 2022 - 2023, the National Gallery of Thailand collaborated the Embassy of



the Republic of Indonesia (Bangkok), to run a cooperative art exhibition entitled "Bridge of Colors" and "Blossoming Curiosity". As of recent year of 2024, we once again joined in coraborative art exhibition entitled "Blending Souls" which consists of 24 artists from both countries, to display their compelling pieces of art on various genres and techniques. This remarkable event is scheduled to exhibit in exhibition building no. 6, the National Gallery of Thailand during Oct 4th - 30th, 2024.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia (Bangkok) and I also wish a great success toward an upcoming art exhibition "Blending Souls" which will surely be a crucial milestone of friendship between the two countries, and I strongly believe that this art event will bring us closer together especially on artistic aspect.

(Miss Darika Thanasaksiri)

The Director of the National Gallery of Thailand



SEPARATED FLESH BLENDING SOULS Indonesia - Thailand

Agus Dermawan T.



The *Blending Souls* Indonesia-Thailand Painting Exhibition showcases artworks by Indonesian artists namely Heri Dono, Edi Sunaryo, Galuh Tajimalela, Prajna Dewantara Wirata, Rendra Santana, Camelia Mitasari Hasibuan, Erica Hestu Wahyuni, Sugeng

Pramuji Hidayat, Rachmat Budiman, Putu Sutawijaya, Made Toris Mahendra, Ni Nyoman Sani, I Made Ruta, Wayan Kun Adnyana, and Ketut Muka Pendet.

The exhibition deliberately features a wide variety of styles and themes. These include the caricatural style found in Heri Dono's paintings, the comical decorative style of Erica Hestu Wahyuni, abstract works with traditional elements by Edi Sunaryo, and the expressive representational style of Galuh Tajimalela's realistic watercolor paintings. Also represented are the illustrative decorative style of Rachmat Budiman's lotus-themed paintings, abstract expressions by Made Toris Mahendra and Putu Sutawijaya, and symbolic representations by Wayan Kun Adnyana. Nyoman Sani presents a fashionably aesthetic style in her works.

Despite the contrasts in content and appearance, these Indonesian painters are born from a single source. They emerge from artistic thoughts that float and



swim in the same river estuary: the estuary of Indonesian painting history. In other words, they are the most recent products of a long-flowing river of Indonesian painting history

To understand this artistic heritage, it is important to look back at the history that has shaped it.

Indonesian Painting as a Historical Pinnacle

Modern Indonesian painting began with Raden Saleh Syarif Bustaman (1807-1880). Before his influence, and for several decades after, modern painting in Indonesia developed through the work of artists employed in the topography division of the Dutch East Indies government. During this period, Indonesian painting also encountered the works of European artists such as A.A.J. Payen and Jan Daniel Beynon.

After Raden Saleh's death, Indonesian painting saw a lull in prominent artists until the 1920s when Abdullah Suriosubroto, who had studied in the Netherlands, became a notable landscape painter in a naturalistic, realistic style. At the same time, Dutch and Dutch East Indies painters, such as Emil Rizek and Romualdo Locatelli, accentuated and contributed to the evolution of modern Indonesian painting.

In 1938, Sudjojono and Agus Djaya founded the Persagi (Association of Indonesian Painting Experts) to establish a place for Indonesian painters in a field dominated by foreign artists. However, Persagi was disbanded during the Japanese occupation in 1942 and replaced by the Keimin Bunka Shidoso cultural organization. During this period, Indonesian painting was largely representational, emphasizing on nationalist themes.

Following Indonesia's independence on 17 August 1945, a range of art associations and studios emerged, fostering a wide range of painting styles stemmed from the recently freed mind of the painters.

The establishment of formal art academies since 1947 like ITB in Bandung, the Indonesian Academy of Fine Arts in Yogyakarta, and other institutions such as Academy of Fine Arts Surabaya, and Jakarta Institute of Arts helps put the modernist style in the spotlight.

The evolution of these styles and genres continued side by side and often collided. Since 2000, contemporary painting has emerged as the latest novelty in Indonesian art, with many artists, including those featured in the *Blending Souls* exhibition, participating enthusiastically in contemporary movement.



Such an extraordinary reality that almost all Indonesian painters are enthusiastic to be part of this contemporary stream. Many talented painters have emerged from this contemporary stream, including those featured in the *Blending Souls* exhibition. Some of the artists showcased in the exhibition include Heri Dono, Edi Sunaryo, Galuh Tajimalela, Prajna Dewantara Wirata, Rendra Santana, Camelia Mitasari Hasibuan, Erica Hestu Wahyuni, and Sugeng Pramuji Hidayat, as well as Rachmat Budiman, a special guest artist, which is none other than the Indonesian Ambassador in Bangkok.

Also, Balinese painters-who actually possess a rich traditional art habit, in this *Blending Souls* exhibition, Putu Sutawijaya, Made Toris Mahendra, Ni Nyoman Sani, I Made Ruta, Wayan Kun Adnyana, and Ketut Muka Pendet present their dynamic and enchanting works.

Contemporaryism is the (temporary) estuary of river in Indonesian painting history. Indonesian painters-driven to always be evolutionary and revolutionary as well as quick to respond to new courses-seem to rejoice in being there.

Thai Painting as a Fragmented History

Perhaps, because the exhibition is organized by the Indonesian Embassy, and the theme of the exhibition is *Blending Souls*, the works of the Thai painters were naturally directed towards reflecting the "Indonesian world." This curatorial decision creates a cohesive theme: Indonesia in the lens of two nations.

Let's delve into some of the key pieces.

Banlu Wiriapornprapas, in his *Lotus and Indonesian Women* series, depicts various tropical flowers floating on the water's surface. The lotus flowers, which appear in both clear and subtle forms, are surrounded by folded and floating leaves. The work suggests a metaphorical connection between Indonesian and Thai women, with the lotus representing the latter.

Phunsee Srisuphar presents semi-abstract works titled *Together as One*, depicting sea creatures joyfully interacting in the depths of the ocean. The animals are rendered with geometric lines in soft, gradational pastel tones.

Similarly, Suchart Vongthong presents semi-abstract paintings in his *Song, Souls* series, where musical instruments, such as the Sundanese rebab, are surrounded by abstract forms representing notes and rhythms.

Pannaphan Yodmanee offers abstract symbolism in *The Universe in Blue Eyes*, where a vast blue field suddenly emerges in the sky, containing the gaze of an eye-an invitation for meditation, incorporating Hindu-Balinese iconography.

Panupong Kongyen's surrealist work *Aurora Polaris* features a pair of eyes



guarding an empty chair amidst a desert landscape illuminated by aurora-like green lights, reminiscent of the glow over Mount Ijen in East Java.

Charlermsak Radanachan's *Dance Bali* and *Manohra Shadow Play* capture the energy of stage performances, with vibrant colors and freely moving ornaments, evoking the dynamic atmosphere of Balinese and Thai visual traditions.

Kreingkrai Kulphun's *Afterlife* series combines detailed realism with the decorative motifs of Balinese art, exploring philosophical depths through magical and mystical elements.

Sompote Singthong's *Solidarity* brings together the magical elements of Balinese and Thai cultures, merging mythological figures such as Barong and Buddha's protective spirits in a grand procession.

Somsak Chowtadapong's works, *Makkaleephon* and *Himmaphan Forest*, are poetic depictions of serene landscapes and mythological scenes, executed with sensitive brushwork.

Pongpan Chantanamattha's expressionistic painting *Amicability of Sundaland* depicts a crowd of common folk engaged in ritualistic activities, welcoming a leader—a reflection of the goodness that emanates from the Sunda region.

These works of the Thai artists illustrate that Thai painting does not follow a linear historical progression. Unlike Indonesian artists, who converge at the confluence of their nation's artistic history, the Thai painters featured in this exhibition, choose distinct fragments of history to explore and express. They can adopt elements from both the past and present, creating a more fragmented yet equally rich narrative in their works.

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Thailand—unlike Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Myanmar—is a country that has never been hegemonized by Western imperialism. This has allowed Thailand to remain firmly rooted in its traditions, which developed from ancient cultural encounters with China and India. The influence of modern Western culture, if present, is only taken as an enriching reference. The strength of tradition is evident in the ornamental and figurative elements found in their artworks. The paintings of Charlermsak Radanachan and Kreingkrai Kulphun in the exhibition reflect this cultural perspective.

During the 19th century, King Mongkut and King Chulalongkorn played significant roles in preserving traditional Thai culture while also embracing



Western art in Bangkok. King Mongkut permitted foreign artists to work and teach in Thailand under certain limitations. His successor, King Chulalongkorn, implemented extensive changes in education and the visual arts, advocating for the use of photography as a means of modernizing the country.

In 1897, King Chulalongkorn even visited Italy and had his portrait painted by artists Edouardo Gelli, Cesare Fantachiotti, and Michele Gordigiani. During the sittings, King Chulalongkorn wore a traditional uniform that symbolized the rich cultural heritage of Siam-Thailand. He also commissioned a statue from a French artist, which depicted him on horseback with traditional Thai accessories. This statue was later placed in front of the Ananta Samakhom Throne Hall in Bangkok. King Bhumibol Adulyadej later continued King Chulalongkorn's initiative by inviting Basoeki Abdullah to paint the royal family.

Since then, the Renaissance style of photographic realism emerged while still retaining traditional Thai elements. A selection of this school is represented in the current exhibition by the paintings of Sompote Singthong.

In 1932, Thailand abolished the absolute monarchy. From this point on, art was managed under the direction of the Silpakorn Art School. While modern art thrived, traditional art persisted. Despite teaching various modern painting styles, traditional thinking remained a significant influence in academic art. Artists such as Banlu Wiriapornprapas, Phunsee Srisuphar, and Pongpan Chantanamattha exemplify this blending of traditional and modern styles. Their paintings reflect elements of impressionism and expressionism, popular European art styles since ancient times.

In the 1970s, Thai painting experienced a surge in popularity following the art boom of the 1960s. This period was marked by the return of painters who had studied abroad, bringing with them a spirit that embraced themes ranging from surrealism to abstraction and formalism. Notable painters from this time include Damrong Wong-Uparaj and Sawasdi Tantisuk. Phunsee Srisuphar and Panupong Kongyen further solidified this artistic movement with their contributions to this exhibition.

Entering the 21st century, contemporary trends colored Thai paintings through various new media. While embracing modern methods, traditional content and visual characteristics remain prevalent in the paintings. Somsak Chowtadapong's painting in this exhibition is a perfect example of this blend of traditional and contemporary elements.

For Thai paintings, there are different art schools with distinct influences.



These include the traditional school with pseudo-Buddhist content, the school influenced by Western teachers, the modern art school from the West, and the contemporary art school with a post-modern spirit. It's important to note that these schools do not follow a strict historical sequence. Each school represents a particular period and should be respected accordingly. Thai painters can choose the influence that best fits their artistic vision from these periods.

That is why the reputation of Thai painters is not measured by their progressiveness in following the eras, but by how deeply they are loyal to the flow they have picked up from the times they have passed through.

As a result, the curator of the periodic ASEAN Selection 1980s, for example, chose the work of Ithipol Thangchalok, an academic ornamental decorative artist whose work reflects the legacy of post-absolute monarchy art in 1932. Thai art observer Somporn Rodboon highly valued the work of Sakchai Uttitho, who remained true to blending Thai art and Western photography concepts taught by King Chulalongkorn in the late 19th century. Sakchai's work also won the ASEAN UOB Art Awards 1996 competition. Curator Apinan Poshyananda placed Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook and Wijiit Apichatkriengkrai as the top avant-garde artists, believing that both would remain loyal to their chosen style.

In conclusion, the Thai painters featured in this exhibition, curated by Assistant Professor Dr. Phadung Prommoon, do not seek to initiate an evolution (let alone revolution) in art. They prefer to select what they personally enjoy and then delve into that choice with utmost seriousness. This distinct history of Thai painting is particularly fascinating for an Indonesian researcher.

Agus Dermawan T.

Critic and author of books on culture and art.

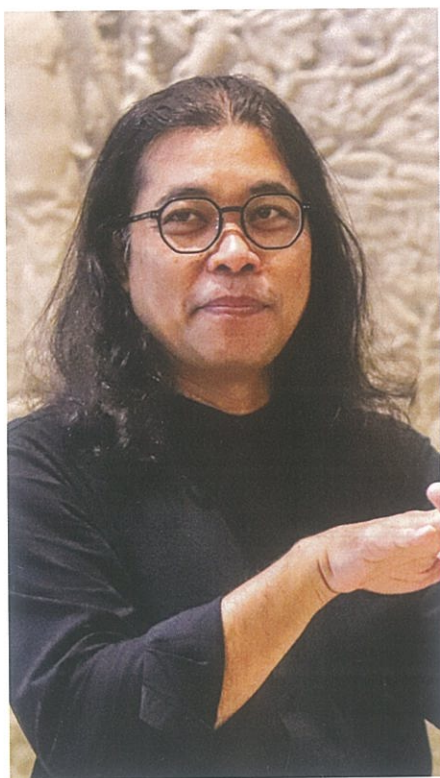
Expert resource person for the Art Objects Collection at the Presidential Palace of the Republic of Indonesia.



BLENDING SOULS

Expression and Diplomacy

Mikke Susanto



As how it usually is supposed to be, an exhibition is always filled with meanings. This time, I tried to test that concept through ChatGPT, an artificial intelligence (AI) application that is currently trending. I typed a light question, “What is the significance of an art exhibition between Indonesia and Thailand?”

It didn’t take long, around 3 seconds, for the application to generate several answers. There were 7 points presented by the AI: Educational and Art Appreciation Platform, A Medium for Artistic Expression and Creativity, Promotion of Artworks and Artists, Development of the Creative Industry, Cultural and Ideological Exchange, Boosting Tourism and Economy, and an Avenue for Social Reflection and Criticism.

These seven points are quite complex if explored more deeply. The conclusion of some of these points clearly shows that this exhibition is important. In fact, it’s very important. All seven points refer to two key words: *expression* and *diplomacy*.

In this context, *expression* refers to the production and aesthetic practice.



The creation of art generates thoughts with various discourses within them. Artists create, present, and communicate their ideas or feelings through their works of art to reflect experiences, ideologies, values, as well as social and cultural realities. Hence, the product of this aesthetic practice can serve as news, issues, information, or myths that respond to contemporary issues or local cultures surrounding the artists, which can be used as material for conversation or communication between individuals.

Art transforms into a representation, connotation, and sensory material useful to viewers. Therefore, we cannot limit expression to merely beautiful things (read: pleasant). Art also encompasses a wide range of expressions, including ambiguity in poetry, disorder in music rhythms, violence in paintings, and more.

Meanwhile, *diplomacy* today is articulated as the management of relationships between various entities and goals. In the world-particularly in the realm of global geopolitics-there are two known forms: hard diplomacy and soft diplomacy. Hard diplomacy is often conducted through military force, with a coercive nature due to circumstances and laws. Soft diplomacy or public diplomacy, on the other hand, is non-coercive, and one of its mediums uses culture or art as a "weapon."

In the past, soft diplomacy was often regarded as an "alternative." Yet, I believe today it has become a significant and primary choice. This exhibition, for instance, not only serves as a diplomatic bridge between nations but also as part of the implementation of the intellectual wealth of both nations, while also serving as a means of preventing conflict and war. The shift in international society's inclination towards optimizing public diplomacy to prevent the resolution of international conflicts has surfaced, producing an extraordinary positive impact.

The paintings from 24 artists (14 from Indonesia and 10 from Thailand) in this exhibition reveal a number of ideas related to these two key terms: *expression* and *diplomacy*. From October 4-30, 2024, they presented a variety of objects, news, issues, or myths through paintings at the National Gallery of Thailand. Most of their works incorporate symbols pertaining Indonesia, often through several types of cultural objects.

Through the diverse styles presented by the mostly semi-decorative figurative painters, we can feel the intimacy between the two nations. Heri Dono's work, *Elephant and Garuda in Harmony* (2024), Ketut Muka Pendet's *Life of Line* (2024), or Kreingkrai Kulphun's *Afterlife* (2024) demonstrate this closeness through the presence of the Garuda and the elephant as symbols of the brotherhood



between the two countries. In Chalernsak Radanachan's *Dance Bali* (2024), Suchart Vongthong's *Songs, Souls* (2024), Chalernsak Radanachan's *Manohra: Shadow Play* (2024), Sompote Singthong's *Solidarity No.2* (2024), and SP. Hidayat's *Lenggok Penari Jaipong* (2024), the cultural heritage of performing arts is used as an important medium for public diplomacy.

Meanwhile, other works present "expression and diplomacy" through still-life objects in their paintings. For example, Banlu Wiriapornprapas's *Lotus and Indonesian Women* (2024), Panupong Kongyen's *Aurora Polaris* (2024), Kreingkrai Kulphun's *Afterlife No. 2* (2024), Phunsee Srisuphar's *Together as One #2* (2024), and H.E. Rachmat Budiman's *There is Lotus in My Heart* (2024) utilize natural objects such as flowers, masks, and other items to describe cross-cultural solidarity with a different language from other painters.

Additionally, other works explore the female body and the universe as symbols. In Prajna Dewantara Wirata's *Janmashtami No. 1* (2024), Rendra Santana's *Historical Remains* (2024), or Somsak Chowtadapong's *Makkaleephon* (2024), Nyoman Sani's *The Legacy #1 to #3* (2024) explores the presence of women with various cultural characteristics as markers of relationships between the two countries. Meanwhile, Pannaphan Yodmanee's *The Universe in Blue Eyes* (2024), Made Toris's *True Colors* (2024) and *Ancient Legacy #01* (2024), and Putu Sutawijaya's *Di Titik Pencapaian* (2024) depict a consciousness about the universe that can be connected to Indonesia-Thailand diplomacy. The symbols of the relationship between cosmology and the human body are strongly embedded in their works.

Beyond that, there are several works based on individual awareness, such as Edi Sunaryo's *Blooming* (2023) and *Primitive Image* (2024), and I Made Ruta's *Misteri Asu* (2024). Wayan Kun Adnyana's *Sembrani Horse* (2024) articulates the mythology of animals believed in by ancient societies in the Nusantara. Pongpan Chantanamattha's *Amicability of Sundaland* (2024) specifically highlights the hospitality of Indonesians in welcoming guests from other countries, through the eyes of a Thai painter.

From the works of Indonesian and Thai artists, it can be derived that the discourse surrounding "expression" and "diplomacy" is rich with linguistic and interpretive creativity. Although diplomacy is often perceived as a complex network or condition, there is always a way for artists to express it in a simple and engaging manner. Through art, we can understand how soft diplomacy is not just a matter of outcome, but its process and range of ideas expand



immensely. In the context of public diplomacy like this, artists' ideas should not be dismissed, even if it's just drawing a flower.

We can all learn from Putu Sutawijaya's work, *Di Titik Pencapaian* (2024), which describes awareness of the path and effort towards peace, purity, and perfection in relationships and life. It's not easy, filled with competition and rivalry, but also togetherness. Crafting relationships with other parties or countries may be complicated and challenging, but rest assured, we will always find creative ways to resolve any matters.

Thus, if we revisit the 7 points highlighted by ChatGPT, the most important aspect-in terms of diplomacy-is showing good intentions, getting through the process honestly and correctly, and understanding each other's concerns. From there, we can articulate the complexity of a diplomatic relationship as "an opportunity to get to know each other." An art exhibition may seem like an easy opportunity or a "light" task compared to preparing for an armed conflict between nations. Precisely because it's easy and light, let's do it more often.

Mikke Susanto

Art Curator & Lecturer at the Indonesian Institute of the Arts (ISI)
Yogyakarta



BLENDING SOULS

"Integrating Thai and Indonesian Art through Cultural and Artistic Understanding"

Assist. Prof. Dr. Padhung Prommoon



The region of Southeast Asia, also known as "Suvarnabhumi," is home to ancient civilizations, particularly in Indonesia and Thailand. Archaeological evidence confirms that both countries are rich in natural resources, rivers, mountains, forests, seas, and oceans and possess invaluable cultural heritage. This is evident from

historical sites such as Borobudur in Yogyakarta, as well as the exquisite sculptures, carvings, and dances of the region. Similarly, Thailand has a foundation in fine arts known for its elegance, including arts, music, and performing arts.

One common aspect of both countries is their national artists, recognized for their vast contributions to architecture, sculpture, painting, music, and dance. Particularly, their painting works are globally acknowledged for their unique identity, deeply rooted in traditions passed down through generations. These paintings reflect traditional themes related to religion, beliefs, way of life, and cultural practices, fostering a sense of beauty, sensitivity, and global citizenship in the people of both nations.

When focusing on the realm of painting, it is evident that artists enjoy the freedom to create based on their life experiences, blended with profound imagination, resulting in a variety of narratives and techniques. These range from



depictions of tribal stories and rural life to urban settings and developments in contemporary international art. The artistic perspectives can be categorized into three aspects: "The Beauty of Nature, Philosophy, Beliefs and Mysticism, and Contemporary Art."

This foundation has inspired the current painting exhibition, which aims to use art as a medium to foster understanding and promote enduring friendship between Indonesia and Thailand. Both nations are united by a spirit of love and peace, and a deep respect for cultural differences, creating a harmonious unity a *Blending of Souls*.

The Beauty of Nature

Nature serves as a realm that reflects the interrelationship of all things-be it the sky, rivers, mountains, forests, animals, or insects. It can be said that nature is the source of spirit, philosophy, religion, science, and aesthetics, inspiring humans to create various works, including artistic creations. This is exemplified in the works of Mitasari Hasibuan, an Indonesian female artist who captures the richness and beauty of nature through her keen and sensitive perspective, perceiving the essence of beauty hidden in the living beings and the surrounding environment. Her paintings combine realistic techniques with dreamy imagination, where she vividly employs bright colors and compositions that emphasize the diversity of wildlife and flora. Her depictions of hornbills, parrots, cats, flowers, and butterflies reflect the harmonious relationship between the beauty of nature and the environment. Moreover, the inclusion of musical notes floating in the background adds a sense of aesthetics and uniqueness to her art.

In the artwork *Di Titik Pencapaian2* by Putu Sutawijaya, the artist portrays life and struggle, reflecting perseverance and resilience in the face of life's challenges. He uses brown and black tones, varying the intensity of light and dark according to the mood of the painting, creating an emotional impact that invites viewers to explore the deeper meanings being conveyed.

In the acrylic painting *Together As One1, Together As One 2, and Together As One3* by Phunsee Srisuphar, a Thai female artist, the semi-abstract style is used to express the longstanding harmonious relationship between Thailand and Indonesia. This is depicted through a group of fish swimming together in water, with the color schemes of the two nations' flags symbolically integrated. The painting *Together As One* consists of three pieces, each thoughtfully composed with playful lines, varying shades of color, and rhythmic forms and shapes,



resulting in a visually pleasing composition.

Meanwhile, in *Lotus and Thai Woman* and *Lotus and Indonesian Woman* by Banlu Wiriapornprapas, both paintings employ techniques, colors, and brushstrokes that are vibrant and lively, emphasizing the beauty and significance of the lotus flower. The lotus, a symbol with deep meaning in both Buddhism and Hinduism, represents purity, enlightenment, and spiritual awakening, embodying the connection between nature and faith. In this series, the artist cleverly hides the face of a woman within the lotus flower, maintaining a harmonious representation of natural beauty.

Additionally, there is a realistic depiction of a lotus flower from the perspective of Indonesian artist H.E. Rachmat Budiman. His artwork, *There is Lotus in My Heart* presents a beautifully blooming lotus that reflects the tranquility of the mind. This work offers a profound perspective on natural beauty and balance, connecting the way of life and spirit within Southeast Asia. The artist combines realistic painting techniques with the creative design of shapes, forms, and colors, along with varied textures within the artwork, enhancing the depth of his conceptual expression.

Philosophy, Belief, and Mysticism

Artworks that explore philosophy, beliefs, and the mystic spirit have sparked the human imagination since ancient times. Galuh Tajimalela presents such themes in his work *Ni Pollok*, which depicts a narrative intertwined with culture, religious traditions, beliefs, and mysteries that are integral to local life. This piece is a form of contemporary art that conveys traditional beauty and cultural interpretations of Balinese women from a fresh perspective. It combines realistic drawing techniques with the artist's imagination. The painting's highlight lies in its composition, which, despite its conflicting elements, achieves harmony through the balance of color, texture, and the intricate depiction of a story on a woman's back that invites curiosity.

Another thought-provoking and interpretive series is *True Colors* and *Ancient Legacy #01* by Made Toris Mahendra. These works reflect a blend of natural beauty and the grandeur of contemporary Indonesian art, expressing reverence and the deep relationship between humans and nature, and the spirit within Indonesian society. The artist presents symbolic imagery, such as an eye containing a map of Indonesia, with intricate lines depicting the islands and magnificent nature. The eyes in these paintings may represent a vision of the spirit or a deep perspective on nature and the universe. The artist emphasizes



movement, power, and mystery through well-balanced artistic compositions.

The work *Historical Remains* by Rendra Santana is a realistic painting that reflects history and religion through the portrayal of a woman dressed in traditional attire, seated amidst ancient ruins and carved stone patterns, symbolizing Indonesian art and culture. The artist deliberately blends nature with art related to history to express the spirit and beauty of the cultural heritage that persists today. This artistic expression demonstrates a deep respect for the past and a profound connection to the religion and culture embedded in Indonesian soil, reflecting the faith in art and history among the people of this region.

For the works of Thai artist Somsak Chowtadapong, titled *Himmaphan Forest* and *Makkaleephon*, the artist expresses his admiration and fascination with Thai paintings related to Buddhism and beliefs in mysticism. He conveys these themes through contemporary Thai paintings, depicting the landscapes and creatures of the Himmaphan Forest, a mythical realm rooted in Buddhist and Hindu beliefs. His imaginative interpretation employs acrylic techniques with fluid, flowing colors, creating an atmosphere of the Himmaphan Forest. The paintings feature mythical creatures from Thai literature, such as kinnaree, kinnara, Narasingha deities, swans, Naga serpents, kachasiha (mythical lions), birds, naga deities, and various mysterious beings, inviting viewers to explore and enjoy the stories crafted by the artist. Meanwhile, the painting *Makkaleephon* portrays a mythological tale of a beautiful maiden with flawless skin, hanging naked on a tree branch, enticing divine beings and humans alike to admire her and pick the makalee fruits to appreciate. The artist skillfully conveys the spiritual allegory in an impressively beautiful manner.

For the work *Afterlife1* and *Afterlife2* by Kreingkrai Kulphun, it reflects religious beliefs and imagery in Thai art, particularly expressing mysticism and the afterlife. This work integrates artistic elements and symbolic media that convey Buddhist legends and stories, including the use of intricate patterns to create dimensions related to spirituality and beliefs about the afterlife. The painting of a demon's mouth devouring humans and mythical creatures represents beliefs about the cycle of birth and rebirth. The artist intentionally uses colors to evoke emotions within the painting and arranges complex compositions in a circular space, providing a novel perception and challenging viewers to interpret its meaning. Additionally, the image of a Khon mask surrounded by flowers and other symbols reflects the relationship between humans and the supernatural.

The works *Manohra/Shadow Play* and *Dance Bali/Wayang* by Chalernsak Radanachan present stories about performing arts and contemporary cultural



exchanges between Thai and Indonesian art. The works draw from the Manohra dance, a Southern Thai folk performance that is closely related to local life, characterized by idealistic expressions that incorporate thought-provoking messages, fun, and humor. Meanwhile, Indonesian art showcases the graceful dances of Bali, enriched with aesthetic power, such as Wayang Kulit, a shadow puppet art form featuring intricate and enchanting costumes. The performing arts of both cultures inspire the artist to express them in modern idealistic paintings that embellish artistic imagination with lines, colors, weights, and compositions that invite exploration of stories reflecting the spiritual connection between Thailand and Indonesia.

Another intriguing piece, *Misteri Asu* by I Made Ruta, reflects mystery and invites viewers to seek deeper meanings. The artist creatively uses cool tones with a light, transparent quality, contrasted with geometric-like patterns. The painting depicts shapes resembling mythical beasts or certain symbols, suggesting folk beliefs about the spirit in the culture of the Southeast Asian region.

Contemporary Art

This group of artists embraces freedom of thought in creating contemporary art that challenges new ideas by drawing on life experiences, diverse techniques, and materials to fuel their imaginations. Edi Sunaryo's works, *"Blooming"* and *Primitive Image*, are prints that seek to communicate the connection between traditional art and modern concepts through the use of symbols and patterns unique to Indonesian folklore. The pieces emphasize geometric shapes that challenge the viewers' perceptions, utilizing intricate patterns and unconventional symbols with striking color weights such as black, white, and red, along with abstract compositions. These artworks not only reflect external beauty but also contain symbols that convey Indonesian culture and traditions from a contemporary perspective.

Another artist, Ni Nyoman Sani, creates works in the style of traditional fashion art. Her series *The Legacy#1*, *The Legacy#2* and *The Legacy#3* portrays women in traditional attire combined with modern elements from a new perspective. The clothing styles are exquisite and uniquely fashionable, with three styles of scarves and waist wraps featuring prominent patterns that convey movement and vitality. The lines and styles of dress represent an identity and traditions passed down through generations, highlighting the unique and charming cultural heritage of Indonesian traditional attire.



Sugeng Pramuji Hidayat's work, *Lenggok Penari Jaipong*, captures the graceful movements of the Jaipong dance, known for its combination of fast-paced, lively rhythms of traditional music. Inspired by the elegance of female dancers, the artist creates a painting using a blue monochrome palette with flowing brushstrokes, showcasing expertise in the Expressionist style. Another piece, *Sang Petarung (Fighter)*, features bold, warm red tones to convey dynamic movement and intense emotion, reflecting the story of a fierce, brave fighter's stance and spirit—much like someone facing life's challenges with unwavering determination. This piece represents contemporary art, reflecting the excitement and complexity of human emotions.

Creative expression is an artist's freedom to reflect their perceptions and imagination. Prajna Dewantara Wirata's work, *Janmashtami I*, and, *Janmashtami II* consists of two pieces focusing on the graceful movements of women. The highlight is in the open composition between the blue monochrome and white background, intentionally creating a contrast. This painting depicts a ritualistic dance in devotion to Lord Krishna, a tradition long practiced in Hindu beliefs. The artist adopts a contemporary style by using dynamic shapes and colors to evoke feelings and imagination, challenging viewers to interpret the emotions and sentiments the artist wishes to convey.

Putu Sutawijaya's monochrome work titled *Di Titik Pencapaian* depicts a group of people in various postures, seemingly climbing, which may symbolize the struggles and battles of human life. Using simple line-drawing techniques and a black-and-white composition, the artwork conveys a complex range of emotions and ambitions. It is a contemporary piece that deeply reflects social issues and the challenges of daily human life.

Heri Dono's work, stimulates the imagination to think outside the box. This creative piece blends humor with social satire, portraying unusual and vividly colored creatures or constructs. The faces in the artwork express emotions with surreal characteristics. This work reflects the fusion of local symbols and Indonesian culture, presenting views on society, politics, and modern social life. The use of satirical art as a tool for communication provokes thought and engages viewers.

Song, Souls 1 and *Song, Souls 2* by Suchart Vongthong is created by an artist who loves and is passionate about music, believing that music fosters friendship and understanding among humanity, leading to a peaceful society. Suchart Vongthong expresses his attitude, emotions, and pure feelings through the story of melodious music, using techniques and vibrant colors in a semi-abstract style.



His works often feature simple yet dynamic lines and vibrant compositions that reflect movement and vitality. Additionally, the work blends traditional Thai art with contemporary art through the use of beautiful musical instrument symbols, symbolizing the strong relationship between Thailand and Indonesia, where people share a common love for music.

The piece *Amicability in Sundaland* by Pongpan Chantanamattha depicts groups of people in contexts that express friendliness and cultural diversity in Sundaland, a region rich in nature, environment, and idealistic culture. The artist uses quick, lively brushstrokes and vibrant colors to build the mood of the painting in a unique contemporary style, reflecting the relationships between people from diverse societies and cultural backgrounds in Southeast Asia. A notable feature of Sundaland is how the artist subtly includes the faces of prominent world figures, inviting curiosity and interpretation.

Solidarity No 1 and *Solidarity No 2* by Sompote Singthong focuses on expressing unity between Thailand and Indonesia. Although both countries have diverse cultures and beliefs-both similar and different-the paintings use vivid colors against a gray background with a modern composition. The contrasting colors convey the idea that differences can blend and coexist harmoniously. This work invites everyone to see the beauty in the fusion of cultures and the peaceful spirit that can coexist together harmoniously forever.

Another intriguing series by Panupong Kongyen, titled *Aurora Polaris 1* and *Aurora Polaris 2* showcases contemporary art that merges reality with imagination. The artist uses surrealistic depictions of aurora landscapes combined with colors that evoke mystery and convey complex emotions and thoughts. These paintings emphasize the beauty of nature connected to personal feelings and symbolic interpretation, inviting viewers to see the connection between the external world and the inner mind of humans. The work reflects an open perspective toward nature and the human spirit, using colors and compositions that convey a unique emotional journey, creating a powerful sense of adventure and challenging hidden meanings.

Life of Line by Ketut Muka Pendet presents the story of movement and the vitality of life through the use of lines and symbols of various animals. The use of light lines and colors creates an intriguing atmosphere, reflecting the fusion of reality and imagination and connecting spiritually with the complexities of contemporary life. This work demonstrates a new interpretation in contemporary Indonesian art by combining intricate lines with subtle coloring to depict movement and the journey of the spirit.



In the work *Sembrani Horse* by Wayan Kun Adnyana, the artist uses softly blended yet sharp colors to depict the horse's body against a gentle orange background, creating a balance between strength and serenity (Soft Power). This piece reflects symbolic expression indicating strength and the love of freedom and peace in Indonesian culture. The use of strong shapes and movements of the horse conveys vitality and combines an intriguing symbolic interpretation.

Another emotionally impactful piece is *Waiting for Godot* by H.E. Rachmat Budiman. This painting resonates strongly with its somber color palette and rugged, conflicting textures. Particularly notable is the depiction of a figure dressed in black, intentionally drawn in a sitting posture with a bowed head, positioned close to the edge of the canvas, holding a wilted flower. This symbolizes the long wait of this man, with the sun's light representing the passage of time from morning to evening. It is a contemporary painting that showcases advanced artistic skills and the artist's depth in conveying emotions. Yet, who knows whom this man is waiting for?

The piece *History of Nature and Harmony #2* by Camelia Mitasari explores the concept that the emergence of nature is synonymous with the lifespan of the earth, which has evolved over billions of years, giving birth to countless entities, from the smallest life forms to the largest beings. All these constitute the history of nature, akin to an endless book. This idea inspires the artist to create a surrealist painting that opens up vast imagination, with an elephant symbolizing the passage of time, roots entangling, and books as symbols recording the compelling narratives of nature. It is a thought-provoking concept that evokes emotions, urging humanity to protect and preserve nature sustainably, skillfully captured by the artist.

In a delightful narrative painting, Erica Hestu Wahyuni's *Legend of Friendship and Prosperity* tells the story of a peaceful and prosperous society under love and harmonious friendship, reflecting coexistence in Indonesia—a land of diverse ethnic groups, languages, religions. It is a portrayal of an ideal society where all lives coexist peacefully. The charm of this painting lies in the artist's meticulous Decorative Art style, depicting seas, mountains, rivers, land and aquatic animals, birds, houses, temples, churches, cultural traditions, and folk games. The composition and color scheme are beautifully arranged, creating a sense of joy and happiness, making it a work that brings delight to its viewers.

The presentation of Thai and Indonesian art through three main concepts "The Beauty of Nature," "Philosophy, Beliefs, and Mysticism," and "Contemporary Art" allows us to perceive the diversity and uniqueness that clearly reflect the



cultures and beliefs of both countries. Artists from Thailand and Indonesia use distinctive colors, patterns, and techniques to present works that connect with their way of life and spirit. This comparative perspective not only fosters a deeper understanding of shared cultures and ways of life but also offers us a glimpse into the beauty and profundity embedded in the art of both nations. Although artists may have different perspectives in reflecting their own cultures, what connects them is the expression of respect, understanding, and appreciation for the natural way of life and religious beliefs that are at the heart of their artworks.

It can be said that Thai and Indonesian art that presents the beauty of nature reflects the relationship between humans and their surrounding environment. Thai artists Banlu Wiriapornprapas and Phunsee Srisuphar express the beauty of nature through vibrant colors and patterns that emphasize balance and tranquility. Meanwhile, Indonesian artists such as Camelia Mitasari Hasibuan and Putu Sutawijaya use intense colors and compositions to depict the strength and power of nature. This difference reflects the philosophies, cultures, traditions, and ways of life of the two countries-where Thai artists focus on peace and harmony, while Indonesian artists emphasize the challenges and beauty of nature and the environment, shaped by their island geographically surrounded by the sea. Despite these differences, both countries strive for a peaceful society.

On the topic of philosophy, beliefs, and mysticism, Thai and Indonesian artists draw upon religious narratives and patterns related to traditional wisdom. Thai artists like Kreingkrui Kulphun use symbols and images that convey spiritual meaning and create a sense of sacredness. In contrast, artists such as Galuh Tajimalela and Edi Sunaryo reflect faith in religion and respect for the diverse cultures within Indonesian society.

The final aspect concerns contemporary thought and expression. Thai artists like Panupong Kongyen and Sompote Singthong employ artistic creations that blend reality with imagination to reflect different beliefs and experiences. On the other hand, Indonesian artists such as Made Toris Mahendra and Heri Dono use symbols and imagery to depict societal changes and the interaction between humans and traditional culture. These artworks highlight diversity and the effort to preserve cultural values and uniqueness amidst a changing society.

Thus, Thai and Indonesian art is not only a pure form of artistic expression but also a medium of cultural communication that reflects the beliefs, faiths, and ways of life of the people in each country. The comparison and connection of these various aspects provide a deeper understanding of the creative cultures of both nations. Studying and exchanging artistic ideas is an excellent way to foster understanding and respect for the differences between them. These



artworks also open perspectives on the commitment to bridging the cultures of both countries through study and artistic exchange. It not only deepens our appreciation of each culture's uniqueness but also acts as a bridge for building mutual understanding between the people of these two Southeast Asian nations. Both nations share a rich cultural heritage and a spiritual essence that seamlessly blends together, embodying the concept of "Blending Souls."



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