

# ACRYLIC

A matter of (ir)rationalizing

*But I can't believe that you'd ever care  
and this is why you will never care  
—The Smiths, These things take time*

## **Fineness, genuineness, and emotions**

As a note to Aditya's current work period, this text would like to confirm your suspicion. It's true that no image are being used for Aditya to begin nor to finish these pieces. It's also true that there's no image for him to be deconstructed, permutated, or represented. These works stand for itself.

In other words, these works are abstract. Hence, these works depend on its creator's emotion. Whether it was deliberately or not, Persagi has "unleashed" the artist from the milieu or the common rein. The individual is the centre of creative power. As tracking the origins of works, it is himself who becomes the centre of the creative power. In nod to Sanento Yuliman<sup>1</sup>, freedom has made abstract works reasonable and even inevitable. In midst of this world where it gets more nonsensical each day, it seems impossible to seek a comfort zone where we can be assured that everything would happen as we'd planned. Artmaking is Aditya's comfort zone to do that. Every step is built with a strict tradition of structured thinking. Some might even call it hyperrational.

It wasn't as simple as that. *"It's like, I got to think how to make things work from each and every mistake I made."*

If we treat arts as a tangible discipline, therefore, every action of arranging visible things have artistic value and involve taste. In this exhibition, Aditya made himself hold onto his intuition (not his rationality); that what he is making is beautiful; is fine. I'd like to quote S. Sudjojono to remind us about the seemingly endless art quest about genuineness. "Modern painting is not a propaganda for fineness, instead it's propagandizing for the genuineness in each person. A theory once said that an artist should work for fineness is correct [...] This genuineness as purpose then becomes the ground for modern painting. And also to this genuineness, new painters nowadays aim for their direction."<sup>2</sup>

## **Rationalization: Formulation and abstraction**

Despite its sins, abstract art is indeed the ultimate manifestation of art that justify its value conforming to its zeitgeist. After all, one of the modern art principle is the art's autonomy (therefore the artist's autonomy). Therefore

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<sup>1</sup> Sanento Juliman, paper for Pesta Seni 2 public talks, *Seni Loekis di Indonesia – Persoalan-persoalannya Dulu dan Sekarang*. Jakarta: Taman Ismail Marzuki, 1969.

<sup>2</sup> S. Sudjojono, *Seni Loekis, Kesenian dan Seniman*. Yogyakarta: Penerbit Indonesia Sekarang, 1946.

modern art through abstract art has been able to show new aesthetic principles that hadn't been done before.<sup>3</sup>

The main challenge during the process in this exhibition, for Aditya as the artist as well as me as the curator, is: Reviving the belief that visualities is independent, that becoming fine is adequate. How do we present fineness in the times where even holiday greetings SMS are styled in *ASCII art*? Or daily text use punctuations as expression? If people think that there's a message for all images, well, of course it's not exaggerating.

Aditya's recent works have been accused to be abstract because they tend to be non-figurative. This accusation began from, *Abstract Logic series: The Arrest of Diponegoro (1895) – Raden Saleh – The Arrangement of Unknown (2015)*<sup>4</sup> where he deconstructed the figurative element from Raden Saleh painting into non-figurative elements. He also rearranged and permuted those elements. Aditya created a formulation to result geometric shape in his works.

Similar logic is applied in *Childhood Memorial: A Typical Landscape Drawing With Two Mountains, A Pathway, Paddy Field and The Sun (2016)*. In this case, Aditya didn't deconstruct, but he created formulas for abstraction and permutation. This particular work is a demonstrative example of how Aditya works—as well as its title. Generally, there are four main structures from this piece as explained on the title. Those four parts were later being modified into 90 times possibilities of arrangement.

From the works above, we can identify that Aditya begin his creative process from existing images. He deconstructs the image, decides several elements as the main structure, plays with those elements arrangement, and in the end, resulting new images. With all of those thinking structure and formulation, the visual that Aditya presents is abstraction from the preceded images.

### **Deliberateness: Transparent material and shadow**

Corresponding to his non-figurative tendency, Aditya uses acrylic sheet in his artistry. In some of his earlier works, viewers are oftentimes deceived merely by the variety of images, the crisp forms, or the fragility of this material. Whereas for me, there's something not right with this material and Aditya's manner of is making it seen. This material is transparent and Aditya allowed gaps between the sheet that he had drawn and the wall. Thus, shadow becomes an unavoidable element to be the part of his works. I am suspicious that the shadow is an effect that Aditya reckoned, in which he deliberately slipped as a surprise.

In the world of materials, what now we call acrylic sheet is *poly(methyl methacrylate)*. As a material, it is a secondary to glass. It's more expensive, but flimsier since it's scratched easily, difficult to clean, and sensitive to

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<sup>3</sup> Asmudjo Jono Irianto, "Seni Lukis Abstrak Indonesia", Jurnal *Kalam* vol. 27. Jakarta: Salihara, 2015.

<sup>4</sup> *The Arrest of Diponegoro (1895) – Raden Saleh – The Elements (2015)*; dan *The Arrest of Diponegoro (1895) – Raden Saleh – The Figureless Unknown (2015)*

temperature change. Acrylic sheet is secondary to glass for its similar use: Protecting, spacing, giving access for light to something underneath it.

Aditya uses a vast variety of materials in his artistic practice. However, he is devoted to the act of painting, painting elements, every aspect of painting, and he keeps on thinking about painting. From the painting perspective, acrylic paint is also secondary to oil. It's often considered more instant for its fast-drying character rather than oil paint. Treatment (mixing composition, storage, etc.) towards this medium is also much simpler than oil.

To Aditya's vocabulary, this transparent medium is chosen for its mediating role, for its position. It functions when something underneath needs it—and of course—when there is light. It is secondary, and at the same time it is the intermediary one. Aditya works with this material for these reasons. Basically, this material needs the light and background to be functional. Hence, this material cannot be standalone for what it is. It solely exists when it's useful.

### **Line, line, line**

The intention to imitate or to transform was never on the maker since the beginning. Whether one's work is comparable or not in this realm is not to be one's concern. Ergo the artist is able to deliver untransformed visuals, not an uptake from the obviousness.<sup>5</sup> This time, Aditya's visuals did not derive from something concrete nor to ask the viewer to conclude something concrete.

Form, composition, and texture in these works are there for themselves. Aditya did not assign them to represent anything. In the aftermath, it is unavoidable that an image is generated from the assembly of elements on such transparent sheet. The necessity of lights and shadows as the effect is something that we want to emphasize through this exhibition. These works of Aditya proofed that what he deals with is not a mere matter of (representational) imageries, but instead a matter of visualities.

One of the attributes of a painter on his canvas is line. Oesman Effendi said: "The origin of painting is line. Line is a partition between two colors. This partition line is determined by eyes. Eyes see. Eyes choose and eyes arrange. Forms of lines consist of dots, straight line and curved line. Colors are countless. However, those two or three types of lines can launch or rearranged those countless colors."<sup>6</sup>

The most familiar aspect from these works of Aditya is the presence of (various) lines. Aside from visualites, line is also an act performed by Aditya when he scratched other transparent materials onto these acrylic sheets; any kinds of tools: brush, sharp object, and up to rubber. There are lines on the surface, lines on the back, lines side by side, overlapping lines, lines from pouring the materials, lines as an act of addition, lines as an act subtraction. For Aditya, line separates one part from the others. Line segregate and

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<sup>5</sup> Sudjoko, "Menuju Nirada", in Biranul Anas dkk (ed.), *Refleksi Seni Rupa Indonesia, Dulu, Kini dan Esok*. Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 2000.

<sup>6</sup> Oesman Effendi, exhibition catalogue *Kesan Dalam*. Jakarta: Taman Ismail Marzuki, 1976.

liberate at the same time. Aditya's lines proof that (at least) there are two complementing sides—if not oppositional.

In these works, Aditya's lines worked like OE's, but color is not the purpose. Aditya's lines rearranged the transparent plane and flat surface underneath; combining, separating, or even merging both of the separated planes. The appearance of shadow lines behind the transparent sheets turned out proving its own presence. Albeit, the presence of Aditya's lines sometimes deceiving or at least spark our curiosity. Is the line on the front or the back of the sheet? What is the importance of knowing it?

*Jakarta, November 2016*  
*Grace Samboh*

(Translated by Gesyada AN Siregar.)