



**LUNDS**  
UNIVERSITET

Growth of Indonesian art market - Art for art's sake

A Master's thesis for the Degree  
Master of Arts (Two Years) in Visual Culture

By

Mizuho Sasaki

May 2012

Grader:

LUND UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

Division of Art History and Visual Studies

Master of Arts in Visual Culture

Growth of Indonesian art market - Art for art's sake

By Mizuho Sasaki

Art market is considered as a bench marker of artworks' value. Value of the works determines not only the importance of the artist whether it is temporal or not, but also the art style, trend of the contemporary art scene. My thesis focuses such issue of Indonesian art scene from its cultural background. Indonesia is now one of the most demanded and growing art market within the contemporary scene. Its rapid growth is accelerated by various factors such as the emergence of auction houses being one. Main focus is to analyze whether such emergence of auction houses with their sales figures actually collate with development of contextual idea of Indonesian art, or is the market is simply growing on its own with its economical aspect as if they are building castle out of sand? The increase of the artworks' price also gained its importance as financial investment thus it is an important factor to consider that in such manner artist may as well as create work that is intellectually empty but aesthetically appealing to be validated in the market. Growth of the Indonesian art market is observed nationally and internationally, but art scene itself does not seem to be recognized as internationally as the market does. Artist as a career is recognized occupation in Indonesia, but what do they strive for and what are expected from art market as an artist? The empirical material I have chosen for the thesis is interviews conducted with personnel involved with Indonesian art scene from different career background. Interviews allowed me to get insight from different perspectives within the art scene and also to rid the bias I may have for having different cultural background and not directly involved with the art scene. The theory will analyze cultural background of Indonesian art market and thus will adopt to shed a light on the otherwise hollow skeleton of Indonesian art market and its intellectual structure.

## Contents

<b>1. INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>5</b>
1.1 MOTIVATION AND PROBLEM .....	5
1.2 PROBLEMS AND ASSUMPTION.....	5
1.3 SUBJECT BACKGROUND (INDONESIAN ART DEVELOPMENT).....	6
1.4 RESEARCH METHOD .....	8
1.5 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS AND BIAS FACTOR .....	9
1.6 THEORETICAL APPROACH .....	10
1.7 RESEARCH QUESTION AND ACADEMIC RELEVANCE.....	11
<b>2. DEFINING INDONESIAN ART SCENE .....</b>	<b>12</b>
2.1 INDONESIAN-NESS.....	12
2.2 MOOI INDIES AND COLONIZATION.....	12
2.3 ART AS REPRESENTATION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY.....	13
2.4 NEW ART MOVEMENT (ORDE BARU) .....	14
2.5 INDONESIAN-NESS IN ART .....	14
2.6 INDONESIAN ART AND ITS HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT .....	15
2.6.1 <i>Colonial period</i> .....	15
2.6.2 <i>Establishment of art institutions</i> .....	16
2.6.3 <i>Cultural restriction and censorship</i> .....	16
2.6.4 <i>Development of contemporary art and its market</i> .....	17
<b>3. IDENTIFYING ROLES IN INDONESIAN ART COMMUNITIES.....</b>	<b>19</b>
3.1 ARTISTS .....	19
3.1.1 <i>Entang Wiharso</i> .....	19
3.1.1.1 Successful artist .....	20
3.1.1.2 Artistic style and the market's validation.....	20
3.1.1.3 State support .....	21
3.1.2 <i>Erica Hestu Wahyuni</i> .....	22
3.1.2.1 Stereotypes of commercially popular artist.....	22
3.1.2.2 Relation with collectors .....	23
3.1.2.3 Being responsive to the market demand.....	24
3.1.3 <i>Mangu Putra</i> .....	25
3.1.3.1 Mangu's view on Indonesian contemporary art .....	25
3.1.3.2 Downfall of the art market .....	26
3.1.3.3 Mangu and state government .....	26
3.2 ART GALLERIST: OWNER OF TONY RAKA ART GALLERY.....	27
3.2.1 <i>Government's idea of Indonesian art</i> .....	27
3.2.2 <i>Prospect of emerging artist in the market</i> .....	28
3.2.3 <i>Growth of market and economy</i> .....	28
3.3 ART COLLECTORS .....	29
3.3.1 <i>Art Collector A</i> .....	29
3.3.1.1 Collector and the market .....	29
3.3.1.2 Market and auction house .....	31
3.3.1.3 Auction sales.....	31
3.3.2 <i>Wiyu Wahono</i> .....	32

3.3.2.1	New Media Collector.....	32
3.3.2.2	Art theory and discourse in Indonesia.....	33
3.4	ART CRITIC: ARIF BAGUS PRASETYO .....	34
3.4.1	<i>Selective culture</i> .....	34
3.4.2	<i>Independency of art scene</i> .....	35
3.5	CONCLUSION: .....	36
<b>4.</b>	<b>ART INSTITUTIONS AND THEIR ROLES IN ART SCENE</b> .....	<b>37</b>
4.1	INDONESIAN VISUAL ART ARCHIVE (IVAA): FARAH WARDHANI.....	37
4.2	INSTITUT SENI INDONESIA: DENI JUNAEDI (ART LECTURER/ARTIST).....	38
4.2.1	<i>Collectors and auction houses</i> .....	38
4.2.2	<i>Students at ISI and emerging artists</i> .....	39
4.2.3	<i>Government corruption</i> .....	40
4.3	ARTJOG: SATRIAGAMA RAKANTASETA (SETO) .....	40
4.3.1	<i>Auction houses and art galleries</i> .....	41
4.3.2	<i>Development of art scene and museums</i> .....	42
4.3.3	<i>Aspiration for government support</i> .....	42
4.4	ART MUSEUMS IN INDONESIA .....	44
4.4.1	<i>Role of Museums</i> .....	44
4.4.2	<i>National museums and private museums</i> .....	45
4.5	IMAGE OF INDONESIA.....	46
<b>5.</b>	<b>AUCTION HOUSES AND ART MARKET IN INDONESIA</b> .....	<b>49</b>
5.1	CONSTITUTION OF AESTHETICS IN THE ART MARKET.....	49
5.2	VALIDATING ARTWORK .....	50
5.3	GOOD INVESTMENT.....	51
<b>6.</b>	<b>CONCLUSION</b> .....	<b>53</b>

## **1. Introduction**

### 1.1 Motivation and problem

Singapore is now becoming a major market for Southeast- Asian Contemporary Art. Taking up a majority of sales in auction, Indonesian art is becoming more in demand with an increasing numbers of collectors from around the world.

Although an auction sale was an exciting occasion to witness, the resemblance became apparent between paintings by well acclaimed Chinese artists and of emerging Indonesian artists. In other cases, artists used photographic images from the media as a source for their portraiture. Among the most popular images used were Mao Tze Tung, Barack Obama and Hollywood celebrities. In the consumer society where consumption shapes the demands in the market, it is almost inevitable for artists to have the artistic tastes and ideas of both collectors and buyers in mind as they work.<sup>1</sup> As Isabelle Graw argues, ‘market success became the measure of all things’ for the emerging artists, and success here means mostly commercially.<sup>2</sup> Would that be an aspiration in the life of an artist who sold their work in the auction, even though it may possibly turn them into an item of commodity?

### 1.2 Problems and assumption

In January 2012, an annual art fair was held in Singapore. Indonesia was featured as one of the major participant countries at the event. Not only is the art fair a networking place for galleries, collectors, auctioneers and other art enthusiasts, at the same time it gave off a rather

---

<sup>1</sup> A Wright, *Soul, Spirit and Mountain: Preoccupations of contemporary Indonesian Painters*, Cornell University, New York, 1991, p. 49

<sup>2</sup> I Graw, *High Price: Art between the Market and Celebrity Culture*, Sternberg Press, New York, 2009, p. 55.

bourgeois atmosphere, a kind of place which is exclusive for the social elite. Along with the art discussion at the fair, the impression given from the fair was rather superficial as organizers seek to prove to attending guests that the art market is on the rise as a financial platform to make an investment. It was deceptive to produce buying behavior amongst guests from an investment point of view, without any guarantee of the artwork's long term value.

Nowadays, Indonesian art and artists are regarded as the most sought after within the contemporary Asian art market. How did this market arise? With the way the auction is carried out, do audiences really believe the results created with? Key components to consider when understanding the market from auction sales are as follows;

- Pseudo bidding: insiders (gallery, auction houses, consignor) are placing bid to raise the price for an actual buyer
- Gallery buy-back: an occasion where gallery bids for their consigned work to protect artists' reputation in case the bidding is not rising to their expectation
- Virtual hammering of a lot: auctioneer calling pieces sold without any bid actually put on

### 1.3 Subject background (Indonesian art development)

Determining factors behind the popularity of Indonesian art are uncertain and vague. Manipulation of artistic value is pervasive in the industry and thus artworks' values are most likely to be controlled. One possible way to find the cause is to look into the development of the social structure in Indonesia. Lack of government and state support for the art scene is extensive and recognized as the main problem which hinders further development of the art scene in

Indonesia. It is therefore astonishing to see how much the art scene has grown on its own, and the market on the side.<sup>3</sup>

Development of Indonesian art goes back to the colonial era initiated on by the Dutch and lasting for 350 years. Some Indonesian artists traveled to the Netherlands to receive professional art training, but it is also understood that this did not affect much of the later artistic development.<sup>4</sup> Not only there was a movement to develop significance of Indonesian art, Indonesia was overall exclusive towards foreign culture. Therefore it cannot be assumed that the contemporary Indonesian art market has been established through western influence at that time.

The cause for the major awakening of artistic skills in Indonesia has been the desire for a development and subsequent reinforcement of national identity. Subsequently, the artistic group *Persagi* was formed which rejected Dutch colonialism. People yearned for their own identity through locally-produced artwork, rather than the identity which was propagated by the colonizers.<sup>5</sup> Several decades later, production of artworks became a revolutionary act against the Suharto regime. It was used to record events and to protest against the government. Political oppression became the motivator for the artists to record and share recent events and their thoughts with society.

Contemporary art was gradually shifting from an identity search, to record and respond to various social aspects in Indonesia amidst globalization. This was done in the midst of globalization in order to suit the markets' needs. The imitations observed in paintings by younger emerging Indonesian artists suggest that their artwork was responsive to the demands of the art markets. This phenomenon is also observed by Couteau who stresses that such borrowing of images from external sources is jeopardizing the originality of Indonesian artwork. He thinks this will result in cultural alienation or disculturation.<sup>6</sup> In such a presumption, the originality or Indonesian-ness of the work could possibly be at the stake.

---

<sup>3</sup> C Turner, 'INDONESIA: Art, freedom, human rights and engagement with the West' in C Turner (ed.), *Art and Social Change: Contemporary Art in Asia and Pacific*, Pandonus Books, Canberra, 2005, pp. 196-227.

<sup>4</sup> SP Soedarso, 'Indonesian Artists: Looking for Identity', in J Fischer (ed.), *Modern Indonesian Art: Three Generations of Tradition and change 1945-1990*, Panitia Paweran KIAS, Jakarta, 1990, pp. 78-89.

<sup>5</sup> J Supangkat, 'The Two Forms of Indonesian Art' in J Fischer (ed.), *Modern Indonesian Art: Three Generations of Tradition and change 1945-1990*, Panitia Paweran KIAS, Jakarta, 1990, pp.158-162.

<sup>6</sup> J Couteau, '1001 Doors: Re-Inventing Tradition, A door to a new Indonesian Contemporary art?', *C Arts*, vol. 18, United Universe Publishing Pte Ltd., Feb/Mar 2011, pp 28-35.

Despite the lack of government support for the art scene in Indonesia, there are national art museums in Jakarta, and private contemporary art museums in Bandung, Jakarta, and Bali. In terms of cultural events, there are art fairs held in Jakarta and Jogjakarta which are operated independently of the government. Another independent sector that contributes to the art scene is the Indonesian Visual Art Archive (IVAA) in Jogjakarta, which is organized to archive all artistic events held in Indonesia and record all published documents about Indonesian art.

Aspects of the art scene in Indonesia which comprises artists working to capture their life and reflect society is growing strong. Marx is quoted in *Art Incorporated* by Stallabrass; that bourgeoisie and its rapid improvement of consumption matters in the society will eventually lead nation into civilization.<sup>7</sup> It is not an intention to deny the Indonesian civilization here of its identity. This stresses that however the art and its aesthetic discourse could be disregarded in the market, the market structure still can aid in building a better working society. It is apparent that art took a large role in formulating a base of current Indonesian society which is not limited to the art scene, yet the irony of the government's lack of interest and support still persists in Indonesia. It is hard to judge whether this phenomenon also plays a part in characterizing modern day Indonesian society or if it is simple disappointment that is hindering further development.

#### 1.4 Research method

This thesis will explore Indonesia's visual art scene from auction businesses as a starting point. Author's initial perspective has been informed from the studying and practicing of contemporary art and through employment in a gallery as an assistant whose role included attending auctions as a non-buyer to record the movement of the market.

Furthermore the author is not from Indonesia and thus having a different cultural background, hence aesthetical understanding in society and general perspective is considered to be biased. To overcome such bias and in attempt to access deeper into the art scene, the author

---

<sup>7</sup> K Marx & F Engels, *The Communist Manifesto: A Modern Edition*, Verso, London, 1998, cited in J Stallabrass, *Art Incorporated*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2004, p. 6.

sought out people who could be interviewed in Indonesia that are currently involved in the art scene. The main issues discussed with interviewees are;

1. How do they describe the role of auction houses in the Indonesian art scene?
2. What is their perspective on visual art and the art scene in Indonesia?
3. What are the future prospects of Indonesia's art scene and art market?
4. What is lacking in the Indonesian art scene?

The interviewees are; artists (Indonesian and American), art student, art gallery owner, art collectors, executive director of an art fair, art critics, and former colleague. All interviews were conducted during the author's field research in Indonesia, in Jakarta, Jogjakarta and Bali in February 2012. Each interviewee was either referred through former colleague or by one another.

Objectives for conducting field research are;

- To obtain up to date inside information of development of current art scene in Indonesia
- To observe and compare each interviewee's stances in the art scene as well as understanding of Indonesian art.
- To gain subjective views on association of art auction houses in Indonesian art scene.
- To observe each establishment and differences in each sectors of Indonesian art scene; galleries, art institutions and museums.

### 1.5 Research limitations and bias factor

The research with interviews conducted in Indonesia allowed the author to gain insights into Indonesia's art scene and how their visual culture such as representation of value in society through religion and artwork was constructed. However, it was also expected that the author would not be granted a full access to certain information. For instance, no responses were given from auction houses upon request for interviews in Singapore, and the Indonesian art critic B

suggesting to not use Indonesian art auction houses as sources for the research at all due to unreliability of business statistics.

## 1.6 Theoretical approach

*Imagined Community* by Benedict Anderson approaches formation of community and analyzes it is created within a similar identity.<sup>8</sup> It is a particularly interesting discussion with Indonesia's national motto; 'Unity in Diversity' capturing the character of a country made up as it is of a large archipelago embracing many different cultures, religions, and races in various regions.<sup>9</sup> During the Suharto regime, construction of national identity was part of the regime's motto 'New Order' which was cultural propaganda put into effect by the government. Aesthetic and cultural values were determined according to appropriateness in representing the ideal national identity.

The theories I have applied for the thesis in terms of economical aspect is *Art in Its Time - Theories and Practices of Modern Aesthetics* by Paul Mattick. As mentioned several times during the interview, corruption is constantly associated with the image of Indonesia locally and internationally. The approach made by Paul Mattick in a chapter of *Art and Money* is the close relationship of luxury and economical assets relating to this corruption and how this eventually influences aesthetic and value standards. It is hard to differentiate between motivation for collecting or investment once the work is sold, but in the end it applies to economic prospects in the art market which influences the value of an artist's brand-like name.

---

<sup>8</sup> B Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, Verso, London, 1991, p. 6.

<sup>9</sup> PM Taylor, 'The Nusantara Concept of Culture: Local Traditions and National Identity as Expressed in Indonesia's Museums', in PM Taylor (ed.), *Fragile Traditions: Indonesian Art in Jeopardy*, University of Hawaii Press, Hawaii, 1994, pp. 71-90.

## 1.7 Research question and academic relevance

The research question for the thesis is what constitutes the Indonesian Art Market? Art auction houses came into being just over a decade ago in Indonesia and the field grew rapidly as it drew in international audiences and buyers. The demand for the market is created through auction houses, with their major role being to validate the artworks and artists. Rapidly growing market is attracting collectors from around the world, and it is considered as one of the strong contemporary Asian art market nowadays. The thesis will explore how does the different elements of Indonesian visual culture; the context where the role of artists determined in and outside of the market, the conceptualization of the art scene and how an art community is supposed to be, are integrated to form such phenomenon of Indonesian art market.

By making art auction businesses as the starting point, the research revealed a search for Indonesia's new and contemporary identity that is integrated as a key role in not only the artmaking, but also in constitution of idea of Indonesia.

In the age of technology where people are more mobile than ever than before, countries cultural, social, religious and geographic borders are blurred through such mobility and cross-cultural interactions. The construction of identity through and in response to political regimes and employing art for propagandist purposes was one path Indonesians took. This is presumably what Indonesian artists are going through once again. I believe that uncovering different factors which dominate Indonesia's visual culture provides a new understanding of construction of national identity amongst globalization and modernization in the 21st century.

## 2. Defining Indonesian Art Scene

### 2.1 Indonesian-ness

What comes into one's mind when one thinks of Indonesian art? Spanjaard argues that the image of Indonesia is stimulated through cultural factors such as religious monuments, architecture, dance and clothing which then stress political unity, while providing an image of Indonesia to tourists and outsiders.<sup>10</sup> While it is easy to witness such an approach practiced in places which attract many tourists, in contemporary art practice, such essence of 'Indonesian-ness' is eliminated and is replaced with individual responses to various social issues.

There are several occasions where art critics and artists refer to what they call 'Indonesian-ness'.<sup>11</sup> Irianto suggests such a concept is hard to define but so far one thing is clear; Indonesia is a community of various ethnic groups comprised and freed from previous colonization.<sup>12</sup> The approach in defining it will be divided into the followings; historical identity, modern identity, art scene rising into powerful sectors within cultural scene and artistic styles, traditions and aesthetic verifications.

### 2.2 Mooi Indies and colonization

During the colonization, artists were trained by the Dutch to paint beautiful scenery of Java and Balinese life, to comply with the 'idealized view of life in the colony'<sup>13</sup>. The colonizer called the art that represented such notion as *Mooi Indies* which means beautiful Indies.

---

<sup>10</sup> H Spanjaard, *Modern Indonesian Painting*, Sotheby's, Leiden, 2003, p. 123.

<sup>11</sup> A Bickerton, 'Ashley Bickerton on Nyoman Masriadi', *Art Asia Pacific*, no. 76, Nov/Dec 2011, p. 25.

<sup>12</sup> AJ Irianto, 'Eyeing Indonesian Contemporary Art', in S Ciclitira & Skira (eds.), *Contemporary Indonesian Art, Indonesian Eye*, Milano, 2011, pp. 23-28.

<sup>13</sup> Turner, loc. cit.

The artist, who acted against the colonizer's recognition of Indonesian art as Mooi Indies, was Affandi, the first Indonesian artist to be recognized internationally<sup>14</sup>. Affandi is known to have opened up the possibility of political expression through his vivid depiction of social oppression at the time. The artists' groups called Persagi, including Affandi rebelled against such stereotyping and claimed that real life led by Indonesian people were not as depicted in *Mooi Indies*; beautification of everyday life was not appropriating the reality they claimed<sup>15</sup>. At this point it is clear that strong yearning for freedom through visual expression against the political oppressions was the force that helped the Indonesian art scene to develop.

### 2.3 Art as representation of national identity

Indonesia is often described as multicultural state; this no surprise since the nation is made of more than 3000 islands which naturally have different cultures, religions and languages. As Indonesia's national motto 'unity in diversity' claims, Indonesia sees this diversity as one of the unique characteristics of their nation<sup>16</sup>. The government saw establishing art scene as an opportunity to visually appropriate and unify various tradition and culture<sup>17</sup>. This period signifies the art movement that was dictated by the government power, '*subjectifying*' the traditions and different states, and approving of certain aspects to form into an ideal Indonesian identity suppressed other artistic possibilities.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> Kusnadi, 'The Larger Meaning of Modern Indonesian Painting', in J Fischer(ed.), *Modern Indonesian Art – Three Generations of Tradition and Change 1945-1990*, Panitia Poweran KIAS, Jakarta, 1990, pp. 42-47.

<sup>15</sup> J Supangkat, 'Contemporary Art in Indonesia, Development Beyond the 1970's', in T Ishida et al. (eds.), *Art in Southeast Asia 1997: Glimpses into the Future, Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo*, Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art, The Japan Foundation Asia Center, Tokyo, 1997, pp. 167-172.

<sup>16</sup> PM Taylor, loc. cit.

<sup>17</sup> J Hellman, *Performing the Nation: Cultural Politics in New Order Indonesia*, NIAS Press, Copenhagen, 2003, p. 14.

<sup>18</sup> MJ DelVecchio Good & BJ Good, 'Indonesia Sakit: Indonesian Disorders and the Subjective Experience and Interpretive Politics of Contemporary Indonesian Artists', in MJ DelVecchio Good, S Hyde, S Pinto & et. al.(eds.), *Postcolonial Disorders*, University of California Press, California, 2008, pp. 62-108.

The attempt to unify the nation under certain aspects was not successful, but simultaneously is suggestive Anderson's claim, where community remains superficial as any individual belonging to it will never know every single member.<sup>19</sup> He continues that nationalism is not awakened in the conscious among members, but is invented where it did not exist<sup>20</sup>. Understanding of community and its significance which forms idea of identity is not something that can be fed to population, but is experienced and understood individually. The regime did not succeed with its nationalist movement, but it has allowed artists and their community to bond together as the Indonesian art community.

#### 2.4 New Art Movement (Orde Baru)

The New Art Movement emerged in 1975 and artists were then more inclined to depict liberally the ideas they wished to express. Jim Supangkat argues that visual images hitherto restricted flooded in after the end of the Suharto regime and this influenced and inspired many artists<sup>21</sup>. Such influences, particularly from the West, can be observed in contemporary art nowadays as many young emerging artists are using images seen in the media as visual references or inspiration for their works.

#### 2.5 Indonesian-ness in art

Another issue that should be mentioned here is the national recognition and the standard of art, which in other words can also be considered as national taste. Taste, as mentioned by

---

<sup>19</sup> Anderson, op. cit., p. 6

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> J Supangkat, 'Pleasures of Chaos', in P Marella (ed.), *Pleasure of Chaos: Inside New Indonesian Art*, Damiani, Bologna, 2010, pp. 11-15.

many authors in writings about Indonesia including Kant, is something that can be achieved or established only when everyone's taste is assimilated and understood in unison<sup>22</sup>.

For instance, there was an incident where Indonesian government and Malaysian government had a dispute over the origin of batik which is textile from the region of Java.<sup>23</sup> Batik was eventually listed as Indonesian cultural heritage by UNESCO in 2009. This event shows the government's strong interest in traditional art rather than contemporary art. Furthermore, with its recognition as traditional attire in various regions in Indonesia, it is recognized as traditional art form that unifies the nation. Although the Indonesian art scene is developing within a contemporary context, the government's understanding and recognition of aesthetic is rather poor and backwards.

## 2.6 Indonesian art and its historical development

As discussed earlier, the development of art has been associated with various political and social events in Indonesia's history; the colonial period, the establishment of art institutions, cultural censorship and restriction, and the development of contemporary art and its market.

### 2.6.1 Colonial period

During the Dutch colonization, the Mooi Indie School was established for training Indonesian artists. Although such influences were rejected by Persagi, this period with Dutch provided the foundations for the Western art practice which later flourished in the Indonesian art scene through Bandung, from the introduction of Western painting techniques to the establishment of museums.

---

<sup>22</sup> I Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2007, cited in I Graw, *High Price: Art Between the Market and Celebrity Culture*, Sternberg Press, New York, p. 153.

<sup>23</sup> TN Barley, Jakarta Globe, Jakarta, October 1 2009, retrieved on February 18 2012,  
<<http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/home/indonesia-and-malaysia-battle-over-batik/332922>>.

### 2.6.2 Establishment of art institutions

Indonesia's two major art institutions are in Jogjakarta and Bandung. ISI (Institut Seni Indonesia) in Jogjakarta was established by Indonesia's first President Sukarno, who personally assigned artists who were involved in the movement towards independence during the colonization such as Affandi and Hendra Gunawan as instructors. Another institute, ITB (Institut Teknologi Bandung) was established in the more Dutch-oriented city at the time, Bandung<sup>24</sup>; Western influence is more significant here as the school were established by Syafei Soemardja and Ries Mulder<sup>25</sup>, instilled with Dutch curriculum.

Both institutes brought change into the Indonesian art scene, because hitherto the majority of artists were self-taught. The differences that are often pointed out between these institutes are Jogjakarta emphasizes individual insight and intuition (they call it 'lasa'), as a major motivation for the artistic creativity. Whereas in Bandung, it is inclined towards Western aesthetic as their instructors are Dutch and thus taught western aesthetics. With the artistic motivation of lasa in Jogjakarta and Western aesthetics practiced in Bandung, it is apparent that Indonesia then gained a reasonable mixture of both aesthetic discourses.

### 2.6.3 Cultural restriction and censorship

As far as the art scene in Indonesia is concerned there is no official censorship in Indonesia in the present day. However, during the previous regime, due to selective nature of President Suharto's cultural propaganda, New Order censored out what was considered unsuitable upon construction of Indonesian national identity<sup>26</sup>. Observing historical turns as such, it is evident that each artistic turn was more or less initiated by political or social turmoil against oppressive powers. Such consistency of capturing social and political reality in artwork was the very motivation that kept Indonesian artist going.

---

<sup>24</sup> H Spanjaard, 'Bandung, the Laboratory of the West?', in J Fischer(ed.), *Modern Indonesian Art – Three Generations of Tradition and Change 1945-1990*, Panitia Poweran KIAS, Jakarta, 1990, pp. 54-76.

<sup>25</sup> U Kayam, 'From Nyoman Mandara to Ivan Sagito', in J Fischer(ed.), *Modern Indonesian Art – Three Generations of Tradition and Change 1945-1990*, Panitia Poweran KIAS, Jakarta, 1990, pp.48-53.

<sup>26</sup> DelVecchio Good & Good, loc. cit.

The resistance as a cultural phenomenon seems appropriate when describing what has brought art communities together in Indonesia. Unlike in western history, art was not only for the upper social classes to interact with, but was also deeply rooted within religion of people's daily life.<sup>27</sup> Art was something that any individual could relate to, thus it became the tool to share the ideas and resisting power between the communities. In this perspective, censorship and restriction was the ironically pushed the development and consolidation of the art scene in Indonesia.

#### 2.6.4 Development of contemporary art and its market

Indonesian art, according to several interviewees is categorized as follows; masters, modern and contemporary. Masters painters and artists belong to the time of Affandi, presumably the first prominent group of artists that contributed to the foundation of Indonesian art. Modern artists, on the other hands belong to artists that revolted against the New Order regime, at the time the group of artists were formed called New Art Movement<sup>28</sup>. Modernism was introduced from the West, although since it was not reinforced, it gave foundation for Indonesian artists to establish their own aesthetic value. Indonesian art scene was thus built and grew upon the search for something to make their own.

Contemporary art in Indonesia does not seek identity as much previous movements did, but it is still observable that artworks are still motivated by the revolt and responses towards its societies. According to some interviewees, the Indonesian art market especially in terms of contemporary art is relatively new, and was short lived. Despite its ephemeral nature, the contemporary art scene created various new platforms for art as well as market opportunities to be integrated; business owners turned collectors, increase in number of art galleries, art fairs and organizations such as IVAA.

Indonesian art scene however, seems to remain exclusive from public unless one is an artist. The reason behind such circumstance could be due to the fact that Indonesia is still a developing

---

<sup>27</sup> U Kayam, loc. cit.

<sup>28</sup> B Maklai, 'New Streams, New Visions: Contemporary Art Since 1966', in VM Hooker(ed.), *Culture and Society in New Order Indonesia*, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1993, pp. 70-83.

country, which may limit the access to the art scene depending on social classes. The development of the nation gave options for individuals to define themselves differently in the art scene, but it also leaves the art scene in Indonesia somewhat still undefined and vague. Thus it is important to identify and analyze different roles in such an art scene as a whole.

### **3. Identifying roles in Indonesian art communities**

This chapter focuses on different roles in the art scene in Indonesia, and is based on analysis of the Indonesian art scene based on interviews with artists, art collectors, art gallerist and art critic. Interviews were conducted in artists' studios in Jogjakarta and Bali, collectors' offices in Jakarta, duration of 60 minutes or more for each interview.

#### **3.1 Artists**

Being artist is regarded as a legitimate career in Indonesia. Artists interviewed for this research are internationally established artists. However, despite the high status of the profession as an artist, the art market and its economy is rather disavowed by those who are involved in it.<sup>29</sup> The tendency of such separation between the art market and the art scene was apparent in Indonesia. Interview focused on such situation caused by market which may affects the artist's career in Indonesia.

##### **3.1.1 Entang Wiharso**

Due to his resistance of artistic motivation and creativity against market demand, Entang is an aspired Indonesian artist as a role model for the young and aspiring artists. His focus for creating artwork is to connect with issues in people's everyday life, and to create a discussion platform for people to engage in aesthetic discourse.

---

<sup>29</sup> J Stallabrass, *Art Incorporated: the story of contemporary art*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2004, p. 96.

### 3.1.1.1 Successful artist

Entang sees motivation as an importance aspect of artmaking for an artist to become successful, and has stressed that if an emerging artist wishes to succeed, one has to be able to instigate discourse with the artwork; ‘people can like it, hate it or get confused from a work, but the work will create a dialogue, and to me that’s the success.’<sup>30</sup> Since the boom of Indonesian art was instigated by bubbled up price, it may be easy to lose track of such creative aspect in motivation and instead focus on monetary validations by the market. The reputation of an artist does not necessarily coincide with visual discourse the artist creates through artworks, but also the commercial value in term of capital it stimulates in the market. Stallabrass stresses that therefore artist’s identity can thus be formed by money and the class<sup>31</sup>. Entang’s perspective may sound rather idealistic in the sense of such an art market prospect, but it shows that artists like him have not lost their creative aspiration and motivation. Jim Spanjaard observed Entang’s oeuvre as; ‘the powerlessness of the individual vis-à-vis the controlling power of the state’<sup>32</sup>; his objective of artmaking is to create artistic discourse through the act of establishing his own identity in the Indonesian society.

### 3.1.1.2 Artistic style and the market’s validation

Entang stated that artists, market and government comprise different arenas<sup>33</sup>. As much as the growth of the Indonesian art market is suggestive of an intertwined connection of all three factors behind the success in the market, Entang disagrees. According to the observation made by Rizki A. Zaelani, Indonesian art represents the rise of a sense of community in a political sense, and with any luck such artistic expression will represent the voice of people in the society<sup>34</sup>. Despite the lack of authority to validate the artworks, each artist can refer to each other and reflect upon themselves in order to see how they involved in the community. Artists are being subsumed in that sense, to the idea of their ideal identity as an artist.

---

<sup>30</sup> E Wiharso, interview, Jogjakarta, 16 February 2012.

<sup>31</sup> J Stallabrass, op. cit., p. 23.

<sup>32</sup> H Spanjaard, *Modern Indonesian Painting*, Sotheby’s, Leiden, 2003, p. 177.

<sup>33</sup> E Wiharso, interview, Jogjakarta, 16 February 2012.

<sup>34</sup> R A Zaelani, ‘Contemporary Art in Indonesia: Beware! After the Big Chance’, in A Kuss et al. (eds.), *Awas! Recent Art from Indonesia*, Cahaya Timor, Jogja, 2000, p. 13-22.

‘Artists make art in order to make something important, art is a type of technology; art is successful when it creates a platform for social discourse’, claims Entang<sup>35</sup>. According to him, collectors buy art because art is intellectual property, whereas art purely as commodity is cheap. The price is only symbolic of transaction, for people to own the meaning behind the object, that art is intellectual property. His observation is also discussed by Throsby; that artistic goods are a subset of cultural goods due to the fact that the creativity is involved in its production and artwork's concern with generation and communication, thus they are potentially intellectual property.<sup>36</sup>

Significance of the market is the transaction that takes place. Intellectual property, is shapeless unless signified or embodied within the artwork, and is thus transacted in the art market. In this understanding, monetary value of an artwork only represents the transaction itself, the occasion, rather than the aesthetic value of artwork. By validating an artwork through the monetary transaction, it is making audiences’ experience with artworks even more ephemeral. Therefore, the idea of market place being the validator for artwork is invalid in Entang’s creative motive.

### 3.1.1.3 State support

While absence of contemporary art museum in Indonesia is apparent, Entang does not believe it is the only place where art can be validated. Despite the lack of state support in Indonesian contemporary art, it ironically shows that Indonesian art scene has grown on its own. The art scene’s arena in Indonesian society is different from political arena; hence hierarchy in art scene does not exist, which provide equal participations for anyone interested. In other words, Indonesian art scene is very liberal in terms of creative motivation and its phenomenal significance.

---

<sup>35</sup> E Wiharso, interview, Jogjakarta, 16 February 2012.

<sup>36</sup> D Throsby, *Economic and Culture*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001, cited in V A Ginsburgh & D Throsby (eds.), *Handbook of the Economics of Art and Culture*, Volume 1, Elsevier, Oxford, 2006, p. 155.

Simpson described art as; 'aesthetically successful new imagery pushes the horizons of reality...expanding civilized consciousness.'<sup>37</sup> Recognizing such art scene in Indonesia is the first step for artist to be part of their art community. As such, Indonesian art scene is giving an example that it can be free from political involvement.

### 3.1.2 Erica Hestu Wahyuni

Erica Hestu Wahyuni is one of the prominent artists in the market. Her artworks are frequently featured in auction sales both in Indonesia and abroad, which assures her consistent presence in the market. Her painting style is distinctive with bold bright colors, figurative depiction of world she likes. The interview with her mostly covered the general idea of Indonesian art market and her perspective towards current Indonesian art scene.

#### 3.1.2.1 Stereotypes of commercially popular artist

It is particularly noticeable in Indonesian market is that, once artists establish a certain status in the market which guarantees good sales; they then tend to retain that particular style in order to sustain stable income through art market. This observation suggests that such artists are reluctant to alter their expressive method as if such change might jeopardize their income and reputation in the market. Unlike artists that keep exploring the possibilities of different expressive method, some artists found their expedient style to settled with. This behavior was often observed among emerging artists who imitated the popular and demanded style in the market, as well as in established artist to retain financial stability; Erica gave the impression of the latter. The difference when compared to Entang's idea of the art scene is that Erica is utilizing system of the art market to her advantage, that is, she knows how to make living for market success' sake, rather than art for art's sake. Such characteristics may be observed in her works with her signature style, but artists like her simultaneously signify the contemporary art market of Indonesia affecting creative motivation of artists. Success as an artist may be

---

<sup>37</sup> C R Simpson, SoHO: The Artist in the City, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1981, cited in S Plattner, *High Art Down Home: An Economic Ethnography of a Local Art Market*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London, 1996, p. 4.

measured according to the artistic discourses artists can instigate, but as long as it is involved with market forces, it is prone to be validated through achievement in sales.

### 3.1.2.2 Relation with collectors

At the time of the interview, Erica was working at her house along with several other assistants each working on different pieces. The painting she was working on was commissioned a collector. As it was requested to include something about Japan by the collector, the painting included several Japanese cartoon characters, and a depiction of a man, which actually was from traditional Chinese painting. Regardless of whether the visual references she gathered for the piece were authentically Japanese or not, the point here is that she executed this painting just as accordingly to the specific request made by her collector.

Erica believes that the art market, where auction houses play large role, is the main force that allows artwork to be circulated in the Indonesian art scene, thus she sees no negativity in it<sup>38</sup>. On one hand her recurrent theme and painting style may be her personal style of working with her creative motivation, while it also shows that she is making sellable art. As a result, such consistency of artist shows their motivation is responsive to the demand of the market.

Erica's stance complies with Adler Moshe's argument cited by Plattner; 'Stardom is a market device to economize on learning costs in activities where the more you know the more you enjoy'<sup>39</sup> along with the argument of the tendency for popular artists to gain more patronage, because the popularity works as a type of quality assurance<sup>40</sup>. If Erica's work is constantly transacted in a certain price range, such significance also becomes a quality assurance and investment guarantees for buyers and collectors. Plattner further argues that 'art is the ultimate consumer commodity, that its value exists almost entirely in the consumer's subjective appreciation of its aesthetic (visual) and market qualities as influenced by dealers, critics,

---

<sup>38</sup> EH Wahyuni, interview, Jogjakarta, 17 February 2012.

<sup>39</sup> M Adler, Stardom and talent, American Economic review 75, 1985, p. 208-12, cited in S Plattner, *High Art Down Home - An Economic Ethnography of a Local Art Market*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London, 1996, p. 14.

<sup>40</sup> Thompson, op. cit. p. 13.

collectors, artists, and few others.<sup>41</sup> Which suggests Erica's artistic motivation is closely related with success determined by popularity and demand in the market.

### 3.1.2.3 Being responsive to the market demand

Employment of artisans is also common among established artists, such business oriented stance can be seen to generate good sales for artists, but what could be at stake again, is that such market and business orientation seem to limit artist's creativity and shun desire to explore and to take one's creativity further. Significance of artwork is almost enforced to be identified as something formless elicited out of visual composition which is artwork, because otherwise it is just another commodity they produce which does not hold meaning of its own apart from transaction experience.

According to Stallabrass, 'contemporary art still defines itself against mass culture'<sup>42</sup>, thus avoiding the strategy of producing artwork in mass may diminish the significance of any subject incorporated in the work. It depends on each artist how they want to associate with the art market, but it may be worth noting that however the works are produced, artworks and branding still play a part in shaping identities of an individual involves in transaction. The construction of identity, Graw argues; 'act as central bearer of meaning for self-positioning and outward demarcation.'<sup>43</sup> Artworks not only represent the artists' identity, but that of consumers and audiences as well. Therefore it is an undeniable possibility that such a phenomenon may possibly characterize the art market in Indonesia, which leaves its understanding to be different between each individual.

---

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>42</sup> Stallabrass, p. 96.

<sup>43</sup> I Graw, *High Price: Art Between the Market and Celebrity Culture*, Sternberg Press, New York, 2009, p. 130.

### 3.1.3 Mangu Putra

Mangu Putra is a Balinese artist who is also a well sought after artist in the market. Themes he portrays in his paintings are critical of political situations, mostly depicted in his various portraiture and photography.

#### 3.1.3.1 Mangu's view on Indonesian contemporary art

Mangu observes that the Indonesian art market is on the decline now. Compare this to several years ago when there was a large demand for contemporary art in the Indonesian art market, resulting in an increased number of emerging artists. The current situation is survival of the most adaptable to the market for emerging artists; their creative motivation is instilled with market success as there is more demand for art's financial value rather than the discourses.

Mangu stated that however the market fall and decline does not affect him himself; first, he is already well established, and second, he does not respond to markets demand and therefore does not measure himself against the movement of the art market<sup>44</sup>. Another issue observed is the growing distrust amongst collectors toward contemporary art due to its unstable values; 'a few years ago, collectors bought anything they saw in the studio, but now they see that these purchases did not return as a good investment, contemporary art was no longer an ideal art investment.' It is observed that decline of interest towards contemporary art is not in financial, but the fact that collectors became more selective. He observes such problem is caused by the lack of national contemporary art museum in Indonesia, which he believes will provide a standard for artwork<sup>45</sup>. The value of art in Indonesia is almost always constructed upon rumors, which are usually manipulated by the market. Thus, the national contemporary art museum has the potential to be a bench marker and validating system for the Indonesian contemporary art.

The prospect of the market may not be as thriving as art businesses may have desired, but it also suggests that buyers are acquiring a taste for their purchases. Taste, according to McCain, is not given but acquired.<sup>46</sup> Taste is susceptible to the manipulation from art market itself, but it

---

<sup>44</sup> M Putra, interview, Bali, 20 February 2012.

<sup>45</sup> M Putra, interview, Bali, 20 February 2012.

<sup>46</sup> McCain, p. 161.

has become an important factor during acquisition of artworks. Art education as a role in determining significance of art, is expected from educational institutions including art museums, but with no national contemporary art museums established there is no institution for the public to access art apart from galleries and auction houses. As a result, the taste acquired among buyers and collectors are likely to have been influenced by the market exclusively.

### 3.1.3.2 Downfall of the art market

Mangu argues that the downfall of the market did nonetheless shed light on problems and issues to be addressed in order for the Indonesian art scene to survive and thrive<sup>47</sup>. Apart from the lack of national contemporary art museum, there is a need for better infrastructure to support the art market in Indonesia. He proclaims that the art industry in Indonesia is already well structured, but the supporting system is not, which includes art institutions and government sectors.

### 3.1.3.3 Mangu and state government

Mangu has occasionally made suggestions for the government to raise their awareness and interest towards contemporary art. As an established artist in Bali, he has made a proposal for a new contemporary art museum in Bali. He submitted a plan with location, for which he is still yet to receive a response.

The government's lack of support and interest in the Indonesian art scene was pointed out in almost all of the interviews conducted for this thesis. According to Mangu, the government is too occupied with their political issues and cannot pay attention to the art scene, or worse, they do not understand contemporary art and thus do not care about it. What they consider art worthy to be presented in art museums are mostly handicrafts and traditional arts, just as they fought for Batik. Mangu stresses that the government needs go abroad to see other countries' structure of museums. This phenomenon somewhat resembles the government regime by former president Suharto, the New Order, to establish Indonesian identity through selective cultural aspects. It

---

<sup>47</sup> M Putra, interview, Bali, 20 February 2012.

seems that government's stance to hold onto ideological presentation of culture, is still in practice since the independence of Indonesia as a nation, whilst the art culture has evolved further on its own.

### 3.2 Art gallerist: owner of Tony Raka Art Gallery

The gallerist interviewed was an owner of Tony Raka art gallery in Ubud, Bali. The first impression of the gallery was that it seemed less commercial; that there were no stereotypical paintings that are usually familiar in auction sales. His preference for discovering a new artistic discourse and visual creation was evident in the presentation of his gallery.

#### 3.2.1 Government's idea of Indonesian art

Tony discussed his disappointment with the lack of state support recalling the opening of an Indonesian art exhibition in London for Indonesian Eye. The ambassador who was invited to deliver a speech proudly stated his past achievements in cultural aspects, such as organizing a Batik fashion show, inviting traditional dancers abroad and number of tourists that visit Indonesia<sup>48</sup>. While contemporary art received no acknowledgement, his presentation also showed the government's need to improve their involvement with the art industry in Indonesia, to see the contemporary art scene in Indonesia as a potential national and cultural asset besides traditional art forms.

In establishing contemporary art as a cultural asset, Stallabrass noted Britain as an example where art is utilized as a boost for economy as well as regional development. He furthermore concluded that 'art should be of quality without being elitist, and should draw in new, diverse audiences.'<sup>49</sup> Thus, representing the cultural tradition rooted in Indonesia's history

---

<sup>48</sup> Tony, interview, Bali, 20 February 2012.

<sup>49</sup> Stallabrass, p. 138.

is important, but recognizing the advantage of contemporary art culture in Indonesia is also critical.

The biggest problem Tony recognizes is the underdeveloped curriculum to educate and train art critic and art historians in Indonesia<sup>50</sup>. Such a lack leads to the improper validation of artworks, and leads artists to depend on capital and market. By comparison, many other countries already have nationally developed art museums as guidelines. As Supangkat writes, with the lack of museums 'Indonesia has created a general impression that the status of modern or contemporary art is not understood by the Indonesian public.<sup>51</sup> While art was utilized as reinforcement of national identity before, it is now becoming social class status marker where the Indonesian community is separated between those who can afford art and those who cannot.

### 3.2.2 Prospect of emerging artist in the market

Tony argues that the Indonesian art scene needs to be disciplined, because many artists take art for granted<sup>52</sup>. He sees emerging artists taking advantage of contemporary art, and as soon as they establish themselves in the market they are left clueless of aesthetic significance. As a result, they will not fight for artistic motivation, but for fortune they make. With such a mentality, they will lose the 'struggling spirit' for art making and lose their creativity<sup>53</sup>. The unstable pricing of artwork in the market is instigated by some buyers abusing knowledge, leaving the market with superficial reputation and prices.

### 3.2.3 Growth of market and economy

Tony's analysis mostly focused on lack of government support playing the major part in hindering the Indonesian contemporary art market. The comparison he made with neighboring countries such as Singapore and Malaysia, suggests that development of the art scene, officially,

---

<sup>50</sup> Tony, interview, Bali, 20 February 2012.

<sup>51</sup> J Supangkat, 'Multiculturalism/Multimodernism', in M Chiu & B Genocchio (eds.), *Contemporary Art in Asia: A Critical Reader*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, 2011, pp. 63-85.

<sup>52</sup> Tony, interview, Bali, 20 February 2012.

<sup>53</sup> Tony, interview, Bali, 20 February 2012.

correlate with economic development and stability. This notion is also observed by Stallabrass as he claims that ‘economy of art closely reflects the economy of capital.’<sup>54</sup> Stock market is seldom used in interview as a metaphor for the art market; sometimes it is unpredictable but draws much attention from investors. If there is a financial sector to influence the economy and stock exchange, it is ironic that the Indonesian government can ignore the strong financial potential of their own art scene. Tony thus proclaims nations such as Singapore and Malaysia are more civilized in terms of transacting artworks<sup>55</sup>. They are eager not to be left behind of the West in terms of artistic development, but because they have proper infrastructure they have been able to come up with their own unique art scene with their own cultural roots.

### 3.3 Art Collectors

#### 3.3.1 Art Collector A

The interview with collector A was held at his office in Jakarta which was also like a small private museum with the house full of art collections. The rooms were separated into his study and a number of his collections: for traditional Balinese art, traditional Chinese artifacts, European arts, and old metal signage. The collections reflected his interests into different art styles and works as he gave a tour of his private collections; it was the ideal impression of a collector.

##### 3.3.1.1 Collector and the market

Being associated with the art lover’s community in Indonesia, collector A is very well connected within many different fields of the Indonesian art scene. Although his prospect for the

---

<sup>54</sup> Stallabrass, p. 4.

<sup>55</sup> Tony, interview, Bali, 20 February 2012.

market is not very stable especially for contemporary art, he sees better prospects for modern and traditional art as the values are already well established unlike contemporary art.

The Indonesian art scene demands the establishment of official contemporary art museums and government involvement, partly to establish artistic standards, but Mattick claims that despite being unknown to some extent, work of the past also functions as standards of value against what could be measured in modern times.<sup>56</sup> Artists such as Affandi, Lee Man Fong, and Hendra Gunawan seem to suit as standards of good art, at least in the historical sense. However it also expresses the ambiguity of contemporary art, which is the extent of modern art in Indonesia that kept on breaking away from the past and attempting to establish new discourse to suit their nationalism at the time.

Whether the contemporary art as a discourse is established or not, it is observed by Rizki A. Zaelani that development of contemporary art in Indonesia is closely associated with internationalization.<sup>57</sup> If contemporary art is shaping another kind of community through art, then it could be observed as that its ambiguity is due this nature. Zaelani further stresses that the contemporary artist represents the dominant voice of society which is public.<sup>58</sup> In this understanding, the art community is coming together in terms of artistic and creative motivation in Indonesia, and artists are actually reflecting such a process as the characteristic of their contemporary art.

The price of artwork is increased when auction houses and galleries see potential sales and demands, the collector A's concern here is whether such pricing complies with the artistic quality of artworks<sup>59</sup>. Nonetheless, the price functioning as a certain indicator of the quality of artwork prompts sales in the market, with buyers believing that the more they pay the better their investment. As for the result of various auction houses, he suggests their results are not legitimate which he calls 'Harakiri Price'.<sup>60</sup> The bubbling up of the price will create a stir in the market and may generate the sales, but such phenomenon cannot last without concrete

---

<sup>56</sup> P Mattick, *Art in Its Time: Theories and practices of modern aesthetics*, Routledge, 2003, p. 3.

<sup>57</sup> Zaelani, loc. cit.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Collector A, interview, Jakarta, 11 February 2012.

<sup>60</sup> Collector A, interview, Jakarta, 11 February 2012.

supporting structure, both as an art market system as well as the aesthetic discourse to validate its own existence as a work of art.

### 3.3.1.2 Market and auction house

An art auction business which was also a gallery was started by an Indonesian business man who collected artworks. The colleague from the gallery has said that the owner was too generous buying works from emerging artists in order to support them. His purchase and selection was not done by the context, but by the artist's status in the market. Subsequently, he started his own business with his collection of artworks he collected through auction sales and galleries, which success did not last long. Impulsive purchase of artwork at auction sales as in this case may be analyzed with Mattick's claim that creative industries rely on tastes that are to some extent cultivated, therefore it is easy for auction houses to manipulate the taste, especially for elite buyer who wishes to present himself a certain way in the society.<sup>61</sup>

Purchasing art from an auction house is also like gambling as Robertson and Chong suggest, and 'losers are presumably those without culture or artistic taste,' because there is no assurance or guarantee apart from auctioneer whether the purchase is good investment or not.<sup>62</sup> Due to this deceptive nature of the auction houses, collector A does not see auction sales to be necessarily an asset to the further development of Indonesia's visual culture<sup>63</sup>. If people wish to see the Indonesian art, then they should go to Jogjakarta, to visit galleries and meet artists, that way they can experience the art in the right way, not by the capital mannerism, says collector A.<sup>64</sup>

### 3.3.1.3 Auction sales

The unreliability of auction validation is not only caused by auction houses, but also buyers. According to collector A, there are cases where a sale has been made, i.e. a lot has been

---

<sup>61</sup> Mattick, p. 162.

<sup>62</sup> I Robertson & D Chong (eds.), *The Art Business*, Routledge, London, 2008, p. 15.

<sup>63</sup> Collector A, interview, Jakarta, 11 February 2012.

<sup>64</sup> Interview with collector A, Jakarta, recorded file (DSS), 8 February 2012.

hammered at auction sales; yet the payment will not be installed by the buyer, even more than 3 years after the sales<sup>65</sup>. Such circumstances seem to hardly credit the auction sales as a trustworthy investment opportunity, and at the same time this is the perfect example of where Indonesian art is not validated according to national standards, but according to marketing potentiality.

At a talk given at Art Stage Singapore 2012, the speaker from French company, Artinfo, has stated that one reason for art market becoming popular place for investment especially through auction houses is, because the transactions are transparent. Auction results are usually published on the websites almost immediately after the sales. The option to have the result sent over is available according to Chu; therefore it seems fairly reasonable to account auction sales as 'transparent'<sup>66</sup>. But is it really so? Graw makes the contradictory statement that lack of transparency is observable in galleries and during auction where either the price is hidden or the names of bidders are undisclosed.<sup>67</sup> The platform of gallery and auction sales where it is seemingly public gives rise to the delusion that transactions are done openly, but the actual figure is only disclosed to those who participate in the transaction financially.

### 3.3.2 Wiyu Wahono

Wiyu Wahono is another art collector interviewed in Jakarta at his office. Just like collector A, his office was reminiscent of a private museum. His collections comprised mostly of new media art. He is a prominent art collector in Indonesia who is also the first collector of new media art.

#### 3.3.2.1 New Media Collector

As a prominent art lover and collector, Wahono supports emerging artists and is receptive for newly innovated art using different and new media. He does not refer to the market

---

<sup>65</sup> Collector A, interview, Jakarta, 11 February 2012.

<sup>66</sup> M Chu, *Understanding Contemporary Southeast Asian Art*, Art Forum Pte Ltd., Singapore, 2003, p. 9.

<sup>67</sup> Graw, p. 63.

to determine quality of artwork he is interested in<sup>68</sup>. When he comes across new art he is rather spontaneous in his purchase and collection. His recent encounter with such art was when he saw an exhibited installation by Japanese artist Takashi Kuribayashi in a museum in Tokyo. The installation was called Forest from Forest (Wald aus Wald). Wahono enjoyed the installation so much that he consulted with the artist to commission an installation work for his office. Such fascination and spontaneity was not something witnessed in auction houses commonly, because people would not buy art unless they knew it was a good investment in most cases. Although his collections of work included paintings and photographs, it was emphasized through his new media art collection that he saw the significance of contemporary art in its experiential aspect.

### 3.3.2.2 Art theory and discourse in Indonesia

Although not from an artistic background, Wahono is very informed of art discourses and theories. He shared his insight over relating Indonesian art to western theories, but he is not convinced that it is necessarily applicable to Indonesia<sup>69</sup>. He made a reference to Jean Lyotard's grand narrative theory in order to argue with why Western theory cannot be simply applied in Indonesian society. In western society, people are held together by one empire. This does not exist in the USA but they are still held together by its leader; whereas in Indonesia, he continues, there is no grand narrative. As stressed a number of times, Indonesia is comprised of thousands of islands that embrace an almost equal or greater number of different cultures. Wahono argues that Indonesian leaders did not try to hold differences together, but instead a President, such as former President Suharto, decided to eliminate such differences. He further remarks Lyotard that literary discourses were regarded as a higher form of culture while visual forms of culture was given lesser significance in the Western society. After Post Modernism, such theories were considered old and were abandoned. In the case of Indonesia, Wahono argues that there was no period where literary discourses flourished in Indonesian history. If art theory in the west was constructed upon their already existing literary discourse, how could it be applied to Indonesia where the path they have taken is missing a key component compared to the West<sup>70</sup>.

---

<sup>68</sup> Wahono, W interview, Jakarta, 10 February 2012.

<sup>69</sup> Wahono, W interview, Jakarta, 10 February 2012.

<sup>70</sup> Wahono, W interview, Jakarta, 10 February 2012.

During the New Art Movement, Geranakan introduced a similar concept of construction of Indonesian art history; that it should be defined by its own history and not by foreign books.<sup>71</sup> It is understandable that Indonesians are yearning for their own aesthetic discourse and its development, but with its history integrated with Western society, it seems difficult to completely dissociate with Western aesthetics. It is hard not to observe that they have such yearning because it has something to oppose against: that being Western aesthetics.

### 3.4 Art Critic: Arif Bagus Prasetyo

#### 3.4.1 Selective culture

Arif shared his view of the Indonesian art market as similar to that of other interviewee; lack of infrastructure in the art scene hindering development and thus causing struggle for many talented emerging artists in Indonesia to leap into their artistic career. Art fairs are organized in several places in Indonesia, but due to independent execution of the program, Arif still does see such art fairs setting standards for Indonesian contemporary art. Artworks selected in the fair, as pointed by Arif, are biased by art fair itself through the process of selection.

Arif proclaims that documentation of culture is important<sup>72</sup>. Not only in visual culture, but in literature, music and dance as well. Although the state support is virtually absent in Indonesian contemporary art, Arif sees that visual culture in Indonesia is actually quite fortunate. There are lots of financial aids put into visual culture compared to other cultural forms, such as shadow puppetry which is surviving mainly due to its significant integration with religion.

The input Arif has made an impression that the government is indeed focusing more on preserving the traditional culture instead of supporting new visual culture element, the contemporary art. However, according to Arif and Mangu, traditional culture from regions such

<sup>71</sup> B Maklai, 'New Streams, New Visions: Contemporary Art Since 1966', in VM Hooker (ed.), *Culture and Society in New Order Indonesia*, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1993, pp. 70-83.

<sup>72</sup> AB, Prasetyo, interview, Bali, 20 February 2012.

as Papua is exploited still nowadays. Artifacts are sold to European collectors overseas, because there is no law to restrict such traffic. It is the common understanding that the government does not support the contemporary art due to the lack of interest, but the lack of control over the exportation of ancient artifacts is difficult to understand. To this question, Arif has given his assumption; the current government is Islamic, therefore they are not obliged to preserve artifacts from another religion, and Indonesia's traditional government was Hindu<sup>73</sup>. This observation is similar to what Anderson has claimed of Christianity with its lack of sense of history.<sup>74</sup> Indonesia as a country went through numbers of historical changes in less than a century. Thus much significance may not be given to artifacts that are irrelevant to prior to its independence, especially if they were not recognized as nationalistic elements.

It is a rather poor stance that the Indonesian government is taking if they cannot see the potential in this cultural phenomenon. Visual culture can play a significant part in consolidating and shaping their national identity, but also in regenerating its economy and regions. Tradition is preserved, but also exploited and discarded at the same time. The Indonesian government needs to recognize the requirement for infrastructure such as laws in Europe that restrict exploitation of artifacts<sup>75</sup>, which could only benefit Indonesian society as a whole.

### 3.4.2 Independency of art scene

According to Arif, exposure of artworks for the public to see and create discourses within, are the key to succeed as an artist. Infrastructure is yet to be introduced, but lack of state and government support also ironically assures some freedom in terms of creativity<sup>76</sup>.

*Modern Indonesian Art* is a publication edited by Koes Karnadi, of a compilation of Indonesian artists and their works, from old masters to contemporary. The publication features almost all prominent artists. Despite its significance to Indonesia's art history, it is not published by the government. The publication is done by Karnadi, who visits and interviews each of the

<sup>73</sup> AB, Prasetyo, interview, Bali, 20 February 2012.

<sup>74</sup> Anderson, op. cit., p. 23.

<sup>75</sup> [Note] There are laws established in EU and Switzerland, in order to protect cultural properties such as EU directive 93.7 and Cultural objects transfer law (KGTG), and these regulations are set in order to prevent transportation of art abroad, occasionally limiting selling and buying.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>76</sup> AB, Prasetyo, interview, Bali, 20 February 2012.

artists and critics to have the articles written<sup>77</sup>. Arif was one of the art critics featured and he is concerned by the extremely small number of art critics in Indonesia compared to the large number of artists. This reflects the infrastructure in art education; although artists may create discourses on political and social issues visually there are not enough art critics to respond to them for further arguments.

### 3.5 Conclusion:

Below are the key points from interviews:

1. Lack of government involvement does not allow infrastructure to be developed in art education.
2. Indonesia lacks national contemporary art museums and many hopes for its establishment, not only to present Indonesia's contemporary visual culture but also to set a standard.
3. The current art market sets the standards; the bubbling of price is inevitable, both by auction houses and artists.

Above are the aspects mentioned in almost all interviews conducted. Lack of infrastructure is consistently mentioned. People seek state support in order to further develop the already established phenomenon of the Indonesian art market. It would be too easy to only point out government as the hindering cause. We may say that the government is denying their own culture's development, but is it really so? In the next chapter, analysis will focus on institutions and government involvement.

---

<sup>77</sup> AB, Prasetyo, interview, Bali, 20 February 2012.

#### **4. Art institutions and their roles in art scene**

Main art institutions are ISI and ITB to start with, followed by IVAA, several numbers of national museums, and organization of several art fairs. Interviews with a lecturer at ISI, the director of IVAA and the executive director of ArtJOG was held in Jogjakarta, with each interview lasting from 30 minutes to 90 minutes.

##### **4.1 Indonesian Visual Art Archive (IVAA): Farah Wardhani**

IVAA stands for Indonesian Visual Art Archive, which is a non-profit organization founded in 1997 in Jogjakarta. The organization was established under the name of Yayasan Seni Cemeti which is an art sector in the outskirt of Jogjakarta established in 1988. IVAA organizes and archives any visual cultural materials of Indonesia such as published books, exhibition catalogues and visual artist's videoworks. According to Wardhani, their objective is to make art something more closely relatable to local public and art students, providing place for networking and discourses<sup>78</sup>. Her input on the Indonesian art scene is that it is very independent: without government, without infrastructure, and without standards (which could be both good and bad). In IVAA, the Indonesian art scene is archived as a gradual development that took a course alongside the development of the nation.

In terms of the market, Wardhani believes that excessive emphasis was put on stardom and sales of artists by the media. Such stardom of artists created in the media is very ephemeral and usually lasts for 3 to 4 years.<sup>79</sup> This reflects that what is transacted as the art trend in the market is irrelevant to the current development of the artistic discourse. As Dag Björkgren

---

<sup>78</sup> F Wardhani, interview, Jogjakarta, 16 February 2012.

<sup>79</sup> F Wardhani, interview, Jogjakarta, 16 February 2012.

suggests, consumption is the key element in creativity when it comes to popular culture.<sup>80</sup> To validate the notion of popularity, it can be noted that the market creates its own trend alongside the development of the art scene, thus suggesting prolificacy and artwork's potential in market as key elements to define popularity.

## 4.2 Institut Seni Indonesia: Deni Junaedi (art lecturer/artist)

### 4.2.1 Collectors and auction houses

Junaedi sees collectors' motivations, whether they are there for investment or not, defines their significance towards development of the art scene. Junaedi proclaims that a collector must like one's own collection and the parameter of good collector is whether they will actually hang artwork on their wall or not<sup>81</sup>. If in term of an investment, it may defy the very reason the artwork was created in the first place, and denying the existence of aesthetic discourse it could have initiated. As stressed by Dirk, 'collecting art and surrounding oneself with it in one's private life become part of a certain lifestyle,'<sup>82</sup> if collector's motivation is only to establish certain life style and status in the society, significance of artwork and its discourse will be lost in the transaction. As German Vanity Fair was quoted by Graw; 'collecting art is the greatest source of prestige.'<sup>83</sup> The value of artwork may be uncertain just by looking at it, but the act of purchase and possession elicit the further value from artwork that represents commercial value that determines one's social status. Lastly, as for auction houses, he recognizes them as negative influence to art scene, because they are platform of capitalism<sup>84</sup>. However, in such circumstance

---

<sup>80</sup> D Björkgren, *The Culture Business: Management strategies for Arts-Related Business*, Routledge, London & New York, 1996, p. 43.

<sup>81</sup> D Junaedi, interview, Jogjakarta, 15 February 2012.

<sup>82</sup> Dirk, p. 29.

<sup>83</sup> Vanity Fair, 26/2008, p. 59 cited in I Graw, p. 138

<sup>84</sup> D Junaedi, interview, Jogjakarta, 15 February 2012.

without official validating sector in the art scene, auction houses still play the major role of validation of work's financial value.<sup>85</sup>

#### 4.2.2 Students at ISI and emerging artists

For students studying in ISI, around 25% will succeed as an artist regardless of their artwork's price. According to Junaedi, the tendency to imitate popular style of artworks, mostly of paintings that are featured in auction catalogues are seen among students as well<sup>86</sup>. It is ironic to doubt that art theory taught at the institution is not sufficient to introduce artistic discourse that would accentuate the importance of individual creativity. Such circumstance shows that even in the art institution, artworks and students are prone to be affected by commercial-art production, and marketing validation. The change within the subject of artworks is also observed by Supangkat; after the development of art over 30 years after the independence, nationalism which was hitherto depicted alongside the search for identity lost its opposing structure. Yet, the search for identity is continuing on its own. As a result, many artists depict the social contextual theme in their paintings.<sup>87</sup>

Whether the status of an artists is defined according to their artistic discourses or market values, Junaedi stresses that for emerging and aspiring artists to be successful, 'they need to be integrated with art elements; art gallery, curator, journalist, collectors'<sup>88</sup>. His point is that without this integration, it is difficult for artists to establish their art into communities and out into society. With his insight, it is almost inevitable to see the effect of globalization of art values. Such insight suggests an effect of globalization of art values. The artworks are determined according to their own aesthetics, but also on the capitals they produce and contribute to the global art market. That leaves artists with their choice to portray and respond to social structure, in order to create new form of art discourse and representation of their society.

---

<sup>85</sup> Plattner, p. 8.

<sup>86</sup> D Junaedi, interview, Jogjakarta, 15 February 2012.

<sup>87</sup> J Supangkat, 'Contemporary Art in Indonesia, Development Beyond the 1970's', in T Ishida et al. (eds.), *Art in Southeast Asia 1997: Glimpses into the Future, Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo*, Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art, The Japan Foundation Asia Center, Tokyo, 1997, pp. 167-172.

<sup>88</sup> D Junaedi, interview, Jogjakarta, 15 February 2012.

#### 4.2.3 Government corruption

Junaedi argues that the Indonesian government's corruption is the most hindering cause for the further development of the Indonesian art scene. He continues; 'In capitalism, 1% is rich while the rest 99% of us are poor.'<sup>89</sup> His stance suggests that while artists are equally regarded in their community, those who involve with art scene through market tend to be social elite, who can afford to own expensive artworks. The gap between societies with artistic development seems to worsen with such condition.

Immediately after the independence was Suharto's political oppression that many artists revolted against, but now the Indonesian art community is facing yet another problem: neglect by their own government. Government and communities do not have to oppose each other; government can still play an important role in regional development and regeneration of a city.<sup>90</sup> Art can utilize itself as an asset, just like it was utilized for presenting ideal nationalism in the previous regime. Many interviewees stated that their government is hindering further development of Indonesia's art scene, market and community. Then the question arises, would it really be the matter of government's involvement that is the problem for Indonesian art?

### 4.3 ArtJOG: Satriagama Rakantaseta (Seto)

ArtJOG is an annual art fair organized in Jogjakarta. The art fair has taken up since 2007: showcasing works by Indonesian artists and selection is done by the organization board as well as invited artists. Being a good opportunity to get public exposure, the art fair receives large numbers of applicant each year; 1600 artists applied last year with submission of 350,000 artworks. An interview was conducted with its executive director Satriagama Rakantaseta (Seto), in Jogjakarta.

---

<sup>89</sup> D Junaedi, interview, Jogjakarta, 15 February 2012.

<sup>90</sup> Stallabrass, p. 139.

Seto states that the most important objective of the event is to be a mediator to connect undiscovered and unknown artists with the art scene<sup>91</sup>. Thus application is open for anyone interested. He believes that there should be a platform for an ‘art for art’s sake’ (which to quote Plattner is ‘for whom art is not merely a profession but an activity necessary for their survival as a human being’,<sup>92</sup>) exhibition in Indonesia where every artist is given equal opportunities to share artistic work as well as their ideas.<sup>93</sup> In comparison to other commercial art fairs and biennales, this is a great opportunity for emerging and undiscovered artists to have their work exhibited. ArtJOG is not only organized for potential buyers, but also for the general public as well. Simonton argues; 'most creators do not function in isolation from other creators, but rather their creativity takes place within a particular artistic, scientific, or intellectual discipline.'<sup>94</sup> Integrating ArtJOG into art community such as Jogjakarta seems perfect to bring an art community even closer and to initiate discourses. Unlike in the art market where validation of artwork thoroughly depends on its transacted price, such as like through auction sales, it could be said that ArtJOG provides equal opportunity for each artists to have their work determined not because of its potential for the marketing value, but also both visually and conceptually.

#### 4.3.1 Auction houses and art galleries

Bubbling of prices and unstable price of works are something atypical in this Indonesian art market, a reason again being because there is no contemporary art museum to set standards. Auction houses can control the prices as they wish, hence artists try to sell works at their studio to individual owner tend increase their price as well. Not only that, it leaves a collector who could also be a potential buyer of auction sales, confused with the artwork purchases and its monetary and qualitative value. Values for artworks sold in auctions have a similar basis to the stock market according to Dirk, the similarities being; marketability, availability of works, and

---

<sup>91</sup> Seto, interview, Jogjakarta, 15 February 2012.

<sup>92</sup> Plattner, p. 79

<sup>93</sup> Seto, interview, Jogjakarta, 15 February 2012.

<sup>94</sup> Simonton, 2001, quoted in McCain. P. 156.

number of interested parties.<sup>95</sup> The fact that there is such analysis for the validation of work means prices are very likely to be manipulated, and unpredictable.

Seto believes that galleries on the other hands are more focused on the growth of the artists they handle, and such aid is needed for artists to have their quality standards and prices controlled.<sup>96</sup> On the other hand, prices established in the market are not a reliable reference for value of work considering manipulation by auction houses. A gallerist, according to Plattner, is someone who supports an artists' career as a whole and not only the sales.<sup>97</sup> Therefore he sees that galleries do care about artists and their development, while auction houses do not care about artists' development but their financial value. It became apparent that as much as many interviewees are rather spiteful of auction houses turning artworks into mere commodities, their presences is also seen as crucial for the art market in Indonesia to flow and to reach buyers from an international market.

#### 4.3.2 Development of art scene and museums

As many others claimed, Seto also believes museums are necessary to set a standard for the art works and their qualities.<sup>98</sup> The differences from others are that he points out that such standard is not for distinguishing quality from good to bad, but to the quality that is 'representative of the plot level of human creation'; if the work is good enough it should connect with the viewer and the contemporary society through the discourse the work creates. Aside from such standards, museums collect work while auction houses do not - it is apparent then which is more interested in the development of art.

#### 4.3.3 Aspiration for government support

Seeing the art community and its scene in Indonesia as so vibrant, one cannot deny that its presence is underestimated by the international art scene and also their own government. Seto

---

<sup>95</sup> Dirk, op. cit., p. 56.

<sup>96</sup> Seto, interview, Jogjakarta, 15 February 2012.

<sup>97</sup> Plattner, op. cit., p. 128.

<sup>98</sup> Seto, interview, Jogjakarta, 15 February 2012.

also questions why the government cannot see potential in the art scene, because he believes that art can be a gateway for many possibilities to interact with other nations culturally and even economically<sup>99</sup>. Indonesia already attracts international visitors with tourisms, and the art scene also has a great potential to become one of the main attractions. In terms of funding the art scene, Seto argues that it is not only a matter of funding but attention; 'For government to realize that art work of Indonesia is important for government that is the crucial point. It will be a strong statement for Indonesia to promote Indonesia in general.'<sup>100</sup> The potential of the art scene is undermined and Seto believes that government should take notice of it as he believes 'art is like a window or door to invite so many things.'

Visiting Jakarta, Jogjakarta and Bali, one can witness the art scene in Indonesia is vibrant not merely in metaphorical terms. Their art works vary from figurative to abstract, installations, and artists are liberally creating works. Moreover, seeing figurative paintings of realism sold in Bali for tourists, it is almost strange for viewers not to wonder what could possibly be happening in Indonesia's actual art scene if tourist shop can display such fine craftsman skill.

Lastly, Seto made a statement that epitomize Indonesia's art scene; 'but with or without government, we will still help the management and art community in Indonesia. For example, through the event I organize. Since the beginning, my team wanted to show the organization of exhibition to our government.'<sup>101</sup> The only struggle seems to be the effect of the capitalism oriented art market shadowing the art scene, while it quietly strives forth.

---

<sup>99</sup> Seto, interview, Jogjakarta, 15 February 2012.

<sup>100</sup> Seto, interview, Jogjakarta, 15 February 2012.

<sup>101</sup> Seto, interview, Jogjakarta, 15 February 2012.

## 4.4 Art Museums in Indonesia

*A museum is an institution, a repository, for the preservation, safekeeping and benefaction of material objects as a product of man's culture and his environment, and the utilization of these in support of efforts to protect and perpetuate the nation's cultural richest.*  
*(Article 1. (1) Government Regulation no. 19/1995)<sup>102</sup>*

The above quote is from the introduction of *Directory of Museums in Indonesia*: it highlights that the preservation, safekeeping, and benefaction of materials are focused in terms of managing the museums. If the museums have these objectives, it would comply with Seto's argument that museums should reflect the development of human societies, and reflect their generations. The development of Indonesia was recorded by the Dutch colonizers from early times and that is the reason museums were established in Indonesia. Nowadays there are about 200 museums in Indonesia, which is assumed to be disproportionate to the population.<sup>103</sup> Most museums collect cultural artifacts. As for contemporary art museums, none have yet been established by the government.

### 4.4.1 Role of Museums

The roles of museums as described by Daniel J. Sherman and Irit Rogoff are first to classify the objects, and second to ‘institutionalize; context usually constructed as some kind of community (of people or of values), that objects are held to signify.’<sup>104</sup> Through a museum’s contextualization with the choice of objects to display, a museum can form, shape and present the history of the society. It is not surprising considering how Indonesian government has attempted before and still is trying to construct national identity based on their idealism. That

---

<sup>102</sup> M Husni (ed.), *Directory of Museums in Indonesia*, Jakarta, Museums Development Project (Proyek Pembinaan Permuseuman), 1999, p. V.

<sup>103</sup> T Susilo, ‘Indonesia’ in J E Javelosa, G V Barte & R Roa (eds.), *Comparative Museology and Museography in ASEAN*, National Commission for culture and the Arts, Manila, 1997, pp. 23-32.

<sup>104</sup> D J. Sherman & I Rogoff (eds.), *Museum Culture; Histories Discourses Spectacles*, Routledge, London, 1994, p. xi.

would provide a possible hypothesis as to why the government has not yet constructed a contemporary art museum today.

Another aspect of the museum discussed by Vera L. Zolberg is a museum's tendency to democratize art that provides 'an elite experience for everyone'<sup>105</sup>. Preservation and collection of cultural artifacts as well as artworks does not discriminate audiences as each will be represented by the cultural significance determined by the museums. That could be the most substantial advantage compared to overly commercial and capital oriented auction houses and art market where consumers are selected by the capital means.

#### 4.4.2 National museums and private museums

The more than 200 art museums in Indonesia include several private contemporary art museums. According to many interviewees, a museum is idealized as an institution where it provides standards for artworks. While the standards for the quality and price of artworks are dependent on the transactions in the art market, they seek to have the standard established by the non-capital driven institution. On the contrary Zolberg argues that 'museums should not be held to the same standard as instruction with immediate practical consequences for the individual and the society.' Her argument points out that taste for the artworks displayed in the museums should be regarded as 'individual matter with no social consequences.'<sup>106</sup> This notion is substantiated as interviewees prefer state museums over private museums for this very reason. For example, Dr. Oei Hong Jing, a most prominent art collector in Indonesia opened a museum for his collection in Bandung. The catalogue for his collection shows his taste, which is almost equivalent to auction house catalogues. In other words, his collections are composed of the tasteful art sold in the market. Another example is Yuz Museum in Jakarta; it was established in 2008 by Budi Tek, a businessman and a collector. His museum is designed to exhibit contemporary works from outside the country and the exhibition is designed by Tek.<sup>107</sup> Furthermore, he states in his interview that collecting art in fact is also part of gaining respect for his family name alongside

---

<sup>105</sup> V Zolberg, 'An Elite Experience for Everyone' in D J Sherman & I Rogoff (eds.), *Museum Culture: Histories Discourses Spectacles*, Taylor & Francis e-library, London, 2003, pp. 49-65.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> S Maki 'Jakarta's Yuz Museum', *Bijutsu Techo*, vol. 64, no. 962, 2012, pp. 17-18.

prosperity from his vast collections.<sup>108</sup> Unlike previous arguments, these museums are hard to be perceived as educational, preservation purpose or representing of a generation; but rather the parading of capitalist elitism. Despite all this, in the situation where lack of state support is apparent, these private collectors are still important in order to provide a base for exhibition models and platforms.<sup>109</sup>

#### 4.5 Image of Indonesia

The government is not interested in contemporary art according to interviewees however; it does not necessarily mean that they are not at all interested in the cultural development of Indonesia. Museums in Indonesia are managed by the Department of Education and Culture, and were orchestrated through centralized national museum system. Funds were mostly devoted to national and provincial museums rather than community-based initiatives, which is pointed out to have prevented museum from fully contributing to sociocultural development of Indonesians<sup>110</sup>.

It is apparent that government is nonetheless still eager to construct national identity based on their idealism. As noted earlier regarding the dispute over the origin of Batik as their cultural significant product, the government tends to see art as more traditionally crafted artworks. If Indonesian government is maintaining its cultural interaction exclusive from other cultures, it is understandable that their artistic discourse could completely differ from what the Indonesian art scene has come to embrace.

Just like commercial art, crafts that refer mostly to their functional purpose are considered ‘low’ art, according to Plattner.<sup>111</sup> As observed by Wahono, the development of

---

<sup>108</sup> BT, ‘Budi Tek: Collector’, *Bijutsu Techo*, vol. 64, no. 962, 2012, pp. 14-17.

<sup>109</sup> Turner, loc. cit.

<sup>110</sup> C F Kreps, *Liberating Culture: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on museums, Curation, and Heritage Preservation (Museum Meanings)*, Routledge, London, 2003, p. 136.

<sup>111</sup> Plattner, op. cit., p. 6.

Indonesia's artistic discourse is contradictory to those of West, meaning that their discourses are derived from visual culture and not from literature. Such observation can lead to presumption to speculate the reason behind the government's preference for traditional art. In the same argument, Plattner stresses that high art is 'some meaningful contribution that advances our vision. The other end of the continuum of art objects is purely decorative.'<sup>112</sup> Thus, it is possible that the government's preference is due to the idea of its nationalism associated with traditional art and craft rather than artworks that imply aesthetical discourse, such as in contemporary art, which is not necessarily visually referential to Indonesian-ness. With the government's attempt to regard tradition as their social infrastructure, modern and contemporary art that are largely influenced by Western aesthetics will be regarded as modern, ephemeral and meaningless decoration. As a result, it can be speculated - that contemporary art is regarded as low art that has no significance and cultural roots to the society.

Indonesian art is gaining a prominent position in the Southeast Asian Art Market nowadays; however the images that represent 'Indonesian Art' or 'Indonesian contemporary art' searched on stock photography databases (Getty Images, iStockphoto, 123RF, Shutterstock, Corbis, Bigstock) and search engine (Google) do not reflect any of the artistic development of modern and contemporary art in Indonesia. The result for both searches can be referred to appendix 1, and are comprised of images of traditional art, textile patterns, sculptures, statues and dancers in traditional attire. As for the search result for 'Indonesian contemporary art', Shutterstock and Bigstock databases returned no results at all, while only two were returned on iStockphoto. The only image that can be referred to as contemporary art in Indonesia was the images of an exhibition with blurred images of paintings in the background on Corbis and Google. The significance of Indonesian contemporary art is lost in this internet database search. Whether the resultant images comply with the ideal Indonesian art by the government, the focus of Indonesian art is clearly emphasized on traditional craft, which was discussed earlier as low art without discourse. According to Paul Frosh, incessant reproductions of stock images as visual contribute to its stereotype.<sup>113</sup> In other words, these images of traditional art and craft are

---

<sup>112</sup> ibid.

<sup>113</sup> P Frosh, *The Image Factory: Consumer Culture, Photography and the Visual Content Industry*, Berg, Oxford & New York, 2003, p. 110.

the stereotype of ‘Indonesian art’ and ‘Indonesian contemporary art’, although visual reference to contemporary art as defined in the art scene is unrecognized.

Without much emphasis on contemporary art by Indonesian government, it is hard to determine whether it is the ideal images of Indonesia they would like to be recognized internationally. Although, the first Indonesian art movement was to break away from the stereotype constructed by the Dutch colonizers, which was Mooi Indies, Indonesian authority is now returning once again to such aesthetical value which is constructed by Western aesthetic and idealism of an exotic nation. Description such as ‘The Western modern art world states that Eastern art should not be westernized because the Western influence would destroy the presumed Eastern identity’,<sup>114</sup> shows the western centric way of defining Eastern art against the Western aesthetics. In other words, while Indonesian government is being exclusive and composing the idea of Indonesian art based on traditional culture, it is in the end still referring and validating its art against Western aesthetics.

---

<sup>114</sup> H Supanjaard, ‘Bandung, the Laboratory of the West?’, in J Fischer (ed.), *Modern Indonesian Art*, Panitia Pameran KIAS, Jakarta, 1990, pp. 54-76.

## **5. Auction houses and art market in Indonesia**

By moving the capital within the art market, auction houses play an important role in creating economic current. While aesthetic discourses initiated by an artist is an attempt to define their creativity with no means of economic value and standard – in other words it still connects art and people together in some way. As Klamer states, the way people value the culture whether in different form or in realm, is expressed in economy. Thus value is a necessary and primary means to unify and center economic and aesthetic discourse.<sup>115</sup>

While auction is used for a wide genre of business opportunities, auction business in Indonesia is also acting as a platform to introduce emerging artists and to give them validations. Among Southeast Asian countries in sales, Indonesia comprises the greatest percentage of the works sold; it is undeniable that Indonesian art is playing a large role in contemporary Southeast Asian art in the market. Historically, auctions were regarded as intermediaries where art dealers used as a main source to acquire artworks.<sup>116</sup> Nowadays, auction is open to all public who wishes to buy or sell works.

### **5.1 Constitution of aesthetics in the art market**

Graw argues that; 'unlike consumer products subject to depreciation such as designer clothing, the values associated with works of art are lasting.'<sup>117</sup> In the case of the Indonesian art market however, the aesthetics are considered almost secondary to the monetary value of artworks. As several interviewees such as Seto and Deni have mentioned, the art auction business in Indonesia is not a phenomenon that is associated with the growth of an art scene

---

<sup>115</sup> A Klamer, *The Value of Culture*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, 1996, p. 19.

<sup>116</sup> Dirk, op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>117</sup> Graw, op. cit., p. 26.

which involves artistic discourses as well as aesthetical concepts. Hence, aesthetics is prone to be very much affected by the value given in the market.

## 5.2 Validating artwork

At a discussion held at Art Stage Singapore 2012, Singapore critic, Iola Lenzi stated that art becomes commodity once it is transacted and validated as it is sold through the auction houses. Such transformation of validity of artists is also linked with branding of certain artistic quality and the social standard as well. This point is argued by Thompson that branding gives a sense of security for buyers at the auction.<sup>118</sup> It assures those buyers without sufficient knowledge of art quality upon making purchases. In such cases, the branded dealers, galleries, and auction houses can work as a quality assurance. It was a rather unfortunate case for the startup of auction business discussed in Chapter 3 that it fell for its very business strategy of auction houses. Hence it is difficult to make assumptions on how deep an artist and artworks have gone into the system of market and its validation. It is also presumed that once art turns into a mere commodity it loses certain cultural significance, but also reducing its interaction with the market may allow it to surface such cultural and aesthetical value otherwise disguised by the market value. In such a concern, an important argument given by Dirk is that saving art from the art market does not mean physically removing artworks from market by material foundation, but rather demanding too little from it.<sup>119</sup> Significance of artworks presented to buyers in auction houses are embellished with prices that seem to assure potential investment; - attempting to collect works with this motivation does not guarantee anything more than the significance of transaction represented in the value. Thus, in the end, artwork may be empty of its cultural value. Value of culture on the other hand, according to Robertson and Chong, is 'determined by the semiotic value plus its production costs, which change with every art form...Price equates the

---

<sup>118</sup> D Thompson, \$12 Million Stuffed Shark: The Curious Economics of Contemporary Art, Palgrave, London, 2008, p. 9.

<sup>119</sup> Dirk, op. cit., p. 13.

exchange value...People should pay for what they like.<sup>120</sup> However, unfortunately in the market, the price is all about how much should be paid, rather than how much is paid voluntarily.

### 5.3 Good investment

‘Affordable art auction’ is occasionally seen as the title of auction sales; since Indonesian art scene on its own is rather established strongly, it was an asset that these works were able to be transacted at a lower price compared to the international market. It is discussed by Bruno S. Frey that the market is an institution where various demands are met.<sup>121</sup> However the artmaking skills are highly regarded, emerging artists' work tend to include commercial themes, and there are arguments that commerciality as a notion equates to low status where artwork does not intellectually connect with audiences, while the notion of mass is associated as derogatory for culture, which highlights the lack of sense in originality.<sup>122</sup> The notion of affordable utilized by Indonesia's art market seems to overrule such discourse and to use such stance as an advantage instead, sacrificing the purchasing artwork for owning artworks to the significance of the bargain one could get.

Simultaneously, Frey argues that art is not a good investment, especially in the long term<sup>123</sup>. It is agreeable in observing productivity of young emerging artists. The market not only manipulates the price and thus the value of artists in the market, but also the production as well. The artists could be regarded as mere artisans for art auction houses to produce investment opportunities, but it is depending on artists of how they determine their motivation in making art. Despite the common conception that the market is a decisive mechanism for culture, Frey argues that the market in fact is not a negative phenomenon to culture at all.<sup>124</sup> He continues that the market can produce in response to demand, while commercially produced art is regarded as low

---

<sup>120</sup> Robertson & Chong, op. cit., p. 53.

<sup>121</sup> B S Frey, *Arts & Economics; Analysis and Cultural Policy*, Springer, Berlin, 2000, p. 11.

<sup>122</sup> P Mattick, *Art in its time; Theories and practices of modern aesthetics*, Routledge, London, 2003, p. 23.

<sup>123</sup> Frey, p. 12.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

quality; but because these demands are created accordingly to specific interest, the market does not require a large mass of audiences.<sup>125</sup> Thus artworks in the market are partially reflective of what comprises the art scene in general, but it is still inevitable to affect price and validation of works in art scene as a whole.

---

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

## **6. Conclusion**

The research was motivated by a desire to see the nature of the Indonesian art scene; whether or not its very existence was something superficial like the auction businesses. It is clear that the market businesses create hype and demands for market, but it is not long lasting. Contemporary art is known to be experiential and thus ephemeral, but auction business and the market validation of artworks were also short lived.

Following are the elements that comprise the Indonesian art scene and market as observed; art institution, art auction houses, art galleries, artists, and collectors. Each element was crucial to compose the rather superficial phenomenon called market, and each element itself also held strong significance on its own. Market was built with each element assembled together; what lacks in the assemblage was infrastructure which would otherwise have come together in a more orderly fashion. For instance; law and regulation in import and export of artifacts, organizing Indonesian art fair where government can attempt to integrate traditional art and contemporary art together, and as many times mentioned; establishment of national art museum of contemporary art.

When attempting to understand and grasp the notion of Indonesian art from an international art market perspective, one cannot deny the impression that it is superficial where artworks presented are repetitive, appropriated images of media and lack originality. The popularity of Indonesian art comes from its affordable prices, but also the vibrant visual artists produced. Vibrant yet empty of artistic discourse, it was due to the difference of artist's motivation, thus allowing the market to fill the objective of art with ability and potential to sell. On the contrary, when observed from within art scene, the art community itself was legitimate and strong in terms of developing aesthetic discourse, cultural and social identity and reflecting of its own development. What is missing is the system between the art community and art market in Indonesia to stabilize the value of artworks in the international market platform.

The government neglect did not seem to be a significant issue in term of aesthetic discourse and development, because what was sought from them by art community is; - not merely a contemporary art museum, - (so almost every interviewee claimed), but a place that can

provide significance in development of artistic discourse which could represent the entire community as one, just as in Indonesia's national motto; unity in diversity. Various elements of the Indonesian art community are brought together on each individual level, but not together as overarching discourses yet. The roles of each elements are defined differently depending on who, where, and what is defined. Not to suggest the consolidation of each role is required in order for the art community and art scene to strive forth, but it is assured that further significance put into each role would benefit the entire art community as a whole. That, as a result may clarify the idea of the Indonesian art market; to understand what infrastructures are constructing such a market, making it definable not only from a financial aspect but culturally, and even nationally.

Recognition of the art community by the government is subtle or virtually non-existent. If the national motto is unity in one, oneness can also be established in the art community as well. Regardless of whether the government has a different understanding of artistic value or not, recognition of artistic development is something that should be considered by them. Just as Indonesian art went through several different developmental phase in less than half a century, defining artistic discourse accordingly and suitably to each era shows the adaptability and constant potential for development. The bipolar nature of the government is on the one hand striving to establish national economy and identity through traditional culture, whilst simultaneously disregarding the emerging modern culture. Government should be able to recognize its own culture instead of defining the country with capitalist modernity and traditional identity.

The very reason why there is art market for Indonesia is because there are buyers and sellers who see the potential of art as an economic advantage. Whether the market as a phenomenon contributes to the aesthetic valuation or not, both prominent collectors and artists are striving to reenergize and develop their art scene as a whole by playing important roles differently, either in the market or in art making practice. Collectors who have already opened their own private museums are proud of their national art development such that they wish to share their enthusiasm as well as aesthetic discourse internationally. Without them, it is doubtful whether Indonesian could have achieved their current establishment.

Throughout its history, visual culture which was comprised of traditional artifacts as well as any form of artworks, were crucial for the development of the country. There were attempts

made to unify the differences from ethnicity, languages and religion, through visual culture. Mooi Indies, Persagi, New Art Movement, and now contemporary art; all played significant roles in defining Indonesian national identity. Just as earlier generations have imagined a unified community and identity, the contemporary art scene is forming itself into unison in the name of art. However the great the differences are, the Indonesian art and its market are defined by each element in the art community. It is apparent that national identity and community is thus imagined already giving the sense of one community.

## Bibliography

### Books

Anderson, B, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London, 1991.

Börkgren, D, *The Culture Business: Management Strategies for Arts-Related Business*, Routledge, London, 1996.

Ciclitira, S (ed.), *Contemporary Indonesian Art*, Skira, Milano, 2011.

Clarke, D, ‘Contemporary Asian Art and its Western Reception’, in

Chu, M, *Understanding Contemporary Southeast Asian Art*, Art Forum Pte Ltd, Singapore, 2003.

Dirk, B, *Art for Sale: A Candid view of the Art Market*, Hatje Cantz Verlag, Ostfildern, 2011.

Fischer, J (ed.), *Modern Indonesian Art: Three Generations of Tradition and Change 1945-1990*, Panitia Pameran KIAS, Jakarta, 1990.

Frey, BS, *Arts & Economics: Analysis & Cultural Policy*, Springer, Berlin, 2000.

Ginsburgh, VA & D Throsby (eds.), *Handbook of the Economic of Art and Culture, Volume 1*, North-Holland, Oxford, 2006.

Good MJD & BJ Good, ‘Indonesia Sakit: Indonesian Disorders and the Subjective Experience and Interpretive Politics of Contemporary Indonesian Artists’, in MJD Good et al. (eds.), *Postcolonial Disorders*, University of California Press, California, 2008, pp. 62-108.

Goodwin, J (ed.), *The International Art Market: The Essential Guide for Collectors and Investors*, Kogan Page, London, 2008, pp. 14-21.

Graw, I, *High Price: Art Between the Market and Celebrity Culture*, Sternberg Press, New York, 2009.

Held, D (ed.), *A Globalizing World? Culture, Economics, Politics*, Routledge, London, 2000.

Hellman, J, *Performing the Nation: Cultural Politics in New Order Indonesia*, NIAS Press, Copenhagen, 2003.

Husni, M (ed.), *Directory of Museums in Indonesia*, Museums Development Project, Jakarta, 1999.

Intan Mardiana MNH, ‘Cross Border Museum Collaborations: Opportunities and Challenges’, in Loh HN & EE T (eds.), *Making Museums Matter: A Post Symposium Publication*, National Heritage Board, Singapore, 2008, pp. 43-47.

Kaushik, R, *Art And Institution: Aesthetics in the Late Works of Merleau-Ponty*, Continuum, London, 2011.

Klamer, A, *The Value of Culture: On the Relationship between Economics and Arts*, Amsterdam University Press, 1996.

Mattick, P, *Art in Its Time: Theories and Practices of Modern Aesthetics*, Routledge, London, 2003.

Maklai, B, ‘New Streams, New Visions: Contemporary Art Since 1966’, in VM Hooker (ed.), *Culture and Society in New Order Indonesia*, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1993.

Mulder, N, *Inside Indonesian Society: Cultural Change in Java*, The Pepin Press, Amsterdam, 1996.

Plattner, S, *High Art Down Home: An Economic Ethnography of a Local Art Market*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1996.

Robertson, I, *A New Art From Emerging Markets*, Lund Humphries, Surry, 2011.

Robertson, I (ed.), *Understanding International Art Markets and Management*, Routledge, London, 2005.

Robertson, I & D Chong (eds.), *The Art Business*, Routledge, London, 2008.

Rogoff, I & DJ Sherman (eds.), *Museum Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacles*, Routledge, London, 1994.

- Schefold, R & HF Vermeulen (eds.), *Treasure Hunting?*, CNWS, Leiden, 2002.
- Spanjaard, H, *Modern Indonesian Painting*, Sotheby's, Leiden, 2003.
- Stallabrass, J, *Art Incorporated: The Story of Contemporary Art*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2004.
- Supangkat, J, 'Art and Politics in Indonesia', in C Tuner (ed.), *Art and Social Change: Contemporary Art in Asia and Pacific*, Pandanus Books, Canberra, 2005. pp.218-227.
- Supangkat, J, 'Art Market, global Economic Crisis', in Heri Pemad Art Management (ed.), *In Rainbow (Visual Art Exhibition)*, Heri Pemad Art Management, Surabaya, 2009, p. 9.
- Supangkat, J, 'Contemporary Art in Indonesia, Development Beyond the 1970's', in T Ishida et al. (eds.), *Art in Southeast Asia 1997: Glimpse into the Future*, Tokyo: Museum of Contemporary Art; Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art; Japan Foundation Asia Center, Tokyo, 1997, pp. 167-172.
- Supangkat, J, 'Multiculturalism/Multimodernism (1996)', in M Chiu & B Genocchio (eds.), *Contemporary Art in Asia: A Critical Reader*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, 2011, pp. 63-85.
- Supangkat, J, 'Pleasures of Chaos', in P Marella (ed.), *Indonesian Art, Pleasures of Chaos: Inside New Indonesian Art*, Damiani, Bologna, 2010, pp. 11-15.
- Supriyanto, E, 'One that continues, breaks and cracks', in E Mulyadi (ed.), *The Journey of Indonesian Painting: The Bentara Budaya Collection*, KPG, Jakarta, 2008, pp. 16-17.
- Susilo, T, 'Indonesia', in JE Javelosa et al. (eds.), *Comparative Museology and Museography in ASEAN*, National Commission for Culture and the Arts, Manila, 1997, pp. 23-31.
- Taylor, PM (ed.), *Fragile Traditions: Indonesian Art in Jeopardy*, University of Hawaii Press, Hawaii, 1994.
- Thompson, D, *The \$12 Million Stuffed Shark: The Curious Economics of Contemporary Art*, Palgrave, New York, 2008.

Turner, C, 'Indonesia: Art, freedom, human rights and engagement with the West', in C Tuner (ed.), *Art and Social Change: Contemporary Art in Asia and Pacific*, Pandanus Books, Canberra, 2005. pp. 196-213.

Wright, A, 'Soul, Spirit and Mountain: Preoccupations of Contemporary Indonesian Painters' (Doctor of Philosophy: 296), *The Cornell Southeast Asia Program*, Cornell University, New York, 1991.

Zaelani, RA, 'Contemporary Art in Indonesia: Beware! After the Big Chance', in A Kuss et al. (eds.), *AWAS! Recent Art from Indonesia*, Cahaya Timor, Jogjakarta, 2000.

### Articles

Bickerton, A, 'Ashley Bickerton on Nyoman Masriadi', *Art Asia Pacific*, issue 76, Nov/Dec 2011, p. 25.

BT, 'Budi Tek: Collector', *Bijutsu Techo*, vol. 64, no. 962, January 2012 Special Edition, 2012, pp. 14-17.

Couteau, J, '1001 Doors: Re-Inventing Tradition, A door to a new Indonesian Contemporary art?', *C Arts*, vol. 18, United Universe Publishing Pte Ltd., Feb/Mar 2011, pp 28-35.

Ito, T, 'Introduction to the Art Market: Interview with Anders Petterson, director of the Art Tactic Website', *Bijutsu Techo*, vol. 64, no. 962, January 2012 Special Edition, 2012, pp. 3-7.

Lam, P, 'Indonesian Contemporary Art: Pondering Global Recognition', *C Arts*, vol. 18, Feb/Mar 2011, pp. 14-21.

Ravel, S, 'Jakarta's Yuz Museum: Report from Jakarta', *Bijutsu Techo*, vol. 64, no. 962, January 2012 Special Edition, 2012, pp.17-18.

Thomson, J, 'Indonesian Mythologies', *Asian Art News*, vol. 21, no. 4, 2011, pp. 74-76.

### Electronic Sources

Barley, TN, 'Indonesia and Malaysia Battle Over Batik', Jakarta Globe, 2009, retrieved 15 February 2012, <<http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/home/indonesia-and-malaysia-battle-over-batik/332922>>.

Hujatnikajennong, A, '*The State and the Market: Two Decades of Indonesian Contemporary Art*', ArtJog, 2011, retrieved 18 February 2012, <<http://www.biennalejogja.org/article/the-state-and-the-market-two-decades-of-indonesian-contemporary-art/?lang=en#1>>.

### Interviews

Battioni, D, recording (DSS file), Jakarta, interviewed on 12 February 2012.

Collector A, recording (DSS file), Jakarta, interviewed on 11 February 2012.

Junaedi, D, recording (DSS file), Jogjakarta, interviewed on 15 February 2012.

Prasetyo, AB, recording (DSS file), Bali, interviewed on 20 February 2012.

Putra, M, recording (DSS file), Bali, interviewed on 20 February 2012.

Raka, T, recording (DSS file), Bali, interviewed on 20 February 2012.

Rakantaseta, S, recording (DSS file), Jogjakarta, interviewed on 15 February 2012.

Wahono, W, recording (DSS file), Jakarta, interviewed on 10 February 2012.

Wahyuni, EH, recording (DSS file), Jogjakarta, interviewed on 17 February 2012.

Wardhani, F, recording (DSS file), Jogjakarta, interviewed on 16 February 2012.

Wiharso, E, recording (DSS file), Jogjakarta, interviewed on 16 February 2012.